
Photographs contain a wealth of information which may be used effectively in historical research. Visual images may be used as evidence, for illustration, for comparison and contrast, and for analytical purposes. Somewhat perplexing is the relatively minimal use of photographs as primary sources in historical inquiry concerning schooling. Many visual clues exist which can help to explain the activities, methods, resources and quality of schooling, and the people involved in schooling, in selected locations. Visual clues may be coordinated with text and with other artifacts to present a more complete picture of schooling in a specific time and place than text alone can provide. Photographs provide opportunities to compare systems of schooling and to engage in longitudinal analysis of a single school system. They can be useful in helping to investigate elements of schooling that may have elevated selected school systems to exemplary levels. The presence of a large collection of educationally related photographs reveals opportunities for utilization which are not present with individual photographs or small groups of photographs. The potential uses of photographs as primary sources for inquiry are not limited to professional historians, but may be taught to, and used by students, as well. This study shows benefits and possibilities of utilizing photographic images as primary sources in historical research in education, and in teaching historical research methods, through the use of examples contained in the Albert W. Achterberg Collection of photographs. The collection was developed during the period of 1940-1999 over an 8,000 square mile area in south-central Nebraska and features a school system in the town of Holdrege, Nebraska.


Artifacts deemed to have played a religious or ritual role in past societies belong to a broader analytical category of ‘symbolic’ material culture. This chapter explores a new approach to such material culture, in which each symbolic object is understood as a ‘once-occurrent’ dialogic interaction involving (1) coded cultural content, (2) particular material and contextual attributes, and (3) a situated synthesizing human perspective. Drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, among others, an embodied semiotic approach to symbolic objects is outlined, which identifies the constitution of
the object not in its elusive past meaning but in the unique and dynamic relationship of its component parts. This approach positions the human actor not merely as an external evaluator of the object but as a fundamental element of its very definition. Discussion of a group of seal stones from Bronze Age Crete illustrates these ideas.


The contributors to this volume examine how things are sold and traded in a variety of social and cultural settings, both present and past. Bridging the disciplines of social history, cultural anthropology, and economics, the volume marks a major step in our understanding of the cultural basis of economic life and the sociology of culture.


What do things mean? What does the life of everyday objects after the check-out reveal about people and their material worlds? Has the quest for the real thing become so important because the high tech world of total virtuality threatens to engulf us? This pioneering book bridges design theory and anthropology to offer a new and challenging way of understanding the changing meanings of contemporary human-object relations. The act of consumption is only the starting point in objects lives. Thereafter they are transformed and invested with new meanings that reflect and assert who we are. Defining design as ‘things with attitude’ differentiates the highly visible fashionable object from ordinary artefacts that are taken for granted. Through case studies ranging from reproduction furniture to fashion and textiles to clutter, the author traces the connection between objects and authenticity, ephemerality and self-identity. But beyond this, she shows the materiality of the everyday in terms of space, time and the body and suggests a transition with the passing of time from embodiment to disembodiment.


The article presents a detailed conversation among an editor of the journal and several historians on methodological issues surrounding the study of material culture within the discipline of history. Participants include: historian of modern Europe Leora Auslander; food historian Amy Bentley; historian of Islam Leor Halevi; historian of science H. Otto Sibum; and archaeologist Christopher Witmore. Topics discussed include the relationship between material culture and historical texts, the distinction between the human and the material, and others.


Contemporary materialist theory is converging with the study of material culture, as evidenced by increasing attention given to the book as a material object produced, circulated, and consumed as a commodity. It is, however, problematic to conceive of
the book as a material object, since writing itself cannot be straightforwardly conceived as a material thing, as Derrida has shown. Moreover, it is difficult to conceive the book as a commodity, since the notion of the commodity is also problematically rooted in the notion of the material, as can be established by reference to Marx and Benjamin. To consider the materiality of the book we need in place an architext of the use of the terms matter and materiality in theoretical thought. These terms are central but elusive, even when they are consciously thematized, as they are, for example, in the work of Judith Butler. This elusiveness arises only partly because the distinction between Cartesian and Aristotelian matter is forgotten, but mainly because these terms are used in an approximate fashion by Marx, who is the principal source of this vocabulary in contemporary theory. We should treat the term matter with the same skepticism we employ when dealing with other idealist concepts, not as their preconceptual other and redemption.


This essay probes the difficulty of defining or delimiting visual culture studies without the reassurance and widespread visual essentialism that, in the end, can only be tautological. Bal examines the reasons for the inability to classify visual culture as a discipline; the elements that can lead to the collapse of object and discipline; and the questions raised concerning visual culture studies in an academic situation.


This text focuses on the author’s analysis of the visual narrativity of images and iconographic reading. Topics addressed include: the development of the iconology method by Erwin Panofsky, founder of contemporary iconographic reading; Film theory on the spectatorial attitudes encouraged or discouraged by visual representation; and the relationship between text and image and between narrative in textual and in visual representation.


This essay confronts figurative portraits with works that retain the trace as basis of meaningfulness. The photograph has been approached from various cultural analysis perspectives that seek to overcome disciplinary boundaries without relinquishing the expert knowledge of specific disciplines. Such is demonstrated by the rich and varied program of the Photograph Conference, out of which this special issue emerged, an event that literally acted out the meaning of the word conference by bringing together people whose intellect has been sharpened by the experience of neither ignoring nor taking for granted the definitions of what of the “humanities” has historically construed as its “fields.” For example, at the Photograph Conference and as exemplifying “after” or “beyond” disciplinarity several papers converged on a single
author, W. G. Sebald, whose “novels” single-handedly raise multifarious issues involved in the cultural analysis of photography. This convergence led to a conference session entirely devoted to Sebald’s work, a narrowing down that is at the same time an opening up.


This article touches on and questions the object of visual studies, word and image relations, historicity, art under visual studies and politics. Exploring in particular the place of politics in visual studies, it outlines some of the ways in which visual studies as a field of inquiry all too often plays lip-service to politics, as it does to history and, more pressingly, as it does to ethics. Resisting an uncritical demand that ethics be introduced and come to occupy central stage in visual studies, the article goes on to interrogate the complex and nuanced ways in which an ethics of vision might still, and necessarily, come to the fore. Attentive to the dangers of such a foregrounding, it nonetheless proposes how such an ethics of vision offers a blueprint for the commitment that lies at the heart of visual studies and thereby can enable the field to make a difference.


Here, Bal explores the aesthetics of everyday life in postcolonial cities; the impact of mass migration on cities; Neocultural expression; the cultural phenomena of food; and the characteristics of immigrant neighborhoods.


While the moving image and migration were both phenomena of substantial currency and effect during the twentieth century, in the present moment, it appears that the visibility of video and migration is increasingly enhanced based respectively on the sheer volume and variety of populations on the move, and the pyramiding appeal and accessibility of video. Video is a medium of time; of time contrived, manipulated, and offered in different, multilayered ways. Time no longer captured, as in the very first strips of celluloid, nor even “sampled” in bits separated by cuts; time is “framed,” made to appear real but no longer indexically attached to the real time that it purportedly represents. Like cinema, it offers images moving in time-slow or fast, interrupting and integrating. Similarly, migration is an experience of time; of time as multiple, heterogeneous—the time of haste and waiting; the time of movement and stagnation; the time of memory and of an unsettling, provisional present, with its pleasures and its violence. I explore the interactions, connections and discrepancies between these two temporalities. Through several works from the video exhibition 2MOVE, I examine three intersections between video and migration. First, both are anchored in the conceptual metaphor of movement—but a movement that cannot be taken for routine, “natural,” or realist. Second, heterochrony offers temporal shelter to
memories. And memories are themselves heterogeneous, multisensate, and multitemporal. Third, I probe the time of the viewing, which is the present.


The reproduction of racism and class-based oppression are taught to children through various cultural media, including toys and games. Between 1880 and 1930, the popularity of racialized toys and banks were fear-based responses to the perceived encroachment by “foreign and exotic” migrations of African American, Chinese, Irish and Native Americans into the cultural landscape of white middle-class America. This article analyzes how artifacts associated with children, such as mechanical banks, clockwork figures, and other toys are part of a larger cultural structure that viewed race and class as inseparable, and that these objects were essential in the development of a learned habitus that exposed white middle class children in the Victorian era to a racially and class oriented world. We argue that these objects reflect both the times in which they were made, and illuminate the relationship between adults and a newfound emphasis on children and childhood, in which toys serve as symbolic mediators of culture.


*Women and Material Culture* comprises twelve illustrated, interdisciplinary essays on gender and material culture across the long eighteenth century. Written by an international group of scholars working in the fields of visual culture, dress history and literary criticism, these essays point to the manifold ways in which gender mediated and was shaped by the consumption and production of goods (from clothing and artworks to books) and elucidate the complex, shifting relationships between material and social practice in the period.


The study of children and childhood in historical and prehistoric life is an overlooked area of study that Jane Baxter addresses in this brief book. Her timely contribution stresses the importance of studying children as active participants in past cultures, instead of regarding them mainly for their effect on adult life. Using the critical concepts of gender and socialization, she develops new theoretical and methodological approaches for the archaeological study of this large but invisible population. Baxter presents examples from the analysis of toys, miniatures, and other objects traditionally associated with children, from the gendered distribution of activity space, from the remains of children-as-apprentices, and from mortuary evidence. Baxter’s work will aid archaeologists bring a more nuanced understanding of children’s role in the historical and archaeological record.

The concept of “working” memory is traceable back to nineteenth-century theorists, but the term itself was not used until the mid-twentieth century. A variety of different explanatory constructs have since evolved that all make use of the working-memory label. This history is briefly reviewed, and alternative formulations of working memory (as language processor, executive attention, and global work space) are considered as potential mechanisms for cognitive change within and between individuals and between species. A means, derived from the literature on human problem solving, of tracing memory and computational demands across a single task is described and applied to two specific examples of tool use by chimpanzees and early hominids. The examples show how specific proposals for necessary and/or sufficient computational and memory requirements can be more rigorously assessed on a task-by-task basis. General difficulties in connecting cognitive theories (arising from the observed capabilities of individuals deprived of material support) with archaeological data (primarily remnants of material culture) are discussed.


This dissertation investigates the cultural meaning ascribed to feminine fashionable objects such as gloves, fans, parasols and vanity sets. I pay particular attention to issues of middle-class formation, the performance of gender, and the materiality of race, empire and colonialism. While these issues lie at the heart of British historiography, this project is written from a unique perspective which privileges cultural artifacts through material culture analysis. While the emergence of the middle class is typically studied as a masculine/public phenomenon, this project corrects the overemphasis on male activity by showing that middle-class women created a distinctive ‘look’ for their class via the consumption of specific goods and through participation in daily beauty rituals. Adding to these ideas, I argue that Victorian women performed a distinct type of femininity represented as passivity, asexuality, innocence, and leisure. By studying the repetitive gestures, poses and consumption practices of middle-class women, I show that certain corporeal acts helped to create Victorian femininity. This work also suggests that women participated in the British colonial project by consuming objects that were represented in the Victorian imagination as imperial spoils. As such, I argue that imperialism penetrated the everyday lives of Britons through several everyday objects. Empire building also created anxieties surrounding questions of race. Women’s accessories, such as gloves and parasols, helped British women to maintain their whiteness, an important way of distinguishing the ‘civilized’ Britons from the ‘uncivilized’ tanned colonial peoples. Overall this project showed that within the everyday objects consumed by women we can identify the anxieties, hopes and dreams of Victorians.

Ruth Behar and Circe Sturm had never met nor spoken to one another before this interview, and yet the two of them were surprised to find that they shared a remarkable degree of connection. Both are cultural anthropologists who celebrate the humanistic side of the discipline and are known for their self-reflexive writing. Both have worked at some point with indigenous transformations people in Latin America, and both have ventured into ethnographic work and documentary film making in their own “home” communities. Perhaps most significantly, both believe that there is a fundamental artistry inherent in understanding and representing human experience. Ruth Behar makes a space for that artistry not only in her well-known ethnographic writing but also in her poetry, fiction, and film. Sturm does so in her non-fiction writing, ethnographic film, and mixed-media art instillations. In the following conversation, the two women discuss the place of material culture in ethnographic research and writing, the classroom, and their personal lives. Both women point to earlier theoretical paradigms within anthropology that limited their ability to perceive and write about the significance of material culture in the world around them. Behar talks about how she came to have a greater critical awareness of material culture once she started doing ethnographic fieldwork in communities out-side the United States. As a result, material culture has become more and more central to her work. The same is true for Sturm, who also argues for a greater engagement with material culture. Both are concerned with how they might encourage students to become more cognizant of their own personal and social relationships with material culture. By exploring in the classroom what they have experienced as anthropologists, Behar and Sturm hope to empower students to think and write about material culture with greater creativity and insight.


To be civilized involves, among other things, making, using, and buying objects. Although speculation on the significance of objects often tends to be casual, there are professionals—anthropologists, historians, semioticians, Marxists, sociologists, and psychologists—who analyze material culture in a systematic way and attempt to elicit from it reliable information about people, societies, and cultures. One reason that analyzing objects has been problematical for scholars is the lack of a sound methodology governing multidisciplinary research. Reading Matter addresses this problem by defining a comprehensive set of methodological approaches that can be used to analyze and interpret material culture and relate it to personality and society.

Berger offers discussions of the main concepts found in semiotic, historical, anthropological, psychoanalytic, Marxist, and sociological analysis. He provides practical descriptions of the working methods of each discipline and demarcates their special areas of investigation. Berger’s lively discussions include a wealth of
illustrative examples that help to clarify the complex and often difficult theories that underlie interpretations of material culture. In the second part of his analysis, Berger uses these disciplines to investigate one subject—fashion and an important aspect of fashion, blue jeans, and what the author calls the “denimiation” phenomenon. Here he shows how different methods of “reading” material culture end up with different perspectives on things—even when they are dealing with the same topic.

The author’s focus is on the material culture of post-literate societies and cultures, both contemporary and historical. This comparative approach enables the reader to trace the evolution of objects from past to present or to see how American artifacts spread to different cultures, acquiring a wholly new meaning in the process. Reading Matter is an important contribution to the study of popular culture and social history. It will be of interest to sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural historians.


Proceeding from Robyn Wiegman’s call for a transition from questions of “why” to “how” with regard to formations of race, this article proposes a heuristic, the “scriptive thing,” to analyze ways in which racial subjectivation emerges through everyday physical engagement with the material world. The term ‘scriptive thing’ integrates performance studies and “thing theory” by highlighting the ways in which things prompt, structure, or choreograph behavior. A knife, a camera, and a novel all invite—indeed, create—occasions for repetitions of acts, distinctive and meaningful motions of eyes, hands, shoulders, hips, feet. These things are citational in that they arrange and propel bodies in recognizable ways, through paths of evocative movement that have been traveled before. I use the term script as a theatrical professional might, to denote not a rigid dictation of performed action but, rather, a necessary openness to resistance, interpretation, and improvisation. A “scriptive thing,” like a play script, broadly structures a performance while unleashing original, live variations. Like the police in Louis Althusser’s famous scenario, scriptive things leap out within a field, address an individual, and demand to be reckoned with. By answering a hail, by entering the scripted scenario, the individual is interpellated into ideology and thus into subjethood. I conduct close readings of scriptive things, including a photograph of a light-skinned woman posing in about 1930 with a caricature of a young African American man, a set of twentieth-century arcade photographs, a viciously racist 1898 alphabet book by E. W. Kemble, and a black doll called “Uncle Tom” that was whipped in the 1850s by a white girl who would grow up to write best-selling children’s books. These readings show how interpellation occurs through confrontations in the material world, through dances between people and things.


Toys are a frequent subject of contemporary claims concerning social problems. Rooted in our culture’s longstanding ambivalence regarding leisure and its concerns
about children’s vulnerability, claims about troublesome toys also reflect anxiety about children’s increased susceptibility to non-familial influences, their growing access to toys, and an expanded toy industry, as well as an active social movement sector. Typically, these claims argue that toys represent undesirable values, and that children who play with the toys acquire those values. Parallel arguments may be found in claims regarding other forms of popular and material culture. Interactionists should be wary of making or accepting these claims, because rather than treating children’s play as a topic for empirical study, such claims locate meaning in objects, rather than actors.


