

## Monument and museum destruction



This issue is not for the faint-hearted. It deals in large parts on the destruction of art and artefacts, of collections and museums, both in peaceful times and in war. This pictures shows the mischievous demolition of a memorial pedestal for a former director of an ethnological museum ordered by a change-museum director recently in Leipzig. Additionally, visitors were invited to smash showcases of museums world-wide. Photos: private





Anette Rein

## From object of respect to debris

### The commissioned demolition of a monument relevant to museum history

On March 3, 2022, the first exhibition rooms in the GRASSI *Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* were reopened. Already during the opening speeches by the Director General of the Dresden State Art Collections (SKD), Prof. Dr. Marion Ackermann (Art Historian), and the Director of the three Saxon ethnographic museums, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch MA (New and Theoretical History and Jewish Studies at Amsterdam, Jerusalem und Berlin; Protection of European Cultural Property/Museology in Frankfurt/Oder <sup>1</sup>), the invited guests heard loud banging and beating in the stairwell. <sup>2</sup> A masked group demolished the pedestal with the dates of the museum directorate of Karl Weule in a brutal act with chisel and jackhammer. What remained was a ruined cuboid made of red Rochlitz porphyry, the noble material of the outer facades of the Grassi Museum and the staircase floor. <sup>3</sup>

Karl Weule (1864-1926; geographer and Völkerkundler [ethnologist/anthropologist]) was the temporary second director of the *Leipzig Museum für Völkerkunde* (1907-1926). After his traineeship at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin (1892), he became deputy director of the Leipzig Museum. After the return from a research trip to German East Africa, he became director of the museums as successor to Hermann Obst. His importance for the science and the museum is enormous: until his death, he was a Professor of *Völkerkunde* in Leipzig and Museum Director. He is considered a pioneer of academic *Völkerkunde* (Ethnology/Anthropology) in Germany and established it as a scientific discipline. Already in 1901, he was Professor of *Völkerkunde* and Prehistory, founded the *Institut für Völkerkunde* as director in 1914 and established *Völkerkunde* as a doctoral subject at the University of Leipzig. <sup>4</sup>

Weule undertook his research expedition in 1906/7 "under the protection of a heavily armed police force" <sup>5</sup> on the Makonde plateau in German East Africa, after the violent suppression of the Maji-Maji uprising against the ruthless tax collection, forced labor, and everyday abuse <sup>6</sup> in which an estimated 200,000 people died. The Colonial Department of the German Foreign Of-

fice informed Felix von Luschan (director of the *Völkerkundemuseum* in Berlin) that the "spoils of war" were stored in the central warehouse in Dar es Salam and suggested that the "Africanist Karl Weule, who would travel to Dar es Salaam anyway, is to inspect the weapons and other objects stored there in the central storehouse and ... to inform which objects the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* was interested in." <sup>7</sup> "Besides Berlin, from where the objects were to be distributed to the other ethnographic museums in Germany, Weule also selected objects [for Leipzig] .... Of the 'entire pile of loot,' as he called it, he only took about 2/5 and informs von Luschan that 'even in this limitation of the pieces' the scientific value of the collection is very low, on the one hand because of their composition, on the other hand due to the lack of precise indications of origin." <sup>8</sup>

"Weule ... had spurned the muzzle-loaders in his selection ... This selection ... not only corresponded to the ethnological collectors' paradigm of the time, which researched societies in Africa ... beyond historical interconnections and change, but also solidified colonial ideological perspectives, whose representatives designed the picture of supposedly primitive and historyless African societies in order to widen the distance between colonisers and the African population'." <sup>9</sup>

From today's point of view, his Leipzig exhibition practice was quite modern. "Weule ... deviated from the geographical concept ... in favour of experimental, comparative shows, developed in close coordination with the visitors. With their encouragement, he organised a whole series of special exhibitions, e. g. on transport methods or industrial forms of early cultures." <sup>10</sup> And there is something else to consider about Weule: "According to his own statement, Weule never acquired an object without having its use or mode of operation demonstrated to him." <sup>10a</sup>

He explicitly summed up, "Masks were obtained only by cunning, resolute demeanor and perseverance; and even then only for relatively high prices." <sup>10b</sup> Not only in the exhibition "*Welten-sammler*", the content of this quote is abbreviated to distortion of meaning, but already in the

inventory data of the Makonde masks acquired by Weule.<sup>11</sup> The distorted quote was then leaked to the press.<sup>11a</sup> By reducing the quote to "by cunning, resolute demeanor and perseverance", it is deliberately concealed that Weule paid for the Makonde objects – not a common practice in colonial contexts!<sup>12</sup>

In his publications as well as in his teaching "Karl Weule... also dealt with 'race' topics, among others. But these questions were not central to his work, nor did he had a keen interest in an anthropological collection. Also, an involvement in anthropological research projects is not evident from the viewed source material ... At the same time, however, it can be stated that, for example scientists of the next generation like Otto Reche and Eugen Fischer ... took up 'race'-issues and helped to shape them and continued in an extreme manner".<sup>13</sup>

After Weule's death, the new Grassi Museum building was inaugurated September 30, 1929. The 2nd chairman of the *Verein für Völkerkunde*, Herrmann Meyer, presented to the Museum a bronze bust of Karl Weule, created by the well-known artist Prof. Max Lange from Munich. 1932 this bust was initially placed in the front part of the Africa Hall.<sup>14</sup> The reconstruction of the building, which was destroyed in the Second World War, began in 1947, and in 1954, the first permanent exhibition with two sections was reopened.<sup>15</sup> As an expression of unbroken appreciation, the monument was placed in the stairwell in 1954.

A first "decapitation" of the stele took place under the previous director, Nanette Snoep, in 2016 on the occasion of the exhibition GRASSI invites #1: *Fremd* (from January 29 until May 8, 2016). Weule was "transformed from an actor into an exhibit, as his bust, which usually stands in the staircase, is taken from its pedestal and placed in a display case. Here it is located opposite the Makonde masks collected on Weule's East Africa expedition – the 'collector' and 'his collection' are related to each other ... In Weule's display case are explanation panels from the display of the ethnological museum as well as ... quotations from his work '*Mitteilungen aus dem Deutschen Schutzgebiet*'. In the statements aspects of ethnological research become visible, which usually prefer to be concealed, because they do not fit into the image of the correct, heroic researcher."<sup>16</sup> Here it was only the activist approach that mattered: The alleged quotations in the showcase did not contain any source references and are therefore difficult to verify.<sup>16a</sup>

After the exhibition, the bronze bust was returned by Snoep on the pedestal. Under the new director Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, the pedestal was finally decapitated, and before the opening of the exhibition "*Weltensammler*" (Nov. 24, 2019) it was moved to the depository. In its place piled a series of museum publications (which, by the way, had been started by Weule), the inscription was covered with a chipboard and a text panel: "Until September 2019, in this place stood the bust of the second museum director Museum director



The Weule memorial in Leipzig before the destruction ordered by the museum director Leonie Meijer-van Mensch.

Photo: <https://www.skd.museum/besuch/grassi-museum-leipzig/>

Right: Two activists demolishing the memorial on March 3, 2022. Photo: private

Karl Weule. He knew how to use cleverly the German colonial policy for himself and the museum. During his tenure (1907-1926), he succeeded in enhancing the museum's collections almost fivefold." <sup>17</sup> Until March 3, 2022, the pedestal remained headless but undamaged in the stairwell of the museum.

