“The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology”
(Gell, 1992)

“The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form.” (Gell, 1992, 44)

Overview:
Technology in its many incarnations is an exciting subject and often lights up our imagination, particularly that of navigation and sea travel. “Magic haunts technical activity like a shadow.” (Gell, 1992, 59) We long for tales of journeys and of pirates, lost armadas and ghost ships. The stories of the time period when we began to use ships in earnest are the most exciting because this was a time period where the map were being made.
We are also inspired by scale from the very small to the overly massive. We enjoy looking at things in these ranges of scales because it creates a different relationship to the one that previously existed. The tilt of power has shifted and we feel small in comparison.

The images above are installations where artists have explored aspects of science, Thomas Zipp’s Planet Caravan that seemed to create a universe within a single room using boards painted in a primordial grey and a shed as well as concrete sculptures and images. In the other is Loris Gréaud an artist concerned with repetition using created geometric patterns on the floor and an installation of rooms laid out in exactly the same way. He also makes the experienced totally enclosed by making the shutter doors close the instant that a person has passed through.

Both of these installations give an idea of how I wish the inside of the large-scale objects to be laid out. I want the environment to feel totally immersive so that people entering the object feel an awe and wonder that may inspire them to create their own objects or installations in response.

This project is concerned with questions regarding the audience’s opportunity to engage with the objects on display and the manner in which they can become inspired by them.
Steam Punk

I was inspired by the imagery of John Wyld’s Globe (1851 – 1862) that was situated in Leicester Square that allowed people to climb within it and see the world. It had a very Steam Punk aesthetic like the navigational objects within the National Maritime Museum. In 2009 the History of Science Museum held a Steam Punk Exhibition featuring artists from a variety of different backgrounds some working with clothing, others creating objects that were purely sculptures, and some creating working technical devices.

Steam Punk lends itself well to the imagery of the project, embodying beauty and technology. The artists employed for the design of the large-scale objects and the running of workshops, are Kris Kuksi, Jos De Vink and Molly Friedrich.
Proposal:
The scale of objects will be paramount in the exhibition, as participants will have an object that fits in their hand that can come apart and show the insides whilst also entering into a large-scale model that will display videos of how the objects are made and how they are used. The audience will be able to explore the relationship between the object and what it is used for rather than just looking at a beautiful technological device behind a sheet of glass.

• The National Maritime Museum will employ three Steam Punk artists to create replica navigational instruments in massive scale that will occupy the park between the Museum and the Royal Observatory.

• Members of the public will be able to enter these massive installations and observe how the navigational instruments work from the inside.

• In conjunction with this the Museum will create replica objects to the same scale as the original or smaller to be handled by the general public and school groups.

• Workshops will be run by known Steam Punk artists exploring the making of technology in a range of materials.

Moving from the Museum to the objects outside:
The Upper Deck will display the objects that are recreated in large-scale in the park. Replica objects in a scale that will fit in your hand will be obtained from the globe-like installation on the Upper Deck. The pictures below give an idea of how that might be set out inspired by Wyld’s Globe. It will be more like a half a globe and will house the displays and information on the objects before leading the viewer to take a replica object and head outside to the installation.
Project Aims:

• To create opportunities for people to learn about how various navigational instruments were made and used.

• To enable people to engage with objects by handling them.

• To inspire people to design and build their own instruments.

Audience:

• Primarily secondary school students in KS3

• Secondarily family groups that will be self guided.

(Right: Working Model of an Astrolabe at the AMNH (2010) Traveling the Silk Road)
Activities:

As a project, it will allow for cross-curricular activities in both science and maths. Part of the project will bring over Jim Bennet from the History of Science Museum in Oxford to give talks about how Astrolabes work as well as some other navigational instruments. The workshops and talks will enable teachers to create and support schemes of work in Science, Design Technology and Art:

- Workshops run by different Steam Punk Artists in:
  - Design
  - Storyboarding
  - Materials
  - Making
  - Story writing

- Talks from experts on how different instruments work with demonstrations and hands on aspects.

- Tours of the large scale instruments.

- Self guided trails with resources.
Sound and Audio Resources:

“These individuals were asked to interact with and interpret the art objects they were presented with, rather than the museum artefact on which it was based.” (Stevenson, 2008, 40) I however wish to understand how a relationship with a reproduction can affect the relationship with the original object.

In relation to my own installation the sound will accompany videos of people making objects. The viewer will be able to relate the objects they are holding with the objects featured in the video. There will also be space on both the upper deck and in the installations to sit down and take the object apart and put it back together again. The objects used will be limited in how much they can be taken apart as it could become too fiddly to put back together.

Like Thomas Zipp’s Planet Caravan there will be downloadable sound (and videos) from the installation available on the National Maritime Museum Website so that audience can re-engage with the installation in their own time.

(Wallis (2007): Screen shot of Thomas Zipp’s Planet Caravan Audio Files)
Project Outcome:
Students who have taken part in the project will be able to enter their designs and models into a competition to be displayed online in the National Maritime Museum Website with the possibility for a themed display on the Upper Deck.

(The History of Science Museum, *Steam Punk workshops and competition. (2009)*)

This project hopes to:

- **Increase:**
  - In of use in secondary groups.
  - Increase in families’ visits.

- **Audience:**
  - Feel more confident in their making skills.
  - Able to discuss technological instruments.
  - Confident in discussing how technology works.
  - Make links between past and current technology.
  - Understand connections in technology, trade, travel and immigration.

- Students who have made school visits to feel confident to return in their own time.
Post Project Analysis:

Audience Response

“If meaning-making processes are contingent, variable, and fluid, then how can they be researched?” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, 373). I wish to record audience response in interview rather than a quantifiable questionnaire, but in order to compare, a quantitative survey will also be carried out. I will to talk to the school groups that come in to take part in the workshops and also visit the schools to observe the response to the project.

• During the project participants will be asked qualitative questions about their experience in the workshops as well as their experience in the installation.

• Participants will be asked about their understanding of the installation and whether they felt it was important to their experience of technology.

• Participants will also be asked to fill out a quantitative survey using statements about their experience with which they either agree or disagree.

“..confronted with some masterpiece, we are fascinated because we are essentially at a loss to explain how such an object comes to exist in the world..” (Gell, 1992, 62) I believe that by being able to engage with these objects participants will understand how they come to exist in the world and how they too can create things that did not previously exist. And that in understanding their fascination will increase through growing confidence with technology.

Word Count: 1465
Bibliography


Image Bibliography


Available at: [http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/exhibits/steampunk/album/?album=1&gallery=13](http://www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/exhibits/steampunk/album/?album=1&gallery=13) (accessed 24/11/11)


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