

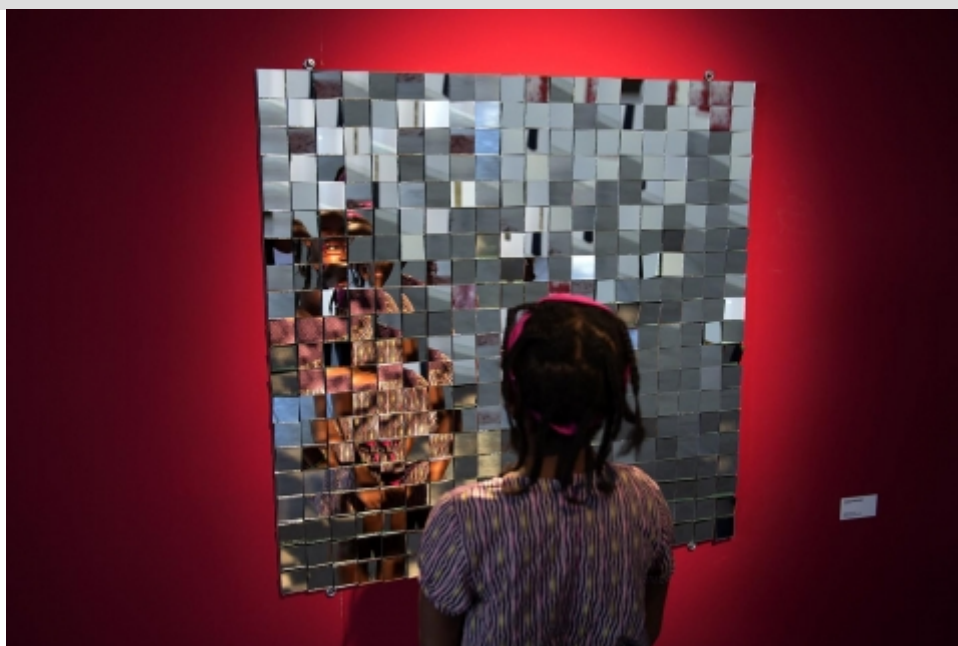
MIDAS

Museus e estudos interdisciplinares

Call for papers

Objects and Museums: Biographies, Narratives and Identity Bonds (2017)

Call for Papers MIDAS – issue 8



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MIDAS – *Museum Interdisciplinary Studies* is launching a call for papers for issue 8 for publication in June 2017. This issue is a thematic dossier under the theme “Objects and Museums: Biographies, Narratives and Identity Bonds” with Alice Semedo (University of Porto), Olaia Fontal (University of Valladolid) e Alex Ibanez (University of the Basque Country) as guest editors.

All accepted articles will undergo a double peer-review. Articles should not exceed 6 000 words (without bibliography) or ca. 40 000 characters (with spaces). It must follow the classical structure of an academic paper. Articles should include abstract, keywords and the biography of the author(s). More information at: <http://midas.revues.org/390?lang=en>

Deadline: **March 31st**, 2017. Send your text to: revistamidas@gmail.com

Note: In March de 2017 MIDAS launches a new call for papers for issue 9 (*Varia*) for publication in 2017 and a call for papers for proposals for thematic issues (for publication 2018).

Objects and Museums: Biographies, Narratives and Identity Bonds

Objects are returning to contemporary social theory with renewed strength. Whether it be in the form of commodities, communication technologies, artwork or even urban spaces, a new world of materiality and objectivity is now emerging with a sense of urgency that transforms them into new places for questioning and reflection. While the most radical poststructuralist and constructivist views tended to liquefy everything solid, today it is precisely the solidity that surrounds us which captures our attention and leads us, for example, to focus on the sensory immediacy of the objects we live, work and speak with — the objects we love and hate. Materiality thus regains a central position in the museological and heritage-related discourse and practice, which in this way are constantly re-imagining what constitutes such materiality.

Several approaches within the spheres of Museology, anthropology, geography, material culture, science and technology studies, design, sociology of consumerism and culture — to name but a few — point towards an understanding of the performative and integrative capacity of objects in helping build that which we call society. New approaches related to material and visual culture, the study of artefacts and the collections of interwoven narratives regard the museum as a laboratory, and museum collections as research technology. Major interdisciplinary projects resort to collections as a means to approaching broader questions concerning art, culture, history or even the environment. Methods drawn from the field of literary studies, for example, are used to design approaches for the analysis of objects of memory that reveal a hunger for new ways of questioning and tackling these issues. Such an approach — closer to literary discourse — becomes more evident in many recently published works, including *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (MacGregor 2014), *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (De Waal 2010), *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Turkle 2007), *Paraphernalia: The Curious Life of Magical Things* (Connor 2011), *Cod – A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World* (Kurlansky 2003) or *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Daston 2000). Applying the biographic approach to objects raises important methodological questions concerning their narrative, structure and chronology, the representation of change, their influence on the lives of humans, the communities and their material history and, above all, their interpretation and visibility in museums. The biographical study of objects has opened up extremely productive and innovative areas of academic research, including the work of Bill Brown on «Thing Theory» (2001); Chris Gosden's, Frances Larson's and Alison Petch contribution (2007) in connection with the Pitt Rivers Museum's collections; and, of course, the essays included in the already classic volume edited by Arjun Appadurai in 1986, and more particularly those on the value of objects and their exchange. By narrowing its focus on the social life of objects and their expressive effects, both in retroactive terms and in their capacity to challenge human activity, the latest issue of MIDAS aims at including transversal views across the several "new materialisms" while at the same time forging critical links with more classic topics and subjects in the history of Museology.

