

Rethinking the Restitutionary Moment: What Next?

Bios of presenters, panellists and moderators, in alphabetical order

Nanci Adler is Professor of Memory, History and Transitional Justice, a chair established by the NIOD, the University of Amsterdam, and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Adler teaches in the M.A. Program Holocaust and Genocide Studies (University of Amsterdam), supervises Ph.D. and postdoctoral research, and has been visiting faculty at, among others, Columbia University. Her current research focuses on transitional justice, the Gulag, the legacy of Communism, oral history, and memory. Adler currently serves on the Academic Advisory Board of the Simon Wiesenthal Institute, International Advisory Board for the Journal for Genocide Research, the Steering Committee of the Historical Dialogues, Justice and Memory Network, and is delegate to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Adler is part of the advisory committee of Pressing Matter.

Tal Adler is a conceptual artist, working with and within research and academic institutions, developing artistic-research methods to engage with difficult pasts and contentious heritages. Through his projects, first in Israel/Palestine and later in Europe, he has engaged with the politics of history and memory, of aesthetics and display, of state and institution, of nature and science, and of ethnocracy, theocracy and diplomacy. At *inherit*, Centre for Advanced Study based at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Adler works with artistic-research fellows and continues to promote the integration of artistic-research practices into the university's structures.

Omar Aguilar Sánchez is tee savi (Mixtec) and holds a Doctorate in Archaeology from Leiden University. He is a specialist in the archaeology, history, language, and anthropology of the Ñuu Savi, primarily focusing on the Mixtec codices and the link between these pictorial manuscripts and the living heritage and Mixtec language from a decolonial perspective, fostering their re-appropriation within the Pueblo de la Lluvia (People of the Rain) itself. He works with Postcolonial Digital Humanities and is the director of the digital and educational projects "Mixtec Codices App," "Ñuu Savi Calendar," and the "Codex Tonindeye" website, as well as co-founder of the collective *Nchivi Ñuu Savi*. Aguilar Sánchez has collaborated on museum and endangered language projects with national and international institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution in the United States, the British Museum in England, the University of Warsaw in Poland, and the Museo Comunitario de Yuku Saa in Tututepec, Oaxaca. In April 2024, he participated in the events leading to the re-opening of the Ancient Americas collections gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Kenzie Allen is a Haudenosaunee poet and multimodal artist. She is the author of *Cloud Missives* (Tin House, 2024), which was a finalist for the Indigenous Voices Awards and the National Poetry Series, and she is the recipient of a 92NY Discovery Prize, a James Welch Prize for Indigenous Poets, and the 49th Parallel Award in Poetry. She is a first-generation descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Kenzie's most recent project is a multimodal book of poetry and creative ethnography that incorporates intergenerational histories and diasporic movements, Haudenosaunee traditions, and archival materials of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. She received her PhD in English & Creative Writing from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, her MFA in Poetry from the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan, and her BA in Anthropology from Washington University in St.

Louis. She is currently an Assistant Professor of English at York University, where her research centers on documentary and visual poetics, literary cartography, and the enactment of Indigenous sovereignties through creative works.

Ana Rita Amaral is a social anthropologist, working across the fields of history, museums and religious studies. Her regional expertise is West Central Africa, particularly today's Angola. Her current postdoctoral research focuses on museum collections assembled by Dutch Catholic missionaries in Angola during the period of Portuguese colonialism, particularly those that can be found today in the National Museum of World Cultures in the Netherlands. It is part of the Work Package dedicated to 'Heritage and the Question of Conversion', within Pressing Matter.

Pansee Atta is an Egyptian-Canadian scholar, visual artist and curator. Through both research and art practice, her work examines receptions of Ancient Egypt from the eighteenth century through the present, using Critical Museology and decolonial methodologies to envision liberatory possibilities for archives and collections.

She is an artist in residence with Pressing Matter and a former research fellow as part of Inherit in Berlin. Currently, she is (remotely) completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Carleton University, Canada, as part of *Mobile Subjects, Contrapuntal Modernisms*, in which she is producing artistic data visualizations representing the circulation of artists from the decolonizing world through the colonial and artistic capitals of London and Paris in the mid-century era. Furthermore, she is a visiting fellow at the Netherlands Institute for the Near East at Leiden University, undertaking a project titled "What can Ancient Egyptian mummies tell us about Dutch collection histories?" examining museological receptions and taxonomies of human remains in museum collections.

