



# The Material Life of Things Research Group

## Participants and Abstracts

### **Christy Anderson (Department of Art, University of Toronto)**

*Matter into materials: fire, fabrication and Renaissance architecture*

As part of a larger research project on early modern European architecture, my contribution will examine the metamorphosis of matter into materials, its evolution and processes. All materials required transformation from their state in nature to make them usable in building. Stone needed to age to increase its hardness. Wood had to be dried to ensure that it would not split or shrink. Other building materials, such as metal and mortar, underwent a more radical fabrication by fire. The power of fire to create, and destroy, architecture is a thread that runs through the writing on and the experience of architecture. The ancient writer Vitruvius attributes the origins of architecture to the power of fire to shape communities and necessitate shelter. Alberti and Vasari return to fire's seminal role in devising buildings. Yet fire was ever present in its destructive role as well, and a final example will include the description of the burnt remains from the fire of London in 1666. Through a study of building materials, in their transformative birth and death, it is possible to understand the cyclical life of buildings. In contrast to a more modern notion of architecture as an inanimate, static object, the early modern conception of architecture was more organic in process. This research draws on the discussion of materials in treatises on architecture as well as the discussion of metallurgical processes, for example, in the writings by Biringuccio. Alchemical notions of fabrication and transmutation run throughout this topic, as all early modern craftsmen understood themselves to be transforming the raw objects of nature into useful, desirable and potentially wondrous objects through the cunning of their skill and abilities.

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Christy Anderson is Associate Professor in the Department of Art of the University of Toronto. She holds a PhD from the Department of Architecture (Program in the History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture and Art) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts (June 1993). She has published widely in the field of Renaissance architecture. Her publications include: "Inigo Jones and the Classical Tradition", *Cambridge University Press*, October 2006, 289 pp., "Wild Waters: Hydraulics and the Forces of Nature", in *'The Tempest' and its Travels*, P. Hulme and W. Sherman, eds., London: Reaktion Press, 2000, pp. 41-47. Recently she has organised a number of conference sessions relevant to the *Material Life of Things* Project, including *Fusible Stones and Solidified Juices: Renaissance Architecture in Flux*, Renaissance Society of America, Annual Meeting, Los Angeles CA, March 2009 and *Materials and Meanings*, 2 sessions at Renaissance Society of America, Annual Meeting, [organized with Pamela Smith, Columbia University]: Venice, Italy, April 2010.

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### **Moya Carey (Asian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum)**

*Bringing it up to date: Qajar brass mounts on Safavid and Chinese ceramics.*

In 19th century Qajar Iran, as in many places, it was practical to repair older ceramic objects with brass fittings: replacement spouts, handles and lids. In the Asian collections of the V&A, an identifiable group of ceramic vessels has been re-fitted in this way, with decorative mounts from Qajar Iran. These mounts are minutely engraved with a repertoire of figures from 19thC Iranian visual culture: youthful Qajar princes, veiled women, dervishes, acrobats, as well as supernatural figures from folklore such as monstrous divs, and a range of bizarre humanoid creatures probably derived from the Qazwini's medieval cosmology, which describes the strange inhabitants of foreign islands. The latter was published as a lithograph edition in the 19th century, and many of the other images may also prove to draw from widely-available lithographic sources.

Commonly, re-mounting is associated with imported objects, such as Chinese porcelain in the Middle East, or Fatimid rock crystal in Europe. The mount may adapt the object to a new function not originally intended for it, or may restore it to its original function by replacing damaged parts. Either way, the mount itself is rarely designed to replicate the original style and provenance of the artefact, and is a contemporary addition to an older or foreign object. It is a product of its own cultural period, and therefore embodies that period's possessive accommodation of historical artefacts. These mounted vessels of Chinese porcelain and Safavid fritware are therefore couched in a Qajar environment and re-fitted according to contemporary taste. They pass from 17th century artefacts to 19th century possessions, and also describe Qajar commoditisation of historical material culture.

To date, this Qajar mount corpus is restricted to the Asian collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, to objects of Chinese porcelain and Safavid fritware which were acquired in Iran during the 19th century. Ongoing research into other collections may reveal a wider group, but it is a telling factor of typical art historical and museum practice that 17th century objects with 19th century additions such as these are rarely included in permanent exhibitions or catalogue publications: both prefer to present historical pieces in the best condition, intact, illustrative only of their time of production, and unaffected by intervening centuries.

This object-based project is intended to complement ongoing research on Chinese porcelain by Luisa Mengoni and Rose Kerr at the museum's Research Department.

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Moya Carey is Iran Heritage Foundation Curator for the Iranian Collections, in the Asian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum. She holds a PhD from the Department of Art and Archaeology, at the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London. Her thesis entitled "Painting The Stars In A Century Of Change: a thirteenth-century copy of Al-Sufi's Treatise on the Fixed Stars (British Library Or.5323)." She has worked as contract lecturer and tutor for the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Aga Khan University, the Department of Art and Archaeology at SOAS, the Birkbeck College and Sotheby's Institute of Art, teaching on aspects

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of Persian manuscript-painting, early scientific illustration and inlaid metalwork, for postgraduate, undergraduate and diploma level. Her publications include: "Mapping the mnemonic: a late thirteenth-century copy of al-Sufi's *Book of the Constellations*", in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Leiden: Brill, 2007). 65-72; "Al-Sufi and Son: Ibn al-Sufi's Poem on the Stars and its prose parent", *Muqarnas* 26 (2009) and "The Gold and Silver Lining: Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Mu`ayyad al-Urdi's Inlaid Celestial Globe (ca. 1288 AD) from The Ilkhanid Observatory at Maragha", *Iran* (2009).

### **Tarnya Cooper (16th century collections, National Portrait Gallery)**

*The re- use, re-cycling and appreciation of panel paintings in sixteenth century England*

Part of the idea of this strand is to consider the ways in which panels paintings are re-used, recycled and re-versioned over time. There are several examples of these practices which can be a simple process of re-using wooden panels, (by painting other compositions over the top), or updating particular portraits to fit new aesthetic models. Critically this work relies upon technical analysis, and the use of x-ray, Infra-red reflectography and microscopy to look beneath the paint layers and dendrochronology to examine when the wood used for panels was first felled. This type of research allows us to trace the physical changes in the life of the object. Consequently, the research can then explore how the meanings of these objects have changed over time and how they reflect specific cultural values.

