

Call for Papers

Date : March 8, 2009

Collecting and Gathering: making worlds and staking claims

A one-day interdisciplinary conference and exhibit at the Center for Archaeology, Columbia University, New York City.

Conference ^ Saturday May 23rd, 2009

Abstract Due ^ Sunday March 22nd, 2009

Practices, institutions and ideas centered around collections and collecting offer a fruitful area for interdisciplinary enquiry in the humanities and social sciences. Whether in the processes through which collections come to be formed, or the ways in which existing collections are experienced by a variety of publics, the impulse to collect is often key to knowing a wider world, and also knowing oneself. This conference aims to bring a wide variety of critical perspectives to bear on this topic; including anthropological, historical and art historical, literary, architectural and museological.

Papers dealing with actual formal collections such as those found in galleries or museums, as well as those interested in less tangible collections - such as collections of facts, observations or ideas - are equally welcome. There are no restrictions with regard to time period, and papers are sought relating to the contemporary world, as well as the recent and ancient pasts.

Papers are solicited on the following and related themes:

The temporality of gathering - how the past and future are grasped and mediated through material substances and practices

Collecting and power - how collecting sets up or maintains power differentials between collector and collected, exhibitor and exhibited

Fixing and making worlds - the bonding of materials, substances, place and people

Histories of collecting - changing modalities and definitions of the collection and of what it is to gather materials, ideas or people in place and time

Collecting as a transformative process - how collecting alters, re-presents or invents the object that is collected and the implications of such transformations

Spaces of collection and collections of spaces - the politics, poetics and meaning of the exhibition space and its architectural framing

This conference is run by graduate students affiliated with the Center for Archaeology and is organized in conjunction with an exhibit on collecting designed by students in the Museum Masters program at Columbia.

Please send a 200 word abstract along with contact information (including name, email, institution affiliation) to Matt Sanger at mcs2178@columbia.edu

Any questions can also be sent to this address.