UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Heritage Research Centre

Cambridge Heritage Research Centre

## 23rd Cambridge Heritage Symposium

# Encountering Human Remains: Heritage Issues and Ethical Considerations

**Thursday 11 & Friday 12 May 2023**
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
University of Cambridge and
Online on Zoom

For more information visit the CHRC Annual Symposia page
To register to attend in person or online visit the online sales page

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With special thanks to
**Raphael Henkes, Oliver Moxham, Geonyoung Kim, Charlotte Wood,** and **Jacqueline Mouttet**

# Summary

Encounters with human remains captivate the human psyche in a myriad of unique ways. While archaeologists usually approach human remains as a source of scientific data that illuminates how ancient people lived and died, others attribute tremendous cultural, spiritual, and political significance to them. Owing to these complex meanings and the unique symbolic power they embody, human remains often receive a prominent spotlight and public attention in various spaces. For example, museums around the world often display human remains for their educational and scientific value, whereas in attention-grabbing travelling exhibitions, anatomical human remains can be transformed into objects of morbid curiosity. Various forms of media including mainstream news media and social media further amplify this fascination and foster an increasing focus on death resulting in death-related aesthetics, literary movements, and even fashion trends.

The spiritual, cultural, or personal desire to encounter the dead can mobilise masses of people to visit historic sites of conflict, violence, and death as sites of tourism or as sacred sites where they can reflect on the magnitude of the loss of life and honour the dead. At the same time, mass graves as heritage sites encounter problems with visitors who do not respect the dead as the event in question recedes from memory. But what sort of behaviour is appropriate and should it be policed? Those who approach the dead from different epistemologies can place the dead closer to the realm of the living, maintaining their status as peoples and spirits and rejecting their relegation to mere curiosities.

In recent decades, a growing body of literature on human remains has examined how unique and complex the approaches to and encounters with the remains of the dead may be for various communities and within different heritage contexts. This conference seeks to explore these diverse perspectives through papers that interrogating different forms of encounters with human remains and deathscapes under an ethical heritage lens.

# Schedule

**Day 1**

**Thursday, 11 May 2023**

| | |
|---|---|
| 09:30 | Registration |
| 09:50 | Welcome Address, Dr Trish Biers |
| **10:00** | **Keynote Lecture**<br>Dr Layla Renshaw (Kingston University)<br>Personhood and Human Remains in the Forensic Investigation of War and Political Violence |
| 10:40 | Keynote Q & A, Chair: Dr Gilly Carr |
| 11:20 | Refreshment Break |
| 11:40 | Session 1 - European Conflictscapes and the War Dead |
| 13:00 | Session 1 Q&A, Chair: Raphael Henkes |
| 13:20 | Lunch Break |
| 14:00 | Session 2 - Necropolitics and Commemorating the Dead |
| 15:00 | Session 2 Q & A, Chair: Dr Paola Filippucci |
| 15:20 | Refreshment Break |
| 15:40 | Session 3 - Shifting the Narrative and Managment of Human Remains |
| 17:00 | Session 3 Q & A, Chair: Dr Trish Biers |
| 17:30 | Drinks Reception |

# Schedule

**Day 2**

**Friday, 12 May 2023**

| | |
|---|---|
| 09:30 | Registration |
| **10:00** | **Keynote Lecture**<br>George Gumisiriza (University of Bath)<br>'Personhood', Power, and 'Otherness' of Migrant Corpses |
| 10:40 | Keynote Q & A, Chair: Dr Paola Filippucci |
| 11:20 | Refreshment Break |
| 11:40 | Session 4 - Encountering Death in Museums: Ethics of Display and Public Perception of Human Remains |
| 13:00 | Session 4 Q & A, Chair: Dr Miriam Saqqa-Carazo |
| 13:20 | Lunch Break |
| 14:00 | Session 5 - Studying the Dead: Curation and Archival Research of Human Remains |
| 15:20 | Session 5 Q & A, Chair: Dr Trish Biers |
| 15:40 | Refreshment Break |
| 16:00 | Session 6 - Reflecting on Epistemology, Spirituality, and the Social Dead |
| 17:20 | Session 6 Q & A , Chair Oliver Moxham |
| 17:40 | Closing Remarks, Dr Dacia Viejo Rose |

# Poster Session

The Cambridge Heritage Symposium will feature an online poster session available throughout the symposium from the 10-12 May. will be available through GatherTown and symposium attendees will be able to view and interact with the posters through use of an avatar on an online platform. Below is some information about how to access the online poster session and some things to be aware of.

**A link to access to the poster session will be sent to attendees following registration.**

**What you need:**

- A **desktop/laptop** with a **mic** and **camera**
- A web browser (Chrome or Firefox recommended).
- We strongly recommend using **headphones** to help prevent feedback. • That's it! There's nothing to install, no software to download.

**Avatars:**

- If this is the first time you will be using Gather, you will be asked to create a profile and Avatar. Your avatar is completely customisable, **but we would like to ask you to create an avatar that closely approximates your actual appearance**, but please accessorize.
- If you already have a profile, but would like to change your avatar you can do this on the home page.
- If you are already in the space, you can still change the looks of your avatar by clicking your name in the bottom left of the screen and then select 'change character'

**How it works:**

- Gather is a video chat platform that has avatars move around a map. As you get close to other avatars, your videos will pop up and you will be able to chat.
- Move around the space using the **arrow keys**.
- By moving your avatar around you can have spontaneous conversations with those around you. These can be either one-on-one or small groups depending on how many people are around your avatar.
- Across the conference site are 'Private Areas'. When you are in these areas (marked by a slightly darker floor and the text that pops up when you walk in) only the other people in that specific Private Area can see and hear you.
- When your avatar moves closer to an interactable object, it will glow yellow and there will be a notification that shows up saying 'Press x to interact with -object-'. This can range from informational flyers, playable arcade games, integrated Zoom meetings, and more!

