

EXPLORING MATERIAL POTENTIAL AND UNDERSTANDING  
THROUGH  
THE FOUND OBJECT

An Introduction to The Scavenger Hunt Workshop

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# Scavenger Hunt Workshop

*A scavenged item = 1 found object - physical, photographed, drawn or filmed*

The aim of this workshop is to introduce you to a method of primary research used by many artist and designers: The collection and material analysis of **found objects** – Through a method of **A Scavenger Hunt**. This will be a day of visual research followed by a presentation of your finding. You will work in teams to gather a defined list of ‘found objects’ that may serve to inspire or inform your own studio practise. You will also collect items that inspire you personally. The task is to collect as many of the *scavenged items* and collaborate as a team to analyse your findings on the day and organise the research following the workshop.

## The Research Method

*A scavenger hunt – Definition: this is a game in which the organizers prepare a list defining specific items, which the participants seek to gather or complete all items on the list, usually without purchasing them. Usually participants work in small teams, although the rules may allow individuals to participate. The goal is to be the first to complete the list or to complete the most items on that list. In variations of the game, players take photographs of listed items or be challenged to complete the tasks on the list in the most creative manner.*

*According to game scholar Markus Montola, scavenger hunts evolved from ancient folk games. Gossip columnist Elsa Maxwell popularized scavenger hunts in the United States with a series of exclusive New York parties starting in the early 1930s. The scavenger-hunt craze among New York’s elite was satirized in the 1936 film My Man Godfrey, where one of the items socialite players are trying to collect is a “Forgotten Man”, a homeless person.*

**A found object** (a translation from the French objet trouvé),



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## NOTE:

These slides (4-12) are presented as an introduction to THE SCAVENGER HUNT WORKSHOP project brief (full brief attached separately). In the day long experimental workshop students will follow a map and be encouraged to collect various item, some physical some experiential, these will be gathered, recorded and evaluated. While there is no formal assessment linked to the activity there is a group and personal outcome outlined in the brief. The aim is to spark conversation about the nature of consumption and waste, the significance of found materials and to inspire the potential of use in their own practice. This is a collaborative activity, that takes place at the start of their Unit 1 Mastering Studio Methodologies. In the Unit they will be encouraged to experiment with a variation of materials, process and application. This workshop has been very successful; It has inspired a few students to continue working with found object throughout their MA studies, it also fosters a sense of connection to each other, and to me as their tutor. The group dynamic is very positive and engaged throughout the day, and they are really excited to connect to an unfamiliar environment. This is ultimately a day of fun, getting dirty on the beach, no computers and no boundaries.





## THE FOUND OBJECT

A found object is a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it

## THROW AWAY MATERIALS

Picasso was an originator. From 1912 he began to incorporate newspapers and such things as matchboxes into his cubist collages, and to make his cubist constructions from various scavenged materials.





## READYMADE

The sculptor Henry Moore (right) for example collected bones and flints which he seems to have treated as natural sculptures as well as sources for his own work. Found objects may also be modified by the artist and presented as art, either more or less intact as in the dada and surrealist artist Marcel Duchamp's (left) readymades, or as part of an assemblage.





Angel of Anarchy 1936 by Eileen Agar



## ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

Extensive use of found objects was made by dada, surrealist and pop artists, and by later artists such as Carl Andre, Tony Cragg, Bill Woodrow, Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas and Michael Landy among many others. Surrealist Artist Eileen Agar used found materials as a starting point for a series of sculptures from 1936-40 named Angel of Anarchy. These found materials were cheap and accessible and allowed her to access a form and explore ideas before investing in bronze or plaster.





## NATURAL FORM

Andy Goldsworthy, like other land artists, makes sculpture directly in the landscape, using the natural objects found there. Goldsworthy has used stones, sticks and even ice and snow to make his sculptures. For 'Hearth Stone' he has brought the landscape into the gallery. By scraping a square shape into the surface of a found rock, we see the rock in a different way. The orderly square shape makes us more aware of the rough, natural irregular form and surface of the rock. The sculpture is one of a series made by the artist to fit in the fireplaces of Pallant House Gallery in Chichester.



## POWERFUL OBJECTS

Way before artists in Europe and America started using objects in artworks, African artists were using found objects in their sculptures. This Ibeji figure, made by by an unknown Yoruba artist, is adorned with glass beads, metal rings and strings of cowrie shells. Cowrie shells are thought to have a protective power and were originally a form of currency across Africa.

In the mid-80s, Former dancer and outsider artist Jeffrey Cook returned to his hometown New Orleans, establishing a studio in the neighborhood of his youth, Central City. Cook began to collect debris from the street, the detritus of urban blight and renovation. With a renewed focus on visual art, he created brightly colored paintings and richly textured assemblages, sculptures and collages that spoke to the patina and spirit of his home. He began to incorporate found objects, signs, and handmade dolls to comment on the social and physical neglect of a community, combined with a nostalgia for the neighborhood's former glory and hope for the future.

Visiting French Quarter galleries – including Barrister's on Royal Street – Cook was exposed for the first time to the rich tradition of African Art. His work began to take on the dark patina and forms of ethnographic objects. Drawing from the beliefs of his New Orleans/African/Caribbean heritage, the history and aesthetics of American/African/African American Art, and the diverse and colorful textures and forms of his neighborhood







## OBJECTS AND MEANING

Cornelia Parker has made several sculptures and installations from flattened silver objects. She said this about using these objects: 'silver is commemorative, the objects are landmarks in people's lives. I wanted to change their meaning, their visibility, their worth, that is why I flattened them'. The title of this sculpture references Rorschach tests – psychological tests that involve asking people what ink blots formed by folding paper with ink trapped inside, remind them of. The symmetry of the flattened silverware is reminiscent of the blots of ink used in these tests. By making this connection, Parker is perhaps hinting at how we think about objects and what we associate them with.



## FASHION ARTEFACT?

Sarah Lucas: Bunny Gets Snookered #1, 1997, tights, plastic and mixed mediums. Right: Ongoing work using tights and mixed media 'Body of Bunnies 2020.