AHRC FULLY FUNDED
COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL AWARD

Magic Lantern Cultures in Britain, 1850-1920:
Exhibition, Reception and Mixed Media Landscapes

Applications are invited for a three-year, fully-funded AHRC Studentship (including full fees and maintenance costs) to undertake an interdisciplinary PhD under the joint supervision of the Department of English at the University of York and the National Media Museum, Bradford. The successful candidate will also be a member of the prestigious new AHRC-funded Doctoral Training Partnership, the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH).

The studentship offers extensive access to the excellent collections and resources at the National Media Museum alongside full participation in the postgraduate life of the top-ranked Department of English & Related Literature at the University of York and in the vibrant and stimulating research culture of the University’s Humanities Research Centre. The appointed researcher will come away from the award with original research that sheds new light on magic lantern cultures, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century leisure pursuits, industrial and artisanal artistic practices, visual story-telling, performance practices and media transition in Britain in the period, with a skill set that will enable him/her to move fluently between universities and museums. In addition, through work on a museum display and on a high-profile, end-of-project lantern show, the doctoral researcher will gain invaluable experience in public engagement as well as in academic research. The project comes under the joint supervision of Professor Judith Buchanan at the University of York and Michael Terwey, Head of Collections and Exhibitions at the National Media Museum.

Time Frame and Eligibility

The Studentship will run October 2014 – September 2017 and is open to UK nationals, or EU nationals who have resided in the UK for three years or more. By the time of taking up the award, the successful applicant will have achieved (or be confidently predicted imminently to achieve) a Master’s degree with distinction. The project is interdisciplinary
in scope and candidates from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds are potentially eligible. It is anticipated that the successful candidate is likely to come from one of the following disciplinary areas: English Literature, History, History of Art, Cultural Studies, Film Studies or a cognate discipline.

The Project

This doctoral award has been won specifically to work with some of the excellent research collections at the National Media Museum. In broad terms, the project will be on magic lantern cultures in Britain in the period 1850-1920. The project will be focused within the areas of lantern exhibition, reception and the mixed media landscapes to which the magic lantern variously contributed in the late C19th and early C20th. Candidates with an interest - established or potential - in the period’s public leisure activities, patterns of domestic recreation, educational landscape, public modes of story-telling, performance traditions, aspirational toys and/or optical technologies are welcome to apply. Once the project is underway, there is good room to shape the specific research questions of the study according to individual preferences within the designated area.

The National Media Museum holds a collection of magic lanterns, lantern slides and lantern-related literature of striking range and quantity. This raw resource of largely unstudied primary and secondary materials constitutes an extraordinary invitation to a doctoral scholar able to devote to it the taxonomical, historically contextualising, materially, aesthetically and textually analytic attention it deserves in order to draw from it an illuminating narrative. This doctoral study will use these research resources in order to extend, refine and, where appropriate, contest, the work already conducted on the technological, performative, artistic, social, domestic and educational operations of magic lantern exhibition and broader culture in Britain.

Within this field, it is anticipated that the particular concentration of the project will be on modes of exhibition and performance, both domestic and public: the style of presentation; the programmes devised for particular audiences and sorts of audiences; the material histories and aesthetic properties of the slides themselves; the audience attending and patterns of reception across different audiences; the nature and quality of the lecturers (and how these both matched and interestingly diverged from the ‘ideal’ lecture as much celebrated in the trade press); the difference in lectures and types of lecture between venues; and, crucially, the absorption of lantern slides, lanternists and lantern shows into other social practices (including domestic life) and other exhibition contexts (including churches, lecture halls, theatre and, in due course, cinema). A thoroughly researched study of exhibition, performance and reception contexts, and the relationship of these to other contemporary, collaborative and competitive media forms, will contribute a valuable social and performative dimension to the evolving work in this area. It is also this that will provide a useful body of work from which contemporary parallels about media emergence, media transition and multi-media co-habitation might usefully be drawn if this proves of interest to the successful candidate.
Lantern practice was part of a wider cultural landscape of entertainment and edification and the structure and balance of the study will be invited to acknowledge this broader context specifically. Although, therefore, work will be underpinned by a series of medium-specific questions addressing lantern technologies, materials and exhibition conventions, it will be invited to situate these areas of enquiry always within the broader industrial, domestic, cultural, artistic and commercial sphere.

The doctoral project will undertake close critical analysis of the research literature on the optical (magic) lantern – in particular to interrogate and unstitch the teleological fallacy that has historically provided the engine for some writing in this area: ie that the lantern was ‘merely’ an anticipation of the more sophisticated medium of cinema. It will also revisit and revise the common, erroneous assumption that post-1900, the lantern ceded quickly in the face of the rival cinematograph with which it could not compete for levels of animation, versatility and popular appeal. The competition, co-existence, and even co-dependence, of the two media provokes questions about mutual accommodation and modes of medium transition that have clear contemporary resonance. This project will therefore provide a timely exploration of the role of established media in a changing mediatised landscape, perhaps thereby implicitly or explicitly prompting newly informed comparative reflection on the co-presence of related but distinct platforms in our current heavily mediatised landscape.

Wider Audiences

Alongside its own academic study, the project will also have a specific analogue goal to make known, accessible and showable some of the highlights of the lantern collection with greatest potential public appeal. The doctoral researcher will therefore contribute appropriate expertise to the development of the proposed ‘Treasures’ gallery at the National Media Museum and the project will end with a high-profile public lantern show. The award holder will help to prepare this show, drawing on some of the materials and findings from the doctoral project.

