



Trench Art

The term trench art refers to all decorative items made from the debris and by-products of the battlefield, and can be created by either soldiers or civilians. Some soldiers were eager to collect souvenirs from their time abroad to make a record of their adventures. In the First World War, the German spiked Pickelhaube helmet was one of the most popular items to collect amongst the Allied soldiers until it stopped being issued in mid-1916. Common items such as shell cases and bullets were also collected.

In the trenches of the First World War, when troops were not fighting they would be attending maintenance duties or keeping a lookout. Periods without any shell fire could sometimes last for several days. Soldiers

often found means to use their creativity whilst off duty and some men re-worked the debris they had collected to pass the time. Fragments such as shell cases were turned into a variety of practical and decorative items including vases, ashtrays and tobacco jars. Local civilians with metalworking and lace-making skills saw the bounty of debris as a business opportunity to produce trench art for sale to soldiers.

