

## Things in Cambridge

**Date :** December 12, 2013

The Cambridge Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) has convened an interdisciplinary research seminar entitled "Things: Material Cultures 1500 - 1900. The brief of the research group is here:

With the dawning of modernity came the age of 'stuff.' Public production, collection, display and consumption of objects grew in influence, popularity, and scale. The form, function, and use of objects, ranging from scientific and musical instruments to weaponry and furnishings were influenced by distinct and changing features of the period. Knowledge was not divided into strict disciplines. In fact, practice across what we now see as academic boundaries was essential to material creation. This seminar series uses an approach based on objects to encourage us to consider the unity of ideas of this period, to emphasise the lived human experience of technology and art, and the global dimension of material culture. It does this by inviting pairs of speakers, often from different institutional backgrounds, to speak to a particular kind of 'thing' or a theme that unites disparate 'things'. Previous 'Things' seminars have concentrated on the early modern period generally and the long eighteenth century in particular; this year we have taken the step into the nineteenth century, the era that brought us the mass production of 'things'. Our aim continues to be to look at the interdisciplinary thinking through which material culture was conceived, and to consider the question of what a 'thing' is, with the ultimate goal of gaining new perspectives on the period 1500-1900 through its artefacts.

Here is Simon Schaffer talking about "things" from one of their Mellon conferences:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BAZO9AWCwk>

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4C2hWnxFI>

The CRASSH website is a rich resource of past talks, many of which are videoed and archived here.