

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from the Norton Simon Museum and the Norton Simon Art Foundation Concerning the “Temple Wrestler”

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum and the Norton Simon Art Foundation (“Norton Simon”) announced today that an agreement has been reached whereby the colossal 10th-century statue known as the “Temple Wrestler” will return to Cambodia. This sandstone work depicting Bhima, a heroic figure in the Hindu masterpiece *The Mahabharata*, has been exhibited continuously at the Norton Simon Museum for nearly four decades. During this period, the Museum has taken great care to preserve the work, and to highlight its significance through scholarly research and publication. Now, as a gesture of friendship, and in response to a unique and compelling request by top officials in Cambodia to help rebuild its “soul” as a nation, the Norton Simon has decided to make a gift of the Bhima to the Kingdom of Cambodia and to its people. Details regarding the transfer of this artwork will be announced at a later date.

Earlier this year, representatives of the Norton Simon met in Phnom Penh with senior officials of Cambodia. During that meeting and in related communications, Cambodian officials stated that they consider the Bhima to be a work of art that is of unique and special significance to its cultural history. They believe the Bhima is one of a pair of colossal 10th-century sandstone sculptures of wrestlers that once stood guard together at the Prasat Chen Temple at the historic site of Koh Ker in Preah Vihear Province; and that Bhima’s companion is the Duryodhan that was recently repatriated by Sotheby’s as part of the settlement of a lawsuit brought by the U.S.

Cambodia officials advised the Norton Simon representatives that it would be of singular importance to its people to have the Bhima exhibited alongside the Duryodhan. The two massive wrestlers would form the centerpiece of a special exhibition in the Cambodian National

Museum that is dedicated to the permanent display of a group of nine ancient Cambodian statues in a setting intended to evoke a temple complex at Koh Ker. Cambodia has sought to recover seven other ancient statues that once stood at the historic site of Koh Ker (Arjuna, Balarama, Dhrishtadyumna, Krsna, Nakula, Sahadeva and Yudhisthira) so they can be displayed around the Duryodhan and the Bhima in this special exhibition. Three of these other statues have been returned to Cambodia to date.

The Norton Simon properly acquired the Bhima from a reputable art dealer in New York in 1976. However, the facts about the Bhima's provenance prior to the dealer's ownership are unclear because of the chaotic wartime conditions in Cambodia during the 1970s. Even though the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Norton Simon have a good faith difference of views in relation to the meaning and scope of Cambodian law and guidelines governing the determination of ownership of the Bhima, the Norton Simon worked directly with Cambodia to come up with a mutually acceptable solution.

"It was a pleasure working with Secretary of State of Cambodia Chan Tani and his team—from the beginning, we all understood the importance of reuniting the Bhima with the other Temple statues and we are proud of this collaborative result," said Walter Timoshuk, President of the Norton Simon Museum.

In conjunction with the agreement to return the Bhima, Cambodia generously offered to make periodic loans to the Norton Simon of other ancient Khmer statues for the purpose of further enhancing appreciation of Cambodian cultural heritage by visitors to the Norton Simon Museum. Information on these loans will be made available in the future.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of Indian and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please

call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day except Tuesday and noon to 9 p.m. on Friday. **Admission:** General admission is \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

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