

The logo consists of a stylized blue icon on the left, resembling a building or a series of steps, followed by the text "MUSEUM STUDIES" in a large, bold, grey sans-serif font, and "BROWN BAG SERIES" in a smaller, bold, blue sans-serif font below it.

# MUSEUM STUDIES BROWN BAG SERIES

Please bring your lunch and join us for a **Museum Studies Brown Bag!**

**Speaker:** Rebecca Bloom (PhD candidate, Asian Languages and Cultures)

**When:** 12:00 pm on Wednesday, January 27

**Where:** Multi-Purpose Room, UM Museum of Art (Room 125)

Where the Sacred and the Secular Meet: The Politics of Display at a Monastery Museum in Ladakh, India

Removed from the sanctified spaces of temples and shrines, and relocated to the secular sphere of museum galleries, Buddhist objects are transformed from icons to artifacts, from images to artworks. Within their new exhibition context, new meanings and values are imposed on these objects based on the authority of the museum and the principles of research and education that it embodies. But what if the museum is located within the sanctified space of a Buddhist monastery? How are the boundaries between art and relic, aesthetic work and empowered icon, scholarly authority and religious belief negotiated in these hybrid spaces? Who is the intended audience and what is the intended mission of a monastic museum?

In this presentation, I will share my recent fieldwork at a museum project at Chemrey Monastery in Ladakh, a Tibetan Buddhist region located in the western Himalayas of India. The proposed reconceptualization of an existing museum at this monastery has revealed the potential implications of wielding cultural preservation to respond to the growth of tourism and the expansion of modernization. Chemrey's monastic museum offers a compelling case study for illuminating the widespread forces of change at play in the western Himalayas regarding the treatment and understanding of sacred art and local heritage, and understanding the powerful resolution offered by the museum medium.