

Museums, Citizenship and Belonging in a Changing Europe

SWICH Mid-term Conference

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Research Center for Material Culture

Steenstraat 1, Leiden (Museum Volkenkunde)

**Abstracts & Biographies
(in order of the programme schedule)****1. Title: The Nation-State, Autochthony and the Struggle over Difference****– Challenges for Ethnographic Musea****Prof. Peter Geschiere**

My research on autochthony, citizenship and exclusion in Cameroon and the Netherlands (*Perils of Belonging* 2009) highlighted different trajectories in the way nation-states try to deal with internal differences. Nation-building in Cameroon since independence (1960) brought a strong formal emphasis on unity, but reinforced ethnic tensions in practice. The celebration of a national consciousness in the Netherlands has a longer history but hides a special inconsistency. In this country, the heydays of nationalism – late 19th century but also after 1945 – coincided with a formalization of internal differences around (a-) religion.

What are the implications of such paradoxical histories for the role ethnographic musea can play? Classical nationalism needs the other as a counterpoint, preferably an external one. In such a vision ethnographic musea can play a welcome role for exoticizing such a counterpoint. Yet, nationalism inspired also a proliferation of local musea celebrating identities of a smaller scale. Are present-day diversities that increasingly confront the nation-state from the inside of a different caliber? Ethnographic musea can play a valuable role in showing how national identity may allow scope for internal differences. However, this is a difficult task in view of the inherent tendency towards fixing that is given with identity thinking. A focus on objects and their capacity to accommodate ambiguity and different meaning can help.

Peter Geschiere is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, Fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences and co-editor of the journal *ETHNOGRAPHY* (with SAGE). He has published extensively on issues of citizenship, belonging and exclusion (see, for instance, his 2009 book with University of Chicago Press, *Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*). During the last decade he has been the principal investigator for the project *Islam in Africa – Globalization and Moving Frontiers*; for the NWO program *The Future of the Religious Past*; and a co-initiator

of the project *The Culturalization of Citizenship – the Netherlands in Comparative Perspective* for the NWO programme *Cultural Dynamics*.

2. Whiteness, alterity and the ethnographic museum

Dr. Rolando Vázquez (UCR/University of Utrecht)

I would like to invite reflection on the role of the ethnographic museum in the constitution of the modern colonial order. The ethnographic museum is a key place to think the inflection between modernity and coloniality. It served as a key stage for the configuration of eurocentrism and whiteness through the coloniality of representation. The ethnographic museum is a machine of coloniality, it appropriated, classified, narrated and exhibited alterity. It played a central role in the deployment of colonial difference for the constitution of the ideas of progress, civilization and the affirmation of whiteness as the normative and non-marked position of enunciation. There is no eurocentric understanding of civilization and progress without the colonial constitution of alterity. The ethnographic museum was the institutional affirmation of the West as being at the center of world geography and at the present of history. The exhibiting of alterity relegated the other peoples of the world to the antipodes of world geography and to the past of civilization.

The tasks of decolonizing the museum and decolonizing the university is a much needed response to the ongoing effects of coloniality associated to current forms of discrimination and other forms of social injustice. Drawing on the Diversity Commission report of the University of Amsterdam I would like to sketch a possible lessons for decolonizing the museum.

Rolando Vázquez teaches Sociology at the University College Roosevelt, University of Utrecht in The Netherlands. Since 2010 he coordinates with Walter Mignolo the Middelburg Decolonial Summer School. Through his work he seeks to develop practices of thinking and learning that transgress disciplinary and geo-political boundaries. His research on relational temporalities seeks to overcome the western critique of modernity and contribute to the ongoing efforts to decolonize knowledge, aesthetics and subjectivity. In 2016 he was part of the diversity commission of the University of Amsterdam.

3. What if I could take your place: Empathy, Emotions and Knowledge

Lina Issa

In this presentation I will focus on two of the main questions that inspire my practice: What if, if I took your place? Can I feel what you feel? And, can my body remember what your body remembers?

The talk will think through different forms that my practice is taking to explore the notion of empathy, and to create that space where the emotional is knowledge. A practice that is driven by the urgency to reconcile with displacement, and with the troubling experience that

a migrant could never become fully a 'citizen' again. Using ideas of physical displacement, I usually put myself and participants in situations that create the conditions for the unfolding of new relationships, and of real and imagined narratives about place and identity. Framed within this conference about the role of ethnographic and world cultures museums within a contemporary Europe marked by different migratory histories, histories of violence and exclusion, the presentation is intended to create the space to think about the work of empathy that these museums can foster through their collections and exhibitions.

