



When do objects become historic? At what point are objects worthy of care? And why collect modern objects? Institutionally and individually, these are questions that the Museum's collections staff contend with each day. Here is our process for answering these questions when considering modern objects.



**Cypress drum created by Thomas Storm Sr. Note the use of modern materials in the construction of the drum, including plastic webbing and nylon cords. (courtesy photo)**

When do objects become historic? This first question is more philosophically difficult as there is no right or wrong answer! For some, the answer lies in a certain number of years past the point of the object's creation, such as twenty or fifty years. This lengthy period of time allows for historical perspective to shape the importance of the object. For others, the answer becomes wrapped around when the object becomes historically relevant. As many objects are tied to events, these objects could become historically relevant immediately following the event (i.e.: a fragment from the Berlin Wall during its destruction).

After a consensus has been reached on the object's importance, the question becomes: when do objects become worthy of care? Objects become worthy of care when they are deemed important, which is a value judgement that can come from many passionate discussions about the object. The degree of importance that one person places on an object may be more or less than what another would place upon it. In that case, it becomes important to understand the intrinsic value of an object from a historic perspective.

So why collect modern objects? Simply put, modern objects will become historic either through a temporal or association measurement. By collecting objects that commemorate events as they happen, the Museum is able to record the Tribe's history as it happens. And in collecting modern objects that will become temporally important, the Museum views the Tribe's history through a much longer lens.

Recent acquisitions of modern objects include three T-shirts commemorating events held on different reservations and drum created by Thomas Storm, Sr. Even though they are modern, caring for these objects can be quite tricky, so it is important to factor all of these things in when making decisions on collecting objects for the Museum.

Important voices in this decision process are Tribal Members. I sat down with Quenton Cypress to



discuss this topic. He is the THPO's Community Engagement Coordinator and sits on the Museum's Acquisition Committee. To him, collecting modern objects helps demonstrate the larger historical growth and prosperity of the Tribe. When asked about the different event T-shirts, he said that "they are events we can have because the Tribe has modernized and adapted to the times. It shows our ability to adapt, persevere, and overcome the restrictions placed on us after many years of being moved around into different areas deemed unlivable."



**One of the three newly acquired T-shirts, commemorating Halloween. (Courtesy photo)**

Our discussion continued in regards the modernization of the Tribe. Quenton believes that the Tribe's adaptability - the modern government, gaming, and different departments - allows for Seminole culture to continue evolving. This includes exploring and expanding art in to areas such as comic book and graphic novel art and modern art on used objects, such as Wilson Bower's skateboards.

Of the objects recently acquired, the saturated colors of the dyes in two of the T-shirts would be adversely affected by extended light exposure and will therefore remain in the vault and away from direct light. The T-shirts' deep hues are still more likely to fade, even with the modern colorfast dyes. While the museum may display these textiles in the future, like all textiles, they will not be displayed for an extended period of time to prevent any further light damage.

Like the T-shirts, the modern drum will be displayed infrequently. The drum has small cracks and fractures throughout the wooden body and the drumhead is taut but not supple. Even in the museum's controlled environment, cracking of the drum body could continue to occur while on display. Therefore, it will remain in custom housing in the vault to prevent and/or slow further cracking to the body of the drum.

All of these items are less than 20 years old, but nonetheless document important moments in the Tribe's recent history. They have been deemed important and worthy of care by the Tribe and therefore by the Museum. My job as a conservator is to facilitate both of those processes, and ensure that these objects are around for many years to come. If you would like to see 'conservation in action', the Museum laboratory is open for observation. Come see how we care for the ever-present

past. Please call me at 863-902-1113 x 12220 or just stop by.

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