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Guest Editor's Introduction

Demons and Gods on Display

The Anthropology of Display and Worldmaking

Across Asia, display is central to the creative process of worldmaking. This issue introduces "the anthropology of display" as a subfield in its own right that illuminates how people, spirits, gods, demons, ghosts, and their ritual props, offerings, effigies, or emblems manifest their powers and presence. A display is not just the static or unmoving framing of an image that invites contemplation rather than participation; it may unfold as one of the many moving, lively, and performative parts in a public event that generates deeply recursive imaginaries of the cosmos. Bringing the anthropology of religion, magic, exchange, art, and performance into conversation with museum anthropology, this issue shows that display is often used to push at the edges of the social and cosmic order. People and spirits may harness the power of display to steer rituals, ceremonies, and festivals in their preferred directions. Displays of this sort may unleash moral ideals of cultural heritage and plurality, aesthetic deliberations about the future, and new anthropological ways of envisioning the human and otherworldly.

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Display is a multifaceted thing that often leads to powerful acts of worldmaking. While a display is typically envisioned as the static or unmoving framing of an image that invites contemplation rather than participation, it may also unfold as one of the many moving, lively, and performative parts in a public event. Many displays—including those in museums, exhibitions, parades, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and public protests—generate deeply recursive imaginaries of the cosmos. Perhaps nowhere, though, are displays more likely to transform the world than in the hands of the people, spirits, gods, ghosts, or demons that set out to steer the social and cosmic order in their preferred direction.

Ever since Bronislaw Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, anthropologists have pinned analyses of major ceremonial events, such as the decorating of canoe prow-boards for the *kula* ceremonial circuit or the amassing of yams for exchange in the Trobriand Islands, on ethnographies that feature elements of display. Similarly, studies of ethnographic representation and the ways in which museums have shaped Euro-American notions of other societies have often revolved around the display of artifacts in glass cabinets or the display of people, cultures, and crafts in live exhibitions and fairs. Display has been a common theme in anthropology, museology, art history, folklore, and communication studies, where it has thrown light on the magical powers of words, people, and things (Tambiah 1968); verbal and communicative competence (Bauman 1984, 2004); the politics of presentation and performance (Davis 1986; Kondo 2018); the making of folklife festivals (Bauman and Sawin 1991; Kurin 1991, 1997; Mathur 2007); the emotional impact of resonance, wonder, and the weird (Greenblatt 1991; Foster 2009); the enchantment of technology (Gell 1992); the accumulation of prestige (Goode 1992; Stoeltje 1992); events that model, mirror, or re-present the world (Handelman 1998); display events in which "actions and objects are invested with meaning and values are put 'on display'" (Abrahams 1981, cited in Bauman 2004, 58); the aesthetics of ritual performance (Hobart and Kapferer 2005); the relationships between concepts and things (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007); and even the production of montage (Suhr and Willerslev 2013). Yet in these and other works, display has frequently served as an analytical springboard to other themes, rather than being taken as a subject of inquiry in its own right.

Throughout this issue, the contributors introduce "the anthropology of display" as a new way of conceptualizing what display is and does. They use the term "display"

to call attention to how people and spirits manifest their powers and presence in a variety of rituals, ceremonies, festivals, parades, public events, theatrical performances, artworks, and things. Their analyses start from displays that take the form of "spectacles" that may move audiences in emotive, bodily, and sensorial ways (Manning 1992, 293). Each contributor shows ethnographically—and, in the case of Heonik Kwon and Jun Hwan Park, also historically—that people often display demons, gods, ghosts, or spirits as well as their "ritual props," offerings, effigies, or emblems with the purpose of accomplishing a worldmaking act (Kendall 2008, 155). The contributors, then, propose that display may underpin new imaginaries of the cosmos in such diverse settings as a shamanic ceremony or temple festival (Laurel Kendall and Ni Wayan Pasek Ariati), a procession of demon puppets (Kari Telle), the parade of a goddess (Teri Silvio), the strange company of gods and flags on an altar (Janet Alison Hoskins), the unfurling of a flag that evokes moral ideals of cultural heritage and plurality (Heonik Kwon and Jun Hwan Park), and the competitions, pageants, and rituals held to repay debts to a sky god (Katherine Swancutt).

The term "display" entered the English lexicon via the Old French *despleier* in the thirteenth century, where it carried connotations of "unfurling" the information printed on a banner. Before that, it can be traced to the Latin *displicare*, which in antiquity meant "to scatter" or "to disperse" but gained the meaning "to unfold" by the Middle Ages. These earlier semantic contours have been formative to the multiple meanings that display has acquired in contemporary usage, where it alternately evokes the sense of being "unfurled," "scattered," "dispersed," "unfolded," "revealed," "exhibited," or "exposed to view" among spectators. As a polysemic term that pivots around making certain things visible while leaving others invisible, display conjures up the staging of an image, thing, being, or event that may captivate, enthrall, awe, and exceed its own bounds.

This raises the question of how any given display might underpin a public event, ritual, or spectacle. Don Handelman distinguishes between rituals and spectacles on the grounds that "spectacles reflect their cultural worlds. The internal logics of spectacles taxonomize and present; those of ritual, taxonomize and transform" (1997, 387–88). He adds that a "spectacle connotes something exhibited to the view, a show, a pageant, a sight, marked by great display, dramatic and thrilling" (ibid., 394). Stephan Feuchtwang takes the related view that a "'spectacle' is not just display. It is also specular, a mirroring by means of the extraordinary—be it of another civilization, or a past that is distant, or for that matter an artistic creation that is meant to disturb and interest" (2011, 74). Spectacles may therefore mirror the "invisible authority" of powerful beings, whether they are people, spirits, gods, demons, or ghosts, in ways that reflect the order of those worlds (ibid., 65). Both Handelman's "internal logics of events" and Feuchtwang's "invisible authority" resonate with many of the analyses set forth in this issue. However, the contributors show that "ritual," "display," and "spectacle" are ultimately elastic concepts that are different in degree but not necessarily different in kind.

