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***BODY AND SPIRIT: TIBETAN MEDICAL PAINTINGS,*  
A COLLECTION OF TANGKAS ILLUSTRATING MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE AND  
PROCEDURES,  
ON VIEW JANUARY 25–JULY 17, 2011**

*Body and Spirit: Tibetan Medical Paintings*, an exhibition of 64 Tibetan medical paintings (also known as tangkas) from the American Museum of Natural History's collection, opens **Tuesday, January 25** in the Museum's fourth-floor Audubon Gallery, and will run through July 17, 2011. On view for the first time in a museum exhibition, these hand-painted reproductions of traditional scroll paintings provide a unique and richly illustrated history of early medical knowledge and procedures in Tibet, and are believed to be among only a handful of such sets in existence.

"The Museum's Tibetan collection, from which these paintings are taken, comprises nearly 2,800 objects, and is among the finest in the United States," said Ellen V. Futter, President of the American Museum of Natural History. "This new exhibition represents the continuation of a great artistic tradition and will offer visitors a unique and fascinating perspective on early Tibetan culture."

Each of the 64 medical paintings on display in *Body and Spirit* was painstakingly reproduced by hand in the late 1990s by Romio Shrestha, a Nepalese artist, and his students, who followed the Tibetan tradition of copying older paintings, basing their work on two published sets of medical tangkas likely painted in the early 1900s that were copies of the original set. The originals were created in the late 1600s to illustrate the *Blue Beryl*, an important commentary on the classic Tibetan medical text, *The Four Tantras*.

The *Blue Beryl* was written by Sangye Gyatso, regent to the Fifth Dalai Lama, who commissioned the original paintings for use as teaching aids in the medical school he founded in Lhasa, Tibet. The causes, diagnostic techniques, and treatments of illness, as well

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as human anatomy, are represented in nearly 8,000 extraordinarily detailed images painted on canvas using vegetable and mineral dyes. The fate of the original paintings is unknown; Shrestha based his work on published sources.

“Although the models for the medical paintings exhibited in this exhibition are old, these paintings were produced in the recent past by a living artist who painstakingly copied a set of old paintings that was, in turn, an exacting copy of a master’s set,” said Laurel Kendall, curator and chair of the Museum’s Division of Anthropology. “Both the art of reproduction and the information on Tibetan medicine contained in the paintings represent conscious acts of transmission across time and space, the living work of culture.”

“These paintings are a unique and unusually rich source for the history of medicine,” said Laila Williamson, curator of *Body and Spirit*. “They illustrate centuries-old medical practices, some of which are still in use. Beyond the medical aspects, there are many intriguing, delightful scenes showing houses, landscapes, domestic life and dress in Tibet in the late 1600s.”

Examples of selections on display in *Body and Spirit* include:

- A tree-shaped diagram offering color-coded branches that illustrates ways to treat diseases caused by an imbalance of humors. In Tibetan medicine, three “humors” are said to flow through the body and determine bodily functions – phlegm is cold and associated with the element water, bile is hot and associated with fire, and wind is either cold or neutral and associated with air;
- The origin of dreams and how they bring the sleeper either to the beautiful realm of the gods or to the ugly realm of tormented spirits; and
- A depiction of the greater elixir of rejuvenation, which according to the text on the painting will give the patient “the body of a 16-year-old with the prowess of a lion, strength of an elephant, complexion of a peacock, speed of a trained horse, and the life span of the Sun and Moon.”

Near the entrance to the gallery visitors will encounter a **Buddha** statue made of gilded copper alloy. Minerals used in medicine and Tibetan medical instruments from the early 1900s will also be on display. While the form of Tibetan medical instruments – lancets for opening blood vessels, cases for carrying medicine or instruments – is practical, some of

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these artifacts feature fine design and ornamentation that convey the idea at the heart of traditional Tibetan medicine: that body and spirit are one. **Artifacts on view will include a surgical instrument case carried on a doctor's belt, a medicine spoon, and a horn used in a ritual to exorcise a disease-causing demon.** Traditional Tibetan therapy also uses a wide variety of medications derived from plants, animal parts, and minerals. **Minerals on display include lapis lazuli, which is used to treat skin disease, and turquoise, used to cure fever.**

The Museum's Tibetan collection comprises nearly 2,800 objects, including the 79 medical paintings and close to 400 original tangkas. Seventeen paintings from the Tibetan collection are on display in the Gardner D. Stout Hall of Asian Peoples.

