Museological Review, 12: 2007

Contents



ISSN 1354-5825

Museological Review, Issue 12. 2007

# MUSEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal edited by Students of the Department of Museum Studies

## Conference Proceedings Issue 12: 2007

University of Leicester
GRADUATE STUDIES

# MUSEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal Edited by Students of the
Department of Museum Studies

Conference Proceedings
Issue 12: 2007

Editors:
Jeanette Atkinson
Wing Yan Ting


University *of*
Leicester

Copies can be ordered at a cost of £8.00 per issue plus postage and packing, from:

Leicester University Bookshop
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RD

Tel: 0116 252 3456 or 0116 252 3000
FAX: 0116 252 5029
e-mail: bookshop@le.ac.uk

*Design and layout: Jim Roberts, Department of Museum Studies*

# Contents

# Preface

Museological Review was established in 1994 to give research students in Leicester and elsewhere a voice. It was to be the vehicle through which the museum studies research community - spread as it is across archaeology, cultural studies, art history and other academic units - could establish a dialogue which would permit the exchange of ideas regarding perspectives, methods and results. This special issue is the outcome of a highly successful AHRC sponsored conference, 'Material Culture, Identities and Social Inclusion', organised by Leicester research students, which took place in Leicester early in 2006, and which shared that same mission. While the conference had a number of keynotes by museum studies veterans, it was the contributions of the research students themselves that was most interesting, for it revealed what these students thought most current and where they believed the field was going. The presented papers showed the degree to which museum studies benefits from the multidisciplinarity of its contributors, not all of whom had read museum studies at postgraduate level before commencing their studies of museums. Although conferences are ephemeral events, participants long remember them and in the papers here there is more than a hint of the topics that were discussed. Conferences are also important for generating enthusiasm - and I recall many conversations with presenters of posters who were clearly passionate about their projects. I hope that before long, Leicester research students will again organise a conference and in doing so attempt to extend the breadth of disciplinary participation even further. Museological Review - which will be relaunched as an online journal from Autumn 2007 - will I hope continue to develop as the voice for an emergent community, for those who wish to research the museum, and wish to locate the next question. I wish it well.

Professor Simon Knell
12 March 2007

# Introduction to the Conference Proceedings

## Conference Aims

The 'Material Culture, Identities and Social Inclusion' conference was delivered over 9th and 10th February 2006. It was organised by the PhD research community at the University of Leicester and brought together a sometimes disparate inter-disciplinary community focused around museum, gallery and heritage research. The conference aimed to reconsider our understanding of material culture, identity and social inclusion issues by exploring how what we choose to collect, display and interpret in museums and galleries validates certain audiences' identities whilst excluding others.

As cultural institutions aiming to serve the public through their collections, museums and galleries are now facing questions regarding what they should collect, how collections should be interpreted and whose voices are being represented. Ultimately, museums need to justify their place within our modern society, where communities and individuals have multi-layered cultural heritages, faith traditions, identities, interests and needs.

## Conference Themes

The overarching theme of the conference was one of inclusion and how museums/galleries were looking beyond their traditional audience base, to enable previously excluded communities to engage with them. The first day of the conference focused on material culture and explored issues of representation with African collections, how it can be used to reach out to new audiences and how contemporary art can be used as a tool for inclusion.

Day two focused on how museums and galleries were involved in combating prejudice and social exclusion through identity construction. The range of papers on this day focused on cultural and national identities, along with how museums can support people whose identities have been affected by war or conflict, through taking a role in the process of peace and reconciliation.

## Bringing Research Communities Together

Through the exploration of these broad themes, we wanted to bring together academics, postgraduate students and museum/gallery practitioners to share ideas; and to provide a forum for the dissemination of cutting-edge ideas, new

research methodologies and the practical experiences of fieldwork. The conference programme attracted papers from 4 eminent keynote speakers, 16 speakers and 20 poster presenters who showcased research focused around the conference themes. This publication aims to disseminate the work of a significant proportion of our speakers who were able to write up their papers more formally for the proceedings.

We were delighted to welcome over 140 delegates from 27 universities (including international academics and students), 17 museums along with representatives from strategic bodies including the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museums Association and regional museum, library and archive councils.

Our evaluation of the conference showed that delegates valued the opportunity to share ideas, network and gain access to current research. We are therefore pleased to be able to disseminate the outcomes of the conference to a wider audience through this special edition of Museological Review.

As conference chair I would like to take the opportunity thank all the PhD Conference Committee who worked incredibly hard to develop and deliver the conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our speakers and presenters and thank those who were able to formally write their papers up and support the production of these proceedings. Finally, I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for awarding the initial funding which enabled the conference to be organised.

Heather Hollins,

Conference Committee Chair,
April 2007.

# Notes for Contributors

## Aims

- To enable museum studies students and other interested parties to share and exchange museum information and knowledge.
- To provide an international medium for museums students and ex-students from around the world to keep in touch with a relevant centre of research.
- To bring to the attention of the practising and academic museum world, innovations and new thinking on museums and related matters.

## Objectives

- To provide a platform in the form of a journal to be published per annum, for museums students, staff and others to present papers, reviews, opinions and news of a relevant nature from around the world.
- To widen up the constituency of the readership beyond the normal museological boundaries (e.g. to teachers, historians, artists, sociologists, environmentalists and others) in order to emphasise the importance of museums to society as a whole.
- To promote and advertise the research of contributors to as wide a public as possible via the journal and other means as the committee may from time to time decide.

## Submission of manuscripts

The Editors welcome submissions of original material (articles, exhibition or book reviews etc.) being within the aims of the *Museological Review*. Articles can be of any length up to 5,000 words. Each contributor will receive one copy of the issue, but not a fee.

Four copies of the typescript will be required; three copies to the Editors and a copy for you to keep for your own reference. Make sure that all copies carry

late additions or corrections. ***It will not be possible for us to undertake or arrange for independent proof reading and the obligation for thorough checking is the responsibility of the authors' not the Editors.***

Contributions should be set as follows:

Title of Article

Full name of the author

Main body of the paper

Numbered endnotes (if appropriate)

Acknowledgements

References/Bibliography

Appendices

Author's name

Full postal address, professional qualifications, position held.

Please type on one side of the paper only, keep to an even number of lines per page, and use standard size paper (A4) with wide margins. Justified, double line-space texts should be submitted without any page numbering. The sub-headings should be typed in exactly the same way as the ordinary text, but should be in bold. Sub-headings should be displayed by leaving extra-space above and below them.

Do not use footnotes.

All foreign language extracts must be also translated in English.

## Style

- Sub-headings are welcome, although 'Introduction' should be avoided where this is obvious. They should be in bold and aligned to the left.
- Words ending in -ise or -ize: -ise is used.
- Numbers: up to and including twenty in words, over twenty in figures, except that figures should not begin in a sentence.

- Measurements are given in metric (SI) units, though Imperial units may be quoted in addition.

- Place names should be up-to-date, and in the Anglicised form (Moscow not Moskva).

- Italics should be used a) for foreign words not yet Anglicised, including Latin; b) for titles of books, ships, pictures etc.; c) very sparingly, for emphasis

- Quotations should be set in single quotation marks '...', using double quotation marks "..." for quotes within a quote. Quotations of more than two lines of typescript should be set on a new line and indented.

- Abbreviations should always be explained on first usage, unless in common international use. Full points should not be used between letters in an abbreviation: e.g. USA not U.S.A.

- Organisations and companies take the singular, e.g. 'the Royal Academy is...'.

- First person tense should be avoided.

## Illustrations/Figures/Tables:

Papers can be accompanied by black and white photographs, negatives, line drawings or tables. All illustrations etc. should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are referred to in the text. **Please note that they must be fully captioned and supplied separate from the document as .tif (tagged image) files. Figures included in Word or Excel documents are not accepted.** Contributors are requested to discuss illustrative material with the Editors at an early stage.

If there is any requirement for special type (e.g. Arabic, Greek, scientific or mathematical symbols) this should be supplied as artwork. All artwork must be scanned and submitted on disk Photographs must be scanned at 150dpi (lpi) minimum, line art at 100dpi (lpi) minimum, and fully captioned

**Referencing/Bibliography:** References must be presented using the Harvard system (author and date given in text, e.g. Connerton, 1989; Cook, 1991: 533).

This should be at the end of the paper, arranged alphabetically by author, then chronologically if there is more than one work by the same author. Use the inverted format as follows:

Connerton, P. (1989). *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cook, B.F. (1991). 'The archaeologist and the Art Market: Policies and Practice.' *Antiquity* 65: 533.

## Copyright

It is the author's responsibility to obtain copyright approval for any materials included in the article.

Once the paper has been accepted for publication, the Editors will appreciate if the contributor can send his/her article on a floppy-disk. We can deal with files prepared on a PC or Macintosh computer using Microsoft Word. Other word processors may be used, but the text must be saved as ASCII or as Rich Text File (RTF). **All word processed documents MUST be saved cleanly, i.e. with a final 'save as…' in order to resolve all edits**. Please discuss this with the Editors if unsure.

## Articles should be addressed to:

The Editors,
Museological Review,
Department of Museum Studies,
University of Leicester,
103/105 Princess Road East,
Leicester LE1 7LG,
UK.

Tel: + 44 (0) 116 252 3963;
Fax: + 44 (0) 116 252 3960.

# ‘Art for the People’: Museums and Cultural Life in the Second World War

*Catherine Pearson*

Studies of museum history can illuminate interpretations of material culture because they demonstrate the meanings attached to museum objects by curators and audiences of the past and, therefore, help to reveal the beliefs of individuals and the cultures of communities in a given time period. These aspects are drawn into even sharper relief when culture is threatened by war and a study of the Second World War reveals that this period of upheaval caused the museum to develop a new relationship with its audiences, and that this was achieved through an altered perspective towards material culture that took account of contemporary issues and was responsive to audiences’ needs.

This paper will explore the nature of these developments, their impact on wartime visitors and their relevance to museum practice today. Studies of museum history to date have tended to concentrate on the work of national museums but this study will also examine these issues from a regional museum perspective with reference to the role of Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. In the course of this paper, therefore, I aim to analyse Leicester Museum’s wartime contribution and to explore its contemporary claims to have been meeting its audience’s needs:

> ‘Possibly at no other time have there been so many demands made upon the services the Museum has to offer … each new demand, each difficult situation, have been met with creative response so that the Museum in wartime has become a vitally alive centre of community interest …’ (*Leicester Museum & Art Gallery Annual Report* (Leics. *Report),* 1941-2:1)

At the beginning of the war, museums, together with cinemas and theatres, had been recommended for closure in order to avoid the dangers of large numbers of people being gathered in one place during air-raids. The Museums Association, however, fought and won a national campaign to overturn government policy. When the restrictions on museum opening were lifted in February 1940, museum staffs were left with the task of having to realise the campaign’s claims that museums could offer a viable public service in war (*Museums Journal (M.J.)* Feb, 1940: 454). Revised services also needed to be established because most museums had removed large sections of their permanent collections to places of safety in the country and were faced with the prospect of galleries emptied of their most prized possessions.

At the same time, the disastrous downturn of the war during 1940 contributed

to an alteration in Government thinking on wartime leisure provision and it was increasingly recognised that access to culture could offer the public some temporary respite from the daily pressures of conflict and help to maintain morale (Addison, 1994(ed): 185). Empty museum galleries also presented the Government with the prospect of utilising public exhibition spaces to support national campaigns and promote national identity. The Government's support for the establishment of the War Artists' Advisory Committee and the appointment of war artists at this time formed part of this initiative and the Committee would work with museums to ensure that an ongoing and changing display of the works produced by the war artists was shown continuously, not only at the National Gallery but also in museums across the country, to enable people to be able to view the pictures in their own localities. By 1945, five separate selections of up to eighty works had been circulated to the large regional galleries and three further selections featuring smaller scale works had toured towns, villages and army camps (Harries, 1983: 270).

The State's interest in such endeavours was driven by the opportunity to promote a sense of nationalism but the war artists, audiences and curators developed their own responses. For example, there was fierce demand amongst museums to obtain these exhibitions and to have the opportunity of displaying modern art by leading artists in order to validate the museum's role and purpose. Visitor numbers for the months in which the war artists' exhibitions were shown at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery demonstrate that such tenacity in obtaining these exhibitions was justified. In August 1941 and August 1942, when the war artist exhibitions were shown at Leicester, visitor attendance doubled on both occasions.[1] The War Artists' Advisory Committee meanwhile was not particularly inclined to encourage artists to produce overtly propagandist images much to the concern of the Ministry of Information under whose remit the Committee initially operated (Harries, 1983: 271-273). Instead the Committee emphasised that the pictures produced needed to 'convey the feel of the war' in order to make a connection with the experience of the viewer (Clark speaking in *Out of Chaos* 1944; Ross, 1983: 9).

Mass-Observation records provide some general indications of how these contemporary pictures were received by audiences, although it must be noted that the opinion of the individual observer or the particular focus of a given observation can limit the application of such evidence. A 1941 report, however, recorded that the war artist exhibitions were:

> '… by far the most popular and attract the largest and most mixed audiences. Not only is the subject of more general interest at the moment, but the type of painting is more attractive to the layman and he feels himself more confident, and unabashed by the expert criticisms, knowledge and highbrow attitudes of the select art for art's sake class. … the majority of people seemed to be taking a general interest and feeling a … genuine pleasure.'
>
> (M-O/TC33-Art/3A: 19/9/41).

This sense of engagement with these contemporary pictures has been borne out through interviews undertaken in the course of this study amongst people who have recollections of visiting the war artist exhibitions. One interviewee recalled that she had been particularly attracted to paintings by artists such as Eric Ravilious - who was attached to the Admiralty - because members of her family were serving on the ships he depicted.[2] The experience had also forged deep memories: she could recall the exact locations of the paintings on the walls of the gallery and remembered the impact that Charles Cundall's painting *Evacuation from Dunkirk, June 1940* had made on her, owing to its size and subject matter (Pers. comm. V2005.i). Mass-Observation records for the same exhibition noted that this picture had attracted the most attention and plans for the exhibition confirmed her memories exactly (M-O/TC33-Art/3A:12/2/41). The exhibits and the museum's architecture had played a major part in sealing and projecting individual experience on to the memory of the museum visit in this instance and Michael Fehr's contemporary observations of visitor behaviour at the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum in Hagen have demonstrated similar patterns in the formation of memories amongst museum audiences (Fehr, 2000: 42-3). This has important consequences for understanding the wider community role that a museum could adopt in exploring and recalling past visits and associations for visitors, and in terms of meanings for material culture (Crane, 2000: 2).

For many visitors, especially those visiting regional galleries, exhibitions such as those featuring the work of the war artists formed their first engagement with modern art. Another interviewee recalled how the war artist pictures left her with a strong impression of the realism of the subjects they depicted and when she was later confronted by traditional Italian works with bright primary colours and ornate gilded frames she found them 'rather peculiar and not like real life at all.' Her encounter with contemporary art during the war has left her with a lifetime appreciation of modern works, a preference which, she informed me, she has never since been able to alter (Pers. comm. V2003.i).

The introduction of modern art to new audiences became a cornerstone of museum wartime policy. As discussed above, this was partly borne out of the necessity of needing to find alternative objects for display in the absence of permanent collections but it was also heavily influenced by a scheme entitled 'Art for the People' which had been devised by the British Institute for Adult Education (BIAE) in 1935. The original aim of the scheme was to take exhibitions of modern works to industrial towns that did not have a gallery or access to contemporary art. Guide-lecturers accompanied the exhibitions to encourage discussion and debate about the works on show and the organisers found that they were able to attract a broader range of visitors owing to the accessibility of the artworks and their presentation within familiar surroundings (Pollak, 1942: 277). The BIAE's work would be greatly expanded in war by the formation of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) in 1940. This organisation, funded by the Treasury, was established to encourage professional and amateur arts activities across

the country with the aim of maintaining morale but it would later evolve into the peacetime Arts Council. State sponsorship in war would allow CEMA and the BIAM to work in cooperation with museums and galleries to create large numbers of regular touring exhibitions that promoted alternative art forms, featured the work of displaced groups and tackled social issues relevant to people's lives (Pollak, 1942: 277-279).

The Moore-Piper-Sutherland exhibition was devised by Professor Philip Hendy, then Director of Leeds City Art Gallery, in 1941 and was an early example of the touring 'Art for the People' scheme. When it reached Leicester, the Museum's Director, Trevor Thomas, noted that the exhibition made 'direct contact with people' (Thomas, 1942 (Feb): 259-261) and gained some of the highest attendance figures despite being shown in December. Visitors voted it the best exhibition held at Leicester in the previous twelve months. As a result, Leicester Museum became a frequent recipient of the CEMA/ BIAE exhibitions and the museum staff supplemented the exhibitions with works from the collections as well as providing lectures, concerts and theatrical events to coincide with the theme of a travelling display.

Trevor Thomas was a member of the Museum Association's advisory panel to CEMA and over 1941-1942 he undertook a visitor evaluation study on the 'Art for the People' scheme, which provides some indication of audience reactions to the programme. Of those surveyed, 33% were not regular visitors but had been attracted to Leicester Museum by the changing programme of exhibitions - one person admitting 'I come whenever there is a special exhibition, as I find the permanent collection on the whole uninspiring' (Thomas, 1942 (Dec): 210). When asked what kind of pictures visitors would prefer to see in an exhibition, 50% voted for contemporary works above all others, with a refugee respondent requesting 'All kinds of modern pictures … not only English art'. Works by Epstein, Picasso, Augustus John and Paul Nash were demanded most frequently (Thomas, 1942 (Dec): 211). In answer to a question about future subjects of exhibitions, 85% indicated a desire for an exhibition on aids to art appreciation. Thomas found his visitors to be 'frankly honest and modest about the range of their art experience, but … eager for more knowledge and increased opportunities'. Visitors were also quick to condemn exhibitions that were poor in quality; they made requests for special lectures to be held at weekends to allow working people to attend and called for refreshments to be made available in the museum (Thomas, 1942 (Dec): 212).

Thomas proved keen to meet the demands presented by his audience, establishing an enormous programme of wartime events, activities and exhibitions at Leicester. Taking heed of his visitors' comments, he introduced refreshments, supplied by the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), to coincide with the museum's regular lunchtime concerts, although he had to overcome initial opposition from the members of the Museum Committee who were horrified at the thought of 'Crumbs in the Art Gallery!' (Weeks & Porter, 1991: 65). He felt that this measure more than anything else had 'contributed to

making the museum more human and alive.' (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 8).

Exhibitions were devoted to topical themes of direct relevance to the community such as the City Planning Exhibition (1944), which considered the future development of Leicester. Held in conjunction with the City Surveyor's office, the displays took over the majority of the museum and regular meetings were held to allow members of the public to discuss the proposals for reconstruction with relevant officers from the City Council. These meetings considered all aspects of community life from 'Housing and Community Planning' to 'The Arts in the Life of the City' (Leics. *Report*, 1943-4: 3).

Another feature of exhibitions in Leicester at this time was the use of open display methods, which allowed visitors to come into direct contact with objects. The BIAE's 'Design for Living' exhibition in 1943, which promoted design in the home, utilised this form of display and it was said to have 'attracted types of people not normally used to coming to the museum because of its [more] personal …character'. (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 9).

Thomas was also prepared to encourage visitors to take on the mantle of curator. Local groups and individuals were invited to contribute and this led to a range of collaborative experiments including an exhibition of artworks by John and David Lavrin, two brothers from Nottingham aged nine and eight, whose prodigious output attracted much public debate about the development of children's artistic abilities (Leics. *Bulletin* Mar, 1941: 4-5). 'Ballet Décor and Design' an exhibition featuring theatre designs, which opened in 1943, had originally been suggested by a visitor to Leicester, a Mr John Carr Doughty, who was subsequently invited to employ his skills as a designer to help stage the exhibition. The display was later toured by CEMA and shown in conjunction with lectures, concerts and visits of ballet companies around the country (Thomas, 1943: 138).

Civil Defence and Armed Service groups, as well as the museum's Children's Clubs (first formed as part of the museum's events for the national 'Holidays at Home' scheme in 1942) were encouraged to utilise museum objects as inspiration for theatre, science or art activities. Trevor Thomas aimed to promote such cooperation because it enabled an:

> 'enjoyable participation in the life of the museum. … By such methods the materials on display cease to be merely objects behind glass cages and become the raw materials of more intimate personal appreciation, enjoyment and individual development,…' (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 9-10).

He also noted that the active participation and enjoyment of children and adults in the life of the museum had a positive effect on the staff, perceiving that 'the museum is beginning to justify its existence and that the job [becomes] human and … worth doing.' (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 7)

Displaced groups in society were also encouraged to contribute to museum

and community life in wartime Leicester. Exhibitions featured the work of refugee artists or portrayed the culture of émigrés groups or overseas troops who were now living in the locality. Czech, American, Chinese, Polish and Russian exhibitions were held, and in 1944 the museum was the first in the country to show German Expressionist Art, with works being loaned by German refugees who had made new homes in the city (Avery-Gray, 2002: 5). The C.E.M.A. touring exhibition, 'The Art of Five Polish Soldiers' (1942) was given a greater sense of immediacy when it reached Leicester because the Director invited the Polish artists concerned to attend the exhibition so that they could discuss their artworks with members of the public and demonstrate their artistic techniques to groups of children.

In the latter stages of the war, the museum staff received a request from the Army Authorities to provide art appreciation courses to prepare members of the armed services for their return to civilian life. At first, Thomas was unsure how the mixed courses of men and women, officers and ranks would get along or 'how aesthetics would go down with troops or higher-ups' but the courses were over-subscribed and quickly extended from three to seven days (Leics. *Report,* 1944-5: 13-14). The approach was relaxed and informal, mixing talks with demonstrations, discussion, quizzes, films, art activities and performance. Thomas would later recall that it was one of the most rewarding aspects of his career and even many years later, he continued to receive letters from participants saying that the course had changed their lives by altering their perspectives and attitudes towards art (Porter & Weeks, 1991: 65).

As well as providing cultural activities, the museum staff also supported the Government's information and propaganda campaigns. A travelling exhibition such as 'Poison Gas' (1941), organised by the Ministry of Information to promote the use of gas masks, was supplemented by museum objects from the ethnographic and reserve collections in order to demonstrate the historic use of masks and provide a more human context for the Ministry's campaign material (Thomas, 1941: 152). Such historical evidence presents museums today with opportunities for researching material culture and reserve collections in different ways – not only in terms of intrinsic value and historical context but also with regard to the range of interpretations that objects have gained over time both within the museum itself and amongst different audiences.

In the light of such evidence, it also becomes clear that Leicester Museum's contribution to wartime cultural life must be weighed against these collaborations with those representing authority and in terms of the government's agenda for maintaining morale. The civilising role that culture might play in society, and the museum's position as a potential agent of authority - as identified by Tony Bennett in his analysis of the 19th century museum - (Bennett, 1995 (ed): 11) would appear to have many parallels with an examination of the museum during the Second World War. However, I would argue that such an assessment needs to take account of wider

complexities that consider the motivations of individuals and different groups within society. As this paper has attempted to show, wartime museum audiences were not passive recipients of an enforced national culture but instead contributed to, and engaged with, representations of their own lives within the museum space, as well as finding opportunities for debate about issues of concern to them. Many wartime curators distanced themselves from government propaganda displays but Trevor Thomas, by contrast, had been willing to co-operate with the Ministry of Information because he saw it as an opportunity for topicality and discussion and to demonstrate that the museum remained 'fully alive to the continuity of events' (Leics. *Report*, 1942-3: 4).

Thomas also utilised the circumstances of war in order to develop his own ideas of forming a cultural centre and 'a living museum' rather than 'a remote temple harbouring its collections' (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 10). However, it was to be these more innovative cultural plans that caused consternation amongst those in authority. Thomas had proposed to reorganise the post-war museum to give more space to changing displays, to education initiatives and to enhance communal social activities but the death of the Chairman of the Museum Committee in 1945 robbed him of valuable support. When he was dismissed from his post the following year, the Committee emphasised a return to traditional curatorship under his successor, Dr M.B. Hodge (Leics. *Report*, 1945-1947: 1-10; Boylan, 1982: 17). Trevor Thomas's innovations had been lauded in the circumstances of war but would prove too contentious for the conditions of peace.

By way of conclusion, therefore, this paper calls for museum history to be considered in greater depth in order to provide a fuller understanding of the development of the museum's role, functions and collections. The meanings assigned to objects in the past, for example, could add to their significance and enable audiences to explore collections in relation to historical events and the memories of previous visitors. Past experiences such as the 'Art for the People' scheme or the war artist exhibitions also remain relevant in terms of creating connections between material culture and audiences. These earlier experiments could inspire provision, especially in terms of involving and validating the work of different communities within the museum space or in the use of integrated schemes showing objects in relation to the transitory arts connected with them.

Finally, an analysis of Leicester Museum's wartime history has demonstrated how the museum altered its approach towards its audiences and the presentation of material culture in wartime by engaging with the realities of contemporary life and this concept still has resonance for museums today. The Director recognised that the war had acted as a catalyst in reshaping the notion of the museum itself:

> 'For most people the term museum connotes past and permanent, whereas for some of us it has become involved in flux and future. That

> is because war has … struck at the conceptions of what those buildings should enclose.'
>
> (Leics. *Bulletin* Jan, 1944: 3)

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the advice and support given to me by my supervisors, Dr Beverley Butler, Dr Suzanne Keene and Dr Nick Merriman in the preparation of this paper and the assistance provided by the staff of Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Record Office and Leicester City Museums, in particular Mary Hider and Claire Cooper. I would also like to thank all those who have kindly contributed their personal memories of wartime museums towards this study. I also wish to acknowledge the AHRC's support for my research.

## Notes

1 In August 1941, 25,318 visitors were recorded at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery when the average monthly attendance for 1941/2 was 11,354. In August 1942, 24,983 visitors were recorded and the average monthly attendance for 1942/3 was 11,330. (Source: Leics. Report 1941/2 and 1942/3).

2 Eric Ravilious's HMS Ark Royal in Action, 1940 (now in the collection of the Imperial War Museum) was particularly mentioned in this regard.

## Bibliography

### Personal Communication:

Recollections of wartime museum visitors:

V2003.i National Gallery war artist exhibitions and concerts

V2005.i National Gallery, war and post-war exhibitions, Festival of Britain

### Primary Sources:

### Leicester City Museums and Art Gallery

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery *Annual Reports* (Leics. *Report*) 1938-1947

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery *Bulletin* (Leics. *Bulletin*) 1941-44

**Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Record Office**

4D/56/426 Leicester Museums minutes and agendas, 1939-1947

4D/56/458 Leicester Museums policy reports, 1931-1947

4D/56/84 Leicester Museums photographic collection

4D/56/101 Leicester Museums scrap books, 1935-1955

**Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex**

M-O/TC33 Art 1938-49

**National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum**

PRO/EL1-6 C.E.M.A. and the Arts Council, 1940-1965

## Secondary Sources:

Addison, P. (ed.) (1994) *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, London: Pimlico.

Avery-Gray, A. (2002) *Expressionism and Beyond: Fourteen paintings from the German Art Collection at New Walk Museum & Art Gallery*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.

Bennett, T. (ed.) (1995) *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*. London & New York: Routledge.

Black, M. & Gray, M. (1942) 'Propaganda Exhibitions and their relation to Museums', *Museums Journal*, Vol. 41 (Jan) 223.

Boylan, P. (1982) 'Why Museums?', *Transactions of the Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society*, Vol. 76 (Aug) 1-24.

C.E.M.A. (1942) *The Art of Five Polish Soldiers* Exhibition Catalogue. London: C.E.M.A.

Clark, K. (1944) in Craigie, J., 1944. *Out of Chaos*. Two Cities Film: London

Cornish, P. & Saunders, N.J. (2002) 'Material Culture & 20th Century War', *History in Focus*, Issue (4) 1-4 <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/War/index.html>

Crane, S. (ed.) (2000) *Museums and Memory.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fehr, M. (2000) 'A Museum and its Memory', in Crane, S. (ed.) *Museums and Memory, 3*3-59, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fyfe, G. (2000) 'A Trojan Horse at the Tate: Theorizing the museum as agency and structure', in Macdonald, S. & Fyfe, G. (eds.) *Theorizing Museums*, 203-228, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Harries, M. & S. (1983) *The War Artists.* London: Michael Joseph, Imperial War Museum, Tate Gallery.

Hewison, R. (1995) *Culture and Consensus - England, Art and Politics Since 1940.* London: Metheun.

Kavanagh, G. (1994) *Museums and the First World War - A Social History.* London: Leicester University Press.

Kirkham, P. & Thoms, D. (eds) (1995) *War Culture, Social Change and Experience in World War Two*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Leventhal, F.M. (1990) 'The Best for the Most: C.E.M.A. and State Sponsorship of the Arts in Wartime, 1939-1945', *20th Century British History,* 1990(1)*,* 298-317.

Macdonald, S. & Fyfe, G. (ed.) (1998) *Theorizing Museums*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

McLaine, I. (1979) *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Markham, S.F. (1938) *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles (other than the National Museums) to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees*. Edinburgh: T and A Constable Ltd.

Minihan, J. (1977) *The Nationalization of Culture*. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd.

Museums Association. (1938-1945) *Museums Journal.* London: Museums Association, Volumes 38 – 45.

Museums Association. (1942) C.E.M.A.: Extension of Art Policy: Symposium of views concerning the exhibitions, *Museums Journal*. Vol. 42, November 1942, 185-191.

Newton, E. (1942) *British War Artists* Exhibition Catalogue. London: National Gallery & Ministry of Information. (P.) NH690=3 1942

Pearce, S.M. (ed.) (1994) *Interpreting Objects and Collections.* London: Routledge.

Pearson, C. (2005) 'Back to the Future: How World War Two shaped today's museums', *Museums Journal*, Vol 105 (Feb), 26-29.

Pearson, N.M. (1982) *The State and the Visual Arts. A discussion of State intervention in the visual arts in Britain, 1760-1981*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Pollak, S. (1942) '"Art for the People" Exhibitions', *Museums Journal.* Vol 41 (Mar), 277-9.

Porter, K. & Weeks, J. (eds) (1991) *Between the Acts: Lives of homosexual men, 1885-1967,* 55-71. London, New York: Routledge.

Richardson, R. (1995) 'Closings and Openings - Leading Public Art Galleries during the Second World War', in Kirkham, P & Thoms, D. (eds.) *War Culture - Social Change and Changing Experience in World War Two,* 87-97, London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd.

Ross, A. (1983) *Colours of War, War Art 1939-45.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries. (1948) *Third Report: The National Museums and Galleries - The War Years and After.* London: HMSO.

Taylor, B. (1999) *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Thomas, T. (1941) 'Masks Grim and Gay', *Museums Journal*, Vol. 41 (Oct) 152-153.

Thomas, T. (1942) 'Moore-Piper-Sutherland', *Museums Journal*, Vol. 41 (Feb) 259-260.

Thomas, T. (1942) 'The Most want the Best', *Museums Journal*, Vol. 42 (Dec) 209-214.

Thomas, T. (1943) Ballet Décor and Design, *Museums Journal*, Vol. 43 (Dec)138.

