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ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES LARGEST EXHIBITION AND PROGRAM CYCLE EVER MOUNTED

Silk Road Chicago at the Art Institute Will Feature Daily Themed Events, Exhibitions, Lectures, Performances, Family Days Across Entire Museum

May 2, 2006, Chicago, IL – The Art Institute of Chicago, with its world-renowned permanent collection of more than 260,000 objects, announces the most ambitious themed exhibition to take place at the museum, *Silk Road Chicago*. Long a repository of the world's cultural and artistic treasures, the Art Institute will offer visitors the rare opportunity to view objects across the entire collection around a common theme, supported by nearly 100 performance, educational, and collaborative programs. The Silk Road - "the place where strangers meet" as Yo-Yo Ma describes it-will come alive at the museum from Opening Day on September 30, 2006, to June 2007.

"Silk Road Chicago is a unique program for the Art Institute," said James Cuno, president and Eloise W. Martin Director of the museum. "Every department, every curator, every lecturer will be embracing the themes of the Silk Road throughout 2006 and 2007, making it the largest unified program ever to be seen at the museum. As the venue in which Silk Road Chicago will take physical form on a daily basis, we are looking forward to this chance to showcase our marvelous collection and introduce-and reacquaint-Chicagoans and visitors alike with the riches we have here on Michigan Avenue."

Silk Road Chicago will open on September 30, 2006, with a daylong celebration. Offering free *Silk Road Chicago* audio guides and admission to the first 200 visitors, the Art Institute will be filled with special exhibitions, lectures, gallery talks, and other events for visitors of all ages. Performers will include the Silk Road Ensemble, dancers from the Natya Dance Theatre, the Chicago Children's Choir, world music percussion with Doug Brush, solo performances by Silk Road Ensemble musicians Yang Wei and Betti Xiang, and Silk Road stories for young audiences with playwright and actor Christopher Cartmill. Gallery walks, games, and art projects for children throughout the day ensure that Opening Day will be enjoyed by the whole family.

Silk Road Chicago will continue throughout 2006 and 2007 with a vast array of exhibitions and activities. Several galleries will be devoted for the year to the theme, featuring rotating objects-from Tang sculptures to Dutch paintings to lavish silk court robes-from the historic Silk Road as well as modern and contemporary art that embody the ideas of cultural transmission. Visitors will be able, literally, to travel the Silk Road through the museum; hundreds of art works from every corner of the Art Institute-

including the contemporary galleries, the photography galleries, and the galleries devoted to modern European painting-will be highlighted as “Silk Road objects” and will be featured with materials that illustrate and explain their significance and connection to the themes of the Silk Road. Special exhibitions will also be mounted by the Department of Prints and Drawings, the Department of Contemporary Art, and the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries.

Throughout the year, artists and musicians will be in residence at the Art Institute, culminating in a week-long residency in April by the Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma from April 9 to April 15. These residencies will feature gallery demonstrations, performances, lectures, and discussions, offering visitors the opportunity to intimately explore the Silk Road themes in small groups or through the rich sounds of the concert hall, from traditional instruments to contemporary compositions. These residencies will also put music in conversation with art, showing how the two have always traveled in tandem and enriched each other.

The Art Institute will also offer one of its most ambitious educational programs for *Silk Road Chicago*, including concise daily gallery walks, reading courses, and seminars that run over several days. In collaboration with the Chicago Humanities Festival, the Art Institute will present its inaugural Presidential Lecture, this year featuring Princeton scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah. Lectures by scholar-in-residence Jonathan Spence, poet Gary Snyder, archaeologist Steven Sidebotham, and Art Institute director James Cuno are all scheduled, along with dozens of other scholars, writers, and artists.

The most extended collaboration in which the Art Institute has participated, *Silk Road Chicago* also will feature cross-programming with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Silk Road Ensemble, the Chicago Humanities Festival, and the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs, among other partners. The collaborations mark the Art Institute as one of the vital crossroads for the project, the only venue in the city in which *Silk Road Chicago* can be experienced every day throughout the year.

Visit <http://www.silkroadchicago.org> for a complete listing of all *Silk Road Chicago* events. Updated throughout the year, <http://www.silkroadchicago.org> is the first stop on an incredible journey.

Silk Road Chicago is made possible in part through the generous support of the Art Institute of Chicago's Silk Road Ambassadors. The early support of these donors has been essential in bringing to fruition this landmark project. Silk Road Ambassadors include: Marilynn B. Alsdorf, Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols, Elizabeth and Harvey Plotnick, and The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation. The Silk Road Chicago Opening Celebration at the Art Institute on September 30, 2006, is made possible by Ford Motor Company Fund, as part of its longstanding tradition of arts education support.

The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, across from Millennium Park. Museum hours: 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday; 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Closed

Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Hours will be changing June 3, 2006. Please check <http://www.artic.edu/aic> before your visit.

Admission: \$12; children under 6, students, and seniors, \$7; members always free. Free Tuesdays free to all, except for certain special exhibitions which may require full or extra admission fee. Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Great Kids Museum Passport" card from any branch library for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park-including The Art Institute of Chicago-and other Chicago institutions. Reach the Art Institute online at <http://www.artic.edu/aic.org/ExploringChicago>.