

**AH 3XX Decolonizing the Museum:
Addressing Systemic Racism and Promoting Social Justice**

Instructor: Saleema Waraich

Credits: 4 (Content/Theory/Reflection component - 3 credits; Practice/Application component - 1 credit)

Format: Three weekly meetings (one 55-minute meeting and two 80-minute meetings)

Prerequisites: one AH course

Course Description

Examines historical, political, curatorial, and theoretical issues related to collections and exhibitions of South Asian, Islamic and African/African diasporic arts in the west, focusing on the United States, to help students understand issues pertaining to power, justice, and identity in contemporary America. From colonial expositions (world's fairs) to the rise of national museums to recent curatorial debates, this course critically engages with practices of display and representation of South Asian, Islamic, and African/African diasporic arts in the colonial, modern, and contemporary eras. In particular, recent movements demanding social justice for marginalized communities are forcing western museums to re-evaluate their collections and modes of display; questions of reinterpretation, de-accessioning and repatriation are coming to the fore like never before. Students will engage with these efforts to decolonize the museum and critical curatorial practices as they design their own exhibits or propose a reinstallation of an existing one through developing exhibition narratives and physical display spaces of their own design.

A. Content/Theory/Reflection component

Universal expositions and encyclopedic and anthropological museums in Europe and the U.S. were key sites for manufacturing and popularizing western white ideologies by disseminating "race science" through their displays of people and cultural artifacts from various cultures. These displays were instrumental in legitimizing hegemonic narratives of racial hierarchies and white superiority. Moreover, the majority of highly regarded museum collections are the products of the wealth amassed through enslavement, colonization, and/or western capitalism and the looting of valuable objects from around the world. In recent years, in response to demands for social justice, museums have begun addressing their disturbing pasts and flawed, detrimental practices. Movements for social justice have forced museums to address their roles in promoting and maintaining white supremacy.

Since the U.S. adopted and adapted European practices and ideologies related to world's fairs and museums, it is necessary to examine key European case studies to understand their manifestation in the U.S. Moreover, the deeply embedded and systemic nature of racism necessitates a historical approach as it is vital to understanding the current practices and making critical interventions.

B. Practice/Application component

In the fourth hour (and through related readings and assignments), students will develop skills

related to curatorial practice; these include the ins and outs of designing an exhibition proposal, writing labels, and building a 3-D model. Students will design a socially aware and engaged exhibition project that contributes to the theme of the course - decolonizing the museum - that they will present at the end of the semester. The student presentations will be open to student friends and family members, other staff and faculty, and to interested members of the general public. Pending the Tang Museum's approval, I hope to hold this event in the Payne Auditorium during the last week of classes, where the students' 3-D models will be on display.

To complement the training students will receive through the course textbook and museum manuals, I will bring outside experts into the classroom to provide students valuable insight into the challenges that they face as curators dealing with art from around the world. Rachel Seligman has agreed to be a regular guest speaker and each time I offer this course I will organize two to three virtual visits with curators from across the U.S. to speak with the class. When possible, I would like to invite a prominent curator from New York to campus, and also to take the students to NYC to visit at least a couple of museums (the Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Asia Society) and one gallery (Aicon Gallery).

In addition, students will be asked to undertake an additional public facing activity and will choose from one of the following options:

- leading a tour of an exhibition at the Tang that connects an exhibition on display to the theme of power, justice and/or identity.
- designing and implementing an educational program/activity for children related to power, justice, and/or identity as it relates to a Tang exhibition on display.
- writing a thoughtful, well-researched proposal to a museum in the U.S. explaining the need for and recommending a new title, gallery text, and mode of display that contributes to efforts to decolonize the museum.
- submitting a proposal for repatriating an object in a given museum's collection to said institution.

Additionally, we will spend time developing their oral communication and presentation skills in order to be able to effectively communicate their insights with a broader audience.

GOALS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Learning Objectives

- to examine how power and social injustice contributed to the collections and exhibitions of non-western cultures in western museums, focusing on the U.S.
- to explore the relationship between colonialism, neo-imperialism, the history of collecting Islamic, South Asian, and African/African diasporic arts in the west, and their display in World Fairs and museums in Europe and the U.S.
- to develop an understanding of how collecting and display intersects with power, the construction of knowledge, and identity politics from the 19th century to the present
- to examine how museums in the contemporary U.S. are addressing issues pertaining to their own deeply problematic past, their role in perpetuating harmful stereotypes, and their recent contributions to social justice movements
- to gain familiarity with key debates in the history and current practice of exhibiting Islamic, South Asian, and African/African diasporic arts
- to improve your skills in critical reading, analytical thinking, and offering constructive feedback

- to develop your skills in critically evaluating and synthesizing information and ideas through class discussions, writing assignments, and curating an exhibition
- to develop and merge creative, critical, and interdisciplinary thinking by designing an exhibition
- to engage with museum work as a form of activism
- to develop oral communication skills by participating in discussions and delivering public presentations
- to foster collaborative work

ETIQUETTE EXPECTATIONS

Please arrive on time and remain active in class. I will expect you to be prepared for each class (i.e. complete all the readings and assignments for the week), participate in discussions in an active and sustained way, and work on your exhibition project throughout the semester. You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning and that of your colleagues in this discussion based course.

