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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Journal of Design History

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Journal:	*Journal of Design History*
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Book Review

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Manuscripts

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For Review Only

With their single-word object synonym titles, the collective address of their subtitles and their illustrated covers showing the eclectic ranges of their subject matter, *Rummage* and *Artifacts* seem to be natural bedfellows. Both are 2020 releases, both focus on British contexts and both are by female mid-career scholars. Each, however, has distinctive differences in style, scope, purpose and intended audience.

Rummage is the third book by Emily Cockayne, Senior Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of East Anglia, UK. Like her previous monographs, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England 1600-1770* (2007) and *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours* (2012), this imaginative study provides authoritative historical research with an engaging literary style. *Rummage*'s published location, Profile Books, signals an ambition to reach beyond academia and the book's approach, full of gags, colourful characters and autobiographical asides, certainly provides as much entertainment as edification. Packed with facts about the changing histories of reused objects, and written with the enthusiasm of a collector with a keen ear for a juicy quote and a salacious detail, the book is highly readable and on several occasions caused me to laugh out loud.

Cockayne's aim is to explore the differing purposes of object reuse from the 1530s to the present, to survey a range of attitudes from today's performative upcycling to government-led schemes in times of need and individual ad hoc practices across 500 years of moral debates about value and waste. The premise is that history can provide instructive lessons for our own wasteful times, and the

structure of the book, intriguingly, starts with the present day and moves backwards through key moments in the form of chapters organised around, initially, shorter chunks of time (between 10 and 40 years) and latterly longer expanses (full centuries). This unusual format cleverly enables a general reader to begin with what they know and to edge towards less familiar territory. It also fits with Cockayne's Janus-faced claim that '[e]very future is, to some degree, a bricolage of the past's uncertain remnants' (3). Finally, it enables a long view of how many periods seem to have perceived themselves as the inventors of thrift (they were not) or conjured ideal pasts where reuse was assumed to have been the norm (it was not; Cockayne shows that the sixteenth century was surprisingly wasteful).

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While the author notes, in one of the first footnotes, that the term recycling is historically specific and therefore imprecise as a definition, it is nonetheless a concept porous enough to take in a range of diverse practices, parallel terms and assorted objects. Eclecticism is both the book's subject and its historical method. Cockayne has an eye for the comic and the disgusting and a preference for paratactic lists. We learn, for example, in the twentieth century, that the ingredients of the M6 motorway includes 2 million pulped Mills and Boon romantic novels, Greenham Common feminist protest banners in the 1980s were constructed from charity shop bridesmaid dresses, bundles of love letters were donated to paper salvage schemes in the Second World War and Boy Scouts competed to gather fruit stones in 1918 to be turned into charcoal for gas mask filters. In the nineteenth century, a tiny baby was among the contents found pressed almost flat in a paper mill's processes while umbrella hospitals served as repair stations for commodities built to last. We meet forgotten traders – grubbers, dredgermen, dustwomen and pure-finders (dog turd gatherers) – and learn about evocatively-titled categories of rubbish and its reformation as clinker, mungo, cabbage, shoddy and scutch.

In its exploration of dumps, pits and muck heaps, this is a book that revels in the revolting, piling up example after stinking example. Especially in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries, there is a

wealth of material and sources; scenes are drawn lavishly and the writing is rich: characters 'chunter' and machines 'froth'. As a collector herself – the text is illustrated with her fascinating historic examples of creative repurposing, all sadly very poorly reproduced on the page – Cockayne can spot a hidden gem. She is also skilled in how to make an academic study appealing to a general reader. The footnotes are full of wide-ranging references to Mass Observation reports, letters to local press and specialist trade periodicals but these are carefully piled to the side. We learn less in the main text about theories and methodologies than we do about the author's own life, from her eviscerated 1970s toy Womble to her parsimonious late grandmother, to whom the book is dedicated. Incidentally, the acknowledgements continue the muck-spreading; I was delighted to see a refreshing rogue's gallery of those who impeded the research, from a divorced partner to a discouraging university department. The practices under discussion are those that involve everyday life tactics so these insertions are not only amusing but fitting; they bring distant histories close to home.

My criticisms of the book are few. Inevitably, with its hurtling canter through 500 years, there are times when I wished for more pause and more analysis. Some examples are lingered over exceptionally well – the failures of the government scheme to reclaim iron railings in the 1940s, for instance – but so many others are romped past. Some emerging themes – that women, as keepers of the domestic economy are normally the major thrifters, although men mostly take the praise – deserved greater space for discussion. The pace of the text also cannot be sustained into the later chapters, which provide fewer sources and sparser detail, and the concluding thoughts are oddly pedestrian and half-hearted. Nonetheless, I learned a lot from this 'heaving mass of miscellany' (13) and its sticky, mucky contents deserve the wide readership to which they are aimed.

