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**ASIAN ART MUSEUM ACQUIRES NEARLY 1,000 WORKS OF ART FROM
TWO PROMINENT ASIAN ART COLLECTIONS**

Superb Selections from the Lloyd Cotsen Japanese Bamboo Basket Collection and
the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection
Will Be Showcased at the Museum's New Facility, Opening March 20, 2003

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, AUGUST 28, 2002 – The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco announced today the acquisition of nearly 1,000 works of art from two prominent Asian art collections, significantly strengthening – both in quality and depth – the Japanese and Southeast Asian areas of the museum's renowned collection. The acquisitions include 832 objects from the Lloyd Cotsen Japanese Bamboo Basket Collection, recognized as one of the largest and most notable collections of its kind in the world; and 167 objects – including many rare sculptures, paintings, and decorative arts – from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection.

Together, the acquisitions, generously donated by the respective donors, represent the most significant gifts of art to the museum since industrialist Avery Brundage's initial gifts in the early 1960s of nearly 8,000 objects, which were the impetus for the museum's founding and established the nucleus of its collection. Many of the Cotsen and Duke objects are considered so exceptional that the Asian Art Museum – scheduled to open its new, expanded facility at San Francisco's Civic Center on March 20, 2003 – will showcase a significant portion of each collection at all times in its galleries. With the addition of these gifts, the museum's overall collection now stands at more than 14,000 objects.

Many friends of the Asian Art Museum may already be familiar with Mr. Cotsen's Japanese baskets. In the year 2000 the museum hosted the critically acclaimed traveling exhibition *Bamboo Masterworks: Japanese Baskets from the Lloyd Cotsen Collection*, which featured more than 100 baskets and offered visitors a rare opportunity to view the extraordinary beauty and intricate craftsmanship as well as the historical and cultural importance of this unique art form. Nearly all the baskets in that exhibition are among the 832 works acquired by the Asian Art Museum. In addition to the baskets, Mr. Cotsen has provided the museum with an endowment to support research, scholarly publications, and

programs focusing on the study of Japanese bamboo basketry. Among the objects in Mr. Cotsen's gift are also such items as tea ceremony implements and paintings. At the new Asian Art Museum, 30 to 40 baskets will be displayed at a time, rotating in six-month intervals. To give a sense of their function as well as their aesthetic beauty, the baskets will be on display next to the Japanese teahouse custom-made for the museum by the renowned traditional carpentry firm Nakamura Sotoji Komuten in Kyoto.

The Duke Foundation gift to the Asian Art Museum includes Thai, Burmese, and Cambodian sculptures in bronze, stone, and wood, as well as Thai and Burmese furniture for temples and aristocratic homes. Objects of particular note are a standing crowned and bejeweled Cambodian bronze sculpture of the Buddha dating between 1100 and 1250 and a more than 11-foot-tall, late-19th-century Burmese gilded throne for a Buddha image. The more than 70 Thai paintings and painted manuscripts in this gift constitute one of the most important collections of Thai painting in the U.S. Among the highlights of the collection are rare banner paintings of episodes from the life of the Buddha and an early-19th-century illuminated manuscript of combat scenes from the epic Ramayana, a related volume of which is in the National Museum, Bangkok. Also included are sumptuous Thai decorative arts of silver, ivory, and gilded lacquer; Thai swords and lances, including one with a blade inscribed with the date 1757 and the monogram of the Dutch East India Company; and glittering jewelry and crowns for classical dancers. Because Thailand's insect population and climate have allowed relatively few old furniture pieces to survive, the Thai furniture from the collection is significant. An exceptional 11-foot-tall, 200-year-old lacquered and gilded panel featuring a superbly rendered depiction of the Buddha may be the finest piece of Thai gilded lacquer outside Thailand. Dr. Forrest McGill, the Asian Art Museum's Chief Curator and Wattis Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art said: "We rearranged the entire gallery plan at our new facility to showcase some of the new objects from the Duke Collection. The pieces were so important – and so stunning – that we had to give them a prominent place."

"The museum is overwhelmed by the generosity of Mr. Cotsen and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and honored to be the beneficiaries of these remarkable gifts. Many of the objects represent the pinnacle of achievement in their respective fields, and we're excited to share them with the world," says Emily J. Sano, Director of the Asian Art Museum. "Our new home in Civic Center features state-of-the-art casework and the latest innovations in gallery design, allowing millions of future museum visitors to enjoy these treasures, along with the rest of our esteemed collection, upon our opening March 20."

"On behalf of the City and County of San Francisco, I accept these gifts with the absolute certainty that the new Asian Art Museum will provide a truly accessible and meaningful home for these priceless works of art," said San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown. "By choosing to donate their collections to the Asian Art Museum, Mr. Cotsen and the trustees of the Duke Foundation have

acknowledged the museum's role in bridging East and West, and the significance of this San Francisco jewel to the art community throughout the world."

Lloyd Cotsen Japanese Bamboo Basket Collection

Mr. Cotsen, a resident of Los Angeles and the former CEO and chairman of the Neutrogena Corporation, assembled his collection during the course of what he calls a "forty-year love affair" with Japanese bamboo baskets. In explaining their appeal, he says, "I was attracted by the tensions created by the balancing of forces: of cohesion and chaos, structure and nature, refinement and exuberance, and ultimately, simplicity and complexity."

