



**Invitation to the Press Conference
20 November 2008**

**Gandhara – The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan
Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise
21 November 2008 – 15 March 2009**

To the Western viewer the Buddhist art of Gandhara seems strangely familiar; its rootedness in Western traditions is strikingly obvious. Gandhara is the name of a region in present-day Pakistan whose connection with the West can be traced back to the far-flung conquests of Alexander the Great (330 BC) and his local successors. Alexander's foray laid the foundation for the trade along the Silk Road between the Roman Empire and the Far East and southern Asia. The Silk Road was also instrumental in the spread of Buddhism beyond its native India.

The Art and Exhibition Hall is pleased to be able to present the first major exhibition of Gandharan art in Germany. Some 300 outstanding objects – among them exquisite stone sculptures, highly detailed reliefs, precious coins and elaborate jewellery – introduce the visitor to the art of the ancient kingdom from the 1st to the 5th century AD. The presentation highlights the multifaceted artistic production of Gandhara under Kushan rule and explores the rich artistic heritage of the region, a melting pot of many different cultures.

The exhibition focuses on stone reliefs depicting the life of the Buddha. Depicted for the first time under Kushan rule, the Buddha is shown wearing a pleated garment reminiscent of the Roman toga. Greek subjects are also prominent and coins feature Greek inscriptions. The exhibition places Gandharan art in a wider context, from the establishment of Greek culture in the region to its legacy in Central Asia and present-day Afghanistan. This legacy garnered worldwide attention when the gigantic rock-cut Buddha sculptures of Bamiyan were destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001.

**The press conference will be held on 20 November 2008 at 11.00 a.m. in the
Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany.**

Participant of the Press Conference:

- Christoph Vitali, *Director, Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany*
- Dr. Christian Luczanits, *Curator*
- Prof. Dr. Michael Jansen, *Curator*
- Dr. Fazal Dad Kakar, *Government of Pakistan, Department of Archaeology and Museums*
- Maja Majer-Wallat, *Press Officer, Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany*

Please register by Fax (+49/228/9171-211) or E-Mail (ferreira@kah-bonn.de). Extensive essays and photo material are available at the press office or www.bundeskunsthalle.de. Please direct all requests for interviews to this office.

We are looking forward to your visit.

Maja Majer-Wallat
Press Officer

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