

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than Ornaments A Metaphor for Culture
When Gold Blossoms: Indian Jewelry from the Susan L. Beningson Collection

(Hong Kong, September 25, 2012) On view from September 27, 2012 to January 6, 2013, at the Asia Society Gallery, *When Gold Blossoms: Indian Jewelry from the Susan L. Beningson Collection* offers visitors a glimpse into India's rich cultural history. The focus of the collection is jewellery from the south of India, in particular, jewellery for deities and women.

Curated by art historian Dr Molly Emma Aitken, the exhibition features more than 160 jewellery pieces from Beningson's personal collection. It includes exquisite bracelets, rings, earrings, necklaces and hair ornaments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A scholar of Chinese studies, Beningson began collecting Chinese textiles and Southeast Asian sculptures. She gradually broadened her interests to include artifacts from the whole of Asia. Beningson will be in Hong Kong to introduce to the Hong Kong public her collection and to share her passion for collecting.

This collection, as Beningson describes, "is based not on academic principle but on the pleasures of seeing, touching, and wearing." What is unique about this collection is that it also reveals what we cannot see, namely, the past lives of these objects.

In Indian culture, the components of jewellery possess otherworldly powers. Jewellery pieces are more than mere decorative objects and indicators of social status. They identify one's regional origin, religious affiliation, marital status, or even allegiance to a certain king.

This duality is evident on the pieces where the glossy enameled designs on the backs of the jewellery are even more stunning than those on the fronts. This is a secret shared only by the jeweller and the patron.

"The fascination of this Susan L. Beningson Collection lies not only in the delicate designs and luminous gems of the jewellery, but also in the experience of jewellery which is a deeply personal one," said Alice Mong, executive director of Asia Society Hong Kong Center. "Objects in this collection interact with the wearer. They are both shaped by, and shapers of experience."

Divided into two realms of experience, 'Women's jewellery', and 'Devotional Jewellery', the collection is brought to Asia for the first time by Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

The jewellery pieces on show are fashioned in a south Indian style, featuring distinctive forms and a preference for gold and rubies. This is remarkably different from jewellery of north India, which shows predominantly curvilinear shapes and is adorned mainly with precious and semi-precious stones.

Alongside the exhibition, Asia Society Hong Kong Center hosts a lecture series and leads children's gallery tours. A must-see for visitors of all ages, *When Gold Blossoms* presents a rich visual feast and offers a deeper understanding of the vibrant cultural and artistic traditions of India.

Visitors can view the exhibition and have a tour around the heritage site of Asia Society Hong Kong Center with a personal tour guide. This is made possible through a tri-lingual mobile app (English, Cantonese and Mandarin) custom-made by the Center.

The mobile app, which works on all 3G smartphones without the need of downloading and installation, enhances visitors' visual and learning experience.

For more information about the exhibition, visit the website of Asia Society Hong Kong Center: www.asiasociety.org.hk.

Sponsorship

Supporting sponsor: Pictet (Asia) Limited

Airline sponsor: United Airlines

About Asia Society

Asia Society is the leading educational organisation dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context.

It was founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd in New York as a not-for-profit, non-government educational organization.

About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

Asia Society Hong Kong Center, being the first overseas center of the eleven centers of Asia Society, has established its new home at The Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine in February 2012.

This adaptive re-use of a heritage site has enabled the public to view and to access the facilities and heritage buildings for the first time in the history of Hong Kong. The interface of old and new structures also allows visitors to explore the history and heritage of the site while engaging in a wide range of arts, cultural and intellectually enriching programmes.

About Asia Society Gallery

Asia Society Gallery is situated in the oldest building (Magazine A) in the Former Explosives Magazine, which was built between 1863 and 1868. The historic fabric and features of this imposing structure have been thoughtfully restored and adapted for use as an art gallery. Asia Society Gallery brings together established artists and aspiring talent who share a commitment to promoting Asian arts and culture, and to bringing the best and culturally inspiring in visual arts to the Hong Kong public.

General Information

Asia Society Gallery (Former Magazine A)

9 Justice Drive, Admiralty, Hong Kong

[Entrance located next to British Consulate/ opposite Conrad Hotel Hong Kong]

Opening hours of Asia Society Gallery

Tuesday – Friday: 11am–5pm

Weekends & public holidays: 10am–5pm

Last Thursday of the month: 11am–8pm

Closed on Mondays, except National Day (October 1, 2012) and Christmas Day (December 25, 2012)

Admission

Adults: HK\$30

Asia Society members: HK\$15

Seniors (aged 60 or above) and individuals with disabilities: HK\$15

Full-time students & children (aged 18 or below): FREE

Public Lecture Series

Thursday, September 27, 2012 Lecture by **When Gold Blossoms** Collector, Dr Susan L. Benington
at 6.30-8.00pm

Thursday, November 8, 2012 Lecture by **When Gold Blossoms** Curator, Dr Molly E. Aitken
at 6.30-8.00pm

Venue: Miller Theater, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, 9 Justice Drive, Admiralty, Hong Kong

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Media enquiries

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