

Is it Real? Historical Authenticity in our Collections and Museums
DAAD Hub-Cambridge / Leibniz-Gemeinschaft Scoping meeting

Organized with support from UCM (University of Cambridge Museums) and HPS (Department of History and Philosophy of Science)

Programme and Schedule

'Authenticity' is a concern that shadows every step of the work of the museum, from the acquisition of objects to their display and interpretation. Variations on the question 'Is it real?' underlie all aspects of our work. Historical authenticity—linked to dynamic issues of cultural and societal expressions and values—and the question of being authentic with regards to a specific time, place and situation cannot be assumed, nor taken for granted.

Building on previous work done in Cambridge interrogating the roles of museums, we wish to revisit questions with colleagues from Germany, aiming to incorporate and draw on expertise from other museum cultures and traditions and, specifically, to add historical dimensions to our discussions. Does the history of collecting and the museum help us understand the present? How do these histories intersect with questions of authenticity? Should museum displays celebrate being 'of their time and place', or aim to transcend time and place? Does the museum have a natural history? A national history? How does authenticity affect the visitor? Issues of authenticity impact our responsibilities to the public and to the objects themselves; these include the problems but also the importance of reproducing attitudes (e.g. about political, cultural and social relations) that are no longer acceptable but were once dominant in society.

By focusing on the question of historical authenticity (of objects, specimens, collections, displays, interpretation and museums themselves) we hope to put questions about the roles of museums in mediating past, present, and future culture at the centre of cultural discussions, raising scholarly and public consciousness of how questions of authenticity can be addressed by museums, scholars, curators and conservators.

We hope to be able to invite colleagues to join us for a one-day scoping session to consider ways to develop a shared project focusing on questions of historical authenticity in collections and museums.

Scoping Meeting 4-5 December 2017, Cambridge
Monday 4th December:

Time	Activity
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch and Introductions and context of our scoping meeting Whipple Museum of the History of Science, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Free School Lane
13:15 – 13:45	Whipple Museum of the History of Science with Museum Director Liba Taub and colleagues Joshua Nall (Curator of Modern Sciences) and Boris Jardine (Leverhulme Fellow) to discuss fakes in the collection
13:45 – 14:15	Travel to Classical Archaeology (15 minute walk; taxis available if desired)
14:00- 14:30	Museum of Classical Archaeology: to discuss Cast Gallery with curator, Susanne Turner
14:30 – 15:00	Travel to Whipple for tea (15 minute walk; taxis available if desired)
15:00 – 15:30	Tea at Whipple
15:30 – 15:45	Walk to Downing site (5 minutes)

15:45 – 16:15	MAA (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) with Curator of Archaeology, Jody Joy, to consider the Maudslay casts of ancient Mayan objects
16:15- 16:30	Walk to Sedgwick Museum (3 minutes)
16:30 – 17:00	Sedgwick Museum: to include consideration of what is 'real' in the Museum, with collections manager Dan Pemberton
17:30 - 18:30	Drinks at Whipple
19:00 -	Dinner at Riceboat Restaurant (Keralan Indian cuisine, Newnham Road)

Tuesday 5th December

Scoping meeting 9:30-2:00

9:30 Brief Presentations around the topic of Historical Authenticity (15 minutes each):

Achim Saupe (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam, Institut der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft)
The Leibniz Research Alliance Historical Authenticity: Introduction and key questions

Sunhild Kleingärtner (Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum Bremerhaven, director/Speaker of the Leibniz Research Museums 2016/2017)
"Authentic experiences" in cultural history museums?

Stephan Schwan (Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien, deputy director of the Research Institute for Media Knowledge, Tübingen)
Authentic objects in museums: A visitor's perspective

Dominik Kimmel (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum / deputy speaker of the Leibniz Research Alliance, head of the education and Communication Department)
Mixed Media: Originals, copies, models and virtual reality

Willi Xylander (Senckenberg Museum für Naturkunde Görlitz, Director)
Collections and objects in time: the specific view of natural history museums

Sabine Heine (Zoologisches Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, head of the communications department)
Natural History Museum Meets Contemporary History. Examining the historical authenticity of our collection

Panagiotis Pouloupoulos (Deutsches Museum, Munich)
(Re)constructing Authenticity in Musical Instrument Collections

Leonie Beiersdorf (Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Head of the Arts and Crafts Collection 1800-1945)
Authenticity versus Deconstruction in the Display of 19th-Century Material Culture

11:30 Discussion over coffee

12:00 Preliminary Agreement of future conference/meeting format, timing, structure and content, as well as other possible collaborations

13:00 Lunch

Participants from Germany:

Dr. Leonie Beiersdorf (Germanische Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg)

PD Dr. Ulf Hashagen (Deutsches Museum, Munich, head of the research institute for the history of technique and sciences at the German Museum)

Dipl. Biol. Sabine Heine (Zoologisches Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn)

Mag. Dominik Kimmel (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum / deputy speaker of the Leibniz Research Alliance)
Prof. Dr. Sunhild Kleingärtner (Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum Bremerhaven / speaker of the Leibniz Research Museums)
Dr. Panagiotis Pouloupoulos (Deutsches Museum, Munich)
Dr. Achim Saupe (Co-ordinator of the Leibniz Research Alliance, Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam)
Prof. Dr. Stephan Schwan (Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien)
Prof. Dr. Willi Xylander (Senckenberg Museum für Naturkunde Görlitz)

Cambridge participants:

Professor Liba Taub (Whipple)
Dr Joshua Nall (Whipple)
Dr Boris Jardine (Whipple)
Dr Jody Joy (MAA)
Mr Dan Pemberton (Sedgwick)
Dr Susanne Turner (Classical Archaeology)
Professor Sachiko Kusukawa (HPS)
Dr Richard Staley (HPS)
Dr Daniel Margócsy (HPS)
Dr Emma Perkins (HPS)
Dr Polly Blakesley (History of Art)
Dr William O'Reilly (History)
Professor Chris Young (MML—German)

Liba Taub and Achim Saupe, 26 November 2017
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