

SWICH Co-collecting workshop

Monday 19 October & Tuesday 20 October 2015

Research Center for Material Culture, National Museum of Worldcultures, Leiden

This trans-disciplinary workshop - part of the *Collecting Futures* research theme of the pan-European collaborative project SWICH - will explore trajectories towards collaborative practices for collecting and documenting collections within ethnographic museums. During the workshop experts from across the world will explore best-practice examples as starting points for developing new theoretical models and practical policy suggestions for how ethnographic and world cultures museums can adopt collaborative models for rethinking collecting and representational practices.

The founding principles around which many ethnographic museums in Europe have historically operated have been that of collecting, studying and representing those 'others' to the West. The last few decades have seen growing and robust (auto)critique of ethnographic museums and collections. This critique has taken different forms and has been generated from different quarters. Firstly, for some within originating communities, critical questions have revolved around issues such as who owns cultural objects; who should collect them; how and under what conditions are they being preserved; and how are they interpreted and represented. Secondly, scholarly critique (including but not restricted to indigenous scholars), has taken up similar concerns, such as ethics of collecting 'other' cultures, questioning representational paradigms, as well as critiquing authority, and the inclusion/exclusion of different stakeholder groups from museum practices.

Finally, criticism has also come from different groups within Europe itself, mostly from post-colonial, labor migrants and post-migrant citizens. They have been critical about what *they* see as their heritage, is or is not represented in these museums.

This workshop takes these critical discussions as starting points to explore possible methodologies for developing new collections, collaboratively with different stakeholder groups. We take collections as sites of relations, as fulcrums around which different communities claim different stakes, sometimes competing, as they negotiate their belonging to different citizenship regimes. With citizenship and belonging as critical lens, the workshop will be organized to focus on different national, regional and international factors that impact the ways in which collaboration is defined and practiced. What should be the drivers for collaborative collecting practices, and how do earlier collections and collecting practices impact on how we collect for the future? What should ethnography museums collect today and in the future?

Monday 19 October 2015

Research Center for Material Culture

9:00 **Registration**

9:30 **Welcome**

10:00 **Claiming Heritage - Co-collecting, Indigeneity, Citizenship and the Nation**

In this session we explore the national contexts for collaborative collecting. In what ways do particular regimes of citizenship (national policy frameworks or internal bureaucracies, for example) or national discussions about belonging for different groups affect co-collecting practices? What internal and external factors affect the museum's ability to conduct co-collecting practices?

Moderator **Ian Lilley**, Professor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (ATSIS) and Willem Willems Professor of Archaeological Heritage Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

Key Note **Joe Horse Capture**, Associate Curator, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

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Q&A

12:00 **Lunch Break**

13:00 **Co-Collecting in international/trans-national perspective**

This session moves beyond national borders to look at how collaborative collecting practices can function within trans- or international citizenship regimes and belonging practices. In what ways can practices of co-collecting in the trans/international context help stakeholder communities to strengthen their own claims for citizenship and belonging in the national/local context? What tensions exist between museums' representational practices and the idea of self-representation that is implicit to the notion of co-collecting? Is co-collecting part of an attempt to depoliticize claims for heritage ownership from different stakeholder communities or does it facilitate other more equitable practices? Can we see co-collecting as forms of 'diplomacy' for different groups as they participate in the representation of their own cultural heritage?

Moderator **Wonu Veys**, Curator Oceania, National Museum of Worldcultures

Key Note **Sean Mallon**, Senior Curator Pacific Cultures, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

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Q&A

15:00 Coffee/ Tea break

15:30 **Co-collecting in the Digital Age**

Digital cultures have become a focal point for contemporary research agendas. This session will examine the ways in which digital and new media technology are changing collecting practices. How might digital contact zones or digital knowledge offer new pathways to share authority and democratize knowledge about cultural heritage within a changing museological and demographic field?

Moderator **Bart Barendregt**, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Director of Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Leiden University

Key note **Maureen Matthews**, Curator of Ethnology, The Manitoba Museum
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Q&A

17:30 - 18:00 **Discussion / Conclusions**

Tuesday 20 October

Research Center for Material Culture

12:30 Overview of Collection Policies and Practices of SWICH partner museums

Presentations of SWICH partner museums current collection policies and practices and collection plans for the future in regard to ethnographic collections.

(SWICH Partners: Please prepare an 8 minutes presentation)

14:00 Roundtable Discussion

Who am I – Co-Collecting and Represented Selves

Moderator: **Lotten Gustafsson Reinius**, Museum Director Etnografiskamuseet, Stockholm and Associate Professor of Ethnology

In this round table we want to explore questions of (self)-representation.

Intrinsic to the idea of collaborative collecting are ideas about different stakeholder groups being able to represent their cultural heritage. While we acknowledge that individuals from originating communities have always been implicit participants in ethnographic collecting (and therefore representation) practices, the notion of co-collecting demands a different kind of authority and balance of representational power. What would we gain or lose in such practices? What are the tensions, contradictions and dangers that they present? What kind of ethical issues do such practices raise?

16:00 End of meeting