Lina Issa is a Lebanese performance and visual artist who lives and works in Amsterdam. A graduate of the Graphic Design Program at the American University of Beirut (2002), she completed a postgraduate research fellowship in Fine Arts at the Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht (2003-2005). She then earned a Master in Visual Arts from the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam (2006). Since then she has worked, individually and in collaboration with others, in a range of media, to explore tensions between the personal and the universal. Issa's work revolves around issues of place, otherness, embodied memory & the performativity of (cultural) identity.

Her projects include: **Where we are not | Performance**, Amsterdam, Beirut, Paris, London (2006-2009), **What if, if I take your place? | Performance**, Stockholm, Amsterdam (2010-ongoing), **Tug of War | Happening**, Kiruna, Sweden (2011), www.linaissa.com

4. Bringing it home: rethinking the politics of belonging, sameness and difference in the ethnographic museum

Prof. Rhiannon Mason

As Tony Bennett (2006: 46) has observed, museums work as 'differencing machines'. Historically, museums have operated to sort, categorise and materialise hierarchies of differences, particularly along racial, ethnic, and national lines. The politics of difference which arise from such practices have been extensively critiqued, particularly in relation to ethnographic museums. In recent times, some museums have been 'refashioned' to promote 'cross-cultural understanding, especially across divisions that have been racialised' (Bennett 2006: 46). Working with ideas such as transculturalism and cosmopolitanism, museum practitioners and museum studies academics have advocated alternative approaches, including a greater focus on self-reflexivity, hybridity, dialogism, and cross-cutting themes which problematize essentialist categories of identity (Macdonald, 2003). By contrast, in many European countries like the UK, we find ourselves in a new moment where public discourses around difference and diversity are being recast, once more, in increasingly racist and xenophobic terms. Questions of difference and diversity are now inseparable from the topics of migration, refugees, asylum seekers, extremism, and

terrorism. These distinct concerns are routinely elided and deliberately confused in the fierce debates currently taking place in politics, media and everyday life. Overt racism and xenophobia has found a new space within political and media discourse. We see moves by certain politicians and pressure groups towards a rapid redrawing of what is considered to be the nation's 'core culture'. We are also witnessing growing attempts in many aspects of public life (not least by some governments) to police the imagined and physical borders between native and foreign, self and other, insider and outsider, in-group and out-group. In this current context, we are here to consider how museums as public institutions relate, and might contribute, to these public discourses and debates.

In my talk, I will propose that arguments about difference need to be revisited in the current context, specifically in relation to questions of belonging and sameness. Whereas much consideration has been given to museums and the politics of difference, I want to reconsider how questions of the self and sameness are equally important to problematise. This is vital in order to avoid repeating the danger of, on the one hand, creating what Sen (2006) calls 'plural monoculturalism' and, on the other hand, giving unhelpful credence to an increasingly, exclusionary belief in a 'core' national culture against which all others will always be destined to be minority additions. Can ideas such as 'radical sameness' (Naidoo 2008), 'intersectionality' and 'transversal' politics (Yuval-Davis 2012) help us rethink difference in the ethnographic museum in relation to the current political climate?

Rhiannon Mason is Professor of Heritage & Cultural Studies at the University of New Castle. Her work is primarily engaged with questions surrounding identities and heritage, taking 'heritage' in the broadest sense to include museums, galleries and heritage sites, but also the many different ways that people and societies define and practice what they understand as 'heritage' outside the scope of formal cultural heritage institutions. As part of this, she is interested to understand how collective and personal memories and identities are interwoven within the physical and symbolic space of the museum. Her publications have included the soon to be published *Museums and Migration: qualitative studies into museum staff and visitor attitudes in European museums*. (with Whitehead; Eckersley and Lloyd) and *Experiencing Mixed Emotions in the Museum: Empathy and Memory in Visitors' Responses to Histories of Migration* (with Lloyd, Galani and Sayner)

Curatorial Conversation 1:

Ethnographic Museums and the Colonial Past in the Present

How should ethnographic and world cultures museums address their colonial histories to better serve the (post)colonial societies of which they are a part?

Dr. Claudia Augustat is Curator of the South America collection at Weltmuseum Wien.

Bruno Verbergt is Head of museum and public services of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren and Associate Professor at University of Antwerp.

