London Transport posters:
from publicity materials to museum exhibits

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Abstract

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This PhD thesis traces the museum's repurposing of publicity posters into museum exhibits from a material cultural perspective. Its aim is to understand how the values and meanings of advertising materials transform as their functions and purposes are altered. In so doing, this thesis employs object itineraries as the theoretical framework, using the London Transport Museum's collection as a case study.

This thesis argues that the values and meanings of London Transport posters change but each point in the transformation is integrally connected to one another. Through the examination of the purposes and narratives of poster exhibitions and the curating process, the change and connection in values and meanings are manifested at both the visual and material levels, such as within a poster design as well as across different material forms.

By examining the criteria for selecting London Transport posters for display and their materialities, this thesis also reveals the diversity of the material forms bearing a single poster design and provides insight into the impact of object materialities, especially their multiplicity, on both collection management and exhibition making.

Further, this thesis engages the primary data with debates about the notions of object originality and authenticity. It argues that museums interact with original objects in certain ways in order to maintain, manifest and highlight the authenticity of these objects. This is mainly to serve the museum's knowledge shaping purpose. Despite that, this thesis concludes that museums should not consider themselves superior to material objects. Instead, the thesis proposes a view of museums as space for human-thing interactions.

Overall, while focussing on advertising materials, the research provides new insight into the nature of museum objects more generally as well as humans' interactions with them. This thesis therefore contributes to various material culture-related academic domains including critical museum studies, anthropology and archaeology.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Preamble

This PhD thesis is focussed on advertising posters in the museum context. Instead of scrutinising the visual language of poster art, it considers these publicity materials as three-dimensional objects. It pays particular attention to the moments when these functional objects are turned into museum collections and exhibits. The main research method used is the case study, with the London Transport Museum's collection being the single case.

Most of the time in everyday life, people interact with inanimate things. The existence of some of these things is consciously reflected on, while others are rather invisible because they are mainly used to serve functional purposes. Sometimes the material presence of functional objects becomes prominent during the design and production stage, but then forgotten while being used. Drawing on a Heideggerian approach (Heidegger 1962), Bill Brown (2001) points out that 'We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us' (4).[1] One obvious example is a mirror. When one is looking at a mirror, it might be more accurate to say that they are looking through it. To put it another way, the purpose of a mirror is to allow a person to look at the reflection of themselves, instead of the flat surface of the object. Yet if there is a crack or stain on it, the physical presence of the mirror will then become noticeable.

Similarly, objects like the London Transport Museum advertising posters examined in this thesis are not produced to be appreciated in their own right. Instead, they are carefully designed primarily to communicate, to promote or to sell the products, which can be other physical things, people, ideas or any other entities. This means that posters are supposed to exist for the values of other things, but not their own. Unlike

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[1] Brown's (2001) remark echoes Martin Heidegger's (1962) discussion about the existence of things. That is, when people are using things such as equipment, they tend to be unconscious about the existence of these things. However, when things malfunction, their availableness (or 'readiness-to-hand') is disrupted. That is when people recognise the presence of these entities by their physical properties, instead of by experiencing their serviceability (Heidegger 2010; Wrathall and Murphy 2013).

mirrors, however, posters are not usually expected to last for a long time. The lifespan of a poster also largely depends on the period of time when the message it conveys is effective, which is usually very short-lived.

Without malfunctioning or being broken, mundane objects tend to be critically reflected on when they enter the museum space. In other words, museums make the physical existence of some eminently forgettable objects become visible and memorable. They also prolong objects' lifespans, delay their deterioration and minimise their wear and tear. Functional objects and what museums do to them are the main interests of this research project.

It is unsurprising that museums try to make sense of objects in their collections and continually interact with them in many different ways. Similarly, this PhD thesis critically examines advertising posters. It also reflects on the nature of museums themselves. Instead of taking museums' routine activities for granted, this research project attempts to determine theoretical implications of what museums do with advertising posters that they acquired, and why they do so.

This introductory chapter is divided into four parts. The first part introduces the PhD research's aim and objectives. The second part generally addresses why advertising posters became the research topic. It includes some reflection on the researcher's context: its benefit as well as potential bias of this research study. It also outlines the histories of poster art as well as the relations between posters and museums derived from the existing secondary literature. The third section of the chapter then provides an overview of this research's case study, the London Transport posters now collected at the London Transport Museum. This first chapter finally ends with the section outlining the structure of this PhD thesis.

Research summary

The primary question this research asks is: do values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they become museum exhibits and if so, how?

To delve into the research in more detail, five subsidiary research questions are asked:

1. What are the purposes of exhibiting London Transport posters?
2. What narratives are told by the exhibitions of London Transport posters?
3. What are the processes of curating the exhibitions of London Transport posters, from conceptualisation to de-installation?
4. What are the criteria for selecting London Transport posters for exhibition?
5. To what extent do the materialities of London Transport posters influence the changes in their values and meanings?

The characteristics of advertising posters and museum objects seem, at first glance, different or even contradictory in many ways. Advertising posters are designed to be used only temporarily. After a short period of time, the content, both pictorial and textual, is expected to become outdated. Their physical qualities are also fragile and ephemeral. In terms of values, they are employed as tools to highlight the qualities of other objects, not on their own. In contrast, museum objects are usually expected to be (or made to be) physically long-lasting, durable and in good condition. Moreover, they are often assumed to be significant within society, either culturally, historically, scientifically or economically. Thus, this research found it interesting to investigate how such functional, ephemeral objects like publicity materials have become museum collections and exhibits, valuable and meaningful to contemporary society.

Why advertising posters? This is the question about my research project that I was often asked by people both within and without the field of museum studies. The discussion of the researcher's context and the review of literature below explains why I chose this particular research topic, collection and theoretical approach.

Why posters?

Researcher's context

This research study uses an anthropological approach to investigate advertising posters as museum collections and exhibits. My interest in museums and objects, especially this particular type, is largely influenced by my academic background and experience. My

postgraduate study was in museum anthropology with a focus on visual and material culture. By investigating museum collections, my PhD research first aims to yield insight into the nature of museum objects by paying attention to those that are multiple and ephemeral. Second, it attempts to gain a theoretical understanding of certain aspects about museum practice. Third, it hopes to find out more about the relations between people and things and how they influence one another, especially in the museum context.

Apart from the influence of my academic background, I chose publicity materials as the topic for my PhD research because I am personally attracted to this type of objects. Not only am I enthusiastic about their visual design but I have also been involved in producing publicity materials in the academic context, such as posters and leaflets for student-led exhibitions, symposiums and conferences. With first-hand experience, I became aware of how deliberate and careful the production of the visual and textual content is, as well as how the outcomes are distributed and circulated. This interdisciplinary PhD project is therefore a combination of my favourite type of functional objects and my academic interests.

It might seem common for researchers to investigate the topics that are relevant to their careers or experiences to a certain extent. Yet it is worth noting that my academic background and personal interests unavoidably affect the research process itself. This should therefore be critically reflected on before exploring the research project further. Positively, having a background outside of (although relevant to) the field of museum studies can benefit this research project in terms of its originality and multi-disciplinary nature. Compared to other types of ephemeral and multiple objects in museums such as postcards (e.g. Prochaska and Mendelson 2010; Rogan 2005) and photographs (e.g. Edwards 2002; Edwards and Hart 2004; Bärnighausen et al. 2019), advertising posters are still rather unexplored not only in museum studies but also in material culture studies in general. Moreover, museum anthropology is often associated with ethnographic collections (due to the history of the discipline). Yet this project applies the approach to different types of museum objects, which in my view have no less potential to give insight into interactions and relationships between humans and things. It can therefore be argued that this PhD research contributes not only to museology, but also to anthropological and archaeological studies of material culture. Albeit rather implicitly, it

can add knowledge to the literatures about poster art too, especially with regard to London Transport posters, this research's case study.

Additionally, my experience and interest in visual design provides an initial and contextual understanding of poster art and advertising. Even though the production process of posters in different contexts varies from one case to another, I have been exposed to different practical dimensions in designing both visual and textual components of posters. This background knowledge helped reduce the hours needed to research the contextual history necessary for this project and so allowed me to invest more time in examining the museum's repurposing of posters. Apart from that, my experience in design adds to this research project creatively, especially in relation to the research process. Visual representations were, for example, helpful especially during the data analysis process as well as the presentation of the final thesis.

However, the negative impact of my background is also undeniable. As discussed above, my academic interests led me to approach museums and their collections from a material cultural perspective. I have been firm in this standpoint since the probationary stage of the research. This can, in a sense, be regarded as biased against and neglectful of other potential approaches. Another risk is an imposition of the theory onto the research. Object itineraries, the theoretical framework applied to this case study, was also identified before the primary research (see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151, for further discussion). In the end, it proved to be suitable for this research, but it is necessary for me as a researcher to ensure that in every step, from data collection, through analysis and presentation, the results and theoretical propositions are directly drawn from primary research, not the other way around. I have also needed to ensure that secondary literatures play only supportive roles, not the primary one, although they are essential in deepening a theoretical discussion as well as relating this PhD research to the existing body of knowledge.

Histories of posters

The above section briefly contextualised the background that led me to researching advertising posters in museums. This part aims to provide an overview of what has been

already studied about posters and reflect on the very first stage of this PhD research, before the case study on London Transport posters in the museum context was selected. This section briefly reviews poster art histories and discusses specific points in these previous studies that were helpful in establishing the boundary of this research.

In summary, most existing literature on poster art is approached from an art historical perspective. While some writings focus on specific types and genres or posters, others broadly discuss the development of posters across cultural contexts. For instance, authors such as Bonnell (1997), Steel and Slocombe (2017) and Wolf (2011) specifically focus on war, propaganda and political posters. Additionally, some publications pay attention to posters with particular artistic styles such as art nouveau (Hofstätter 1984; Sainton 1977) and avant-garde (Becker 2004). In respect to a particular time period, the late nineteenth century is the focus of the recent volume by Iskin (2014), whereas Rickards's book (1968) is dedicated to posters of the 1920s.

Apart from the publications on specific types of posters, the literature that discusses poster histories across genres and cultural contexts was helpful in providing contextual knowledge for this research topic and in identifying the gap within the literature on posters. For example, while my research specifically focusses on the transport posters in a particular museum institution in the UK, the volumes by Barnicoat (1972) and Guffey (2014) provide background knowledge and raise awareness about the diversity of poster designs, production techniques and their functions across cultural contexts such as surrealist posters in Japan (Barnicoat 1972) and religious and political posters in Nigeria (Guffey 2014). The origin of posters is usually associated with the rise of print technology in the late nineteenth century, and Barnicoat (1972) locates the origin of posters in Paris in 1870, when Jules Chéret produced colour lithographic posters for the first time. This era is often regarded as the 'golden age' of posters or 'poster craze' (Flood 2008). Four of the five selections of London Transport posters, on which the primary research concentrates, are colour lithographs (also see the London Transport posters in focus section in this chapter, pp.29–33). More importantly, this print technique is related to the conservation issues to be discussed in Chapter 5 (see the Ephemerality section in Chapter 5, pp. 178–187).

While there had been publications on poster art since the late nineteenth century (Alexandre et al. 1895; Clemens 1896; Hiatt 1895; Rogers 1901, for example), Price (1913) claims that his account is the first to critically study the history of posters. Focussing on the visual design and qualities, Price's volume nonetheless gestures towards the power of posters to affect the mind and the sense of the viewers. This point was helpful to the discussion about the encounters between poster exhibits and museum visitors in Chapter 6 (see the Human-thing encounters section in Chapter 6, pp. 227–234). However, it is worth noting that in my thesis, posters are considered material objects, the visual aspect of which pays an important role. In other words, this study is distinct from art historical studies of posters in the sense that it takes into consideration the connection and entanglement between the poster design and the material form inscribing it. The examination of London Transport posters in the museum context in this PhD thesis, therefore, concerns both their visual and material characteristics.

A later volume on the history of posters by Hillier (1969), is interesting in its implication about different moments in the process of producing posters. For instance, he compares the unfinished sketches with the final design of nineteenth-century posters and discusses the adaptation of similar designs into two posters that convey different messages (also see Hillier 1969: 102–103, 150–151). In shaping the research, this drew attention to the influence of the multiplicity of London Transport posters on their transformative values and meanings, as well as the connections between the same or similar poster designs being inscribed in different material forms.

In defining the research boundary at an early stage of this project, the exhibition catalogue by Wrede (1984) was informative on museums' relations to posters. Wrede implicitly points to museums' repurposing of advertising posters into exhibits as well as into reproduced images in publications. While a body of literature on poster art pays attention to the production stage of posters, there is a lack of existing focus on the moments in which posters are museum collections and exhibits. The research presented in this thesis attends to this, without arguing that values and meanings of posters are limited to the contemporary museum contexts in which they are currently situated.

Guffey (2014)'s volume contributes most to this research project, particularly in relation to the material cultural approach. Interestingly, Guffey associates the birth of

posters with the culture of posting. This is the first history of the poster, to my knowledge, that pays attention to people who place these papers on the streets. In her first chapter on posters produced in between 1840–1950, for instance, Guffey focusses less on major artists than billstickers. Apart from discussing the interactions between billstickers and finished posters, Guffey pays attention to the artists and their methods of designing posters in the digital age. In the last chapter of her volume, for example, she associates the artist's skilful use of computing technology with Gell's (1992) concept of magic. Due to the sophistication of technology for poster design, she argues that posters today are an enchantment. For Guffey, the digital age is therefore a new 'golden age' of posters.

In general, the previous studies on poster art tend to emphasise the aesthetic values of posters. Yet none of them is concerned with the influences of their material qualities, especially ephemerality, multiplicity and reproducibility on the values of this type of objects. Moreover, most literature focusses on the production of posters, whereas the repurposing of posters beyond their advertising function has still gained little attention. This research project aims to contribute to filling this gap, by investigating the values and meanings of posters in the contemporary museum setting.

Museums and posters

Following this review of poster histories, the next section turns to the relations between advertising posters and museums, as this is the particular focus of this PhD research. This part gives a general overview of how posters as publicity materials have been repurposed by various museum institutions. The examination of the relations between posters and museums helped delimit the boundaries of this PhD research and, at the same time, indicated challenges in attempting to identify a suitable case study. However, this process eventually revealed the strength of the London Transport Museum's repurposing of posters, that stands out from other institutions.

Despite the original purpose as publicity, posters have been subjects for museum exhibitions since the late nineteenth century. That was when posters exemplified the latest print technology (colour lithography) and aesthetic development of advertising and commercial art. Today, neither aesthetic quality nor technology on posters is regarded as

prominent, but the interest in visual narratives conveyed by posters have not yet totally disappeared, especially among museum institutions. As a result, posters have been repurposed by museums in different ways, such as being transformed into permanent museum collections and displayed in temporary exhibitions as well as becoming subjects for museum publications and purchased for private collecting.

One example of Western museums' repurposing of posters is the Victoria and Albert Museum. Claiming to be 'the first major museum to collect posters' (2017), poster art forms part of its permanent collections. The Museum has archived over 10,000 posters from around the world with a wide range of themes, the digitised versions of which can be accessed online. In other museums, posters with specific themes have been collected. The Deutsches Historisches Museum, for example, owns approximately 80,000 German political posters and others representing German technology, economy and culture. Its purpose is to archive people's 'everyday life and mentality' (Deutsches Historisches Museum 2017). Belgium's In Flanders Fields Museum collects text posters of the First World War, which it identifies as an important historical means of communication (De Doncker 2017). Similarly, Imperial War Museums (2017) in Britain has collected over 10,000 war and propaganda posters, including both pictorial and text-only designs among their various departments. This museum also interestingly categorises war posters into different subthemes, such as conflict and recruitment.

Indeed, among a wide range of themes war and political posters seem to be the most popular subject for museums and scholars to study. Their interpretations and representations of war posters heavily emphasise the power of image and language as a form of communication, which is evident in exhibitions featuring posters of this genre. For instance, the exhibition *Picturing politics – exploring the political posters in Britain*, held by the People's History Museum from 2011 to 2012, highlights how the communication of democracy in Britain represented in posters has changed overtime (People's History Museum 2011). More recent is the travelling exhibition *State of deception, the power of Nazi propaganda* produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in partnership with the United Nations Outreach Programme, which was held in various museums as well as UN information centres in 35 countries (United Nations 2017). This exhibition underlines how the Nazi party employed posters as a

medium to propagandise the notion of utopian society, which resulted in Germany's dictatorship and mass murder after the First World War. Another example is the 2019 *The art of persuasion: wartime posters by Abram Games* at the National Army Museum, London (Figure **1.1**). Focussing on a particular artist, the exhibition highlights the artistic methods used in communicating wartime messages (National Army Museum 2020). Not necessarily limited to this genre, the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition entitled *The power of the poster,* held in 1998, also emphasises the powerful effects of posters for both promoting political agendas as well as advertising and artistic movements (Webber and Norton 1998).

Figure **1.1** The exhibition *The art of persuasion: wartime posters by Abram Games* held at the National Army Museum, London, in 2019 © National Army Museum (Image courtesy of the National Army Museum, London)

The exhibition catalogue is among the most common form of museums' publications on the subject of posters. Aside from highlighting powerful language, as mentioned above, this form of publication on posters usually underscores artistic and design quality and provides examples of strong poster artworks (that are often selected for exhibition displays). However, the Royal Academy of Arts's catalogue *Posters: a century of Summer Exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Arts* (Pomeroy 2015), which feature posters from 1918 to 2014, was not published to coincide with any exhibition.

This work could be considered a cultural history of the RA Summer Exhibition posters. With images of posters organised chronologically, it gives readers an opportunity to observe the change in styles overtime as they turn through the pages. Furthermore, its brief introduction by Mark Pomeroy interestingly discusses power relations during the negotiation process of poster production.

Aside from physical publications, certain museums contribute to literatures about posters in forms of web articles and blogs. The Victoria and Albert Museum, for instance, published an article about poster conservation for *the Power of poster* exhibition in its online journal (Webber and Norton 1998). Moreover, it has a blog section 'Posters: stories from the V&A collection' dedicated to discussions about posters from a wide range of perspectives. A list of bibliographies about posters (Victoria and Albert Museum 2002) is also provided.

Another common activity related to the repurposing of posters undergone by museums is the reproduction for personal collecting. Many major museums and art galleries typically sell posters featuring their ongoing exhibitions. Some UK examples are the Tate, the British Museum and the National Galleries of Scotland. These institutions also sell reproductions of posters produced by well-known artists and designers from their own collections. In other cases, posters featuring canonical artworks (but not necessarily designed by major poster artists) are also for sale. One unusual example is Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich. It has a subscription programme for the public who are interested in collecting the Museum's contemporary exhibition poster design, while its extensive collection of Swiss and international posters is not available for subscription (Museum für Gestaltung 2017).

Aside from Museum für Gestaltung, however, it is worth noting that posters collected and exhibited by these museum institutions are not necessarily produced by them. Whether or not they archive museum-produced posters, e.g. posters for exhibitions held by the museums, is not usually stated on their websites. In some institutions, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, posters that reflect the institution's history are catalogued and categorised separately from posters that it acquires from elsewhere. Moreover, posters in these museums usually form a very small part of much larger collections. The amount of exhibitions and publications is relatively small compared

to those dedicated to other major collections. Thus, using one of the institutions mentioned above as a case study to understand museums' interactions with material culture in general, seemed difficult to justify. However, the London Transport Museum's relations with advertising posters is unique. That is why it was selected as a case study for this PhD research. The overview of this case is presented below.

Contextualising the case study

Case study, in this context, is used as a research method. The detailed discussion of this method can be found in Chapter 2. In brief, as Robert K Yin (2014) suggests, there are five rationales for choosing a single case study: being either 'critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal' (51). It is the unusual or extreme case rationale on which this research on museum repurposing of advertising posters is based. The London Transport Museum's Poster Collection,[2] in my view, can also potentially reflect some aspects of museum activities and material culture at large. This section is divided into three parts. It first gives an overview of London Transport posters in terms of its design, production, material techniques and distribution. Second, it discusses the London Transport Museum's contribution to the repurposing of these advertising posters, which makes it a strong case study for this research topic. Finally, this section briefly introduces the five poster designs and associated objects that are the focus of the primary research and the discussion in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

London Transport posters

The London Transport Museum's collection is specifically dedicated to London Transport posters, which broadly refer to publicity materials produced by London Transport since the early twentieth century. The purpose is to encourage commuters to travel mainly via the Underground, but there are also posters produced to promote other types of transport such as buses, trams and ferries. Apart from destinations such as museums,

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[2] As the research proceeded, the case study also encompassed the Artwork, Ephemera and Photograph Collections apart from the Poster Collection as understood in the preliminary stage of the study. However, these types of objects were produced in relation to London Transport poster prints, which are considered the main focus throughout this research.

zoos and sightseeing, London Transport posters encourage travellers to participate in activities such as shopping, seeing theatres and staying safe during war time (see Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3, for example). To achieve its goal, the company in its early days commissioned artists to produce visually strong and attractive posters.

Figure 1.2 *Buckingham Palace* (1936a; left) and *Westminster from the Thames* (1936b; right) by Edward McKnight Kauffer © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Figure 1.3 Two posters by Edward McKnight Kauffer, *Buckingham Palace* and *Westminster from the Thames*, displayed on the timetable and map/poster board outside East Grinstead country area London Transport bus garage (Tropical Press 1936) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Apart from those commissioned by London Transport, other examples of transport posters, such as railway and steamer posters, were widely produced in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. These posters have been reproduced to this day in not only poster form, but also books and postcards. What is special about London Transport (especially the London Underground) is, as Jonathan Black (2008) argues, that the corporation had more diverse technologies, services and products to advertise compared to other types of transport. Moreover, London Transport posters during the interwar period (from 1920s to 1930s) are considered to be the most effective designs and so influential to artistic and design development of the time.

Regarding the materials and technicalities, most London Transport posters have been produced using lithographic techniques, the variety of which are due to the advancement of technology changing over time. Lithography, according to Alan Powers (2008), is a type of surface or planographic printing process. It was invented at the end of the eighteenth century by Alois Senefelder. The technique started to be widespread in the West for map making, music printing and, in rare cases, creating fine arts. Early lithographs were produced in black, while colour lithography became a popular medium for producing poster art in the late nineteenth century, especially in France (see the Histories of Posters section in this chapter, pp. 15–17). The use of coloured printing inks has also been changing. Some examples of pigments derived from natural sources (i.e. animals or plants) were such as black was from lamp-black; red from carmine or cochineal; blue from indigo or Prussian blue; yellow from lead chromate or yellow ochre. Other colours such as purple and green were mixed. After 1880, versatile dyes were created by a mixture of traditional pigments and metallic salts, which were known as the lake colours. Many of these were produced by chemical syntheses such as red from coal tar (Powers 2008).

Regarding the printing methods, as pointed out by Powers (2008), lithography originally involved drawing directly on the water-absorbent surface of the stone, which is then inked up and printed in a press. Alternative to stone, a grained metal such as zinc could be used for lithographic printing. However, offset printing, which became widely practiced in 1908, was a major technical change, according to Powers (2008). With this method, the paper is no longer placed in direct contact with the stone or plate. Instead,

it absorbs the ink from an intermediary surface like a smooth rubber roller. This technique also made way for the popularity of posters during this period. How the artist's work was translated into prints could be achieved in various ways, with a collaboration with the printer, as pointed out by Powers (2008). First is by tracing or hand-copying. The second method is called photolithography, in which the printer transfers a photograph (i.e. of the artwork) onto a lithographic plate. Another method, called 'autolithography' is that the artist directly draws on the stone or transfer paper so that the final prints are evident of the artist's hand. However, this method was not preferred by London Transport for it was time-consuming and potentially costly (Powers 2008).

Concerning the number of posters produced, according to Claire Dobbin (2008), representative London Transport poster print run in the 1920s was approximately 1000. Among these, 850 were posted for publicity purposes, whereas the remaining 150 poster prints were reserved for sale and non-commercial distribution. Hence, these posters not only functioned as advertising as originally intended by London Transport, but also made their way to individuals' homes (e.g. for decoration), offices, shops and schools. Today, approximately 200 London Transport posters are issued yearly. The direct commission of artists or designers is still practiced (through the London Transport Museum), albeit rather occasional. This would be only in case where an artistic approach is considered to be the most effective means to fulfil a particular marketing strategy (Webb 2008).

According to David Bownes and Oliver Green (2008), double royal (1016 x 635mm) is the standard size of London Transport posters. Occasionally, those in larger sizes such as quad royal (1016 x 1270mm) and four sheet (1524 x 1016mm) were also employed i.e. for hoardings at Underground stations. For display on the side panels of trams and the front panels of busses, smaller double crown-sized (762 x 508mm) posters were produced. Apart from these standard posters, there were panel posters produced in various sizes during the 1920s and 1930s to be displayed on the glass screens inside Underground cars. Other examples of non-standard posters are such as those used on noticeboards at stations and staff areas as well as posters produced during wartime, which suffered from paper shortage. As advertising, London Transport posters are displayed temporarily. In 1915, for instance, posters were intended to be on for three months (Flood 2008). However, as Dobbin (2008) points out, the poster *Chinatown by*

Underground (1988) by the Royal Academician John Bellany, which was commissioned through the 'Art on the Underground programme', was on display for three years.

This subsection has implied that London Transport posters, especially in the early twentieth century, were the results of collaborative processes between the commissioner, artists and printers. Through the commissioning programme, the artist would present the sketch or sample to London Transport's Publicity Committee, who would either approve or reject the design. The approved artwork would then be sophisticatedly tailored to a poster by the printer (Powers 2008). This explains why there was slight difference between the design of the final prints and that of the aspiring artwork.

London Transport Museum

Apart from the high quality of London Transport poster designs, the London Transport Museum has potential as a research resource. Regarding the online platform, the Museum's website provides a good amount of information related to its Poster Collection. For example, there is a page giving an overview of its poster art by using video clips mainly to promote its Museum Depot, where posters are kept (London Transport Museum 2016). Moreover, the website provides information regarding past exhibitions, such as *The art of the poster* (2008) and *Poster art 150* (2013). For *The art of the poster* exhibition, the entire exhibition narrative is presented on the website (London Transport Museum 2010a), while the content for *Poster art 150* includes only the artworks and posters displayed in the physical exhibition (London Transport Museum 2013b).[3]

Besides information about past exhibitions, the online poster archive is highly informative and most insightful during initial research (London Transport Museum 2010e). Here, users can search on the collection site for images of posters by artist, date,

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[3] The current structure of the website content is slightly different from the version on which this research relied in the preliminary stage. For instance, there are now no separate pages dedicated specifically to poster art. The information about past poster exhibitions is listed together with other exhibitions held at the Museum (London Transport Museum 2020e). The video clips promoting the posters were also removed. The discussion here is based on the older version in order to highlight the strength and originality of the Museum's relations with poster collections compared to resources provided by other institutions as observed in the initial stage of this research.

theme and colour. The theme is based on the visual content, one of the most significant aspects of posters. Under the 'Entertainment' theme, there is the museums & galleries subtheme, the largest among the others. The Museum updated its online collection in late 2017, which made the format more user-friendly. During the process of identifying the case study, this research relied on the older version of the online collection as discussed here, while the pilot study (Chapter 2) onwards is based on the current version.

Among information provided in the online database, I find most interesting the reference number, which suggests the date when each object was acquired. The earliest in this collection is 1983, when most posters were catalogued by the Museum. However, some more recent posters were accessed before earlier ones. The latest posters available online under this subtheme were catalogued in 2005 as the reference numbers suggest (also see the Posters as museum collection section in Chapter 4, pp.129–136, for discussion about reference numbers). More recent posters have not yet been made available online, but reproductions of which can be bought in both physical and online shops.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that London Transport posters in fact entered the museum space even before the second half of the twentieth century. As early as the 1920s, these posters were donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum and later became its permanent collection (Green 2008). That means London Transport Museum is not the only site where London Transport posters are collected. Apart from the Victoria and Albert Museum, some of the London Transport posters are collected at Imperial War Museums and the National Railway Museum (Bownes and Green 2008). This suggests that posters of the same visual contents can be found at different institutions. This is also true for private galleries and retailers that sell the original London Transport posters. Their prices are usually higher than the reproductions currently available at London Transport Museum. However, this PhD study focusses only on the London Transport Museum's collections, while London Transport posters collected by other institutions are excluded.

Apart from online research, I explored publications published by the Museum in order to ensure that its Poster Collection was a suitable case study. One remarkable example is the collection of essays *London Transport posters: a century of art and design*

(2008) edited by Bownes and Green. This book comprises ten papers on different aspects of London Transport posters, but largely concentrates on visual narratives, such as the functions of London Transport posters during war time (Lewis and Bownes 2008), the representations of women in posters (Dirix 2008) and suburban housing advertising posters (Bownes 2008). Some chapters deal with more social aspects of posters, such as the contribution of the late Managing Director Frank Pick as an art commissioner (Green 2008), the relationships between London Transport, printers and artists (Powers 2008), and art education (Rennie 2008), as well as the public's reception of Underground posters as publicity, artworks and collectibles (Dobbin 2008). Others (Flood 2008; Black 2008; Webb 2008) focus on the design development with an emphasis on the status of London Transport posters in relation to the art world. In terms of the use of poster images in the essays, some authors selectively discuss certain specific posters, while others use London Transport posters as illustrative to wider themes, categories or artists.

Additionally, information about exhibitions of London Transport posters since they were first produced are provided in the same volume. The four major exhibitions mentioned in the book include those held at the Mansard Gallery in 1917, Burlington House in 1929, the Royal Institute Galleries in 1963 and the London Transport Museum in 2008 (Bownes and Green 2008: 12–13). After the publication of this book, the London Transport Museum has held various exhibitions such as *Poster art 150* in 2013, mentioned above, as well as an ongoing temporary display series entitled *Poster parade*, which has exhibited posters of different themes. The most recent theme is *Festive fun*, which coincided with the Christmas and New Year season (London Transport Museum 2020f). It was open from November 2019 to January 2020. The most recent exhibition of posters for this thesis is *Poster girl*s, which was on from October 2017 to January 2019. It featured posters produced by female artists (London Transport Museum 2020e). These continuous exhibitions suggest that the Museum plays an important role in continually contributing to changing values and meanings of London Transport posters.

The Museum's representations and reinterpretations of London Transport posters are also evident in other activities. At the Depot, the Museum organises a tour at least every few months. The tour lasts for 90 minutes and is led by a volunteer guide. The interpretation is therefore based on the interest of each guide. In the process of

identifying the case study, I joined a guided tour on 25 March 2017. What I found interesting is that the physical collection is, unlike the online database, organised quite randomly regardless of years of production or themes, and yet the label is attached to each object (see the Posters as museum collection in Chapter 4, pp. 129–136, for further discussion on how posters are stored in the Museum's Depot). The most interesting aspect of the tour for me was the difference between the actual artworks and posters, which are not noticeable in the digitised versions. Some of the physical artworks are clearly distinct from the printed posters, especially those produced with three-dimensional techniques such as collage. Materialities of posters are therefore no less significant than visual elements, especially when comparing between printed posters and the original artworks. This then became one of the questions asked during primary research.

London Transport posters in focus

The initial research into London Transport posters and the London Transport Museum's collections outlined above reveals that each poster design has appeared on the surface of various material objects. Poster prints and artworks are only a few examples among others. Different object types with the same visual design were also produced on different medium using different techniques. This suggests that the material forms are no less significant than the poster designs. This PhD thesis therefore takes into account both designs and material forms of London Transport posters.

Across the extensive collection of over 10,000 London Transport posters, the primary research particularly concentrates on objects carrying the following five museum-themed designs:

1. *London history at the London Museum* (1922) by Edward McKnight Kauffer (Figure **1.4**);
2. *Natural History Museum*; *lepidoptera* (1928) by Austin Cooper (Figure **1.5**);
3. *The Tate gallery* (1928) by Rex whistler (Figure **1.6**);
4. *Imperial War Museum* (1936) by Edward Wadsworth (Figure **1.7**);
5. *Femme bien informee* (1972) by Harry Stevens (Figure **1.8**).

As recorded in the Museum's database, there are at least 58 objects associated with these five designs. This includes commissioned artworks, objects aspiring artworks, poster prints, reprints, reproductions in different sizes and photographs with these poster designs *in situ*. Documentation and archival materials related to these objects were examined during fieldwork at the Museum. The access to 14 of these 58 objects was granted by the Museum and so their material qualities could be observed. The process of identifying these five selections of poster designs and their material varieties are detailed in the following methodological chapters (see Chapters 2–3, pp. 36–102).
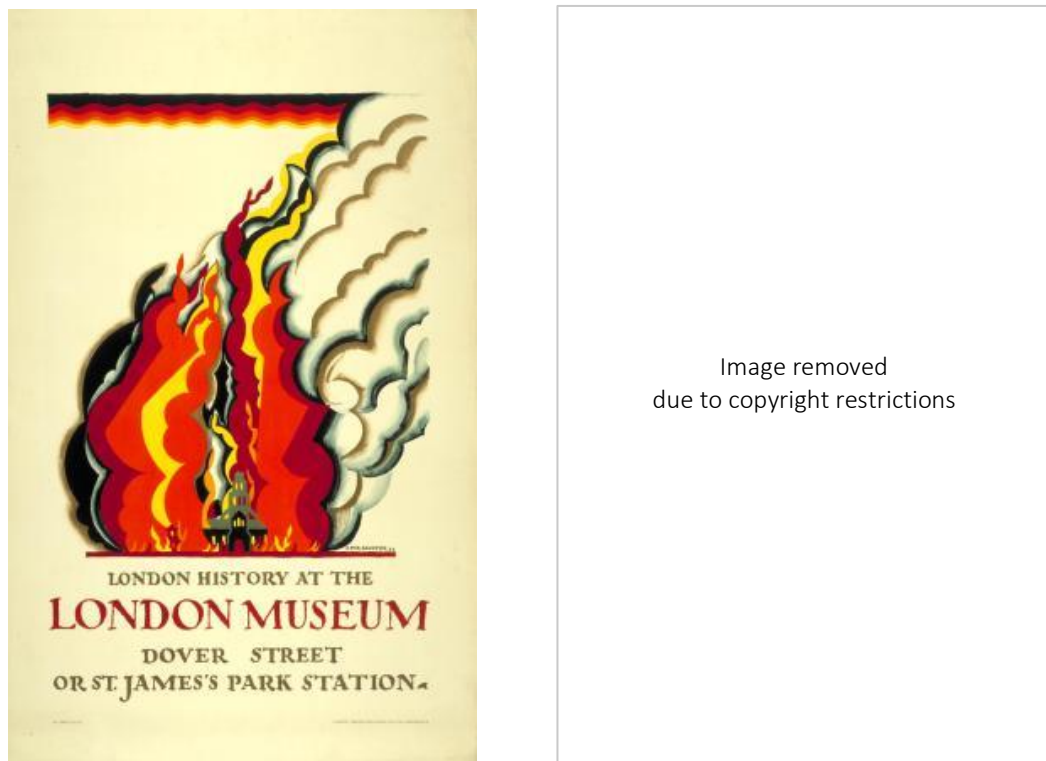
Figure 1.4 Kauffer's *London history at the London Museum* poster (1922a; left) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection and artwork (right) in Laver et al. (1949: plate 29)
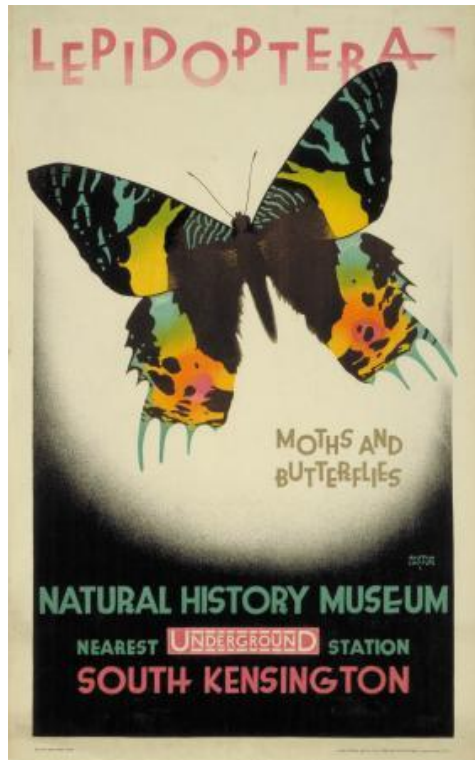
Figure 1.5 Cooper's *Natural History Museum; lepidoptera* poster (1928b; left) and artwork (1928a; right) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Figure 1.6 Whister's *The Tate Gallery* poster (1928; left) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection and artwork (right) in Laver et al. (1949: plate 3)
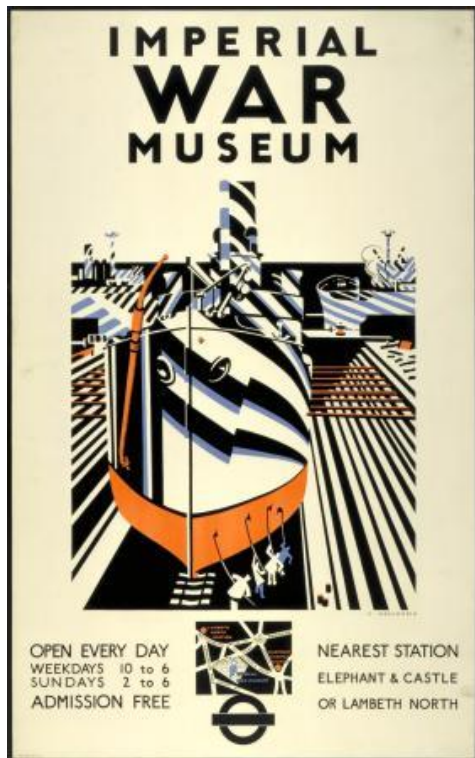
Figure 1.7 Wadsworth's *Imperial War Museum* poster (1936a; left) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection and artwork (right) in Laver et al. (1949: plate 9)

Figure 1.8 Stevens's *Femme bien informee* poster (1972a; left) and artwork (1972k; right) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Overall, this section (Contextualising the case study) has attempted to justify the London Transport Museum's Poster Collection as a suitable case study for this PhD research on museums' repurposing of advertising materials. The initial investigation of London Transport posters was extremely informative in finalising the case study as well as areas to be explored in the thesis. The Museum has repurposed posters into different forms i.e. collections, displays, publications and reproductions. Regarding material qualities, some interesting aspects of posters are the singularity of visual design and the multiplicity of the printed posters in the physical collection as well as the relations between the two. These form the key thematic chapters of this PhD thesis as summarised below.

Thesis structure

This PhD thesis is divided into seven chapters (see Figure **1.9**). Following this introduction are the two methodological chapters, explaining the process from the preliminary stage of the research until the analysis of the field data collected. The London Transport Museum's online collection is a starting point for Chapter 2, which explores the theoretical aspect of the case study as a research method in detail. It also includes the pilot project, a quantitative study of museum-themed poster prints and artwork in the Museum's online collection, which gave insight into the nature of the collection and led to the identification of the five selections of posters on which the field research particularly concentrated. This chapter then concludes with the practical preparation for the fieldwork, including the development of case study protocol, data collection questions and ethics application.

Chapter 3 presents the second half of the research process, which covers primary research and data analysis. It provides a discussion of the key sources of evidence during data collection, in terms of their definitions and characteristics as well as the rationale behind the selection of materials that potentially reflected the research inquiry. The chapter subsequently moves towards the data analysis process. This covers the techniques and methods used to maintain research quality, validity and reliability as well as to turn the raw data into themes, which then became the three following chapters.

The three following chapters present key themes emerging from primary research supported by secondary literature. Each of these chapters comprises the responses to the research questions, the review of relevant literature as well as the analysis, although these three elements are more integrated rather than being presented separately. Chapter 4 answers the primary research question of how values and meanings of London Transport posters change when they enter the museum space, using the object itinerary framework. In so doing, it also includes findings in response to the subsidiary questions concerning purposes, narratives and curation of poster displays.

Chapter 5 focusses on the materialities of London Transport posters. It discusses the outcomes in response to the other two research questions: the criteria of selecting posters for display and the impact of materialities on the repurposing process. It also brings in the discussion of literature in material culture studies and elaborates how this research adds new dimensions about object materialities in the museum space, both in terms of collecting and exhibitionary practices. The analysis therefore contributes to the theoretical understanding of museum objects in general.

Chapter 6, the last thematic chapter, also acts as a theoretical proposition. It focusses on the human-thing relationships within the museum. It takes forward the interplay between multiplicity and singularity of objects implied in Chapter 5 and links them to the notions of originality and authenticity. This chapter then goes further by discussing a fundamental question of why museums repurpose objects and how they interact with objects to serve its goal. This chapter ends with an object-centred discussion of human-thing entanglement in the museum.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, recapitulates the key ideas explored in this thesis. It starts with a brief summary of research outcomes, focussing on how objects change and what humans do to them in attempting to change them. Then the chapter moves to research contributions, theorising the relationships between humans and the material world beyond museums. Furthermore, it identifies research limitations including aspects and approaches that are not included here. The thesis finally concludes with a brief discussion of potential topics for future research.

At the end of this thesis are the appendices, which consist of the methodological tools employed prior and during the field research. These include the case study protocol, data collection form and interview schedule. These tools have been essential for keeping the research questions in focus throughout the process as well as maintaining the coherence of the data collected in order to assure the quality of this entire PhD thesis.
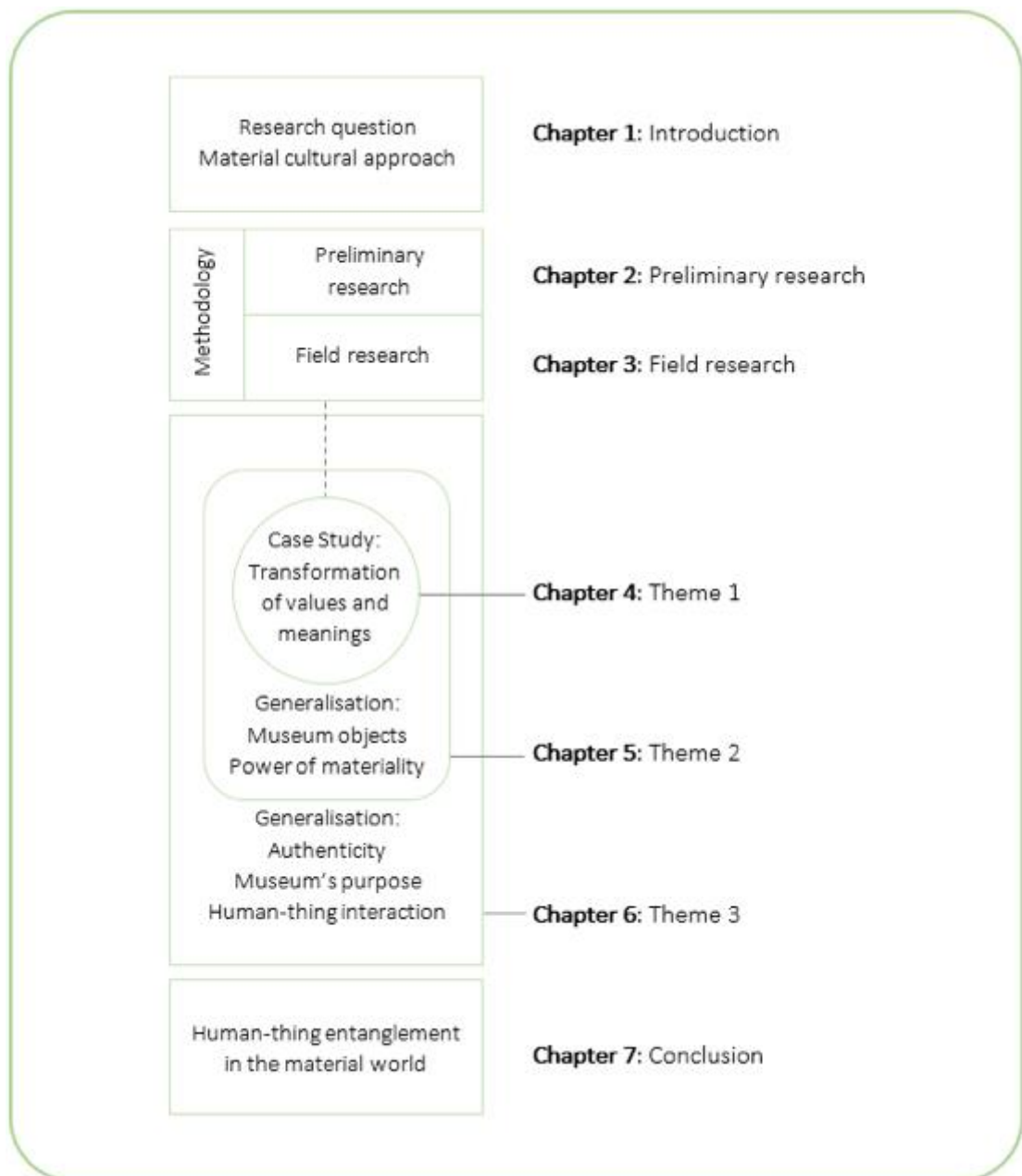
Figure 1.9 Thesis structure

Chapter 2
Preliminary Research

Introduction

To achieve the research aim and objectives outlined in the introductory chapter, the method and process employed play a major role. This study of museums' repurposing of advertising posters employs only one main research method, which is a case study with the London Transport Museum's collections. According to Yin (2014), the case study involves the entire process of doing research. The second chapter of this PhD thesis contributes to the first half of the process: the preliminary research prior to fieldwork. The main purposes of this chapter are, first, to provide a theoretical discussion of the case study method as well as the application of it into this project. The second aim is to detail the preliminary research process, which sets the boundary for data collection. In so doing, it covers the following points: case study design, pilot study, units of analysis, preparation prior to fieldwork and data collection procedures. These tasks completed during the initial stage as well as the outcomes helped contextualise the nature of the fieldwork, data collected and how they were analysed in a later stage.

Study design

As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the primary question this research asks is: do values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they become museum exhibits and if so, how? It is the research question that is the methodological starting point, according to Peter Swanborn (2010). This study employs the case study as the main research method, with London Transport posters collected at the London Transport Museum being the focussed case. The first section of this chapter explains why the case study is the most appropriate research method for this project.

According to Yin (2012, 2014), case study research is derived from the researcher's desire to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex social phenomenon or the case set in the real-world contexts. The phenomenon being studied might pay

attention to either a single actor or multiple (Gillham 2000; Swanborn 2010). The insightful appreciation of the case(s) is expected to create new knowledge about 'real-world behavior and its meaning' (Yin 2012: 4). As Yin (2014) argues, this method is applicable for studying a variety of subjects such as individuals and groups, institutional changes and relationships. This PhD research is not only about museum institutions but also objects and people, as well as their relationships with one another. In short, the case study method employed in this project is expected to shed light on the transformation happening to printed publicity posters within the museum context and the implications of such a change.

The case study, Swanborn (2010) points out, is suitable for research that asks broad questions regarding a social process. More specifically, Yin (2014) suggests that it is fitting for the 'how' and 'why' types of question. This study primarily asks a 'how' question, but the answer to how the transformation occurs implies (or at least raises a question of) why such a phenomenon happens, which is tackled as part of generalisation (Chapters 5 and 6). Although the subsidiary questions, as outlined in the introductory chapter, are dominated by 'what' questions, they are in fact developed from 'how' and 'why' questions. For instance, asking about the process of exhibition curation is actually similar to asking how the poster exhibitions and displays were curated. Likewise, asking about the criteria of choosing objects for exhibitions echoes why one group of objects was selected instead of another. Hence, it can be argued that this PhD project attempts to explore and explain a phenomenon, which is the purpose of doing a case study as Yin (2014) argues.

Moreover, Yin (2014) points out that 'why' and 'how' questions are also asked by other methods such as experiment and history. As implied in the definition discussed above, the case study is suitable if the study focusses on contemporary events, which is agreed by Bill Gillham (2000). The phenomenon to be observed in this study is not controlled by the researcher, so a laboratory experiment is not applicable. Similar to Yin (2014), Swanborn (2010) excludes experiments in the definition of the case study. However, he argues that it can be used to study not only the 'here and now' but also a phenomenon of the past over which the research has no control. Compared to a historical

writing, the interest of a case study report is different, according to Yin (2014).[4] While historical research attempts to understand the nature of the case, generalisation is a key characteristic of the case study research. Case study research attempts to use the case to shed light on a larger theoretical issue (Yin 2014). My study does not aim to write a history of London Transport posters but to use them to illuminate the nature of material culture and human engagement with them in the museum context. Poster art histories that were discussed in the introductory chapter were also mainly to contextualise the case study, instead of being the end point in themselves.

The issue of generalisation is worth further discussion. According to Yin (2014), it is this aspect about which case study research is often criticised. How is it possible to generalise from a single case? Yin gives a convincing answer to this question. Unlike a teaching case, a case in case study research is not a sample. The case study is generalisable not to the entire population but to theoretical propositions. If the researcher aims for the statistical generalisation, it is impossible for the case study to provide a valid analysis. This issue is also discussed by Mario Luis Small (2009) in his paper on field-based research. Rather than focussing on case study research, Small in fact discusses the validity of choosing a case for ethnographic studies of urban poverty, social inequality and immigration. His idea is nevertheless helpful for developing this research's case study. Citing J Clyde Mitchell (1983), Small argues that an attempt to find a representative case is the researcher's mistake. Case study research, he suggests, does not lead to a statistical inference but a logical or causal one, which corresponds to theoretical generalisation pointed out by Yin. It is therefore theoretical proposition instead of statistical generalisation to which this research's case study leads.

What actually is a case in case study research? Yin defines a case as a 'bounded entity' (2012: 6), which can be a person, institution, event or other social phenomenon. The boundaries between the case and the contextual conditions can be blurred both temporally and spatially (symbolised by the dashed lines in Figure **2.1**). Additionally, Yin proposes four basic types of case study design: single-case holistic, single-case

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[4] Here, Yin (2014) does not clearly define history as a research method. Yet there is a body of literature in both the historical discipline (e.g. Bos 2012; Kamp et al. 2018) and other areas such as management and marketing (e.g. Golder 2000; McLaren et al. 2015; Smith and Lux 1993) that discusses and/or apply history as a research method.

embedded, multiple-case holistic and multiple-case embedded designs. The single-case study and multiple-case studies are in my view almost the same. Multiple (holistic or embedded) cases are composed of several single (holistic or embedded) cases. The differences lie in the nature of the research questions and generalisation. The generalisation for the single-case design is deducted from the case, while each case in multiple-case designs functions more like a unit of analysis in the single-case study.
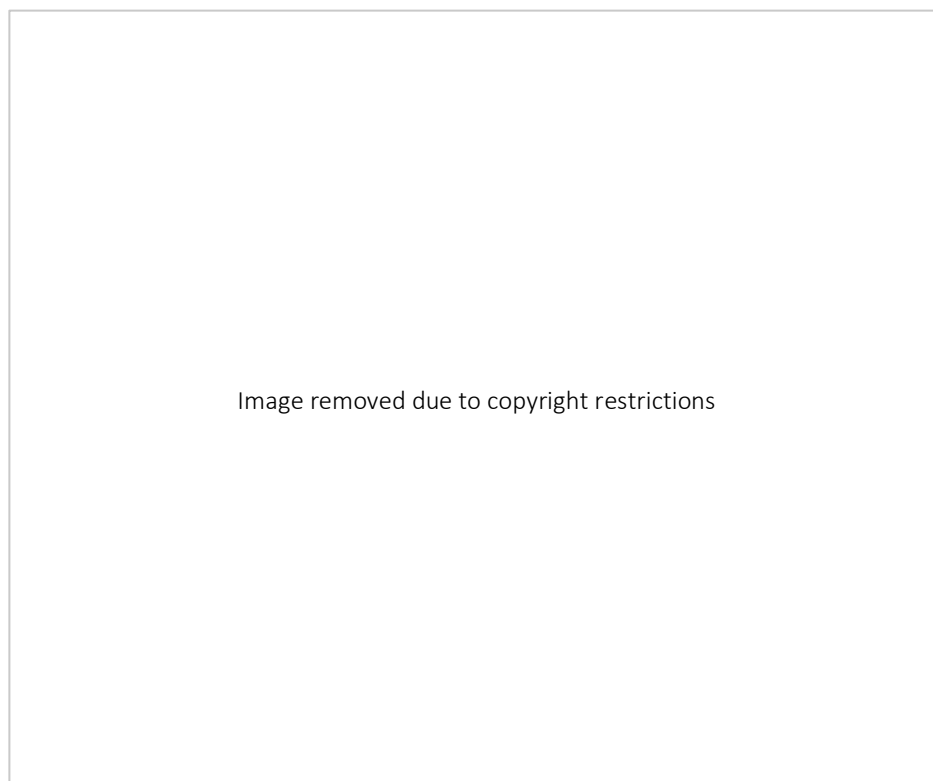
Figure 2.1 Basic types of designs for case studies (Yin 2014: 50)

Furthermore, Yin (2014) argues that multiple cases tend to produce stronger results, but a single-case design is appropriate if it has a case that is critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal. A critical case is crucial to the theoretical propositions, while the extreme or unusual case diverges from ordinary courses of events or theoretical norms. The common case is expected to reveal about conditions of an everyday situation. A revelatory case is represented when the researcher is able to observe and analyse a social phenomenon previously inaccessible, whereas a longitudinal case is employed when studying the same case at different points in time.

The selection of the London Transport Museum's collections as the proposed case is based on the second rationale: the extreme or unusual case as mentioned in the introductory chapter. Unlike most advertising materials, London Transport posters have survived beyond their original function. The socio-cultural values have potentially been added as they are transformed into museum objects and collected at the London Transport Museum. Compared to other institutions, the Museum also has a potential as a resource for data collection. After the identification of the case study as outlined in the Chapter 1, the pilot study was conducted in order to have an overview understanding of the Museum's collections, as well as to narrow down the boundary of the case itself before field research was undertaken. The pilot project is discussed in the following section.

Pilot study: a quantitative database analysis of museum-themed poster prints and artworks in the London Transport Museum's online collection

Overview

According to Yin (2014), the pilot case study refers to 'a preliminary case study aimed at developing, testing or refining the planned research questions and procedures that will later be used in the formal case study' (240). It is like a trial that allows the researcher to observe different phenomena from different perspectives and so to detail their case study protocol. The pilot case study is conducted during the preparation for collecting case study evidence and possibly before applying for ethics approval. However, Yin (2014) notes that the pilot case study should not be confused with a pre-test. While the data collection process in the pre-test is repeated in the final case, the data collected from the pilot case is not meant to be reused in the actual case study.

The main criteria for identifying a pilot case study, according to Yin (2014), are convenience, access and geographic proximity. For example, the researcher might have prior personal contact with informants. The site might be conveniently located and easily accessed. These criteria make the relationships between the researcher and the participants less structured and more prolonged than the formal case. Yet the researcher

should value the informants as well as provide them with feedback. Such feedback can be adjusted from the case study protocol to meet the informants' needs.

Regarding the nature of the inquiry, the scope of the pilot case study, as Yin (2014) suggests, can be much broader than the final data collection and cover both substantive and methodological issues. The data is expected to provide basic issues being studied. This should be usable by the researcher along with the literature review in order to ensure that the formal case study reflects the real-world phenomena and significant theoretical issues. Methodologically, the pilot case study can inform the researcher about relevant questions as well as the procedure of data collection, such as what data should be given priority or the amount of time and number of researchers need for the final plan.

The pilot study in this PhD research follows most of the logics suggested by Yin (2014), but there are several different elements. I agree that a pilot case study can help strengthen the conciseness and clarity of the project in relation to the scope as well as methodological and theoretical enquiry. However, I prefer calling this trial a 'pilot study' rather than a 'pilot case study' because it was not part of the case selection process. By the time the pilot study was conducted (between July and August 2017), the posters and relevant objects collected at the London Transport Museum had already been identified as the case as mentioned in Chapter 1. The purposes of this pilot project are, therefore, to gain an overall understanding of the Museum's Poster and Artwork Collections as available online and to identify the candidates for the unit(s) of analysis in the final case study. Each unit of analysis in this research refers to a group of the artworks, prints, reprints and reproductions associated with the same or similar poster design.[5] Another aim of this pilot project is to find out the most suitable criteria for identifying the unit(s) of analysis.

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[5] Field data collected showed that objects based on a single design included reproductions and reprints apart from poster prints and artwork as understood at the research's preliminary stage. Therefore, these types of objects were later included in each unit of analysis. For discussion of different types of objects of the same design, also see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151.

