

UCL Young Curators with Harris Invictus Academy

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Hi, welcome to our online exhibition you have happened to stumble across. We hope you find our Young Curators Project informative and intriguing, because we certainly did. We are a group of 6 Year 10 students from Harris Invictus Academy Croydon who are studying a range of subjects, including History, English and Art.

THE PROGRAMME

The programme took place over 5 weeks during which we met various curators and lecturers, who taught us different aspects of curating. We met the following:

- **WEEK 1:** Dr Ludovic Coupaye introduced us to curating, Archaeology and Anthropology. He showed us how to explore the story behind an object. We did our first object handling session, trying to investigate the objects.
- **WEEK 2:** Dr Rafael Schacter taught us to tell a story through objects. He researches street art to create exhibitions that tell stories. We were taken to an exhibition called 'Defying Death' where we explored the evolution of medicine throughout history. We were taught the importance of presenting an object in an exhibition.
- **WEEK 3:** Dr Haidy Geismar taught us about Vanuatu and its culture. We looked at a wooden mask, trading mats and t-shirts, as well as the patterned cloths from the island chain. The mats in Vanuatu's culture are used as a type of gift giving and can often be used to represent the coming of age. These mats, as well as other commodities, could also be used in trading goods because Vanuatu's culture promotes a mistrust of consumerism.
- **WEEK 4:** Toni-Ann La-Crette, a poet and librarian, introduced us to crafting haikus. A haiku is a type of poem originating from Japan which usually consists of 3 lines with a total of 17 syllables in a pattern of 5, 7, 5. We completed a series of exercises to get our brains thinking about connecting our personal objects with an object from the exhibition. At the end of the session, we had each successfully produced at least one haiku.
- **WEEK 5:** We collectively recalled our experience. We produced the material for the online exhibition.

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We now have an idea of Anthropology as a subject, and have a good understanding of the opportunities that are offered to us as university students. It has also made us able to expand on our ideas and speak about them more fluently than we could have done before participating in the programme. From this course we have taken away key concepts such as culture and the problems faced by collectors when storing the objects. Culture has a big impact on people's everyday lives.

We enjoyed the fact that we were able to develop our ideas and understanding of Anthropology in separate sessions focusing on different cultures and aspects of curating. It would have been better if we had more time in each session as it was long journey to UCL on hot sweaty trains. However, it was worth the journey as we gained skills to be able to analyse and describe a story. We were also able to gain the experience of being in a university which makes us feel less stressed about making an attempt to eventually go to university in the future.

This project was put together by:

Delphine Mercier, Curator-Collections Management and Care

Dr. Haidy Geismar, Curator and anthropologist

Celine West, UCL Museums and Collections

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Thanks to:

Dr. Ludovic Coupaye, Dr. Rafael Schacter, UCL Anthropology

Toni-Ann La-Crette, Librarian and Poet

Melissa Shiress, Hayaat Stuart-Khafaji, UCL students, for their help.

The Young Curators' selections

Syeda Sana Gilani

Prayer board

UCL Ethnography Collection, S.0030

Wood, black ink

Nigeria

19th century

From the anthropology collection, I chose a prayer board which was made in Nigeria. It was used by students to memorise verses of the Quran. It interested me because it linked to me as a school and Arabic student. People would wash off verses and drink them as a form of prophylactic and to take blessings from it. These practises are known as El Mahara. I chose it because it still has marks of the last writer which links to the phrase that I chose to write on my clay piece, suggesting the fact that even though we don't personally know them today, the Marabouts (the religious leaders) had a big impact on the people surrounding them and became a reason that their boards were collected by the curators.

Arabic plaque

Clay

Croydon

2018

From home, I brought an Arabic clay plaque that I had made in school as an exam draft. I chose it because it has great sentimental value to me and portrays my culture and beliefs. I had carved and embossed the clay with tools to create the final piece just as the student had written on the prayer board. Its translation in English is "you cannot hear me but I have a great voice". This reflects me as a child because I was a quiet and shy primary student, but it has shaped me in to how I am today.

