

## **'102 Pieces of Glass' – for NUNO**

The 'Neither Use Nor Ornament' group show touches on a recurring theme in my work around the question of value and worth. What is an object 'worth?' Is an object that's useful more valuable than one that's purely ornamental, for example? How can we put a price on any given item?

On the surface, the objects presented in '102 Pieces of Glass' are of no real monetary value – a pound or two on ebay perhaps, but certainly not big bucks. But once it's revealed that some of them belonged to my late grandmother, then they become imbued with a personal history and narrative, and the emotional value of them is for me infinitely greater.

The objects I gathered from the house that my late Nana was finally forced to leave after some 75 years bring a poignancy to an otherwise random collection. The items carry a much greater weight and significance once we're aware of the narrative behind them, and for me personally, evoke deep-rooted childhood memories around family and relationships – connections, love and loss.

The objects selected are also steeped in social history and speak volumes about my Nana's identity, age and social standing in the world; there's a lot of mass-produced cheap glass amongst the 102 pieces and very little high quality lead crystal. The glass pieces also reflect the different eras my Nana lived through and demonstrate how much life has changed over the last century, particularly in relation to the things we own nowadays – the domestic, everyday objects we have in our homes and make use of.

In the years since my Nana's death in 2010 I have combined the various items I rescued from her home with others from my extensive lifetime collection to create small, celebratory assemblage works. The source material is diverse – china, fabrics, soaps, plastics and so on – and of course, glassware.

The invitation to be a part of The 'Neither Use Nor Ornament' group show motivated me to separate out the glassware and to return to making work for audience participation – to invite people to be actively involved in working with objects rather than simply viewing them from a distance. Bearing in mind the powerful emotions that certain objects can stir up in me, I'm curious about the impact they might have on others.

There are 102 objects in this piece of work, symbolic of the number of years my Nana lived. I'm inviting visitors to the exhibition to select a piece of glass and to make their own mark on it. What will participants add to it in order to stamp their own unique touch?

I'm asking people to introduce some colour, whether that's literally, by adding something (a small posy of flowers to a jug, perhaps – or a painted egg to an eggcup) or through leaving a story about the particular piece of glass that caught their eye. What was it that appealed to them? Did it remind them of somebody? Did it trigger a memory from their past? Was it an object that they simply considered might be useful, or were they attracted to it for its aesthetic appeal – or perhaps even for its ugliness?

What will the people of Oxford bring to add to this collection of objects? How will they respond to the invitation to be actively involved in a piece of art? And will the piece be 'worth' more at the end of the process?

*Kate Murdoch – March 2019*