Exhibiting the Sacred

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By Samantha Bass

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Project Instructor Professor Laura Schiavo

Introduction

On November 16, 1990, the United States passed NAGPRA, the Native American Graves

Protection and Repatriation Act. In doing so, the government acknowledged its responsibility of encouraging and enforcing the respectful treatment of American Indian sacred and cultural property.

Since the passage of NAGPRA, the museum profession has become more cognizant of what it means to collect and exhibit religious and sacred artifacts connected to living peoples and cultures. Although NAGPRA dealt mostly with the repatriation of sacred objects and human remains to American Indian tribes, it also helped usher in the practice of consultation between museums and American Indian leaders about how sacred objects should be treated. Today's museums continue to use consultations and other methods when exhibiting sacred objects from various world religions and cultures. Museum exhibitions are especially challenging since the institution not only has to engage the visitors, but must also do so in a way that is respectful and inclusive to the religion or culture on display.

As a graduate student aspiring to be an exhibition developer, I was especially interested in how museums decided to display sacred objects to the public. During my research process, I interviewed professionals at many museums, asking each the same question: "What standards do you use for exhibiting the sacred?" My findings suggest that no standards exist across the field for the displaying of sacred objects of religions and cultures in museums. In this essay, I will use case studies to explore the ways in which museums are addressing this void, and how specific museums are caring for sacred objects on display through consultations on a case-by-case basis with community leaders. I will conclude by outlining my recommendations for the future of exhibiting the sacred in museums and briefly sharing my experiences preparing a session proposal for the upcoming American Association of Museums Conference to discuss this important issue.

Limited Precedents and Regulations for Displaying Sacred Objects

To date, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is the only museum governing body to acknowledge the special nature of sacred and religious objects on exhibit in museums outside of NAGPRA. In a report that was enacted on August 9, 2006, the Board spoke of groups not included in NAGPRA: "The Report encourages museums to consider cases where it may be important to go beyond the law and adopt special stewardship or interpretive responsibilities for sacred objects that are not covered by NAGPRA and are not subject to specific national or international laws or treaties. Such works include those of non-federally recognized tribes, First Nation cultures in Canada, indigenous Mexican cultures, as well as other groups worldwide." While all of the world's religions and cultures are technically included in the final provision, the report is quite vague and clearly focuses on indigenous peoples. Like NAGPRA, the AAMD report encouraged consultation and dialogue between cultural and religious leaders and museums regarding objects to be exhibited.

In order to understand the significance of standard regulations for exhibiting sacred religious and cultural objects, one first must comprehend the importance of NAGPRA. American Indian communities from 1990 forward had a resource through which they could claim property held by museums and begin the process of repatriation. Alternatively, museums and institutions now had standards by which they could monitor their collections. NAGPRA's guidelines helped museums by establishing a set of rules to follow instead of relying on case-by-case situations. Under NAGPRA, today's museums need to have a compelling reason for display of a sacred object. Especially sensitive objects will be separated from main exhibits so tribal members may choose to avoid them when at the museum. For instance, human remains and images of human remains are very explicitly written as off-limits for display. Museums have come a long way in recognizing the need to communicate and consult with

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¹ Association of Art Museum Directors. "AAMD Report on the Acquisition and Stewardship of Sacred Objects" August 9, 2006. (Accessed November 21, 2010).

http://www.aamd.org/papers/documents/SacredObjectsReleaseandGuidelinesCombined8.9.06-dated.pdf

American Indian tribes about displaying their culture to the public. Through these consultations, museums have not only learned how to properly respect the artifacts and living people connected to them, but have also in many cases expanded the museum visitor experience.

