

**ToHave&
ToHold:
Making
collections**

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Making Collections

Foreword:

Philip Clarke
Director

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Objectspace aims to provoke new assessments about practices and practitioners in the fields of craft, design and the applied arts. *To Have & To Hold: Making Collections* is located in this remit in that it proceeds from the understanding that collectors are practitioners, working in the sector alongside makers, curator and writers.

Exhibition projects that draw on private collections often set out to examine the holdings of the collections. *To Have & To Hold* has a different purpose, which is to examine the practice of the collector. What is on display is ‘the hand’ of the collector through a small selection of what they have collected and a statement about their motivations and interests. We are exceedingly grateful to collectors; MaryAnn Crick and Tim Crick, Jillian de Beer, Martin Keay, Michael Hodgson, Louis Le Vaillant, Rosemary McLeod, Mick Pendergrast, John Perry, Geoff Perkins, Dr Stephen Rainbow, Judy Redmond and Monique Redmond, Rosie Schneideman, Dame Margaret Sparrow, Grant Stevens, Fiona Thompson and various Private Collectors all of whom agreed to submit to our examination, and did so, with remarkable candour.

These collectors span a wide variety of territories and motives and our intention, in terms of the selection of collectors, has been to be expansive rather than definitive. The practices of the individual collectors speak for themselves. When considering these collections and collectors together, it is interesting to note, how many are motivated by intangibles qualities. A popular conception of a collector is a person, “arrested”, as John Perry eloquently describes it, by the physicality of the objects they admire. Other collectors, however, are motivated by intangible qualities such as; ‘death’, ‘health’, ‘heritage’, ‘hybridity’, ‘technological achievement’, ‘the lives of women’ and admire the objects they collect because of their embodiment of these qualities.

The progenitor of *To Have & To Hold* is Objectspace’s Vault Programme which since 2004 has presented installations drawn from 27 private collections around New Zealand. Objectspace is extremely grateful to all of these collectors for their generosity which is the foundation for *To Have & To Hold*. In addition to the Vault Programme Collectors I would like to acknowledge the invaluable advice and support provided *To Have & To Hold* by; Art + Object, Stephen Brookbanks of Object Support, Cordy’s, Donna Hoyle, Anna Miles and Jane Wild.

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The Collections:



The Collection of Amusement:

09 Courtesy Mick Pendergrast Collection

Collectors collect, and some collect and collect and collect. Mick Pendergrast, the owner of this collection of tiki-inspired objects, is a distinguished retired professional curator, scholar, writer and private collector. His principal interest is the use of fibre, mainly the basketry and weaving of Maori and South Pacific cultures. As a scholar his writings have inspired many contemporary practitioners, one leading Maori maker has said of him, “I have a deep respect for him...he opened my eyes to the world of indigenous basketry and I have spent many hours with him enjoying his company and talk.”

Pendergrast collects fibre works, and other objects, from the cultures that attract him. His collections are numerous and extensive and are housed in their own large building. Some works are displayed in vitrines others are stored: it is a private museum on quite a large scale and the collection is documented in the way that public collections are. Pendergrast receives gifts and donations of objects as public institutions do. Many of the items have been acquired in second-hand shops and markets. Pendergrast says that when he was searching and “feeling deprived if I didn’t find the things I was looking for” he started buying these ‘tiki’ often for just a “few cents” and for amusement.

He concedes that at first “I didn’t like them too much” but he recognized that these largely domestic and sometimes disposable works were worth collecting and that it was important to “acknowledge the existence of these, whether we like it or not.” Although this collection of tiki-inspired works itself is an amusement, or cul-de-sac, within Pendergrast’s collections the fact of its existence presents some interesting observations about the nature of collecting.

Serious collectors frequently have multiple active collections. The truly curious – as opposed to the acquisitive – can be drawn down unfamiliar and untrod paths. Experience hones the collector’s instincts. Many years before debates about cultural appropriation came to the fore regarding New Zealand art and design, Pendergrast recognised that these cheap and discarded objects were eloquent, and therefore valuable, objects that spoke about the large issues of national identity and inter-cultural relations. His contribution to the ‘discussion’ has been to locate and assemble the evidence.

The Collection of the Archivist:

Courtesy Geoff Perkins Collection

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In ceramics circles this collection is legendary because of its scale, range and depth. It comprises over 2000 objects, mostly New Zealand works, but with a significant Asian component. The collector resists some obvious labels, “definitive” or “museum quality”, because, he says, “this is a collection of pots I like...I’m not afraid of buying works by unknown makers if I like them.”

Perkins started buying New Zealand studio pottery in the 1960s when the, “craft movement was so exciting”, and embodied a progressive sensibility. Whilst living in Boston he encountered historic Asian ceramics in New England museums and was able to see connections between traditional Asian and contemporary New Zealand practice. Later, whilst on regular business visits to Asia, he acquired examples of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean works he so admired. The territory of Asian ceramics is well theorised and it is interesting to speculate how his immersion in this scholarship might have shaped his own collecting.

Upon his return in the mid-seventies Perkins was aware of the waning ‘craft movement’. His particular mission, as a collector, became clear, “I have to start and preserve some of it...people don’t appreciate the importance of the crafts movement”. With this clarity of purpose he devised some key collection development policies, which are essentially archival. One is to track the development of selected makers over time: the collection comprises significant holdings by Len Castle, Andrew van der Putten, Mirek Smisek, Graeme Storm and Marilyn Wiseman. Another policy is to acquire, what Perkins calls, “mid course corrections.” This is Perkins’ own term for the provocations, of perhaps an international visitor or a significant professional development initiative, that result in the making of different works. Perkins has in his collection a drawing made in New Zealand by Bernard Leach. This then inspired a specific work by the late Trevor Bayliss which Perkins also owns. Integral to the collection are books, catalogues and research notes as Perkins also initiates his own research. One figure of interest is Dutch born maker Simon Engelhard. Perkins has located and acquired works and information from Engelhard’s pre-New Zealand career.

