



GODDESS

DIVINE ENERGY

Education Kit

www.goddess-art.com.au

ART
GALLERY
NSW

Art Gallery of New South Wales
13 October 2006 – 28 January 2007

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Coordinated and written by:
Tristan Sharp senior coordinator of education programs
Victoria Collings, coordinator of K-6 school and family programs
Leeanne Carr, coordinator of secondary school and Asian education programs
Amanda Peacock, coordinator of access programs
Sherryl Ryan, coordinator of gifted and talented programs
Lisbeth Star, gallery educator.

Section 2 English written by:
Kris Euridge, English / visual arts teacher, Chifley College, Mt Druitt.
Introductory texts written by:
Chaya Chandrasekhar, curator of South and Southeast Asian art, AGNSW
Other texts adapted from the exhibition media release, text panels and catalogue.
Editor: Jennifer Blunden
Design: Vivien Sung.

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Australia pp@ag.nsw.gov.au www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/education

Cover: *Dancing Bhadrakali adored by the gods* (detail), folio 45 from the Tantric Devi series, India, Punjab Hills, Basohli, c 1660-1670, opaque watercolour, gold, silver and beetle wing-cases on paper (border restored), 17.5 x 18.5 cm. Private collection on loan to Museum Rietberg Zurich

EDUCATION KIT OUTLINE

This education kit highlights key artworks, ideas and themes from the exhibition Goddess: divine energy which is on show at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 13 October 2006 to 28 January 2007.

The kit aims to provide a context for using the artworks and associated source materials as a resource for Years K-6 and Years 7-10 education audiences, with particular reference to the study of visual arts and English. It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition or as a pre-visit or post-visit resource.

The kit has been written with specific reference to the NSW stage 1-3 creative arts, stage 4-5 visual arts and stage 4-5 English syllabuses, with consideration for its relevance to the syllabus documents of other states. It also provides specific investigations and approaches for stage 3-6 students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and gifted and talented students across a range of curriculum areas through the Da Vinci Project section.

The kit has been developed to be of value beyond the duration of the exhibition as a useful resource for the Gallery's permanent collection. Through the Collection Connections section, key works in the Gallery's permanent collection of Asian art are directly related to key works in the exhibition (many of which are also included in the exhibitions). Other Collection Connections link key works in the exhibition to works across the Gallery's collection areas by ideas, themes, subject matter and media.

This strategy, which is embedded in all Art Gallery of New South Wales education kits, is designed to anchor the study of significant temporary exhibitions back to the gallery's permanent collection as a core and enduring education resource.

While the kit has been designed specifically for teacher and student audiences, it may also be of value and interest to a general audience.

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SECTION 1

GODDESS: DIVINE ENERGY

Introduction

Goddess: divine energy is the first major exhibition in Australia to explore the many manifestations of the divine female in **Hindu** and **Buddhist** art. Over 150 exquisitely carved sculptures and lavish, richly coloured and delicately composed paintings from India, Tibet and Nepal, dating from 2000 BCE through to the 20th century, have been gathered from museums and private collections around the world.

There are many thousands – possibly millions – of goddesses in the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. Countless images depict them variously as seductive, benevolent or malevolent: as a loving mother, a compassionate saviour or rage personified. With her male counterpart she can be the compliant consort or the passionate lover.

In the exhibition audiences will encounter **Kali**, the dark goddess and also the goddess of freedom who uses her power to overcome all evil and remove ego; **Durga**, goddess of strength; **White Tara**, goddess of health; **Green Tara**, goddess of compassion; **Parvati**, goddess of happiness; **Lakshmi**, goddess of prosperity; and **Radha**, goddess of love.

The all-powerful Goddess has been a source of inspiration and guidance to followers for centuries. She protects, loves, comforts, champions, seduces, enlightens, saves and empowers. Goddesses help guide us to spiritual attainment and ultimate bliss.

Jackie Menzies, head curator Asian art, AGNSW

The exhibition is divided into four sections:

THE DIVINE MOTHER features early fertility and nature figures which articulate the nurturing power of the goddess. These demonstrate the importance of the goddess to the early Indic understanding of duality as expressed in imagery of male/female nature spirits (*yaksha/yakshini*) and *mithuna* (amorous couples).

GODDESSES IN HINDUISM comprises three parts: the **Goddess and Vishnu**, the **Goddess and Shiva** and the **Goddess** on her own. This section surveys images of the romantic yet spiritually symbolic story of Radha and Krishna, examples of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, and of the androgynous form of Ardhanarishvara (half Shiva, half Parvati). It also explores the power of the goddess, or Devi, as articulated in the pivotal 6th-century narrative poem, the *Devi Mahatmya* (glory of the goddess), and in graphic images of the powerful goddesses Durga and Kali.

YOGA TANTRA looks at the goddess represented in symbolic form through *yantras* (geometrical diagrams, or sacred receptacles which hold the essence of a deity), *mantras* (spoken sonic formulae), *mandalas* (literally 'circles', or sacred diagrams for meditation) and subtle body drawings depicting *chakras* (or wheels, an important Buddhist symbol and within the context of yoga, a series of energy centres along the central axis of the body) demonstrating how the body is the instrument to achieve enlightenment.

GODDESSES IN BUDDHISM comprises two parts: **Wisdom**, presenting the divine female principle in Buddhism, including the goddesses Prajnaparamita (the goddess of wisdom), the beloved Tara; and **Wisdom and Compassion**, which looks at the five Jina Buddhas and their consorts together with mandalas containing them. This section concludes with a series of powerful sculptures and paintings depicting father-mother union, when the goddess Prajna (wisdom) is depicted united in an inseparable embrace with her male partner Upaya (means), the couple symbolising the ultimate unity, or non-duality, of all existence.

Hinduism and Buddhism

HINDUISM

Just as the moon does not shine without moonlight, so also [the god] Shiva does not shine without [the goddess] Shakti.

Hinduism is the principal religion of the Indian subcontinent and is practised by nearly 80 percent of its population. In addition, more than 30 million followers live outside India, in regions as distant as the Caribbean, North America, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as in other parts of Asia, particularly Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Hinduism is among the oldest religions of the world, and, having evolved over tens of thousands of years, is a complex tradition. Unlike many other major religions, Hinduism does not owe its foundation to a particular individual and acknowledges a number of sacred texts rather than a single scripture like the Christian Bible or the Islamic Qur'an.

Similarly, rather than worshipping one creator god who has the ability to affect day-to-day existence, Hindus worship the gods Shiva and Vishnu as well as the all-powerful goddess, who takes on many forms. The tradition also recognises numerous additional gods who perform a variety of divine functions.

The religion centres on three primary tenets: *samsara*, *karma* and *moksha*. *Samsara* is the belief that an individual is subject to innumerable transmigrations, or cycles, of rebirth. *Karma* is a system of justice: one's actions during a given lifetime determine the conditions of the next. *Moksha*, or liberation, is the final goal of Hinduism. According to Hindu thought, all matter is inherently identical for everything emerges from a common source, known in Sanskrit as Brahman. The goal is to overcome ego, triumph over the illusion of duality (eg, male/female, good/evil, mind/body) and realise the essential oneness of all things. With this realisation, a Hindu escapes the cycles of rebirth and attains spiritual liberation.

Hindu gods such as Shiva, Vishnu and the goddess are various forms through which the idea of Brahman is conveyed. When a Hindu worships these deities, he or she attempts to understand the relationship between the individual and the divine – that one is not separate from the other. Thus, according to Hindu thought, within every individual resides the power of the divine, waiting to be realised.

BUDDHISM

Wisdom [goddess] + Compassion [god] = Eternal Bliss

Buddhism is one of the six major religions of the world with more than 376 million adherents. The tradition originated in India, but is practised today primarily beyond India's borders, throughout much of Asia, including Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan. Partially fuelled by the arrival of Asian immigrants, Buddhism has also more recently been adopted in Europe, North America and Australia.