Thomas, T. (1991) 'An Academic Life', in Porter, K. & Weeks, J. (eds.) *Between the Acts: Lives of homosexual men, 1885-1967,* 55-71, London: New York, Routledge.

Vergo, P. (ed.) (2000) *The New Museology.* London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

Witcomb, A. (2003) *Re-Imagining the Museum – Beyond the Mausoleum.* London: Routledge.

## Biography

### Catherine Pearson

MPhil/ PhD student, Department of Museum and Heritage Studies, Institute of Archaeology, University College London

I studied for a BA in Medieval and Modern History at King's College, London, graduating in 1992 and subsequently gained an MA in Museum Studies at University College London in 1997. I am currently undertaking doctoral research at UCL on the history of Britain's museums during the Second World War and the immediate post-war years. My research is supported by the AHRC. I am also editing the wartime journals of Essex archaeologist and curator, E.J. Rudsdale. I have previously worked at the Institute of Historical Research, Anglia Ruskin University and at Writtle College, a partner institute of the University of Essex.

# Tricky Listening: Museological inclusion of archaeologically alternative identities relating to Bermuda's underwater cultural heritage

*Charlotte Andrews*

*Figure 1: Aerial view of Bermuda, 2002. Courtesy Bermuda Maritime Museum.*

## Introduction

This paper explores identity politics of underwater cultural heritage in Bermuda. My interest is not the material remains of the island's rich maritime past nor 'the specific insights gained about the past but in the very process of engaging with the material remains of the past in the present' (Holtorf, 2005). This instance is concerned with those groups with the closest connections to underwater heritage among the island's multicultural resident population of roughly 66,000 (Bermuda Government Census Office, 2000).

An introductory overview charts the modern history and current circumstances relating to the island's submerged cultural resources (see also Azevedo-Grout, 2006). This prologue aims to provide basic context and explanation for

the findings and arguments subsequently put forward. Next is a condensed ethnography of my recent effort (Andrews, 2005) to understand how a specific set of Bermudian identities closely associated with Bermuda's underwater heritage are generated, expressed and maintained within this contained island society of vastly differentiated experiences. This description highlights how these understandings depart from, but in subtle ways also align with, archaeological and museological epistemologies. Lastly, I speculate how the study findings could affect museum practice and exhibition curation in particular. Drawing on wider debates regarding social inclusion and professional authority, I explore certain challenges and merits for potential localised curation that attempts to hear alternative views while remaining faithful to archaeological patrimony.

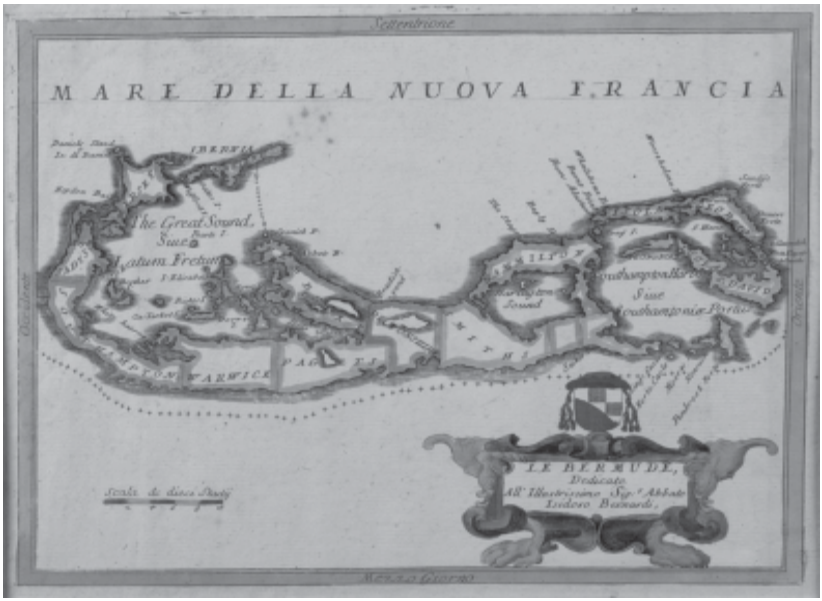


*Figure 2: Map of Bermuda by P. Coronelli, 1692. Courtesy Bermuda Maritime Museum, Nancy & Brian Duperreault Collection.*

## Context of Bermuda's Underwater Cultural Heritage

Since the earliest human contact with Bermuda in the late 15th century (Barreiro-Meiro, 2002, Bream, 1990), untold vessels have been wrecked—without and with intention—on the reef system dressing this North Atlantic seamount. Historic documentation supports nearly 400 shallow water sites surrounding the 21-square mile archipelago, with significant additional deep-water wreck potential (Newell, 1995). Bermuda's known 'wet' deposits broadly

represent the cultures of the Atlantic Diaspora, span the 16th to 21st centuries, and reflect an extensive cross-section of maritime technology (Delgado, 1997, Godet, 1993).

In Bermuda, as elsewhere, the development of underwater archaeology (Bass, 1966) and conservation techniques came only after salvage and treasure hunting had severely truncated the submerged physical record. Though history admits some contemporaneous salvage of shipwrecks and disassociated cargos, archaeologists contend that a vast repository remained intact in Bermuda's warm, clear, shallow waters until the advent of modern dive technology (in particular, SCUBA) following World War Two (Smith Jr. and Harris, 2002). Archaeologists and curators estimate a fraction (perhaps 5%) of salvaged Bermuda material survives in local public holdings today, due to site vandalism, destabilisation and disassembly, inadequate conservation, the trade, export, and private collection of artefacts, and the scarcity of documentation associated with original salvage.

The significance of this loss is emphasised by the special characteristics of underwater sites, and shipwrecks in particular, which make them superior reserves of cultural information (Redknap, 1997). Though underwater archaeological reality is often far from the stereotypical 'time capsule', intact shipwrecks are usually physically and temporally contained entities that provide archaeologists with relatively closed assemblages of material and contextual data. Whether individually or in comparison, wrecks may more precisely date and diagnose social, political, and technological activity for the cultures aboard and ashore, including more subtle and less documented aspects of social life (Giesecke, 2002). For recent historic periods, into which Bermuda's entire cultural history falls, shipwrecks are many times associated with archival documentation. Facing delimiting factors of chaotic deposition, time, the elements, and especially human interference, archaeological and interdisciplinary research has remarkably gleaned new information from even the most fragmentary wreck sites.

Since their establishment in the 1970s and 80s, Bermuda's cultural heritage institutions, including Bermuda Maritime Museum (BMM), the Bermuda National Trust (BNT) and the Sea Venture Trust, have supported research, conservation, exhibition and outreach. Non-academics, including avocational divers and collectors, helped to establish these institutions. Few initiatives, however, have seen collaboration between archaeologists and salvage divers[3], reflecting the erosion of common ground over the last thirty years. One consequence of this divide was the 1997 establishment of the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI) by salvage advocates. This deliberate split from the archaeologically orthodox BMM displays loaned salvaged collections and promotes salvage enterprise, such as the American deep-water commercial recovery firm Odyssey Marine Exploration Inc. (Saul, 2006). While there is much more to the substance and history of both BMM and BUEI, the divergence of archaeological and salvage epistemologies is illustrated by these two institutions.

Long lobbied for by BMM, BNT and other local preservationists, the 'Bermuda Historic Wrecks Act' (Bermuda Government, 2001, Bermuda Government, 2004) outstrips liberal and archaeologically-uncommitted retrograde legislation (Bermuda Government, 1959, Bermuda Government 1989, Bermuda Government, 1997). It is the first national statute to conform to the 'Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage' (UNESO, 2001, Dromgoole, 2006). Lauded by archaeologists (Johnston, 2002) but alternatively viewed as a politicised counter-insurgency against the island's influential salvage lobby, the Bermuda Act's tenets are protection of all sites over fifty years from unauthorised interference, with strict licensing requirements and severe penalties for contravention. State ownership is assumed of all archaeological remains without compensation to site finders or license holders. Any remains illegally removed from a submerged context are classed as 'illicit' (Carman, 2005). The law establishes government bodies, including a Custodian of Historic Wrecks and a Wrecks Authority, with explicit remits for licensing, oversight, and outreach.

Since his January 2004 appointment, the first-ever Custodian has made headway towards practical policy development, site and collections database recording, and archaeological training for local divers and overseas field schools. On a general level, some collaboration with local divers and among institutions has been achieved in the past few years, as demonstrated by the joint exhibition 'Bermuda Uncovered: 500 Years of Archaeology' (Bermuda National Trust *et al*., 2005).

Despite these infrastructural provisions and progress, in its infancy the legislation has been largely isolated from supportive measures and public programmes. The lack of visible momentum of the underwater heritage conservation platform suggests that criminalisation itself is largely ineffective at shifting consciousness and behaviour, and, as proposed by Mackenzie, may even serve to further block civic change (Mackenzie, 2005). More comprehensive national management of the new regulations has been stalled by delayed implementation, insufficient resources, limited institutional and community partnership, and continued infighting between archaeologists and salvage advocates. Pivotal issues remain unresolved, such as a conditional amnesty for existing private collections and the long-term management of a physical (and crucially, not a merely virtual) 'National Collection' of all crown-owned remains recovered under license. The ongoing attempt by local archaeologists and museums to professionalise along international standards has buttressed local management infrastructure, but arguably also hardened positions and inhibited dialogue. This professionalisation includes the adoption of professional codes of practice and ethics, which prescribe strict guidelines on institutional dealings with illicit antiquities and collectors.

Polarisation thus remains acute between the two interest groups with the closest relationships to Bermuda's underwater heritage. The upfront, mutually respectful, constructive debate and negotiation that Laurajane Smith urges

between conflicting ideologies has not yet taken place (Smith, 2004). The current aftermath of this legislative change is a crucial moment in the short timeline between treatment of the island's underwater heritage as an exploitable, uncontrolled commodity to a publicly entrusted, non-renewable, and highly regulated resource. Bermuda's underwater heritage has been redefined within one generation, leaving Bermudian[4] publics and heritage practitioners to face a difficult and unsettled legacy.

*Figure 3: Divers on the* Santa Lucia*, wrecked off Bermuda 1584. Courtesy Bermuda Maritime Museum*

## Hearing Archaeologically Alternative Identities

As Curator of BMM since 1999, I've had a back-stage pass to the contested politics of Bermuda's underwater heritage, occasionally becoming embroiled. During my tenure, I have been indoctrinated with archaeological values infused with discourses of processual science, professionalism, and tangible heritage. As a 'motivated, interested, located, strategizing' steward (Shanks, Forthcoming) I have latched onto these ideals. I have often failed to recognise the extent to which my rhetoric, conviction, and identity is entangled with my professional and personal investment in heritage and connected to insecurities associated with being inexperienced and local. Yet, as a Bermudian whose involvement with heritage was somewhat accidental, and being surrounded by peers with divergent or indifferent views, I am mindful of the arbitrary and specific construction of my outlook. In a parallel universe, I

might equally subscribe to a position of apathy or even salvage advocacy. My own experience informs an interest in how relationships with heritage are manifested, passed on or capable of change.

Prompted by this positioning, I conducted and analysed semi-structured interviews with thirty Bermudian maritime enthusiasts, as well as several local archaeologists and heritage professionals, for my masters dissertation project (Andrews, 2005). Under the label 'maritime enthusiast' I targeted active and veteran 'salvage divers'[5] and others suspected of either thought to be sympathetic to that behaviour or resistant to salvage criminalisation and archaeological authority. My informant focus recognises that there is no one public, but multiple interacting groups whose understandings and behaviour are diverse, dynamic, and equally worthy of in-depth study, regardless of their subscription to supportive, neutral, or 'alternative' values (Merriman, 2004). This research assumes that, at some level, heritage relationships (even if contested, exclusive etc.) yield cultural literacy, belonging, and identity for individuals and groups, and are therefore 'positive' in a socio-psychological sense.

A qualitative interview approach attempted to open blocked dialogue and generate an intimate data sample for evaluation. Yet given the politics between informants and researcher, this effort was a process of 'tricky listening' in which I had to engender interviewee trust, avoid paternalistic questioning, and awaken my uncontaminated curiosity to understand my subjects' logic. This stab at receptivity conflicted with my sense of professional obligation, an evangelical desire to convert to the archaeological perspective, and concern for ramifications within the politicised island society in which I live and work long term. The extent to which my focus on the social subject and use of qualitative methods limited the influence of external concerns, assumptions and hypotheses, and allowed interviewee attitudes and agency to emerge independently, is the study's litmus test[6].

Using a conversational interview style I learned that the strong affinity for the ocean consistent for all the interviewees is often cultivated in childhood, by way of privileged access to the water, and adult mentoring, especially by males. Interviewees stress the experiential understandings and skills of Bermudian mariners, often relating to mastery of the complex maritime environment. Criticism is levied at local museums for failing to document this reservoir of expertise. Interviewees demonstrate an almost insatiable desire to be active on and in the water, longing to exercise curiosity, initiative, and high physical interaction. The ocean simultaneously offers the interviewees peace and adventure, an escape especially yearned for and cherished in a congested island space.

Genealogical maritime links, Bermuda's transatlantic significance, and perceived connections to past mariners all bolster interviewees' sense of inheritance and location in a historical continuum. While archaeologists dismiss a long local salvaging 'tradition' as a fabricated attempt to legitimate

looting, interviewees nonetheless identify salvage as a sustained local lifeway. This orientation to the past is part an attempt to lend its contemporary practice authenticity (Hutchings, 1999) and part unadulterated contributor to salvage identity (Edson, 2004).

Amidst admiration for pioneering divers of the 1950-60s heyday, is a romanticised notion of the quintessential 'treasure hunter' as the seafaring man-of-action hero-outlaw. In this, accessible figure interviewees find rebellion to convention and academia, reflecting iconoclastic island attitudes. Juxtaposing this esteem is longing for the undisturbed remains of earlier decades, regret for their damage, and slight bitterness towards earlier salvage divers.

Bermuda's salvage culture evolved from socio-economic, racial and gender segregated post-war society. Despite today's more democratic climate, the interviewees—who are without exception white, male, and middle/upper-class (due in part to the demographic itself and in part to my informant selection)—suggest through subtleties of language and accent, anti-democratic networking, and strong projection of entitlement that the group's elitism remains intact and self-protecting. Robust camaraderie suggests a kinship system based on mutual acknowledgement, dependence, sharing, and trust. Like British metal detecting groups, the Bermudian salvage fraternity bonds through their activity, finds, and senses of distinction and purpose.

Interviewees contradict traditional archaeological principles of equal value (Renfrew and Bahn, 2000) by denying fair treatment to all cultural remains, distinguishing between shipwreck and other sites, unique and 'duplicate' objects, 'junk' and 'treasure'. The superlative treatment of 'treasure' and precious metal objects is especially pronounced. It is perhaps best illustrated by the mystique offered by 'the greatest single object of all', a gold-and-emerald Spanish pectoral cross recovered from the 1596 wreck of the *San Pedro* by local treasure hunter Teddy Tucker in 1955 and stolen from public display sometime before 1975 (Tucker, 1962, New England Aquarium and Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute, 2004). In a related example, sharp interviewee response to the 2005 theft from BMM of three other gold *San Pedro* artefacts recovered by Tucker (Harris, 2005) combines this intrinsic partiality with a heightened valuation of lost heritage.

Along with the regard for 'treasure', there is some desire to profit from salvage and concern about compensation removal from the legislation. Despite this economic expression and given that fiscal motivation was no doubt played down in interviews with me, the interviewees still demonstrate their key motivation is not fiscal, but a desire to interact with the submerged heritage both in and out of the water. In terms of interaction, concentration fixes on portable antiquities. Even interviewees with good understanding of site preservation and contextual association are prone to a strong sense of entitlement to discover, collect, and possess artefacts. Often described as natural instinct, interviewees imply this is behaviour they are resistant to

adapt and protectively maintain a 'finders-keepers' culture, reflecting Bermuda's profoundly capitalist character.

Interviewees treat looted artefacts as transcendental (Gill and Chippindale, 1993), psychologically sanctioning their physical and intellectual detachment from archaeological sites. In lieu of, or irrespective of, any archaeological understanding, the collector transforms the object into a clean canvas for the manufacture of new meanings. A process of imbuing objects with special qualities ensues, in turn bestowing these qualities onto the collector. Discovery and recovery from the sea is revived by continued contact with the object on land. Despite having estranged looted artefacts from their context (Renfrew, 2001), interviewees imaginatively reconstruct historical associations. This sometimes mytha-poetic 'alternative archaeology' is viewed by interviewees' as satisfactory historical deduction and no less acceptable than academic research for shaping cultural understanding. The bond between collector and object is also cultivated through a spectrum of post-salvage care, including conservation, cataloguing and home display. It is especially through the act of sharing that this material bond comes full circle; esteem of the object by others confers esteem onto the collector.

Moving into contestation, interviewees feel archaeologists betray their roots by failing to credit and contextualise early salvage. Archaeologists and museums are seen as having contributed little new knowledge and are charged with appropriating divers' work and material. Archaeologists are viewed as territorial of their vested role as expert and professional, alienating local divers with overly didactic and academic discourse. Interviewees mistrust the intentions and abilities of archaeologists and museums, and resent the involvement of overseas researchers and non-divers in decisions affecting resource access and control. These maritime enthusiasts maintain that they have privileged rights above other publics. Their passive-aggressive critique of archaeologists and museums subtly indicates a desire for contestation itself, where polarisation strengthens identities and expectations for adaptation are thrust onto others with little self-critical reflection.

The panoptic expectation lying behind the Historic Wrecks Act anticipates that behaviour initially managed by regulation and enforcement eventually becomes internalised and self-monitored (Bentham, 1787, Foucault, 1977). Despite enactment six years ago, interviewees' communicate the infant law's incapacity to affect considerably their attitudes. While this reflects anti-establishment island values resistant to institutionalisation, few actually disagreed in principle with the regulation. Interviewee criticism instead focuses on a missing canopy of policy and programming to back it. Paradoxical views to natural and cultural local heritage suggest both the relative success of, and interviewee desire for, a management model based of persuasion, education, and inclusion.

I have briefly touched on a small constellation of the many ways the interviewees relate to and conceive of Bermuda's underwater heritage. These

include maritime connections related to activity, legacy, privilege, fraternity and space; intimate material culture bonds generated through object interaction, private possession, and grassroots curation; and contestation over control of tangible remains.

Many subtle and complex issues arise out of these understandings and the challenging and ongoing process of coming to 'hear' them as a vested heritage professional. Though I inevitably interpret the interviewee data through an archaeological lens and perhaps perpetuate an archaeology-salvage dichotomy in my interpretation and language, I have tried to be led along by the interviewees in addition to archaeological principles. Being located among 'alternative' understandings, if only for a short while, has instigated my reflection of existing management approaches of Bermuda's underwater heritage. It has provided contextualisation for earlier heritage advocacy and policy but also a more critical eye towards designing new ways forward for localised best practice in archaeology and museology.

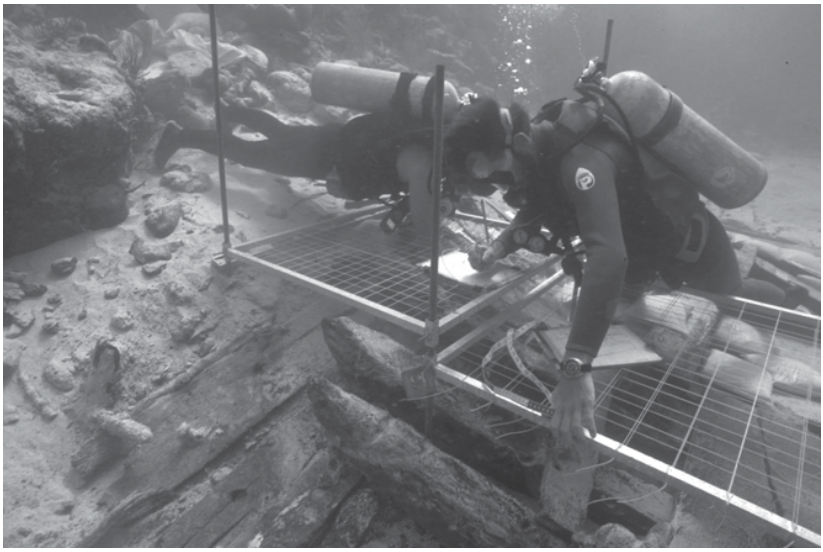

*Figure 4: Underwater archaeologists surveying the* Pollockshields*, circa 1990. Courtesy Bermuda Maritime Museum*

## Implications for Museum Exhibition Curation

This community-based study offers insights for development of the nascent management infrastructure being spearheaded by the Custodian of Historic Wrecks in partnership with Bermudian groups and museums. However, my

special concern is the ability and responsibility of local archaeological museums and organisations, and their exhibitions specifically, to respond to Bermuda's contemporary circumstances and diverse identities. It should be noted that only a minor portion of Bermuda's public collections have been recovered archaeologically, with the majority salvaged by Bermudian divers in the 1950-70s before and during the maturity of underwater archaeology. Some of this activity, including major collaborations between Bermudians and the Smithsonian Institution, arguably contributed to the development of the academic discipline.

I will go on to consider how the study's findings – both the interview data itself and a continued re-negotiated 'listening' to it – might affect exhibition curation in Bermuda and contribute to theoretical exhibition models. Continuing with 'listening' to these 'archaeologically alternative' identities, while drawing on wider debates concerning social inclusion and museum authority, I would like to pose the following questions. How could local archaeological museums include salvage divers and diving in their exhibit making? Should they do this and why?

I will respond to the first question of inclusion by elaborating a few ideas for collaboration and representation, suggesting dialogic and multi-vocal curatorial strategies that are an evolving trend in the museum field. Generally, the process of exhibition development (and associated products and programmes) has multiple stages of activity that fall within larger phases of conceptualisation, planning, development, execution and assessment (Dean, 1994). Key components of future local exhibition production will likely be to fundraise, establish a project team and volunteer network, define conceptual and practical priorities and goals, identify target audiences, develop exhibit narratives, conduct artefact research, conservation and preparation, carry out exhibit design, production and installation, create educational programming, evaluate outcomes, and ensure continuing operation and maintenance.

Salvage divers could potentially play interesting and important collaborative roles in many of these stages of curatorial action. This could range from exhibition narrative development, in helping to debate and determine the ways salvage diving history and culture, archaeology and heritage management, and the legacy of contestation are incorporated into the story being told. Mutually valuable experiences for local museums and salvage divers might be found in the areas of historical and curatorial research as well as in the care, conservation and preparation of artefacts for display. Oral testimonies from surviving salvage divers who originally recovered exhibition artefacts, have familiarity with a specific site, or experiential maritime knowledge and skills could be collected by fellow divers and incorporated into the exhibition content, interpretation and design.

Generated via these collaborative means or not, representation of local salvage diving within an exhibition could occur on multiple levels. Within an exhibition's diachronic and/or thematic maritime history narratives, salvage

activity could make appearances according to validated historical research, as well as local knowledge patterns or 'folklore'—notwithstanding the latter being less empirically authenticated. In a desire to showcase their academic and public value, it is likely that underwater archaeology and museum techniques will weave into local museums' presentation of Bermuda's shipwrecks. Salvage could also be entwined, not solely as an antithetical ideology to archaeology, but as the academic discipline's partial predecessor and an embedded, controversial and threatened aspect of local heritage. On the one hand, unequivocal support for sustainable tangible heritage management and interdisciplinary academic research could be presented in plain terms. Equally, the historical context for and continuing arguments about advocational salvage and commercial archaeology could be laid out. The contemporary circumstances and contested politics of Bermuda's underwater heritage could be far more than a marginalised sidebar in a larger discussion and re-construction of the past.

This inclusive representation is especially strong for the interpretation of artefacts. While for some objects this might serve an archaeological line of reasoning, other artefact interpretations could include non-archaeological local maritime knowledge. The perimeters of interpretation could be consciously expanded to include, acknowledge and appropriately contextualise salvage divers' discovery and recovery of underwater sites and remains. The information communicated about salvage might alternate between positive and negative spins, between confrontational and permissive tones, between autocratic and democratic voices.

The question whether and why Bermuda's museums' should include salvage divers and diving in exhibition curation is less straightforward and more provocative, from a local perspective, if not theoretically. With some trepidation, I will respond positively, arguing that local institutions ought to include salvage divers and culture in the exhibition development process and product. Three lines of reasoning support this assertion. Local museums are responsible to:

1) produce integrated and inclusive exhibitions that reflect and sustain both intangible and tangible cultural forms, 2) provide a democratic space for the interface of diverse perspectives, and, 3) acknowledge and respond to their deep embeddedness in and active construction of identities and meanings associated with and constitutive of Bermuda's underwater heritage.

The Custodian of Historic Wrecks is currently expanding programmes to train Bermudian divers in archaeological technique. This is an early step in an attempt to transition divers from salvage to archaeology, which will hopefully evolve into collaborative field schools with professional archaeologists[7]. Exhibition collaboration and representation provides a double-sided opportunity to extend this transition out of the water, to shift divers' private possession, research, conservation, and display of archaeological material beyond their homes into the public domain.

Beyond fostering a gradual conversion from salvage to archaeological values, this continued material culture interaction sustains relationships to the underwater heritage that are now essentially outlawed under the Historic Wrecks Act. While undermining the well-founded legislation or treating salvage divers as a disenfranchised subaltern goes too far, we should acknowledge the mutating effect of the new legislation on salvage culture and question local museums' responsibility to this aspect of Bermuda's maritime culture. Collaborative curation offers a chance to collectively evaluate how salvage culture has been transformed by the protective measures and identify methods to transition, document and sustain these intangible local identities in tandem with preservation and conservation of physical remains.

Including salvage in the life of artefacts extends their historical associations beyond their original deposition. Though far from filling the void from a lack of archaeological provenance and reliable survey information for many of Bermuda's wrecks (Dethlefsen, 1978, Godet, 1993) this extension nonetheless adds provenance to the artefact. Furthermore, an allied presentation of archaeological and salvage-based interpretations may provide audiences with a more accessible and meaningful transaction with collections in that a contemporary and personalised aspect of the island's maritime heritage is shared. Bermudian audiences may more readily relate to localised salvage culture than universalist scientific principles or temporally dislocated history. We should also carefully consider whether omission of salvage history only serves further to decontextualise salvaged museum objects. Including salvage as part of the life of an artefact opens up new and more existentialist conceptualisations of Bermuda's underwater heritage where the cleavage between tangible and intangible cultural forms is less distinguished and their interdependency highlighted.

As shown by the shifting and interdependent relations among tangible and intangible aspects of heritage, culture is generative, constructivist and multi-discursive (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000); in other words creative, fluid and diverse. Accordingly, there are multiple uses of, dialogues with, and values placed on the past and its remains. These may range from authentic to empirical to pseudo-scientific to imaginative to manipulative. Heritage as a social phenomenon is thus elastic and shaped by socio-political realities. This subjectivity is further guided by the empowerment of some more than others to define their conceptions of difference to one another. Although I agree with Wylie that we have to maintain a reasonable degree of positivist empiricism in our relations with, and study of, the past, I also take Ransley's point that 'the concept [of heritage] itself, as well as the conception, is socially constructed' (Ransley, 2006, Wylie, 2005).

Museums are better recognising the diverse and shifting social construction of heritage by both academics and the multiple publics they serve. Whether as forums (Cameron, 1971), places of assembly (Latour, 2005), or 'contact zones' (Clifford, 1997) Bermuda's museums are gradually becoming the spaces that theorists have long envisioned for the performance and

confrontation of these diverse cultural identities. Curators often work with publics possessing specific knowledge and expertise, for content development or to offer the constituency satisfying involvement in curation. By positively viewing salvage divers' sense of entitlement to the underwater heritage, local archaeological museums' might harness and reflect to broader publics the experiential knowledge, oral traditions and social history of this constituency. The experience and energy salvage divers might lend to achieving exhibit priorities is also something to consider.

The polarisation of archaeologists and salvage divers in Bermuda partially results from the paucity of contact and debate among them. 'Critical understanding and dialogue, not dismissive polemics, is the appropriate way to engage with the multiple pasts and alternative archaeologies in contemporary society' (Holtorf, 2005). The sort of collaborative and representative methods suggested, which should themselves be 'rigorously reasoned and inclusively generated' (Ransley, 2006), could transform local museums into spaces for expression and interaction of multiple and contrary understandings. This may enable moving past surface rhetoric and politics to more fundamental levels of debate.

Bridging the dissonance between archaeologists and salvage divers may, however, be too ambitious, given this period of transition and the possibility these identities are fundamentally irreconcilable (in spite of their ironic similarities). While consensus and negotiation is desirable, the point of inclusion is not capitulation, but the opportunity for expressing different understandings. Rather than reflecting singular immutable narratives, inclusion of diverse perspectives in the exhibition development breaks down essentialist thinking and supports greater equity and tolerance. The increasing role that museums are taking on in fighting social exclusion (Sandell, 2002) should perhaps begin with close and contested issues like this in which local museums are politically and ethically tied up.

In a multi-discursive environment, we as heritage managers might better question the rarely disrupted conventional discourse of archaeology and heritage. There is a need to re-examine our understanding and judgment of salvage identities as well as our own rather fundamentalist, masculinist and self-serving values regarding our expert and socially isolated stewardship of fragile, finite, and tangible archaeological heritage. Archaeologists' and curators' privileged and often exclusive access to heritage and the ability to define it should not be taken for granted (Ransley, 2006).

As previously mentioned, any imminent museum curation in Bermuda takes place with protective legislation enacted, but without a strong management canopy and amid continuing salvage threats to Bermuda's shallow and deep-water archaeology. It remains a thorny situation and the protective statutes cannot be presumed inalienable. Bermuda's museums are all challenged by broad operational mandates and unmatched fiscal and human resources. As the nexus of research, collections and the public, unrealistic expectations

are often placed on the media of exhibition, especially 'permanent' installations. Within such materially and politically constrained settings, curators are constantly faced with the proverbial 'Sophie's Choice', whereby inclusion of one public or aspect of heritage inevitably means alienation or exclusion of another. Obviously, the extent to which the type of inclusive exhibition development ideas proposed above are appropriate and achievable is wholly subject to the specific situation. The level of involvement and control local museums are able or willing to offer over curation is influenced by the tension between convention and innovation at the island's largely modernist museums, the political and logistical challenges of their exhibition initiatives, and the willingness of salvage divers and other stakeholders to negotiate and participate. All of these decisive factors will only emerge in the course of curation.

There are indeed real sides to these issues and considerable political and pragmatic constraints, making the relatively fundamentalist tendencies of local archaeologists and archaeological museums understandable. Postmodern prescriptions from academe for practitioners to climb out of their comfort zones onto shaky limbs where public demands and professional ethics must be carefully balanced are often hard to fill. These calls are not always reasonable or appropriate within true-life contexts like Bermuda that are a tinderbox of conflicting interests and adolescent in terms of heritage management infrastructure. We indeed have to take care in terms of advocating or conferring legitimacy onto 'alternative archaeologies', as these may run counter to the interests of other equally legitimate publics and open up heritage to unacceptable misuse. Wylie nevertheless suggests there is some middle ground.