**Important!**

To avoid any issues where members are being seen and heard when they do not wish to be we recommend the following:

- We would encourage everyone to have their microphones off as default until in a situation where

# Poster Session

they are happy to be heard

- We would encourage everyone to have their video on, but this is of course absolutely your choice, please do whatever you feel comfortable with
- Please be aware of where you are standing when you are interacting with other members
- If forming a social cluster, please be mindful that you are not too close in proximity to posters or other 'interactive' items (as denoted by a square area of colour change on the floor near said item) as to avoid 'cross-talk'

**Interaction within Gather will be subject to the same Code of Conduct as the symposium.** Although much of the site is customisable, we would request that you use your usual name. This will help other delegates find you if they want to chat, similar to a name badge.

**Not-So-Obvious Features:**
Here are some things you might find useful but aren't immediately obvious -There is a **messaging feature** that allows you to message people in four ways:

1. *individually by clicking on their name in the participant panel,*
2. *locally to the people you are video chatting with. ("Nearby")*
3. *globally to all the people in your map. ("Everyone")*
4.

- There is a **locate feature** to find others by clicking their name in the participant panel. There is also a **follow feature** to automatically move your avatar to follow another user. The participant panel is the bottom-most option in your toolbar on the left.
- Want to **full screen someone else's video**? Just click on their video. • Talking to a group of people? Click the box with two white arrows to the right of the video carousel to open the **grid view**.

**Toolbar explanation:**

- Gather Logo = Will open settings and allow you to go to the home page
- Avatar = When your camera is on you can pin or full-screen yourself
- Name = Personal menu: allows you to change your avatar, set a status, turn on quiet mode, and respawn
- Mic = turn mic on or off and change settings
- Camera = turn mic on or off and change settings
- Smiley face = **Emotes** that appear above your avatar
- Computer screen = **Screen sharing** ability

**Technical difficulties:**

- Refreshing the page will fix most things!
- If that doesn't work, try muting and unmuting your mic and camera in Gather. • Check if your browser permitted camera and mic access

For more information on our platform, please feel free to stop by the GatherTown Help Centre or check out our YouTube tutorials.

# Keynote Speakers

## Dr Layla Renshaw

## Kingston University

## 10:00, Thursday 11 May 2023

Layla Renshaw is an Associate Professor at Kingston University where she teaches forensic archaeology and anthropology. Her research focuses on post-conflict investigations, and the relationship between human remains and traumatic memory. She has worked as an assistant archaeologist for the UN's International Criminal Tribunal in Kosovo. She has carried out fieldwork in Spain and is the author of *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War. She has conducted ethnographic and family history work with the relatives of Anzac soldiers from WWI, exploring the link between DNA testing and memory. In 2019, she was principal investigator on the ISRF-funded group project Citizen Forensics: Materializing the Dead from Grave to Gene. Layla is currently co-investigator on Dr Esther Breithoff's UKRI project Ecologies of Violence: Heritage and Conflict in More-than-Human Worlds.*

## Personhood and Human Remains in the Forensic Investigation of War and Political Violence

Forensic archaeology and anthropology are increasingly used to investigate war and political violence. Forensic science grounds much of its authority in its capacity to uniquely identify the dead, and ostensibly 'restore' personhood to anonymous human remains. This paper highlights the inherent tension between subject and object in the treatment of dead bodies as they undergo scientific analysis. Over the course of an investigation, the personhood of dead bodies may be constructed and deconstructed multiple times by the forensic practices they are subjected to.

Focusing on the contemporary exhumations of Republican mass graves from the Spanish Civil War, this paper explores the different dimensions of personhood sought by the living when a mass grave is exhumed. These range from the affirmation of personal and familial bonds with the dead as a step toward mourning them, to the reanimation of shared political identities in the construction of historical narratives. Complex representational, affective and symbolic demands are placed upon the dead during post-conflict investigations.

# Keynote Speakers

The bodies recovered in these investigations should be understood in the context of their other material traces, including the clothing and possessions of the dead, mementoes and memorials. Exhumation represents an opportunity to reconfigure representations of the past, but in so doing, it may displace pre-existing and locally meaningful forms of remembrance. This paper asks whether multiple understandings of memory, evidence and identity can co-exist with the forensic paradigm.

**George Gumisirza**

**University of Bath**

**10:00, Friday 12 May 2023**

George is pursuing a PhD in Social and Policy Sciences, funded by ESRC and the University of Bath. His PhD thesis Repatriationscapes: death and body repatriation among African diaspora in the UK focuses on Afrocentric perspectives on death. George has an MRes in International Development (distinction) (University of Bath 2021); an MSc in Social and Cultural Theory (University of Bristol 2020); and a Bed(Hons) from Makerere University, Uganda. George moved to the UK in 2011.

## Repatriationscapes: 'Personhood', Power, and 'Otherness' of Migrant Corpses

Repatriationscapes is a framework for exploring death and the process of repatriation of the deceased (Gumisiriza, 2022). Repatriationscapes consolidates the ontological meaning of identity, belonging and heritage through funerary rituals and traditions in the "rites of passage"(Gennep, 1960). However, power-imbued global institutional policy and practice, undermine the notion of personhood by determining who is/was a person in contemporary racialised discourse. Borders and migration debates insinuate hostility towards the living and erasure of the dead in popular global politics.

This paper employs the lens of migrant corpses found in spaces and places of constructed tensions to unpack contemporaneity of personhood of the living concerning the dead. How does the personhood of the living characterize corpses of dead migrants? How are global institutional policies and practice prejudiced in framing dead bodies of migrants? How does

# Keynote Speakers

repatriationscapes expose the margins in death politics ignored in academia? In answering these questions, the paper explores potential individual and collective ways of encountering human remains in society.

My paper contemplates broader global issues involving public engagement, social capital, and migrant marginalisation. Also, posthumous dignity and heritage through conforming ethical considerations in practice. Conceptually, I reflect on humanitarian action framework relating to social death (Parra et al., 2020). I draw on multi-dimensional perspectives and resources including my on-going PhD research into death and body repatriation among African diaspora in the UK.