Buddhism builds on many of the same beliefs as Hinduism, including the notions of *samsara* (cycles of rebirth), *karma*, and the underlying oneness of all things that Buddhists, however, describe as emptiness (*shunyata*). The goal is to perfect one's wisdom and overcome human shortcomings like pride, anger and jealousy. The end result of this realisation, or the final goal of the religion, is *nirvana*, the cessation of cyclic existence.

The principal figure in Buddhism is Siddharta, who, during the 6th century BCE, was born a prince of a small kingdom in northeast India. Growing tired of his materialistic, princely life, Siddharta left the palace in search of true happiness. After six years of wandering he finally understood that eternal happiness comes with overcoming ego, realising the oneness of all things as emptiness, and subsequently escaping the cycles of rebirth. This knowledge is known in Sanskrit as *bodhi*, and referred to in English as 'enlightenment' or 'awakening.' Once Siddharta achieved this knowledge, he came to be known as 'Buddha, the awakened one.' For the remainder of his life until he passed into *nirvana* in his 70s, he shared his knowledge with others and his teachings became the fundamental tenets of the religion.

With time, the Buddha's teachings came to be interpreted variously, giving rise to three major schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. The basic differences between these schools involve who can be considered eligible for Buddhahood and the methods by which each aspires to reach that goal. Within Mahayana, male *bodhisattvas* and female equivalents known as *dharanis* compassionately assist devotees and guide them towards self-betterment. Within Vajrayana a variety of male and female Buddhas unite harmoniously to articulate ideas of non-duality. In these pairings, the male Buddha represents compassion and the female represents wisdom, which are, according to the tradition, the two main ingredients of awakening.

In both Hinduism and Buddhism the goddess is the catalyst for spiritual attainment.

Commentary

EARLY GODDESSES

The ancient roots of goddess worship in the Indian subcontinent are demonstrated by various terracotta female figures, variously termed mother goddesses, fertility figures or nature goddesses, which date back millennia BCE. The oldest sacred text of the Hindus, the *Rigveda*, dated to the middle of the second millennium BCE, contains hymns to the goddesses of dawn, the earth and the rivers, while trees, serpents and other aspects of the natural world were worshipped as part of the age-old cult of the *yaksha-yakshini* (male and female nature spirits).

The figures of *yakshini* embody the Indian ideals of feminine beauty: tall and slender form, narrow waist, curvaceous hips and full, rounded breasts. Synonymous with ideas of fertility, abundance and auspiciousness, such figures were absorbed into Hinduism and Buddhism and used to adorn the temples of both religions.

HINDU GODDESSES

According to Hindu belief, existence in this transient world is an endless cycle of birth and rebirth (*samsara*) from which a person seeks release (*moksha*) by following one of the three main paths to liberation: that of Vishnu, that of Shiva, or that of Devi. Each of these deities has myriad forms, while there are many other gods and goddesses. The whole Hindu pantheon totals possibly millions of deities.

Devi, the great goddess, is the ultimate source of *shakti*, the energy of the universe, which expresses itself through countless divine female manifestations (referred to as Shaktis as well as by individual names such as Parvati). Shaktis appear as independent goddesses or as the consort of a god.

This exhibition has chosen to focus on a select few shaktis and, where applicable, their consorts: Radha and Krishna (a manifestation of Vishnu), Parvati and Shiva, Durga and Kali.

Radha

Radha, considered a manifestation of Lakshmi (consort of Vishnu), and referred to as Krishna's divine consort, first appears as but one of the bevy of lovestruck *gopis* (cowherds) with whom Krishna plays. However she comes into her own in the 12th century in Jayadeva's great lyric poem the *Gita Govinda* (love song of the Dark Lord), and remains centre stage with Krishna in the following centuries: the eternal beloved, to be wooed and won.

As a goddess, Radha is referred to as the *shakti* (energy) of Krishna, without which he would be lustreless, 'like the sun would be without heat'.

Parvati

According to Hindu mythology, Parvati, daughter of the great mountain Himalaya and the most beautiful woman on earth (as the many statues of her make supremely evident), won as her husband the great god Shiva, the Lord of Yoga. She did this through extreme asceticism and penance (*tapas*) and he 'rewarded' her by absorbing her into himself, thus creating the magnificent images of Ardhanarishvara, the 'Lord who is Half Woman', which symbolise the ultimate oneness of male and female.

More prosaically, Shiva and Parvati as a couple, whether depicted in intimate embrace or standing alongside each other, symbolise a sought-after conjugal bliss. She is partner to the conformative and family-oriented aspect of Shiva, and as such represents the ideal wife, the *pativrata*. The couple is often depicted with their two sons (the six-headed god Skanda and the elephant-headed god Ganesha).

Devi

The concept that all goddesses are manifestations of one great goddess (Devi) was articulated in the classic Hindu text of goddess worship the *Devi Mahatmya* (glorification of the goddess) dating to the 6th century CE. A cascade of hymns throughout the text hails the goddess's pervasive power, her dynamism, and her transcendence of simplistic notions of duality (such as male and female).

The text contains three main narratives that have inspired countless painted and sculpted images of Devi:

- praise to the goddess in whatever manifestation she appears
- the defeat of the buffalo demon Mahisha by the goddess Durga
- the defeat of demons by the great goddess in her form of Kali, and with the support of the mother goddesses

Durga

While images of the warrior goddess Durga date back to the 2nd century CE, the earliest known textual reference occurs in the *Devi Mahatmya* (glorification of the goddess). The text recounts how Durga came into being when the gods combined their *shaktis* to create a force powerful enough to kill the buffalo demon, Mahisha. Although Durga comes from the gods, she simultaneously transcends them, for the gods, like everything, were created and activated by Devi, the great goddess. Depictions of Durga triumphantly thrusting her trident into Mahisha are a popular yet iconic statement of the defeat of evil and negative thoughts.

Kali

The goddess Kali, the Dark One, is the *shakti* of Durga: the only goddess to be the *shakti* of another goddess. She is easily recognisable by her emaciated, dishevelled and fearsome appearance as well as by her attributes which include an unsheathed sword and a severed head: the former alludes to her power to overcome all evil, the latter to her power to remove ego. Typically Kali wears a girdle of severed arms, symbolising the *karmas* she has removed (thereby freeing devotees from their pre-determined fate). Kali haunts the cremation ground as it is the interim domain between this world and the next, and Kali is the Mistress of Time and Death.

Kali is also the primary goddess of the Ten Wisdom Goddesses (Mahavidhya). Worshipped in both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, this group is considered to embody different aspects of a single goddess.

YOGA TANTRA

Tantra is a belief system in which the power of the goddess (*shakti*) is paramount. Practitioners of Tantra believe that a form of shakti – called *kundalini shakti* (serpent power) – resides dormant within each one of us, waiting to be awakened and harnessed towards the achievement of higher consciousness. In Tantra the emphasis is on practice – on meditation, yoga, deity worship and ritual. The tools of Tantric ritual are *mantras* (sacred syllables), *yantras* (diagrams), *mudras* (gestures) and mandalas (circles).

Both Hindu and Buddhist practitioners of Tantra believe there is a subtle body within each that can be unfolded and energised by Tantra yoga for the attainment of pure consciousness. This is done by awakening the *kundalini shakti* and moving it through the *chakras* (energy centres) of the body to unite it with the Supreme Consciousness that resides just above the crown of the head.

BUDDHIST GODDESSES

Buddhists have continually revered an array of exalted goddesses alongside male exemplars like the Buddha Shakyamuni, the founder of the religion. While the Buddha transmitted teachings that would eventually lead followers to spiritual attainment, he relied on the host of divine females to attend to his disciples' immediate needs and to ensure their wellbeing. Thus, Buddhist goddesses provide timely rainfall and bountiful crops, grant wealth, progeny and other life-enhancing blessings, protect against enemies, calamities and dangers, and compassionately deliver the troubled and suffering. These goddesses are generally referred to as Dharanis, for their assistance may be summoned by reciting a *dharani*, a sacred formula or syllable, imbued with the power of the goddess.

