



DESIGNING OBJECT-BASED EXPERIENCES

A Prototyping Game



*Based on Beautiful Data:
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INSTRUCTIONS

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.

AUDIENCES

a sixth-grade class on a field trip

AUDIENCES

*someone who has never been to
a museum before*

AUDIENCES

*a longtime museum patron known for
her philanthropy*

AUDIENCES

a tourist with limited English skills

AUDIENCES

*a parent with
his/her two young children*

AUDIENCES

a tour group from a local senior center

AUDIENCES

a college student who is deaf

AUDIENCES

*an accomplished scientist from
a local research lab*

AUDIENCES

*a group of friends whose education
levels range from high school to PhD*

AUDIENCES

*a 50-year-old man
with color blindness*

VALUES

tradition

VALUES

transparency

VALUES

community

VALUES

aesthetic

VALUES

shareability

VALUES

complexity

VALUES

identity

VALUES

cutting-edge

VALUES

integrity

VALUES

excellence

FORMATS

exhibition with digital elements

FORMATS

installation in museum gallery

FORMATS

public program

FORMATS

*interactive element for
children visiting the museum*

FORMATS

mobile app

FORMATS

touchscreen in exhibition gallery

FORMATS

page on museum's website

FORMATS

lesson plan or online lesson

FORMATS

display as part of permanent collection

FORMATS

project based in social media

OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

Small bottle
1997.0423.1.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.

CULTURE/PERIOD:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:

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

CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Aceti 1980, Stimler 1985, Barrett-Small 1999, Aceti 1999, Brown 2002

ACQUISITION DATE:

1977-02-13

DEPARTMENT:

American West Studies

EXHIBITION HISTORY:

'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'



OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

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.

CULTURE/PERIOD:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:

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

CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Taylor 1973, Santachiara 1996, Ghraoui 2002, Büehl 2002

ACQUISITION DATE:

April 12 1963

DEPARTMENT:

Postcards

EXHIBITION HISTORY:

'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'



OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

Patented wheel
BCX342.9999499.1
Frictionless Pulley
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:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:
CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

Industrial America
Nov 8, 1955
Parry Sound, MA
Donated by the estate of Mrs Loukissas-Battles
Aluminum, anodized aluminum, steel
Industrial manufacturing
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:
DEPARTMENT:
EXHIBITION HISTORY:

Devine 1955, Sutton 1957, Kelly 1977, Paul 2002, Vandyke 2003
1988
Industrial Tools & Equipment
'Patently Ingenious'
'Aluminum: Our Friend'
'Domestic Bliss - Home Inventions of the 1950s'
'Lucky 13, the history of Aluminum'



OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

Shoe horn
12-67893-12-C
Berkeley Royal Grain Prototype Shoe Tree
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:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:
CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

Pre-war Germany
1938
Oberndorf
Washington, DC
Wood, metal alloy
Industrial production
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:
ACQUISITION DATE:
DEPARTMENT:
EXHIBITION HISTORY:

Kadish 1981, Miranda 1983
1959
Personal Accessories
'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'



OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

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:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:
CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

Late Victorian
December 2 1889
Yorkshire, England
Yorkshire, England
Brass
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

ACQUISITION DATE:

2002 (1988)

DEPARTMENT:

European Metalwork (Egyptology)

EXHIBITION HISTORY:

'Lacunae and Loss: Rebuilding the Waverley'
'Presenting History'



OBJECT TYPE:
MUSEUM NUMBER:
TITLE:
DESCRIPTION:

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:
DATE:
PRODUCTION PLACE:
FINDSPOT:
MATERIALS:
TECHNIQUE:
CURATOR'S COMMENTS:

-
1951 (1923)
Unknown
Reykjavik, Iceland
Polished marble
-
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

ACQUISITION DATE:

April 1 1952

DEPARTMENT:

Northeast American Holloware

EXHIBITION HISTORY:

'Recent Acquisitions'
'The Artisans of Iceland'
'Iceland Artworks'
'Fake! Replicas, Forgeries, and Their Place in the Museum'