Bernadette Atuahene is a Harvard and Yale-trained property law scholar whose work focuses on land and homes stolen from Black people. She currently holds the Duggan Chair at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law. Atuahene has served as a judicial clerk at the South African Constitutional Court, worked as a consultant for the South African Land Claims Commission, and practiced at a global law firm called Cleary Gottlieb. She is the author of *We Want What's Ours: Learning from South Africa's Land Restitution Program*, and she directed and produced an award-winning short documentary film about one South African family's struggle to regain their land. Atuahene has won several accolades and has published extensively in academic journals such as the *California Law Review* and *NYU Law Review* as well as news outlets such as the *New York Times* and *LA Times*.

Since 1990, **Jos van Beurden** has focused on researching the protection of the cultural heritage of vulnerable countries (mostly former colonies). Initially, the ongoing illegal trade in art and antiquities was central in his research, since 2009 this is colonial looted art. With his research and publications, he has helped put the topic of "restitution of colonial collections" on the agenda in the Netherlands and abroad. His latest publication is titled *The Empty Showcase Syndrome. Tough questions about colonial collections* (2024). Van Beurden is a Critical Friend of Pressing Matter.

Micaela Cabrita da Palma holds a bachelor's degree in History and master's degree in Curating Art and History from VU Amsterdam and currently works as a junior researcher at the International Institute of Social History. She studies the [colonial and slavery past of the Zaan region](#), focusing on local



involvement in the slave trade and slavery, and the processing of colonial products in that region. She is also active as a tour guide in Haarlem, giving tours and lectures on the [colonial history of the city](#). In the Pressing Matter research project, she worked as a junior provenance researcher focusing on West African objects and was responsible for coordinating the project on an interim basis for a year. During her final year at Pressing Matter, she worked on identifying global restitution policies and recommendations regarding human/ancestral remains.

Chiara de Cesari is Professor of Heritage, Memory and Cultural Studies, and Chair of Cultural Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her research explores how forms of memory, heritage, art, and cultural politics are shifting under contemporary colonialisms and multiple, entangled planetary crises. She is particularly concerned with the ways in which race, racism and colonial legacies live on today, especially in museums and cultural institutions. On these topics, she is part of 'Pressing Matter: Ownership, Value and the Question of Colonial Heritage in Museums', within which she co-leads the subproject on the role of artistic practices in processes of restitution and repair, and coordinates the series of experimental repair labs. Among others, she is the author of *Heritage and the Cultural Struggle for Palestine* (Stanford UP, 2019), and *Decolonize the Museum: Art, Activism, and the Question of Race in Curation* (with Wayne Modest and Marta Pagliuca Pelacani, Routledge, 2025) as well as the co-editor of two key volumes in memory studies (*European Memory in Populism*, Routledge, 2019; *Transnational Memory*, de Gruyter, 2014).

Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha is Associate Professor at the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, National Museum, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She was Post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University, John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellow, and had appointments as Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Visiting Professor at the University of Amsterdam, Visiting-Professor at New York University, and Tinker Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago. She has published articles, book chapters, and edited volumes on post emancipation and social movements, archives, anthropology and history in Brazil, Cuba and the U.S.; and on Maroon societies in Suriname. Her current research is about art, creativity, and other cultural and political transformations among the Maroon Ndyuka in Eastern Suriname. Gomes da Cunha is a Critical Friend of Pressing Matter.

Elsbeth Dekker is a PhD candidate with Pressing Matter at VU University within the working package 'Law and the Question of Ownership'.

Adieyatna Fajri is a PhD Candidate with Pressing Matter at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies and Groningen Institute of Archaeology, University of Groningen. His research investigates the archaeological and museological traces remaining from the demolition of Banten royal palace in the early 19th century by the Dutch colonial government. Engaging with reflections on potential forms of Cultural Genocide, his research analyses the material and immaterial legacies of this extreme violence which simultaneously shape the process of musealization and heritage formation and what this might mean for reconciliation of both communities in Indonesia and the Netherlands which connected through diverse but interrelated ways with this historical event.