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I have brought together a clay plaque with Arabic writing carved in to it and a wooden prayer board. I made the clay plaque this year as a draft assessment piece for art because it had a personal link to me. This linked to the Quran board because of its calligraphic text and their natural material. I picked this object because I had carved the Arabic into it just as the student had written on it. It also reflects my culture and religion as I am a Muslim and it is quite interesting for me to recognise the different methods used by students in the past and compare it to how I am revising for my mosque exams now.

*Board sitting silently
Reminiscing the past
Speaking so clearly, yet paused.*

*Wood so artistic
Linguistically
A drained core*

Tyanne Hudson

Collection of cinema tickets

Paper, ink

Croydon, 2016-2018

Tickets I have collected over the past 2 years from trips to cinemas with friends and family.

I have chosen this object because I think it represents friendship and helps me to remember my experiences. For example, when I went to see *The Greatest Showman* with some of my best friends, Jasmine and Victoria. The ticket helps me to remember the little details like the fact that after the film we sat on the floor of the cinema for an hour waiting for more friends to come out of another film. Also, when we went to see *Dead Pool 2* as a leaving party and my friend, who was leaving, didn't show up.

Four Lantern Slides

UCL Ethnography collection, X.0428, X.0430, X.0432, X.0434

Glass, chemicals, paper

Nigeria Ivory Coast, Yoruba

1950s

Lantern slides were used as a way to present information much like a PowerPoint. They are photos that can be projected onto a screen and were used to teach students from UCL in around the same time they were made.

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I chose these images because they are both linked to memories and ways of learning about different cultures. The films talk about the 21st century and the things we find interesting and the lantern slides teach us about life in 20th century Nigeria. They are also connected by the way they were shown, both on projectors for a large audience.

*TJ is very poor
He owes me lots of money
And half a large coke*

*Samuela, Samuel
Vicky fight a lot
About nothing really*

Soliman Hussaini

Soliman Hussaini - Personal object

Meme: Loss

Digital object

Artist: Tim Buckley

Buckley, T., 2 June 2008. Loss. Ctrl+Alt+Del. [online]. Available from: <https://cad-comic.com/comic/loss/> [Accessed 2 August 2018].

The object is a meme, some may argue the best meme. A meme is a joke that has been passed around and changed when it's passed. I picked this meme because of my love of internet culture and this specific meme because my friends and I have referenced this meme frequently in our conversations and shared laughs.

Club

UCL Ethnography Collection, D.0018

Wood, fibres, pigments

Melanesia, Solomon Islands

The object is a club, which is a weapon. It is made of one piece of strong wood as metals were not found easily in the Solomon Islands during the 19th century. On both sides, it has a whaling scene of sailors hunting whales, "whaling scenes". It shows the meeting of the cultures of Europe and the Solomon Islands. It was a souvenir from the Solomon Islands.

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The reason I chose these items is because when I was shown the club I made a connection between the club and memes. A joke or a weapon of war isn't something new – they been around

for a long time – and the meme and the engraving display the originality of each owner. They are changed by each owner which makes the object original and not some other joke or weapon. That's why I chose those objects, as they have a connection even though they are very different.

*Memes make me glad
They show me life and our culture
So I chose a meme*

Candour Ndaguba

*Valentine's Day card
Card, Post it notes and Love
Croydon, 2018*

This object is a Valentine's Day card that was given to me by my significant other. I've picked this object as it holds much emotional value to me.

*Kula Arm-shell (Mwali)
UCL Ethnography Collection, J.0062
White conus shell, small red, white and black shells and fibres
19th Century*

This Arm-shell was used as a medium in which its owners would pass on their experiences of trips to different islands in the South Pacific. This particular object is from the Trobriand Kula Ring. I found this object both aesthetically pleasing and mentally stimulating as I was given a story by the third anthropologist we met, Dr Haidy Geismar.

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I've chosen this object as it is meant to signify the passing on of emotions to a stranger. I have picked both objects in order to contrast the way emotions can be transmitted from person to person, whether this transmission takes place in closed or open relationships.

In Humane Humanity

The shell, the smell we

*Take, break, make, steal is it real
All for a feeling*

*A feeling we aren't
Feeling, the gift of giving
The talent of stealing*

*Hope, slippery slope
We steal the air, we never
Choke, the revenge. Life*

Best Oscar

*Strong-arm blaster
Plastic
China
21st century*

The object I chose is a Nerf Gun. It is a toy that shoots out foam darts. I received it on my 10th birthday from my mother. I chose the gun because it represents the desensitization of war and violence in our society. The purpose of the toy is to bring out the adrenaline and exciting aspect of war without the drastic consequences and horrors attributed with war. It also represents a child trying to draw himself closer to the more adult aspects of life.

