

PRESS RELEASE

# Tibetan wind bringing mandalas to the Archdiocesan Museum

EXHIBITION: Mandalas in the Wind | Tibetan Buddhist Art from the collection of National Museum – Náprstek museum  
OPENING: 24 04 2023 at 6:30 pm  
DURATION: till 27 08 2023  
VENUE: Olomouc Archdiocesan Museum, Gallery  
AUTHOR: Helena Heroldová  
CURATOR: Gabriela Elbelová  
EXHIBITION DESIGN: Vlastimil Sedláček  
GRAPHIC DESIGN: Vladimír Vaca  
LOANS BY: National museum – Náprstek museum of Asian, African and American Cultures

In the past centuries, Christian missionaries went to Tibet to convince the locals of the inner strength of their religion, but for now, the spiritual art of Tibetan Buddhism is moving to the former chapter deanery - today's Olomouc Archdiocesan Museum. The exhibition *Mandalas in the Wind | Tibetan Buddhist Art from the collection of the National Museum - Náprstek Museum*, which is on display from 24 April to 27 August 2023, is a part of an artistic interreligious dialogue conducted on the grounds of the Christian-oriented Museum. This is not happening for the first time - in the past, for example, there have been exhibitions representing Japanese Buddhism or Judaism.

The Tibetan Buddhist art is intrinsically linked to religion. Visitors will see a representative selection from the extensive collection of the Náprstek Museum. In total, there will be over 150 objects, mostly paintings, small votive images and sculptures. "Traditionally, artwork has been seen in Buddhist terms as supporting the three aspects of Buddhahood: body, speech and mind. For centuries, individual objects have served as tools for meditation, prayer, and didactic purposes. They are characterised by their rich iconography, deep symbolism and masterful processing of materials," explains Helena Heroldová, curator of the National Museum.

Over the centuries, Tibetan art has evolved formally, and specific regional styles have also emerged. Magnificent paintings and sculptures have traditionally been part of the interiors of monasteries and wealthy dwellings. Small paintings placed in scapulars or clay offerings were used for everyday folk religious practice. "It is important to note that the Buddha's teachings are not theistic; they do not explain the origin and functioning of

the world. Its only goal is the path that leads man to liberation – nirvana. This is defined as the end of suffering, the suppression of clinging to existence, greed, hatred and delusion, the realm of absolute peace, enlightenment and eternal bliss," adds Gabriela Elbelová, curator of the Olomouc Museum of Art.

Tibetan Buddhism has greatly influenced life throughout the entire area of cultural Tibet, which includes the areas of today's northern, central and south-eastern provinces of China and present-day Mongolia. In addition to the dominant Buddhism, other religions play a major role in this cultural area - notably Bon, which is based on nature cults and shamanism and whose origins can be traced back to a time before the advent of Buddhism. The title of the exhibition, Mandalas in the Wind, is in a certain way an intended pun, as it is also a clear signal for Europeans - they immediately associate it with Tibet, its culture and religion. "Mandalas are a specific art of complex geometric images that have a symbolic and spiritual meaning. Wind - lung in Tibetan - is not only a real and characteristic element of the Tibetan air, but in Buddhism it also denotes one of the five basic elements - vital energy. The prayer flags known as lungta, which literally means wind horse or horse in the wind, are believed to bring good luck and fortune," Gabriela Elbelová explains the title of the exhibition.

### **Catalogue**

For the exhibition Mandalas in the Wind, the Museum of Art has published a 72-page publication of the same name, which introduces the reader to the foundations and history of Buddhist teachings, their conception in Tibet, China and Mongolia, as well as the first contacts of Europeans and their view of the art of Tibetan Buddhism. In the catalogue part, it presents the most important thematic and iconographic groups of objects by means of examples of specific selected exhibits from the collection of the Náprstek Museum. The curators - Helena Heroldová and Gabriela Elbelová - have accompanied the catalogue with rich pictorial material.

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