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Objectzine

**Material Cultures
of Entertainment Media in
Late-seventeeth-century Japan**

Selected Object Journals

edited by Radu Leca

Selected object journals produced on occasion of the course
Material Cultures of Entertainment Media in Late-seventeenth-century Japan, edited by Radu Leca.

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It has been a peculiar challenge to teach a course on material culture during a pandemic that requires avoidance of close contact. My initial idea was to bring a variety of objects to the class and entice you to think through their material characteristics, social roles and metaphoric meanings. When this became no longer possible, I thought of our shared experience: as we avoided public spaces and contact with other people, our proximity and use of objects in our homes increased. I took this as an opportunity to encourage your critical thoughts on the very objects that you found yourselves in confinement with.

More than just a closer look, my aim was to spur you to experiment with the range of ways in which you can write about and present your chosen objects. Although some theorists attribute discrete agency to objects themselves, I think the power of objects, then and now, lies in their entanglement in social practices. This also means that the meaning of objects can be reformulated with each use and re-presentation. And in writing our object journals, we explored the various possibilities of redefining objects for, in this case, an art historical audience.

A more complex version of that process is required for writing articles and captions. By producing your object journals you have been practicing the skills required for producing art historical texts. While you may not always use the theoretical framework of material culture, a close attention to the properties of objects and their meaning of practice is the pre-requisite to all art historical enquiry.

It has been a joy to read through your object journals every week and discover your approaches and solutions to presenting meaningful objects. I have learned a lot from your input. Together you have created this object-zine. It will serve as a material reminder of the beginning of your journey of exploration, and is hopefully the first of your many publications.

Keep looking, thinking and writing!

Gratefully,

Radu Leca

The Bookmark

by Lukas Bäuschlein

For this week's journal task, I've found a bookmark, that was gifted to me by my mother. The bookmark's color is white and it's heavier than print paper. On it are three Chinese Letters depicted. The letters are definitely more cursive, I might also say, that it leans into calligraphy. I'd say the letters were quickly written, since the creator made it a quick business to create bookmarks for passersby. The letters were written with black ink. Due to the bookmark's usage, you can faintly make out some black wishy spots, shifting away from the letters. The bookmark is said to spell out my name with the meaning "The one, who searches his path" or something in that direction. I however can't read out my name with those letters. I'm familiar with the 路 from 道路 (street),

which is why I can get behind the "seeking path" idea. It also can be read as "ru", so that's a good start. The second letter cannot be found in my Japanese Database, but it seems to be a combination of 上 "up" and 下 "down", while 下 can be read as "ka". Maybe "up" and "down" as in "lost, but also searching"? The final one 思 as in "thinking" makes sense for the meaning, but I can't find "su" as a possible reading. In the end, I don't care too much about whether or not the reading is correct or not. I mean it probably is. I'm not profound in the Chinese Language after all. I hold it dear, since I like its design and its function.



The Album

by Sybille Mativet Épouse Ehrlich

This object is a photo album. Each element of it is made of paper. It is a pocket album to share war memories. On each of the 12 pages the viewer can recognize private snapshots of soldiers' every day life during the first World War. It measures 10 x 8 cm and it is unexpectedly light.

The cover is made of a simple one thin ply of cardboard which is covered with a beige decorative paper. The surface imitates a paper fiber structure. Its texture feels very smooth. The original sheets were most likely larger and were especially cut for this kind of album.

Inside the book each page is made of two thin cardboard layers in between which the pictures are glued onto. The pages' surface is embossed and provides a rough texture. The paper reflects light and looks shiny. Its color is light brown and slightly darker than the outside cover of the book. Each photo is framed with a dark brown line that has been printed especially for this photo album. The pictures are originally black and white, but the color faded over time and they got a yellow finish. My beloved grandfather commented each photo.



Khatam Jewelry Box

by Bahar Fatahi Bavand Pour

This is a rather old jewelry box from Iran. It was crafted in Iran using the ancient inlaying technique called Khatam. This delicate and time-consuming technique is one unique way of marquetry. The small box here shows a scenery of deer-hunting that has been carved convex into the wooden foundation. The beautiful geometrical shapes formed into stars were made by using various origi-

nal materials such as, different types of wood (ebony, teak, orange, rose), camel or cow bones and different metals like silver or brass. To achieve these complex patterns each material has to be cut into 2 mm (or less) thin triangle shaped sticks, that then will be put together with a string and glue to then be pressed. The bundle gets cut into pieces and assembled together and

then cut again into stripes for the application onto the wood, finished off with a fine lacquer layer. The inside of this box has an inlay of a velvet-like textile. There are many objects made using this technique and the best works of Khatam are said to be from Isfahan. It is best displayed on a vanity as it is a jewelry box, that invokes feelings of nostalgia.



