



Virtual Collection of Masterpieces

“It is indeed very remarkable, rich in content, broad in scope with an excellent choice of objects. What is interesting and important of course is the collaborative and inclusive aspect of the project.”

Neil MacGregor, director of the British museum

An international cooperation project between museums

31 museums from Asia and 31 museums from Europe have contributed approximately 1000 masterpieces to the [Virtual Collection of Masterpieces](#) (VCM). Officially launched in Gyeonggi in Korea on the 13th of September 2007, the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces is a Web-accessible selection of images and accompanying information on Asian masterpieces from Asian and European museums. The project presents the Masterpieces of the contributing museums' collections through the Internet in order to promote mutual understanding and appreciation between the peoples of Asia and Europe and to provide easy access of this information for both the general public and professionals alike.

The VCM chooses to present masterpieces, because “Museums all over the world take pride in masterpieces; people are fascinated by those pieces of art and culture of such quality that they transcend the ordinary to speak across time about cultural expression and achievement.” The website raises the question of the definition of a masterpiece; every participating museum explains why its masterpieces are considered as such.

The VCM is supported by the [Asia Europe Foundation](#) (ASEF) in Singapore as a flag ship project and led by a consortium of Asian and European museums.

History

The [Asia-Europe Foundation](#) (ASEF), which was launched by the [Asia-Europe Meeting](#) countries (ASEM) on the 15th of February 1997 in Singapore, seeks to promote understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchange. This exchange includes conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms.

Taking up the challenges of ASEF's mission, some museum directors in Asia and Europe embarked on a programme of cooperation, called the [Asia-Europe Museums Network](#) (ASEMUS). In August 2005, ASEMUS museums considered highlighting the masterpieces as the first phase of an ambitious project in order to promote greater understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe. ASEMUS has initiated many projects, the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces being one of the most important.

The founding partners

Volkenkunde, National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden
Gyeonggi Provincial Museum, Korea
National Heritage Board, Singapore
National Museum of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines
Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, China
Musée du quai Branly, Paris, France
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland
Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden
Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF)
Asia Pacific Regional Organisation of ICOM (ICOM-ASPAC)

Contributing museums

Austria	Vienna	Museum für Völkerkunde
Brunei	Kota Batu	National Museum
China	Beijing	Palace Museum
China	Hong Kong	Museum of Art, Kowloon
China	Shanghai	Shanghai National Museum
Czech Republic	Prague	Náprstek Museum
Finland	Helsinki	Didrichsen Art Museum
Finland	Helsinki	Kulttuurien Museo
France	Paris	Musée du quai Branly
France	Paris	Musée Guimet
Germany	Göttingen	Ethnographic Collection of the University of Göttingen
Germany	Hamburg	Museum für Völkerkunde
Germany	Munich	Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde München
Hungary	Budapest	Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts
Indonesia	Jakarta	Museum Basoeki Abdullah
Indonesia	Jakarta	Museum Kebangkitan Nasional
Indonesia	Jakarta	Museum Nasional Indonesia
Indonesia	Jakarta	Museum Sumpah Pemuda
Ireland	Dublin	Chester Beatty Library
Italy	Rome	Museo "Giuseppe Tucci"
Italy	Rome	Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini"
Japan	Nagasaki	Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture
Japan	Tokyo	National Museum
South-Korea	Seoul	Hanyang University Museum
South-Korea	Seoul	National Museum
South-Korea	Seoul	Sejong University Museum
South-Korea	Yongin-city, Kyonggi-do	Gyeonggi Provincial Museum
Laos	Vientiane	Hong Prakaew
Laos	Vientiane	National Museum
Laos	Vientiane	Sisaket Museum
Laos	Vientiane	That Luang Museum
Latvia	Riga	Museum of Foreign Art
Netherlands	Amsterdam	Rijksmuseum
Netherlands	Amsterdam	Tropenmuseum
Netherlands	Leeuwarden	Keramiekmuseum Prinsessehof
Netherlands	Leiden	National Museum of Ethnology
Philippines	Dasmariñas	Museo De La Salle
Philippines	Makati City	Ayala Museum
Philippines	Manila	National Museum
Poland	Krakow	National Museum in Krakow
Poland	Torun	District Museum Torun
Poland	Warszawa	National Museum in Warsaw
Poland	Warszawa	Muzeum Azji i Pacyfiku w Warszawie
Portugal	Lisbon	Calouste Gulbenkian Museum
Portugal	Lisbon	Palácio Nacional da Ajuda
Singapore	Singapore	Asian Civilisations Museum
Singapore	Singapore	National Museum of Singapore
Singapore	Singapore	National Archives of Singapore
Singapore	Singapore	NUS Museum
Singapore	Singapore	Singapore Art Museum

Slovenia	Ljubljana	Slovene Ethnographic Museum
Spain	Madrid	Museo Nacional de Antropología
Sweden	Gothenburg	Museum of World Culture
Sweden	Stockholm	Museum of Ethnography
Sweden	Stockholm	Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities
Sweden	Stockholm	Medelhavsmuseet
Thailand	Chiang Mai	Chiang Mai National Museum
Thailand	Chiang Rai	Rai Mae Fah Luang
Vietnam	Hanoi	National Museum of Vietnamese History
Vietnam	Hanoi	Vietnam Museum of Ethnology
Vietnam	Hanoi	Vietnam Fine Arts Museum
United Kingdom	London	Victoria and Albert Museum

Future development

The Virtual Collection of Masterpieces is the beginning of a long commitment to cooperation between Asian and European museums. The VCM will be maintained properly and will be further developed by adding more participating museums and actively engaging them. Extension of the VCM will be specifically focused on those countries that have not many participating museums yet (e.g., China, India, Pakistan and Mongolia). The objective is to present 5000 Asian masterpieces on-line by 2010 and to make them widely accessible. The VCM will also provide new tools, which will be used for various educational activities.

Finally, the VCM can also offer a unique virtual working and meeting place for museum professionals, a platform for collaboration and cooperation between the Asian and European museums, and a virtual showcase of ASEMUS in cyberspace.

The image displays two screenshots of the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces (VCM) website. The top screenshot shows the home page, which includes a navigation menu on the left, a featured 'Masterpiece of the Day' (a terracotta jar), and a list of featured stories. An arrow points to the top right of this page with the label 'Home page'. The bottom screenshot shows the search interface, which includes a search bar, filters for museum, object type, region, and period, and a list of search results for Buddha images. An arrow points to the search bar area with the label 'Search the VCM'.

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