



The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe

Edited by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling
and David Gaimster

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MATERIAL CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe marks the arrival of early modern material culture studies as a vibrant, fully-established field of multi-disciplinary research.

The volume provides a rounded, accessible collection of work on the nature and significance of *materiality* in early modern Europe – a term that embraces a vast range of objects as well as addressing a wide variety of human interactions with their physical environments. This stimulating view of materiality is distinctive in asking questions about the whole material world as a context for lived experience, and the book considers material interactions at all social levels.

There are 27 chapters by leading experts as well as 13 feature object studies to highlight specific items that have survived from this period (defined broadly as c.1500–c.1800). These contributions explore the things people acquired, owned, treasured, displayed and discarded, the spaces in which people used and thought about things, the social relationships which cluster around goods – between producers, vendors and consumers of various kinds – and the way knowledge travels around those circuits of connection. The content also engages with wider issues such as the relationship between public and private life, the changing connections between the sacred and the profane, or the effects of gender and social status upon lived experience.

Constructed as an accessible, wide-ranging guide to research practice, the book describes and represents the methods which have been developed within various disciplines for analysing pre-modern material culture. It comprises four sections which open up the approaches of various disciplines to non-specialists: ‘Definitions, disciplines, new directions’, ‘Contexts and categories’, ‘Object studies’ and ‘Material culture in action’.

This volume addresses the need for sustained, coherent comment on the state, breadth and potential of this lively new field, including the work of historians, art historians, museum curators, archaeologists, social scientists and literary scholars. It consolidates and communicates recent developments and considers how we might take forward a multi-disciplinary research agenda for the study of material culture in periods before the mass production of goods.

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OF MATERIAL CULTURE IN
EARLY MODERN EUROPE

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Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling
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First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 9781409462699 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781315613161 (ebk)

Typeset in Perpetua
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The great joy of this volume for us has been the way of working it has encouraged – between individuals exploring materiality at different stages in their careers and from different perspectives – so we must first thank the contributors for being so open to taking new approaches to their encounters with material culture; for thinking, working and in many cases writing collaboratively and for being prepared to do so across boundaries of approach, perspective and discipline.

A good deal of that collaborative working began at a workshop in April 2013 which took place before the *Materialities of Urban Life in Early Modern Europe* conference at the Institute of Historical Research in London, to which many of the writers of the chapters below contributed either physically or virtually. Our thanks to Mark Merry of the Centre for Metropolitan History for developing the idea for this with us, and for planning and hosting it, and to Olwen Myhill for the logistics. The speakers at the conference itself helped to shape our thoughts about what a volume like this needed, as did research students at the universities of Birmingham and Kent, on whom we tried out various incarnations of its contents and shape. Angela McShane assisted us in thinking through the ways the Object Studies might work, and put us in touch with some willing and able writers.

Finally, we would like to thank the staff at Ashgate and Routledge for their help with the various stages of this volume, particularly Lianne Sherlock and Autumn Spalding at each end for easing and supporting the transition, and to Laura Pilsworth, the History editor at Routledge, for going the extra mile with the images which set it apart from the others in this series, but are so vital to its subject.

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Section I

DEFINITIONS, DISCIPLINES,
NEW DIRECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster



Figure 1.1 Abraham Ortelius, world map from the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570). Image from Wikipedia Commons/ Library of Congress.

‘Very curious’¹

This is a book for and about the curious: focussed on past interactions between individuals and things of interest, it’s our contribution to defining and developing the field of early modern material culture studies. This is a relatively youthful field which is moving quickly; it is one in which the editors are all involved from very different angles – as a literary scholar and an art historian both with a strong interest in social and cultural history, and as an archaeologist who is also a museum director – and it is an area of scholarship about which we care passionately.

We wanted to bring the largest possible range of current work together in one place as a way of mapping a subject that is coming into focus like the early modern map of the world (Figure I.1).

Our working definition of material culture is part of that range and breadth. We are curious about the things with which people interacted, the spaces in which they did so, the social relationships which cluster around their associations – between producers, vendors and consumers of various kinds – and the way knowledge travels around those circuits of connection. Volumes on material culture work with a considerable variety of implicit and explicit definitions of their subject, shaped by the preoccupations of their editors and the disciplinary backgrounds of their contributors (e.g. Hicks and Beaudry eds. 2010, with work by ‘field scientists’: anthropologists, archaeologists, cultural geographers and proponents of science and technology studies; Riello and Gerritsen eds. 2014, aimed specifically at historians). Our book aims to be as inclusive, broad and imaginative as possible in its disciplinary scope: you will read the work of historians, art historians, museum curators, archaeologists, social scientists and literary scholars, and we hope that at least some of these approaches will seem curious (unusual; intriguing; strange?) to you. As a result, our view of materiality goes far beyond focussed object studies (although those too are very important to us and you will find a section dedicated to them) and aspires to ask suggestive questions about the whole material world as a context for lived experience in the early modern period. We discuss the material experience of the elite and those below them – both the glittering goods of a material Renaissance and the pragmatic, everyday surroundings of the street or the kitchen – and in doing so we hope to raise questions about the role of aesthetics in early modern engagement with materiality: about design, detail, and the distinctions and connections between, for instance, a play by Shakespeare and a record of a pavior’s possessions in a probate inventory. Indeed, our focus on the materiality of everyday experience in early modern Europe provides a distinctive contribution to recent work on the interplay of ‘high’ and ‘low’ modes of cultural production (Hadfield, Dimmock and Shinn eds. 2014). The study of material culture has widened out over the last few decades from objects to ‘the large compass of materiality, the ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological, and the theoretical; all that which would have been external to the simple definition of an artifact’ (Miller 2005, 4). We are now in a position to explore the mutual processes of construction of the many environments of early modern Europe on the one hand, and the events, actions and experiences of its men and women on the other. These contexts are the fleeting and dynamic arenas in which affective, social, cultural, devotional and economic events took place.

We concur with the agendas of recent publications regarding material methodologies, in which there is general agreement that ‘there is no single way of engaging with material culture’ and, therefore, ‘there cannot be a unified and universal methodology’ (Gerritsen and Riello 2014, 5). The distinct disciplinary perspectives of those involved in this kind of work lead to different questions; the weight and priority given to particular sources and the balances between them will be dissimilar – for instance the relationship between textual and material evidence within a given argument. This book does not aim, therefore, to offer a uniform ‘how-to guide’ to analysing materiality, but it does present a wide range of possible approaches, methods and working practices and, in the object studies which are one of its key features, it will offer brief models for *levels* of engagement which might be emulated when asking questions of things.

Whilst we do not aim to be dogmatic here, then, we do want to make a strong argument for a more explicit discussion of just how to be curious about the material remnants of a period that gave us the cabinet of curiosity – we want to extend our conversations about how to employ our encounters with matter in our writing about the early modern past.

Disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity

A large-scale map of the evolution of material culture studies might give us a broad history of disciplinary investments in materiality. It would look something like this: we might begin with the concept of ‘material culture’ in British archaeology and social anthropology, which emerged in the second quarter of the twentieth century. In the 1960s and ’70s historians broadened their horizons from the political machinations of the elite to the more modest dealings of the rest of society under the umbrella of ‘history from below’ and explored popular culture as an area of division, tension and appropriation between social groups. In the 1970s and ’80s the idea of ‘material culture studies’ emerged, following on from the earlier development of material culture in archaeology and anthropology; in the ’80s and ’90s both economic and social historians studied the ‘consumer revolution’ of the eighteenth century and then charted similar patterns both across Europe and back in time. Partly as a response to the emphasis on production in archaeology and archaeologically inspired history, which ‘failed to take account of the ways in which people enrol things in everyday social practices’ (Hicks and Beaudry 2010, 7), there was an extended debate about when and where a recognisably modern consumer society might have had its origins – for instance Italy or the Netherlands – which gradually moved from a focus on documents to include an interest in objects. At the same time, art historians were turning critical attention to a range of visual media expanded beyond the ‘fine arts’ and the cultural and social contexts informing its production, distribution and consumption, while literary scholars were exploring both the ‘everyday’ and notions of ‘self-fashioning’, showing a pronounced concern with the gendering of objects and exploring the kind of quotidian practices which are so often only accessible through contemporary literary and theatrical representations.