Farabi Fakh is a Lecturer and head of the Master's Programme at the Department of History at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. His current research interest is the history of the Indonesian New Order state, corruption and the oil industry. He is currently finishing several articles which delve into



corruption during the New Order. In 2020, he published *Authoritarian Modernization in Indonesia's Early Independence Period: The Foundation of the New Order State (1950-1965)* with Brill. The book is based on his PhD dissertation from Leiden University.

Hilmar Farid has been leading transformative initiatives to enhance Indonesia's cultural ecosystem since 2016 as the Director-General for Culture at Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. His focus has been on policy innovation, sustainable funding, and empowering cultural actors through collaboration between government, civil society, and cultural practitioners.

Farid has formulated and enacted the Cultural Advancement Law (UU Pemajuan Kebudayaan), which defined clear roles for stakeholders, from central and local governments to the private sector and civil society. He also oversaw the development of its derivative regulations, ensuring a structured roadmap for implementation. Additionally, Farid has been serving as a Senior Lecturer at Institut Kesenian Jakarta and Chairperson at Perkumpulan Praxis since 2020 and 2012 respectively, contributing to the advancement of cultural education and research in Indonesia.

Kodzo Gavua is an archaeologist and ethnographer who holds a PhD and a Master of Arts degrees from the University of Calgary, Canada. He also earned a Master of Arts degree in International Affairs and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Archaeology and Philosophy from the University of Ghana. Kodzo serves as an Associate Professor of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, and researches the effects of cross-cultural interactions on Africa's cultural heritage and economic development. He engages in public archaeology, anthropology of tourism, economic anthropology, art history, material culture studies, and museum studies. Gavua established and coordinates the A.G. Leventis Digital Resource Centre for African Culture at the University of Ghana.

Dan Hicks is Professor of Contemporary Archaeology at the University of Oxford, Curator of World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and a fellow of St Cross College Oxford. His books include *The Brutish Museums* (Pluto Press 2020) and *Every Monument Will Fall: a story of remembering and forgetting* (Penguin 2025). Instagram/Bluesky: @ProfDanHicks., Details of and links to Dan's most recent publications are on his [website](#).

Guno Jones is Professor of the Anton de Kom Chair in the History of Colonialism and Slavery and their contemporary Social, Cultural and Legal Impact. His research is interdisciplinary in nature. Currently, he is involved, as projectleader, in an interfaculty VU research project on the legal history of Dutch slavery. He also participates in a KITLV research project on the role of the royal Dutch family in colonial history. His main research interests are political discourses on citizenship, post-colonial migration and the nation in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK; the politics of World War II heritage in the Netherlands and its former colonies; the politics of the heritage of colonialism and slavery in the Netherlands; the construction and politics of 'mixedness' during colonialism, in the Netherlands and in the EU. Jones is a Critical Friend of Pressing Matter.

Nancy Jouwe has been actively involved in both academic and social spheres, focusing on women's rights, the history of slavery, transcultural exchange, and heritage in a postcolonial context. Within the cultural sector, she works as a curator, researcher, advisor, and program maker and has been engaged with Pressing Matter as a Critical Friend. Jouwe studied Literature at the Universities of Utrecht and York, specializing in Women's Studies and Cultural History. Among other things, she was director of



the Stichting Papua Cultureel Erfgoed (PACE) and artistic director at Kosmopolis Utrecht. Over the past decades, she has held administrative positions in various organizations and has taught at, among others, the Utrecht School of the Arts, where she has held a fellowship since 2022 in connection with research into the history of slavery in the city of Utrecht.

Zara Julius is a transdisciplinary artist based in Johannesburg. She works primarily with sound and multimedia installation, and social practice, often collaborating with musicians and educators. Her practice is informed by her methodology of “rapture”; asking how we might take seriously Black cultural innovation and performativity as sites of fugitivity despite enduring extractivist logics. Her work involves the collection, selection, and creation of (contested) archives — real, imagined and embodied. She is especially engaged in thinking through the archive, the death-life matrix, and the internal workings of the Black sonic, and how they may help us reconstitute Time, memory, and History amid various unfreedoms and landlessness. Through Pressing Matter, Zara produced an art book project, *A Funeral For...*, with Zoé Samudzi. She is currently in the process of developing her first work for stage from this research. Zara holds a BAHons in Social Anthropology (2014) and a MAFA in Fine Art (2021).

