

# findings

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Artists in Conversation Craft in the Bay Schmuck 2016 Crafts Council Collection Autor  
and Current Obsession Money No Object Alice Anderson Shows and Tales

# Alice Anderson - Memory Movement Memory Objects

Wellcome Collection 22 July – 18 October 2015

Lieta Marziali

**In an increasingly digital age, do you take the time to look?** How is this affecting your ability to remember? Can you even distinguish the familiar?

The Anderson show starts off in semi-darkness: it really wants you to spend that extra energy, as well as time, just looking. It also wants you to listen, and not just with your ears. A woman sits quietly in a corner in the participatory event: in slow, rhythmical, repetitive gestures, she wraps an old metal kettle – one of those you would sit on a proper fire. The click click of the copper wire being unwound belongs to the tacit knowledge of those who have grown up with a grandma spooling wool or an aunt always seated at her old sewing machine. There are memories in that noise associated with thread, with the domestic.

And then there are the objects people have donated for the studio archive. As a visitor, I get a glimpse into somebody else's world, their take on the familiar and their version of particular significance. And yet, these objects are so insignificant to me that, in my frenzied reflections, I do not even make a note of what they are. Why are people attracted to certain objects? How does that relationship – because it is about this dialogue that we are talking about here – develop?

There is nothing to 'like' in this exhibition. This is a visual art that does not engage with aesthetic perceptions, nor does it want the viewers to do so. They are instead invited to partake in an act of recognition, in both its acceptations of detecting and of acknowledging the silent objects that fill our lives almost unnoticed: the spectacles, the electric plug, the remote control... I might be deprived of light but, as I walk along, I am certainly made aware of how much more time I am spending looking at these things than I would in their original state. As an artist myself, I ask if it is Anderson's intervention: the physical manipulation and elevation to the plinth. As a maker, I ask myself about the forgotten embedded value every single one of these objects carries in terms of thinking and designing.

As I move to the Assemblages room, I find it strangely – or perhaps unexpectedly – brighter. Is this calculated curatorial intervention aimed at drawing attention to the fact that the objects shown here are now being taken out of the context of the familiar and are being abstracted into form? And, in terms of sensations, am I being snapped out of the memory stage, out of my own recollection of similar objects, to look at the now? At new possibilities? Am I being transported into a world of pure form (especially with the abstract geometrical pieces) which, stripped of a physical connection to a known object, allows me to make my own connections? Certainly the materiality of these shimmering objects is hypnotic as I follow thread after thread but am never able to find a beginning and an end....

The last objects are more and more covered up by thread, making it increasingly difficult to discern, to make associations. If that oblong block is a remote control, I have to think twice. Some other blocks I cannot recognise at all. But that's the nature of memories, even when they are our own. Especially lost memories: part of our existence and yet so hard to recollect and to connect with. As we are constantly bombarded by an amount of information that is increasingly impossible to process, how much of our memories are we losing, rather than retaining? How much is that already fragile balance shifting?

In the 'Distorted Objects' there is light again. These are objects displaying the force, both physical and mental, applied to them to shape them and to change them. Once again I ask myself about the curatorial choice of where we are sent back into a reflective, recollecting mood and where we are summoned back to the present to confront this force that shapes the life all around us and ourselves in it. And, for one last time, I try to listen: is the repetitive tribal trance tune I hear the contemporary version of the spool?