One-Day Workshop with Inaugural Guest Lecture
Saturday 7 May 2016
Lindisfarne Centre, St Aidan’s College, Durham University
Supported by
Institute of Advanced Study
Welcome

‘Nineteenth-Century Art and Science Today’ brings together researchers working in academic and museum sectors to explore the close relationship between art and science in the nineteenth century, and how we study, represent and display that relationship today. Beginning with the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies inaugural guest lecture, given by Bill Sherman and Tim Boon, we learn about the interwoven history of the V&A and the Science Museum, and their disciplinary reunion under the aegis of shared development plans in London. Sam Alberti, recently appointed as Director of Science and Technology for Museums Scotland, will chair the keynote, direct questions and provide insight from his vast experience.

Two inter-related research conversations follow: the first involves a close examination and illustration of how current, cutting-edge scholarship represents and conceptualizes the interchange between art and science in nineteenth-century exhibition, zoology and literature; the second hones in on museological practice, and how the museum sector aims to represent these and other nineteenth-century interchanges between art and science today. The day ends with a plenary session open to the floor for questions and discussion.
Schedule

09.00 – 09.45 | Registration, Tea and Coffee
Lindisfarne Centre, St Aidan’s College

09.45 – 11.00 | Inaugural CNCS Guest Lecture
Tim Boon, Science Museum
Bill Sherman, Victoria and Albert Museum

11.00 – 11.30 | Tea and Coffee Break

11.30 – 13.00 | Research Conversation
Barbara Gribling, Durham University
David Lowther, Newcastle University
Roisín McCloskey, Durham University

13.00 – 14.00 | Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 | Research Conversation
Mungo Campbell, The Hunterian Museum, Glasgow
Oli Betts, National Railway Museum, York
Elizabeth Edwards, Emeritus De Montfort University

15.30 – 16.00 | Tea and Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.00 | Plenary Panel Session
Led by Ludmilla Jordanova, Durham University

17.00 | Conference Closes

17.00 – 18.00 | Wine Reception

18.00 | Conference Dinner
Inaugural Guest Lecture

Chaired by Sam Alberti, Curator of Science and Technology for Museums Scotland

09.45 — 11.00

'The Department of Science and Art Revisited: The View from South Kensington'

Tim Boon, Head of Research and Public History, Science Museum
Bill Sherman, Director of Research and Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum

The keynote address will offer a talk on--and as--the South Kensington Museum, which was the original home for what was later split into the V&A and Science Museum. The government body that created it was The Department of Science and Art, which was run by Henry Cole (the prime mover behind the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the SKM's founding director). We would like to put the Victorian relationship between science and art into both a long and a local perspective by considering the prehistory of the Department and Museum, the period of roughly 50 years when the two collections lived in a single organisation, the reasons for the split circa 1900, and the opportunities now (in museums and universities) for reconnecting them.

Tim Boon is Head of Research & Public History at the Science Museum, London. Boon is a historian and curator of the public culture of science. His published research is mainly concerned with the history of science in documentary films, television, museums and, latterly, music. Arising from his historical research and his curatorial practice, he has developed strong interests in the public history of science, technology, engineering and medicine. He has acted as Principal- or Co-Investigator on several research projects on behalf of the Science Museum. More broadly, he is responsible for developing the Museum’s research and public history programme, and has oversight of the Science Museums & Archives Collaborative Doctoral Partnership.

Bill Sherman is Director of Research and Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where he is leading the development of a V&A Research Institute. He moved to the V&A from the University of York, where he was Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Renaissance & Early Modern Studies. He has published widely on the history of books and readers, the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the relationship between knowledge and power and the word/image interface. His recent publications include Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England and a special issue of the Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (edited with Juliet Fleming and Adam Smyth) on Renaissance Collage.

