Special Panel Session

AHRC
Translating Cultures

The Arts and Humanities Research Council supports world-class research that furthers our understanding of human culture & creativity.

The AHRC’s themes provide a funding focus for emerging areas of interest to arts and humanities researchers. In recognising that interdisciplinary and collaborative research often requires particular forms of support to develop its full potential, themed funding calls can be particularly supportive of developmental activity, partnership-based activities, and innovative approaches. The funded theme ‘Translating Cultures’ explores how languages, values, beliefs, histories and narratives can be shared and understood across different cultures and contexts. This theme is of particular relevance to the Heritages of Migration conference. During the conference delegates will have the opportunity to network with those involved, and learn more about the projects that have been funded as a result of the theme, including:

- Researching Multilingually: At the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State
- Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Mobility, Identity and Translation in Modern Italian Cultures

Presentations as part of this special panel session include:

Densua Tordzro, Naa
Artist
UK/Ghana

Cloth, Skin, Fashion and the stories they hide and tell

In this paper fashion and fabric artist Naa Densua Tordzro will present her work researching the ways in which clothing is interpreted when worn by incongruous bodies. Working over the past 3 years as part of the AHRC funded project Researching multilingually at Borders Naa Densua has created numerous items of clothing for wear in both Ghana and Scotland and at other venues. She has also produced the costumes and textiles for the Dance Production, in Dodowa at the Noyam African Dance Institute, Ghana Broken World, Broken Word. Her artistic interventions and approach to fashion and the symbols in the kente cloth have then troubled accepted norms about clothing, skin, race, language and bodies in different contexts. In this panel discussion with Prof Alison Phipps Naa Densua will discuss her ways of working and what she has found from this postcolonial diaspora approach to fabric and fashion.

Forsdick, Charles
University of Liverpool
UK

Translating Cultures, Translating Objects

The paper will explore the extent to which translation studies has – or often has not – intersected with discussions of object histories. Drawing on work associated with the UK AHRC “Translating Cultures” theme, and in anticipation of a forthcoming exhibition on “Translating Cultures in 50 Objects”, I address the ways in which the circulation of material artefacts can encapsulate processes of intercultural translation and illustrate the complex dynamics on which these processes depend, i.e., operate as vehicles of translation, but also sites in which translation is inscribed. I suggest that such an approach challenges previous emphases in object histories, where the focus on the “travel” of artefacts has often been more chronological than geographical or
intercultural, and where the frame in which such analyses have been situated is often that of the national as opposed to the transnational or transcultural. I will draw in my analysis on the recent commitment of the journal *Art History* to studying "hybrid, transactional objects that unsettle conventional categories by crossing chronological and geographical borderlines" as well as on the Harvard University project on *Tangible Things* (with its parallel emphasis on "things unplaced" and "things out of place") to suggest the potential of considering objects in transit as objects in translation.

Hills de Zarate, Margaret  
Queen Margaret University  
UK

**Moving Objects: Memory and material culture**

*Translation is fundamentally a creative process and a good translator should have creativity. The work of a translator is like that of a painter or writer* (Gui, 1995).

In this presentation the role of translation is understood in its broadest sense to include the transmission, interpretation and sharing of languages, values, beliefs, histories, narratives and life stories and the vehicles of translation, such as art, performances, objects and other cultural artefacts. Drawing on current developments in the field of material and visual culture and recent participatory ethnography research undertaken in the provinces of Buenos Aires in Argentina and San Paolo in Brazil it focuses on objects and the narratives embodied within them as a vehicle of translation in relation to the transmission of transgenerational identity and personal continuity. In considering the memory of objects in their absence it addresses their replacement through the acquisition of evocative objects and the recreation of a habitus; the active presence of the past of which it is the product—an evolving process of structuration and restructuration that shapes individual and social mobility and therefore a generative rather than a fixed system: a basis from which endless improvisations can derive.

Phipps, Alison  
University of Glasgow  
UK

**When Objects Tell Stories: Hospitality in-between the home to the museum**

Material culture and material life have attracted considerable attention in the literature on tourism and anthropology. This seminar considers the objects which arrive in or are packed into suitcases and how these objects are then displayed when they are at one and the same time both congruous and incongruous, and thus have a creative and narrative potential. It looks at the forms of display negotiated by a range of travellers through their relationships and kinship and their sense of home. In particular it focuses on the subjective and sensuous elements involved in the use of material culture and its material (after) life as well as the different narratives and interpretations which circulate around the stories of object arrivals, moving displays, changing understandings and expanding stories.