

GO BACK TO YOUR OWN HOME!

Who owns whose culture? Should I stay or should I go? What can visitors, museum workers and artists do (together)?



Dr Kai Syng Tan FRSA PFHEA @kaisyngtan

2-hour workshop through object-based learning, debate, productively antagonistic cross-disciplinary conversation, practice-led research and co-creation.

On repatriation, cultural ownership and decolonisation of cultural spaces.

With Unit X 2023 *Conversations about Keeping*, with Manchester Art Gallery

GO BACK TO YOUR OWN HOME!

'Go back to your own home' is a refrain cast by 'locals' on 'foreigners' (or 'foreign-looking' [sic] people) in their (adopted) homes. What are the insights of those colonised/with cultural artefacts/aspects stolen?



Dr Kai Syng Tan FRSA PFHEA @kaisyngtan

2-hour workshop through object-based learning, debate, productively antagonistic cross-disciplinary conversation, practice-led research and co-creation.

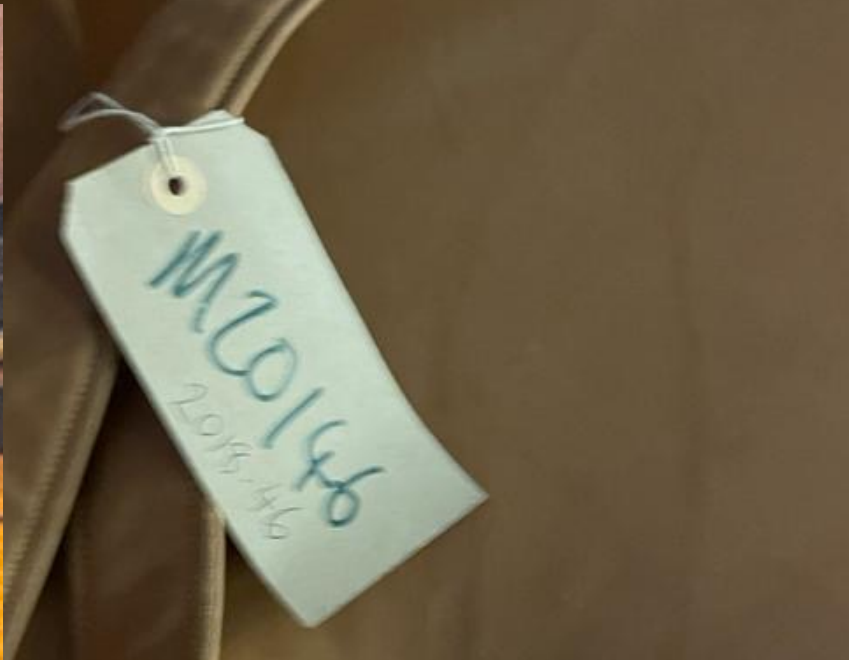
On repatriation, cultural ownership and decolonisation of cultural spaces.

With Unit X 2023 *Conversations about Keeping*, with Manchester Art Gallery

PRE-SESSION TASK



Bring **one object** into the space that **evokes** an element (look? smell? from similar historical era? function?) of the furniture that you saw during our field trip that you were most intrigued by.



STRUCTURE

- **5 minutes:** Getting all bodies and minds into the space
- **30 minutes: Warming up:**
 - Safe(r) space
 - Film clips + provocations
 - Initial responses (+ introductions, pronouns)
- **5-10 minutes: Short break**
- **60 minutes: Exercise:**
 - 30 minutes: Discussions about creative interventions. Groups should activate object(s) that were brought in to space.
 - 30 minutes: Sharing findings; other groups provide feedback
- **15 minutes: ~~Cooling down~~ Kicking Off:**
 - Closing thoughts on learnings and findings
 - Actions (individual, collective): What next?

SAFE(R) SPACES

This is an inclusive space. Ableism, Xenophobia, Transphobia, Homophobia, Racism, Sexism, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and/or any Prejudice based on variations in our cognitive and communicative and behavioural setups, ability, Asylum status, Class, Ethnicity, Gender, Gender presentation, Nationality, or Religion is NOT welcome here.

