

**CHOLA: SACRED BRONZES OF SOUTHERN INDIA  
THE SACKLER WING OF GALLERIES**

11 November 2006 – 25 February 2007

An exhibition devoted to the artistic and cultural riches of the imperial Chola dynasty of Southern India is on show at the Royal Academy of Arts. This is the United Kingdom's first ever exhibition specifically dedicated to these processional bronze sculptures. **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India** is a comprehensive presentation of Chola bronzes from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. The exhibition contains approximately thirty sculptures drawn from international institutions and private lenders in India, Europe and the USA including the National Museum (New Delhi), the Government Museum (Chennai), Cleveland Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Asia Society (New York), Linden Museum, Stuttgart, The British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Cholas were a dynastic group that emerged in the ninth century after the capture of Thanjavur (located in the present day state of Tamil Nadu) in 850 and went on to rule for the next four hundred years. During this time they controlled much of Southern India extending as far as the islands of Sri Lanka, the Maldives and parts of Indonesia.

Portable bronze sculptures, revered as physical manifestations of the Hindu gods, were produced to fulfil public functions and preside over festivities. These were ritually bathed, dressed and decorated with jewels and garlands of flowers inside the inner sanctum of the temple, a place of restricted access and, for those unable to see them in this context, processed through the streets on special occasions. The celebrated representation of Shiva as *Nataraja* (Lord of Dance), seen by many as the quintessential Chola image, was adopted by the ruling dynasty as a type of royal emblem. Chola bronzes, cast using the lost-wax method, are widely considered to be among the very finest works of Indian sculptural art.

Throughout their rule the Cholas were great patrons of the arts and oversaw an extensive programme of temple construction. Stone-built temples were richly decorated with depictions of Hindu gods. Poetry and music were especially composed to accompany religious processions and, like dance, consequently prospered during this period.

It is no coincidence that the Royal Academy of Arts will be hosting **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India** in 2007. Not only does 2007 mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the

independence of India but it also marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last major exhibition of the art and culture of India at the Royal Academy the *Exhibition of Art Chiefly from the Dominions of India and Pakistan, 2400 B.C. to 1947 A.D.* held in 1947. **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India** exemplifies the Royal Academy's ability to present art from different cultures and follows on the recent seminal exhibitions *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (1995), *Aztecs* (2002), *Return of the Buddha* (2002), *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600-1600* (2005) and *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795* (2005/6).

## ORGANISATION

The exhibition is curated by Professor Vidya Dehejia, Columbia University, in collaboration with John Eskenazi. These distinguished experts are working closely with Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary, Dr Adrian Locke, Exhibitions Curator and Tom Phillips RA, Chairman of the Exhibitions Committee.

## SPONSORS

Cox & Kings is Travel Partner of **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India**.

## CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a full colour illustrated catalogue containing specially commissioned articles that serve as a guide to current knowledge on the subject. Essays by Vidya Dehejia, John Eskenazi, John Guy and Daud Ali.

## EVENTS PROGRAMME

An education and events programme has been organised to coincide with the exhibition. This includes workshops, gallery talks, teachers' evenings, an education guide, public gallery talks and a focus day.

## AUDIOGUIDE

The audioguide provides a comprehensive guide to the exhibition, enabling a greater understanding of **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India**.

## DATES AND OPENING HOURS

Open to public: 11 November 2006 – 25 February 2007  
10 am – 6 pm daily (last admission 5.30 pm)  
Late night openings: Fridays until 10 pm (last admission 9.30 pm)

## ADMISSION

£8 full price; £7 Registered Disabled and 60 + years; £6 NUS / ISIC cardholders; £3 12–18 years and Income Support; £2 8–11 years; 7 and under free. There is also a new joint ticket available until 1 January 2007 for entry to both **Rodin** and **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India**, which

costs: £16 full price; £13 Registered Disabled and 60 + years; £11 NUS / ISIC cardholders; £5 12–18 years and Income Support; £4 8–11 years.

## **TICKETS**

For tickets to **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India** please visit [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk) or call +44 (0)870 848 8484. Groups of 10 or more must book in advance call 020 7300 8027 or email: [groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk)

## **IMAGES**

Publicity images for **Chola: Sacred Bronzes of Southern India** can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at [www.papicselect.co.uk](http://www.papicselect.co.uk) and once registered go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section.

**For public information, please print 020 7300 8000 or [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk).  
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**For further press information, please contact Lara Raymond in the RA Press Office on  
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