Perkins says of the Anglo-Oriental ceramics movement, “you can’t deny the instrumentality of that movement in creating a body of pots, makers and activity.” Perkins’ achievement as a collector has been to create a collection (managed by an image rich database) that elucidates this history. In the process this collector has become a renowned source of expertise for institutions, other collectors and scholars.

Works made by Simon Engelhard 1955 – 1968
Courtesy Geoff Perkins Collection





The Collection of Artifacts:

13 Courtesy Private Collection

During his childhood, the collector remembers the recounting of a family anecdote: in 1903, at the age of seventeen, a great aunt died. In response to this tragedy, the family, then resident in the United Kingdom, promptly sent for a selection of new mourning jewellery to assist them in their grieving.

This anecdote seems instructive in relation to the later formation of this mourning jewellery collection. The wearing of mourning jewellery was familiar to the collector; his family still retains pieces purchased in 1903 and other pieces purchased as early as the 1860s. It identifies the collector as a person whose world view enables them to see history as lying ahead of them, rather than behind them, for whom the present is grounded in their intimate knowledge of the past.

Mourning jewellery held a number of attractions, one being entirely worldly. “Given the workmanship and materials of gold, enamel and pearls these works were undervalued in relation to their original cost”. As cultural artifacts they appealed because they demonstrated the different mentality of our antecedents toward death. The collector says that he “was always attracted to how the Georgians and Victorians faced death differently. It was embraced as part of life.” With this acceptance of death, mourning, under Victoria, became a major social rite. A convention that marched with, rather than eschewed, fashion and which encompassed the emotions of grief through to respect for the departed. Mr. Wemmick in *Great Expectations* wears a profusion of rings, brooches and seals, “as if he were quite laden with remembrances of departed friends.” He is, in fact, a lawyer’s clerk, wearing tokens of respect for departed clients.

The collection was formed from the 1970s onward by the collector together with his wife, who occasionally wears favourite pieces. This collection stands at nearly 200 pieces and includes mourning, memorial and sentimental jewellery. ‘Mourning jewellery’ is jewellery appropriate to a state, and or degree, of mourning. The term is also used to describe memorial jewellery, which is jewellery that commemorates an individual through the inclusion of a reference to them, perhaps hair, initials or a photograph. Sentimental jewellery is that which denotes love or friendship of which an example is a pair of Georgian shoe buckles adorned with the interwoven hair of lovers.

This collector has, “about ten or more other collections on the go”, most of which are shaped by his interest in history and informed by his belief that we need “to understand the past in order to make sense of the present”.

The Collection of Commission:

Courtesy Objectspace Collection

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Historically, when many ‘artists’ were socially positioned as ‘artisans for hire’, much art was created through a process of commission. Content, context, material, site and size were regularly specified. Commissions remain a significant means for the creation of works of art, particularly large and public works, but nowadays artists are predominately positioned as ‘autonomous genius’, and their output is largely constituted of works they have chosen to make, rather than works they have been instructed to make. Serious collectors, individual and institutional, continue to award commissions to favoured artists, however it is unusual for an entire collection to have been formed through the process of commission.

Although these objects have been made by different makers working in different media and cultural traditions, in their satisfaction of the commissioner’s requirements, they have a commonality. Criteria of being; outstanding and distinctive, diverse in type and range and are works that; expand the boundaries of tradition, exemplify the highest standards of traditional practice, engage discerning collectors and which are suitable and appropriate for limited edition production.

This collection was not assembled specifically for the reason of simply forming a group of pleasing works. The commissioner’s purpose is an initiative, Objectspace Limited Editions, which has motives, economic and professional development, that relate to both parties. The objects in this collection are the ‘original’ works (in essence models) for the artist-made replicas that are offered for sale in limited numbers. The professional development aspect enables makers to explore their own themes. For instance Vita Cochran and Peter Lorimer’s works are both made with recycled materials. The buyers, individual and institutional, local and international, of these works have been able to acquire exciting and exclusive works, made especially for them whilst freed from the responsibility of having to research, negotiate and commission a specific artist.

It is intended that the collection will in time form a connoisseur’s collection – or definitive collection – of contemporary New Zealand objectmaking. At a glance this is a seemingly eclectic collection of works: what unites it is the invisible hand of the collector, whose identity and interests have fundamentally shaped both the objects and collection.

Handwork Bag by Vita Cochran, 2007 (detail)
Courtesy Objectspace Collection





The Connoisseur's Collection:

17 Courtesy Private Collection

The connoisseur is a second generation collector: she started with rocks, shells and stamps. As collectors, her parents fostered an appreciation of the handmade and encouraged the budding collector. They introduced her to the rites of auction rooms and museums, drove her hundreds of miles to search the shore for shells and commissioned a cabinet for keeping her collections. These experiences helped fashion a lifelong collector and collecting interests. Much of her adult collecting has been focused on objects made of natural materials, particularly horn, shell and wood. It was in handling shells as a youngster that the connoisseur discovered her metier as a collector, “condition is everything to me.”

The collector progressed to a career in design; a field where she works daily with the qualities of composition and form, material and making – the constituents of beauty. These qualities inform her collecting and reading. Her enjoyment of art and design is not bounded by the possibility of possession, she has an extensive library that informs her collecting and which satisfies her eye and mind regarding works she does not own.

The connoisseur's standards for admittance to her collections are high: perfection or perfectibility is required. She lives to the same exacting standard she demands and dedicates significant amounts of time to the collection's management and maintenance. Skilled professionals are found and engaged to rehabilitate and repair as is necessary. If objects have a task to perform – open, shut or stand – they will be fit to do so. Everything is required to perform as part of an ensemble as nothing is stored. Objects are composed in groups for aesthetic pleasure. The collector's commitment to excellent condition brings constraints including the ennui of regular visits to viewings, auctions and showrooms without finding suitable gratification. Collecting however is a lifetime's endeavour and she remains sanguine, “I will find what I am searching for.”

