

Your Trash, My Treasure:
An assessment of the value of souvenirs

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PhD

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Abstract.

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The importance of the object as a means of understanding the human world is an area of enquiry in Academic and Arts Practice. It spans a range of disciplines, particularly the new cross disciplinary area of Material Culture Studies, which reflects the increasing interest in the object and its role in our lives. The aim of this study is to identify the qualities of the souvenir that give it value, in order to add to the discourse surrounding the role of objects in understanding our world.

This thesis considers the qualities of souvenirs in the light of critical theory, case studies, my Fine Art practice and exhibitions, and contemporary Fine Artists. I posit that the souvenir is an object with particular distinguishing features and that these distinct qualities are what give it its value. I will argue that the 'narrative of origins' of souvenirs (Stewart, 2007) is what gives them their value and I use the term 'value' in relation to their emotional, material, cultural and personal currency. The souvenir is often regarded as a 'fallen object' (MacCannell, 1976), but I will argue that in terms of personal narrative and social resonance the souvenir is a neglected area of study that enters value systems at every level.

My practice comprises painting and film making, and through this I have investigated and articulated my relationship with my own souvenirs. During the case study interviews I devised the terms *Object Plus*, *Souvenir Moment* and *Souvenir Dynamic* to encode our relationship to souvenirs. These are important new terms which help to articulate the unique qualities of souvenirs.

The study of the souvenir, as an object in its own right, has mainly been confined to its relationship with tourism and fictional writing and, with the exception of Susan Stewart's work, has been largely neglected. This thesis argues that souvenirs, despite their associations with cheapness, ubiquity and kitsch, are our most potent objects and are therefore deserving of greater attention.

Contents

Abstract	2
Contents	3
List of Figures	6
Acknowledgements	9
Declaration	10
Chapter 1. Introduction	11
1.1. Background and Context	12
1.2. My Practice	15
1.3. Methodology	16
1.4. Chapter Outlines	18
Chapter 2. The Souvenir in Theory	20
2.1. What is an Object?	21
2.1.1. Producing Things	22
2.1.2. Taste/Value	23
2.1.3. Attachment	24
2.1.4. Sign Value	24
2.2. The Personal	26
2.2.1. Literature and Things	29
2.2.2. Personal Contamination	30
2.3. The Object and the Souvenir	32

Chapter 3. Practice in Practice	37
3.1. My Home and My Collection	37
3.2. Painting the Souvenir	44
3.2.1. The Painting as Object	50
3.2.2. Commentary on Paintings	51
3.3. Film Making	64
3.4. Photography	71
Chapter 4. Multiple Narratives and Memory	73
4.1. Multiple Narratives: Recognising Objects	73
4.2. Activating Memory: The relationship between Memory and Narrative	74
4.2.1. The Role of External and Internal Memories in my Paintings	78
4.3. Narrating the Archive: Archiving the Narrative.	81
Chapter 5. Collectors and Collecting	90
5.1. Collecting	90
5.2. How Collectors Regard Themselves	93
5.2.1. Interview with a Collector	93
5.3. Gallery and Museum Collections: Changing Narratives	100
Chapter 6. Style and Value	105
6.1. Your Kitsch, My Souvenir	105
6.1.2 1950's and 60's Kitsch: The Individual and the Mass Produced	107

6.1.3. Kitsch and Hierarchies of Taste and Value	109
6.2. Value and Authenticity	112
6.3. Value and Display	114
Chapter 7. Cultural Currency and Cultural Seepage	118
7.1. Made in China	118
7.2. Making Souvenirs in Haiti	127
7.3. Cultural Seepage in Lamu	130
Chapter 8. Case Study Evaluation and Conclusion	133
8.1. Case Study Evaluation	133
8.2. Conclusion	148
References	153
Appendices	164

List of Figures

Chapter 3

Figure 1: My Souvenirs	38
Figure 2: My Souvenirs	38
Figure 3: My Souvenirs	39
Figure 4: My Souvenirs	39
Figure 5: My Souvenirs	40
Figure 6: My Souvenirs	40
Figure 7: My Souvenirs	41
Figure 8: My Souvenirs	41
Figure 9: My Souvenirs	42
Figure 10: My Souvenirs	42
Figure 11: The Photograph (2011)	45
Figure 12: The Painting (2011)	45
Figure 13: Kookaburras (2010 On a shelf with other objects).	46
Figure 14: Figure 14: Snow Globe (2010 Wiping the paint, animating the object, obscuring the past).	46
Figure 15: Elephant. (2010 Blurring the background)	46
Figure 16: Garden Gnome (2013 A plain flat ground	47
Figure 17: Commentary on Paintings	52
Figure 18: Commentary on Paintings	53
Figure 19: Commentary on Paintings	54
Figure 20: Commentary on Paintings	55

Figure 21: Commentary on Painting	56
Figure 22: Commentary on Paintings	57
Figure 23: Commentary on Paintings	58
Figure 24: Commentary on Paintings	59
Figure 25: Commentary on Paintings	60
Figure 26: Commentary on Paintings	61
Figure 27: Commentary on Paintings	62
Figure 28: Paul Housley. The Roses in Blackpool (2005)	63
Figure 29: Mechanical Birds on a Branch view 1	70
Figure 30: Mechanical Birds on a Branch view 2	70
Figure 31: Mechanical Bird in a Cage view 1	70
Figure 32: Mechanical Bird in a Cage view 2	70
Figure 33: Duck Egg Cup view 1	70
Figure 34: Duck Egg Cup view 2	70
Figure 35: Plastic Parrot view 1	71
Figure 36: Plastic Parrot view 2	71
Figure 37: Votive Offerings at St. Roch Cemetery	72
Chapter 4	
Figure 38: L with his Hedge Pig	77
Figure 39: Painting 1	78
Figure 40: Painting 2	79
Figure 41: Lisa Milroy: Personal Items. (1984)	80
Figure 42: The Consolation of Objects. Vitrine 28	82

Figure 43: 4213 Cigarette ends. Vitrine 68	86
Figure 44: Coffee Pot from Istanbul.	88
Chapter 5	
Figure 45: My religious souvenirs 1.	90
Figure 46: My religious souvenirs 2.	91
Figure 47: Open shelf display of glass	94
Figure 48: Whitefriars Glass	96
Figure 49: A mixed display of glass on open shelves	97
Figure 50: The Narrative of Origins at the Gallery of Wonder. (2011)	103
Chapter 6	
Figure 51: Examples of a Gallery Hang 1.	116
Figure 52: Examples of a Gallery Hang 2.	116
Chapter 7	
Figure 53: New York Taxi	120
Figure 54: Made in China 1	120
Figure 55: Sydney Snow Globe	121
Figure 56: Made In China 2	121
Figure 57: Roman Centurion Pencil Sharpener	122
Figure 58: Made in China 3	123

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Declaration.

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the School Ethics Committee on 11th July 2012.

Penny Grennan

Signature:

Date:

Chapter 1. Introduction

The aim of this PhD is to re-evaluate the souvenir both theoretically and through Fine Art Practice. I aim to reassess the value of souvenirs and to rehabilitate the souvenir as an object with distinct qualities acting as a window on the narrative of human relationships to others and self.

I demonstrate that souvenirs evidence attitudes, fashions, cultural stereotyping, a human disposition to loss, longing, love, memory, memorial, conquest, attachment, narrative, context, and decoration in a way that no other category of objects do. I hope to contribute to the discourse surrounding Material Culture and our relationship with objects particularly through the framing of new terms to describe the unique qualities of souvenirs and our relationship with them.

This will be achieved through:

1. Examining the nature of the souvenir in the context of theoretical writing and literature
2. Examining other artists' practice in the light of my own work.
3. Drawing upon a research case study conducted in conjunction with an exhibition of my work at Oasis School of Human Development in Boston Spa.
4. Conducting interviews with a collector and a souvenir producer.
5. An exploration of my own souvenirs through my studio practice through painting, film making, photography and the presentation of actual souvenirs in conjunction with the exhibition of my artwork.

Our relationship to, and with, objects is important in that it helps us to understand the past, the present and contextualises the future. Objects tell us who we are and I argue that we have an *iterative* relationship with objects, one that is always changing, and being changed.

In *The System of Objects* (2005) Baudrillard describes objects as, 'having two functions – to be put to use and to be possessed'. He says that a useful object is never satisfactorily owned, whereas a 'pure object, devoid of any

function or completely abstracted from its use, takes on a purely subjective status'. (2005, p. 86)

I will be defining the object as an item that has materiality and a 'use value' (Baudrillard, 2005, p. 86.) However, I shall also be arguing that souvenirs are more than this, in that souvenirs often share the qualities of objects, but that in order for an object to be a souvenir it must serve the additional purposes of evoking narratives through memory, empathy, pathos, nostalgia, loss and longing. Key to the function of the souvenir is what Susan Stewart (2007) calls, 'the narrative of origins'.

What is the narrative of origins? It is the narrative of interiority and authenticity. It is not the narrative of the object; it is the narrative of the possessor. (2007, p.136)

I shall be arguing that this is the defining, distinguishing feature of the souvenir, and although the narrative may be supplemented by others and the value of the souvenir may change over time, its *souvenirness* is dependent on the narrative of origins

In the course of my research I have coined the new term *object plus* to describe the value relationship identified through the 'narrative of origins' (Stewart 2007). I have also identified what I call the *souvenir moment* used to describe the feelings that the souvenir evokes even if it is not materially present and I shall be arguing that these terms reflect what is valuable and important about the souvenir. I have also described the effect that objects have on us as the *object dynamic*. This study offers new terms and understanding for the study of objects that cross the boundaries of different value systems and that separates the souvenir from objects in general.

1.1. Background and Context.

In order to examine the value of souvenirs: Tourist, Ethnic and Personal, I shall explore the identity of the object, the souvenir, its history and the role it

plays in personal, and cultural, lives. This will include an examination of the nature of the individual souvenir, with reference to the nature of collections and collectors, and how the process of owning informs our relationship to objects. I will draw on theories of appropriation and commodification, as well as theories of longing and nostalgia, with particular reference to the writings of Susan Stewart (2007), Jean Baudrillard (2005) and Daniel Miller (2009). I will discuss ideas of appropriation and what they say about the collector, consider the souvenir's value and its significance through Dean MacCannell's (1999) writings on tourism, and look at the psychology of collecting with reference to James Clifford (2002) and Susan Pearce (1998, 2000). These readings will provide a framework within which to consider the way that the souvenir is represented and understood. I will examine the work of contemporary artists; Howard Hodgkin, Jeff Koons, Sophie Calle, Paul Housley, Lisa Milroy, Haim Steinbach and Mark Dion, and consider how their work informs my own practice and thinking. My exhibitions and interviews with gallery visitors, a collector and a souvenir manufacturer will be used to examine how their experiences of souvenirs supports or contradicts the proposition that it is the relationship with the owner that defines the souvenir and narrative that gives it its significance and value.

My interest in souvenirs stems from my own large collection of artefacts, painting and memorabilia. I have travelled widely throughout my life and have either lived in, or visited, over thirty countries. I do not dispose of my souvenirs and as they have amassed I have realised their fundamental importance in reflecting who I am and what I have done. I have little attachment to the functional items in my life, such as furniture and furnishings, unless they are unusual or highly decorated or gifts, but I have a deep emotional attachment to the hundreds of items that I own that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. My collection of what Daniel Miller calls 'Stuff' (2010) is a mirror that I see myself reflected in. I am defined by what I own, my souvenirs provide the context, the record, the narrative of my life and it is this fundamental relationship that informs my art practice and this enquiry. This is an example of what Gibson describes as 'Affordance' (Gibson in Connor, S. 2011 pp.2-3), whereby one is implicated in the action

of objects, in the case of my souvenirs, through their multiple narratives. This subjective position clearly informs my research as it is dependent on the narratives that are the result of my personal experiences and are reflected in my writing as well as in my painted response to my souvenirs; a response that evidences itself in my work through varying styles and material decisions. In order to examine the characteristics of souvenirs I have developed a typology: Mass produced tourist souvenirs, ethnic or craft souvenirs and souvenir objects.

- Mass produced tourist souvenirs are created by the market with a narrative in mind which is subsumed into the personal narrative of the owner and is activated through memory.
- Ethnic or craft souvenirs represent a folk narrative which is appropriated by the narrative of the collector.
- Personal souvenir objects depend on the primacy of an overriding personal narrative to give them resonance and value.

These objects may have a *use value* but it is the personal narrative that defines their souvenir quality. All of these categories depend on them having a particular significance to the owner and all souvenirs dependent on narrative, memory and attachment to activate them.

There are many theories on the importance of objects, as the emergence of Material Culture Studies as an area of academic concern indicates. Daniel Miller, a foremost proponent of the study of Material Culture, states,

Material Culture... implies that much of what we are exists not through our consciousness or body, but as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us. (2005, p. 5)

However, in debates concerning material culture, it seems that the souvenir is not afforded any special treatment whereas I am arguing for the uniqueness of the souvenir. In order to do this I will rehearse the arguments surrounding the object. I identify theorists who regard society's relationship to the object as being of critical interest and social importance, including Karl Marx, Jean Baudrillard, Marcel Mauss,

Claude Levi Strauss, then I will consider the importance of the object in defining our individual, social identity through an engagement with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Sigmund Freud, Jean- Paul Sartre, Russell Belk, E.H. Gombrich and Donald Winnicott, and how that relationship changes over time. Walter Benjamin considers the emotional impact of objects through unpacking his library and in his book on the Arcades. He writes compellingly about the aura of an object that is lost through mechanical reproduction and I will discuss the aura of the souvenir in relation to this.

I will be considering the question of taste with reference to Bourdieu's *Social Distinction* and his theory of *Habitus* and *Doxa*. I will consider Tomas Kulka and Clement Greenberg in relation to the concept of Kitsch and notions of value. Ideas of value have always been hotly contested. Veblen's, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1994) identifies 'conspicuous consumption' as the barometer for the shallowness of modern society and I discuss whether the souvenir could be considered to be emblematic of the leisured classes.

There is little discussion specifically about the nature of souvenirs except in literature, travel writing, or within travel and tourism studies and these mainly concentrate on the souvenir as a commodity which impacts on perceptions of place and local economies. However, personal relationships to objects and souvenirs are well represented in fictional literature. *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins, *The Spoils of Poynton* by Henry James, and *The Museum of Innocence* by Orhan Pamuk all have souvenirs at their core. (Chapter 4)

1.2. My Practice

Imbuing objects with metaphorical meaning has a long history and painting has been central to this representation. In the 16th and 17th Century Flemish still life tradition of Vanitas certain objects were commonly understood to represent life's great themes through the depiction of objects, thereby encapsulating the transience of life, the certainty of death and the impermanent nature of worldly possessions.

My paintings are more concerned with prompting individual narratives through what may be common and ubiquitous objects; souvenirs, a category of object assigned cultural significance and value. My research, in the form of my own art practice, explores the *objectness* of souvenirs through the materiality of paint on canvas by making an object about an object and by referencing the notions of value implicit in making a painting,. My paintings are usually 10" x 12", their size demanding intimacy and scrutiny.

1.3. Methodology

The relationship of practice to theory in this PhD is critical. Additional to my theoretical and historical research and studio practice, I have made 3 films, have conducted a case study and a series of interviews, had 9 exhibitions, 2 of them solo shows, where I have explored the nature of souvenirs through paint, photography and installations. In addition, I have given 12 conference papers and shown my films at 3 conferences.

Through conferences I have been struck by the interdisciplinary nature of this PhD. To date, apart from art research conferences I have given papers at a conference on Travel Writing, on objects in C18 – 20 Literature, on archiving, on Literary Form and Visual Culture and at an Historical Studies conference on Memory, Commemoration and Memorial. The interesting point is that I have been invited to present at these conferences primarily because of my film, *A Journey Around My Life* (2010) (see chapter 3) and I have usually been the first, and only, visual artist presenting work, thus indicating a growing willingness on the part of the organizers to embrace diverse disciplines. As a result of giving papers at conferences I have begun to understand the relationship between practice and theory in this PhD. It is through taking my practice to theoretical conferences, as well as presenting a conference paper, that the inextricable relationship between the two elements of my research has become evident.

I have conducted group interviews following an exhibition as well as interviewing a collector of souvenirs and a souvenir manufacturer and I have also used exhibition comments in my thesis. (Appendices 2, 3, 6, 7)

In May 2012 I conducted a case study as part of an exhibition called Objects of Desire (appendix 1) held at the Oasis School of Development, Boston Spa, in Yorkshire, which has become important in developing my thinking about souvenirs. Surprisingly, nearly half of the group I was working with, despite being asked to do so before the event, did not bring any souvenirs with them, although they had chosen their souvenir in advance. The participants described their souvenirs and told their stories (appendix 2) and it became clear that they did not need the object to be with them in order to do this effectively. With or without the object its souvenir qualities were accessible. This indicated that the narrative of the souvenir is accessed through memory and that the actual object is an aide-memoire. This led me to consider the *non-objectness* of souvenirs. It was through analysis of this case study that I coined the term *souvenir moment* (Chapter 3).

I consider the work of the following contemporary artists:

- Howard Hodgkin (2001), a painter who is concerned with memory through paint.
- Lisa Milroy (1998) who as a painter is concerned with the ability of paint to recreate the emotional power of the objects that she paints, mainly from memory, and is concerned with how she translates her relationship with objects to the canvas through paint.
- Paul Housley (2005) who paints objects such as plastic soldiers and broken toys bought in car boot sales, i.e. someone else's rejected objects and souvenirs, in a manner that references the historically valued conventions of the great masters such as Rembrandt.
- Jeff Koons (1992) whose monumental treatment of banal objects such as balloon dogs that he has fabricated by a team of technicians ironically replicates the process of mass-production so central to the manufacture of souvenirs. Koons often chooses familiar, Kitsch, mass-produced commodities as the basis for his work and challenges and transforms their cultural status, and value, through a process of enhancement either through an increase in size or through their fabrication in materials with greater status such as bronze or

porcelain and their consumption through the elite market of art. As with the souvenir, Jeff Koons is playing with scale, authenticity and ironic distance by giving value to things that we recognised as cheap.

- Sophie Calle (2003) is an artist for whom the processes of narrative construction is key to her work, whether it is her fascination with the narrative of lives of others, her own life or a dynamic constructed narrative which she plays out. The particular work that I will focus on is *The Birthday Party* in which where she displays every-birthday presents that she has been given over time.
- Grayson Perry (2011) whose ceramics disrupt the accepted role of the pot and its decoration by producing beautiful pots with grotesque and disturbing images on them thereby using the ostensibly decorative as a vehicle for social commentary.
- Haim Steinbach (1970s) is known for displaying ready-made mundane objects and pristine commodities on sleek minimalist shelves in such a manner as to raise questions about value and the conditions by which cultural status is constructed.
- Mark Dion (1999) who takes an archaeological approach to objects, their provenance and therefore their value by working with communities who under his guidance excavate their own identities.

1.4. Chapter Outlines:

Chapter 1: Introduction: This includes a description of the context, scope and method of my enquiry into the value of souvenirs.

Chapter 2: The Souvenir in Theory: This chapter is concerned with the importance of objects to human beings and society. I briefly review a range of theories in order to contextualise souvenirs which I argue are *Objects Plus* (Grennan 2011).

Chapter 3: Practice in Practice. This chapter describes my fine art practice and its relationship to the theories that I have outlined in chapter 2.

Chapter 4: Multiple Narratives and Memory. The role of narrative in defining the souvenir is critical to its understanding but it is necessarily difficult to define as often multiple narratives, both exterior and exterior co - exists without apparent contradiction. In this chapter I cite, Orhan Pamuk's: *Museum of Innocence*, the novel and the museum, as an example of the fictive potential of the narrative and the multiplicity of stories that can be attached to objects.

Chapter 5: Collectors and Collecting. This chapter is concerned with the location of the souvenir within collections and how this affects the narrative. This chapter aims to illuminate these differences through an interview with a collector and with reference to my films.

Chapter 6: Style and Value. This chapter considers notions of value, identifying different interpretations of value by examining one particular style that is associated with souvenirs - Kitsch.

Chapter 7: Cultural Currency and Cultural Seepage. The theme of appropriation is central to understanding the sign value of souvenirs and this chapter looks at how cultural stereotyping and the market impact on the production of travel souvenirs and their cultural currency. It refers to an interview with a souvenir producer as well as referencing research on souvenirs in Australia and Kenya.

Chapter 8: Case Study Evaluation and Conclusion. This chapter utilises the narrative of objects of the group interview at Oasis School of Human Development to consider the relationship between my theoretical research and my Fine Art practice and how this informs an understanding of the defining characteristics of the souvenir and its value, both socially and personally.

Appendices

Chapter 2. The Souvenir in Theory

'Things are what we encounter, ideas are what we project' Leo Stein. (1927, p. 44)

This chapter will review theoretical writings on the importance of objects in the life of human beings and of society. I argue that our relationship to objects forms the foundation of our relationship with souvenirs, which I describe as *Objects Plus*, in that they share the same qualities of objects but have additional characteristics, that makes them souvenirs. This chapter identifies some of the key features of our relationship to, and with, objects as a way of understanding the potent part that they play in our understanding of the world and, consequently, the corresponding value that souvenirs have.

Our relationship with objects is complex and can be interpreted in different ways, according to different disciplines and cultures. The view that archaeologists take of objects is not the same as that of sociologists, anthropologists, economists, psychologists or cultural historians. Theorists regard the importance of the object differently: either as something to be transcended (Karl Marx, 1865), as substitute (Donald Winnicott, 1971), as social determinant (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984), as signifier (Marcel Mauss, 1990), as a prompt for private singularisation (Igor Kopytoff, 1986), as the foundation of Object Relations theory (Melanie Klein, 1975), as integral to the extended self (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1943), as fetish (Sigmund Freud, 1927), as sign value (Jean Baudrillard, 2005), as a catalyst for human relationships and culture (Daniel Miller, 2003), or as a vehicle for personal narratives (Susan Stewart, 2007). Whatever their perspectives, each illustrates the value that objects have to human beings. It could be argued that the range of interpretations and qualities attributed to objects is an indication of how potent they are. Understanding the relationship that we have with objects is pivotal to understanding the relationship that we have with souvenirs.

I begin my analysis with a commonplace definition of objects that reflects their generally accepted characteristics and provenance. The role of objects, and our use of them, distinguishes us from other species. We not only use,

and develop objects to enhance our physical lives but we attach emotional, spiritual and social significance to them. Objects are not just tools; they are repositories for complex ideas and feelings.

2.1. What is an Object?

A material thing that can be seen and touched: *Philosophy* a thing external to the thinking mind or subject. Origin: late Middle English: from Medieval Latin *objectum* 'thing presented to the mind'.

Oxford Dictionaries. (2012)

That an object is a material thing that can be seen and touched is a rather crude definition of the object and can be questioned elsewhere in relation to virtual environments such as the internet. However, for the purposes of this thesis, 'the object as material thing', and the fact that it originates from the Medieval Latin term 'objectum, thing presented to the mind', is how I will define it. The Object, as "a material thing", is also a critical element of my enquiry through my art practice, as the materiality of paint, film and photography is a vital component of my relationship with the object. That the object is a 'thing presented to the mind' is the cornerstone of my enquiry into the defining characteristics of the souvenir.

Objects have been used and fetishised since the Stone Age. By fetishism I mean the investing of objects with imaginary powers that transform the object so that it becomes a source of mystery, fantasy, religiosity and power, beyond their utility. Objects have always been the cornerstone of historical interpretation, throwing light on the present and providing a link with the past. The recent popular series on the radio, *The History of the World in 100 Objects*, (2011) written and narrated by the Head of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, all indicate a growing interest in examining the potent relationships that we have with objects in the light of what they say about us as humans: historically, socially, emotionally, economically, culturally and as individuals.

According to Marx (1990:1865) the means of producing objects is the means of subjugation and the creation of commodities enslaves us. The process is ultimately alienating, which sets up a tension between the means of production and the product itself. Marx uses the term *commodity fetishism* – to describe the means by which the working man becomes subjugated by the market, resulting in fluctuating value, and the fetishising of things or commodities. However, the process of alienation arises through the exploitation of labour but does not necessarily result in alienation from the commodity. He states:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour (1990, p. 72)

Sigmund Freud (1927) also writes on the fetishisation of objects, but he describes fetishism as satisfying the needs of sexual appetites through objects, thereby investing them with the power of substitution. He regards our relationship to objects as being the object of drives and impulse rather than just use or non-use objects.

2.1.1. Producing Things

The value of useful objects, e.g. washing machines, phones and computers is more readily understood than our attachment to apparently useless objects, like ornaments and souvenirs. Hierarchies of usefulness, versus ornamentation, come into play here, thereby determining a social value of objects. This is challenged by publically recognised non-use objects such as valuable works of art, but in this case the originality, scarcity and historical or cultural provenance gives it value in a way that mass produced objects cannot share, whether they have a use or not.

Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (1994) coined the phrase, *conspicuous consumption*, a pejorative term that typifies the anti-consumerist backlash that has voice in our current, commonly described,

Consumer Society. Discourses on capitalism, materialism, consumerism and environmentalism often cast the object as villain. (The Green Party, Greenpeace, the Transition Town Movement). Equally, discourse that values a spiritual dimension over consumerism and, which demands that we eschew the material world as a means of reaching spiritual fulfilment, has also contributed to the vilification of the object. But how many people, while espousing denial of the material, actually practice it?

2.1.2. Taste/ Value

The Structuralist, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963) was concerned with context and framing and what he called Binary Opposites, that is, a measure of what something is in relation to what is not, and vice versa, thereby providing a framework for judgements to be made. He believed that these oppositions led to an understanding of value and importance in different cultures and it was on this basis that humans make sense of the world. These oppositions are also culturally determined and fluid. His ideas led to the development by Bourdieu of the concept of Habitus. Bourdieu (1984) believed that all human beings operate in social fields, one being an economic arena, the other, a cultural field where cultural or symbolic capital determines status. Taste is a by-product of dominance in this social field. He uses the term Habitus to describe the context and the cultural norms that we live by, and these vary from society, class, and group. These norms define us but are also altered by us, in very subtle ways. These norms are also encoded in behaviours, attitudes, rituals, speech and things, and can be read and understood by those within the same group. Habitus is fluid, the speed at which it carries the group with it is rapid, and it is the grit of social change and understanding that leads to innovation. Bourdieu employs the term Doxa (Bourdieu.1979) to describe all that is taken for granted, the unspoken limits of the acceptable which, according to Bourdieu, restricts social mobility through characteristic consumption.

Through the magic of a world of objects which is the product of the application of the same schemes to the most diverse domains, a

world in which each thing speaks metaphorically of all the others, each practice comes to be invested with an objective meaning, a meaning with which practices and - particularly rites- have to reckon at all times, whether to evoke or revoke it. (1979, p. 91)

2.1.3 Attachment

Object Relations Theory (Winnicott, 1972) constructs our relationship with, and to, objects through substitution and separation from the mother, although in modern object relational theory the mother is an object too. Our early relationships with objects, determine our ability to form relationships as adults. For Object Relations theorist, Melanie Klein (1997), the Object becomes a substitute for the mother's breast. As a result of the infant's supposed complex relationship with the breast, the mother, and the removal of the breast leads to projection onto objects that enables the infant to separate and become increasingly autonomous, and this has a continuing impact on the relationship that they have with objects throughout their lives. The material practice of artist Louise Bourgeois exemplifies the mother object relationship described above. Bourgeois studied child psychoanalysis and her art practice has centred on her relationship to the mother through installations and sewing and as Jane Alison states in *Colour after Klein*:

Bourgeois addresses childhood trauma, a theme that recurs throughout her work and is often realised in monstrous object terms. (2005, p. 23)

In *The Red Room (Child)*, (1994) she constructs a camp full of memories signified by a collection of childhood bits and pieces with a strategically placed mirror rendering the viewer, a voyeur. Here I see a parallel tension between the process of weaning and our attachment to objects, which is often accompanied by feelings of ambivalence and guilt.

2.1.4 Sign Value

Jean Baudrillard (2005) argued that the ownership of any object results in it becoming emblematic of the owner who invests power, identity and self into the object which in turn defines the owner. He writes:

The particular value of the object, its exchange value, is a function of social and cultural determinants. Its absolute singularity, on the other hand, arises from the fact of being possessed by me – and this allows me, in turn to recognize myself in the object as an absolute singular being. (2005, p. 97),

In this statement he is referring to the sign value of objects, rather than their exchange or use value. This sign value is important in relation to our emotional attachment to objects, although it is possible to have this attachment to objects that also have a use or exchange value. The distinction between use, exchange and sign value is central to my discussion regarding the defining characteristics of souvenirs and their corresponding value to human beings.

Roland Barthes (1979) describes the Eiffel Tower as a pure signifier to be filled with the dreams of men in the same way that souvenirs of the tower are. He says:

The Tower attracts meaning...
It plays a glamorous part, that of pure signifier i.e. of a form in which men unceasingly put meaning (which they extract at will from their knowledge, their dreams, and their history), without this meaning thereby ever being finite and fixed: who can say what the Tower will be for humanity tomorrow? But there can be no doubt it will always be something, and something of humanity itself. (1979, p. 5).

He describes the Eiffel Tower as having no use value, despite its iconic nature, hence its value as a repository for men's dreams.

Post-modern theory contributes to a blurring of boundaries between status and value, particularly in relation to the market and consumerism and this uncertainty results in shifting notions of value and worth. Jean-Francoise Lyotard (1979) is credited with being the main proponent of the rejection of:

grand narratives of Western Culture because they have now lost all their credibility.[...] Post modern Philosophy provides us with the arguments and techniques to make that gesture of dissent, as well as how to make value judgements in the absence of such overall authorities. (Sim, S. *Postmodern Thought*, 1998, p. 3)

2.2. The Personal.

In *Possessions and the Extended Self*, Russell Belk states that, 'Our possessions are a major contributor and reflection of our identities'. (1988, p.1). This statement relates to the extended self and consumer behaviour. The common link between the ownership of goods and chattels and the ownership of souvenirs and mementoes is the act of appropriation, and to this extent all these objects share the same qualities, that they are appropriated and thus become part of the extended self. What is the extended self? According to Belk, *I am what I own*. Ownership of objects is a way of exercising power in an unpredictable world and a way of creating meaning and narrative in our lives. It helps to create a current and future narrative and to leave a legacy so that the narrative continues beyond death. Therefore, one's relationship with objects, and types of objects, changes over time, but their function in relation to defining self, remains the same. Considering that one's sense of self changes over a time it is understandable that the role that objects play in this process of change alters too. Research conducted by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981):

Indicates that as we age the possessions that people cite as "special" tend increasingly to be those that symbolize other people... These findings also may suggest that possessions are regarded not only as a part of self but also as instrumental to the development of self. (Belk, 1988, p. 141)

Their research shows that people have a changing relationship with objects depending on their ages. In that:

1. Children define themselves through the manipulation of objects.
2. Adolescents are seen to belong by having certain objects

3. Midlife objects represent aspirations, future hopes.
4. Old age. Objects capture memories and immortality through bequests and collections.

(1988, p. 148)

So, what is it about objects that prompt feelings of identification?

Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) described the Object-Subject relationship in terms of possession and being possessed. This relationship raises questions about who possesses whom or what, and with what consequences. It could be argued that in the drive to acquire more objects we, the possessor, are possessed by the need to possess, hence the perceived *need* to go shopping. Sartre maintains that the only reason we want to own something is to enlarge our sense of self and that the only way we can know who we are is by observing what we have... having and being are distinct but are inseparable. 'When an object becomes a possession, what were once self and not self are synthesized'. (Sartre in Belk. 1988:146)

Sartre identifies 3 ways in which we learn to see objects as part of self.

1. Conquering and mastering objects and things and functions and giving them to others.
2. Creating and buying objects
3. By knowing an object.

Belk states that: "These three stages are within our purview but self extension also happens through contamination." (1988, p. 151) (See section 2.2.2)

The souvenir is a very powerful symbol of our need to transform experiences and memory into commodities. Their value is personal and consequently the object becomes subjective, blurring the object/subject relationship. The key component in this process is the narrative. I would argue that there is a process of iteration at work here: the object, its fact, our relationship with it and its fictionalisation, the subjective understanding of the truth and therefore the value that we place on it, all feed back into our continuing relationship with the object. As Bourdieu states in *Distinction*:

The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors. (1979, p. 91)

Objects are therefore the vehicles for memory, history, knowledge, change, relationships, beliefs, judgement, value, understanding, progress; in fact a need to create and have objects can be viewed as the catalyst for all human development. In *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*, Igor Kopytoff (1986) describes the biography of things, each object's personal story and how, through its ownership and use by individuals, that story is unique to each object.

