# Objects on the Move

Deadline: Jul 1, 2024
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Objects on the Move. Unpacking the Narratives of Circulating Exhibitions 1900–1952.

In the 1950s, interest emerged among scholars and museum professionals in circulating exhibitions as a distinct format with its own theoretical principles, goals and technical issues. The 1950 publication of a themed issue of ICOM's Museum Journal attests to growing interest in the international framework. Tracing the origins of such practices back to Great Britain, museologist Grace L. McCann Morley Osborne noted how the phenomenon expanded in Canada, the United States, South Africa, and Australia, acknowledging the importance of such practices in disseminating knowledge and encouraging cultural exchanges. Three years later, Elodie Courter Osborn – a former director of circulating exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York – authored the UNESCO Handbook of Circulating Exhibitions, discussing organizational and design issues posed by circulating exhibitions and providing professionals with technical advice based on her decennial experience at MoMA.
Traveling exhibitions could benefit from the availability of a broader range of items, locations, or professionals beyond traditional museums and/or galleries. Sometimes, exhibited works included those that could not be permanently displayed, such as drawings, or prints. Reproductions and facsimiles were sometimes added alongside original art works to include objects that could not circulate because of their nature or to avoid damage risks. Exhibit locations ranged from museums, libraries, schools, and stores. Traditional and "unconventional" players – including politicians, diplomats, museum directors and curators, private collectors, businesspeople, buyers, art critics, and journalists – were all involved in a complex network, engaged in new organizational challenges to the events' success.
While promoting a deeper knowledge and understanding of different cultures among broad audiences, traveling shows helped strengthen cultural and political ties and significant networks of exchange while increasing attendance in hosting museums. Though scale and elaborateness might vary, exhibitions could count on a tightly organized schedule, enabling participating institutions to share production costs, organizational efforts, installation philosophy, display strategies, and marketing campaigns.

Some of these shows have already been the object of investigations. For instance, recent studies have focused on specific traveling exhibitions that played prominent roles within a diplomatic and commercial context – e.g., Italy at Work (United States), Weberpackung in America, Tapeten in USA, and Textilien aus USA (Germany) – or that championed an explicit (and sometimes noxious) political and ideological agenda – e.g., Die Entartete Kunst Ausstellung (Germany).
Yet few studies have explored traveling exhibitions in a broader context, as part and parcel of a

modern era that drew its impulses and ideas from transcultural research and ambitions and as a legacy of today's challenges.

This call for papers aims to encourage a transdisciplinary discussion on how touring exhibitions contributed to the knowledge growth within the circuit of arts, decorative arts, handicrafts, fashion, and design.
The MMD issue aims to address the topic within a broader framework, providing new insights or a different way of understanding artifacts, people, and ideas detached from their original contexts, how and why they circulated, and the ways specific ideas, forms, and displays were perceived out of their original context. The chronological boundaries range from the beginning of the 20th century to 1952 (inception of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service).

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:
- Case studies related to specific traveling exhibitions and the way they impacted on local or global communities;
- Institutions or individuals (collectors or museum curators and directors) involved with traveling exhibitions;
- Case studies detailing shared display strategies;
- Comparison of different narratives addressing the same events;
- Approaches to conservation, publication and communication of the memory of traveling exhibitions;
- Historical risk-management practices for packing and shipping items to ensure safety and installation quality under diverse conditions.

Submissions will be sent as abstracts (maximum 3,000 characters, spaces included) in Italian, English or French and a short author biography (maximum 1,000 characters, spaces included) to the editorial board (mmdjournal@unibo.it) and the guest editor (paola.cordera@polimi.it) by 1 July 2024.
Should they be accepted, full papers must be submitted for peer review by 15 January 2025.

Key Dates:
- Abstract submission: 1 July 2024
- Notification of acceptance: 1 September 2024
- Full paper submission (including images): 15 January 2025
- Reviewers report to authors for amendments: 1 April 2025
- Final text submission: 15 May 2025

Read more about MMD. Museum Materials Discussions. Journal of Museum Studies: https://mmdjournal.unibo.it/

Reference:

CFP: Objects on the Move. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 18, 2024 (accessed Nov 24, 2026),

<https://arthist.net/archive/41673>.