

TITLE:

The Choata Mandir Museum

THEME:

Artistic Representation of Deities, Gods and Objects in the Hindu Religion

DESIGN:

As “*choata*” means small and “*mandir*” means church/temple to worship gods and deities in Hindi, the design is built around an in-home place to worship in the Hindu religion during quarantine while many temples are closed throughout the world.

MISSION/GOAL FOR THE VISITOR:

The mission of The Choata Mandir Museum is to embrace the aesthetic quality in Hindu art while bringing peace an offering to anyone who visits. We respect the viewpoints of all religions while guiding artistic appreciation through Hindu religion.

WAYS TO ENGAGE IN THE MUSEUM:

Our museum stays open virtually for touring through the duration of COVID-19. This virtual format allows our consumer base and frequent visitors to stay engaged and up to date with The Choata Mandir Museum while residing in the safety of their own home. Multiple FREE tours are given daily and can be accessed through our website www.choata_mandir.art. Viewers are encouraged to light incense of their choice while viewing the exhibit as it enhances the experience.

PLANNING ITERATIONS IN DESIGN

The planning and assembly of the Choata Mandir Museum temple was rather seamless and smooth. My mother and I were previously thinking about a way she could practice her religion through COVID-19 and this project was a great way to make her vision come to life. We found all the exhibit pieces in our basement, cleaned them up, and put together an actual place for her to practice daily. The situation was benefited for my project, and for my mother’s religion.

Exhibit Label:

“The Choata Mandir”

Choata: A translation from Hindu to English which means- small *or tiny*.

Mandir: the Hindu temple of mandir is referred to the place where Hindus go to worship gods in the form of various deities. There are over 1000’s of mandirs around the globe, and each is unique.

I invite you to explore the collection behind you, which has been assembled as an “*in-home*” choata size replica of a mandir. A traditional mandir is similar in size to the American Catholic Church. The mandir is a place to come and worship and feel vibrations that lead you to the spiritual world. This is a religious place. Mandir temples around the world are filled with metal, wooden and stone statues of gods and deities. Worship is performed to honor the many of the deities of the Hindu culture.

Through religion we appreciate art in the craft form of the spiritual beings and belongings we are surrounded with. Each deity in this exhibit comes from Asia and most of this collection has been collected by an Indian immigrant, who came to America. Not all pieces came over at once, but overtime as the collection grew larger, the *choata mandir* was born.

As you indulge in this exhibit, think about the complexity and the simplicity of figures seen before you. Notice some of the carvings, patterns, posture and the “animal-like” faces of gods and deities seen in Asian Indian art, which here, are portrayed through religion.

-Ryan Kilcoyne

Executive Director | The *Choata Mandir* Museum

Object Labels:

Memory/Description Labels:

1.

The Mandir

Unknown | India | 1990

Hand welded and crafted | Accents of gold, silver, and Couper



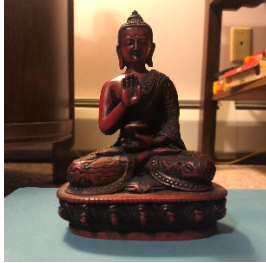
Mandir, means church in the English language. The Mandir is the physical building where Hindus worship respective gods and deities, some that are seen in this exhibit. It is structurally designed to bring humans beings and god together, using symbolism to express the ideas and beliefs of Hinduism. Mandir roots are structured in the Vedic Traditions.

2. (Inside Mandir)

Lord Buddha

Unknown | Nepal | 1995

Hand Crafted | Mahogany Wood



“Lord Buddha is a prince, and he was my favorite prince to worship when I was a child. Buddha is one of the most famous lords in the world, even in common American culture.

My sisters and I would follow the many teaching of Buddha and take time in our daily life to reflect with Buddha to become better Hindus. I particularly loved Buddha’s teaching of selflessness and can remember fighting with my older sisters about who was the most selfless! Not very selfless.

Some of Buddha’s other common teaching’s say: No Killing. No Stealing. No Lying. Have a Clear Mind. Respect the Life you are Given. Respect the Pure Nature.”

-Mona Kajiji Kilcoyne | *Indian Immigrant to America*

3.

Lord Mahavir

Unknown | India | 1987

Hand Painted and crafted | Marble and 24 karat gold leaf



“I know about Lord Mahavir from my grandmother. My grandmother was not very spiritual as I was growing up. My grandmother never talked about religion and my mother and her sisters always encouraged her to share her religion with her grandchildren. She was brought up through Jainism religion, a form of Hinduism, the oldest religion in the world.

