

PhD Fellowship, Repatriates Project, Vienna

Central European University, Vienna, Austria, Sep 01, 2022

Application deadline: Feb 1, 2022

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Call for Applications: Fully Funded PhD Fellowship at Central European University, Vienna in the REPATRIATES project and History in the Thematic Area of: Artistic Research in Museums and Communities engaged in the process of object repatriation from European collections

Central European University invites applications for a fully funded PhD Fellowship starting in the 2022/2023 academic year in the Artistic Research project REPATRIATES and New Originals: Museums and Communities engaged in the process of object repatriation from European collections

The PhD Fellowship Scheme

The PhD will be supervised by the project's Principle Investigator Professor Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll in the Department of History. The Fellow will pursue a PhD in Comparative History and will be funded by the European Research Council, Horizon 2020.

Duration and Funding: the selected applicant will receive a monthly living allowance equal to the amount of the standard CEU PhD Scholarship for the duration of 36 months, with opportunities to apply for additional research funds covered by the ERC project, including a travel allowance and support for a six-months write-up period.

Location: Central European University, Vienna, Austria. Research sites will include Bénin Republic or Nigeria (Abuja and/or Abomey and/or Benin City), or Mali, with travel to Paris and Vienna, depending on research focus.

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to the PhD in Comparative History. In addition to meeting the general CEU admissions requirements, applicants should submit letters of recommendation from three professors familiar with their post-graduate work, a three-page research proposal, as well as a motivation letter (200-400 words) indicating that they are applying for the REPATRIATES Fellowship funded by the ERC.

The topic of the proposal should fall within the broad thematic focus of the program as described below, and should address issues of method and substance, as well as previous work done in the field, in appropriate detail. Applications are welcome from candidates with a Master's degree that includes a Master's thesis.

Applicants can apply here: <https://history.ceu.edu/howtoapply>

Application deadline: February 1, 2022 (23:59, Central European Time)

For more information on the application process, see here: <https://www.ceu.edu/apply>

For more information on the thematic area contact Professor Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll on carrollk@ceu.edu.

Details about the Thematic Area

The REPATRIATES research project is seeking to appoint a practice-based researcher from Nigeria, Bénin Republic, or Mali as an integral member of the wider research team. The position is to be held as a PhD Candidate for three to four years. The appointee is expected to have a developed social practice as an artist, art historian, critical heritage studies practitioner, anthropologist (or related disciplines) as well as a demonstrable knowledge of material culture and techniques of making, and a clear interest in the processes and contexts of the museum/community repatriation experience. Awareness of, and involvement in, current artistic research concerning repatriation by contemporary artists from both Nigeria and Bénin will be significant. The appointee will hold the position of Doctoral Student, and will join an interdisciplinary research team composed of artists, curators, art historians and others based in Australia and Namibia, as well as a range of academic and institutional partners in Paris, Berlin, London and Vienna. The appointee will be expected to work collaboratively with other members of this international team to effect creative, reflexive and analytical research tasks. The REPATRIATES project, led by artist Professor Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, offers a structured framework in which to afford research time to individual and collaborative critical analyses of a range of repatriation processes and practices.

RESEARCH FIELD AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The proposed research will focus on the restitution of African artefacts from French museums, and in particular its evolution in France's most important museum for non-European arts, Le Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. The project will analyse the ways in which notions of ownership, politics, guilt and other affective and ethical contingencies are negotiated and contested, through a critical positioning of the various actors within and outside the institution: curators, conservators, gallerists and the art markets, collectors, artist collectives, community stakeholders in the diaspora and the former colonies. This research, possibly focusing on both the processes of objects being restituted to Nigeria by several German institutions and to Benin by French authorities, will also redress the most severe criticism of the current debate on restitution, aptly articulated by members of the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies Africa: 'The international debate needs to quickly gain a much-needed African dimension'. It is one of four clearly defined case studies that together make up the wider, comparative research structure of REPATRIATES. The other three case studies involve repatriation processes underway in Australia, Mexico and Namibia. Observing the Musée du Quai Branly as a focal point of French debates about restitution a site of intense national and international interest, in parallel to the debate in Germany, this doctoral research will make a key contribution to the comparative research of the overarching REPATRIATES project.