The current research is collaborative and has been part of a major research project called Making Art in Tudor Britain, a project which has undertaken technical analysis on over seventy five portraits produced for British patrons in the period 1500-1580. The team on this project have worked in close association with Aviva Burnstock at the Courtauld who is also keen to collaborate with the research group on this topic. There are numerous of examples of case studies on our website, see <http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/case-studies.php>

This type of research is highly applicable to Tudor and Jacobean painting as few paintings (particularly portraits) were considered as 'art objects' by their first audiences. There are also very few known artists and the composition of many paintings were produced in workshops as multiple copies, only a few of which survive today. Therefore the concept of a painting as a unique object is less relevant; a fact which impacts on our understanding re-use of panels.

My research also explores how the meanings of individual's portraits change during the lifetime of the sitter in relation to their biography. I will examine several examples of portraits of 16th century writers and merchants to consider the performative function of portraiture in relation to biography.

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Tarnya Cooper is the curator of 16th century collections at the National Portrait Gallery. She is currently engaged in a major research project entitled Making Art in Tudor Britain based upon the collections at the NPG. The project is currently undertaking technical analysis on over 150 British paintings from the period 1500-1620 and it explores: the production and manufacture of

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paintings, the influence of Netherlandish emigres on artistic production, how condition and alterations made over time have influenced the meanings of works and changing functions for a contemporary audiences.

### **Francesca Dell'Acqua (Facoltà di Lettere, Università degli Studi di Salerno)**

*The 'Framed' Infinity of His Likeness: the Cultural Context of the Genoa Mandylion*

The so-called 'Mandylion of Genoa' (Genoa, San Bartolomeo degli Armeni) is an icon portraying the likeness of Christ with a luxurious enamelled, repoussé and filigree gilded frame. The chronology (tenth to fourteenth century), as well as the origins of the painting are debated, but the focus of my research project will be the cultural context that produced its frame. This is made up of four filigree plaques that circumscribe the outline of a very dark face of Christ, and the outer, rectangular frame, in which ten plaques in filigree work alternate with ten small enamelled and repoussé plaques (about 5x5 cm) featuring the history of the relic and its arrival in Constantinople in 944. The icon is a reproduction of the cloth imprinted with Christ's facial features that He, while preaching in Jerusalem, is said to have sent to king Abgar of Edessa (today Urfa, Turkey). Although other copies, each believed to be 'the' original Mandylion, circulated (one in particular, in the Vatican, Cappella Matilda, is very close to the Genoa Mandylion for the iconography of Christ's likeness but displays a simple gilded frame), none has been endowed with such a rich frame as the Mandylion that arrived in Genoa in the late fourteenth century under unclear circumstances.

The frame, whose experimental aspects are quite unique, is likely to have been produced at the imperial Palaiologan court between the late thirteenth and the fourteenth century. This frame corresponds to many of the questions addressed in the call for the applications. For example, its debated chronology; the supposed imperial patronage; its alleged authenticity; its decontextualisation in Genoa perhaps as a consequence of a theft rather than a gift; its change of destination from a private, imperial cult in the Constantinopolitan Pharos chapel to a once-a-year public display in the Genoese cathedral; its pre-modern restorations and additions; and last, but not least, the unparalleled quality of its craftsmanship.

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In 1996: graduated in History of Art at the *Università di Firenze* with a thesis entitled "Le vetrate del monastero altomedievale di San Vincenzo al Volturno" dealing with the Carolingian glazed windows of the monastery in which Roman and Levantine glass was remployed. In 2001 got a Ph.D. degree in History of Medieval Art at the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa, with a dissertation entitled: "La vetrata in Occidente tra l'eta' tardo imperiale e l'altomedioevo: le fonti, l'archeologia", that two year later was published as a book. Has been fellow at the American Academy in Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies. In 2004 has worked at the exhibition *Intorno al Sacro Volto da Bisanzio a Genova* (Genova, Museo Diocesano, 17 Aprile-17 Luglio 2004). In 2006 has been awarded with the *Prize Hanno and Ilse Hahn* by the *Bibliotheca Hertziana/Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte* of Rome. In 2008 has conceived, and has been coordinating since, an international research project called "Mediterranean Cross-Currents: The So-called 'Salerno ivories' as Examples of Artistic



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Interaction in the Middle Ages" (scientific committee: Gerhard Wolf, Avinoam Shalem, Anthony Cutler, Gudrun Buehl, and Herbert L. Kessler). Is presently working, among other things, on the Palaiologan frame of the Holy Face of Genoa, and on the so-called Serpent Column in the Hippodrome of Istanbul, another magnificent example of transformation of an object according to its evolutionary perception along its 2500 years of history.

### **Rebecca Farbstein (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*The social lives and technologies of Magdalenian portable art*

This research studies the object biographies and technologies of producing Magdalenian art, dated c. 17-11,000 years before present. The ways craftsmen engaged with materials will be studied using chaîne opératoire methodology, which traces sequential actions involved in the production, use and discard of artefacts. Using macro- and microscopic analysis, it may be possible to distinguish the choices artists made while producing and using art made in several raw materials, including antler, bone and stone. The intersection of material, technical, social and symbolic considerations in these artefacts attests to their multiple lives and meaning in Magdalenian society. These intertwined social and material lives of Palaeolithic art are the focus of this research.

A piece of decorated antler, dating to c. 13,500 years before present, illustrates the potential of this research. After the decoration was made, the artefact was re-appropriated, possibly by a different craftsman working at a later date. He or she splintered the antler to make a tool, and in the process, bisected the original decoration. What remains is the drefuse from the production of a tool. Thus, several craftsmen engaged with this material and the artefact in distinct ways. One apparently valued its potential as a symbolic piece of art, whereas another was more interested in its potential as a foundation for a tool. The object endured three "life histories": as the antler grown by a reindeer for one year of its life, as the support for a decorative motif, and finally as the foundation for a tool.

I plan to study other objects like this to uncover their rich and varied object histories and the ways Palaeolithic artists made and transformed their material worlds. Art will be studied from two regions of southern France, both of which preserve evidence of periodic occupation by hunter-gatherers at the end of the last Ice Age. This research should offer better understanding of the social and technological lives of Palaeolithic craftsmen and the art they made.

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Dr. Rebecca Farbstein was the 2009-2010 Caroline Villiers Research Fellow at the Courtauld Institute of Art. She earned her PhD in archaeology at the University of Cambridge in 2009, and previously graduated with highest honours from Princeton University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in art history and archaeology. Her research focuses on the materials and technologies associated with the production of Europe's earliest art: small, handheld statuettes and figurines, generally termed "portable art," which date to c. 40,000 – 10,000 years before present. She has conducted fieldwork and excavations in France, the Czech Republic, and Lesotho, and will begin a new field project in Croatia this summer. Her previous publications include: Farbstein, R. 2010. 'The significance of social gestures and technologies of



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embellishment in Palaeolithic portable art.' *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*. (DOI: 10.1007/s10816-010-9085-9) and Farbstein, R. & J. Svoboda, 2007. New finds of Upper Paleolithic decorative objects from Predmostí, Czech Republic. *Antiquity* 81: 856-864.