Many displays in fact "model," "mirror," or "re-present" the social and cosmic order in Handelman's (1998) sense of the term. Handelman parses public events into three types, starting with "the event-that-presents" or "mirrors" the lived-in world

through displays of "form, fantasy, and power derive[d] directly from [the] social order" (ibid., xxix). Echoing Michel Foucault, he observes that the event that mirrors the social order draws attention to, strengthens, and supports it (ibid., 4, see also 78). In contrast, he proposes that the "event-that-models" the lived-in world reframes (or potentially reshapes) it according to a new vision that "emerges from human creativity as a world unto itself" (ibid., xxvi). But the "event-that-re-presents" goes further by modeling and mirroring the world in ways that "may raise possibilities, questions, perhaps doubts, about the legitimacy or validity of social forms" (ibid., 49, see also 5). Illustrative examples of the event-that-represents can be found in the Smithsonian live exhibitions organized by Richard Kurin (1991, 1997) in the summer of 1985, called "Aditi: A Celebration of Life" and "Mela! An Indian Fair." These exhibitions were filled with display, ritual, and spectacle, which "included daily Ganesha (*puja*) worship; the mud-sculpting of a Durga mother-goddess icon, the construction of a paper-and-bamboo *taziya* (memorial) for the Muslim Muharram festival, and the building and burning of forty-foot-high effigies of the demon king Ravana and his allies" (Kurin 1991, 319). Originally, these (and other) displays at the Smithsonian were meant to reflect the everyday life, artisanry, and social and cosmic orders of India. However, many Indian participants not only modeled the exhibition themes after their own visions of India but also performed them in ways that mirrored the "Smithsonian interest in exemplary practitioners" who display the worldmaking qualities of Smithsonian exhibitions (ibid., 327). The upshot was that many participants used display to steer the social and cosmic orders of the Smithsonian exhibitions—and arguably of India itself—in their preferred direction. Here, many Indian "performers reframed the representation of a performance into a performance itself, regulations notwithstanding" (Karp 1991, 285).

Each contributor to this issue shows that creative displays like this often "push at the edges" of a given ontology (Kendall and Ariati 2020, 284). These spectacles may blur—or even collapse—the ontological distinctions between the display of demons, gods, ghosts, and spirits, on the one hand, and their presences and powers, on the other. Displays of this sort commonly unfold as "public enactments, in their multiplicitous and varied forms, [that] are not only patterned by social forces—they have been part of the very building and challenging of social relations" all along (Davis 1986, 5). Especially creative displays may therefore lead to a worldmaking act that "evokes sociopolitical transformation and [yet] the impossibility of escaping power, history, and culture" (Kondo 2018, 29). The displays discussed by the contributors to this issue tend to go a step further by unsettling the cosmopolitics, cosmic relations, and "logics or organization of design" that are specific to particular events (Handelman 1998, xi; see also Handelman 2004, 4, 12–17).

Before pressing ahead with my discussion of display and worldmaking, though, I need to position it more firmly within the anthropological literature. I start by considering the importance of display in Malinowski's (1922) classic study of the Trobriand Islands and in Alfred Gell's (1992) study of how technologies enchant spectators. Display is a leitmotif in each of these works but is often subsumed under related themes—and notably exchange or magic—that are credited with its worldmaking qualities. Then I turn to the role of display in museums, exhibitions,

and fairs, which have long shaped conceptualizations of the world within and beyond the exhibition space. Here, I point to how display underpins diverse aspects of social life, such as the desire to accumulate goods and status, the dazzling and unsettling qualities of sensory stimulation, the discursive strategies of representation, and the effort to model, mirror, or re-present the world. This brings me to a discussion of the transformative powers, collective imaginaries, and elastic qualities of display (all recurrent themes in this issue) that people, spirits, gods, demons, and other beings may use to steer the social and cosmic orders. Finally, I discuss how the contributors' articles point toward the conceptual value of an anthropology of display and conclude with further reflections upon it.

Toward an anthropology of display

Like many anthropological themes, the power of display has been illustrated both ethnographically and through museum exhibitions. Some ethnographies of display have come to be viewed as anthropological exemplars, because they are "hyper-descriptive in that they described the world in more real terms than the world could do itself, and certainly did this job better than other examples would" (Højer and Bandak 2015, 4). Both the *kula* ceremonial circuit and the Victorian-styled thematic exhibitions at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England are anthropological exemplars of display, which, however, are best known for having illuminated other things: competitive exchanges and magical technologies in the case of the *kula*, and a highly contentious mode of ethnographic representation in the case of the Pitt Rivers Museum. My intention in discussing these kinds of exemplars is not to revise the well-known findings of Malinowski or the vast scholarship on the art of anthropology, museum studies, and materiality. I set out to show instead how the heuristic of display brings a variety of worldmaking acts into focus.

As Malinowski remarked in his early twentieth-century landmark study of the Trobriand Islands, the "display" of newly finished canoes produces "a big, aesthetic effect" (1922, 146–47). Display is one of his key logical operators, which is put on equal footing with other concepts in his ethnographic theory, such as gift-giving or the technology of magic. Malinowski notes that "the right to display food" (ibid., 169) commonly underpins the presentation of yams (the archipelago's dietary staple) in storehouses especially devoted to them, while food displays are central to important events, such as the distribution of yams at *sagali* mortuary rites (ibid., 170), the ceremonial preparation of pigs for a feast (ibid., 171), or the *vilamalya* magic performed after a harvest to weaken the islanders' appetites so that they will leave as many yams as possible displayed in their storehouses until they rot (ibid., 169). Accordingly, he suggests that Trobrianders accumulate foods because they are "prompted by the desire of display and enhancement of social prestige through possession of wealth" (ibid., 169). However, this accumulation of food is also offset "by the fundamental human impulse to display, to share, to bestow" (ibid., 175).

