The forthcoming exhibition on Pompeii and Herculaneum at the British Museum is going to be superb. It will be packed with wonderful objects such as the famous ‘Three Graces’ and Flora/Primavera frescoes and exquisite silver and glass drinking cups; there will be reminders of mundane everyday life such as baking tins and a water tap, miraculous survivals such as an incense brazier with its ash intact and the baby cradle from Herculaneum. There’s the slightly, and very, bizarre – a bronze water heater/samovar and a dormouse storage jar – and, for devotees of the Cambridge Latin Course, the familiar – an electoral graffito and the bronze bust of Caecilius (whether the or a different Caecilius). And of course, there are casts of bodies and the poignant articles those fleeing the eruption took with them: a basket of coins, rich gold jewellery, a lantern and a set of tools.

As if all these factors were not enough, the outstanding strength of this exhibition is that it does not attempt to cover every aspect of life in these two first century Campanian towns, but focuses very explicitly on the domus itself. This is reflected both in the choice of objects, all of which were found in a house or are most closely associated with domestic use, and in the layout of the exhibition which is intended to evoke the layout of a house in Pompeii or Herculaneum. So if it’s the amphitheatre, theatre, baths and the forum you want, then this is not the exhibition that will give them to you straight up. However, this does not mean that you cannot find the wider world of gladiators, traders and armpit-pluckers in the exhibition; it’s just that you have to work harder at it, and the experience will be no worse for that.

This intersection of inside and outside would be a fruitful approach for older students to consider and is richer than the true, but obvious statement that the house is in a context because it is located in a town which has a forum, an amphitheatre and so on. The interesting question in this exhibition is how the context can be constructed through the objects. We can see the objects as points through which axes run that extend beyond the walls of the domus itself. Mary Beard discusses the ways in which wall paintings and certain other objects represent non-Italian cultural traditions and become reminders ‘of a world and history beyond Pompeii’. Examples of this in the exhibition include the painting of Theseus and the Minotaur from the House of Gavius Rufus (VII.2.16) and a faience fountain spout in the form of a Nile crocodile. However, we can use the same approach and stay closer to home. Take, for example, the painting of the distribution of bread found in the tablinum of a house in Pompeii (VII.3.30). Here we have something found in the heart of a house, showing what we must presume to be a member of the household past or present enacting a public role in relation to the larger population of the town. It projects the role of the householder beyond the house and at the same time, by situating that public role in the tablinum, communicates his and his family’s social position to anyone within that space, whether members of the immediate familia or guests or clients. Similar exercises can be done with many
other objects including the garum-bottle mosaic of Umbricius Scaurus, three mosaics of theatre masks and a graffito of gladiators.

Sticking with bread, the famous carbonised loaves offer an analogous opportunity, though we are working here not with representational, visual images. It is unlikely that bread was baked at home, so the sheer presence of the bread is witness to the processes of manufacture and purchase which took place somewhere else – in one of the many bakeries dotted round town. The loaf in the exhibition is stamped with CELERIS Q GRANI VERI SER (of Celer, slave of Quintus Granius Verus). If this is the name of the slave who made it in a separate bakery, this is a lively added detail, but it has been suggested that this is the stamp of a household slave who prepared the dough in the domestic kitchen. The dough was then taken to the baker’s oven to be baked and brought back to the house to be eaten – the stamp was needed in order to distinguish the loaves of a particular household. If this is the case it offers an additional dimension to the sort of relationship that existed between house and town. Once we go down this route, we can see that probably every manufactured object in the show, in that they are in some way products of industries outside the house, imply infrastructures of trade and transport sometimes in the immediate locale and sometimes further afield. All the objects convey, in their different ways, what Mary Beard describes as a ‘sense of something beyond the house’.

We may decide that we want to take the contents of the exhibition straight and think of them as the cogs and gears of the house as ‘a machine for living in’, to butcher Le Corbusier’s meaning, and that is a worthwhile and interesting approach. However, if we still want an exhibition that will situate the house in the wider world, we can get it by looking at objects in the ways suggested above. It just means the students and we need to work a bit harder than when we are presented with neatly pre-packaged displays on gladiators or the forum.

What this all boils down to, as Steven Hunt makes clear in his article, is that what we and our students get out of the exhibition depends on the questions we bring to it. Steven uses the example of women and demonstrates how through good preparation, students can use the exhibition as a source of evidence for women’s lives in Pompeii and Herculaneum without a section of the exhibition on the ‘topic’ of women. He recommends the tripartite ‘before, during, after’ model of planning museum visits which most of us in museum education favour, and his example is detailed enough not to need further discussion apart from saying that in this exhibition it could be applied equally well to slaves and free men and to less person-oriented topics such as religion, literacy and communication of status.

