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# ARTslant



## **HOARD**

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### **Hoards I Have Known by Andrew Berardini**

I have never seen a real, archeological hoard. I've read about them in books, with full-color jewels splayed out on neutral backgrounds laid carefully in protective casings, stacks of silver and bronze coins embossed with Roman emperors, coiled gold snakes for nameless warrior queens. The internet provides hours heaped upon hours of "research" a procrastinator can dig into for the sake of pure meandering scholarship (a hoard of wasted time), giving one visions of buried riches, war loot, lost artifacts of occult power and unknown treasures, waiting to be uncovered by a pith-helmeted amateur.

The real hoards were deposited from war, unknown troubles, presumably intended returns by merchants for safekeeping. And safekept they were. The temple treasure hurriedly buried in a field as the temple likely burned by invaders. A king's ransom in coin uncovered two thousand years later by a field plow, deposited for an unknown king whose spiked head perhaps dearly missed his lost ransom. A votive offering to gods whose names had forked no lightning, their worship disappeared, names once powerful amulets no longer remembered.

I've seen a fair share of other kinds of hoards. All hoards resemble the other though. They all are marked with the stink of fear and the need for protection. (Is there a reality television show for this? Yes, there is. Two even. *Hoarders* on A&E. And its copycat *Hoarding: Buried Alive* on TLC.)



Liz Glynn, *Hoard*, 2012, Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles, Installation view; Courtesy of Redling Fine Art.

The hoards I have seen:

Newspapers stacked and collapsed over sundry this and that, a small, little house with objects heaped to the graying ceiling and all stained walls, a very narrow passageway leading from room to room, some rooms, walled off long ago, their treasures safely ensconced behind bits of string, tin cans with bits of label clinging on, and a collection of soda bottles stretching back decades. The smell of rot had gone perhaps even past rot and into the old death of medieval churches and swamps. I was in love with the hoarder's daughter and loved her more for showing me her house and surviving it for as long as she did, which wasn't long in the end.

In a large apartment in a small European city, I went to an apartment piled with crates, room after room; sometimes the contents had been removed hastily, paintings wrapped in plastic and glassine, bubblewrap and styrofoam, and then recovered poorly and jammed back into their crates or leaned against them. Their owner lived in a small corner of his vast home, the rest taken up by his collection of art.

I have met sallow-cheeked men and women with facts and figures, knowledge and datum so overflowing inside of them it presses against the whites of their unsteady eyes. Never dispensed only gathered. Their last breath sweeps empty a library.

And at Redling Fine Art, there is a hoard, or hoarding at least. One fear of theft or instability breeds another. Protection demands safes, first wood then metal. Easily busted into, the safety-deposit box provided another kind of protection, also easily broken. The largest diamond heist in modern history involved the emptying of safe-deposit boxes (Antwerp, 2003, \$100 million in diamonds never recovered).



Liz Glynn, *Safe* (after Diebold, patented 1871), 2012, Cast glass, one uncut diamond, surveillance camera, 34 x 36 x 40 inches; Courtesy of Redling Fine Art.

A glass safe (Diebold replica, patent 1871) watched by a surveillance camera once hiding a single diamond lies smashed. A wall lined with casts of deposit boxes. A contract/proposal for the protection of treasure involving five keys (similar to one that had another hoard of Bactrian gold during the Taliban years in Afghanistan). And on some plinths, sit objects each with telling names of different finds all under the header *Lost and Found*, 2012: *Snettisham Jeweler's Hoard*, *Salisbury Hoard*, *Dorchester Hoard*, *Vale of York Hoard*.

Is a glass safe any safer than a metal one? Are replicas as good as originals? Does a fragile material like fired-clay have more endurance than silver and gold? All of these discovered hoards from Afghanistan to York, are they safer now that we've found them? Are we trying to preserve perceived value, fight off inevitable instability, disorder, death? Does history in the end teach us anything we haven't already known and chosen to forget?

The safest treasure is lost, buried deeply under forgetful soil.

—Andrew Berardini

(Image on top: Liz Glynn, *Breach* (Buenos Aires, January 1, 2011), 2012, 134 compromised cast plaster safe deposit boxes, 22 x 200 x 12 inches (detail); Courtesy of Redling Fine Art.)