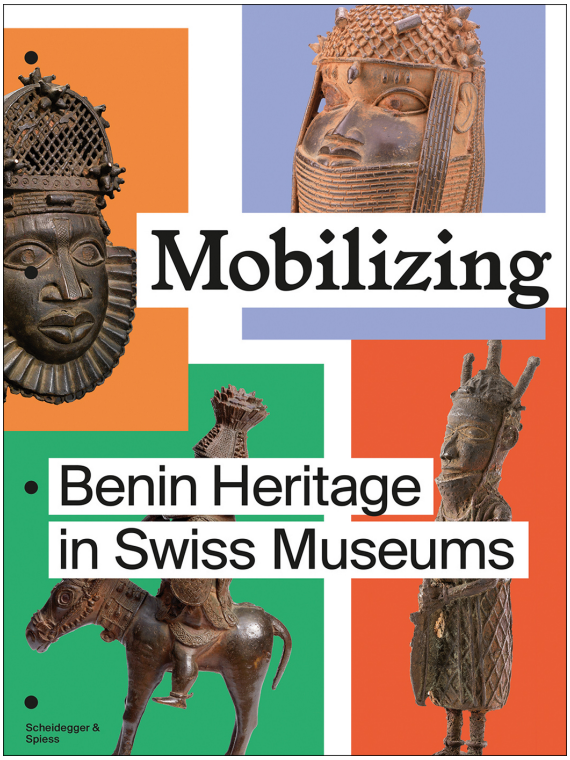
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Mobilizing

Benin Heritage in Swiss Museums

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- A multifaceted reader on the cultural heritage from the pre-colonial Kingdom of Benin in the collections of Swiss and international museums
- Offers very readable access to this complex topic through concise texts and rich visuals
- Addresses the topic of looted art from colonial contexts and restitution beyond the controversial political debate
- Includes voices from present-day Nigeria and the diaspora
- Published to accompany the exhibition *Dialogue with Benin: Art, Colonialism and Restitution* at Museum Rietberg, Zurich (August 23, 2024 to February 16, 2025) and Benin obliges at the University of Zurich's Ethnographic Museum (August 24, 2024 to August 2025)

This multifaceted reader explores the cultural heritage of the pre-colonial Kingdom of Benin, in the territory of what today is Nigeria. Objects from Benin are held also in Swiss museums and, as in other countries of the Global North, have become the subject of controversial debate. The richly illustrated volume offers new findings on the historical and current significance of artefacts. Moreover, it highlights the current dialogue with partners from Nigeria and the diaspora, reflecting on the methods of cooperative research and the future of the objects currently kept in Swiss collections. Biographies of individual items and examples of mediation and exhibition practice provide an insight into interwoven histories, the international art trade, and post-colonial reconciliation work between Africa and Europe.

Mobilizing: Benin Heritage in Swiss Museums is published as part of the Benin Initiative Switzerland (2021–24), a project by eight Swiss museums focusing on provenance research on artefacts from colonial contexts. Texts and images invite reflection on art works and values, relationships, and views of history. The close collaboration with representatives from Nigeria and the diaspora enables new forms of knowledge production. This not only sets cultural heritage in motion, but also the museum as an institution itself.

Esther Tisa Francini is head of archives and provenance research at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich and co-director of the Benin Initiative Switzerland. **Alice Hertzog** is a social anthropologist working as provenance researcher at the University of Zurich's Ethnographic Museum. **Alexis Malefakis** is a curator at the University of Zurich's Ethnographic Museum, where he is in charge of the Africa collection. **Michaela Oberhofer** is curator of art from Africa and Oceania at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich, and co-director of the Benin Initiative Switzerland.







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