



BUTLER GALLERY

Our Stories Through Objects

Butler Gallery in collaboration with the Fr. McGrath Family Resource Centre and Kilkenny Adult Learning Service, part of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board, present a project in which people who have migrated or had to seek refugee status in Ireland tell their stories through personal objects. We all have items that are precious to us, some can be extraordinary in nature, others very ordinary. Yet whatever the nature of the object, they all have the power to hold memories of place, of people, of events that happened in our lives. We hope the stories linked to the objects you see in this exhibition prompt reflection about what it means to leave the place you called 'home' and create new lives in other places.

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Samuel Morgan and Theresa Delahunty, Fr McGrath Family Resource Centre

Helen Walsh, Carmel Bryan and Betty Weeden, Kilkenny Adult Learning Service

Freddie Greenall, photographer

Denise Mbala, Democratic Republic of Congo

Object: National Dress

These clothes are very important for African women. When an African woman dresses in these particular clothes, she feels a great lady. She is very elegant & pretty. During the celebration of the customary marriage, the bride dresses in these clothes and is really graceful. In my country, during the customary marriage, we ask for some of these special clothes for the mothers who gave birth to the ladies, we also ask for money, cola nuts, wine, beer etc.

The wedding is very important and great because it is a family marriage. The guests and family dress in similar clothes. After the registry marriage, we have a church wedding. So, in fact, an African woman has three ceremonies. After the ceremony, a celebratory meal is held with African food & drink. This dress is also worn for International Women's Day, the 8th March in DRC.



Esther Nasser Samuel, South Sudan

Object: *Bibii* (in Mundu language) *Ititii* (in Avokaya language) and *Lugaya* (in simple Juba Arabic)

Bibii are used for carrying things on the head or shoulders. I would like my daughter who was born here in Ireland and the other who was brought into the country as a baby to get to know how we used to carry things while we were in South Sudan and how to make the *Bibii*, usually from leaves and grass. Up to the present day people in Africa, especially in villages, still use it as it's the only means of transporting goods.



Anna Lesniak, Poland

Object: Photo of my parents

This is a beautiful photo that means the world to me. It is a photo of my parents, who have sadly passed away. The picture was taken on their wedding day. My father was wearing a wonderful black suit and my mother was wearing a lovely white dress. They are extremely happy. It was taken in some sort of forest, they were married for 45 years. When I'm feeling sad and miss them, I take out this photo and remember the beautiful memories we had together. When I was young, I often spoke with my mom about their wedding day, they got married after 3 months of knowing each other, so they were very much in love. Looking back I now realise that they had a very happy life together, it was hard with young children and not much money but I always felt very loved. Now, I see that they gave me the confidence to do what I want with my life. Part of the sadness is that my son doesn't remember the great people they were and they don't see the happy life I have with my husband and son, here in Ireland.



Asta Bruisyte – Karpiene, Lithuania

Object: Cross Stitch Picture

I love history, this cross-stitch picture has historical meaning for me. Between 1940 and 1952, the Soviet Union started to exile Lithuanian people to Siberia, especially professionals, teachers, farmers, and writers. In Siberia, they worked very hard, didn't have proper clothes and many died from starvation. One Lithuanian woman found some pieces of clothing and from the threads, she made this cross-stitch picture. This lady died in Siberia, from starvation and her daughter had to stay there suffering for many years. Eventually, she got back to Lithuania and brought her mother's piece of cross-stitch back with her.