Supervision and Support

The appointed student will be attached both to the Department of English and Related Literature and Humanities Research Centre at the University of York, where Professor Buchanan is based, and to the National Media Museum in Bradford, where Michael Terwey will be responsible for the project. In different phases of the project’s progress, the researcher may be more in one place than the other. It is an hour on the direct train between York and Bradford, and additional financial provision in support of the Studentship is in place to enable easy travel between the two in accordance with project needs.

In Bradford, the successful candidate will be provided with all necessary training in
working with collections, and in mounting exhibitions, by Museum staff.

In York, the successful candidate will be included in the graduate training programmes of the department, of the Humanities Research Centre and of the prestigious, AHRC-funded White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH) of which the successful candidate will also be a member. York offers a wealth of relevant research seminar series, symposia and conferences which run throughout the year. The appointed candidate will be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities these present in order to ensure his/her own academic professional profile develops strongly across the course of the Studentship.

Further Information

Further information about the National Media Museum (NMeM) may be found at:
http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/

Further information about the Department of English and Related Literature may be found at:
http://www.york.ac.uk/english/

Further information about the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) may be found at:
http://www.york.ac.uk/hrc/

Further information about the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH) may be found at:
http://www.whiterose.ac.uk/projects/the-white-rose-college-of-the-arts-humanities/

Informal enquiries about the offered studentship may be directed to Professor Judith Buchanan and/or Michael Terwey at: judith.buchanan@york.ac.uk and michael.terwey@nationalmediamuseum.org.uk

Enquiries about the application process may be directed to Helen Barrett: helen.barrett@york.ac.uk
How to Apply

This Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Studentship is open to UK nationals, or EU nationals who have resided in the UK for three years or more. Only eligible candidates need apply.

Applications should be made through the University of York online system as an application for a PhD place to the Department of English and Related Literature.

To begin your application, go to the following URL:

http://tinyurl.com/StartEnglishPhDCDA-application

You will be prompted what to do one stage at a time. You can begin an application on one day, save it and continue on another day.

An application will consist of:

- a completed online application form, with all relevant fields completed. For ‘preferred supervisor’ on the form, write Judith Buchanan; for ‘field of research’, write York-NMeM Magic Lantern CDA Studentship.

- A PERSONAL STATEMENT (forms part of the application form) of 600-800 words clearly setting out the candidate’s evolving academic interests, aspirations and specific interest in this particular doctoral project. NB: Being precisely descriptive about academic interests, what has nurtured those and where these might lead is more helpful than purely generally expressed enthusiasm or an extended passage of self-evaluation. (Evaluating the quality of the applicant is the referees’ job.) You should title this personal statement: Applicant for York-NMeM Magic Lantern CDA Studentship.

- uploaded academic transcripts (pdf or jpeg) indicating modules taken and overall classification awarded for each degree taken; if an MA course is not yet complete, please submit an interim transcript supplying details of marks thus far awarded;

- 2 pieces of academic writing (.doc or .docx files of not more than 4.5k words each)

As part of the online applications process, each applicant will need to supply the name and contact details of two academic referees able to comment appropriately on the candidate’s academic achievement and potential. References will be submitted by the referees directly to the online system in response to an emailed invitation to do so automatically issued by the system. The agreement of referees to act should be secured by the applicant before their names are entered on the application form.

All application materials, including the separately submitted academic references, must be uploaded to the online system by 1pm on Thursday 3rd April when the applications window for this Studentship will close. Late applications will not be considered. We
suggest potential applicants do not leave it too late before beginning the application process, even if they do not yet have all their application materials ready to upload. This will enable the system to issue the invitation to referees sooner rather than later and so give them a longer window of time in which to submit their reference.

Once your application has been started, you will be given access to "You@York" (our applicant portal) where you will be able to track the progress of your application, upload additional supporting documents, and update your contact details if the need arises.

You can also use You@York to check whether your referees have submitted their references. If they haven’t yet done so within a few days of the deadline, we would recommend sending a polite email to your referees to remind them of the deadline pending. Incomplete applications – including applications lacking references - will not be considered.

Once you have submitted your application, you will receive a 9-digit reference number. Once you have this, you must complete a very short additional form to register your interest in the project:  http://tinyurl.com/magiclanterns

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be conducted by Michael Terwey and Judith Buchanan on 29 April 2014 at the National Media Museum. Applicants are very welcome to visit the University of York on a different occasion if they would like to see around the beautiful graduate facilities there also. If so, they should contact Professor Judith Buchanan (judith.buchanan@york.ac.uk) to arrange a time to visit.

Instructions for referees:

Please note: it is the applicant’s responsibility to brief referees fully and appropriately about what is required of them and by when.

Referees are asked to say how they know the applicant, in what context and for how long, to comment on the academic quality and academic potential of the applicant (if possible, relative to a specified cohort), and to address the applicant’s research skills, reliability, efficiency, levels of motivation and preparedness for doctoral study. If the MA is yet to be awarded, at least one referee should be in a good position to predict the likely MA result of the applicant. Individual module grades should be supplied that form the basis of this prediction. References should be written on headed notepaper that indicate institutional affiliation. The referee’s own position and contact details at that institution should be given.

References must be uploaded to the system by 1pm on Thursday 3rd April.

Judith Buchanan
Department of English and Related Literature/ Humanities Research Centre
judith.buchanan@york.ac.uk
http://www.york.ac.uk/hrc/people/staff/judith-buchanan/

Michael Terwey
National Media Museum
Bradford
michael.terwey@nationalmediamuseum.org.uk
http://www.york.ac.uk/hrc/people/staff/michael-terwey/