

# Norton Simon Museum **For Immediate Release**

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## Norton Simon Museum Presents ***Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft***

Explore gold's cultural and material resilience through 60 incredible works  
in the Museum's 50th anniversary exhibition.

October 24, 2025 – February 16, 2026



**Pasadena, CA** – Opening this fall at the Norton Simon Museum, *Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft* explores the artistic and cultural function of gold in approximately 60 works of art drawn from across the Museum's collections, which encompass South and Southeast Asia, Europe, North Africa and North America. This group of objects, many of which will be displayed together for the first time, spans from around 1000 BCE to the 20th century to reveal unexpected intersections in the circulation, craft and meaning of gold across time and place. On the occasion of the Museum's 50th anniversary, a milestone traditionally associated with this metal, the exhibition invites a fresh inquiry into the nature of gold as an artistic medium.

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Gold's elemental nature lends significance to many of the artworks on view in the exhibition. In the realm of religious art, the metal's malleable yet incorruptible quality enabled artists to create enduring images of devotion. Gilt Hindu and Buddhist sculptures from the 12th to 20th centuries were commissioned by donors to emphasize the spiritual attainments and deified status of various religious figures. The gold on these objects represents one of the highest forms of offering, in terms of both economic and aesthetic value, and it was intended to accumulate merit and provide protection for devotees. Intricate details wrought by the hands of skilled artisans centuries ago are still preserved in the corrosion-resistant metal, which ensured the longevity of the object's splendor and spiritual power. In 14th- and 15th-century Europe, artists of Christian images used extraordinarily thin, hammered gold leaf to create shimmering divine realms, an effect once dramatically enhanced by candlelit churches and private altars.

Gold's rarity, and the expertise required to harness it as a medium, contributed to its impact as a visual expression of power. The objects in this exhibition were crafted from metal excavated from mines across three continents and transported over vast regions, often in the form of currency. In the hands of trained craftspeople, this processed gold was transformed into jewelry that adorned Roman patrician women or spun into thread that was then woven into textiles for elite patrons in Europe and Asia. The long historical thirst for gold motivated California's own extractive 19th-century mining practices, the legacy of which is explored through photographs by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston.

New technical analysis conducted for this exhibition helped to identify the objects' fundamental material properties, which provoked further questions about their significance—are these works actually gold, and what does it mean if they are not? In some cases, gilding versus solid gold becomes an issue, because it is the purity and preciousness of the material itself that gives these objects power. Alternatively, when “gold” is created through the treatment of another metal such as brass, or by skillful illusionistic painting, the gleaming effect and impressive artistic alchemy become more important than the raw materials.

*Gold: Enduring Power, Sacred Craft* is organized by Associate Curator Maggie Bell and Assistant Curator Lakshika Senarath Gamage. The exhibition, on view in the lower-level exhibition wing, will open on October 24, 2025, fifty years to the day of the Museum's renaming to the Norton Simon Museum, and run through February 16, 2026. A series of public programs will be organized in conjunction with the exhibition.

### **About the Norton Simon Museum**

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art

Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens.

**Special Notice:** From early January to early October 2025, the Museum's exterior areas are under construction, which will result in improvements to the Sculpture Garden and entrance. The Sculpture Garden is closed for the duration of the project. To learn more, visit our [website](#).

**Location:** The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit [nortonsimon.org](http://nortonsimon.org). **Hours:** The Museum is open Thursday through Monday, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. (Friday and Saturday to 7 p.m.). It is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

**Admission:** General admission is \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. The first Friday of the month from 4 to 7 p.m. is free to all. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free but limited, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for schedules.

**Images:** Giovanni di Paolo (Italian, 1403-1482), *Branchini Madonna*, 1427, tempera and gold leaf on panel 72 x 39 in. (182.9 x 99.1 cm), The Norton Simon Foundation; *Headdress*, 20th century, China, Tibet, gold metal with semiprecious stones, 11 1/4 x 7 x 7 5/8 in. (28.58 x 17.78 x 19.38 cm.), Norton Simon Museum, Estate of Armand J. Labbé, in memory of his parents, Gertrude and Armand Labbé; George Herms (American, b. 1935), *For the Corner Pass*, 1962, collage of paper, foil, ink and feathers on paper, 16 x 8 1/2 in. (40.6 x 21.6 cm), Norton Simon Museum, Gift of the Artist © George Herms.