### **Kate Gerry (Department of Medieval Art, The Walters Art Museum)**

*Show and Tell: Transformation, Medieval Art and the Modern Museum*

Many medieval artefacts have been modified in the centuries since their initial creation, repaired and updated as contexts and priorities changed throughout the Middle Ages, and then, often, recombined, restored and remade in the modern period to suit the tastes of collectors. These adaptations, some radical, some more subtle, are usually treated as obstructions to our study of the pristine object and scholars have often sought, in their descriptions, to strip away the traces of later stages in order to better envision the primary work. Researchers, lecturers and students might choose to consider a given work of art in its original state, but visitors to collections of medieval art are confronted with the object as it exists today. This poses a particular set of questions for curators and museum educators, as well as for private collectors. I have been engaged in several case studies of medieval works of art, including manuscripts, that have been adapted or transformed in different ways, and I will now turn my attention to how museums have approached these works. During the period of the Material Life of Things Seminar, I will focus my research on the ways in which collectors and museums have approached the question of authenticity and change in medieval works of art, and how they have presented, or perhaps hidden, this aspect of individual works from viewers. This issue has been a factor in displays of medieval art throughout the modern period and is of even greater interest at this particular point in time: the recent reinstallations of the medieval collections at the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum demonstrate changes in thinking about how to display medieval works of art, and the three venues of an upcoming international exhibition of medieval reliquaries will also need to tackle this issue.

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Kathryn Gerry received a PhD in Medieval Art History from Johns Hopkins University in 2008, and currently holds a Mellon postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Medieval Art at the Walters Art Museum. While completing her doctoral research, she held a Kress fellowship at the Courtauld Institute of Art (2005-2007). She has worked as a research associate in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books at the Walters, and has taught various courses in the field of medieval art at Johns Hopkins, the Catholic University of America, and the Maryland Institute College of Art. Her research has focused on medieval manuscripts and other works of art that have been significantly modified as their contexts changed over the course of the Middle Ages. She has published an article on stages of transformation of the St Albans Psalter, and has recently submitted for publication another article on the St Albans Palter, and a paper on a small group of composite manuscripts. In 2009, she presented a conference paper on a twelfth-century portable altar incorporating earlier medieval fragments, and she is currently preparing a paper on the covers of the Mondsee Gospels, with an eye towards determining whether they reveal a primarily medieval state or post-medieval modifications.



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### **Jim Harris (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Sculpture and Trauma: Polychromy as a record of disaster and displacement*

Alterations to sculptural polychromy are neither always consistent over the lifetime of an object, nor always effected in response to the same stimuli. The painting and gilding which determine an object's appearance and (apparent) materiality are often themselves transformed at later dates, either as a result of changing tastes and functional requirements, or in response to (sometimes traumatic) external events. Tracking these changes can contribute to an understanding not only of the circumstances of an object's creation but of its viewing context and reception over time.

The initial focus for my research for *The Material Life of Things* will be the completion of a study of Donatello's *Entombment* in polychromed limestone at the Santo in Padua. This has involved the sampling and analysis of the layer structure of the treated surface in order to establish a record of the various campaigns of polychromy to which the relief has been subjected, and the tracing through published texts of the changing perception of the object over time. Among the discoveries has been that its polychromy was completely transformed following a fire in the mid-eighteenth century, giving it an aesthetic quite different from its original appearance, responsive more to the relief's changed location and context rather than to its iconographic content and original function.

My ongoing project will involve tracing the physical transformations of a group of polychromed sculptures more closely at hand, the sixteenth and seventeenth century funerary monuments in the church of St Olave Hart Street, in the City of London. St Olave's is one of the few city churches to survive the Great Fire, though it was severely damaged during the Second World War and its sculpture has been extensively restored and repainted. Technical analysis of the polychromy will be undertaken with a view to establishing their original appearance, their alteration in response to traumatic events and the relationship of their surface treatments to the changing liturgical and decorative priorities of the church in England between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. The study will also involve close attention to the documented history of the church through reformation, revolution, fire and war.

By establishing the physical biographies of the objects and by giving them context in the theological and material development of the church I hope to map their joint histories in a way that will engage with many of the issues raised in the overall scheme of the project, for example the history of materials; conservation, restoration and adaptation; temporality and authenticity; ephemerality; the relationship of 'artists' to artisans; and corporate and individual attitudes towards materiality, display and colour.

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I am a Visiting Lecturer and Research Forum Associate Scholar at the Courtauld Institute, currently completing a PhD under the supervision of Patricia Rubin. My thesis is a group of case studies of polychromed sculptures by Donatello, examining them from material, functional and iconographic viewpoints with the intention of understanding the circumstances of both their creation and their changing use and reception over time. It follows an MA which attempted to



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reconstruct the original viewing context for a large-scale, monochrome passion cycle of the sixteenth century, from a Genoese Benedictine house and intended for use over the hours from Good Friday to Easter morning.

I have served two years as editor of *immediations*, the Courtauld's Journal of Postgraduate Research, and am a member of the Institute's Sculptural Processes Research Group. I am also a Director of Man & Eve gallery, where issues of the conservation and ephemerality/permanence of contemporary art are daily concerns. My publications include: 'Northern European Polychromed Sculpture' in V. Brilliant (ed.), *Gothic Art in the Gilded Age*, exh. cat., John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida (Sarasota, 2009), pp. 78-93, '(Re-)Making Beauneveu: The Scholarly Construction of a Great Artist', and 'Digest of Documents', in S. Nash, *André Beauneveu, "No Equal in Any Land" – Artist to the Courts of France and Flanders*, Groeninge Museum, Bruges (London, 2007), pp. 178-205 and 'Whose Perspective? Andrea del Castagno, Paolo Uccello and the Patron's Point of View,' *immediations*, vol. 1, no. 3, (2006), pp. 5-23.

### **Hanna Barbara Hölling (Faculty of Humanities, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam)**

*Between organic media and technology. Unstable materials and contemporary conservation*

In the recent time, there has been a notable amount of objects based on organic art and technology presented either in exhibition venues, during larger art events or entering the public and private collection. Indeed, the tangible organic media, to generally name solely plants in their diverse state of existence, are more conducive to replication and modification than any other medium currently applied in contemporary art. Consequently, the lack of rules determining the original state of an artwork, as well as the absence of regulations concerning the re-installation, re-execution or re-assemblage of these artefacts, remains problematic. Since the organic art changes with every new exhibition venue or at regular time intervals, the conservators pose difficult questions as to an object's authenticity. Additionally, the documentation issues, which are considered to be essential in conservator's practice, have to face and be adjusted to the transitory character of objects.