Sam Alberti is Curator of Science and Technology for Museums Scotland. Until recently, Sam was Director of Museums and Archives at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, which includes the renowned Hunterian Museum. He is interested in the past, present and future of medical and natural history collections. His books include Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum (2009), The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie (2011) and Morbid Curiosities: Medical Museums in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2011).
Research Conversation

Chaired by Simon James, Department of English Studies, Durham University

11.30 — 13.00

‘From the 'Panstereomachia' to the Heraldic Exhibition: the Art and Science of Displaying the Medieval Past’

Barbara Gribling, Department of History, Durham University

In 1826, Mr Bullock opened his panstereomachia exhibition at 209 Regent street. For the price of a shilling, visitors could look through peepholes into a Gothic-styled room at 1500 ‘plastic marble’ figures representing the famous medieval battle of Poitiers. A key selling point of the exhibition was its mysterious name which alluded to a new type of exhibition experience. The exhibit spoke to a burgeoning market for historically-themed exhibitions and a fascination with the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century. Yet Bullock’s exhibition was only one of many exhibits both history themed and otherwise which employed old and new technology to bring the past to life to excite and inform new consumer audiences. In turn, viewers’ experiences of the past were often mediated through these technologies. This paper will trace flashpoints of medieval exhibits across the century to assess how exhibitors drew on science and technology to offer competing visions of the medieval past. It will examine how these exhibitions reflect changing views about the Middle Ages as well as debates about the purpose of the past as instruction and entertainment. Through the example of the 1894 Heraldic exhibition, it illustrates a growing interest at the end of the nineteenth century in the preservation of decaying medieval artefacts as important parts of Britain’s national heritage. It raises questions about the relationship between technology and the display of the past.

Barbara Gribling is a CoFund Junior Research Fellow in the Department of History exploring British cultural history from the late eighteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Her work investigates childhood, consumer culture and the uses of the past. She has a forthcoming book on the Image of Edward the Black Prince in Georgian and Victorian England to be published with the Royal Historical Society in their Studies in History series. She also co-edited a volume on Chivalry and the Medieval Past out this year in Boydell and Brewer’s Medievalism series. Her new research explores children and their consumption of the medieval past through exhibitions, tourism, theatre, pageants, books, toys and games in the period 1880 to 1938.
‘The View from the Mountain: Brian Hodgson’s Himalayan Zoology’

David Lowther, The Zoological Society, London & School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Newcastle University

Brian Houghton Hodgson (1801-1894) is one of zoology’s forgotten pioneers. Over the course of twenty-five years, isolated from fellow Europeans in Kathmandu, he made the first determined effort to catalogue and classify the birds and animals of the Himalaya. Central to this project was the commissioning and collecting of scientifically-accurate zoological paintings from Nepalese artists. Numbering in the thousands, many now lie in the collections of the Zoological Society of London.

Originally intended by Hodgson to serve as the basis for a series of illustrated scientific publications, the watercolours have lain largely undisturbed for over a century. Now, they are being rediscovered not only by historians of science and empire, but also by conservationists and biologists. Repositories of vast quantities of information relating to species distribution, they remain the foundation of Himalayan Zoology. However, their interpretation is laced with difficulties: created at a time before modern, ‘scientific’ standards of objectivity by artists to whom such conventions were wholly alien, they are remarkable both as artefacts of a hybrid culture of seeing and for their extraordinary accuracy.

Based on three years of study of the Hodgson Collection as Visiting Library Scholar at the Zoological Society of London, this short paper will introduce the images and address the unique problems of interpretation faced by both historians and scientists. It will then turn to the ways in which the collection is being used by modern zoologists, particularly in the creation of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Red List for Nepal, published earlier in 2016, and argue that historians of science and empire have only just started to scratch the surface of this remarkable resource.

David Lowther is a final year PhD student and lecturer in modern British, European, and imperial History at Newcastle University and the University of Sunderland. His research interests lie particularly in the visual culture of the natural sciences, but encompass British and European intellectual and cultural history between 1750 and 1914. He is currently Visiting Library Fellow at the Zoological Society of London, where his research focuses on nineteenth-century zoological art, particularly the Himalayan collections of Brian Houghton Hodgson, and their place in the transitional culture of pre-Darwinian European science. He is a member of the Britain-Nepal Bicentenary Committee, and is a guest curator of ‘The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell’ exhibition at the GNM: Hancock.
‘Nineteenth-Century Science and Art in Peter Pan’

Roisín McCloskey, Department of English Studies, Durham University

It is Walt Disney, not J. M. Barrie, who created the Peter Pan that most people know today. Disney’s Peter Pan is eternally joyful because he is eternally young; his nineteenth-century ancestor is more ambivalent about eternal youth. I suggest that this is because J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan (1904) studies a relationship between science and art which Disney’s Peter Pan (1953) only performs.

