

DECR reading group - Contested Holdings. Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return. Towards a "Global History of Restitution"

Book presentation
20th June 2024 from 19:00 pm to 20:30 pm
On line

Reading group of the book *Contested Holdings. Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return*. Towards a "Global History of Restitution", edited by [Felicity Bodenstein](#), Damiana Oțoiu and Eva-Maria Troelenberg (2022)

[Felicity Bodenstein](#), Lecturer in the history of museums and heritage studies at Sorbonne University, Paris joins us for the fifth and final in this series of Reading Group sessions for Doctoral and Early Career Researchers. During this session, we will discuss both the Introduction and Conclusion of *Contested Holdings: Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic, and Artistic Processes of Return*, edited by Felicity Bodenstein, Damiana Oțoiu and Eva-Maria Troelenberg (2022). In this study, the authors delve into the multifaceted landscape of museum repatriation and restitution, examining its historical context and contemporary significance across diverse cultural and disciplinary perspectives.

The book addresses various case studies, from Jewish looted collections during World War II to the repatriation of Ngarrindjeri human remains kept in western collections. This allows for the examination of restitution and repatriation processes from an innovative perspective. These artefacts, whether relating to material culture, human bodies or ancestral remains, are referred to as "contested holdings". We will discuss this terminology, and the vocabulary related to restitution issues. Definitions are also proposed by the authors to establish a theoretical framework that would enable a better understanding of the legal, moral, and ethical issues surrounding the restitution to original countries, communities or individuals. The introductory and concluding chapters aim to reflect on the roles of various actors in museums, governmental institutions and private collections. Drawing on post-colonial theory and the concept of "relational museum", these chapters highlight the need for a "global history of restitution" and thought-provoking observations about decolonizing cultural spaces and western museum practices.

With participation of [Nancy Ba](#)

The reading group is open to all.

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