The masked demolition group were members of the artists' collective PARA from Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt/M.: "The collective explores future ruins, narratives of the politics of commemoration and questions the suitability of cultural heritage of current modes of social coexistence. To this end, PARA works in an interdisciplinary manner, site-specific and performative, with techniques of reconstruction and speculation, between research and fiction." <sup>18</sup> Illuminating are details on the website of one of PARA's members, Bastian Sistig (partner of & sistig GbR): Sistig is engaged in "speculative research and adventurous obscuring of history formation ... Thereby, & sistig combines strategies of the documentation and soft fiction to documentary poetics. Content focus is the questioning and perverting of memory and politics of truth." <sup>19</sup> An obscure art action revolves around the ascent of Kilimanjaro in 1889 by the geographer Hans Meyer, <sup>20</sup> who allegedly took along the top stone of the mountain. <sup>21</sup>

The current performance was not mentioned in the press invitation of the museum, however, it was not entirely unexpected. An article in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* had announced the demolition and misrepresented it as a decision of the whole museum staff. <sup>22</sup> In fact, many participants were not informed of what to expect and were emotionally overwhelmed by the demolition. Reactions to the "act of senseless destruction" were predominantly negative; no "hurrah" was heard. The deep embarrassment was expressed by questions like: "How much was that, I wonder?", and "Was it taxpayers' money that was squandered?" or "Who appoints people organising such childish prank?" The artistic intervention was generally perceived as iconoclasm, remained incomprehensible, and certainly not at all suitable for a new permanent exhibition.

In addition to staff members, the guests included two representatives of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, Program Development (Lutz Nitsche, Executive Board, and Uta Schnell, Scientific Staff) as well as other personalities from the cultural sector, including Claus Deimel (former Deputy Director General of the SKD and former Director of the ethnographic collections), Larissa Förster (German Lost Art Foundation, Head of the Collections from Colonial Contexts), Volker

Rodekamp (former President of *Deutscher Museumsbund* and former Director of *Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig*), Wolf-Dietrich Baron Speck von Sternburg (patron of the arts in Leipzig). Some of them, such as Karl Heinrich von Stülpmagel (senior conservator/VDR and furniture historian at *Ägyptisches Museum Leipzig*), started a discussion with the official representatives: "With reference to the iconoclasm, I told Mrs. Meijer-van Mensch my opinion on the spot (and this was not very friendly...). She defended herself by claiming that the monument is not a listed monument, an assumption which may be wrong." <sup>23</sup> If the monument is considered part of the museum inventory, then it is protected. If the stele has been placed in the staircase for many years and the integration into the design of the building forms a unit of monumental value, it has a share in the pronounced monument protection – according to a statement of the Monument Office. <sup>24</sup> Independent of aspects of monument preservation <sup>25</sup> [and criminal law], the question arises of how to deal appropriately with evidence of one's own institutional history." <sup>26</sup> According to museum ethics, it would have been correct to label the unloved pedestal with a commentary.

On the SKD website, under the heading: "*Umbenennung von Werktiteln*", the following statement is published: "Former iconoclasts destroyed the works, because they seemed to them dangerous or obscene. The task of the SKD is to preserve and protect the works." <sup>27</sup> Another statement of the SKD on the events in Ukraine also points in the same direction, in which "support for the protection of cultural treasures is offered." <sup>28</sup> This empathetic and appreciative offer of the SKD is in stark contrast to the goal of triggering the greatest possible outrage by destroying the memorial pedestal, <sup>29</sup> on which the commissioned artists' collective together with the museum director seemed to be solely concerned with. The possibility that this may discourage potential object donors from entrusting things to the museum in the future is taken into account. With the commissioned performance, the SKD is presumably signaling the de-collection – if not even the destruction of the museum. For whoever visits the museum will see a plastic standee in front of the stele, which dresses up this request in a concise pictogram as well as a text panel that bluntly calls for violence against the showcases with ethnographic objects and ethnographic museums. <sup>30</sup>

Independent of due provenance research and restitution <sup>31</sup>: Even if the background Kilimanjaro story is partly just an adventurous obscuring or fake and the artistic staging and its actors are at best reminiscent of the classic figure of the trick-

ster <sup>32</sup>, the question remains whether the new orientation of the house justifies this kind of destruction.

## Notes

- 1 Ms. Meijer-van Mensch finished her studies (1993-1999) at Amsterdam University with an MA, while studying in Jerusalem 1996-1997 and at FU Berlin 1997-1999 simultaneously. 2 years postgraduate studies followed at Frankfurt/Oder (her own statements at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/léontine-meijer-van-mensch-b072206/?originalSubdomain=de>)
- 2 The staging at the opening is part of the museum's reorientation of the museum towards becoming a network museum, which is that deals with its own history in a reflexive manner. An important step in this direction is the project funded by the Federal Cultural within the framework of the Initiative for Ethnological Collections. Future Program REINVENTING.GRASSI.SKD.
- 3 My explanations are based on statements from participants, archives, literature, social media, the Office of Historical Monuments, and visual as well as visual documentations. The ignorance of the age of the monument becomes clear in the comment of the director on Facebook on 8.3.2022: "The columne [sic!] was there since the 1960's/1970's ... don't overdue it with your 100 years" [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10220777781215629&id=1270749018&sfsn=scwspmohttps://www.facebook.com/search/posts?q=fred%20von%20bose&filters=eyJzZWVuX3Bvc3RzOjAiOiJ7XCJyYWI1XCI6XCJpbmRlcmFjdGVkX3Bvc3RzXCIsXCJhcmdzXCI6XCJcIn0ifQ%3D%3D](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10220777781215629&id=1270749018&sfsn=scwspmohttps://www.facebook.com/search/posts?q=fred%20von%20bose&filters=eyJzZWVuX3Bvc3RzOjAiOiJ7XCJyYWI1XCI6XCJpbmRlcmFjdGVkX3Bvc3RzXCIsXCJhcmdzXCI6XCJcIn0ifQ%3D%3D)
- 4 [https://leibniz-iftl.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Bibliothek\\_Archiv/Archiv\\_Findb%C3%BCher\\_PDF/Weule.pdf](https://leibniz-iftl.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Bibliothek_Archiv/Archiv_Findb%C3%BCher_PDF/Weule.pdf); see also Seige 2004
- 5 Lang et al 2021, p. 227. Weule was accompanied by 13 Police Askaris and the district officer Ewerbeck. All on duty in the colonial administration had received orders to comply with Weule's wishes in every respect. Thus, the Wali instructed the entire population of his district to bring their material cultural possessions for purchase – especially masks and cult objects. (Blesse 2009 b, p. 296)
- 6 *ibid.* p. 225
- 7 *ibid.* p. 227f [transl.]
- 8 *ibid.* p. 228; quote in citation from Ivanov; Weber-Sinn 2018, p. 82 [transl.]
- 9 *ibid.* p. 229; quote in citation from Ivanov; Weber-Sinn 2018, p. 84 [transl.]
- 10 Noack 2019, p. 34 [transl.]
- 10a Blesse 2009 b, p. 297 [transl.]
- 10b *ibid.* p. 298 [transl.]
- 11 e.g. <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1787013>
- 11a Schlehahn 2019
- 12 However, what Weule actually understood by "high prices" remains undetermined. In Leipzig, a total of 1088 inventory numbers – for 1206 objects – were assigned after this journey (Blesse 2009 b, p. 298). [transl.]
- 13 Laukötter 2007, p. 321f [transl.]
- 14 All costs incurred were borne by the Verein für Völkerkunde, Leipzig.
- 15 Blesse 2009 c, p. 359f
- 16 Julia Zureck, cf. <http://julzureck.com/mitteilungen-aus-demdeutschen-schutzgebiet/>; see also the video 1,25 min. <https://grassi-voelkerkunde.skd.museum/en/ausstellungen/grassi-invites-1/julia-zureck/> [transl.]
- 16a s.a. Kilb 2022
- 17 [transl.] <https://www.lvz.de/Mehr/Bilder/2019/11/Die-Weltensammler-im-grassi-museum/4>; [https://twitter.com/\\_omwo/status/1232643842052108288/photo/1](https://twitter.com/_omwo/status/1232643842052108288/photo/1)
- 18 [https://www.p-a-r-a.org/web\\_mobil\\_para.pdf](https://www.p-a-r-a.org/web_mobil_para.pdf) [transl.]
- 19 <https://www.bastiansistig.com/about>; see also the video on the project "Moving Mountains" [transl.] <https://www.bastiansistig.com/projects/moving-mountains>
- 20 [https://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Hans\\_Meyer\\_\(1858-1929\)](https://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Hans_Meyer_(1858-1929))
- 21 Many details are not verifiable and probably part of fiction or speculation, which the PARA group says is specialized in. Meyer is said to have presented part of the stone Wilhelm II, who, according to PARA, had it placed in the Grotto Hall of the New Palace in Potsdam – where he later should have been exchanged. An examination of the existing stone in the 1980s identified it as a fake, namely as biotite slate, which often occurs in German low mountain ranges. The other half is said to have served the Meyer family as a paperweight until it found its way to the antiquarian bookshop Kainbacher in Baden near Vienna. There is the rest of the stone for sale. According to PARA, the price was negotiated down from €250,000 to €40,000. "With the goal of returning the summit stone, PARA invites the public to take part in performative actions to remove building fabric of the GRASSI Museum [!!!] and to produce replicas of the stone from the extracted material. These can be purchased in the exhibition and at [www.berge-versetzen.com](http://www.berge-versetzen.com). With the proceeds of the sold replicas the repurchase of the actual summit piece at the Austrian dealer will be made possible. The ethnological museum, which keeps the looted objects of colonized societies, becomes the raw material of restitution. To further raise the stakes, PARA removed the top six centimeters of the Zugspitze on September 16, 2021. The spire, which is on display in the exhibition, is the hostage in the process of restitution. Only when the summit stone of Kilimanjaro returns, the summit of the Zugspitze is also put back in its place." [transl.]
- 22 In his article, Peter Richter calls the monument: "not a listed substance, but a later added pedestal that once bore the bust of a former museum director, which was felt to be out of date in the house anyway" (Richter 2022; transl.). At this point it would be interesting to learn who "the spokeswoman of the museum" for this information was. As far as is known, this action was not the result of a joint discussion with all museum employees.

