

The Things They Carried

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There's no Academy Award for Best Prop. In Hollywood's pecking order, mere things have always taken a backseat to the beautiful people, and countless treasures and costumes from classic films have been tossed out over the years or been left moldering in boxes. Yet, as the following pages show, the perfect prop—a child's sled, a golden statue, a lead bird—can capture an audience's imagination, and can truly live forever.



← Rocky

BOXING GLOVES

The sleeper hit of 1976 and a surprise Best Picture winner, the underdog-palooka fable kick-started the career of writer-director-star Sylvester Stallone, launched a six-film franchise, and roused untold millions of couch potatoes with dreams of "Eye of the Tiger" glory. Stallone donated the gloves from *Rocky II* to the Smithsonian, but he wore these gloves in the first *Rocky*, where he duked it out for 15 rounds with Apollo Creed. This pair clearly has a strong sentimental appeal for him—it has remained in his private collection for more than 30 years.



Citizen Kane

ROSEBUD

It's the cinematic equivalent of Proust's madeleine, a rich man's dying word, a symbol of innocence lost—and hands-down one of the most iconic props in film history. A few sleds were used in the making of Orson Welles' 1941 masterpiece, and in the film's famous final scene, one ends up being burned in Charles Foster Kane's furnace. In 1982, Steven Spielberg bought this one at an auction for \$60,500. He keeps it safe in a Lucite box in his office.



Cast Away

WILSON

In the 2000 film *Cast Away*, this humble volleyball was the only friend of Tom Hanks' character, who was stranded on a deserted South Pacific island. Man and anthropomorphized spheroid developed an intense and conversational (albeit one-sided) relationship. Today, Wilson resides comfortably in the office of Fox Filmed Entertainment chairman Tom Rothman. Does anyone ever try to chat with it these days? "Only Wilson would know," says Fox spokesman Gregg Brilliant, "and he's not talking."

Casablanca →

SAM'S PIANO

You must remember this: actor Dooley Wilson, seated at this piano in the beloved 1942 romance, crooning "As Time Goes By" to Ingrid Bergman. After *Casablanca*, the piano was played again (but not by Sam) in other films, and by the time Dr. Gary Milan, a retired dentist from Beverly Hills, purchased it from a props house years ago, it was unrecognizable. "It was covered in many layers of paint," says Milan. Restored to its original condition, the piano is now valued at over \$2 million and loaned out for occasional exhibits and performances.



Borat →

BORAT'S SUIT

It's hard to think of a less impressive ensemble. It's shapeless. It's bland. It looks cheap because it is. And yet this suit played a vital role in actor Sacha Baron Cohen's 2006 stealth-comedy performance as Kazakh TV reporter Borat Sagdiyev. The secret to its effectiveness? Its odor. "Nothing is ever washed," says *Borat* costume designer Jason Alper, who purchased the duds in London for about \$40. "When Borat kisses people and goes in close, the smell of the suit authenticates the fact that he's been traveling. It's amazing what people buy into."

STAR WARS HAN SOLO'S BLASTER

Note to 'Star Wars' geeks: This is not the blaster Han Solo used to blow away Greedo; like many of the props from the 1977 film, that one's been lost to history. This one probably dates from 1980's 'The Empire Strikes Back,' says Lucasfilm archivist Dinah Houghtaling. "It was based on a German World War II pistol and modified with a scope and different buttons," she says.



STAR WARS LIGHTSABERS

Inspiration for countless imaginary duels in backyards across America, the lightsaber is the Jedi's weapon in the 'Star Wars' universe. Used by Luke Skywalker in 'Star Wars' and 'Return of the Jedi,' these sabers were crafted from aluminum, plastic, copper—and movie magic. "They don't actually work," says Lucasfilm's Houghtaling. "Everyone asks that."



APOCALYPSE NOW MACHETE

Francis Ford Coppola kept much from his 1979 Vietnam War epic (a Navy patrol boat, the surfboard Robert Duvall's character mentions). But when EW asked if he still had the machete used by Martin Sheen's Captain Willard to kill Marlon Brando's mad Colonel Kurtz, he didn't know. After a search, it turned up in a cardboard box. Funny what gets lost in the fog of war—and moviemaking.



