

*THE*  
COLLECTOR'S  
CABINET  
EXHIBITION  
GUIDE



THE MORBID ANATOMY MUSEUM  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK  
JANUARY 24 - MARCH 29, 2015

# **THE COLLECTOR'S CABINET**

## **CURATOR'S NOTE,**

### **CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The second exhibition of The Morbid Anatomy Museum, "The Collector's Cabinet" is an unapologetic celebration of the idiosyncratic, curious and fascinating wonders hidden behind the closed doors of the private collectors of the greater Morbid Anatomy community. It is also an exploration of the very special relationship between people and things, between collector and treasured object, as well as a tribute to the numinous power objects continue to exert, even in an age purportedly devoted to the rational.

The generosity and vision of the extraordinary collectors of the greater Morbid Anatomy Community made this exhibition possible, in every way. This exhibit is as much about them and their relationship to objects as about the objects themselves. The descriptions that follow are, fittingly, in their own words, unless in italics.

"The Collector's Cabinet" will be the first of a series of exhibitions showcasing private collectors and collections. We all sincerely hope you enjoy this exhibition as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Joanna Ebenstein, Co-Founder and Creative Director, Morbid Anatomy Museum, January, 2014

#### **CREDITS**

Curator: Joanna Ebenstein

Assistant Curator: Laetitia Barbier

Exhibition Coordinator and Fabricator: Aaron Beebe

Brenna Pladsen: Administrative Assistant

#### **THE COLLECTORS**

Matthew Alfano, Karen Bachmann, Laetitia Barbier, Jennifer Butkevich, Catherine Crawford, Mark Dion, Rory Feldman, David Freund, Mel Gordon, Richard Harris, Brandon Hodge, Carol Holzner, Tracy Hurley Martin, Jeffrey Jenkins, Tim Kern, Dr. Robert Lerch, William "Billy" Leroy, Ryan Mathew Cohn, Evan Michelson, Peter N. Névramount, Rebecca Purcell, Daniel and Sommer Santoro, Ronni Thomas, David Wolin, Mike Zohn, and the Anonymous Whimsical Victoriana Collector.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This exhibition—and in fact, the entire Morbid Anatomy Museum—would have been utterly impossible without the support, intelligence, wit and dedication of Morbid Anatomy Museum co-founder and board chair Tracy Hurley Martin. Thank you!

This exhibition could also never have happened without the help of Laetitia Barbier, Aaron Beebe, Mike Zohn, Erica Saunders, Evan Michelson, Mark Dion, G F Newland, Amy Slonaker, Ronni Thomas, Jennifer Butkevich, Emmet Liston, and Noah Loesberg.

I would like also to specially thank each of collectors involved: Thanks to each of them for trusting us with their precious things and for taking the time to say share their thoughts for this catalog.

## The Woodland Fair



The Squirrel Bar Scene: Located on the other side of The Woodland Fair



The Woodland Fairground and The Squirrel Bar Scene  
20th Century anthropomorphic taxidermy  
Once displayed at Cress Funeral Home, Madison, Wisconsin  
From the collection of Mike Zohn

These two dioramas—The Squirrel Bar Scene and The Woodland Fairground—were commissioned by Funeral Director Sam Sanfilippo and displayed with multiple other anthropomorphic taxidermy tableaux in the basement of his Funeral Home in Madison, Wisconsin. The Cress Funeral Home and its whimsical museum was renowned as a Roadside attraction and attracted many visitors for decades.

I knew about this collection for years, as one of the modern American example of anthropomorphic tableaux in the vein of the British Victorian taxidermist Walter Potter. Sanfilippo died few years ago and an auction was held in 2014. As a collector and an antique dealer, I couldn't miss this opportunity. I participated in the auction on the phone with the intention of buying Sanfilippo's most iconic dioramas. How many occasions do you have in a lifetime to get your hand on a such curiosities?

All the details are so quirky: the "Topless Girly Show" chipmunks are actually more dressed than the other Fair Ground companions. The Fisherman squirrel and his pipe...These dioramas are just fantastical work.

Mike Zohn is co-star of TV's "Oddities" and co-owner of Obscura Antiques.



"Landrus" the Great Sideshow Banner, 1930s  
From the collection of David Wolin

Fred Landrus (1896-1966) was a fairly well known magician and mentalist who travelled the carnival and sideshow circuit from the 1920s through the late 1950s. This banner dates from the 1930s and has a decidedly homemade quality showing a handsome magician and a spooky ghostly skeleton figure. One can only hope that Landrus the Great was a better magician than painter.

David Wolin is the proprietor of Invisible Gallery, a Brooklyn based roving antique and art dealership that specializes in unusual and occult items.



A selection of early plastic lamp finials  
Circa 1940s  
From the collection of Mark Dion

I have a vast collection of finials for domestic lamps. Many are brass, aluminum, ceramic, plastic, Bakelite or wood. The ones I find the most appealing are those made of early white plastic which have discolored to creamy ivory. When my collection is assembled together it acquires a resemblance to an elaborate miniature cemetery.

Mark Dion is a contemporary artist much of whose work centers around collectors, collecting and taxonomies. His work examines the ways in which dominant ideologies and public institutions shape our understanding of history, knowledge, and the natural world. The job of the artist, he says, is to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception and convention. Appropriating archaeological and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between 'objective' ('rational') scientific methods and 'subjective' ('irrational') influences. The artist's spectacular and often fantastical curiosity cabinets, modeled on Wunderkammen of the 16th Century, exalt atypical orderings of objects and specimens. He has received numerous awards and has had major exhibitions at the Miami Art Museum (2006); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004); Tate Gallery, London (1999), and the British Museum of Natural History in London (2007).



Paper Doll House Album  
19th Century  
From the collection of David Freund

Paper Doll House albums, like the one here, are among the most touching in my collection of many types of hand made visual albums. Almost always designed by young women, Paper Doll House albums use decorative paper, hand-colored elements and printed illustrations of people and furnishings to envision and portray their ideal home.

Such illustrative materials, mostly gleaned from catalogs and women's magazines, were meticulously cut out and pasted one by one onto the album's blank pages. Attention was given not only to domestic taste, but to requirements of graphic design, such as scale and perspective. These aspects are accomplished skillfully in this album, although other albums that come up short in such polish often have special appeal of the beginner's earnest hand.



Another element that distinguishes this album is narrative. The panels do not appear to progress like a graphic novel, but the panel illustrating the sickroom and the one with the empty chair at the dining table, behind is the framed "In Loving Memory," suggest some personal loss.

With no one left to tell the story or to confirm our inferences, we are left to discover and ponder clues. It seems safe to assume, however, given the care required to select, prepare, and place the elements on the page, that the maker had clear intention in mind. I prefer to risk giving her more than less credit.

The usually anonymous creators of what can be called the folk art of early visual albums have long since died. For most, the memory of their affect upon the planet has evaporated. Yet, the ephemeral visual material they encountered, then funneled through their eyes and minds, then sifted, sorted, and re-imagined, now is seen in albums embodying their talent, voice, and presence.

David Freund, Professor Emeritus, Ramapo College of New Jersey. Collector and photographer, Board of Directors, Ephemera Society. Work in collections of MOMA, New York, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Bibliotheque Nationale.



Sentimental Hair Album  
1845  
From the collection of David Freund

*A mark of friendship's pleasing power  
In this small trifle see  
And sometimes in a lonely hour  
View this and think of me.*  
—Laura Smith, Circa 1845

Although more refined in diction, this sentiment could well be inscribed in a yearbook today. This 1845 iteration, however, is animated by a still fresh lock of Laura's hair. "Hair is at once the most delicate and lasting of our materials, and survives us, like love. It is so light, so gentle, so escaping from the idea of death, that with a lock of hair belonging to a child or friend..." (Leigh Hunt, in *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1855)

In the nineteenth century, distances were more daunting and partings thus more often final, so that mementos, especially ones that could intimately recall a loved one, enjoyed special significance. Not only departed friends and family but ones still present were often memorialized with clippings of hair, bound in ribbon of appropriate color.

Not only simple locks, hair was also woven into delicate wreaths and braids, at home or by professionals in the popular trade of hair art. These creations could also be large, for display in frames or under glass domes, or small, as jewelry, worn on the body.

Hair keepsakes, a corporal part of the loved one, perpetuate emotions of attachment, a secular expression of the enduring aura of reliquaries.

*Farewell, dear Adaline; happy hours adieu,  
When first our youthful hearts each other knew,  
Oft as I think of thee, the pensive sigh,  
Will swell this bosom, while you mouldering lie.*

—Adaline Cody, Died May 10th, 1849. Age 25 years.  
(Two verses from hair albums, Collection, David Freund)

David Freund, Professor Emeritus, Ramapo College of New Jersey. Collector and photographer, Board of Directors, Ephemera Society. Work in collections of MOMA, New York, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Bibliotheque Nationale.