- 23 The specific legal situation – e.g., § 304 StGB – must be assessed by more professional colleagues for this topic.
- 24 eMail from the monument office of the city of Leipzig of March 8, 2022 to the author: "...that the column of Karl Weule was not recorded as an individual monument by the State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments. Regardless of this, it is of course part of the collection of the Museum of Völkerkunde and is thus already protected." [transl.]
- 25 cf. § 2 para. 2, Saxon Monument Protection Act
- 26 Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel: oral communication on March 9, 2022. [transl.], cf. also <https://www.facebook.com/MUSEUM.AKTUELL/posts/4981911858513136>
- 27 <https://www.skd.museum/forschung/werktitel/> [transl.]
- 28 <https://www.skd.museum/ueber-uns/stellungnahmen/stellungnahme-zur-ukraine/> [transl.]
- 29 Richter 2022
- 30 Kilb 2022
- 31 s. Rein 2018; Rein 2022
- 32 <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trickster>

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All websites visited between March 11 and 14, 2022.

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## Wulff E. Brebeck / Barbara Stambolis (Hg.) Erinnerungsarbeit kontra Verklärung der NS-Zeit



## Vom Umgang mit Tatorten, Gedenkortern und Kultorten

mit Beiträgen von Barbara Stambolis, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, Daniela Siepe, Waltraud Schreiber, Dietmar Klenke, Arnold Vogt und Wulff E. Brebeck

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Christian Mueller- Straten

# Heroes and Jacobines: How to correctly distance yourself from male predecessors?

The ordered destruction of the Leipzig monument for Karl Weule violates German laws and global preservation norms

## What happened so far

At the beginning of March 2022, on the occasion of the reopening of the special exhibition „Re-Inventing Grassi“ of the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Leipzig, the commemorative pedestal for the second director of the Museum of Ethnology, Karl Weule <sup>1</sup>, was brutally destroyed in front of an invited audience by a commissioned artist group. As recently as November 2019, its director Meijer-van Mensch had promised to „keep a balance between critical research and honour“. <sup>2</sup> Now we know what to make of it. Moreover, the group of artists was allowed in the exhibition to give advice in German and English how to throw stones into the display cases of ethnological museums.

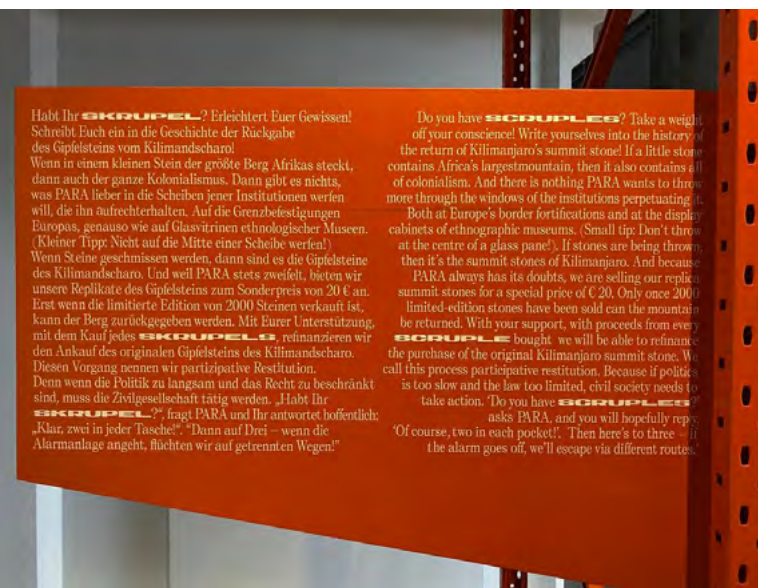
Anette Rein has already reported on the context of this monument destruction in MUSEUM AKTUELL. <sup>3</sup> So far, the only thing to add is that the supervisory body SKD <sup>4</sup> are still advertising the museum with the Weule pedestal, although it no longer exists. Because of its current importance, Rein's research went viral as preprint <sup>6</sup> and was recognized by many scientists because of its factual analysis in numerous letters to the author and in letters to the editor of MUSEUM AKTUELL. <sup>7</sup> The English version can be found on the preceeding pages.

The editor-in-chief of MUSEUM AKTUELL, Adelheid Straten, pointed out in her editorial <sup>8</sup> that every male monument annoys feminists, because women still get far too few monuments globally (e.g. in Germany within the „Walhalla“ near Regensburg or the Bavaria Hall of Fame in Munich) – free after the late US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who once said that there was a certain place in hell for women who do not support each other. Picture galleries of former male directors are nowadays quite often taken down and set aside by new female directors. The destruction of a monument for a male director as a marketing gimmick (for an otherwise rather insignificant exhibition) is not tolerable.

These thoughtful words were opposed to verbal positions by supporters of the action. Interestingly, however, they diverted attention <sup>9</sup> from the topic of the destruction of the pedestal to colonialism and the „beneficiary of colonialism“, Karl Weule. However, these colonialist references to the younger Weule were addressed, described and taken into account in the short contribution by Anette Rein. What is interesting, is the narrative of the Leipzig museum director Ms. Meijer-van Mensch that the commemorative pedestal is neither a registered monument nor a museum object and can therefore be demolished without any problems.