*Body and Spirit: Tibetan Medical Paintings* is curated by Laila Williamson from the Museum's Division of Anthropology together with host curator Laurel Kendall, who is curator and chair of the division. A companion catalog, *Body & Spirit: Tibetan Medical Paintings* (AMNH in association with University of Washington Press), is available in the Museum Shop for \$29.95.

The artist, Romio Shrestha, was born in Kathmandu, Nepal. When he was six years old, two Tibetan Buddhist monks arrived at his home to announce that Shrestha was the 17th reincarnation of the master Tibetan medical painter Arniko. The monks gave Shrestha a stock of valuable art materials, explaining that he would one day form his own school of painting. Shrestha's father, who did not want his son to become a monk, sent him to Roman Catholic school. Shrestha has said that this background of mixed religious influences endowed him with a spirituality that he wants to express in visual form. Inspired by images he saw in books and in monasteries around Kathmandu, Shrestha taught himself to paint and went on to establish a school in Nepal in 1968. His paintings can be found in many of the great collections of the world including the British Museum and The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, U.K.; The Buchheim Museum in Bernried, Germany; Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey; National Museum Moscow in Moscow, Russia; The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland; and The Voelkerkunde Museum in Zurich, Switzerland; as well as in many private collections around the world.

The Museum is deeply grateful to Emily H. Fisher and John Alexander, whose vision and generosity supported the acquisition and conservation of this collection of Tibetan Medical Paintings.

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*Body and Spirit* is made possible by a very generous gift from the Estate of Marian O. Naumburg.

### **Special Programming**

In conjunction with the Museum's special exhibition *Brain: The Inside Story*, the Museum will be holding a special Global Weekends program, *Living in America: Brain and the Tibetan Creative Mind* from Tuesday, January 25 through Sunday, January 30. This unique six-day event will allow visitors to experience meditation, watch monastic dances, and learn about the latest research on Tibetan meditation's impact on the brain. Featured speakers include **Richard J. Davidson**, director of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin, and **Joseph Loizzo**, director of the Nalanda Institute for Contemplative Science. **Khen Rinpoche Geshe Kachen Lobzang Tsetan** and monks will demonstrate Tibetan arts, including the creation of a sand mandala.

Support for Global Weekends is made possible, in part, by the Ford Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Inc., the Tolan Family, and the family of Frederick H. Leonhardt.

*Living in America: Brain and the Tibetan Creative Mind* is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, celebrating 50 years of building strong, creative communities in New York State's 62 counties.

Additional materials supported by Panchen Lama – Tashi Lhunpo Project.

The monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery are appearing with the assistance of The Tibet Fund.

### **AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH.ORG)**

The American Museum of Natural History is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. Since its founding in 1869, the Museum has advanced its global mission to explore and interpret human cultures and the natural world through a

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wide-reaching program of scientific research, education, and exhibitions. The Museum accomplishes this ambitious goal through its wide-ranging facilities and resources. The institution houses 46 permanent exhibition halls, state-of-the-art research laboratories, one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere, and a permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts. The spectacular **Frederick Phineas and Sandra Priest Rose Center for Earth and Space**, which opened in February 2000, features the rebuilt Hayden Planetarium and striking exhibits about the universe and our planet. With a scientific staff of more than 200, the Museum supports research divisions in anthropology, paleontology, invertebrate and vertebrate zoology, and the physical sciences. With the launch of the **Richard Gilder Graduate School** in 2006, the American Museum of Natural History became the first American museum with the authority to grant the Ph.D. degree. The Museum has produced exhibitions and Space Shows that can be seen currently in venues on five continents, reaching an audience of millions. In addition, the Museum's website, **amnh.org**, extends its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond the Museum's walls.