This article addresses the relationship between light, material culture and social experiences. It argues that understanding light as a powerful social agent, in its relationship with people, things, colours, shininess and places, may facilitate an appreciation of the active social role of luminosity in the practice of day-to-day activities. The article surveys an array of past conceptions of light within philosophy, natural science and more recent approaches to light in the fields of anthropology and material culture studies. A number of implications are discussed, and by way of three case studies it is argued that light may be used as a tool for exercising social intimacy and inclusion, of shaping moral spaces and hospitality, and orchestrating movement, while working as a metaphor as well as a material agent in these social negotiations. The social comprehension of light is a means of understanding social positions in ways that may be real or imagined, but are bound up on the social and cultural associations of certain lightscapes.


Pupils’ essays represent an overlooked resource for historical inquiry. Historians have often ignored young people’s work as ‘unauthentic,’ falsely believing it to be merely the mimicking of teachers’ and parents’ beliefs. But young people are not merely mouthpieces for adults, as research on teacher–student interactions has demonstrated. By adding pedagogical theories of the classroom to social historical research methodology, it is possible to read pupils’ writings as the result of their own critical thinking and observations, thus providing much-needed insight into the daily lives of young people. Using the example of Soviet-occupied postwar Germany, the author presents approximately a dozen representative pupils’ essays of the 1400 she examined in order to illustrate how young people’s voices help complete our picture of typical schooldays in historical contexts. The inclusion of these essays in the historical research on the postwar years in eastern Germany shows that the reinstatement of school after the war was an important event for young people, and that they cared very much about their learning. It also points to the many obstacles that young people faced in order to receive an education, including classrooms that were freezing and filled
with rubble from the war time bombings. Equally important is that these pupils’ assignments underline the importance of including young people’s voices in any historical investigation of schools.


Material culture has been part of a distinctively human way of life for over two million years. Recent symbolic and social analyses have drawn much attention to the role of material culture in human society, emphasizing the representational and ideological aspects of the material world. These studies have, nonetheless, often overlooked how the very physicality of material culture and our material surroundings make them unique and distinctive from text and discourse. In this study, Nicole Boivin explores how the physicality of the material world shapes our thoughts, emotions, cosmological frameworks, social relations, and even our bodies. Focusing on the agency of material culture, she draws on the work of a diverse range of thinkers, from Marx and Merleau-Ponty to Darwin, while highlighting a wide selection of new studies in archaeology, cultural anthropology, history, cognitive science, and evolutionary biology. She asks what is distinctive about material culture compared to other aspects of human culture and presents a comprehensive overview of material agency that has much to offer to both scholars and students.


Studies of ritual and religion have increasingly taken account of the rich material dimension of ritual practice. Nonetheless, and in parallel with similar tendencies in the wider humanities and social sciences, such studies have often framed material culture as a passive reflection of cultural values, thoughts, and cosmological beliefs that are understood to prefigure them. In contrast, this paper argues that the material aspects of religious practice may serve a very different end than do texts and symbols. By doing away with language partly or perhaps even entirely, at certain points in time, both material culture and certain more experientially oriented types of ritual activity are able to alter human thought and understanding by relating it directly to experience of the material world, the environment, the body, and the emotions. Archaeologists and anthropologists must beware of allowing language-oriented, representationalist understandings of material culture and ritual to limit elucidation of the myriad of ways in which these two components of human activity often work together to alter human perception and understanding. While language may frequently be adequate for dealing with everyday activities and experiences, ritual, often materially, emotionally and sensually oriented, helps to grasp the elusive and unknowable at the margins of these experiences.

This article identifies the interpretation of historical materials as the essence of contemporary historical practice. It then compares three different approaches to interpretation, namely, reconstructionism, constructionism and deconstructionism, through case studies of four common categories of historical materials found in the field of sport history: official documents, oral testimonies, films, and photographs. The key to understanding the three approaches, and hence different interpretations, lies in their respective objectives for history practice and in their epistemological assumptions. In analyzing the four categories of historical material, the article places particular emphasis on deconstructionist approaches. Critics typically associate deconstructionism with the fragmentation of knowledge and notions of relativism. However, close examination reveals that deconstructionist approaches to historical interpretation are considerably more rigorous and demand more sophisticated contextualization and theorization than is popularly held.


This book is about the classroom, the most important meeting place for teachers and pupils in an education building. Individuals’ knowledge, however, about what happens inside this space is limited. In many respects the classroom is still the black box of the educational system. To open up this box, this volume brings together scholars from the disciplines of Art, Architecture, History, Pedagogy and Sociology. They present a wide variety of new perspectives, methodologies and sources for studying classrooms. The book examines images and representations of classrooms (photographs, paintings and pictures on school walls), writings and documents inside the classroom (school exercise books, teachers’ log books and observer reports), memories and personal experiences of classrooms (egodocuments from teachers and pupils, and oral history interviews), the space and design of classrooms (architecture, school murals and the transformation of space), and material objects in the classroom (school furniture, primers for reading and school wall charts). The essays are illustrated with a unique collection of more than fifty photographs of classrooms in Europe.


This article examines the issues and problems surrounding the material culture of children and childhood, with the aim of making children more visible within material culture studies. It presents results from recent research examining such material culture within the accredited museum collections of mainland Britain, and compares the data from this study to expectations and statements made in the small body of existing literature in this field. Evidence is offered to both challenge and confirm ideas, and new perspectives on this area are offered, notably that ‘the material culture of children’ and ‘the material culture of childhood’ should be considered distinguishable and separate entities.

The notion of questioning the visual and considering the construction of photographic archives of schooling is a new area of research and scholarship within the field of the history of education. It draws inspiration from ideas, perspectives and theory generated by the various strands of sociology, social history, cultural studies and feminism, which have left their mark on the intellectual landscape in recent years. The educational past has been opened up to different questions: both the apparent and the hidden or silent are subject to scrutiny. The ‘everyday’ details of schooling have acquired a new significance.


The key issue arising from the perspective offered here is that the material context of the school, including the elements of design in the built environment and the objects which it contains, have drawn both adults and children into differently framed but intimate, creative and imaginative relationship with them.


Over the last decade there has been a significant growth of interest among historians of education in questions of space, place, material cultures and the travel of knowledge and theory. This work builds and expands upon the foundations set by studies of school building programmes of earlier periods published in the 1970s and 1980s. More recent publications have extended the range of source materials available to us and promote a wider and deeper criticality in our ways of seeing and using such sources for the histories we tell.


This article explores the typology of photographic images of school and schooling used by historians who have developed visual methodologies in their research and scholarship over recent years. The authors consider the question, raised by a number of scholars, concerning the value of image-based research and the capacity of the visual alone to produce new knowledge aside from other traditional sources. The ‘progressive image’ is discussed as one type of school photograph in the context of a range of other types and the article traces the stories of two schools, known to be progressive and innovative during the mid-twentieth century through archived imagery. The authors suggest that the social relationships forged between educators, artists, photographers and policy makers, known and unknown to the historian, are by-
products of the process of considering the progressive image in the history of education, opening up new and potentially rich research agendas for the future.


In recent years sensory history has emerged as a research topic of growing interest to historians and has been accompanied by a call to incorporate the senses into our understanding of the past. Under modernity, social direction and control were built into the infrastructure of modern life as specialist institutions — designed to discipline, control and shape urban bodies — emerged and multiplied in the urban landscape: the prison, the workhouse, the asylum, the reformatory, the children’s home and the school. This paper focuses on the school as a site of childhood control. Historians of education and childhood have to date paid little attention to the sensory worlds of schooling and childhood. This study focuses on one sense: hearing. Hearing, sound, and aurality have been shown to be deeply implicated in modernity’s daily elaboration. The study explores the sounds of modern schooling; the culture of listening in modern schools; the materiality of the modern school ‘soundscape’; and the influence of architectural acoustics on the culture of listening. In doing so, the study addresses the problems, sources and methodologies involved in writing a history of the hearing school.


This article explores the possible uses of school photographs for developing new histories of education. Two different types of school photographs are discussed, with particular attention paid to the significance of the representation of the body of the schoolchild. The authors consider how the school photograph, produced within the school for internal private purposes and/or for external community consumption, has acted as a significant means by which school was ‘performed’ and through which boundaries between the public or institutional world of school and private world of the home and community could be traversed. Photographic albums from two schools in Portugal in the mid-twentieth century are explored within an analytical framework that considers how such sources develop new understandings of how local traditions intersect with transnational cultural norms. The idealized arrangement of the body of the schoolchild is never more clearly demonstrated than in school photography, and the authors trace this tradition to the origins of images of the schoolchild found in popular public iconography dating from the late nineteenth century.

What place do images hold among other kinds of historical evidence? In *Eyewitnessing*, Peter Burke reviews graphics, photographs, films and other media from many countries and periods and examines their pragmatic uses. This profusely illustrated book surveys the opportunities and the challenges of using images to understand other times. In a thorough and compelling defense of the importance of the visual to history, Burke argues that images should not be considered mere reflections of their time and place, but rather extensions of the social contexts in which they were produced. The author describes and evaluates the methods by which art historians have traditionally analyzed images and finds them insufficient to deal with the complexities of visual imagery. In developing a richer mode of visual interpretation, Burke devotes much attention to religious icons and narratives as well as to propaganda posters, caricatures and maps. *Eyewitnessing* also addresses the economics of images — some, such as films, are commodities in themselves, while others are created to advertise other products. Concentrating on the representation of social groups, the author explores stereotypes as well as notions of foreignness and gender. In this wide-ranging, highly accessible volume, Burke helps us to understand the promise and the pitfalls of using visual evidence in the writing of history.


The DM Museum (formerly the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection) in the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University was the dream of the late Dagmar Gustafson, former department head, who in the 1950s envisioned the museum as a way to instill in students an appreciation of fabrics and apparel.


Images of the places and activities called “school” as a formal institution are rich data for the inquiring gaze. This article focuses specifically on historical photos of school rituals and ceremonies through which young people perform particular narratives of schooling through repetitive embodied practice, and, in turn, construct values and beliefs about themselves and wider society. In particular, we look at rituals of the habitual, coming of age ceremonies, patriotic rituals and ceremonies, and degradation rituals and ceremonies. In analysis of these photographs, we ask, what meanings are (re)performed in such rituals and ceremonies? Why are these performances important to consider in the context of young people’s identity negotiation and school reform? And, after such an analysis, how might any of the performances contain spaces for (student and teacher) agency, including resistance and transformation?


The article discusses the significance of letters, specifically historical letters towards teaching history and language arts. According to the author, letters reflect a person’s
point of view concerning a particular historic event which makes such letters a valuable instrument in teaching as well as in curriculum integration. Letters and other documents including diaries and photographs provide a personal account of certain events that the person has witnessed himself. Studies and investigations regarding a particular historical event can get crucial insights from letters and documents which were written during the same period that the event happened.


What narratives may a micro-study within a school reveal about past lives, roles and design? What traces may be contained within a single room? This paper focuses on an oral history of a ‘welfare room’ in a postwar infants school as told by a welfare assistant. The school is an early example of a school designed by Mary (Crowley) Medd opened in 1949. Mary, together with David Medd, was to play a significant role in postwar school design through their work at a local authority level, particularly in Hertfordshire and more widely at a national and international level through the Ministry of Education Architects and Building Development Group (1949-1972). This study, part of a wider investigation of three of the Medds’ postwar schools, reveals three features of architectural intention lived out in the habitation of the space. There is an attention to the ‘in-between’ as part of a reconfiguring of learning spaces, to comfort and care linked to design, which promotes growth, and to craftsmanship.


This paper discusses the publication of “The Material Culture of American Homes, 1650–1920,” a ten-unit slide and tape program developed by Kenneth L. Ames, William S. Ayers, and Nancy L. Garrison at the Winterthur Museum that fills an important need for images of artifacts that can be used in the classroom. Clark looks at the series’ approach to material culture studies, exploring the different ways in which meanings become associated with objects.


The work of women’s historians researching the second wave of feminism in Canada (since the 1960s) has been made much easier by the 1993 publication of *The Canadian Women’s Movement, 1960-1990: A Guide to Archival Resources*. Like the Nova Scotia volume, this guide would not have been published without the support of various grants and the ongoing commitment and vision of a relatively small group of women. Although the true test of the guide’s worth is yet to come, we can state confidently that active, semi-active, and dormant records of most women’s groups in Canada from 1960 to 1990 will not be lost to history, thanks to this
publication and the related advocacy work of the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives (CWMA) team.


This study examines the gender-typed portrayal of material culture in Caldecott Award–winning children’s books published between 1937 and 1989. Analyses of illustrations found that a larger proportion of female characters was shown using household artifacts, and a larger proportion of male characters was depicted using nondomestic production artifacts. Contrast analyses revealed no change over time in the proportions of female characters portrayed using household and production artifacts. The authors conclude that children’s exposure to this representation may result in gender-linked modeling effects on preferences and skills related to technology and other material culture.


This article proposes a framework for studying material culture, such as fashionable clothing, based on an analysis of the processes that lead to the creation and attribution of symbolic value. Five types of analyses are outlined: (1) analyses of material culture as a type of text that expresses symbols and contributes to discourses and to cultural repertoires; (2) analyses of systems of cultural production in which symbolic values are attributed to material culture through the collective activities of members of culture worlds; (3) analyses of the communication of symbolic values associated with items of material culture and the processes whereby these meanings are disseminated to consumers through the media; (4) analyses of the attribution of symbolic values to material culture by consumers and of their responses to symbolic values attributed to material culture by producers of material culture or in other ways; (5) cross-national studies of symbolic values expressed in material goods and of the systems that produce them in order to reveal differences in the types of symbolic values attributed to material culture in different countries and regions. An analysis of cultural, social, and organizational influences on the production of fashionable clothing in Italy introduces three articles in this issue on this theme.


South Asian, or ‘Indian’, textiles have long been both apparent and appreciated within British culture. They form an important part of what we can see as a British Asian transnational space of things. This paper examines this space and the cultural exchanges that constitute it, in order to raise wider issues concerning the relations between transnationality, space and histories of material culture. The paper starts with some contextual observations on approaches to transnationality that foreground
material culture. The appeal and problems of accounts that ‘follow’ things transnationally are reviewed, and matters of ‘design’, ‘style’ and ‘pattern’ are argued to be a fertile edge to this approach. As an illustration, the paper then focuses more specifically on a case study, Owen Jones’s *The Grammar of Ornament* (first published in 1856), relating its representation and reproduction of Indian patterns to the material collections of South Asian textiles within the Victorian ‘exhibitionary complex’, examining the material transformations made to Indian ornament in these processes, and setting these acquisitions and alterations in the context of Victorian British design culture. By way of conclusion, the paper draws out what this narrative of *The Grammar of Ornament* says more generally about how we approach transnationality, and specifically transnational space, through things and material culture.


*Village School* (1940) and *Children’s Charter* (1945) are two propaganda films produced on behalf of the British government at the beginning and the end of the second world war and are key visual sources for educational history, quite accessible but so far much neglected by educational historians. This paper examines the two films as case studies of the visual in the making of educational space at one moment in history. The historical moment is the Second World War in Britain, and the space is the public space in which educational policies and ideologies are promoted. The two motion pictures are located in their historical context, followed by comparative and critical comments from three perspectives: the image as a document of relations between producer and consumer; the image as a medium of expression; and the image in its relation to a wider iconography of education. A major focus of this paper is the way in which promotion of a progressive curriculum and teaching method is inscribed with in a film on schooling in war time evacuation, and it also highlights the complexity of reading motion pictures, and especially propaganda film, as historical evidence.


A compelling aspect of education history and one that is drawing new writers and readers in the field is the increasing diversity of sources on which education historians draw. New forms of admissible evidence challenge us to adopt different approaches to analysis, while changing analytical frameworks demand the inclusion of new sources of data. Evidence and interpretation in this sense stand in a symbiotic relationship. As outlined in the editorial to this issue of the journal, this section intends to encompass critical discussion of source genres, problematics of interpretation and interpretive debates relating to individual documents, images, artefacts and sites.

This article proposes that fetishization of objects involves an overdetermination of their social value through a discursive negotiation of the capacities of objects that stimulates fantasy and desire for them. The idea of the fetish has a particular presence in the writings of sociologists, namely, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. It implies for these two theorists of the social, a particular form of relation between human beings and objects. While Marx’s account of fetishism addresses the exchange-value of commodities at the level of the economic relations of production, it fails to deal in any detail with the use-value or consumption of commodities. In contrast Freud’s concept of the fetish as a desired substitute for a suitable sex object explores how objects are desired and consumed. Drawing on both Marx and Freud, Sociologist Jean Baudrillard breaks with their analyses of fetishism as demonstrating a human relation with unreal objects. He explores the creation of value in objects through the social exchange of sign values, showing how objects are fetishized in ostentation. This article argues that while Baudrillard breaks with the realism characteristic of Marx’s and Freud’s analyses of fetishism, he does not go far enough in describing the social and discursive practices in which objects are used and sometimes transformed into fetishes.