Studies suggest that migrant bodies are disposed of without tradition. “No standard procedure is in place to deal with the remains of migrant bodies at present….buried without formal identification…no repatriation” (Connolly et al., 2017). This implies “the rites of exclusion” (Chidester, 2002, p. 32) from racialised perspectives in death politics.

Migrant corpses broadly characterize stigmatised death and disfranchised grief (Doka, 2002). Consider recent Mediterranean deaths and Vietnamese Essex (UK) lorry bodies in 2019. Death during “invasion”(Syal, 2022) or corpses of “Marauding migrants” (Perraudin, 2015) - victims or criminals? This framing of migrants perpetuates institutional dissociation from the dead and control of survivors through social stigma.

# Day 1—Session 1

## 11:40-13:20, Thursday 11 May 2023

## European Conflictscapes and the War Dead

### 'Schroedinger's mass graves' or the problem of the invisible dead

**Dr Gilly Carr (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

Killing sites from the 'Holocaust by bullets' can be found in Eastern European countries such as the Baltic States, and in currently-inaccessible countries such as Belarus and Ukraine; but mass graves are also found right across Europe, especially in the vicinity of former concentration camps. This paper examines a variety of case studies across Europe, including in Lithuania, Serbia, and Alderney, analysing a particular common element: what we might label 'inappropriate behaviour' at sites. Now that it's almost 80 years since the end of the Second World War, do we see this behaviour because the Holocaust is seen as 'ancient history' and no longer relevant? Is it to do with antisemitism? Or is this a problem because the dead in question are, by their nature, invisible and below ground? At some killing sites or mass graves, the dead have been exhumed, sometimes by the perpetrators and sometimes by war graves commissions or war crimes investigators, and often a long time ago. And yet the site of death is still seen as sacred – but not by all. These sites of (former and current) mass graves are problematic as the (essence of the) dead are both 'there' and 'not there' and are sometimes denied to have ever been there at all. There is also a question of numbers of the dead, but this cannot be resolved because Halacha (Jewish law) forbids any disturbance of the Jewish dead. This paper explores the phenomena at mass graves, its inherent problems, and some of the local solutions.

### Necropolitics, Memory, and War: Contested Heritage and Security in Estonia

**Dr Margaret Comer (Tallinn University)**
*in-person speaker*

This paper examines the intersection of heritage, memory, politics, and national identity in contemporary Tallinn, capital of Estonia. Specifically, it analyzes sites of mass killing and mass burial related to the first and second Soviet occupations; the Nazi occupation, including the Holocaust; and the Great Patriotic War/World War II. In the aftermath of the war, memorials to Red Army losses were erected across Estonia, many including burials. Some memorials to victims of Nazism were also erected, but the Jewish identity of Holocaust victims went unmentioned. After 1991, memorials and museums commemorating victims of

# Day 1—Session 1

Soviet repression developed across Estonia, while Holocaust memorials were revamped and Red Army memorials reconsidered. The widespread 'double genocide' presentation of Holocaust and Soviet repression has long been criticized for downplaying crimes under fascism and eliding local collaboration, while the necropolitics of burial sites have become more urgent since the 2022 intensification of the war in Ukraine; as the 'red monuments' to Soviet military victory have come to signify a 'danger' to contemporary Estonia, the question of how to handle the sites' human remains has arisen. This paper examines how rhetoric and decisions about these sites compares to the heritage narratives and necropolitics on display at former sites of violence such as Patarei Prison, the KGB Prison Cells, and the unmarked site of the Uus Street Holocaust massacre. How are different types of killing and death interpreted, and how are victims and perpetrators identified? How do these identifications change over time, and to what political usages are narratives of loss and death put?

**Atrocities Heritage and the status of the massacred dead**

**Leonora Weller (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

Atrocities are usually dealt with by forensic archaeologists in an attempt to identify the bodies and primarily use the circumstances of their death as the evidence required in court before they return the remains to their families or communities. In this respect, the circumstances which bring about these atrocities and the process of dealing with the human losses shape and change the history and culture of the surviving communities forever. It becomes a posthumous matter to remember them or the circumstances of their death through commemoration and memorializing particular sites as heritage. This paper examines the status of human remains from mass grave sites in Kosovo and Serbia in the aftermath of the war in 1998-1999. The paper questions whether human remains resulting from atrocities are heritage? Do they become heritage once a memorial plaque marks the mass graves site, or do they remain commemorated through historical writings or wartime factfinding reports? What happens with clearly marked graves which are empty, awaiting the human remains of those still missing? What do they represent? Creating a museum, curating exhibitions, recording oral histories and other means of documenting the past have been crucial in the commemoration of those missing, as well as those whose remains were found in mass graves following the conflict. The paper explores heritage authority and heritage creation through community activism. This case study explores the edges of what is or can be understood as heritage, expanding the debate and demonstrating that heritage is an intensive subjective concept. This concept is contested and claimed by and on behalf of individuals, groups and entire societies seeking to locate themselves within a convincing cultural and historical narrative.

