The Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology
2015 Symposium
Carolyn Rose Seminar Room, NMNH

Session One
Thursday, July 16th, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

PRESENTERS

Sarah Richardson, George Washington University – Anthropology

*Threads of Kurkin: Bodies, Design, and Repair in Kuna Mollakana*

The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) houses at least 685 *molakana* made by Kuna women of the San Blas archipelago off the coast of Panama. These vibrant, multicolored appliqué panels have indexed political autonomy and ethnic identity since at least the 1925 Kuna Revolution and currently comprise a major economic sector within Kuna communities. Scholars have examined the politics, aesthetics, and commodification of *mola*-making as well as, more recently, *molakana* as everyday clothing. Taking the NMNH collection as a research site, I investigate the *molakana* themselves as objects that manifest intricate social histories through signs of use and repair, through far-ranging sourcing of materials and designs, and through thematic and technical emphases or shifts over time. My close examination of a small number of pieces points to both fruitfulness and limitation in investigating social processes through re-contextualized objects, celebrating the material presence as well as the phenomenal inscrutability of Kuna *molakana*.

Wahsontiio Cross, Carleton University – Cultural Mediations

*Along the Border: Haudenosaunee Beadwork Across Temporal and Spatial Dimensions*

Haudenosaunee art forms such as quillwork and beadwork have been stylistically modified over the past three centuries due to cultural and material influences from the European cultures they encountered and interacted with during the colonization period. From these influences and the political and geographical fluxes that occurred due to historic events such as the American Revolution and the War of 1812, dispersal of populations and alliances
between nations of the Haudenosaunee confederacy and their colonial counterparts caused a divergence of not only people but their material culture. By examining moccasins from NMNH and NMAI collections, I will explore the relationship between movement and materiality between Seneca and Mohawk nations on both sides of the Canadian/U.S. border. Through this study I will try to answer questions such as how have displacement and intercultural relations changed the way the Haudenosaunee produce material culture? And how does that influence how we express ourselves?

Mikael Muehlbauer, Columbia University – Art History

*Image and Reality in Fin-de-siècle Ethiopia*

Menelik II, Emperor of Ethiopia from 1889-1913, was responsible for both averting European colonial subjugation and for expanding his domains far beyond the Ethiopian plateau. The United States was interested in cultivating relations with this resurgent empire in order to open Ethiopian markets to US manufactured cotton. The arbiter of this relationship in 1909 was Ambassador Hoffman Philip, who acquired dozens of gifts in the course of his diplomatic mission to the country. The choice of gifts by the emperor and his court illustrates the imperial image he wished to export and are indicative of the king’s ethnocentric, militaristic and aristocratic purview. However, because Hoffman traveled extensively around Ethiopia, and acquired items from the king’s subject peoples, Menelik’s imperial image is also subverted in the collections, which illustrate the agrarian and ethnically diverse reality of fin-de-siècle Ethiopia.

Brittany Sheldon, Indiana University – History of Art, African Studies

*Remembering Anew: Another Look at the Life and Work of Dr. Labelle Prussin*

Dr. Labelle Prussin is a key scholar of African architecture and artistry who conducted numerous field research trips in West and East Africa between the 1960s to the 1990s. The primary goal of the trips was to gather data on Islamic and nomadic arts and architecture, but Dr. Prussin also collected an interesting variety of objects along the way that she later donated to the Smithsonian. My project brings together these objects and their associated documentation to illuminate the stories behind their commissioning, production and donation to the Smithsonian. Through a broad analysis of the collection and close examination of a number of objects, I consider Dr. Prussin’s research from a new angle, adding a personal dimension to our knowledge of her scholarly work.

**DISCUSSANTS**

**CARA KRMPOTICH, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAMME, FACULTY OF INFORMATION, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**
Session Two
Thursday, July 16th, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

PRESENTERS

Ana Karina de Morais, University of California Santa Cruz – History of Consciousness

Collecting Africa: the Smithsonian-Universal Film Manufacturing Company African Expedition of 1919-1920

In August of 1919, an expedition organized by the Smithsonian Institution and Universal Film Manufacturing Company arrived in Cape Town, and - with naturalists, cinematographers, directors and actors in tow - commenced their yearlong travels across the continent to Cairo. What can this expedition tell us about the construction of Africa, and South Africa more specifically, as affective, social and geopolitical entities? Through a close analysis of ethnological objects, museum records, and archival materials, and a review of the expedition's contributions to natural history collections, I argue that scholarly, imperial, touristic and cinematographic impulses came to coalesce and inform one another, building towards a mode of imagining and relating to Africa and South Africa that endures to this day.

Lee Bloch, University of Virginia – Anthropology

Ancestral Sounds, Material Transformations: Braided Histories and Deep Time through Florida Seminole ‘Shell’ Shakers

The Smithson Institution’s National Museum of Natural History’s Southeastern Native American collections contain several rattles manufactured from turtle shells or cans, most of which were obtained from Florida Seminole communities. Women wore these shakers around their calves during sacred and social stomp dances that were held during the warm seasons. Although not necessarily sacred in their own right, these objects were vital parts of important spiritual practices of Indigenous peoples in the region. Archaeological remains evoke the deep history of shell shakers in the Southeast, while ethnological collections demonstrate how Seminole peoples enrolled novel ecologies, everyday materials, and repurposed commodities into the crafting of shakers. Building on a previous fieldwork interview with a Muskogee (Creek), I examine what Sonya Atalay calls “braided histories” that weave together multiple ways of knowing the past through oral traditions, stomp dances, documentary records, and the material assemblage and disassemblage of the objects themselves.