In a small class environment like this one, you are expected to stay focused, engaged, and active. This is an important part of learning and also for your professional life after graduation.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings

Students will read essays published in a wide range of books, journals, and newspapers. All of the required readings are available on the ‘Syllabus and Course Content’ page in *theSpring*. A number of articles are available online; links to these articles are listed on the syllabus. In addition there is one required book for the course, available for purchase in the Skidmore Shop:

Leslie Bedford: *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016 (2014)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- | | |
|--|-----|
| - attendance, engagement and group (team) work | 10% |
| - regular reading reports | 20% |
| - take-home midterm and final (each one is worth 7.5%) | 15% |
| - independent public-facing activity | 15% |
| - exhibit project (inc. end-of-semester public presentation) | 40% |

All students are required to complete all substantive assignments; failure to do so will result in an F grade.

Engagement and Group (Team) Work

I expect you to participate regularly and productively in class and in your assigned group sessions, and to demonstrate a mature, collegial attitude in all forums. I evaluate engagement by observing how often you speak, as well as the substance of your contributions in class and in your assigned groups; and any interactions that we have during individual and small group meetings. ***Engagement is central to your success in this course; it is central and critical to the learning process.***

I will be dividing the class into groups or teams to facilitate preparation for curator visits and also for peer review of your exhibition projects. A separate document with guidelines (titled “AH XXX Group Work Guidelines”) will be made available on *theSpring*.

Reading Responses

Carefully and critically examining the readings is an especially important aspect of class. You are expected to submit a reading report for every assigned reading. Your entries should demonstrate careful reading of the texts; **you need to show me that you carefully and critically read the assigned readings; you must address what the article is about.**

Some of the readings listed below specify a set of questions to be discussed in your response. Others direct you to separate document with guidelines (titled “AH XXX Reading Response Guidelines”) that is available on *theSpring*. **Please follow the instructions that accompany each assigned reading / set of assigned reading as listed below.**

Reading responses are always due by the beginning of class on the day that a given reading/set of readings is/are assigned. You are permitted three passes over the course of the semester. If you complete all reading responses, you will earn extra credit.

Take-Home Midterm and Final

Both your midterm and final will consist of a 5-page paper summarizing, synthesizing, and reflecting upon key themes from the readings, class discussions, and curators’ visits. These reports are key moments for critical reflection and to record how your understanding of course content is developing and shifting.

A separate document with guideline (titled “AH XXX Midterm and Final Guidelines”) will be made available on *theSpring*.

*** Exhibition Project (these are “holding” dates and will be synced with calendar for the semester when this course is offered)**

The term project involves researching, creating, designing, and presenting an individual exhibition. *Your exhibit will consist of five components and be completed in six stages:*

A. two-page exhibition proposal is due **September 16**

B. revised and expanded exhibition proposal (4 -5 pages), list of tombstones (object IDs) and the text for the accompanying introductory wall panel (i.e. an introduction to your exhibit) are due **September 30**

Although the labels aren't due until October 22nd, you should already know what you want to say in each object's label so be sure to keep notes of why you're selecting the objects you're selecting (i.e. how do they fit into the story you're telling?).

C. labels for each object and additional wall panels are due **October 22**

D. peer review of exhibition project / portfolio: **November 9 and 10**

The more you share with us (please see 'F' below), the more feedback you will receive.

E. exhibition project presentations to be delivered on **December 1 and 3**

Each team of curators will give a fifteen minute presentation on your exhibition, explaining to the audience why your exhibit is important (a “need-to-see”!), the objectives and narrative of the exhibit, providing a virtual walk-through, discussing related programming, sharing promotional materials, and responding to any questions/comments from the audience.