# Day 1—Session 1

## Human rights to human skeletal remains as heritage: The case of the Cursed Soldiers in post-socialist Poland

**Dr Magdalena Matczak (Nicolaus Copernicus University)**
*online speaker*

Although there have been extensive studies and legislation on cultural and archaeological heritage for decades, it is only recently that human skeletal remains have been recognized as heritage. In the context of exhumation, much is said about fundamental human rights, but there is no mention of exhumed human remains as cultural heritage or the cultural human rights to them. In addition, the problem of exhumation has been addressed in relation to various geographic regions, excluding Central Europe. The paper broadens the understanding of human remains as heritage based on the ICOMOS and Council of Europe conventions on archaeological heritage. It expands theoretical insights by considering the relationship between exhumed human remains as heritage and cultural human rights to them. Human remains are subject to necropolitics, which determines when and for whom they constitute heritage. This problem is discussed based on the skeletal remains of the victims of the communist system, the so-called Cursed Soldiers who suffered violent deaths during executions, torture and injuries in Poland after World War II. The Polish communist government eliminated the pro-democratic movement by killing oppositionists and burying their bodies in mass graves in inaccessible places. In post-socialist Poland, only since 2011 have extensive exhumation works been carried out in places of mass graves as deathscapes with the aim of returning the bodies of the murdered to their families and society. These works arouse extreme reactions from approval of the families of the victims through publicity in the wider society, media attention, administrative difficulties to criticism. The human remains of the Cursed Soldiers have tremendous cultural, spiritual, and political significance in contemporary Poland. The exhumed, identified, and reburied remains of the victims of communism are a special kind of heritage for various social groups, especially for families who have human rights to them.

# Day 1—Session 2

## 14:00-15:20, Thursday 11 May 2023

## Necropolitics and Commemorating the Dead

### Frozen Bodies: challenging and ethical considerations related to the analysis of the White War (WWI) victims.

***Dr Daniel Gaudio (Durham University) & Dr Franco Nicolis (Soprintendenza Per I Beni Archeologici della Provincia di Trento)**
**in-person speaker*

'White War' refers to the battles which occurred during WWI on the Italian front in a particular context: the summits and glaciers of the Eastern Alps. Discoveries of soldiers' human remains released by the glaciers is a common phenomenon, especially in the last 10 years, when glacial decline has been dramatically accelerated by climate change.

Since 2007, the authors have worked to ensure prompt recovery of these remains in the remote peaks of the Italian Eastern Alps and conducted bioanthropological analysis prior to their officially organised reburial, conferring military honours on the fallen. The process of recovery and analysis is fundamental to ensure the correct legal procedures (e.g., confirming the Time Since Death) and avoid looting by memorabilia seekers who too often pounce on bodies to strip them of all collectable material, ID tags included. Our aim is to return to the soldiers the only thing that they still have, the right to be identified, which is impossible if their personal items are removed. However, the issue does not end there.

These soldiers, with their soft issues partially preserved, with their beards or hands still visible, still express all their humanity, their fragility. It is unsurprising that in the past the scientific analysis of these soldiers produced a hostile reaction from the local population and intellectuals.

The chances of identifying these soldiers are low. Notwithstanding the legal issues, why is the analysis of their remains relevant for these victims? Are scientific investigations justifiable? These kinds of dilemmas characterize our work in this sensitive context, and we recognize there are divergent tensions: scientific requirements and attempts at identification must be accompanied by the awareness that these bodies, their fragile flesh, in the public's mind deserve the least disturbance. In our view, a mindful and compassionate approach is essential during this process.

# Day 1—Session 2

## Colonial Cemetery as a Living Space: Interpreting the Colonial Deathscapes and the Local's Narrative in Busan, South Korea

**Hyunjae Kim (University of Cambridge)**
*online speaker*

This research examines how colonial cemeteries have been transformed and perceived by the postcolonial South Korean society. The changing fates of colonial funerary landscape are varied by different postcolonial locales and interpretations such as neglect, decay, demolition or ambivalence. By exploring narratives of local residents in Biseok village (the former Japanese cemetery) in South Korea, this study identifies how the death space of colonialism has been transformed into the place of living of post-colonial South Korea. The Ami-dong Japanese cemetery in Busan was neglected after the Korean liberation in 1945, as the Japanese residents in Korea returned to their homeland. However, the cemetery soon became a town where the gravestone houses were created by people who used the gravestones at the cemetery to build the shacks during the post-war restoration in 1950s. Through examining the process to make this settlement, this research first argues the ethical concerns of how the remains in the graves of the cemetery were treated. The attitude of how the Korean society deals with colonial cemetery after its liberation reveals one aspect of postcolonial interpretation of the colonial deathscapes created by the Japanese empire. Second, the grassroots' resilience against the traumatic history is discussed. The local narratives focus on community activities to remember the village's history relevant to their poor residential environment established in the location of former cemetery, particularly describing how local residents overcome sufferings of the colonial rule, the subsequent conflict of the Korean War and the post-war restoration. Third, postmemory contexts of Biseok village is examined to understand the generational transmission of memory about the cemetery. The way of describing the cemetery and the stories of the village reflects local community's perception on the colonial architectural remains and how we approach to the history of those material remains.

## Representing international remains: language barriers at difficult heritage site Mimizuka 'Hill of Ears' in Kyoto, Japan

**Oliver Moxham (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

How does one manage a heritage site built on remains from a 16th century conflict in a 21st century tourist hotspot? I shall attempt to answer this question through the Japanese national heritage site of Mimizuka, the 'Hill of Ears', located in the heritage-rich Higashiyama ward of Kyoto. During its time as the capital of Japan, Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi had the pickled ears and noses of Joseon Korean and Ming Chinese soldiers sent

# Day 1—Session 2

to Kyoto in 1597 after his invasion of Korea and interred in a mound as testament to his power. Now it stands surrounded by World Heritage sites drawing many tourists to the area, particularly from South Korea and China. However, it appears that efforts have been made by the site managers to suppress its exposure to tourists, offering literature only in Japanese and Korean and requesting that no offerings be left.

Drawing on multilingual thematic analysis of on-site literature and Google Maps reviews, I argue that the language barrier has effectively prevented those outside of Japanese and Korean language communities from accessing the site. From discourse analysis of Google Maps reviews we can also see different dominant discourses between contemporary Korean and Japanese visitors to the site with little intercultural dialogue.

Given the active international interest in the site, I argue that best practice for heritage management would be a translational justice approach, providing linguistic representation for all stakeholders to encourage intercultural dialogue around the site. This would not only foster a sense of respect and consideration amongst stakeholders but also allow for grassroots discourse to influence and participate in the representation of the site.

