

Nuba Images by Leni Riefenstahl (online/Berlin, 25–26 Oct 24)

Online / Vortragssaal am Kulturforum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Matthäikirchplatz, 10785 Berlin, Oct 25–26, 2024
Registration deadline: Oct 18, 2024

Friederike Eden

Interdisciplinary Symposium “Collaboration and Digital Handover: Discussing the Project ‘Nuba Images by Leni Riefenstahl’”.

Practices concerning repatriation and collaborative provenance research have hitherto largely focused on cultural objects in museum collections. Collaborative research and the digital provision of photographic collections from colonial contexts is still in its infancy. Now, the German–Sudanese research project on Leni Riefenstahl’s Nuba photographs and film footage is exploring joint approaches towards revising these works with the aim of analysing, classifying and digitally handing over the photographic material for appropriation. The ultimate goal is to develop alternative ways of engaging with these works that incorporate various kinds of knowledge and counter hegemonic museum discourses, practices and representations.

The late German film director Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) became famous as a key creator of Nazi propaganda films. In the 1960s and 1970s she produced two widely distributed books of photographs of the Nuba communities in Sudan. Her Nuba photographs were charged with a colonial, racist aesthetic and attracted international attention. Although these works were subject to intense critical debate, they also acted as the catalyst for her artistic and popular comeback as a photographer. Leni Riefenstahl’s estate, which was donated to the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) in 2018, forms the material basis for this research project with our Nuba partners, the Pan-Nuba Council.

The interdisciplinary symposium is structured around three thematic areas: multiple photographic contexts and working with archives; collaboration, knowledge production and multiple epistemologies; and (re-)claiming heritage. The project team members will present initial findings from their ongoing research. To broaden the theoretical framework, a number of scholars have been invited to reflect on their own work and experiences in the field of digital archiving and provisioning. The aim of the symposium is to provide a platform for discussing different approaches to collaboration and digital repatriation, taking into account the challenges, the constraints and potential of these kinds of working processes. The event will bring together a wide-ranging audience of scholars and interested members of the public.

// PROGRAM //

Friday, October 25th

9.30–10 a.m.: Arrival & check-in

10–10.30 a.m.: Opening

- Videos with welcoming remarks from Claudia Roth, Minister of State for Culture and the Media and Professor Dr hc mult. Hermann Parzinger, President of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz

- Professor Dr Lars-Christian Koch, Director of the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin)

- Professor Dr Moritz Wullen, Director of the Kunstbibliothek (Art Library), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

10.30–11.10 a.m.: Introduction

- Dr Paola Ivanov, PD, curator of the East-, North East-, Central and South African Collections, Ethnologisches Museum

- Dr Ludger Derenthal, Kunstbibliothek, Head of Collection of Photography

- Professor Shamsoun Khamis Kafi Tiyah, Chairman of the Pan-Nuba Council

11.10–11.50 a.m.: Keynote

- Sudan's Identity Politics, Violence, and Nuba Resilience / Dr Guma Kunda Komey Kalo, Pan-Nuba Council, Associate Professor of Peace and Development Studies and Associate Professor of Geography, University of Bahri, Khartoum

11.50 a.m.–1.30 p.m.: Lunch break

1.30–1.50 p.m.: Multiple Photographic Contexts and Working with Archives / Moderator: Dr Ludger Derenthal

- Working with a Working Archive – Collaboratively cataloguing Riefenstahl's photographic estate / Katrin Peters-Klaphake, research associate, Kunstbibliothek, Collection of Photography

1.50–2.10 p.m.

- Sudan & photography / Ala Kheir, photographer, educator and curator

2.10–2.30 p.m.

- The Allegories of Leni Riefenstahl's Photobooks / Professor Dr Zoë S. Strother, Riggio Professor of African Art, Columbia University

2.30–3 p.m.: Q & A

3–3.30 p.m.: Coffee break

3.30–3.50 p.m.: Multiple Filmic/Artistic Contexts and Working with Archives / Moderator: Dr Valerie Hänsch

- Tracing, Sorting, Identifying: Riefenstahl's film recordings of the Nuba mountains as holdings in the Deutsche Kinemathek / Anke Wilkening, film restorer, Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek

3.50–4.10 p.m.

- Hussein Shariffe and The South-East Nuba: A case study in digital archiving, restitution and repatriation / Professor Erica Carter, Professor of German and Film, King's College London

4.10–4.30 p.m.