FEMALE BUDDHAS

Around the 7th century CE, a new type of goddess made her debut on the Buddhist scene. The sacred female completed her ascent and attained the highest status that is possible in Buddhism, namely, Buddhahood. Unlike Dharani deities, who have circumscribed qualities and roles, female Buddhas embody all Buddhist virtues and attainments and manifest the state of full awakening. Textual descriptions distinguish the female divinities that are accorded Buddha status with the Sanskrit expression *samyaksambodhi*, which asserts that they have realised 'supreme, perfect enlightenment', and that they understand the nature of reality as inherently empty (*shunyata*). Vajravahni and Tara are examples of female Buddhas.

Tara

Tara is the most beloved goddess of the Indo-Himalayan Buddhist world. She is revered as a universal mother who watches over all beings with equal affection and exerts herself in myriad ways to deliver them from suffering and lead them to enlightenment. Her name means both 'Star Lady' and 'She Who Carries Across,' that is, 'Saviouress'.

Like the northern star, Tara is a guiding light for those striving to navigate the troubled waters of life. She helps her devotees cross the ocean of worldly existence (*samsara*) and delivers them safely to the other shore: nirvana, ultimate peace, spiritual liberation. Tara is endowed with exquisite beauty and unlimited saving powers, an irresistible combination that has enshrined her in the hearts of laity, monastics and yogic specialists alike.

VAJRAYANA

Vajrayana (or Tantric) Buddhism, the final flowering of Indian Buddhism, swept through Asia and survives to the present day in Nepal and Tibet. It is the esoteric offshoot of Mahayana Buddhism, which maintains that Buddhahood is available to all sentient beings and that spiritual realisation can be achieved through cultivating exemplary qualities like compassion and insightfulness.

According to Mahayana understanding, cultivating such ethical perfection is a slow, gradual process that takes place over innumerable lifetimes. Building on Mahayana principles, Vajrayana developed a system that focuses on attaining perfection rapidly, within a single life. While the Mahayana path stresses virtuous conduct that involves eschewing desire, sensuality and passion, Vajrayana Buddhists embrace such powerful emotions and use them as a radical and unconventional means to attainment. Vajrayana practices include receiving rigorous religious training with a teacher, undergoing complex ritual initiations and performing transformative yogic meditations.

THE HIGHEST TANTRAS

Tantras are a body of esoteric religious literature that espouse advanced meditative practices (*dhyana*), sacred formulae (*mantras*) and yogic techniques as a means to spiritual awakening. Tantric literature varies in complexity to accommodate different levels of religious understanding among adherents. Therefore, Tantric texts are generally divided into four categories based on the profundity and difficulty of the teachings they contain. The most advanced texts belong to the category known as Highest Tantras.

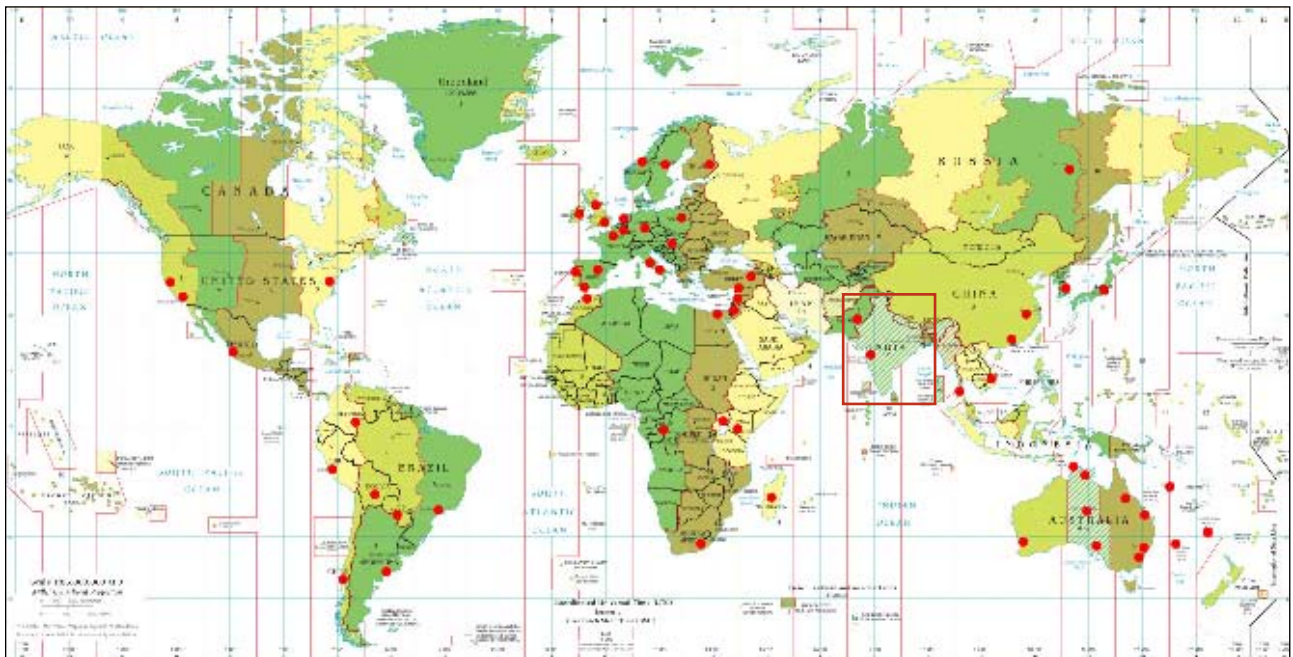
The underlying goal of Highest Tantra teachings is to overcome dualistic notions like male and female, sun and moon, light and dark, night and day, and achieve a balanced awareness of undifferentiated reality. Each text conveys this critical principle through a Buddha couple that resides eternally locked in passionate embrace. These pairings articulate the inseparable union of male (compassion) and female (wisdom) and the resulting bliss of awakening.

Locating the Goddess: Geography



The artworks in *Goddess: divine energy* are from India, Tibet and Nepal. While Hinduism and Buddhism originated in this region, they have spread to many other counties around the globe, with approximately 900 million people identified as Hindu across 94 countries (third most popular religion in world) and 376 million identified as Buddhist across 92 countries (fourth most popular religion in the world) currently.

Source: www.Adherents.com: National & World Religion Statistics.



Locating the Goddess: Timeline

Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world and Buddhism, the fourth oldest. The 166 artworks in *Goddess: divine energy* span a period of almost 4000 years: 2000BCE to the late 20th century.

Living in the 21st century, time and history on this scale can be difficult to comprehend. This timeline is designed to give context

to the works in this education kit (eight key works from the exhibition and eight from the gallery's permanent collection) and the two major religions they represent. To give some sense of perspective, 10 other religions practised in the world today are also included.

