

Things to Do

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Objects of affection

One of the city's smallest museums showcases big ideas about the current state of humanity. By *Jillian Anthony*

THE TINY MMUSEUMM 1 and **Mmuseumm 2** sit in Chinatown in a six-by-six-foot retired elevator shaft and a storefront window, respectively. They are microcosms of current events, housing mini-exhibitions that relate to specific human experiences happening worldwide. The museum's exhibitions change annually, and cofounder and curator Alex Kalman describes this year's as "object journalism," a way of looking at the world we're living in through vernacular items—i.e. most pieces were collected from people

and places rather than created by artists. **Mmuseumm 1's** 15 exhibitions explore a range of items, from merchandise emblazoned with Trump's name to items discarded by immigrants crossing the Arizona desert, while **Mmuseumm 2** houses a 14-year-old's idyllic model of his war-torn city of Aleppo, Syria. We've highlighted seven of the most enthralling items on display, with Kalman's commentary.

1 "ISIS currency," gold dinar, the Islamic State

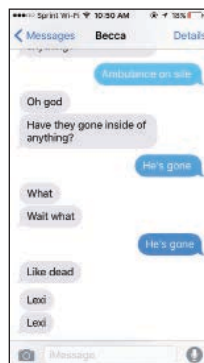
"It's interesting to look at the idea of creating a currency to legitimize oneself. That happens whether you are a governing body of a country or you're Chuck E. Cheese's—to have one's own currency is to establish in others' eyes a form of legitimacy. Here we get to see it from a terrorist organization. Based on media [ISIS] put out about the currency and photos online, these were created as facsimiles of the original coins."



2 "The Last Message Received"

Fifteen-year-old Emily Trunko started the Tumblr the Last Message Received, to which people could submit the last correspondence they had with loved ones. This message's submitter, Becca,

wrote, "I found him dead and was too scared to say out loud what happened." The exhibit showcases several messages like this one.



3 "2015: A Year in Review in Cookies," Pizza Rat

Artist Evan Maddalena designed and baked cookies depicting last year's biggest events. He included NYC's 2015 mascot, Pizza Rat, who became an instant icon after being videotaped dragging an entire slice of pizza down the subway stairs. Other cookies include



4 "Personal Items of Immigration," stuffed animal

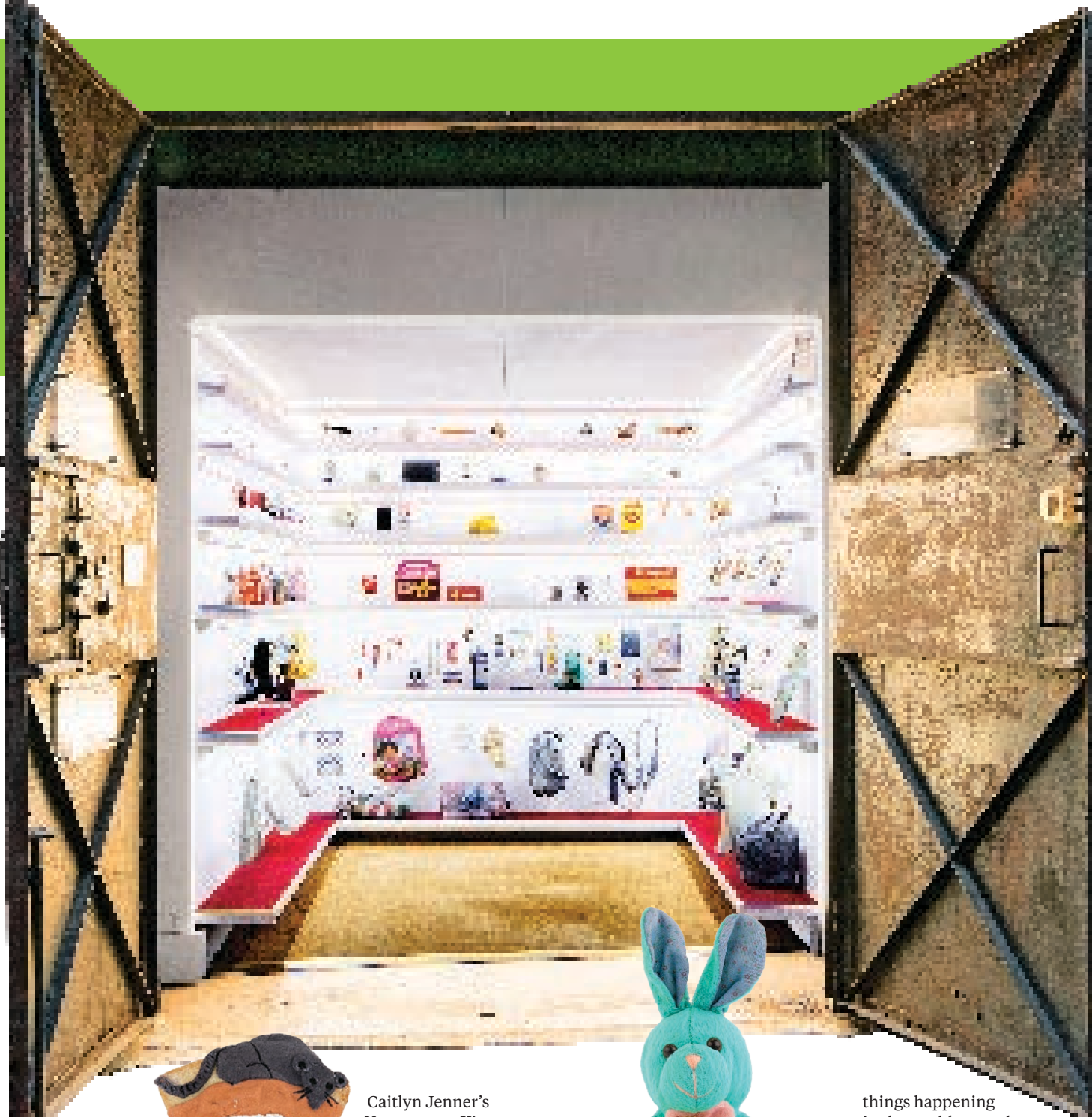
This installation, displaying actual items found on routes immigrants have taken across the Arizona desert to make it into the U.S., is about the

