

The Museum of the Extraordinary Ordinary

The item I have chosen to display in an imaginary museum are my glasses (see fig 1). This item would be featured in The Museum of the Extraordinary Ordinary, a museum which features mundane, everyday items and urges its audience to consider the deeper significance of such ordinary objects. I was prescribed glasses at the age of seven to correct a severe degree of myopia, commonly known as short-sightedness, and they have ever since become one of few constants in my day-to-day life. The very first and last thing I do every day is to put on and take off my glasses. My vision beyond approximately four inches becomes blurred, so I am dependent on my glasses to do most things.

Despite my dependence on them, my feelings towards my glasses have changed throughout my life. As a young girl, I despised having to wear them. They were socially considered an unattractive attribute, with connotations of being nerdy and uncool. As the years passed, they became further cemented as a significant aspect of my identity. Social attitudes towards glasses have also changed, impacting my own feelings about them. People who wear glasses are often perceived as more intelligent, dependable, and honest (Mahdawi, 2018). Research suggests there may actually be a correlation between intelligence and genes which indicate poor eyesight (Mahdawi, 2018).

Within my imaginary museum, my glasses would be displayed amongst other inventions which have changed the way we live yet are commonly unappreciated and taken for granted. Other items included in the exhibition would be a key and lock, which provide

safety and security, without which none of our other possessions would be safe from theft. Also exhibited on display are rolls of toilet paper, an important invention, before which items such as seashells, stones, or a sponge on a stick were historically used to fulfill its function (Ponti, 2020). Toilet paper is considered such an essential item that the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 caused many people to panic buy and stockpile toilet paper (Mao, 2020). Another item on display would be a pair of scissors contained in plastic packaging, to highlight the irony and necessity that scissors are required to open the packaging. These are just a few objects which represent everyday items so mundane they would not typically be considered to have much meaningful significance, yet if they suddenly ceased to exist it would cause many problems and a great inconvenience in our day to day lives. Such an exhibit would hopefully cause its audience to reflect on what objects are important to them, and enable them to see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Each of these items would be displayed on podiums of equal size and illuminated with a single overhanging light. No individual item would be highlighted over another, representing how these items are of similar importance. The display of the items would be similar to that of those displayed in The Museum of Broken Relationships located in Zagreb, Croatia, a museum which displays donated items of personal and sentimental significance (see fig 2). Each item displayed in the museum represents a failed relationship between two people, and features an accompanying anonymous description written by the donor. Each item is one which holds little significance to the casual observer, but represents an emotional memory to the donor. For this reason, the

items are showcased in such a way which indicates equal significance and importance. Such a set-up does not influence which pieces the audience are drawn to, so they are free to experience their own journey when exploring the exhibition.

The website for The Museum of Broken Relationships states its sole purpose to be “treasuring and sharing your heartbreak stories and symbolic possessions. It is a museum about you, about us, about the ways we love and lose” (Museum of Broken Relationships, no date). For this reason, the intended audience for this museum is very general. It is intended for anyone who has loved and lost, for anyone who has experienced personal relationships. In short, it is intended for absolutely anyone, and its intention is to elicit emotions and discussions surrounding human relationships. It urges its audience to consider what physical things are important, valuable, and meaningful to us. It is for this reason I drew inspiration when considering my imaginary museum, and when deciding on an object of significance to me.

The items in my museum would feature an accompanying label written by various individuals detailing a personal story featuring the item displayed. This would help to highlight the significance of items we typically do not often think about or consider to be momentous objects. The display for my glasses would feature the following label:

“It was 1998 when I was first prescribed glasses at the age of 7. The day I got my first pair of glasses was so significant and life-changing that I still remember it clearly decades later. I had previously assumed that everyone saw the world the same way I

did. I did not consider my vision to be blurry, as I had no alternative reference for comparison. In fact, I was insistent that I did not need glasses, because in my mind I knew I could see perfectly well. Suddenly, my vision was much clearer, and I realized that everyone else had been able to see that way the whole time. It was a monumental realization to process. It highlights how, no matter how certain we may feel that our perception of something is the only possible perception, it is always a possibility that things are not as they appear.”

References

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Images

Figure 01



Figure 02

<https://traveledearth.com/2012/09/26/the-museum-of-broken-relationships/>

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