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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

***Buddha in Paradise***  
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Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) is pleased to present *Buddha in Paradise*, an exhibition of more than 40 works of painting, sculpture, and ritual texts, drawn from the museum's permanent collection, which explores the concept of paradise in Tibetan Buddhism. The works of art range in date from the 13<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century but illustrate ideas and beliefs that have endured for thousands of years.

Human beings across cultures have long envisioned realms beyond the hardship of ordinary existence. Most cultures have created descriptions – oral, visual, written – of such realms or states of being. In Tibetan Buddhism, paradise is conceptualized as multiple perfect realms called “Pure Lands,” which are apart from the world we know and are where enlightenment can be quickly attained. Rather than a monolithic understanding of paradise, Tibetan Buddhism contains different approaches and teachings about these lands and how to reach them, the most radical of which confronts us with the realization that paradise is all around us if we are able to perceive it.

*Buddha in Paradise* is organized into sections that examine the different Pure Lands well known and aspired to by Tibetan Buddhists and the underlying philosophical beliefs by which they are defined. Topics explored include the endless cycle of death and rebirth and paths out of its hold; the fundamental Buddhist idea that there are two levels of reality; the life of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni and the Pure Lands surrounding the other important deities in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon; and particular Pure Lands that are among the most prominent in Tibetan Buddhist teachings and popular among Tibetan people.

Among the works of art on view is a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tibetan painting depicting the “Wheel of Becoming.” It illustrates, in great detail, the Buddhist conception of the cycle of birth and death and, depending on the conduct of one's life, the possibilities for rebirth. Also included in the exhibition is a richly colored 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tibetan painting of Buddha Amitabha, seated in the Pure Land he inhabits called “Sukhavati.” Across Buddhist Asia, Sukhavati is the most popular

Pure Land because it is the easiest to reach and holds abundant, perfect pleasures that facilitate enlightenment.

Taken as a whole, the visions of paradise gathered together and examined in *Buddha in Paradise* show how the universal human awareness and understanding of the temporality of life and the struggle of living manifests itself in Tibetan Buddhism.

### **About RMA**

RMA houses an esteemed collection of Himalayan art. The paintings, pictorial textiles, and sculpture are drawn from cultures that touch upon the 1,800 mile arc of mountains that extends from Afghanistan in the northwest to Myanmar (Burma) in the southeast and includes Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan. The larger Himalayan cultural sphere, determined by significant cultural exchange over millennia, includes Iran, India, China, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

The rich cultural legacy of this region, largely unfamiliar to Western viewers, offers an uncommon opportunity for visual adventure and aesthetic discovery. For young and old alike it is an environment in which to encounter the unknown and find meaningful dialogue. It requires actively bringing to bear one's previous experience, looking closely at the material at hand, discriminating carefully, and shaping the imagination. The fundamental aim of the museum is to provide this adventure in learning through art.

Working to foster connections between visitors and the art is RMA's diverse team of knowledgeable and professional guides who are always available on the gallery floors to answer questions, engage in discussions, and help explore the art at any level. The guides work in concert with RMA's ambitious schedule of exhibitions, education, and public programming, designed to provide multiple entryways to delve into Himalayan art.