Sensitive, problematic, contested? (Zurich, 20-22 Nov 24)

Zurich, Switzerland, Nov 20–22, 2024
Registration deadline: Nov 1, 2024

Kim Stengl

Sensitive, problematic, contested? Challenges and opportunities in dealing with cultural heritage in museums.
Kunsthaus Zürich, Museum Rietberg, and Swiss National Museum present an international conference on cultural heritage in museums.

The handling of cultural heritage in museums has become the focus of heated public discussions in recent years. At the centre of the debate is a critical examination of collection histories and object biographies, as well as a critical review of traditional institutional and museum practices. This entanglement of issues takes centre stage at the international conference held in Zurich, jointly organised by the Kunsthaus Zürich with its focus on fine art from the middle ages to modern and contemporary, the Swiss National Museum which specialises in cultural history and the Museum Rietberg with its collections of arts from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. The three museums have been examining their engagement with objects, testimonies and stories that are considered “sensitive, problematic or contested” in their exhibitions and collection research.

The three-day international conference is primarily aimed at experts and practitioners. The focus is on the exchange of experiences from practice in dealing with objects, testimonies and stories that are considered “sensitive, problematic or contested”. The conference will take place in-person and will be livestreamed online. It will comprise presentations of case studies from over 20 international museum practitioners and experts drawn from a call for papers, panel discussions, two lecture performances, exhibition tours, as well as a world café. The aim is a lively, open exchange on methodological, strategic and programmatic considerations by exploring topics such as “exhibiting”, “collecting”, “displaying”, “provenances”, and “researching” from a wide range of perspectives.

PROGRAM

DAY ONE: Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Venue: Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz, 8001 Zurich

12pm: Registration

1–2pm: Introduction and welcome

2–4pm: Panel I “Exhibiting” (presentations of case studies + Q&A session)

Speakers: Rosa Anna Di Lella (Museum of Civilizations of Rome, Italy), Alexander Herrera (Universidad de los Andes, Colombia), Sheila Reda (Mauritshuis, Netherlands), Jennifer Smailes & Eva Fischer-Hausdorf (Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany)

4:30–6pm: Guided exhibition tours

6:15–7:15pm: Lecture performance: meLê yamomo

DAY TWO: Thursday, November 21, 2024
Venue: Museum Rietberg, Gablerstrasse 15, 8002 Zurich

9–11am: Panel II “Collecting” (presentations of case studies + Q&A session)
Speakers: Ophélie Laloy (KBR Royal Library of Belgium), Carolina Orsini & Sara Chiesa (Mudec Museum of Cultures of Milan, Italy), Aaron Nambadi (Windhoek City Museum, Namibia), Céline Hug (National Museum, Switzerland) & Michèle Dick (Fotostiftung Schweiz, Switzerland)

11:30am–1pm: Panel III “Research” (presentations of case studies + Q&A session)
Speakers: Noor Ahmed (The Citizens Archive of Pakistan), Carl Deussen (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), Lucas Burkart (Digitales Schaudepot, Switzerland) & Beatrice Voirol (Museum der Kulturen Basel, Switzerland)

1–3pm: Guided exhibition tours

3–4:30pm: World Café

5–7pm: Panel IV “Provenances” (presentations of case studies + Q&A session)
Speakers: Christine Howald (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Germany), Mara Lagerweij (Rijksmuseum, Netherlands), Katharina Otterbach (Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland), Victoria Reed (Museum of Fine Arts Boston, USA)

DAY THREE: Friday, November 22, 2024
Venue: Swiss National Museum, Museumstrasse 2, 8001 Zurich

9–10:30am: Guided exhibition tours

11am–1pm: Panel V “Displaying” (presentations of case studies + Q&A session)
Speakers: Dora Strahm (Natural History Museum Bern Switzerland), Khalil Rabah (artist, The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind), Donna Rose & Brenda Malone (National Museum of Ireland), n.n.

2–2:30pm: Closing Discussion and Wrap Up
Speakers: Ann Demeester (director Kunsthaus Zurich), Annette Bhagwati (director Museum Rietberg), Denise Tonella (director Swiss National Museum)

2:30–4pm: Lecture Performance

Programme and organisation
Kunsthaus Zürich: Ann Demeester, director / Joachim Sieber, head of provenance research / Ioana Jimborean, research associate / Kim Stengl, project and research assistant. Swiss National

Museum, Zurich: Denise Tonella, director / Heidi Amrein, chief curator. Museum Rietberg, Zurich: Annette Bhagwati, director / Esther Tisa Francini, head of provenance research and archive.

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Reference:
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