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Art and the Tourist gaze. Three Discrete Categories of Souvenir: *Sampled, Crafted and Representative*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to establish a method by which one might categorise the objects and artefacts of tourism within contemporary art discourse and to demonstrate that tourist art is a unique expression of place and genuine artistic style.

In this paper I will expand upon the conventional "Sampled" and "Representative" binary classification of souvenirs and develop a new category of the "Crafted" souvenir. This will be achieved by first describing five souvenir attributes that are present, to some degree, in all souvenirs. They are:

- Medium,
- Maker's Mark,
- Relational
- Invitational
- Iconofetish.

I will illustrate these criteria graphically as axis points that assess the degree of presence or absence of each attribute in the three individual souvenir categories. I will then show the patterns in the language of souvenirs and the subtle variations in that language, demonstrating by example how the potential souvenir expression of all objects and artefacts may be assessed within this typology.

Biography

D L Hume is currently concluding his PhD in Art History and Theory at the Tasmanian School of Art. The title of his thesis is "Pebbles to Postcards: an investigation into the activity of tourist art, souvenirs and other artefacts of travel." in which he argues that tourist art really is art!

In 2000 he took a fledgling paper to the annual Australian Anthropological Society conference at the University of Western Australia. In 2002 he presented papers drawn from his research at the 9th Conference on Hunter and Gatherer Societies (Chags) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland and the Politics of World Heritage conference at the International Institute of Culture, Tourism and Development (IICTD), University of North London, England.

In the same year he also developed and curated "*Wunderkammer 02: a survey of tourist art, souvenirs and fine art from Tasmania and Tropical North Queensland* " For the Plimsoll Gallery, Tasmanian School of Art.

Between teaching duties at the Tasmanian School of Art, he has undertaken extensive field research in Central Australia, Far North Queensland, New South Wales and in his home State of Tasmania.

Art and the Tourist gaze.

Three Discrete Categories of Souvenir: *Sampled, Crafted and Representative*

The tourist gaze is characterised by fleeting experience, deviancy, and excessive consumption. Souvenirs are the material anchors of that experience. Susan Stewart categorises souvenirs as either *Sampled* objects or *Representative* artefacts.¹ *Sampled* souvenirs are souvenirs of individual experience that are not available as general consumer goods,² they are collected directly by the tourist, with no intervention or mediation by the host culture and often take the shape of sea shells or pebbles washed smooth by the tide, wild flowers dried and pressed or animal remains. This type of souvenir collecting finds its history in those collections of "Naturalia"³ gathered by the scientific company of early explorers and conforms to what Susan Pearce calls a "systematic mode of collection", in that the imperative was to relate the exotic samples to a known botanical system.⁴

For Stewart, the *Representative* category includes "souvenirs of exterior sights...which most often are representations and are purchasable."⁵ Here Stewart places all other souvenirs, objects that may properly be called artefacts, in that they are produced from human mediation and interpretation. This category embraces, on the one hand, postcards, wilderness posters and calendars, and on the other, crafted objects, such as Stewart's own example of a miniature basket⁶ and other crafted souvenirs, like clay pots, didgeridoos, boomerangs, and lathe-turned Huon pine trinkets. It is clear, from this range of souvenir artefacts, that there is the need to subdivide this category into the *Crafted* and the *Representative*.

Leaving in place Stewart's *Sample* grouping, the revised *Representative* category accounts for the mass production of souvenirs, made from non-native or generic media, such as postcards. These are distinct from *Crafted* artefacts, in that *Crafted* souvenirs are reliant upon endemic materials, local craft traditions and styles for their souvenir expression, and frequently retain some utilitarian reference.

This framework favours the artefact's operation as a souvenir, rather than the museogallery categories of ethnographic artefact or work of art. This is consistent with Pearce's pre-Romantic classification of collected objects as "Naturalia" and "Artificialia",⁷ from which it seems Stewart's categories are devised. My proposed typology therefore engages with the Romantic sensibilities of collecting, a period commensurate with the advent of contemporary tourism,⁸ during which, collecting took a "demotic turn"⁹.

The three categories, together with the fundamental attributes of all souvenirs, are expressed in ideal form in the following chart. The reasoning behind the division of souvenirs into three categories may be explored further through the scrutiny of their attributes that fall into five key expressive components, charted below.

Figure 1 showing categories of souvenirs, attributes and ideal examples

Category → Ideal example → Attribute ↓	Sampled	Crafted	Representative
	Sea shell	Signed Huon Pine Bowl	Landscape Postcard
Medium	Of the site unmediated	Of the site mediated	Unassociated Generic
Maker's Mark	Absent	Present	Dominant
Relational	Place	Place & People	Place and or People
Invitational	Open	Ajar	Closed
Iconofetish	Personal	Domestic	Public

In the above chart each attribute gauges a specific narrative component found in the expression of all souvenir objects and artefacts and is detailed as follows.

