

An Acknowledgement

Welcome to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. The museum is comprised of two galleries: the Freer Gallery of Art, which opened to the public in 1923, and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, in which you stand now.

Dr. Arthur M. Sackler was a physician, medical publisher, pharmaceutical marketer, and collector of Asian art. He and other members of the Sackler family were active philanthropists. Many leading educational and cultural institutions have recognized their name on buildings, galleries, positions, or programs.

Dr. Sackler was a leading figure in the Sackler family, which is now widely known for their ownership of Purdue Pharma, the company that made billions of dollars from the development and sale of the opioid OxyContin. Introduced in 1996, OxyContin was created and promoted in part based on patents and marketing techniques honed by Dr. Sackler. The drug has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans. Litigation against Purdue Pharma began in 2001. Many institutions who recognized the family's gifts have removed the Sackler name.

In 1982, Dr. Sackler donated \$4 million and more than one thousand objects to the Smithsonian, which include outstanding examples of ancient Chinese jades and bronzes and Persian metalwork, among other works. In recognition of that gift, the Smithsonian agreed that this gallery be designated as the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Dr. Sackler died in 1987, shortly before the gallery opened.

Though we no longer accept donations from the Sackler family, the 1982 gift agreement requires that the facility and original collection retain the name of Arthur M. Sackler in perpetuity. Removing the Sackler name from this gallery would jeopardize the museum's ability to retain these objects, which now form a part of our country's holdings and contribute to our mission to share the arts and cultures of Asia with the public.

We acknowledge those who have suffered as a result of the opioid crisis, those who have advocated on their behalf, and those who take issue with the name on this gallery. How our collection came to be is a part of our museum's history—a history that should not be erased or ignored. And while we cannot change the past, we can shape our future as we enter our next century as the National Museum of Asian Art.

A collection that once belonged to one person now belongs to the people of the United States, and we invite you to help us write our next chapter. We remain committed to transparency and fostering greater understanding and dialogue.



Scan the QR code if you wish to share your thoughts.