Gelare Khoshgozaran is an undisciplinary artist and filmmaker whose work engages with legacies of imperial violence manifested in war, militarization and borders. They use film and video to construct peripheral narratives that seek to redefine existing constructions of ‘home’ as a means of approaching new conceptualizations of belonging. Khoshgozaran has presented their work internationally, with recent exhibitions and screenings at MoMA Doc Fortnight, Delfina Foundation, Images Festival, EMPAC, MASS MoCA and the Hammer Museum. With a BA in Photography from University of Arts in Tehran (2009), and an MFA from University of Southern California (2011), they are assistant professor of art at UCLA School of Art and Architecture.

Katja Kwastek is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research focuses on processual art and aesthetics, and human-non-human-technology relations as reflected upon in contemporary art. Together with Chiara de Cesari, she leads a subproject dedicated to artistic research within the NWA consortium Pressing Matter: Ownership, Value and the Question of Colonial Heritage in Museums (2021–2025). From January 2026 on, she will be involved in the new NWA consortium JUST ART: Creating Common Grounds for Climate Justice Through Artistic Research. Kwastek is one of the co-founders of the Environmental Humanities Center at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Aram Lee is an artist whose research-driven practice reinterprets institutional materials, reshaping their roles through performance, film, and video installations. Often involving performative actions with the public, her work redefines how objects are described, activated, and circulated. By challenging diasporic amnesia, Lee releases spectral and fictional narratives embedded within institutions, dissolving cultural predominance and envisioning new structures.

She has been an artist-in-residence at the Jan van Eyck Academie, the Goethe-Institut Marseille, and *Pressing Matter* at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, and the IFAN Museum Dakar.



Within the *Pressing Matter* project, Lee has been developing a body of work examining the enduring nature of colonial toxicity and the impossibility of restitution. Her performance *Holding Poison* (2023) was presented at the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam; the live radio broadcast *350,000 Leaks* (2024) was transmitted from the refrigeration space of the museum depot in collaboration with online radio JAJAJANEENEENEE; and her video *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (2025) also emerged from this research.

Susan Legêne is Professor of Political History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She focuses in her teaching and research on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion rooted in histories and cultures of colonial and postcolonial nation state formation. Museum collections are among the archival sources relevant to that approach. Between 1985 and 2008 she worked at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, as a publisher, editor, and head of the curatorial department of the then Tropenmuseum. Together with Wayne Modest (Wereldmuseum and VU) and Karina Rinaldi-Doligez (VU) she forms the Pressing Matter Management Team.

Wayne Modest is Director of Content of Wereldmuseum, with locations in Amsterdam, Leiden, and Rotterdam. He is also Professor (by special appointment) of Material Culture and Critical Heritage Studies at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

A cultural studies scholar by training, Modest works at the intersection of material culture, memory and heritage studies, with a strong focus on colonialism and its afterlives in Europe and the Caribbean. His most recent publications include the co-edited publications, *Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in A Changing Europe* (2019), and *Victorian Jamaica* (2018). He is currently working on several publication projects including *Museum Temporalities* (with Peter Pels, 2026) and *Curating the Colonial* (with Chiara de Cesari, 2026). Modest has (co)curated several exhibitions, most recently, the Kingston Biennial (2022) entitled *Pressure* (together with David Scott and Nicole Smythe-Johnshon).

Peter Pels is Professor Emeritus in the Anthropology and Sociology of Modern Africa at Leiden University since 2003. He edited *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale* (2003-2007), and published on the anthropology of religion, colonial modernity, magic, politics, ethics and material culture. More recent publications include essays on the history and decolonisation of anthropological methods (in *HAU*, 2014 and *Anthropological Theory*, 2022), and on the anthropology of the future (in *Current Anthropology*, 2015). As a principal investigator in the Pressing Matter project, he studies transatlantic (re-) inventions of 'African' heritage, the history and future of (mostly missionary) colonial collections, and questions of ancestry and materiality. Berghahn published his book *The Spirit of Matter: Modernity, Religion, and the Power of Objects* (2023), and Routledge will publish *Museum Temporalities: Time, History and the Future of the (Ethnographic) Museum* (edited and introduced with Wayne Modest) early in 2026.