She did not talk about religion with me and my brothers as she believed that we should find the religion that we would like to practice as we grew older. The one lord she talked about was Mahavir. To this day, I do not know why, and I will never be able to ask her as she is now deceased. Mahavir was the 24th and last tirthankara in her religion. He is a god who teaches. He provides education as a messenger spreading his wealth for the good of all.

My mother recalls my grandmother worshipping Mahavir dating back to her own childhood. She says that Mahavir was the only lord she worshiped back then also. She took 10 minutes out of her busy day to worship him, and this was the only time that she kept for herself, as she had a very handicap son. She devoted her life to teaching her handicap son how to live, and therefore leads me to believe why she held Mahavir close to her soul and gave him her time of day even though she was not spiritual.”

Ryan Kilcoyne | Executive Director | The Choata Mandir Museum

4.

Goddess Laxmi

Unknown | India | 1992

Welded | Brass



Laxmi is the goddess of wealth, fortune, power, beauty, fertility, and auspiciousness. She is described as restless, whimsical yet maternal. Laxmi first lived with the demons before the gods acquired her. She was briefly associated with Shiva before she became the faithful consort of Vishnu-Narayana, the ultimate refuge of man.

5.

Lord Ganesh

Unknown | India | 2006

Hand Welded | Brass



Ganesh has a mythological origin like many gods in the Hindu pantheon. Ganesh is the son of Shiva and his consort Parvati. His artistic design is very interesting as he was born of human form, yet he bears the head of an elephant. Ganesh is believed to be a protector and will often reside at various doors, to keep out the unwanted.

6.

Lord Shiva

Unknown | India | 1937

Welded | Copper



Shiva is one of the most important gods in the Hindu pantheon. He is a member of the holy trinity along with Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Shiva is the destroyer. Shiva is associated with creation as in Hinduism the universe is thought to regenerate in cycles every 2B years.

7.

Lord Parsvanatha

Unknown | India | 1984

Sculpted | Crystal and Gold leaf



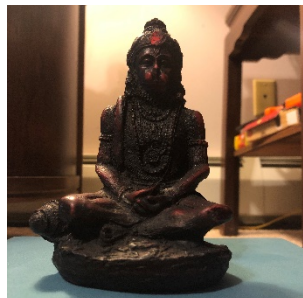
Parsvanatha is popularly seen as a propagator and reviver of ancient Hinduism know as Jainism. Parsvanatha was the spiritual successor of the 23rd tirthankara Neminath. When Parsvanatha is sculpted or painted, he is always identified by a canopy of snake hoods over his head.

8. (Outside Mandir)

Lord Hanuman

Unknown | Southern India | 2001

Hand Carved | Coconut Coir



“The Lord Hanuman statue is a very special replica statue that I hold very close to my heart. In 2011 I went through a divorce with my first and only husband. It was a tough time. I felt lost, I did not feel like myself, and I used Lord Hanuman to help me grieve through this challenge phase in my lifetime. Hanuman is the lord to help clear obstacles in your path. Offerings are given to Hanuman on Thursday and Sunday. To this day I still give my offering to Hanuman on Thursday’s and Sunday’s. I leaned on my mother during my time of divorce, and she always told me, “My daughter, pray to Hanuman as he will guide you to clear your mind.” This gave me strength and energy to persevere and lead a life for my three boys.

A couple years back, I took my first trip home to India in over 25 years. It was long overdue, and I was able to meet up with an old friend I had lost touch with through my journey in America. At first sight of seeing this friend, he held this Hanuman statue between us as the first thing we saw together in over 25 years. It cleared our path, bringing us back together. We were instantly reunited, and all obstacles were now cleared for us to form a relationship again.

If you allow spiritual beings to become involved in your life, they will guide you in the right direction.”

-Mona Kajiji Kilcoyne | *Indian Immigrant to America*

9.

Lord Ganesh

Unknown | Southern India | 1930's

Hand Carved | Sandalwood



Sandalwood is used in this carved statue of Ganesh. Sandalwood is one of the most spiritual woods used in the Hindu culture. It calms that mind making you relax deeply and balance your feelings. It purifies your negative energy and balances your feelings. Sandalwood must be carved with detail and care, as it is brittle and easily breaks upon touch.

10.