Through wearing clothes, keeping furniture, responding to the telephone, noticing the signature on a painting, we interact with objects in our everyday lives. These are not merely functional relationships with things but are connected to the way we relate to other people and the culture of the particular society we live in. This book draws on established theoretical work, including that of Simmel, Marx, McLuhan, Barthes, and Baudrillard as well as a range of contemporary empirical work from many humanities disciplines. It uses ideas drawn from this work to explore a variety of things—from stone cairns to denim jeans—to understand something of how we live with them.


During the last thirty years, ‘consumption’ has become a major topic in the study of contemporary culture within anthropology, psychology and sociology. For many authors it has become central to understanding the nature of material culture in the modern world, but this paper argues that the concept is, in British writing at least, too concerned with its economic origins in the selling and buying of consumer goods or commodities. It is argued that to understand material culture as determined through the monetary exchange for things—the cash nexus—leads to an inadequate sociological understanding of the social relations with objects. The work of Jean Baudrillard is used both to critique the concept of consumption as it leads to a focus on advertising, choice, money and shopping and to point to a more sociologically adequate approach to material culture that explores objects in a system of models and series, ‘atmosphere,’ functionality, biography, interaction and mediation.

This paper argues that although classical sociology has largely overlooked the importance of social relations with the material world in shaping the form of society, Braudel’s concept of ‘material civilization’ is a useful way to begin to understand the sociological significance of this relationship. The limitations of Braudel’s historical and general concept can be partially overcome with Elias’s analysis of the connection between ‘technization’ and ‘civilization’ that allows for both a civilizing and a de-civilizing impact of emergent forms of material relation that both lengthen and shorten the chains of interdependence between the members of a society. It is suggested that the concept of the ‘morality of things’ employed by a number of commentators is useful in summarizing the civilizing effects of material objects and addressing their sociological significance. From the sociology of consumption the idea of materiality as a sign of social relationships can be drawn, and from the sociology of technology the idea of socio-technical systems and actor-networks can contribute to the understanding of material civilization. It is argued that the concept of ‘material capital’ can usefully summarize the variable social value of objects but to understand the complexity of material civilization as it unfolds in everyday life, an analysis of ‘material interaction’ is needed. Finally the paper suggests some initial themes and issues apparent in contemporary society that the sociological study of material civilization might address; the increased volume, functional complexity and material specificity of objects and the increased social complexity, autonomy and substitutability that is entailed. A theory of ‘material civilization’ is the first step in establishing a sociology of objects.


Our everyday interactions with material objects are dependent on us making sense of what they mean and what actions will be effective in transforming them to suit our purposes. We perceive things by interpreting the information of our senses in the light of what we know of our material culture. We act on them through bodily gesture that changes them, both physically and their meaning as signs. Those who design and manufacture objects anticipate how they will be interacted with and how they will fit within the existing material culture. Their intentions are embedded within the form of the objects they produce and are responded to or ‘read’ during interaction by consumers or users. Material interaction involves pragmatic relations that situate the meaning of objects in relation to other objects and the intentions of the designer and the user. This article attempts to set out the pragmatic features of everyday interaction with objects to enhance sociological understanding of design and consumption and illustrates the processes of material interaction with the examples of making flat-pack furniture and professional work on cars. The concept of ‘pragmatics’ is derived from the writings of Pierce and Morris, and their approach to the study of signs is developed with reference to Barthes. Meaningful material interaction involves the subject/object, person/thing relations of perception and gesture and these are developed from the theories of Merleau-Ponty and Leroi-Gourhan. The pragmatic dimensions of material interaction are proposed to be: intention, perception, orientation, manipulation and continuation.

This article explores the key moments in Benjamin’s and Barthes’s analyses of the cultural significance of the photograph. For Benjamin these are: the optical unconscious, the transmission of aura, the representation of cultural and political decay and proto-surrealist political commentary. For Barthes they are: the techniques of the photographer, the studium, the punctum and the ecstasy of the image. These rather different approaches to photography reveal a common concern with history. Both authors have written about the nature of historical understanding, and photography has provided both with a powerful metaphor. What emerges from their analyses of photographs is that each evokes a double moment of historical awareness; of being both in the present and in the past. For Benjamin this is the ‘spark of contingency’ with which the aura of past existence shines in the present. For Barthes it is the ‘ça-a-été,’ the emotional stab of awareness that what is present and visible in the photograph is irretrievably lost in the past.


History is recorded in many ways. According to author James Deetz, the past can be seen most fully by studying the small things so often forgotten. Objects such as doorways, gravestones, musical instruments, and even shards of pottery fill in the cracks between large historical events and depict the intricacies of daily life. In his completely revised and expanded edition of *In Small Things Forgotten*, Deetz has added new sections that more fully acknowledge the presence of women and African Americans in Colonial America. New interpretations of archaeological finds detail how minorities influenced and were affected by the development of the Anglo-American tradition in the years following the settlers’ arrival in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. Among Deetz’s observations:

- Subtle changes in building long before the Revolutionary War hinted at the growing independence of the American colonies and their desire to be less like the British.
- Records of estate auctions show that many households in Colonial America contained only one chair—underscoring the patriarchal nature of the early American family. All other members of the household sat on stools or the floor.
- The excavation of a tiny community of freed slaves in Massachusetts reveals evidence of the transplantation of African culture to North America.

Simultaneously a study of American life and an explanation of how American life is studied, In Small Things Forgotten, through the everyday details of ordinary living, colorfully depicts a world hundreds of years in the past.

My course elicits divergent reactions from students. Reading through my evaluations, I often feel I have taught two different lower-division courses. Some students feel the class content was “made up” and that the assignments were “unclear” or “too hard” for an introductory level course. Others rank the course as one of the best they have taken at Davis.


Despite the recent attention given to the archaeology of childhood, households continue to be treated by archaeologists as the product of adult behavior and activities. Yet children shaped the decisions and motivations of adults and influenced the structure and organization of daily activities and household space. Further, children’s material culture serves to both create and disrupt social norms and daily life, making children essential to understanding broader mechanisms of change and continuity. Thus, archaeologists should reconceptualize houses as places of children. This research brings together multiple lines of evidence from the Early Postclassic site of Xaltocan, Mexico, including ethnohistory, burials, and figurines to reconstruct the social roles and identities of children and to problematize our understanding of households. I argue that thinking of houses as places of children enables us to see that children were essential to daily practice, the construction and transmission of social identity, and household economic success.


The degradation of cultural artefacts is usually understood in a purely negative vein: the erosion of physical integrity is associated with a parallel loss of cultural information. This article asks if it is possible to adopt an interpretive approach in which entropic processes of decomposition and decay, though implicated in the destruction of cultural memory traces on one register, contribute to the recovery of memory on another register. The article tracks the entanglement of cultural and natural histories through the residual material culture of a derelict homestead in Montana. In conclusion, the article suggests that deposits of degraded material, though inappropriate for recovery in conventional conservation strategies, may be understood through the application of a collaborative interpretive ethic, allowing other-than-human agencies to participate in the telling of stories about particular places.

In recent years there has been a growth in interdisciplinary work which has argued that disability is not an isolated, individual medical pathology but instead a key defining social category like ‘race’, class and gender. Seen in this way disability provides researchers with another analytic tool for exploring the nature of power. Running almost parallel in time with these academic developments has been a growing interest in the use of the visual in educational research. This growth in interest may be explained by Catherine Burke’s observation that images—line drawings, still photography, film, video and digital technologies—have accompanied the development of state education from its beginning and that ‘the camera within the School has its own historical narrative reflecting change and continuities in ways of seeing education and children over time.’ In 2007, a workshop was held at the European Conference on Educational Research, Ghent which brought together academics to engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue around a set of images that capture disability and pedagogical practice. This article consists of three commentaries on the photographs (Devlieger; Van Hove and Vanobbergen; Grosvenor) which were given at the workshop and some reflective remarks written after the workshop (Simon). The commentators were given a maximum of 10 minutes each and their points are presented here very much as they were in the workshop, but references have been added and appear in the footnotes. The article opens with some brief contextual information about the archive which holds the selected photographs and the process by which the workshop came into being.


Material culture is the substance of much archaeological research but it has only recently been studied as evidence of gender relations. This book uses case-studies drawn from many different periods and areas to illuminate and develop concepts and theories. It ranges from the social contexts of production and artefact use to the construction of food as a gendered social medium. The worldwide contributors critique traditional approaches and consider feminist and non-heterosexual gender perspectives. This volume offers a significant expansion of an established field of study and shows the scope for engendering the archaeological past.


This paper explores the commemorative dimensions of death, dying, and bereavement in contemporary America, as embodied in material and visual culture. Focusing in particular on the Oklahoma City National Memorial (dedicated in 2000 and now managed by the US National Park Service) and on temporary shrines constructed near Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado (the site of a murderous rampage in 1999), it asks how and why such commemoration is organized—by whom and for whom? What do these practices and rituals—both seemingly spontaneous public practices and those managed by specific institutions—reveal about American attitudes toward death and grief? What do they tell us about who (and what) is deemed
memorable in their absence, in US history, and in terms of an imagined national future? Indeed, what is the role of memory in the material and visual culture of death, dying and bereavement in contemporary America?


During her lifetime, Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth (1886–1967) single-handedly amassed one of the largest and most extensive private collections of quilts and other textiles in Britain and possibly the world. Her family humorously dismissed her obsession as “Rachel’s tat” (worthless rags), yet her legacy is now valued at $10 million and housed in an archive for researchers and scholars. Rachel was a passionate, master needlewoman and effective social activist who used every item in her collection as a teaching tool during her long and very colorful life. She felt that textiles are as much a tactile as a visual medium and must be handled to be understood. Her dynamism was so potent and memorable that, 40 years after her death, volunteers continue to maintain and add to the collection of 35,000 items in the archive housed in her family home in Lancashire, England, creating an ongoing historical resource.


This paper outlines how visual culture is emerging as a paradigm within visual arts education. It provides an overview of cultural studies, elucidates the differences between material culture studies and visual culture studies, and provides examples of art education studies that have been influenced by material culture studies.


This paper argues that the material and presentational forms of photographs are central to their meaning as images. Drawing on work from the anthropology of material culture, it explores the significance of the materiality of ethnographic photographs as socially salient objects. The argument suggests that, while the analytical focus has been on the semiotic and iconographical in the representation of race and culture, material forms of images are integral to this discourse.


This article explores the significance of the material practices of photography and its archiving in interpretive approaches to the relationship between photographs and history. Drawing on work in material culture studies in anthropology and on the concept of “material hermeneutic,” it argues that photographs should not be understood only through forensic and semiotic analysis of content, but as objects that constitute material performances of a complex range of historiographical desires in the negotiation of the relations among past, present, and future. The analysis is grounded
in an exploration of the material practices of the photographic survey movement in England between 1885 and 1918. This loosely cohered group of amateur photographers recorded a historical topography of ancient churches, cottages, passing events, and folk customs in order to create a photographic record for the benefit of future generations. As such it was a self-conscious statement of “popular historicism.” The members’ concern for key values of permanence and accuracy, expressed through the detail of photographic and archival processes, reveals the ways in which cultural loss and photographic loss become mutually sustaining metaphors for each other, and in which the photographs themselves are material markers of both evidential value and of an affective historical imagination.


In 1937, Australian photographer Olive Cotton photographed the sea from the headland at Newport Beach, producing *Sea’s awakening*, one of the most sublime images of her career. This essay considers the photograph in depth as part of an ongoing search for developing alternative means of analyzing and interpreting photographs. It is premised on the conviction that photographic history is limited as a means of illumination and uses an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from other fields including social history and biography. In addition, concerns with gender, materiality and narrative are explored. The aim of the essay is not to fix the meaning of Sea’s awakening, rendering it static but to mobilize it.


This paper takes up the call by scholars such as Alfred Gell to consider objects of material culture as objects, by examining them in the context of production, circulation and reception. Because they are unadorned and without visual interest, the hand-held artefacts used in some New Ireland dance performances, do not lend themselves to modes of analysis that see cultural objects as surrogate texts, the hidden meanings of which can be ‘read.’ This very ‘lack’ enables us more readily to discern their significance, which lies in their magical potency and in the performance of their creator, the shaman, in attracting, wielding and revealing his awesome power. The power sought is less power over others and more power to—the ability to realise projects that can elicit effects. If consciousness and body are one, such achievements are to be understood as embodiments of intentionality and agency. It is through the production and wielding of such objects that people make themselves.


This paper considers how significance is given and denied to material remains from the past. It explores this issue by means of an ethnoarchaeological study conducted in
and around the Castillian villages of Solosanco and Villaviciosa, in the Amblés Valley, Spain, between 1997 and 1999. It analyses the Iron Age and medieval symbolism used in a coat of arms produced in 1998, and argues that this object partially reflects a local narrative reasserting a sense of identity for Solosanco and its satellite village, Villaviciosa. This was done at a time when those two communities perceived themselves to be under social and economic threat. By concentrating on the performative, corporeal nature of the villagers’ interaction with their material culture in the present, the paper seeks to demonstrate how an ethnoarchaeological approach may help to illuminate the ways that memory and material culture may have been manipulated in the past, in the absence of large-scale, state-directed, structural intervention.


This essay examines architectural photographs of schools produced for consumer magazines like House Beautiful, which helped create aspirations for the rising American middle class during the period 1935–1959. It reveals the way that schools for the upper-middle classes were promulgated as ‘role models’ for the boom in school construction that accompanied the post-war baby boom. The authors examine images of exterior and interior school architecture and built environments in the Gottscho and Schleisner Photography Collection at the Library of Congress. Through Allan Sekula’s process of archivisation and the use of constant comparative analysis, Margolis and Fram identify the prominent middle-class, architectural discourse inscribed on, in and surrounding the schools. They further discuss the maintenance of middle-class ideology through the guiding force of ‘conspicuous consumption’ patterns—the power behind the prominence of the archive and its accumulation process.


Frantz addresses the issues of understanding and meaning in relation to material culture by looking explicitly at writing and picturing. Topics covered include the argument that material culture is itself an interpretation of the world; the relationship between material culture and conceptualization; the performative function of picturing and writing; and the interpretation of performative re-presentations of the world.


During the twentieth century, attitudes towards infants and infantile death in Ireland changed greatly. These changes are reflected in funerary practices and spaces of burials, with infants’ graves moving from the anonymity and marginalization of separated burial grounds to recognition and naming in the main cemeteries. In the last few decades, several strategies in the reorganization of spaces dedicated to their burial
are observable, with attempts to rationalize an increasing “personalization” and material accumulation of objects on the graves. Anthropological research has long been concerned with the forms through which a relationship with a significant person continues after death through various forms of communication, such as visits to the grave and offerings, all of which have roots in memories of shared experiences. In the case of the death of an infant around the time of birth, memories are often limited and the absence of future shared lives shapes the experience of the loss. The manner in which parents cope with this absence often seems to be through the creation of memories, embodied in objects. Material culture, especially in forms of gifts on the grave, seems to play an important role in the ways in which parents fulfill the need to continue to care of their babies.


Place is material, conceptual and symbolic. Physically, the Library at Townsville College of Advanced Education was central, visible and distinctive. Internally, it provided a dramatically different environment from other college buildings. It functioned as the (metaphorical) ‘hub’ of the external studies programme and, when the college was under threat, it formed a symbolic rallying point.


Archaeologists often make distinctions between ritual material culture and everyday or utilitarian material culture. This paper examines this differentiation model for understanding the complex relationships among material culture, ritual, and everyday life. Using folklore recorded in Scotland in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, Gazin-Schwartz suggests another, continuum-based model, and suggests how this model can enrich archaeological understanding of the meanings and beliefs that form the cultural contexts for the artifacts, features, sites, and landscapes we study.


Material culture records human intrusion in the environment. It is the way we imagine a distinction between nature and culture, and then rebuild nature to our own desire, by shaping, reshaping, and arranging things during our lifetimes. In *Material Culture*, Henry Glassie calls us to first principles and common things, as we work to build a better view of humanity. Through five extended, interlinked essays, he offers challenges, methods, and demonstrations, showing how we can reinvigorate and enrich the study of history, art, and culture through close consideration of the things people make. The people—the tellers of tales, the weavers, potters, and builders of houses—stand at the center of his endeavor. He introduces us to them, and in oneness with them he shows how this kind of study can bring us toward an understanding of the world’s complexity.