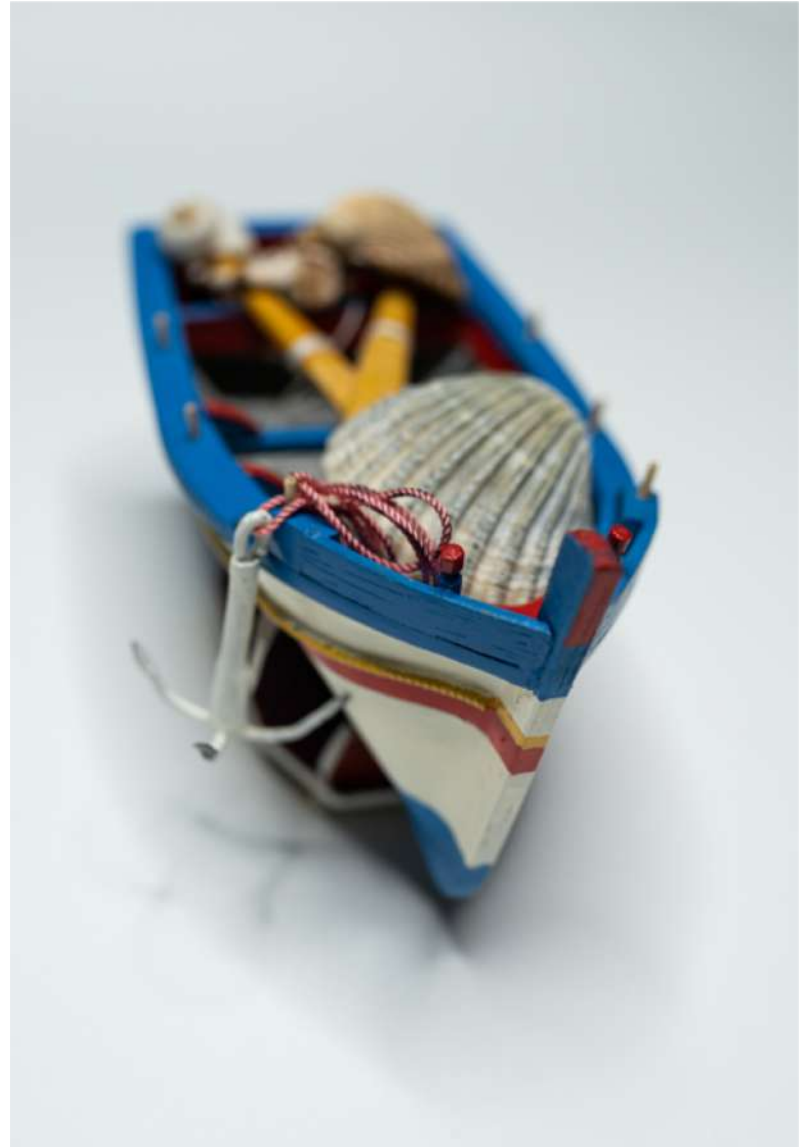
All the suffering and home sickness is in the cross-stitch. Imagine how difficult it must have been to make this without proper materials. My auntie made copies of the picture and gave me one, I treasure it because of the story behind it.



Francesca Graziano, Sicily, Italy

Object: A traditional model of a fishing boat

My object is a traditional model of a fishing boat. This small boat is a symbol of my Italian origin. I am from Sicily, a big island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Italy. My grandfather is from a small fishing village. He was a little boy during the Second World War. At that time, it was very hard to find food and the only way to survive was to fish. He was able to find food for himself and his family. His history teaches me to be strong and to always do your best to survive during the storm!



Hanan Himou Oqail, Morocco

Object: Moroccan Caftan

My Moroccan caftan is my traditional dress. It is very important to me to have it here with me in Ireland because it reminds me of my country and my traditions. I bring it with me everywhere. I can wear it in every ceremony – weddings, baptisms, religious festivals. It is a long tunic with long sleeves worn with a belt (mdama). I wore my caftan at my wedding. I celebrated with my whole family with love and happiness. In Morocco, there are seven styles of seven regions.



Anita Kleysa, Poland

Object: Family Photo

This is a picture of my sisters and me, one older and one younger. It was taken about three years ago and it holds a lot of memories of our entire lives. When we were small we didn't always get on and to this day we still fight occasionally! This picture was taken at our oldest sister's birthday, we had a lot of fun, we talked about our childhood and our parents who have passed. My sisters live close to each other in Poland and I have been living here in Ireland for 10 years and I miss them in everyday life. We often call each other to catch up but it's not the same as meeting face to face. When I visit Poland, I see them every day. When we meet there are so many happy tears. I hope to see them this year.



