

The Art of Curating: Telling the Stories of Objects

26 September 4-5.30pm
27 September 11am – 12.30pm

An Introduction to the
GLAM Collections at HKU



The Art of Curating: Telling the Stories of Objects

Objects are 'containers' and they carry knowledge.

Museum display and publish objects to tell stories and communicated with different audiences in mind to convey information.

Interpreting objects: we study an object's physical properties, design and decoration, their use and historical cultural value and context (especially if the object is in a collection and 'out of context').

We analyze material, technique, idea, style, and culture.

Curating Collections and Exhibitions

Idea

selection / object list

loans requests

organisation of shipment and insurance

exhibition design

object display

object description

communication

How do you initiate and develop a display?

- A book?
- An essay?
- A research paper?
- A presentation?

Every research project starts with:

1. the idea:

a) a statement

b) a question

2. the object(s):

a) an archaeological find

b) a collection

What questions do curators ask in preparation of a display?

What questions do they stimulate the public with?

How / where are these questions asked?

How are they directed to a specific audience?

What questions do they leave unasked and unanswered?



What object is it?

What purpose does it fulfil?

What culture does it belong to?

What age does it have?

What importance does it have according to its culture; age, material(s)?
(what does the object represent in its cultural context?)

What material(s)?

What technique(s)?

How is it decorated - both material(s) and technique(s)

What size is it?

What condition is it in?

How complex was the object(s)' production?

What scale of production existed?

What resources were needed?

Were the object(s) used locally or widely disseminated (exported)?

What is the context for which they were made?

What is the context from which they arrive (today)?

What contents and context can groups of objects convey?

How do objects document and tell 'part of a story'?

Building and Maintaining a Collection

- Collecting/acquiring begins with your long-term vision and storing needs, as you want to consider object conditions and, if you can, materials and composition even before you collect. We entered an age about 10 years ago when 'modern materials', trade grade paints, plastics, ill composed glass, started creating unforeseen and often even unknown problems.
- Store individual materials appropriately, and do not expose non-lightfast materials, such as Chinese ink paintings, to excessive light to avoid damage and fading.

Collection Care

- Conservation/restoration proposals are needed before treatment, and documentation thereafter. Discuss treatment options, material and reversibility of conservation method/treatment prior to physical work.
- Catalogue: origin, provenance, and tombstone information, such as size, age, colour of an object, and names and bio of the artist(s). Use photo images, and record conditions, as well as price at time of purchase.
- Record artist information, correspondence, and context of purchase (auction, exhibition (keep published (printed and/or online) catalogues, for example)).
- Record similar artworks if in existence.