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## ASIA SOCIETY TEXAS ANNOUNCES BOLD NEW EDUCATION PROJECT

*One-of-a-Kind Initiative Promises to Transform Student Learning  
with Asian American and Asia-Specific Educational Resources*



*Draft rendering of The Reflection Garden in the Onsite Exhibition*

HOUSTON, June 22, 2022 — [Asia Society Texas](#) (ASTX) is embarking on an ambitious \$10.7 million [educational project](#) that will radically advance essential tools needed by students and educators to learn the untold narratives of Asians and Asian Americans. Consisting of both an **Online Learning Platform** and an **Onsite Exhibition**, the project seeks to address gaps in learning opportunities that often lead to intolerance and racism. The transformational project is slated to open to the public in the spring of 2023 with more than [\\$9 million in funding secured](#) to launch the project's design and initial buildout in less than a year. Amid this historical moment, inspiring empathy and fostering a better understanding of our interconnected world is of utmost importance, and ASTX is committed to building a more inclusive society through the exchange of diverse perspectives and celebration of vibrant cultures.

According to research conducted by the National Commission on Asia in the Schools, an overwhelming majority of educators have little content, knowledge, or training related to Asia. The lack of understanding is reflected in their curriculum, and results in student gaps in knowledge and perspective. Additionally, many districts and educators lack the resources needed to diversify their curriculum — such as professional development and curriculum tools that



*Draft rendering of Onsite Exhibition in ASTX's North Gallery*

explore race, identity, and varying ideology. “There is a great need for Asia-specific learning materials that are engaging and relevant to educators and students” says Rick Cruz, Deputy Superintendent for Houston Independent School District. “It is our belief that Asia Society Texas’ Education Project will close the learning gaps. Our diverse student population will benefit from the intentional building of cross-cultural connections and the strong alignment to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).”



*Draft rendering of The Gathering Table in the Onsite Exhibition*

Informed by two years’ worth of research with a 14-member Advisory Council — composed of a dynamic group of cultural, educational, and business leaders — ASTX has developed this bold new initiative to build upon our belief in the power of art, dialogue, and ideas to combat bias and build a more inclusive society. According to Bonna Kol, President of ASTX, “We have

engaged top designers to transform the Asia Society Texas Center into an immersive learning center that will virtually transport students and guests to explore Asia. Students and educators unable to visit the Center will have access to original graphic novels with interactive learning blocks backed by a robust portal for educators. This is the first of its kind in the U.S.” Gordan Quan, chair of the Advisory Council for this project, shares, “As an Asian American who grew up in Texas, providing opportunities to foster curiosity and build human connectivity by elevating AAPI perspective is deeply meaningful to me. I know how meaningful it is for a child to see their own story and identity reflected – reinforcing the idea that everyone’s life experience and cultural history is valued and important.”

## THE ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM

The Online Learning Platform is a virtual storytelling experience utilizing interactive graphic novels to deepen middle and high school students' understanding of Asia and Asian American perspectives. Rooted in humanities and STEM-based concepts, the platform also includes an educator portal which provides lesson plans and curriculum resources aligned to learning standards for seamless integration into classroom teachings. There are no other resources like this available for educators. "As a Filipino American raised in Tennessee, I am excited to work with Asia Society Texas to be a place where Americans from all backgrounds can engage directly with the many cultures of Asia" says Phillip Tiongson, Founder and CEO of Potion, the project's design firm based in New York. "We believe this project is not only innovative but a game changer for students and educators when it comes to learning about Asia."



*Draft rendering of graphic novel*



*Draft rendering of Train to Asia in Onsite Exhibition*

## THE ONSITE EXHIBITION

The Onsite Exhibition will be the first interactive learning exhibition in Houston focusing on Asia. This flexible and permanent exhibition will guide guests of all ages on an immersive and multisensory experience to learn about Asian Americans, Asian art, culture, and contemporary global issues. The exhibition is designed to spark curiosity and highlight the interconnectedness between the peoples of Asia, Houston, and the United States. "From the moment the Center opened almost ten years ago, I have been deeply moved seeing the curiosity, wonder, and joy sparked by Asia Society Texas' programming" says Nancy

Allen, ASTX board member and philanthropist. "I'm thrilled knowing this incredible building will be transformed to inspire our community to more deeply embrace the beauty and diversity of Asia."

The curriculum for both initiatives is grounded in the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and Asia Society's Center for Global Education Global Competency Framework. The strong alignment to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and accompanying teacher training will ensure the project has a solid place in educators' curriculum, encouraging the inclusion of Asian and Asian American perspectives in classrooms across the state.

## ABOUT ASIA SOCIETY TEXAS

Asia Society Texas believes in the strength and beauty of diverse perspectives and people. As an educational institution, we advance cultural exchange by celebrating the vibrant diversity of Asia, inspiring empathy, and fostering a better understanding of our interconnected world. Spanning the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, our programming is rooted in the educational and cultural development of our community — trusting in the power of art, dialogue, and ideas to combat bias and build a more inclusive society.

## ABOUT OUR DESIGN PARTNERS

**potion** [Potion](#) is a design and technology studio based in New York City. We have built projects from concept to close-out, at home and abroad, on every scale from kiosks to interactive galleries to monumental digital walls, and distributed on digital platforms for mobile, native frameworks, and responsive web. Since our founding, Potion has been committed to a different, more inclusive vision for a technology company. We are proudly minority-owned, we embrace inclusion and diversity as a core strength and believe that we make our best work when we bring together an array of people with a multitude of experiences and perspectives. With a tailored focus on experiential and interactive work, we've built a practice devoted to the transformation of public places and the empowerment of those who operate and support them. Potion has been recognized by AAM, SEGD, Fast Company, MUSE, Communication Arts, SXSW, and the Art Director's Club.

**C&G Partners** [C&G Partners](#) is a multi-specialty creative studio, dedicated to design for culture with deep expertise integrated across exhibitions, signage, digital installations, branding, and web. The firm has worked on projects for cultural clients including the Smithsonian, Japanese-American National Museum, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Library of Congress, MoMA, and the National September 11 Memorial Museum. Working in close collaboration with Asia Society Texas and Potion, the studio is creating interactive experiences that celebrate diversity and connectivity and build an understanding of both Asia and Asian-American communities in Houston.

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