Gillian Beer suggests that God lost his ‘explanatory function’ after the publication of Charles Darwin’s The Origin of Species (1859). By reading Barrie’s Peter Pan as a study both of the difficulties of Darwinism for the human self, and of the ‘explanatory function’ of childhood for that self, I hope to argue that the nineteenth-century relationship between science and art which Barrie posits is evident in the content and enduring appeal of Disney’s Peter Pan.

By refuting origins and ends both within its plot and in its textual history, Barrie’s Peter Pan performs Darwinism to its audience; by offering those same origins and ends in the fantasy of its eponymous eternal child, Peter Pan is also a study of childhood as an art which enables the still-necessary teleological fiction of the self. Barrie’s Peter Pan therefore performs the losses brought about by Darwin’s contribution to science, and vindicates the explanatory function of art: from Barrie to Disney and beyond, art continues to create explanations which may be falsifiable, but are necessary nevertheless.

Roisín McCloskey is a third-year PhD student and tutor in the English Studies department at Durham University, and a postgraduate representative for the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies. She is interested in how ideas about childhood were created at the interface between fiction and science in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in how such ideas were understood to inform wider debates in this period. Her current research looks at precocious children in the literature and psychology of the late nineteenth - and early twentieth-century, with a particular focus on language and memory in the works of Henry James, Frances Hodgson Burnett, E. Nesbit, J. M. Barrie, and Daisy Ashford.
Research Conversation

Chaired by Máire Cross, School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University

14.00 — 15.30

‘The Hunterian: Reordering the objects of Enlightenment knowledge in the nineteenth-century university’

Mungo Campbell, The Hunterian Museum, Glasgow

While William Hunter’s formation and eventual bequest of his Enlightenment collection to the University of Glasgow involved a number of significantly novel approaches to the material cultures of knowledge and its generation, and the institution he established represents, in the twenty-first century, a rare, if not unique, survival, The Hunterian’s continuing existence in the form intended by Hunter, as a single collection, was not a foregone conclusion.

When Hunter (1718-1783) drew up his Will in 1782, he was determined that the work of some thirty years (together with expenditure of many thousands of pounds), a collection which encompassed his own anatomical and pathological specimens, natural history, ethnography, numismatics and one of the great working libraries of eighteenth-century London, would find utility as a permanent and functioning institution used by the academy for teaching and research.

Uniquely among fellow Enlightenment collectors, from Hans Sloane to his own brother John, specifically included in Hunter’s bequest were his paintings and other works of art. Thus, when William Stark’s Hunterian, the first public museum in Scotland, opened in the Old College of Glasgow University in 1807, it included the first purpose-built public picture gallery in Britain. From the outset however, the coherence of the art collection appears to have been obscure to contemporary enquiry. Through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the collection would undergo a gradual process of intellectual and, ultimately, physical fragmentation.

This paper will question a number of established perceptions about the transmission of Hunter’s collection from eighteenth-century London to nineteenth-century Glasgow and examine the particular challenges faced by his cultural collections in their new institutional home.

Mungo Campbell is Deputy Director of The Hunterian at the University of Glasgow. Before moving to Glasgow in 1997 he worked at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and in the Print Room at the National Gallery of Scotland. From 1998 – 2003 he served on the Visual Art Committee of the Scottish Arts Council and chaired SAC visual arts panels for Exhibitions and for Educational Awards. He was also Chair of VAGA Scotland from 2003 to 2007. He was a Board member of the Scottish Museums Council (Now Museums Galleries Scotland) from 2001 to 2007 and also served on the Board of SCRAN from 2004 to 2006. He curated Allan Ramsay; portraits of the Enlightenment exhibition at The Hunterian in 2013 and is leading a major research programme, in collaboration with the Yale Center for British Art, in preparation for the tercentenary of William Hunter’s birth in 2018.
‘Recasting the Railway Age: Victorian Art and Science in a modern industrial museum’

Oli Betts, National Railway Museum, York

The nineteenth-century is often seen as a golden age of railways – a flowering, from the early forays of the 1820s and 1830s, of a new technology that dramatically shaped the age in which it was situated. By the end of the century, as the clouds of war gathered, the railways dominated British industry, society, and culture.

Yet the traditional narratives of a “Golden Age” actually serve to create artificial barriers and overly simplistic set-piece visions of the period. Perhaps most significantly is the division between the large cultural set-pieces of the Victorian railway, such as the transport for the Crystal Palace exhibition or the rise of the working-class seaside holiday and the middle-class Thomas Cook excursion, which dominate the wider narrative of railways in Victorian society but sit uneasily alongside the technical history of locomotive design, the construction of the railway lines, and the staffing and operating of the vast Victorian network that evolved. It can be a narrative that obscures as much as it reveals and, particularly in more popular forms, draws very heavily on an assumed narrative of linear progress.

