

# Honours in Curatorship 2016



The Centre for  
Curating the Archive  
at the Michaelis  
School of Fine Art  
in collaboration with  
Iziko Museums  
of South Africa



## Mexican Man

Acquired in 1994 in Mexico City from vendor on roadside on route to Frida Kahlo's house. Reminded artist of her father.



an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture



centre for curating the archive

# Honours in Curatorship 2016

<b>Index</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Programme description</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Courses offered by the Michaelis School of Fine Art</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Courses offered by Iziko Museums of South Africa</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Admissions</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Postgraduate bursaries</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Centre for Curating the Archive</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Iziko Museums of South Africa</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Contact details</b>	<b>15</b>





# Programme description

The honours programme in Curatorship is offered by the Michaelis School of Fine Art's Centre for Curating the Archive in close collaboration with Iziko Museums.

The programme offers courses in the theory and practice of curatorship, developing in students a sophisticated awareness of the practicalities, politics and poetics of working with collections of many kinds. Students are encouraged to bring the disciplinary insights of their undergraduate major (whether this be in the visual arts, the humanities or the sciences) to the curating of both material and virtual collections, and are offered opportunities to work on exhibitions in real spaces and in the digital realm. A major aim of this programme is to introduce students, through seminars, fieldwork and workshops, to the central skills of a curator: to understand objects and how to research them, to work with collections, articulating them in exhibitions, and to collaborate with artists, mediating their production.

The course prepares students for further postgraduate study or possible work as curators, museum educators, collection managers and for positions that require the use, interpretation, display and manipulation of collections.

Students observe and examine objects directly under the guidance of conservator Angela Zehnder as a part of the Practical Communication elective.





# Programme Structure

## Compulsory Components

Critical thinking in curatorship  
Research essay/project

## Elective Courses

(three required)

Practical communication  
Working with museum collections  
Imaging the world in photographs  
Virtual display  
Local issues in curatorship

## Other Possible Electives

An elective from another humanities faculty honours course may be chosen where appropriate to replace one of the above with permission from the programme convener, Professor Pippa Skotnes.

## Workshops

Students are required to attend one preventive conservation and one curatorship workshop as well as a third themed workshop relating to research methods along with other postgraduate students.

## Internships

The programme includes a mandatory sixty-hour internship that will be supervised as part of Michaelis' exhibition programme, by Iziko Museums of South Africa, or alternatively by another public museum or gallery. Students' performance will be evaluated by internal and external supervisors. A list of offerings should be provided to students at the beginning of the academic year.

*Pantone*, an exhibition resulting from the taxonomy workshop run by Nina Liebenberg in 2014.



# Courses offered by Michaelis School of Fine Art

## Critical Thinking In Curatorship

### **Duration: 1 double seminar per week (first semester)**

The first part of this course will introduce students to the history and practice of curatorship, and interrogate the meaning of the term curatorship in different spaces and contexts, with a focus on art collections and installations. Students will be exposed to curatorial practices and to the practicalities of mounting exhibitions and displays. Topics will include a history of art galleries and museums, with a focus on the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the role of the catalogue in translating the visual content of the displays. The course will also examine the responsibilities of the curator to the public, with a strong focus on South African issues and communities. In the second part of this course, students will deepen their critical understanding of the various intellectual frameworks that inform curatorship practices. Special attention will be given to the history of 20th and 21st century artists who have engaged with museums, as well as critical texts on these works. Creative and imaginative approaches to the museum and strategies of display will be explored and specific case studies, both local and foreign, will be examined. This course will include a workshop. Times to be agreed.





## Imaging the World in Photographs

### **Duration: 1 double seminar per week (first semester)**

This course focuses on documentary photography as a medium through which the past is represented in the present. It will allow students to engage with both the history of the practice, its contribution to visual heritage in South Africa, the trends, styles and movements that shaped its development, and will probe photographic form and the public life of the image, that is, the manner in which photographs circulate, are reproduced, and enter the public life of societies in particular times and places. Students will look at photographs across a range of genres, including documentary photography, ethnographic photography, and more avowedly fine art photography. This broad ranging course explores the relationship between photography and:

### **History and memory**

### **The shaping of subjectivities**

### **Disciplinary knowledges**

### **Social life**



## Local Issues in Curatorship

### **Duration: 1 double seminar per week (second semester)**

In this course students will focus on developing their insight into the local and contemporary issues impacting curatorial practice, and specifically the way in which the colonial legacy of South Africa continues to affect this practice. Students will critically engage with existing material in the Michaelis Collection, University of Cape Town collections and Iziko collections, as well as draw on current events and developments in the local context. With this focus on local issues, students will be required to conceptualise the specific relationship between the museum and its publics in a way that is embedded in and speaks to the South African and African context. Students will further be challenged to imagine ways in which imaginative curatorship of historical material might serve to challenge existing hierarchies and knowledge production. Field trips will be organized with on-site discussions about current exhibitions and displays.

