

Göttingen Spirit Summer School:

The material culture of exploration and academic travel, 1700-1900

Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Historic Observatory, University of Göttingen, Germany,
24th-29th July 2017

Convenors:

Dr. Marie Luisa Allemeyer (Zentrale Kustodie, University of Göttingen)

Dr. Dominik Hünninger (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, University of Göttingen)

Christian Vogel (Zentrale Kustodie, University of Göttingen)

Experts/Speakers:

Professor James Delbourgo, Rutgers University

Professor Joachim Rees, Freie Universität Berlin

Dr. Bernhard C. Schär, ETH Zürich

Dr. Lola Sanchez-Jauregui, University of Glasgow

Professor Vanessa Smith, University of Sydney

Topic and Purpose

Travel has long been a subject of inquiry in the history of science and scholarship. In recent years, the changes and development of the practices of travel, especially collecting and inscription during the long 18th century, have received special attention. Many studies focused on the changing aims, objectives and perceptions of travel, the collection of data and objects, the visualisation of observations and the collaborative nature of these practices. It has become clear how an earlier encyclopaedic attention was slowly supplanted by specific disciplinary interests and how this also shaped many fields of academic inquiry. Working "in the field" became a requisite of newly developed disciplines, like ethnography and the biological sciences. Indeed, these practices seem to have been instrumental in making scientific and scholarly careers. At the same time, individual observation and inscription became objects of contention and debate themselves. Reports of individuals needed to be supported by new strategies of evidence production, like field diaries or new tools for measuring and recording the observations. Practices of collection, preparation, classification, visualisation, as well as the transfer of specimen and objects were widely discussed and their improvement was fiercely debated. The objects themselves became tokens of evidence, especially after their transportation to the growing institutions of collecting in Europe and elsewhere. They were supposed to verify the travel reports. Comparison of objects and observation became important, too. Cataloguing and the paper tools of collecting were also part and parcel of this development. Since we acknowledge the epistemic value of engaging with objects, visits to the relevant academic collections at the University of Göttingen are an integral part of the program.

In addition to questions concerning the role of objects and collections in the processes of knowledge production, we would also like to address the state and development of object based research in the humanities. How can humanities research be enhanced by engaging with objects? Which methods and theories can successfully be employed in order to achieve meaningful knowledge about these processes on a medium and larger scale?

Each day of the summer school will be dedicated to a specific topic where four to five PhD candidates will present their research and give an introduction to their projects, with one expert commenting and leading the discussion for each project.

James Delbourgo will give a keynote lecture on Monday, 24th July: "Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum"

We will also include a session on how to visually communicate academic research and how to create complex narratives through strategic display. It will also investigate how inquiry into material aspects of objects can enhance research. This object-based session will be led by Lola Sanchez-Jauregui, University of Glasgow, and will involve hands-on experience.

For parents we can offer a child care service during the time of the summer school.

The summer school will be reflecting travel in four thematic sections:

- The Natural Lives of Cultural Things: Collecting Materials, Environments and Categories
- Scientific travels and the spaces and people in-between
- Imperial infrastructures and scientific travel as a collaborative endeavour
- Drawing and inscription as practices of mobilisation and insight

The Natural Lives of Cultural Things: Collecting Materials, Environments and Categories // James Delbourgo

What is the relationship between what we think of as cultural objects and the natural environments from which they come? Histories of collecting, like modern museums, are usually organized by disciplinary categories such as science, natural history, anthropology, archaeology and art. But how can attention to the natural environments from which objects come shed new light on the processes by which they get valued and categorized? If historians of science have sought to restore the cultural context within which natural knowledge is made, how might we restore the natural context in which cultural knowledge is made? The rise of industrialization and imperialism between 1700 and 1900 produced unprecedented global mobility and contacts between different peoples, while fostering specializations of knowledge into new disciplines and institutions, notably including museum collections. By what practices were objects valued, represented (verbally and visually) and collected both through dealings with local populations and negotiating natural environments? What role did forms of materials science – whether vernacular or more formal judgments of specific materials' value – play for the formation of a basis for collecting what later came to be seen as primarily cultural artefacts? How, in other words, might we melt down conventional disciplinary divisions to reframe the history of collecting and see how acts of collection were interventions in natural environments that, in turn, produced judgments about natural materials, as well as cultural forms? Finally, how did the meanings of specific materials shift through relocation from collection sites to museums, and to what extent did such movement erase, preserve or invent associations between exotic materials, lands and peoples in the minds of metropolitan publics?

Scientific travels and the spaces and people in-between // Vanessa Smith

There is now a long history of work on the implication of scientific voyaging in the establishment of European global Empire; however more recent scholarship, building on the insights of Kapil Raj in *Relocating Modern Science*, has shifted the focus to the intercultural constitution of scientific knowledge. Rather than a Latourian vision of European science emanating from 'centres of calculation' in which Indigenous specimens were amassed and classified and local knowledges appropriated, Raj and others have set out 'an alternative vision of the construction and spread of scientific knowledge through reciprocal, albeit asymmetric, processes of circulation and negotiation'. This panel will focus on the transnational travel, networks and exchanges that produced scientific knowledge: that is, knowledge that would not have come into existence without documented intercultural encounter. We are interested both in work that engages with new archival materials or case-studies, and work that revisits existing accounts of European scientific discovery and assesses them in the light of these considerations. We envisage that both accounts of travel from Europe to outer Empire, and travels by colonial subjects to metropolitan centres will be of relevance to the discussion.

