Emotional Objects

Touching Emotions in Europe 1600-1900

Institute of Historical Research, London

11th-12th October 2013

Convened by Sally Holloway & Alice Dolan

Funded by the European Research Council Project

‘Spinning in the Era of the Spinning Wheel 1400-1800’

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Introduction

Emotional Objects aims to stimulate interdisciplinary debate concerning what objects reveal about emotions, and what emotions contribute to material culture. In particular, it will explore the way the materiality of objects – the very stuff of which they were made – performed emotional work. In the course of the last decade, both an emotional turn and a material turn have been identified as key developments in historical scholarship. Yet the emotions and material culture have rarely been considered in combination. Emotional Objects will bring them together. The conference is funded by the project ‘Spinning in the Era of the Spinning Wheel’.

Spinning in the Era of the Spinning Wheel, 1400-1800

From the introduction of the spinning wheel to England during the later Middle Ages to its eclipse by powered spinning machines early in the nineteenth century, hand-spun yarn was vital to the success of the textile industries that dominated English manufacturing. Indeed, hand spinning – of wool, flax and ultimately cotton – became the principal income-generating activity pursued by women. For many of those women, it was also an essential means of furnishing their own families with textiles. Spinning was, at one and the same time, the foundation of England’s rise to pre-eminence in the international trade in textiles, and a crucial means by which rural families supplied themselves with cloth.

Yet hand spinning before the Industrial Revolution is typically dismissed as a low-productivity bottleneck that needed to be overcome in the forward march of economic and technological progress. It has rarely been studied in its own right. ‘Spinning in the Era of the Spinning Wheel’ aims to remedy this deficiency. It is a five-year research project, funded by the European Research Council and led by John Styles at the University of Hertfordshire, UK. Its objective is a comprehensive history of hand spinning in England between 1400 and 1800.

Alice Dolan

Alice is a PhD researcher employed by the University of Hertfordshire as part of ‘Spinning in the Era of the Spinning Wheel’. Her thesis ‘The Fabric of Life: Linen and Life Cycle in English Daily Life c.1678-1810’ explores the cultural significance of linen both in terms of its use and meanings from infancy to death. Her interest in emotional objects is explored within her final chapter ‘passing on’ which juxtaposes highly emotive objects with textual sources and asks whether linen was a surprisingly unemotional material.

Sally Holloway

Sally completed her AHRC-funded PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2013. She is currently rewriting the thesis into a monograph entitled Romantic Love in Words and Objects: Courtship and Emotion in Georgian England. Her postdoctoral project will explore the material culture of emotions in England between c. 1740 and 1850. Sally is co-editing the collection Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History with Sarah Randles and Stephanie Downes, supported by the Australian Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, and Queen Mary Centre for the History of Emotions.

Zoë Thomas, is assisting on the day. She is a second year PhD student at Royal Holloway. Her thesis explores women’s craft communities in terms of space, identity and the home, in England and Germany during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
Speakers & Abstracts

Natalie Armitage, University of Manchester, ‘Wax Dolls, Poppets and Images of Infamy: The Enduring Nature of the Human Effigy’

The human effigy, whether employed in private ritual magic or acts of public execution, has had an enduring nature throughout European history. By the end of the seventeenth century King James and Martin Del Rio had identified the practice of harming an effigy to injure or kill another in their treatises on witchcraft and magic and the practice of publicly burning an effigy of the ‘Guy’ on Bonfire Night had become well established. Unlike other methods of witchcraft and ritual that have become obsolete during the modern period, the potency and resilience of the human effigy as a method of retribution, whether its efficacy is believed or just utilised for cathartic means, has remained.

This paper will explore the use of the human figure, in both private and public forums, for retributive purposes to establish why such objects retain the power to inspire fear and disgust, but also solidarity when viewed in a group context. Are they mere remnants of older traditions, or does the emotive power we imbue these objects with indicate a deeper psychological connection and identification with representations of the human form?

Natalie is currently studying for her PhD. Her thesis is titled ‘The Voodoo Doll as Historical and Cultural Artefact’.

Niall Atkinson and Susanna Caviglia (University of Chicago), ‘Touching Rome in the 18th Century: The emotional construction of the eternal city’

In 1775, the French traveller Gabriel-François Coyer recounts his rapture in the face of Rome’s ancient treasures and how he touched a statue to make sure that it was only lifeless marble. Expressing a conventional trope about the power of ancient culture, Coyer’s emotionally charged touching points to the changing relationship between objects and emotions in the age of the Grand Tour.

Contemporary French travel accounts of Rome, however, reflect an ambiguous response to the physical encounter with the past. Although most visitors were culturally prepared to react with the proper emotional intensity to individual artistic objects, they were confused by their haphazard urban context. Christian relics invaded pagan monuments, miraculous virgins competed with a vast culture of prostitution, and ancient statues were made to hurl current political invectives. This confusion of categories was the result of the way objects from the past were “disfigured” by contemporary life. To the foreigner, this spatial and temporal hybridity obstructed the elevated emotions these objects were meant to arouse because the actual sensorial experience shattered the rarefied visual regime within which they circulated.

French painters, who came to Rome to study this visual regime, developed a representational apparatus that transformed it through the corrective power of touch. Instead of isolating objects for aesthetic reflection, they immersed themselves and their work in the material complexity of Rome, where touching fragments emerged as the primary motivator of a sensual awakening. Like Coyer’s hand, this emotional touching not only dispelled any anxiety about the superiority of the past but also brought a new
understanding to the meaningful way in which its objects continued to structure daily life. In doing so, these painters constructed a spectacular beauty that travellers would come to understand as modern Rome.

Niall is the Neubauer Assistant Professor of Art History in the department of Art History at the University of Chicago, and is currently completing a manuscript entitled *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture and Florentine Urban Life*.

Susanna is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Limoges (France) and currently Visiting Lecturer in the department of Art History at The University of Chicago.