Before moving forward, it is essential to first elaborate upon the importance of exhibiting sacred objects in museums. What is so significant about presenting religious and holy elements of various cultural groups? After all, such artifacts often require more care and special planning than other collections pieces. From a collection manager's perspective, exhibition may pose many new challenges to the care and preservation of sacred objects because of the very public nature of display. If sacred artifacts resided in storage, museum staff might simply ask members of the religious community in for consultation and private treatment. Yet it is through exhibition of these objects of religious significance that many museums fulfill their moral and social obligation to preserve and teach the public about the world's cultures.² In addition, visitors can learn about, and in some cases even experience a spiritual encounter through the sacred objects on exhibit. According to historian James Clifford, the modern museum is not just exhibit or program centered, but should also be viewed "as a contact zone." In this role, the museum has a unique opportunity to communicate about spirituality with the visitors who come through its doors. A person could learn about a religion or culture by reading a book or watching a documentary. The learning that goes on in this context is one-sided in that the reader or viewer receives information about the group's practices and beliefs, but does not contribute his or her own ideas and experiences. In museums, however, audiences bring their own experiences and knowledge of sacred objects. Museum exhibitions provide opportunities for these visitors to see or in certain cases touch religious objects up close, and serve as active participants in their own learning by applying their own

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² Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991) 341.

³ Lawrence Sullivan and Alison Edwards, eds., *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington: American Association of Museums with the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 2004), xvi.

experiences. Through the exhibitions and related programs, the museum and the audience become equal partners and foster continued learning through dialogue.

This concept of museums as contact zones presents challenges when applied to exhibitions containing sacred objects because interactions are not restricted to the museum and the audience, but also include the religious or cultural group from which the sacred object originates. When it comes to exhibiting sacred objects, museums therefore have an extra partner with whom they must work to create shared experiences with the audience. Regardless of the museum's best intentions to teach its audience about world religions and cultures through objects, disrespect for or improper display of these special artifacts may tarnish the museum for years to come. Therefore, in the words of lawyer and NAGPRA advocate Diane Humetewa, "Consultation, consultation, consultation is key!" In the case studies that follow, most museums did just that by turning to local, and in some cases, world religious leaders for advice and participation in the exhibit's development. Many of these consultations began well before NAGPRA's birth in 1990, although NAGPRA certainly increased their frequency and importance.

Case Studies: Sharing the Sacred

Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of active participation from the consulting religious leaders was the case of the Buddhist Tibetan Alter and accompanying exhibit at the Newark Museum. In 1935, the museum had employed a group of American artists to create a Buddhist alter for display. By the early 1980s, the alter was in need of repair. Furthermore, the alter had never been attached to the living people of the religion to which it belonged. The museum wished to create an entirely new exhibit about the connection of art and daily lives of Tibetan Buddhists. Therefore, the museum turned to members of the local Buddhist community for consultation. After much dialogue between the museum

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⁴ "NAGPRA and the Courts." NAGPRA Conference November 15, 2010. The George Washington University.

and religious leaders, the conversation made it all the way to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. He advised that the old 1935 alter should be desecrated since sacred images were depicted on its surfaces and he did not want to "disrupt the sacred thread." The deconsecrating ceremony was completed by the Venerable Ganden Tri Rimpoche in January 1988. Museum staff, visitors, and members of the Buddhist community watched as fragments and panels from the old alter were preserved and sealed into the new alter already under construction. This was the first in a series of activities over the next three years at the museum which became known as "Tibet, the Living Tradition."

Next, the Newark museum hired Phuntsok Dorje, a Tibetan artist trained at a Buddhist monastery, as an artist-in-residence from 1989-1990. He worked with museum staff and Buddhist leaders to ensure that all parties were involved and their needs were taken into account as he designed and painted the new alter and other sacred space areas. On September 23, 1990, the Dalai Lama travelled all the way to the Newark Museum to consecrate the new alter in a ceremony that was open to museum staff, visitors, and Buddhist community members alike. In his speech, the Dalai Lama asked members of the faith to "come to the space and protect it." Today, the newly consecrated alter remains an essential part of the museum's exhibit, and houses many of artifacts of sacred significance. Museum staff and local Buddhists work together to preserve and protect the living artifact. Therefore, the Newark Museum's Tibetan Buddhist Alter is an instance of how consultation can lead not only to a successful exhibit, but also a spiritual and sacred place for members of the faith. As can been seen with the Newark Museum, care for sacred objects on exhibit occurs on a case-by-case basis.

Like the Newark Museum, the Chicago History Museum sought out local religious leaders when putting together a new exhibit, *Catholic Chicago*. Catholic Chicago was the first in a series of temporary

⁵ Lawrence Sullivan and Alison Edwards, eds., *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums with the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University), 73.

