# The Mutability of Collections (London, 7-8 Jul 23)

Institute of Historical Research, London, Jul 7–08, 2023
Deadline: Nov 30, 2022

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The Mutability of Collections: Transformation, Contextualisation and Re-Interpretation.
Seminar on Collecting & Display, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 7-8 July 2023.

We invite proposals for papers reflecting on the ways in which the contents of collections are not permanent but may be subject to numerous mutations. Objects in collections are added, exchanged or disposed of, translated and transformed. Items can be moved to new surroundings and different decorative settings, resulting in altered contexts of display, meaning and significance.

The history of collections is more than a history of objects brought together by acquisitive owners; it is also a history whereby collectors and owners may re-interpret an inherited or purchased collection and re-arrange and complete it in accordance to their taste.

As is well known, the Medici amassed a collection that grew, was looted, regained, distributed over palaces and villas and, finally, bequeathed to Tuscany as part of Anna Maria Louisa's family pact in 1737. Obviously, the Medici's treasures were not the only collection with a fragmented biography and that of Rudolf II would provide another famous example.In the nineteenth century, William Beckford added new layers of interpretation as he amassed his collections from a variety of different sources. Further translations and reinterpretations ensued when the first collection was dispersed and Beckford created a new collecting environment in Bath.

This session aims to explore the various issues underlying the mutability of collections:
- the ways in which intentionality, taste and the periodically fluctuating financesof collectors influenced the composition and display of a collection, sometimes more than once within a collection's biography;
- the ways in whichfashion may have directed a collector towards particular groups of objects, as well as their alteration according to the taste of the time;
- the ways in which collections may be reinterpreted and take on new meanings according to the spaces in which they were displayed;
- the different associations and meanings given to individual objects through their changing representations, displays or associations.

We invite paper proposals of 250 words max. (and a short bio of 200 words) investigating the mutability of early-modern collections during their creation, transfer to new locations, transformation or re-interpretation.

Please send your proposals to collecting_display@hotmail.com by 30 November, 2022

More: https://collectinganddisplay.org/

Reference:

CFP: The Mutability of Collections (London, 7-8 Jul 23). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 24, 2022 (accessed Nov 16, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/37756>.