“I like to live surrounded by beautiful things” and her collections (tortoise shell boxes, ivory walking sticks, combs, treenware, ex-voto), “bring the quality of richness into everyday life.” The collection is not conceived as an inheritance, she is happy for her collections to be largely dispersed in the future and “to go back into ‘the system’ so that others can have the pleasure.” Her inheritance, and legacy to others, is the pleasure of collecting itself.

Georgian Quillwork Tea Caddy (detail)
Courtesy Private Collection

The Collection of Contemporary Art:

Courtesy Louis Le Vaillant Collection

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Like many art collectors Louis Le Vaillant is concerned with the qualities of the contemporary, in particular, innovation and experimentation. His collection of lei is an index of this interest.

The lei were purchased as part of his wider Pasifika collecting that included embroidered pillow cases, woven hats and lei. The hats and lei were purchased as works of art: to go up on the walls. The first purchases were made in the 1980s, at exhibitions staged by makers at Massey Homestead in Mangere. Latterly lei were purchased directly from Niuean makers at Pasifika, the annual Auckland festival and largest Pacific Island event on the globe. Initially lei were a secondary interest, but they came to the fore, in his collecting, simply because they were more accessible. After some years Le Vaillant was drawn to the work of Niuean lei makers because they seemed, “the most exciting, the ones where you could see development taking place ... new materials and forms were being used and developed almost year by year.”

Le Vaillant talks of being mentored early in his collecting career by two other collectors, both of whom happened to be artists. As a fledgling collector he had a strong interest in folk art and an attraction to works that were neither easily accessible nor affordable. His older collector-friends mentored him through a struggle between instinct and the possibility of satisfaction, by pointing out possibilities that would enable him to satisfy his interests in both experimentation and folk art. Another issue to consider was his professionalism. As a curator he felt strongly that he had to collect outside of the areas in which current and potential employers were actively collecting. As he describes it, clarity about the focus of his collecting developed through working through a process involving instinct, mentoring, reason, accessibility and affordability.

Le Vaillant sees his lei, and hat, collections, as tracking artistic experimentation and cultural innovation over a 20 year period. As a collection these works document a moment when our sense of identity, place, art, culture and preciousness was being redefined. And they demonstrate the extent to which makers and the collector embraced the opportunities for experimentation and innovation.





The Collection of Devotion:

21 Courtesy Grant Stevens Collection

Devotion to heroes such as sports stars and their team, singers and their band, the monarch and their family is sometimes called a 'hero cult'. Such cults have been part of many cultures and religions and are formed around individuals held in the highest regard. Grant Stevens' collection of Churchilliana is founded on his devotion to Winston Spencer Churchill (1874–1965). Devotion to Churchill is so widespread that the word 'Churchilliana' – which describes items that relate to Churchill – is a well known and widely used term.

Stevens says that he became seriously interested in Churchill following the politician being shortlisted for *Time* magazine's 'Person of the Century' award. Not only was Stevens inspired by what he read of Churchill's life as a writer, politician, soldier, leader, inventor and artist but he also found some parallels to his own life, albeit given marked differences in circumstance, time and place. Admiration grew to devotion because of the lessons and wisdom that could be learned and because of Churchill's triumphal return to centre stage after his 'wilderness years'. Acting on this sense of devotion Stevens used the internet and within a month a collection of hundreds of items from around the world was assembled.

This is a collection that is used. As a community leader and businessman Stevens meets a cross section of people and he utilises his knowledge of this exceptional life to connect with and support others. Churchill won the Nobel Prize for Literature and it is books, by or about him, that form the most part of the collection. The other significant elements are collectibles, mostly ceramics, medals and stamps. Collectibles are objects manufactured specifically for the purpose of being collected. They can bring the hero's achievements into the daily life of the votary as well as substitute for a scarcity of 'authentic' relics. Churchill collectibles were produced throughout his life and particularly around the time of his death and centenary of his birth. The volume of gold plated medals uniquely chronicles his life with quotes from his writings. This is a collection that documents an exemplary life and which sustains the living.

The Encyclopaedic Collection:

Courtesy John Perry Collection

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In conversation about the scale of his collection, the collector alludes to a Japanese symbol for 10,000 things which represents the concept of infinity. In terms of both content and scale the allusion is useful: this is a collection so vast it cannot be easily visually surveyed. The collector, John Perry owns Global Village Antiques, which operates as an extension of his personal collecting. He describes his collecting as “having a global consciousness” and the name of his business states the focus of his collecting: it addresses the entirety of human material culture.

Perry says that early in his life, “encyclopaedias were my friends”, and clearly he is still in the thrall of them, at least 26 different sets of encyclopaedias are at hand in his home. A favoured set is opened and the random double page spread reveals “Put the Horns on the Right Animal” with a following spread being “Light Houses of the Northern British Empire”. This outlandish juxtaposition mirrors the encyclopaedic character of Perry’s collection; he collects things from everywhere and every time, his oldest object dating from about 2700 BC.

While the collection may appear catholic, it is largely thematised in that he has, “about 20 interests on the go”. These include objects related to Helensville (where he lives), Auckland, New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific and the Orient as well as shells and shell material, ginger jars, animalia, alabasters, gourds, printed ephemera, masks, toys, kitchen equipment, three dimensional images of humankind (dolls and sculpture) as well as representations of waterfalls. Perry’s groupings can be taxonomically unorthodox: his Native American collection comprises ‘authentic’ objects, souvenirs, books and popular depictions of Native Americans. As well as themes, collecting criteria are also in operation, “the unusual, the outstanding and the extra-ordinary.” He attributes these criteria to the guidance of friend and mentor Theo Schoon. An encounter with objects, that meet these criteria, finds him, “being arrested”, by them.

Perry describes himself as a, ‘ground-feeder’, in terms of the acquisition process. His regular habitat is Op shops, markets and unorthodox sources because his experience is that, “fortune favours the brave”. He does not spend ‘gold’, but finds it; a selection of his collection has recently been consigned to a leading auction house for disposal.