REFERENCES:

- Neurodiversity In/& Creative Research [Network](#)'s Community guidelines
- The above have in turn been developed from CVAN Community guidelines by Contemporary Visual Arts Network Fair and Equitable Programme by Dr Cecilia Wee, with support from Veionella Spaine
- See: <https://cvan.art/work-campaigns/fair-equitable/>;
- <http://www.withforabout.com/safer-spaces-boundaries>
- <https://www.soulfirefarm.org/about/safer-space/>
- <https://amc.alliedmedia.org/how-to-virtual-amc/community-agreements>

WARMING UP

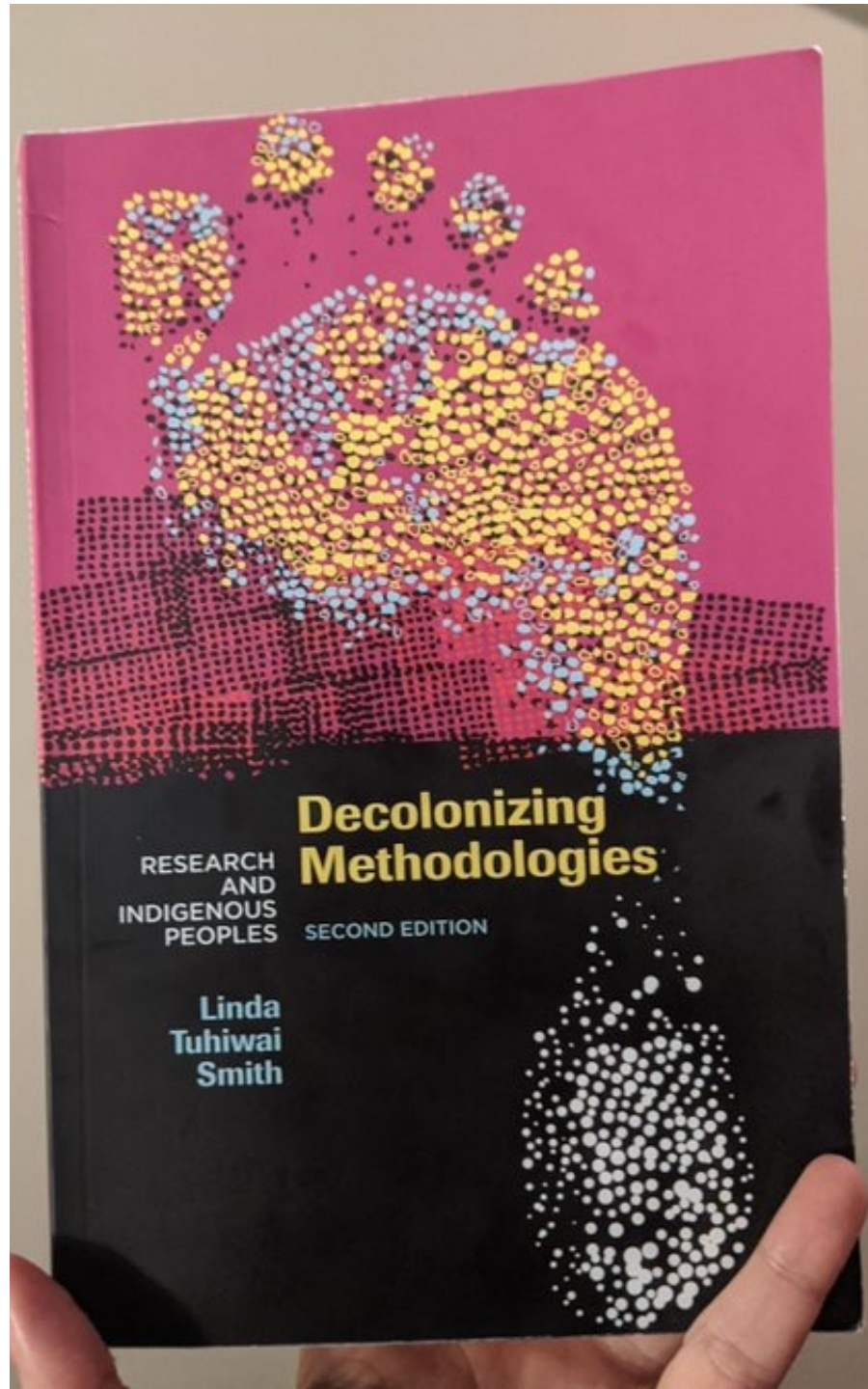
- 1) Share your thoughts about visit
- 2) The leader-ful [Horniman Museum](#) as the [first UK institution to repatriate 72 Benin bronzes](#), looted in 1872, to Nigeria (August 2022), and walking the talk by employing a specialist who has actually has insider knowledge and access to histories, stories and impacts of the artefacts that it keeps ([Benjamin Bunsenze](#) as Curator of Musical Collection and Culture).

