

VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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SPRING 2024 EVENTS

Images Out of Time Seminar



THURSDAY, APRIL 18

12:30-2pm PST

THH 309K

The Crisis of the Museum of Other People

ADAM KUPER

Visiting Professor, Department of Anthropology, The London School of Economics and Political Science

Co-sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and the Levan Institute for the Humanities

Readings and links for Images Out of Time events will be made available when you RSVP to vsri@usc.edu.

Museums of Other People are in crisis, and the crisis may be terminal. They are condemned for collusion with imperialism, stand accused of promoting racial stereotypes, and face a clamour for the return of treasures looted from long gone empires.

The crisis is also, and just as fundamentally, an intellectual crisis. These museums failed to reimagine their role in a post-colonial world. Unable to provide a clear and compelling answer to fundamental questions about their vocation, they are vulnerable to the challenge of identity museums along the Mall in Washington D.C., and struggle to match the glamour of museums of "primitive art" in New York, Paris and Berlin.

What is to be done? Museums of Other People should engage with their own histories, address the historical contexts of empire, and come to terms with a plural world. Exhibitions should contextualise local histories, trace cross-currents of trade and ideas, reflect on relationships between now and then, and here and there. They must share in the training of curators, mount collaborative travelling exhibitions, even operate as lending libraries. They need to become cosmopolitan museums.

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