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Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) Presents Two Exhibitions Focused on Nepal

From the Land of the Gods: Art of the Kathmandu Valley

March 14, 2008 – March 16, 2009

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Nepal in Black and White: Photographs by Kevin Bubriski

March 14 – October 13, 2008

RMA is pleased to present two exhibitions focused on Nepal, *From the Land of the Gods: Art of the Kathmandu Valley* and *Nepal in Black and White: Photographs by Kevin Bubriski*. Taken together, the exhibitions offer a nuanced exploration of Nepal – its art, culture, religious belief systems, people and politics – spanning from 1200 to the late 1980s.

From the Land of the Gods: Art of the Kathmandu Valley draws from RMA's permanent collection, exhibiting more than 50 of the museum's finest examples of Nepalese sculpture, painting, and ritual objects. Emphasis is on highlighting the variety of forms and subjects, techniques and media, which emerged from Nepal's creative matrix. The exhibition also touches on the main religious traditions of the Kathmandu Valley, Hinduism (Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shakta) and Buddhism, which have been integral in the artistic and culturally rich environment.

Historically, the kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley comprised the political, religious, and cultural entity now known as Nepal. Located between India and the region of Tibet, the valley acts as a crossroads of trans-Himalayan trade, the shared sacred site of various Himalayan religions, and one of the epicenters for much of Himalayan art. This unique position has fostered a tremendous amount of cultural, social, and religious exchange in Nepal, thus establishing a living creative tradition that is one of the single most important influences in Himalayan art history.

Nepal in Black and White: Photographs by Kevin Bubriski presents more than 30 of Kevin Bubriski's photographs, selected from his large body of work produced over the last 35 years of

his visits to Nepal, beginning in 1975. The exhibition is composed of his black and white photographs, taken in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. In addition, four of Kevin Bubriski's color photographs will be on view in the lobby near RMA's spiral staircase.

Kevin Bubriski's first introduction to the country he would come to document over the years was as a Peace Corps volunteer working on drinking water supply pipelines in remote mountain villages. He carried a 35mm camera with him everywhere he went, taking photographs that would form the beginning of the body of work he built up over the following years. In 1984, Kevin Bubriski returned to Nepal as a photographer. This time, he carried with him a 4" x 5" view camera, a tripod, and the trappings of a mobile professional set-up, traveling the length and breadth of the country for the better part of three years.

With unflinching clarity and sharp detail, the photographs in *Nepal in Black and White: Photographs by Kevin Bubriski* show the changes that took place between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s, especially the influence of Western society on a previously isolated culture.

In his words:

The realization that not only my camera but also the modern world was, in turn, making ever-increasing intrusions into even the most remote areas of Nepal compelled me to document a time and way of life slipping inexorably into the past.

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.