CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DIGITAL ART HISTORY: *PRACTICE AND POTENTIAL*

WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2017
PAUL MELLON CENTRE + THE COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

The first conference of the Early Career Researchers in British Art Network in partnership with The Courtauld Institute of Art's Digital Art History Research Group (#DAHRG) and the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art

Convened by Dr Hana Leaper (Paul Mellon Centre), Dr Sophie Hatchwell (University of Bristol) and Dr Fern Insh (Courtauld Institute of Art)

This conference provides a platform for Early Career Researchers engaged or interested in digital art history to showcase their work, develop skills, and think broadly about how digitization can innovate, challenge convention, and inform art-historical practice.

By inviting an emergent generation of scholars together, this conference intends to move beyond defining digital art history. Instead, we consider how digital technology integrates with and enhances art historical methodologies and theories in today's digital world.

PAUL MELLON CENTRE
for Studies in British Art

THE COURTAULD
Institute of Art
The Sackler Research Forum

SCHEDULE (9.30 - 5 – Paul Mellon Centre / 6 - 8 – Courtauld Insitutute of Art)

9.30-10.00: Registration and Introduction | *Paul Mellon Centre*

10.00-11.30:

PANEL 1 - Practice: Exploring the nexus of digital technologies and art historical research

Chair: Dr Hana Leaper (Postdoctoral Fellow, Paul Mellon Centre)

Élodie Gössant- Reconstructing a lost country house: the case of Erlestoke Park (Wiltshire)

Shu-Chi Shen- Revisualising, Reconstruction and Recreation: The Case Study on a Digital Exhibition in the National Palace Museum

Thomas Flynn- 3D for Cultural Heritage: An Introduction

11.30-12.00: Comfort Break

12.00-1.30:

PANEL 2 - Potential: Evolution and synthesis of art historical methodologies

Chair: Dr Sophie Hatchwell (Senior Teaching Associate, University of Bristol)

Nirmalie Alexandra Mulloli & Christina Bartosch - Exhibitions of Modern European Art 1905-1915 – Building metadata to reveal artist exhibition strategies and advance theoretical possibilities of exhibition spaces.

Ricarda Brosch & Adam Knight- The Quantitative Turn: Big Data Ethics in Digital Art History

Rosário Salema de Carvalho & Inês Aguiar- Match! Image recognition issues on Az Infinitum – Azulejo Indexation and Referencing System

1.30-2.30: Lunch

2.30-3.30:

Workshop Session - App Building for History and Heritage | Dr Fern Insh (Sackler Digital Research and Engagement Fellow, Courtauld Institute of Art, #DAHRG)

3.30-4.00: Comfort Break

4.00-5.00:

Roundtable Discussion: Early Career Researchers' role in developing digital practice

Walk/ transport over to The Courtauld Institute of Art

6.00-7.15:

Lecture - The Art of Losing: A Wishlist for Responsible Digitization | Emma Stanford (Digital Curator Bodleian Library, Oxford) | *Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, Courtald Institute of Art*

7.15-8.00: Reception | *Foyer, Courtald Institute of Art*

ABSTRACTS & CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Élodie Gössant
elodiegoessant@orange.fr

Reconstructing a lost country house: the case of Erlestoke Park (Wiltshire)

In the 1820s, Erlestoke Park was one of the most important country houses in England. Its landlord, George Watson-Taylor, Esq. MP (1771-1841), one of the wealthiest gentlemen in Great Britain, was a figure of the cultural elite. In his town and country houses, he exhibited his magnificent collection of paintings, furniture and decorative objects that, according to the contemporaries' opinion, could compete with aristocratic displays. Now, the collection and the houses disappeared during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leaving no visual trace of the interiors.

In the framework of my doctoral studies my research on the impact of the Erlestoke Park display and its rhetoric on visitors and the place of Erlestoke Park in the history of collecting and display in royal palaces and aristocratic country houses, necessitated to create a visual reconstruction of some of the rooms to facilitate comparisons with other illustrated examples (Carlton House or Petworth House). The impressive sale catalogue of Erlestoke Park's content in 1832 being fortunately presented room by room, I was able to locate every object. Completing this precious source with my previous research on works of art acquired by the collector, plans of the building and visitors' accounts, I produced a 3D reconstruction of the interior and the evolution of the house's façades. Being the result of a research as well as a research tool, this work nourished my reflection on Watson-Taylor's collection. It is this research process that I propose to expose in the framework of the "Digital art history: practice and potential" conference.

