



50 Of The Most Interesting And Unusual Collections People Have

Akvile Petraityte and Ieva Gailiūtė

If there is one thing we humans love doing, it's collecting. Coins, seashells, stamps, baseball cards, vintage artwork — you name it, we hoard it. Some people see it as a hobby, while others build rooms or create special places in their homes to showcase their fascination with accumulating objects they're interested in. But there's a whole other category of people who undertake the challenge of finding the rarest and most extraordinary items from every corner of the world.

Collectors of the most random objects have stockpiled impressive quantities of things they're obsessed with and shared pictures of their discoveries with everyone on the internet. We at Bored Panda have scoured the web to bring you a list of sometimes whimsical, sometimes slightly creepy, but nonetheless captivating collections that might inspire you to start one of your own.

From shark teeth to four-leaf clovers to tiny balls from pen ink cartridges, continue scrolling to check out these interesting displays. Be sure to hit upvote on your favorite ones and let us know about the things you love to collect in the comment section below! Keep reading to also find our interview with professor and an avid collector Shirley M. Mueller, M.D.

Human curiosity, as well as creativity, knows no bounds. Millions of people from around the world share the enthusiasm of acquiring all sorts of unusual items most wouldn't think of collecting, yet for them, it's irresistible. These possessions may even become a part of their personalities, signaling to themselves and others who they are and where they belong. Some collectors have even turned their hobbies into full-time professions by opening museums or galleries and offering tours right in their own homes.

To find out more about what's going through our minds when we crave to collect things we feel deeply interested in, we reached out to professor Shirley M. Mueller, M.D. Being an internationally known collector and scholar of Chinese export porcelain, she happily shared some insights about creating unique collections and our behaviors related to it.

When asked whether having more of the same item makes us believe these objects are more valuable, the professor said, "A neuroeconomic concept is that we value what we own more than similar or identical items which others own. This is called the endowment effect. Thus, having more of the same items does make us think they are worth more than the same items which others possess."

Mueller pointed out that stumbling across and admiring extraordinary collections online can inspire us to take up the challenge of starting one of our own. "Additionally, knowing someone we admire who collects can inspire us to do the same," she said.

Mueller is a professor of neurology at Indiana University, as well as a renowned author of multiple books. Combining her two fields of interest, she recently published *Inside the Head of a Collector: Neuropsychological Forces at Play*, which explains the mysterious and often little-understood logic of the collectors and delves deeper into some of the topics discussed in the article.

According to Professor Mueller, an enormous number, around 30 to 40 percent of the population, collects one thing or another. And the reasons people lean toward accumulating unusual objects are numerous. One of the most common ones is simply because it gives them pleasure. "In anticipation of obtaining that special object, our pleasure center 'lights up' using a sophisticated scientific technique called functional magnetic resonance imaging," she told Bored Panda.

The neuroscientist who is board-certified in neurology and psychiatry explained her research in great detail in her article in *Psychology Today*. The method she mentioned is called the Oddball paradigm, and it's an experiment where the participant is presented with a string of ordinary items interrupted by extraordinary ones. Their brain activity is registered using a functional magnetic resonance machine which

revealed that once people witnessed the unusual, their minds showed an overwhelming response.

"This may be why we seek the unique when we collect. It stimulates our brains in areas that connect to our pleasure center. This may also have an evolutionary benefit. We explore the new until we determine whether it is a benefit to us or not," Mueller wrote.

Another common reason that drives some collectors forward is pride. By acquiring exquisite and rare objects, people feel excited it might set them apart from the crowd and could even lead to recognition and admiration from others. "Other collectors, aside from the rareness of the piece, want to acquire it at a modest price. That is their joy and gives them pride in being so astute. It's the possession for comparatively little money that excites them," she added.

Then we have the history-lovers who feel fascinated by uncovering precious gems from our past and dream of getting their hands on antiquities. Mueller stated in her piece that this makes them feel closer to a time long gone, and can even give them a way to reconnect with their ancestors, important historical figures, or events that happened years ago. "This is the reverse of feeling a sense of history in looking toward the future. This collector may hope to build a legacy by passing on special objects to future generations," the professor explained.

We humans certainly stand out from the rest of the natural world by gathering items purely for the joy of the hunt and satisfaction of owning them. And apparently, this phenomenon is nothing new. Archeologists have discovered that 105,000 years ago, humans in the Kalahari region of southern Africa collected crystals. "Our analysis indicates that the crystals were not introduced into the deposits via natural processes, but were deliberately collected objects likely linked to spiritual beliefs and ritual," Dr. Jayne Wilkins, lead author of the study, told Forbes.

And as it turns out, we have never looked back since the moment we started. "Collecting is additive to life itself," Mueller told us. "It isn't a job; it isn't a hobby. It is a passion. What could be better?"