

## Cataloguing Magic: The complex biographies of ritual objects in museum contexts

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Session: Cataloguing Magic: The complex biographies of ritual objects in museum contexts

Abstract: Following the success of 'The Materiality of Magic' session at Liverpool TAG 2012, this second session aims to further establish 'magic' as a term and subject on the archaeological agenda.

Despite its simple definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, as 'the power of apparently influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces', 'magic' is a term viewed by many scholars with wariness or distrust, having been ascribed certain pejorative or sensationalist connotations. These connotations have greatly influenced our perceptions and uses of it. This factor will therefore be considered in specific relation to museum contexts; how has the word 'magic' been used by museums and the heritage industry? Has it been avoided? Has it been exploited?

However, as well as offering an exploration of the sensationalist undertones of 'magic', this session also aims to de-sensationalise and de-stigmatise it by defining it simply as a term encompassing ritual practices and popular beliefs, and inviting our contributors to propose their own definitions of it.

The primary purpose of this session is to investigate the complex biographies of ritual and folkloric objects within museum contexts. Not limited geographically, we aim to offer a wide range of case-studies demonstrating the complex issues involved in the museumising of 'magical objects'. How have they been catalogued? Do their statuses as ritual or folkloric artefacts influence how they are stored and displayed? How are they presented and interpreted? These are just some of the questions this session aims to explore.

We aim to publish the papers of this session in a multi-contributor volume.

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