

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
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"ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL"

EXHIBITION TO OPEN JANUARY 18th  
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, January 14: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announces the opening this week of the first exhibition ever held of American crystal engraved with designs by artists of the Far and Near East. "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL," by Steuben Glass, will be opened to the public on Wednesday, January 18th, at 10:00 A.M.

There will be an official preview for the Ambassadors of 16 Asian countries and other official guests on January 17th at 3:30 P.M., at which time the Secretary of State, The Honorable John Foster Dulles, will give the opening address.

The exhibition will be on view at the National Gallery of Art through February 19th. The collection will subsequently be shown at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from March 9th through April 9th, 1956.

"ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" comprises 36 crystal forms engraved from drawings by artists of 16 nations of the Far and Near East: Nationalist China, Japan, Korea, The Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, India, Ceylon, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Egypt.

Also to be shown are the artists' original drawings, lent by The New York Public Library. These drawings were commissioned on behalf of Steuben Glass by Karl Kup, Curator of Prints and of the Spencer Collection, on an extensive trip throughout Asia in 1954-55. They were subsequently given to The New York Public Library by Steuben, in appreciation of the Library's assistance in the project.

The 36 pieces on exhibit are evidence of a unique form of friendly cooperation between artists of the East and craftsmen of the West. Asian artists prepared the drawings; American designers captured the mood of the drawings in the crystal forms, and American draftsmen interpreted the drawings in engraving the crystal.

Among the outstanding designs from the Far East is the "Bodhisattva," a lotus-shaped crystal stele engraved from a woodcut by Kiyoshi Saito, Japan's foremost contemporary printmaker. The design was inspired by a 7th century statue still standing in the Horyuji Temple in Nara.

Raden Basoeki Abdullah, the Indonesian painter whose portraits include those of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands and the President of Indonesia, drew a wayang puppet to be engraved on a crystal plate. His "Bhima and the Snake," symbolizing the triumph of right over wrong, comes from a tale from one of the great Hindu epics so familiar to his countrymen.

The Indian artists include K.S. Kulkarni, who represented India in the International Art Exhibition in New York in 1951. His design of "Khajuraho Temple," engraved on a covered urn, evidences the sensuous refinement of classical Indian painting expressed with the directness of modern painters and sculptors of France.

George Keyt of Ceylon, one of the giants of Asian art, has drawn a bold and monumental scene from one of the famous Jataka stories - "The Bodhisattva Vishvantara Gives Away His Wife." Speaking of his design for glass engraving, he said: "An artist is a true member of society only if he can adapt his art to the need of his fellow man."

"The Turkish Tray," an elliptical, stoppered form engraved with a semi-abstract folk art motif, is a characteristic example of the work of Turkey's brilliant painter Bedri Rahmi Eyuboglu, who considers art second only to his nationality. Strongly influenced by the French master Raoul Dufy, he applies contemporary techniques to capture the spirit of Turkish design.

The work of one of Egypt's most modern painters, Hamed Abdalla, is represented by a composite, rectangular form engraved from his drawing "Lovers on Shemm-en-Neseem." His principle, "--- to paint nature as I see it with my mind, not as it 'looks' to the eye," is clearly demonstrated in his angular design of four figures.

The thirty other works in the exhibition are equally important. Each piece expresses, in the radiant medium of crystal, one aspect of the great culture flourishing in areas of Buddhist, Hindu and Moslem thought.

Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., President of Steuben Glass, states that "the primary purpose of the collection is to exhibit to the people of the world examples of the creative art of modern Asia as appreciated and interpreted by America. For too long the West has tended to judge Asian art chiefly by its magnificent historical manifestations. It is inspiring to know that great traditions are being carried forward by contemporary artists, working in more modern style and more modern media."

David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, and James J. Rorimer, Director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, have stated: "Here is yet another proof that art knows no boundaries and that culture is one of the strongest links between civilized men."

An 83-page catalogue of the exhibition, illustrating all of the crystal pieces to be shown and including photographs of the artists, will be on sale during the exhibition. The catalogue includes a foreword by the directors of the two museums and text by Karl Kup and by John M. Gates, vice-president of Steuben Glass.

Simultaneously with the showing of "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL," the National Gallery of Art is exhibiting a collection of works by contemporary American glassmakers lent by The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York.

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BACKGROUND FACT SHEET FOR THE EXHIBITION  
"ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" by STEUBEN GLASS

Since its inception in 1934, Steuben Glass has commissioned contemporary artists to design for engraving on glass, since the material itself is an artistic medium well adapted to express and interpret the work of the artist.

Major exhibitions of Steuben Glass which have included such designs have been held at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1936; Art Gallery of Toronto, 1937; Art Institute of Chicago, 1938; Cleveland Museum of Art, 1938; Baltimore Museum of Art, 1944; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1948; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1949; Palais du Louvre, Paris, 1951; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1953; Seattle Art Museum, 1953; and many other museums.

In addition to individual pieces, three notable collections of engraved crystal have been presented by Steuben.

1. The American sculptors Sidney Waugh and Bruce Moore have, over a period of years, designed a succession of engraved pieces and sets which portray in crystal the spirit and development of the United States.
2. Twenty-seven leading painters, sculptors and designers of the United States and Europe were commissioned by Steuben in 1939-40 to execute drawings for copper wheel engraving. Included were such artists as Henri Matisse, Salvador Dali, Aristide Maillol, Eric Gill, Paul Manship and Grant Wood.

3. In 1950 Steuben commissioned twenty British artists for a special program. Sir Jacob Epstein, Graham Sutherland, Sir Matthew Smith and John Piper were among the artists who worked on this venture. The initial presentation of the collection "British Artists in Crystal" took place in New York in 1954. The collection was included in the major exhibition of Steuben Glass in London in the autumn of 1955.

In the spring of 1954, Steuben undertook to commission artists of the Far and Near East, in the belief that their work could make a signal contribution to the art of glass. The New York Public Library cooperated in this program by making available to Steuben the services of Karl Kup, Chief of the Art Division and Curator of Prints of the Library. Making an extensive journey through the Far and Near East in 1954-1955, Mr. Kup commissioned a large group of drawings on behalf of Steuben Glass from the artists of sixteen Asian nations. From these drawings, Steuben selected thirty-six to be engraved.

Mr. Kup's trip was made possible by the cooperation and assistance of the United States Government, from whose personnel based in those countries, as well as from private institutions and individuals, he received invaluable assistance.

The official preview of "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" will be held at the National Gallery of Art January 17th at 3:30 P.M. The Secretary of State, The Honorable John Foster Dulles, will deliver the opening address. Prior to the opening, David E. Finley, Director of the Gallery, will give a luncheon at the Sulgrave Club for the Ambassadors of the sixteen participating Asian nations and their wives, and for other official guests.

The exhibition at the National Gallery of Art will be open to the public from January 18th through February 19th, 1956.

After the Washington showing, "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" will be exhibited in New York by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, from March 9th through April 8th, 1956. The official preview of this exhibition will take place at the Museum on the evening of Thursday, March 8th. Details of the arrangements for the preview will be announced by the Museum.

The United States Information Agency, in cooperation with leading museums and other national institutions, will arrange and sponsor in behalf of the United States the subsequent display of "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" in the sixteen nations from which the drawings were obtained. Official announcement of this program will be made by the United States Information Agency about February 1st.

World wide coverage of the Washington exhibition of "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" will be given by the United States Information Agency in its overseas programs. Representatives of U.S.I.A. will attend the opening.

For further detailed information, including the crystal, artists and nations included in the exhibition, consult the exhibition catalogue, "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL."

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

"ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL"

The Exhibition Setting

Designed by John Monteith Gates  
Vice President, Steuben Glass

The setting for the exhibition of "ASIAN ARTISTS IN CRYSTAL" consists of six free-standing display "islands", each devoted to a general geographic or cultural area of the Far and Near East. The islands are similar in general construction and each one displays about six pieces of crystal. A white ceiling supported on slender gold columns forms a canopy for each island.

The crystal is displayed on black ebony pedestals which conceal the lighting for the individual pieces of glass. The back of each island, as well as the ends, are hung with panels of vivid oriental colors chosen in each case as reminiscent of the particular geographical area. Additional concealed lighting illuminates the back panels. There is no lighting in the galleries except that which is reflected from the ceilings and backs of the islands. The effect is mysterious yet colorful, and serves to produce an atmosphere of oriental serenity.

January, 1956