We accept that every person has many biographies...each of which selects some aspect of the life history and discards others. Biographies of things cannot be but similarly partial. (1986, p. 68)

Daniel Miller, in *The Comfort of Things*, (2009) writes that it is through objects and our relationship with them, that we live our lives. Objects tell a story, not only to their owners but to others, objects reflect our past, present and future; they are the material of our existence.

His ideas run contrary to the idea that we as a society have lost our moral compass as a result of our relationship with things. He argues that it is only through our understanding of our material culture that we can understand society and people's lives. He writes:

People exist for us through their material presence. An advantage of this unusual perspective is that sometimes these apparently mute forms can be made to speak more eloquently to the nature of relationships than can those with persons...

In short material culture matters because objects create subjects much more than the other way around. (2009, p. 287)

Sherry Turkle in *Evocative Objects* invests objects with, among other attributes, the means of social control. "Objects function to keep society within itself". (2007, p. 310). By this she means that the clocks that tell us the

time, and the medicines that we take, are all objects that regulate and control society. This could also be described as *affordance*, the process by which we are apprehended by objects and their narrative or their function.

2.2.1. Literature and Things

Despite the paucity of theoretical writing on the souvenir, the qualities that souvenirs have, specifically their ability to evoke feeling of loss and longing through memory and nostalgia feature in a range of literature. The book, *Rodinsky's Room* (Lichenstein and Sinclair: 1999) is a good example of this; it combines an artist's quest for identity through the traces of another person's existence, this is done through materiality and narrative, in the case of an abandoned room, and is coupled with psycho-geographical musings on the city which are redolent of the writings of Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1927 - 1940).

Literature is a consistent source of exploration of the value of objects and souvenir. Novels such as *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins and *The Spoils of Poynton* by Henry James centre on objects that are imbued with human narratives that bestow such value on them that people are willing to commit crimes to acquire them. John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* contains a poignant moment when the women are packing up their homes and deciding what objects to take when they leave for California.

The women sat among the doomed things, turning them over and looking past them and back. This book, my father had it. He liked a book. *Pilgrim's Progress*. Used to read it. Got his name in it. And his pipe – still smells rank. And this picture – an angel. I looked at that before the fust three come – didn't seem to do much good. Think we could get this china dog in? Aunt Sadie brought it from the St. Louis fair. See? Wrote right on it. No I guess not. Here's a letter my brother wrote the day before he died. Here's an old-time hat. These feathers – never got to use them. No, ther isn't room. How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past?

(1974, p. 75)

The C18th onwards saw the emergence of It- Narrative and Thing Theory where objects were given a voice, as in Henry Durbin's *A Narrative of some*

extraordinary things (1800) and there has been a resurgence in endowing objects with characters or voices, or using objects as a catalyst for human understanding. (Turkle, 2007)

Thing Theory (Bill Brown. 2009) animates the inanimate with human characteristics and uses the object as a vehicle for narrative. Literature reflects on sentiment and emotion in a way that critical theorists do not and it is as a result of this often unflinching look at the human condition, that there are many examples of the importance of the souvenir in literature, from Proust's *souvenir moment*, with the Madeleine biscuit to *The Grapes of Wrath*, cited above, to Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* (see Chapter 4), and beyond.

Bill Brown, in framing *Thing Theory*, talks about the *thingness* of objects:

The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject – object relation. (2009, p. 140).

2.2.2 Personal Contamination

The anthropologist, Marcel Mauss writes about the relationship between the gift, the giver and the recipient not just in terms of the object but in terms of what I call the *object dynamic*: that is the power of the object as gift or legacy. In *The Gift*, he states:

It is clear that in Maori custom this bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons, since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person.(1969, p. 10)

Mauss explored the cultural weight that gifts had in specific societies and it is not surprising that the relationship between the giver and the receiver should be so potent. To paraphrase, one is giving *of one's self* or *giving one's self* in the act of giving a gift. It would be reasonable then to extrapolate this further and to suggest that the intrinsic relationship between the gift and the giver is only possible if the gift is in

some way a manifestation of the giver, with the personal contamination of the object resulting in change and iteration. This could be described as its narrative which, in this case, is a personal one.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977) Hegel describes the process by which the self's awareness of an external object is dependent on a degree of self-consciousness understanding that recognises oneself as a subject. This is necessary in order to apprehend the object. However the understanding of self is fluid and it changes in relation to the object. These changes occur through consciousness attempting to reconcile itself to knowledge, then in the light of a new consciousness and new knowledge, the cycle begins again. This process is called thesis – antithesis and synthesis and could be considered to be the basis on which *contamination* (Norman, 2004) *affordance* (Gibson, 1986) and *iteration* (Grennan, 2011) in relation to the object, occurs.

This personal *contamination* of the object is also evident in design considerations. In *Emotional Design – why we love (or hate) everyday things*, Donald A Norman states:

Beyond the design of an object there is a personal component as well, one that no designer or manufacturer can provide. The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. (2004, p. 6)

Personal contamination is a key attribute of the souvenir and can be described as the narrative of origins (Stewart, 2007). The following section will examine the qualities of the souvenir in the light of the review of changing ideas of the object. I argue that the souvenir can be described as an *Object Plus* (Grennan, 2011), in that it often shares the qualities of the object but in order to be a souvenir it must evoke feelings of personal attachment, even if it is an attachment founded in a collective response, such as civic or national pride. It is this attachment that makes souvenirs powerful catalysts for memory, nostalgia and narrative.

2.3. The Object and the Souvenir.

Susan Stewart asks:

What is the narrative of origins? It is the narrative of interiority and authenticity. It is not a narrative of the object; it is a narrative of the possessor. (2007, p. 136)

What is the narrative of origins? It is the context, the story, the relevance of the object that gives it personal validity and once this happens the narrative becomes something to be remembered. The need for the narrative in the souvenir is so strong that the souvenir cannot exist without it, since without it, it is merely an object.

Morgan and Pritchard describe souvenirs as:

Objects of thresholds set apart from the everyday through the meanings attributed to them by their owners as prisms of remembrance. (2005, p. 46)

Souvenirs have resonance on both physical and emotional levels, with the materiality of the object playing as important a part in the lure of the object as its narrative importance. Souvenirs are objects that prompt feelings of loss and longing and nostalgia (Stewart, 2007) and they are dependent on their narrative for agency. A souvenir can be bought, received as a gift or made, but, the key characteristic is its value to the owner and this value is the narrative that has been invested in the object. The role of souvenirs is to fix the past in the present although, as I argue later, the fixed narrative is mutable and always incomplete. Nostalgia is concerned with a memory and implicit in this is a longing for another time or place or person which is in turn blurred by changing contexts over time. The souvenir becomes an *aide memoire*, through its materiality, which satisfies a need for certainty, even if the certainty is contestable, making the past real in the present whilst provoking feelings of loss and longing. Xavier de Maistre in *A Journey around my Room* (1790) writes about how finding a packet of old letters makes him feel.

What a pleasure it is to see recorded in these letters the interesting situations of our young years and to be transported back again to those happy times that we will never see again! (2004, p. 47)

The souvenir is an incomplete symbol of the past which is, in turn fictionalised by the object itself. Souvenirs, bought at a specific location become representative of: a whole experience, a nation, a culture, a period of time in the purchaser's life when they were single, happy or sad. These singular attributions occur even though the souvenir may have been mass produced. This is the contradiction of the tourist souvenir. All souvenirs have special and personal value despite their origins and despite being made in the millions. Travel souvenirs are often bought as evidence or trophies, as a way of demonstrating the reality of the trip where they were bought, as evidence. The fact that I have bought a souvenir makes the experience mine and I now have ownership of an experience that no one else has had. Uniqueness and exoticism often mark out the souvenir's value as signifiers of my newly acquired status as a traveller. It is the role of the travel souvenir to appropriate and to bestow and I now own part of the place where I have been to. Souvenirs are often bought as gifts although the recipient may not have been to the place where they were bought, but by giving souvenirs to those at home, the giver is bestowing some part of the experience on those who have not experienced it. (Mauss, 1969)

Despite the personal nature of the narrative within the souvenir, they are often culturally stereotypical and mass produced and the picture postcard is an example of this. They are a means of communicating the fact of the trip and the image of the trip to those who are absent yet the images are decided by someone else and often do not depict the precise place that they are being sent from. They are an approximation, but their authenticity resides in the message on the back and the fact of it being posted from the place in which it was bought. Postcards that are sent from home to home after the journey do not have the same value as those sent at the time. The notion of narrative and time is crucial to the action of the postcard.

A postally used card has a particular poignancy for, even when the passage of time has dissolved any remnants of the original relationship between sender and recipient, it still points to someone's physical presence in the place at which it was bought, written and posted. (Steward, 2008, p. 5)

Another way of evidencing a journey is through photographs. Their personal nature make the public rendering of them more intimate than the stereotypical postcard, however, they too are unsatisfactory. Just as memory is no substitute for the real event, the photograph is a common form of souvenir designed to record private moments. The photograph captures a fixed and consigns a moment for posterity, providing proof (Sontag, 1977, p. 9). However, the captured moment can only be an approximation (Chapter 4), as with mass produced souvenirs.

Having considered the complex nature of objects and their significance for human existence and development I take the position that the value, in its broadest sense, of objects cannot and should not be underestimated, as it is through things that we are measured and we exist. All these theories serve to throw light on the knotty problems that objects present us with, either in determining their economic value, their emotional potency, their decorative worth or their usefulness, their uniqueness, their antiquity, their ubiquity or their narrative. I suggest that our relationship with objects is iterative and that is what makes them so important; we define and are defined by what we have and it is the nature of this relationship that leads to its inherent contradiction. It could be argued that this is the use value of the souvenir; I define use as an object's generic practical use or function whereas the souvenir has a personal use and function, that of containing narrative.

If objects are defined by what they are, as much as what they are not, and what they do and do not represent, there will always be dissatisfaction with what they are not, and therefore what they are. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). This is central to understanding the contradictions of the souvenir.

It is this close and often inextricable relationship to and with objects that is critical to an understanding of what characterises a souvenir and why souvenirs have value.

Having reviewed the literature I conclude that the qualities of the souvenirs and our relationship to them originate in our complex relationship with objects, that is: material things with a use value. However, the defining quality of the souvenir is the narrative that is attached to it which results in its *souvenirness*, a quality I shall be attempting to define this quality through this enquiry.

Stewart states:

The souvenir must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse, a narrative discourse which articulates the play of desire. (2007, p. 136)

The often miniature nature of souvenirs contributes to their value as signifiers because, although they are portable versions of monuments and culture, they demand a suspension of disbelief that makes the possibility of personal attachment and narrative compelling. The tourist souvenir has become transformed, both actually and metaphorically, through a process of replication and miniaturisation. If one brought a full size model elephant back from India the narrative would be very different from that of a small replica. A crucial distancing needs to occur to allow the investment of personal narrative to occur. The souvenir is evidence of experience and is a potent prompt for personal history and *singularisation* (Belk, 1988) however the travel souvenir is recognised, at the point of purchase as a sham. In *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell states:

To prevent the souvenir from becoming elevated in importance to the point where it breaks its relationship with the attraction, it is always represented as a fallen object, as no substitute for the thing itself. (1999, p. 159)

However, civic trophies i.e. those collected by nations as signifiers of conquest are not 'fallen objects'. Instead they are trophies and evidence cultural power and enshrine a civic narrative. Souvenirs like the Elgin

Marbles carry complex historical and national narratives that shift over time and are dependent on changing attitudes to conquest and dominance. As with the travel or personal souvenir the narrative of the owner is its crucially defining characteristic. What is essential to the souvenir is its specific system of relationships of object, substitution, loss and display, not its status value.

This chapter has described the qualities of the object and of the souvenir and has used use and non-use value as a distinguishing feature. I would also like to differentiate between Travel Souvenirs, Ethnic Souvenirs and Personal Souvenirs. Travel souvenirs include tourist souvenirs that are bought as souvenirs of place and are mass produced for the tourist market. They also include non-mass produced objects that become souvenirs because of their narrative of place. Ethnic souvenirs are souvenirs that are regarded as having greater cultural authenticity although the validity of this assumption is contested and discussed in chapter 7: Cultural Currency and Cultural Seepage. Ethnic souvenirs also include Civic souvenirs like the Elgin Marbles as these symbols of colonial collecting usually reflect the ethnicity and culture of their origins. Implicit in the Ethnic souvenir is historical veracity and worth. Personal souvenirs refer to objects that are entirely dependent on narrative for their *souvenirness*. These objects may be gifts, inherited objects or objects with a significant dominant narrative that gives them value to the owner and elicits feelings of nostalgia, loss and longing.

The Souvenir manifests all the difficulties of the object because it is one, but I would argue that it is emblematic of all that we love and hate about objects. Souvenirs enshrine feeling, emotion, narrative, status, longing, loss, history, representation, stereotypes, and cultural distortions and have no use value (Baudrillard, 205, p.86) and we all have them. They could be said to epitomise all that is wrong with our profligate and consumerist society, whilst signifying the personal, private, fragile, and the special. They symbolise cultural imperialism and cultural stereotyping whilst representing personal and individual journeys and memories. They are personal, yet often mass produced, cheap yet with status value. They are paradoxical and reliant on memory and attachment to make them real.

Chapter 3. Practice in Practice

Fine Art performs a mediating function whose efficacy resides entirely in its ability to register the difference between the lived and the represented with some significance (Drucker, 2005, p. 88)

This chapter is concerned with my practice and how it informs my thinking about the value of souvenirs.

My practice comprises painting, photography, film making and installations. My primary focus is on making small paintings in oils, however; I use installations and film to complement my enquiry and offer alternative ways of interrogating my relationship with souvenirs. I mainly use photography for reference, if the object of my painting is not available to me (Figure 11), however, I do photograph objects which I do not paint and regard these photographs as souvenirs in their own right (Figure 37).

3.1. My home and my collection.

The interior of my house is an object of my research, as well as a collection, and my practice has developed from my relationship to, and with, the contents of it. I have souvenirs from all over the world that have been amassed throughout a peripatetic life and this house was my 31st when I moved here, at the age of 41. About 4 years ago I realised that my collection of 'stuff' (Daniel Miller, 2010) represented me and told the story of my life. I then became interested in how I could explore the value of souvenirs through my practice and through wider research in an attempt to establish what their value is and what this means.

Figures, 1 to 10 show examples of the objects and souvenirs that are in my house.



Figure 1: My souvenirs.



Figure 2: My souvenirs



Figure 3: My Souvenirs



Figure 4: My Souvenirs



Figure 5: My Souvenirs



Figure 6: My Souvenirs



Figure 7: My Souvenirs



Figure 8: My Souvenirs



Figure 9: My Souvenirs



Figure 10: My Souvenirs

I also write about my house and my souvenirs and what they mean to me.

This is a story of a life full of souvenirs, objects, photographs, postcards, kitsch, mementoes, memorabilia, aide memoires, miniatures, ciphers, and trophies.

I've been to Asia and Africa and Europe and America North and South and to many of the gaps in between. I have lived there, or just passed through. I have had my hand open wherever I have been and I have brought my gold home, where it now collects dust and neighbours on every surface; a cornucopia of disparate treasure, exotic and mundane, large, small, beautiful and tragically ugly. The aesthetic has become subsumed by the collection, a collection that was never intended and (one) that has emerged over time into a fluid mass of stories and glinting prizes, testimonies to me and my life but in a language so personal that they may appear like so much noise in a house full of chatter. The past rolls into the future as the present is acted out around my trophies, evidence of an exciting life, one that is still happening.

This is not an archive, this is me and my enthusiasm for religious memorabilia, elephants, musical instruments, textiles, figures, monkeys, plastic novelties, paper lanterns and lights, chandeliers, flowers, cups, saucers and cakes litters my back story like a CV. These objects or things are peopled too by givers and lovers and friends and children, just as my days have been, and still are. Often the objects fade out of view and then reappear at odd moments, providing new glimpses of old times.

Sometimes I sit in my big bed in my enormous bedroom and have a lazy trip around the world. Spain and Sri Lanka are on my chest of drawers, Cuba on the top shelf of the white bookcase, Kenya and Russia on the red, China, Peru and Indonesia on the opposite wall and then back to bed via Barcelona and the Lake District and Kathmandu. The floor is Indian and the bucket of instruments, send out sounds from Burkina Faso, the US of A, and Northumberland.

Am I a hoarder, an anthropologist, a curator, an artist, a neurotic, a sentimentalist? I am all and none of these things. I love my home because of the stories that it tells, to me and to others. My house is full of colour and humour and wit and foolishness: my plastic tomato sauce dispenser makes me smile, although I hate ketchup. My knitted cakes in all their pinkness amuse me, although I prefer to eat cheese. I do not believe in God but am intrigued by the degree to which people across the world do, and how that belief manifests itself in plastic icons and strings of votive flowers. For some the home is a quiet sanctuary, mine is a vibrating mass of multicultural misrepresentations that make me think and debate and laugh. (Grennan, 2011)

3.2. Painting the Souvenir.

The aim of my paintings is for the gesture, the absence of marks, the ground, the tones, the blurring, to all combine with the image to create a sense, a response, a yearning; with the snapshot size of each canvas inviting intimacy. As well as taking on the qualities of an object, the fading gesture or the sliding picture plane all add to a sense of the private made public, a particular view presented in a particular way. The displacement and refocusing of objects in collections, and the resulting emotional and social relationships, find physical equivalence in the way that the paintings are made. I am trying to re-materialise the sign, making emotion and narrative manifest through re-materialising the object. A process of translation is occurring: a re-telling. Walter Benjamin in, *The Task of the Translator*, states:

If Translation is a mode, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works. And yet, by virtue of its translatability the original is closely connected with the translation, in fact this connection is all the closer since it is no longer of importance to the original (1969, p. 70)

Although Benjamin is writing about translating language this statement aptly describes the process of painting souvenirs.

The subjects that I paint are either personal mementoes that are gifts, or are items that I have bought as souvenirs. These may be manufactured as tourist souvenirs or other objects that I have bought as reminders or trophies of places that I have been to. Each painting is 10 inches by 12 inches and over time the approach to the object that I am painting has changed. Initially, I painted the object *in situ* using photographs as reference (Figures 11 &12), this involved decisions about composition and hierarchies, the blurring of the object and, or, background (Figures 13-15) is as, Gotz Adriani (2008) who writes about Gerhard Richter's work states:

A metaphor, so to speak, for the contingency of perception, which is conscious only for a moment of what is being perceived before it passes out of that consciousness.(2008, p. 22)

Latterly I have stripped out any details that may define, or detract from, the single object that I am painting and paint a flat ground, placing the object in the middle of the canvas (Figure16). My aim is to allow the viewer to bring their own narrative to the painting, prompted by my treatment of the object, although at the same time I am making my own statement about my relationship with the object through my treatment of it. The perspective in my work is often slightly off centre, partly because of my lack of 3D vision; this also reflects, through an analogous formal device, the ambiguous nature of souvenirs. Souvenirs have a contested value, and are often copies of emblematic objects that have been miniaturised and debased and sold by the millions.



Figure 11: The Photograph.



Figure 12: The Painting. (2011)



Figure 13: Kookaburras (2010) On a shelf with other objects.



Figure 14: Snow Globe (2010) Wiping the paint, animating the object, obscuring the past.



Figure 15: Elephant. (2010) Blurring the background.



Figure 16: Garden Gnome (2013) A plain flat ground.

When I paint I wait until I have an image in my head, a sense of the object, or what I call *a taste in my mouth*, I use this term to describe the immediacy and clarity of the sense of the object that I experience. If I do not do this the result is usually disappointing to me. The success of the painting relies on what I have termed, the *souvenir moment*, (Chapter 4) that is: a clear picturing of the object and its narrative and a full engagement with the personal value that the object has. I then work from photographs or more recently, directly from the object. The process of choosing the canvas – already painted with an old image or blank, but over-painted with white primer; the format, landscape or portrait, constitutes the planning stage enabling me to fit the object to the canvas accordingly. I roughly draw the object, sometimes using charcoal or soft graphite as both of these materials bleed into the paint and create a shadow of something gone before (Figure 19). Sometimes I disregard what I have sketched. The main purpose of the sketch is to locate the object on the canvas and the under painting, if there is one. The painting process varies and to some extent I do not know how the paint will be applied until it happens. This is not to avoid the questions of technique or decision making but it is allowing space for the emotional response to the object that I am trying to capture. I make decisions as I proceed, but quite often the relationship between my eyes, my hand and my response to the object is what makes the work. My criticality operates during the process of painting

and then, more evidently, in the review process. I often paint wet on wet because I am trying to capture a moment that I do not want to rehearse, as the narrative changes with retelling. I regard this integration of narrative through paint as, what James Elkins (2000) describes as 'alchemy'.

When people say art is alchemy, they usually mean it involves metamorphoses that can only be partly understood. Chemistry can only go so far, then intuition, creation, skill, genius, imagination, luck or some other intangible has to take over. Alchemy is the generic name for those unaccountable changes: it is whatever happens in the foggy place where science weakens and gives way to ineffable changes (2000, p. 121)

My aim is to achieve a balance between material, intention and intuition. This 'alchemy' is concerned with process and implicit in this is the dominance of material and process over subject matter. However, I try to integrate the subject matter as the existence of the narrative resides here, as well as in the material processes.

In the group exhibition *About Painting* (2011) a number of painters were asked about their studio practice. Each responded differently using headings to signal different concerns. The areas of comment were: the studio, process - the various stages of making, routines, materials, and craft. Many of the questions centred on techniques, environment and process yet still, alchemy crept in. Phoebe Unwin talks about the need for some degree of figuration in her work.

None of the people that I paint are portraits. I think of them as being portraits of feelings rather than portraits of a particular person. But all of my paintings and subjects end up being things that I have experienced in some way. (2011, p. 89)

This description applies to my painting as I am also trying to communicate narrative and feeling through the use of paint; however, the fixing of the souvenir through paint also interests me. I am making an object about an object that will then have a different life to the original item. It is a 3D object with a 2D image upon it, fixed in time. The image will not change although

the positioning of the painting may. It is the fixing of the object in the paint that is important, as is the narrative being communicated through the language of material and gesture, and the willingness of the viewer to recognise a story, that they will then make their own. The recognisable character or quality of the object, often through its ubiquity, is the beginning of the process. As one visitor to my exhibition held at Oasis School of Human Development (2011) wrote:

The exhibition makes me want to smile – it reminds me of the things my parents and grandparents treasured from rare holidays (especially grandparents) – love the childlike quality of the pieces.

(Appendix 2)

The visitor is describing how the recognition of an object, or objects, prompts a personal memory and narrative, thereby re-animating the object that I have fixed in paint. Each painting depends on a degree of identification, by the viewer, for it to work; as it is through this that the narrative emerges. However, I do not intentionally paint objects that are easily identifiable or recognisable. It is upon this indexicality that Kitsch (Chapter 6) depends, but I do not select my souvenirs for this reason. I select them for their personal value to me, that is: how I feel about them, aesthetically and, or, emotionally.

Another visitor to my exhibition at Oasis School of Development asked me why I painted in different styles. This was something of a surprise as I was not aware that I did. My focus is painting a response to the object, this is influenced by the style and formal qualities of the object itself, but I do not seek to produce a copy. This visitor's comment made me realise that I had successfully communicated something singular and personal about each souvenir through paint.

3.2.1. The Painting as Object.

It is accepted that the painting is an object: the stretchers, the canvas, the materiality of the paint, all combine to make it one. I am interested in the boundary between image and object in my paintings. I often use box canvasses that assert their three dimensional, free-standing, object status which enables them to be displayed as ornaments. The *objectness* of paintings, particularly small paintings, is discussed by Andrew Graham Dixon (2001) in relation to Howard Hodgkin's work, he states:

Small paintings, which are always framed by the real world, which abut it so manifestly, are self evidently objects, hung on a wall. They're things that might be held, felt, weighed, as well as looked at or into. Hodgkin's paintings flaunt their palpability, their nature as things like so many other things in the world: hammers, paperweights, kettles. Their thing-ness, inseparable from their eloquence, is a painter's way of anchoring his fantasy, his melancholy and his lyricism. (2001, p. 151)

In 2011 I sold a painting to a couple who stand it on their shelves and change its location on a regular basis. This has parallels with the sculpture of Haim Steinbach in which he displays commonplace and exotic objects adjacent to each other on Formica shelves in such a way as to question how context determines value. (Six Feet Under, 2004, shows a plastic frog, a pair of plastic feet, a ceramic pig and a pair of wooden clogs displayed on a plastic laminated wooden shelf)

I am also interested in exploring notions of value that are attached to the history and practice of painting, especially the use of oil paint. Although my use of this practice is motivated by a desire to present what Dean McCannell (1999, p. 159) describes as a 'fallen object'.

The narrative that is attached to, and prompted by, these paintings is critical to my work. And, as with souvenirs, the notions of value and narratives collide. I am asking questions about;

The value of the painting.

The value of the materials.

The painting as painting, and the painting as object.

Paint as material.

The image.

Stereotypical narratives.

Personal narratives.

This list raises questions about points of reference in the painting. Culturally painting has a particular narrative attached to it, as does the souvenir and disruption takes place when the recognition shifts through the paint into a personal narrative, prompted by the challenge to the indexicality of both the painting and the object.

3.2.2. Commentary on Paintings.

The following commentary on individual paintings offers a reading of the image, suggesting potential relationships and my intentions behind their production. I do not title my paintings as this would impose a narrative on the viewer.



Figure 17: This is a painting of a cheap plastic wind-up Christmas tree. It appears to be pigeon-toed, which helps to accentuate the comical nature of the object. It is sparsely decorated but the decorations match the colour of the red ground: the colour of Christmas, rich and warm and in sharp contrast to the light tones of the tree. This is a reversal of the expected, just as a walking Christmas tree is. The intention of the visible brush strokes on the tree is to create a sense of weight allowing it to move. This painting focuses on the object, without a context, as a means of amplifying its status as *signifier*. (Barthes, 1979)



Figure 18: The light tone of the flat ground of this painting strangely enhances the bulk of the Indian elephant; it is made of grey soft stone which seems to capture both the solidity and the skin of the animal. The position of the legs and the connection with the trunk means that it is fixed, tied down and caught but still able to move if it wants to. The formal qualities of this painting allow the object space to operate in, giving it a dynamic that is enhanced by the tonal similarity of the object and the background. The painter, Lisa Milroy also uses a flat ground to isolate the narrative potential of her objects (see figure 41). This elephant was given to me by a friend. It reminds me of them, our relationship and my trip to India.



Figure 19: I wanted to capture a sense of the classical beauty of this pen top and have emphasised the drapery of the Statue of Liberty's gown. I have used charcoal to sketch the outline thereby allowing the under drawing to seep through the paint, indicating that there is a residue of past narratives emerging into the present. This object is a universally recognised image, a civic emblem, and a very large monument. Her size is reinforced by her closeness to the edge of the painting, as if she is bursting out of it. In fact the pen top is only two inches tall and through this painting I have tried to exemplify the contradictions inherent in miniaturisation (Stewart, 2007). A friend brought this back for me from New York, where I have lived and visited. This statue represents; a continent in the abstract, a place in personal terms, and a friendship.



Figure 20: This bottle was made as a souvenir from Ireland and is supposed to represent a nation and its culture through its colour – green, and the shamrocks and leprechauns on it. It unashamedly exploits stereotypical iconography of the country and is consistent with many other souvenirs; however, this is an unusual travel souvenir as it is large and very heavy. I have used tonal similarities to accentuate the qualities of the green glass and the reflective nature of it. Compositionally, I positioned it resting on the bottom of the painting in order to emphasise its weight, although it is glass and the symbols on it are frivolous and lightweight. A whole nation captured in a bottle, containing what message? The decoration on the bottle is blurred by the glass surface, but it is also blurred because of the fictional nature of what it represents. This painting was exhibited in the Moot Hall solo exhibition (2013) and a visitor made the following comment, ‘When I saw the painting I thought it was a bottle with a story in it – a childhood fantasy wood

with 2 children in it and a woodcutter'. This illustrates the power of objects to create narrative within the viewer (Baudrillard, 2005)



Figure 21: This radish-shaped condiment set is painted with a greater commitment to figurative realism than much of my other work; this is because I wanted to do justice to the wit of the object by communicating its functional and aesthetic qualities. Part of the allure of souvenirs is their playfulness and this is what appeals to me about this object. It comprises three radishes, one pepper, one salt and one, mustard, and they are all lying on a leaf. They are beautifully made and make only a passing nod to utility. However, their function is what makes them interesting. I suggest that not many people would buy solely decorative radishes, but because they are ostensibly useful they have a greater value bestowed upon them (use and non use value p.11). Radishes are not inherently beautiful either but I was interested in the reflective quality of the pottery that makes them seem like jewels. I was also interested in the roundness of each radish and I have used circular lines in the ground to accentuate this. These radishes were given to me by my

brother who is as astringent in his manner as a radish and also polished and beautiful to look at.



Figure 22: This bear is a museum object from the Edinburgh Toy Museum. It is moth- eaten and slightly plaintive looking. I wanted to love it and could feel the childhood attraction of such a toy. Although the bear is old he is not broken and I chose to paint him in warm shades to bring him alive. He also looks as if he may roll off the page at any moment. This bear is vibrant with children's stories and play. I painted it from a photograph which is a souvenir of a trip to Edinburgh and a nostalgic visit to a toy museum. Although I have never owned a toy like this it reminds me of old toys and innocent play. Despite not being owned by me is it an archetypal Victorian toy which prompts feelings of nostalgia and reverence. Here it is enshrined in an oil painting, as well as being a receptacle for the history of toys, the child who owned it, the collector who donated it to the museum and the museum itself. Its multiple narratives are analogously suggested by the layered and abstracted background in the painting. (Chap 4.1).



Figure 23: This is an ocarina from Peru that is shaped like a cat. It is made of clay and is sleek and smooth. The hole for blowing into is at the front of the cat between its paws and the note holes are on its back. I have been deliberately ambiguous about its function; it is a beautiful object as an ornament, as a cat. The colours that I have used are tonally redolent of the rich colours of Peruvian traditional clothing and decoration. I chose to reuse an existing canvas which had a mask painted on it as I wanted to abstract the ground as a means of locating the cat visually and metaphorically. It appears to be sitting in a cat basket but it is also sitting on the past. The ocarina is an ancient musical instrument but this is a new version of it made to amuse, as well as to play. It is a souvenir with all the strangeness and adaptations that this implies which makes it typical of cultural stereotyping by fixing a myth in the present (Chapter 7). I have been to Peru so I recognise this object, however, I did not buy it, and it was a gift from a friend.



Figure 24: This is a donkey from Spain; it cannot stand up because it is badly made, but it has charming qualities. It is overburdened and rough; with a slightly resentful look in his eye. This is an emblematic Spanish souvenir, a crude cultural stereotype like sombreros or castanets and one that is familiar to the British tourist. I am attracted to it because of its absurdity and also by my notion that it is not cooperating with its own function and is therefore not fit for purpose, even though it could be said that the purpose, that of representing a culture, is spurious. It is an archetypal travel souvenir which is laden with cultural clichés in the form of the colours of the halter and neck piece, the baskets and the object itself. This donkey is a *fallen object* and is *no substitute for the thing itself*, (MacCannell, 1999, p.159), the thing itself in this case being Spain.



Figure 25: This painting of a stone fish reflects the smoothness of the surface of the object. The over painting references past stories and origins as well as hinting at a context but in this case, the forms are abstracted so that the viewer constructs their own narrative and the highly reflective nature of the paint illuminates the object with reflected light, making it jewel-like. The object is beautifully burnished and very precious to me because of its aesthetic qualities and its materiality. It is small enough to sit in the palm of my hand and is exquisitely smooth but in the painting I have increased its size to amplify its value and presence. The prevailing narrative of this painting is its aesthetic and archaeological qualities. It is important to me because I was an archaeologist in my youth.



Figure 26: This jug was a present from South Africa. The decoration on the jug is more accurately copied than usual and the scene firmly locates its origins in the African continent, albeit in a cartoonish way. The flat yellow ground supports but does not detract from the object and it resonates with the colours of the jug. I grew up in Zambia and Kenya and have travelled in Africa on a number of occasions. The people who gave it to me found the complexities of post apartheid South Africa difficult and not what they expected. This is neatly captured in this jug, in that it is a beautifully crafted object but the scene that is depicted on it is one of a basic existence. In this regard the jug holds personal, cultural, and political narratives for me and because my childhood was spent in Central and Eastern Africa, this jug, as ‘a

memento is emblematic of the worth of that life' (Stewart, 2007, p.139).