The Notebook

by Stefania Fiume

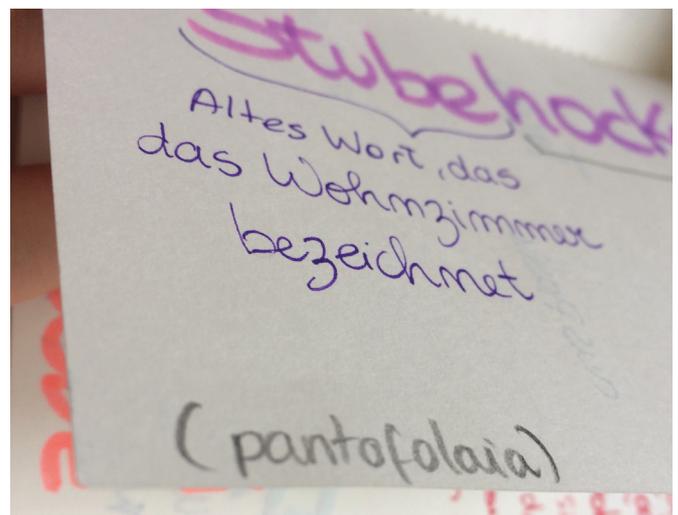
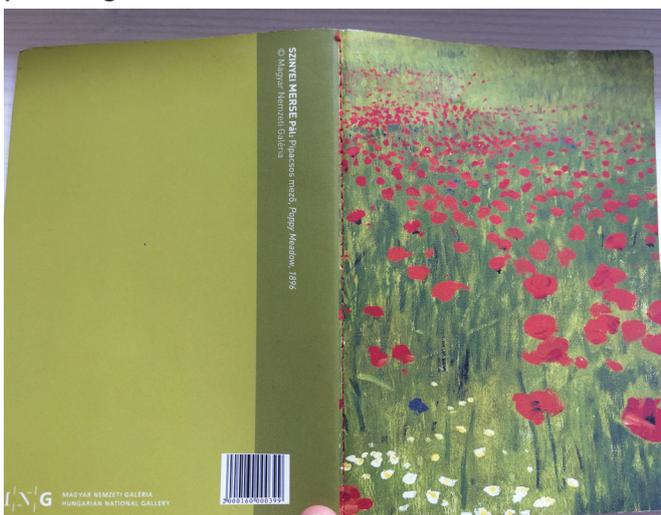
This is a little notebook I bought in 2015 at the Hungarian National Gallery, (Magyar Neuzeit Galería) in Budapest. After viewing the exhibition this was one of my favourite paintings: "Poppy Meadow" (1896) painted by Szinyei Merse Pál.

It goes without saying that in this kind of paraphernalia the original work has more value than the reproduced souvenir, that is why an important status change happened. The original work measurement were 90x55 cm, oil on canvas, so here we have just "a portion" of the whole canvas. The motive which appeared on the canvas is reproduced on paper, which is thicker than the common one and rougher to the touch. It is also yellowish. The little portion of the whole painting is a remainder that

the notebook is also little and hence just a part of the whole. This aspect is open to many interpretations.

The "missing" part of the painting included a little sky triangle and a man. Cutting out these parts, the attention is more on the botanical facet of the painting. Moreover, the status changed from being a masterpiece exposed in a national museum to a little memento, which is affordable by the "common people" and therefore could be used in daily life.

Please note that a red thread was used to put the pages together. They weren't stapled.



A little shiny house in a forest

by Claire Girard

This decorative lamp is completely made out of wood, either left untreated or painted in black. Each piece was cut out individually, then accurately assembled and carefully glued together – except the roof tiles, which are simulated by incised gradations. Finely grained paper was attached on the window screens from the inside, and right under the attic hangs a lightbulb, which emits a warm golden light shining through the translucent windows. On the bottom of the building, protected from sight, a moveable panel was cut out, so that the lightbulb can easily be replaced if necessary. The whole construction incorporates typical elements of traditional Japanese architecture like *shōji* windows, a hipped

roof and a pedestal, thus imitating an archetypical Japanese house or shrine.

I got the lamp as a birthday present from a close friend, who now studies architecture and art in Karlsruhe. She designed the construction, but it was her father – a retired carpenter – who built it. I placed it in a real limelight spot, on a white sideboard in front of a white wall, framed by two lushly green plants. In winter, when the light is on, the lamp looks like a cozy home in a wide dark forest.



