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**ASIAN ART MUSEUM OF SAN FRANCISCO REOPENS MARCH 20, 2003,
AT NEW HOME IN CIVIC CENTER**

Architect Gae Aulenti's Design Adds Modern Elements to Historic Beaux Arts Building to Create
Dramatic New Facility for Showcasing Museum's World-Renowned Collection

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, NOVEMBER 11, 2002 – The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco—having long outgrown its home of 35 years in Golden Gate Park—will open its new, expanded facility at the city's Civic Center on Thursday, March 20, 2003, at 10:00 am. The grand opening culminates an eight-year, \$160.5 million public/private partnership to create a new home for the museum and its world-renowned collection of Asian art through the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the city's former Main Library, a 1917 beaux arts-style building. Architect Gae Aulenti, best known for converting a derelict Paris train station into the celebrated Musée d'Orsay, conceived the transformation of the historic building into the new Asian Art Museum. The museum's new quarters—featuring nearly 40,000 square feet of gallery display space as well as expanded educational services, state-of-the-art storage and conservation facilities, and more—will allow the museum to better fulfill its mission of leading a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture.

“We are delighted to once again share the Asian Art Museum with the citizens of the Bay Area and the world,” said museum director Emily Sano. “Our new facilities will allow us to expand our offerings to provide a truly unique experience. Not only will we have the treasured collection our constituents have always loved, but we will have more of it on view. In addition, we will provide new interpretative programs to enhance the visitor's connection to the art.”

“San Francisco is excited to welcome the new Asian Art Museum to the revitalized Civic Center neighborhood, the cultural, political, and social heart of this city,” said San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown. “The museum is a dynamic new element and represents another jewel in Civic Center's crown.”

To date, more than \$157 million of the \$160.5 million capital campaign has been secured, including \$52 million in public bonds. The single largest private gift, \$15 million, came from Korean-born Silicon Valley entrepreneur Chong-Moon Lee. In recognition of Mr. Lee's generosity, the new building will be officially recognized as the Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture.

Architect Gae Aulenti's effort not only revitalizes the historic building—originally designed by George Kelham—but also creates an exciting new space in which to showcase the museum's renowned collection. Seismically retrofitted to withstand an 8.3 earthquake, the building will feature many of the distinctive elements of the original structure while incorporating several innovative attributes to facilitate the building's new purpose as a museum. The rehabilitation of the structure leaves its Beaux Arts exterior essentially unchanged. The conceptual design retains the historically significant architectural spaces and details of the interior, including the entrance, majestic staircase, loggia and grand hall, vaulted ceilings, travertine and faux travertine finishes, skylights, inscriptions, molded plasters, light fixtures and stone floors—all returned to their original luster.

The key elements of Dott. Aulenti's design comes into full view on the museum's ground floor. The historic entrance opens onto a newly created interior court—an expansive public space brightened by natural light from two banks of skylights—which serves as the museum's lobby and primary gathering spot for tours, school groups, and other visitors. This floor will also house 8,500 square feet of special exhibition galleries, three multipurpose classrooms, and a drop-in Education Resource Center to support the museum's highly regarded programs. A striking two-story escalator, which extends 115 feet from the rear of the court through a glass-enclosed curtain along the outside of the building, acts as a dramatic means for escorting visitors to the galleries on the second and third levels. The ground floor also incorporates visitor amenities such as the 1,700-square-foot museum store and a café featuring an outdoor dining terrace overlooking the Fulton Street mall.

The second and third floors will house nearly 2,500 works from the museum's highly regarded collection—more than double the amount of objects that were on view at the museum's former Golden Gate Park facility. Spread over 29,000 square feet in thirty-three separate galleries, the treasures on view—colorful paintings, ancient stone and bronze sculptures, intricately carved jades, delicate ceramics, embroidered textiles, and much more—will be complemented by state-of-the-art interpretive displays and programs, offering visitors a comprehensive introduction to all the major cultures of Asia.

The overseeing of the design of the new Asian Art Museum is a joint venture of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK), LDA Architects, and Robert Wong Architect in association with Gae Aulenti, FAIA. Dott. Aulenti specializes in the adaptive reuse of historic structures as museum spaces (Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Palazzo Grassi, Venice). HOK, an international design firm with offices worldwide, brings

to the project substantial experience in historic rehabilitation. The joint venture LEM/DPR is serving as the construction manager.

Calendar editors, please note: Full public event listings to come.

Visiting the Museum

Beginning March 20, 2003, the new Asian Art Museum will be open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, with extended evening hours every Thursday until 9:00 pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$6 for youth 12–17, and free for children under 12. Complimentary audio tour of the museum's collection galleries will be available. Located at 200 Larkin Street, the new Asian Art Museum will overlook Civic Center Plaza across from City Hall. The new location offers greater access to Bay Area residents and visitors via BART, MUNI, Sam Trans, Golden Gate Transit, and the Bay Bridge. Parking will be available in the nearby Civic Center Garage and other parking facilities in the neighborhood. For more information, please call (415) 581-3500, or visit www.asianart.org.

About the Asian Art Museum

Opened in 1966 as a result of a gift to the City of San Francisco by industrialist Avery Brundage, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco is one of the largest museums in the Western world devoted exclusively to Asian art. Its holdings include approximately 15,000 Asian art objects spanning 6,000 years of history and representing numerous countries and cultures throughout Asia. The collections serve as the basis for exhibition, research, education, and loan activities. The Asian Art Museum is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture. To fulfill its mission, the museum strives to increase the breadth of its collections, enhance relationships with local constituencies and Asian cultures, and expand exhibitions and program-related activities. The museum uses its resources to make Asia accessible to a diverse and rapidly expanding Asian-descendant populace searching for a meaningful and comprehensible introduction to its cultural heritage, and to a non-Asian populace wishing to be introduced to traditions and cultures that play an increasingly prominent role in international affairs.