Collecting has shaped and continues to shape Perry’s life as he is both a private collector and a professional collector and the demarcation between the two is semi-permeable. As a young artist Perry was also a collector and he went on to become a professional collector as the inspirational director of a public art museum. He now works as an entrepreneur / impresario collector as a retailer and consultant to auction houses, other collectors and public institutions. Just as human curiosity is insatiable, Perry’s curiosity for objects that show, “how cultures perceive their worlds”, is seemingly also unquenchable.



*A Short History of the World,
with apologies to H G Wells
(detail)*

Courtesy John Perry
Collection



The Collection of Fashionability:

25 Courtesy Rosie Schneideman Collection

It is ironic that a collection featuring brands such as Christian Dior, Prada, Costume National, YSL, Lanvin, Versace, Gucci, Bottega Veneta and Chrome Hearts should demonstrate a rigorous resistance to conspicuous consumption. Rosie Schneideman's collection of designer sunglasses has been formed by hoarding her own sunglasses for almost 40 years and evidences a taste for fashionability and distaste for disposability. Schneideman says that she didn't set out to form a collection but kept her sunglasses because they didn't take up much space and because she was constitutionally unable to dispose of things that she might use again. The lesson of wearing a vintage dress of her mother-in-law's, and being told that it was "the most beautiful dress" was instructive: beautiful objects are worth keeping.

Her commitment to fashionability is fierce. She eschews loyalty to any particular designer and is somewhat embarrassed by the presence of 1980s retro revivals: "What was happening in the '80s?" It's a fair question for politicians and designers. This commitment is tempered by a fastidious consumption. Decisions to purchase are serious, not made frequently and are often made with her husband. Just 26 pairs have been acquired in almost 40 years. The purchase of the first Dior pair in 1974 meant they "could barely afford to eat for the rest of the week". Only one pair is in service at a time, frequently for a period of years. Her dictum "You do not lose them" conveys an antipathy for carelessness and just one pair (Cutler & Gross) is missing: "stolen" rather than mislaid. Once retired, pairs are returned to their original packaging and stored in a capacious shoe box (Costume National).

This collection is an outstanding history of fashionability and shopping. Seriousness regarding these topics is not at all misplaced. The history of shopping has recently emerged as a field of academic scholarship and the work of American historian Caroline Weber has demonstrated that fashionability can be a useful lens for understanding profound political change.

The Handmade Collection:

Courtesy Judy Redmond and
Monique Redmond Collectionsn

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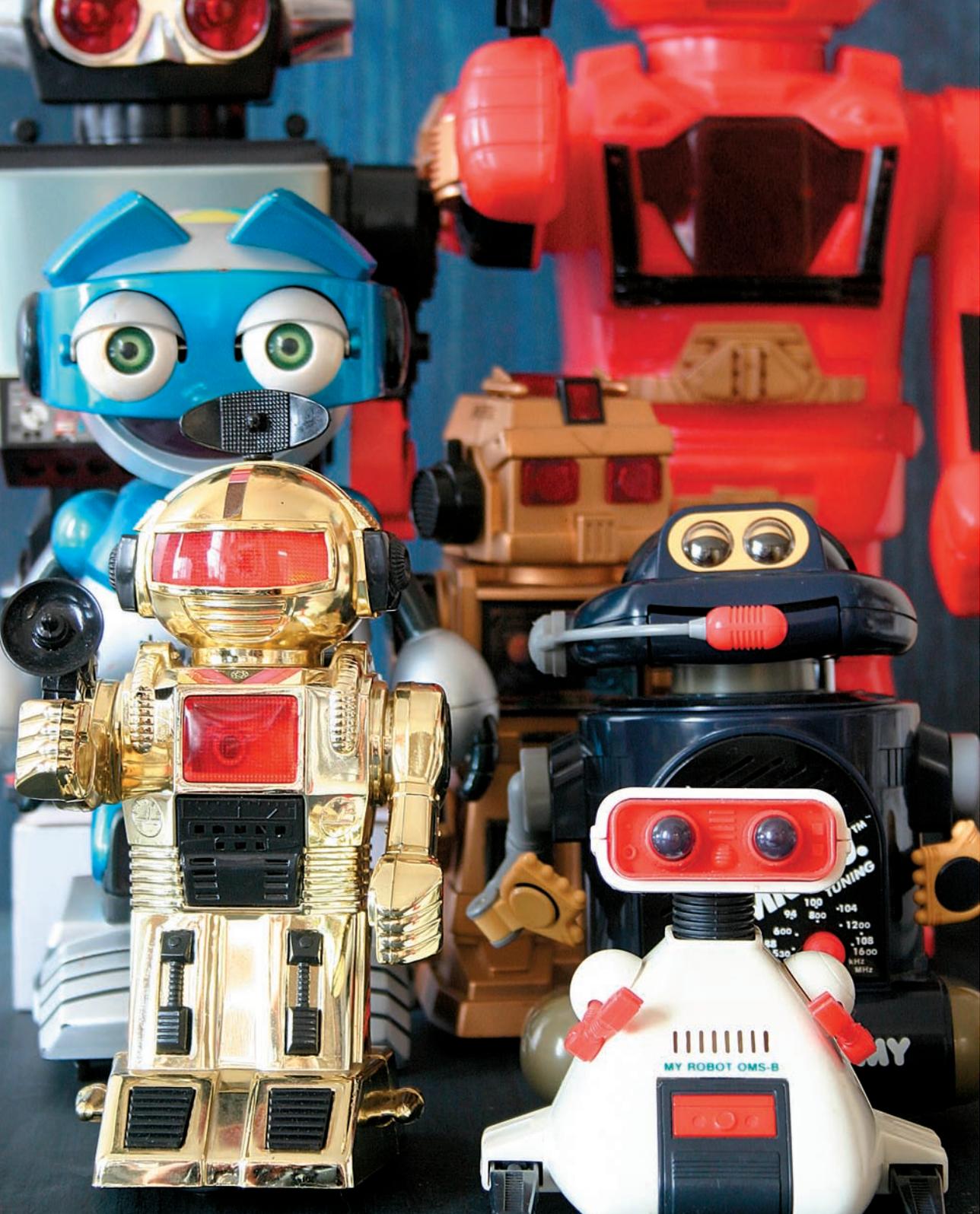
This collection belongs to Judy and her daughter Monique; most of the objects in it were made for Monique and her brother Paul. It is a collection of objects mostly made by Judy, but with items made by her mother Ulla, her grandmother Florence and by ‘Great Grandma Reynolds’. Collections of the paraphernalia of infancy are not uncommon and are often formed to evoke happy memories of childhood. For its owners, the sentiment evoked by this collection is quite different. The collection is treasured because of recollections about the production of the objects rather than their consumption, or usage.