Lacrimosa - Tear Catcher

Late 19th Century - Early 20th Century

Rock crystal and sterling silver

From the collection of Karen Bachmann

Tear catchers were commonly used during ancient Roman times with mourners filling glass bottles with their tears, and entombing them with their loved ones as a symbol of their affection. They were also employed to demonstrate love, guilt, grief, and remorse. Women cried during funeral processions, collecting their tears in these vessels. The more tears indicated the extent to which the deceased were loved. Roman era tear catchers measured up to 4 inches in height. The specially designed seals allowed the tears to evaporate. When all the tears were gone, this indicated the period of mourning was over.

During the 19th century, the sentimental Victorians revived the practice. Tear catchers made a comeback amongst the wealthy. The Victorian example that we have displayed shows the typically smaller style favored in the 19th/Early 20th century. This later style was generally smaller, daintier, and had elaborate, decorative silver work. This example is rock crystal and sterling silver. The cap is hand engraved with the letter K. Unfortunately, we have no information as to the identity of the K being mourned.

Karen Bachmann is a Professor and Art Historian at Pratt Institute and FIT. She is Morbid Anatomy's resident jeweler, and a collector and expert in Victorian hairwork jewelry.





Ten Saints Reliquary  
Napoleon III Era, 19th century  
From the collection of Laetitia Barbier

Sainte Marguerite Marie Alacoque - Patron Saint of those who lost parents and of Sacred Heart Devotees; Saint Urbain - Patron Saint of Wine Growers; Saint Lazare - Patron Saint of the Sick and Infirm; Saint Claire - Patron Saint of Eye Disease, Laundry and Embroiderers as well as Telephone and Television; Saint Peter the Apostle - Patron Saint of Feet Problems, Baker and keeper of the Keys of Paradise; Saint Fortunat - Patron Saint of Cooks; Saint Peter Canisius - Patron Saint of Germany; Sainte Colombe - Patron Saint of Witches in Galicia; Sainte Pacifique - Unknown to me; Saint Clement the Martyr - Patron Saint of Blacksmith and metal workers.

The list above presents the numerous saints figuring in this “ten-in-one” reliquary and the patronage or miraculous virtues associated with each of them. Arranged in a Sacred Heart shape and adorned by radiant “paperolles” and beadwork, labels bearing the names of each Saint hide miniature fragments of unidentified matter. I'd love to think that these sacred titbits are “mixto pulveri corporis” - particles of their bodies - but its more likely that this shadow box contains Holy Dirt from their grave or their birthplace. Or, its just dust.

Raised as a Catholic, I've been obsessed by the concept of private devotion and the idea that faith can be celebrated in the intimacy of one's personal space, through a range of artifacts, often meticulously crafted, considered sacred or manufactured to be so. Behind this intention, the ethereal line between religious practices and superstitions are often blurred. Most of the objects I collect reflect this idea.

I've always envisioned this Reliquary as a powerful charm, a talisman. Its not a piece of the True Cross for sure, but it contains major figures of the Catholic Pantheon and to me their miraculous power are true. I've never been a good cook but thanks to Saint Fortunat, I never poisoned myself to death. I'm not often sick, have no eye diseases and no sore feet. As a french person, I'm grateful to know that both wine growers and bakers are actively protected by Saint Urbain and Saint Peter The Apostle. And most importantly, no Galician Witch has cursed me yet, thanks to Sainte Colombe.

Laetitia Barbier is the Head Librarian of Morbid Anatomy Library. A French independent scholar, she studied Art History in La Sorbonne University, Paris. Her work has been featured in *New Wave* (France), *Vice Magazine* (Germany) and *Atlas Obscura*. She lives in New York since 2012.



Small Paper Box and gummed Label with Assorted Found Objects

Mixed media

From the collection of Rebecca Purcell

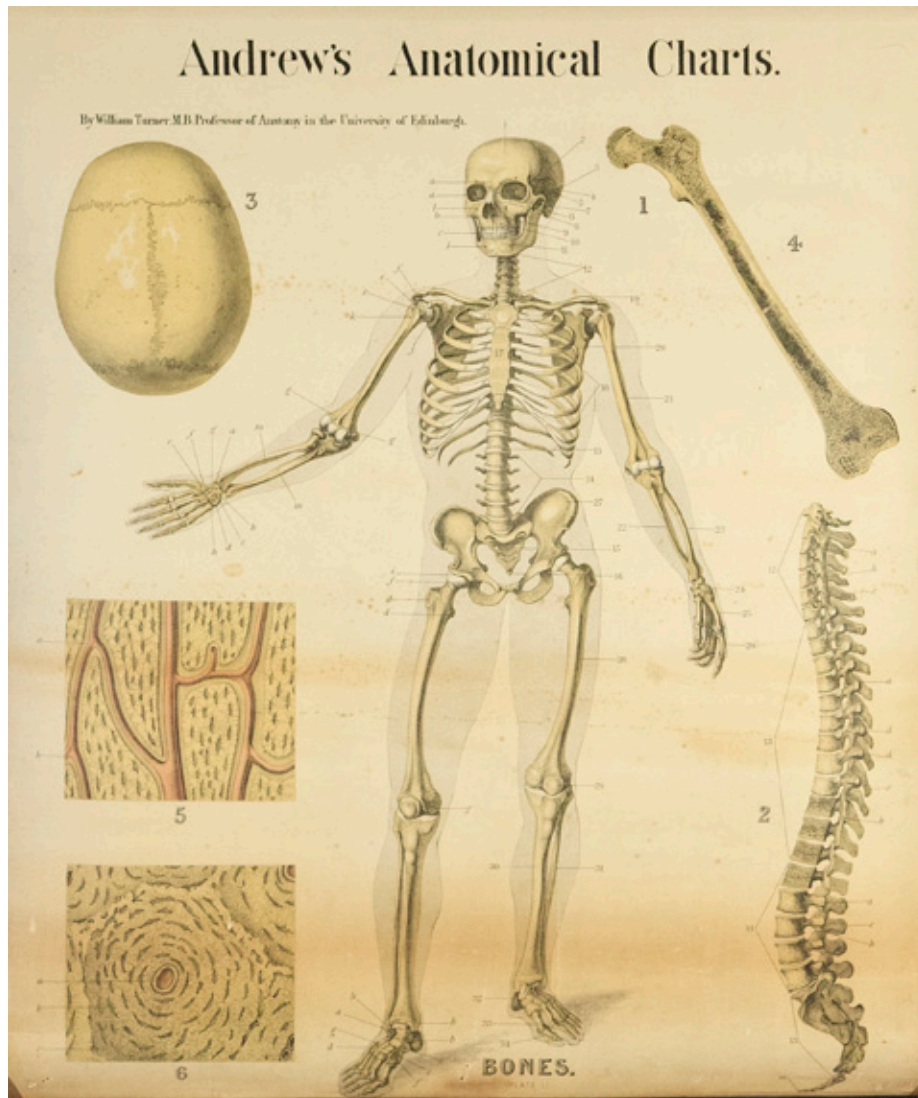
The objects in this collection were gathered as part of an ongoing art project that began in childhood and eventually developed into an elaborate, nine-part, aesthetic-psychological-cultural matrix, called *Organon 9 Worlds*. The matrix attempts to organize the majority of western aesthetics into nine distinct categories, numbered synesthetically rather than chronologically, each representing a specific style as well as phase in the creative process.

These particular objects were gathered for either their implied length of ownership, for their intrinsic appeal, or simply by virtue of accidentally wandering into my world.

Rebecca Purcell exists in the spaces between things, between artist and stylist, writer and note-maker, past and present/present and future.

Navigating in this liminal state, Purcell has immersed herself in the world of styling, art, design and handcraft for over thirty years. Starting with numerous careers in display and several adventures in design, she spent the years 1995-1999 specifically making and showing art in NYC.

A pioneer in the Past-Present aesthetic, Purcell was visual director and co-creator of the groundbreaking A.B.C. Home from 1990-1997. Followed by styling and art direction for several home design companies, working primarily with the Anthropologie catalog 1999-2003, 2007-present. In 1996 Purcell wrote an interiors book that was one of the first to feature the Past-Present aesthetic, and became a cult classic ten years after publishing; *Interior Alchemy* (William Morrow).



Andrew's Anatomical Charts

19th Century

From the collection of Matthew Alfano, M.D.

This wonderful example of anatomical art and education is one of a series of five charts published by the University of Edinburgh in the mid to late 1800's. Charts like these were carted from lecture to lecture as examples of anatomy for instruction. Modern dissection in medical schools requires refrigeration for preservation of cadavers, so at the time of publication, much of the teaching of anatomy was impromptu and short when a body became available (by legal or illegal means) and before it decayed.

Dissection as a means of medical instruction, was not yet a widely accepted and was therefore an underworld of medicine, often taught in hidden labs until the 20th century. Charts like these provided a means of continued and acknowledged teaching when dissection was not available. In addition, the use of charts rather than bodies could be acknowledged by the associated university.

The series that this chart is a part of, has been copied and expanded upon by several publishing companies including the American University of Chicago which published its expanded series of charts in the 1880's with just enough changes to the original plates from Andrew's so as to be "Original."