F. 3-D model + “catalogue” / portfolio (for our purposes, this will be a digital portfolio of your exhibition) is due **December 14**

Your “catalogue” / portfolio will include:

- revised and expanded proposal (5 pages)
- introductory wall text and section labels
- tombstone and label(s – layering information) for each object with accompanying image
- maps, timelines, diagrams, photos, etc.
- related educational/cultural programming
- promotional material (e.g. posters)

MISCELLANEOUS

Submission policy

All assignments must be turned in on time. If you are unable to submit an assignment due to a significant illness or emergency, you are expected to communicate with me as soon as possible so that we can decide on an appropriate course of action. If it is a legitimate reason and I have been informed promptly, I will be as accommodating as possible. ***Please take full responsibility for submitting work on time and do not request exceptions unless it is a serious matter.***

Citation & Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is presenting another person's work as your own. Skidmore College requires instructors to report all cases of plagiarism to the Office of Academic Advising.

To ensure that this does not happen, please be sure to provide proper citations for all paraphrases and quotations. Paraphrasing entails turning someone else's words into your own, and then citing

the original source. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism. It is good practice to avoid using quotations, unless it is essential to reproduce an author's exact words. For your written assignments, citations in parentheses are acceptable.

More information can be found at <http://cms.skidmore.edu/advising/integrity/index.cfm>.

**Students are expected to follow the Honor Code.
Infractions of the Honor Code are taken seriously with severe consequences.**

Academic Integrity Statement

By enrolling at the college, you have agreed to abide by the Skidmore Honor Code, which states, "I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to abide by the College regulations." You should understand the high value we place on intellectual honesty and familiarize yourselves with the "Definitions and Guidelines" section of Skidmore's Academic Integrity Guide. These "Definitions and Guidelines" are published online.

Title IX Statement

Skidmore College faculty and staff are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. We consider sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal regulations.

If you choose to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, The Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates are all options available to the student.

More information can be found at <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/> or by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, Joel Aure, or Deputy Coordinator, Sarah Green.

Accommodations Statement

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener (mhegener@skidmore.edu), Coordinator of Student Access Services. You will need to provide documentation that verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call x8150 or stop by the Office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center (Starbuck 102, www.skidmore.edu/academic_services).

Diversity and Inclusion

Skidmore College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community in which members develop their abilities to live in a complex and interconnected world. Consistent with our educational mission, we recognize ourselves as a community that respects individual identities based on varying sociocultural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, religious and spiritual tradition, age, ability, socioeconomic status and learning style. We strive to create a socially just world that honors the dignity and worth of each individual, and we seek to build a community centered on mutual respect and openness to ideas—one in which individuals value cultural and intellectual diversity and share the responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment. We recognize that our community is most inclusive when all members participate to their full capacity in the spirited and sometimes challenging conversations that are at the center of the college's educational mission.

Conscientious Religious Observance Policy

If religious observances cause absence from class, campus employment, athletic practice, and/or game days or necessitates accommodations, students should notify their faculty, coaches, or supervisors prior to the date(s) of their absence. New York State policy and Skidmore College policy mandates that students be allowed to make up academic work and/or campus employment requirements without penalty. These accommodations should not reduce the overall expectations of a course nor unduly burden the student requesting accommodation. Faculty must permit students to take a makeup examination without any penalty if they have to miss an examination due to religious observances. Similarly, faculty must permit students to submit missed assignments by an agreed upon due date, without penalty.

Although not required, the College highly recommends that students submit written notification of the pending religious observances at the start of the semester or at least one week before the date. As an option, students may use this form. Distributing the written notification during the first week of classes, campus employment, or the start of the athletic season gives students, faculty, coaches, or supervisors time to prepare for the absence.

If a student, supervisor, coach, or faculty member feels the policy is being violated, they should contact the Dean of Faculty Office at 518-580-5705 (Palamountain 416), the Dean of Students Office at 518-580-5760 (Case Center 313), or Human Resources at 518-580-5800 (Barrett Center first floor).

Schedule of Meetings

**although I used the dates from this semester's syllabus, I added an additional week so this syllabus reflects the standard fourteen-week semester; the following dates will be changed according to the semester when this course is next offered.*

The following schedule is subject to change. Any changes to the schedule and syllabus will be announced in class or/and by e-mail.

Please complete all assigned readings, media, and activities *prior* to class.

Week One: Introductions **(to each other, to the syllabus, to museums)**

Mon, Aug 24: Introducing Ourselves

- Introduce ourselves
- *Two Truths and a Lie*

Tue, Aug 25: Introduction to the Course

- Today we'll review the syllabus, course content, course mechanics, assignments, etc.
- In preparation for today's class, please:
- read the syllabus and make list of questions
 - familiarize yourself with *theSpring* course website

Thu, Aug 27:

Please read and submit a response to the following three readings, noting what issues are at stake in each one and how these readings connect with / build upon one another; in response to all of these readings, how do you answer the question, "What is a museum?"