Recently, two strands of methodological development in particular have been especially pronounced. First, explorations of consumption have gone global. Whilst work continues on the ‘material Renaissance’, the Dutch ‘embarrassment of riches’, the French ‘history of everyday things’ and the Anglo-American ‘birth of a consumer society’, they are now seen in the light of Chinese investment in ‘superfluous things’ and the ‘Japanese storehouse’ of objects, and more recently still ‘the ‘tulip age’ of the Ottoman Empire and the age of ivory, pepper, gold, slaves, [and] ‘guinea cloth’ . . . that reshaped material life in coastal African societies’. Our sense of early modern attitudes towards ‘commerce, consumption, and collecting’, as well as the spread and exchange of knowledge, have been profoundly shaped by this much more explicit focus on the geography of the production, distribution and consumption of objects (Findlen 2013, 15–16). This work also signals a move away from consumption as purely symbolic in meaning (usually of a household’s status), and towards its situated role in social and cultural practice, a move being made both in historical and social-science studies of consuming (Warde 2004).

Section I: Definitions, disciplines, new directions

Giorgio Riello opens the first section of this book with a chapter that clarifies and develops this methodology of widening perspectives by offering a series of classifications and typologies. First, he outlines the range of possible functions which objects traded across the world could fulfil: as imported consumer goods; as things of collecting and wonder, often arranged into cabinets; as objects of knowledge in important proto-ethnographic collections; as materials of diplomacy and luxury; and as food, animals and plants ‘ranging from the potato to pineapples, from turkeys to tomatoes’. All of these categories recur in later chapters, and Riello’s chapter offers a useful starting point for understanding their possible interconnections.

He also explores the various methods by which these commodity trajectories are being studied in order to define the early modern phase of globalisation: seeing connections from a specific point, where ‘foreign influences’ can be examined as they alter the social, economic and cultural capital of local cultures’; following objects as they move across the map, or materially change as they are exchanged. These ‘global biographies’ consider how things ‘take shape in space, by drawing on the long-distance trade of raw materials, by relying on design patterns provided by consumer markets, by being decorated, customised and modified in different places and times’. Following objects in this way, he shows, allows us to de-centre European perspectives, as we see that Europe was often significantly behind other destinations in adopting new types of goods. Such a comparative view invites attention to the ‘vectors and directions of exchange’ and what he calls ‘artefact chains’.

Then, alongside this recent development in consumption studies, scholars interested in the relationship between individuals and environments have begun to engage with methods from the social sciences in order to specify early modern embodied relationships and engagements with material culture. In the second chapter, therefore, John Sutton and Nicholas Keene argue that if we’re to understand material culture, we need to comprehend ‘the agents who make it, use it, and are in turn transformed by and with it’ more fully, through an analysis of the mind. They outline a version of cognitive history which builds on recent discussions of ‘distributed cognitive ecologies’, arguing that minds spread beyond brains and bodies into a social and physical world which can be seen as a cognitive ecology: a ‘structured setting in which individuals or groups remember, create, imagine, or engage in other flexible intelligent action’ involving physical, technological and social resources. Bringing us back to our opening map, they give the example of navigating the Pacific, a task ‘not executed by following a complete plan held in the mind or brain of any one individual’ but rather ‘distributed across a number of people and a range of objects and instruments’ with ‘complex histories’. This work is intended to challenge our sense of the inviolability of the individual mind, disrupting our view that ideas and practices only ‘become public’ when they leave the body to be communicated to others; rather, they assert, the ‘products of cognitive activity must all be embodied’; knowledge needs material transport – books, machines, people etc.

In the outlines of these two chapters and the brief sketch of work over the past century that proceeded them, it’s clear that early modern material studies has developed as, at different times and on different questions, various groups of disciplines have been in dialogue with one another. Many of the contributions to this volume chart some sense of the development of their topic of enquiry away from narrowly disciplinary-based divisions. Harold Mytum, for instance,

shows how the study of mortuary culture has been held back by proprietary distinctions – funerary monuments in the church studied by art historians; those outside by archaeologists; funerary practices by historians; excavated bodies by archaeologists. Such divisions, he says, ‘hinder the understanding of social and cultural life, which was not so divided’. The inherent political biases of division are laid bare in Maria Hayward’s chapter on dress: textiles and the textile trade forming ‘a well-established strand of economic, text-based, history’; the study of clothing regarded as ‘a marginal, chiefly female, object-based’ concern with ‘little place in serious, and predominantly male, academia’.

Topics of study are broadening to resemble a multi-disciplinary dialogue – Glenn Richardson demonstrates how court studies, for instance, has come to include ‘art and architectural history, the history of design, furnishings and furniture, music, textiles and clothing, of theatre and of ritual’. We believe very strongly that multi-disciplinary conversations and liaisons are one of material culture studies’ most appealing features, but we similarly respect disciplinary skills and the need for an equal balance of research interests and agendas. The parity advocated by Sutton and Keene, who counsel that mutual benefits can arise from a meeting of social science and humanities approaches as long as the topics are of mutual interest, has proved essential for successful collaboration. As a result, some chapters are written by individuals working within one discipline who have a deep familiarity with the source material and methods of another (for instance archaeologist Kate Giles’s use of documentary materials), and more have been co-written by scholars working in different fields, such as Patricia Fumerton, Megan E. Palmer and William Palmer’s collaboration between literary scholars and a conservationist. This kind of work demands both respect for disciplinary skills and a familiarity with and appreciation of the sources and approaches of colleagues.

If you are reading this book as a student, at whatever level, don’t feel daunted by this – none of us have all the skills needed to do this work, but we (almost) guarantee that embarking on it with friends and colleagues at various stages of learning new ones will be a truly exciting and enriching experience! For the particular field of early modern material culture studies, we are in a slightly more fortunate position. Disciplinary training and outlook remain important, but it is the case that early modern studies more broadly has traditionally been an interdisciplinary field of endeavour, with established alliances and/or intersections between History, Archaeology, Literature, Art History and to a lesser extent Anthropology in particular. A new breed of scholar is equipped with a much wider range of skills which allows them to enter into more productive dialogue with colleagues in different disciplines and to be more sensitive to the generic complexities of a wider range of disparate evidence. They have often been equipped with this range of literary, historical, aesthetic and haptic skills through postgraduate training in interdisciplinary research centres focused on the early modern period, such as those at Birmingham, Kent, Sussex, Southampton, Warwick and York (amongst others in the UK), and through research programmes that bring together humanities departments and museums – for instance the Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art MA in Design History, the Winterthur-University of Delaware Masters programme in the Decorative Arts, or the Smithsonian George Mason Master’s in the History of Decorative Arts.

So how have the key disciplines of early modern studies traditionally approached material culture? We should be clear that we’re talking here about broad disciplinary tendencies, rather than the work of individual scholars (or collaborations between them) which are often

considerably more flexible and innovative in approach. Whilst the discipline of **History** might be seen as a point of connection between the field sciences and the aesthetic disciplines, it has had perhaps the least developed engagement with materiality of all the disciplines because of its strong foundation in the study of textual sources. As a result, there is an innate suspicion of the value of material evidence, and the discipline has been slow to develop a method for its study. As Karen Harvey put it in 2009 in her thought-provoking introduction to *History and Material Culture*, ‘historians are not much interested in things or their thingness for their own sake, but as routes to past experience’ (Harvey 2009, 7). Often more comfortable with quantitative rather than qualitative approaches, whilst economic historians have been a major driving force behind consumption studies, they have, as Paula Findlen neatly puts it in *Early Modern Things*, ‘often struggled with how to measure desire’, something they generally do in collaboration with anthropologists and social scientists (2013, 16). Nevertheless, the essential drive of the discipline to consider large-scale shifts over time has offered a crucial corrective to and context for other disciplines’ more focused engagement with individual things (e.g. Baatsen, Blondé and De Staelen, this volume), and it leads the field in the sense that it develops a framework for analysis of the broader topics of debate for early modern societies into which material evidence might intervene, such as gender, status and religious identity (see Cust; Tittler, this volume).

The way things interact with these larger narratives has been explored by Riello in earlier work, where he aimed to lay out for the discipline a more sophisticated methodological interaction with objects, in the form of ‘*history from things*’, where artefacts are used as the raw materials of study; ‘*history of things*’, where the relationship between objects, people and representations is studied; and ‘*history and things*’, where materiality evokes and shapes ‘new processes of gathering, systematizing and presenting ideas’ (Riello 2009, 26). The effect of this last possibility is to shatter the narrative coherence of history as an explanatory tool. More recently, Riello and Gerritsen have seen the ways in which materiality is altering the discipline of history in positive terms: ‘the primacy of the written account in the historical discipline has been destabilized’; ‘the boundaries of history have changed’; and material culture is now ‘one of the most fertile areas of collaboration’ between different kinds of historians, other academics in humanities and social sciences, and museum curators (Riello and Gerritsen 2014, 5).