THE EXORCIST CROSS

After shooting wrapped on 1973's devil-child smash, one relic, a silver and black onyx crucifix, wound up in the possession (so to speak) of special-effects supervisor Marcel Vercoutere. It was used by the priest, Vercoutere says, and spared from Linda Blair's demonic desecrations: "Linda waved that thing around fiercely, so I made several others out of rubber so no one would get hurt."



← Psycho

STUFFED OWL

As if the Bates Motel weren't creepy enough, director Alfred Hitchcock posed this stuffed owl among other mounted animals in Norman Bates' parlor to amplify the sense of menace.

Universal Studios archivist Jeff Pirtle, who now tends to the creature along with a stuffed seagull from *The Birds*, says it's in surprisingly good condition, given that the film debuted in 1960.

"It was preserved using arsenic," Pirtle explains. Somehow, when you're talking about a Hitchcock prop, a dose of arsenic seems fitting.

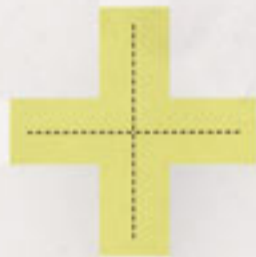
MINORITY REPORT EYEBALLS

The fake eyeballs used by Tom Cruise's Chief Anderton in the 2002 sci-fi thriller wound up in a climate-controlled vault in Fox's archives after the film wrapped. Made from glass and a soft prosthetic material, they may seem like odd keepsakes. But as Fox spokesman Brilliant notes, "We also have severed tongues, alien entrails, and disembodied limbs in the archives."



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD ATTICUS FINCH'S GLASSES

In 1963, Gregory Peck won the Best Actor Oscar for his performance as a crusading Southern lawyer in the film adaptation of Harper Lee's novel. In 2003, the American Film Institute named Finch the No. 1 hero in film history. Somehow, a bit of his wisdom and morality seems embedded in these glasses, which reside, along with his leather briefcase, in the Universal archives.



RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK GOLDEN IDOL

Inspired by Aztec and Incan relics, the cursed golden fertility idol featured in the 1981 smash has become one of the Indiana Jones' series' most familiar icons. According to Houghtaling (yes, this one's from Lucasfilm too), there's actually another version of the idol that has its eyes wide open: "If you pause your DVD at the exact right moment, you'll see it for a split second."



THE MALTESE FALCON THE MALTESE FALCON

The treasured bird at the heart of John Huston's 1941 hard-boiled film noir is made of pure lead, but, as in the film, the object holds tremendous value. Estimated to be worth \$2 million, the 50-pound figure has one feature setting it apart from counterfeits: a bent tail feather. "Supposedly someone dropped it and it almost landed on one of the actors' toes," says owner Dr. Gary Milan.

Forrest → Gump

FORREST'S LEG BRACE

Tom Hanks' lovable titular hero may have made an epic journey across America, but these polio leg braces from the 1994 Best Picture have been sitting for years in a box in Paramount Pictures' archives, along with just a tad more *Gump*-abilia. "All we have are the braces, Lieutenant Dan's titanium legs, and some other costume pieces," says studio archivist Randall Thropp. "We're lucky to have what we have." To paraphrase Gump's mama, "Life is like a box of old props: You never know what you're gonna get."



King Kong →

KONG'S HAND

Props from Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's 1933 classic are nearly as rare as albino gorillas. Director and *Kong*-phile Peter Jackson owns a few—a stop-motion dinosaur puppet, various spears and shields—but much of what had been kept in the old RKO Pictures store-room was thrown out years ago. This decaying five-inch-long hand, all that's left of a model that climbed the Empire State Building, was donated to Los Angeles' Natural History Museum by *Kong*'s special-effects whiz Willis O'Brien. And as for that missing finger? "It's not missing," says collections manager Beth Werling. "O'Brien removed the covering so that people could see the articulated skeleton underneath."