This paper will show how art and science, cultural and technical, were intertwined in the Victorian world of the railways and reflect on how these different currents might be placed within a modern museum context better equipped to present not only the triumphs of the Golden Age but its flaws, its mistakes, and its eccentricities as well.

Oli Betts is the Research Fellow at the National Railway Museum in York. His PhD compared social investigation of poverty with the lives of the poor across late Victorian England, drawing on a range of new material (including the newly released 1911 census returns) to demonstrate how the reality of life in poverty increasingly diverged from the imaged of a working-class in need of reform and assistance. He is currently researching a project marrying the human and transport histories of South London 1850-1940, examining how the railways shaped the culture, society, geography, and politics of one of the fastest growing urban regions in Britain. You can find him on Twitter @DrOliBetts
'Photography as "Victorian heritage" in the public space'

Elizabeth Edwards, Professor Emertia of Photographic History, De Montfort University

It is no coincidence that the Victorian period is effectively the default ‘heritage’ period: it is also the photographic age. The period appears connected and knowable through the immediacy and reality effects of the photograph. While there is an extensive literature on urban landscapes as public history, little attention has been given, outside the productions of arts practice, to the way historical photographs have been used to produce an historically scripted space, creating a sense of historical connection and continuity. This paper will thus explore the current resurgence of the Victorian photograph in the public space – in shop windows, on building sites, in public institutions, as the past is played out photographically in the contemporary urban space. Drawing especially on a local history exhibition, spread through the streets of Lewes in Sussex in 2014, I consider the ways in which photographs are used to create an intensification of historical imagination and coherence of sentiment as the immediacy of photographs is used to create banal folded presences of the past, an historical ‘habitus’ which intensifies the space-time of the street. As such, I argue, photographs are used to layer and wrap time, to anchor and connect a sense of the past within the everyday.

Elizabeth Edwards is a visual and historical anthropologist and Emeritus Professor of Photographic History at De Montfort University, Leicester, where she was until recently Director of the Photographic History Research Centre. Specialising in the social and material practices of photography, she has worked extensively on the relationships between photography, anthropology and history. Her monographs and edited works include Anthropology and Photography (1992), Raw Histories (2001), Photographs Objects Histories (2004), Sensible Objects (2006) and The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination 1885-1912 (2012). In 2014 she received a lifetime achievement award from the Society for Visual Anthropology (American Anthropological Association) and in 2015 was the first photographic specialist to be elected a Fellow of the British Academy. She is currently working on books on photography and the emergence of a collective and publically owned ‘cultural heritage’ 1850-1950 and on the relationship between photography and history writing.
Plenary Panel Session
Led by Ludmilla Jordanova, Department of History, Durham University
Sam, Alberti, Tim Boon, Mungo Campbell, Elizabeth Edwards, Bill Sherman & Bennett Zon
16.00 — 17.00

Ludmilla Jordanova is Professor of Visual Culture in the Department of History at Durham University. She is a historian of science and medicine who has a long-standing interest in visual culture and museums. She is an active teacher and researcher at Durham University, where she chairs the University’s Collections Committee and is a leading member of the Centre for Visual Arts and Culture. She has been President of the British Society for the History of Science (1998-2000) and of the History of Science Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (2006). Her 2000 exhibition ‘Defining Features’, which explored portraits of practitioners of science, medicine and technology, was at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich. She served eight years as a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. Her most recent book is ‘The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice’ (2012).

Bennett Zon is Professor of Music at Durham University. Zon researches in areas of long nineteenth-century musical culture, with particular interest in British science, theology and intellectual history. He has published The English Plainchant Revival (Oxford University Press, 1999), Music and Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century British Musicology (Ashgate, 2000) and Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (University of Rochester Press, 2007). Zon is currently writing Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture (Cambridge University Press, 2016), and he and Bernard Lightman have co-edited Evolution and Victorian Culture (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Zon is General Editor of Nineteenth-Century Music Review (Cambridge University Press) and the book series Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Ashgate). With Carol Harrison he co-directs the International Network for Music Theology, and is Director of the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies at Durham University.
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