Literary scholars, more congenitally drawn to the postmodern absence of coherence suggested in ‘history and things’, perhaps have a clearer affinity with material sources. As early modernists, many of them are at home working with the ephemeral staging practices of the contemporary theatre, and an important strand of literary work on materiality has involved challenging the notion of the ‘bare stage’ through both an exploration of the use of props and the circumstances of production within amphitheatres and indoor playhouses and a theorisation of the relationship between theatrical event and context which draws on theatre studies’ practice-based research agenda (Harris and Korda 2002; Korda 2002; Wall 2002; Sofer 2003; Richardson 2006; 2011; Harris 2009; Bailey, Korda and Lowe, this volume). The reconstructions of early modern theatres and their engagement with academic research, including the joint doctoral programme run between the Globe and King’s London, have been important laboratories for this work (see reconstructions of ‘Shakespeare’s Globe’ in England, the US and Japan (amongst other places) and its indoor fellows, London’s Sam Wanamaker Playhouse and the American Shakespeare Centre’s Blackfriars Playhouse in Virginia). Further significant

research has been pursued on the development of audiences more generally, in which literary scholars have collaborated with colleagues in other disciplines to understand the nature of the various ‘publics’ for early modern aesthetic productions (Wilson and Yachnin 2011).

In addition, literary scholars have used their skills in close textual analysis to tease out the qualitative subtleties of contemporary comments on things. Both on the stage and in manuscript and print, they have explored the unique evidence which literary texts give of explicit observation on the social and cultural meaning of materiality and the personal reactions it provokes (Smith 1999; Stallybrass and Jones 2000; Fleming 2001). They bring to the table the kind of sources that present embodied exchanges, emotional responses and quick, quotidian discussion of things, and this permits them to explore the way objects and practices become gendered and their links to the development of individual identity (de Grazia and Stallybrass 1996; Fumerton and Hunt 1999; Fisher 2006). Work over the past 30 years shows a clear engagement with and excitement about material evidence born out of the appeal of working on aesthetic things and exploring the way in which they’re crafted – attention to the fine detail of work, especially such narrative qualities as it might possess – but they have often been content to explore the textual representation of objects and the intellectual contexts in which they appeared, at one remove from the extant material examples of stuff, and only rarely do they actually find themselves in museums and archaeological collections.

The one major exception to this trend towards the textual is the large body of work on the history of the book, a multi-disciplinary field which includes bibliography, codicology, bookbinding, and histories of printing, publishing, reading and libraries. It focuses on the nature of a medium whose influence was mounting steadily in the early modern period – from manufacture to distribution, purchase, consumption or reception, and storage and survival, in ways that focus on the social, economic and cultural relations books created at all stages of their existence (Eisenstein 1980; McGann 1991; Johns 1998; McKenzie 1999; Barnard 2014; Howsam 2014; Gardham 2015; Smith and Maguire, this volume). Moving outwards from the physical aspects of the object, recent scholarship has begun to consider the social, cultural and intellectual processes associated with books (for instance reading practices) and the interplay between the book as artefact, the text within it, and the oral and performative cultures that it might bring into play.

As an object-based discipline, **Art History** could be said to be intrinsically concerned with material culture, with extant artworks in various media providing the ‘raw materials’ for study at first-hand, and its founding principles depend to a large extent upon the developments in art and craft that took place during the early modern period; the cultural achievements identified with ‘the Renaissance’. Indeed, it is often said that the history of art began in Europe in this period; the Italian artist Giorgio Vasari is credited with setting out the foundation in his *The Lives of the Artists* (1568), with his connoisseurial judgements about quality and individual genius informing the organisation of artists and works within a canon of styles, schools and masters.

Subsequent developments produced a series of hierarchical classifications which elevated some items of craftsmanship (painting in oils, sculpture in stone, fine printmaking) above others (the applied arts) and organised them within broad genres (e.g. history painting; landscape) and movements (such as ‘Mannerism’ or ‘Baroque’). In its focus on the singular and the exceptional, art history has traditionally separated its concerns from the mundane world of the everyday and the popular. Though it relegated the applied, or decorative, arts to the bottom

rung of its hierarchy, the discipline's connoisseurial framework for appreciation – dominated by assessment of success in technique, quality and aesthetics as well as a concern with the maker's biography and oeuvre – also informed the early development of design history, though in recent decades the **History of Design** has become highly interdisciplinary, with particular interest in social history, as reflected in many of the object studies in Section II.

In modern academic practice, art history courses and publications often focus on a defined period and region. This has shifted emphasis from appreciation to questions of meaning and reception, requiring analysis of historical context. It has become common to acknowledge different 'ways of seeing' or 'practices of looking' to point up the culturally determined nature of subjectivity – what Michael Baxandall described as 'the period eye' – and sensitivity to difference has troubled the essentialist tendencies of the discipline's founding principles (Baxandall 1974). The interaction of Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic critical theories in the '70s and '80s produced the 'The New Art History', a general shift to social and cultural history, which investigated the operation of knowledge, power and identity in systems of representation for an expanded field of enquiry that encompassed a greater variety of visual media and practices and a wider range of social groups. In the '80s and '90s the term 'visual culture' was adopted to embrace analysis of a wide array of images across a range of objects and surfaces in relation to the specific concerns and attitudes of a given culture. Thus, art historians have considered the visual culture of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic (Alpers 1984), early modern China (Clunas 1997) and the death ritual of post-Reformation England (Llewellyn 1991).

Alongside the ascendancy of the notion of 'visual culture' as an umbrella term for the nature and operation of images within a given culture, a parallel development in the '80s and '90s pursued interest in the place of art in economic and social life (Goldthwaite 1993; Jardine 1996). An interest in the business of art has focused attention on the dynamic between production and consumption; the economics and experience of making, selling and buying (O'Malley 2005; O'Malley and Welch 2010). In such studies the term 'material culture' may address demand for luxury art products and conspicuous consumption linked to status (Clunas [1991] 2004) or the huge range of goods available in the Renaissance marketplace (Welch 2009).

A turn to critical theory and an expanded field of cultural production and consumption has been criticised, however, for overshadowing the more traditional skills and concerns of art history in assessing the nature, quality and effects of form, technique and style as well as the meaning of motifs and iconography (Jöekalda 2013). This detailed close looking – known as 'formal analysis' – is an important foundation to further interpretation and is usually taught as whole or part of introductory modules in undergraduate programmes.

Art history's insistence on the place and power of the visual foregrounds the aesthetic functions and impact of crafted things and heightens awareness of the sensory effects of form. With its active involvement in museum practice, it is acutely aware of the importance of the encounter between viewer(s) and artwork. This is apparent, for example, in the attention to how sculpture works in the round (in Llewellyn's chapter) and the intersections between the visual and aural (explored by Dennis and Fumerton et al). If the methods of art history prioritise the visual, most practitioners would accept that this interest is indissoluble from material form (medium), while analysis of the contexts of the work (spatial and historical), wherever possible, is grounded in historical method by researching and analysing supporting textual sources.

The discipline of **Archaeology** was transformed with the redevelopment of European town centres following the ending of the Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain, placing the material culture record at the heart of our understanding of the transition of European society from the late Middle Ages to the modern era through merchant capitalism, industrial revolution, colonialism, globalisation, religious conflict and the emergence of leisure as a definitive category. Objects that were once the focus of connoisseur interest are now mapped and graphed to explore trends in consumer taste, technological development, social competition and ideological or religious affiliation across the landscape and through time. The former heavy emphasis on object characterisation, typochronology or provenance has been superseded by a greater emphasis on archaeological and socio-topographical context and on consideration of the symbolic value of artefacts. The study of excavated material culture in its context has the capacity to amplify and calibrate the established documentary record of changing human experience. Domestic artefacts, such as ceramics, can be observed to operate both ‘vertically’ within the social hierarchy and also ‘horizontally’ through social, cultural and ideological networks. Whilst the comparative study of individual artefacts has much to offer the broader historical narrative, the archaeological survey of assemblages of material culture on the microscale of the household level or at the macroscale of the community level enables us to connect material culture more effectively with real people (Gaimster 1994; 2009a; 2009b; 2012a; 2014). In recent years a series of archaeological excavations have created a comparative resource for the study of elite household consumption on both land and sea during the early modern period in England, from royal palaces to courtier houses and naval ships (Rodwell and Bell 2004; Biddle 2005; Gardiner 2005; Drury and Simpson 2009). Artefacts and their distributions have become embedded as a core interest in the social archaeology of the medieval to early modern transition (Gaimster and Stamper 1997; Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003). In addition, the archaeological study of domestic material culture, in particular, is developing a stronger transdisciplinary agenda, intersecting with materials analysis and also with iconographic investigations of objects, their functionality and changing symbolic values (Hook and Gaimster 1995; Gaimster 2012b).