Until the early 20th century, the world of medical instruction was often furiously competitive between instructors, each trying to best the other, as lecture tickets were expensive and highly profitable, making plagiarism and intellectual theft rampant.

Matthew Alfano, M.D. is currently a resident physician in Brooklyn. He came to medicine by happenstance, and had an original career as a pilot. He loves the art of medicine, both literal and figurative, and relishes in the fact that practicing medicine is one of the last frontiers of human to human interaction without an electronic medium to interfere. He comes from a long line of people whom possess a predisposition to accumulate stuff (but not hoard).



Assorted brushes

19th and 20th century

From the collection of (and installed by) Jeffrey Jenkins

BRUSHES! The humble, simple, glorious, extravagant and delightful brush. Heroic tools made from blades of grass or hay, pine needle, animal fur or plastic filament, they combine to form small nations dedicated to order and design. They are a celebration of the remarkable diversity that may be found in sameness and even though time and utility work to break them down they always manage to reflect their core values. Often, they quietly carry the ghosts of past lives, secretly revealing the hands they were made by and those that used them. Whether restoring domestic order or filtering industrial by-products they always express themselves – and us.

Jeffrey Wade Jenkins (b. 1958) is an artist and graphic designer living and working in NYC and Jewett, NY.

His art and photography explore the intersection and overlap between the subjective perceptions and interpretations of the natural world and the methodologies used in pursuit of its control and understanding.

The use of ironic and random juxtapositions, deceptive scale, isolation and alternative contexts are often employed to explore meaning and value in systems of ownership, both personal and institutional.

This interest in the natural world has expanded into projects involving collecting, collections, and the associated materialism, aesthetics and cult of curiosities. He has exhibited nationally and internationally. His graphic design projects include identity programs, web sites, annual reports and other promotional materials for individuals and corporations and environmental groups. He also designs books, catalogs and monographs for other artists and was art director of design and advertising at Calvin Klein and Banana Republic. He received a BFA from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, NYC.



Enigmatic Stage Photo  
Circa 1920  
From the collection of Dr.  
Robert Lerch

This is a unique stage curtain with mystical imagery. It came out of a lot that was from an old vaudeville gentleman's storage locker and I bought it from the dealer who got the locker... storage wars at its best. The imagery of the curtain is unique and evocative of a mystical sojourn.

Dr. Robert Lerch is a collector and dealer based in New York City.



Les Diableries

Orpheus à la cour de Pluton (Orpheus at Pluto's Court), La Fête Des Lanternes Chez Satan (Satan's Lantern Party)

Paris, France

19th century

The Devil's Sifter

George Lofton

1890

From *Character Sketches; or, The Blackboard Mirror*

Both from the collection of Ronni Thomas



My fascination with the Devil is probably the only consistent thing I have in my life. From a very young age, as a product of catholic school, I remember without irony being absolutely mystified by this alternate ruler, the cosmic trickster, the naysayer. The fact that one invisible character can be so prolific throughout history, changing shape, appearance and personality with the changing times, never ceased to be an endless source of creative inspiration for me (and yes the result of many confusing notes home from school). While my personal collection is typically filled with items erring on the 'creepy' side—and I admit contains some objects just to 'get a reaction', the Devil artifacts are, beyond mere shock value, undyingly sacred to me. Presented here are 3 of the finest examples of the French Diableries from 1863 and an original woodcut of George Lofton's 'Devils sifter' from his manuscript, "Character Sketches; or, The blackboard Mirror."

The diableries are particularly fascinating in the great detail of their design... Not only are they wonderful examples of the 3D technology of the day, but when backlit, color emerges from hand painted Watercolors on the backs. They represent the devil, *my* devil, the way I see him in my dreams; laughing it up in hell with an army of drunken skeletons; a wonderful way to spend an eternity of damnation.

Ronni Thomas is the film-maker in residence at The Morbid Anatomy Museum. He is also the creator and director of the "Midnight Archive" web series ([www.themidnightarchive.com](http://www.themidnightarchive.com)), "Walter Potter the Man Who Married Kitten" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjHBpxla45U>), and the upcoming "Morbid Anatomy Presents" film series.





Pestina

U.S. Department of Agriculture, San Francisco

Circa 1966

From the collection of Catherine Crawford

My only hesitation in loaning Pestina to the Morbid Anatomy Museum's Collector's Cabinet is that one of my twelve siblings might see her here and perform a heist. We're all very attached to this adorable, and bewilderingly sexy, little insect.

She ended up in my possession some time in the early 1990's when I (perhaps covertly) transferred ownership from one of my brothers – with whom I rented a house in Santa Cruz, CA – over to myself.

However, Pestina entered the family decades earlier after my father, Capt. William P. Crawford, relocated Crawford Nautical School, the family navigation school known cheekily in some circles as The Crawford College of Nautical Knowledge, from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The new school landed in the Agriculture Building at the foot of Mission Street (right near the Ferry Building, for those familiar with San Francisco geography).

According to my mother, Pestina was just waiting there when they moved in. This makes sense considering that the poster is the handiwork of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Trademarked in 1966, Pestina was designed for the plant quarantine division.

From 1974 until 1990, when the school moved further up the coast from San Francisco to Seattle, Pestina hung on the wall upstage right in Crawford Nautical's main classroom. If you sniff her with all your might, you can still catch a hint of cigarette smoke absorbed from the countless sailors who came to hear Dad's lectures.

A freelance writer, Catherine Crawford is the author of *French Twist: An American Mom's Experiment in Parisian Parenting*, and she edited the book *If You Really Want to Hear About It: Writers on J.D. Salinger and His Work*. She teaches writing and grammar and lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.



[ Calf head located over gallery door ]



Two headed calf taxidermy mount  
Mummified seven-legged, two-bodied piglet  
From the collection of Tim Kern

I have always felt a connection to freaks. When I first bought Martin Monestier's book *Human Oddities* in 1989, I had no idea the impact it would have on my life. It didn't take long for me to become obsessed with the unusual humans within... I knew their names and stories and wondered what it must be like to be born with an extra leg or two heads. Being an identical twin, it could have easily been my fate to be permanently attached to my brother James. I obsessively bought whatever books I could find on human oddities and sent away for cassette tapes from Ward Hall. My collecting really started then—with a small selection of sideshow photos and performer cards I got while corresponding with Jeff Murray. I still have an unfinished painting I started for the cover of a book he was planning to do. When I earned my Bachelors of Fine Art degree, my first solo exhibition focused on photography inspired by sideshow and human oddities accompanied by Robert Ripley-style cartoons I had drawn about the subject.

Shortly after finishing school, my twin brother and I both became tattoo artists. Even though we lived in different states at the time, our paths remained connected. Years later we would find out that our great great grandfather was a tattoo artist working on the carnival circuit. My obsession with freaks and my choice of occupation now makes total sense to me...

The two pieces I have in the exhibition reflect my obsession with conjoined twins and are among my favorites. My wife Hang and I name all of our taxidermy after musicians, so we thought it was appropriate that the two-faced calf be named Hall & Oates. Our mummified seven-legged, two bodied piggy is named Meatloaf, but sometimes I call him Leftovers.

Tim Kern is a rotten carny bastard. A seventh-generation twin, he was born in a state of Misery—half-cooked and with a lazy eye. Over the years, he has developed a passion for human oddities, prestidigitation, and serial killers. Tim has been a tattoo artist since 1995 and owns Tribulation Tattoo in NYC.





Mrs. Tomson's Manifestation  
Chicago, Illinois  
1922  
From the collection of Brandon Hodge