*Demonstrations: Performing Being Black* (detail) an exhibition and series of performances curated by honours student Khanyisile Mbongwa (2013) as part of her research project.

<https://app.mural.ly/t/thehirschcollective/m/thehirschcollective/1441631009704>

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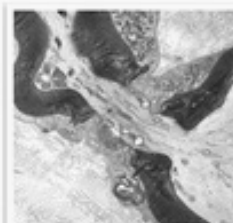
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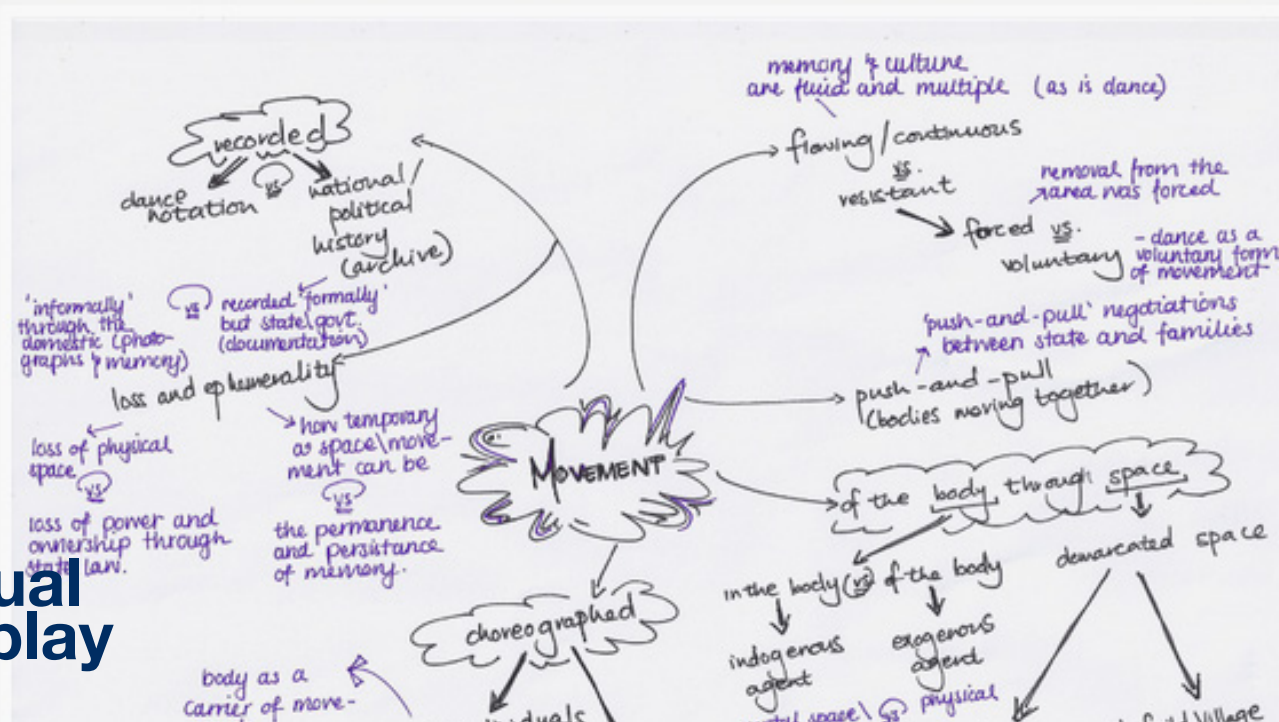
# Visual Concept



## Neurophysiology

The lab examines the neural control of movement through recording cells and field potentials in motor regions of cortex. A 16 channel system is currently employed to record up to 32 cells simultaneously. Using this data, information coding of the upper extremity in the brain is explored. Current studies include trying to discern how neural activity relates to features of movement such as position and velocity as well as other extrinsic parameters. Another study focuses on how the brain codes movement in joint based coordinates. Finally, local field potentials and electrocortical potentials are recorded from motor area of the brain as well and these signals are compared to cell recordings to analyze their relative information content. This work is supported by the Whitaker Foundation.


## Virtual Display



## Duration: 1 double seminar per week (second semester)

In this course students will be required to curate (or recurate) an institutional Iziko or University of Cape Town space in the virtual domain. They will need to take into account not only the context of the space but also the objects/art works, investigating different taxonomies and displays and various possible approaches to interpretation. A historical overview of the virtual, from the panorama and diorama to current artistic and curatorial practices in the virtual realm, will be discussed. Students will be supported by an IT specialist, who will run a workshop on digital exhibition and facilitate their online exhibition.





