

The Consortium for World Cultures project  
*Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Smithsonian* presents

## Dr. Christina Kreps



When: **12:30-2:00** on **Thursday, Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

Where: Conference room, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 600 Maryland Ave. SW, Suite 2001, Washington, D.C.

Please RSVP to [HolmgrenM@si.edu](mailto:HolmgrenM@si.edu) to ensure event capacity.

Title: **Shifting Views of the Object and Intangible Culture in Museums**

### Abstract:

For years now, museum scholars and professionals, particularly curators, have been lamenting the declining status of “the museum object.” As museums have shifted their focus from being object- to visitor-centered, objects are said to have been reduced to “visual metaphors,” “props” for telling stories, and replaced by “interactives” that are designed to enhance the “visitor experience.” However, objects are making a comeback. Museum visitors are hungry to once again see the “real thing” and have more “authentic” experiences. This trend is emerging alongside the movement to increase the presence of intangible culture in museums. This presentation considers how the “sensory turn” in anthropology and material culture studies, in addition to the flowering of “multisensory” approaches to museum curation, is generating more dynamic and multidimensional ways of perceiving and experiencing objects as both tangible and intangible culture. Kreps highlights how these developments can be linked to growing recognition of the multiple ways in which diverse communities know, value, and experience objects. In short, Kreps addresses how the return to the object has the promise to enlarge the space for intangible culture in museums rather than diminish it.

### Bio:

Christina Kreps is Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Director of Museum and Heritage Studies, at the University of Denver. For over twenty years, Christina has studied museological forms and practices from cross-cultural, comparative, and international perspectives. She has conducted research on museums and been involved in museum development and heritage training programs in Indonesia, Viet Nam, Thailand, and Europe, in addition to the United States. She is currently co-editor of the Routledge series, *Museum Meanings*, with Richard Sandell of Leicester University. Christina received the 2014 University of Denver Distinguished Scholar Award for her scholarly contributions to anthropology and museum studies as well as for her engaged practice.

*Special thanks* to the American Studies Department at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), for co-sponsoring the event.