

ASIAN ART MUSEUM  
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**Asian  
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## NEWS

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### **Asian Art Museum Cleared to Return Artworks to Thailand as Long Planned** **U.S. District Court conditionally dismisses case that would have slowed return of sandstone lintels**

San Francisco, Feb. 10, 2021 — The Asian Art Museum has come to a [very satisfactory settlement](#) with the U.S. Department of Justice regarding its existing plans to return two sandstone lintels from the museum's collection to the Kingdom of Thailand.

"We are very pleased that these lintels are going back to their country of origin," says Dr. Jay Xu, Asian Art Museum Director and CEO. "This settlement will allow us to do what we have been wanting to do for some time — return the lintels to Thailand."

Over the past few years, the museum has worked closely, transparently, and in good faith with the Kingdom of Thailand, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on the long process of deaccessioning and repatriating these artworks. The museum already had plans to return the lintels — plans that were made known to the federal government. That is why the Department of Justice's civil complaint regarding these lintels, filed this past October, came as a surprise. The museum was deeply concerned that the complaint, apart from being unmerited, would hamper our existing plans to return the two lintels as swiftly as possible. The complaint also alleged that the lintels were removed from Thailand illegally, despite the fact that the DOJ presented no affirmative evidence of that fact and the museum found no evidence that the lintels were removed from their sites contrary to the laws of Thailand. The Museum has agreed to the end goal of returning the lintels to their country of origin without agreeing to the DOJ's misleading factual allegations.

The museum has long been committed to returning these lintels, which have been held in its collection for more than 50 years. Because the collection is the property of the City of San Francisco, the museum follows a multi-step set of procedures that is required when removing artworks from its holdings. These procedures — which include what is known as deaccessioning — reflect the best industry practices, practices that have been in place for many decades.

The museum is happy to report that the settlement [confirms its initial position](#), avoids the unnecessary burdens of litigation, and allows the final steps of deaccessioning to continue without interruption. When this process concludes — following an Asian Art Museum Foundation board and Asian Art Commission vote on March 30 — the DHS will take custody of the lintels and facilitate their transfer to Thailand.

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