My Grandfather's Étagère

by Felicitas Jung

This étagère is made out of three pieces from the same wood. It consists of two trays, which are connected by a pole. The pole has a much lighter color than the rest. The lower tray has a round base. The pieces are stuck together with glue. In the middle some glue is still visible. The wood was processed by woodturning and later it was polished. During the turning, the upper bowl cracked, but it is still usable. The étagère is used to display sweets or fruits. Furthermore, the different pattern and colors of the wood are already quite appealing by themselves and the étagère makes the objects, presented on it, decorative.

The étagère was a gift from my grandfather. He made it in his workshop, like many other bowls and decorations. Since he is almost ninety, he makes more mistakes while turning wood than before. Therefore, the étagère is not perfect, but I still like it very much since it was a gift and it is made with a lot of passion. Normally I like to place it on the dining table with fruits on it or, when I have guests, I present my homemade cookies on the étagère.



The Birthware

by Hyungkyu Kim

This ceramic ware has an extremely important meaning to me and to my family.

My Grandfather has made this ceramic ware for me to celebrate my birth, and this can be regarded as one of his legacy. Looking at it reminds me of my grandfather and the memories I have with him. Although the memories aren't much, they are precious enough to reminiscent.

Looking at what's being displayed on the upper surface of the ceramic ware (first pic), we can see the numbers, which indicate the date of my birth, August the 1st, 2000. Then my name is written on the right hand in korean, then on the very top a leaf, telling that the one being celebrated is a boy. Lastly on the left hand side we have the caption celebrating my birth!

On the other photo the name of my Grandfather and the relationship between he and I (grandfather and grandson) is written down.

It has a very thick and firm texture, although it does not really look like so. The inner part is a bit stained and got rusty, because it's around 20 years old. Surprisingly there's no crack or noticeable damage, even after all these years! Colored mainly by Light and Dark Green, which I find eye-comforting.



Uzbek Doppa

by Timo Körner

This square *doppa* – a head-dress worn by certain ethnic groups of Central Asia – was acquired by my parents on a market in Samarkand in 1986 while traveling through what back then were different parts of the USSR. It is one of the most prominent souvenirs from said trip, as far as I know the only one from the more exotic, “oriental” Uzbek section as well and therefore still a revered object. In order to protect it from potentially harmful factors such as too much light exposure or touching it usually rests quietly in a shadowy albeit still somewhat prominent spot of a display cabinet.

It is made from cotton silver-beige thread and deep purple velvet as well as additional red plastic decor elements on the out- and another hardened cotton textile on the inside. One may assume that the light-coloured thread – especially in combination with the dark velvet aesthetic – aims to at least remind the beholder of silk thread used in more luxurious Uzbek clothing. However, to me, the extensive use of regional cotton and the easily apparent hand-crafted nature only add even more to the “locality” of the object,



which is a quality often sought after in souvenirs (especially from places that remote to us).



