

Call for Proposals for the conference

ARTEFACTS XIX “Environing Exhibits: Science, Technology, and Museums in the Anthropocene”

ARTEFACTS is an international network of academic and museum-based scholars interested in promoting the use of objects in studies of the history of science and technology. The network was established in 1996 and since then has held annual conferences and published several books examining the various ways that this can be accomplished.

The next conference will be held at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, Germany, **26–28 October 2014**. The conference is co-sponsored by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, a joint center of the Deutsches Museum and Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich.

In 2000, the fifth ARTEFACTS conference discussed the topic of “Artefacts and the Environment.” In the very same year the atmospheric chemist and Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen jointly with the ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer proposed the new geological epoch of the Anthropocene that is shaped by the deep impact of humankind on the environment at a planetary scale.

Since that, with climate change and global warming gaining ever more momentum, the concept of the Anthropocene has found ever more followers not only in the natural sciences but also in the cultural sciences and the humanities. The idea of the Anthropocene has developed into a vibrant field of studies which examine the inextricable interrelations between nature and culture, environment and society. This year’s Artefacts conference will embark on this inspiring agenda. It aims to discuss the material culture-dimensions of the Anthropocene.

Topics could cover questions such as:

- Technologies and techno-scientific knowledge are both driving forces of the environmental problems that we are faced with in the Anthropocene and an indispensable source of finding solutions to overcome these problems. How do we cope with this dual character of technology/science in museum exhibitions and what sorts of artefacts are suitable to reflect this duality?
- How have certain features of material objects, especially instruments that may have been designed for some other purpose, led us to a better understanding of environmental change?

- How have certain artefacts become symbols of the human impact on the environment (“natural” phenomena like the ozone hole and the "calving" of glaciers, or “artificial” devices like plastic waste and CO2-emissions)?
- Museums of science and technology have acquired an impressive record of displaying environmentally related issues such as climate change, changing energy regimes or nuclear disasters. Likewise, museums of natural history have held exhibits on changes in the biosphere, loss of biodiversity or ecological change. Is the Anthropocene asking for a merger of these two discrete types of museums or/and for a reinterpretation of the science and technology museum in the 21st century?
- Internet, television, smart phone – our present media-speeded-up world is filled with fast communication media. Museums, collections, and exhibitions are the opposite: slow media that allow for long-term thinking and balanced reflection. How can we benefit from the slowness of museums in the Anthropocene as an era of speed and acceleration?
- Workshop session on how these various topics can be effectively treated-through objects-in museum exhibits. Note this would be an opportunity for participants who don't have enough material to develop a formal presentation, but who have good ideas, to express themselves. It might also be a forum for non-historians (geologists, biologist, architects, civil engineers) to describe problems and/or solutions that might be worth describing in exhibits.

ARTEFACTS conferences are friendly and informal meetings with the character of workshops. There is plenty of time for open discussion and networking. Each contributor is allocated a 20 minutes slot for her or his talk plus ample of time for questions and discussion. Please send you proposal for sessions or individual papers (500–700 words) along with a brief CV to Helmuth Trischler (h.trischler@deutsches-museum.de) no later than Friday, **4 July 2014**. Please remember that the focus of presentations should be on artefacts.

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