

South Asia Council Forum

Yoga in Museums: Sacred Objects and How Some People Respond to Them

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12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
Coor Hall, Room 6615

Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto



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We have long recognized that many objects in museums were originally housed in temples, shrines, or monasteries, and were religiously significant to the communities that created and used them. How, though, are such objects to be understood, described, exhibited, and handled now that they are in museums, and have different functions? Are they still sacred objects, or formerly sacred objects that are now art objects, or are they cultural artifacts? Are they simultaneously objects of religious and artistic significance, depending on who is viewing the object? These objects not only raise questions about their own identities, but also about the ways we understand the religious traditions in which these objects were created and which these objects represent in museums today. This presentation addresses a surprising way in which some respond to museum objects that have former lives as religiously significant objects by engaging in yoga practice in the presence of these objects.