

University of Virginia thangkas collection

University of Virginia collection of thangkas

2023

Title Statement

University of Virginia thangkas collection Guide to the University of Virginia collection of thangkas MSS 16855

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

P.O. Box 400110

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110

URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

January 15, 2025

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Profile Description

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Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16855

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1686

Unit Date

2023

Language

No linguistic content; Not applicable

source

University of Virginia. Library

Extent

3.26 Cubic Feet 3 tube containers Containers 2 (6.25X 6.25 X 36 inches) 1 (6.25X 6.25 X 72 inches)

Condition Description

Good

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from theThangka.com by the Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia on August 4, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Biographical / Historical

Rincheling Gallery and Art School is located at Boudhanath, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. The school produces a large variety of thangkas, while following the Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist philosophy and tradition. The owner of the gallery and school is Mr. Tashi Lama. The school strives to preserve the ancient Buddhist painting tradition and uses traditional materials and manner of painting to create their works.

Content Description

This collection contains three Tibetan commissioned by the University of Virginia Library for the opening of the renovated library in 2024. Thangkas are paintings on on cotton or silk appliqué, typically of a deity, scene or a mandala and act as a visualization support for mediation practices or other Buddhist rituals. The titles of the three thangkas are Seventeen Philosophers, Four Friends, and World Peace Mandala. The three scrolls are on cotton canvas, painted with stone colors and decorated with 24-carat gold on brocade with wooden handles. All were scanned, and two were reproduced to display outside the Tibetan reading room in Shannon Library 2024. These were created by the Rincheling Gallery and Art School located at Boudhanath, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

Keywords

Tankas (Tibetan scrolls)
University of Virginia. Library

Description of Subordinate Components

Seventeen Philosophers

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/254812

Unit Date 2023

Mixed Materials [X006178777] 001 (Artifact)

Language No linguistic content; Not applicable

Extent 1 items1 roll 6.25 X 6.25 X 72 inches

Scope and Contents

This thangka is a depiction of the Seventeen Indian masters of the Nalanda Monastic University, the most important Buddhist learning center in India's past. The Buddha sits at the center and is surrounded by images of these masters. Nalanda Monastic University was established during the Gupta Dynasty in the late 5th to early 6th century C.E. under the patronage of the Gupta king Shakraditra, the institution survived for six hundred years through the Pala Dynasty. Nalanda's renown as a center for higher learning spread far. It attracted students from as far away as Greece, Persia, China, and Tibet. Although Buddhism or Buddhist Philosophy was naturally the central focus of study, other subjects, including astronomy, medicine (Ayurveda), grammar, metaphysics, logic, philosophy of language, classical Hindu philosophy, non-Indian philosophy, and so forth, were all regularly studied. The seventeen Indian masters represented in the thangka are the author of all the books in the Tibetan Collection. These seventeen masters names are: Nagarjuna (c. 2nd century C.E.), the revealer of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and the systematizer and founder of the Middle Way (Madhyamaka) school of Buddhist philosophy; Aryadeva (c. 3rd century C.E.); Asanga (300-390 C.E.); Vasubandhu (c. 4th-century C.E.); Dignaga (6th-century C.E.); Dharmakirti

(600-660 C.E.); Gunaprabha (c. 9th century C.E.); Shakyaprabha; Buddhapalita (470-550 C.E.); Bhavaviveka (500-578 C.E.); Chandrakirti (600-650 C.E.); Shantarakshita (725-788 C.E.); Kamalashila (c. 8th-century C.E.); Haribhadra (700-770 C.E.); Vimuktisena (c. 6th century C.E.); Shantideva (c. 8th-century C.E.); and Atisha (980-1054 C.E.)

Four Harmonious Friends

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/254813

Unit Date 2023

Mixed Materials [X006178776] 002 (Artifact)

Language No linguistic content; Not applicable

Extent 1 items1 roll6.25 X 6.25 X 36 inches

Scope and Contents

This thangka, titled Four Harmonious Friends or The Delightful Tale of Honoring the Age, depicts the tale of the four harmonious animals, one of the widely preached Jataka tales, a significant part of Buddhist mythology. It depicts an elephant standing under a fruit tree carrying a monkey, a hare and a bird on top of each other. The story tells of four animals, all close friends: a partridge, a hare, a monkey, and an elephant. They lived beneath a large banyan tree. Out of curiosity, they wanted to figure out who was the oldest among them. To determine who was the eldest, they discuss their memories of the oldest tree and then order themselves by age. The bird, recognized by the other animals as the oldest, sits on top. The four animals lived together in co-dependence and cooperation, helping each other to enjoy the fruits of the tree.

World PeaceMandala

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/254814

Unit Date 2023

Mixed Materials [X006178775] 003 (Artifact)

Language No linguistic content; Not applicable

Extent 1 items1 roll 6.25 X 6.25 X 36 inches

Scope and Contents

This thangka is a buddha mandala. It is an intricate design with one large circle in the center and four smaller circles in each corner. It symbolizes the universe and gives the viewer a sense of belonging and connection. A mandala symbolizes the universe in its ideal form, and its creation signifies the transformation of a universe of suffering into one of joy. It can also be used as an aid to meditation, helping the meditator to envision how to achieve the perfect self. The meaning of a mandala varies, though it's typically considered a symbol of balance, eternity, and perfection.