Methods

The pilot study for this PhD project is a quantitative analysis of the London Transport Museum's online Poster and Artwork Collections, which is publically accessible (London Transport Museum 2020b). The version of the database examined in this project was updated in 2017. For the items added into this version of the database, no digitised images were available at the time the pilot project was carried out. Due to the lack of key information represented in the image (e.g. institution represented), they were not considered candidates for the unit(s) of study, although these newly-listed objects were included in the statistics presented in this section.

Population

Regarding population, the final case study (this PhD thesis) focusses specifically on the museum-themed posters and related items in the Museum's collection in order to emphasise the transformation undergone in the museum context. However, the population in this pilot study covers objects categorised under all themes. The purpose is to provide a general idea of the online collection as well as to demonstrate the significance of museum-themed posters and artworks in terms of quantity compared to other themes irrelevant to transportation. The data related to the entire collection is useful in providing contextual information rather than being part of the process of identifying the unit(s) of analysis in the final case. Starting with the total amount of objects in the online collection, the pilot study narrowed down its population as it developed as shown in the results section.

Database design

The Museum's online database (London Transport Museum 2020a), on which the pilot project is based puts posters and artworks into separate collections. For each collection, it is possible to do both free search and advanced search, where the user can filter the results by theme, artist, date and reference number. The detailed information of each poster and artwork provided in the new database includes the image of object, simple name, date, collection, object location, reference number, size, associated company,

associated person, reproduction, publisher, printer, descriptive size, content text, additional information, title, scale of record completeness and the link to the Museum's shop website where the poster can be purchased.

While the browsing and searching features of the Museum's database provide adequate information for quantitatively analysing the entire Poster and Artwork Collection, the details page of each object does not exactly reflect the information about the theme of the museum. However, there is also information that is not explicitly written in the record but can be observed in the image of each object, such as the institution each design advertises and the nearby Underground station(s). The information about the Underground line(s), nonetheless, is not directly provided but can be found on the Transport for London website (2020b). The data based on the written record, the textual element in the poster designs and additional research on Underground stations then form Database A, developed specifically for the pilot study's data collection. This database covers the information about the original use of the objects as publicity posters. The record includes the reference number of each object, the artist/designer who produced it, the institution it represents, the content subject (collection, exhibition, history/story, shop or leaflet), the production date, means of transport and the identification of the transportation (yes or no).

Database B is not drawn from the analysis of the Museum's online collection, but it records secondary sources related to the museum displays of these objects and the representation of them in publications. Its list of secondary materials is not exhaustive but covers the sources I was able to access at the point where the pilot project was conducted. The details recorded in Database B consists of the author of the document, publication date, content summary, page, type of the publication (chapter, exhibition catalogue, online article or photograph), the exhibition title, date and venue. It also records brief information about the object displayed, which overlaps with the first database: the institution the object represents, the artist/designer, date of production and reference number as well as the type of object (poster or artwork) and my personal reflections.

Procedure and criteria

Regarding the analysis procedure, this pilot study was divided into three phases, each of which had its specific purpose, size of population and criteria. Phase I was aimed at exploring the nature of the entire collection, as mentioned above, yet the results were not used for identifying the unit(s) of analysis. The presentation of the results of this phase included three charts, which illustrated the amounts of posters and artworks divided by theme (Figure **2.2**), subtheme (Figure **2.3**) and date (Figure **2.4**) respectively.

Phase II was the longest and respectively the most important. This phase started with a development of Database A. It records the information related to the objects in their original context as publicity materials. The criteria used for the quantitative analyses in this phase in fact paralleled Phase I. It categorises posters and artworks by date, institution and artist. Figure **2.5**–Figure **2.7** represent the amounts of museum-themed posters and artworks from 1909 to the present. Figure **2.8**–Figure **2.10** include only the amount of posters produced during the 1920s, and Figure **2.11**–Figure **2.13** the posters produced in the 1930s. The quantity of the objects was expected to reveal the significance of each category to London Transport. For example, if most objects were produced by Artist X, it would be likely for those objects to become potential candidates for the unit(s) of analysis.

Phase III focussed on the exhibitions and representation of objects in publications. The findings were calculated from the data available prior to conducting fieldwork. The purpose was to finalise the candidates for the unit(s) of analysis as well as to test the validity of the results gained from Phase II. This final phase involved the design of Database B, on which the analysis was based. The final candidates were selected according to the amount of the exhibitions and publications on the objects.

Results

Phase I: analysis of the entire collection

This part demonstrates the results of the quantitative analysis of posters and artworks in the Museum's entire online collection. It includes three charts (Figure **2.2**–Figure **2.4**) representing the amount of the objects categorised by theme, subtheme and date

respectively. The amounts represented in each chart are based on the search results shown on the Museum's online database filtered by the above categories. The numbers might not correspond to one another, possibly due to certain technical problems regarding the search engine system or incompleteness of the database. For instance, some objects are included in the record but might not be grouped under any of the filters. Despite that, the inaccuracy in the numbers did not affect the identification of the units of analysis, which began in Phase II. The quantity of posters and artworks in Phase I was examined only to gain a contextual background of the collection.
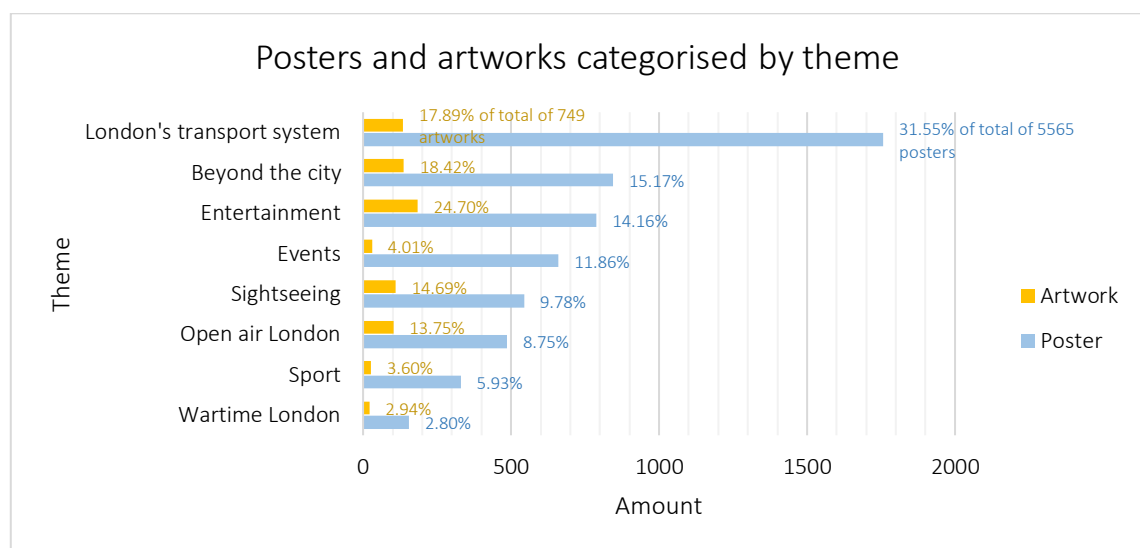
Figure 2.2 Posters and artworks categorised by theme

The total amount of posters and artworks as shown in the Museum database's search results are 14,136 and 1,676 respectively. However, when filtering the results by theme, the numbers of posters and artworks are reduced to 5,565 and 749 respectively. The quantity of objects under each theme is represented in Figure **2.2**. The largest theme for posters is London's transport system (31.55%). The 'entertainment' theme, under which the museums & galleries subtheme is grouped, ranks third among the eight themes. However, this theme represents the highest percentage of artworks, which is 24.70% of the total.
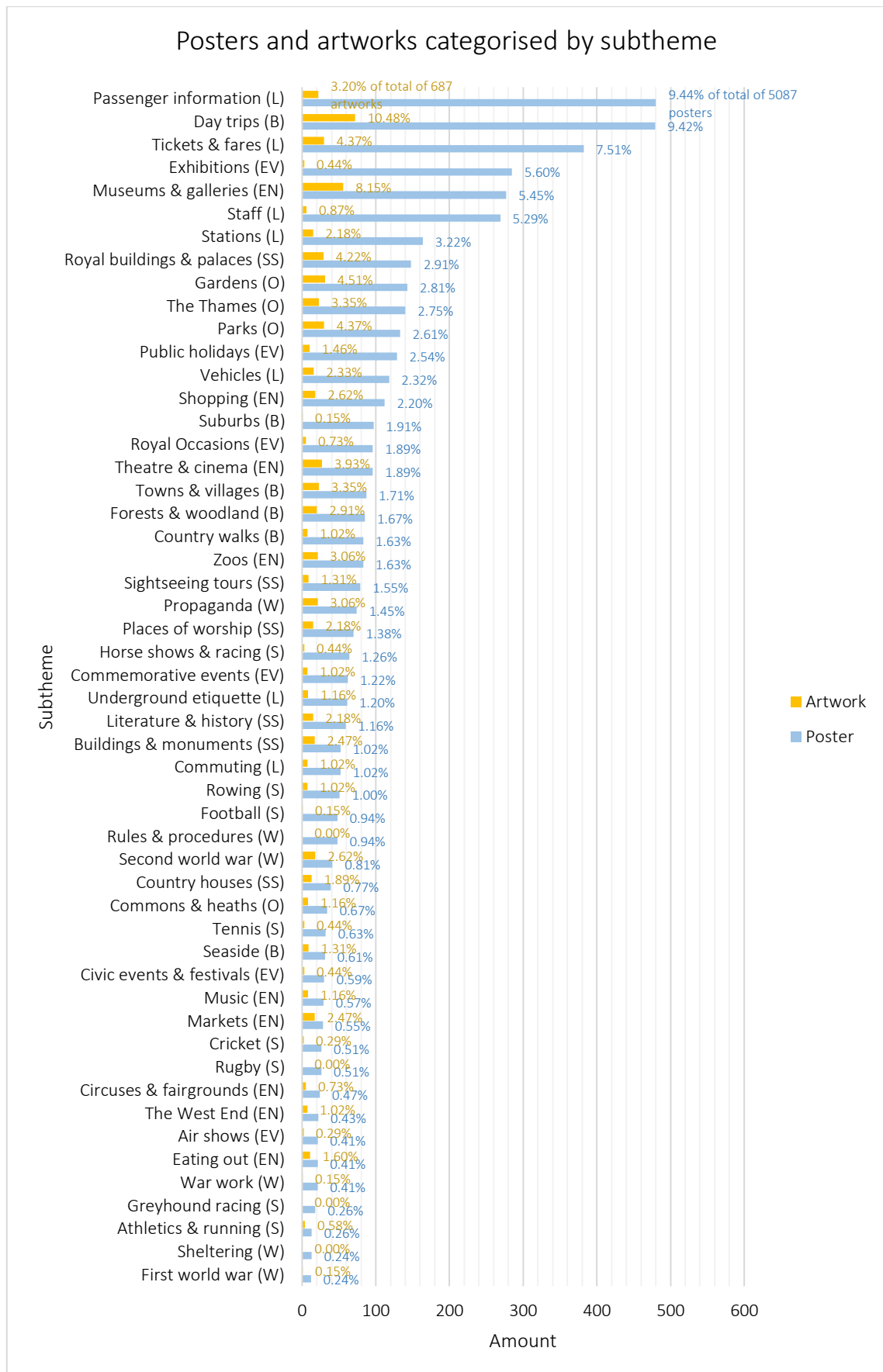
Figure 2.3 Posters and artworks categorised by subtheme

The amounts of posters and artwork categorised by subtheme are 5,087 and 687 respectively, which do not correspond to the results filtered by theme and period. The quantity of objects under each subtheme is represented in Figure **2.3**. The parenthesis after each subtheme is an abbreviation for the theme under which it is grouped:

B	stands for	Beyond the city
EN	stands for	Entertainment
EV	stands for	Events
L	stands for	London's transport system
O	stands for	Open air London
SS	stands for	Sightseeing
S	stands for	Sport
W	stands for	Wartime London

Among 58 poster subthemes, 'museums & galleries' is ranked fifth largest with 277 posters, which equals to 9.44% of the total amount. However, the 56 artworks of this subtheme represent 8.15% of the total, which is the second largest.
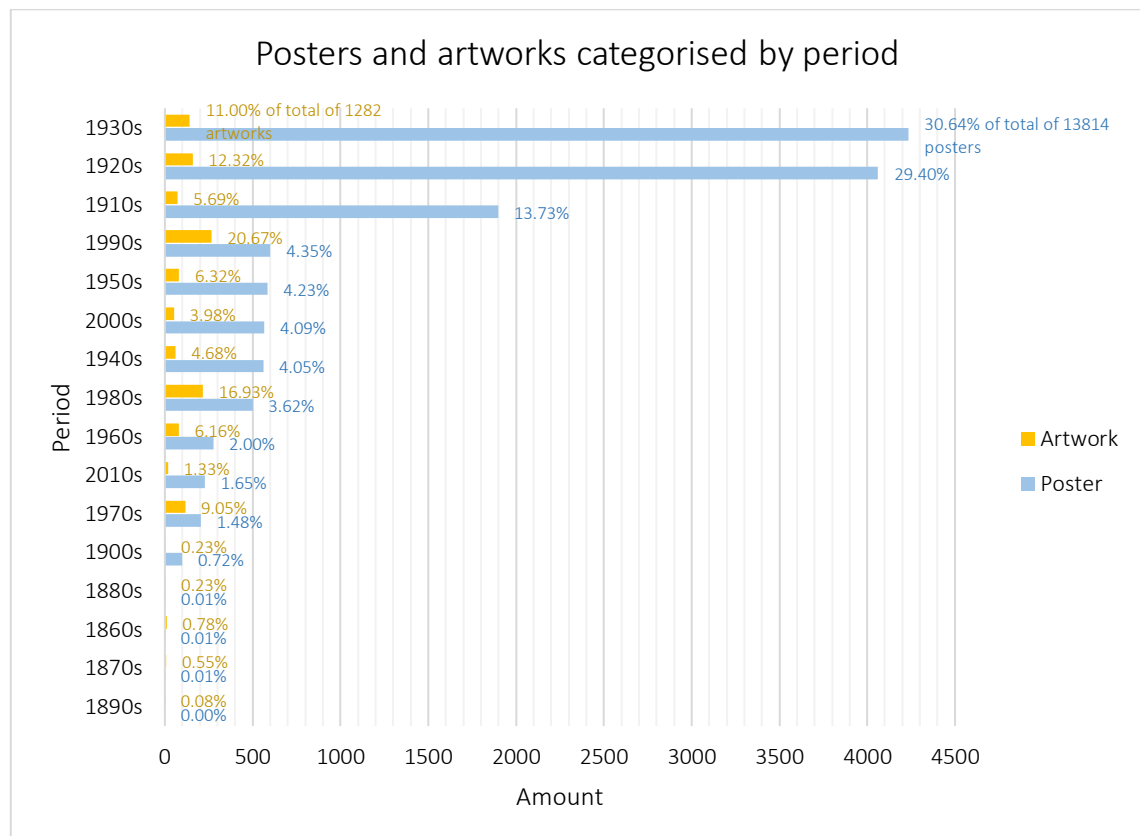
Figure 2.4 Posters and artworks categorised by period

The total results of posters and artworks when filtered by period (decade) are 13,814 and 1,282 respectively. As demonstrated in Figure **2.4**, most of the posters and artworks in the collection were produced during the interwar period. 4,062 posters and 158 artworks were commissioned in the 1920s and 4,233 posters and 141 artworks were produced in the 1930s. However, the number of artworks represented here includes those produced for maps and vehicle signs apart from posters. That makes the artworks of the 1990s the largest in number, representing 20.67% of the objects in the Artwork Collection. Therefore, the data shown in this chart does not necessarily reflect the search results using the other filters, as demonstrated in Figure **2.2**–Figure **2.3**.

In summary, the results in Phase I provide insight into the Museum's online Poster and Artwork Collection. Despite the inconsistency in numbers, the analysis in Phase I affirms the significance of the museum-themed designs in the entire collection. They are among the top non-transportation themes represented in the London Transport poster designs. Moreover, this analysis demonstrates that the period between the 1920s and 1930s were the most significant for the commission of London Transport posters, which is also confirmed by the data represented in phase II discussed below.

Phase II: analysis of museum-themed objects
This section concentrates on the amounts of artworks and posters specifically categorised under the museums & galleries subtheme. It is the museum-themed category from which the candidates for the unit(s) of analysis in the final case study were selected. The nine charts (Figure **2.5**–Figure **2.13**) presented in this section are based on different categories: date/period (decade), museum and artist. Figure **2.5**–Figure **2.7** represent the number of objects produced from 1909 to the present, while Figure **2.8**–Figure **2.10** focus specifically on the 1920s. The quantity of posters and artworks produced during the 1930s is shown in Figure **2.11**–Figure **2.13**.

Moreover, it is worth noting that Database A records the information of every object in the Museum's online collection, but objects with certain characteristics are excluded in the quantitative analysis presented here. The first characteristic is the pair posters and their original artworks. The pair consists of two posters: one is solely image-

based, while the other is text-dominant but might be beautifully decorated. This type of poster was mostly produced in the 1950s (Webb 2008). The second group of objects that is not represented in the charts below are the designs that advertise more than one institution, for they tend to be text-dominant and so potentially difficult for the analysis in the actual case study. Third, the charts exclude objects with inadequate information for the analysis, such as items with no images and those with unclear information regarding which institutions they represent. The lack of information possibly hints that these objects are not prioritised by the Museum, which might mean they have less tendency to be subjects of past exhibitions. Additionally, some museum-related posters and artworks are categorised under other subthemes such as exhibitions, country houses, and royal buildings and palaces. These events and institutions are sometimes regarded as similar to museums. However, as they are not recognised by the Museum as belonging to this subtheme, they would not be considered as candidates for the unit(s) of analysis.

The institutions represented in the museums & galleries subtheme includes museums, art galleries, historic houses and a zoo. Figure **2.5** shows the amount of objects in which different institutions are advertised. Among 277 posters under this subtheme, 39 feature the London Transport Museum, representing 20.86%, which is the largest percentage. However, the largest group of artworks is of the British Museum, which includes eight objects or 18.60% for the total of 56.

Museum-themed posters and artworks categorised by institution

Museum	Artwork	Poster
London Transport Museum	13.95% of total of 56 artworks	20.86% of total of 277 posters
Science Museum	2.33%	10.16%
Victoria and Albert Museum	4.65%	9.09%
British Museum	18.60%	8.56%
Museum of London	6.98%	6.42%
Tate Gallery	2.33%	6.42%
Natural History Museum	9.30%	3.74%
National Gallery	4.65%	3.21%
Royal Academy of Arts	0.00%	3.21%
Imperial War Museum	2.33%	2.67%
Imperial Institute	2.33%	2.14%
Royal United Service Museum	2.33%	2.14%
Greenich	0.00%	1.60%
Wallace Collection	4.65%	1.60%
Wellington Museum	0.00%	1.60%
Geffrye Museum	2.33%	1.07%
Guildhall Museum	0.00%	1.07%
Horniman Museum	0.00%	1.07%
India Museum	4.65%	1.07%
Museum of British Transport	0.00%	1.07%
National Portrait Gallery	0.00%	1.07%
Royal Air Force Museum	0.00%	1.07%
V&A Museum of Childhood	4.65%	1.07%
Whitechapel Art Gallery	6.98%	1.07%
Goldsmiths Hall	0.00%	0.53%
Kensington Palace	0.00%	0.53%
Kenwood House	0.00%	0.53%
London Museum of Practical Geology	0.00%	0.53%
London Toy and Model Museum	2.33%	0.53%
Museum of Mankind	0.00%	0.53%
National Army Museum	2.33%	0.53%
National Maritime Museum	0.00%	0.53%
Sir John Soane's Museum	0.00%	0.53%
St Albans	0.00%	0.53%
Tate Modern	0.00%	0.53%
Tring Park	0.00%	0.53%
William Morris Gallery	0.00%	0.53%
Planetarium	2.33%	0.00%

Figure 2.5 Museum-themed posters and artworks categorised by museum
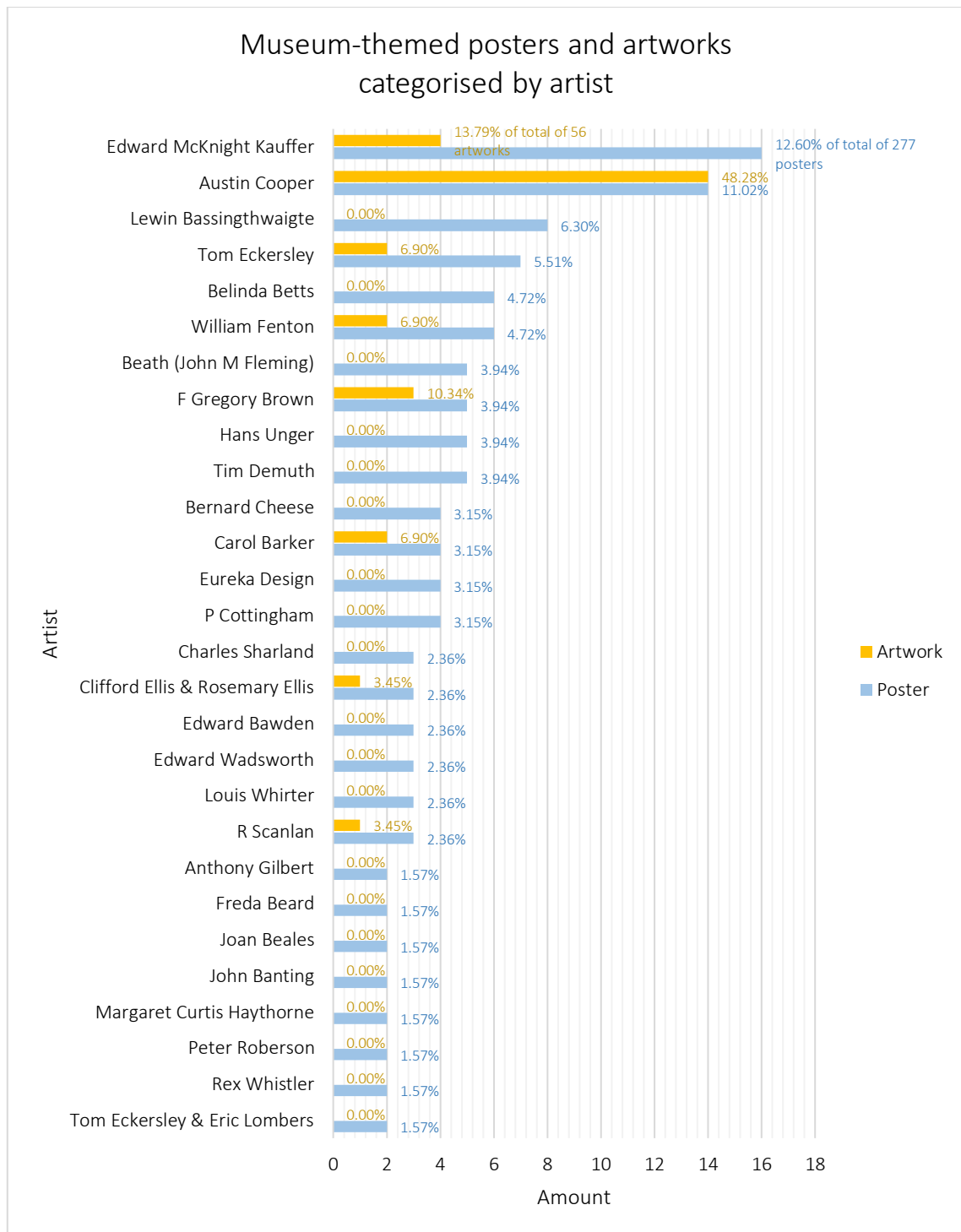
Figure 2.6 Museum-themed posters and artworks categorised by artist

Focussing on the artists, the museums & galleries subtheme consists of posters and artworks produced by 105 artists (or groups of artists). Based on the Museum's database, Edward McKnight Kauffer was commissioned to produce more posters than other artists/designers. The Museum holds 16 posters and four artworks designed by

him. However, regarding the total number of objects (not designs), Austin Cooper ranks number one. The Museum's online database includes 14 posters and 14 artworks designed by Cooper, which makes his artwork the largest group (48.28%) among the others. These two artists are also famous for their design works for London Transport and highly praised in the publications by the Museum, usually in association with Pick, the former Managing Director who started the commissioning programme (Green 2008).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Figure **2.6** does not include the data about the 72 artists that were commissioned to produce only one design, even though they count as part of the total amount. The details of these posters are nonetheless recorded in the Museum's database and the pilot project's Database A.
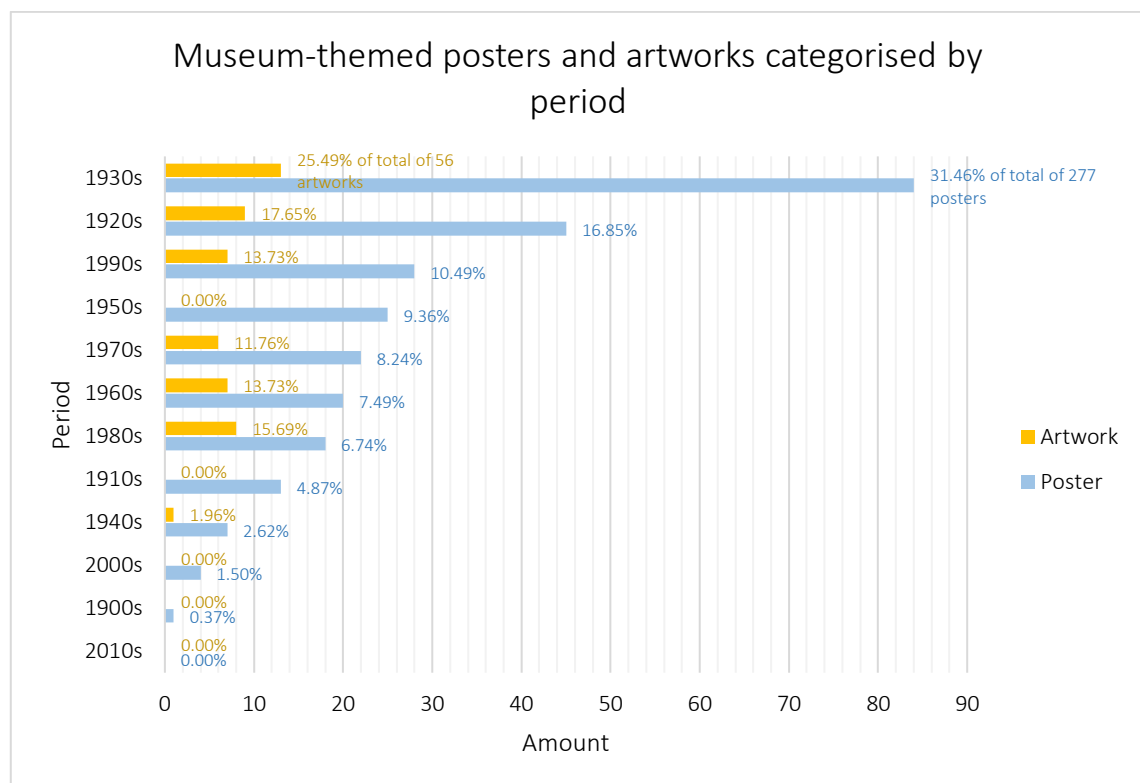
Figure **2.7** Museum-themed posters and artworks categorised by period

Figure **2.7** represents the quantities of museum-themed posters and artworks categorised by decade, ranging from the 1900s to 2010s. Most of the objects in the collections were produced during the 1930s, which is composed of 84 posters (31.46%)

and 13 artworks (25.49%). The 1920s ranks second with 45 posters (16.85%) and nine artworks (17.65%). The amounts here correspond to the results of analysis of the entire collection (see Figure **2.4**), which shows the quantity of posters of the interwar period all together as the highest among the other decades.
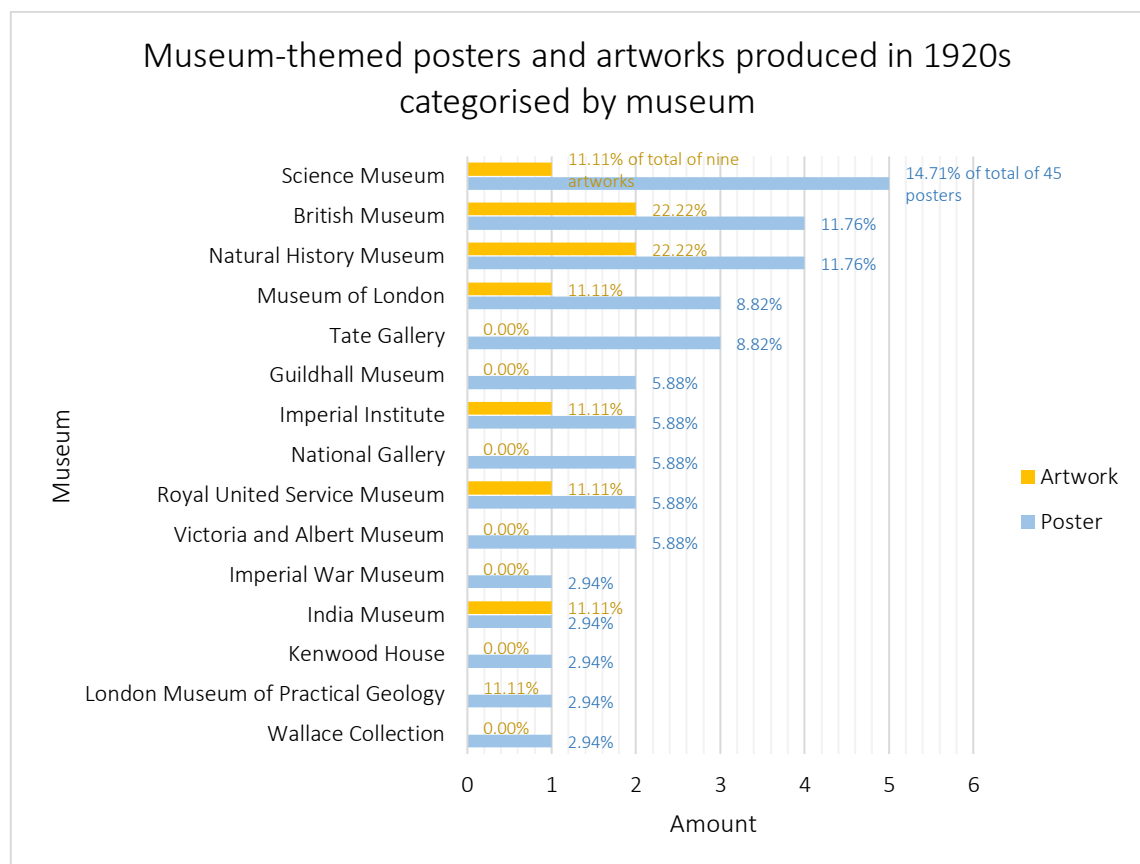
Figure **2.8** Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1920s categorised by museum

The online database consists of 64 museum-themed objects produced in the 1920s: 45 are posters and nine are artworks. As demonstrated in Figure **2.8**, most objects feature the Science Museum, the British Museum and the Natural History Museum. Based on the total amount of both posters and artworks, there are six objects that feature each of these three museums. If based on the design, however, the Science Museum is ranked first with five posters and one artwork. Apart from the amount of objects shown in this figure, there are 12 posters advertising more than one institution. They are

excluded in the figure as they would not be considered candidates for the case study's units of analysis for the case study.
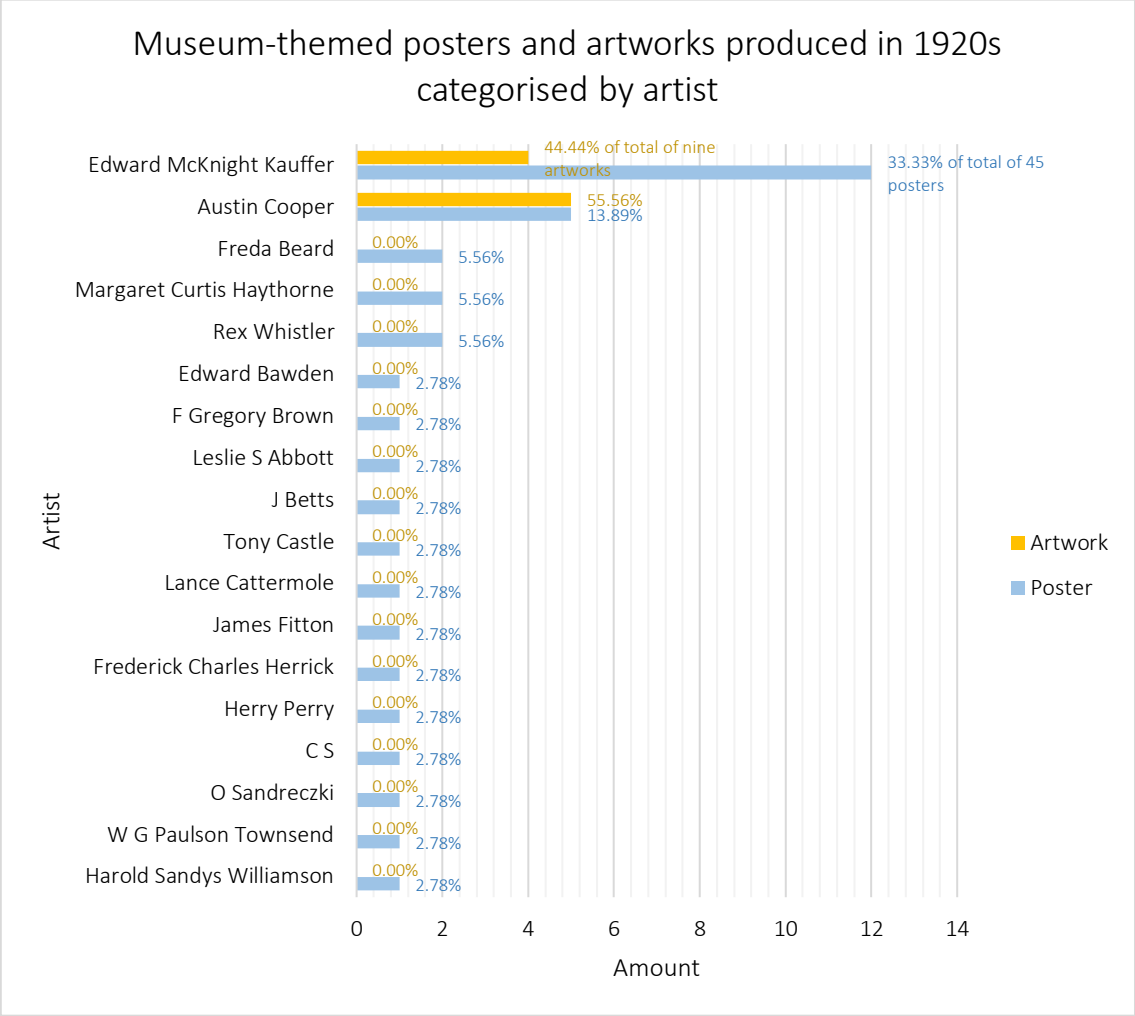
Figure 2.9 Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1920s categorised by artist

According to Figure **2.9**, almost 50% of the posters under the museums & galleries subtheme produced in the 1920s were associated with artists Kauffer and Cooper. Twelve posters and four artworks were designed by Kauffer, while five posters and five artworks were designed by Cooper. However, it is worth noting that the amount of posters and artworks does not represent different designs. For instance, the five artworks designed by Cooper were adapted into the five posters shown in the Museum's online database. These ten objects would therefore make five units of analysis instead of ten.

Apart from the amount represented in this figure, ten posters produced by unknown artists are not shown in the figure. Moreover, each of the following artists was commissioned to produce only one museum-themed poster throughout history: Leslie S Abbott, J Betts, Tony Castle, Lance Cattermole, James Fitton, Frederick Charles Herrick, Herry Perry, C S, O Sandreczki, W G Paulson Townsend and Harold Sandys Williamson. Therefore, their works were unlikely to be the potential candidates for the unit of analysis.
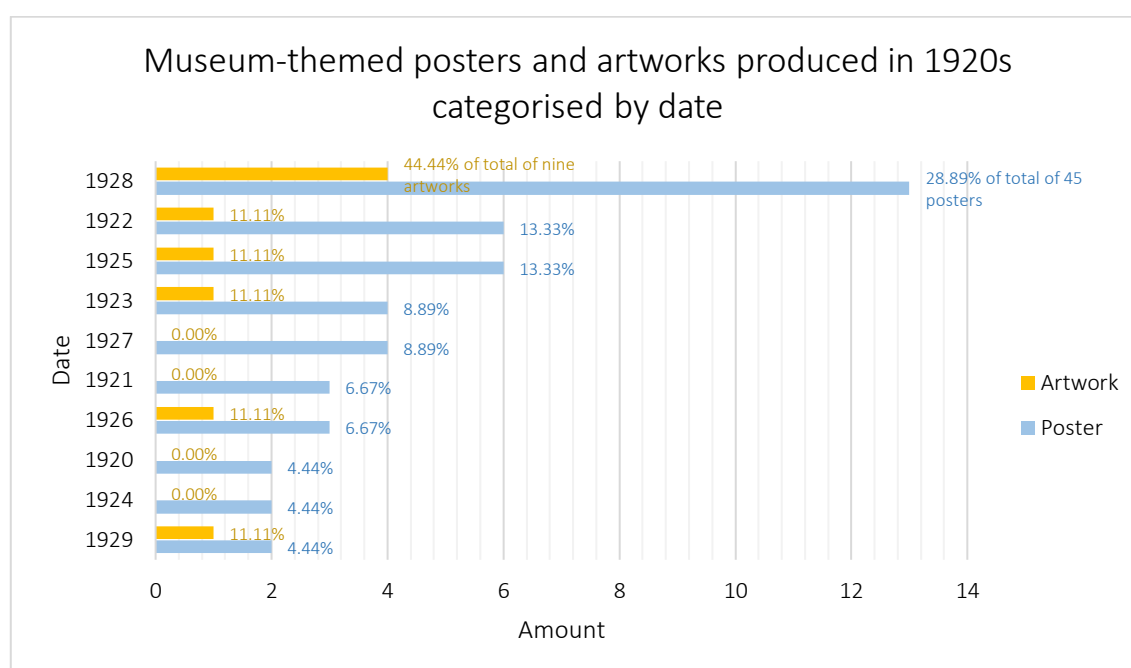
Figure 2.10 Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1920s categorised by date

In order to obtain more detailed information of the 1920s, the objects produced during this period were also categorised by year. According to Figure **2.9**, the collection consists of 13 posters (28.89%) and four artworks (44.44%) produced in 1928, the amount of which is higher than in other years. Among these, three posters were produced by unknown artists.
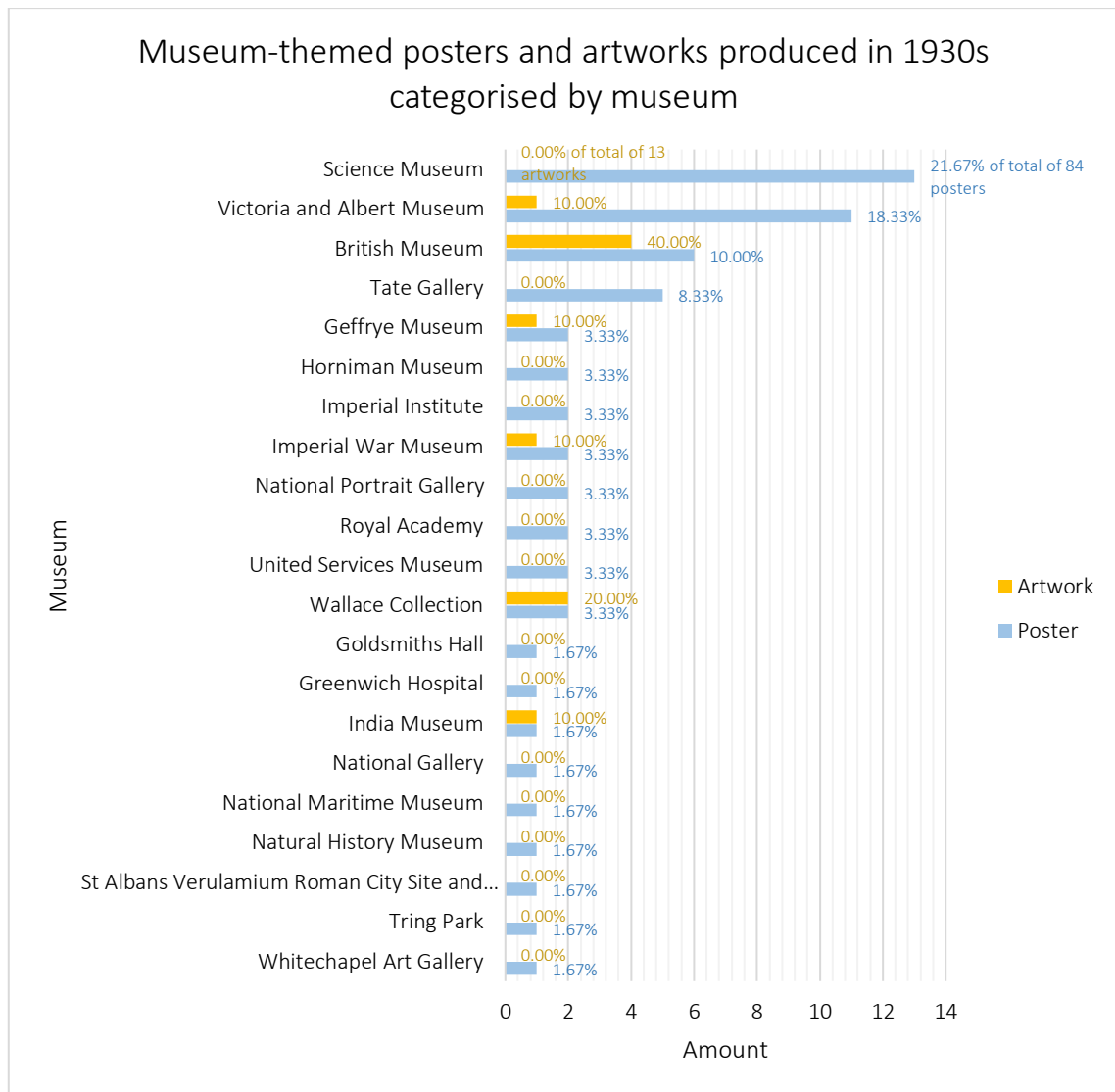
Figure 2.11 Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1930s categorised by museum

The final section in Phase II presents the data related to the posters and artworks produced in the 1930s. The Museum's online collection consists of 84 museum-themed posters and 13 artworks produced in the 1930s. Among the totals, 25 posters and three artworks representing more than one museum and those with unclear information about which museums they promote are not represented in Figure **2.11**. As shown in this figure, the Science Museum is represented most often in the designs produced during this period. It is advertised in 13 posters, which represents 21.67% of the total, but no artworks related to this institution were collected. The Victoria and Albert Museum ranks second with 11 posters and one artwork. The database includes more artworks featuring the British Museum (40%), although the total amount of the objects is lower. It is featured

in four artworks and six posters. Regarding the Natural History Museum, the results turn out very different from the 1920s (see Figure **2.8**). Only one poster produced in the 1930s advertises the Museum without any associated artwork collected.
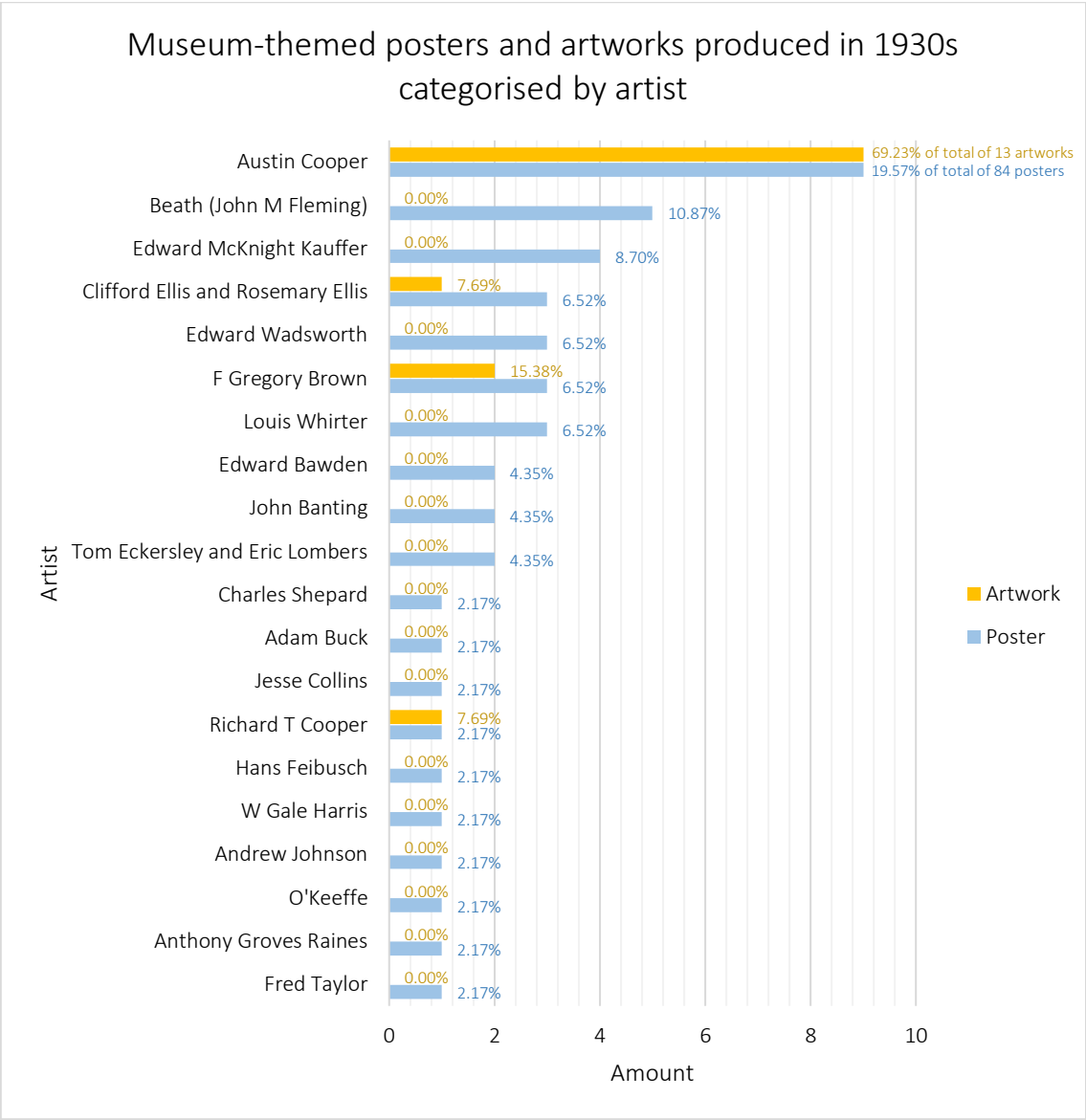
Figure 2.12 Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1930s categorised by artist

Figure **2.12** demonstrates the amount of museum-themed posters and artworks produced during the 1930s categorised by artist. The result is not completely different from the 1920s (Figure **2.9**). Most of the objects are associated with Cooper. The collection includes 18 objects contributed by his design, including nine posters and nine

artworks. There are fewer objects designed by Kauffer in the 1930s compared to the earlier decade. The collection includes four posters without any artwork of his, but he still ranks third regarding the number of designs. The second in the rank is John M Flemming aka Beath. The Museum does not have any of this artwork, but the online database includes five posters designed by him.

Based on the Museum's database, each of the following artists (also shown in Figure **2.12**) was commissioned to produce only one museum-themed poster throughout history: Adam Buck, Jesse Collins, Richard T Cooper, Hans Feibusch, W Gale Harris, Andrew Johnson, O'Keeffe, Anthony Groves Raines and Fred Taylor. Therefore, their works were likely to be excluded from the potential units of analysis. Apart from that, 39 posters produced by unknown artists are not represented here.
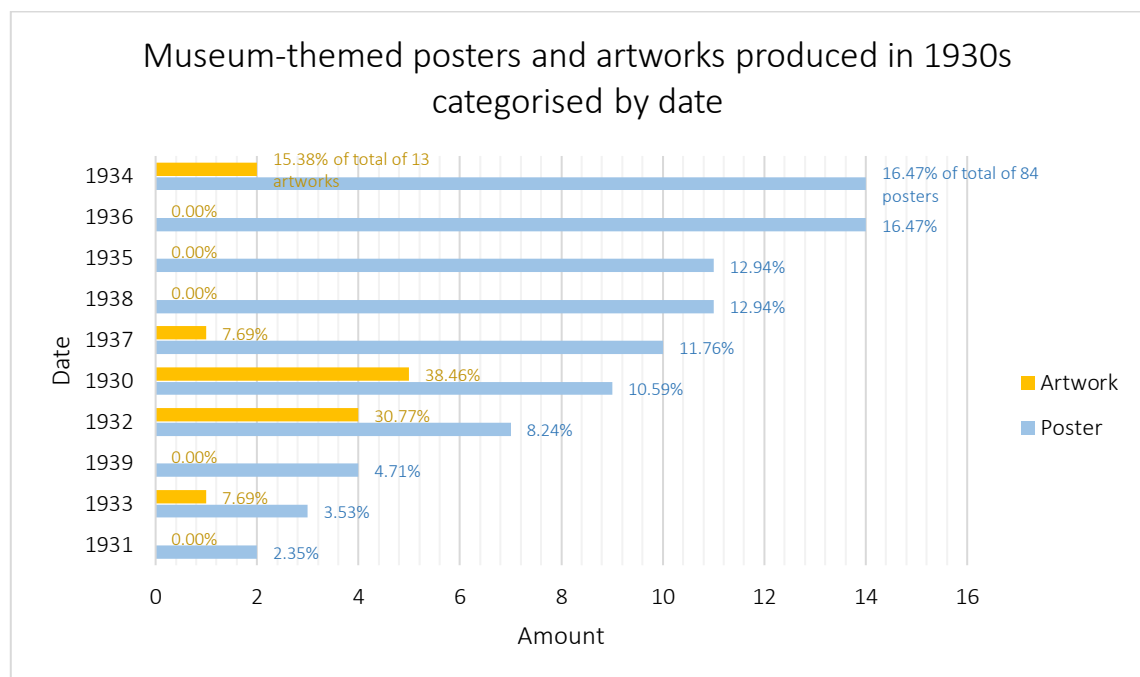
Figure **2.13** Museum-themed posters and artworks produced in 1930s categorised by date

The last chart (Figure **2.13**) of Phase II shows that in 1934 and 1936, 14 designs were commissioned by London Transport, representing 16.47% each. Regarding the total amount of objects, however, 1934 is the largest group with 14 posters and two artworks,

which makes 16 in total. In contrast, in 1931 only two posters were produced to advertise museums and galleries.

The high quantity of posters and artworks commissioned in the interwar period reflects the reception of the design. Yet I am by no means suggesting that poster designs in other periods were produced with less sophistication. However, London Transport posters of this period receive a high reputation in terms of design quality and recognition for representing and influencing the artistic and design developments of the time (Black 2008). In contrast, posters produced in the 1950s and 1960s are regarded as developing independently from the art trend. They became more like illustrations in style (Webb 2008). As the period when posters were produced might influence their values and meanings, the later part of Phase II focussed on the 1920s and 1930s posters and artworks. The concentration on each decade makes it possible to demonstrate the amount of objects produced each year. The production year might not be very significant for this project, but it is possible to link the year with museum development or even significant events during history in future research.

The categorisation of posters and artworks based on the institutions they represent in this phase also has an interesting implication. Some museums have been represented in London Transport advertising more often than others, but the frequency varies from one decade to another. If every unit of analysis represents the same institution at different periods of time, it might be possible to trace the development and the visual representation of such an institution both for publicity purposes and for museum display. However, this criterion might not reflect the actual purposes of representations, for posters are not usually categorised by the museum institutions they represent. In other words, the 'museum' is not usually regarded as a genre of poster apart from being the subtheme in the Museum's database. Another risk is that by focussing on the institution, the focus of the research might be diverted from material culture to a historical analysis of an institution using visual images of posters.

The categorisation by artist possibly reflects the exhibition making process where most of the posters are treated as a form of art. The analysis can also be helpful in understanding the relations between artists, London Transport and the Museum. However, if the units of analysis are selected from a single artist, possibly a famous one,

the exhibitions of their works might be similar in nature. For example, the interpretation of the artworks and posters might often be linked to the expertise of the artists without revealing other aspects of the posters. As the reader can infer, the analyses of the online database presented in Phases I and II of the pilot project had not yet brought about the best criteria for identifying the units of analysis. The final phase therefore shifted the focus from the original message and the production of poster designs to the exhibitionary journeys of them.

Phase III: analysis of poster exhibitions and publications

Phase III of the pilot study explored how many times a museum-themed poster and/or artwork had been exhibited and reproduced in publications. The data were gained from sources publicly available, which I was able to access prior to ethics approval and the actual fieldwork. The types of documents include exhibition catalogues (Laver 1949; Levey 1976), publications (Bownes and Green 2008), online articles (Kaur 2015; London Transport Museum 2010a, 2010b, 2013b, 2017) and photographs (London Transport Museum 2010d).
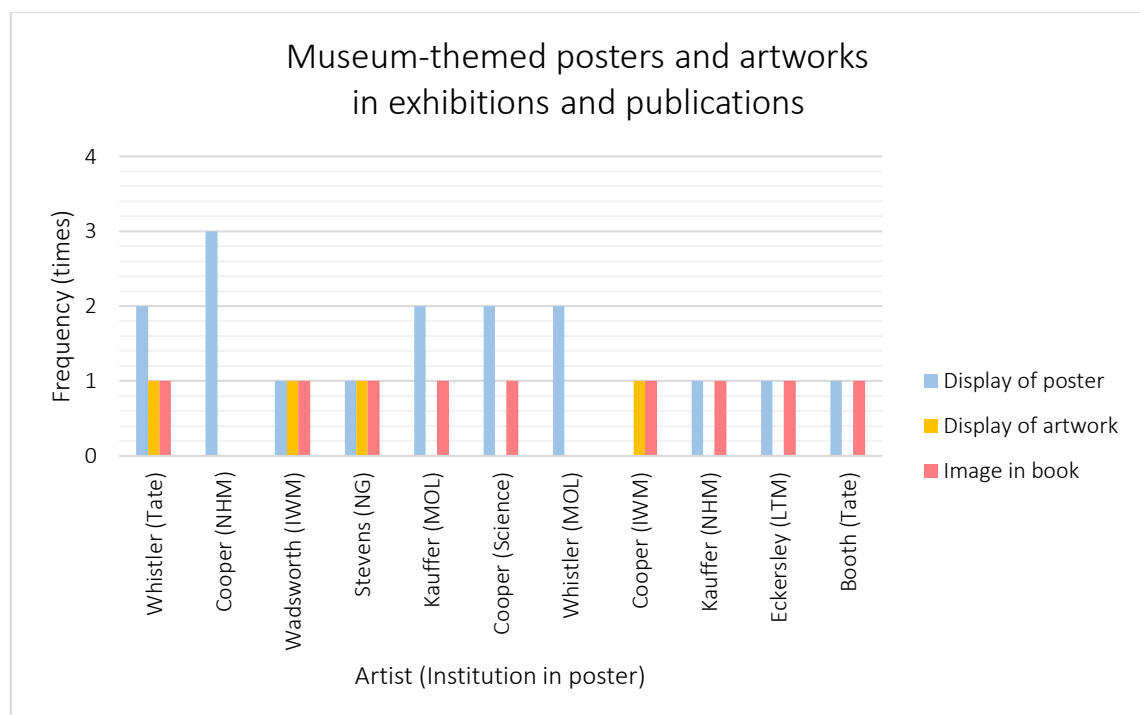
Figure 2.14 Museum-themed posters and artworks in exhibitions and publications

Figure **2.14** represents the frequency of the repurposing of each unit (poster and artwork) based on the available sources. Each unit in the figure is described with the artist's name and the institution it represents. More detailed information about each unit, exhibition and publication is recorded in Database B. According to Figure **2.14**, *The Tate Gallery* (1928b) by Rex Whistler has been repurposed four times. What is also worth mentioning is Cooper's *Natural History Museum*; *lepidoptera* poster (1928b), which has been exhibited three times, even though during the pilot project, I was not able to find any publication discussing it. Edward Wadsworth's *Imperial War Museum* (1936a) and Harry Stevens's *Femme bien informee* posters (1972a) and artworks (1972b) have been exhibited once each. The images of these posters were also reproduced in the publications. Kauffer's *London history at the London Museum* (1922) and Cooper's *Bicyclism – the art of wheeling* (1928), which advertises the Science Museum, were both exhibited twice and reproduced in books only once. The *London Museum* poster (1928a) by Whistler was also exhibited twice, but no publications found at this stage discuss it. Apart from the units represented in Figure **2.14**, however, there are 21 other designs that were exhibited or reproduced in the publications. They were not considered candidates for the final units of analysis, which were selected from the objects that have been repurposed more frequently.

