Concepts such as fetish, magic, and the gift have often been attributed to ‘kinship communities’, and taken to be ‘out of place’ if not ‘overcome’ in modernity. But is Hegel’s notion of the magic fetish in Africa so different from Marx’s and Freud’s descriptions of the crucial role of fetishes in modern societies? Freeing ourselves from evolutionist and structuralist conceptions allows us to take the fetish not merely as the object of an irrational and arbitrary choice of people in primitive cultures but a potentially universal mechanism of deception, fantasy or desire. Art and art history likewise attest to the continuing legacy of terms originally devised for the description of other, non-Western cultures and has most recently focused not only on fetishism and magic but the materiality and mediality of their objects. We are all fetishists; and if we tend to see the fetish through the optics of fixation, it is precisely because of its unsettling nature and composite fabrication; its capacity to produce and/or reproduce originary acts and events and to destabilize the boundaries between faith and law, icons and idols, object and referent, the natural and the artificial.

With
Joshua Barker
Filipa César
Maria José de Abreu
Preciosa de Joya
Iracema Dulley
Wyatt MacGaffey
Ursula Helg
Rosalind C. Morris
Roger Sansi-Roca
James T. Siegel
Bruno Sotto Mayor

In cooperation with DFG-Research Unit 1703 “Transcultural Negotiations in the Ambits of Art. Comparative Perspectives on Historical Contexts and Contemporary Constellations”, Freie Universität Berlin
Programme

THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2016

Workshop: Reflecting the Recurrences of Fetish, Magic and the Gift
With James Siegel, Rosalind Morris, and Joshua Barker

14:00   Introduction
14:15 – 15:45   Part 1
15:45 – 16:30   Coffee break
16:30 – 18:00   Part 2

19:30 pm   Keynote: James T. Siegel
Gift, Fetish, Magic

Please note: the workshop session will discuss short texts. Please contact info@ici-berlin.org if you would like to register for the workshop and receive the excerpts in advance.

FRIDAY, 29 APRIL 2016

9:30    Morning coffee
10:00 – 10:20   Introduction
10:20 – 11:00   Ursula Helg
Kongo n’kisi, Opacity and the Crisis of Modernity

11:00 – 11:40   Wyatt MacGaffey
Epistemological Reclassification of Kongo n’kisi

11:40 – 12:00   Coffee break

12:00 – 12:40   Bruno Sotto Mayor
Translating the /nkishi shi/ Sculpture in the Post-War (Angola/DR Congo)

12:40 – 14:00   Lunch break

14:00 – 14:40   Roger Sansi-Roca
The Recursivity of the Gift in Art and Anthropology

14:40 – 15:00   Coffee break

15:00 – 15:40   Preciosa de Joya
Writing Their Bible: Reflections on a Filipino Millenarian Movement

15:40 – 16:20   Maria José de Abreu
The Referent in Person: Fetish, Magic, Gift

15:40 – 16:00   Coffee break

17:00 – 17:40   Iracema Dulley
The Fetish in Translation

17:40 – 18:20   Rosalind Morris
The Fetish of Gold Returns

18:20 – 19:00   Coffee break

19:00   Filipa César
Reading Matter: A Grin Without Marker