Revealingly, display was so important to gifting and exchange in the Trobriands that Malinowski equated "the very fundamental motive of giving" to "the vanity of a display of possession and power" (ibid., 174–75). This point is echoed in *The Sexual*

Lives of Savages, where Malinowski shows that in "*kayasa* (competitive displays)" (1932, 32)—many of which involve food gifting—"there is always a pronouncement of public opinion on the result. So that the most successful or energetic participants also receive an individual share of glory" (ibid., 214). In *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, the vanity of display underscores the entangled relationship between "the fear of sorcery and the desire for [the] display of wealth" (Malinowski 1965, 243). Here, the desire to display may dangerously provoke "the undercurrent of malice, suspicion and envy which accompanies the display of food and the show of praise and admiration, [and] may lead to bitter personal animosity, which in the Trobriands usually leads to attempts to kill by witchcraft" (ibid., 181). Outcompeting another person with a robust display, then, may attract the risk of personal harm, while failing to please the spirits of the dead with an insufficient display may cause offended spirits to unleash their invisible authority throughout the year ahead. Trobrianders therefore seek to please the dead with opulent displays at key ceremonial events, such as harvesttime when the spirits "return to the village to be present at the dancing and feasting, to enjoy the display of food and valuables, and to partake of the cooked dishes of food which are exposed to them" (ibid., 47–48). During the festive season of Milamala, the spirits also receive food and "a display of valuables, *vaygu'a*, to gladden their eyes" (ibid., 468).

Opulent displays also feature in more recent anthropological classics, such as Gell's study on the technology of enchantment, which evokes Malinowski's discussion of the canoe prow-boards used for the *kula* (1992, 62n2). But here, display is tied to more than personal vanity or the effort to please spirits. Display is shown to be a product of virtuosic skill and the worldmaking powers needed to create a spectacle in the first place. Trobrianders invest painstakingly skilled labor into carving and decorating prow-boards, so that when their canoes reach the shores of *kula* trading partners they will dazzle them into giving away their most famous *kula* shell armbands and necklaces, which are tokens of social status (ibid., 44–46). Virtuosic carving skills enthrall Trobrianders, for whom "the canoe-board is not dazzling as a physical object, but as a display of artistry explicable only in magical terms, something which has been produced by magical means" (ibid., 46). Drawing on George Simmel's discussion of value in *The Philosophy of Money*, Gell suggests that the value of any given thing is scaled against the difficulty in producing or obtaining it, while a virtuosic display of its production is needed to enchant spectators (ibid., 47–48, 58). Yet the technology of enchantment falls short of explaining, for instance, the allure of "the wonder-cabinets of the Renaissance," which contained items that often exceeded "the artistic skill of human makers: technical skill could indeed arouse curiosity, but so could nautilus shells, ostrich eggs, uncannily large (or small) bones, stuffed crocodiles, and fossils" (Greenblatt 1991, 50). Given that spectators may succumb to displays of virtuosic skill, displays of natural wonders, and even displays of the slippage between them (such as the virtuosic skill in obtaining a whole collection of natural wonders), the question arises: how might the worldmaking powers of any kind of display come to be envisioned and propagated?

The dazzle of display

Centuries after cabinets of curiosity became fashionable in Europe, a new way of displaying and vicariously engaging with other societies emerged in late-nineteenth-century museums and expositions, such as the world's fairs (Jenkins 1994, 248). Visitors to early museums and exhibitions encountered displays that were built on the then-current "scientific methods of visualization to understand and exhibit other people—to show them not as they were to themselves but as they were to be pictured or displayed according to museum techniques" (ibid., 267–68). Framed within Euro-American imaginaries, these displays mirrored the sentiments of many of their spectators, who were not often empathetic or even apparently aware of the differences between anthropological displays and theatrical reenactments (ibid., 258–60). These early displays shaped how many spectators have since come to envision exhibited "objects, facts, and images," other societies, the science behind taxonomies, and what they may mean for the spectator's own place in the world (ibid., 248).

There is in fact a whole theater to museums, exhibitions, expositions, and fairs that has encouraged people to approach displays as worldmaking acts. Many spectators have succumbed to this theater, although not all do. Saloni Mathur's study of the November 1885 promotional campaign of Liberty & Co. in London, for example, reveals the racialized landscapes, ideologies, and practices underpinning the display of a "village" of living Indian artisans, which was roundly critiqued by the Indian press for "the barbarous act of displaying human beings" (2007, 41). Despite this debacle, a year later, the Colonial and Indian Exposition of 1886 was staged inside of a recreated Indian palace in London that featured "historical subjects of ethnographic display [who also] refused the terms of their representations" (ibid., 54). Trilokya Nath Mukharji, an upper-caste Bengali who attended this exposition, inverted the spectator's gaze and "transformed the exhibition into a space where 'Europe,' too, could be observed" by standing behind the Europeans who spoke about Indians on display so that he could better hear the points of view of the "*natives of England*" (ibid., 69; emphasis in the original).

Spectators may encounter ironies like this at every level of display, down to the brief labels added to museum items and the fuller descriptions of them communicated through audio tours, films, video screens, and other mediums (Baxandall 1991). Displaying labeled items "makes a collection physically and conceptually manageable" but often downscales the scope of ethnographic representation to "a context in which objects exist devoid of their history" (Jenkins 1994, 268). Here, the onus is left on the spectator "to explore the historically and culturally contingent relationships between the discursive and the nondiscursive"—or the explicit and implicit—qualities of any given display and to imaginatively reconstruct the world(s) from which it has come (ibid., 270). Many spectators, then, end up envisioning exhibits through the lens of a "metonymic displacement" in which one or more labeled items stands for an entire society (ibid., 268–69).

