



---

AN EXHIBITION EXPLORING FOUND OBJECTS  
ONE PERSON'S TRASH IS ANOTHER PERSON'S TREASURE

---

# WHAT'S IT WORTH?

---

**MA MUSEUMS & GALLERIES:  
CULTURE, COLLECTIONS AND COMMUNICATION**

---

**Project Team**

**Donna Ballan  
Fernanda Grebe  
Louise Healey  
Wan-Ting Hsu  
Regina Lei  
Sacha Lee  
Pete Martin  
Violet McClean  
Naomi McGrew  
Laura Miller  
Heidi Wallis**

The project team was responsible for the Curation, Marketing and Management of this exhibition, and the release of the accompanying catalogue.



---

**AN EXHIBITION EXPLORING FOUND OBJECTS  
ONE PERSON'S TRASH IS ANOTHER PERSON'S TREASURE**

---

## **WHAT'S IT WORTH?**

**SATURDAY 17TH MAY 2008 / 11.30AM TO 5.00PM**

The exhibition has been **curated** by MA Museums & Galleries: Culture, Collections and Communication Students at the Textile Conservation Centre, Winchester Campus, University of Southampton.

“What’s it Worth?” is the question asked by current postgraduates studying at the Centre. The group of future museum professionals have arranged a unique one day exhibition to explore the value we give objects. Held in the historic Undercroft building behind Winchester Cathedral, the exhibition proves to be a distinct event in Winchester’s cultural calendar.

The exhibition investigates and discusses the cultural value and worth of the objects exhibited and is split into three sections:

1. Museum disposals
2. Artistic response
3. Found objects

The exhibition aims to investigate the differences

between public and museum disposals and the artistic interpretation of value. All objects within the exhibition have been thrown away by previous owners so the exhibition acts as a recycling process for the object. From a visibly damaged kettle to a loved and dearly missed childhood toy, visitors are asked to participate in the idea of an object’s worth – is a kettle more valuable than a toy dog?

Artist Julia Flatman has created site-specific sculptures for the exhibition made entirely from found items. The work entitled Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade directly responds to ideas of value and worth through representing the Undercroft building and how the building has been used throughout its history. Each sculpture represents a significant episode in the history of Winchester including the life and work of Winchester resident Josephine Butler who lived nearby.

---

## OBJECTS FOUND – TRASH OR *treasure*

---

Throughout our lives we collect objects. Some of these objects have a special meaning to us. We feel an emotional attachment to them because they remind us of someone during a significant period. However, we can discard other objects easily. This could be because they are worthless, broken or have become old fashioned and obsolete. We may wish to give to charity so that these objects can find a new home. We may be decluttering our lives. How do we decide which category an object fits in to and how do we get rid of the objects we no longer value? We dispose of our rubbish by binning it, dumping it in the street, taking it to charity shops or recycling centres.

Our **TRASH** that we take to charity shops and recycling centres can become other people's **TREASURE**.

The objects here on exhibition have all been discarded for a variety of reasons. Can you guess what these reasons were? Have you ever owned similar objects? What do these objects remind

you of? Would you discard these objects? Would you want to keep them? Why?

### **Keeper of Memories - Collection**

The collection forms part of a larger archive and the items that forms part of this exhibition portrays one person's strong interest in collecting objects. They are functional, as the collector still wears and uses some of the items. She has always been fascinated with objects, but more so now, as these objects are associated with the past of others and with history. She has a fascination with the 'nostalgic association' that is generated by found objects, thus by collecting such objects the subject feels as though they are preserving these memories and their romantic associations.

Is this an obsession of possession? The collection is symbolic to the collector, as it is a point of reference and reflection of what the objects mean, who they remind us of and why we want that connection to remain real.

The entire collection features a selection of toys, books and a large collection of vanity wear, which have been sourced from recycling centres, charity shops, car boot sales and through gifts. Some of these objects are her own childhood possessions. Trends within fashion, publishing and music that were popular during the 19th century are catalogued by the collection. The objects displayed here include vintage clothing, jewellery, a doll and some vanity wear. They summarise how we consumers have become more aware of recycling and reusing found objects, often preferring the more authentic style and richer history that they offer when compared to newer objects. We also enjoy the more robust manufactured quality of these products, a feature often lost in modern day reformed fashions.

### **Royal Typewriter**

This Royal Typewriter was purchased at the Winchester Recycling Centre. Royal typewriters used to be a common sight in offices across the world. It was marketed as the sturdiest and strongest typewriter available. The Royal Company organized stunts such as throwing their typewriters out of aeroplanes to show that they would survive the fall. Typewriters have been replaced by computers. However, people still buy them as they like their old fashioned quality and the typeface that they produce. In some cases they have become artistic objects.



