

Jahrestagung ICOM Deutschland – Museen verändern

3. November 2022 - Humboldt Forum Berlin

16:00 - 17:15 Uhr Themen-Insel 4: Museen verändern die Perspektive

Keynote: Museums of and for the People: Centring Communities' Knowledge in Museum Practices

Golda Ha-Eiros, National Museum of Namibia (NMN)

Abstract:

Cultural objects from indigenous people were historically collected from European collectors for reasons of power and the benefit of the white gaze, regardless of their importance to the Source Communities. This appropriation and Othering of people, nation states and even global spheres, through the translocation of cultural objects caused ongoing political and epistemic divides and violence. We are now claiming museum practices are more accessible and inclusive, but to whom? Interpretations, displays, collection management development and decision making remain highly controlled by Eurocentric academic knowledge and practices – even in collaborations. Rarely does traditional Community knowledge enter into considerations on what collections mean and how they ought to be cared for to ultimately find their way to joint museum practices and policies.

As we are moving towards a shift in knowledge hierarchies, the world of museums and the so-called world museum is opening up to more transnational collaborations at eye level. As museums in the European but also in the African context remain publicly challenged and held accountable for their past transgressions, we seek to unpack and re-interpret the multi-layered meanings of cultural objects in our collections, interrogating the narratives not just from the current owners' perspective but also from Source Communities. Museums need to strive towards being safe and collaborative places, where no one is left out. A place where all members of society are represented and are stakeholders in their cultural heritage. A place where the loss of retrospective and prospective memory making and the transmission of knowledge can be restored through intentionally incorporating Community knowledge in everyday museum practices. This keynote discusses and introduces Community centred initiatives applying traditional knowledge to daily museum practices, building on examples from my personal curatorial practices at the *National Museum of Namibia* as well as joint projects with the *Ethnologisches Museum* in Berlin.

Short Bio

Golda Ha-Eiros is Senior Curator for the *National Museum of Namibia* (NMN), responsible for the Anthropology collection as well as Community knowledge preservation and activation through artistic interventions. In 2019, she was Guest Researcher at the *Ethnologisches Museum* Berlin where she researched the historical collection from Namibia and co-curated an exhibition on collaborative research processes at the Humboldt Forum.

Being part of this ground-breaking collaborative partnership in the aftermath of “Confronting colonial past. Envisioning Creative Futures” 23 cultural objects were returned to Namibia from Berlin’s museum’s collection. Previously she was curating the collections of the ‘Liberation Heritage’ at the Namibian *Office of Veterans Affairs* and at the *National Art Gallery of Namibia* (NAGN), preserving and documenting the history of Namibia’s National Liberation Struggle. She is also a member of the *Museums Association of Namibia* (MAN).