



## Keep Them or Give Them Back

*What to do with cultural artefacts acquired during the UK's imperial wars.*

**with Dr Paul Fox**

**Wednesday 22nd January 2025 (19:30-21:30)**

Paul Fox is a historian of visual culture specialising in the representation of armed conflict in European culture.

The impulse to loot and take trophies from a defeated enemy is as old as warfare itself. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries British expeditionary forces amassed large collections of objects, many of which are now located in our civil and military museums. Some artefacts are now on public display, but most are not. While the majority are everyday objects of no great historical or cultural significance, some are fundamentally important to the modern identity of the peoples from whom they were taken. Should we now keep them or give them back? This talk will explore the ethics of retention with specific reference to objects taken as trophies during the Anglo-Egyptian campaign to defeat the Islamist uprising in the Ottoman Sudan, 1883-99.

Paul was a professional soldier for 27 years. He subsequently received his doctorate at University College London where he worked on the visual representation of battlefield behaviour in German illustrated histories, 1871-1933.

In addition to his work on memorialisation, landscape and commemoration, he has researched British imperial cultures of looting and trophy taking for the University of York, undertaken research in cultural property protection for Newcastle University, and has taught at University College London on topics including the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict; the construction of national and gendered identities at war; and the militarisation of the built environment.



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