

## International Symposium

### What can museum anthropology do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

June 9–10, 2022

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, Germany

Convener:

Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich

Museum anthropology is one of the oldest sub-fields of anthropology which was, especially in the German context, constitutive of the discipline itself. Yet it has, again especially in the German context, long been neglected in academic research and teaching. This symposium sets out to draw museum anthropology back into anthropology, to address specific museological and also general anthropological concerns. Museum histories, theories, methods and practices can be mobilised to expand on recent academic developments such as the material and ontological turns, hot topics such as colonial history and postcolonial critique, the indigenisation of disciplines and institutions, and emerging methodological interactions between anthropology and the arts, as well as the increasingly important interface between academic research and the wider public.

The ongoing controversies around ethnographic museums show that material entities – through their transfer, presence and restitution – continue to gather people together. Far from being dead relics and static records of the past, they continue to live material lives of unforeseen potentialities, provoking human debate, contestation, conflict and, potentially, reconciliation and reciprocal knowledge production. Moving beyond the status quo, the symposium seeks to envision the different approaches and modalities, epistemologies and ontologies through which the ethnographic museum was conceptualised in the colonial past, is rethought in the (post)colonial present, and might function in the future. What happens if we rethink objects as material archives of indigenous knowledge to address environmental changes, consider collections as creative technologies to revitalise cultural practices, and use exhibitions as methods to conduct experimental research in aesthetic and spatial environments? What happens if we approach museums not only as cultures and structures of collecting, ordering and governing, but also as dynamic contingent processes, heterotopian spaces and living resources for creative interventions and utopian reimagining? In other words, when ethnographic objects, collections and exhibitions are used in the present and mobilised towards the future, how can we thus move from postcolonial critique to decolonial doing?

To address these pressing questions, it requires the development of particular skills and expertise, which urges us to rethink what museum anthropology can do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This symposium, which is organised in collaboration with the Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, is associated with the ERC-funded project 'Indigeneities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' ([www.indigen.eu](http://www.indigen.eu)) and the research and teaching program in museum anthropology being developed at LMU Munich.

June 9

0900 - 0930 Registration

0930 - 1000 Welcome

*Uta Werlich (Museum Fünf Kontinente) and Philipp Schorch (LMU Munich)*

1000 - 1130 Panel - ERC/MAA exhibition project 'Indigenous Futures'

The ethnographic museum in the settler colonial present

*Jordan Wilson (New York University)*

Reconnecting the disconnected: Returning taken ancestors

*Leah Lui-Chivizhe (University of Technology, Sydney)*

Tambuna (re) claim to land and country

*Taloi Havini (Independent artist, Brisbane)*

Chair: *Paul Basu (University of Bonn)*

1130 - 1230 The organic collection

*Nicholas Thomas (MAA, University of Cambridge)*

Visual translatio between art and museum – Representation and categorization of the world

*Antoinette Maget Dominicé (LMU Munich)*

1230 - 1400 Lunch

1400 - 1530 Beyond loot and root in colonial collection narratives

*Rainer Buschmann (California State University Channel Islands)*

Lessons from the past: On engaging collections and ontologies in today's ethnographic museums

*Glenn Penny (University of Iowa)*

New originals: The anthropology museum as contemporary art space after repatriations

*Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll (Central European University)*

1530 - 1600 Coffee

- 1600 - 1730 Potentials of the fragmentary  
*Anna Schmid (Museum der Kulturen Basel)*
- What should we do? Conversing with a moai in Paris beyond art and ethnography  
*Bruno Haas (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) and Diego Muñoz (LMU Munich)*
- Invisible? Untouchable? Exhibiting Roman light art  
*Ruth Bielfeldt and Susanne Bosche (LMU Munich)*
- 1730 - 1830 Reception
- 1830 - 1930 Inaugural lecture - What can museum anthropology do in the 21. century?  
*Philipp Schorch (LMU Munich)*
- Welcome: *Irene Götz (LMU Munich)*
- June 10
- 0930 - 1130 Histories in a post-anthropological museum  
*James Clifford (University of California, Santa Cruz)*
- Joys and sorrows of museum storage  
*Ivan Gaskell (Bard Graduate Center, New York)*
- Shall we give the bones a name? (De)personalization and objectification of prehistoric humans in museum contexts and public outreach  
*Philipp Stockhammer (LMU Munich) et al*
- De/centering the human – Developing a museum of life, BIOTOPIA.  
*Samara Rubinstein and Colleen Schmitz (BIOTOPIA - Naturkundemuseum Bayern)*
- 1130 - 1300 Lunch
- 1300 - 1430 Panel - Museum Fünf Kontinente
- Plants in connection - Considering vegetal materials of the ethnobotanical collections of Spix & Martius in light of contemporary plant discourses  
*Gabriele Herzog-Schröder (LMU Munich)*

Learning by curating: Reflections on exhibition projects between university and museum

*Paul Hempel (LMU Munich) and Anka Krämer de Huerta (Museum Fünf Kontinente)*

Walking the thin line: the exhibition *From Samoa with Love? Samoan Travellers in Germany, 1895-1911. Retracing the Footsteps* at the Five Continents Museum in Munich, 2014

*Hilke Thode-Arora (Museum Fünf Kontinente)*

Chair: *Daniel Simpson (University of Cambridge)*

1430 - 1500 Coffee

1500 - 1700 From TAKING to CARE: Speculative futures for ethnographic and world cultures museums

*Claudia Augustat (Weltmuseum Wien)*

Access through care: Reconnecting collections by developing handling skills

*Diana Gabler (MARKK Hamburg)*

Who to talk to, whom to blame? On ethnographic museums and the question of re-centering objects through skilled dialogue

*Mareile Flitsch (Völkerkundemuseum, Universität Zürich)*

Museum anthropology and the reworlding of museums

*Sharon Macdonald (CARMAH, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)*

1700 - 1730 Conclusion

*Uta Werlich (Museum Fünf Kontinente) and Philipp Schorch (LMU Munich)*