

## Conference Application for “Australian Mobilities”

### Mobilising Indigenous Knowledge through the Digital Return of the Frobenius Archive to the Kimberley

More than 80 years ago, hundreds of portrait drawings, painted copies of rock art sites, sound recordings, cultural objects and thousands of photographs, as well as a wide range of field notes, emerged from the Frobenius expedition to the Kimberley region of north-western Australia. For many decades, these records and objects were stored in various German institutions. In the course of a DFG project, the Frobenius Institute and the University of Western Australia, together with three Aboriginal Corporations of the Kimberley, have started mobilising the inscribed cultural knowledge of these materials. After a complex digitisation process, all the records have been compiled, transcribed and cross-referenced in a tailor-made database that digitally returns the materials to the *Wanjina Wunggurr* community like a long-buried time capsule. The aim of the research project is to develop a systematic and collaborative assessment of the German ethnographic expeditions to the Kimberley in 1938/39 and 1954/55, and to analyse the value and significance of the archival materials today. How can its potential be made accessible to Traditional Owners, future generations, museums and the wider public? My presentation will outline how the Frobenius archive has been approached collaboratively in the first years of the ongoing research project through community consultations, an exhibition, a database, fieldwork on Country and a forthcoming artist residency.

#### Bio note

Christina Henneke studied Anthropology, Psychology and Cultural studies at the University Münster and Indigenous Studies in Perth, Australia. She wrote her master thesis on Indigenous art and identity in the context of the Mangkaja Arts centre in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia. She then completed an academic traineeship at the Museum für Kunst und Kultur in Münster and was Head of Press and Public Relations at the Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt from 2010 to 2021. Since 2021 she has been a research assistant and PhD student in the DFG project "The German Ethnographic Expeditions to the Kimberley, Northwest Australia. A Collaborative Assessment of Research History, the Interpretation of Australian Aboriginal Heritage and Digital Repatriation" at the Frobenius Institute. Her PhD thesis has the working title “Old Records, New Relations: Traces of Agency in the Returning Frobenius Archive of the Expeditions to Northwest Australia” and is being supervised by Associate Professor Carsten Wergin (Heidelberg University) and Associate Professor Martin Porr (University of Western Australia).

#### Contact:

Christina Henneke  
Frobenius Institut  
Norbert-Wollheim-Platz 1  
60323 Frankfurt am Main  
henneke@em.uni-frankfurt.de