5. Materialising Postcolonial Polities: Encounters with Things in the Ethnographic Museum

Dr. Sandra H. Dudley

This conference's call urges us to consider a range of important and urgent questions surrounding the relationships between (ethnographic) museums, on the one hand, and diverse, postcolonial polities, migration and notions of identity on the other. This paper's response zooms in to look in close focus at the potential role of the encounters between visitors and objects on display. In particular, it looks at material, sensory and emotional aspects of those engagements. To what degree might these encounters open up the exploration of complexities, ambiguities and tensions, or, indeed, similarities, connections and ease, inherent in multicultural nations? How far might they facilitate notions of belonging or difference and to what possible ends? And to what extent and utility can we think of the artefacts within the ethnographic museum as themselves comprising a postcolonial polity?

Sandra H. Dudley is Associate Professor in the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester and previously worked at the Pitt Rivers Museum (University of Oxford). She is currently working on a British Academy- and British Council-funded project with the National Museum Institute (New Delhi) and other Indian cultural organisations and museums. She has also worked for two decades with refugees from Myanmar (Burma) in Thailand, and has published widely on areas related to objects, exile and museums.

6. 100 MIGRATORY

Monica L. Edmondson

In this presentation, I will speak about my work **100 MIGRATORY**, locating it within broader questions of identity, belonging, colonization and the survival of an indigenous minority of north Europe.

My work **100 MIGRATORY** is an extensive, local and world-wide art project that has served as a framework exploring issues such as identity, origin, allegiance and migration. The culture and heritage of the indigenous people of north Europe, the Sami people, interweave with questions of past and current colonization and the survival of an indigenous minority in a contemporary multicultural society. In **100 MIGRATORY** a hundred glass vessels, all individually made, depart on a return journey, starting in their home in the vast, winter-white mountains of Sápmi in the north of Sweden. From there the vessels migrate on their individual journeys through different countries, environments and cultures.

Monica L. Edmondson is an acclaimed artist who studied in Australia, before returning to the north of Sweden to become established as a specialist in art glass. In Monica's work

Sami culture converges with international influences, both technically and in concept, often inspired by the vast white winter. Monica is represented in the permanent collections of a number of museums, including National Museum in Stockholm, National Gallery of Australia and Museum of Design and Applied Arts in Reykjavik Iceland. Her hot-worked, kiln-formed and wheel-cut glass has been included in exhibitions at home and abroad, for instance at National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Koganezaki Glass Museum at Shizuoka Japan, Venezia Aperto Vetro Italy and SOFA New York.

Curatorial Conversation 2:

“We need to do something with Turks, and Islam”: A reflection on Islamic visual culture, heritage and citizenship in the National Museum of World Cultures

Mirjam Shatanawi & Pooyan Tamimi Arab

Moderator: Michel Lee

The National Museum of World Cultures holds an important collection of Islamic visual culture from the 19th and 20th century, which has gained new relevance with the presence of migrant groups from Morocco, Turkey and other majority Muslim countries. However, the display of this collection also raises a number of urgent questions. Should heritage be defined along ethno-religious lines? How can the museum participate in producing “good citizenship”? Can the museum engage with the public debate on Islam without reproducing its restrictive political frames? Curators Mirjam Shatanawi and Pooyan Tamimi Arab will reflect on Islamic visual culture, heritage, and citizenship in relation to contemporary cultural and religious diversity in the Netherlands. They do so by sharing thoughts on some of the objects selected for the forthcoming permanent exhibition of the Tropenmuseum “Things that Matter”. These include Ottoman visual culture and the museum’s collection of images of the Prophet Muhammad.

Mirjam Shatanawi is Curator of Middle East and North Africa at National Museum of World Cultures and PhD candidate at University of Amsterdam.

Pooyan Tamimi Arab is Assistant Professor of religious studies at Utrecht University. He also works as assistant curator of Middle East and North-Africa at the National Museum of World Cultures.

Michel Lee is Curator at National Museums of World Culture Sweden and Director of The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquity.

7. Production of difference and self-exoticization in collaborative formats in current ethnographic museum and artistic practice

Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner

Museums of ethnography have in the recent past engaged in various collaborative practices with so-called source communities and migrant groups in their immediate surroundings.

These practices were geared to enable encounters not only with objects but between people and to give voice to other perspectives on museum holdings and narratives. Equally, collaborative contemporary art projects have adopted comparative approaches by getting deeply immersed in other cultural spheres of knowledge and living in co-creating collaborative artscapes with members of these communities. Such formats allow audiences to experience difference and appreciate other values also by encounters with the “real” people involved. This review of some of these practices aims to open up a discussion about the right of self-exoticization as a mode of self-representation, production of difference, celebration of diversity and the agency of ethnographic museums as stages for such cultural encounters.