The makers are members of a family that, over a number of generations, were highly proficient practitioners of the textile crafts of crochet, dressmaking, embroidery, tating, knitting, sewing and tapestry. For generations, constant endeavour was the ‘default mode’ within the family, and, because the required skills and time were readily available, little was bought that might possibly be made. Ulla would frequently produce matched knitted items for an entire generation of grandchildren. Items such as Monique’s jeans were handmade, not primarily for reasons of economy, but because the currency that this family preferred to expend was its expertise and skill.

These qualities were enshrined as a family value, “we were brought up to value hand made things,” says Monique. The impulse to make was so deeply ingrained that it survived Judy moving into fulltime work. The pleasure of making, for Judy, was not only derived from the performance of existing skills. She enjoyed creating new sorts of objects, sometimes using new materials and styles, because of the challenge involved. The collection is testament to a now largely past era with respect to production within the family, but the collection is not closed as Monique knits for a new generation and expects that some of her works will eventually enter the collection.

The collection began informally because Judy valued the expertise, skill and family tradition represented by these objects. For the collectors, the handling of these works evokes a sense “of being in the room with others.” The specific expertise and skills of each maker is still known, so authorship can be ascribed, sometimes through a process of elimination, by examination. This collection provokes an admiration for the identities, expertise and skill embodied in the objects as well as a fond attachment for the setting in which they were produced.





The Collection of Hybridity:

29 Courtesy Michael Hodgson Collection

Androids (designed to look and act human) and humanoids (with the form of a human body) are the particular types of robots (mechanisms programmed to complete tasks) that fascinate collector Michael Hodgson. These are, superficially, hybrid objects, part machine part human.

The collection began as a result of Hodgson being introduced to the world of second hand shops by his partner, an avid Art Deco collector, interestingly the machine-age style par excellence. Most of the collection has been sourced from such shops and auctions. Hodgson says he gets a sixth sense about when and where he might find new examples and has been known to get so excited regarding a prospective acquisition that he has bid against himself at auctions.

These works were manufactured as toys, products which have frequently embraced the very latest social and technological developments and ideas, often in the service of some age old human preoccupations, such as dominion and warfare. Hodgson views these objects as artefacts of the post-atomic space race era. An era where our fascination with machines was recontextualised by the new possibilities of machine ‘intelligence’ and the discovery of new life forms. These toys can be understood, on one level, as three-dimensional speculations as to what might come to pass in the future. They give – sometimes quaint – form to the aspirations of that era regarding hopes for extra-human assistance and friendship, and fears regarding their amenability and our replaceability. Hodgson recounts the eerie experience of watching a musical performance by seven robots playing brass and wind instruments at the Toyota Museum and the weirdly enthusiastic, and possibly apprehensive, appreciation of the audience. It is perhaps unsurprising that Hodgson has such a deep-seated fascination with the interface of man and machine. He is an arts practitioner, who has been a pioneer in the development of new and hybrid creative practices that combine sound and moving image through the application of various technologies.

A small portion of the collection, which comprises about 350 items, is available to Hodgson’s children to play with. Having been discarded by their original owners as toys, these objects are generally not ‘put to work’. One birthday was a memorable departure from this approach and friends were asked to bring batteries to the celebration. A battalion of robots was energised in order to perform their tasks: the amusement of humans.

The Patron's Collection:

Courtesy Fiona Thompson Collection

30

Fiona Thompson acquired these spoons directly from the maker Levi Borgstrom. Most she bought and some he gave to her. Her collection stands at over 50 examples of his work and in the course of forming it she developed a friendship with him which grew to include; encouragement and support, gifts of timber and food, championing and purchase of his work and gifting works back to his family. This collection is a demonstration of her patronage, in the very best sense of that word, of this remarkable maker.

Borgstrom was born in northern Sweden and moved to New Zealand in 1951. His spoons uniquely fuse traditional Scandinavian practice with the New Zealand environment in his use of both indigenous and exotic woods.

Thompson's championing and support of Borgstrom is contextualised by her support and championing of the crafts sector itself. In 1978 she was on the organising committee of a World Crafts Council: NZ Chapter (later NZ Crafts Council) organised exhibition at the Auckland Museum. The exhibition generated a public clamour for information on where the work of the makers could be seen. In response to this thirst for information Fiona Thompson published *The Craft Hunters Guide*. The *Guide* ran to three editions in five years and was arguably the first initiative that mapped the craft sector nationally. She subsequently received a QSM for her championing and support of the crafts.

Thompson's collection of New Zealand and British craft, particularly ceramics is extensive. However it is her Borgstrom collection – he is described in the *Guide* as a “Maker of spoons of distinction” – that best demonstrates her role as a collector – patron.





The Philanthropist's Collection:

33 Courtesy Jillian de Beer Collection

Amongst the things collector Jillian de Beer inherited from her family were; a collection of diamond jewellery, an abiding interest and appreciation for craftsmanship and a philanthropic sensibility. The de Beer family descends, along with the Fels and Brasch families, from Dunedin's Hallenstein family. These families are renowned for their collecting and philanthropy. These legacies have shaped de Beer's own collecting.

