This lecture uses the Uganda Museum’s collecting history to trace how the practices of museology—detachment, recontextualization, display—helped to constitute and organise political life. In colonial times, administrators used the Museum to place dangerous and politically upsetting objects out-of-bounds. In the 1970s—during which, in Idi Amin’s words, Uganda was developing at a ‘supersonic’ pace—curators devoted themselves to the acquisition of ephemeral objects that would soon be outmoded by the onward rush of history. Today, in Yoweri Museveni’s Uganda, there is a concerted effort to make the Museum and other cultural institutions answer to the demands of the market. Medicine, art, clothing and other objects have been made into global commodities that generate profit while also upholding discriminatory political hierarchies. The work of the Museum both reflected and enabled the changing logics of cultural management in the Ugandan postcolony.

Derek R. Peterson was formerly Director of the Centre of African Studies and Senior Lecturer in African History at Cambridge University. He is now Professor of History and African Studies at the University of Michigan. His most recent book, _Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival_ (2012), won the Herskovits Prize of the African Studies Association (US) and the Martin Klein Prize of the American Historical Association. He is the editor or co-editor of seven books, most recently (with Stephanie Newell and Emma Hunter) _African Print Cultures: Newspapers and their Publics in the Twentieth Century_ (2016). Earlier this year Peterson was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in African Studies. He is presently writing about Idi Amin’s Uganda.