

# Symposium

**Restitution and Reparation Issues in Ghana. Experiences from the Past –  
Perspectives for the Present and Future**

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2022

Time: 09:00-16:00 UTC/GMT

Venue: J.H.K. Nketia Conference Hall, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana  
on-site & via zoom

## **Keynote: Professor Bénédicte Savoy (Technical University, Berlin)**

Bénédicte Savoy holds full professorship in the Department of Art History at Technische Universität Berlin since 2009, where she currently serves as Chair for Modern Art History/Art History as Cultural History. From 2016 to 2021 she also held the "chaire internationale" at the Collège de France in Paris (Histoire culturelle des patrimoines artistiques en Europe, XVIIIe-XXe siècle).

Together with the Senegalese author and academic Felwine Sarr, she prepared the groundbreaking report on repatriation from French museums commissioned by French president Emmanuel Macron. The report is entitled: *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics*; and is also known as the *Sarr-Savoy Report* (2018). Bénédicte Savoy is author of a new book entitled *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat* (2022).

Chair: Professor Wazi Apoh (Dean, School of Arts, University of Ghana)

The Symposium is organised by the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) and the School of Arts, University of Ghana



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## **Restitution and Reparation Issues in Ghana. Experiences from the Past – Perspectives for the Present and Future**

As part of the Day of Scientific Renaissance of Africa celebrations, this symposium is organised by the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) in collaboration with the School of Arts, University of Ghana. It addresses the issue of colonially taken cultural objects from Africa as well as past and ongoing claims for restitution and reparations. Restitution claims have a long history in Africa. In 1971, the Ghanaian film-maker Nii Kwate Owoo published his film “You Hide Me”. The film made a clear case for returning African cultural objects enclosed in museums and their depots outside the African continent. In 1974, Ghana initiated a claim for the restitution of Asante gold objects, which had been looted by the British Army, a hundred years before. Despite these ground-breaking initiatives in the 1970s, the debate about restitution and reparation, as well as the concrete steps forward have only evolved slowly in Ghana. Moreover, they have been left widely unnoticed by experts, political leaders and broader audiences. This is about to change with the global momentum which, for the first time, is pushing a large number of museums in the global North to be ready to facilitate the return of objects to their source regions.

This symposium contributes to this debate. It looks back to past and present restitution claims, but also raises the question of how to put restitution into practice and which additional claims are related to it. For this purpose, the symposium allows for a conversation between one of the most prolific global specialists in the area of research on restitution and its political dynamics, Prof. Bénédicte Savoy (Technical University Berlin), and with the leading researchers of this topic as well as central institutional stakeholders in Ghana. The symposium is inspired by MIASA’s ongoing research on the restitution of colonially taken African objects, which was implemented as one of the institute’s intersectional topics at its German-Ghanaian-sponsored programme on “Sustainable Governance”. At the same time, the symposium benefits from the long-standing research in this field conducted at the University of Ghana’s School of Arts and the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies. Moreover, the symposium acknowledges the important role that the UNESCO has played since the early 1970s by issuing regular resolutions on the return of cultural property to the countries of origin.



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## **Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA)**

The Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) was created in 2018 at the College of Humanities of the University of Ghana (UG), Legon campus. It is based on a collaboration with a consortium of four German partners: the University of Freiburg (leading partner), Goethe University Frankfurt, the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, and the German Historical Institute Paris. The institute is part of the Maria Sibylla Merian initiative in the Social Sciences and Humanities and sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and benefits of co-funding from the University of Ghana.

MIASA serves as a platform for German-African research collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities by exploring the issue of “Sustainable Governance” in an interdisciplinary perspective. Its intellectual agenda aims at reducing asymmetries in global knowledge production and to contribute towards making African thinking increasingly relevant in academic debates. In collaboration with its partners in Germany and at the University of Ghana, MIASA organizes a broad range of events, and offers time and space for supporting innovative academic research of top international quality through its residential fellowship programme.

Webpage: <https://www.ug.edu.gh/mias-africa/>

Blog: <https://miasa.hypotheses.org/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/MIASA\\_UG](https://twitter.com/MIASA_UG)

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### **Announcement: Book Launch**

#### **Bénédicte Savoy: *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat*, 2022**

The Goethe Institute Ghana organizes in collaboration with the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa a book launch of Prof. Bénédicte Savoy's book *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat*, published by Princeton University Press in 2022: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691234731/africas-struggle-for-its-art>), translation by Susanne Meyer-Abich. The book reflects the history of how African nations, starting in the 1960s, sought to reclaim the art looted by Western colonial powers, but also how Western museums withhold information about their depots and inventory and aimed at making forget the claims. Savoy argues that restitution is essential to any future relationship between African countries and the West. The publisher highlights that *Africa's Struggle for Its Art* “will shape conversations around these crucial issues for years to come”.

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2022

Time: 16:00 UTC/GMT

Venue: Goethe Institute Ghana