The baskets in the collection range in date from the Edo period (1615–1868) to the present. The techniques of weaving bamboo in strips vary with each basket, which may include such materials as old bamboo arrow shafts, driftwood, cloud-pattern bamboo (named for its intermittent mottling), and smoke bamboo (taken from the rafters of old country cottages exposed to smoke for more than 100 years). Many of the baskets were originally made for the tea ceremony or for flower arranging, activities with profound artistic and philosophical meanings in Japanese culture. And many were created by artists who represent basket-making lineages and by others who have been designated in Japan as "Living National Treasures" in recognition of their mastery. One fine example is a basket entitled "*The Shimmering of Heated Air*" (approx. 1958) by Shôno Shôunsai (1904–1974), the first artist working in bamboo to be designated a "Living National Treasure." Previously on view in the exhibition *Bamboo Masterworks*, this important piece was created with the intention of representing the refraction of candlelight through faceted crystal. With its dynamic interplay of structured geometry and its shimmering, overlapping lines of bamboo that seem to dance as the viewer moves around it, this work marked a great leap into new territory.

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection

Doris Duke (1912–1993) was the only child of James Buchanan Duke, a founder of the American Tobacco Company and Duke Energy Company, and a benefactor of Duke University in his native North Carolina. Throughout her life Doris Duke enthusiastically pursued her varied interests. Fascinated by different cultures, she gathered countless treasures on her worldwide excursions and acquired notable collections of Islamic and Southeast Asian art.

Before being distributed among institutions such as the Asian Art Museum, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Collection of Southeast Asian Art (established in 1961 as Doris Duke's Foundation for Southeast Asian Art and Culture) featured more than 400 museum-quality sculptures, paintings, manuscripts, ceramics, and other works from Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, and Laos. Many of the works have not been widely seen by the public, and for nearly 20 years, the collection was virtually unknown. The Duke Collection also consisted of more than 1,800 other items, including

antique woodcarvings, cabinets, traditional costumes, paintings, weapons, theatrical masks, musical instruments, porcelains, and statues, as well as utilitarian household utensils and pottery. Many of the objects in the collection are from the Bangkok style of the late 18th through the late 19th century. Some of the objects date as far back as 700 CE, however, and represent the earlier Khmer, Lopburi, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya styles. Together, these objects have represented one of the most important collections of later Southeast Asian art in the West. Dr. Henry Ginsburg, noted scholar of Southeast Asian painting from The British Library, considers the Thai paintings represented in the Duke Collection the finest grouping of its kind outside of Asia. The collection was housed at Duke Gardens in Hillsborough, New Jersey.

The collection became the responsibility of the Trustees of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation after Ms. Duke's death in 1993. After careful consideration, the trustees decided that Ms. Duke would have wanted the objects shared with people from coast to coast. Plans have been made to distribute the collection among a number of museums and public art institutions, preference being given to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the Walters Art Museum. This gift is all the more rare because the foundation does not, in general, support the visual arts, museums, or galleries, concentrating its philanthropic efforts instead upon strengthening organizations dedicated to the performing arts; protecting and restoring the environment; seeking cures for diseases; and helping protect children from abuse and neglect.

About the Asian Art Museum

Opened in 1966 as a result of a gift to the City of San Francisco by industrialist Avery Brundage, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco is one of the largest museums in the Western world devoted exclusively to Asian art. Its holdings include more than 14,000 Asian art objects spanning 6,000 years of history and representing numerous countries and cultures throughout Asia. The collections serve as the basis for exhibition, research, education, and loan activities. To fulfill its mission, the museum strives to increase the breadth of its collections, enhance relationships with local constituencies and Asian cultures, and expand exhibitions and program-related activities. The museum uses its resources to make Asia accessible to a diverse and rapidly expanding Asian-descendant populace searching for a meaningful and comprehensible introduction to its cultural heritage, and to a non-Asian populace wishing to be introduced to traditions and cultures that play an increasingly prominent role in international affairs.

About the new Asian Art Museum – Opening March 20, 2003

Having long outgrown its home of 35 years in Golden Gate Park, the museum will open its new, expanded facility at the San Francisco's Civic Center on Thursday, March 20, 2003, at 10:00 am. The grand opening will be the culmination of an eight-year, \$160.5 million public/private partnership to create a new home for the museum and its world-renowned collection of Asian art through the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the city's former Main Library, a 1917 beaux arts-style building. Italian architect Gae Aulenti, best known for converting a derelict Paris train station into the celebrated Musée d'Orsay, conceived the transformation of the historic building into the new Asian Art Museum. To date, more than \$155 million of the \$160.5 million capital campaign has been secured, including \$52 million in public bonds. The single largest private gift, \$15 million, came from Korean-born Silicon Valley entrepreneur Chong-Moon Lee. In acknowledgment of Mr. Lee's generosity, the new building will be officially recognized as the Asian Art Museum–Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture. Featuring nearly 40,000 square feet of gallery display space as well as expanded educational services, state-of-the-art storage and conservation facilities, and more – the new quarters will allow the museum to better fulfill its mission of leading a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture. For more information, call (415) 581-3500 or visit www.asianart.org.