⁶ Newark Museum website. Accessed November 19, 2010.< http://www.newarkmuseum.org/TibetAltar.html>
⁷ Lawrence Sullivan and Alison Edwards, eds., *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums with the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University), 75.

exhibits about religious groups in the Chicago area (the next exhibit, *Jewish Chicago*, is slated to open in 2012). When I asked Chicago History Museum curator Jillian Austin about how museums exhibit the sacred, she responded, "I think that the tendency is to focus on the local community. Everything always happens on a case-by-case basis. Each situation presents a different internal dilemma for the culture of the museum and religious community involved." In the case of Catholic Chicago, the museum opted to work with local religious leaders, such as the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and the Archdiocese of Chicago. For example, when the museum wished to display habit materials worn by nuns, the Sisters came to the museum to mount the installations instead of the traditional museum handlers, although museum staff certainly helped in whatever way they could. While no legal or ethical code comparable to NAGPRA was in place, the museum felt that it was best to err on the side of caution out of respect for the objects and people linked to them.

An interesting debate amongst museum staff and religious leaders while choosing artifacts for this exhibit centered around the inclusion of human relics, in particular the remains of Mother Cabrini, a famous figure in Chicago's history. Some staff members wished to include the human relic in the exhibit, while others felt "the need to draw a line somewhere because the museum was not teaching religion, but trying to explore the community." The Chicago History Museum is not unique in this debate over whether exhibiting certain pieces of the sacred is crossing a boundary that exceeds the educational mission. In the end, the museum decided to display Mother Cabrini's shoes (which apparently took on a very distinct smell when treated by the conservator), and rocking chair, objects which themselves were not sacred but became sacred out of association with Mother Cabrini. Therefore, the museum staff was able to assemble and care for these objects without the help of Catholic leaders.

Another problematic situation encountered by the Chicago History Museum was related to a vestment (sacred garment) on loan from DePaul University. The artifact had been sealed in a specially

⁸ Interview via telephone November 17, 2010.

⁹ Ibid.

lacquered case, which many argued had become part of the relic itself. Yet the museum wished to display the object for the public, and determined that this could not be successfully done unless it was removed from its original case and placed in another. After consultation, museum conservators removed the vestment under the supervision of religious leaders to ensure that no damage occurred. Once again, collaborative work between a museum and religious community resulted in a respectful and educational exhibit of the sacred. The Chicago History Museum was not the only museum in Chicago exhibiting sacred object during this time, however.

In the spring of 1997, the Art Institute of Chicago embarked on a new exhibit entitled "Baule: African Art/Western eyes." Later, the exhibit also travelled to museums across the country, including the National Museum of African Art. The exhibit was to feature wood carvings from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries including sculptures, masks, textiles, staffs, and carved doors. American scholar Susan Vogel and native Baule researcher Koffi N'Guessan collaborated together on the project to ensure that the culture was represented in a respectful and educational manner. One of the major challenges of the exhibit was that some ritual objects from Baule culture were restricted by gender. For example, objects traditionally used by men or housed in men's sanctuaries were thought to be fatal to women who gazed upon them. The curators wanted to respect the Baule people's beliefs. Yet simultaneously, they recognized the need to take visitor expectations into account. Visitors would want to see and learn as much as possible, regardless of their own gender. The resulting compromise was a framing of the exhibit in which some ritual objects were collectively designated as "men's" and others "women's." This way, everyone had access to the sacred objects, but individuals also had the option to avoid certain sections as well if they were Baule or wished to respect Baule tradition. Some objects were considered

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¹⁰ National Museum of African Art." Baule: African Art/Western Eyes." Accessed November 18, 2010). http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/baule/e3.htm

¹¹ Lawrence Sullivan and Alison Edwards, eds., *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums with the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University), 53.

so dangerous to the viewer that a special scrim or transparent screen was used to shield the visitors from directly gazing at the artifact. By including a Baule scholar as a key contributor to the project and engaging in research and dialogue with the Baule people, the museum was able to identify and act on beliefs associated with the sacred objects to ensure that the culture was treated with the dignity and sensitivity it deserved.

