



## Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre Media Advisory

### Art Exhibition

### “Narratives of Faith & Memory: Remembering the Lost Sculptures of Kathmandu”

Joy Lynn Davis

Patan Museum, Lalitpur, Nepal, 15-21 December 2013

Since the 1960s, thousands of Buddhist and Hindu sculptures have disappeared from Nepal’s public temples, shrines, courtyards, fountains, and fields. Prior to the thefts, they were actively worshipped by their communities as living deities. This exhibition, which is supported by UNESCO and Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, documents community response to the theft of stone sculptures from the Kathmandu Valley. Paintings, interviews, and photographic documentation, weave together narratives of Kathmandu’s sacred spaces, exploring how people respond when religious art objects—that exist, not as commodities, but as vital living community participants—are physically removed.

Twelve large-scale paintings bridge present and past states of these sacred spaces by realistically depicting the sites as they look presently and then visually “repatriating” the stolen sculptures back into those sites with 23 karat gold. Didactic panels accompany each painting, featuring historical photographs of the stolen sculptures, current photographs of the sites, information about the stolen sculptures and replicas, and excerpts of interviews with local elders, devotees, and temple caretakers. A website launched in conjunction with the exhibition includes a searchable and sortable database of all known thefts recorded by Joy Lynn Davis (currently over 200).

This exhibition sparks dialog about the ongoing problem of art theft in Nepal and worldwide, and builds on work done in the 1980s by Lain Singh Bangdel and Jürgen Schick documenting art theft from Nepal.

The timing of the exhibition coincides with an international symposium entitled “Protecting Asia’s heritage. Strategies for fighting illicit traffic of cultural property and fostering restitutions,” organized by the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu on 16 and 17 December 2013, under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Artist Joy Lynn Davis is from California. She currently lives in Patan and is an artist in residence at the Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre.

More information about the project is available at:

<http://www.rememberingthelost.com>

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17<sup>th</sup> Century Goddesses (flanking Vishnu)  
stolen in the early 1980s from Sankhu  
acrylic painting with 23 kt gold, Joy Lynn Davis