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## Tibetan Buddhist Monks Return to Asia Society to Construct a Sand Mandala and Present Music and Dance

Houston, Texas, May 18, 2016—Asia Society Texas Center is pleased to welcome back to Houston the Tibetan Buddhist monks from **Drepung Loseling Monastery**. From August 18-21, the monks will construct a sand mandala and perform ceremonies in the Center's Louisa Stude Sarofim Gallery. During this ritual, millions of grains of sand are painstakingly laid into place in order to purify and heal the environment and its inhabitants.

Last year's mandala creation and ceremonies drew more than 3,300 visitors to Asia Society Texas Center. New to this year's program is a special sacred music and dance performance on Saturday, August 20. The monks will draw from ancient Tibetan traditions to perform multiphonic chanting, music, and dance.

Admission to the special exhibition and its related activities (with the exception of Saturday's evening performance) is free and open to the public. Asia Society Texas Center is located at 1370 Southmore Boulevard in Houston's Museum District.

### GALLERY HOURS

Thursday, August 18, 12 pm – 6 pm (Opening Ceremony starts at 12 pm)

Friday, August 19, 10 am – 6pm

Saturday, August 20, 10 am – 7 pm\* (Sacred Music and Dance Performance at 7 pm)

Sunday, August 21, 10 am – completion (Closing Ceremony starts at 3 pm)

\* The monks will be working on the sand mandala from 10 am to 6 pm on Saturday, August 20. The gallery will remain open until 7 pm for visitors to view the sand mandala.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

#### **Opening Ceremony | Thursday, August 18, 12 pm | FREE Admission**

The mandala sand painting begins with an opening ceremony, during which the lamas consecrate the site and call forth the forces of goodness through chanting, music, and mantra recitation. The lamas then begin the painting by drawing an outline of the mandala on a wooden platform. In the following days, they lay the colored sands using a traditional metal funnel called a *chakpur*. Guests will be able to view the monks' progress in person and online through Asia Society Texas Center's website.

#### **Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Healing | Saturday, August 20, 7 pm | Ticketed**

Robed in magnificent costumes and playing traditional Tibetan instruments, the Drepung Loseling monks perform ancient temple music and dance intended to kindle world healing. The Loseling

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monks are particularly renowned for their multiphonic chanting known as *zokkay* (complete chord). Each of the main chantmasters simultaneously intones three notes, thus each individually creating a complete chord.

**Closing Ceremony | Sunday, August 21, 3 pm | FREE Admission**

The monks will dismantle the mandala, sweeping up the colored sands to symbolize the impermanence of life. Half of the sand will be distributed to the audience at the closing ceremony, while supplies last, and the remainder will be deposited into a nearby body of water.

**About Mandala Sand Paintings**

This artistic tradition of Tantric Buddhism, painting with colored sand, ranks as one of the most unique and exquisite. Millions of grains of sand are painstakingly laid into place on a flat platform over a period of days or weeks to form the image of a mandala. To date, the monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery have created mandala sand paintings in more than 100 museums, art centers, and colleges and universities in the United States and Europe.

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning sacred cosmogram. These cosmograms can be created in various media, such as watercolor on canvas, wood carvings, and so forth. However, the most spectacular and enduringly popular are those made from colored sand.

In general, all mandalas have outer, inner, and secret meanings. On the outer level they represent the world in its divine form; on the inner level they represent a map by which the ordinary human mind is transformed into enlightened mind; and on the secret level they depict the primordially perfect balance of the subtle energies of the body and the clear-light dimension of the mind. The creation of a sand painting is said to effect purification and healing on these three levels.

**About Asia Society Texas Center**

With 12 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the west. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach.

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