# Other possible electives (offered by Visual Art History)

## The Politics and Ethics of Collecting (first semester)

This course studies art-collecting practices in the West from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. *Inter alia* it considers the 18<sup>th</sup> century arguments for the establishment of private art collections, the 19<sup>th</sup> century growth of public museums, the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of modern art museums, and recent post-modern developments in exhibitionary practice. Throughout the course these issues are situated in a socio-political context.

*King Feridun in his flower garden*, Persian 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century,  
28,2 x 17,8 cm. Collection of Irma Stern Museum.





# Courses offered by Iziko Museums of South Africa or other

## Practical Communication

### **Duration: 1 double seminar per week (first semester)**

Curatorship demands the skill of writing clearly in different registers for different purposes; whether for press releases, exhibition labels, text panels, internal reports or academic essays for publication in books or catalogues. This course aims at developing students' capacities and awareness of the different approaches to writing demanded by professional curatorial work. Emphases will be on accuracy and objectivity, as well as the virtues of *précis* and creativity in the writing of engaging texts aimed at visitors to museums and galleries. Apart from formal lectures, students will be taken on field visits to view current exhibitions and challenged to critically evaluate their effectiveness in terms of communication and design. While the course is mainly object-centred in its approach, a study of the role of text and image in relation to 'conceptual' curatorial approaches will also be encouraged. Intensive study of the associated texts and display tactics in a number of key exhibitions in art history will also be undertaken. Students will be set a number of short projects, which will be the subject of continuous feedback, discussion and revision. These projects will constitute a final portfolio to be submitted for examination at the end of the course.





## Working with Museum Collections

### **Duration: 1 double seminar per week (second semester)**

This course will introduce students to museum collections as resources for research, interpretation and visual communication. Iziko's art and social history collections or the collections of another public institution will be used as a basis for elucidating multiple approaches to the understanding and interpretation of collections. The outcomes of this course will include: ability to apply research methodology in interpreting museum objects, tracing provenance and significance of collections; understanding the relationship between the tangible and intangible aspects of collections; and hands-on experience of working with museum collections. Understanding the multiple meanings of objects in different contexts is an essential skill when working with collections. Students will have the opportunity to apply this concept in practice.

Exhibition view of *Appendix*, an exhibition drawing together photographs by Stephen Inggs and artifacts from diverse UCT collections. Curated by Nina Liebenberg, Michaelis Upper Gallery, 2014.

## Testimonial

Dear Nancy,

*It is really interesting to receive this message from you. I have been provoked to reflecting on my time at Michaelis much recently and often realize how much I miss it! After completing the Honours Course I left for Windhoek to take up a position in the curatorial team of the National Art Gallery of Namibia for a period of six months. In July 2014, I moved to Germany, where I am currently studying at the University of Tübingen. I started a Master in Social Anthropology in October last year and am currently working on a research project focusing on contemporary curatorial practice in postcolonial Southern Africa and their points of intersection with anthropological practice.*

*Your message catches me in a process of negotiating this research interest with my institute, where interdisciplinary approaches to our field of study are rare. As such, I have been spending some time with my beautiful (!) notebook from 2013, and all my scribbles and notes around the many discussions that happened in the Anatomy Lecture Theatre.*

*I am very glad that I had the opportunities the Honours course exposed us to. The honours degree and contact to professionals at the university and museums not only will be of great help for my MA research now, but has been critical to my academic positioning in a way that I doubt would have been possible here.*

*In my opinion – 3 years later, the course was invaluable, both in terms of the theoretical package and practical guidance, and in terms of the organisational structure of the honours course (access to professional networks, range of seminars offered, style of teaching through intimately structured seminars and great amount of input from professionals).*

Regards,

Pia  
Alumnus 2013



## Academic Criteria

Applications are invited from students who have completed an undergraduate degree in the visual arts or cognate fields, including such disciplines as art history, archaeology, visual studies, history and anthropology, as well as any of the sciences, who are interested in the work of a curator and curatorship, museology and working with collections.