Metonymic displacement is experienced not only through ethnographic forms of display but in museum spaces dedicated to art. The "white cube" rooms that display modern art immerse spectators in a sensorially, materially, and conceptually blank canvas that is meant "to define itself as a zero-degree status of display, the mythic

fundament out of which art objects emerge *ex nihilo*" (Drobnick 2005, 267). Designed to evoke a clinical space, the white cube filters out the unwanted sensory stimulation of, for example, the dazzlingly "enticing window displays" of department stores that historically emerged with museums, exhibitions, and world fairs (Howes 2005, 284). By blocking out the dazzle of the everyday world, the white cube encourages visitors to feel "isolated from social and political cares, protected from history, contingency and accountability" so that they may surrender to metonymic displacement, the enchantment of the white cube's technology, and its logics of design (Drobnick 2005, 267). Subverting the dazzle of someone else's display is, though, no easy task. Doing this requires unsettling long-held stereotypes about the relationships between display and worldmaking, both within and beyond the museum setting.

Unsettling displays

Since the early 2000s especially, many museum staff have set out to decolonize their ethnographic collections by commissioning new displays from artists who represent the societies from which their collections were sourced (Geismar 2015; see also Durrans 1992, 13). Many of these artists have produced displays that are meant to unfold either as provocative, ironic, and subversive commentaries on ethnographic collections or as "a kind of spiritual safeguarding" of them (Geismar 2015, 193). Artistic interventions of this sort have been as diverse as the settings in which they were created. There are museums in which invited artists have "worked as both anthropological interlocutors and anthropological subjects and, through their work, they have also generated new objects for anthropological collections" (ibid., 200). Other museums have encouraged invited artists "to be 'mad scientists' who could create new contexts for objects without any responsibility to communities outside of the institution"—an ambiguous arrangement that has led to the production of displays that alternately critique or support "the power relations and representational imbalances long institutionalized within the European ethnographic museum" (ibid., 200).

But to challenge the dominant mode of display in any museum, it is often necessary to convince museum staff, visitors from the public, and the artists who create new displays to fully unpack their sense of what art and ethnographic representation happen to be. Many artists who set out to question notions of representation in museum spaces end up adhering to "a modernist definition of 'art,' which insists on a primacy of abstracted form, the supremacy of certain institutionalized spaces, and a confident universality . . . [that] negates cultural difference" (ibid., 194). Yet many of these artists also face "the ever-present forms of containment presented by fashions like 'Indo chic,' and the ambivalent space in multicultural society we recognize as the 'ethnic slot'" (Mathur 2007, 169–70). These forms of containment and ambivalence raise the bar significantly for any artists, curators, or visitors who seek to unsettle not just ethnographic and artistic representation but colonial and modern art sensibilities.

Interventions such as these do, however, unfold from time to time. Curator Alisa LaGamma, for example, presented an exhibition titled "Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary" that ran from October 2007 to March 2008 at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (LaGamma 2007). Her exhibit "included a parody on a 'white room' with some once-sacred pieces exhibited as art and valorized in labels by mention of the esteemed collectors who had once owned them" (Laurel Kendall, personal communication, February 11, 2021). As Kendall observes, LaGamma's exhibit subverted the notion of the white cube as "its own visual regime, a sensory cliché signifying 'modern art'" by provocatively displaying African reliquaries within one. This tongue-in-cheek feature of the exhibit invited museum visitors to question whether the ethnographic items on display ever should—or even could—have been reduced to the voyeuristic pleasures of collectors or modern art aesthetes. By encouraging museum visitors to rethink their views of Central Africa and of display itself, LaGamma's exhibit unsettled some of the expectations surrounding ethnographic and artistic representation. Arguably, her exhibit even transformed the cosmopolitical terms through which some visitors engaged with other people's ancestors and things like the reliquaries that had been used to display and contain them.

The transformative powers of display

Transforming the world—or even just certain elements of it—may sound like a tall order, but this is often what people seek to do through display. Apparently simple acts of display, such as using shamanic implements and offerings as ritual props, can unleash a variety of transformative powers. Displays of ritual props, for example, have shaped how illnesses in South Korea—and, since the 1990s, consumer desires, too—are navigated through shamanic ceremonies called *kut* (Kendall 2008, 2009). Offerings for *kut* now mirror the world of conspicuous consumption in which the spirits and clients of Korean shamans must manage their greed. Yet coaxing spirits with the right kinds of offerings is not easy, because "the constant visual display of seemingly boundless and very expensive things to buy have brought with them an uncomfortable awareness of those who have been left behind and of things beyond one's own reach" (Kendall 2008, 162). Many offerings remind shamans and their clients of what the ancestors could not have afforded to enjoy in their own lifetimes, such as imported delicacies like bananas, and even lead to disputes over whether edible ritual props should be comprised exclusively of "foods specified in ritual manuals" (ibid., 159). Debates like these evoke more than just the contradictions that may arise with new forms of consumption and developing a taste for luxury. They point to how Korean shamans, their clients, and spirits have no choice but to "draw dramatic power from these same contradictions" (ibid., 161).

These contradictions intensified in the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, when South Korea was compelled to ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for support (Kendall 2003, 2009). As South Korea reeled from national dependency on the IMF, some shamans chose to conduct affordable ceremonies with humbler displays of ritual props, which were designed to help clients proactively combat a continuous stream of financial disasters. Notably, Korean shamans found that while they did not have the power to summon or control the IMF, their spirits could predict who it would strike and when, because the IMF was transforming the social and cosmic

order (Kendall 2003, 53–55; Kendall 2009, 146–52). One shaman even reassured her client, who had sought to exact revenge on the person who made her husband lose his job, that her spirits had already confirmed "the IMF will take care of it" (Kendall 2003, 57). Humble displays of ritual props, then, enabled Korean shamans and their spirits to reveal the deeply recursive and contradictory ways in which the IMF was transforming the world and what (if anything) their clients should do to steer their way through it.

