

**Opening remarks by Dr Magali An Berthon, Postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen, and convener of the research workshop *CONFLICT: Archives, Collections, and Heritage* on March 25, 2024 at the University of Copenhagen South Campus, Denmark.**

I would like to thank you all for coming and attending this event. My name is Magali An BERTHON, I am a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Textile Research here at the University of Copenhagen. It's my pleasure to welcome you to this day of discussions and research. I thought I would just start with just a few words about what brings us here today in terms of topics and conversations and interests.

So, *CONFLICT: Archives, Collections, and Heritage* is a research workshop which aims to explore the concept of cultural heritage, archives, and museum collections in context of conflict and post-conflict times. I am myself, a textile-historian, focusing on Cambodia's modern and contemporary history, which, as you know, has been marked, among others, by the French colonisation, the civil war in the 1970s, and the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. So, to me this topic is particularly relevant and has been part of a 2,5-year research project through the fellowship here at the centre.

With what is happening currently in Ukraine, in Gaza, in Myanmar, or Sudan, or with regards to the wave of inquiry into the acquisition histories of museum collections and artefacts in Western museums, it appears very clearly to me that endangered cultural sites and museum collections, looting, illicit antiquity trade, and repatriation are pressing issues to be discussed across periods, cultures, places, and disciplines. Moreover, the idea of conflict can be applied to objects themselves and how we research them - when they are missing, for example, when they have incomplete or incorrect data, or when their existence relies on partial evidence.

And finally, the final chapter of this day is to discuss how art, artists, and artisans may also provide invaluable answers to these contexts of conflict and cultural memory and material loss in other ways than scholarly approaches, building bridges between memory, people, restoration, and preservation. So, these are some of the key points that I hope will emerge in the rich conversations of the day.

And another thing to note is this event is organised in conjunction with an exhibition *The Art of Ikat: A Cambodian Renaissance*, which opened on February 22, 2024, on campus here at the Royal University Library. This event was made possible with the generous support of the EU MSCA Actions Horizon 2020, the Carlsberg Foundation, and the CL. Davids Collection Foundation. I also want to thank Morten Grymer-Hansen who's here, Luisa Dominguez Rey, who helped me as my research assistant, Sarah Jagd, and Camilla [Fraas Rasmussen] also, for helping me set up this event today.

And without further due, I will now introduce our keynote speaker. It's an honour to welcome Prof. Ashley Thompson, Hiram W Woodward Chair of Southeast Asian Art at SOAS University of London. She maintains a sustained research focus on premodern Cambodian arts and literatures, and complements this with more punctual work on the contemporary period and the arts of the larger Southeast Asian region. She leads – this is hard to pronounce, I've practiced! – *Circumambulating Objects: Paradigms of Restitution of Southeast Asian Art*. I didn't do so bad, I'm proud! A three-year research program funded by the Getty Foundation. Her keynote today is entitled *On Decoloniality and Restitution in Cambodia Today*.

Thank you, professor. I will leave you to the screen.

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