

# Introducing Artistic Provenance Research

## Sharon Macdonald and Tal Adler

This book aims to introduce *artistic provenance research* into wider debate and practice. Artistic provenance research (APR) mobilizes artistic approaches and sensibilities to engage with questions concerning the histories and ownership of objects, including the very modes of investigating these. It can thus be seen as both a form of and a reflection on provenance research. Through its distinctive methods, APR opens up new angles and perspectives on provenance, and through its production of artworks, it can make creative, challenging, and dynamic interventions into public debate.

It is important, at the outset, to emphasize that by APR, we do not mean provenance research that is conducted about artworks. While APR might address the provenance of artworks, it can also be concerned with other kinds of objects, ideas, or topics connected with provenance (such as the very notion of ownership or the politics and dynamics of provenance research). Deeply grounded in research, APR produces artistic processes and artworks that promote and enable new forms of research and knowledge production, as well as reflection on – and potentially activating change in relation to – other forms of provenance research.

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In this book, the core ideas of APR are presented, illustrated, and explored through selected cases. These are by no means the only instances of APR; various works by artists such as Sophie Calle, Maria Eichhorn, and Hans Haacke, among others, could have been included, even though this is not a designation these artists have used.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, we choose to look in depth at a set of recent examples, which are mainly presented by the artists and researchers themselves. This makes it possible for us not only to consider finished artworks and their motivations but also to examine the processes of their making, including the struggles involved. We selected these particular works because they take an interesting approach to provenance and they illustrate a diverse (though definitely not exhaustive) range of media, including drama, performance, installation, photography, and text. Furthermore, they highlight a variety of modes of conducting provenance research, including delving into archives, paying close attention to objects, collaborating with various groups and communities, engaging in autobiographical reflection, and trying to communicate with ghosts and spirits. At the same time, there are certain concerns that thread through many of the chapters, such as those of human remains and of colonial contexts.

In order to more fully illustrate and probe APR, we give one case especially detailed attention – a project called *Who is ID8470?* The project was conceived and created by artist and researcher Tal Adler, who coined the term *artistic provenance research* and who is one of the editors of this book.<sup>2</sup> This book itself can also be seen as part of the artistic research project *Who is ID 8470?* The project concerns the collection and exhibition of a human skull with markings according to the discredited science of phrenology, and it – and this book – examines in detail the forms in which the skull has been kept, categorized, mobilized,

[1] It is beyond the scope of this chapter and book to catalogue and discuss the works that might be considered to be engaging in APR. There are, however, good reasons to consider as APR works such as Sophie Calle's *What Do You See?* and *Last Seen*; Maria Eichhorn's *Restitutionspolitik* and *In den Zelten* ...; and Hans Haacke's *Manet-Projekt '74*. Other artists who are producing work that might be considered APR include Pansee Abou ElAtta, Nora Al-Badri, Martin Krenn, and the following, who are discussed as instances of APR by either art historian Christoph Zuschlag, in his *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung. Wie die Herkunft von Kulturgut entschlüsselt wird* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2022) or by Lina-Luisa Sittig in her bachelor's thesis ('Künstlerische Provenienzforschung – Mehrwert für die museale und kuratorische Praxis', Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin, 2023); Anna Artaker, Michael Asher, Marianna Christofides, Raphaël Denis, Vera Frenkel, Arno Gisinger, Emeka Ogbob, Michael Rakowitz, Christian Schnalke, and Christoph Westermeier. Zuschlag and Sittig also discuss Tal Adler's *Who is ID8470?*

[2] Tal Adler has used the term in various public presentations, including 'Künstlerische Provenienzforschung – Mehrwert in einem "Gallschen Schädel"' (presentation at the Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, February 21, 2022); see <https://kulturgutverluste.de/node/775>. He has also used this term, together with Sharon Macdonald, in 'Artistic Provenance Research' (presentation, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford, April 29, 2022). Zuschlag, in *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung*, uses the term 'künstlerische Provenienzforschung' to refer to works by artists that deal with themes of 'the provenance of artworks, collections histories, the colonial past, NS-loot and restitution' (1.13; our translation). He gives as a prime example Tal Adler's *Who is ID8470?*

and displayed, as well as the challenges in intervening in these. These interventions included a video-sculpture installation in the Humboldt Lab in the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Through several chapters, each examining different aspects of this project – written not only by Adler but also by various other actors involved in the project – we intend to provide a multidimensional exemplification of APR.

In this introduction, we begin with some comments on provenance – a topic that has been gathering momentum since World War II and that is currently the subject of increasing interest and discussion not only within academia and the art and museum worlds but also in wider political and public arenas. We then provide a more detailed explanation of APR, in which we also discuss related movements and terms, including critical fabulation and experimental, potential, and speculative history, as well as the cases of APR included in this book. The final section reflects on the wider potential for artistic-research approaches in relation to provenance research and beyond.

### Provenance Research

The term *provenance* emerged in late eighteenth-century Europe, where it was closely bound up with the development of art markets, which shaped its subsequent use elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Referring to an artwork's history, provenance was important, especially for auction houses, for determining who had created an artwork, as well as its transfers of ownership, and thus its authenticity and financial value. While provenance relied on documents, provenance practice in such contexts was typically more affirmative than investigative, and it tended to rely on a fairly limited set of questions, approaches, and sources. Only in the twentieth century, and especially in the wake of trying to track down and restitute artworks that

[3] See, for example, Gail Feigenbaum, and Inge Reist, introduction to *Provenance: An Alternative History of Art*, ed. Gail Feigenbaum and Inge Reist (Los Angeles: Getty, 2012), 1–4, at 1. They note that the term first appeared in English in 1785, derived from the French *provenir*. In the same volume, the entangled early history with art markets is also discussed, especially in Sophie Raux 'From Mariette to Jollain: Provenance and Value in Eighteenth-Century French Auction Catalogs', 86–103, with insightful remarks also in Anne Higonnet 'Afterword: The Social Life of Provenance', 195–209. It is worth noting that the term *provenience* is also sometimes used, especially in archaeology, though this refers specifically to the location of an object's discovery and excavation; Rosemary A. Joyce, 'From Place to Place: Provenience, Provenance and Archaeology', in *Provenance: An Alternative History of Art*, ed. Gail Feigenbaum and Inge Reist (Los Angeles: Getty, 2012), 48–60. For further relevant discussion, see also Patty Gerstenblith, 'Provenances: Real, Fake and Questionable', *International Journal of Cultural Property* 26, no. 3 (2019): 285–304. It should also be noted that interest in questions of the origins and life histories of objects, which can, for example, be found in various disciplines, is not restricted to that which is described as *provenance*. See, for example, Victoria L. Lemieux, 'Provenance: Past, Present and Future in Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Perspective', in *Building Trust in Information: Perspectives on the Frontiers of Provenance*, ed. Victoria L. Lemieux (Cham: Springer, 2016); and Jane Milosch and Nick Pearce, eds., *Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2019).

