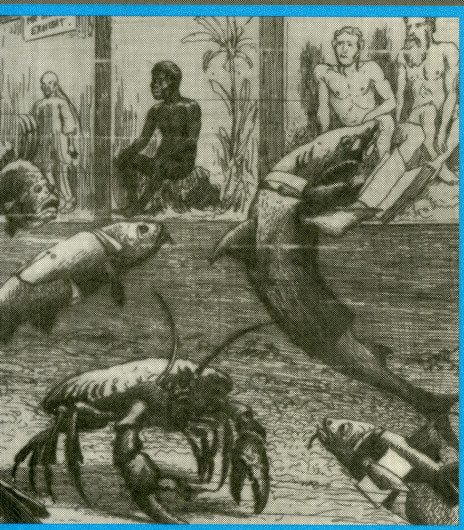


# COLLECTORS

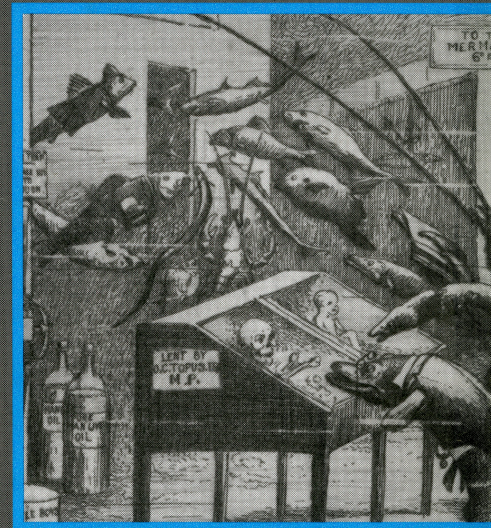
Individuals and Institutions



Edited by

*Anthony Shelton*

*Collectors Individuals and Institutions* brings together sixteen papers written by curators and anthropologists on the history and significance of some of the most important ethnographic collections preserved in British and Belgian museums. The contributors discuss the origins of museum collections by focusing on individual collectors: the passionate but amateur pursuits of adventurers, missionaries, colonial officials and connoisseurs, as well as the more systematic labours of early scientists, and the effects that their often eclectic collections and tastes had on popular perceptions of other cultures. The volume also provides cross-sections of the ethnographic holdings of Exeter, Ipswich, Manchester, the Horniman, Bankfield, and Russell-Cotes museums and explores the strategies through which their collections have been assembled and the ways in which they have been used. With its companion volume, *Collectors Expressions of Self and Other*, this work provides an indispensable introduction and guide to ethnographic collections found in the UK and elsewhere. Together these two volumes offer important insights into ethnographic collections and their potential value and contribution to anthropological enquiry.



Anthony Shelton is Head of Collections (Research and Development), at the Horniman Museum, London. He has held curatorial positions at the British Museum and the Royal Pavilion Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton. He has curated eight exhibitions and published over a hundred articles and reviews on the ethnography of West Mexico, pre-Columbian visual culture, museology, and European representations of other cultures.