Henry Glassie discusses the early life influences that led him to folklore as his vocation. He describes his formal education; his mentoring by Fred B. Kniffen, whose training shaped Glassie’s study of material culture; his job as the state folklorist of Pennsylvania; and his participation in the evolution of public sector folklore. Glassie also describes the centrality of fieldwork to his career, his writings, his teaching, his museum work, and to the folklore enterprise. Finally, he evaluates the earmarks of a successful public history venture and the influence of his work’s intention to democratize history.


Rejecting traditional notions of what constitutes art, this book brings together essays on a variety of fiber arts to recoup women’s artistic practices by redefining what counts as art. Although scholars over the last twenty years have turned their attention to fiber arts, redefining the conditions, practices, and products as art, there is still much work to be done to deconstruct the stubborn patriarchal art/craft binary. With essays on a range of fiber art practices, including embroidery, knitting, crocheting, machine stitching, rug making, weaving, and quilting, this collection contributes to the ongoing scholarly redifinition of women’s relationship to creative activity. Focusing on women as producers of cultural products and creators of social value, the contributors treat women as active subjects and problematize their material practices and artifacts in the complex world of textiles. Each essay also examines the ways in which needlework both performs gender and, in turn, constructs gender. Moreover, in concentrating on and theorizing material practices of textiles, these essays reorient the study of fiber arts towards a focus on process—the making of the object, including the conditions under which it was made, by whom, and for what purpose—as a way to rethink the fiber arts as social praxis.


This book is a systematic treatment of semiotics from the perspective of postmodernism. It not only develops an important theory of the role of symbols in postmodern culture, but aims to help the reader to analyze contemporary society by providing a series of case studies that apply theory to everyday life. Chapters are devoted to applied studies of malls, Disneyland and theme parks, the role of signs and advertising in late capitalism, fashion, the body, rock subcultures, and the question of identity. The relationship between semiotics and postmodern culture discussed in this book rejects the influence of Saussure and is based, instead on Peirce. It makes a contribution to Peircian semiotics and at the same time provides a critique of deconstruction and the cultural analysis of Baudrillard. In their place it proposes a
materialist semiotics which avoids the idealism and the privileging of mental states by postmodernism.


The article focuses on cultural history and material culture approaches. Material life is partly shaped by cultural imperatives. Social reality has to be structured to be perceived and understood. Whether it communicates through words or visual representation, the cultural system relies on metaphor and symbolism. Culture is, however, evinced in distinct forms generated by human responses to opportunities in specific historical contexts. Historians of material culture describe, categorize, and compare the characteristics of artificially constructed objects that have survived in physical or representational form—their size, shape, color, design, weight, and volume.


The modern world around us is more mysterious than we think. This book looks beneath the surface of modern material culture to ask how the very stuff of our world has shaped our societies, and how and why it is that we have made the material culture that surrounds us. *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture* offers a new approach to the study of contemporary objects, from academics prominent in disciplines ranging from archaeology to philosophy and psychology. All have diverse perspectives on what material culture is, but all are equally concerned with how the very material nature of artefacts comes to form human life.


In 1937, the Council for Art and Industry sponsored a national exhibition in London of materials ‘for use in connection with teaching in elementary schools. Local education authorities were encouraged to send representatives to the exhibition as a means of developing ”a line of approach … to ensure that what is used in the elementary school may have quality of material, soundness of construction, fairness of colour and appropriateness of design, in sum, beauty.” Schools, the exhibition organizers argued, had a role to educate ‘the future consumer’ and in helping to set ‘a standard for industry in the next generation.’ This article offers an account of the exhibition, detailing its development, the arguments and ideas about pedagogy that emerged in its planning and the final format of the event. This ‘story’ is then used to reflect on the Modernist project and the ‘art of seeing’ in order to illuminate the ways in which the material environment of schools shaped ideas and practice.

This paper has several concerns. It is about both the stories we tell and the images we place with those stories; it is also about historical practice and the power of the image to generate new research approaches. The paper is organized into three sections: the ‘eye of history’ and historians and the visual archive; histories of black and minority ethnic schooling; and the idea of a second gaze in the visual archive. The paper looks at the historical literature around using visual sources in research, and in particular will draw attention to the ‘problem of authenticity’, ‘the reality effect’ and the ‘aura of believability’. It then shifts its focus to consider the educational history of black and minority ethnic children in British schools and problems associated with the dominant policy-driven narrative that is used to explore that history. The paper goes on to address the importance of the photographic record for surfacing hidden elements in cultural history. Finally, Grosvenor argues that historians need to be sensitive to the idea of a second gaze when researching the educational experiences of marginalized groups in society.


This article looks at two modern institutions designed to discipline and control urban bodies—the school and the asylum—and the records they produced and the young people whose moral and cognitive capacities they tended. Both institutions are the sites of past childhood stories, yet the lives experienced in them are essentially anonymous. The focus of historians has been on engaging with the ‘voices’ of the official policy makers, professionals and administrators rather than on the ‘voices’ of the children. In pursuing the ‘voices’ of children in these institutions the article makes a series of claims for the biographical approach and the use of multiple sources of evidence. It also addresses the relation between history and the telling of stories.


This conjectural essay was originally written for a symposium entitled “Historiography of the Future: Looking Back to the Future,” held at the International Standing Conference for History of Education in San Luis Potosi, Mexico in July, 2011. Participants were asked to envision future challenges for the discipline and to imagine what innovations and new interests would arise in the next 30 years. Written from the vantage point of 2041, the essay describes scholarship and methodological approaches used by historians of education to explore the history of the senses.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s SHELTER produced a series of campaign pamphlets aimed at raising public awareness of homelessness in the United Kingdom. “Back to school from a holiday in the slums!” was one such pamphlet which, using a mixture of photographic images and oral testimony, posed a series of questions about the relationship between living in unfit and overcrowded housing and poor educational performance. The pamphlet is used in this article to explore the dialogue between the image and the word and the representation of inequalities.


This article presents views on education and schooling based on papers collected during the European Educational Research Association conference in Lahti, Finland. The authors address problems concerning researches in educational history, factors affecting historical education development, and the impact of educational history on educational events and practices.


This paper focuses on a visit made by Birmingham, England-based high school students to London, England as a school activity in 1951. Placing of the visit in the context of its time, pedagogy and ambition, Grosvenor and Lawn use it as a case study to explore the representation of educational changes taking place in England at the time.


Focuses on modernization in Northern Europe and North America. Demand for rapid accommodation to new conditions; Transformations in economic and industrial structures; Effects of mass migration on workforce; Description of the modern school and city. This article looks at visual representations, and changes in education, and attempts to make connections, backed up with a philosophical approach that seeks to explain the visual turn in exploring the history of education.


Despite the fact that tourists constantly interact corporeally with things and physical places, tourist studies have failed to understand the significance of materiality and objects in modern tourism. Like much theory and research influenced by the ‘cultural turn’, tourist (and leisure) studies have melted everything solid into signs. This article is inspired by current calls for a renewed engagement with the ‘material’ in social and
cultural geography and sociology. It introduces questions of materiality and material culture into cultural accounts of contemporary leisure and tourism, in particular in relation to space and ‘human’ performances. In doing so it stresses the inescapable hybridity of human and ‘nonhuman’ worlds. It is shown that leisure and tourist practices are much more tied up with material objects and physical sensations than traditionally assumed and that emblematic tourist performances involve, and are made possible and pleasurable by, objects, machines and technologies. Thus we suggest that further engagement with the ‘material’ would be the constructive path to follow for future leisure and tourist studies.


How do the living maintain ongoing relationships with the dead in Western societies? How have the residual belongings of the dead been used to evoke memories? Why has the body and its material environment remained so important in memory-making? Objects, images, practices, and places remind us of the deaths of others and of our own mortality. This unusual and absorbing book develops perspectives in anthropology and cultural history to reveal the importance of material objects in experiences of grief, mourning and memorializing. Far from being ‘invisible,’ the authors show how past generations, dead friends and lovers remain manifest—through well-worn garments, letters, photographs, flowers, residual drops of perfume, funerary sculpture. Tracing the rituals, gestures and materials that have been used to shape and preserve memories of personal loss, Hallam and Hockey show how material culture provides the deceased with a powerful presence within the here and now.


Tapping into a rich and largely unexplored archive of unpublished manuscript diary materials, as well as private letters, published diary, autobiography, self-portraiture, pamphlets, and rare ephemera, *Those Secret Exhibitionists* traces the role that diary practice played in the development of feminist subjectivity for Native American and Anglo American women who were writing serially at the turn of the twentieth century. This study takes a holistic and transdisciplinary approach to diarists and their textual productions, drawing from the disciplines of feminism, narrative psychology, and Native American ethnic studies to argue that these small, quiet, understudied volumes provide an insight possible nowhere else in literature for understanding the interior formations of subjectivity, particularly for women writing during the tumultuous decades of the early twentieth century.


This short article discusses the creation of the *Journal of Material Culture*: Ideas behind the journal; Who is at the editorial helm; Art and artifacts; Cosmetics and
appliances; Social meaning of objects; Interviews with former slaves. INSET: “Material Culture: A Sampling of Current Scholarly Projects.”


Preparations for a centenary exhibition to mark the 1898 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait incorporated cross-cultural collaborative work, reflecting the changing roles of museums as sites for contact and research combining curatorial expertise and indigenous knowledge. Specific objects in the collections of the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology continue to be active intermediaries in the relationship between museum staff and Torres Strait Islanders and the museum itself has become an important field site. This paper provides an ethnography of the process of creating the exhibition and explores different ways that many of the objects displayed have resonance for Islanders today.


Using the cable television show *Hoarders* as its primary case study, this essay offers a theory of “material deviance” that fuses a primary interest of material culture studies—the social status of objects—with a central concern of queer studies—the roles that deviance and normalization play in social management. Placing these two disciplines together enables us to interrogate supposedly abnormal uses of material cultures, uses that are seen as abnormal not only in terms of their sexual object choice. This disciplinary conjunction allows us to scrutinize how object pathology and aberrant object conduct such as hoarding can upset normative social boundaries.


*The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* introduces and reviews current thinking in the interdisciplinary field of material culture studies. Drawing together approaches from archaeology, anthropology, geography, and Science and Technology Studies, through twenty-eight specially commissioned essays by leading international researchers, the volume explores contemporary issues and debates in a series of themed sections—Disciplinary Perspectives, Material Practices, Objects and Humans, Landscapes and the Built Environment, and Studying Particular Things. From Coca-Cola, chimpanzees, artworks, and ceramics, to museums, cities, human bodies, and magical objects, the *Handbook* is an essential resource for anyone with an interest in materiality and the place of material objects in human social life, both past and present. A comprehensive bibliography enhances its usefulness as a research tool.

Souvenirs, broadly conceived, are generally thought to be the material counterpart of travels, events, relationships and memories of all kinds. The material items classed as souvenirs discussed in this text have memorial functions, usually connected with the owner’s travels. But not all of the items are souvenirs of tourism; they are also souvenirs of other past phenomena, such as political events (suffragettes), colonial history (India), former artistic pre-eminence (Awaji Ningyo puppetry) or former ways of life (South American ceramic archaisms). The authors do not necessarily focus on material souvenirs in their memorial function as prompters of memory. They also use their case studies as starting points for the discussion of many interesting contemporary phenomena, such as cottage industries for economic development in Mexico and Ainu, as devices to invigorate or maintain artistic practices, as emblems of cultural conformity (Surrealists) or as symbolic weapons in national and international political arguments. A key focus of many of the chapters is the question of meaning: what is the meaning of any particular souvenir or collection, and for whom does it bear that meaning?


Archaeological periodization constructs narratives with beginnings, middles and ends. But the material culture on which such narratives are built is also involved in narratives according to which past agents lived their lives. According to Ricoeur, such lived narratives are also related to agents’ practical experience of time. As archaeologists we have to ‘read’ past narratives through the rhetoric by which they were expressed. While Hayden White’s scheme for temporal cycles of rhetoric is rejected, the sequence of material culture at Sitagroi is examined in order to explore the relationships between the plots written by archaeologists and those lived by past agents at the site. Past and present concepts of time are embedded in different narratives and expressed through different rhetorics, but some interaction between the two is possible.


The article presents information related to the development of reflexive field methods in archaeology. The development of these methods in archaeology is neither delayed nor ironic because it results from specific issues and problems which are of a different nature from those found in ethnography. Archaeological sites are often central to the construction of the national and colonial memory and counter-memory. Archaeology often uses a wide range of techniques adopted from the natural and physical sciences which is not true in the case of ethnography. Reflexivity is essential in case of archaeology because it sits between the natural sciences, the social issues and conflicts.

This paper explores human-thing entanglement, making five key points: (1) Humans depend on things. In much of the new work in the social and human sciences in which humans and things co-constitute each other, there is, oddly, little account of the things themselves. (2) Things depend on other things. All things depend on other things along chains of interdependence. (3) Things depend on humans. Things are not inert. They are always falling apart, transforming, growing, changing, dying, running out. (4) The defining aspect of human entanglement with made things is that humans get caught in a double-bind, depending on things that depend on humans. (5) Traits evolve and persist. When evolutionary archaeologists identify lineages of cultural affinity, they claim to be studying cultural transmission. Transmission may be involved in such lineages, but it is the overall entanglement of humans and things that allows success or failure of traits.


This article presents an ethnographic case study of the relationship between the development of heritage tourism, and the role of material culture in memory practices in rural Southern France. Drawing on anthropological fieldwork in the village of Monadieres, it provides an analysis of how artefacts in the locality’s built environment have been renovated and revalued in a climate of historical change. This was the consequence of varied acts of commemoration by both independent individuals and the local council in which heritage tourism development was not necessarily the end-goal. Nevertheless, these acts were implicated in the council’s ‘disciplinary programme’ to produce a local infrastructure for heritage tourism. The article therefore explores how this industry co-habits with and colonizes modern memory practices at a micro-level. To this end it adapts analytical tools from the anthropology of time, which enable an integrative analysis of these differing ‘temporalizations’ of the past.


The Handbook of Material Culture provides a critical survey of the theories, concepts, intellectual debates, substantive domains, and traditions of study characterizing the analysis of “things.” This cutting-edge work examines the current state of material culture as well as how this field of study may be extended and developed in the future.


The first part of this chapter will describe the kinds of studies of modern material culture that archaeologists are doing and their reasons for doing them. There is little published literature at present, and many research reports are undergraduate term papers with their attendant weaknesses. Therefore, this first section of the chapter is an
overview, not a critical review, of the dealings of archaeologists with our material culture. The second part of this chapter describes the broader context of studies of modern material culture in current behavioral science research.


This article reflects upon the collection and presentation of photographic data. The problem of representing the visual as more than illustrative of written research findings is the methodological focus. An empirical study in Cardiff explored practices of cultural display in the home, focusing on the living room mantelpiece. First, I discuss the methodological debate concerning the ‘crisis of representation’ of visual data in social research. Following a brief discussion of a year-long autophotographic project by informants, the debate centers on photographs taken at the time of the interview. I show how the ‘crisis of representation’ in social enquiry can be illuminated by recognizing both domestic display and presentation of data as cultural practices/methods of researching and remembering. Finally, I argue that multi-modal representations of these mediated frames of experience can illuminate complexities of ‘doing’ home cultures and enquiry into the domestic interior.


My purpose, in short, is to restore to life a world that has been effectively killed off in the pronouncements of theorists for whom, in the words of one of their more prominent spokespersons, the road to understanding and empathy lies in ‘what people do with objects’ (Miller 1998: 19). My argument has five components, each of which corresponds to a key word in my title. First, I want to insist that the inhabited world is comprised not of objects but of things. I have therefore to establish a very clear distinction between things and objects. Secondly, I will establish what I mean by life, as the generative capacity of that encompassing field of relations within which forms arise and are held in place. I shall argue that the current emphasis, in much of the literature, on material agency is a consequence of the reduction of things to objects and of their consequent ‘falling out’ from the processes of life. Indeed, the more that theorists have to say about agency, the less they seem to have to say about life; I would like to put this emphasis in reverse. Thirdly, then, I will claim that a focus on life-processes requires us to attend not to materiality as such but to the fluxes and flows of materials. We are obliged, as Deleuze and Guattari say, to follow these flows, tracing the paths of form-generation, wherever they may lead. Fourth, I shall determine the specific sense in which movement along these paths is creative: this is to read creativity ‘forwards’, as an improvisatory joining in with formative processes, rather than ‘backwards’, as an abduction from a finished object to an intention in the mind of an agent. Finally, I shall show that the pathways or trajectories along which improvisatory practice unfolds are not connections, nor do they describe relations between one thing and another. They are rather lines along which things continually
come into being. Thus when I speak of the entanglement of things I mean this literally and precisely: not a network of connections but a meshwork of interwoven lines of growth and movement.


