

# MUSEUM MATTERS: A PANEL DISCUSSION SERIES POWERED BY CIPEG

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In 2020, CIPEG conducted a survey to gather feedback from current members about how we can better support the museum Egyptological community and fulfil our committees' role and purpose. Part of this involved reflecting on what we can do to grow our membership numbers, and retain existing members. As a result, we asked survey participants to identify what types of experiences they would like us to offer more of. Among the top suggestions were having "more online offerings"<sup>2</sup> and "more workshops/symposia/activities".<sup>3</sup> In response to this, the CIPEG Board created a new virtual programme titled *Museum Matters: A Panel Discussion Series Powered by CIPEG*. The series aims to bring aspiring and experienced museum professionals closer to important museum matters. Discussions centre on themes relevant to the museum community today and address issues specific to Egyptology and Nubiology, and associated collections worldwide.

## Museum Matters I: Egyptian and Sudanese Collections in Latin America and the Caribbean

Today, museums in Europe and North America are confronting colonial legacies and seeking to provide more transparency about the collections that came into their care. Held on 23 April 2022, the inaugural panel discussion of the Museum Matters series explored this topic from the perspective of museums in Latin America and the Caribbean. What was the impetus for the creation of Egyptian and Nubian collections in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico? How do they fit within European colonialism and the 'Age of Enlightenment'? What role do they play in their respective communities and on the international stage?

The programme started with *Mexico: An American Egypt*, a keynote address by David H. Colmenares,<sup>4</sup> who discussed the Egyptian imaginary that haunted pre-scientific Mesoamerican archaeology, charting the turning points and articulations that led to the

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Ashley Arico, Managing Editor of the CIPEG Journal, for her support during the editing of these contributions and to the authors for accepting the challenge to expand their original contributions. Additional thanks to Denise Doxey and Lara Weiss, who, along with this author, led the taskforce that planned and organised CIPEG's first Museum Matters online event. Thank you to the rest of the Board for their feedback and support.

<sup>2</sup> CIPEG Survey Report: 16. Thank you to CIPEG Board Member Melanie Pitkin, who designed and implemented the survey, for providing references to this report and for reading and commenting on an early draft of this introduction.

<sup>3</sup> CIPEG Survey Report: 43.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of the event, Dr Colmenares was the Moorman-Simon Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at Boston University.

imagined entanglement of these otherwise unrelated civilisations (not published here). This 20-minute talk was followed by four 10-minute presentations that discussed the formation of ancient Egyptian and Nubian collections in Mexico City (Mexico), La Havana (Cuba), São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and La Plata (Argentina).<sup>5</sup> Expanded versions of these presentations were invited and edited for publication in this volume, diving further into the topic than the online presentations allowed. These papers bring to light the collectors – often members of the aristocracy, if not actual royalty – who had the same interests and aspirations as their peers in Europe and North America. Along with collecting histories, some of the contributions discuss how the formation of Egyptian collections was closely tied to the identity of newly independent nations or the foundation of new cities, as part of an identity building process. Others reflect on the stretch of European colonialism across the Atlantic and how to reconcile the fact that indigenous cultures in South America were eclipsed by ancient Egypt in the construction of identities. Some of the articles focus on display histories, noting how pharaonic Egypt is presented alongside ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, while others opt to discuss the role of scholarship and museum collaboration as a way to make lesser-known collections more visible and valued by the international community.

Regardless of the angle from which the authors approach their contribution, they all provide food for thought relevant to emerging and seasoned museum Egyptologists and Nubiologists.

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<sup>5</sup> Due to technical difficulties, the panel discussion could not be held after the four papers.