- Eugene Dillenburg, "What, if Anything, Is a Museum?" *Exhibitionist* (Spring 2011): pp. 11-13

- Alex Marshall, "What Is a Museum? A Dispute Erupts Over a New Definition" *NY Times*, Aug. 6, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/arts/what-is-a-museum.html>

- Terence Trouillot, "Pushed to Address Systemic Racism, Museums Face a Reckoning," July 16, 2020

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-pushed-address-systemic-racism-museums-face-reckoning>

Week Two: History of Non-Western Exhibitions

Mon, Aug 31

Please read and submit a list of reflections and possible solutions for facilitating successful group work:

- Barbara Oakley, "Coping with Hitchhikers and Couch Potatoes on Teams," *Journal of Student Centered Learning*, Volume 2, No. 1 (2004): pp. 32-34

***We will be using this reading to create norms or ground rules as a group for group work. As you read, please consider:**

- How many of you have been in a group with a hitchhiker and couch potato?
- What might you do as a group if one of you hitchhikes?

Tue, Sep 1 Ethnographic Exhibits and World Fairs

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines'):

- Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Aug., 1993): pp. 338-369

Highly Recommended:

- Chip Colwell, "Museums have a dark past, but we can fix that," TEDx Talks, August 22 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJYS9C06_qY

Thu, Sep 3 Colonial Collections of Indian Art

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines'):

- Carol A. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1989): pp. 195-216

Week Three: History of Non-Western Exhibitions

Mon, Sep 7

Meet in your pre-assigned study groups to share your respective research on next week's guest curator, Dr. Qamar Adamjee. During your group session, please prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask Dr. Adamjee and send these to me by the end of day. At the beginning of tomorrow's class, each team will share information about Dr. Adamjee's career that you find especially compelling.

Tue, Sep 8

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines'):

- Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," *Colonialism and the Object – Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, ed. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (Routledge, 1998): pp. 11 - 27

Thu, Sep 10

Please read and submit a list of the most influential, most helpful ideas discussed in the following set of readings. In your response, please let me know how many of you thought about exhibitions in this way (or said another way, how many of you recognized the stories being narrated in exhibitions you've visited?). Please share any particularly memorable exhibition stories and consider what made them so memorable for you.

- Polly McKenna-Cress and Andy Goodman, "Telling Stories"; "The 10 Immutable Laws of Storytelling"; "The Story on Storytelling," *Creating Exhibitions* (Wiley, 2013): pp. 109-115

- Leslie Bedford, "Story," *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences* (Routledge, 2014): pp. 57- 64

Week Four:

Resisting Colonial Stereotypes and Fulfilling Audience Expectations

Mon, Sep 14

Meet in your pre-assigned study groups to share your respective research on next week's guest curator, Dr. Navina Haidar. During your group session, please prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask Dr. Haidar and send these to me by the end of day. At the beginning of tomorrow's class, each team will share information about Dr. Haidar's career that you find especially compelling. ***See the readings on Sep. 22 for more information related to Dr. Haidar's work; they will help to you prepare questions for her visit.***

Tue, Sep 15 *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts*

Please visit the following websites and submit a 1 – 2 page summary of your impressions and reflections of the exhibition, Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts. As you work on this response/reflection paper, please remember that the V&A was formerly the South Kensington Museum (which we read about and discussed last week). How does knowing this background influence your understanding of the exhibition?

1. Please explore the six – brief - articles contained in the following website:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/m/maharaja-the-splendour-of-indias-royal-courts/>

To be clear you will be reviewing the thematic overviews titled as follows:

- Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts
- Shifting Power
- The Raj
- Princely India
- Maharaja: The exhibition (please click on the images contained here)
- Videos: Maharaja (please watch the video clips contained here)

2. Please read and view the images of the galleries:
<https://www.mowatandco.com/exhibition-maharaja-vanda>

3, Now, please compare the V&A's exhibition website with the Asian Art Museum's: <https://www.asianart.com/exhibitions/maharaja/intro.html>

Thu, Sep 17

****two-page exhibition proposal is due by noon today***

Thu, Sep 17: Guest Speaker Dr. Qamar Adamjee, Malavalli Family Foundation Associate Curator of Art of the Indian Subcontinent, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, from 2009- 2020

About Dr. Qamar Adamjee: Dr. Adamjee will share her experiences as the in-house curator at the Asian Art Museum for a traveling exhibition titled *Maharaja: The Splendor of India's Royal Courts*, organized by Victoria & Albert Museum. As in-house curator, Dr. Adamjee felt

compelled to resist the problematic aspects of the show, illuminating not only the enduring legacy of colonial discourses in contemporary museum practice but also as manifest in the audience desires and expectations. Her work draws much need attention to how conscientious curators wrestle with institutional needs and pressure to draw in large numbers of visitors, often through blockbuster exhibitions like *Maharaja*.