The analysis in the final phase of the pilot study alludes to another possible criterion for selecting units of analysis, which is the type of exhibitions in which posters and artworks featured. For example, the temporary display series entitled *Poster parade* features posters under different themes such as history, literature and rivers (also see the Changes in narratives section in Chapter 4, pp. 115–151, for exhibition types). According to the findings, no museum-themed display has been curated, but posters and artworks featuring museums and galleries might have been exhibited under other themes. In this case, it might be possible to observe the repurposing as well as the representations of different museums. Nevertheless, the weak point of this potential criterion is that the same series of displays might employ the same techniques. For instance, if only printed posters, not artworks were exhibited in this series, it would be impossible to see how each type of objects representing a design influences and constrains the exhibition making process.

Alternatively, the frequency of exhibitions that objects feature in might be the strongest criterion compared to the others mentioned so far. With various exhibitions, it could be possible to trace the change in values and meanings of posters (and artworks) as they become museum exhibits, which is the aim of this PhD research. Therefore, the final case study employs the frequency of the exhibitions and publications about London Transport posters and artworks as the criteria for selecting the units of analysis. The findings from the Phase III analysis in particular pointed to the potential candidates. For the diversity in terms of artist and institution, the five units of analysis include the designs by Kauffer (1922a), Cooper (1928a, 1928b), Whistler (1928b), Wadsworth (1936a) and Stevens (1972a, 1972b). It is worth noting that some of these candidates correspond to the results in Phase II, while others do not. For instance, Stevens's poster (1972a) and artwork (1972k) were not commissioned in the interwar period unlike the other candidates. However, each of these designs have different interesting characteristics and histories, the key characteristics of which are discussed in the following section about the units of analysis.

Units of analysis

The process of identifying the candidates for the unit(s) of analysis was presented in the previous section. The results of the pilot study led to five potential candidates that have been exhibited at least three times. Although being discussed in chronological and alphabetical orders, this does not suggest any hierarchical significance. Each of the five units of analysis carries an interesting characteristic in different ways.

The first candidate appears to most conform to the criteria resulting from the quantitative analysis of the Museum's online database. The American designer Kauffer is one of the poster masters highly praised by London Transport. This poster (Kauffer 1922a; Figure **1.4**) was produced during the interwar period and influential to the Modernist art development. It promotes the history that can be learnt at the Museum of London. Based on the pilot study's findings, only the poster has been exhibited and collected at the London Transport Museum.

The characteristic of the Cooper poster (1928b; Figure **1.5**), the second candidate, is in fact similar to the Kauffer one (1922a). The Museum has 28 museum-themed objects (14 posters and 14 artworks; also see Figure **2.6**) associated with Cooper, which represents the highest percentage. Unlike the Kauffer poster, however, this design promotes the museum collection. Due to the evidence collected in the pilot study, it is known that only the poster of this design, not the artwork (1928a; Figure **1.5**), has been exhibited. More importantly, this design was also produced during the interwar period, which is considered the 'golden age' of London Transport posters (Cooper 2008). Cooper is also a commissioned artist highly celebrated by the Museum (Rennie 2008).

What I find interesting about the Whistler poster (1928b; Figure **1.6**) is the artist himself. As shown in the online database, only two posters designed by Whistler and none of his artworks were collected by the Museum (see Figure **2.6**). Whistler is recognised not only as a British designer and illustrator but also as an artist.[6] He was commissioned to paint the mural of the Tate Britain restaurant (Tate 2020; also see Figure **4.17**), on which this poster design is based (see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151, for further discussion). His self-portrait is also collected by the National Portrait Gallery (Saywell and Simon 2004). This unit can be informative in exploring the relations between posters and the art world.

According to the online database, the Museum only holds the poster of Wadsworth's *Imperial War Museum* (1936a; Figure **1.7**), but the artwork was exhibited at least once (at the *Art for all: London Transport posters 1908–1949* exhibition at the V&A in 1949) before the Museum was established (see Figure **2.14**). Regarding the artist, Wadsworth is usually recognised in association with Vorticism in the 1930s. The design of this poster also has interesting dimensions. The poster features the camouflage ships of the First World War onto which Wadsworth's dazzle designs were applied. The ships are also represented in the *Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool* painting (1919) by Wadsworth himself (Hewison 2015; also see Figure **4.16**). This unit of analysis can thus be effective in exploring the relations between different material objects of the similar

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[6] According to Heather Birchall (2005), Whistler's contribution to the British art scene is often overlooked due to the fact that most of his works were commissioned by private patrons.

designs beyond posters and artworks (see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151, for further discussion).

Unlike the other candidates, *Femme bien informee* (1972a, 1972k; Figure **1.8**) by Stevens, which features the National Gallery, does not fit any criteria. Stevens was commissioned to produce only one museum-themed design. The quantity of posters commissioned during the 1970s is also much lower than in the interwar period (see Figure **2.7**). Yet it should not be overlooked, as the Museum has collected both the poster and the artwork of this unit as well as exhibited both at least once (see Figure **2.14**). The commission of this poster is also interesting. Rather than commissioning the artist directly, this work was commissioned through an advertising agency (London Transport Museum 2010c).

Preparation prior to fieldwork

The identification of the case study discussed in the introductory chapter and the selection of the units of analysis as the outcome of the pilot project presented above are part of the preparation for the field research. The activities summarised below, including the case study protocol, data collection questions and ethics implication, are essential in keeping the data collection process as effective and focussed as possible. These materials were also constantly reflected on during the fieldwork in order to ensure that the method used throughout the process was in line with the research aim and objectives.

Case study protocol

According to Yin (2014), a case study protocol is similar to a survey questionnaire in the sense that it is directed at a single point, which can be a case or a respondent. However, the protocol does not address the interviewees or informants but rather the researcher. Additionally, not only is it an instrument for data collection, but it also contains rules and procedures to be followed. While Yin suggests that it guides the researcher during the data collection, the protocol functions as a blueprint for conducting this PhD research. It covers the entire process of the inquiry from research questions to report writing. It was

also used as a reference to keep the research on track. Therefore, the case study protocol helps maintain the reliability of the research. The protocol of this study was originally developed from Figure 3.2 in Yin (2014: 84) and was regularly updated throughout the research process (see Appendix 1, pp. 253–256 for the latest version).

Data collection questions

Questions used in data collection are in fact part of the case study protocol (see Appendix 1, pp. 253–256). This part does not list all the questions, but each level of questions is worth discussing separately here, as it was crucial for the methodological development of this case study. According to Yin (2014), there are five levels of questions addressed to different data during the fieldwork. However, the third level of questions is applicable to a multiple-case study. My research therefore has four levels of data collection questions. The relation between the levels of questions and the units within the case is demonstrated in Figure **2.15**.
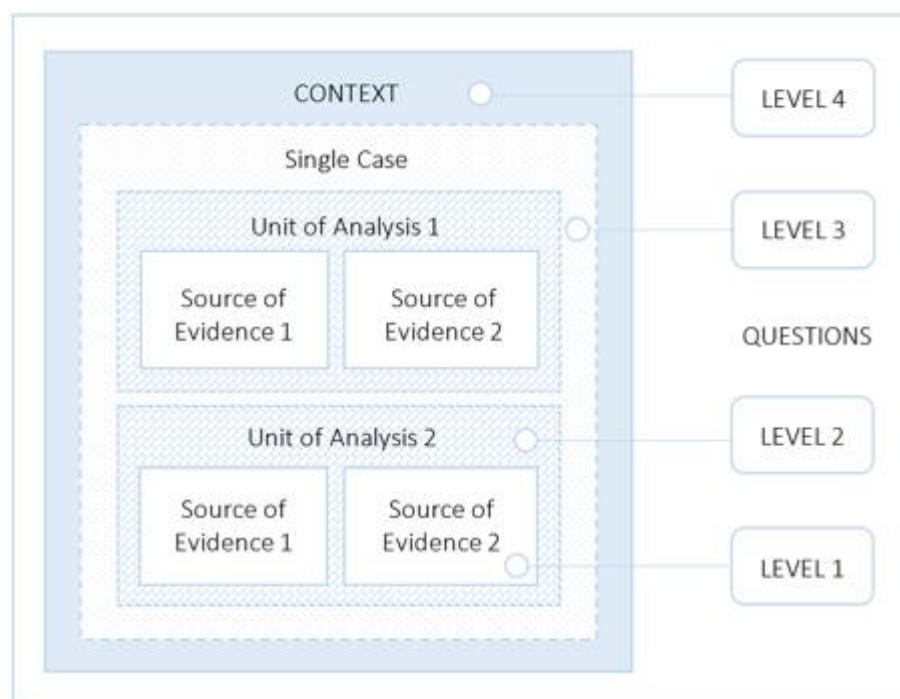
Figure 2.15 Relations between levels of units and levels of questions, adapted from Yin (2014: 50)

The levels of questions for the case study protocol are adapted from Yin's guidance. Level 1 contains a set of questions designed for specific sources of evidence. It is articulated from level 2 to suit the nature of each source. Level 2 includes questions asked of specific units of analysis. Yin regards this level of question as the most important and is to be remembered by the researcher at all times during fieldwork. Level 2 questions, he notes, are usually confused with those of level 1. To explain this, Yin compares the researcher to the clinician. The level 2 questions are similar to the courses of illness the clinician keeps in mind, while the level 1 questions are what the clinician asks the patient. In my study, level 2 questions are subsidiary questions addressing individual units of analysis. Level 3 are the questions asked of an entire study beyond the case study evidence. It involves the pattern of findings across units of analysis as well as information from other literatures that have been reviewed. Level 3 questions are therefore considered equal to the major research question. Level 4 contains normative questions about recommendations and conclusions. They are beyond the narrow scope of the study but gesture towards a theoretical proposition.

Ethics implication

With respect to interviews (see Chapter 3, pp. 69–102), this research involved human participants and therefore had ethical implications and required ethical approval prior to field research. All the interviews were conducted in accordance with the University of Leicester's (2020) Code of Practice for Research Ethics. As the interviewees were museum professionals, who are competent adults, my research involved only minimal risk. The application for the ethical approval was submitted after I had gained the consent from the London Transport Museum to use their collection as the case study for this research project in December 2017. The application was accompanied by the following documents: project information sheet for participants, research consent form, letter of interview invitation, as well as my correspondences with the London Transport Museum. As requested by the reviewers, the interview schedule was later included. The revised application was assessed and successfully approved in April 2018.

Data collection procedures

The field research was completed within nine months, from January to September 2018. It was divided into three phases, each of which was expected to be completed within three months. My original plan for January to March was to focus on the exhibitionary context of the selected posters, which is the main focus of this research. I intended to mainly collect evidence associated with the London Transport Museum from documents, photographs, artefacts and interviews (see Chapter 3, pp. 69–102). Then the second phase, from April to June, was aimed at data related to the production of the units of analysis, such as London Transport's poster commissioning programmes, which can be found at the Transport for London Archives, and secondary sources. The other three months, from July to September, were planned to be spent on secondary sources at other archives and libraries, as well as revisiting the organisations in the first two phases to retrieve the data missed in the first place.

Towards the end of the first phase, I managed to collect most of the key evidence available from archival materials and documents at the Museum. Yet certain plans during the first three months were amended due to the following circumstances. First, interviews with the Museum staff about poster exhibitions could not be conducted due to the delay in the ethical approval process. Based on information gained from documentary research, I also became aware of a large number of objects associated with the five units of analysis, beyond what are available in the online collection. In this case, it was impractical to examine all of them. Thus, I spent time reflecting on the data collected before deciding which items to access and sending the request to the Museum. As agreed by the institution, object observation was completed in May 2018.

The third circumstance was the restriction regarding research visits at the Museum Library. The Library is open on Wednesdays and Fridays and able to accommodate only two visitors at a time (London Transport Museum 2020d).[7] As I requested access to the internal database, Wednesdays were the only choice (for the first two visits). For this reason, I decided to visit the Courtauld Institute of Art on the following

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[7] At the time the primary research was conducted, the Museum Library was located at 39 Wellington Street, London WC2E 7BB close to the main Museum site. The current address is Albany House, 98 Petty France, London SW1H 9EA, but the visiting times remain the same (London Transport Museum 2020d).

day of my third visit to the Library. The Courtauld was an important alternative resource for catalogues of London Transport poster exhibitions held at the London Transport Museum and other institutions. Apart from that, it has various publications related to the productions of posters and their designers, which were to be examined in the second and/or third phase. Another change in my plan was related to photographs. I decided to arrange the copyright agreement with the Museum while awaiting the ethics approval for interviewing. After the ethics application was approved, the interviews were then conducted in May 2018, together with object examination. The four sources of evidence mentioned above are discussed in detail in the chapter that follows.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the methodological explanation of this research project, which can itself be considered an entire case study. It has discussed the first half of the research process, from the identification of the case, the London Transport Museum's collection, up to the preparation of the field research, where the focussed objects were selected and a data collection plan was finalised. Although rather descriptive in its nature, this chapter has several important implications. First, it reaffirms the potential of the case in respect of its resourcefulness. Second, it demonstrates the chain of logic this research project has attempted to maintain since its initial stage through the careful selection of the units of analysis. Third, this chapter itself acts as a bridge, connecting the research question to the characteristics of field research: how and what type of data is collected and analysed in a way that is in line with both the methodology and the theoretical framework. The second phase of the research process is elaborated in the following chapter.

Chapter 3
Field Research

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the second half of the research process, which is fieldwork. The discussion is divided into two parts. The first part contributes to the four sources of evidence used in this case study: documentation, photographs, artefacts and interviews. It covers the methodological discussion of each type of evidence source as well as the identification of the actual materials examined during the primary research. The second part of this chapter discusses how the data collected was made sense of. It covers both the technique employed to maintain research quality, which is triangulation, as well as the analysis method, which is thematic coding. The second part ends with the application of the material cultural approach to research methodology, which is referred to as visualisation and materialisation of data. The processes and methods outlined in this chapter finally lead to the emerging themes and theoretical propositions of the case study.

Entering the field: sources of evidence

When doing case study research, Yin (2014) suggests using multiple sources of evidence, for these allow the researcher to 'address a broader range of historical and behavioural issues' (120). The four types of sources on which this research relies are documents and archival records, photographs, physical artefacts and interviews. In many studies, these materials are considered research methods in their own right, but they are employed as data sources in this case study. This confirms that the choice of methodology is a single-case study rather than mixed methods. Despite that, the methodological literatures are important for understanding the strengths, weaknesses and analytical tools for each type of evidence source. This section therefore draws on methodological discussions as well as reviews the actual materials and discusses why they are selected as sources of evidence for this project.

During my field research in 2018, data related to the exhibitions of London Transport posters which were available were collected. All the field notes were then translated into this research's data collection database using Google Forms, which was developed separately from the databases used in the pilot project (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68, for details). This database comprised the questions asked to each type of material based on the case study protocol (see Appendix 1, pp. 253–256). Data collected is the answers to those questions. Among the four evidence sources, my fieldwork relies mostly on documents (see Figure **3.1**). 9.6% of the materials examined represents photographs and another 9.6% represents artefacts, while I did two interviews with two professionals responsible for the Museum's poster-related collections. Each type of evidence is discussed below.
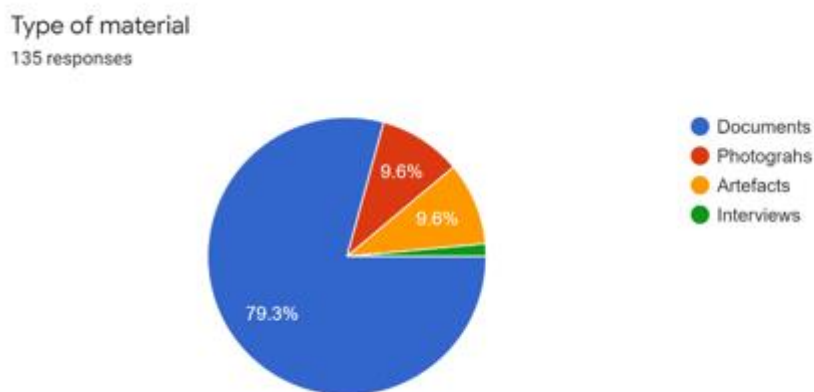
Figure 3.1 Percentage of sources of evidence examined as recorded in this research's data collection database using Google Forms

Documentation

Documents were the main sources employed in this study. According to Ben Gidley (2012), doing historical or documentary research refers to using data created in the past but now stored in archives. My research pays attention to both primary and secondary sources related to London Transport posters and the exhibitions of them. Most of the documents I examined are archived at the London Transport Museum Library. In some literature, the distinction is made between oral and documentary sources in historical research. The discussion in this section focusses only on documentary sources, while the oral sources are referred to as interviews. In fact, what are considered documents also

vary among different literature. For instance, material objects are sometimes viewed as documentation (Dirks 2002). In Michael Quinn Patton's (2002) chapter, both written documents and photographs are regarded as material culture. However, photographs in my research are considered a distinct category, which is discussed in the following section.

During my field research, 107 written sources were examined. The types of documents available at the Museum Library include catalogues and leaflets for poster exhibitions, most of which were held at the Museum, visitor guides, news clipping, fact sheets used internally, as well as publications about posters and the associated artists. The Library also holds the guides for the Museum's film collection and for materials kept at the Transport for London Corporate Archives, which potentially provide useful sources for further research regarding the commission and production of London Transport posters.

Additionally, it is as Gidley (2012) points out important to pay attention to whether the sources are for internal or external consumption. Official documents are often neutralised, such as in a form of formal language. Despite such a format, he suggests, they should not be considered neutral but culturally constructed. Similarly, the archive in which the files are located is no longer regarded by historians as objective. This idea is, as Michelle T King (2012) notes, influenced by the Foucauldian notion of the historical archive as a locus of power and knowledge. Focussing on the colonial context, Nicholas B Dirks (2002) similarly argues that the archive echoes how the state is operated. Discourses created, promoted and maintained by the state can be found in the archive.

Even though my research is not based on a national archive or governmental institution, it was important to be aware of the power relations around the documents and their locations. The survival of certain documents as well as the selective and fragmented nature data therein indicates their relations to the institution as well as the hierarchy between materials. In the case of my research, the purposes of producing and archiving each document were therefore noted in my data collection database. Apart from that, I continually reflected on my role as a researcher in the field. Information such as time spent on each material and how it was acquired is included in the database (see Appendix 2, pp. 257–264). That is because, as King (2012) argues, the researcher's

experience, knowledge and emotions also influence the decisions made while in the archives as well as research findings. Thus, archival research, apart from archivisation, is now regarded by historians as historical process, which is 'subject to a range of temporal, political and practical concerns, rather than self-evident ideals' (King 2012: 17). Correspondingly, Helen Simons (2009), in her discussion of the 'self' in case study research, points out that the research is part of the phenomenon they are studying. Subjectivity should therefore be recognised and documented during the fieldwork as well as reflected in the final report.

According to Gidley (2012), there are various reasons for using documentary sources. One is that this type of source provides 'a glimpse behind the scenes' (267), which characterises the data gained from the London Transport Museum's internal database. Although records are kept in a digital form, most are not visible online. Rather, they can be accessed only at the Library on the device provided by the Museum staff. The records examined during the fieldwork include those of prints, reprints, reproductions and artworks (if applicable) associated with the five units of analysis (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68). The format for each record is similar. It is grouped into five categories: catalogue, administration, conservation, loans and groups.

It is the administration section of the internal database that I find most interesting and insightful. It includes the location history of each item, which reveals that different copies of the same print are sometimes stored in different places. While one copy might be displayed in one exhibition, another copy can be selected for another. Moreover, the location history shows where units of analysis have been exhibited, both inside and outside the Museum. Without looking at the location history of the Whistler poster, I would not have been aware that it was planned to be in *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*, which was on from January to March 2018. As informed later by the Collections Assistant, this item was however replaced by another poster. This is an example of the data not available by solely observing the display. The interview would not have addressed the replacement of this unit if I had not examined the internal database (also see the Interviews section, pp. 79–82).

Besides the location history, the administration section shows if and how each item is labelled as well as the availability of the record to the public. According to the

data, it seems that the record of one of the prints associated with the same design is available online, while information about other copies is included only in the internal database. Relevant to labelling is the information about mounting in the conservation section. Even though my research initially did not focus on the conservation practice, the record about the condition of each item became very insightful, especially when reflecting on the criteria for selecting exhibits and considering the influence of object materialities throughout the repurposing process (also see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195).

Apart from the Museum Library, the Courtauld Institution of Art Library is another important resource for this research. It holds a collection of exhibition catalogues from the early twentieth century to the present. It is also where I found evidence related to exhibitions of posters and other artworks produced by the artists associated with the units of analysis. Most of the catalogues I examined were on the open shelf at the Library, while a few of them had to be requested prior to my visit. The nature of the materials at the Courtauld Library are more artist-focussed, while the evidence found at the London Transport Museum Library is centred on posters (The Courtauld Institute of Art 2020).

Photographs

According to Suki Ali (2012), the photograph is considered one of the main sources of images used in visual research. Some popular genres among researchers are photojournalism and documentary photography. The role of these visual materials is, for Ali, more than illustrative of the written text. Instead, they are often regarded by the public as representative of historical moments. Additionally, photographs can be viewed as constructing an argument and meaning on their own. The photographers are in some cases participants and/or researchers themselves. In the context of archival photographs, historians today are also interested in the photographic images' interactions with the text (Holm 2014). Aside from photographs, Ali points out that discourses promoted by advertising images are the key interest of visual researchers. Apart from that, other sources of still images are paintings, drawings and graphics, which fall into the category of 'visual culture'.

Although the image content is 'partial, necessarily restricted, bounded and mediated' as Stephen Spencer (2011: 133) argues, it is considered essential in understanding the narratives that posters represent in both advertising and exhibitionary contexts. However, posters are regarded in this study not simply as visual culture but as material culture, the visual elements of which play a key role in serving the (re)purposing of them. Therefore, this research does not provide a visual analysis of poster designs. It is worth, however, mentioning that moving images such as films are another type of material studied using visual analysis, although these were not generally employed in this project.

Using advertisements as an example, Ali (2012) interestingly suggests certain key aspects of images to which visual researchers should pay attention: how the image is produced, what it represents, how it is consumed, what role it plays in the visual research process, as well as the development of visual technologies and its relation to the sociocultural context at the time. It is the represented messages conveyed in the images in which my research was most interested, but other areas above are recognised as reflecting the nature of these materials. Therefore, information such as the format and purpose of producing and archiving photographs are included in my field notes.

The photographs examined during field research comprise first, seven prints from the Museum's Photograph Collection and second, 14 digital images photographed by the Museum's Marketing Department for internal use. All the items in the Photograph Collection that were examined document exhibitions before 1970s, whereas those from Marketing are of recent exhibitions originally produced and stored in digital format. It is also important to note the differences in how the two types of photographs were presented to me as a researcher. I accessed both the digitised images of black and white prints and written information about them via the Museum's internal database. However, the photographic images from the Museum's Marketing Department are not part of the Museum's collection, so there are no records of them in the database. The files are instead stored in digital folders. The name of each folder suggests an exhibition title with which the images are associated, but no written information is included. I accessed both groups of photographs using the computing device provided at the Library.

Some of these photographic images are used in my research mainly for illustrating the repurposing of posters. As insightfully discussed in Ali (2012)'s chapter, there are various methods and frameworks for analysing visual images with differences in focus. Psychoanalytic theory, often employed in film and cultural studies, is used to gain insight into the members of audiences by examining what visual images represent. Not only the audience but also the producer of the image is the focus of discourse analysis. Moreover, the discursive approach recognises different readings of an image. The audience's interpretation of an image does not always correspond with the intention of the producer. The context in which the researcher encounters an image and their background knowledge about a discourse also affects their understanding of such an image. Instead of the audience, semiotic analysis emphasises the personal interpretation of the researcher themselves. The meaning of an image from this theoretical perspective is derived from its '*interrelations* [original emphasis] with other images' (Ali 2012: 290). This is based on the notion that the knowledge about the social world depends on how it is represented and perceived.

Other methods such as photo-elicitation and memory work[8] are similar, in the sense that they are purposefully selected to encourage responses and comments from the viewers, and so they are often conducted as part of interviews. However, memory work is more flexible and open-ended than photo-elicitation. Suki Ali (2012) and Gunilla Holm (2014) mention ethnographic analysis as a way of interpreting photographs taken in the field. In this approach, the ethnographer considers themself as both the reader and producer of the image. How the researcher categorises and interprets an image contributes to its meaning. The image is also treated with the same importance as the written text.

The visual methods reviewed above are not used in my research study. Similar to other types of data sources, photographs examined in this study are analysed using the thematic coding method. The details of this approach will be discussed in due course (see

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[8] According to Ali (2012), photo-elicitation involves selecting specific photographs for participants to elicit comments. This method is often used with other methods as part of focus groups or interviews. Memory work, Ali explains, can be regarded as a form of photo-elicitation. This method refers to the use of photographs taken by interviewees to encourage autobiographical recollection as well as to produce new memories.

the Analysis method section, pp. 86–88), but there are some points in Ali (2012)'s discussion that are worth mentioning here. First, Ali recognises that content analysis is applicable to not only written texts and words but also visual images and artefacts, for these materials 'reflect social processes and help construct perceptions of the social and cultural world' (2012: 289). This statement is in accordance with my decision of using the same analytical tool for different sources of evidence. Another point I find interesting is Ali's emphasis on the connection between content analysis and statistical generalisation. She argues that the repetition of an image, such as within a media genre, can reveal some aspects about the world represented or to what extent they are accurate. However, this research does not employ content analysis in a quantitative way. Each photographic image (as well as information about them) is instead used to converge with the data collected from other sources.

Aside from content analysis, the making of images is an analytical tool that came up after I had done some archival research. This means photographs I took are included in visual sources of evidence and used as illustrations in this thesis. According to Ali (2012), images can be made by either researchers or research participants. In some studies, photographs taken by the researcher are also used in conjunction with other methods such as photo-elicitation (Holm 2014), as mentioned above. During the field research, most photographs were taken as part of artefact examination. Even though my photographs are used in this case study mainly for reference and illustrative purposes, by bringing in this method, I consider it a good opportunity to compare my visual interpretation of reality with that reflected in other visual images and other types of evidence sources.

Artefacts

Similar to Yin (2014), Gillham (2000) recognises artefacts as significant primary sources of evidence for case study research. As he points out, 'Physical evidence has a direct quality: it is first-hand' (89). This corresponds to Jules David Prown (2002)'s chapter on material culture theory and method, in which he argues that material artefacts are important as they are evidence of aspects of the human mind. A material object possesses intrinsic (physical), utilitarian, aesthetic and spiritual values. It is also evidential

of historical events and illustrative of the truth and cultural facts. Drawing on Henry Glassie (1978), Prown (2002: 73–74) points out that material objects are potentially more representative of human intellect than words, especially among non-literate people.

To scrutinise what objects can tell, Prown proposes a method of analysis processing from a description of objects based on visual observation to deduction, which involves sensory engagement and reflection of the perceiver's interaction with objects. This is then followed by speculation based on the researcher's imagination and engagement with theories. The methodology he proposes closely reflects the process of how people interact with objects, starting from the most simple, physical engagement, to the more intellectual, interpretation and analysis. The questions used in the field research while examining the units of analysis are adapted from Prown's proposed theory (also see Appendix 1, pp. 253–256). The data collected were compared with those from other sources and interpreted with the same analysis method.

Although Prown highlights the production of material objects, Jon Wagner (2011) argues that they are not necessarily used for the purposes intended by their makers or designers. This point is illustrated by the displays of London Transport posters. Observing the material properties of the selected artefacts is insightful for understanding both the original and contemporary contexts. According to the data gained from the Museum's internal database, there are multiple copies of (re)prints aside from the reproductions and artworks associated with a single poster design. Despite having the same visual content, different forms and copies of the units are diverse in their material properties (also see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195).

For instance, a copy of Wadsworth's *Imperial War Museum* print was reproduced and resized into postcards (Wadsworth 1973) for sale, which were later turned into museum objects in their own right. One copy of this printed poster was labelled by pencil, another by ink (Wadsworth 1936a, 1936c). Moreover, the conditions of different copies of the same design also range from good to poor. For example, one of Cooper's prints (1928c) was sent out for conservation and mounting before the *Poster parade: reimagining the historic posters* display in 2017 (see pp. 161–178, for discussion of the multiplicity of posters). Focussing on the different physical characteristics, I requested access to twelve objects, including nine prints, one reproduction and two artworks.

Suggested by the Collections Assistant on the day of examination, one reprint was added to the list.

Stevens	Print (1972a)	Featured in different exhibitions
	Print (1972c)	
	Artwork (1972k)	Compared to prints (different object types)
Cooper	Print (1928b)	Different object types
	Artwork (1928a)	
Wadsworth	Print (1936a)	Mounted
	Print (1936b)	Kept in drawer
	Postcard (1973)	Different object types
Kauffer	Print (1922a)	Pencil-labelled
	Print (1922c)	Framed and mounted
	Reprint (1966d)	Same design, different text
Whistler	Print (1928b)	Mounted
	Print (1928c)	Ink-labelled and framed Removed from Poster Parade display

Figure 3.2 Table listing artefacts examined during fieldwork

As represented in Figure **3.2**, the first two artefacts were two copies of Stevens's (1972a, 1972c) *Femme bien informee*, which featured in different exhibitions. They were also compared with the original artwork of this poster design (Stevens 1972k). The artwork and a print of the Cooper poster (1928a, 1928b) were examined for the same rationale. In the case of the Wadsworth poster, two prints (Wadsworth 1936a, 1936b), one of which is mounted, were requested. A postcard-sized reproduction (Wadsworth 1973) mentioned above was also studied. The mounted and pencil-labelled copy of Kauffer's (1922a) *London Museum* was examined against the copy that is framed and mounted (Kauffer 1922c). These two items had also been displayed in different past exhibitions. These were compared with the reprint, which has the same visual design with different text (Kauffer 1966d). Additionally, two copies of the Whistler print were requested. One of them (Whistler 1928b) is mounted on tissue and the other (Whistler 1928c) is ink-labelled and framed. However, different material qualities were not the only reason I chose these two copies. As the latter print was the one removed from the *Poster parade* display, I aimed to find out to what extent the material properties were influential

to the replacement. In general, the observation on artefacts was expected to shed light on the selection criteria for poster exhibits, which supplements the evidence gained from the database. My observation was also compared with the data collected from the interviews with the two museum curators discussed below.

Interviews

Interviewing is the fourth type of evidence source employed in this case study. As a research method, there are many issues and varieties related to interviewing about which a researcher should be concerned, as suggested and discussed in the existing literature. Bridget Byrne's chapter (2012) distinguishes qualitative interviewing from the classical, survey-based approach. The first group refers to in-depth, conversational or semi-structured interviews, whereas the latter is structured and standardised. Additionally, qualitative interviewing is considered data generation in which the researcher is regarded as co-producing the data with the interviewees, rather than as data collection which assumes that the social world exists independently from the language describing it. According to Byrne (2012), qualitative interviewing can provide flexibility and depth as well as reflect complexity among other advantages. It is also often regarded as a topic or a social event rather than a resource offering the truth about the social world. This idea is reflected in Svend Brinkmann's (2014) view of qualitative interviewing, both unstructured and semi-structured, as 'a knowledge-producing social practice' (279).

The two approaches to interviewing in fact indicate the two opposite epistemological positions: idealist and realist approaches, which are equal to constructionist and neo-positivist conceptions suggested by Kathryn J Roulston (2010 cited in Brinkmann 2014; also see the Triangulation section). Another form of interviewing, Roulston points out, is a romantic approach, in which the interviewer aims to build a rapport with the interviewee and gain confession from them. Rather than attempting to find authenticity in conversations, postmodern and transformative conceptions consider interviewing 'a chance for people to get together and create new possibilities for action' (Brinkmann 2014: 282). In practice, interviewing is often conducted and analysed as both a topic and a resource, as pointed out by Byrne (2012). Both information revealed in the interviews and how it is communicated are considered

essential to my research. This research's approach to interviewing as well as other types of data sources thus falls into subtle-realism, which is in-between the two extreme approaches. This is discussed further in the Triangulation section below (see pp. 82–86).

Due to the subjective nature of interviewing, Byrne (2012) argues, reflexivity is what the researcher needs throughout the study. Byrne explains reflexivity as the researcher's awareness of their role in the research process. The position that the researcher takes influences their approach, research questions and interpretation of evidence. Regarding interviews, Byrne points out that reflexivity involves the researcher's acknowledgement of their impact on the interaction with the interviewee. This standpoint is opposite to the view that the researcher is an objective and neutral observer, taken for granted in the standardised survey-based interviews. This issue of reflexivity was also taken into consideration in my interviews with the two museum curators. Thus, my own interactions with the interviewees were included in the field notes and data collection database.

The main purpose of conducting interviews in my study was to gain insight from the museum professionals who had been involved in the curation of poster exhibitions and *Poster parade* display series (for Types of exhibitions, also see the Chages in narratives section in Chapter 4, pp. 115–126). In a sense, they were considered people inducing change in the values and meanings of posters by repurposing them. Another reason for interviewing museum professionals was to test the validity of my interpretation and understanding of the data gained from other sources. With interviews as data sources, the roles of the interviewees in relation to the institution were taken into account. The selection of interviewees was based on theoretical sampling, where they were chosen 'according to how likely it is that their interview will contribute to the development of an emerging theory' (Byrne 2012: 216). The two interviewees were identified and contacted via the Collections Assistant Stelina Kokarida. One is the Curator of the Poster Collection Evdoxia Apostolou. The other is a former Senior Curator at the Museum, Anna Renton.

According to Byrne (2012), theoretical sampling involves certain criteria, but it should remain open as the research develops. As mentioned earlier, I learnt from the internal database that one copy of the Whistler (1928c) poster print was briefly displayed

in *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*. As the Collections Assistant informed, Whistler's poster was considered to be problematic, and so it needed to be replaced (for further discussion, see the Posters' past journeys section in Chapter 4, pp. 142–150). The third interviewee, also the Museum's Curator, was therefore requested after I was aware of this amendment. She was the person in charge of replacing the Whistler poster. However, the interview invitation was rejected after the participant was given the questions, as she felt they were beyond of the scope of her work.

Aside from who to interview, Byrne (2012) addresses the other four basic questions the researcher should take into consideration, which are locations for interviewing, interviewing questions, recording and analysis methods. Initially, the interviews were planned to be conducted at either the institutions where the interviewees were currently working or at another location preferred by the interviewees. The format would be face to face, as in my research I aimed to observe the interviewees' physical (and possibly emotional responses) along with their words. In both interviews, I managed to observe how the interviewees responded in person. However, both were conducted outside their workplaces. As the Curator was on maternity leave, I arranged an in-person meeting with her in a coffee shop near her house. The former Senior Curator was also on sick leave after an operation, so it was inconvenient for her to meet in person. Therefore, the interview was conducted using Skype video call.

Each of the interviews includes nine questions mainly addressing the key themes (subsidiary questions) of my research, focussing on purpose of poster exhibition, criteria, narrative and the curatorial process (see Appendix 3, pp. 265–102). With the participants' permission, both interviews were recorded. The interviewees' verbal, emotional and physical responses were also noted after each interview. Afterwards, the transcript was sent to each participant to check for factual errors. Apart from that, I had several email communications with both participants in a later stage of research mainly for the clarification of data collected, which is also regarded as part of the interview evidence. Together with field notes, the interview data was then analysed with evidence from other sources using the thematic coding approach (see the Analysis method section, pp. 86–88).

The existing methodological literature reviewed above attempts to justify each type of data source by pointing out their distinctive qualities as well as offer a variety of theoretical frameworks, approaches and analytical tools. However, my interest is more in their similarities. Although diverse in detailed characteristics and the data they generate, documents, photographs, artefacts and interviews are similar in a sense that they are all biased. Each individual source of evidence is also created for a particular purpose by subjective human beings, which makes it a subjective source. It is also used in this project for a particular purpose and context. The potential bias of evidence source is tackled in this research using a method called triangulation, which is discussed in the section that follows.

Making sense of evidence: data analysis

As mentioned above, the data collected during the field research was constantly reflected on. Also, the four types of evidence sources collected were compared in the process of data analysis. This section first pays attention to the technique used in order to maintain the quality of the entire research process and results. This is followed by a discussion of the analysis method, which is thematic coding, both in the theoretical sense as well as the application of it.

Triangulation

As pointed out by Gillham (2000), different sources of evidence or types of data related to the same issue can produce contradictory results, even though they are all 'true'. According to Yin (2014), multiple sources are thus most advantageous when the data collected from each source are then triangulated. In Yin's words, the researcher should develop 'converging lines of inquiry' (2014: 120), represented by Figure **3.3**. In undertaking data triangulation, the researcher collects evidence from different sources, which are expected to corroborate the same findings. As a result, the final findings will be supported by multiple sources of evidence. By suggesting triangulation, I argue that Yin (2014) attempts to provide a tool to strengthen the quality of case study research, which is one of the key issues explored in a variety of research methodology handbooks.
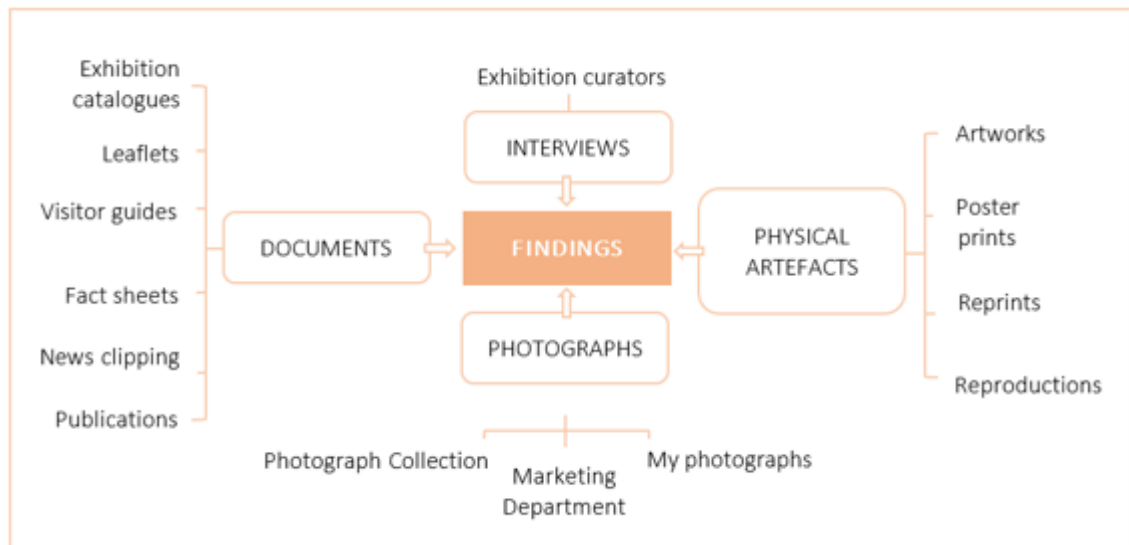
Figure 3.3 Convergence of multiple sources of evidence adapted from Figure 4.2 in Yin (2014: 121)

The term 'triangulation' is originally used in land and navigational surveying to describe the techniques for determining a single point in space by converging two other points (Rothbauer 2008). Introduced by Norman K Denzin (1978), the concept of triangulation has been applied to data collection and analysis in social sciences to strengthen research quality and credibility. According to Paulette M Rothbauer (2008), 'The basic idea underpinning the concept of triangulation is that the phenomena under study can be understood best when approached with a variety or a combination of research methods' (829). Thus, Denzin (1978 cited in Quinn 2002) argues, every study should rely on multiple research methods. Moreover, although the general definition of 'triangulation' highlights the methodological combination, Denzin proposes four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation, methodological triangulation, theory triangulation and investigator triangulation. The first two types are more relevant to the approach to my research project, so they are further elaborated on here.

In my view, the line between data and methodological triangulation is blurred. The definitions of these two types given in methodological literature sometimes overlap and scholars' opinions and applications of each type of triangulation are not always the same. For instance, Rothbauer (2008) defines data triangulation as finding evidence from different types of evidence sources, such as written documents, photographs, interviews and observation. Apart from triangulating written sources against oral, which I consider

similar to documentation against interviewing, Gidley (2012) mentions triangulation between different types of written materials, such as clippings from newspapers, leaflets and police transcriptions. As discussed above, these sources of data are in some contexts regarded as research methods. Clive Seale (2012) also interestingly mentions the different points in time and space of the data to be triangulated.

Regarding methodological triangulation, Seale (2012) points out, a combination of interviews and ethnographic observation is the most common. It is also often employed as a rationale for combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a research study. However, methodological triangulation does not have to deal with two distinct methods. As Rothbauer (2008) suggests, combining structured and conversational interviewing across time and space can also be considered triangulation of methods. While Seale's description seems to emphasise data collection, Rothbauer views this type of triangulation as encompassing both data collection and data analysis. To offer a more complete picture of a research problem, the statistical measures of findings can be triangulated with the hermeneutic analysis of conversational interviews. These examples illustrate the different opinions among scholars towards the triangulating techniques. By mentioning such differences, however, I am not attempting to pinpoint the best definition, as it would not be helpful for my own research. I would rather refer to this technique simply as 'triangulation'. The other two types, theoretical triangulation, the use of analytical frameworks related to different theories, and investigator triangulation, the use of multiple researchers or evaluators, are not applied to this PhD project.

As mentioned earlier, triangulation is employed in social research to maintain its quality. The issue has been addressed in various literatures on qualitative research methods, in which the different characteristics of quantitative and qualitative studies are usually clearly distinguished. When discussing research quality, scholars often refer to the concept of validity, reliability and replicability, the criteria used widely in scientific tradition. Validity, according to Nigel Norris (1997), refers to 'the reasons we have for believing the truth claims' (172), which can be in the form of 'statements of fact, descriptions, accounts, propositions, generalisations, inferences, interpretations, judgements or arguments' (172). In the case of this PhD research, the answers or statements in response to the research questions could be considered truth claims.

According to Seale (2012), validity has three components. First, measurement validity refers to the extent to which measures, such as interview questions, are logically linked to concepts. Second, internal validity is the connection between the causal statements and the study. Third, external validity means the generalisability of the findings to other populations beyond the case. The generalisability in Seale's chapter is merely statistical, which was not applicable to my case study research. As it was intended to be an extreme case, the attempt to statistically analyse did not make sense and its validity should not be measured by this criterion. Instead, my research's external validity was tested by its theoretical generalisability (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68).

However, Seale (2012) points out that the study does not have to be valid in order to be reliable. The reliable findings presented can be consistently incorrect. Not only reliability but also replicability is considered crucial in scientific tradition. Replicability, Seale points out, refers to a comparison of different studies with the similar problems and research methods. If a study can be replicated by other researchers, the confidence in the truth value of results will be increased. Research replicability is also discussed by Yin (2014) in relation to case study method. Despite his objection to statistical generalisability, with which I agree, the case study research should generate the same results despite being conducted by another investigator.

While emphasising the connection between research validity and statistical generalisability as mentioned above, Seale (2012) includes theoretical sampling in the discussion of the alternative approach to qualitative research quality. The concepts of validity, reliability and replicability, together with triangulation, are sometimes viewed as inappropriate for qualitative research. The main reason is that qualitative studies, unlike scientific studies such as experiments, often occur in naturalistic settings. Also, in the actual field, researchers tend to discover different versions of reality instead of a pre-existing universal truth as accepted in scientific tradition. To put it another way, scientific tradition takes a realist standpoint, which is criticised by qualitative interpretivist approaches.

Interpretivism or idealism (Byrne 2012) or constructionism (Gidley 2012) usually involves an in-depth qualitative study of a small number of people in a single setting over a considerable amount of time. Due to the naturalistic nature of research, some scholars

seek for an alternative method for maintaining research quality. Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba (1985), for instance, critique the notion of truth value emphasised in realist scientific tradition. They propose for naturalistic enquiry the four concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to replace the concepts of internal and external validity, as well as reliability and objectivity of conventional research. Credibility, Seale (2012) argues, can be achieved by extensive field research, triangulation and gaining feedback from other researchers. Transferability pays attention to the uniqueness of each local context. It can be fulfilled by a detailed description of the setting under inquiry. Dependability, which replaces reliability, can be achieved by auditing. It is, according to Seale, also helpful in building confirmability. Auditing, he points out, is related to the self-reflexive exercise of the research.

Nevertheless, between the two opposite approaches of realism and interpretivism is the subtle-realist approach. Citing Martyn Hammersley (1992), Seale (2012) explains that subtle-realists recognise 'the existence of a social world that exists independently of the researcher's mind' as well as 'the impossibility of knowing this world in any final certain sense' (537–537). This is the standpoint this research adopts: there is the truth behind a social phenomenon; yet it can only be approached and represented in a certain way by a researcher, who examines it with bias and certain agenda. Furthermore, Seale (2012) makes an interesting point that it might not be necessary for a researcher to label oneself as a realist, interpretivist or subtle-realist. The approach taken should instead be based on the nature of the research project. In the case of my research, I argue that the subtle-realist approach is most suitable. More importantly, this standpoint is connected to thematic coding, the analysis method applied to this research.

Analysis method: thematic coding

The analysis method employed in this research is thematic coding or thematic content analysis. According to Carol Rivas (2012), when qualitative data is divided into themes, it becomes more manageable and easier to interpret. Thematic coding, she suggests, can be used for written documents, images, field notes as well as transcripts, which cover all the types of data sources examined in my field research. Furthermore, Rivas points out that there are two approaches to data, which lead to different techniques of thematic

coding. An inductive qualitative study begins with a broad research question. The data collected then empirically lead to the precise themes and research question. For a deductive approach, however, certain themes are developed prior to data analysis from previous research, theory or researcher experience.

I consider my research leaning more towards the deductive approach than inductive, as echoed by the case study design process. It was decided prior to field research that exhibitions of advertising posters are to be scrutinised from a material cultural approach with object itinerary (Joyce and Gillespie 2014) as the key theoretical framework (for the application and discussion of this framework, see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151). The questions for data collection were therefore designed to reflect this aspect (see Appendix 2, pp. 257–264). Nevertheless, as Rivas (2012) points out, it might be helpful to combine both inductive and deductive coding in some cases. It is also the technique applied during my field research. Having four subsidiary questions to start with, the question about the influence of materialities on the transformation of objects' values and meanings was later added as the data collected pointed to this aspect.

Aside from these two different approaches, Rivas (2012) provides useful advice about the process for inductive and combined inductive-deductive coding. She suggests three stages of thematic content analysis: code, category and theme development. According to Rivas, initial coding is supposed to be open. Some codes might later be used as they are, whereas others can be grouped into the primary categories during the second stage of coding. The technique that might be helpful when developing categories is a constant comparison of data within the same and across categories. Rivas suggests checking one bit of data against another in every step of coding and categorising. The purpose is to maintain the connection of data and the researcher's interpretation. It also helps make the analysis grounded in data and make the categories completed. In case the analysis is expected to go beyond the description, Rivas points out, the themes that provide insight or contribute to a theory are essential. Thus, themes that were developed during the interpretation process are considered crucial in this case study research.

It is also the themes on which the presentation of findings is based. In my initial plan, the 'itinerary' of each unit of analysis, from advertising to exhibit, would be presented in each findings chapter respectively. Nevertheless, the nature of the data

collected to date appeared to be fragmented. The evidence rather shows a point in time and space, or what Joyce and Gillespie (2014) call 'stoppages' in the movements of each object rather than its entire journey. As my research emphasises the themes with the five units of analysis being illustrative, the data is potentially better articulated when being presented thematically. To report the findings, Rivas (2012) suggests three techniques: lists, careers and typologies. I find lists and careers more suitable than typologies for this research's case study. During the process of the thematic coding analysis, the career format was insightful for visualising the journeys of units of analysis, which is elaborated below. The analysis then led to the three main themes, which are presented using the list technique in the form of the three thematic chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Visualising and materialising data

The last section of this chapter discusses the application of the thematic coding analysis in light of the material cultural approach, as well as the object itinerary framework that this case study adopts. More importantly, it can be considered part of the reflection of research data in order to ensure the quality of the research. The main purposes of visualising and materialising field data are, first, to distinguish the truth claims that are relevant to the research questions from the entire data collected, and second, to find out the implications of the research evidence, which later became the three themes discussed in the chapters that follow. Therefore, the process of visualising and materialising the data is significant to this research process, for it not only led to the theoretical propositions, but also affirmed the suitability of the research methodology discussed so far in this chapter.

As this case study research is interested in the transformation of London Transport posters, it is the chronological and geographical movements that were visually and materially represented during the data analysis. This explains why the detailed interpretation an object received in each exhibition was not included here, even though they were noted in the field and transferred into the data collection database. However, information regarding the physical conditions of objects was briefly described in order to ensure that London Transport poster-related collections are considered material objects instead of merely visual culture. Regarding the technique and format, my original plan

was to visualise data purely using basic computer software. However, later on the use of computer design was combined with physical tools, such as pieces of paper and office stationery, including post-it notes and highlighters, for the tactile representation allowed me to be more interactive with the data. The relevant data was represented in the form of timelines and maps.

Timelines

Unable to predict where data during field research would lead, the timeline for the journey of each unit of analysis clearly demonstrates the fragmented nature of sources of evidence, as well as the types and multiplicity of objects bearing the London Transport poster designs. Before reflecting on their benefits, this section first describes the characteristics of the timelines and the process of making them. Timelines were created after documentary and photographic evidence was collected, but before artefact examination and interviews. Each timeline was created separately for each individual unit of analysis. Thus, there were five timelines, and each of them includes multiple objects in various material forms within the unit. As mentioned above, the timeline is different from the database, in the sense that the data presented focussed particularly on events in the journey of each analysis unit and its material varieties. The detailed interpretation of a copy of poster prints in exhibitions recorded in the database is, for instance, not included.

The design of the timelines started with data visualisation using Microsoft Excel. The rows represent the years, while the columns show the events in which different objects within the unit of analysis took part. Colour codes are also used to categorise the types of objects and the events they featured. For example, the artwork column has an orange background; prints are in red; reproductions green; photographs blue. The column representing each artwork exhibition has an orange border around a white background, while displays of prints have red borders (see Figure **3.4**–Figure **3.5**, for example). By colouring the border, it makes the exhibition types as implied by the titles become noticeable. At the bottom of each timeline, the key points that emerged as a result of the visualisation are noted (Figure **3.6**–Figure **3.7**). One example is that not every copy within the unit is stored in the same location. As the timelines were created after the core documentary and visual research was completed, the points that became clear

or were obscured were then paid careful attention to during the following examination of other types of evidence sources. For instance, the data suggest that certain prints with the same design are not stored together. I therefore asked the Curator regarding this during the interview conducted later.

Figure 3.4 Screenshot of part of the timeline for the Cooper poster in an Excel spreadsheet

Figure 3.5 Screenshot of part of the timeline for the Wadsworth poster in an Excel spreadsheet

45			
46	**Notes**		
47	1 All prints seem to be stored in the same location		
48	2 Only one copy of prints is mounted		
49	3 Artwork has been exhibited and gone through conservation		
50	4 Poster Parade: (vintage) prints inspire new posters **		
51	5 All exhibitions of this unit (both inside and outside LTM) tie to the LTM but some of his other artworks (including those for LT posters) were exhibited in monographs.		
52	6 1998/23762 has no digital representation so not sure what this photo represents		
53			
54			

Figure 3.6 Screenshot of my notes at the bottom of the timeline for the Cooper poster in an Excel spreadsheet

65			
66	**Notes**		
67	1 Postcard reproduction (or reprint) and photos -- purchase coinciding with exhibition = narrative + material -> multiple		
68	2 Different copies of print exhibited at different locations: inside and outside LTM		
69	3 This unit has an interesting original context: woodcut (artwork of poster), which was later exhibited -> large painting -> actual ships		
70	4 Some exhibitions: no ideas which prints were exhibited		
71	5 Styles of exhibitions: monograph, Underground		
72	6 Different copies of print exhibited at different locations: inside and outside LTM		
73	7 Different styles of mounting, framing and labelling		
74	8 Postcards/reproductions: different division (collection) => ephemera		
75			

Figure 3.7 Screenshot of my notes at the bottom of the timeline for the Wadsworth poster in an Excel spreadsheet

After visualising the data, I then materialised them, first by printing out the Excel spreadsheet for each unit, which required at least four pieces of A4 paper. I then stuck them onto an A1-size poster, together with relevant printed photographic images available on the Museum's online database. Some images are digital representations of the unit of analysis, while others represent the unit *in situ* in different exhibitions (see Figure 3.8–Figure 3.11). As the Museum's database provides accession numbers of the objects digitally represented, it was easy to compare them with the events, such as the year they were accessioned and exhibited, represented in the Excel column. Regarding the relationships between images themselves, it was also interesting to experience how the images printed in similar sizes deceive the eyes of the viewer. In other words, it was difficult to tell that an image represented double-royal posters, while another represented a postcard-sized print without viewing the actual objects. How the materialities of objects potentially confuse the viewer then became one of the points discussed in Chapter 5.
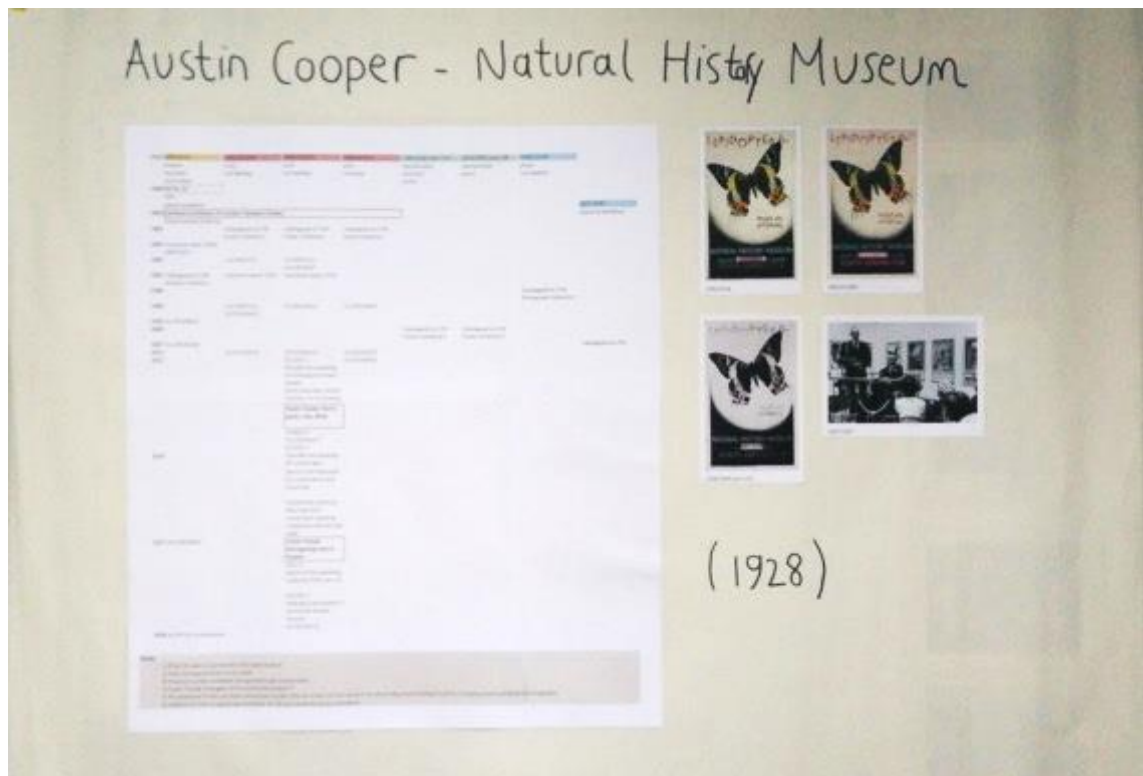
Figure 3.8 The final version of the timeline for the Cooper poster in A1 size

Figure 3.9 A B/W print capturing the opening of the exhibition *A centenary exhibition of London Transport posters*. In the background, the Cooper and Whistler poster prints are on display. This photographic image is included in the timelines for both units of analysis (as shown in Figure **3.4**). Photographed by Herbert K Nolan, 1963 © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Figure 3.10 The final version of the timeline for the Wadsworth poster in A1 size

Figure 3.11 A B/W print, capturing the *Art for all* exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in which the Wadsworth artwork was displayed. This photographic image is included in the timeline for the Wadsworth (as shown in Figure 3.5). Photographed by Richard Sharpe, 1949 © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

As the above example implies, the timelines made prominent the themes of the exhibitions, which are related to the new meanings added to posters. They also show the multiplicity of objects within each unit of analysis. Moreover, it became obvious during such a process how fragmented the archival resources are. For instance, in the case of the Kauffer poster, it is not recorded which copy of the prints was displayed in most exhibitions. This reflects the incomplete and selective characteristic of the archival documents discussed earlier. More importantly, the fragmented nature of evidence sources is, in my view, significant in a way that it corresponds to the itinerary framework's recognition of the fragmented journeys of the objects. Their movements include ruptures. They can also be multiplied, unlike the life course of human beings (also see the From object biography to object itineraries section in Chapter 4, pp. 104–114, for the discussion of the object itinerary framework).

