



# Object Love

Rebecca Farkas

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*Object Love* is an animated video of artworks and objects from the collection of Museums Worcestershire and from people's own homes. I think of it as a moving 'still life' that brings a new perspective to the things that we collect in the museum and in our homes. We all have things in our homes that we cherish, whether they have monetary value or for sentimental reasons, and many museum objects are items that were once in an individual's home.

In autumn 2020, I invited people to choose an object, and tell me the story behind it for *Object Love*, an artwork commissioned by Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum. Worcester's art gallery is housed in one of the oldest museums in the country; the Worcester Museums collection of objects and art is very varied and full of fascinating things. I also collected images of some of the objects that people have at home that they cherish. The animation contains many of the suggestions that people sent to me, but there are a few that I couldn't include in the film, but are still very interesting. This document contains the objects suggested and the stories behind those choices.

My recent work has explored the *Memento Mori/Vanitas* painting tradition, which was an idea that started in the 17th century. Artists created paintings that gathered together objects, which could include flowers, fruit, vegetables, insects, skulls, books, clocks and so on. The translation of 'memento mori' is 'remember you must die' and the idea was to remind people that they should live their lives to the full. I like to think of it as a nudge about possessions and materialism that reminds us that, 'You can't take it with you.'

# Chemist Shop

Suggested by Angela Shouler

Angela works at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum and responded to my callout for staff and volunteers to tell me about their favourite things from the collection. Angela has been inspired to create her own collection, by her favourite museum objects.

"The Chemist Shop...this fascinates me from, not only its amazing pharmaceutical past, but its wonderful collection of old remedies and bottles, some of which I have collected at home. They reflect a past where the process of packaging was creative. It also lasted and had a beauty of its own which I still enjoy looking at.

I have attached a picture of a few of my bottles from my collection."

For the animated film, I used some of Angela's bottles from her picture and a photo of the chemist's lamp, taken by Jonathan Barry of Worcester News.



# Faberge Jewel

Suggested by Colonel SJ Cartwright MBE

Colonel Cartwright, Honorary Curator of Worcestershire Yeomanry Museum, sent in a picture and story about a Faberge Jewel that was presented to the Worcestershire Regiment in 1904 by the Countess of Dudley to celebrate their service during the Boer War and the return of the regiment from that conflict.

As well as being a finely crafted work of art, the piece has a deeper meaning for the Colonel, "This piece of Faberge has been part of my life almost since I joined the Regiment in 1965.

I was later commissioned and it was part of the duties of a junior officer following a formal dinner to ensure the Jewel, as it is known, was conveyed to a place of security and safety. Usually this was in the Armoury or under lock and key in the guard room. As things changed in the Forces, and dining out of the mess became 'the thing' we often visited local hotels, close to where we were based, and often stayed over. On these occasions it went to bed with me! No, not under the covers, but under the bed.

Over the years the item has increased in value and is now worth £1million plus, as valued 2 years ago. I never dreamt at the time, when it was tucked away under my bed, that I would be able to say at a future date that I had slept with an article under my bed worth a £million plus."