The theft of inherited jewellery, which she wore frequently, together with a conscious decision to dedicate part of her income as a businesswoman, to the arts, prompted her to form her own collection of contemporary jewellery. How she went about this task was shaped by the legacy of her family. While buying widely from emerging, mid career and established practitioners de Beer talks of supporting makers not just because of the quality of the individual works but because of the respect she has for them as people. De Beer says, "I need to know about the maker ... I rarely buy something from someone who is unknown to me." Her preference is for "intelligent works" that offer comment on our place and culture. For her the decision to acquire an individual work is as much a decision about the object as a conscious decision to support an artist she respects and the broader 'cultural ecology' they operate within. This approach to acquisition has seen her acquire multiple works from a number of makers including; Warwick Freeman, Gavin Hitchings, Tania Patterson and Joe Sheehan.

This is a hard working collection de Beer uses in various ways. She wears it regularly and is able to talk knowledgeably about works and makers; lends it to galleries for exhibition; and utilises it as a vehicle for developing supportive relationships with makers. As a consultant working with organisations around the world, from companies to governments, she actively uses her knowledge of the performance of makers and our 'cultural ecology' as creative economy exemplars.

From its inception this collection has been planned for presentation to a public institution. The quality of philanthropy is integral to the collection's formation and in the collector's relationship with individual works to the point that she declares, "I'm not sure if I can say 'I own this' even though I might have bought it."

Works by Gavin Hitchings
Courtesy Jillian de Beer
Collection

The Practitioner's Collection:

Courtesy Martin Keay Collection

34

Martin Keay is a professional gardener and elements of his collection of garden tools, notably forks and spades, are part of his working 'tool box'. In New Zealand good garden implements were invariably English, handmade, branded, costly and consequently usually well cared for. The strength of the steel, "it's all in the steel" says Keay, the lightness of the solid oak handle and the overall balance of the traditional English spade makes for an implement that is a delight to use. In the case of forks and spades, these are tools which he reckons frequently out perform their modern equivalents. Keay started his collection about ten years ago and it now comprises around a hundred implements. The original motivation was twofold: to acquire tools, "that were wonderful to use", and to save tools that were being discarded. At that time, "no one was keeping vegetable gardens...these are largely the tools of vegetable gardening."

Keay is a pioneer collector in his field – when he started he wasn't aware of any other collectors – but in the intervening period two interrelated factors have changed things. One is the international emergence of garden tools as a field of collecting and historical enquiry and the second change is the resurgence of vegetable gardening itself. Nowadays spades are sometimes selling for ten times the price Keay was paying for them when he started acquiring. Buyers of old tools are now as likely to be collectors as well as home gardeners wanting quality implements.

Professional gardening for much of the twentieth century involved specialised and intensive labour: it was largely unmechanised. Practice was defined by nineteenth century British estate gardening, a setting populated by Head Gardeners, Gardeners, Under Gardeners and Apprentice Gardeners, all working for employers who had the highest expectations regarding production and presentation. Keay's 35 pairs of secateurs, all slightly different, demonstrate that the tools of professional gardeners were as specialised as their roles and skills. Professional gardening is now different, being significantly chemicalised and mechanised. This collection of implements honours earlier traditions of gardening; the knowledge, the practices, the people and the contexts in which they operated. Keay says he would like the collection to stay together, but remarks, "given the current state of our public collections I'm not sure if this is at all possible."





The Reference Collection:

37 Courtesy Dame Margaret Sparrow Collection

A reference collection is a collection maintained for the purpose of study and authentication. Most commonly the objects in a reference collection are books, atlases, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, which are always available for consultation within a library. Dame Margaret Sparrow's reference collection is quite different; it comprises abortion and contraceptive devices and related objects.

Dame Margaret is a medical professional, teacher and advocate who has had a long and active involvement with family planning, a distinguished career that has seen her honoured in various quarters. She began collecting this material because, as a teacher of trainee doctors and nurses, she thought it was important that they had direct access to examples. Her intention was to assemble a collection that could be handled and which illustrated the medical story of family planning in New Zealand. Like other reference collections it is accessible, aspects of it are displayed in a cabinet at the national offices of Family Planning. As well as local devices, the collection features Intra Uterine Devices (IUDs) that Dame Margaret has collected, with the consent of patients, who have lived abroad, thus providing an international dimension to the collection.

Portions of the collections have been loaned on occasion to public institutions for temporary display. Because of the intimacy of the subject and the vulnerability of objects and stories Dame Margaret is keen for the collection to receive exposure. A mention on television's *Holmes Show* attracted an interesting addition. At that time the bathroom cabinet of a deceased estate was being cleared. A cache of 1940s prophylactics and sex education literature, seemingly safely stored for posterity, duly made their way into the collection.

This display also features objects used in the procurement of abortions. This is a related but separate group of objects which, because of the sensitivity of abortion as a subject, has never been exhibited. Dame Margaret notes that the recent British docudrama film, *Vera Drake*, accurately portrayed the medical options for many twentieth century women dealing with unwanted pregnancies. These objects are very similar to the items that women, like Vera Drake, would have used.

As a doctor involved with family planning, Dame Margaret says that she has treated literally thousands of men. This collection however authenticates, "that the burden of family planning has largely been borne by women." It is a collection of intimacy and privacy, shorn of personality but still deeply evocative, that is itself a reference to the cultural, legal and medical co-ordinates of past and present lives and society.

The Collection of Saviour:

Courtesy Rosemary McLeod Collection

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Handkerchiefs are intriguing objects that have moved from ubiquity to almost obscurity within a generation. Rosemary McLeod's handkerchief collection exists within her much larger textile collection. She says, "what interests me is the role and significance of textiles in the lives of women." For her, "objects are eloquent of their time". Her textile collection has been exhibited numerous times and provided the foundation for her award-winning book *Thrifty to Fantasy: Home Textile Crafts of the 1930s-1950s*.

The small and seemingly familiar, functional object known as the handkerchief has had many and varied roles. The fashion accessory handkerchief, for instance, was often a complex ensemble player, working alongside hats, gloves, handbags, shoes and jewellery, their collective task was to enliven the garments of a small wardrobe. Three or four matching handkerchiefs might be employed at once to accessorise an outfit, their function to add colour or texture.