A wide range of beings and forces—from shamans to the IMF—may in fact harness the power of display in unprecedented ways. Consider the story of the Balinese mask known as Jero Amerika, who used both demonic and divine forms of display to transform the social and cosmic order. Jero Amerika had been kept as a souvenir wall decoration for years by a Canadian expatriate living in New York and Hong Kong, but frightened him with uncanny moments of rattling, teeth chattering, and flights around the room of his apartment, until he was returned to Bali and received proper recognition as a *sesuhunan*, or "a local god operating through a temple mask" (Kendall and Ariati 2020, 282). Through his world travels and the many different interpretations made of him, Jero Amerika has shown that "mask use always implies a philosophy of personality, but not a single, specific one" (Tonkin 1992, 231). Yet Jero Amerika has taken his transformative powers of display much further in Ubud, a former kingdom of Bali where he resides today as a local temple god, and across the whole island. In temple festivals and in "the local knowledge that circulates through talk, newsprint, and new media," Jero Amerika exhibits an unusually animated and, for some, even "troubling" subjectivity that Kendall and Ariati suggest "pushes at the edges of (what we thought we knew about) a Balinese ontology, [by] behaving in ways that, although plausible within the social life of a Balinese *sesuhunan*, are also deeply eccentric, going beyond the usual expectation of a Balinese mask" (2020, 284).

Much like Jero Amerika, the demons and gods discussed throughout this issue display their own transformative, imaginative, and sometimes deeply eccentric powers. They may, like Korean shamans, expose the appetites, sensibilities, and concerns of the people and spirits who inhabit a world shaped by consumption, recessions, contradictions, and the demands of financial institutions such as the IMF. Or they may, like Jero Amerika, alternately manifest themselves as a ritual prop and a demonic or divine god that instils awe in people, sets ritual events in motion, and pushes at the edges of the social and cosmic order. Many people, in turn, actively seek out these displays "to feel the frisson of a brief encounter" with spirit beings that can steer their collective imaginaries in their own preferred directions (ibid., 292).

Staging collective imaginaries

Certain displays may give rise to collective imaginaries in which the "gods are always both becoming and resisting the projections of human subjectivities" (Silvio 2019, 120). Taiwanese of different generations, genders, and classes, for example, have displayed miniature toys modeled after the deities of Chinese popular religion in city homes, offices, restaurants, and other places since 2007 (ibid., 88). Many young Taiwanese display toy gods in ways that benefit them personally and evoke "the gods' presence

in the human world, if not their existence per se, as an ongoing project of collective imagination" (ibid., 91). Their collective imaginary of the gods is further shaped by the growing popularity of Japanese manga/anime and Taiwanese *ang-a* animation, the latter of which imbues a three-dimensional anthropomorphic figure, such as a toy god, with "specific human qualities (personality, affect, and charisma) through specific types of actions (ritual, iconographic, and communicational practices)" (ibid., 55, see also 92). By re-presenting the personal—and especially the "cute"—qualities of gods in imaginative ways, Taiwanese ensure a reciprocal flow of affect, sympathy, and felicity between themselves and the spirit world (ibid., 104–5, see also 113–15).

However, an altogether different way of staging affect, sympathy, felicity, and the collective imagination underpins the pageantry of the annual Arirang Festival in North Korea, which is meant to resolutely communicate the statement: "Do not hope for any change in me!" (Kwon 2010, 6). This statement, and the Arirang Festival as a whole, are a call to reinvigorate the revolutionary values of North Koreans who obtained national liberation from colonial Manchuria. Staged as a "gigantic mass spectacle involving thousands of highly trained citizen actors (children, students, women, and soldiers) and well-choreographed mass performances," the Arirang Festival dramatizes not only collective paternal love and filial piety for the nation's leader but his "boundless paternal love for all the nation's displaced children" (ibid., 11). The Arirang Festival also echoes the funerary bereavements for Kim Il Sung held in 1994, so that it bridges the "revolutionary traditions" of the past and present (ibid., 19). Here, the affective politics that sustains each citizen's personal connection to Kim Il Sung and the leaders that followed him reinforces a wider collective imagination of how sovereignty is maintained.

Radically different notions of kinship are, then, displayed in Taiwan and North Korea. Unlike the Taiwanese youth whose collective imaginary of toy gods "induces a kind of mirroring effect, cutifying (and in some cases making abject) the viewing subject" (Silvio 2019, 105), the North Korean collective imaginary—as expressed through the Arirang Festival—revolves around militant veneration of the Kim family of leaders. Like ancestor spirits or living parents who bestow benefactions on their descendants, the Kim family is re-presented through collective displays of a partisan state that "calls the pains of hunger 'peevish cries [of children] for food,' unsuited for the soldiers of military-first politics" (Kwon 2010, 22). The Arirang Festival is therefore meant to transform North Koreans into strong, vigorous, and loyal admirers of the Kim family, who have little to no tolerance for cutified subjects and imaginative ways of re-presenting the social and cosmic order. This brings us to the question of how any given display may transform what counts as "self" and "other," or "human" and "otherworldly," in ways that encourage people to rethink the principles that underpin display itself.

The elasticity of display

Earlier I discussed how displays in museums, exhibitions, or fairs—such as LaGamma's exhibition of Central African reliquaries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—may be used to unsettle ethnographic and artistic representation. I now turn to how displays

may encourage spectators to reconsider such common binary distinctions as self and other, ethnic insider or outsider, sacred and secular, human and spirit, or male and female. Displays of spirits, gods, ghosts, demons, and their ritual props, offerings, effigies, or emblems may bring a certain elasticity to these distinctions, the principles that lie behind them, and even the social and cosmic order. How people engage with displays, then, may shape their ways of perceiving and relating to others.