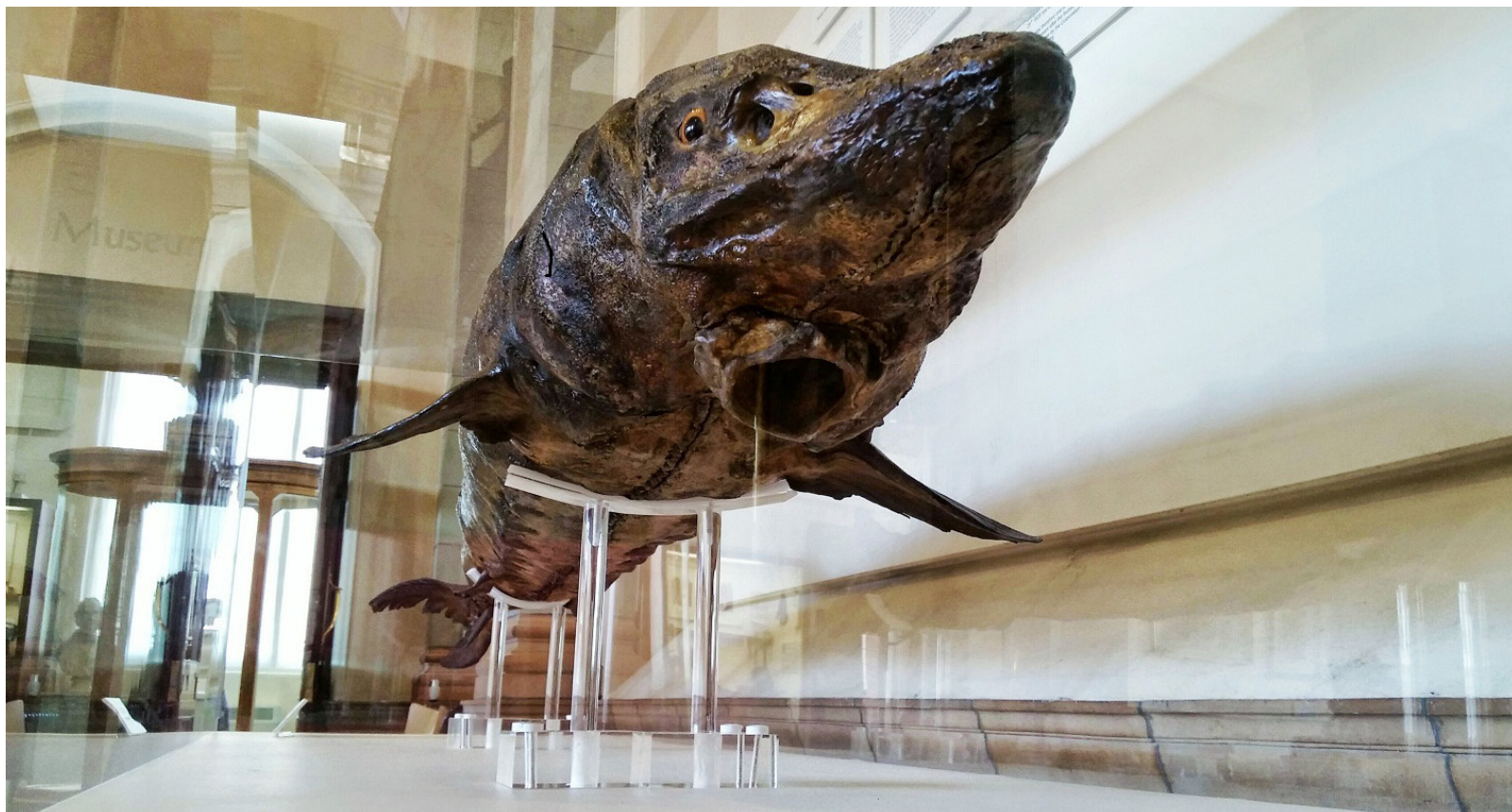
# Sturgeon

Suggested by Manda Graham

I had several people contact me on social media with their favourite objects from the museum or at home. Manda liked the sturgeon that is housed in a tank near the cafe. I can see why this creature appeals, as it is very striking and most people won't have been up close to such a huge fish before.

Manda explained why she picked it, "The sturgeon please...It's so unexpected but so prominent as it sits in the cafe rather than in the museum. Plus...I can never believe it came out of the Severn!"

I enjoyed animating this beastie, as I always stop to look at it when I'm at the museum.



# Albatross

Suggested by Sally Stone

Another spectacular creature at the museum is the albatross, affectionately known as Albert. The huge bird is believed to have been presented to the museum by Mr Percy Brown of RMS Waimate, a ship with cold storage facilities that travelled between the UK and New Zealand in the late 1800s.

Sally's reason for choosing Albert was a fun one, "The albatross - I think I picked it because the girls used to have to say 'hello' to it whenever we visited Worcester, so... fond memories."