The maintaining of organic art poses amazingly similar problems to those of maintaining new media. The becoming rapidly obsolete constituents evoke the questions of reinstallation, emulation or even migration. How far does the change of a physical component, be it a hardware component or a record, alter the meaning of artwork? Is the real meaning of the artwork contained in the very idea of the object, or is it rather the material objecthood of artwork and its behaviour that produces meanings? I aim also to show how various stakeholders influence the condition of perishable constituents by means of comparisons of diverse object's "interpretations" that might be found even within the same collection in different display situation.

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Hanna Hölling \*1975 trained as conservator at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1993-2000), University of Applied Science in Cologne (1998-2000), Central Institute of Conservation

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in Rome (2000) and University of Amsterdam (since 2009). Grants of GFPS e.v. (1998), DPG e.v. (1999) und NWO (2009-2013). Conservator at the Restoration Centre in Düsseldorf (2006), Museum Folkwang in Essen (2005); freelancer at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne (2004-2007) and other museums; Head of Conservation at the ZKM | Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe (2007-2009). Visiting lecturer at the State Academy of Art and Design in Stuttgart, Faculty: Conservation of New Media and Digital Information (since 2008) and at the University of Amsterdam, Professional master: Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image (2009). Since 2009, PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam. Lives and works in Amsterdam and Zürich. Her publications include: Hölling, Hanna Barbara: *Konservierung* in: Hedinger, J., Gossolt, M. (Eds.): *Lexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst von Com&Com*, Niggli publishers, Zurich 2010; Hölling, Hanna Barbara: *On the Afterlife of Performance*, Witness Report, Conference and Exhibition "The Manifold (after) Lives of Performance", 13–15 November 2009, STUK Kunstencentrum, Leuven (Belgium) and Frascati (Nes 63, Amsterdam); a co-production of de Appel and STUK Kunstencentrum; <http://www.deappel.nl/pdf/exhibitions/63/ontheafterlifeofperformancehannaholling.pdf>; Hölling, Hanna Barbara: *Organic Art. Unstable Materials and Contemporary Conservation*, PhD thesis summary on conservation of organic materials as a part of the overall project *New Strategies in Conservation of Contemporary Art*, 2009. <http://www.newstrategiesinconservation.nl>

### **Sally Korman (Independent)**

*Destroyer and Preserver: Vasari's Book of Lost Things*

In 1527, during the upheaval that followed the Medici's expulsion from Florence, the arm of Michelangelo's *David* was broken into three pieces. The fragments were retrieved by two youths, who braved the continuing unrest to rescue this symbol of civic identity and artistic virtuosity. The story was told by one of them, Giorgio Vasari, in the 1568 edition of his *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. In casting his sixteen-year-old self as the protector of the *David*, Vasari creates a powerful synecdoche for the *Lives* themselves.

This project investigates Vasari's role as curator of the disappeared. Through painstaking research, he pieces together the memory of lost, stolen, destroyed or decayed objects. He catalogues the casualties of time, accident, neglect and flawed artistic practice: lamenting vandalism and the collateral damage of political violence. He celebrates ephemera - triumphal arches, festival scenery, firework displays - and argues passionately for retaining decorative interiors in their original contexts. Yet as a painter and architect, Vasari was responsible for some spectacular incursions into the territory of the past, as when he remodelled the former Great Council Hall into the residence of the Medici Dukes.

Vasari's activities as a collector reflect this dual impulse to preserve and transform. The now-displaced contents of his album reveal evidence of multiple interventions. He changed the shape of drawings, added attributions and contained them within mounts of his own design, like visual commentaries.

Artworks, for Vasari, were living organisms. They could die, and be revived. He constructed their afterlives: they underwent the same literary and historical manipulations as his human subjects. Vasari's *Lives* are a repository of memory and a museum of lost things. Above all,



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they are an act of love, through which their creator lays claim to the souls of generations of craftspeople and the things they made.

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Sally Korman studied at New College, Oxford and the Courtauld Institute, where she completed her PhD thesis under the supervision of Professor Patricia Rubin. Formerly Curatorial Assistant at the National Gallery, she has held the position of Visiting Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute, University College London, Goldsmiths and Roehampton University. She writes on Italian Renaissance art and literary culture. Her publications include: 'A St Francis by Botticelli in the National Gallery', *Apollo*, July 2003, '*Dante Alighieri Poeta Fiorentino: Cultural Values in the 1481 Divine Comedy*', in *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, eds. G. Neher and R. Shepherd, Ashgate Press, 2000 and *Baroque Painting in Genoa*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery, 2002 (co-author with G. Finaldi)

### **Pip Laurenson (Time-based media conservation, Tate Modern)**

*As If: identity and loss in the re-framing of contemporary art*

In this research I will explore how the identities of works of art are reframed depending on their vulnerability to, and in the face of, different types of loss. I work as a conservator for time-based media artworks, performances and artists' installations. Here the practice of managing change and assessing its significance has led to the evolution of different conceptual frameworks which, in some ways, relate back to more traditional conservation practice and in other ways do not. I will compare how loss and change are conceptualized for contemporary and historical artworks and, by analyzing a range of cases, develop an understanding of how this leads to the reframing of a work's identity. An outcome of this research will be to provide a critical reading of the conceptual frameworks emerging for contemporary art conservation. I will develop this research by identifying a variety of works from different periods whose identity has been reframed due to loss and examine:

- \* the mechanisms which triggered reframing
- \* the motivation behind reframing
- \* how it happened
- \* how it was articulated
- \* by whom
- \* how these works are presented

The implicit or explicit theoretical frameworks underpinning these case studies will be articulated and examined in the context of how they support contemporary and historical approaches to loss. I will use social networking and list serves to encourage people to present examples, so I can gather a broad overview of the types of reframing that has occurred. For example, where a fragment becomes the work, or where a performance becomes an installation. Included in this set of cases will be examples where the artist has preemptively articulated ways that her work might be reframed once elements are lost. As, for example, Ceal Floyer has done for 'Carousel' where key technology has become obsolete.



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Pip Laurenson is currently the Head of Time-based Media conservation at Tate. She has published widely on the conservation of contemporary art including 'Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations', in *(Im)permanence: Cultures In/Out of Time*, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh (2008). Also in 2008 Pip collaborated with Ann Wagner Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, University of California, Berkeley on a joint paper 'Nauman's Edge' presented at *The Object in Transition: A Cross-disciplinary Conference on the Preservation & Study of Modern & Contemporary Art*, Getty Conservation Institute. She leads for Tate on two international interdisciplinary research projects *Matters in Media Arts* and *Inside Installations: the preservation and presentation of artists' Installations* and is a member of the steering group for the Research Centre *The Art Museum and its Future*.