There are clearly many points of contact here where interesting conversations might start – general moves, for instance, towards an interest in the context for and use of things in the past few decades. But it’s also worth thinking through the way these different disciplines make connections between things – how they categorise them and where they naturally look for the context within which they might be understood. For instance, archaeologists’ traditional notions of the assemblage (a group of artefacts situated in a particular context), whose elements they contextualise in relation to typologies based on material forms, have interesting connections to art historians’ sense of style and innovation in which a particular motif or way of rendering it can be used to date individual artworks and organise them within the oeuvre of a particular artist or movement. In contrast, historians and literary scholars might be more likely to look across material and textual forms, considering interactions between image and text, continuity and change at a given moment and based around the actions of historical subjects. Those who study the construction of knowledge might take as their unit of analysis ‘the whole shifting and dynamic system seen as an interacting whole’ of objects, places and people (Sutton and Keene, this volume). We need to be explicit about the way we address questions of scale.

Paying close and detailed attention to things has often involved drawing on models borrowed from anthropology, such as a biography of an object which follows a thing from raw material, through production, trade, wear and tear and, perhaps, destruction or deposition (Appadurai 1986, esp. chapter by Kopytoff; Hoskins 1998). Whilst this approach can elicit valuable detailed information, Pennell has cautioned against analysis in which ‘the circumstances of material survival recede’, and ‘thick description’ enables the object to seem more meaningful, ‘relevant – ‘bigger’, if you will – than it actually is’, to our sense of the early modern period in a way that it was not at the time. Her concern is for the political consequences of the objects on which we choose to focus: the association of women with ‘domesticity and practical skills rather than arts’ has rendered domestic objects, for instance, ‘historically ‘small’ and incapable of carrying explanatory value’ (Pennell 2009).

This is partly a question of the kinds of things we analyse. The study of consumption ‘has depended on viewing material goods at two quantitative extremes: either as the numeric aggregation of probate inventory or trade data presence; or as the singular “case study” based on a surviving object’ (Pennell 2009, 176). Riello makes a distinction in his chapter between ‘unique objects’, often found in museum collections, possessing such material beauty, exceptional value or imaginative power that they epitomise a cultural encounter, and ‘traded commodities’ which, as part of the consuming habits of many Europeans, stand for patterns of exchange and are studied as types rather than individual things. Objects of great beauty and value are much easier to discuss, however; more straightforward to fit into narratives of economic and political significance. Our attitude towards them has its origins in the early modern period, when we began to think differently about those things kept apart as significant in a particular way, first in private cabinets of curiosities and then in the public institution of the museum, where their display shaped ways of looking at them and increased their status (Bleichmar and Mancall 2011, 2).

Attending to scale also means considering the way different gradations of relations between people and things appear in the narrative accounts we produce of the past. Let’s return to the map at the head of this introduction for a moment. But at the same time, could you think about Sir Thomas Puckering, who lived in The Priory, the converted buildings of the Priory of St Sepulchre which his father was able to purchase at the dissolution of the monasteries in Warwick, at the start of the seventeenth century. On 29 June 1620 he paid Thomas Shipton, a London grocer, £14 2d for ‘sugar, spice, fruit, sope, sturgeon, Westphalia bacon, anchovais, Bologna sausages, with the charges concerning them until they were loden upon the waggon to come down’ (Merry and Richardson 2012). Clearly this offers evidence of a kind for European material culture – Puckering is buying goods that originate in Westphalia and Bologna. But putting it against the map makes clear the range of scales on which attending to materiality allows us to focus, and we hope the preceding discussion has made clear how disciplinary perspectives might shape our predilections for certain points along that continuum from pan-European trade to the individual household. In the chapters that follow, you will read about topics conceived at every level; seeing them together makes us consider explicitly the context we offer, the perspective we adopt, the way we focus our subjects and draw boundaries between them in writing about a period in which the whole material world was increasingly seen to be intricately and inextricably connected.

For early modernists, these questions of scale, focus and perspective are particularly important because of the significance and complexity of the relationship between public and private activities in our period and the importance of changing notions of identity and subjectivity, issues which are prominent themes across this volume. In order to explore the various environments which shaped and were shaped by different qualities of behaviour, Section II opens with six chapters on particular spaces: the conceptual space of the map, the royal court, the church as a venue for public worship, civic buildings, domestic buildings and the street, before moving on to the body and identity.

Section II: Contexts and categories

Bernhard Klein's chapter on mapped space explores what he calls the 'scenes' of cartography. He links the areas depicted, the European countries in which map production was most prevalent (Italy, Germany and the Low Countries), and the location of the physical objects on board ships, in domestic studies, libraries and state rooms. He outlines an escalation in 'map consciousness', defined as 'the ability to conceive of one's own place in the world in relation to the spaces surrounding it', and he describes the relationships maps invited between individuals and the world they represented – not the 'immediacy of direct physical experience' but rather their more abstract sense of their own local and global position.

Glenn Richardson reveals the royal court as an environment deeply engaged with the formation of a 'political community' whose access to the monarch was choreographed spatially in relation to different zones whose status was defined by royal proximity and reflected in their decoration and furnishing. These spaces facilitated a range of peculiarly early modern intimacies, binding supporters together 'into closer bonds of personal loyalty' to overawe challengers in the wake of European conflicts; as courtiers created an 'affinity' of friends, family and clients fostered and maintained through gift exchange; or as Francis I's creation of the office of *gentilhomme de la chambre du roi*, a courtier who attended the king as a daily companion in his private apartments, spread throughout Europe as a model of 'soft power' linking informality and the institutions of sovereignty.

Andrew Spicer distinguishes between the Catholic space of the church, 'sanctified and set apart from the secular world', and a Protestant building offering convenient accommodation for congregations for religious services and especially preaching. Whether containing divine power or the worshipping public, the 'seemliness' of church space is explored in three different categories of material culture crucial to the respect for appropriate modes of behaviour negotiated through materiality: items relating to the sacraments; to preaching; and to displays of civic or familial pride. He pays careful attention to spatial divisions – the Catholic altar physically separated from the rest of the church behind a balustrade in the choir – but also different denominations' attitudes towards the permanence of features, such as trestle tables erected when required for the Lord's Supper in the infrequent rites of the Dutch Republic and Scotland.

Civic buildings also expressed power relations through spatial division. Kate Giles analyses their role in excluding the 'wrong sort of public' from 'the growing specificity of governing functions'. She explores developing contemporary debate about the appropriate use of such

buildings, and scholarly discussion about how to define them as a category. Like all the spaces mentioned in these opening chapters they had medieval predecessors, ‘in the halls, hospitals, chapels and market buildings of medieval moots, guilds and corporations’, but their early modern shape reflected cultural, social, economic and political shifts. She explores their function as locations for debate and discourse amongst a town’s governing elite, identifying the significance of ‘the relationship between people, buildings and things in the construction of the bourgeois ‘public sphere’’. Her focus on the way public and domestic spaces are mutually constituted forms an obvious point of contact with Chris King’s chapter on domestic buildings.

King argues that understanding consumption must involve contextualising objects; that the built environment has often been treated as a ‘passive backdrop or container’ for new goods, rather than a socially, economically and politically active participant in a material culture ‘conceived as a totality’. He puts equal emphasis on the house as a site of production as well as consumption, showing it as the space where these two aspects were most equally balanced. The private offered here is a contested one, ‘always subject to close observation and moral regulation by the wider community’, but it is nevertheless taking on an identity as a ‘distinct cultural field’. Like Spicer and Giles, he too sees increasing division and specialisation of space in parlours and chambers, kitchens and service areas, which he argues advertised social status through division.