However, a key limitation of each timeline is that it does not manifest the interrelation between the five units of analysis. Apart from this, the five timelines lack the visual representation of the spatial movements each object within the unit went through despite showing the information about the locations (such as where an exhibition took place). To reflect object itineraries as the key framework, I then decided to produce maps that geographically represent where the units of analysis move. At the same time, the maps would make the connection between units more obvious.

Maps

Unlike the timelines, maps were created after data collection was completed. Before discussing the maps created to represent locations where London Transport poster prints and artworks have been exhibited, it is worth briefly addressing the terminology, which is significant in the material culture literature. In his book *Lines: a brief history* (2007), Tim Ingold disagrees with the use of the words 'map' and 'transport' when discussing the processual nature of materials. Instead, he explains changes in material objects by using the concept of wayfaring and growing. He is also against the idea of space, which affirms the dichotomy between matter and mind (also see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195).

The points argued by Ingold in my view make strong sense. Even though maps for Ingold seem to emphasise more the stoppages or dots rather than lines, they have potential to illuminate the sometimes unplanned itineraries of London Transport posters and artworks. As pointed out earlier, the movements of these objects are processual and interconnected, but it is impossible to trace the entire 'lines' of their journeys due to the fragmented nature of evidence sources. Despite that, by looking at where they temporarily stop (as much as the information is available), it is possible to see how their values and meanings change and the transformation of one object is connected to what is experienced by others, both within and between units of analysis.

What are the characteristics of the maps used in data analysis? In order to trace the locations where London Transport poster prints and artworks were exhibited, I made use of three types of existing maps from online sources available for download: the world map (Free World Maps 2019), the map of London attractions (TripIndicator 2019) and the map of the London Underground (Transport for London 2020c). Each of them represents a distinct geographical scale. First, the world map is used in this stage to represent the locations of London Transport posters at the global level (see Figure **3.12**–Figure **3.13**, for example). Second, the map of London attractions (instead of that of the UK) is employed, for most domestic exhibitions of London Transport posters were held in central London (Figure **3.14**–Figure **3.16**). However, the Whistler poster was exhibited in Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, according to the data collected, so the central Brighton map (VisitBrighton 2020) was attached to the London map to represent this particular exhibition (Figure **3.16**).

Figure 3.12 World map marking the countries where the Kauffer poster and artwork were exhibited
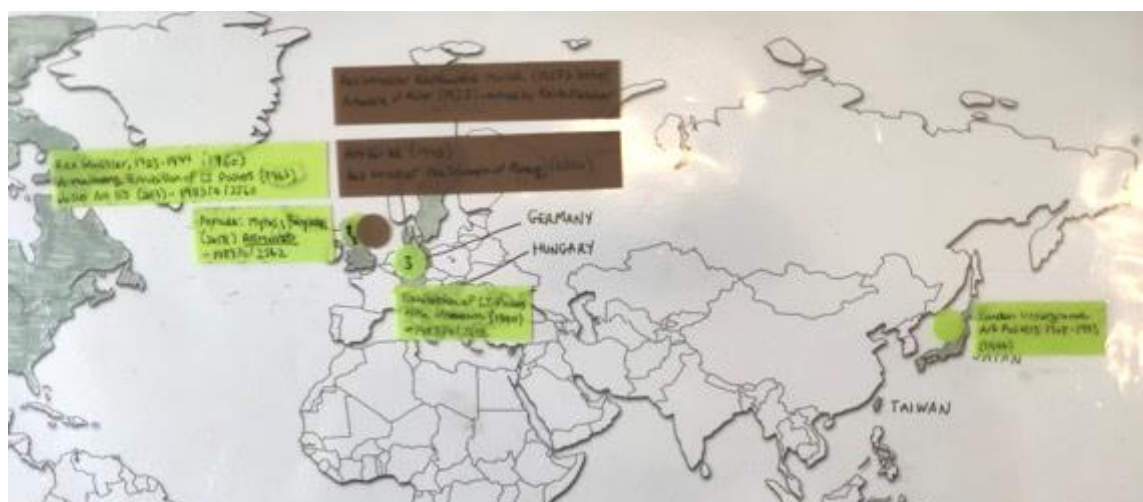
Figure 3.13 World map marking the countries where the Whistler poster and artwork were exhibited

Figure 3.14 Map of London marking the institutions that the designs of the five units of analysis represent

Figure 3.15 Map of London marking the locations of where the Kauffer poster and artwork were exhibited

Figure 3.16 Map of London marking the locations where the Whistler poster and artwork were exhibited

Figure 3.17 London Underground map marking the institutions that the designs of the five units of analysis represent

Figure 3.18 London Underground map marking the closest stations to where the Kauffer poster and artwork were exhibited
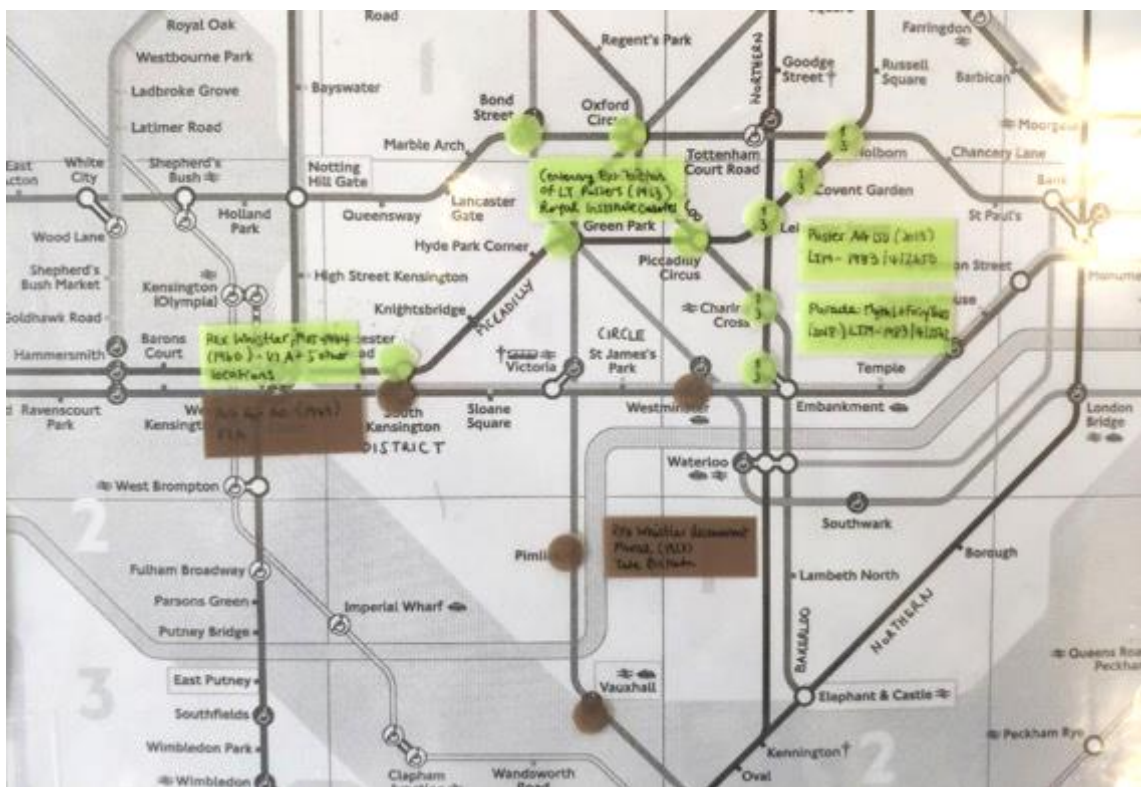

Figure 3.19 London Underground map marking the closest stations to where the Whistler poster and artwork were exhibited

Regarding the London Underground map, it represents similar scale with the map of London but in slightly different ways (Figure **3.17**–Figure **3.19**). Initially, it was unclear to me whether or not the use of this map would be helpful and if so, how, since posters were not relocated for exhibitions using this means of transport. Nonetheless, the indication of the Underground station is the key element in the London Transport poster design, so I found it interesting to visually trace today's transport lines and stations that are linked to the locations of the institutions where they were exhibited in the past. Moreover, the difference between the Underground map and the London tourist attraction map is that, in the first case, usually more than one station is marked for each exhibition location. This is because the exhibition locations can be easily accessed from various Underground stations. Compared to the use of the first two maps, the representations of the Underground stations where exhibitions of London Transport posters took place were least useful for this case study. Yet it might contribute to future research, especially regarding the movement of visitors, as well as the use of visual content of posters and exhibitions to move people (see Chapter 7, pp. 237–252).

Regarding the design of the maps, they were made using both computer software and actual objects, similar to the timelines. The three maps mentioned above were printed out on an A4 sheet. Then I marked dots for exhibition locations where each unit of analysis was displayed on a clear plastic sheet. In case it was known which copy of the poster print was exhibited, the number of the copy was also written on the dot. The use of a clear plastic sheet was useful, for it was possible to put one sheet on top of another in order to compare the locations each unit had been. Within each unit of analysis it is also possible to see the trend of where and which copy would usually be exhibited. This contributes to the answers to the subsidiary question, regarding the criteria of choosing the display and the influence of materialities in the change in London Transport posters' values and meanings (see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195).

Data visualisation and materialisation were useful tools for keeping field research in focus. After the fieldwork was over, timelines and maps were also employed as part of triangulation and thematic coding. With the help of these tools and constant reflection on field data, as well as secondary and theoretical literature, I finally came up with key

themes represented by the mind map below (Figure **3.20**). As a result, they formed the three thematic chapters of this PhD thesis (Chapters 4–6).
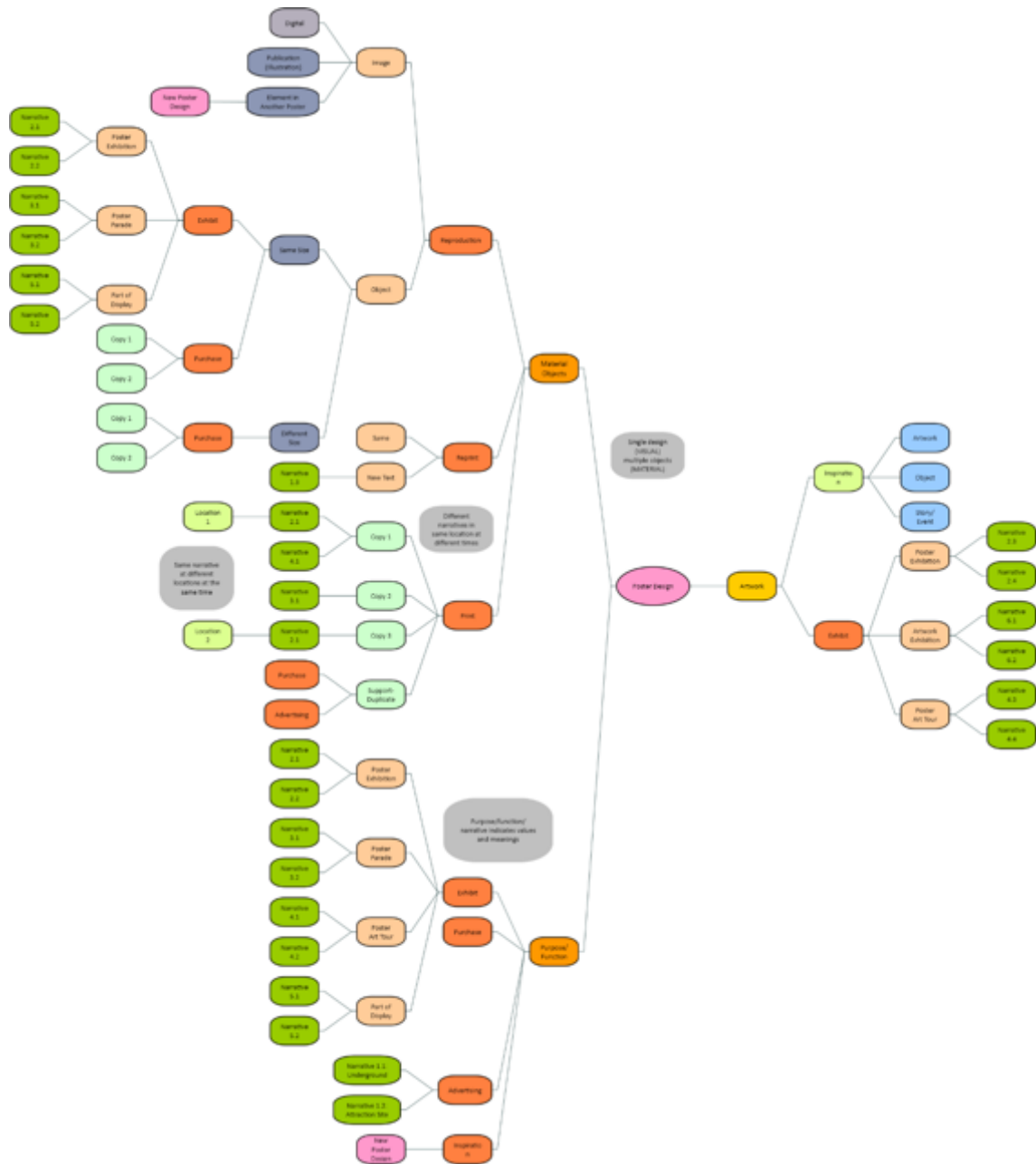
Figure 3.20 Mind map representing the emerging themes

Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to the primary research process. It has discussed both the methodological and practical aspects of the four key types of evidence sources examined:

documents, photographs, material objects and interviews. Albeit often considered research methods, they are employed in this research as sources of data under the case study method. Apart from identifying materials used, this chapter has revealed the rationales behind the selection criteria. The selection of artefacts examined were, for instance, aimed to reflect the material characteristics of poster prints, artworks, reproductions and reprints.

Moreover, the discussion has demonstrated the transformation of the research process itself. Original plans needed to be adjusted from time to time, mostly based on the availability of the field site and research participants. In this case, it can be argued that this case study research aims to maintain the best practice and its ethics by respecting the institution's restrictions and advice under different circumstances. It also complies with the University's ethical monitoring system for the research quality. However, the amendment in the data collection plan was, at the same time, to ensure correspondence with the research aim and questions.

Regarding research quality and credibility, this chapter has also demonstrated the research's reflexivity throughout the primary research process. Field notes include the researcher's encounters with the materials i.e. the time spent and how they were accessed so that I was reminded of my own subjectivity, potential bias and intervention to the data collected. After the completion of the fieldwork, research quality was still monitored and maintained throughout the analysis method as discussed in the second half of this chapter. Triangulation was part of the tools employed. The thematic coding method was carefully applied and reflected on. The data analysis also closely followed methodological literature while adopting the itinerary approach, the research's theoretical framework. This approach is discussed in detail in Chapters 4–6, together with the emerging themes resulting from the analysis.

Chapter 4
Itineraries of London Transport posters

Introduction

Under the object itinerary framework, this first thematic chapter aims to address the thesis's major research question: do values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they become museum exhibits and if so, how? Although rather implicit, it also responds to the following three subsidiary questions: what are the purposes of exhibiting London Transport posters? What narratives are told by the exhibitions of London Transport posters? And what are the processes of curating the exhibitions of London Transport posters, from conceptualisation to de-installation?

This chapter argues that the values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they are repurposed into museum collections and exhibits. Despite using the term 'repurposing', the transformation in values and meanings is, however, not entirely separated from their original advertising function. Rather, the change is processual, gradual and relational throughout the re-contextualisation of the publicity posters within the museum setting and beyond.

Moreover, the transformation and interrelation occur at both the visual and material levels. At the visual level, a London Transport poster design is no longer intended to provide information about transportation in an exhibitionary setting. Each design can be given different interpretations in different exhibitions at different times. One design can also be related to another through exhibition narratives. Apart from that, visual elements in a poster can inspire later designs that might communicate or advertise significantly different subjects. At the material level, the ephemeral publicity materials that become part of the London Transport Museum's permanent collections are given different roles and statuses. The repurposing therefore extends the connection between posters themselves and other objects alongside the transformation in their values and meanings.

The answer to the major research question is elaborated throughout the discussion in this chapter. The following section introduces the object itinerary approach, the theoretical framework this research employs. It also includes my reflection of choosing this theory over that of object biography, as had initially been proposed. The rest of this chapter mainly analyses how the transformation occurs to London Transport posters through the repurposing process. The discussion is divided into the visual and material levels. In each subsection, activities involved in turning posters into exhibits, such as narratives and purposes of poster exhibitions, are included.

From object biography to object itineraries: theoretical framework

What is the concept of object itineraries and why is it applied to this research? I argue that the itinerary approach is suitable for the study of publicity posters in the museum display context for various reasons. First, it reflects the rationale behind the major research question. Second, this framework is applicable to the material properties of printed posters, especially concerning their multiplicity and reproducibility. Third, the object itinerary model, similar to this research, recognises objects as relational. It also regards processual change in their values and meanings as potentially connected to their interactions with humans (through museum practice, in this case), without placing human agents at the centre of relationships, nor perpetuating human-thing dichotomy. Fourth, the itinerary concept's emphasis on continual transformation of objects over time and space matches this research's focus on the repurposing of posters in the contemporary museum setting. Therefore, this concept also fits the case study method, which pursues an in-depth investigation of contemporary events as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Finally, the study methodologically follows 'things in motion' (Joyce and Gillespie 2015: 4), as suggested by the object itinerary approach. Before expanding each of these points, this section first discusses the definition of object itineraries.

Object itineraries is an alternative concept to the cultural biography approach (Appadurai 1986a; Kopytoff 1986) widely adopted and developed in the studies of material culture in various disciplines, such as anthropology, archaeology and museum studies. This concept is introduced in a volume edited by Joyce and Gillespie (2015),

which was published about three decades after *The social life of things* (Appadurai 1986b). In the introductory chapter, Joyce and Gillespie explain that an itinerary 'traces the strings of places where objects come to rest or are active, the routes through which things circulate, and the means by which they are moved' (3). The routes and sites that itineraries intersect, they argue, might be real or virtual, multiple or singular. Itineraries are not only spatial but also temporal. They might include stoppages and gaps or even be fragmented.

In fact, the itinerary framework does not completely contradict the biographical approach. Certain ideas and concepts in object itineraries are adapted from those proposed in the cultural biography. According to Joyce and Gillespie (2015), the term 'object' used instead of 'thing' is partly to resonate with object biography. Although Igor Kopytoff (1986) employed these two terms interchangeably, they explain, the collocation 'object biography' has been adopted more widely. The other reason is based on Brown's (2001) differentiation between the concepts of things versus objects. As Joyce and Gillespie (2015) argue, objects are those freely used as facts, whereas things reflect subject-object relations. They suggest that itineraries begin with objects, while the term 'things' would suggest outcomes (see the Ephemerality section in Chapter 5, pp. 178– 187, for further discussion about things and objects). As the word choice is not the major concern of this research, the phrase 'object itineraries' (rather than 'thing itineraries') is adopted in this project as Joyce and Gillespie suggest. Regardless of the wording, the itinerary framework is more suitable, mainly due to its rationale applied to this research study where things can potentially change continually into new stages, while staying connected to the previous passages. It is unlike the biography metaphor, which lies in an assumption that 'continuous bodily integrity is essential for the continuity of existence' (Joyce and Gillespie 2015: 11) just as the life of a human being.

Do values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they become museum exhibits and if so, how? The wording in this major research question is purposefully selected to resonate with the underlying assumption that continual transformation of objects is not entirely dependent on humans' mind and intentionality, even in the seemingly human-controlled environment such as a museum exhibition. The existing scholarship on display and exhibition development, especially practical ones,

tends to emphasise the conceptual stage and interpretation over other processes such as design and installation (e.g. Dean 1996; Alexander and Alexander 2007). However, as also explicit in those works, exhibition development involves not only interpretation but also physical engagement with objects, such as handling, conserving, installing and removing objects. My research therefore regards interpretation as a form of humans' intellectual engagement with objects, which potentially affects publicity posters' values and meanings, but only to a certain degree. Object transformation can be reinforced by many other factors beyond human control, such as physical qualities of objects themselves or their interactions with other materials, both visible and invisible, as some scholars (e.g. Ingold 2007, 2009; Brooks 2015) point out. Physical change is recognised here as potentially influencing objects' cultural values assigned by humans. Aging and decay are some examples (see Chapter 6, pp. 196–236, for further discussion in regard to object authenticity). This explains why active verbs are used here to collocate with objects: 'to change' and 'to become' instead of, for instance, asking how values and meanings of London Transport posters are assigned, or how these types of objects are (re)interpreted by humans for museum exhibitions. Such a rationale is echoed in the itinerary concept.

Moreover, Joyce and Gillespie (2015) suggest that itineraries are extensive, usually beyond the human lifespan. It is rather difficult to pinpoint either the beginning or the ending of itineraries. In their words, 'They have no real beginning other than where we enter them and no end since things and their extensions continue to move' (3). However, it is important to note that my research does not attempt to trace the entire itineraries of London Transport posters, nor claim that the journeys start when they are used as publicity materials and end as they become museum displays. Rather, the repurposing of their functions is considered at certain moments in the itineraries. During these moments, they interact with humans and objects through museum practice, which potentially triggers the transformation in their values and meanings to a certain extent.

In fact, cultural biography has been employed by various scholars to explain the 'lives' of objects that last longer than those of humans. Some examples provided by Joyce and Gillespie (2015) are such as the ideas that objects 'die' many times when they move into or out of social relationships (Joy 2009 cited in Joyce and Gillespie 2015). They might

be 'murdered' and then 'reincarnated' into new forms of existence (Moreland 1999 cited in Joyce and Gillespie 2015). Such examples illustrate the limitation of the biography framework and the tendency for scholars to equate the changes in objects with the course of a person's life, thereby creating anthropomorphic metaphors. However, anthropomorphism, according to Joyce and Gillespie (2015), might be suitable for such cases as sacred or animated objects, as they are attributed with human characteristics. The biography approach also vividly describes singular objects significant to the biographies of humans, or what Janet Hoskins calls 'biographical objects' (1998). Yet for other types of objects, such as the publicity posters in my study, their materialities, including multiplicity and reproducibility, are strikingly different from a linear sequence in the life of an individual. For instance, London Transport posters with the same design can simultaneously be used for different purposes at different locations, carrying different values and meanings (also see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195).

It is worth noting that some visual material objects have been studied from the object biographical lens. For instance, Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004) trace how a group of ethnographic photographs became part of the Pitt Rivers Museum collections through the categorisation and archival process undergone in the museum institution. Unlike ethnographic photographs, however, which frequently representing real people, publicity posters can feature not only photographs and paintings of real people but also abstract patterns and graphics, as well as drawings of fictional characters, non-human creatures and things, as exemplified by London Transport poster designs.

Some theories have in fact been proposed to avoid reducing things into extensions of humans. One example addressed by Joyce and Gillespie (2015), is actor-network-theory or ANT (Latour 2005), which creates the symmetry between humans and nonhumans. Actors in the network of relationships can be in any form or any kind of entity. Joyce and Gillespie (2015) do not seem to counter the notion of causal effectiveness within a network of relationships between humans and non-humans, which is proposed by ANT in order to decentre to the roles of human beings. The relations formed around London Transport posters might be understood as 'networks' or alternatively 'meshworks', the Deleuzian term coined by Ingold (2009; Deleuze and Guattari 1988). Nonetheless, visualising publicity materials through the lens of itineraries,

in my view, makes the temporal and spatial transformations more explicit as this approach emphasises the movements of objects. It is transformation on which this research project mainly focusses: the relations between humans and things, and things themselves, are considered as part of theoretical proposition (see Chapter 6, pp. 196–236); however, this is discussed in terms of how relations are revealed through examining the transformation in London Transport posters' values and meanings as they are re-contextualised in the museum setting.

The notion of Material Agency is another example of scholars' attempts to avoid an anthropocentric standpoint in understanding human-thing relationships. In the introduction to their edited volume, Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris (2008) propose a decentralised definition of agency as 'a situated process in which material culture is entangled' (xii). Influenced by ANT's view of humans and non-human entities as equally important in the relations between them, Knappett's and Malafouris's volume counters the conventional idea that agency is associated with human consciousness and intentionality. In his own chapter, Malafouris (2008) suggests considering agency as causal events happening the physical world, rather than representational states in human mind. With regard to intentionality, he associates agency with what he calls 'intention-in-action', rather than 'prior intention', which precedes action. However, the concept of Material Agency, according to Knappett and Malafouris (2008), is not meant to replace human agency nor suggest that agency is material instead of human. Instead, it calls for a move away from anthropocentric approaches to agency.

It is also worth noting that the authors in this edited volume do not necessarily all share the same idea of Material Agency, albeit that they are influenced by ANT. Ingold (2008), for instance, regards agency as emerging from skilled action-perception of an organism in the 'meshwork'. This is opposed to the idea that 'agency – that is, what makes things happen – is *distributed* [original emphasis] throughout the network' (210), as suggested by ANT. In this case, Ingold calls for attention to the movement and perception, as well as the qualities, of organism in the process of creating the 'meshwork'. What I find especially interesting in Knappett and Malafouris' volume (2008) is their emphasis on the 'what is happening' (process/phenomenon) in the web of relationships, instead of 'who has done it' (agent). This is, for example, further developed in the chapter by John Law

and Annemarie Mol (2008). Using the concept of material semiotics, they highlight the interrelations and interdependence between co-actors in acting and being enacted upon within the network. These authors' remarks on the structure of the network/meshwork as well as the movements and characteristics of interrelated entities therein correspond to this PhD thesis's interest in the journeys of London Transport posters (Chapter 4), the influences of their materialities (Chapter 5) and human-thing entanglements (Chapter 6). In general, the notion of Material Agency (Knappett and Malafouris 2008) contributes to an understanding of the key moments in the itineraries of London Transport posters in the museum context while supporting the non-anthropocentric standpoint of this framework. Compared to Material Agency, the itinerary approach however highlights more the transformation and movements of objects, which is the main interest of this research. This approach is thus heavily emphasised in this section and employed as the key theoretical framework in discussing the repurposing of London Transport posters in the museum context.

Not only does the itinerary framework reflect the physical properties of publicity posters, but it is also suitable for investigating their values and meanings. According to Joyce and Gillespie (2015), a new Material Culture Studies asks of objects their social values and meanings, apart from their behavioural and technological attributes (Hicks 2010 cited in Joyce and Gillespie 2015). A key characteristic of cultural biography is that it views material objects as social and processual (Appadurai 1986a). Their status, such as commodity (Kopytoff 1986), is not a fixed category but a stage in their 'lives'. A commodity can later be singularised and added to, for instance, an artistic value. In other words, they are removed from the market exchange system and enter the art world. A commodity can also become a museum object with a new form of cultural value. However, this does not permanently erase their financial value, which is sometimes even heightened when being singularised (for further discussion of singularity, see Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 152–236).

As suggested above, the object biography approach is interested in the processual nature of objects' values and meanings. Despite that, Appadurai (1986a) and Kopytoff (1986) tend to emphasise more the exchange system operated by humans than the material properties of objects themselves. This research project agrees with the notion

of relationality introduced by the biographical approach. Yet it adopts the object-centred standpoint of the itinerary framework despite the study's focus on the museum context, which is seemingly under absolute control of humans. In fact, it is this project's interest in the process of repurposing of objects produced in the past in today's museums that makes the itinerary approach more suitable. With the biography framework, London Transport posters as museum objects would be regarded as a form of 'afterlife', or it would be necessary to justify that their 'lives' extend beyond the original contexts. Then another problem would arise: how to pinpoint the 'death' of these publicity posters if their 'lives' are extended.

Without any need to decide whether the museum's repurposing is an afterlife or a career in life, the itinerary approach destabilises the boundary between objects and the representation of them. During their itinerary, an object can move physically or be circulated in other forms such as visual image and writing. These transformations can occur either simultaneously or consequently, which are permitted thanks to their material qualities together with 'technologies of circulation' (Joyce and Gillespie 2015: 12) available at particular points in time and space. Apart from technologies, Joyce and Gillespie suggest that the examination of itineraries requires the consideration

> of impediments and facilitators to movement; of natural and cultural transformations along the way; of whether objects travel intact or incomplete, with others or alone; of the landscapes that result from the places linked through their travels; and of the value of circulating objects for the production and reshaping of cultural relations that separate people, as well as for those that connect persons, places, and things across space and time (2015: 12).

The consideration of these points is regarded here as contributing to an understanding of the transformation of objects' values and meanings, so they were constantly reflected on throughout this study. Nonetheless, it is unclear in Joyce and Gillespie's volume (2015) if the itinerary approach should be applied to trace the entire journey of an object. If so, it seems to me quite difficult (or even impossible) to achieve. As mentioned above, an itinerary is regarded as endless, so it makes more sense to trace only part of it. This research mainly follows the transformation of London Transport posters from their original function as publicity materials to their contemporary role as

museum exhibits. Other moments in their itineraries are however referred to from time to time in case they help to illuminate the changing values and meanings of the posters.

Given that the object itinerary approach covers the contemporary engagement with objects, this framework corresponds well to the methodology of this research project in both a theoretical and practical sense. As discussed in Chapter 3, this research employs the case study as the main method, which aims at enriching an understanding of the contemporary phenomenon (Yin 2014). Second, it also attempts to follow the movement of objects themselves as suggested by Joyce and Gillespie (2015). It focusses on a small number of units of analysis and trace their routes into different museum exhibitions instead of, for instance, focussing on a number of London Transport posters in a single exhibition (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68).

More importantly, the object itinerary approach is essential for the process of theoretical generalisation at the end of case study research (Chapters 5 and 6). As Yin (2014) suggests, a theory should be developed during the case study design, remembered and reflected on all through the data collection procedures. It is object itineraries on which this research is based. Data collected is analysed under this framework. Additionally, the findings in case study research are not meant to be the end point in themselves but are generalised through the lens of object itineraries. Beyond the knowledge about the case, this research study also attempts to understand the nature of other objects apart from London Transport posters, museum institutions and even human-object relations in general, which are discussed in Chapters 5–7.

Prior to this PhD research, there was some work that applied the object itinerary approach to studying archaeological and museum objects, such as chapters in Joyce and Gillespie's (2015) volume. Among those, I find the chapter by Neill J Wallis (2015) most relevant to this study regarding its focus on the itineraries of visual images. Here, Wallis argues that the journeys of the images of Swift Creek Stamped vessels are separate from the pottery itself. For instance, the sherds were collected, illustrated, photographed and reproduced. The images were multiplied and flew through circulation while the vessels carrying these images experienced stoppages by being kept in museums, libraries and archives. Unlike Wallis's chapter, nonetheless, my analysis considers visual properties as part of the materialities of London Transport posters. Instead of emphasising the

separation between the visual and the material, my project takes into consideration the intersections and connections of the poster design and the object inscribing it, although their movements are diverted. The flow of the objects is also considered continuous, even though they become museum objects.

Aside from the chapters in Joyce and Gillespie's (2015) volume, some recent literature mentions the itinerary approach, albeit not necessarily using this framework. For instance, Andrew Meirion Jones et al. (2016) recognise the benefits of this framework as providing a 'more nuanced analysis of the relationships between human and non-human things and forces' (126) without dichotomising humans as active and objects as inert nor restricting objects with 'place-bound' (126) vocabularies. Nonetheless, the itinerary approach is not suitable for their study of stone plaques from the Isle of Man and North Wales. Instead, they employ the concept of 'multiple objects' to trace the varied networks of relationships in which the plaques are situated. Using different metaphors, Jones et al.'s (2016) paper and my project are both interested in the interrelations within the journeys and consider the objects' movements as gradually transformative.

The above examples show that the framework has been interpreted and applied in slightly different ways. What those studies and my project share is, however, 'its emphasis on movement and change' (Dudley 2017: 558), which Sandra Dudley regards as the strength of the object itinerary approach. Dudley identifies the successful adaptation of object itineraries to investigating the 'Relational shifts and makings and remakings of meanings and values through time and space' (Dudley 2017: 558). Nevertheless, she criticises Joyce and Gillespie's (2015) introduction to this theory as attempting to justify its superiority to object biography and thereby neglecting some of the depth and complexity of the biography approach. I agree with Dudley as object biography has been successfully applied to different types of objects, especially those considered living or spiritually or emotionally meaningful to individuals, as mentioned above. It has also influenced and inspired later social theories on material culture including object itineraries itself. Thus, my project by no means neglects the potential of the biography metaphor. Yet it prefers the object itinerary approach as non-

anthropocentric metaphor makes its emphasis on movement and transformation in values and meanings more explicit, as earlier pointed out.

Additionally, I find interesting Dudley's (2017) suggestion about the potential of the object itinerary approach to develop further the narratives told about objects along their journeys. Dudley in fact considers object itineraries, similar to object biography, anthropocentric for stories about objects that are narrated by human beings. This, in my view, makes sense as the narrator tells stories about objects' journeys based on the parts or aspects that they choose to follow. By taking an object-centred standpoint, this PhD study does not deny the intervention of the narrator. Instead it recognises and constantly reflects on the impact and brings it forward in telling stories about objects' journeys. In the last thematic chapter (Chapter 6), it also attempts to adopt an object's point of view in theorising the entanglement between objects and humans in museums.

To conclude, having reviewed the key characteristics and the development of the object itinerary framework, as well as relevant literature, I argue that object itineraries is an appropriate framework for studying the transformation of London Transport publicity posters' values and meanings in the museum display context. That itineraries are constantly transformative and extended beyond the life and control of human beings fits the rationale behind the research enquiry. Moreover, the concept of itineraries decentres humans in the movements of objects resulting in rejecting of any anthropomorphism (and so anthropocentrism) to describe their materialities and existence. Similarly, it is not necessary to fill publicity materials with human qualities to investigate and describe their relational and transformative values and meanings. Furthermore, transformation of London Transport posters, when becoming both museum exhibits and research topic, can be recognised as part of their itineraries, instead of being 'reincarnated' from their 'death'. Methodologically, this framework also tracks the objects' passages from their production to the contemporary stage. The focus on the contemporary phenomenon thus makes the itinerary notion applicable to the case study, the main method of this research, and to the theoretical understanding of human-object and object-object relations beyond the scope of publicity posters in the museum display context.

In the remainder of this chapter, the itineraries of London Transport posters are discussed. While the initial focus of this research was the London Transport posters in the

exhibitionary context, the significance of collection management and their histories beyond the museum context emerged during field research. These themes are therefore added to Posters and beyond, the final section of this chapter (pp. 136–150). To illustrate each theme, the five units of analysis (and several other poster designs) are simultaneously employed as examples. This means that the journey of each poster is not discussed separately. Moreover, the analysis of London Transport posters' changes in values and meanings is divided into the visual (poster designs) and material levels (posters as objects), which might overlap in terms of chronology. This style of presentation is for the purpose of reflecting the connections between different values and meanings throughout their itineraries. It is also important to note that the itineraries of London Transport posters are in fact not necessarily linear but complex and multiplied, as the rest of the chapter demonstrates. Nonetheless, a simplified chronological representation of the itinerary of the Wadsworth poster is provided at the end of this section, so that the reader is aware of multiple events experienced by London Transport posters over time (see Figure **4.1**).
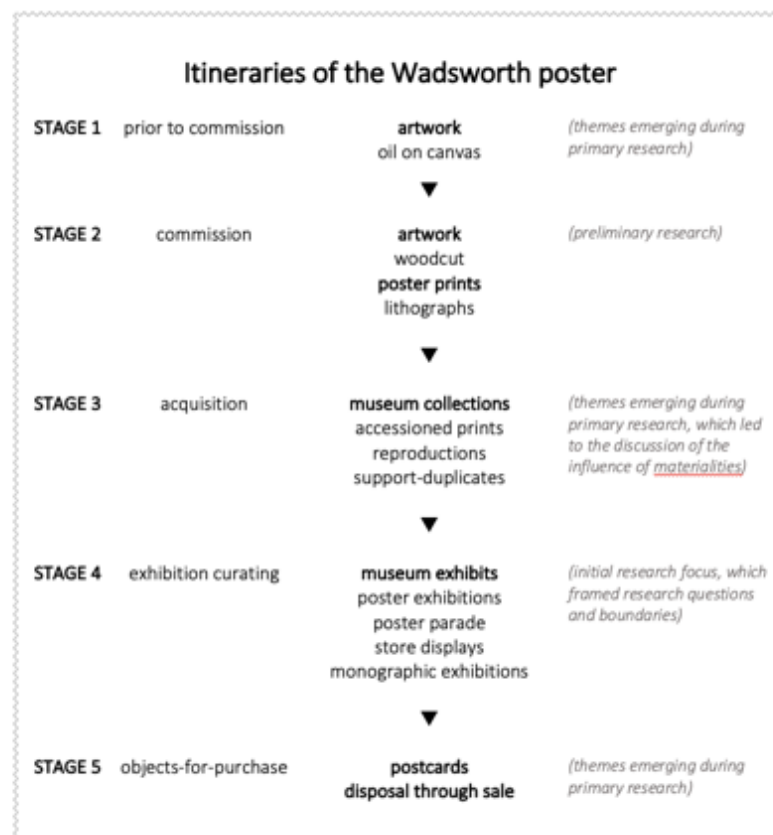

Figure 4.1 Itineraries of the Wadsworth poster, a chronological representation of changes in values and meanings of London Transport posters

London Transport posters' changing values and meanings at the visual level

The transformation in values and meanings of London Transport posters can be broadly categorised into two levels: visual and material. This section addresses the visual level through the lens of the object itinerary framework. At the visual level, the change has been closely connected to exhibition narratives. London Transport posters once advertising and informing about transport to commuters become representative of museum messages conveyed to visitors. Even in the museum setting, the narratives continue to change, but new meanings given are inevitably connected to the former points along the journeys. The connections are triggered both within a single poster design and different ones as discussed below.

Changes in narratives: connection within one poster design

The first part of this section discusses the transformation and interrelation at the visual level within one poster design. The change occurs when London Transport posters are re-contextualised and become exhibits. However, posters' values and meanings within the exhibitionary context are still not stable but rather transformative. To understand this continuous and gradual transformation, I first start the discussion with London Transport posters' narratives as advertising.

Quite obviously, functional and commercial art, such as advertising posters, is designed to carry both utilitarian and artistic values. In the case of London Transport posters, the former Senior Curator explains that:

> Basically, the point of all the transport posters is to get people to travel in a certain way. Some of it is to drive off-peak travels, so during weekends and holidays, most parts of the transport systems are not necessarily as busy as they are during the week because you don't have your weekday commuters. So the point of the posters was trying to get people to use the transport system to go out into the countryside (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

To serve the publicity purpose, pictorial posters like London Transport posters combine both text and image. When they are turned into museum objects, these two elements remain the same. Nevertheless, their function has been changed: they are no longer used

for advertising nor informing. When being used for London Transport originally, it can be argued that the text is more important. The museum-themed posters are, for instance, intended to communicate to commuters the museums they advertised and how to get there. Nevertheless, when displayed in the exhibition space, visual design becomes highlighted. Textual information still appears on the print, reading the same thing, yet they become meaningless in a literal sense. In other words, the text is no longer meant to encourage the viewer to travel to the museum. Rather, it becomes part of the exhibition narratives given to these exhibits, which are conveyed to museum visitors rather than commuters. The changes in narratives as London Transport posters were turned into museum exhibits are represented by the following oppositions.[9]

advertising   :   exhibit
text highlighted   :   image highlighted
commuters   :   museum visitors

For instance, when the Cooper poster was originally displayed as publicity i.e. across Underground stations and platforms, the text 'Natural History Museum; Nearest Underground Station South Kensington' encouraged the viewer to visit the museum as well as gave instruction of how to reach the destination. Nonetheless, when the very same poster design was exhibited in *Poster parade: reimagining historic posters* in 2017 at the London Transport Museum, the informative text became mute (even though 'Lepidoptera Moth and Butterflies' might still be illustrative of an exhibition narrative). It is rather the image of a butterfly that is highlighted. It is employed in this case to illustrate how this motif influences two other Transport posters designed much later on (see Figure 1.5 and Figure 4.2).

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[9] The sets of oppositions used throughout Chapter 4 to illustrate the changes in values and meanings of London Transport posters are adapted from Dinah Eastop (2000)'s structuralist analysis of textiles' multiple histories

Figure 4.2 The Cooper poster (1928c) on display as part of the group of three posters with the butterfly motif in *Poster parade: reimagining historic posters.* Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2016.

In case that the textual information is still in use, it becomes representative or illustrative of a new meaning, instead of being informative as in the original context. For example, the names of museum institutions on the designs link together the Wadsworth, the Whistler and the Stevens posters in the Museum's *Poster art 150* in 2013. This group represents modern attraction sites in London being advertised. While the text remains the same, it is given a new role. In this case, it is the key purpose of this exhibition that draws the connection between the new museum value and the original function of London Transport posters. According to the former Senior Curator involved in curating *Poster art 150*, this exhibition aims to highlight the original function of posters as advertising:

> So I found that it was really important to just loosely categorise the posters into the job that the posters were meant to be doing because I think one of the things I find most fascinating about these posters is their function. As you know, they are supposed to be functional. They weren't just there to improve the look of the stations, but they were also there to do a job. So I think what I was trying to get across in the exhibition is what they were supposed-, of they were doing, why they were significant, not just from an art and design perspective but also from a social historical perspective too, and understanding the value of posters and ephemera in uncovering that history I suppose (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

Rather paradoxically, the examples above have demonstrated the relational change in the values and meanings within a poster design when moving into a new context. The same text communicates different things, even though the new narrative attempts to reflect the original function. Another interesting point the examples imply is the connection between different designs that occur in the exhibitionary context, which is discussed in due course (see the Multiple exhibitionary narratives section, pp. 127–129).

<div align="center">

literal   :   representative
travel information   :   reflexive of original function

</div>

It is worth noting that becoming exhibits does not guarantee that the values and meanings of London Transport posters remain the same, since the narratives given to them vary from one exhibition to another. Each time London Transport posters are given each exhibitionary narrative, being used in representation, their itineraries can be considered metaphorically extended. A new chapter is added to their journeys with a new value and meaning. In general, the narratives are integrally tied to the exhibition types and purposes, although in reality there are more nuances. The exhibitions London Transport posters featured can be broadly categorised into four groups: poster exhibitions, *Poster parade* series, Store displays and monographs.

Poster exhibition

By poster exhibitions, I refer to exhibitions in which the poster is the main subject. At the London Transport Museum, a poster exhibition is curated every three to four years (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). This type of display usually attempts to celebrate the design for London Transport. In general, the subject and theme of a poster exhibition goes with a concurrent event. The overall narrative can also be implied by the exhibition title.

For example, the latest poster exhibition *Poster girls: a century of art and design*, coincided with the celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. This exhibition did not include any of this research's units of analysis, however. The most recent exhibition that features most of the units is *Poster art 150*. Apart from regular poster exhibitions at the Museum, some of the units have featured in poster exhibitions

at other institutions. For instance, all the units except the Stevens were displayed at *Art for all: London Transport Posters 1908–1949* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1949. The exhibition was aimed at celebrating London Transport's contribution to poster art and exemplifying the successful collaboration between artists, patron and printers (Laver et al. 1949).

An example of poster exhibitions outside the UK is the *London Underground art posters 1908–1993* in Japan in 1994. According to the exhibition catalogue edited by Kenshiro Takami (1994), the Kauffer and Whistler posters were grouped together with other posters produced between the 1920s and 1930s to illustrate the time when Underground posters were at their peak both in terms of quality and quantity. This is due to the rapid development of the transport system and Pick's establishment of the clear corporate design. Relevant to this section, the Wadsworth was part of the group with posters produced in the 1930s. It illustrated the high standard of poster publicity commissioned by the Underground Group. In the same exhibition, however, the Stevens poster represented a rather different narrative. Grouped together with posters commissioned between the 1960s and 1980s, it was used as illustrative of London Transport's financial difficulties. For this reason, posters were considered a luxury. The production of posters was contracted to agencies and hardly matched the innovation of the former campaigns (Takami 1994).

Poster parade

The second type of display is the London Transport Museum's *Poster parade*. It is, according to the Curator, a small-scale exhibition primarily for marketing purposes. There are four *Poster parade* displays every year. Each features approximately 20 posters and is on for three months. This gives the Museum an opportunity to display around 80–100 posters a year. The purpose of the *Poster parade* series is to showcase the Poster Collection as well as to sell the reproductions of posters on display. As this series is marketing-oriented, the interpretation and narrative are in fact considered less important than the visual design of the posters themselves (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). That means the poster designs that are considered visually attractive are chosen for the *Parade*. This

series of display is thematic as implied by its titles, such as *Flow of the river* in 2017 and *Clean air London* in 2019. Similar to poster exhibitions discussed above, this temporary display series usually follows ongoing events. For instance, *Poster parade: representing women – exploring equality* was on at the same time as the *Poster girls* exhibition. Sometimes, *Poster parade* goes with the season. As the Curator points out, during summertime, more colourful posters are usually chosen for display (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

Poster and Art Store display

Another type of display worth mentioning is in fact not a conventional form of exhibition. It is the display of the collections in the Poster and Art Stores at the Museum Depot. Although the main function of the Depot is to store the collections, the Stores are open to the public through the pre-booked Poster Art Store Tour. The purpose of the Store display is rather combined. In a sense, the posters act as store decoration, but they are at the same time an integral part of the narratives volunteer guides share with visitors. They are used not only for the interpretation of individual works, as in poster exhibitions, but also used as part of the story of the Museum behind-the-scenes, which is the uniqueness of the Store display. Some of the posters are hung on the wall and put on the top of chest for visitors to view (Figure **4.3**).

Guiding narratives in the Poster Art Tour are diverse depending on the volunteer guides who deliver them, their interests and expertise, as well as how the stories fit the display in the Stores. The tour that I joined in April 2017 highlighted the well-known posters and the artists who designed them. For instance, the tour guide mentioned the famous artist Man Ray, the American poster designer Kauffer, and Edward Johnston, who produced the Transport for London typeface. The guide used the relevant works on display to illustrate the tour narrative. According to the Curator (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.), most framed printed posters in the Poster Store were removed from the *Poster art 150* exhibition when it was over and then reused for the Tour. Now the Wadsworth poster (1936a) is hung on the wall in the Poster Store, whereas the Whistler poster (1928b) is placed on the top of a drawer (Figure **4.4**).

Figure 4.3 A view of the Poster Store decorated with posters framed hung on the wall and placed on top of drawers. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 4.4 A view of Poster Store showing the Wadsworth poster (1936a) on the wall and the Whistler poster (1928b) on top of the chest. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Moreover, the Curator points out that visitors who pay for the tour would like to see not only the posters but also the storage and how these objects are kept and taken care of by the Museum. While the posters hung on the wall are the main subjects of the tour, sometimes visitors have an opportunity to see prints kept in drawers. However, this case is uncommon as volunteers are not allowed to open drawers. Only the tours led by the Curator feature these posters. According to the Curator, visitors are usually very excited to see the objects 'off display' as this offers them a more exclusive behind-the-scenes experience (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

The Curator's comment on visitor experience resonates with Susanne Keene's (2005) view of public storage as an alternative way for visitors to enjoy collections, apart from through exhibits. At the time of Keene's publication at least 24 museums in the UK provided open access to their storage facilities. Wider and more open access to collections also helps justify the usefulness of museum collections, most of which are not on display. In this case, museum staff can also play an enabling (rather than controlling) role in enhancing visitors' enjoyment. Despite that, there are issues related to open storage that need to be addressed, such as an increase in security risk and physical damage to objects (due to a less stable environment). Some public storages might also confuse visitors by giving the impression of being exhibits with insufficient interpretation. Successful open storage, according to Keene (2005), lies in its informal arrangement style, together with sense of serendipity and discovery.

Monographic exhibition
The other type of exhibition in which London Transport posters have featured is the monograph. The purpose of a monographic exhibition is probably the most obvious. It is to celebrate an artist's expertise using their works as illustration. The stories told usually relate to the artist's work and techniques and life events. It is worth noting that the tour-guiding narratives given to the Poster and Art Store display can be as much about the artists as the collections, in case the volunteer is interested in the artists. Unlike the monographs, its key purpose is however not to celebrate a particular artist as discussed above.

According to the evidence available, all of the monographic exhibitions featuring London Transport posters were held in institutions other than the London Transport Museum. For instance, the Kauffer poster was displayed in the *E McKnight Kauffer: memorial exhibition of the work of E McKnight Kauffer* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1955 (Kauffer 1955). As the title suggests, it featured works by Kauffer. The Whistler poster was also exhibited in *Rex Whistler, 1905 - 1944: a memorial exhibition* at the V&A and five other institutions in 1960 (Arts Council of Great Britain 1960). Apart from that, the Wadsworth poster was displayed at a memorial exhibition for the artist at Colnaghi's London in 1974. The exhibition was entitled *Edward Wadsworth 1889-1949: paintings, drawings and prints* (Wadsworth 1974). The works displayed at the latter two exhibitions are slightly different from the Kauffer exhibition due to the artists themselves. While Kauffer is recognised particularly for his poster design, Whistler and Wadsworth are widely known for their fine arts, not necessarily commercial art as posters. Objects exhibited at their memorial exhibitions were therefore mixed between posters and other types of artworks, such as paintings and woodcuts. Apart from the exhibitions mentioned, Cooper had monographic exhibitions displaying other types of artworks without any London Transport posters, such as *Trajects by Austin Cooper* at Gimpel Fils in 1959 (Cooper 1959).

In fact, London Transport posters are often displayed in exhibitions of other subjects, such as part of the permanent display at the Museum. One example is *Designology: shaping London* in 2017, which tells stories about the use of design to aestheticise the functional purpose of transport from the past to the present. In this exhibition, posters such as the *London Transport collection* poster (1975b) and artwork (1975a) by Tom Eckersley were featured along with artworks, maps, tickets, moquette and other objects to represent publicity, communication and technology as well as architecture (Figure **4.5**). *The Tate Gallery by Tube* poster (1986b) and artwork (1986a) by David Booth (of the agency Fine White Line) is also part of the Museum's permanent display (Figure **4.6**).

Figure 4.5 The *London Transport collection* poster print (1975b) and artwork (1975a) by Tom Eckersley on display at *Designology: shaping London*, London Transport Museum. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2017.
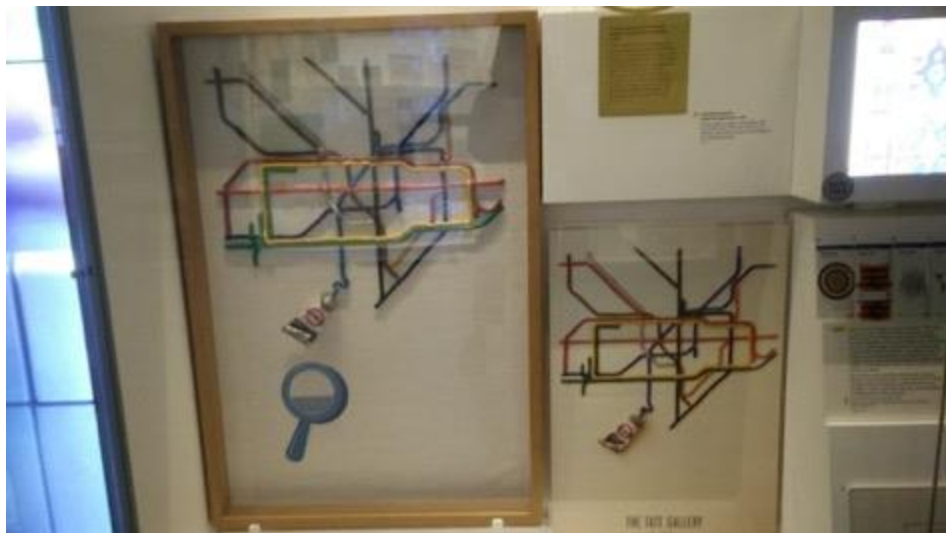
Figure 4.6 The *Tate Gallery by Tube* poster (1986b) and artwork (1986a) by David Booth (of the agency Fine White Line) as part of the permanent display at the London Transport Museum. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

As implied above, a single design can feature different types of exhibitions serving different purposes and carrying different messages. This indicates that being exhibits does not stabilise the values and meanings of London Transport posters. The Whistler poster was, for instance, used to celebrate both the artist and the contribution of the London Transport to the art and design industry. Additionally, the new meanings the

Museum give to a poster design can also be challenged. For instance, the Whistler poster (1928c), when it was displayed for a short time in *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*, was pointed out by a visitor to be offensive as the figure on the tree on the left of the image (Figure **4.7**) was regarded as racist. Although the Curator mentioned that this figure is a mythological creature,[10] the Museum decided to remove it from the display (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). According to the computer database, this poster design had also been displayed in at least five exhibitions prior to this *Poster parade*, although there is no documented evidence of whether this was considered racist in the past or whether the Museum was approached in this regard. The intended and unintended changes in meanings of the Whistler poster are represented in the following oppositions.

monographic exhibition	:	poster exhibition	:	*Poster parade*
artist's expertise	:	London Transport as art patron	:	myth and fairy tales
aesthetic	:	aesthetic	:	racist

Figure **4.7** The problematic creature in the Whistler poster (1928c) on display at *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*, which resulted in the poster's removal from display. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

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[10] Although it is unclear what this figure actually represents, according to Nikki Frater (2015), images of black servants appear in several of Whistler's works, including *The Dudley-Ward sisters* (1933), and staircase murals at 19 Hill Street (1930–1931) and 36 Hill Street (1936) in London. Whistler's insertion of the black servant caricatures is influenced by his interest in the eighteenth-century tastes and black culture in the 1920s and 1930s (Frater 2015).

Although themes vary among different types of exhibitions, the interpretive contents of the single design overlap between one exhibition to another. The most obvious example is the basic information provided for them when they are on display. For instance, either being used to illustrate a theme or an aesthetic value, the poster title, artist and year of the production are usually included. The diverse yet overlapping narratives show that to interpret the display, narratives usually combine many elements. It depends on which aspect is highlighted, which is partly based on the overall theme of the exhibition. Nevertheless, the display cannot be totally interpreted without regarding the visual design whatever the overall exhibition theme is. In this case, it can be argued that narratives of a poster are inevitably constrained by the image itself. The transformation of values and meanings within a poster design is thus related to both the visual characteristic of posters and the intervention by the curatorial mind, not just one or the other.

The examples discussed above illustrate the connection between different interpretations of the single design in different contexts: from advertising to different types of exhibitions. The first connection is the repurposing of a single visual design in different settings at different moments. Apart from that, there is a connection in terms of interpretation given to the poster design. However, I am by no means arguing that London Transport posters' multiple and transformative narratives are problematic. Neither do I criticise the Museum for inducing the new meanings given to posters that are diverted from their original context or beyond the purpose and intention of the producer, either the artist or the commissioning body. Instead, the discussion here has illustrated how arbitrary and multiple the visual content can potentially be. It invites reinterpretation and redefinition over time as they move into different contexts. The effect of time, which influences physical change and new meanings and values is tackled in the following two chapters. The second part of this section still emphasises the connected and interrelatedness of the changes that occur at the visual level of posters. New narratives are given, but not beyond the visual elements of these posters. That is why their movements are always connected to their past.