### **Francesco Lucchini (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Getting Things Together: Assemblage and the History of Goldsmith's Work*

This research is part of a larger project on the goldsmith's craft in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy (1300-1500). The project aims to reinstate goldsmith's work at the heart of creative activity in the visual arts, proposing a craft-based re-evaluation of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century artistic production and arguing for the central role played by goldsmith's practice. In particular my research will explore the distinctive nature of the goldsmiths' work as a work of assemblage, considering the implications of this technique for the broader problem of writing about the materiality of art in a way that is not simply descriptive but also interpretative. I will present some of these ideas at the first *Material life of Thing Symposium* ("Objects Making History: New Approaches to Material Evidence in Medieval Studies", 9 July 2010). My paper (entitled "Objects, Materiality and the History of a Place") will consider goldsmith's works that have been manipulated and physically altered in the course of their material existence. It will primarily concentrate on selected fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century reliquaries of St Anthony of Padua in the Basilica del Santo. I will suggest that a satisfactory account of the material transformation of these reliquaries should be both general enough to offer a basis upon which to mount an explanation (and not simply a description) of the underlying processes which governed their making and physical alteration and specific enough to be able to discriminate between the material properties and historical context of a goldsmith's work and, say, those of a panel painting. This paper will propose an interpretation that attempts to satisfy these conditions by looking closely at individual artefacts in order to reassess their processes of making and design, and by considering them en masse – as community's objects – in order to study their emerging qualities as a group.

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Francesco Lucchini completed his PhD, entitled 'Objects at Work: a Material and Cultural History of the Reliquaries of St Anthony of Padua in the Basilica del Santo, ca.1231-1448 at The Courtauld in 2009. His interests cover a wide spectrum of medieval artifacts and techniques, including metalwork and material aspects of early Italian painting. He is also co-organizing an inter-institutional research projects seeking to define the category of the *Clever Object* as a tool

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of art-historical interpretation. Forthcoming publications include: 'Face, Counterface, Counterfeit. The Lost Silver Visage of the Reliquary of St. Anthony's Jawbone,' in *Meaning in Motion: Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. G. Freni and N. Zchomelidse (Princeton University Press, Forthcoming, 2010); 'The Making of a Legend. The Reliquary of the Tongue and the Representation of St Anthony of Padua as a Preacher,' in *Franciscan Preaching*, ed. T. J. Johnson (Brill, Forthcoming, 2010); 'Circolazione di reliquie e committenza di reliquiari al Santo nel primo Quattrocento,' in *Cultura arte e committenza al Santo nel Quattrocento*, eds. G. Baldissin Molli and L. Bertazzo (Padua, Forthcoming, 2010).

### **Angela Matyssek (Art History Department, Philipps-Universität Marburg)**

#### *Metaphors and Practices of "Life"*

Nam June Paik's "Robot K-456" (1963), the "first non-human action artist" (Paik), was knocked down by a car during a street action. An immediately arriving ambulance took it to a museum where experts were only able to record the robot's death. Since then its body is exhibited in museums. With this performance the artist stipulated basic statements about art and its exhibition spaces. One of this provocative claims is that museums are cemeteries.

Analogies between artworks and humans are numerous in the history of art. Particular since the late 19th century, there seems to be no space outside the medical world where notions of "death", "suffering" or "life" are so often evoked than in the conservation of art. Artworks are considered very special entities situated between things and humans. These two spheres are connected through mechanical animation, myth and metaphor. Moreover, objects can even stand for the artist him- or herself: We talk about "a Picasso".

Apart from the rhetorical use of metaphors of "life" and "death", the practices of conservation draw on medical practices, i. e. adopting techniques like x-raying. The cuttings of Barnett Newman's painting "Who's afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III" have been stitched up with surgeon's needle and thread after the knife attack. Considering these seemingly "normal" analogies, my aim is to investigate how rhetoric and practices are interlinked and reinforce each other.

Focusing on the 19th and 20th century as the "scientific" and "secular" age I seek to explore these interlinkings in relation to specific art objects and their histories. As my starting point serve Newman's four paintings of his "Who's afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue"-series. This object-specific approach also promises to yield insights into the possibilities and limitations of the concept of "object biography".

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Angela Matyssek is an art historian with a strong interest in the history of science and technology, and is Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin at the Art History Department at Philipps-Universität Marburg. A core interest of most of her projects are the theories and practices of reproduction, documentation, conservation and restoration. Among other topics, she has written on photography and the practices of art history, artists' experiments with painting techniques during WW II, and on medical preparation. In 2007 she organized the conference "Wann stirbt



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ein Kunstwerk? Konservierungen des Originalen in der Gegenwartskunst? (?When does an Artwork die? Conserving the Original in Contemporary Art?) and she is currently researching theories and practices of the original in contemporary art. Her areas of specialization and research interests include modern and contemporary art, the history and theory of photography and new media, as well as collections, display and archives, and art and economy. She holds a PhD from Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, and was a Fellow of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (IFK), the Akademie Schloss Solitude, as well as a Research Fellow at ETH Zurich and an Assistant Curator at Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Last publications: (ed.), *Wann stirbt ein Kunstwerk? Konservierungen des Originalen in der Gegenwartskunst*, München 2010 (in press); *Überleben und Restaurierung. Barnett Newmans 'Who's afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III?' und 'Cathedra?'*, forthcoming in: Peter Geimer / Michael Hagner (eds.), *Nachleben und Rekonstruktion. Vergangenheit im Bild*, Paderborn 2011 (published as Preprint 398, Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science, Berlin 2010).

### **Luisa Mengoni (Asian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum)**

Will join the group in November 2010.

### **Susie Nash (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Sculptural fragments: interpretation and display*

Abstract to be supplied.

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Susie Nash has taught at the Courtauld Institute since 1993; she specializes in northern European art of the late medieval and early Renaissance period, having published on illuminated manuscripts, panel paintings, textiles and most recently sculpture. These publications include *Between France and Flanders. Manuscript Illumination in Amiens in the Fifteenth Century* (1999) a monograph on the sculptor André Beauneveau (2007), a series of three articles on Claus Sluter's 'Well of Moses' (Burlington Magazine 2005, 2006, 2008) *Northern Renaissance Art* (2008), and most recently the co-editing, with Jo Kirby and Joanna Cannon of the book *Trade in Artists Materials. Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700* (2010), to which she contributed an essay on the cost, acquisition and supply of pigments at the Burgundian court. In her teaching and research she places great emphasis on the physical and material aspect of objects, on interpreting documentary sources in the light of physical evidence, and has a particularly interest in the practice of technical art history.