had been looted by the National Socialists, did scholars and the public call for more probing approaches, and questions of provenance were increasingly coupled with those of social justice. Even then, however, it was not until the 1990s that such efforts moved significantly beyond private initiatives, with, for example, the founding of the German Lost Art Foundation.<sup>4</sup> Especially important in ushering in what can properly be called provenance *research*, were the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, which were formulated at a conference in December 1998, after which, as art historian and provenance expert Lynn Rother puts it, a ‘mode of provenance research’ emerged that was ‘concerned with socially disquieting details’ and that ‘meticulously tracks institutions, people, objects, and money with a forensic level of detail’.<sup>5</sup>

Since then, such research has gathered considerable pace, especially within the last ten years. Cases – such as that of German art dealer heir Cornelius Gurlitt, whose collection of over one thousand artworks, many presumed to have come to him, via his father, as forcibly seized property of Jewish owners – have brought questions of provenance into a more public arena.<sup>6</sup> As have films, such as *The Woman in Gold*, a semi-fictionalized account of a Jewish refugee’s legal challenge to the Austrian government to have a painting stolen from her family by the Nazis returned to her.<sup>7</sup> Such popular accounts promote a narrative in which property that has been criminally appropriated – initially by the National Socialists – is restituted, once the proper facts are finally discovered and verified. Provenance research is, thus, cast in such public

[4] The Coordination Office of the Länder for the Return of Cultural Property, out of which the German Lost Art Foundation grew, was established in 1994. The situation varies significantly between countries, with most lacking such an organization.

[5] Lynn Rother ‘Uncanny Provenance: Art History and its Double’, *Texte zur Kunst* 128 (2022): 84–97, at 92. Other authors also comment on the relative recency of this development. In a review of the history of provenance research, Christian Fuhrmeister and Meike Hopp write, in 2019, that ‘provenance research is now – and significantly, only now – booming’. They attribute the shift to a range of factors, including funding, though they also conclude that the current state of affairs is far from adequate. Christian Fuhrmeister and Meike Hopp, ‘Rethinking Provenance Research’, *Getty Research Journal* 1.1 (2019): 213–31, at 216. Christian Zuschlag sees the late 1990s as marking a key paradigm shift – also involving wider public interest – in relation to questions of provenance while also pointing to its longer-term practice: Christian Zuschlag, ‘Provenienz-Geschichte und Perspektiven eines neuen Paradigmas in den Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften’, in *Raubkunst und Restitution-Zwischen Kolonialzeit und Washington Principles*, ed. Matthias Weller, Nicolai B. Kemle, Thomas Dreier, and Karolina Kuprecht (Zurich: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2020), 22–36. The point is also made by Tilman von Stockhausen, ‘The Failure of Provenance Research in Germany’, in Feigenbaum and Reist, *Provenance*, 124–136.

[6] See Sabine Oelzer, ‘Nazi-Looted Art: A Chronology of the Gurlitt Case’, *Deutsche Welle*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/nazi-looted-art-a-chronology-of-the-gurlitt-case/a-60896180>; Andreas Huyssen, Anson Rabinbach, and Avinoam Shalem, ‘Nazi-Looted Art and Its Legacies: An Introduction’, *New German Critique*, no. 130 (2017): 1–7; and Jonas Tinius, ‘Awkward Art and Difficult Heritage: Nazi Art Collectors and Postcolonial Archives’, in *An Anthropology of Contemporary Art: Practices, Markets, and Collectors*, ed. Thomas Fillitz (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 130–45.

[7] First shown in 2015, the film was directed by Simon Curtis and produced by BBC Films. The screenplay is by Alexi Kaye Campbell.

narratives as a heroic form of detective work, in which the truth carries the redemptory capacity to right past wrongs. Its etymological connections with the word *prove* highlight the onus on provenance research to provide categorical proof of ownership as the basis for its work of restorative justice.

Contributing to the growing interest in questions of provenance – and also mobilizing its restorative and redemptory promise – are debates about the theft and illegal trade of antiquities, as well as about colonial plunder and restitution. This has led to museums, especially those holding collections of antiquities or ethnographic objects, increasingly finding themselves at the centre of debates about their right to hold them.<sup>8</sup> In Germany, indicators of new attention to colonial provenance include the German Lost Art Foundation's being granted funding for work on 'cultural goods from colonial contexts', in 2018, and in 2021, the establishment of a new national contact point for collected goods from colonial contexts.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis has certainly not been restricted to Germany, however, with many former colonial powers being challenged about the objects that they hold in museums and increasing numbers of initiatives being developed to investigate the circumstances in which collections were acquired.<sup>10</sup> In relation to colonial-context provenance, too, popular culture provides an index of wider awareness and sensibilities; for instance, the US film *Black Panther* (2018) includes scenes in which a member of the Wakanda people forcefully removes a Wakanda object

[8] On antiquities, see, for example, Sharon Waxman, *Loot: The Battle over the Stolen Treasures of the Ancient World* (New York: Times Books, 2008). On questions of colonial plunder and restitution, see footnote 10 below.

[9] A list of various developments can be found on the website of the German Ministry for Culture and Media: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/bundesregierung/bundeskanzleramt/staatsministerin-fuer-kultur-und-medien/sammlungsgut-aus-kolonialen-kontexten-1851438>. See also Jonathan Bach, 'Provenance-Centered Reckoning. A Memory Infrastructure for the Colonial Past?', in 'Germany's Changing Memoryscape. Postcolonial, Postmigrant and Postsocialist Dynamics', ed. Irene Hilden, Sharon Macdonald, and Andrei Zavadski, special issue, *Berliner Blätter* 89 (2024): 43–59.

