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by

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2019

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Spinning Tales: An Investigation of Illusion and Belief

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Spinning Tales: An Investigation of Illusion and Belief

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2019

Abstract

Spinning Tales: An Investigation of Illusion and Belief

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

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Can I convince people that a well-known folktale is historic fact? In theater, we as designers extend an invitation for the audience to suspend their disbelief in what they know to be unreal. A well-constructed illusion holds high market value in the entertainment industry and is often applied to manipulating the beliefs (and even actions) of people through advertising and propaganda. Museums hold significant power as guardians of knowledge and history, but what reinforces this perception? If governments, ad agencies, and museums can manipulate belief in this way, this same power can be harnessed to construct convincing illusions for entertainment experiences. By staging the folktale of Rumpelstiltskin within the framework of a historical museum exhibit, theatrical props may be transformed into historical documents. Using elements that audiences already perceive in relation to “fact” may inspire an audience to willingly partake in the illusion and doubt the reality, if only for a moment.

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A Brief History of Me

BEGINNINGS: CHILDHOOD'S INFLUENCE

Some time ago when I was laboring over what to be when I grew up, I heard that the people who are happiest in their jobs are doing something they loved to do as children. As I reflect on this now, I believe this to be an entirely accurate statement. I am an artist turned scenic designer at the start of her career in themed entertainment. When I was in elementary school I loved to play make-believe with my friends and direct the life dramas of my doll collection. Fairytales, magic, and myth were my creative fuel and still are today. At the same time, I loved pretending I was the heroine of various historical dramas.

Aside from constructing these imaginary worlds on my bedroom floor, I spent family vacations traveling to Michigan and Florida. Walt Disney World is the obvious influencer here, but Grand Rapids, Michigan has steep competition in the form of the Grand Rapids Public Museum. Their permanent exhibit "The Streets of Old Grand Rapids" is a 3/4-inch scale re-creation of the city in the 1890s. Complete with shops based on actual businesses at the time as well as a working period telephone, this exhibit still inspires the make-believer in me to float down the street as if I were a late-nineteenth century woman on my daily errands.

MIDDLES: REAL-WORLD INSPIRATIONS

My interest in history and how people lived in eras past ran so deep that, for the longest time, I wanted to be Indiana Jones. The Villa of the Mysteries near Pompeii with its beautifully confounding frescoes captivated me. There is a great deal of guesswork involved as archaeologists analyze the fragmented remains of culture, yet tourists rarely

witness this painstaking assemblage of story. We come upon these excavated sites and are presented with an educated guess of what happened, but it is the artifact that convinces us of these distant ways of life. Yet it wasn't that I wanted to study history so much as recreate it as immersive environments that audiences could actually experience.

In contrast to the strictly historical lens of the Grand Rapids Public Museum, Walt Disney World's Animal Kingdom park boasts a similar, though far more mythic, museum experience. Expedition Everest is more than a roller coaster: it is a mission to discover the fate of a lost expedition which is believed to have perished at the hands (or claws) of the Yeti. The queue line for this ride tells most of the story through a series of scenes including a registration office at Base Camp, a temple littered with offerings to the spirits of the Forbidden Mountain, and finally a museum exhibit about the myths and legends associated with the mountain. The Yeti features prominently in this exhibit as do the mangled remains of the lost expedition's campsite. While nothing explicitly states "The Yeti did it!" there are allusions to the legend as well as a blurry photo salvaged from a camera at the campsite. What I find most compelling in this queue line is the sheer quantity of props informing and supporting the central narrative. The art director and designers spent years traveling and collecting material culture from Nepal to fill out the story and establish a certain level of historical and cultural authenticity. With this much proof, how can you not believe in the Yeti?

THE SEED OF AN IDEA

My thesis idea formed rather quickly and easily. I sought to combine my interests in myth, exhibit design, history, and prop design. The answer was simple: I would make an exhibit that presents a fairytale as historic fact.

Out of the thousands of fairytales, folktales, myths, and legends in the world I chose Rumpelstiltskin. Who, you ask? Is that the one with the hair? No? The one about the man who sleeps for a hundred years? No. This is precisely why I chose this tale. It triggers only the vaguest associations in most people. It has not been devoured and regurgitated by Disney's talented animation department. Those who watched the ABC Network's TV show *Once Upon A Time* will recall a character named Rumpelstiltskin, but his story is not the same as that written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The "Brothers Grimm" published perhaps the most well-known collection of German folklore in the 19th century and it is still studied today. The Grimm version of Rumpelstiltskin, from which I expanded into other versions, has a clear storyline with a cause, effect, and resolution. Anyone who has read the Grimm tales will understand how much they lack in detail. This inherent vagueness turned out to be an asset. I was free to invent an entirely new story for this character because my audience remembered only general information from the story. With the basic structure established, I built my own narrative about Rumpelstiltskin's history, travels, and dealings.

Rumpelstiltskin is not a well-defined figure in folktales. He eludes classification into typical folk creature categories like fairies, ogres, or witches. He is quite unusual in this respect, standing alone in his own category of antagonists. A Cornish version of Rumpelstiltskin called *Foul-Weather* calls him a "gnome of the mountain" (Briggs 179). The English version, *Tom Tit Tot*, refers to him as an "impet" or imp, which is defined as "a small devil, an off-shoot of Satan" (Clodd 408; Briggs 232). This is how I've come to understand him: a devilish trickster trading assistance for a physical part of someone, be it their child (*Rumpelstiltskin*) or their heart (*Foul-Weather*). This character's ambiguity and range of offenses made him the perfect subject of my fabricated history.

Choosing a folk tale with which to work was not without reason. According to Jack Zipes, folk tales were oral stories “cultivated by the common people to express the manner in which they perceived nature and their social order and their wish to satisfy their needs and wants” (5). The key phrase here is “common people” which distinguishes folk tales from fairytales. What eventually became the literary genre “fairy tale,” was a collection of written stories appropriated from the working classes’ folk tales for the entertainment of the educated upper class (Zipes 7). *Beauty and the Beast* is an excellent example published in several versions in the 18th century.

It was important to use a folk tale because these stories were intended to influence the behavior of the listener, unlike the elegantly written fairy tales of late 17th century French author Charles Perrault. *Little Red Riding Hood* warned children and adults alike of the dangers lurking in the woods. *Rumpelstiltskin* cautioned against boasting. Folk tales were expected to be believed on some level in order to pass down community values, fears, and dreams through the generations. These stories are uniquely qualified for my experiment in illusion because they were originally told as moral examples to influence young audience’s understanding of their world and its lurking dangers. *Rumpelstiltskin* warns of the consequences of boasting and making deals you don’t want to keep. By telling this tale, one could persuade children that bragging about skills you do not possess might raise your social station, but at a steep price.

On the surface, historical museums and folk tales appear to be in opposition. Museums represent the preservation of knowledge and history, while folk tales are seen as fictional stories with no basis in reality. I contend, however, that these institutions serve the same purpose. Museum scholar Elaine Heumann Gurian says “Museums, historic sites, and other institutions of memory... are the tangible evidence of the spirit of a civilized society” (“What is the Object of This Exercise?” 163). Though intangible, folk

tales serve as documents preserving the hopes and fears of a people in the heroes and villains of their stories. In her essay for *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *Narratives of Value and the Antiques Roadshow: "A Game of Recognitions,"* Abby Clouse says there is an unbreakable connection between stories about people and stories about objects (5). Museums illuminate our connection with objects and stories helping us understand deeper parts of our present selves and past societies. Both museums and folk tales accomplish the same goal of preserving and transferring the "spirit", the "memory", the ethos of generations long since departed. Therefore, it can be reasoned that both museums and folk tales possess the power to affect belief, be it in a thing, a movement, a fear, or a hope.

A Question and A Plan

I built this thesis around a single question: can I convince people that Rumpelstiltskin is real? Anyone who has ever written a work of fiction, made a movie, or even produced a play has faced a similar question. It is not a new query. The art of persuasion has deep roots in everything from English essays to politics, but it is also powerfully present in entertainment. On the stage and in theme parks like Walt Disney World or Universal Studios, all design elements contribute to the construction of an *illusion*. The illusion is the narrative that seeps into an audience's mind through words, pictures, sounds, and ambiance. It is the driving force behind every design decision. It is the intangible element that only exists in the viewer's mind. A seamless and thorough illusion makes us want to believe a story is true.

Throughout this process, I was under no illusion that I could actually succeed in completely convincing my guests that my far-fetched version of a 500-year-old imp is true. My mission was to construct an illusion using certain tactics of manipulation to affect the audience's belief in my tale. I turned to tried-and-true sources to understand these tactics. Advertisements, political propaganda, conspiracy theories, and even fake news are historic and contemporary modes of manipulation and persuasion.

In my research I came across an April Fool's prank by artist and illusionist Dan Baines. In 2007, Baines posted a press release online with the title "Do Fairies Live at the Bottom of Your Garden?" Accompanying his article was a photograph of a gloved hand holding what appears to be the skeletal remains of a fairy. The lighting in the picture is a harsh, cool white and resembles the lighting in a morgue or laboratory. Also in the image is a plastic bag labeled "POLICE EVIDENCE". The article describes an anonymous man in Derbyshire, England whose dog found the skeleton on a walk through a known fairy

haunt. It is a detailed account and sports an objective tone, though it lacks any elements that one could actually verify. A week later, Baines revealed that the article and photo were a hoax, evoking outrage from the fairy-believing community. He said, “Even if you believe in fairies, as I personally do, there will always have been an element of doubt in your mind that would suggest the remains are a hoax... Alas the fairy is fake but my interest and belief has allowed me to create a work of art that is convincing and magical” (Baines). This “hoax” illustrates how we often believe what we want to believe suggesting that we have agency over what we think is true or not. Although that power makes us susceptible to influencers such as propaganda or conspiracy theories, it also allows for these magical moments of imagination in which we are drawn into the mystery and possibility of an illusion.

Theatrical designers harness this potential as they invite their audience to “suspend their disbelief” and immerse themselves in the story that is unfolding onstage. Theater goers (or theme park visitors for that matter) would not have bought a ticket if some part of them was not willing to believe in the experience even a little bit. As demonstrated by the Derbyshire Fairy Hoax, folklore is particularly good at drawing people into the mystery and possibility of a magical otherworld. By using *Rumpelstiltskin* as my source narrative, I hoped to entice a certain audience into believing it real. Oral folk tales like *Rumpelstiltskin* are entwined with the concept of belief. They were instructional narratives by and for the masses to pass down their community values and ideologies to future generations. These clearly defined world views helped societies to understand their place in the social and spiritual hierarchy of the universe which in turn determined the survival of the group. The magic and myth of folklore was merely a vehicle to convey perceived truths about social and natural environments in a way that

drew audiences in and simplified the complicated social structure into accessible imagery.

Cultural institutions like museums, libraries, and even theme parks use established signs that trigger acceptance of presented information in the audience. Each and every museum, from the massively funded Bob Bullock Museum of Texas History to the hole-in-the-wall passion-project that is the Texas Music Museum, use similar tactics. Section titles, information panels, “Do Not Touch” signs, felt-wrapped display stands, and a certain narrative tone were the major elements that I sought to implement in my exhibit. Artifacts are often, though not always, separated from the viewer by acrylic vitrines or other barriers. If museum resources allow, soft boutique lighting offers a clearer view of the artifact as well as hints at preservation needs to limit light exposure. Large information panels, either printed on expensive Sintra PVC boards or cut and pasted onto foam core by volunteers, surround the objects with a written narrative. Smaller object labels detail the provenance of an artifact as well as give brief insight into the significance of it. Numbers might help delineate clusters of objects while some artifacts are isolated on pedestals.

Most of the time artifacts are seen removed from their original context. This seems to be a hallmark of museums that I don’t enjoy. Occasionally though, curators might stage particularly special objects in more compelling ways that offer another layer to the story. One of my favorite displays in the Bullock Museum features a letter written by Stephen F. Austin displayed behind glass on his prison writing desk. These more “complete” vignettes extend into the realm of theatrical storytelling, which is something museums are typically resistant to.

In her essay “Noodling Around with Exhibition Opportunities,” museum consultant/advisor Elaine Heumann Gurian wrote “I believe that somewhere in the

history of exhibitions, certain nonrational strategies were deemed theatrical. Being in the theater is still not wholly acceptable... And yet, like it or not, exhibitions are in part public entertainment” (357). I agree whole heartedly with Heumann Gurian’s final statement here. Exhibitions are most certainly public entertainment, though their motive is to educate their audience about a particular subject. Theme parks, on the other hand, are purely theatrical as they are presenting what is in essence a performance and not necessarily an educational experience. Heumann Gurian continues “Surely the most effective and popular attractions of our time, Disneyland and Disney World, use techniques that may educate while creating enjoyment but, like P.T. Barnum, they have ‘blurred the boundaries between museum and carnival shows,’ and the museum world would not want to be identified with that!” (358).

The Walt Disney Company and Universal Studios use different techniques to create their illusions. They use design pulled from the film and theater industries to build up enough “world” around their audience to convince them of their immersion in the story. Every single element, from the park benches to the bathroom signs, helps tell a story to theme park visitors. This has a lot to do with specific architectural elements and scenic finishes as well as the written narratives sprinkled around the attractions, though most of the story is purely visual.

