

## The Story of Things, curated by Carson & Miller

Carson, J & Miller, R 2009, *The Story of Things*, exhibited at: Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections (Manchester, UK), 14/09/2009 – 29/1/2010.

*The Story of Things* explored the ideas of memory, collections and narrative. Engaged by a collection of historical scrapbooks (which in themselves encapsulated some surprising ideas of collections, memory and narrative) held by the museum Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections (UK), we utilised the conceit of the scrapbook as both a visual motif within the exhibition and as a metaphor for our experience of working with the Collections. We set about gathering evidence of our deliberately random and undisciplined journey through the rich and varied material held there.



images of *The Story of Things* (2009-10). Photography by Tony Richards. © MMU Special Collections.



The title deliberately embraces a dual meaning: firstly, the idea of ‘things’ having a story and that this story might be drawn out through the act of curation, and, secondly, a defining of our very particular act of curation in producing *The Story of Things*, which used the artefacts in a museum collection not in a traditional, ‘accepted’ manner but as artists’ materials that might be altered and played with through acts of stacking, overlapping, combining and separating. In doing so we deliberately presented misleading, misinterpreted or inaccurate accounts of the museum’s holdings, investigating Pearce’s idea that

Collections are essentially a narrative of experience; as objects are a kind of material language, so the narratives in to which they can be selected and organised are a kind of fiction...

(Pearce, S. M. (1995) *On Collecting: an Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, London: Routledge. p412.)



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# THE STORY *of things* curated by Carson & Miller

MONDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2009  
TO FRIDAY 29TH JANUARY 2010

MMU SPECIAL COLLECTIONS GALLERY  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Sir Kenneth Green Library  
Manchester Metropolitan University, All Saints M15 6BH

FREE ADMISSION – OPEN TO ALL  
see website for opening hours

0161 247 6107  
lib-spec-coll@mmu.ac.uk  
www.specialcollections.mmu.ac.uk



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In the tradition of scrapbooks, *The Story of Things* – in its essence a three dimensional version of a scrapbook which used the gallery as its pages – constructed its own internal ordering and logic. We cross-referenced the collections, sometimes relating things by type, sometimes putting the unlikely together, sometimes remembering something we already knew, sometimes uncovering things unknown to us. In doing so we did not seek

...closure and establishment of meaning, but exactly the opposite, the absencing of meaning which, in turn, evokes an endless production of it, an endless production of fortuitous encounters...

(Allmer, P. (2009) *On Being Touched*, Manchester: MMU Special Collections. p iv.)

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