



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

NATION RELIGION KING

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

PRESS RELEASE

Visit of a Senior Team of Experts from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the Smithsonian Institution

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts ("Ministry") is pleased to inform the public that a team of experts from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Asian Art ("NMAA"), has visited Cambodia for a 7-day field study in early April 2025. The delegation included specialists in collection management, exhibitions, provenance research, and curation. This visit marked a significant step forward in implementing the shared objectives outlined in the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the Smithsonian Institution. This collaborative partnership is founded on the mutual objectives of promoting cultural exchange, fostering understanding of Cambodian art and culture, and strengthening the skills of museum professionals - particularly in areas of provenance research, combating illicit trafficking, and repatriating cultural heritage. This collaboration is also built upon Cambodia's successful restitution campaign over the last decade, which has resulted in the return of hundreds of national treasures from all over the world, including institutions and private collectors in the U.S., to Cambodia.

The primary goal of the visit was to move forward with discussions about plans for a world class exhibition about the ancient royal city of Koh Ker, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2023, to be launched in 2030 in Cambodia and in 2031 in Washington, D.C at the NMAA. The delegation toured key museums in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, as well as several ancient temple sites and met with a range of experts from the Ministry, the National Museum of Cambodia, Sambor Prei Kuk National Authority, APSARA National Authority, the National Authority of Preah Vihear and Edenbridge Asia.

H.E. Dr. Phoeurng Sackona, Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, stated: "We welcome the sincere and expert collaboration between our two countries, and we are delighted to work with the Smithsonian Institution, a global leader in the museum world". The Minister would like to sincerely thank and praise the efforts of all those involved with the visiting delegation, with particular thanks to the US Embassy in Phnom Penh and the Ministry's team of archaeologists, art historians and researchers. The Minister also expressed special thanks to Bradley J. Gordon and his team at Edenbridge Asia, whose years of dedicated hard work have supported and helped Ministry officials in negotiating the return of Khmer cultural treasures, and who initiated the present collaboration.

She added "We recognize the beauty and brilliance of our ancient royal city of Koh Ker and are excited to begin developing a world class exhibition about Koh Ker. It is thrilling to have this opportunity to showcase our national treasures which have been returned to Cambodia, and to know that it will bring positive attention and interest in the rich and fascinating ancient history of Cambodia".

Phnom Penh, 25 April 2025