Rethinking the principles of how one should relate to others is a common feature of many displays in South Asia, where "processions most often affirm or create boundaries, which distinguish insiders from outsiders and provide structures for the display of prestige and hierarchy" (Jacobsen 2008, 7). This is also the case in Japanese *matsuri* festivals, which, however, have a strong propensity for "transformation and change" that makes the social and cosmic order, and the principles underpinning it, notably elastic (Foster and Porcu 2020, 2). Each time Japanese hold the Gion Matsuri festival in Kyoto, for example, they transform ordinary street spaces—including the souvenir shop called Otabi Kyoto—into sacred geographies filled with the presence of spirits (Porcu 2020, 60–65). Otabi Kyoto ordinarily sells tourist items, but during the Gion Matsuri it is rapidly refurbished as a sacred space equipped with festival goods so that "customers feel the intervention of the *kami* [invisible beings] and their protection while they shop" (ibid., 62). Similarly, Michael Dylan Foster shows that the Namahage festival, which is a new year celebration held across Japan, brings people into the company of masked "demons" performed by men who may alternately evoke the jocular (and, for children, frightening) ambience of private rituals held for locals in their hamlets (2020, 121–28), the collective imaginaries of the festival's newly acquired UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status (ibid., 135, see also 128–32), or the kinds of demonic antics that satisfy tourists (ibid., 140–48). Each way of approaching the Namahage festival reveals the elasticity behind the principles for how demons may be displayed to locals and visitors. Participants in Japanese festivals such as Gion Matsuri and the Namahage take deliberately creative approaches to display that "look to the past even as they actively shape the future" (Foster and Porcu 2020, 2).

Some of the more imaginatively staged festivals showcase a surprising degree of elasticity, responsiveness, and fluidity around principles of gender, body, and ethnicity. While women are, for instance, routinely excluded from many public-facing events in the Gion Matsuri festival, their "backstage" roles in it "are seen as fundamental" enough that one member of a local preservation association publicly affirmed "the festival would not be possible without such 'women's power'" (Porcu 2020, 51). Certain women have also repeatedly pushed back against these principles in ways that opened up new, and even eccentric, possibilities for display—as happened when a non-Japanese woman researcher gained permission to accompany a float in the Gion Matsuri festival, albeit in the capacity of a security guard advised to mask her gender by tying up her hair and foregoing make-up (ibid., 51–52). Flexibility and elasticity of this sort are not specific to Gion Matsuri or even Japanese cityscapes. They have become key features of bear hunting rituals among the *matagi* traditional hunters of northeastern Japan, who rely on the *yama no kami*, a female spirit or god that dwells in the mountains and "is sensitive about her own appearance and inherently

jealous of other females" (Schnell 2020, 175). Women are traditionally prohibited from joining these rituals "for fear that the deity might take offense and withhold her favors" of bear hunting success, but this taboo has started to lift in "piecemeal" fashion due to falling numbers of hunters and concerns that the rituals will die out (ibid., 175). On one level, the inclusion of women in *matagi* bear hunting rituals is an act of conservation. Yet, on another level, women's involvement in the hunt is a novel display, which, by virtue of its unorthodoxy, re-presents the status quo even as it opens up new room for transforming it. Displays such as these often shapeshift in ways that reflect the elasticity of their own principles, collective imaginaries, and transformative powers. Let us, then, consider how the contributors to this issue approach the worldmaking qualities of display ethnographically, through accounts of how spirits, gods, demons, and their ritual props, offerings, effigies, or emblems push at the edges of the social and cosmic order.

The articles

Laurel Kendall and Ni Wayan Pasek Ariati show in their article "Manifestations of Presence in Korea and Bali: Crossroads, Intersections, Divergences" that Korean shamanic rituals and Balinese temple festivals "display presence" at the boundaries between performance and animation. While Korean shamans, or *mansin*, use their bodies, voices, and facial affect to "evoke a mobile and immediate presence" of the spirits, the Balinese entranced medium, or *pemundut*, wears a mask animated by a local tutelary, or *sesuhunan*, which is responsible for "sending him into trance and propelling his actions." The boundaries between performance and animation remain fuzzy in each display, such that the Korean shaman "is not the *mansin* but she is not not the *mansin*; she is not the god (in a one-on-one sense), but she is not not the god." Comparable ambiguities surround the Balinese *pemundut*, whose own body is heavily cloaked and whose face remains covered by the mask animated by the *sesuhunan*, so that even Kendall and Ariati, "operating on a tip from seemingly well-informed sources," found themselves tracking down the wrong *pemundut* for an interview not long after observing his entranced work firsthand. Korean shamanic rituals and Balinese temple festivals are, then, steered by religious specialists who display their "bodies, costumes, props, offerings, and the like" in ways that "are never absolute." What Kendall and Ariati illuminate are "two distinct ontologies of presence" that are "ultimately very different visual realizations" and yet are fluid enough to push at their own edges, leading Koreans and Balinese to new crossroads, intersections, divergences, and forms of worldmaking.

Similarly, Kari Telle shows in her study "Displaying Demons: Processions at the Crossroads in Multireligious Indonesia" that the demon puppets called *ogoh-ogoh* on the island of Lombok routinely "escape categorization and refuse to be pinned down." *Ogoh-ogoh*, which are crafted by youths and "made for display," bring forces of the invisible and visible realms together when paraded through one of the busiest trafficked crossroads in the town of Cakranegara. The puppets draw together people from across ethnic and religious boundaries in ways that "galvanize a communal ethos that almost transcends status differences," and yet occasionally lead to fights

among the youths who produce them, "especially if their demon is ridiculed or physically attacked." Tellingly, the ambiguity, vitality, and transgressiveness of *ogoh-ogoh* become particularly acute after they have been ritually "filled with an unknown force" that turns them into "a juncture or crossroads traversed by multiple entities." When *ogoh-ogoh* are filled with the power of *taksu*—which amalgamates the force of their artwork, the mantra recited to enliven them, and the sensibilities of spectators—they may dazzle audiences in ways reminiscent of the *kula* canoe prow-boards in the Trobriands. Part of the dazzle of *ogoh-ogoh* is sourced to their "ontological volatility" and penchant for going on display in ways that "unsettle the porous boundaries between 'religion' and 'entertainment.'" Telle thus underscores the cosmopolitics of displaying demons on Lombok, which resemble "a quest for sovereignty" as different council leaders vie to become the main patrons of the *ogoh-ogoh* procession, so that it can mirror their own position, status, and influence. Here, *ogoh-ogoh* produce "fresh collective imaginaries about the demonic" that go beyond modeling or mirroring the world à la Handelman (1998). Enlivened *ogoh-ogoh* dazzle and incite strong passions, first among other "beings of the invisible (*niskala*) realm" and then among humans, both of whom are transformed from spectators into co-participants of the demon parade. It is the *ogoh-ogoh*, then, that steer the annual procession on Lombok in their favor, rendering it a worldmaking event on chiefly demonic terms, rather than an event predominantly shaped by people who would seek to harness demons in the service of what, in human terms, is most politic.