## My approach

In the following article, I am going to attempt two approaches: an art-historical evaluation of the destroyed Weule monument at the landing of the Grassi Museum staircase and an ethical evaluation of the destruction of the monument in an institution that is dedicated to the preservation of culture.



In Leipzig, the artist group PARA was allowed to give advice in both German and English how to smash museum show-cases. The German text reads: *„Schreibt Euch ein in die Geschichte der Rückgabe des Gipfelstein vom Kilimandscharo! Wenn in einem kleinen Stein der größte Berg Afrikas steckt, dann auch der ganze Kolonialismus. Dann gibt es nichts, was PARA lieber in die Scheiben jener Institutionen werfen will, die ihn aufrechterhalten. Auf die Grenzbefestigungen Europas, genauso wie auf Glasvitrinen ethnologischer Museen. (Kleiner Tipp: Nicht auf die Mitte einer Scheibe werfen!)...“* *„Habt Ihr Skrupel?“* fragt PARA und ihr antwortet hoffentlich *„Klar, zwei in jeder Tasche.“* - *„Dann auf Drei - wenn die Alarmanlage angeht, flüchten wir auf getrennten Wegen.“* Photo: Utzenbach/Twitter

## Review: How old is the monument?

In a Facebook post on March 8, 2022, Ms. Meijer-van Mensch criticized her employee Fred von Bose. She wrote: „The columne [sic] was there since the 1960's/1970's... don't overdue it with your 100 years ...." <sup>10</sup> He buckled and replied "okay...okay" and she praised him for that with a "but I love you anyway".



In 1925, the new Grassi Museum on Johannisplatz was one of the most modern museum ensembles in the world. Photo: <https://www.grassimak.de/museum/geschichte-architektur/>

On September 30, 1929, the new museum of the Grassi Museum of Ethnology was inaugurated. For this purpose, the Leipzig „Association for Ethnology“ donated to the museum a bust of its long-term director Karl Weule, who passed away in 1926. <sup>11</sup> The association had



The gallery of honour of the Grassi museum, originally placed in the foyer on the first (Br.) floor. Possibly, the Weule bust rests here on a temporary wooden pillar. To the left and right of this are the entrances to the Africa and Europe departments of the Ethnological Museum. Geography and the musical instrument museum were located on the ground floor. Picture taken approx. 1930, photographer unknown. Source: Archives of the Grassi Museum für angewandte Kunst. Picture provided by Olaf Thormann

previously commissioned the bust to the sculptor Prof. Dr. Max Lange (1868-1947), Munich. The cost of 3.500 RM <sup>12</sup> were carried by the Association. This means that – in contrast to other cases in other museums – it was not the museum that commissioned the bust of its former director. The bust was given to the museum as a present for rather undefined display, but probably for show in the Grassi's gallery of honour. The date of production of the posthumous bust dates back to 1928/29. Somewhat after 1932 the museum management placed it where it best suited Weule's biography: in the Africa hall. <sup>13</sup> After the war the pedestal was placed at various points in the stairwell.

The artist of this bust was. At his time, the medical doctor and late impressionist artist Lange was a much sought-after sculptor: <sup>14</sup> „Lange created numerous portrait busts, monuments, tombs, medals and plaques for public and private clients, especially for the scholars at Leipzig University.“ [transl.] <sup>15</sup>

From 1910, after marrying the Danish woman Nora Kjaer (1874-1927), the Langes lived in Leipzig-Gohlis, where he also set up his studio. „A significant example of his dissolution of an organic connection between architecture and sculpture is the Puttenbrunnen / Lipsia fountain in Leipzig, which he designed in 1913 <sup>16</sup> and won the first prize in a competition.“ [transl.]



The famous putti fountain in front of the „Arabic Coffee Tree“ is a major work by Joseph Max Lange. Photo: Wikimedia Commons / Appaloosa

In November 1921, Lange moved to Munich, but also led an unsteady life here, characterized by changing apartments and numerous trips. But there is little information about Lange, all internet sources copy from Wikipedia and its historical sources, and recent art history does not want to deal with him.

The Weule pedestal at Leipzig Museum of Ethnology is most comparable to the memorial pedestal for the sur-



Self-portrait of Max Lange, taken from Trumm (s. note 9)

geon and ophthalmologist Wilhelm Roser in Marburg, a monument erected in front of the German Institute for the Blind. Here, too, the bust is made of metal and the base is made of reddish stone. Wikipedia clearly designates the Roser pedestal as a monument,<sup>17</sup> and it is also a listed monument. Trumm emphasizes a special „invention“ by Lange, the organic combination of stone and bronze bust. Lange's **development from the pedestal busts to a herm** is most clearly seen in this monument in Marburg.<sup>18</sup>

Another comparable bust, even created approximately at the same time, is that of the famous art-historian Georg Dehio of Museum Kunstpalast Foundation (bronze, 34 cm h., 1929). There is also an autograph drypoint etching by Max Lange, which is in the possession of the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome.



The Bust for Georg Dehio, 1929, Museum Kunstpalast Foundation. Photo: Museum

The oldest photo of the Weule pedestal that could be traced within a few days shows it in 1943 after the heavy bombardment of Leipzig.



The Weule pedestal after the bombing of 1943. Note the wrong start year of the directorate and the wreath of laurel. Source: Archive of the Grassi Museum of Ethnology

In the photo, the pedestal appears just as white as the walls, bears a crack at the basement and no plinth. So there can be no talk of a base made of Rochlitz porphyry tuff. In any case, it already bears the metal letters destroyed in March 2022.



The destroyed Grassi Museum. Large parts of the collections were evacuated. Photo: <https://www.grassimak.de/museum/geschichte-architektur/>

The bust itself was not damaged during the war.<sup>19</sup> After the destructions of the museums in 1943-1945, the museum was initially roughly secured and then partially rebuilt from 1947 onwards, but only gradually and provisionally. Significant parts of the building complex were even rented to a number of third-party users after the war. According to Lothar Draeger, curator for Northern America objects, the pedestal was situated these days already in the 50s, together with a plaque for the first museum director, less prominent in a „dead“ triangle under the flight of stairs.<sup>20</sup>



The staircase in the 60s, unknown photographer. By zooming in, you will see the Weule monument in a distance, the common window panes and several water damages. Photo: Archives of the Grassi Museum für angewandte Kunst. Thanks to Olaf Thormann

In these days, the flight of stairs showed massive signs of war and rain damages, and the windows by Albers were replaced by usual common window glass. After an average caused by coal shortage in the heating system in the cold winter of 1981, water flooded the museum and the Grassi Museum was almost completely closed for 20 years. Between 2000 and 2005 it had been restored, partly rebuilt and modernized. In 2001, the Weule bust was taken to the interim Maedlerpassage.<sup>21</sup> A wooden pedestal was made for it in the lecture and assembly room. Giseler Blesse had a brass plaque made, which took the opportunity to correct the start date of Weule's directorship from 1906 to 1907.

In 2011, the completely destroyed Albers windows in the main staircase were restored by the glass painting workshop Peters, Paderborn, using funds from the Savings Bank Fund. The pedestal – like all the reddish stones in the museum – was made of Rochlitzer porphyry tuff, altogether the largest job the quarry owner has ever experienced. The bust was glued to the base, there are no traces of a screw connection either on the bust or on the porphyry tuff pedestal.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the entire museum is a protected (listed) building and one of approx. 20 so-called cultural beacons in the federal government's Blue Book containing culturally important sites in the former GDR. The Grassi Museum is also part of the Conference of National Cultural Institutions.