View, compare, discuss:

- 2A) Horniman Museum clip (2020): [Kingdom of Benin: Home learning challenge - Horniman Museum and Gardens](#) 2'00"
- 2B) Lace Iyamu's Edo TV interview (2022): [A Chat with The Chair of The Horniman Museum London on The Return of Benin Bronzes](#) 4'00"
- 3) Vox film (2020) [The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts](#) 9'31"

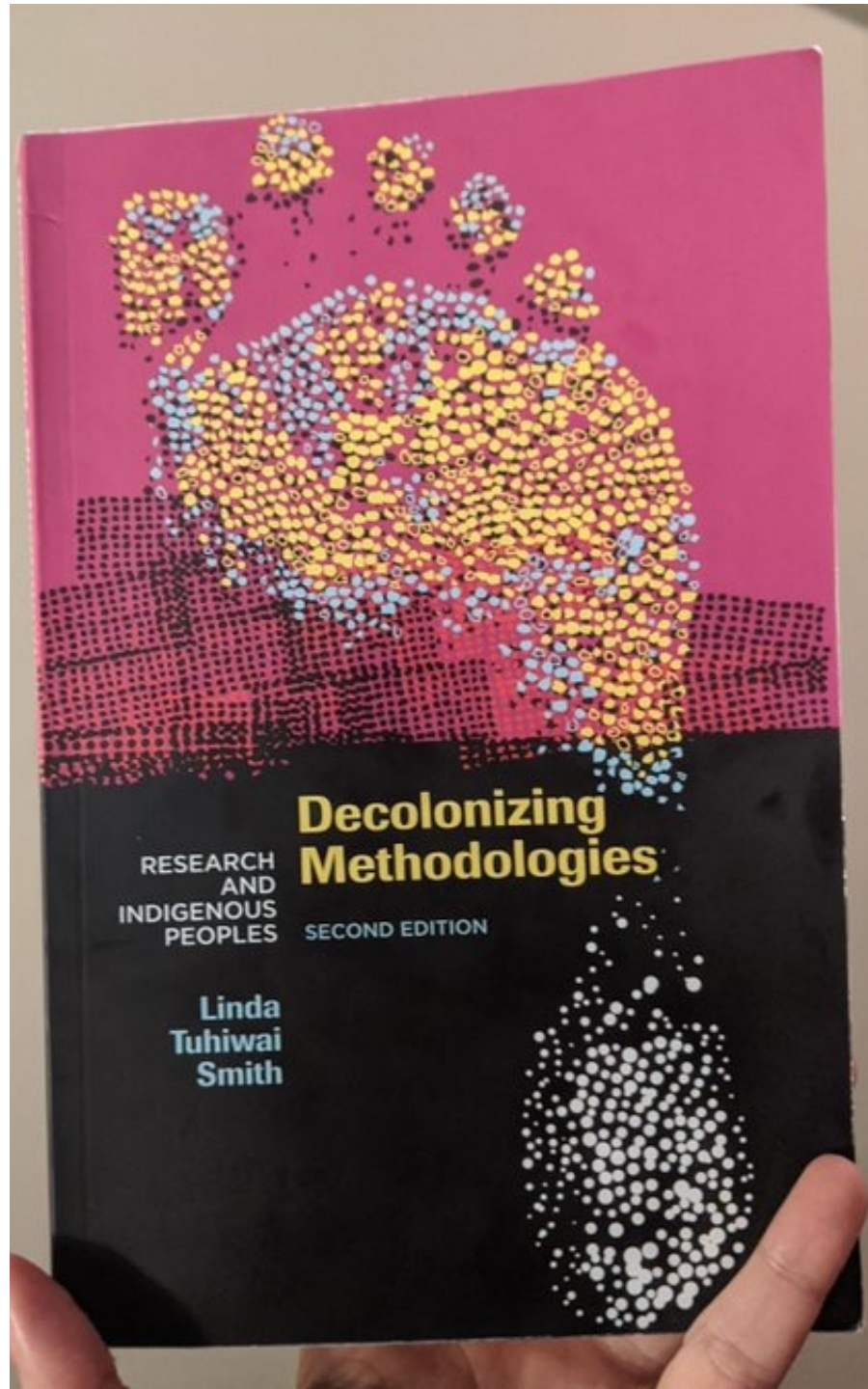
‘The globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly **reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge, and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge.**’