Figure 27: These Kookaburras are amongst my favourite souvenirs. They are a souvenir of a friendship rather than a place, although I recognise their origins and I have been to Australia. Their intimacy accords with my friendship and I have tried to portray them as an inseparable pair, sharing a secret, as well as functioning as a condiment set. The marks in the ground aim to reinforce the closeness between them.

The painter, Paul Housley, is an artist who also paints cheap plastic items, which are often bought in markets and are sometimes broken, and uses the canon of painting to imbue value to the objects. He is concerned with the nature of paint and value, referencing the old masters in a contemporary way. However, he is not concerned, as I am, with the narrative of the object, rather with the narrative of the paint.

In the catalogue of Paul Housley's exhibition, *The Boy is Made of Plastic* (2005), Alastair Robinson says:

Housley begins with the banal or incidental objects precisely because they are, in and of themselves, empty ciphers. Any meaning we attribute to them is accrued only through the process of remaking them in pigment. (2005, p. 4)



Figure 28: Paul Housley. *The Roses in Blackpool* (2005)

The difference between my work and Housley's is intention and I would argue that there is no such thing as an 'empty' object but that in his work the paint creates the narrative of value rather than reflecting it.

3.3. Film making

As well as my painting practice I have also explored the representation of souvenirs through film, as I wanted to try to animate the souvenirs in a different way to paint and to explore narrative content through sound, or its absence.

My first film, *A Journey Around my Life* (2011), refers to the book, *A Journey Around my Room* by Xavier De Maistre (1790), in which De Maistre is confined, as a punishment for an affair of honour, to his room for forty two days. During this confinement he journeys around his room, re-discovering forgotten corners and developing new relationships with the objects, furniture and paintings that he owns. He uses his environment as a prompt for his musings and the book forms a travelogue, not only of the landscape of his prison, but of the man.

The film is concerned with the impact that objects, particularly souvenirs, have on me, and the aim of the film is to explore the aesthetics of my collection. In order to do this I have filmed the objects on the top of my piano and have told some of their stories. The conveyor belt of treasure suggests a continuum, and the low lighting creates a sumptuous, almost impenetrable gloom. Redolent of Caravaggio, the chiaroscuro highlights the gold and red and silver of objects that are often cheap and gaudy in daylight. The incomplete view of the objects mirrors the partial view that we can only have of someone else's life. As already stated the narrative is crucial for the activation of the souvenir, is personal and subjective and may or may not be true, like the partial view of the objects in the film, the stories are incomplete.

The sound track of the film is a spoken list describing the provenance of the objects, a list that is interrupted by 2 stories about specific objects, which I remove as if giving them special status. The film begins with the sound of a conveyor belt running and the objects are filmed in a continuous line. The conveyor belt sound runs throughout the film. After 1 minute my voice is heard and I speak until the end of the film.

I say:

Some saints, Brighton, Barcelona, Penny,

Chicken night lights, Hexham, Christina and Paul

Jesus in the door knob, Brighton, Simon

Jesus framed, Unknown,

Ganesh, India, Paul

Elephant, India, Penny

Our lady, Barcelona, Penny

Red elephant, Unknown

Colette, London, Rosemary

Brass painting set, Jaipur, Penny

Prayer wheel, India, Paul

Poodle, London, Bryony

Bowls, China, Rosemary

Rose, New Orleans, Penny

Fan, Barcelona, Penny

Hindu figure, Neasden, Penny

Jesus and Mary Snow globes, unknown

Beads, New Orleans, Penny. Last year we made our way to New Orleans on a quest for sounds and music and excitement. We found them all. Travelling on boats and trains, trams and buses and on foot, we met musicians and bakers, drop outs and murderers, artists and carpenters, film makers and academics. They all had their own memories of the Storm, but next to their versions of havoc and destruction laid the glittering strings of the Mardi Gras. Thousands of cheap strings of beads, accumulated over the years, festoon

the city, hanging from lamp posts, trees, gates and fences, telling a different story, a story of celebration and deep superstition and history and ritual. They are mainly ignored until the festivities begin and then more are added, until one day, the power supply will be cut off, not by hurricanes or bankruptcy, but by the weight of plastic beads. These beads are made in China.

Plastic mice, Newcastle, Rosemary

Holy shells, home-made, Teresa

Ganesh, unknown

Buddha, unknown

Box, Australia, Mary

Hindu figure, Neasden, Penny

Bowl, Newcastle, Ashley

Cup and saucer, unknown, Simon

Fan, Barcelona, Rosemary

Plastic food, San Francisco, Rosemary

Cups and saucers, Junkshops, Fraser

Leaning tower, Unknown

Knitted cakes, eBay and homemade, Penny

Cake stand, Unknown, Simon

Saki, Japan, Penny

Hedgehog, The tip, Penny. This is the story of a souvenir. One day I went on a trip to the tip, I did not have a any rubbish to dispose of, I went because it was an opportunity to spend some stolen moments with someone else's husband. While he recycled his bottles I wandered into a shed that was full of small electrical goods, fridges and tables and found a hedgehog. It was displayed next to a leather wallet on a set of shelves under a council sign that

read: it is forbidden to take any items away. I pocketed both. The wallet was beautifully made and unfortunately empty and I gave it to a friend for Christmas. The hedgehog was carefully constructed out of wood shavings and woodchips and is fragile as a result. I kept the hedgehog. He is a stolen souvenir, a memento of a secret outing to a place of rejected objects, a place of chaos and rubbish that is carefully ordered and restricted; a place of categories and collections.

Birds in the hand, Rosemary

Silver perfume bottle, Simon

Tea cup, Newcastle, Hilary

Angels, Peru, Ros

Charles and Diana cup, Junk shop, Simon

White roses, Junk shop, Penny

Cherub, Junk shop, Penny

Grapes, Junk shop, Penny

New York cab, New York, Rosemary

Postcard, Belsay Hall, Penny

End of film

The aim of the film was to explore the aesthetic of my souvenirs in a new way. The richness imbued in the objects by the process of film making, the lighting and the focus was a surprise to me and I have explored this further through paint (Figure 25).

The second film is called *Stuff Keeps Happening 1* (2012), which comprises a set of still shots of the interior of my house. I made 2 versions of this film, one silent and one with a soundtrack, the first film allows the objects to speak for themselves and concentrates on their aesthetic qualities and how they are displayed. The second version uses a soundtrack to make a specific point

about the interviewee's relationship to her object and how it changes over time. The soundtrack to *Stuff Keeps Happening 2* is a recording of Anna, who describes where she got a befeater money box and its importance to her during her life. She also describes her changing relationship to it, she states, "It was like a toy but I didn't play with it, it was just a souvenir". It was never functional because it lost its stopper very soon after she got it. She says about her money box, 'It was not a treasured object, it *is now*. It was not a treasured object.'

This illustrates how the narrative of the object has changed over time, even though its origins are apparently fixed. Anna's narrative moves firmly into the present when she attributes significance to the stopper less money box, in that she realizes that she has never been able to save money. She had not made this connection until she started to tell her story and the money box is her catalyst for autobiographical construction.

Steven Connor writes in *Paraphernalia – the Curious Life of Magical Things*, on the qualities of the mundane and day to day objects such as paperclips, buttons, keys and glasses.

Objects often have what JJ Gibson calls "affordance" meaning that they seem to hold out certain very specific kinds of invitations to us.[...] The affordance of objects means that they are not merely externally loaded with associations and connotations, but that we find ourselves implicated in, or apprehended by them. (2011, pp. 2-3)

Anna's souvenir has 'affordance'; it has moved through time and space with her and has been invested with stories and revelations, the most recent one, captured here. The 'narrative of origins' (Stewart, 2007) gives it its value but the narrative changes and develops over time. In this film the images are of my souvenirs and they set up a parallel narrative to the Beefeater money box, although the actual money box does not feature and the objects keep rolling after the voices have stopped. As in the film, *A Journey Around My Life*, (2011) there is a degree of remorselessness in the succession of objects being paraded before the viewer, thereby reinforcing the point that

my 'stuff keeps happening' and so does Anna's, but in different ways. I showed this film during my show at The Moot Hall (Appendix) and people seemed to be divided between wanting no narrative, because it detracted from the beauty of the objects, to wanting to see a beefeater money box, to understanding that stuff keeps happening and liking the way this had been communicated. My intention was to raise questions through the making of the films and I feel that the possible interpretations and responses to them serve to support my thesis regarding the crucial role of personal narrative in activating the souvenir.

Aviary (2013) is a short film about my bird souvenirs. The film presents each bird as a type of 'jail bird'; Frame 1-side view, frame 2- mug shot. (Film Stills, Figures: 29-36) This sets up a narrative about caged birds, real and otherwise, and our relationship to the natural world and how it is represented through objects. The side and then full face shots result in a feeling of intimacy with the object and this engagement with the viewer serves to intensify the material qualities of each bird and to give them a solemnity and gravitas that they would not otherwise have. The film also highlights the absurdity of how we represent birds and the particular pathos of the egg cup where a duck is supporting his boiled kin (Figure 33 and 34) is an example of this. The soundtrack is of real bird song that accompanies the movements of the mechanical birds that feature in the film, raising questions about the real and the imitation. The bright pink background reflects the garishness of reproduction but also the intimacy and comfort of the home as they are all filmed on my settee. This film neatly encapsulates the contradictions inherent in some objects: their cheapness their ubiquity, their garishness, their pathos, their beauty, their indexicality and their multiple narratives.



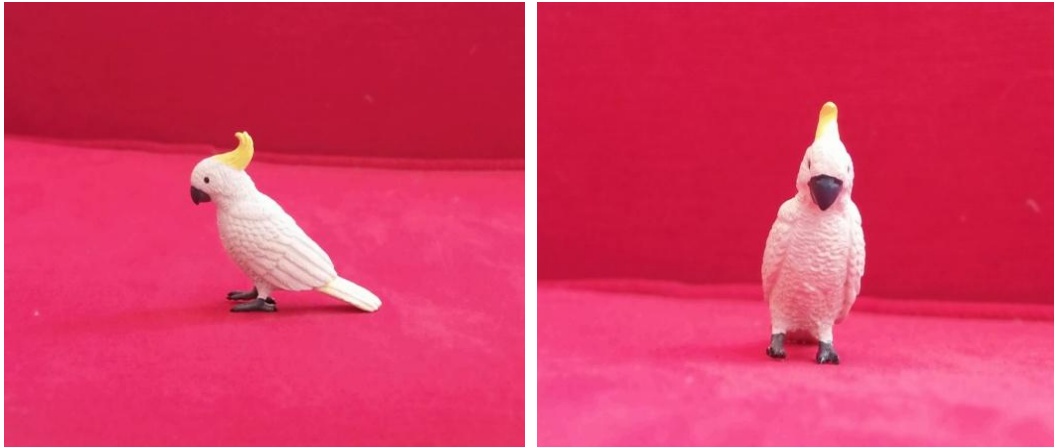
Figures 29 and 30: Mechanical Birds on a Branch



Figures 31 and 32: Mechanical Bird in a Cage



Figures 33 and 34: Duck Egg Cup



Figures 35 and 36: Plastic Parrot

3.4. Photography

I primarily use photographs as reference for my paintings but I also have taken some photographs that act as souvenirs in their own right and are of objects that I would not paint. I do not exhibit these photographs, as they are personal to me, but I do show them to people when talking about my trips abroad. The photograph below reminds me of the cultural collisions that typify New Orleans, a collision that was evident throughout the city, not just in its cemeteries.



Figure 37: Votive Offerings at St. Roch Cemetery.¹

This chapter has reviewed my practice identifying strands and themes that have developed during my PhD. The role of the Gallery, exhibitions and titles are also important elements of my practice and I will consider them in relation to narrative (chapter 4) and Value (chapter 6).

Note 1.

Saint Roch is the patron saint of plague and pestilence.

Chapter 4. Multiple Narratives and Memory.

In this chapter I consider the changing nature of narratives and how memory activates them. Whether the souvenir is a travel souvenir, a gift or a civic souvenir it does not function without a narrative and this narrative cannot function without memory. I also consider here the way that recognition and acceptance, particularly in mass produced souvenirs provide a formative narrative which may then be superseded by others.

4.1 Multiple Narratives - Recognising Objects

In his essay *Meditations on a Hobby Horse or The Roots of Artistic Form* (1963) E.H. Gombrich, discusses both the process of artistic representation and abstraction and the investing of qualities and attributes to a broom stick with a horse's head on it. What we recognise in the hobby horse can be attributed to: imagination, particularly as it is a child's toy to: a memory of that relationship with the horse, and to its sign value, and its substitution value, resulting in its *horseness*.

Gombrich argues that the stick is:

Neither a sign, signifying the concept horse nor is it a portrait of an individual horse. By its capacity to serve as a substitute the stick becomes a horse in its own right. (1963, p. 2)

I would argue that the demands made on the viewer by the tourist souvenir are the same as those of the hobby horse; both are approximations of the real, as well as substitutes. Gombrich fails to discuss the sentimental power of the hobby horse, which like other childhood toys may prompt nostalgic feelings of childhood days and play; however he does describe the power of the human to recognise and value the hobby horse's substitutive powers. It could be argued that the hobby horse does have a sign value that emerges only once the first stick and head have been recognised as a horse. The 'crudely carved head' aids the process of recognition but many a broom has

been used as a horse in children's play. It is this ability to identify some common quality, either the broom's rideability or the shape of the head, which can be described as the 'narrative of origins' (Stewart 2007). One child may see a broom, another a horse, just as one person may see a sea shell and another may see an object that is populated with place, time, people, feelings and memories. It is this ability to abstract, substitute or bestow that neutralises the apparent absurdity of miniaturisation, relocation and appropriation that is common in travel souvenirs.

It needed two conditions, then to turn the stick into our hobby horse: That its form made it just possible to ride on and it; secondly – and perhaps decisively – that riding mattered. (1963, p. 7)

As discussed in the chapter 2 in relation to the object and its importance, it is interesting that Gombrich has chosen to write about an object when considering the roots of artistic form. He states that the painter:

relies on, our readiness to take hints, to read contexts, and to call up our conceptual image under his guidance. (1963, p. 10)

I would argue that this is the way that travel souvenirs operate in that they depend on our willingness to invest certain narratives in them. The hobby horse may depend on a common narrative to activate it, as does the souvenir of the Eiffel Tower, but the existence of the personal narrative is what give both of these objects the power to create identity. If the importance of riding is needed to validate the hobby horse, then the need to take away a symbol of a place or journey matters with the souvenir.

4.2 Activating Memory: The relationship between Memory and Narrative.

The relationship between multiple narratives and memory is inextricable in the souvenir, as the souvenir is dependent on memory for its activation. In

order that the souvenir can capture narrative it needs to be released or realised through memory, as perhaps all narratives are. Describing the process of remembering is as difficult as establishing the truth of what is being remembered. Narratives are activated by a process of recall; however the details of what is remembered often cannot be relied upon. The fluid nature of memory is well documented and the narrative of souvenirs is no exception. Svetlana Boyn (2001) in *The Future of Nostalgia* states that there is:

A contemporary Russian saying claims that the past has become much more unpredictable than the future. (2001, p. X1V)

The process is not reliable and the content is mutable but without memory there is no narrative. Even written narratives can be contested in the face of discrepancies with remembered, unrecorded events and with recorded events there is always the issue of perspective or viewpoint. A need to capture place and experience in a material form in the souvenir is contradicted by the apparent unreliability of memory and the way that the narrative changes over time, with elements being superseded by others. Despite this we continue to travel hopefully. As Urry states:

The postmodern tourist knows that he or she is a tourist and that tourism is a series of games with multiple texts and no single authentic tourist experience. (2002, p. 92)

It is the degree of knowingness regarding the provenance and function of tourist souvenirs that makes their function contestable. Despite their falsity, their dissembling nature and their unreliability in what they represent, souvenirs are still bought, loved, valued and kept.

As a result of my interviews (Oasis School of Human Development 2012. Appendix 2) I coined the term *Souvenir Moment*, to describe the moment when the narrative of the souvenir is remembered, even if the object is absent. The act of remembering is often a multi-sensorial

experience which is aptly described by an interviewee longing for an absent object that has become a virtual souvenir for her.

And there's not a day goes by when I don't wish that I had my grandma's button tin and what happened was that when I was little we used to go to my grandparents on a Saturday, on a Sunday to give my mum and dad a bit of space basically while they cooked Sunday lunch and my grandma had two Cow and Gate milk tins, big ones, like that, full of buttons. My grandmother was born in 1903. This contained buttons her mother and her mother's mother had had, so the buttons were amazing and there was two of them and she used ... we used to look forward to this, she used to ... I can remember now physically doing it, on the kitchen table, put out a big newspaper, and then she would tip the tin out onto the paper and I can remember the sound that it made as they all spread out and then I would spend about an hour with a glass of lemonade, just looking at them, sorting them, looking at them and every week I found buttons that I'd never seen before. And it was only after my grandmother had died and all her effects had been dealt with by my mum and dad and everyone else but one day I said "Whatever happened to grandma's button tins?" and my mum said "Oh, they went" and I ... Oh, I so wish I'd asked for those.

This memory is about loss and longing (Stewart, 2007), once again the memory of a time, a place and a person are embodied in objects, including the person's standards and morés. M's granny collected the buttons because she was thrifty. The buttons were powerful ciphers for her relationship with her grandmother. The experience of visiting her, a sense of family, the materiality of the buttons, the sound they made, the associations (the lemonade, the table, the newspaper) and after she died, this apparently inconsequential collection, in its absence, was recognised as a valuable memento of M's childhood and relationships. The buttons are treasures that, although they are no longer available in material form, are part of the narrative of the past.

L brought along, what resembled an old potato. His son, now 35 years old, had made it for L, when he was 7, and it had been kept in L's bedroom ever since. L has a good relationship with his son and is concerned about his safety as he is a fire fighter. L's son had just had his appendix removed and was convalescing. The son phoned L on the morning of the event and asked

him what he was doing that evening. L told him he was taking an object with him to talk about with people he did not know. L said, 'You'll never guess what I am taking', the son replied, 'the hedge pig'. L was surprised as he did not know that the son remembered the object or even knew that he still had it. The son then talked about the making of the hedge pig and they then talked about how important they are to each other. As L said, I have a close relationship with my son but through the hedge pig we were able to tell each other how much we meant to each other. The telling of this story made L cry, to me it was a potato, to L and his son it was a symbol of their relationship.



Figure 38: L with his Hedge Pig.

As Stewart states:

Because of its connections to biography and its place in constituting the notion of the individual life, the memento becomes emblematic of the worth of that life and of the self's capacity to generate worthiness. (2007, p.139)

In *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym discusses the importance of objects to refugees, particularly Russian émigrés who went to the United States of America in the 1970's.

Diasporic souvenirs do not reconstruct the narrative of one's roots but rather tell the story of exile. They are not symbols but transitional objects that reflect multiple belonging. The former country of origin turns into an exotic place represented through its arts and crafts usually admired by foreign tourists. Newly collected memories of exile and acculturation shift the old cultural frame works. (2001, p. 336)

Demonstrating once again the power of the object to capture and reflect shifting memories of place and identity.

4.2.1. The role of External and Internal Memories in my Paintings.

These two paintings hint at multiple narratives and the unreliability of memory. I have painted over old paintings but not eradicated the image underneath.



Figure 39: Painting 1

The first painting has the residue of another mask underneath it which acts as a shadow to the image. This painting is of masks in the Pitt Rivers Museum. The masks are trophy souvenirs and have status because they are on public display. They have authenticity and value bestowed on them by their context and they are historical, cultural and civic trophies. They were collected by the Victorian collector and carry a colonial discourse with them, one that is being rewritten all the time.



Figure 40: Painting 2

The second painting has two narratives beneath it, the head of a sculpture and the wiped background on top of it. There is no attempt to make the relationship between the under, and over painting explicit, as the relevance and content of the work shifts depending on who is viewing it. Memory serves the person who has it, as does the souvenir and this object is a souvenir of a

friendship and an object that I keep, not for its aesthetic qualities, but because I like the person who gave it to me. Despite its appearance I remember my friend fondly when I look at it. I have known my friend for over 20 years hence the layers of paint and the shifting focus.

Artist Lisa Milroy's work is concerned with nostalgia and the use of objects in making sense of her world. She uses her memory of objects as the basis for her work and the objects that she paints are often mundane but are rendered beautiful by her treatment of them. The objects that she paints have special resonance to her but she makes them both special and ordinary by exposing their essence. [Schwababsky (2003), Archer (1993), Milroy (1998)]. Fiona Bradley in *Lisa Milroy* (2001) describes Milroy's object paintings in relation to memory.

Milroy's representations do, of course, have a relationship to objects, but objects as they exist in the mind and memory rather than in reality...They signal outside themselves through the operation of association and possibly metonym, bringing back to mind as we look at them complete experiences, ideas or emotions...Emptied objects – emptied only so that they may immediately be filled with personalised meaning. (2001, p. 18)



Figure 41: Lisa Milroy: Personal Items (1984)

This echoes Roland Barthes writings on the Eiffel Tower (Chapter 2).

4.3 Narrating the Archive: Archiving the Narrative.

I will now examine the relationship between narrative and archive in the case of *The Museum of Innocence*, which are both a novel and a museum. This case study concentrates on the slippery notions of truth and authenticity, interpretation and intention and the role of narrative in understanding them. Memory is a key component in activating the narratives of the objects in the novel and the museum, and in making them souvenirs.

Fred Davis in *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* in Belk states:

Nostalgia (like long- term memory, like reminiscence, like day dreaming) is deeply implicated in our sense of who we are, what we are about, and (though possibly with much less inner clarity) wither we go. In short, nostalgia is... a readily accessible psychological lens...for the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities. (1988, p. 150)

In 2008, Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel prize winning author published a novel called *The Museum of Innocence*, in which he tells the story of the relationship between Kemal, and his young lover, Fusin. Their relationship is characterised by obstacles that prevent them from being together in marriage, although their association endures throughout their lives. In order to sustain his obsessive love, Kemal collects things that either belongs to Fusin or that she has some relationship with, and he keeps these objects in his family's empty flat. His need for her, enacted through these objects, intensifies depending on the state of their relationship.

It was during these, our darkest days, and especially the last months of 1979, that I stole most things from the Keskin Household. By now these objects were no longer just tokens of moments in my life, nor merely mementoes; to me they were elemental to those moments. (2009, p. 511)

Kemal is sustained by what Daniel Miller calls, 'The Comfort of Things' (2009), or as the title of chapter 28 in the novel says, 'The Consolation of Objects'.

These stolen objects become emblematic of their relationship and, after Fusin's death Kemal decides that a museum should be opened to her memory containing them. This museum would be called The Museum of Innocence and would be an archive of their love.



Figure 42: The Consolation of Objects. Vitrine 28. (Pamuk, 2012, p. 138)

However, the book and the museum are not linear or separable endeavours. The last chapter of the novel describes how Kemal helps Pamuk, the author, to plan the museum, an example of their inextricable origins and an example of the narrator featuring in his own fiction. Kemal says:

Please finish the book now, and also write that each and every object in the museum must be softly lit from within the display cases in a way that conveys my close and devoted attention. (2009, p. 718)

In 2012 Pamuk opened such a museum, under the same name, apparently mimicking the idea within his own novel. The museum contains 83 cabinets, one for each chapter with each named accordingly and filled with the objects found in the novel.

In 1999, Pamuk bought the building that houses the museum and where, in the novel, Fusin lived. However, the idea of the museum and the book began in the 1980's and had emerged from a desire to salvage and protect old Istanbul from the ravages of westernisation and decay and to pay homage to *huzun*, a Proustian melancholy that grips the city and its inhabitants with a communal sense of loss and longing. According to Pamuk, the melancholy of Istanbul is *huzun*, a Turkish word whose Arabic root denotes a feeling of deep spiritual loss but also a hopeful way of looking at life, it is, 'a state of mind that is ultimately as life-affirming as it is negating'. (2006, p.91)

It could be argued that it is *huzun* in the relationship between Kemal and Fusin that keeps their love alive. Despite the apparent pathos of their situation, even though Kemal can never have the relationship that he wants, and despite dedicating his life to her, before Kemal dies he:

Kissed Fusin's photograph lovingly, and placed it with care into the breast pocket of his jacket. He then smiled at me, victorious. Let everyone know, I lived a very happy life. (2008, p. 728).

Pamuk describes the process of writing the novel as one where he collected objects and constructed the story around them or:

sometimes by doing precisely the opposite: trolling around the shops for objects that the novel required, or having them made by artists and craftsmen. (2011, p. 122)

It was the limits of imagination that led Pamuk to open the museum, thereby constructing a reality that is fed, in turn, by the imagination. So, what is this museum of innocence, an archive, an art work, a work of fiction, or is it a giant interpretation board, describing the novel?

Pamuk writes:

There is, of course, a strong bond that holds the novel and the museum together: both are products of my imagination, dreamed up word by word, object by object, and picture by picture over a long period of time. This is perhaps also why the novel and the museum each tell a story. The objects displayed in the museum are described in the novel. Still, words are one thing, objects are another. The images that words generate in our mind are one thing; the memory of an old object used once upon a time is another. But imagination and memory have a strong affinity, and this is the basis of the affinity between the novel and the museum. (2012, p. 18)

The Museum of Innocence, in book and museum form, captures the past through a personal narrative of loss and longing, but its impact does not depend on any knowledge or specific cultural experience, instead it relies on the human urge to identify with objects, and to make them our own, through narrative, (Miller, Kopytoff, Turkle, Connor) and there is a long tradition in fiction of satisfy this urge however, Pamuk does not rely on this instinct for attachment alone to tell his story. He further obscures the real from the fictional, with the strands of truth and invention being lost in the labyrinth of construction. At the back of the novel there is a printed museum ticket which can be used to get into the actual Museum of Innocence illustrating the blurring of boundaries between both endeavours.

When constructing the cabinets in the museum, Pamuk realised the need for aesthetic, as well as narrative, judgements to be made and that a literal representation of each chapter would not be adequate.

No, I couldn't just display the objects in order like books on a shelf. The boxes have to have a special structure and an aura: they each had to have a particular soul. (2012, p. 61)

In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart states that:

The collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context. (2007, p. 151)

And I would argue that this exemplifies the process of creating the museum of innocence in both its forms.

On a tour around the museum I was told by Irem, my guide, that visitors often wanted to know if the story is true: Is Orhan Pamuk, Kemal. Has Pamuk loved in this way and are the objects real. The need for the truth is evident. Some visitors come specifically to confess to the part they have played in the manufacture of the truth e.g. a woman who had been photographed and whose photo had been used to create an old newspaper came specifically to confess to this fact.

This museum wanders from the real to the fictional to the constructed to the invented, the copied and the borrowed. It is like any story, partially true and often fanciful. There is no truth in this museum other than its own existence and the truth people want to find there. It is an art installation on a permanent and large scale, the cigarette ends are real, but who smoked them?



Figure 43 : 4213 Cigarette ends. Vitrine 68 (Pamuk, 2012, p.229)

The paintings, ostensibly made by Ahmet Isikci, are painted by Pamuk. The hand of the novelist is all over the building. None of it is real except to those people, who seeing the fictional bottles of soda say, 'I remember drinking from one of those'. There is, however, one strand that could be described as *real* and that is the cultural references to old Istanbul that permeate the book and the museum. The references within the novel to cultural morés and cultural change under Atatürk and the lifestyles and habits of the characters, could be said to have more truth in them than the rest, except that, as middle class, westernised and educated, Pamuk's view of the city can only be partial.

Within the book objects, such as Fusan's earring, play a pivotal role and in the museum it has its own cabinet and the spiral motif of the design is reflected in the construction of the building. Some objects have greater value than others and this is determined by Pamuk. This raises questions about the role of the curator or archivist in determining emphasis. According to John Ridner (2009) in *From Polders to Postmodernism*,

Postmodern archiving theory recognises that:

Regardless of social status, each individual's truth is incomplete.
(2009, p. 137)

And MacNeil states in *Archival Theory and Practice*:

The truthfulness of our truths.... Is necessarily constrained by the limitations of our individual perspectives; our truths are at best partial ones. (In Ridner, 2009, p. 137)

Like many archives, the Museum of Innocence is incomplete, but unlike most archives the missing elements are waiting to be constructed. Some of the cabinets are partially, or completely, empty with a partly or completely drawn, curtain indicating this fact.

The museum has made a call for souvenirs of old Istanbul although it is not clear what will be done with them. This implies that either the project will continue without the book, or that the objects will be used for the closed or incomplete cabinets or that *huzun* may be the enduring theme of the museum.

In response to this call, I have painted a picture of a Turkish Coffee Pot and I have sent them a photograph of it. This coffee pot is a cheap pot bought in a market but its patina suggests luxury and worth. It reminds me of Istanbul, not only because I bought it there but because, to me, Istanbul represents the collision of old and new and is a place where nothing is quite what it seems. The background is suggestive of landscape and raises questions about objects and place (Figure 44)



Figure 44: Coffee Pot from Istanbul.

So what effect does translating the narrative from words into objects have on the narrative?

Pamuk states:

Whatever the reason may be, the sounds, smells, and images of the world we encounter in novels evoke a sensation of authenticity we fail to find in life itself...When we read a good novel, a part of our mind thinks we are immersed in reality – and that life is exactly like this experience. Meanwhile though, our senses are reporting that this isn't happening at all. This paradoxical situation is what leaves us feeling unsatisfied. (201, p. 124)

I believe that this attempt to reconcile the limits of both the novel and the museum is where an understanding of this project lies, and that despite the intentions of the artist, author, and curator i.e. Orhan Pamuk, the real value of this museum is the hidden narratives that emerge from it and that reside with the viewer. The cabinets are full of objects that can be easily identified with: cigarette ends, newspaper cuttings, clothes, tea cups, shoes; some are full of objects with no clear

narrative attached to them, except for the title of the chapter within which they feature. Other cabinets are specific representations of a scene in the book and one gets a detective's satisfaction from identifying its source. The layers of interpretation are myriad and in this sense it is like inhabiting the novel, or a life, or a history, or nostalgia, or loss, or longing, or curiosity about a world that may or may not be true. So, is this museum an archive, one that references the book but does not contain it and if so, what is being archived? Is it the social history of Istanbul in the first half of the 20th Century told through a love story?

As Morgan and Pritchard state:

A material object acquires a cultural biography as it moves through different hands and objects are transformed by their contexts and their owners, (2005, p. 44)

The Birthday Ceremony (1980 – 1993) by artist Sophie Calle is another example where objects become signifier, in this case of friendship, love and security. Calle held an annual birthday party over a 14 year period where her friends' gifts were displayed in a glass fronted cabinet until the following year when they were replaced by a new set of gifts. The last year's objects were stored, but available for her to look at when she was feeling stressed and fearful. Calle claims that by looking at the gifts and reminding herself of how much she was loved and the nature of her friendships, through the objects, that she managed to overcome her feelings of insecurity. This demonstrates the power of the gift (Mauss, 1969) its transformative qualities and the object as signifier activated by memory.

Chapter 5. Collectors and Collecting

We cannot be proud of someone else's souvenir unless the narrative is extended to include our relationship with the object's owner or unless... we transform the souvenir into the collection. (Susan Stewart, 2007, p.137)

5.1 Collecting

Collecting is the process and the collection is the result, some collections are deliberate and orchestrated (first editions, a complete set), whilst others emerge from the habit of acquisition. Souvenir collections are often an unintended outcome of the act of acquiring a number of single souvenirs. This is what has happened with my collection of souvenirs. Each object has been acquired independently of the others but over time themes and groupings appear in what Susan Pearce calls an 'accumulation', 'a group' and 'a hoard'. (1998, p.2) but to an outsider would be a collection. The arrangement of my religious memorabilia is random and grouped, and is representative of a range of religions, their common denominator being representations of faith. I have many other religious souvenirs in my house that are not grouped with similar objects.



Figure 45: My religious souvenirs 1.



Figure 46: My religious souvenirs 2.

So, I would agree that my collection is souvenir based and within that grouping it is possible to identify shared qualities but as a collection the common denominator is me. I am particularly interested in the relationship of the singular object with the group and how it affects the narrative, as the narrative of the group is different to the narrative of the individual object.