Natasha Awais-Dean, Independent Scholar, “‘I giue will and bequeathe […]’: the making of memory through material culture in seventeenth-century England”

And she is dead, which nothing, but to close  
Her eyes myself, could win me to believe,  
More than to see this ring.¹

These words, uttered by the King in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*, show how an individual’s identity can be so inextricably linked to an item of material culture. Retention of her ring is pivotal to Helena’s character, to her identity, and indeed to her very existence. That she has been parted from this small, yet highly significant object, is enough to convince the King of her death. The potency of objects to carry on the memory of an individual is found within the testamentary instructions of early modern citizens. Bequests of jewelled goods are particularly evocative, since they were highly personal possessions. This paper will juxtapose the jewelled bequests made by the statesman Sir Thomas Sackville (c.1536-1608), including four pieces that he names as heirloom jewels, with bequests made by more modest citizens. In doing so, I will show that the desire for remembrance was no less marked amongst the non-elites. This is supported by surviving material evidence in the form of mourning rings, objects physically inscribed with the memory of the deceased.

Natasha Awais-Dean received her doctorate from Queen Mary, University of London in 2012. Her research focuses on the jewelled possessions of early modern citizens in England and Europe and she also consults on material culture from broader time periods.

¹ Act V, Scene III, lines 118-20.
Days after the Bank of England formed in 1694, its directors made a decision that would impact on the Bank for over 300 years: ‘It was Ordered that the Seale…whereof the Impression is… Britannia sitting & looking on a Bank of mony… be the Comon Seale of the Company in all their Transactions.’ As well as featuring prominently in its architecture, Britannia appears on many objects produced and used by the Bank: notes, stationery, tokens and gold. A powerfully resonant object and image, Britannia adapted to, and reflected, the Bank’s and Britain’s economic power over the C18 and beyond.

Historians have argued that the Bank, as mediator between the state and its creditors, represented a locus of trust during the C18. This paper explores how Britannia reinforced that trust and channelled the emotions of self-interest and patriotism towards investment in a state at war. Britannia helps us understand the emotional, and financial, investment in Britain’s national debt.

Jenny and Anne are currently engaged in an Economic History Society-funded project to examine the use of Britannia as a symbol of credible commitment.

Ruth Battersby Tooke, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, ‘Frayed: Textiles on the Edge’

This paper examines the making of an exhibition about textiles as therapy. Focussing on the objects collected by Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service the paper will discuss issues of interpretation, provenance and framing a curatorial narrative with a diverse range of textile artefacts.

Objects under discussion include the extraordinarily beautiful 15 piece set of bed-hangings made by a grieving mother as a solace. Anna Margareta Brereton lived with her husband at Brinton Hall, Norfolk. In 1800 Anna’s beloved eldest son John died of a fever aged 14. “This plunged her into an abyss of sorrow, which had well-nigh destroyed her mental powers, and nearly brought her body to the dust”.

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5 Quotation from the sermon delivered at Anna Margareta Brereton’s funeral by the Revd. Upjohn of the Parish Church of Briningham, April 4th 1819.
The embroidered letters of Lorina Bulwer are an incredible survival; the example held in the collections of NMAS is 3 m in length, every centimetre covered in text. Made from a patchwork of fabrics it is several layers thick, each letter of the text is in block capitals, almost every word underlined. Made in 1901-13, whilst Lorina was an inmate of the ‘Female Lunatic Ward’ of Gt Yarmouth Workhouse, they speak with fury at the situation she has found herself in.

Uniting these diverse stories is the use of needle and thread as an occupational therapy, busying the hands to still the mind, and a creative expression of an inner voice.

Ruth is Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles for Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

Antonia Brodie, Queen Mary University of London, ‘Material Memories: An embroidered sheet in the V&A’

In 2006 the Furniture Textiles and Fashion Department of the V&A received a package. Inside the parcel were a large linen bed sheet and a photograph of a woman in 19th century dress with an accompanying note, but no indication of the donor's name or address. The sheet was late sixteenth century, comprising two widths of hand-woven linen joined by a bobbin lace insertion. Finished at the corners and at the end of the insertion with tassels, it was embroidered with six sets of initials, four of which bore dates ranging from 1786 to 1900.

According to the note that accompanied the anonymous donation these initials referred to the individuals for whose laying out after death this sheet was used. Research has shown that the initials in fact record marriages, significantly altering the meaning of the object and the commemoration it appears to represent, associated not just with death but also, perhaps instead, with other noteworthy events in its owners’ lives. The sheet presents a unique opportunity to explore the materials goods of several generations of one family and to build a picture of the role that objects can play in marking and celebrating emotional experience.

Antonia has worked in museums in Britain and the US, and is currently studying for her PhD. Her thesis is titled ‘Noblemen and Furnishing the Home 1650-1730’.

Claire Canavan, University of York, “‘Your artfull fingers have wrought passion there”: feeling faith in early modern women's needlework’

In 1636, Lady Elizabeth Powlett presented the University of Oxford with a piece of needlework that she had made which portrayed the 'birth, death, resurrection and ascension of our Saviour'. Although the work itself is no longer extant, it was commemorated in a series of verses written by members of the university which reveal the emotional responses elicited by this wrought Passion. Combining precise attention to the threads, tools and techniques of stitchery with keen sensitivity to the work's capacity to depict and provoke 'trickling tears', fainting 'fear' and 'sorrowing smiles', these poems suggest how needlework's very materiality could stimulate both physical and spiritual feeling. In this paper I read these poems in conversation with contemporaneous embroidered artefacts and early modern theories of the embodied emotions in order to explore how needlework enabled women to shape the devotional sensibilities not only of themselves and their families but of audiences beyond their households. By considering how embroidered objects participated in reformation debates about the role of affective piety and the relationship between the somatic and spiritual senses, I argue that we need to rethink the contexts in which the emotional content of women's
biblical needlework made itself.

Claire is a second-year PhD student at the University of York where her work on the narratives of early modern needlework is funded by the Wolfson Foundation.

**Maria Cannon, Northumbria University, ‘Separation and renegotiation: Letters between parents and children through the life cycle in early modern England’**

Letters are unique sources which allow us a direct link to the thoughts and emotions of those in the past. This paper will present examples where the materiality of letters tells us as much about the emotions of the sender and recipient as the content. Recent work has been done on the materiality of early modern letters (Daybell, 2012) but this paper will offer a new perspective by focusing on the changing parent-child relationship through the life cycle. Elite family life was dominated by separation as parents worked away from home and children moved away from their parents, to attend university or marry. Separation created a need for families to share experiences with letters and objects as they negotiated different life cycle stages such as marriage and death. Tokens such as locks of hair were included as peace-making gestures or food from home sent to alleviate homesickness, and certain letters were preserved as objects with a special meaning such as a teenage child’s first letter home from university. That these letters were kept shows their importance as emotional objects to their receivers. This paper will use these examples and others to explore the emotional experience of the changing parent-child relationship, made clear by both the content and the letters themselves which are often more than simple pieces of paper.

