

Out of the Box: Anthropology Collections Unpacked

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What can anthropology collections do? Anthropology graduate students studying the history, politics and practices of exhibiting cultures have mounted an exhibition exploring the potential of anthropology collections. Installed in the rotunda of Low Memorial Library from May 12 to June 2, the exhibition draws together a wide range of objects assembled by anthropologists connected to Columbia University and Barnard College.

From New York City archaeological ceramics to a Yagua blowgun, the showcased artifacts were not originally conceived as exhibition pieces, and they have never before been on public display. Nevertheless, these varied objects exist as fragments of the anthropological experience.

This collaborative exhibition explores the professional and personal reasons why anthropologists have tended to amass material culture, building up, and, in some circumstances, abandoning collections. These accumulations may be valued as raw data, educational tools, collectibles or personal mementoes from the field. Eleven students have curated the cases in the exhibition to reveal the multiple dimensions of what anthropology collections can do.

Out of the Box: Anthropology Collections Unpacked, is on view in the rotunda of Columbia's Low Library from May 12 to June 2, 2009. The Library is located on the Morningside Heights campus of Columbia University at Broadway and 116 Street and is open Monday-Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

This exhibition was curated by: Lauren Click, Sarah Elsasser, Savannah Fetterolf, Tara Holland, Mark Hvizdak, Becky Laughner, Joo Hyun Lee, Steven Mandis, Fran Ritchie, Sara Rockefeller, Constance Smith. It emerged as part of two courses in museum anthropology taught by Nan Rothschild, Erin Hasinoff, Meredith Linn and Felipe Gaitan Ammann.

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