> 'Science establishes truths about the world, albeit truths that are understood always to be open to reassessment and revision. In this the evolving methodologies of critical scientific inquiry are immensely valuable, but I see no reason to conclude that this insulates the scientific enterprise or its products from political, moral, and social scrutiny, much less establishes that scientific values have a transcendent value that takes precedence over all other interests.' (Wylie, 2005)

As privileged and implicated cultural stewards, we cannot operate from a position of fear of legitimising alternative archaeologies, compromising academic and professional ethics or weakening the archaeological position. Rather, we must actively use exhibitions to create spaces for the communication of different identities, admitting the biased, embedded, and non-neutral position of local museums in that process and product. Rather than a politically correct appeasement or an opening up to dangerous relativism, the archaeological position is strengthened through the study, exchange and representation of 'alternative archaeologies' (Schadla-Hall, 2004). As Meskell and Pels bring to our attention, to recognise and expose our professional vulnerability and the ways we 'disembed' or 'exteriorize'

professional ethics from actual museum practice, is to demonstrate and 'confront the fact that our expertise consists of (re-)negotiating the different and often antagonistic moral complexes that take place in [particular] locales' (Meskell and Pels, 2005). Our credibility as heritage managers comes from this understanding and in leading by example. Just as today's Bermudian salvage divers must adapt their behaviour for the sake of preserving the island's submerged archaeology, local museums should incorporate change into their curatorial strategies. Ultimately, we strengthen heritage management and museum practice by stretching to hear and integrate alternative perspectives.

*Figure 5: Oil painting of the* Sea Venture*, unknown artist. Courtesy Bermuda Maritime Museum.*

## Conclusion

These are merely initial questions and ideas as Bermuda's museums move forward with new curatorial initiatives concerning underwater heritage. They are presented with some scepticism and anxiety. It is a tremendous challenge for local museums and practitioners to exceed superficial outreach and genuinely reposition themselves towards mainstream constituents, much less dissonant publics with 'alternative' heritage interests. However, this work comes from my embedded sense that the time is right for more thoroughly integrative curatorial approaches in this context. My combined presentation

of ethnographic findings and speculative curatorial praxis hopefully contributes one localised interpretation to wider debates about the roles and responsibilities of museums towards social inclusion.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my Bermudian informants. Thanks also to my M.Phil. and PhD supervisor Dr. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, Bermuda Maritime Museum Executive Director Dr. Edward Harris, Bermuda Custodian of Historic Wrecks Dr. Philippe Rouja, my father Dr. William Andrews, University of Southampton PhD students Jesse Ransley and Lillian Azevedo-Grout, Bermuda Maritime Museum for information and image use, University of Leicester Department of Museum Studies 'Material Culture, Identities and Inclusion' Conference Committee for their encouragement in the oral and written presentation of this paper, and the Bank of Bermuda Foundation Sir John W. Cox Postgraduate Scholarship which generously funds my graduate studies and research.

## Notes

1 The term 'salvage diver' is used throughout this text to identify the subjects under study but this language use is not unproblematic. Although relatively moderate compared to 'salvors', 'treasure hunters', 'wreckers', 'plunderers', 'looters', 'collectors' etc., the appropriateness of 'salvage diver' has been questioned in terms of the archaeological and academic 'structures and agendas it supports' (Ransley 2006:15). Conversely, ascendent terms such as 'alternative archaeologists' or 'avocational archaeologists' are considered inappropriate for the current Bermuda context.

2 In this use, 'Bermudian', extends beyond citizenship criteria to include all Bermuda stakeholders.

3 'Salvage divers' may or may not be engaging in salvage activity following passage of the 2001 Bermuda Historic Wrecks Act.

4 Previous written and oral presentations of my M.Phil. project have incorporated a double narrative of select quotations, in order to include the interviewee voices at some level in my interpretation. These quotations are omitted here due to space constraints.

5 Underwater archaeology field schools have run out of BMM since the early 1980s. While there has been some local participation and collaboration, overseas student volunteers have been the large majority of participants in these programmes.

## Bibliography

Andrews, C. (2005) Cultural Heritage Management and Alternative Publics: Bermudian Attitudes to Bermuda's Underwater Cultural Heritage. *Archaeology.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge.

Azevedo-Grout, L. (2006) Using Underwater Heritage in Bermuda as a Benchmark in Order to Assess the Possibilities for a Holistic Approach to Underwater Heritage Management in the Caribbean. *Archaeology.* Southampton: University of Southampton.

Barriero-Meiro, R., LT-CDR, (2002) The Bermuda Islands and Juan Bermúdez. *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History,* 13**,** 7-18.

Bass, G. (1966) Archaeology Under Water, London, Thames and Hudson.

Bentham, J. (1787) Panopticon: London.

Bermuda Government (1959) Wreck and Salvage Act.

Bermuda Government (1989) Historic Wrecks Bill.

Bermuda Government (1997) Historical Wrecks Act.

Bermuda Government (2001) Bermuda Historic Wrecks Act.

Bermuda Government (2004) Bermuda Historic Wrecks Amendment Act.

Bermuda Government Census Office (2000) *Report on the 2000 Census of Population and Housing*. Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Census Office.

Bermuda National Trust, Bermuda Maritime Museum, Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute and Custodian of Historic Wrecks (2005) Bermuda Uncovered: 500 Years of Archaeology. Devonshire: Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art.

Bream, J. W. (1990) The Spanish Influence on Bermuda. *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 2, 15-24.

Cameron, D. F. (1971) 'The Museum a Temple or Forum'. *Curator*, 14, 11-24.

Carman, J. (2005) *Against Cultural Property: Archaeology, Heritage and Ownership*, London: Duckworth.

Clifford, J. (1997) 'Museums as Contact Zones', in Clifford, J. (ed.) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dean, D. (1994) 'The exhibition development process', in Hooper-Greenhill, E. (ed.) *The Educational Role of the Museum*. London: Routledge.

Delgado, J. P. (ed.) (1997) *Encyclopaedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology*, London: British Museum Press.

Dethlefsen, E. (1978) The Hunter Galley: An Exercise in Undergraduate Historical Archaeology. Ninth Conference on Underwater Archaeology.

Dromgoole, S. (ed.) (2006) *The Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage: National Perspectives in Light of the UNESCO Convention 2001*, Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Edson, G. (2004) 'Heritage: Pride or Passion, Product or Service?' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10, 333-348.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, London: Allen Lane.

Giesecke, A. G. (2002) 'Wrecked and Abandoned', in Ruppe, C. V. & BARSTAD, J. F. (Eds.) *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Gill, D. W. J. and Chippindale, C. (1993) 'Material and Intellectual Consequences of Esteem for Cycladic Figures', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 97, 601-659.

Godet, N. (1993) 'Marine Salvage and Archaeology in Bermuda', *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 5, 1-11.

Harris, E. C. (2005) *Lighting Strikes Twice: Heritage Theft at Dockyard.* Hamilton: The Royal Gazette.

Holtorf, C. (2005) 'Beyond Crusades: How (not) to engage with alternative archaeologies', *World Archaeology*, 37, 544-551.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000) *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture.* London: Routledge.

Hutchings, N. (1999) *Shipwrecking, the Evolution of a Bermudian Tradition*. The Ocean Research Foundation.

Johnston, P. B. (2002) *Milestone Legislation*. Maritimes, 15, 11-12.

Latour, B. (2005) 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public', in Latour, B. & WEIBEL, P. (Eds.) *Making Things public: atmospheres of democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mackenzie, S. R. M. (2005) 'Dig a Bit Deeper: Law, Regulation and the Illicit Antiquities Market', *British Journal of Criminology*, 45, 249-268.

Merriman, N. (ed.) (2004) *Public Archaeology.* London: Routledge.

Meskell, L. and Pels, P. (2005) 'Introduction: Embedding Ethics', in Meskell, L and Pels, P. (eds.) *Embedding Ethics*. Oxford: Berg.

New England Aquarium and Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute, (2004) Teddy Tucker: Adventure is My Life.

Newell, M. (1995) Bermuda's Maritime Heritage: The Future – The Challenge – The Deep. *Bermuda Maritime Museum Quarterly.*

Ransley, J. (2006) 'Rigorous Reasoning, Reflexive Research and Space for "Alternative Archaeologies"?' *Questions for Maritime Archaeological Heritage Management. Land & Sea III*. University of Southampton.

Redknap, M. (ed.) (1997) *Artefacts from Wrecks: Dated Assemblages from the Late Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Renfrew, C. (2001) *Loot, Legitimacy and Ownership: the Ethical Crisis in Archaeology*. London: Duckworth.

Renfrew, C. and Bahn, P. (2000) *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Sandell, R. (2002) 'Museums and the Combating of Social Inequality: Roles, Responsibilities, Resistance', in Sandell, R. (ed.) *Museums, Society, Inequality.* London: Routledge.

Saul, D. (2006) *SS Republic. Explorer's Lectures Series*. Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute.

Schadla-Hall, T. (2004) 'The Comforts of Unreason: The Importance and Relevance of Alternative Archaeology', in Merriman, N. (ed.) *Public Archaeology*. London: Routledge.

Shanks, M. (forthcoming) 'Post Processual Archaeology and After', in Chippindale, C. and Maschner, H. (eds.) *Handbook of Archaeological Methods and Theories*. Altamira.

Smith, Jr. C. E. and Harris, E. C. (2002) 'Underwater Cultural Heritage in Mermuda', in Ruppe, C. V. and Barstad, J. F. (eds.) *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Smith, L. (2004) *Archaeolgoical Theory and the Politics of Cultural Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Tucker, E. B. (1962) 'Adventure is My Life as Told to Don A. Schanche', The Saturday Evening Post.

UNESCO (2001) Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

Wylie, A. (2005) 'The Promise and Perils of an Ethic of Stewardship', in Meskell, L. and Pels, P. (eds) *Embedding Ethics*. Oxford: Berg.

## Biography

### Charlotte Andrews

PhD candidate, Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, Curator (on academic leave) Bermuda Maritime Museum

Charlotte Andrews is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge. Her dissertation explores the relationships of communities to cultural heritage, using her native Bermuda as the primary case study. This doctoral research is an academic sabbatical from her role as Curator at Bermuda Maritime Museum, where she has worked in collections management, exhibition development, museum outreach and operations since 1999. She recently received her MPhil in Archaeological Heritage and Museums from Cambridge and an earlier BA in Anthropology from Columbia University.

# The Strange Story of the Thing, or The Material World in the Contemporary Novel.

*Emeritus Professor Susan Pearce*

The twentieth and twenty-first (so far) centuries have seen the publication of a large number of novels, mostly in English, which take the single object, the collection, or the museum as their central image[8]. These sometimes achieve both popular and critical success, but in any case, assessment of literary quality is not the issue here. Both *Foucauld's Pendulum* (Eco 1988) and *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown 2003) begin in museums, the Louvre and the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers respectively, and in their different ways both explore the implications of the idea that arcane knowledge rests in unfrequented store rooms. In *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995), Kate Atkinson shows how the underbelly of life in the museum city of York demonstrates the difference between representation and experienced reality. In *The Keeper of Antiquities* (1968), Dombrovsky uses the museum and its material to show how ideological positions can usurp honest thought:

> 'Sure enough, the director sent for me to come to his office next day. …
>
> "Must you keep saying "why" and "what use"? " The director leaned back in his chair, and gave me a stern look. 'You must stop it. No, I mean it: this tone will not do. What about the anti-religious propaganda? … I want you to write the captions. I know that you can make them better and more readable than the present ones'. (p. 49-50)

The broader genealogy for museum centred novels runs back to Flaubert, who in *Bouvard et Pechuchet* (1881) exposed the museum's task of gathering 'knowledge', and in *Madam Bovery* explored the texture of lives; an added reason why Julian Barnes should have followed Flaubert when he wished to bring texture of past and present together in *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984).

The idea of the collection plays a fundamental role in novels such as Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1998) and is used as a unifying idea in Stephan Zweig's *The Invisible Collection* (English trans. 1998). John Fowles in *The Collector* (1963) gives a rather crude correspondence between collecting and life, with his butterfly collecting serial murderer, and Barbara Pym a much subtler one, in *Quartet in Autumn* (1977) in which pathological collecting infuses the pathological end of life. In Tibor Fischer's *The Collector Collector* (1997), the collector is an ancient Sumerian bowl, which has seen it all, and collects people:

> 'Now I've been *used* … Shaving bowl, vinegar jar, cinerary urn, tomb good, *pyxis*, vase, rat-trap, *krater*, bitumen amphora, chamber pot,

> pitcher, executioner, doorstop, sunshade … if you are quiet, don't fuss and take it, it's staggering what people will dump on you. If it's vile, I've had a pile …' (p. 5)

Single numinous objects can embody the themes of quest, fulfilment, self discovery and ethical code, and so are central to the large 'sword and sorcery' school, which frequently focuses the story on the particular understanding or manipulation of pieces of material culture: we need look no further than the *The Lord of the Rings* or the titles of many of the *Harry Potter* series. In these stories, the key objects act as cosmic ordering symbols. A moral contrast was set out in the early 1900s, where M. R. James's violent and evil antiquities (1992) stand beside the denouements of Chesterton's Father Brown, God's Vicar on earth, who can always show how dark material forces are in reality subject to natural laws[9] (1929). Objects specially chosen to embody particular symbolic power feature in historical novels, shown very clearly in Rosemary Sutcliff's use of the enduring nature of the flawed emerald signet ring to create continuity across the short- lived generations of humans[10]. Such objects, and collections also, crop up regularly in detective stories, where they provide motive and evidence, and where the pedigree runs from Wilkie Collin's *The Moonstone* by way of Conan Doyle, Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie, Patricia Wentworth and many more, to P. D. James' *The Murder Room* (2003), which brings us back to the museum. In most of these novels the museum visitor, the collector, the purchaser, the curator and the detective emerge as figures around whom the relationship with the material world is organized. The particular implications for ways of possessing, knowing and wanting offered by each object or set of objects are worked out through the inter-action between them and the characters.

Things seen as particularly active within human lives are the theme of other novelists. The large range of 'sex and shopping' novels, like others on the edge of decency and pornographic novels definitely beyond it, stress the power of objects of desire, and the passion of possession. Georges Perec's *Things* (1990, originally *Les Choses*, 1965) shows us a world dominated by the desire for acquisition. Perec indeed, gives us the sense that people and material interact to produce history, which is unpredictable rather than given, unlike most writers who present characters living within the tunnel of history, which already exists in front and behind. The workings of the imaginary material world in all this specifically object centred fiction - and the list might be hugely extended - could be analysed from the same perspectives as those employed to consider actual objects in the actual worlds. Interesting, but now well-worked, themes appear: the creation of identity, the manipulation of objects to produce narratives to taste, the correspondences between material life and human life. These specifically object-centred novels, however, are simply the obvious cases in what is a general characteristic of fiction.

A feel for this can be achieved by considering briefly two kinds of contemporary fiction. A considerable number of the most admired English novels belong in what may be called the naturalistic tradition. These tend to operate through

'rational', sequential narratives, and feature characters, who grow and develop while maintaining their essential selves. The novels are often said to hold a mirror up to life, although, naturally, what they say comes to us through the lens of each writer's personality and experience. The range is enormous, but a characteristic passage, which ostensibly puts the object world in its subordinate place, comes from Graham Greene's *The Third Man* (1950):

> 'The snow gave the great pompous family headstones an air of grotesque comedy; a toupee of snow slipped sideway over an angelic face, a saint wore a heavy white moustache, and a shako of snow tipped at a drunken angle over the bust of a superior civil servant called Wolfgang Gottmann. Even this cemetery was zoned between the powers: the Russian zone was marked by huge tasteless statues of armed men, the French by rows of anonymous wooden crosses and a torn tricolour flag' (p.20).

By contrast, the novel-writing tradition usefully called magical realism, in which writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges, show us a very different kind of world. They come from a South American tradition in which revolution can make things new, and where the cultural bedrock is a multi-faceted fusion of fundamental Catholicism, traditional African religion, and perhaps indigenous practices (a mix that has fascinated European writers like Eco). Here, everything is magical because all objects can act miraculously, dreams and myths are part of the real world, the lack of definition and essence offers infinite possibilities, and anything can and does happen. We need only consider what Marquez says on the first page of his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967):

> 'A heavy gipsy with an untamed beard and sparrow hands put on a bold public demonstration of what he himself called the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia. He went from house to house dragging two metal ingots and everybody was amazed to see pots, pans, tongs and braziers tumble down from their places and beams creak from the desperation of nails and screws trying to emerge, and even objects that had been lost for a long time appeared from where they had been searched for most and went dragging along in turbulent confusion behind [the] magic irons. "Things have a life of their own" the gipsy proclaimed with a harsh accent. "It's just a matter of waking up their souls"' (pp1-2).

However, no matter how the novelist works his or her material, novels must operate within some version of the physical world, with which the novelist has a special relationship. This is recognized by Italo Calvini[11] in his meditation on fiction:

> 'I would say that the moment an object appears in a narrative, it is charged with a special force and becomes like the pole in a magnetic field, a knot in the network of invisible relationships. The symbolism of

> an object may be more or less explicit, but it is always there. We might say that in a narrative any object is always magic' (p 33).

It is crucial is to remember that in historical terms, the European novel (that is, those written in a European language) is an intrinsic part of what it is convenient to call modernism. Of course, the genre has its own history in the European tradition, and those who first wrote 'modern' novels may have received some inspiration from the classical Greek and Latin stories, which they certainly knew. Equally, novels have been produced outside the European tradition, but it would be perverse not to accept that the huge number of novels written in a European language between roughly the early sixteenth century and the present moment do not constitute a distinct literary phenomenon. The bundle of traits which make up modern society have been much discussed, and can be briefly listed. They include the assertion that each single human is essential, that is possessed, by definition, of integrity through life, of moral responsibility, and of a unique personal history. This human is a knowing intelligence, and the world is out there to be known through the operation of reason; all this is regarded as 'natural'. The bearing of this on the writing and reading of modern novels (including those which react against it) is obvious.

An intrinsic element in this 'modernist' or 'enlightenment' complex is that it proved capable of turning the key in the engine of production, and out poured huge quantities of material culture, without which the economic aspect of the modernist world would falter. It is easy to fail to appreciate just how huge the 'before and after' difference was. In 1548, a women called Margery Wylchin belonging to a well-to-do farming family in Norfolk could leave in her, very typical, will her own bed with its covers to her niece, Beatrice, some silver spoons, and a range of pots and pans[12]. By the early eighteenth century, women of a rather higher social class were able to bequeath clothes and pieces of jewellery to family and friends (Pointon 1997, 17-57); by the nineteenth century in such families we have reached a world in which special clothes are needed for each time of day and each activity through the year, and rooms have curtains with linings, swags, flounces, ties, tassels, and pulleys. The inhabitants of this broadly contemporary world must know their way around this universe of goods. They, and particularly women upon whom the development of such expertise falls principally, must be able to tell silk from rayon, or what will wear and what will fall apart; also what will look smart and what will seem dowdy. The characteristics of modernism include a clear strand of the feminine, and the feminization of material, morally double-edged, is implicated in the facts that, as creative artists, women have made perhaps their most significant impression in written fiction, and surveys demonstrate clearly that women form the bulk of novel readers.

A swathe of recent work has made clear that objects are not simply the means to bring about a pre-determined end; rather they embody an idea of what it is to be human, embedded in identities, histories, and perceived wealth, and as such they exert their own power on individuals and communities

(e.g. Dudley 2002). This power enables them to be re-worked to create new alignments of 'tradition' and social grouping. The last two centuries or so, the period of course in which most novels have been written, has shown how this nature of material things, together with the enormous quantity of goods in the period, has generated a shift in the relationship between objects and people; the quantity of goods – note that word – turned out to hold the seeds of subversion. The emotional and social force embedded in the mass of material goods, and their extreme desirability, has worked to produce a new, transposed relationship between personified objects and reified humans. Humans have willingly entered into a Faustian pact in which goods, or at least daydreams about goods, are given in exchange for our essential humanity, our capacity to relate to other humans.

The novel has a complex relationship to the object world. Each novel is itself an artefact, crafted by its author within a particular spatial and temporal context, and so it shares the capacity to embody a particular view of the human condition, and to be re-interpreted as time passes. Novels are not singular in being artefacts which embody an enormously complex worldview – all objects do that – nor in their ability to convey this view to the reader. The particular nature of a novel lies in the relative ease with which it can be understood, because it works through a well-developed technique of rendering language – essentially something spoken – as marks on flat sheets of pulped cloth and wood.[13] Like other objects, novels are open to an infinite range of new interpretations as time and place shift, and also, like all others, they can only function as meaning makers because they are seen against the broad range of material culture. But the novel is particularly complex. The home-worlds of every language-based artefact contain imaginary or virtual objects to which we give the same status as physical things, and which interact with the characters to create the mesh of action, and serve as the organizing poetic principle of the narrative. As a result of the particular historical situation of which they are an intrinsic part, novels do this more closely and with more detail than other genres; perhaps we might go further and suggest that doing so is integral to the nature of the novel.

We may suspend disbelief and give literary objects the honorary status of reality but, of course, they are nothing of the kind. Enormous odds operate against the actual conjunction in real life of given humans and things, and given human and human, even though we experience all this as very ordinary in our day-to-day lives. The novelist hijacks the worlds of these chances in order to create plot and action; this is what we call creative, and count as the particular insights, which novelists can offer. They can show us things about our situation, which perhaps we could not see so clearly without them.

We have, then, a notion of our surrender of self-possession to the object world, which I have called a Faustian pact, its clear expression in the object-centred novels I drew attention to at the beginning of this paper, and its underlying presence in the fibre of every novel. I wish to suggest that the power of material culture to embody, indeed direct, how we should think, feel,

and behave, under-lies a shift in the nature of morality, in how we understand good and bad, and that it is the insights of novelist into the human condition, which can reveal this to us. The novel's implication in the modern culture of mass material and the power embodied in objects, has prompted novelists to show how objects now possess a kind of morality of aesthetic, a poetic of good and evil, which is as true in the actual world as it is in the virtual world of the story, but it is the task of the novelist to show it to us, and in so doing, to enhance it. This is a place where all the imaginative traditions, popular and 'serious' come together.

What I am saying is emphatically not a return to popular Victorian aesthetic values, which held that looking at nice pictures could make you good or that novelists should not mention anything, which might bring a blush to the cheek of the young person. Also, I am aware of the very significant social implication in every discussion of the kind of material poetic we might call taste. It is a social fact that if we know an individual likes plastic flowers, we can deduce what kind of television programmes, holidays, clothes and furnishings she is also likely to like, although, and increasingly, we may be wrong, as taste become steadily more eclectic across the community. I am looking for something more fundamental than this.

*The Lord of the Rings* has a large number of pertinent passages. One chosen more or less at random comes from the final stages of Frodo and Sam's journey to the Cracks of Doom:

> 'So they came slowly to the white bridge. Here the road, gleaming faintly, passed over the stream in the midst of the valley, and went on, winding deviously towards the city's gate: a black mouth opening in the outer circle of the northward walls. Wide flats lay on either bank, shadowy meads filled with pale white flowers. Luminous these were too, beautiful and yet horrible of shape, like the demented forms in an uneasy dream; and they gave forth a sickening charnel smell; an odour of rottenness filled the air'. (p 731)

The flowers have 'demented forms' like the sinister blossoms in some of Audrey Beardsley's work. The white bridge leads to danger, the white flowers are unpleasant, and white appears as physically horrible and emotionally debilitating. Normally good attributes, like gleaming or being luminous, or being beautiful, have an evil aesthetic. Tolkien wrote in a deliberately high style, but the material ethical poetic can be extremely down to earth. In *Brighton Rock,* Graham Greene tells us all we need to know about the descent of Pinkie into moral squalor when he draws our attention to the pepper and salt pots in the shape of lavatories on sale in the town. These are not examples of the pathetic fallacy in which the external world mirrors the emotional tone of the character. Here, the objects are morally unpleasant in their own aesthetic right, whether or not the characters are present to experience them. Something of the same, but radiating uneasiness rather than evil, is given to us by Barnes at the beginning of *Flaubert's Parrot*

> 'This statue [of Flaubert in Rouen] isn't the original one. The Germans took the first Flaubert away in 1941, along with railings and door knockers. Perhaps he was processed into cap badges. For a decade or so the pedestal was empty. Then a Mayor of Rouen who was keen on statues rediscovered the original plaster cast … and the city council approved the making of a new image. Rouen bought itself a proper metal statue in 93 per cent copper and 7 per cent tin: the founders, Rudier of Chatillon-sous-Bagneux, assert that such an alloy is guarantee against corrosion. Two other towns, Trouville and Barentin, contributed to the project and received stone statues. These have worn less well. At Trouville Flaubert's upper thigh has had to be patched, and bits of his moustache have fallen off: structural wires poke out like twigs from a concrete stub on his upper lip'. (pp. 11-12)

This embodies most of what I have been talking about. The statue may be virtual on the printed page, but it is unmistakeably there, living an independent life in time and weather. It is an icon of modernism, and to be understood in that cultural context, but it has become endowed with the capacity to affect the viewer in its own right. This power is Calvini's 'magic', the material aesthetic of ethic, which the novelist's insight can point up. Barnes's passage on the statue shows the concrete detail of metal and founder; the capacity of material to be endlessly re-cycled and re-interpreted; the notion of the original which turns out to be nothing of the kind; the multiplication of a human who ought to be unique and integrated, but is in fact fractured and scattered; and finally, as bits of Flaubert's leg and face drop off, the realisation that we are all material bodies, which will return to the material matrix. And it is probably this awful realization which has prompted the focus on the object world by the popular end of fiction, most of those books mentioned at the beginning, and our fascination with them.

## Notes

1 This phenomenon is now beginning to attract attention; see Edgar 1997, Wilkinson 1997, Hall 2002, Martin 2002. See also the very interesting collection of short stories by Peter Blegvad, A.A.Byatt, Helen Cleary, Tobias Hill, Hari Kunzru and Gaby Wood, focussing on the Wellcome Collection, Hildi Hawkins and Danielle Olsen, 2003.

2 In James, the short story called 'The Mezzotint' is a good example, and in G.K.Chesterton, 'The Doom of the Darnaways'; James 1992; Chesterton 1929.

3 The signet ring first appears as belonging to Marcus in *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954), and re-appears fairly consistently in her Roman and post-Roman novels after that

[4] Calvini's book was drawn to my attention by Benjamin Morris, to whom I am grateful.

[5] Will of Margery Wylchin, 1548, Consistory Court of Norwich, Norfolk Record Office.

[6] Or, of course, now various audio or virtual forms. At the moment, these all derive either from the page, or from an idea of the page, but this may change.

## Bibliography

Atkinson, K. (1995). *Behind the Scenes at the Museum.* London: Doubleday

Barnes, J. (1984). *Flaubert's Parrot*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Brown, D. (2003). *The Da Vinci Code.* London: Corgi.

Calvino, I. (1996). *Six Memos for the Next Millenium.* London: Vintage.

Chatwin, B. (1988). *Utz.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Chesterton, G. (1929). *The Father Brown Stories.* London: Cassel and Co.

Dombrovsky, Y. (1968). The Keeper of Antiquities (trans. Glenny, Michael from the Russian originally published *Novy Mir*, Moscow 1964) HarperCollins.

Dudley, S. (2002). 'Diversity, identity and modernity in exile; "traditional" Karenni clothing' in Green A. and Blurton R. (eds.) *Burma Art and Archaeology.* London: British Museum Press.

Eco, U. (1989). *Foucauld's Pendulum.* London: Secker and Warburg.

Edgar, K. (1997). 'Old masters and young mistresses: the collector in popular fiction,' in Pearce 1997, 80-94.

Greene G. (1971). *The Third Man.* Aylesbury: Penguin.

Fischer, T.(1998). *The Collector Collector.* London : Vintage.

Flaubert, G. (1881). *Bouvard et Pecuchet* Paris.

Fowles, J. (1963). *The Collector.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Hall, M. (2002). 'Literary Voices' in Pearce *et al* 2002 *Voices,* 177-269.

Hawkins, H. and Olsen, D. (eds.). (2003). *The Phantom Museum and Henry Wellcome's Collection of Medical Curiosities.* London: Profile Books.

James, M. (1992) . *Collected Short Stories*. Ware, Wordsworth.

Marquez, Garcia G. (1972). *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* (trans. Gregory Rabassa) Aylesbury: Penguin.

Pearce, S (ed.). (1997). *Experiencing Material Culture in the Western World.* Leicester University Press.

Pearce, S. (2000). 'Collecting Stories' in Pearce, S. and Martin P. (eds.), *The Collector's Voice: Contemporary Voices,* 141-196, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Pearce, S., Flanders, R., Hall, M. and Morton, F., (eds.) (2002) *The Collector's Voice: Imperial Voices,* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Perec, G. (1990). *Things.* (trans. Bellos, David from the French originally published 1965, Paris, Julliard), London: Collins Harvill.

Pointon, M, (1997). *Strategies for Showing. Women, Possessions and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800.* Oxford University Press.

Pym, B. (1977). *Quartet in Autumn.* London: Macmillan.

Sutcliff, R. (1954). *The Eagle of the Ninth.* Oxford University Press.

Tolkein, J. (1954). *The Lord of the Rings.* London: George Allen and Unwin.

Wilkinson, H. (1997). 'Mr Cropper and Mrs Brown: good and bad collectors in the work of A.S. Byatt and other fiction', in Pearce 1997, 95-113.

Zweig, S. (1998). *The Invisible Collection.* London: Pushkin Press.

## Biography

**Emeritus Prof. Susan Pearce**

Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

Susan read History at the University of Oxford, and then worked as a curator at Liverpool and Exeter. She joined the Department of Museums Studies in 1984, and became successively Head of the Department, Professor, Dean of Arts and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. She has served as President of the Museums Association, and Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries of London. She has written much and lectured widely on material culture studies and museums.

# Location! Location! Location!: Contemporary African Art and the Politics of Representation

*Lisa Binder*

February 2005 ushered in the beginning of *Africa 05*, a year long cultural exchange between the United Kingdom and Africa. Museums, galleries, concert halls and cinemas offered viewers the sights, sounds, colours, stories, art, images, textures, fashion, sculpture, photography, film, debate and discourse on African culture and life.[1] The press release stated, '*Africa 05* is a series of major cultural events taking place in London that celebrates contemporary and past cultures from across the continent and the diaspora' (November 18, 2004). According to Gus Casely-Hayford, who was the *Africa 05* Program Director:

> '*Africa 05* is not just a series of exhibitions and events, it's a watershed moment in the development and promotion of African arts and culture in the UK. We are confident that the year will challenge many people's preconceptions about Africa and will place many African artists firmly within the UK and international arts scene'. (Press release, November 18, 2004)

With the 05 year come and gone, Casley-Hayford's wish for the 'development and promotion' of African arts can be assessed. There have only been two such 'celebrations' in the UK: Africa 95 and Africa 05. The success of the former event was discussed at length during the *In and Out of Africa: Art and Identities* conference held at the British Museum in conjunction with the opening events of *Africa 05*. Before introducing the keynote speaker, Chris Spring, Curator of the African galleries at the Museum, offered this explanation for the conception of the year long celebration:

> 'When Gus Casley-Hayford and I began to dream about *Africa 05* back in 2001 it was with a view to seeing how far we had come since the last big festival of African arts and cultures in the UK, *Africa 95*. A conference seemed to us the best way to assess this progress, and we drew inspiration from what had already been achieved in the recently opened Sainsbury African galleries at the British Museum. There the work of some of Africa's foremost contemporary artists left our public in no doubt that African art is alive and well, but also helped them to look with new eyes at some of the other works from many different traditions displayed elsewhere in the galleries. The way in which we allowed each work to speak about African history rather than forcing it to illustrate a linear chronology also sparked some controversy, questioning the distinctions between so-called contemporary, ethnographic and prehistoric African art – and indeed continuing validity of these terms. That is as it should be, for if nothing else the galleries must be a forum for debate'.