Maria is a third year PhD student. Her thesis is titled ‘Families in Crisis: Parenting and the Life Cycle in English Society, c. 1450-1620’.

**Geoffrey Cantor, University of Leeds and University College London, ‘Responses to the Great Exhibition’**

The objects displayed in the Great Exhibition of 1851 are usually portrayed as exemplifying Victorian taste and industrial progress. However, contemporary accounts also demonstrate the profound emotional impact that the Exhibition exerted on visitors. Words failed as visitors were overawed by the sight of Paxton’s vast glass and iron Crystal Palace. Moreover, confronted by thousands of diverse exhibits from around the world visitors experienced intense feelings of wonder – the words “wonder” and “wonderful” occur frequently in contemporary accounts. Charles Kingsley was not alone in being moved to tears.

This paper will analyse the emotional reactions of visitors to the Crystal Palace and to its contents. These emotions were often related to the novelty of the experience – witnessing a building that was immense and transcended previous experience and from being exposed to a diversity of extraordinary exhibits. This study of the emotional response to the publicly displayed objects in the Exhibition (including the building itself) will also draw attention to the way emotions were communicated among the wider population in the summer of 1851.

Geoffrey is Professor Emeritus at the University of Leeds and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at UCL. His four-volume work *The Great Exhibition: A Documentary History* was published in September 2013.
Joanna Crosby, University of Essex, ‘Orchards & the Emotional Apple in Victorian England’

Every apple tree is a scion from the original, the parent tree of that variety, grown on by grafting. So an apple that you bite into today, is a direct, material, living connection to the time when the original tree was bearing fruit. Apples are transitory and changeable, but they carry a weight of symbolism; an often contradictory emotional charge. I would like to present my initial findings into the emotional history of the apple, focussing on the Victorian era. I will present my research into the meanings that the apple carried for those who grew, traded and ate this most-recognised of fruits. This is an exploration of how material culture is expanding to include food, ingredients and recipes, drawing on historical research into sensual memories, and how social history can be tracked through changes in taste. Orchards are managed landscapes that have been imbued with significance as a place of mystery, folklore and ritual. Even a new ‘community orchard’, growing young specimens of historic apple varieties, have an atmosphere that awakens particular emotions. I will consider the orchard in the context of ways of seeing the landscape, through our emotional attachment to particular types of setting.

Joanna is a part-time PhD student researching the importance of the apple in Victorian England. She is interested in people’s emotional attachments to orchards and trees.

Hilary Davidson, Independent Scholar, ‘Grave Emotions: Textiles and Clothing from 19th Century London Cemeteries’

What is the last thing someone ever wears, who decides, and what emotions do those garments embody? Excavations by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) of two 1840s Non-conformist and Baptist cemetery sites answer some of these questions for poorer mid-nineteenth century Londoners. The decayed textiles emerging from these graves are a new and emotionally rich source for exploring the distance of the recent past. The unexplained, chance-found scraps of clothing and shrouds read in their own context reveal unique information, breaking archival silence about burial rituals and death-related consumption practices in lower social levels than the middle classes. The choice of interred textiles and garments - such as a satin baby’s bonnet, pinned silk ribbons and a false waistcoat - , their qualities and construction all bespeak emotions around pride, dignity, religious feeling, tenderness and socially codified grief. Clothing fragments become a substitute fleshliness as the bodily tissue they cover wears away, the last traces of the invested, materialised emotions surrounding death. The paper also considers the emotions these intimate, poignant and sometimes gruesome objects evoke in the researcher during analysis. How - or should - these feelings be considered after stripping my own emotional responses for the supposed objectivity required of an archaeological report?

Hilary Davidson was curator of fashion & decorative arts at the Museum of London between 2007-2012. She has lectured, taught and published across a wide range of dress and textile history, and is currently an independent scholar based in Sydney, Australia.
Joelle Del Rose, Wayne State University, ‘“The Luxurious Fancies of Vice”: Sexual Connection and Material Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century Erotic Imagination’

This project examines the connections between material objects and sexual thoughts and memories in Britain during the long eighteenth century. Recent scholarship on the material culture of love has illuminated the ways men and women used rings, letters, and tokens to express emotions and cement relationships. Material objects associated with sex were also imbued with meaning, and performed emotional work by regulating sexual memories and contributing to a shared sense of erotic intimacy between couples. Joy, anger, hatred, jealousy, and lust were variously conveyed through manufactured luxury goods and market commodities that shared physical and mental space with couples before, during, and after sex, contributing significantly to the erotic experience. Silk wall hangings, silver tableware, and other luxury furnishings and accessories were not merely background; they were an integral piece of the erotic puzzle. The links between sexual performance, haptic pleasure, and manufactured objects illustrate the complexity of sexual thought and emotions and the influence of material culture on personal and sexual expression. In this way, the vocabulary of sex and identity were expanded and enhanced, providing a more encompassing language with which to express sexual emotions as well as an additional set of coded meanings for the inanimate goods of international and domestic commerce.

Joelle is a doctoral student. Her thesis is titled ‘Recasting Luxury: Status, Sexuality, and Space in the Eighteenth Century British Urban Milieu’

Mark Dennis, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ‘Veiled in Allegory: The use of material culture by freemasons to reinforce their emotional links to each other, their lodges and the organisation’

Freemasonry uses material culture to communicate its symbolism, increase the drama of its ceremonies and create physical links to the intangible. Masonic ritual is intended to affect the individual in a memorable and emotional way so items are sometimes retained to remind the freemason of these moments of drama and the lodges themselves have furnishings to support the ceremonies.

Freemasons create objects that link them and their and lodges with buildings, people and events that reinforce their self-identity. Items created may even include fragments of historic structures such as Cleopatra’s needle. A wide range of objects for use in the everyday world were decorated by freemasons to communicate their pride in membership. The imagery chosen often makes a link between different aspects of their lives, freemasonry being just one. The masonic ‘briefcase’ that survives the member’s death is often a snapshot of all that they found of importance in their masonic career.

The paper will review the wide range of masonic material culture and demonstrate the links between it and the emotional peaks of a freemason’s progression from initiation until their retirement or death. Reference will also be made to non masonic fraternal organisations and to overseas freemasonry.