[10] See, for example, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, 2018); Katrin Sieg, *Decolonizing German and European History at the Museum* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021); Felicity Bodenstern, Damiana Otiou, and Eva-Maria Troelenberg, eds., *Contested Holdings: Museum Holdings in Political, Epistemic, and Artistic Processes of Return* (New York: Berghahn, 2022). There has also been an expansion of work on particular kinds of collections, including ethnological and those containing human remains. See, for example, Larissa Förster, Iris Edenheiser, Sarah Fründt, and Heike Hartmann, eds., *Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit. Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte* (Berlin: Arbeitsgruppe Museum der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie, 2018); Larissa Förster and Sarah Fründt, eds., in 'Human Remains in Museums and Collections', special issue, *Historisches Forum* 21 (2017): <https://doi.org/10.18452/19383>.

from a London museum.<sup>11</sup> While the word *provenance* is not used in all of these cases, questions about origins, ownership, and value – all of which are central to provenance research – are clearly involved.

This expansion of interest in provenance also reflects an expanded understanding of provenance that is no longer restricted to the function of providing credentials for the evaluation of artworks within art markets, though providing a worthy pedigree for an artwork or for other objects continues to be significant and influential.<sup>12</sup> Increasingly, however, provenance research is conducted within a moral framework of establishing rightful possession, with the question of whether the current owners really have the right to be regarded as such often being at the forefront. This means that provenance research is frequently tightly bound up with questions of restitution and return, and in relation to objects from colonial contexts, with the decolonization of museums and other collecting institutions.

Despite the importance of such work and the fact that it is publicly prominent, and despite increases in funding and in the quantity and range of provenance investigation being undertaken, this is all still inadequate to the task of providing information about even a small proportion of the objects in museums and other locations, and such efforts are also hindered by insufficient infrastructure and coordination.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, advances are being made, and provenance scholarship, as well as some of its practice, has become more sophisticated, raising questions about the assumptions and tendencies of earlier provenance research, as shaped by their former contexts of use, and bringing novel approaches and sources to bear.<sup>14</sup> APR can be seen as part of this expanded critical and reflexive provenance research.

[11] While the scenes of the theft of the object have been widely referenced (including in our own earlier draft of this introduction) as an example of attempted ‘restitution’, the film’s narrative is not so unequivocal, not least since the character involved is trying to acquire the object to extract its metal (‘vibranium’) content. Thanks to Max Koss for pointing this out. Another interesting example is ‘Escape from the British Museum’, a series about a jade teapot that wants to return to China, which in 2023 was highly popular on the Chinese version of TikTok. See, for example, Amy Hawkins ‘Viral Series About Chinese Teapot Escaping from the British Museum to Become Film’, *Guardian*, September 2023. And in 2024, Mati Diop’s *Dahomey*, which follows the return of objects from the Musée du quai Branly to the Kingdom of Benin, won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale.

[12] For further discussion, see Gail Feigenbaum and Inge Jackson Reist, eds., *Provenance: An Alternate History of Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013). Another important area concerns Ancient World objects, some of which are from a colonial context. See Waxman, *Loot*.

[13] See Führmeister and Hopp, ‘Rethinking Provenance’.

[14] Feigenbaum and Reist’s *Provenance* is one example of such scholarship, as is Rother’s ‘Uncanny Provenance’, which contains a compelling list of questions about how we might do provenance differently, such as asking about the consequences of listing restitution claims in provenance records.

### Expanding Provenance Research

One feature of many understandings of provenance – as anthropologist and researcher at the German Lost Art Foundation Larissa Förster points out in her chapter in this book – is that it is seen as involving a continuous ‘chain of owners and possessors’. Provenance research seeks to piece together this single and unbroken line. It does so through attention to documentation, especially legal, that can establish such ownership, with, in many cases (especially for colonial contexts), the idea of the object’s ‘origin’ or original owner being deemed particularly significant. As Förster observes, there is an assumption here of the ‘ultimate knowability of an object’s history’. Yet, in many cases, the documentation is lacking, and it is not possible to trace the links in the chain continuously back over time or even to establish a clear-cut origin. In some cases, too, the object itself may be missing – and instead the research may have to begin ‘from a void’, as actor, director and writer Konradin Kunze describes of the missing bodily remains of an ancestor in his chapter in this volume, and what he suggests thus requires a form of ‘reversed provenance research’.

Whether an object is present or not, giving precedence to legally acceptable forms of documentation may be limiting, not least in its likely exclusion of other types of relationships – including forms of custodianship or belonging – between people and objects other than formal legal ownership, as highlighted in the conversation in this volume between artist and anthropologist George Mahashe and religious and heritage studies scholar Duane Jethro. This includes forms of custodianship and other relationships between people and objects that are not restricted to those of particular individuals, as tends to be the case in much formal provenance research. Even where collective ‘owners’ – such as nations or communities – are posited, this is still based on a model of a single and singular entity, thus upholding a specific conceptualization of ‘possessive individuation’ that permeates Western heritage and identity discourse, and it gives especial weight to property relations.<sup>15</sup> In effect, this is to operate a mutually exclusive model of ownership – that is, there can be only one rightful owner and only one line of inheritance – that is not necessarily applicable in all circumstances and that might rule out other possible significant modes of belonging or relating. Provenance is, thus, ‘a limiting exercise’, as Mahashe puts it. His preference is for an understanding of it as ‘meandering, following the leads, not consolidating them’.