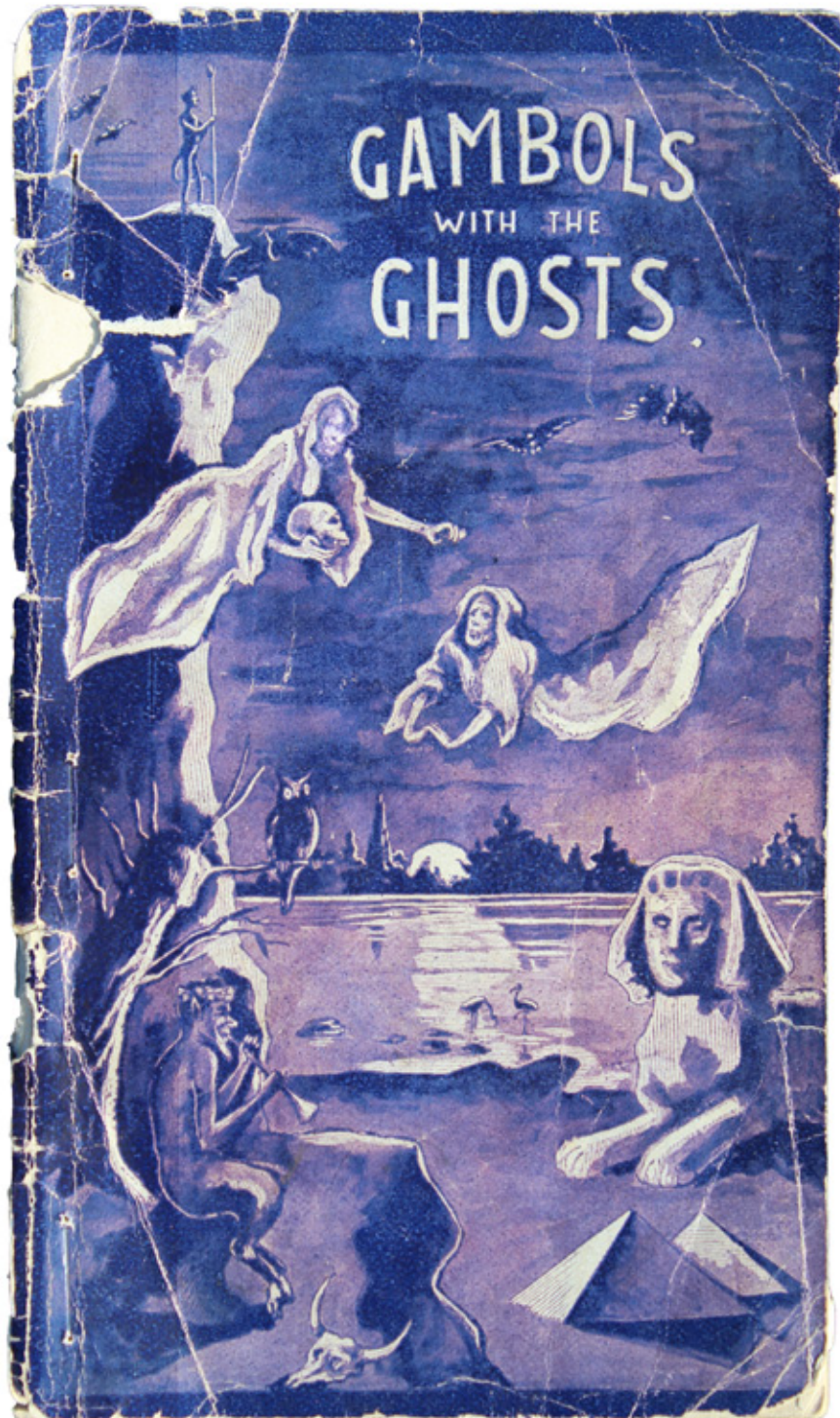
Legitimate photographs of séances are rare enough. Cameras don't capture much in a pitch-dark room, and mediums were wary of photographs capturing something they didn't want made public. What's worse, decades of heavily-illustrated books on séance phenomena mean that new and original photographs that haven't been overexposed—if you'll pardon the necessary pun—are difficult to procure. But what have we here?

This photograph depicts the ectoplasmic spirit manifestation produced by the medium Elizabeth Tomson, taken at a séance performed in December, 1922 at Chicago's Masonic Temple. Tomson is often improperly identified as the aged woman seated in front of the cabinet. But Tomson was only around 37 years old at the time, and would have been tied-up inside the cabinet to produce her manifestations. The elderly woman is likely an audience member.

Of course, the argument can be made that Elizabeth Tomson is in the photograph, disguised as the shrouded spirit. It was certainly the claim of Chicago's police department, who arrested Tomson for fraud shortly after this photograph was taken. It wouldn't be the first time she was caught. Her "spirit guide" was tackled several times, bitten in the dark on more than one occasion, and once caused a small riot when a smuggled flashlight exposed the "ghost" as the medium herself.

In 1922, Elizabeth even tried to claim the *Scientific American's* \$2,500 reward for producing an authentic "visible psychic manifestation," but was disqualified when she was caught smuggling gauze, flowers, and a live snake into her test cabinet. Never a dull moment with the Tomsons!

Brandon Hodge is an Austin-based author and antiquarian. He is the historical authority on automatic writing planchettes, and owns the world's finest collection of séance and spirit communication apparatus, which he documents on his popular website, [www.mysteriousplanchette.com](http://www.mysteriousplanchette.com).



*Gambols with the Ghosts*

Sylvestre & Co., Chicago, Illinois

1901

From the collection of Brandon Hodge

This diminutive pamphlet is purportedly a secret catalog selling gaffed séance apparatus for fraudulent mediums. Surviving copies are so hard to come by that famous ghost hunter Harry Price once said they were “so excessively rare that during a lifetime’s search for a specimen... I came into possession of a copy, the only one in Great Britain.” So, I felt I was in good company when I purchased a copy of my own in 2012.

Price wasn’t the only skeptic to get a hold of the infamous catalog. In 1910, magician William S. Marriott exposed its secrets in *Pearson’s Magazine*, where he posed with some luminous ghost forms ordered from Sylvestre & Co. in an effort to educate the public about fraudulent spirit manifestations.

Nestled between the catalog’s covers is page after page of spirit slates, séance trumpets, talking boards, gaffed handcuffs, and other deceptions—everything a fraudulent medium could possibly need. Here, you can see it opened to a selection of talking skulls and rapping devices.

But was it really a catalog for fraud mediums as Price and Marriott believed? Many of the items are admittedly geared more toward magicians—particularly pages of card tricks and mentalism effects. While they would certainly have served a fraudulent medium well, I found the tell-tale markers ironic: that magicians might have used a disguised magic catalog to “expose” fraudulent mediums with devices more suited to their own sleight-of-hand performances than legitimate séance practitioners, who rarely needed much more than a dark room and a group of faithful believers. So really: who’s fooling whom?

Brandon Hodge is an Austin-based author and antiquarian. He is the historical authority on automatic writing planchettes, and owns the world’s finest collection of séance and spirit communication apparatus, which he documents on his popular website, [www.mysteriousplanchette.com](http://www.mysteriousplanchette.com).



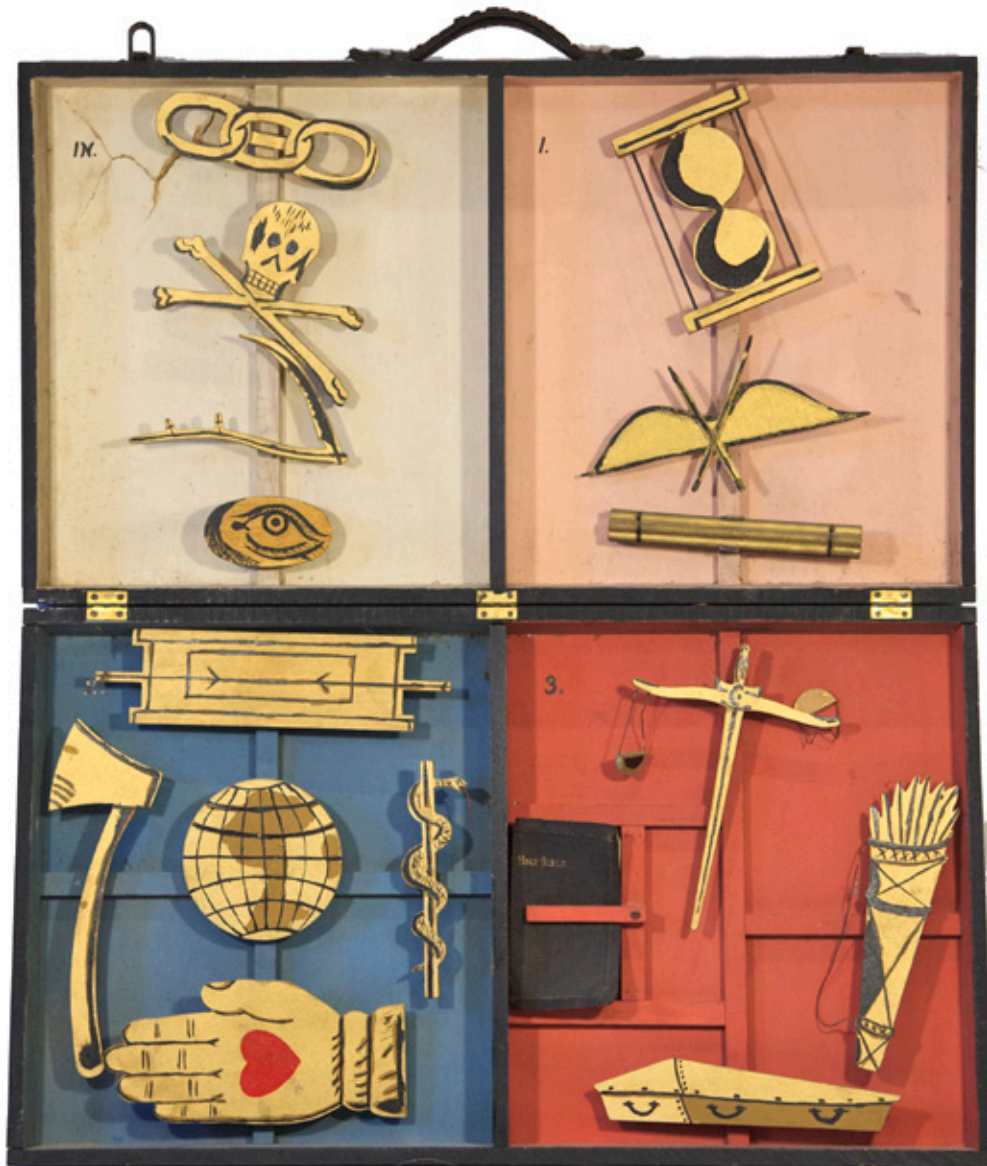
Pair of 19th century erotic paintings  
19th century  
From the collection of William Leroy

These two erotic tin paintings are 19th Century french Art Populaire, typical for that period. The Soldiers are in 18th Century dress, circa 1775. I found them at a Military show that was mostly Nazi stuff...so I bought them for a good price.