Close-up: The Case of the Jewish Torah

My final group of sacred objects exhibited in museums consists of artifacts from the Jewish faith. I would like to start off by acknowledging that this section will provide more case studies and analyses than others because of my particular background as a former intern and guest curator at a Jewish museum as well as my own religious practices as a Jew. By presenting this expanded analysis, I hope to illustrate the complexities involved in displaying the sacred, even when the curator and other staff involved in the exhibition are displaying objects of their own faiths. According to Virginia Greene, there are two kinds of Jewish religious ritual objects: those that are holy, and those that are not. The first category includes the Torah, mezuzah, tefillin, and any other objects which contain G-d's name. The Torah, or the Hebrew Bible, is a written on bound sheets of animal skin which are then wrapped around two wooden rolls and decorated with a mantle, breast plate, and metal crowns. Every week, congregations around the world read a different portion of the Torah and roll the scroll to the correct section. Examples from the second category might include a wine glass, set of candlesticks, or a spice box. These objects are important components in ritual ceremonies, but they themselves are not considered holy. While they should be treated with respect, the exhibited objects themselves require no special care outside of normal museum conservation procedures. On the surface, Greene's division of

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¹² Virginia Greene. "Accessories of Holiness: Defining Jewish Sacred Objects," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Volume 31, Number 1, and Article 5 (1992): 31.

holy and neutral artifacts might seem fairly clear-cut. As the following case studies will demonstrate, however, many gray areas remain.

In an effort to illustrate the lack of a standard or consistency in treatment of Jewish religious objects on exhibit, I will compare the way the Torah is exhibited at two different museums and highlight the issues that appear. At the Jewish Museum of Maryland, the Torahs are housed in a traditional ark and kept wrapped in their mantles and decorations. Since one of the Torahs was donated by a local family, the museum sometimes allows the family to take the Torah outside the museum for its own rituals. Additionally, groups sometimes celebrate events at the museum, and use the Torahs. In an effort to preserve the Torah and avoid handling it as much as possible, the museum does not roll back the Torah weekly or annually unless a group wishes to use it. In addition, the Torahs at this museum are pasul, or "unkosher," meaning that they are flawed in some way and therefore technically not suitable for use in prayer. According to traditional Jewish practice, pasual Torahs are sacred, and therefore deserving of respect. Some more strict Jews would be offended that the Torahs are not turned weekly, or that the ark is opened unceremoniously during tours.

When speaking with Jewish Museum of Maryland curator Karen Falk, I learned that the Museum had been contemplating a more interactive exhibit or program where visitors would have the opportunity to lift a Torah. ¹³ From the Museum's standpoint, it is a valuable experience because the physical act of carrying the Torah and feeling its weight helps the visitor feel connected to the artifact on exhibit. Yet I must confess that as a Conservative Jew, I was offended by the very idea. In Jewish tradition, if one drops a Torah, the entire community who witnessed the event must fast for forty days. After consultations with members of Maryland's local Jewish community, the Museum reached the same conclusion that such an interactive exhibit was disrespectful, as well as dangerous given the weight of a Torah.

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¹³ Interview with Karen Falk. November 19, 2010.

In contrast, the Jewish Museum of Milwaukee displays its Torah opened up to the weekly portion. The Torah is enclosed in a glass case, and is accompanied by metal crowns and a mantle, along with a description (which I wrote). Every week, the museum educator changes the Torah to the correct chapter. Like the Torahs at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, this Torah is considered "unkosher." Yet Jews still view it as special since it has God's name written. If the Museum ever wished to dispose of the Torah, it would have to be taken apart and buried in the ground during a special ceremony (most likely led by a rabbi). Orthodox Jews often believe that a pasul Torah should remain in an ark out of respect until it can be properly buried. Therefore, these Jews might be offended that the Jewish Museum of Milwaukee has decided to display the unwrapped Torah in the glass case. In fact, in an online segment about burying pasual Torahs, Rabbi Daniel Grossman of Adath Israel Congregation in New Jersey explicitly says that no Torah, pasul or non-pasul, should ever be displayed in a museum. ¹⁴ As someone who has led tours to non-Jews at the museum, however, I understand the impact that seeing a Torah has on the visitors, especially when they can see the stitches of the parchment and the Hebrew letters in black ink. As a fellow Jew, however, I certainly do not wish to offend members of my own religion. Therefore, different standards for exhibiting religious objects occur exist even when all parties involved share the same religion.