This paper explores the use of introspective writing by others as a means of understanding two characteristics of intrapersonal communication: the process of selective memory, which defines and redefines personal history, and the pattern of habitual thinking, which confirms self-identity. Jensen recommends the classroom use of memoirs and journals as aids to exploring and developing interpersonal communication.


The use of evidence from material culture can counteract the tendency toward reification that appears in so many works of social history. Scholars such as Ivor Noel-Hume, James Deetz, E. McClung Fleming, Charles Hummel, Kenneth Ames, Cary Carson, and Thomas Schlereth have been in the vanguard of “doing history with the dirt on”: conducting historical research using verbal evidence, quantitative techniques, and systematic investigations of artifacts relevant to the society in question.


Today, digital media, available at the click of a mouse, has replaced media played on cumbersome old equipment. Many of those old, original films and sound recordings have been digitized over the past few years and fit the definition of primary sources. Adventurous educators are discovering that this dynamic category of primary sources adds richness and authenticity to learning.


We take for granted the survival into the present of artifacts from the past. Indeed the discipline of archaeology would be impossible without the survival of such artifacts. What is the implication of the durability or ephemerality of past material culture for the reproduction of societies in the past? In this book, Andrew Jones argues that the material world offers a vital framework for the formation of collective memory. He uses the topic of memory to critique the treatment of artifacts as symbols by interpretative archaeologists and artifacts as units of information (or memes) by behavioral archaeologists, instead arguing for a treatment of artifacts as forms of mnemonic trace that have an impact on the senses. Using detailed case studies from prehistoric Europe, he further argues that archaeologists can study the relationship between mnemonic traces in the form of networks of reference in artifactual and architectural forms.

This paper describes our ongoing research about what it takes to design things that can be ensouled or can achieve heirloom status as a matter related to sustainable design. This paper draws on research on fifteen deep narratives that we collected to uncover detailed accounts of relationships between each participant and a single particular loved artifact or collection of a single type. Three themes emerged from our analysis of the narratives: (1) intimacy accumulated as an association with an object over time, (2) investment of effort to learn and control functionality, and (3) implicit values related to the patterns of collection of artifacts. In conceptualizing these three themes as an analytical frame, we arrived at two uniting notions that generally apply across many of the narratives and that serve as catalysts to design principles, namely the notion of rarity of an object, and the notion of aficionado-appeal of an object. We conclude by considering how these unifying notions can be used reflectively and judiciously to prompt design principles for interaction designers at least, and possibly as design principles in-and-of-themselves.


This article focuses on the contribution of architecture to the study of History in the U.S. Kean provides a chronological framework of the style changes of American architecture, as well as a discussion of material culture and architecture.


Drawing on the Museum’s correspondence files, registers and handbooks, as well as the collections themselves, the article seeks to explore how ideas about the Malay world were formed and expressed in the way material was interpreted and displayed. The picture revealed, especially in the early period, is one of a network of British people, chiefly academics, with a shared view of what kinds of material culture from the Malay world should be collected and how that material should be interpreted. Underlying this, however, are suggestions of an increasingly wide range of relationships between people of the Malay world and Britons abroad, embodied in the material which found its way for whatever reason into the cases or storage shelves at the Museum.


The article discusses visual history and material culture studies. The author also talks about a section of the journal called “Images, History, and Technology.” The author explains that visual history is often used to describe a visual account such as a
narrative that uses pictures to enliven a text. Authors will often build an argument around an image and consider what a representation reveals about a particular culture or period. How to interpret historical events and cultural moments through visual history is also discussed.


*Learning from Things* presents the methods and theories underlying the many ways in which material objects—things of all kinds from all periods of history—can reconstruct and interpret lifeways of the past. This collection of essays links material culture studies with art history and the history of technology, as well as with archaeology, anthropology, cultural geography, folklore studies, and other fields that use material evidence. The thirteen contributors—among them Jules D. Prown, Don D. Fowler, Steven Lubar, Joseph J. Corn, and Michael B. Schiffer—examine both the processes of forming historical and archaeological records and collections and how those processes influence, and even distort, conclusions made by scholars. The book also deals with the role of optical and electron microscopy, radiocarbon dating, and other tools of material science in material culture studies. Citing various processes—from microwear analysis of Paleolithic stone tool surfaces to the impact of mechanized metal cutting on nineteenth-century gun production—the contributors argue the importance of multidisciplinary participation for accurately analyzing objects. Bringing together the approaches of both “hard” systematic scholars and “soft” humanists concerned with aesthetics and cultural belief systems, the book provides a foundation for the further evolution of material culture studies.


Material culture surrounds us and yet is habitually overlooked. So integral is it to our everyday lives that we take it for granted. This attitude has also afflicted the academic analysis of material culture, although this is now beginning to change, with material culture recently emerging as a topic in its own right within the social sciences. Carl Knappett seeks to contribute to this emergent field by adopting a wide-ranging interdisciplinary approach that is rooted in archaeology and integrates anthropology, sociology, art history, semiotics, psychology, and cognitive science. His thesis is that humans both act and think through material culture; ways of knowing and ways of doing are ingrained within even the most mundane of objects. This requires that we adopt a relational perspective on material artifacts and human agents, as a means of characterizing their complex interdependencies. In order to illustrate the networks of meaning that result, Knappett discusses examples ranging from prehistoric Aegean ceramics to Zande hunting nets and contemporary art.

*Thinking through Material Culture* argues that, although material culture forms the bedrock of archaeology, the discipline has barely begun to address how fundamental artifacts are to human cognition and perception. This idea of codependency among
mind, action, and matter opens the way for a novel and dynamic approach to all of material culture, both past and present.


How do things come to embody meaning? In much anthropological and sociological writings, things have mainly been considered in two ways: either as commodities or as gifts. Correspondingly, people’s relationships to things and to other people seem to fall in two broad categories, often regarded as mutually exclusive, either as impersonal, economic or market relationships with strangers, or as personal gift relationships with intimates, friends or relatives. The ‘social life of things’, however, is more varied. Drawing on Alan Page Fiske’s theory of the four fundamental models of human relationship, four ways in which people may relate to each other and to things are distinguished; these models are applied to empirical data from a study on the giving of gifts in the Netherlands. Complications may occur when the parties to the transaction do not share the same frame of mind with respect to each other and to the things that are being transferred. Things may have conflicting social lives.


One source of materials for art education historical research that has barely been tapped in the United States is ephemera—casual bits of handwritten and printed paper used in daily life. These circulated images and documents convey actual practices, commitments, and attitudes of people.


In recent years, there has been a spate of books theorizing fashion. Few, however, take on board the artifactual nature of cloth. In contrast, costume historians have looked closely at garments, but have shown less concern with how clothing is informed by social structures. This book fills a major gap by combining these two “camps” through an expressly material culture approach to clothing. In sustained case studies, Küchler and Miller argue that cloth and clothing are living, vibrant parts of culture and the body. From the recycling of cloth in Africa and India and the use of pattern in the Pacific, to the history of “wash and wear” and why women wear the wrong clothes to restaurants, this book shows the considerable advantage gained by seamlessly combining material and social aspects of dress and textiles.


Scrapbooks present a particularly challenging set of preservation issues to archivists. However, as an intriguing combination of diaries, photograph albums, and ephemera, their format and arrangement are an essential part of their usefulness as sources to researchers. The fascinating link between scrapbooks and quilts, evident in a brief history of scrapbooks and an exploration of several types, indicates that scrapbooks are
a particularly rich source for researchers interested in women’s history. In order to facilitate the richest understanding of these unique and fascinating sources, material literacy should be increased among both archivists and researchers. In particular, archivists should understand the important function these records have to researchers, and how their storage and preservation choices affect that function.


This book examines the way that objects ‘speak’ to us through the memories that we associate with them. Instead of viewing the meaning of particular designs as fixed and given, by looking at the process of evocation it finds an open and continuing dialogue between things, their makers and their consumers. This is not, however, to diminish the role of design in shaping human consciousness. The contributors do not view objects as blank carriers onto which humans project prior psychic dramas, but rather, place crucial importance on the precise materials from which they are made, their social, economic and historic reasons for being, and the way that we interact with them through our senses. This book therefore studies the physical within the intellectual, directly testing the concept of material culture. With telling illustrations, and spanning the Renaissance to the present day, leading scholars converge across disciplines to explore the souvenir-value of jewellery, textiles, the home, the urban space, modernist design, photography, the museum and even the sunken wreck. Together they show how the sense of the past and of history, far from being a ‘radical illusion’ as some post-modernists claim, has been a deeply felt reality.


The Pioneer America Society is an organization devoted to the study of material culture, especially in the New World. This commitment presents certain problems for the anthropologist because the anthropologist is very likely to want to say that there is no such thing as material culture. Culture, as used by most anthropologists, consists in “shared, learned, behavior.” Here the operative word is behavior, and, by definition, materials cannot be self-motivated behavers, so there can be no such thing as material culture. Now, it is not intended that you should take this statement as merely a semantic argument, even though I think there is some validity to it. Instead, let us look at how anthropologists, or at least the portion of them that seem to make sense to me, will proceed to consider the role of material objects in the action of culture.


Taking its title from *Psycho Buildings* (2008), an exhibition of architectural sculptures at London’s Haywood Gallery, this paper explores the complex relationship between pedagogy and space. Specifically, it aims to reconceptualize teaching and learning as ‘aesthetic encounters’, paying attention to the haptic, experiential and participatory aspects of spatialized pedagogic practice. Drawing on examples taken from pedagogic art, a field of practice hitherto neglected within critical pedagogy, it is argued that the
design, construction and critique of teaching and learning spaces needs to engage with the aesthetic distribution of what can be seen, said, and experienced by teachers and learners. These ideas are explored through one example of a psycho classroom, The Reinvention Centre at Westwood at the University of Warwick (UK). It is suggested that as spaces of creative dissensus and ruin, psycho classrooms can work to disrupt and reconfigure the distribution of the sensible and, as such, represent spaces of potentiality.


Why had these machines been collected together, placed so carefully and with difficulty in an almost inaccessible space in the school? What machines ended up there? Who had placed them there and why? What life span had these machines had, how were they used and had their use finished? Who knew about these machines? What relationships did teachers have with these ‘traces’ of previous cultures of teaching? How did they relate to teacher professional identity? In short, what stories were attached to these material remains? Technology is a trace of past practices, a sign of the layers of sedimentation of work and the cultures of work, in the school. The machines could be a guide to older ways of working in the school and the arrival and demise of skills, duties and routine relations. These machines could offer some evidence but only when additional information can be gleaned from them, the people who used them or remaining school documents about them. Without this, the evidence is uncertain because the research questions are treacherous. After all, this is a collection of artefacts that are not uncommon in schools. Most of them had probably passed through other schools. They are recognizable objects and each of them is mass produced. There are no artefacts that point to mysterious processes of production or are peculiarly local.


This is a book with an interest in the materiality of schooling. It is focused on objects in schooling, which, taken individually and together, constitute the sites of schooling. It does not assume a fixed dichotomy between objects and people, in other words, that there is a life of imagination and action, and there are collections of inanimate objects. Nor does it assume that the technologies and objects of schooling, chained together by routines and action, should remain invisible from inquiry into schools as sites of learning and work. Instead, by drawing attention to the materiality of schooling, that is, the ways that objects are given meaning, how they are used, and how they are linked into heterogeneous active networks, in which people, objects and routines are closely connected, it creates a richer historical account of the ways that schools work.

Photographs, as one English historian commented, are often treated by historians as “eyewipes” taken “on trust” and treated “as objective correlatives of fact.” This photo-essay was conceived as a contribution to the development of an agreed critical practice among historians in using photographs as historical evidence. This critical practice recognizes that photographs exist both in history and as history, that they are products of cultural discourse, that they do not offer a transparent window into the past, that photography constitutes a site of production and representation, and that a photograph must be read not as an image, but as a text, and as with any text it is open to a diversity of readings. In recent years, historians of education have done much to develop this practice in relation to past representations of school and schooling. This work has not happened in isolation and complements the development in the social sciences of analytical models for the study of the visual. Parallel to the growth of historic interest in the visual there has also emerged amongst historians of education a heightened recognition of the significance of “space” as a factor in shaping pupil and teacher lives. This photo-essay was similarly conceived to also engage with this growing agenda for historical research. In short, the essay aims to bring together two research areas—the visual and space—but in a new form, by fostering a dialogue/narrative between the past and the present, between the historian and the photographer.


This article discusses the impact of the widespread adoption of information and communication technologies on the field of material culture. According to several authors, with the rise of information technology, material culture and values, like possession, will be increasingly displaced by a new ethic, called the post-material ethic. This ethic is consists of values, such as freedom of access, sharing to the benefit of others and valuing people based on their mental abilities rather than on their material possessions.


Complementing recent archaeological work on identities, in this article I describe the semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce—his general ‘theory of signs’—and discuss its uses for interpreting human identity through material culture and the artefactual record. Often classified as ‘symbolic anthropology/archaeology’, previous researches have presented a more restricted sense of semeiotic, while fewer scholars have been working through Peirce’s theories directly. Here, I articulate some aspects of Peirce’s semeiotic realism and his pragmatism with his theories regarding semeiosis matter and semeiotic identity. Specifically, Peirce regarded matter as ‘mind hidebound with
habits,’ and his semeiotic is particularly well-suited for analyzing the obdurate or habitual character of material culture. Based primarily on my ethnographic and archaeological fieldwork in an Irish-speaking region in western Ireland, I explore and apply some of Peirce’s theories to an interpretation of human social identities manifest through such things as prayer beads and field-walls.


This article examines how popular music has been represented within museum exhibitions and considers the specificities of collection and display relating to popular music artefacts. Using a number of recent exhibitions as examples, it considers how very particular versions of popular music history are constructed through the display of material culture. In effect, the institutional logics of museums and art galleries mean that the conceptual underpinning of popular music exhibitions tends to take the form of either canonic representations, the contextualization of popular music artefacts as art or the presentation of popular music as social or local history. The article argues that these types of approach represent a problem for the researcher/curator attempting to reconstruct a truly social history of popular music as they tend to replicate dominant hegemonic versions of history. The article then suggests ways in which the popular music curator can actively learn from private collectors in order to give a more balanced representation of a variety of popular music practices. Drawing on interviews with private collectors it considers how the material culture of popular music can offer an avenue through which to explore personal and social histories, memory, affect and identity in the exhibition context.


This article examines how, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the German psychological sciences used the Berlin Wall to interpret and make sense of the psychological make-up of the German people. It focuses on how the wall has been invoked by psychiatrists, applied psychologists, and psychotherapists in their writings at three historical moments: (1) after its initial construction in 1961, (2) immediately after its fall in 1989, and (3) 10 years after its demise. After the wall was erected, it became an interpretive resource to think about a divided society, and to make visible, decipherable, and classifiable, the inner life of a people. Shortly after its fall, it continued to serve as a basis for categorizing human suffering. Ten years later the wall had been rhetorically transformed into a “mental wall” offering a compelling metaphor for modern Germany’s apparent psychological and cultural divide. The three case studies exemplify how the psychological sciences use material objects, such as the Berlin Wall, as interpretive resources to reflect on psychological issues, make sense of societal transformations, and create and solve social problems.

Anthropology has a long history of examining the visual, from the work of early ethnographers who used photography as part of their documentation process to the present-day critiques by visual anthropologists (Edwards 1992; Pinney 1997; Moser 2001). As David MacDougall notes, “Anthropology has had no lack of interest in the visual; its problem has always been what to do with it.” That is, while visual images are commonly used in anthropological interpretations (such as in academic publications, conference presentations, and museum displays), researchers rarely reflect on how images function in relation to the research process. Images have had, and continue to have, an impact on how archaeologists visualize and interpret the past. Representations of the past (be it the deep past or more recent decades) can serve to fix visions of past peoples and their activities, even when these images have been derived from and shaped by particular colonialist, aesthetic, or nationalist schema.


This article seeks to explore the relationships between heritage and identity by drawing on analytical discussions of material culture and historical consciousness and focusing on an empirical case of ‘undesirable heritage,’ that is, a heritage that the majority of the population would prefer not to have. The case is that of the Nazi or fascist past in Germany, with specific reference to the former Nazi Party rally grounds in Nuremberg. By looking at some aspects of the ways in which this vast site of Nazi marching grounds and fascist buildings has been dealt with post-war, the article seeks to show both the struggle with the materiality of the site and changing forms of historical consciousness. It focuses in particular on some of the post-war dilemmas associated with the perceived agency of architecture, the sacralizing and trivializing of space, the role and implications of musealization, and the growth of a more reflective identity-health form of historical consciousness.