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### **Scott Nethersole (The National Gallery/The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*'richonc[i]are e ridurre a l'uso d'ogidi': The reframing of Florentine altarpieces and the rise of independent panel painting, c. 1450-1501*

Around 1501, Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* (before 1435) was remodelled and updated. It was given a new frame and substantially repainted by Lorenzo di Credi. This example of reframing – both literally and metaphorically – of a polyptych as a unified, single-field and square-format *pala d'altare* is well known. It is perhaps less well known, however, that this practice was widespread. The phenomenon has received relatively little scholarly attention, beyond a chapter in Cathleen Hoeniger's book on *The Restoration of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500* (Cambridge, 1995), where she stressed that the reverence accorded certain altarpieces – whether because they were painted by, say, Giotto, or because they suggested the ancient lineage of a family – might have prompted their preservation through renovation, rather than replacement. Hoeniger also proposed that changing taste and major architectural work in chapels should be taken into consideration. Neri di Bicci's description of the alterations he performed on an old altarpiece for Tommaso Soderini in 1471, which heads this page, might suggest that her thesis is, in part at least, correct. But how these altarpieces were physically altered, as well as the relationship of these 'restorations' to wider trends in the Florentine art of the period, have yet to be properly examined.

This project will begin by considering the physical carpentry of these complex objects, asking how polyptychs, whose frames were integral to their structure, were adapted into panels that fitted into trabeated frames much like gallery pictures. It will ask if there was any consistency of approach and if any workshop specialised in work of this type. This initial phase completed, my research will expand to ask three questions: first, what happened to the elements removed from these altarpieces; second, how did the new representational space created in these works affect the pre-existing sacred relationship between the saints (internally) and the viewer (externally); and third, what relationship might be constructed with the emergent typology of independent panel paintings at the end of the fifteenth century. The alteration of spalliera paintings, such as Uccello's *Battles of San Romano*, along similar lines to fit new decorative schemes will provide a potential avenue of investigation. Finally, the project will question if these holy objects were reframed as 'art' objects, or if the desire to update them provides evidence of their continuing efficacy as sacred representations.

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Scott Nethersole is the incoming Lecturer of Italian Renaissance Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art, where he completed his doctoral studies on 'The Representation of Violence in Fifteenth-Century Florence'. He was previously the Harry M. Weinrebe Curatorial Assistant at the National Gallery and the Michael Bromberg Fellow in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum.

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### **Sara Pennell (Early modern British history, Roehampton University, London)**

*'Cultures of repair in Britain, c. 1600-1800'*

I have been stimulated by my recent preliminary research into attitudes to ceramic (semi-) durability in early modern England, to develop a broader research agenda, charting British cultures of repair and recycling from circa 1600-1800. In exploring the motivations to and practices of material repair of not only textiles (which have been the focus of some scholarship in this area), but also domestic ceramics, glass, furniture and metalwares. I will locate changing ideas about repair and reuse of material goods and physical fabrics within contemporary constructions of and historiographical discourses about durability, cleanliness, domesticity, the ethics of consumption and modes of commodification. I am keen to explore how material qualities in this period are evaluated in relation to other values invested in objects (e.g. stylistic or emotional values); and how such material values shift as conceptions of durability, fashion, replaceability and so on, shift. I will also draw on my knowledge of medical history in thinking through the connections between physiological and object 'repair' in this period. The relative marginality of histories of artefactual repair in museums' presentations of their collections, often categorised as the 'behind the scenes' work of conservators, is another important focus.

My research will therefore initially target the following areas:

1. Strategies of maintenance: cleaning, polishing, mending & recycling (using household accounts, artefactual/archaeological evidence, prescriptive literature)
2. Technologies and services of repair (drawing on natural philosophical and domestic prescriptive literature, domestic papers, newspaper & shop advertisements, etc)
3. ideologies of repair (e.g. linguistic deployment of discourses around mending; status connotations of repair)
4. repairing bodies, repairing things (exploring links between e.g. surgical knowledge and technical discourses around material repair).
5. communicating early modern cultures of repair (e.g. working with museum conservators/curators to historicise and interpret maintenance and mending within representations of the use-life of artefacts).

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Having completed a Master's degree in architectural preservation in the US in 1992, and a doctorate at Oxford on the subject of the material culture of food in early modern England in 1997, I have since worked as a researcher at the Victorian and Albert Museum, at Birkbeck College and the Institute of Historical Research, before my current position. I have published several chapters concerned with the material cultures of food and the 'everyday' in seventeenth & eighteenth-century England and the historiography of consumption, most recently in Karen Harvey, ed. *Material Culture and History* (Routledge 2009).

I have also begun to research the cultures of repair and maintenance in domestic settings, across the long eighteenth century, and the circulation of secondhand goods in England before 1750, as represented in my chapter on the repair of ceramics in early eighteenth-century England, in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, eds, *Everyday Objects: Medieval and*



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*Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (forthcoming, Ashgate 2010); and a chapter on household sales of used goods which will appear in J. Stobart and Iija van Damme, eds, *Secondhand and Modernity* (forthcoming, Palgrave 2010).

### **Kate Rudy (The Courtauld Institute of Art/Trinity College Dublin from 2011)**

*Touched, Rubbed, Handled, Glued, Sewn and Kissed: The Life of Medieval Manuscript Prayer Books*

Manuscript prayer books were kept close to the body, by virtue of their size and structure. The mechanics of a codex demanded that the user to handle the object in order to interact with it. Furthermore, rubrics within most prayer books demand that the reader pick up the book seven times a day to read. Other rubrics demand that the reader look at the images, either those within the book or sculptures and paintings exterior to it, while still others demand that the user read while walking, kneeling, standing, processing, or lying on the ground. People developed close, frequent and intimate relationships with their books.

All of these interactions had a physical impact on the manuscript prayer book, and resulted in material added, material removed, and material rubbed away inadvertently. Users sewed pilgrims' badges, tokens symbolizing the Eucharist water, small prints, drawings, and curtains. They added script, often extra prayers and birth, marriage, and death notices. They also removed material when they repeatedly kissed images, sometimes wearing down the paint all the way to the vellum. They inadvertently left fingerprints on the margins and dirt in the gutter.

This study concentrates on how medieval users changed their prayer books in the course of using them. It investigates the clues they left that reveal their relationships with their books. It posits the prayer book as the locus of interactive devotional performance, whose only witness was the book itself.