	BCE	
HINDUISM	4000-2500	
	3500	
	3000	
	2500	
JUDASIM	2000	
	1500	
ZOROASTRIANISM	1000	
BUDDHISM	560-490	
SHINTO	500	
CONFUCIANISM		
TAOISM	440	
JAINISM	420	
	0	
CHRISTIANITY	30	
	500	
ISLAM	622	
	early 900s	Durga slaying the buffalo demon (Mahishasuramardini) – Rajasthan, India
	900S	Tara – Madhya Pradesh, India,
	c1000s	Shiva and Parvati on Nandi, accompanied by Skanda and Ganesha – Central India
	c1000s	Torso of a female figure – Madhya Pradesh, India
	c1000s	Tree goddess (shalabhanjika) – Karnataka, India
	c1100s	Androgynous form of Shiva and Parvati (Ardhanarishvara) -- Tamil Nadu, India
	c1300s	Kalachakra and Vishvamatha – Tibet
	1400s	Vajravarahi – Tibet Sikhism
	1500s	Mandala of Kalachakra and Vishvamata –Central Tibet
	1700s	The Paradise of Tara – Tibet
	1800s	Vac, goddess of speech – Rajasthan, India
	1800s	Kali Yantra – India
	c1820	Leaf from the Lambagraon Gita Govinda –Punjab Hills India
	c1850	Circular dance of Krishna and the gopis – Rajasthan, India Baha'I
	1863	
	1900s	Narodakini – Tibet
	1990s	Durga – India
	2000	
	2006	Goddess: divine energy opens at the Art Gallery of New South Wales
	CE	

KEY: Key borrowed for the exhibition Key works from the Gallery's Asian Collection

Decoding the Goddess

This list decodes the Hindu and Buddhist goddesses and gods that are presented in the exhibition. Those listed in red relate to the artworks in this education kit.

Ambika 'beloved mother'; in Jainism, a popular benevolent goddess who attends the 22nd of 24 Jain liberators (Tirthankaras); in the Shaiva and Shakta traditions, an epithet of Durga.

Ardhanarishvara 'the Lord who is Half Woman'; androgynous form of Shiva, in which the right side of the body is male and the left is female (ie, that of his consort Parvati).

Ashtamatika 'eight mothers'; emanations of Durga, particularly popular in Nepal.

Bhadrakali 'auspicious Kali'; also see Kali.

Bharat Mata 'mother India'; personification of the Indian nation as a goddess.

Bhudevi 'earth goddess'; see Prithivi.

bodhisattva a Buddha-to-be; a being destined to achieve Buddhahood.

Brahma a Vedic god, who in later Hinduism is regarded as one of the three main male gods; commonly associated with the function of cosmic creation.

Chakrasamvara (*prajna* partner **Vajravara**) a Heruka Buddha based on the *Chakrasamvara Tantra*.

Chamunda a fierce aspect of Durga; an alternative form of Kali

Durga supreme goddess in Hinduism; authoritative, energetic aspect of Parvati; also called Ambika; as Mahishasuramardini, the slayer of the buffalo demon Mahisha

Ganesha elephant-headed god, invoked as the 'remover of obstacles' at the start of undertakings; son of the goddess Parvati.

Ganga goddess personifying the Ganges River, the most celebrated of the seven sacred rivers of India; sometimes regarded a wife of Shiva and often seen in his matted hair; her identifying animal mount is the crocodilian *makara*.

Garuda mythical creature that is part bird and part human; animal mount of the god Vishnu and the Jina Buddha Amoghasiddhi.

gopi female companion of Krishna.

gramadevata 'village deity'; commonly a goddess who presides over, and is closely linked with, a village community.

Guhyasamaja (*prajna* partner **Sparashavajri**) a Heruka Buddha based on the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*.

Hevajra (*prajna* partner **Nairatma**) a Heruka Buddha based on the *Hevajra Tantra*.

Kali personification of the concentrated shakti (energy) of Durga; fierce shakti of Shiva; one of the ten wisdom goddesses (Dashamahavidyas); other epithets and forms include, Bhadrakali, Mahakali, Tripura Bhairavi, Dakshinakali, Guhyakali

Kama, god of erotic love.

Krishna 'Dark One'; one of the most beloved of Hindu gods; the 8th incarnation of Vishnu; the divine hero of the epic Mahabharata; paired with his eternal love Radha, Krishna is the focus of the devotional bhakti tradition.

kundalini 'coiled one'; reservoir of subtle energy that lies dormant in coiled form at the base of the spine until awakened to purify the body; as Kundalini, name of the goddess who personifies this infinite latent power.

Kurukulla Dharani goddess; within Vajrayana, also a female Buddha.

Lakshmi goddess of wealth and wellbeing; principle consort of Vishnu; when lustrated by elephants (gaja) known as Gajalakshmi; also see Shri.

Lakshmi Narayana composite form of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi, in which the proper right side of the body may be male and the proper left may be female.

linga 'sign'; the aniconic form of the Hindu god Shiva

Mahadevi 'Great Goddess', of whom all other goddesses are manifestations; also known as Devi.

Mahakali 'Great Kali', who presides over the dissolution of the universe at the end of a time cycle.

Mahottama Heruka (Tib Chemchok Heruka) (*prajna* partner Krodeshvari) Heruka Buddha of the Nyingma tradition.

maithuna male and female deities in sexual embrace.

Manasa snake goddess worshipped mainly in Bengal and other parts of northeastern India.

nadi devata 'river goddess'; also see Ganga, Sarasvati.

naga 'snake', generally the king cobra; snake deity (feminine nagin or nagini).

Nairatma (Nairatmya) 'no self'; a prominent vajrayogini; a principal female Buddha.

Nandin (Nandi) 'joyous one'; the bull vehicle or animal mount of Shiva.

Nataraja Shiva as the king (raja) or Lord of Dance.

Pancha Jinas (Pancha Tathagatas) 'five victors'; a set of five Buddhas (see Jina); sometimes referred to as the Celestial Buddhas.

Pancharaksha 'five protectors'; a set of Dharani goddesses.

Parvati daughter of the mountain (Himalayas); primary consort of Shiva and mother of Ganesha; a gracious and benign aspect of Devi; also called Uma.

Kalachakra (*prajna* partner Vishvamata) a Heruka Buddha based on the Kalachakra Tantra.

Parvati daughter of the mountain (Himalayas); primary consort of Shiva and mother of Ganesha; a gracious and benign aspect of Devi; also called Uma.

Prajnaparamita 'perfection of wisdom'; feminine personification of perfect, transcendent wisdom as expounded in the Prajnaparamita literature, fundamental to Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

prithivi 'earth'; as **Prithivi**, name of the goddess who personifies the earth; also known as Bhudevi.

Radha (Radhika) eternal love of Krishna; sometimes regarded an incarnation of Lakshmi; within the devotional bhakti movement, Radha denotes the individual's unending desire for union with the divine (Krishna).

Rama 7th incarnation of Vishnu; the hero of the epic *Ramayana*.

Rukmini Krishna's wife; while Radha is Krishna's eternal beloved, according to tradition, she does not marry him (see Radha).

Sadashiva five-headed form of Shiva, with four heads in the cardinal directions, and the fifth either implied or placed above the four.

Samantabhadra (*prajna* partner Samantabhadri); an Adi Buddha of the Newar and Tibetan Nyingma traditions.

Santoshi Maa goddess whose popularity rose with the release of the 1975 film *Jai Santoshi Maa*.

Sati first wife of the Hindu god Shiva, who is reborn as his second wife, Parvati.

Shakti name of the goddess who personifies creative energy; consort of Shiva as the male generative aspect.

shalabhanjika tree goddess; one associated with the *shala* tree.

Shiva one of the three main male gods of the Hindu pantheon, thought to be of pre-Vedic origin; commonly associated with the function of cosmic destruction, which allows for subsequent creation; supreme deity and ultimate reality of the Shaiva tradition; prototypical yogin or ascetic, known for his yogic powers; his various forms and epithets include, Shiva linga, Nataraja, Shrikantha, Maheshvara, Sadashiva.

Shri goddess who listens to the pleas of her devotees; epithet of Lakshmi.

Sitatapatra (Ushnishasitapatra) '[goddess of the] white parasol'; a Dharani deity who protects against enemies and danger.

Skanda the son of the Hindu god Shiva; serves as the general of the gods; also known as Karttikeya.

Somaskanda representation of Shiva, Parvati and Skanda as a young boy.

Tara 'guiding star', 'saviouress'; a beloved Buddhist goddess; initially a Dharani deity, who becomes a prominent female Buddha; has several forms, the most popular of which are Green Tara and White Tara.

Umamaheshvara representation of Shiva (Maheshvara) seated with Parvati (Uma) on his left.