In the exhibit *Rumpelstiltskin: 500 Years of Devious Dealings*, I tried to harness elements of both museums and theme parks. I was not expecting to *convince* my audience that Rumpelstiltskin is real. Rather, I wanted to *attempt* to convince them by designing and constructing an illusion. Like artist Dan Baines, I would play the role of illusionist building a story around a few specifically chosen artifacts and some forged historical documents. The first step would be to identify which elements could effectively manipulate the audience’s perception of my exhibit as more than an art installation. The

second would be to maintain the illusion across all storytelling platforms including written text, artifacts, and the overall presentation.

The Illusion

There are three parts to my illusion: the written history of Rumpelstiltskin, the artifacts, and the physical exhibit. Each part would need to support the other in creating a self-confirming and cohesive world in which it would be easy to believe that Rumpelstiltskin is real. A break in the illusion of any one part would mean a break in the illusion of the whole.

THE STORY

As I began drafting up a series of events through which this character's story might be told, I knew from the start that only using one version of the tale would not be enough because they tend to lack detail. The Grimm's version, while the most well-known, is no exception. It unfolds like this:

A miller brags about his daughter's ability to spin straw into gold, which attracts the attention of this nameless land's king. The king orders the miller's daughter to the palace where she is shown a large room full of straw that she is expected to spin into gold overnight. If she fails, she will die. As she sits helplessly among the piles of straw, a little man appears and offers to help if she can pay. The miller's daughter offers the imp her necklace and he spins all of the straw into gold by morning. Impressed by her work, the king shows her another room holding even more straw. He gives her the same instructions and threat of death if she fails. Again the little man appears and the miller's daughter offers her gold ring. The straw is once again spun into gold and the elated king shows her to the largest room in the palace full to the brim with straw. If she succeeds this third and final time, the king promises to marry the miller's daughter. When the little man appears for the third time, the miller's daughter has nothing left to give him. The imp suggests that, once she marries the king, she give him her first born child in exchange for his help spinning the straw into gold. The miller's daughter agrees and they set to work. In the morning, after presenting the roomful of gold to the king, they are married and one year later they have a child. True to his word the little man returns demanding his payment. When the new queen refuses, the imp says that she can keep her child if she guesses his name in three days. The queen agrees to this deal and starts guessing all the names she knows. "That is not my name" he answers to all her attempts. The queen spends the next day collecting

names from her servants and when the little man appears a second time, she goes through her list again. After another unsuccessful day, the little man disappears. On the third day, a messenger sent to collect names from around the kingdom returns emptyhanded. However, while he was passing through the forest he happened upon a small house with a fire out front. Dancing around the fire was a “comical little man” who sang: “Today do I bake, tomorrow I brew, the day after that the Queen’s child comes in; And oh! I am glad that nobody knew that the name I am called is Rumpelstiltskin!” When the little man appeared the Queen began guessing names to which he responded “No.” At last she said “Then perhaps your name is Rumpelstiltskin!” Outraged the little man cried “The devil told you that!” He stamped his feet so hard that one sunk into the ground. As he grabbed the other foot to pull himself free, he split himself in two “and there was an end of him.”

This story has very little descriptive imagery which left room for invention and flexibility in my own storytelling. I guessed that most of my audience would only remember very general elements of the story. How Rumpelstiltskin vanished from the Queen’s rooms after she guessed his name varies across the three different versions collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm alone. In one he splits himself in two. In the others he is swallowed up by a crack in the earth or he flies away on a wooden spoon. Many variations of this tale exist outside Germany. A version called *Whuppity Stoorie* was told in Scotland. *Tom Tit Tot* was told in England, *Giltrutt* in Iceland, and *Titteli Ture* in Sweden.

Using the movement of this oral story across Europe I established an imaginary migration for Rumpelstiltskin that would eventually culminate in him traveling to North America where his camp could be discovered. Through this narrative structure, I began to create new details and events for Rumpelstiltskin’s history. Throughout my own telling I tried to tie him into real history while still embracing the ‘magic’ within the tale. Considering its origins in lore, legend, and the supernatural I felt it important that some of the magical elements remain. He is not a real creature and his nature is rooted in myth so I did not want to remove him from that entirely. I also believe that the magic of folk

tales is what attracts people to them so in order to hook my target audience, magic stayed in my story.

THE ARTIFACTS

I chose the artifacts before I actually wrote the bulk of Rumpelstiltskin's history. I knew there were certain objects that I wanted to create: a ledger and a shoe were the clearest to me early on. These objects helped construct narrative landmarks that I could use to find my way through the mire of 500 years. In addition to the physical props that I built, I also planned to use Photoshop to forge "historic" documents which would be displayed on the information panels alongside the exhibit text. These graphic artifacts would be an important element in the exhibit because I had a great deal more power over manipulating 2D images. Creating realistic physical objects that guests would be able to closely inspect was more challenging than altering photographs or creating digital paperwork that only had to satisfy one sense (sight) as opposed to two senses (sight and touch).

THE EXHIBIT

The final piece of my illusion is the exhibit. It would not have been enough to display the story and artifacts online or in a thesis paper alone. They had to be made physical and displayed with the care and precision of real artifacts in history museums. To be convincing, the displays had to be similar to what would be seen in real museums. I would also design the flow of information as well as the spatial relationship between objects, text, and audience.

Process

It was a slow start. True to the creative process, I spent (and wasted) a lot of time trying to make the story more complicated than it needed to be. I began looking at academic analyses of folk tales, fairytales, and oral storytelling but then realized that this was not moving the project forward. In an effort to extricate myself from the rabbit hole of analytical psychology on the hidden meanings in fairytales, I wrote a brief overview of Rumpelstiltskin's history:

Rumpelstiltskin did not die when he stamped his foot so hard he cracked himself in two. Somehow, he managed to survive his apparent self-destruction and has been actively pursuing his nefarious goals over the past several centuries.

The first recorded incident of the "little man" known as ___ dates back to the 16th century. It is said that a young woman (possibly a queen or someone of equal social standing) whose father tricked a man (possibly a king) into marrying, sought help from ___ for one reason or another and was not satisfied with her end of the bargain. To get out of the deal she'd struck, she was forced to guess his name. She was successful, though how he escaped is unknown.

Since then, ___ has been caught/sighted/dealt with several times over the last 500 years. Sometimes he is successful and keeps whatever prize promised him in exchange for his help. Often though, he is unsuccessful and exits the scene in various ways ranging from child-like temper tantrums to the eruption of fault lines caused by his stamping foot.

He lives primarily off the grid, away from cities and crowds. Extant reports describe him as very strange looking so he likely prefers places with fewer prying eyes. No one knows how he gets around, though he does so rather quickly. Some have claimed to have seen him riding a broom or even a giant spoon.

He frequently works in threes, helping out three times in exchange for payment in three installments, the last always being of the greatest value. He helped only women in the first four centuries however this has changed over the past 150 years as women have gained more independence, access to education, and generally were allowed to take their fate into their own hands. Nowadays in a world of instantaneous access to the whole of human knowledge, not to mention

name databases consisting of hundreds of thousands of names in every language, _____ has to take what work he can get.

Generally, he helps people achieve a better situation than their current one, whether they deserve it or not. Usually they lie about something they can do in order to achieve some goal but are then put to a test of their skills. At which point, _____ appears as if by magic.

This is the original version of my Rumpelstiltskin narrative as I conceived it in February 2018. At the time, I was toying with the idea of not naming Rumpelstiltskin at all in the exhibit since the secrecy surrounding his name is a theme in every variation. I decided against this in the hopes that his name would be the hook that drew passerby into my story.

A DISCOVERY IS MADE

Using this rough sketch as a base, I began brainstorming what would be on display and why. My goal was to construct a narrative and build out Rumpelstiltskin's character using the artifacts on show. At least some of them needed to be fairly specific to time and place in order to show from where and when he'd come. A range of provenance in the artifacts would add length to his timeline suggesting a longer-than-average life. But before I could really nail down all of these details, I had to determine how *and where* these artifacts were found. Early on in this process I decided that the artifacts were part of the remains of Rumpelstiltskin's campsite, recently discovered in the woods. I wanted to show the campsite as it was found and as it looked during excavation. To make this look as real as possible, I figured the best approach was to photograph the artifacts and some other camp elements (tent, fire pit, etc.) in real woodland rather than try to Photoshop everything together. However, if Rumpelstiltskin lived in Germany, how would I replicate the lush wild of German fairytales in the Hill Country of central Texas? Wild yes, but every romantic illustration of those European

forests shows dense, green, wet, moss covered woodland of an entirely different quality than the rough brushy land of Texas.

Keeping Rumpelstiltskin in Germany felt limiting in more ways than one. If I lived for 500 years, I certainly would not stay in the same place. I'd travel and explore and take voyages and see as much of the world as possible. Why would a magical being like Rumpelstiltskin, unbound by time, not do the same? Perhaps he traveled to Texas? Making Texas look like Texas would not be terribly difficult. After consulting my little brother who is familiar with most of the camping and hiking trails in the Lone Star State, I settled on Colorado Bend State Park as a suitable place for Rumpelstiltskin's campsite. Discovering the artifacts in Texas gave credence to why they would be displayed in Texas and add what I thought was a bit of absurdity to my historical account of the German folk-figure. I mean really: why on earth would Rumpelstiltskin come to Texas? This question would be answered much later when I wrote the information panels that would accompany the artifacts.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

The next problem I solved was the exhibit space. I was determined that it not be a classroom. Classrooms have very particular meanings to the students and faculty who use them and I did not want to fight against that personal significance. Additionally, a classroom in the Drama department already has associations with acting and the false reality of the stage. This would be going completely against my attempts at convincing visitors of the truth, realness, and un-theatricality of my story.

In a perfect world where I get everything I want, this exhibit would have been staged in a real history museum, sort of like guerrilla art. I needed a space that inherently supported my story as unquestionable fact. While I did ask the Blanton Museum of Art in

Austin if they would consider displaying my exhibit, I seriously doubted that actual history museums would want a mock-exhibit on their premises devaluing their own historical truths. The Blanton bemusedly though politely said no of course, but the University of Texas Fine Arts Library was interested. Okay, so it's not a museum per say but they do display archaeological artifacts and bring in small exhibits from time to time to showcase significant publications and artworks in the creative world.

Like museums, libraries are institutions that stand for the preservation of knowledge, history, and yes, storytelling. The Fine Arts Library, though housing information on theatre and the arts, would not necessarily invite the viewer to question the authenticity of an object's provenance. It was a very appropriate option and their timeline for the exhibit aligned perfectly with mine. A deal was struck almost immediately and preparations began to pick up speed.

AN EXPLORATION OF LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

During the fall of 2018, I enrolled in a class through the UT Austin Information School called Historical Museums: Context and Practice taught by Dr. Patricia Galloway. It was a very useful class for organizing artifacts and information in my exhibit. We read many articles on the organization of museums today and how exhibits influence audience interaction and even perception. The most helpful part of this class, though it was also the most time consuming, was visiting a local historical museum every week. In total I visited 13 museums: the Texas Music Museum, the Bob Bullock Museum of Texas History, the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, the O. Henry Museum, the Susannah Dickinson Museum, the Austin Fire Museum, Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farm, the Capitol Complex Visitor Center, the LBJ Library, the Texas Department of Public Safety Historical Museum and Research Center, the Texas Military

Museum at Camp Mabry, the Elisabet Ney Museum, and the Texas State Cemetery. It was an extensive exploration of Austin's historical museums and provided me with real life exhibit applications at every level of funding.

I noted and photographed specific display methods for various types of artifacts (especially books) as well as tone in the written texts. Seeing how artifacts and information were organized spatially in small and large environments was an invaluable experience because it is not always intuitive to the artifacts displayed. Creativity and storytelling are major elements in exhibit creation and demand a great amount of effort and skill from many people to arrange. Though the scale of my exhibit allowed for it, working alone was definitely difficult because I did not have other minds to help me work through the audience's engagement with the story. Learning about the extensive time and effort contributed to an exhibit by huge teams of people was my biggest take away from the class. Being designer, writer, curator, producer, and builder was no easy feat and if I were to create another exhibit, a team would be the first thing I assemble.

MAKING THE ARTIFACTS

In September I began making the artifacts that I had spent the summer planning. Throughout this process I factored in limitations on convincing fabrication techniques, display options, time, and my own skill. These constraints had a great influence on what I made and how I made them. My artifact list stayed fairly consistent throughout the process, though I did end up cutting a couple due to lack of time and not really knowing how to "fake it." A campsite replica and a broken piece of a spinning wheel were among the cut props. I was not sure how to go about making a wheel and I had in my mind a very particular style (a Saxony spinning wheel) that looked handmade, perhaps with ornate folk carvings on it. I looked into buying one but even the broken ones, which I

wanted, were a bit pricy. The Texas Performing Arts Prop Shop had a few, but they were not the style I wanted and breaking them to add wear and tear wasn't an option. So I nixed the spinning wheel in favor of the drop spindles (Figure C4). These suited Rumpelstiltskin's nomadic lifestyle better than a traditional spinning wheel did. I hoped that the drop spindles would add age to the character and make him seem older than the 19th century Grimm story suggests.