*Ndome Shield
UCL Ethnography collection, B.0026
Wood, pigments
Kenya, Kikuyu*

The object from the collection I chose was a shield that originates from Kenya. It was used in coming of age ceremonies and would be used in a ceremonial dance. It is made out of wood and has red and black patterns painted on it.

I chose the shield because its pattern and aesthetics are very intriguing but besides that I chose it because it links very closely to my personal object. The shield represents the embracing of responsibility and the calling to action for a child and this creates a contrast between the two objects.

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The two objects connect because they represent the evolution of human opinion on the duties of a child. The modern concept of childhood is a relatively new concept where children are expected to have a good education and have a meaningful relationship with their parents. The nerf gun I believe accurately represents this as it is evidence for the change in the purpose of a childhood from work to leisure. The shield represents past views on childhood.

*A wall of honour
That protects both the man
And his own state*

*From the death that stalketh in the night
From the pain that corrodes his higher conscience
And from the inequity of his leaders*

*A wall that harbours valour
And unleashes it in the mist of his terror
A wall we call shield.*

Kaiya Pink

*Graffiti poster
Board, paint
Croydon, 2012*

My object is a graffiti poster which I created at a summer school when I was in year 6. Creating the poster was to show the privilege of being a part of the summer school during the last year before it was closed down. The poster is a symbol of fun and memories that were created at the summer school. Creating the poster took lots of concentration and patience; however, I had great fun challenging myself with different materials in order to create a magnificent piece of work.

*Necklace
UCL Ethnography Collection, J.0035
Fibres, glass beads, pigments
Zimbabwe*

The object I chose from the exhibition was a necklace from Rhodesia which today is called Zimbabwe. The necklace was donated to the collection by G. Penwarden, the niece of George Henry Walker, who lived in Bulawayo around 1910. The necklace is made out of glass trade beads. The use of imported beads is a fact of historical significance. Jewellery in Zimbabwe prior to

colonial rule was primarily made with locally sourced materials, such as shell, and the integration of glass beads denoted a shift in political climate. When originally worn, this necklace may have conveyed conventions of status relating to age, family, gender, marital availability, for both the group and individual in ritualistic or ceremonial acts. These factors constitute the object's social and spiritual significance.

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My poster links to my object from the collection through a season of change. The objects convey the idea that one object can link to so many memories. They also suggest the change from one age to another, for example, leaving the summer school and entering Year 7 with memories of the summer, compared with the necklace being passed down in celebrations from one person to another

Gain

*Amazement in life
An excited audience
They see in the fibres*

*Peace is on their chests
Memories from others before
Their presence still there*

*Something beautiful
But created in past time
Wanted with no author*

Postscript by Oliver Barham, English Teacher at Harrys Invictus Academy Croydon

I would like to thank UCL Anthropology and Delphine Mercier for organising a wonderful project that offered the students new experiences they might not have otherwise had. I would also like to thank the various academics and volunteers whose time and support helped the students develop new perspectives about the world in which they live.

I was worried the students might find academia dry, academics obtuse, and the journey long, so it was joyful to watch them engage with the difficult ideas with which they were confronted with an

energy and enthusiasm that belied their having just spent a full day at school. It is to the student's credit that everybody involved with the trip praised their intelligence and imagination, as well as their general attitudes and behaviour.

Rafael Schacter, who researches and organises exhibitions of street art, spoke at our second workshop at UCL about the street art in Croydon, which several of the students had viewed on a walking tour of the town with their Art teachers. This led to an interesting discussion about why and for whom art is made, which led the students to ideas about gentrification and social mobility.

It is difficult to analyse objects because it requires a visual vocabulary that we might not have access to, and it is even more difficult to state what those objects suggest about the world because it requires knowledge and imagination. The students have displayed and developed all these qualities and I hope in doing so they have thought about their own lives and their relationship to the objects and people around them.

I also hope the students saw what a varied and interesting place the world is with numerous possibilities for intelligent and curious people.