

**Shirin Abu Chouka und Manuel May:**  
**Grounding conversations. Maya collections, global supply chains  
and international law**



**Mi. 3.7.2024 um 18 Uhr in der Bibliothek des RJM**

This presentation will explore the potential of participatory action research to co-develop provenance research and envision possible pathways for the conservation and management of Maya relics in museums based on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It aims to open an invitation to the academic community, museums and civil society to actively engage in “*future oriented dialogues*” on museum collections and international law. The case of the Dzibilnoac paintings at the Rautenstrauch Joest Museum offers a great opportunity to work in partnership with the Maya communities to

- 1) raise awareness on the ongoing problem of looting of Maya relics and sacred sites and the global supply chains taking relics to distant countries in the global north, security gaps, as well as
- 2) to investigate the subjective, emotional, and traumatic dimensions of cultural heritage and their impact on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, as they are bridged by museum collections and
- 3) to trigger conversations with grassroots communities and civil society about *futurities* on heritage management and conservation, with a special focus 1) on promoting Indigenous Peoples' rights to control, manage and transmit heritage for the generations to come and 2) on collective healing processes for civil society sharing links with museum collections.

Sherin Abu Chouka holds an international PhD in Latin American History from the Freie University of Berlin and has studied and worked for the in the International Graduate Research Group in Mexico of UNAM, Colegio de México and Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Her area of research combines oral history, semantic change, social movements and cultural history. She is currently working as a researcher and developer of educational material on change, nature and Indigenous knowledge.

Manuel May is a Maya Indigenous scholar from the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico. Manuel holds a PhD in Architectural Heritage from the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain. His area of research lies at the intersection of Indigenous heritage, archaeology and sociocultural anthropology. His work encompasses the socio-political dimensions of Indigenous heritage and methodological considerations for a rights-based approach to research. In November 2017 he was awarded a grant as a Principal Investigator by the European Union - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the German BMBF (04/2018 - 09/2019) to investigate the Mayan cultural landscapes and archaeological sites threatened by industrial cultivation in Hopelchen, Campeche, Mexico. Manuel's work at the global level includes conferences and lectures at various universities and museums around Europe and the Americas, and steady participation in United Nations forums on Indigenous issues, i.e. EMRIP and the Permanent Forum. Currently, Manuel researches the role of Indigenous delegates and representatives in the production of knowledge and norms at the UN level. From April to September 2024, he is doing a research stay at the University of Marburg.