### **Sandy**

This beloved toy dog was owned by a Winchester family for forty years. It was named 'Sandy' by the children who were devoted to it and spent many happy hours playing with it. While the children grew up, Sandy was used less and lived in their garage. The owners finally decided to get rid of it. The owner explained that it was a very hard decision to make as Sandy was special to her during a meaningful period of her life. This object has immense emotional value for the adults who used to play with it as children.



### **Records**

Vinyl records have been replaced by CDs. However, there has been a resurgence of interest in Vinyl, with DJs and music fans alike choosing to buy records instead of mass produced CDs. Contemporary records often have artistically designed packaging and graphics making them a more imaginative purchase. This packaged collection of records seems to be a forerunner of MP3 players.



---

## MUSEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF AN OBJECT'S VALUE

---

In the museum context, the object's value is related to a represented collection. It embodies a real and emblematic value that has the most important function to communicate a message or idea to people. Objects are collected, restored, conserved and displayed, always aiming to communicate.

Cultural ideas of value and the access to objects can provide intellectual learning as well as emotional responses. It is also why the disposal, destruction or sale of collections is such a difficult issue for museums because such de-accessioning procedures involve the demotion of material from the public sphere.

Considering museum visitors receive most of the information from displayed collections, it is possible to say that most objects do not have intrinsic value. Value and relevance is dependent on the relation to the culture, a period, a specific context, its 'biography' and appeal to a collection policy.

An object that is not part of the museum core collection cannot support the

museum's research, display or interpretation or be provided with enough care and access. It may be preferable to transfer the item to an alternative place where it will be treasured.

Museum disposal consists of a complex decision making process of transferring or removing an item from a museum's collection. Transferring items does not make them necessarily trash: it just may not be relevant to compose the dialogue which a specific museum intends to establish with its public. An object may possibly have meaning and significance to another exhibition context, where it can acquire particular value.

### Museum Disposal Policies

Museums are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens that they hold in trust for the public's interest. Items are therefore acquired on the basis of a long term, socially responsive plan and principal institutional aims. There is a strong presumption in favour of the retention of

items and most disposals are fiercely unpopular. Responsive, curatorially motivated disposals take place as part of the museum's long term collection policy in order to increase public benefit.

Apart from legal and constitutional requirements, a museum can quickly destroy its credibility and suffer immense public relation damage if it disposes of items with defined criteria.

In most cases, the circumstances are uncontroversial and straightforward: better placed in another museum; the destruction of too badly damaged or deteriorated items; or the rationalisation of duplicates. It is possible to promote a responsive decision to show that value and worth of objects are of absolute best interest.

### Museum Disposal - Work Exhibited

A metal agricultural tool. No background information. Unknown museum quality. Not relevant to current collection policy.

A marmalade slicer. Unknown history. Unknown if connected to collection policy

Metal door fittings marked "E. B. Holdaway". Unknown object that may have connections to collection depending on history.

Small collection of plaster cast snakes left over from already deaccessioned Natural Sciences collection. Quite damaged. No background records.



---

## JULIA FLATMAN

---

Julia Flatman is a site specific artist based in Dorset. She graduated from The Arts Institute at Bournemouth in 2005, and is a lecturer on the BA Fine Art course at the Institute whilst continuing with her own artistic practice. She has most recently taken part in the MEETING PLACE – Contemporary Art and the Museum Collection exhibition at the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum. Flatman's current research explores the inherent qualities of materials, process and form, and their potential to evoke within the viewer associations and impressions from their own experiences. Utilizing materials and objects drawn from the domestic, the homemade and the craft object, Julia seeks to highlight the nature of activities traditionally associated with women, the decorative, useful, functional and repetitive as well as their potential to convey meaning. She also seeks to exploit the emotional connotations by varying the use and context away from their familiar references, engaging other possibilities in multi layered installations with no settled conclusions. Her sculptures often directly and indirectly

reference the body in terms of their associations with use, the biological interior and exterior and anthropomorphic forms. A combination of materials - hard with soft, luxurious with disgusting, flexible with rigid - create an ambiguity of meaning and suggest a narrative beyond the object. The sculptures placed in physical relation to the gallery – balancing, leaning, resting, stretched, hung, extending beyond what appears to be their allotted space or boundary - make reference to the language of Art History and the reality of the gallery's physical space determining the viewer's interpretation of the work.

### **The Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade**

'The objects and space of installation corporealise this border of past and present, of history and memory, of site and knowledge.'