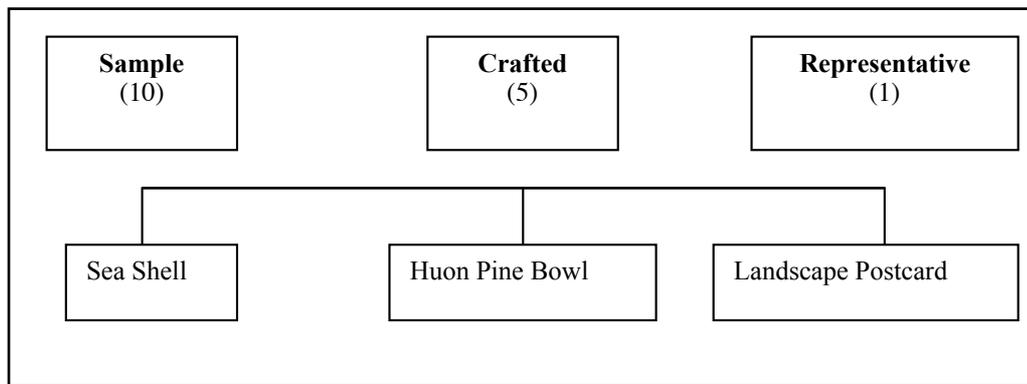
Medium

What is the importance of this feature in the object/artefact's activity as a souvenir?

The term 'Medium' is self-explanatory and refers to the raw and or mediated state of the material from which the artefact is made.

By isolating this 'Medium' axis it can be seen how the *Sampled* souvenir is produced of raw, natural material, collected from the visited site, without the intervention of the host culture. It is therefore reliant upon the tourist's recognition of its capacity to signify the experience of the site. On the other hand, the *Crafted* souvenir is, moreover, constituted from an endemic material, but, as shown, (Plate 1) is interpreted through the craft of the host culture. At the other end of the scale the *Representative* category carries no marker of the visited site in its medium (Plate 2).

The most important feature of the *Sampled* souvenir is its presence as a genuine sample or fragment of the experienced site. In the light of this, I have allotted a value scale from ten (10) to one (1) along this axis, beginning with the *Sampled* on the left at ten (10), which reflects the overriding importance of the medium in the *Sampled* souvenir. I have then plotted the *Crafted* group at the median point, with a value of five (5), recognising the raw materials' augmentation through craft and its contribution to the activity of the artefact as a souvenir. Then finally to the *Representative* category with a value of one (1), that is not dependent on an endemic medium to refer to the visited site.



This reverse scale of assessment from 10 to 1, beginning at the *Sampled* is not constant for every attribute. The only other axis in which it is found is the 'Invitational'. Other axes are rated from 1 to 10.

Makers mark

What level of human intervention has the object/artefact undergone and how important is it to its function as a souvenir?

The 'Maker's mark' axis refers to the authorship of the maker and measures the degree to which it is present in the souvenir. The sea shell is without a maker, other than the specifics of the environment from which it is collected, so is rated at one (1). The Huon pine bowl, like other minor species timber souvenirs, often carries the maker's mark on the underside. In this way the artist's authorship is present but not dominant and therefore, like most crafted souvenirs of that type, attracts a rating of five (5).

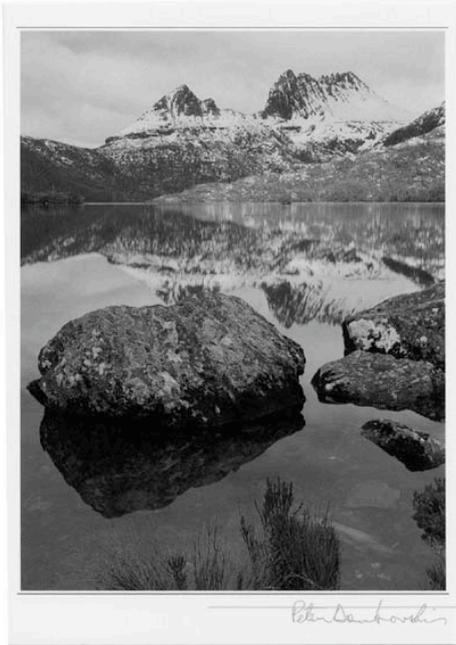
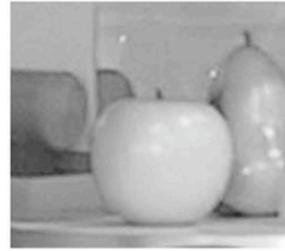
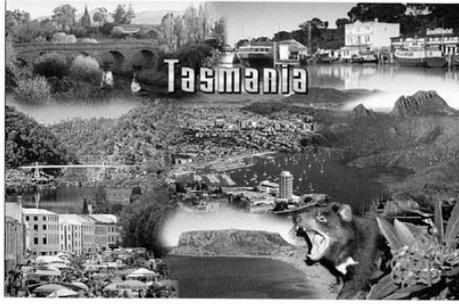


