

Call for Papers | THE COLLECTING IMPULSE: Graduate Symposium

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, March 8-10, 2013

Keynote Speaker: Bill Brown, Karla Scherer Distinguished Service Professor in American Culture at University of Chicago in the departments of English and Visual Arts, and Co-Editor of *Critical Inquiry*

Proposals due by Monday, December 17, 2012

Participants will be notified by Monday, January 14, 2013

Organized by graduate students of Art History and the School of Art + Design in affiliation with Society for Art History and Archaeology (SAHA) at UIUC. Major sponsorship provided by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) and the School of Art + Design.

“Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memories.” - Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"

This symposium investigates a resurgence of interest in possession, accumulation and hoarding, in the wake of an international financial crisis that dispossessed millions of their homes, savings, and sense of security. If we look at the contemporary art world, for example, revenues at auctions have reached unprecedented highs. During a global recession, art fairs have closed with record-breaking attendance, and art world darlings like Damien Hirst have offered collectors incentives like the “Spot Challenge,” in which gallery-goers who have the means to visit the artist’s retrospective in each of Gagosian Gallery’s eleven global locations earn a signed spot print dedicated personally to the collector. The collecting impulse, however, has not only exploded in the elite sphere of the contemporary art market. Popular television shows like *Hoarders*, *Storage Wars*, and *Antiques Roadshow* evidence a growing interest in the culture of collecting. Current scholarship also reflects this trend in the growing interdisciplinary field of material culture and the expansion of museums and museum studies. While the phenomenon of collecting has long fascinated scholars, the topic has become increasingly visible in recent years and therefore warrants renewed attention.

We invite 20-minute graduate papers from all periods and disciplines in the humanities to be presented at this symposium. Presenters will also have the opportunity workshop and discuss their own scholarship dealing with issues of collecting, as well as some of the methodological questions arising from this preoccupation at a more intimate roundtable and lunch with our keynote speaker, Bill Brown.

Prof. Brown is currently working on a new book project entitled *Other Things*, which he will draw on for a lecture that specifically addresses our theme. We anticipate that his keynote address on collecting, along with the presentation of work by emerging scholars will provoke a productive exchange of ideas about varying approaches to material culture among a wide range of objects of study, in addition to the methods and challenges of dealing with materiality as it applies to different forms of collecting, and to different disciplines.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Collections as tools of personal as well as and shared identity
- Distinctions between collecting, cataloguing and archiving

- Material culture in the domestic space
- Mass media, virtual, and ephemeral collections
- Issues of preservation and display
- Novelties and souvenirs
- Relations between collecting, patronage, and artistic production
- The manuscript and book collections
- Corporate art collections and investments
- Cabinets of curiosity
- Collecting as an affirmation of, or challenge to, art institutions

Please send your abstracts of 250-300 words and a short biography to sahagradsymposium@gmail.com by Monday, December 17, 2012. Please direct any other questions to Ellen Martin at emartin7@illinois.edu.