

LEGACIES.
WHY
MUSEUM
HISTORIES
MATTER.

A CONFERENCE
TO EXPLORE THE
MEANING OF
INHERITANCE

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY
13-15 JAN 2026

COLOPHON

This 2026 conference is organized by Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Marika Keblusek, Susanne Boersma, Raphaël Gerssen and Margot Stoppels as part of the [Leiden University Museum Lab](#).

It has been made possible with Leiden University funding from the Dutch Ministry of Culture.

Conference Programme Committee

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Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Dr. Susanne Boersma, Raphaël Gerssen and Margot Stoppels

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is a particularly engaging moment to study the history of museums. How do their storied origins – as private palace collections and *Wunderkammern*, houses of worship, monuments to the nation, sites of commemoration or new archistar containers for art – relate to their significance in contemporary life? How do their physical structures, be it cabinets, palaces, white cubes, temples, churches or mausolea, and their collections reflect the museums' histories, wherever they may be in the contemporary world? How do we navigate the idea of the museum as an inherited construct, within the context of its many debates? What is it about a museum's past that keeps us curious, and how does it inform what it does in the present?

During this international conference, a project of the Leiden University Museum Lab, participants present papers that focus on museums with significant founding histories, broadly defined by their buildings, collections, commemorative functions, collectors or founders, that are currently engaged in some manner of institutional introspection, by way of exhibitions, acquisitions, restitutions, or renovations.

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 13 JANUARY

P.J. Veth Building, 1.01

9:00 – 9:30
Registration

9:30 – 9:50
Welcome and Introduction

- **Welcome** from Prof. Dr. Stijn Bussels, Academic Director LUCAS (Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society), NL
- **Introduction** from Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, University Lecturer and Project Director, Museum Lab, Leiden University, NL

9:50 – 10:30
Keynote: Reflections on the History of the Public Art Museum

Dr. Carole Paul, Director of Museum Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

10:30 – 11:00
Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:20
PANEL I – Monumental Legacies

Chair: Prof. Dr. Pieter ter Keurs, Emeritus, Leiden University, NL

- **The Glyptotheque as a Site of Memory, Monumentality, and Transformation: Historical Identity and Contemporary Reflection of a Museum Institution in Croatia**
Dr. Magdalena Getaldić, Glyptotheque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HR
- **Obelisks and Totems: On Reframing Ethnographic Museums and Why Artistic Practice Matters**
Irene Quarantini, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

- **The Palatine Gallery: How Residents of the Pitti Palace Shaped Today's Museum**
Ilya Markov, Leiden University, NL

12:20 – 13:20

Lunch (independently)

**Programme continues at the
Kamerlingh Onnes Building (KOG), A0.51**

13:20 – 14:40

PANEL II – Reshaping Legacies: Italian Museums

Chair: Dr. Irene Baldriga, Sapienza University, IT

- **Reshaping the Oldest Italian National Museum**
Dr. Paola D'Agostino, Musei Reali Torino, IT
- **Legacies Now: The Renewal of Institutional Inheritances at Five Museums in Rome**
Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL
- **Two Centuries of Legacy, One Decade of Inclusion. Political Backlash and Strategic Reframing of Outreach at the Museo Egizio**
Dr. Costanza Paolillo, New York University, USA

14:40 – 16:00

PANEL III – Founders' Legacies

Chair: Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

- **The Long Shadow of the Founder. Hero-Worship and the Construction of Continuity for a 'National Museum'**
Dr. Joachim Berger and Darja Jesse, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, DE
- **National Gallery in Prague throughout the 20th Century: The Case of the Morawetz Collection**
Lucie Němečková, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of WWII Victims, Prague, CZ
- **Leache & Wood: Rediscovering the Chrysler Museum's Lost Founders**
Dr. Mia Laufer and Drew Lusher, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, USA

16:00 – 16:30

Tea Break

16:30 – 17:50

PANEL IV – Unseen Legacies: Belgian Museum Buildings

Chair: Annemarie de Wildt, Former Curator at the Amsterdam Museum, Board Member of CAMOC, ICOM

- **Inherited Workspaces: Rethinking Creative Practice at the Constantin Meunier Museum**
Dr. Ulrike Müller, University of Antwerp/Constantin Meunier Museum, Brussels, BE
- **Haunted Halls: Reclaiming Hidden Histories of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels**
Dr. Gerrit Verhoeven, University of Antwerp/Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, BE
- **Between Immersion and Reflection. Old Antwerp and Museum Mayer van den Bergh Performing the Past**
Prof. Dr. Stijn Bussels, Leiden University, NL, and Prof. Dr. Bram van Oostveldt, Ghent University, BE

17:50 – 18:00

Day Closing

By Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

18:30

Dinner for Conference Speakers

WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY

Kamerlingh Onnes Building (KOG), A0.51

9:00 – 9:10

Introduction

By Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

9:10 – 9:50

Keynote: Legacies – Gifts of Love, Sacred Trusts, Investments

Monsignor Dr. Timothy Verdon, Director of the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo/
Museum of the Workshop of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, IT

9:50 – 10:30

**Keynote: Developing and Opening Amsterdam's National
Holocaust Museum in a Politicized Era – Curatorial Challenges
and Critical Choices**

Prof. Dr. Emile Schrijver, Director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter and National
Holocaust Museum, Amsterdam, NL

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:20

PANEL V – Revealing Histories and Reclaiming Heritage

Chair: Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

- **'My Heritage - Your Heritage?!' Places of Jewish Heritage in Germany**
Prof. Dr. Christiane Dätsch, Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, DE
- **POLIN Museum i Warsaw: A Place Where Memory Meets Responsibility**
Joanna Fikus, POLIN, Warsaw, PL
- **How to Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Museum Rietberg?
Reflections on Researching and Curating the Institution's History**
Esther Tisa Francini, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, CH

12:20 – 13:20

Lunch (independently)

13:20 – 14:40

PANEL VI – Eastern Europe: War and Recuperation

Chair: Dr. Seraina Renz, Leiden University, NL

- **UNESCO and Museum Diplomacy: Geographies and Balances of Cultural
Policy during the Cold War**
Dr. Irene Baldriga, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

- **Cultural Losses of Museums. The Polish Respond to World War II**
Dr. Bartłomiej Sierzputowski and Elżbieta Przyłuska, Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Warsaw, PL

14:40 – 16:00

PANEL VII – Eastern Europe: (Post-)socialist Museums

Chair: Dr. Seraina Renz, Leiden University, NL

- **Shaping the Contemporary Art Museum Identity through its Complex Heritage. The Example of the Museum of Fine Arts in Split, Croatia**
Jasminka Babić, Museum of Fine Arts, Split, and Prof. Dr. Dalibor Prančević, University of Split, HR
- **Collecting to Forget: The Legacy of the Museum of Atheism in Vilnius**
Karolina Bukovskytė, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute/National Museum of Lithuania, Vilnius, LT
- **Whose Ethnography? Ethnographic Collections and Museums in Central Europe**
Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

16:00 – 16:30

Tea Break

16:30 – 17:50

PANEL VIII – Revisiting Institutional Narratives

Chair: Prof. Dr. Wonu Veys, Leiden University/Wereldmuseum Leiden, NL

- **The Imperial Gaze Materialised: The *Ten Thousand Chinese Things Museum* as Archive**
Yuansheng Luo, KU Leuven, BE
- **Museum Histories in a Postcolonial Age: Collecting and Curating Netherlandish Art Legacies in the Global South**
Dr. Laia Anguix-Vilches, Utrecht University, NL
- **“You’re usually wrong”: Looking Back at the Anti-racism of the Past at One Museum**
Dr. Deirdre Madeleine Smith, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, USA

17:50 – 18:00

Day Closing

By Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

THURSDAY 15 JANUARY

Kamerlingh Onnes Building (KOG), A0.51

9:00 – 10:20

PANEL IX – Modernist Legacies in the Americas

Chair: Dr. Stephanie Noach, Leiden University, NL

- **Lourival Gomes Machado and the Legacy of a Certain Brazilian Modernism at MAM-SP**
Dr. Ana Avelar, University of Brasília, BR
- **Legitimizing Modernism: Art History and the Formation of Museum Authority in the United States**
Dr. Laura Braden, Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL
- **(Re)Making the San Francisco Museum of Art Modern**
Dr. Berit Potter, California State Polytechnic University Humboldt, Arcata, USA

10:20 – 10:50

Coffee Break

10:50 – 12:10

PANEL X – Crafts and Material Legacies

Chair: Dr. Lieske Huits, Leiden University, NL

- **Donating Lace and Knowledge: Women and Early 20th-Century Historic Lace Acquisitions in the Belgian Royal Museums for Art and History**
Julie Landuyt, Ghent University/Free University of Brussels, BE
- **Crafts' Networks and the National Museum of Capodimonte in Naples**
Francesco Montuori, European University Institute, Florence, IT
- **Preserving Heritage through Museums: The Case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**
Chang Farhan Tahir, University of Duhok, IQ-KR