Barbara Plankensteiner is Senior Curator of African art at the Yale University Art Gallery. Formerly she was curator for the Subsaharan Africa collections at the Weltmuseum Wien and has served as its chief curator and deputy director until August 2015. In that role she was responsible for the re-conceptualization of the permanent galleries and was the initial project leader of the SWICH-project in designing and coordinating its successful application.

**6th Annual Gerbrands Lecture: Hearing Heat: An Anthropocene Acoustemology
Prof. Steven Feld**

Bruno Latour suggests that even if poisoned, the anthropocene is a deep gift to anthropology, challenging the field to invent new approaches to citizenship and responsibility. This lecture takes up Latour’s challenge through acoustemology, (acoustic epistemology), the study of sound as a way of knowing. I present three stories entangling cicadas and humans, poetics and politics, vocal mediation and affect. The first story utilizes ethnographic field recordings to explore the significance of singing with cicadas in Papua New Guinea rainforest histories of eco-aesthetics and environmental havoc. The second story utilizes film soundtracks and installation sound art to explore cicadas as the traumatized voice of acoustic memory for post-nuclear Japan. The third story utilizes YouTube and ambient video art to explore cicadas and mytho-phonologos in ancient and contemporary Greece, listening equally to Plato’s Phaedrus and the rising mercury of austerity indignation. These three stories reveal how cicadas have sounded as bio-political archives, and how ethnographic, scientific, and art sound recordings can recompose culture and nature into what Donna Haraway calls “naturecultures” that acknowledge “companion species.”

Steven Feld is an anthropologist, filmmaker, sound artist/performer, and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology Emeritus at the University of New Mexico. After studies in music, film, and photography, he received the Ph.D in Anthropological Linguistics at Indiana University in 1979. From 1976 he began a research project in the Bosavi rainforest of Papua New Guinea. Results include the monograph *Sound and Sentiment* (republished 2012 in a 3rd and 30th anniversary edition), a Bosavi-English-Tok Pisin Dictionary, and essays, some published in his co-edited books *Music Grooves* and *Senses of Place*. From this work he also produced audio projects including *Voices of the Rainforest*. Key theoretical themes developed in this work are the anthropology of sound and voice; acoustemology, particularly regarding eco-cosmology as relational ontology; emotive sensuality; and experimental,

dialogic writing, recording, and filmmaking. Feld's work has been supported and honored by MacArthur and Guggenheim fellowships as well as book and film prizes.

8. Performative Citizenship: arts, politics, subjectivity

Prof. Engin Isin

In this presentation, I will outline a critical approach to citizenship, which I call 'performative citizenship' with references to two performative projects. The first is the Migration Museum Project. Since 2013, a number of activists have been working toward building a national migration museum for Britain. So far they have concentrated their efforts on exhibitions and events with an education programme. The project's longer-term aim is to create a permanent museum. The second is the 'Who Are We?' project to be staged in Tate Modern in 2017. Working with Counterpoint Arts, an artist-activist group, and colleagues from Loughborough and Warwick universities, artworks are being commissioned to interrogate the we-effects of nationalism. I have been taking part in both projects as means of actively exploring the changing relationships between art, politics, and political subjectivity. This lecture assesses the pros and cons of approaching citizenship from a performative perspective.

Engin Isin is Professor of Politics at The Open University. (He will be a Professor of International Politics in Queen Mary University of London and University of London Institute in Paris in 2017.) Isin's work concerns the transformative politics of the citizen as a political subject. He has written extensively on performativity, acts, and enactments of citizenship. He maintains an eclectic website at <http://enginfisin.net>.

9. Europe the Game - thinking about representation, museums and European-ness

Dr. Alana Jelinek

This talk starts with an artwork, called Europe the Game. The artwork is an interactive painting of Europe with 54 different birds eye views of European landscapes. The object of the game is to put into a frame those landscapes that 'fit', leaving out those that do not. The game is played with as many players as possible and in contestation.

The talk will begin with the artwork as a way of exploring ideas of representation and belonging. Both the artwork and the talk asks, if it is true that it is impossible to include all peoples and all points of view in the frame, or within a museum's display, how do we choose which to exclude or include? How do we navigate this process of inclusion and exclusion and how do we invite people to feel that they belong even if they can't see themselves represented? By its nature, any museum curation is an act of inclusion and exclusion. At any time, some things and peoples are not represented who could be. What is included is always both a political and personal decision with political and personal impacts on audiences. Like Europe the Game, is the only way to navigate this potentially fraught

problem, to parade the fact that these are choices, which may change over time?

