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**ART INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES MAJOR GIFT OF ASIAN ART  
FROM CHICAGO COLLECTOR BARBARA LEVY KIPPER**

**Nearly 400 items range from Buddhist ritual objects to jewelry  
from Central and South Asia, China, Russia and Indonesia**

Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, announced today that Barbara Levy Kipper has pledged to give the Museum nearly 400 items from her exceptional collection of Buddhist ritual objects and Asian ethnic jewelry. Kipper's gift will provide an important new dimension to the Museum's collections of Indian, Himalayan, Central Asian, Southeast Asian and Chinese art. An exhibition of the objects, with an accompanying catalogue, is planned for the museum's Regenstein Hall in the summer of 2016.



Kipper, the former chairman of book distributor the Chas Levy Company and a Life Trustee of the Art Institute, is a wide-ranging collector who previously has made generous donations to the Museum's departments of Photography, Prints and Drawings, and Asian Art. This latest commitment comprises a selection of 394 pieces from the remarkable Barbara and David Kipper Collection of more than 1,200 items of Asian jewelry and ritual objects. Additionally, she is making a gift of more than a dozen objects of African jewelry to the museum.

"We are so very grateful to Barbara for her many years of extraordinary commitment to the Art Institute and for the infectious enthusiasm she brings to everything she does," said Druick. "As we now place a heightened focus on expanding our Asian holdings, Barbara's gift illustrates the deep impact that a collector's passion and generosity can have on an institution like ours."

"When I started traveling and casually photographing in the Sixties, it never occurred to me I'd become either a serious collector or photographer," said Kipper. "Sadly, the cultures to which I was drawn have become shadows of themselves, their craftsmanship severely compromised. Jewelry and ritual objects in the collection exemplify the exuberance of what once was. I take pleasure in knowing that these objects are now safe from destruction, their journeys completed."



Tom Pritzker, former chairman of the Art Institute's Board of Trustees and himself a collector of Asian art, praised Kipper for the quality of her collection and her ongoing support of the museum. "The richness of Barbara's selections reflects her wonderful eye for the art of Asian cultures. Her passion for collecting is incomparable, as is her willingness to share her objects with the public."

Kipper's contribution to the museum follows in the tradition of James and Marilyn Alsdorf, whose collection of Indian, Southeast Asian and Himalayan art at the Art Institute is well known across the world for its range and depth.

The most comprehensive part of Kipper's gift is from the Himalayas, including Tibet and other regions of the Tibetan Buddhist cultural sphere. Of these, the most extraordinary is a wide-ranging collection of *ga'us*, or portable amulet boxes, originating from Tibet, but also produced in the Buddhist cultural regions of Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, and China, as well as the Ladakh region of India and the Buryatia region of Russia.

A *ga'u* is a portable case for relics, worn mostly by Tibetan men and, to a lesser extent, women, that holds a deep cultural resonance within Tibet and the surrounding Buddhist communities. It serves as a shrine to contain a sacred or precious object, such as a small sculpture or painting, stamped clay image, textile, funerary ashes, precious stone or inscribed paper. It is worn on the body either around the neck, on a belt, across the shoulder, or in the hair, in order to protect the traveler on a long pilgrimage, business trip, or battle. Men usually wear the shrine-shaped *ga'u*, which is placed on an altar when at home or in the monastery. Women wear a gem-set *ga'u* around the neck. The *ga'us* can vary greatly in size, from a few centimeters in height to more than 20 inches.

Ritual and ceremonial objects abound in Tibet, a land where religious devotion continues to be intense and pervasive. The objects in this group serve as instruments to bridge the gap between the everyday world and the world of the divine, and to help focus the mind in meditation and spiritual thought. Among the objects in the promised gift are a large gilt copper Stupa Reliquary (c.16th/17th century) and gilt metal oracle crowns ornamented with silver skulls and jeweled flames.



These were worn by Buddhist monks or laypersons who would impersonate a god and give voice to the advice or warnings of that particular deity.

In addition to *ga'us* and other ritual objects, the Kipper collection includes jewelry and wearable items such as headdresses, hats, hat finials, earrings, and cloak clasps for both men and women. Many of these objects are studded with turquoise, prized in Tibet for both its color and perceived healing properties. Jewelry from other regions, including Central and South Asia, China, Russia and Indonesia, also is included.

Kipper is a longtime supporter of the Art Institute, serving on several boards, including the committees on Asian Art and Textiles and the Asian Art Council. She supported the recent contemporary exhibition *Nilima Sheikh: Each Night Put Kashmir in Your Dreams* (March 8–May 18, 2014), co-curated by the Asian and Contemporary art departments. She was chairman of the Chas Levy Company, her family's 115 year-old business, until its sale in 2011. An accomplished photographer, her work was featured in the publication *Joffrey Ballet: An American Classic*, which received a gold medal at the Independent Publishers Book Awards.

**Images:**

Barbara Levy Kipper

*Portable Shrine for Relics (ga'u) with Face of Glory (kirttimukha)*. C1960. Promised gift of Barbara and David Kipper.

*Oracle Diadem*. 19th century. Promised gift of Barbara and David Kipper.

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