

Call for Papers

Date : April 20, 2008

Conference on "Ownership and Appropriation" (Auckland, New Zealand, 8-12 December 2008)
Panel on "Cosmopolitanism and the Appropriation of Culture"

Co-organisers: Mark Busse (University of Auckland) and Jade Baker (University of Canterbury)

In a chapter of his 2006 book *Cosmopolitanism*, provocatively titled "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?", Kwame Anthony Appiah argued that objects of cultural value "belong in the deepest sense to all of us" and "are of potential value to all human beings". While reminding us of our common humanity, cosmopolitan claims to a universal connection to art (what Appiah called "the connection despite difference") are also an appropriation—a claim to pan-human ownership that sidesteps political and economic inequalities in the contemporary world. These inequalities privilege people living in metropolitan centres who have access to public museums and art galleries, and allow only the wealthiest individuals to enjoy valuable cultural objects on a daily basis. This panel will further debates arising from cosmopolitan claims of universal ownership of cultural objects, and the on-going appropriations underwritten by such claims. It will do this by comparing and contrasting connections "despite difference" with what Appiah called "the connection to art through identity" (the connections people feel to objects that were created by their ancestors), as well as the concrete manifestations of such connections in art markets, histories of cultural objects in museums and private collections, the significance of repatriation in a globalizing world, and arguments against the cosmopolitan position which emphasize the entanglement of objects, persons, communities and places.

This panel continues discussions started at a special session of the College Arts Association in New York in February 2007, the proceedings of which are being published as a forthcoming special issue of the [International Journal of Cultural Property](#)

The conference on "Ownership and Appropriation" is a joint conference of the Association of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, the Australian Anthropological Society, and the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand. For further information, see the conference website:

<http://www.theasa.org/asa08/index.htm> or contact the conference organisers Professor Veronica Strang (v.strang [at] auckland.ac.nz) or Dr Mark Busse (m.busse [at] auckland.ac.nz).