[15] See, for example, Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London: Routledge, 2013), especially chapter 1, for a discussion of this. The notion of possessive individuation is derived from C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

Conceiving of provenance in terms of single lines of legal ownership effaces other kinds of relationships and gives priority to claims based on durable forms of documentation that are in formats and languages legible to and deemed legitimate by those with the power to make decisions about them. In practice, this tends to mean that oral sources or non-verbal means of recording have little traction, although arguments are increasingly being made for accepting them, as in the case of wampum belts – in which beaded patterns are modes of recording and sealing agreements – of certain Native American peoples.<sup>16</sup> Circumscribed in scope by the specific aim to identify original and continuous lines of ownership, provenance research may also be limited by certain assumptions – including, for example, those of the relationships between people and objects – and the methodologies involved in this. Wampum belts, for example, are considered by Native Americans to be social agents rather than inanimate objects.<sup>17</sup>

Partly in response to perceived limitations of the term *provenance*, academics and museum workers have proposed other terms for researching objects' histories. Principal among these is *object biography*.<sup>18</sup> Not seeking to necessarily affirm value or question ownership, object biographies may include not just transfers of ownership but also multiple aspects of an object's past. Like other terms that have been suggested, such as *object itinerary* or *object career*, object biography still shares the potential limitation of suggesting a single historical thread, a unilinear trajectory from birth or other beginning point onwards.<sup>19</sup> While appreciating the excellent work done under these and other labels, we prefer to use the term *provenance* despite and indeed because of its possible limitations. We use this term to more readily enable dialogue with existing provenance work, contributing further to its ongoing

[16] Margaret Bruchac, 'Broken Chains of Custody: Possessing, Dispossessing, and Repossessing Lost Wampum Belts', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 162, no. 1 (2018): 56–105. This article also discusses provenance research on wampum belts. There are also instances of legal proceedings being taken on behalf of non-human entities, with the latter being designated as legal persons. See, for example, Erin L. O'Donnell and Julia Talbot Jones, 'Creating Legal Rights for Rivers: Lessons from Australia, New Zealand and India', *Ecology and Society* 23, no. 1, (2018): <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09854-230107>.

[17] Bruchac, 'Broken Chains of Custody'.

[18] Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91. For further discussion of the notion of *object biographies*, see Janet Hoskins 'Agency, Biography and Objects', in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage, 2005), 74–84.

[19] See, for example, Rosemary A. Joyce, and Susan D. Gillespie, 'Making Things Out of Objects That Move', in *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, ed. Rosemary A. Joyce (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2015), 3–19; Hilde Doering 'Dingkarrieren. Sammelstück, Lagerstück, Werkstück, Ausstellungsobjekt', in *Geschichtskultur in der zweiten Moderne*, ed. Rosmarie Beier (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000), 263–78; and Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, 'Objects and the Museum', *ISIS* 96 (2005): 559–71.

diversification and increasing criticality. Furthermore, inherent in such terms as *object biographies*, *object itineraries*, and *object careers* (and their attendant methodologies) is a following of objects.<sup>20</sup> The following of objects may sometimes be involved in APR, but not necessarily. APR might, for example, involve following persons or be primarily concerned with questions of ownership, institutionalization, and value that are not necessarily about establishing biographies, itineraries, or careers.

APR, then, is concerned with questions of provenance – including those of objects, origins, ownership, markets, institutions, and value – but like the newer scholarly approaches to provenance, APR's approach is primarily interrogative and critical. It engages with questions about the pasts and entanglements of objects and subjects but in ways that actively probe, rather than only seek to ascertain, answers to those questions. APR interrogates or provides alternatives to the established conventions, ambitions, and narratives within which certain objects might usually feature. Moreover, it regards aporias in the record not as problems to be necessarily solved by documentation – or else ignored as irresolvable absences – but as opportunities for artistic engagement and for bringing to life the '*something else* and the *what-might-be*' (emphasis in the original), or indeed the *what-might-not-be*, that lie at the edge of the imaginable.<sup>21</sup> This seems to be similar to what writer and potter Edmund de Waal, in the interview in this volume, refers to when he emphasizes the importance of 'the pause' for opening up 'a moment of possibility'. How such possibility is grasped in APR, however, may be multiple.

### **Between the Speculative and the Factual**

APR's addressing of pauses or gaps may have a particular role in contexts in which there is a lack of conventional documentation – for instance, by imaginatively offering possible narratives or by highlighting the hiatuses themselves or the social processes that produced them. There are affinities here with other approaches within the humanities. As Larissa Förster discusses in this volume, at least since the 1980s, historians have been seeking to admit a wider range of sources, including non-documentary and marginal ones, and to engage in forms of speculation. Among the terms that she references are the *circumstantial paradigm*, the *art of*

[20] Other terms may avoid this, such as 'historiography of collections', as proposed by Larissa Förster in 'Plea for a More Systematic, Comparative, International and Long-term Approach to Restitution, Provenance and Historiography of Collections', *Museumskunde* 81, no. 1 (2016): 49–54. This, however, then circumscribes the focus to collections.

[21] Saidiya Hartman, 'Intimate History, Radical Narrative', *The Journal of African American History* (Winter 2021): 127–35, at 131.

*intelligent conjecture*, and *experimental histories*.<sup>22</sup> To these we might also add *counterfactual histories* and *potential history*.<sup>23</sup> She and historian Holger Stoecker, propose what they term ‘tentative object biographies’, an approach she demonstrates in her contribution to this volume with reference to their search for the provenance of certain human remains in the zoology collections of Jena University.<sup>24</sup> Unable to find a definitive single story, Förster and Stoecker present three possible – but plausible (a term that she emphasizes) – trajectories by which these human remains had come to be in the collections.

Other developments within the humanities also aim to creatively address a lack of historical information and the restrictions of the forms that available documentation may involve. To the forefront in recent years has been the work of Saidiya Hartman. First proposed in her 2008 essay, ‘Venus in Two Acts’, ‘critical fabulation’ is the name she gives to a method by which she seeks to ‘represent the lives of the nameless and the forgotten, to reckon with loss, and to respect the limits of what cannot be known.’<sup>25</sup> Critical fabulation is not simply conjecturing about what might fill the lacunae; rather, and as her practice shows, it means to be deeply immersed in the available archive and to critically engage with it, highlighting its limitations, while at the same time drawing on available sources – including more marginal and fleeting ones – to imagine experiences that are otherwise unavailable. In her 2019 book, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, for example, she seeks to explore and present the experience of young Black women in the urban United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highlighting their multiple subject positions and forms of agency, as well as the

[22] Förster draws here on Carlo Ginsburg, ‘Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method’, trans. Anna Davin, *History Workshop Journal* 9 (1980): 5–34; Sybille Krämer, ‘Was also ist eine Spur? Und worin besteht ihre epistemologische Rolle? Eine Bestandaufnahme’, in *Spur. Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst*, ed. Sybille Krämer, Werner Knogge, and Gernot Grube (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 11–33; and Klaus Neumann, ‘But Is It History?’, *Cultural Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2008): 19–32.