William "Billy" Leroy was born in Amiens, France and grew up in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He is the owner of forever closed, Billy's Antiques and Props, "last holdout of the old Bowery" on the Lower East Side of New York City.

Leroy is also an actor, stars in the movie "Dirty Old Town" and "Bourek", which will come out in Spring 2015. He currently appears in the Hit Reality Show "Baggage Battles".





Rustic Folk Art Odd Fellows Mnemonic Traveling Case  
From the collection of David Wolin

As a collector, the objects I get the most excited about are things that exist outside of the world of price guides, the handmade the homespun, the ill-concieved and the poorly executed. The outsiders, the outliers, things that are one of a kind or possess a unique viewpoint. This Odd Fellows traveling case is a perfect example of the successful individual and somewhat unskilled interpretation of an established idea and imagery. This traveling case would have been used to educate prospective members on the intricacies of Odd Fellow initiation levels, serving as a mnemonic or "memory jogger." The box acts as a sort of puzzle with each piece being removable and interchangeable.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization that, while still extant, had its heyday in the late 19th and early 20th Century. An offshoot of the more populous Freemasons, the Odd Fellows had broad appeal amongst the working class and tradesmen of the day, Despite their somewhat more egalitarian membership, the Odd Fellows have some of the most grandiose and colorful ritual and ceremony of the numerous fraternal orders. Like the Masons, the Odd Fellows are an initiatory order with gradated steps towards membership levels. There were several companies who provided accoutrements for the various fraternal orders, the most famous being The DeMoulin Brothers, who offered catalogues of lodge supplies, clothing, books, and various paraphernalia. Many of these items were mass produced but others were hand made to order. Lodges could purchase hand painted banners, backdrops, and costumes and, while no two are exactly alike, there are distinct variations and unique qualities to these items and quality varied greatly depending on the skill level of the particular craftsman on duty.

Clearly, the artisan behind this piece was unable to afford the manufactured instructional materials and crafted his own. The end result is inspired and ingenious and a little kooky, not the sort of thing you would find in a price guide and therefore priceless.

David Wolin is the proprietor of Invisible Gallery, a Brooklyn based roving antique and art dealership that specializes in unusual and occult items.



Oddfellows Plaque with Antlers  
Circa Early 1900's-40's  
From the collection of Daniel and Sommer Santoro

We found this piece at an antique shop in the Poconos. It caught our eye because it combined our interests in antique fraternal items, vintage hunting artifacts, and hand-carved crafts.

Daniel and Sommer Santoro live in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. Sommer co-owns Black Gold, a record/coffee/antique shop in Carroll Gardens. Daniel is a tattoo artist at Smith Street Tattoo Parlour, also in Carroll Gardens. Both are avid collectors of ephemera, Victorian taxidermy, folk art, and oddities- so much so that they fear their collection may some day completely consume them in their modest, one-bedroom apartment.



The Sacred Heart of Jesus  
 Assorted sacred heart-themed artifacts  
 From the collection of Peter N. Névramount

For reasons I cannot all together explain, I have been drawn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for most of my life. There is no question that I have felt a perverse attraction to this dreadful symbol of a pierced bleeding heart circumscribed by sharp thorns, flames shooting from its top, stabbed with a cross. At the same time I have felt a tremendous challenge from this symbol in which Jesus exposes his heart and seems to say, "Here is my heart, I have nothing to hide. Can you say the same?"

In the late 17th century the French Visitandine nun Marguerite-Marie Alacoque reported a series of powerful incantatory visions, during which Jesus showed her his heart. In her autobiography she wrote of the "inexplicable Secrets of the Sacred Heart." I have never had a vision of the Sacred Heart yet I have at least a partial understanding of what she meant.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a visual symbol. If its "Secrets" could be fully articulated in words it would become a relic; an impotent symbol with feeble power to persuade. This is why the meaning of the Sacred Heart resides ultimately within renderings of it that speak "de corde tuo, ad cor tuum," about your heart, to your heart.

Hopefully the images on display here, individually and then collectively, will inspire viewers to contemplate their willingness to reveal their own hearts without guile and to honor Jesus' message of love and forgiveness. To me this image of a bloody wounded heart speaks wordlessly of Jesus' passion, his challenge, his mercy, and the valley of tears through which we all must pass.

Behold the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

Peter N. Névramount is a Brooklyn based collector and book packager. He is currently writing and producing *The Sacred Heart of Jesus: A Visual History*. The book is a result of a lifetime of fascination and devotion to this mystical symbol.



Phrenological Death Mask Bust, Possibly by Pierre Marie Dumoutier (1797-1871)  
19th century  
Plaster  
From the Morbid Anatomy Museum permanent collection

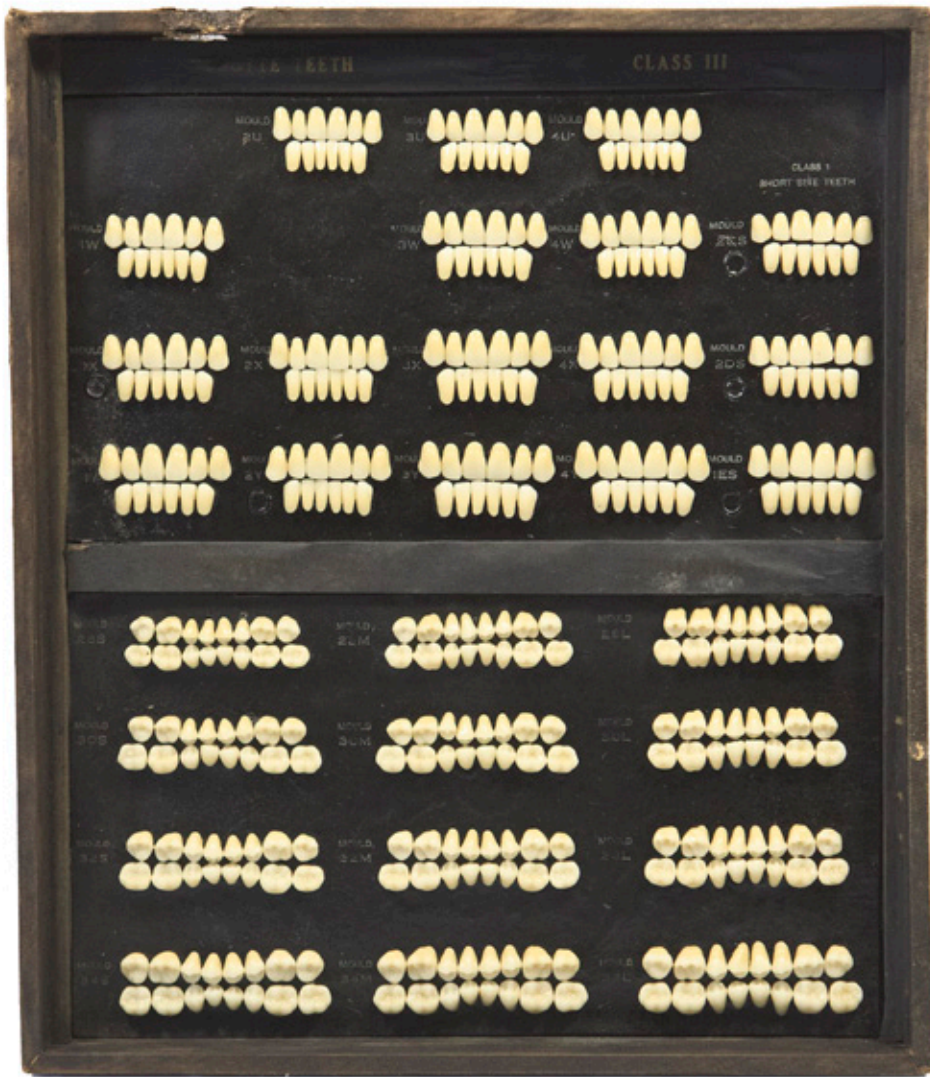
Last year, Morbid Anatomy acquired this enigmatic 19th century plaster phrenological death bust. You can tell it was cast from the face of a dead man because the eyes are open, and it would be extremely painful to cast the face of a living person in such a fashion.

Phrenology was a 19th century pseudo science founded by German physician Franz Joseph Gall; the idea was that one could read the bumps on the head in order to understand a person's true character. The theory posited that different characteristics were localized in specific regions of the brain and, thus, the skull would develop in relationship to the brain, which would expand (creating bumps) in more highly developed areas, and vice versa. If you look very closely, you can see what appear to be graphite lines and faint words delineating the different regions of character on the man's skull.