Ciraj Rassool is Senior Professor of History at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), where he also directs the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies. Among his latest publications are *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor, 2017), written with Leslie Witz and Gary Minkley; and *Missing and Missed: Subject, Politics, Memorialisation* (published as *Kronos: southern african histories*, 44, 2018), co-edited with Nicky Rousseau and Riedwaan Moosage. At UWC, He directs the Remaking Societies, Remaking Persons Supranational Forum. He is one of the principal



investigators of the international collaborative research projects, 'Action for Restitution to Africa', and 'Re-connecting "Objects": Epistemic Plurality and Transformative Practices in and beyond Museums.' Rassool is a Critical Friend of Pressing Matter.

Laurens de Rooy is a historian of science and medicine specialized in history of anatomy, zoology and anthropology, focused on the collections of Museum Vrolik, the Anatomical Museum of the University of Amsterdam.

Motsane G. Seabela is an interdisciplinary scholar, *ngaka* (spiritual healer) and museologist focused on critical heritage and museum studies, as well as indigenous epistemologies. She currently is the Curator of Anthropology at the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History, Pretoria, South Africa. Seabela is also a doctoral fellow at the University of Pretoria and holds a PhD from the same University. Her research centres on the overlooked narratives of black individuals in museums and 'collections' that are deeply rooted in colonial histories. One of her recent creative works is the co-curated exhibition entitled *Inherited Obsessions*, which interrogates the concepts of preservation and its true purpose. Additionally, Seabela addresses the transformation of museums from sites of violence to spaces of healing through restitution efforts both within and beyond their walls.

Hande Sever is a writer and research-based artist whose work explores the excavation of lost texts and distant images, examining how their omission and dissemination inform historical revisionism and shape archival practices. Grounded in theories of sovereignty, Sever's research interrogates the ways in which historical narratives are shaped and manipulated, particularly in the context of military violence, surveillance, and censorship. Often drawing from her family's history of persecution, her lens-based practice explores the intersection of personal and collective memory, uncovering how visual culture is used to both erase and construct historical narratives. Sever's work has been exhibited internationally at the Hauser & Wirth in Somerset (2018); Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna (2021); Czong Institute for Contemporary Art in Seoul (2021); Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin (2025); REDCAT: Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater (2025) and the Wende Museum of the Cold War (2025) in Los Angeles, among others.

Wouter Veraart is Professor of Encyclopedia of Law and Legal Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and one of the investigators of Pressing Matter. Veraart studied Law and Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. Previously, he has lectured in legal philosophy at VU University and in legal history at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. He obtained his PhD degree (cum laude) on 'The Deprivation and Restitution of Property Rights during the Years of Occupation and Reconstruction in the Netherlands and in France'. For this book and related publications he received the Dirk Jacob Veegens Award in 2006. In 2007, he obtained a three-year Veni grant on the topic 'Time, Restitution and the Law'. In his inaugural lecture 'The Passion for a Mundane Legal Order', in 2009, he paid attention to the legal consequences of forgetting and remembering as collective answers to injustice of the past. At present, Veraart is also as project leader of the NWO-project Compensation as Punishment (2023-2027).

Marleen de Witte is a social-cultural anthropologist studying the postcolonial dynamics of religion, heritage, and material culture in West Africa and Afro-Europe. She has conducted extensive research in Ghana (since 1995) and the Netherlands (since 2006) and published widely on African Pentecostalism,



African Traditional Religion, and media practices; media, materiality, and the senses; Asante funerals; heritage and popular culture in urban Ghana; and the social life of African heritage among young Afro-Dutch. Within the Pressing Matter project, her research focused on the trajectories and potentialities of spiritual artefacts from Ghana held in Dutch mission collections, engaging with broader debates as well as creative collaborations around heritage restitution and museum decolonization.

Carine Zaayman is a researcher and research coordinator at the RCMC/Wereldmuseum. As an artist, curator and scholar, she is committed to critical engagement with colonial archives and collections, specifically those holding strands of Khoekhoe pasts. Her work focuses on the afterlives of slavery and colonialism, particularly in the Cape, by bringing intangible and neglected histories into view. Her research aims to contribute to a radical reconsideration of colonial archives and museum collections, especially by assisting in finding ways to release their hold over our imaginations when we narrate the past, as well as how we might shape futures from it.

