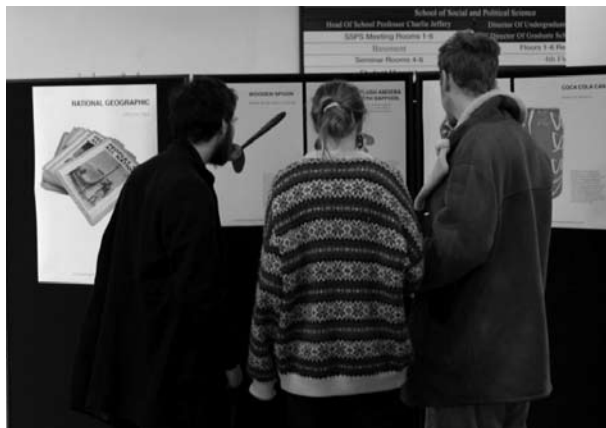


**INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ACCESS KNOWLEDGE:
UNDERSTANDING ANTHROPOLOGY THROUGH OBJECTS**

// TABITHA GOULD

During one week of the academic year, the University of Edinburgh promotes creativity and innovation in education amongst its students and staff through Innovative Learning Week (ILW). ILW is designed to broaden students' academic understanding of their discipline, but it also allows affiliates of the university to access knowledge on a variety of subjects through encouraging student and department led workshops, talks, socials and debates facilitating extra-curricular learning.

This year the Social Anthropology Society worked alongside the Social Anthropology Department during ILW to provide a platform aimed at favouring the diffusion of anthropological knowledge and to encourage students of other disciplines to learn about anthropology from a non-academic perspective through the creation of a stunning visual exhibition entitled 'Anthropology in 100 Objects'. The concept, proposed by lecturer Jamie Cross, was inspired by the recent BBC 4 radio programme 'History of the World in 100 Objects' and was realized through the hard work of the Social Anthropology Society. The motivation behind this project was to broaden people's perspective on what anthropology is: removing anthropology from the academic context in order to make people aware of the presence of anthropological implications in the objects we use and take for granted. Submissions for the exhibition came from a range of students across disciplines and thus showed how contributors were able to engage with anthropology within a non-academic framework. Similarly, viewers were also able to understand and engage with anthropology from a layman's perspective as each photographed object had a corresponding blurb about the submission answering the question: 'What makes this object anthropological to you?', rendering each item more personal and creating an interaction with the visitor. Some objects were considered anthropological because of the item's connection with places where their contributor had spent time researching, and often an article had been received as a gift from informants or friends during fieldwork. Other contributions, such as the string bag from Melanesia, became anthropological because owning a locally made bag made the anthropologist more approachable, thus transforming the object into a tool through which to access local knowledge.



The exhibition, curated by Jamie Cross, Emma Middleton and Lucy Bull was launched in the Community Café of the Chrystal Macmillan Building, on Thursday 21st February and attracted a crowd of about fifty viewers from across the university. One observer, a fourth year Classics student noted how the exhibition was 'illuminating to a non-anthropologist', and was 'visually very captivating'. The student also suggested that the idea should be explored in different disciplines by producing monthly departmental exhibitions, thus enabling more students to expand their knowledge within and beyond their own discipline.

The Public Exhibition was supplemented by its own semi-permanent online website www.anthropologyin100objects.com.

This webpage serves as the year long online site of the project, which received over 1,000 global hits in its first week of going live, including viewers from Brazil, Bulgaria and India. The exhibition pieces were displayed at the annual student-led Royal Anthropological Conference in St Andrews from April 12th – 13th 2013. The submissions aligned well with the theme of this year's conference: 'Close Encounters: Bringing Anthropology Home'. The conference was co-hosted by the University of Edinburgh, the University of St Andrews and the University of Aberdeen and enjoyed inspiring talks from Dame Marilyn Strathern and Tim Ingold. ♦



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The exhibition could not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of members of the Social Anthropology Society in the organisation and publicity of the event.

Thank you to Tom Spratt, Mai Ebine, Rebecca Chan, Katie Forrester, Emma Middleton, Lucy Bull and Jamie Cross for their inspiration and hard work.



Bast Shoes
Musteika, Lithuania, 2010
hand-woven, linden-tree bark



String Bag
Begasin, Papua New Guinea, 2011
bush materials



Jewish Museum Entrance Ticket
Berlin, 2012
paper



Notebooks
India, 2007
paper, plastic, metal spiral binding



Plush Amoeba with Daffodil
UK, 2012
polyester (plush), glass (eyes),
textile (leaves), plastic (stamens), metal pin



Sourvachka
Bulgaria, 2012
cornel-tree branch and yard, wool, popcorns,
dried red peppers, monkey-nuts, homemade sesame ring

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*Please visit the website www.anthropologyin100objects.com
to read the stories behind these objects.*