



Call for Papers

Museum cooperation between Africa and Europe: Opportunities, Challenges and Modalities

1 – 3 December 2016

Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Switzerland

Conference organized by the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich on behalf of the Swiss Society for African Studies in cooperation with the Swiss Anthropological Association.

According to the state of the art in museology, and as formulated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the classical objectives of conservation, collection, research, communication and exhibition as core activities of museums shall be complemented by broad international cooperation, especially with the communities and museums in the provenance areas of the collections.

This assignment is particularly relevant for ethnographic museums whose collections are assembled all over the world. The collaboration with research institutions in the countries where the collections originate from is a major priority. This research thus pursues the twofold goal of documenting the collections more thoroughly by cooperating internationally, as well as making them accessible notably to their societies of origin. Ideally, intercontinental cooperation is accompanied by exchange of expertise and experience in museology, strategies of collection, conservation and (inter-) mediation.

Although there are, and have been numerous cases of international cooperation between African and European museums, only few live up to the demands of post-colonial critique. Either the cooperation was, and is mainly unidirectional, displaying European exhibitions in African museums or aiming at coaching African institutions in fields such as conservation, restoration, or curating, thereby following a development approach. Or they take place on a mere consulting level of knowledge exchange with Afropolitan museologists in Europe or the Americas. Only few cooperation projects focus on the practical implementation of joint efforts, taking into consideration the expectations, goals and needs of all parties involved.

Against this background, we would like submissions aimed at discussing the following **questions**:

- What are the objectives and modalities of museum cooperation? What are the afforded opportunities and the challenges to be met?
- How comparable or distinct are strategies to collect, interpret and impart material and immaterial culture in the 21st century? Do shared narratives exist, and if yes, how are they produced?
- How comparable or distinct are understandings of cultural history and representation and best practice in African and European museum work? What is the relationship between academic anthropology and museums in Africa today?

- How does the colonial legacy affect existing and non-existing international cooperation and museum practice (e.g. loans of artefacts, claims for restitution, collecting, curating, preserving, and exhibiting) today?
- How do contemporary phenomena such as urbanity, globalized flows of objects and ideas, modern technology, etc. translate into museum work, exhibitions, perception and audience?

The conference shall bring together scholars and museum practitioners from Africa, North America and Europe and an expert audience to review and survey past, current and planned cooperation. Expected are contributions dealing with museums' cooperation focussing on the above formulated questions and related issues. The conference is embedded in a current cooperation between the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, the Uganda National Museum in Kampala and the Igongo Cultural Centre in Mbarara, Uganda, laid out over several phases. It aims at scrutinizing and debating on the current and planned cooperation in a quality circle of experts and museum professionals.

Conference format

The conference shall comprise three keynote addresses by museum practitioners and scholars on international museum cooperation. Ten individual papers will illustrate the spectrum of current approaches and research activities. Besides the presentations and keynotes, there will be the opportunity of 'Poster Networking': those unable to attend the conference may present their projects, experiences and perspectives in the form of a poster (submit your pdf-file ready for print and the conference organizers will take care of printing and mounting).

Deadline for submitting paper abstracts

Please submit your abstract of 300 words until **10 July 2016** to Thomas Laely laely@vmz.uzh.ch. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by 15 August 2016. Authors' abstracts will be published prior to the conference in a preliminary programme. Following the conference, we intend to publish a selection of papers in connection with the activities on the conference topic and the exhibition projected for 2017.

Conference registration

Registration for the conference will open on **15 August 2016** – please register thereafter online, a form will be available on the following website: www.musethno.uzh.ch/conference-2016.

Conference date and venue

The conference opens on Thursday 1 December 2016 at 5pm and closes on Saturday 3 December 2016 at 2pm. It will be held at the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Pelikanstrasse 40, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland.

Contact

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