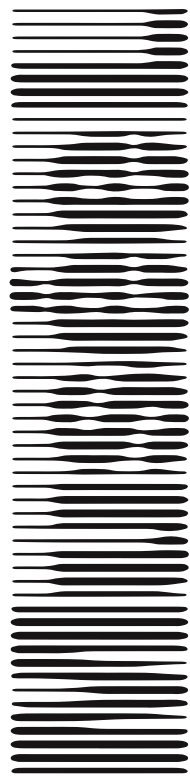


Musée
universitaire
de Louvain



SYMPOSIUM

***Decolonising university
collections? Challenges,
issues and perspectives***

8 and 9 October 2026

9:00 AM > 5:00 PM

Musée L

The growing reflection on colonial legacies within European universities has led to the publication of reports and the creation of working groups highlighting universities' historical involvement in colonialism. These initiatives are part of a broader movement, with European and international efforts aiming at decolonising collections, curricula, and academic structures. However, from the risk of political appropriation, marketing strategies, to the reproduction of colonial scientific approaches, the decolonisation of university museums raises profound questions.

Two key issues can be pointed out:

- Decolonising university collections: examining their provenance, management, and the relationship to knowledge production through critical research and collaboration with the communities concerned.
- Rethinking relationships with the colonial legacies: beyond collections themselves, questioning curricula, power dynamics, and collaborations with universities in former colonies in order to foster more balanced partnerships.

These multidisciplinary reflections also extend to new forms of colonisation and call for a broader reassessment of academic practices. How can these initiatives bring about lasting transformation within university institutions?

_PROGRAMME

8 October

09:00-09:30

Welcoming participants

09:30-10:00

Opening

Marino Ficco, Marion Bertin and Elisa de Jacquier (UCLouvain)

10:00-10:15

Objets déplacés, sens déplacés. Enjeux épistémologiques de la décolonisation des collections universitaires

Dieu-Merci Manwana Sindani, Christian Chiza, Esthere Wanko, Patient Mulumeoderhwa Polepole (UCLouvain, Centre Placet)

10:15-11:00

Keynote session Eva Namusoke (Cambridge University)

11:00-11:15

Break

11:15-12:00

Musée L: visit of the museum in small groups, with an invitation to suggest changes to the display towards a decolonial perspective

12:00-13:00

Lunch break

13:00-14:00

Workshop: a session for small groups to discuss and put forward two suggestions for changes to the museum's museography or practices at the Musée L (only in-person, registrations required before the event)

14:00-15:45

_Session 1

Colonial Heritage and Universities: different perspectives and challenges

Chair: Sébastien Soubiran (UMAC)

15 minutes presentation, followed by 10 minutes questions and answers

- a_ *Beyond “Informal” Empire: Natural History Collections in Switzerland at the Heart of Imperial Science*
Sarujan Theivendran and Monique Ligtenberg (ETH Zurich)
- b_ *Testing a Decolonial Process for the Interrogation of the University of Melbourne’s Geology Museum*
Tharushi Bowatte (Melbourne University)
- c_ *Décoloniser l’enseignement des arts plastiques au Maroc*
HibatAllah Barrous (Université de Rabat Mohammed V)
- d_ *Reconnecting archives, universities and communities*
Jonas Van Mulder, Hippolyte Mambu, Cathérine Bolao, Elie Kitoko, Jaimie Lufata, and Jean-François Monami (KADOC, UCC, KU Leuven)

15:45-16:00

Break

16:00-17:00

Poster session

9 October

09:00-09:15

Welcoming participants

09:15-10:00

Keynote session Placide Mumbembele (UNIKIN) and Annie Lussier (Redpath Museum, Montreal)

10:00-10:15

Break

10:15-12:00

_Session 2

Human remains in university collections: ethical and scientific challenges

Chair: Marie-Sophie de Clippele (UCLouvain)

15 minutes presentation, followed by 10 minutes questions and answers

- a_ *Restitution Is Not the End: Decolonising Ancestral Remains in University Collections*
Jean Kalombo Mulimbi, Jacques Kalumba Ngoy and Laurent Licata (UNILU and ULB)
- b_ *Checking the boxes. The challenges of colonial human remains at the University of Strasbourg*
Tricia Close-Koenig (Strasbourg University)
- c_ *Decolonising the Body*
Sulichatiani and Ilham Baskoro (Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia)
- d_ *Collaborative Reburial and Ethical Stewardship: The “Sutherland Nine” Project (University of Cape Town, South Africa)*
Damiana Otoiu (Bucharest University)

12:00-13:00

Lunch break

13:00-14:00

Workshop: feedback and conclusions from the previous day workshop

14:00-14:15

Break

14:15-16:00

_Session 3

Curatorial choices and contemporary challenges

Chair: Ayoko Mensah (The House of European History)

15 minutes presentation, followed by 10 minutes questions and answers

a_ *Curating Silence*

Injonge Karangwa (KU Leuven)

b_ *Rethinking Indigenous Presence in 18th-Century Brazilian Maps from the University of Coimbra's Collection*

Luciana Fontana and Mariana Brum (Coimbra University)

c_ *University Collections as Colonial Heritage: Initial Insights from Research at the University of Coimbra*

Rita Amaral (Coimbra University)

d_ *Relational curatorship and reimagining meanings of African collections at Manchester Museum*

Njabulo Chipangura (National University of Ireland)

16:00-17:00

Final session

Wayne Modest (Director of Content of Wereldmuseum), Remco Vermeulen (Senior advisor international cooperation collection management at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands), and Hanna Pennock (Co-Chair of the ICOM Standing Committee on Decolonisation)

Hybrid event, online or in person at the Musée L in Louvain-la-Neuve. Registration is required before 25 September 2026.

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REGISTRATION

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