

Ethnographic Collections and the Remaking of Knowledge

September 19, 2 pm-4 pm.

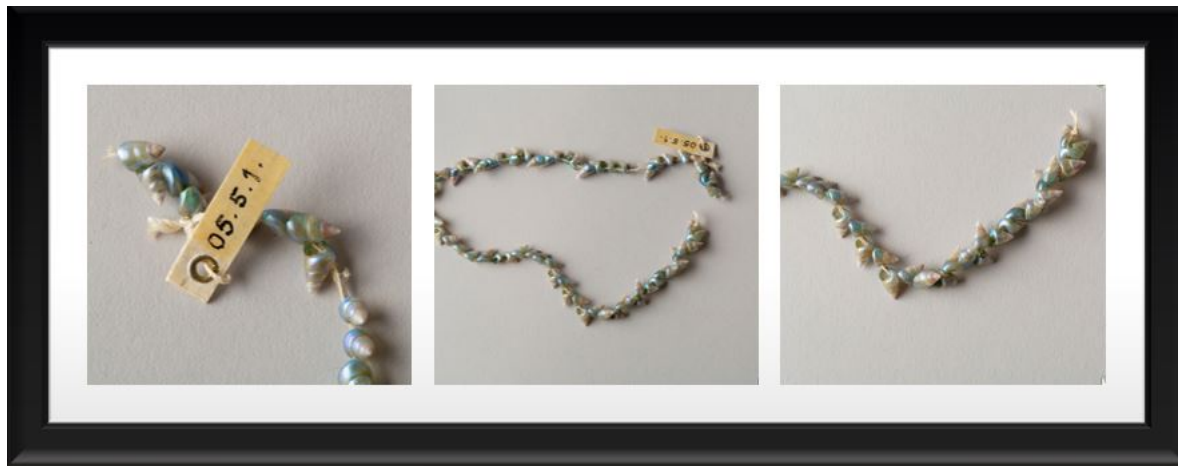
The Studio, Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg

Seminar

This round table event brings together three research projects which address the future of ethnographic collections from multiple perspectives. The discussion will feature a panel of six local and international presenters who will discuss how historic collections can shed light on environmental questions, First Nations knowledge sovereignty, working across knowledge and museum silos, and the complexities of archival decolonization. The first hour will be panel presentations. This section will be filmed. The second hour will be Q&A with panel and audience.

Event mingle

You are welcome to join us for refreshments at a post-event mingle from 4 pm onwards.



Shell necklace from Tasmania.

Photo: Johan Jeppsson, Swedish National Museums of World Culture.

Hosted by Centre for Critical Heritage Studies, Heritage Academy and the Swedish Museums for World Culture in collaboration with the Dept. of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg



Vetenskapsrådet



Projects and bios

Objects of Science and Culture

Ethnographic museums across Europe are full of objects with difficult histories that contemporary curators often struggle to navigate and the silos within which collections have been separated disallows research that might have revived lost knowledge. Through a case study of an Australian shell necklace held in Etnografiska, this presentation will explore the opportunity to reconceive such collections as complex vectors of environmental data, traditional knowledge and social history. Reconfiguring ethnographic collections as both scientific and cultural not only invites western biodiversity scientists into ethnographic museum storehouses, it shines a light on non-western knowledge systems in communities of origin, born of deep ties to more-than-human life-worlds. In this exchange, new environmental understandings are advanced and new futures are discovered for ethnographic objects held in European collections.

Dr Christine Hansen holds a PhD in history from the Australian National University and has worked as a curator in Australia and Sweden. She held a post-doctoral position in critical heritage studies at the Centre for Critical Heritage Studies (CCHS) at the University of Gothenburg and has been affiliated to the centre for several years. She is now the principal investigator of the project Objects of Culture and Science, based at the Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg.

