

***Lag Zo: Making on the Tibetan Plateau***  
**A Professional Exchange Opportunity for Cultural Heritage Professionals in China**

**Overview**

The online exhibition [\*Lag Zo: Making on the Tibetan Plateau\*](#), which the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (SI) launched for virtual audiences in September 2019, also offers exciting opportunities for extending the reach to physical audiences in selected museums, universities, and community centers.

Accordingly, SI seeks three Tibetan cultural heritage professionals from China to travel in 2020 to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., to co-curate and adapt the content of the online exhibition into a physical exhibition that would then travel to their home communities. Each exhibition venue can supplement *Lag Zo: Making on the Tibetan Plateau* with objects from their local communities to contextualize it further, as well as programs that might amplify the content and themes of the exhibition itself.

**The Online Exhibition**

*Lag Zo: Making on the Tibetan Plateau* employs a place-based approach by highlighting five key environments in Tibetan culture: *In the Tent*, *On the Mountain*, *In the Shrine*, *In the City*, and *On the Move*. *Making* is integral to the Tibetan story in each of these places. From gilded thangkas to yak-hair shawls, the Tibetan Plateau is home to rich and diverse artisan traditions, including work by weavers, bronze artists, silversmiths, and black potters. Moreover, *Making* extends beyond traditional craftsmanship through the livelihoods of Tibetan farmers and herders, who likewise possess heritage knowledge and skills. Finally, as urbanization transforms rural life in what is widely recognized as the largest rural-to-urban migration in human history, *Making* plays an important role in city life, as crafts are increasingly attractive sources of employment for young Tibetan city-dwellers.

The online exhibition draws upon two extensive digital resources produced by SI: the Artisan Documentation Project and the Nomad Material Culture Documentation Project. All online content will be free and downloadable in Tibetan, Chinese, and English. The exhibition is also linked to “[Methods and Techniques for Documenting and Preserving Tibetan Culture](#),” a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), and the “[Oral History Interviewing Guide](#)” developed by SI for Tibetan artisans, culture bearers, and cultural heritage professionals.

**The Physical Exhibition**

The physical exhibition will follow the same place-based approach as the online exhibition but may wish to emphasize certain environments more than others. For instance, for exhibition venues in rural areas, greater emphasis may be placed upon *In the Tent* and *On the Mountain*. Conversely, exhibition venues in urban areas may wish to place greater emphasis on *In the City* and *On the Move* (especially to highlight the patterns of rural-to-urban migration).

Whenever possible, the physical exhibition will take full advantage of the photographic and video materials produced for the online exhibition. All exhibition venues are strongly encouraged to supplement the basic exhibition materials with new materials and objects from their own communities.

## **Professional Exchange**

This SI project aims to connect three Tibetan cultural heritage professionals in China with some of their counterparts in the United States, in order to learn from each other. The exchange visit of three weeks between April and August 2020 will include a study tour to SI and other relevant cultural institutions in the Washington, D.C. area, organized specifically based on the participating professionals' needs and goals.

One possible result of the exchange may be the production of a physical exhibition at a venue in the Washington D.C. area that will help tell the important story of *Lag Zo: Making on the Tibetan Plateau* for audiences—some of whom may have relatively little familiarity with Tibetan culture. While developing the interpretation and signage for the D.C. audience, the participants will also work with SI staff to develop interpretation and signage for an exhibition in their own institution, as well as a more general mobile exhibition.

## **Project Outputs**

- On-the-job experience producing a temporary exhibition in Washington, D.C.
- Creation of related educational materials and public programming guide
- Development of downloadable instructions and print files for a mobile, adaptable community-based version of the exhibition.

By co-curating these physical exhibitions with SI, Tibetan cultural heritage professionals will gain additional expertise and experience that will help them better serve their local communities in the future.

## **Impact and Evaluation**

Building upon several thousand visitors to the online exhibition, the physical exhibition hopes to attract at least one thousand visitors to each of its venues. Several thousand more indirect beneficiaries will be impacted through the experiences, learnings, and cultural engagement of the physical visitors to the exhibition venues.

## **Application Process**

Please send a letter of intent and CV in English by December 31, 2019, to [folklife@si.edu](mailto:folklife@si.edu). The letter of intent should include the name of the museum, cultural center, or community center where the physical exhibition would be housed.