In many cases, I chose artifacts that would lend this ancient element to my version of Rumpelstiltskin. I wanted him to be much older than his oral stories to deepen the magic and extraordinary nature of the narrative I was weaving. I intentionally worked in some implausible elements (alright, lots of implausible elements) to increase the impact of the experiment's results should I find that people did believe. If my entire made-up narrative was entirely realistic, this illusion would not have been nearly as fun to construct. On top of this, I believe the magic of folktales is a significant part of what attracts us to them and makes them so enjoyable.

The other artifacts in the final display include (see Appendix C for images):

- A shoe made in the style of a medieval poulaine
- An account book and a loose page listing several of Rumpelstiltskin's clients
- A beaded necklace
- Wooden bobbins with names of clients and dates inscribed on them
- Two baskets with "flax" fibers and a piece of gold thread stuck into the weaving
- A can of coins from various countries and times covered in sediment
- Two wooden spindles with "stone" whorls
- A "cast iron" pot and archaeological field drawing
- A field drawing of a "magic" spoon
- Brass bracelets

- A carved wooden button
- Several pieces of pyrite (Fool's Gold)

The bracelets (Figure C7), button (Figure C8), and pyrite (Figure C11) were late additions and procured from a thrift store, Michael's craft store, and my brother's childhood rock collection respectively. I started adding these smaller items because I feared I would not have enough artifacts on display. In the end I think I had just enough to look at and support the exhibit text. However, I made the artifacts before the exhibit text was actually finished so I spent a great deal of time trying to write the story to support the artifacts, which can be tricky when the objects range in origin of place and time.

THE EXHIBIT SCRIPT

The next phase of the project was writing what is called an "exhibit script." Curators create these to organize all of the written information and artifacts in an exhibit including section headings and object labels. This structure helps to outline the guest experience and the flow of information. I began my exhibit script by closely following the example shared with our Historical Museums class. However, as I was trying to lay out my artifacts within the linear progression of the written story, I struggled to find a logical physical place for every object. I realized that my story is not linear. Every object does not necessarily relate to a specific information panel. Trying to make everything fit was inhibiting my writing. With this revelation I restructured my exhibit flow. Rather than having a defined beginning and end to the exhibit, I organized the space, information, and artifacts so that guests could wander freely between text and objects at their own pace. This shift allowed my story to develop more organically and with much less force than it had been. The vagueness of the folk tales meant there were a lot of gaps

to fill and with a five-hundred-year timeline, gaps in the narrative were unavoidable. Yet, looking back this contributed to the air of mystery about him and justified my seemingly scattered selection of artifacts.

While the objects play a role in building the mystery and tangibility of Rumpelstiltskin, the exhibit script is where I developed most of his character. Simply regurgitating the folk tales was not enough so I wrote some new encounters for him. I reasoned that on his journey from Germany to Texas he might have engaged in some “devious dealings” with people along the way. What drew him to North America, though? Why the California Gold Rush of course! It fit perfectly with this character and yielded some convenient interactions with gold miners. In this story I was able to maintain a bit of Rumpelstiltskin’s magic by keeping the gold-weaving theme. Through my research of mid-19th century America I stumbled across another bit of helpful information to legitimize my historical narrative. According to the Texas Almanac, the largest group of Germans immigrated to Central Texas in the 1840s, founding the settlement of New Braunfels which is only about 133 miles south of the future Colorado Bend State Park (Plocheck). Perhaps, I queried, Rumpelstiltskin traveled to America with his countrymen where he heard about the discovery of gold in California. Rather than settling in Texas right away, maybe he went out west and spun gold out of the earth alongside his fellow ‘49ers who spotted him at his unusual work on several occasions. This notion inspired a sighting of Rumpelstiltskin by a miner which I then claimed was written up in *The Pacific News*, a real newspaper that was printed in the San Francisco area between 1849 and 1851 (“California’s Daily Newspapers;” Figure B7 and D13). I used this story as a backdrop to the Fool’s Gold artifact display.

In an effort to get Rumpelstiltskin back to Texas, I wrote up an account by a New Braunfels woman describing his failed attempts at offering her his spinning services. In

the account, the woman says the fairy “exploded into a fit of hysterics and disappeared into a puff of smoke. The only traces of him left behind were two small footprints made of gold dust” (*Rumpelstiltskin*; Figures B8 and D14). Writing these tidbits of magic and absurdity made me throw my head back laughing on several occasions after which I would think “No one is ever going to believe this!”

The “Markham Attwood case” is another example of story expansion (Figures B9 and B10). I wanted to bring Rumpelstiltskin into the 20th century and broaden his area of expertise outside spinning gold. Forgery seemed like a logical field for him to explore and would diversify the graphic artifacts on display. Rather than using a photo found on the internet to represent Markham Attwood, I scoured my grandmother’s box of family pictures and found one of her grandfather, my great-great grandfather, William Edward Kintz. I Photoshopped the image of the desk stacked high with “forged” documents (Figure D19), the Chicago Police Report (Figure D16), and the suspect drawing (Figure D18). The police sketch of Rumpelstiltskin is entirely original and was done in Photoshop mimicking the charcoal style of a 1930s police drawing I found. I enjoyed telling this particular story the most. It was modern and I found I could include more detail, which is evident in the police write up. Yet I was worried that the magical aspects of the story (that Rumpelstiltskin “burst into a shower of gold dust”) would be a sure sign of fakery. However, it would be no fun to convince people of totally plausible and not at all impossible happenings. Persuading someone of something that goes against all reason and common sense would be all the more revealing...and amusing.

WRITING LABELS AND DISPLAYING ARTIFACTS

Object labels are a keystone in historical museums. They provide information about provenance as well as contribute to the overall narrative voice of an exhibit. As I

wrote the object labels, I tried to maintain the mystery and supernatural aspect of the original folk tales. I tried to strike a balance between the objective presentation of information and the archaeological puzzle that the entire exhibit is based on. In the label for the spoon I disclose that the researchers are actually considering the fact that the spoon might possess “magical properties” (Figure C14). By demonstrating that the scientists on this project are open to supernatural causes, I asked my audience to be open to it as well.

Throughout this process the problem of how to display the information was looming in the back of my mind. I wanted all of the artifacts to be displayed behind glass because vitrines are what I associate most with historical museums. At least one visitor noticed this and commented “It would be cool if some of the stuff was in a glass case to show how important it is.” If you can’t touch it, it must have incredible value or be so delicate that even breathing on the artifact will do harm. When it became apparent that I would not have access to glass vitrines, I resigned myself to displaying the objects out in the open. I made sure to place prominent “Please Do Not Touch” signs around each display as this was standard practice in museums where artifacts were on open display.

The relationship between audience and artifact is something that I did not really address until late in the process. It proved a daunting and difficult thing to plan before I had the story completely sketched out. In the end, the audience experience was less “designed” than a true museum exhibit, which typically has a flow supported by more “real” history and detail than I could feasibly incorporate into my objects. Nevertheless, the final layout of artifacts and text in an organic and non-linear flow was very successful. Had I forced the audience down a one-way narrative path the seed of possibility might not have taken root as well as it apparently did. Leaving it open so that each guest could choose which information to access on their own terms may have given

them a sense of agency and, therefore, power in the experience. Perhaps my trust in their ability to complete an illusion from my story fragments made them trust the fiction I fed them.

On Successes, Failures, and Lessons Learned

My thesis was built around the question: can I convince people that Rumpelstiltskin is real? Yes. I can and I did. Behold the power of illusion! (And Photoshop!)

GUEST RESPONSE

In an effort to judge guest reactions to the exhibit and its information, I offered comment cards on which they could write their thoughts. I had about 16 people leave comments and of those, ten revealed doubt or belief.

Some of the comments included:

- “It looks so real”
- “FAKE! These art pieces looked really cool and real at first but then I realized this was all fake.”
- “FAKE thought it was real at first”
- “This is incredible! Everything is so well made, curated, and presented. And the literature is so well written. I couldn’t figure out how you put the little figure in the pictures but they look genuinely believable! I know you must have thought about using lighting and other forms of media (interviews, etc.) probably but restricted by the library.”
- “That’s really funny cause I really thought all of that was real.”

Other comments are more ambiguous in the author’s stance on the matter:

- “Very cool! I’m amazed that UT was able to acquire these items for display and put them in the library. Really enjoyed reading the strange history of Rumpelstiltskin (although I’m quite creeped out too).”

- “I learned so much and now am questioning so much.”
- Didn’t know he had so many names. It was interesting to see how he adapted over the centuries. Very fun. Good job.”
- “Wow! This is so interesting! I have been mesmerized by the story of Rumpelstiltskin ever since I was a child. Those involved in this research must continue this work with scrupulous historical diligence, and publish it as a book. Is there a transcript of this exhibit text available? I would love to continue referring to it, and to stay abreast of any future developments in this fascinating story!! Thanks so much for displaying it.”

Upon reading these notes I concluded that some doubt may have been fostered within my audience, but there was also a hint of indulgence and sarcasm. All in all, it seemed moderately successful in terms of audience response. I’d managed to spark curiosity and provide an entertaining experience for those who stopped by.

And then it happened.

A few days before closing a student journalist contacted me wanting to do an interview about the exhibit. In her email she asked if I could connect her with Dr. Beathan Thomas and Leona Andreasen. My breath caught in my throat. She had asked for the contact information of my fictional nature photographer and archaeologist! I spent several hours wondering if this was another sarcastic comment or if she truly believed the discovery in Colorado Bend State Park had been made. I also debated whether I should go into the interview and keep up my illusion that Rumpelstiltskin is real and possibly still alive. I quit acting a long time ago though so I no longer trusted my ability to keep up the charade.

We agreed upon a phone interview and, when she called, the first thing she asked was how I came up with the idea for the exhibit. I countered with the question: “Well, did

you believe it?” She paused and sounded unsure. She confessed that at first she did believe it and was really intrigued by everything, so much so that she wanted to get in touch with the discoverers of the campsite. However, as good journalists are wont to do, she started researching the events I outlined in the exhibit. She said she tried looking up Dr. Beathan Thomas and Leona Andreasen online and came up with nothing. Of course she wouldn’t find anything. Beathan Thomas is my little brother’s first and middle name. “Leona” is made up and Andreasen is the Danish version of my last name, Andersen, meaning son of Andreas. The journalist even contacted the Texas Archeological Society about what was supposedly happening over in Colorado Bend State Park and they said they knew nothing about it. She talked with some students sitting near the exhibit in the Fine Arts Library who were definitely on the fence about what the exhibit was and whether it was real.

It took some proactive fact-checking consisting of a call to the local archaeological society and a few Google searches to dissuade the journalist from her initial conviction. Yet she did believe it at first and so did several of the people she interviewed. I am still amazed that I succeeded in this respect. While I was writing the information panels for the exhibit, I was doubled over laughing half the time at how ridiculous the story is. I know how hard I worked and the lengths I took to convince people that this was real, but I did not think it would be this effective. I am so curious what the response would have been had I been able to stage this exhibit in a real museum.

I asked a few colleagues what it was that broke the illusion for them. One said it was the tin can of coins explaining that it was the only obviously mass-produced artifact in the exhibit (Figure C9). This was a particularly enlightening comment. I had hoped that using a soup can (split pea soup if I recall) would help bring Rumpelstiltskin into the modern age further emphasizing his extreme age and suggesting his continued existence.

For this guest, the contrast was too much for the illusion to hold, but it may have seemed more integrated in the story had there been more contemporary artifacts on display.

Another visitor suggested the use of media such as interviews with researchers or the archaeologist to add depth and realism to the illusion. I would have loved to stage interviews and present them alongside the artifacts and information panels. This was another layer to a story that was getting too big for me to handle alone. Creating this element would have required a script, camera, editing, and of course an actor to play the interviewee. While a human element would have helped ground the narrative, I settled for photographs of the discoverers instead, which are of my cousin and a photographer friend.

The journalist who interviewed me also said that she spoke with an 8th grader who visited my exhibit and asked if she believed that it was real. The young attendee said no, she did not believe, and she noted that it was the pyrite that broke the illusion for her. She was not at all fooled by my Fool's Gold, which was, ironically, the only real thing in the entire exhibit.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

I have analyzed the broad successes of this venture through the lenses of storytelling, scenic design, and themed entertainment. A story was woven through written text and artifacts. Each artifact became a tool to support or expand the central thread of narrative through which I built Rumpelstiltskin's history. The success of the story stemmed from the objective, yet open-minded, narrative voice I cultivated in the text as well as the looseness of the storyline itself. I intentionally left room for the audience to fill in their own impressions and preconceptions. If the story had been tightly packed with details and facts, the mischievousness of the experience would have been obliterated.