So let us here assess the progress Dr. Spring spoke of via the Sainsbury galleries. While for some the thematic rather than chronological groupings of the more 'traditional' objects (often peppered with contemporary objects made in an aesthetic and/or materially traditional mode) often gives reason for criticism, I find the themes work very well. What I do question is the placement, at the very entrance to the galleries, of the works, which are to represent 'contemporary' Africa. Let me pause here to say that I commend the British Museum for beginning the long journey toward inclusion of contemporary work in their collection. Most western museums have not even considered the acquisition of contemporary African art for their African galleries let alone their contemporary collections. However, it is the cautious selection, which I call into question. It is just this sort of caution that prevailed in many of the *Africa 05* events and could potentially serve to foster the divide Springer and Casely-Hayford so hoped to eliminate.

In this paper, I will explore current collecting practices as well as review institutional display of works by contemporary artists from Africa. I will investigate how this curatorial division influences the interpretation and representation of Africa and African culture. Further, I will argue that work by artists in 'diaspora' provide the visual signifiers compatible with museum collection and display practices. Through the politics of the museum system, 'diaspora' has come to represent Africa.

Until very recently, the works at the entrance to the African galleries consisted of sculptures (the primary media employed by 'traditional' African artists in the marketplace for the last century). Sokari Douglas Camp (whose work I wrote my Master's Thesis about) had two large works (one in the entrance and one on the other side of a small partition dividing the contemporary from the traditional) both representing Kalabari Ijo masking traditions and accompanied by a video made by Douglas Camp herself. It is most important to note here that Douglas Camp now has dual citizenship and has lived in England most of her adult life. While her work depicts both British and Nigerian experiences, it is most often the sculpture addressing her African heritage that is collected.

One of Magdalene Odundo's beautiful container-like ceramic pieces sits on a pedestal front and centre in the foyer. Odundo is Kenyan by birth but like Camp, attended art school in the UK. To learn her technique, she travelled not only to Africa but to North America as well. She too resides in Great Britain where she teaches at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design. Speaking from experience, if an American museum is going to collect a contemporary 'African' piece, it will often be one made by Odundo (or now also El Anatsui whom I will discuss in a moment)**.** With some irony, Odundo's vessels were meant to remain empty. They are sculptural forms – not vases meant to hold objects. While they certainly carry meaning, they are hardly filled with Africa.

Made of discarded liquor bottle-tops, El Anatsui's large *Man's Cloth* drapes the entire back wall of the foyer. *Man's Cloth* refers to the Ewe cloth made in

his country of birth Ghana (similar to the more commercially popular *Kente*). During the *Africa 05* celebration, Anatsui's cloth series quite literally draped over the entire city of London. As stated, *Man's Cloth*, hung in the British Museum and yet another of the series hung and still hangs directly behind the desk of the Director of the British Museum, Neil McGregor. At the same time, *Sasa* hung prominently at the entrance to the Africa Remix exhibition and around the corner, at the October Gallery, Anatsui's cloth hung in a solo exhibition. It was at this time a major company, headquartered in London, purchased cloth from the October exhibition to hang in their corporate offices. While he has lived here in Nigeria for the last quarter century, he primarily exhibits in European, American, and Japanese venues**.** When one of his cloth series sculptures, *Society Women's Cloth*, will be displayed in Dakar (Dak'Art) this year – it will be the first time the work will have been exhibited in an African country.

While they have now begun to, ever so slowly, change the display to add new works such as the *The Tree of Life* (which was actually commissioned by the British Museum) and the *Throne of Weapons* both by Kester of Mozambique, and to display a print by the late Namibian artist John Ndevasia Muafangejo (1943-1987), the artist who currently populates the Sainsbury galleries with the most works at the moment is Rachid Koraïchi. A Paris-based Algerian, Koraïchi has one large work in the entrance, which draws on Islamic traditions of calligraphy, textile and ceramic production and *Sufi* philosophy in an effort to create works of universal relevance and impact. Ask him what the script says and he will tell you it says nothing. They are empty signs – they just look like script. Reminiscent of Odundo's vessels I would argue. He has a number of these works scattered throughout the gallery.

The artist participants (as well as the academic panellists) in the British Museum's conference rightfully spoke of identity and authenticity. Simon Njami, curator of the Africa Remix exhibition (to be addressed later in this paper) reiterated the Hegelian notion that 'Africa is not a part of history.' (Personal notes, "In and Out of Africa: Art and Identities" 12 February 2005) He followed this statement with the question that seemed to be the theme of the conference, 'What kind of African are you?' If we are to turn to the contemporary African artwork in the British Museum, the answer seems to be: one that *was* from Africa but not so much right now. It seems the *diaspora* speaks visually for Africa in the British Museum. Here I am compelled to quote Njami once again for he stated in his lecture, 'the work is what should tell the story – not the artist's history. No one wonders what part of Germany Joseph Beuys came from.'(Personal note, 12 February 2005) To that, I say: Here, here, Dr. Njami. Except Africa is a Continent and Germany is a country. And if the work by contemporary African artists is to 'tell the story'…don't they belong in the Tate Modern rather than the Sainsbury African Galleries?

The new *World Museum Liverpool* is yet another institution that makes use of the 'contemporary at the entrance' plan of attack. When the visitor walks into the African section of the World Cultures Gallery, he/she is greeted by a

(strange) video of an 'African' man discussing the works contained within the gallery; additionally discussing the 'diaspora' in contemporary African art. Immediately to the left of the video screen are three large drawings by the Nigerian artist Osi Audu.

> 'Osi's work is concerned with the way in which we can "breathe" life into objects with our imagination and how the shape and form of objects can therefore represent or contain our unconscious thoughts.'
>
> 'His themes and techniques use ancient Yoruba philosophy and modern Western approaches, such as the idea that objects can contain, channel and transform natural forces.'

Osi, (like most of the other artists I discuss in this paper) has participated in an exhibition concerned with the idea of African 'diaspora.' Nigerian by birth, he studied in Africa and America before moving to the UK. He has VERY recently (last month) moved back to America – New York state. His work in *Journeys and Destinations*, held at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian, in Washington DC in 2003, explored

> 'the important histories of migration and the negotiations of artistic, cultural, personal and group identities among African artists who make up the growing and significant diaspora of practicing artists now living in Europe and America.'

Armed with the examples presented, I would like to submit that African artists in 'diaspora' (arguably a difficult term which I am investigating in my PhD thesis) seem to offer work curators feel *transition* the public from the past to the present in a comfortable way. Unfortunately, this dictum insists the artists produce work that performs Africa, or at least an 'African-ness' deemed ingestible by the viewing audience. In this, the artists work is reduced to commodity – objects consumed by the viewing public as representative of contemporary Africa.

The transactional nature of identity is no more obvious than in its market value. Objects purchased by museums and private collectors represent not only the artist, and the collector's identity markers, but also speak to the ultimate thematic goal of a collection surmised by the viewer(s). In other words, what the public sees is what was purchased, and if what was purchased was a perceived representation of a culture, the public consumes a constructed signified of the art/artist based on the purchaser's decision of what the art, and whom the artist, *should* be. In the end, it is the market that dictates identity, and by extension authenticity, to history.

In *The Mirror of Production*, Jean Baudrillard comments on this function of commodity stating, 'Consumption, in so far as it is meaningful, is a systematic act of the manipulation of signs. Objects are categories of objects which quite tyrannically induce categories of persons.' (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999: 23) The history of art presumes these categories of persons via the

academically defined institutional practices of museums, galleries, dealers and collectors. The arts of the Americas, African art, Asian art, modern art, and contemporary art are a few of the myriad examples of this categorization of cultural experience. When the market, based on the institutional categories, demands 'authentic' representations of social experience, the resulting commodity functions as fetish.

Over the last few decades, another category has emerged; that of Contemporary African Art. This taxonomic subdivision of contemporary art has been problematic in that its popularity on the art market preceded the institutional language required to discuss it. Academics and critics struggled to separate the *traditional* (often offered in apology along with air quotes) from the *contemporary* (again apologetically referring to 'anything being made now'). The recent use of *modern* to describe the work of artists from African countries is a step toward releasing the grip of the binary selections of traditional or contemporary. However, the term is too often used as a Western referent rather than a unique art historical genera yet it allows for an easily accessible marketing category and is thus working its way into the lexicon of academia.

As recently as October 1990, the pre-eminent journal on the subject, *African Arts*, asked, 'What are we going to do about contemporary African art?' as if it were a problem a collective of pundits could solve. (Povey, 1990: 1) The inability of the academic community to subsume current work from Africa into the category of contemporary forced the scholars of historical African practices to adopt the dilemma. And the debate continues although now in the form of a new (sub)category: diaspora. Two recent exhibitions, both focusing on work by African artists in diaspora, originated in the United States. *A Fiction of Authenticity: Contemporary Africa Abroad* was the inaugural exhibition for the new Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and did not travel outside of the country. The Museum for African Art's *Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora* did travel beyond continental borders to Lisbon, Portugal and the City Art Centre in Edinburgh.[2]

Kendell Geers, who participated in both *A Fiction of Authenticity* and *Looking Both Ways*, addressed the prevailing theme of 'identity' and 'authenticity' centralized in these sorts of exhibitions during an interview with Jérôme Sans, Director of Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Adjunct Curator at the Institute of Visual Arts in Milwaukee, stating:

> 'I think you should first ask *where* and by *whom* these questions of curators and academics who debate so-called identity art, but as always these discussions are about "other" people's identities – they don't involve self-analysis. As the occidental art model has lost much of its energy and momentum, it has needed to look elsewhere for stimulation'. (Sans, 2003: 94)

Gears' statement echoes an oft heard opinion in the artistic community of contemporary artists from Africa and of African descent. Worn down by

participating in over a decade of 'African' exhibitions and festivals arguably beginning with *Africa 95* through the recent 'diaspora' exhibitions, Kendell Geers has reached a precipice in his artistic experience. In the early stages of my interview process with the artist, he articulates this *Africa fatigue* (Smith, July 3 2005):[3]

> 'i am not sure what your expectations are from the interview but since you are studying african art i cannot help thinking that you may want to discuss the problems of contemporary african art. i feel that i should warn you that i have very little to say on the subject. i am not interested to continue flogging a dead horse and have moved on in my thinking and my practice and do not have any desire to return. i cannot add to the thousands of words i have already written on the subject. if you would like to discuss bataille, artaud, debord, the acephale, duchamp etc then we can have an interview but not if you need to fix the dialogue within an african context'. (Personal communication, August 18, 2005)

It could be argued that the artist Sokari Douglas Camp understands this fatigue better than most. Certainly the exhibition of her work, 'Play and Display', in one of the many Africa 95 venues solidified her position in the art world. Her work from 'Play and Display' was collected by the British Museum (as well as several other museums whose focus lie in predominantly ethnographic collecting practices), is exhibited in a multitude of public spaces, and is included in most major texts surveying Africa and contemporary African art. (Visona, Poynor, Cole, Harris, Abiodun, and Blier, 2003; Smith, and Perani, 1998; Kasfir, 1999; Powell, 1997; and Fall, and Pivin, 2002) Although she declined to be included in the blockbuster Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London, which ushered in and anchored Africa 05 with great fanfare, she did participate in the British Museum symposium and contributed work to Ground Force at the British Museum, an "African Garden" staged in the forecourt of the museum.[4] During her highlighted interview at the symposium, she discussed the aftermath of Africa 95 where she, 'spent a lot of time escaping 'black' shows," and felt that she had been, 'caught in a box' (Personal note, 12 February 2005). In several of my visits and interviews with the artist, we have discussed the demands of curators and dealers to have her make art that 'looks African.'

This craving for perceived authenticity by consumers of visual culture is *the* topic when artists and scholars gather to discuss African art and identity. In another session at the British Museum's symposium, the artist and curator of the Biennial for African Photography in Bamako (2001 and 2003), Akinbode Akinbiyi, in conversation with Simon Njami, discussed the demand for 'authenticity' in the art market. Akinbiyi mused, 'Identity has very little to do with geography', to which (you will remember I mentioned at the beginning of this paper) Njami responded, 'The work is what should tell the story, not the artist's history. Don't look for the African – look at the show – maybe you will see some *Africanness*.' (Personal note, 12 February 2005)

Certainly, the work does 'tell the story;' yet it cannot be severed from the artist's history and more importantly, the viewer's history. The call to abandon the search for the African as a *sine qua non* for digesting a visual commodification of Africanness is a call for the viewer to alter *their* identity. As non-African viewers we have only our constructed signified for what that Africanness is and, I would argue, when armed with the knowledge that the work was made by an artist of African decent, cannot see the work outside of our non-African historical referent.[5] However, the ability of many curators and scholars of *contemporary* art to include these artists, thus altering the referent, remains tenuous.[6] While change is slowly coming, as evidenced by the New York Museum of Modern Art's recent acquisition of Yinka Shonibare's, *How does a girl like you get to be a girl like you* (1995), or, within the last year, the Centre Georges Pompidou's collection of a cloth-series sculpture by El Anatsui, most remain content to strategically include (on display or in discussion) that one token vessel by Magdalene Odundo.

In recent years, a short list of African artists or, more commonly, artists of African descent, have begun to have their work accepted and circulated within the museum community. In addition to El Anatsui and Sokari Douglas-Camp, Odundo and Audu have joined the ranks of those who, it seems, make work acceptable to represent the African continent and offer a certain *branding* of 'African-ness' to the museum-going public. While an artist's individual experience and work are inextricably bound, so too is the viewer's referent with the work's constructed identity. I am in no way advocating a separation of the work from its referent, as constructed as that may be, by artist, dealer, buyer, institution, market and viewer. These are, after all, African artists with an African history.

So what is to be done? Should museums with collections of traditional (historical) African objects collect the contemporary arts of the continent? Where does the diaspora fit into the equation? Where in the museum space should the work be displayed? These are not necessarily questions with hard and fast answers. This issue is compounded when said institutions accession works by artists in diaspora. The positioning of the works at the entrance to the gallery, as a point of entry into the past, only renders the work diasporic. In the anthropologist James Clifford's essay, 'Diasporas,' the author discusses William Safran's definition of the term in the first issue of the journal *Diaspora*:

> 'He defines diasporas as follows: "expatriate communities" (1) that are dispersed from an original "center" to at least two "peripheral" places; (2) that maintain a "memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland"; (3) that "believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country"; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) whose consciousness and solidarity as a group are "importantly defined" by this continuing relationship with the homeland.' (Clifford, 1997:247)

Following this definition – it is the ***work*** that is in diaspora – from museum's contemporary gallery spaces.

## Notes

1 I should like to note here that the press release states, "Throughout 2005, museums, galleries, concert halls and cinemas will be reverberating with the sights, sounds, colors, stories, art, images, textures, fashion, sculpture, photography, film, debate and discourse that will create one of the most significant events in London and the UK in years." In the body of my abstract for this paper, I argued this "reverberation" was more of a "slight shudder".

2 *A Fiction of Authenticity: Contemporary Africa Abroad*. Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis Missouri, September 20, 2003 - January 4, 2005. Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, Purnell Center for the Arts, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, September – December 2004. Blaffer Galery, the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Houston, Texas, September – November, 2006. *Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora*. Museum for African Art, New York, New York, November 14 – March 1, 2004. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, March 27 – July 18, 2004. Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Portugal. January 5, 2005 – March 5, 2005. Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, California, January – March 2006. The City Art Centre. Edinburgh, Scotland. June 18, 2005 – September 11, 2005.

3 My use of the term "Africa fatigue" stems from an article published in the July 3, 2005 *Sunday Times* where the author, Economics Editor David Smith reveals, "Three of four surveys – conducted in the past few days – reveal distinct "Africa fatigue," with most people believing that the continent's problems should not be the top priority at G8. There is also deep scepticism about whether the decisions set to be endorsed by G8 leaders in Scotland will lift Africa out of its problems." David Smith, "Don't Forget Other Problems Says Public," *The Sunday Times*, July 3, 2005, p. 11. Further, I co-opted the term for a paper, "Remix or Revise? A Mid-Year Review of Africa 05," which I presented to the Association of Art Historians, Student Members Group annual conference in Glasgow, Scotland on July 7, 2005, and where I argued not only "Africa fatigue" but "Africa 05 fatigue."

4 *Africa Remix: the Contemporary Art of a Continent*, Hayward Gallery, London, February 10 – April 17, 2005. The sign in front of the "Africa Garden" reads: "Ground Force at the British Museum. Over the years

the BBC's Ground Force programme has led millions of fans down more than 130 garden paths, creating backyard paradises in just days and teaching viewers along the way about different 'plant practices' from around the world. The Africa Garden is the team's final creation together. Over the summer, visitors will be able to explore the Museum and the garden, finding connections between the plants and the cultures they come from. The garden includes flora from three African climate zones – desert, tropical and temperate – informed by *Ground Force's* work in Ethiopia, Morocco and their garden for Nelson Mandela in South Africa. It also features contemporary sculptures by African artists – from Mozambique to Ghana – including work specially commissioned by *Ground Force*. You can find more contemporary African art, alongside outstanding objects of African heritage, in the Museum's African galleries (Room 25), including work by the artists represented here. The Africa garden is part of a major collaboration between the BBC and the British Museum in support of Africa 05: a London-wide celebration of African culture and heritage. The final *Ground Force* programme, "A Garden for Africa 05', will be broadcast early in July, showing the making of the garden and featuring some of the artists involved."

5 This not only occurs between the African and non-African art market but also on the continent as well.

6 With the exception of curators of African descent such as Okwui Enwezor or Simon Njami, curator of the *Africa Remix* exhibition, and editor of *Revue Noir*, who argued in his opening address of the Africa 05 symposium at the British Museum that, "Africa is the most contemporary continent in the world." (Personal notes, February 11-12, 2005)

## Bibliography

Africa 05. (2004) Press Release. 24 November.

Binder, L. (2005) 'Remix or Revise? A Mid-Year Review of Africa 05' presented at the Association of Art Historians, Student Members Group annual conference, July 7.

Clifford, J. (1997) 'Diasporas', in *Routes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Fall, N. and Pivin, J. L. (2002) *An Anthology of African Art: The Twentieth Century*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers.

Horrocks, C. and Jevtic, Z. (1999) *Introducing Baudrillard*. Cambridge: Icon Books.

Geers. K. (2005) Personal communication via e-mail, August 18.

Kasfir, S. L. (1999) *Contemporary African Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Personal notes, Njami, S. (2005) "In and Out of Africa: Art and Identities." BP Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, British Museum, 12 February.

Personal notes, Njami, S. (2005) "In and Out of Africa: Art and Identities." BP Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, British Museum, 12 February.

Povey, John F. (1990) 'First Word', *African Arts*, October, 23(4).

Powell, R. J. (1997) *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century.* London: Thames and Hudson.

Sans, J. (2003) 'Kendell Geers: A Terro Realist in the house of Love," in *Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora.* Gent: Snoeck Publishers.

Smith, D. (2005) 'Don't Forget Other Problems Says Public', The Sunday Times, July 3 2005, p. 11.

Smith, F. T. and Perani, J. (1998) *The Visual Arts of Africa: Gender, Power and Life Rituals.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Visona, M., Poynor, R., Cole, H. M., Harris, M., Abiodun, R. and Blier. S. P. (2003) *A History of Art in Africa.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

## Biography

**Lisa M. Binder**

PhD student, School of World Arts and Museology, University of East Anglia

Lisa Binder is currently a PhD student at the University of East Anglia in the Department of World Arts and Museology, where she researches the contemporary arts of Africa in the UK art market. Prior to her studies in the UK, Lisa was a fellow in the African Art Department of the Cleveland Museum of Art. In addition to the Cleveland Museum, she has worked in the Department of Architecture Design and Graphics at the Denver Art Museum and taught art history for the University of Colorado at Denver. She received her MA from Kent State University and her BA from Cleveland State University.

# Connecting Histories: Gelede Masks at the Manchester Museum

*Emma Katherine Poulter*

## Introduction

> 'Museum objects are fragments; masks without costumes; figures without shrines; shrines without sacrifices; architectural pieces removed from their buildings, which can never provide the kind of general survey or re-totalise a particular aspect of history or culture that museums so treasure' (Shelton 2003: 187).

The near 2,000 objects that form the Manchester Museum's West African collections as Shelton suggests, are all fragments, fragments of history and memory from former times and places. Most of these objects came to the Museum in the early to mid twentieth century although many date back to the nineteenth century. Collected at different times, by different people, these objects have travelled from various places across the vast expanse referred to by the term 'West Africa'[1]. Only a handful of contemporary West African objects have been accessioned into the Museum collections in the last twenty years. As such, how can the collections at Manchester Museum be used and interpreted to demonstrate connections with West Africa today? What different sorts of meanings do they encapsulate? How can these be brought out and interrogated in the museum and what relevance do these meanings have and for whom?

The Manchester Museum's collection of Gelede[2] masks consists of nineteen objects amassed by eight different collectors over a period of almost a hundred years from 1864 to 1958. They are an assembly that have been categorised, stored and displayed by the museum as if they represent a homogenous group and have been interpreted throughout their museum careers as signifiers of Yoruba culture. Nine of the museum's collection of Gelede masks are currently on display in the Living Cultures Gallery which opened in 2003. This is the second of two new ethnography galleries at the Manchester Museum that have opened over the last decade. The first Living Cultures Gallery, initially called Explorers and Encounters, opened in 1995 replacing a previous display which had remained largely unchanged since 1958[3] (Bankes 1997: 79). The Explores and Encounters Gallery exhibited five Gelede masks in its 'Associations and Rituals' section which displayed objects from West and Central Africa as well as from Canada and Mexico. In 1999, the museum was awarded 20.3 million from various funding bodies, which allowed it to

embark on an extensive capital development project (Annual Report 1997-1998). This project entailed the building of a new extension to the museum and created the space for a second Living Cultures Gallery, into which the Gelede masks became incorporated. They are now displayed alongside other West African objects in a large case, which faces the visitor as they enter. The effect of this case is visually dense, with small Ibeji[4] figures arranged along the front and dominating pieces such as Minkisi[5] figures and two-faced masks towards the back. The Gelede masks are hung above these on the back wall (Fig 1). Although containing many of the objects included in the previous 'Associations and Rituals' display, the theme of this case has changed to 'Masks and Carvings' thereby shifting the interpretation away from a consideration of their abstract, spiritual meanings towards a functional understanding concerning their manufacture and use. This change in terminology accords with the other themes chosen for the gallery, which also privilege object types[6].

*Fig. 1. 'Masks and Carvings display', Living Cultures Gallery*

The interpretative text accompanying the current display of Gelede masks discusses the art of the carver but says little about how this practice has changed over time and there are no contemporary objects on display. In this way the written interpretation does not counter-balance the display's exoticising visual affect with contextual information in order to situate these practices today, nor does it explain how these objects came to be accessioned

into the museum's collections. As such, it promotes an ahistoric understanding of West Africa, its peoples, and their lives – an effect which perpetrates notions of exoticism concerning West Africa, rather than challenging them.

## A Biographical Approach

My research utilizes a biographical approach towards the objects and collections at Manchester Museum. Following Appadurai, I argue that the significance of any object at any one time should not be considered in isolation, as it is the trajectories that objects follow during their lifetimes, which illuminate the constructive aspects which make an object meaningful in any given milieu (1986:5).

In their original context, these masks would have been worn during elaborate masquerades, described by Drewal and Drewal as:

> 'Lavish spectacles of carved wooden headpieces, cloth costumes, dances, songs and drumming found principally among Western Yoruba peoples in Nigeria and Benin' (1983: xvi).

These masks were constituent parts of the complex whole, yet multifaceted occurrence of the Gelede masquerade. They would have been worn with a costume consisting of female head-wraps and baby sashes (borrowed from family members) as well as metal anklets (Lawal 1996: 96). Ebunsola, a Manchester based Yoruba group, have described the purpose of Gelede as embodying the principle that: 'the world is very fragile, we must live peacefully together' (Afinsuji 2005: 14). The masquerade performance and the imagery communicated by Gelede masks in the form of elaborate and often satirical or proverbial superstructures are therefore all part of a wider phenomenon aimed at ensuring that this delicate harmony is maintained.

Masquerades remain an important part of many peoples lives across Western Africa, however, the social issues which it considers, the materials used, as well as the concepts underlying the performance have inevitably changed over the last hundred years. In addition to this, an investigation looking exclusively at a museum object's original context only provides a partial insight into their complex life-histories. Life-histories which for the majority of their existence, in most cases, have been structured by contacts and journeys made out of and away from this original context.

Every object in a museum collection has its own unique life-history, encompassing a range of contacts and processes. These histories relate to the West African peoples from whom these objects originated as well as to the Museum, but additionally they incorporate a web of individuals and places spanning both locations. All these histories are important, yet the underlying politics concerning the contacts and exchanges necessary to physically enable the movement of an object from one cultural context to another has largely been excluded from the themes chosen to display and interpret non-Western objects in museums and galleries.

What strikes me as missing from the current display of Gelede masks at the Manchester Museum is a historical understanding of these objects: how and why they came to Manchester. I will now turn to a consideration of these hidden histories in order to broach the questions poised at the beginning of this paper.

## Gelede Masks in Focus

Ten out of the nineteen Gelede masks in the Manchester Museum were collected by Frank Willett, the museum's first Keeper of what was originally called Ethnology and General Archaeology (see Figs. 2 and 3 for examples).

*Fig. 2 & 3. Gelede masks 0.9195/292 & 0.9195.290, Frank Willet 1956-57.*

Willett went to Nigeria for six months from 1956 to 57 to work as a government archaeologist at the site of Old Oyo, at this time Nigeria was still part of the British Empire. Willett says that he bought these masks from Professor Morton-Williams, a social anthropologist who in turn had bought them from leather workers in Oyo who were agents for collecting and trading artefacts, which they sold to tourists. According to Willett, they seemed to be 'a valuable thing to have for the museum…and they weren't expensive' (Willett 2005 pers.comm.). An interesting comment revealing how, despite having a low monetary value in Western terms at the time of their purchase, they embodied a different type of value, theorised by Bourdieu as 'symbolic capital' (1984). It was this symbolic capital that made these masks 'valuable' in terms of their significance to the museum, a value that became consolidated when they

were transferred to the West and accessioned into the Manchester Museum's collections. Additionally, the monetary value or 'economic capital' of these masks also increased (ibid). This is illustrated by Willet's comments concerning his collecting budget:

> 'I didn't feel that one hundred pounds was going to go terribly far but in fact it went further than I expected and I did do a costing when I came back of what they would have cost on the market in Britain and it came to-I think the figure was £575 worth, so it was worth a lot more by the time you got it back here' (2005 pers. comm).

The transfer of these masks from one cultural context to another illustrates differences in their symbolic and economic value to different peoples at different times. It is also indicative of the colonial links established between Britain and Nigeria and their manifestations in the mid-twentieth century in terms of the contacts and exchanges it enabled, as well as showing the motivations behind the collecting of a particular individual connected to the museum.

*Fig. 4. Gelede Mask, 0.9161/1, Governor Glover between 1864-1870.*

Turning to the other Gelede masks in the collection, particularly revealing is 0.9161/1 (Fig. 4) which was donated by the Church Missionary Society in 1958, having a label attached to it, which read: 'This was taken from a Heathen temple in a small town which was destroyed by Governor Glover between 1864 and 1870'[7]. Non-Western objects do not impart *facts* about 'Other' cultures, but are used to *construct* an understanding of them based on Western systems of knowledge making[8]. This Gelede mask became entangled in such negotiations of meaning. In the eyes of colonial administrators and missionaries at the time, it embodies a religious significance, which was at odds with their understanding of civilized society.


*Fig. 5. Gelede Mask, 0.6984, Mr & Mrs T. Smith 1946.*

Another mask in the collection was given by Mr and Mrs T Smith in 1946 in memory of their son, Eric, who was killed during the Second World War (Fig 5). He had been an avid collector of ethnographic objects, amassing over 80 items from various places including Africa, India, Sri Lanka, South-east Asia, Australia, Japan and North America, all of which his parents donated to the Manchester Museum (Annual Report 1945-1946). The issue of personal memory is an important one. Memories are one of the most fragile meanings of a museum object. An object's physical appearance may have little or no correlation to the types of individual and often arbitrary meanings that these objects articulated for their owners. As Stewart has noted:

> 'As experience is increasingly mediated and abstracted, the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence…In this process of distancing, the memory of the body is replaced by the memory of the object…The experience of the object lies outside the body's experience- it is saturated with meanings that will never be fully revealed to us' (1993: 133).

However, when fragmented information relating to these memories survives through documentation and oral histories for example, this evidence of shared narratives between objects and peoples lives is particularly revealing of the wider contexts in which these intimate memories were constructed. In this case, it demonstrates the cataclysmic impact of the Second World War on one family's life.

*Fig. 6. Gelede Mask, 0.8174/30, Mrs Mary Burgess 1951*

*Fig. 7. Gelede Mask, 0/5224, Mrs G. Whipp 1939*

Interestingly a quarter of the masks in the collection were donated by women. 0.8174/30 was given by Mrs Mary Burgess in 1951 (Fig. 6), and according to the catalogue card entry it was collected by her between 1896 and 1906. A further mask was donated by Mrs G. Whipp in 1939 (Fig. 7). Three more were

given by the Lees sisters between 1935 and 1952. I have been unable to ascertain much about Mrs Burgess and Mrs Whipp but through the use of various archives it has been possible to investigate the history of the Lees family and their relationship with Manchester Museum[9]. A dynamic which is particularly revealing of how museums, their objects, ideologies and public played an important role in the consolidation of a middle-class identity in nineteenth and twentieth century Manchester. After the death of John Lees in 1933, his daughters donated around 300 objects from his collection to the Manchester Museum; including two Gelede masks (Fig. 8 and 9). This collection, described by the 1933 annual report as 'large and valuable' consisted of objects predominantly from Africa and India. The Lees were a wealthy middle-class family. John Lees worked as a chief clerk and cashier for the Manchester Fire Insurance Company based at Kings Street. Although he was an avid collector of non-Western objects, it appears that he bought these through networks of art and antiquities dealers in Manchester rather than travelling abroad himself.

*Fig. 8. Gelede Mask 0.6431, Lees 1933*

*Fig.9. Gelede Mask 0.4814, Lees 1933*

It seems that much of the money John Lees used to expand his collections came from a business venture he entered into with his brother William Lees in the late nineteenth century, which took advantage of Britain's imperialist connections, buying land in America. There is also evidence to suggest that investments were made in tobacco and oil companies. It appears that these schemes brought the Lees family into considerable wealth, as by 1901, aged 53, John Lees had retired. John Lees did not donate objects to the Museum during his lifetime. It was therefore his daughters who benefited from the social prestige which accompanied this donation, with the 'Lees' collection being displayed in its own dedicated case at the museum from at least 1940 until 1951. The Misses Lees also became frequent financial subscribers to the museum along with influential individuals such as Lord Egerton of Tatton Park. The relationship between the Manchester Museum and the Lees family, which continued for over forty years, was thus clearly one of mutual benefit. The accessions register records that donations of objects continued to be made by the sisters until 1960, with a third Gelede mask being donated in 1951 (Fig 10).