The man from whose face this bust was cast is unknown to us, but it is highly likely that he was noteworthy in some way, perhaps a criminal or a genius; otherwise, the cast would probably not have been taken and preserved.

The bust was allegedly purchased from the workshop of Louis Thomas Jérôme Auzoux (1797-1880), a French physician and artist of papier-mâché anatomical models. Liza Young—a museum studies student at St. John's University—did some research into this piece (<http://morbidanatomy.blogspot.com/2014/07/a-case-of-missing-identity-researching.html>) and determined that, based on an analysis of its style, that it might well have come from the workshop of Pierre Marie Dumoutier (1797-1871) a famed 19th century phrenologist and adventurer.

This text is based on original research conducted by Liza Young and Morbid Anatomy Library's own Head Librarian Laetitia Barbier.



Comparative Dental Models  
20th Century  
From the collection of Matthew Alfano, M.D.

At first this may seem strange to have different shapes of porcelain teeth set in wax for display, however, these are not means of advertising “grills.” This set was made in the early 20th century, when techniques of modern dental hygiene were ideas yet to take shape, and a trip to the dentist usually involved tooth removal, not routine cleaning or a cosmetic touch up. These examples of teeth served as a means for comparison to match the remaining teeth a person possessed with a compatible set of false teeth that could be manufactured to replace the ones the person had lost or just had removed.

Even today, professionals that craft dentures use more modern and expanded examples like these to compare teeth and ensure that a compatible set can be made to work with remaining teeth, or to completely replace a person’s original teeth with minimal notice. Today, we take a tooth brush for granted, when in past centuries, very few people lived to old age with their own teeth, and dentures were very common. They were crafted out of everything from wood to porcelain, or even from someone else’s teeth (for which they were paid to donate) depending on what you could afford.

Matthew Alfano, M.D. Is currently a resident physician in Brooklyn. He came to medicine by happenstance, and had an original career as a pilot. He loves the art of medicine, both literal and figurative, and relishes in the fact that practicing medicine is one of the last frontiers of human to human interaction without an electronic medium to interfere. He comes from a long line of people whom possess a predisposition to accumulate stuff (but not hoard).





Neck Tattoo in Jar

Circa 1990s

From the collection of Daniel and Sommer Santoro, Brooklyn, New York

About 10 years ago, a man walked into a Texas tattoo convention carrying a small jar of tattooed skin floating in liquid. Our friend, Adam, approached the man and inquired about the strange accessory. The man told him that within the jar was skin from his own neck that he had removed because the tattoo artist had tattooed the order of the stripes on the American flag incorrectly. The man had his specimen in the jar for years and had only thought to bring it to the public when he saw an ad for the tattoo convention. Adam made him a modest offer for the piece, which the man gladly accepted and left with the quote, "I don't know why, but I always knew that thing would end up back in a tattoo shop."

Adam gifted it to us a few years ago, knowing that we would appreciate it.

Daniel and Sommer Santoro live in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. Sommer co-owns Black Gold, a record/coffee/antique shop in Carroll Gardens. Daniel is a tattoo artist at Smith Street Tattoo Parlour, also in Carroll Gardens. Both are avid collectors of ephemera, Victorian taxidermy, folk art, and oddities- so much so that they fear their collection may some day completely consume them in their modest, one-bedroom apartment.



Talking Skull  
Abbott's Magic Novelty Company, Colon Michigan  
Circa 1940  
From the collection of Brandon Hodge

Talking skulls are a peculiar piece of apparatus from the “spookshow” era of stage magic performance, when famous magicians like Dunninger and Houdini set out to debunk fraudulent spirit mediums. The papier-mâché skulls were often presented as the sort of item Spiritualists used to speak to the dead. They certainly communicate the same way as early rapping mediums, clacking their jaws—once for “yes,” twice for “no,” and so on—just as anxious spirits would have rapped out answers to posed questions in a séance. Though there's no evidence true mediums ever used talking skulls, they do appear in the infamous Sylvestre & Co. Gambols with the Ghosts catalog, which was purportedly a secret catalog for fraudulent mediums.

I became fascinated with talking skulls in the mid-1990s while researching the turn-of-the-century inventions of the mad-scientist magician and “necromancer” Joseffy. His creation, which he called Balsamo, fascinated audiences and rival magicians alike, as the life-like skull mysteriously clacked out correct responses despite operating on a sheet of clear plate glass while surrounded by audience members. Such performances would have been impossible for other talking skulls of the era, and for this reason, the commercially-produced talking skulls were known as “poor-man's Balsamo.”

This particular skull, while unmarked, has all of the design hallmarks of those produced by Abbott's Magic Novelty Company starting in the 1930s. I had wanted a “poor-man's Balsamo” for many years, and after nearly a decade of searching, I finally added this long-sought skull to my collection. It stays pretty quiet... most of the time.

Brandon Hodge is an Austin-based author and antiquarian. He is the historical authority on automatic writing planchettes, and owns the world's finest collection of séance and spirit communication apparatus, which he documents on his popular website, [www.mysteriousplanchette.com](http://www.mysteriousplanchette.com).



George's Arms, Circa 1900  
Wood, leather, metal, webbing, paint  
From the collection of Evan Michelson

This pair of prosthetic arms tells an inspiring tale. They belonged to a gentleman named George Hunlock, a resident of Danville, PA. Mr. Hunlock was employed as a brakeman on the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad. One fateful day, in the discharge of his duties, George slipped under the wheels of a railroad car and both his arms were severed at the shoulder. This would be a devastating injury today, but in the late 19th century survival alone must have seemed nearly miraculous. The recently-concluded American Civil War had brought about a revolution in the science of limb amputation - a development from which George Hunlock undoubtedly benefited.

Happily, Mr. Hunlock not only survived his terrible injuries, he thrived. He continued to work for the railroad as a watchmen at crossings, using his wooden arms to wave a lantern to warn of oncoming trains. His limbs (provided by J. Condell & Son) are heavy by today's standards, and the fingers (with the exception of a spring-loaded thumb), are not fully articulated. Despite this lack of prosthetic dexterity, George Hunlock soon mastered the use of his arms and hands, which allowed him to eat, light his pipe and (most remarkably) develop handwriting that was "clear and distinct." Contemporary reports say that he wrote "better with his wooden hand than most men can with their natural hands."

Accompanying the arms are newspaper articles heralding George Hunlock's bravery, and correspondence from the limb manufacturers detailing various upgrades, repairs and accessories. Also present are ledgers signed "George Hunlock" that survive from his second career as a tobacconist. All these things were contained in a box marked "Dad's Arms" that was sold at an estate sale in Pennsylvania many years ago. The dealer who bought them was informed by the family that the ledgers were indeed kept by Mr. Hunlock himself, and that (incredibly) the neat handwriting is George's very own.

Evan Michelson is an antiques dealer, collector, and co-owner of New York's Obscura Antiques. She is also the co-star of TV's long-running series "Oddities." She has held the position of Scholar-in-Residence at Morbid Anatomy since its inception, and is a founding board member. Evan lives with her husband and assorted creatures in a listing Victorian filled with wax ladies, tragic taxidermy and the hair of countless antique strangers. She is also a writer and lecturer who obsessively traces the evolution of ephemeral, aesthetic philosophical constructs. To what end it is not yet known.

Evan Michelson is an antiques dealer, collector, and co-owner of New York's very own Obscura Antiques. She is also the co-star of TV's long-running series "Oddities." She lives in a listing Victorian occupied by wax ladies, tragic taxidermy and exotic gewgaws. Evan is also a writer and lecturer, who obsessively traces the elusive evolution of ephemeral, aesthetic philosophical constructs. To what end it is not yet known.



Ex Voto, Votive or Retablo Painting, Mexico

Paint on metal

Dated 1871

From the Morbid Anatomy Museum permanent collection

Anatomical Ex Votos (stomach, lungs, chest)

Naples

Tin

Probably 20th century

From the Morbid Anatomy Museum permanent collection

We at Morbid Anatomy are very interested in the complicated and entangled edges between health, death, medicine, and faith. These ex votos are part of a larger collection of material culture exploring these ideas.

The painting purports to be from Mexico, and is dated 1871. Due to the many forgeries of such pieces—which were typically commissioned to recognize and honor a saint's miraculous intercession on one's behalf—we are not sure if it is authentic or a replica, but it remains, nevertheless, one of our favorite pieces.

These tin anatomical ex votos were found at a Neapolitan flea market. You still see them adorning the shrines of many a saint in southern Italy. They are left as offerings at shrines either to request or commemorate a miraculous intercession. Sometimes they are meant literally—i.e. the lungs might represent lung cancer or asthma—but they are sometimes also used metaphorically. In the words of Liza Young, who did some research on one of these pieces for a class in her museum studies program, “a leg may represent an injury or a request for safe travel. Eyes may create a connection between the living and the dead (not unlike darshan). Internal organs, on the other hand, tend to relate directly to a literal illness.”



