

Museum spaces do not provide the same experience to all its visitors.

I regularly visit the Fleming's Asian gallery. In my first year, I visited only this one particular gallery because I felt at home seeing the objects I used to see inside Hindu temples in Nepal. I knew nothing about colonization, and the Asian gallery provided me with a very comfortable space amidst the very white space outside the museum I was barely comfortable in handling: my English was not great for interacting with people and I was the only international student from Nepal, with no one to talk to in Nepali. I even clicked pictures of the gallery and sent them home, and everyone said wow! There were certainly times when I thought the way objects were presented seemed very rude: the Buddha's head was broken, the Sun God was kept in a dark space. Some objects are more than just objects—they are Gods! As a South Asian Hindu, I felt saddled with a feeling of inferiority: where are flowers to honor Hindu Gods? Why do I need permission from a white person to put flowers there?

Nevertheless, I liked visiting the gallery, and I still do! Again, from my own experience, when I think of how museums reproduce white supremacy, I think of the white student worker. As usual, I was doing my work with the Hindu objects without touching them; the worker came close, kept on staring, did not smile at all, and after this time, I did not feel the same comfort in doing the work I used to do with the Hindu objects. The white supremacy here, I think, lies in the comfort that allowed the white worker to keep on staring while at the same time, generated a feeling in me that said, no I was not doing the right thing inside a museum space, given my preconceptions about whiteness and how a white person smiles in consent.

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# Absence

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*Seeing and Unseeing the Fleming's Collection*