

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VMFA Celebrates Art Museum Day**

Museum Will Offer Complimentary Passes to *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*



L: Installation view of *Luxation 1*, 2016, Tsherin Sherpa (Nepalese, born 1968), acrylic on sixteen stretched cotton canvases. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2017.195a-p; R: Visitors admire works in the *Awaken* exhibition

Richmond, Virginia— In celebration of the 10th annual Art Museum Day, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts will offer visitors complimentary vouchers to *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*. An initiative of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), Art Museum Day gathers hundreds of institutions from across North America to recognize the arts and the important role art museums play in their communities.

Visitors to the museum on Saturday, May 18, can request up to two vouchers from the museum's Visitor Services desk and the VMFA Shop. Each voucher is redeemable for one adult, senior, student or youth admission to *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*, which runs through Aug. 18, 2019. In this exhibition, visitors can view spectacular Buddhist art from the ninth century to as recent as 2016 and also take part in the narrative it presents of a quest for enlightenment.

Vouchers will be available on May 18, 2019, only. They may be redeemed at any time during the run of *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment* but may not be used for other exhibitions. VMFA is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission and is AAMD's sole Virginia partner for Art Museum Day this year.

The theme for Art Museum Day 2019 is *Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition*, a recognition of the new roles of museums as active participants in their communities. While preserving their primary missions—collecting, conservation, communication, research and exhibitions—museums have transformed their practices to remain closer to the communities they serve. Once static institutions, museums are reinventing themselves to become more interactive, audience focused, community oriented, flexible, adaptable and mobile. They have become cultural hubs functioning as platforms where creativity combines with knowledge and where visitors can also co-create, share and interact.

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is a cultural hub in the heart of Richmond, but through innovative initiatives such as *VMFA on the Road: An Artmobile for the 21st Century* and the Evans Distance Learning live video classes, VMFA has become a cultural hub beyond the physical walls of the museum,” says VMFA Director Alex Nyerges. “We are honored to partner with AAMD for the 10th annual Art Museum Day and are delighted to offer visitors a special opportunity to visit *Awaken* and learn more about the spectacular art of Tibetan Buddhism.”

AAMD’s Art Museum Day is an opportunity to focus attention on the role of art museums in North America, an extension of the International Council of Museums’ (ICOM) International Museum Day. AAMD represents 240 art museums across the United States, Canada and Mexico—from regional museums in small towns to large museums in major urban centers. Last year, VMFA — along with more than 150 other AAMD member museums — participated in Art Museum Day.

### **About *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment***

*Awaken* is an opportunity for VMFA visitors to power down, unplug and join a voyage into the visionary art of Tibetan Buddhism. The journey from clamor to contemplation unfolds as visitors progress through a series of immersive spaces, engaging with spectacular art along the way. Nearly 100 objects, both historical and contemporary, are drawn largely from two of the country’s most extraordinary collections of Himalayan art: VMFA and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. For participants and viewers alike, the exhibition offers a pause from the ordinary noise of daily living and a chance to contemplate and reflect.

Beginning with a multimedia display that emphasizes the relentless distractions of daily life, the exhibition asks a basic question: are we really awake and fully aware? Or do the clamor and fragmentation of ordinary experience lull us into a kind of waking sleep and doom us to running in endless, unfulfilling circles? The exhibition then progresses through a series of stages along a journey toward waking from that slumber. Visitors learn some of Buddhism’s essential teachings, encounter artworks that serve as guides, are joined by allies wise and fierce, and receive equipment for the journey. The most crucial tool given is a map—a painting called a mandala—of the visionary expedition ahead. They must overcome trials, face fears and eventually confront the ultimate ordeal, death itself. The payoff is a glimpse into reality’s true nature and a culminating vision of clarity as powerful as the confusion with which the journey began.

*Awaken* is curated by Dr. John Henry Rice, VMFA’s E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art, and Dr. Jeffrey Durham, Associate Curator of Himalayan Art, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. The exhibition will be on view at VMFA through Aug. 18, 2019.

### **Sponsorship Information**

Organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Presented by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund, the Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans Exhibition Endowment, Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation, Margaret N. and John D. Gottwald, McGue Millhiser Family Trust, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Jay and Marsha Olander, Robert E. and Jacquelyn Pogue and Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Reed Jr. Additional ongoing support for VMFA’s exhibition program is provided by the Dr. Donald S. and Beejay Brown Endowment, the Council Exhibition Fund, and the Fabergé Ball Endowment.

### **Ticket Information**

The exhibition is free for VMFA members, children ages 6 and under, state employees and teachers, as well as active-duty military personnel and their immediate families; \$15 for adults; \$12 for seniors 65+; and \$10 for youth 7–17 and college students with ID.

### **About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures,

conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 40,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

**The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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