*Fig 10. Gelede mask, 0.8283, Lees 1951.*

The collection and donation of ethnographical objects to the Manchester Museum thus provided a middle-class family with an inroad into various social circles. The influence of the Lees family would have been clearly visible at the Manchester Museum during the mid-twentieth century and it can be argued that their legacy remains embodied in the Museum today through the funds they subscribed as well as through their extensive collection of objects. The Lees collection thus illustrates how a biographical approach to museum objects reveals meanings that reflect inwards on Museum culture itself.

## Revealing Meanings - Enabling Approaches

What are the implications of these glimpses into the histories of collections? The intent of my research is not simply to provide an historical examination of objects, but instead to mobilise the multiple meanings accessed through these investigations to present new possibilities for their interpretation, relevance and potential use today.

The homogeneity created by the museum's present display of Gelede masks arranged in rows in a case which is visually dense with objects, belies the varied histories that these objects encapsulate. As the artist, Fred Wilson, puts it:

> 'The history of an object, the obsession that may have impelled its acquisition, the brutality with which it may have been removed from its original location are left unreported…spans of time or geography or the hostility and tension between artists, communities, cultures or countries are nullified as diverse works repose serenely side by side' (1993: 8).

All of the Gelede masks in the collections have come to Manchester as a result of historical processes linked to colonialism in West Africa[10], or through interactions and connections which have resulted from its legacy. Processes which have shaped British identity as well as the identity of those being colonized, and as such these objects reveal much about an intersecting cultural past. Annie Coombes has revealed and critiqued the motivations implicit in the Victorian and Edwardian museum's representation of the ethnographic 'Other' in her book *Reinventing Africa*, whereby African objects came to be enmeshed in systems of representation used to facilitate the formation of a national identity, rather than aiming to accurately portray the lives of African peoples (1994). Although much has changed in terms of the display and interpretation of non-western museum objects over the last decade[11], many museum displays continue to promote the idea of the museum as a neutral space in which displays can be understood by the museum visitor via anonymous text, which aims to provide factual explanations rather than raise questions.

It will never be possible to completely reconstruct the life-biographies of each Gelede mask from their beginnings in West Africa through to their current status in the Manchester Museum and to communicate this through their display. Nor will it be possible to recreate in the viewer the emotions that were generated by these objects in the past, whatever the contemporary viewer's cultural, social or economic background. As Susan Vogel has eloquently pointed out, we are:

> 'too locked in the perspectives of our own culture to presume to be faithful to the object in any exalted way. We can be faithful only in our fashion…only barely faithful, or not at all. And we can be faithful only in the fashion of our time' (1991:193).

However, the glimpses into a shared past offered by investigations into object histories although never complete or retotalising could be brought out in Museum displays in numerous ways. For example, by incorporating documentation such as letters or labels related to the objects on display, biographical narratives could be added to complement information concerning their original context. In addition to this, by having video clips of performances such as a contemporary Gelede masquerade in which new and old masks often perform together[12], shown next to the museum's masks, the contemporary side of this tradition as well as their performative aspect can be communicated. The display could similarly be brought into the twenty-first century through the incorporation of 'other voices' into the interpretation in the same way that the 'Rekindle Video' does for other sections of the gallery (see discussion in the section below)[13]. Additionally, the juxtaposition of a modern Gelede mask, made out of plastic for example, which had been collected or commissioned by the museum, next to those in the collections which had been made and used a hundred years ago could demonstrate connections with contemporary Africa whilst also showing differences between objects made and collected at different times.

## Contemporary Practices

My research also demonstrates that an examination of the life-histories of museum objects does not only identify interactions set in motion in the distant past, but also reveals how ethnographic objects in the Museum are active in processes of negotiation and representation in the present. For example, in 1996 four of Manchester Museum's Gelede masks were borrowed for an exhibition at the Angel Row Gallery in Nottingham. The exhibition entitled *Steel Stories* was a collaboration between the Angel Row Gallery, East Midlands African and Caribbean Visual Arts organisation, and the Nigerian born sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp. Since being accessioned into the collections, most of these masks had never left the museum, so their use in *Steel Stories* recontextualised them on various levels. The exhibition displayed the Gelede masks next to Sokari's pieces made out of steel. According to Sokari:

> 'I went strictly on the museum basis of just showing a decapitated head, I found that amusing, [on Gelede masks] they have people giving birth, a cyclist who happens to be a policemen… antelopes and things and I thought wow! How exciting is that! and I decided to have conversations about my family and I made a family tree, a portrait of… my husband and my two girls, and a conversation about London life and mad cow disease or what ever was going on at the time…and I just thought these Gelede masks have great conversations and I wanted to go on the same theme' (2005 pers. comm.).

Although these pieces were shown in a gallery, much of Sokari's work has been displayed and bought by Museums such as *Big Masquerade with Boat and Household on Head* (1995) which is displayed in the African Galleries at the British Museum. It is a life-sized sculpture, which embodies the spectacle of masquerade, placed next to museum objects it comments on their incompleteness. As Sokari wrote in an article for the *Journal of Museum Ethnography*: 'I always found it strange to be confronted in a museum with a bodiless mask facing me, pinned to a wall. Where was the rest of it?' (1999: 55).

As well as providing an example of how Gelede masks in the Manchester Museum's collections have formed connections with people in the present, Douglas Camp's work is also an example of how the creative collaboration of artists and museum collections has enormous potential for suggesting innovative ways to bring new perspectives and hidden histories to the fore. An example of a particularly revealing approach to museum collections is demonstrated by the work of the artist Fred Wilson (Wilson 1992, Wilson & Sims 1993, Corin 1994). Through the careful juxtaposition of objects, his installations address underlying issues concerning representation, inclusion and exclusion, and reveal how a reflexive approach can transform a traditional museum space into a place for an ongoing cultural debate (Corin 1994: 8). A particularly poignant example of this was a display, which formed part of the

exhibition *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society Museum in Baltimore. In a case containing silver ware, Wilson added a label, which read 'Metal work 1793-1880'. Also made of metal and 'hidden deep' within the Museum stores, Wilson found a pair of slave shackles. So he placed them together. As he says: 'they had a lot to do with each other, the production of one was made possible by the subjugation enforced by the other' (1992: 101).

As well as investigating the forgotten histories of Museum objects Wilson has also examined the artistic life and achievements of contemporary African peoples in his work. Making the point, through the introduction of unexpected contemporary items into his installations, that current issues are often frozen out of displays of African objects in Museums and Galleries (Wilson & Sims 1993). Thus the visual interventions which question the circumstances surrounding the assembly and display of museum or gallery collections via the juxtaposition of objects, reveals and deconstructs the situatedness of these objects in effective ways. These allow objects to become empowered, dynamic agents, facilitators of the 'back and forth processes of understanding between cultures' in order to negotiate understandings in the present (Lynch 2004: 146).

This brings me to the final question raised at the beginning of this paper, for whom do these meanings have relevance? Museums and Galleries have begun to re-examine the ways in which objects are interpreted and cared for in order to move towards a two-way process of understanding and communication with the communities they serve and whose cultural heritage their collections represent (Peers & Brown 2003: 1). At the Manchester Museum a pioneering community advisory panel has been established in partnership with the museum to debate, identify and articulate the needs and interests of diverse communities, in order to create culturally inclusive representation (CAP 2003). Over the last five years, the group has been responsible for instigating initiatives such as the 'Rekindle' project where members expressed their personal reactions to objects in the collections; video clips from which are shown in the second Living Cultures Gallery. In addition to this, community groups, such as Ebunsola, are asking for access to objects and the documentation associated with them, on their terms. As I have suggested, non-Western objects also provide an insight into an intersecting colonial history. In order for these hidden meanings to be brought out, and for the Museum to be of relevance to a wider range of visitors whose backgrounds are implicated in these histories, it needs to become what Ganahl has described as an 'experimental space'. A space which helps us to become aware of the values we have gained through our membership to multiple communities (1997: 137).

## Conclusion

Museum objects have been shown to be embedded within processes of representation, which shape identity individually, communally and nationally. Museum displays rarely confront these implicit processes relating to an intersecting cultural past in their permanent displays. By examining issues such as colonialism and its legacy through the interpretation of museum objects, visitors can be encouraged to 'risk their prejudices or comfortable notions of themselves' by becoming aware of the consequences and implications of these processes (Golding 2004: 26).

Ethnographic objects offer us insights into contacts and the creation of meaning occurring within and between cultures. As Mary Pratt from whom Clifford has borrowed the term 'contact zone' describes:

> 'A contact perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. [It stresses] co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often with radically asymmetrical relations of power' (cited in Clifford 1997: 192).

Clifford has applied this theory of 'contact zones' to the museum (1997). He has shown how encounters between people do not only take place at geographical peripheries but also at cultural boundaries or 'sites of discovery' such as those represented by the Manchester Museum (1997: 193). This contact perspective can be honed-in from the museum environment to focus on the objects themselves through a consideration of the relationships created through and around artefacts (Peers & Brown 2003). Every object that makes up the West African collections at the Manchester Museum is emblematic of specific cultural encounters, whether it has been bought, given as a gift, exchanged, confiscated or stolen. As the work of the artists mentioned in this paper demonstrates, museum objects have a continuing potential to negotiate meaning in the present and to facilitate contacts between people from various backgrounds.

By participating in this dialogue set up around the object as 'contact zone' via innovative techniques of display and interpretation, museum visitors become implicated in the construction of meaning, rather than simply being recipients of curatorial knowledge. As McLeod has written:

> 'Only in this way will [museums] get unexpected results, have awkward or unanswerable questions asked [and] be part of new ways of looking at their collections, new ways of perceiving the world' (cited in Levell & Shelton 1998: 22).

Museum objects may be fragments, but they are fragments, which have the potential to reveal a multitude of stories about their lives.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks to the Manchester Museum for their continuing support of my research, particularly to Lisa Harris, Curator of Anthropology. Thanks also to Sokari Douglas-Camp and Frank Willett for sparing the time to discuss their work with me, and to the Angel Row Gallery. Many thanks to Louise Tythacott and Dr Helen Rees Leahy for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper. I also wish to acknowledge gratefully the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

## Notes

1 The nations currently denoted by the term 'West Africa' cover a total area of 6.5 million square kilometres. The names used globally for these regions today are: Nigeria, Niger, Ghana (former Gold Coast), Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Benin Republic (formerly Dahomy), Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Guinea Bissau, Burkino Faso and Mali .

2 Gelede masks form an integral part of the Gelede masquerade. A public performance found principally among western Yoruba peoples (Drewal & Drewal 1983: 7). They are worn perched on the head of the performer whose face is disguised by a thin piece of cloth. The masks often have elaborate superstructures; the masqueraders also wear costumes of brightly coloured assorted fabrics (Lawal, B. 1996: xiii).

3 Bankes recollects: 'When I came to the Museum in October 1984 there were one or two Gelede masks on show in the old Ethnography Gallery' (2004 pers. comm.).

4 Ibeji are known as twin figures. Twins are regarded as special in Yoruba society. Although physically double, they are seen as being spiritually 'one'. If one twin dies a statuette or 'ibeji' is made to house this twin's soul in order to prevent the surviving twin from dying (Lawal 1996: 53-54). This ibeji reflects the sex of the dead twin and the mother often carries it around with her and feeds it as she does the living twin.

5 Minkisi (Nkisi in the singular) refers to a wide range of objects produced and used in the Kongo region of Central Africa. They denote a belief in the potency of the unknown. In simplistic terms they act as containers for bilongo (medicines) and form receptacles for ancestral spirits (Mack 1995: 54-55). Inactive on their own they become powerful through the interaction of the nganga (priest). Once activated they are used for a variety of important roles including curing disease and punishing wrongdoers (MacGaffery 2000: 12). In order to authorise an agreement or consultation a nail or blade would have been driven into its body.

[6] These are ‘cloth and clothing’, ‘arms and armour’, ‘out of clay’, and ‘archery’.

[7] Information from museum catalogue cards.

[8] For a further discussion concerning representations of non-Western objects in the Museum see Coombes 1994, Karp & Mullen Kreamer 1991,Thomas 1991and Stocking 1985.

[9] These archives include Manchester and Oldham Local Studies Units and the Greater Manchester County Record Office.

[10] I recognise that West African colonialism was a complex process which not only had regional differences but also changed over time resulting in diverse economic and social manifestations (Hatch 1771: 198).

[11] As demonstrated by the work of museum practitioners such as Laura Peers, Alison Brown, Trudy Nicks, Anita Herle and Anthony Shelton (2003) and exemplified by current museum displays such as *African Worlds* at the Horniman Museum London which opened in 1999 and the *World Cultures* gallery which opened at Liverpool Museum in 2005.

[12] On the 11 September 2005 Ebunsola hosted a Gelede Masquerade performance by a dance troop from America at the Zion Centre in Manchester as part of a festival of traditional West African masquerades. The performance, which lasted about two hours, consisted of loud drumming, clapping, dancing and singing involving the audience. The Gelede Masqueraders appeared dressed in brightly coloured clothes with rattles around their ankles and impressive Gelede masks perched on their heads. These masks were varied, for example one looked new and was made out of plastic. This mask, which was larger than the rest and worn by the principle masquerade dancer, took the form of a stylised face and hairstyle. The other masks were older and made out of wood and had been repainted in bright colours.

[13] An example of a similar approach is the ‘Voices’ project that took place at the Horniman Museum, London, prior to the opening of the new *African Worlds Gallery*. Here people of African and Caribbean descent living in London were interviewed and their views and impressions about the objects on display were incorporated into the interpretative text alongside a photograph of the interviewee (Shelton 2003: 191-192).

## Bibliography

Afinsuji, O. (2005). *An introduction to Ere and Gelede masquerade*. Manchester: Ebunsola.

Appadurai, A. (1986). 'Commodities and the politics of value', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.) *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 3-63, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bankes, G. (1997). 'From Ethnology to Explorers and Encounters'. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 7, 79-90.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (tr. Richard Nice). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

CAP (2003). *CAP News Update: The Manchester Museum Community Advisory Panel Newsletter.*

Coombes, A. (1994). *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture andPopular Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Corin, L. (ed.) (1994). *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson.* Baltimore: The New Press.

Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press.

Douglas Camp, S. (1999). 'Life in Museums', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 11, 55-62.

Drewal, H. J. & M, T. Drewal. (1983). *Gelede: Art and Female Power among the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Bloomington Indiana University Press.

Ganahl, R. (1997). 'Museums and public/counter-public space in the global-capitalist era of digital convertibility', in Kunsthaus Bregenz and Christian Kravagna (eds.) (2001) *The Museum as Arena. Artists on Institutional Critique*, 135-137, Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz.

Golding, V. (2004). 'A Field-site of creative collaboration: Inspiration Africa'. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 16, 19-36.

Hatch, J. (1971). *Nigeria: a History*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited.

Herle, A. (2003). 'Objects, agency and museums: continuing dialogues between the Torres Strait and Cambridge', in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (eds.) *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, 194-207, London and New York: Routledge.

Karp, I & Mullen Kreamer, C. (eds) (1992). *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Lawal, B. (1996). *Art Gender and Social Harmony in an African Culture.* Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.

Levell, N & A. Shelton. (1998). 'Text, Illustration and Reverie: some thoughts on Museums, Education and new technologies', *Journal of Museum Ethnography,* 10, 15-34.

Lynch, B. (2004). *Access to collections and affective interaction with objects in the museum.* Unpublished PhD thesis. Manchester University.

MacGaffery, W. (2000). *Kongo Political Culture.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mack, J. (ed.) (2000). *Africa: Arts and Cultures.* London: British Museum Publication.

Manchester Museum Central Archives. *Annual Reports 1889-2003*. University of Manchester.

Manchester Museum Central Archives. *Ethnography Accessions Register*. University of Manchester.

Nicks, T. (2003). 'Museums and contact work: introduction', in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (eds) *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, 19-27, London and New York: Routledge

Peers, L & A Brown (2003). 'Introduction', in Laura Peers and Alison Brown (eds.) *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, 1-16, London and New York: Routledge.

Shelton, A. (2003). 'Curating African Worlds', in Laura Peers and Alison Brown (eds.) *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, 181-193, London and New York: Routledge.

Stewart, S. (1984). *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, The Collection*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Stocking, G.W (ed.) (1985). *Objects and Others: Essays in Museums and Material Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Thomas, N. (1991). *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Havard University Press.

Vogel, S. (1991) 'Always true to the object in our fashion', in Karp, I & Lavine S.D (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 191-204, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Wilson, F. (1992). 'Constructing the spectacle of culture in Museums'- text drawn from the lecture series 'Art in context: rethinking the new world', in Kunsthaus Bregenz and Christian Kravagna (eds) (2001) *The Museum as Arena. Artists on Institutional Critique*, 97-102, Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz.

Wilson, F & Sims, P. (eds) (1993). *The Museum: Mixed metaphors. Fred Wilson*. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum.

## Biography

**Emma K. Poulter BA (Hons.), MA**

PhD student, Museology, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, University of Manchester

Emma trained as an archaeologist at Southampton University where she developed an interest in the study of object biographies. This interest was developed during her Masters in Art Gallery and Museum Studies at the University of Manchester where she became particularly interested in the representation of anthropological objects in museums. Emma's PhD is based on the West African collections at the Manchester Museum, examining the biographies of objects in these collections in order to investigate the historical, economic and social processes underlying the colonial enterprise, which enabled these objects to become situated in Manchester. These histories have largely been excluded from the interpretation and themes chosen to display non-western objects. Emma has worked in various museums and galleries including the Harris Museum and Art Gallery in Preston and Manchester Art Gallery.

# Illness in Contemporary Arts: Metonymic Representations and the Politics of Recognition

*Effie Komninou*

> 'You do not die from being born, nor from having lived, nor from old age. You die from something. (...) There is no such thing as a natural death: nothing that happens to a man is ever natural, since his presence calls the world into question. All men must die: but for every man his death is an accident and, even if he knows it and consents to it, an unjustifiable violation'.
>
> Simone de Beauvoir

These are the last lines of Simone de Beauvoir's book 'A Very Easy Death', an account of her mother's hospitalization and death from cancer. Within the space of a few sentences, dying from illness is defined as a primordial 'accident', 'an unjustifiable violation', the metaphor of one of the most persistent narratives of our culture, the Fall, constantly 'calling the world into question'. Even though progress, technology and medicine in the West seem to be able to offer a postmodern apotheosis of life, man is existentially doomed to failure. Still emotionally ambivalent between 'mourning' and 'satisfaction', between loss and desire, the Western world is obsessively trying to escape death - bound up as it is to the Christian promise of immortality in a cosmic sense (Dollimore, 2001).

Illness, either as a pertinent belief in the existence of a supernatural punishment for an 'original sin', or, the human condition that embodies man with mortality, is somehow omnipresent: present, presented and represented, illness in the West is extending beyond the medical terminology and is identified with progress as it plunges into the political language or the 'genes' of society (Sontag, 2002).

While the World Health Organisation's Constitution defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organisation website, http://www.who.int/about/en) and has not amended its perfectionist definition of health since 1948, medical sociologists have argued since the 1970s that the sick role changes according to the cultural, social and political meanings attached to health as the moral model of the universe. As the full narrative of life, from birth to death, is being disciplined within medication, health acquires a holistic quality, and illness seems to be defined upon a classificatory system that confines it as the literal and symbolic (that is social) opposite of 'well-being' (Gerhart, 1989).

As medical sociologist, Uta Gerhardt has noted 'after the intellectual shock of Nazism (...) it became disconcertingly clear that what constituted health, as a

collective if not an individual mental state, seemed largely determined by social definitions of normality' (Gerhardt, 1989: xviv). Michel Foucault's historical-philosophical accounts of the institutionalisation of medicine, have significantly formulated the contemporary narrative about the constitution and normalisation of both the natural and the social man. As part of a broader historical and philosophical turn against the modernistic hagiographies of the West, Foucauldian thought has enabled the understanding of the ways in which the medicalisation of life has been constituted since the 19th century, and enabled the approach of the 'medical' institution as one of the most important sites for the exercise of disciplinary power over the human subject (Foucault, 1979, 2003, 2001).

The birth of the clinic, a 19th century invention, signalizes for Foucault the individualization of disease, the historical turning point where disease is given an organization, a structure and a space apt to categorization. The birth of the clinic gave prominence to the category of the 'individual patient', while the whole mythology of 'clinical reason' and 'clinical positivism' started to unravel. Within the clinic and under the clinical gaze, illness has been configured and localized in the same mode that gave birth to physiognomy and established the idea of 'seeing' as a mode of diagnosis.

According to sociologist Georges Didi-Huberman the localization of illness upon the visible formulated 'the figurative problem that obsessed every medical clinic, the problem of the link, the phantasmatic link, between seeing and knowing, seeing and suffering' (Didi-Huberman, 2003: 8). This phantasmatic link has been an unresolved political problem within the history of the representation of illness, ever since it started to be perceived as a recognizable, visible body –specifically a body within a body, or a body projected on a face. The category of the individual patient, both the subject and object of clinical observation, is from that time to emerge as a special, modified space.

For Sander L. Gilman, Professor of Liberal Arts in Human Biology, this modified space is the image of disease. Gilman defines this space as a continuous one, which is connected to 'the fear of collapse, the sense of dissolution, which contaminates the Western image of all diseases' (Gilman, 1993: 3). For Gilman, this representational continuity demonstrates a discourse of homogenizing power. In his various analyses, he considers how representations of illness solicit homophobia ever since the visual conception of madness and how they have been used in order to stigmatize, isolate and control (Gilman, 1994, 1988, 1986).

This thesis recognizes this modified place to still rest in the heart of the representation of illness in contemporary art: the category of the 'individual patient', its identity as the subject and the object of clinical observation is still being explored in the visualization of disease on the museum's walls. Looking at just a few of the exhibitions of the last decade, one can recognize the importance of this category both for artists and curators in the West. [Indicative list of relevant exhibitions: Care and Control (group exhibition, Rear Window,

Hackney Hospital, London, 1995), Hospital Projects, (Publics Art Development Trust, various spaces, London, 1997), Living & Dying (permanent Wellcome Trust gallery, British Museum, London 2003), Damien Hirst, Cancer Chronicles (White Cube, London, 2003), Christine Boreland, Simulated Patient (Lisson Gallery, London, 2004), Invalid (group exhibition, Old Royal Hospital, Greenwich, 2004), Talking Back to science: art, science and the personal (ongoing Wellcome Trust group project, inaugurated in 2004), Marc Quinn, Chemical Life Support Art Images (White Cube, London, 2005), Inside Out Loud: visualizing women's health in contemporary art (group exhibition, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis, 2005), At the mercy of others: the politics of care (group exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2005), The body at risk: photography of disorder, illness and healing (International Center of Photography, New York, 2005/6)].

My main research concern is to examine how the aesthetic is configured and legitimized today in the display of works on illness on the museum's walls, in other words, within the institutional discourses of contemporary art practice. The key question is what it might mean, in historical and political terms, to have an aesthetic relationship with images of illness. Under this vein, I am interested in reassessing the relationship between the ethic and the aesthetic as it has been reintroduced in contemporary art theory - through writers like Jacques Derrida (1987), Terry Eagleton (1990) and Janet Wolff (1993).

The term 'contemporary' of course is not by any means axiomatic: what is exactly understood when we refer to contemporary art, when is it that the 'new' begins? The idea of discontinuity underscoring Foucault's entire theoretical project, is crucial in order to identify what the contemporary might mean regarding the representation of illness. What could signalize the contemporary rapture such a historically overloaded representational field has undergone? Or, what in Foucault's words is 'the space of a few years [within which] a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think other things in a new way' (Foucault, 1973: 50).

The examination of the artistic production of the last 30 years, as the responses to AIDS have shaped it, may provide the fertile ground for all these issues to unravel, for all the 'breaks' to be examined: it is a literally 'new' and inadequately researched space in art historical terms; and it sets out the first artistic responses to AIDS, a syndrome which initially embodied and today typifies concurrent responses to a new 'epidemic'. An interdisciplinary analysis of this period is important in order to try to recognize how representations of illness acquire the status of works of art since the late 1970s, and how this influences our understandings of art and art history. It is equally important to evaluate how contemporary art historical writing – like the new art history, *Art Since 1900* (Foster et all, 2004), understands current artistic production as it happens.

The main hypothesis is that representing disease in the arts formulates a very particular discursive practice (a historical, social and institutional structure of categories and beliefs), which historically resides on two main axes: on

one hand, the figurative problem of illness as representation (Didi-Huberman's phantasmatic link between seeing and suffering), and on the other hand, the broader implications of this representational field for the wider domain of the politics of representation. Trying to establish the characteristics of this discourse through specific recurrent themes (the ill subject, illness as an abstract entity, the hospital, the 'clinical' gaze, the body and the sexual politics of illness) as well as through particular case studies (mainly exhibitions and commissioned works), the representation of disease is being examined as the borderline topos, where the mobilization of aesthetics and the mobilization of politics meet and converse.

The underlying concept of this schema is that medicine invaded – and still invades - the arts, in as much as artists were and still are consciously turning illness into art, from tuberculosis and madness to cancer and AIDS. What is implied here, is that this sort of art in the museums today still carries something of the spirit of the 'wunderkammer' (the old cabinet of curiosities), in as much as the popularization of medicine and its infusion with culture ever since the conception of the idea of 'Public Health', is somehow 'factualised' and naturalized within the practices of the museum and the curatorial choices for the display of these works. Health, mortality and normalcy blend in their association with the body, while all the definitional uncertainties of illness seem to have been copiously depicted in the arts: from destruction to triumph illness has been figuratively present full-scale at least ever since the invention of photography. As particular political, symbolic and notional spheres are perpetually replaceable (illness-health-normalcy, and/or representation-ideology-identity, and/or ethics-aesthetics-politics), the representation of illness today extends beyond the historicism of metaphors and the pretext of symbols (Sontag, 2002, Herzlich, 1973). Lay perceptions of health and illness inform identity politics and today, by 'virtue' of the history of their representations, occur metonymically both on a formal (aesthetic) as well as on a political (ideological) level: they usurp identity when they are not.

Under this light, one has to recognize the pervasiveness of the medical discourse in the art of museums. This pervasiveness has shaped a particular modality of aesthetic realism and is the outcome of a constant interaction between art and medicine since the 19th century, which can be traced back upon various moments in the histories of the institutionalization of both discourses (anatomy, physiognomy and the conception of the idea of Public Health are being approached as characteristic moments in this interaction with particular reference to photography). This realism is betokening a slippery concern with objectivity and is approached throughout the research as the basis of what Gilman describes as the 'continuous face of the disease' perpetuating a representational homophobic consensus: as artworks are indiscriminately digested into culture, the images of illness they bear are unequivocally appropriated as signs. This process evacuates artworks as signs all too easily of their forms, their signifiers: 'illness as image' often becomes the bearer and not the maker of meaning; it is transformed into 'image as illness', a supposedly objective sign ambivalently correlated with value (Jordanova, 1989: 47).

The principal implication for art theory is a less reflexive approach to art-making, or as art historian and critic Hal Foster has put it a 'turning away from questions of representation to iconographies of content; a certain turn from a politics of the signifier to a politics of the signified' (Foster, 1993: 3). Foster's critique underlines how an extrinsic 'theoretical concept or a political position' can operate as the content of the work at the expense of the analysis of how the work can be political or theoretical in its own terms, of how it operates on the level of the signifier. The predicament – and what this thesis argues for - is how the analysis of the art of museums as a distinctive field in visual culture, may enable the shift from setting out another iconography of disease, into opening up questions of representation and meaning.

Curator and activist Jan Zita Grover has mused:

> 'What, we might ask, constitutes a meaningful photograph of a person with AIDS? Is it a portrait of that person before physical signs and symptoms mark him/her (but what of the latent infection)? A portrait of that person with the physical signs and symptoms of illness or chemotherapy (but what of the person who looks healthy to the end)? A portrait of the person in extremis? All of these? None of these?' (Grover, 1997:155)

The constant interplay between the personal and the political since the 1980s has formulated a quest for a decentred human subjectivity, a visually declared need of recognition, aesthetically and politically mobilized upon the representation of illness. We could think for example of the intensity of the 80s and early 90s in the various proclamations and explorations of sexuality as a subject of art: for example, Robert Gober, David Wojnarowicz, Felix-Gonzales Torres and Zoe Leonard, to name just of few as they are canonized in the newest history of art publication, *Art Since* 1900 (Foster et all, 2004). Or, the practices of commenting on society as a somatic entity resonating within the broader post-feminist framework epitomized in the works of Kiki Smith and Mona Hatoum. Accordingly, the works of female artists who have been depicting the female human body as the topos where identity is constructed and articulated, deconstructing and/or fragmenting the self through its corporeal horizons, like Ida Appleborg, Hannah Wilke and Jo Spence.

The more medical sociology enables the wider understanding of the provisionality and transitionality of the sick role, the more 'meaningful' the representations of illness will become. The reading(s) of all the meanings could generate a dynamic space for criticism to reflect on the position the 'art work' might or might not assume in the wider field of representation. To examine the representation of illness acknowledging its metonymical 'disposition', cannot but constantly draw attention to power structures and ideological practices, as well as to the dialectical traps being re-fabricated around art today, as politics steadily turn rightwards and suffering becomes more and more spectacularised.

In the lines of gender theorist Judith Butler's thinking on the 'human striving for recognition' on one hand and the 'prohibition of public grievability' on the other, the analysis and critique of the figurative problem, which the representation of illness historically carries, may test the limits not only of cultural criticism, but more importantly of the autonomy of cultural representations today (Butler, 2004). And it can ultimately dare to ask how contemporary cultural perceptions of humanity come into being.

In the heart of every humanistic pursuit, there has always been a quest for 'truth'. In Western representations that quest has been slippery, as trying to find meaning, seeking to grasp the 'truth', is arguably a political question. As Foucault has succinctly put it:

> 'The problem is not changing people's consciousness –or what's in their heads- but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. […] The political question […] is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness, or ideology; it is truth itself' (Foucault, 1991: 74-75).

Approaching the representation of illness as metonymical will primarily focus on 'the institutional regime of the production of truth' coming to life in the museum space: the proposition is that the representation of illness in contemporary artworks generates a particular metonymic quality, when what read as illness is identity and when representation stands for ideology; thus, representation becomes the metonymy for truth, which ultimately is a metonymy for power.

This schema views contemporary artworks/ exhibitions as trying to balance between two main ideas: the narrativity and the unthinkability of illness on the museum walls, or in other words, the representation of politics and the politics of representation, which could be characterized as 'the politics of recognition'. The metaphoric and symbolic representation of illness today (what has been described as 'victim art' in concurrent critical debates) falls into the traps of identity politics and the dangers of naturalization or obscurity, that cultural activism was facing less than 10 years ago. Why is it for example that prolific activist groups such Gran Fury decided to disband in 1993? Why, or even better how, is it that the witty and caustic tone of artists, like Barbara Kruger is being historicized upon their aesthetic impact on visual culture? How is Ed Kashi's photographic project on the home hospice of terminally ill in America, or Nicola Nixon's portraits of people with AIDS vindicating a space for an aesthetic against the defeat?

