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Media Contacts:

Stephanie Todd-Wong | Vice President, Communications and External Affairs | stwong@asiasociety.org | 713-496-9905

Chris Dunn | Senior Marketing and Communications Manager | cdunn@AsiaSociety.org | 713-496-9903

TSHERIN SHERPA: SPIRITS OPENS SEPTEMBER 21ST

SPECTACULAR EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION



Spirits (Metamorphosis), 2019-20, Tsherin Sherpa (American, born Nepal, 1968), acrylic and ink on canvas. Collection of Dolma Chonzom Bhutia.

HOUSTON, August 15, 2023 — [Asia Society Texas \(AST\)](#) announces the opening of [***Tsherin Sherpa: Spirits***](#), a stunning mid-career retrospective of today's most visible, well-known, and accomplished contemporary artist from the Himalayan region. Focusing on Sherpa's *Spirits* series, the exhibition features 33 pieces, including painting, sculpture, installation, and fiber work that thoughtfully contemplate the power of transformation. Born and raised in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sherpa studied Tibetan Buddhist painting with his father from the age of 13. In his late 20s, he relocated to California, where he continued his traditional art practice before moving beyond its boundaries to establish his own artistic voice. *Tsherin Sherpa: Spirits* is open to the public Thursday, September 21, 2023, through Sunday, January 7, 2024.

Tsherin Sherpa: Spirits tells the stories of loss, struggle, and empowerment. The exhibition traces the evolution of Sherpa's *Spirits* series as it stretches, bends, reconfigures, and repurposes elements from traditional Tibetan art, merging them with modern imagery. Through these transformations, Sherpa contemplates the collisions of culture and identity that displaced people must negotiate. Dislocated from their homes — an experience familiar to the artist and communities all over the world — these figures move from grief and confusion to courage and self-assurance, to triumph and wisdom.

According to Sherpa, “The ‘Spirit’ character was like my alter-ego, but now, after living in Nepal again, I see there are many people who are very fluid in their identity, living between different countries and are very easily adaptable to different environments. That fluidity is amazing. Now, ‘Spirits’ has a different meaning — it is not just about my experience.” In their multiple manifestations, the *Spirits* reveal endurance that gives way to the power of transformation.

For **Owen Duffy**, Nancy C. Allen Curator and Director of Exhibitions, the opportunity to share Sherpa’s work with the Houston community is significant: “Tsherin Sherpa’s witty and inventive evolution of thangka painting will enchant visitors. We’re particularly excited to add to the exhibition a gallery dedicated to Sherpa’s ongoing projects with traditional artists from the Kathmandu Valley.”

While the *Spirits* series began in 2009, after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, Sherpa felt a strong urge to work with local artists, and several of these weavings, paintings, and installations will be included in the Houston iteration of the exhibition. For Sherpa, “The Asia Society Texas exhibition is going to be a major platform to showcase these contemporary collaborations with traditional artists from Nepal.”

Sherpa insists that the meaning of his work is fluid, dependent on what each viewer brings to the encounter. Viewers are invited to listen closely to the exhibition and discover a story that resonates with their life.

***Tsherin Sherpa: Spirits* Fast Facts:**

- Dates: Thursday, September 21, 2023 – Sunday, January 7, 2024
- Opening Reception with the artist: Thursday, September 21 from 6 – 8:30 p.m.
- Exhibition Admission: Free for members, \$5 for students and seniors with I.D., and \$8 for nonmembers
- Hours: Wednesday–Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Location: Asia Society Texas, 1370 Southmore Blvd, Houston, TX, 77004 (in the Museum District)
- More info: asiasociety.org/texas/exhibitions/tsherin-sherpa-spirits

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1968, **Tsherin Sherpa** currently works between California and Kathmandu. In his youth, he began studying traditional Tibetan thangka painting with his father, Master Urgen Dorje Sherpa, a renowned thangka artist from Ngyalam, Tibet. After studying computer science and Mandarin in Taiwan, he returned to Nepal, where he collaborated with his father on several important projects, including thangka and monastery mural paintings. In 1998, Sherpa immigrated to California; there, he began to explore his own style –

reimagining traditional tantric motifs, symbols, colors, and gestures, which he resolutely placed in contemporary compositions.

The artist represented Nepal at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022 with his solo exhibition *Tales of Muted Spirits – Dispersed Threads – Twisted Shangri-La*. He has exhibited across the United States, Europe, and Asia, including in the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT8), Brisbane (2015); *Beyond the Mandala – Contemporary Art from Tibet* (2011), Volte Gallery, Mumbai, in collaboration with Rossi & Rossi London; *Scorching Sun of Tibet* (2010), Songzhuang Art Center, Beijing; *Tradition Transformed: Tibetan Artists Respond* (2010), Rubin Museum of Art, New York, Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire, and the Crow Collection of Asian Art, Dallas, Texas; *Buddha in the Hood* (2010), Red Mill Gallery, Johnson, Vermont; *Sacred Images: Thangka Painting* (2007), Alta Galleria, Berkeley, California; and *Contemporary Thangka* (2007), Smith Andersen Editions, Palo Alto, California. He has also held solo exhibitions at Rossi & Rossi London (2012 and 2018) and Hong Kong (2016).

ABOUT ASIA SOCIETY TEXAS

Asia Society Texas Center believes in the strength and beauty of diverse perspectives and people. As an educational institution, we advance cultural exchange by celebrating the vibrant diversity of Asia, inspiring empathy, and fostering a better understanding of our interconnected world. Spanning the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, our programming is rooted in the educational and cultural development of our community — trusting in the power of art, dialogue, and ideas to combat bias and build a more inclusive society.

Tsherin Sherpa: Spirits is organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, in partnership with Asia Society Texas. The checklist of works in the exhibition was selected by Dr. John Henry Rice, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The Asia Society Texas presentation of the exhibition is curated by Owen Duffy, Nancy C. Allen Curator and Director of Exhibitions, with Rebecca Becerra, Exhibitions Manager and Registrar.

Exhibitions and their related programs at Asia Society Texas are presented by Nancy C. Allen, Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, and Leslie and Brad Bucher. Major support comes from The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston Endowment, and the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance. Generous funding also provided by The Anchorage Foundation of Texas, The Clayton Fund, Texas Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Wortham Foundation, Inc., Agnes Hsu-Tang, Ph.D. and Oscar L. Tang, and Ann Wales. Funding is also provided through contributions from the Exhibitions Patron Circle, a dedicated group of individuals and organizations committed to bringing exceptional visual art to Asia Society Texas.