Mark has been Curator of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry since 1999, and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He is not himself a freemason.
Tove Engelhardt Mathiassen, Den Gamle By, Aarhus, Denmark, ‘Protective strategies hidden in garments for christening’

In 2006-2007 Den Gamle By (The Old Town) in Aarhus, Denmark, had a large exhibition of garments for christening from the 18th century till the present. More than 100 objects were exhibited. The main part of the older garments represented a sort of reuse of exquisite textiles in a new ritual context in all groups of society in spite of sumptuous laws. Garments for babies remind us of the vulnerability of the newborn and in this way they are emotional objects. They do especially so when they originate from earlier periods with an infant mortality rate much larger than today. Parents of earlier centuries used various strategies to protect the small pagans from evil before baptism. When the provenance is known it is striking that several garments for baptism represent a reuse of garments from weddings or other *rites de passage* in Arnold van Gennep’s terms. The paper will present various signs of protective strategies hidden in christening garments and a 19th-century example of the reuse of a feminine ritual garments in a christening robe in order to discuss the reasons for these sorts of choices.

Tove is Curator of historical dress and textiles, history of furnishing and historical gardens in Den Gamle By, Denmark, an open air museum of urban history and culture.

Freya Gowrley, University of Edinburgh, ‘Life Shall Triumph over Death’: the souvenir as memorial and mourning device at A la Ronde

This paper will examine the commemorative function of the souvenir in the aesthetic programme of A la Ronde, in Devon (c. 1796); an eccentric, sixteen-sided house, with interiors designed by its two female owners, Jane and Mary Parminter (1750-1811 and 1767-1849). It will focus on a specimen table constructed by the Parminters from an array of natural, prefabricated and collected items, including souvenirs from their continental tour of c. 1784-91. Far from a random briccollage of souvenirs however, the table in fact acts as a mourning device and commemorates the loss of Jane’s sister and Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth Parminter, who died shortly after their return from Europe in 1791. Here, the souvenir extends its traditional function to enact a memorial gesture: beyond its objectification of the Parminters’ Tour, the table is also an associative artefact, which evokes the loss of their beloved travelling companion. Through their active employment in the haptic process of making, the Parminters’ souvenirs are imbued with an inherently emotive semantic range, allowing them to function far beyond simply recalling a location once visited. At A la Ronde, such objects are central to the construction of personal identities and private histories, and work to embody Susan Pearce’s notion that souvenirs ‘are intrinsic parts of our past experience [because] they possess the survival power of materiality not shared by words, actions, sights and the other elements of experience…they alone have the power to carry the past into the present’.6

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Freya is a third-year doctoral student. Her thesis is titled ‘Trivial Pursuits: Crafting Self, Sphere and Space in Women’s Cultural Engagement 1760-1820’.

Kate Hill, University of Lincoln, ‘Battlefield souvenirs and gender in the late nineteenth century’

This paper will investigate the way battlefield souvenirs inflected and shaped gender roles through the different ways in which they were collected and used in the late nineteenth century. While souvenirs of Napoleonic battlefields are a well-known aspect of Romantic collecting, battlefield souvenirs of the later period have been less fully studied, although they took place in a context of high levels of imperial military activity which was widely covered ‘back home’, for example in the dramatic coverage of Kitchener’s campaign in the Sudan.

The paper will examine souvenirs collected by serving military personnel as well as by tourists; and will examine the routes by which such souvenirs came to Britain, and where they went within the country. It will suggest that there were both masculine and feminine styles of collecting and using such souvenirs, both of which showed a high degree of emotional investment in the materiality of the souvenir. Masculine military souvenir collection utilised the mode of the trophy, and highlighted tropes of conquest and domination; while feminine military souvenir collection foregrounded domestic, and therefore familial, links to individual soldiers, and formed a memorialising practise which in many ways links earlier nineteenth-century memorial practices with those which would be developed in the twentieth century, especially as a result of the First World War.

Kate is a Principal Lecturer in History at the University of Lincoln. She is currently researching women, gender and museums during the 19th and early-20th centuries and the history of women in archaeology.

Helen Hills, University of York, ‘Unable to bear. Material culture: objects and objections’

This paper attempts to draw together questions of materiality and affect that have remained separated by a significant divide in recent scholarship. The intense interest in 'material culture' in the humanities still often dissipates ‘materiality’ either into a curious obdurate residue outside analysis, or -- ironically -- immaterializes the material to treat it as mere instantiation of idea. Art is often curiously marginalized within discussions of 'material culture' -- as if 'materiality' necessarily refers to the quotidian -- to shrouds and handkerchiefs, aprons and marginalia, rather than to art and architecture. 'Affect' is then the hook that is thrown to relate 'art' to 'material culture', often depending on art as 'representation'. This paper focuses on a case study in which affect, matter, materiality and artistic invention intersect in particularly suggestive ways.

Stefano Maderno's St Cecilia (1600) in the basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere is one of a series of curious sculptures, made partly to celebrate the finding of the relics of saints in 17thC Rome, that stage the body of the saint as dead. In this sculpture body, relic and art are interfused in the matter of the finding or inventio. This conjunction between the 'finding' of the body and the invention of art that stages that body as a relic draws on affective rhetoric and art theory and brings to bear and to matter and to make materially evident the relation between matter, materiality and emotional affect. This paper discusses that critical intersection in relation to the demands of religious devotion and political effects. Materiality and its affects are thus investigated in relation to inventio, invention and the art of finding to ask what are the operations
of the inter-relationships between invention, affect, and history/istoria?

Helen is a Professor of the History of Art. Her research focuses on the relationships between architecture, urbanism, religious devotion and spirituality, and gender and social class. She co-edited *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (2005).

**Sally Holloway, Royal Holloway, ““Who opens this must have a kiss:” Handling Letters and Tokens in the Development of Romantic Love in England c. 1730 to 1830”**

Courting couples in Georgian England exchanged a bewildering array of love letters and tokens, including patch boxes emblazoned with messages such as ‘Who opens this must have a kiss’, ‘Think of Me’ and ‘Esteem the Giver.’ This paper will investigate how courting couples used such items to encourage the development of love between c. 1730 and 1830, using love letters, objects, prints, poems and ballads as source material.

