DESIGNING OBJECT-BASED EXPERIENCES

A Prototyping Game

Based on Beautiful Data:
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This package of materials - a set of object histories, accompanied by three sets of cards - is meant to spark new ways of designing experiences with objects and collections. The conditions laid out by the histories and cards reflect common contexts for object-based work, providing a playful but relevant framework for ideation and prototyping. The materials can be used as part of a game, as tools for project development, as prompts for discussion, or however is most generative for you: we’ve laid out a few options, but there are no firm rules for how you use them. A guide to what this package contains:

The **object histories** are fictional descriptions of real objects, written to contain many of the description fields commonly found in archives/museums/collections. These will be your starting points in designing object-centered experiences.

The **audience cards** provide a specific audience for your work. Once you’ve drawn an audience card, you should design with accessibility for and engagement of this audience in mind. While the audiences are somewhat specific, they represent potential – and, in many cases, common – museum visitors.

The **value cards** provide certain core values, drawn from real museum mission statements. When you draw a value card, you should keep this value central to your process and design, thinking about what creative embodiments of this value might look like.

The **format cards** prescribe a particular format for the experience or interaction you design. These formats represent common modes of working in museums and similar settings, both in physical museum spaces and online.

**Some possibilities for use:**

**Play the game:** Using the complete set as a game enables play that is generative for working with collections and objects. To play the full game, draw one object history and one card from each stack. In 45 minutes or less, use basic materials — we recommend markers, Post-its, Legos, string — to prototype an experience with the object, based on the parameters set by your combination of cards (see here for examples of what these prototypes might look like). This can be done individually or in a group; if you’re with a group, take time to share and discuss your prototypes once time is up. What does your prototyping suggest for object-based practices, and what dialogue or ideas does it provoke?

**Mix and match:** Maybe you have an object you would like to work with, but need the constraints of format and value to better direct your prototyping. Maybe you don’t have an object in mind, but you work in a department that focuses on a certain format and want to spur new thinking about these projects. Feel free to pick and choose which cards you use, and to bring in your own materials, constraints, and so on.

**Use a springboard:** If you’re brainstorming or working on a project and need a provocation or a springboard for new ideas, use this package as a menu: refer to it and draw from what’s useful as you want, or pick a card at random and see where it takes you.

**Change it up:** This package contains one set of objects, ideas, and constraints, but not the only set. Feel free to remix, add to, or amend this set in whatever way is most useful to your processes and context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCES</th>
<th>AUDIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a sixth-grade class on a field trip</td>
<td>someone who has never been to a museum before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a longtime museum patron known for her philanthropy</td>
<td>a tourist with limited English skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a parent with his/her two young children</td>
<td>a tour group from a local senior center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a college student who is deaf</td>
<td>an accomplished scientist from a local research lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a group of friends whose education levels range from high school to PhD</td>
<td>a 50-year-old man with color blindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition</td>
<td>transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>aesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shareability</td>
<td>complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identity</td>
<td>cutting-edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMATS</td>
<td>FORMATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>exhibition with digital elements</em></td>
<td><em>installation in museum gallery</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>public program</em></td>
<td><em>interactive element for children visiting the museum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mobile app</em></td>
<td><em>touchscreen in exhibition gallery</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>page on museum’s website</em></td>
<td><em>lesson plan or online lesson</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>display as part of permanent collection</em></td>
<td><em>project based in social media</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Postcard folder and postcards**

**AC112.344.2611**

**Cavern photos**

Paper folder containing ten printed photos of caverns. Folder is designed to be mailed via U.S. postal service, with printed lines for mailing address. Photos are printed in full color.

- **1950s American**
- **1952-May**
- **The Red Smith River Printing Company, East Rapids, Michigan**
- **Acquired as part of Schnapp Estate Sale, Boston, MA**
- **Ink on cardstock**
- **Offset photo printing**

The practice of mailing postage packets gained popularity in the 1950s after they were used in a Coca-Cola advertising campaign. The photographer is Gene Aiken, known for his documentation of the roadside attractions in the region.

- **April 12 1963**

**Postcards**

- 'Tourism Through the Ages'
- 'Coca-Cola Culture'
- 'Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom; the American Postal Service'
- 'Caves!'
- 'Futura - Font of the Future'

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**Small bottle**

1997.0420.1.A2

**Holy Water bottle**

Bottle is constructed of glass, with raised lettering reading “HOLY WATER.” A raised cross is situated between the two words. The bottle is stopped with a cork, with hollow metal tubing running through vertically. An engraved metal cap screws onto the tubing.

- **Bottle produced circa 1850**
- **Unknown**
- **Reno, NV**
- **Glass, tin, cork**
- **Engraved; glass casting**

Bottle believed to have been typical of the kinds of cure-alls carried by a snake oil salesman who traveled through Nevada. Cap is believed to have been adapted from a 15th century child’s ring; glass bottles of similar make have been found in the area with traditional cork stoppers. Bottle was purchased by a Carson Valley sheriff, and was said to be found on his person after he was shot by escaping train robbers.