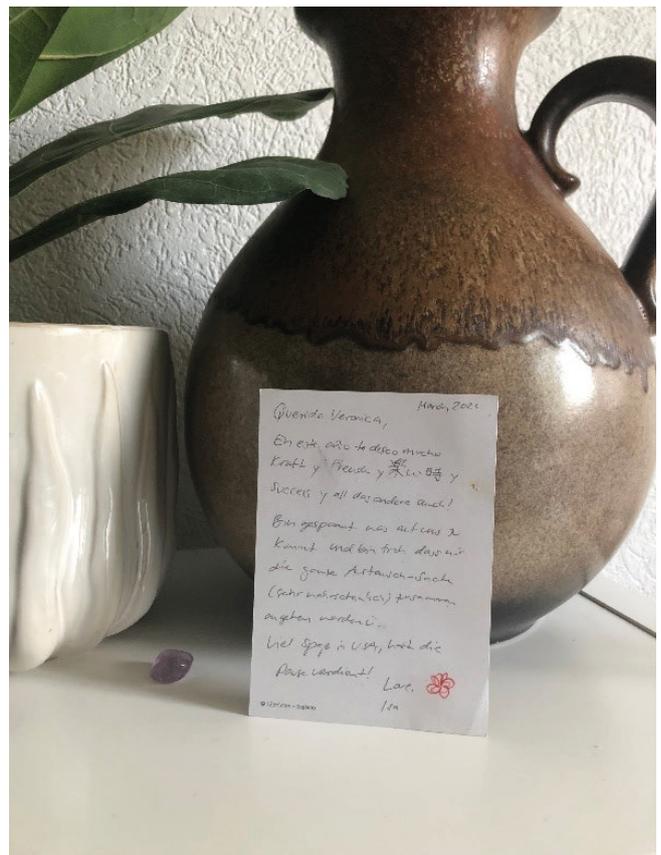
Querida

by Veronika Kravcenko

Two weeks after my birthday, I met with a dear friend who was in Spain and couldn't celebrate with me. She gifted me wine and this card with it. It is a standard postcard with a thick paper and picture of red roses on the back. The writing was likely written with a light gel pen, since there are tiny black dots always at the end of the letter's line, the thick paper holds the gel ink not good, I imagine it blacker on regular office paper.

The card consists of two paragraphs, the writing is cursive in block letters. The first paragraph is also not straight but falls to the right like the letters. Not every letter is completely written out, for example the last "e" from "Freude" is just a winding line, like almost all vowels. The first paragraph was likely fast written, the second paragraph was more thought of, therefore the writing is straighter. The purpose of the card is of course not to be just aesthetically pleasing, but to deliver wishes. But I think

postcards are always made to be displayed, the picture or message has always the purpose to be read or looked at again. It leans against a brown vessel on my bookshelf, reminding me of my friend.



The Elvis Shirt

by Radu Leca



This worker's shirt in fifties style is of black cotton with light-purple details, has guitar-shaped buttons (with a spare one in the chest pocket) and golden embroidery on the front with a cock singing into a condenser microphone, and on the back with the same crooner within the logo of Sun Records in Memphis, where many legendary rock'n'roll tunes were made by Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and most notably Elvis Presley. It is the emblem of a lifestyle also epitomised by classic American

cars, and it was indeed at a show of such cars in Netherlands that I bought this shirt. The cars were custom modified and made-up as if floating on feathers. The same idealisation is at work in the shirt, with its appeal to 50s icons and iconographies. The shirt's maker prides itself on 'rough & greasy workwear since 1959'. It is a markedly male garment, invoking scenes of car repairmen with their embroidered workwear arriving at a rock'n'roll concert in their cars.

I wore it only once, when my musician friend came from Hong Kong, and we jammed with me on voice and him on classical Chinese flute.

The Shade

by Yanling Li



We bought this paper-made lampshade from Ikea, together with many other light, airy furniture ranges when we moved into an old flat on the outskirts of Berlin. There used to be a massive brass chandelier, left by an old couple who once owned the house and probably resided here for most of their lives. But we are just tenants. It would be rather sentimental if the flat is somewhat reminiscent of that of grandma's. Here the materiality of paper, plastic and plywood (lightness, portability, planned obsolescence) lend itself to a realization of our plans as being brief and future-oriented.

My partner installed the shade and created the cloud-like pendant by crumbling the paper layers, facilitated by thin wires wrapped on the edge. The paper is just of the right texture: not too thick so that one can easily fluff it up; not too thin either, so that ripples can be formed and fixed. It also bears a personal touch that belongs to someone scrupulous and gentle – the pendant would have appeared like a used tissue had it been done by me.

Our perception of the material is in fact mediated by a regular, quotidian orchestration – the light. In early morning (I cannot vouch for this) or late afternoon, the shade looks cool

white with a tint of crepuscular shadows. However, when switched on in the evening, the originally warm but crispy light becomes cozy and diffused through the translucent shade.

The Model

by Sinan Minyas



For this task I decided to choose my wooden mannequin model, which I use whenever I want to draw proportions correctly and or poses that I'm not familiar with. The mannequin is mainly pieced together out of individual solid wood pieces, which are hold together by metal wires and screws on each joint which allow, free movement for the limbs of said mannequin. Furthermore, the mannequin is hold in the air via a wooden platform and a metal pole that is connecting the pedestal with the figure. It does not have a name, I bought it mainly because I was struggling at drawing different poses and needed proper reference, and use it mainly for practice purposes. Besides that, it doesn't really possess a personality although one could say that the

poses the mannequin strikes can be used to portray traits that can be found in human behavior such as glee or fun. The figure isn't intended for any kind of performance, but the latter mentioned poses that it can strike, are somewhat entertaining, also I like to position the mannequin in ridiculous stances, which make me giggle occasionally, playing around with its limbs is fun and that in some sense that too can be seen as performance, at least for me.