The final chapter on the spaces of early modern Europe probes the protean nature of the street as the most flexible of all the contexts explored here, a space ‘*between*, a by-product of the built environment and service area to the privileged locations of culture’. Andrew Gordon contrasts Lefebvre’s analysis of the production of space, which ‘stresses the collaborative aspects of inhabitation and . . . representation’, against de Certeau’s emphasis on ‘the practices that counter, resist or appropriate the ordering of the urban environment’. His chapter questions the meanings of inhabiting space through the introduction of the coach – ‘A portable place of privacy to which one could ‘retire’ . . . in the midst of the public space of the street’ – which offered spatial agency to aristocratic women in particular. But he also explores urban representations of people, in the form of the street sign: ‘one of the richest forms of self-conscious representational activity and interpretive play’ and a ‘marker of the reciprocity of cultural transactions between residents and spatial practitioners’.

As this final point makes clear, these issues of public and private actions and arenas also bear upon a further key question in early modern studies where material culture has an important contribution to make: changing attitudes to identity and individuality. Early modern studies has had a particular interest in the construction of identity, one which has grown in focus since Stephen Greenblatt’s influential *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* was published in 1980. In it, he stated that ‘there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities’, one that constitutes ‘an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process’. The term ‘fashioning’ moves in interesting ways between the fabrication of materials and the drawing together of selves: although long in use ‘as a term for the action or process of making . . . for a distinct style or pattern’, only in the sixteenth century does fashion ‘come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of a self’ (Greenblatt 1980, 1–2). Distributed cognition, for instance, finds fruitful ground in the study of a period which has always been very sensitive to the contingency of ideas of people and things.

Five chapters in Section II address aspects of the attention paid to the self. Sullivan and Wear outline changing attitudes towards the body, initially seen as ‘infused with an ‘anima’ or soul not found in inorganic objects’ but also made up of elements ‘related to those found in the wider natural world’. These connections suggest that early modern people experienced the world’s materiality ‘from the inside out’, in terms of an ‘essential materiality shared across the body, mind and natural world’, a view which gives the body considerable status in negotiating between inside and outside and in shaping ways of knowing: as they put it, ‘epistemology (i.e. ways of knowing) shaped ontology (i.e. the nature of existence), and ontology in return shaped epistemology’. Maintained through attention to ‘environment, diet, sleep, exercise, bodily evacuation and the emotions’, paying close attention to one’s body was an essential, and essentially material, aspect of ‘knowing oneself’.

Howard Mytum’s chapter on mortuary culture, a key category in archaeology of this period, picks up on both attitudes towards the body and the religious changes on which Andrew Spicer focuses. In the rise of the use of coffins and of labels giving personal details, he sees ‘the increasing power of individualism’, now possible even in multiple graves. Mytum’s sensitivity to the scale of these commemorative practices furthers our understanding of levels of visibility enabled by material culture – funerals held at night attracted less attention; body disposal was ‘marginalised and seen as private, linked to family and friends, and not of wider social significance’ – and he traces the strategies for coping with emotions that material culture enabled at the levels of both individual and society.

Maria Hayward situates clothing, the most personal set of consumption choices, within European sumptuary legislation which determined what one was entitled to wear. She sees dress as the ultimate expression of identity, offering a representation of ideals of gender, marital status, age, social and professional status, morality and nationality which negotiated both personal and group identity. Across the early modern period, clothes which signalled ‘undress and informality’ became increasingly important, coming to define particular rooms, such as the bedroom, dressing room and closet for more relaxed interaction. Dress formed the surface at which the body and the spaces in which it moved met one another.

In her chapter on food, Sara Pennell argues that the history of this crucial subject has largely ignored production artefacts in favour of objects of consumption – fine tablewares as opposed to the food that people actually ate. She draws attention to analysis techniques within osteoarchaeology and palaeopathology which use the skeleton to ‘chart the effects of diet on individuals and across communities’ but points out that we still know very little about food preparation within the home, partly because of an inherent bias against ‘mundane’ things which has ‘rendered them mostly invisible’ to collectors and museum exhibitions. Getting to the heart of the difficulty of studying everyday life, she points out that routine production and consumption, ‘as opposed to the ritual or extraordinary’, is invisible because it was ‘deemed unremarkable’.

David Grummitt’s chapter on arms and armour shows the extent to which provisioning for the protection of individual bodies was connected to the development of many different kinds of identity, from the familial (through the display of the arms of the elite in their funerals), to the communal (dressing of urban soldiers uniformly and in livery), to the national in the provisioning of standing armies. Although England lagged behind France, Spain and the Low Countries in the provision of a standing army, across the period crown archives ‘demonstrate

increasing royal control over the manufacture, purchase and distribution of arms and armour' and a move from private noble to communal armouries. The connections to Hayward's chapter around fashion and appearance that designates status are striking.

The final category explored in Section II is the material culture of textuality. This reflects the crucial changes wrought on early modern society by the rapid dissemination of print and the increase in reading which fundamentally altered attitudes towards the relationship between public and private issues, information and knowledge, and individuals' developing sense of their identity through a reflexivity about their actions and their place in the world. Frances Maguire and Helen Smith explore the dual nature of textual material as sources for and a category of materiality. Picking up on the two major concerns of this section, they draw attention to recent attempts to situate reading within particular early modern spaces and 'consider how the spaces and tools of reading influence interpretation' and are in turn influenced by 'the presence – both physical and conceptual – of the book' (you too are turning these pages in one way or another); they emphasise the connections between text and identity through 'the diverse sites in which 'life-writing' could take place'.

Section III: Object studies

Section III contains 14 short studies of specific objects offered as exercises in close, object-based analysis. They are written by authors from different disciplines and career stages including newly qualified MA students (working from the perspective of the history of design), doctoral students, curators and senior academics. What these pieces share is a level of focused engagement with the material properties of a given object, moving from description to interpretation, providing various routes by which you might begin to work with specific items or categories of material culture at first hand. Such short, synoptic analyses of objects form a key part of museum interpretation and presentation, and the ability to describe (which may take many literary forms) has an important role in the process of turning artefacts into evidence (Jordanova 2012, section 1).

The studies in this section draw out the practical implications of the relationship between objects, spaces and categories of evidence and explore significant issues around ownership and use which extend the previous section's consideration of identity. Some of them investigate the kind of personal objects which had the capacity to move about with individuals, defining those individuals' itineraries and the scope of their journeys, such as Chung's majolica convent plate, Garratt's pocket atlas, Coscarelli's portable medicine cabinet or Cope's carved shoe-horn. Others have a domestic use, but gesture towards wider conceptual issues in their decoration, like Lee's drug jar with an African face, Jackson's decorative dining trencher featuring a Sybil, Hamling's carved cupboard with Biblical figures or Canavan's embroidered mirror with a man and a woman in a hyper-real landscape. All these objects feature figurative decoration, often taken from printed exemplars and in many cases suggestive of archetypes of behaviour – whilst in use, they invite comparison between themselves and their users. The scale of the visual impact of these things ranges from the detailed close-looking required by Sibthorpe's intricate finger-braids to Gordon's street sign or Mercer's tournament helmet, both gaining meaning in urban space. The public life of these latter two objects can be contrasted against the concealment apparently sought by the owners of Hewitt's shoes, deliberately hidden away

within a house in Stratford-upon-Avon, and Thwaite's witch-bottle, filled with pins and human detritus in order to achieve potency.

Section IV: Material culture in action

The final section of this book contains a rather different kind of chapter. Here, leading scholars discuss the work in which they are currently engaged, often in the form of a case study which picks up on one or more of the issues and themes developed in Section II. Like some of the object studies which precede them, they investigate things and practices which frequently move across the boundaries of the spaces outlined earlier, calling into question divisions between sacred and secular, domestic and public. A brief discussion of each will suggest both the diversity of approaches and some ways in which you as a reader might follow your interests through this part of the volume.

Richard Cust argues for a substantial rise in the material cultures of lineage (a range of objects which demonstrate how gentry families represented themselves in the long seventeenth century) displayed across several of the contexts explored earlier – houses, churches, schools, almshouses and civic buildings – and revealing 'heraldically-educated sensibilities'. Focusing on mortuary culture and the body, his study of funerals and monuments reveals complex relationships between form and elite remembering, and exploring one type of representation across different spaces allows him to argue against distinctions between sacred and secular display.