In most of the cases I studied, the museum staff made decisions about how to display sacred objects based on community consultation. Despite the improved relationships between museums and many represented groups, however, much work is yet to be done. What one community leader deems acceptable may not hold true for another, even if both are from the same group on display. Community consultation may be difficult if the groups on exhibit are not involved in the museum. For example, according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Outside of Europe, Jewish museums are generally created

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¹⁴ "Adath Torah Project Part 2: What do you do with a pasul (unkosher) Torah?" with Rabbi Daniel Grossman. November 3, 2008. http://www.mefeedia.com/watch/32195102 Accessed November 21, 2010.

by the community or with strong community involvement. In Europe, it is different." From this standpoint, community consultation at institutions such as the National Museum of the American Indian may be seen as a solution to the problem of exhibiting sacred objects. A general positive from community consultation has been the initiation of dialogue between museum professionals and groups on display. I believe that these conversations will be crucial to the representation of religious and cultural groups in museums in the coming decades.

Moving Forward

As all of the case studies included in this project show, a lack of standards in sacred objects can and often does offend members of the religious group. Part of the reason why there have not been calls for a standard set of rules likely stems from the fact that museums are turning to religious leaders and scholars in their local communities to establish how they can best display sacred pieces. The danger appears when museums do not ask for advice, and instead decide to exhibit objects as they see fit. Even when museums reach out for help, they may receive conflicting responses. While some groups discussed, like the Tibetan Buddhists, have a clear leader who can offer guidance, others such as Jews do not have a central figure. Many of the professionals whom I consulted for this project stand firmly in their beliefs that museums should base their decisions on consultations with religious members of their particular community. Although I agree that these connections are important, I see two flaws in focusing solely on local needs. First, visitors come to museums from all over. What may be acceptable practice for one community may not hold true for another community of the same religion or culture. Second, the museum has a moral obligation to exhibit sacred objects from all religions and cultures in the best way it is able. At this point, museums do not have the resources they need to fulfill this commitment.

I propose a two-fold plan for enhancing the display of sacred objects in museums. First, the

American Association of Museums and other museum governing bodies should draft a statement of best

practices illustrating the ethical and moral responsibilities of museums to exhibit sacred objects with respect. Parties involved in creating this tool should include museum professionals such as curators and educators, as well as consultants from a wide range of religions and cultures whose artifacts are often on display in museums. Key provisions must include consultation, provenance research, and so on.

Second, museums should work together to create a series of conferences and publications about exhibiting sacred artifacts from specific religions and cultures. In this way, museums could share knowledge with one another in addition to seeking out consultations from religious leaders.

Conclusion

The case studies presented in this essay demonstrate a lack of standard practices in exhibiting artifacts of a sacred nature. Museums of today face the growing challenge of displaying religious and cultural objects by consulting with local religious leaders. Yet museums also need a forum where they can compare one another's approaches and establish a set of regulations to respectfully exhibit sacred objects. Of course, even with the implementation of standards, museums will not all display artifacts of sacred significance in the same manner. Some might determine that the educational value overweighs exhibiting concerns. Likewise, there may not be one widely accepted answer to a specific exhibition concern. Such standards will, however, ensure that the issues are brought forward for museums and religious groups to ponder. Museum exhibitions have the power to do much more than instruct an audience on the uses and significance of a particular sacred object. They have the ability to serve as portals to shared experiences among visitors in the exhibit space, and ongoing dialogue between the institution, audience, and people associated with the religious objects.

EPILOGUE

When I began my studies at the George Washington University, this paper was among the first that I completed. It started as a research project in which I perused the stacks of Gelman Library looking for materials related to exhibiting sacred objects. Little did I know that the lack of sources would motivate me to embark on a search to find real-life examples in museums across the United States and beyond. This ongoing research, which quite frankly never really stopped during the entire two years that I was in the Museum Studies program, entailed finding museums with objects from religious or cultural groups on display, and then actively seeking email, telephone, or in-person interviews with curators, educators, and other relevant museum staff. What I realized quickly was that not only was there a lack of standards for exhibiting sacred objects within the field, but there was also a lack of discussion.