### **At the American Museum of Natural History**

The Museum offers a broad array of programs for adults, children, families, students, educators, and scientists. These range from special exhibitions to symposia, lecture series, workshops, and film festivals. Highlights include *Brain: The Inside Story* (November 20, 2010–August 14, 2011), an amazing and stimulating exhibition that will give visitors a new perspective and insight into the human brain using imaginative art, vivid brain scan imaging, and thrilling interactive exhibits; the Hayden Planetarium Space Show, *Journey to the Stars*, narrated by Whoopi Goldberg; *The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter* (October 16, 2010–May 30, 2011), an annual favorite featuring up to 500 live, free-flying tropical butterflies from the Americas, Africa, and Asia; *Race to the End of the Earth* (May 29, 2010–January 2, 2011), which recounts one of the most stirring tales of Antarctic exploration: the contest to be the first to reach the South Pole in 1911–1912; *Highway of An Empire: The Great Inca Road* (October 17, 2009–September 2011), an exhibition of more than 35 striking photographs featuring roads and trails built by the Inca six centuries ago; *On Feathered Wings* (June 21, 2008–May 1, 2011), a photo exhibition of more than 30 dramatic

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images of birds in flight; *Vital Variety: A Visual Celebration of Invertebrate Biodiversity* (ongoing), an exhibition of 23 large-format color photographs highlighting the immense diversity of invertebrates; **Space Show Double Feature** (select Friday and Saturday evenings), shown in the Hayden Planetarium, with back-to-back screenings of the Museum's first two Space Shows: *Passport to the Universe* (narrated by Tom Hanks), which launches visitors on a thrilling trip through space and time, and *The Search for Life: Are We Alone?* (narrated by Harrison Ford), which explores whether life exists beyond Earth; and **One Step Beyond**, the popular monthly party series where guests can dance in the Museum's Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Hall of the Universe to sets by the biggest names in techno, electronica, hip-hop, and indie rock.

### Hours

The Museum is open daily, 10 am–5:45 pm.

The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

### Space Show Hours

*Journey to the Stars* is shown every half hour Monday–Friday, 10:30 am–4:30 pm (first show on Wednesday begins at 11 am), and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–5 pm.

### Admission

Suggested general admission, which supports the Museum's scientific and educational endeavors and includes 46 Museum halls and the Rose Center for Earth and Space, is \$16 (adults) suggested, \$12 (students/seniors) suggested, \$9 (children) suggested. All prices are subject to change.

The Museum offers discounted combination ticket prices that include suggested general admission plus special exhibitions, IMAX films, and Space Shows.

- Museum Supersaver includes all special exhibitions, IMAX film, and Space Show: \$32 (adults), \$24.50 (students/seniors), \$20 (children)
- Museum Plus One includes one special exhibition, IMAX film, or Space Show: \$24 (adults), \$18 (students/seniors), \$14 (children)

Visitors who wish to pay less than the suggested Museum admission and also purchase a ticket to attend a special exhibition, IMAX film, or Space Show may do so only on-site at the Museum. To the amount they wish to pay for general admission, they should add \$20 (adults), \$16.50 (students/seniors), or \$11 (children) for a Space Show, special exhibition, or IMAX film.

### Public Information

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For additional information, the public may call 212-769-5100 or visit the Museum's website at [amnh.org](http://amnh.org).

Now you can prepare for your Museum visit by downloading the new **American Museum of Natural History Explorer App**, a groundbreaking enhanced navigation tool available for free from the App Store on iPhone and iPod touch or at [www.iTunes.com/appstore/](http://www.iTunes.com/appstore/). The Explorer pinpoints your location within the Museum and offers turn-by-turn directions through the 46 permanent exhibition halls, and features customized tours, a fossil treasure hunt, and social media links for posting to Facebook and Twitter.

### **Follow**

Become a fan of the Museum on Facebook at [facebook.com/naturalhistory](https://facebook.com/naturalhistory), or visit [twitter.com/AMNH](https://twitter.com/AMNH) to follow us on Twitter.

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