

## **John Rose: *Broken Headstock***

It was difficult to find an object that connects with me on a translocal level. My approach was to look for something that has travelled with me through the years, and that is connected to the core of my being.

After considerable thought, I chose a broken piece of an old guitar. Specifically, it is the headstock from an acoustic guitar that has been with me since 1999, when I lived in Chatham, Ontario. As this object might seem a bit strange, I have provided a picture (Figure 1) to help clarify. The headstock of a guitar is a very central piece of the instrument. It is where the tuning pegs are located and where the strings are wound. It is a central part of how sound is controlled and manipulated in the instrument.

It is significant that this object is broken. I have an affinity for things that are broken or “damaged” in some way. It denotes change and signifies that the object has been affected in some way. Things that are broken have gone through metamorphosis and represent some kind of action. This change, or metamorphosis, is a type of movement. When things break, they move (physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.) and are transformative by nature. One of the reasons why I chose this object is because, in its current state, it is representative of a transformative experience.<sup>1</sup>

At a base material (or commodity) level, the object itself is made of wood. Most of the guitar was made of red wild cherry wood from Quebec. However, the neck is made of silver leaf maple, including the headstock. This material reality is something often lost to people who see a guitar just as a guitar. Those with a vested interest in guitars, or those critically engaged in economic processes, are likely to pay attention to the material itself. This reality demonstrates an element of the translocality of this object. As I gazed out the windows of the boat during the Workshop, the trees standing on the islands reminded me of the materiality of my object. It forced me to think about the trees from which the wood was cut to fabricate the guitar, and the journey that brought the instrument into my life and onto that boat with me.

Music is essential to my life, and this broken headstock is connected to the creation of music. Initially, as a songwriter I wanted to bring “my music” with me on the Workshop. I wanted to somehow condense all the songs I have written and recorded into one, single object because my music is the real transformative, translocal “object.” However, the next-best-thing was this headstock because it has traveled with me through 4 different towns (Chatham, Toronto, Peterborough and Kingston, Ontario), and was a part of my most formative years as a musician. It represents a deeply personal translocal experience.

The music I have played on this instrument, or the music that this instrument has co-created, is transnational and translocal in multiple ways. Music (or art) is necessarily an organic, manifold thing. It exists as influenced by the endless moments of inspiration brought forth by any facet of life (nature, people, other art, etc.). Art is one of the ultimate translocal experiences.

If I see an object in the landscape, I may write about it or be inspired by it. I might create a song, and that object now takes on a new form in that artistic moment. For example, I wrote a song called “River Otonabee,” very much inspired by my experiences with the Otonabee River in Peterborough. When my friends in Minnesota or London listen to that song, in some way the Otonabee River travels to those places. It becomes transnational or translocal through art. Or, at least an emotional experience, channelled through my art and inspired by the river, is communicated transnationally. Art has a unique way of dissolving boundaries and communicating across vast areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: unfortunately there is no exciting “rock’n’roll” story as to how this guitar was broken. It merely deteriorated with age, and I held onto the headstock in order to use the tuning pegs and hardware in the future.

Figure 1: Guitar Headstock (Object)