[23] Martin Bunzl, ‘Counterfactual History: A User’s Guide’, *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (2004): 845–58; Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019). Martin Bunzl acknowledges that to some extent in all historical work on causation, ‘counterfactual claims come along for the ride, like it or not’ (846), but he argues that there has been a new level of explicit counterfactual work undertaken since the 1990s. For further discussion of this development and the philosophical issues raised, see also Elazar Weinryb, ‘Historiographic Counterfactuals’, in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (New York: Wiley, 2011), 109–19; and Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds: Possibility and Understanding in History and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[24] They have developed this at more length in Larissa Förster and Holger Stoecker, *Haut, Haar und Knochen. Koloniale Spuren in den naturkundlichen Sammlungen der Universität Jena*, vol. 9, *Laborberichte* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2016).

[25] Saidiya Hartman, ‘Venus in Two Acts’, *Small Axe* 26 (2008): 1–14, at 4.

violence of the structures and strictures within which they lived.<sup>26</sup> This entailed activating an immense amount of detail from close readings of the archive and reassembling it to craft her alternative narratives. In addition to the term ‘critical fabulation’, she describes her practice as ‘speculative history, close narration, and documentary poetics’<sup>27</sup> – each name bringing a word from the more imaginative realm together with one indicating proximity to the available record.

This coupling of the creative and speculative with in-depth awareness of the available archive or sources is characteristic of many APR works, too. It is, among other things, through the mutual enmeshing of these – of the ‘plausible and the experimental’, as Förster puts it – that APR is able to make novel and significant contributions to the existing work on provenance. Such coupling and enmeshing is evident in Förster’s own work as well as in many examples of APR, such as those discussed in this volume: the project *Who is ID8470?*; the performances concerning the provenance of ancestral remains from former German colonies, collaboratively written and here reflected on by Konradin Kunze; the photographic installation of George Mahashe; and the books of Edmund de Waal. In all of these examples, it is evident that considerable importance is given to the record; so, emphasizing that speculation and artistic work do not mean ignoring or dismissing the archival record. This was addressed by de Waal when we asked him about the degree of poetic license that he allows himself in his own ‘stories’ – to use a word he often employs in talking about the provenance narratives in his work. ‘Not much’ was his reply. He went on to insist upon the importance of ‘the discipline of research’. Forms of discipline, rigour, and immersion – extensive and intensive research – are characteristic of all the cases in this volume, as well as most other examples of APR that we discuss here, albeit with varying inflections and emphases. This deserves underlining, for, as philosopher Martin Bunzl emphasizes in his discussion of counterfactual history, what is at issue here is not simply brandishing ‘imagination, and unconstrained imagination at that’ but, rather, a thorough ‘grounding’, as a researcher, in wide-ranging knowledge, including knowledge of what is currently known or not.<sup>28</sup> For speculation and artistic engagement to be compelling and effective, they must be informed: not only their ‘plausibility’ but often their richness and critical traction as art works rests, at least in part, on this.

[26] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

[27] Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, 127.

[28] Bunzl, ‘Counterfactual History’, 845.

### Research and Production Modalities

Like Hartman, Förster emphasizes the considerable amount of time and work that creative and speculative approaches to provenance may entail. In part, this is because the work does not restrict itself to the usual sources and categories; instead, it is attentive to, or needs to wait for, serendipity and minor leads that others might overlook, and assessing the significance of absences and silences. De Waal – whose books *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, *The White Road*, and *Letters to Camondo* each, in various ways, tell of years of careful research into the pasts of objects – explains in his interview here the importance to his work not only of ‘tracking down texts and materials in libraries and archives’ but also of attending to ‘hiddenness’.<sup>29</sup> What is *not* said or shown – absences and gaps – needs attention and can itself open up new avenues of investigation. In addition, de Waal stresses what he calls ‘somatic research’: ‘actually being present in the places where things happened’ and, thus, having also to ‘deal with the physical presence of something, and the places that it’s been’. Such physical presence and the embodied and affective dimensions of encounters with objects, locations, persons, atmospheres, and spirits can be crucial for shaping artistic provenance work, as is evident in the other chapters in this volume, too. Again, this can take place over considerable stretches of time and be implicated in the artist-researcher’s own personal experience and relationships. For de Waal, this involves tracing his family’s histories, delving back into his own memories, as well as encountering relatives and others through photographs, documents, places, and objects. His books are thus not so much the results from distinct projects as parts of a continuous life’s work – a work in which provenance is, as he puts it, ‘a necessary political, personal act’.

So, too, for Konradin Kunze, whose experience of learning that ‘hundreds of ancestors in boxes’ were stored in the cellar of the university where his father had worked – and which he had visited as a child – propelled his own political and personal artistic-research journey, realized in a range of dramatic performances. As with de Waal, physical journeys to locations – in various countries – from which objects and ancestors had come were a decisive part of his process. Some of these were highly affective, most notably being taken by a grandson of Mangi Meli – who had been hanged by German colonizers in Tanzania in 1900 – to the

[29] See Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2010); Edmund de Waal, *The White Road: A Journey into an Obsession* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015); Edmund de Waal, *Letters to Camondo* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

tree in the village where he had been murdered. Kunze's travels enabled him not only to meet people who were themselves seeking answers to provenance voids but also, in some cases, to develop collaborations that further shaped the artistic-research process and performances.

In the case of George Mahashe, his approach to provenance is rooted in his immersion in 'Khelobedu [. . .] the language, culture and religion of Balobedu from the north-eastern part of the Limpopo province of South Africa'.<sup>30</sup> In an enmeshing of the personal and political over many years, he critically interrogates the photographic archives of colonial anthropologists and develops his own distinctive artistic and research practice. Among other things, this involves drawing on the notion of *vadimu*, which is sometimes translated as 'ancestors' (a term also invoked by Adler and Kunze) but which, as he is keen to point out, has specific connotations in the South African context – including 'the capacity to make means, to secure a future for your children' – that are not necessarily captured by the term *ancestors* or others, such as *ghosts* and *spectres*. As he and Jethro suggest, this offers scope for expanding upon existing understandings of provenance.