Art critic and historian Benjamin Buchloh has observed 'a steady dismantling of the autonomous practices and spheres of culture' and has asked: 'Where does this leave artistic practices in the present, and how can we, as art historians and critics, address them? Are there still spaces situated outside that homogenizing apparatus?' (Foster et all, 2004: 673). It is within the problematic of this teleological thinking the stress of this research falls and it is by addressing these exact questions that the resonances of the 80s and

the 90s are crucial in approaching the nonsensicality of the characterization of representations as 'meaningful' or not implies.

By 'meaningful' then, we can assume the field of representation that allows space for criticism to address it beyond the dialectical traps imposed on art when viewed solely either as the yardstick of an idealistic social reformation, and/or as a universally inclusive utopia. This tendency is largely being reinvented today, as politics steadily turn rightwards under the new 'Great Terror' Western societies have been internalising after 9/11. The long-lasting nineteenth century assumptions that viewed art as a benevolent inclusive utopia are being reinvigorated as cultural policies in countries like Britain evolve around a utilitarian concept of an 'art for all'. Behind the alibi of the need for a new civil society and the careful reinvigoration of Hegelian ideas about 'the artist as an idealist' and 'the objective truth of the spirit', a naturalized, depoliticized political myth is being (re)fabricated around art. I believe that the representation of illness is a field demonstrative of this depoliticisation and all the highly political implications it carries.

In his critique of Hegel's aesthetics Theodor Adorno argued that for Hegel 'the objectivity of the artwork is the truth of the spirit: It is the spirit that has gone over into its own otherness and become identical with itself' (Adorno & Tiedermann, 2002:344). The removeness of any idea of otherness (as art is supposed to be a monolithic, positive 'truth' 'identical with itself') is the axis of every discourse restricting it to a 'social', and/or pseudo-ethical functionality. According to Adorno, such a tactic reveals a propensity 'which harmonizes all too fundamentally with the general direction of society towards the apotheosis of means" and "production for the sake of production' (Adorno & Tiedermann, 2002: 341-342). As works on illness are widely being commissioned and displayed today by organisations such as the Wellcome Trust, we cannot remain oblivious to an institutional propensity that fosters understandings of medicine and suffering in high-profile contexts. As Foucauldian scholarship and the recent history of cultural activism have demonstrated, the notion of illness is structural and can question institutions and power structures far beyond the confines of medicine itself.

Butler does indeed posit a 'new basis for humanism' by pleading for a world, which nurtures bodily vulnerability without eliminating it. As she puts is, 'we are not separate identities in the struggle for recognition but are already involved in a reciprocal exchange, an exchange that dislocates us from our positions, our subject-positions, and allows us to see that community itself requires the recognition that we are all, in different ways, striving for recognition' (Butler, 2003: 41-44). What this research is trying to discover *en route* is whether art upon its encounters with illness has managed something different today upon the challenge reality continually offers. Discovering the human through loss, striving to present the 'unpresentable', could be a core metonymy as well as a crucial imperative for the representation of illness, if we still wish to perceive art to be capable of fostering the human 'striving for recognition'. In a deeply re-politicized epoch for artists and art institutions to address these issues, representing disease within the museum today may put forward

a new critical basis for aesthetics as a means of revealing the human condition and the very possibility of humanity.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the organisational team of this conference that gave me the opportunity to present my research in a wide and diverse academic audience. Particularly, I wish to mention the genuine help and support of Kostas Arvanitis and Heather Hollins. I also wish to thank the Department of Cultural Policy & Management at the School of Arts of City University for supporting and encouraging my research. Above all, I am grateful to my PhD supervisor, Dr Juliet Steyn for her vigorous guidance and intellectual motivation.

## Bibliography

Adorno, G. & Tiedermann, R. (ed.) (2002) *Theodor Adorno: Aesthetic Theory*, London: Continuum.

Beauvoir, S. de (1969) *A Very Easy Death*, London: Penguin.

Butler, J. (2004) *Precarious Life*. London: Verso.

Derrida, J. (1987) *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Didi-Huberman, G. (2003) *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Cambridge Massachusetts & London: MIT Press.

Dollimore, J. (2001) *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Sontag, S. (2002) *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS as Metaphor*. London: Penguin Classics.

Eagleton, T. (1990) *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. London: Blackwell

Foster, F. (1993) 'The Politics of the Signifier: A Conversation on the Whitney Biennial', *October,* 66 3-27

Foster, H., Krauss, R., Bois, Y.A., Buchloh B. (2004) *Art since 1900: modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Foucault, M. (1973) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1979) *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1991) 'Truth and Power' in P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, 51-75, London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (2001) *Madness and Civilisation*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (2003) *The Birth of the Clinic*. London: Routledge.

Frankenberg, R. (1986) 'Sickness as Cultural Performance: Drama, Trajectory and Pilgrimage. Root metaphors and the making of social disease', *International Journal of Health Service*, 16 603

Gerhardt, U. (1989) *Ideas about Illness: An Intellectual and Political History of Medical Sociology*. London: MacMillan.

Gilman, S. L. (1987) 'AIDS and Syphilis: the iconography of disease', in D. Crimp (ed.) *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/ Cultural Activism*, 87-108, October 43, Cambridge Massachusetts & London: MIT Press

Gilman, S. L. (1994) *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Grover, J. Z. (1997) 'Constitutional Symptoms' in S. Watney (ed) *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*. 3rd edition, London: Cassel.

Jordanova, L. (1989) *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the 18th and 20th Centuries*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Morris, D. B. (1998) *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wolff, J. (1993) *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*. London : MacMillan.

## Biography

**Effie Komninou**

PhD student, City University, School of Arts, Department of Cultural Policy and Management)

Effie Komninou holds and MA in Arts Criticism & Management (distinction) and a BA in Photography. She has curated photography exhibitions in Greece and abroad and has published among others at *Third Text* and *Futures*. She recently curated an exhibition on design and human rights for the Greek Section of Amnesty International and is currently collaborating as a researcher (dramaturgy) with the dance group *Aerites* on a performance based on the true story of Ellen West who suffered from anorexia. Her PhD research examines the representation of disease in contemporary visual arts (under the supervision of Dr Juliet Steyn).

# Museums and the Combating of Prejudice

*Dr. Richard Sandell*

## Extended abstract

A decade ago, Stephen Weil articulated a question with which, he suggested, museum practitioners, policy makers and funding bodies had become increasingly preoccupied. 'What kinds of positive changes can museums really effect in the world beyond their doors?' (1996: 95). In responding to the question he argued that, while they could not single-handedly 'stop a war, end injustice or cure inequality', museums were nonetheless influential organisations with the capacity to make a significant contribution to 'the task of building a just, stable, abundant, harmonious, and humane society' (ibid). In highlighting their potential influence, however, Weil also drew attention to the lack of understanding and knowledge concerning the ways in which museums might make such a contribution. My purpose in this study was to respond to this deficit in understanding, through a theoretically informed empirical investigation of the ways in which audiences respond to exhibitions developed with particular social intentions. My research focuses, in particular, on the ways in which audiences engage with exhibitions where attempts have been made to 'write in' messages designed to promote equality and combat prejudice. It explores the discourses and interpretative repertoires that are stimulated amongst visitors by the exhibition encounter and considers the cues, interpretive props or other factors within the museum's control, that might potentially influence the ways in which visitors engage with ideas of difference. Finally, it explores the role that audience perceptions of the museum's cultural authority play in influencing readings of, and responses to, exhibitions.

Sociology, cultural studies, anthropology and museum studies have, in recent decades, thoroughly positioned museums as sites in which collective social understandings of cultural difference are constituted, communicated and negotiated. Although work within these disciplines has sometimes sought to acknowledge the complexities, contradictions and ambivalence involved in modes of cultural production (and, more rarely, those associated with processes of audience reception), analyses have very often highlighted the capacity for museums to function as instruments of power, generating discriminatory effects through the ways in which differences, in particular racial and gender variations, have been represented in negative, hierarchical and otherwise pernicious ways. The representational practices of the museum have frequently been characterised as excluding and oppressive through their tendency to erase, marginalise or silence minority groups and identities.

In recent years however, there has been a growing interest, especially amongst practitioners, in the potential which museums might hold to function as sites

for the staging of liberatory interventions designed to contest or subvert dominant (oppressive, discriminatory) understandings of cultural difference. Museums in many contexts have sought to critically deploy the principal axes of difference – gender, ethnicity, class, religion and, (though to a lesser extent), disability and sexuality - to construct exhibitions and displays which reflect the increasingly pluralist societies in which they operate and which, to varying degrees, are predicated upon concepts of equal human rights. Although these trends in museological practice have been widespread, limited attention has been given to interrogating and understanding the social and cultural effects and consequences of these new representational forms which seek to affirm differences, promote cross-community understanding and respect, counter prejudice and intolerance and privilege ways of seeing underpinned by concepts of equity and social justice. In what ways do audiences engage with exhibitions designed with these intentions in mind? What potential, if any, might museums hold to shape, not rather than simply reflect, both individual and broader societal understandings of difference? What challenges and dilemmas are museum practitioners, involved in producing exhibitions that purposefully seek to confront different forms of prejudice, likely to encounter along the way? My study then, seeks to address these timely questions in particular ways. By blending contemporary theoretical perspectives from a range of disciplines and bringing these to bear on the analysis of empirical, in-depth research into processes of audience reception, I aims to shed light on the social agency of museums. (I use the term 'social agency' to refer to the capacity for museums to - in varied ways - shape, not simply reflect, social and political relations and realities).

In some senses, this project is in step with current museological thinking and practice. Although the conception of the museum as an agent of social change is sometimes fiercely contested, there is, nevertheless, growing international interest in the adoption of purposes and functions which position museums as institutions which can be brought to bear on 'the social' in various ways. Consequently, one of my main aims has been to develop a set of concepts, a language and a body of evidence with which to understand and explain these emerging trends and phenomena. The findings of my study lead me to contend that museums can counter prejudice through their capacity to frame (and reframe), to inform and enable the conversations which visitors, and society more broadly, have about difference. However, in other ways, the arguments I develop also serve to problematise emerging trends and conventions in exhibitionary practice as well as current thinking within museum communication and representation. Some prejudices, for example, emerge from my research as both more challenging for audiences to engage with and more problematic for museums to confront, highlighting the complex and dynamic relationship museums have with dominant social values and norms. What factors account for the situation in which some forms of oppression and discrimination are universally and unequivocally condemned whilst others remain either neglected or deemed to be negotiable and open to debate? My contention, that museums might usefully explore the possibilities presented, by substituting their attempts to remain impartial

and objective (by presenting opposing perspectives on particular issues of rights and equality as equally valid and leaving visitors to come to their own conclusions) with approaches which privilege (and attempt to engender support for) a particular moral (non-prejudiced) standpoint, is perhaps one with which many practitioners will be uncomfortable. A further purpose of my research then is to contribute to ongoing debates about the purpose, agency and concomitant social responsibilities of museums (and, indeed, other media engaged in the representation of minority or marginalised social groups).

In my presentation, I shall argue that museums can counter prejudice by reframing, informing and enabling society's conversations about difference. I shall identify both interpretive strategies and specific display devices, cues and props which appear to be especially effective in stimulating audiences to engage with exhibitions (in ways which fulfil the museum's mandate) and I shall explore the characteristics attributed to museums as knowledge-providers that illuminate their potentially unique contribution to the task of tackling prejudice. Finally, I shall highlight the difficulties exhibition makers encounter in developing representational interventions intended to offer alternative ways of understanding difference.

## References

Weil, S. E. (1996) 'The Distinctive Numerator', in S. Weil (2002), *Making Museums Matter*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

## Biography

**Dr Richard Sandell**

Deputy Head, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

Richard Sandell is Deputy Head of the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, which he joined in 1997 having previously worked in the UK museums sector. The main theme running through Richard's research is the social agency of museums in relation to various forms of inequality. He completed the doctoral research in 2005 and the book, *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, was published in November 2006, which focuses on the capacity for museums to combat prejudice by reframing the ways in which society understands and relates to difference. He was recently awarded a Fellowship in Museum Practice from the Smithsonian Institution, which enabled him to pursue his research into the social role and agency of museums within the US context.

# Social Inclusion and Museums: Celebration of 'Difference', Understanding 'Self' and 'Other'

*Dr. Yuka Shimamura-Willcocks*

## Extended abstract

My PhD thesis investigates the social and cultural approaches of museums and galleries towards social inclusion[14], with the aim of enhancing an understanding of 'other'. This paper particularly focused on the findings of one of my fieldwork exercises, and aimed to demonstrate how workshops in art galleries, where people with 'difference' interact with one another communicating with museum objects, contributed to the enhancement of participants' understanding of 'self' and 'other'.

My fieldwork was performed in Japan, researching the relationship between people with disabilities (especially people with visual impairments) and people without disabilities when they appreciate visual art together. Disability issues was chosen for my study because, as Re:source (2001: 12) states, 'disability issues are clearly positioned within the broader agenda of human rights, equal opportunities and diversity', which is relevant to the study of social inclusion (also see Sugiyama, 1993; Thomas and Corker, 2002; Hall, 1997).

My research paradigm is symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and sociological studies regarding 'self' and 'other' (Bauman and May; 2001; Woodward, 1997; Volf, 1996; Fay, 1996). It is also relevant to Disability Studies regarding identity and relationship with 'other' (Yoda, 1999; Goffman, 1963; Corker and Shakespeare (eds), 2002; Swain, J. et al. (eds), 1993; Ishizuka, 1999) as well as a concept of citizenship (Marshall, 1950). The main properties of my theoretical framework are 'self' and 'other'. Throughout my thesis and this summary paper, the relationship between 'self' and 'other' is concerned with social action and social interaction (Mead, 1934). My research confirmed that socio-cultural learning in museums and galleries can be a useful method of social inclusion (Hein, 1998; Hein, 2001, Hein and Alexander, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, Hooper-Greenhill (ed.), 1994; Hooper-Greenhill (ed.) 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2004; Falk and Dierking, 1994), and my thesis investigated the non-researched area of socio-cultural learning in museums and galleries, looking at the social nature of interactions with 'strangers' and 'the Other' in museums.

Fieldwork was conducted using a method of questionnaires given to participants in the workshop referenced above. The fieldwork objectives were to examine the personal attitudes of the workshop participants towards the Other or people with 'difference' and to assess if and how these attitudes

changed. The fieldwork aimed to investigate what is the socio-cultural learning in museums and galleries as well as how it can be used for social inclusion activities in museums and galleries.

The questionnaires were gathered in workshops at two sites: the AIXS Gallery (which is an exhibition space run by an independent company in Tokyo, AXIS Inc.), and Setagaya Art Museum (which is a local authority museum also based in Tokyo). The workshops were organised not by the galleries themselves but by museum access groups ('Museum Access Group MAR' in the AXIS Gallery and 'Museum Access Group VIEW', 'Nagoya YWCA' and 'MAR' in the Setagaya Art Museum). Various types of exhibits were used in the AXIS Gallery, half of which were touchable objects, whilst the Setagaya Art Galleries exhibited only two-dimensional artworks.

*Figure 1: Performance in the workshops*

After the workshops, participants were asked to fill in questionnaires and fifty-seven responses (16 from visually impaired and 41 from the sighted participants) were collected. The qualitative data from the questionnaire was transcribed, coded, indexed, partly translated into English and made ready for analysis. Comments from participants were categorised under five themes created during data analysis: 'Interaction', 'Different way of seeing art works', 'Disability', 'Museum practice' and 'Others'. After careful analysis, findings

were obtained and the main findings in relation to the issue of 'self' and 'other' were categorised as follows.

A. Similarities between 'us' and 'them'

B. Differences between 'us' and 'them'

C. Differences amongst 'us'

D. Differences amongst 'them'

E. Discovery of the self through interaction with 'other'

The analysis of my fieldwork confirmed that the experience made many participants realise and learn that there is 'difference' in 'us' as well as 'similarities' in 'them' and they reached the conclusion that 'we are all the same and different'. My thesis addressed how those changes happened in the workshops and two models were produced to explain this learning process applying a communication model (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994), interaction model (O' Donnell, 1997), and Disability Studies (Yoda, 1999).

In short, the workshops offered a great opportunity for participants to understand 'self', 'other', 'differences' and 'similarities' amongst participants. The positive effects can be realised by all, and the structure used is flexible because the subjects of the exhibitions and the abilities and characteristics of participants can be varied. This suggests that it can be one of the methodologies for social inclusion activities in museums and galleries. Museum exhibition space and objects bridge 'self' and the unknown Other ('strangers'), using their educational and communication skills, objects and environment. Participants of the museum events learned 'self' and 'other' as well as about museum objects in the workshops. They learned that 'we are all the same and different'. This is the first step of inclusion, and socio-cultural learning in museums has the potential to contribute to this socially inclusive activity in any society. 'Other' exists inside 'us'; the self is constructed by interaction with 'other' according to symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934). Overall, although one workshop cannot be used to generalise all activities in museums or art galleries, it suggests that socio-cultural learning in museums has a significance to contribute to this social inclusion activity. Unfamiliarity towards 'other' gives 'us' a feeling of being unsafe. When the boundaries between 'other' and 'us' become unclear or ambiguous, the uncomfortable feeling turns into anxiety, hatred, or exclusion towards 'strangers' (Bauman and May, 2001). Therefore, understanding the Other or strangers is important to avoid social exclusion and enhance social inclusion. This strategy can be adapted in any society.

My thesis contains a number of issues, such as disability awareness (Barnes et al., 1999: R:source, 2001, Association of Art, Culture and People with Disabilities, Japan, 1998) including the social model of disability (Oliver, 1996), exclusion in society (ex. Japan and England)(Yoda, 1999), social roles

of museums and galleries (Dodd and Sandell, 2001; Sandell (ed.), 2002) and cultural policies of the governments (DCMS, 1999; DCMS, 2000; DCMS, 2001: SEU, 2001; Scottish Museums Council, 2000; GLLAM, 2000; Japanese Association of Museums, 2005). Unfortunately, practical constraints do not permit me to explain these issues in full detail here. Each issue demands to be explained in greater depth, which will be a future task for this author. Moreover, further researches by other researchers in relation to this matter as well as practices in museums and galleries are encouraged.

## Notes

[1] The term 'social inclusion' is not clearly defined in literature and policy documents. The term 'tackling or combating social exclusion' is normally used instead (DCMS, 1999; DCMS, 2000; DCMS, 2001: SEU, 2001; Scottish Museums Council, 2000; GLLAM, 2000), because society and the people's 'self' are now subjective and multidimensional (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Pieterse, 1997). This paper, however, proactively uses the term 'social inclusion', suggesting it as a new role of museums.

## Bibliography

[* = translated by author]

Art, Culture and People with Disabilities, Japan (now Able Art Japan) (1998). *Accessible Museum: Bunka shisetsu no baria furika ni kansuru chosa hokokusho* (Report on the barrier- free of cultural institutions)*, Tokyo: Able Art Japan.

Barnes, C. et al. (1999) *Exploring Disability: A sociological introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. and May, T. (2001) *Thinking Sociologically,* 2nd ed., 1st ed. by Bauman, Z. (1990), Malden-USA, Oxford-UK, Victoria- Australia: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Corker, M. and Shakespeare, T. (eds) (2002) *Disability/Postmodernity*, London and New York: Continuum.

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) (1999) *Policy Action Team 10: A Report to the Social Exclusion Unit: Arts and Sport*, London: DCMS.

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) (2000) *Centres for Social Change: Museums, Galleries and Archives for All*, London: DCMS.

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) (2001) *Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: Co-operating Across the Sectors to Tackle Social Exclusion*, London: DCMS.

Dodd, J. and Sandell, R. (eds.) (2001) *Including Museums: perspectives on museums, galleries and social inclusio*n, Leicester: Research Centre for Museums and Galleries.

Falk, J. H. and Dierking, L. D. (1992) *The Museum Experience*, Washington D.C.: Whalesback Books.

Fay, B. (1996) *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

GLLAM (Group for Large Local Authority Museums) (2000) *Museums and Social Inclusion*, England: GLLAM.

Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New Jersey: Penguin Books.

Hall, S. (ed.) (1997) 'The work of representation' in Hall, S. (ed.) *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, London, California and New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd, 13-74.

Hall, S. (ed.) (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, California and New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hein, G. E. (1998) *Learning in the Museum*, London and New York: Routledge.

Hein, G. E. (2001) 'Constructivism: More than Meaning Making', *Museological Review*, 7, 1-17.

Hein G.E. and Alexander M. (1998) *Museums Places of Learning*, Washington DC: America Association of Museums.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1994) *Museums and their Visitor*, London and New York: Routledge.

Hopper- Greenhill, E. (ed.) (1994) (2nd ed. 1999). T*he Educational Role of Museum*, London and New York: Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill (ed.) (1995) *Museum, Median, Message*, London: Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000) *Museums and The Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London and New York: Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2004) 'Measuring Learning Outcomes in Museums, Archives and Libraries: The Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP)', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10 (2): 151-174.

Ishizuka, M. (1999) 'Sabetsu toshiteno ijime: aruiwa gakko kyoiku hihan (Bullying as discrimination: alternatively criticism to school education)', J*inken to Kyoiku* (Human rights and Education.)* (31): 36-43.

Japanese Association of Museums (2005) *Darenidemo Yasashii Hakubutsukan Zukuri Jigyo: Baria Furi no Tameni* (The project for making museums which are kind to everybody: for Barrier-free)*, Tokyo: Japanese Association of Museums.

Marshall, T.H. (1950) *Citizenship and Social Class - and other essays*, London and New York: The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press.

Mead, G. H. (1934; paperback ed. 1967 Morris, C. W. ed.). *Mind, Self, and Society: from the standpoint of a social behaviourist*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

O' Donnell, M. (1997) *Introduction to Sociology,* 4th ed., Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Oliver, M. (1996) *Understanding Disability: From theory to practice*, New York: Palgrave.

Pieterse, J. N. (1997) 'Multiculturalism and Museums: Discourse about Others in Age of Globalization', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 14 (4): 123-146.

Re:source (The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) (now MLA) (2001) *Disability Directory for Museums and Galleries*, London: Re:source.

Sandell R. (ed.) (2002) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London, Routledge.

Scottish Museums Council (2000) *Museums and Social Justice: how museums and galleries can work for their whole communities*, Edinburgh: Scottish Museums Council.

SEU (Social Exclusion Unit) (2001) *Preventing Social Exclusion: Reported by the Social Exclusion Unit,* UK: SEU.

Sugiyama, A. (1993) 'Shogaisha sabetsuwa donoyounamono deattaka (What was the discrimination towards people with disabilities)*, in Harada, K and Sasaki, T. (eds.) *Shin shiten, nihonno rekishi:dai 7kan gendaihen* (New Viewpoint, Japanese History Volume 7 Contemporary)*, Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu ouraisha Ltd, 300-305.

Swain, J. et al. (eds) (1993) *Disabling Barriers: Enabling Environment*, London, California and New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Thomas C. and Corker M. (2000) 'A Journey around the Social Model' in Corker, M., and Shakespeare T. (eds.) *Disability/Postmodernity*, London and New York: Continuum, 18-31.

Volf, M. (1996) *Exclusion and Embrace: A theological explanation of identity, otherness, and reconciliation*, U.S.A: Abingdon Press.

Woodward, K. (1997) 'Concepts of Identity and Difference' in Woodward, K. (ed.) *Identity and Difference*, London: SAGE Publication Ltd.

Woodward, K. (ed.) (1997) *Identity and Difference*, London: SAGE Publication Ltd.

Yoda, H. (1999) *Shogaisha sabetsu no shakaigaku* (The Sociology of the discrimination towards disabled people)*, Tokyo, Iwanami Publisher Ltd.

## Biography

**Dr. Yuka Shimamura-Wilcocks**

Research affiliate, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

Yuka Shimamura-Wilcocks has completed her PhD research with the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. After working at an industrial science museum as an educator, then at a Venetian glass art museum as a curator in Japan, she came to England and has completed her MA degree in the Department of Museum and Gallery Management at City University. The title of the dissertation was 'Museums, Volunteers, and their Communities: Improving the Relationship'. In her research project, she examined the wider social context, looking at the relationship and 'difference' between 'self' and 'other'.

# Emancipatory Research Methodologies: The Road to Social Justice

*Heather Hollins*

## Introduction

At the 1993 United Nations (U.N.) World Conference on Human Rights:

The conference reaffirmed that

> 'all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and thus unreservedly include persons with disabilities. Every person is born equal and has the same right to life and welfare, education and work, living independently and active participation in all aspects of society' (U.N. 1993, 62).

The Vienna Declaration, which arose from that conference, states that:

> 'The place of disabled persons is everywhere. Persons with disabilities should be guaranteed equal opportunity through the elimination of all socially determined barriers, be they physical, financial, social or psychological, which exclude or resist full participation in society' (U.N. 1993, 6).

The reality, however, is that disabled people are still amongst some of the most excluded and marginalised people in society today, and that 'social exclusion is a complex phenomenon' (Social Exclusion Unit 2004, 4), with some barriers being easy to see or touch, for example steps into a building; whilst others, such as prejudice and stereotypes, are less easy to challenge.

Often disabled people will have to deal with many barriers at once, including barriers which were created in their past, such as poor educational opportunities. Their exclusion arises out of a complex and multidimensional mix of factors, which can prevent the U.N.'s aspirations from coming to fruition.

## Aims of the Paper

This paper will give a brief overview of the social model of disability, the most contemporary model developed from within the Disability Movement, which is the epistemological underpinning for my research. The power of the social model lies in it's assertion that disability is not just about individual people's impairments and the difficulties that arise out of them, but the way that society is organised to disable people. Oliver, in his 1990 book '*The Politics of*

*Disablement*', argued that disabled people have been denied access to the key political, educational and cultural institutions which could enable them to fully participate in society, and that this exclusion has resulted in their marginalisation from society.

As indicated by the SOLON Consultants (2001) report commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), one of the key cultural institutions that disabled people, both historically and currently, have been denied access to, are museums. Museums have a unique place in society. They are the place where our society as a nation and as communities choose to place, in perpetuity, the objects which we consider to be important. Who museums collect from and the objects they then choose to display makes a statement about which groups are important in society, and which groups are not. This paper will explore the levels to which museums 'allow' disabled people access, and whether current patterns of access give disabled people a voice.

The focus will then move on to look at how my adoption of the social model of disability within my research has led me on a journey to discover inclusive emancipatory research methodologies which place disabled people at the heart of the research, and involve them in a central empowering way to ensure that their voices are heard. The paper will finally look at some of the challenges of aspiring to adopt emancipatory research principles, and how I have come to view this work as part of the wider agenda of social justice.

## Models of Disability

Models are useful tools as they enable abstract concepts to be understood in concrete terms. The way in which society understands disability has changed over time as our social, cultural and economic values have changed, along with advancements in medicine and technology. What would have been perceived as a disability 100 years ago is different to the contemporary concept. For example, in the post-industrialisation era, left-handedness was seen as a disability due to a person's impaired ability to work right-handed machines, such as looms. Before the invention of glasses, many people's lives would have been limited by their visual impairment.

Over time, there have been a series of models of disability that have generally been unconsciously adopted by mainstream society. This paper will focus in on the medical and social models of disability which have dominated the conceptualisation of disability over the past 100 years.

## The Medical Model of Disability

In the nineteenth century, the age of industrialisation, coupled with the increased importance of science, heralded in the 'Age of Reason', with its emphasis on 'scientific rationality' and social progression (Armstrong 1983).

As Oliver's (1990) Marxist analysis of the history of disability outlines, employees who were able to perform their work with maximum efficiency became the pseudo-medical definition of normality. '"Normality" then, became determined by the ideal of the white, youthful, able, male body'[1], which harked back to the Victorians' admiration of the Classical Greek and Roman exploration of the body beautiful. This reinforced the age-old myth that disabled people's bodies were flawed and defective (Armstrong 1983). The notion of impairment and what people's bodies were not able to do, was enshrined in the new medical model.

The medical model assumes that disability is an intrinsic characteristic of an individual, arising from bodily or mental impairments.[2] It sees the person as sick or abnormal. It describes disability as the individual's problem and that the difficulties that disabled people experience are caused by the individual's impairment or condition. Following this model, if a person is a wheelchair user, the problems they have accessing building with steps is due to their impairment.

As the underlying problems are seen as medical, the solutions and expertise rests in the hands of doctors, occupational therapists and other medical professionals. All areas of a disabled person's life are specialised, compartmentalised, medicalised and labelled. Disabled people's futures are therefore 'defined by a medical prognosis'.[3] The limited parameters of this model have been passed on to other sectors, leading to community based services also adopting an overly clinical preoccupation with disability.

Further criticism of the medical model lies in that it ignores the role of the social and physical environment in the disabling process. The significant social, physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers that disabled people face in society go beyond medical diagnoses. The model also has an unequal relationship at its heart between the medical professional and disabled client. Although a professional may be caring, the disabled person is placed in a passive role. Decisions made by the 'expert' may not allow the client to exercise the basic human right of freedom of choice. In the extreme, it can undermine 'the client's dignity by removing the ability to participate in the simplest, everyday decisions affecting his or her life, e.g. when underwear needs to be changed'.[4]

## The Social Model of Disability

In the late 1960s, following other social movements, such as those created by women and black people, which aimed to challenge the dominant social order, disabled people started to come together to challenge society's view of disability and the way this manifested in their lives. The origins of what would later be called the social model of disability can be traced to Hunt (1966) '*A Critical Condition*'. In this publication, Hunt argued that because people with impairments are viewed as unfortunate, useless, different and sick they pose a direct challenge to commonly held Western values. This led

Hunt to the conclusion that disabled people 'encounter prejudice, which expresses itself in discrimination and oppression' (Hunt 1966, 152).

In 1976, the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (U.P.I.A.S.) were the first group, from within the emerging political disability movement, to develop a definition of disability. They defined disability as

> 'the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activity'[5] (U.P.I.A.S. 1976, 14).

This was an important development that went beyond medical issues. Impairments were still acknowledged in the definition, but it crucially referred to the exclusion of disabled people within society.

This definition was later broadened by organisations such as The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (B.C.O.D.P.) to include disabled people with intellectual, sensory and mental impairments (Barnes 1996). The B.C.O.D.P.'s (1981) definition (cited in Priestley 1999) goes a stage further in the separation of impairment from its consequences in society by stating that:

> 'Impairment: is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment'.
>
> 'Disability: is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers'.

In the early 1980s, Mike Oliver, one of the founding fathers of the field of disability studies, developed what he coined the social model of disability, to explain the concept of disability to his social work students (Oliver 1983).

The social model aims to reflect the daily realities for disabled people, as experience had shown them that most of their problems are not caused by their impairments, but by the way that society is organised (Finkelstein 1980, Abberley, 1987, Oliver 1990). It places disabilities within the human rights discourse and asserts that disabled people are systematically discriminated against by a disabling world, which is designed to suit non-disabled people.