12:10 – 13:30

Lunch (independently)

13:30 – 14:50

PANEL XI – Colonial Legacies

Chair: Prof. Dr. Wonu Veys, Leiden University/Wereldmuseum Leiden, NL

- **Founding Myths and Colonial Entanglements: The Japan Folk Crafts Museum and the Politics of Mingei**
Anna Stewart-Yates, University of Oxford, UK
- **A Forgotten History: The Former Colonial Collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History, Belgium**
Anke Hellebuyck, University of Antwerp, BE
- **Rethinking Narratives: The “Animals of Africa” in Bern**
Sarah Csernay, Nordamerica Native Museum, Zurich, CH

14:50 – 16:10

PANEL XII – Prominent Figures and Entangled Histories

Chair: Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

- **A Contested Museum History: Scenography and the Placement of the Islamic Collection at the Berlin Museums**
Dr. Zehra Tonbul, Ozyegin University, Istanbul, TR
- **Entangled Objects and Memory Sites in the Museum: Re-imagining the ‘Modern’ Collection**
Prof. Dr. Juliet Simpson, Coventry University, UK
- **The Museum as a Battleground: Political Art at the Israel Museum, 1967-1977**
Meital Raz, University of Amsterdam, NL

16:10 – 16:40

Tea Break

16:40 – 16:45

Introduction to Keynote

By Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

16:45 – 17:25

Keynote: The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1909 – Towards a Machine for Looking

Prof. Dr. Andrew McClellan, Tufts University, Boston, USA

17:25 – 17:45

Closing Remarks

By Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

FRIDAY 16 JANUARY

**Sign up for one of the optional curator-led visits
at registration**

10:00 – 11:30

**Wereldmuseum Leiden: Reenvisioning the New Permanent
Galleries**

Led by Prof. Dr. Wonu Veys, Curator of Oceania

Website: <https://leiden.wereldmuseum.nl/>

Address: Steenstraat 1, 2312 BS Leiden

10:00 – 11:30

Rijksmuseum Boerhaave: A Tour of the Permanent Displays

Led by Prof. Dr. Ad Maas, Curator of Modern and Natural Sciences

Website: <http://www.rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl/>

Address: Lange St. Agnietenstraat 10, 2312 WC Leiden

10:00 – 11:30

**National Museum of Antiquities: A Tour of the Temporary
Exhibition “Discovering Ancient Egypt”**

Led by Dr. Toon Sykora, Curator of the Egypt and Nubia section

Website: <https://www.rmo.nl/>

Address: Rapenburg 28, 2311 EW Leiden

LOCATIONS

On Tuesday 13 January, from 9:00 to 12:20:

P.J. Veth Building, Room 1.01 (first floor)

Address: Nonnensteeg 1-3, 2311 VJ Leiden

Accessibility: Access to the building and conference room on the first floor via stairs. Lift access possible with assistance. Please notify conference organizers beforehand.

From Tuesday 13 January 13:20 to Thursday 15 January, 17:30:

Kamerlingh Onnes Building (KOG), Room A0.51

Address: Steenschuur 25, 2311 ES Leiden

Accessibility: Access to the building via ramp or stairs. The conference room is located on the ground floor.

A map of these and further locations can be found on page 47 and via [this link](#).

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Andrew McClellan

Prof. Dr. Andrew McClellan is Professor of Art History, Tufts University, Boston. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the history of museums and collecting, including *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in 18th-Century Paris*, *Art and Its Publics*, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, and *The Art of Curating: Paul Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard*. His current book project, from which his talk is drawn, is *Rivals on the Fenway: Isabella Stewart Gardner, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Destiny of the American Art Museum*.

Carole Paul

Dr. Carole Paul is director of Museum Studies in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her current work concerns the history of museums and collections in the early modern period, especially in Rome. Her various publications include *The Borghese Collections and the Display of Art in the Age of the Grand Tour* (2008) and *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe* (2012). She is now writing a book on the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

Emile Schrijver

Prof. Dr. Emile G.L. Schrijver is General Director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter in Amsterdam, which includes the Jewish Museum, the Portuguese Synagogue, the Holocaust Memorial, Hollandsche Schouwburg and the National Holocaust Museum, and teaches History of the Jewish Book at the University of Amsterdam. Schrijver curated the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books in Zurich, and edited the *Encyclopedia of Jewish Book Cultures* (published online/Brill Publishers). He serves on boards and advisory committees

of Jewish cultural organizations in the Netherlands and abroad. In 2025, he and Ruth Peeters completed a study on 2,000 years of European antisemitism.

Timothy Verdon

Monsignor Dr. Timothy Verdon is a Canon of Florence Cathedral and Director of the cathedral museum, the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. A Yale-trained art historian, he has been a consultant to the Vatican commission on artistic heritage, a fellow of the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Villa I Tatti), as well as Burke Lecturer in the Stanford University program in Florence. Author of numerous books and articles on Christian art, and Visiting Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of King's College London, he is presently overseeing the expansion of the Museo dell'Opera (expected completion: 2028).

ABSTRACTS AND BIOS (A-Z)

Lourival Gomes Machado and the Legacy of a Certain Brazilian Modernism at MAM-SP

Dr. Ana Avelar, University of Brasília, BR

This paper investigates Lourival Gomes Machado's role as the first Brazilian director of the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP) from 1949 to 1951 and his contributions to shaping a historically grounded vision of Brazilian modernism. Succeeding French critic Léon Degand, Machado positioned MAM-SP within global dialogues through exhibitions of artists like Picasso and Lhote, while also advancing a national canon by promoting Tarsila do Amaral, Portinari, and Bruno Giorgi. His conception of modernism—rooted in expressionism, realism, and later abstraction—was guided by the idea of *forma mentis*, a culturally specific mindset expressed through form. His curatorial choices, including exhibitions of psychiatric patients' works, reflected a socially engaged ethos. As artistic director of the inaugural São Paulo Bienal (1951), associated with the Museum, he further expanded Brazil's international presence. This paper draws from his dispersed critical writings to examine how Machado's thinking continues to inform debates on museums' roles in shaping national art histories, while also offering a case study in institutional self-reflection and historiography from the Global South.

Ana Avelar is an art historian, critic, and professor at the University of Brasília. Her academic work focuses on Brazilian modernism, art criticism, and curatorial history, with particular attention to the intersections of national identity, abstraction, and institutional formation. She is the author of a monographic study on Lourival Gomes Machado's thought and its impact on Brazilian art historiography. Avelar has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and frequently lectures on Brazilian art in national and international academic forums. She also curates exhibitions, notably for institutions such as MAC-USP and the National Museum of the Republic.

Museum Histories in a Postcolonial Age: Collecting and Curating Netherlandish Art Legacies in the Global South

Dr. Laia Anguix-Vilches, Utrecht University, NL

In 1624, the Dutch landed in Tainan (southwestern Taiwan). In 1630, they seized Recife (northeastern Brazil). Over three centuries later, two private museums opened in these regions, with contrasting approaches but a shared aim: to interpret European art for local audiences. In Tainan, businessman Shi Wen-long (1928–2023) created the Versailles-like CHIMEI Museum as an uncritical celebration of Western culture. In contrast, the Instituto Ricardo Brennand (Recife) draws on the world's largest collection of works by artist Frans Post (1612–1680) to reflect on the multilayered legacy of Dutch colonialism in Brazil. At a time when Dutch museums are critically re-examining their histories in light of the Netherlands' colonial and slavery past, little attention has been paid to how museums in formerly colonized regions contextualize these legacies. This paper compares CHIMEI and Instituto Ricardo Brennand's founding visions, analyzing curatorial practices, audience strategies, and institutional narratives, to reflect on the role of museums in postcolonial societies in shaping local cultural identities and understandings of the colonial past. In doing so, it demonstrates that institutional introspection and social responsibility in museums take different forms across specific geopolitical landscapes.

Laia Anguix-Vilches is a museum historian interested in curatorial practices, institutional collecting, and inclusivity. She has published in the *Journal of the History of Collections* and co-edited a special issue for the *Museum History Journal*. She has convened panels on museum histories for the Association for Art History Conference and is co-editing a volume on women curators (Routledge). She also serves as the international board member of the *Museums and Galleries History Group*. At Utrecht University, she works on the VICI project *The Dutch Global Age*, investigating the curation of seventeenth-century Netherlandish art in museums beyond the Europe/US axis.

