

SHARDS OF WISDOM

“Heard it Through the Grapevine”



Tired of collecting? Hey, there is a cure for that problem.

Observations by Ralph Finch

Hey, when you spend your days sitting in your late mother-in-law's bathrobe looking at the computer at various auction houses, that can happen. In fact, yesterday, courtesy of LiveAuctioneers, I noticed that I was presented with 450,000 items being offered that day! And after two hours, I had barely scratched the list.

Thanks to the Internet, the collecting world is getting smaller—and bigger—at the same time.

Three days ago, Janet was upstairs on her computer bidding on a large marble plant stand in Brussels, while I was downstairs on our smartphone bidding on a large, green, pontiled demijohn offered by a South Carolina auction house.

Janet stopped bidding after she couldn't locate a Brussels shipper willing to send it over to Michigan. I was the high bidder, and the great piece of green glass soon arrived, doubled-boxed at a price that pretty much matched the cost of the demijohn.

But back to the problem. It's easy to get tired of the hobby when you are collecting Jared Spencer flasks, or cobalt bitters, or...the world's greatest collection of glass target balls. After that, no auction house or any garage sale in the world is likely going to have anything for you.

So switch to something easy and interesting that is right for you. How about...

Something from your home town? That won't work if you are from New York City unless you have a lot of money and own a warehouse.

If you are from Zeba, Michigan, and are one of the 480 people there, you might have a challenge finding souvenirs, even though the village goes back a while (Zeba was initially founded in 1831). On the day I checked, eBay offered zero items on Zeba.

For something small and fun, how about collecting things with your last name? Although again, this has flaws. If your last name is Smith, you may need the above-mentioned warehouse just to stash your ton of goodies.

With a name like “Finch,” an old name but so-so common, it's doable. I have a Ralph's Snuff, a Ralph's California Fruits box, a Ralph's Coffee, a “R Finch” barber bottle, and a large, framed print of a ketchup bottle done by an artist named Ralph (Goings) 1928-2016. But if you have a last name like Brzezinski (as in Mika?), it shouldn't take more than a few minutes.

Searching for a collectible with my middle name doesn't take much of my time. My middle name? Dundas. It's an old name with some historical ties but—not much. I did find a dryer vent maker in Canada by that name. (Ah, I'm familiar with hot air.)

I also noticed that “Dundas was a federal electoral district in Ontario that was represented in the House of Commons of Canada from 1867 to 1925.” Talk about sexy. One notch better: In 2006, Sotheby's offered “The Dundas Collection of Northwest Coast American Indian Art.”

With a name like Dundas, you come close, as a teenager, to have bullies say, “Hey, dumb ass.”

Greek Coreform Glass Alabastron

Submitted by Chris Hartz

The publication and exhibition history of this approximately 3½-inch-tall Classical Period Greek coreform glass alabastron helped drive interest in the Fifth Century BCE piece, which topped off at \$4,111 at LiveAuctioneers.



Greek Coreform Glass Alabastron

Lot description: A stunning core-formed glass alabastron comprised of deep sea blue glass with opaque tangerine yellow and cyan blue trailing combed into a feathered pattern that envelops the entirety of the ovoid body. The discoid mouth flares outwards as a slender band of tangerine glass encircles the rim. Finally, a pair of applied trail handles, each in an elegant loop finishes the upper body. A divine work of glass art to be treasured for its impeccable form, beautiful hues, and sophisticated technique. Size: 1.5” wide x 3.6” high (3.8 cm x 9.1 cm); 4.7” high (11.9 cm) on included custom stand.

The alabastron is a long-bodied vessel with a rounded bottom, a

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cylindrical neck, and a flat disk for a mouth. Though usually without handles, some alabastra have trailed handles like this example. According to the *Beazley Archive* of the University of Oxford, the alabastron shape's history extends back to Corinth, but was only preserved in Athenian pottery examples back to the mid-sixth century BCE. Alabastra were created in many materials, including alabaster, and the Greek term for this stone. Alabastron (most likely of Egyptian origin), was the source of inspiration for the name of this shaped vessel. Many examples were finished with a white ground, as if to imitate this stone. Others, like this example, were created from colorful glass. We know from vase painting imagery of women using alabastra following a bath, that these vessels most likely held perfumed oils.

According to the Corning Museum of Glass, core forming is “the technique of forming a vessel by winding or gathering molten glass around a core supported by a rod. After forming, the object is removed from the rod and annealed. After annealing, the core is removed by scraping.” This process of glassmaking was begun in the late 16th century BCE by glassmakers of Mesopotamia, and then adopted by Egyptian glassmakers in the 15th century BCE. The technique almost came to an end in the so-called Dark Ages of Mediterranean civilization (1200 to 900 BCE); however, by the 9th century BCE a new generation of glassmakers took up the technique once again, and between the 6th and 4th century BCE core-forming spread throughout the Mediterranean.

Exhibited in *Ancient Glass: Selections from the Richard Brockway Collection* at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University, Salem from March 10 to May 19, 2007 and *Glass of the Ancient World* at the Vero Beach Museum of Art, Florida from October 11 to December 28, 2008.

Published in *Ancient Glass: Selections from the Richard Brockway Collection*. Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University, Salem, 2007; *Glass of the Ancient World*. Vero Beach Museum of Art, Florida; and *Antiques & Art Around Florida*, Fall 2009 - Winter 2010. *Collecting Ancient Glass* by Richard Brockway with Lynette Macleod, pp. 27. Provenance: Private, Vero Beach, Florida, USA collection, acquired before 2003.

The next image is a pair of Andrew Clemens (American, 1857-1894) ‘Sweetheart’ Sand Bottles each dated 1883 and with name banners for Charles Bramar and Maggie Bramar. Height with stopper 8 ¾ inches. Height without stopper 7 ½ inches. Diameter 2 ½ inches. The lot sold for \$120,000 this past March by LiveAuctioneers. One bottle features a galloping horse to one side, above which hangs a name banner for Charles Bramar. The other side shows a clipper ship at sea, along with the date 1883. The second bottle is identified to Maggie Bramar and dated 1883, with an elaborate bouquet of flowers held in an urn on one side and a pair of yellow birds perched around their nest of eggs on the other.



Smithsonian posts 4.5 million historic images into public domain



We're used to museums and libraries releasing hundreds, if not thousands, of images into the public domain, but no other institution has made quite the same splash as the Smithsonian. The world's largest museum has added even more images from its collection to the public domain, totaling a whopping 4.5 million assets. Available on a platform called Smithsonian Open Access, anyone can download, reuse, and remix these images at any time—for free under the Creative Commons Zero (CC0) license.

The database pulls 2D and 3D images, as well as sound recordings and data sets, from the Smithsonian's 21 museums, nine research centers, libraries, archives, and the National Zoo. The new additions to the initial 2.8 million assets mark a continuing release of information that opens up a wide range of possibilities for creators. With over 155 million items across all of its collections, the Smithsonian is continually digitizing and adding to the platform. While they are making these resources available, the museum technically disclaims any liability that the asset might have copyright considerations elsewhere or as yet unknown. These efforts are reaching the public: in the last quarter of 2022, 25.7 million assets on the database were viewed by the public.

So what can you expect to find? A dive into the 3D records shows everything from CAD models of the Apollo 11 command module to Horatio Greenough's 1840 sculpture of George Washington. To facilitate that content for makers, the Smithsonian is also now on Sketchfab. Other notable pieces entering into the public domain include a portrait of Pocahontas in the National Portrait Gallery, an image of the 1903 Wright Flyer from the National Air and Space Museum, and boxing headgear worn by Muhammad Ali from the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

