



Please join us for a **Museums at Noon** presentation!

Speaker: Emily Cornish (PhD candidate, History of Art)

When: 12:00 pm on Friday, March 13

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

Collecting Oceania

Traveling along numerous intellectual, social, political and cultural currents, objects from the Pacific Islands have been circulating in United States' museum collections since the nineteenth century, especially in universal art museums. Using a mid-Atlantic U.S. institution as a case study, this talk explores Pacific Islands holdings and collection histories. Close engagement with museum object files, digital catalogue, and the objects themselves reveals a complex collecting history that encompasses the twentieth century obsession with the so-called "primitive arts," U.S. involvement in WWII, and contemporary ethical dilemmas regarding the repatriation of human remains and sacred objects. By tracking aspects like objects' display histories, language of classification, and more, the bounded nature and value of this collection in relation to the museum's current priorities, initiative, and constraints comes to the fore, ultimately prompting consideration of the museum's responsibility today to such objects and their source communities.