

Thinking through Collections

Philipp Schorch

Workshop - Museum Fünf Kontinente

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All of us work, in one way or another, with collections. We might be interested in the historical formation of collections, the material constitution of things, the evolution of material expressions from the past to the present, exhibition histories and forms of display, notions of provenance, and techniques of conservation. At first sight, these directions of enquiry appear as museological. This is true, of course, but there is also more to this than meets the eye. Interrogating the historical formation of collections, for example, also sheds light on the histories of the sciences and the cross-cultural production of knowledge, the material constitution of things offers insights into cosmological frameworks and human-environmental relationships, material expressions reflect Indigenous conceptualisations of art and aesthetics, exhibitions and displays articulate definitions of regions and societies, and conservation is linked to efforts of preserving and remembering. In short, *thinking through collections* is not an exclusively museological affair limited to the realm of the museum, but an intellectual endeavor with the potential to make deeper and wider knowledge claims of fundamental and original value to the academy. This is the ethos and potential that this workshop sets out to foster. Each participant is invited to present their collection-related work in progress to pose questions and tease out preliminary answers or ideas that transcend the collection itself. In doing so, the workshop approaches collections as material records, sources, witnesses, informants, interlocutors and field sites, among other manifestations, which offer unique research material, in the epistemic sense, to pursue all kinds of questions of relevance to the arts, humanities as well as social and natural sciences.

Programme

10:00 - 10:15 Welcome

Introduction

10:15 - 10:45 Knowing through collecting

Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich

10:45 - 11:15 Historicising knowing through collecting

Glenn Penny, University of Iowa

Museum futures: Material cultures of ethnography and natural history as archives of environmental knowledge

11:15 - 11:45 Thinking through wood

Hilke Thode-Arora, Museum Fünf Kontinente

11:45 - 12:15 The ethno-botanical intertwining of the Amazonian collections of Spix and Martius

Gabriele Herzog-Schröder, LMU Munich

Lunch

Recollecting Rapa Nui

13:15 - 14:00 The Indigenous agency: From collecting to recollecting Rapa Nui

Diego Muñoz, LMU Munich

14:00 - 14:45 Forms of collecting - collecting form: Rapa Nui carvings in scientific and artistic collections

Philomena Härdtlein, LMU Munich

PhD projects

14:45 - 15:30 *Doing* provenance research = working with collections? Observations on the relevance of materiality for the practice of provenance research

Gesa Grimme, LMU Munich

15:30 - 16:15 Where do we go from here? Decision making in conservation when anticipating community involvement in the 'near future'

Diana Gabler, MARKK Hamburg/LMU Munich

Coffee

16:45 - 17:30 Unpacking Umlauff: The 'Tsimshian Totem Pole' in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin

Ilja Labischinski, Ethnologisches Museum Berlin/University of Bonn

17:30 - 18:00 Conclusion

Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich

19:00 Dinner Hofbräuhaus

07.08.2021 Excursion to *Südsee-Sammlung und Historisches Museum Obergünzburg*: <https://www.suedseesammlung.de/>