### Karl Weule: from Saulus to Paulus

As the son of a turner, Weule developed to remarkable academic heights – first he became a geographer, later he developed into one of the most important German ethnologists of his time. Weule became associated professor of Ethnology and Prehistory in 1901. In 1914, an

ethnology university seminar was set up in the Leipzig museum, followed by a state research institute for ethnology. Three years later, he was elected a member of the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina. In 1920 he became a full professor of ethnology – the first in Germany. From 1921 he was spokesman for the ethnographic department of the German Anthropological Society and in 1925 spokesman for the entire association.<sup>23</sup>

The German Wikipedia writes [transl.]: „Karl Weule particularly developed the relationship between the museum and the University of Leipzig ... He contributed to the development of teaching, research and publication in the museum. In his time, the collection experienced an extraordinary growth and commissioned expeditions to the four corners of the world, notably led by discoverers Leo Frobenius, Hermann Meyer, and Fritz Krause.“<sup>24</sup> In his resignation speech in 1926, the Leipzig Rector Max Le Blanc described him as a scholar „of high reputation both at home and abroad, who was among the foremost ethnologists of the present. He was a co-creator of modern ethnological science, in which he worked without one-sidedness represented the evolutionary direction.“<sup>25</sup>

His merits are summarized as follows in the Saxon Biography: „Director of the Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig since 1907, he built up the museum as a scientific institution, especially with Fritz Krause and Paul Hermann, and led it through a variety of promotions for the growth of the collection, the ethnological Research and publicity by the mid-1920s from the association museum to an internationally important institution.“ [transl.]<sup>26</sup> My impression is: as Weule got older, he abandoned his earlier colonialist habits and turned into a solid museum ethnographer. Already his many photos from the southern Tanzania expedition (1906/07) show him as a distanced researcher who respected other cultures.

In the Leipzig Museum, „W. initially concentrated on the introduction of a file, cataloging and inventory system based on the Berlin model and on the beginning of scientific collection processing ... As a remarkably practical museum director and specialist, W. organized the internal service necessary for the constantly growing facility and achieved the employment of scientists for all major regions of the world and for prehistory by 1914. Through numerous contacts to explorers, colonial officials, missionaries, etc. and through the acquisition of honorary collectors all over the world and sponsors, who mainly supported purchases and research trips, W. played a decisive role in the growth of the collection, so that in the mid-1920s the Leipzig museum was one of the three largest ethnographic museums in Germany alongside the Berlin and Hamburg museums to make it usable for the general public or to convey interest in the museum and in ethnology to the population. This goal was achieved by building up an extensive photo

archive to illustrate public lectures, by setting up a public library with a reading room, teaching events in the exhibition rooms and public lecture programs. The latter were carried out together with the Association for Ethnology, of which W. was chairman from 1907 until his death. W. was particularly committed to the inclusion of ethnological material in school lessons, which in 1921 led to the temporary establishment of ethnology in Saxon schools. The popularization of ethnological knowledge also took place through lecture courses at educational and training institutions, such as the Leipzig adult education center, the arts and crafts college and the book dealers' training institute ... The dissemination of scientific knowledge about „foreign peoples“ and ethnology in public was hardly common in Saxony up to that point, so that W. has done groundbreaking work in this regard. - For reporting on the museum and the publication of ethnological research results, W. founded the scientific publication series „Yearbook of the Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig“ and „Publications of the Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig“ and published the „Treatise of the Saxon Research Institute for Ethnology“. In terms of scientific theory, W. represented, in addition to his regional specialisation in East Africa, aspects of Ratzel's anthropogeography and Bastian's evolutionist approaches, which are reflected in his publications and exhibition concepts as well as in his scientific teaching activities. In contrast to many contemporary ethnologists, he did not consider the two theoretical directions to be contradictory. However, he partially rejected the cultural circle theory of Fritz Graebner. In the last years of his life he also dealt with the theory of convergence. His position as museum director left him little time for further theoretical research. However, his publications contain numerous comparative research approaches. W. considered it essential to get to know the living conditions and cultures of the peoples studied on site, which is why he supported the field research projects of the scientists at the museum and the institute. W. advocated the need for close, interdisciplinary cooperation between ethnology, prehistory and anthropology, which he tried to achieve, especially from 1914 as head of the research institute. He taught, among other things, „General Ethnology“ as the main lecture topic and held special lectures on ethnography of all continents. By including his museum curators, teaching at the institute was placed on a broad basis right from the start. The city of Leipzig supported the research institute with substantial grants, so that research trips and the publication of scientific works could be financed.“<sup>27</sup>

## What is the epistemological character of the Weule memorial?

Ms Meijer-van Mensch has repeatedly stated that the commemorative pedestal was not a memorial.

This view is wrong under any aspect for several reasons and it does not give license to demolish the pedestal

anyway. Because it is also inadmissible for museum directors to destroy works of art that do not have a monument status (yet). The ICOM code of Ethics is clear: „Museums are responsible for the tangible and intangible heritage of nature and culture. Museum authorities and those involved in the strategic direction and oversight of museums have a primary responsibility to protect and promote this heritage .. The sponsor should take measures to protect the public, staff, collections and other resources from natural disasters and man-made damage in the long term ... A museum's collection policy ... must not be dominated solely by current, intellectual trends or current museum customs ... Museums must fully embrace and comply fully with international, national, provincial and local laws and contractual obligations.... Museum staff should be familiar with relevant international, national and local laws and the conditions of their employment and avoid situations in which their conduct could be interpreted as inappropriate can be n... **Loyalty to colleagues** [including the former museum director Weule - MS] **and the museum that employs them is essential** and must be based on loyalty to the fundamental ethical principles of the profession.“<sup>28</sup>

The Weule pedestal consists of two parts that make it a memorial: a lettered remembering stone pedestal (with a wrong starting date of Weule's directorship, detected later on by museum curator Giselher Blesse) and a bust created by an artist *post mortem*, which is a work of art in itself, serving to commemorate the deceased. The pedestal without a head makes no sense, the decapitation of the pedestal by Meijer-van Mensch in 2019 was already an act of cultural destruction - just like the decapitation of a saint's head by the Münster Anabaptists. A commemorative bust for a former museum director also makes no sense in the depositories, it has been de-



In the depository room, the Weule bust no longer reminds museum officials and visitors. Photographer unknown

prived of its intended function: it no longer commemorates.

Significant in this context is the fact that the gift from the circle of friends becomes a memorial only by the placement of the bust on a **lettered** support: without the inscription nobody would know what this is all about, only with the inscription it becomes clear that this bust does not refer to a sponsor or scientist, but an important former director. The support is not just an old museum base (e.g. like many others in a museum to raise a museum object on show), but the necessary substructure for a commemorative portrait bust. Its material matched the surroundings, both in the old arrangement in the Africa section and in the stairwell after the war. The Rochlitz stone is, since centuries, the preferred regional stone for monuments, castles and churches or several of the famous postal mileage obelisks. At least in Leipzig, the Old Townhall, St Thomas Church, the former „Fuerstenhaus“ and St Trinitatis were built with this hard and iconic stone. The famous Brandenburg Gate in Berlin rests on it. It had been the museum who carried out the final placement of the bust on an inscribed pedestal. In my opinion, the relocation of the commemorative pedestal from the Africa Hall to the main staircase even represents a second higher rating, which is even reinforced by the central placement and the selection of a significant and matching stone base. Especially for the GDR, the Rochlitz porphyry tuff stone was first choice. The below quoted article by Esther Fontana confirms this interpretation.