- **1977-02-13**

**American West Studies**

- ‘Cowboys! Indians!’
- ‘Showdown at Carson Corral’
- ‘Glassworks of the West’
- ‘The Things They Carried - trinkets, charms, and personal effects of the old west’
- ‘American Hustle: A History of the Art of the Sale’
### Shoe Horn

**OBJECT TYPE:** Shoe horn  
**MUSEUM NUMBER:** BCX342.9990.499.1  
**TITLE:** Berkeley Royal Grain Prototype Shoe Tree  
**DESCRIPTION:** Consists of rounded wooden base shaped to fit in toe of shoe with slats extending through center. Metal rod is joined to top, allowing 200 degree rotation. Wooden bulb screws onto the end of rod. Bulb fits into wooden handle allowing rotation, but joint is not secured. Handle is notched to accommodate toe of base in compact folded position.  
**CULTURE/PERIOD:** Pre-war Germany  
**DATE:** 1938  
**PRODUCTION PLACE:** Oberndorf  
**FINDSPOT:** Washington, DC  
**MATERIALS:** Wood, metal alloy  
**TECHNIQUE:** Industrial production  
**CURATOR’S COMMENTS:** This is a prototype of a shoe tree designed for portability. It would have been sold to travelling salesmen for whom both space and presentation was a priority. Note in particular the experimental straight slots as compared to the more traditional and still common circular holes.  
**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**  
- Kadish 1981, Miranda 1983  
**ACQUISITION DATE:** 1959  
**DEPARTMENT:** Personal Accessories  
**EXHIBITION HISTORY:**  
- ‘On the Road’  
- ‘Wear, Tear, and Care’  
- ‘Lost Civilization - Pre War Germany and What the Nazis Destroyed’  
- ‘Suitcase Life’  
- ‘Pre-production: The Hidden Life of Common Objects’

### Frictionless Pulley

**OBJECT TYPE:** Patented wheel  
**MUSEUM NUMBER:** BCX342.9990.499.1  
**TITLE:** Frictionless Pulley  
**DESCRIPTION:** Pulley comprised of two anodized blue disks linked to an internal ball bearing and held within a folded aluminum blank. Patent number information etched on surface of disk.  
**CULTURE/PERIOD:** Industrial America  
**DATE:** Nov 8, 1955  
**PRODUCTION PLACE:** Parry Sound, MA  
**FINDSPOT:**  
**MATERIALS:** Aluminum, anodized aluminum, steel  
**TECHNIQUE:** Industrial manufacturing  
**CURATOR’S COMMENTS:** Charles B Franklin’s frictionless pulley revolutionized laundry day for countless American households. After entering the market in 1953, the wheel was already a best-seller and ubiquitous part of the suburban backyard by the time the patent was awarded in 1955. This special edition of the pulley, anodized in a limited edition cobalt blue, was created to commemorate the official grant of the patent. Only 27 were made as gifts to the PULLCO staff.  
**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**  
**ACQUISITION DATE:** 1988  
**DEPARTMENT:** Industrial Tools & Equipment  
**EXHIBITION HISTORY:**  
- ‘Patently Ingenious’  
- ‘Aluminum: Our Friend’  
- ‘Domestic Bliss - Home Inventions of the 1950s’  
- ‘Lucky 13, the history of Aluminum’
**Goblet**

*C-19273.221*

**The Yurkofsky Goblet**

Smooth marble goblet has a narrow base and short stem, with cup narrowing towards the lip. Stone is striated gray and white. Surface is highly polished.

- **Culture/Period:** 1951 (1923)
- **Date:** Unknown
- **Production Place:** Reykjavik, Iceland
- **Material:** Polished marble
- **Technique:**

  - Originally thought to be an example of finely hand polished stone, typical of the austere beauty of Icelandic culture, it was not until the Yurkofsky scandal prompted a comprehensive re-evaluation of the entire collection that the goblet was discovered to be suspect. It is now believed to have been machine-crafted in Maine.

**Bibliography:**

- Lubar 1983, Undeen 2011
- April 1 1952
  - Northeast American Holloware
  - ‘Recent Acquisitions’
  - ‘The Artisans of Iceland’
  - ‘Iceland Artworks’
  - ‘Fake! Replicas, Forgeries, and Their Place in the Museum’

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**Stand**

**1007.1223**

**The Empty Pedestal**

Stand is cast in brass, with a round base and ornate floral decoration along edges and legs. A hole extends through the center. Surface has spots of discoloration. Item number appears raised on top center.

- **Culture/Period:** Late Victorian
- **Date:** December 2 1889
- **Production Place:** Yorkshire, England
- **Find Spot:** Yorkshire, England
- **Material:** Brass
- **Technique:** Mold casting

  - This stand was commissioned by a Victorian merchant by the name of Charles Grimwald as a stand upon which to mount his prized possession: an authentic brick of Egyptian hieroglyphs. When his descendants donated the piece the stand came with it. When the Waverley Institute was burglarized, they took the stone but left the stand behind.

**Bibliography:**

- Hall 1890, Merleaux 1902, Hunter 1936, Krautli 2003, Maizels 2006

  - European Metalwork (Egyptology)
  - ‘Lacunae and Loss: Rebuilding the Waverley’
  - ‘Presenting History’

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