Popular gifts include miniature portraits, silhouettes and eye miniatures which were gazed upon, touched, kissed and smelled by individuals as a means of formulating romantic emotions. Lovers were expected to gaze at these objects at length while remembering their beloved’s physical qualities, imagining the rapture of being with them, saying prayers, and renewing the promises which brought them together. Individuals also physically handled gifts sent by loved ones, creating new forms of behaviour among individuals who surrounded themselves with romantic gifts. Such was the importance of love tokens that these treasured objects were said to resemble holy relics. This paper will investigate the rituals surrounding love tokens to explore the emotional power of these objects in greater detail.

Sally completed her PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2013, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The thesis analyses romantic love in words and objects in England in the long eighteenth century.

**Johanna Ilmakunnas, Universities of Helsinki and Northampton, ‘Emotional handiwork: Artefacts made by elites in eighteenth-century Europe’**

In early modern Europe, handiwork was an essential part of elite lifestyle. Every girl from princesses to daughters of country squires learned needlework. The objects girls and women made and the act of needlework or other handicrafts were burdened with a variety of emotions, from enthusiasm to artistic satisfaction, from sense of duty to boredom. For some handiwork was dull and even painful task, but there were also women who enjoyed working with their hands, planning and making objects. Also elite men performed handiwork, especially woodwork and embroideries.

This paper discusses handiwork the elites and genteel classes made in eighteenth-century Europe and the emotions linked to handicrafts, making of artefacts and the objects themselves. The examples of emotional handiwork are drawn from England, France and Sweden, especially from letters and diaries describing handiwork and objects made, thus revealing a variety of reasoning and sentiments behind. Emotional objects made by elites are e.g. embroidered wallets, turned wooden boxes, rings or bracelets made of human hair, and linen marked with initials.

The paper challenges the image of the handiwork performed by elites as empty and meaningless
activity by discussing the different artefacts made by elites and the emotions, both positive and negative, the handicrafts evoked.

Johanna is currently a postdoctoral research fellow in Finland. She started work on her new project Diligent aristocracy in September 2013, funded by the Academy of Finland.

Victoria Kelley, Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London) and University for the Creative Arts, ‘Fanaticism, Anxiety, Delight: the meanings of surface in the late Victorian and Edwardian home’

This paper will focus on the surfaces of objects in the Victorian and Edwardian home, examining domestic routines of cleanliness and maintenance. It will examine three emotions associated with these objects and routines: fanaticism, anxiety and delight. Fanaticism can be found in household advice manuals that set out in exacting and minute detail the processes prescribed for the maintenance of the surfaces of the Victorian home. These books demanded frequent and regular cleaning, brushing, buffing, polishing, pressing, and ironing of all manner of objects, from stair-rods to bed frames to stoves to shoes to table linen to clothing. Anxiety is the corollary of this fanaticism, unease about the dangers of the material world in an age that was only just becoming aware of germ theory. Anxiety had social origins, too, as routines of cleanliness were an arena for the display of propriety, of female competence, social status and family affection. But if they were a site of anxiety, then the surfaces of domestic objects were also a place where delight could be found: this paper will examine autobiographical sources to uncover accounts of sensual and emotional pleasure in the material qualities that come with assiduous maintenance (polish, shine) as well as analysing the allure of beautifully aged goods, the antiques that in the 1870s and 80s were beginning to be fashionable. It will draw on theoretical insights from anthropology (Mary Douglas) and phenomenology (Gaston Bachelard).


Hanna Kietäväinen-Siren, Jyväskylä University, Helsinki, ““As a sign of his love for her:” Material representations of love between men and women in early modern rural Finland’

This paper examines material representations of intersexual love in the early modern Finnish countryside (ca. 1650–1700), addressing the following questions: How was love between a man and a woman manifested via gifts, everyday assistance or the reciprocal sharing of goods? What do these manifestations tell us about the meanings and contents of that love, both within and outside marriage? These topics are examined through an analysis of district court cases dealing with engagement and marital disputes, fornication and adultery.

I analyse the emotion of love as a mixture of biology and social and cultural construction. Emotional utterances and views on particular emotions follow the vocabulary, conventions and ideals of their culture and time. In early modern Sweden-Finland a major force governing narratives on love was the Lutheran Church with its emphasis on marriage. Old folkways also persisted, and in these traditional customs especially material tokens and gifts were a significant part of representing and interpreting emotion.

Gifts and tokens were essential in expressing love both within and outside marriage. When a couple entered into marriage, gifts were a crucial part of the formal ceremonies. Exchanging gifts signalled love and commitment for both the parties themselves and those around them. Gifts and tokens symbolized also friendship and intimacy. In the period studied, spousal material reciprocity was also a vital part of the meanings attached to ideal marital love.
Hanna is a PhD student, currently close to completing her dissertation and will present it next spring. Her thesis is entitled “The warm water in my heart”. Love between a man and a woman in early modern rural Finland.

**Claire Lerpiniere, De Montfort University, Living with historical textiles: weaving together identity and materiality**

Research which understands how an individual’s sense of identity is enhanced by the objects which surround them connects the material and the affective domains. In this framework, an artefact can be of historical or design interest whilst simultaneously being invested with an individual’s memories and emotions. The materiality of an artefact – its surface, form and function – can enhance these links between artefacts and the affective domain.

Clothing and textiles are universal objects, and therefore warrant particular attention. Through their direct contact with our skin, they are also amongst our most intimate of objects, from the point of which babies are swaddled within the folds of ‘Grandmother’s’ blanket at their birth, through adulthood, to the end of life.

This paper is a case study examining the emotional, historical and biographical resonance of two artefacts for their owner: a fragment of Lord Byron’s bedspread, and a Victorian Christening gown. These are drawn from a larger research project which explores the phenomenon of the *domestic textile archive*: textiles kept beyond their useful lifecycle for their emotional or family historical value. From this case study, the value of these objects as historical and emotional objects is formally recorded and reflected upon.

Claire is Senior Lecturer in Printed Textiles at De Montfort University. Her research interests include drawing, textiles, design pedagogy, and phenomenological research methods.

**Bridget Long, University of Hertfordshire, “‘Regular progressive work occupies my mind best”’: Needlework as a source of consolation and reflection’**

The majority of textiles survive because they were valued by generations of owners who regarded them as repositories of family memory. A set of patchwork bed hangings was preserved because of the sorrow that the maker ‘stitched’ into the cloth during its making when Anna Brereton retired to her room and took up her needle after the death of her son in 1800. By sewing patchwork, she found an outlet for her sadness and used the project not to fill an indulged woman’s leisure hours, but to stitch a way out of her grief.