This paper examines the bodily investment of gender construction. Marcoux looks at the ways by which men demonstrated their superiority over women in terms of physical strength, the effect of naturalness, and the relational character of gender relations.


Native American children were subjected to a rigidly enforced regime of acculturation in a federally funded system of Indian boarding schools. This paper explores the peculiar iconography of photographs of these Indian schools, hundreds of which can
The advent of searchable photograph archives on the Internet makes possible new forms of visual ethnography analogous to a kind of archeology. Photographs can be examined and meanings imputed based on documentary evidence and theoretical understandings. Margolis examines four documentary projects, each of which had its own representational agenda: first, Richard Pratt’s use of photographs as a propaganda-of-the-image to garner support for Carlisle and other Indian schools; second, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) documentation efforts that included panorama photographs and a collection of shots from the Pacific Northwest by Ferdinand Brady that emphasize labour; third, Frances Benjamin Johnston’s photographs representing Indian schooling as progressive education; and finally a recently discovered album of vernacular photographs from the Sacaton school in Arizona. Margolis describes the ‘circumstances and milieus’ in which the photographs were made before turning to issues of sociological theory and meaning.


The authors’ research is concerned with the use of visual imagery as data to examine schools and schooling. In attempting to develop knowledge further by incorporating the visual in educational research, they draw on a hybrid mix of disciplines including sociology, ethnography, history and the humanities. Many scholars and historians writing about the history of education emphasize written texts (e.g. formal curricula, school board minutes); photographers and visual artists depict the physical arrangements, postures and facial expressions of bodies within socially constructed spaces. Currently, some historians are attempting to open up new methodologies and theoretical perspectives for the inclusion of images as data, while others remain ambivalent about the legitimacy of visual data of educational history. In this article, the authors discuss images of three lessons that the body is subjected to as essential elements of schooling: surveillance, discipline and punishment. They argue for the usefulness of the visual as data informing historical and sociological imaginations and research.


This paper examines recently discovered photographs of Arizona Indian schools. The amateur snapshots were drawn from a personal album of about 150 photographs collected by a woman who, we deduce, worked at the Pima Indian school in Sacaton. We do not know the name of the woman who made the album and sketchy captions, handwritten on the front or back of the photographs, provide scant documentation. The images date from c.1917 and provide tantalizing bits of information about the structure of an Indian school, its environment in the desert South of Phoenix, and the daily lives of the students and teachers. The snapshots appear to have been taken by an acquaintance visiting one of the teachers at the school who captioned the images and
compiled the album. The album provides a foundation for inferences and interpretations grounded in the literature. Arizona schools identified in the photo captions include the Blackwater Day School, Sacaton, Keams Canyon, and Rice Station boarding schools. During the period when these images were made each of these institutions functioned as feeder schools, funneling students to the off-reservation boarding school in Phoenix that was the second largest in the country.


The word out of Hollywood in late 1990 was that Columbus would be “big box-office” in 1992. Two crews were racing to complete cinematic tributes in time for the 500th anniversary of his voyage. Christopher Columbus, shooting on location from a script by Mario Puzo, claimed exclusive access “to Spain’s full-size re-creations of the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria, now under construction” while an untitled opus in development by an international production team insisted its film would “go beyond the history books” to tell “the truth about the man and what happened.”


Moving beyond traditional notions of gender as a static concept wherein human beings are passively molded into gender-appropriate behavior, 23 scholars instead view it as a negotiated, contested, and interactive process. In showing some of the ways gender is made visible, they explore avenues such as the gender of things that surround us; subtle and invisible processes of inclusion and exclusion from valuation; fusing form and content, practice and product; and how the material culture of gender produces gendered beings.


McCarthy discusses the material aspects of television as well as its value for philosophical inquiry into ongoing transformations. The article explored the crucial conceptual framework of a television, and the material relation of television to space.


This photo essay documents a kind of space that is called, in cyber jargon, the geekosphere. Geekospheres are the personal spaces that computer users create around their monitors, using trinkets, toys, mottoes, images and other ephemera. These highly individualized assemblages are not simply sites for personal expression. Rather, they often serve as vehicles for coded statements about the workplace and the experience of work.

This thesis examines aspects of historical interpretation. An interpretive style, called “experiential interpretation,” is presented, tested, and analyzed. Experiential interpretation attempts to present tangible details about the past by appealing to the human senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. The main objectives of this interpretive style are to present intimate histories of past individuals, to foster emotional or relational connections between the learner and the material, and to also utilize creative aspects of learning. The author’s work in historical interpretation at Fort Necessity National Battlefield is analyzed.


This essay engages with recent work on an unusual, yet fascinating theme: absence. Two edited collections have recently been published that deal with the topic: *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss* (Bille et al., 2010) and *The Matter of Death: Space, Place and Materiality* (Hockey et al., 2010). These books explore an almost counterintuitive aspect of absence: its material culture. Indeed, absence has a materiality and exists in—and has effects on—the spaces people inhabit and their daily practices and experiences. Drawing on the discussions in these two books and on other recent developments in the study of absence, this essay considers the relational ontology of absence, conceiving absence not as a thing in itself but as something that exists through relations that give absence matter. Absence, in this view, is something performed, textured and materialized through relations and processes, and via objects. We therefore need to trace absence. This entails following and describing the processes through which absence becomes matter and absence comes to matter. It means to map out, locate and follow the traces of absence and understand absences as traces, that is, as residual, incomplete, elusive, ambiguous, yet material entities.


In this paper Meyer explores the significance of the development of notions of cultural property for material culture theory. Meyer looks at the relevance of understandings of objectification or objectness and human action embedded in object-ideologies; the limited capacity of legal discourses of cultural property; and the concerns of Indigenous Australians about their own relation to culture, creativity and expression.


Addressing questions about representation, this book critically explores the potential of different types of visual material to illuminate historical studies. The contributions
in this collection range from explorations of picture schemes used in nineteenth-century classrooms to contemporary popular representations of schooling. Film and photographic images are considered in specific contexts, presenting case studies along with theoretical reflections about methods, values and they very nature of historical studies. Images are examined in children’s literature, in the induction of history of education students, in the recreation of past practices and in the promotion of government policies. Visions of education are put alongside discussion of the ‘visual turn’, its value to historians, and its relation to questions about the construction of knowledge and the archive. A range of positions on the visual are represented in the collection. Without presenting an orthodoxy, the book aims to promote new awareness of this important aspect of education history and the issues it raises.


This review contends that the study of consumption and commodities represents a major transformation in the discipline of anthropology. It documents this metamorphosis by examining how the debate on gifts and commodities transcended its original formulation as good versus evil. It then examines the recent growth and maturity of material culture studies and nascent developments that may give rise to a political economy of consumption. Miller notes, however, that there is still a paucity of ethnographic research specifically devoted to these topics. The review concludes by arguing that the study of consumption and commodities is particularly close to traditions established in the study of kinship and it may come to replace kinship as the core of anthropology, even though the two topics often have been viewed as antithetical.


The field of material culture, while historically well established, has recently enjoyed something of a renaissance. Methods once dominated by Marxist- and commodity-oriented analyses and by the study of objects as symbols are giving way to a more ethnographic approach to artifacts. This orientation is the cornerstone of the essays presented in *Material Cultures*. A collection of case studies that move from the domestic sphere to the global arena, the volume includes examinations of the soundscape produced by home radios, catalog shopping, the role of paper in the workplace, and the relationship between the production and consumption of Coca-Cola in Trinidad.

The diversity of the essays is mediated by their common commitment to ethnography with a material focus. Rather than examine objects as mirages of media or language, *Material Cultures* emphasizes how the study of objects not only contributes to an understanding of artifacts but is also an effective means for studying social values and contradictions.

Although so much of the life we care about takes place at home, this private space often remains behind closed doors and is notoriously difficult for researchers to infiltrate. We may think it is just up to us to decorate, transform and construct our homes, but in this book we discover a new form of ‘estate agency’, the active participation of the home and its material culture in the construction of our lives. What do the possessions people choose to take with them when moving say about who they are, and should we emphasize the mobility of a move or the stability of what movers take with them? How is the home an active partner in developing relationships? Why are our homes sometimes haunted by ‘ghosts’? This intriguing book is a rare behind-the-scenes exposition of the domestic sphere across a range of cultures. Examples come from working class housewives in Norway, a tribal society in Taiwan, a museum in London, tenants in Canada and students from Greece, to produce a genuinely comparative perspective based in every case on sustained fieldwork. So Japan, long thought to be a nation that idealizes uncluttered simplicity, is shown behind closed doors to harbour illicit pockets of disorganization, while the warmth inside Romanian apartments is used to expel the presence of the state. Representing a vital development in the study of material culture, this book clearly shows that we may think we possess our homes, but our homes are more likely to possess us.


The article presents the author’s response on Mitch Rose’s critical points with regard to material culture studies (MCS), which include the two-dimensional arguments about the fundamental import of materiality, an ontology of reductive economism in the outcome of the position, and the absence of any notion of alterity within the framework. It indicates that Rose’s propositions on the fundamental lack of MCS, together with the proposed solution, is problematic and ambivalent.


The international missionary organizations that emerged in the nineteenth century in Europe and North America established outposts in some of the remotest regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Missionaries were among the first to recognize the communications potential of the black-and-white medium of photography, in some cases early as the 1840s. Photographs were useful for record keeping and reports and for the edification of supporting publics at home. But missionaries were curious beyond practicality. As they became more proficient with cameras, they took pictures of everything around them. Their collections provide invaluable evidence of cultural encounters and social change in non-Western cultures, becoming a source for scholarship across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines, including not only religious studies but also history, art history, economics, political science, area studies, anthropology, international relations and comparative sociology.

This paper discusses how the expansion of anthropology, so that it can be applied to societies of very different sorts, has given it new problems to solve, afforded new insights, and revealed new categories of problems, to which the skills of anthropology can be applied. Mintz pays special attention to how the field is organized differently in Europe and the United States and to the consequences of domestication.


This article draws on findings of qualitative research that considers the importance and meanings people attach to domestic decoration and surroundings via an exploration of the material culture of living rooms. In attending to issues and debates concerning everyday consumption practices within the domestic sphere, the following discussion suggests an approach that firmly places an understanding on how ‘goods’ and ‘things’ are used, lived with and appropriated into everyday life. Drawing on in-depth interviews carried out in the homes of 50 respondents in Greater Manchester, UK, the article develops and complements existing ideas and research in cultural anthropology, consumer studies and, more recently, sociology of consumption, which focus on understanding aspects of the complex relationships that exist between subjects and objects, and how these operate within the boundaries of ordinary, mundane and routine consumption practices. It will be shown that one aspect of this relationship relates to the ways in which ‘things’ act as the embodiment of meaningful social relations and significant connections between family members, friends and even wider social networks, and offers one way of understanding material culture consumption within the home. This is explored via three observed processes of display, acquisition and appropriation within the home: gift objects as familial obligation; objects as markers of memory; and the commemorative potential of objects.


This article explores the relationship between history, memory and everyday life with particular reference to the theories of Henri Lefebvre and other French critics, who use the everyday as a way of making sense of particular kinds of cultural change in Western societies. For Lefebvre, the everyday is significant because it is a sphere in which the modern and residual can co-exist: it shows how the apparently universalizing processes of modernity are shot through with historical survivals and local differences. However, this relationship to history is concealed beneath the invisibility of the everyday, the fact that it ‘evade[s] the grip of forms’ (Lefebvre 1971, p. 182). The value of a certain kind of involuntary memory, I want to argue, is that it can denaturalize the everyday and connect it again with historical processes. The essay concludes by examining material culture as a particularly fertile ground for investigating this sort of memory. When the commonplace objects of the recent past survive accidentally into the present, they conjure up unstable and elusive meanings and provide fragmentary evidence that routines have histories.

The author reflects on the theoretical implications of the turn to the material dimension of religion. He thinks that the turn to materiality does not mean a return to an object-oriented study, but rather that scholars of material culture are much intrigued by the felt knowledge that looking, touching, shopping, revering or praying constitutes. He considers material culture as any aspect of that world-making activity that happens in material form.


This essay examines three disparate sports-related objects—commemorative rings, John Unitas’s jacket, and a large baseball card collection—owned by different people. It offers an appreciation of the objects (aesthetically and historically), and considers their rich, polysemic meaning via an interdisciplinary method that is part oral history, part ‘thick description,’ part exegesis. In the process we learn that, to their owners—a former elite athlete, the possessor of an heirloom, and an avid collector—these things represent memorable, important accomplishments, experiences, relationships, moments, memories, and values. Broadly speaking, the objects signify authenticity, nostalgia, and sentimentality, as well as a sense of connectedness, memory, and identity. Ultimately, the objects sustain things (ideas, relationships, feelings) that enrich their owners’ sense of self and their place in the world.


This paper examines the ubiquitous teddy bear. He is not only occupying such diverse spaces as children’s beds and rooms, schools, hospitals, toy shops, museums, television studios, sports stadiums, police cars, airplanes, the graves of children and the pockets of US soldiers, but has also become a major signifier in child psychology and early child-hood education besides being the occasional object of history, anthropology and cultural studies. But in spite of an impressive amount of popular wisdom surrounding the object, the question of who the teddy bear is remains a puzzle. Strange as the proposition may be, a cursory exploration into the many manifestations and theorizations of the teddy bear intimates, as the author contends, that we should seriously consider if, though inanimate, he has agency and may even be able to speak.


The article is organized into three main sections: In the first section, inspired by the work of Martin Jay, Nóvoa demonstrates the denigration of vision in historical
thinking, suggesting that images are demanding new theoretical and methodological approaches susceptible of elucidation in their own terms. In the second section, Nóvoa attempts an analytical interpretation of a collection of public images of teachers, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, in order to show the heuristic potential of this material in the historical treatment of educational matters. Finally in the third section, the author outlines some trends of historiographical renewal, giving attention to the way images can help to reshape the remembering imagining and the space time relationships in the History of Education field.


This paper suggests a new way of working with and analyzing school photographs in history of education research, especially photographs of school classrooms. It advances a new methodological approach for inquiring into the spatiality and materiality of schooling. This approach is located in the practice of installation art and draws from the theory of relational aesthetics and postproduction. As demonstrated in the paper, thinking about school spaces and places as installations, and place-making practices as a form of installation making, presents opportunities for posing new and different types of research questions. It also provides opportunities for generating new inquiry and representational practices in educational research. Conceptualizing school spaces and places as installations that demand spectator participation to function as intended requires educational researchers to think critically about the spatial dimensions of educational experiences and the experiences of place in educational contexts.


Why have the social and human sciences shown such disinterest in material culture? How has this neglect affected archaeology? How do things and materiality at large relate to human beings and ‘social life’? These questions are addressed in this article, which also critically examines social constructivist and phenomenological approaches to material culture. Arguing against the maxim that ‘all that is solid melts into air,’ it is claimed that to understand important aspects of past and present societies, we have to relearn to ascribe action, goals and power to many more ‘agents’ than the human actor—in other words, to re-member things.


If historians have been reluctant to engage seriously with photographs as evidence, the problem is even more pronounced in sport history. This article examines two photographs of Solomon Islands divers in order to consider the larger idea of photographs as historic documents. The focus is less on the content of the pictures and
more on ways of reading photographic images as material objects. Materiality as a methodological tool for considering photographs has been used in anthropology (e.g. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Wright) and has potential for sport historians. It involves considering photographs as three-dimensional objects as well as two-dimensional images, and considers how the creation, distribution, consumption and recycling of photographs constructs, shapes and influences meanings.


A significant amount of qualitative research takes place in the field. Yet the notion of analyzing the place and material objects that contribute to the interactions and in situ behaviour of the participants is often overlooked. This article shows how an analysis of space and material culture contributes to an understanding of social and structural relationships in qualitative research. Using examples from a study of a technology company to demonstrate how an analysis of space and material culture added insights into power, identity and status, the authors conclude that the tacit insights derived from space and material culture analysis, when synthesized with analysis of other data, enable researchers to gain new perspectives on the social world.


The essays commissioned for this book demonstrate the range of the work now being undertaken in the study of material culture by scholars in many different disciplines. This study can be approached from the various angles of consumption and commodity; social and political symbolism; personal experience; the museum as professional institution; as text in its semiotic relationship to linguistics; as narrative and as constructions of the self and the other. The foreword suggests that whichever approach is adopted, objects remain in our alter egos, embedded in a closed system of reference in which the things that touch us most nearly—objects, food, body/sex—are used to describe each other and in doing so create both collective cultural, collective and individual identities.