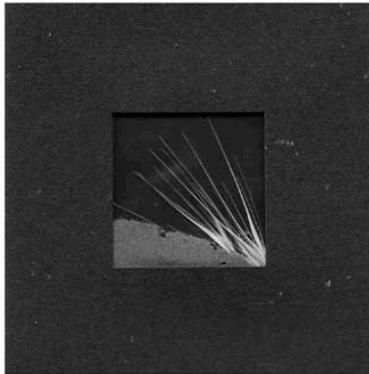
Plate 1 (below) Peter Meure, *Huon pine bowl*, undated, 27 cm.

Plate 2 (middle left) Peter Dombrovskis, *Cradle Mountain*, 2002, photographic greeting card, 19 x 13.5 cm.

Plate 3 (top left) Nu-colour-vu, *Views of Tasmania*, 2002, postcard, 12 x 17.5 cm.

Plate 4 (above) Ornamental Apple, undated, Huon pine, life size.

Plate 5 (below left) Magic Rabbit, *A little bit of the Outback*, 2003, postcard, Australian desert sand, Spinifex and Iron Stone, card and clear plastic, 11 x 11 cm.



The landscape postcard (Plate 2), like the work of art, most often features the photographer's signature in a prominent position and so is rated at ten (10). However, this is not the case with all postcards, as the more generic variety of postcards (Plate 3) are mostly without authorship. These would fall into the same sphere as the ubiquitous mass-produced mugs with national flags printed upon them, that are produced far away from the site they pertain to represent and attract a rating along this axis closer to the sea shell, as shown below. It is the rating of their other attributes that set them apart from the sea shell example.

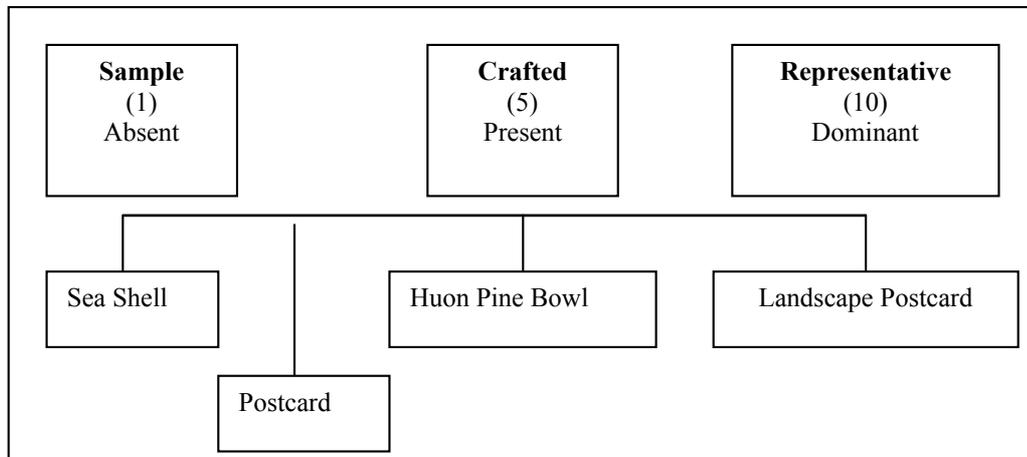


Figure 3. Maker's mark axis showing typical and atypical examples

Relational Axis

What does the object/artefact relate to?

The 'Relational' axis refers to the underlying motive behind the souvenir's collection. This axis defines the thematic base of the object or artefact, framed as a souvenir, and gauges the relationship between the tourist and the site. Some souvenirs relate the tourist's experience of the site alone, while others speak of the people that inhabit that site. This axis assesses that relationship, beginning with those souvenirs restricted to referencing place alone, rated one (1), then sliding along to those that relate to people and place, rated five (5) and finally people and or place, rated ten (10).

This axis addresses the feature or features of the visited site that are embedded in the souvenir. In the ideal examples, plotted below, it can be seen that the sea shell's reference is confined to the place of its collection. This is due to its raw nature, in that it has not been mediated by the people of that site, so is not invested with any cultural heritage and is reliant upon the collector for its meaning.

In contrast, the ideal *Crafted* souvenir always consists of a raw material extracted from the site and is mediated by the crafts-people of the site. This fixes the relational feature of this category of souvenirs, as one of people and place. These first two categories attract values of one (1) and five (5) respectively.

The 'Relational' axis is completed by the *Representative* category, to which I have allotted a value of ten (10). This category of souvenir is produced from generic media that is not drawn from the site and is typified by the landscape postcard. Unlike the *Sampled* group it is not restricted to referencing place alone, nor does it insist on a people and place reference, governed by media and craft. The *Representative* souvenir is the most flexible souvenir on this axis and has the capacity to relate to people and or place, due to its reliance on imagery alone.