# Day 1—Session 3

## 15:40-17:30, Thursday 11 May 2023

## Shifting the Narrative and Management of Human Remains

### Managing Human Remains in an Indigenous Museum: The Monsopiad Cultural Village in Sabah, East Malaysia

**Dr Yunci Cai (University of Leicester)**
*in-person speaker*

I critically examine the perspectives and treatment of human remains, based on the case study of a ritual house at the Monsopiad Cultural Village in Sabah, East Malaysia. The ritual house holds a collection of 42 human skulls, believed to have been captured by Monsopiad, a Kadazan warrior who lived in the area some 300 years ago. Now in custodianship of Monsopiad's seventh direct descendent, the ritual house and its collection are now part of the Monsopiad Cultural Village, an Indigenous museum which represents the cultural heritage of the local Kadazan people. Through an examination of Indigenous beliefs and practices around the cultural practice of headhunting in historical Sabah, and how they continue to influence the attitudes towards human remains and their treatment in contemporary Sabah, I demonstrate how museological approaches that privilege the genetic kin and the re-humanisation of remains in museums may not be meaningful to local Kadazan people, who do not attach sentiments to their ancestral remains, or to their historical practices of headhunting. For the direct descendants of Monsopiad, the exotic portrayal of the human skulls in the Monsopiad Cultural Village for primitivist tourism has offered them a means to preserve their family legacy and pride, and a route to self-representation and self-determination in contemporary Malaysia. Although the human skulls are subject to museumisation by virtue of their display at the cultural village, the direct descendants of Monsopiad request that respect is shown to the skulls, or rather, the spirits of the skulls, whom the local communities believe are their spiritual guardians. My case study demonstrates how the concept of survivance can offer a useful framework for us to contemplate the perception, use and treatment of human remains in museums, in ways that can challenge the dominant Western approaches and discourses around human remains.

### Strategic empathy: Giving space to the diversity of Egyptian views on mummified remains

**Dr Heba Abd el Gawad and Dr Alice Stevenson (University College London)**
*in-person speaker*

Within Eurocentric scholarship and museum practice is a rising discomfort towards the display of mummified Egyptian human remains. This is evident in active repatriation and Egyptian academic petitions calling for return of selected individuals. Yet the concern expressed in these new initiatives is rarely informed by the complexity of Egyptian views

# Day 1—Session 3

towards exhibiting and repatriating bodies, which is the focus of this paper. We argue that current binary thinking regarding ethics of display and the selectivity of return requests are rooted in strategic narcissism whereby Egyptian and international academic and museum spheres are imposing their priorities and world views on wider ancient and contemporary Egyptian communities. Egyptians constitute a community of descent for such remains, connected through land, lived geo-political experience, and a perceived genealogy to their ancient Egyptian ancestors. Ongoing debates need to be inclusive of these voices, even when they do not offer consensus, and to be transparent and sensitive when addressing histories of acquisition and interpretation. In this paper we critically reflect on some of the most recent initiatives first by outlining some of the contexts that inform Egyptian perspectives and then by addressing the challenge of multi-directional representations and collection protocols that are able to accommodate and respond to such a diversity of views and emotions. Rather than seeking a simple fix, museum staff and academics might try to foster a more ethical discourse through strategic empathy, honouring how historic and contemporary communities see themselves and the world around them.

## Mummies of Guanajuato: Shame or pride

**Dr Paloma Robles Lacayo**
*in-person speaker*

Discovered by accident in the extractions (made for lack of payment at the end of the five-year period, according to the decree of secularization of cemeteries) of the corpses originally placed in drawers, the Guanajuato Mummies have been available for observation in situ since the appearance of the First, the arid body of a French doctor whose coffin is opened in the Santa Paula Pantheon on June 23, 1870.

The exhibition had had some museographic improvements, until in 2016 a transformation was undertaken that oriented the patrimonial interpretation by the visitor towards the perspective of bioethics and existential psychology, since it was considered that it was necessary to look inside and outside, it is that is, in these human remains (their conservation and real history), but also in the perception and meaning of the viewer.

In an unprecedented effort, a research work begins to recover the identities and biographies of the people whose mummified corpses have historically been exhibited in Guanajuato, which at some point will completely eradicate the nicknames and legends around them. Additionally, the Mexican poems that best exalt the possibility of death to value life were sought, and they were incorporated into the museographic discourse, together with provocative questions to question the visitor about their personal purpose. Interactive elements were placed, such as coffins of various sizes so that the visitor becomes aware of the finiteness of vital existence, and a showcase that can be entered, to think that the exhibition in a museum is a possible future for anyone, and thus instill an attitude of respect.

Consulted later, the National Bioethics Commission of Mexico precisely recommends measures for the protection, investigation and contextualization of mummified corpses.

# Day 1—Session 3

## The Ancestors help Us: Archaeology as a Key to Boost Tourism in Huaycan (Peru)

**Dr Guido P. Lombardi**
*online speaker*

Huaycan, a planned settlement for the poor established East of Lima nearly 40 years ago, took its name from a neighboring thousand-year-old archaeological site: Huaycan de Pariachi or ZAMHP. In appropriating its name, the founders of modern Huaycan committed to protect the ancient one and the human remains of its ancient inhabitants. Time has proven this commitment difficult to fulfill: ZAMHP still lacks basic services, despite being one of the largest, most intact, and accessible pre-Columbian villages in the Andes.

Despite trouble, some members of the community have started to consider ZAMHP as a possible 'new Machu Picchu', which could be key to improve local economy through tourism, particularly around burials and archaeology. This presentation attempts to add on that direction, shedding light on how life might have been organized at the site, based on observation of factual evidence, treatment of the dead, as well as on information from the literature, particularly the Manuscript of Huarochiri (c. AD 1600).

The dead were part of the living in the Andes; particularly founders of lineages and rulers had their bodies preserved so that they participated in festivities and gatherings for centuries after death. Display and worship of ancestral mummies or skeletal parts was forbidden by the conquistadors, but survived. Respecting ancestral body-preserving traditions, bridging them with modern education and local specialists, provides new possibility for Communities to carry on their legacy.