Alsop states in the *Rare Art Traditions. The History of Collecting and its Linked Phenomena* (1982) that, 'to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy.' (1982, p. 70). I would argue that the process of incorporating a souvenir into a collection results in a degradation of the original item, as re-contextualisation occurs and the objects lose their narrative independence. This is one of the many paradoxes of the souvenir and the collection.

Elvie Whittaker in *Romance with Things-The Collector and Tourism* describes collecting as:

The acquisition and management of seemingly arbitrarily chosen objects that are transformed from their original intended function into a sacred object. (2008, p. 2)

The words *arbitrary* and *sacred* are of note here; the act of purchasing a souvenir is intended but often the range of souvenirs and the very fact of them being available is arbitrary. The idea of the fetishisation of the

object, thereby rendering it sacred, is reinforced by the acts of bestowal that occur in buying, owning, displaying and cherishing the souvenir. It is removed from its original location and imbued with *otherness*.

Whittaker also describes collectors as:

Individuals (who) have a strong impulse to domesticate the chosen objects... giving them a good home. (2008, p. 2)

The object is domesticated in that it becomes part of the private world of the individual even if the collection ends up in a museum or gallery.

Walter Benjamin writes about his collection of books, this essay being made more poignant by the part that his unwillingness to leave his library played in his fate. Although I do not wish to focus on the motivations of collectors in general, I do feel that there are similarities between the collector and the souvenir owner and their respective relationships to the objects that they own. There is some discussion to be had about the difference between active collecting and accidental collections. Collectors whose aim is to collect a full set become more interested in the completion of the set rather than the objects themselves, whereas souvenir buyers are mainly interested in the provenance and experience of collecting their objects and only realise over time that there are groups forming which could be described as a collection.

Walter Benjamin talks about the passion of collecting:

Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories, (1999, p. 364)

Enshrined in the collection are memories of acquisition, characteristics and value. Benjamin also talks about the nature of the collector's relationship with the objects as one:

Which does not emphasise their functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. (1999, p. 364)

This echoes Baudrillard's description of use and non-use value (chapter 1). Benjamin also describes the nostalgic power of the collection:

As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired. (1999, p. 364)

Ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him: it is he who lives in them. (1999, p. 369)

This chimes with *private singularisation* (Kopytoff 1986) in relation to the biography of things and the extended self (Belk 1988) where ownership of objects is a way of exercising control in an uncertain world.

5.2 How Collectors Regard Themselves

Reporting on the Contemporary Collecting Survey (Pearce, 1993) it appears that the bulk of collectors who were interviewed about their collections did not regard themselves as collectors even though they answered 'yes' when asked if they were collectors. 30% replied that they only regarded themselves in this way once it had been suggested by the survey, even though most of the respondents had collections that were equivalent in size to those of recognised collectors. (1998, p. 3). Pearce states:

Collecting as a process works in the shadowland, making its meaning on the edge where the practices of the past, the politics of present power, and the poetic capacity of each human being blur together. (1998, p. 1)

The poetic capacity of each human being is where the contradictions lie, as demonstrated by the interview below.

5.2.1 An Interview with a Collector

In 2012 I interviewed a collector, of glass and guitars (Appendix 3). RK has collected glass for decades, he collects Morano glass as well as pieces that he likes and they can be cheap or expensive. He has recently sold half of his original collection of approximately 900 pieces. He admits that by talking about the collection he has realised its past value and meaning, although he

questions those values and meaning now.



Figure 47: Open shelf display of glass

RK attributes his need to collect to what he calls *aspects of personality*, by this he means that the drive to collect is part of him that fulfils a need. He is 73 and is having therapy and feels that he is not compelled to collect any more. He now thinks that collecting is a form of madness that he has to explain:

So I've just realised that that anchor, it's almost trying to find a meaning for your existence through these lumps of whatever it is, you know, it could be brass or guitars or glass or whatever it is. But I do now at this advanced age see the madness in it...All the other things that I'm thinking about, it's just justifications, that's why madness. They're just justifications for having this *junk* around me.

By using the word *junk* RK is making a value judgement which is contradicted throughout this interview. This is common when people talk about souvenirs; they regard them as valueless yet valuable, but this position is less common

with collectors whose single theme collections are more consciously constructed and maintained, than the general accumulation of souvenirs that are consequently valued differently.

RK talks about the apparently random process of collecting and what is important about the individual pieces, indicating that he is always interested in acquiring new pieces for his collection.

I've just realised that now, [...] especially if I'm looking at them individually, as singular pieces, [...] that they've come, a) from a different place and b) from a different kind of background, their provenance is totally different, most of it's mysterious in that sense, so I find myself trawling charity shops or I make a beeline for a place because I know there's one particular piece there.

Although RK talks about losing his need to collect and of disposing of his glass, he still wants to keep some of his collection and speaks of the aesthetic in a way that is typical of Object Subject Relations (Sartre 1943) in that it is mediated by a narrative. RK enjoys the contradictions of his collection in terms of provenance and value and likes confounding the hierarchies implicit in them.

Aesthetically I love some of them and some of them are so grotesque that they go full circle and become lovely for some weird reason...That blue and white thing is so far over the top, I had to have it. ...Some of it's so ugly, it's past ugly and yet still it's got a place in amongst it. There's something egalitarian about that. Because I love throwing it all like that, just up on shelves, where it mingles with its superiors or its inferiors. (Figure 49)

RK recognises that the way he collects has changed; he now needs a few valuable pieces in the collection, so that when he dies it is worth inheriting.

What it needs to make it a proper collection is a few good bits thrown in. You can't have it all hoping that it's going to become legit, you know. It's still going to be tat in forty years, most of it, whereas if I put a couple of good pieces in every now and then, it'll kind of make it something worth leaving.



Figure 48: Whitefriars Glass



Figure 49: A mixed display of glass on open shelves

This introduces a different notion of value to his actions. Before this RK was collecting for himself, now he is collecting for others and for posterity. This in turn affects notions of value although he still thinks that the collection is mainly *tat*.

He also talks about the rewards and entitlements of collecting pieces, they are a reward for having put the collection together; he is rewarding himself for creating the collection, by adding to it, he deserves them.

I've got a few bob spare so I'm really ... I deserve those two pieces and I bought them.

Although he knew that he 'had enough pieces'. He also begins to be influenced by scarcity and rarity and takes the advice of dealers. He talks about buying 2 pieces instead of 1 because they were becoming rare.

I remember thinking at the time, I don't need these two, I've got enough and up to now it's been a civilised, organic way of collecting but suddenly I thought, the one thing dealers always say to me is it's getting harder to find and, when you do find it at auction, you have to really pay for it. So what used to be a trade price has now become ... a retail price.

The use of the word 'civilised' here indicates the distaste with which RK views collecting for profit and in using monetary value as a primary motivation. He also recognises that the need to pass the collection on is about *posterity*.

RK started collecting in 1985 and bought the first piece because it was peculiar. He bought a glass table lamp, attracted by the design and in the belief that the light would glow through it. He was wrong but he still likes the piece. A week later the person who sold him the lamp said he had a piece of red glass that RK may like that he used to put his keys in. Then he noticed its qualities and was amazed. It was robust and beautiful and he began to notice other pieces of glass.

And it never scratched, it never scratched. And I thought, this thing's a real survivor. It's like ... And it's this ... And I suddenly noticed how deep that red was and I thought, I've never seen a red quite as deep as this and I suddenly looked at it as glass. I went "Glass!" And then I suddenly started seeing other bits of glass.

RK is describing seeing, and not seeing the object, giving it a use and then recognising the beauty of the colour and the material. He changes the display of the collection every week, indicating that there is an element of show in the aesthetic of the collection. But who is the display for?

RK apologised for the dust on the collection, he used to wash and dust it regularly but now he is too old and infirm. I asked if this affected the aesthetic of it, RK says no but yes, again illustrating the contradictions inherent in his relationship with the collection.

Umm, in my head it does, yeah. I mean, I'm not looking at it, going Oh, it's dusty. What I'm thinking is, I wish it was clean.

The relationship between the actual collection and the conflicting voices in RK's head, the beauty, the value, the dust, and the meanings, all exemplify the ambiguity of bestowing value through ownership and narrative.

RK returns to hierarchies of value and taste when he talks about the Murano glass which is upstairs, it is kept separately because of its aesthetic value. He feels that it deserves to be on its own and not tainted by the less valuable pieces, 'the riff raff'.

...the Murano stuff in the glass case, I like it so much I don't want it mixed up with the riff raff ... it looks really good on its own, stands very well on its own. And so I've separated those.

RK also collects guitars and ascribes his need to have them as bestowal, a superstitious belief that a rare and valuable guitar will make him play better. This magical power of *affordance* (Connor, 2011) does not apply to his glass

because it has no practical use value for RK. As a musician his guitar collection is much more potent in this regard.

I thought, there's always an element ... or this probably doesn't apply to the glass, [...] with guitars [...] there's always an element of, when I get the next one, it'll make me play properly.

This interview illustrates the inherent contradictions in investing value in objects and the difficulties in defining what value means. It is clear that this collection has great personal value to RK, he enjoys its materiality and colour but over time its value and the narrative has changed, he is no longer driven by need, and now that he is older the question of its value to others after he dies has presented itself. He is very house proud and feels uncomfortable with the accumulating dust and he thinks that his collection needs validating by containing some valuable pieces. It is almost as if the collection has served its purpose and has become so influenced by external considerations that it has to be seen in a different way. He is also in less predictable financial circumstances, so monetary value has now become part of the narrative. However, RK can still tell the stories of all of the pieces and I would suggest that his apparently conflicted feelings about the collection indicate that he still has a hugely important emotional attachment to the glass, either individually or collectively. My *collection* of souvenirs resembles RK's in size and there are undoubtedly issues that we share about storage, display and the realisation that one's collection is necessarily finite. These considerations eventually emerge through the act of collecting but are not present if, what becomes the collection emerges over time through the purchase of a range of single objects. This also raises the question of when a group of single objects becomes a collection and what the implications are.

5.3 Gallery and Museum Collections: Changing Narratives.

Collecting ransacks the past to create a present idiosyncrasy.
(Pearce 1998, p. 13)

Personal collections can be as extensive as those in public or civic institutions and they are sometimes identified by the name of the collector, for example, Charles Saatchi or Sir John Soane. In these cases it is the collector who determines the collection's character and content, unlike the British Museum which has a national collection and a very particular institutional identity. Also, the individual collection can change in ways that institutional collections cannot. (Charles Saatchi is known for regularly selling large parts of his collection to make room for new works of art.) Once a collection is in the public domain and is mediated by catalogues and archiving, it becomes defined by a public identity as there is an expectation that collections in large institutions such as the British Museum and the V&A will conform to accepted museum practices using periods, or chronologies, or geographical regions as ways of presenting artefacts. This is changing to some degree and sometimes through the intervention of an artist. Grayson Perry's *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at The British Museum in 2011 is a case in point. The Director, Neil MacGregor, states about the exhibition,

The resulting juxtapositions are something that none of those of us working in the museum ever would – or could – have brought into being. (2011, p. 7)

Taxonomies play an important part in fixing the narrative of collections and artists often use them as a way of grouping objects in particular and unusual ways. In September 2011 I had a solo show at the Gallery of Wonder at Newcastle University (Appendix 4), where I played with taxonomies. My show was called, *The Narrative of Origins* and my artist's statement said:

What is the narrative of origins? It is the narrative of interiority and authenticity. It is not a narrative of the object; it is a narrative of the possessor (Stewart, 2007).

Behind every fact there is a story and it is here that other sources of wonder lies. We may see insects, artefacts, museum collections, departments, all grouping similar things together but behind the evidence lies cultural norms, beliefs, and human judgement. Each story depends on the existence of an object, and the human interpretation of it.

Who is to say which story is true, and does it matter?

Part of the narrative of collections is the names that they are given. The Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus devised the current

system of two-part Latin names in 1753 and this construct is an internationally recognised method of identifying and understanding species.

This work explores the use of taxonomies and the two part naming system as a way of disrupting their accepted forms and creating a new narrative behind them. It plays with how groups of objects are configured and who creates the categories that are catalysts for their stories.

Pinned, like butterflies in cases, are photographs of objects, paintings, and people, offered up for re-telling.

I made a series of boxes similar to butterfly display boxes (Appendix 4.1- 4.6) and using grouping of my photographs I pinned them down as if they were butterfly or insect specimens. Each box had a theme such as faces or wings and in the case of the box in Figure 50, *Legs*. The narrative that accompanies this box aims to highlight the different stories that objects can tell. I have legs, I am a table. What qualities of *tableness* have the objects in this box got, none, they are all horses. My intention was to humorously challenge accepted taxonomies in a light hearted way and also to display my collection of souvenirs and photographs in a new way. . Foucault in *The Order of Things* argues that the Linnaean system is:

Arbitrary in its basis, since it deliberately ignores all differences and all identities not related to the selected structure. (2002, p. 153)

Through this work I have tried to exploit the similarities implied by but, 'not related to the normally selected structure'.



Figure 50: The Narrative of Origins at the Gallery of Wonder (2011)

The artist, Mark Dion, also uses display as a way of presenting the archaeology of people's lives and places. He subverts conventional museum practices by elevating the mundane and presenting his work in cabinets modelled on the cabinet of curiosities. He also examines the role of the museum and plays with the notion of the artefact and archaeological finds. His narrative is concerned with the value of human life and the environment, as well as elevating the value of the individual artefact, through its presentation as part of the collection. In *Tate Thames Dig* (2000) he uses archaeology as a means of accessing culture through excavation and artefacts. [Rattemeyer (2004), Shaw (2007) Vincent, (2005), Hudson (2006)]

Dion's *Tate Thames' Dig* was a site specific work which involved excavating the banks of the river Thames at Southwark by its inhabitants who were part of the work. In a sense this work was process rather than outcome driven and the participants were collecting their own history.

Dion's work is concerned with location and objects and how they inform each other in the way that souvenirs and collections reveal the intentions of the collector. Dion re-frames the collection by rendering it personal in the same way that the narrative personalises the souvenir.

In this chapter I have highlighted the process by which objects inadvertently become part of collections, in contrast to clearly orchestrated collections, and how the notion of the *whole* demands different attention to that of the individual piece. I have also shown that notions of aesthetic, monetary, social and emotional value shift with the creation of the collection and that the very distinguishing feature of the single object or souvenir becomes obscured by other concerns and narratives.

Chapter 6. Style and Value.

6.1 Your Kitsch, My Souvenir.

Having defined three types of souvenirs; Tourist Souvenirs, Ethnic Souvenirs and Personal Souvenirs, I would like to consider another category that is defined by style and that has a widely recognised, deeply embedded narrative. This style is Kitsch, where the prevailing narrative is nostalgia and the commonplace. Kitsch describes both the style and the objects, and is an example of the market creating an appetite for objects, useful and, possibly decorative, through mass production - mass production and class aesthetics being the common denominators of Kitsch. Clement Greenberg, who criticised the cultural value of Kitsch, describes the climate within which Kitsch emerged.

To fill the demand of a new market, a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, Kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide. (2005, p. 5)

The aesthetic and cultural value of Kitsch is contested and the position taken by Greenberg and Kulka accords with attitudes to the souvenir - that both are cheap imitations of the real. Greenberg's arguments are based on the superiority of 'genuine culture', a term that becomes increasingly difficult to define, due to globalisation and post modernism. Binkley (2000) however, attributes to Kitsch a 'unique aesthetic' and argues for the importance of repetition, which is a characteristic of mass produced objects and mass production itself.

Kitsch, [...] preserves a unique aesthetic sensibility that spurns creativity per se while it endorses a repetition of the familiar and a grounding in an affirmation of the everyday. (2000, p.134)

Binkley values repetition and the domestic and argues for the 'uniqueness of Kitsch as a distinct style, one that celebrates repetition and conventionality as a value in itself' (2000, p. 133)

Whereas Greenberg takes a contrary view of the value of repetition, stating that, 'Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations'. (2005, p. 5)

Kitsch very clearly typifies the qualities of the souvenir in a socially ironic way, something that Kulka describes as the 'deceptive nature of Kitsch' (1996, p. 2). Whereas the souvenir may be a degraded item, Kitsch has cultural kudos through its collectability and increasing market value. Although not used to describe souvenirs in terms of personal value, Kitsch, and the reproduction of Kitsch, is clearly about nostalgia and longing. It exemplifies nostalgia and we long to own it, hence the successful market in Kitsch objects. Greenberg states that, 'Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times' (1939, p. 40). By 'the same' Greenberg means that despite changes in style Kitsch continues to satisfy popular tastes. In relation to the pervasive nature of this style, Milan Kundera writes:

None of us is superman enough to escape Kitsch completely. No matter how we scorn it, Kitsch is an integral part of the human condition; Kitsch has its source in categorical agreement. But what is the basis of the being? God? Mankind? Struggle? Love? Man?...since opinions vary, there are various Kitsches: catholic, protestant, jewish, communist, and fascist democratic. (1984, pp. 256 -7)

The universality of Kitsch in style and content and, as with souvenirs, its ubiquity, sets up contradictions in relation to value. Kitsch could be described as the democratisation, or bastardisation, of style. It could be the commodification of taste which, on the one hand may mean its corruption or, on the other hand, a means by which the consumer exercises control over the production of taste. Defining Kitsch is problematic, as the discourse surrounding it is mainly pejorative, perhaps because those who enjoy it do not care to defend it. It is steeped in High Art versus Low Art aesthetics. However, the overlap between Kitsch and souvenirs, in that they are both vehicles for nostalgia, loss and longing and provide narrative attachment, as well as

being generally disdained, is important to this enquiry. Furthermore, the primacy of the market and its impact on design in the case of Kitsch is echoed in the interview with the souvenir manufacturer in Haiti in the following chapter.

6.1.2. 1950's and 60's Kitsch: The Individual and the Mass Produced.

Plastic is the dominant material of 1950's and 60's Kitsch along with bright fluorescent colours, both of which represented domestic and social freedoms following the privations of the Second World War. In Kitsch there is room for the personal and the universal to go hand in hand. As Kulka states, 'The aim of Kitsch is not to create new needs or expectations but to satisfy existing ones' (1996, p. 27). Kitsch appeals to a particular market and can be bought as original pieces or as mass produced copies. In the book, *Kitsch Deluxe* (2003) Lesley Gillian surveys different types of Kitsch and gives examples of collections that illustrate this. The range is extensive under such headings: cocktails, J.H. Lynch, cowboys and cowgirls, diners, neon, religious Kitsch, royals, wireware, Tretchikoff, gnomes, Barbarella, shag pile, thunderbirds, tropical fish, dogs, fake flowers, flying ducks, Elvis, Witco, Tiki, hula girl, snow domes, Lava lamps, Indian Kitsch, flamenco dolls, cactus Kitsch, holiday postcards, jungle prints, Formica, shell art, flamingos. The range is truly impressive and whilst I was looking at the photographs I realised how much Kitsch I own. I was surprised by this, as all the pieces that I have were not acquired through a desire to collect Kitsch but under the broader heading of souvenirs, and each has a singular and special narrative attached to it which has nothing to do with style.

So, what is the narrative of Kitsch and what does it say about taste and value? Defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (2012) as 'worthless pretentiousness in Art', Kitsch is generally understood to mean cheap and tawdry, with its association with imitation. There appears to be no dictionary that yet defines Kitsch as a modern cultish trend that sees educated aesthetes shamelessly embracing pink – plastic lawn flamingos, plaster poodles and indeed, 'worthless pretentious art'. This contemporary

attachment to Kitsch is knowingly ironic and born out of a distancing and a wish to satirise the seriousness with which Greenberg et al demonised the sentimental low tastes that Kitsch epitomises. Sam Binkley, in the *Journal of Material Culture* (2000.5. p135), describes the value of Kitsch as that:

which glories in its embeddedness in routines, its faithfulness to conventions and its rootedness in the modest cadence of daily life, works to re-embed its consumers, to replenish stocks of ontological security, and to shore up a sense of cosmic coherence in an unstable world of challenge, innovation and creativity. (2000, p.135)

Contemporary collectors and Fine Artists (Charles Saatchi, Jeff Koons, Peter Blake) are fully aware of the safety of Kitsch but choose to make it dangerous by engaging with it and thereby challenging its cultural value.

Kitsch film director, John Waters once said, 'In order to acquire bad taste, one must have very, very good taste' (2003, p. 8) which is a shorthand for acknowledging the code and making it his own. Kitsch embraces the 'fallen object' (McCannell (1976), the ubiquitous and the special, it has moved from the cheap, to the expensive and the exclusive. It has a shared narrative of the past and a new narrative of today. Kitsch speaks of mass production and the appropriation of historical styles; the Baroque, the Victorians, the Mexicans, Hollywood, and 1950's working class taste, that all share a narrative of nostalgia, loss and longing (Stewart. 2007) without longing for a specific style. As with souvenirs Kitsch becomes invested with personal narratives. This is what distinguishes Kitsch collections from single souvenirs. With individual souvenirs the public narrative can differ, a copy of the Eiffel Tower has a range of narratives attached to it; engineering, Paris, the French, recognition of nationhood, which is then overlaid by the personal narrative of the owner. Buying Kitsch is mainly about owning a fantasy with a 'public' narrative of origins, which is more embedded in the style rather than its *souvenirness* being as personal signifier.

In *Kitsch Deluxe* (2003) Mary Rose Young describes the interior of her house in the Forest of Dean as being furnished with a mix of 'cheap

rubbishy furniture' and 'antiques'. It's a bit like a theatre set, so it needs a few, nice expensive things to give it a bit of authority'. (2003, p. 74). As with RK's glass collection, the language that Mary Rose Young uses is revealing. She has actively created her home environment, and has made decision based on taste and value. She and her husband have invested time, effort and money in creating a home that is full of ceramics, colour and painted furniture. In terms of creating the effect it has 'cost' a lot yet she still attributes value in the form of authority to things that are expensive and 'nice', implying that the rest is not nice either. (Claude Lévi Strauss: Binary Opposition, 1962). This is the language of Kitsch and the souvenir. Copies do not have the same value as originals, and Kitsch is still considered to be cheap imitations made of cheap materials, although now Kitsch may be very costly to buy. For example, Jim Pooke and Alan Bradford have spent most of their money and time collecting Kitsch.

Jim believes that his "Addiction to Kitsch" is all about rekindling memories, but as one of six children in a working-class East End family, it was more often about remembering things that other people had.

(2003, p. 127)

This is a double dose of loss and longing, a longing for something that Jim never had and which he satisfies, in order to feel safe, through Kitsch.

6.1.3. Kitsch and Hierarchies of Taste and Value.

As Greenberg has stated, the style of Kitsch remains the same even if the form and content changes. It is its relationship to culture and what it references that is constant, thereby accounting for the ease with which Kitsch can be identified, whereas, despite sharing some of the same attributes, the souvenir is not so easily categorised. The public facing nature of Kitsch masks any *souvenirness* that it might contain which

may also explain the feeling of antipathy that Kitsch elicits. It is a blunt stylistic instrument, one that is mass produced, commonplace and easily accessed, whereas the narrative of the souvenir, the very thing that defines it, is hidden.

Greenberg states that a:

Precondition for Kitsch, a condition without which Kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully formed cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions and perfect self consciousness Kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends. (1996, p. 27)

In this statement the exploiter seems to be Kitsch, preying on culture and implicitly corrupting it and us. In his article *Dream Kitsch*, Benjamin states, 'It is the last mask of the banal, the one with which we adorn ourselves, in dreams and conversations, so as to take in the energies of an outlived world of things'. (1999, p. 4)

Kulka, Benjamin and Greenberg seem to describe Kitsch as if it is a predatory force and that, in the face of Kitsch, good taste and high art, and all the attributes afforded to art at its transformative best, will be routed. It also seems that Kitsch is a catalyst for class- taste hierarchies. It is mass produced and easily acquired and it satisfies the human desire for sentimentality and nostalgia and it fails to raise questions; rather it satiates an unsophisticated desire for art as interior design. However, like Binkley, Daniel Miller describes aesthetics as, 'shorthand for internal order and consistency' (2009, p. 17) and I would argue that it is nostalgia; fixing the past in the present, that provides consistency and order. It seems that the debate is about good and bad aesthetics and cultural elitism. Defending High Art in the face of the market may be a lost cause in the light of the ease with which High Art can be transformed into Kitsch: witness the printing of images of priceless original paintings onto souvenirs on sale at national galleries throughout the world. As Calienescu states, 'Determining whether an

object is Kitsch always involves considerations of purpose and context'.
(1987, p. 275)

The production of Kitsch is prey to all the motivations of mass production: to make money from the market and to produce multiples whilst the Art market prides itself in making money from the original and the unique. The implication being, in line with Walter Benjamin's thoughts on the diminution of the aura in the *Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1969) that; authenticity, aura, the soul, or some valuable essence, has been eradicated by the process of making many copies, and that good taste is about singularity, individuality and invention. I would suggest that the collectors of Kitsch would argue that their collections do not differ from those in museums or private collections in that they have cultural and aesthetic value, and that they create individual looks and environments in the same way as any Fine Art collector. So, is rarity the key to the value rather than the intrinsic qualities of the object? This raises questions about how we account for changing aesthetics, both personally and culturally, and whether today's Kitsch is the museum artefact of tomorrow. Artist Jeff Koons uses Kitsch in much of his work. He makes sculptures of widely recognised cheap disposable objects in expensive materials: for example Rabbit (1986) where he cast a plastic inflatable rabbit in stainless steel. He also plays with size, reversing the miniaturisation of the souvenir and expanding the mundane or banal, such as balloons into monumental pieces (Banality, 1988). His work is easily identifiable through his use of popular imagery such as balloon dogs, Popeye, advertising images, pornographic images, and popular cultural icons such as singers, for example; *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988) is a series of three full size statues of the singer cuddling his chimpanzee, all of which sold for millions of dollars. Koons employs ironic distancing in his work, nodding at the cultural status of Kitsch, while operating within a High Art context. His work evidences a knowingness that is absent from the collectors of Kitsch who are featured in *Kitsch Deluxe* (6.1). Koons is ironically playing Greenberg at his own game, allowing High Art collectors to like and collect Kitsch, whilst reinforcing cultural divisions that Greenberg employs. Binkley (2000) argues that:

Kitsch surpasses bad taste through a curious reversal which rehabilitates its failure, its conventionality and its duplicity into a sign of its humanity, redeeming its shortcomings by applying them to the maximisation of charm. (2000, p. 140)

Even Walter Benjamin, who writes so critically about the loss of 'tradition' and the value of a 'unique existence' states:

The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. (1966, p. 215)

He is acknowledging the power of the individual to reactivate the reproduction and to give it meaning. The relationship between Kitsch and souvenirs is fluid, but I argue that the balance of narrative in Kitsch is different to that of the tourist souvenir, in that the culturally recognized style or currency in Kitsch remains dominant.

6.2. Value and Authenticity.

Walter Benjamin raises questions about value and authenticity in relation to mechanical or mass reproduction, proposing that through reproducing the image its, 'aura' is diminished, and it becomes distanced, in a negative way.

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term 'aura' and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. (1969, p. 4)

I wonder if the aura of a monument, place or event is diminished through its replication in the form of a souvenir, and whether the way that copies are

regarded by Benjamin has contributed to current attitudes to authenticity. If this is the case, I would argue that to regard the aura as immutable, and therefore only capable of being spoiled by reproduction, is to underestimate the value of the new object. I would argue that the souvenir is *redeemed* by its narrative, whether personal or cultural, thereby giving it its own authenticity.

Following a discussion (2013) with a senior inspector at Historic Scotland about determining value in ancient monuments she drew my attention to the criteria which governs their scheduling. Although, these criteria have been designed to deal with buildings and sites, not artefacts, the categories that have to be fulfilled resonate with the qualities that need to exist for an object to be a souvenir.

The key categories are:

Intrinsic value,
Contextual Value,
Associative Value.

In the following passage I have substituted the word *souvenir* for *monument*.

The Cultural significance of any *souvenir*, whether of national importance or more local significance, can be characterised by reference to one or more of the following; the characteristics are in three groups:

Intrinsic – those inherent in the *souvenir*;

Contextual – those relating to the *souvenir's* place in the landscape or in the body of existing knowledge;

Associative Characteristics - more subjective assessments of the associations of the *souvenir*, including with current or past aesthetic preferences.

(Associative Scottish Historic Environment Policy Dec 2011 Annex 2) (Appendix 5)

These criteria neatly describe the differing value of souvenirs:

The *intrinsic* value of a souvenir may be in its rarity, beauty, cost or collective cultural narrative value. The *contextual* value of a souvenir may be in its public narrative: For example, the Elgin Marbles or the narrative of the place

or object it is a souvenir of. The *Associative* value of the souvenir is contained within its personal narrative and characterises most souvenirs. However, souvenirs are vehicles for multiple narratives and may contain all three attributes. Ethnic or cultural souvenirs such as folkloric or craft objects are often more expensive than mass produced ones, although they are often produced on a large scale too, witness government textile and rug shops in India. The same rugs can be bought for a fraction of the price on the internet but the experience is not the same for the purchaser. In the case of the souvenir I would say that the key word to describe a souvenir is its *significance* to the owner. (Miller, 2008).

Daniel Miller argues that authenticity originates in the personal:

The authenticity of artifacts as cultural derives, not from their relationship to some historical style or manufacturing process - in other words, there is no truth or falsity immanent in them – but rather from their active participation in a process of social self creation in which they are directly constitutive of our understanding of ourselves and others. (1991, p. 215)

6.3. Value and Display

As described in Chapter 3, my paintings play with notions of value. I paint pictures of items that are often cheaply made and common, yet I bestow upon them the legacy of centuries of oil painting by using high quality materials and by using an established art form, thereby placing it within the same canon as the great masters. I also play with the painting's own status as object, which in turn questions its value. Is it to be looked at, or handled? The ambiguity of the value of the souvenir is reflected in the treatment of it on canvas and in the way that the paintings are hung when they are exhibited. The art gallery is a place full of hierarchies and assumptions about value, where 'the tourist gaze' (MacCannell, 1999) is replaced by the gallery visitor's gaze which is laden with expectations, particularly with regards to paintings. I aim to additionally disrupt these hierarchies by having no titles or numbers on the work, pricing all the work the same and hanging the work as if it has

emerged on the wall like a group of souvenirs. Sometimes I hang a painting singly because I want it to be seen alone, to pose questions about importance and value. This may be triggered by the aesthetics of the painting or because of the value of the souvenir I have painted. This approach replicates the way that I display my objects at home.

In my exhibition entitled *Objects of Desire* (2012) I aimed to set up an ironic distance that would lead the viewer to question what is meant by the exhibition's title. Are the paintings the objects of desire, is it my desire or could it be the viewer's? Are the objects that I have painted the objects of desire? Why would I want to enshrine, in paint an image of a donkey from Spain or a radish shaped condiment set? What is their value and to whom? As with all artists their work communicates with, and is interpreted by, the viewers and often we have no idea what the response might be. Visitors left their responses in a comments book, one of them wrote:

These paintings, as objects themselves, fill my heart with warmth... and also make me happy to know that the eclectic array of objects in my home is not a sign of some kind of eccentricity...necessarily. (02.04.2012).

Thereby echoing the sentiments expressed by Binkley when he states that:

Kitsch happiness expresses a universal human fellowship so inclusive and so fundamental as to be undeniable, and this universality is what knits together its various strands to a reassuring cosmic web; there is simply no one on the outside. (2000, p. 146)

My visitor looked at the show and immediately internalised it in order to validate her behaviour, and her own collection, thereby attaching a complex personal value to the exhibition and the work



Figures 51-52: Examples of a Gallery Hang (2012).

In considering notions of style I have identified similarities and differences between Kitsch and souvenirs as vehicles for personal narratives. Despite there being stylistic similarities between many mass produced travel souvenirs and Kitsch I maintain that the *formative narrative* of Kitsch, is its style, whereas the styles of travel souvenirs vary. Once again it is the 'narrative of origins' that makes them souvenirs and as a result, unlike Kitsch, it is easier for the stylistic narrative to be disrupted and subsumed by the personal. I would suggest that although the souvenir shares the same contested territory of value with Kitsch, it once again has a unique quality that gives it greater value: that of personal narrative. The debate about Kitsch is concerned with cultural corruption and lack of authenticity, likewise, the following chapter discusses how cultural stereotyping and cultural seepage occurs in the case of the souvenir.

Chapter 7. Cultural Currency and Cultural Seepage.