The social model states that disabled people face a range of barriers, which prevent them from fully participating in society and accessing the services that are available to non-disabled people, and that these barriers may be institutional, personal, social, attitudinal or environmental.

So to use the example, outlined in the medical model earlier, according to the social model a wheelchair user should be able to gain access to a building with steps in an alternative way, e.g. by using a ramp or a stair lift.

The model takes the focus away from individuals and establishes disability as a form of oppression experienced by people with impairments (Abberley 1987, Oliver 1990, Hughes and Paterson 1997, Swain and French 2000). This allows the disabled people's movement to make links with and explore the commonalties and differences with other oppressed groups. The strength of this model for disabled people is that it places the onus upon society to break down barriers, thereby liberating disabled people to challenge society to remove barriers. The separation of impairment and disability enabled the growing disability movement to lobby for changes.

## Emancipatory Research Principles

In the early 1990s, following on from the development of the social model, the emerging field of disability studies started to analyse critically the traditions and protocols of the research process. Researchers such as Colin Barnes (1992), Mike Oliver (1992) and Gerry Zarb (1992) argued that the process of research had, historically, excluded disabled people.

They looked at the research methods that had been developed from the scientific positivist and social sciences interpretive traditions and concluded that these approaches were contributing to the exclusion of disabled people.

Many disabled academics, such as Oliver (1992) were

> 'unhappy at the widespread exclusion of disabled people from disability discourse and called for the adoption of research strategies that were both emancipatory (seeking `positive' societal change) and empowering (seeking `positive' individual change through participation).' (Kitchen 2000:25-6)

Moreover, they argue that research concerning disability is invariably researcher-orientated and based around the agendas of the non-disabled researcher, treating disabled people as research subjects. Often cited within these arguments is the critique of Hunt (1981) who describes the experiences of being a 'victim of research'.

He talks about the disempowering experience of being a disabled subject of research in a care home, and that the disabled people involved actually felt they were left in a worse position at the end of the process as, when the research was published, they felt very offended about the way their views and lives had been interpreted and represented. They felt they had not been listened to and subsequently felt disempowered.

At the centre of this research, the power inequalities that were seen in the medical model of disability are still being perpetuated. The researcher is seen as the 'expert' who is the gatekeeper to knowledge, and disabled people play a passive role receiving no tangible outcomes or benefits as an outcome. As Kitchen asserts, this type of research compounds 'the oppression of disabled respondents through exploitation for academic gain' (2000, 45).

In response to these issues, researchers such as Barnes, Oliver and Zarb started to develop a new research paradigm, which they named emancipatory disability research, which had the social model at its core. In the same way that the social model aimed to place the onus on society to remove disabling barriers, emancipatory research aims to remove disabling barriers from the research process. The emancipatory paradigm, as the name implies, is about the facilitating of a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs (Oliver 1992, 110)

Emancipatory research methodologies are not, however, a new set of research methods, they utilise the same research tools as seen particularly in the interpretive paradigm, such as interviews, focus groups and oral history. Emancipatory research follows a set of underlying principles, which shape the way that the research is planned, implemented, analysed and disseminated to remove disabling barriers, and places disabled people's voices at the centre of the process (Stone and Priestley 1996, Zarb 1992, Kitchen 2000).

Barnes (1992) talks about emancipatory research as being 'about the systematic demystification of the structures and processes, which create disability', and the establishment of a workable dialogue 'between the research community and disabled people in order to facilitate the latter's empowerment'. To do this he argues that researchers must 'learn how to put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of disabled people', and that 'they do not have to have impairments themselves to do this' (Barnes 1992, 122).

He talks about the need to 'erode the myth of the "professional expert"' (Barnes 1992, 122-3) and that there is a need to shift the balance of power in the research process towards disabled people. This echoes the work of Foucault (1973, 1980) who looks at both the power relationships between experts and oppressed subjects and the relationship between knowledge and power. Foucault explores the process behind how some groups' knowledge is marginalised or hidden within the dominant mainstream. Barnes (2003) talks about the need for disabled people to have control of the research agenda, and that the outcome of research should facilitate a shift in power towards their rights. Clearly emancipatory research has a strong political agenda as well as an aim to explore notions of disability.

Barnes also asserts that 'accountability is a major consideration for all those striving to do emancipatory disability research' (2003, 7), Kitchen calls this the empathetic feedback loop, with participants getting 'the opportunity to correct misinterpretations and influence the direction of the research' (Kitchen 2000, 38).

Oliver (1992) summarises that the key fundamental principles of emancipatory research are empowerment and reciprocity and that through creating a dialogue with disabled people it will lead to beneficial social change.

## What is Museum Access?

So how does this apply to the museum context and in practical terms how should emancipatory principles and the social model of disability underpin the research process? I think a useful place to start is to look at what we mean when we talk about access and inclusion for disabled people in museums.

As enshrined within the social model, disabled people often have limitations placed on their lives due to the barriers they face in society. If disabled people are to get involved in heritage, culture, science and the arts, they should be able to choose to step over the threshold of museums and not only gain access to the building and facilities, but more crucially to the content of exhibitions and programming.

## Levels of Access

But what do we really mean by the term access? Access is a multilayered issue, with legislation like the Disability Discrimination Act and standards like Museum Accreditation giving disabled people the right to get access in through the door; but with no real guarantee of the quality of the visitor experience or the depth to which they are able to access the content of exhibitions and programming.

As the 2001 national survey into provision for disabled users of museums, archives, and libraries reported, museums are currently placing too great an emphasis on the physical and mobility aspects of access for disabled people. People with sensory impairments are generally less well catered for, while people with learning difficulties or issues relating to mental health are almost overlooked (SOLON Consultants 2001, 16).

The next increased level of access may happen when museums start to consider whether disabled people can gain access to the sensory and intellectual knowledge 'trapped' within the objects. Museums at this level may create consultation forums with disabled people and begin to think about how disability is represented in their collections and displays. At this stage however, the museum is still in control of the agenda.

It could be argued that higher levels of access occur when museums start to talk to disabled people, start to look at how disability is represented in the museum space and start to hand the agenda over to disabled people.

When I began my PhD, I was interested as to whether museums had focused too much on physical access and why UK museums were not fully accessible for disabled people. Following this train of thought I could have gone on to consult with disabled people about access to buildings, facilities, exhibitions or services.

I have come to realise that although whilst solving access issues like these are important, we are actually looking at the symptom and not the underlying cause. The underlying cause being that inaccessible buildings, spaces, exhibitions, facilities and programming arise out of a fundamental lack of understanding about the nature of disability.

This manifests itself through lack of thought and good intentions, and what's missing in the equation is the museum setting up a genuine and sustainable dialogue with disabled people. As with the social model of disability, this dialogue needs to place the needs and voices of disabled people at the centre of the discourse.

The fundamental issue here is access to power. Are museums consulting and working with disabled people in a way that allows them to shape the way that services develop? Are museums working with disabled people in a way that breaks down power hierarchies and challenges institutional discrimination? This is the direction that my research is now moving in, and working within the new paradigm of emancipatory research poses the following type of challenges to my research design and implementation:

## Challenges for Research

### 1. Empowerment and Reciprocity

As Barnes states, 'the rationale of the emancipatory disability research paradigm is the production of research that has some meaningful practical outcome for disabled people' (2003, 9). Coupled with Oliver's argument (1992) that emancipatory research should be empowering, this has posed the challenge that research must place disabled people at the heart of the agenda.

I am just about to embark on my field work at the Holocaust Centre, Nottinghamshire, and one of my first considerations was how could it be empowering for disabled people and how could they directly benefit from the process. From experience, some disabled people become involved with consultation and research as they want to see services improve for other disabled people, but research cannot be based on everyone wanting purely altruistic outcomes. An important element of this research will therefore be the development of a package of benefits for the disabled people involved, which may include training to support their career aspirations and the opportunity to develop new skills. Individual's motivations for involvement will be valued along with their views on how the research might benefit the wider disability community.

### 2. Making Sure the Research Process is Accessible

To ensure that research is accessible a number of factors need to be

considered, including conducting research in accessible venues, the timing of research sessions, as some disabled people will be working during the day, and the use of accessible verbal and written communication methods.

As Barnes (2003) explores, the whole research process needs to be demystified. This can involve deconstructing the language utilised within research, and training for disabled people so that they can get actively involved in gathering data and in representation of their experiences. Why should disabled people not represent themselves in the research process, as surely they hold expertise on the embodied experience of their impairments and how museums can contribute to their exclusion from society?

## 3. Challenging Issues of Expertise, Power and Control

In my research, I am aspiring to use emancipatory research principles to enable disabled people to gain access to power at the highest level at the Holocaust Centre. This will facilitate access to staff at a senior level and also involvement in the decision making process for new developments.

An important element of the research will also be to challenge the dichotomy that the researcher holds the expertise and the disabled people are involved passively in the research process. The control of the research process will therefore be handed over to the disabled people, so that can decide what they consider to be important. This may involve focusing on exhibitions, events, marketing, collections, staff training, or any number of issues. It will be their agenda.

The knowledge, skills and expertise needed to conduct the research will be shared across all the partners. I will share my knowledge of the process of conducting inclusive research with the disabled people and museum staff. The disabled people will have the expertise about the lived experience of disability and the museum will hold expertise concerning their building, services and collections. A collaborative approach will therefore be developed to enable us to work together to break down barriers.

## 4. Accountability

Barnes (2003) talks about the need for researchers to be accountable to disabled people within the emancipatory paradigm. Throughout the research process, I plan to build in a process of feedback, both in terms of having regular meetings with all parties to check that the research process is on track and in-line with the agenda set by the disabled people, and in showing the disabled people my writing and analysis, so they can comment on whether they agree with the way they are being represented. So ultimately, although the thesis will be mine, the disabled peoples' knowledge will be represented in a way that reflects their agreed views.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to outline the historical context to the exclusion of disabled people within contemporary society. It explored the medical model of disability and its disempowering effect on disabled people. It discussed the emergence of the social model of disability and how it led to the development of the emancipatory research paradigm, from within the field of disability studies, which aims to place the voice and priorities of disabled people at the centre of the debate. It has also focused on what this may mean for disability access and inclusion within the museum context and how emancipatory research may enable disabled people to gain access to power.

Referring back to the title of this paper 'Emancipatory research methodologies: the road to social justice', I would argue that this type of research fits into the wider agenda of creating an equal and fair society for all. The notion of social justice re-entered the political arena in 1997, when the Scottish-led Labour executive adopted it as part of its agenda on social inclusion. As the Scottish Museums Council's 2000 report on '*Museums and Social Justice*' discusses, 'museums have enormous potential to make a unique contribution to the social justice movement' (2000:1).

If we really are going to create a fairer society for disabled people, where they have freedom of choice to fully participate in community life and the cultural heritage of the nation, then museums need to engage with this political agenda. Emancipatory research, and the principles that underpin this way of consulting with disabled people, are part of this movement and if museums are to achieve the U.N.'s aspirations that 'the place of disabled persons is everywhere', then it is going to take more than a few ramps and lifts to achieve this.

## Notes

1 www.ru.org/artother.html (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

2 www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-dds/odi/documents/Definitions/Definitions003.shtml (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

3 www.ru.org/artother.html (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

4 www.vertou.demon.co.uk/models_paper.htm (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

5 This definition has a narrow focus that does not cover all areas of disability. As the group was constituted by people with physical impairments, however, the group did not feel that it could legitimately talk on behalf of people with other types of impairment.

## Bibliography

Abberley, P. (1987). *'The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability'.* Disability, Handicap and Society, Vol. 2 (1) 5-19.

Armstrong, D. (1983). *The Political Anatomy of the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes, C. (1992). 'Qualitative Research: valuable or irrelevant?'. *Disability, Handicap & Society*, Vol. 7 (2) 139-155.

Barnes, C. (1996). 'Disability and the Myth of the Independent Researcher'.

*Disability & Society*, Vol. 11 (1) 107-110.

Barnes, C. (2003).' What a Difference a Decade Makes: reflections on doing 'emancipatory' disability research'. *Disability & Society*. Vol. 18 (1) 3–17.

Finkelstein, V. (1980). *Attitudes and Disabled People*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Foucault, M. (1973). *Birth of the Clinic*. London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester.

Hughes, B. and Paterson, K. *(1997). 'The Social Model of Disability and the Disappearing Body: Towards a sociology of impairment'.* Disability and Society*,* Vol. 12 (3) 325-340.

Hunt, P. (1966). 'A Critical Condition' in P. Hunt., *Stigma: The Experience of Disability*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Hunt, P. (1981). 'Settling accounts with parasite people'. *Disability Challenge*, Vol. 2, 37-50.

Kitchen, R. (2000). 'The Researched Opinions on Research: disabled people and disability research'. *Disability & Society*, Vol. 15 (1) 25-47.

Oliver, M. (1983). *Social Work and Disabled People*. London: Macmillan.

Oliver, M. (1990). *The Politics of Disablement.* London: Macmillan.

Oliver, M. (1992). 'Changing the social relations of research production'. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, Vol. 7 (2) 101-114.

Priestley, M. (1999). *Disability Policies and Community Care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Scottish Museums Council, (2000). *Museums and Social Justice: How museums and galleries can work for their whole communities*. Edinburgh: SMC.

Social Exclusion Unit, (2004). *Tackling Social Exclusion: Taking stock and looking to the future*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

SOLON Consultants, (2001). *Survey of provision for disabled users of museums, archives, and libraries*. London: MLA.

Stone, E. and Priestley, M. (1996). 'Parasites, pawns and partners: disability research and the role of non-disabled researchers'. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, 696-716.

Swain, J. and French, S. (2000). *'Towards an Affirmation Model of Disability'.* Disability and Society, Vol. 15 (4) 569-582.

The Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation, (1976). *Fundamental Principles of Disability*. London: U.P.I.A.S.

United Nations, (1993). *World Conference on Human Rights: The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.* Geneva: United Nations.

Zarb, G. (1992). 'On the road to Damascus: first steps towards changing the relations of disability research production'. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, Vol. 7 (2) 125–38.

## Website References

www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-ds/odi/documents/Definitions/Definitions003.shtml (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

www.ru.org/artother.html (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

www.vertou.demon.co.uk/models_paper.htm (last downloaded on 30/12/03).

## Biography

**Heather Hollins**

Associate Tutor and PhD student, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

My first degree is in Biology and Geology, from the University of Manchester and I completed my MA in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. I initially worked as a natural science curator before my interest turned to the potential role museums had in supporting learning and social inclusion. After a twelve-year career in the museum and learning sectors, I now work part-time at the Holocaust Centre and my PhD research focuses on unpicking the factors behind the process that excludes disabled people from UK museums.

The theoretical underpinning of my thesis is the social model of disability and how this places the onus on society to break down the barriers that can prevent disabled people from fully participating in society. This has led me to explore emancipatory research methodologies as an inclusive way for disabled people to work with museums to end the cycle of exclusion. My thesis will focus on the process of inclusion, how disabled people can gain not only access to museum buildings, faculties and the content of exhibitions/ programmes; but also more importantly to the institutional power structure that lie behind the scenes. I am interested in the experience that disabled people have when visiting museums and how people with different impairments learn within the museum space.

# Jewish History in the Showcase[1]

*Tobias Metzler*

> 'All Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history. They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than any other which has survived. The bonds that unite them have proved stronger than the weapons of their persecutors and detractors ....'
>
> (Berlin, 1980: 251, 254-5)

> 'The occasion is unique. You may have exhibitions often, but a Jewish exhibition is not an everyday affair. There is so much that we do not know, that what we do know may be trivial in consequence; but even that is open to argument, if not to demonstration.'
>
> (Jewish Chronicle, April 8, 1887)

When the Paris *Exposition Universelle* opened its doors to the public in 1876, the Trocadero Palace, the main site of the exhibition, housed a novelty. For the first time an exclusively Jewish exhibition was on display as part of a world fair. The 82 objects, from Torah Scrolls, Synagogue Arks, to Passover cups and Candelabras of different types, had been compiled by Isaac Strauss. Born into a Jewish family in Alsace he moved to Paris where he had become *chef d'orchestre* of Napoleon III.

For the first time, Jewish ritual artefacts were presented as historical and aesthetic phenomena, beyond the framework of religion and liturgical practice. The main objective of Strauss and his collaborators was – as the text of the catalogue by Georges Stenne (pen name for David Schornstein) reveals clearly – to proof the existence of an independent Jewish art within and beyond the framework of religious life and practice and to place it equally along side with the arts of other nations and ethnic groups (Stenne, 1878). It is not an exaggeration when Richard I. Cohen describes the display of the Strauss Collection as 'a landmark in, and a testimony to, the development of Jewish life in Western and Central Europe,' for with this exhibition yet one more aspect of Jewish life had been objectified, transplanting the sacred into the profane (Cohen, 1998: 155).

The exhibition revealed an important shift in modern Jewish identity formation. According to Cohen's interpretation, the Strauss collection revealed a nostalgic 'return to the ghetto' by secular modern mainly metropolitan Jews. Different from Cohen's view I interpret it as manifestation of a new Jewish self-confidence rather than an attempt to recapture the presumably "authentic world" of previous Jewish generations for it was for the first time that Jews attempted to display elements of Judaism to a broader (non-Jewish) public.

However one interprets the driving forces behind the display of the Strauss collection it revealed the "deactualizing of Judaism" – to borrow an expression by Gershom Scholem – taking place here that was the precondition for Jewish exhibitions across Europe and North America during the following decades and thus pointing to a development of new patterns of modern Jewish identity.

The German Jewish scholar David Kaufmann who visited the exhibition in Paris was deeply impressed by it. Realizing that the exhibition was not only aiming for the recognition of Jewish art but that French Jewry thereby attempted to claim its place within the reformation of French society after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, Kaufmann expressed his hope for German Jewry to organise a similar exhibition in the near future (Kaufmann, 1878: 349).

This paper focuses on yet another exhibition that, different from Kaufmann's hopes, did not take place in Germany but across the Channel. By looking at this Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition in some detail, I want to argue that it revealed and promoted a heterogeneous, somehow paradox construction of Jewish history and thus allows an insight into the complex process of Anglo-Jewish identity formation at the end of the nineteenth century. Through the history of this exhibition, we will encounter a community in search of its place within such different identity-frameworks as the discourse of Englishness and the history of Judaism from the times of the ancient Israelites well up into the nineteenth century.

It was Isidore Spielman, a trained engineer who came up with the idea of organising a Jewish exhibition in London (*The Times*, May 11, 1925: 8). In Spring 1886, he presented his idea to the young Jewish journalist Lucien Wolf, descendent of an Ashkenazi family and the Sephardi Jew Alvarez Newman. Both men had previously called for the establishment of an Anglo-Jewish historical society to support the study of "British-Jewish history."[2] Spielman convinced them that such an exhibition would level the path to the fulfilment of such an idea.

Soon the three men were joined by Joseph Jacobs. Born in Australian Jacobs had come to England in 1873 to study anthropology at Cambridge (Wolf, 1911-14: 212 f.).[3]

In an open letter to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* dated from April 23, 1886 Spielman outlined his plan to organise an 'Anglo-Jewish Archæological Exhibition' and sketched the aims of the exhibition as following.

Besides the 'collection of records of Jewish history' in England 'objects employed in Synagogue service and in religious ceremonies, as well as antiquities and other curiosities' should form the content of the outlined exhibition (*Jewish Chronicle*, April 23, 1886).

In order to realise their idea, the circle of young men (for it was only men) needed further support both in financial matters and in questions of organising such a plan.

Frederic David Mocatta, a well-known Anglo-Jewish philanthropist and communal leader, who had supported and promoted the scientific study of Judaism, became financier of the project.[4] Together with Mocatta a number of Anglo-Jewish notables joined the different exhibition committee, such as the Secretary of the United Synagogue Philip Ornstein, the poet Israel Zangwill, the Jewish MPs Lionel L. Cohen, Sir Julian Goldsmid and Samuel Montagu as well as prominent members of the Rothschild family. In particular, the "List of Guarantors" reads like a Who-is-who of the Victorian Anglo-Jewish elite (Catalogue, 1887).

One of the most prominent figures supporting the efforts towards the realisation of the plan was the 'Delegate Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire' Hermann Adler.[5] Thus, the project of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition envisioned and initiated by a group of young acculturated Jewish intellectuals became one of the Anglo-Jewish elite known as 'the Cousinhood'. Peter Stansky sees it even as '"coronation" of the "Cousinhood"' (Stansky, 1995: 162). The soiree Frederic David Mocatta gave on the eve of the opening of the exhibition in early April 1887 at the Albert Hall shows this bourgeois character most clearly. The report of the Jewish Chronicle — the leading newspapers of established Anglo-Jewry — on this occasion reads as following:

> 'The opening ceremony […] was in every way a great success. All the leading men of the community were there, a large proportion of its charming portion graced the Albert Hall with their presence. And not only were communal notabilities represented in full force, but there was a goodly number of Gentile celebrities who showed their friendliness to all that interests Jews by their sympathetic presence. From all sides were to be heard expressions of admiration at the successful organisation of the display of objects. There was something to interest all tastes. The ladies were enchanted with the fine embroideries and silver ornaments. The sterner sex had all the history of our past to form the subject of conversation and reflection.' (*Jewish Chronicle*, April 8, 1887: 9)

Apart from the curious gender relations that we are presented with, the emphasis the correspondent laid on the presence of Gentiles is conspicuous. Not only were a number of non-Jews present at the opening soiree but some had also served on different exhibition committees. It was intended, especially during the preparatory stages, that the exhibition was to gain the sympathy of a gentile audience, for Judaism.

However, the aims of the organisers went beyond considerations concerning Jewish/non-Jewish relations. They rather aimed for an integration of Anglo-Jewry into the discourse of Englishness by sketching a narrative of English-Jewish history as an integral part of the history of England and her continuous progress, portraying English Jews as loyal citizens and patriots. Thus the date of the exhibition does not come as a surprise.

Choosing 1887 — the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee — as the year for this exhibition was by no means a coincidence. In numerous contributions to the columns of the *Jewish Chronicle* representatives of the Anglo-Jewish elite pointed out that the show at the Albert Hall was to serve as a major Jewish contribution to the numerous events, festivities and exhibitions in honour of 'her gracious majesty'. This intention was more than a mere demonstration of Anglo-Jewish patriotism.

In his classical analysis of Englishness, Philip Dodd points to a number of central elements of its conceptualisation. He emphasises that 'a great deal of the power of the dominant version of Englishness during the last years of the nineteenth century [...] lay in its ability to represent both itself to others and those others to themselves. Such representations worked by a process of inclusion, exclusion and transformation of elements of the cultural life of these islands' (Dodd, 1986: 2).

According to David Cesarani, the 'construction of an Anglo-Jewish heritage' during the last decades of the nineteenth century was in part a 'continuing struggle with the taxonomy of Englishness' (Cesarani, 1992: 30). It was this 'construction of an Anglo-Jewish heritage' that the London exhibition fostered in numerous ways, promoting the idea that in the achievement of becoming politically equal citizens, the *Jews in England* had to continue their efforts in order to becoming *Jewish Englishmen*.

Such attempts were most visible in the first of the four sections of the exhibition, entitled 'Historic Relics and Records'. Assembling a number of objects related to the early history of Anglo-Jewry, namely historical artefacts as well as manuscripts and illustrations of Jews in medieval England prior to their expulsion in 1290, this section also accommodated a series of 'portraits of communal celebrities' (Catalogue, 1887: 7). The 170 paintings, engravings, and photographic reproductions depicted leading Anglo-Jewish figures from the time following the Readmission of the Jews to England under Cromwell up to the mid-nineteenth century. Starting with portrayals of Menasseh ben Israel and numerous rabbinic authorities, the series appeared like a gallery of ancestral portraits of many 'Cousinhood' families. No matter if they depicted religious leaders such as the founder of the United Synagogue Moses Hart, important politicians of Jewish decent such as Benjamin Disraeli or successful sportsmen such as the Jewish boxing champion Daniel Mendoza; these portraits presented individual Anglo-Jewish success-stories.

Not only the portrait gallery but also the entire first section on Jewish history in England revealed a distinct narrative that became known as the 'Anglo-Jewish Progress Show' (Kushner, 1992). Closely linked to the conception of progress show were attempts to display Anglo-Jewish history as an integral part of English history by pointing to the contributions Jews had made to British society and thereby embedding Jewishness into Englishness.

This materialisation of an 'Anglo-Jewish progress show' can be seen as one of the long-lasting effects of the exhibition. Throughout the following

decades, it was this model, derived from the London Exhibition, that dominated Anglo-Jewish historiography (cf. Stansky, 1995; Cesarani, 1992).

To draw the conclusion though, that the entire exhibition was focussed around this attempt of integrating Jewishness into Englishness, would be misleading. Rather than following a single concise political agenda or strategy, displaying just one particular historical narrative the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition as a whole appeared very heterogeneous.

By the time of the opening of the exhibition, almost 3000 objects were assembled under the dome of the Albert Hall.[6] Although the majority of the objects came from British collections, donations were brought to London from such different places as Canada, India, Breslau and Vienna (Catalogue, 1887: xiii-xxi). They were organised according to four major sections of the exhibition: 'Historic Relics and Records', 'Jewish Ecclesiastical Art', 'Antiquities' and 'Coins and Medals'.

The descriptions of these sections indicate that the scope of the exhibition by far exceeded the realm of Anglo-Jewish history. Having mentioned the *Exposition Universelle* of 1879 earlier, it is noteworthy that the section 'Jewish Ecclesiastical Art' housed the entire Strauss collection that had been on display some nine years earlier in Paris. In London, the collection was placed in amongst a large number of other Jewish ceremonial objects from around the globe. This heterogeneity points to conflicting construction of Jewish identity.

The sections 'Antiquities' and 'Coins and Medals' were formed of different exhibits from the ancient Near East, showing a model of the temple of King Salomon, archaeological relics from excavations in Palestine, ancient Jewish coins, as well as curiosities such as a stone claimed to be from the Tower of Babel.[7] These collections together with a number of works by medieval Jewish philosophers and religious manuscripts and prints indicate that, despite the attempts to nationalise Jewish history, the organisers were well aware of a distinct Jewish context. Thus, the attempt of placing Jewishness within the discourse of Englishness was somehow dismantled and replaced by yet another set of identity forming elements.

Although Anglo-Jewry presented itself on the one hand as a loyal and integrated group within English/ British society throughout the course of its history, they on the other hand also claimed a sense of distinctness. This distinctness rooted in the idea of Judaism and the ancient history of the Jewish people. Reference to medieval Jewish authorities such as Abraham ibn Ezra or Maimonides as well as to biblical figures such as King Salomon signified this. Moreover, a national(istic) conception of Anglo-Jewry was replaced by a transnational concept of Jewish history.

Inviting the eminent German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz to give a talk on *Parallels in Jewish history* (Graetz, 1888) as part of the lecture series which accompanied the exhibition, and thus attempting to promote the

'scientific study of Judaism' in the form of Hebrew and Judaic studies rather than the mere study of Anglo-Jewish history, were further indicators for this broader framework.[8]

Yet in a different way, the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition bore elements of a transnational Jewish identity. Another set of exhibits indicated a broader perception of Anglo-Jewish history, superseding its focus on the British Isles to that of the British Empire as well as to the English-speaking world.

A special sub-section of the exhibition was devoted to the history of the Bnei Israel, one of the three major Jewish communities in India. This section, formed of 37 objects, mirrored the entire exhibition on a small scale. Besides liturgical objects, the visitors could see images of Indian Synagogues and a number of books both in Marathi and Hebrew, showing the cultural richness of Indian-Jewish culture.

Apart from the objects and manuscripts relating to the history of the Bnei Israel, many other objects related to Jewish history across the British Empire and the former North American colonies were on display at the Albert Hall. The majority of these objects concerning Jewish history overseas though were scattered throughout different subsections of the exhibition. A map showing past and present congregations of the British Empire from the collection of Joseph Jacobs was displayed alongside with Catalogues of Hebrew Manuscripts and books at Cambridge and the British Museum respectively (Catalogue, 1887: 44). Documents relating to the history of the Jews in the Caribbean Islands were displayed together with manuscripts of entirely different provenance.

On the whole, the organisers of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition did not succeed or maybe did not even intend to provide a concise concept of exhibiting Jewish history or Jewish histories around the British Empire. Despite this lack in conception, the mentioned artefacts and subsections indicate that the British Empire constituted an inbuilt aspect to the self-understanding of the group of London Jews organising and realising the exhibition at Kensington.[9]

Besides indicating a construction of the Anglo-Jewish past beyond the national realm, placing it within the context of Jewish history and culture, these elements reveal another important objective of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition. The intention was to present Jewish history and religion to a non-Jewish audience as mentioned earlier. Here in turn the importance of the exhibition as an attempt to promote an internal self-awareness of one's heritage within the Anglo-Jewish community — at least its more assimilated and anglicised section — became visible.

So far, the focus was on the integration of different models of Jewish identity that played out within the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition. Before drawing some final conclusions from this it is necessary to look at aspects of exclusion.

While the Anglo-Jewish establishment was willing to draw elements of common identity from a rather broad framework, they entirely neglected another aspect of Jewish presence that was right on their doorsteps.

Since the beginning of the 1880s, Jewish mass migration from Eastern Europe to the British Isles reached a new dimension. Had there been Eastern European Jewish immigrants already prior to this period they now arrived in Britain in thousands. Many of them tried to travel on towards America but many also stayed and settled here, predominantly in London's East End.

It has been argued that the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition 'ignored the experience of the East End' (Kushner, 1992). While this is not to be denied the question remains whether it was a deliberate intention of the organisers of the Albert Hall exhibition to exclude the East End Jews and their culture, regarding it as a threat to their model of Anglo-Jewish identity, namely the narrative of progress show.

I would argue that it was rather ignorance than deliberate exclusion that took place here. Throughout the 1880s and 90s the growing Jewish settlement in the eastern boroughs of the capital were perceived far and foremost in terms of urban problems, such as pauperism, sweated labour and slums, not in terms of culture. It took several years, following the first waves of mass migration, that the Victorian upper and middle classes including the Jewish establishment become fully aware of the conditions in the East End and saw the necessity of countering them. Even then, the Jewish streets in Aldgate or Stepney were regarded rather as a foreign country then as space of a distinct Jewish subculture in. It was not until 1906 that an exhibition displayed this absent part of Anglo-Jewish culture, right at the heart of the East London Jewish neighbourhoods at the Whitechapel Art Gallery (Steyn, 1990). The Whitechapel exhibition came at a time that saw an important shift within Anglo-Jewry. In the wake of the debates and the ultimate passing of the Aliens Act by Parliament in 1905, 'West End Jews' developed a new sense of communal solidarity with their East End coreligionists. Along side this development established Anglo-Jewry gradually began to appreciate elements of Jewish East End culture such as the Yiddish Theatre.

It should be emphasised once again, that starting with the display of the Strauss collection in Paris in 1878, the materialisation of Jewish culture and history through exhibitions became a central feature in promoting and constructing modern Jewish identity, both in Europe and beyond. It is noteworthy that besides a number of common elements these early exhibitions were very much determined by national frameworks and the attempts of Jewish communities to integrate their cultural and historical heritage into that of the host societies and thus played an important role in the formation of modern Jewish identity. In particular, the London example shows that exhibitions had become a means of not only constructing but also renegotiating Jewish identity.

