

"Material Cultures, 1740?920 "; The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting

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Summary:

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Interweaving notions of identity and subjectivity, spatial contexts, materiality and meaning, this collection makes a significant contribution to debates around the status and interpretation of visual and material culture. *Material Cultures, 1740-1920* has four primary theoretical and historiographic lines of inquiry. The first is how concepts of otherness and difference inform, imbricate, and impose themselves on identity and the modes of acquisition as well as the objects themselves. The second concern explores the intricacies of how objects and their subjects negotiate and represent spatial narratives. The third thread attempts to unravel the ideological underpinnings of collections of individuals which inevitably and invariably rub up against the social, the institutional, and the political. Finally, at the heart of *Material Cultures, 1740-1920* is an intervention moving beyond the disciplinary ethos of material culture to argue more firmly for the aesthetic, visual, and semiotic potency inseparable from any understanding of material objects integral to the lives of their collecting subjects. The collection argues that objects are semiotic conduits or signs of meanings, pleasures, and desires that are deeply subjective; more often than not, they reveal racial, gendered, and sexual identities. As the volume demonstrates through its various case studies, material and visual cultures are not as separate as our current disciplinary ethos would lead us to believe.

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