

PRESS RELEASE

**THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART COLLABORATES
WITH THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF NEPAL
IN THE RETURN OF TWO OBJECTS**

NEW YORK, NY, January 10, 2022 — The Rubin Museum of Art and the Consulate General of Nepal in New York announce the transfer of ownership of two objects from the Rubin’s permanent collection to Nepal.

The return ceremony took place at the Rubin Museum on January 10, 2022. Acting Consul General Mr. Bishnu Prasad Gautam received the objects on behalf of the Government of Nepal. “We are deeply grateful to the Rubin Museum of Art, its Executive Director, the Board of Trustees, and the Museum’s scholars and officials for their initiative and cooperation in returning these artifacts back to Nepal. We also appreciate the efforts of supporters and interested parties for their love of Nepali art. The proactive response and thoughtful collaboration from the Rubin have positively contributed to Nepal’s national efforts to recover the lost artifacts,” remarked Consul General Gautam at the ceremony.

The objects scheduled to be returned include the Upper Section of a Frieze/Torana (17th century) and a Garland Bearing Apsara (14th century). The Upper Section of a Frieze/Torana once resided in a temple complex in Patan called the Yampi Mahavihara/I-Bahi/Yampi Bahi. An unknown source removed the object from Nepal, and it came into the United States and joined the Rubin Museum’s collection in 2010. The Garland Bearing Apsara is documented to have been originally situated at the Keshchandra Mahavihara, Itum Bahal, Kathmandu, and went missing in spring of 1999. It was brought to the United States, and added to the Rubin Museum’s collection in 2003.

The Nepal Heritage Recovery Campaign brought the claims to the Museum’s attention after publicly noting their concerns over social media and in articles in the *Nepali Times* and the *Kantipur* in Nepal. In immediate response to the claims, the Rubin engaged two scholars of Nepali art to further examine and research the known provenance of the pieces. The Museum also collaborated with the Consulate General of Nepal, New York, in determining the origin of the objects, the possibility of returning them to their original sites, and the repatriation process. After thorough investigation, all parties collectively determined that these objects were unlawfully removed from their original sites in Nepal.

Jorrit Britschgi, Executive Director of the Rubin Museum of Art, comments, “As custodians of the art in our collection, the Rubin recognizes that we have an ongoing duty to carefully research the art and objects we collect and exhibit. The theft of archaeological objects continues to be a major concern in the art world. The Rubin’s collecting activities adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice related to provenance.

We believe it is our responsibility to address and resolve issues of cultural property, including helping to facilitate the return of the two objects in question. We're also pleased to share that an ongoing partnership between the Rubin Museum and Itum Bahal has come out of this collaboration. It will include documenting the temple's collection and establishing a permanent display space for the objects. This is being jointly developed with the temple and a museology class at the Lumbini Buddhist University in Nepal."

Britschgi elaborated, "The Rubin is committed to overseeing the safe arrival and installation of these objects in their future location. The title to these objects will be transferred over to Nepali authorities as part of the ceremony. The pieces will be returned to the Department of Archaeology in Nepal, who will determine their final location. The Rubin Museum hopes that the objects will ultimately return to their original sites pending the Department of Archaeology's condition evaluation of the locations."

Prior to this claim, no object in the collection was confirmed to have been unlawfully obtained. The Museum devotes considerable resources to investigating the provenance of all objects in the collection, including:

- A multiyear effort to catalogue, review, and consolidate research on the Rubin Museum collection.
- Digitizing objects in the collection to make them public on the [Rubin's website](#) and on Himalayan Art Resources.
- Regularly attending forums and collaborating with representatives of the countries affected by illicit trade.
- Inviting independent scholars to research the collection.

The Rubin and the Consulate also expressed their willingness to continue working closely in promotion of Himalayan art and culture, as these collaborative efforts contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and further strengthen the longstanding people-to-people ties between Nepal and the United States of America.

ABOUT THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

The Rubin Museum of Art in Chelsea, New York City, explores and celebrates the diversity and uniqueness of Himalayan art, ideas, and cultures across history and into the present. With its globally renowned collection, largely centered around art from the Tibetan Plateau, the Rubin fosters understanding and appreciation of this region by relating its art and ideas to our shared human experience today. Inspired by the philosophical traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism and aligned with ongoing research into learning, behavior, and the brain, the Rubin offers innovative exhibitions and programs that examine provocative ideas across the arts and explore the mind. Through this work, the Museum serves as a space for reflection and personal transformation, opening windows to inner worlds so visitors can better navigate outer ones. www.RubinMuseum.org

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