Considered from a scenic design perspective, the exhibit layout, spatial organization, and location also contributed to the overall success of the experience. Its organic, non-linear structure supported the loose narrative allowing each guest a unique experience. As for the artifacts, I think my best ones included the bobbins (Figure C6), the account book (Figures C1 and C2), and the shoe (Figure C3) which were each handmade and distressed. The book was by far the most complicated artifact I produced. I took a Coptic Bookbinding class at the Austin Book Arts Center in order to learn how to do this painstaking ancient binding technique. I could have bought a vintage leather ledger and distressed it to fit my needs, but making the book from scratch seemed more appropriate and within the realm of Rumpelstiltskin's off-the-grid lifestyle. I used gold thread (spun by him of course) to sew the signatures together and attach the boards for the cover. I made the boards out of foam core and matt board then texturized and painted them with a leathery finish. The making of the account book and the feeling I wanted it to evoke sums up the overall experience I sought for each visitor to the exhibit. I wanted his book to have the elements of magic and nature in it because these make up the mythology of folklore. Maintaining this supernatural sense of the original, this innate quality of the narrative traditions of our past, deepened my carefully constructed illusion and imbued it with more meaning than any other story I could have chosen to present.

ENDINGS: CONCLUSION OF A 3-YEAR ADVENTURE

First things first, this is not an ending.

Much like Rumpelstiltskin's, my story continues and, while the diploma might be in my possession, the learning never ceases. I chose to pursue a degree in theatrical design to learn what it takes to tell a story that draws people into its core. Stories that surround, that grow, that resonate with audiences both young and old and bring each into

contact with our collective memory, the same human consciousness preserved in myths, legends, and folk tales.

Creating *Rumpelstiltskin: 500 Years of Devious Dealings* helped me understand a little better how to connect to the deepest parts of an audience and bring them into a story. I return to my guiding question: Can I convince people that a well-known folk tale is historic fact? Belief is a powerful thing and something that we often rightfully protect with skepticism. Through my work as a scenic designer and as curator on this project, I discovered that we can choose to believe in a story for the sake of experiencing a world view other than our own. Theater creators ask their audiences to “suspend their disbelief” and they do so because they either need or want to feel the story on stage as an emotional extension of themselves. Seamless illusions are the bread and butter of the theme park industry, drawing millions of guests every year. Guests willingly step out of their realities and into new immersive experiences, every detail of which validates every other detail and as such creates a thoroughly self-confirming and believable world.

I did not have billions of dollars with which to construct an immersive experience to convince my audience that Rumpelstiltskin is real. Instead, I chose to harness the institutional power of museums to substantiate my illusion. As guardians of knowledge and history, museums direct our belief as they intentionally construct narratives that inform our understanding of history, both ours and other’s. They hold a great deal of responsibility to tell stories free of the biases of the exhibit creators. As I demonstrated through my own exhibit which brazenly presented false information as fact, belief is very easily manipulated when you understand just a few elements that reinforce our contemporary perception of truth.

I contend that, for all my worrying that the story was too ridiculous, it was the impossibility of the story I spun that engaged passersby and allowed them to suspend

their disbelief during their visit. I believe one learns a lot about a person when one uncovers what they *want* to believe in. I have noticed that magic is absent in our contemporary literature and I have found that it is missed. Several of the comments left by visitors to my exhibit mentioned a deep love for fairytales. As I expected, the name “Rumpelstiltskin” and its connection to magic and myth, was the hook that drew people into my illusion. I believe our collective memory is slowly uprooting the inexplicable, illusive, and enchanting elements that once allowed us to explain phenomenon now made clear by science. By retelling a familiar folk tale, I hoped to tap into the universal feelings of enchantment and wonder that children felt when listening to the old stories. These are the emotions I seek to evoke in my future audiences: a dash of hope, a smidgen of possibility, a spark of belief. There is power in this, yes; responsibility, even more so. And yet, when the stories are captivating and deeply human and full of the lore that inspired the first oral stories to be told, the audience will more often than not willingly partake in the conjuring of such an impossible world and doubt their reality, if but for a moment.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: EXHIBIT SCRIPT AND PLAN

This appendix includes all of the text that appears on the information panels in Appendix B.

Info Panel Text 12.8.19	Accompanying Documents (images)
Introduction	
<p>Panel 1: More than a Myth (What was discovered)</p> <p>Folktales were thought to be just that: tales. Stories told to children to warn them about the struggles they would face in adulthood. Captivating narratives that would help the common folk make sense of their world and their place in it. Most folktales are fiction, but this one is not.</p> <p>Deep in the woods of the Texas Hill Country, a discovery was made that would change how historians and folklorists categorized the tale of an imp that fiercely guarded his name from those he helped. What was first thought to be just another abandoned campsite holds a slew of evidence pointing to the assumed fictional character, Rumpelstiltskin. Many of the artifacts are still undergoing intense testing and research but some, on display here, have been deemed ready for public viewing. This discovery of The Camp and its incredibly well-preserved artifacts ranging from the 15th to the early 19th century leads historians to question whether Rumpelstiltskin was merely the stuff of legend. A nature photographer's chance findings in central Texas suggest more than that. Based on the dates of these artifacts, archaeologists have come to two conclusions: first that Rumpelstiltskin was a real person and second that, somehow, he managed to survive and has been actively pursuing his nefarious dealings over the past five centuries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of the campsite location

Figure A1: Exhibit Script

<p>Panel 2: A Discovery is Made</p> <p>In 2016, famed nature photographer Leona Andreasen was tracking a particularly uncommon type of owl. The barred owl (<i>strix varia</i>) had been sighted in small numbers and confirmed breeding in Colorado Bend State Park. Andreasen, ever dedicated to her work of photographing hard to find species for future generations, followed her subjects deep into the woods to photograph them at peace in their natural habitat.</p> <p>On a late fall day just as the sun was beginning to set, Andreasen sighted a lone owl as it swooped down to the riverbank to catch its meal. She followed it to a tall tree where it appeared to be feeding its young. As she began to set up her tripod at the base of the tree, she noticed a hard wooden handle protruding from the earth near the tree's roots. With some effort she released it from the soil's grasp and dusted it off. A long wooden shaft with a stone at one end and a hook carved into the other lay in her hands. Her years studying medieval history sparked recognition in her brain: a spindle. Andreasen found that there were still some fibers attached to the whorl of the spindle. Upon closer inspection, Andreasen determined that the attached strand was straw which tapered off into a metallic yellow thread.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps of its location in Colorado Bend State Park • Illustration of the campsite
<p>Panel 3: Connecting the Threads</p> <p>Andreasen recalled recent articles published by former colleagues about the significance of spinning in the history of "women's work" in early modern Europe. One article, written by Dr. Beathan Thomas, had referenced an old and obscure fairytale and presented a rather compelling argument of the tale's historicity. Dr. Thomas put forth that the tale "Rumpelstiltskin," about a mischievous man of unusually small stature who could spin straw into gold, was actually historic fact rather than the moralistic children's tale recorded by the Brothers Grimm in 1857.</p> <p>This was the first person Andreasen called after her startling discovery in the hills of Texas. Almost immediately, Dr. Thomas caught a flight to Austin, rented a Jeep and drove to Colorado Bend State Park with three assistants and his dog Grimm. Upon arrival at the clearing, this small team began the most unusual and historically momentous excavation in modern Texas history.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo of Leona Andreasen and Beathan Campbell • Photos of necklace during excavation

Figure A1 continued: Exhibit Script

Spinning Tales	
<p>Panel 4: Understanding the Lore He has gone by many names - Tom Tit Tot, Whuppity Stoorie, The Helper, Purzingele, Giltrutt, the imp, even Little Man. And yet none of these names brought him as much attention and acclaim as the name Rumpelstiltskin. Though he guarded these titles with the utmost care, they managed to leak into public knowledge over the past five centuries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations from various published versions of the tale
<p>Panel 5: Truth in Legend A true history of this little man, whose legend has only recently been revived in popular culture, is difficult to compile. Many factors contribute to this. However, the most frustrating is his total lack of origin.</p> <p>According to Dr. Thomas' research, the first recorded incident attributed to the creature known as Rumpelstiltskin dates back to the 16th century, though he may be much older. It is said that a young woman's father tricked a man of very high rank into marrying her by boasting that his daughter could spin straw into gold. When faced with the challenge of spinning three rooms full of straw into gold, she sought help from a creature that appeared as soon as her hopeless tears began to fall. For one reason or another she was not satisfied with her end of the bargain. To get out of the deal she'd struck, she was forced to guess his name. She was successful, though how he escaped is unknown.</p> <p>Stories abound of young women in similar situations. One account dating to the 1700s is about a woman whose mother told the king that her daughter could spin an exorbitant five skeins of flax a day. The young woman, who married the King on the grounds that she would spin five skeins of flax every day for a month, later claimed to have had help from a small devil. In exchange for his service, she agreed to become his bride if she couldn't guess his name in three days. By some stroke of luck or mere coincidence, the King was passing through a dark part of the forest one day when he overheard laughter and saw the little man singing "Nimmy nimmy not, my name's Tom Tit Tot." One man who lived about the same time in Suffolk, a Lord Jeffrey Abbot, kept meticulous daily journals of everything he saw and did, including this strange encounter in the forest. His account seems to line up with the story of the king in Tom Tit Tot quite well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustration by Walter Crane (1845-1915) - Household Stories from the Collection of the Brothers Grimm. Published by Macmillan & Co. London 1882. • Journal Entry of Lord Jeffrey Abbot - From the private collection of Timothy Abbot, a dependent of Jeffrey Abbot. British, ca. 18th century.

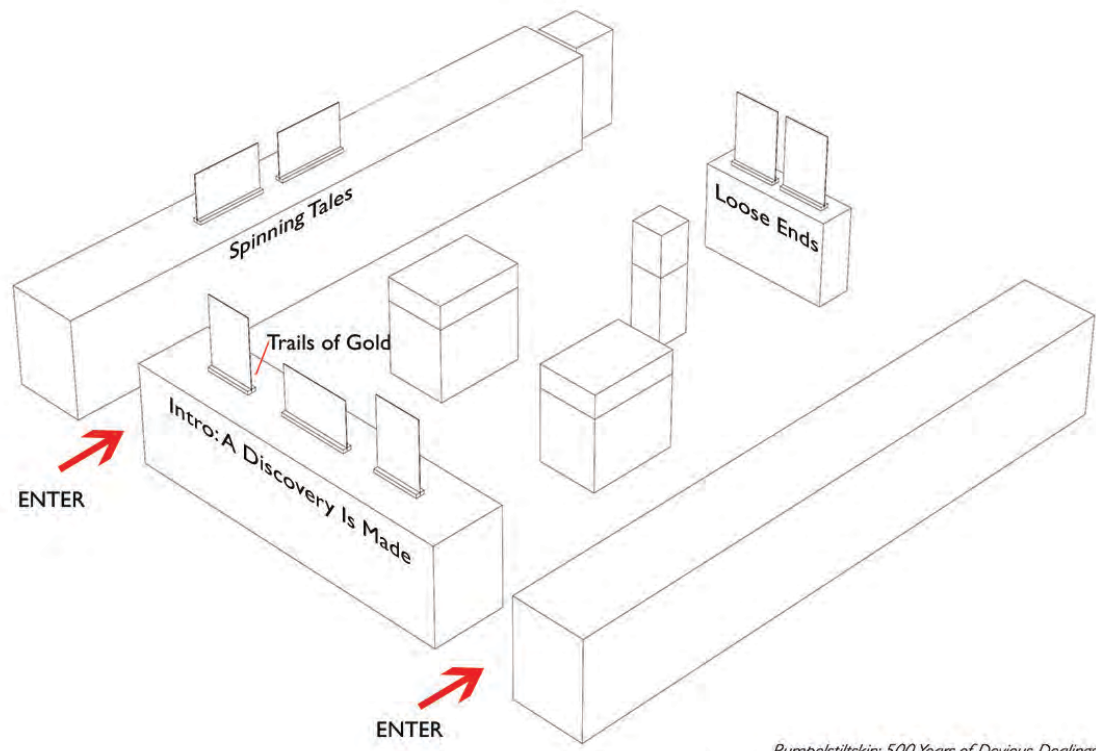
Figure A1 continued: Exhibit Script

Trails of Gold	
<p>Panel 6: Journey from Europe to North America Rumpelstiltskin first appeared in Germany during the middle of the 15th century. He then made his way through Europe leaving a trail of stories about him behind. Dr. Thomas collected hundreds of obscure reports that authorities overlooked due to insufficient evidence and fantastic claims. Over the last 500 hundred years, Rumpelstiltskin has been sighted or dealt with in various capacities and under even more diverse contracts for “helping”. According to Thomas’, Rumpelstiltskin was occasionally successful and kept whatever prize promised him. Often though, he was unsuccessful and exited the scene in many ways ranging from child-like temper tantrums to the eruption of fault lines caused by his stamping foot. Since the tale was first told in Germany, police reports of devils, small statured people, and even fairies who offer help to struggling people pop up every now and then. It wasn’t until the invention of the camera that these reports were given credence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map of Europe depicting Rumpelstiltskin’s progress through the continent. • Photographic documentation of sightings
<p>Panel 7: Immigration to America German immigration to the United States increased greatly in the mid-1800s and researchers believe it was this movement that inspired Rumpelstiltskin to travel to North America. By the end of the 1850s, nearly 1 million people had emigrated from Germany to America. Rumpelstiltskin, having a penchant for gold, likely came to America in response to the discovery of gold in California. One of the bobbins discovered at The Camp is inscribed with the word “Coloma,” which was where James W. Marshal kicked off the California Gold Rush in 1848 with his findings at Sutter’s Mill. Descriptions of a man approximately 3 feet tall are found in a newspaper interview (above) with one forty-niner who was asked to describe the sorts of people who came to mine. Another account by a miner in 1849 told about a “smallish man all brown from the dust, dressed in a green jacket and wearing a red felt hat” who was seen pulling long golden strings out of the river bed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketch by a gold miner of a very short man presumed to be Rumpelstiltskin • Photo of gold miners with blurry figure nearby (Rumpelstiltskin) • The Pacific News article of interview with gold miner
<p>Panel 8: Public reports of Rumpelstiltskin in California stop there, though. Dr. Thomas believes that after Rumpelstiltskin exhausted his luck in the Gold Rush, he journeyed to central Texas where many of his fellow countrymen resided. In 1844, Prince Karl of Solms-Braunfels brought 150 German families to Texas where they established the settlement New Braunfels, roughly 130 miles south of Colorado Bend State Park. It is easy to see why Rumpelstiltskin might have come to Texas in the hopes that his people still needed his help in their new land. Reported sightings spiked between the 1880s and 1900 in Texas with many apparently sane people describing very short men “dark green in color” wearing clothes stitched together with gold thread. In 1872 a New Braunfels woman, who had a great deal of wool to spin into yarn for a wealthy client, reported seeing one of the “little people” watching her from under an old elm tree in her front yard. According to her account, he offered to help finish her spinning in exchange for a beautiful old clock with golden hands that her grandfather had brought from Germany. When the woman refused, the little man exploded into a fit of hysterics and disappeared in a puff of smoke. The only traces of him left behind were two small foot prints made of gold dust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map of New Braunfels in relation to Colorado Bend State park • Police report of New Braunfels woman’s story • Illustration by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm

Figure A1 continued: Exhibit Script

Loose Ends	
<p>Panel 9:</p> <p>The last recorded sighting of someone meeting Rumpelstiltskin's description was in Chicago in 1929. After the big stock market crash that would eventually lead to the Great Depression, thousands of people lost their livelihoods and were forced to make ends meet any way they could.</p> <p>Rumpelstiltskin went where the demand was.</p> <p>Markham Attwood, an executive at a prominent Chicago bank, grew desperate as the bank faced possible layoffs. In an unsettling turn of events, assistance in the form of a strange little man appeared in Attwood's moment of crisis.</p> <p>It all began with his wife Jane bragging about her husband's nonexistent account acquisitions at the bank's annual holiday party. Not knowing what to do, Attwood went along with his wife's blatant lies until he was approached by his boss who congratulated him and requested to see the new account lists the following Monday. That night while working late in the bank, Attwood began to panic. While standing at the window contemplating a quick end to his current predicament, he saw a small figure about 3 feet tall standing on the ledge just outside the window. Attwood described the figure as "short wearing baggy trousers, a bright white shirt, and a green knit cap."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago Police Report from the initial inspection • Photo of Markham Atwood
<p>Panel 10:</p> <p>Extant police reports from this incident indicate that the mysterious man offered to forge new accounts for Attwood, including references and notarized seals. In return for help, Attwood gave the creature a gold plated pen he had received as a company Christmas gift the year before. According to Attwood, this continued for several weeks until one night he ran out of things to pay the little man with. The man wouldn't take paper money, he said, and instead asked for something of far greater value. "When he refused to take my money, the son of a bitch asked for my unborn child. I told him to go to hell and out of nowhere a loud noise rumbled up from the ground. The man started jumping up and down, screaming and yelling and then burst into a shower of gold dust."</p> <p>"I couldn't recall him ever mentioning a name though he knew mine from our first meeting." Markham Atwood, 1930, from <i>Fairy Sightings in Modern-day America</i> by Annette Peters.</p> <p>It appears that Rumpelstiltskin dealt in more than physical gold. Forging documents and curing illnesses also seem to be among his signature services as seen in the remarkable discovery of his account ledger, on display in this exhibit. Accounts like Markham Attwood's were extremely common before 1930 but then they suddenly stopped. Researchers are at a loss for why. Dr. Beathan Thomas commented that "it is possible that the creature we know as Rumpelstiltskin finally met his end, but we can never truly be certain. We will just have to wait and see if any more sightings of him surface. Until then, the findings at this campsite will keep us very busy and hopefully answer a few longstanding questions as well."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police sketch of the suspect • Photo of Atwood's office with the forged documents stacked on desk

Figure A1 continued: Exhibit Script



Rumpelstiltskin: 500 Years of Devious Dealings
UT Austin Fine Arts Library 2019
Exhibit Model
Scale: 3/4"=1'-0"


Figure A2: Original exhibit plan

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION PANELS

To read text on the information panels, refer to Exhibit Script in Appendix A. Refer to Appendix D for details of graphics.

MORE THAN A MYTH

Folktales were thought to be just that: tales. Stories told to children to warn them about the struggles they would face in adulthood. Captivating narratives that would help the common folk make sense of their world and their place in it. Most folktales are fiction, but this one is not.



Arlin G. Clark/Black Star Park, © 2013 The Camp, all rights reserved.

Deep in the woods of the Texas Hill Country, a discovery was made that would change how historians and folklorists categorized the tale of an imp that fiercely guarded his name from those he helped. What was first thought to be just another abandoned campsite holds a slew of evidence pointing to the assumed fictional character, Rumpelstiltskin. Many of the artifacts are still undergoing intense testing and research but some, on display here, have been deemed ready for public viewing.

This discovery of The Camp and its incredibly well-preserved artifacts ranging from the 15th to the early 19th century leads historians to question whether Rumpelstiltskin was merely the stuff of legend. A nature photographer's chance findings in central Texas suggest more than that. Based on the dates of these artifacts, archaeologists have come to two conclusions: first that Rumpelstiltskin was a real person and second that, somehow, he managed to survive and has been actively pursuing his nefarious dealings over the past five centuries.

Figure B1: Introductory Panel 1

A DISCOVERY IS MADE

In 2016, famed nature photographer Leona Andreason was tracking a particularly uncommon type of owl. The barred owl (*Strix varia*) had been sighted in small numbers and confirmed breeding in Colorado Bend State Park. Andreason, ever dedicated to her work of photographing hard to find species for future generations, followed her subjects deep into the woods to photograph them at peace in their natural habitat.



Colorado Bend State Park topographical map showing location of The Camp.



Reconstruction of The Camp as it might have looked when first occupied.

On a late fall day just as the sun was beginning to set, Andreason sighted a lone owl as it swooped down to the riverbank to catch its meal. She followed it to a tall tree where it appeared to be feeding its young. As she began to set up her tripod at the base of the tree, she noticed a hard wooden handle protruding from the earth near the tree's roots. With some effort she released it from the soil's grasp and dusted it off. A long wooden shaft with a stone at one end and a hook carved into the other lay in her hands. Her years studying medieval history sparked recognition in her brain: a spindle. Andreason found that there were still some fibers attached to the whorl of the spindle. Upon closer inspection, Andreason determined that the attached strand was straw which tapered off into a metallic yellow thread.

Figure B2: Introductory Panel 2

CONNECTING THE THREADS



Emma Andraesen



Dr. Beathan Thomas

Andraesen recalled recent articles published by former colleagues about the significance of spinning in the history of “women’s work” in early modern Europe. One article, written by Dr. Beathan Thomas, had referenced an old and obscure fairytale and presented a rather compelling argument of the tale’s historicity. Dr. Thomas put forth that the tale, “Rumpelstiltskin,” about a mischievous man of unusually small stature who could spin straw into gold, was actually historic fact rather than the moralistic children’s tale recorded by the Brothers Grimm in 1812.

This was the first person Andraesen called after her startling discovery in the hills of Texas. Almost immediately, Dr. Thomas caught a flight to Austin, rented a jeep and drove to Colorado Bend State Park with three assistants and his dog Grima. Upon arrival at the clearing, this small team began the most unusual and historically momentous excavation in modern Texas history.



Excavation photo of a basket wheel found by The Group

Figure B3: Introductory Panel 3

SPINNING TALES

Understanding the Lore

He has gone by many names - Tom Tiddler, Whuppity Stoorie, The Helper, Purzingele, Gilitrut, the imp, even Little Man. And yet none of these names brought him as much attention and acclaim as the name Rumpelstiltskin. Though he guarded these titles with the utmost care, they managed to leak into public knowledge over the past five centuries.



Illustration by Louis Dorval
Some Fairy Tales: Stories and Fables of Olden Collections France
Published 1911



Illustration by Maxime Guy
The World's Fairy Book
Published 1928



Tom Tiddler
Illustration by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939)
Fairy Fairy Tales by Hans Anand Senf
Published by Macmillan Company, New York
1928



Tom Tiddler
Illustration by John Bown
Fairy Fairy Tales by Joseph Jacobs
Published by David Nutt, London 1900



Illustration by Edward Colby (1860-1943)
The Fairy Book by Ethel M. Atwell Child
Published by Macmillan & Co, London 1919



Illustration by Anne Anderson (1874-1927)
More Andersen's Old Fairy Tales
Published by Thomas Publishing Company
1923

Figure B4: Panel 4

Truth in Legend

A true history of this little man, whose legend has only recently been revived in popular culture, is difficult to compile. Many factors contribute to this. However, the most frustrating is his total lack of origin.



The illustration *White Crown* (c.15-1910)
Reprinted courtesy from the *Collection of the British Library*
Published by Methuen & Co., London 1914

According to Dr. Thomas' research, the first recorded incident attributed to the creature known as Rumpelstiltskin dates back to the 16th century, though he may be much older. It is said that a young woman's father tricked a man of very high rank into marrying her by boasting that his daughter could spin straw into gold. When faced with the challenge of spinning three rooms full of straw into gold, she sought help from a creature that appeared as soon as her hopeless tears began to fall. For one reason or another she was not satisfied with her end of the bargain. To get out of the deal she'd struck, she was forced to guess his name. She was successful, though how he escaped is unknown.

Stories abound of young women in similar situations. One account dating to the 1700s is about a woman whose mother told the king that her daughter could spin an exorbitant five skeins of flax a day. The young woman, who married the King on the grounds that she would spin five skeins of flax every day for a month, later claimed to have had help from a small devil. In exchange for his service, she agreed to become his bride if she couldn't guess his name in three days. By some stroke of luck, or mere coincidence, the King was passing through a dark part of the forest one day when he overheard laughter and saw the little man singing: "Niminy niminy not, my name's Ton Tui Tot." One man who lived about the same time in Suffolk, a Lord Jeffrey Abbot, kept meticulous daily journals of everything he saw and did, including this strange encounter in the forest. His account seems to line up with the story of the king in *Ton Tui Tot* quite well.



An account of Lord Jeffrey Abbot
From the private collection of Timothy Abbot, a descendant of Jeffrey Abbot.
Timothy Abbot
This is an extremely strange account in the wood, although possibly, for about 1000 years for parties, we were always down a right name for. I got very poor paper in the wood had been some before, which was quite a few months ago, I was passing through those trees from about an ill dead. On an open inside, shall get when I heard a sort of humming, rising up from below. I passed over the edge and was right. A little back changed color, with long pointed end and crooked nose and not like much about the way and deep. It had a little spinning wheel and was spinning with and it said to find that it was a white. Over the opening it sang: "Niminy niminy not, my name's Ton Tui Tot." Could it believe more eyes? and so I looked away was more to find the little devil and made a quick back to my home and party. Took Lady Frances to about it and it seemed to make her quite happy. Though it was quite such a strange one.

Figure B5: Panel 5

TRAILS OF GOLD

Journey from Europe to North America

Rumpelstiltskin first appeared in Germany during the middle of the 16th century. He then made his way through Europe leaving a trail of stories about him behind.



Map of Europe showing movement by which the legend spread.

Dr. Thomas collected hundreds of obscure reports that authorities overlooked due to insufficient evidence and fantastic claims. Over the last 500 hundred years, Rumpelstiltskin has been sighted or dealt with in various capacities and under even more diverse contexts for "helping". According to Thomas', Rumpelstiltskin was occasionally successful and kept whatever prize promised him. Often though, he was unsuccessful and exited the scene in many ways ranging from child-like temper tantrums to the eruption of fault lines caused by his stamping feet.

Since the tale was first told in Germany, police reports of devils, small statured people, and even fairies who offer help to struggling people pop up every now and then. It wasn't until the invention of the camera that these reports were given credence.



c. 1927

Taken by a friend of the couple pictured, this photo captured a moment for the first time in a woman's perspective. Even today, many women's perspectives and the principle of recording from such a short distance would not result in an average subject appearing only 1/3 as tall as they are.



c. 1900

Under natural circumstances, this figure was less visible than it appears. Can you spot the tiny figure walking the woman's path? (That's right, she's not there!)

