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Art

Traverse Miles and Millennia From Home at Asia Week New York

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by Lisa Yin Zhang

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Treasure Box (18th century), 32.4cm x 35.5cm x 25.4cm; objects: Shang–Ming Dynasty, various dimensions; a scholar’s object box with lid and two doors which open to reveal four drawers, constructed of Huanghuali (genus *dalbergia*) with recessed white copper hardware. (This collection and presentation was assembled in 2005 in the manner of Qing Dynasty emperor’s “treasure boxes”, which were custom designed around small groups of

curios from the Imperial collections. Several examples exist in the National Palace Museum in Taipei.) (image courtesy Zetterquist Galleries)

There's a treasure box on view on the Upper East Side: its *huanghuali* wood doors swing open to reveal drawers containing earrings from the Chinese Warring States period; an Angkor Period Cambodian Bronze necklace; and six gilt bronze silkworms from the Chinese Han Dynasty.

While that particular object is being shown at Zetterquist Gallery, the treasure box is a salient metonym for the constellation of exhibitions and programs debuting at the 12th edition of Asia Week New York. Scheduled for March 11–20 and spanning South Asia to East Asia, the ancient through the contemporary, this edition will feature presentations from over a dozen museums and institutions and twenty-nine international galleries.

Additionally, all exhibitions will be free to the public, with six auction houses mounting sales in person and online. As Princeton University Art Museum curator Zoe S. Kwok explains, the week ranks as “the most important annual event in Asian art outside of Asia.”



“The Buddha Triumphant over Mara,” India, probably Bihar (ca. 800–900), stone; 21 3/4 x 14 3/8 x 5 inches | this work will be on view in the Rubin Museum’s *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*, 2021 (image courtesy the Rubin Museum of Art)

Where else can one find *Ningxia* carpets, Joseon-dynasty writing desks, works on handmade Nepali paper, and silverware with *shikadu* inlay, all in one place? “Place,” of course, is a bit more nebulous of a concept at this year’s Asia Week, as the pandemic continues to halt travel and disrupt normal operations. “When we show digitally, it doesn’t matter where you are,” Reena Lath, director of New Delhi-based **Akar Prakar**, told Hyperallergic, a fact which might level the playing field a bit for institutions located elsewhere in the US, such as the Santa Fe-based **TAI Modern**, which specializes in sinuous Japanese bamboo art; and international galleries such as the Beijing-based **Ink Studio**, which will present a Chinese experimental ink

painting group show. “The work of art speaks its own language and has its own presence, and stands its own ground,” Lath continued, and indeed the past year of lockdowns has pushed institutions to bone up their digital offerings.



A huanghuali painting table (Late Ming – early Qing dynasty, 17th century), 35 x 75 x 28 7/8 inches, on view at Nicholas Grindley (image courtesy Nicholas Grindley)

Digital innovations aside, if you’re in New York and looking to see some work in person, exhibitions like the Rubin Museum’s [*Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment*](#) are worth a visit. The show includes historical works from the museum’s collection (from as early as the 7th century), as well as some by contemporary Tibetan-American artist Tsherin Sherpa. Cross-institutional collaborations also offer some gems, including [a stunning exhibition on Korean shamanism](#) at the Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook University, drawn exclusively from the collection of the Korea Society and on view virtually and in-person.



Tsherin Sherpa, "Luxation 1" (2016), acrylic on sixteen stretched cotton canvases; each 18 x 18 inches (image courtesy the Rubin Museum of Art)

Beyond exhibitions and auctions, Asia Week New York is also bolstered by virtual lectures and public events that brings a level of variety not seen in physical presentations —from a Persian tea ceremony hosted by the Wang Center to a lecture on ivory and temple decor in 18th century Sri Lanka from the Met Museum. In this most unusual iteration of Asia Week New York, one can traverse miles and millennia from a laptop screen.

Asia Week New York takes place online and at various venues in the New York City area March 11–20.

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