Applicants are required to submit hard copies of the following before October 30:

- 01** a detailed narrative curriculum vitae;
- 02** a letter of no more than two pages detailing your background and reasons for wishing to study curatorship, as well as your special areas of interest relevant to the programme;
- 03** academic transcripts;
- 04** the names and contact details of two academic referees;
- 05** a sample piece of academic writing;
- 06** 500-word research proposal

These must be sent to:  
 Nancy Dantas, Michaelis School of Fine Art  
 University of Cape Town  
 Enquiries: [nancy.dantas@uct.ac.za](mailto:nancy.dantas@uct.ac.za)  
 Telephone: 021 480 7151

**In addition to the above, prospective students must apply on-line at [www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za) before October 31.**





# Postgraduate Bursaries

Students wishing to apply for a departmental bursary should motivate to this effect when applying to the Hons in Curatorship programme. Given that the support we are able to offer is limited, it is recommended that prospective students look at other avenues, namely general university funding as well as the National Arts Council of South Africa.

For more information about postgraduate funding offered by the University, please see <http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/funding/postgraduate/awards/research/> (in particular, **Form 10E**).

All queries regarding general university funding should be directed to Ms Olivia Barron at the NRF Office, Postgraduate Centre and Funding Office, Otto Beit Building, Level 3, Upper Campus, University of Cape Town, telephone 021 650 1920, email [olivia.barron@uct.ac.za](mailto:olivia.barron@uct.ac.za). Completed 10E forms and all accompanying documentation should reach Ms Barron before 31 October 2015.

## Conditions

Successful applicants will be required to:

- (a) register for full-time study for the full curatorship programme at the Centre for Curating the Archive at the Michaelis School of Fine Art; and
- (b) comply with the university's approved general rules and policies for the postgraduate sector.

## Selection process

Bursaries will be awarded on the basis of both merit and need and will be judged according to faculty policy.

## Tenure and conditions

This is a one-year programme. Bursaries are non-renewable.



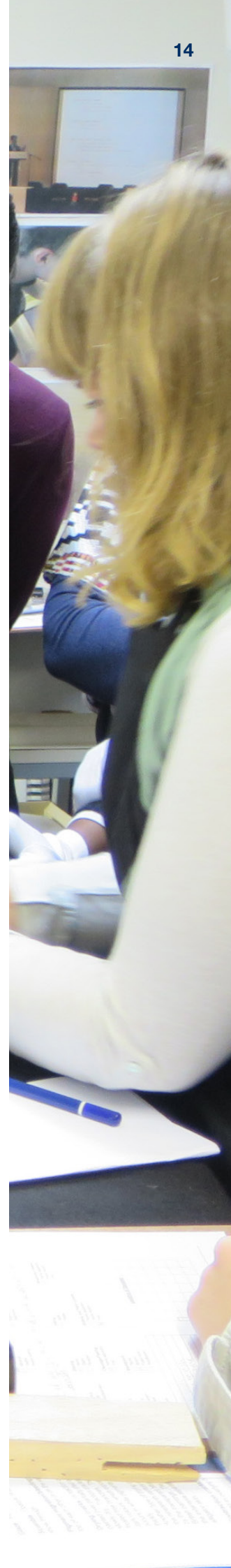


## The Centre for Curating the Archive

The Centre for Curating the Archive was founded in the late 1990s as both a creative and scholarly initiative dedicated to the imaginative working with collections. It is a centre that actively engages with many different kinds of text-based, image and object collections, developing the visual and curatorship as active sites of knowledge. Projects, publications and courses aim, through practice, to open up novel combinations of the historically separated domains of the creative arts and the truth-claiming discourses of history and the social and natural sciences.

## Iziko Museums of South Africa

Iziko Museums of South Africa (Iziko) operates eleven national museums, a planetarium, the Social History Centre (resource archive) and three collection-specific libraries in Cape Town. Iziko's museums were amalgamated by the Cultural Institutions Act of 1998 to drive development and transformation imperatives. Eleven years on, Iziko has emerged as a leading player in the heritage sector in Africa and is acknowledged as a benchmark for South African museums. Iziko art collections are housed in South Africa's premier art museum, the Iziko South African National Gallery, as well as the Michaelis Collection at the Iziko Old Town House, comprising outstanding collections of traditional, modern, contemporary South African and African art as well as the work of British, French, Dutch and Flemish artists. The collection consists of approximately 9330 works of art (a continuously-increasing number) and is divided into six different sections: historical paintings and sculpture; traditional African art; modern art; prints and drawings; photography and new media; and contemporary art, with curators in charge of each individual collection.





# Honours in Curatorship 2016

## Applications must be directed to:

Professor Pippa Skotnes, Director  
Centre for Curating the Archive  
Hiddingh Campus, 31-37 Orange Street  
Gardens 8001  
Cape Town

## Enquiries:

[nancy.dantas@uct.ac.za](mailto:nancy.dantas@uct.ac.za)

## Telephone:

+27 (0)21 480 7151

## Website:

[www.cca.uct.ac.za](http://www.cca.uct.ac.za)



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