



# annotation



The majority of art students experience a range of emotional and sensory responses to the collections. They find that objects have the power to trigger a chain of associations and feelings. Sketchbooks can function as a repository in which these fleeting feelings are caught and reflected upon. This section shows some of the ways in which sketchbooks can be used as a creative diary, not only recording object data but also thoughts and ideas generated from discussion with friends.



# annotating your sketchbook

Annotation may consist of:

## Observations

This is the factual, contextual information about the object you have drawn.

- Make notes about the object around your sketch. Try to include:
- Where it comes from
  - Who used it or made it
  - Its size
  - What it's made from
  - What it was used for

## Experience and ideas

This is where you record your personal response to the object. How does it make you feel? What does it remind you of? What were you thinking as you made your drawing?

You can record your response to the object in lots of different ways:

## observation + images

- Collect images from the internet or magazines and stick them in your sketchbook

## observation + conversation

- Have a conversation with other people in your group. How do they feel about the object you have chosen?

## observation + object analysis

- Brainstorm ideas (spider diagrams, mind maps)

## observation + imagination

- Use your imagination: try using your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing) to imagine what it would be like to use the object, or imagine what it was like in the place where it was used.

Head ornament  
how would you wear it?  
tie it on?

blue and red macaw feathers  
more than 40 feathers

from Peru  
Upper Santiago river

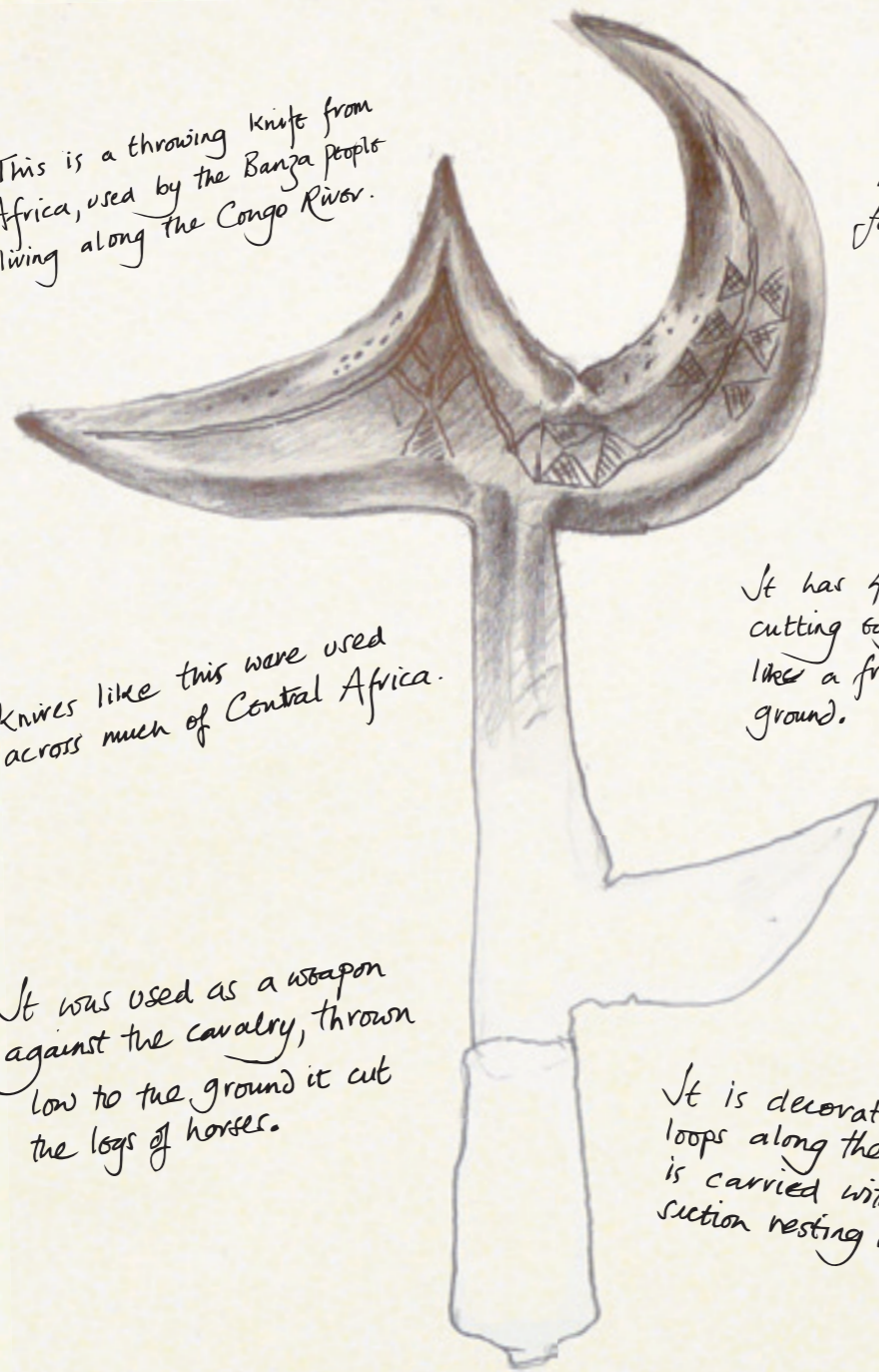
one label says Jivaro tribe

mounted on foam

observation + images



This is a throwing knife from Africa, used by the Banza people living along the Congo River.



In some parts of Africa it is used in place of money for buying goods.

Knives like this were used across much of Central Africa.

