

SACHI Invites You To Join

In Celebration of Asian Art Museum Exhibition, *Vishnu's Cosmic Ocean*.

Experience SE Asia's largest ancient bronze, a 1000-year old Cambodian National Treasure of a spectacular Reclining Vishnu, a Hindu deity, in a rare and exclusive appearance in SF (On display October 23, 2026, to January 25, 2027).



Reclining Vishnu from the West Mebon, National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia © National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. Photograph by Mario Ciampi, © Guicciardini & Magni Architetti.

2026 Annual Event

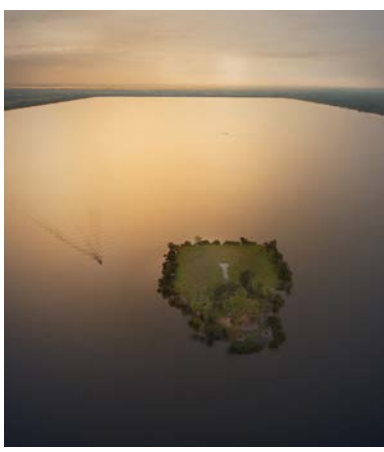
Calm and Chaos: Vishnu's Cosmic Ocean

PART 1

The Vishnu Reclining on the Cosmic Ocean

Why was the image of Vishnu reclining on the cosmic ocean so popular in ancient Cambodia? How might the unique geography of the Angkor plain have made narratives associated with water especially appealing?

In Osher gallery, as we view the monumental bronze Vishnu on loan from the National Museum of Cambodia, we can imagine it in its island temple floating in an enormous manmade reservoir. With this recently restored masterpiece as a starting point, we will explore the complex hydraulic systems that buttressed the ancient Cambodian empire and the ways that rulers may have used Hindu narratives to draw parallels between royal and divine power.



West Mebon in the West Baray
Photograph © Robert Clark

PART 2

The Churning of the Ocean

The mythic churning of the cosmic ocean of milk, with Vishnu providing the necessary stability, can be understood to refer to the activities needed to bring forth



Traditional tug-of-war game, Cambodia. Credit: Ly Lay/Xinhua

agricultural and commercial prosperity. The churning is depicted on vast scale at Angkor Wat, a Cambodian royal temple dedicated to Vishnu, and underlines the Vishnu-like role of the king as the provider of stability. In later Cambodia and Thailand the churning was sometimes enacted by performers during royal consecrations and by villagers for folk festivals.

Society for Art & Cultural Heritage of India

2026 Annual Event

Calm and Chaos: Vishnu's Cosmic Ocean

Presented in collaboration with

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

Join Us

Sunday, November 1, 2026 • 11:00 AM

for an illuminating discussion with
two distinguished Asian Art Museum Curators:

Dr. Natasha Reichl

Exhibition Curator and Associate Curator, Southeast Asian Art, AAM on
The Vishnu Reclining on the Cosmic Ocean

Dr. Forrest McGill

Emeritus Senior Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, AAM on
The Churning of the Ocean myth

Venue

Samsung Hall, Asian Art Museum
200 Larkin Street, San Francisco

Free admission and open to the public

Rsvp: info@sachi.org

SACHI Annual Meeting at 10:30 AM precedes the Annual Event



Dr. Natasha Reichl is a curator of Southeast Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Three of her exhibitions are on view now: *Vishnu's Cosmic Ocean*, *Art from Contemporary Cambodia*, and *Garuda in Bali*. Other recent exhibitions have examined provenance and the circulation of works of art. These include *Moving Objects: Learning from Local and Global Communities*, *Lost at Sea: Art Recovered from Shipwrecks*, and *Philippine Art: Collecting Art, Collecting Memories*. She is the author of *Violence and Serenity: Late Buddhist Sculpture from Indonesia* (University of Hawai'i Press). She holds a B.A. in literature from Yale University and an M.A. and PhD. in the History of Art.



Before his retirement, **Dr. Forrest McGill** was for many years the Wattis Senior Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum. Major exhibitions of which he has been organizer or co-organizer include *Beyond Bollywood: 2000 Years of Dance in the Arts of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayan Region* (2022) and *The Rama Epic: Hero, Heroine, Ally, Foe* (2016). He served as editor for the catalogues of these exhibitions and wrote major essays for them.



The Churning. Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok. Credit: Don Ramey.



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