# Day 2—Session 4

## 11:40-13:20, Friday 12 May 2023

## Encountering Death in Museums: Ethics of Display and Public Perception of Human Remains

### Indigenous and Subjugated Bodies: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Implications

**Dr Katie Stringer Clary (Coastal Carolina University)**
*in-person speaker*

The history of human bodies displayed in museums and exhibitions goes back centuries to the popular sideshows, freakshows, and Dime Museums of the nineteenth century in the United States. As museums and institutions set out to collect and study a variety of ethnicities, collections of non-white or "abnormal" bodies grew. The acquisition of many of those remains lies at the intersections of race, white supremacy, and pseudoscience. Even though many museums and historic sites today see themselves as far removed from the spectacle and exploitation of people, living and dead, the roots of these displays provide important context for institutions today.

This paper examines the spectacle of some of the earliest displays, their acquisition, and the educational or entertainment value of those exhibitions through the lens of modern museums. The paper focuses specifically on the Indigenous groups and enslaved populations of the United States, who were sometimes literally hunted and killed, or taken after death, for collections at such storied organizations as the Smithsonian Institute, universities, or other large museums. Throughout the human rights campaigns of the mid-twentieth century, into the late twentieth centuries, and even now with Black Lives Matter and other activist campaigns, museums have had to reckon with this past, often at the demand of stakeholders and in the public eye. The paper concludes with a Case Study of the implications of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990), including how it has, perhaps, not lived up to the expectations from when it was passed over 30 years ago, as well as some of the imperfections and exclusions inherent in the law.

### Triune Bodies: The Issue of the Graeco-Roman Mummified People's Return

**Olga Nikonenko (University College London)**
*in-person speaker*

# Day 2—Session 4

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in interest in the Graeco-Roman period of Egyptian history. The mummified people discovered in Egypt are now stored in different countries, with the US and the UK housing most of them. It is striking that Graeco-Roman mummified people are not extensively displayed in any of the possible motherlands: neither in Egypt, Greece nor Italy. Several exhibitions have been organized recently, such as Ancient *Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* at the British Museum in 1997 and the eponymous exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (US) in 2000 and the recently opened *Golden Mummies of Egypt* at Manchester Museum (UK). The increasing display of Graeco-Roman mummified people has provoked questions regarding their provenance, public display and repatriation. In contrast to the ancient Egyptian period, the peculiar nature of Graeco-Roman mummified people has complicated the seek for their origin.

In this paper, I discuss how the museums have dealt with 'problematized' heritage over more than twenty years, what ethical implications are associated with twentieth-first-century colonialism and the repatriation process of the multi-cultural Graeco-Roman mummified people. I argue that Graeco-Roman mummified people represent a peculiar manifesto of the Roman imperial melting pot, belonging simultaneously to at least three large ethnic groups: Romans, Greeks of four city-states and the so-called 'Egyptians' as an artificial category of the Roman legal system, comprising different societies living in Egypt. The problem of repatriation is further complicated by the fact that even in the case of a successful identification of the body's origin, its funeral context (sarcophagus, tomb inscriptions, Fayum portraits) is the embodiment of a mixture of traditions of several ancient cultures that prevent scholars from identifying a particular legal successor.

## Lindow Man: A Personal Reflection

**Dr Jody Joy (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

I was inspired to present this paper by a former colleague who mentioned to me recently on a social media post how she used to chat to Lindow Man, the Iron Age bog body on display at the British Museum, when she was undertaking regular maintenance on his display case – topping up the water in the humidifier and monitoring his condition. Her reason for doing this was that she 'figured he probably got bored staring at the ceiling all day.' This comment struck a chord with me as it presents a very different perspective from the often cold, forensic and scientific presentation of the study and care of ancient human remains in museums, particularly in television documentaries, but also in the media and sometimes in museum displays. It also marries with my own encounters with Lindow Man as a curator formerly responsible for his care.

In this paper I will reflect further on these personal perspectives and also consider the different reactions to human remains in museum collections made by those who care for

# Day 2—Session 4

them, the curators, collections managers and visitor services staff whose job it is to ensure their preservation and safety. These, often humane, responses to human remains in museum collections are rarely reflected upon in academic discourse and debates about the ethics of displaying and storing ancient human remains and they have much to tell us I think about the care of human remains in museums.

**The Whispering Dead**

**Cat Irving (Surgeons' Hall Museums)**
*in-person speaker*

Surgeons' Hall Museums holds the largest collection of surgical pathology in the world, and behind each piece of preserved tissue in the collection is a very human story. This paper will look at the way investigations into the records of the collection can elucidate some of these stories and what that can tell us about the lives of the people of Edinburgh through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. By considering the way collections like this were acquired we can see that these were often some of the poorest members of society, whose stories tend not to be told, and this can give us an insight into understanding their lives. By thinking about the lives of the people whose remains are in our collection we can give them agency, transforming them from just a didactic teaching object and restoring humanity. We have to acknowledge that this is not a complete process, and however well-intentioned we are still only getting a partial picture of their lives which will itself by coloured by our own experiences. Nonetheless, the dead continue to whisper to us.

# Day 2—Session 5

## 14:00-15:40, Friday 12 May 2023

## Studying the Dead: Curation and Archival Research of Human Remains

### (Re)presentating Human Remains in Academic Research. Dealing with Forensic Reports and Images of Corpses

**Dr Miriam Saqqa-Carazo (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

Human remains are not only exposed to inappropriate and unethical use, but also the traces they have left in the historical archives. Anthropological and medical reports are some places where they are represented. The archives contain graphic material and documents that describe and expose living or dead bodies, many of which have suffered violence in the past. The fact that this material refers to people from other historical moments should not mean an unwise use. Through my research in archives, mainly from violent conflicts of the mid-twentieth century, I have been confronted with judicial and forensic documentation that included images of people who had suffered violent deaths and images of exhumation processes where corpses were exposed, even exhibited. Likewise, the personal information compiled from these individuals is another layer of exposure that must be considered. Throughout my research, I had to ask myself many questions that challenged me on how to use this sensitive documentation for academic proposes. Discussing particular cases, I would like to present the protocols applied in my research. Through these questions and protocols, I intend, among other things, to discuss the necessary level of exposure of this archival material in academic publications and, in turn, to demonstrate the importance of including these ethical approaches in research that confronts past violence and its material evidence.