This paper will draw on sources including diaries and reminiscences from middling and gentry women such as Sarah Hurst, Gertrude Savile and Anna Larpent to examine how women in the long eighteenth-century negotiated time for their emotional well-being while carrying out household tasks such as sewing. Trained to sew from childhood, they were well-practised in needle skills and able to carry out their projects ‘mechanically’ while focussing on their personal concerns. It will explore how needlewomen accepted the tedium of sewing in exchange for time for reflection.

Bridget is a PhD student investigating the social and cultural contexts relating to the making of patchwork between 1680 and 1820. She is also an Associate Fellow of the International Quilt Study Center and Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
**Tara MacDonald, University of Amsterdam, ‘Embodied Objects in Victorian Sensation Fiction’**

This paper proposes to examine the representation of “embodied objects” in Victorian sensation fiction, a literary genre that flourished in England in the 1860s and was so-called for the supposedly sensational, affective responses of its readers. In particular, I examine the way that objects previously associated with the bodies of dead or dying characters, such as hair, paintings, or photographs, are figured both as emotional objects but also clues to identity in the novels. That is, despite the genre’s own ties to readerly affect (susceptible readers were often thought to physically mimic the sensations of the characters or narrators), these mementos become oddly devoid of emotion once they become clues to crimes or plots of mistaken identity. In novels such as Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860), Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), and Thomas Hardy’s *Desperate Remedies* (1871), reminders of the physical human body are not always cherished relics, but instead often gesture to the precariousness of Victorian (especially female) identity. In this way, I compare the embodied and emotional potential of hair and photographic representations of the body in the novels with the sensation novel itself as an unstable object of affect and identity.

Tara is co-founder, with Kristine Johanson, of the interdisciplinary research group *Emotion and Subjectivity 1300-1900*. Her current research focuses on Victorian sensation fiction.

**Ross Macfarlane, Wellcome Library, London, ‘From amulets to apps: an emotional biography of Edward Lovett’s folklore collections’**

During his life Edward Lovett (1852-1933) amassed one of the largest collections of objects pertaining to ‘folk medicine’ in the British Isles. Dispersed after Lovett’s death, the fragmented collection now resides in a number of museums across the world (including the Smithsonian Institute, the Science Museum, the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh and the Cuming Museum in London).

The amulets, charms and talismans Lovett collected are fascinating for both their materiality and their emotional status. Imbued with the hopes and fears of their creators and original owners, Lovett’s surviving correspondence illustrates the appeals to emotion which he used to describe his collection and which also informed his collecting practice.

Taking as a case study the 2011 Wellcome Collection exhibition, ‘Charmed Life’ (in which artist Felicity Powell responded to and arranged a selection of Lovett objects from the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, and in which a tie-in iPhone app was developed as part of a legacy project), I will seek to chart the changing emotional and material status of Lovett’s collection, contrasting the heightened emotional curation of ‘Charmed Life’ with the objects’ neutral storage and also illustrating the changing material nature of these emotive objects through their engraving and marking in the process of being accessioned by museums.

Ross is the Research Engagement Officer at the Wellcome Library. His research interests include the theory and practice of collecting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
Alison Matthews David, Ryerson University, Canada, ‘A Holocaust of Ballerinas’: Inflammatory Skirts & the Dangers of Dance

Crowds marveled at the virtuoso performances of ethereal, sylph-like Romantic ballerinas, who leapt gracefully through the air, barely skimming the earth with their toes en pointe. Swathed in layers of diaphanous gauze, tulle, and tarlatane, their material presence was immaterial. Yet the very fabric of their costumes put them at risk of being ‘burnt whole,’ in the original sense of the word holocaust. Journalists used the term to condemn the ‘daily holocaust’ of nineteenth-century women and children whose light clothing caught on fire.

In 1862, during a rehearsal at the Paris Opéra, Emma Livry’s tutu brushed a gas footlight and turned her into a living torch. She died eight months later. Her accident provoked grief and spurred renewed efforts to chemically flameproof gauze.

The remains of her costume are currently ‘buried’ in a small, wooden sarcophagus at the Musée de l’Opéra. When I requested an appointment, the disgusted curator called the object ‘morbide’ and told me that I could only view the unopened box.

With some persuasion as to my scientific and historical interest in Livry’s dress, he let me study the fragments of her crumpled, tattered, and charred costume. While I felt pity rather than disgust, the unsettling object itself bore the traces of the dancer’s violent death in the state of its material remains.

Alison is an Associate Professor in the School of Fashion at Ryerson University. Her current project Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present will be published in 2015. She is co-curating ‘Fashion Victims’ at the Bata Shoe Museum (April 2014).

Bridget Millmore, University of Brighton, ““A remarkable half-penny with a name engraved upon it”: eighteenth century love tokens as records of family attachment”

Listed with the pieces of furniture and bedding stolen from Henry Ferris’s house on 13 January 1794 were a number of small items - two letters, a little tin box, and an engraved coin. According to Ann Ferris, whose husband a quarter master was away at sea, the coin belonged to his first wife, ‘it is a bit of copper engraved, with a name on it, Susannah Schreder, born 25th February 1757.’ These words recorded in the Old Bailey proceedings illustrate the eighteenth century customary practice of engraving and giving tokens to mark family attachments.

The focus of this presentation is on the craft of engraving and in particular the process of inscribing words and images onto eighteenth century love tokens. These objects were crafted from the resources the poorer sorts had to hand, worn and defaced coins of low value. The paper investigates the custom of altering and marking coins with details of kinship bonds. It discusses them in the context of other practices and in particular the marking of graves with carved stones which became popular at the end of the eighteenth century among the lower middle classes. With current interest in the study of material culture and the history of emotions this presentation contributes to interdisciplinary debate by introducing a little known group of objects embedded with sentiment.

