FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 29, 2015
MEDIA CONTACTS: Amanda Hicks Nina Litoff
(312) 443-7297 (312) 443-3363
ahicks@artic.edu nlitoff@artic.edu

GATES OF THE LORD: THE TRADITION OF KRISHNA PAINTINGS AT THE ART INSTITUTE
TO OFFER RARE GLIMPSE INTO ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST
INTIMATE AND PRIVATE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

More than 100 Artworks from India and the United States Come Together in Chicago
for a Groundbreaking Exhibition of Unique Indian Visual Culture

CHICAGO—The Art Institute is proud to announce the opening of the highly anticipated special exhibition, Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings, on September 13, 2015 in Regenstein Hall where it will remain on view to audiences through January 3, 2016.

Join the Art Institute of Chicago this fall to experience a stunning installation of more than 100 objects including pichvais—intricately painted cloth hangings—celebrating Shrinathji, a form of the Hindu god Krishna. This first of its kind large-scale exploration at any American museum of the art and aesthetics of the Pushtimarg sect of Hinduism, Gates of the Lord comprises a magnificent assembly of drawings, pichvais, paintings, and historic photographs. Madhuvanti Ghose, the Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan and Islamic Art, highlights the special context for this exhibition saying, “This is a chance to showcase this very special artistic tradition to our audiences in the United States. Nathdwara and its artists are renowned for having preserved painting traditions in an unbroken legacy for more than four centuries. The exhibition provides us with an opportunity to celebrate these living traditional artists who have gone unrecognized for too long.”

The extraordinary Lead Sponsorship of Nita and Mukesh Ambani and the Reliance Foundation and the generosity Anita and Prabhakant Sinha made it possible to borrow these artistic
treasures from two prestigious and rarely exhibited private collections from India, the Amit Ambalal Collection (Ahmedabad, India) and the TAPI Collection (Surat, India). Complimented by loans of important objects from public and private collections within the United States, as well as highlights from the Art Institute of Chicago’s own permanent collection, this groundbreaking philanthropic partnership supports the museum’s vision to present the richest possible story of Pushtimarg art and tradition.

Founded in the 16th century by the saint and philosopher Shri Vallabhacharya (1479–1531), the Pushtimarg is a religious community dedicated to the devotion of Shrinathji, a divine image of the Hindu god Krishna as a seven-year-old child. The religious and artistic heart of the sect is based in the temple town of Nathdwara (literally, “The Gates of the Lord”), near Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan, India. The unique, highly aestheticized veneration of Shrinathji has long fascinated scholars and artists, as has the extraordinary legacy of miniature paintings created to record such worship. This exhibition showcases centuries of pichvais and miniature paintings that have been created by and for the Pushtimarg in devotion of Krishna as Shrinathji.

The exhibition takes its visitors through a year in Nathdwara, and the daily veneration of Shrinathji characterized by the changing of seasons and a bustling festival calendar. Gallery by gallery, the viewer is introduced to the impressive range of pichvais used as backdrops for Shrinathji in his shrine, each uniquely suited to a particular season or festival. The accompanying miniature paintings offer further insight into the Pushtimarg sect: its private and intimate mode of worship, rich history, and important priests and patron families. Exhibition curator Madhuvanti Ghose underscores the sacred, cloistered practice of the Pushtimarg. “This sect of Hinduism is little known, even within India, due to its very closed and private devotions. Even today, phones and cameras are not allowed within the precincts of its main temple at Nathdwara. Thus, outside of the sect, there is little appreciation of its unique traditions that have been strictly preserved and elaborated upon since the 16th century.”
Festival and devotional music, a shrine reconstruction, and touchscreen kiosks that allow visitors to page through religious manuscripts, enhance the experience of the Pushtimarg’s rich and very private culture. The exhibition ends with an exploration of the works, sketches, and observations of prominent 20th- and 21st-century Nathdwara artists who continue the devotional painting tradition, expand its legacy, and ensure it flourishes and endures.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue featuring in-depth essays and full-page reproductions published by the Art Institute and distributed worldwide by Yale University Press and Mapin Publishing.

RELATED EVENTS

Member Preview Day of Gates of the Lord
September 12, 2015
Regenstein Hall
Members get the first glimpse of the unique visual culture of the Hindu Pushtimarg sect of Western India through more than 100 paintings and pichvais.

Member Lecture: Gates of the Lord
September 12, 2015
2:00pm–3:00pm
Rubloff Auditorium
Reservations Required
Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art, Madhuvanti Ghose offers insight into the Pushtimarg; their devotion to Shrinathji, a form of Krishna; and their rich visual tradition that continues today.

Concert: Rattan Mohan Sharma
September 13, 2015
2:00pm
Rubloff Auditorium
Free with museum admission
The Indian classical vocalist, composer, and music director from Rajasthan celebrates the opening of Gates of the Lord. Presented in association with Mandala Arts.

Conversation: Madhuvanti Ghose with Victoria Lautman
September 24, 2015
6:00pm
Fullerton Hall
Free with museum admission
Chicago arts and culture writer Victoria Lautman talks about Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings with exhibition curator Madhuvanti Ghose, Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art.

Member Lecture: Gates of the Lord
October 27, 2015
2:00pm–3:00pm
Fullerton Hall
Reservations Required
Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art, Madhuvanti Ghose offers insight into the Pushtimarg; their devotion to Shrinathji, a form of Krishna; and their rich visual tradition that continues today.
Family Festival: Gates of the Lord
November 21, 2015
Drop in 10:30am-3:00pm
No Registration Required

Join us at this festival with a focus on Sharad Navratri, the seasonal Gujarati celebration in autumn, and also on the broader seasonal Hindu celebration of Diwali, the festival of lights. Enjoy a variety of art activities in the Ryan Education Center, including the Little Studio for ages 3-5. Discover Hindu stories by looking at works of art with a costumed dancer. Enjoy dance demonstrations led by Mandala, including Garba and Dandiya Raas, two traditional dance forms of Gujarat, India, and then join in a lively community dance!

Images:

Sponsors
Lead Sponsorship for *Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings* has been provided by Nita and Mukesh Ambani and the Reliance Foundation.

Major funding has been generously contributed by Anita and Prabhakant Sinha.

Annual support for Art Institute exhibitions is provided by the Exhibitions Trust: Kenneth Griffin, Robert M. and Diane v. S. Levy, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation, and the Woman’s Board.

The exhibition opening dinner is graciously underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. Dev Tandon and The Kini Group.

# # #

The Art Institute of Chicago gratefully acknowledges the support of the Chicago Park District on behalf of the citizens of Chicago.