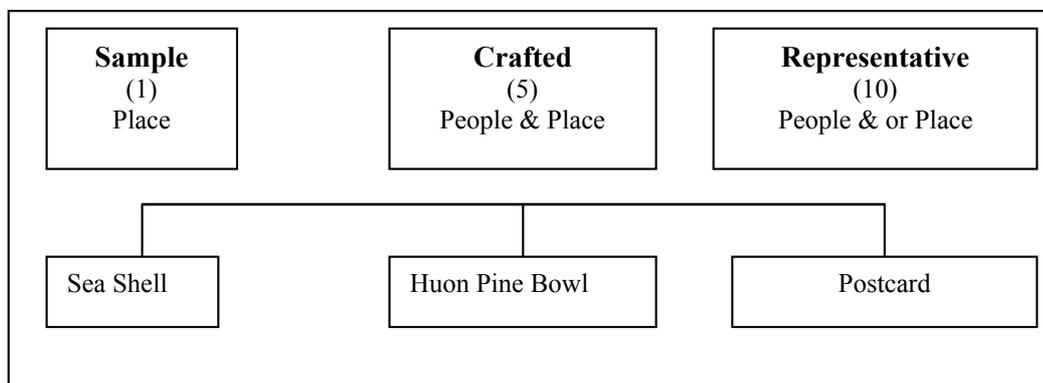


Figure 4. Relational Axis showing typical examples

Invitational Axis

What is the object/artefact's capacity to absorb the tourist's narrative?

This is the second of two reverse scales of assessment. The 'Invitational' axis refers to the souvenir's capacity to accept the collector's narrative of experience of the site. It takes into account the completeness of the souvenir's narrative, prior to collection by the tourist. For instance, the sea shell contains no anecdotal narrative of the site, so invites the collector to supply its meaning as a souvenir. The sea shell's souvenir narrative is therefore understood as open, its invitational qualities are high and it is allotted a value of ten (10). The crafted example, on the other hand, carries a value of five (5), because the maker has interpreted the raw material and a souvenir narrative is set in train. By retaining some utility in its form and being produced from a medium specific to the site, the crafted souvenir invites further enhancement of the narrative from the tourist, that builds upon that established by the maker, its invitationality may be understood as moderate and, like a door left ajar, is neither closed nor open. However, the ornamental crafted souvenir (Plate 4) is less invitational, due to its lack of utility and so is located closer to the *Representative* category as shown below.

The *Representative* group of souvenirs are, moreover, closed in their invitational capacity and are allotted a value of one (1), reflecting the completeness of their narrative. These souvenirs are clear in the site they represent, through the images of well-known features of the visited site. For instance, the postcard featuring views of Tasmania (Plate 3) is overtly labelled and is unequivocal about the site it represents. It is full and explicit in its testimony of people and or place and requires no augmentation from the collector. The same may be said of other postcards or printed matter, such as a postcard of Sydney Harbour, featuring the Harbour Bridge and Opera House. An image of Uluru also attracts the same value, as does a Dombrovskian postcard of Cradle Mountain (Plate 2), they leave the viewer in no doubt as to what the souvenir represents and do not insist on the collector to contribute to their narrative.

By contrasting the built-in fullness of the postcard's narrative to the exemplified sea shell, it can be seen that the sea shell's narrative is far from obvious and relies upon the collector's explanation. That is, the artefact does not indicate its site of collection in itself. In this respect the fullness of the narrative occurs post collection, through the expansive development of the fetishistic narrative, that is at the core of the tourists attraction to the object. For, the conventional fetish narrative is furtive, hidden and quiet, while the object itself may be invested with almost any meaning.

These sampled objects are, moreover, but not always, made of a material that is endemic to the site. China fragments are an anomalous example, in that the material may come from afar and is also crafted. However, the manner in which these souvenirs are collected, that is, as found objects, sees these fragments rest more toward the *Sampled* than the *Crafted* category, as shown below.

This degree of narrative completeness can be best tracked through the following diagram, in which the invitational capacity of souvenirs of various types may be plotted.