In May of 2011, I began a new phase of my research project, to develop a panel to present at the upcoming American Association of Museums in Minneapolis. My goal was to generate discussion in the field, but also to expand my own knowledge of the subject by communicating with museum professionals with experience exhibiting the sacred. The proposal process was a first-time experience for me, and I honestly had no idea what I was doing. I received guidance from Rita Mukherjee Hoffstadt, Program Co-Chair of the National Association for Museum Exhibition (NAME), as well as Corine Wegener, Associate Curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA). From Wegener, I learned that the display of sacred objects continues to be a problem even in art museums, which do have a report on exhibiting sacred objects, as referenced in the beginning of this paper. As Wegener explains, she tries her best as a curator to consult represented groups and display objects in a respectful manner. No additional resources are easily accessible to her, however, and she would appreciate them. For example, in exhibiting Judaica at MIA, Wegener, a non-Jew, consults rabbis and attends conferences to ensure that objects are respectfully displayed. If standards in the field existed, or if a set of rules were to be

established by an organization such as the Council of American Jewish Museums, Wegener would have access to more plentiful and solid resources to plan her exhibition.

In preparing my AAM session proposal, I encountered increasing problems defining the meaning of "sacred objects." One of the greatest challenges in labeling anything as sacred was that what may seem sacred to someone or some group may not be so for another. When I contacted the Newark Museum about how it displayed objects from the Hindu faith, the curatorial assistant with whom I spoke, Millicent Matthews, said that images and sculptures of Hindu deities such as Vishnu and Shiva were not viewed as sacred and therefore no special care had to be given to them. At the Portland Art Museum, in contrast, the exhibition team was specifically told to handle the eleventh-century sculpture of Lord Ganesh, god of wisdom and remover of obstacles, with "due reverence," although the meaning of "due reverence" was never fully explained. The exhibit includes a "Do not touch" sign and a vigilance camera to ensure that visitors are not touching the object. While such precautions may be important, they are no different from attention and respect given to most objects in museums.

Needless to say, lectures that I attended by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett forced me to further question the ambiguous nature of displaying sacred objects in museums. In particular, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's concept of place as a key factor in establishing sacredness of an object really stood out to me. When I wrote the first draft of this paper in Fall 2010, I actively studied examples of Torahs on display across the country. Yet I never for one moment questioned the exhibiting of Torahs at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, regardless of my constant exposure to them as a docent. It was not until after Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's lecture that I realized that the museum's atmosphere was influencing how I perceived the object. I ceased to see the Torah as a sacred object, and instead the torn and frayed pieces of parchment became a symbol of Nazi destruction and human loss. I would argue that few other

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¹⁵ Millicent Matthews, Curatorial Assistant, Newark Museum. Interview via telephone June 3, 2011.

¹⁶ Earthpages.org, "American Hindus urge Portland Art Museum to treat Lord Ganesha statue with reverence," January 31, 2009. Accessed February 3, 2012.

institutions could display the Torah in this manner without coming across as disrespectful. A similar politics of place is at play at the Newark Museum's Tibetan Buddhist Alter discussed earlier in this project. The reason why the Tibetan Alter works is because the entire room in which it is located has been transformed into a place of holiness. Therefore, museums also must make the choice of to what kind of place the object belongs, using as much input from community experts as possible. This knowledge bring me back to my argument that discussions regarding sacred objects in museums should be happening, whether that be through community consultation, conferences, councils of museums, or another vehicle. Guidelines created by AAM or another organization for exhibiting sacred objects may be useful, but should be viewed as a first step, and not a final checklist.

In late April 2012, I will have the opportunity to present my findings at the American Association of Museum's Annual Marketplace of Ideas. I am looking forward to sharing what I have found, and listening to the experiences and suggestions of museum professionals. I strongly believe that the current absence of standards for exhibiting sacred objects is a void that the museum field will eventually have to fill. I am less certain as to what form this eventually would take, but do not for one moment doubt the creativity and diligence of today's museums to develop a new set of tools. By bringing emphasis to this long overdue issue, I hope to generate conversation. My ongoing research has reminded me of just how complicated museum exhibitions can be, and what opportunities await.

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