Latifa Taoussi, Morocco

Object: Bangles

I want to talk about my mother's bangles that she gave me before she died. She told me they had high value for her and I must keep them and after give them to my daughters. The bangles were a symbol of happiness for her when she wore them – she always wore one but when there were big occasions she wore all 5 – like the weddings of my sisters and brothers, new-borns in the family, birthdays, engagements. I love these bangles because they are the most precious memory of my mother who left her country and family to come to live with me in Italy and helped me a lot in raising my children. I love these bangles because every time I see them I remember the most amazing person in my life and the best moments I spent with her. That is why I will look after them forever.



Toshie Ooue, Japan

Object: Box for Acupuncture needles

My father was an acupuncturist. He was also an acupuncture teacher. He had a cheerful personality and was respected by others. He used to perform acupuncture on a lot of people every day. When he went out, he carried needles in a box. It's called HARIBAKO (the box for needles.) Then he could do acupuncture anytime, anywhere, for people and for himself. He always took it with him when he visited our relatives who lived far away. My uncles always looked forward to receiving his treatment. There were large, medium and small boxes. These are the medium and small ones. There is a compartment to keep unused needles in, a place to stick the needles during the treatment. and a compartment with a lid containing cotton soaked with antiseptic solution. He loved reading too much. He lost his eyesight due to retinal detachment at the age of 16 because of overreading books. At that time, the Japanese government recommended and assisted blind people to become acupuncturists and masseurs as a way to get a job.

He gave up his literary path and chose the acupuncture path. However, he continued to write Japanese poems called Haiku. He had a Haiku about acupuncture, too.

"鍼を打つ手に響きあり初仕事"

(I felt good sensations and vibrations with the hand when I did the acupuncture in my first job this year)

You can see that he enjoyed the job. He was working until two years before he died at the age of 83. When he was 80, he told us that he was happy that his acupuncture had improved again. This little metal box followed my father's path. And I also follow the path he went through.



Kenya Collins, Brazil

Object: Diamond engagement ring

In 1973 this beautiful engagement ring was purchased at O'Connors Jewellery Shop on High Street in Kilkenny. This jewel represents a love story which started some 50 years ago.

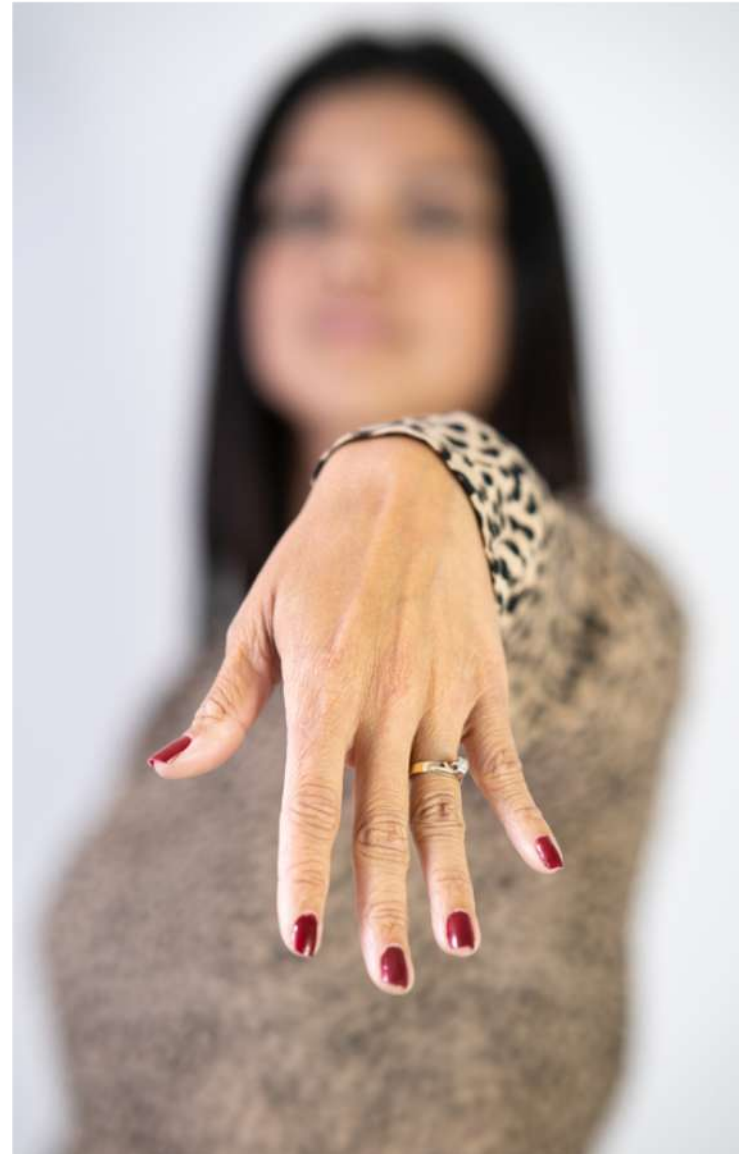
It was bought by a young man named Tom who had fallen in love with a sweet and charming girl called Alma, who at the time was 16 years old.