Multiple exhibitionary narratives: connection between different poster designs

This subsection argues that different London Transport poster designs in the museum setting are connected to one another mainly through exhibition narratives, which do not necessarily correspond to the advertising narrative each of them was given in the first place. Moreover, the visual design of one poster can inspire another, leading to a new image. One reason this potentially occurs is, in my view, due to the richness and ambiguity of visual elements which can be reinterpreted over and over in a variety of ways.

As discussed above, a single design can be part of different exhibition narratives. The new narratives do not necessarily directly echo the original message. Likewise, one design can be drawn and make connection with others in different exhibitions. One means by which the Museum does so is to tie them with an overall theme of the exhibition. For instance, the Whistler, Wadsworth and Stevens posters were connected by the museum institution where they were advertised in *Poster art 150*. Together with other posters, they became representative of urban attractions including museums, zoos, parks, etc. More obviously, the thematic connection is employed in curating the *Poster parade* series. In this case, posters designed by different artists in different years, having different artistic styles made with different techniques become assembled and related. In the exhibitionary context, it depends on which aspect of a poster design is highlighted. This explains why one design can be connected to others through a variety of themes. The Cooper poster (1928c), for instance, featured in *Poster parade: north, south, east, west* in 2012 and then in *Reimagining historic posters* in 2017.

While *Poster parade* connects poster designs through themes and looks, the Art and Poster Store display links posters through the chronological order and the guiding narratives told about them as mentioned earlier. According to the former Senior Curator, by hanging posters produced in the same era together, it makes sense to tell a story about them (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). However, as a design can fit many *Poster parade* themes, it can also fit different guiding narratives, which give them an opportunity to connect with a wide range of other designs.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the interpretation of each design might not entirely represent the theme it illustrates. As previously pointed out, the label of each exhibit usually includes information about its production stage. The original context provided can act as a reminder that the exhibitionary narratives are constructed and their museum values and meanings are given to the originally advertising materials, whether or not the viewer is aware. Additionally, this style of label indicates that posters in the display setting are treated in a similar fashion as art objects. Yet this does not guarantee that London Transport posters as exhibits carry the equal value with the artwork on which it is based. This is discussed in the following section on the transformation of London Transport posters at the material level (pp. 129–150).

Furthermore, archived in the Museum, London Transport posters of the past can be a resource for the creation of other designs. In other words, a poster design can inspire later designs, which is exemplified by examining *Poster parade: reimagining historic posters*. In this case, the motif in the Cooper poster appears in at least two later designs by Transport for London (see Figure **4.2**). Next to the Cooper poster (1928c) is *Butterflies* by Derrick Sayer (1952). It is the image part of the pair posters advertising attractions in London where visitors can see butterflies, which unquestionably includes the Natural History Museum. The poster on the left, however, is not at all relevant to the institution. It advertises the contactless Oyster card. As the reader can infer from this *Poster parade*, these advertising prints were later repurposed into exhibits themselves. Removed from the advertising context, their advertising values are replaced by museum values. In this case, it can be argued that the itineraries of London Transport posters are continual, as well as multiplied and connected to different designs.

By attempting to understand how connections between different poster designs are influenced by exhibition narratives, I had the opportunity to reflect on my intervention on posters' values and meanings. According to the itinerary approach, the life or journeys of objects begin as 'we enter them' (Joyce and Gillespie 2015: 3). The discussion above has demonstrated how the re-contextualisation of poster designs within the museum setting influence the change. However, it can also be argued that my project makes a connection between the five designs selected as units of analysis. It does so through the process of identifying the units of analysis which reveals certain shared

aspects, as discussed in Chapter 2. More importantly, the continuous changes of stories told about a poster suggests that values and meanings attached to the connection between posters in the new context can potentially be beyond the intentionality and expectation of the producer. As London Transport posters became the topic of my study, their itineraries continued in a similar fashion to when they became part of the museum collections and exhibitions.

London Transport posters' changing values and meanings at the material level

While the previous sections mainly focussed on the change and connection in terms of the interpretation of visual design, this section looks at London Transport posters as material objects. As part of the repurposing, some of the London Transport posters were turned into the London Transport Museum's collection. Through the collecting practice, each copy of the posters was given a new role and the Museum's treatment of them was due to such a new function. As a museum object, a poster is acquisitioned, conserved, documented and stored in a way that prevents it from being ephemeral. From time to time posters in the museum collection becomes exhibits. Although the exhibition narratives are mainly related to visual design in order to communicate the interpretive message, each exhibition inevitably involves the use of many other objects apart from posters. This is how the change in values and meanings at the material level occurs while connecting one poster with material objects of different types and forms. The interactions and interrelation between objects are not inclusive to the museum setting, but continual and gradual. This is reaffirmed by the investigation of the journeys of London Transport posters prior to their advertising origin and after being museum displays.

Posters as museum collection: connection between prints with the same design

In general, printed posters as advertising are produced to be displayed temporarily. After the advertising period is over, a poster is supposed to be removed and discarded. The materials required in the production of them are therefore ephemeral and relatively

inexpensive. This is also true for most copies of London Transport posters. However, due to their attractive designs, some copies were turned into private collections. It is also important to note that some London Transport posters were produced to be bought. For instance, *Stick to London's model bus* (1927; Figure **4.8**) by Frank Mason can be cut into pieces to make models. Elsie Henderson's *Underground aids to perplexed parents* (1917; Figure **4.9**) also has a dual purpose: it was primarily publicity but at the same time could be coloured at home (Dobbin 2008). While these cases are unusual for London Transport posters, the repurposing of them into objects-for-purchase and playthings does exemplify the potential of posters' values and meanings to be multiple and transformative. Yet the private consumption in this case does not attempt to constrain the ephemerality of posters but rather make use of them, which is unlike the Museum's repurposing them into collections and exhibits.

Figure **4.8** *Stick to London's model bus* (1927) by Frank Mason © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Figure 4.9 *Underground aids to perplexed parents* (1917) by Elsie Henderson © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

In fact, London Transport posters have been recognised for their aesthetic values from the beginning. Since the early twentieth century, artists were commissioned to produce artworks on which the posters are based. Acknowledging the artistic value of this commercial art, the late Managing Director Pick started to give some samples of London Transport posters to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1911, which later became part of the V&A's permanent collection (Dobbin 2008; Flood 2008). The company also archived several copies of London Transport posters themselves. When the Museum was established in 1980, these posters then formed part of today's Poster Collection (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

While some London Transport posters, including the Whistler, Wadsworth, Cooper and Kauffer posters, were exhibited in other institutions before the establishment of the London Transport Museum, most poster exhibitions and displays at the Museum nowadays feature objects from its collections. The only exception is *Poster parade: reimagining the historic posters,* in which a poster was acquired from Transport for London (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Collection management can be considered part of these posters'

journeys from advertising materials to museum exhibits. It also plays an important role in enhancing the transformation of their values, especially at the material level. It is therefore included in the response to the research question.

Figure 4.10 The second copy of the Cooper poster (1928c) on the left and the artwork (1928a) on the right. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Given statuses as museum objects, London Transport posters are no longer treated as ephemera. A wide range of activities as part of curatorial practice were done to them in order to slow down degradation and extend their lifespan (also see the Ephemerality section in Chapter 5, pp. 178–187). Paradoxically, the attempt to slow down the material change inevitably leads to the transformation in values and meanings. That is to say, when copies of each London Transport poster are accessioned into the Museum's Poster Collection, their durability is added by, for example, being conserved. Except for those framed and hung on the wall as decoration as discussed in the previous section, most prints are put in clear Melinex sleeves and kept lying flat in drawers in the Poster Store. This method for long-term storage is also recommended by the poster dealer Twentieth Century Posters (2020). The condition of each print is also regularly

checked and recorded. For instance, the second copy of the Kauffer poster (1922b) is indicated as having a poor condition. Occasionally, a special treatment is needed, such as when a poster is to be used as an exhibit. The poster that has been conserved before being exhibited is the second copy of the Cooper (1928c). In 2016, as it is recorded, the print was sent to Clare Reynolds for both conservation and mounting. A year later, it was displayed at *Poster parade: reimagining historic posters*. In 2018, the artwork of the Cooper poster (Cooper 1928a) was also sent to PH7 for conservation (Figure **4.10**). It is not recorded, however, if it was in poor condition and/or to be on display soon. London Transport posters' shift (at the material level) from publicity materials to museum objects is represented in the following oppositions.

publicity materials   :   museum objects
short-lived   :   damage minimised
disposed of   :   kept in stores

Apart from the accessioned prints of each poster design, the Museum used to collect several other copies to be used for other purposes than exhibits. The Museum refers to these 'extra' copies as support-duplicates (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). They are given a reference number but not necessarily in sequence with the accessioned copies. For example, the three accessioned copies of the Stevens poster are numbered 1983/4/7870, 1983/4/7871 and 1983/4/7872 (Stevens 1972a, 1972b, 1972c). The first set of numbers indicates the year of acquisition. The second set suggests a category. Four in this case represents the Poster Collection. The last set of numbers indicates the order of the object added into the collection. The other seven copies of the Stevens poster, which are categorised as support-duplicates, are numbered 1999/41995 to 42000 and 2000/3652 (Stevens 1972d, 1972e, 1972f, 1972g, 1972h, 1972i, 1972j). These were catalogued using a current system in which the number is generated automatically. While the first half similarly indicates the year, the second represents the order of object acquisitioned regardless of the category (Email from Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 27 June 2018. pers. comm.).

The two formats of acquisition number first show that the support-duplicates of the Stevens poster were not catalogued until 20 years after the three accessioned copies

were, although all were produced at the same time. Another important implication is that the process of de-contextualising and re-contextualising objects in the museum setting is itself not static. At present, the Museum no longer collects support-duplicates. According to the Curator, there are no written documents recording the exact date when the collection of support-duplicates started. However, this practice began at the same time when the Museum started to acquire London Transport posters and continued for around two decades. For contemporary posters, they are sold at the Museum's shop. As the production cost is rather inexpensive, extra copies are not worth collecting as support-duplicates, according to the Curator (Email from Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018 and 16 October 2019. pers. comm.).

As the museum practice is changing, the statuses of posters in the museum context are unstable. Being museum objects (in the sense that they are kept and used by the Museum) does not mean that all the London Transport posters are given equal status. They are in fact hierarchical. While the accessioned prints are meant to be used as exhibits, support-duplicates are used for other purpose, both commercial and non-commercial, according to the Curator (Email from Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018 and 16 October 2019. pers. comm.). The hierarchy between the values of posters in the museum context is also related to the designs of artworks on which they were based.

Apart from poster prints, the London Transport Museum acquired some of the artworks that inspired the poster designs. For instance, the Museum collected both the artwork and the prints of the Cooper and Stevens posters, but not necessarily at the same time. According to the accession number, the Stevens artwork (1972k) was acquired over a decade after the poster prints. As museum objects, artworks have also been conserved and insured. Unlike prints, however, artworks are kept in the Art Store. Most of them are mounted and framed and then hung on the baton. This includes the artwork of the Stevens poster (1972k; Figure **4.11**). The artwork of the Cooper poster (1928a) is an exception due to its poor condition. It is kept flat and covered with a piece of paper to protect it from the light (see Figure **4.10**). Thus, it seems that the aesthetic value of advertising poster designs is recognised so that they become museum objects. However, the accessioned posters might not be considered by the Museum as worthy as the

artworks inspiring the designs. Yet it is higher in the hierarchy compared to support-duplicates, even though both were contemporaries at the production stage (also see Figure **4.12**).

Figure 4.11 A view of Art Store with the artwork of the Stevens poster (1972k) on the bottom right. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 4.12 A diagram comparing different (and potentially hierarchical) values assigned to objects related to the Stevens design

This section has discussed the transformation of the posters of a single design at the material level as they became museum objects. In the original, advertising context, London Transport posters were supposed to be short-lived. Being displayed either outdoors or in Underground stations, they were not necessarily handled with care. As museum objects, the ephemerality of the posters has, however, been slowed down. Additionally, this section has pointed out that the repurposing does not give the poster equal value to the artwork. Those labelled as support-duplicates on the other hand, are assigned lowest museal status and not meant to be exhibited at all, even though they are archived in the Museum. This shows the hierarchical relations between them which did not appear in their prior advertising context. By moving on to look beyond the exhibitionary setting, the relations between the posters and other objects become more evident.

Posters beyond the exhibitionary context: connection with other types of objects

The last part of this chapter concentrates on the change of posters' values and meanings through their connection with other objects. As discussed above, exhibitionary narratives potentially alter the values and meanings of the visual design. Exhibitionary values are also varied and changeable. As part of creating new narratives, posters and other objects are assembled. Posters in new narratives can also lead to the production of other objects with the same design and beyond. Apart from addressing those issues, this section briefly touches upon the past journeys of posters: their production stage and before. In doing so, it reaffirms the relational nature of transformation in London Transport posters' values and meanings and how London Transport posters are connected to other objects along their itineraries.

Posters now and after

Data collected during primary research indicates that turning London Transport posters into museum exhibits always requires the use of other objects to create the exhibitionary effect. How London Transport posters are displayed in the gallery space is different from when they were displayed as publicity materials. Similar to other types of visual art

objects in general, posters on display in a museum or gallery are mounted and framed. The use of these props as part of interpretation not only turns poster prints into exhibits, but it also alters their physical qualities. The posters as exhibits become bigger and heavier. In some cases, mounts cover small parts of the posters. For instance, the black border of the Wadsworth poster in the Poster Store is covered by a creamy mount. In this case, the black motif becomes less prominent than the creamy colour of the frame and paper, which matches the background of the poster (Figure **4.13**–Figure **4.14**).

Apart from what is attached to posters, the locations where they are located also influences the change in their values and meanings. As exhibits, London Transport posters are situated in either the gallery or the Store. Either place is composed of materials, both visible and invisible. Ingold (2007), for example, draws on James Gibson (1979) to highlight that rather than viewing a room as an empty space, it can be seen as materials in the form of medium, substances and surfaces. Substance refers to solid stuff, while medium is invisible, which in this case might be air, temperature and lighting. Surface is where substances and medium interacts. Examples of surfaces are in my view types of objects we are familiar with, such as flooring, ceiling, drawers, props, and artefacts themselves (also see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195). All of these materials are necessary for London Transport posters to function as exhibits. At the same time, all these elements influence how the viewer interacts with and perceives these posters. Their encounters with museum visitors are part of the London Transport posters' itineraries. This point is developed further in Chapter 6.

Figure 4.13 The third copy of the Wadsworth poster (1936c) with a black border. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 4.14 The first copy of the Wadsworth poster (1936a), mounted and framed in cream, which is displayed on the wall in the Poster Store. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Additionally, London Transport posters as exhibits can lead to the production of other objects. At the visual level, a poster can inspire another design. The reproduction of posters as object-for-purchase sometimes results from a poster display or it is displayed in order to attract buyers. In the case of *Poster parade* as discussed above, one of the main purposes is to sell the reproduction. A reproduction can be in the same size and format, or different. For instance, reproductions of the Wadsworth poster are now available to purchase in the double royal format and smaller-sized prints at the London Transport Museum Shop (see pp. 153–160, for discussion about types of objects sharing the same poster design). It is worth noting that the reproduction and the poster-inspired design are always inscribed on the surface of a material object. Apart from being printed on a piece of paper, poster images can appear on a wide range of objects, such as umbrellas, pillows, bags and stationery, as exemplified by objects-for-purchase sold at the Museum Shop. Along with the reproduction of posters on physical objects, the image reproduction in fact extends the journeys of London Transport poster designs in the digital format as the Museum offers image licensing service for different uses, including media and websites (London Transport Museum 2020c). In short, an image London Transport poster design from the Museum's collection can be reproduced onto the surface of various material forms. The differences between accessioned prints and reproductions are represented in the following oppositions.

accessioned print   :   reproduction
museum exhibit   :   object-for-purchase
double royal   :   double-royal
             postcard
paper   :   paper
             fabric
             plastic
             media

Not only reproductions of London Transport posters but also those that are part of the Museum's collections can be turned into objects-for-purchase. As a result, these items are permanently removed from the Museum's collection. For instance, 326 support-duplicates were disposed of from the Museum's collection of spares to be offered for sale at Christie's on 4 October 2012 (Christie's 2012; Pitts 2012). The sale has an implication in terms of changing values and meanings of London Transport posters.

That is, these selections of support-duplicates were repurposed from publicity materials to museum objects and then objects-for-purchase and probably later become part of private collections.[11] As shown in the Christie's auction result (2012), the price of each item varied, from a few hundreds to over ten thousand British pounds. For example, the realised price for *Spring on Wimbledon Common* (1924) by Phillip Conrad was £250. The item sold with the highest price in this sale was in fact a support-duplicate of the Wadsworth poster. The estimated price was £8,000–£12,000, while the final hammer price was £37,250. The auction brought £1,026,750, including buyer's premium (Christie's 2012). Although there was no record of the physical conditions in the Museum's database, it is assumed that the duplicate copies offered for sale were in good conditions. As advertised on the Christie's website, the market value of each poster lies in its rarity and condition, apart from its accessible price, medium and aesthetic quality (Pitts 2012).

More importantly, the auction of support-duplicates at Christie's has an ethical implication, as it involves the disposal of items from museum collections. According to the Director of the London Transport Museum Sam Mullins, the Museum had collaborated with Transport for London and the Museums Associations to make sure that the sale achieves the professional standards for ethical disposal of collections (Pitts 2012). The disposal of support-duplicates of London Transport posters corresponded to the Museums Association's *Disposal toolkit* (2020) in the sense that these items were duplicates and underused. As pointed out by the Curator, they were in the backlogs (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Moreover, the sums raised in the disposal was intended to be held in trust by the Museum for use in acquisition, conservation and restoration of collections, as pointed out by Lionie Pitts (2012). This is in accordance with the Museums Association (2020: 10)'s guidance on methods of curatorially motivated disposal:

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[11] According to the Curator, items in the London Transport Museum's Poster Collection have never been posted for advertising, unlike their contemporaries. They were directly archived by London Transport (Email from Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018 and 16 October 2019. pers. comm.). Although some copies entered the museum archive directly at the time of printing, this research still regards advertising as the original function of London Transport posters (For further discussion, see the Physical collections section in Chapter 5, pp. 160–167).

Any money raised as a result of disposal through sale should be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the museum's collection. Money raised should be invested in the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection (for example, by creating or increasing an endowment, making new acquisitions or making a significant capital investment which will bring long-term benefit to the existing museum).

Although this research mainly concentrates on the itineraries of London Transport posters from advertising to museum exhibits, the examination of disposal of support-duplicates through sale reaffirms that the values of London Transport posters continue to change outside the museum sphere. While the museum status of the sale items was removed, the outcomes of the sale, however, help prolong the museum function and value of those posters that are still in the collections. Both of the physical posters and their images held in the Museum also continue to be interacted with in various ways for different purposes.
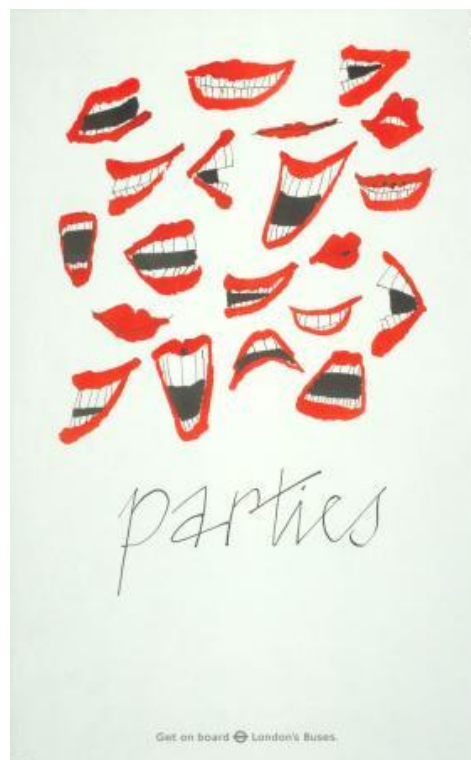
Figure 4.15 *Parties* by Alan Fletcher (1993) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Apart from objects-for-purchase in both physical and digital formats, London Transport posters have inspired different types of objects for educational purposes, as exemplified by the collaboration between the Museum and Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, in 2013. In this programme, master's students created a short animation video based on a poster design in the Museum's Collection. One example is an animated poster (London Transport Museum 2013a) based on *Parties* by Alan Fletcher (1993; Figure **4.15**), designed two decades earlier. This case affirms how the itineraries of an object can incorporate a variety of objects and entities in different forms, as well as immaterial things such as ideas and digital media.

Posters' past journeys

Although the 'past' itineraries of posters were originally not the main focus of this project, their histories emerged during primary research. They also have a significant implication in understanding the transformative nature of London Transport posters. By tracing back to the stage when London Transport artworks and poster prints were produced and even before that, the reader can see more clearly the connection between different types of objects that has developed over time, while their values and meanings change.

The relations between posters and artworks extend far beyond the museum context. They also usually involve objects of different types and forms. By tracing the journeys of London Transport posters backwards even to the time before they became advertising, it is possible to see the chain of the continual interrelations between objects. As mentioned above, Pick established a campaign commissioning artists to design posters in 1908. The commissioned artworks were later turned into poster prints. Printing technique changed through time due to the advancement of technology. For London Transport posters produced in the 1920s and 1930s, the technique widely used was lithography. In most cases, the printer was responsible for this process, while a few artists did it themselves (Powers 2008). After going through the lithographic making process, the design based on the original artworks, as a result, appears slightly different on the poster prints.
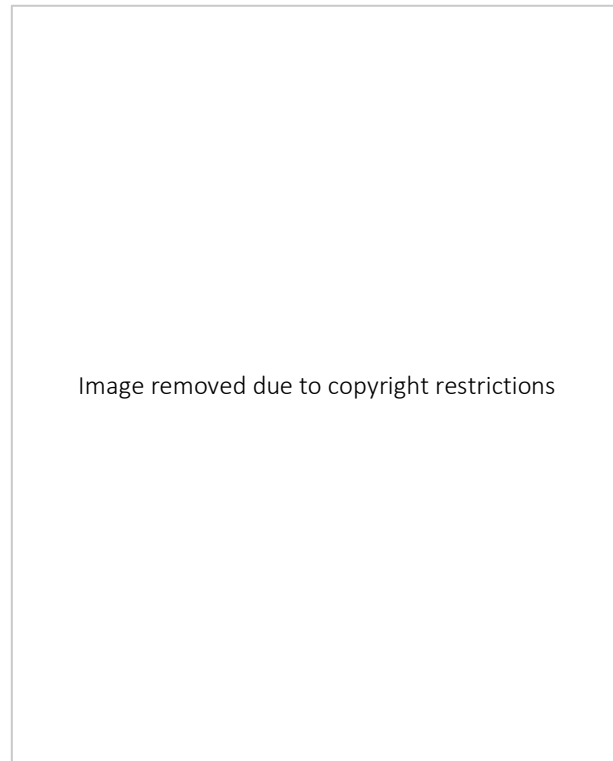
Figure 4.16 *Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool* (1919) by Wadsworth in Hewison (2015)

Apart from considering the artworks on which the posters are based, it is interesting to trace where the designs of the artworks came from. Despite different materialities, most artworks inspiring London Transport posters are usually flat and have quite similar sizes to poster prints. Nevertheless, some of the artworks were inspired by objects with very different material qualities, or even by non-objects. For example, the artworks for the Wadsworth and the Whistler posters were based on artworks produced earlier. The Wadsworth artwork, which is a woodcut, was reworked from a linocut illustration that he had made during the First World War (Green 2001). This illustration was itself based on a huge painting, *Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool,* produced by the same artist. This painting is now on display at the National Gallery of Canada, in Ottawa (Figure **4.16**). Despite a similar design showing the dazzle pattern on the ships in the centre, the materialities of this work are very different from the Wadsworth poster. The painting was made by oil on canvas. The size is as big as 304.8 x 243.8 cm (National Gallery of Canada 2020), compared to the double royal print, which is 508 x 762 mm. The size of the woodcut is also different, and it includes only the image in the centre of the poster

prints (see Figure **1.7**). The variety is extended when this design was made into an object-for-purchase as discussed above (see the Posters now and after section, pp. 136–136).

Figure **4.17** *Rex Whistler Restaurant, Tate Britain* (Tate Photography 2020), Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

In the case of the Whistler poster and artwork, there is even more diversity in terms of design. What inspires this artwork is the mural, *The expedition in pursuit of rare meats* (1927), of the Rex Whistler Restaurant (formerly called the Refreshment Room) at Tate Britain, which was intended to attract upper-middle class customers (Birchall 2005; Figure **4.17**).12 As Heather Birchall (2005) points out, the narrative of this mural is set in an imaginary town called Epicurania. The story depicts a journey undertaken by a group

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12 Similar to the Whistler poster (Figure **1.6**), at least two images of a fictional black character appear on the mural of the Rex Whistler restaurant (also see the Changes in narrative section, pp. 115–126, for discussion about the problematic figure in the Whistler poster).

of Epicurian hunters to bring back rare foods to the town. The design is a mixture of fantasy and reality as well as includes allusions to real people and architectural buildings and landscape. One year later, Whistler designed a poster the Restaurant, but it was never produced probably because it was considered too violent (Cecil and Cecil 2012; Figure **4.18**).

Image removed due to copyright restrictions
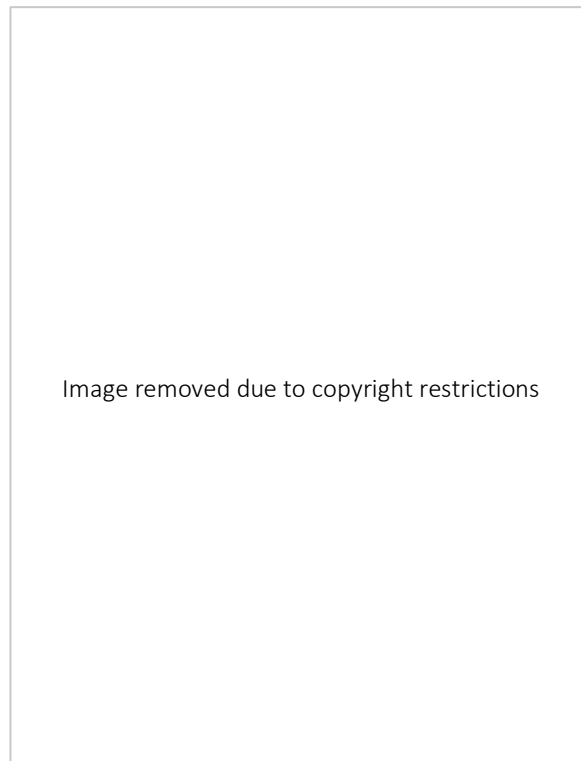
Figure 4.18 A watercolour artwork for the Rex Whistler Restaurant's poster, which was not produced (Cecil and Cecil 2012: 50)

Regarding Whistler's design for London Transport poster and artwork inspired by the mural, the figures of two well-dressed ladies drinking at a table were added to the foreground with the Epicuranians looking at them in the background (see Figure **1.6**).[13] With all the components, the poster then represents the atmosphere at the restaurant instead of only the wall (Birchall 2005; Green 2001). This makes this relation between the poster design and the mural different from that between the poster and the artwork. In

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[13] Interestingly, these elements (two ladies in the foreground) make the Whistler poster and artwork rather similar to the sketch for the Restaurant poster that has never been produced.

terms of size, the difference is even greater than in the Wadsworth case. The mural, although flat, describes 180 degrees around the room that is almost 60 feet long and over 30 feet wide (Frater 2015). This affects how the viewer sees it, as the mural can be viewed only partially when facing one direction. The poster, in turn, represents only part of the mural and the diners within the mural environment.

Regarding the Stevens artwork and poster designs (Figure **1.8**), they can be considered to be inspired by art, but in this case it is a combination of different works and styles adapted into one artwork. That is to say, the female figure in the Stevens poster echoes Picasso's Cubist style without taking any element from his actual work (Green 2001). At the background of the Stevens poster and artwork, on the other hand, are direct representations of four paintings in the National Gallery London, including Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini portrait* (1434), J M W Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839), Canaletto's *Venice: The Basin of San Marco on Ascension Day* (circa 1740) and Peter Paul Rubens's *Le Chapeau de Paille* (1622–5). The difference is that they are made into Abstract drawings by chalk, while the original works are oil paintings in the Realist style (see Figure **1.8**). When turning this artwork into a poster print, the drawings are replaced by the photographic reproductions of these paintings. Interestingly, this case is similar to the Whistler in the way that they both represent a scene with inspiring works *in situ*. This is unlike the Wadsworth artwork, which directly imitates another work of art, and with the text 'Imperial War Museum' and transport information added when the artwork was later turned into the poster.

Aside from art inspiration, some artworks commissioned by London Transport were inspired by objects of different forms and/or non-objects. I find the Cooper design very interesting in this regard (also see Figure **1.5**). The image of the butterfly can be considered to represent a collection at the Natural History Museum, which the poster originally advertised. Regarding the butterfly as part of the collection, it can then be argued that it is a museum object. However, this object used to be a living creature before it was collected and preserved. This raises a question of what is considered an object and what is not. The nature of objects is discussed in the next chapter (see Chapter 5, pp. 152–195). At this point, it is worth noting that itineraries of an object potentially involve

and intersect with different types of objects and entities depending upon how far the movement is traced.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions
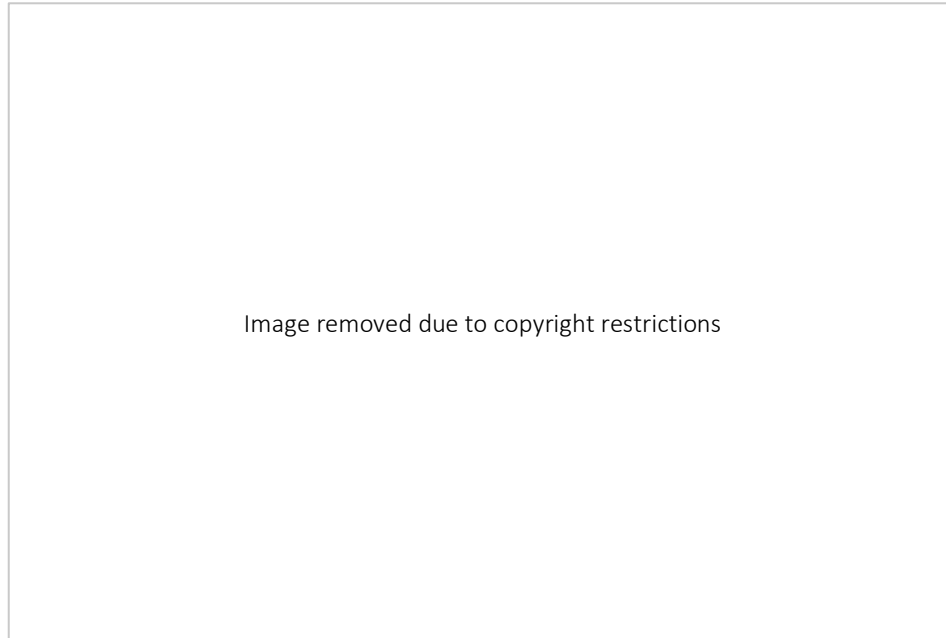
Figure 4.19 The Great Fire of London model at the Museum of London with the new audio-visual effect (Hayward 2010)

In some cases, the journeys of posters are connected to the abstract, such as stories and events. This is exemplified by the Kauffer poster (Figure **1.4**). According to Oliver Green (2011), the design of this poster is based on the illuminated Great Fire of London model now displayed at the Museum of London with new audio-visual effects (Figure **4.19**). It can be said that the Vorticist-style image in the centre of the poster (Halliday 2011) represents St Paul's Cathedral and surrounding buildings, which are on fire. What is no less important than the model inspiring the design is the story about the 1666 Great Fire itself. This is supported by the fact that the fire dominates the majority of the space of the image as well as the text underneath, reading 'London History at the London Museum'.
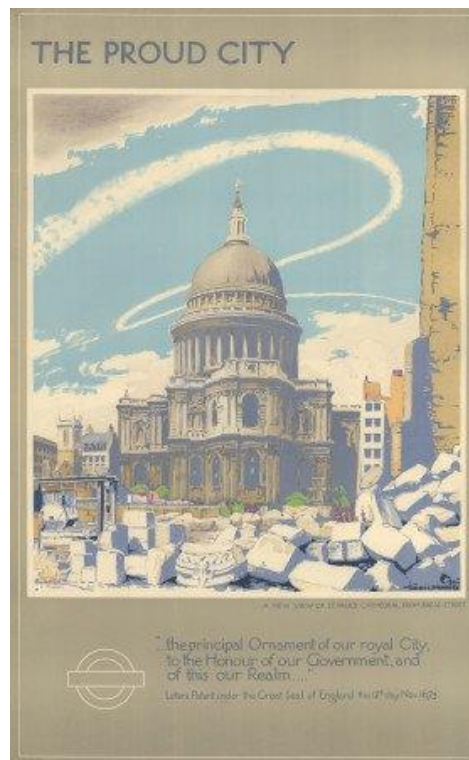
Figure 4.20 *The proud city: St Paul's Cathedral* (1944) by Walter E Spradley © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Apart from the Kauffer design, there are a few other London Transport posters that feature St Paul's. For example, *The proud city: St Paul's Cathedral* (1944) designed by Walter E Spradley, is regarded as 'symbolic of the spirit of the people, not only of London, but of Britain itself; the spirit of a nation whose head was bloodied and unbowed' (Advertiser's Weekly 1944: 461 cited in Lewis and Bownes 2008). According to Bex Lewis and David Bownes (2018), the standing Cathedral is surrounded by debris with an aeroplane vapour trail over, which emphasises the strength of Britain during the Second World War (Figure **4.20**). Similar denotation can be found in the famous photograph of St Paul's in the midst of the ruins (Figure **4.21**), which have been reproduced many times as pointed out in a chapter by Sheila Watson (2009). The image first appeared on the front page of the *Daily Mail* on the 31st of December 1940, with the headline emphasising the British survival in warfare. Nonetheless, it appeared a few days later in a German paper to represent the fall of London. Half a century after the Second World War, this photograph was reused in a display at the Churchill Museum in London. According to Watson (2009), it accompanies a speech by one of the most notable British Prime

Ministers, Winston Churchill, in order to evoke visitors' emotional responses. The representations and interpretations of this St Paul's image, although not included in the units of analysis, does demonstrate the interconnection between images, events, buildings, people and identities, both in the political context and the exhibitionary one.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions
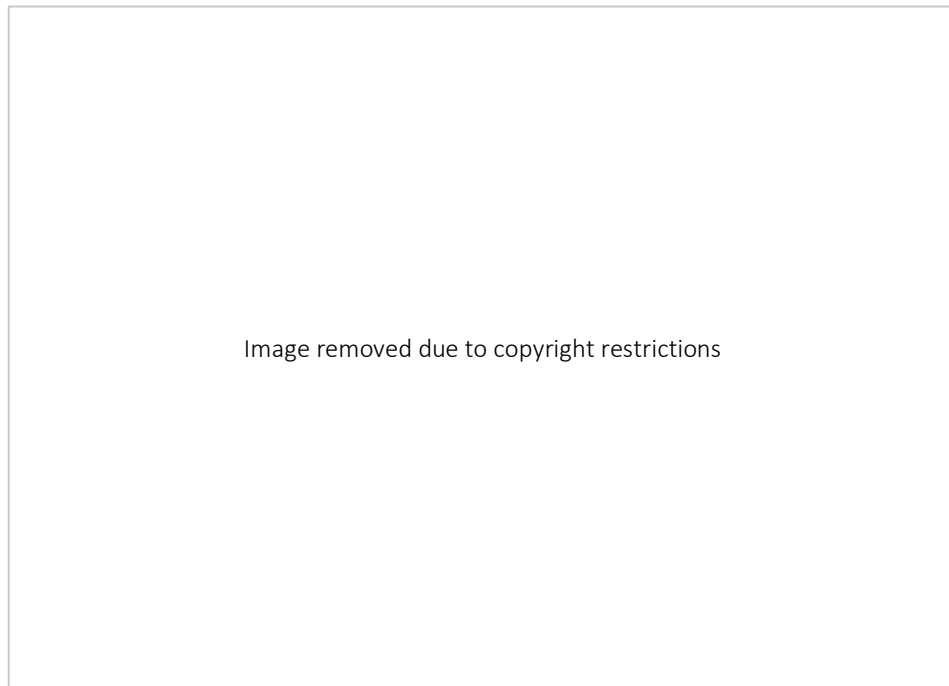
Figure 4.21 The famous image of St Paul's Cathedral in the midst of fire, smoke and ruin. It first featured on the front page of the Daily Mail on 31 December 1940 and has been reproduced many times. (Watson 2009: 219)

The farther the itineraries of London posters are traced, then, the clearer their connections to other objects and non-objects become. Due to these interrelations and interactions, the values and meanings gradually change. This section has focussed on the material level of such a transformation. Within each unit of analysis or a single poster design, objects of different forms that carry each visual image perform different roles in a museum setting based on the statuses and values given. The same visual design can appear on an exhibit, object-for-purchase, or even a digital object. Most of the time, the assigned roles cannot be fulfilled without them being assembled with objects of other types and forms for functional, interpretive and decorative purposes. Before the time the London Transport poster designs were created, up to today, when they appear on a

variety of material forms, their itineraries have never been stable. Their values and meanings continue to change as this section has demonstrated.

Conclusion

This chapter has applied the object itinerary framework as a method of following the movements of London Transport posters and as a theoretical framework for analysing how the posters' values and meanings have gradually transformed. It started with a statement responding to the key research question: their values and meanings change, but different moments in the transformation are integrally connected and interrelated to one another throughout their journeys. This first thematic chapter then demonstrated that object itineraries was a suitable approach to the study of posters. It is a framework that recognises the multiplicity of objects without imposing human characteristics onto them.

What this chapter has added to the itinerary approach is the recognition that the stories of object itineraries are from the perspective of the narrator, which are subjective and able to represent only certain parts and aspects. By telling stories about the journeys of London Transport posters, I as a researcher inevitably extended their journeys. Not only were the advertising materials turned into exhibits, but these exhibits then became the object of study in this PhD research project. This means that both the London Transport Museum's repurposing of London Transport posters and my study of them influenced the changes in the posters' values and meanings. The objects based on the Kauffer, Whistler, Cooper, Wadsworth and Stevens design became related not only in exhibitions, but also in my project, although they were produced at different times by different artists.

Additionally, this chapter has attempted to answer three subsidiary questions regarding the processes, narratives and purposes of poster exhibitions, albeit rather implicitly. In general, the purposes and types of poster exhibitions predict the messages they are meant to convey. The examination of the narratives led to an understanding of the change in London Transport posters' values and meanings at the visual level. As exhibits, the aesthetic value is usually highlighted. The visual design has been employed

to represent a wide range of messages. Even when the written text on a poster design is used to deliver an exhibition narrative, it is rather symbolic or representative instead of informative. The exhibition narratives have also assembled and connected different poster designs together.

It is true that the narratives of poster exhibitions are mainly related to the visual design of posters instead of their materialities. However, as part of the re-contextualisation in the museum setting, each poster has been treated as an object. The repurposing of these publicity materials into museum exhibits involves activities that trigger new roles and statuses. The posters' new function as museum objects can also be altered or lead to the connection with and production of other objects. The transformation that continually occurs across advertising and exhibitionary spaces is potentially beyond the expectation and intentionality of the producer.

In short, this chapter has shown that the interrelation between various objects has been occurring continuously along with the change in their values and meanings, both at the visual and the material levels. The visual and material qualities of London Transport posters therefore contribute to an understanding of the singularity and multiplicity of objects. This is to be analysed in detail in the second thematic chapter.

Chapter 5
Materialities of London Transport posters

Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter 4) traced how London Transport posters have moved from their original function as publicity materials to the current status as museum objects (and beyond). This chapter has two aims. First, it addresses the other two subsidiary questions: what are the criteria for selecting London Transport posters for exhibitions? And to what extent do the materialities of London Transport posters influence changes in their values and meanings? The second aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical proposition: which material characteristics of museum objects are revealed by the case study and how the museum interacts with them.

In fact, the two research questions being tackled here are closely related to each other. Criteria for selecting poster exhibits echo the impact of materialities, as well as how and why the London Transport Museum responds to them in certain ways. Apart from that, the discussion in this chapter expands the research questions. Along with exhibition making, field data revealed that other aspects of the Museum's collection management, such as documentation and cataloguing, contribute to an understanding of materialities and the nature of museum objects in general.

The chapter's core theme of object materialities frames its structure. The first section briefly discusses the four different types of objects sharing the same visual designs that are collected by the Museum: prints, artworks, reprints and reproductions. The variety of object types within each unit of analysis exemplifies multiplicity, one of the most important material qualities of London Transport posters, which will be addressed subsequently. Apart from that, this chapter includes the analysis of ephemerality, as well as some other key material characteristics such as reproducibility, size, flatness and light weight of the posters. The discussion of each of these physical qualities is also accompanied by how the Museum responds to them in theory and practice, both in relation to collection management and exhibition making.

Types of objects based on the same poster design

Different types of objects and copies of the same object types have been mentioned from time to time in this thesis. Without attempting to be repetitive, this chapter looks in more detail at the unique material characteristics of each form of object carrying a poster design. This provides a scope and contextual information for understanding the material abundance of London Transport posters with which the Museum has to interact. It also implies the importance of materialities of the so-called visual culture, like advertising posters in the actual museum practice.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, London Transport's former Managing Director Pick aimed to make the posters more than mere advertising. He planned to have them exemplify art and design development. His intention was demonstrated by London Transport's commissioning programme he initiated. Not only was he active with the production and design of posters but Pick also envisioned the posters as part of museum collection (see the Posters as museum collection section in Chapter 4, pp. 129–136). Apart from printed posters, the London Transport Museum now collects and creates other forms of objects carrying London Transport poster designs. Although being aware during the pilot study that each unit of analysis encompassed the Poster, Artwork and Ephemeral Collections (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68), the documentary research, especially within the computer database, revealed that the number of the accessioned objects based on the five designs was far larger than I imagined. For each London Transport poster design, the following four types of objects are usually collected at the Museum: poster prints, an artwork, reprints and reproductions. Each of these object types in the collection might also include more than one copy.

Prints

According to Gerald Ward (2008), prints refer to 'Images or designs impressed or stamped on a support (e.g. paper or fabric). The term encompasses a wide variety of techniques used to produce multiple versions of an original design'. While some prints are meant to be singular art objects, others serve functional purposes, such as to multiply existing designs or objects. Most well-known London Transport posters were produced

using the colour-lithographic technique. Lithography, as Ward (2008) describes, is 'Planographic printmaking technique based on the antipathy of grease and water, and the attraction of these two substances to others of a similar nature and to a prepared surface of porous limestone or grained metal' (for the discussion of lithographic posters, see the London Transport posters section in Chapter 1, pp. 22–26). Among the four types of objects based on each London Transport poster design, the Museum has more copies of poster prints than any others. Yet how many copies of them are collected has changed over time. The guidelines for collecting prints in the current practice is mainly based on the Museum's list of pre-approved acquisitions (London Transport Museum 2018). As the document title suggests, objects under the list can be accessioned straight away without being approved by the Museum's Collection Development Group (CDG). Types of prints that are included in the list are (1) posters commissioned by Transport for London (TfL), London Transport or predecessors, (2) posters commissioned by Art on the Underground (AOTU), (3) posters commissioned by Poems on the Underground (POTU) and (4) exhibition posters produced by the Museum. Apart from prints, other ephemera items such as maps, timetables and operational documents produced by TfL are included in the list.

Moreover, the maximum quantity of poster prints with the same design that can be accessioned is three, except for the Museum exhibition posters which are limited to only one copy. In case the poster is printed in more than one size, three copies of the most common size, which is double royal, are accessioned together with one copy of any other size if available (London Transport Museum 2018). In the past, as shown in the Museum's computer database, more than three copies of prints can be accessioned, but some of these are categorised as support-duplicates, which are to be used for other purposes than being exhibits.

Why does the Museum collect more than one copy of the poster prints that carry the same design? According to the former Senior Curator (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.), it is because multiple prints can be stored and displayed at the same time. For instance, if one copy were already on display in an exhibition at the Museum's main site, another could be hung to decorate the Poster Store and used as part of the narrative for the Poster Art

Tour at the Depot. The third copy would then be kept in a drawer in the Poster Store. If none of the copies are used for display, all of them are kept in the drawer(s).

However, the three copies of poster prints are not necessarily put in the same drawer. In fact, there are no fixed regulations about in which drawer a poster should be stored. Some posters might be stored chronologically. In some cases, the works designed by the same artist might be found in the same drawers. In most cases, posters that are found together are those used in the same event, such as those featured in the same exhibition. As both former and current curators pointed out, it does not matter where posters are kept. As long as the record system is efficient, they should be able to locate any object (Interviews with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, and Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

Apart from benefits in terms of practicality, the location record is in line with the minimum requirements for location and movement control of collections according to Spectrum 5.0, the UK Museum Collections Management Standard. For example, it is suggested that 'You have a system of recording all locations where objects are displayed or stored within your museum' (Collections Trust 2017b). This is important as it helps museums identify any object's location easily at all times. It is also possible to note locations that might not be appropriate for certain types of objects. Another requirement about an access to location information by object number and location is also beneficial in the sense that it helps museums to be aware of which items are in storages and exhibition spaces as well as where each object is located (Collections Trust 2017b).

Artworks

Among this study's units of analysis, only two artworks of the five poster designs were collected at the London Transport Museum: one for the Cooper (1928a) and the other for the Stevens poster (1972d). As the Museum does not collect all the artworks inspiring the accessioned poster prints, the size of the Artwork Collection is much smaller than the Poster Collection. Moreover, artworks for poster prints produced in the early commissions are regarded as 'drafts' for the poster design, instead of as completed

pieces of works in their own right. Although the artwork for the Cooper poster (1928a) fits this category, it was acquired and became part of the Artwork Collection. This is unlike the Stevens artwork (1972d), also collected, which is considered a completed work in its own right.

As discussed in Chapter 4. the statuses of the prints and artwork for each unit are clearly distinguished by the Museum (see Figure **4.12**). Artworks are also excluded in the Museum's list of pre-approved acquisitions (London Transport Museum 2018). Unlike poster prints, reprints and reproductions, artworks need the approval from the CDG before being accessioned into the Museum's collection. Compared to other types of objects, artworks inspiring poster designs conform most to the assumption of museum objects as unique and singular. As an artwork is not multiply produced, its quantity cannot be reduced through the musealisation process, unlike poster prints.

Reprints

Another type of object based on a poster design the Museum collects is the reprint. This refers to a print that was inspired by the original design but with a small difference. For instance, the reprint of the Kauffer poster (1966d; Figure **5.1**) has the same visual image with different text. Instead of the message advertising the London Museum and the Tube station, the text of the reprint reads:

> This famous London Transport poster, designed by E. McKnight Kauffer in 1922, is reprinted to commemorate the anniversary of the Great Fire of London in September, 1666. Copies of this and many other London Transport posters may be seen and bought, print 10/- each, at the Poster Shop, 280, Marylebone Road, N.W.I, near Edgeware Road, (Circle Line) station.

According to the list of pre-approved acquisitions (London Transport Museum 2018), the Museum accessions only one copy of the posters of the same design with small differences in the text or logos and without any additional historical value, which can refer to poster reprints. In the Kauffer case, the reprint was produced to celebrate 300 years of the Great Fire of London. However, the Museum somehow holds another three (spare) copies (Kauffer 1966a, 1966b, 1966c) of this reprint, apart from the copy

mentioned above (Kauffer 1966d; Figure **5.1**). Interestingly, it is the first (spare) copy (Kauffer 1966a; Figure **5.2**), not the one examined, that is shown in the online database.

Figure 5.1 The reprint of the Kauffer poster (1966d). Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 5.2 Digital representation of a copy of the kauffer reprint (1966a) shown in the Museum's online database © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Reproductions

Similar to the reprint, the reproduction is not usually collected by the Museum, as stated in the pre-approved acquisition list (London Transport Museum 2018). Nevertheless, each reproduction design is considered individually. Reproductions that are potentially regarded as historically significant include (1) those produced to commemorate an event, (2) to acknowledge the significance of a design or artist and (3) to document London Transport's publication policies. If the design meets one of these criteria, one copy of the reproduction will then be accessioned.

The records of reproductions within the five units of analysis that appear on the Museum's internal database can be divided into four categories. First is the image reproduction as part of a publication. For instance, the Museum accessioned three image reproductions of Wadsworth poster (or artwork) in a booklet (Wadsworth circa 1950, 1951a; Figure **5.12**, 1951b), which was either produced as part of the *Art for all* exhibition in 1947 or for the *Festival of Britain* in 1951. Apart from the image reproduction, there is a stand-alone reproduction in a different size than the original print, such as postcards. The Wadsworth poster was also made into postcards and two of them are accessioned in the Ephemera Collection (Wadsworth 1973, circa 1985). However, it is worth noting that the image on the postcard printed in 1973 includes only the central part of the original design, which is the dazzle ships, whereas the texts i.e. 'Imperial War Museum' and transport information is excluded (see Figure **5.3**). It can be said that this is in fact a third type of reproduction, which is that of an artwork instead of the print, but this is unclear.

Nonetheless, there are some postcards in the Museum's Ephemera Collection that share the same visual designs as poster prints. An example is the postcard (Leete 1975; Figure **5.4**) based on the poster by Alfred Leete (1928b; Figure **5.5**). Both include the text 'The roads are never up on the Underground', which was added to the original artwork (Leete 1928a; Figure **5.5**). Unlike poster prints and artworks, the insurance value given to postcards is rather low. In the Wadsworth case (1973), it is worth only £1. Apart from the four types of reproductions above, the Museum has double royal sized reproductions of poster prints produced as objects-for-purchase, as mentioned in Chapter 4 (pp. 103–151).
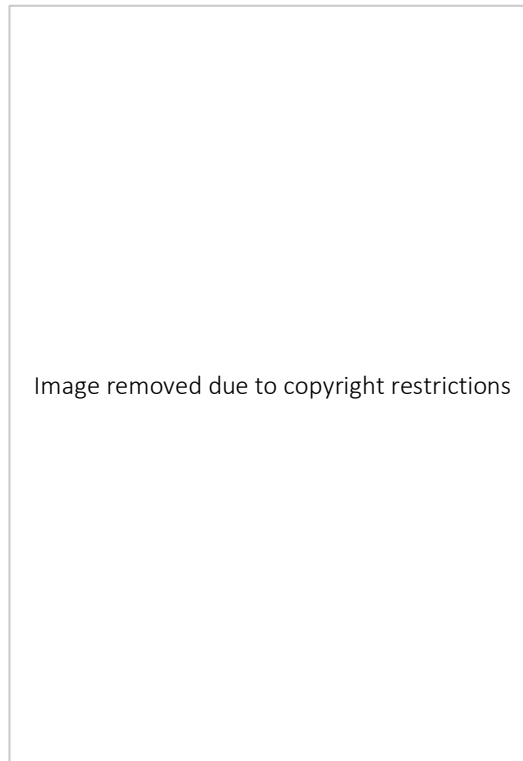
Figure 5.3 The *Camouflage* postcard (1973) by Edward Wadsworth © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Figure 5.4 The *Watchman* postcard (1975) by Afred Leete (top right). Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 5.5 *The roads are never up on the Underground* poster (1928b; left) and artwork (1928a; right) by Alfred Leete © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

This section has demonstrated the richness in terms of material varieties within each unit of analysis. Not only does a London Transport poster design reside in four types of objects, but each category can also comprise multiple copies. This material characteristic comes into play with the actual practice at the Museum, both regarding collection management and exhibition making. Moreover, it seems to contrast the conventional perception of museum objects as singular and unique. As the Museum repurposes the once advertising materials to collections and exhibits, how do they deal with their somewhat problematic materialities to make them fit the category of museum objects? And how does their practice question the assumption about museum objects in general? These are the issues to be tackled in the remainder of this chapter.

Influences of materialities on the changes in the values and meanings of London Transport posters

The values and meanings of London Transport posters transform over time as they are turned from advertising materials into museum exhibits. Over the course of their journeys, one is able to observe the interrelatedness between objects, people and even histories. While the museum's repurposing of posters itself triggers the change, it is not entirely under control of people's interactions with them. Materialities impact upon object transformation as the discussion below demonstrates. It examines key material qualities of London Transport posters: multiplicity, ephemerality, as well as reproducibility, size, flatness and lightness. The discussion also includes how the Museum has handled them throughout the process of turning them into museum objects, as well as maintaining and removing their museum values.

Multiplicity

The diversity in terms of types and amounts of objects discussed in the previous section points towards the multiplicity of London Transport posters with which the Museum has to interact. Among different physical characteristics, I find the multiplicity of posters most important, for it seems rather challenging to museum practice in deciding which objects to collect, to make available online and to display in physical exhibitions. What are the criteria and rationales behind the Museum's decisions? These issues are addressed in this subsection. The interplay between the Museum's curatorial practice and the multiplicity of posters also contributes to the debate within material culture studies, regarding the nature of objects both inside and outside the museum sphere.

Physical collections

Apparently, the Museum cannot avoid interacting with the abundance of objects related to London Transport poster designs. While the pre-approved acquisition list (London Transport Museum 2018) provides a guideline for which types of objects and how many of each are collected, it does not pinpoint how the Museum should interact with their multiplicity once these advertisements become part of the museum collection. When

entering the museum setting, the multiplicity of posters can potentially be problematic, for museum objects are stereotypically expected to be unique and singular. However contradictory it appears, the Museum has an interesting method to deal with the originally multiple objects like London Transport posters.

The interplay between museum practice and object multiplicity can first be observed through collecting. Regarding London Transport printed posters, the copies that are archived at the Museum were automatically differentiated from their contemporaries that remain as advertising. This practice results in London Transport poster prints being divided into two categories: advertising and exhibits. However, it is worth noting that the copies that became part of the Museum's collection have, in fact, never been used as publicity materials (Email from Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 27 June 2018. pers. comm.). This means that some copies of the contemporaries are given the role of museum objects from the beginning. Such a fact complicates the identity of these collections. At the same time, this is a challenge to the research question itself, for one might argue that the accessioned copies are originally museum objects. They are not repurposed, and so their values and meanings might remain unchanged, similar to those copies that remain as advertising throughout their life courses.

However, this statement might not be entirely accurate. These accessioned copies of poster prints can be considered to have a unique museal identity, while representing the entire group of their contemporaries at the same time. By viewing all the copies of London Transport posters as one group instead of considering each of them individually, I argue that they were all originally produced to be publicity materials. Yet the Museum removed several copies through collecting before they were able to perform their original, advertising function. Therefore, the three accessioned copies of poster prints were, in my view, originated as advertising materials. They were initially part of the multiple objects forming the category of London Transport publicity posters. Once entering the Museum, they still represent advertising and artistic values. In other words, they are samples of the original function while being physically located in the Museum and utilised as museum objects. Moreover, it is worth noting that it would not make any difference, at least from the curatorial perspective, if another group of three had been

accessioned instead of the ones currently in the Museum's Poster Collection. This rationale is also evident in museum practice, in the sense that it makes no difference which copy of poster prints is chosen as display. The point I would like to emphasise here is that the multiplicity of London Transport poster prints remains both in the (original) advertising contexts as they are multiply produced and in the (repurposed) museum setting, where multiple copies are collected.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there are cases where museums commission artists to produce objects to be directly collected, i.e. for the purposes of making their collections more complete. For instance, the collecting policy of the National Museums of Scotland (NMS), especially regarding ethnographic collections, involves the commissioning of native makers to produce objects that represent indigenous cultures, as pointed out by Knowles (2003; see also, for example, Krmpotich et al. 2014). Drawing on three examples of NMS's previous commissions, Knowles critically reflects on broader issues regarding power relations between the museum and the native maker, authenticity of commissioned objects and ethical implications of the practice. In particular, Knowles's discussion on the NMS's commission of a Thunderbird transformation mask and costume from the Kwakiutl carver Calvin Hunt in 1998, echoes the arbitrary functions of London Transport posters. According to Knowles (2003), the commissioned mask and costume were used in a Kwakiutl dance performance before being sent to the NMS for the *Heaven and Hell* exhibition. As Hunt wrote in his email to the NMS after the performance, 'Dance costumes and masks were made to be worn and this one is happy that it has done so!' (Hunt 1999 cited in Knowles 2003). The maker's attitude and his use of the commissioned artefact resonate with his recognition of the intended original function of the Transformation mask and costume. It is true that this particular artefact was produced to be a museum object; yet considering it as part of the 'Transformation mask and costume' category, it is compatible and 'good enough for use within the community' (Knowles 2003:60–61).[14] Similarly, the collected copies of London

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[14] Knowles (2003) points out that by being used in performance, the commissioned Transformation mask and costume was being 'authenticated'. This type of objects can be considered as fitting the 'ethnographic authenticity' category suggested by Field (2009). However, Field pays attention to the production process and where the object originates. From his view, whether or not the commissioned object was used in the performance or directly entering the museum collection, it can be considered authentic. As the concept of 'ethnographic authenticity' is not applicable to London Transport posters, the case study, it was only briefly

Transport poster prints should have been able to perform the advertising function just as their contemporaries that remain publicity materials.