ISBN 1-903338-00-X



9 781903 338001 >

Contributions in Critical Museology and Material Culture

# COLLECTORS

Individuals and Institutions

Edited by

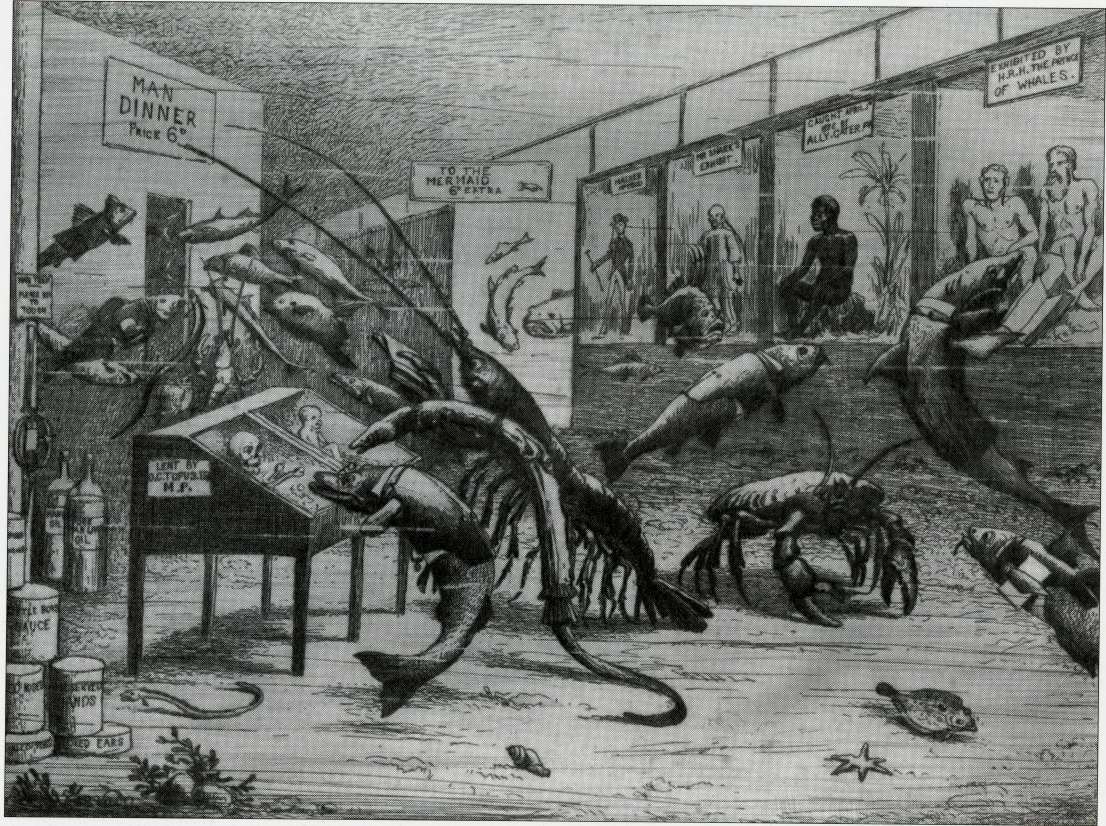
*Anthony Shelton*



The Horniman Museum and Gardens, London



Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra



'A Merry Christmas', the human aquarium, by Frank Patou, c.1880s. Collection of Stan and Ingrid Clapham.

(Illustration: S. and I. Clapham.)

# Preface

As a young research assistant beginning an unexpected and never imagined career as a curator in the British Museum, I remember coming across Yvonne Schumann's two volume report on the ethnography collections stored in provincial and university museums in the United Kingdom. For years I kept the two volume work on my desk, now and then fetishistically thumbing through it, while imagining the unsuspected wealth of scientific and artistic treasures which lay sleeping in municipal and academic vaults. At the time I had a singular passion, which did not stray very far from central Mexico and, having rummaged through the BM's own not unformidable collections, I wondered what other secret iconographies might be hidden elsewhere in the country. Since that time onwards I have been aware that the most pleasurable part of being a curator is the possibility of discovering and getting to know new collections and devising strategies to increase their accessibility and unleash the hidden worlds that lie dormant within them. While working in museums, over the past seventeen years, I have been fortunate in having been able to curate several exhibitions and refurbish four permanent galleries, as well as, in some small way, develop those collections that I have been associated with. In view of this, I am particularly grateful to the trustees, the director and my colleagues on the Horniman's senior management team for generously supporting this two volume work which brings together 28 papers that begin to unlock and describe some of the historical realities which Yvonne Schumann's statistical survey only innumrated. Read together, it is hoped that these two volumes will not only provide a reference source to some of the more important ethnographic collections in England and elsewhere and the collectors who contributed to them, but will also raise methodological and theoretical questions concerning the history of collections and encourage a new generation of scholars to work on the vast resources that museums hold, whose surfaces to date have only been scratched.

I would like to thank Malcolm McLeod, John Mack, Jonathan King, Elizabeth Carmichael and Brian Durrans for first introducing me to the world of collection history, and the even stranger and more exotic world of museums. Jessica Rutherford who, while I was Keeper of Anthropology at Brighton Museum, gave me the freedom to develop the collections, to work on temporary exhibitions, and always provided congenial and stimulating company. At the Horniman Museum, my gratitude extends to Mike Houlihan and Janet Vitmayer for supporting the work that the Anthropology Department and I undertook on the Museum's new galleries, the annual research conferences, the monograph series and the temporary exhibition programme. Many other people in the museum world too, have given support which directly or indirectly, but nonetheless decisively, has contributed towards the realisation of the present publication programme. In particular I would like to acknowledge Mary Bouquet, Nuno Porto, Daria Neklesa, Paulo

Gama Mota, John Picton, the members of the editorial board and all the scholars spread across four continents, who contributed to this and other volumes; David Attenborough who graciously opened the *African Worlds* gallery at the Horniman Museum, and also the *Green Gallery* when I was keeper at Brighton Museum; Roger Silverstone, Craig Clunas, Pather Mitta and Mike Rowlands of Sussex University and University College London, who provided havens for intellectual introspection and jointly pioneered taught courses in Critical Museology and Museum Ethnography: A special debt of gratitude is due to Mr and Mrs S. Clapham, collectors *extraordinaire* for kindly supplying the print of the human aquarium which appears on the cover of this volume. Finally, I should like to thank all the students over the past 8 years, not only for their insightful and enthusiastic discussions, but for their assistance inside the various museums I have been affiliated with and for their investigations which have enriched this monograph series and contributed so much to restoring the lost, denied, or repressed histories of collectors, collections and institutions. Last but not least I would like to thank Nicky Levell, who in my absence proved once again to be an indispensable copy editor and proof reader and diligently oversaw the production of this work.

Anthony Shelton  
Horniman Museum, London