Adler's decades-long engagement with what in much existing provenance research are referred to as 'human remains' was inspired in part by the disjuncture between the Jewish ideas that he was brought up with and what he encountered in museum storage and exhibition spaces.<sup>31</sup> He has explored issues of visibility, presence, and absence over a series of artistic-research projects and practices, taking him to many museum collections and other storage spaces. As he describes in his chapters that follow in this volume, this brought him into contact with the narratives of a wide range of interlocutors, including spirits in the collections' storage – without which the artwork *Who is ID8470?* would have been impossible.

[30] Cited in Mahashe and Jethro, in this volume; originally from George Tebogo Mahashe, 'Walking Towards a Camera Obscura', *Critical African Studies* 12, no. 2 (2020): 218–36.

[31] See our note on terminological problems. For discussion of this term, see Larissa Förster, 'Talking and Going About Things Differently: On Changing Vocabularies and Practices in the Postcolonial Provenance and Restitution Debates', in *Doing Diversity in Museums and Heritage: A Berlin Ethnography*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023), 57–75.

### Artistic Practice

As evident from the contents of this volume and from the examples below, our understanding of *art* is a broad one, to incorporate not just fine art but a wide range of creative practices, including film, performance, literature, hacking, and conceptual, relational, or dialogical practices, amongst others. Important here, however, is that we do not approach art as only a matter of taking a particular format or medium but, rather, as the mobilization of an artistic sensibility. That mobilization is not restricted to creating an art end product, but rather it is thoroughly part of the research or making process. What this means, as we see it, is a willingness to engage creatively and a heightened attention to modes of expression, form, and style, not only those that the artist themselves might use but also those suggested by whatever it is to which they direct their gaze – that is, attentiveness to ‘the aesthetics of research’, as Adler puts it in the interview with de Waal below. This is evident in all of the APR examples here, with the *Who is ID8470?* project manifesting it directly in its intervention into curatorial decisions regarding the display of human remains – as both Adler and anthropologist and curator Friedrich von Bose discuss in their chapters.

Significantly, all of the cases of APR in this volume involve consideration of questions of objectification and visibility, audibility, or sayability – including questions of what might or might not be shown. These are questions of the ‘ethics of research’, to quote de Waal, who expands Adler’s reference to the ‘aesthetics of research’. For those works dealing with parts or images of people now dead, such ethics are particularly fraught, since consent to display is unlikely to have been granted, and furthermore, there may be taboos or restrictions on showing or seeing them in various cultures. Moreover, acts of showing risk repeating and even reinforcing problematic historical modalities of representation. Whereas with *Who is ID8470?* Adler questions the planned display of a human skull, Kunze makes one central to his performance *Schädel X*. This is not, however, a real skull, which audiences only learn in the after-show discussion, and the question of objectification is raised in part by having the skull itself protest against how it is being treated. Giving voice to the skull (or, we might say, its possible former ‘inhabitant’) is thus a strategy shared by Adler and Kunze.

In Mahashe’s installation, *Dithugula tsa Malefokana*, photography is used as a medium, but there is a calculated attempt to disrupt its capacity to endure over time – and to thus act as a means of continuing visibility – by creating analogue photographs in such a manner that they quickly fade, obliterating the image taken. De Waal’s writing, too, is suffused with reflection on presence and absence and on what is possible

to say or show. These are major themes of his pottery and exhibition work, including the installation in the museum of the collector Moïse de Camondo, as he discusses in the interview here.

A further feature of the artistic mode in provenance work is its capacity to accept, incorporate, and even accentuate indeterminacy, ambiguity, and ambivalence. This is to value what Mahashe refers to as ‘meandering’ or de Waal’s appreciation of complexity and contingency: ‘You might feel that you want to nail things down . . . But that’s not truthful. You can’t hold things forever in one place; they don’t have one meaning’, the latter says. Such nuanced attention to indeterminacy, ambiguity, and ambivalence – as well as, more generally, to the figuring out modes of expression as part of the production process – is not necessarily exclusive to artists; it is shared, to some degree, by other disciplines, such as social and cultural anthropology and, to an even greater extent, by specific approaches such as critical fabulation and speculative history. But in artistic work, the openness to the non-settled and the crafted relationship with form and style are even more fundamental and far-reaching. Because of the greater degree of openness to possible modes of expression, the artistic is less bound to more conventional forms of articulation and presentation used in scholarly research in the academy or in applied contexts – although here we note that there are pockets of past and current academic practice in which a wider range of possible formats and styles, today often referred to as ‘multi-modal’, is employed.<sup>32</sup> In tune with such searches for alternative and effective approaches, APR entails the honing of an artistic sensibility and practices in which forms and modes of expression are always at issue, deserving considered selection and forms of reflection.

### Reflecting on Provenance

APR entails explicit or implicit reflection on provenance, provenance research, and/or related concepts and practices themselves. Not all of the chapters included in this book deal with *artistic* provenance research; some are included to illustrate related approaches. In Förster’s chapter, although she does not describe her work as ‘artistic’, her practice of ‘tentative object biographies’ is formulated through contemplating the expectations, practices, and restrictions of more conventional provenance research. In other chapters, however, such reflection is indeed made through art practice and performance.

[32] See, for example, Patricia Alvarez Astacio, Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, and Arjun Shankar, ‘Multimodal Ambivalence: A Manifesto for Producing in S@!#t Times’, *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 2 (June 2021): 420–27

In Adler's *Who is ID8470?* project, provenance research – and especially the lack of such prior research – is a primary concern, and it is explicitly addressed in video interviews with various interlocutors whose own work or positions relate to provenance research as well as with others who reflect on it. As Adler discusses (in 'Who is ID8470?', in this volume), his experience of seeking funding for provenance research on the skull was part of the project and thus meticulously documented, including in this volume, which can itself be seen as a further dimension of the project. Part of *Who is ID8470?* was an exhibit at the Humboldt Lab – the exhibition space of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) in the Humboldt Forum, a controversial public event and exhibition location that opened in 2021. Here, reflection on provenance is evident in the exhibit's attention to the historical practices that resulted in, or *might* have resulted in, this human skull – and others like it – being collected and exhibited. Through the project's mode of accessing existing records (as set out in detail by researcher of medical history Marion Hulverscheidt, in this volume), as well as alternative possible sources – especially the artist-researcher's communing with spirits (see 'We are ID8470' in this volume) – the artwork highlights the presuppositions and limitations of provenance research as it is usually conducted.