In the context of contemporary art, it is not uncommon for public institutions such as museums to commission artists, according to Louisa Buck and Daniel McClean (2012). As they point out, commissions by major institutions can help improve the profiles of the artists. In some cases, artworks are commissioned for acquisition, while others became part of permanent collections later on. Sometimes, artworks are commissioned for temporary displays and not necessarily acquired by the institutions (Buck and McClean 2012). Additionally, Buck and McClean (2012) discuss the commissions of artworks to be displayed in public space such as in the case of transport commissioning. Their examples include London Transport's Art on the Underground project, in which artists are invited to create artworks that help transform the environment of London Underground stations into art space (Dillion 2007; Transport for London 2020b). The formats of the works range from paintings, map covers and sculptures to train wraps and multimedia (Buck and McClean 2012). For instance, the 2020 commissioning programme includes *Volita*, an online audio collage by Heather Phillipson and artworks entitled *Pleasure's inaccuracies* by Lucy McKenzie to be displayed at Sudbury Town Tube station (Transport for London 2020a).[15]

Whereas London Transport's poster commissioning is a predecessor of the current Art on the Underground series, it is important to note that pictorial posters were originally intended to increase the use of public transport and to inform commuters. The poster commissioning programme initiated by London Transport's first Managing Director Pick is therefore not simply a practice of art patronage but mainly to serve commercial purposes, as pointed out by Green (2008). This has an important implication regarding the change in values and meanings. In general, the institutionally commissioned contemporary artworks discussed in Buck and McClean's volume (2012) are created to be art and still remain so at least at the point of museum acquisition. In contrast, the acquired copies of London Transport poster prints are no longer publicity

addressed in the discussion of object authenticity in Chapter 6 (For further discussion, also see the Types of authenticity section in Chapter 6, pp. 206–211).

[15] The commissions by Transport for London (TfL) are currently postponed until further notice (Transport for London 2020a).

materials unlike their contemporaries. Despite the shift in function at the point of acquisition, London Transport posters remain in multiples in the London Transport Museum's collection. The multiplicity of these poster prints adds complication to the museum practice especially in terms of cataloguing and documentation.

The multiplicity of objects in museums is insightfully discussed in the chapter by Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton (2015). Using the object biography approach (Appadurai 1986b), the key question being asked is when photographs come into being. Edwards and Morton acknowledge multiple processes of technically developing photographs and the collaborative aspect of their production. However, their interest is not the origin of photographical materials. Instead, they focus on the museal and cultural origin of these objects within the museum space. That is when they become part of the collection. The authors' analysis of multiplicity (and reproducibility) of visual material objects like photographs is helpful in investigating London Transport poster prints in the museum setting. While being multiple, ethnographic photographs in the Pitt Rivers Museum are regarded by Edwards and Morton (2015) as having originality. The term 'multiple originals' they employ to describe the photographic collection implies that multiplicity is not necessarily contradicted to originality. Objects can be both multiple and original at the same time. Interestingly, this notion also suggests that the identity of the photographs is based on their existence as a group. This argument is in my view sensible in the ethnographic context, in which the meanings of photographic content and materials cannot be understood when each print is examined individually.

This is both similar and different to London Transport poster prints in the original context, at least to a certain degree. For advertising purposes, multiple copies of printed posters are produced at a time. It thus makes sense to view them as a group of contemporaries or originally multiple objects. However, London Transport posters are different from ethnographic photographs, in the sense that the visual content of each print stands alone from one another. The interpretation of visual images can be done by examining any of the copies of the same design. Therefore, London Transport posters might have multiple originals, but they are not serial originals like ethnographic

photographs in Edwards and Morton's (2015) chapter.[16] It is worth noting that the concept of multiple originals seems less applicable to London Transport poster prints in the museum context, in the sense that the categories are altered despite having multiple characteristics. Among the copies of poster prints that were distinguished from their contemporaries and collected at the Museum in its early days, some were assigned the role of support-duplicates instead of accessioned prints. The two categories not only perform different roles but also carry unequal values. Accessioned prints became higher in status than support-duplicates, as discussed in Chapter 4 (also see Figure **4.12**). Additionally, that the Museum no longer collects support-duplicates can be regarded as partly due to the multiplicity of poster prints themselves. Multiple copies consume a limited space, which is one of the reasons why the Museum decided to dispose of the posters that were in the backlogs. The consumption of space is discussed further in the Other material qualities section below.

As previously mentioned, the multiplicity of London Transport posters still remains as they become part of museum collections. However, the groups with which they are identified are altered. Apart from this, the multiplicity of posters in the museum setting has more complexity, for it has gone through the process of singularisation both as collections and exhibits. This aspect is not covered by Edwards and Morton's (2015) notion of multiple originals, yet various literature that is interested in the values of material culture demonstrates that singularisation is a means by which objects are valorised. One example is the circulation within the art world as pointed out in the well-known chapter by Kopytoff (1986).

In the case of London Transport posters, each museum object is in practice documented and curated individually, even though they are regarded as part of the group and/or having the same visual design, as discussed above. That is to say, the Museum's internal database comprises the record of every single object despite different levels of detail and completeness. Information for accessioned prints and artworks are, for instance, more detailed than support-duplicates. Likewise, one copy of a poster print

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[16] In fact, some London Transport posters were designed to be displayed together, such as pair posters, which consist of a text-dominant design and an image-only one (also see Chapter 2, pp. 36–68, for detailed discussion).

might have more detailed records than another. As individual objects have their own material qualities autonomous from others in the group, different copies of the prints have required different conservation and care over time. They have also featured in different exhibitions, so their itineraries and movements are diverse, as shown in the Museum's internal database.

For instance, the first two copies of the Wadsworth poster (1936a, 1936b), as recorded in the Museum's database, are pencil-labelled, while the third one (Wadsworth 1936c) is ink-labelled, as well as mounted and framed. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the mount and frame together with its position on the wall make the copy displayed in the Poster Store looks slightly different from the sleeved copy, which was put on a table in the Museum's office area as I examined it (also see Figure **4.13**–Figure **4.14**). Interestingly, I found out later that the displayed print is in fact the first copy, while the sleeved one is the third. It is also labelled by pencil instead of pen, as indicated in the internal database. What is significant is not the error in the Museum's documentation. Instead, this 'mistake' implies that materialities can deceive the viewer's eyes especially in dealing with multiple objects like poster prints. That their visual content is the same and considered the key element of posters can, potentially, make the viewer overlook the difference in their material conditions and the traces of curatorial practice, even though they are not invisible.

Aside from the information about labelling, locations and loan histories for both copies are likely to be accurate. The record shows that the first copy was exhibited in *Poster art 150*, so it makes sense that it was framed for the event and later became the Store display as pointed out by the former Senior Curator (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Additionally, the record of the third copy shows that it was loaned and displayed in Japan and Taiwan. This corresponds to the strong tendency that either the second or third copy is selected to display outside the institution, which is to be discussed in the subsection below.

Although there is no clear reason why the record in the internal database does not match the actual activities done to some objects, it is likely that the visual design that multiple copies of prints share causes the confusion. Without examining the labelling on

the actual objects, I would not have been able to tell which copy belongs to each accession number. In this case, it seems sensible to regard these posters as a group or multiple originals. All the accessioned copies can be employed interchangeably in museum representation. Despite that, it does not mean that the Museum does not attempt to singularise them at all. Singularisation is no less evident in the making of London Transport poster exhibitions.

Physical displays

Since the production stage, London Transport posters have been displayed in various contexts. First is in London Underground stations, bus stops, or in the vehicles as publicity, which was their original function. Second is the display of London Transport posters as household decoration. One example is the use of *The North Downs* (1915) by Kauffer (Figure **5.6**) as bedroom decoration (Figure **5.7**), as appearing in Heal's catalogue of furniture (Dobbin 2008). This display context, according to Dobbin (2008), highlights how London Transport posters were used to reflect the taste and lifestyle at the time. Within such space, the textual part of the poster was cut out, so only the pictorial content was displayed. This is interesting in the sense that in such a setting, communication, which is the original purpose of posters, is undermined while the decorative aspect is highlighted.

The third display context of London Transport posters is the museum exhibition, in which both textual and pictorial elements are usually included and also accompanied by extra information, images and even other material objects. What Dobbin's (2008) discussion about both household and museum display contexts demonstrates is that different uses of posters might not always reflect the intention of the artist, the commissioner, nor other parties involved in the first production. Unexpected interactions between people and posters might be influenced by the material properties, to a certain extent. The potentials of poster materialities to be interacted with and experienced in different ways corresponds to Dudley's idea of 'experiential possibilities' (Dudley 2012: 11). This section specifically looks into how poster materialities in the museum display context contribute to such possibilities.
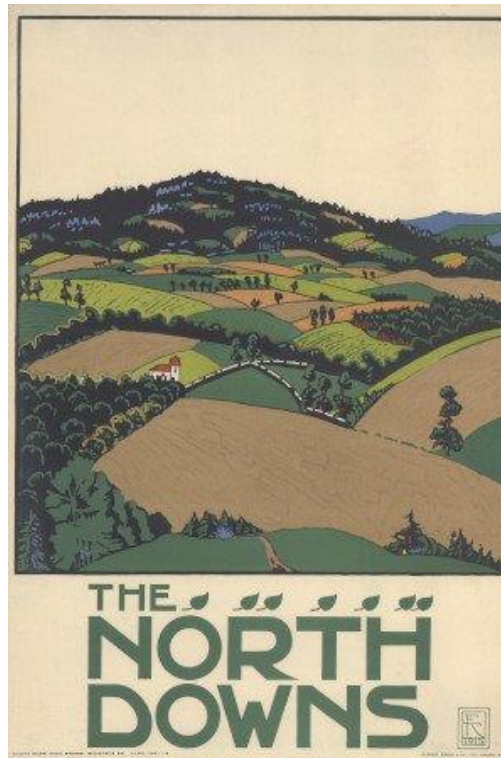
Figure 5.6 *The North Downs* (1915) by Edward McKnight Kauffer © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 5.7 Illustration from Heal's *A book of bedroom furniture* (1921) in Dobbin (2008: 226)

In fact, the London Transport Museum seems to pay more attention to the narratives given to poster exhibits than their materialities. In selecting which London

Transport poster designs and which type of objects to be displayed, the narrative is also considered the main criterion. For example, the poster designs that feature in each *Poster parade* display are those that correspond to its theme regardless of when and in which contexts each copy of the poster prints was produced (or collected). Despite that, the field data interestingly reveals a significant influence that the materialities of London Transport posters have on the Museum's decisions in the exhibition making process. As each London Transport poster design can be found on multiple objects in the collection, the Museum needs to make a decision which particular object or copy is to be exhibited to represent such a design. The Museum, through the lens of the curators interviewed, is in fact aware of this aspect, but there are no established regulations regarding this. The solution to poster multiplicity is therefore rather pragmatic. It is barely influenced by the intended message, as in the case of choosing the visual designs, to which point I shall return in due course.

Furthermore, the different material forms of artefacts, for example, sometimes take precedence over the visual poster design they bear. Among different types of objects with the same poster design collected at the Museum, prints have been exhibited most often, followed by artworks. For instance, the Cooper poster design appeared in at least three exhibitions. First was at *A centenary exhibition of London Transport posters* at the Royal Institutes (now the Royal Academy of Arts) in 1963, although there is no record which copy was chosen. Recently, the second copy of the accessioned prints (Cooper 1928c) was displayed at the two *Poster parade* displays mentioned in Chapter 4. Another material form, the artwork of the Cooper (1928a) featured in the *Art for all* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1949. That was exhibited even before any copies of the prints were. This tendency is also reflected in the case of the Kauffer, Wadsworth and Whistler poster designs.

This trend does not seem to apply to the Stevens, however. According to the field data, the Stevens poster prints were exhibited four times, whereas the artwork has been displayed five times so far. Three exhibitions that featured the Stevens poster design were all held at other institutions, but specifically as part of the exhibitions of London Transport posters. The third copy of the accessioned prints (Stevens 1972c) was on display in Japan and Taiwan in 1994, and the second copy (Stevens 1972b) at

Verkehrsmuseum in Dresden, Germany in 2009. Then in 2014, the first copy (Stevens 1972a) was exhibited at the Museum's *Poster art 150*. The artwork of the Stevens (1972k) was also displayed in Dresden in 2009. Apart from this, it featured in *Artwork for all* at the London Transport Museum in 2003. The other three times were part of the touring exhibition entitled *Art of the poster* between 2008 and 2012. It was at the Danish Railway Museum in Denmark in 2010, and at the New York Transit Museum and the Swedish Railway Museum in 2012 (see Figure **5.8**). Despite the higher number of the exhibitions, it seems that the Stevens poster prints (1972a, 1972b, 1972c) and artwork (1972k) have been displayed to represent similar narratives, highlighting the quality of London Transport poster design. None of them, for instance, is part of a monographic exhibition.

Figure 5.8 A visualisation of the locations where the Stevens poster prints and artwork were exhibited, adapted from the map created for data analysis

Unlike prints and artworks, same-size reproductions are hardly ever used as exhibits themselves, which corresponds to the fact that they are not part of the Museum's permanent collections. However, it is not unusual for the Museum to reproduce an image of a poster design, usually on a smaller scale, and include it in the exhibition's text panel. For example, a small image of the Stevens poster was reproduced to be used as part of the interpretation panel (Stevens 2008) in the *Art of the poster*

exhibition. After the exhibition was over, the Museum also accessioned this panel. Another exception for the reproduction to be displayed is when the Museum is unable to find the original print. According the Curator (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.), once a large-scale poster (not from a unit of analysis) was reproduced in the double-royal size in order to be exhibited in a *Poster parade* display. A reproduction was also used in the Museum's *Night shift: London after dark* exhibition, which was on from September 2015 to April 2016. Without special circumstance, nevertheless, the reproduction would not become part of either museum collections or exhibits (also see the Reproductions section, pp. 158–160).

In case of the reprints, however, no evidence collected during the field research suggests that any of them has been exhibited at the Museum. That means it is usually either artworks or prints (or in some cases both) which are turned into museum exhibits, while reprints and reproductions are normally repurposed only into museum objects and/or collections. There comes the question of how to choose which of the two material forms, a poster print or an artwork, to be displayed in an exhibition. According to the Curator, it is the exhibition narrative that determines this. It depends on the message the exhibition is expected to communicate (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). This statement suggests that the material form can also reflect the intended message, similar to the visual design. In some cases, both the poster and its inspiring artwork are exhibited alongside each other. As mentioned above, the Stevens poster (1972b) and artwork (1972d) in the exhibition of London Transport posters at Verkehrsmuseum is one example. A more recent example is the exhibition *Poster girls*, in which an artwork was displayed together with the poster print in order to highlight its enormous size. It is the artwork's size for which the artist is well known, according to the Curator (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). For *Poster art 150*, which attempted to show the original function of posters, the poster prints that were originally produced and used for advertising purposes were chosen for display instead of the artworks (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

In case the Museum decides to display poster prints, another question that arises is which of the three accessioned copies is chosen to be exhibited? According to the curators, the reason for choosing a particular copy is very pragmatic and not at all influenced by the intended message and interpretation. As the former Senior Curator points out, it does not matter which copy is on display as all of them are considered contemporaries. There is no difference in terms of their status and value. Moreover, visitors would not be able to differentiate between them no matter which copy was on display, as they carry the same visual design (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). In my opinion, visitors might not even be aware that the Museum holds several copies, although they possibly assume that the posters come in multiples. Or in case that they are, visitors might not be interested in finding out which copy is on display.

Nevertheless, even though the three are perceived as carrying the same message and value, the Museum cannot avoid selecting an individual copy. For the *Poster art 150* exhibition, the first copy in the series of each poster design was chosen to be displayed since there was an online public vote activity. The former Curator points out that the Museum preferred the copies on display to have the same accession numbers as the ones shown in the online database, which is publically accessible. However, in the case where the first copy of a poster was already in use, the Museum had no choice but to select another one as an exhibit (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

In other displays, such as *Poster parade*, the reason for choosing a particular copy of the poster prints could simply be that it is the one found first or located on the top in the drawer (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). This is again based on the rationale that every copy of the poster prints with the same design would give the same effect when being displayed in a gallery. This idea is in my view similar to the perception of London Transport poster prints in their advertising context. It does not matter which copy is displayed at any location. Every poster print carries the same visual content and performs the same function, either as publicity or an exhibit.

While the selection criteria are usually based on practical reasons, as the curators point out, the Museum's computer database does reveal some consistencies regarding the copies that were actually chosen. That is to say, the first copy in the series of three is always displayed at the Museum, not in other institutions. Sometimes the second copy also appears at the Museum's main site, probably because the first copy is already in use in another exhibition or activity. The first copy of the Whistler (1928b), for example, has been on the top of the chest in the Poster Store since it was de-installed from *Poster art 150*. It is then the third copy (Whistler 1928c) that was chosen to be exhibited at *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*, the details of which were discussed in Chapter 4 (pp. 103–151.

For exhibitions outside the London Transport Museum, whether in the UK or abroad, it is always either the second or the third copy that is loaned. This is usually the case even when the first copy is not being used by the Museum during the loan period. The Stevens poster mentioned above is one example. Another is that the first copy of the Wadsworth poster (1936a) was used in *Poster art 150*, while the third copy (Wadsworth 1936c) was loaned to the exhibitions in Japan and Taiwan in 1994 (see Figure **5.9**). Similarly, the third copy of the Kauffer poster (1922c) was exhibited at Kozlekedesi Museum in Budapest, Hungary in 1991, whereas it is not recorded which copy was displayed in other exhibitions (see Figure **3.12** and Figure **5.10**).
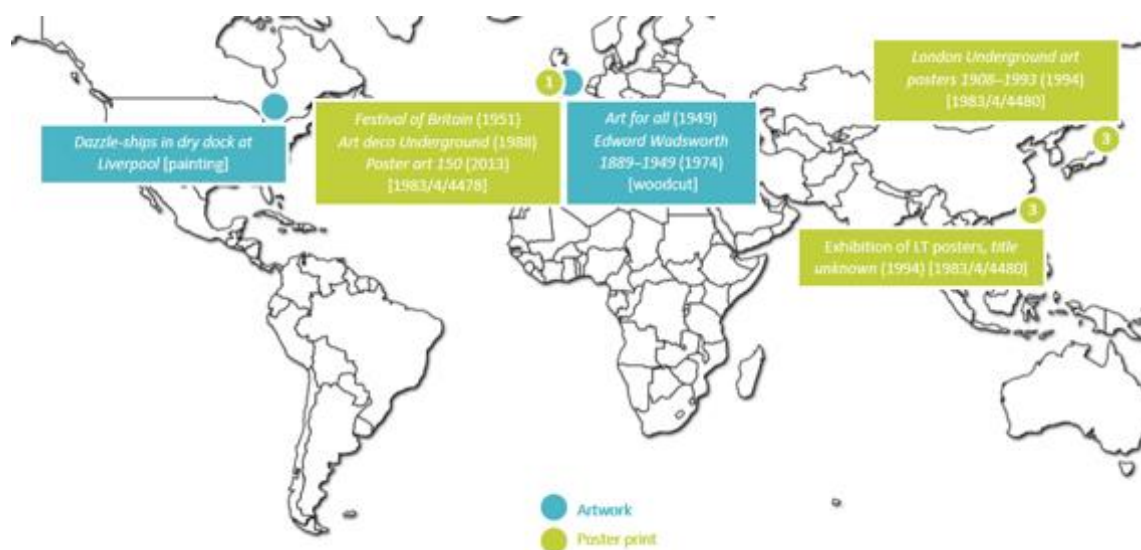
Figure 5.9 A visualisation of the locations where the Wadsworth poster prints and artwork were exhibited, adapted from the map created for data analysis
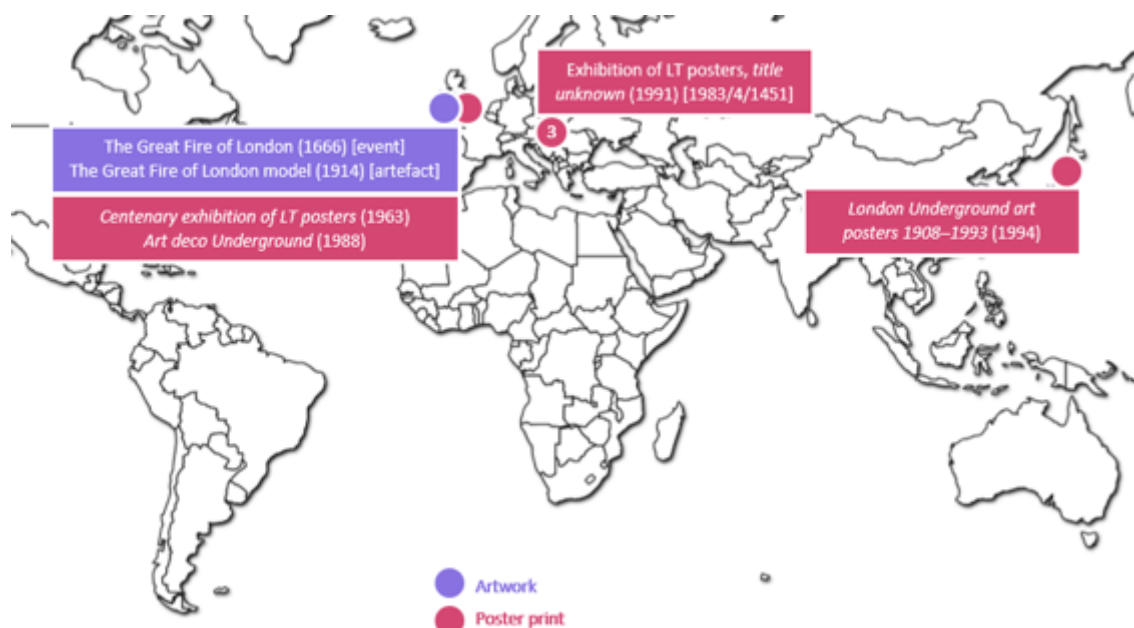
Figure 5.10 A visualisation of the locations where the Kauffer poster prints and artwork were exhibited, adapted from the map created for data analysis

The above examples reaffirm that the material qualities of London Transport posters influence the actual practice despite the Museum's emphasis on the visual interpretation. In this case, multiplicity impacts upon decision making in the curatorial process, although rather unconsciously and unintentionally. As the discussion of the selection criteria for poster exhibits implies, a design needs to reside in a material object. In the case of the artwork, the material characteristics vary, whereas each poster print is on a piece of paper usually in the double royal size. One design can be interpreted in a variety of ways and narrate different stories, but it could not be used on display at different locations at the same time, unless there were multiple copies.

While the multiplicity allows London Transport poster designs to simultaneously appear in different settings, no evidence suggests that any two (or more) copies of poster prints with the same design (or multiple copies of any other material form e.g. reproductions) have ever been exhibited in a poster exhibition, *Poster parade* or on permanent display at the same time.[17] This distinguishes the poster's function as a museum exhibit from the original publicity status. The Museum makes use of London

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[17] It is, however, possible for objects of different material forms with the same design, such as a copy of a print and the artwork to be displayed alongside each other in an exhibition.

Transport posters' multiplicity, but the exhibition making at the same time requires singularisation. Thus, in understanding the singularity and multiplicity of advertising posters in the museum setting is not at all a simple matter.

Online platform

Apart from physical collections and exhibitions, which are available on the Museum's main site and Depot, London Transport posters and related objects can be accessed online. As implied above, physical objects have been through the process of selection, singularisation and interpretation. Unlike exhibitions, however, only some physical collections are displayed in the publically accessible areas on the Museum's main site, while others are kept at the Depot and made available to the public only by appointment. Access to records of objects in the Museum's database is also limited. This is where the interplay between object multiplicity and singularity can be observed.

It is worth noting that the Museum's online database has a unique characteristic, instead of being an exact duplicate of the internal one. That is, it usually includes only records of the first poster copy of each London Transport poster design. Information about other copies and support-duplicates can only be accessed internally. The reason for this, according to the former Senior Curator, is that the Museum highlights the design of the poster instead of the physical aspects of it, as pointed out earlier. In this case, every copy is viewed as similar (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). This suggests that visual content seems privileged over the materials for managing the online collection and information about it, similar to the physical ones. Such a rationale is also supported by the information available online, which does not include any physical aspect of each London Transport poster, while emphasising information about the visual design.

The completeness of the online record for poster prints in this research's five units of the analysis range from 76 to 86 percent, as indicated on the record webpages. For instance, the record for the Stevens poster (1972a), which is 86-percent complete, includes the following information: simple name, date, collection object location, reference number, size, print code, publisher, printer, descriptive size, content text,

additional information, title, colour, printed by, related person and record completeness. In fact, the information on the online record is applicable to all the copies of poster prints, except the location. As previously mentioned, one copy might be in the exhibition at the Museum's main site while the other two are kept at the Depot.

Regarding artworks, the online database offers a briefer version of the record in the Museum's internal database. For example, the artwork for the Stevens poster (1972k), which is marked as 100-percent complete, includes the following information: simple name, date, collection, object location, reference number, size, associated person, title, colour, related person and record completeness. Apart from that, most items on the online database are illustrated. For each unit of analysis, the information about each print and an artwork is accompanied by a digital representation of it. Unlike the Museum's website, the record of each item in the internal database includes multiple digital images. However, it is interesting that those images are the same for all the copies of the accessioned prints. Therefore, it is difficult to indicate from which copy the photographs are taken and then digitised.

Moreover, it is important to note that the amount of records for the artwork, some of the reprints and the reproductions (if they were accessioned) are the same for both public and institutional versions of the database as the Museum holds only a single copy of the objects with these material forms. The fact that only one copy of the reprint and/or reproduction is usually accessioned suggests that these multiple objects do not normally remain multiple but became singular once being archived into the Museum. In the case of artworks, they have been singular from the production stage. More importantly, the discrepancy between the physical and online records for London Transport poster prints has another important implication. While remaining physically multiple at the Museum, the accessioned prints are singularised in the online environment. With only the record of the first copy available online, it gives the online user an impression that the Museum has one copy of the prints for each London Transport poster design.

One might ask: if the poster were regarded as visual culture instead of material culture, would it illuminate the complexity of curatorial practice caused by the multiplicity of London Transport posters as elaborated in this section? My answer is no. Regarding

the visual design, the interplay between multiplicity and singularity can still be observed in rather different ways. On the one hand, a single design remains single and unchanged despite being embedded in multiple materials. Artworks, prints and reproductions might be made of different materials in different sizes, shapes and forms, but the design they bear is still the same. On the other hand, each individual London Transport poster design is subject to multiple interpretations. It can potentially be given different narratives and become representative of different stories and histories at different periods of time, whereas each material object of the same design has a unique singularised journey (also see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151). In short, the concept of multiple originals might be applicable to understanding London Transport posters as a group of publicity materials. Yet the interplay between multiplicity and singularity within the museum setting is much more complex through categorisation as demonstrated in this section.

Ephemerality

The ephemerality of objects is in contrast to their multiplicity, in the sense that it limits their quantity and lifespan. In the case of the London Transport poster prints, it is true that multiple copies were originally produced at one time to be used as publicity. They are also reproduced in multiples to be sold for personal collecting at the Museum shop. As they carry the same message through the same visual design, any copy can be used interchangeably to serve the publicity purpose. It is also easy to find a replacement when one copy is defective thanks to their multiplicity. Nevertheless, the material (paper) on which each design is printed is fragile and ephemeral. Many of the original poster prints do not last beyond the intended period of use, which ranges from several months to several years (also see the London Transport Posters section in Chapter 1, pp. 22–26). Modern papers, which were made after the mid-nineteenth century, are rather fragile due to the use of cheap wood pulp as raw material. Some of them thus last for only a few decades (Victoria and Albert Museum 2016). However, the lifespans of some London Transport poster prints might potentially be extended through the repurposing and singularisation, such as by being archived in museums or collected by auction houses and private collectors, for they would receive special conservation treatment.

The repurposing of London Transport posters directly deals with the fragility of their materials apart from their multiplicity. Similar to other types of museum objects, poster prints are expected to remain as close to their original condition as possible. It can therefore be argued that the Museum attempts to fight against their fragility and ephemerality while making use of them as exhibitions, collections and resources. The attempt is evident in the processes of both collection care and exhibition making. London Transport poster prints with poor conditions are unlikely to be exhibited (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). One example is the second copy of the Kauffer poster (1922b). As it is in poor condition, it makes sense that the Museum instead loaned the third copy to Kozlekedesi Museum for an exhibition of London Transport posters in 1991. However, there are also cases where the objects selected for display, which are supposed to be in good condition, require extra conservation treatment beforehand. The third copy of the Whistler (1928c) was, for instance, sent to the conservator before being displayed in an exhibition. In other institutions, such as the University of Brighton Design Archives, the conditions of the original Design Council posters requested for loan were assessed. Good-conditioned posters with minor issues such as ripped corners were infilled using heat-set tissue before being displayed (Kutilainen 2016). At the Library of Congress, the lithographic poster Photographic times (circa 1890s) by Lawrence Mazzanovich, for instance, suffered from paper losses and tears, so they could not be used by researchers. Conservation treatment was given such as by mending tears and applying inserts (Library of Congress 2020).

Regarding the London Transport Museum's collecting policy, the fragility of London Transport poster prints is taken into consideration, although, as mentioned above, there is no criteria of how they are stored. For example, one drawer might contain the works by a single artist or prints with different designs that used to be featured in the same exhibition. Nonetheless, the Curator mentioned that she is currently developing a new strategy. In her view, multiple copies of the same poster design should be stored separately, so that the Museum would not lose all of them in an emergency (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). This strategy reaffirms the fact that the Museum cannot avoid dealing with the fragile characteristics of London Transport posters in its collection.

The way in which each object is stored also reflects how the Museum attempts to constrain its ephemerality by its preventive conservation. This latter term refers to

> all measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimizing future deterioration or loss. They are carried out within the context or on the surroundings of an item, but more often a group of items, whatever their age and condition. These measures and actions are indirect – they do not interfere with the materials and structures of the items. They do not modify their appearance (ICOM-CC 2020).

According to Eastop (2006), preventive conservation measures involve not only the environmental control of storage and display areas, but also the development of integrated collection management strategies. An example of the preventive conservation conducted at the London Transport Museum is that both the Poster and Art Stores are kept at a low temperature. A temperature between 5°C and 10°C is suitable for materials such as paper archives and textiles, according to Gary Thompson (1986) and Genevieve Fisher (2010). In general, each reduction of 5°C in museum storage also helps double the lifespan of each object (UNESCO 2006). Most poster prints are stored in a Melinex sleeve and are lying flat in drawers. Some of them, such as the first copy of the Kauffer (1922a), remain mounted while in the sleeve. Yet this is unlike the first copy of the Stevens poster (1972a), which is mounted but not kept in the sleeve.[18] As informed by the Collection Assistant, the mount is supposed to be temporary, but in this case, it is not removed as it can be reused in a future exhibition. However, she notes that the ideal means of storing poster prints is to keep them lying flat (Interview with Stelina Kokarida, London Transport Museum Collections Assistant, 23 May 2018. pers. comm.).

Likewise, the accessioned reprints and reproductions are stored in a similar fashion to the poster prints. A reprint of the Kauffer posters (1966d; Figure **5.1**), for instance, is covered with a Melinex sleeve and stored in one of the drawers in the Poster Store. A reproduction, such as a postcard based on the Wadsworth poster design (Wadsworth 1973), is also kept in a Melinex sleeve alongside three other postcards. They are stored in one of the drawers specifically dedicated to the Postcard Collection in the

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[18] In this case, the information on the Museum's internal database again does not correspond to the actual labelling. As recorded, the third copy of the Stevens poster (1972c) is ink labelled. It is mounted and framed but not kept in the Melinex sleeves. However, I discovered during the artefact examination that this information should have referred to the first copy (Stevens 1972a).

study/office area outside the Poster and Art Stores (see Figure **5.11**). Protected by sleeves, London Transport prints, reprints and reproductions can be handled without gloves. In the case of artworks, most are framed and attached to a baton, except for those in a fragile condition. For instance, the surface of the Cooper artwork (1928a), which is a gouache painting, was covered by a sheet of glassine interleaving paper for extra protection at the time of my primary research (also see Figure **4.10**). Gloves are also required when handling this object, and the other works hung in the Art Store, in order to prevent potential damage. As shown in the record, the Cooper artwork (1928a) was sent to PH7 the Paper Conservators in February 2018, approximately three months before I examined this artwork. However, the detailed treatment administered to the object was not noted by the museum.

Some examples of the treatments by professional conservators are such as in the case of the Whistler and Kauffer poster prints. The first copy of the Whistler print (1928b) was, as the record shows, cleaned, repaired, de-acidified and mounted on japan tissue by PH7. The current condition is indicated as stable and physically sound. It is now on top of drawers in the Poster Store (also see Figure **4.4**). The second copy of the Kauffer poster print (1922b) was also sent to PH7 to be cleaned, repaired, de-acidified and mounted on japan tissue. However, it is unclear when the conservation treatment was given. The conservation treatment and location where it took place were noted as suggested in Spectrum 5.0 (Collections Trust 2017a), although the records of some items are not as complete as others. The levels of conservation and care required for objects in different material forms reflects the status the Museum assign to them. The handling of artworks requires a higher level of care than the handling of poster prints, reprints and reproductions. However, all types of objects carrying a London Transport poster design, are handled, cared and curated in such a way that helps slow down their decay and deterioration.

Figure 5.11 The drawer where postcards are stored located in the study/office area outside the Art and Poster Stores. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

In the display context, London Transport poster prints are usually mounted and framed. Mounts and frames are, in a sense, to counter the fragility of museum objects while at the same time providing a decorative, highlighting effect. Moreover, to display an object in the Museum, light is necessary: so some damage to exhibits over time is unavoidable. Yet with an appropriate lighting control, damage can be kept at an acceptable level. The London Transport Museum uses a combination of artificial and natural lighting to illuminate some areas, such as the mezzanine where the *Poster parade* series is held. The poster exhibits are thus inevitably exposed to both artificial and daylight. As pointed out by Thompson (1986), visible and ultraviolet (UV) radiation from light damages all natural and synthetic organic materials, such as paper, linen, dyes, wood, plastics etc. The light causes surface deterioration, which includes both colour change and strength change. The material components of poster prints, such as paper and varnish,[19] are susceptible to degradation by ultraviolet radiation, according to Thompson (1986). Although London Transport posters are temporarily exhibited, they

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[19] As varnish is colourless, it hardly absorbs visible radiation. Thus, UV radiation is likely to be the main cause of degradation (Thompson 1986).

are not supposed to be disposed of after de-installation. This makes their repurposed function distinct from their original role as advertising. London Transport posters' ephemerality is unavoidable on some levels, but at the same time and as we have seen, the Museum has attempted to resist and slow down surface deterioration using various methods such as lighting and temperature control in the Art and Poster Stores.

Although conservation work is seen as a fundamental and even mundane activity in museum practice, the fact that collections need to be taken care of has two interesting theoretical implications. First, it questions the notion of the human mind's opposition to and control over material things. Second, it supports this chapter's argument that object identities, at least in the museum context, are closely associated with their materialities. To illustrate the first point, I would like to briefly discuss Jules David Prown's (2002) chapter 'Mind in matter'. In general, Prown's chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical and methodological approach to the study of material culture.[20] Even though the author does not argue for the superiority of the human mind over physical objects, his volume unwittingly maintains the dichotomy between people and things. Apart from limiting the object of study within the discipline of material culture to man-made artefacts, this opposition can be observed in his classification of the objects for a critical analysis. That is, Prown categorises things into six groups based on the intended functions of objects assigned by people, ranging from the more decorative to the more utilitarian, which are art, diversion, adornment, modifications of the landscape, applied arts and devices. He admits that these broad categories should be refined, yet argues that they do help make material culture analysis more manageable.

The musealisation of London Transport posters resonates with Prown's (2002) categories of material culture, in the sense that the Museum assigns new roles and statuses to their collections. However, it is also contradictive to his idea in that the categories are not static nor necessarily associated with the production stage and their original purposes. The transformation in categories and also values and meanings of

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[20] In fact, Prown (2002) defines the term 'material culture' as an academic discipline (not a field) 'based upon the obvious fact that the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication' (70). However, to avoid confusing artefacts with the concept of materials introduced by Ingold (2007), this thesis employs the term 'material culture' to refer to objects, both man-made artefacts and natural objects, and 'material culture studies' to refer to the discipline.

London Transport posters are influenced by the change in their materialities. Physical transformation reinforces people's need to interact with materialities in certain ways in order to make the museum objects fit the assigned categories. In the case where the intended role is no longer achievable, people then need to reassign a value and meaning to the object.

Concerning the physical change of material things, Ingold's (2007) notion of materials is very helpful and applicable to the musealisation of London Transport posters. In his article 'Materials against materiality' (2007), for example, Ingold suggests turning the purpose of material culture studies to an understanding of objects themselves rather than human culture. Interestingly, he is opposed to scholars' interest in object materiality and calls for an attention to the materials of objects instead. For him, 'To understand materiality, it seems, we need to get as far away from materials as possible' (2).[21] What alienates the study of material culture from the properties of the materials, for Ingold, lies in the binary opposition between mind and matter, which reduces human beings to the abstract mind and objects to visible, solid materiality, as implied in Prown's (2002) chapter, for example. Apart from man-made artefacts, other physical properties of both animate and inanimate forms have, Ingold argues, also been treated as if they were immaterial. For example, this is reflected in Chris Gosden's (1999 cited in Ingold 2007) division of the material world into two categories of landscapes and artefacts, as opposed to the human mind. According to Ingold, such a division is a misunderstanding. What is believed to be the immaterial world is in fact material but invisible and penetrable.

To understand the material world more accurately, Ingold proposes an alternative categorisation of things based on Gibson's (1979) three types of elements of the inhabited environment: medium, substances and surfaces, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Among the three, I find his concept of surfaces particularly interesting. Being between the substance and the medium, the surface 'separates one kind of material (such as stone) from another (such as air), rather than *materiality from immateriality* [my emphasis]' (6). According to Ingold, the surface is composed of not only materials but also human imagination (Ingold 2000 cited in Ingold 2007). It is at the surface of the

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[21] Ingold's criticism in fact refers to the study of material culture in archaeology and anthropology rather than criticising material culture studies as a discipline.

material world where human-thing interactions occur. Such characteristics, in my view, makes the surface similar to the materiality or 'thingness of things' (Brown 2001: 4). This research project therefore takes object materialities into consideration while adopting Ingold's view of materials in explaining the non-static characteristics of London Transport posters.

Despite its different view towards materialities, this study is in agreement with Ingold's (2007) opposition to not only the dichotomy between the material and the immaterial but also human control over the material things, which are in fact related to each other. Based on the division between mind (immateriality) and matter (materiality), the creation of objects is understood as starting with human imagination and creativity. Objects are completely planned and designed in the human brains before being realised into physical things. In contrast, Ingold's argument gestures towards the limitation of human intellect over the material properties of things, especially during the production process. What is designed might not always work as intended. The production is also influenced and constrained by the materials or substances themselves. Apart from that, objects' interactions with medium through surfaces are relative and continuous. Therefore, objects including man-made artefacts can be viewed as active and processual even without being assigned human agency or interacting with and consumed by people. This view towards material culture echoes the ephemerality of London Transport posters. Therefore, the Museum's collection care can, in a sense, be regarded as an interaction with the surface of objects.

That objects in museums change quickly is in fact obvious in the field of conservation as pointed out by Thompson (1986). Although the conservation practice was not initially the interest of this research, the preventive conservation is worth further discussion for it is essential in understanding object matierialities and the museum's responses to them. While the fragility of London Transport posters implies the inability of people to take complete control of object materialities, this does not prevent them from assigning the museum identity to their collections. According to Mary M Brooks (2014), the value and meaning of a museum object is usually enhanced through conservation work as physical damage is normally associated with loss of value. Intervention, such as restoration and conservation, is therefore regarded by Brooks as

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'acts of interpretation, of different degrees, that focus on overcoming decay in order to allow "users," whether researchers, curators, or visitors, to engage with both the physical and metaphysical aspects of an object' (Brooks 2014: 387). The negotiation between object's museal identities and their physical change can be observed in the Museum's conservation and care of the objects bearing the London Transport poster designs.

Without emphasising the notion of materialities, Dormínguez Rubio's (2016) examination of the discrepancy between objects and things resonates with Brooks's (2014) idea about museums' resistance to physical decay. It is also insightful for understanding the Museum's interactions with the ephemerality of objects. He proposes an ecological approach to understanding the nature of objects and things. This approach, in my view, shares the common rationale with Ingold (2007, 2012), in the sense that it recognises the processual characteristic as well as the collectiveness and cooperation between different entities and materials in creating what is considered an object. Unlike Ingold, however, Dormínguez Rubio does not reject the values and meanings of objects triggered by people. Instead, he is interested in how people respond to this transformative nature. Musealisation provides a good example in this case.

Additionally, Dormínguez Rubio's discussion about the difference between things and objects[22] resonates with the materialities of London Transport posters, although the terms 'objects' and 'things' are used interchangeably in this thesis. As he argues,

> Things […] should be understood as material processes that unfold over time, while objects are the *positions* [original emphasis] to which those things are subsumed in order to participate in different regimes of value and meaning. Thus, when we talk about an 'object', we are not simply referring to some-thing sitting 'out there' *sub specie aeternitatis*; instead we are referring to a particular moment, a position, in the life of some-thing (Dormínguez Rubio 2016: 61–62).

Moreover, to maintain the object identity of the some-thing, Dormínguez Rubio (2016) points out, requires constant interactions with the some-thing's changing material properties. In the case of the Mona Lisa painting at the Louvre, it has experienced maintenance, care, conservation and repair over time in order to perform the role as an

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[22] The notions of things versus objects are various among scholars. Ingold (2012), for instance, regards objects as completed and situated in the phase of human consumption. In and between things, in contrast, consist the flow and interchange of energy and materials. People are, in his view, also things.

art object. However, successfully preserving this identity does not mean that the material process has stopped, but it has rather been slowed down according to Dormínguez Rubio. At a certain point, the material process of the some-thing will reach the stage where it no longer fits the assigned identity. That is when the some-thing will assume the new object identity.

The London Transport Museum interacts with artworks, poster prints, reprints and reproductions in a variety of ways so as to maintain their identities as museum objects. As mentioned above, those objects in poor condition are unlikely to be able to perform their roles as museum exhibits. This demonstrates the change (or at least reduction) of their exhibitionary role while still being considered museum objects. At the same time, by being removed from the role as exhibits, poor-conditioned objects might be able to prolong their status as museum collections (or at least expected to do so), especially with the help of conservation. Dormínguez Rubio's (2016) notion of the negotiation over the object's identity as well as Ingold's (2007) view of human-thing interactions at the surface level also overlaps with Dudley's (2012) discussion about unexpected encounters between humans and artefacts within the museum space, which are not necessarily intellectual but more often physical and sensorial. This point is developed further in Chapter 6.

Other material qualities: reproducibility, size, shape and weight

Apart from multiplicity and ephemerality, other key material qualities, such as reproducibility, size, shape and weight are significant for scrutinising the nature of objects bearing London Transport poster designs, especially prints. Thanks to their physical characteristics, with the help of technology, the Museum is able to reproduce both London Transport poster prints and artworks. While the ephemerality of posters constrains collection growth, reproducibility seems to multiply their quantity and material forms. In other words, reproducibility supports multiplicity. For instance, two of the fifteen objects with the Kauffer poster designs are image reproductions in publications (Kauffer 1950a, 1950b). In the case of the Wadsworth, at least five objects out of nine in the Museum's collection are reproductions (Wadsworth circa 1950, 1951a; Figure **5.12**, 1951b, 1973, circa 1985).
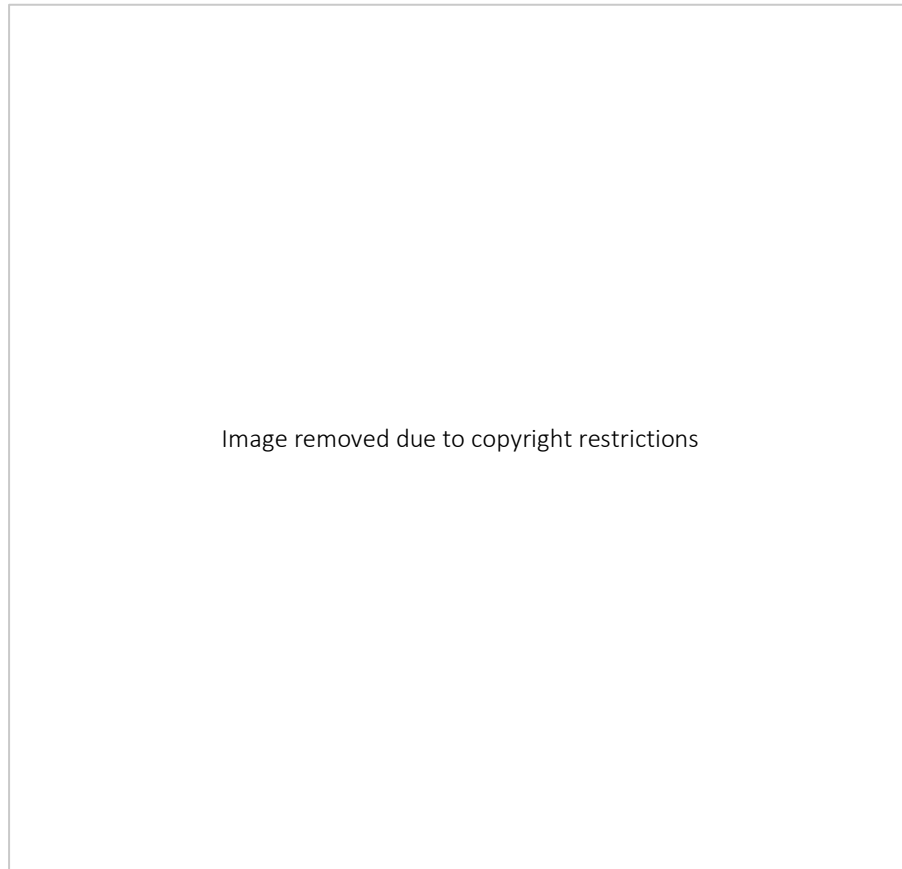
Figure 5.12 An image reproduction of the Wadsworth poster in London Transport's press advertisement in Art and Industry, September 1951 (Wadsworth 1951a) © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

In fact, the Museum does not usually collect reproductions except those with historical significance (London Transport Museum 2018), as mentioned earlier. Despite that, exhibition making leads to the reproduction of the Museum's collection. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the purposes of *Poster parade* is to sell reproductions, which are available in various sizes such as double royal and postcards. Additionally, poster exhibitions are accompanied by exhibition catalogues, which often include the image reproductions of these poster designs. Some photographs of exhibitions also contain images of posters *in situ*. Although not included in the collections, the reproductions of accessioned poster prints as objects-for-purchase allow the quantity of material objects with the same poster design to multiply without restrictions. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that reproductions cannot be regarded as multiple

originals, unlike copies of London Transport poster prints, although they are multiply produced.

Apart from supporting their multiplicity, the reproducibility of posters has a significant implication concerning museum practice. While museum objects tend to be singularised, it is not uncommon for museums to reproduce their visual objects for sale or to be used in other activities such as object handling. In the case of three-dimensional objects, museums might even produce replicas. With today's technology, such as 3D printing, it is also possible to duplicate culturally sensitive objects in order not to replace their original values with museum ones. One example is the collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the Tlingit community of southeast Alaska to 3D scan objects that were repatriated to the community. According to R. Eric Hollinger et al. (2013), the 3D replicas can be used for the museum's educational purposes while the original objects are returned back to their original use for ceremony. This practice undoubtedly raises a question about a museum object's authenticity and originality that museums aim to represent. This point is discussed in detail in the chapter that follows.

Additionally, the reproducibility of London Transport posters affects the amount of prints kept by the Museum. While the role of reproductions is clearly distinguished from accessioned prints, it overlaps that of support-duplicates, in the sense that both are potentially used by the Museum for non-curatorial purposes as already mentioned (also see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151). According to the Curator, the cost of reproducing posters nowadays is affordable. It is therefore not necessary for the Museum to collect support-duplicates given the limited capacity of the storage space. For this reason, some of them were disposed of by being sold to Christie's (Email from Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018 and 16 October 2019. pers. comm.).

The disposal of support-duplicates indicates that other physical qualities of objects, such as size, shape and weight, are crucial to the Museum's curatorial practice. Likewise, the physical capacity of the storage space plays a significant role in deciding whether to add, keep or remove objects from museums. Poster prints that were produced in larger sizes than double royal cannot be collected, for they would not fit the drawers in the Poster Store. The decisions made to objects carrying the London Transport

poster designs can therefore potentially cause change in their identities, values and meanings.

In the exhibition scenes, these material properties also matter. The noticeable size, flatness and light weight of London Transport poster prints are considered beneficial to the Museum. As mentioned in Chapter 4, an exhibition of London Transport posters is curated every three to four years at the London Transport Museum. In other words, every poster exhibition is followed by two exhibitions on another subject. Then again, the Museum holds a poster exhibition. For instance, *Poster art 150* was followed by *Goodbye Piccadilly* and *Designology,* then another poster exhibition (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). According to the Curator, the frequency is partly due to the reasonable cost for curating a poster exhibition. The relocation and installation do not require additional tools and staff. In her words,

> in general, we have very often a poster exhibition because it's easy, cheaper and very popular. People love poster exhibitions. They don't need additional tools, cases and humans to manage. It costs less than other exhibitions and they are more popular exhibitions. That's the reason (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

This is, in my view, partly due to the physical properties of London Transport posters, in the sense that they are flat and lightweight. The double royal size of posters is also suitable for being on museum display. Only the London Transport posters of this size are selected for *Poster parade*. Again, this is different from artworks. As mentioned earlier, an enormous-sized art object can be selected as an exhibit if it corresponds to the interpretation and exhibition narratives (also see the Physical display section, pp. 168–176). Materialities, including multiplicity, ephemerality, reproducibility as well as size, shape and weight, therefore matter in the actual museum practice regarding both collection management and exhibition making, despite the Museum's privilege of the visual design of London Transport posters over their physicality.

The influence of these material characteristics corresponds to Bruno Latour's (1986) concept of immutable mobiles, which refer to objects that make possible the mobilisation of resources through space and time. The best mobiles, he argues, are

inscribed or optically consistent paper surfaces. Drawing on Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979), Latour points out that printing technology contributes to the mobilisation and immutability of the two-dimensional inscriptions; and in this case, the printing press is a powerful device. In his words,

> Immutability is ensured by the process of printing many identical copies; mobility by the number of copies, the paper and the movable type. The links between different places in time and space are completely modified by this fantastic acceleration of immutable mobiles which circulate everywhere and in all directions in Europe (1996: 10).

Thanks to the invention of the printing press, different places in time and space can be connected with each other in immutable mobiles, which are readable and presentable. They can be displaced and circulated without losing what Latour calls 'optimal consistency'. This can be compared with the visual design of London Transport posters, which graphically represent various objects, events, ideas and histories. These designs remain identical on the surfaces of the paper, the materialities of which change over time, however. Due to other physical characteristics of the paper, especially its light weight, flatness, together with the help of printing technology, these images can move into different locations, from hoardings at Underground stations, to the Museum's storage, gallery space and beyond.

Regarding the characteristics of inscriptions, Latour (1986) insightfully discusses the following nine advantages, which help foreground the discussion of the Museum's knowledge creation in Chapter 6 (see pp. 211–219). The first advantage is that inscriptions are mobile. Large-scale material objects such as planets are not moveable, whereas the inscriptions of them i.e. in forms of maps and photographs are. While moving, inscriptions remain immutable. This is the second advantage, according to Latour. Each stage in the explosion of the exploding stars is, for example, captured on the surface of the paper. Moreover, the flat surface of the paper where objects are inscribed can be easily found, read, looked at, held, studied etc. London Transport posters, especially in the double-royal size, are perfect to be collected, stored in drawers, examined in the research facility and displayed in the gallery space. They can travel to different locations in the Museum and be presented to different audiences (i.e. curators,

conservators, visitors, researchers) over and over again, who encounter them with different purposes.

The fourth advantage, according to Latour (1986), is that the scale of inscriptions can be modified, while their internal proportions remain the same. They can also be reproduced and distributed at reasonable cost. As a result, various places across time and space can be assembled at another period of time. Due to their reproducibility, flatness, mobility and immutability, Latour argues that inscriptions can thus be recombined and reshuffled. London Transport poster designs have been reproduced into different sizes such as postcards. They have appeared on pages in publications as well as inscribed onto merchandises with different material forms such as stationeries, clothing and homeware. These immutable mobiles can therefore be distributed outside the museum space such as homes as collectibles, household decorations and gifts.

Relevant to recombinations, one can also superimpose images of different scales and sources. The final two advantages are considered by Latour (1986) as the most important. One is that inscriptions can be merged within a written text. Things can be written about and so they become part of the text. A piece writing on these things can also be read and commented on. This earlier piece of writing would then become part of the new text. The final advantage, the greatest one as Latour suggests, is the two-dimensional character of the inscriptions. This makes it possible for them to merge with geometry. In case of perspective (as in drawing and sketching), the paper can be worked with rulers and numbers, while the three-dimensional objects and space on the surface can also be manipulated. Material objects can also be transformed into photographs, diagrams, numbers and tables, which make them measurable and manageable, according to Latour (1986). The designs of London Transport posters and the paper on which these are printed were combined with one another across different locations within the museum space through acquisition, collection care and exhibition curating. These collections have also been merged with the documents, Museum's database and publications whereas their images remain optically consistent.

Altogether, these nine advantages, as Latour (1986) points out, should be considered in relation to mobilisation process, facilitated by innovation and technology.

The notions of immutable mobiles and inscriptions resonate with the influences of materialities on the repurposing of London Transport posters. These concepts also contribute to the analysis of the Museum's knowledge production to be discussed in the following chapter (see the Collection management section in Chapter 6, pp. 211–219), which encompasses not only the collections but also functional objects employed to serve the museum's goal.

Conclusion

Throughout the itineraries of London Transport posters, their materialities play an important role. Their physical qualities both influence and constrain the transformation in their values and meanings within the museum setting. One of the key physical characteristics of advertising posters is unquestionably their multiplicity, which is seemingly in contrast with the stereotype of museum objects as singular and unique. Multiplicity makes the repurposing of posters into museum exhibits rather complicated and questions the nature of material culture, as well as how the museum interacts with it.

Taking the notion of multiple originals as the starting point, this chapter has argued that the multiplicity of London Transport poster prints remains when they enter the London Transport Museum. Multiplicity makes it possible for the Museum to accession several copies and use them interchangeably to illustrate the different interpretations of each visual design, while keeping others as support-duplicates. Paradoxically, the multiplicity of London Transport poster prints is never highlighted in the exhibition setting. They become singularised, in the sense that only one copy of the collected prints with the same design is exhibited at a particular display. Yet their multiplicity allows these contemporaries to represent different or the same narratives at different locations at a time. Similar to physical displays, online catalogues usually showcase only one copy of poster prints for each design. This reaffirms the Museum's emphasis on the visual content and narratives over poster materialities.

Similar to the exhibitionary context, the multiple original poster prints are singularised through collection management. As the Museum's internal database reveals,

each copy of London Transport poster prints has a unique museal journey. It has been used for different activities, and so each has experienced different material transformation. Some copies are mounted, framed and labelled with either ink or pencil, while others are not labelled. Some might also be used more often than others. They might be in either good, fair or poor conditions and so received different treatment at different points in time. Each copy of the once contemporary prints is also given an unequal level of attention. Some have detailed records, whereas others have little information known about them. The care that they are given shows that the Museum at the same time perceives each member of the group of these multiple objects as individual and unique. The ways in which the Museum perceives and treats other types of objects with the similar design, such as artworks, reprints and reproductions are even more distinct from one another, resonating different values given to objects of different material forms.