Shaping the Contemporary Art Museum Identity through its Complex Heritage: The Example of the Museum of Fine Arts in Split, Croatia

Jasminka Babić, Museum of Fine Arts, Split, and Prof. Dr. Dalibor Prančević, University of Split, HR

The building of today's Museum of Fine Arts in Split is a unique example of institutional and spatial metamorphosis, reflecting a broader spectrum of socio-political, cultural, and museological shifts. Listed as a protected national heritage, it was constructed as a city hospital in the late 18th century, repurposed during the socialist period in 1970s into the Museum of Communist Revolution, and adapted in the early 2000s into a museum of modern and contemporary art—testifying to its spatial resilience and adaptability in accordance with the changing ideological and social priorities. Today, the museum acts as an active participant in contemporary museological practices, strengthening discursive and participatory exhibition models. The focus of this presentation is the relationship between architecture and heritage, as well as the ways in which spatial elements, the museum collection, and contemporary programming policies reflect the transformation of the museum's role—from a place of ideological representation to a space of inclusion, critical reflection, and local networking. Through this example, we explore how physical structures and the history of the collection shape the institutional identity of the museum in a contemporary context, and how inherited museum models enable—or limit—the reinterpretation of heritage in the 21st century.

Jasminka Babić is a curator and an art critic from Split, Croatia. She currently holds the position of Director at the Museum of Fine Arts in Split. She has graduated Art History and English Language and Literature in 1999 from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Her work focuses on contemporary art practices in Croatia and abroad. She is a co-curator of the contemporary art collection permanent display of the Museum of Fine Arts. She has organized numerous exhibitions of Croatian and international artists. She is a member of ICOM, Croatian Section of AICA and HULU (Croatian Association of Visual Artist Split).

Dalibor Prančević is an Associate Professor at the Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split. His research focuses on 20th-century and contemporary art and visual culture. For eight years, he worked as a curator of the collection at the Meštrović Gallery in Split. He has led scientific research projects and participated in several others as a team member. He has received prestigious fellowships, including the Fulbright Post-doctoral Award

(USA, 2018). He is the author of scholarly articles, essays, and books, and regularly curates and writes about contemporary art exhibitions.

UNESCO and Museum Diplomacy: Geographies and Balances of Cultural Policy during the Cold War

Dr. Irene Baldriga, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

The paper aims to analyze the role attributed to museums in the material and political reconstruction initiatives promoted by UNESCO in the aftermath of World War II and in the particular context of the Cold War period. Drawing on archival documents and, above all, on the journal “Museum International”, which has never been systematically studied to date, the paper will illustrate orientations, strategies, and proposals undertaken by UNESCO through the specific context of museums in the complex dynamics of international dialogue before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The study of this documentation allows us to reconstruct the actual importance assumed by museums in representing values, identities and memories during the period of confrontation between the West and the Soviet bloc. Articles and contributions from both sides were published in the magazine *Museum International*, effectively promoting an exchange of information and models despite the political and cultural conflict that existed. A closer look at this material can help us better understand the role that museums played in the geopolitical dynamics of the second half of the 20th century, even beyond the main macro-processes managed at the institutional and governmental level.

Irene Baldriga is Associate Professor at Sapienza University of Rome, where she teaches Museology, Museum Education and Museum Policies. She is an adjunct researcher in the HISTARA group at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (France) and a member of the Groupe Education et Musées at the University of Montréal. Since 2019, she is a member of the scientific board of the international research project *Musées engagés, publics participatifs*, organized by the Ecole du Louvre and the University of Quebec at Montréal. She has published extensively on matters of new museology, museum education and decolonization.

The Long Shadow of the Founder. Hero-Worship and the Construction of Continuity for a ‘National Museum’

Dr. Joachim Berger and Darja Jesse, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, DE

The Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg (GNM) was founded in 1852, following the failed attempt at German unification in 1849. The initiative came from Hans von Aufseß, a Franconian baron who sought to establish a central register of all sources on the pre- and medieval history of the German lands. This utopian endeavour was abandoned by von Aufseß’s successors, and the museum then turned to collecting objects from virtually every branch of human activity that was considered important for a collective ‘German’ identity. Despite this early shift of the museum’s concept, later self-descriptions of the GNM repeatedly claimed continuity with its founding phase. The image of Hans von Aufseß as a mythical founding figure was crucial for this ‘invention of tradition’. The paper will investigate the mechanisms of hero-worship and institutional identity-construction from a long-term perspective. It will analyse the speeches, publications and media coverage from the museum’s anniversary celebrations in 1877, 1902, 1927, 1952, 1977, and 2002 in their historical contexts. All these celebrations took place after periods of crucial socio-political transformation and institutional turmoil. We argue that, by appropriating von Aufseß’s legacy, the museum’s officials were attempting to stabilise and legitimise the institution’s mission, which was constantly being redefined.

Joachim Berger is currently conducting a research project at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (GNM) in Nuremberg (*Museum, Politics and Society: The GNM from 1852 to 2027*). For this project, he is on leave from his position as research coordinator at the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) in Mainz. Berger has worked on the internationalism of civil society movements (using the example of Freemasonry), on hero worship from the early modern period, on princely courts in Germany, and on the history of European historiography. List of publications via ORCID id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4809-9033>.

Darja Jesse is an art historian and research associate at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (GNM) in Nuremberg in the research project *Museum, Politics and Society. The GNM from 1852 to 2027*. She worked at the Deutsches Historisches Museum and in the DFG Research Training Group *Identity and Heritage* at the Technical University of Berlin. In her research Darja Jesse focusses on art policy and art production under National Socialism as well as dealing with the Nazi past after 1945 in the fields of art production, art history and museums.

Legitimizing Modernism: Art History and the Formation of Museum Authority in the United States

Dr. Laura Braden, Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

This paper examines how the rise of the art historical discipline in the early twentieth-century United States served as a legitimating ideology for the modern art movement, reshaping museum practices and professional authority. Drawing on archival and secondary sources, I analyze how actors and institutions aligned around art history to justify new standards of cultural value, fundamentally transforming museums into sites of intellectual authority. I trace three interconnected processes: the professional accreditation of art historians; the application of art history through exhibition formats that privileged chronology and authorship; and the emergence of ideological networks linking collectors, curators, and academics. Focusing especially on the Museum of Modern Art, I show how art history structured exhibition design, collection policy, and institutional identity in ways that are now taken-for-granted. This analysis historicizes the ideological foundations of museums' interpretive authority and aesthetic hierarchies, offering a critical lens on how museum practices today still reflect early twentieth-century investments in intellectualized, exclusionary conceptions of value. By centering ideology in the study of museum histories, the paper contributes to broader debates about institutional legacies, aesthetic canons, and the social reproduction of cultural authority.

Laura E. A. Braden is an Assistant Professor of Arts and Culture Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her research examines the sociology of art, focusing on how institutional ideologies, particularly art history, shape artistic legitimacy and cultural authority. She specializes in network analysis, exhibition histories, and the development of modern art institutions in the United States. Her work has been published in such journals as *Social Networks*, *Social Forces*, *Poetics*, and *American Behavioral Scientist*. Braden holds a PhD in Sociology from Emory University and previously worked in cultural planning for the cities of Atlanta and San Antonio.

Collecting to Forget: The Legacy of the Museum of Atheism in Vilnius

Karolina Bukovskytė, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute/National Museum of Lithuania, Vilnius, LT

In 1966, the Museum of Atheism was opened in the Church of St Casimir in Vilnius. This establishment echoed similar institutions in other cultural centres of the Soviet Union. With the fall of the Soviet regime the church was returned back to the faithful and the collections of the closed museum transferred to Lithuanian National Museum. The paper inquires into the legacies of the Soviet atheist doctrine and colonization practices on the collections of sacred art and discusses frameworks within which these legacies are manifested and coped with. Recontextualizing of the previously unexplored collection of icons accumulated over several decades through state-led illegitimate practices and the analysis of archival materials (inventories, display projects, visitor records, media references, etc.), the paper identifies strategies employed to assert ideological dominance and patterns of shaping the collective memory through collections and displays. It also contributes towards critical review of the heritage of occupations placing it within broader discourse of Museum Studies. Tracing the institution's development, social role, and legacy and demonstrating the complexities of this heritage, the paper argues that the Museum of Atheism functioned as institution of oblivion and proposes frameworks of ethical engagement with the contested collection.

Karolina Bukovskytė is a PhD candidate in Art History at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute and a curator of the painting and icon collection at the National Museum of Lithuania. In 2022, her article 'The Silver Frame of the Acheiropoieton of Vilnius: A Décor or a Commentary?' was published in the peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal *Art History Studies*. In 2025, she completed a traineeship at the National Museum in Krakow in Poland. Her current research focuses on religious artworks in museums, issues surrounding contentious heritage, iconography of icons, and the interplay between Eastern and Western traditions in sacred art.

Between Immersion and Reflection. Old Antwerp and Museum Mayer van den Bergh Performing the Past

Prof. Dr. Stijn Bussels, Leiden University, NL, and Prof. Dr. Bram van Oostveldt, Ghent University, BE

This paper explores Old Antwerp (1894), the reconstructed Renaissance quarter at the Antwerp World Exhibition, as a revealing case of how historical scholarship and immersive strategies intertwined at the fin de siècle. Organized by Max Roosees and Frans Van Kuyck, Old

Antwerp offered visitors both an intense nostalgic experience and a critical confrontation with modern historiography. We analyze how this project anticipated key aspects of museum culture: the tension between historical reconstruction and modern spectatorship, the role of architecture and performance in shaping memory, and the visitor's divided position between immersion and critical distance. To do so, we show how Old Antwerp fed into the creation of Museum Mayer van den Bergh (1904), where the collection's display strategies turned the museum into a deeply personal "space of interiority," blending mourning over the death of the young, but ambitious collector with public exhibition. By examining these entangled legacies, the paper engages with the conference's broader questions about how museums inherit, reframe, and perform the past through architecture, collections, and commemorative practices.