Shiva ling

Unknown | India | 1998

Hand Welded | Brass



This Shiva ling is made of brass and is aniconic representation of the Hindu deity Shiva. It physically symbolizes the male and the female reproductive organs in a state of bliss. The upper part, the cobra's, represent the phallus or the male organ. The base line lower part of the Shiva ling represents the yoni the vulva. In the most traditional form of Hinduism, females are not to touch the Shiva ling during puja, (prayer).

11.

Divya (Oil Lamp)

Unknown | India | 2018

Factory welded | Brass



A beauty oil lamp that was patterned in a factory in India. Light symbolizes knowledge, and darkness, ignorance. The Lords have the knowledge principal, and they illuminate all knowledge. The divya lamp is lit to bow down to knowledge as the greatest form of wealth.

12.

Supari

Natural offerings from a beetle nut tree

Saffron | Kum-Kum



Supari is natural. It comes from the beetle nut tree but holds vibrant colors that are often viewed in high regard in the Hindu culture. Supari is symbolic of the nut of the ego that must be offered on the altar of God. It represents the hard, coarse qualities the must be surrendered to God, leaving only the soft pure qualities.

13.

Incense Holder

Unknown | India | 1920

Welded | Sandalwood | Steel



Incense enhances the viewing of the art by acting as aroma therapy. We have chosen sandalwood incense for this exhibit as it is used to promote feelings of serenity and to ease irritability. Sandalwood is a great way to untie all viewers into and exhibit considering that some viewers might be unfamiliar.

14.

Swastik Matt

Unknown | India | 1985

Hand beaded by a relative | Assorted Beads



The Swastik Matt was hand beaded by a relative. The intricate design of weaving is something that takes years to master without messing up. The swastika is a symbol connoting general auspiciousness in Hinduism. In other cultures, and movements throughout history, the swastika was altered and became a representation of negativity. Here, it represents purity of soul, truth, and stability. There are four end point on the symbol to represent the four directions and their harmonious whole.

15.

Ghanti Bell

Unknown | India | 1907

Factory produced | Brass



The Ghanti bell has a cow on top of it. Cows are sacred in the Hindu religion. On this bell, the cow sits atop the bell signifying the calling of sacred gods and deities. When the bell is sound, it helps disengage the mind from ongoing thoughts thus making the mind more receptive. During prayer, the Ghanti Bell can be rung to control your wandering mind and bring it back to focus.

ENGAGING IN HINDU RELIGIOUS ART

THE CHOATA MANDIR MUSEUM



WWW.CHOATA_MANDIR.ART

"Embracing Aesthetic Quality in
Hindu Art while Bringing Peace and
Offering to Anyone who Visits"



IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19, THE CHOATA
MANDIR MUSEUM IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE
FREE DAILY VIRTUAL TOURS THROUGH OUR
WEBSITE. DONATIONS ARE GRACIOUSLY
ACCEPTED.

DAILY TOURS FROM SENIOR TOUR GUIDE
MONA KAJIJI KILCOYNE | INDIAN IMMIGRANT TO AMERICA



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TO: Leading Arts Advocacy Politicians
from the State of Connecticut

PURPOSE: Supporting Unique Arts in
A changing America

Hello,

I write to you today on the crucial subject of the importance of funding and supporting unique arts and museum's in the State of Connecticut. In 2020 America, it is becoming more important than ever that we have arts institutions and organizations that connect people and engage our audiences through digital means.

The current state of COVID-19 has caused many Connecticut arts organizations and institutions to close their doors to the public. This has left enthusiasts, audiences, and arts lovers across our state to mourn for the next time they will be able to embellish in their artistic needs. With support from other top community arts administrators in our state, we ask that you continue to support the community arts with funding that will yield long term results for digital connection.

As the Executive Director of The Choata Mandir Museum, a Hindu religious art-based institution in Mystic CT, we are taking appropriate strides to make our museum available online to our consumer base to enjoy from the safe comfort of their own home. We are providing FREE daily virtual tours that take the viewer through our main exhibit, The Choata Mandir. We want to express the importance of continuing to be able to give our consumer base what they need to keep good mental health from distractions like online viewing of art amongst COVID-19. This is only possible through the continued support from you lobbying our state congress for funding for impactful and adaptable community-based arts like ours in our state.

As many doors to the arts are closed and will continue to remain closed for long durations of time, by making digital means available to all viewers free of charge, we have proven that this system works, and is a great representation for how the State of Connecticut meets all the needs of our residential population, and how we as a state always exceed the demand placed on the engagement in the arts.

