

# DECOLONIZING NATURAL HISTORIES

## *Critical and practical perspectives in museum contexts*

15–17 March 2023

While decolonization has been the subject of much recent discussion in both ethnological and archaeological collections, it has largely been absent from natural history contexts. In addressing this topic in a natural history museum, this three-day conference will examine the circumstances under which non-European collections have found their way into European natural history museums and develop practical tools for both collections management and public mediation that represent and include the participation of a diversity of voices and experiences.

Specifically, speakers from different Latin American and European countries will develop a critical reflection on decolonial thought and practices, including the identification of key issues and practices in a natural history context. Participatory workshops and other activities will also aim to create a space for meaningful exchange among participants to lay the groundwork for future collaborations and to develop practical toolkits for natural history museums and museum professionals interested in engaging in decolonial practices.

#### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Tomás Bartoletti (ETHZ), Denise Bertschi (EPFL),  
Celia Bueno (MHNN), Jessica Litman (MHNN), Ewa Maczek (OCIM),  
Ludovic Maggioni (MHNN), Mathieu Viau-Courville (OCIM)

#### SUPPORTED BY:



#### REGISTRATION

Click here: [bit.ly/neuchatel-registration](https://bit.ly/neuchatel-registration)  
Deadline registration: 3 March 2023  
Contact: [laure.nador@u-bourgogne.fr](mailto:laure.nador@u-bourgogne.fr)  
Registration free of charge.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit [www.naming-natures.ch](http://www.naming-natures.ch) and [www.ocim.fr](http://www.ocim.fr).  
The conferences will be held in English with some  
workshops in French. All events will take place on site.  
Some video recordings will be made available online.

#### LOCATION

Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle Neuchâtel MHNN  
Rue des Terreaux 14  
2000 Neuchâtel  
Switzerland

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## Wednesday 15 March 2023

17:00	Meeting point at Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle Neuchâtel MHNN	18:00–18:45	Guided tour of the exhibition <i>Mouvement</i> at the Musée d'Art et Histoire MAHN
17:15–17:45	Visit to the statue of David de Pury in downtown Neuchâtel	19:00	Apero at MAHN (Visits will be given in English.)

## Thursday 16 March 2023

08:00–09:00	Welcome and registration	12:30–14:00	LUNCH BREAK (upon registration, CHF 25)*
09:00–09:30	Opening remarks	14:00–15:30	2 <sup>nd</sup> Panel: <i>Collecting past and present: challenges for the future</i>
Speakers:	Ludovic Maggioni (MHNN) Mathieu Viau-Courville (OCIM) Tomás Bartoletti (ETH Zurich) Thomas Facchinetti (Dicastère de la Culture de la Ville de Neuchâtel)	In this panel, we will discuss past collecting practices and compare them to contemporary ones, to demonstrate how the ethics of collecting natural history specimens has changed through time. Given these changes, we will also discuss what collections in the future may look like.	Speakers: Ina Heumann (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin) Anne Gabrielle Wüst Saucy (Schweizerisches Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU) Moderator: Geraldine Delley (Laténium, Université de Neuchâtel)
09:30–10:30	Keynote: <i>Miranda Lowe, CBE (Natural History Museum London)</i>	15:30–16:00	COFFEE BREAK
In this keynote conference, Miranda Lowe will bring together innovative thinking and practices in natural history museums, from both her work in the natural sciences and her involvement in creating the barrier-breaking project <i>Museum Detox</i> .		16:00–18:00	Workshop: <i>New Voices and Approaches on Decolonization in Latin American Contexts</i>
10:30–11:00	COFFEE BREAK	Introduction: Ludovic Maggioni (MHNN) Moderation: Tomás Bartoletti (ETH Zurich) Aldo Benites Palomino (University of Zurich) Marcelo Sánchez-Villagra (University of Zurich) Fernanda Guedes and Alexander Kellner (Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro)	
11:00–12:30	1 <sup>st</sup> Panel: <i>Decolonial thought in contemporary museum practice</i>	18:00–18:30	<i>Connecting communities</i>
In this panel, Sharon Heal and Bruno Brulon Soares will provide views from the UK and Latin America on how to tackle the challenge of decolonizing museum institutions.	Speakers: Sharon Heal (Museums Association London, UK) Bruno Brulon Soares (University of St. Andrews, Scotland) Moderator: Mathieu Viau-Courville (OCIM)	Speakers: Amazo-NE Asociación Machu Picchu	
		18:30–19:30	APERRO
		19:30	DINNER (upon registration, CHF 50 professionals, CHF 35 students)*

## Friday 17 March 2023

08:00–09:00	Coffee & opening session: Ludovic Maggioni (MHNN)	12:15–13:45	LUNCH BREAK (upon registration, CHF 25)*
09:00–10:30	3 <sup>rd</sup> Panel: <i>Naming natures</i>	13:45–16:00	Workshop: <i>Public oriented museum practices</i>
A panel where we discuss how different communities from different contexts relate to the natural world around them, how they name species in the natural world and the place they hold in their cosmologies. Can different systems of classification exist in parallel? Or does one system always eclipse the other?	Speakers: Victor Gonzalez (University of Kansas) Benki Piyako (Ashaninka knowledge keeper – via video) Sophie Lalignant (University of Tours) Moderator: Jessica Litman (MHNN)	Introduction: Olivia Fahmy (independent art historian and curator) Priska Gisler (Bern Academy of the Arts HKB) Noémie Étienne (University of Vienna) Moderation: Denise Bertschi (EPFL Lausanne)	
		16:00–16:30	Conclusions and perspectives
10:30–11:00	COFFEE BREAK	Speakers: Mathieu Viau Courville (OCIM) Ludovic Maggioni (MHNN) Tomás Bartoletti (ETH Zurich) Denise Bertschi (EPFL Lausanne) Jessica Litman (MHNN)	
11:00–12:15	4 <sup>th</sup> Panel: <i>Decolonizing natural sciences through contemporary art</i>	16:30–18:00	APERRO

The aim is to discuss exhibition practices between natural science and contemporary art. It is based on a reflection on how artistic practices can enrich the process of dealing with contested natural history collections in aiming towards decolonization. Some examples of such transdisciplinary exhibition projects and methodology will be discussed.

Speakers: Bergit Arends (Courtauld Institute of Art, London)  
Bianca Baldi (Sint Lucas Antwerpen Research)  
Moderator: Denise Bertschi (EPFL Lausanne)

\* Pre-order meal options will be offered on the online registration form and payable on the morning of the conference, Thursday, 16 March, by cash or card.