## Duckling and plant pot

Suggested by Jamila Walker

In the *Object Love* animation, I have paired together two bird-objects that were submitted. Albert the Albatross pops down for a chat with the little duckling that Jamila submitted to the project. It's an object from her own collection at home and she told me why she picked it.

"This object stands out for me, because it could be viewed, as 'trick', it raises queries - alive, dead, macabre, why a plant pot? Cute or horrid...what's the story, does the duckling have a name, can I touch it?"



## Worcestershire Sauce

Suggested by Jenni Waugh

I loved the energy of Jenni's suggestion, for an item that is closely identified with the county, "The really big bottle of Worcestershire Sauce - I think it used to be in the cases in the room with the dress. I love outsize versions of things that are usually quite small. I identify with that, being larger than many women! There's a very large glove somewhere too."

The giant bottle of sauce is no longer on display, so I've used a picture of other bottles from the Museum's collection here.



# Sandwich

Suggested by Emalee Beddoes-Davis

There have been a few surprises during this project, and Emalee's suggestion was unique. As a former curator of the museum, she has insider knowledge of the collection.

"THE SANDWICH!!! It's a half-eaten beef sandwich from the late 19th century that was found wrapped in newspaper down the back of a sofa that was acquired by the museum. It's now kept in a cigar box and is one of my favourite museum objects. It should be one of the wonders of the world."

This is definitely one of the weirder things in the museum and I felt it deserved its own individual animation. It's a very short piece, but I have recreated a sandwich and incorporated it with the genuine article.



Huge thanks to the museum staff who hunted the sandwich down for me and photographed it.

# Museum Case

Suggested by Rachel Cockett

I loved this suggestion by Rachel but it was one of the things that I wasn't able to include in the animation.

Rachel explained why she chose it, "This period case - the design quality and the curved wood and glass. Made to look beautiful, unlike most modern museum cases. What am I saying... all modern museum cases!"



## Sheila Scott by Ernest Waldron West

Suggested by Hannah Cooper

Hannah got in touch with her favourite piece from the art gallery, "The portrait of Sheila Scott. It should be on display; it shows little girls in Worcester that you too could grow up and be a trailblazer."

Sheila Scott (1922-88) was born in Worcester and was the first British pilot to fly solo around the world in a light aircraft, making the journey three more times during her piloting career. She broke over 100 light aircraft records and was the first pilot to fly directly over the North Pole in a light aircraft.

I didn't use the portrait in the main animation, but I played with the sky in a moving picture.



# Necklace

Suggested by Gemma Moore

Gemma touched on an important point in what she says below: it's interesting how much love we can place in an inanimate object - it's all about the stories that they help us to remember. Often, it's about the people and places we associate with them.

"I have chosen to submit an object from home. My chosen object is one of my favourite chokers; I decided to submit as I enjoy wearing this particular choker because I associate it with multiple stories. I once managed to lose it in a field, and I thought the likelihood of finding it again were pretty remote. But I did manage to, which I was so happy about.

I have worn it everywhere. I have worn it when I have gone to a swimming session called Aqua fit, so it has started to turn rusty. One day I realised I had lost it again, and I decided the next day to purchase a few more chokers just like it. Once I had done this, so perhaps another day later, I went into the spare room of my house, and just below where we keep the vacuum, there I saw my favourite choker on the floor... so evidently it must have slipped off, fallen onto the floor without me realising!"



## Worcester's Sea Dragon

Suggested by Rosemary Roden

I incorporated Rosemary's favourite piece into the animation and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing her knowledgeable explanation of the fossil and where it was found.

"One of my favourite fossils is an almost complete skeleton of a Lower Jurassic ichthyosaur, *Eurpterygius communis*, from the Lower Lias rocks of Bickmarsh on the Worcestershire/Warwickshire borders. It was given to the museum in 1887 as part of a bequest from the late Canon A.H. Winnington Ingram. Since then it has been one of the most popular specimens in the museum but has also been used by scientific researchers for over a century. Ichthyosaurs were not really dragons but one of several sorts of giant marine reptiles which lived in the Mesozoic seas at the same time as dinosaurs roamed the land. They first appeared in the Triassic period around 220 million years ago but like the dinosaurs, became extinct about 65 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous.

