

# Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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## Norton Simon Museum Presents ***Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft***

Commemorating the Museum's 50th anniversary, the exhibition features 60 incredible works that highlight gold's cultural and material resilience across time and place.

October 24, 2025 – February 16, 2026



**Pasadena, CA** – Opening this fall at the Norton Simon Museum, *Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft* explores the artistic and cultural significance of gold in approximately 60 works of art drawn from across the Museum's collections, which encompass South and Southeast Asia, Europe,

North Africa and North America. Sculptures, paintings, jewelry, tapestries and photography that span from 1000 BCE to the 20th century will be displayed together for the first time, revealing unexpected intersections in the circulation, craft and meaning of gold across time and place. Presented on the occasion of the Museum's 50th anniversary, a milestone traditionally associated with this metal, the exhibition invites a fresh examination of gold as an artistic medium.

The exhibition is divided into three thematic galleries: power, devotion and adornment. The first gallery displays objects that convey authority through the presence of gold, used by artists to create dazzling effects that underscored their patrons' wealth and status. In some cases, such power came from direct access to sources of gold, which was extracted from mines and rivers across Africa, Asia, Europe and South America and transported over vast regions. The historical thirst for gold motivated California's own 19th-century mining practices, the legacy of which is explored in this exhibition through photographs by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. In the hands of trained craftspeople, gold, a highly malleable metal, was transformed into a variety of objects collected by elite patrons, including illuminated manuscripts and tapestries woven with golden thread.

The second gallery features religious art that uses gold, a metal valued for both its beauty and durability. Its ability to be shaped without corroding made it ideal for sacred images meant to last. In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, gilt sculptures from the 12th to 20th centuries were often commissioned by donors to honor deities and enlightened beings. Gold symbolized spiritual purity and served as a high-value offering meant to earn religious merit and provide divine protection. In 14th- and 15th-century Europe, artists used extremely thin sheets of hammered gold leaf to depict Christian holy figures surrounded by divine light. The gold's glow, especially under candlelight in churches and private altars, heightened the spiritual atmosphere.

In a jewel-box setting, the third and final gallery of the exhibition gives special attention to the power of adornment and the artistic skill required to produce precious jewelry worn by Roman patrician women, or that ornamented Egyptian statuettes possibly used for domestic protection in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

New technical analysis has helped to identify the fundamental material properties of the wide array of objects on view, prompting further questions about their significance. Close inspection of paintings, manuscripts and sculpture has revealed the variety of ways artists manipulated gilt surfaces to create rich devotional experiences. The team of curators and conservators also discovered that in some cases, what appears to be gold is in fact an illusionistic treatment of another material such as bronze, silver, silk thread or paint. This sort of artistic alchemy evokes the gleaming effects of actual gold. Many such discoveries will be presented in the exhibition, along with technical displays that delve into the artistic practices used to create the objects on view.

*Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft* is organized by Associate Curator Maggie Bell and Assistant Curator Lakshika Senarath Gamage. It is on view in the Museum's lower-level exhibition wing from October 24, 2025 (the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the renaming of the Norton Simon Museum) through February 16, 2025. A series of events, including a film series and lecture program, will be organized in conjunction with the exhibition. Details will be available at [nortonsimon.org](http://nortonsimon.org).

### **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 South 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 800 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens.

**Special Notice:** From early January through October 2025, the Museum's exterior areas are under construction, which will result in improvements to the Sculpture Garden and entrance. The Sculpture Garden is closed for the duration of the project. To learn more, visit our [website](#).

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 [nortonsimon.org](http://nortonsimon.org). Hours: The Museum is open Thursday through Monday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. (Friday and Saturday to 7 p.m.). It is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday. Admission: General admission is \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. The first Friday of the month from 4 to 7 p.m. is free to all. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. Parking: Parking is free but limited, and no reservations are necessary. Public Transportation: Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA A Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for schedules. Planning your Visit: For up-to-date information on our guidelines and protocols, please visit [nortonsimon.org/visit](http://nortonsimon.org/visit).

Image: Asia: Nepal, *Indra*, 13th century, Gilt bronze, 16 1/8 x 12 3/16 x 6 in. (41.0 x 31 x 15.2 cm). The Norton Simon Foundation.