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Kathryn Rudy (Kate) specializes in late medieval manuscripts of the Low Countries. She has written articles about the manuscript precedents of Bruegel's Netherlandish Proverbs; the earliest visual interpretation of the Ghent Altarpiece; illustrated manuscripts for instructing children; words as devotional objects; as well as several articles about medieval pilgrimage both real and imagined, culminating in a book (forthcoming) titled *Nuns' and Religious Women's Virtual Pilgrimages in the Late Middle Ages*. Other recent work includes a long essay titled "How Nuns Invented the Postcard," and an investigation of the manuscripts produced at the Franciscan Convent of St. Ursula in Delft. Her three long-term projects concentrate on the reception and original function of manuscripts: she has built a database to reconstruct fifteenth-century manuscripts whose prints have been cut out of them. She has compiled several thousand Middle Dutch rubrics that provide instructions for votaries in front of images for a book provisionally titled *The Spiritual Economy of Images: The Performance of Prayer on the Eve of the Reformation in the Low Countries*. Thirdly, she has nearly completed a book called *The Prayerbook as Talisman in Late Medieval Flanders*.



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Kate earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University in Art History, and also holds a Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies from the University of Toronto. She has held research, teaching, and curatorial positions in the US, UK, Canada, The Netherlands and Belgium.

### **Katie Scott (The Courtauld Institute of Art) and Hannah Williams (The Courtauld Institute of Art/University of Oxford)**

*Artists' Things: A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century Everyday Life*

*Artists' Things* takes as its subject the material objects that mediated the relationships between artists, their lives and their works. Arranged alphabetically in the form of a dictionary, each short essay examines a different object once owned by an artist in eighteenth-century France, from items related to their professional practice (Fragonard's paint-box, Chardin's spectacles, Vernet's notebook), to things with more personal significance (Falconet's letters, Nattier's clavichord, Cochin's handkerchiefs). In a series of material and archival studies, analysing actual objects or, where they no longer exist, the visual and textual traces of them in paintings, drawings and written descriptions, *Artists' Things* proposes an alternative social history of art that forges connections across the often distinct disciplines of art and material culture.

Informed by anthropological approaches premised on an understanding of society as lived experience, this collection of objects will catalogue the range of different relations between people and things, and between people via those things: relations both conscious and unconscious, willing and unwilling, emotional and contractual, sensual and cerebral. It is also alert to the nature of the gestures that have secured the survival either of the objects themselves, or memories of them; gestures both intentional and accidental; gestures preserved by use, miss-use and through collection. Just as it offers itself as a contribution to the tradition of artists' *Lives*, this study recognises that objects have lives of their own. It is through an interweaving of these biographies of the animate and the inanimate that *Artists' Things* aims to discover and describe a more holistic picture of the social and cultural networks of eighteenth-century France. In an embodied engagement with artists' personal possessions, the objects themselves retrace the vital intersections between art, science, technology, music, theatre, religion, law, fashion and the rituals of everyday life.

The objects that the participants have selected for the initial stage of the project are: Saint-Aubin's *Livre de caricature* (Scott) – a book of family jokes composed over several decades in the later eighteenth century by members of an artist's family; and Fragonard's paint-box (Williams) – the surviving tools and traces of pigment that constitute the physical remnants of the artist's technical practice. As complimentary objects, the two lend themselves to lines of inquiry about the 'use-life' of artistic wit and material practice.

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*Katie Scott* is a reader in history of art at The Courtauld Institute of Art. A specialist in eighteenth-century French art, she has published widely on the intersections between art, architecture and the decorative arts in the history of early modern material culture, most notably in her book *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Yale University Press, 1996). More recently her research interests have turned to the relations



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of art theory, commerce and the law, from which has derived her current book project, *Becoming Property: Art, Theory and Law in the Age of Enlightenment*. She was guest-editor of *From Luxury to the Everyday: French Decorative Arts of the Eighteenth Century*, a Special Issue of *Art History* (2005).

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*Hannah Williams* is completing her PhD at the Courtauld Institute of Art and will take up a Junior Research Fellowship at St John's College, Oxford in October 2010. Her PhD thesis is an ethnographic and art historical portrait of the Paris Académie Royale (1648-1793), examining the portraits and self-portraits of its members, and her postdoctoral research focuses on religious art and everyday life in early modern Paris. She held a Doctoral Fellowship in Paris at the Centre Allemand de l'Histoire de l'Art, has published articles on early modern French portraiture, and has co-convened several conferences including most recently *Everyday Objects: Art and Experience in Early Modern Europe* (2009) at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

### **Nat Silver (History of Art Department, UCL)**

*Connoisseurship, the art market and the imagined identity of Renaissance paintings*

The magnificent Trinity altarpiece by Francesco Pesellino painted between 1455 and 1460 for the Pistoia church of Santissima Trinità hangs today in the National Gallery, London. Surrounding it is a modern reproduction of a fifteenth-century frame which masks the dramatic nature of its mutilation and subsequent painstaking reconstruction. In the late eighteenth century this *tavola quadrata* was brutally chopped into six pieces which were framed individually and sold off to various private collectors. In 1863, Charles Eastlake acquired one of them for the National Gallery and as further fragments emerged, the Gallery began to reassemble them into an altarpiece. However, lacking any image of its original form they mistakenly constructed a Gothic-style polyptych rather than a single *tavola quadrata*. Some of the pieces had indeed been marketed by art dealers as polyptych fragments, a claim that added value to them in the eyes of collectors but contributed to its marginalization by scholars who viewed the polyptych as an 'archaic' altarpiece format. This object raises questions of fragmentation, reconstruction and categorization. But many other paintings in the same collection invite us to consider how pressures exerted by the burgeoning nineteenth-century market for Quattrocento paintings shaped, and continues to shape, our understanding of their authors and their original functions. My project will examine a pair of panels in the NG also by Pesellino, depicting the Battle and Triumph of David. Their function is frequently misunderstood, largely as a result of their popularity with nineteenth-century connoisseurs, and I seek to reconsider the physical and iconographic evidence in light of these concerns.

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I am currently a PhD candidate in the History of Art Dept at UCL. I took my MA at the Courtauld in fifteenth century Florentine art. In the past I have done internships in the drawings



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departments of both Christie's and the J. Paul Getty Museum. I look forward to beginning the Mellon pre-doctoral curatorial fellowship at the Frick Collection in September.

### **Evgeny Steiner (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)**

*Hokusai's Manga: An Art Object or The Ideas for Art?*

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is the artist who made sketches for a set of fifteen volumes called Manga – 'different, random, sketchy, disarrayed pictures'.

Can these fifteen books united by the same title be considered as a single work of art or are they rather represent a loosely jointed series.