Bridget is an AHRC-funded PhD student. Her thesis is entitled ‘Tokens of affection: re-engraved coins, sentiment and the poor, 1700-1856.’
Michele Plott, Suffolk University, Boston, MA, ‘The Object as Emotive: Diamonds, Cashmere Shawls, and How Girls Became Women in France, 1860-1885’

Nineteenth-century French girls of the bourgeoisie aisée knew their wedding would be the turning point of their lives: at marriage they became both wives and adults, and objects were key in this transformation. Many historians have addressed the gendered nature of consumption in nineteenth-century France, but few have focused on how material objects enabled women’s emotion work. I argue that the obligatory wedding gifts – the corbeille (groom’s gift), trousseau, and other gifts of clothing, jewelry, lace, linens, furniture, and pin money – operated largely as emotives (first-person declarative statements that can simultaneously describe and change the speaker’s feelings). Receiving these gifts and, after marriage, wearing the diamond jewelry, cashmere shawls, and toilettes de jeune femme changed girls into young wives and allowed them to be recognized by society as fundamentally altered from their unmarried selves. The diaries and letters of French women reveal their responses to their own wedding gifts and those of their friends as complex – a mixture of aesthetic and possessive pleasure, deeply felt connection, and awareness of their power and emotional charge.

Michèle Plott is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. She is currently writing about arranged marriage and expectations of romantic love in late-nineteenth-century France.


‘I read these details through wet eyes. That is the power these things have. That is why people sew quilts. That is why this is an engrossing show.’ Waldemar Januszczak (Sunday Times, 4 April 2010)

In 2010, the Victoria & Albert Museum’s exhibition ‘Quilts 1700-2010’ received unprecedented visitor figures and press coverage. Subtitled, ‘Hidden Histories, Untold Stories’, the exhibition sought to navigate a path through the myths and misconceptions surrounding quilt making, showcasing quilts as complex objects which resonate with multi layered references open to numerous interpretations.

Often quilts are passed down through the generations undocumented, some are accompanied by oral histories and personal narratives; over the years the names and dates become confused and stories embellished. Yet the potency of the voice from the past is sometimes more powerful than the evidence revealed by close examination of the textiles used by the makers.

Drawing on contemporary press reviews and visitor feedback, this paper will examine why the exhibition stimulated collective feelings of warmth, comfort, loves and loss in the public consciousness. Focusing on two case studies, ‘The Deal Cot Quilt (1690-1720)’ and ‘The Rajah Quilt (1841)’, the paper will discuss the narratives that reduced Waldemar Januszczak of the Sunday Times to tears.

Sue is Curator of Contemporary Textiles at the V&A. She was lead curator of ‘Quilts 1700-2010’ at the V&A (20 March - 4 July 2010) and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (15 June - 22 September 2013).

Sarah Ann Robin, Lancaster University, ‘Of Hair and Heart: Understanding the Materialisation of Love among the English in the Seventeenth Century’
Material culture played a critical role for those who fell in love. Tokens signified promise and intent for those during courtship and in betrothal. Gifts served the necessary and practical demands of living. Finally, objects commemorated the deceased, becoming agents of comfort for those who were left behind. The existence of personal objects could bring tangibility to the fragility of life: the hair of a lover enclosed oceans and kept distant memories alive. Objects fortified relationships: they pronounced to the world that one person loved another and that they had embarked on their economic, spiritual and loving journey through life together. They were retained within the most private and intimate of spaces: worn against the skin and hung on the walls of the domestic sphere. They were reminders, reinforcers, consolers and mediators.

I will argue that objects not only reflect the then expectations and realities of ‘being in love’; their study must be a three-dimensional one, not purely of mirrored images, but one with different sides, heights and depths, of fabrics, designs and functions. Drawing these approaches together, the object can reveal much about love in the seventeenth century.

Sarah Ann is a part-time PhD student. Her thesis explores heterosexual love in seventeenth-century England and the Americas, chiefly through material culture.

Andrei Sorescu, University College London, ‘Icons Not to be Kissed: The Portrait of the Czar and Nationalist Anxiety in Nineteenth Century Romania’

The purpose of the present paper is to explore the way in which the physical presence of the Czar’s portrait in post-independence (1878) Romania evoked a sense of nationalist jealousy and unease, as living proof of the Romanian peasants’ political and moral incapacity of pledging proper allegiance to a ‘legitimate’ authority, in an age in which politics excluded them from voting and active participation. By looking at pamphlets, newspapers and various reports, the physical presence of such an object amongst those conspicuously visible and destined for religious worship is to be interpreted as a persisting feature of Romanian nationalism's anxieties with regard to the efficiency of enforcing allegiance, between the last Russo-Turkish war and World War One, particularly as the additional issue of petitioning the Czar regardless of the Romanian king's prerogatives is a recurring theme throughout the period, with similar overtones. It is in such a setting that the material nature of physical objects of the kind and their consumption may be analysed, mindful of the dynamics of touch as an absent/present factor. In so doing, a hitherto unexplored avenue of research is opened up, with the dynamics of bourgeois and peasant politics contrasted against a backdrop of ‘passive’ and ‘active’ political engagement.

Andrei graduated from Bucharest University, and is currently undertaking a Research Masters at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London.

Helen Smith, University of York, ‘ “This sad paper”: paper, metaphor, and the materiality of emotion’

In early modern literary and theological texts, paper is routinely used as a metaphor for unformed human character. Othello, for example, famously demands of Desdemona, ‘Was this fair paper ... made to write “whore” upon?’. This common conceit establishes paper and its cognates as passive Aristotelian matter waiting to receive its shaping form. My paper, however, will explore the dizzying plenitude of emotional states and adjectives - from peevish to perjured, gilt to guilty - which were attached to paper across a broad range of early modern writings, and which, I will argue, reveal that early modern paper possessed a lively and complex emotional life.
Paper, I will suggest, was used to articulate emotion, not only through writing, but through its material resonance as a touchable metaphor, its material form, and its place - in a variety of shapes - within gift and exchange circuits. In the second part of the paper, I will go on to discuss several instances in which the vivid force of adjectival description appears to transfer emotion from the writer or user to the paper itself, rendering the paper an expressive and emotional actor.

Helen is a Reader in Renaissance Literature at the University of York. Her current Leverhulme-funded project is entitled *The Matter of Early Modernity: Matter, Materiality, Objects.*

**Kate Smith, University College London, “With how many various emotions I visited Oakley Park”: Loss and Longing in Georgian England**

This paper explores how migrating families used objects to express feelings of exile, absence and loss during the long eighteenth century. It focuses primarily on East India Company families who worked in India during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. While previous historical studies have focused on how transactional practices of gift giving reaffirmed familial connections across time, this paper examines how families worked to wrap shared objects (such as houses) in layers of meaning to create and consolidate inter-generational familial ties. While using such objects to express loss and longing, these projects also instituted feelings of belonging across time and space as family members involved themselves in a collaborative project.

