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Take to the Sky
Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art
March 31 – December 18, 2006

The Rubin Museum of Art (**RMA**) is pleased to present *Take to the Sky: Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art*, an exhibition that looks to Himalayan art to explore human aspirations for flight throughout time and across cultures. The exhibition is comprised of just over twenty works of painting and sculpture from Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and Mongolia, ranging from the 13th through 19th centuries, and made in the service of the three primary religions of the Himalayan region, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Bon. Focusing on the corners and sides of Himalayan works of art, the exhibition examines the enchanting figures that float, fly, and levitate there. Curated by Kathryn Selig Brown, Curator, and Cyra Levenson, Manager, Education, the exhibition is intended for a broad and curious audience and has an extensive educational component geared towards children.

In Buddhist thought, advanced spiritual development is associated with certain supernatural powers such as flying. Himalayan art is filled with figures soaring into the skies, leaping from place to place, and rising into the air. *Take to the Sky: Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art* includes images of great spiritually accomplished ones (*mahasiddhas*), notable and important teachers (*lamas*), heavenly females (*asparas*), and creatures that are half man, half bird (*garuda*)—all in flight. These figures are situated mostly at the periphery of Himalayan works of art because the potential to fly is considered to be a side-effect of spiritual advancement rather than its ultimate goal. Finding these small and oftentimes discretely-depicted figures within the structure of the work as a whole requires careful looking. Though enlargements of these figures are available to help the viewer, *Take to the Sky: Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art* encourages visitors to take time to explore the works of art slowly, allowing these enchanting figures to reveal themselves.

Accompanying the exhibition is a 248 page illustrated book, written by scholar Glenn Mullin, with contributions by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, artist and scholar Amelia

Arenas, and Donald Rubin, co-founder of the Rubin Museum of Art. The book delves into the magical and sometimes surprising stories of those who gained the power to fly. Glenn Mullin's lively writing and the essays of the contributors place the stories of these spiritually accomplished Himalayan beings into a larger world context, recognizing that flight is a wish, a dream, and perhaps sometimes a reality for all of mankind.