The lax ideas about intellectual property and individual vs. collective authorship prompted various manipulations with the published books of Manga. They were many times reissued with all kinds of modifications. More importantly for our theme, users would often rebound these Manga books in a different format (for instance, changing a codex to an accordion style book). Often they would cut and paste different parts of pages in their own albums according to their individual whims. But possibly the most striking example of changing the original meaning as well as axiological and material status of Manga was the circumstance of the first appearance of it in the West. In our days Manga is usually published as an arbitrary selection of pages or a thematic selection of motives. This adaptation makes it easier to perceive but destroys the original integrity of the whole oeuvre.

A contextual study of the adventurous life of Manga books and their physical transformations, East and West, can yield a new interesting light upon the notion of the masterpiece and its post-production life.

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Evgeny Steiner is a specialist in traditional Japanese art and in 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Russian art. His books include *Stories for Little Comrades: Revolutionary Artists and the Making of Early Soviet Children's Books* (Univ. of Washington Press, 1999; Russian enlarged edition, 2002); *Zen-Life: Ikkyu and Beyond* (St.Petersburg, 2006; English edition is worthcoming); *Catalog of Japanese Prints in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts*, 2 volumes, (Moscow, 2008 – editor and contributor); *Victory Over the Sun*, (London, 2009 – translated trans-rational Russian Futurist texts with commentaries and introduction). Evgeny is Professorial Research Associate at the Japan Research Centre at the School of Oriental & African Studies, London). Currently he is preparing the first fully commented facsimile edition of Hokusai's Manga.



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### **Maria Elena Versari (Getty Research Institute/Duquesne University, Pittsburgh)**

*Sculpture and mixed media at the beginning of the 20th century. (Un-)castability, canonized persistence and the ephemeral definition of modern sculpture*

I'm currently engaged in a research project surrounding the value of fragile and perishable materials (plaster and other less traditional media) in the modernist sculptural practice of the 1910s.

This inquiry stems from my work on the sculptures of the Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni, originally created in plaster and mixed media. Boccioni famously theorized the use of a plurality of materials in sculpture in a Futurist Manifesto (1912). After his untimely death in 1916, however, all his original sculptures were destroyed or seriously damaged. Over time, only three plasters remained and were used to create a series of posthumous bronze casts. In their turn, the latter have assumed the value of originals both in current scholarship and in international museological practice. The three remaining plasters (one in Italy and two in Brazil) have never undergone any serious technical analysis, so that we still lack any information on their factual construction. On the basis of some newly discovered photographic documentation, I am currently engaged in a radical reconsideration of the "object biography" of Boccioni's (disappeared) sculptures.

While my research on these works is still ongoing and I am collaborating with two colleagues from the Accademia di Brera and the Raccolte Civiche of Milan on a book project on this subject, I am also currently enlarging the scope of my inquiry to develop a more systematic analysis of similar case studies in the history of modern sculpture.

The possibility to join the Courtauld's research group on "The material Life of Things" would greatly benefit both of these projects. It would allow me to compare notes with colleagues involved in similar tasks, enlarging my knowledge of technical procedures but also helping me clarify a new, much-needed methodological approach to the role played by the material life of objects in the definition of modern sculpture.

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Maria Elena Versari has been a Getty Visiting Scholar for the Spring 2010 and in the Fall of this year will be Visiting Professor of Art History at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. She studied at the Scuola Normale Superiore, where she received a PhD in Art History in 2006 with a doctoral dissertation devoted to the international relations of Futurism in the 1920s. She has worked as a Fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Institut Nationale d'Histoire de l'Art in Paris and the Wolfsonian Museum and Library. More recently, she held the position of Assistant Professor of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Art at the University of Messina and, after moving to the United States in 2008, she served as the Scholar in Residence at the Center for the Arts in Society at Carnegie Mellon University and as the Lynette S. Autrey Visiting Professor in the Humanities Research Center at Rice University.

She is the author of *Constantin Brancusi* (Firenze, 2005) and *Wassily Kandinsky e l'astrattismo* (Firenze 2007; French transl., Paris 2008) and has written several articles devoted to Italian Futurism, Avant-Garde internationalism, Cubism, Fascist aesthetics and architecture. She is



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currently working on a study devoted to the use of fragile and perishable materials in the modernist sculptural practice and the repercussions that this choice had on the canonization of modern sculpture itself.

**Elizabeth I Watkins (Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television, University of Bristol)**  
*A Cinematographic Document. Film Material and The Great White Silence (Herbert Ponting, 1924)*

The film archive is in a state of change as digital technologies affect film production, restoration processes and the ways of accessing and studying the cinematic archive (Cherchi-Usai, 2000; Fossati 2009; Mulvey 2006). Theoretical and philosophical frameworks that are responsive to questions of the history, historiography and historicity of film (Rosen: 2001) have begun to address temporality and contingency as dynamic forces which offer a source of fascination and threaten the spectator by destabilising the relationship between the past and present (Doane 2002; Rosen 2001).

The photographic index, as the capturing of an instant, is concealed within the cinematic illusion of movement and presence, which for Doane traces the veiling of the historicity of the subject (2007). In turn, the film archive offers an image of preservation and stasis within which, each film print and video bears the residual marks of its physical existence (conditions of storage, scratches of the machines of replay and reproduction) trace the temporality of the material itself. An analysis of the numerous manifestations of Herbert G. Ponting's film footage of Scott's fated polar expedition (1910-1913) across an initial twenty year period tracks the film's shifting technological and material contexts as the re-mobilisation of a commodity. This study will be extended through a second strand of enquiry which focuses on the British Film Institute National Film Archive's current colour restoration of *The Great White Silence* (H. G. Ponting, 1924) through a critical reading of primary sources located at the BFI National Archive, the Filmmuseum, nl., the Deluxe Digital Film Laboratory and Ponting's correspondence which is held at the Scott Polar Research Institute. The provenance of the film reveals the current restoration as a configuration of materials reassembled from the 1910-1913 camera negatives, prints and colour instructions scratched into the film's photographic emulsion and dated 1924, images re-used for a subsequent version released with sound, and preliminary restoration work undertaken in the 1990s. The practice of film restoration tends to conceal the marks of its own process. This case study addresses the temporality of the film material, medium and archive, through Andre Bazin's perspectives on cinema and stasis and Freud's articulations of memory to question the instabilities of 'the film' as an object of study.

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Dr Elizabeth I Watkins is a Research Associate at the University of Bristol and a Visiting Research Fellow at Centre CATH (Cultural Analysis, Theory and History) at the University of Leeds. She completed a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Leeds (2004 -2007) on the significance of colour and the characteristics of the film as material (transparency, saturation, glare, decay, fading) for theories of subjectivity and desire in cinema. Liz has published in *parallax*, *Paragraph* and *Journal of British Cinema and Television*.