In contrast to the accessory handkerchief, which might be made of silk, chiffon or crepe de chine, were the handkerchiefs made from recycled pyjamas, sheets and fabric scraps which bespoke economy and practicality. Women commonly gave each other handkerchiefs as gifts at a time when most of them had little money of their own. Often white and lace and sometimes expensive, these were the handkerchiefs that accumulated in boxes and drawers, frequently unopened and unused, having completed their principal role as friendship tokens within the rituals of a feminine world.

Another group were those which had souvenir, commemorative or aspirational qualities in their design. McLeod talks movingly of one of her first purchases, an unopened box, of Bon Voyage handkerchiefs as, "embodying the dream that you could travel, when few people did." From the 1960s women were beginning to escape the conventions and codes that had traditionally shaped their lives and consequently lost the habit of employing the handkerchief for the performances previously assigned.

Inherently ephemeral and fragile, these handkerchiefs have been rescued, mostly from Op Shops, and a collection has been assembled, since the 1970s. McLeod notes that handkerchiefs have been discarded in large quantities and are now quite hard to find. For many women, handkerchiefs were admissions to the multiple realms of economy, fashion, friendship and romance, and as such are, "social documents of a particular feminine culture".





The Collection of the Saviour of Technology:

Courtesy Dr Stephen Rainbow Collection

Collector Stephen Rainbow is emotional about the technology he collects. He describes himself being outraged, as a teenager, by an entertainment at a carnival involving the slow destruction of an aged Ford Zephyr by sledge hammer. The Zephyr, for this embryonic collector, was not a hunk of junk metal but a well performing specimen of social and technological history. His response to the incident he says “was emotional and physical”, even though it took place many years before he formed his collection of 25 British Ford motors vehicles.

Rainbow grew up, “with a Ford tractor, a Ford van, a Ford car...in the countryside where everything was a Ford.” He says, “Ford more than any other company put the world on wheels in the twentieth century.” Perhaps because of its ordinariness, and the particular trajectory of the British motor vehicle industry, Rainbow has always perceived that British Fords were at risk and likely to become rare. His first purchase, in the 1980s, was a one-owner 1953 Anglia 100E. Co-ordinates for his collecting gradually emerged as he found he was interested in the rare and quirky, the functioning rather than the exemplary, the patinated rather than the pristine. A recent purchase is a Ford Thames van complete with its original Post Office livery. He thinks there might be, “a couple of dozen” British Ford collections in the world, his being one of the more eclectic.

For many people the purchase of car was their second biggest investment. Cars were cherished and kept for economic, personal and social reasons. Rainbow recounts meeting a wide variety “of remarkable people,” male and female vendors, who informed him that they were going to weep or were unable to farewell him, so large a part of their emotional life was the vehicle they had just relinquished to him.

Rainbow is no petrol head, the former academic and heritage sector professional reads and researches about the production and consumption histories of Fords. The design and mechanics of the iconic Mark IV Zodiac, he relates, came about as the result of an international corporate power play. His collection includes related books, brochures and models. This *recherché* knowledge has an egalitarian utility. Rainbow says his Ford collection and enthusiasm creates possibilities for connections and conversations that transcend generations and groups.

Rainbow’s commitment, “to preserve an aspect of our social history”, is fuelled at its core by a sense of indignation regarding, “the destruction of something – person or artefact – that will never exist again. I have the same reaction to seeing a historic building being destroyed and – quite seriously – to footage of people being shot during the Holocaust.”

The collection is a significant commitment on a number of levels as vehicles are garaged at two separate locations and it “shapes how I use my time”. But, as he remarks, of his collecting and collection “it is a major source of meaning in my adult life”.

A Sentimental Collection:

Courtesy MaryAnn Crick and Tim Crick Collections

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It is rather paradoxical that a collection of commercially made collectibles, albeit made to the highest standards of manufacture, is, in terms of its formation, a collection of intimate sentiment. This is the collection that Tony Crick formed for his wife Joan from the early 1950s until he died in 1966, as a series of birthday presents. The collection started with one felicitously purchased and gifted figure. The gift found favour, so in the years that followed, Royal Copenhagen porcelain figures were presented annually to Joan and the collection was so enlarged. It seems that these figures might have found favour for a number of reasons. Joan and Tony both liked modern styling and this was the era of 'Danish Modern'. Joan particularly liked animals and these, mostly northern hemisphere, animals might have been seen as a charming reminder of her English childhood.

These figures were purchased in an era of severe import licensing and it is likely that sometimes there may not have been a wide choice available unless the boat had literally 'just come in'. All the gifts are, or include, animal figures, as is the case with *The Goose Girl* with the exception of the last gift. This gift, *The Nurse*, is quite different from its predecessors and is a poignant full-stop to the collection. Tony – the doctor – was at the time being nursed by Joan, the former nurse. Already very ill at the time of Joan's birthday, both would have been very aware of the symbolism attached to the singularity of this gift. Unlike the round, soft and playful animal figures *The Nurse* is unflinching and upright: because she has to be.

Royal Copenhagen is one of the oldest and most prestigious European porcelain factories. Founded in 1780, it was operated by the Danish Royal Family until 1868. New ownership brought innovation. Porcelain figures were released in 1889, to much acclaim, and ranges of other collectibles – commemorative objects, annual mugs, plaques and plates – were offered in the years following. Collectibles are objects that are produced for no other reason than to be collected. Collectors of collectibles often strive to achieve completeness within their collections by purchasing every possible example or variant. Joan went on to purchase other ceramic figures, especially New Zealand native birds. Nothing was added to her collection of Royal Copenhagen figures. She defined it as complete, in that everything in it had been given to her, in love, by Tony.



Biography

Collecting is often presented as a quick-fix route to self distinction. This popular conception of collecting is at one end of the spectrum of possibilities, the other end being eloquently stated by Dr Stephen Rainbow who, in describing his collecting and collection, says, “It is a major source of meaning in my life.”

