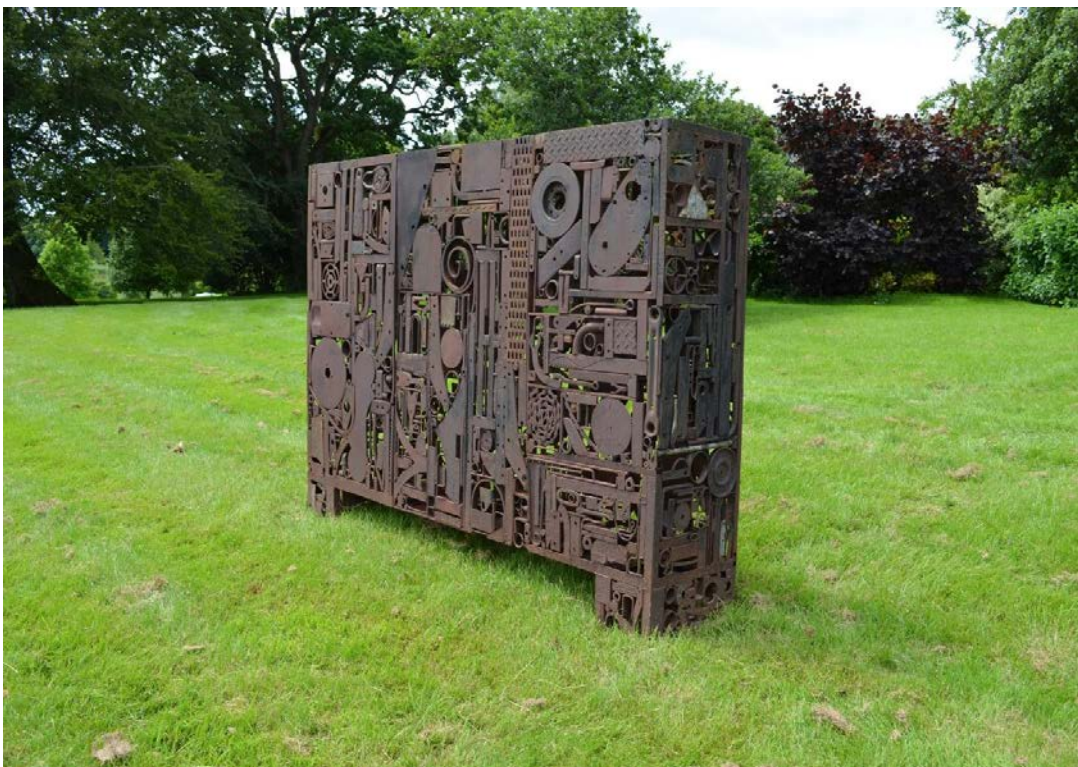


The Roche Court Educational Trust  
Learning Resources for Home and School

Precious Junk



Paul Roberts-Holmes, 'Quaba-La', 1997, © the artist and courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park

**Quaba-La** is a sculpture made of found fragments of agricultural machinery and domestic tools. Roberts-Holmes collected worn out, discarded pieces of iron and steel, no longer fit for their intended function, and transformed them into sculpture. He carefully placed them in an intricate grid, each part touching the next, and welded them together.

*Art term: '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. (tate.org.uk)

Roberts-Holmes chose everyday, functional, overlooked objects. By selecting them for his art, he gave them a new context and a new value. All of these rusty objects have had a past life. They have been used by a human hand and they have a story. Each fragment retains its histories and memories whilst simultaneously being reinvented as part of a new form with new meaning and purpose.

The title, *Quaba-La*, refers to an ancient religion also known as 'Kabbalah' which is based in a branch of early Judaism. This school of thought explains the relationship between eternal, infinite things, and the mortal, finite, man made world. Roberts-Holmes might have been referring to these ideas in choosing to make a permanent, revered artwork from disintegrating objects that were once junk.

#### **About the artist**

Paul Roberts-Holmes (1964-2001) studied at Roehampton and The Royal Academy Schools. He had an exhibition at the New Art Centre in 1993 called 'Wanderings'.

Two years after making *Quaba-La*, he made three very similar works for Dorset County Museum called *Mithras*, *Herne* and *Epona* - a Bronze Age axe head, a Roman amphora and a Norman font, suggesting an interest in history, time and archaeology.



## Experience, explore, imagine

### Treasure Baskets

**Make your own treasure baskets by selecting groups of everyday objects for children to explore.** Particularly suitable for Early Years, SEND and younger children.

**Adults could choose objects with a variety of weights, textures and materials.**

You might select a basket of metallic objects, alongside a selection of fabrics, wrapping papers, or perhaps objects of a particular colour. Natural materials are good for giving sensory feedback. Think carefully about including toys for this activity as they can be leading or limiting.

**Collect them in baskets, bags, boxes.**

**Allow children to explore the objects independently in the first instance.**



### Treasure Hunt

**Older children can select their own objects for a basket, bowl or any container - go on a treasure hunt around your house or garden!**

**How many different metal objects can you find?**

**How many natural objects can you find? e.g. stones, shells, things made of wood.**

**Choose your own categories and challenges e.g. find 10 tiny things, find 5 things with moving parts, red things, blue things, noisy things, things with holes in... What else?**

**How will you arrange and curate your collections?**

*Art term: 'curate'.* To curate, means to select, organise, present and look after a collection or exhibition.

Investigate and make  
Precious junk collections



**Create your own museums of found objects and use them as inspiration for your own artworks!**

Suitable for all ages.

