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## ASIAN ART MUSEUM PRESENTS 26<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL JAPANESE NEW YEAR BELL RINGING CEREMONY



Strike the giant temple bell and bid farewell to 2011 at the Asian Art Museum's 26th Annual Japanese New Year Bell Ringing Ceremony. This year, we hold our traditional ceremony on Saturday, December 31, beginning at 11:30 am. As in past observances, we will strike the bell—a 2100-pound, sixteenth-century Japanese bronze bell originally from a temple in Tajima Province, and now part of the museum's permanent collection—108 times. The bell-ringing provides a fun, festive, and meaningful opportunity to ring in the New Year with loved ones and reflect peacefully upon the year past.

After opening remarks about the Japanese New Year by Yoshie Akiba, Reverend Gengo Akiba will lead the ceremony. The observance will include a purification ritual and chanting of the Buddhist Heart Sutra. Reverend Akiba will begin the bell ringing, and then participants may take their turns striking the bell to leave behind the bad experiences, wrong deeds, and ill luck of the old year.

Akiba Roshi is director of the Soto Zen Buddhism North American office. He is also Zen teacher at Oakland's Kojin-an Zendo. Hands-on art activities are offered in the education studios to entertain families while they wait for their turn at the bell.

### BELL RINGING CEREMONY

Based on Japanese custom, the *joya no kane* (end-of-the-year bell) is struck 108 times before midnight on New Year's Eve, ushering in the New Year and curbing the 108 *bonno*, or mortal desires, which according to Buddhist belief torment humankind. It is hoped that each reverberation will wipe away the bad experiences, wrong deeds, and ill luck of the past year.

Thus, tolling heralds the start of a prosperous and joyous new year. Each toll is struck after the reverberations from the preceding toll have dissipated. In Japan, the last toll traditionally coincides with the first few seconds of the New Year. The Asian Art Museum's ceremony takes place during the day, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm.

Museum visitors wishing to participate will be assigned numbered tickets on a first-come, first-serve basis, starting at 10:00 am in South Court; 108 groups of four to six people will be assembled to strike the bell. No advance reservations will be accepted.

### **ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM**

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renown collection of more than 18,000 Asian Art treasures spanning 6000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life, while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

**Information:** 415.581.3500 or [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)

**Location:** 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

**Hours:** The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. From January through October, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9:00 pm. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

**General Admission:** FREE for museum members, \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors (65+), \$7 for college students with ID, \$7 for youths 13–17, and FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. Admission on Thursdays after 5:00 pm is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and members, who are always admitted FREE). Admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission into special exhibitions.

**Access:** The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.