Kate is a Research Fellow on *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857.* Her monograph *Material Goods and Moving Hands: Perceiving Production in England, 1700-1830,* will be published by Manchester University Press in 2014.

**Emily Taylor, National Museums Scotland, ‘The remains of marriage: an investigation of how eighteenth century garments can narrate their own emotional value’**

This paper proposes a discussion based on PhD research which focussed on items of eighteenth century dress in Scottish collections and belonging to Scotswomen. It will focus on women’s garments that belonged to Lowland Scots households from Glasgow and Liverpool collections; asking how the survival of garments in relatively untouched condition evidences emotional investment, not only of those who knew the deceased, but of subsequent generations. This will include investigation of the emotive circumstances that may have led to the garments’ initial storage, as evidenced by provenance research.

The paper will contrast the careful preservation of the chosen garments with other items, remodelled and reused in the nineteenth century, asking in what ways the behaviour of their keepers was influenced by emotional attachment to the objects, and looking at how objects can carry emotive memory beyond the lifetime of their users, and those who knew them. Finally, the paper will address questions of social class and the role financial means can play in the desire and ability to store objects as a physical representation of emotional memory.

Emily is an Assistant Curator at National Museums Scotland. She recently completed her PhD thesis, entitled ‘Women’s fashionable dress in Scotland, circa 1760-1800: an object-based analysis of the relationships between dress, style and identity in an Anglo-French context.’

**Anna Schram Vejlby, The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen, ‘Knitting and**
identity in the first decades of the 19th Century seen through portrait painting’

The primary attribute in many portraits of bourgeois ladies from the beginning of the 19th Century is a piece of knitting. Taking as a starting point Danish painter C.W. Eckersberg’s large portrait of Mrs Schmidt (1818), wife of the East India merchant Schmidt, I wish to explore the emotional values invested in that knitting. All about Mrs Schmidt’s attire and surroundings speak of wealth and yet she underscores the basis of the family’s riches by knitting at a stocking – they have worked their way up and they are still working! Why was it so essential to the rising middle classes of Danish and other European societies to demonstrate their diligence so stubbornly? How much does a piece of knitting have to do with the overall culture of Biedermeier and the realist “emotionless” style of painters of the time?

Anna is a Curator at the Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen. Later this year she will start her PhD research funded by The New Carlsberg Foundation, exploring C.W. Eckersberg’s portraits in an international perspective.


The emotive power of objects is not inherent, but based upon interactions between the object, its physical and conceptual contexts, and the individual, momentary states of any given observer. Temporality is a vital condition of the concrete and abstract placements of actants in these continually changing relationships.

This paper will use Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope and other literary devices to explore two specific emotive experiences produced in museum spaces, paying particular attention to the role of temporality as cause and consequence. The experiences are the sublime and the uncanny, extreme forms of ecstatic state which each produce a sense of disjuncture from shared chronological time. Concrete examples will be drawn from the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, an institution which plays upon its historicised, archetypal Victorian state, and used to illustrate the conditions and functions which allow these states to arise. The conclusion will raise a difficult issue: whether displays of material culture should deliberately endeavour to provoke such extreme emotional responses. If so, how should such states be engineered, and what might the consequences be for the academic and philosophical position of the museum and it’s relationships with objects and the people who look, give, and are displayed?

Formerly a student at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, Jenny recently completed her AHRC-funded PhD. The thesis was entitled ‘Timescapes: The Production of Temporality in Literature and Museums’. She is currently developing this research.

Ann Wilson, Cork Institute of Technology, ‘Catholic images in late nineteenth-century Ireland: power and emotion’
Irish Catholic popular piety in the early nineteenth century was significantly focused not on objects such as statues, but instead on natural features such as mountain summits, islands, lakes, streams and springs, to the extent that it has been described as ‘shapeless and nonfigurative’.  

During the nineteenth century, however, the Church implemented a major reform programme, building numerous churches in which the religious practice of the faithful could be regulated and supervised. These churches were filled with statues and pictures whose narrow range of form and content were approved by the hierarchy, and whose accessibility and elaborate setting encouraged frequent and active engagement. Such images were also incorporated into outdoor locations which, despite the reform programme, were still sites of traditional pilgrimages, thus transforming them into something altogether more specific and controlled.

Form and content could be controlled, but it was more difficult to regulate how people actually interacted with these images. Their emotional power was such that they became associated with an enchantment and agency which far exceeded and indeed sometimes counteracted the aims of the reformists. This paper looks at how the particular material and visual qualities of these images made them so powerful as a means of controlling behaviour, but also of escaping that control.

Ann is a lecturer in Visual Culture in the Media Communications department, Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork Institute of Technology. Her PhD was entitled ‘Catholic Ireland: The Catholic Church and the construction of an Irish Catholic Identity, 1879-1923.’

Juan Manuel Zaragoza Bernal, Queen Mary University of London, ‘Objects to Care. Care for Objects: Embedding Emotions from the Assembly Line in the 19th century’

It is widely accepted that material culture plays an indispensable role in the transmission of cultural values and practices, since Pierre Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977) at least. Nevertheless, the study of the relationships between emotional values and practices and material culture have been uncommon in academic discussion. I will propose that to achieve a full understanding of how emotions emerge in the practices of care of the late 19th century, we need to pay attention to the special relationship Victorians had with things as a defining part of their cultural identity.

In particular, I will focus on the practices of care in the Victorian family and how the emotional response to them was inserted into objects. Moreover, this relationship was not circumscribed to the private interaction between caregiver and patient. It became public when a specific emotional relationship was embedded in products such as vaporizers and bedpans directly during the production process, as part of the cultural values and practices transmitted by material culture, according to Bourdieu. The study of these objects, understood as carriers and seeds of emotions, will help me to sustain a new approach to the material history of the emotions.

Juan gained his PhD at the Autonomous University of Madrid in 2012. He is currently a Marie Curie Fellow, working on his new project Material cultures of care and emotion in Britain and Spain, 1890-1940.

7 Michael Carroll (1999) Irish Pilgrimage, Holy Wells and Popular Catholic Devotion