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## COLLECTING THE WORLD

Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum

The event is part of the research project »Dinosaurs in Berlin. *Brachiosaurus brancai* as political, scientific and popular icon«. In cooperation with the project »Mobile Objects«, Cluster of Excellence *Image Knowledge Gestaltung* at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung.

**Date:** Tuesday, 18 July 2017, 6 pm

**Venue:** Festsaal (Haus 1), Luisenstraße 56, 10117 Berlin

**Chair:** Anke te Heesen  
(Professor of history of science, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

**Admission free**  
Please register at: [pan@mfn-berlin.de](mailto:pan@mfn-berlin.de)

An Interdisciplinary Laboratory

Evening Talk

JAMES  
DELBOURGO

Tuesday, 18 July 2017, 6 pm

# COLLECTING THE WORLD

Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum

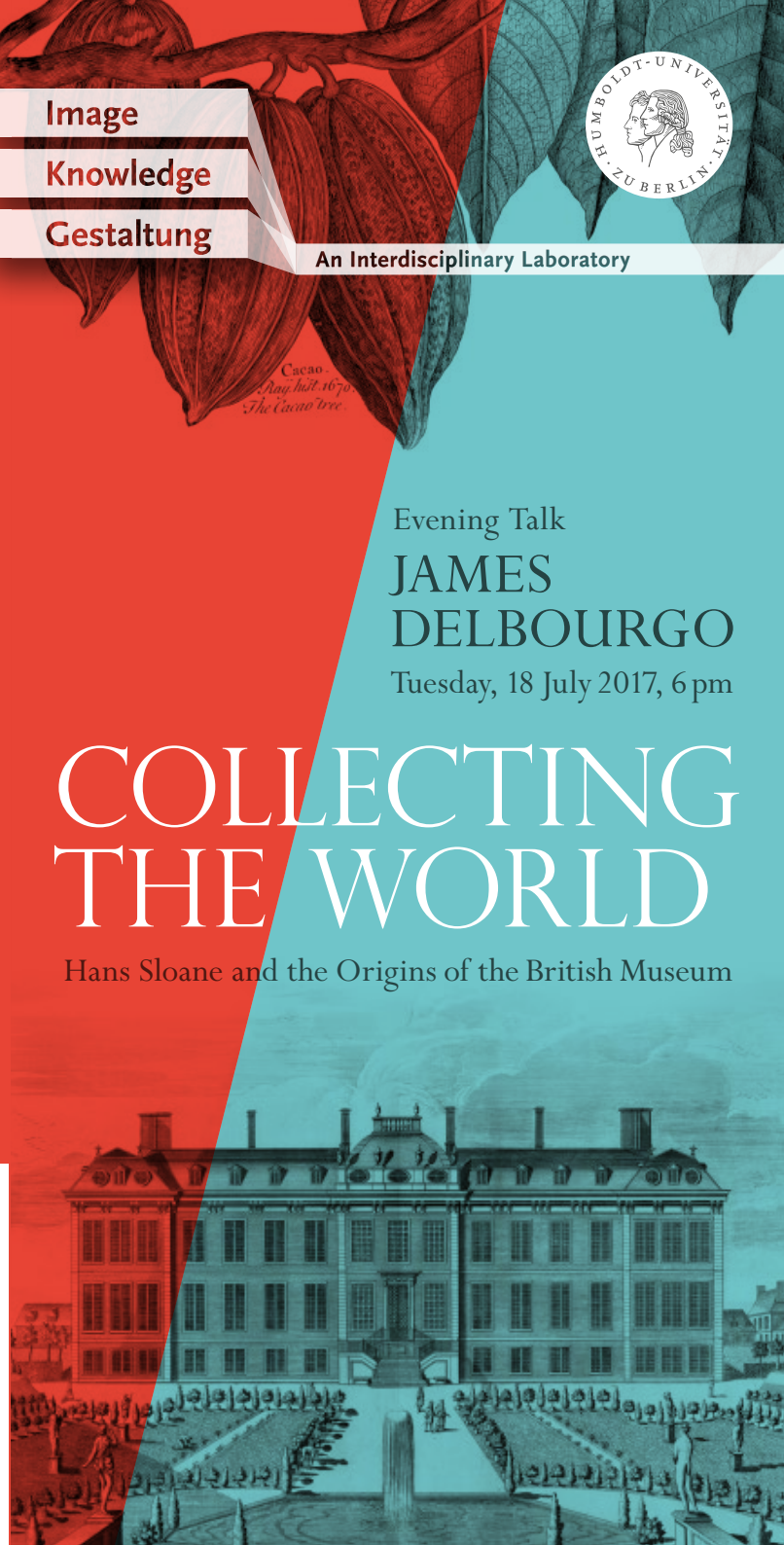
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für Bildung  
und Forschung



## Abstract

In 1759 the British Museum opened its doors for the first time – the first free national public museum in the world. But how did it come into being? This talk is based on a new biography of its founder Hans Sloane, which recounts the story behind the museum's creation. Born in northern Ireland in 1660, Sloane amassed a fortune as a London society physician, becoming a member of the Whig establishment and president of the Royal Society and Royal College of Physicians. His wealth and contacts enabled him to assemble an encyclopedic collection of specimens and objects – the most famous cabinet of curiosities of its time. For Sloane, collecting a world of objects meant collecting a world of people. His marriage to a Jamaican sugar heiress gave him access to both planters and African slaves, from whom he collected a variety of objects. He then established a network of agents to supply artifacts from China, India, North America, the Caribbean, and beyond: plants and animals, books and manuscripts, a >shoe made of human skin<, the head of an Arctic walrus, slaves' banjos, magical amulets, Buddhist shrines, copies of the Qur'ān and more – nothing was off limits to Sloane's curiosity and fortune. The overlooked story of one of the Enlightenment's most controversial luminaries offers a fresh perspective on the entanglement of scientific discovery and imperialism in the eighteenth-century and the heritage of today's global museums.

## About the Speaker

James Delbourgo is associate professor of history at Rutgers – the State University of New Jersey and currently visiting professor of history of science at Harvard. He holds degrees from the University of East Anglia, Cambridge and Columbia and has published several books and articles on early modern science, travel and collecting in relation to British colonial societies. His study of Hans Sloane, global natural history collecting and the origins of the British Museum is located at the intersection of these fields of research.

## Directions

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Festsaal (Haus 1)  
Luisenstraße 56, 10117 Berlin

Hauptbahnhof

🚊 S5 S7 S9 S75

🚋 U55

🚊 Tram M5 M8 M10

🚌 Bus 120 142 147 245 TXL

Tram & Bus Stop Invalidenpark

🚊 Tram M5 M8 M10

🚌 Bus 120 142 147 245 TXL

Bus Stop Robert-Koch-Platz

🚌 Bus 142 245

Bus Stop Charité Campus Mitte

🚌 Bus 147 TXL

Bus Stop Schumannstraße

🚌 Bus 147