Collectively, the wider team has the potential to expand the debate to the infra-politics of the repatriation process, an approach especially relevant in the French context which has seen an exaggerated focus on the legal issue of inalienability, as well as the perception of the initiative as a high-level top-down political strategy. REPATRIATES will help re-evaluate object agency and the cultural impact of these processes in a more holistic way: beyond 'contact zones' and 'museum friction-

s', REPATRIATES proposes the restitution process as a means to unsettle calcified power relations between European museums and their transnational stakeholder communities.

WORKING CONTEXT, KEY DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The Researcher will be a doctoral student of the Central European University in the department of History, and will be supervised and managed by the Principal Investigator, Professor Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll. The post-holder will receive guidance and support from members of the REPATRIATES advisory board, including Prof. Didier M. Houenoude (Université d'Abomey-Calavi), Gaele Beaujean of the partner Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac Paris, Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner of the Benin Dialogue Group and director of the Museum am Rothenbaum in Hamburg, and Dr Felicity Bodenstein (Sorbonne and Digital Benin). These advisors to REPATRIATES, will provide guidance on actors and networks in Paris related to the announced return of 26 objects to a new museum being built in Abomey Musée de l'Épopée des Rois du Abomey as well as to the Nigerian-German context. Dr Anna Seiderer (Paris 8, Vincennes/Saint-Denis) will provide guidance on actors and networks on artistic and anthropological research on colonial heritage in France and in Benin. International research exchanges will be facilitated through online infrastructures and tools.

The Doctoral Researcher will be expected to:

- Effect research in full compliance of ethics, data and best-practice research guidelines agreed with the European Research Council, and will be supported to do so
- Fulfil the degree requirements of a PhD in Comparative History at CEU, including coursework and exams in the first year of the program
- Collaborate effectively with the range of actors and institutions in your research area, working with respect and transparency as an ambassador of the REPATRIATES project in multiple community contexts, and be governed by Terms of Reference documents where appropriate
- Develop and deliver high-quality, innovative research outcomes on the subject of the research described above, including, but not limited to, the following activities:
 - As part of your research and production process, to participate in and convene workshops, seminars, conferences, training sessions and other collaborative events with a range of participants
 - Produce research publications (scholarly, artistic or both) for leading international and/or peer reviewed journals
 - Produce book chapters for project-specific REPATRIATES publications, including edited volumes and artists' books
 - Participate in conferences of appropriate learned societies and associations
 - Produce a short film in collaboration with the Principal Investigator and other team members
 - Produce research dissemination materials for the project's public facing website and social media, as well as other channels
 - Participate in exhibition projects (both physical and digital) where appropriate
 - Perform editorial and studio critique tasks as appropriate to support other team members
 - Work with the Project Delivery Manager to ensure that she has the information and materials she needs to effect the smooth running of the case study and the wider REPATRIATES project
 - Other tasks as agreed with the Principal Investigator
- Work closely with the PI and the other members of the REPATRIATES research team to assist in research and outcome delivery
- Travel, including international travel, where necessary and appropriate

KEY DIMENSIONS AND CHALLENGES

Demonstrable existing working relationships of trust with the stakeholder communities in Africa will be essential to the access required to conduct this research. The post-holder will be working in an international, intercultural, inter-institutional and interdisciplinary context in which a range of highly disparate methodologies, ontologies and epistemologies will be operative concurrently. Furthermore, the subject of the research itself is highly contested in high-level nation-state political and legal arenas as well as in personal, cultural and community arenas. It will be essential for the post-holder to maintain respect, intellectual and artistic rigour in all research activities and dealings with the various actors s/he will engage with and encounter in the project.

Central European University is a graduate institution of advanced research and teaching, dedicated to socially and morally responsible intellectual inquiry. CEU's distinctive educational program builds on the research tradition of the great American universities; on the most valuable Central European intellectual traditions; on the international diversity of its faculty and students; on its commitment to social service; and on its own history of academic and policy achievements in transforming the closed communist inheritance. CEU is committed to promoting the values of open society and self-reflective critical thinking. It aims at excellence in the mastery of established knowledge, courage to pursue the creation of new knowledge in the humanities, the social sciences, law and management, and engagement in promoting applications for each, in particular through their policy implications. CEU is a new model for international education, a center for study of contemporary economic, social and political challenges, and a source of support for building open and democratic societies that respect human rights and human dignity.

Reference:

STIP: PhD Fellowship, Repatriates Project, Vienna. In: ArtHist.net, Dec 9, 2021 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35510>>.