In dramatizing the attempt to find the provenance of a human skull from Namibia that had supposedly been inherited by a German school teacher, the plot of Kunze's fact-based fictional work was, he writes, 'shaped by many unexpected twists and turns, which serve as an – at times entertaining – example of the difficulties and limitations of provenance research and repatriations'. Kunze's chapter gives readers an insight into what is involved in trying to trace provenance, but it also makes an eloquent statement about the necessity of such work and the shortcomings of current institutional provision.

Shortcomings are also made evident in the chapter by Jethro and Mahashe, particularly when Mahashe, through his close attention to Khelobedu, highlights the inadequacies of Western notions and practices of provenance, especially, but not only, for non-Western contexts: 'In my context', he explains, 'we are not in the business of finding out who owns something but, rather, who does the responsibility for things fall to'. We need to reflect, he argues, on the very attempts to fix and pin down. This resonates, too, with de Waal's position, in which his books can be seen as sustained and subtle contemplations on provenance; as he puts it in the interview below, 'all my practice is about breaking that [the conventional, narrow, auction-house understanding of provenance] up and going: "You know what, you want complexity? Bring the word provenance in"'.

### Effects and Afterlives

By highlighting limitations and suggesting alternatives, APR opens up the capacity to change existing perspectives and practices. The very act of bringing the usually forgotten or marginalized into the frame of attention might be seen as a form of repair. In addition, APR artworks can help bring about change by promoting further provenance work or by suggesting alternatives to existing modes of conservation or display. Beyond this, however, APR works may actively seek to instigate specific actions – such as those leading towards restitution. Indeed, one significant feature of APR – whether avowedly activist or not – is that it can reach publics beyond the academy and thus bring the questions, perspectives, and concerns that it implicates to wider audiences.

It is not always possible, however, to directly attribute change to a specific work of APR, and many works and other developments operate in concert or cumulatively. Nevertheless, it is evident that APR works can play a major role in shifting sensibilities, which can then spark further action and transformation. In the interview with de Waal, for instance, he recounts that the Austrian government gave away a thousand free copies of *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, and the president ‘said that the book has helped change the kind of awareness in Austria of Jewish families [...] not just as victims’. Such a shift is hard to pin down but is of tremendous historical importance – not least, it seemed to have contributed to a change in the Austrian law to finally allow ‘Holocaust-era families to reclaim citizenship’.

APR has helped generate still further provenance research and/or activism, and in some cases, it has led also to repatriation and other concrete developments. Kunze’s work is exemplary here: his initial investigations and artistic works led to extensive further provenance research undertaken by himself and others, often in collaboration. Although he writes that his work did not directly lead to the repatriation of the skull featured in *Schädel X* to Namibia in 2018, it nevertheless was a contributing factor. After many years of sleuthing, in which Kunze was considerably involved and worked closely with descendants (who requested that DNA sampling be undertaken), certain ancestral remains have been found and positively identified as extremely likely to be of the Mangi family (though not Mangi Meli’s skull), and negotiations have begun for their repatriation to Tanzania. Similarly, the compelling arguments made by Förster and Stoecker for the plausibility of a particular tentative object biography led to human remains being repatriated from the Phyletic Museum in Jena to Namibia. Förster has also helped draw up guidelines on the conduct of provenance research and, in her work at the German Lost Art Foundation, has played a role in determining what that institution researches and how.

*Who is ID8470?* has prompted further provenance research – such as that of Hulverscheidt, presented in her chapter in this volume – and the project has also involved the public in the discussion on provenance research, artistic engagements with scientific collections, and the display of human remains, as Adler outlines in his chapter. The ways in which this APR did and did not contribute to changing collections and display practice is also discussed by him in detail; what his experience also arguably shows is the recalcitrance of existing practices. Von Bose points out how the interdisciplinary and artistic approach of *Who is ID8470?* has helped shape museum and collections discussions beyond the Humboldt Forum, especially about what to show and not show.<sup>33</sup> As with the work of Kunze and de Waal, Adler's *Who is ID8470?* aims to engage a wider public in the concerns around provenance, something which it was explicitly conceptualized to do as a work of APR.

What we hope to have made clear in this introduction and in the chapters that follow is that APR is not simply a method advocating open-ended fantasizing in cases where there is a lack of information; rather, it is deeply grounded in research and in attentive forms of investigation and practice, which are alert to affective, bodily, ethical, personal, political, and representational dimensions. APR is not necessarily an alternative to more conventional forms of provenance research, and, indeed, it can help support or initiate more of the latter. More than anything, it opens up new possibilities and offers alternatives. In the process, it frequently alerts us to the culturally bounded nature, amongst other limitations, of conventional provenance work. By doing so, APR helps to propose and propel ways of expanding beyond and improving upon existing provenance work.

The fact that APR produces artworks – of multiple kinds – is a vital dimension of its dynamic and constitutive capacity. These are not simply the end points or outputs of the processes that precede them; they are a further stage in the process, in which the effects and afterlives – what

[33] Earlier artistic research by Adler relating to collected human skulls has also had an impact on practice. The work *Dead Images*, focused on collections in the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, is acknowledged by that museum's curators as having shifted their practice, leading to more considered and considerate treatment of the subjects in their care. For more information about *Dead Images* and the EU-funded project TRACES: Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritage with the Arts, in which it was embedded, see the following chapters, all in Marion Hamm and Klaus Schönberger, eds., *Contentious Heritage and the Arts: A Critical Companion* (Klagenfurt: Wieser Verlag, 2021): Tal Adler, Linda Fibiger, John Harries, Joan Smith, Anna Szöke, and Maria Teschler-Nicola, 'Dead Images: Facing the History, Ethics and Politics of European Skull Collections', 63–68; Sharon Macdonald, 'Contentious Collections, Contentious Heritage: Risks and Potentials of Opening Europe's Memory Banks', 95–128; Tal Adler, 'The Creative Co-production: An Experimental Model for Artistic Engagements with Contentious Cultural Heritage', 287–308; Tal Adler and John Harries, 'Reflexive Photography and the Transformation of Shock – an Interview', 473–94; and Anna Szöke, 'In Search of the Individual Story: Learning from Collections of Human Remains', 549–72.

happens through and with them, and as initiated or encouraged by them – of the works are also part of the APR's wider scope. Of course, all artistic works have a productive potential to make things happen, not least through their aesthetic and affective moving of individuals. But with APR, because of its direct engagement with questions of provenance (and the inherently ethical and political nature of these questions), the potential is even more salient and, thus, potentially more far-reaching and powerful.

