UEP COLLOQUIUM  June 4-6 2015: Programme
Thinking with Objects: University Museum Collections in Teaching and Research

For over two decades, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has generously supported and encouraged US university museums to facilitate teaching and learning across a wide range of academic fields through their collections. The success of the Mellon programme’s recipients in stimulating new interdisciplinary approaches to university pedagogy has been the foundation for the Ashmolean Museum’s University Engagement Programme (UEP), which has adapted the US model to address pedagogical impact within the Oxford environment, and to develop durable interdisciplinary collaborations.

Thinking with Objects presents us with an opportunity to bring together established museum teaching curators, museum colleagues from diverse backgrounds, academic partners and interested faculty to consider the impact of object-based teaching in an increasingly demanding university environment, and to identify outcomes essential to these initiatives.

We invite colleagues from the US, Europe and the UK to join us for a two-day colloquium in Oxford, at the Ashmolean Museum, for in-depth sessions centred on university museum collections and their place in mainstream higher education.

1. Thursday 4th June Evening reception and welcome. Ashmolean Museum, Mallett Gallery, 6-8pm. Welcome address: Professor Shearer West, Head of Humanities Division, Oxford University.

2. Friday 5th June Colloquium, 9-5 (Headley Lecture Theatre)
   a. Registration 08.50am-09.00am
   b. Morning introduction/Director 09.00am-09.30am
   c. Session I: The wider perspective 09.30am-11.30am
      Coffee/tea break 11.30am-12.00am
   d. Handling sessions 12.00pm-13.15pm
Lunch 13.15pm-14.00pm

e. Session II: Oxford and UEP 14.00pm-16.00pm

Coffee/tea break 16.00pm-16.30pm

f. Handling sessions 16.30pm-18.00pm

Dinner 7-9 Ashmolean Dining Room, by invitation

3. Saturday 6th June colloquium, 9-5 (Headley Lecture Theatre)

   a. Registration 8.50am-9.00am
   b. Session III – object teaching at Oxford 9.00am-12.00am

Coffee/tea break 10.20am-10.40am

   c. Session III – Object teaching at Oxford cont. 10.40am-12.00pm
   b. Handling sessions 12.00pm-13.15pm

Lunch 13.15pm-14.00pm

   c. Session IV – Engaging with the material 14.00pm-16.30pm

Coffee/tea break 16.30pm-16.45pm

Wrap up 16.45pm-16.50pm
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June  
Session I : 9.30am – 11.30am

University Museums as Intellectual Assets: A wider perspective

Oxford’s museum collections increasingly are being seen as durable intellectual assets, as a result of sustained engagement being offered through an array of teaching and research opportunities within the Ashmolean and its sister museums. The dialogues between museum professionals, academics, and university administrators highlight the potential for longer term integration of object study in established degree programmes, but also point to the challenges of assessing its impact, understanding its influence on both university and museum scholarship, and recognising the inherent creativity and added value of cross-disciplinary initiatives.

This session invites academics and museum professionals from Oxford and colleagues from other European institutions to share perspectives on collections initiatives being contemplated, recently launched, or well under way, and asks a seasoned observer of the US university museum sector to bridge between the established practices in that domain, and the emergent ones in Europe. The papers will touch on various strands and themes being highlighted in the other colloquium sessions.

Panel

Chair : Dr Giovanna Vitelli

Discussant: **Professor Ivan Gaskell**, Professor of Cultural History and Museum Studies, and Curator and Head of the Focus Gallery Project, Bard Graduate Center, New York

**Dr Silke Ackermann**, Director, Museum of the History of Science, University of Oxford

**Dr Mikael Ahlund**, Deputy Director, Museum Gustavianum, University of Uppsala, Sweden

**Dr. Marie Luisa Allemeyer**, Director, “Zentrale Kustodie” (Centre for Collection Development), University of Göttingen/ **Dr. Dominik Huenninger**, Managing Director, Göttingen Institute of Advanced Study, Georg-August-University, Göttingen, Germany

**Professor Laura Peers**, Professor in Museum Anthropology; Curator for the Americas Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

**Professor Abigail Williams**, Professor of English Literature and Lord White Tutorial Fellow, St. Peter’s College, University of Oxford
Objects and their Contexts in the Oxford Curriculum

Since 2012 the UEP has contributed object sessions to courses in various departments. This panel is an opportunity for Oxford faculty to share their experiences with object-based teaching at the Ashmolean. Reflecting on recent changes to their courses, these talks will address alterations to syllabi, curricular aims and objectives. Faculty will also assess the process of sustained engagement with the museum object as a means of unpacking discursive aspects of its past and present, and its importance to students across disciplines. Following, relatively brief individual talks, a discussion will address the ways in which the UEP contributes to the curriculum at Oxford and if Museum sessions improved a course and the approach of a department.