Élodie Gössant is an independent art historian based in Paris.

Thomas Flynn

3D for Cultural Heritage: An Introduction

In this presentation, Thomas Flynn explains what 3D is; why 3D has become commonplace; and how you can use 3D in the cultural/arts sector.

Tom began work in 3D at the British Museum, helping establish a 3D capture and sharing programme that continues to this day. He is co-founder of a small ed-tech company Museum in a Box which is exploring the re-use of 3D, image and audio collections within a classroom context. Tom currently leads cultural and non-profit partnerships at Sketchfab Inc., highlighting best practice in sharing 3D data with audiences worldwide and delivering training for cultural sector staff in how to capture 3D scans of artifacts using simple digital photography. You can see his 3D work on Sketchfab

Thomas Flynn is Cultural Heritage Lead at Sketchfab.com – a popular platform used to publish, share and discover 3D, VR and AR content.

Dr Shu-Chi Shen
3091381508@qq.com

Revisualising, Reconstruction and Recreation: The Case Study on a Digital Exhibition in the National Palace Museum

The influence of digital technologies in the past has focused attention mainly on its technical power rather than the reconstructed ways of self-learning and self-amusement. This paper explores the special position of digital art collection and digital aesthetics in the National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei, thus, I take two special exhibitions for examples: the 2011 'Landscape Reunited: Huang Gongwang (1269-1354) and "Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains"' and the affiliated 'Beyond Landscape: Meeting Huang Gongwang and New Deductions of the Landscape', the latter displays the new media art exhibition based on the former. This study highlights the critical roles of new media art plays in the field of the virtual reality, virtual cultural heritage visualization and virtual museums.

This paper asks two core research questions. First, why and how digital technology has aided, reconstructed and innovated the greatest surviving masterpieces by Huang Gongwang, one of the Four Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) Masters in China? Secondly, 'how new media art techniques has broken the boundaries of time and space in this original masterwork around 1350?' By bridging the gap between the past and present, as well as designing a dynamic visual language, this essay discusses how we create the new networks of digital communication in the digital collection both in the virtual world and art museum, which provides the refreshed understanding of the digital knowledgescapes.

Dr Shu-Chi Shen is Associate Professor at the School of Art, Southeast University, China

Nirmalie Alexandra Mulloli & Christina Bartosch
nirmalie.mulloli@univie.ac.at
christina.bartosch@univie.ac.at

Exhibitions of Modern European Art 1905-1915 – Building metadata to reveal artist exhibition strategies and advance theoretical possibilities of exhibition spaces.

Within the few years, before World War I, the appearance, and indeed the very notion of (western) paint-ing changed radically. This history of early 20th century modern European art has often been written as the development of new artistic forms and "-isms". Conversely, little systematic research has been under-taken to show how those forms and "-isms" were presented to and received by the public, and whether and how artists used specific strategies to gain an audience.

The foundation of the "Exhibitions of Modern European Painting 1905-1915" project based at the Universi-ty of Vienna (funded by the Austrian Science Fund), is premised on building an open-source database of exhibitions including Modern art and artists, which took place in Europe between 1905 and 1915. By transforming the information of what we estimate to be around one thousand original catalogues into an aggregated data set, we hope to build a view of the geographic distribution and networks of modern painting, the chronology and geography of exhibiting new artistic forms, the propagation of "-isms", the exhibition strategies of artists, and the discourses that accompanied exhibitions of modern art.

Drawing from our respective doctoral research topics, this paper demonstrates our methods for creating an art historical metadata set and the value such data has to expand our understanding of historical artis-tic developments and brings forward the ways in which this data can also begin to progress traditional theoretical debates of (exhibition) space.

Nirmalie Alexandra Mulloli & Christina Bartosch are project managing the Exhibitions of Modern European Painting 1905-1915 project at the University of Vienna.