Another important implication is that materiality of objects itself is transformative, as the examination of London Transport posters has demonstrated. That is due to the constant interactions with not only human beings but also other objects within the environs. This is related to another material quality of posters, which is their ephemerality. This transient characteristic of a poster counters their multiplicity, but it also affects the museum repurposing of them to a large extent. Albeit being multiply produced, poster prints are not originally expected to be durable. The design is printed on a piece of paper, which can be damaged easily. If not handled with care, it can be creased, cracked and torn. It is not water nor fire resistant. It is the fragility that the Museum tries to resist as part of the musealisation of these advertising materials, especially through collection care and conservation. The museal status therefore impacts upon how the physical qualities of objects are interacted with and responded to. Paying attention to fragile objects, one is able to see the attempt of the institution to delay the constant changes that occur throughout the journeys of objects in the collections.

While their fragility can limit and reduce the quantity of London Transport poster prints, their multiplicity is supported by their reproducible quality. Although the reproduced posters might not be regarded as part of the multiple originals, they do multiply the number of objects carrying a single visual design. More importantly, the fact

that posters are originally multiples might make the reproduction of these posters easily acceptable. Whereas a poster print is singularised in terms of how it is displayed in a gallery, the exhibition itself promotes or even serves the Museum's commercial purpose of reproducing London Transport poster prints. That means the Museum does produce objects apart from 'repurposing' them. Yet the museum-produced collectibles like poster reproductions are not intended to be museum objects but can potentially form private collections.

Apart from multiplicity, ephemerality and reproducibility, this chapter has paid attention to the enormous size, flatness and lightness of London Transport poster prints. These key characteristics have no less impact on the Museum's collecting and curatorial practice. The ways in which poster prints and artworks are stored and displayed cannot be done without regarding these three qualities. The use of drawers, the low temperature of the Stores, as well as the use of mounts and frames are some examples. Additionally, these qualities correspond to the Museum's financial constraints. Poster exhibitions are affordable compared to other types of objects. While the design is considered attractive to viewers in their original context, as well as museum visitors, the materialities make it possible for them to be exhibited more often than objects of other forms.

In some cases, the materialities of London Transport posters are part of the exhibition narrative despite the Museum's emphasis on the visual design. Despite the focus on the visual content, the displays must be the original pieces. The originality is partially performed by object materialities as discussed in this chapter. While poster exhibits should be in good condition, the sign of age is essential in indicating their original function. It might seem common for visitors to expect to see original objects in the museum, but it is worth considering more profoundly why museum displays are expected to be original. The topic of originality and authenticity is discussed in the following chapter (Chapter 6) in hopes of shedding light on the institutionalisation of objects by museums and on the nature of the museum institution itself.

Chapter 6
Originality, authenticity and museums

Introduction
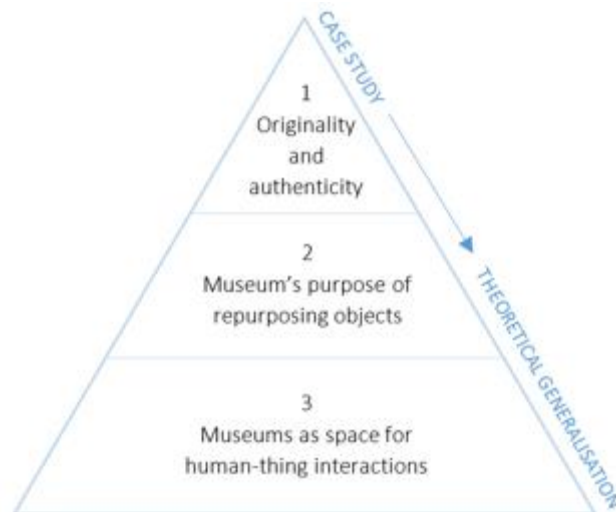
Figure 6.1 Relation between the three sections of this chapter

This last thematic chapter addresses three topics: authenticity, museums' repurposing of objects and human-thing interactions. In terms of the focus, it shifts the thesis's attention from objects alone to a more holistic view of human-object relationships in the museum space. Methodologically, this chapter acts as the theoretical generalisation of this research's case study. It provides an analysis of what the London Transport Museum's collection management and exhibition practices reveal about several key characteristics of museums in general. In terms of the relation between sections, this chapter starts with a smaller theme followed by broader ones, as demonstrated by the diagram above (Figure **6.1**).

To begin with, the chapter first discusses the notion of object authenticity in relation to originality, singularity and pastness, which is one of the key issues that emerged from the research evidence. Apart from that, this section addresses different types of authenticity that are manifested in the research's case study. The discussion of

authenticity is drawn from both the findings of this research's case study and secondary literature in related disciplines to support the primary research. Taking forward the role of authenticity in museums, this chapter also attempts to understand a broader question of why museums repurpose objects at all. As this research's case study suggests, authenticity is maintained, presented and highlighted for the sake of knowledge creation, which can be regarded as the primary concern of the museum. In so doing, both the presence of physical objects and information about them play an integral role.

Nonetheless, museums' attempt to make use of their collections and displays for the purpose of knowledge shaping does not undermine the significance of material objects. In a sense, museums' purpose of repurposing objects and the activities deriving from this goal can be viewed as a form of human-thing interactions. As this research's case study demonstrates, museums are unable to take complete control over their collections, which physically change over time. Visitors' interactions to objects are also potentially unpredictable and serendipitous. This chapter therefore concludes by highlighting the integral role of material culture and so justifying the object-centred standpoint towards museums.

Object authenticity

As Chapter 5 demonstrates, the London Transport Museum prefers to display original objects, including artworks and poster prints. Reproductions are used only in cases where originals are not available. This emphasis on originality is not just a concern of this one museum. It seems normal for visitors to assume that museums collect and showcase only original objects and are therefore unlikely to visit a museum in order to see fake objects or reproductions on display in a gallery space (this excludes items for sale displayed in the museum's gift shop, of course). That is one example of why the association between museums and originality is often taken for granted, not only by visitors but also by museum professionals and scholars. The museum's emphasis on object originality, in my view, becomes common to the point where museums sometimes stop thinking about why they interact with objects in one way and not another. The first section of this chapter therefore addresses the question of why originality matters so much for

museums. It argues that the notion of originality is unquestionably linked to the idea of authenticity widely debated in museum studies and related academic domains in social sciences and humanities. The actual practice at the London Transport Museum is analysed along with a discussion of scholarship on authenticity, as to provide insight into what this concept actually means, as well as how it impacts upon contemporary museum practice.

Authenticity's relation to originality and singularity

Before discussing the concept of authenticity in detail, I will first follow up on the notion of singularity addressed in Chapter 5 and its relation to object originality. I argue that the originality of museum objects is often connoted with the idea of singularity, but this is not necessarily true in actual museum practice. For originally singular objects, such as artworks, there are unquestionably well-established methods for distinguishing the original from the copy. In the case of singular visual arts, copies might refer to reproductions, which are produced later to imitate the original objects. One criterion used for identifying the original is the material qualities. Regarding the Artwork and Poster Collections at the London Transport Museum, the interplay between originality and singularity is rather complicated. As pointed out in Chapters 4 and 5, artworks were commissioned to inspire poster prints. Although the visual content of poster prints usually looks almost the same as artworks to the point where they might be mistaken as reproductions of the artworks, poster prints are considered original objects unlike reproductions (for types of reproductions, see the Reproductions section in Chapter 5, pp. 158–160). Therefore, the term 'copy' of prints employed in this thesis is not associated with reproductions but rather addresses an individual with multiple objects under the same category.[23]

Nonetheless, an important difference between artworks and poster prints is that artworks are singular, while prints are multiple at the stage of production and remain so

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[23] In fact, the Museum also uses the term 'copy' to refer to a reproduction apart from a print. However, the word 'a copy' throughout this thesis refers to each of the multiple objects under the same category, which are contemporarily and multiply produced (e.g. a copy of reproductions, a copy of prints). A copy of prints is therefore not the same thing as a reproduction of them.

after they became museum collections, despite being grouped into different categories. This does not mean that the Museum does not attempt to singularise them. As the previous chapter (Chapter 5) on object materialities demonstrates, singularisation is one technique the Museum has employed to turn London Transport publicity poster prints into accessioned collections and exhibits. It also showed that the material qualities of posters, especially their multiplicity, have complicated this singularising process. The fact that several copies of prints were accessioned and that they are considered representing a group of objects of the same design sustain their multiple characteristic, while still being original. When on display, however, poster prints are exhibited in the museum space as if they were singular in the same fashion as artworks.
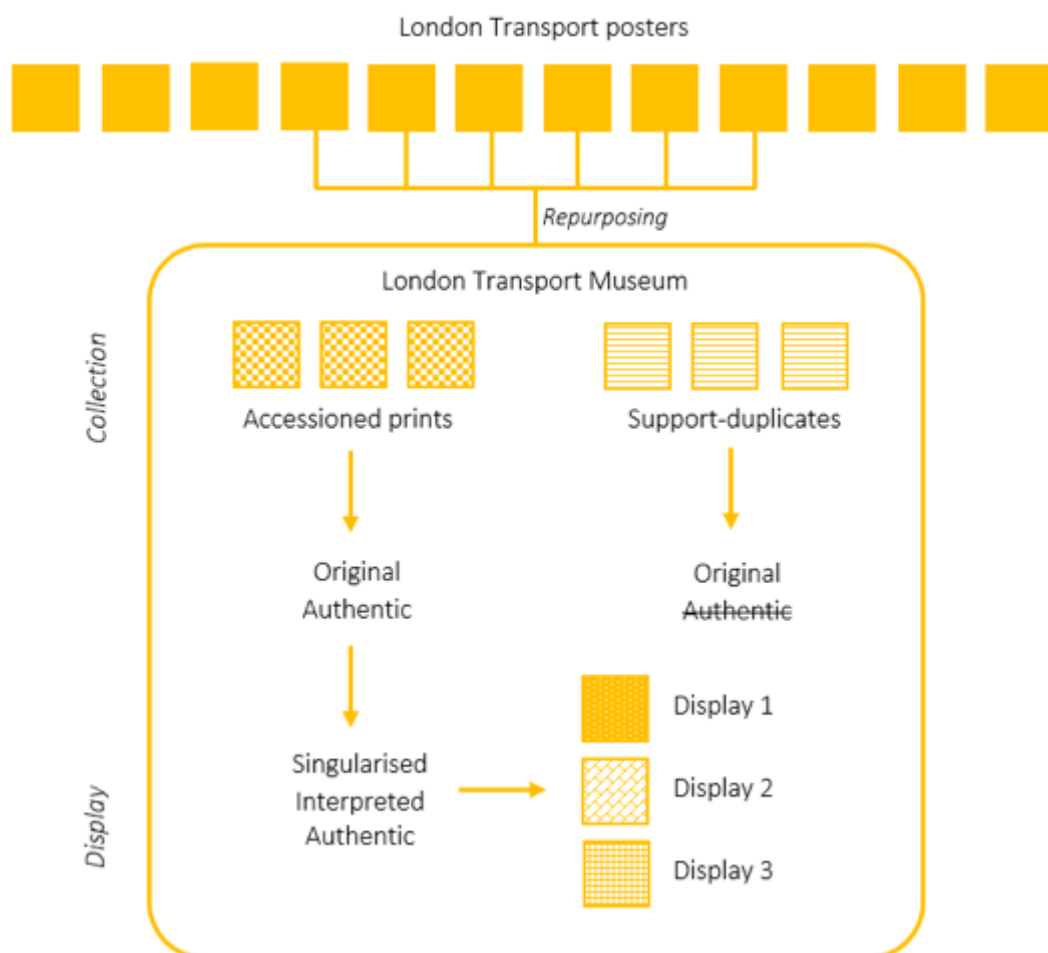
Figure 6.2 A visualisation of how original London Transport poster prints have become authentic museum exhibits

One significant implication from the analysis of originally multiple objects like poster prints is that object originality is not necessarily represented by its singularity. To represent the original advertising function and context of London Transport poster prints, the Museum could possibly display all the accessioned copies of each print at the same time. This would reflect how they were displayed as publicity materials (as opposed to as museum exhibits). Yet the Museum has bothered to singularise them through curatorial process, with the result that not every original poster print qualifies as an exhibit. That is, those that are potentially chosen must first be accessioned into the Museum's Poster Collection. Second, they must be in good condition and available (for other criteria, see the Physical displays section in Chapter 5, pp. 168–176). Eventually, only a single copy of the print with the same design is displayed, usually alongside other posters with different designs, artworks or other objects of different material forms. Each of them is also accompanied by the interpretation text. This process is represented by Figure **6.2**. Instead of simply showing the originality, museums, I argue, singularise original objects and then place them with textual information in a gallery space with proper lighting and design in order to highlight the authenticity of objects.

However, it is worth noting that the idea of authenticity was in fact never mentioned by the Museum's curators I interviewed. It is the concern about object originality that was emphasised, especially during the discussion on the criteria for selecting museum exhibits. The Museum's emphasis on object originality is exemplified by the role of full-size reproductions of London Transport posters. If they are not original prints, they are not generally accessioned and used as displays. That the curators did not mention authenticity can be interpreted in two ways. First, they might not be concerned about it at all. Second, they might consider originality synonymous with authenticity. By referring to originality, there is therefore no need for them to mention authenticity. Apart from reproductions, support-duplicates cannot be used as exhibits, even though they were produced as the same time as the accessioned original prints. The reason is, in my view, that they are original but not authentic as a result of categorisation and singularisation through collection management. As the case study suggests, originality is therefore not the same thing as authenticity whether or not the Museum is aware of such

a difference. More importantly, it is object authenticity, not originality that is the goal of museums' singularisation of objects.

The notion of authenticity has become significant not only in the museum context but also in the material culture-related disciplines such as heritage studies, archaeology and anthropology. Some of the scholarships in those areas of study are helpful for explaining how authenticity interplays with the Museum's repurposing of advertising posters. In the early discussion of the object biography approach by Appadurai (1986a) and Kopytoff (1986), the notion of authenticity is already mentioned. The authors recognise the transformation of objects' values and meanings through the process of singularisation. Kopytoff in particular pays attention to the circulation of objects between consumption and the art world, which makes them commodities and artworks respectively. That is how the authenticity of objects is created. In a sense, this implies that Appadurai and Kopytoff emphasise the active role humans play in creating object authenticity. Although it is humans who invented the idea of authenticity, at least in the museum context, authenticity is, in my view, unable to be considered entirely separated from the itineraries of objects themselves.

While object originality is associated with the production stage, authenticity is likewise related to the histories of objects. In the museum context, the interpretation and representation of objects, through which their authenticity is highlighted, put great emphasis on their original context. In the case of London Transport posters, the documentation in collection management, as well as interpretation in the exhibitionary setting underlines the production stage: how and why they were produced and who was involved in the process. For poster exhibitions, the values of poster prints on display are often linked to the contribution of the institution, which is London Transport. In the case of monographs, poster prints are more or less employed to highlight the life histories of the artists who designed them. Nonetheless, the *Poster parade* displays, which are mainly thematic, are slightly different in the sense that posters can be employed to connote with ongoing events apart from the past. Yet it is worth noting that the main purpose of this series is mainly marketing-oriented instead of providing a social historical account of each poster print, although the basic information about the production is included in the interpretation labels (also see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151).

Apart from their past journeys, authenticity is associated with the physical qualities of collections. As previously pointed out, the original object is preferably used at the London Transport Museum as an exhibit, although the textual interpretation accompanying a poster usually highlights the visual content and design. The traces of wear and tear shown by the original object that visitors can see confirm that it was really produced in the past and has survived to the present. The changes in the object's material qualities thereby manifest its authenticity.

My research therefore indicates that object authenticity is a mixture of perceived value added by people, object history and its physical qualities. To support this proposition, the following sections draw on two particular approaches from the archaeological and anthropological literatures. I first pay attention to the notion of age-value of objects suggested by Cornelius Holtorf (2013), which I find theoretically applicable to the complexity of authenticity and its confusion with originality as evident in the research's case study. I then borrow Les Field's (2009) ideas about different types of authenticity to explain the Museum's posters and related collections. As the following section demonstrates, both literatures support this research's argument that object authenticity is as much about human ideas as about material objects themselves.

Authenticity as pastness

Holtorf (2013) proposes the concept of age-value or pastness, which I find applicable to the interplay (and confusion) between authenticity and originality in the musealisation of London Transport posters, especially in relation to the selection of poster prints for display. Holtorf uses this concept to reconcile constructivist and materialist approaches. Although he still favours the constructivist strand, he does recognise the crucial role of material qualities. In Holtorf's view, authenticity is related to age-value instead of the age of objects, as usually mistaken. An object that is considered authentic is the one having the quality of deriving from the past, no matter which point in the past it is representing in a given context. As mentioned earlier, it is standard practice for the London Transport Museum to display an original print, even though the interpretation focusses very much on the content of the poster. Why so? One possible answer is that the material qualities of the original print shows the pastness or age-value as proposed by Holtorf (2013).

Fading colours, cracks, dirt and other signs of wear and tear represent the object's condition of being from the past (see Figure **6.3**–Figure **6.4**, for example). This makes it an authentic object.

Figure 6.3 Traces of pastness on the third copy of the Stevens poster (1972c). Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Figure 6.4 Traces of pastness on the first copy of the Stevens poster (1972a). Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Moreover, Holtorf's (2013) idea about traces of pastness on objects echoes the importance of time in museum practice pointed out by Brooks (2015). Without referring to the notion of authenticity, Brooks interestingly notes that in museums, the negotiation is taking place between psychological time and physical time. While museums are inviting visitors to experience the past (psychological time), they are coping with physical change of objects through collection care and conservation (also see the Ephemerality section in

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Chapter 5, pp. 178–187, for further discussion). The decision made by conservators is therefore influential to the value and meaning of objects presented to visitors.

Materialities are, in fact, not the only criteria for creating the conditions of pastness. As mentioned earlier, Holtorf (2013) acknowledges the roles of both human intervention and materialities in relation to authenticity. This standpoint is affirmed by the three requirements for enhancing the pastness and so the authenticity of an object. The first requirement is material clues, including wear and tear, decay, etc. as mentioned earlier. These clues are also manifested by original London Transport poster prints, while reproductions cannot fulfil this role. Comparing the first copy of the Stevens poster (Figure **6.4**) and the third one above (Figure **6.3**), some traces of wear and tear might make the former appear slightly newer. However, it can be argued that all three accessioned prints have age-value. Therefore, it makes sense why the Museum is not concerned with which copy is on display. The fact that there is more than one copy is not regarded as problematic either (while only one copy is displayed for the authentic effect as discussed earlier).

Another requirement Holtorf points out is a narrative that connects the past with the present. At the London Transport Museum, the thematic poster exhibition might not, in general, necessarily highlight the pastness of objects as mentioned above (for more details about the Museum's types of exhibitions, see the Changes in narratives section in Chapter 4, pp. 115–126). Instead, it sometimes exemplifies the re-contextualisation by combining objects from different moments in the past. Poster prints from the 1930s and 1970s, for example, can both be used to illustrate modern cultural attractions in London in *Poster art 150*. Moreover, the thematic strategy in curating exhibitions can also be viewed as a contemporary way of looking at these objects. This corresponds to Holtorf's point about the connection between now and then, as well as the importance of age-value over the age of object. No matter which point in time each poster print represents, it is acceptable as long as it shows the quality of being produced in the past.

Aside from exhibition themes or storylines, I argue that the information regarding the production of objects, such as the year the poster was printed and the technique used can be considered echoing the pastness. For instance, the lithographic technique itself was widely employed to produce posters from the late nineteenth to early

twentieth centuries. As the former Senior Curator points out, London Transport posters 'are an amazing achievement in terms of what's possible with the lithography' (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Along with the materialities, the information regarding this technique provided in the label reaffirms the age-value of the exhibits.

Figure 6.5 The *London Museum* poster (1928a) by Rex Whistler was displayed in *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales* as a replacement of *Tate Gallery* (1928b) also designed by the same artist © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

Besides that, pastness needs to meet the audience's expectation according to Holtorf (2013). This requirement is in my view the most difficult to achieve. It might even be impossible for museums to correctly predict or meet every visitor's expectation, which is subject to change and dependent on different circumstances. This is demonstrated by the criticism towards the Whistler poster as being racist while on display in *Poster parade: myths and fairy tales*, even though both the poster and artwork had been exhibited in the past (also see Chapter 4, pp. 103–151). The Museum solved the problem by replacing this poster design with *London Museum*, which was also designed by Whistler (1928a; Figure

6.5). This work contains different visual and textual content, but it was produced in the same year. An original print was also used instead of any reproduction. After the replacement, the Museum did not receive any other complaints according to the interview with the Curator (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). In this case, it can be argued that the Museum successfully fulfils the audience's expectation to see authentic prints that echoes the themes of mythological creatures, while not displaying a work that can be considered racially inappropriate.

The view of authenticity as pastness is helpful in explaining the privilege of original objects in both the collecting and display contexts. Whether or not the curators are aware, accessioned London Transport poster prints and artworks successfully perform as authentic objects thanks to their physical deterioration, the narratives given to them as part of the musealisation and the expectation of the audience to experience the 'original'. Nevertheless, the concept of age-value does not adequately cover the museums' interplay with the multiplicity of objects and the importance of the singularisation process discussed at the beginning of this chapter. These phenomena can, however, be insightfully explained by different types of authenticity as proposed by Field (2009), which is discussed in the section that follows.

Types of authenticity

Three of the four types of authenticity suggested by Field (2009) are reflected in the musealisation of London Transport poster prints and artworks. In his article on pottery from the Nicaraguan village of San Juan de Oriente, Field (2009) proposes four types of authenticity that objects carry at different historical moments. These include ethnographic authenticity, high-artistic authenticity, engineered authenticity and brand-named authenticity. As San Juanese pottery has become exhibited, some types of authenticity are presented, while others are undermined. For example, Field suggests that pottery from this village, as well as other parts of the world, is presented as having unique artistic value at the Museum of International Ceramic Art in Middlefart, Denmark. In contrast, the pottery becomes representative of indigenous identity in such an ethnographic institution as the Museum of Culture in Helsinki, Finland. Field's ideas about

types of authenticity are helpful for understanding the London Transport posters in the museum context.

The first type is what Field calls ethnographic authenticity, which explains the condition in which an object represents a cultural group or identity and so is considered authentic. Nevertheless, this type of authenticity seems the least relevant to London Transport poster-related collections, though it may be more applicable in the context of anthropological and ethnographic museums. To elaborate, the identity of the individual maker of a particular object for this type of authenticity is less important than where it originates. Apart from that, the process of production and patterns are also significant. An ethnographically authentic object is perceived by consumers, as Field argues, to conform to certain standards. The variations between individual objects are usually viewed as trivial and predictable. Ethnographic authenticity is related to the idea of originality, while its uniqueness is less important.

The second type of authenticity is the high-artistic one. Unlike ethnographic authenticity, this type is closely associated with uniqueness, singularity and the individual maker. The expertise and reputation of the maker plays an important role in determining whether an object is high art or not. Additionally, its aesthetic qualities and technical process of production should also be sophisticated and unique. That means the authentic art object is also singular. This type of authenticity, Field points out, is what Kopytoff (1986) refers to. It can therefore be argued that high-artistic authenticity is related to singularisation. In the case of London Transport posters, this type of authenticity is likely to be manifested in the exhibitionary context. It is obvious especially in the case of monographs, in which posters and artworks represent 'masterpieces' and are employed to illustrate and celebrate artists' expertise, as well as their unique styles and techniques. In thematic exhibitions, such as the *Poster parade* series, as well as those celebrating the design development of posters, the artistic value of posters is also often included in interpretive panels and labels. Thus, whether explicitly or implicitly, London Transport poster prints and artworks are inevitably presented with high-artistic authenticity (at least partially) in the gallery space. In some cases, it is also combined with other types of authenticity.

Another type of authenticity is regarded by Field as being engineered, which is applicable to the London Transport Museum, especially in relation to collection management. This refers to mass-produced objects, which are also applicable to this research's case study. Similar to ethnographic authenticity, engineered authenticity neglects the identity of the individual maker. It is the design standard that is more important. An object is considered authentic only if it meets a particular technique or parameter. In other words, an engineered-authentic object also represents a group of objects of the same type, unlike authentic high arts. As Field points out, this type of authenticity is influenced by Walter Benjamin's essay 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (1999).

Regarding the case study, the multiplicity of London Transport posters allows the Museum to collect and accession more than one copy. In this case, it does not matter which copies are selected from their contemporaries as they are viewed as representing the 'original' group. Moreover, this viewpoint perpetuates in the process of selecting posters for exhibits. From the Museum's perspective, any copy can be exhibited as they are all considered having the same value and meaning. Each copy, as long as it is from the original production, is accepted as being authentic. Its uniqueness in terms of physical change does not matter to the narratives of the exhibition. Yet it is worth noting that when on display, the selected copy inevitably represents high-art authenticity as mentioned earlier. That is why only a single copy is exhibited. More importantly, this type of authenticity is in accordance with the Holtorf's (2013) notion of authenticity as pastness, although they are slightly different. Pastness, represented by material traces, narratives and audiences' expectation can reaffirm that the objects genuinely belong to the 'original' group. Engineered authenticity and pastness can therefore be viewed as supporting each other.

The last type of authenticity, or what Field calls brand-named authenticity, is also evident in the case of London Transport posters. Similar to engineered authenticity, objects belonging to this type are multiply produced, whereas the individual maker is not at all significant. However, what is unique about brand-named authenticity, according to Field, is that it is associated with a corporate or national identity instead of a bounded cultural group as with ethnographic authenticity. Similar to the authentic high art,

aesthetic qualities and sophistication are integral for an object to embody a brand identity. In the case of London Transport posters, in my view, most exhibitions of posters at the Museum (as opposed to monographs, *Poster parade* or Store displays; for details, see the Changes in narratives section in Chapter 4, pp. 115–126) are clearly associated with this form of authenticity. The Museum itself is generally proud of the quality of their poster prints. Apart from exhibitions, the Museum's promotion of their collections and publications tend to group these poster designs under the brand of London Transport. In other historical writings of posters, Underground posters are sometimes viewed as a unique category, while their aesthetic qualities are at the same time celebrated (Hillier 1969; Wrede 1988; Guffey 2014, for example). The discussion of the influence of these poster designs to art and design history in general can, nonetheless, be viewed as resonating the high-artistic authenticity at the same time.

Field's discussion of authenticity has at least two important implications. First, it shows that object authenticity itself is arbitrary and transformative. The same type of objects can be considered carrying different types of authenticity at different periods of time in different contexts. What is revealed in this research's case study is that different types of authenticity can be combined and presented together. As pointed out earlier, the term 'authenticity' was never mentioned by museum professionals during my field research. Yet how the Museum manages the collection related to London Transport posters, especially how it deals with the objects' multiplicity and singularity, can be analysed as an attempt to maintain, present and enhance different kinds of authenticity. Whether or not museums are aware of its impacts, authenticity is usually present in its display space. Having said that, I am by no means suggesting that authenticity is attributed as a result of external interventions, such as in curatorial practice. This is related to the second implication in Field's paper.

Apart from the transformative nature of authenticity, Field's paper recognises the roles of anthropologists and museums in creating authentic effects. This argument, from the surface, seems to privilege the roles of humans over objects. To put it another way, it appears to come from a more constructivist viewpoint instead of the materialist approach to authenticity. Yet Field's discussion on the four types of authenticity in fact gestures towards the importance of object qualities. For instance, aesthetics and

uniqueness, which are sometime associated with the material qualities, are essential for high-art authentic objects. Nonetheless, the maker at the same times plays an important role in this type of authenticity. Their reputation is another criterion, but both need to work together and correspond to each other. This argument is, in my view, different from the imposition of human agency onto objects. Instead of arguing that an object is authentic due to its producer, Field's (2009) ideas about the types of authenticity, similar to Holtorf's (2013) notion of authenticity as pastness, gestures towards a two-way relationship and mutual interactions between humans and objects.

It is this standpoint that my research takes, for it also corresponds to the phenomenon that occurs at the London Transport Museum. Authenticity is a theoretical concept used in this PhD thesis to explain how and why museums interact with their collections in certain ways. Nonetheless, authenticity could not be realised by people's intervention alone. For one object to be considered authentic, their materialities matter. Moreover, this section has implied that different types of authenticity can co-exist and be combined. They can be enhanced simultaneously in museums through different curatorial processes, even though museums might not necessarily be aware of the difference. To put it another way, museums have a tendency to sustain, present and highlight the authenticity of objects whether or not they can come up with a conclusion of what authenticity exactly is.

Taking forward the singularisation of London Transport posters discussed in Chapter 5, this chapter began by connecting the notion of originality to the theoretical debates on authenticity. It argues that museums are particularly concerned with object originality, yet it is not the end point. Original objects are collected and acquired in the first place. When they enter the museum, some of these original objects are made into authentic ones. The key method employed is singularisation, which is complex when applied to originally mass-produced objects like advertising posters. The London Transport Museum makes use of their multiplicity, but this quality does not necessarily undermine the authenticity of objects themselves. In some cases, physical qualities that meet the expected standard can create authenticity, whether or not the given object is singular or unique. In other cases, objects can perform authentically as long as they show a sign of being from the past. These are the examples of how authenticity is achieved.

The next question is: why do museums attempt to maintain, manifest and enhance the authenticity of their collections at all? This is tackled in the section that follows.

Knowledge creation: museums' purpose of repurposing objects

The analysis of this research's case study has scrutinised how original advertising materials have been made authentic through different museum activities. This section goes back to a fundamental question of why museums repurpose objects at all. It argues that knowledge creation is unsurprisingly considered one of the institution's most important tasks. The London Transport Museum's emphasis on knowledge shaping is evident, not only in the interpretation of poster exhibits, but also in regard to resources provided to researchers. In this case, this section is reflexive on my own research as an example of the use of museums as spaces for knowledge. It also engages the primary data with secondary literature on museum displays and collecting histories, in an attempt to theorise museums' knowledge shaping purpose.

Collection management

This subsection pays attention to how the London Transport Museum's collection management gestures towards its knowledge shaping purpose. Accumulation, documentation, preservation, interpretation, access to and information about collections are done in such a way that the connoisseurship about the collection is achieved. While material objects are rather used as a means or instrument to reach such a goal, they play an integral and crucial role throughout the process. More importantly, as the discussion below demonstrates, material objects still remain at the centre of the museum practice whether or not this corresponds to the institution's perceptions about them.

In his chapter, Tomislav Sola (2004) points out that museums have been obsessed with the quantity of their collections. As a result, the number of objects collected keeps increasing, which becomes problematic. Yet why do museums keep adding objects to their collections? According to Sola, one reason is that the institutions attempt to fulfil the fragmented past for the sake of the present. In his words, 'The meaning of museums is not to study the past, but how we relate it. As such, the museum has become the

mediator between users and the past' (2004: 254). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that physical collections, in Sola's view, are not the ultimate goal of the museum. Material culture is only a means by which museums attempt to understand non-material culture. This is the attitude towards physical objects adopted by the London Transport Museum and probably other museums as well, as various scholarship in the field of material culture studies (Prown 2007, for example). The Museum has sustained and enhanced the authenticity of their collections and displays primarily for the sake of knowledge creation. Although the role of material culture, from this perspective, seems rather instrumental from the Museum's perspective, it nevertheless plays an extremely significant and crucial role throughout the actual museum process. Even for Sola, museum collections represent the reality of not only the past, but also the present and the future.

According to the Museum's former Senior Curator, London Transport posters tell 'an amazing social historical story' (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Yet it is worth noting that not every object in the collection is selected to perform every moment and aspect of the past. As Sola points out, collection growth is associated with museums' attempts to reconstruct memories. Yet remembering is, in his view, as important as forgetting. To put it another way, oblivion is part of the remembering process through collection management. Collections, which represent certain memories, do not straightforwardly contain every detail of the past, but have been through the process of acquisition, selection, categorisation, documentation, preservation, interpretation, etc. Not every object related to London Transport is collected by the London Transport Museum. Also, only certain objects in the Museum's collections are selected to create certain stories that resonate with their pasts i.e. through documentation and exhibition curating. That means only partial itineraries of the London Transport posters are remembered in the present, mainly through resources available in the Museum.

Although this thesis initially paid attention to the repurposing of London Transport posters into exhibits, the moments when they entered and functioned as collections have contributed to the understanding of their changing values and meanings, especially in relation to the Museum's knowledge shaping purpose. It is true that London Transport posters have been collected for non-commercial purposes since the early 20th

century, such as being archived at London Transport's Circulation Department and donated to the V&A collection in 1915 (Flood 2008; Dobbin 2008). Yet the existing literature on London Transport posters tends to emphasise the aesthetic quality as the main reason for acquisition, although London Transport did lend some of these posters from its archive to art schools and college.

Knowledge creation is more evident in the contemporary Collecting Policy of the London Transport Museum. The guideline regarding the acquisition of these poster prints is listed in the pre-approved acquisitions document (London Transport Museum 2018), which was discussed in Chapter 5 (see the Types of objects based on the same poster design section, pp. 153–160). In general, the Museum is currently collecting a wide range of materials and media that document the history of urban mass transportation. Apart from advertising posters and original artworks, other examples are such as maps, engineer drawings, ephemera, photographs, vehicles, uniforms and rolling stock. The Museum also accepts donations that have been assessed and approved by the Museum's Collections Development Group (CDG) in their monthly meetings (London Transport Museum 2020a). However, as pointed out on the Museum website, certain donated objects might not eventually enter the collections if they fall into one of the following criteria: similar items have already been collected at the Museum; the items do not fit its Collecting Policy; they are in poor condition or contain hazardous material; the information about their histories is insufficient. In case of the Photograph Collection, prints, digital images and slides would be accepted by the Museum only in case the donors are the copyright owners (London Transport Museum 2020a).

Regarding the number of objects, collection growth is mentioned in John E Simmons's (2015) chapter on collection management. He interestingly points out its relationship with order and preservation, as represented by the diagram below (Figure **6.6**). The arrowheads symbolise infinity, which means there is no limit on how much the collection potentially changes in size, condition and the categorisation. However, excess in any of these aspects, according to Simmons, makes the collection unusable. Regarding preservation in particular, Simmons gestures towards its connection with access to collections. To what extent a collection is available to the public and researchers is the balance between preservation and knowledge creation. According to Simmons, access to

collections requires the relocation and handling of objects, which potentially result in deterioration.
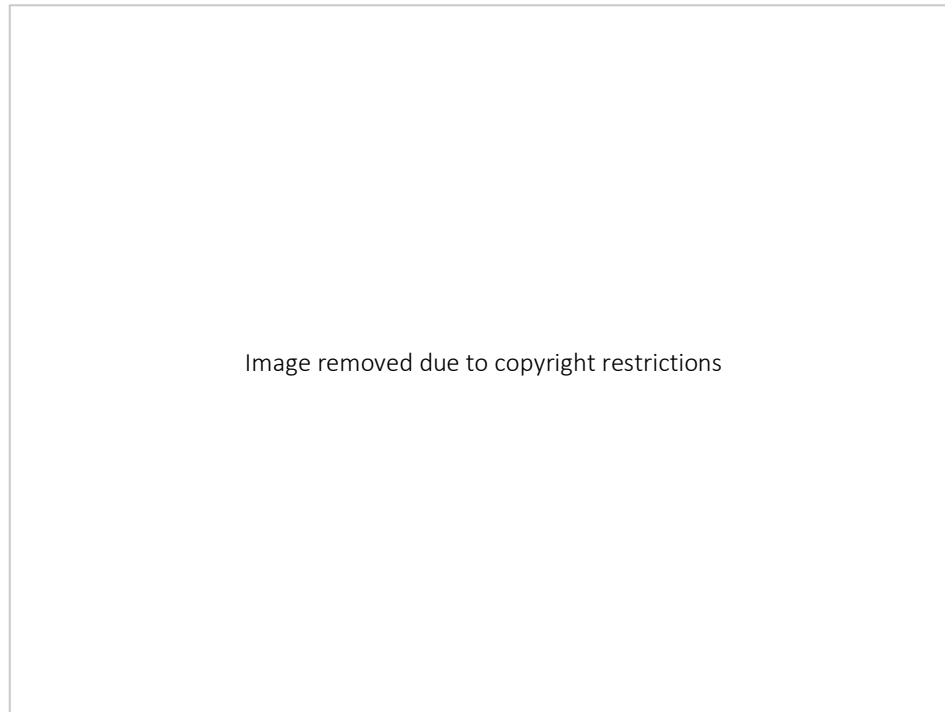
Figure 6.6 A visualisation in Simmons (2015: 233) explaining the relations between the order of the collection and preservation

As for this research's case study, there are no restrictions for how many objects researchers can request. However, the balance between preventive conservation and the Museum's knowledge creation can be observed. I examined all the artefacts requested at the Museum Depot, where they were stored. Yet most were moved from their 'permanent' storages i.e. particular drawers in the Poster Store and placed in the study area for this purpose and returned after the examination was over. Photography was also allowed during the examination of every object, but the fragile Cooper artwork (1928a) could not be handled without gloves as pointed out in Chapter 5. As for the framed and mounted artworks and posters, the Museum and I made an agreement that they would not be moved or handled. Instead, I was accompanied by the Curatorial Assistant to the Stores during the observation. The temperature in both Poster and Art Stores is kept low for conservation reasons, because high temperature can speed up the deterioration

according to Simmons. Although preventive conservation is viewed by Simmons as distinguished from collection management, they are certainly relevant to each other. It is also worth noting that conservation and access are associated with material qualities of objects.

Apart from access to collection, access to information is essential for serving the knowledge shaping goal of contemporary museums. Quoting Paul F Marty, Simmons points out that museums have become 'repositories of knowledge' (2008: 4 cited in Simmons 2015) rather than those of objects. In my view, museums still hold both, but I do agree that the ultimate goal is knowledge creation. Information, Simmons argues, is significant for various reasons. First, it distinguishes museums from other institutions. What museums do with information includes generation, organisation, perpetuation and dissemination. Second, information is what triggers values and meanings of objects. It is part of the process of object repurposing done by museums. An alternative term for repurposing might be musealisation, which refers to the de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of objects in the natural environment into museum objects, according to Simmons. Objects therefore become representative of reality in the larger context beyond their functional reality.

Access to information has, in my view, less impact on preservation compared to access to collections. The availability and access of information the London Transport Museum provides the public is limited to a certain extent, probably due to ethical and legal reasons (or any others) rather than preservation. As pointed out earlier, the Museum's internal database has more detailed information than the online one, where only the record of the first copy of the print is available. The content of the online record is also shorter than the internal one. As a researcher, I was allowed to access the Museum's internal database. I could take notes as much as I wished, but photocopy and photography were prohibited (while photography is allowed during artefact examination). Thus, it can be argued that information plays an important role in knowledge creation. The importance of information in museums is also highlighted in Malcolm Chapman's (2015) chapter on the development of collection management systems. He argues that collection management can be regarded as content management, especially thanks to the use of computing systems in managing museum

collections since the late twentieth century. My field research demonstrates that in order to understand the nature of material objects in focus, I inevitably interacted with information built around it as much as the objects themselves.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the formats of the content in the Museum's internal and online databases are relatively easy for non-specialists to understand. The communicative aspect of museums is highlighted by Sola (2004), similar to Chapman (2015) and Simmons (2015). He argues that communication is one of the museum's main functions, apart from collecting and researching objects. Information attached to physical collections is also encountered by people both inside and outside museums to a large extent. This is also true for my own case study. Documents, databases, as well as interview data are as equally important as artefacts to my research study. Nevertheless, it is important to note that content cannot exist without physical objects. While accessing the information provided at the London Transport Museum, I was unavoidably interacting with material objects and people. As the internal database is only accessible on the Museum's computer network, I was required to travel to the Museum Library and take note from the specific device. While the collection was moved to the study area, I was required to visit the Depot to examine the objects requested. Likewise, processes before and after field research, such as data analysis and writing-up, could not be done without objects outside the Museum, such as computers, notepads, printers, etc. The existence of material culture is therefore essential throughout the process of knowledge creation provided by museums. Even institutions that heavily employ multimedia or those without physical collections cannot fulfil their task without machines to make those technologies work.

Moreover, the content provided by the Museum includes not only records stored in the computer, but also physical archival documents and publications, which were also crucial to my research. As Chapman (2015) points out, today's collection management systems are a mixture between the information in the computer and physical documents. Some of them exist in both formats. The list of pre-approved acquisitions (London Transport Museum 2018) was, for instance, sent to me by email in a PDF format, but it can also be printed out for use. Publications, such as exhibition catalogues, are all in printed formats, which are available elsewhere apart from the Museum Library. However,

the Library is a resource where most publications related to my research topics were gathered. The Museum in this case plays the role of the repository of knowledge as much as the collections, as Marty (2008) suggests. The public is able to interact with the content related to collections in the museum, as much as the physical collections themselves, through other channels provided by the museum apart from exhibitions (i.e. publications, online articles, online databases, etc.).

Therefore, it seems apparent that the availability and access to information reaffirms the emphasis on knowledge creation in museum practice, which is the key purpose of the museum in my perspective. Despite that, the roles of the physical collections should not be undermined. It is in fact the collections that are at the centre of the content. In some cases, information about objects draw people closer to them. For instance, advertising posters with their original function are used by institutions like museums to promote their collections or displays. This is one of the main themes of London Transport posters (apart from promoting the transportation itself), as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Hence, it can be said that the importance of the content provided by the museum does not weaken the significance of physical objects themselves in serving the museum's knowledge shaping purpose.

Museum collections' relationship to content and knowledge creation are insightfully discussed in Simon Knell's (2007) introductory chapter of his edited volume *Museums in the material world*. He interestingly points out that apart from their materialities, museum objects are attributed with both interpretation and context. However, these two are in his view slightly different. Interpretation, I argue, can be considered part of the content discussed by Chapman (2015). It contributes to objects' values and meanings but is not intrinsic to it. According to Knell, interpretation can derive from both within (such as qualities of objects) and without (such as their locations and histories). On the contrary, Knell argues that context is integral to museum objects. In Knell's words: 'the object is not surrounded by 'context' but part of it' (2007: 9). Collecting objects can therefore be regarded as gathering different pieces of context. This statement, I argue, implies the privilege of information in museums and the use of objects as a means to achieve it.

Moreover, Knell's discussion of object interpretation is applicable to the collection management at the London Transport Museum. As discussed in detail in Chapter 4, contemporary prints were given hierarchical status through the accessioning process. Knell's chapter touches upon this issue. He uses the term 'resolution' to explain different levels of categorisation, which is a value-laden process. High resolution analysis of objects results in a large number of groups, while each of the group is more homogenous. In the case of the London Transport Museum's collection, artworks and prints can be viewed as two large heterogeneous groups resulting from low resolution analysis. To organise prints in more detail or to make higher resolution analysis, they can be divided into those accessioned and support-duplicates. Accessioned prints can be divided into themes, years of production, artists who produced them, etc. Their museal functions also echo how they are categorised. Yet it is important to note that categorisation is flexible and overlapping. This explains why one poster can represent multiple narratives as pointed out in Chapter 4, and represent different types of authenticity as discussed in the first section of this chapter.

Knell's discussion of knowledge creation, in my view, focusses more on the attempt by the institutions to gain expertise by making use of objects, instead of how they act as facilities for visitors to create knowledge for themselves. He points out that museums' interactions with objects behind the scenes are to gain knowledge and expertise or, in his word, connoisseurship about them. However, connoisseurship, according to Knell, is not restricted nor unique to museum professionals. Anyone can be a connoisseur in any subject. Another interesting argument made by Knell is that interpretation is subject to change, whereas objects, which are used to illustrate different interpretations, remain the same. While I agree that collections can be illustrative of different narratives, they are in fact subject to change physically throughout natural processes as this case study has shown. In my view, objects are therefore active and transformative similar to the content given to them. Nevertheless, Knell's viewpoint towards material objects is rather complicated. On the one hand, he views it as quite passive in relation to interpretation. On the other hand, he does consider the object as the final authority. This corresponds to this research's argument that objects are at the

centre of activities around them. They are indeed one of the actors in the network of relationships within the museum space.

This therefore brings me to another argument: information provided by museums contributes to human-thing relationships whether or not this is intentional. As mentioned earlier, access to data requires interactions with physical objects whether they are museum collections, or devices such as computers, books, phones, etc. Again, relationships constructed around objects are inevitable and more like by-products instead of the goal. Objects in this case include not only collections, but also those where information resides as discussed earlier. In any kind of relationship, there are dynamics, conflicts and hierarchies. This is also true of the relationships between objects, information and people within the museum context. While museum collections can be considered the centre of the relationship, information related to it is far from being neutral. According to Chapman (2015), content built around objects in the early days of the museum relied much more on the interest of the curators. Even in the contemporary museum, some objects are given more information than others. Information related to a single object is also selective and subjective, which corresponds to Sola's (2004) argument that collections represent the partial past that is remembered.

The author of the information is another aspect to consider. Chapman (2015) points out the rise in the participatory approach in the museum's content management. Apart from providing access to information, many museums today encourage the public themselves to be the writers of the content. The permission given to external researchers to conduct research, just as in my primary research, can be regarded as a form of public participation. In terms of the content provided in the database, it is under the Museum's control. However, the field research resulted in my PhD thesis, which expands knowledge about the Museum's Poster and related collections at the Museum.

Latour's (1986) concepts of immutable mobiles and inscriptions help to explain the combination between texts, images and material objects used for knowledge production. As discussed in Chapter 5, the images of London Transport posters remain optically consistent, while moving around on surface papers, such as in forms of prints, reprints and reproduction (also see the Other material qualities section in Chapter 5, pp. 187–193). Apart from the Museum's collections, objects involved in the process of

knowledge shaping encompass archival materials, records, stationaries, computing devices, buildings, etc., together with information both on the computer screens and printed documents, as pointed out above. These inscriptions and three-dimensional objects, when being accumulated, connected and managed strategically, result in the mastery of knowledge, the key purpose of the museum (Hopper-Greenhill 1992). Nonetheless, Latour (1986) does not gesture towards the superiority of the persons who accumulate written or imaged resources into a single location. The collector/gatherer, he points out, would be overwhelmed by the excessive amount of such objects. Power that one gains through the accumulation of resources would also be disrupted when the inscriptions become less mobilised and more mutable. This phenomenon, in my view, resonates with the problem of excessive collection growth in museums discussed earlier in this section. As Simmons (2015) argues, the excessiveness in size, categorisation and deterioration would result in the collection being unusable, which means that the museum's knowledge production process would be obstructed. Thus, as Latour (1986) puts it,

> by themselves the inscriptions do *not* [original emphasis] help a location to become a center that dominates the rest of the world. Something has to be done to the inscriptions which is similar to what the inscriptions do to the "things", so that at the end a few elements can manipulate all the others on a vast scale (21).

This means that neither inscribed resources nor the person who gathers them on their own can assume the superior role in knowledge production. Instead, they need the flat surfaces of the paper for the inscriptions to be presented, managed, appreciated and understood. In other words, abstract ideas, theories and interpretations in the human mind could not be connected with one another and with material objects, unless they were all flattened out onto the same surface of files, according to Latour (1986).

This idea helps explain the significance of files, records and archival materials in the London Transport Museum (and presumably, many other museums) in fulfilling its role as the repository of collections and knowledge. Social historical and aesthetic values of collections, among others, have been gathered onto a geometric (and also digital) space of files and records. This allows the Museum to develop connoisseurship and provide resources to the public. Latour's (1986) concepts of immutable mobiles and

inscription are concerned not only with the connections but also the power relations between the two-dimensional inscriptions, three-dimensional material objects, abstract ideas and people who come to interact with them. This can be observed at the London Transport Museum in relation to the control of and access to collections and the manipulation of information about them, as pointed out above. The issue of power is developed further in the following section's consideration of knowledge production in the museum display context.

Exhibitionary practice

Apart from acting as research facility, the Museum's participatory approach is evident in the exhibitionary practice. One example is the vote activity as part of the *Poster art 150* exhibition, which serves its purpose of engaging with the public. Participation and celebration are in fact considered as more important than providing the rich historical account of the poster designs (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Regarding curating, however, the content of the displays is still mostly controlled by the Museum. Similar to the documentation of the collections, only some parts of the history of the exhibits are highlighted (i.e. to enhance authenticity), while others are neglected. Regarding the London Transport poster prints, for instance, the information about the artist is often privileged over the information about the printer, even though they were both integral to the production of posters. Despite that, the examination of the exhibitionary practice to be discussed in this section implies there is room for expected and serendipitous encounters as well as the impact that objects on display have upon people who encounter them.

The emphasis on knowledge creation perpetuates in the Museum's exhibitionary practice. The accuracy of information and interpretation that accompanies poster exhibits is one example. This is also true for the guiding narratives of the Poster Art Tour at the depot. Although the interpretation is flexible and nuanced depending on the volunteer guides, the curator emphasises that she works closely with them and attempts to provide them with accurate information. Concerning the *Poster parade* series, it is the students on placement who curate them. Yet the curator points out that the curatorial

principle is the same with major poster exhibitions. They are also done under the supervision of the curator to ensure the accuracy and quality (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Related to poster exhibitions, the Museum also publishes catalogues as well as books on London Transport posters (also see Chapter 1, pp. 11–35). This confirms the Museum's concern with knowledge creation while hinting at the control of the content related to their exhibits through the exhibition curating practice.

However, what actually occurs in the gallery space does point towards the power of object materialities in serving the knowledge shaping purpose, as well as its connection to the serendipitous and expected encounters with displays experienced by visitors. For instance, one of the reasons why poster exhibitions are curated more often at the Museum than those of other subjects related to London Transport is because they attract visitors. This is emphasised by both curators in the interviews: 'People love poster exhibitions' (Interview with Evdoxia Apostolou, London Transport Museum Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.); 'poster exhibitions are very popular and people really like them' (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.). Apart from that, popularity plays an important role in *Poster parade*, as it is curated mainly for marketing purposes. For this reason, the selection of poster exhibits is also influenced by how popular each design is. The arrangement is also heavily done for an aesthetic reason. The image and colour are in this case as important as the story the display tells. Additionally, the former Senior Curator pointed out that poster design can, at the same time, attract people to other collections or even other aspects of design history. This is the reason why poster prints are usually employed in non-poster exhibitions and displays. In her words:

> As for the purpose of including these posters, I think it's a real strength of the Transport Museum collection that it has these posters because the collection itself is really varied, but the posters I think help the collection to be more relevant perhaps to a wider audience. Some people might think 'I'm not really into trains. That's not my thing'. Actually, the posters are a good way in for people who can appreciate the art and design elements, and then through that, they can then appreciate the design elements that they see in other objects in the collection. That might be design elements on trains. It might be signage. It might be the design elements that you would find in the station environments, so I feel that

the posters really make a way in for people because they are colourful and exciting and the other thing about them is that they are telling an amazing social historical story. Often, you've got people in fashions of the time. The posters were very aspirational (Interview with Anna Renton, London Transport Museum's former Senior Curator, 29 May 2018. pers. comm.).

This shows that the aesthetics of posters in the exhibitionary context, not the information about them, can enhance viewers' curiosity and gain more knowledge about the posters, other objects, as well as histories. This phenomenon corresponds to Dudley's (2012) argument that the direct interactions with museum objects, such as in the gallery space, encourage people to find out more about them.

Although the exhibitionary practice and collection management is discussed separately in this section, they are in fact connected and even overlapping. Sola (2004) points out in his chapter that 'First, museums were nothing but visitable collections' (250). This hints at the connection and the blurred boundary between displays and collections. It also resonates with the idea of the 'museum effect' coined by Svetlana Alpers (1991) to explain transformations of objects caused by museums, in which this PhD project is primarily interested. Alpers regards the museum effect as 'a way of seeing' (27). Things that enter the museum thus become objects of visual interest. As the museum effect is unavoidable, she suggests that museums should work with it rather than attempting to overcome it. Whether or not intended by the exhibition makers, object display always involves re-contextualisation and the assertion of their ways of seeing. Hence, museum display, Alpers argues, does not represent cultural significance but rather the 'visual distinction registered by the museum' (30).

Additionally, the idea that museum display transforms objects' values and meanings is echoed in the debate about art versus artefacts as discussed in Gell's (1996) paper. He suggests that three possible approaches to defining artworks are aesthetic, interpretive and institutional. It is the institutional theory introduced by George Dickie (1974 cited in Gell 1996), I argue, that parallels Alpers's (1991) notion of the 'museum effect'. According to Gell, Dickie regards art as being judged by the art world, with which museums and galleries are associated. The judgement is done by the living agents without any connection to the intention of the maker nor the historical context.

My research project has not attempted to pinpoint whether posters are artefacts or artworks. Also, the first section of this chapter pointed out that the act of enhancing and presenting object authenticity is a form of museums' repurposing of objects. It also argued that authenticity is associated with the makers of objects, the stories about them, as well as the qualities of objects themselves. This means that this research does not completely agree with Dickie's (1974) institutional standpoint towards objects' values and meanings. However, it shares with him the idea that the functions of objects and people's interactions with them potentially become altered as they are turned into museum exhibits. And that is influenced by the 'museum effect' asserted by the museum institutions through the context of exhibition making.

Unsurprisingly, de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation done by museums are often the subject of criticism (as implied above). Yet this is, in my view, not necessarily an entirely negative act, even though it is linked to the history of oppression and sometimes it has been done in a politically unethical way. This issue is rather, in my view, related to the content instead of the practice itself. As this research's case study has shown, even advertising materials can be considered authentic, valuable objects when they become museum objects. This issue is developed further in the section that follows.

Museums as space for human-thing interactions

As Dudley (2015) points out, 'In a museum there does, at first sight at least, appear to be such a relationship of power' (44) between different actors. The last section of this chapter proposes a view of museums as space for human-thing interactions. It starts with a discussion of power relations within museums in which humans are the main actors. Through documentation, representations and interpretations of collections and displays, museums are often regarded as having control over objects, as well as certain groups of people to whom the acquired objects originally belonged. However, literature explored here also shows how the authority of contemporary museums is being challenged. The second half of this section then shifts the reader's attention away from humans to the objects' point of view in order to illustrate their significant role in the dynamics of relationships. More importantly, it suggests a viewpoint of museums as spaces for

human-thing interactions instead of that of power negotiation, although it still exists. By decentring the role of humans, this very last part will demonstrate that objects and people are both active in museums. Their relationships are therefore mutual despite being used for the sake of human knowledge.

Negotiation of power: humans as main actors

The idea of the museum's role as instrumentality of power is by no means surprising in the existing literature. Museums are sometimes regarded as legitimising imperialism and colonialism as well as promoting nationalism. From this perspective, cultural artefacts in museums have political implications, which is agreed by Steven C Dubin (1999). By focussing on the culture of display in the American context in particular, Dubin suggests that society towards the end of the twentieth century was dominated by symbolic politics, such as in the forms of representations and portrayals. The interpretation of historical moments gives museums power to have control over people's knowledge and attitudes towards certain issues. Museums therefore feature what he calls 'displays of power' (3), which tell stories about how power is lost and granted, as well as how it is exercised and constrained.

Similarly, Ivan Karp (1991) regards museum display as a site in which power is being negotiated. Citing Michael Baxandall (1991 cited in Karp 1991), he agrees that in exhibition making and experiencing, intentions of the object producers, exhibitors' arrangement and display of objects, and museum visitors' assumption are confronting one another. These subjective actors bring with them different interests, desires, assumptions and abilities. This dynamic relationship also differs from one exhibition to another. Among these agents, Karp regards the maker of the exhibitions as the most powerful, even though he agrees that audiences have the potential to resist what is represented. Recognising the museum's authority, Karp suggests a more ethical means for the institution to exercise their power through displays, which is to encourage audiences to revise their knowledge.

In contrast, Dubin (1999) does not view museums' authority as ultimate. His volume gestures towards pressures and constraints against museums' power that have

been increasing since the second half of twentieth century. Under the influence of new social history in the 1960s, American museums started to invite broader audiences. Since the 1990s, history and revisionism, Dubin argues, have become central motifs to the American life. The public has paid more attention to how their cultures are represented or misrepresented. The 'culture from below' and artists from the marginalised groups have become the spotlight. This trend has made museums and exhibitions contested sites, in which people struggle for identity construction. The institutions have also become more vulnerable to financial (e.g. funders), organisational (e.g. curators), societal (e.g. audiences) and historical constraints (e.g. legacy of historical mandates). Contemporary museums, according to Dubin, are more like forums than temples. Nevertheless, Dubin's account does not favour one standpoint over another, but rather attempts to understand why audiences challenge and become critical against museums. In this case, it can be argued that Dubin views museums and displays as set in a specific socio-cultural context similar to their audiences. Museums de-contextualise and re-contextualise the artefacts on display, but they do so within the contemporary context within which they are situated.

