



What next? Insurrection of things in the Amazon

Museum der Kulturen Basel, Switzerland – Exhibition 22 March to 29 September 2013

The life of things doesn't end when they become part of an ethnographic museum collection. In fact, they tell us stories of a common past and present between the museum and their place of origin. They also ask questions concerning the responsibility which we bear from these relationships for the future.

With its "What next? Insurrection of things in the Amazon" exhibition, the Museum der Kulturen deals with these questions and invites you to partake in an inspirational journey through the historical and current interrelation between the Amazon Basin and the ethnographic collections at the knee of the Rhine. The exhibition examines selected collection pieces ranging from the 1950s to 2010 with a view to establishing the interests and world views of a variety of peoples and with a particular focus on indigenous communities. In these communities, objects play a central and active role in humanisation, the arrangement of social relationships and the visualisation of identities. Myths tell us how objects are created and take on a role in life but also of how they rebel against humans when they are not treated as they should be. The exhibition combines contemporary approaches in ethnology, which delve into the impact of things, addressing the question of the freedom of indigenous peoples to act within a global context. Gigantic infrastructure projects designed to develop natural resources will drastically and irreversibly change both Amazonia and also, most likely, the rest of the planet. The Museum der Kulturen has taken on this problem in order to pursue connections between museum collections and historical events in Amazonia. No answer is given to the question of "What next?" The exhibition is designed to be a platform for reflection, thus leaving it open to visitors to decide for themselves if and how they wish to approach the question of global responsibility which, depending on your viewpoint, consists of something between involvement and neo-colonial intervention.