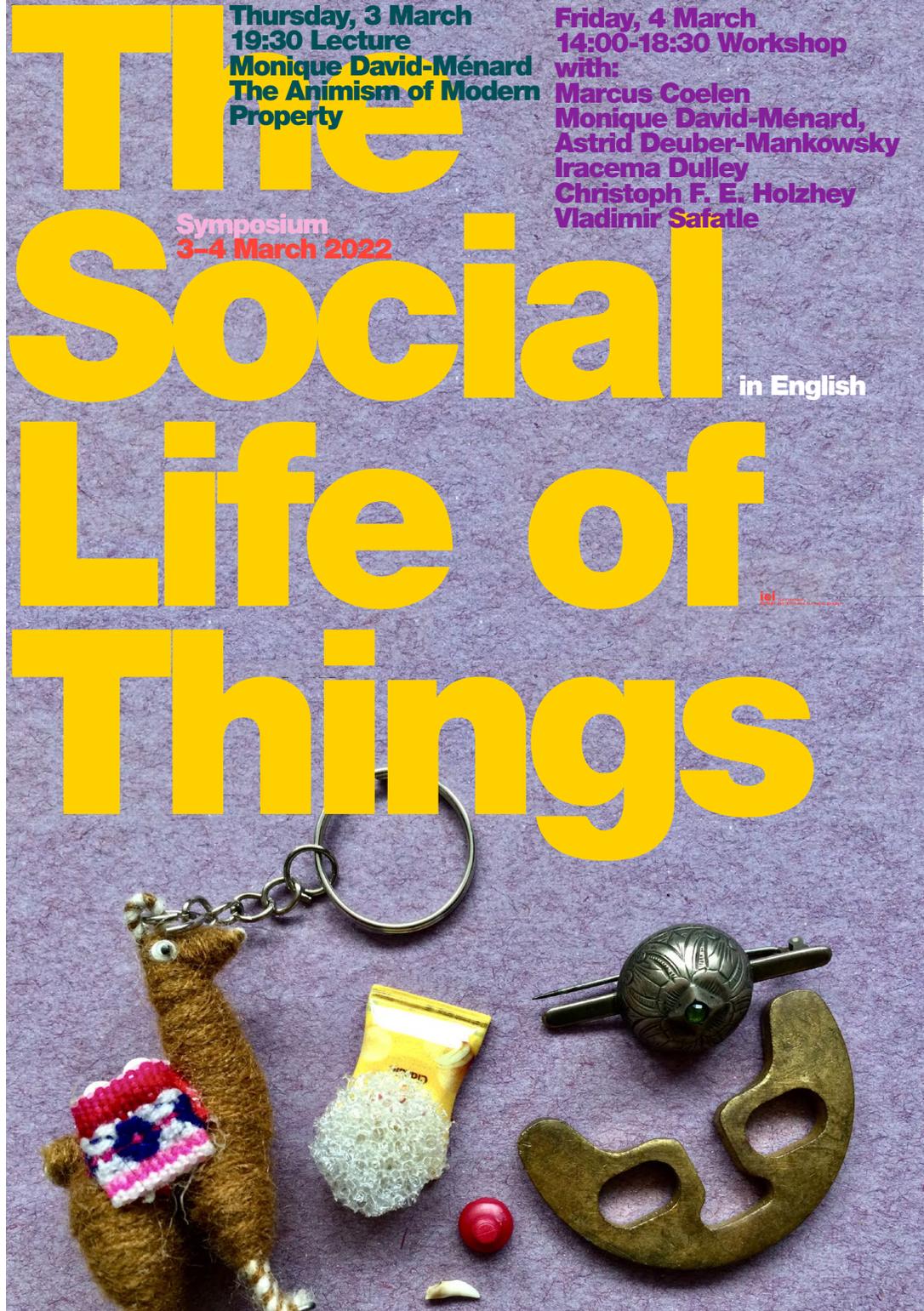


# The Social Life of Things

Objects are produced and exchanged, desired and transferred. While they can be said to condense and contain the 'real' of social relations, they never become fully transparent. Instead, problematizing oppositions between the inside and the outside, the subjective and the social, they are media for social relations and conflicts, as well as media that help constitute and transform subjects with their singular desires and forms of enjoyment. How are objects differently constructed and animated by the social and the individual? In what sense do moderns remain animist in their relation to the unconscious and to notions of ownership and property? Engaging with Monique David-Ménard's book *La Vie sociales des choses: L'Animisme et les objets* (2020), this symposium seeks to explore how the always local opacity of objects entangles psychoanalysis and anthropology, philosophy and politics.



**Thursday, 3 March**  
19:30 Lecture  
**Monique David-Ménard**  
The Animism of Modern Property

**Friday, 4 March**  
14:00-18:30 Workshop  
with:  
**Marcus Coelen**  
**Monique David-Ménard,**  
**Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky**  
**Iracema Dulle**  
**Christoph F. E. Holzhey**  
**Vladimir Safatle**

**Symposium**  
3-4 March 2022

# The Social Life of Things

in English

ici KULTURLABOR BERLIN INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY

**Thursday, 3 March 2022**

**19:30 Lecture**

**Monique David-Ménard  
The Animism of Modern Property**

In 1842, Karl Marx denounced a new law prohibiting the poor from pilfering fallen wood in the forests of the Rhineland. He saw in this apparently local case a major transformation of modern societies. By identifying which new anthropology serves as the basis for the legal invention of property rights, which make things face the wills of owners, Marx affirms a strange proximity between human beings and inanimate things. On the side of the legislators, to prohibit 'poverty' from collecting brushwood for heating and to price this wood to make the poor pay for it, means to adore 'wooden idols'; it amounts to a primitive religion, which Marx will later call fetishism. For the poor, collecting fallen wood means, by law, to identify with a new form of social and political exclusion. Their identification with the dead twigs is much more than a metaphor as it is the matter of an animist experience. It is a paradoxical animism, an animism of the inanimate. This is why Marx compares the savageness of the nobles and the bourgeois to that of the Cubans colonized by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century.

If all societies are animistic, is the modern animism invented by property rights worse than that of non-modern societies, and in any case more unconscious of itself? This talk will compare Marx's diagnosis with Marilyn Strathern's affirmation that 'property is our myth'.

**Monique David-Ménard** has a double career, as a professor of philosophy and a practicing psychoanalyst. As the Director of the Centre d'études du vivant (2005-2011), she established the field of research 'Gender and Sexualities' at the University Paris-Diderot/Paris 7. She has been invited to teach at a wide variety of universities worldwide: Ruhr University Bochum, Diego Portalès, Santiago de Chile, Universidad de Chile, Universidad de Sao Paulo, UNAM, Mexico, as well as Columbia University. As a psychoanalyst, she has been a member of the Société de Psychanalyse Freudienne since its foundation in 1994. She is also a co-founder of the ISPP (International Society for Psychoanalysis and Philosophy) and a member of the International Network of Women Philosophers (UNESCO).

**Friday, 4 March 2022**

**14:00–18:30 Workshop**

**The Social Life of Things**

**14:00–16:00 Part I**

**Christoph F. E. Holzhey  
Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky  
Iracema Dulley**

**16:00–16:30 Coffee Break**

**16:30–18:30 Part II**

**Vladimir Safatle  
Marcus Coelen  
General discussion with Monique David-Ménard**