Artifacts, from its subtitle, promises a similar range and reach. Found objects, in the term's everyday understanding, can include twentieth-century Surrealist sculptural items chanced upon in urban encounters and the shopping lists and analogue photographic street finds so beloved of twenty-first

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century cult collectors. The first-person plural of the subtitle assumes a wide collective community and a study that shed lights on contemporary concerns. In fact, it is disingenuous: the book is a serious, valuable but very specific scholarly study of how certain antiquarian objects were used by educated elites in the long eighteenth century to articulate competing political discourses. The subtitle – perhaps in an attempt to garner a wider readership a la *Rummage* - captures none of this.

Despite significant differences in tone, scope, purpose and audience, there are some remarkable similarities between *Artifacts* and *Rummage*. *Artifacts* is also concerned with what the author terms 'old, dirty, rusty, moldy, and broken items'; those historical 'bits and bobs' (4) that can be dismissed as 'crumbly bric-a-brac' (17). Specifically, the book is concerned with four main categories as case studies: old coins, weapons, antiquarian manuscripts and grave goods. These were called upon to narrate and substantiate history for their interlocutors, but as the author points out, they proved to be unruly, 'unreliable narrators' (12). Crystal B. Lake is a Professor of English Language and Literatures at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio and this accomplished work, her first book, draws on some 15 years of labour. Given her disciplinary context, she is more concerned with the metaphorical function of an object in a text rather than the objects themselves. This concern with 'artifactual form', seen across fiction and non-fiction literature, means that Lake does not get her hands dirty in the digging, like Cockayne, but instead uses her case studies as 'opportunities for thinking about the causal relationships between physical objects and immaterial ideas' (110). This is a productive strategy, specifically in relation to the category of goods that her chosen term 'artifacts' comprises. This category does not include all goods but signals specific antiquarian fragments, made up of parts rather than wholes, which enable conjecture about the past. While these objects may align with and can be positioned in relation to other eighteenth century gimcracks, curiosities and souvenirs, they have particular characteristics as 'conglomerate objects composed of both solids as well as empty spaces that exist in a state of flux' (7).

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These particularities create certain conditions for objects that were expected to be vocal, politically and philosophically. Lake begins with John Aubrey's study of Avebury stone circle, and his resulting publication, *Monumenta Britannica* (c.1665-1693), commonly credited with being the first work of archaeology. Aubrey believed that objects should 'give evidence for themselves'; to 'speak', in other words (2). This expectation forms the departure point for Lake's study; she links this expectation to new materialist theories. Here she is mostly referring to concepts of vibrant matter posited by Jane Bennett and the non-human agency claims of Bruno Latour, but Bill Brown's thing theories and Daniel Miller's material culture studies are also cited. For Lake, this intersection provides a productive space to consider the variously vitalistic and mechanistic eighteenth-century attitudes to matter alongside contemporary expectations of objects as social and cultural intermediaries and actors.

Eighteenth-century antiquarian artifacts, Lake notes, were expected to 'do' things, as Latour would put it. They were expected, for example, to validate, authenticate and substantiate political authority; they could, however, serve as evidentiary forces for both royalist and republican positions in the seventeenth-century crisis of state. The dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century had led to what Lake describes as 'an unprecedented number of historical items' flooding the British antiquary market (23); antiquarians themselves, in the 1628 words of John Earle, were accused of being fetishists for 'musty things which they have rak't from dunghills' (24). Coins, as an example of such an item, were considered to be the most affective forms of historical evidence in the eighteenth century, but as Lake notes, they could be fallible, malleable and duplicitous. As characterised by numismatists and poets alike, old coins and their particular material affordances illuminated conflicting political expectations about objects and history. As such, artifacts in Lake's conception, are 'invitations to indulge in thought experiments about the past' (196).

The contrasting uses to which objects were put in the eighteenth century show that Lake's artifacts were partial in both senses of the word; 'they roused as many controversies as they were called on

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to soothe' (45). This recognition of their potential provides a powerful justification for putting the object front and centre in a historical study. Ironically, then, objects slip out of view at times in *Artifacts*. Certainly they are given less space than the theoretical extrapolations made of them. This is not a text that gets close to its object in all its sensory and tactile forms; indeed, they are barely illustrated. Objects function most regularly as tropes and literary devices; they are representations and mediators of fact and its interpretation.

Artifacts certainly contains fewer jokes than Rummage, but is still a lively read, albeit one that is much more narrow, specialist and theoretically dense, and consequently with less of an appeal to mass market. It still entertains; the uses of antiquarian manuscripts as eighteenth-century butter wrappers, toilet paper and wine stoppers shares both fact and fascination with Cockayne's study. Both books discuss the literary genre of 'it-narratives', popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, where tales are told from an object's point of view. In making objects the protagonists, both *Rummage* and *Artifacts* are twenty-first century it-narratives of a kind, whose fresh perspectives on a wide variety of objects show the continuing bounty and complexity of material culture studies in all its forms.

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