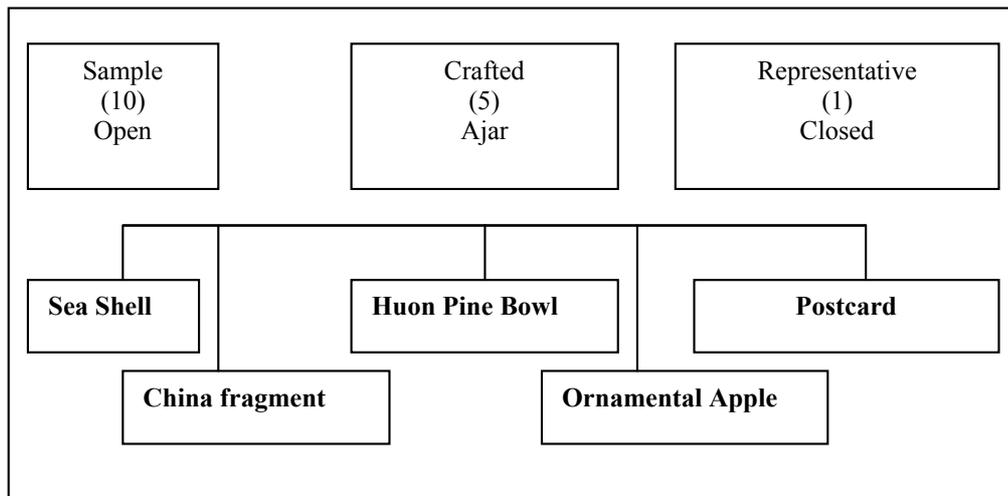


Figure 5. Invitational Axis showing typical and atypical example

Iconofetish Axis

Where does the inherent narrative of the object/artefact reside?

The last of the narrative components explores the 'Iconofetish' nature of the souvenir and is a further refinement of the souvenir's intrinsic narrative quality. This narrative feature calls for a reassessment of the notion that the conventional fetish narrative is closed, circular and may not develop.¹⁰ I am proposing that the initial attraction of the souvenir is fetishistic, in that it is a substitute part for the tourist's experience of the destination. That firstly, it satisfies the tourist's need to organise his or her emplacement within that space and then serves to sustain that experience through an irrational belief. For, like the fetish object, the primary role of the souvenir is to memorialise and placate a difficult memory. In this case the difficult memory is the end of the holiday period. Having discovered that the narrative quality of the fetish, embodied in the souvenir, is of a developmental nature, the 'Iconofetish' axis plots the development of this quality in each class of souvenir.

More precisely this attribute gauges the degree of 'largesse' to be found in the souvenir, that is, the iconographic reception of the artefact. This refers more clearly to the latent content of the narrative, while the 'Invitational' axis is concerned with the manner by which the narrative is progressed, this attribute discusses the sacred quality and value of the souvenir's features, as authorised or not, through the collective gaze.

This iconic status is most prevalent in the *Representative* group of souvenirs, especially the photographic type. Postcards almost always feature an iconic image, such as Sydney Harbour Bridge, Uluru or Cradle Mountain, which is due to their extremely high heritage value and untouchable status. To sample those sites, in the terms described by Stewart,¹¹ would be a sacrilegious act, although it does happen. Certain styles of *Representative* souvenir also tend to carry an iconographic feature that is less tangible. The Dombrovskian style landscape postcard (Plate 2) is one example, as too is Central Desert Dot Painting, in which the craft or style of image, rather than the image, is understood as typical and distinctive of the site.¹²

Following my reassessment of conventional theories of the fetish, I have discovered that when it is embodied in the souvenir, the fetish operates in a way that permits its leakage from the deeply personal and furtive sphere of collecting and display, into the domestic and then public space. The 'Iconofetishistic' axis plots and gauges the quality of this allure in the souvenir, it seeks to discover the fetishistic and or iconic appeal, inherent to some degree in the activity of all souvenir objects and artefacts and assesses it through the site of display.

There is nothing iconic about a sea shell gathered from the beach, unless it is a specific type that the site is recognised for, in which case the specific sea shell is likely to be found in the *Crafted* and *Representative* souvenir categories also. The red sand of the Central Australian Desert may be viewed in this way, as images of the Red Centre are an iconic image of Australia and, as shown (Plate 5), it can be ingeniously incorporated into the *Crafted* category. The *Crafted* souvenir often consists of iconic materials, like Huon pine, while the *Representative* souvenir

seeks authority in the imagery of the iconic site, for example the Tasmanian wilderness, or the specific built features of Sydney Harbour.¹³

Moreover, the iconic, in relation to the souvenir's narrative content, refers to the level of the public's broad reception of the artefacts. This can be gauged from the 'largesse' that is afforded the site of representation. The idea of 'largesse' runs contrary to the emptying of the aura that is attributed to Benjamin's thesis on mass-produced art, which rests, in the first instance, upon the artwork's dislocation from its ritual basis as a result of mechanical reproduction. This process, Benjamin argues, liberates the work from its ritual source and makes the work available to the masses, but in doing so it denigrates the aura of the original.¹⁴ However, for MacCannell, in his seminal study of tourism, the 'aura' of the artefact or object exists only in the reproduction. He insists that:

Society for its part, can only produce the importance, "reality" or "originality" of a work of art by piling up representations alongside.¹⁵

And continues on to argue that reflecting on the conditions of tourism:

Benjamin should have reversed his terms. The work becomes "authentic" only after the first copy of it is produced. The reproductions are the aura, and the ritual, far from being the point of origin, *derives* from the relationship between the original object and its socially constructed importance.¹⁶

In other words, society authorises the artefact, the aspiring artwork, as a work of art. It does this by constructing a framework that includes the modern secular rituals of authority, what I have termed 'largesse', through which the work is consumed as a sacred object or artefact. Conventionally this framework exists in the structures of the museogallery system and other institutions involved in the arts. That is, the site's notoriety or fame within the public perception, which, has much to do with the communal value afforded the site or object that the souvenir represents. This may be ascertained through the environment in which the artefact or object is curated and reflects the popularity of the site, or object, which, in turn, has the effect of distancing the tourist from the iconic feature, prohibits the collection of *Sampled* and *Crafted* souvenirs and promotes the production of *Representative* souvenirs. Souvenirs of iconic sites, events and objects may be discovered in each class of souvenir but the *Representative* category is the most favoured. By isolating this axis, as follows, it can be seen how the iconofetishistic features of our ideal souvenirs may be mapped.

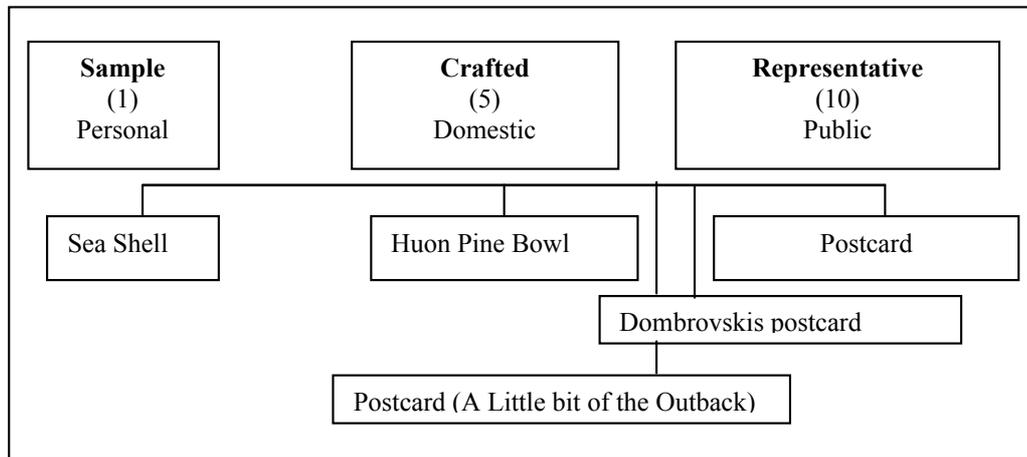
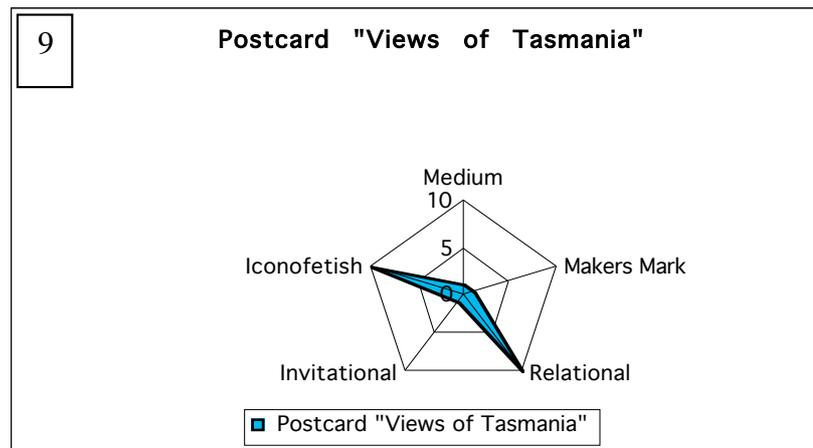
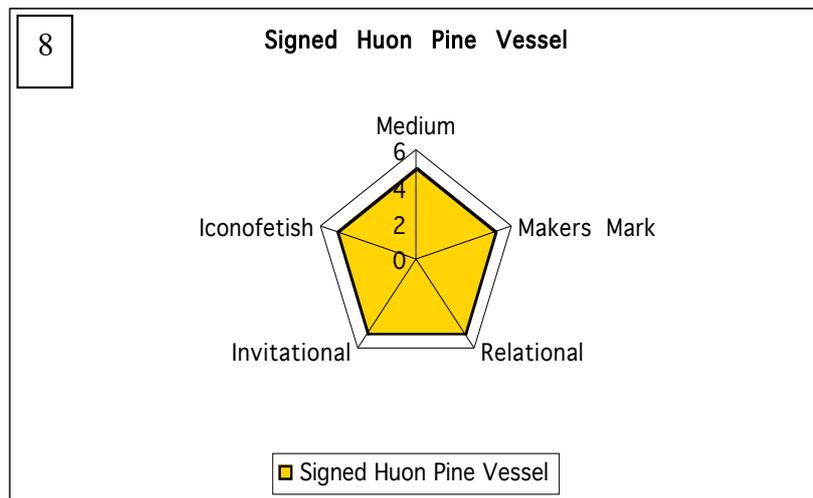
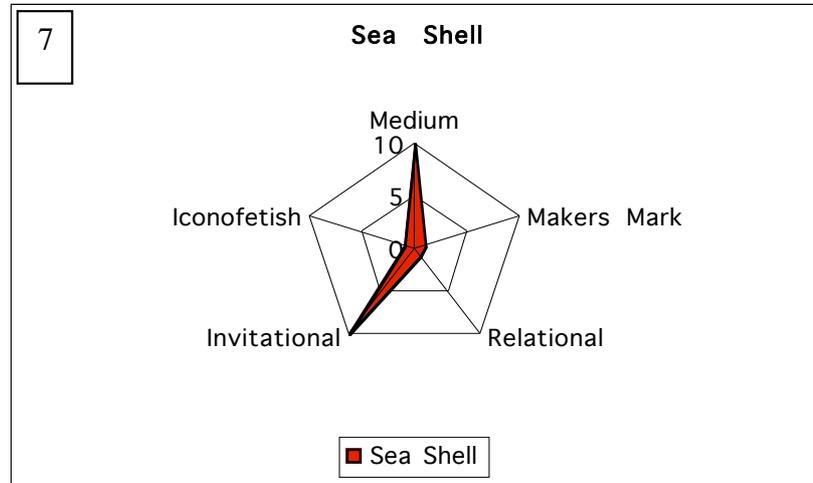