In this chapter I will be considering how the making of souvenirs influences cultural stereotyping and vice versa. I will comment on a range of research and also discuss an interview that I conducted with an aid worker who set up a souvenir business in Haiti in the 1980s.

As a result of their origins and associations, all travel or tourist souvenirs have cultural currency; however, as indicated below, notions of authenticity and representation are contested because of the influence of the market place and the global economy. It is evident that the manufacturing origins of many souvenirs have nothing to do with what, or where, they represent and this could be regarded as the identifying difference between tourist and, so called, ethnic souvenirs. Ethnic souvenirs are those that are made where they are bought and represent some aspect of indigenous folk or cultural heritage. Ethnicity suggests authenticity but this distinction is often blurred by cultural seepage, or the fluid nature of cultural representation.

7.1. Made in China.

Souvenirs, particularly if they are mass produced, are often made from cheap materials like plastic, resin and tin, as this ensures that they are affordable. They are often approximations, or interpretations, of real places and things, specifically designed for the mass tourist market. Despite their cheapness and ubiquity they carry a powerful cultural narrative with them. The origins of these easily recognisable cultural narratives are complex, particularly as souvenirs are often not made in the place in which they are eventually sold and are supposed to represent. Today many travel souvenirs are made in China.

The New York Taxi cab and the snow globe of Sydney (Figures 53-58) are made in China and are examples of globalised production and the global availability of images. They also illustrate the normalisation of the absurd in the world of travel souvenirs. The car has been miniaturised, while the city of Sydney, Australia where it rarely, if ever, snows, is captured in a snow globe.

The Hadrian's Wall Roman Soldier is miniaturised, is a pencil sharpener and is made in China. These souvenirs belong to me. I bought the taxi in New York on my 50th birthday. I lived in the city when I was 12 years old and had not been back since. The taxi is loaded with significant and pleasant memories, and epitomises my transient past and is evidence of it. I do not care that it was made in China. In fact I am amused by this fact and also by the idea that the doors open but I cannot get into it because of its size. I wonder if it matters whether the doors open or not, and if it does is this because the additional feature of opening doors means it has more value by being more realistic. Finally, I like the fact that I have a taxi on my chest of drawers.

The snow globe was sent to me by a close friend who lives in Sydney and who I miss very much, although I visit her as often as I can. I bought the soldier from Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall when I was the artist in residence for The Society of Antiquarians of Newcastle upon Tyne (SANT, 2011). His head moves and he sharpens pencils. I find this absurdly amusing especially as SANT take their Roman historical collection, and responsibilities, very seriously.



Figure 53: New York Taxi



Figure 54: Made in China 1



Figure 55: Sydney Snow Globe



Figure 56: Made In China 2



Figure 57: Roman Centurion Pencil Sharpener

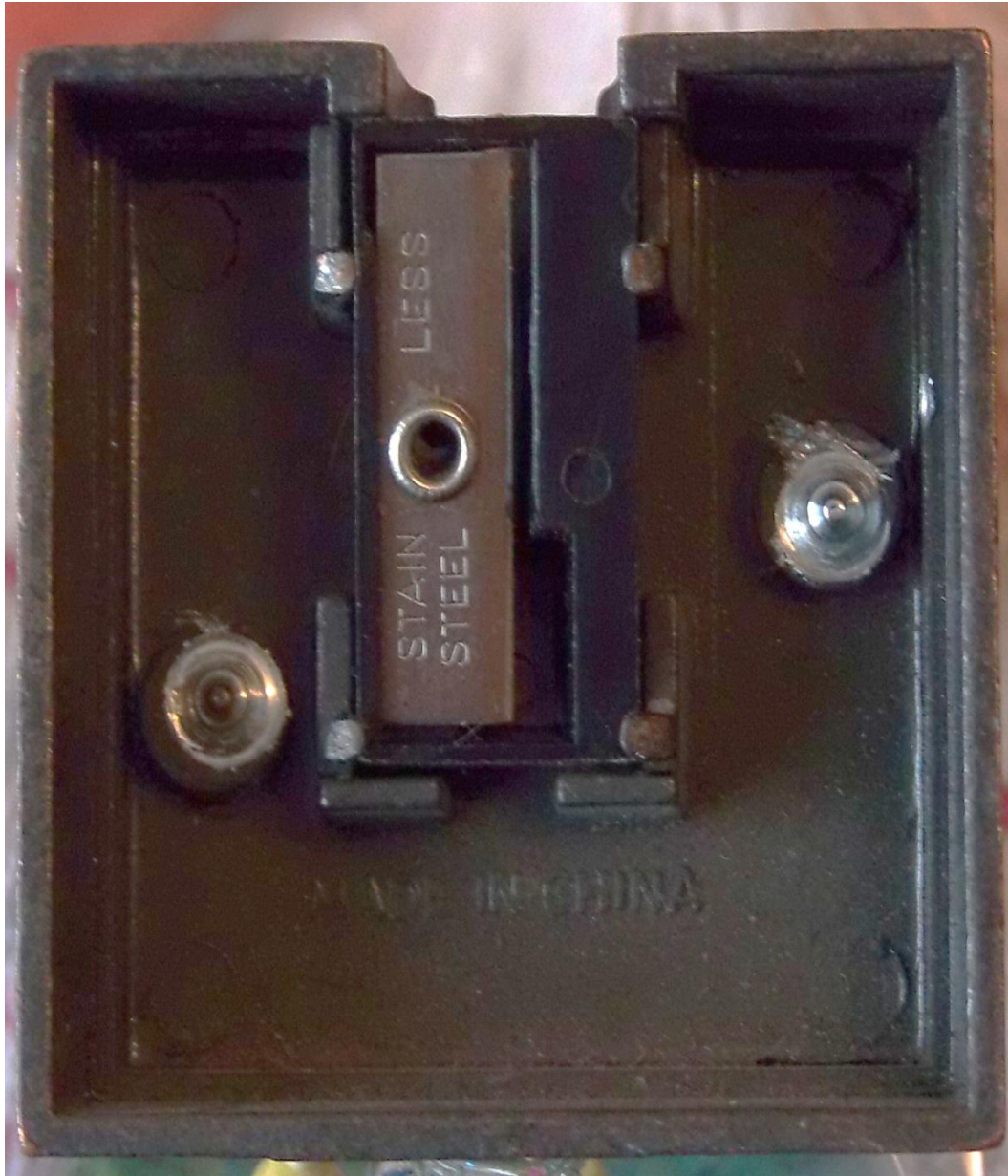


Figure 58: Made in China 3

Making copies of landmarks is fairly straightforward. In terms of promoting identification, it is interesting to consider how a nation or a continent can become, stereotypically represented by: for example, textiles (Indian, African) sculpture (South East Asia) or castanets and sombreros (Spain and the South American subcontinent). I wonder what epitomised Paris before the Eiffel tower was built. These representations are often as lacking in nuance as the tourist packaged experience that resulted in the purchase of a tourist souvenir may be, but as an iterative process of shifting content occurs

through the attachment of personal narrative, the souvenir becomes imbued with complexity and personal value.

Geography is part of the defining nature of the travel souvenir, what Lynne Falwell calls *Geographic Specificity* (2007, p. 1). In her paper *Buying a piece of the Wall: German Cities, American Tourists and the Hunt for Souvenirs*, she describes a process by which the tourist industry in post war Germany has resulted in a mediated cultural profile where:

The handiwork and regional crafts of Southern Germany, Bavarian beer steins and Lederhosen, cuckoo clocks from the Black Forest, emerge as typical souvenirs for the country as a whole. (2007, p. 8)

Also, in *Aboriginalia: Souvenir Wares and the Aboriginalization of Australian Identity*, (2011) Adrian Franklin discusses the way in which the cultural artefacts and images of a marginalised and almost invisible group, the indigenous people of Australia, have been adopted as symbols of the country that has oppressed them, even though most of the cultural practices that are represented no longer play a central role in Aboriginal life.

In this case, it is a combination of a quest for the exoticism of the past, a championing by the white arts community and guilt that has resulted in, 'at best an extremely confused iconography of nation'. (2010, p. 196)

This 'aboriginal semiotic drenching' (2010, p. 196) has resulted in the appropriation of cultural symbols and practices by predominantly white producers (designers, travel writers, souvenir makers) to serve the market for old, quaint and strange symbols of the nation. Consequently, Aboriginal images and wild life characterise many Australian souvenirs.

Since souvenirs are about memory, it is understandable that the design of travel souvenirs often references the past. The process of cultural fixing is not linear but I would suggest that, in the production of souvenirs, it is mainly driven by the market. Ironically, the very difference and distinctiveness of

Aboriginal culture, represented through exotic forms of visual art, makes marketing the symbols of Old Australia easy.

From the early encounters both colonial appropriation and Aboriginal agency played roles in the development of the boomerang as a national symbol. Remarkably soon after the European arrival in Australia Aboriginal groups began manufacturing implements for the purpose of trading with newcomers.

(Effingtonin in Franklin: 2010, p. 198)

In *Distant Discourses – Real Proximities: Tourism and Consumption of Souvenirs in Merida, Yucatan*, (2007) Francisco Fernandez identifies the hammock, as an example of misappropriation as a souvenir of the Merida. The Merida use hammocks every day, for sleeping in and they are rarely used outside. Yucatenian homes often have a special alcove built for the purpose of sleeping and resting whereas, among tourists, the hammock is a symbol of outdoor leisure. This is the equivalent of our divan bed becoming a symbol of our western culture, which it may be, but it is not yet a source of souvenir design.

In a world of marketing, logos are the shorthand for identity and authenticity, The Trade Mark symbol TM signifies uniqueness and originality and any unauthorised copying is a crime. The fact that the trademark is applied to appropriated items and symbols does not affect its value in the eye of the manufacturer, vendor or purchaser. In *Souveniring the Sydney Opera House*, (2007) Cristina Garduno Freeman states that it is the logo that is considered to be the distinguishing feature of the souvenirs that are sold at the opera house. She quotes from the Sydney Opera House official website:

The range of official licensed merchandise has developed into an easily identifiable and highly desirable product, as it is the only product in the market that carries the official Sydney Opera House logo, the mark of authenticity. (2007, p.4)

In this case, it is the dominant features of the outside of the building that becomes its signifier and, although the Sydney Opera House is intended for musical performances, it is the unique material existence of the building where this occurs that is translated into the logo which is then applied to the commonplace, i.e. pencils, tea towels, bowls. In order to be special the souvenir needs to have distinguishing features that are easily recognisable, whether these are particular to a nation, a building, or a place.

Godfrey Evans in *Souvenirs: from Roman Times to the Present* (1999) charts the rise of far eastern producers of souvenirs. Japan was the main producer of souvenirs between 1930 and 1965 when it was superseded by Taiwan and then China, which is now the biggest producer of souvenirs in the world. This development in the production of souvenirs, the migration of primary souvenir manufacture, is attributable to global trade and low labour costs. However, lately, there seems to be a move in British retailing towards supplying high quality souvenir goods under the logo *Made in Britain*, where their provenance is the most important aspect of their value (1999, p. 95). Themes have developed in the global souvenir market driven by the merchandising strategies and brand promotion of powerful multi-national corporations. For example the souvenirs bought at Disneyland carry the narrative of cartoon characters, their films and the narrative of mass produced dreams. They are then supplemented by the narrative of the place where they were bought – Paris, Orlando, and finally through their purchase by a tourist by a personal narrative.

Narrative investment is not just the province of the tourist souvenir. If the narrative defines the souvenir then the souvenir can be any object that has *souvenir qualities*, and the cultural exploitation of events and individuals is big business.

According to one estimate, the total value of “collectable Diana Mementoes” (Princess Diana) in the year from 31st August 1997 exceeded £252 million. (1999, p. 98)

These souvenirs are memorial pieces following Princess Diana's death. The pieces will have served the same function as travel souvenirs except that their narrative is attached to a person instead of a culture. In this case however, the primary cultural resonance is the British Royal family and all that they signify, historically and socially, their particular relationship to Diana and the fact that she died in tragic circumstances at a young age. These fixed narratives will then be supplemented by those of the owners, where they were when she died, where they bought the souvenir and what they felt about the circumstances of her death.

7.2. Making Souvenirs in Haiti

In 2011 I interviewed a man called S who set up a souvenir manufacturing business in Haiti (Appendix 6). The following illustrates the tension between vested interests and the commodification of Haitian culture for a western market.

S worked in Haiti in the early 1980s as a development worker with the remit to developing a sustainable Haitian craft business. It was initially funded through the Caribbean Based Initiative, which then US president, Ronald Reagan implemented as a means of improving trade between Central American countries, Caribbean countries and the United States of America. The USA wanted to forge relationships in the Caribbean in response to the rise in communist insurgents in Nicaragua and this alliance provided import duty breaks and tax incentives to promote trade and political leverage.

The prevailing economic and political climate dictated the way that the business was set up and it determined what was made, as well as who it was sold to. Consequently S had to operate within the established business models which were USA facing and he wanted to exploit existing markets.

The existing souvenir business that S took over was making expensive items that had been introduced by another aid agency and did not have its origins

in the country. Haitians were making copies of Taiwanese baskets that were more expensive to produce than the originals. A theme that runs through this interview is the role of foreign intervention, from finance to design and distribution. In this extract S describes how Haiti was a production annex for the USA, its only input into the programme being the supply of cheap labour.

They used to bring things a bit like floating car parks across from Miami, they used to drag them with tugs and the trucks used to drive off the car park into the industrial park and then they used to assemble the stuff and drive them back and tow them back again. It was an amazing process. But it was all about cost and so on, so there was no Haitian input at all.

S used his design experience, gained whilst working for a toy company, when deciding which objects would sell. He cites the design of Fisher Price play sets where the toy farms are modelled on those near the company's design centre outside Buffalo in western New York.

People take inspiration from what's around them. [...] You drive through the countryside and you see all of these red barns, every farm looks exactly the same, they have a little silo and they have a red barn and so if you look at the Fisher Price Little People play sets, the farm set they sold zillions of units for many years, all have this little red barn [...] So say somebody designed a farm, they'll design what's around.

This seems to be stating the obvious: that people design what they know, for the markets that already exist, within cultural, economic frameworks. What became apparent in this interview were the contradictions inherent in producing souvenirs within these frameworks and the blurring of cultural boundaries and origins. No culture is hermetically sealed but this case illustrates the way in which the market dictates the design of the product which results in the production of fictive souvenirs and cultural stereotypes. Although he acknowledges that Haitian art is identifiable, 'Haitian art was a sort of genre'. He ends up producing souvenirs designed by non-Haitians for the American market.

S also comments on how prices for art in Haiti were inflated because of external art markets and the flow of rich tourists, illustrating how external notions of value impact on local economies and result in changes in perceptions of worth.

There were galleries in New York just showing the top of the line Haitian artists. [...] And so everybody had to paint, everybody said “I’m an artist” and nobody would say “I’m a crafts’ person”, [...] everyone had to be an artist and if you say to this guy “How much is your painting?”, he would say “\$2,000” and you’d say “Well, I’ll offer you \$25” and you’d agree on \$50 or whatever, there’d always be this tension.

Despite S’s plan to set up sustainable enterprises, the external forces of the market meant that he failed.

We were trying to do some added value so that people could start workshops or start businesses and export and make some money out of it and have some chance of a sustainable business.

Instead the business becomes a production line.

So this was much more of a mass production sort of thing, so there would be one artist who just did toucans and one guy who just did the background and one guy who just did parrots.

The production line calls into question the idea of the *handmade* craft and the role of the hand or multiple hands of the artists or makers. The designs were nothing to do with Haiti. However, S still holds on to notions of cultural authenticity when he applies the term ‘unique’ to the mass produced, culturally sanitised souvenirs that he showed me saying, ‘these are not too unique; these were a little bit more unique at the time’. The idea of relative uniqueness is interesting as it indicates a desire to rationalise the process of pragmatic adaptation that the project had undergone. This interview illustrates how ideas of uniqueness are mediated by politics, economics, and cultural norms.

In this case, charitable aims (providing sustainable independent work for Haitians) were matched with external political strategies (The Caribbean

Based Initiative) with an existing market (in the USA) and non-Haitian design considerations, (the designers were English, French and Egyptian). At the end of the process the only Haitian input was production line labour and materials. However, to an external observer it appeared that the souvenir business was a Haitian enterprise and was representative of some aspects of Haitian culture.

7.3 Cultural Seepage in Lamu.

The following case demonstrates how individuals can have an impact on the production of souvenirs and cultural stereotyping.

The development of the market in *jua kali* (Hot Sun) souvenirs outlined in a paper on the carvings of souvenir craft sellers in Lamu, Kenya, (Dziedzic: 2008) is an example of the market determining the design and production of souvenirs. It describes how the existing coconut carving trade was created in 1989 by a local craftsman, M-urage Ngani Ngatho, who responded to an Australian tourist in Lamu who wanted a copy of a bracelet carved from coconut that she had bought in Mombasa. M-urage Ngani Ngatho continued to make bracelets and other items out of coconuts, depending on demand. As a result a new type of ethnic tourist souvenir emerged, although those buying them will assume that they are representative of indigenous practices. M-urage developed his work and style as an outsider (a kikuyu) He and his apprentices do not own souvenir shops and their work is distinctively different to the wood carving of the Swahili (the original inhabitants of Lamu). Additionally, wood is expensive in Lamu whereas coconuts are freely available. Any idea of historic cultural representation falters as the makers of *Hot Sun* souvenirs are considered to be immigrants to Lamu. Swahili artisans normally work in wood and trade through formal channels whereas the producers of *Hot Sun* mainly sell in an informal way on stalls by the roadside (hence the name). These people are considered to be sub-cultural by the artisanal Swahili so the *Hot Sun* souvenirs are produced for outsiders by outsiders: a common trend in the production of souvenirs (see 7.1). However the *Hot Sun* souvenirs are handmade and the makers have great pride in the

skills that they employ, in design, carving and hand making the tools with which they work. This enterprise began with rubbish – discarded coconut shells and has become regarded as a specialised craft. M-urage is now responsible for training all subsequent coconut carvers, who are all non Swahili, in practice and in origin and his apprentices sell his work for him; he has become the grand master carver.

The work of these craftsmen debunks the myth of timelessness, unchanging culture in Lamu and reveals instead a dynamic, ever – evolving network of cultural exchange and innovation.

(2008, p. 11)

Having considered the forces at play in the production of the tourist souvenir it is interesting to consider how attachments are made to such hybridised objects. Konrad Kostlin in *Souvenir: The Artefact Designs the User*, states:

Any stuff can be denominated to be a souvenir. Just let it know its denomination: “You have to serve me as a souvenir”. It is the authoritative act of the individual, which can convert any stuff into a souvenir, if it is, connected with his/her life. (2007, p. 3)

On this basis the lack of uniqueness and absence of historical or cultural accuracy is irrelevant to the value of the souvenir. Instead it requires a point of identification that serves as a signifier with which to fill it up with narrative.

Souvenirs are desired, rather than desirable, as they do not embody any collective benefit. However, the manufacture of souvenirs may be deemed desirable as a way of stimulating economies and providing employment through their manufacture and sale. They are also a way of disseminating culture and cultural symbols. Whether the products are culturally desirably or not, is a different question. When they are bought it is because they are desired by the purchaser. Value judgements are being constantly exercised in the market place and the trade in souvenirs is no exception.

This chapter has considered the power of cultural stereotyping and cultural seepage in the development and design of souvenirs and how this creates a tension between these influences and notions of authenticity and veracity. Travel souvenirs are not expected to be authentic, but conversely, they are expected to represent the truth at some level.

Chapter 8. Case Study Evaluation and Conclusion.

This chapter provides a final analysis of the interviews that I conducted at Oasis School of Human Development. I have made reference to this research throughout my thesis and have used some of the comments in my film, *Stuff Keeps Happening* (2013). The narratives that the participants provided about their objects are compelling in their humanity and in exemplifying the arguments presented in this study. I feel that they deserve a voice, other than as exemplars for theoretical discussion. I have analysed the transcript (Appendix 2) with the intention of revealing the depths of attachment and significance that their souvenirs have to each person and, in doing so, I am allowing the objects to have the last word.

8.1 Case Study Evaluation.

Background

Between March and June 2012, I had a solo exhibition at Oasis School of Human Development, Boston Spa entitled, 'Objects of Desire' where I showed 39 paintings of souvenirs and an installation of souvenirs (Appendix 1). I had been invited to submit a proposal to the Board of Directors who were interested in showing work that complemented the type of work that the company provides. Oasis School of Human Development works with organisations and individuals on developing human cooperation and collaboration, and enhancing personal and professional performance through communication. At the time they were working with a group on developing more creative approaches to business through engagement with the Arts. In the past, Oasis has facilitated communication through personal objects, so my approach was not unknown to them. The gallery is ostensibly a research gallery and I worked through the company to record how their clients responded to my work in general and then, how people felt about their own souvenirs. I did this through a research session where people came to talk about their souvenirs.

On 28th May 2012 I worked with group 1 and they talked about the souvenirs they had been asked to bring with them. I recorded their stories and photographed them with their objects. The second group talked to each other about their objects and then, as a group, discussed any observations that they had about the process.

Group 1

I worked with a group from Taylors of Harrogate, who had been attending Oasis for 3 months looking at ways for the company and staff to be more creative in their operations during the recession and within their rigorously regulated business. The group was recruited from all departments within the business. They had been playing with paint and had visited Grizedale Sculpture Park in addition to working as a group with Oasis staff. They agreed to bring their souvenirs to a session with me and to talk about them. They had already seen the exhibition and installation. Each person talked about their object and the other members could ask questions or talk about the object. I taped this session and it has been transcribed (Appendix 2). Out of a group of nine, three people forgot their objects and two brought object representations of their objects in the form of photographs and the other four brought souvenirs with them. The three who forgot their objects had carefully selected them but had left them at home. However, this did not prevent them from talking eloquently and with feeling about their chosen object. All the absent souvenirs: the Blackpool Tower, the table, the glass fish ornament, were clearly described. It was as a result of this session that I identified what I call a *Souvenir Moment* and I would argue that the absence of the material object allowed them to discourse more freely than the others as there was no material manifestation of the truth.

Group 2

This group comprised eleven people who did not know each other. They were associated with Oasis in a number of different ways and most of them had not seen the exhibition. They all brought souvenirs with them except for one man who was sharing his objects with his wife, thereby presenting a shared narrative. This group used their objects as a means of introduction to

each other. They circulated and then we came together to discuss the role that the object had played in their relationship building, what they revealed and whether there had been any surprises. There were two revelations by the owners of particular objects that provided an interesting example of *iteration*: how we invest in the object and it in turn shapes us. (A in my film, *Stuff Keeps Happening* - Chapter 3 and L and his Hedge pig- Chapter 5)

Objects of Desire Interview Group 1 – Commentary. (Appendix 2)

A had forgotten his model of Blackpool Tower but described it, and its provenance, clearly. For him the Blackpool Tower provides a prompt for memory as well as being an important statement of his relationship:

It was our first trip away as a couple and we thought we'd go to Blackpool for some reason and we ended up staying at the "Iking" hotel which should have been the Viking Hotel [laughter]. And it was one of the better hotels in Blackpool and we had table 34 at the cabaret with Stu Francis that night which we didn't realise was such a good table and we were put in a room just near the kitchen. To open the door, you couldn't actually open the door to get into the bedroom because it was so small. So we quickly left the "Iking" Hotel and went to another horrific hotel and it lashed it down and we stayed there for about two nights and ... it was horrific. But the lasting memory was sat on the pier with our plastic effigy of Blackpool Tower because that was closed due to refurbishment of course, and we took a picture of ourselves with it and it was the most horrific start to a relationship I've probably ever seen or had in my life but we're still together, it always reminds us of a horrendous holiday. (p.162)

A is aware of the contradictions implicit in his souvenir, it symbolises the start of, and enduring nature, of his relationship with his girlfriend, it is the closest that they got to the tower when they were at Blackpool, yet he knows it is a cheap copy:

But it is ... it's ... how can I describe it? It's in plastic, it's about 6 inches and the bottom's got clear Perspex on the base where the sand is, so it is a work of quality.

I think the sand makes it, I think it gives it ... it gives it some weight to start off. It makes it a bit more special I think than just a bit of plastic. I doubt if it's real sand from Blackpool, it's builder's sand from the local garden ... but it certainly makes us think back at that horrendous first foray into our relationship. (p.164)

Since this experience A and his girlfriend always buy cheap souvenirs as presents for each other and them as a couple. He uses the term quality as a descriptor:

Snow globes, obviously. We've got magnets, fridge magnets, as well. We've got sombreros from Mexico. Just the usual thing but it's got to be of that quality of merchandise. (p.163)

Thereby demonstrating the conflicting notions of value embodied in their souvenirs, however, he wouldn't consider swapping it for a better one:

Ooh, I think the size of it, I think it's just to do with basically when we bought it and ... I mean, it's not valuable or good-looking in any way but there's probably about 6,000 different exactly the same ones out there but ... I don't, I wouldn't go for a posher model, I wouldn't go for like maybe a chrome one or something because it is what it is. (p.180)

Interview 2

R 2 has a photograph of his new handmade guitar on his ipad. He claims not to have brought his object but he has brought an image of his object on another object. This object is not a souvenir but the feelings of emotional attachment that R2 expresses for the guitar reveal multiple layers of narrative in the object. His attachment to his musical instruments is not solely about nostalgia but he regards them as being part of himself, because of the physical as well as emotional relationship that he has to them. I suggest that he has a physical, as well as an emotional memory of these instruments because playing an instrument is dependent on this developing. Initially R2 expresses value through uniqueness, trophyism and status:

You know, there's nothing else like it in the world, it's the first one he's built with this body shape. It's the only one he'll ever build with this headstock shape because he paints it. (p.165)

There is also the unique involvement that R2 has had in the process:

The combination of woods was my choice, the combination of the electronics; the scale length is one that I've chosen. (p.165)

In this next excerpt R2 is clearly describing the process of self extension (Belk, 1988).

And as with all my instruments it will become part of me and it'll become a natural extension and that to me is kind of what makes it so important. It's not just that it was made for me, because obviously that does make it important, but obviously ... But also the fact that I know, even though I've only had it about ten days now, more than that, a couple of weeks, I know that it will become part of me, part of me creatively, part of me musically and part of what I do day to day and I know from experience with my other instruments that it will be ... I'll be able to feel it in my mind when it's not with me. (p.165)

This is reinforced through his expectations of the instrument, expectations borne out of past experience:

If I sit and think now, I can feel one of my other bass guitars. I know what it's like to ... I know what it feels like to have it sitting on my leg here. I know exactly where the nut would be if I was to put my hand up like that. I know exactly where every position is. So it just becomes a very organic extension of me and its objects like that that really have the most importance to me. (p.165)

The physical and material relationships that R2 has with his instruments are of primary importance to him:

Not so much ones that ... Not so much things that I look at but things that I interact with really closely and physically and there's something very special about playing a fretless instrument because you've got the contact directly from ... Rather than finger

to string to metal, you've got finger to string to wood and you can feel all the vibrations throughout the whole instrument and it's a very organic, tactile experience. So that's... Yeah, that's the key for me; it's the interaction, physical interaction with the object. (p.165)

R2 has a strong sentimental attachment to all his instruments, even if they are not very good ones, as he says, they each have their own value to him:

My very first bass I don't think I'd ever get rid of, not because ... Well, I am sentimental about it, yeah, definitely. No one would ever want it, it's horrible, as is so often the case with your first instrument, it's rubbish, but I think that I'd never want to get rid of it because it's ... Again, I know it, it's like a part of me. It would be a bit like ... I was going to say losing a limb but that's a bit drastic ... losing a toe ... Yeah, it would be a loss, yeah ... quite deeply felt and some of the ... I've got a guitar I've had, which I got for my 18th birthday and I would never get rid of that. So yeah, definitely a sentimental value to them. (p.166)

Interview 3

M has forgotten her object and describes her souvenir moment:

I'm feeling that I'm letting you down here because, a bit like A I didn't remember to bring my object but interestingly when I knew that I was coming to this, which was about three weeks ago, mentally I chose my object, I knew what I was going to bring, so I know how to describe it to you. (p.167)

In relation to value she says about her choice of object:

We have a gallery. So our house is full, absolutely full of many beautiful things. So it's ... In choosing something it's sort of quite hard because they all have a resonance but of course some of them are objects we've purchased so they already have an inherent value. (p.167)

The object that she chooses has no monetary value but has emotional value. It is a glass goldfish in a glass plastic bag that her daughter bought for her parents when they were on holiday in Venice:

And it was the first present that our daughter Lauren, who's now 23 but at the time she was 9, ever bought without our knowledge, completely spontaneously with her own pocket money (p.168)

Because her daughter had bought it for them it influences how M regards it, and how she regards glass ornaments in particular:

And it's beautiful, it's absolutely beautiful. I would never have bought it myself. I wouldn't have looked at it twice. For me it was a bit of a tourist gewgaw really. But in fact it carries in within it this ... It represents something far greater than just the little glass thing. And the funny thing about it is, I've always really hated glass ornaments, particularly because my mum collected them when I was little and she used to have loads of them, those ones that were sort of drawn, you know, with very fragile glass legs, chickens and flamingos, yeah, things like that and parrots and stuff like that. And she used to put them all over on the mantelpiece and I always managed to break them. I was always somehow stumbling into them or trying to handle it carefully to look at it and then breaking it. So I sort of developed this real paranoia about glass ornaments and how I just never ever wanted to have them. But this thing is pleasingly chunky and doesn't look fragile at all, although actually I do look after it. (p.168)

This illustrates a change in M's feelings about value and about relationships to objects, through relationships to people, specifically her mother. This object encapsulates multiple narratives, the narrative of the object, the fairground, Venice which is known for its glass, the narrative of gifts (Mauss, 1969) the relationship between parents and child, the changing relationship of value and values, the legacy relationship of M to glass through her childhood experiences and her relationship to the object as a gallery owner, The relationship that her daughter L has with the object signifies attachment to place and family and when she returns home she checks to see if it is there,

she doesn't see it she'll say "Where is it?" and then I'll say "Oh, it's just moved on to that shelf" because we operate a gallery from our house, from our home, so we're often putting things away, our things away, to have an exhibition and then getting our things out so things don't always go back in the same place. So she looks for it, she does look for it. (p.169)

Interview 4

V says that she rejects objects. She has moved house a great deal (17 moves in 6 years) and it is people who are important to her:

when we started the enquiry we were asked to bring an object and what I wanted to bring I couldn't find and then this time what I wanted to bring was a different object and I couldn't find it and it dawned on me that the objects that I used to really, really value when I was single or just married have absolutely no significance at all to me any more since I've had children because all that is important to me now is living and breathing things like husband and kids and parents and siblings and ... that's what I'm drawn to and what I find inspirational and what I get enjoyment out of. So I've just got some photographs out of my wallet of my husband and my kids because that is the object that means the most to me. (p.170)

She does not know where her objects have gone but she knows that she has not thrown them away. She describes some of the souvenirs that she has in detail but still claims not to value them:

And other things were in little matchboxes because they were delicate little seahorses I found on the beach in India that had fossilised or all sorts of other random ... Chambo fish that ... somebody carving a Chambo fish in Mali out of local wood and it's the local fish. Things like that, that during my travels symbolised so much and were so much part of me, I thought, actually don't have any importance to me anymore. (p.171)

V is in denial about her relationship to objects, whilst, quite emphatically, eschewing them, wanting nothing to dust or nothing to pack away when you move house. She does have objects that they have bought on holiday and that she describes as interesting objects:

Yes, some of them from trips that we've made together as a family or with my husband, a bit like you, we've got some random things from our travels together that are on the shelf that have been there since we put them on the shelf and they haven't moved.
Interesting objects.(p.172)

Also her photographs are out of date. Perhaps V's relationship to objects is muddled because her 2 lives are so different; she seems to be rejecting the old nomad life full of mementoes for a stable life devoid, as far as she is concerned, of material objects with no use value. (Baudrillard, 2005)

Interview 5

C has brought an original painting of a place of emotional importance to her and her large extended family. Interestingly, although the painting is described as original, and technically it is, there are ten similar pictures in the family. The painting is unframed and its value is purely sentimental:

So this picture for me is really special in a lot of ways. One, a very close friend of mine drew it for me. Two, the kind of little barn that you see there is where five generations ago is where my family came from. It's a very dear place to me in Ireland which I visit quite frequently. It's just a beautiful place. It brings back huge amounts of memories from when we were kids. We have a huge family of cousins, should I say, but if I was to say that I'm one of six but my father's one of 17 and my mother is one of six as well so there's 86 first cousins. So, but these were places of absolute joy when we were kids and a friend of mine drew this for me when we were planning to have a family reunion and it was really ... The family reunion in itself was 500 people and it was just a little flyer that we were going to send out to everybody with regards to what was going to happen for the entire weekend and she drew this kind of little picture for the front of the flyer and this was the original and as I say it just has fantastic memories. I love the picture itself, I can relate to it; the person that drew it is very dear to me. The history that goes with what's in it is huge and the fun that I had when I was a kid here was just phenomenal as well. But even as a young adult ... I think I mentioned earlier about, I don't know who it was to now, but a group of cousins, we used to just go back to Ireland and we had huge amount of relatives but we'd go and rent a house. We were all just maybe 19 or 20 years old and with having that many cousins, there was a lot of us of the same age at the same time so we had great fun and we'd go over and we'd take instruments over, it's a very musical family as well.

