The Politics of Public Display: Archaeology, Museums and Artifacts from the Holy Land

Morag Kersel, DePaul University

5:30 pm Thursday, April 9, 2015
Kelsey Museum Lecture Hall
434 South State Street
This event is free and open to the public

Archaeological Institute of America
Kershaw Lectures in Near East Archaeology
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology
Collaborative Archaeology Workgroup
The Politics of Public Display:
Archaeology, Museums and Artifacts from the Holy Land

Speaker: Morag Kersel, DePaul University
Host Department: Archaeological Institute of America
Date: 04/09/2015
Time: 5:30 pm
Location: Kelsey Museum Lecture Hall

Description:
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In 2002 the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) displayed the James Ossuary – a commonplace limestone burial box from the 1st century CE bearing the Aramaic inscription “James, Son of Joseph, Brother of Jesus”. Timed to coincide with the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Schools of Oriental Research, the ROM brought the ossuary together with an audience of experts. With this display the museum took on simultaneous roles: custodian of a sacred relic, a shaper of public interpretation, and as a fiduciary institution.

Recent acquisitions of Dead Sea Scrolls and other biblical artifacts by academic institutions like Azusa Pacific University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary demonstrate that the desire to “own”, display and interpret the past continues to be an important aspect of institutional missions, missions which also have competing roles.

This lecture will examine the differing strands of obligation – obligation to the public; to students; to board members; the academic community; the country of origin; and ultimately to the archaeological record. Using case studies of artifacts from the Holy Land we will investigate the politics of public display and the role of the museum.

Short bibliography on lecture topic: