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Slideshow: Luminous-The Art of Asia at Seattle Art Museum

By Adriana Grant

The next big exhibit of Asian art isn't tucked away in Volunteer Park at Seattle Asian Art Museum—it's the main attraction at SAM Downtown. Luminous: The Art of Asia, which opens Thursday, will showcase more than 160 works from 13 countries, including 17th-century Japanese screens, 13th-century bronze Nepalese sculpture, MRIs of ancient religious artifacts from China and India, and a smattering of more contemporary pieces in photography, porcelain, and fiber. Roughly a fifth of the pieces are on display for the first time—Thai ceramics, textiles, and Indian paintings discovered in storage—and a third of the exhibit comes home after years of touring Japan.

Amid this collection of historical artifacts, the most striking work is by Do-Ho Suh, a Korean-born New York artist (b.1962) best known in Seattle for his dog-tag sculpture *Some/One* (also on view at SAM). Suh's new installation, *Gate*, is a three-dimensional silk replica of the ornate stone gate outside Suh's childhood home. The translucent sculpture serves as a screen for a three-minute animation that appropriates images from some of the seminal works in the exhibit. The flock from nearby panel *Crows* gathers and flies through the gateway; a faun strolls in from 17th-century masterpiece *Poem Scroll With Deer*. It is a startling, sad, beautiful work that evokes a strong sense of nostalgia.

Do-Ho Suh's written observations accompany many of the pieces on view, serving as a modern interpretation of the exhibit, while raising questions concerning displacement and contextualization. That said, Suh's own work might be the best way to bring attention to the far older pieces.