Instruments, alcohol, sea and scenery was the kind of measure of it. But we used to go back, even as a young group now we would go back to visit, well, it would be my great uncle at the time, but we'd be staying in this building and the whole group of us would go back. And we were still captured, you know, by the stories and the stone floors and the open fires and they were still cooking on open fires twenty years ago and so it's just really, really important to me. So yeah, so yeah. So that's my ...it's one of my favourite objects. (p.176/7)

Why isn't it framed? C's response describes a need to be close to the image and not have it not hidden behind glass:

What was requested after this was that some of the different generations in the family actually wanted a picture of this and so she drew ten of them but she freehand drew. So it says 2 of 10 here, but they are originals, they aren't copies at all. The ten pictures are completely different but there are ten of that picture, if that makes any sense to you. But, no, I think to put glass over it would hide something and I think there is something about getting old gracefully and ... And again for me I wouldn't presume to know a great deal about art but I do believe it's in the eye of the beholder, it is what you see and what you get out of it. And so, yeah, so ... it is purposely not framed. I have a lot of ... I have quite a lot of paintings in the house and they are framed and ... yeah ... Actually from when this was drawn, and as I say we had a family reunion, I have a huge kind of framed family tree and that's all as I say framed but this still isn't. (p.178)

The painting is number 2 of 10 and C has seen them all. Her relationship to the painting is framed in part by the existence of 9 others, all slightly different, this reveals other narratives to her as she tries to see the differences between them. She also has to travel to see them, as they belong to other members of her family, thereby reigniting the potency of the painting. When asked:

So if someone came and said "I'll swap you number 4 for number 2", what would you say?

She replied,

I would be happy to if they ... Yeah ... It's not about being perfect. It's kind of ... As I say, the sentiment in every one is the same but

valued different. So again it's the same person that drew this, it's about my family going back 200 years and it's about the memories as a child and what we got from that and the family that's still about now. So I would be happy if somebody would like to, I'm not pushed to but ... yeah. (p.179)

Thereby she identifies a collective value and a collective narrative validated by individual attachment.

Interview 6

R6 salvaged her fiancé's granny's button tin from being sold at a car boot sale. She did this because buttons remind her of her childhood, she is about to get married and wants to hand this tin down to her children. She thinks buttons are important because they have a story to tell. R6 uses a nostalgia and memory as a framework for family relationships and she has a strong attachment to the narrative of objects (Stewart, Turkle) and recognition of the *Comfort of Things* (Miller).

The button tin brings me in because I salvaged Mike's great granny's button tin. It was on the car boot and I said "What's this?" and Mike said "Oh, it's my granny's button tin" and I said "You can't get rid of that". So I have her button tin to pass down through the family because I think buttons are important and it would have gone and I can ... I used to play with buttons as a child and I just think things like that have a story and that's kind of how it brings me in. This is a receipt for my wedding band, I'm not married yet, but I like to purchase old things that already have a story, even if you don't know what the story is, so I made a conscious decision to purchase a 1920s wedding band because people find it odd to wear things that might have been on somebody else, I find it really intriguing. So I like old jewellery, old furniture, where you might not know the story but you can guess. Part of the fun is working out where this could have been or you know, did it love someone completely different? And I feel really comforted by objects where you don't necessarily know their story but you can help, you can be part of the future of their story. So yeah, I haven't got it yet, so it links in again, I haven't got the object but I know where it is and it's 1920s band that hopefully will bring ... it's probably ... hopefully it's had a really lovely life somewhere else and I can take that with me moving forward. So that's ... objects with a story are most important to me. And I also brought my diary which is a to do list and I think I got this from my mum because she, when I was younger she wrote a diary every day, from me being just born til

about two and she kept that and I've written snap ... not written a diary for my whole life but written snapshots of my life in books so when we were at school we used to have a book that circulated around a group of friends and it sits in a trunk under the bed and I can't bear to throw away, even though it's a work one, it's about things to do today, I can't bear to throw things like that away, so I keep everything: full notepads, because they have a story somewhere in them, so it's not about necessarily just about the object, it's about what the story is and how you can make up a story if you don't know it. (p.184)

The aesthetic of the button tin is also raised; it has great value to R6 so judgements about its attractiveness are mediated by this:

So nobody may want the button tin but it's got a lovely well, it's a horrible button tin, it's got a horrible picture of a dog on the front. (p.186)

R6 also keeps the narrative alive by using the existing buttons and adding new one to the tin.

Interview 7

R7 could not bring her object of desire with her, it is too big and she did not bring a photograph either. She has a *souvenir moment*.

R7 buys a leather topped table with her boyfriend. It was a purchase that reflected a joint decision about taste that signified their moving in together. They have made the table theirs by buying it together, restoring it and modifying it (cutting off the legs). It symbolises their new life together whilst bestowing status on them through its existing narrative, one of value and prestige (turn of the century and from the houses of parliament, with dovetail joints), although she states that this isn't of primary importance. These details are supplied by others; they are the provenance of the piece that is all. The signature handprints in the varnish add a tangible human dimension to the narrative whilst providing something for R6 to measure herself against.

When my boyfriend and I decided to move in together we made a conscious effort to look at things that maybe had something about them and so we went to second hand stalls and looked on eBay and eventually found this amazing, well it looked in the picture

amazing, this amazing table with like a leather top and the person selling it had this really kind of romantic dreamy idea that it was a turn of the century table and it sat in the Houses of Parliament and he had reason to believe so had used it to work and all this but that wasn't really what drew me to it. So anyway we got it and I saw it and it was just ... it had been in the cellar, it was kind of ... the legs were rotten, the leather was really, it was kind of dried out, it was cracked, it was really awful, and I was like "Oh God" and so Matt, my boyfriend, he went about kind of repairing it. And he started repairing it but then because his dad was selling his house it went into storage but he kept going back with stuff to put in, he kept going back to that. Anyway, when we moved in it was a massive effort to bring this table in because it's big, really big and it's really heavy and I think it's probably quite a quality piece. People keep telling me the drawers have dovetails, so apparently that's a good thing, but ... So yeah, we live in the top floor flat, so, without a lift, so it was a massive effort, the staircase is really narrow and I saw it for the first time and the legs had been sawn off so it was shorter, so it's a coffee table and the leather had been peeled back and the glass handles had been polished and they had like a I think it's a portcullis stamp on and underneath the leather Matt had sanded it but whoever had made it, there are handprints kind of, whoever made it had varnish on their hands and there are handprints and he said "Do you want to cover those up, they're not very kind of in fitting, they don't really keep with the kind of way our living room looks", and I was like "No, I love those". And now they're kind of a feature of the table and people come and say "What is that, why do you keep that?" But actually it's been polished up and I think they look great and they're kind of a ... I put my hand against them and I don't know, it's just something, I don't know, it's something to measure against. There's just something about them that I really... I love having them there. (p.187)

R7 also talks about the financial value of the table. It's cheapness being an added bonus, indicating a pride in prudence:

And I'd never part with it and actually on top of all that it was a bargain, it cost £5 and the person who had it in their cellar delivered it for free. So its cost next to nothing and it really forms the centre of the room. (p.188)

Interview 8

G forgot her object and is glad that she did, instead of talking about a photograph she talks about the ring that she has on. It signifies her

relationship with her sister, cemented on a holiday in Ibiza two years ago. Her sister had just ended a difficult relationship and in her sisters' words:

But she was sort of coming out of the other side and she was getting back to her old self and she got rid of him and it was like the beginning of her new start. So it was almost like a butterfly being set free. (p.190)

The reference to the butterfly is significant because the ring has a butterfly on it. They bought identical rings at a shop at the airport on their way to Ibiza.

They both still wear their rings:

But I still wear it now, even though all the stones have fallen off and she still wears hers and some of hers have fallen off as well and it's got something in it, I'm not quite sure. (p.191)

The ring has great sentimental attachment for her:

Yeah. But every chance I get I always wear it because ... I've got nicer rings but this one is the most sentimental because it's like us getting back together and we had this main holiday where she was totally different personality to what she was becoming. (p.191)

The rings are a symbol of their sisterhood and also they signify hope for better times.

Interview 9

R has brought a piece of Lego. He has been selling his belongings and when he found his Lego he began to play. He recognises the feelings that he has towards it, keeping one brick as a reminder of the pleasure that they gave him, a memento from childhood.

I got them out and started messing around with them again and it brought back their sentimental memories. I'm not quite sure why I'm getting rid of it but there's a lot of clutter in our house that I really need to get rid of and I can't find a use for anymore. It seems to be as a part of my history and I couldn't see it in the house anywhere and it's ... Do

I just keep the memories and get rid of it and it's somewhere inside me and ... Or, you know, do I keep hold of one little brick and then that be something that just brings back all my Lego collections? (p.196)

He talks as if he is going somewhere but he isn't. He thinks that his parents want to downsize and that he should get rid of things that he doesn't use anymore. However, he feels ambivalent about it as they are clear about what they want to keep and why.

I did make the decision solely because I haven't been in the garage for ten years I would have thought and they've come out very infrequently, I guess my parents are probably looking to downsize shortly so they're probably thinking, 'God, there's a lot of stuff in this house, what can we get rid of' But a lot of objects that they have that they've got one of already in the house, they're keeping like a spare of it, and it was interesting why they didn't want to get rid of ... they didn't want a big clear out, they just wanted to select bits and hang on to other things that have sentimental value or could have a future with someone else. (p.197)

He sold some of his Lego to a child at a car boot sale. He was pleased that he had sold it to a child:

But I guess like selling my Lego to the child that bought it, then that's passing that on to them and then they'll have memories about it as well. (p.197)

When asked what he was going to do with the money from selling his Lego R said that it would go in his ISA 'for a house', meaning that he is selling bricks to buy bricks!

8.2 Conclusion.

This study argues that despite their ubiquity, and often contested value, souvenirs are our most emotionally potent objects. I argue that their common lack, of what Baudrillard (2005) describes as, *Use Value* often obscures an understanding of their importance as signifiers (Barthes, 1997) and catalysts for memory. I argue that it is the narrative content of souvenirs that singles them out as signifiers and receptacles for attachment, loss and longing; emotions that elicit powerful responses that are commonly experienced. I have also identified souvenirs as vehicles for cultural stereotyping and cultural seepage, where new souvenirs designs become emblematic of old cultures, thereby exemplifying the many contradictions inherent in attributing authenticity and value to these objects.

This assessment of the value of souvenirs draws on a range of critical theorists, from Karl Marx to Daniel Miller, all of whom have framed debates relating to the importance of objects and our relationship to, and with, them. These writings discuss value, attachment and cultural significance and are located in a diverse range of disciplines. The cross-disciplinary nature of this study is necessitated by the foundational importance that objects have to human society, whether in terms of; the means of production, function, value and aesthetics and, most importantly, by the absence of a critical framework specific to souvenirs. I maintain that the value of souvenirs intersects all these categories and manifests some of their own and I have consequently devised new terms to describe them. I posit that souvenirs are not currently afforded close and singular academic scrutiny because they are regarded as being a sub-set of objects.

Originality

In response to the absence of specific theoretical writings about souvenirs I have constructed my own framework for examining what gives them value. The absence of a specific language to describe the value of souvenirs has led me to create new terms to describe their distinctiveness, their action and their dynamic qualities. I have defined the souvenir as an *Object Plus* as a way of distinguishing souvenirs from objects that is, that they are objects but

that they have additional qualities as signifiers and receptacles for attachment, loss and longing, and emotion. I have also described the *Souvenir Moment* as the moment of narrative recall when the souvenir becomes activated by memory and I have described the souvenir's potentially fluid and changing narratives as *iteration*; a changing narrative that keeps the *souvenirness* of the object vital.

Drawing on the writings of Susan Stewart (2007), who uses the term *Narrative of Origins* to describe the relationship between owner and object, I demonstrate the complexity of multiple narratives and how they depend on memory for their activation (Gombrich, 1963). I refer to fictional works as a means of describing the enduring emotional importance of objects to human beings, as this lies within the tradition of narrative writing (De Maistre, Steinbeck et al), and use *The Museum of Innocence* (Orhan Pamuk, 2009 - 2012) as an example of the *iteration* through the narrating the archive and archiving the narrative . In his novel, *The Museum of Innocence*, and his eponymous gallery, Pamuk skillfully raises questions of veracity and cultural objects and souvenirs, demonstrating the slippery nature of narrative by combining the written and the visual, the true and the invented.

The comments recorded throughout my exhibitions and interviews evidence a disjuncture between public and personal notions of value, with owners disparaging their objects and then describing their importance. I have explored this conflict of values through my own Fine Art Practice by drawing on established notions of value in oil painting and the subjects of my work. I have articulated my relationship with my souvenirs through writing, painting and film in a way that is particular to me and the varying attachments that I have to them. My Fine Art Practice provides a critically important vehicle through which to test my proposition that souvenirs are our most personally valued objects and, through employing different painting strategies, I have made work that describes my relationship to my own souvenirs by attempting to re-materialise the sign. I have also contextualised my practice through the work of other artists who engage with commodities, objects, value and memory (Koons, Milroy Dion et al).

The interviews that I have conducted also provide documented evidence of the emotional value of souvenirs and this has formed the basis of my film *Stuff Keeps Happening 2014* which demonstrates a clear example of affordance (Gibson, 1986). The relationship between practice and theory in this study has crucially revealed the disjuncture between written, visual language and feelings, when interrogating the impact of souvenirs. Contradictory notions of taste, particularly kitsch, typify responses to souvenirs and the prevailing feelings that they are cheap and worthless. This is clearly contradicted by the interviews that I conducted and have critiqued in Chapter 8.

Having considered the status of souvenirs in relation to objects, and their aesthetic and social value, I maintain that the critical distinguishing feature of souvenirs is their narrative content. Multiple fluid narratives may be at play and the formative narrative may be personal, civic or situational, but it is the narrative that is critical to the action of the souvenir.

Significance for the field

The framing of this study in terms of our relationship to objects reveals the particular nature of our relationship to souvenirs. An examination of notions of value, in relation to what MacCannell (1999) calls *fallen objects*, leads to the consideration of their role in reinforcing cultural stereotypes and what functions those stereotypes perform. Most non-fictional writings on souvenirs are framed in terms of diasporic studies, or as economic drivers for tourist economies, and the impact of souvenirs are generally overlooked. I argue that the impact that souvenirs have on economies and cultural identity is worthy of note, with their cheapness and ubiquity masking their far-reaching influence on cultural stereotyping.

I also argue that, despite often being regarded as degraded objects (Kulka, and Greenberg et al) the domestic and personal nature of most souvenirs is where their value lies. The view that souvenirs are degraded objects is in part a reflection of hierarchies of taste and value and the commodification of nostalgia, but this thesis maintains that the worth of souvenirs extends much further than this.

This study is not confined to personal travel souvenirs but also examines the role of civic souvenirs and collections. The fact that the study is cross disciplinary reflects the far reach of the qualities of souvenirs and therefore their potential significance across many areas of study and practice.

Further research

In assessing the value of souvenirs I have revealed their personal potency and their fluid significance and I would argue that further study of souvenirs would inform the study of Material Culture and an understanding of the role that objects play in our lives. As *Objects Plus*, souvenirs intersect and inform research on memory, attachment, loss, longing, and memorabilia; all areas of study that are currently prominent in the face of an aging population and the rise of Dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Further study of souvenirs would add to existing discourses around identity, postcolonial studies and cultural norms.

The study of museum collections and private collectors provides a useful counterpoint to the souvenir as an individual object and what happens to it when it becomes part of a collection, either by accident or by design. The collection manifests the difficulties of the personal and the public, the singular and the multiple, and a consideration of the veracity of prevailing narratives and the further study of objects' souvenirness, may inform Museum practices.

This study raises questions about authenticity, ubiquity and the apparent disjuncture between private and public notions of value in the souvenir. It proposes that it is their potential to be, what Barthes describes as:

A form in which men unceasingly put meaning (which they extract at will from their knowledge, their dreams, and their history), without this meaning thereby ever being finite and fixed. (1997, p. 5).

which gives them their unique and complex potency and resonance, and consequently the ability to capture, and reveal, the narrative of people's lives.

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Appendices

1. Invitation to Private View for my Exhibition at Oasis School of Human Development	165
2. Transcript of Interview at Oasis School of Human Development	168
3. Transcript of Interview with a Collector	212
4. Gallery of Wonder Catalogue	222
5. Scottish Historic Environment Policy Dec 2011 Annex 2	225
6. Transcript of an Interview with a Souvenir Manufacturer	227
7. Commentary on Moot Hall Exhibition	239

Appendix 1.

Invitation to Private View for my Exhibition at Oasis School of Human Development.



Objects of Desire

Works by Penny Grennan

You are invited to an opening event on 26th April between 6.00 and 8.00pm. Please bring an object that you love, or hate and talk to the artist about it.

Why are we attached to objects that other people ignore, why is the shell from the beach so precious? Why do we collect souvenirs to remind us of times and places gone by? Artist Penny Grennan has made these questions the focus of her PhD in Fine Art Practice at Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne. Her study is concerned with the nature of Souvenirs and she will be exhibiting her paintings and objects at Oasis. Her interest in souvenirs stems from a life spent travelling and the collection of objects that she has amassed over time. Her souvenirs have great value to her but are often mass produced imitations of cultural stereo types. What is it that gives these cheap items value and to whom? Do you have a souvenir at home that means a lot to you?

If so, Penny would like to talk to you about it. Come to Oasis with your object and tell her your story.

Objects of Desire. 25th March – 18th June. Oasis Human Resource Development, Hall Mews, Clifford Rd. Boston Spa LS23 6DT. Tel: 01937 541 700 Mob: 07767254303

www.oasishumanrelations.org.uk. Viewing by arrangement.

Appendix 2.

Interview with 11 people at Oasis School of Human Development about their relationship with their Objects of Desire.

P: Do you want to say your name?

A: My name's Alex and my object, which isn't here, is a plastic reincarnation of Blackpool tower with real Blackpool sand in the bottom of the Blackpool tower. The reason why it's... me and my partner, girlfriend [unclear 00:23] ... We always buy rubbish things as trinkets wherever we go. It was our first trip away as a couple and we thought we'd go to Blackpool for some reason and we ended up staying at the "Iking" hotel which should have been the Viking Hotel [laughter]. And it was one of the better hotels in Blackpool and we had table 34 at the cabaret with Stu Francis that night which we didn't realise was such a good table and we were put in a room just near the kitchen. To open the door, you couldn't actually open the door to get into the bedroom because it was so small. So we quickly left the "Iking" Hotel and went to another horrific hotel and it lashed it down and we stayed there for about two nights and ... it was horrific. But the lasting memory was sat on the pier with our plastic effigy of Blackpool Tower because that was closed due to refurbishment of course, and we took a picture of ourselves with it and it was the most horrific start to a relationship I've probably ever seen or had in my life but we're still together so it's quite a ... it always reminds us of a horrendous holiday.

P: But can you ... do you laugh about it?

A: Yes, it's horrific, because I think that just set the tone for a horrific and tacky weekend at the "Iking" hotel ... he was mortified, this bloke, to say that "You have got table 34", it was a good table and Stu Francis along, so we were supposed to be overjoyed at that, which probably couldn't ... it couldn't be further from the truth.

M: I don't remember who Stu Francis is .

A: He's the guy who said "crush a grape" or "rip a tissue". He was some comedian but he was doing an adult more blue apparently, so we were [unclear 2:21] more amazing, it was rubbish, it was ... Yeah, so we've still got it and we still collect rubbish tack if we go away as part of ... I think the price range is under £5, under £1 in fact.

P: And so what does your collection comprise of so far?

A: Snow globes, obviously. We've got magnets, fridge magnets, as well. We've got sombreros from Mexico. Just the usual thing but it's got to be of that quality of merchandise.

P: And do you collect them separately or do you always only buy those things when you're together?

A: We sort of seem to buy them when we go away as a ... it's this silly thing we ... or it appears, "Look at this, look what I've bought for you" as a gift for my other half, so, yeah ... quality.

P: Excellent.

A: But it is ... it's ... how can I describe it? It's in plastic, it's about 6 inches and the bottom's got clear Perspex on the base where the sand is, so it is a work of quality.

P: And do you think that the sand makes a difference?

A: I think the sand makes it, I think it gives it ... it gives it some weight to start off. It makes it a bit more special I think than just a bit of plastic. I doubt if it's real sand from Blackpool, it's builder's sand from the local garden ... but it certainly makes us think back at that horrendous first foray into our relationship.

P: Right, thank you.

A: [unclear 4:01]

P: Who'd like to go now? Shall we just ... Shall we go round?

R2: I'm feeling the pressure now. Well, again, my object isn't with me unfortunately but I do have a picture somewhere, there we go. This is my new instrument what I have made specially for me, what I had made especially for me by Mr Alan Cringean of Moffat, Dumfries & Galloway. It's ... well, those of you who've read my thing from last time will know, it's kind of almost unique. It's a four string fretless non-league bass guitar that I used at first for something quite different and

it's got four D tuner levers at the headstock...and it's just very special to me because it was made for me on commission ... It's ... You know, there's nothing else like it in the world, it's the first one he's built with this body shape. It's the only one he'll ever build with this headstock shape because he paints it. The combination of woods was my choice, the combination of the electronics, the scale length is one that I've chosen, it's ... And as with all my instruments it will become part of me and it'll become a natural extension and that to me is kind of what makes it so important. It's not just that it was made for me, because obviously that does make it important, but obviously ... But also the fact that I know, even though I've only had it about ten days now, more than that, a couple of weeks, I know that it will become part of me, part of me creatively, part of me musically and part of what I do day to day and I know from experience with my other instruments that it will be ... I'll be able to feel it in my mind when it's not with me. If I sit and think now, I can feel one of my other bass guitars. I know what it's like to ... I know what it feels like to have it sitting on my leg here. I know exactly where the nut would be if I was to put my hand up like that. I know exactly where every position is. So it just becomes a very organic extension of me and it's objects like that that really have the most importance to me. Not so much ones that Not so much things that I look at but things that I interact with really closely and physically and there's something very special about playing a fretless instrument because you've got the contact directly from ... Rather than finger to string to metal, you've got finger to string to wood and you can feel all the vibrations throughout the whole instrument and it's a very organic, tactile experience. So that's ... Yeah, that's the key for me, it's the interaction, physical interaction with the object.

P: So, your other instruments, do you have a ... I don't know this really but do you have a sentimental attachment to them?

R2: Some, yeah, definitely. My very first bass I don't think I'd ever get rid of, not because ... Well, I am sentimental about it, yeah, definitely. No one would ever want it, it's horrible, as is so often the case with your first instrument, it's rubbish, but I think that I'd never want to get rid of it because it's ... Again, I know it, it's like a part of me. It would be a bit like ... I was going to say losing a limb but that's a bit drastic ... losing a toe ... Yeah, it would be a loss, yeah ... quite deeply felt and some of the ... I've got a guitar I've had, which I got for my 18th birthday and I would never get rid of that. So yeah, definitely a sentimental value to them.

P: And do you anticipate that the relationship that you've got with those objects is going to be a similar relationship that you're going to develop with that one?

R2: Well, they're a bit like children. You have a different relationship with them depending on the nature of the instrument. And they get used for different things - that's not so much true of children. [Laughter]

P: Oh, I don't know!

R2: My ... Well, because my two children are completely different, utterly different personalities. And it's the same with my instruments, my guitars and my basses and the other gubbins that I have mucking around from years of never getting rid of anything. So I know that it will ... They'll each have their own relationship. We got a piano recently which ... I've not had a piano on a regular basis since I was at home living with my parents. And that, you know, I'm now

developing a relationship with a new piano so I mean, that's 88 separate keys to understand. Because each ... Because it's not a very good piano, so each one's got its own touch. So, yeah, it's all about the physical interaction and developing that history and that muscle memory and that.

P: Right, thank you. Even though it's a virtual object. So you're showing it to us on an object.

R2: I am, yes.

P: Okay.

M: Hello Penny, I'm Mary Godfrey. I'm feeling that I'm letting you down here because, a bit like Alex I didn't remember to bring my object but interestingly when I knew that I was coming to this, which was about three weeks ago, mentally I chose my object, I knew what I was going to bring, so I know how to describe it to you. I ... My family, me and my family were artists, so my daughter's an artist, my husband's an artist, I studied art, I make art. So our house ... And we have a gallery. So our house is full, absolutely full of many beautiful things. So it's ... In choosing something it's sort of quite hard because they all have a resonance but of course some of them are objects we've purchased so they already have an inherent value. So I was looking around, thinking what could I bring ... And also I'm quite fussy, so really interested in your sort of dilemma, when I'm given something by somebody, if it's not something that is my personal taste, I do have a tendency to put it away in a box in the attic and never look at it again. Somehow it has to be very special for me to put it out on the shelf. So I was having a look around at everything beautifully arranged on the

shelves and there's one thing that quietly sits in a corner which does stand out and it's a piece of glass from Venice and it's a ... Basically, you know when you were a kid and you'd go to the fairground and you'd get a fish in a plastic bag? Well, it's a glass plastic bag with a glass fish in it that's like about that big, bunched up at the top, with clear glass, sort of sits very firmly on the shelf with this goldfish with blue stripes on it inside ... embedded in the glass, like a paperweight really. And it was the first present that our daughter Lauren, who's now 23 but at the time she was 9, ever bought without our knowledge, completely spontaneously with her own pocket money and we were on holiday in Venice and we were staying on the Lido and we'd gone out for lunch to a local restaurant on a street with shops on it and as we were sat having our coffee Lauren said would she be allowed to just go and look in the shop next door, which we'd already been into. I think it was two or three doors down. And we were a little bit nervous because we thought, you know, we don't know where she's going to go, but she said "No, no, I'll be alright, I'll just be two doors down". And so off she went, didn't think anything of it. And then she came back and we went home to the apartment that we'd rented and that evening she said "I've bought you a present" and she presented us with this glass fish and we were stunned, absolutely stunned that she'd gone out by herself and actually she'd used money that we'd given her as pocket money for the holiday to buy herself ice creams and things like that. She'd pretty much used all of it because I don't think it was cheap. And it's beautiful, it's absolutely beautiful. I would never have bought it myself. I wouldn't have looked at it twice. For me it was a bit of a tourist [unclear 14:02] really. But in fact it carries in within it this ... It represents something far greater than just the little glass thing. And the funny thing about it is, I've always really hated glass ornaments, particularly because my mum collected them when I was little and she used to have loads of them, those ones that were sort of drawn, you know, with very fragile glass legs, chickens and flamingos, yeah, things like that and parrots and stuff like that. And she used to put them all over on the mantelpiece and I always

managed to break them. I was always somehow stumbling into them or trying to handle it carefully to look at it and then breaking it. So I sort of developed this real paranoia about glass ornaments and how I just never ever wanted to have them. But this thing is pleasingly chunky and doesn't look fragile at all, although actually I do look after it. So, I'm sorry I haven't brought it but that's my object.

P: That's fine. But do ...what does your daughter ... has the story changed, or what does your daughter say about that ornament now?

M: Oh, she gave it to us, it's a present.

P: Yes.

M: She meant it. She would, I mean she'd never know ... she doesn't know that I didn't think "Ooh, I'm not so sure I'd really want that" and in fact, I don't think I ever did think that to be quite honest. And of course subsequently, because our daughter's just graduated from ... sorry to boast again, just graduated from the Slade School of Art, so she just got her degree last week. And of course in the intervening years Lauren has given us loads of things, lots of things that she's made. I've kept all those things with ... The house is covered with the stuff and I love it and I value it really, really highly because it's something that she's made, but it still sort of sits there ... And actually if ... she has on occasion, if she doesn't see it she'll say "Where is it?" and then I'll say "Oh, it's just moved on to that shelf" because we operate a gallery from our house, from our home, so we're often putting things away, our things away, to have an exhibition and then getting our things out so things don't always go back in the same place. So she looks for it, she does look for it.

P: Interesting. Right, okay. Vicky?

V: I had a think about objects to bring, this is a bit like you, I've travelled all over and think by the time I moved to Harrogate I'd had 17 addresses in six years or something and when we started the enquiry we were asked to bring an object and what I wanted to bring I couldn't find and then this time what I wanted to bring was a different object and I couldn't find it and it dawned on me that the objects that I used to really, really value when I was single or just married have absolutely no significance at all to me any more since I've had children because all that is important to me now is living and breathing things like husband and kids and parents and siblings and ... that's what I'm drawn to and what I find inspirational and what I get enjoyment out of. So I've just got some photographs out of my wallet of my husband and my kids because that is the object that means the most to me.

P: So do you think that, when you say that you couldn't find them ...?

V: Oh they're probably at my parents' house now.

P: But you haven't ... you don't think that you've ... you haven't given them away?

V: I haven't given them away and I haven't thrown them away ...

P: Right, okay.

V: ... but something that all the previous 17 moves in six years, when I didn't even have a car at some points and I moved house in taxis or with the goodwill of friends, all of these things came with me and some of them are small enough to be on a [unclear 18:06] which I kind of put in a pillowcase in another pillowcase and then on the backseat with a seatbelt on it and other things were in little matchboxes because they were delicate little seahorses I found on the beach in India that had fossilised or all sorts of other random ... Chambo fish that ... somebody carving a Chambo fish in Mali out of local wood and it's the local fish. Things like that, that during my travels symbolised so much and were so much part of me, I thought, actually don't have any importance to me anymore.

P: So how old are your children?

V: Four in July and just turned one and two months.

P: So the one who's four, does he or she ...?

V: He.

P: ... he do drawings and?

V: No. My 14 month old draws already. My four year old, not interested.

P: Right. So do they ...?

V: But he'll pick flowers for me or he'll tell me random stories that make me laugh about random things that ... or his dreams are always great in the morning, what he's dreamt about and what he's thought about and expressions like, you know, if he's been naughty he'll say "Am I driving you happy?" because he's used to me saying he's driving me crazy, so it's just his own little spin on words and language and how to wind me up but ...

P: That's really interesting, isn't it? So do you think that ... How do you account for it?

V: Well, my friends have obviously noticed as well, because I had a big birthday last week and I was only bought three types of presents and they were booze, books and things like massages and that kind of nice pampering style thing that my friends obviously think I need, but I didn't get anything for the home, I didn't get anything personal in that sense for me. I didn't get any clothes, I didn't get anything like that, I just got things that don't last, that are ... that you drink or you read and pass on or ... Nothing to dust or nothing to pack away when you move house.

P: So do you have objects in your house that don't have a use?

V: Yes, some of them from trips that we've made together as a family or with my husband, a bit like you, we've got some random things from our travels together that are on the shelf that have been there since we put them on the shelf and they haven't moved. Interesting objects.

P: And do you revisit those, even though you're not acquiring new ones, do you actually ... Are they just part of the scenery or do you actually occasionally ... you know, a bit like you said that you had a joke about this, the objects ...?

V: I'd like to think that I took a few and thought "Hmm, let's have a change of ..." but that doesn't really happen in our house. The only change that happens is when the stack of magazines and stuff in the magic drawer becomes so big that we can't shut the drawer, then that gets revisited. Everything else tends to stay where it was put in the first place.

P: Okay, show us your photos, please.

V: The one I've got of my daughter is when she was very young and very grumpy and I needed it for her passport but I still keep it because it makes me laugh because she looks like Uncle Fester in the Addams Family. So that's my daughter when she was very small. [Laughter]

P: Great.

V: See what I mean?

P: Yeah, that's great.

M: Like a little grumpy Buddha.

V: That's my son quite recently with his nursery picture because I don't tend to take that many photos and that's one of me and my husband and my son on his knee. So they've survived in my wallet.

P: And do you look at them from time to time or do they just sit in your wallet?

