

***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:

James Cuno (2008) *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Waxman, Sharon (2008) *Loot: The Battle over the Stolen Treasures of the Ancient World*. New York: Times Book