

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

Information Officer, Deborah Ziska

UPDATED RELEASE
March 26, 1997

CONTACT: (202) 842-6353
Nancy Starr, Publicist

MILLENNIUM OF GLORY:

SCULPTURE OF ANGKOR AND ANCIENT CAMBODIA

AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, JUNE 29, 1997

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Millennium of Glory: Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia, the first major exhibition of Cambodian sculpture to be shown in the United States, will be on view at the National Gallery of Art, East Building, June 29 through September 28, 1997. While Cambodia's architecture is often recognized for its beauty and monumental scale -- such as the majestic temple of Angkor Wat that ranks among the world's most beautiful -- its thousand-year legacy of equally extraordinary sculpture, also one of the great traditions in world art, remains largely unknown due to long years of turbulent politics. Now, building on the opportunities made possible by recent peace accords, international cooperation, and a democratic assembly, one hundred major works of art (6th - 16th centuries) that reveal the richness of Cambodia's cultural legacy will become accessible to Americans as never before.

The only venue in the United States will be the National Gallery. Showing in Paris until the end of May, the exhibition

-more-

cambodia...page 2

will travel later to Tokyo and Osaka, Japan, following Washington.

The exhibition has been organized by the National Gallery of Art, the Royal Government of Cambodia, and the Réunion des musées nationaux/Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet, Paris.

"The generous loan from the exceptional collection of the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, along with important works never lent before from the Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet, and other collections, will enable viewers to enjoy a unique panorama of Khmer sculpture. Visitors will discover the beauty of this art, which although widely unknown in most countries, has been studied intensively by specialists since the end of the nineteenth century," said Earl A. Powell, director of the National Gallery.

The exhibition is made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation, The Marjorie Kovler Fund, and The Rockefeller Foundation. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Most of the objects are from the outstanding collections of the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, and the Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet in Paris, which together hold much of the world's greatest Khmer art and have direct historical links to the discovery of Cambodia's cultural heritage. At the end of the last century, French travelers' descriptions of the originality and beauty of Angkor, which was then under the

-more-

cambodia...page 3

sovereignty of the king of Siam, aroused enormous public interest in France. But since World War II there has not been an important exhibition of Khmer art in Paris and this will be the first major show of Khmer art in Japan as well as in the United States.

Other lenders to the exhibition in Washington include the Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Asia Society, New York; the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst.

Beginning before the sixth century and continuing for more than a thousand years through the sixteenth century, Cambodian artists created works of art reflecting many aspects of their culture and embracing both the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. The sculpture in the exhibition will range from monumental works in sandstone representing gods, mythical guardians, female dancers, and legendary creatures to refined bronzes used for religious rituals and ceremonies, most often royal or aristocratic. The Khmer statuary will be presented in context with displays of architectural ornaments, important inscriptions, explanatory maps, photomurals, and texts. The National Gallery of Art will also produce a short video on the temples of Angkor, showing the architectural context of the sculptures in the show.

The guest curator for the National Gallery exhibition is Dr. Helen Ibbitson Jessup, who was also guest curator for Court Arts of Indonesia that toured the United States in 1990 - 1992.

-more-

cambodia...page 4

Accompanying the exhibition will be a fully illustrated catalogue, Millenium of Glory: Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia, with color and black and white illustrations of every object in the show. The catalogue will offer a comprehensive account of Cambodian history, religion, and architecture with essays from a wide range of international experts along with individual entries on the works exhibited, many of which have never before been published. A comprehensive general bibliography, a chronology, an index, and a glossary will also be included. The catalogue will be published by the National Gallery of Art and distributed by Thames and Hudson Publishers, London and New York.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue, between Third and Seventh Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free of charge. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (202) 842-6176.

#