Ricarda Brosch & Adam Knight
ricarda.brosch@gmail.com
adam.knight@oii.ox.ac.uk

The Quantitative Turn: Big Data Ethics in Digital Art History

The processing of art history as an undulating whole is an intimidating but tantalising prospect, a task that with the advent of big data methodology is no longer inconceivable. This paper explores the intersection between big data methods and the history of art, drawing on practices and case studies that illustrate continuities and parallels between the non-digital and digital approach to the study of art history. Crucially, however, this paper will seek to critically assess the consequences of the 'quantitative turn' in art historical methodology. What do we gain from the quantification of artwork? What do we lose? Finally, are the limitations of big data-powered art historical work to be simply acknowledged or overcome? We will argue

here that a primary concern should be the perceived objectivity, infallibility and veracity often associated with computational methods. The semantic interventions that govern the inclusion and exclusion of artworks and their subsequent datafication are an important counter to this objectivity. Working with big data remains an exercise in subjective scholarship: A failure to recognise and account for this can lead to overly generalised, false or even potentially dangerous academic claims. Much more than a simple question of scale, the epistemological and sociological impact on the generation of knowledge brought about by the application of big data to more 'traditional' scholarly fields must therefore be considered. With this in mind, this paper will put forward a number of guidelines related to the 'ethical' use of big data in the field of art history and humanities more widely.

Ricarda Brosch recenrtly completed her MA at the Courtauld Institute of Art.
Adam Knight is an MSc student at the Oxford Internet Institute

Dr Rosário Salema de Carvalho & Inês Aguiar
rscarvalho@letras.ulisboa.pt
inesaguiar00@gmail.com

Match! Image recognition issues on Az Infinitum – Azulejo Indexation and Referencing System

Az Infinitum – Azulejo Indexation and Referencing System is a research-oriented project focused on the study of Portuguese ceramic tiles (azulejos) (see: http://redeazulejo.letras.ulisboa.pt/pesquisa-az). It is based on several relational databases that enable the systematisation and interconnection of data. Az Infinitum allows users to register and cross data about the locations where azulejos are applied, the decorative motifs, the authorships, the chronologies, the sources of inspiration, old photographs, materials, techniques, archival documentation, and so on.

According to Drucker's definition, Az Infinitum is a digital project. Capable of gathering, processing and systematising a huge quantity of information, of promoting its analysis and enlarging thereby the scope of research, it brings about a fundamental epistemological change – allowing researchers to raise new questions and paving the way to a renewed perspective on the history of Portuguese azulejos.

However, its success is dependent on the existing data, and there is still a lot of work to be done in order to secure a scientifically relevant research sample. Because of that, Az Infinitum is not yet able to offer perfect or remarkable data visualizations. On the other hand, although an image recognition tool is needed in this field, technology researchers do not seem very interested in solving specific Art History research questions. In light of these challenges, how can Az Infinitum grow as a Digital Art History project, engaging image recognition tools and bridging the gap with technology researchers?

Dr Rosário Salema de Carvalho - Azulejo Research Network, ARTIS – Institute of Art History, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon.

Inês Aguiar - Azulejo Research Network, ARTIS – Institute of Art History, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon.

Emma Stanford

The Art of Losing: A Wishlist for Responsible Digitization

What makes a good digital surrogate? How do we minimize and mitigate the loss of fidelity inherent in digitization? Is it possible to create digitized resources that accommodate not only current research needs but future ones? Using case studies from the past 25 years of digitization and from the longer history of visual and textual reproduction, this lecture will explore the weaknesses and strengths of digital reproduction, survey current efforts to create richer digitized resources, and discuss the difficulties these efforts face. In this context, the lecture will propose a wishlist for the responsible creation and curation of digital surrogates, emphasizing linked, machine-readable metadata, an interoperable and standardized discovery interface, high-quality images that acknowledge the original object's multidimensionality, and the facilitation of scholarly interaction with and enrichment of the object.

Emma Stanford is Digital Curator at The Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

Thank you for being here and have a great conference!

Any queries? Please direct them to:

fern.insh@courtauld.ac.uk

Our official conference hashtag is #DAHPP

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