### Archival archaeology: understanding historic approaches to recording, researching and curating human remains in British Mandate Palestine

**Dr Rachael Sparks (University College London) & Dr Nina Maaranen (Bournemouth University/University of Sheffield)**
*in-person speaker*

The period between the two World Wars was a time of intensive archaeological activity in Mandatory Palestine, where foreign field projects frequently encountered human remains in their work —in post-medieval cemeteries overlying the tell sites they wished to excavate, and

# Day 2—Session 5

ancient cemeteries, often located on the flat agricultural land surrounding these tells. This paper proposes to explore the way in which these excavators engaged with the skeletal material they uncovered, the research agendas that influenced their decision making, and how this has impacted current and future use of the assemblages created.

The focus of the paper will be the work of Sir Flinders Petrie and his field staff at Tell Jemmeh, Tell Fara, and Tell el-'Ajjul, where Petrie's team excavated over 2000 burials. Some 127 specimens were extracted and sent to Karl Pearson's biometric laboratory at UCL to support his programme of craniological research. This material was transferred to the newly-created Duckworth Laboratory in 1945, where the collection came to be largely forgotten until the authors initiated their current study.

The ethical issues behind the early 20th century adoption of ancient skulls to support biometric studies and wider eugenic agendas are well known, as is Petrie's involvement in this work. What we did not expect to find was that some 64% of the curated remains were post-medieval, quite probably modern, in date. These appear to have been collected without any published record of their existence or associated contexts, in contrast to the treatment given to ancient burials from the same sites. This paper will explore the implications of this, as well as wider issues surrounding the historic objectification of human remains, reconceptualised as specimens and displaced from their former identities — both culturally, in separation of person from their burial place, and physically, through the separation of skull from body.

**London Bodies and Beyond: Reflecting on past exhibitions**

**Jelena Bekvalac (Museum of London)**
*online speaker*

The Museum of London over the last forty six years has accumulated a substantial Archaeological Archive from archaeological excavations in response to building developments undertaken in the City of London and Greater London Area. The Centre for Human Bioarchaeology is a key part of the archive curating the extensive osteological collection, connecting the human skeletal remains with valuable contextual information. The osteological collection has been pivotal not only for research in the osteological field but also a lead on discussions in exhibitions, best practice for display and ethical considerations. From the ground breaking London Bodies exhibition in 1998, where for the first time the presence of human skeletal remains were the central focus of the exhibition, to the first Wellcome Skeletons exhibition in 2008 and later regional touring exhibitions (2016 -218), Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men and Roman Dead, the museum has had a major role in exhibitions with human skeletal remains. Each exhibition raised different ethical concerns and challenges enabling an opportunity for valuable discussions around the individual exhibition themes, the treatment of the remains and a means for insight to the

# Day 2—Session 5

many contributory factors influencing an exhibition.

**Human remains, material culture and museums: An object-based approach**

**Dr Ayesha Fuentes (University of Cambridge)**
*in-person speaker*

This paper will present examples of human remains used as a substrate for cultural objects from the perspective of a conservator specializing in the care and handling of archaeological and ethnographic collections. This will include specific cases where human teeth, bones, hair, body parts and fluids have been utilized into objects of personal adornment, ritual implements, musical instruments and protective devices like charms and amulets. Examples will be drawn from various continents, historical periods and cultural groups from across the globe and here in the UK. These objects will be discussed in terms of their techniques for construction and handling, as well as the ways in which they illustrate the material value of human remains in different traditions of skill and knowledge production.

This work proposes to expand on current museum discourse focused on issues of repatriation and consent in order to engage with the ways in which the utilization of human remains in material culture demonstrates a diversity of understandings and values for the human body and its death. Further, this paper will explore how the legal responsibilities of museum caretakers – as described in the 2005 UK Department of Media Culture and Sport guidance for the care of human remains, for example – are distinct from the ethical obligations of cultural historians working in a museum environment and how the need to be precise about an object's context, function and interpretation is essential for its appropriate care and documentation.

Research presented here will be shaped by the author's practical experience as a conservator and researcher in material religion as well as her current postdoctoral position as the Isaac Newton Trust Research Associate in Conservation at the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

# Day 2—Session 6

## 16:00-17:40, Friday 12 May 2023

## Reflecting on Epistemology, Spirituality, and the Social Dead

### "I'm Not Paying 6k For A Half (Brain) If There's No Story Behind It": How The Human Remains Trade Determines Market 'Value'?

**Dr. Damien Huffer (University of Queensland) & Prof. Shawn Graham* (Carleton University)**
**online speaker*

Over the last several years, academia, law enforcement and the public has become increasingly aware that the private commercial collecting of a wide range of human remains has found a ready home on numerous e-commerce and social media platforms. This is in addition to the auction houses and brick and mortar stores through which all manner of antiquities are sold worldwide. This growing collecting community is able to find and sell to each other through the internet and the general lack of moderation of black and grey markets on most platforms. Ultimately, human remains trafficking threatens humanity's shared heritage, potentially jeopardizes crime scene integrity, and can be a direct injustice to descendent community's Ancestors. Most research into how this market functions (including ours) has taken a macro and generally quantitative approach, but much remains to be understood that qualitative analyses can reveal, especially considering that most dealers do not post prices publicly anymore. Here, we present several case studies drawn from our archives of anonymized sales posts and associated comments that speak to an open-ended question: how is market value determined? Future research will explore this question in more depth. The case studies presented here, however, are illustrative of how 'fair prices' are negotiated and alleged scammers are mitigated demonstrates the potential for qualitative descriptive analysis to illuminate aspects of collecting community dynamics potentially useful to law enforcement investigations and public outreach designed to reduce demand.

