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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***  
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***OUT, OUT BRIEF CANDLE!  
WORKS OF ART POINT WAY TO DEATH  
AT RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART***

***Second of Two Complementary Exhibitions Examines Views of Death***

New York —The Rubin Museum of Art finds fascinating parallels and significant differences in the depiction of death over the centuries in *Remember That You Will Die* (March 19—August 9, 2010), an exhibition focusing on works of art from Medieval and Early Renaissance Europe and Tibet.

Serving as *memento mori* (death remembrances), the 84 works of art and artifacts on view range from a 12<sup>th</sup>-century be-jeweled bronze reliquary arm from Belgium to a wooden club carved into the shape of a skeleton from Tibet. The one contemporary work, a video by the American artist Bill Viola entitled *The Three Women*, is being exhibited in New York for the first time.

Eerie personifications of death greet the visitor in the form of two pairs of sculptures of skeleton figures: weathered lindenwood figures from 17<sup>th</sup>-century Germany extend bony, beckoning

hands, while macabre bronzes from Tibet portray a yogic brother and sister engrossed in a mad dance—as skin peels off like furred ribbons. Both sculptural pairs warn of the fleeting nature of life: in the Western tradition, as *memento mori*, and in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as an incentive to make diligent use of precious human rebirth.

“We have found one common denominator in the works of art we have gathered for *Remember That You Will Die*: whether from Europe or Tibet, all serve as reminders to the righteous that life is transient and volatile and that the believer must adhere to religious guidelines in order to safeguard a better hereafter,” says Martin Brauen, chief curator, Rubin Museum of Art. Dr. Brauen has organized the exhibition in collaboration with Karl Debreczeny, senior curator, Rubin Museum of Art, and Bonnie B. Lee, curatorial consultant.

Among the subjects found in the section of the presentation devoted to Western works are the *danse macabre*, or Dance of Death, and heaven, purgatory, and hell; among the Buddhist works, the landscape of the afterlife, whether it be paradise or hell, and brutal scenes of charnel grounds (considered ideal places to confront the fear of death through meditation).

*Remember That You Will Die* is to be shown concurrently at the Rubin Museum of Art with *Bardo* (February 12 through September 6, 2010), an exhibition, named for the intermediate state between death and enlightenment or rebirth in Tantric Buddhism, featuring works of art that have been used for centuries to prepare the initiate for death.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

A number of the featured objects in *Remember That You Will Die* draw from popular folk traditions reflecting the societal preoccupation with death in Europe in the wake of The Black Death (14<sup>th</sup> century). Among these is *The Dance of Death* (1538), an engraving by Hans Holbein the Younger, depicting the *danse macabre*, an allegory for death not found in the Bible but acted out in plays and painted in church frescoes across the European continent to prompt Christian believers into piety as a way to guarantee salvation. Here, Holbein shows a peddler going along a country road with his wares as Death drags him in the opposite direction—to the underworld—while another Death figure in the shadows plays a long mandolin/violin-like bowed instrument, with his back turned to the peddler. Death, especially in the *danse macabre* form, often is seen to dance gaily and/or play musical instruments.

Two rosaries and two scrolls demonstrate the manner in which Christian and Buddhist works can take intriguingly similar forms. Two rosaries are featured in the exhibition, one a 16<sup>th</sup>-century German example of intricately carved ivory beads in the shape of human skulls, the other a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tibetan beads of 100 skull-shaped beads more abstractly and coarsely carved from human bone.

Created for the wall of a chapel in the Marienkirche in Lubeck, Germany, the Lubeck Dance of Death scroll is an eight-foot long engraving showing Death as the universal social equalizer. The engraving starts on the left showing the greatest ecclesiastical power on Earth, the Pope, headed toward Death, and goes all the way down to the farmer and peasant, a young boy, young maiden, and infant. The brightly colored Charnel Grounds scroll from 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tibet unfolds more than seven feet, depicting eight cemeteries and the faithful who go there to meditate. Because dead bodies are left out, not buried, in charnel grounds, there could be no starker reminder of mortality than the corpses, ogres, hungry ghosts, and zombies depicted here.

A Buddhist initiation card, ritual bone apron, painted skull hand drum, and shinbone trumpet are among other objects on view from Tibet, to be seen nearby such European artifacts as a pocket watch in the form of a silver skull, a silver gilt pendant in the shape of a coffin, containing a skeleton with a frog sitting on its chest, and a doctor's walking stick with a skull-shaped knob.

### **About the Rubin Museum of Art**

RMA holds one of the world's most important collections of Himalayan art. Paintings, pictorial textiles, and sculpture are drawn from cultures that touch upon the 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. This rich cultural legacy, largely unfamiliar to Western viewers, offers an uncommon opportunity for visual adventure and aesthetic discovery.

Admission to RMA is \$10 for adults; \$7 for seniors, neighbors (zip codes 10011 & 10001 with ID), and artists (with ID); \$2 for students (with ID); free for seniors the first Monday of every month; and free for children under 12 and for museum members. Gallery admission is free to all on Fridays between 6pm and 10pm.

Open Monday 11 am to 5 pm, Wednesday 11 am to 7 pm, Thursday 11 am to 5 pm, Friday 11 am to 10 pm, Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm; closed on Tuesday. To reach the museum by subway, visitors may take the A, C or E to 14th Street; the 1 to 18th Street; 1, 2, 3 to 14th Street; F and M to 14th Street; N, R, Q, 4, 5 and 6 to 14th or the L to 6th Avenue. By bus, visitors may take the B20 to the corner of 7th Avenue and 17th Street.

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