Figure 6. Iconofetish Axis showing typical and atypical examples

In conclusion, it can be seen that by drawing all of the attributes together and expressing them graphically, as ideal examples, these three categories present distinct but related patterns in the language of souvenirs, as follows.

Figures 7, 8 & 9. Showing graphic expression of ideal *Sample*, *Crafted* and *Representative* souvenirs



Then by applying the same criteria to the more complex souvenirs, cited above, the souvenir capacity of those artefacts can be plotted to reveal the tone of their expression in relationship to the stable ideal examples.

Figure 7 showing the comparative souvenir expression of three postcards

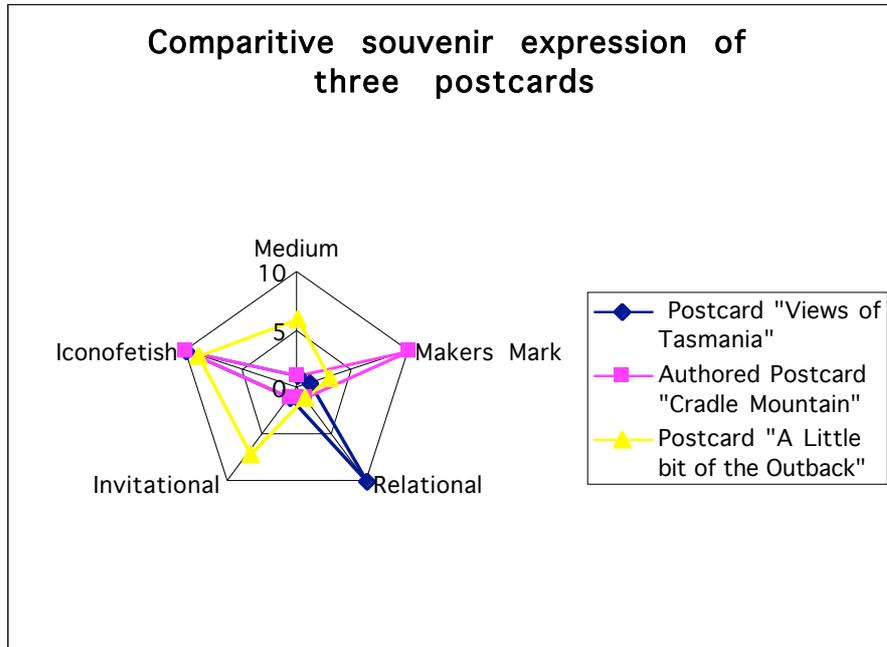
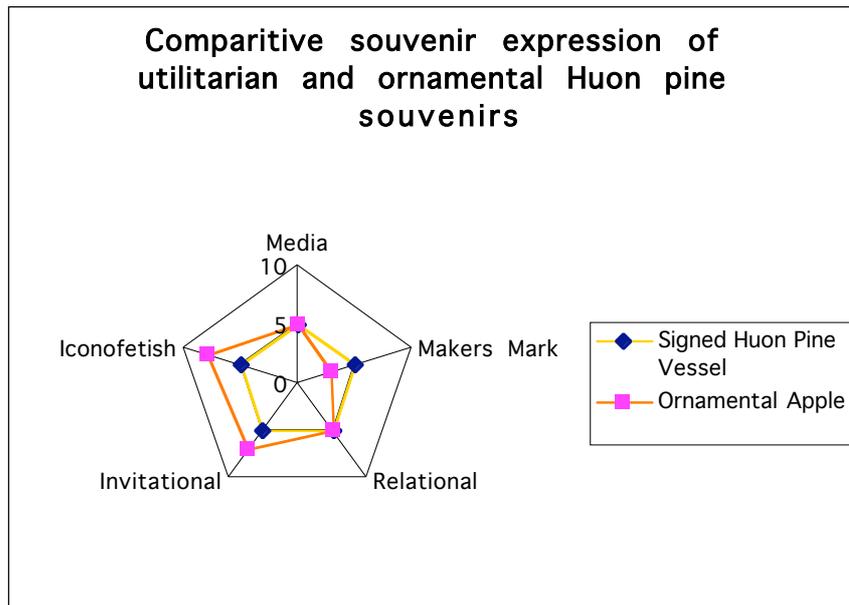