Stijn Bussels is Professor of Art History and Academic Director of the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. His research focuses on the intersection of art, theatre, and experience in the early modern Low Countries. He is the author of *Spectacle, Rhetoric and Power: The Triumphal Entry of Prince Philip into Antwerp* (Brill), *The Animated Image: Roman Theory on Naturalism, Vividness and Divine Power* (De Gruyter). Together with Bram van Oostveldt, he wrote *The Sublime in the Dutch Republic* (Routledge) where he explored the field of museum studies, with particular attention to the role of touch in *Wunderkammern*.

Bram Van Oostveldt is Professor at the Department of Art, Music and Theatre Studies at Ghent University. He authored two monographs on eighteenth-century theatre in Brussels and has published extensively on early modern theatre history. Recent projects include a monograph with Stijn Bussels *The Sublime in the Visual Culture of the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Routledge 2022) and a project with Caroline van Eck on camouflage. In addition, he has published on topics in museum studies, with a particular focus on exhibition practices and the experience of art.

Legacies Now: The Renewal of Institutional Inheritances at Five Museums in Rome

Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

Museums in Rome are among the world's most famous. They begin with 15-century papal gifts to the Capitoline and progress to Baroque-era collections, Vatican museums, museums of world civilizations and modernism, and an "archistar" contemporary art institution, presenting

a full range of European museum history. Because of their fame and the fact that in Italy, public collections are inalienable, these museums proudly declare permanent value - a timeless inheritance of social and cultural authority. The 21st century, however, inspires investigations of these legacies, with concerns about new ways to make old art accessible, decolonization and social cultural responsibilities. Advancing Walter Benjamin's claim that collecting is practical memory, and by extension museums are the best repository of unmediated, practical memory (Gaskell 1995), this paper encapsulates five presentations made recently (2023-2025) at the KNIR (Royal Dutch Institute in Rome), with Roman museum directors engaged in institutional self-reflection. Faced with architectural inheritances at Zaha Hadid's MAXXI, colonial collections in the Fascist-era building of Museo della Civiltà, artists' uses of collections at Galleria Borghese, community patronage of Museo Ebraico di Roma, and the legacy of artist Giorgio de Chirico from his home, these directors' dialogues present multilayered authorial choices made about their museum's legacies.

Laurie Kalb Cosmo is University Lecturer in Art History and Museum Studies at Leiden University and Director of the Leiden University Museum Lab. Her current research and publications focus on museum histories and art, architecture, and philanthropy of the early 20th century, in Italy and the Netherlands. She has been a professor at American universities in Rome and curator at museums in the United States, and recipient of fellowships with the Fulbright Foundation, United Nations Development Programme, Smithsonian Institution, School of Advanced Research, Civitella Ranieri Foundation and KNIR (Royal Dutch Institute Rome), as NWIB Visiting Professor and current Museum Fellow.

Rethinking Narratives: The “Animals of Africa” in Bern

Sarah Csernay, Nordamerica Native Museum, Zurich, CH

Building on ideas advanced by Leiden museum director Fredericus Anna Jentink and other contemporaneous proposals around 1900, the Natural History Museum in Bern adopted in the early 1920s the principle of dividing scientific collections from public display collections. The display collection was intended to respond to the public's interest in the environment of animals through dioramas that presented them in reconstructed natural settings. This exhibition form, combining educational intent with immersive visual representation, created a demand for new animals. To meet this need, big-game hunter Bernard

de Watteville, together with his daughter Vivienne, undertook a hunt to the then colonized countries of Congo, Kenya, and Uganda, procuring over 130 animals for Bern. The museum continued to obtain and display animals through hunting activities in colonial territories in Africa until 1960, new dioramas were constructed until the 1980s. While the de Wattevilles were long celebrated within the museum's narrative, the roles of other actors and the connected colonial context have largely been overlooked. Through selected diorama case studies, this paper examines the intersections of scientific practice, colonial ideology, and exhibition design, and considers how the Bern Museum today addresses these entangled histories.

Sarah Csernay studied art history with a focus on museology at the Universities of Zurich and Bern. After completing her studies, she worked in various museums in the areas of exhibitions and collections. She is currently responsible for provenance research at the North American Native Museum in Zurich. Additionally, as part of her PhD at the University of Bern, she is researching the history of the making and reception of the diorama exhibition *Animals of Africa* at the Natural History Museum in Bern and its colonial entanglements.

Reshaping the Oldest Italian National Museum

Dr. Paola D'Agostino, Musei Reali Torino (Royal Museums Turin), IT

The Museo nazionale del Bargello in Florence opened to the public in 1865. The oldest national museum in Italy was purposely housed in the severe thirteen-century Palazzo del Podestà, because of its connection with Dante Alighieri's life and the poet's first known portrait by Giotto and his workshop. Mostly visited for its stellar collection of Italian Renaissance sculpture, the Museo del Bargello has a unique history as monumental building, which became a symbol of the nineteenth-century Italian national identity. Nowadays, the museum hosts remarkable encyclopedic collections, with varied provenance. After briefly illustrating the importance that the Bargello played worldwide in fashioning the late nineteenth- and early twentieth- centuries museums' display standards for Italian Renaissance sculpture and medieval decorative arts, this paper discusses the groundbreaking changes that took place between 2016 and 2024: the new displays of decorative arts, as well as of Italian sculpture, especially the Medieval and the Baroque collections. It also analyses the conservation works on the building carried out in 2020-2021, to combine medieval architecture and twenty-

first century museums standards. The historic Palazzo is a meaningful frame for an array of artworks and has been newly identified as a fundamental part of contemporary visitors' experience.

Paola D'Agostino is the director of Musei Reali Torino. As visiting professor at Villa I Tatti – Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies – she worked on the role of Early Modern Museums in global society. As director of Bargello Museums, curator at the Yale University Art Gallery, Cynthia Hazen Polsky/MET visiting curator at the AAR, and senior research associate at The Met, she oversaw new collections displays and several exhibitions. Whilst she was director of the Bargello, she received the FIAC Excellency Award as outstanding Italian Director, and the museum got the Apollo Award for Best Exhibition of the Year 2022.

'My Heritage - Your Heritage?!' Places of Jewish Heritage in Germany

Prof. Dr. Christiane Dätsch, Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, DE

Jewish cultural heritage is closely linked to Europe – one of the large so-called diaspora areas of Ashkenazi Jewry. The places where Jewish cultural heritage is preserved are as diverse as the heritage itself: They include former synagogues and community centers, Jewish neighborhoods and town houses, but also new buildings. They offer narratives of Jewishness in Germany, based on the idea of a shared, diversely interwoven Christian-Jewish cultural heritage. Various locations are intended illustrate this new collective memory: Large and modern institutions such as the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt or the Jewish Museum in Berlin, but also smaller institutions such as the Berend Lehmann Museum in Halberstadt or the Jewish Museum Göppingen, which is located in a former Protestant church. These places tell of transformations, caesuras and transitions of Jewish life, whereby they have an inherent moment of tension: Will it still be possible to convey and exhibit Jewish his-tory and culture in a lively way after the Shoah? Who is the public that visits these places of remembrance and how is the heritage inscribed in the city and region? The approach to the topic is ethnographic: it is based on documentary analysis and on explorations on site.

Christiane Dätsch holds an MA in German studies, Journalism and Romance studies (Bamberg, 1995) and a PhD in modern German literature (Hamburg, 2003). She has worked as a journalist, press officer at the German Literature

Archive Marbach, head of communication at the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, and academic (senior) councillor at the Institute for Cultural Management, Ludwigs-burg University of Education. Since March 2024, she is Professor for Cultural Management at Merseburg University of Applied Sciences. A recent publication (with Y. D. Markovich) is *Shared Heritage revisited. National and post-national Dimensions on the Example of Germans, Palestinians and Israelis* (2024).

Preserving Heritage through Museums: The Case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Chang Farhan Tahir, University of Duhok, IQ-KR

In the post-conflict region of Iraqi Kurdistan, this research investigates its museums, which have rarely been the subject of academic study. Years of conflict and neglect in this field have left the region's rich cultural heritage vulnerable, making the role of museums crucial. But how exactly are these museums changing and contributing to preservation? This research focuses on three museums in different cities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Slemani Museum, an archaeological museum and the oldest in the region, as well as the second largest in Iraq; the Kurdish Textile and Ethnographic Museum, focusing on the preservation of weaving traditions and local textiles, located in the heart of Erbil Citadel, considered the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world; and Duhok Gallery, which functions as a museum due to the absence of a dedicated art museum in the city of Duhok. The historical background of the region is deeply intertwined with the dynamics of its cultural heritage, and through these examples, the study explores how museums have been developing with the political status of the region. This research sheds light on how these institutions navigate their inherited legacies while actively shaping cultural preservation in a transforming society.

