

**Collecting The World:  
Assembling Objects from Antiquity to the Present**

History 510:541: Colloquium in Global History: Spring 2013

Department of History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

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Thursdays 16h30-19h30: RCHA Seminar Room, 88 College Avenue, New Brunswick

Office Hours: Tuesday 16h30-17h30, Van Dyck Hall 104 + by appointment

**Description**

Why do human beings collect objects? How has this activity varied across time and space? How have objects – whether of knowledge or taste – functioned as actors in human societies? And what are the most productive ways for scholars to engage with material cultures? This colloquium explores a vital cluster of themes in contemporary critical inquiry: the relation between objects, knowledge, culture and society. Our approach will be both historical and theoretical. One aim is to move beyond Euro-American geographies to think about constructions of the universal and the global, and their relationship and reconfiguration of locality. Considering objects' movement, and the mechanics of this mobility, will therefore be essential. So too will be the relation between collecting things and collecting people: making orders of objects and orders of society. We will examine recent approaches to thing theory that consider the co-agency of nonhuman and human actors. And above all, we will focus on the question of value: how can we understand the production of value in objects (whether economic, scientific, aesthetic, political, and so on) through social histories of labor and exchange, whether visible or hidden? Specific topics include spoils and the triumph in ancient Rome; icons and relics in medieval Europe; Baroque universalism in European cabinets of curiosity; early modern exchanges through global commerce; the first universal public museums in the eighteenth century; imperial Victorian exhibitions and their postcolonial aftermaths; non-western collections and ontologies (India, the Pacific, China, Amazonia and the Middle East); gender and sexuality; commodity fetishism and commodification in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; the modern art museum and its sociology; postcolonial restitution politics; the relationship between art-work and artifact; and globalized collecting and museums today. We will read broadly to generate a wide-ranging discussion. There will be a fieldtrip to a New York museum. We will also draw from the instructor's experience researching the history of collecting in collaboration with different museums.

## **Required Readings: Books**

Alexander Library Reserves and New Jersey Books (37 Easton Ave):

Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (California)  
James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture* (Harvard)  
Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* (California)  
Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum* (California)

## **Readings: Articles and Documents**

Mostly on Sakai marked thus \*

<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>

## **Assessment**

Discussion and Participation: 50%

Short paper (due 25 Feb) and a term paper (discuss themes with instructor): 50%

## **SCHEDULE**

### **24 Jan: Introduction: What do Objects Mean to Us?**

*Citizen Kane* (1941), dir. Orson Welles: Finale – “Rosebud”

\* Marcel Proust, *The Way by Swann's* (Paris, 1913-): the *madeleine*

\* Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library: A Talk About Collecting” (1931),  
*Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken, 1969), pp. 59-67

\* Jean Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting” (1968) in John Elsner and Roger  
Cardinal, eds., *The Cultures of Collecting* (Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 7-24

\* Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke UP, 2010), chap. 2

\* Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationship between Humans and Things* (Wiley-  
Blackwell, 2012), chap. 5

### **31 Jan: Ancient Collections**

\* Andrew Erskine, “Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: the Museum and Library of  
Alexandria,” *Greece and Rome* 42 (1995): 38-48

\* Steven Rutledge, *Ancient Rome as a Museum: Power, Identity, and the Culture of Collecting*  
(Oxford University Press, 2012), chaps 2-4, 7

\* Trevor Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia* (Oxford  
University Press, 2004), chaps 1, 3-4

\* Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*: sections on Africa and Asia; Black Sea, India, Far East;  
Trees; Gold and Silver

\* James Delbourgo and Staffan Müller-Wille, “Listmania,” *Isis* (2012): introduction

### **7 Feb: Medieval Relics and Iconoclasm**

- \* Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Zone Books, 2011): chaps 2, 4, conclusion
- \* Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 169-191
- \* Finbarr Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 641-659
- \* Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Bristol Classical Press, 2012), chaps 4, 6, 7
- \* Bruno Latour, "Iconoclasm: Or Is there a World Beyond the Image Wars?" in Latour and Weibel, eds., *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (MIT Press, 2002), pp. 14-38

### **14 Feb: Inside the Cabinet of Curiosity**

- \* Paula Findlen, "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy," *Journal of the History of Collections* 1 (1989): 59-78
- \* Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (University of California Press, 1994), chap 3 and short epilogue only; or Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (Zone Books, 2001), chap 7
- \* Krzysztof Pomian, "The Collection: Between the Visible and the Invisible" (1978), *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Polity Press, 1990), pp. 7-44
- \* Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; Vintage, 1994), chap. 5
- \* Mary Helms, "Essay on Objects: Interpretations of Distance made Tangible," in Stuart Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 355-377
- \* Peter Pels, "The Spirit of Matter: On Fetish, Rarity, Fact, and Fancy," in Patricia Spyer, ed., *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces* (Routledge, 1998), pp. 91-121