Meskimmon.M, 2003. Women making Art, history, subjectivity, aesthetics London, Routledge Unlike the museum artefact whose purpose is often explained, Flatman creates

work where the meaning is not articulated but is dependent on the individual's imagination and personal memories. In museums and art galleries a great deal of effort goes into preserving objects and artefacts according to their value in terms of our understanding of our world both past and present.

Flatman's choice of objects and materials have come from researching the building's history and the people associated with it including:

- The relics of the Saxon Saints and the remains of St Swithun
- The lead culverts of the Lockburn - a medieval watercourse
- The domestic space of the undercroft- once Canon Mulso's Kitchen
- The violent nature of the occupation by the Parliamentarians
- The life of Josephine Butler (1828 – 1906) who lived next door

The Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade references Josephine Butler's memoirs of the same name published

in 1896. A pioneering feminist, speaking out publicly, and seeking equal rights for women of all classes and in all social situations, Butler has not perhaps been as widely known as she deserves. Her major political impact in securing the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and her work in improving education for women on the edges of society, all made her a major force for social change in 19th Century Winchester.

The work takes its cue from the space in which it is displayed, the juxtaposition of materials and objects, triggering personal associations and responses, the combinations of thoughts and memories creating new narratives.



## **MA Museum & Galleries: Culture, Collections and Communication**

The MA in Museum & Galleries: Culture, Collections and Communication looks at museological practice, including curatorial theory and practice in museums, galleries and historic houses. The course allows students build a critical awareness of processes involved in curating cultural materials, ranging from modern and contemporary art through to social history artefacts and archaeological material.

Students learn how to:

- understand the issues involved in interpreting and preserving collections
- apply creative skills to understanding and interpreting collections
- balance the need to preserve collections in museums, galleries and historic houses with public access
- employ management practices in the cultural sector
- use their skills and knowledge to participate in a group project on communicating with collections
- undertake research in museology.

## **The Textile Conservation Centre**

The Textile Conservation Centre is the leading international organisation in the field of textile conservation research, education and practice. Its work has now broadened to respond to the dynamic social and intellectual challenges of the heritage sector, both nationally and internationally.

The Centre was founded in 1975 by Karen Finch and was based at Hampton Court Palace for nearly 25 years. In 1998 it merged with the University of Southampton, and relocated in 1999 to the University's campus in Winchester.

## **Winchester School of Art**

Winchester School of Art was founded more than 130 years ago; the School joined the University of Southampton in 1996. Today it offers some of the most flexible and dynamic programmes within the UK of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in painting, sculpture, fashion, graphic design, advertising design, photography and textile art & design.

## **University of Southampton**

The University of Southampton is one of the top 10 research universities in the UK and has achieved consistently high scores for its teaching and learning activities.

## **Acknowledgments**

MA Museums & Galleries: Culture, Collections and Communication would like to thank the following for their help and support in the making and presentation of this exhibition:

Mary Brooks  
Nell Hoare  
Richard Wright  
Karen Tate  
University of Southampton  
Sonja Stender, Designer  
Image XL Printing  
SERCO  
Winchester Museums Service  
Winchester Cathedral  
The Private Collection of  
Violet McClean  
Winchester Gallery,  
Winchester  
The John Hansard Gallery,  
Southampton  
The Gallery, Arts Institute at  
Bournemouth  
The Textile Conservation  
Centre  
FWB Printing, Wincanton  
University of Southampton,  
Design & Print services

## **CREDITS**

© 2008, copyright of the copy resides with MA Museums & Galleries Students, including the right to reproduce, unless otherwise stated. Images copyright resides with the artist and named photographers.

**Edited and complied by**  
Violet McClean

**Art Direction and Design by**  
Sonja Stender  
[www.jazznoons.co.uk](http://www.jazznoons.co.uk)

**Printed by**  
FWB printing, WINCANTON  
[www.fwbprinting.co.uk](http://www.fwbprinting.co.uk)

**Cover Image**  
Sandy, The Dog  
**Found Objects images**  
Photography by Heidi Wells  
and Regina Lei

**Julia Flatman's Images**  
Photography by Julia Flatman

**Museum Disposal Images**  
Photography by Peter Martin

**For more information  
please contact**  
Naomi McGrew  
Louise Healey  
Press & Marketing Officers  
Email: [whatsitworth\\_wsa@  
hotmail.com](mailto:whatsitworth_wsa@hotmail.com)  
Tel: 07961795889 /  
077903014467

## **The Undercroft**

Winchester Cathedral Visitor Centre  
Inner Close, Winchester  
SO23 9LS

For more information please contact:  
Naomi McGrew/Louise Healey, Press & Marketing Officers  
Email. [whatsitworth\\_wsa@hotmail.com](mailto:whatsitworth_wsa@hotmail.com)  
Tel. 07961 795 889 / 07793 014 467