Also focussed on how the expression of identity was changing in this period, Robert Tittler analyses the way portraits were becoming available not only to the gentry but to the urban and rural, metropolitan and provincial middling sort, to express 'before a quasi-public audience and posterity itself, their personal histories, moral standing' and civic virtues. He charts the establishment of the stable physical form we now recognise, relocated to domestic or civic space, and a concomitant shift in the identity being portrayed from a focus on piety to a concentration on public service.

Amanda Bailey's chapter on masculinity and the dagger in *Macbeth* and Korda and Lowe's on clean linens both focus on the early modern stage, and props as things which 'complicated the linguistic construction of a given character, the moral argument of a play, and the audience's investment in theatrical spectacle'. Bailey explores the development of the early modern dagger as a weapon of physically intimate combat and uses it, in connection with the idea of affordances, as a way of unpicking the nature of manhood and the qualities of its 'anxiousness' within patriarchy.

In contrast, Korda and Lowe explore the connection between women's work, cleanliness, civility, bodily permeability and the stage. They focus on the dramatic shift in methods of cleanliness from immersing the body in water to laundering its linens, and changing norms of hygiene that influenced 'embodiment and dress, social interaction and space, and cultural institutions and forms'. Seeing linens as 'mediators' between the humoured body and its ecological environs', they argue for material culture not as series of discrete objects but as interrelationships between different kinds of stuff.

Both Suzanna Ivanič's and Irene Galandra Cooper and Mary Laven's chapters deal with portable religious objects. Ivanič begins with a *Kunstammer* cameo to investigate changing

ideas about the way the natural world reflects or embodies God's power. She investigates the character of consecrated items and the effect of the Tridentine approach to images on the nature of realism. Looking at local religious material cultures, she is able to address 'the myriad blurred lines between personal and official faith, public and private devotion and between devotional material, curiosity and art'.

The Italian rosaries which Galandra Cooper and Laven study allow them to address the relationship between the material and the spiritual, the secular and religious – shopping is not, they insist, solely a worldly pursuit. Analysing exotic materials and costume books, they show links between rosaries and fashion, but through the prayers the objects invited and related books containing the liturgy of the rosary they also uncover a complex web of 'mental, oral, textual, visual and material aspects' which come into play in the performance of the object.

David Karmon and Christy Anderson follow urban smell through many of the connections between bodies and spaces explored in Section II. They explore how religious rituals employed scent to distinguish sacred space and define a special environment, from the Ottoman mosque complex to the Reformed church. They also show smell shaping secular relations: marking urban from rural workers and distinguishing those whose occupations infused them with 'the smells of their trades'. Smells distinguished and divided bodies: the stinking dead and diseased or the perfumed clothing of the wealthy.

In contrast, Flora Dennis offers a detailed investigation of the sound of musical objects which 'echoed within spaces other than churches and courts and played an important role in everyday life alongside the objects of the early modern home'. In the domestic spaces of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, the volume of music's performances and the size of its audiences increased to shift it from the festive to the everyday, until it became part of the way individuals conceived of their identity.

Patricia Fumerton, Megan E. Palmer and William Palmer's chapter also focuses on the material traces of sound, this time in the relationship between woodcuts and text in broadside ballads which prompted and directed song, used in the alehouse and pasted up in the house, and therefore bridging the gap between public and private settings. Through the fate of a particular image of a 'welcoming woman', they consider in detail questions of reuse and the multi-temporality of the print shop, in which cuts could range from antique to brand new and aesthetic form could produce in their readers and singers sophisticated engagements with tradition capable of engendering political resonance.

Nigel Llewellyn's chapter also reads objects for expected audience response. His two main examples – an English funeral monument by a Danish sculptor and a set of coaches designed and carved in Rome for the entry of the Portuguese ambassador – allow him to explore the impact of a static object in sacred space and a dynamic one in urban streetspace. Thinking through the implications of these connections and distinctions between the power of objects that cannot be fully read without audience movement, Llewellyn offers 'the moving counter-ing the still' as a narrative history of sculpture as a category of material culture.

Exploring the connection between women's lives and household space during widowhood, Lena Orlin argues that the parlours men often left to their wives to live in after their death created 'households *within* households' which allow us to analyse contemporary processes of negotiation around everyday life focussed on access. But she also ties this material circumstance to the wider history of the development of privacy, whose 'wide-scale rights . . . began

with the widow's parlour', separating this 'practical privacy' out from more familiar spaces of privileged intellectual production and identifying it as 'one feeder of the cultural construct that confined women to the private sphere'.

Inneke Baatsen, Bruno Blondé and Carolien De Staelen's chapter also focuses on domestic organisation, exploring the evidence for a consumer revolution in Antwerp, a production centre for luxury goods and hence arbiter of fashion that mediated Italian cultural influences in the north. In the shift from goods whose raw materials had intrinsic value to those whose design alone gave them their significance, they detect makers changing their practices to appeal to a bourgeois market. Locating changes in the possession of tablewares in different rooms within the house, they conclude that 'the northern 'material Renaissance' was bourgeois, not genteel', its manners defined in an urban context.

The contents of a brick-lined London cellar are analysed by Angela McShane and Nigel Jeffries, a historian and archaeologist working together to examine what its range of goods had to tell them about the function and meaning of the space: the relationship between European imports and local manufacture; smoking and drinking cultures and their connection to the construction of national identities (often articulated around the distinction between Catholic and Protestant countries); and the social range of behaviours suggested by the distinction between drinking vessels. Their methodological explicitness provides a fitting conclusion to this volume: they set the archaeological work of 'locating, categorising, describing, comparing and interpreting' the objects against their possible uses and their wider social, political and religious significance.

Using this book

In conclusion to this overview, then, how might you use this book? Firstly, in practical terms you will notice that the chapters in Sections I–III have simple author-date references and a bibliography while the chapters in Section IV use endnotes. This is to aid further reading around the broader overviews and object studies contained in the first half of the book, while the research chapters contained in Section IV are supported by more detailed, discursive endnotes. We hope these two systems of documentation will assist a range of uses for these chapters in teaching and research, accessed as individual essays as well as being part of this Companion.

In intellectual terms, we would encourage you to follow your own curiosity to map a journey that moves between the chapters on categories of material culture in Section II to the more specific examples in Section III via the object studies that sit between the two, working through their different scales, perspectives and levels of detail. The volume does not claim to offer you an exhaustive comparative European analysis of key themes in early modern material culture studies – work on different countries and in different disciplines is advancing at different rates, and any attempt to provide such coverage would result in a distorted picture. It does, however, allow you to take journeys through writing on central themes of gender, status and identity, of performance, political culture and the lifecycle. On these journeys you might glimpse hierarchies of race and ethnicity which defined Europe's place in the world, in the colour coding on maps of Africa which 'placed clothed, white north Africans at the top and naked, black sub-Saharan Africans at the bottom' (Klein); in the machetes for harvesting

the cane on the Caribbean sugar plantations (Pennell); in the use of blue in the portrait of an African figure on a Maiolica drug jar (Lee); in an atlas's portrait of the Silesians, wearing velvet and chains of gold, 'easily drunk being much given to 'Banquettinge' (Garratt); or in the decoration of the second coach in the convoy of Marques de Abrantes or de Fontes's Papal embassy, with its rear tableau showing the winged lion (the Portuguese royal house) crushing the Muslim crescent and shackled slaves representing Africa and Asia (Llewellyn). Such a journey offers suggestive perspectives on the role of trade and discovery in the construction of notions of otherness as an aesthetic experience of novelty, but also on the way research into certain marvellous objects can skew our understanding of race towards the exotic and away from the everyday.

You might see early modern women more clearly still, sitting at a separate table to men before the pulpit in Geneva to receive the Lord's Supper; negotiating for favours as part of an 'affinity' or faction in the royal courts of Europe; coming at the back of the funeral procession of their elite husbands or fathers as disbarred from the body of the cortège on the basis of their sex; using the talismanic healing qualities of coral in Renaissance Tuscany; beating linen with bats to clean it in London; inscribing tin-glazed earthenware with their names as nuns, having changed their identity when entering the convent; settling into their recently-assigned parlour in England after their husband's death; or storing, in 'two wood Chestes, a watering pott, a black bill, a great old bible, a Colander, a pewter pott' (Spicer; Richardson; Cust; Ivanič; Korda and Lowe; Chung; Orlin; Maguire and Smith). These vignettes of individuals placed in space and time help us to think comparatively about women's material experience of their gender on a daily basis and at moments of crisis. As a comparative journey, they offer important indications of the interplay between proscription and practice which are so crucial to understanding women's lives, and they begin to suggest the extent to which contemporary social interactions were shared or isolating – they ask us to question when and how women worked and thought as a group defined by gender and how often and in what circumstances they were divided by class and social practice.