Marx’s call for a materialism capable of engaging reality as “sensuous human activity” opens a question about the role of representation in relation to data. Images have increasingly been seen as significant forms of data in the history of education. Derrida’s theory of the spectre—a variation on the positions established in his earlier works on the trace, the supplement and difference—offers a way of rethinking visual images, their relations with existing discourses of knowledge and with positioned subjects who makes sense. Two early twentieth-century photographs are explored
here, in relation to ideas derived from Derrida, as an exercise in the philosophy of representation.


This paper considers a key text in the field of Cultural Studies for its relevance to questions about the identity of knowledge in education. The concept of ‘aura’ arises as being of special significance in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” as a way of understanding the change that occurs to art when mass reproduction becomes both technologically possible and industrially realized. Aura seems to signify something of the symbolic halo generated by objects of special significance that is both powerful and indefinite. This paper argues that aura is in fact the necessary property of symbolic representation—and that it attaches as much to the figure of Walter Benjamin as it does to any canonical work of art. But the paper also claims that Benjamin’s argument about the significance of popular forms of art—particularly photography and film—can be updated and applied to critical questions about the established order of knowledge in education. This is particularly relevant to those curriculum domains where specific objects—texts, for example—are invested with powerful auras. It may also be applicable to all forms of established knowledge and curricula.


A museum is not a univocal medium: it is a complex of narrative strategies, objects, spaces, texts, and images. Its messages are produced by both curators and audiences and compete for dominance simultaneously. Exhibitions serve a representative function and therefore take artifacts out of their primary contexts, endowing them with new meanings and layering them with esthetic and historical values. Some classes of objects resist reinterpretation, and of these, this paper focuses on fashion, as a commodity that cannot be completely divorced from consumer context.


Based on papers presented at the “Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture” conference held in St. John’s, Newfoundland in June, 1986. Includes bibliographical references and index.

This article explores the material culture of kindergarten in the United States in relation to the production and consumption of materials and kindergarten theory and pedagogy. The focus is on Friedrich Froebel’s building gifts as they were manufactured and sold by the Milton Bradley Company from 1869 to 1939. A view of trade catalogues over the 70-year period found that the gifts were available along with larger blocks and materials supporting progressive pedagogies. The presence of items in the catalogues supporting different and conflicting ideas is explained as a reflection of the enduring popularity of a conservative kindergarten pedagogy aligned with Froebel’s original ideas.


Just what is a picture worth? Qualitative research is dominated by language. However, researchers have recently shown a growing interest in adopting an image-based approach. This is the first volume dedicated to exploring this approach, and will prove an invaluable sourcebook for researchers in the field. The book covers a broad scope, including theory and the research process, and provides practical examples of how image-based research is applied in the field. It discusses use of images in child abuse investigation, children’s drawings in health education, cartoons, the media, and teachers.


This book collects a selection of papers presented at a symposium at the eleventh International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in 1982, summarizing what the participants view to be important directions for growth and development in material studies and highlighting exciting recent material culture research. It is an extremely useful source of bibliographic references on material culture. The essays provide an excellent sample of current research and a number of substantive contributions to the debate about the place of material culture studies in anthropology.


Pt. II. The built environment and the political ecology of artifacts. The logic of the mall / Rob Shields. The ideological commodification of culture: Architectural heritage


This article examines the tensions between conformity and distinctiveness that were played out in the case of the sailor suit (mostly worn by boys) and the pinafore (mostly worn by girls) in Edwardian Britain. Each of these embodied general concepts of age- and gender-appropriate dress, as well as finely graded social distinctions between more and less costly variants of the same garment. This is followed by an examination of the knitted sweaters worn increasingly by both sexes from 1900. In each case, the costs, meanings and uses of garments are evaluated through a close analysis of retailers’ documents, consumers’ statements, and school group photographs. This allows us to see whether changing ideas about childhood, and increased mass production of clothing, led to a flattening of social and gender distinctions in dress, or whether these persisted in different forms.


Over the last 20 years, studies of material culture have increasingly come to rely on the assumption that cultural and material forms are co-constitutive. Indeed, it is thought that the co-constitutive nature of culture and materiality guarantees the significance of materiality in the constitution of social relations. This article illustrates the limitations of the co-constitutive relation by characterizing it as overly secular. Specifically, Rose argues that the co-constitutive relation grounds the significance of material culture in a set of earthly dynamics that rob materiality of its privileged position. The article develops this position through two maneuvers: (1) it describes a particular conception of absence as it is developed in current debates in continental theory; and (2) it demonstrates how a blindness to absence provides a limited understanding of the significance of material objects within social relations. In conclusion, the author argues that the recognition of absence re-orient the way we understand the significance of material objects by attuning us to how materiality marks that which is necessarily beyond the social.

In this paper, Rousmaniere discusses how the creative use of visual images in the history of education work has allowed her to broaden her way of thinking about the past, and “loosen up” her ways of interpreting and using history. Rousmaniere argues that historical images can provide answers to our questions about the past, but that they can also raise new questions, and thereby open up new interpretations of the past.


In opening our eyes to material culture, the built environment, old photographs and other mnemonic or extra-curricular sources of knowledge, Samuel forces us to rethink our snippy dismissal of heritage, re-enactment, antiquarianism, and resurrectionism. In taking us beyond the ‘linguistic turn,’ with its narrow concentration on rhetoric, discourse, and text, Samuel offers a positive engagement with postmodernism. Leaving aside the spurious epistemological theory, Samuel celebrates the democratic, pluralist and inclusive practice which postmodernism empowers.


*Matters of Conflict* looks at the definitive invention of the twentieth century—industrialized war—and its vast and varied material legacy. From trench art and postcards through avant-garde art, museum collections, and prosthetic limbs to battlefield landscapes, the book examines the First World War and its significance through the things it left behind. The contributions come from a multidisciplinary perspective, uniting previously compartmentalized disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, cultural history, museology, and art history in their focus on material culture. This innovative, hybrid approach investigates the ‘social life’ of objects in order to understand them as they move through time and space and intersect the lives of all who came in contact with them. The resulting survey sets a new agenda for study of the First World War, and ultimately of all twentieth-century conflict.


This essay looks at the emergence and development, through technology, of the modern auditory world and asks what its existence in the evolving matrices of time, space and the human body can offer to our understanding of matter and material culture today. The first part explores the materialization of time in phonographic sound as an instance of the fragmentation of modern life, and how this displaced the temporal experience of the premodern world. The second part looks at the impact of magnetic tape recording—its materiality and malleability—which permitted sound artists to produce multitemporal audio collages that advanced the modern soundscape into the realm of Benjamin’s ‘dialectical images.’ The essay concludes with a consideration of
how the material culture of sound ends in the human body—its final materialism—just as the old sound objects of analogue technology appear to be dematerialized.


Everybody collects something, sometime. Many artists have discovered collecting and saving as a means of artistic expression and have made the storage of objects and information the subject of their work. This ranges from digital memory to rows and stacks of materials to shelves, packaging crates, installations, and entire areas filled with diverse objects stored systematically or in states of utter chaos.


Through a broad range of examples, the author demonstrates how theories of behaviour and communication have too often ignored the fundamental importance of objects in human life.


This collection presents 10 essays that suggest rationale and methods for involving students of American history in first-hand research using primary source material. The book is intended for classroom and extracurricular use by teachers and students of American studies on the high school, college, and adult education levels. It can also be of use to people in museums, historical village communities, and historical societies as they seek to develop and implement educational programs. The essays represent a sampler of teaching and research techniques which have been developed and tested over a period of five years in American studies courses on the college level. The essays discuss ways to examine and interpret history using a wide variety of artifacts, including historical photographs, mail-order catalogues, maps, historic museums, historic houses and villages, local archaeological artifacts, and records of landscape architecture at different periods throughout history. Students are involved in a variety of activities, including undertaking research in photographic archives; tracing changes in an area by following photographs of different building types; unmasking deliberate distortion in photographic evidence; tracing the evolution of the mail-order catalogue in America; analyzing etiquette at different periods as it was mirrored in mail-order catalogues, advice manuals, and self-improvement primers; comparing land surveys from various eras; reconstructing city plans and maps based on incomplete cartographic evidence; and researching symbolic meaning of historic houses from whatever documentary materials may survive.

This paper focuses on the importance of social history or material culture as a research strategy in historical studies in the United States. Schlereth discusses the parallelism between material culture and social history and interrogates the assumptions of an environmentalist approach to material culture research.


This article describes 1:1 material explorations within the architecture program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design via a newly established material research library and database, the Materials Collection, and a first year architecture course titled “Materials and Construction: An Introduction to Techniques, Composition, and Strategies” that integrates the Materials Collection as a teaching tool. On a broader scale, Integrating Material Culture also refers to the school’s initiative to integrate a “material culture” in its pedagogy, defined by the notion of material research as a process of innovation in design.


What has happened to regional experiences that identify and shape culture? Regional foods are disappearing, cultures are dissolving, and homogeneity is spreading. Anthropologist and award-winning author of *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*, C. Nadia Seremetakis brings together essays by five scholars concerned with the senses and the anthropology of everyday life. Covering a wide range of topics—from film to food, from nationalism to the evening news—the authors describe ways in which sensory memories have preserved cultures otherwise threatened by urbanism and modernity.


This article analyzes an intersection of materiality and language use. I argue that verbal practices, generally overlooked in material culture studies, are an integral dimension of consumption. Types of talk—both referential and indexical—can illustrate how people mediate relationships with objects, as well as with each other. Drawing on ethnographic research in Silicon Valley, California (1999-2001), I present examples from middle-class South Asian American communities. In these closely-knit social contexts, I examine how people discursively create objectifications through talk and consumption of visual media such as video and photographs. My examination of these language practices reveals that people not only form relationships with objects they own, but also with objectifications—verbal and visual representations—of objects they borrow, rent, or imagine. Social theorists have remarked on how people can use contests of status and display associated with consumption to ascend into higher social classes. I consider how youth and adults engage in language use and consumption to instead display identity and status within their own community.

Reaching back 400 years, *Material Life in America* is the first reference showing what the study of material culture reveals about American society—revelations not accessible through traditional sources and methods. In nearly 200 entries, the encyclopedia traces the history of artifacts, concepts and ideas, industries, peoples and cultures, cultural productions, historical forces, periods and styles, religious and secular rituals and traditions, and much more. Everyone from researchers and curators to students and general readers will find example after example of how the objects and environments created or altered by humans reveal as much about American life as diaries, documents, and texts.


In *The True Vine* (1989), Stephen Bann assumes the role of Nietzschean ‘antiquarian,’ a historian attentive to the slightest residues of material culture, the kind of historical evidence overlooked, or disregarded, by those more concerned either to monumentalize the existing historical record or fundamentally to shift its understanding. Bann’s approach to history accommodates a certain modernist sense of the inexhaustible excess of meaning to be found within any material practice, an attitude towards media of representation here associated with the art criticism of Clement Greenberg but, all the more so, with the pragmatic philosophy of C.S. Peirce. Adopting Bann’s ‘antiquarian’ spirit, this essay probes the cultural significance of the material factor in painting, photography, film, video and forms of digitized electronic display.


The core of archaeology is the relationship between people and things. Left without informants and, in many cases, textual data, archaeologists strive to reconstruct past life through the window of artifacts: things made, used, and modified by individuals while participating in the activities of everyday life. According to behavioral archaeologists, our ability to understand the relationship between people and things in the present is the foundation for archaeological reconstruction of the past. This comprehensive text sets forth a theory for understanding the relationship between people and things. Humans, whether in the distant past or in our current world, make choices while inventing, developing, replicating, adopting, and using their technologies. A wide arc of factors, from utilitarian to social and religious can affect these choices. The theoretical model presented here provides the means to understand how people, whether it be Paleolithic stone tool makers or 21st century computer designers and users, negotiate these myriad factors throughout the artifact’s life history. While setting forth a behavioral theory, the book also engages the ideas of other competing theories, focusing especially on agency, practice, and selectionism. Six case studies form the core of the book, and provide clear examples of how the theory can be applied to a range of artifacts and people from prehistoric North
American ball courts and smudge pits to the first electric cars and 19th century electromagnetic telegraph technologies.


*Material Identities* examines the ways that individuals use material objects as tools for conveying certain aspects of their personalities to others. Exploring the complexity of identity through the intersecting notions of gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and class, this book looks at the deliberate expression and manipulation of identity through the use of material goods, and how individuals single out aspects of themselves in order to project or conceal particular characteristics. Engaging with objects from the past and present, high and low culture, and from around the globe, this volume explores the range of contrasting media from painting and print to clothing and furniture, and takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of material culture’s expression, and identity’s careful orchestration. Contributors include experts from various fields including architectural theory and museum studies.


This article discusses the possibility for expanding our understanding of the visual to include the 'spoken visual’ within oral history analysis. It suggests that adding a further reading, that of the visualized body, to the voice-centered relational method, we can consider the meaning of the uniformed body for the individual. It uses as a case study a photograph taken of a group of girls on a school outing, and their adult interpretation of the meaning of the modifications to their school uniform. Extracts from oral history interviews with girls who left school in South London in the late 1950s are also used, to demonstrate the frequency with which respondents refer to how they looked in order to express in more detail how they felt.


A renowned literary coterie in eighteenth-century Philadelphia—Elizabeth Fergusson, Hannah Griffits, Deborah Logan, Annis Stockton, and Susanna Wright—wrote and exchanged thousands of poems and maintained elaborate handwritten commonplace books of memorabilia. Through their creativity and celebrated hospitality, they initiated a salon culture in their great country houses in the Delaware Valley. In this stunningly original and heavily illustrated book, Susan M. Stabile shows that these female writers sought to memorialize their lives and aesthetic experience—a purpose that stands in marked contrast to the civic concerns of male authors in the republican era. Drawing equally on material culture and literary history, Stabile discusses how the group used their writings to explore and at times replicate the arrangement of their material possessions, including desks, writing paraphernalia, mirrors, miniatures, beds, and coffins. As she reconstructs the poetics of memory that informed the women’s lives and structured their manuscripts, Stabile focuses on vernacular architecture, penmanship, souvenir collecting, and mourning. Empirically rich and nuanced in its readings of different kinds of artifacts, this engaging work tells of the erasure of the
women’s lives from the national memory as the feminine aesthetic of scribal publication was overshadowed by the proliferating print culture of late eighteenth-century America.


Visual research is reemerging across the social sciences as a significant, underutilized resource producing unique lines of inquiry and sparking innovative pedagogies. Stanczak’s edited volume crisscrosses disciplines in ways that highlights the multiple manifestations of this newer interdisciplinary trend. As such, this volume will be useful as a methodological, epistemological, and pedagogical resource across disciplines such as sociology, education, cultural studies, anthropology, American studies, communications, gender studies, and political science. The text is organized around three thematic issues: methodology, epistemological reflection, and theoretical and conceptual exploration. Each of these guiding themes is developed to greater or lesser degree in each chapter providing a navigational thread throughout the entire book. The authors most explicitly address methodology in their essays, but also answer epistemological questions and suggest ways in which visuals facilitate theoretical or conceptual development.


This study explores the value of hair combs as material culture, and their various traditions through the eyes of five intergenerational females (two women and three girls) who visited a retired couple to view examples of their hair comb collection and learn about its worth. A pre-questionnaire revealed the younger females’ fascination with shiny details as worthy of attention and the practical considerations of the older women. The elicitation of participants’ evolving questions led to the explanation of the importance of the combs by the collectors, an elderly couple. Based on Bolin’s material culture categories, a semiotic analysis revealed that they learned about different comb forms, function, decoration, colouring, material, technique, trade practices (illegal poaching), style, date (acquisition), symbolism, condition, authenticity (determining fakes), attribution (cataloguing) and provenance (ownership). They were surprised that men made and wore combs (gender stereotype). Education on caring for these precious things goes beyond the museum walls and schools and should foster such intergenerational questioning and valuing even in classrooms.


*Willa Cather and Material Culture* is a collection of 11 essays that tap into a recent and resurgent interest among Cather scholars in addressing her work and her career.
through the lens of cultural studies. One of the volume’s primary purposes is to
demonstrate the extent to which Cather did participate in her culture and to correct the
commonplace view of her as a literary connoisseur set apart from her times. The
contributors explore both the objects among which Cather lived and the objects that
appear in her writings, as well as the commercial constraints of the publishing industry
in which her art was made and marketed. Essays address her relationship to quilts both
personally and as symbols in her work; her contributions to domestic magazines such
as *Home Monthly* and *Woman’s Home Companion*; the problematic nature of
Hollywood productions of her work; and her efforts and successes as a
businesswoman. By establishing the centrality of material matters to her writing, these
essays contribute to the reclaiming of Cather as a modernist and highlight the
significance of material culture, in general, to the study of American literature.


