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Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist As Collector



Synopsis

Exploring more than a dozen personal collections of contemporary artists, this unique and revealing book probes the aesthetic and psychological dimensions of collecting and shows how objects can influence and reflect their owners' work. Throughout history artists have collected objects for professional and private reasons. Picasso, for example, collected African and Oceanic art; Walker Evans amassed a huge collection of postcards depicting ordinary Americans; and Matisse was an avid collector of exotic textiles and furniture. This book takes a look at the private collecting habits of contemporary artists including Arman, Peter Blake, Hanne Darboven, Edmund de Waal, Damien Hirst, Howard Hodgkin, Dr Lakra, Sol LeWitt, Martin Parr, Jim Shaw, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Andy Warhol, Pae White, and Martin Wong/Danh Vo. Their holdings range from mass-produced memorabilia and popular collectibles, such as cookie jars and children's toys owned by Warhol, to unique curiosities and specimens, like Blake's collection of Walter Potter taxidermy, and other curios and rarefied artifacts, such as important examples of African art owned by Arman. Presented alongside key examples of their work, these objects provide insight into the inspirations, influences, motives, and obsessions of their owners. A lead essay examines the reasons why artists collect, attempting to understand the relationship between the objects artists amass and the works they make, and contributions by or on each of the artists reflect on the personal significance of collecting habits.

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Customer Reviews

"[Yee] gathered together the unique and mesmerizing personal collections of more than a dozen

contemporary artists . . . Psychological, psychedelic and everything between and beyond, these collections inspired some of the most influential artists of our time; collections such as Hiroshi Sugimoto's Japanese antiquities, Sir Peter Blake's taxidermy, Arman's African art and, of course, Andy Warhol's cookie jars." Juxtapoz "Presented alongside written reflections on or by each of the artists, as well as key examples of their work, the featured collections reveal how—just as art is coveted by collectors—objects are often treasured by artists, and how collections can both influence and reflect their owner's works." —The Boston Globe

Lydia Yee is a Curator at the Barbican Art Gallery in London and has recently been appointed Chief Curator at Whitechapel Gallery, London.

Loved it. The only thing I wished for is more pics of Andy's cookie jars and other stuff of his. That's really why I purchased the book.

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