Cat Shoe Maker's Sign

Late 19th century

From the collection of William Leroy

The 19th Century Puss in Boots sculpture was actually a cobbler sign. It was hung outside, his arms holding a placard with the name of the shoe maker. Its boots are made of real leather. It was bought in 1984 in France.

William "Billy" Leroy was born in Amiens, France and grew up in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He is the owner of forever closed, Billy's Antiques and Props, "last holdout of the old Bowery" on the Lower East Side of New York City.

Leroy is also an actor, stars in the movie "Dirty Old Town" and "Bourek", which will come out in Spring 2015. He currently appears in the Hit Reality Show "Baggage Battles".



"San Pascualito" Figure  
Guatemala  
Wood, paint and metal  
Circa 1930  
From the Richard Harris Art Collection

*San Pascualito is a folk saint venerated in Guatemala and parts of Mexico. Called "King of the Graveyard," his veneration is associated with the curing of disease. The veneration of San Pascualito is not approved by the Roman Catholic Church. (source: Wikipedia)*

This piece is an example of the breadth of my art collection, "Kunstkammer of Death." It was always my intention that my collection would not be a "Trophy Collection" of Masterpieces. I wanted the collection to contain ephemera, vernacular photos, videos, ethnographic objects and pieces of pop culture as well as the traditional forms of art such as paintings, prints/drawings, photos and sculptures. Incorporating all of these art forms would increase the comfort level of the collection's audience, from the art connoisseur to the general public. In addition the collection would become a visual Gateway to the further conversation of "Death."

I have tentatively called this section "Death through the Eyes of the Living." In addition to these examples of the cultural variety of death's iconography, there is another large section of the collection, "Death on Steroids" or "War," that includes pieces from the Civil War, WWI, WWII and the Iraq War. I ironically call this section "The Righteousness of War."

In all the history of art exhibitions based on the subject of "Death, I believe that my collection is unique in its visual representation of "Death."

Richard Harris grew up in New York and graduated from Queens College with a degree in Economics and a strong background in art history. He started his career path at an art reproductions business selling copies of old master paintings to businesses.

His introduction to antique prints began as he worked for two dealers who bought and sold botanical prints and prints with birds and animals. From there he went out on his own, confident in his ability to create his own collections. His story is best told in his own words: "I have accumulated over 1500 objects exploring the related themes of death and mortality."



#### Mater Dolorosa Statue

France

18th Century

From the collection of Laetitia Barber

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Virgin Mary's immaculate gown is sometimes traded for austere attire. Wrapped in grief and solitude after the Crucifixion, the mournful mother is known as "Mater Dolorosa," or "Our Lady of Sorrows."

I bought this Mater Dolorosa in 2010, in Marché Vernaison, as I was still living in Paris. This statue was arranged in the crowded vitrine of an antique shop, squeezed between erotic Netsuke, bronze devils and a tricorne hat.

I remember thinking: "Holy Mother, what are you doing in such eccentric company?" A merchant resembling a pirate informed me she was older than the French Revolution and was used for religious processions, parading the streets of some provincial city of France on her Feast Day. I don't know if that's true. Nevertheless, my heart was profoundly moved when I first saw her. Her Titian grace felt as if it had survived eons, and the benevolence of her arm gesture remained intact and powerful, even if some of her fingers were lost. The "Coup de Grace" was when I discovered the minuscule teeth hiding behind her tender smile. Judging by her garment, she was in mourning, but her presence gave me the impression she could transfix all the sadness in the world.

She's been in my collection ever since that day and followed me when I moved to New York.

Laetitia Barbier is the Head Librarian of Morbid Anatomy Library. A French independent scholar, she studied Art History in La Sorbonne University, Paris. Her work has been featured in *New Wave* (France), *Vice Magazine* (Germany) and *Atlas Obscura*. She lives in New York since 2012.



*[ Please note: photo of these candlesticks have not been included due to wishes of collectors; Instead, we include here this trade label of Rowland Ward, the taxidermist who prepared the pieces. ]*

#### Zoomorphic Candlesticks

Preserved Baboon forearms, bronze, and ebonized wood. 14 inches high by 6 ½ inches (diameter of base).

Stamped, "Rowland Ward Limited, 166 Piccadilly."

Rowland Ward, London

Circa. 1900

From an anonymous collection

The words "political correctness" did not exist in 1900 and conservation of the natural world was in its infancy. Animals and their various parts were used not only as a food source but also as items of personal adornment and interior decoration. Rowland Ward, who descended from a renowned family of taxidermists, founded a business that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries. His studio was patronized by international sportsmen and the various heads of Europe's royal houses. One department of Rowland Ward Limited was responsible for creating novelty "animal" furniture which included horse hoof inkwells, zebra-legged lamps and candlesticks such as these.

In America, a revival of interest in all things Victorian flourished from the 1970's for a generation. This pair of anonymous collectors embraced that revival and found themselves quite at home in the era. The Victorians had the broadest possible interest in the natural world as its exploration exploded. A particular aspect of these interests was the appetite for the exotic and the whimsical which is represented in these candlesticks. The collection from which these pieces are drawn is expansive and contains examples illustrative of most aspects of the decorative arts of the era from the simply amusing to the sublime.





Danse Macabre, or "Dance of Death" Figurines  
 Terracotta  
 German, mid-19th century  
 From the Richard Harris Art Collection

*The Danse Macabre (aka the Dance of Death, Danza Mababra, danza della morte, or Totentanz, depending on your nationality), originated during the years of the bubonic plague (a.k.a. the black death), and was intended to remind one that death would soon be coming for us, be we king, pope or commoner. The theme was explored in forms as diverse as poetry, visual arts (see above) and music.*

These pieces are examples of the breadth of my art collection, "Kunstkammer of Death." It was always my intention that my collection would not be a "Trophy Collection" of Masterpieces. I wanted the collection to contain ephemera, vernacular photos, videos, ethnographic objects and pieces of pop culture as well as the traditional forms of art such as paintings, prints/drawings, photos and sculptures. Incorporating all of these art forms would increase the comfort level of the collection's audience, from the art connoisseur to the general public. In addition the collection would become a visual Gateway to the further conversation of "Death."

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Images left to right, top to bottom:

Death and the Young Woman; Death and the King; Death and the Abbess; Death and the Grocer.



Richard Harris grew up in New York and graduated from Queens College with a degree in Economics and a strong background in art history. He started his career path at an art reproductions business selling copies of old master paintings to businesses. His introduction to antique prints began as he worked for two dealers who bought and sold botanical prints and prints with birds and animals. From there he went out on his own, confident in his ability to create his own collections. His story is best told in his own words: "I have accumulated over 1500 objects exploring the related themes of death and mortality."



Weimar Erotic Ephemera  
1920s and 30s  
From the collection of Mel Gordon

Between 1920 and 1933, the city fathers promoted Berlin as a primary destination for sex-tourism. That and erotic entertainment was one of the municipality's chief sources of income. It all came to a close with the Nazi coupe. Berlin's fabled sex industry not only physically vanished, all remnants of it disappeared or were destroyed in the Nazi cleansing and Allied carpet-bombing that followed.

Twenty years ago, I began to collect rare Weimar erotica from German antiquarian stores and from families of American tourists. I even managed to purchase a stack of items from the notorious transvestite nightclub, Eldorado, from a seller in Cleveland. Her grandmother had honeymooned in Berlin and saved the naughtiest brochures for a scrapbook.

In the end, I found nearly a thousand Weimar print ephemera. I thought of it as an archaeological investigation of lost Jazz-Age Europe.

Mel Gordon is the author of *Erik Jan Hanussen: Hitler's Jewish Clairvoyant*, *Grand Guignol: Theatre of Fear and Terror*, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin*, and many other books. *Voluptuous Panic* was the first in-depth and illustrated book on the topic of erotic Weimar; The lavish tome was praised by academics and inspired the establishment of eight neo-Weimar nightclubs as well as the Dresden Dolls and a Marilyn Manson album. Now, Mel Gordon is completing a companion volume for Feral House Press, entitled *Horizontal Collaboration: The Erotic World of Paris, 1920-1946*. He also teaches directing, acting, and history of theater at University of California at Berkeley. He is also on the board of advisors for The Morbid Anatomy Museum.





The Witches' Cove  
Follower of Jan Mandijn  
16th Century  
Oil on panel  
From the collection of Jennifer Butkevich

It has monsters and grotesques and dancing kitties. What else do you need?

It takes me to a fantasy world of another time. It makes you fantasize about what people were thinking back in the 16th century. Its very much a fantasy land. For some people, that might be a nightmare, but for me, its a dream world.

Jennifer Butkevich is a Houston, Texas based collector. She is also a founding member of the Morbid Anatomy Museum and serves on its board of directors.