## A remark from an art-historian on semantics and legal paragraphs

But the term „monument“ is ambiguous: in terms of monument preservation, it designates something that has achieved monument protection status (in contrast to the unprotected non-monument) and it is a fundamental art-historical category as well – in contrast to other sculptural functions such as bozzetto, animal figure or tombstone.

In order to determine the character of the Weule pedestal, it must be stated that it definitely has the form and function of an regional art-historical monument. But is it also a monument in terms of monument protection? The Monuments Office of the City of Leipzig decided on March 8, 2022: “that the column by Karl Weule was not recorded as an individual monument by the State Office for the Preservation of Monuments. **Regardless of this, it is of course part of the collection of the Ethnological Museum and is therefore already protected**” (see Anette Rein’s note 24, emphasis added). Indeed, the Weule bust has belonged to the museum since 1929, i.e. for 93 years – and it rested on some sort of memorial pedestal from 1932 to 2019.

In its introduction to the list of monuments in Saxony, the State Office for the Preservation of Monuments in

Saxony clearly emphasizes: „The status of an object as a monument does not depend on its entry in this list or on the mapping. **Objects that are not listed can also be monuments.** In principle the monument property extends to the substance and appearance as a whole, **including the interior.** Deviance applies if only parts of the building are explicitly protected ( e.g. only the facade).“ <sup>29</sup> [transl., emphasis added] Cultural heritage according to the Saxonian Monument Protection Law is defined in §2. These include buildings, stone monuments and works of fine art. For these, the preservation obligation of §8 applies: „(1) Owners and owners of cultural monuments must treat them with care, preserve them as monuments within the scope of what is reasonable and protect them from endangerment.“ §§35/36 regulate corresponding criminal offenses and subject them to high fines:

„Section 35 Criminal Offenses

(1) Who

1. **destroys a cultural monument or a significant part of a cultural monument without the permit required under Section 12 (1) No. 5, ... shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two years or a fine.**

(2) The negligent commission of an act under paragraph 1 shall be punished with imprisonment of up to one year or a fine...“ <sup>30</sup> [transl., emphasis added]

These paragraphs of the regional monument protection find their correspondence in the penal code. There it says in §304 on damage to property harmful to the public:

„(1) **Anyone damaging or destroying unlawfully ... grave monuments, public monuments, natural monuments, objects of art, science or commerce, which are kept in public collections or are publicly displayed,** or objects, which are used for public benefit or to beautify public paths, places or parks, **will be punished with imprisonment of up to three years or with a fine.**

(2) **Any person who, without authorization, changes the appearance of a thing referred to in subsection (1) or an object referred to there in a way that is not just insignificant and not just temporarily, shall also be punished.**

(3) **The attempt is punishable.**“ <sup>31</sup> [transl., emphasis added]

This means: Independent of the monument listing, monuments in Saxony are legally protected against destruction by law. On the one hand as parts of a listed whole and as part of a museum collection (even if not yet inventoried), but also generally as „public monuments, objects of art, science or commerce, which are kept in public collections or are publicly displayed“.

So is the Grassi Museum as a whole or only parts of it under monument protection? The answer is: The entire

Grassi Museum is under monument protection under the object number 09290269:

„Name of the building: Grassimuseum; Museum of Applied Arts; today Museum of Applied Arts; Museum of Ethnology; Museum of Musical Instruments

Brief description: Museum with an older portal, with open spaces on the street side and green inner courtyards with paved paths, sculptures and monuments; unique, multi-wing building complex with a museum for handicrafts, a museum for ethnology and a museum for musical instruments, built on part of the former Old St John's Cemetery, plaster facade with porphyry tuff structure, architects: Zweck & Voigt, international significance for the history of architecture and museums, artistic and architectural significance, rarity and popular education value

Dating: 1925-1927 (Museum)“ [transl.]

The following applies: „Basically, the property of a monument extends to the substance and appearance as a whole, **including the interior.**“ In plain language, this means that the narrative spread by the museum director that the Weule pedestal is „not a listed monument“ does definitely not apply. The superior management of the SKD (Ms Ackermann and her legal consultants) could have recognized that. She should not have approved this action. It is **questionable, however, whether she was properly informed in advance about the planned destruction on a Saxonian monument.**

**The Weule pedestal at the Grassi Museum was part of a former memorial concept by the three Grassi Museums which lasted from the Weimar Republic till 2019.**

Contrary to other assumptions, the Weule pedestal in the listed Grassi Museum was not a stand-alone object. It was part of a memorial concept. Also right away from the start of 1929, commemorative busts of important of scientists and sponsors were part of the museum's gallery of honour.

For decades there was also a commemorative bust in the stairwell of the well-respected art historian Richard Gaul (1862-1944), erected by the second museum under the Grassi roof.<sup>32</sup> During the Eva-Maria Hoyer directorship, the Gaul pedestal was transferred to the so-called Rehgarten in order to attract a full view of the reconstructed Albers windows.<sup>33</sup> Before that, but after the complete refurbishment of the Grassi Museum, the Musical Instrument Museum (the third museum under the roof) also noticed that an important sponsor of the museum was missing: „In the stairwell, in a very prominent place, there were already ... two busts: those of the founding directors of the other two Grassi Museums,

the Museum for Ethnology and the Museum of Applied Arts.“<sup>34</sup> (transl.) For this reason, a third memorial bust was made under Ms Esther Fontana (then museum director of this third museum) with reference to the pedestals for Gaul and Weule, namely for the important Jewish patron of the museum, Dr. h.c. Henri Hinrichsen; he was murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. In 2012, the Hinrichsen bust was made by „Michael Hoepfner in Coburg. It was then cast in bronze, chased, patinated and finally sealed with protective wax by the Bert Noack bronze foundry in Leipzig. Supported by sponsors and friends of the University of Leipzig, we managed to win several other partners, such as the Leipzig Citizens' Foundation, the Petersverlag and numerous private individuals for this idea. The bust was placed in a clearly visible place in the spacious staircase of the Grassi Museum and thus commemorated Henri Hinrichsen set a visible sign.“<sup>35</sup> (hvm) Later on, the Hinrichsen bust was transferred to the music hall of the museum.

Anyone destroying autocratically one of these three commemorative pedestals including the banishment of one of these busts to the depository, is destroying the self-affirming memorial composition of three museums inside the listed museum complex. The Weule pedestal could certainly have been placed next to Gaul's bust in the proper museum garden of the Ethnological museum, of course with an historically correct, critical distancing text keeping in mind that hindsight is always 20/20.

### How important is the inventory?

Whether the monument was inventoried or forgotten to inventory in the stress of the day is actually irrelevant from a legal point of view. Why? Because registration concerns the legal level and inventarisation the additional scientific level. It is legally decisive that the bust found its way into the possession of the museum with the acceptance of the bust's donation and through the high valuation of Weule by the completion with appropriate pedestals. The museum accepted the gift of the commemorative bust right from the start and transformed it into a monument independently and without external pressure.