### **21 Feb: Early Modern Global Exchanges**

- \* William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism," *Res* 16 (1988): 105-123
- \* Simon Schaffer, "Golden Means: Assay Instruments and the Geography of Precision in the Guinea Trade," in Christian Licoppe, et al, eds., *Instruments, Travel and Science: Itineraries of Precision from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 20-50
- \* Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach, eds., *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World* (Ashgate, 2009): introduction; and Suzanne Preston Blier, "Capricious Arts: Idols in Renaissance-Era Africa and Europe (The Case of Sapi and Kongo)
- \* Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Duke University Press, 2002): chaps 2, 5
- \* Vimalin Rujivacharakul, ed., *Collecting China: The World, China, and a Short History of Collecting* (University of Delaware Press, 2011): Dematté chapter

- \* Laura Hostetler, “Qing Connections to the Early Modern World: Ethnography and Cartography in Eighteenth-Century China,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (2000): 623-662
- \* Savithri Preetha Nair, “Native Collecting and Natural Knowledge (1798-1832): Raja Serfoji II of Tanjore as ‘Centre of Calculation,’” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15 (2005): 279-302

\*\*\*\*\*Short paper due\*\*\*\*\*

### **28 Feb: The Universal Public Museum**

- Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (University of California Press, 1994)
- \* James Delbourgo, “Empire of Curiosities: Hans Sloane, The British Museum and the Collection of the World” (2012)
- \* Constance Classen, “Museum Manners: The Sensory Life of the Early Museum,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (2007): 895-914
- \* Anne Goldgar, “The British Museum and the Virtual Representation of Culture in the Eighteenth Century,” *Albion* 32 (2000): 195-231
- \* James Cuno, *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), chap 1
- \* Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (MIT Press, 2005): introduction

### **7 March: Victorian Exhibitions and Pacific Worlds**

- \* Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Harvard University Press, 1991), chaps 1-2, 4
- \* Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *New Formations* 4 (1988): 73-102
- \* Ira Jacknis, “Franz Boas and Exhibits: On the Limitations of the Museum Method of Anthropology,” in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (University of Wisconsin, 1985), pp. 75-111
- \* James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Smithsonian, 1991)

### **14 March: The Social Lives of Commercial Things**

- \* David Graeber, *Toward An Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (Palgrave, 2001), chap. 2
- \* Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 (1867): commodity fetishism
- \* Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1899), chap 4
- \* Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1986): Appadurai introduction and Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process”
- Bill Brown, ed., “Things”: *Critical Inquiry* (2001): introduction by Brown and Christina Kiaer, “The Russian Constructivist Flapper Dress”

### **21 March: Spring Break**

### **28 March: Art and Taste in the Modern Era**

\* Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935)  
Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (University of California Press, 2008)

Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, 1982)

\* Andrea Fraser, "There's No Place Like Home / L'1% C'est Moi" (2012)

### **4 April: Colonial Legacies – Art, Artifact and Restitution**

James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Harvard University Press, 1988), selections

\* Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, eds., *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (Routledge, 2003): introduction; intro to sections 1, 3; chaps 2, 11

\* Universal Museums Declaration and related documents, *Museum Frictions*, pp. 247-256  
"Museums and Restitution" University of Manchester Conference Documents (2010):

<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/museology/museumsandrestitution/>

<http://culturalpractice.wordpress.com/?s=museums+and+restitution>

Kwame Opoku on James Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity?*:

<http://www.elginism.com/20080608/kwame-opoku-deconstructs-cuno>

### **11 April: No Class – Reading Week**

### **18 April: Non-Western Ontologies + Gender and Sex**

\* Fernando Santos-Granero, ed., *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood* (University of Arizona Press, 2012): introduction, chapters 2, 4, 9  
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Some Reflections on the Notion of Species in History and Anthropology," *Emisférica* (2013):

<http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-101/viveiros-de-castro>

\* Alcida Rita Ramos, "The Politics of Perspectivism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 481-494

\* Amy Levin, ed., *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader* (Routledge, 2010), selections

\* Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text* 11 (1984-1985): 20-64

\* Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (University of California Press, 1996), introduction

### **25 April: Globalized Exhibitions**

\* *Exhibiting Cultures*: introduction; Yamaguchi, "Poetics of Exhibition"; Goswamy, "Another Past"; Ybarra-Frausto, "Chicano Movement"; Munjeri, "Refocusing or Reorientation?"

\* Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz, eds., *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World* (Ashgate, 2012): introduction, chaps 2, 7-9

\* Wayne Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern: Museums, Collections, and Modernity in the Caribbean," *Museum Anthropology* 35 (2012): 85-96

\* Ivan Karp, Corinne B. Kratz, et al., eds., *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/ Global Transformations* (Duke University Press, 2006): Kreamer, "Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain"

## **2 May: Global Publics and the Museum Experience**

\* Andrea Fraser, "Isn't This a Wonderful Place? (A Tour of a Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)" (2003), in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (MIT Press, 2005), pp. 233-260

\* Fred Myers, "Complicity of Cultural Production," *Museum Frictions*

\* Tony Bennett, "Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture," *Ibid.*

\* Pierre Bourdieu and A. Darbel, "Cultural Works and Cultivated Disposition," in *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public* (1969; Polity Press, 1991), pp. 36-50

\* Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum As a Way of Seeing," *Exhibiting Cultures*

\* Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," *Ibid.*

## **Saturday 4 May, 10h30: Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**

\*\*\*\*\**Term paper due*\*\*\*\*\*