Week Five:

“What’s in a Name?” Exhibiting Islamic Art in the West

Mon, Sep 21 *Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Please read and submit a response to the following two essays, listing the key issues and collecting/exhibiting trends addressed in each article.

- Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, “Collecting the ‘Orient’ at the Met: Early Tastemakers in America,” *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 30 (2000): pp. 69-89

- Rebecca Lindsey, “Displaying Islamic Art at the Metropolitan: A Retrospective Look,” 2 February 2012

<https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/features/2012/displaying-islamic-art-at-the-metropolitan>

Tue, Sep 22: Guest Speaker Dr. Navina Haidar, Curator in Charge of the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

About Dr. Navina Haidar: Dr. Haidar was the coordinating curator of the New Islamic Galleries project, which came to fruition with the opening of an amazing sequence of galleries in 2011. After 9-11, like other museums around the world with collections of Islamic art, the Met dedicated a significant amount of resources to renovating the galleries that showcase these collections. Unlike other museums, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York renamed their galleries, sparking considerable debate.

Please read and submit a response to the following collection of essays, listing the key issues addressed in each article. In your response please address the factors and goals shaped the Met’s decision to renovate and rename their galleries? Do you agree with their decision to rename the collections? Why or why not?

- Alan Riding, “Islamic Art as a Mediator for Cultures in Confrontation,” *NY Times*, 6 April 2004, sec E, p. 1.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/06/arts/an-essay-islamic-art-as-a-mediator-for-cultures-in-confrontation.html>

- Randy Kennedy, “Placing Islamic Art on a New Pedestal,” *NY Times*, 22 September 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/arts/design/islamic-art-treasures-at-the-metropolitan-museum.html>

- Robert Worth, "At the Met, a New Vision for Islam in Hostile Times," *NY Times*, 28 October 2011

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/30/magazine/at-the-met-a-new-vision-for-islam-in-hostile-times.html>

- Nasser Rabbat, "What's in a Name," *Artforum International; New York*, Vol. 50, Iss. 5, (Jan 2012): pp. 74,76,78.

Please view videos included on this webpage:

<http://blog.metmuseum.org/newgalleries2011/en/welcome.html#more-5>

Thu, Sep 24: Islamic Arts at the Louvre

Please read the following NY Times articles, and make a list of the key issues raised. In addition, you will notice a theme that permeates this week's readings is whether exhibitions of Islamic art can confront prejudice and negative stereotypes, reshape American, European and global views of Muslims, and/or function as a mediator of cultures. In your response, please include your opinion on this matter.

- John Tagliabue, "Louvre Gets \$20 Million for New Islamic Wing," *NY Times*, 28 July 2005 <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/28/arts/design/louvre-gets-20-million-for-new-islamic-wing.html>

- Carol Vogel, "The Louvre's New Islamic Galleries Bring Riches to Light," *NY Times*, 19 September 2012

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/20/arts/design/the-louvres-new-islamic-galleries-bring-riches-to-light.html>

Week Six: On Curating

Mon, Sep 28

Please read and submit a list of the most helpful, most influential ideas discussed in the following set of readings on labels.

- Beverly Serrell, “What Are Interpretive Labels?”; “Types of Labels in Exhibitions”; “Labels That Ask Questions,” *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (Walnut Creek: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.): pp. 9-36; 105-110

* all three chapters are in the same document in *theSpring*

Super Useful Guides for Label Writing:

- Beverly Serrell, “Guidelines for Exhibition Texts,” *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996).

- V&A, “Gallery Text at the V&A: A Ten Point Guide” (August 2013)

Recommended:

- Polly McKenna-Cress, “Advocacy for the Subject Matter,” *Creating Exhibitions* (Wiley, 2013): pp. 69-88

Tue, Sep 29: Guest Speaker Rachel Seligman, Assistant Director for Curatorial Affairs and Malloy Curator, Tang Museum

Skidmore’s much beloved Assistant Director and Malloy Curator, Rachel Seligman, will speak with us about the various considerations of curating; including curating as narration; curating as authorship with its own point of view and agenda, like other types of storytelling; curating as agency (and how to encourage and transfer agency from a curator to audience viewers); curatorial choices about how to present information; how exhibition design (inc. wall color, lighting, hanging in a grid, etc.) shapes narrative and audience experience. She will address museums’ hidden agendas, how they drive decision making, the narratives they put forward and suppress, and a curator’s role and responsibility in making those decisions and narratives transparent.

Please read and submit a list of the most helpful, most influential ideas discussed in the following two chapters.