**In a tin, box, jar or envelope, select items for your own mini museum collection.**

Museums are filled with precious objects. They are places where humans make meaning and tell stories using objects and fragments of material culture.

**Choose items that not traditionally be considered to hold value - things which might usually be overlooked.**

**Look carefully in your garden, down the back of the sofa, in the back of junk drawers or cupboards, in pencil pots or anywhere else things easily get lost.**

Collecting things is a human desire. Many artists make their work using found objects as a key material, whilst others collect found objects as their creative inspiration. Henry Moore, for example, was well known for collecting sticks, stones and shells on his walks, and displaying them in his studio to inspire his sculptures.

**Spend time looking closely at your objects. Everything can be interesting if you look at it very closely!**

**What do you notice? Think about why you were drawn to different items.**

**Curate and arrange your items** - lay them out so they tessellate together, like Paul Roberts-Holmes'.

If you have lots of one type of object e.g. pebbles or coins, try arranging them by different qualities they have such as by colour or size.

'Cabinets of Curiosities' or 'Wunderkammer' were the earliest kind of museums and contained interesting objects of all kinds. They weren't arranged like a modern museum, but instead objects were displayed aesthetically, grouped by categories such as type, size, material or colour, rather than age or origin.

**Think about how to display your objects in ways that make them seem even more important. Could you make a frame, a plinth or a cabinet?**

**Take photos of your arrangements, make drawings, and take notes.**

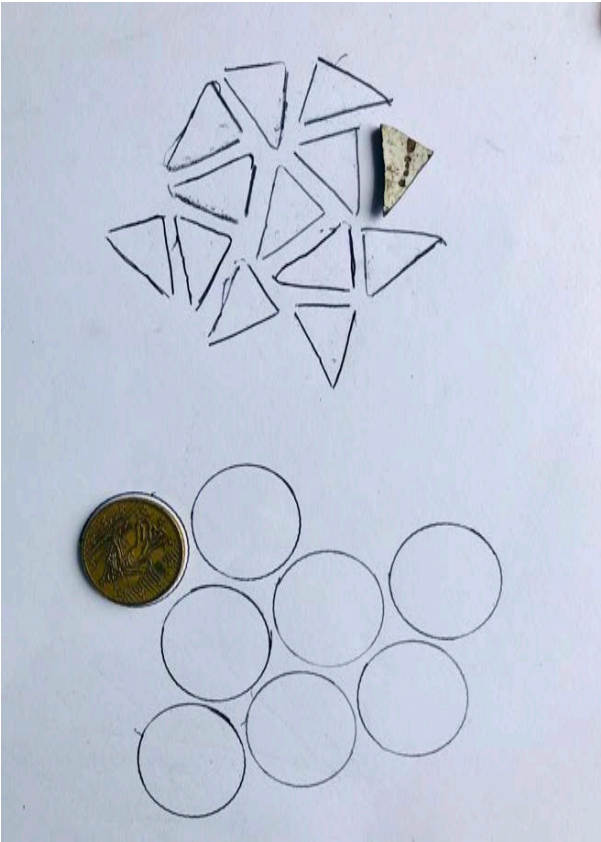
**Now use your collections to inspire your own art!**

**Use chalk, charcoal, crayon, graphite or the side of your pencil to take rubbings.**

**Draw around your objects to create tessellating, jigsaw patterns.**

Cut out their shapes and create a collage.

What will you make next? Why not use your collections to make your own junk sculpture!





**Develop further:** Topology is the study of the properties of objects. It is very much linked to curation. We create order and curate objects all the time in our daily lives, from choosing our clothes to laying the table. For older children, teenagers and adults wishing to develop their ideas further, we recommend this resource from [@artpedagogy](#) on Instagram inviting you to collect, observe and record your collections:

**“Produce a typological study - look a little closer at everyday objects that might populate our lives, lofts, cupboards, closets... How might these be selected and recorded objectively through drawing, painting, photography... and then shared for scrutiny and comparison?”** Click [here](#) for more.

## Develop and describe

### Storytelling: how do you define treasure?

Archaeologists could be considered real-life treasure hunters. Archaeology uncovers the history of everyday stories, based on fragments of physical objects. Tiny, old, broken, dirty or rusty things dug up from the earth, which might initially not look like much at all, contain important clues and memories. Museums give these objects meaning by sharing their stories and displaying them in a way which makes them precious.

**Select the most overlooked, unassuming object in your precious junk collection. Perhaps it is something ‘boring’, damaged or dirty?**

**Can you tell its story? Where has it been, who has held it and what has it been used for?**

**What has it seen, heard, felt or smelled?**

**If you can't be certain - make up a story!**

**You might like to write it down (as a story or as a diary) or tell the story to a friend or family member out loud.**

**If your object was displayed in a museum, what would you write on the label?**

**Whisper to your object - tell it the reasons you chose it for your collection, and explain why it is interesting, after all.**

## Reading, listening, watching

See further Paul Roberts-Holmes artworks on display at Dorset County Hospital via Art UK:

<https://www.artuk.org/discover/artists/roberts-holmes-paul-19642001>

If you enjoyed these activities, try reading, 'How To Be An Explorer of the World' by Keri Smith:

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/181050/how-to-be-an-explorer-of-the-world/9780241953884.html>

or follow her on Instagram for inspiration during the coronavirus pandemic [@explorationoftheday](https://www.instagram.com/explorationoftheday)

If you are interested in art and archaeology, read an article about Mark Dion's 1999 Tate Thames Dig and listen to him speaking about it - <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dion-tate-thames-dig-t07669/digging-thames-mark-dion>

Share your creations with us on Instagram:

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