ceramic arts. His recent gifts and permanent loans to Die Neue Sammlung fulfilled his long-standing goal. Set within the ultramodern architectural structure of the Pinakothek der Moderne, Die Neue Sammlung offered the unique opportunity to highlight these African ceramics from the perspective of design in modern and contemporary artistic sensibilities rather than presenting them as artifacts frozen in an ethnographic past, which the German public had grown to expect of museums with African collections over the past 150 years. Moreover, Die Neue Sammlung is internationally acclaimed for its collections of modern and contemporary European, American, and Japanese ceramics, thus providing a prominent new home for the collection. This acquisition marked the museum’s first foray into collecting arts of African origins. With works from all major regions of Africa, the Duke of Bavaria’s gifts and permanent loans of African ceramics significantly expanded the museum’s non-European holdings and their global reach in educating the public about modern and contemporary arts and design (Nollert 2019: 6–13).

Die Neue Sammlung’s announcement of these new acquisitions and their exhibition (Fig. 1) came in the midst of almost weekly media editorials and exposés in Germany addressing restitution and the role of European museums in looting Africa’s cultural heritage (Plankensteiner 2019: 359). The museum was now thrust into the debates, compelling the staff to consider potential restitution claims on their newly acquired African ceramics. Moreover, with the German Museum Association’s Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts also being published in July 2018, the development of A Different Perspective would need to accommodate the new recommendations for working with these mostly unprovenanced objects. The German Museum Association’s guidelines intended to provide impetus, increase awareness, and serve as an aid for the work museums undertake with objects from colonial contexts as well as with demands for the return of these objects … In addition, the museums are called upon—regardless of whether they have objects from colonial contexts in their collections—to actively deal with the issue of colonialism in their exhibition and education work (German Museum Association 2018: 4).

At the root of the new standards for working with and transparency about museums’ inventories of colonial and postcolonial collections was the call for the “fundamental importance” of provenance research that seeks to clarify and, through digitization of its collections, to provide transparency and global access to the circumstances of an object’s removal from its original context (German Museum Association 2018: 4). The Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts now broadly defined “historically sensitive objects” as works that had originally been acquired by force or from within “highly dependent relationships” (German Museum Association 2018: 9–10). These included 1) objects from formal colonial rule contexts; 2) objects from colonial contexts outside formal colonial rule; and 3) objects that reflect colonialism (German Museum Association 2018: 16–23). Under wide-ranging definitions of these three classifications, almost every African art object from the nineteenth century onward could now be considered historically sensitive and therefore subject to the new recommendations for provenance research that examines colonial era “injustices committed in the acquisition of objects” (Förster, Edenheiser, and Fründt 2018: 1).

As Förster, Edenheiser, and Fründt emphasize, until now, provenance studies “rarely made the problematic and often violent context in which these objects had been acquired during the colonial period a subject of research in its own right” nor did they “clarify the different conditions and effects of collecting under colonial ruling practices” (2018: 16; see also Plankensteiner 2019: 357). Consequently,