Engagement is key and putting the audience at the fore front of any institution should always continue to be your number one focus as an arts advocacy politician. I thank you for your continued support.

Be Well,

Ryan Kilcoyne | Executive Director | The Choata Mandir Museum | www.choata_mandir.art

Multimedia Piece's

***Don't forget to enable the "CC" (closed captions) button on YouTube for guided captions when viewing the museum.**

(CTRL & CLICK ON EACH PICTURE TO VIEW THE VIDEO)

1.



2.



Background Research

Museums across the globe have exhibited the art of the Hindu religion and culture like I have done in my Mini Museum. Although background research was available within my own home, as my mother is a practicing Hindu, the links to exhibits and YouTube videos below were a great reminder and reinforcement of how other people view and see the beauty of Hindu art globally. This is an interesting art concept because it comes from a religious background. Religion and art often go hand in hand and the links below will take you to Hindu art showings across Asia and America with a focus on India.

Through all of the links, you will notice that some of the same objects appear in respective collections and the only difference is the time period that they were made, the size of the object, and variation in what it was made out of, like coloring and facial details. As I was building my museum, I had many more pieces in the house than the ones pictured, but I was able to narrow down the “more common pieces” from the pieces that I saw in the exhibits. The beauty of the Hindu culture and in doing this museum is that different gods and deities can be worshiped for personal reasons to the viewer. Statues and replicas are typically hand carved with intricate design which makes them desirable to the viewer’s eye.

Some of the traveling exhibits are being sponsored in prestigious institutions around the world like the MET for example. Even colleges and universities bring in visiting Hindu exhibits to diversify the learning of their general student body.

I encourage you to look at some of the links below if you are curious and find the time:

- 1.[Seeing The Divine in Hindu Art University of Missouri MAA](#)
- 2.[YouTube The Hindu Temple](#)
- 3.[YouTube The Asian Art Museum](#)
- 4.[Showcase Hindu Deities Brigham Young University Museum of Art](#)
- 5.[The MET Hinduism and Hindu Art](#)

Classroom Connections

Understanding *Cultural Democracy* and the goals associated with *Cultural Democracy* in the *Cherbo and Rosenberg readings* in week three are some of the main readings from class integrated into my *Mini Museum*. The reading on *Magnetic Museums* and understanding how important the relationship between the audience and the stakeholders is was also something that I kept in mind when creating my museum. I had a *BHAG* from *Kaiser's* readings on what I envisioned and how my museum could come to life. My *BHAG* was useful to keep me motivated in making my Mini Museum the best that it could possibly be. I also used the *Cultural Advocacy* reading to make sure that my *Letter of Advocacy* was something well written, so a politician reading it wants to act to help my institution.

In the reading about cultural democracy, we learned how to use people's creative differences, and I used my mom as a guide because she was more knowledgeable in the area. If I could not accept my mom's help to put together a culturally accurate temple, my *BHAG* would have been subpar. I put the definition of cultural democracy to work when the values were shared between my mom and I because we come from various cultural groups (Catholic and Hindu). Looking at some of the goals in cultural democracy, which are furthering community conversation, educating others about what you are passionate about, healing and not isolating the arts organization with a specific type of community or group of people, I was able to create an exhibit that I was proud about and something my mom could actually use.

Some of the cultural democracy goals were implemented for writing my cultural advocacy letter to a politician. Some of the main key points from the cultural advocacy reading implemented in my letter were about how to be inclusive and thankful to be able to be heard. When I wrote this letter, going back to the reading was crucial because I was reminded how you want to make your point, tell them why you're writing, but be thankful for support that they might already give your organization. The main idea is that you must include everyone and make sure that there is a place for all at your institution.

One definition of a magnetic museum is *a high performing institution with a superior ability to attract and retain the resources necessary to deliver sustained programmatic excellence and growth overtime*. The people who are viewing my museum online are choosing to engage in my institution because I have proven that there is a reason to motivate them emotionally and there is a way for them to contribute and give back to create their own museum experience. Even though this is a digital museum, you can view my Hindu based exhibit as a pass-time, for religious purposes, or for the beauty in the art of the pieces on exhibit. Therefore, why I was successful. I am in the relationship business between my audience and my stakeholders, and both sides are linked appropriately.

We are at a tough point in time in society but being adaptable and shifting to virtual and digital formats is what makes my museum projected from growth, and likely guaranteed continued support from donors and stakeholders.