

Statement of Grant Purpose  
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**Return of Anatolian Artifacts to Turkish Museums: A Design Impact Analysis**

In the dead of night you are dug out of your home, wrapped in a tarp, and tossed in a trunk. You spend months secretly being passed through cargo holds. Finally, you are presented to a wealthy collector and put on display at one of the most prestigious institutions in America. This is the life of a looted artifact. Now, after decades of display, you are being sent back. What will happen upon your return?

Often, the objects being studied in museums have, knowingly or unknowingly, been illegally sourced. Outside of classrooms and museums the study of ancient artifacts has dramatic ramifications for living communities in the object's home country. When stories of these returns reach international news networks these historic objects command cultural attention. Photos are shown, experts are interviewed, objects are relocated, and the story fades out of the public eye. A few months later the process will repeat with another mosaic or monumental sculpture. Out of the spotlight, these returned objects bring about a variety of poignant personal stories. They operate as educational resources and can be important sources of community identity. Much of the research and media coverage of repatriation focuses on the return of artifacts to Greece and Italy, while the return of Anatolian artifacts to Turkey often takes a backseat.

The study of classical archeology has complex modern cultural connotations. While archeologists and scholars are aware of the impact the study of antiquity has had on local communities, they typically focus on the role of these objects in ancient civilizations. Although I am working in the discipline of classical studies, I will conduct my research with an interdisciplinary design approach in order to center the experiences of the individuals most impacted by the relocation of antiquities. To me, the field of human-centered design presents modern solutions to old problems of antiquities research. For my project I will be working with Turkey Design Council to provide an interdisciplinary analysis of the display and community impact of repatriated artifacts through qualitative interviews.

For the first five months of my project I will gather data by conducting interviews beginning with the Istanbul Archaeological Museums and Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. As large antiquities museums in a major city, they offer one representation of the display of returned artifacts. Similarly, I will visit the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. I will continue by traveling to as many Anatolian archeological museums as time and funding permit, including the Troy Museum in Tevfikiye, the Ephesus Archeological Museum in Selçuk, and Antalya Archeology Museum. Each of these museums has a strong connection to the wave of repatriation of Anatolian artifacts. I hope to use The Turkey Design Council's existing network with the Istanbul archaeological museums. Additionally, I will be reaching out to the International Council of Museums coordinator in Turkey to help facilitate contact with the museums outside of Istanbul.

I believe the study of antiquities works best when it incorporates and draws from the experiences of impacted communities. I will interview curators, museum educators, and community members about the initial events, news coverage, or celebration of the repatriation. I will also seek out analytics on visitor numbers and museum education initiatives. The aforementioned networks will help me find a few of my interviewees. I hope that these contact points will help direct me to museum educators for further research. Upon my arrival at a museum I expect to have at least one of these interviews pre-arranged but further connections with community members may need to be made on-site. This methodology draws from my early

Masuda, Grant Purpose, Page 2

journalism education in Hawaii. I have over six years of varied experience conducting community interviews. I started this work in high school through training with PBS Hawaii. Professional local storytellers taught me to formulate respectful questions, address complex emotions, and to mitigate discomfort in interviews. Learning these skills in my own community gave me experience with asking for interviews with those who had typically never been interviewed before. I continued this training on-campus through my design major. Human-centered design allows me to combine my interview background with my passion for design work.

I would immediately begin taking expedited Turkish language courses, and I have already begun a self-taught Turkish course. Although I plan to reach speaking proficiency in Turkish before I arrive, and I hope my skills progress during my project, I recognize the complexity of qualitative interviews. It is my goal to gather data and present material in a truthful and respectful manner, and as a non native Turkish speaker I feel strongly that a translator should be involved in the gathering and processing of interview materials.

The remaining four months of my project will be spent on working with the Turkey Design Council to formulate a design impact analysis. Turkey Design Council is a group of accomplished interdisciplinary designers that share my interest in the intersection of design, history, and identity. The outcome will be a document that pulls together the stories of these returned artifacts, their role in these museums, and their community reception in a succinct statement.

The secondary outcome is to create opportunities for dialogue and collective sense-making. The whirlwind of returned objects presents an ever-changing landscape of antiquities in Turkey. I hope to create an ongoing network of museum workers interested in repatriated works. If the impact analysis reveals any shared concerns or problems, this network can serve as a platform for discussion or sharing possible solutions. The goal of the design research process is to determine an approach *with* and not *for* impacted communities. The connections between museums may be tenuous. They operate in very different areas but they are currently grappling with the same situation. Connecting the community of museum workers may result in insight into shared problems and the development of possible solutions. This is the same methodological approach that I am currently applying in my design thesis focusing on the repercussions of repatriation within American museums. I will be drawing from interviews with American curators, museum workers, and visitors to determine alternatives to the display of stolen artifacts. The reality of repatriation must be faced internationally. We must form a mutual understanding of the worldwide effects of repatriation and determine solutions together.

Museums encourage us to explore our relationships with art, history, our communities, and ourselves. I want my future pursuits in antiquities research to be conducted mindfully, incorporating the methodologies I have learned in my design education. As someone who grew up in a place heavily impacted by colonialism, I am sensitive to the warranted distrust of outside visitors. The goal is not for me to insert myself into this complex issue but to create opportunities for dialogue and collective sense-making. I hope that my approach to this work and my commitment to centering community voices builds trust with the communities I am interviewing. I understand the study of repatriation is not isolated in the realm of antiquities and has complex political and cultural implications. I hope this study can be an opportunity to demonstrate the connection between the study of ancient objects and their impact on modern communities.