Chang Farhan Tahir is a researcher from Iraqi Kurdistan. She holds an MA in Management of Arts and Culture from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where her thesis was recognized as pioneering work on Museum and Heritage Studies in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Chang collaborated with the *Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project* on community engagement activities and delivered a TEDx talk on preserving local heritage. She also participated in the *Lost & Found* exhibition, presenting a project on how museums can aid in preserving archaeological sites. She is currently a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Duhok.

POLIN Museum i Warsaw: A Place Where Memory Meets Responsibility

Joanna Fikus, POLIN, Warsaw, PL

Twelve years after its opening, POLIN Museum remains a vital cultural legacy, where memory becomes both responsibility and action. Located on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, across from the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, POLIN engages with the layered legacies of Jewish life in Poland. Its Core Exhibition presents 1,000 years of Jewish history through multiple perspectives, revealing forgotten narratives and reclaiming a heritage often marginalized. Memory, at POLIN, is not passive—it is a legacy that demands engagement. Through exhibitions, education, and public programs, the museum fosters dialogue, empathy, and civic awareness. In the face of rising antisemitism and radicalization, POLIN stands against hate and exclusion. It promotes openness, inclusion, and critical thinking—especially among younger generations. The museum also supports local efforts to protect and promote Jewish heritage across Poland. Guided by Holocaust Survivor Marian Turski’s words “don’t be indifferent”, POLIN positions memory as its core legacy: a living, moral force shaping the future. As part of the panel on Revealing Histories and Reclaiming Heritage, this presentation will explore how POLIN transforms remembrance into a powerful, democratic legacy for today’s society.

Joanna Fikus is Head of the Exhibitions Department at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, where she has worked since 2005. She coordinated the development of the Core Exhibition and currently oversees both permanent and temporary exhibitions. Joanna Fikus also serves as Deputy Chair of the Jewish Historical Institute Association and is a board member of the Association of European Jewish Museums. She specializes in museum education, Jewish history, and public engagement. With a background in cultural anthropology, she is committed to using exhibitions to foster dialogue, challenge prejudice, and make history meaningful to contemporary audiences.

How to Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Museum Rietberg? Reflections on Researching and Curating the Institution’s History

Esther Tisa Francini, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, CH

Following the Second World War, the city of Zurich received a collection

of non-Western artworks as a gift and established the Museum Rietberg in 1952. The collection had been amassed by the Swiss-German banker Eduard von der Heydt during the interwar period, and was relocated to Switzerland mainly due to National Socialist cultural policies. The city acquired a historic villa, a former residence of the Wesendonck and Rieter families, who were active during the colonial period, to use as an exhibition venue. The legacies of both colonialism and National Socialism have always challenged the institution's ability for contradiction as they are inscribed in the collection as well as in the location. 2027 will mark the 75th anniversary of the Museum Rietberg. This provides a valuable opportunity to explore the institution's history asking questions such as: Which key moments in the history of the Museum Rietberg caused paradigmatic shifts? How has the presentation, narration and mediation of the artworks changed? In what ways are global and local history reflected in the museum's own history? This presentation reflects on the project leading up to an exhibition and a publication on the museum's history.

Historian **Esther Tisa Francini** is Head of the Archives and Provenance Research at Museum Rietberg, Zurich. She publishes widely on looted art, provenance research and museum and collection history and speaks regularly at international conferences. She is the curator of *From Buddha to Picasso. The collector Eduard von der Heydt* (2013) and *Pathways of Art. How the objects come into the museum* (2022–2024) and co-curator of *Dada Africa. Dialogue with the Other* (2016) and *In Dialogue with Benin. Art, Colonialism and Restitution* (2024–2025).

The Glyptothek as a Site of Memory, Monumentality, and Transformation: Historical Identity and Contemporary Reflection of a Museum Institution in Croatia

Dr. Magdalena Getaldić, Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HR

Housed in a repurposed 19th-century industrial building in Zagreb, the Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts presents a unique case for rethinking the museum in the 21st century. Founded in 1937 to collect, preserve, and present Croatian sculpture, the institution reflects the cultural ambitions of a young nation and the broader historical dynamics of museum-making in the interwar period. Its architectural setting—transformed from a site of labor into a space of heritage—offers insight into how physical structures

shape, and are shaped by, a museum's evolving legacy. Today, the Glyptothek finds itself at a critical juncture. Confronting questions of institutional memory, national identity, and public engagement, it is engaged in processes of renovation, reinterpretation, and reevaluation of its collections and foundational narratives. These efforts resonate with global conversations around the role of museums in addressing their histories, social responsibilities. This paper explores how the Glyptothek navigates its inherited identity while responding to contemporary challenges. Through an analysis of its architectural symbolism, curatorial strategies, and institutional discourse, the paper considers how this museum contributes to broader discussions about the future of cultural institutions in a rapidly changing world.

Magdalena Getaldić is an art historian, museum curator and scientific researcher based in Zagreb, Croatia. She works at the Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, focusing on sculpture collections, plaster cast history, and modern museum practices. Her research interests include the legacy of classical antiquity in European art, the role of reproductions in art education, and the shifting narratives within museum display. She has organized and contributed to numerous exhibitions and publications, with a strong emphasis on connecting historical collections to contemporary cultural discourse.

A Forgotten History: The Former Colonial Collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History, Belgium

Anke Hellebuyck, University of Antwerp, BE

In a central hall of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, a larger-than-life statue of King Leopold II (1835-1909), staunch supporter of the museum, looms high over visitors. Today, the statue of this controversial king, notorious for his involvement in the brutal colonial exploitation of Congo, is the only visible trace of the little understood colonial history of the museum. The museum once contained a substantial collection of Congolese objects, which was transferred to the Africamuseum in Tervuren by the 1970s. Up until now, information on this former colonial collection has been severely lacking, which has prevented the museum from undertaking deeper introspection into its colonial past. With this paper I introduce my research project that uses the rich museum archive to systematically investigate the former Congolese collection in its entirety. I aim to

unravel the forgotten history of the collection, in terms of its size, provenance, the collectors involved and their methods of collecting. In the paper I demonstrate that this deep dive into the Congo collection is essential for a broader reconstruction of the museum's history and to provide a firm basis for the current activities of the museum, especially concerning steps towards decolonisation.

Anke Hellebuyck is a PhD student of Heritage Studies at the University of Antwerp and part of the ARCHES research group. She is currently working on the FWO-funded project *A display of power and propaganda? Uncovering colonial and imperial ties and ideologies in the collections and archives of the Belgian Royal Museums of Art and History (1885-1950)* with Prof. Dr. Gerrit Verhoeven as supervisor. Her research interests include museum history, collection provenance, colonial and imperial history and decolonisation of archives and museums.

Whose Ethnography? Ethnographic Collections and Museums in Central Europe

Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

Ethnographic museums have increasingly become the focus of academic and public debate, which questions the history, provenance, and presentation of their collections (see e.g. Rowlands et al. (eds), *Reframing the Ethnographic Museum*, 2025). In response to post-colonial critique, several institutions—amongst which the Wereldmuseum (NL), the Ethnologisches Museum in the Humboldt Forum (DE) and the Anima Mundi in Rome (IT)—have undergone significant transformations. Changes include engagement with communities to reinforce inclusion and diversity; rethinking museum narratives; and a more open attitude towards requests for restitution. However, ethnographic museums in the former socialist parts of Europe are rooted in a rather different legacy. Their collections, and thus their curatorial narratives and concerns, differ greatly from those elsewhere in Europe, focusing foremost on national identity, communities and cultures. The newly opened (2023) Ethnographic Museum in Budapest mainly presents Hungarian objects and cultural traditions, either on their own or in an international context, much like its Polish counterpart in Warsaw. Ethnographic open-air museums in Central Europe reinforce this emphasis on a national ethnography. This paper investigates the museum legacies of ethnographic collections in Poland,

Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, discussing the impact of their (socialist) past on their international future.

Marika Keblusek is Associate Professor at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. Her teaching centres on the history and theory of museums, collections and heritage. She is Principal Investigator of the NWO-funded project *Images on the Move. Friendship Albums as Pictorial Networks in Early Modern Europe*.

Donating Lace and Knowledge: Women and Early 20th-Century Historic Lace Acquisitions in the Belgian Royal Museums for Art and History

Julie Landuyt, Ghent University/Free University of Brussels, BE

While feminist museology has recently highlighted women's roles in museums, it often concentrates on those in formal or prominent positions. This paper shifts attention to the museal archive as a space of opportunity to trace overlooked female presences. Focusing on lace acquisitions at the Belgian Royal Museums for Art and History from 1905 onwards, I examine the processes of acquisition and the key role of women as both donors and knowledge makers based on prolific cases. Lace, whilst often associated with women and femininity, has seldom been researched as such within a museum context. Drawing on a gendered reading of the museum's archives, I trace how the museum's collection was shaped by dozens of female donors, their personal collections, social networks, and connections to the museum. Examining the impact of their amateur expertise on the formation of institutional knowledge about lace, this case offers a new reading of a century-old collection, and reveals how collecting practices were embedded in the museum's social and institutional context. In doing so, it proposes an alternative, gendered way of writing museum history—one that begins in the margins—while connecting the museum's past to broader histories of collection practices, social status, and material culture.

Julie Landuyt obtained her degrees in Art History from Ghent University (BA & MA) and the École du Louvre (BA), specializing in institutional art history of the long nineteenth century. Since 2023, she studies Digital Humanities at the KU Leuven. In 2024, she started a PhD at Ghent University and the Free University

of Brussels, funded by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). In her PhD, she studies women's roles in the Brussels Royal Museums between 1870 and 1945.

Leache & Wood: Rediscovering the Chrysler Museum's Lost Founders

Dr. Mia Laufer and Drew Lusher, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, USA

The Chrysler Museum of Art regularly highlights a 1971 collection gift from Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., as the genesis of the current museum. However, the institution was founded in 1933 as the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences and can trace its roots to two pioneering women: Irene Leache and Annie Wood. In 1871, the pair founded a girls' school and hosted cultural programs where diverse individuals gathered to explore the humanities. After Irene's death in 1901, Annie established the Irene Leache Memorial, which became a cultural hub and developed an art collection for a future art museum. Their vision for using cultural education to enhance civic life fostered a city-wide commitment to the arts and inspired the formation of many of Norfolk's cultural institutions. To appropriately promote their overlooked legacy, the museum is using cross-departmental collaboration to balance Chrysler's story with that of Leache and Wood. The curatorial and programming staff are partnering to organize an exhibition, commission a short documentary, host public conversations, and modify broader programming to reflect the values and experiences they embodied. This paper explores the museum's timely and complex efforts to excavate this lost history and highlight why it matters for our contemporary community.

Mia Laufer is the Irene Leache Curator of European Art at the Chrysler Museum of Art. Laufer holds a doctorate and a master's degree in Art History and Archaeology from Washington University in St. Louis and a bachelor's degree in Art History from New York University.

Drew Lusher is the Public Programs Coordinator at the Chrysler Museum of Art. Lusher holds a master's degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Virginia, a master's degree in Conducting from the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, Germany, and a bachelor's degree in Music Education from Westminster Choir College.

The Imperial Gaze Materialised: The *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* Museum as Archive

Yuansheng Luo, KU Leuven, BE

This paper examines the *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* exhibition (1838–1842) as a paradigmatic case of the “exhibition as archive,” revealing how architectural scenography, curatorial practice, and print culture converged into a colonial technology of knowledge. Established in Philadelphia and later relocated to London, Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum functioned as a hybrid institution – simultaneously museum, spectacle, and ideological apparatus – through which Chinese architecture and material culture were reframed within Western epistemic systems. The pseudo-Chinese pavilion in Knightsbridge not only materialised a romanticised chinoiserie aesthetic but also spatialised racial and civilisational hierarchies in built form. Drawing on theories of museal coloniality and the “exhibitionary complex,” the paper argues that the spatial and classificatory logic of TTCT enacted an architectural mode of stereotyping that rendered China legible as static, ornamental, and governable. Through archival analysis of catalogues, illustrated media, and architectural depictions, the study shows how TTCT’s visual and spatial legacies shaped enduring clichés of Chinese civilisation and fuelled Europe’s “collection fantasy.” By tracing its transatlantic trajectory, the paper further situates TTCT within ongoing debates on heritage framing and the decolonisation of museum architecture.

Yuansheng Luo is a PhD researcher in architectural history at KU Leuven. His work examines how nineteenth-century Western print media and exhibitions represented and reinterpreted Chinese architecture, shaping Euro-American visual stereotypes of China. He is a member of ICOMOS, the Association for Art History (UK), AHRA, British Photographic History, and the British Art Network. His research has appeared in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *Photography and Culture*, *Amsterdam Museum Journal*, and leading Chinese journals. Luo has presented at major conferences including *Illustration Research* (London), *Romanticism’s Colonial Legacies* (Frankfurt), and *The Exhibition as Research* (Oslo) and so on.

The Palatine Gallery: How Residents of the Pitti Palace Shaped Today’s Museum

Ilya Markov, Leiden University, NL

The Palatine Gallery museum holds one of the most extraordinary collections of European paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries, retaining its original arrangement conceived and executed between the end of the 18th century and 1834, when the museum was opened to the public. The home of the gallery, the Pitti Palace, was successively occupied by the Medici family, the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty and the House of Savoy. Each dynasty made changes to the palace and its art collections, reflecting practical needs and evolving artistic tastes. This presentation traces how the residents of the Pitti Palace shaped the Palatine Gallery into the museum we know today by focusing on its gallery spaces, art collections, and on how these collections were presented in the gallery. It shows how the core of the Palatine Gallery collections was formed under the Medicis, while the current gallery spaces and the distinctive salon hang were introduced by the Habsburg-Lorraines. The presentation also elaborates on the mission of the House of Savoy to preserve the Lorraine arrangement of the Palatine Gallery, thus presenting museum visitors not only with outstanding art, but also with a comprehensive history of the museum itself, both of which we can witness today.

Ilya Markov is a researcher and educator specializing in art history and museum studies. Having an established career in Artificial Intelligence with a PhD degree and an extensive publication record, Ilya is currently pursuing a master's degree in Museum Studies at Leiden University, focusing on the interaction between museums, their exhibits, and museum visitors. He is the founder of *Museums as Therapy*, an initiative which seeks to develop a cross-disciplinary approach to rethinking museum engagement, interpretation, and education through both scholarly and public platforms.

Crafts' Networks and the National Museum of Capodimonte in Naples

Francesco Montuori, European University Institute, Florence, IT

The National Museum of Capodimonte was established in 1866, following the unification of Italy. It is housed in the former Royal Palace, originally built by Charles of Bourbon to display the Farnese collection of paintings he had inherited from his mother, Elisabetta Farnese. Today, the museum holds one of the most important collections of both figurative and applied arts. Over time, the museum acquired other

collections and expanded its scope, which now spans from Medieval to Contemporary art. However, the significance of the museum—and of the building that houses it—must be understood within the broader network of cultural infrastructures developed by Charles of Bourbon and his son, Ferdinand, such as the porcelain workshop of Capodimonte, or the archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Today, the museum is not only connected to the decorative arts it exhibits but also to the workshops established in the surroundings during the eighteenth century, forming a coherent historical and artistic ensemble which stretches across the city. In my paper, I examine how this network is represented in the current museum setting and how it reflects the history of the palace itself and of the collections and objects housed therein.

Francesco Montuori is a PhD student at the European University Institute in Florence. He has a background in Asian studies and Cultural studies, holding a BA (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2017) and two MAs (Leiden University, 2019, and 2022) in these disciplines. In the past, he has mostly been working on textiles and on the history of collections of Asian objects in early modern Europe. He is currently working on his PhD thesis dedicated to the *Gabinetto di Porcellana* in Naples and is a co-convenor of the *Visual and Material History Working Group* at EUI.

Inherited Workspaces: Rethinking Creative Practice at the Constantin Meunier Museum

Dr. Ulrike Müller, University of Antwerp/Constantin Meunier Museum, Brussels, BE

The Constantin Meunier Museum in Ixelles, Brussels offers a rich case of a historic artist's house and studio now operating as a satellite of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. Established in 1939 in the former residence and atelier of sculptor-painter Constantin Meunier (1831–1905), it embodies tensions between artistic legacy, commemoration, and institutionalization. This paper explores the evolving role of Meunier's studio—once a site of creative labor—through the lenses of canonization, materiality, and curatorial practice. It traces the transformation of the studio into both a *lieu de mémoire* and gallery, often at the expense of preserving its material and experiential dimensions. Like many small house museums, the Meunier Museum

struggles with limited visibility, space, and funding, but also holds unique potential. A new vision is emerging that foregrounds creative practice, seeking to reactivate the studio's original function and architecture while showcasing Meunier's process through its diverse collections. By reflecting on the museum's past and its layered legacies, this paper proposes strategies to reconnect the site, its collections, and their narratives of artistic practice in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences and institutional futures.

Ulrike Müller is assistant professor in heritage studies at the University of Antwerp and postdoctoral researcher at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB)/Constantin Meunier Museum, Brussels, specializing in the history and theory of collections and museums. Currently, she leads the research project *Abbey Rd. Revisited: A Critical Study and Remedy for the Meunier Museum as a Satellite of the RMFAB*, which examines the national and international reception of Belgian sculptor-painter Constantin Meunier (1831–1905) and the musealisation of his house and studio. Her broader research explores the emergence, challenges, and future potential of heritage concepts and museums.

