

Forum: Restitution and Beyond

October 26, 2024

Park-Villa Rieter, Museum Rietberg Zürich

1:30 – 5:30 pm



Programme

The Benin Initiative Switzerland is dedicated to researching the provenances and historical contexts of the Benin collections in eight Swiss museums. The joint project is supported by the Federal Office of Culture. While the first phase (2021/22) focused on collaborative provenance research, the second phase (2023/24) dealt with communicating the research findings together with partners from Nigeria and the diaspora in Switzerland. This resulted in several exhibitions in Basel, Geneva, Neuchâtel, and Zurich accompanied by a rich programme of events and the joint publication *Mobilizing. Benin Heritage in Swiss Museums* (2024).

Two exhibitions on Benin opened simultaneously in Zurich in August 2024: the exhibition *In Dialogue with Benin: Art, Colonialism and Restitution* at the Museum Rietberg and the exhibition *Benin Dues – Dealing with Looted Royal Treasures* at the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich.

The two institutions are organizing the *Forum: Restitution and Beyond* to reflect on these collaborative projects. Both museums have initiated a process for the possible transfer of ownership of their looted or likely looted Benin objects. The forum will evaluate the research and results of the Benin Initiative Switzerland in the wider context of cooperation and restitution efforts. International experts discuss new visions for museums and communities in both Switzerland and Nigeria.

1:30 pm

Welcome

Dr Annette Bhagwati, Director Museum Rietberg Zurich

Prof Mareile Flitsch, Director Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich

Greetings

Chijioke McHardy Ani, Chargé d'Affairs Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bern

Prince Aghatise Erediauwa, Representative of the Royal Palace of Benin

Corine Mauch, Mayor of the city of Zurich

Prof Christian Schwarzenegger, Vice President of the University of Zurich

- 2:00 pm **The Benin Initiative Switzerland: New Forms of Collaboration**
 Esther Tisa Francini, Co-Head BIS and Head of Provenance Research and Archives at Museum Rietberg Zurich
 Daniela Müller, Provenance Researcher BIS and Museum der Kulturen Basel
 Dr Michaela Oberhofer, Co-Head BIS and Curator for Africa and Oceania at Museum Rietberg Zurich
- 2:20 pm **The NCMM Reimagined – A Story of Heritage, Digitization, and Infinite Possibilities**
 Olugbile Holloway, General Director NCMM – National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria
- 2:35 pm **Returning Heritage Home – Perspectives and Practices of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture**
 Fabienne Baraga, Head of the Specialized Body for the International Transfer of Cultural Property at the FOC – Federal Office of Culture, Switzerland
- 2:50 pm **Keynote: It's Not Just About Restitution**
 Prof Bénédicte Savoy, Head of the Department of Modern Art History at Technische Universität Berlin
- 3:30 – 4:00 pm **Break**
- 4:00 – 5:30 pm **Round Table: The Importance of Cooperation and Restitution for Museums in Nigeria and Switzerland**
 Dr Annette Bhagwati, Director Museum Rietberg Zurich
 Dr Alice Hertzog, Provenance Researcher and Co-Curator *Benin Dues* Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich
 Olugbile Holloway, General Director NCMM
 Femi Johnson, Digital Heritage Specialist at the MOWAA – Museum of West African Art, Benin City
 Patrick Oronsaye, Painter, Art Historian and Cultural Consultant with a specialization of Benin Art, Benin City
 Moderation: Prof Barbara Plankensteiner, Director at MARKK – Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt, Hamburg