- Leslie Bedford, “Alternative Exhibition Models,” *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences* (Routledge, 2014): pp. 39-53

Wed, September 30

*** revised proposal, list of tombstones (object IDs), and the text for the accompanying introductory wall panel (i.e. an introduction to your exhibit) are due by noon today**

Thu, Oct 1 and Fri Oct 2

One-on-one meetings with me to discuss exhibition projects and your individual projects (tour,

educational programming, proposal, etc.); please submit proposals for both the night before our meeting.

Week Seven:

Exhibiting Islamic and South Asian Arts in the 20th Century

Mon, Oct 5: From Bazaars to White Boxes

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in ‘AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines’):

- David J. Roxburgh, “Au Bonheur des Amateurs: Collecting and Exhibiting Islamic Art, ca. 1880-1910,” *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 30, (2000): pp. 9-38

Tue, Oct 6: From Bazaars to White Boxes

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in ‘AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines’):

- David J. Roxburgh, “After Munich: Reflections on Recent Exhibitions,” *After One Hundred Years: The 1910 Exhibition “Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst” Reconsidered*, ed. Avinoam Shalem & Andrea Lerner (Leiden: Brill, 2010): pp. 359–86

Thu, Oct 8

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in ‘AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines’):

- Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "The Contrary Careers of India's Art Objects," *Spectacle and Display*, Deborah Cherry, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2008): pp. 628–654

Week Eight: Exhibiting South Asian Arts Today

Mon, Oct 12

* take-home midterm is due by noon today

Please read and submit a reading response to the following essay.

A. The article by Ahuja explores the potential of museums to address conflict and includes examples of labels that do the type of work he's advocating for. In your response to Ahuja's essay, please:

- summarize why Ahuja believes it is important to not shy away or ignore issues pertaining to conflict as embodied in objects in museums,*
- include a list of the types of conflict he highlights in his essay, including the case studies he presents,*
- include his suggestions for productively addressing conflict,*
- and propose additional types of conflict that museums should narrate in and for the public.*

- Naman P. Ahuja, "Conflict: Can Museums Tell Us Why?" *Marg*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (June 2020): pp. 26–37

Tue, Oct 13:

Please read and submit a reading response on the following brief exhibition review. In your response, please share your opinion on this exhibition's approach to depicting Hindu icons. What do you like or not like about this approach? Drawing upon Guha-Thakurta's essay from last Thursday and building upon our conversation in process, do you think museums should portray these sculptures as devotional objects ("in context" as Susan Bean writes) or as art.

Please explain why. Be sure to consider what is gained and lost in each approach (devotional object vs. art object) in your response.

- Susan Bean, "Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion" (Exhibition Review),
Museum Anthropology, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1996): pp. 29 - 32

Thu, Oct 15:

Meet in your pre-assigned study groups to share your respective research on next week's guest curator, Dr. Amanda Gilvin. During your group session, please prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask Dr. Gilvin and send these to me by the end of day. At the beginning of Monday's class, each team will share information about Dr. Gilvin's career that you find especially compelling.

Week Nine:
African Arts, Black Lives Matter, and Decolonizing Museums

Mon, Oct 19:

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines'):

Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, edited by Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine, Washington DC: Smithsonian, 1991: pp. 191-204

Tue, Oct 20: Guest Speaker Dr. Amanda Gilvin, Senior Curator of Collections and Assistant Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Davis Museum, Wellesley College

About Dr. Amanda Gilvin: Amanda Gilvin is an art historian and curator who writes about textiles, contemporary art, and museums of Africa and the African Diaspora. She finished her Ph.D. in the History of Art at Cornell University in 2012. Before arriving at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College as an Assistant Curator, Gilvin taught at Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and Skidmore College. Her book manuscript, *Mining Beauty: Art and Development in Niger*, includes an analysis of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger. In her current role as Director of Curatorial Affairs, Dr. Gilvin is in charge of the Davis Museum's efforts to decolonize the museum.

Please read (Sarr and Savoy) and listen (NPR) to the following and submit a reading response for each using one or more of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Report Guidelines'. Alternatively, you're welcome to instead submit a response that outlines the major issues that must be taken into consideration when dealing with issues of repatriation as informed by the assigned pieces, which focus on objects stolen from Africa. Whichever option you choose, be sure to address the questions and issues that come up in the NPR audio piece and the excerpts from Sarr and Savoy's report.

- Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics*, N°2018-26, November 2018 (Translated into English by Drew S. Burk). Paris: Ministère de la Culture de la France: 1-26, 54-62.
http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf

- NPR: 1A: WAMU, "Museums Are Filled with Stolen African Art. Is It Time to Return It?" September 15, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/11/912001044/museums-are-filled-with-stolen-african-art-is-it-time-to-return-it>

Thu, Oct 22: Museums as Spaces of Systemic Racism and for Social Justice

*** labels for each object and additional wall panels are due today**

In your reading response to the following two articles, please respond – that is, I'd love to hear about your reactions to the topics addressed, the connections you're making to previous readings, class discussions, and personal experiences, and anything else that comes to mind as you're reading.

- Farah Nayeri, "To Protest Colonialism, He Takes Artifacts From Museums," *NY Times*, Sept. 21, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/21/arts/design/france-museum-quai-branly.html>

- Claire Voon, "As Confederate Monuments Come Down, American Museums Rethink How They Tell History," *Artsy.net*, Jul 22, 2020

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-confederate-monuments-american-museums-rethink-history>

Week Ten:

A Demolished Landmark and a New Vision for an Encyclopedic Museum

Mon, Oct 26: Meet in your pre-assigned study groups to share your respective research on tomorrow's guest curator, Dr. Tushara Bindu Gude. During your group session, please prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask Dr. Gude and send these to me at your earliest convenience since I need to send the questions to her by the end of today. ***See the readings for this week for more information related to Dr. Gude's current work; they will help to you prepare questions for her visit.***

As part of your preparations, please read the following exhibition review:

- Perwana Nazif, "The Jeweled Isle: Art from Sri Lanka at LACMA," 18 January 2019

<https://ocula.com/magazine/reports/the-jeweled-isle-art-from-sri-lanka-at-lacma/>

Tue, Oct 27: Guest Speaker Dr. Tushara Bindu Gude, Associate Curator, South and Southeast Asian Art, Los Angeles Museum of Art

About Dr. Tushara Bindu Gude: Dr. Gude is the associate curator in the South and Southeast Asian Art Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and has a leading role in creating new narratives and display strategies for the museum's collection of South and Southeast Asian Art. Dr. Tushara Bindu Gude received her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her areas of expertise include Indian Buddhist art, South Asian courtly paintings, art of the colonial period, and the modern and contemporary art of South Asia. Her past exhibitions at LACMA include Pinaree Sanpitak: Hanging by a Thread (2013) and India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow (2010-11). Dr. Gude has also recently curated several permanent collections including, Buddhism, Trade, and Diplomacy: Relationships Between Tibetan and Chinese Art (2016-17), and Monsoon: Indian Paintings of the Rainy Season (2016-17). She was also the co-curator of the exhibition Las Huellas de Buda (Traces of the Buddha) (Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, July 19 – October 14, 2018), the first pan-Asian Buddhist exhibition to be held in Mexico City. She was the co-curator of "The Jeweled Isle: Art from Sri Lanka," the first comprehensive survey of Sri Lankan art organized by a U.S. museum.

Please read and respond to the following two pieces, using the following prompts. Michael Govan is the Director of LACMA and Professor Michael Conforti is a Lecturer in the Graduate Program in Art History at Williams College (in MA). The following two articles are in favor of LACMA's vision; in your response please discuss the reasons for Govan's defense

of the project and Conforti's support and praise of it. Was your response to Knight's essays aligned with Govan and Conforti or did your opinion of LACMA's overhaul shift after reading these two articles? Were you swayed by their argument? Why or why not?

- Michael Govan, "Op-Ed: LACMA's new building is visionary — and big enough," Los Angeles Times, April 7 2019

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-govan-lacma-zumthor-final-plan-20190407-story.html>

also available as a pdf file on *theSpring

- Michael Conforti, "LACMA is building an institution for the 21st century," The Art Newspaper, June 13 2019

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/comment/lacma-is-building-an-institution-for-the-21st-century>

Recommended:

- Catherine Wagley, "LACMA's \$750 Million Renovation Was Once Hailed as a Powerful Vision of What a 21st-Century Museum Could be. Now, It's a Lightning Rod," *artnet news*, April 1, 2020

<https://news.artnet.com/market/lacma-expansion-analysis-1822221>

Thu, Oct 29:

Your reading response for today consist of two parts:

Part I: Giovannini's essay is a critique of LACMA's proposed plan to decolonize the museum. Why is he critical of LACMA's director Govan's plan? What do you think of Govan's plan and of Giovannini's critique? What do you think LACMA should do? Please carefully consider potential losses and gains.