Figure B6: Panel 6

Public reports of Rumpelstiltskin in California stop there, though. Dr. Thomas believes that after Rumpelstiltskin exhausted his luck in the Gold Rush, he journeyed to central Texas where many of his fellow countrymen resided. In 1844, Prince Karl of Solms-Braunfels brought 150 German families to Texas where they established the settlement New Braunfels, roughly 150 miles south of Colorado Bend State Park. It is easy to see why Rumpelstiltskin might have come to Texas in the hopes that his people still needed his help in their new land. Reported sightings spiked between the 1830s and 1900 in Texas with many apparently sane people describing very short men "dark green in color" wearing clothes stitched together with gold thread.



Illustration by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939)
The Fairy Tale of the Rumpelstiltskin
 Published by Constable & Company LTD, London
 1929



Report filed with the New Braunfels sheriff's office in 1879.
 This report details the account of a local woman who claimed she
 saw a fairy who offered to help with her spinning.



Map of Texas in 1850, showing the former location of Colorado Bend State Park and the site of the New Braunfels settlement.

In 1879 a New Braunfels woman, who had a great deal of wool to spin into yarn for a wealthy client, reported seeing one of the "little people" watching her from under an old elm tree in her front yard. According to her account, he offered to help finish her spinning in exchange for a beautiful old clock with golden hands that her grandfather had brought from Germany. When the woman refused, the little man exploded into a fit of hysterics and disappeared in a puff of smoke. The only traces of him left behind were two small foot prints made of gold dust.

Figure B8: Panel 8

LOOSE ENDS

The last recorded sighting of someone meeting Rumpelstiltskin's description was in Chicago in 1929. After the big stock market crash that would eventually lead to the Great Depression, thousands of people lost their livelihoods and were forced to make ends meet any way they could. Rumpelstiltskin went where the demand was.



Markham Attwood
May 1909

Markham Attwood, an executive at a prominent Chicago bank, grew desperate as the bank faced possible layoffs. In an unsettling turn of events, assistance in the form of a strange little man appeared in Attwood's moment of crisis.



Police Report Filed by Markham Attwood at the Chicago Police Department
January 16, 1929

It all began with his wife Jane begging about her husband's nonexistent account acquisitions at the bank's annual holiday party. Not knowing what to do, Attwood went along with his wife's blatant lies until he was approached by his boss who congratulated him and requested to see the new account lists the following Monday. That night while working late in the bank, Attwood began to panic. While standing at the window contemplating a quick end to his current predicament, he saw a small figure about 3 feet tall standing on the ledge just outside the window. Attwood described the figure as "short wearing baggy trousers, a bright white shirt, and a green knit cap."

Figure B9: Panel 9



Police Sketch of Artwood's "Helper"
January 1931

Extant police reports from this incident indicate that the mysterious man offered to forge new accounts for Artwood, including references and notarized seals. In return for help, Artwood gave the creature a gold plated pen he had received as a company Christmas gift the year before. According to Artwood, this continued for several weeks until one night he ran out of things to pay the little man with. The man wouldn't take paper money, he said, and instead asked for something of far greater value. "When he refused to take my money, the son of a bitch asked for my unborn child. I told him to go to hell and out of nowhere a loud noise rumbled up from the ground. The man started jumping up and down, screaming and yelling and then burst into a shower of gold dust."

"I couldn't recall him ever mentioning a name though he knew mine from our first meeting."

Markham Artwood, 1930

from *Fairy Lightings in Midwestern America by Assam Peters*

It appears that Rumpelstiltskin dealt in more than physical gold. Forging documents and curing illnesses also seem to be among his signature services as seen in the remarkable discovery of his account ledger, on display in this exhibit. Accounts like Markham Artwood's were extremely common before 1930 but then they suddenly stopped.

Researchers are at a loss for why. Dr. Beathan Thomas commented that "it is possible that the creature we know as Rumpelstiltskin finally met his end, but we can never truly be certain. We will just have to wait and see if any more sightings of him surface. Until then, the findings at this campsite will keep us very busy and hopefully answer a few longstanding questions as well."



Photo of the forged documents found at the track after Artwood reported the incident.

January 1931

Figure B10: Panel 10

APPENDIX C: ARTIFACTS AND LABELS



Figure C1: Account book

Origin unknown, 17th century; Leather, gold



Figure C2: Account book page

Buried under a collapsed tent at the base of an oak, this book was hand-bound in the ancient Coptic style. Gold thread binds the signatures and boards together and creates a decorative headband along the top and bottom edges of the book. Upon closer examination, the book was determined to be an account ledger of sorts. Each page is notated with a date in the upper corner and is lined with three columns: one for names; one for a description of services rendered; and one for what looks like a price. All of the names are written in a brownish red ink, which tests conclude to be blood. The front cover of this tome is embossed in gold leaf with the descriptor “vol. 3.” Archaeologists have not yet found volumes 1 or 2. The dates of this ledger begin in 1602 and end in 1875.



Figure C3: Shoe

ca. 1950

Leather, handstitched

This shoe is one of the most unusual artifacts discovered at The Camp. It appears to have been handmade in the style of 14th century poulaines, which were long pointed shoes worn by both men and women in medieval Europe. However, what makes it so befuddling to the archaeologists is the fact that the leather of the shoe is only about 60 years old. The toe is stuffed with moss as was common in the 15th century in order to keep the shape of the toe. The foot bed measures approximately 17 centimeters in length excluding the elongated toe stuffed with moss. One of the specialists onsite noted that it was roughly the size of her 4-year-old daughter's size 9 child shoe.



Figure C4: Wood spindles and stone whorl

England, c. 1800

In its oldest form, spinning was done by hand by twisting the raw fibers into strands. Simple tools such as spindles and distaffs were used to wrap the spun yarn into manageable spools. Sometimes a weight called a whorl was attached to one end of the shaft to aid in the twisting of the fibers. While the stories about Rumpelstiltskin often mention a spinning wheel, it is not unreasonable to assume that he also utilized simpler methods like these drop spindles to spin his gold.



Figure C5: Necklace

German, c. 1450-1500

Glass and amber beads on twine

This necklace dates back to the early days of the German Renaissance. The materials, while skillfully arranged, were common in the central European countryside and so were not highly valued. This type of jewelry was common among lower-class German women. There is no maker's mark on this piece suggesting that it was made as a gift for a loved one rather than by a professional jeweler. In the Grimm version of Rumpelstiltskin, the miller's daughter trades her necklace for help spinning the king's straw into gold. While there is no evidence at The Camp that confirms this is the same necklace worn by the future queen in the story, it may have been offered to Rumpelstiltskin in return for his spinning services.



Figure C6: Bobbins

Origin unknown, 1500-1800

These empty wooden bobbins were discovered in one of the baskets and were used to collect the finished spun fiber. While most of the details have been rubbed smooth by extended use and years of exposure to the elements, a few words found written on the the bobbins can be deciphered. One bobbin is inscribed with the name “Emily” followed by a year: “1921”. Another reads “Calum”, a common male name in Scotland. Another bobbin has several words scratched through. The name and date “Elsebeth 1432” is legible, though struck through. The only word not crossed out is “Coloma,” which is where the California Gold Rush began in 1848.



Figure C7: Bracelets

Brass, 17th century

Possibly used as payment for spinning services.



Figure C8: Button

Carved Wood, 19th century



Figure C9: Metal container with coins

Various denominations, origins, and dates of issue

This rusted out container was found with more than 40 coins in it from 7 countries dating from 1500 to 1900. Included in this cache were 9 British farthings from the mid 1700s, a silver US dollar minted in 1851, an Indian Head cent minted in 1901 and several Lincoln cents minted in 1923. Unless the resident of The Camp was a rare coin collector, the sheer volume and range of currency found here suggests the owner would have to have been either a time traveler or several hundred years old.



Figure C10: Baskets

United States, early 20th century

The modern manufacturing and minimal deterioration of these baskets leads researchers to believe that they were made or purchased within the last 100 years. If you look closely, some fibers can be seen caught in the reeds of the basket. Archaeologists believe that these baskets held raw flax, wool, and straw before being spun into yarn.



Figure C11: Pyrite (Fool's Gold)

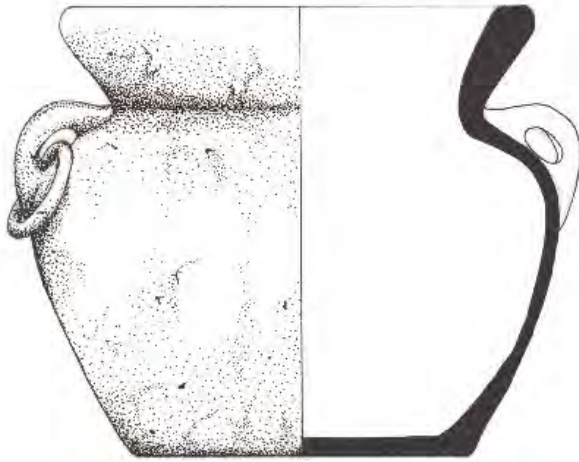
Possibly from Coloma, California



Figure C12: Iron Pot

Europe, 15th century

This cast iron pot was found half buried in a circle of stone assumed to be a fire pit. It was presumably used for cooking, though charred remnants of herbs commonly used by medieval apothecaries have been found beneath layers of mud settled in the bottom of the pot. Researchers believe that the pot was left still hot and cooking on the fire at the time of abandon. Based on this evidence, it is thought that the inhabitant left in a hurry without time to put out the fire. Large pots like this were common camping tools throughout history and also possessed a certain mythic fascination regarding their association with witches and devils. In one version of the tale, Rumpelstiltskin is spied laughing and flying on a large spoon around a great boiling pot. It is in this celebratory state that he reveals his name to unknown passersby.



Archaeological drawing of iron pot
Artist: Lee Kemp



Illustration by Paul O. Zelinsky
Rumpelstiltskin, from the German of the Brothers Grimm
by Paul O. Zelinsky, Dutton Children's Books, New York, 1986.

Figure C13: Archaeological drawing of iron pot

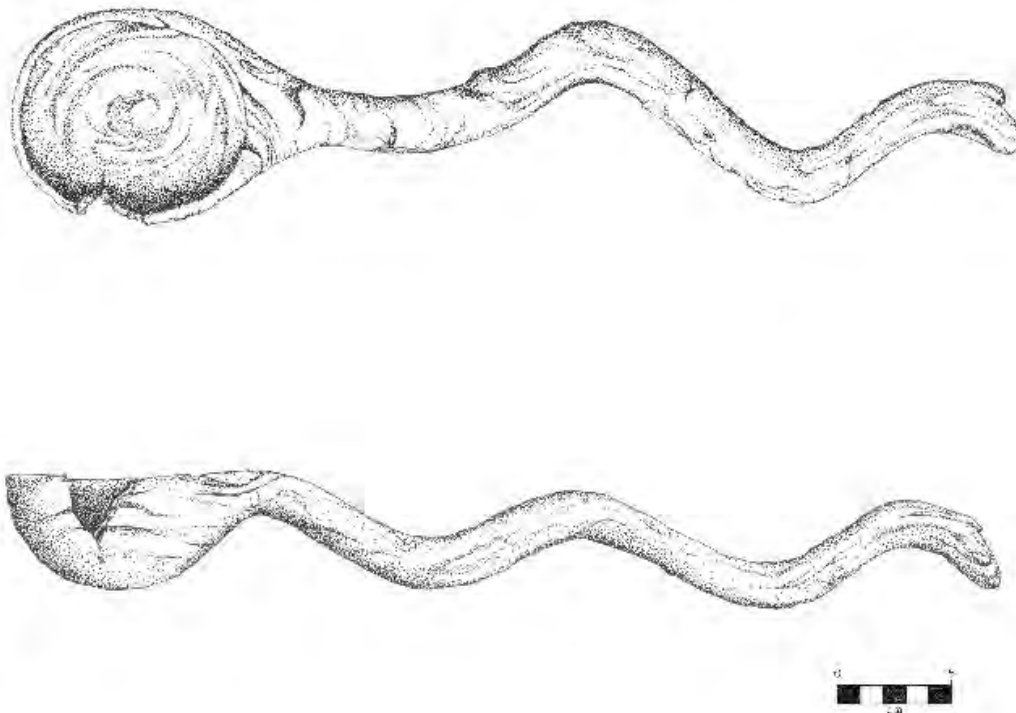


Figure C14: Archaeological drawing of hand-carved wooden spoon

Date unknown, suspected to be several thousand years old

This 20-inch spoon found at The Camp was discovered submerged in a nearby stream. Due to its fragility, it is not on display here but is being carbon dated at Dr. Beathan Thomas' lab in the United Kingdom. One version of Rumpelstiltskin collected by the Brothers Grimm in the mid-1800s referred to the little man flying around his boiling cauldron on a giant spoon. It is in this state that he was said to be spotted by the Queen's maid who then overheard Rumpelstiltskin singing his name. In another version Rumpelstiltskin, angry at having his name guessed and thus losing out on the Queen's first born child, escapes out the window on a flying spoon. Dr. Thomas believes this may be the very same spoon and has invited renowned experts in the history of magical artifacts to study it.

APPENDIX D: GRAPHICS ON INFORMATION PANELS



Figure D1: A cliff in Colorado Bend State Park on which The Camp was located.



Figure D2: Colorado Bend State Park topographical map showing location of The Camp.

