FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIGH MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS MASTERPIECES OF SAMURAI ARMOR FROM THE ANN AND GABRIEL BARBIER-MUELLER COLLECTION

Exhibition features more than 150 objects spanning nearly nine centuries, unveiling the artistry and culture of Japan’s military nobility

ATLANTA, June 22, 2023 — This summer, the High Museum of Art presents “Samurai: Armor from the Collection of Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller” (June 23-Sept. 17, 2023), an exhibition featuring one of the most important collections of its type outside of Japan. Through a dazzling array of armor, helmets, swords and other objects spanning almost nine centuries, the exhibition illuminates the exceptionally high level of design and craft dedicated to these elaborate instruments of ceremony and combat and reveals the culture, lifestyle and artistic legacy associated with the samurai warrior in Japanese society.

Assembled over nearly four decades of collecting, the exhibition comes to Atlanta from The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum in Dallas, Texas. The High is the first museum in the Southeastern United States to present this exhibition, which has traveled to cities around the world.

“While this exhibition explores a cultural history and artistic traditions not represented in our holdings, it nevertheless aligns with our mission to present work that serves as a complement or foil to our collection,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “We are grateful for the opportunity to share these exquisite artworks with our audience.”

The High’s chief curator, Kevin Tucker, added, “For centuries, the samurai in Japan provided a touchpoint for not only political change and military prowess, but importantly, an extensive range of artistic production in metals, textiles, lacquer work and the host of materials necessary to create these elaborately decorated statements of power and prestige. The legacy of samurai persists to this day in the often nearly mythological perception of their history and adoption of imagery in popular culture including by way of anime, manga and contemporary film.”

The exhibition features more than 150 objects, including nearly 20 complete sets of armor, many dating from the Edo period (1603-1868), marking the rise and expansion of the samurai, and ultimately, their dissolution in the face of changing political and military structures. These
and related works dating to as early as the Kamakura period (1185-1333) reflect upon the evolution of the “omote dogu” — the external appearance and equipment of the samurai warrior — and the legacy of such imagery across the centuries.

The opening galleries introduce and define the samurai class and feature four of the collection’s finest suits of armor, which belonged to the daimyo (or ruling lords). This section also emphasizes the roles of women in samurai families and the importance of the Bushido, or samurai code.

In another section, the exhibition explores the various pieces that create a full suit of armor, including garments, shin guards, sleeves, masks and helmets. In addition to displaying their separate components, this section features seven complete sets and examines the evolution of armor styles, or “nanban,” which were influenced by contact with other cultures, including the samurai’s first Western conflicts in 1541. These galleries also explain the role of the artist in Japanese society and showcase the different schools, or workshops, where armor was produced, as well as the principal influences evidenced in their production such as the natural world and samurai spirituality.

The Barbier-Mueller collection features many necessities of the samurai’s horse, including horse armor, saddles and masks. The third section of the exhibition presents exquisite examples of these objects and explores the role of the horse in battle and in samurai processions.

In a later section, the exhibition emphasizes how samurai fashioned highly effective weapons, including swords, bows, arrows and quivers. The objects are not only intricately decorated but demonstrate equal attention to their form and function. A drum and flag in this section serve as examples of battle command equipment.

The last section of the exhibition focuses on objects that belonged to the Mōri clan, a family of powerful rulers from Honshu, Japan, who were prominent from the 12th to 19th centuries. These comprise three full suits of armor, beautiful textiles, weapons including swords and bow-and-arrow sets, and equestrian items such as stirrups and saddles.

For an adjacent installation, the High commissioned Atlanta-based, multidisciplinary artist Brandon Sadler to create a series of paintings about the life of Yasuke, an African man who became the first Black samurai in the 1500s. The paintings are inspired in part by Japanese woodblock prints, which often depicted samurai as legendary, heroic figures. Sadler also contributed the design scheme of the exhibition’s entry gallery and adjacent gallery, which references the legend of the samurai in popular culture.

The exhibition is presented in the Cousins Special Exhibition Galleries on the Second Level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion.

**Exhibition Organization and Support**

“Samurai: Armor from the Collection of Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller” is organized by The
Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum. This exhibition is made possible by funding from Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., William N. Banks, Jr., Cousins Foundation, Burton M. Gold, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Harry Norman Realtors, and Wish Foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Mrs. Fay S. Howell/the Howell Fund, Karen and Jeb Hughes/Corporate Environments, Loomis Charitable Foundation, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, The Fred and Rita Richman Fund, Mrs. Harriet H. Warren, and Elizabeth and Chris Willett; Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Mr. Joseph H. Boland, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Robin E. Delmer, Peggy Foreman, Helen C. Griffith, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Margot and Danny McCaul, Wade A. Rakes II & Nicholas Miller, and USI Insurance Services. Generous support is also provided by the Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, the Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margaretta Taylor Exhibition Fund, and RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund.

About the High Museum of Art
Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 19,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

About The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum: The Samurai Collection
The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum: The Samurai Collection has been selectively amassed by Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller and their children over the past 35 years. The museum is located in Dallas’ Harwood District at the historic St. Ann’s School. Centuries of craftsmanship are represented in the collection, with objects dating from the seventh to 19th centuries. Samurai masterpieces, including suits of armor, helmets, masks, horse armor and weaponry, are on display in the museum, traveling exhibition, and the lobbies of Harwood International developments. To date, The Samurai Collection has garnered more than 1.5 million visitors worldwide. The museum in Dallas is free and open to the public, and the current
exhibition can be found here. Select pieces from the collection were most recently on display at the Bernisches Historisches Museum and have traveled to 14 cities worldwide.

# # #

DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media contact:

Marci Davis
High Museum of Art
404-733-4585
marci.davis@high.org