

Engaging the Senses: Object-based Learning in Higher Education. Helen Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan, eds. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015. 230 pp.*

Reviewed by Sarah M. Hatcher

Helen Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan's edited volume, *Engaging the Senses: Object-based Learning in Higher Education*, is an important step towards both explaining and exploring the myriad ways in which museums and higher education can, and often do, work together. The unique creature that is the university museum has seldom been the focus of published academic research but this work begins to alter that story. A series of case studies provide firm evidence of the value of museum-higher education relationships and, in some cases, ways to create or sustain such relationships. Over time educational thinking and practice has ranged from behaviorist to postmodernist, with many stops between. As a whole, this book does not stake out a particular theoretical viewpoint, but instead seeks to explore the ways in which object based learning can and should be used in higher education contexts. Both primary source literature and objects of material culture can be "read" and studied in ways that render them as useful as textbooks and lectures.

It is often tempting to skip the introduction and move directly to the heart of the book, but this introduction provides more than many and serves not just to synthesize the rest of the volume and prepare the reader for what they will see, but also to inform and ground the reader. Not all museum educators and faculty are thoroughly versed in educational theory, and as theory informs many of these chapters, the introduction is a valuable touchstone. Deftly covering more than fifty years of ideas, they tease out relevant ideas while questioning and acknowledging the problematic ones.

With essays from seventeen contributors (including the editors) representing eleven different institutions from England, Northern Ireland, Italy, the United States, and Hong Kong, the book is arranged into three distinct sections: "The Pedagogical Value of Object-based Learning;" "Object-based Learning Environments and Contexts;" and "Object-based Learning, Museum Education, and Creative Practice."

In the first section, Anne Tiballi's chapter, "Engaging the Past: Haptics and Object-Based Learning in Multiple Dimensions," was particularly noteworthy. Writing from her experience at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Tiballi "explores how close encounters with objects through their recreation—in two or three dimensions, or digitally—can be used to increase the observational skills, contextual knowledge and empathetic imagination of the students" (57). Her chapter works to not just discuss the "benefits of multi-model, haptic engagement for learning and cognitive development" (61), but

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also to provide very specific examples from her own research using textiles from the Cemetery of the Sacrificed Women in Pachacamac, Peru, housed at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. While there are many museum education programs that focus on the use of objects to increase observational skills or prompt writing, Tiballi's use of re-creation through drawing, 3D renderings, and weavings serves to prompt additional ways of thinking about how the act of making can create new ways of knowing.

Chapter five, "The Value of Object-Based Learning within and between Higher Education Disciplines," written by a University College London research team comprised of Arabella Sharp, Linda Thomson, Helen Chatterjee, and Leonie Hannan, is perhaps the single-most important chapter for the museum educator seeking to prove the worth of object-based learning. "Researchers at UCL have considered both the practical and the theoretical aspects of using objects in university classrooms, and have used mixed methods to interrogate the cognitive effects of sensory engagement with objects of study" (97). The data and the analysis are both helpful and could be used to give university administrators or potential funders proof positive that museum experience matters. The data also points to the need for similar studies in US museums, as the structural differences in higher education systems in the US and UK are significant.

The final section focuses on Object-Based Learning, Museum Education, and Creative Practice and includes a chapter that could be used to inform the ways in which graduate education can be altered to facilitate greater use of collections and museums. Much of the vocabulary is specific to the landscape of higher education in the UK, but the overarching ideas within it should be of interest to faculty who supervise doctoral students on any continent.

Many of the authors end their chapters with calls for future or further research and I sincerely hope that this call is heeded. University museums of all disciplines represent major opportunities for faculty and students for both leisure and pedagogical use, conducting research that clarifies these opportunities and their impact can only serve to help further justify the university museum.

Sarah M. Hatcher is a museum educator and administrator with over a decade of experience in museum settings. Currently serving as the Head of Programs and Education, she oversees the development of exhibits, programs, tours, and curriculum materials for the Mathers Museum of World Cultures at Indiana University. Among her professional interests are how the intersection of formal and informal education influence learning, and developing ways to change public perceptions surrounding museums.

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