Imperial infrastructures and scientific travel as a collaborative endeavour // Bernhard C. Schär

Scientific expeditions into "unknown territories" developed simultaneously with imperial aspirations of European colonial powers from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards. On the one hand, they benefited from colonial infrastructure, such as trade fleets, support from colonial armies, plantation owners, and colonial administrators, who provided forced laborers, translators, local guides, and indigenous collectors. On the other hand, they provided cartographic, geographic, ethnographic, but also botanical or zoological knowledge, which was useful for economic exploitation and European rule in the colonies. Such entanglements between colonial infrastructures, colonial trade relations and exploration voyages enabled a rapid expansion in the presence of "scientific objects" in Europe, as well as the establishment of an appropriate infrastructure for the exploration of these objects: academies, museums, botanical gardens and universities. In recent studies on global history, the sciences are therefore seen both as a supporting pillar and as a product of colonialism. In the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the practice and the organization of expeditions and exploration changed of course: from the journey of an encyclopaedic scholar, still embodied most recognizably by Alexander von Humboldt, they increasingly mutated into well-organized and firmly-lead expeditions of multi-disciplinary research teams - typically consisting of specialists in botany, geology, zoology and ethnography. However, specialization was not only visible and important for the European scientists but increasingly produced a large number of indigenous specialists from the colonized population who often remain anonymous. Researchers were also always involved in transnational communication networks in Europe and the colonies. The studies envisioned for this panel could address the following questions: How did the relationship between expeditions and colonial infrastructure in play out in the different European empires?

Drawing and inscription as practices of mobilisation and insight // Joachim Rees

Drawing and sketching took prominent positions among the practices which transcended the seen and the observed into flat and mobile units. The laborious and meticulous efforts to create, print and distribute images, as well as the passionate arguments among European scholars about quality, adequacy and usefulness of images, clearly show the enormous importance of drawings in the exploration of foreign environments. At the same time, the visual mobilization of both natural and social phenomena transferred the hitherto strange environment not only into an object of scientific knowledge, but also into an object of imperial and colonial governmentality and administration. After all, drawing was itself a form of knowledge production, as well as a key technique of the appropriation of the natural world. Thinking with the sketching hand was an important form of approaching objects and phenomena not only in the European studios, but also in the field. In addition to the practical conditions of drawing in the field, contributions to the collaboration between scholars and draughtsmen and -women, the professional self-understanding of draughtsmen and -women are very welcome. Furthermore, the epistemic significance of drawings, the media competition between preparation and drawing, as well as the different graphic representations and formats of drawings may also be addressed.

Applications and Selection Procedure

The summer school will be held in English and welcomes PhD candidates or advanced postgraduates to apply. Up to 18 applicants will be admitted. Interested applicants are asked to send a cover letter, a CV, as well as the completed application form that can be downloaded from the website (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/how-to-apply/555121.html>). You will need to insert a research exposé (800 words) into the application form. The documents (cover letter, CV, application form) should be sent by 15th of March 2017 via e-mail to summerschool@kustodie.uni-goettingen.de, merged together as one pdf-file. The cover letter should contain a statement why the project would benefit from the summer school, in how far the project is related to the overall topic and more specifically to the preferred panel, as well as to one or more of the academic collections from Göttingen (<http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/die-sammlungen-im-detail/521326.html>). The selection will be conducted by the convenors, the experts and the academic advisory board of the *Zentrale Kustodie*. Successful candidates will be informed in April, and will then be asked to send in a more developed research exposé (up to 5000 words incl. footnotes) within 6 weeks of the invitation. These texts will be circulated among all participants of the summer school and will be the basis for the experts' commentaries and the discussions during the summer school. We ask all applicants to address not only the research content of their projects but also to include references to concepts and methodologies and an explication of their research agenda and the sources employed. A discussion on how objects and collections feature in the research project is very much appreciated.

Thanks to the generous support of the „Goettingen Spirit Summer School“-program at the University of Göttingen, we are able to provide board and lodging for all participants and only need to collect a participation fee of 50 € prior to the Summer School.

For further information and questions, please contact Christian Vogel (summerschool@kustodie.uni-goettingen.de)

Preliminary program

Monday, 24.07.2017

4:30 pm – 6 pm: Arrival, registration, and presentation of the *Zentrale Kustodie* and the *Lichtenberg-Kolleg*

6:15 pm – 8 pm: James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum* (Keynote lecture)

8 pm: Opening Dinner

Tuesday, 25.07.2017

9:30 am – 10 am: presentation of the chair

10 am - 12:30 pm: 2 project presentations

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: visit of a collection

4 pm – 6 pm: 2 project presentations

6:30 pm – 8 pm: Guided tour Historic Observatory

8 pm: Dinner

Wednesday, 26.07.2017

9:30 am – 10 am: presentation of the chair

10 am - 12:30 pm: 2 project presentations

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: visit of a collection

4 pm – 6 pm: 2 project presentations

6:30 pm – 8 pm: Object-based session with Dr. Lola Sanchez-Jauregui

8 pm: Dinner

Thursday, 27.07.2017

9:30 am – 10 am: presentation of the chair

10 am - 12:30 pm: 2 project presentations

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: visit of a collection

4 pm – 6 pm: 2 project presentations

7 pm: Dinner

Friday, 28.07.2017

9:30 am – 10 am: presentation of the chair

10 am - 12:30 pm: 2 project presentations

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: visit of a collection

4 pm – 6 pm: 2 project presentations

7 pm: Dinner

Saturday, 29.07.2017

10 am – 11 am: Departure