Caitlyn Jenner's *Vogue* cover, Kim Davis in an orange jumpsuit and the Internet-famous blue-and-black (or was it white-and-gold?) dress.



"simple idea of humanizing stories," says Kalman. "The act of remaining [empathetic during] experiences that can be really trying is something that is built into all of us in this survival mode. With these

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY MMUSEUMM



American chain restaurants from opening in Iran, but the desire for fast food remains—thus, copycat chains have opened up. This installation includes packaging from those establishments. "I believe that there are multiple Super Stars, and it's a restaurant opened by an entrepreneur in Iran who has no affiliation with Carl's Jr., which is represented in that iconography," says Kalman. "The people in this country and the people sitting over there—we all love a cheeseburger. There is that universality of where we connect and agree. It's open there because certain people would like to have Carl's Jr. Other people see it as a symbol of tyranny."

6 "The Message Is the Medium," Trump chocolate

Usually when America has someone running for the presidency, we can look at their history of public service," says Kalman. "With Trump, you don't have that opportunity, but you can look at his

things happening in the world around us, there's a sense of, It happened once upon a time, or, It's happening over there, and there's distance between the consumer of the story and the story itself."

5 "The Fake American Fast Food Franchises of Iran," Super Star french fries

Government sanctions between Iran and the U.S. have stopped



history of business and the materialization of that through product. Through that brand of Trump, we can start to better understand who he actually is." Other displayed items that the Trump brand has manufactured include energy drinks, vodka and cologne.



7 "Future Aleppo," Aleppo, Syria, in Mmuseumm 2

Mohammed Qutaish, 14, lives in the largest city in Syria, Aleppo, a place that's been ravaged by civil war since 2011. The fighting has left 250,000 dead and displaced 11 million Syrians from their homes. Qutaish, who has spent a third of his life in war and hopes to one day be an architect, began building models to represent the "Syria of tomorrow." "I began building my model after I experienced my city being destroyed by air strikes and missiles," says Qutaish. "My sorrow, caused by this destruction, has inspired me immensely. Sometimes I feel very frightened. Sometimes I cannot think or work. Optimism gives me the power and determination to finish the works I have started." Each complex he designs is accompanied by a peaceful garden. "I hope that one day these paper buildings will become real buildings," says Qutaish.

→ The Mmuseumm is located at 4 Cortlandt Alley (mmuseumm.com). Thu, Fri 6–9pm and Sat, Sun noon–6pm; suggested donation \$5. Through Nov.