The discussion will address questions such as:

- What would help develop and increase the number of object-based sessions and courses in the curriculum at Oxford?
- What should the Museum do to make its collections more accessible? And what are some of the problems with object-based teaching?

Panel

Chair: Dr Mallica Kumbera Landrus

Discussant: Dr Pegram Harrison, Said Business School

Professor Heather Viles, Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

Professor Corneliu Bjola, International Development, University of Oxford

Professor Christopher McKenna, Said Business School, University of Oxford

Professor Stefano Zacchetti, Theology and Religion, Oriental Studies, University of Oxford

Professor Gervase Rosser, History of Art, University of Oxford
Saturday 6th June  
Session III: 9.00pm – 12.30pm  

Object-based Teaching at Research Intensive Universities: Unique Challenges  

A concern in the early 1990s for the relevance of college and university art museums began an effort to bring them closer to their host institutions. Now, after nearly two decades of object-based teaching in higher education, this concern is allayed but how we teach with collections is changing, especially at large research intensive universities. In an increasingly consumer oriented climate and one in which radical interdisciplinary connections are progressively more desirable, museums and collections of large research universities find themselves again in a mode of reinvention. The panel will ask questions and host four practitioners at different stages of this reinvention.  

It will address questions such as:  
- How can work with art and history collections in the natural and social sciences, medical, law and business schools be rigorous and relevant?  
- How can star faculty and exclusive graduate groups be lured into teaching and research with collections and methodologies with which they are unfamiliar? How important are development agendas?  

Panel  

Dr. David Odo, Director of Student Programs and Research Curator of University Collections, Harvard University Art Museums  

Dr. Pamela Franks, Deputy Director for Exhibitions, Programming, and Education and the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, the Yale University Art Gallery  

Dr. Juliana Ochs Dweck, Curator of Interpretation and Academic Engagement, Princeton University Art Museum  

Dr. Roberto C. Ferrari, Curator, Art Properties, Columbia University
Saturday 6th June  
Session IV: 14.00pm – 16.30pm

Engaging with the Material: University Collections and the Unfamiliar Practice of Teaching with Objects

The demand for teaching in the University Museum environment seems almost insatiable, yet the resources to meet it, human, financial and in terms of space are inevitably limited. The need to teach members of faculty across the widest possible range of disciplines to work with objects, therefore, is a pressing concern. Among the colleagues most eager to work with the Ashmolean University Engagement Programme and with programmes in other University Museums have been incoming members of faculty and early-career scholars: doctoral students, post-docs and those in their first permanent post. Their willingness to bring students to the Ashmolean and to include object-based work in their courses normalises the relationship between their academic departments and the Museum, encouraging broader curricular change, whilst their closeness to their primary research often manifests in openess to new avenues of enquiry and pedagogy. Their collaboration, as educators, as advocates for museum teaching and as potential funding partners is crucial to the sustainability of our work.

This panel will discuss the role of museum-based academics in introducing faculty members, new and established, to the principles of teaching with objects, and in particular their part in developing the teaching practice of early-career scholars. It will address questions such as:

- who wants to teach with objects?
- how do we encourage, train and enable them?
- how can they help with the establishment of new programmes?
- what do they have in common?
- when do they start?

Panel

Elizabeth Manekin, Assistant Curator of Education, Yale University Art Gallery

Dr Jessica Martinez, Head of the Division of Academic & Public Programs, Harvard Art Museums

Dr Liv Robinson, Stipendiary Lecturer in Medieval English Literature, University of Oxford

Nicole Crawford, Senior Curator of Collections, University of Wyoming Art Museum

Dr Isadora Helfgott, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Wyoming

Dr Alexandra Gerstein, Curator of sculpture and decorative arts, Courtauld Institute of Art, London