Dr Mandy Quadrio is a Trawlwoolway / Pairrebeenner woman connected to her clan Country of Tebrakunna, Cape Portland, far north-east coast of Trouwunna / Loetrouwitter / Tasmania, and the Laremairremener clan Country of Little Swanport, Oyster Bay Nation of eastern Trouwunna / Tasmania. She is also of Anglo-Irish heritage. Currently based in Meanjin / Brisbane, her artistic practice encompasses sculpture, installation, photography and mixed media. Through her practice Quadrio works to unfix racist categorisations, historic denials and imposed invisibility in relation to Aboriginal identity.

Critical Design for Cultural Heritage: Embracing Decoloniality in the Digital Age

This presentation will take its cue from *Carlotta*, the digital cultural archive situated in Sweden. We delve into the ethical challenges that emerge when colonial-era archival data is digitized and made accessible without (critical) discourse, thus reinforcing its acceptance as unchallenged truth. We will start from the assumption that technology is not neutral but instead has affordances which shape human interaction. This understanding leads us to explore the development of technological tools through a lens of critical design that can help us present and imagine a different kind of cultural archive. This critical design approach can help find instruments which help not only cultural archives, but also the original owners of these histories to switch the narratives inside cultural institutions. To usher in the decoloniality of information systems, we posit that cultural heritage institutions should adopt an outside-in approach to co-designing and co-governing these systems, thus necessitating partnerships with the Global South. This cooperative approach can foster digital environments where we consciously unlearn old practices and adopt new ways of working together.



Vetenskapsrådet



Susannah Montgomery, Deputy Director and Researcher at the Sustainable Media Lab, Inholland University of Applied Sciences. Over the past few years, Susannah has focused on developing strategic partnerships, programming, and research opportunities across the Creative Business domain at Inholland University of Applied Sciences. Most recently, she helped to launch Inholland's newest living lab, the Sustainable Media Lab, which is dedicated to making technology safe, helpful, and sustainable for society, ensuring that everyone's rights are protected – even in the digital world.

Dr Adriana Muñoz is Curator for the Americas at the National Museums of World Culture in Sweden and a judge for the European Museum of the Year Award. Born in Argentina, she has been working with the collections in Göteborg since her arrival in Sweden almost 30 years ago. Her focus within her curatorial role is giving access to collections, exhibitions, education, and increasingly, working on repatriation and provenance projects. Her research investigates the possibility of changing the narrative of the museums in the digital world.

Entangled Knowledges: Kaartdijin, Science and History in the Robert Neill collection

Taking a multidisciplinary cross-museum collection as its starting point the Entangled Knowledges project aims to highlight Menang Nyungar knowledge embedded in a historic collection of fishes, mammals and artefacts held at National Museums Scotland and a portfolio of sketches of fishes held by the Natural History Museum, London, by returning this knowledge to the Menang community in Western Australia. This collection was brought together by Assistant Commissary Robert Neill in Kinjarling (Albany) in the 1840s, where he worked and lived amongst Menang fishermen and women. Neill carefully recorded Menang fish taxonomies, fish habits and habitats and Menang cultural associations with fishes. These collections were dispersed across museums in Edinburgh and London, becoming isolated from each other and disconnected from the community whose knowledge the collection captures. Once in these museums, the dominance of western scientific knowledge, development of disciplinary silos and museum documentation practices increased this disconnection, reducing museum's understanding of the Menang cultural significance. Today Menang people are reconnecting to the collection and the records of their ancestral knowledge that it holds. This presentation will explore how working in a cross-sector, collaborative and Indigenous-governed team can enrich and re-frame the understanding of this collection in the Museum/s today.

Asst Professor Tiffany Shellam is an historian at Deakin University who works collaboratively with the Nyungar community of Western Australian, historians, museum curators, and archivists to unearth hidden and alternative histories of 19th century encounters. She is interested in the ways in which collaborative work can unsettle the surety of archives, and the ways in which ethnographic and biocultural collections offer different narratives of past events.

Shona Coyne is a Menang/Nyungar woman with cultural connections to Yamatji Country in Western Australia and the Scottish Highlands. She is also Head of the First Nations Collections and Community Engagement team at the National Museum of Australia. She has worked on a number of award winning exhibitions and her research interests centre around the intersections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous colonial histories.



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