V: Yes, normally when I'm away I have a look at them, if I'm away for a long time, I'll look at them or show them to people who are asking about ...

P: And do you have lots of photos of them in the house?

V: Yes.

P: Because photographs are absolute classic souvenirs. So I mean it's ... I think one of the things that's quite important is that notion of what we mean by an object. So, you said I didn't bring my guitar, but actually you brought an object that showed your object. So the objects of your desire, which is what the show is called, is actually photographs of the people in your life ...

V: Yes.

P: ... but they're still objects.

M: Could I make an observation and it's quite possibly even a question really? You're both ... You've both moved lots of times and you've ... You said "My house is crammed full of things that I collected" and you're saying almost that it isn't really, the things that you collected are not particularly important to you. So there's almost a sort of real contrast there that's making me think, is it that your view is "I'm moving so many times, I don't need to hold on to things to be happy because I just take what I need with me when I go" and yours is "I've moved so many times, it's quite nice to put down roots and have a sort of ... Things are grounded, have objects around me that sort of ground me down, to stop me moving".

P: Yeah, and I can't imagine moving now, the whole notion of it is absolutely terrifying that I'd just have to set fire to the house, I think, is the only way I could do it. And I think that in some ways, because I was so peripatetic, that those objects represent a security to me really. But also they describe who I am. So in a way it's a bit lazy, I don't have to, I don't have to tell anybody what I've done because they can come and see, you know. And now I'm totally sanctioned, I have complete permission to turn my house into whatever it is because I'm an artist so people don't even think it's weird anymore. For years they thought it was weird because it's like permanently Christmas in the house and now they're just "Oh, it's probably some smart thing she's doing" and I'm just going "Phew". So that permission to be who I am... So it's the really strong narrative about my life comes out in the objects for me. So I'm interested in the fact that you settling down meant that you didn't need those bits anymore and ...

V: Who said settling down?

P: Well, no, well, family ... Sorry, I didn't mean that pejoratively, but you know, you've got family, you've got kids, your focus has changed, hasn't it, I would suggest. I don't know.

V: I think maybe for me it's I've realised what's important.

R2: Can I ask, do you put new photos in your wallet?

V: No.

R2: Because I know I've got pictures in my wallet of Joe who's nearly five that I know I took when he was about three so ...

V: And they've just ...

R2: And they're just sitting there.

V: Yeah, that's ... Well, the one with me and my husband and my son, that's nearly four years old now, so ... No.

P: Thank you.

C: Hello, I'm Claire and I have brought along a little picture. This is ... You can just pass it around actually. So this picture for me is really special in a lot of ways. One, a very close friend of mine drew it for me. Two, the kind of little barn that you see there is where five

generations ago is where my family came from. It's a very dear place to me in Ireland which I visit quite frequently. It's just a beautiful place. It brings back huge amounts of memories from when we were kids. We have a huge family of cousins, should I say, but if I was to say that I'm one of six but my father's one of 17 and my mother is one of six as well so there's 86 first cousins. So, but these were places of absolute joy when we were kids and a friend of mine drew this for me when we were planning to have a family reunion and it was really ... The family reunion in itself was 500 people and it was just a little flyer that we were going to send out to everybody with regards to what was going to happen for the entire weekend and she drew this kind of little picture for the front of the flyer and this was the original and as I say it just has fantastic memories. I love the picture itself, I can relate to it, the person that drew it is very dear to me. The history that goes with what's in it is huge and the fun that I had when I was a kid here was just phenomenal as well. But even as a young adult ... I think I mentioned earlier about, I don't know who it was to now, but a group of cousins, we used to just go back to Ireland and we had huge amount of relatives but we'd go and rent a house. We were all just maybe 19 or 20 years old and with having that many cousins, there was a lot of us of the same age at the same time so we had great fun and we'd go over and we'd take instruments over, it's a very musical family as well. Instruments, alcohol, sea and scenery was the kind of measure of it. But we used to go back, even as a young group now we would go back to visit, well, it would be my great uncle at the time, but we'd be staying in this building and the whole group of us would go back. And we were still captured, you know, by the stories and the stone floors and the open fires and they were still cooking on open fires twenty years ago and so it's just really, really important to me. So yeah, so yeah. So that's my ...it's one of my favourite objects.

P: It's great. So where does that reside in your ... Where do you keep it?

C: It resides ... it just moved actually recently. So it used to be in the study against a little musical instrument and I put this new shelf up in the bedroom that now houses the hairdryer and straighteners and stuff and it sits in the corner and so I pretty much see it every morning.

P: Because the thing that strikes me that's interesting about that is, I mean, you've talked with like passion about this object because of all the things that it reminds you of and all the pleasure you get out of it, but it's not framed.

C: No, it's not.

P: So ...

C: But isn't it just beautiful, without it being framed?

P: Hmm. But is that a deliberate decision?

C: No, no, no, it is, it is. There is ... What was requested after this was that some of the different generations in the family actually wanted a picture of this and so she drew ten of them but she freehand drew. So it says 2 of 10 here, but they are originals, they aren't copies at all. The ten pictures are completely different but there are ten of that picture, if that makes any sense to you. But, no, I think to put glass over it would hide something and I think there is something about getting old gracefully and ... And again for me I wouldn't prevail to know a great deal about art but I do believe it's in the eye of the beholder, it is what you see and what you get out of it. And so, yeah,

so ... it is purposely not framed. I have a lot of ... I have quite a lot of paintings in the house and they are framed and ... yeah ... Actually from when this was drawn, and as I say we had a family reunion, I have a huge kind of framed family tree and that's all as I say framed but this still isn't. But yeah ...

P: And have you seen all ten of them?

C: Yes, yeah, and you know when I visit some people ... I know my brother has one and I know a great aunty has one up in Harrington. When I visit these people I kind of look at them but because you look at them in isolation from the others, it's hard working out what's different but there is differences in all. Yeah.

P: So if someone came and said "I'll swap you number 4 for number 2", what would you say?

C: I would be happy to if they ... Yeah ... It's not about being perfect. It's kind of ... As I say, the sentiment in every one is the same but valued different. So again it's the same person that drew this, it's about my family going back 200 years and it's about the memories as a child and what we got from that and the family that's still about now. So I would be happy if somebody would like to, I'm not pushed to but ... yeah ...

P: That's really interesting. So if I had a Blackpool Tower and it was slightly bigger than yours, say, or a bit posher, would you swap yours?

A: No, because then that would go over the £5 limit.

P: What happens if I got it in a sale though, it was less than £5?

A: Ooh, I think the size of it, I think it's just to do with basically when we bought it and ... I mean, it's not valuable or good-looking in any way but there's probably about 6,000 different exactly the same ones out there but ... I don't, I wouldn't go for a posher model, I wouldn't go for like maybe a chrome one or something because it is what it is. I think it's just ... it's just

M: The true test of the attachment to an object is whether you'd trade it.

A: [laughter] Yes.

M: Whether you could be persuaded to part with it.

A: A massive Blackpool Tower ...

P: But I'm happy to trade this ... I feel ambivalent about that. But anyway. No, that's great. That's really interesting, isn't it? I mean, the thing that I just find endlessly fascinating is about this attachment to inanimate things that we have, it's extraordinary, isn't it? I mean, you've just told us the story of your family and your relationships and that's encapsulated in that and it's not a photograph of the place and that is really important, that somebody's hand has made it and it tells

that amazing story. And they all do, all the objects out, it's just wonderful, isn't it? Very exciting, I'm very excited.

R2: It's like a triple whammy with yours that it was drawn by someone who's very dear to you and it represents your childhood and also represents a family reunion so it's obviously a really rich object.

C: But I would like to also say I'm a bit of a neat freak and you know we're talking about buying stuff from all over the place and I'm thinking I'd really struggle at your house. But it is, everything in my house has kind of got a place and, yeah, I like to have places for things, if that makes sense? I don't have huge amounts of objects but everything has a place.

P: There's this really interesting theory which is called self-extension. I was thinking about it with your musical instrument, and that is that we sort of think about ourselves as being the subject and then over there is the object and we somehow bestow things on the object but there is a theory that actually, especially in the case of children's development, is that it's a process, it's a circular process, that we are affected by the objects that we get and we develop in all sorts of different ways, attitudes develop like civic pride when you bring home the Elgin Marbles, there's a ... it's a process of what they call iteration that just keeps going round and round and round, developing.

A: It's true, because I ... Another thing I bought, I like old sort of stuff and things, I bought off this website once years ago a Grand Prix tyre and ... It was because it's a Grand Prix tyre and it came with a certificate saying this was off a Ferrari driven by a really crappy driver in the Monaco Grand Prix and years and years and years ago when I was about five or six I went to Monaco with my dad during camping in

France and we went to the Rosie's Bar where the drivers used to go and I bought this tyre because I thought ... for whatever reason I thought it would be really good to have, I thought "This is cool" and it came, it was in a box, I was like, "Look at that", it's all battered and scrubbed up and stuff and ... I know, when we moved into our first house me and my girlfriend, she just started [unclear 36:34], I went "It's a Grand Prix tyre, it's got to come with us" and she's going "It's not coming anywhere in the house". So it's now in the back garden as a plant pot and I was like ... And she goes ... And she's there trying to move it, it weighs a ton because it's full of soil and she can't move it. It's brilliant because she'd love to throw it away but she can't physically lift it up. But she's going "Why the hell did you buy that?" and I was going "I don't know, I just thought ...". It's someone that I really ... I love Formula One stuff so it's something that's been round Monaco. That tyre ... For some reason I thought that was really important and I bought it, it cost about £100, something stupid.

P: Like a trophy?

A Like a I had something that was at such a massive event and I had part of that in my house and now in the garden.

P: That's great that it's actually a flower pot now.

A: It's a nice flowerpot, but it's so heavy, she's desperate to throw it away with a few other things that I've got over the years but she can't, can't lift it, so ...

P: [laughter]

M: I wondered if anyone had ever in your research if anyone had ever talked about an object that they don't actually have but they wished they did have? Because I have ... Well, I don't have it but I know exactly what it is. My grandmother's button tin. And there's not a day goes by when I don't wish that I had my grandma's button tin and what happened was that when I was little we used to go to my grandparents on a Saturday, on a Sunday to give my mum and dad a bit of space basically while they cooked Sunday lunch and my grandma had two Cow and Gate milk tins, big ones, like that, full of buttons. My grandmother was born in 1903. This contained buttons her mother and her mother's mother had had so the buttons were amazing and there was two of them and she used ... we used to look forward to this, she used to ... I can remember now physically doing it, on the kitchen table, put out a big newspaper, and then she would tip the tin out onto the paper and I can remember the sound that it made as they all spread out and then I would spend about an hour with a glass of lemonade, just looking at them, sorting them, looking at them and every week I found buttons that I'd never seen before. And it was only after my grandmother had died and all her effects had been dealt with by my mum and dad and everyone else but one day I said "Whatever happened to grandma's button tins?" and my mum said "Oh, they went" and I ... Oh, I so wish I'd asked for those.

P: Do you know why your grandmother kept them?

M: Very ... thrift, they were useful, you know. You'd never throw ... my grandparents never threw anything away. In the downstairs cupboard in my grandfather's house in London, the downstairs cupboard ... My granddad was a gardener and there was about fifty jars of dried sage. He picked sage from the garden to make sage and onion stuffing. I

mean, never in a million years could you ever get through that amount but he ... There was no way he was going to throw away something that he'd grown and dried and put in jars. And I think people just kept things then. They valued [unclear 39:54]

R6: The button tin brings me in because I salvaged Mike's great granny's button tin. It was on the car boot and I said "What's this?" and Mike said "Oh, it's my granny's button tin" and I said "You can't get rid of that". So I have her button tin to pass down through the family because I think buttons are important and it would have gone and I can ... I used to play with buttons as a child and I just think things like that have a story and that's kind of how it brings me in. This is a receipt for my wedding band, I'm not married yet, but I like to purchase old things that already have a story, even if you don't know what the story is, so I made a conscious decision to purchase a 1920s wedding band because ... S people find it odd to wear things that might have been on somebody else, I find it really intriguing. So I like old jewellery, old furniture, where you might not know the story but you can guess. Part of the fun is working out where this could have been or you know, did it love someone completely different? And I feel really comforted by objects where you don't necessarily know their story but you can help, you can be part of the future of their story. So yeah, I haven't got it yet, so it links in again, I haven't got the object but I know where it is and it's 1920s band that hopefully will bring ... it's probably ... hopefully it's had a really lovely life somewhere else and I can take that with me moving forward. So that's ... objects with a story are most important to me. And I also brought my diary which is a to do list and I think I got this from my mum because she, when I was younger she wrote a diary every day, from me being just born til about two and she kept that and I've written snap ... not written a diary for my whole life but written snapshots of my life in books so when we were at school we used to have a book that circulated around a group of friends and it sits in a trunk under the bed and I can't bear to throw

away, even though it's a work one, it's about things to do today, I can't bear to throw things like that away, so I keep everything: full notepads, because they have a story somewhere in them, so it's not about necessarily just about the object, it's about what the story is and how you can make up a story if you don't know it.

P: And do you read those books ...?

R6: From time to time, yes, we'll have a girly night in and we'll revisit the teenage diary, it's a bit like *Adrian Mole*, and it's a really good giggle with a glass of wine. And I don't know, I don't think I could ever throw them away. I'd have to pass them on to somebody else in the group. So yeah, it's about the documenting things or guessing.

P: And do you ... on those occasions when you all look at the diaries together, are your memories of events different to what's recorded?

R6: Oh, yeah, definitely, yeah. Because it's a snap shot of time and then that generates further discussion and more memories and ... But I'm not a diary writer, I don't write my own diary, I'll write odd things down and I might keep learning logs and journals now and then but I don't throw anything like that away.

P: I think that's really interesting, the whole idea about the objects having a narrative before they reach you because, particularly talking about like souvenir trinkets, you know, you can guarantee that the sand didn't come from Blackpool and that it's manufactured in its thousands in Taiwan or somewhere. But there's that whole things about it's been there but it's come here and it represents something completely

different which is actually only contextualised by us which is really fascinating.

R6: So nobody may want the button tin but it's got a lovely ... well, it's a horrible button tin, it's got a horrible picture of a dog on the front.

M: Has it got buttons in it?

R6: Yes, and I have used some of them but I do put my own buttons in it so I am keeping it alive. Rather than it leaving family and going elsewhere.

P: My grandfather was in the first world war and he wrote a diary in pencil and there were bits of lampblack all over it from the lamps and he wrote about the whole of the first world war up to the point when he was invalided out which was very close to the end and nobody died, nobody died in it, and the only way that you knew that somebody died was that he'd talk about Frank or Harry or Fred or whoever it was and then they wouldn't appear again. And so there was this really tedious account of how many miles they walked and how you had to tie the bottom of your trousers up with string otherwise the rats would run up your legs in the night, blah blah, but nobody died in this war. And it was such a telling narrative really about the author, about the state of the author and, you know, we obviously all know about the horrors of the first world war, so it was incredibly ... so

R6: We have a box of love letters from somebody at war, so it was my partner's mum's great, great grandfather and his fiancé at the time and there must be about 100 letters, back and forth, and we started to work through them and try and write them, to type them up so if they

are ever damaged or ... we could capture the story but it's a full ... it could be a film, it's a full narrative. I just find things like that so interesting.

P: Yes, it's fascinating.

R7: I think [unclear 45:38] perhaps to a lesser extent, when my boyfriend and I decided to move in together we made a conscious effort to look at things that maybe had something about them and so we went to second hand stalls and looked on eBay and eventually found this amazing, well it looked in the picture amazing, this amazing table with like a leather top and the person selling it had this really kind of romantic dreamy idea that it was a turn of the century table and it sat in the Houses of Parliament and he had reason to believe so had used it to work and all this but that wasn't really what drew me to it. So anyway we got it and I saw it and it was just ... it had been in the cellar, it was kind of ... the legs were rotten, the leather was really, it was kind of dried out, it was cracked, it was really awful, and I was like "Oh God" and so Matt, my boyfriend, he went about kind of repairing it. And he started repairing it but then because his dad was selling his house it went into storage but he kept going back with stuff to put in, he kept going back to that. Anyway, when we moved in it was a massive effort to bring this table in because it's big, really big and it's really heavy and I think it's probably quite a quality piece. People keep telling me the drawers have dovetails, so apparently that's a good thing, but ... So yeah, we live in the top floor flat, so, without a lift, so it was a massive effort, the staircase is really narrow and I saw it for the first time and the legs had been sawn off so it was shorter, so it's a coffee table and the leather had been peeled back and the glass handles had been polished and they had like a I think it's a portcullis stamp on and underneath the leather Matt had sanded it but whoever had made it, there are handprints kind of, whoever made it had

varnish on their hands and there are handprints and he said “Do you want to cover those up, they’re not very kind of in fitting, they don’t really keep with the kind of way our living room looks”, and I was like “No, I love those”. And now they’re kind of a feature of the table and people come and say “What is that, why do you keep that?” But actually it’s been polished up and I think they look great and they’re kind of a ... I put my hand against them and I don’t know, it’s just something, I don’t know, it’s something to measure against. There’s just something about them that I really... I love having them there.

P: Right, what a great story.

R7: It was like [unclear 48:15] and ...yeah.

P: Because it’s about that whole thing about all those secrets that make up the past because we have our own understanding of our own past and the stories that are told us but there’s all that other stuff that we don’t know and then occasionally it pops up and we suddenly think “Ah”, you know, like there’s a ... it’s sort of like a mystery. It’s a bit like treasure, isn’t it, the button box for kids is like treasure.

M: But also I think that sign of a human touch is really ... There’s a resonance there, isn’t there? The way it connects.

R7: And I’d never part with it and actually on top of all that it was a bargain, it cost £5 and the person who had it in their cellar delivered it for free. So it’s cost next to nothing and yet it’s like [unclear 49:05] and it really forms the centre of the room.

P: And it will have been handmade, so the whole hand of the maker.

R7: Yes.

P: Yeah. And also the fact that it has been in the Houses of Parliament was sort of status to it as well, wasn't it?

R7: And that's really ... I thought maybe, ooh, that's maybe why I like it, but actually that isn't the reason [unclear 49:30] at all but that's kind of pale ...

P: So was that your souvenir?

R7: Yes.

P: Right. Okay.

V: Understandably you haven't brought it.

R7: It's massive.

R2: Up three flights of steps. [Laughter] Do you have any pictures of it?

R7: No, I don't.

R2: Is it in the background of any?

R7: Oh actually, let me have a look actually, I think it ...

R2: Spend the next ten minutes looking through pictures ... Sorry.

R&: But yeah ...

P: Let us know if you find any.

G: So hello, I'm Gemma. Luckily for today I forgot my object, well, I thought I did. I thought it was an inspirational object so I was going to bring a photo that I took of the sunset in Ibiza but as we're talking about sentimental value I'm actually going to talk about my ring. So, again it was from when me and my sister went to Ibiza. It was about two years ago now and the significance is that we both bought one at the airport together, that sounds a bit childish but she'd just come out of a long-term relationship and she'd changed, she'd gone almost OCD, she had to control everything. She would only eat chicken and chips, she was only ... she hated odd numbers and she was basically a bit of a fruitcake [laughter]. But she was sort of coming out of the other side and she was getting back to her old self and she got rid of him and it was like the beginning of her new start. So it was almost like a butterfly being set free. So there's two ... There 's one big butterfly and another little one and it did have sparkles on it and it was about £15 from Claire's Accessories, not Claire's, Accessorize. But I

still wear it now, even though all the stones have fallen off and she still wears hers and some of hers have fallen off as well and it's got something in it, I'm not quite sure, but ... [laughter]

A: Flour.

G: Yeah. But every chance I get I always wear it because ... I've got nicer rings but this one is the most sentimental because it's like us getting back together and we had this main holiday where she was totally different personality to what she was becoming. So ...

P: Right. That's really interesting, because it's interesting that they're two identical objects, so the question I'm going to ask is, is her story the same as yours?

G: Yes.

P: Yes?

G: Yes.

P: So she feels the same way about her ring in terms of her own condition?

- G: Yes. And if I wear a different ring, she'll "Why haven't you your ring on?" So, I'm "Hang on!" [laughs] But no, we do wear other rings but nine times out of ten it's always this one.
- P: Interesting, that's great. That's really good. So do you talk, do you reminisce about the holiday through the rings?
- G: Yeah, we do, yeah. We did try the whole swapping them as well but because it was so hot they're moulded to our fingers so ... She's got skinny fingers so they don't fit.
- P: Do you think that would have changed your relationship with the ring if it had been hers and not yours, even though they're apparently the same?
- G: I haven't really thought about it really. Ummm ... Probably not, in a way it would probably be nicer if we could swap them because we always used to share everything when we were little because she was then, I think Andy spoke about her earlier, she was only just a year older than me so we always used to share everything anyway, so it would have been quite nice to share it but it's also equally nice to have our own moulded.
- P: Yeah. There's a long tradition, isn't there, about people sharing rings, there's the old folk music tradition about chopping wedding rings in half and people going off to sea for so long that when they come back you don't recognise them and the only way you know your putative husband is if the bits fit together and people always ... men, always trying it on. [Laughter] And you know, rings about marriage. They're quite potent, aren't they, objects, rings?

M: It's quite funny actually, I was thinking, oh, I haven't bought my object I could use my ring and then I thought, no, I won't do that, I'll just describe the object that I haven't brought. But I was... There is a sort of strong tendency or strong pull to sort of relate to the things that you have on you all the time, you know, because they do, they are quite significant aren't they? Particularly wedding rings.

P: Yeah. And the fact that it's ...

R6: It's really not that it's the wedding ring, it's that it's 1920s.

C: My partner's grandmother died last year and the wedding band was left to my partner Emma but the actual wedding band was from her great, great, great, great grandmother in 1834, I think it was, and it was in its original case from a Glasgow jeweller company and it was terrific until some little scallywag broke into the house and stole it.

[collective "oh!"]

C: But we had it from 1834, Emma had it for three weeks and it was stolen from our house. It was just ... But it was nothing at all to do with value and it was a very.... What was it? It was a history of the old [unclear 55:04] and who'd touched it, where it had been, but anyway.

R6: I suppose that's the worrying thing, isn't it, when you have so much attachment to objects like that, it's nothing to do with the cost.

C: It was huge attachment, yeah. There was lots of valuable stuff stolen but it was all about the ring. There's no way you could ever replace it.

G: Where have you got your ring from?

R6: It's from Cavendish in York. It's not the same one?

[Laughter]

R6: It's a 1920s ring.

C: Glasgow jeweller, yeah? In a red box.

P: But that's what really intrigues me about the notions of value, you know, because nobody here, even your instrument which I suspect didn't cost 50p, you didn't mention the cost of it ...

R2: No.

P: ... Or ... and you talked about value in a completely different way in terms of the money, i.e. that your daughter spent all her ice cream money on it, so it's a completely different notion of value and those

things being stolen but the stories, someone stolen ... the story, aren't they?

C: The story, yeah.

R2: There's like a craft value to my instruments that ... I've got a few that were made for me but this one took 15 months to make, there's a lot of work in it, [unclear 56:19]

P: But the way you were talking was actually it only became really valuable to you once you started having a relationship with it.

R2: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Until then it's just a lump of wood and metal.

P: And the same with your table. It sounded like the sort of bonus bit of it was it was only a fiver but if you were to quantify how much time had been spent on it and turn it into the hourly rate, I think it's probably been quite expensive but that's not the point, is it? That's not ...

M: It can be a problem when something becomes quite valuable. Because we've collected art over a long period of time, some of the pieces we have in our home are actually very valuable and I ... it makes me nervous, it makes me uncomfortable, you know. Yeah. I sort of ...

C: We paint stuff, we know, yeah. Anything, of real sentimental value, it's in a safe.

P: It's a shame, isn't it?

R: I feel quite bad now. So my name's Robin. I've started selling quite a lot of my objects that I've collected this weekend, so I've bought a bit of Lego. So this brings back lots of happy memories as a child but I started selling my Lego sets now at a car boot, so I've been getting rid of my objects that I collected for a number of years and you know, when I was getting them out and sorting them, you know, I got them out and started messing around with them again and it brought back their sentimental memories. I'm not quite sure why I'm getting rid of it but there's a lot of clutter in our house that I really need to get rid of and I can't find a use for anymore. It seems to be as a part of my history and I couldn't see it in the house anywhere and it's ... Do I just keep the memories and get rid of it and it's somewhere inside me and ... Or, you know, do I keep hold of one little brick and then that be something that just brings back all my Lego collections?

P: So, I don't know. Is that what you were going to do?

R: I might keep this one brick. There's not much left now, I did sell some this weekend. So, I'm going to keep one brick.

P: And what are you going to do with the money?

R: That's a good question. I think it may go into my ISA for a house eventually but that'll be a long way off.

P: I think that's a completely marvellous answer, I have to say, because you're basically ... What you're saying is that you're selling a series of objects in order to buy another one but completely ... And the fact that it's Lego houses and you're going to buy a house is just so great. That's just great. See, there is a rationale behind it all. So, when you say that you were ... I mean, did you solely decide that you're going to get rid of these objects or has somebody else contributed to this decision?

R: I did make the decision solely because I haven't been in the garage for ten years I would have thought and they've come out very infrequently, I guess my parents are probably looking to downsize shortly so they're probably thinking "God, there's a lot of stuff in this house, what can we get rid of?" But a lot of objects that they have that they've got one of already in the house, they're keeping like a spare of it, and it was interesting why they didn't want to get rid of ... they didn't want a big clear out, they just wanted to select bits and hang on to other things that have sentimental value or could have a future with someone else. But I guess like selling my Lego to the child that bought it, then that's passing that on to them and then they'll have memories about it as well.

M: That just reminded me of something actually that I didn't mention in my visual diary, sharing stuff today. There's an exhibition at the Barbican at the moment and I can't remember the name of the artist but you'll probably know. A Chinese artist based in the UK who has got an exhibition of all the objects from his mother's house in China and the story is that when the father died ... She's of that generation that keeps things, like my grandparents did and my parents did actually, because it might be useful later, so she would never throw anything away. When her husband died, this old lady became very distressed and became really attached to objects and not only would

she not allow anything to be thrown away, she was very strong in not wanting her children to throw anything away either and these were grownups with families and living in separate houses and she would try to encourage them to keep things and eventually she died. No, she hasn't died, that's it, but the thing about her is that, in order to help her with this bereavement, the son who's the artist, has asked her to help him curate an exhibition of her objects and they've catalogued and arranged all these objects and there's just miles of it, it's extraordinary. And you know, it's things like cooking pots, used toothbrushes, tin washing up bowls, children's toys, plastic bags, old shoes ... I mean, there's nothing of any value there at all but the big value was in how it's helped her overcome bereavement.

P: Have they reconstructed the house at the Barbican as well? Because I saw it ...

M: So you do know that guy?

P: I saw it in Chicago, and it was an extraordinary thing to see because in the Chicago Institute it was displayed in a central atrium and then you went up the stairs so you could look down on it ...

M: That would look much better like that.

P: Yes, you had a completely different view from the ground floor and the further up you got, the more it became about patterns and shapes ...

M: Yeah, because it is arranged, all arranged.

P: Yeah, and lots of brightly coloured, because there's lots of Chinese stuff.

M: No, the room's not ideal at the Barbican because you're sort of coming down some steps and ... it's a bit like going into a sort of junk emporium. You follow a path through ...

P: Oh, I know which space it is.

M: It's one of the ones on the side of one of the auditoriums. So in a way it actually feels like going to a really rubbish junk shop where there's nothing that you'd want and you don't get that sense.

P: There's a great ...

M: And when you get to where the house is you just think "God, they've got a house as well?"

P: It is amazing, actually. I know I found it particularly interesting because it is the sum total of this woman's life and we've all had those experiences though, haven't we, you know, that notion that people downsize as they get older so you're talking about your parents downsizing, there's that thing about shedding, so it all becomes internalised and so you don't need the objects anymore but some things you don't want to get rid of but because a crisis had happened to this woman, she hadn't gone through that process and it was just all there. And by the ... going through the material of her life helped her to sort it out. But I think it's interesting because I would say that part

of your ambivalence about getting rid of the Lego, you want to pass it on to somebody else so it can have that story, can carry ... Because Lego's fab, isn't it? It's just amazing and it's about making dreams happen. You're turning it in to loot to make another dream happen, but that dream was still lodged in somebody else's space which is your parents. So I mean if left to your own devices you might think well, bugger it and put it in a cardboard box to go under the bed, you know, or you might not. So there's those moments that happen where you have to make decisions about things but they don't go away. You may forget about your Lego and then you'll have kids of your own and I would suggest that Lego is a timeless thing and you may take your kids to the boot sale and buy somebody else's Lego because Lego's so fab. So it's a funny ...

M: But that thing about getting rid of things that you had when you were a child, there is a sort of, I recognise that feeling, sort of letting go of the past, that you've sort of moved on to a different life.

R: And there's like objects like little houses like that. I know in my car boot I had two little Tetley houses and they kind of had like a snow globe and it's just like interesting so these are all things that I've collected over my time that I've just ... You know, they're all in a big box and I haven't looked at them for years and I've got them out of the attic, and I went through them and there wasn't really anything that I felt sentimental to. And just got rid of them which is probably a horrible thing.

P: No, I don't think so, no, I don't think so, because I think that we all do that all the time. I mean, sort of, it's just a process of getting rid of and replacing. I mean, unfortunately we do it with people as well, don't we? We don't actually get rid of them but they drift off and ... that's ...

it's just all part of the way that life goes, doesn't it? I suppose ... I mean, we started travelling when I was nine and all my toys were put into storage and my aunt got rid of them all and I've never got over it really, partly because one of them was a Guinness stopwatch with a toucan that dragged the Guinness and it would have been worth a fortune. And my doll called Jean who was made of clay and I washed her in the bath and her face collapsed, but I loved her. But they just disappeared. I went to a foreign country and the whole of my life was just erased.

M: That's really interesting because we've got in our loft the equivalent of your life, we've got our daughter's growing up and it's all in boxes in the loft and I wouldn't dare, you know ... It's almost like, although we've given them to her, bought them for her, they're her objects and every now and again we go "Are you going to come and have a look at what you want to keep?" and she goes "Oh, yeah, not just now".

V: You'll have to do what my mum and dad, said "if you don't come and get what you want, we're moving house and it's going to get ..." and that spurred me to go and ...

R6: That's what my mum and dad did.

M: We haven't reached that point.

V: They had three daughters though so there's a lot of daughter stuff.

R6: My mum and dad are the same and Mike's family are completely the opposite which is probably why my ... I like things like stories but I haven't really got a lot of objects from when I was little but Mike's dad and his brother and him have Buzz Lightyear in a box from 1996 when it came out because it's going to be worth something in the future and everything is still in a box, he didn't play with anything. He played with sticks.

M: Bought as an investment.

R6: Yeah, he played with sticks, he played in puddles and he didn't really play with toys because they were all in boxes in the garage for when they're going to be worth something.

P: Wow, that's really interesting.

R2: My parents gave away all my Star Wars toys, my original, like early 80s Star Wars toys that, they were ... Even without boxes they'd be worth a fortune.

P: But did you, have you forgiven them? No? You don't bring it up every Christmas?

R2: No, it's a waste of time. It's one of those things that I can't quite actually believe happened but it did and thus 'tis done.

A: My dad that with my Scalextric, it was like a vintage 60s Scalextric, he gave to his friend at work because he didn't have much money. I was still playing with it at the time. It still used to come out. It was like they had these cars and stuff and like ... proper old vintage Scalextric and he just gave it to someone at work because he's hard up and he hasn't anything. I was [unclear 1:09:02] Then a book came out recently about how these ... the classic Scalextric cars and it was ones that are quite rare and I was flicking through it in a bookshop and thinking two in the middle of my Scalextric cars from the sixties. Crazy. That's what I had.

V: That guy's probably bought a million pound villa with the proceeds of your cars.

A: Yeah, he probably has. But yeah, my parents gave stuff away, even when I was still playing with it.

M: Do you think that these programmes like the Antiques Road show and Cash In The Attic are changing people's perception about objects that they're prepared to part with?

P: No, I don't think so really because I think that people ... there's always been a hierarchy of importance of objects. For the things that you're really, really attached to, then money doesn't come into it ... unless you're desperate, unless you're really so desperately hard up that you just say oh, we're not going to eat today if I don't sell this. But, no, I think in the main that that sort of conflating of value, financial as opposed to emotional, only happens around objects that you really, really don't care about or their value stops you caring about them.