It was the central paradox of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition that

although it set out to display a one-dimensional view of Jewish history, namely through the narratives of progress show and the place of Anglo-Jewish history within the realm of Englishness, it revealed the complexity of Jewish history and thus the multitude of Jewish identities. By extending the perception of Anglo-Jewry by mapping a community between Sydney and Saskatchewan, Cape Town and Kensington or Bombay and Barbados such a one-dimensional narrative was made impossible.

Incorporating elements that not only challenged the conception of Jewishness as an element of Englishness but also dismantled it at the same time, the Albert Hall exhibition revealed the difficult process of a community in search of its identity. 1887 was not the staring point of this process but it was an important step towards the creation of what Israel Finestine has called 'the new community'; a process that continued well into the early twentieth century.

A number of factors led to the failure of constructing Jewish history as an exclusively 'anglicized' one.

The first was an attempt to preserve or in certain ways newly construct a common Jewish identity, rooted in the history of ancient Israel in Jewish religion as a response to both assimilatory and liberalizing tendencies within Anglo-Jewry.

The second major challenge was the already mentioned Jewish mass migration from Eastern Europe. Although not visible at the Albert Hall exhibition, this element was to become the most important challenge in the formation process towards a new Anglo-Jewish identity and demanded a reformulation of Jewish Englishness.

The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition owes much of its success and influence to its heterogeneous perception and conception of Jewish history. Thus it offered a number of different points of departure for future developments, such as the creation of the *Jewish Historical Society of England* that committed itself for decades to the amateur study of Anglo-Jewish history, the foundation of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* setting out for a scientific study of Judaism in the English-speaking world or future Jewish exhibitions and subsequently their institutionalisation in Jewish Museums.

What became visible in the showcases around the Albert Hall was not only a sense of Jewish distinctness but also an acclaimed universalism of Jewish history. It was Joseph Jacobs who summed this up as following:

> 'For it is the conviction that history will one day give the solution of life's problem that sustains us students of the past in our laborious and often dull undertakings. No philosophy of life will ever be considered adequate if it does not explain the life of the past as well as the present. History must thus be the Œdipus that will solve life's riddle. And the history of the Jews will form no unimportant contribution towards such a solution. It is the conviction of many others, besides us Jews, that a

> Divine purpose runs through the long travail of Israel. Jews alone form a bridge between ancient and modern times. If their history does not contain any inner meaning, then the life of man upon this earth has no rational aim. It is on account of this general importance of Jewish history that it may claim special attention form all students of the past ....' (Jacobs, 1896: 241-2)

## Notes

1 This paper is based on research I conducted for my master thesis at the Free University Berlin in 2004 entitled *Jüdische Geschiche im Schukasten: Die Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition und der Beginn der Wissenschaft des Judentums in England (Jewish History in the Showcase: The Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition and the Beginnings of Science of Judaism in England)*.

2 The open letter by Wolf and Newman, calling for the foundation of such a society appeared in the *Jewish World* early in 1886.

3 Jacobs not only became a well-known folklorist but also remained committed to the study of Jewish history throughout his life. On Jacobs cf. Benjamin, 1946 and Sulzberger, 1916-1917.

4 He corresponded with Leopold Zunz and published himself in the field of Jewish history. Later he donated his immense library to University College London and the Jewish Historical Society of England respectively. On the history of the Mocatta Library cf. Rabinowicz, 1962 and Levine, 1933.

5 The correspondence between organizing committee (i.e. Isidore Spielman) and Adler—deposited at the London Metropolitan Archives—shows to what extent the Chief Rabbi was involved in the preparations of the exhibition (ACC/2805/02/01/098-9).

6 In total, the catalogue lists 2626 objects that were on display at the Albert Hall, excluding the objects shown in three supplementary exhibitions at the Public Record Office, the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum.

7 The inclusion of many of these objects was in part the result of the cooperation between the organisers of the exhibition and the Palestine Excavation Fund.

8 Both the creation of the *Jewish Historical Society of England* and the publication of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* were closely related to the London exhibition.

[9] For a detailed analysis on the influence of the Empire on London and Londoners cf. Schneer, 2001. The example of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition indicates that Schneer's analysis can be applied to Jewish Londoners as well.

## Bibliography

Benjamin, D. J. (1946), 'Joseph Jacobs' *Australian Jewish Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings* III (2) 72-91.

Berlin, I. (1980) 'Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx and the Search for Identity', in Idem. *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas*, 252-286, London: Hogarth.

[Catalogue] (1887) *Catalogue of Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, 1887: Royal Albert Hall: And of Supplementary Exhibitions Held at the Public Record Office, British Museum, South Kensington Museum.* London: Clowes.

Cesarani, D. (1992) 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages?: Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry' in Tony Kushner (ed) *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness & Jewishness*, 29-41, London: Cass.

Cohen, R. I. (1998) *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.

Dodd, P. (1986) 'Englishness and the National Culture', in Robert Colls and Idem. (eds.) *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880*-1920, 1-28, London; New York; Sydney.

Finestein, I. (1961) 'The New Community, 1815-1880,' in: V. D. Lipman (ed) *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History: A Volume of Essays*, 107-23. Cambridge: Published for the Jewish Historical Society of England by W. Heffer and Sons.

Graetz, H. (1888) 'Historic Parallels in Jewish History', in *Papers Read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, London 1887*, 1-19, London: Office of the "Jewish Chronicle".

Jacobs, J., 'Jewish History. Its Aims and Methods', in Idem. *Jewish Ideals and Other* Essays, 234-242, London 1896.

Kaufmann, D. (1878) 'Aus der Pariser Weltausstellung', in *Israelitische Wochenschrift* IX 301, 309, 317, 325, 333, 341, 349.

Kushner, T. (1992) 'The End of the "Anglo-Jewish Progress Show". Representation of the Jewish East End, 1887-1987', in Idem. (ed) *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness & Jewishness*, 78-105, London: Cass.

Levine, E. (1933) *The Origin and Growth of the Mocatta Library, Museum and the Gustave Tuck Theatre. University College London. A Chapter in Forty Years of Anglo-Jewish History*, London; Colchester; Eton: Spottiswoode.

Rabinowicz, H. M. (1962) *The Jewish Literary Treasures of England and America*. New York; London; Toronto: Thomas Yoseloff.

Schneer, J. (2001) *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

Spielman, I. (1908-10) 'Sir I. Spielmann's Presidential Address and its Sequel [1903]' in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* V, 43-57.

Stansky, P. (1995) 'Anglo-Jew or English/ British? Some Dilemmas of Anglo-Jewish History' *Jewish Social Studies*: *New Series* 2, 159-178.

Stenne, G. (1878) *Collection de M. Strauss: description des objets d'art religieux hébraïques: exposés dans les galeries du Trocadéro, à l'exposition universelle de 1878*. Poissy: Lejay.

Steyn, J. (1990) 'The Complexities of Assimilation in the 1906 Whitechapel Art Gallery Exhibition 'Jewish Art and Antiquities', *Oxford Art Journal* 13 (2) 44-50.

Sulzberger, M. (1916-1917) 'Joseph Jacobs' *American Jewish Year Book*, 68-75.

Wolf, L. (1912-14) 'Origin of the Jewish Historical Society of England (Presidential Address, delivered before the Society on January 15, 1912', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* VII 206-221.

## Biography

**Tobias Metzler**

PhD student, Department of History and Parkes Centre of Jewish/non-Jewish Relation, University of Southampton

My research areas are modern Jewish history and culture in transnational perspectives as well as questions of urban identity. Studying History, Judaic Studies, and Political Sciences in Germany and at Yale University (USA) I was awarded my MA from the Free University of Berlin (Germany) with a thesis on the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition and the development of the Science of Judaism in late nineteenth-century Britain. Currently, I am working on a research project entitled 'Jews in the Metropolis: Urban Jewish cultures in London, Berlin, and Paris, 1880-1940'.

# The Regeneration of Long Kesh/Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland: the Only Way Forward?

*Laura McAtackney*

The Long Kesh/Maze prison site in Northern Ireland currently lies at a crossroads. As a functioning prison, it was significant as being overwhelmingly populated by paramilitary prisoners from Northern Ireland's recent conflict: the so-called 'Troubles'. In its twenty-nine-years' history, it was utilised as a prison from 1971 until 2000 and it is estimated that over 10,000 men passed through its gates (Purbrick, 2000: 91). However, since its closure in September 2000, as a result of the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998, there has been growing public, governmental and media interest and speculation about the future life of the site. With the publication of the Maze Consultation Panel report, *A New Future for Maze/Long Kesh* (2005), regeneration of the site has been forwarded as the only possible way forward. As the land was transferred from the Great British to the Northern Irish government under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, May 2002, its intention was 'to provide a new momentum for social and economic regeneration in the region' (M.C.P., 2005: 6).

However, close consideration of the proposals show that perhaps this course of action is not as necessary as has been suggested. I aim to show that the regeneration of the site is not the only viable option through careful consideration of the report, in particular the sections on the two government-led elements, and by examining examples of the presentation of difficult heritage in a national and international context. Before doing so, the site of Long Kesh/Maze must be considered in detail so that its unique position in Northern Irish society can be fully understood.

## The Long Kesh/Maze prison site

Long Kesh/Maze, like many elements of Northern Irish society, has a dual name to reflect the dual meanings that have been attributed to it by different actors during the course of 'the Troubles'. The 'Long Kesh' element of the name relates to the periods before the H Blocks were built and was also the name of the site when it was utilised, as an airfield, during World War II. The Nissan huts that had been used during World War II were utilised to hold prisoners and the area they covered was expanded (Fig. 1).

The Nissen huts were placed together in so-called 'cages', which was what the prisoners called the wire fences that surrounded each compound, each cage contained three huts for accommodation, one for recreation and one for ablutions. The prisoners when interned, and at a later stage when some were imprisoned, were placed with the paramilitary group that they self-identified in segregated compounds.

*Fig 1: Nissen Hut, Cage 9, Courtesy of Dr John O'Neill (c. Jan 2005)*

When internecine strife escalated in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, heralding the start of the so-called 'Troubles', the site was used as an internment camp, once the numbers interned reached such levels that they could not be housed within the existing prison regime. Internment, which saw 342 men from nationalist communities detained without trial on the first night of its implementation alone, began on 9 August 1971 and precipitated an escalation in nationalist hostility and violence towards the State. Such hostility can be seen as the result of internment not being implemented equally across both communities, with almost all internees coming from the nationalist catholic community, and also by the fact that a large number of internees were not actively involved in paramilitary activities and were lifted as a result of out of date or poor intelligence (Galliher & DeGregory, 1985: 104).

Internment, as a method of controlling the nationalist community, was used until the mid 1970s and was phased out as a result of the Gardiner Report (1975), which acknowledged that internment was not working and there was a need to control paramilitary elements held at Long Kesh by criminalising prisoners who, to this point, had been treated and self-identified as political prisoners. As official sources conceded at an early stage: 'The short point appears to be that the camp was built on a design more appropriate for a

prisoner of war camp than an internment camp' (Letter from I M Burns to P Leyshon Esq., dated 23 September 1971. CJ 4/449 TNA). The physical manifestation of this concession was the building of HMP Maze.

The use of the name 'the Maze', for the series of H Blocks that were built between 1975 and 1976 and which immediately started to house paramilitary prisoners, was often used by officialdom and, to an extent, the general public as the official name for the site. However, prisoners did not, and still do not, use this term as it was generally accepted, by both the imprisoned and the imprisoners, that the change in name was part of the policy to change the status of the prisoners (Stevenson, 1996: 38). The eight blocks were swiftly constructed on a 'H' plan, with prison accommodation being placed within the four wings on the parallel long sides and the administration being located at the central point (Fig. 2).

*Fig. 2: Entrance to H Block 4, HMP, the Maze (January 2006)*

The Long Kesh/Maze prison site can be considered unique for a number of reasons. Within the context of Northern Ireland, where many of the paramilitary prisoners came from highly segregated areas, this became a shared site, in reality if not in propaganda terms. Within the Long Kesh Internment Camp, there was contact on an everyday basis as each separate cage cooperated

to enable communication between different cages and the initial integration for Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries within the wings of the H Blocks ensured contact. For many of the prisoners this would probably be the first time that they would knowingly come face-to-face with a member of 'the other side' on a daily basis.

Such a situation did not come without its problems, there were frequent riots within the prison and the paramilitaries even at times coordinated their protests to cause maximum disruption to the prison regime. (McEvoy, 2001: 12) Of a more public and serious nature was the growing level of ongoing protests against the loss of political status, especially prominent amongst the Republican prisoners, that brought the prison to public attention and are now its most famed association. The authorities' attempts to take away prisoners' special status and criminalise them began by housing them in a new facility, where it was assumed that they could be isolated and have their group collective identity broken. This was supplemented with a reduced number of visits and parcels to be received by each prisoner, no freedom of association and the wearing of prison uniform. The latter imposition became the focus of protest. Indeed, the first inmate to be placed in the new H Blocks (Kieran Nugent) refused to wear the prison uniform and as he was not allowed to wear his own clothes he wore only a prison-issue blanket (thus beginning the so-called 'Blanket protests') (McEvoy, 2001: 233). The escalation of these protests, both in levels of severity and numbers involved, through the 'Dirty Protests' – where the prisoners wore only blankets and smeared excrement on the walls of their cells – to the 'Hunger Strikes' created a vast public and media interest in the site that had hitherto been absent.

The culmination of this public and media interest in the site climaxed with the death of Bobby Sands, the first of 10 men who died whilst on Hunger Strike in 1981. The reaction to his death was huge, with an estimated 100,000 attending his funeral (http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/abstentionism/chron.htm. Accessed 01.05.06). The tension leading up to, and proceeding, his death led to ugly confrontation with the police and full scale rioting in many nationalist areas. It has been estimated that at least 20 civilians and security personnel were killed as a direct result of the civil unrest connected to the Hunger Strikes. (http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/abstentionism/chron.htm)

By the 1990s, it was clear to all that the power that the prisoners held within the Long Kesh/Maze prison site was not just restricted to the confines of the prison. Through sophisticated networks of communications, including the use of smuggled paper communications and radios, incarcerated paramilitary leaders were able to direct terrorist operations on the outside. A telling example of this involves the visit by the then Secretary of State, Dr Mo Mowlam MP, to the prison in 1998. She met with loyalist paramilitary leaders to negotiate when the loyalist ceasefire on the outside was on the verge of collapse. Her very public intervention not only ensured that the ceasefire held, but it left no one in doubt as to where the real power of the prison lay.

This can perhaps explain the unique situation of how two totally different prison regimes, reflected in two totally different prison structures, came to exist simultaneously on the same site, with the H Blocks becoming operational in the mid 1970s and the Nissan huts continuing to hold prisoners until the early 1980s. Therefore, the Long Kesh/Maze prison site has a highly complicated history as a prison and was also highly influential in the course of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Any attempt to understand the recent conflict must start with this icon of 'the Troubles', as it not only represented the complexities of the situation but illustrated the interactions between all the major players: paramilitaries from all sides, their communities, the numerous security forces, the media and the people of Northern Ireland as a whole. As former prisoner, Laurence McKeown, has stated: 'Long Kesh, as a prison, must therefore to [sic] be seen in terms of the central role it played within the political conflict in the North of Ireland. What happened within the prison had an impact upon events on the outside and vice versa'. (2001: XIV)

## Long Kesh/Maze Prison Site: Since Closure

Since the Long Kesh/Maze prison site closed in September 2000, the site has been left at a crossroads between its past life as a prison, an icon of the Troubles, a facilitator of civil unrest and political solutions as well as a future life that is as yet undecided. The Maze Consultation Panel was established in May 2002 to examine the site and provide proposals for future usage. Throughout this process the local media has taken a keen interest in where the future of the site lies, and in particular it has focused on the retention versus destruction debate that has been waged between and within the public, media and political parties. Many Republican prisoners and their communities wished for the site to be retained whole, as a Museum of the Troubles or a Robben Island of Northern Ireland, to ensure that their struggle, particularly the sacrifice of the men who died on the Hunger Strikes, was not forgotten. Conversely, there is a fear throughout the Unionist communities that the site is so identified with Republican prisoners that it would become a shrine to the Republican cause and it would be preferable to destroy it entirely. There was also the increasing concern that the prisoners would gain greater publicity whilst their victims would be forgotten. These positions were articulated through the two main newspapers in Northern Ireland, the nationalist *Irish News* and the more mainstream, unionist-leaning *Belfast Telegraph*. Both papers focused as advocates for either side, published numerous editorials forwarding their point of view and followed the ongoing political discussions.

However, the Panel is cross-party in make up and it was perhaps inevitable that a compromise solution would be negotiated. In February 2005, *A New Future for Maze/Long Kesh* was finally published. The title in itself is interesting in that it immediately indicates that the site will be changed, probably symbolically as well as physically, and the use of the convoluted 'Maze/Long Kesh' title indicates the levels of negotiation required for the naming of the site alone!

## A New Future for Maze/Long Kesh

The aims of this proposal are made clear early in the document. The opening words discussing the establishment of the Maze Consultation Panel state its aim as to, 'bring forward advice on the regeneration of the Maze/Long Kesh' (M.C.P., 2005: 3). Therefore, it is evident that regeneration has been the overriding concern of the panel. Furthermore, this 'new future' for Long Kesh/ Maze can be seen as there is an obvious attempt to displace the negative associations of the site and replace it with 'an internationally recognizable physical expression of the ongoing transformation from conflict to peace' (M.C.P., 2005: 14).

To do so, the report proposes that the site is to be divided into six areas: the sports zone; the International Centre for Conflict Transformation; the rural excellence and equestrian zone; offices, hotels, conference and leisure facilities; light industrial zone and retained zone. There is also a strong emphasis on the landscaping of the site and symbolic development. The proposal states that the division of the site into a number of piecemeal elements is due to 'no single iconic proposal' being forwarded (M.C.P., 2005: 9). Preservation, evidently, is not an option.

The major government-led elements of the plan, and those sections proposed for implemention first, are the sports zone and the International Centre for Conflict Transformation. Also of interest is the 'retained zone', which at about 100 acres is one of the larger elements of the site. This section, despite its name, is to be 'cleared and decontaminated' despite there being no plan to utilize this zone for up to twenty years (M.C.P., 2005: 29). This, I would suggest, is a clear indication that the Panel does not want elements of the site to remain except where they are tightly controlled.

## The Government-led Elements: the Sports Zone

The Sports Zone is one of the largest and most prominent elements of the proposal, at 50-60 acres it is proposed that a multi-purpose inclusive sports facility (inclusive in that it is to house soccer, Gaelic games and rugby) be built on a cleared section of the site. Surprisingly, this element has been the most controversial element of the proposal and it is currently the most high-profile within the media. Of evident concern is the location of the site, in that it is not situated close to Belfast city centre, where all the representative sports' grounds are currently situated. There is also concern about the ability for the site to be multipurpose: of particular note are the different pitch sizes, with football having the smallest dimensions at 90-120m long and 45-90m wide and Gaelic games the largest at 130-145m long and 75-90m wide. However, Parliamentary Under-Secretary Ian Pearson MP has publicly denounced the proposals of other sites within Belfast (most prominent of which being at the site of Maysfield Leisure Centre and the Ormeau Park, both in South Belfast) by stating that there was no other viable option. (BBC News, 30 March 2005)

## Government-led Elements: International Centre for Conflict Transformation

The other government-led element, International Centre for Conflict Transformation (I.C.C.T.), is to be by far the smallest section in the proposal. At just 15 acres, including new build elements, it represents less than 4% of the site area, but it is easily the most thought-provoking section. It has been proposed that the elements that are to survive will be representative (i.e. one of each H Block, Nissan hut, church and the administration block and hospital from the prison site along with a piece of the perimeter wall and some elements from the RAF camp). It is planned that this element will lose its association with paramilitary prisoners and its role in 'the Troubles', by the insistence that, 'the facility would be a neutral, inclusive and constructive "place apart"' (M.C.P., 2005: 14).

As one of the government-led elements, the I.C.C.T. is dealt with relatively early in the proposal (directly after the Sports Zone). However, within this section the elements that are to be retained are not even mentioned until point 15 of 20. Firstly, the buildings to survive are enumerated to be 'preserved and maintained as an inherent part of the I.C.C.T., and used in its daily work'. (M.C.P., 2005: 16). Far from the surviving elements being central to the functioning of the site, they are mentioned as secondary to the new purpose built archive, library and educational facilities: 'We decided that the work of the International Centre could be facilitated positively by being located beside the preserved buildings' (M.C.P., 2005: 17). Though the proposal does concede this important work would be fitting 'in a setting which played a major role in the conflict' (M.C.P., 2005: 17). Therefore, there is not an attempt by the panel to ignore the past happenings at the site, rather a heightened sensitivity to how these structures could be used to facilitate peace, rather than discord, in the future. The surviving elements are not to stand alone, they are to be placed together and their interpretation is to reflect this new context.

It can be seen that this element is the most problematic as having both potential pros and cons as it is consciously being turned from its previous associations with conflict to one that is to facilitate reconciliation. On a positive note, it is surely a good sign that at least some of the site is to be retained and that it is recognized that to be able to move forward there is a need 'to acknowledge and learn from the past whilst looking forward to and building for the future.' (M.C.P., 2005: 17). However, the details of how this element is to be utilized are of more concern. Although the proposal is relatively detailed regarding its plans for the site, it does not elaborate on how this site will be used, how free access will be provided (the proposal states that 'OFMDFM will continue to provide access by the general public to the preserved buildings on an inclusive basis' (M.C.P., 2005:17), which is rather disingenuous given that the site is not currently open to the general public), and how the site will be interpreted.

One area of interest in this regard is the issue of how one interprets such a contentious site. The proposal merely mentions that the site will be interpreted from its World War II origins up to present day and that this will be done through 'straightforward factual information'. (M.C.P., 2005: 17). However, one has to ask, how can such a story of the site be told? Does such a thing as an objective story of any site exist regardless of the fact that this site is particularly contentious and divisive? Also, by trying to provide such a narrative the potential audience will surely lose much of the significance of the site: of how those who inhabited the site felt about it; how they lived their lives on the site; how the buildings impacted on their ability to live and how they interacted with it; and what they thought of their incarceration, their struggle and the situation before, during and after incarceration. There are also questions of whether this small, obviously controlled surviving area will be accessed in the same way as if it had been fully retained. Will the site lose its context when such a small sample will continue to exist? How will the buildings relate to each other? Will a chronology of the site still exist and be exhibited for the public?

These are important issues that are not frequently addressed and are of special importance to this site and could potentially be dealt with in a sensitive manner through the utilizing of the site as primarily a place of memory and reconciliation rather than as a place of regeneration. The suggestion of how the surviving elements are to be presented – together, in a corner of the site amongst purpose-built facilities – suggest that interaction with the site and its interpretation is to be tightly controlled. This can be problematic, as Ashworth and Graham (2005, 4) have argued, heritage is open to different interpretations within society at any given time and despite efforts at creation of official interpretations, these specific understandings cannot be enforced.

## Alternative Ways Forward?

Despite statements to the contrary, regeneration of the site is not the only option. As can be seen from Fig. 3, the site is located in a conspicuously rural area, where there is not the problem, which afflicts many urban prisons, of pressure for space. The prison is located approximately 12 miles from Belfast, the largest city and administrative capital of Northern Ireland, and two miles from the city of Lisburn. However, it is not implicated in any need for expansion by either city. In addition, it has no current infrastructure that would allow mass movement to the site, a fact the report highlights in that there is the need for 'a significant amount of additional transport infrastructure'. (M.C.P., 2005: 32-33)

If it can be accepted that change to the site is not an economic necessity then one can look at the potentials of the site. The Long Kesh/Maze prison is, to a large extent, unique in relation to its role in 'the Troubles' as a fundamentally shared site. Despite the more obvious associations of the site with Republican prisoners, both sets of prisoners were housed at this prison and

*Fig 3: Aerial Map of Long Kesh/Maze.*
*(Image courtesy of Dr John O'Neill. January 2005)*

had their own, both individual and shared, impacts on their surroundings. Also, the prison was not only created and shaped by 'the Troubles' but the prison equally had an impact on the course of the recent conflict. This makes the site ideal in being used to cut through the myths and propaganda on all sides and to try to show the different stories of those who were implicated in, and affected by, the recent conflict in Northern Ireland. In this respect the site could become a major research and educational tool, as is proposed to some extent with the I.C.C.T. (M.C.P., 2005: 15-17), but it can also be a major site of reconciliation through attempts at understanding the attitudes and roles of all sections of society both directly and indirectly impacted by the site.

## Heritage Context

One only needs to examine the more successful recent exhibitions at a number of museums and heritage centres throughout Northern Ireland to gain some understanding as to how 'heritage that hurts' (Uzzell & Ballantyne, 1998) can be utilized to gain greater understanding between all sections of society rather than to allow divisions and bitterness to fester through ignorance.. The museums that most effectively attempt to portray the recent past in Northern Ireland include the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, with their temporary exhibitions on Brotherhoods in Ireland (1988) and their inclusion of an interpreted Orange Hall (usually exclusively protestant) for inspection by all visitors. The recent temporary exhibition, Conflict: the Irish at

War, at the Ulster Museum, which has had a greatly extended run and won the Irish Exhibition of the Year award for 2005, is also an interesting example of how to present the more painful aspects of the recent past. This exhibition contained memorabilia from prisons, including loyalist banners depicting Orange Order style processions in the compounds of the Long Kesh Internment Camp in 1974 (Fig. 4) as well as artefacts connected to victims, such as a poem written by a five year old child who was subsequently killed in a car bomb. Such powerful exhibits, when sensitively displayed and interpreted, can promote understanding and attempts at reconciliation far more effectively than through merely removing all remnants of 'the Troubles' so thoroughly that we can pretend that they never existed.


*Fig. 4: Loyalist Banner from 1974,*
*Image from* Conflict: the Irish at War *Exhibition, Ulster Museum. 2005.*

The Long Kesh/Maze site could be utilized in such a way, with many international examples as reference, such as Robben Island in South Africa, Port Arthur in Tasmania, and Alcatraz Island near San Francisco, being the most obvious examples to follow as precedents. In all these examples, the prisons have had extended, difficult biographies and problems overcome regarding ownership, interpretation and lack of consensus regarding the way forward. With the abundance of standing remains, artefacts and documents associated with the site, from all sections of society, this could easily be accomplished and perhaps holds the key to the way forward? Perhaps the only further ingredient necessary is the distance of time to allow perspective regarding how the site could be used when the difficulties of the past are not so close.

## Potential Problems

This is not to say that there are no potential problems with such a proposal. There has been growing fear amongst non-Republican politicians and members of the public that such a site needs to be controlled and changed lest it becomes a 'Museum of the Troubles', a 'Museum of the Hunger Strikers' or a pilgrimage site for Republican sympathizers. The undisputable connection between the Republican movement and the site has ensured that many feel it can never be a shared site and that it could potentially become utilized as a site of Republican victory. This concern has grown with the increasing electoral success of the political wing of the Republican movement, Sinn Féin, who are now the second largest political party in Northern Ireland, with 24.3% of the vote in the 2004 General Elections. Therefore, fear of the appropriation of the site by one element, and the increasing identification of the site with one section of society, is a real concern that has resulted in a desire by many for strict governmental control of the site.

There is also a lack of consensus as to the best way to deal with the recent past in Northern Ireland: whereas many heritage and museums professionals would accept that there is a need to explore the recent past to foster understanding, there is also an opposing view that it is best not to dwell on the past. For example, whereas the Director of the Down County Museum stated that the major difficulty in presenting divisive heritage is that it may alienate potential audiences of the heritage institution; the Assistance Director of the Somme Heritage Centre stated that fear of not harnessing government funding ensured that most museums and heritage attractions do not attempt to portray divisive heritage (McAtackney, unpublished: 19). Indeed the latter was critical of the impact of such institutions on watering down potentially controversial material on the 2001 travelling exhibition, Local Identities: An Exploration of Cultural Identity. (McAtackney, unpublished: 11) This lack of consensus on such a fundamental subject is reflected in the multipurpose proposals for the Long Kesh/Maze prison site, as there is no agreement as to how to utilize this site after its functional use has become defunct. However, there is an obvious desire for the political agreements to begin to impact all levels of society, and how these sites are utilized is of major concern. These are difficult issues: is it too close to the present for such sites to be opened up to scrutiny? Is the recent past too divisive and too controversial to be explored?

## Conclusion

The Long Kesh/Maze prison site is an interesting case-study in what happens to security infrastructure from extraordinary situations once its original purpose is no longer current. In a society that continues to have difficulties in moving from the extraordinary circumstances of that past, these issues become of paramount concern. Therefore, the future of the Long Kesh/Maze prison site is not just a matter of security but also a political and social concern.

The government proposals for the future of the site attempt to address the concerns of all sides by issuing a compromise solution with no one victor between the advocates for destruction and preservation. However, it should be considered that as the site is not in a prime location, there is no need to find a quick solution for its future use. Perhaps the only way forward is not to regenerate, as the proposal suggests, but to wait until there is a suitable distance of time between the conflict of the past and the new, post-conflict state. Perhaps in this way the most iconic site connected to 'the troubles' can eventually be used to facilitate understanding, reconciliation and to ensure that we never forget, and hence never go back to the dark days of sectarian conflict.

## Bibliography

Ashworth, G.J. & Graham, B. (2005) *Sense of Place, Sense of Time*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Galliher, J.F. & DeGregory, J.L. (1985) *Violence in Northern Ireland: understanding Protestant perspectives*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan

Gardiner, Lord. (1975) *Report of a Committee to Consider, in the context of Civil Liberties & Human Rights, Measure to Deal with Terrorism in Northern Ireland. (Gardiner Report)* London: HMSO.

Maze Consultation Panel. (2005) *A New Future for Maze/Long Kesh*. Belfast: HMSO.

McEvoy, K. (2001) *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management and Release.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKeown, L. (2001) *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners Long Kesh 1972-2000*. Belfast: Beyond the Pale.

Melaugh, M. (1986) *Abstentionism: Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, 1-2 November 1986. A Chronology of Main Events.*

http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/abstentionism/chron.htm (Accessed 01.05.06)

Purbrick, L. The Architecture of Containment, in Donovan Wylie *The Maze*, 91-110, London: Granta.

Stevenson, J. (1996) *"We Wrecked the Place": Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles*. New York: The Free Press.

The National Archives. CJ 4/449. Letter from I.M. Burns to P Leyshon Esq. dated 23 September 1971.

Uzzell, D. & Ballantyne. P. (1998) *Contemporary issues in heritage and environmental interpretation: problems and prospects*. London: Stationery Office.

## Biography

**Laura McAtackney**

PhD student, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Bristol

Laura is currently in the third year of a PhD: 'A Historical Archaeology from the Long Kesh/Maze prison site, Northern Ireland' at the University of Bristol. She has published on this topic in a number of journals and edited volumes. Prior to studying at Bristol, Laura completed an MPhil at Cambridge in Archaeological Heritage and Museums (2001-2002), dissertation: 'The Presentation of Shared Heritage: the Case of Northern Ireland'. She initially studied History and Ancient History / Archaeology at Trinity College Dublin (1995-1999). She has also worked as an archivist for the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.