Taking a different kind of route, you might want to follow early modern senses outwards from the body, in a period in which there was 'no clear differentiation between knowledge produced through individual perception and that generated by external measurement' and in which the 'knowledge provided by our senses constituted knowledge' (Sullivan and Wear). You could travel through Europe's urban spaces, asking 'When an inhabitant of the early modern city stepped into the street, what did they step on?' (Gordon); appreciating sight as a sense which structures space, and smell as a sense which orientates individuals and aligns space 'with associations and memories' (Karmon and Anderson); understanding the 'perception of movement through the sense of sight', which shows what some seventeenth-century philosophers saw as 'a state of equilibrium between the moving and the still' (Llewellyn). Inside buildings in particular, you will discover mistrust and suspicion, in religious manuals' instructions to employ the senses carefully, 'to meditate on God by using sight to 'regard creatures as things made by the hand of the omnipotent God' and smell 'to contemplate . . . the sweetness and fragrance smelled by the blessed souls in heaven' (Ivanič); or the care with which the improving spiritual effects of music had to be weighed against its dangerous sensual influences: 'the capacity of certain sounds to inspire lust and relinquish bodily control' (Dennis). But you will also find positive domestic scents such as the health-giving smell of herbs and spices contained

in a *Balsambüchse*, or portable medicine holder (Coscarelli), and the sight of moral exemplars like the Four Evangelists, David playing his harp and Samson and Delilah on an ornate Dutch *beeldenkast*, where women stored linen, ‘all incorporating tiny inscriptions, which suggests the need for close viewing’ (Hamling). Following the gestures which individuals performed in their daily lives, you might come upon the sensation of a tight shoe which needs a shoehorn to get it onto the foot; the dextrous gesture required to use a banqueting trencher, ‘a fingertip touch to grasp and lift the wafer-thin plate off of the table, flip it over and rotate it in the hands’; or to produce women’s fingerloop braiding of a Katherine Wheel as ‘a haptic engagement with their spiritual beliefs’ (Cope; Jackson; Sibthorpe). But these are just a few brief journeys you might take – led by your curiosity, you can choose to follow individuals through their connections with a range of objects, rooms, ideas or particular qualities of experience in specific countries or amongst certain types of people.

Material culture in early modern society: Key issues

Although we are not yet in a position to draw conclusions about early modern European material culture in general, reading across these chapters does suggest key issues which bear further consideration in the work which you might go on to produce when you’ve finished reading – they’re not ‘facts’ which hold true across Europe, but they are key dynamics in which material culture played a significant role. In the highly stratified societies to which these individuals belonged, for example, we can see the social structure laid bare in day-to-day interactions, such as disputes over church seating or dress, for instance. This type of practice could be set within the wider context of the Europe-wide phenomenon of the threat which new merchant and professional classes increasingly posed to the established elite and social commentators’ growing willingness to acknowledge the presence of new families in the ranks of that elite, their claims progressively based on wealth. Material culture in this period was fundamentally implicated in the negotiation of a **rapidly changing social structure**, and this volume offers particular insights into the role of middling groups in negotiations with their inferiors and superiors. Noticeable across the chapters is, for instance, the steady rise of a new group of professional men whose roles put them in interesting relationships with material culture and suggest changing connections between knowledge and skills, practice and theory. Some of these men inhabit roles developed from previous incarnations, such as the Heralds of the College of Arms who studied family history and heraldry with a new professionalism, or the elite cooks who presided over new technical and artistic innovations (Cust; Pennell). But some were entirely new roles – for instance professional undertakers offering expert knowledge of available options to the newly bereaved (Mytum), a greatly expanded group of administrators in new bureaucratic roles (Maguire and Smith), or the first official London City Pavier (Gordon).

In the context of such changes in the social hierarchy, these chapters invite assessment of the **relationship between consumption and status**. They offer a sweep from high to low – Elizabeth I wearing Mary I’s cloth of gold coronation robes to stress the legitimacy of female rule and Tudor continuity (Hayward); the elite starting to identify with ‘the contours of the land they owned’ through estate or county mapping (Klein); Turkish carpets which were neither ‘exclusive rarities . . . nor commodities within the reach of everyone’ but rather ‘exotic’ and ‘novel’ objects that people aspired to possess’ (Riello); the possibility of seeing

a broadside ballad pasted up in the alehouse or at home (Fumerton et al) – through which we can see the circulation of many kinds of goods and begin to question the narratives of the emulation of the elite by their social inferiors as, for instance, Antwerp’s bourgeoisie saw mass markets flourish in relation to their desires in the absence of a strong elite patronage network (Baatsen et al). These chapters open up debate about whether material culture can be separated into ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ and how materiality might have been engaged in broader social processes of division and appropriation – employed to mark different groups off from one another. We are beginning to theorise cultural ‘popularity’ in relation to early modern print now (e.g. Kesson and Smith 2013), but how do such ideas relate to other categories of early modern object? A general conclusion deriving from many of the chapters sees the rise of the urban merchant and artisan class and their consumer power as one of the single most defining characteristics of the period and its materiality.

And these chapters suggest we should broaden out our assessment of consumption from the purchase of objects to, for instance, the choice to insert a staircase as part of fitting a house out appropriately as a mayor’s residence (King). Separating out coach travel and city walking (Gordon), or the studies and writing closets associated with ‘spatial, temporal, and economic privilege’ from the ‘practical privacy’ available more widely (Orlin) allows us to define specifically early modern attitudes towards **socially stratified behaviour within space**. We can explore how far up and down the social scale knowledge of different concepts and practices might have travelled: for instance, ‘the theoretical and technical knowledge underpinning the understanding of the qualities, elements and humours’, through popular practices, oral traditions and textual materials; or cures for bewitchment ‘situated amongst elite, intellectual and scientific systems of knowledge, read by a range of people across wide social and spatial geographies’, in order to establish common ground in ways of ‘knowing and experiencing the world’ (Sullivan and Wear; Thwaite).

The work represented here allows us to understand **levels of investment** in materiality related to modes of making before industrialisation. Threaded through the chapters is comparative information on **processes of manufacture**, from ‘munition-quality’ pieces of mass-produced armour (Grummit; Mercer), to tomb workshops, an embroidered mirror frame or a Venetian harpsicord (Cust; Canavan; Dennis), which suggests a particular early modern way of using things invested in methods of making and sensitive to their ability to convey the techniques by which they were made. Making was a part of cultural exchange – the movement across Europe of craftspeople escaping religious persecution shaped the physical and aesthetic nature of the objects produced, providing, for instance, ‘a range of new styles and motifs ideally suited to showcasing the themes associated with lineage’ (Cust). Similarly, across Europe, we can see the development from import of foreign commodities and skills to endogenous (local) industry which imitates imported forms and raw materials (Baatsen et al). These changes suggest the extent to which, for some commodities and in some places, we can talk about a genuinely European material culture where choices were made in cognisance of the decisions and objects made in other countries – in courtly fashion perhaps, or in those major cities like Venice, Rome, London and Antwerp which acted as gateways by provisioning a fully articulated European market. Objects from different countries drew attention to difference, and discussion of imports was therefore important in the creation of both individual and national identities. While some domestic activities for people at the lower end of the social

scale in particular could be undertaken in an entirely locally provisioned way, even relatively commonplace actions like smoking, drinking and eating were on one level at least partly international (McShane and Jeffries).

