



Smithsonian American Art Museum

**“The Remainder of Our Effects We Must Leave Behind”:  
American Loyalists and the Meaning of Things, 1765–1800**

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My dissertation examines the personal and political meanings invested in “things”—portraits, furniture, and other material objects—that belonged to those who remained loyal to the British crown during the American Revolution. Many loyalists abandoned their homes and permanently fled the North American colonies during the conflict, leaving most of their possessions behind. My study will look at the evolution of meaning as these items were possessed, then lost, and in some cases, possessed again. The visual encoding of this meaning—in the narrative content of portraiture and in the personalization of items such as engraved pieces of silver—will also be extensively investigated. Overall, the dissertation will employ anthropological and art-historical methodologies to explore this nexus of meanings in an attempt to bring issues of materiality and possession to the forefront of art history and material culture studies.