For Immediate Release

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As a part of the Northern Illinois University Art Museum’s upcoming Southeast Asian Exhibition Suite, *Music for the Divine* showcases Burmese traditions and musical instruments ranging from those used in Buddhist rituals, traditional royal court ceremonies, and contemporary multi-ethnic expressions. This exhibition will run in the South Galleries, and will feature the Burma Art Collection at NIU August 28th – November 17th with a public reception on September 13th from 4:30pm – 6:00pm.

*Music for the Divine*, curated by Dr. Catherine Raymond, Director of the Center for Burma Studies and Professor of Art History at NIU, showcases a unique collection of Burmese musical instruments from the Burma Art Collection at NIU. Each of the instruments on display (harp, bronze drum, flute, *hsain waing* (gamelan ensemble), *patala* (xylophone), conch, bells, chimes, etc.) is a work of art. Created by artisans from within the various Burmese ethnic groups, their forms and sounds are expressions, not only of aesthetics and technical skills, but also of religious ideals, community identities, and political relations.

For example, the harp—the quintessential instrument of the dominant Burman culture—historically had specific Buddhist and courtly functions, as does the *patala*. The *ozi* (a long cylindrical drum) is used by the Shan to accompany popular dance; while the iconic bronze drums of the Karen could traditionally have served in animistic ceremonies, including those calling for rain.

As part of an on-going commitment to share this unique collection with the Northern Illinois community, *Music for the Divine* is thematically linked with programming spanning several colleges and departments at NIU, including: the School of Art; the School of Music; the Anthropology Department; the History Department; and the Center for Southeast Asia Studies. *Music for the Divine* is also a component of the Celebrating Creativity: Asian/Asian-American Identities Project, offered in conjunction with the Cambodia Studies Conference, September 13-16, and the International Burma Studies Conference, October 5-7, at Northern Illinois University. Visit [http://www.grad.niu.edu/burma](http://www.grad.niu.edu/burma) or [http://www.cseas.niu.edu/ceas/conferences](http://www.cseas.niu.edu/ceas/conferences) for related programming.

The NIU Art Museum is located on the first floor, west end of Altgeld Hall, on the campus of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, 60115. Hours are Tuesday through Friday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Saturday from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. Group tours may be arranged by appointment. More information may be found on our website: [www.niu.edu/artmuseum](http://www.niu.edu/artmuseum).

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Bronze Drum
Burma/Myanmar
Burma Art Collection, Northern Illinois University
Gift of Richard M. Cooler, 1999

Lacquered wood harp
Burma/Myanmar
Burma Art Collection, Northern Illinois University
Gift of John Lacey, 1997

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