Two-headed kitten in a Belljar

19th Century

Prepared by Victorian famed anthropomorphic taxidermist Walter Potter, England

From the collection of Carol Holzner

I first became aware of the existence of Walter Potter when I was shopping in a vintage store in Chicago in the mid 1980's and came across several old postcards that caught my eye, "The Kitten's Wedding" and "The Kitten's Tea Party" from Museum of Walter Potter, Arundel, UK. I bought the cards and shared with my friends, Jim and Debbie Gallo. Surviving on our own, without an internet or a computer of any kind, together we researched as much as we could about this museum in Arundel, and at some point Jim and Debbie flew to England and journeyed to Arundel, only to find that the museum had moved to another city. Many years later, the internet arrived and our knowledge increased until the day we saw the announcement of the sale of the museum, much to our great distress and horror. While trying to think of ways to come up with GB 3 million to buy the museum, I found myself short several million dollars. So, I bid at the auction via Bonham's. When I was subsequently informed that my bid for the two-headed kitten in a dome had been successful, I have yet to overcome my shock and awe of not only owning a piece of Walter Potter, but the incredibly strange places and people it has taken me. Thank you.

A native of Illinois, Carol Holzner has lived in Chicago since 1981. Her husband, Ron Holzner, is the bass god of doom metal. They were married three years ago at the Roadburn Festival in Tilburg, Holland on the day the Icelandic volcano blew up and stopped all air travel in the Western Hemisphere for over a week. She and Ron live with their two cats, Sparkey and Kahuna, when they are not traveling to Europe, Africa or DeKalb.

Carol studied Art History at Northern Illinois University. Her interest in old, abandoned taxidermy began in the early 1980's during her years as a member of the Black Pyramid Family and she has now succumbed to life in her *Mansione de Stuffidermy*, a house of several hundred pieces of taxidermy and host to many over the years, from Nirvana to Joanna Ebenstein. Her blog "The Unnaturalist" gives one a peek into her various interests in collecting, which has a wide range far beyond vintage taxidermy, with a massive collection of antique books on the exploration of Africa in 1700-1800's, Victorian clothes, unusual art, and specimens to name only a few. As a true collector, she is always thinking of ways to finance an extra addition to the the *Mansione de Stuffidermy*. She is borderline Divine crazy cat lady and Hoarder Exotique. Feel free to send money.



Top image: Antique postcard from Potter's Museum of the two-headed kitten. Bottom image: Photo by Chris Bradley



*Physica Sacra*, 1730s

First Edition, 5-Volume leather bound first edition once belonging to the prime minister of Denmark, Ove Høegh-Guldberg (1731-1808), with 762 plates on cosmography, paleontology, zoology, botany, and anatomy

From the collection of Tracy Hurley Martin

We were at the beginning stages of planning the Morbid Anatomy Museum when I was made aware of the availability of a copy of Johannes Jacob Scheuchzer's early 18th Century *Kuper-Bibel* (*Copper Bible*), more commonly known as the *Physica Sacra*. An ambitious compendium of art, mysticism, religion and science, it overflows with beautiful copper engravings and Biblical commentary all designed to illustrate, explicate and even to justify divine revelation and the bible itself in natural-scientific terms. It was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

*Physica Sacra* was described by MAM's own Joanna Ebenstein as follows: "I don't think I have ever seen a more elegant expression of these ideas than the content and illustrations of this book, which blends Bible commentary with natural history in a bombastic interest of the known world of its time..." So perhaps more than any other document, these volumes seemed to represent and encapsulate the mission of The Morbid Anatomy Museum as the place for the study of the arcane and the actual.

I'm very pleased to make these editions available to MAM for this special Collector's Cabinet exhibition for all to explore, appreciate and enjoy.

Tracy Hurley Martin is a co-founder of the Morbid Anatomy Museum, and the chair of its board of directors. She lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband, Vince Clarke, co-founder of Depeche Mode, Yaz and Erasure, and their son Oscar.

Image: Homo ex Humo ('man from the ground', or 'dust'), plate from *Physica Sacra*



Memento Mori  
European  
17th or 18th century  
Wax, textile, metal  
From the collection of Evan Michelson

This rare, striking little wax sculpture is typical of both the Southern Italian and Southern German tradition of exquisitely modeled wax miniatures depicting cadavers in various states of decay. In Germany, such highly-detailed figures were often produced by nuns as meditative objects. In Italy, the famous ceroplast Gaetano Giulio Zumbo (1656 - 1701) produced elaborate, miniature dioramas detailing human death, disease and suffering, utilizing corpses very much like this example. Every detail, from the shredded clothing, looping intestines, exposed bone, and rotted skin to the tiny parasitic creatures (and even the toenails), is painstakingly, lovingly rendered.

Such putrescent cadavers made their first graphic appearance in the 14th century (that catastrophic era of the European Black Death), and their popularity (in art and as life-sized, stone funerary monuments) continued to grow straight through the 16th century. They are stark reminders of death: "As You Are Now, So Once Was I/ As I Am Now, Soon You Shall Be" is a popular epitaph that rather pithily expresses the notion that Life is transitory and that Death awaits us all. These transi images (specifically, a depiction of a corpse inhabited by worms) are also a type of Vanitas - a reminder that material, earthly things (no matter how vital or beautiful) are fleeting and meaningless. Transi figures like this one are central to the tradition of the Danse Macabre: a sardonic spectacle (most commonly seen in paintings and engravings) that warns us all, kings and commoners alike, of our grim, unavoidable, earthly fate.

Evan Michelson is an antiques dealer, collector, and co-owner of New York's Obscura Antiques. She is also the co-star of TV's long-running series "Oddities." She has held the position of Scholar-in-Residence at Morbid Anatomy since its inception, and is a founding board member. Evan lives with her husband and assorted creatures in a listing Victorian filled with wax ladies, tragic taxidermy and the hair of countless antique strangers. She is also a writer and lecturer who obsessively traces the evolution of ephemeral, aesthetic philosophical constructs. To what end it is not yet known.



Exploded adolescent skeleton prepared and mounted by Ryan Matthew Cohn  
Prepared by (and from the collection of) Ryan Mathew Cohn

A Beauchene Skull, also known as an exploded skull, is a disarticulated human skull that has been painstakingly reassembled on a stand with jointed, movable supports that allows for the moving and studying of the skull as a whole or each piece individually. The first examples of Exploded skulls date back to the mid-19th century but were originally introduced by Leonardo Da Vinci in his anatomical drawings.

Though I have created many examples of exploded skulls over the years, I thought it would be an artistic challenge to explode a full or partial human skeleton. The idea was influenced by the only known example which resides in the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington DC. The skeleton I chose to articulate is that of a male adolescent 10-12 years of age. Each bone was prepared and articulated with brass armatures to create the full structure. The biggest challenge in creating this piece was emulating the look and structure of the exploded skull but as a full/partial skeleton. I chose to focus on the upper torso and skull.

Ryan Mathews Cohn a collector and purveyor of natural history, medical, and scientific antiquities. His interests led to his artistic renditions of osteological preparation for schools, M.D's, and private collectors. His works can be seen on [www.ryanmatthewcohn.com](http://www.ryanmatthewcohn.com) as well as the television show Oddities on "The Science Channel".

Photo: Courtesy of Sergio Royzen.



Do Spirits Return?

The Otis Lithograph Company

Circa 1922

Window Card size lithograph

From the collection of Rory Feldman's Wonder Show Museum

When asked to name a great magician, the first name to come to most people's minds is Harry Houdini. But within the magic community lives the story of the true legend, Howard Thurston (1869-1936). Although Houdini emerged in his last years with only one attempt at a full evening show of magic, exposé of mediums and escapes; he should be best remembered as an escape artist and a flamboyant showman. In contrast, Thurston was a performer so great, that a magic historian once summed up the distinction between Thurston and Houdini by saying, "Houdini has to go out and do all sorts of wild escapes and stunts to hold a crowd; and Thurston can do it by just walking on stage." Howard Thurston was the greatest magician and showman of his time. His Wonder Show of the Universe was a prestigious theater extravaganza that toured America – and was anticipated as much as Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth. Thurston would amaze audience members right before their eyes, with a 30-member troupe of dancers and assistants. They traveled by an eight-car train filled with more than 40 tons of illusions, scenery, animals, costumes, and they stunned audiences with a two-hour performance twice a day overflowing with music, humor, color, and the stunning impact of a master magician. Inspired by a performance of the great magician Alexander Herrmann (1844-1896), Thurston began performing sleight-of-hand acts in the street, which turned into a career, playing the biggest theaters all over the world. Then in 1908, Harry Kellar, the most famous magician of his time (1849-1922) passed "the mantle of magic" to Thurston when he retired. One of the only illusions that Thurston kept from the Kellar show was the famous Spirit Cabinet illusion. As Thurston described in a program for the illusion, "We are closer than ever to the mysteries of existence... Thurston will produce psychical manifestation of spirits as presented by him before societies of psychical research and innumerable investigators of spirit phenomena. You will not fail to be convinced." Thurston answered the question "Do Spirits Return?" nightly for his audience.

Rory Feldman is the Founder and Executive Director of the Museum of Magic, a not-for-profit educational organization. He is an internationally acclaimed magician, magic collector, and historian. He is the owner of the world's largest collection on magician Howard Thurston, containing over 50,000 items. Feldman, along with items from his collection have appeared in over 100 publications including the New York Times, as well as on PBS, A&E, and the History Channel. He is considered to be the authoritative voice on Thurston.