Habitat for Humanity®

ReStore® After Dark

UNKNOWN OBJECTS

Unknown Objects Challenge—The Answers Revealed!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Unknown Objects Challenge!
Here are the identities and stories behind the mystery objects featured at ReStore After Dark.



OBJECT #1

VIETRI Botanical Animals Rabbit Tureen

This colorful, rabbit-shaped ceramic piece is actually a covered serving tureen, complete with a matching ladle. Made in Italy for VIETRI's Botanical Collection Animals line, it features an imaginative design incorporating vegetables, leaves, and fruit. The piece is an example of trompe-l'œil, a decorative tradition in which objects are designed to resemble something else. Its exact production date is uncertain, but it is a modern piece, likely from the 1990s or early 2000s.



OBJECT #2

Persian Esfand Sooz

This unusual metal object is a traditional Iranian Esfand Sooz, a brazier used to burn esfand (wild rue) seeds. In Persian culture, the smoke is traditionally believed to provide protection against the evil eye and negative influences. The practice has been part of Iranian family life for generations, particularly during important occasions, departures, and homecomings. Although it resembles an incense burner, its traditional purpose is specifically to burn esfand seeds.



OBJECT #3

Mystery Engraved Ring

This silver-colored ring is an engraved, signet-style ring featuring an elaborate monogram and decorative shield-shaped panels on its shoulders. Signet rings have historically been used to display family initials, personal symbols, or affiliations. This example includes faint lettering and date-like markings, but its original owner, age, and significance remain unknown. It is an intriguing example of personal jewelry whose history has yet to be uncovered.

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OBJECT #4

Ceramic Tobacco Jar or Humidor

This decorative, hand-painted ceramic jar was most likely designed to store loose pipe tobacco. Its floral decoration, gold-colored detailing, and finely crazed glaze are characteristic of ornamental ceramics popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A particularly revealing clue appears on the back: an inscription reading, "As we walk thro' the world let us smoke by the way." Similar jars were sometimes fitted with a damp sponge to help preserve tobacco's moisture.



OBJECT #5

Madame Alexander McDonald's Dolls

These two miniature dolls were produced by the Alexander Doll Company for McDonald's Happy Meal promotions. The Mickey Mouse Boy doll, wearing mouse ears and red shorts, was released in 2004 as part of a Disney-themed collection. The second doll, Wendy dressed as the Big Bad Wolf, appeared in a 2010 fairy-tale collection. Both are approximately five inches tall and represent miniature versions of the collectible doll designs for which Madame Alexander became famous.



OBJECT #6

Franciscan Apple Chop Plate

Although it resembles an oversized dinner plate, this 12⅜-inch piece is a chop plate, a round platter used to serve meat, vegetables, and other shared dishes. It features Franciscan's Apple pattern, introduced in 1940, with red apples, green leaves, and sculpted brown branches against cream-colored earthenware. Made in the United States by Gladding, McBean & Co., the platter bears a distinctive bordered "TV-screen" mark. Its backstamp design matches the 1961–1962 version documented by the Franciscan Ceramics Archive.



BONUS

Annalee Christmas Pig (1990)

This cheerful Christmas pig is a whimsical felt holiday decoration made by Annalee Dolls of Meredith, New Hampshire. Founded by Annalee Thorndike, the company became famous for its expressive handmade-style holiday figures, particularly mice, elves, and other animals. Dressed in a Santa outfit and carrying a green gift sack, this pig dates to 1990, as indicated by its original sewn label. Its once-bright red costume has faded to a soft rosy pink over time.