The article focuses on symbolization with the help of things. Material environment,
through its interpretive use by the participants in their situated activities, becomes a
component of the process of communication. The participants’ actions and
conversation are interwoven with material objects and arrangements which thus
become, both physically and with respect to the meanings that they embody for the
parties, a product of these very actions and conversation. Speech, gesture and material
setting get articulated in the process of communication. People generally interact in
places where they are surrounded by “material culture”. The complexity of
communication in a world largely made up of human artifacts is increasingly
becoming important. Quite often these material objects become important in
generating meaning and information. Meaning, therefore, does not only flow through
symbols and expressive forms that form our ancient and primary tools for
communication, and it is not just “contextualized” by the material environment; rather,
the environment, through the interpretive use the participants make of it in their
situated activities, becomes a component of the process of communication.

Styles, J., & Vickery, A. (2006). *Gender, taste, and material culture in Britain and North
America, 1700–1830*. New Haven, CT: Yale Center for British Art.

Between 1700 and 1830, men and women in the English-speaking territories framing
the Atlantic gained unprecedented access to material things. The British Atlantic was
an empire of goods, held together not just by political authority and a common
language, but by a shared material culture nourished by constant flows of
commodities. Diets expanded to include exotic luxuries such as tea and sugar, the
fruits of mercantile and colonial expansion. Homes were furnished with novel goods,
like clocks and earthenware teapots, the products of British industrial ingenuity. This
groundbreaking book compares these developments in Britain and North America,
bringing together a multi-disciplinary group of scholars to consider basic questions
about women, men, and objects in these regions. In asking who did the shopping, how
things were used, and why they became the subject of political dispute, the essays
show the profound significance of everyday objects in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.


In this article the authors seek to build on efforts to apply the insights of social learning theory to interpret patterns of continuity and change in the archaeological record. Using ethnographic data gathered from detailed case studies, they characterize pedagogy in the context of craft apprenticeships as involving the gradual scaffolding of skill in a novice through demonstration, intervention and collaboration. Although these processes cannot be directly observed in the archaeological record, they can sometimes be inferred through the detailed reconstruction of operational chains in past technologies. The evidence presented suggests that pedagogy has played an essential role in securing the faithful transmission of skills across generations, and should be regarded as the central mechanism through which long-term and stable material culture traditions are propagated and maintained.


Thayer proposes that, when the documentation review process bogs down and usability testing is impossible, we might approach the situation using a method from the field of art history. Art historians who study ancient societies frequently rely on material culture analysis as a way to piece together the cultural context that produced specific art objects. Material culture analysis is the study through artifacts of beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions, of a particular community or society at a given time. The idea behind material culture analysis is to look at an artifact from the perspective of a cultural outsider and then to decipher the underlying values of the original culture. Professional communicators may already perform a version of this task. When reviewing a technical specification document. The process of material culture analysis consists of three main steps: description, deduction, and speculation. The author discusses the issue by using an example of how art historians typically conduct the analysis process.


Following recent research in historical and cultural studies on “the book” and the practitioner field of book arts, the book is now approached no longer only as a vehicle for content but as a rich and mutable material entity. But in this materialist framework, is it possible to discern a politics of the book? This article addresses that question from two angles. First, it sets out a figure for the analysis of political material culture: the “communist object.” This figure is developed through Russian Constructivist concern
with the “intensive expressiveness” of matter, Walter Benjamin’s analysis of the 
“collector” and his critique of use value, and the confounding capacities of the 
“fetish.” Drawing on the perceptual field of book arts, the article then employs the 
concept of the communist object to investigate the dynamics of political printed 
matter, with a focus on the small-press pamphlet. The article concentrates on three 
contemporary small-press projects of nondoctrinal communist persuasion: Unpopular 
Books, 56a Archive, and Infopool. Against the anemic image of political media as 
“counterinformation,” the article seeks to develop an expanded understanding of the 
material culture of political media, an understanding that foregrounds a communism of 
organic and inorganic process.


This book is an exploration and application of post-structuralist discourse theory in 
archeology, tackling a basic problem of historical and archeological analysis—the 
relationship between text and artifact. Focusing on a collection of rock carvings from 
Sweden, Tilley shows how alternative conceptualizations of the material from 
structuralist, hermeneutic, and structural-Marxist frameworks substantially alter the 
understanding of their meaning and significance.


This book provides an innovative contribution to debates about the use of metaphor in 
the social sciences, written by one of today’s foremost archeological theorists. 
Christopher Tilley combines theoretical interpretation with practical examples to show 
the significance of the concept of metaphor in the study and writing of material forms. 
The first part of the book provides an overview of the use and value of the notion of 
metaphor in its broadest sense. Tilley argues that without metaphor human 
communication would be almost impossible and he shows how metaphors provide the 
basis for an interpretative understanding of the world. He then presents three 
archeological and ethnographic studies of metaphors chosen to demonstrate the 
richness of the concept for understanding texts, objects and artworks. Part Three of the 
book examines metaphor more specifically in relation to the social construction of 
landscape and the meaning of place in the prehistoric past and the present. The author 
concludes by developing elements of a theory of material forms as “solid metaphor.” 
The book will be of interest to all those examining metaphor in its various 
applications.


The study of material culture is concerned with the relationship between persons and 
things in the past and in the present, in urban and industrialized and in small-scale 
societies across the globe. The *Handbook of Material Culture* provides a critical 
survey of the theories, concepts, intellectual debates, substantive domains, and 
traditions of study characterizing the analysis of “things.” This cutting-edge work
examines the current state of material culture as well as how this field of study may be extended and developed in the future.

The Handbook of Material Culture is divided into five sections:

- Section 1 maps material culture studies as a theoretical and conceptual field.
- Section 2 examines the relationship between material forms, the human body and the senses.
- Section 3 focuses on subject-object relations.
- Section 4 considers things in terms of processes and transformations in terms of production, exchange and consumption, performance and the significance of things over the long-term.
- Section 5 considers the contemporary politics and poetics of displaying, representing and conserving material and the manner in which this impacts on notions of heritage, tradition and identity.

The Handbook charts an interdisciplinary field of studies that makes a unique and fundamental contribution to an understanding of what it means to be human. It will be of interest to all who work in the social and historical sciences, from anthropologists and archaeologists to human geographers to scholars working in heritage, design and cultural studies.


The article focuses on Professor Michael Billig’s concept of banal nationalism in relation to a comparative material culture study of Swedish and English gardeners and gardens. It states that banal nationalism is a myriad of everyday practices by means of which nations reproduce themselves as nations, rather than overt ideologies. According to the author, Billig’s work considers the concept in terms of linguistic discourses in relation to political speech and sporting events which may be reproduced through the mundane material practice of gardening.


This article considers conceptual links between producing installation art works in the present and interpreting prehistoric lifeworlds. We consider connections between the work of contemporary ‘landscape,’ ‘environmental,’ or ‘ecological’ artists and an ongoing landscape archaeology project centered on Leskernick Hill, Bodmin Moor, in the south-west of Britain. The authors argue that the production of art works in the present can be a powerful means of interpreting the past in the present. Both the practices of interpreting the past and producing art result in the production of something new that transforms our understanding of place and space resulting in the creation of new meaning. Art and archaeology can act together dialectically to produce
a novel conceptualization of the past and produce a means of relating to the past that is considerably more than the sum of its parts.


The article discusses the three dimensions of historical work on material culture. The three dimensions include the conceptual broadening from objects to things, practices, and politics. It explores the history which poses particular challenges but offers opportunities. It further explains that political history is not separate subdomain, wherein political ideas and party politics play battle over municipal reforms. It emphasizes that showing respect towards things has a great implication on the practice of history.


How can historical archaeologists best integrate documentary images and texts with archaeological evidence? The concept of “labor of representation” draws attention to the physical efforts, strategic decisions, and political projects inherent in representational practices, allowing archaeologists to rigorously account for the social production of historical documents without negating their evidentiary value. Contextual analysis of Joseph de Urrutia’s plan drawings of Spanish-colonial presidios demonstrates this approach, revealing systematic representational conventions. Overall, Urrutia depicted the settlements as more homogeneous and with more formal spatial order than was likely the case. The plan drawings are also shaped by an ideological boundary between military order and civilian disorder. Archaeological investigations that have taken the Urrutia drawings to be reliable “as-built” plans have tended to neglect or misinterpret those elements of the archaeological record that are most closely related to local, indigenous, and vernacular cultural practices.


The article discusses the relationship between sustainability and product design. Many commercial products go beyond basic utility, to include a multitude of technical features, along with styling and aesthetic considerations. But the vast majority of these products are unsustainable. The author suggests that sustainability does not necessarily require a return to local production, the use of natural materials or high-value materials, craft-processes, or even high-quality production. Instead, once basic utility is surpassed, the industry enters an area of design that deals with the social and positional aspects of material culture.

This paper explores the materiality of social power relationally through study of social interactions with artifacts. Specifically, it is argued that acquisition of an artifact instantiates social power by imposing interactions on groups taking part in that artifact’s life-history activities. The authors introduce the “performance-preference matrix,” an analytic tool for systematically studying the effects of such acquisition events on activity groups. The use of the performance-preference matrix is illustrated through an example: the acquisition of electric-arc lights for lighthouses in the 19th century. Suggestions are offered for analyzing culture-contact situations and for handling singularized artifacts such as heirlooms and monuments.


Visual sources, in the form of teachers’ journals and career literature, constitute an important part of the material culture of the teaching profession, and demand examination for their impact on occupational identity. The material allows for a range of interpretations and the approach taken here is speculative, in both methodologies and analysis. This paper examines how visual imagery, as a ‘communicative symbol’ and as a ‘social fact’, has actively contributed to the formation of gendered teacher identities. An analysis of the extensive archives available at the Trade Union Congress Library was central in revealing a set of recurring themes over a period of 60 years. This iconography was then located in its wider historical, pedagogical and cultural contexts and possible interpretations of these gendered representations of the occupational identity of teachers suggested.


This paper explores the challenges for social and cultural historians of education of using documentary films on schools and schooling as a research resource. It draws upon the outcomes of the British Academy–funded Documentary Film in Educational Research project, an international study that focused on developing methodological frameworks for researching school documentaries. The paper offers definitions of the notion of documentary and considers the range of styles and forms that constitute ‘school documentaries.’ Among the salient methodological issues examined is the potential for documentary film to be used both as a source and an object of study. These multi-dimensional possibilities raise a series of questions about different status and usages of documentary footage according to research context and about the myriad social, production, genre and technological contexts in which readings of school documentaries are embedded. The paper argues the need for historians of education to develop networks that can contribute not only to academic study of school documentaries but also to the urgent work of archiving and circulating films.

This article reviews a number of new titles in the field of material culture, including books by Thomas J. Schlereth, Robert Friedel, Peter J. Hugill and D. Bruce Dickson, and Barrie Reynolds and Margaret A. Stott.


When we look in depth at how the experience of education was represented in American culture, we find evidence of visual tropes representing evolving but persistent aspects of the experience of schooling, such as the performance of judgment, and the desire to know the world. These tropes were rendered in terms of pictorial conventions that went back centuries to chapbook woodcuts, and that by the early twentieth century had appeared and would reappear in movies, illustrations of novels and textbooks, magic-lantern slides and stereograph cards, and the art of popular magazines. Focusing on the dunce cap and the apple, this essay shows how these two simple objects arrived in the early twentieth century as icons for the process of education and the experience of schooling. While changing over time, they were important for the way in which they gave successive generations common symbols for understanding school. In the process of being appropriated repeatedly over the space of decades and centuries as symbols of the educational process, the dunce cap and the apple were transformed into conservative forms, dense with the layers of meaning that accrued to them.


The presentation of an aesthetic identity involves the accomplishment of a coherent, plausible narrative that links one’s choices to desired characteristics of the self. As symbolic evidence of a person’s taste, material culture is a vital component of a successful narrative. Via case studies of pivotal household objects, this paper uses face-to-face interview data as a way of investigating processes of aesthetic choice. Household objects are interpreted as material elements imbricated in the presentation of a socially plausible and internally consistent aesthetic self. Narrative analysis, and the concept of the epiphany-object, are proposed as useful ways of accounting for tastes in domestic material culture. Methodological questions of truth-telling and authenticity in the face-to-face context are considered, and the sociological problem of taste is scrutinized in light of ideas about social accountability and textual identity.

Warde’s (1994) theoretical analysis of possible anxieties provoked in the act of consumption synthesizes a large body of contemporary literature on uncertainty, social change and consumption. In doing so, it offers a predominantly structural model of the anxiety provoking tensions and forces individual consumers may be exposed to. Drawing on the work of contemporary figurehead theorists of social change, and proposing his own application of Durkheim’s model of suicide to the problem of consumption anxiety, Warde presents a model of how anxieties and their mitigation are embedded within configurations of contemporary consumer culture. Though Warde’s analysis illustrates the structural, theoretical context of potential consumption anxieties for particular social groups, it is unable to specify how such anxieties are manifested and managed—or performed—by individuals within specific social and consumption settings. This paper takes an interpretive approach, conceptualizing consumption anxiety as a discursive, narrative phenomenon likely to surface within particular social settings that are conducive to generating expressions of anxiety. The paper also considers the relation between narrativization and objects, arguing that the cultural capacity of objects must be understood within local settings where objects are afforded a capacity to act through various discourses. The argument is drawn using selections of face-to-face interview data collected from a sample of middle-class householders on the practice of home decoration.


This paper addresses some fundamental questions in the field of consumption studies through an exploration of literatures within object-relations psychoanalytic theory. It takes materiality as its central concern, dealing especially with questions of actor–commodity relations. In particular the paper uses the conceptual apparatus of the object-relations approach to propose a new way for theorizing aspects of consumption practice relating to person–object relationships. After situating the discussion within contemporary debates in consumption studies, the paper uses D.W. Winnicott’s work as a point from which to integrate broader literatures on aesthetic experience and subject–object relations. The paper draws out the cultural implications and affinities of Winnicott’s model and argues that his approach usefully suggests pathways for developing a model of consumption which neither reduces person–object exchanges to the psyche, assemblages of practices, or to the dead hand of social-structural forces. Rather, it is argued that Winnicott’s model is suggestive of the more widespread and powerful cultural implications arising from relations between actors and objects of consumption.


Aesthetic experience has been relativized and marginalized by recent social and cultural theory. As less attention has been paid to understanding the nature of aesthetic
experience than mapping the distributed social correlates of tastes, its transformative potential and capacity to animate actors’ imaginations and actions goes unexplored. In this paper we draw upon a large number of in-depth interviews with performing arts audiences around Australia to investigate the language and discourse used to describe aesthetic experiences. In particular, we begin with theorizations of the subject-object nexus within object-relations theory to consider the transformative potential of aesthetic experience. Using these literatures, and extending them to others within sociology of the arts and materiality, our focus is on the way aesthetic experience can fuse human subjects with aesthetic objects. We examine how viewers take an aesthetic object into themselves and in turn project themselves into the aesthetic object by various visual and imaginative techniques. Our theoretical and empirical analysis bears out the constructive and productive capacity of aesthetic experience.


The blackboard, a useful teaching tool in nineteenth-century England, was transformed into a teaching necessity in the decades following 1870, when the Education Acts made school free and mandatory for all children. The resulting huge population of schoolchildren inspired the development of teaching techniques appropriate for large-group learning. Many of these techniques relied on the blackboard as a reusable demonstration space visible to the entire class at once, unlike a book or slate. To share these new practices among teachers, particularly the novice teachers recruited to serve the increased school population, dozens of teaching manuals were published around the turn of the twentieth century. These manuals’ instructions for how to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and nature study to elementary school students offer historians a rare glimpse into teachers’ and students’ school experiences by suggesting how the blackboard shaped classroom practices in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England.


The article analyzes the importance of studying religions through the study of fine art, social, and cultural history. It mentions the purpose of the *Material Religion* journal: to study religion in relation to its impact on visual culture, material culture, and shared imaginaries, providing the definition of religion given by the journal’s editors in its inaugural issue in March 2005. Meanwhile, the definition of material culture in terms of visual culture is further examined, with the use of the term material culture by many art historians being highlighted.