### The Dead as Clickbait: Images of Human Remains in British Online News Outlets

**Ellie Chambers (University of Chester)**
*online speaker*

Online news is one of the main sources of information for the British public, with

# Day 2—Session 6

engagement increasing significantly year on year, further accelerated by the pandemic. Archaeological research is regularly reported by such outlets, offering a far greater reach than analogue public engagement projects and enabling the dissemination of research across the social web. The implications of the scale of this form of engagement is yet to be sufficiently considered in archaeological literature, and the resulting ethical considerations for the use of images of human remains in news articles has not received critical attention in the same way that it has for museums or on social media. Once placed in a news article, the context of human remains is often removed and any educational purpose is replaced with the sole intention of generating engagement- the dead become clickbait. Building on my PhD research, I will share data relating to the prominence of images of human remains in six major British online news outlets, and discuss the trends and common narratives associated with such images. Using this data, I will demonstrate how images of the dead are misused in online news outlets and consider how this influences the public's understanding of the dead, the political uses of images of human remains, and the 'othering' of past and global peoples through archaeological reporting in online news.

**Transcultural Epistemic Dialogue and Literary Encounters with Ancestral Remains: Beth Piatote's Antíkoni**

**Dr Svetlana Seibel (Saarland University)**
*in-person speaker*

"What do the living owe the dead?" In her adaptation of Sophocles' Antigone, Nez Perce scholar and writer Beth Piatote poses this question as a central one. The play, published in 2019 as part of her collection The Beadworkers: Stories, is set in a contemporary museum and inspired by the discussion and controversy surrounding the discovery of The Ancient One (Kennewick Man). By dealing with this topic through the genre of Greek tragedy, Piatote dramatizes and interrogates both ethical and political stakes of repatriation and the protocols of handling the ancestral remains. Piatote's adaptation demonstrates the significance of artistic interventions for debates surrounding ethical approaches to ancestral remains, not least by contextualizing them in relation to Indigenous political struggles in North America. In this, the embodied nature of drama as a performative art provides an additional layer of meaning, as demonstrated by the production of Antíkoni at Berkeley's Hearst Museum of Anthropology. Here, aesthetics resonates with the politics of space, and the production creates meaning through these interactions as it embeds Piatote's artistic practice into institutional and scientific debate and relations of power. Lastly, creating a dialogue between Indigenous storytelling and Greek tragedy the play implicates the foundations of Western thought and artistic practice into these discussions, effectively facilitating a transcultural conversation and searching for points of convergence in ethics and epistemologies connected to death.

# Day 2—Session 6

**Art, Grief, and the Reclamation of Body**

**Charles Clary (Coastal Carolina University)**
*in-person speaker*

This paper explores the relationship between grief, loss, my conceptualized art making, and how these processes can reinvigorate creativity by providing a life line or outlet through the grieving process. Artists such as Teresa Margolis, Marc Quinn, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Justin Crowe, The Martin Funeral Home and Nan Goldin all explore death and mourning in varied iterations both through the documentation of the process of dying as well as the metaphorical symbolism of death and then human body. With the unexpected loss of both my parents in 2013 due to smoking related cancers, the conceptual ideation of my art practice changed drastically and irrevocably. My work transformed into sinewy investigations of muscle, cancer cells and the degradation of the body through chemotherapy and radiation treatments. The fragility of paper mimics that of my mothers body as she fought her cancer for seven months and slowly faded away. My work seeks to provide catharsis, and a reimagining of healing, both physically and psychologically, through the lens of Memento Mori, large scale paper sculptures and installations. By immersing myself in this trauma I am able to cope with the vast void that has been carved and excavated from my being and find a way to surmount the unescapable inevitability of death.

# Art, Death & The Human Body

The image on the cover of this programme is taken from an artwork by US artist Charles Clary. Charles' work seeks to provide catharsis, and a reimagining of healing, both physically and psychologically, through the lens of Memento Mori, large scale paper sculptures and installations. Charles will be talking about his work in the paper 'Art, Grief, and the Reclamation of the Body' in Session 6 of the symposium. Charles currently lives and works in Conway, South Carolina, where he is an Associate Professor of Studio Art and Foundations Coordinator at Coastal Carolina University.

Charles Clary, he/him, was born in 1980 in Morristown, Tennessee, USA. He received his BFA in painting with honours from Middle Tennessee State University and his MFA in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design. He has shown in exhibitions at Galerie Evolution-Pierre Cardin in Paris, France, The Netherlands' CODA Museum Paper Biennial in 2021, The Shanghai Paper Biennial in 2021, Art of Paper Fair in New York City, and many other international, national, and regional juried, group, solo, and museum exhibitions.

# Art, Death & The Human Body

Clary won Top Prize at the 2016 ArtFields Competition in Lake City, SC, and in 2019 he won both People's Choice Award for 2D and the Merit Prize at ArtFields. He recently sold three commissioned pieces to Google corporate offices, and he was named the HTC Distinguished Teacher-Scholar at Coastal Carolina University in 2022, the highest award bestowed upon a faculty member by the university. Clary has been featured in numerous print and Internet interviews including, Create! Magazine, Candyfloss, This is Colossal, WIRED magazine (US and UK), Hi Fructose, Beautiful Deay, and Bluecanvas Magazine. He has also been featured in publications including 500 Paper Objects, Paper Works, Paper Art, Papercraft 2, and PUSH: Paper. Charles has exhibited regionally, nationally, and internationally in numerous solo and group shows, is represented by Paradigm Gallery + Studio in Philadelphia, Artspace 305 in Miami Florida, and R02 Gallery in Dallas, Texas.

# Notes


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