The E. McClung Fleming Model of Artifact Investigation

Developed at Winterthur Museum in Delaware, The E. McClung Fleming Model is a well-respected, comprehensive model used to investigate individual artifacts. The model is built around five basic properties and it suggests four operations:

The five properties are:

1. **History**: includes where and when the object was made, by whom, for whom, why, and successive changes in ownership, condition, and function.

2. **Material**: what is the object made of.

3. **Construction**: what are the techniques of manufacture, workmanship, etc.

4. **Design**: includes structure, form, style, ornamentation, and iconography.

5. **Function**: embraces its intended and unintended uses in its culture.

The four operations are:

1. **Identification**: encompasses the ideas of classification, authentication, and description. Its chief objective is to provide accurate information about the five properties. It may involve looking at external sources like probate records or learning something about the maker.

2. **Evaluation**: results in a set of judgements about the artifact, usually based on comparison with other examples of its kind.

3. **Cultural Analysis**: examines the interrelationships between the artifact and its culture.

4. **Interpretation**: suggests the meaning and significance of the artifact in relation to contemporary culture.