

on display have been borrowed from the American Museum of Natural History, which indicates the important role of collections in the exhibition. Though the incorporation of separate collections in the context of 'sexology' may shed new light on the objects displayed, in most instances their use in the exhibition merely reiterates extant knowledge rather than generating new meaning. For example, the objects are largely placed within an area of the exhibit that relates directly to their most common characteristics – e.g. the Tent room for ethnographic collections.

Specimens of Kinsey's research in the U.S. in the first decades of the twentieth-century are joined in the Classroom by various other media. Part-documentary and part-filmic group portrait, Sharon Hayes's 38-minute film *Ricerche: Three* (2013) showcases the attitudes of a group of female students towards issues of gender and their bodies (figure 3). Projected in large-scale format, the dialogue of the students being questioned by Hayes pervades the exhibition. Whether this was intentional or not, the voices of young women alternating between impassioned debate over the contemporary politics of gender equality, race and sexual orientation punctuates the viewer's experience of the historical materials displayed in the other areas. This aural dynamic has immediate feminist implications, as the voices of women mediate visitors' experience of objects that have played an historic role in policing categories of gender. The palpable presence of antagonism and debate also serves as a reminder that politics plays as much of a role in sexual practices and research conducted around them as personal preference or individual research.

In the last room, the Archive, visitors are invited to contribute to the work of

the sexologists by registering their own experiences and continuing the debate about sexual practices, orientations and the effects these conversations have upon contemporary political and social issues. The rich programme of events and interventions in the space suggests that the exhibition does have the potential to provoke debate and participation.

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'Disobedient Objects', Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 26 July 2014 – 1 February 2015. Catalogue: Eds. Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon, V&A Publishing, London, 2014, 144 pages, paperback, ISBN 9781851777976, £19.99.

'Disobedient Objects' at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) collects together various activist ephemera from 1970–present, defined by curators Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon as the material remainders of social movements. Objects range from tear-gas masks made using empty water bottles during recent Occupy movements, to playful, even absurdist inflatable cobblestones used in the Berlin-Kreuzberg May Day protest in 2012. The exhibition considers how everyday objects have been appropriated and adapted for protest, most typically in urban spaces during political demonstrations. In addition, the curators asked what the relocation of disobedient objects to the institutional gallery space would mean in a context that frequently reflects nostalgically on the past or affirms the status quo rather than contests it.

Diagrams spread throughout the show, also free to download online, give instructions for making clandestine urban stencil kits and tear-gas masks. Many objects are accompanied by two texts – one curatorial and one maker’s statement. Curatorial decisions of this nature are intended to dissociate objects in the exhibition from what the curators describe as an ‘outdated modernist framework,’ associating the museum with the mausoleum. Rather than treating the exhibition space as a site of classification and canonization, objects are conceptualized as being incomplete and unfinished. In Flood and Grindon’s view, the spurious fetishization of items can all too frequently conform to commodity circulations outlined by Karl Marx: ‘Money-Commodity-Money’. The curators, however, are more interested in objects less likely to move so fluidly from producer to market, falling more inline with what they name: ‘Movement-Object-Movement’. Disobedient objects are therefore also those conventionally ignored by exhibitions dealing with political engagement, most likely because of their negative relationship to the political economy.

Many exhibitions in recent times have dealt with protest posters and graphics, as noted in the extensive accompanying publication. Though no examples are outlined, one might look to certain forgotten exhibition histories including, ‘Committed to Print: Social and Political Themes in Recent American Printed Art’ at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1988. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) affiliated groups such as Gran Fury, Little Elvis, and Wave Three criticized the exhibition for its failure to include AIDS-based issues or designs at a moment when the epidemic was at its height in the city. Prejudices towards queer

culture, and the neoliberal restructuring of urban space – culminating most prominently under the Mayor Rudolph Giuliani zoning policies after 1993 – forced many alternative and creative communities to the peripheries of the city.

The politics of neoliberalism – an ideological apparatus preserving the rights of money over social equality via deregulated markets and state dismantling – are inevitably a concern for ‘Disobedient Objects’. Cultural institutions in the UK and elsewhere are currently run as public/private partnerships. The V&A’s website encourages potential sponsors to utilize its brand to improve corporate marketing and public relations initiatives. The democratic character of the public or cultural sphere in this scenario appears under threat, as cooperatively owned assets are taken ownership of by the private wealth of individuals and corporations. In the context of the now much-discussed ‘creative industries,’ expression and innovation are marketized, and thus subject to market demands. In the institution, curatorial decisions are made with visitor number targets in mind, and are thus more likely to fit with current trends rather than break new or controversial ground. A prominent example of this is Damien Hirst’s mid-career retrospective at the Tate Modern during the London 2012 Olympics. Hirst’s trite confrontations of life and death are enough to (still) appear cutting-edge to tabloid mentalities, whilst simultaneously being sufficient to displace politics for emollient profanation and limit critical thinking; for example, in relation to the rather more toxic and widely criticized Tate/British Petroleum partnership.

Conversations and debates regarding representational crises of cultural institutions

are ongoing and much contested. For certain curators, critics, and politically-engaged artists, commitment to social knowledge production can and must outweigh contradictions implicit to the public institution being increasingly in the grip of private money. The presence of disobedient objects in a design museum is not simply or straightforwardly antagonistic towards institutional profiles, but, for the curators, 'with and for' the circulation of information beyond current remits or conservative mandates. A careful methodological approach to curating the 'Disobedient Objects' exhibition thus achieves a great deal at a moment when public and civic rights are being suppressed by a tenacious establishment led by a failing ideology. If we – perhaps a little grandiosely – consider that curatorial practice might be likened to governmentality as a social duty of care and provision, then part of this exhibition's achievement is its inclusion of constituencies usually overlooked, ignored or exempt.

At the same time, the diversity of objects also means that it is a little difficult to discern any clear ideological or political affinity. For example, the presence of various defaced currencies makes categorization to traditional binaries of left and right difficult. A Libyan banknote bearing an iconoclast Muammar Gaddafi after his demise does suggest revolution. However, in a territory marred by political, economic, and religious disagreement, both the intentionality and the political agency of the object are less obvious. Coins stamped RIRA (Real Irish Republican Army) also refuse a straightforward non-violent protest narrative, a troubled and unclear history involving an impassioned call to nationalist unity and an often aggressive political conservatism.

What is clear from the collection of objects is a common refusal to submit to political limitations. Anti-state ephemera is also worth considering as a kind of contemporary anti-state apparatus, meaning that an object's proper contextualization might lead to a narrative concerning the campaign to retake freedom and expression in the context of civil restrictions rather than state legitimacy *per se*. It is on this affective level that the more discursive objectives of disobedience become most clear. If cultural institutions remain charged with social knowledge production despite regrettable contradictions in the neoliberal economy, 'Disobedient Objects' reminds us both that design and political art needn't orientate itself completely to the market, and that a material, pluralistic, and diverse democracy is a commodity worth fighting for.

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Marcus Coates, *UR . . . A Practical Guide to Unconscious Reasoning, Book Works and Create London, London, 2014, 288 pages, paperback, ISBN 9781906012618, £12.00*

For over a decade, Marcus Coates' fascination with wildlife has been reflected in what the artist calls his 'becoming animal' works, and in socially-engaged performances where the artist utilizes these 'becoming' skills to assume the role of the shaman. In these latter works Coates travels to the 'lower world', encountering animals in search of answers to dilemmas facing various communities. In *UR . . . A Practical Guide to Unconscious Reasoning*