- Joseph Giovannini, "The Demolition of LACMA: Art Sacrificed to Architecture," *The New York Review of Books*, 2 October 2020

https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/10/02/the-demolition-of-lacma-art-sacrificed-to-architecture/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NYP%20Marilynne%20Robinson%20Richard%20Wright%20LACMA&utm_content=NYP%20Marilynne%20Robinson%20Richard%20Wright%20LACMA+CID_478e3db3584ba5e33d906b11bb935788&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_term=Los%20Angeles%20County%20Museum%20of%20Art

Part II: Christopher Knight received the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Criticism "For work demonstrating extraordinary community service by a critic, applying his expertise and enterprise to critique a proposed overhaul of the L.A. County Museum of Art and its effect on the institution's mission." Please read the following three essays in Christopher Knight's series; in your response to these three articles, please discuss why these essays were deemed "extraordinary community service" as well as the reasons why he vehemently objects to LACMA's overhaul. Do you agree or disagree with his argument? Why?

three are available on the Pulitzer's website:

<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/christopher-knight-los-angeles->

[times](#)

- “Critic’s Notebook: Troublesome Signs in LACMA’s Risky Reorganization Plan” (March 12, 2019)
- “The Incredible Shrinking Museum: A Critic’s Lament” (April 2, 2019) also available at <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-lacma-shrinking-20190402-story.html>
- “An Open Letter to LACMA Architect Peter Zumthor: Stop Dissing L.A.’s art” (July 9, 2019)

Recommended (this is the first essay in Knight’s LACMA series, written in 2017):

Christopher Knight, “The new LACMA: Plans call for radical change to how we see the permanent collection,” May 25, 2017”

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-ca-cm-lacma-zumthor-collection-20170528-htmlstory.html>

*** also available as a pdf file on *theSpring***

Week Eleven: Asian Arts

Mon, Nov 2:

Small group meetings with peer review to discuss your exhibition project / portfolio.

Tue, Nov 3 and Wed, Nov 4:

Individual meetings with me to discuss your exhibition project / portfolio as well as review your individual project (tour, educational program, proposal, etc.); you must submit drafts of both the night before our meeting.

Thu, Nov 5: Multiculturalism and Identity Politics in U.S. Museums

Please read:

- Holland Cotter, "Under Threat: The Shock of the Old," *NY Times*, 14 April 2011.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/arts/design/non-western-art-history-bypasses-the-ancient.html>

- Vishakha Desai, "Revisioning Asian Arts in the 1990s: Reflections of a Museum Professional," *The Problematics of Collecting and Display, Part 2*, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (June 1995): pp. 169-174

Week Twelve: Exhibiting Islamic Art in Muslim Majority Regions

Mon, Nov 9: Building a 3D-Model: workshop with Rachel Seligman

Tue, Nov 10: Betwixt and Between: The Problems of Producing and Exhibiting Asian-American Art

In your response to the selected excerpts from the following exhibition catalog, please discuss the issues specific to producing and exhibiting Asian-American art in the U.S. Do you agree with the authors that despite the risk of essentialism and/or promoting identity politics, it is still necessary to create spaces for exhibiting Asian American art. Why or why not?

- selected excerpts from *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now*, edited by Melissa Chiu, Karin Higa, and Susette S. Min, with contributions by Margo Machida and Helen Zia (New York: The Asia Society, 2006)

Thu, Nov 12:

Please read and submit a reading response (using one of the options described in 'AH 3XX Reading Response Guidelines'); in addition, please consider what American critics responses to contemporary artists from around the world means in light of the central premise of Cotter's article ("Under Threat"):

- Debbie Lisle, "Benevolent Patriotism: Art, Dissent and 'The American Effect.'" *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 2 (June 2007), 233-250.

Week Thirteen: Exhibition Presentations

Mon, Nov 16: peer workshop individual public facing project (tour, educational program, proposal, etc.)

Tue, Nov 17: New Capitals of Art

Please read and submit a response to the following collection essays, listing the key issues addressed in each article.

- Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Building Museums, and a Fresh Arab Identity," *NY Times*, 26 November 2010

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/27/arts/design/27museums.html>

- Doreen Carvajal, "Louvre Abu Dhabi, a Cultural Cornerstone Where East Meets West," *NY Times*, 7 November 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/arts/design/louvre-abu-dhabi.html>

- Holland Cotter, "Louvre Abu Dhabi, an Arabic-Galactic Wonder, Revises Art History," *NY Times*, 28 Nov. 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/28/arts/design/louvre-abu-dhabi>

Nov 19: Individual public facing project presentations to the class

Week Fourteen: Exhibition Presentations

Each curatorial-team will give a ten-minute presentation on your exhibition in the Payne Auditorium in the Tang Museum. This event is open to your friends, family, faculty and staff, the general public.

Mon, Nov 30: Dress Rehearsal

Tue, Dec 1 Dress Rehearsal

Thur, Dec 3: Public Presentations

Your complete exhibition project / portfolio and take home final is due on the last day of Finals Week: December 11