Photo from Twitter [thread](#) by social designer Sarah Fathallah from Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2021) (first edition: 1999) [Decolonizing Methodologies](#). Zed Books, a seminal book by [Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith CNZM](#)



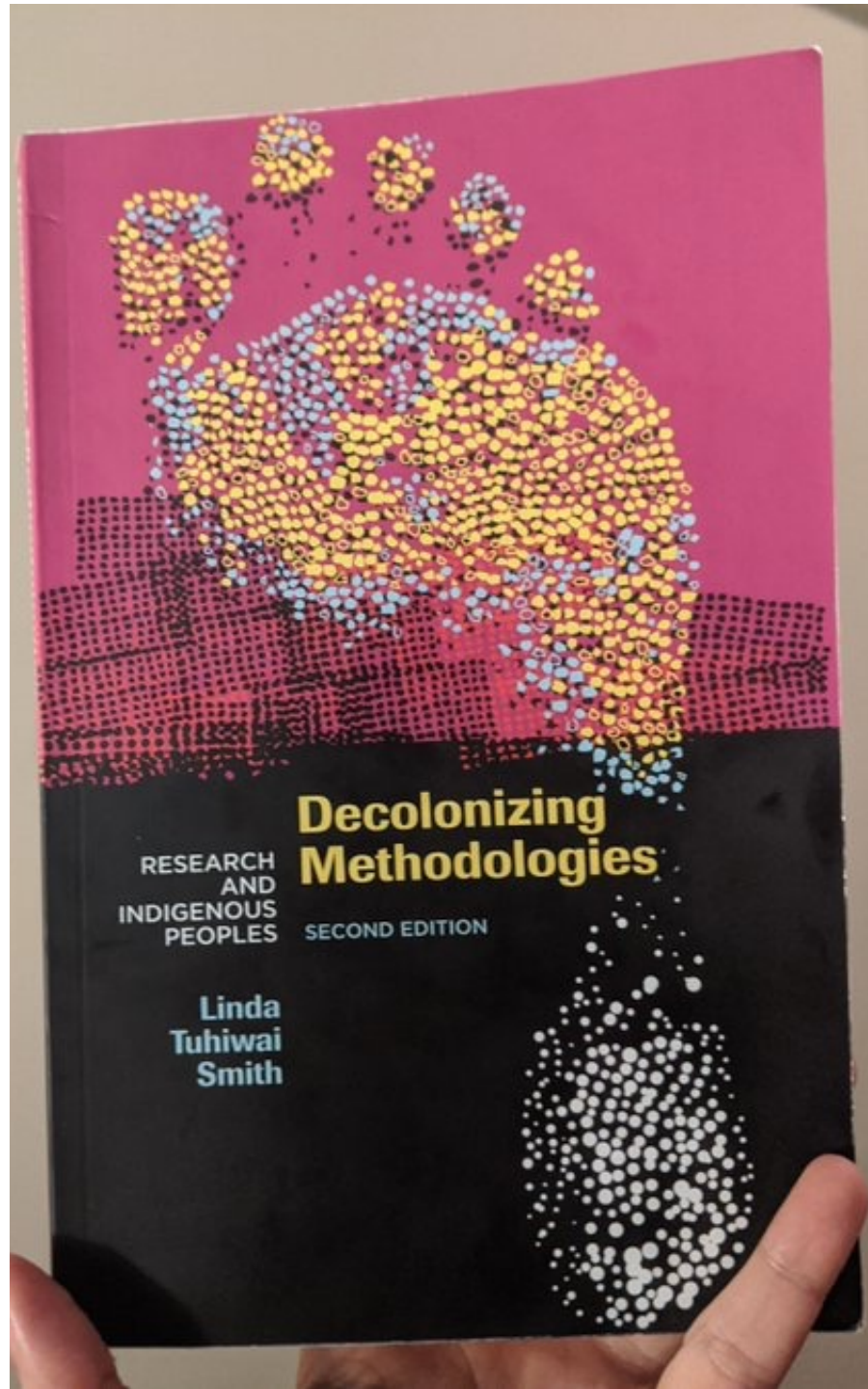
- ‘Knowledge (and thus research) is something **discovered, extracted, appropriated, and distributed.**’
- ‘Colonialism wasn’t just about collection. It was also about **re-arrangement, re-presentation and re-distribution.**’