Amanda Thompson, Bard Graduate Center – Material Culture
**Piecing Evidence: Identifying Maker’s Agency in Sturtevant’s Mikasuki Seminole Patchwork Collection**

In 1959, William Sturtevant collected hundreds of patchwork samples made by artisans of the Seminole Mikasuki band in Florida. These objects were a part of a bi-thematic collection of objects for sale to tourists and clothing worn by Seminoles. Sturtevant was working to create a historical survey of design form and change in Seminole patchwork which, in its scale, elided the individual makers of patchwork items. My project is to recognize the hand of the individual maker by close examination of the patchwork samples’ fabrication—thus transforming a sample of design to the artistic production of an individual. By so looking, I propose to show the agency of the Seminole Mikasuki artisans and reveal their engagement with the culture, labor, and industry of Seminole patchwork production.

Hilary Symes, Temple University – Visual Anthropology

**Negotiating Conceived Spaces through Material Culture: an Analysis of Hawaiian Barkcloth Collected by the U.S. Exploring Expedition**

In 1840, members of the United States Exploring Expedition reached Koloa, Kauai and embarked on a survey of the island to collect biological, ethnographic, and geographic data. This presentation examines six atypical pieces of *kapa* barkcloth collected during the expedition. While they were made using Hawaiian production techniques and materials, the pieces evoke Western textile motifs and fashions and were understood in vastly different ways. Although barkcloth has symbolic and practical significances for Hawaiians, expedition members viewed these styles as evidence of scientific “progress,” while missionaries saw clothing choices as emblematic of moral purity. Using Lefebvre’s framework of social spaces in conjunction with discourse and materials analysis, I posit that these pieces of barkcloth represent and embody the lived space of Hawaiian indigenous groups, negotiating an evolving dialectic between the conceived spaces of indigenous culture, expedition science, and Western religion.

**DISCUSSANTS**

JENNIFER SHANNON, CURATOR & ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

CASTLE MCLAUGHLIN, Curator of North American Ethnography, Peabody Museum at Harvard University

**Session Three**

*Friday, July 17th, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.*
**Presenters**

Kaitlin Brown, University of California Santa Barbara – Anthropology

*Weaving Worlds: Chumash Basket Weavers at the Turn of the 20th Century*

The Chumash of South-central California have a time-honored basketry tradition that continues up to present day. In more recent history, the changing social landscape brought by colonial establishments drastically altered Chumash lifeways; however, women continued to produce baskets for personal use, as well as the larger global market. This paper focuses on the lives of three women basket weavers, Candelaria Valenzuela, Petra Pico, and Donaciana Salazar. Using a methodological framework grounded in the *chaîne opératoire*, I show similarities in manufacturing techniques within baskets and distinct differences between them. I suggest that the similarities represent communities of practice in which Chumash women actively employed strategies to cope with a burgeoning basket market in the 20th century, while the differences represent a continuation in the transmission of technological knowledge from mother-to-daughter in matrilocal kin groups.

Marissa Shaver, University of Texas San Antonio – Anthropology

*Taking Museum Research to the Field: Artifacts, Landscapes, and Labor*

A fundamental way in which people engage with their landscapes is through labor practices. This presentation considers this engagement through an examination of artifacts and the built-environment. As a part of the Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology (SIMA), I worked with 55 objects collected by William J McGee from the Seri of Tiburon Island, Baja California, Mexico on his 1895 expedition to gain a sense of the relationship between the Seri and their landscape. I will extend this research to an analysis of the built-environment in Punta Abreojos, Baja California Sur, Mexico as a part of dissertation fieldwork. This research has two purposes: 1. It seeks to understand the role of landscapes in economies. 2. And it examines the potential of incorporating museum research practices into the fieldwork-method kits of ethnographers.

Erin Freedman, Bard Graduate Center – Material Culture

*Powers Concealed: Translating Cloth in an Egúngún Masquerade Ensemble*

Egúngún masquerades are practiced by Yoruba communities in their veneration of collective ancestors. To control the liminal boundary between the mortal and immortal worlds, masqueraders don elaborately constructed ensembles which ingeniously exploit the diversity of foreign cloth imports adaptable to local design schemes. As a material interface between global supply chains and the dynamic aesthetic criteria for traditional costume, one mid-twentieth century Egúngún masquerade costume from the National Museum of African Art
offers a novel point of entry. The variety of cloth types employed in this object will be considered in tandem with their specific modes of incorporation, both physical and spiritual. How do certain generic pattern motifs found in the object's foreign cloth fragments accord with Yoruba cosmology? To what extent is the foreign cloth “worked” to mimic local production? These questions begin to explore the mediating capacity of Egúngún masquerades ensembles as sites of brokerage between past/present, traditional/new, local/foreign.

Jennifer Shannon (fellow), University of Colorado Boulder

SIMA as a Teaching Model for Engaging University Collections

DISCUSSANTS

Adrian Van Allen, Doctoral Candidate, University of California Berkeley – Anthropology and Peter Buck Pre-doctoral Fellow, National Museum of Natural History

CASTLE McLAUGHLIN, Curator of North American Ethnography, Peabody Museum at Harvard University