Ushnishavijaya 'victorious queen of crowning light'; a Dharani goddess who bestows long life and favourable rebirths.

Vag Vedic goddess who creates speech; in later Vedic literature, said to have created the *Vedas*; also see Sarasvati.

Vajradhatvishvari wisdom partner of Buddha Vairochana, and sometimes of Vajrasattva, Guhyasamaja, Vajradhara; identified with vajrayoginis like Vajravarahi, Nairatma; epithets include, Prajnaparamita, Shunyata, Bhagavati.

Vajrasattva (*prajna* partner Sattvavajri); an Adi Buddha; sometimes considered the 6th Jina Buddha

Vajravarahi 'adamantine sow'; a prominent *vajrayogini*; a principal female Buddha; *prajna* partner of *Chakrasamvara* in the *Chakrasamvara Tantra*; also see *Chakrasamvara*.

Vasuki name of the seven-headed serpent who serves as the rope when Vishnu, in his tortoise incarnation (Kurma avatar), churns the cosmic ocean.

Vasundhara 'bearer of treasurer'; a Dharani goddess who bestows abundance and agricultural bounty.

Vishnu a Vedic god who later becomes one of the three main male gods of Hinduism; commonly associated with the function of cosmic preservation; supreme deity and ultimate reality of the Vaishnava tradition; assumes ten forms (see avatars) to protect the earth and re-establish righteousness.

Go Goddess: Experiencing the Hindu Festival of Durga Puja

While travelling in India late last year (2005), Public Programs assistant, artist and filmmaker Olivia Prunster spent some days in Kolkata (Calcutta) during the famous Hindu festival of Durga Puja, the annual propitiation festival for the goddess Durga.

The fierce Durga (the Kali of Kolkata's Kalighat temple, after which the city is named) is one of the wives of Shiva, but she is powerful enough to be worshipped in her own right. Prunster's photographs and commentary vividly capture the atmosphere of this amazing occasion.

OLIVIA PRUNSTER (LEFT) AND HER FRIEND PREITY AT THE DURGA PUJA IN KOLKATA, OCTOBER 2005.



'Durga is great. What I love about her is that every year she gets discarded and tossed in the river and her only recourse is to come back bigger and better and louder next year. Go goddess!'

ELABORATE LIGHTS FESTOON THE STREETS OF KOLKATA DURING DURGA PUJA IN OCTOBER 2005.



'Imagine a mass of people greater than the population of Australia crammed into the streets of a single city, continuously on the move ... Each year the city of Kolkata is paralysed by puja fever, everything else stops and for days and nights the city does not sleep. A quiet puja is something no one has heard of this side of the 1980s ...'

ONE OF THE PANDALAS (TEMPORARY TEMPLES) ESPECIALLY BUILT FOR THE 2005 DURGA PUJA.



'Last year 131 pandalas were constructed specifically for the purpose of housing the deities during the festival, and I visited more than 50 of them over a number of days ... Sometimes towering up to three storeys, the pandalas are often crafted from unconventional materials like razor blades or polystyrene, bits of metal, even grains, seeds and lacquered bread dough, all in order to stand out from the crowd.'

DURGA MAHESHURAMARDINI (DURGA SLAYING THE BUFFALO DEMON) IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST FORMS OF THE DEITY; DESCRIPTIONS DATE BACK AS EARLY AS THE 6th OR 7th CENTURY CE. IN THIS VERSION SHE HAS 10 ARMS.



'Each community in Kolkata designs and competes for the most original or bizarre variation on the Durga theme ... In the spirit of worshipping their goddess, they construct unique and personal interpretations of Durga slaying the buffalo demon, surrounded by the goddesses Kali and Lakshmi and gods Ganesha and Kartikkeya.'

A FESTIVAL IMAGE OF THE GOD OF WAR, KARTTIKEYA, ON HIS PEACOCK MOUNT.



'The intensity builds over the final series of rituals in an uninhibited procession to transport the gods to the ghats. It all climaxes in the dramatic and destructive immersion of the idols in the river. The abandonment of the gods marks the abrupt conclusion to the festivities and signals the commencement of preparations for next year.'

TWO VERSIONS OF THE EIGHT-ARMED DURGA WITH HER LION MOUNT AND THE DEMON MAHISHA, SURROUNDED BY OTHER GODS AND GODDESSES SUCH AS GANESHA AND KARTTIKEYYA.



'Like every pandala created for the puja, each Durga image was a different expression of exactly the same scene ... The puja ceremonies, while being steeped in Hindu religious tradition, also reflect the ever-changing nature of contemporary India. In true Indian style, Durga Pujas of today are a complicated fusion of past and present.'

Excerpt first published in TAASA Review, The Journal of The Asian Arts Society of Australia, vol 15, no 1, March 2006, pp16-17

The Exhibition

CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVES

Goddess power

The goddess is everywhere: she is manifest as the power (*shakti*) of the universe; she is the activating principle that leads to spiritual bliss; she is the personification of wisdom, compassion and protection; and she is the strength to overcome negative mind-states that reside within each one of us.

To make so many claims is to distill the wisdom and teachings (many once secret) that are inherent in the religious traditions relating to the female principle as articulated in the goddess (or Devi) path of Hinduism and the Tantric or Vajrayana school of Buddhism. The beautiful, imaginative and amazing imagery inspired by goddess-related beliefs is the subject of the exhibition *Goddess: Divine Energy*, with loans from leading public and private collections around the world, including India.

The exhibition *Buddha: Radiant Awakening* in 2001 surveyed images of the Buddha from the Historical Buddha Shakyamuni to later manifestations such as the Medicine Buddha, the Future Buddha and the Five Transcendent Buddhas. However, as noted scholar Miranda Shaw writes in her catalogue essay for *Goddess*: 'Buddhism has perennially provided female objects of reverence alongside the Buddha and other exalted male figures, although scholars have only recently brought attention to the female pantheon. The female figures evolved along with the tradition as a whole, as different divinities were introduced to reflect the distinctive theologies and practices of the early, Mahayana and Tantric movements'.

Shaw whose groundbreaking book *Passionate enlightenment: women in Tantric Buddhism* (1994) brought fresh perspectives into the arena of religious studies alerts us to several important points: that religions evolve in response to the spiritual needs of devotees, that some traditions remain unnoticed and subservient due to the privileging of other streams; and that scholarship on the history and evolution of many religions is still at a nascent stage.

There are other factors in the emergent appreciation of goddess images: for example, the empowerment of women within our own society and their concomitant search for relevant spiritual models; the feminist influence in the field of religious studies; and the redirection of Western scholarship to non-Western religious tradition.

Although Buddhism arose in India, it largely disappeared from there with the Mongol invasions from the 1100s. Hence it is in the art of Tibet and Nepal, home to Vajrayana Buddhism, that we find spectacular images of Buddhist goddesses, used for meditation and worship. Various types of Buddhist goddesses have been distinguished. One type is the Dharani goddess whose presence is invoked by the recitation of a *dharani*, a series of specified sound syllables. A Dharani is the female equivalent of a male Bodhisattva; like him, she is a being far advanced on the path to enlightenment, but one who chooses to stay on this earth to guide others towards enlightenment.

The most beloved goddess of the Indo-Himalayan Buddhist world is Tara whose name means 'saviouress'. Tara is a female Buddha rather than a Dharani: a sacred female who has realised supreme, perfect enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*) and who with unmatched compassion helps her devotees safely cross the ocean of worldly existence (*samsara*) to the other shore of nirvana: ultimate peace, spiritual liberation.

Shaw's catalogue essay recounts how Tara's journey to enlightenment began in another universe in the distant past, when she was a human princess named Moon of Knowledge. When the princess set her aspiration on full enlightenment, some monks urged her to pray to be transformed into a man so that she could progress more rapidly toward her goal. The princess retorted that duality is an illusion and thus in reality there is no man, woman, self or person. She vowed to remain in a female body until all sentient beings are established in supreme enlightenment.

