

Voices in (and around) the Museum

Wednesday Evenings, May 2011

This series of oral interventions – by architects, archeologists, artists, curators, historians, musicians, theorists, and writers – aims to understand how the voices emanating from objects and subjects in the museum impact the institution's traditional remit of researching, collecting and displaying objects. How do these voices condition the visitor's affective and sensory experience? How do the narratives told by the museum through objects change over time? Which voices have been suppressed, and why? What can museums do to preserve the immaterial traces of the voice? And what new technologies and outreach strategies are required to listen to and broadcast voices both in and outside of the museum?

Voicing the Museum Artefact

Wednesday 4 May
6pm – 8.30pm
UCL
Haldane Room

The friction between orality and materiality provokes an epistemological tension in how material artefacts are studied and understood. Case studies discussed in this session will highlight how vocal engagements are transforming the way researchers and curators interpret material collections, and how this transformation calls for the application of alternative research methodologies and approaches.
Sarah Byrne (UCL), Debbie Challis (Petrie, UCL), Emma Poulter (British Museum) and David Toop (London College of Communication)

Exhibiting the Voice:

Inside the Museum

Wednesday 11 May
6pm – 8.30pm
UCL Institute of Archaeology
Room 209

Until recently, the audioguide was the privileged conduit for the voice in the museum. But audioguides offer limited interaction with visitors, and are often viewed as accessory to the display. In light of the contemporary museum's heightened concern with orality and intangibility, artists, architects and curators will share their experiences in giving the voice a more central and creative role in exhibition contexts.
Steve Cross (UCL), Colin Fournier (UCL), Marysia Lewandowska (Konstfack) and Sarah Lowry (Foundling Museum)

Exhibiting the Voice:

Outside the Museum

Wednesday 18 May
6pm – 8.30pm
UCL Institute of Archaeology
Room 209

What is it about the unrivalled presence of voice that can translate meaning about a specific time or place, and transpose the listener to another time/place? Voices inscribe sites with meaning and emotion, creating a 'sense of place' or, to the contrary, a sense of displacement, uncanniness. How can the museum harness this affective charge of the voice to expand beyond its walls?
Toby Butler (University of East London), Paul Elliman (Yale School of Art), Seph Rodney (London Consortium) and Imogen Stidworthy (Jan van Eyck Academy)

Preserving the Voice

Wednesday 25 May
6pm – 8.30pm
UCL Institute of Archaeology
Room 209

Because a highly unstable medium, subject to the speaker's lapses and vagaries, the voice presents a challenge for museum collections mandated to tell coherent, consensual, and 'objective' stories. Archivists, historians and archaeologists in this session will consider the place of the voice in museum storerooms and archives, and the means by which to preserve past and present voices.
Susan Hawkins (Kingston University London), Jack Maynard (Tate), Linda Sandino (V&A and University of the Arts London) and Hilary Young (Museum of London)