Ichthyosaurs or "fish lizards" looked very like modern dolphins and this suggests they had a similar lifestyle. With their streamlined bodies, fins, flippers and long narrow jaws packed with sharp teeth, they were perfectly designed as hunter-killers. They were also very fast swimmers and possibly capable of reaching speeds of 15 mph. Some were fish eaters but others fed on belemnites and other molluscs. The largest ichthyosaurs were almost 16m (50ft) in length, but others were only the length of a human. Unlike most reptiles, ichthyosaurs gave birth to live young."



## Museum Collection

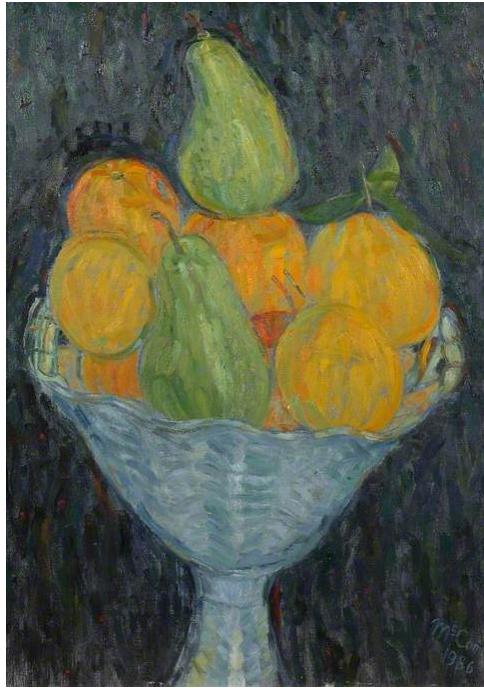
Chosen by the artist, Rebecca Farkas

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum and the County Museum at Hartlebury are full of many fascinating things and I wanted to piece together the objects and artworks that really mean something to the people who interact with these collections, whether as visitors, staff or volunteers. As I mention in my introduction, in my artistic practice I have been exploring the idea of the Memento Mori and Vanitas, traditions of painting that often incorporate worldly goods and perishable items like flowers and fruits. I wanted to find things in the museum's collection that reflected these themes and so I chose paintings and photographed objects to use in the Object Love animation. Here are some of them.



*Still Life Group* by Albert Hodder is a lush depiction of plenty - it struck me that more people in the UK this year have learned what it's like to not be able to buy all of the food that they wanted or needed.

I used a perfectly painted peach from this painting at the beginning of the *Object Love* animation, to make it appear to 'rain' peaches.



Leonard McComb's *Pears and Oranges, Cyprus* was the first painting that I animated for the project. The colours and brushwork are vibrant and lively - it worked well for my idea of a 'moving still life'.



When I came across this beautifully detailed painting in the art gallery collection, I knew that I had to use it. Flowers were often depicted in Memento Mori paintings, alluding to the fragility and finite nature of life. In the animation, the roses move across the screen in a joyous dance.

Roses by Dominique Hubert Rozier



Portraits are often very popular in museums and art galleries. Humans respond well to other humans and these two girls caught my eye. I noticed the contrast between the rich and no doubt well admired young lady painted by John Bagnold Burgess in *The Pride of Seville* and the hard working young woman depicted in *A Village Girl with Pitcher* by Walter Chamberlain Urwick. Despite the differences in the lives and social statuses of the girls, both images are romanticised notions of young womanhood and I wanted to bring them together in the *Object Love* animation. What would they say to one another?

I took a lot of photos on rainy day in August, when I visited the Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle.

There were so many things that I would have liked to include in *Object Love*, if only there was more time! These Fountain Masks and a little fish, who becomes many, added respective doses of drama and humour to the animation.



Thank you to everyone who sent me their suggestions for *Object Love*  
and to the staff of Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum  
for all of their assistance and support.

Rebecca Farkas

Images used courtesy of Museums Worcestershire, Jonathan Barry  
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