Original map by Brian Slone <http://www.gislibrarian.com/portfolio-items/colorado-bend-state-park-map/>



Figure D3: Reconstruction of The Camp as it might have looked when last occupied.



Figure D4: Dr. Beathan Thomas.

Original photo: “Charlie Pearlman.” The author’s cousin.



Figure D5: Leona Andreasen.

Original photo: “Rachel Kirby.” The author’s friend and former coworker.



Figure D6: Excavation photo of beaded necklace found at The Camp.

12 June 1718

Had an extremely strange encounter in the wood whilst hunting today. Far ahead I got from the party as we were chasing down a right smart fox. I got away to a place in the wood I had never seen before which was quite a feat seeing as I grew up running horses through those trees from dawn till dusk. Came upon an old chalk pit where I heard a sort of humming rising up from below. I peered over the edge and saw a sight! A little black thing of a devil with a long pointed tail and a crookit nose and toes that stretched out long and sharp. It had a little spinning wheele and was spinning its work and its tail so fast that all I saw was a blur. Over the spinning it sang- "Nimmy nimmy not, My name's Tom Tit Tot!" Couldn't believe mine eyes o' and so I backed away so as not to disturb the little devil and made it quick back to mine horse and party. Told Lady Petronella about it and it seemed to make her that happy. Though it was quite such a strange tale.

JA

Figure D7: Journal entry of Lord Jeffrey Abbot

From the private collection of Timothy Abbot, a descendent of Jeffrey Abbot.

Transcript:

Had an extremely strange encounter in the wood whilst hunting today. Far ahead I got from the party as we were chasing down a right smart fox. I got away to a place in the wood I had never seen before which was quite a feat seeing as I grew up running horses through those trees from dawn till dusk. Came upon an old chalk pit where I heard a sort of humming rising up from below. I peered over the edge and saw a sight! A little black thing of a devil with a long pointed tail and a crookit nose and toes that stretched out long and sharp. It had a little spinning wheele and was spinning its work and its tail so fast that all I saw was a blur. Over the spinning it sang- "Nimmy nimmy not, My name's Tom Tit Tot!" Couldn't believe mine eyes o' and so I backed away so as not to disturb the little devil and made it quick back to mine horse and party. Told Lady Petronella about it and it seemed to make her that happy. Though it was quite such a strange tale.



Figure D8: Map of present day Europe showing various names by which he is known.



Figure D9: Rumpelstiltskin sighting - Campers

Taken by a friend of the couple pictured, this photo captured a curious onlooker as well. The tree is only a few feet behind the woman pouring coffee. Even taking into account perspective and the principle of receding forms, such a short distance would not result in an average adult appearing only two and a half feet tall.

Original photo: "Gifford and Cornelia camping." Grey Towers Heritage Association, https://www.greytowers.org/photo_gallery/historical/.



Figure D10: Rumpelstiltskin sighting - Spinners

Another unusual camera capture taken by a man later accused of tampering with the negatives. Can you spot the tiny figure watching the women spinning at their wheels?

Original photo: Welch, R. "Carding wool and spinning, Highlands, County Donegal, 1914." Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/proni/13582351285/>.



Figure D11: Rumpelstiltskin sighting - Miners

Photograph of miners showing a strange, blurry figure in the background, ca. 1850.

Original photo: "A woman with three men panning for gold during the California Gold Rush, 1850." United States Geological Survey, <https://www.usgs.gov/media/images/1850-woman-and-men-california-gold-rush>.



Figure D12: Sketch made by California miner with initials Z.A. dated 1849.

Miner claimed it was a dwarf.

UNUSUAL MINING COMPANIONS

With the discovery of Gold around this part of the country, California has had an influx of foreigners flocking to the region to get a taste of the yellow dust for themselves. Many folks have been keenly observing their panning neighbors and some of these newcomers are quite the characters. One local miner said he thought he saw one of the little people from his own country of Ireland. The miner described him as such: "He was a little fella, no taller than my knee, and he had a knack for panning like I never seen before. I seen him trudging to the river with his hat pulled way down his face, his coat collar stood up, and a pan tucked under his arm. Never said a word to no one. Kept to himself mostly. But then one mornin' around dawn I seen him sitting up top a boulder with a skein of wool in one hand and twirling a long stick in the other. Something that looked like the stuff we was all there looking for seemed to catch the light coming up over the mountain. But when I walked closer for a better look, the sun flashed in my eye and he was gone soon as I blinked my sight back. Never saw the fella again." This miner claimed he saw the rolling strands of gold out of the

tion and prospects of the country. It is entitled "California Guide to the Gold Region" and as it may be seen is the production of Dr. J. W. Erzbicki, some of whose works have been previously published. The character and structure of the Gold Region, we believe, has never been laid before our readers. Erzbicki is well known in the States as a professional contributor to the scientific Review, and has been for some years a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California, and has devoted much time and labor to a thorough exploration of the different portions of

A NEW WORK

We have just been given an opportunity to examine the proof sheets of the volume, which is to be published in a day or two, and by the local count it is truly a work of energy to

Figure D13: Newspaper article printed in The Pacific News issued on August 12, 1849.

Sheriff Records of New Braunfels

18 Aug. 1872

Martha Mueller of the Mueller farmstead out by
Roche's Creek claims to have seen a 'little man'
watching her while she worked. Offered to
help her spin wool in exchange for her grandfather's
clock.

Left abruptly when she refused his assistance.
Martha claims she saw him burst in to a puff
of smoke

Proceeded with Deputy Knox to investigate
surroundings but found little more than
a few small foot prints. Told William Mueller to
keep eye out for lurkers.

Martha swears it was a fairy from the old country.

Figure D14: Report filed with the New Braunfels sheriff's office in 1872.

This report details the account of a local woman who claimed she saw a fairy who offered to help her with her spinning.

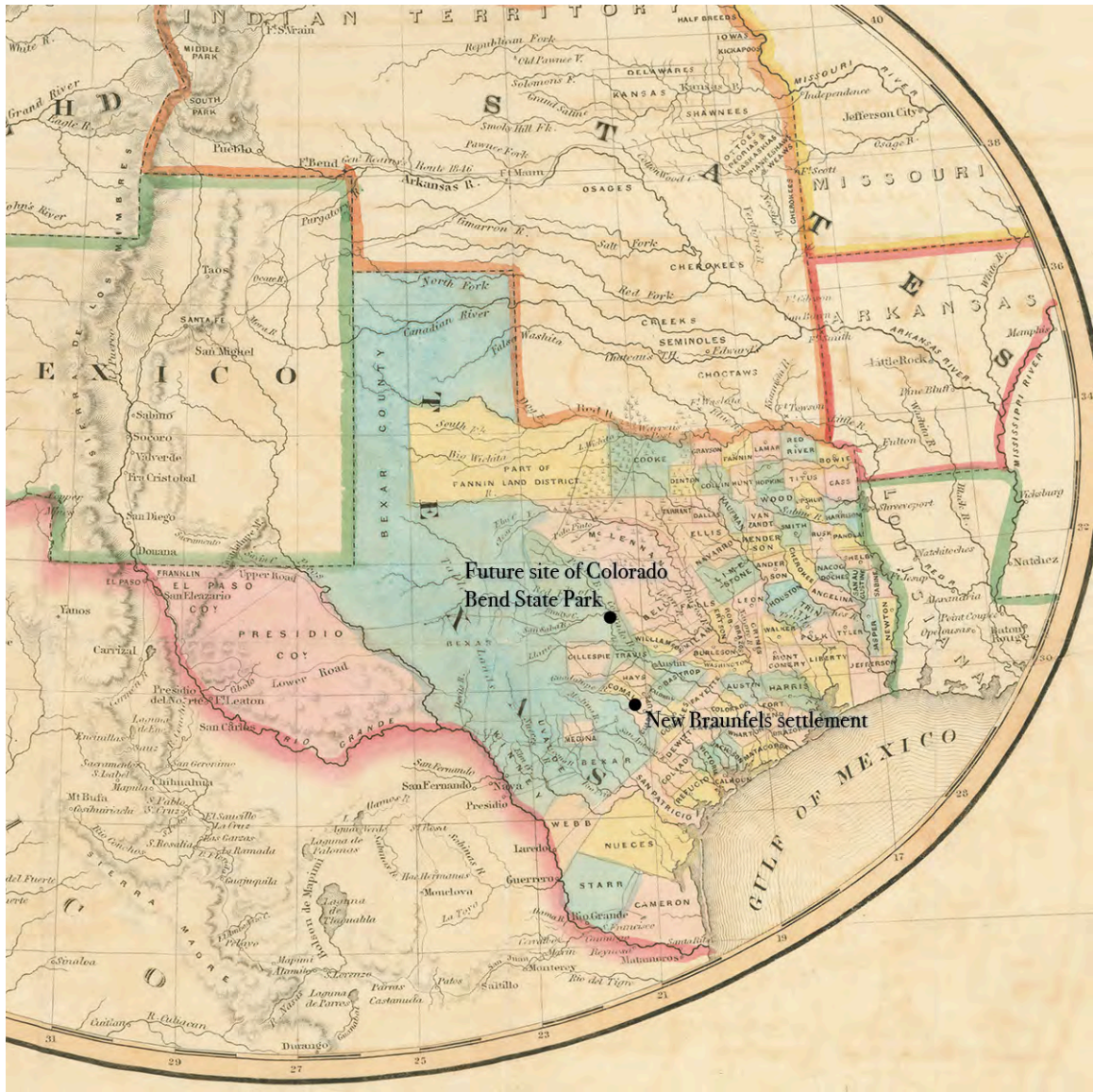


Figure D15: Map of Texas in 1851 showing the future location of Colorado Bend State Park and the site of the New Braunfels settlement.

Original photo: “J. De Cordova’s Map of the State of Texas Compiled from the Records of the General Land Office of the State, by Robert Kreuzbauer, Houston, 1851...”
 Engraved by J. M. Atwood, New York, 1851. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, “Historical Maps of Texas,”
https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_texas.html.

Chicago Police Department

Report Made By:	Name and Offense Charged:	Period For Which Made:
Officer G. Miller	Markham Attwood - Forgery.	Jan. 18, 1930

Persons Interviewed and Evidence Collected:

Responded to a phone call from the above mentioned ^bsubject about an attempted robbery. Subject was calling from Gross Bank of Chicago on Clarke and Washington. On arrival, subject seemed fired up and talking too fast to understand. Pete and I managed to get him to slow down enough to walk us through what happened. Subject claims that a little old man stole his watch, gold pen, and then asked for his unborn child.

"Robber" is described as approx. 3 feet tall with long tangled gray beard. Last seen wearing green long sleeved shirt over brown pants with suspenders. Wood buttons on suspenders. No tie. Wore a knit cap.

Found on subjects desk piles of folders holding new accounts. Subject claims that his "robber" is responsible for forging the documents though no evidence of this man is present. Searched office twice over and found nothing except a pile of yellowish dust. Subject claims little man "exploded in shower of sparkling dust."

Would advise continued questioning of subject. Story not all there. Also question family and boss at bank. Booking Attwood for forgery on account of no evidence to suggest collaboration.

Wife:
Jane
Markham

Figure D16: Police Report filed by Markham Attwood at the Chicago Police Department, January 18, 1930.



Figure D17: Markham Attwood, May 1929

Original photo: "William Edward Kintz." The author's great-great grandfather. Courtesy of the Anderson Family archives.



Figure D18: Police sketch of Attwood's "Helper," January 1930.