Teri Silvio continues the focus on worldmaking in "The Malevolent Icon Lantern Incident: Early Twenty-First-Century Transformations of the Image of the Goddess Mazu in Taiwan" by proposing that Taiwanese of different generations and political persuasions champion different displays of Mazu, a popular Daoist deity. Whereas the older generation sets out to protect "the hidden core of Chinese folk religion" from being recast in the newer image-forms of today's Taiwan, the younger generation seeks to shift the center of religiosity so that it falls squarely within "the penumbra, where the presentation of the gods is open to change." Many younger Taiwanese portray Mazu as a Japanese pop-influenced and manga-styled character like any other "cute-sexy *moe shojo*." But as Silvio shows through the heated debates that erupted over a parade float made in Mazu's image for the 2017 Lantern Festival in Taiwan's popular Ximen Ding neighborhood, the goddess's display pitted fans of her manga style against those outside of this fandom. In response to this, Wei Tsung-cheng, the artist who had popularized cute-sexy depictions of the goddess through his manga series *Apocalypse of Darkness Warfare*, agreed to repaint the float in a way that would appeal to fans. Perhaps more poignantly, this controversial display of a cute-sexy goddess mobilized wider generational, political, gendered, theological, and aesthetic deliberations about how Taiwan's future should be shaped—especially through its gods. Yet Silvio also shows through her ethnography of the 2021 Taiwanese opera version of Wei's *Apocalypse* that debates about the gods have started to give way to the growing cross-generational appeal of pop-influenced portrayals of Mazu. Blending manga with traditional operatic repertoire (the latter of which has historically been a classic performance art and an offering to the gods), the operatic production of *Apocalypse* folds a pop-influenced display of Mazu into a more

conventional performance genre. Thus, Silvio concludes that creative Taiwanese are bringing new images of popular deities like Mazu—and even display itself—"closer to the hidden spaces of Chinese folk religion."

Janet Alison Hoskins suggests in "Strange Company: Victor Hugo, the Saigon Flag, and Santa Claus on Vietnamese Altars" that Vietnamese popular religion is also expanding in eclectic ways, even as it evokes decolonization, models new religious aspirations, and mirrors multiple forms of loss, disconnections, and a displacement from the past. Hoskins focuses on three images introduced into Vietnamese popular religiosity. One is a mural of Victor Hugo in a temple of Caodaism, an "'Asian fusion' faith" that assembles "the gods of Europe and the gods of Asia." Another is the Saigon flag of the now defunct Republic of South Vietnam, which is treated "as a sort of ancestor" by many in the Vietnamese diaspora who identify as members of "Little Saigon" communities. The third is a Santa Claus doll placed on the altars of Đạo Mẫu shamanistic practitioners who adopt the perspectives of spirits from the imperial Vietnamese past. Each of these images may be displayed in ways that model decolonization on Vietnamese terms and "serve as an anchor for an identity that seems in danger of becoming unmoored." Many images on Vietnamese altars are thus meant to become "models for personalities and attributes that we may all aspire to." This modeling of images is especially visible in the moving displays of Vietnamese rituals, where spirit mediums "use a mirror to see themselves transformed into the possessing spirit." However, as Hoskins shows, museum displays of Vietnamese traditional altars are typically "de-sacralized or de-animated for visitors" and cannot become the lively "canvases of syncretic elements" found on home altars "that encourage personalized modes of spirituality and sometimes also the production of altogether new models." Given this, Hoskins proposes that model figures do more than mirror shared histories of loss and displacement; they offer new ways for Vietnamese to connect with each other and the past through creative assemblages of gods, demons, ancestors, national emblems, meanings, and possibilities.

Heonik Kwon and Jun Hwan Park discuss a related theme in "The American Flag in Kim's Spirit Shrine," namely how the South Korean shaman Kim Kŭm-hwa displayed a small American flag that reflected the culturally plural world of shamanism in which she strove to live. As Kwon and Park show, Kim's small American flag "spoke to the powerful forces of modern politics that sought to displace shamanism from society" in Incheon, the historic port town west of Seoul that was her home. For Kim, the flag was emblematic of her role as a cultural diplomat chosen to perform the shamanic *kut* ceremony at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, during a two-month trip in which she gave another invited shamanic performance at America's preeminent cultural institution, the Smithsonian Museum. The enthusiastic reception that Kim and her spirit-helpers received in America was altogether different from what they had experienced in the two decades prior to her trip, when shamanism and popular religion in South Korea were branded as superstition and subjected to a "militant polemic against idolatry." Kim's trip coincided with the 1980s South Korean resistance movement to military-led rule—a movement that, as Kwon and Park observe, championed "shamanism as a key part of its cultural (or countercultural) activity." South Korea responded to this movement by imparting shamanism with

