

July 2022

Dear Reader

The past month has seen *Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts* slow down as we wind down towards the summer and the much-needed rest it ushers in. Prior to this rest, over June and July, I had the honour of spending time in Germany as one of 55 fellows of TheMuseumsLab 2022. TheMuseumsLab, in its own words, ‘is a programme developed to support professional exchanges between curators, researchers, and executives, working in museums, galleries and heritage sites across African and European countries’. The fellowship was a great opportunity to exchange experiences working in museums and with difficult stories and objects. Often the conversations led us to topics of restitution, decolonization and a consensus that the museum as we know it needs some rethinking.

As part of the programme, over a week we were led through the collections of Berlin’s natural history museum, city museums and botanical gardens, and introduced to some of the object therein. The collections are huge and old, some dating back to as early as the 17th century. And with collections such as these, most of the objects, or materials some objects are made from, have origins elsewhere and more often than not tell a history of colonial violence and looting. Alongside this, the massiveness of the collections truly perturbed me. Perhaps it was the density of going through and learning about the depots of 3 collections in as many days and thus for the first time, being able to have an image of what one means when they speak of the ‘collection’ and its depot. The three collections together tell a particular (colonial) story and history. This points to the notion that a collection is not just a number of objects collated under one museum, but also a set of histories, of stories and, perhaps most poignantly, a practice in specific and particular cosmologies, which point to a set of ethics and demarcations.

Inherent in some collections is the naturalized logic that collections must grow and contain the entirety of the world (or art histories). This logic is no doubt tangential to and at home in modernity but efforts to de-modernise and de-colonise point to that it is no longer a given. A collection like the one we will be building as part of *Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts* has no intentions to hold the whole world or to be a comprehensive art historical collection, most simply because it cannot. Like most collections, it intends to be a collection based on history, learning, technology and knowledge, and attached to printmaking workshops, the possibilities in each of the 4 cornerstones, are multiplied and positive. One way to rethink museums is to build a collection that dis-

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pells the (modern) age old that there is a 'zero-point' from which to see the world and create and order knowledge in it. With the intention to be a collection that is a place where, unlike some older and bigger collections, the rethinking of established stories is not something done retrospectively. *Samlande tankar/Collecting Thoughts* embraces this and even here there are challenges and questions, new and old to ask. With my TheMuseumsLab Germany chapter now over, I appreciate even more this practice of question and the unique and exciting opportunity that lies ahead.

Thank you for reading and until soon.

Signed,
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Process leader and curator