With its ample shape and radiant diamond, the ring has travelled various places over the years and been present at many happy moments, most notably their wedding day of August 30st, 1975 at St. Patricks Church in Kilkenny.

In 2020, some 45 years later, the ring was passed as an heirloom by Alma to a young Brazilian woman who was to become the wife of the eldest son of the couple. On receiving the ring, she proceeded to return to the same shop in Kilkenny where it was originally bought and had it resized and polished so that it may continue on its journey with her and when the time comes, may be passed on to future generations.

'My name is Kenya, I was born in Belém do Pará, in the north of Brazil and I was living in Rio de Janeiro when I met my Irish husband-to-be in 2017.

In 2020 we got married in Rio during the global pandemic. The ceremony was unique. We were on lockdown and could only have the best man and one bridesmaid present at the registry office. The families and friends from both sides, dressed in their full wedding attire tuned-in via Zoom. It was unconventional, but a fantastic and memorable day.'



Yesim Seker, Turkey

Object: Tea glass and coffee cup from Istanbul

I brought the glass and coffee cup to Ireland because they make me think of Istanbul. We make Turkish tea in different colours, different strengths, dark and light, so we need to see the tea in the glass. Most Turkish people take their coffee strong and black. All Turkish families have tea glasses and coffee cups like this. It is our tradition. We drink tea all day in Turkey, maybe 5-6 times a day – with lemon and sugar. When I use my tea glass I think of drinking tea with my family in Turkey. We continue the tradition in Ireland.



Esther Nasser Samuel, South Sudan

Object: *Akindo* (in Mundu language); *Koi'bi* (in Avokaya language), *Mukshasa* (in simple Juba Arabic) and *broom* (in English).

Our traditional broom for sweeping rooms and veranda of huts in our village. It is obtained after threshing sorghum; then the bearer of the sorghum seeds; put together and tied with a piece of rope to secure it from scattering.

I would like my children to know some of the things we use back in South Sudan so that someday God willing; they may travel and find their hands on our rudimentary tools; and it must not be strange for them.

When I brought it after my visit in 2019, my little daughter who was born here grabbed it and bit it; thinking that it's edible fruit. I had to explain what it is and from what it was made and for what use.



Esther Nasser Samuel, South Sudan

Object: *Gbatu* (in Mundu language), *Mbiricha* (in Avokaya language) and *Loferega* (in simple Juba Arabic).

Our traditional multipurpose blender. I brought this object with me when I left my country in 1990. It's one of the artefacts to remind me and our children about our tools in South Sudan. I have to demonstrate to my daughters how to handle and use it correctly when preparing our special sauces.