National Gallery in Prague throughout the 20th Century: The Case of the Morawetz Collection

Lucie Němečková, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of WWII Victims, Prague, CZ

The focus point of the proposed paper will be the collection of Jewish collector and patron Richard Morawetz. His notable art collection, comprising Old Masters, works on paper, musical manuscripts, and incunabula, came under the custody of the State Collection of Old Masters (later the National Gallery in Prague, NGP) in 1939, when Morawetz deposited his artworks there to protect them from Nazi looting. Despite the restitution efforts after 1945, the Morawetz collection remained in the care of the largest and most important art museum in the country for nearly six decades. Several Morawetz artworks are once again part of the National Gallery in Prague's collection today. The complex history of the Morawetz collection and its close connection with the history of NGP will allow us to briefly discuss how the repressive regimes of the past century shaped the museum collections of the NGP and its approach towards the deposited collections during the Nazi occupation and under the subsequent

Communist regime. In the final part of the paper, we will discuss how the 1989 return to democracy in the country slowly echoed in the actions of the NGP and its attitude towards the restitution claims.

Lucie Němečková graduated with distinction from Palacký University in Olomouc with a Master's degree in Theory and History of Fine Arts. As part of her studies, she spent a year at Utrecht University's Faculty of Humanities. Lucie has worked as an art historian in the Lobkowitz Collections, as well as for the National Gallery in Prague, curating exhibition projects and permanent exhibitions of artworks from the gallery's Old Masters Collection. Since 2021, she has worked at the Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of WWII Victims. She is the author of scholarly texts and several catalogues.

Two Centuries of Legacy, One Decade of Inclusion. Political Backlash and Strategic Reframing of Outreach at the Museo Egizio

Dr. Costanza Paolillo, New York University, USA

Founded in 1824 to elevate the House of Savoy's prestige, Turin's Museo Egizio embodies the paradox of a museum rooted in non-local antiquity yet central to local identity. Since its 2014 reopening under director Christian Greco, it has sought to align with Turin's demographic transformation—where nearly 20% of residents hold foreign passports—through initiatives promoting inclusivity and civic engagement. Early programs like the 2016 “Lucky Those Who Speak Arabic” campaign and World Refugee Day events invited intercultural dialogue but also sparked nationalist backlash, turning the museum into a site of political contention. In response, it has pivoted toward less polarizing projects such as Museo Egizio Accessibile—funded through the post-COVID Recovery Fund—and the multimillion-euro Piazza Egizia renovation for its bicentenary, both emphasizing accessibility and symbolic openness. This paper argues that these recent transformations, though ambitious and well resourced, reveal institutional limits. By favoring broadly palatable forms of inclusion that avoid direct confrontation with dominant narratives of cultural belonging, the museum prioritizes strategic adaptation over structural change—illustrating the challenges of practicing inclusivity within an increasingly polarized political landscape.

Costanza Paolillo holds a PhD in Art History from the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa (2019) and is currently completing a second PhD in Italian Studies at New York University. Her dissertation investigates the political weaponization of cultural heritage in contemporary Italy, in the context of global phenomena such as mass migration and mass tourism. From 2023 to 2025, she has been a fellow at the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome, where she co-founded the research group *Spatial Communities*, now part of the Max Planck Society Heritage Network.

(Re)Making the San Francisco Museum of Art Modern

Dr. Berit Potter, California State Polytechnic University Humboldt, Arcata, USA

In 1935 the San Francisco Museum of Art opened its doors in a city-subsidized space on the top floor of the Veterans Building behind San Francisco’s City Hall. While its founding director, Grace McCann Morley, described the museum as a center dedicated to modern and contemporary art, the word “modern” would not be added to its name until 1976. At its opening, the museum’s humble collection included around one hundred prints and a library of periodicals, and it possessed no funds for acquisitions. After moving from its first location to a new building designed by architect Mario Botta in 1995 and a 305 million dollar renovation completed by Snøhetta in 2016, it is now one of largest museums dedicated to modern and contemporary art in the United States. This paper will investigate the foundational figures who helped make the San Francisco Museum of Art modern, including the donors who played exceptionally powerful roles in shaping the museum’s collection due to its lack of acquisition funds. As the museum expanded, how did its early investment in local art shift toward more canonical artists, and why is its founding focus on West Coast, Latin American and women artists being centered again today?

Berit Potter is Associate Professor of Art History and Museum Studies at Cal Poly Humboldt, where she oversees the university’s professional certificate in Museum and Gallery Practices. She received her doctorate in art history from New York University as well as a master’s degree in museum studies. Her research engages with issues of display including the reception of Latin American and US modern art on the West Coast. Examples of her scholarship can be found in *The Americas Revealed: Collecting Colonial and Modern Latin American Art in the United States*, *SFMOMA’s Projects + Perspectives*, *Panorama*, and other publications.

Obelisks and Totems: On Reframing Ethnographic Museums and Why Artistic Practice Matters

Irene Quarantini, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

Ethnographic museums across Europe are undergoing a profound process of self-redefinition, as they confront the legacies of their colonial pasts. This transition is frequently marked by symbolic acts, such as renaming themselves as “museums of society”, which suggests a renegotiation of their historical and knowledge-related paradigms. The paper aims to explore how the tension between a re-signification of the past and debate about their future is manifested not only within the museum’s internal practices and displays, but also in outside elements pertaining to symbolic landscape. These exterior markers can be read as historical extensions, that shape the museum public perception or may influence how the institution projects itself into the world. In doing so, the paper compares two case studies: the obelisk dedicated to Guglielmo Marconi, commissioned in 1939, standing at the entrance of Museo delle Civiltà in Rome (formerly Pigorini Museum); and the totem pole carved by Kwakwaka’wakw indigenous community in 2012, placed outside the Wereldmuseum in Leiden (formerly Museum Volkenkunde). Though distinct, these two vertical “monuments”, similarly located at museum entrances, invite a comparative reflection on pressing issues such as institutional identity and discourse, public memory, and the role of contemporary artistic practice in reimagining ethnographic museums’ futures.

Irene Quarantini is a PhD candidate in Museum Studies and History of Art at Sapienza University of Rome. Her doctoral project investigates the reconfiguration and epistemic transformation of ethnographic museums. It focuses in particular on the role of contemporary artistic practices in mediating exhibition processes and difficult heritages, engaging diverse audiences, and addressing the institutional challenges these practices entail. In 2024, she was Visiting Researcher at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the University of Oxford and has also worked across various public and private art institutions in Italy.

The Museum as a Battleground: Political Art at the Israel Museum, 1967-1977

Meital Raz, University of Amsterdam, NL

A prevalent understanding of avantgarde and political art in the 1960s and 1970s frames it primarily as anti-institutional and counter-hegemonic. My research seeks to challenge this assumption and demonstrate how museums, both in western contexts and in newly established contemporary art museums worldwide, were deeply intertwined with political artistic movements. The Israel Museum provides a compelling case study of an institution that actively cultivated distinctive avantgarde and political art practices. Established in Jerusalem in 1965, the museum's contemporary art department pioneered many developments in experimental and political art. This reached its peak in the 1970s, a decade marked by sustained warfare and the intensifying Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This paper argues for the pivotal role the Israel Museum played in shaping and promoting political art in Israel. Willem Sandberg, a founding member of the museum, proved crucial in fostering these practices, having joined its establishment after his retirement from Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum. While Sandberg took on numerous organizational tasks, his most significant contribution was his mentorship in the contemporary art department. Through his transformative influence, political art at the Israel museum held a dual identity, existing between east and west, and simultaneously embracing an anti-establishment approach and nationalist ethos.

Meital Raz is an art critic and PhD researcher at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam. Her research sits at the intersection of exhibition and museum studies and politics of space, with a focus on environmentally and socially engaged exhibitions from the 1960s and 1970s.

Cultural Losses of Museums: The Polish Respond to World War II

Dr. Bartłomiej Sierzputowski and Elżbieta Przyłuska, Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Warsaw, PL

The restitution of lost public art collections has remained one of the most important tasks of the Polish cultural policy for nearly 80 years. Cultural losses experienced by Poland in 1939-1945 results in the fact that the Polish state continues to trace in foreign collections (including Dutch) movable cultural property lost from within the post-1945 borders of Poland. The Polish authorities has already attempted to

secure cultural objects during the war years. Part of the objects from the Wawel Royal Castle were deposited in Canada, among other things. After 1945, this work was continued, while inventorying what survived the war, as well as documenting what had been destroyed or dispersed. The Polish Head Office of Museums and Preservation of Monuments drew up questionnaires on the loss and destruction of works of art and cultural and natural monuments. Determining these losses allowed to take appropriate restitution measures as to objects lost and unlawfully removed from Poland. Today, the results of the museums' provenance studies are, among other things, the basis for entry into the Electronic Database of Wartime Losses of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

Bartłomiej Sierzputowski is counsellor at the Department for Cultural Heritage, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. He obtained his PhD in Law and is the author of papers related to cultural property law and public international law. His research areas include: law, cultural heritage protection, foreign affairs.