They might be expensive pieces of art, you're more worried about ...
That's the more obvious element of the relationship.

M: I'm rather cynically intrigued by the idea of following up some of those people where the expert, the antiques expert has sort of delivered the verdict and they go "Ooh, I didn't realise it was worth that much but of course I'll never part with it" and I think it would really be interesting programme to follow those people up and see just who has.

R2: Bought a yacht.

V: They have done one of those.

M: Oh have they?

V: Yeah, I didn't see it.

A: Was there one about a teapot that was worth like, it was really, I think it was a vase, it was like Ming Dynasty or something and it was worth £100,000 and that was the same thing, they'd never part with it and they went back and she did sell it because she said "For one I couldn't get insured for it and two I was just terrified of it ..."

P: Yes, because of the different value ...

A: "... so what could I have done with it?" It was basically on a dresser for like twenty years on her great, great granny's and it just ... you went past it and knocked it, then whoop, all of a sudden it was worth a stack of cash and she was like....

P: Okay, now I'm aware of the time. Do you want your photos taken with your objects? Shall we do a group photo, seeing there are so many virtual objects in the room?

M: Since some people are without objects.

A: And more flying in.

P: Or ... It is entirely up to you. I'd quite like a picture of you with your Lego brick.

R: Okay.

P: ... and your picture. We could do it like you're a prisoner, couldn't we?

V: Yeah.

M: Which is more useful for your PhD?

P: Well, no, I was just quite interested because, if you'd all brought stuff, it's quite nice to record it but that doesn't mean we can't still do it

because, as I was talking, I was thinking we could have a collection on the table but I'm really now interested in the fact that most of the objects are in your head.

M: Maybe you could ... What you could do is take individual shots of people with an object and then a group shot of all of us.

P: How do you feel about that? Is that okay? I'm aware of the time, is everyone still alright for like five minutes or so? Okay, the hot seat

End of Transcript

Appendix 3

Interview with a Collector: RK

RK: ... aspects of personality. That's ... I've just realised that now, is that when I look at it, especially if I'm looking at them individually, as singular pieces, it's the fact that they've come, a. from a different place, b. from a different kind of background, their provenance is totally different, most of it's mysterious in that sense, but it's also come for a different reason on board, so I find myself trawling charity shops or I make a beeline for a place that's going to cost me money to get there and back because I know there's one particular piece there. So I've just realised that that anchor, it's almost trying to find a meaning for your existence through these lumps of whatever it is, you know, it could be brass or guitars or glass or whatever it is. But I do now at this advanced age see the madness in it. That's what it says to me mostly. Yeah? I think.

I: But why madness then? What ...?

RK: Well, because I can't really ... All the other things that I'm thinking about it's just justifications, that's why madness. They're just justifications for having this junk around me.

I: Yeah, but if you've just said that they're an anchor for who you are, what has happened that means that you don't need that anchor anymore, that you see through it?

RK: Oh, how long have you got? [laughter] Really? I mean, that's ... partly just maturing age but I think also ... I've been having serious demon removals from a lady.

I: Okay.

RK: And it's left me quite different. And becoming more different as time goes on.

I: Right.

RK: This is very recent and ... I was beginning to look at it as if it were a kind of result of madness, but now I'm sure that there's something I needed out of it which I don't need any more ... I think.

I: Yeah, okay.

RK: I like to keep a few pieces as a kind of ... you know, just because I love them. Aesthetically I love some of them and some of them are so grotesque that they go full circle and become lovely anyway for some weird reason.

I: It is interesting, that aesthetic thing is interesting, isn't it? Because I've got souvenirs which I look at them and I think they're completely revolting but I love them for their revoltingness.

RK: Yeah, me too, me too. That blue and white thing is so far over the top, I had to have it. And they did look at me sideways. In fact, they were still looking at me while they bubble wrapped it. They didn't take their eyes off me because [laughter] ... But you know, yeah, I know exactly what you mean. Some of it's so ugly, it's past ugly and yet still it's got a place in amongst it. There's something egalitarian about that. Because I love throwing it all like that, just up on shelves, where it mingles with its superiors or its inferiors without any kind of ... there's no kind of variance.

I: Except there is in your ... Overall there's not but you said you know that there's a collection here and in amongst that, unless you know there's a really valuable piece here, you'd think they were all the same, you know, that white one ...

RK: Oh no, I think that most people wouldn't, that's what I meant, most people wouldn't know ...

I: But do you like that sense ...?

RK: They wouldn't discriminate between that bit that's a couple of hundred quid ... which I've never done before, I've never actually gone and said "That's the top of the tree in collectors' terms, I've collected it all these years, I've got a few bob spare so I'm really ... I deserve those two pieces" and I bought them both at the same ... No, I didn't, I bought them two weeks apart and asked the guy to keep them for me. But I thought there was some kind of deserving well, for having put this collection together. The other thing, the other aspect of that, I remember thinking at the time, I don't need these two, I've got enough and up to now it's been a civilised, organic way of collecting but

suddenly I thought, the one thing dealers always say to me is it's getting harder to find and, when you do find it at auction, you have to really pay for it. So what used to be a trade price has now become ... it's a retail price. And I suddenly thought, I know I've done the right thing in investment terms for the kids, yeah, because Alex wants it, one of the kids wants it, but it's not fair to have just avoided all the good bits, do you know? Just because you know, what it needs to make it a proper collection is a few good bits thrown in. You can't have it all hoping that it's going to become legit, you know. It's still going to be tat in forty years, most of it, whereas if I put a couple of good pieces in every now and then, it'll kind of make it something worth leaving.

I: Right, right.

RK: So that's trying to live forever as well, isn't it, really?

I: Well, it is ...

RK: For posterity.

I: It is, but also it's about validating your collection in the eyes of others, isn't it? Because up to just ... it's just validated for you, it's just important to you.

RK: Yeah. And nobody was ... I mean, nobody saw it really, apart from Maddie and a couple of other people. Nancy saw it and a couple of other people. The kids ... Oh, Alex took some kind of interest. I don't

think Rosie's that interested because she's too sensible. But I suddenly thought that if I'm going to do it at all, if you know what I mean, then I might as well try and do it a little bit more properly than I would do most other things, you know.

I: And when did you buy the first piece or get the first piece?

RK: When I ... when we came up here actually, which was ... Well, not long after we came up here, so it'd be about '85.

I: Right. And had you had your eye on that sort of stuff in the past, or had you just ... picked it up?

RK: No, I know what it was. There's a glass thing next to my bed, a glass ... kind of table lamp thing, which looks middle European to me for some reason, Czech or it might ... somebody said they thought it might be Italian. But anyway, I remember buying it just because of the ... it was just like "Whoa!", it's white and a great strip of red and green round it and I loved it and I ... it just reminds me of a kind of barber's pole and it's glass, why is it glass? I can't understand why this thing's glass. Maybe when you light it up ... and it was in a junk shop. Maybe when you light it up the glass will glow. It doesn't, it's just got a light on top of it. But the same bloke that sold it to me sold me that big heavy red piece. About a week later he said "This has got your name on it, eight quid". And I went "Oh right, yeah", took it home and Maddie and I used it for a thing on the fireplace that you kept sticks in and we used to throw keys in it sometimes, you know, "The keys are in the thing on the fireplace". And it never scratched, it never scratched. And I thought, this thing's a real survivor. It's like ... And it's this ... And I suddenly noticed how deep that red was and I

thought, I've never seen a red quite as deep as this and I suddenly looked at it as glass. I went "Glass!" And then I suddenly started seeing other bits of glass. That's ... and then ... that's what happens, isn't it?

I: Very interesting, yeah.

RK: But I never really thought anymore than ... It's just ... I quite like living with it...It doesn't get in the way. You know, that thing on there, it's better that that's there than it isn't, if you see ... And I change whatever's on there every week.

I: Oh, do you?

RK: Or two weeks or three weeks. When I notice that I go "That's been there a long time". Because there's so much of it, all I've got to do is stick another piece up.

I: So do you spend much time cleaning it then? Dusting it?

RK: I was going to apologise because now I can't get up on those shelves really and ... just doing that amount of washing up. I did at one time, yeah, at one time it used to always sparkle but now I really can't do it. I really ... Anything where I use my ... I have to limit it. There's a finite amount of time for arm usage.

I: And does that matter to you then? Does that affect the

RK: Not anymore.

I: ... aesthetic of it?

RK: Umm, in my head it does, yeah. I mean, I'm not looking at it, going "Oh, it's dusty". What I'm thinking is "I wish it was clean" but I'm only thinking ... I'm not looking at it, if you see what I mean. It's in my head, it's ... Because I do tend to be a little bit ... not anal exactly, although many would say I am, a lot of people would probably say I am, but I'm nowhere near as bad ... I couldn't have lived with that door like that at one time, whereas I can now. That kind of thing ...Whereas at one time ... But I do have to know where everything is. But ... that's another thing I've just thought of, as I'm tumbling this madness out ... At one time I couldn't have lived with the randomness of it.

I: Oh, okay.

RK: And now I can. So I think that's probably an advance. But I think I've gone past that now.

I: So what ... How would you have had it before then?

RK: I wouldn't have had it at one time.

I: Oh I see, I beg your pardon.

RK: Because of its ...

I: Because of its randomness ...

RK: ... it's random nature.

I: Oh, I see, you wouldn't have archived it or catalogued it or organised it, you just wouldn't have had it.

RK: Well, in a sense I have upstairs, because... the Murano stuff in the glass case, in the glass square box case doesn't really ... in my head anyway ... When I like it so much I don't want it mixed up with the riffraff ... No, that's not ... What I like is, it looks really good on its own, stands very well on its own. And so I've separated those. And then what happened is because I had those cabinets which I can't give away, nobody wants them anymore, and I'm sure at some point everybody's going to go "What happened to all those lovely glass cabinets?"

I: They're fantastic.

RK: Can't give them away. And ...

I: So did you buy the cabinets for the collection?

RK: No. I just had all kinds of ... What I used to do at one time was fill them with stuff like I've got, little bits of this, little bits of that, little interesting bits and then sell the whole thing with the cabinet, right? And I did it about four or five times and then when ... Every now and then people would say "Oh, where's that little Mickey Mouse that you had, that ...?" and I'd say "Well, I sold it in a cabinet" and they'd go "You idiot" and then things from the record business like CBS belt buckle was in one and ... And I could see people in these auctions, it was great fun for me, just watching people looking at them and you could see their heads going "Whirrrrrr" [laughter] "How much is this worth?" and I remember a guy used to come here from an auction house, he used to come here to see what I'd trawled and how I'd laid it out in the cabinet. Because it's the sculptural thing for me and I used to love having these cabinets around with all different kinds of stuff in it and ... you know, I'd rather be doing that than going down the pub sometimes. But ... I don't know, it's ... that was ... I used to enjoy that I think more than any of the other collecting things but I always reached the buffers with **[unclear 11:12]**. I do with the guitars, I do with ... I mean, one of the guitars that's just gone to Morecambe is a 1966 Epiphone Texan and it's like ... I mean, who'd have ever thought that I would have one, do you know what I mean? And I was offered one and I had to have it. I thought, there's always an element ... or this probably doesn't apply to the glass, but there's always an element with guitars anyway, because that's about the third collection that I've had, there's always an element of "When I get the next one, it'll make me play properly". Do you ever get that with instruments?

I: No, a sort of reverse of that. If I haven't got a good instrument, then I know it's not allowing me to play as well as I can, which is slightly different. It doesn't have the same alchemy that you're describing.

RK: No, I keep thinking that the lightning bolt will happen. If I get that bass, I'll suddenly be Jaco Pastorius. In fact, I would spit on his talents.

I: [Laughter]

RK: But it doesn't work, does it? Because it actually doesn't make any difference whatever. All it's got to be is playable.

I: It just makes your mistakes sound better [laughter].

RK: Yeah. That's the bit of technology I want, is where it cuts the mistakes out.

I: [Laughter]

End of Transcript

Appendix 4

Gallery Of Wonder Catalogue



OPENING

GALLERY OF WONDER
GALLERY AND RESEARCH FACILITY

The Narrative of Origins

Penny Grennan

PREVIEW: TUESDAY 30th August
5.00PM - 7.30PM

THE FOYER ENTRANCE TO THE FINE ART BUILDING,
THE QUADRANGLE,
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY, NE1 7RU

EXHIBITION DATES: August 30th - 24th September 2011 24/7
www.galleryofwonder.co.uk



The Narrative of Origins.

What is the narrative of origins? It is the narrative of interiority and authenticity. It is not a narrative of the object; it is a narrative of the possessor.

Behind every fact there is a story and it is here that other sources of wonder lies. We may see insects, artefacts, museum collections, departments, all grouping similar things together but behind the evidence lies cultural norms, beliefs, and human judgement. Each story depends on the existence of an object, and the human interpretation of it.

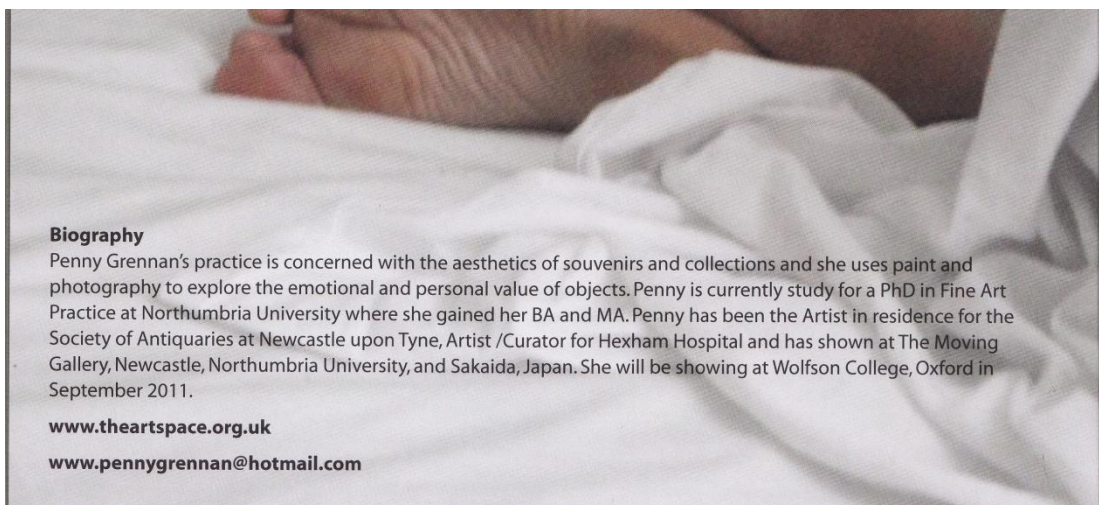
Who is to say which story is true and does it matter?

Part of the narrative of collections is the names that they are given. The Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus devised the current system of two – part Latin names in 1753 and this construct is an internationally recognised method of identifying and understanding species.

This work explores the use of taxonomies and the two part naming system as a way of disrupting their accepted forms and creating a new narrative behind them. It plays with how groups of objects are configured and who creates the categories that are catalysts for their stories.

Pinned, like butterflies in cases, are photographs of objects, paintings, and people, offered up for re-telling.

Stewart, S. (2007:136) On Longing. Durham and London. Duke University Press.



Appendix 5

Scottish Historic Environment Policy Dec 2011

Annex 2

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011

5. Cultural significance of any monument, whether of national importance or more local significance, can be characterised by reference e.g. one or more of the following; the characteristics are in three groups:

Intrinsic – those inherent in the monument;

Contextual – those relating to the monument's place in the landscape or in the

body of existing knowledge; and

Associative – more subjective assessments of the associations of the monument,

including with current or past aesthetic preferences.

Intrinsic characteristics

a. the condition in which the monument has survived. 'Condition' includes the potential survival of archaeological evidence above and below ground, and goes beyond the survival of marked field characteristics;

b. the archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument or any part of it;

c. the apparent developmental sequence of the monument. Monuments that show a sequence of development can provide insights of importance, as can places occupied for a short time;

d. the original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts.

Contextual characteristics

e. The present rarity or representativeness of all or any part of the monument, assessed against knowledge of the archaeology of Scotland and of the region in which the monument occurs;

f. the relationship of the monument to other monuments of the same or related classes or period, or to features or monuments in the vicinity. This is particularly important where individual monuments, themselves perhaps of limited immediate significance, form an important part of a widespread but varied class. The diversity of the class should be a material consideration in making individual decisions;

g. the relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting.

Associative characteristics

h. The historical, cultural and social influences that have affected the form and fabric of the monument, and vice versa;

i. the aesthetic attributes of the monument;

j. its significance in the national consciousness or to people who use or have used the monument, or descendants of such people; and

Scottish Historic Environment Policy Annex 173

k. the associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events.

6. Understanding of cultural significance may change as a result of the continuing history of the monument, or in the light of new information, or changing ideas and values.

Appendix 6

Interview with a souvenir maker: the making of souvenirs in Haiti

R: So they ... This is a big American charity, I think they're sort of a global charity now, but they, it's an enormous organisation that has offices in many, all third world countries, developing countries, and they started out after the war with feeding programmes for Europe. They had things called care packages that the Americans of a certain age will know about, where they sent packages of food and clothing to refugees all over Europe and so on. And then it sort of became ... it's like Oxfam or Save The Children or something like that, N.G.O.S they're called. And so they had a programme in Lesotho which was making hand knitting yarns from mohair which was a local commodity in Lesotho. So I did that for five years and they said "Oh, we've got this programme in Haiti". I think they thought ... I think at the time I thought it was Tahiti but it turned out not to be. I was dreaming of grass skirts and palm trees and ... Anyway, so I arrived in Haiti and there was this ... They had a programme called Carno, which had been started by some very well meaning people in the north west of Haiti where there was cotton and there was very little, it's a very dry arid region they have, they have what they called Latanie which was like palm leaves, cotton and the cactus, Vetive cactus, the big spiky things. And so they were making very, very simple stuff out of cotton, these cotton tapestries, but they were rather chunky, a bit like this rug, but very, very primitive and they weren't cheap because it wasn't a very ... Then they had some people come, a couple of technicians come from Taiwan to teach them how to make baskets or ... And they made sort of Taiwanese baskets and again rather expensive, because ironically they were, they ended up, when we tried to sell them they were always compared with baskets that were made in Taiwan or the Philippines or whatever which were of course far, far cheaper and made much more efficiently. So I was losing a lot of money, provided

some sort of subsistence for quite a lot of people. So they said “Oh, we’ve got this project, we’re just pouring money down this bottomless pit and have a think and tell us what you suggest”. So I looked at it for a short time and I said “This really is not going to work, you will never make ... it’s not about the marketing or whatever, there’s going to be a very limited demand for that sort of stuff”. And at that point there was a thing called the Caribbean Based Initiative which Ronald Reagan implemented which was meant to improve trade between Central American countries, Caribbean countries and the States because they had sort of communist insurgents in Nicaragua and so on and so on. Basically it was tax, import duty breaks and so on to try and develop. So my boss, who was in charge of the care mission, they used to do all sorts of programmes. This was like business development programme and they did water programmes, they used to feed 600,000 people every day, they had all sorts of medical things and so on, it was a big operation. So he said “See if you can get some of this money” because normally they would give this money to the government but if you gave it to the government in Haiti that was the last you saw of it, it ended up in the presidential Ferrari fund or something like this. So I said “Well ...” Haiti’s very close to the States, it’s only a short flight to Florida or whatever and ... So I said “Well, if ...” and they had quite a big ... They had big industrial parks at the time around Port-au-Prince which was the capital and they were bringing, they would make cheese or they started even making electronic components and things like this but it was assembly stuff and in a big factory they used to make baseballs, something like 70% of all baseballs at that time were made in Haiti because they were all hand sewn, a bit like cricket balls. So ... They had quite a lot of giftware. They would make ... You know, every American household has a wreath on the door at Christmas and they would send down the vines and the foliage or whatever that got wound into those things and just bash them out and paint them and put some rocking horses on them and whatever, put them back in the container and send them out again. So they were quite big operations. They used to do a lot of

beaten metal sculptures and that was actually a local thing where they would make voodoo symbols and things out of beaten old big oil drums. And they ended up making ... it became quite trendy in the sort of country look they had at the time in the States. This was ... I went there in 1981, 82, so it was quite a long time ago we're talking about when the country look was prevalent in the States. And so they would actually send their oil drums down and they would just hammer out rocking horses which was one of the key ... those sorts of images that used to go on to all of this giftware stuff. We used to ... We'd already tried hawking our stuff around the giftware shows in Dallas and Atlanta and Miami and places like that. So I said "Ok, let's set up a design centre to try and help people who want to set up their offshore manufacturing in Port-au-Prince and try and help Haitian manufacturers manufacture the right stuff to sell in the States because this isn't going to go. So we closed down this ... We also had a shop which was also a disaster that sold this stuff. So we started a new shop just because that was quite a useful focus and also gave some immediate feedback and ended up being fairly successful. And then we got in touch with lots of local manufacturers to see if we had something to offer. We hired some designers. And so we started to work with them. We also set up a factory to produce stuff as well. It actually started more as a sort of experimentation sort of workshop but we ended up just having production lines and stuff if the stuff sold with the ultimate objective that we would then give those to local manufacturers. So it wasn't reliant on an aid organisation which was not a specialist in that area anyway. Anyway, so that was the idea, and then they gave us quite a lot of money to start it up and we did that until there was a revolution in 1986/1985, right at the end of 1985 and then we had to get the hell out. And then more recently there was a huge earthquake which hit a really ... the place became a real basket case. Anyway, so in terms of the souvenir bits. So the range of stuff that we did. So that was the sort of starting point. And so this was ... I'm trying to ... So we were selling ... The focus was ... Because people ... I'm jumping around here ... people take

inspiration from what's around them. If somebody's making, it's the natural thing to do. I worked for Fisher price for many years who make preschool baby toys and so on and their headquarters is in a little town outside Buffalo in Western New York and all of the... You drive through the countryside and you see all of these red barns, every farm looks exactly the same, they have a little silo and they have a red barn and so if you look at the Fisher price Little People play sets, the farm set they sold zillions of units for many years, all have this little red barn and every company that's copied those products, all those have the little red barn and that came from just being in that, having that design centre stuck in that countryside. So say somebody designed a farm, they'll design what's around. So we ... There were some intrinsic crafts in the country. If I ... I can show you ... Haitian paintings were very well known. Do you want to just come up to the next floor? I've got a few examples.

P: Yes.

R: Cruise ships used to stop in Haiti, not so much when we were there, they did occasionally but they had been on the cruise ship cycle.

P: Right

R: And they made ... These are Haitian papier-mâché ... So this was not quite indigenous but that was the sort of stuff that they bashed out.

P: So was that technique of papier-mâché intrinsic to Haiti?

R: I wouldn't say intrinsic, I mean it had been introduced at some point. The painting is the thing ... I'll show you ... I'm not sure, I think it came from France originally but that's ... Mind your head there.

P: Oops. Where am I? Right.

R: You're in the attic. So that was a Haitian painting.

P: Oh okay.

R: And if you went down to the port and you looked like a tourist you'd be accosted by hundreds of people flogging you paintings that all looked rather similar to that. I mean, quite nice, it's all oil paint. And they used to make boxes, here's ... you can't see them so well but there's a box there, you can see how they would paint furniture.

P: Oh, okay. Right, so, and stylised in a very particular way, aren't they?

R: Yeah, yeah. It came from, I think it came from, I'm not sure if it came from Haiti and went to France or it was in France and then went to Haiti.

P: Where was Rousseau? He wasn't ... Was he in Haiti?

R: No, he was French but I think he had associations with the South Pacific.

P: Oh yeah, that's right.

R: I think, I'm not quite sure.

P: Okay, because they're quite redolent of that really, aren't they?

R: Yeah, and everybody had their particular style and they were very popular in France and you could pay thousands for ... there were galleries in New York just showing the top of the line Haitian artists. Haitian art was a sort of ... It was a genre, if you like. And so everybody had to paint, everybody said "I'm an artist" and nobody would say "I'm a crafts person", everyone had to be an artist and if you say to this guy "How much is your painting?", he would say "\$2,000" and you'd say "Well, I'll offer you \$25" and you'd agree on \$50 or whatever, there'd always be this ...

P: But these are great, I really like that.

R: These came from a little town south of Port-au-Prince. We were driving past one day and there was a whole bunch of them stuck out on a wall, I'm sure somebody just showed somebody how to make papier-mâché and there were little workshops that ... it would have been some aid worker or volunteer or whatever who showed them and then they said to their mate who was an artist, you know, "Can you paint stuff on?" and then they got ... People were very happy to paint and express themselves and it was all a little bit stylised. So that was what we sort of started with and we said "How can we use some of the ...?" And they also used to make wooden bowls, there was a lot of wood turning and a bit of wood carving, they did wood carving that

was a little bit sort of African, the way that it looked. And then wood turning where they, there were lots of lathes kicking around and very, very rudimentary things, but they would make bowls, you know, salad bowls and they were usually out of mahogany and they cut down all the mahogany trees in the country to furnish this. There were still a few left but ...

P: And were they doing that before it became a tourist item?

R: I don't know, I have no idea. It had been on the tourist route for years and years because it's very close to the ... because of the Caribbean cruise thing, close to the States and so on. Anyway ...

P: It's amazing that it's ...

R: Mind your hair on that lamp thing.

P: I mean, it's one of the poorest countries in the world, Haiti, isn't it?

R: It is, yeah. It always was.

P: It's extraordinary. I don't know how I'm going to get down there. You might have to hold that.

R: Let me show you how ...

P: Do you just jump, do you?

R: Let me show you how I do it. Do you want to try that?

P: Okay, yes.

R: Maybe I should ... I don't know whether to get to the bottom and catch you or hold you from the top.

P: That's a good plan. You might have to catch those. Thank you very much. You can tell me whether I'm on it.

R: Okay, you're fine.

P: Yes, that's fine. Right. Something that really interests me is the sort of grey area that occurs when actually there's no answer to it. There's a degree to which trade, so trade in the items you're describing, influences style. So you're talking about making the red barns and that becoming sort of emblematic of the ...

R: An icon almost.

P: Yeah, of the farm and then there's that notion that to what extent things are appropriated from the sort of original culture, whatever that means, because that's a question of the term as well, because influence is always coming in and out and then they're produced or simplified or changed in terms of what the perceived market is. So if

it's going to the States and they're interested in the country look, let's change how we represent this and that then feeds into this stereotypical ... yeah, what becomes a sort of stereotypical style.

R: Yeah. There were two things that were happening then. There was one, there was the industrial parks that were bashing out stuff that was defined precisely in the States, defined for the US market. So the country look, they'd sort of say "These are this year's colours for the rocking horse range" and they would be slightly different from the previous year but the previous year's didn't sell at all and the new line really sold like hot cakes. It was quite a sophisticated industry in its particular way. But of course they were just interested in paying a dollar a day because it was minimum labour wage and it was only a short ... They used to bring things a bit like floating car parks across from Miami, they used to drag them with tugs and the trucks used to drive off the car park into the industrial park and then they used to assemble the stuff and drive them back and tow them back again. It was an amazing process. But it was all about cost and so on, so there was no Haitian input at all. So our ... we were trying to do some added value so that people could start workshops or start businesses and export and make some money out of it and have some chance of a sustainable business. So we had a series of manufacturers that we worked with. We even had some US manufacturers that we were working with to try and improve their ... We did a bunch of different things but this was the core of it if you like. And so we took some combinations of things and put them together. So we took the woodturning and the painting and we came up with this range of stuff that was like painted parrots that were very emblematic or if you like symbolic of Haiti and then we stuck them on little mahogany pots and ... which was quite a chintzy souvenir type thing

P: Yeah, they're nice actually.

R: ... but very sort of representative of the Caribbean or whatever. And so we were selling those to gift shops in Florida primarily, so people would go on the west coast of Florida to some sort of resort on the beach and then in the gift shop you'd see all the parrots and so on and they sold great actually.

P: So who designed that? Did the Haitians?

R: We designed ... When I say "we", there was me and a couple of other ... there was one, when we did those, we did those one weekend in a little town where the papier-mâché came from, there was a guy who had a ... he was a guy who was an Egyptian guy who was living there, he was a Baha'i, he and his wife were Baha'i missionaries or whatever. He was a painter, that was his ... and he moved there permanently to live ... but he was there, both because he wanted to go there and secondly because he wanted to spread the word about the Baha'i faith. He was a pretty good business guy, he was fairly sharp, but he was, he could, he was an illustrator, he was quite clever, he used to paint Pereos on, they were very stylistic in the sort of flowers and this, that and the other, but he was also interested in trying to help, as part of his religious bit to try and help the local people and whatever. He was a bit, because he was a bit of a bazaar trader type, bazaar trader middle eastern guys, but he was a clever guy and so we said "Okay, so why don't you manage if you like these people who can paint a bit and there's people who make the wood and so why don't you bring ...?" So we went down to that place for a long weekend, a holiday weekend, and we said "Okay, we're just going lock ourselves away and we're going to design some stuff". And so we came up with this idea and we made a few samples, went out to see the guy with a lathe and got a guy to cut up some African looking sculptures and said take some parrots and we painted them up and we came out with that idea at the end. And we also came up with

something, I used to have some actually but I gave them away the other day. We would call them Hobnobs and they were ... there's four of them there, they were like people with faces and the face ...

P: The face was proud.

R: ... was at the end of a knob. And they had nothing to do with Haiti at all but they started out being parrots and things and then this guy who was a bit of a caricature painted some other funny faces on and we had this ... We took all of these ideas, we had this gift shop ... and we put them in the shop and they started to sell better than anything so then we expanded the whole ... that was a poster for the shop at the time.

P: Oh, okay.

R: So that was in the shop, because they also used to make these chairs and there were people who made whatever, ceramics and printed textiles and so on.

P: Right, okay.

R: Anyway, so he ended up with a ... this was a price list thing, this was his stuff. So he was doing anything from fish, we used to ... these are not too unique, these were a little bit more unique at the time. These things, you see they went from the parrots into the caricatures. These started to do really well and then these were all ... we used to call them shelf sitters because they used to look over the edge of the shelf

and things like this. And these were the hobnobs. So they started off with one or two designs and then used to do them for. So if you had a friend who was a ... or if your brother was a baseball player or your dad was a fisherman or a tennis player or a golfer or whatever, this was obviously for the bathroom.

P: Very good.

R: And then we also took the basic boxes and there's one on the top of the stairs actually. So it went from what you saw in the attic

P: Oh okay.

R: So this was much more of a mass production sort of thing.

P: Oh right.

R: So there would be one artist who just did toucans and one guy who just did the background and one guy who just did parrots and this guy Morro, his name was, he's still there even , you can go to his website and see ... End of Transcript

Appendix 7

Commentary on exhibition **Objects of Desire** at **The Moot Hall, Hexham.** **27th – 29th September 2013.**

The purpose of the exhibition was for me to assess my work in an exhibition space that I had hired for the purpose. I hung 62 paintings and showed 2 films. I also invited friends and interested people to come and see the work. The show was open for 14 hours in total and I had 99 visitors.



I kept a comments book and wrote down the comments of visitors.

Comments on the paintings.

F: I like the over paintings, I found them spooky and liked the idea of a past narrative being hinted at.

N: I am amazed by what I have missed, the paintings reveal themselves the more I look at them and I mean the paintings, not the layers in the paintings.

S: The whole show reminds me of a 1950's toy shop, full of all the things we would like to have.

P: When I look at the whole collection it looks like tat but when the object is isolated in a painting it changes it totally. It becomes more interesting and worth looking at, it gives the object more value, more aesthetic value.

J: I like the gnome best, he reminds me of me, and my face is like that. I also like the Tudor coffee pot, it seems valuable.

H: The different depth of canvas echoes the different shapes of the objects.

A: just like being at home.

M: Interesting to feel the difference evoked by having a plain background compared to the object being in situ.

Comments on the films.

L: Although I understand what the narrative in the film (Stuff Keeps Happening) was doing I thought it spoilt the film. I would have liked silence so that I could concentrate on the objects.

G: I wanted the narrative to end at the same time as the objects.

T: The birds made me laugh out loud (Aviary)

R: The change of tense in the film indicated the change of narrative.

RS&JS: From Trash to Treasure is so well portrayed in the 'Anna' interview and film

JH: Mechanical tweeting birds a highlight. It inspired me to collect more objects of questionable taste.

There were general conversations about souvenirs that people had and about quality and authenticity.

H: I went to Poland recently I lived there years ago and I tried to buy the carved wooden objects that I had seen there the first time I visited. They were no longer available and the quality of the items has diminished.

