

PhD Studentship, Department of Art History, University of Aberdeen

University of Aberdeen

Application deadline: May 13, 2024

Isabelle Gapp

Fully-funded (UK & International) PhD Studentship (4 years) in the Department of Art History at the University of Aberdeen: A visual history of Sir Charles Lyell's notebooks

Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875), the author behind the *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), played a prominent role in shaping our planetary understanding during the nineteenth century, that of earth as an interconnected system involving life and its environment. His scientific contributions are numerous, but include an early explanation of climate change, ground-breaking explanations of co-seismic earth movements, and the theory of gradual "backed-up building" of volcanoes. In addition, what is particularly interesting to this project are his studies, written and visual, of 19th century glaciers and landscapes.

Taking a historical approach to science, especially geosciences, this project expands upon the archival turn in glaciology (Zumbühl et al 2008, Headland et al 2023) and interdisciplinary opportunities afforded within environmental art history (Gapp 2021). It also offers a unique opportunity to study unpublished materials aimed at studying and understanding the history of geology at a time of heightened scientific and cultural interest. This PhD project is framed around a hitherto untapped resource, notably the collection of 266 scientific notebooks (or "laboratory thought books") spanning 1825 to 1874 that document Lyell's international fieldwork. These notebooks have yet to be critically examined and their importance within both geosciences and art history assessed. This project will involve a study of the drawings and writings contained within these volumes, alongside the 1000s of geological and mineral specimens collected by Lyell and held within the University of Edinburgh's School of GeoScience Cockburn Museum, and the wider British, Scandinavian, and central European image cultures contemporary with Lyell's studies. As glaciers, coastlines, and inland landscapes and their surrounding communities are increasingly impacted by climate change, this project adopts an interdisciplinary framework for engaging archival materials, visual and written, to better comprehend, frame, and assess past, present, and future geological environments.

Applicants should have either a master's degree or a first or upper-second class honours degree in a relevant subject. We invite applications from candidates of all backgrounds who have an interest in art history, geology, environmental history, the history of science, or cultural geography. They will also have a strong interest and demonstrable skills in one or more of the following: visual or object analysis, handling archival materials, museum collections, GIS.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this project, the student will have a genuine interest in working as part of an inter-departmental team and within a vibrant research community at Aberdeen, as well as alongside other post-graduate students. International travel will form a large component of this project and so a desire to spend time abroad is highly advantageous.

We encourage applications from all backgrounds and communities, and are committed to having a diverse, inclusive team.

Informal enquiries are encouraged, please contact Dr Isabelle Gapp (isabelle.gapp@abdn.ac.uk) for further information.

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APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

- Formal applications can be completed online: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgap/login.php>
- You should apply for History of Art (PhD) to ensure your application is passed to the correct team for processing (the programme applied for may not be representative of the programme which will be offered to a successful candidate, this is for administrative purposes only)
- Please clearly note the project title and lead supervisor in the respective fields on the application form
- Your application must include: A personal statement, an up-to-date copy of your academic CV, and clear copies of your educational certificates and transcripts.
- Please provide two academic references with your application.
- Please note: you DO NOT need to provide a research proposal with this application
- If you require any additional assistance in submitting your application or have any queries about the application process, please don't hesitate to contact us at pgrs-admissions@abdn.ac.uk

Funding Notes

This 4 year studentship is funded by The Development Trust, University of Aberdeen. Funding will cover tuition fees, a Research Training and Support Grant (RTSG) of £20,000, and stipend based on RCUK rates (currently £18,622 per annum for 2023/2024). Eligibility is not constrained by nationality.

Funding for international students does not cover visa costs (either for yourself or for accompanying family members), immigration health surcharge or any other additional costs associated with relocation to the UK.

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References

- Gapp, I. (2021). A Woman in the Far North: Anna Boberg and the Norwegian Glacial Landscape. *Kunst og Kultur* 104, no.2, 82-96. doi: 10.18261/issn.1504-3029-2021-02-02
- Headland, R., Hughes, N., & Wilkinson, J. (2023). Historical occurrence of Antarctic icebergs within mercantile shipping routes and the exceptional events of the 1890s. *Journal of Glaciology*, 1-13. doi:10.1017/jog.2023.80
- Lyell, Sir Charles. 1830-1833. *The Principles of Geology*. 1st, 2nd and 3rd Volume. John Murray.
- Zumbühl, H.J., Steiner, D., and Nussbaumer, S.U. (2008). 19th century glacier representations and fluctuations in the central and western European Alps: An interdisciplinary approach. *Global and*

Planetary Change 60, no.1-2, 42-57. doi: 10.1016/j.gloplacha.2006.08.005

Reference:

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