

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### Art Exhibition

**“Remembering the Lost Sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley”  
Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, 10 April – 22 May 2015**

Joy Lynn Davis

in collaboration with Photo.Circle

with sponsorship by the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal

and additional support by UNESCO

and the Himalayan Art and Cultural Heritage Project



Painting by Joy Lynn Davis, Acrylic with 23 karat gold on cotton rag paper, 40x30", 2014  
18th Century Ganesh, stolen in 1988 from Chochhen Tol, Bhaktapur

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 sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal with collaboration by Photo.Circle and additional support by UNESCO, documents community response to the theft of stone sculptures from the Kathmandu Valley. Paintings, interviews, historical photographs and current photographs weave together the history and 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.

Fifteen large-scale paintings are a bridge between the past and the present where stolen sculptures are recontextualized and visually repatriated. Artist Joy Lynn Davis visits, photographs, and paints the sacred sites where sculptures were originally located and then paints the stolen sculptures back into those sites, referencing historical photographs. Stolen sculptures are painted in 23 karat gold, referencing the commodification of the sacred and

providing a visual language revealing what has been stolen. Informational 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 an interactive map and searchable and sortable database of all known thefts recorded (currently over 200).

This exhibition celebrates Nepal's rich cultural heritage and sparks dialog about ownership of culture, the international art trade, and the ongoing problem of art theft in Nepal and worldwide. The research exhibited builds on work done in the 1980s by Lain Singh Bangdel and Jürgen Schick about art theft from Nepal.

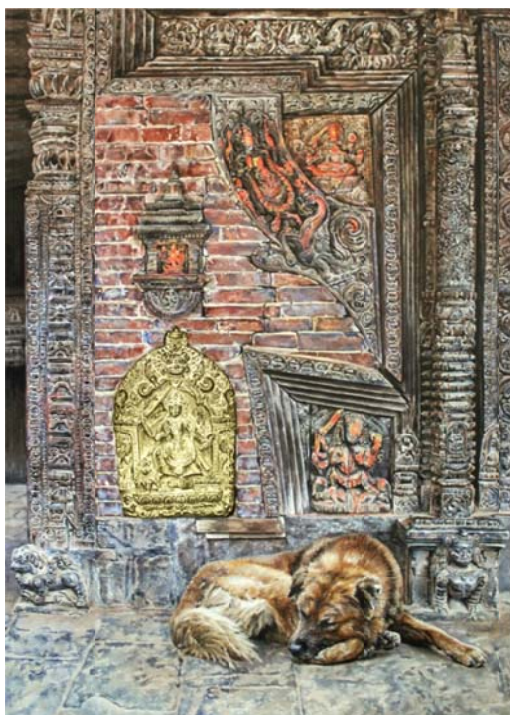
Community outreach activities and events are planned during the exhibition, inviting visitors to participate in film nights about art theft from around the world, walking tours of sites of thefts, repatriation debates, a memory recording station, and talk programs. A documentation workshop with university students will also culminate in the exhibition of their original research and creative activities.

**Joy Lynn Davis** is an artist and researcher from California, currently living in Lalitpur. She was an artist in residence at Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre (2012-2013) and Santa Fe Art Institute (2008, 2009). She received her BA in Art from the University of California Santa Barbara in 2002. In 2012, her work was sponsored by UNESCO and exhibited at Patan Museum. She is the founder of Himalayan Art and Cultural Heritage Project, a non-profit working to preserve and promote awareness for the artistic and cultural heritage of Nepal and other areas of the Himalayan region.

**Photo.Circle** is an arts organization in Lalitpur which brings photographers and other visual storytellers together, nurturing unique voices that document and engage with social change in Nepal. Photo.Circle was established in 2007 as a platform for photography in Nepal and is a Private Limited Company which reinvests all profits to create opportunities for photographers to learn, exhibit, publish, and market their work through workshops, publications, exhibitions and commissioned assignments.

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Information about the project is available at:  
<http://www.rememberingthelost.com>



The back side of Vishesvara Temple, Patan Durbar Square (photos: Joy Lynn Davis, 2013)



Before theft in 2010  
 (photo: Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust)



After theft, 2013  
 (photo: Joy Lynn Davis)

Painting by Joy Lynn Davis  
 17th Century Maha-Lakshmi, Patan, Nepal  
 Acrylic with 23 karat gold on cotton rag paper, 40 x 30", 2013