

## Sailors' souvenirs

– kitsch or cultural artefacts?

The Fisheries and Maritime Museum in Esbjerg is an institution comprised of an array of intriguing maritime stories. The exhibitions provide an in-depth dissemination of both the cultural and natural history of south-western Jutland, encompassing subjects such as seafaring, port and offshore activities, as well as the unique natural and biological environment of the Wadden Sea. However, the good stories are not only found in the permanent exhibitions – they are also kept at the heart of the museum in the storage rooms. This is where we find the large collection of sailors' souvenirs, which is comprised of a vast range of different objects from all around the world. Sailors' souvenirs have for a long time been recognised as a problematic group of artefacts at several museums due to their diverse nature. This has resulted in an unsystematic approach in matters related to registration, documentation, and display. While some artefacts are deemed as objects of art or ethnography, others are regarded as kitsch or simply ignored, which consequently creates a fragmented picture of the underlying phenomenon of souvenir collecting amongst sailors. This article provides an overview of the diverse nature of sailors' souvenirs, and recognises all of the artefacts' cultural significance, kitsch or otherwise.