It has 4 spurs or sharp cutting edges. It was thrown like a frisbee low to the ground.

It was used as a weapon against the cavalry, thrown low to the ground it cut the legs of horses.

It is decorated with copper loops along the handle and is carried with the square section resting on the shoulder.

We had a conversation about the knife, it went like this:



Adrian says:

I feel the lighting and the mood is theatrical, with the roof and the environment up here. I don't like it... they're very violent these weapons... vicious and cruel.

Looks like it was used to hit someone over the head - I'd hate that (to do that or have it done to me). It's a throwing knife from Africa.

Makes me think of kids with knives.

Difficult to draw, the light keeps changing on it. The engraving isn't that clear, I had to look closely.

I prefer the pencil: it has a sharp, cruel, pointed look. If I drew it again I'd make it exaggerated to look more pointed, more vicious.

I can't imagine who would carry it. I see it as part of a violent culture, where life is cheap.

Andy says:



It reminds me of an agricultural tool, something you'd use to cut wheat or chop your chives! I'm not sure I'd choose it as a weapon, it seems silly. It gives me a comic book image. I can imagine making this with tin foil and cardboard.

Melody says:

It doesn't feel like an object that was designed to be used. The edges seem thin. It isn't as scary as some of the other weapons around here, ones that look like they've been made just to hurt people.





these are all  
barkcloth  
- made from the  
wides of trees  
in tropical areas  
- they wet the fibres  
and mash them  
together - like  
making felt.

from  
Taveuni Island  
in Fiji ↙



barkcloth  
is used - for wall decorations  
- bedding  
- clothing  
- making masks

The dots are  
folded over -  
can't see how  
big they really  
are.

Here is a conversation we had about the barkcloth:



Melody says:

I felt very cosy sitting here, it feels warm, the textures... safe, comfortable.

It's difficult to see the detail. At first I thought it would be easy - shapes, colours, geometric - but there are lots of diagonal lines that connect, so I had to think about the whole thing. Hard to get my head round it.

By looking I can see it's painted over the top, not woven. Who made it? By themselves? Did they lay it out and do the whole thing in one go? What about the bits you can't see? Does it change?

I like the black and white best - it's striking, intricate, distinctive. The one in the middle, with the curl, made me think of ferns in New Zealand, even though it's from Nicaragua (does that shape mean something to people there too?)

Thinking about the material of the object. Is it ceremonial, daily wear, or matting or decoration in a domestic setting? It couldn't be very comfortable to wear clothes made out of this (too itchy and rigid), so I guess it wouldn't be used for every-day clothes.



Adrian says:

This place is the cosy corner of the Museum. The cloths remind me of Joseph Beuys, a German artist whose plane went down in Russia and he was found by local tribes and wrapped up in felt and lard. Now his work has things covered in felt.

I think of a room that would have a lot of this hanging up - very homely. The cloths are preferable to more ornate, stiff textiles - they're straightforward and honest. It feels cocooned and safe.

I like the way they're layered in the case... you see a little bit of one, then a little bit of another.

Fabric isn't displayed like this in a shop, but I wish that it was. It makes it easier to compare the way they've been made and look at the decoration, the similarities and the differences.

Andy says:



observation + conversation



Papua New Guinea



It might be an ancestor, or a supernatural being

Used once, then thrown away

worn with a costume

Used in ceremonies

you can see a frame at the back

reminds me of papier maché

Construction

made of barkcloth. What is it?

it looks awkward to wear

who chose the design?

Design

worn by men in secret!

no eye holes - do you look through the mouth?

I can imagine it worn at night by fire-light

Use

sometimes the eyes seem to follow me around

performance art?

Artists

reminds me of Picasso and Matisse

Artist as Shaman? worn by special people. Is this like Joseph Beuys?



observation + object analysis



These vases come from:  
 The Aegean (Island of Lesbos)      Nagaland (India)

They were used for holding water and/or wine.



Ondurman (where is this??)      Spain?

**sound**  
 glug, glug, glug  
 I can imagine the Aegean pot, full of wine, at a big family lunch... sounds of cutlery, chatting, glasses clinking, children, clapping, music

**smell**  
 smell of food, lemons, pine-trees on the wind.  
 do they smell dusty or smelly - old wine?

**taste**  
 would you want to drink from them now?  
 wine, bread, olives, tomatoes

**the Senses**

**feel**  
 the patterns - bumpy + ridged  
 one of the pots is so smooth - I think the person who made it must have gone over it again + again, smoothing away all the bumps.

**sight**  
 all of these pots would have been used in someone's house - it's hard to imagine when they're lined up in the museum case like this.

observation + imagination



# acknowledgements

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**Page 12:** Two masks from the museum's teaching collection.

**Page 13:** Indian textile made from a recycled sari (2002.40.3).

**Page 15:** Clockwise from top left: black capped kingfisher (copyright Oxford University Museum of Natural History), Asian fairy bird (copyright Oxford University Museum of Natural History), woman dancing by qinn.anya, photo available from [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) under a creative commons attribution and share-alike licence, black gold white brown by dryfish, photo available from [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) under a creative commons attribution licence, Hoopoe (copyright Oxford University Museum of Natural History), male peacock with feathers full strut by respres, photo available from [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) under a creative commons attribution licence, rainbow lory (copyright Oxford University Museum of Natural History), pearled puple eyeshadow with feather lashes by dreamglow, photo available from [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) under a creative commons attribution licence.

**Page 21:** Mask. Papua New Guinea (1906.74.1). Andaman islands and Australia (1884.33.52, 1884.60.20-21, 1898.75.60-61).