Endangered Heritage: Restitution and Repair.

I will present this lecture to honour the memory of my esteemed colleague Professor Hu Chia-Yu (胡家瑜).

Heritage is in danger of loss on a global scale. Conflict and war are the principal and most obvious causes but others are more subtle in terms of loss of knowledge and skilled practices. Preservation is a key concept that has come increasingly under question. Can we preserve all heritage or do choices have to be made? If destruction of heritage is inevitable then how do we make these choices? The use of legal conventions has historically been the principal method of ensuring that definitions of cultural and intellectual property will be respected. Several recent criticisms of how these conventions work in practice has undermined our confidence in how well they work. The most prominent of these criticisms has focused on the bias of epistemologies used and the need to understand the role of alternative knowledge. These debates present significant challenges for museums and curators of collections on a global scale.