Collections are frequently autobiographical. Dame Margaret Sparrow’s collection documents a distinguished medical career that has included a long term involvement with family planning matters. Rosie Schneideman’s collection presents a detailed record of her life as a fashionista, shopper and traveller. In some cases the practice of collecting has shaped other aspects the collector’s life. John Perry is an outstanding example. He describes his career as artist/collector then gallerist/collector then curator/collector and now describes himself as a collector entrepreneur/impresario. The knowledge and expertise he has acquired as a collector is now the source of his livelihood: dealing with other collectors and collections is what he does. Another paragon collector, Rosemary McLeod, has written a social and textile history, largely based on her collection and collecting, and is now an award winning historian and speaker at scholarly conferences. More than just styling the lives of their owners, collections document, inspire, shape and generate meaning in the lives of collectors.

Consumption and Production

Collecting is an important mode of cultural consumption especially when collectors, for a variety of reasons, make longitudinal commitments to certain makers as Jillian de Beer, Geoff Perkins and Fiona Thompson have done. The economic dimension of collecting, particularly in relation to the collecting of contemporary production, is significant. At the *Volume* symposium (Napier, October 2008) a leading New Zealand ceramics collector declared how much he spent annually on his collections. Interestingly his annual acquisitions budget dramatically exceeded the acquisition budgets of most, if not all, of the leading public collections active in the territories of craft and the applied arts.

Collectors accumulate knowledge and expertise as they accumulate objects. In the case of some paragon collectors, Geoff Perkins for instance, this knowledge and expertise is not only housed mentally but can be located and retrieved from the database, library and research notes he has created. In creating a unique collection of objects and then assembling related information that explicates those objects Perkins, and other paragon collectors, can be described as ‘content creators’ or cultural producers. While collectors may not often be acknowledged as cultural producers they are recognised for their possession of expertise and knowledge. Collector Perkins was asked some years ago to work on Auckland Museum’s internationally reputable Asian ceramics collection, in recognition of his expert knowledge, which was greater than that otherwise available to the museum.

The line between collectors as cultural consumers and/or producers is particularly indistinct in the cases of collections where works have been made or commissioned by the collectors. In these cases ‘the hand’ of the collectors is not only evident in the totality of the collection but in its constituent works. Collecting is a significant mode of (active) consumption, however, many collectors demonstrate that collecting, as a practice, straddles if not blurs, the line between consumption and production. In the cases of collectors who accumulate objects, as well as considerable expertise and knowledge, it seems unexceptionable to acknowledge them as cultural producers.

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Obsession versus Reason

The word ‘collector’ is frequently bracketed with the word ‘obsessive’. It conveys the image of enslavement and frenzied acts of acquisition: the unopened shoes of Imelda Marcos come to mind. A fierce enthusiasm and commitment to their territories is demonstrated by the *To Have & To Hold* collectors, irrationality is not.

The recounting by Louis Le Vaillant and a private collector of the beneficial training they received early in their careers locates collecting, not as an obsession, but as a capacity that can be developed by teaching as well as by practice. Le Vaillant interestingly attributes the direction, or focus, of his collecting to the mixture of mentoring and his own professionalism. Another private collector admits to a very worldly rationality in helping him determine his focus “these works were undervalued in relation to their original cost.”

These collectors consistently demonstrate a cool rationality in the development of sophisticated collection development policies and their application, John Perry attributes his ‘policies’ to the guidance of a mentor. Geoff Perkins’ policy of acquiring ‘Mid-course corrections’ is a highly sophisticated collection development policy, one that would be appropriate for any major collecting institution.

Patterns and Points

Collectors make patterns and points. The long term commitment to their collections required of collectors constitutes a regular pattern of activity in terms of the required regular visits to sources, conservators, repairers, advisors and other collections including galleries and museums. Although Mick Pendergrast and a private collector talk about experiencing a sense of deprivation, or ennui, arising from unsuccessful searching, collectors are optimists and are not deterred. As a private collector puts it, “I will find what I am searching for.” This sense of patternmaking is deepened in the cases of collectors who have multiple active collections. This is a common occurrence amongst collectors and one collector admits to having “about ten collections on the go”. Aside from discovery, completing the pattern is important as relationships with sources and other collectors are maintained. And sometimes the purchase of the ‘odd new thing’ will begin a new ongoing interest.

Collectors have points to make. As a group, these collectors exhibit fantastically diverse and quirky points of view toward the present and the past. While many collectors are focused, or “arrested”, as John Perry eloquently says, by issues of material and form, others are primarily focused on giving form to more intangible subjects. ‘Death’,

‘health’, ‘heritage’, ‘hybridity’, ‘technological achievement’ and ‘the lives of women’ are some of the points these collectors and collections make and explore. The themes of these collections are very different to the canonically or chronologically themed collections and displays of many public institutions. In valuing the discards of others they are often pioneers in the opening of new territories of knowledge. Martin Keay says he wasn’t aware of any other collector operating in his field when he began collecting. Since then others have entered the local field and internationally the field has been constituted by publications and regular sales with rising prices. Collectors McLeod, Pendergrast and Rainbow have similarly rescued and saved ‘ordinary’ objects that few, until recently, would have valued for the reasons they do. In the hands of collectors with subject knowledge and expertise the most ordinary object, such as a handkerchief, can transport us to and elucidate other cultures, economies and societies.

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Private and Public

The practice of collecting blurs the line between public and private, as it blurs the line between consumption and production. Much collecting activity is conducted at public locations and collectors themselves are often identifiable at those locations in their pursuits. The content of many collections is democratic: themes such as ‘health’ or ‘technology’ have an inherent public-ness to them. And the frequent generosity of many collectors in sharing their accumulations, both objects and knowledge, (*To Have & To Hold* being on example) is an aspect of their long-term and public commitment to the territories they work in and their collections.

Yet collecting is commonly perceived as solely a private occupation. One essentially taking place in private quarters and often pursued for the reason of personal distinction. The collectors featured in *To Have & To Hold* demonstrate something quite different. While their collections are privately owned much of the practice of these collectors has public dimensions. Rather than being a wholly enclosed, or private, pursuit these collectors demonstrate that collecting is a cultural practice that enlarges and enriches public life.

To Have & To Hold: Making collections

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