Elżbieta Przyłuska is chief expert at the Department for Cultural Heritage, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. She is an art historian who deals with restitution cases at the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, conducts research on losses in sculpture and artistic crafts, and is interested in objects taken from Poland to the East during World War II.

Entangled Objects and Memory Sites in the Museum: Re-imagining the 'Modern' Collection

Prof. Dr. Juliet Simpson, Coventry University, UK

The legacy of the nineteenth-century museum's creation of a perceived boundary between past and present art, its construct of 'national schools', is a persistent narrative as is well treated. Yet, in founding major museum collections of modern art, the fault-lines of art-history or memory reveal more porous sites of interaction than are claimed: the concerns of this paper. My focus is on Hugo von Tschudi (Director of the Berlin Nationalgalerie, 1896-1908), and his efforts to develop a modern art museum drawing on the formal, affective intensity attributed by key Berlin art historians, notably Wilhelm von Bode, to late medieval art. Discussion examines the potency of this juxtaposition for a conceptual and visual approach to modern art by Von Tschudi

and contemporaries beyond limitations of national-cultural, or indeed, temporal constructs. Von Tschudi's case is a striking demonstration of how the value of past art – and a porous conception of it, stimulates a vision of modern art, built around the entangled possibilities of a different 'present'. The conclusions suggest that von Tschudi's key insight, of a modern collection reordered through the expressive intensity of late medieval art, proposes new scope for rethinking museum approaches to borders of 'the modern' beyond past/present polarities.

Juliet Simpson is Full Professor of Art History, Chair of Cultural Memory-Research Director in the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities, Coventry University. She is a specialist in long nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art, fin-de-siècle museums and cultural memory, the afterlives of Gothic and Northern Renaissance art, and the emotions. She is Principal Investigator and Lead Curator for the acclaimed international exhibition, *Gothic Modern – From Darkness to Light* in Ateneum, Helsinki/National Museum, Oslo/The Albertina, Vienna (2024–26). Recent publications include her book, co-edited with Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, *Gothic Modern – From Munch to Kollwitz* (Hirmer: University of Chicago Press, 2024).

“You’re Usually Wrong”: Looking Back at the Anti-Racism of the Past at One Museum

Dr. Deirdre Madeleine Smith, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, USA

Carnegie Museum of Natural History was established in 1895 by Scottish-born, American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. This presentation reflects on the Carnegie Museum's collaborative initiative in public education *We Humans* dating back to the 1950s. Museum-employed archaeologists James Swauger and Don Dragoo drew on anthropological theory and the museum's collections to develop an exhibition and a curriculum on race and racism, which debuted in downtown Pittsburgh in 1955 and then circulated as portable displays in both local schools and labor meetings after 1956. The project was a collaboration between the museum, United Steelworkers, the City of Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh Public Schools. It promoted a message of shared humanity and worth across racial groups, using scientific theories of racial typology, as well as punchy, rationalist rhetoric to state that race was a technical concept and that

racism was illogical. Although by measures flawed in its approach and partially scientifically inaccurate, *We Humans* seems inspiringly enterprising and optimistic today. This year, the 70th anniversary of *We Humans* is marked by a satellite exhibition and related programming, centering the questions: How do museums serve as spaces for racial justice? In the future, what will people think about today's anti-racist work in museums?

Deirdre M. Smith teaches and mentors History of Art & Architecture and Museum Studies students at the University of Pittsburgh and researches and programs around institutional histories and collections at Carnegie Museum of Natural History. She holds a PhD in art history from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree in art history and museum training from George Washington University. Her writing on contemporary art, animal studies, and the history of science have appeared in *Configurations*, *Third Text*, *Art History and Esse Arts + Opinions*.

A Contested Museum History: Scenography and the Placement of the Islamic Collection at the Berlin Museums

Dr. Zehra Tonbul, Ozyegin University, Istanbul, TR

This paper draws on archival documents from the Berlin Museum for Islamic Art to trace the shifting role of Islamic art collection through its historiographical framing, scenographic strategies, and spatial positioning within the Berlin Museum landscape. The museum was founded around the acquisition of the Mshatta Façade in 1904 under Wilhelm von Bode. In the 1920s, its institutional placement became the subject of debate between Josef Strzygowski, director of the Art Historical Institute in Vienna, and Carl Becker, Professor of the History and Culture of the Orient at the Kolonialinstitut in Hamburg. While Becker argued for its inclusion in a Museum of Antiquity, Christianity, and Western European Art, Strzygowski advocated for its place within a Museum of Asian Art. The collection was ultimately incorporated into the newly built Pergamon Museum in 1932. This paper revisits this debate to trace the trajectory of the collection into the late 1930s and 1940s, when plans for a Museum of Oriental Art were developed but halted by war. Drawing on internal correspondence and planning documents, the paper examines the evolving vision of Ernst Kühnel, then director of the museum, and how it reflects broader

epistemological and geopolitical shifts that shaped the museum's subsequent history.

Zehra Tonbul is an architectural historian whose research focuses on the history and theory of art and architecture in the modern and contemporary periods. She received her PhD degree from Bogaziçi University, co-advised by the University of Vienna. Tonbul conducted postdoctoral research at the Berlin Museums on the topic of Parallel Odysseys of German Scholars of Islamic Art. She holds a degree in Architecture from Istanbul Technical University, and an MPhil degree in History and Philosophy of Architecture from the University of Cambridge. Tonbul currently teaches at Ozyegin University in Istanbul.

Haunted Halls: Reclaiming Hidden Histories of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels

Dr. Gerrit Verhoeven, University of Antwerp/Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, BE

Today, visitors at the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) are often puzzled by the impressive, yet slightly confusing, museum buildings. While the collections are well contextualized through labels, wall texts, and audiovisual media, the story of the buildings themselves—the maze of galleries, halls, stairways, and corridors constructed across different periods and in diverse styles—remains largely untold. This silence, we argue, is not merely accidental. Rather, it reflects a reluctance within the institution to confront its own problematic origins. The RMAH was one of King Leopold II's pet projects, reportedly financed with wealth extracted from colonial exploitation in the Congo—a regime widely condemned as one of the most brutal of its time. Today, the institution is still haunted by its colonial legacy, making it difficult to openly engage with its own past. Drawing on recent scholarship in museum and heritage studies, this paper explores how the museum's architecture can serve as a narrative tool to confront and communicate its controversial past and to make the institutional history – both the sweet and the sour – visible again.

Gerrit Verhoeven is an assistant professor in the Heritage Department at the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and head archivist at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels. His research spans cultural heritage and history, with museum history as one of his main areas of interest.

Founding Myths and Colonial Entanglements: The Japan Folk Crafts Museum and the Politics of Mingei

Anna Stewart-Yates, University of Oxford, UK

This paper examines the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Mingeikan) to examine how museums negotiate complex legacies of nationalism, colonialism, and aesthetic ideology. Founded by Yanagi Sōetsu in 1936 to champion the Mingei (folk craft) movement, the museum embodies a vision of “authentic” Japanese-ness derived paradoxically from Korean ceramics collected during Japan’s occupation of Korea. While Yanagi vocally opposed the occupation, his theories were shaped within the structures of empire he ostensibly resisted. The museum’s 80th anniversary exhibition, *The Beauty of Korean Crafts* (2016), suggested growing recognition of these origins. Meanwhile, the Korean Overseas Cultural Heritage Foundation has catalogued all Korean objects in the collection, though restitution remains off the table, shaped by restrictive international legal frameworks. Drawing on recent scholarship that reassesses Yanagi’s writings and the museum’s institutional history, this paper explores how the museum’s founding narrative has obscured its colonial entanglements while promoting an essentialist vision of Japanese identity. By situating the Mingeikan within broader debates on decolonisation, restitution, and institutional responsibility, this paper addresses how museums in non-Western contexts grapple with inherited colonial dynamics. The Mingeikan’s identity and the global appeal of Mingei aesthetics invites scrutiny of what cultural institutions owe to the communities and histories they represent.

Anna Stewart-Yates is an History of Art and Visual Culture graduate student at Oxford, researching intercultural exchange and the global movement of Korean objects in the twentieth century. She holds degrees in Art History and Curatorship, and Law, from the Australian National University and previously practiced as a commercial lawyer with a pro bono focus supporting First Nations artists. She has held sessional academic roles at ANU in art history and legal theory and conducted provenance research on Southeast Asian antiquities at the National Gallery of Australia. Her research develops interdisciplinary approaches across art history, law, and heritage.



Central station

Ibis hotel

Wereldmuseum

Boerhaave

Museum of Antiquities

P.J. Veth
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