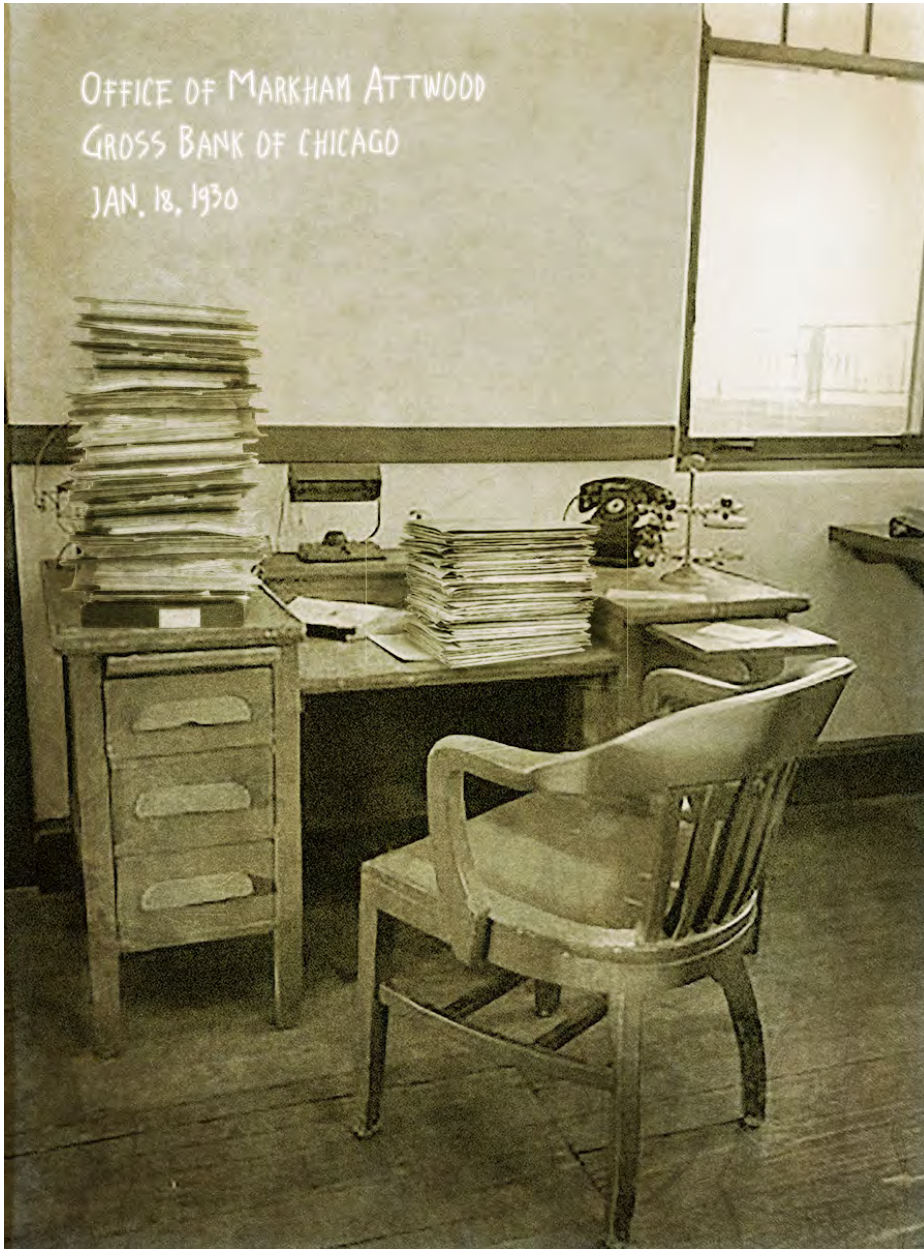


Figure D19: Photo of the forged documents found at the bank after Attwood reported the incident, January 1930.

Original photo: "Bristow Historical Depot and Town Square: The recreated desk from original 1920's railroad office." Trip Advisor, https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g51223-d12981173-i350921183-Bristow_Historical_Depot_and_Town_Square-Bristow_Oklahoma.html

APPENDIX E: EXHIBIT PHOTOS

These are photos taken of the finished exhibit installed in the University of Texas Fine Arts Library.



Figure E1: Exhibit installation



Figure E2: Exhibit installation



Figure E3: Exhibit installation



Figure E4: Exhibit installation

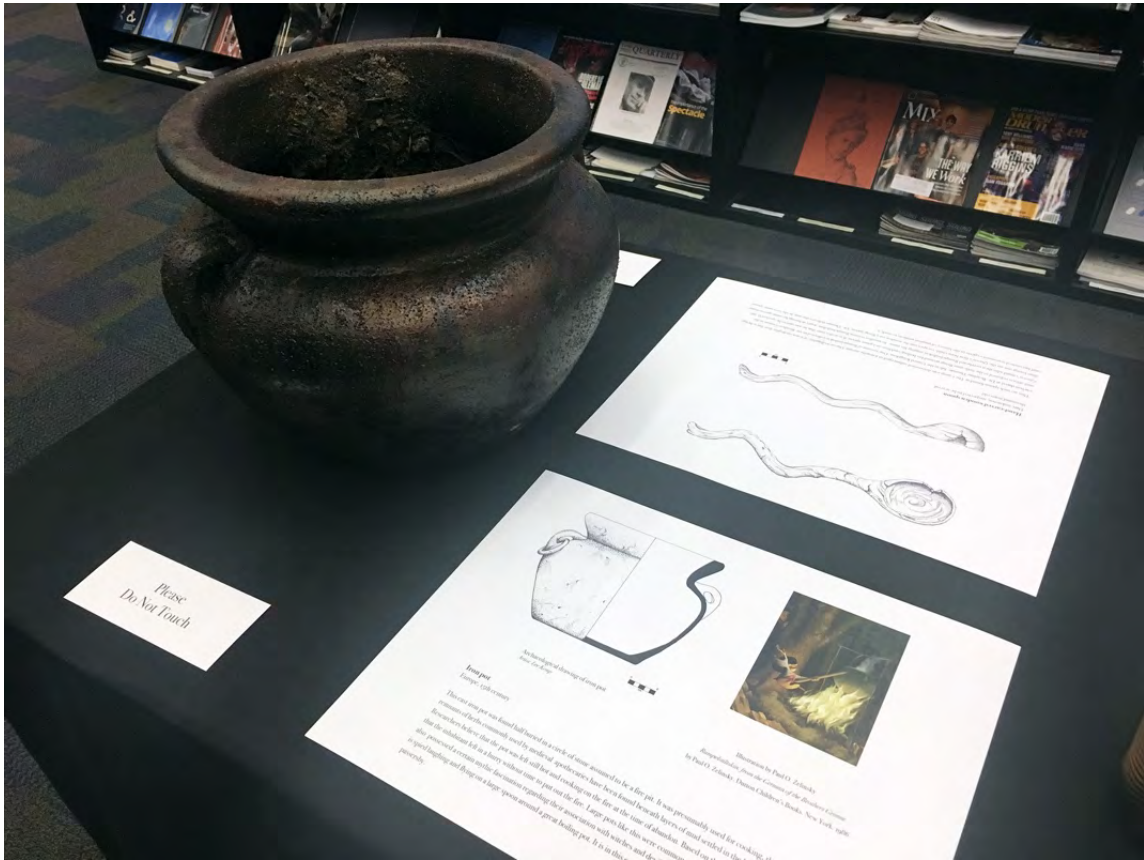


Figure E5: Exhibit installation

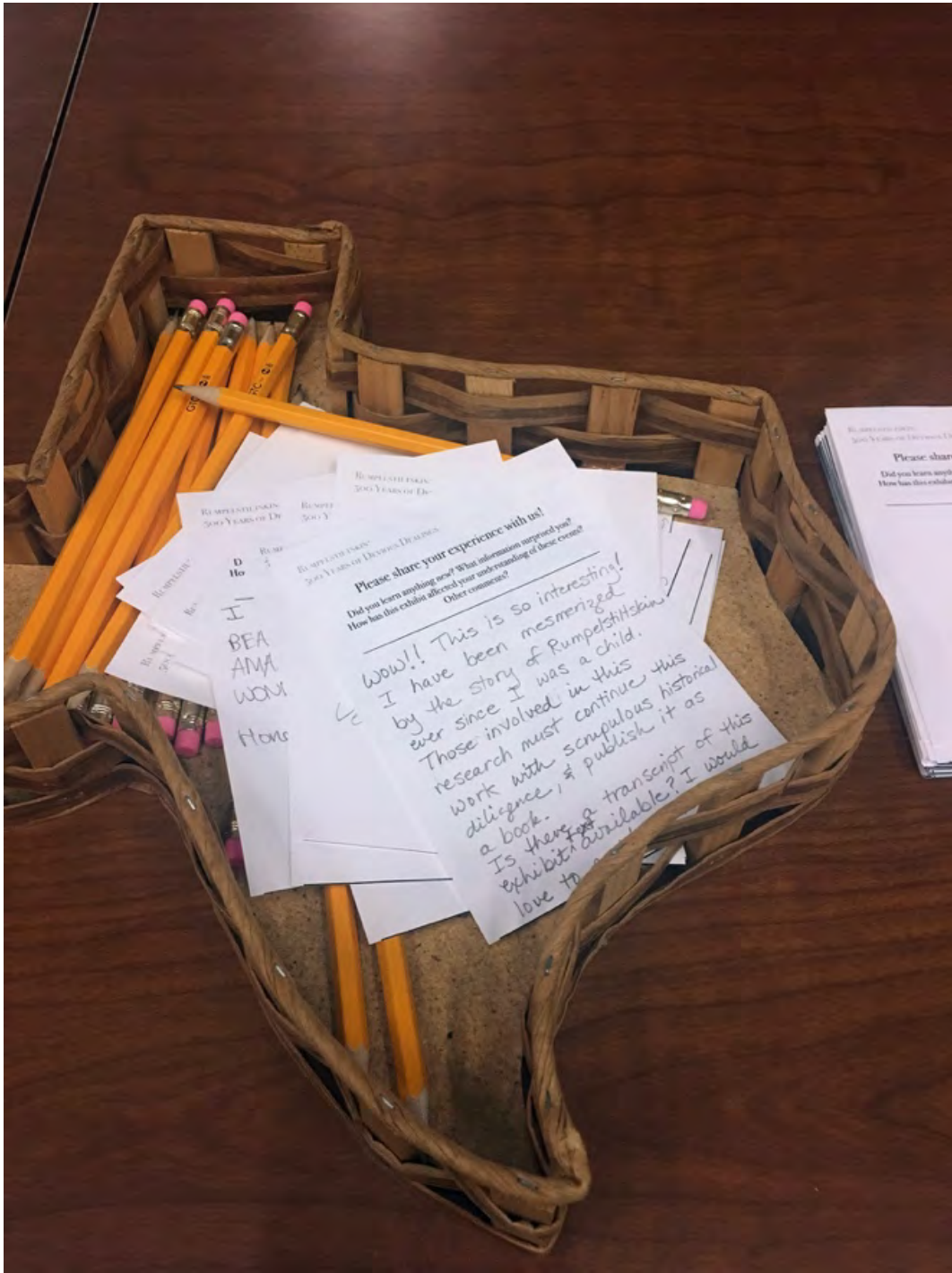


Figure E6: Exhibit installation

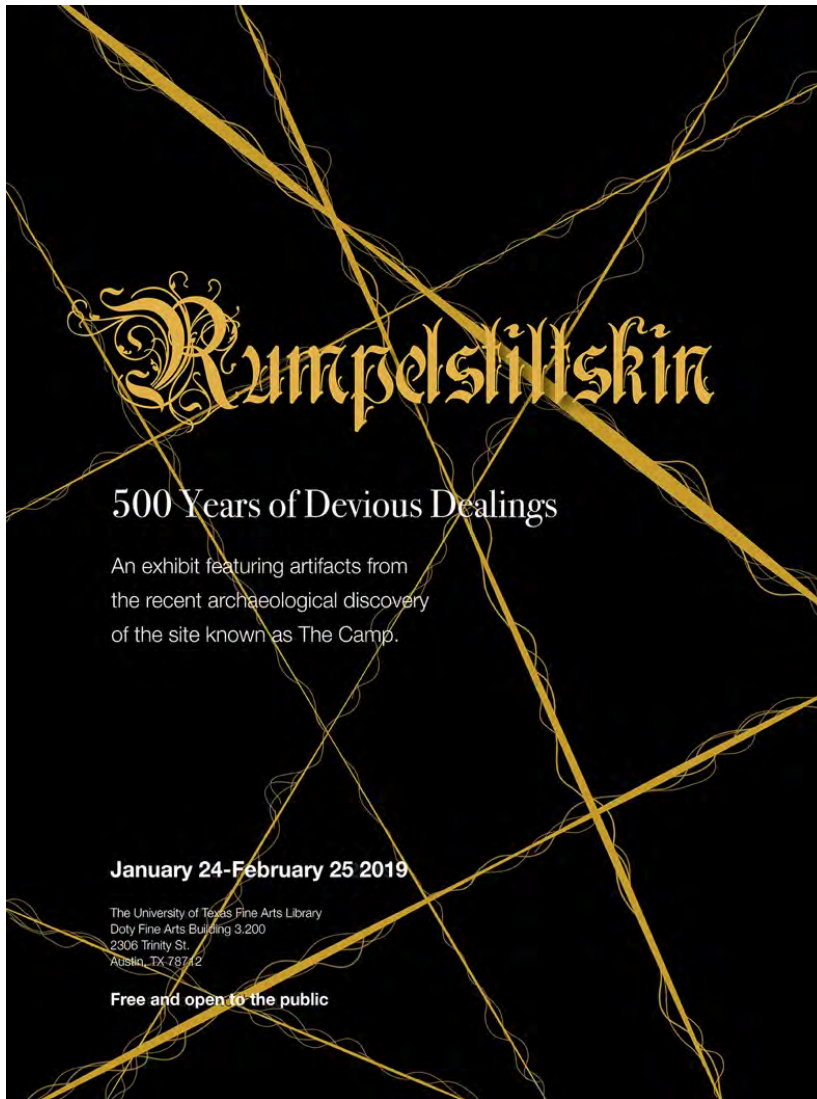


Figure E7: Promotional exhibit poster

Promotional description:

What most thought to be just an old fairytale is in fact based on a real person who evaded the law and the history books for centuries. The exhibit *Rumpelstiltskin: 500 Years of Devious Dealings* features rare artifacts recently unearthed at a site now known as “The Camp” located in the woods of Colorado Bend State Park. The artifacts on display date from the 16th to the 20th century and document Rumpelstiltskin’s migration from central Europe to the Texas Hill Country. This incredible discovery has led scholars to construct a new history of the man who, legend has it, could spin straw into gold. A history that suggests Rumpelstiltskin might still be alive today.

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