



Museum of Missing History

Have you got a clue?

Information for Owners of Discovered Objects

If you own an object listed in our Catalogue of Missing Objects, remain calm.

Some of the objects listed in COMO are highly valuable, while many others are of little value except to their owner and the scholar who wants to study them. What you want to do is get professional help in figuring out what you have and what to do with it.

The general rule, as with any other important set of decisions in life, is keep your wits about you and use your common sense. If an object is particularly rare and valuable then each professional you contract with will have something to gain by working with it. The best professionals, whatever their field, will make clear to you their agenda and avoid any conflicts of interest. That said you are the best guardian of your own interests.

There is a series of steps that we recommend that you take if you own an object listed in our catalogue. These steps can be broken down into two parts:

What do I have? (authentication/appraisal)

What do I want to do with it? (keep, sell, loan, donate)

What do I have?

Have the object authenticated

It is important that you consult a professional who has experience authenticating objects like yours. Accurate evaluation of particularly rare or valuable pieces may require special expertise. Authentication services are often provided by appraisers, dealers and museums. Beware of any conflicts of interest that the professional authenticating your object may have. If you have any doubts you should seek a second opinion.

Have the object appraised

The Museum of Missing History recommends that you contact the American Association of Appraisers or the International Society of Appraisers in order to find an accredited appraiser who has experience in appraising objects like yours (outside the U.S. you will need to find check with the professional association of appraisers is in your country). Accurate evaluation of particularly rare or valuable pieces may require special expertise.

What do I want to do with it?

Make the object available to scholars

We ask that you make photographs, measurements and other basic information about the object available to The Museum of Missing History for publication and sharing with interested scholars and institutions. You are also encouraged to make the object available to scholars and museums for study or exhibition.

Decide whether or not to keep the object

This is an important decision and should be made carefully. This is doubly true if it is a family piece or has some other sentimental value to you. Once an object is donated or sold it will likely never come back to you.

If you decide to sell your object

Do your research and be certain that you work with a reputable collector, dealer or auction house. As with other professionals, you want to work with someone who has dealt in objects like yours in the past. If the object is very valuable you should consider having your lawyer advise and represent you in its sale.

If you decide to donate your object

You may want to consider donating the object to a museum or other cultural institution. Consult with your accountant or a tax attorney on how to get the best tax advantage from your donation. Also, feel free to ask as many questions as like of the institutions that you are considering making your gift to.