A goddess does not always appear on her own. A central tenet of Vajrayana Buddhism is that enlightenment is attained through combining wisdom (*prajna*) and compassion (*karuna*). From the wisdom comes the insight and compassion that leads to enlightenment. Hence when Buddhist symbology uses gender to articulate these two components: *prajna* represented by the female and *karuna* by the male, it is the physically smaller female who is in fact the activating principle. Images of a female and male in sexual embrace, in Sanskrit *maithuna*, serve as a metaphor for the transcendent bliss that is obtainable in this life time by harnessing the powerful emotions of desire and passion, and practising yogic meditations and rituals under the guidance of a guru. The importance of this imagery is demonstrated by the number of sculptures and paintings of *maithuna*. Once such images, symbolic of a high level of spiritual attainment, were only shown by gurus to those initiates who had attained a certain level on their path to enlightenment. Since much of this art has been hidden in Tibetan monasteries for centuries, it is only the sad history of Tibet in the 20th century that has revealed these spectacular images to the wider world.

The passion and tender intimacy seen in Buddhist images is also to be found in paintings of the Hindu god Krishna with his partner Radha, particularly illustrations to the great lyric poem of the twelfth century, the *Gita Govinda* (*Love Song of the Dark Lord*) by Jayadeva. The love story, of heart-wrenching poignancy and sensuality, can be interpreted as an allegory for the soul's search for union with the godhead: the absorbing of one into the other, and the overcoming of duality.

Hinduism believes in the one Ultimate Reality of which all goddesses and gods are but manifestations: just as a diamond has many facets, so each god(dess) is but one reflection of the real stone. As in Buddhism, there are goddesses who are independent and goddesses who partner specific gods. There are devotees who follow the path of the goddess and her power, just as there are devotees who follow the path of Shiva or Vishnu. Significant in Hinduism is the belief in the power of the female principle – *shakti* – which can be possessed by a god, or personified independently as a goddess. The power

of *shakti* is captured in the revealing axiom “Shiva without *shakti* is a corpse (*shava*)”. This saying is the explanation for many images which depict a goddess seated on a corpse: she is the activating principle against his inertness.

Devi, the Great Goddess, is multifaceted. As Parvati, she is the compliant consort to the wild ascetic Shiva; wife within a family that is not a family. As Durga, she is the conqueror of all negativity. As Kali, the *shakti* of Durga, she is the protector and the conqueror of time. Kali haunts the cremation ground, the transition area between this world and the next.

In one of several graphic images of her in the show, she is shown characteristically dark skinned, wild-eyed, and dishevelled. The sword she holds is symbolic of her power to cut the devotee free of the desires and distractions of this world; the severed head is the ego she removes; the arms around her waist are those karmas she has also removed. Kali frees us from all that binds us to this life. She sits on a corpse who is in the process of being activated as the great Shiva: she has the power of inception across aeons of time. Overall this painting is a great statement about the redemptive power of the Goddess as well as the fact that ultimately it is she who is responsible for everything!

Jackie Menzies, head curator, Asian Art and exhibition curator, *Goddess: divine energy*
Excerpt first published in *Look* magazine, Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, September 2006, pp 29-33



FACTS & FIGURES

The artworks in the exhibition span the period 2000 BCE to the 20th century.

Works: in total, there are 166 artworks in the exhibition -
23 stone sculptures
33 bronze and other metal sculptures
4 woodcarvings
7 ornaments and objects
62 paintings on paper
16 paintings on cloth
1 painting on wood
13 thangkas
4 terracotta items
2 textile
1 papier-mâché

Lenders: in total there are 40 lenders to the exhibition -

Australia: 29 works in total

26 works from 4 public institutions
3 works from 2 private lenders

Note: includes 12 works from the AGNSW collection

International: 137 works in total

110 works from 22 public institutions
27 works from 12 private lenders

Note: Includes 23 works from 3 public institutions in India.

Countries: artworks have been lent from -

Australia
France
Germany
India
Italy
Netherlands
Singapore
Switzerland
UK
USA

Religions: represented in the exhibition -

Hindu
Buddhism

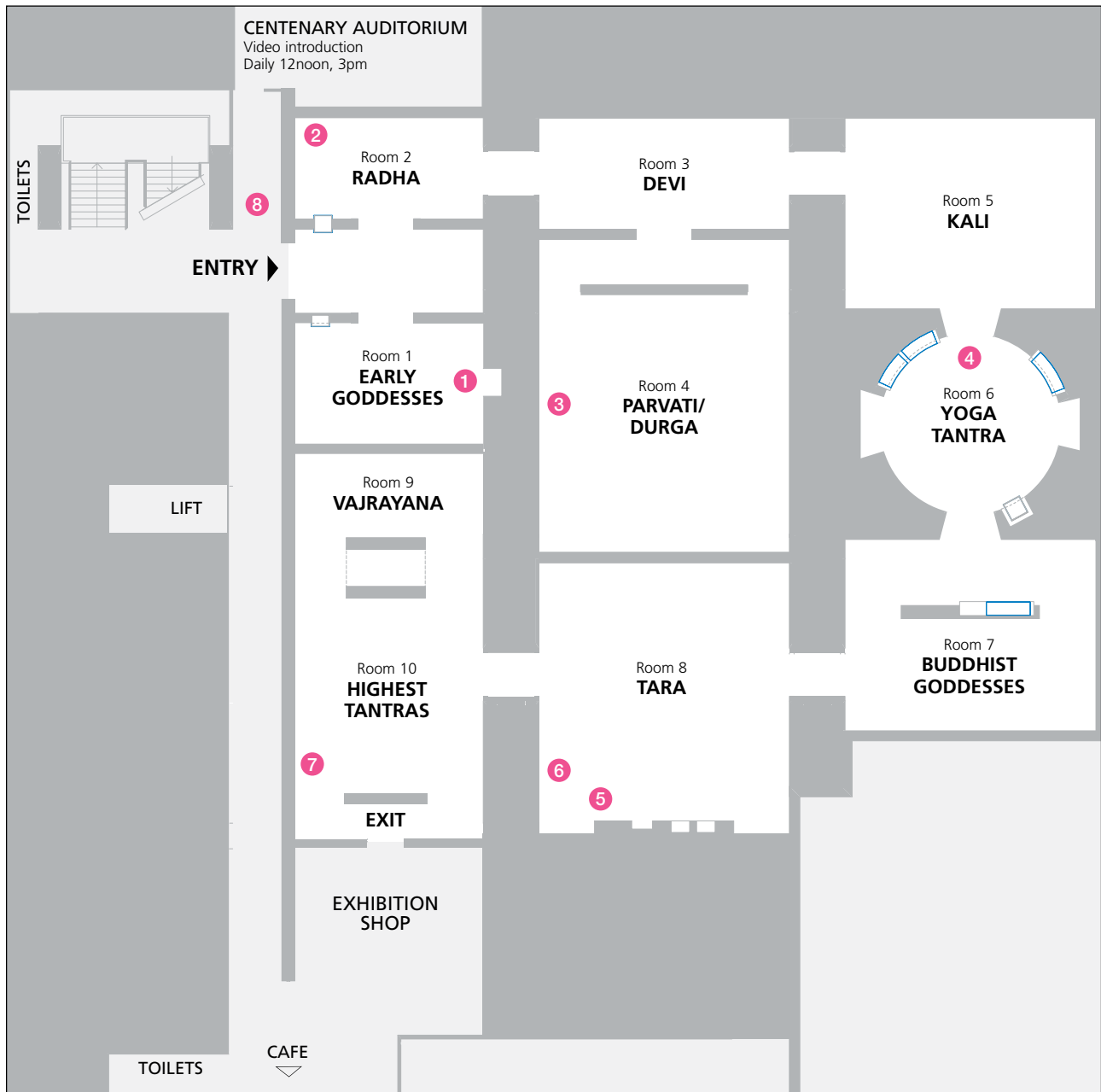
Themes: there are 7 broad thematic areas in the exhibition:

Early Goddesses
Hindu Goddesses
Yoga Tantra
Buddhist Goddesses
Female Buddhas
Vajrayana
The Highest Tantras

The exhibition took ‘3 years and a lifetime of wisdom’* from conception to installation to opening and will run for 16 weeks from Friday 13 October 2006 – Sunday 28 January 2007.