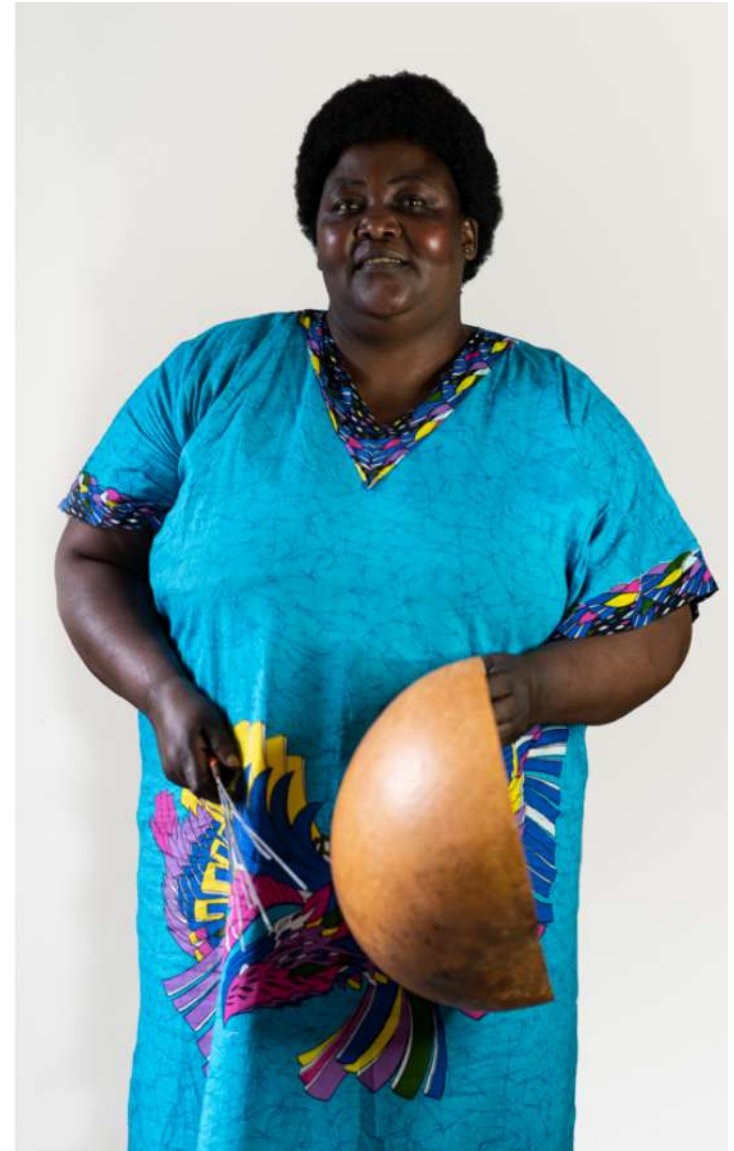


Veronica Akello, South Sudan

Mrs Akello is playing a musical instrument called an '*Awal*' used by the Acholi tribe.

Object: *Awal* and *Chili*

The *awal* is a musical instrument used for a dance called larakara. The metallic object is called *chili* and is used to create sound by beating the awal up and down in a fast motion. In the past, this instrument was only played by males, however, in modern times a small group of women such as Mrs Akello learned how to play it.



Veronica Akello, South Sudan

Object: Gara

The gara is worn around the ankle during a dance. It is worn by women and produces sound as the women move their feet to the beat of a drum and awal.



Veronica Akello, South Sudan

Object: Gono

An accessory worn on the head of males during traditional dances of the Acholi tribe. Men would shake their heads to the beat of the drum and awal. The gono is made from bird feathers and moves as the men dance mimicking a bird.



Veronica Akello, South Sudan

Object: Bila

Bila is like a flute and is blown by men upon entering the dance floor during traditional Acholi dance. It is made from animal horn and is usually decorated with animal fur.



Veronica Akello, South Sudan

Object: Tiko

Tiko (dancing beads) are worn around the waist of women and young girls during dance performances.