Photo from Twitter [thread](#) by social designer Sarah Fathallah from Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2021) (first edition: 1999) [Decolonizing Methodologies](#). Zed Books, a seminal book by [Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith CNZM](#)



‘Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?’

Photo from Twitter [thread](#) by social designer Sarah Fathallah from Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2021) (first edition: 1999) [Decolonizing Methodologies](#). Zed Books, a seminal book by [Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith CNZM](#)



Artist asks British Museum to return Assyrian treasure to Iraq in swap

Sculptor Michael Rakowitz says he will give his fourth-plinth bull to Tate Modern if Iraq can share custody

Guardian 20 Jan 2023



📷 Michael Rakowitz with his sculpture, *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist*, in Trafalgar Square, 2018. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty

- Iraqi-American artist asked [British Museum](#) to return one of its ancient Assyrian treasures to Iraq in exchange for donation of his fourth plinth sculpture to UK.
- Rakowitz's 4th plinth sculpture: Contemporary interpretation of an Assyrian winged bull (*lamassu*), decorated in tins of date syrup (Trafalgar Square 2018- 2020).

SHORT BREAK

EXERCISE

- **30 minutes:** Break into groups for discussions about creative interventions. Groups should activate object(s) that were brought in to space.
- **30 minutes:** Sharing findings; other groups provide feedback

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What can visitors, museum workers and artists do (together)?
- What could creative and co-creative efforts that are 'productive' look like, moving forward?
- What do we mean by 'productive'?
- Are you someone from a culture from which artefacts/aspects have been stolen? Have you stolen from another culture?
- **Whose artefact is it?**
- **Who owns it?**
- **Whose interests does it serve?**
- **Who will benefit from it? Who has written its label and framed its scope?**
- **Who will look after it?**

~~COOLING DOWN~~ KICKING OFF

- Closing thoughts on learnings and findings
- Actions (individual, collective): What next?

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Wellcome](#) retiring its racist Medicine Man exhibition (November 2022)
- [Manchester Museum's return of 43 ceremonial and sacred objects to Aboriginal communities](#) at the 250th anniversary of James Cook's first voyage to the east coast of Australia (2020)
- Wikipedia pages on: international [Benin Dialogue group](#); Benin bronzes; [restitution](#) and [repatriation](#)
- BBC's [Museum of Bad Vibes](#)
- Vox film [The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts](#)
- News clip [Germany to return Benin Bronzes to Nigeria: A new era for stolen artifacts?](#)
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2021) (first edition: 1999) [Decolonizing Methodologies](#). Zed Books. This seminal book by [Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith CNZM](#) contains plenty of powerful analyses and offers an indigenous approach to research that students can apply. As importantly, the book highlights the fundamentally colonialist structures that underpin research and knowledge, which can lend a powerful framework for our exercise here in interrogating how western institutions of knowledge and culture work. See one of the tabs below for detail. The screenshots below are from a [thread](#) by social designer Sarah Fathallah of some of Tuhiwai Smith's insights.