On the other hand, and through the incorporation of the intangible (historical, emotional, spiritual) and relational aspects (ownership, belonging and identity) of objects in museums, new avenues of inquiry are opened up which make it possible to call into question educational approaches that represent the museum as a heritage container. Heritage, therefore, is regarded as the relationship capable of connecting cultural assets with the society they belong to and the time that inherits such assets. Within this logical framework, objects somehow become the carriers of an identity embodied in narratives, biographies or artistic constructions that present themselves

manifestations of the bond formed between cultural assets and people. On the other hand, the creation of such bonds does not simply take place inside the museum's physical space, but additionally — and more and more — in other spaces (including virtual ones). All these relations constitute different manifestations of what is actually the same approach: the generation of identity-based ties between individuals or groups and heritage assets.

Another topic which we would like to include in the forthcoming issue of MIDAS refers to the relationship between objects and learning in museums. It is often stated that objects facilitate learning through the development of observation and questioning skills, which in turn allows for emotional connections and for complex ideas to become comprehensible. In this regard, we encourage discussions on these concepts on the basis of research work inspired, for example, by case studies.

The forthcoming issue of the MIDAS results from the current emphasis on bringing together several perspectives (museological, curatorial, technical) on the place of objects in museums — all with a view to critically mapping this domain. In short, the point is to stimulate reflection and present a number of relevant examples that make it possible to develop a new take on the theory concerning objects in museums as carriers of not just social, but also individual meanings, thus enabling heritagization/identity-construction processes to play an exploratory role from the standpoint of education. The topics and issues proposed partially overlap and should allow for the confrontation of several perspectives, both theoretical and methodological, as well as the production of diversified materials.

Topics

Three major lines of analysis are preferably suggested:

a) Individual stories: narratives, biographies, artistic constructions around musealized objects

Submitted articles may for example provide biographical narratives about particular objects; texts discussing the methodology of object biographies or introducing existing projects in connection with the life of objects; texts exploring the relationships between the curatorial and auto / biography on the basis of objects; the history of the museum (the museum as artefact); and any other aspect of the topic that is duly justified.

b) The Internet and the social networks as spaces where identity-based subject/object ties can be generated and shared

Through the Internet, museums have transformed the way in which they interact with the public. Synergies are thus generated which promote a greater autonomy in the visitors and create new spaces for interaction. What are the new forms of subject-object spaces, virtual museums and social networks that have been brought into play? Does this kind of “relational extension” of museums allow us to reflect on the kinds of bonds that are being nurtured? Which are the new ways of story-telling that have emerged and, along with them, the voices that are being listened to in the new relational settings? Does the intimate, the personal, the micro acquire here a more important dimension by multiplying and building deeper connections with regard to heritage?

c) The privileged object-learning relation in museums

What is the “added value” of object-based learning? What approaches are being currently used in museums and which evidences are being presented? How can education experts help museums engage in a discussion on object-based learning? How can museums use objects in a more creative way? And why is it that such approaches differ from others in terms of knowledge production? What are the impacts, the opportunities and the challenges involved in using digital technology in this context? What could be the impact, for example, of 3D printing of objects aimed at object-based experience? Which technological powers will be available to us in the future? Against this background, further issues may still be explored.

Brief Cvs of guest editors

Alice Semedo

Assistant professor (Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto). After finishing a first degree in Archaeology at the University of Coimbra (Portugal) I pursued my studies at

the University of Leicester, UK (Museum Studies - M.A. 1991; PhD 2003) where I presented a thesis on museum professional discourses (*The Professional Museumscape: Portuguese Poetics and Politics*), supervised by Susan Pearce. Among other functions, I have acted as director of studies for the MA (2003-2013) and PhD (2013-) in Museology at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto (Portugal) where I have been teaching since 1994. Within the MA in Museology I teach different courses that reveal the diversity of my teaching and research interests: museums and museology, the study and management of collections, and finally, policies and practices of communication in museums. I am particularly interested in the use of performative mediation objects in museums. I have participated in different research projects, published and organized conferences on topics relating to my research interests such as museological narratives and discourses, professional museological identity and contemporary missions for museums. I am also currently a researcher at CITCEM and supervise PhD and MA thesis and dissertations within these interests (MA Dissertations concluded: 30; PhD thesis concluded: 5).

Olaia Fontal

Graduate in Fine Arts at the University of the Basque Country, graduate in History Art and PhD in Educational Sciences at University of Oviedo. She is a university professor in Art Education at the University of Valladolid (Spain), author of many books and articles indexed in the theme of heritage education. She currently directs the Spanish Heritage Education Observatory (SHEO), three R & D projects, and she is co-coordinator of the National Heritage Education Plan in Spain.

Alex Ubañez

Degree in Geography and History and PhD in Education Sciences, currently is full professor at the University of the Basque Country. Specialist in Heritage Education, and professor of Research in Heritage Education at the University of Huelva, co-directed four doctoral theses in this area. Since 2006, he has participated uninterruptedly in research teams of R & D & I projects of MINECO. Since 2015, is principal investigator in two projects. He is a member of the Network of Excellence in Social Sciences Research - Red14, and has been the author of the National Heritage Education Plan of Spain.

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