The Mirror

by Ulrike Walter

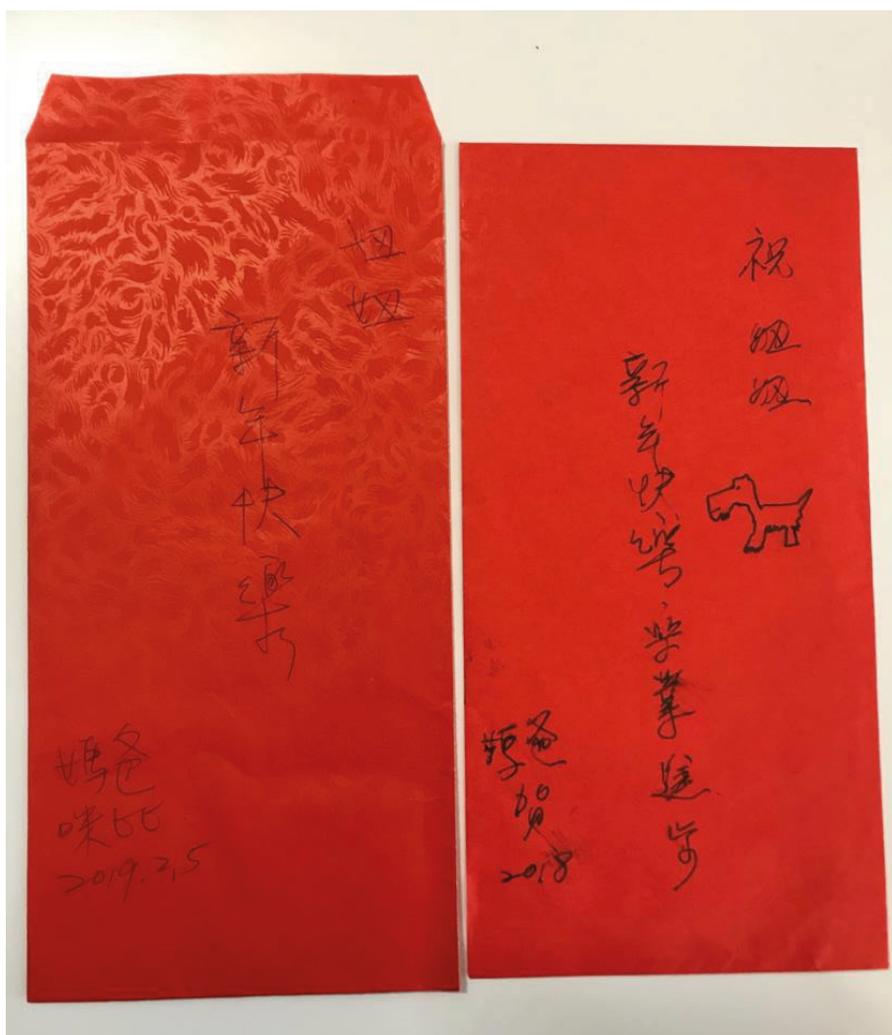
This mirror can be used by anyone picking it up. There is no training necessary to take a mirror and use it in any way. This particular mirror has two sides, one with normal view and the other side with an enlargement 5 x the normal size. A mirror can be used in many ways for a play. The most famous play known here is the fairytale Snow White whose stepmother uses a mirror to tell the future about her beauty and power. But in reality, this device ultimately turns against her. A mirror in a play can be used as a way to exploit the magical way of talking to people over long distances or as a tool to show the truth to the character (like in Dracula).

Mirrors have been used for centuries in rituals of all kinds, even supposedly dark magic. Today mirrors are used to look at ourselves and decide about our appearance and if it's passable for going outside. Mankind's pride and pressure on beauty standards for all sexes has increased over the last century. Once an object to be admired for the object itself has now become an object to admire us. And yet, almost everyone owns at least one mirror.



The Red Envelope

by Yujung Wu



These red envelopes were from the Chinese lunar new year in 2018 and 2019. They were hand written by my father. The one on the left hand side says: Happy New Year, Dad and Mom 2019. February the fifth and the one on the right says: Happy New Year, and success in studies, wishes from Dad and Mom 2018. Beside the writing is a drawing of our pet dog, a schnauzer. These red envelopes were used on Chinese lunar new year and they contained money inside. It is usually given from elderly to younger people. As one grows up, one will receive less and less envelope each year. I only got the red envelope from my parents and grandparents these past year so I kept them, usually people only kept the money inside. The hand writing on the right is faster than the one on the left, as you can see from the strokes have become softer and rounder. The red envelope is not for daily use, they are only use on special occasion the new years or weddings. They are usually personally handed and that gives a personally touch to the object. If they were kept, they are usually kept privately and not displayed.



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