Some teachers may feel that using an exhibition in this way is not in the spirit of school visits, which should contrast with school-based learning by being less directed and more informal. Students should be allowed to experience an exhibition on their own terms, not be encumbered by worksheets, lists of things to look for or enquiry questions. I think this distinction arises from three misconceptions. The first is that an exhibition visit has to be centred on just one aim, outcome or mode of engagement with the displays. When advising teachers about how to structure a museum visit, I recommend that they think of the visit as an unusual kind of lesson. A museum visit can be given variety and structure in the same way that a lesson consists of several different phases, with different types of activity, different focuses and different types of student grouping. Now, as Steven points out, a linear exhibition has to be taken in order so that once one section has been passed through, it takes a stalwart teacher to take her children back again against the flow of visitors. Also, busy exhibitions make teacher intervention and pacing much more difficult. However, it seems to me that giving a class something to track through an exhibition or asking them to pause in one part of an exhibition and follow up a topic in detail, while also allowing flexibility and open engagement with the displays, is a challenge that, with proper preparation, is not unreasonable to set students.

The second misconception is that enjoyment of an exhibition or museum is in direct opposition to extracting educational value. This is typified by the edutainment industry’s maxim, ‘ounce of treatment – ton of treat’, quoted by Alan J. Friedman. As Friedman goes on to explain, this approach places education and enjoyment at the opposite ends of a single continuum – the more you have of one, the less you have of the other – whereas an alternative model would see education and enjoyment as independent variables: students can derive just as much enjoyment from educational experiences as they can from pastimes that are fun, but of no educational value.

The third misconception is that students have more fun when you don’t ask them to do anything, that freedom is equivalent to the ‘treat’ in the edutainment maxim. In the British Museum we see evidence every day of just how mistaken this is. The students who have least fun, the ones bored out of their minds are those who have nothing to do and have been cast back on their own resources.

Giving students nothing to do in this exhibition is of course less of a risk for Classics teachers, especially those who have been studying Pompeii either through the Cambridge Latin Course or as part of a classical studies course. The students will have some background, may be familiar with some of the objects and should, one hopes, be motivated by at least some interest in the subject. However, I would still maintain that it is wise and ultimately more enjoyable for the students if they are primed in some way, even for a very informal visit. It is possible to engineer a response without dictating what it should be. For this particular exhibition, the easiest way is to look back through objects the students have already encountered, discuss them, and make the students familiar with them. Then, when they meet the objects in the exhibition, they will have a set of preconceptions about them that will be reinforced or challenged. Very broad questions to think about are useful here too: If you had to select the single most important object in the exhibition, which would you choose? Which object in the exhibition surprised you most?

Teachers of Book I of the CLC also have an extra advantage if they choose to do more focused activities. In the
resources for teachers available on the BM website, we have suggested some enquiries into topics such as women, slaves, wall-paintings and mosaics. We have also provided sample activity sheets where students can gather their findings and which can be used straight, adapted or differentiated, by age for example. With a broad audience to cater for, we have had to make these enquiries and sheets general, but the CLC teacher can use the characters of Book I to make the enquiries much more directly related to what the students have encountered already: Which rooms in the house would Felix be allowed to enter? Which of the pocula on display do you think he would most have enjoyed looking at? In the cubiculum, find objects Melissa might have used when attending to Metella. If Metella and Melissa were not the only female slaves in Caecilius's household, what evidence can you find of who the others might have been and what they did?

It is true that exhibitions are harder to use than permanent galleries and that their quality as ‘special’ events often makes it tempting to let them speak for themselves, especially when the subject matter is relatively familiar. Succumbing to this temptation is in my view a missed opportunity. Teachers are in the very special position of being able to direct young people’s attention, to encourage them to consider things they might otherwise miss, to develop their thinking and their understanding through challenges and new experiences. This exhibition offers a great chance to exercise that privilege.


2 See Beard (2008), p.150

3 Friedman, A.J. (1996) Differentiating science-technology centers from other leisure-time enterprises, in Association of Science-Technology Centers Newsletter, January/February

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### Linking the Exhibition with Teaching Practice

**by Steven Hunt**

The following article discusses approaches which teachers might use before, during and after their visit to the exhibition. The approaches were stimulated by a discussion held at the British Museum between Richard Wolff, Anna Karsten, Gill Mead, David Moyes and James Watson, whom the author would like to thank for their contributions. The author has grouped these ideas into four approaches:

- **Kinaesthetic and empathetic learning: being ‘inside’ the Roman house**
- **Dealing with sensitive issues – pupil responses to the casts of the victims of Vesuvius.**
- **An enquiry-driven approach to exploring the role of women in the Roman world – women’s representation in the CLC and in the exhibition.**
- **Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE): managing pupils’ responses to sexual imagery in the exhibition.**

#### Kinaesthetic and empathetic learning: being ‘inside’ the Roman House

The exhibition is going to be about the best way anyone is going to be able to get the idea of the use of space in a Roman house today. When one goes to Pompeii itself, most of the buildings are in a ruined state and the few which are accessible are pretty much denuded of their original wall paintings and the objects which were found within them. Instead visitors have to try to gather together in their minds what it was like to enter a Roman house by visiting several sites: The House of the Dancing Faun plus the House of the Vettii (sadly under restoration for the foreseeable future) plus the House of...