

## Vying for Museum Space: Re-writing Object Biographies in the Age of Decolonization

With

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Chaired by

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How many stories can a museum object have? This roundtable will gather researchers as well as curators to discuss new approaches to object biographies with a focus on the question of how such narratives could be incorporated in museum display and longer-term practice. Taking Neil MacGregor's 2010 BBC Radio 4 programme (and subsequent book) *A History of the World in 100 Objects* as a starting point it will turn to the formerly subaltern stories this famous project has left out. How can formerly excluded voices be empowered to tell their own histories about these objects? The panel will include participants of our launch event (Kingston, Jamaica, Dec 2019), which intended to work towards a multilateral fusion of object histories and present legacies in museums and their collections through and with scholars and curators in and from the 'Global South'. It took place under the premise that one museum object can in fact have 100 histories of 100 worlds.

The project is part of generating dialogue. Having identified stories and authors in Kingston, this follow-on roundtable in London serves as an implementation event and intends to pose the next set of questions. It will include British Museum curators to discuss not only how the

narratives of object biographies could be embedded within permanent galleries and but also how they can be institutionalized for longer term memory. While some objects are being returned to their counties of origins in an ongoing repatriation debate, how can the ‘100 histories of 100 worlds’ be ‘returned’ to the museum in a sustainable, equitable but also porous way?