*Quote from Jackie Menzies, head curator Asian Art and exhibition curator

Exhibition Floor Plan



1. Early Goddesses
2. Radha
3. Parvati Durga
4. Yoga Tantra
5. Tara
6. Tara
7. Highest Tantras
8. Exhibition Entrance

Cross Collection Connections



THE GODDESS AT THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The Art Gallery of New South Wales holds a diverse range of artworks directly representing the goddess in our Indian and Himalayan collections from Kushan period sculpture from the 1st -2nd century to contemporary folk painting.

Inquiry activity

Investigate diverse representations of the goddess held by the Gallery through the online collection search at: www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection. Outline the cultures, times in history and religions they are connected to and discuss how these representations differ.

CONNECTING THE GODDESS ACROSS THE COLLECTION

The following works from the AGNSW collection are categorised by themes relevant to the investigation of the goddess and the exhibition *Goddess: divine energy*.

They are starting points for developing connections, contrasts and discussion across media, subject matter, technique and formal qualities. They also suggest approaches for working with the Gallery's permanent collection in broader, more diverse and long-term ways.

Images and information for the works listed can be sourced from the Gallery's collection handbooks the permanent collection education kits (*Focus on photography*, *Encounters with contemporary art*, *Aspects of Australian art and Adventures in Asia*), the gallery's Research Library and Archive and the online collection search.

Inquiry activity

Create an online exhibition focussing the themes and artworks in this section related to *Goddess: divine energy* using myVirtualGallery at www.artgallery.nsw.gov/mvg.

In your exhibition, select works about or related to the concept of the 'goddess' from the Gallery's collection. Present your exhibition with a title, images and text panels. You may use the themes presented in this kit or choose your own. Present your exhibition to the class, explaining your rationale, its content and who your target audience may be.

Telling tales: stories and narratives

Exhibition key work

Leaf from the 'Lambagraon' Gita Govinda c1820
INDIA, Pahari, Kangra, workshop of Purkhu
opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 23.8 x 32.5 cm
Ludwig Habighorst



Rajasthan state, Kota
Vasant Ragini c1770
INDIA
opaque watercolour with gold on paper
18.2 x 12.2cm
Purchased 1997
82.1997



Lord Frederic Leighton (England 1830-96)
Cymon and Iphigenia 1884
oil on canvas; 163 x 328 cm
Purchased 1976
210.1976

Symbols: mother, child, nature

Exhibition key work

Tree goddess (shalabhanjika) c1150-1200
INDIA, Karnataka, Hoysala period (c1006-1346)
chloritic schist, 87 x 44.5 x 24 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Felton Bequest 1963
540-D5



Francesco Ferrucci (Italy 1437-93)
Madonna and child c1480s
marble, 71.5 x 55 x 13.5 cm
Purchased 1971
125.1971



Ming Dynasty Xuande (1426–35) mark and period
Stem cup with design of the eight Buddhist emblems 1426-35
CHINA
Jingdezhen ware, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration,
10 x 11.9 cm
Purchased 1979
464.1979



Rinpa School
Flowers of the four seasons 1600s
JAPAN
pair of six-fold screens, ink, colours and sprinkled gold on paper
170 x 364.4 cm each
Purchased 1989
282.1989.a-b

Couples: relationships

Exhibition key work

Mandala of Kalachakra and Vishvamatha c late 1500s
CENTRAL TIBET
gouache on cotton, 83 x 75.5 cm
Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet



Arthur Murch (Australia 1902-1989)
Beach idyll 1930
tempera on canvas on plywood, 35.5 x 59.1 cm
Purchased with assistance from the Visual Arts Board Australia Council
Contemporary Art Purchase Grant 1975
57.1975



Robert Billington (England / Australia b1954)
Young couple with Torana 1991-92 /94
gelatin silver photograph, 31.6 x 31.3 cm sight
Gift of the artist 1994
622.1994



Peter Elliston (Australia b1940)
**Couple on platform at Giles Baths, Coogee,
New South Wales** 1992-94
gelatin silver photograph, 43.6 x 55.7 cm image; 50.3 x 60.8 cm sheet
Purchased 1994
228.1994

Dancing: time and movement

Exhibition key work

Vajravarahi 1400s
TIBET
gilt bronze, 35 cm
The Berti Aschmann Foundation of Tibetan Art at the Museum Rietberg Zurich



Miyajima Tatsuo (Japan b1957)
Region no 126701 – 127000 1991
300 LED lights, 190 x 1200 cm installed
Purchased 1995
32.1995



Ken Thaiday (Australia b1950)
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS
Beizam (shark) dance mask 1996
plywood, black bamboo, string, plastic, paint,
glass, feathers, 86.7 x 106 x 71 cm
Mollie Gowing Acquisition Fund for Contemporary
Aboriginal Art 1997
4.1997



Bertram Mackennal (Australia / UK 1863-1931)
The dancer 1904
bronze, 168 x 71 x 69 cm
Purchased 1910
700

Words: language and text

Exhibition key work

Vac, goddess of speech 1800s

INDIA, Rajasthan

gouache on paper, 28 x 20.3 cm

National Museum, New Delhi. Ajit Mookerjee Collection



Anselm Kiefer (Germany / France b1945)

Women of antiquity: Candidia 2002

painted bronze, iron; 177 x 130 x 125 cm

Purchased 2005



Kitagawa Utamaro (Japan 1753-06)

The coquettish woman from the series

Variations of blooms according to their speech 1806

JAPAN

colour woodcut, ban tate-e, 37.3 x 25.8 cm

Purchased 1930

4368



Ford Madox Brown (England 1821-93)

Chaucer at the court of Edward III 1847-51

oil on canvas, 372 x 296 cm

Purchased 1876

703

We are family!

Exhibition key work

Shiva and Parvati on Nandi, accompanied by Skanda and Ganesha c 1000s

CENTRAL INDIA
pink sandstone, 53 x 50 cm (irreg)
Jeff Connor Collection



Mysore, Karnataka
Shiva and Parvati early 1900s
INDIA
colours, gold and stucco on cloth, 33.5 x 21.1 cm
Gift of Mr F Storch 1994
361.1994



Frederick McCubbin (Australia 1855-1917)
On the wallaby track 1896
oil on canvas, 122 x 223.5 cm
Purchased 1897
572



Figure of Ganesha 900s
JAVA/INDONESIA
volcanic grey buff stone, 67 x 40 x 35 cm
Anonymous gift 1985
178.1985

I am woman hear me roar!