Alana Jelinek is an artist with a range of methods to explore complex ideas, including painting, collaborative events, performances, film and writing novels, in addition to writing theory of art. She did her PhD in both fine art practice and history of art, investigating art as a democratic act. Since 2009 she has been with the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, making artworks in response to the collections. Her first postdoc investigated the relationship between collections, collectors and the collected where the collected is both people and things, and for this ended up investigating the Fijian 'cannibal fork' as both historical artefact and as site of an imperialist racist imaginary. Her current work is with Nicholas Thomas on the Pacific Presences project, investigating collections of Pacific material in European collections.

Curatorial Conversation 3:

Ethnographic and World Cultures Museum and the politics of Inclusion/Exclusion

How can or do ethnographic and world cultures museums respond to the pronounced failure of multiculturalism, coupled with rising xenophobia and exclusionary politics?

Cécile Bründlmayer is Curatorial Assistant at Weltmuseum Wien and PhD Candidate at University of Vienna

Liza Swaving is Curator of Public Programmes at the Research Center for Material Culture, National Museum of World Cultures

10. Swings and Roundabouts: Pluralism and the Politics of Change in Canada's National Museums

Prof. Ruth Phillips

This talk explores the evolving relationships of Indigenous, settler, and diasporic communities as refracted through recent representations in Canada's national museums. As in other settler societies, Canadian museums are negotiating constructs of national identity, belonging and citizenship in relation to two sets of pressures-- for Indigenous decolonization, which produces a tension between inclusion and sovereignty, and for the pluralist accommodation of demographic and cultural diversity rather than the ghettoizing tendencies of official multiculturalism.

During the past fifteen years, these tensions have been further complicated by electoral swings between Liberal and Conservative governments. Through examinations of several recent exhibitions, the paper argues that, although undoubtedly constrained by short-term policy shifts, the historical narratives presented by national museums respond less to these electoral politics than to currents of social change and public opinion, which operate at a deeper level. As the old saying puts it, "What's lost upon the roundabouts we pulls up on the swings."

Ruth B. Phillips is Canada Research Chair and Professor of Art History at Carleton University. Her research focuses on the Indigenous arts of North America and critical museology. Her books include *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (2011); *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast* (1998); *Native North American Art*, with Janet Catherine Berlo (2nd edition, 2015); and *Representing Woman: Sande Masquerades of the Mende of Sierra Leone* (1995). She has served as director of the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology and president of CIHA, the International Committee on the History of Art. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

11. Is belonging still worth striving for? *Museums in the political cultural landscape of Israel*

Dr. Judy Jaffe-Schagen

In Israel, a move to the political right is very apparent in the government's cultural policy. At the beginning of this year, Miri Regev, Minister of Culture and Sport since 2015, proposed a 'Loyalty in Culture' bill that would authorize her ministry to cut funding to institutions that attack Israel and its symbols.

While the Israeli government uses its cultural policy to create and reinforce the national narrative and collective memory, ethnographic and migration museums, often together with memorials, serve as tools for migrants and other minorities to preserve and represent their heritage and memory as well as to become accepted and respected citizens in Israeli society. In July, artists, museum directors, and arts educators filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Culture due to increased threats to freedom of speech. This protest comes mostly from art institutions. It seems that ethnographic and migration museums haven't changed their policies choosing instead to continue to promote distortions of their own narratives that they hope will be accepted as part of the national narrative. Some of these museums, such as those of the Bedouins, Iraqis and Ethiopians, are losing the support of some of their own group as they adjust their stories to an increasingly nationalist government.

The question of what role ethnographic museums can play in fashioning more convivial policies seems, at present, not relevant for Israel. Rather the question that should be asked, is whether belonging remains a goal worth striving for? In this paper I will look at several ethnographic museum collections and at recent initiatives taken by the Ministry of Culture and Sport for a discussion of current debates regarding questions of citizenship and belonging within the political cultural landscape in Israel.

Judy Jaffe-Schagen was born and raised in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, but has been living in Israel for the past 15 years. She obtained her doctorate in history from VU University Amsterdam. Earlier this year her book *Having and Belonging. Homes and Museums in Israel* was published by Berghahn Books, New-York – Oxford. For two years she has been working as a postdoc, first at Haifa University in Israel, then at the Amsterdam School for Memory and Heritage Studies. This academic year she is affiliated with CLUE +, Research Institute for Culture, History and Heritage.