



Media only: Melinda Machado (202) 633-3129, machadom@si.edu

June 18, 2015

“Object Project” Explores Everyday Things That Changed Everything
Hands-on Gallery Opens July 1 at the National Museum of American History

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History will open a unique hands-on learning space, the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation Object Project, July 1. Made possible by philanthropist Phyllis Taylor, the 4,000-square-foot space in the museum’s new Innovation Wing will focus on “everyday things that changed everything.”

Anchored by an array of individual cases—some overhead, others with visitor-activated sound, light and motion effects—“Object Project” will invite visitors to interact with approximately 250 objects within the 9-by-40-foot sculpture that forms the learning space. The space is divided into four sections: Bicycles, Refrigerators, Ready-to-Wear Clothes and Household Hits, which includes a customized interactive version of “The Price Is Right” game show format licensed from FremantleMedia North America Inc.

“‘Object Project’ will put history into the hands of our visitors, helping them learn about the history of innovation and allowing them to discover connections between innovative ideas and society’s needs,” said the museum’s MacMillan Associate Director for Education and Public Engagement, Judy Gradwohl.

Glass-fronted cases will hold a variety of common objects with unexpected stories, including a Columbia bicycle customized by Tiffany & Co. in 1896; a pop-up toaster from the 1920s; a shopping cart from 1937; dishes designed for leftovers and toys, such as a 1950s Pretty Maid toy kitchen and celebrity paper dolls. Hands-on carts will feature activities that explore when ice cubes were a novelty and hats were commonplace.

“Object Project” will invite visitors to use fun and surprising activities and games to uncover intriguing stories behind many objects taken for granted today. Visitors can sit atop two representative

1880s high-wheel bicycles and pose for photos. A “magic” scrapbook uses overhead projections to fill its pages with photographs and clippings that materialize and swoop into place on the page.

Digital resources will include a [website](#) and a [blog](#) with behind-the-scenes glance into research, object acquisition and space development. An illustrated [online essay](#) by author and object expert Rob Walker explores how Americans have been venturesome in their adoption and adaptation of innovative things.

The National Museum of American History is at 14th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. and open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free.

###