- Artistic Reflections on the Digital Nuba Archive: Uncovering loss and ancient revival / Khalid Shatta, visual artist

4.30–5 p.m.: Q & A

5–5.30 p.m.: Coffee break

5.30–7 p.m.: Film screening and discussion with the director / "Beats of the Antonov", directed by Hajooj Kuka, 68 minutes, 2014

Saturday, October 26th

9.30–9.50 a.m.: Collaboration, Knowledge Production and Multiple Epistemologies – Panel I / Moderator: Dr Mohamed A. G. Bakhit

- Collaboration in Times of Crisis: Ethics, affects and agencies in the co-production of knowledge / Dr Valerie Hänsch, postdoctoral researcher, Ethnologisches Museum and Dr Paola Ivanov, PD, curator of the East-, North East-, Central and South African Collections, Ethnologisches Museum

9.50–10.10 a.m.

- Identifying Criteria and Classifying the Nuba Images of Leni Riefenstahl: Challenges and processes / Dr Guma Kunda Komey Kalo, Pan-Nuba Council, Associate Professor of Peace and Development Studies and Associate Professor of Geography, University of Bahri, Khartoum

10.10–10.40 a.m.: Q & A

10.40–11.10 a.m.: Coffee break

11.10–11.30 a.m.: Collaboration, Knowledge Production and Multiple Epistemologies – Panel II / Discussant: Professor Dr Annie E. Coombes, Emerita Professor of Material and Visual Culture at Birkbeck, University of London / Moderator: Dr Valerie Hänsch

- Decolonising Riefenstahl's Work on the Kau Nyaro People: Perspectives of the photographed people between the past and the present / Dr Mohamed A. G. Bakhit, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Khartoum

11.30–11.50 a.m.

- Visual Deconstruction of a Sudanese-German Connected Heritage / Hajooj Kuka, filmmaker

11.50 a.m.–12.20 p.m.: Q & A

12.20–2 p.m.: Lunch break

2–2.20 p.m.: (Re-)Claiming Heritage – Panel I / Moderator: Dr Guma Kunda Komey Kalo

- Sudan Memory: Lessons learned / Professor Marilyn Deegan, King's College London

2.20–2.40 p.m.

- Nuba Material Cultures: Calabashes and funeral rituals in the Masakin and Kau Nyaro region / Dr Towhid Khamis Angalo Tabasa, postdoctoral researcher, Centre for Cultural Heritage Studies, University of Dalanj

2.40–3 p.m.: Q & A

3–3.20 p.m.: (Re-)Claiming Heritage – Panel II / Moderator: Dr Paola Ivanov

- Claiming Belonging: Nuba cultural festivals and creative practices of resistance / Mohamed Ahmed Farah Salih, research assistant and video journalist and Dr Valerie Hänsch, postdoctoral researcher, Ethnologisches Museum

3.20–3.40 p.m.

- Creating with Purpose: Participatory art and resilience in the Nuba mountains, a contemporary context and experience / Professor Khalid Ibrahim Kodi, Professor of the Practice, Art + Design, College of Arts, Media and Design at Northeastern University

3.40–4 p.m.

- Nuba Centre for Culture, Heritage and Arts / Professor Shamsoun Khamis Kafi Tiyah, Chairman of Pan-Nuba Council

4–4.30 p.m.: Q & A

4.30–5 p.m.: Coffee break

5–5.30 p.m.: Final discussion

5.30–6 p.m.: Handover of Digital Images

Registration/Notification:

The conference will take place on-site, and will also be streamed/hybrid live and recorded.

The conference language is English.

You can register until 18 October 2024. Please send an e-mail to Friederike Eden (f.eden@smb.spk-berlin.de) with your contact details, specifying which days you want to take part. You will receive a confirmation of your reservation.

The number of participants is limited for organisational reasons – early registration is recommended.

Please also register for online attendance as meeting links will be sent.

The programme is subject to change.

Organiser:

Kunstbibliothek (Art Library) and Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin)

For more information:

<https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-fuer-fotografie/events/detail/collaboration-and-digital-handover-discussing-the-project-nuba-images-by-leni-riefenstahl-2024-10-25-093000-144393/>

Reference:

CONF: Nuba Images by Leni Riefenstahl (online/Berlin, 25-26 Oct 24). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 9, 2024 (accessed Jul 1, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42875>>.