Exhibition key work

Durga slaying the buffalo demon 1900s
INDIA
poster image



Kalighat, Calcutta, West Bengal
The goddess Durga, mother of Ganesh late 1800s
INDIA
watercolour with gold and silver paint on paper,
42.9 x 25.7 cm
Purchased 1959
EP3.1959



Edward Poynter (England, 1836-1919)
The visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon 1890
oil on canvas, 234.5 x 350.5 x 20.5 cm frame
Purchased 1892
898

Paradise lost and found

Exhibition key work

The Paradise of Green Tara 1700s

TIBET

thangka, colours and gold on cotton, 61.6 x 53.3 cm

The Newark Museum, purchase 1969 Felix Fuld Bequest Fund



Kamakura period (1185-1332)

Taima mandala (depicting the Western Paradise presided over by Amida Buddha) early 1300s

JAPAN

hanging scroll, ink and colour with gold on silk, 146 x 138 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation Purchase 1991

369.1991



Charles Meere (Australia 1890-1961)

Australian beach pattern 1940

oil on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm

Purchased 1965

OA20.1965



William Robinson (Australia b1936)

Wispy landscape 1990

oil on canvas, 140 x 202

Purchased 1990

204.1990

Glossary

Key words and their definitions used within this education kit that relate to **key art works, ideas** and **themes** from the exhibition *Goddess: divine energy*.

abhaya mudra 'gesture of reassurance or fearlessness' made by raising the hand (usually the right) up to chest level with the palm facing out and the fingers upright; in Buddhism, sometimes considered a teaching gesture to dispel fear and uncertainties.

adamantine a mineral, often referred to as 'adamantine spar'. It is a silky brown form of corundum. Adamantine is also used as an adjective to refer to non-metallic, brilliant light-reflecting and transmitting properties, known as *adamantine lustre*. Within the religious context it refers to that which is unfaltering, immutable, and brilliant.

attribute a quality, characteristic or property associated with or belonging to something or someone.

Bharat Mata 'mother India'; personification of the Indian nation as a goddess.

bindu 'dot'; the nucleus of the universe; the single point from which all manifestation emanates.

bodhisattva a Buddha-to-be; a being destined to achieve Buddhahood.

Bodhi tree a sacred fig tree. According to Buddhist belief, Prince Siddharta (Buddha) meditated under this tree until he reached Enlightenment.

chakra 'wheel', 'circle'; within the context of yoga, a series of energy centres along the central axis of the body; for the *chakras* of the subtle body system, see p. 174.

Common Era (CE) sometimes known as the Current Era, the period of measured time beginning with the year 1 on the Gregorian calendar, the most commonly used calendar in the world today. The notations CE and BCE (Before the Common Era) are alternative notations for AD (*anno Domini*, Latin for

'in the year of the Lord') and BC (Before Christ), respectively. The term Common Era is preferred by some as a religiously inclusive alternative.

dakini a highly attained female who is revered for the sharp, penetrating wisdom she possesses.

deity a god or goddess; divine character or nature.

deva 'god' (feminine *devi*).

dharma Buddhist teachings.

Gita Govinda 12th-century poem by Jayadeva that celebrates the love of Radha and Krishna.

iconography a language of symbols; an idea represented by an image. Iconography usually refers to the design, creation and interpretation of the symbolism within religious art. The word 'iconography' literally means 'image writing' (Greek in origin).

kama 'desire'; as Kama, god of erotic love.

lama a Buddhist priest or monk from Tibet

liturgy a form of public worship, a ritual.

mantra a religious syllable or poem, typically from the Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit word mantra consists of the root *man* ('to think'), also in *manas* ('mind') and the suffix *-tra* meaning 'tool', hence a literal translation would be 'instrument of thought'. Mantras are intended to deliver the mind from illusion and material inclinations. Chanting is the process of repeating a mantra.

mandala 'circle'; cosmological diagram; the purified realm of a deity or Buddha; meditative and ritual device.

moksha 'liberation'; from the cycles of rebirth through reintegration with Supreme Reality (see Brahman); the final goal in Hinduism.

motif a recurring subject or theme.

omniscient knowing all things.



Highest Tantra room



Early Goddesses room



Yoga Tantra room

nirvana 'extinguish'; complete dissolution and release from the cycles of rebirth; the final goal in Buddhism.

prajna 'wisdom'; one of two constituents of final attainment or Buddhahood; personified as female and as a female consort of a male deity or Buddha; also see *karuna* and *upaya*.

puja devotional acts and ritual offerings.

Ramayana one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, compiled some time between 500 BCE-200 CE, and attributed to the scribe Valmiki. While the story centres on the hero Rama, the abduction of his wife Sita by the demon Ravana and the ensuing battle, the epic presents ancient philosophies and teachings and provides some record of early Indian culture and thought.

samsara cycles of rebirth; transmigration.

Sanskrit a classical language of India, a liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, and one of the 22 official languages of India. Sanskrit is also known as 'The Mother of all Languages', although it, like Latin, Greek and Persian, actually descends from Proto-Indo-European (PIE). It has a position in India and Southeast Asia similar to that of Latin and Greek in Europe, and is a central part of Hindu tradition and Indian philosophy. Today, Sanskrit is mostly used as a ceremonial language in Hindu religious rituals in the forms of hymns and mantras.



Early Goddesses room

Shakta a tradition centred on the goddess and feminine energy (*shakti*) as the principal focus; follower of this tradition.

shakti 'energy', 'power'; feminine creative energy; female consort of a male deity

stupa mound to cover relics of the Buddha and important individuals. After the 'passing away' of the Buddha, his remains were cremated and the ashes divided and buried under eight stupas.

Tantras body of esoteric Hindu, Buddhist and Jain literature that espouses advanced rituals, visualisation practices, the use of sonic formulae (mantras) and yogic techniques as means to rapid religious advancement.

thangka (Tib) 'flat-field'; Tibetan painting or banner.

triloka 'three worlds'; realms of existence in the cosmos; may refer to the netherworld, earthly realm and the heavens.

vajra (Tib dorje) 'adamantine', 'unfaltering'; sceptre-like object that denotes the indestructible nature of Buddhist reality.

yakshini nature and tree spirit supplicated for fertility and abundance (masculine *yaksha*).

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Menzies, Jackie. *Goddess: divine energy*, AGNSW, Sydney 2006

Miller, Barbara Stoler. *Jayadeva's Gita Govinda*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1978.

Rawson, Philip. *Tantra*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London 1971

Rhie, Marilin M & Thurman, Robert A F. *Wisdom and compassion: the sacred art of Tibet*, Thames & Hudson, London 1991

Shaw, Miranda. *Passionate enlightenment: women in Tantric Buddhism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1994

Online

Art Gallery of New South Wales Goddess: divine energy www.goddess-art.com.au

Art Gallery of New South Wales Collection online www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection

Art Gallery of New South Wales myVirtualGallery www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/mvp

Visasia: Art Gallery of New South Wales Asian Collection website <http://www.asianart.com.au/>

TAASA: The Asian Arts Society of Australia www.taasa.org.au

Film

Goddess: divine energy film series: Dream Girls

In both Asian and Western cinema, intelligent, strong, active and assertive female actors have been a symbol of empowerment for women, often representing the perfect model of female balance and delivering power with sex and sex with power.

The Gallery's film series Dream Girls celebrates some of the goddesses of Asian and Western cinema, screening films from India and China as well as Western classics.

For full film program, descriptions and screening times: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/events/cal/goddess_films

Mother India, Mehboob Khan (dir) 1957

Devi, Satyajit Ray (dir) 1960

Bandit queen, Shekar Kapur (dir) 1994

Devdas, Sanjay Leela Bhansali (dir) 2002

The living goddess, Frank & Josette Heimans (dir) 1975

Helen: queen of the nautch girls, Anthony Kormer (dir) 1970

Fearless: the Hunterwali story, Riyad Vinci Wadi (dir) 1993

Crouching tiger, hidden dragon, Ang Lee (dir) 2000

Notorious, Alfred Hitchcock (dir) 1946

Queen Christina, Rouben Mamoulian (dir) 1933

Gentlemen prefer blondes, Howard Hawks (dir) 1953

The postman always rings twice, Tay Garnett (dir) 1946

Music

Two CDs have been custom produced for the exhibition by Celestial Harmonies to provide sound for the exhibition. These are available in the Art Gallery of New South Wales shop:

In praise of the goddess

Devotional songs from the Mallick family

Goddess: divine energy

Compilation CD includes tracks by Paul Horn, Krishna Chakravarty, David Parson, Karnakata percussion track, arti bells from the Durga Temple in Varanasi.

Produced by Public Programs Department
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Art Gallery Road, The Domain, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
pp@ag.nsw.gov.au www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/education