

## **Hidden Histories of Things**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015

9am – 5pm



**Are you interested in the fascinating hidden histories of things as diverse as turpentine, pesticides, seaweed, apples and red squirrels?**

**This event, co-organised by the Open University's Commodity Histories Project and the Institute of Making, brings together an international group of researchers who focus on peoples' relationships with the non-human throughout history. Discussion will focus on methods for interrogating the non-human and will explore what histories of materials, objects, animals and plants can reveal about their contemporary workings and future potentialities.**

Overwhelmingly, research on the non-human, whether stressing collaborative relationships between things and humans or conversely the intractability and resistance of certain properties of the non-human to human will and control, tends to focus on the contemporary world. This one-day workshop takes a step back and aims to explore how the histories of materials and non-human phenomena might inform our understanding of their present workings and future potentialities. It views history as a creative process, capable of suggesting new possibilities by revealing hidden stories and episodes from the past drawing on multi-disciplinary perspectives.

The Institute of Making is a creative space for those interested in materials and the made world, providing a location for investigation, research and play with an enormous variety of materials. Commodity Histories focuses on the histories of a wide range of commodities that have become an indispensable aspect of people's daily lives throughout the world, providing a forum for new research in the field, and focusing on their histories beyond Europe and North America.

**This event is free, but spaces are limited. Book online through the Institute of Making website.**

**Location:** Institute of Making, Malet Place, University College London, WC1E 7JE.

**Contact:** [research@instituteofmaking.org.uk](mailto:research@instituteofmaking.org.uk)

# Programme

## 9.00 am - Start

9.15 - 9.30 **Welcome** - Sandip Hazareesingh (Open University) and Sarah Wilkes (UCL)

## 9.30 - 11.00 **Session One - Plant Agencies**

Lewis Daly (University of Oxford): “Plant Perspectivism? Bina Charm Plants in Makushi Ethnoecology”

Joanna Crosby, (University of Essex): “Comfort Me with Apples: The Hidden Cultural and Material Histories of Apples”

Lucy Davis (Nanyang Technological University): “Stories of Wood and the Migrant Ecologies Project”

## *11am - Coffee break*

## 11.15 – 12.45 **Session Two - Plants into Commodities**

Wouter Klein (Utrecht University): “Bringing the Bark: the Introduction of Peruvian Bark on the Medical Market of the Low Countries (c. 1640-1720)”

Sophia Efstathiou (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): “Weeding Out the Sea: Adding ‘Value’ to Norwegian Seaweed”

Marcin Krasnodębski (University of Bordeaux): “The Secret History of Turpentine”

## *12.45pm - Lunch*

## 1.45 - 3.15 **Session Three - Materials and Modernities**

Tom Widger (University of Sussex): “Pesticides and Modernity”

Jane Wess (Science Museum): “The Mobilisation of Modernity: Diary of an Instrument at the Royal Geographical Society”

Mat Paskins (Open University): “National Rosehips”

## *3.15pm - Coffee break*

## 3.30 - 4.30 **Session Four - Animal Environments**

Matthew Holmes (University of Leeds): “The Perfect Pest: Natural History and the Red Squirrel in Nineteenth Century Scotland”

Monika Baár (University of Groningen): “Eyes that Lead: The History of Guide Dogs for the Blind”

## 4.30 - 5.00 **Conclusion, drinks and exploration of the Materials Library**