### **This Volume**

The first four chapters that follow this introduction present *Who is ID8470?* In the first of these ('Who is ID8470?'), Tal Adler sets out the background and context of the human skull – sometimes given the identification number 8470 – with markings according to Gall's phrenological ideas, which became the focal point for this APR project. Adler discusses previous showings of the skull in exhibitions and on websites, his own relevant earlier work (especially on a project called *Dead Images*), and how he came to propose and carry out APR. The chapter describes the decisions he made, the difficulties he faced, and what was ultimately produced. In the following chapter, called 'We are ID8470', Adler discusses the possible biographies of ID8470 and his mode of engaging with spirits as part of his research. The research for four possible biographies, each of which also features as a particular character in his video installation at the Humboldt Lab, is presented here. His research is then complemented by a chapter by Marion Hulverscheidt, in which she deploys her medical historical skills to investigate the provenance of the skull ID8470 further, in the process illuminating various sources and potentials but also the limits of what it seems possible to unearth. Curator at the Humboldt Lab, Friedrich von Bose, who first brought ID8470 to Adler's attention as he contemplated whether and how to show it, explains the concerns and processes involved from his perspective. An insightful theorist, ethnographer, and curator of exhibitions, von Bose also discusses the work of (co-)producing an exhibition, especially in the contested space of the Humboldt Forum, as well as wider considerations of the potentials of university collections.

The remaining four chapters expand into further dimensions of provenance while also delving into particular cases. Larissa Förster's chapter, 'Filling Gaps in Provenance Research: Between Plausibility and Experimentality', clearly explains the positions and assumptions involved in particular kinds of provenance research, as well as how these might be addressed by speculation and 'tentative histories'. Through

a summary of extensive provenance research that she (together with Stoecker) conducted on a piece of human scalp from an individual from Africa, she highlights the tensions between dealing with the information available and contemplating what might have been. The book that Förster and Stoecker produced follows academic conventions of rigorously investigating and referencing sources, but it is also experimental in its format by offering, in three main chapters, three different possible histories.

Like the previous chapters, Konradin Kunze's concerns human remains, one of the most problematic topics for provenance research, and is also, like Förster's, focused on African colonial contexts. His detailed account of how he came to be engaged in attempting to track down missing ancestors of Tanzanian people whom he met and of the plays that he produced, often collaboratively, shows the detailed research involved, as well as the ways in which the artworks produced could recursively prompt further investigation and wider public interest. The project is ongoing.

The following chapter also focuses on Africa, in this case South Africa. It takes the form of a dialogue between artist and anthropologist George Mahashe and religious studies scholar Duane Jethro; it foregrounds Mahashe's views on provenance and how he addresses it in his artistic work. A key part of his approach involves engaging with ideas and practices that are part of his Vhalovedu heritage. As he argues, provenance is important in contexts of restitution and repatriation claims, but this should also mean acknowledging the ideas and sensibilities involved in the particular cultural contexts. His artworks draw on these ideas while helping bring them to light.

The final chapter of this book is an interview by the editors with Edmund de Waal in which they discuss provenance in relation to his highly reflective and beautifully crafted books, as well as his pottery. This interview makes crystal clear just why provenance research is so important, in addition to how it is conducted, the kinds of probing questions that it asks, and how it can and should be (especially through artistic forms) released into – or, we might say, gifted to – the world.

By bringing these authors and chapters together, this book provides the first theorizing and in-depth discussion of APR. In addition to setting out theory, methodology, and case studies, the book functions as a manifesto for such work. We hope it will inspire others to undertake APR work. Beyond that, however, we also call for APR's greater institutionalization – its acceptance as a legitimate approach and its eligibility for institutional support. Already there are signs of this, though APR still tends to be supported mainly through temporary project

funding.<sup>34</sup> Without greater institutionalization, there is a risk that APR might be regarded as something of a specialist approach that is used only occasionally – or, perhaps, just in those cases when nobody knows what else to do or there are differences of opinion that cannot be resolved by other players (as was partly the case in the Humboldt Lab, as von Bose discusses here). Instead, APR should be more formally embedded within the kinds of institutional frameworks that can enable it to flourish. It should be accepted as part of the wider academic landscape, rather than viewed as an art practice that takes place only at distinct institutions (namely, art schools). And it should be eligible to receive support from both academic and cultural funding sources.<sup>35</sup>

Although individual artist-researchers were involved and indeed at the centre of each of the cases discussed in this volume, they were often part of wider multi- or interdisciplinary collaborations and were thus attuned to (and often trained in) multiple disciplines. Because artistic research frequently requires and mobilizes diverse players, it can play an important role in the academy, helping generate multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary engagements. APR – and artistic research more generally – is not, however, restricted to the academy. Many of the questions that it deals with are of considerable public interest. Taking forms such as installations, exhibitions, plays, and books, APR is able to reach and go beyond those spheres within which more conventional provenance research usually operates. This enables it not only to become a means of commenting on the ongoing debate about provenance but also to be fully part of it.

[34] Examples of this include the projects *Pressing Matter: Ownership, Value and the Question of Colonial Heritage in Museums* (funded by the Dutch National Science Agenda) and *REPATRIATES: Artistic Research in Museums and Communities in the Process of Repatriation from Europe* (funded by the European Research Council). Both projects allow artists to develop artistic research in topics that relate to provenance such as the ownership, handling, exhibiting, or repatriation of objects and collections of colonial contexts.

[35] In Germany, these two streams of funding tend to be separate, and there is a risk that APR work may be viewed as not quite fitting – and therefore not funded – either.