Figure 8 showing the comparative expression of utilitarian and ornamental Huon pine souvenirs



In the above graph (Fig. 7) it can be seen how the form delineated by the expressive pattern of the generic postcard: *Views of Tasmania* is maintained in the Dombrovskian postcard but that the orientation of the form is altered, due to the craft or style of the image, being understood as typical and distinctive of the site. This variation is extended further in the case of the third postcard: *A little bit of the Outback*, which, delineates an expressive pattern that is closer to the *Crafted* category, due to the imaginative use of a raw material garnered from the site it represents.

A similar variation can be seen in figure 8, which contrasts the expressive patterns of two *Crafted* souvenirs: Peter Meure's *Huon pine bowl* and an unattributed *Ornamental apple*. Here, the *Ornamental apple* shows an increased Iconofetish and Invitational expression, a reduced register on the Maker's mark axis, but maintains the overall pattern of the *Crafted* souvenir.

As an analytical tool this typology is flexible enough to assess the material culture and souvenirs of all cultures that come under the gaze of the tourist. Furthermore, with the increasing development and formalisation of many tourist destinations, this typology provides a useful point of reference for the design and production of souvenirs.

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- 1 Stewart, S. *On Longing*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984 pp.135-136.
2 *ibid.*, p.138.
3 Pearce, S. *On Collecting: An investigation into collecting in the European tradition*. London:
4 Routledge, 1995 p.123.
5 *ibid.*, p.32.
6 Stewart (1984) p.138.
7 *ibid.*
8 Pearce (1995) p.123.
9 See Urry, J. *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage Publications, 1990 and R. Shields, *Places on the*
10 *Margin*. London: Routledge 1990
11 Pearce (1995) p.123.
12 According to Freud the fetish object has no way of bursting out of its repetitive orbit and "The
13 meaning of the fetish is not known to other people" (Freud, S. *Civilization and its Discontents*.
14 New York: W.W. Norton, 1962, p.154.) This is challenged by later interpretations of the fetish
15 from Apter and Pietz among others, for whom fetishism is typified by the "Eurocentric
voyeurism of "other" collecting" (Apter, E. "Introduction" in Apter, E. and Pietz, W. [Eds]
Fetishism As Cultural Discourse. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, p.3.). See also Stewart
(1984) Mulvey, L. *Fetishism and Curiosity*. London: BFI Publishing Indiana University Press,
1996, Clifford, J. *The Predicament of Culture: twentieth century ethnography, literature and*
art. Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1994, Rojek, C. & Urry, J. *Touring Cultures:*
Transformations of Travel and Theory. London: Routledge, 1997 and MacCannell, D. *Empty*
Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers. London: Routledge, 1992 and *The Tourist: A New*
Theory of the Leisure Class. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1976, who have all challenged the
limited narrative capacity of the fetish.
11 For Stewart (1984) the Sample souvenir is literally a fragment of the visited site. Although great
lengths are taken on behalf of management authorities and alike to protect popular tourist
destinations from the furtive collection of such booty, the erosive effects of tourism on sites like
the Acropolis is well known and persists today in the souveniring of coral from the Great
Barrier Reef as an example.
12 Stewart (1984) p.136 cites a plastic miniature of the Eiffel Tower, arguing that "The souvenir
replica is an allusion...it come after the fact and remains both partial to and more expansive
than the fact. It will not function without the supplementary narrative discourse that both
attaches it to its origins and creates a myth with regard to those origins."
13 Benjamin, W. "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction." in *Illuminations*.
Arendt, H. (Ed.) London: Schocken, 1969.
14 MacCannell (1976) pp.47-48
15 *ibid.*, author's emphasis