Crooked director's pictures after Ms NJ Snoeps farewell party for external friends. Any cleaning lady could straighten this sensitive act of disregard. These reproductions were also dismantled in the first week of Ms. Meijer-van Mensch directorship. Photo: private

This means that Weule's appreciation continued unabated in the GDR period, which conducted the first „re-inventing“ of the collection<sup>36</sup>, and during the post-reunification period. Even under the direction of Ms NJ Snoep<sup>37</sup>, when much of the permanent exhibition had already been dismantled and the pictorial gallery in the administration area was crooked during a farewell party, the bust pedestal remained in place unscathed. The bust was only temporarily removed for an exhibition.<sup>38</sup>

### What is allowed, what is forbidden?

This brings us to the final question: which forms of „re-discovery“ are permitted and which are forbidden? In this regard, reference should be made to an aspect that has not yet played a role in the discussions about the Weule pedestal: Saxon civil servants must also observe the obligation of their oath of service when critically examining the achievements of their predecessors: They must „take their office to the **best of their knowledge** and ability to lead, respect and defend the **constitution and law and practice justice towards everyone**“.<sup>39</sup> These terms of behaviour are also essential scientific standards. Leading museum servants have to be committed to historical truth, the law (see above) and justice – which includes the relation **towards their historical predecessors**.

In addition, „destroying“ or „allowing to destroy“ is **definitely not the task of museums**, which is **collecting, preserving, researching, exhibiting, communicating and returning works of unethical acquisition**. This exultations of a Jacobine equals the distortion of the facts and values of the celebration of a convicted counterfeiter. And it does not run parallel with the recommendations of the German Museum Association (DMB) on decolonisation.<sup>40</sup> The fact that the museum did not destroy the pedestal with its own means and personnel, but commissioned an artist collective instead with public subsidies, which did not create but destroyed a monument in a public happening under the claim of „freedom of art“ (which, of course, also has limits, and destruction is not essential to art), was meant to be a masterstroke but turns against its inventor. **The destruction of monuments is clearly forbidden in Saxony, especially if they are located in a listed building or a museum. Public payment of an illegal action does not legalize it. Ethical decolonizing cannot excuse illegal and unethical actions.** Also the uncritical „auxiliary troops“ in the press were wrong when they celebrated this crossing of the red line as a „brave experiment“ or „pursuit with one's own past“.

**The brutal destruction of a memorial for a highly respected museum director and ethnological scientist during the opening of an exhibition in a SKD museum also damages the public image of the museum, the SKD, and violates the official oath of civil servants: Doing justice to one's predecessors means weighing negative and positive insights, finding a balanced judgement. There is no trace of it in the official statements**

– one moves on the level of whispered suspicion and rush to judgment on the notorious level of the Austrian saying „Waastas eh“.<sup>41</sup>

The decapitation of the pedestal and its destruction signalizes that Ms Meijer-van Mensch at Grassi Museum of Ethnology intends a revolution („museum change“), not a reform. A reforming look at the museum past is nothing special at all for a museum, it is the rule, „new brooms“ want to sweep cleaner. But this act and the allowance to the artist group PARA to fix a panel with a text which animates to smash showcases of ethnological museums plays with barbarism of the worst kind. Everyone knows examples from the recent past. Must museums now be afraid of imitators, of teased Jacobins storming our museums?



This image proves that as of December 2018 the Weule bust was still in its former place and there was no better place at the museum for Cheri Benga, Kevin Bress, Freddy Tsimba (a curator) and Steve Bandoma to pose than before the Weule memorial. From 2020 onwards, Kevin Bress became project manager and curator of the future program „(Re)inventing Grassi 2023“, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation; Benga and Bandoma were artists of the exhibition „Megalopolis – Voices from Kinshasa“. Photo: SKD/NJ Snoep, posted to Facebook on 12/1/2018

It is legitimate and common international best practice to ship unpopular monuments to museums in order to comment on them anew in exhibitions. This is what happened, for example, after the monument to the slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, whose statue was recovered from the harbour basin and placed in a Bristol museum afterwards. Boniface Mabanza from Namibia reported a similar solution.<sup>42</sup> This preserves and illuminates historical testimonies.

How necessary it is to preserve incriminated monuments can be seen from the preservation of the concentration camps as memorial sites and a some National Socialist power structures such as the „Reichsparteitagsgelände“ in Nuremberg with the associated interpretation center. Unlike the Colston memorial, you don't have to take

the Weule memorial to a museum, it was already there. A critical caption would have been sufficient, because in the case of Weule, there many reasons to remember properly.

## Manipulated truth

However, truth must not be manipulated in the process of decolonisation. As far as I know, Weule neither took possession of the famous Makonde masks in Leipzig during the suppression of the Maji Maji uprising nor enriched the museum *en masse* with confiscated artworks. He respected the indigenes and trusted on negotiations. One source reports that some indigenes cheated him in these negotiations.

Quotations may not be reproduced in abbreviated, distorting form (all Leipzig inventory data of the Makonde masks omit deliberately the passage that Weule paid dearly for the masks) <sup>42a</sup>, the subsequent considerable increase in objects in the Weule department must not be presented in such a way that unethical acquisition and daylight robbery was the general rule. As a warning, a British judge recently had to prove that an activist used a „false narrative“ to have a plaque removed: Sonita Alleyne, Oxbridge College’s first black principal, testified at a court hearing that she was unable to enter Jesus College’s chapel while there was a memorial carving for a certain Tobias Rustat. The judge ruled that Alleyne had spread a „false narrative“: Rustat was undoubtedly involved in the atrocities of slavery but he did not owe much of his wealth to the slave trade, nor did the foundation’s funds come from this source. One could provide the monument with appropriate interpretations and explanations. <sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

Already one week after taking office, Ms. Meijer-van Mensch was taking down all (male) predecessors pictures. She did not add a picture of her immediate predecessor, Ms. Snoep. The event of destruction of the Weule pedestal was long-termed planned with the agreement of Ms. Ackermann, while all research done on Weule, both by Blesse and Krebs, led only to “ambiguities”. Not one case, hithertoo, of Weule’s acquisition has to be called unethical. Both, pedestal and bust make a protected monument within a protected building.

Ms Meijer-van Mensch had to resort to unproven interpretations of the multiplication of museum objects under Weule and to the alternative fact that all three museums had decided to remove the bust bases and store the busts <sup>44</sup>: Graule’s bust stands still as a monument of honour in the Deer Garden and Hinrichsen’s bust rests on a wooden pedestal in the musical instruments museum. Of course, one can also wonder where the acclaiming press and Dan Hicks got all the wrong information from.

Taken these facts into account and Ms Meijer-van Mensch’s explanation “It had to hurt and some people are hurt” <sup>45</sup> it becomes clear that, in contrary to all nice words brought forward with a big smile, this demolition of a protected monument was rather an unlawful act of radical feminism than an act of decolonisation and the consequence of scientific results.

