

MUSEUM OF THE HOME

An introduction to Mantelpiece stories and Shelf Life

Rebecca Jacobs:

Mantelpiece Stories, by Madeleine Waller, and Shelf Life, by Mina Salimi, were commissioned by Bolton Museum and Art Gallery and the Museum of the Home in London. I spoke to some of the people who made the films to find out more.

Carole Ogden lives in Bolton and features in Mantelpiece Stories. I asked her about the experience of letting the cameras into her home.

Carole Ogden:

It did feel quite unusual to talk about quite personal things I suppose. I think having someone specifically come to look at them helped me to focus on them again through someone else's eyes, really.

The trouble is we live in such a throwaway society now. Like the lady with the flour sifter, that's a wonderful thing, you know, that she can hold that and have that immediate link to something that her grandmother held.

Rebecca Jacobs:

Gita Sahgal and Jessica Rosenfield are members of the Museum of the Home's Faith and Culture Forum, who co-produced Shelf Life. I asked them what it was like to work with the museum.

Gita Sahgal:

For me, it has been a really inspiring project, about the different sorts of people who can gather in really a very small part of London.

Jessica Rosenfield:

Mantelpieces in the home have a way, I think, of connecting people. They don't necessarily put their most precious objects, but things that bring them joy, or comfort, and feelings of pride.

We discussed it that not everyone would have a mantelpiece, and that it might be a shelf in their kitchen.

Rebecca Jacobs:

The films share themes that will resonate with many of us. Gita talks about loss and what she hopes people will feel when they watch them.

Gita Sahgal:

I think the desire to collect objects is universal, and the desire to use them as a focus for memory, and love really.

Both the films deal with loss really very movingly, you know, loss of a mother when very young; having to become a refugee and perhaps not knowing whether your parents were alive; somebody who'd worked in a firm that dealt with rubber, and whose only mementos because he'd had to flee war were the honour of his life as a worker.

I hope they'll be as moved as we were when we watched it, and I hope they'll feel we live in an interconnected world.