intangible cultural heritage status, which brought it back into the fold of authentic cultural activities and normalized relations with neighboring countries. This meant that Kim's role as a diplomatic envoy to the United States took place at what became for her "a defining moment," in which her trip to the Knoxville Fair displayed "a world where she could be free from social stigma and be proud to be a performer and guardian of traditional culture." But Kwon and Park propose that there is more to Kim's display of the American flag in her spirit shrine, which is in fact "quite *un-American.*" Drawing upon Kim's memoirs, they show that her small American flag displayed the heritage conservation ethos that underpins UNESCO, modern anthropology, and the advocacy of peace and tolerance in the post-1945 world, rather than any common discourses of American power. One can see this ethos of heritage conservation in the photograph that Kim kept "prominently displayed in her home," which showed her next to the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss during his 1981 visit to South Korea when he attended one of her *kut*. Further echoes of this ethos are found in the display of Kim's own portrait, which arrived at the UNESCO House soon after Lévi-Strauss's visit and now hangs in this self-proclaimed "universal museum" with other items celebrating cultural diversity from around the world. In displaying her small American flag, then, Kim re-presented (and enlivened) her memories of Hwanghae shamanism from her early life, when she contributed to the welfare of her community alongside other popular religious practitioners, free from the domestic military campaigns against her craft and the international complicity behind it that for so long had devalued its "earthly spirituality." Unfurled here was Kim's highly personalized form of worldmaking that mirrored UNESCO's vision of heritage conservation, both within and beyond the walls of its universal museum.

Finally, Katherine Swancutt shows how many Nuosu display their worldmaking ambitions in "The Time of Red Snowfall: Steering Social and Cosmic Renewal in Southwest China." Her comparative study of the annual Fire Festival celebrations in the Liangshan mountains throws light on the two-way displays underpinning this high-stakes festival, which no Nuosu person is guaranteed to survive. Many Nuosu in western Liangshan envision the Fire Festival as a response to a fun-loving wrestling match that took place in myth-historical times between a human hero and the spirit emissary of the sky god. However, the sky god, Ngeti Gunzy (ꉻꄚꇴꋒ), became enraged when the hero accidentally killed his emissary and has retaliated ever since by making the souls of Nuosu people go missing during the Fire Festival until they pay him a sacrificial debt.[1] Unforeseen accidents, illnesses, and even deaths caused by Ngeti Gunzy are common during this dangerous season of social and cosmic renewal. To avert disaster, then, many Nuosu in western Liangshan hold lively competitions and pay their sacrificial debt to Ngeti Gunzy through the ritual for "the descent and exchange of the soul" in the hopes that he will display his satisfaction by sparing lives. Further sacrifices are made in western Liangshan to win over local land spirits, the ancestors, guardian spirits, and spirit helpers of each household, and in some cases even culture heroes, which usher in prosperity for the year ahead. By contrast, Nuosu in northeastern Liangshan approach the Fire Festival as a largely uncelebrated event that often involves deferring their competitions to the autumn sheep shearing festival and disguising their sacrifices to Ngeti Gunzy by calling them "turning back

the enemy." Here, Nuosu explain that their distinct approach to the Fire Festival emerged after a generations-old battle brought eerie "red snowfall," which has since become a metaphor for extreme bloodshed, to their mountains. Red snowfall may also evoke the myth-historical moment when the sky god transformed red snow into human beings, only to nearly wipe them out with a flood after his spirit emissary was killed. Arguably, then, Nuosu across northeastern Liangshan defer and disguise the key elements in their Fire Festival to avoid heralding in another battle, or worse yet, encouraging Ngeti Gunzy to replace them with a new crop of human beings. So, while different local and even personalized worldmaking strategies unfold through the Fire Festival in Liangshan, each is illuminated by an anthropological analysis of display.

Conclusions on the anthropology of display and worldmaking

What the contributors to this issue offer anthropology and the wider field of Asian ethnology is a new way of envisioning display, worldmaking, and the relationships between them. The anthropology of display both encompasses and goes beyond the discipline's longstanding interest in competitive displays of gift-giving, the enchantment of technology, the dazzling and unsettling qualities of sensory stimulation, the discursive strategies of representation, the effort to model, mirror, or re-present the world, and other related themes. It does this by approaching display not only as the static or unmoving framing of an image that invites contemplation rather than participation but as one of the many moving, lively, and performative parts of a public event. Each of the contributors shows that especially powerful spectacles may blur, or even collapse, the ontological distinctions between the display of demons, gods, ghosts, and spirits, on the one hand, and their presences and powers, on the other. People and spirits who harness the transformative powers of display may therefore steer their regimes of visibility, collective imaginaries, logics, and principles of how to relate to the world in new, elastic, and often unprecedented directions.

Here, the conceptual value of the anthropology of display comes fully into focus. Cutting across museum anthropology and the anthropology of religion, magic, exchange, art, and performance, the anthropology of display throws light on how people and spirits push at the edges of the social and cosmic order. It shows that display has the power to generate deeply recursive imaginaries of the cosmos. On another level, it calls attention to how displays unleash moral ideals of cultural heritage and plurality, aesthetic deliberations about the future, and new ways of envisioning the human and otherworldly. Ultimately, then, the anthropology of display reveals how powerful demons, gods, ghosts, spirits, and their ritual props, offerings, effigies, or emblems underpin our analyses of worldmaking.

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on the Rise? (II): New Landscapes, New Gods, New Cosmologies," which Laurel Kendall and I co-organized in Bangkok, Thailand. We continued with another panel in 2020 devoted to "Demons and Gods on Display: The Pageantry of Popular Religion as Crossroads Encounters," which I organized in Kobe, Japan. I am grateful to all who participated in the panels. Especial thanks go to Janet Alison Hoskins, Laurel Kendall, and Kari Telle for stimulating comments on this introduction, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their generous remarks. This article is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 856543).

Note

1. Many of Swancutt's research partners in Southwest China are Nuosu ethnohistorians who routinely use the Nuosu script in their own publications and strongly promote its use by others to extend its visibility, reach, and longevity. These ethnohistorians seek to position the Nuosu script and culture within the history of wider China and the world at large. They also seek to spread a general awareness of the Nuosu language and to show the similarities and differences between it and Chinese by publishing in both languages. To respect Nuosu efforts to protect their language, Swancutt provides both the Nuosu script and Chinese characters for key terms in this special issue.

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