## Notes

- 1 A short curriculum vitae and works by Karl Weule can be found here: [https://leibniz-iftl.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Library\\_Archiv/Archiv\\_Find%3%BCcher\\_PDF/Weule.pdf](https://leibniz-iftl.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Library_Archiv/Archiv_Find%3%BCcher_PDF/Weule.pdf)
- 2 *Leipziger Völkermuseum beleuchtet eigene Geschichte*. t-online of November 21, 2019 based on dpa, [https://www.t-online.de/region/leipzig/news/id\\_86855156/leipziger-voelkermuseum-beleuchtet-eigene-geschichte.html](https://www.t-online.de/region/leipzig/news/id_86855156/leipziger-voelkermuseum-beleuchtet-eigene-geschichte.html). In this article, Carola Krebs, the curator of the special exhibition „Weltensammler“ explained that the Weule bust was removed from the pedestal in 2019, although closer provenance research had ultimately resulted in „uncertainty“ (!): „It is unclear how Weule - one year after the bloody suppression of the forwarded to Leipzig ... It cannot be ruled out that Weule benefited from the suppression of the uprising in today’s Tanzania.“ As more recent findings were not communicated, the removal of the bust to the depository and the destruction of the pedestal were ultimately based on „ambiguities“ (i.e. on pride and prejudice).
- 3 Anette Rein: *Vom Gegenstand des Respekts zur Ruine. Die beauftragte Demolierung eines museumsrelevanten Denkmals*. In: *MUSEUM AKTUELL*, issue 279+280, p. 9-12, [https://www.museumaktuell.de/download/d\\_138.pdf](https://www.museumaktuell.de/download/d_138.pdf)
- 4 <https://www.skd.museum/besuch/grassi-museum-leipzig/> (last visited on March 27, 2022!)
- 5 deleted
- 6 The final version can be downloaded here [https://www.museumaktuell.de/download/d\\_138.pdf](https://www.museumaktuell.de/download/d_138.pdf), previously posted as a preprint via museums-themen and Facebook .
- 7 to be published in issue 281.
- 8 [https://www.museumaktuell.de/index.php?site=show\\_issue&month=04&year=2022&TM=1](https://www.museumaktuell.de/index.php?site=show_issue&month=04&year=2022&TM=1)
- 9 on Twitter and Facebook.
- 10 [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10220777781215629&id=1270749018&sfnsn=scwspmo4](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10220777781215629&id=1270749018&sfnsn=scwspmo4) This incorrect historical narrative was also carried over into the hastily penned comment by the noted activist and history professor Dan Hicks: „At some point thereafter, the German Democratic Republic’s administration installed a 1930s bronze bust of the second director Karl Weule on a museum staircase.“ (<https://hyperallergic.com/719708/unmasking-a-history-of-colonial-violence-in-a-german-museum/>). Also the rest of Dan Hicks publication is overloaded with wrong facts, wrongs dates and wrong conclusions.
- 11 Krause, Fritz: *Chronik des Museums 1926-1945*. In: *Jahrbuch des Museums*, vol. X (1926-1951), p. 8 Giselher Blesse does not believe that the announcement made by the Mayor of Leipzig to the Association for Ethnology in Leipzig on October 28, 1929: “The bust will be placed in a worthy place in the new Grassi Museum.” [transl.] was fulfilled only in 1932, because there was the Gallery of Fame and the sections of East and South Africa, Cameroon and Benin were open to the public already until the

- official opening of the museum on September 30, 1929, but the overall completion dragged on until 1933. eMail notice by Blesse of April 5, 2022
- 12 Archive of the Museum of Ethnology Leipzig. This sum equals approx. 14.000 €.
- 13 Krause (see note 11), p. 19
- 14 German Wikipedia, s.v. „Max Lange (artist)“
- 15 *ibid.*; cf. also Peter Trumm: *Eine Stegemann-Medaille und ihr Schöpfer*. In: *Koblenzer Heimatblatt* of June 16, 1929. Trumm mentions Lange's father, the architect August Carl Lange, and points out that Lange's medals and plaques are in all major coin cabinets in Germany. His mother was Christiane Rosalie Lange, née Aubel.
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm\\_Roser?usel-ang=de](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Roser?usel-ang=de)
- 18 see note 9
- 19 eMail message from Giselher Blesse v. 3/29/2022
- 20 Oral communication by Lothar Draeger, March 30, 2022
- 21 eMail message from Giselher Blesse of March 29/2022
- 22 *ibid.*
- 23 [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl\\_Weule](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Weule)
- 24 [https://de.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Musée\\_Grassi\\_d%27ethnologie](https://de.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Musée_Grassi_d%27ethnologie) (Frobenius is incorrectly listed here as Fribenius)
- 25 Max Le Blanc: *Bericht über das Studienjahr 1925/26*. In: *Die Leipziger Rektoratsreden 1871-1933*, vol. II, p. 1484
- 26 Christine Seige: Karl Weule. In: *Sächsische Biografie*, ed. by the Institute for Saxon History and Folklore eV, [https://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Karl\\_Weule\\_\(1864-1926\)](https://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Karl_Weule_(1864-1926))
- 27 *ibid.*
- 28 German version of 2006, [https://icom-deutschland.de/images/PDF/icom\\_ethische\\_guidelines\\_d\\_2010.pdf](https://icom-deutschland.de/images/PDF/icom_ethische_guidelines_d_2010.pdf)
- 29 <https://www.lfd.sachsen.de/1406.htm>
- 30 *ibid.*
- 31 [http://www.lexsoft.de/cgi-bin/lexsoft/justizportal\\_nrw.cgi?xid=137474,452](http://www.lexsoft.de/cgi-bin/lexsoft/justizportal_nrw.cgi?xid=137474,452)
- 32 s. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Graul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Graul). The internet (including the official site of the city of Leipzig) is full with photographs showing the Graul bust in the staircase, but this does not show the actual state.
- 33 Oral communication by Olaf Thormann. Thormann is the today's museum director of the Grassi Museum für Angewandte Kunst and was a former colleague of Ms Hoyer.
- 34 Esther Fontana: Eine alte Schuld. <https://home.uni-leipzig.de/~foerder/eine-alte-schuld.html>
- 35 *ibid.*
- 36 In 1979, the GDR leadership forbade the then museum director Wolfgang König to celebrate the museum's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and imposed on him a reappraisal of colonialism within the framework of international imperialism. See Claus Demel: *Wer Wind säht. Rufe aus der „letzten bildungsbürgerlichen Bastion rassistischen Denkens“*. In: *Paideuma* 62/2016, p. 261f. See also Bernhard Streck: *Kurze Geschichte des Instituts für Ethnologie der Universität Leipzig*. In: *Kunst&Kontext* 1/2013, p. 74f
- 37 Rein, Anette: Little stories with big impact. An interview with Nanette Jacomijn Snoep. In: *EXPOTIME!*, July/August issue 2015, p. 16-20; <http://www.museumaktuell.de/expoTime/eTime/ExpoTime!-2015-08/index.html>
- 38 Dan Hicks' claim „...in 2016, under its former director Nanette Snoep, the museum board decided to remove the bust from its stones plinth“ is one of his many wrong facts. The bust was only removed once for an exhibition under Ms NJ Snoep and then mounted again on the pedestal – and there was no board decision, because there is no museum board. See p. 19
- 39 <https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/13871-Saechs-BG>
- 40 Guidelines for dealing with collections from colonial contexts, 3<sup>rd</sup> version 2021, <https://www.museumbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/leitung-zum-umgang-mit-sammlungsgut-aus-kolonialen-kontexten-web.pdf>
- 41 This Austrian saying is an abbreviation for „waaßt eh was i moan“ = You know what I mean.
- 42 Racism: how to counteract it, how can museums deal with colonial fantasies? Boniface Mabanza in conversation with Anette Rein. In: *MUSEUM AKTUELL*, 263-264/2020, p. 30-38, especially p. 32, <https://www.bundesverband-ethnologie.de/kunde/assoc/15/pdfs/Rein-2020-Rassismus.pdf>
- 42a The multiplied inventory dates read uncompletely: “Er selbst gibt an, dass diese nur ‚durch List, entschiedenes Auftreten und Ausdauer‘ zu erlangen waren.” [Weule states himself that this was only achieved “through cunning, decisive action and perseverance” <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1787518> The Federal Archives in Berlin keep the meticulously recorded purchase amounts for each Makonde object. Friendly note from Giselher Blesse
- 43 Falsches Narrativ. Rustat-Relief bleibt in der Kapelle des Jesus College. *FAZ* (G.T.) of March 25, 2022, p. 14
- 44 kreuzer online, <https://kreuzer-leipzig.de/2022/03/25/es-soll-ja-weh-tun>
- 45 *ibid.*
- Special thanks go to Olaf Thormann, Giselher Blesse and Wieland Hecht for answering questions of GRASSI museums history.

Christian Mueller-Straten (ed.):

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