

Museums in Africa (Egypt) (ALA, 3/19-3/22/03)

bishop

1/7/03; ALA, 3/19/03-3/22/03)

DEADLINE: January 7th, 2003

African Literature Association's 29th annual meeting

"Of Lighthouses and Libraries: History ReLit"

19-23 March 2003

Alexandria, Egypt

Institute for Gender and Women's Studies,

American University in Cairo

Sponsored Panel

"Public/private, in and out of Africa's museums"

Half of Africa's museums are located in nation-states with the most globalized economies: public funds in Libya, Tunis, Algeria, South Africa and Egypt sponsor half the continents' institutionalized representations of the past. Nation-states--and the artifacts, heritages and selves that support their sovereignties--regulate access to museums as modern institutions. Yet, what is the relationship between cultural institutions and the nation-state under globalization?

Drawing on Debra Morris' critical re-interrogation of public and private (*Signs* 25: 2, Winter 2000), it can be argued that performances and utterances within and around museum displays bridge the public/ private divide. Collections expose individuals' possessions, extract artifacts as archeology, and raze locations into history. Morris situates the public/private divide in liberal power and political values (property, market capitalism, patriarchal relations). This divide serves to protect decisions, experiences, and places from fellow citizens', nation-state or international interventions.

Morris' work represents one possible strategy for critical studies of such postcolonial institutions as museums. For her, "privacy allows us to represent--without rationalizing away--those desires, needs,

and experiences that implicitly challenge the demand for articulated rationality." Rather than conceptualizing privacy as a crucial reprieve of power (that is, thinking of it as the opposite of power; which requires banishing bodies, economic concerns, and social questions from public life), Morris' concept of transitional space may prove useful in considering museums' spaces, collections, and communities.

This proposed panel invites papers that critically engage with museums and practices of institutionalized memory in Africa and engage—but need not be limited to—the following questions: In what ways do orality and commemorations of memory cross-cut institutionalized histories? Does display of domestic objects entail contradictions for community museums? What shadows do institutions of national authority cast over near-by historical displays?

Those interested should submit a paper title and an abstract by January 7 to bishop@aucegypt.edu.

Panel organized by
Dr. Elizabeth Bishop, Scholar Affiliate
Institute for Gender and Women's Studies
The American University in Cairo
bishop@aucegypt.edu

Further information on the conference visit:

[http://academic.udayton.edu/](http://academic.udayton.edu/ala)

ala

Further information on the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies
visit: www.aucegypt.edu/igws

Reference:

CFP: Museums in Africa (Egypt) (ALA, 3/19-3/22/03). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 7, 2002 (accessed Jul 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/25369>>.