One of the reasons why the museum's repurposing of objects is criticised might be that the institution itself is drawn out of its context. It is true that museums de-contextualise and re-contextualise objects of the past, but they are at the same time part of the contemporary context. Museums are not static but have influenced and been influenced by society since their origin. Knell (2007) reminds the reader that museums' roles, approaches, mentalities and practices have been changing. The nineteenth century museums were drastically different from museums nowadays, as society and culture have developed over time. However, I argue that what remains the same is that museums have been repurposing objects since their early days. The act of repurposing itself is not problematic. It is usually the interpretations given to museum objects and, sometimes, the methods that are not necessarily ethical or politically correct in a particular context at a particular period of time. For instance, human remains are displayed as if they were inanimate objects. No names are given to identify them as once living persons. In the case of some ethnographic collections, museum displays are sometimes done in a way that enhance the exoticism of the cultures being represented. Therefore, it is the content that

is associated with power negotiation rather than the practice or the nature of the objects themselves.

It can be argued that the existing scholarship about museum displays discussed in this section underlines the power of human agents (e.g. exhibitors, audiences) while overlooking the importance of physical objects (e.g. objects on display, lighting, text panels). None of the them pay attention to how and to what extent physical qualities of objects play a part in influencing and constraining the process of exhibition making and collecting practice, as well as the experiences of museums as resources of knowledge. This material aspect of objects has been central to my research project on posters in the context of museum display. Although objects are meant to be used for knowledge creation, their roles are significant. Their relationships with humans are mutual, dynamic and interactive. Therefore, material objects are as impactful as authoritative museum professionals, even in the context where they are used for the sake of human knowledge.

Human-thing encounters

As implied above, the scholarship regarding power relations within museums emphasises the negotiation among human actors, whereas objects are often neglected or regarded as merely used by humans to achieve their goals. It might seem to make sense, for those issues are mainly concerned with people, while things play only representative or symbolic roles. As I argued earlier, objects might not (and literally cannot) initiate a discord in museums. Oftentimes, conflicts are triggered by the interpretation or values and meanings museums give to their collections, which are not necessarily satisfactory for every group of audiences. Although it is different groups of people who negotiate authority over objects, this does not mean that objects themselves are completely passive or under complete control of human beings. Objects and people play mutual roles throughout the ongoing process of musealisation.

The influence of material objects in people's social life is evident in the existing literature on material culture. As Daniel Miller (2005) highlights, 'Social relations exist in and through our material worlds that often act in entirely unexpected ways that cannot be traced back to some clear sense of will or intention' (32). As Miller points out, even in

the religious context, in which the immaterial is often considered superior than the material, people paradoxically use material things to express the importance of immateriality. Ancient Egyptians, for instance, built statues appropriate to their gods as a means to give life to them. They also mummified individuals, so that those preserved bodies could be transported into an afterlife (Meskell 2005 cited in Miller 2005, 2010). In Hindu cosmology, another example discussed by Miller (2005, 2010), the material world is critiqued as illusive. The pastel saris worn by elderly women in South Asia, in contrast to bright sensual sari worn by the bride, is one of the material forms employed to symbolise the goal in transcending the attachment to the material life.

Miller (2008) also insightfully discusses human-thing entanglements in the British domestic sphere, concentrating on a particular multicultural street in London. Although the focus of Miller's book is different from this PhD thesis, which pays attention to human-thing relationships in a professional museum context, it theoretically echoes the ongoing negotiation between people, objects' materialities and object's meanings, that I discuss below. Miller's (2008) discussion on Portrait 18 entitled 'Shi', for example, gestures towards the ongoing movements of various types of objects in a residence with limited space, as a result of the negotiation between functional and decorative purposes as well as expressions of the owners' identities and familial relationships. Pauline, with her clear sense of control over the household environment and the accumulation of objects, as Miller describes, is in charge of deciding which objects go to storage and/or on display. Books and other materials associated with war games from her partner Rupert's childhood are supposed to move only between attics, whereas his father's history books are allowed in the sitting room, as they represent adulthood. Personal collecting and disposal of inherited objects, which resonate with the relationships between the street's residents and their families, are also exemplified. For instance, Rupert's mother forcefully passed him her proud collection of Blackamoors, the wooden figures depicting exoticised African males, which is still kept in the flat. She was also going to give away her late husband's army costume to Oxfam, but it was rescued by Rupert beforehand. This then became the only thing he inherited from his father after he passed away. In Pauline's case, she decided that her grandmother's china was to be disposed of through car-boot sales, because she did not like its flowery style. In contrast, the paintings

collected by her grandfather and father are displayed on the walls around her flat, as they have sentimental meanings rather than serving any functional purpose. The existence of material things in Pauline's home, thus reflects an ongoing battle between pragmatism, aesthetics and personal relationships of the residents.

Indeed, using Pauline's flat as an example, Miller (2008) makes an interesting point about the negotiation and reconciliation between objects that are acquired over time for different purposes. These reveal not only the relations between people and things but also those between things themselves. Unlike the interior designer, who pays attention to the overall aesthetic of the room when deciding which objects to display, according to Miller (2008),

> the personal relationship to things is often a fortuitous result of accumulation: things inherited from one's parents, souvenirs from holidays, gifts from a lover or a brother. There is no reason at all why such things should bear any relation to each other in aesthetic terms. As a result, most living-rooms include this additional cause of conflict – the degree to which the personal relation to things will disrupt the aesthetic relation between things. This is often an ongoing battle in its own right. So there are the newly purchased items, sofas and cushions that match, a kitchen with plenty of aluminium and white. But within these are personal things, an inherited chair, various ceramic bowls, and there is no feeling that these are disruptive; rather, there is an overall reconciliation between the different sources and different genres (Miller 2008, 408–409).

Although the London Transport Museum is not a personal space, the decision made in regard to which posters to be displayed or stored as well as where and how to do so is also a result of the reconciliation between different purposes. The Poster Store, for instance, functions as storage as well as display space. Most poster prints currently hung on the walls are those removed from previous exhibitions. At the same time, they form part of the tour guiding narratives as well as giving a decorative effect. Those kept in drawers were also taken out occasionally, i.e. for conservation and research purposes (also see the Poster and Art Store display section in Chapter 4, pp. 120–122).

It is true that the movements of material things, as discussed so far, are determined by the strategies developed by the persons in charge, either the flat owners or museum professionals. Yet I am not arguing that objects are necessarily passive and controlled by people. Concerning the human-thing entanglement in the museum context,

Dudley (2015), for example, uses the notion of colonial encounters in explaining the statuses and identities of people and things within their relationships with each other. She focusses mainly on the objects instead of museum representation or professional practice, attempting to understand objects from their own point of view. In order to do so, Dudley employs the metaphor of colonial relationships: unequal yet mutual. She pays attention to the display context, instead of curatorial practice behind-the-scenes. Museum objects are compared to a colonised group of people, perceived by the coloniser as passively waiting to be encountered. Museum visitors are regarded here as similar to the coloniser, who travels to the colony and gazes at the 'colonised' objects, with the act of gazing implying an unequal relationship between the looking subject and the objects being looked at. Visitors perceive museum objects as inferior to them, but this does not mean that the object of gaze 'thinks' the same way. By trying to look from the object's perspective even in a metaphorical sense, it is possible to decentre the roles of people in their relationships with things and so to see a more realistic picture of relations within museums. For example, while a person's perception of other people or entities that they encounter is inevitably influenced by the perceiver's background and experience, this does not suggest that the other party actually has no agency, is submissive or is actually what the viewer believes they are.

In a colonial kind of relationship, then, while the colonised may be oppressed they nonetheless have agency of their own. The perceptions that the coloniser might have, does not necessarily reflect the colonised's actual identity. Yet this is an enforced relationship. It is the coloniser or in the museum display context, the gazer at the objects, who initiates the encounter; however, this does not determine how the objects respond. Moreover, inferiority in terms of power does not equate to passivity. Relationships might not necessarily be equal, but they can be mutual and interactive. In addition, each group involved in the colonial relationship is in fact heterogeneous. In a museum context, this resonates with Knell's (2007) idea of high resolution analysis in collection management. While some groups of people, such as curators and sponsors, might have more authority than others such as marginalised groups of people, both of them seem superior to objects.

To put it another way, hierarchy and diversity exist in every kind and at every level of relationship, including in relationships involving objects. In the case of London Transport posters, hierarchy is part of the Museum's repurposing of London Transport posters. Artworks are at the top, followed by accessioned prints and reprints. Reproductions and support-duplicates, which are in fact 'prints', might be the lowest in the hierarchy (also see Figure **4.12**). Altogether, these museum collections are used by museums for particular purposes. In terms of relative power and from the museum management's perspective in both collecting and exhibitionary contexts, they are in an inferior position.

Nonetheless, just as colonised societies were themselves diverse and not in unchanging states before colonisers arrived, so too are museums and their objects (Dudley 2015). The research's case study demonstrates that within the museum space, objects have continuously interacted with other materials and substances, such as air and light. Preventive conservation and other forms of collection care are examples of how humans are forced to respond to the transformation in objects as a result of their interactions with the environment. Such physical interactions between objects, or in Ingold's (2007) view, between surface, medium and substance of the materials, has nothing to do with intentionality. Intentionality or, in Malafouris's (2008) term, 'prior intention', presumably formed in the mind in advance of action, does not determine what actually happens when two entities encounter and interact with each other in the physical world. Additionally, the actors within the network of relationships do not act alone but instead do so in relation to other actors (Law and Mol 2008). They are also always enacted by one another and so are not in control: an 'enacted actor', whether human or non-human, is not in control of the results of what is being done. Thus, interactions within the natural world demonstrate the inability of humans to take control of other entities and the environment around them. What people can do is to respond, such as by triggering, speeding up or slowing down natural transformations in the physicality of both objects and themselves. In the museum context, Ingold's arguments on the nature and interactions of materials (2007) thus has some correspondence to Dudley's (2015) viewpoint towards the coloniser's intentionality. While it seems natural for humans to assert their own values and meanings to other entities with which they

interact, it does not guarantee that the objects of this imposition will actually turn out to be whatever they are forced or expected to be. There are times, for example, when museum professionals have to respond to the physicality of objects. This can be understood as objects' resistance to humans' desires and manipulation, evident even in a human-built space like the museum.

One of the characteristics of Joyce and Gillespie's (2015) object itineraries, is stoppage. This has to be seen against the backdrop of the constant and gradual transformation in the natural world identified by Ingold (2007). Not only museum objects but the physicality of people keep interacting with the surrounding environment and so continually bringing about change. Yet paying attention to certain moments of encounter also contributes to understanding of human-thing relationships. To illustrate, an object that has been kept in museum storage without being exhibited for a long time always interacts with the environment surrounding it. According to Thompson (1986), relative humidity (RH) in the storage, for instance, causes deterioration of objects in physical, chemical and biological modes. Materials that absorb moisture, such as paper, shrink as the RH falls and swell as it increases. They also become brittle when the RH is lower than 40%. However, the materials are suffering from the fading of dyes and mould growth at higher RH. The collections automatically experience such a change even without human intervention. However, this moment in storage can be considered as stoppage in the geographical and cultural senses. This object's value and meaning might remain the same for a while until it interacts with humans again, such as when it is taken out for conservation, study or display. With a new interpretation and content being added to it, an object is then attributed with a new meaning and role and so a new form of cultural significance. Regarding my research's case study, support-duplicates of London Transport poster prints in the backlog were sold to Christie's, as mentioned earlier. It can be argued that these objects once again became active in the socio-cultural sense as a result of the exchange. They were geographically relocated to a different kind of institution and probably given a new role, such as a vintage poster with a new financial value (also see the Posters now and after section in Chapter 4, pp. 136–136).

Therefore, I agree with Dudley (2015) that it is important to pay attention to certain moments of interactions. They bring about changes, at least socially and

culturally. Not only the transformation in objects, but the encounter can also affect people to a large extent. The effect might occur during the encounter and then leave behind its legacy. As pointed out earlier, I find Dudley's argument applicable to both the display context and the activities behind-the-scenes. As a researcher, I made use of artefacts at the London Transport Museum for knowledge creation. My encounters with them are mainly visual, which is similar to the kind of encounters one might expect in the exhibitionary setting. The materialities of poster prints and artworks, especially their size and the vivid colours, had a strong impact on me. Even though the content of the artefacts examined are far from being emotional or sensitive, the massiveness and the richness of the colour and design did urge me to keep looking at them.

Figure 6.7 The opportunity to lift the third copy of the Whistler poster (1928c) during the artefact examination. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

However, visual experience, as supported by previous literature, never exists on their own. In the case study research, I examined the materialities of artefacts mainly by visually observing them, but I also inevitably interacted with them with other senses. Apart from lifting and moving them, I probably smelt these requested objects unconsciously and unintentionally (see Figure **6.7**). Or to put it another way, the odour of the old paper was quite vivid, so I automatically smelt it. At the same time, I interacted with the environment of the study area, as well as the Art and Poster Stores. Apart from

the material qualities of the artefacts, it is the low temperature, as part of the Museum's preventive conservation, that sensorially affected me in a very strong manner. It made me feel immersed within such a space and that feeling still lingers in my memory. Every time I think about my fieldwork experience, I could still remember clearly how cold it felt in the Stores (also see the Ephemerality section in Chapter 5, pp. 178–187, for discussion about preventive conservation and museum environment).

I am aware that the sensorial experience is very much individual and subjective. Other people would probably have different reactions and are impacted by the material world in which they are immersed to a different degree. However, I would like to emphasise here that the impacts of the material objects and environment are not the outcome of anyone's intentionality or perception. The Museum and I arranged the encounter with the artefacts purely for research purposes (although my research pays attention to object materialities). Nonetheless, the moments of encounter were potentially powerful and unpredictable. I argue that this view of the museum as space for human-thing encounters recognises the pedagogic goal of the museum, as well as the significance of the objects in achieving it. Museum collections also contribute to the powerful encounters beyond the intentionality asserted by the museum institution.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a theoretical generalisation for this research's case study on the musealisation of London Transport posters. It has addressed the issue of authenticity, museums' educational roles, and human-thing relationships in order to show that museum institutions make use of material things for the sake of human knowledge, but inanimate things do play active and mutual roles in this form of encounter. This chapter started with the discussion of authenticity in the museum space, both in the public area and behind-the-scenes. It argued that object authenticity is the main reason why museums singularise objects in both the exhibitionary and collecting contexts. The authenticity of objects enhanced and maintained by museums is itself non-static and arbitrary. It can tie with the uniqueness of objects, their histories, as well as aesthetic

qualities. Although museums might not fully understand what authenticity exactly is, the concept itself plays a very important role in museum practice.

Then the chapter turned to a broader question of why museums bother repurposing objects to be authentic ones at all. The case study is an example of how the musealisation has been done. The second section of this chapter took forward the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 and engaged with the literature on museum history and theories. It thus argued that knowledge creation can still be considered the main task of the institution, in the form of both collection management and exhibition making. In order to do so, museums produce and provide interpretation and information about their collections and displays. The content attached to museum objects distinguish them from their original context in everyday life. Information about collections is encountered by museum audiences as much the objects themselves. My research is one clear example. However, objects remain at the centre, where content is produced around them. The access to the information also requires physical objects on which the content resides. Although they are not museum collections, functional items are integral to museums' knowledge creation and distribution. To put it another way, people interact with objects all the time either with or without awareness and intention.

This was linked to the final part of this chapter and key argument of this research: museums are space where humans and things encounter and interact. In this encounter, both objects and people play mutual and active roles. It is true that within the museum space, people come with intentionality and purpose, which is to make use of objects for their own benefit. Thus, they appear to have a superior status in this form of encounter (at least in people's point of view). However, this does not mean that objects are passive. Oftentimes, museum professionals play a more responsive role to objects. Object materialities and their constant change heavily impact collection management and exhibition curation. Planning and design cannot be done without first considering what each type of object requires. Although objects are instrumental, they are at the same time central to the activities happening within the museum space. Last, but not least, the analysis has confirmed the active role of the museum in triggering the change in object values and meanings. It has also reminded the reader that museums are part of contemporary culture. What happens in the museum is an example of how people

interact with the material world. In the concluding chapter of this PhD thesis, the reader will be invited to reflect on people's relationships with things in contemporary society at large.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

Introduction

The journey of this PhD thesis has finally come to its last chapter. Although the London Transport posters in the museum context is the focus of this research, it is, however, not its end point. This study has employed a particular group of advertising materials in a specific museum setting in order to understand better the nature of material objects, museums, as well as human relationships with the physical world at large. These issues have been tackled and presented in six chapters, which is summarised below.

The first chapter introduced the research aim to investigate the changing values and meanings of advertising posters as they are repurposed into museum objects. It also contextualised the research topic by discussing my anthropological background and personal interest in the design of publicity materials. Further, the first chapter also reviewed the histories of poster art, as well as introduced the case study, the London Transport Museum's Poster and related Collections.

The second and third chapters concentrated on research methodology, which is the case study. It discussed the process from how the case study was identified (preliminary stage), to how the evidence collected from different sources converged and were interpreted (data analysis). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the actual research procedure was, in fact, not as linear as the structure of the methodological chapters suggest. Some processes, such as data analysis and fieldwork, were overlapping. The presentation was structured in a more simplified, process-based fashion in order to help the reader to easily understand the protocols adopted in this research to achieve its aim and objectives.

Following the discussion of research methodology are what I consider the key chapters of this PhD thesis. They were divided based on the thematic rationale rather than chronological. The order of the thematic chapters also followed the case study method: from a single case and research question to theoretical generalisation. Even

though the evidence from the case was mentioned in each of these chapters, with reference to relevant secondary literature, the interests of Chapters 5 and 6 were expanded from the specific case of the London Transport posters discussed in Chapter 4, to cover a theoretical discussion of material culture and museum institutions.

Aside from the six chapters, this final chapter summarises the structure of the thesis in this introductory part. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to the research outcomes and implications, particularly drawn from the key analysis chapters by linking the small research topic to the contemporary world outside the museum. It also discusses how this research contributes to various disciplines that are interested in material culture. Moreover, this concluding chapter addresses some areas of studies that are excluded in this thesis. Finally, it ends with potential topics to be investigated in future research.

Research outcomes

To summarise, this PhD thesis investigated how the values and meanings of London Transport posters change as they become museum exhibits, using the case study as the research method and object itineraries as the theoretical framework. To achieve this research aim, the study addressed the following five subsidiary questions:

1. What are the purposes of exhibiting London Transport posters?
2. What narratives are told by the exhibitions of London Transport posters?
3. What are the processes of curating the exhibitions of London Transport posters, from conceptualisation to de-installation?
4. What are the criteria for selecting London Transport posters for exhibition?
5. To what extent do the materialities of London Transport posters influence the changes in their values and meanings?

While the first four questions were set out during research design, the concern about poster materialities came up during data collection and analysis. The generalisation in the final thesis thus addressed this theme. Moreover, the thesis initially focussed on the journey of London Transport posters in the exhibitionary context. Yet the data that emerged gestured towards the importance of the commissioning, acquisition,

conservation and disposal of London Transport posters in understanding the changing values and meanings. The answers to these research questions, which were presented in the thematic chapters (Chapter 4–6), therefore extended beyond the exhibitionary setting.

To recap, the evidence suggested that the values and meanings of London Transport posters changed both at the visual and material levels, as they became museum exhibits. At the visual level, the information conveyed by posters in the advertising context was overridden by the exhibition themes and narratives. These posters as exhibits therefore represented the social-historical value instead of functional one. However, a copy of poster prints could be exhibited alongside other posters with different designs in different exhibitions with different themes and purposes. For example, the *Poster Parade* display series is marketing-oriented, while monographic exhibitions celebrate the techniques and expertise of the artists. As the findings suggested, exhibitions with different purposes brought together different posters designed by various artists across periods of time through the process of identifying the exhibition theme, selecting designs and types of objects to be displayed (i.e. artworks or poster prints).

At the material level, the change in values and meanings was also evident in the collecting practice. Once poster prints were acquisitioned, they became distinct from their advertising contemporaries. Among the collected poster prints, some were considered part of the Museum's collection, while others were support-duplicates, to be used for non-exhibitionary purposes. More importantly, the data suggested that the itineraries of London Transport posters did not end in the museum space. Some copies of support-duplicates were, for instance, disposed of through auction sale, while the accessioned prints still carried the museum values (at least at the point where this research was conducted).

While it was impossible to reconstruct the entire process of exhibition curating (due to fragmented and limited data), the findings showed the Museum's emphasis on poster designs and exhibition themes when selecting displays. Despite that, the Museum could not avoid interacting with the materialities of each London Transport poster, especially concerning their multiple and ephemeral characteristics. In order for these

poster collections to manifest the museum value at the present, the Museum has attempted to delay the decay and deterioration, especially through the process of preventive conservation.

One point this research study has reaffirmed is that objects are never stable. The change that they experience is not necessarily dependent on human beings. Below the outcomes of this case study research are discussed in light of the following two questions: 1) how do material objects change? And 2) what do people do in attempting to change material objects? Apart from addressing these questions, the remainder of this chapter at the same time seeks to justify the suitability of the object-centred standpoint, with an emphasis on the power of materialities in the museum practice.

While the primary concern of this research has been how objects transform culturally in the museum context, it does recognise that objects always alter physically even when no new values and meanings are attributed to them. This is due to their constant interactions with other materials within the environs. In other words, inanimate things, including those labelled as man-made artefacts and natural things, have continual interconnections and relationships with one another. This happens out of human control even in the setting like museums, where material things have been appropriated for the sake of human knowledge. The London Transport Museum's collections naturally and gradually age even when lying in storage, without necessarily being used as exhibits. The interactions with them, such as in the form of collection care and conservation, are aimed to delay and minimise the physical transformation. That means humans in fact play a rather responsive role in regard to the changing materialities of objects. Therefore, the human-centric viewpoint towards museum practice might not be the most appropriate, as suggested in Chapter 6.

It would then make sense to go further by assuming that material things do not need humans to change. However, one cannot guarantee that they would change in the way or into stages that satisfy humans, as exemplified by the deterioration of the London Transport poster prints and artworks. The fact that things constantly interact with one another also has another important implication. That is that object identities are arbitrary and unstable. In fact, there might not be an absolute way to divide between man-made artefacts and the natural world as often taken for granted. Regarding production, humans

are unable to invent a new thing without using matters or materials that have already existed, however complicated the method and process of production. The production of London Transport poster prints at least requires paper sheets, colours, printers and other equipment. Air and humidity are also necessary, for example. What is perceived by humans as separated entities are probably not quite true from the objects' point of view. Nevertheless, in order to make sense of the world, categorisation and discrimination seem unavoidable. This happens in both the museum context and everyday life.

That means humans need objects more than they need humans. London Transport posters were originally needed by London Transport for publicity purposes. They are later turned into museum collections and exhibits as they are needed by the Museum to fulfil their knowledge shaping (as well as marketing and other) purposes. In the second chapter of his book *Entangled: an archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*, Ian Hodder (2012) interestingly discusses the idea that humans depend on things. He uses the term 'dependence' to cover two meanings: reliance and dependency. Humans not only rely on things, but things also trigger human needs. Examples Hodder gives are such as how objects, like an ashtray, can tempt a chain smoker and how whisky and a glass can test the physical need of an alcohol addict. Later in this volume, however, he argues that objects also need humans, with which I do not completely agree.[24] In my view, objects depend on humans only in the situations where they exist to serve human purposes. In other words, the assumption that objects need humans are drawn mainly from humans' viewpoint.

This links to the second question to be answered in this section: what do people do in attempting to change material objects? As implied above, humans put things into categories to make sense and make use of them. Yet this is not only exclusive for the relationships between humans and things. Humans also make assumptions about one another and animals, as suggested by Dudley (2015; also see Chapter 6, pp. 196–236). In the museum context in particular, humans mainly interact with things for the sake of

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[24] In Chapter 4 of this volume, Hodder (2012, pp. 64–86) proposes the idea that things, especially those made by humans, depend on humans. In so doing, he focusses on the tendency of things to fall apart. Therefore, they need humans to care and maintain them. This argument, although seemingly self-contradictory, in fact reemphasises how humans depend on things. In Hodder's view, things require humans' intervention only when they are to serve the purpose assigned by humans. This also supports the standpoint of this research.

human culture and society. However, their intentionality and purpose do not justify humans' authority over things. To fulfil the goal and make the assigned categories work, museum professionals are forced to respond the transformative materialities of objects.

To make use of and repurpose objects, museums give them new roles. They attribute to objects a cultural significance different from their original functions. In so doing, museum professionals both constrain and trigger the change in their materialities by interacting with them, as well as bringing them into interactions with other material things. As Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate, London Transport posters are accessioned, documented and interpreted in such a way that they can benefit the people who come to interact with them. Moreover, objects produced by different people in different contexts and periods of time are placed together in the gallery space in order to illustrate museum values and meanings. London Transport poster prints are put in mounts and frames in order that the museum effect is attributed to them. These exemplify the responses to the transformative materialities of objects in order to make them fit the categories assigned.

As Domínguez Rubio (2016) points out, nonetheless, an object eventually reaches a point where it physically changes so much that the prescribed category no longer works. Posters that are in poor condition are unlikely to be assigned a role of museum display (while they might still be considered museum collections). Those once categorised as support-duplicates in the London Transport Museum's collections are potentially disposed of or turned into purchases by being sold to an auction house, partially due to the limited capacity of the physical storage. This shows that the materialities of functional objects that come to interact with museum collections play a significant role in assigning their identities. More importantly, it confirms humans' dependence on things in museum activities. This covers both objects to which museums consciously and intentionally attribute new values and meanings, as well as those used purely for functional purposes.

Like museums' repurposing of objects, my case study research was conducted to attempt to advance human knowledge. In a sense, it can be argued that I have repurposed museum objects into an object of study. In so doing, I have made a connection between advertising poster prints, artworks, reproductions and reprints produced from different periods of time in order to create a narrative in an academic

fashion presented in this thesis. My hope is that the narrative resulting from the combination of different material objects will be a valuable and sensible one. From the beginning to the finalisation of this thesis, I have also made use of various functional objects such as stationary, computers and other devices, electricity, water, food, transport etc. without even necessarily reflecting on them. They have been an essential part of the repurposing of museum objects, even though they will not be considered criteria for evaluating the outcome of the thesis. Therefore, the PhD process itself in, my view, has demonstrated how much humans depend on things.

Research contributions (beyond the museum context)

The above section reemphasised that museums need things to serve their purposes. However, one might ask if it is acceptable for museums to attempt to change things the way they do? To respond to this question, this section brings the museum back into the contemporary cultural context and considers human-thing relationships in society at large. It then summarises how the research outcomes contribute to the knowledge in the field of museum studies, as well as other related academic disciplines.

One point this research has demonstrated is that museums do attempt to change objects apart from the natural, physical change that they constantly experience. Yet nothing could fulfil the role as a museum object unless it were repurposed by the institution. This statement seems to be against the conventional perception of museums and their collections. That is, that the institutions are often expected to be honest to the original values and meanings of objects. I agree that most museums are considerably concerned with object originality both in the collection management and exhibition curation. As demonstrated by this research's case study, museums make an effort to provide as accurate as possible information about and interpretations of their collections. They have conducted research, developed connoisseurship, as well as shared the facts they have learnt about objects with the public. However, what museums do to objects in attempting to understand and present their origins and histories is, in my view, still considered an act of repurposing. By interacting with them in a critical, reflexive and

museal way, they inevitably change the values and meanings, as well as functions of objects intended by their producers.

One might then ask: is what museums do to objects unethical? They remove objects from the original context and recontextualise them for the benefit of museum audiences. The new meanings given to objects in the museum context can potentially be offensive to certain groups of people, whether or not they have direct connection with object histories. In this research's case study, which does not deal with sensitive objects, the ethical issues therefore were not extensively discussed. Despite that, I am by no means attempting to undermine the ethical concern. Yet the study of functional objects that museums repurpose could reveal that an effort to change the values and meanings of an object is very common. There is nothing unethical about the act of repurposing. It is the content that is given to it and the ways an object is interacted with that can potentially be controversial and ethically questionable.

In the case of ethnographic museums, for instance, some objects were acquired during the colonising period. There are also many museum objects and artworks that were looted during wartime. Moreover, how collections are displayed sometimes does not necessarily reflect the original use of objects. For instance, sacred objects from indigenous communities are, in some cases, displayed in the museum vitrines as if they were inanimate and lifeless. To tackle this issue, certain museums successfully repatriated sensitive objects to the originating societies. Other institutions attempt to improve their practice by encouraging and facilitating the public to interact with museum objects, rather than only allowing them to visually experience objects through glass cases. For example, some museums offer handling sessions, invite the public to build content around the collections and make their displays more interactive, etc. Whether or not museums attempt to bring people closer to objects in the institutions or move objects back to people away from museums, they all reaffirm that humans always interact with objects. Often, they do so for an ethical and knowledge shaping purpose. Therefore, instead of rejecting the relationships with objects, this research suggests accepting the entanglement between people and things in society and re-examining the perceived human superiority in museum practice.

Moreover, it argues that museums are still essential in society. Without museums, humans still could not avoid interacting with the material world and trying to change it. They still make an effort to understand one another and other entities and make assumptions of who/whatever they encounter. With museums' goal of knowledge creation, it provides an opportunity for people at present to understand certain aspects of the past that were revealed through material culture. Museums also allow objects that were intended to be only functional and overlooked in the original context to be reflected on critically. The repurposing of these objects, as this research has demonstrated, can help people to reconsider their viewpoint in relation to the material world, both inside and outside the museum.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the notion of repurposing is not restricted to museum practice. It is, in fact, rather common in everyday life. Recycling is one obvious example. Some everyday objects such as furniture and tools are also designed to be multi-functional. Moreover, in contemporary society, where the environmental problems have become a major concern, the repurposing of objects is even encouraged. In another sense, the lifespan of objects is also prolonged, which can be beyond the intentionality of the producer. The purpose of the repurposing, in this case, is therefore expected to benefit the physical world as well as the humans who reside in it.

Therefore, it can be argued that the study of object repurposing contributes to knowledge in various academic domains that are interested in material culture and materialities. Regarding theoretical museum studies, this research reaffirms that knowledge creation is the main purpose of contemporary museums. Despite the emphasis on the benefit to human society instead of the material world, this research has concluded that museums unavoidably respond to object materialities and never successfully take control of them. Hence, it seems more accurate for humans not to perceive themselves as superior in their relationships with objects. This study has also confirmed the integral roles and influences of material objects in museums, although digital media has been more and more important in both collecting and exhibitionary practices.

Furthermore, it can be argued that this research adds new knowledge to the discipline of anthropology. This project in fact approaches museums from an

anthropological point of view. It regards museums as a cultural setting, with certain ritualistic activities and purposes. Methodologically, the field site was visited for primary research. Objects and people belonging to the focussed setting were interacted with in order to gain an understanding of how museum activities operate. Practices conducted and attitudes adopted in relation to material objects reveals a certain pattern of contemporary means of interacting with the material world. This research therefore deepens an understanding of human society to some degree.

Apart from that, the study can be regarded as contributing to material culture studies at large, which is closely connected to the field of archaeology. Even though this project pays attention to the objects produced in the recent past being repurposed in the contemporary world, rather than archaeological ones, it does share common interests, such as the issues of authenticity and originality. It also engages with secondary literature in archaeology in scrutinising certain phenomena in this research's case study. More importantly, this project itself provides insight into the complexities of the relations between singularity, multiplicity, originality and authenticity. As demonstrated by the case study, it proposes that authenticity is, in fact, not the same thing as originality as usually understood. Besides that, this research implies that whether objects of study are from the recent or earlier pasts, they all lead to the conclusion that human society could not survive without their interactions and relationships with objects.

Research limitations

By specifically focussing on the London Transport posters and relevant objects collected at the London Transport Museum, this research project does not cover various topics. In fact, the case study method and theoretical framework set a boundary for this project. The discussion of what this research excludes, therefore, mainly derives from the methodological and theoretical choices. It, at the same time, reaffirms that the research has carefully followed the protocols.

Firstly, the case study research is interested in the contemporary phenomenon (Yin 2014). This PhD thesis pays attention to the contemporary museum function assigned to the once advertising materials. It is therefore not a historical account of

London Transport posters. Histories of poster art, in general, are reviewed only for the purpose of contextualising the research. The production and original use of London Transport posters are summarised only to give an overview of the case study. Secondly, case study research is not an extensive study (Swanborn 2010) but limited to a bounded entity. In this case, the focus is on a particular type of object (publicity materials) collected at a particular institution (the London Transport Museum). This project, thus, does not cover the repurposing of posters into other forms such as private collections or merchandises, even though they were mentioned occasionally.

Regarding its object-centred approach and itinerary framework, this research treated posters as material objects, the visual content of which plays a significant role throughout their journeys. However, the approach suggests that this PhD research does not provide a visual analysis of the posters being studied. It is not interested in how the visual language affects the viewers emotionally or triggers their actions and behaviours (although it does point out how the materialities sensorially invoke people's reactions). Additionally, some anthropological studies of visual culture do focus on how the visual content contributes to social relationships. Yet this is beyond the scope of this case study. It pays more attention to the impact of materialities in seemingly mundane museum practice.

Moreover, the interest in materialities implies that this project mainly concentrates on the physical collections. It is true that digital representations of objects were considered and employed in various processes of this research. For example, digital images in the London Transport Museum's online collections were essential for the quantitative analysis of the case in the pilot study. Images were also printed out to make the timelines in identifying the themes as part of data analysis (also see Chapter 3, pp. 69–102). Nonetheless, these digital representations of posters are not considered critically. It is true that there are objects that are born digital instead of resulting from digitisation of physical things. Digital objects might also have their own materialities, which are distinguishable from physical ones. Although recognising the importance of these topics, they are, however, beyond the interest and the approach of this research.

Another limitation set by the object-centred approach is that this project is less interested in power relations between people with things being used as instruments.

Although this thesis, especially in its last thematic chapter (Chapter 6), pays attention to the human-thing relationships, it suggests de-centring the role of humans in the web of relationships, even within human-controlled environments and practices like museums. It also points out that the materialities of objects largely influenced museum practice. Regarding the data collection process, the number of objects, such as documentation and artefacts, used as evidence sources exceeds that of people chosen for interviews, even though those inanimate objects were made by people. Apart from that, research participants are limited to museum professionals only. This means that visitor studies is one area that is beyond the scope of this PhD research.

As stated at the beginning of this section, this research is bounded by its methodology apart from the theoretical approach. The case study method, especially regarding a single-case design, is often critiqued for its subjectivity and generalisability (Simons 2009; Swanborn 2010; Yin 2014). Throughout this research, the subjectivity of the researcher was recognised and reflected on, as suggested by Simons (2009). The case study protocol (Appendix 1) was developed and followed closely in order to ensure that this research is replicable and would produce the same results if being conducted by another researcher (Yin 2014). Concerning generalisability, case study research cannot provide a statistical generalisation but an analytic or theoretical one (Swanborn 2010; Yin 2014). Although the single case was identified based on the extreme/unusual case rationale as suggested by Yin (2014), he points out that a multiple-case design is preferable. Multiple cases allow direct replication, so the outcomes are likely to be more robust. To evaluate the inferences of this study, future case study research could be conducted using other poster collections as case studies to explore their changing values and meanings. One strong example is Poster House in New York. Opened in 2019, the museum is solely dedicated to posters. Future research on the topics related to this study is discussed in the following section.

Future research

As has been emphasised, object materialities play an important role in human life both inside and outside museums. This argument justifies the use of the material cultural

approach to investigate human-thing entanglement in the material world in different contexts. Within the field of museum studies, there are extensive areas that can be further investigated with an object-centred perspective. The potential research areas and topics discussed below are drawn from certain elements in this research study that can potentially be developed in greater detail.

One possibility is in respect of the focussed object of study. Poster art has been repurposed by other institutions both within the UK and beyond, apart from the London Transport Museum. Posters from different genres or even those from similar genres produced within various cultural contexts show diversities in terms of content. Different types of posters (such as political, film and medical posters) and the repurposing of them by museums from different cultural areas, both in the Western and non-Western societies, might reveal different dimensions about objects, people and museums. To deepen and expand knowledge about this type of object, multiple case studies are unquestionably important. The outcomes of this case study can also be insightful for future research, in terms of data collection processes as well as the theoretical implications to which the objects of the same type might lead.

Regarding museums' repurposing, other types of objects can be further investigated. Apart from posters, museums use different forms of publicity materials, such as leaflets, visitor guides, and floorplans to promote exhibitions and facilitate visitors. In this case study, these objects were archived and turned into documentary sources to record the history of the Museum, which also serve its knowledge shaping goal. There are also posters the Museum produced to promote exhibitions. While some copies were repurposed into collections, others have probably been reused for other reasons, such as decoration. A copy of posters promoting *The art of poster* exhibition (2008) is, for instance, now casually taped on the door of the Poster Store without a frame or mount (Figure **7.1**). Whether or not resulting in museum collections, the repurposing is a form of a present-day interactions with the objects from the past. The examination of this type of activity potentially contributes to a better understanding of today's culture, especially regarding human relationships with the material world.

Figure 7.1 A copy of poster prints for *The art of the poster* exhibition featuring the Stevens artwork casually taped to one side of the door to the London Transport Museum's Poster Store probably for a decoration purpose. Photograph © Amornchat Sermcheep, 2018.

Another possibility is a study of functional objects that are used for musealising other objects. As this case study has shown, museums make use of different things throughout the repurposing process. That means different types of objects come to interact with one another to serve the museum's knowledge shaping purpose. Museums are also space where people interact with things in different ways. While museums consciously deal with their collections, other objects unquestionably play an integral role. The theoretical reflection of objects used by museums but are excluded in their collections can then expand knowledge about the nature of the institutions.

In relation to the power of materialities, objects with a strong visual image, like advertising posters, might be a potential case for investigating how they contribute to the social relationships between people. While this case study focusses on the movements of objects, the research findings hint that they can potentially move people. Advertising posters for an exhibition can lead people to come to museums. Likewise, posters as exhibits (as well as other types of objects) are also likely to attract people to each other,

as well as to museums. While this issue might seem to focus on people, objects remain at the centre with their power being highlighted. This, therefore, corresponds to the object-centred approach applied throughout this PhD research.

The potential research areas discussed above reemphasise the contributions of this research project. They also demonstrate that the material cultural approach can help deepen an understanding of the entanglement between people and things, both within the museum context and in society at large. Additionally, they reaffirm the importance of physical objects and their impact on people, while questioning the superiority of humans in the entangled web of relationships. More importantly, this research implies that there are different areas about material objects that can be explored further. Although having relied on things probably since the beginning of mankind, humans have yet to gain a thorough understanding of objects they encounter. They are still many aspects of the material world that are yet to be discovered.

Afterword

As this thesis has come to its end, I would like to draw the reader back to the fundamental question: do physical objects still matter? As this research study has demonstrated, the answer is clearly yes, but is it still true outside the museum? With the twenty-first century way of life, it seems that people rely more and more on the digital, partly due to the decrease in natural resources and partly due to convenience and security. Banknotes and coins are, for instance, becoming less important in everyday economic exchange. Instead of carrying different plastic cards (such as credit/debit cards, membership cards, travel cards/tickets), they can be stored in a digital form and presented using mobile phones. In the academic environment, e-books and e-journals are more efficient and probably used more than the physical copies by academics, students and researchers. These lead to the assumption that the role of physical objects is becoming less and less significant in the contemporary way of life.

Nonetheless, there are a number of things that cannot be replaced by the digital. These include fundamental items such as food, clothing, shelter and transport. Without them, people could not survive. People also continue to improve the means by which

they interact with things; or to put it another way, people still attempt to master things around them. Recently, a Japanese organising consultant Marie Kondo, who wrote a best-selling book *The life-changing magic of tidying up* (2011) and with her original show on Netflix *Tidying up with Marie Kondo* (2019), has become widely known among international audiences (or at least among those interested in organising, de-cluttering and housekeeping). Whether or not audiences agree with her so-called 'KonMari' method, I find Kondo's work and public reception a good example of people's relationships with things in the mundane everyday life. Oftentimes, things become out of control. The amount of a certain thing might also increase. In households, things can easily get cluttered and disorganised. According to Kondo's famous advice, objects that do not 'spark joy' should then be discarded. This, in my view, resonates with the values and meanings of objects to their owners, as well as the powerful impact of objects on people. Whether things are tidy also depend on how effectively people respond to object materialities. However simple it might sound, one cannot deny that people still struggle to keep things in place.

This example seems very mundane, but it proves that humans still attempt to take control of objects as much as this task seems impossible to achieve. What is obvious is that people cannot live without interacting with the material world. Thus, this PhD thesis concludes that material culture still matters, and so do object materialities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: case study protocol

Overview of the case study

1. Mission: 80,000-word PhD thesis
2. Case study questions and hypotheses
    2.1. Major research question: do values and meanings of publicity posters change as they become museum exhibits and if so, how?
    2.2. Subsidiary research questions
        2.2.1. What are the purposes of exhibiting London Transport posters?
        2.2.2. What narratives are told by the exhibitions of London Transport posters?
        2.2.3. What are the processes of curating the exhibitions of London Transport posters, from conceptualisation to de-installation?
        2.2.4. What are the criteria for selecting London Transport posters for exhibition?
        2.2.5. To what extent do the materialities of London Transport posters influence the changes in their values and meanings?
    2.3. Hypotheses (supported by literature review papers and pilot study)
        2.3.1. London Transport's publicity posters have been repurposed as museum exhibits.
        2.3.2. The values and meanings of London Transport posters change through exhibition making under different themes and concepts.
        2.3.3. Although the literature of poster art emphasises the visual design, the materiality plays an important role in turning publicity materials into museum exhibits.
        2.3.4. For publicity purposes, multiple copies of posters are printed and displayed, but the exhibitions and displays of posters have featured artworks, original printed posters (usually from the collection) or photographic reproductions.
    2.4. Theoretical framework for the case study and key readings
        2.4.1. Theoretical framework: object itineraries
        2.4.2. Key readings
            2.4.2.1. Joyce, R.A. and Gillespie, S.D. (eds.) (2015) *Things in motion: object itineraries in anthropological practice*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.
            2.4.2.2. Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.) (1999) *Actor network theory and after*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Data collection procedures

1. Contact person for doing fieldwork

    1.1. Stelina Kokarida, Collections Assistant, Curatorial Department, London Transport Museum

    1.2. Email: Duty.Curators@ltmuseum.co.uk; Stelina.Kokarida@ltmuseum.co.uk

2. Data collection plan

    2.1. Sources of evidences

        2.1.1. Exhibition catalogues (LTM Library)

        2.1.2. Documents related to exhibition making (LTM Archives)

        2.1.3. Documents related to the production of the original posters (LTM Archives and Transport for London Corporate Archives)

        2.1.4. Photographs of exhibitions featuring the units of analysis (LTM Photograph Collection)

        2.1.5. Physical artefacts: artworks, printed posters and reproductions on display (LTM Poster and Artwork Collections)

        2.1.6. Interviews: exhibition curators and poster collection curator

    2.2. Other sources

        2.2.1. *Commercial Art* (1922 – 1931) / *Commercial Art and Industry* (1931 – 1936) / *Art and Industry* magazines (1936 – 1958): critics and receptions of London Transport posters

        2.2.2. *The Penrose Annual: A Review of the Graphic Arts*, Volume 42: London Transport publicity

        2.2.3. Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections: London Transport Poster Collection (first half of the 20th century for art school shows)

        2.2.4. Tate and Courtauld Institute of Art Libraries: exhibition catalogues

        2.2.5. University of the Arts London: Eckersley Collection

    2.3. Case study database

        2.3.1. Field notes and interview recordings

        2.3.2. Case study documents: scanned images of artefacts, documents and photographs

        2.3.3. Bibliography: RefWorks

        2.3.4. Data collection Database: Google Forms

3. Preparation prior to fieldwork

    3.1. Literature review

        3.1.1. Cultural biography

        3.1.2. Poster histories

        3.1.3. Museum posters

        3.1.4. Posters as material culture

        3.1.5. Posters as visual culture

        3.1.6. Museum display

        3.1.7. Research methodology: case study

        3.1.8. Theoretical framework: object itinerary

    3.2. Pilot study

        3.2.1. Selecting a case study: London Transport Museum's poster collection

        3.2.2. Type of case study: embedded single case study

        3.2.3. Quantitative database analysis: screening candidates and identifying units of analysis

    3.3. Probation review

3.4. Ethics approval: prior to interviews

3.5. Contact LTM

Data collection questions

1. Level 1: questions asked of specific units of data collection (see Appendix 2, pp. 257–264)
2. Level 2: questions asked of specific units of analysis (same as subsidiary research questions)
3. Level 3: questions asked of an entire study beyond the case study evidence, involving literature review and other published data (same as major research question)
4. Level 4: normative questions about recommendations and conclusions (beyond the narrow scope of the study)
    4.1. Other types of objects: ephemerals, visual material (pictorial) objects, functional objects used for museum activities, reproducible objects (prints), multiple originals
    4.2. Beyond museum context: way of thinking of objects in general
    4.3. Materials against materiality
    4.4. Rival theories: mind vs matter

Guide for the case study report: single-case study

1. Audiences
    1.1. Supervisor
    1.2. Examiners
    1.3. Researchers and enthusiasts
2. Report structure: thematic
    2.1. Introduction
        2.1.1. Research questions
        2.1.2. Research context
            2.1.2.1. Why posters?
            2.1.2.2. Why material culture approach?
            2.1.2.3. Why London Transport Museum?
        2.1.3. Analytic technique: individual-level logic model
    2.2. Theme 1: itineraries of London Transport posters
        2.2.1. Key ideas
            2.2.1.1. Answer major research questions
            2.2.1.2. Scope: publicity to exhibits (change and move but connected)
        2.2.2. Theoretical framework
        2.2.3. Posters' journeys: transformation and connection in values and meanings
            2.2.3.1. Changes in narratives
            2.2.3.2. Multiple exhibitionary narratives
            2.2.3.3. Posters as museum collection
            2.2.3.4. Posters beyond exhibits

2.3. Theme 2: materialities of London Transport posters

    2.3.1. Key ideas

        2.3.1.1. Highlight material cultural approach

        2.3.1.2. How the actual practice unavoidably deals with multiplicity of posters

    2.3.2. Literature review: material culture

    2.3.3. Criteria for selecting poster exhibits

    2.3.4. Influences of materialities on changes in values and meanings

        2.3.4.1. Multiplicity

        2.3.4.2. Other material qualities: reproducibility, ephemerality, size, flatness & lightness

2.4. Theme 3: originality, authenticity and museums

    2.4.1. Key ideas

        2.4.1.1. Analysis of what museums do to objects (repurposing) from object-centred point of view

        2.4.1.2. Theoretical proposition: beyond the case study

        2.4.1.3. Human-thing relationships and interactions

    2.4.2. Originality and authenticity

    2.4.3. Knowledge creation

    2.4.4. Museums as space for human-thing interactions

2.5. Conclusion

    2.5.1. Chapter summary and key issues

    2.5.2. Theoretical proposition

    2.5.3. Contribution and need for future research

Appendix 2: data collection form (Level 1 Questions)

This form consists of level 1 questions addressing the four types of evidence sources: documents, photographs, artefacts and interviews. It was adapted into an online survey format using Google Forms during field research. The responses were exported to a spreadsheet and kept as the Data Collection Database for data analysis. Each response to the form was translated from my field notes on each material examined at the field site. The last column in each table below indicates relevant level 2 (subsidiary) questions (i.e. purpose, criteria, process and narrative) and/or types of information to be used in the final thesis such as fact/reference (e.g. date, name) or report writing (e.g. potential image to be included in the thesis).

Documents

Content Exhibitionary Context Exhibition		
Title		Fact/ reference
Start date		
Institution		
Room		
Curator		
Exhibition team		
Concept/theme		
Overall storyline		
Mode		
Type		
Orientation		
Circulation pattern		
Display style		
Visual experience		Narrative
Lighting		
Colour		
Label		
Content (in relation to objects)		
Design		
Materiality		
Media		
Illustrative images		
Documents		

Photographs		
Film		
Audio		
Interactive display		
Pacing		
Light		
Colour		
Texture		
Scale		
Space		
Intensity		
Arrangement		
Movement		
Temperature		
Related programmes and activities		
Educational		
Promotional		
Publication		
Merchandising		
Featured object		
Reference number		Criteria
Type of object		
Exhibition development		
Conceptual phase (idea gathering)		
Idea sources		
Idea collecting and comparison		
Project selection		
Object selection		
Identification of potential or available sources		
Exhibition schedule		
Developmental phase		
Planning stage		
Exhibition goals		
Storyline		Process
Physical exhibition plan		
Educational plan		
Promotional strategies and plan		
Production stage		
Exhibition components		
Object mounting and installation		
Educational programme development and staff (docent) training		
Promotional plan implementation		
Use of the educational programmes with the exhibition		
Functional phase		
Operational stage		

Exhibition presentation		
Educational programme implementation		
Visitor response		
Maintenance and security		
Admission fees and services		
Achievement of the exhibition goals		
Deterioration of collections		
Terminating stage		
Exhibition dismantling		
Returning objects to collection storage		
Assessment phase (evaluation stage and idea gathering)		
Assessment of exhibition		
Assessment of development process		
Suggested improvements to product and process		
Notes		
<u>Original context</u>		
Artist		
Date of production		
Display start date		Fact/ reference
Display end date		
Commissioner		
Printer		
Amount of copies		
Content		
Purpose		
Commissioning programme		
Title		
Purpose		Narrative
People involved		
Locations of display		
How it was displayed		
Notes		
Reflecting on type of evidence		
<u>Relation to archival institution</u>		
Title		Fact/ reference
Object location		
Accession number		
Recorder		
Collecting purpose		
Description		Subjectivity
Notes		
<u>Relation to researcher</u>		
Data access		Fact/ reference
Time spent		
Access procedures		

Relevant level 2 question		
Missing information		Report
To be used in thesis		
Format		
Notes		

Photographs

Content **Exhibitionary Context** **Exhibition**		
Title		
Start date		
Institution		
Room		
Curator		Fact/ reference
Exhibition team		
Concept/theme		
Overall storyline		
Mode		
Type		
Orientation		
Circulation pattern		
Display style		
Visual experience		
Lighting		
Colour		
Label		
Content (in relation to objects)		
Design		
Materiality		
Media		
Illustrative images		
Documents		
Photographs		Narrative
Film		
Audio		
Interactive display		
Pacing		
Light		
Colour		
Texture		
Scale		
Space		

Intensity		
Arrangement		
Movement		
Temperature		
Related programmes and activities		
Educational		
Promotional		
Publication		
Merchandising		
Featured object		
Reference number		Criteria
Type of object		
Exhibition development		
Conceptual phase (idea gathering)		
Idea sources		
Idea collecting and comparison		
Project selection		
Object selection		
Identification of potential or available sources		
Exhibition schedule		
Developmental phase		
Planning stage		
Exhibition goals		
Storyline		
Physical exhibition plan		
Educational plan		
Promotional strategies and plan		
Production stage		
Exhibition components		Process
Object mounting and installation		
Educational programme development and staff (docent) training		
Promotional plan implementation		
Use of the educational programmes with the exhibition		
Functional phase		
Operational stage		
Exhibition presentation		
Educational programme implementation		
Visitor response		
Maintenance and security		
Admission fees and services		
Achievement of the exhibition goals		
Deterioration of collections		
Terminating stage		
Exhibition dismantling		
Returning objects to collection storage		

Assessment phase (evaluation stage and idea gathering)	
Assessment of exhibition	
Assessment of development process	
Suggested improvements to product and process	
Notes	
Reflecting on type of evidence **Original use**	Fact/ reference
Photographer	
Owner (institution)	
Date	
Format	
Size	
Purpose	Subjectivity
Relation to archival institution	Fact
Title	
Object location	
Accession number	
Recorder	
Purpose	
Description	Subjectivity
Relation to researcher	Fact/ reference
Data access	
Time spent	
Access procedures	
Relevant level 2 question	Report
Missing information	
To be used in thesis	
Format	
Notes	

Artefacts

Observation on artefact **Description** **Substantial analysis**	Narrative, criteria
Size	
Dimension	
Weight	
Function	
How they are used	
Ephemerality	
Content	
Iconography	
Decorative design	

Motif		
Logo		
Represented elements		
Formal analysis		
Lines		
Colours		
Texture		
Light		
<u>Deduction</u>		
Sensory engagement		
Touch		
Smell		
How perceiver feels		Narrative, criteria, methodology
What perceiver sees when projected into the represented world		
Intellectual engagement		
What pictorial elements represent		
Emotional Engagement		
Emotional response		
<u>Speculation</u>		
Theories		
Hypotheses		Levels 3, 4
Connection with other evidence and methodology		
Reflecting on type of evidence		
<u>Relation to original use</u>		
Type of object		
Artist		
Title		Fact/ reference
Date of production		
Printer		
<u>Relation to archival institution</u>		
Title		
Reference number		Fact/ reference
Location		
How it is stored		Narrative, purpose
<u>Relation to researcher</u>		
Date accessed		
Time spent		Fact/reference
Access procedures		
Relevant level 2 question		Analysis
Missing information		
To be used in thesis		
Format		Report
Relevant image		

Notes		

Interviews

Interview questions (Appendix 3) are adapted from this form.

Content **Exhibitionary context**		Fact
Exhibition		
Criteria for selecting exhibits		Criteria
Exhibition development process		Process
Purpose of exhibition		Purpose
Theme/concept		Narrative
Storyline		
Original context		Fact
Commissioning programme		
Artist		
Current commission		Narrative, purpose
Reflecting on type of evidence **Relation to institution**		Reference Subjectivity
Interviewee's name		
Interviewee's role in institution		
Interviewee's relation to objects		
Collection overview		
Other activities related to object		
Relation to researcher		Reference
Date of interview		
Time spent		
Access procedure		
Relevant level 2 question		Analysis
Missing information		
To be used in thesis		Report
Format		
Recording (attachment)		
Notes		

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

Introduction

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before we start, let me briefly introduce myself and my research project. My name is Amornchat Sermcheep and I am doing a PhD in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. My research focusses on how publicity posters have become museum exhibits and the changes in their values and meanings when they are repurposed. I chose the poster collection at the London Transport Museum as my case study. In this interview, I would like to ask you about your experience of curating exhibitions of London Transport posters and the nature of poster collections at the Museum.

Questions

1. Could you tell me about your role in the London Transport Museum and your work related to the poster collection?
2. Could you tell me about the Museum's policy on exhibitions and displays of London Transport posters (e.g. why and how often are they exhibited compared to other collections)?
3. Have you been involved in curating any exhibition in which one of these five posters (or artworks) was displayed?
   1) Edward McKnight Kauffer's *London History at the London Museum* (1922)
   2) Austin Cooper's *Natural History Museum; Lepidoptera* (1928)
   3) Rex Whistler's *The Tate Gallery* (1928)
   4) Edward Wadsworth's *Imperial War Museum* (1936)
   5) Harry Stevens's *Femme Bien Informee* (1972)
4. If so, could you tell me about the exhibition's concept and the process of curating it? Or if not, could you tell me about any other exhibition of posters in which you were involved?
5. Could you explain how and why these posters were selected?
6. Were/are these exhibits prints, artworks or reproductions? Why did you choose one and not another?
7. According to the database, the Museum usually archives several copies of a printed poster. Could you tell me how you decide which copy is to be exhibited?
8. According to the database, each copy of a print does not always have the same record details (e.g. different locations, framing, labelling and levels of access). Could you tell me about how the Museum catalogues and documents these items?
9. Are there any other aspects of poster collections and exhibitions at the Museum you would like to add/discuss?

Confirmed interviewees

Contact: Stelina Kokarida, Collections Assistant

Name	Role	Email Address
Anna Renton	Former Senior Curator at LTM	ARen@aeltc.com
Evdoxia Apostolou	Curator of poster collection	doxaapostolou@hotmail.com
Georgia Morley[25]	Person in charge of replacing Whistler's poster in *Poster parade*	Georgia.Morley@ltmuseum.co.uk

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[25] The participant withdrew after receiving the interview questions.

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