



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

MEDIA RELEASE

**ANCIENT KHMER MASTERPIECES UNVEILED AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY
OF AUSTRALIA**

Three iconic Khmer sculptures, spanning a period of five centuries, have today been unveiled at the National Gallery of Australia. The sculptures will remain on display for the next three years on long-term loan from the National Museum of Cambodia.

This loan is the most recent development in a cultural relationship extending back before 1992 when the National Gallery of Australia unveiled its popular exhibition - The Age of Angkor.

‘The National Gallery of Australia and the National Museum of Cambodia have built a close connection across three decades and we look forward to further strengthening the collaboration into the future’, said His Excellency Hab Touch, Director-General of the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, who travelled to Canberra for the unveiling.

‘I am delighted to see these wonderful works on display in Canberra. Our commitment to show the art of our nearest neighbours goes back to the inception of the Gallery. However, we hold very few fine Khmer sculptures. This loan, from one of the world’s great collections, transforms our ability to tell the story of mainland South-East Asian art’, said the Director of the National Gallery of Australia, Dr Ron Radford.

The long-term loan allows the National Gallery of Australia to display magnificent Khmer art from an important period in South-East Asian history while also drawing attention to the issue of illicit trade, looting and reproductions.

‘The exhibition of these marvellous sculptures is another example of the close links between our countries. Every year, many thousands of Australians travel to Siem Reap to see the temples. I am certain that Australians will enjoy seeing such high quality Khmer art in their capital and that it will inspire more Australians to visit Cambodia,’ said Alison Burrows, Australia’s Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The exhibition consists of a standing Buddha from the seventh century, one of the oldest Buddhist sculptures found in Cambodia; an exquisitely carved lintel showing part of the Hindu creation story, The Churning of the Sea of Milk, from the tenth century; and an extremely rare twelfth to thirteenth century representation of a girl in the form of the Buddhist goddess of wisdom, Prajnaparamita.

The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh thanks the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, and the National Museum of Cambodia for making the exhibition possible.

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29 August 2014