Another key determining factor for early modern material culture was the intersecting paths of **changing commodity cultures and confessional identities**. You will read analyses of sacred objects, such as the altar whose sanctity spread out into its linens and the liturgical vessels that were used on them, provoking strong reactions and defining particular responses, either of official blessing and lay reverence or of violent attack during iconoclastic riots (Spicer); or the worshippers who connected lives and spaces by donating ex voto paintings in exchange for divine domestic intervention (Galandra Cooper and Laven). But the centrality of religious identity to all spheres of existence ensures that its ripples are felt right across the chapters: objects from gingerbread moulds in the shape of saints which allowed the faithful to celebrate feast days at home, to changes in body disposal and commemoration, to the iconography of diplomatic coaches that celebrated the Roman Catholic faith bear evidence of the shaping power of religious perspectives on material form (Pennell; Mytum; Llewellyn). Several chapters discuss tensions between the aesthetic qualities, value and spiritual role of objects which exceed practical use and, as these tensions suggest, there is a great deal to be learned here about popular belief too – through witch-bottles and concealed shoes, or about salt as a weapon against the devil, ‘both mundane and potentially marvellous’ (Thwaite; Hewitt; Pennell).

If we broaden this **relationship between the mundane and the divine** to consider points where the non-material meets the material, then a whole range of activities, such as the pursuit of alchemy and the pseudo-science of heraldic definition, ‘often endowed with semi-mystical overtones’, can be seen trying to negotiate the gap (Cust). There are thought-provoking echoes in the nature of theatre, where spectacle becomes ‘a locus of doubt, where the line between subjects and objects collapses through the interrogation and unhinging of the real’ (Bailey). Studying material culture questions the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical, the sacred and the secular, and asks where we should set the boundaries and how we should explore the mindsets that make connections across spaces, practices and faith.

The chapters that follow fire up ideas about the particular qualities and position of early modern materiality – what factors governed its power and influence? There are hints of a **distinctive temporality** in a period of religious, political and material change: goods that endure to be willed between the generations; the alterations and reworkings by new, often amateur and domestic craftspeople which kept clothing functional and fashionable at all levels of society; the re-purposing of a stoneware vessel as a witch-bottle; or the contrast between partitions added within houses as ‘lasting measures’ for sons when their father died, and the temporary arrangements made for widows (Cope; Hayward; Thwaite; Orlin). Personal labour could lead to localised ways of working, as regionally distinctive ‘cultural reactions to death’, for instance, were ‘negotiated through the washing, dressing, and display of the body’ in the home (Mytum).

Early modern labour added many different kinds of value. As material practices often occupied a middle ground between aesthetic embellishment and religious intent, preparations such as the consecration of an altar stone by a bishop, ‘who anointed the four corners and then the centre with holy oil and sealed holy relics in a cavity within it’, would fall into the category of adding spiritual value (Spicer). The re-valuing which comes with such industry

is part of a wider aspect of early modern materiality – the **significance of additional applied work**. It could be one element of the cost of a commodity, for instance hand-applied colour, ‘which brought up the price of maps or atlases by a third or more’ and might often be added at the request of the purchaser (Klein). It could also be the site of gendered displays of skill and dexterity on the part of amateur craftswomen, such as the maker of a mirror frame who embroidered the different textures of the grass ‘with diverse techniques and materials, including chenille, purl, and overtwisted silk’ (Canavan). Additional work dignified the item and therefore made it fitting as a medium for transferring respect and affection – a suitable gift, such as the daggers with etched blades, ‘handles and sheathes or scabbards . . . damasked and encrusted with precious gems’ (Bailey) – aesthetically pleasing ornaments that beautified the receiver too. These details were linked to the visibility of the object, as was the case for wall monuments within churches, whose ‘degree of elaboration’ gave them ‘commemorative prominence within the structure’ (Mytum). Such visibility might also be linked to legibility for the object’s audience, for instance in the many categories of things that feature ‘decorative but meaningful and often moving figure work – globes, scientific instruments, street furniture, ships’ figure heads’, figures which ‘accompany representation or add commentary or act as way-finding tools’ (Llewellyn; Gordon).

As some of these examples suggest, added details were also the means by which objects were keyed into the **aesthetic trends of fashion**, such as the ‘intensified use of Islamic ornament in Venice’, which defined the fashionableness of harpsichords by connecting them to other up-to-the-minute items and indicates close collaboration between different kinds of craftsmen (Dennis). But in some places and times there was a marked development of distrust of excessive ornamented fashion, often in a Protestant context. Excessively ‘curious’ or ‘fantastical’ linen accessories, for instance, ‘came to be a sign not of deep ‘cleanliness’ but of superficial, extravagant affectation, if not dissimulation’ (Korda and Lowe). Those embellishments point too to a rather different configuration of early modern connections between utility and aesthetic value which trouble our own disciplinary boundaries between art history’s traditional interest in artistic quality and a broadly conceived social history’s interest in use. In Antwerp, majolica seems to have crossed a dividing line from pot to art object: sought primarily for its design and its decorative value, its producers were enlisted as members of the guild of St. Luke, ‘the craft guild of artists’ (Baatsen et al). In some societies with a highly developed aesthetic sense at least, like Venice, how a thing looked was not a ‘superficial afterthought’, rather ‘an intrinsic part of its identity and an important facet of its function’ (Dennis). Aesthetic form is also linked to the drawing out of an audience’s emotion, funerary monuments in particular demonstrating changing attitudes towards grief, expressed as a Baroque engagement with highly charged emotion (Llewellyn).

Another key defining feature of early modern materiality explored below is its connections to a **developing print marketplace**. In almost every chapter, you can read about a written text which stands in an active relationship to a material practice. For instance the 1558 act for ‘having of horse, armour and weapon’ that established new obligations (Grummitt), or the *Instructionem fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae* published by Carlo Borromeo in 1577, a ‘compendium of earlier ecclesiastical ordinances’ which ‘served as a manual for those visiting churches in the archdiocese of Milan to implement the Tridentine decrees and ensure uniformity’ (Spicer). The latter took authority in its turn from the Bible, and from scriptural

precedent and classical authors such as Galen, texts of the past inspired the early modern writings that shaped materiality, translated and reprinted across Europe. There was an interesting mixture of translated texts from across Europe and a developing local market, the balance different on different subjects – fast to take off on domestic practice, slower on painting, for instance (Hamling; Tittler). These texts were explicitly produced to organise material practice. Partly as a response to the growing complexity of material culture and partly as a function of the increasingly professional approaches to recording it, there was a marked **increase in technical terminology** which covered ‘garments, fabrics, colours, trimmings, and accessories’ (Hayward); the ‘baffling names of the dishes served up by the royal cook’ (Pennell); or a ‘developing specialist (and frequently arcane) nomenclature of arms and armour’ (Grummitt). Language registered the significance of material engagements with objects and sensory responses, such as words to describe perfume and its effects: ‘ambered, civited, expired, fetored, halited, resented, smeeked . . . breathful, embathed, endulced, gracious, incensial, odourant, pulvil, redolent, suffite’ (Karmon and Anderson). New professional men increased the complexity of material operations, producing a detailed **culture of administration** in heraldic funerals, for instance (Cust). These lists of terms can cause practical problems for the historian of material culture who has to try to marry them up with contemporary images and extant examples. They testify to swiftness in the development of forms: as new or changing types like the portrait began to settle down into a more stable materiality, so the terminology associated with them solidified and became standardised (Tittler).

New print genres were also emerging which attempted to develop and document material cultures and practices. Some translated the material features of an event into visual or written form, prolonging its impact by replicating it in another medium. Examples include festival books which commemorated European dynastic alliances, with their ‘orchestration of food in feasts, allegorical displays and ‘happenings’ ’ (Pennell); the maps of areas the size of countries or continents which ‘were based on written information and the evidence of eyesight, not on innovative mathematics’, translating visual information into text and then into image (Klein); or the relationship between the uproar caused by the arrival of a rhinoceros (the first since antiquity) into Lisbon as a gift from Sultan Muzafar of Cambay to Emanuel I of Portugal, and the print of it produced sight-unseen from written sources by Albrecht Dürer in several thousand copies which amplified and substituted for the ‘real’ object, partially undoing its rarity (Riello). Many of these ‘translations’, such as urban descriptions which ‘emerged from habits of politic recording devised to inform diplomatic strategies and the arts of governance’ (Gordon), lent themselves to a self-consciously comparative European perspective. This concentration on the relationship between different **modes of representation** went beyond print – Tittler argues in his chapter on portraits that the ‘very close imbrication of writing and painting must be recognised as a distinctive and defining characteristic of the era’. Whatever their claims to verisimilitude, these representational forms were never direct and never disinterested, of course. As Riello argues with respect to Asian objects, ‘the power of imagination – for instance through paintings – served to amplify the[ir] cultural value and presence’. Representations could magnify the significance of and desire for material culture, as well as simply augmenting its audience.

These printed texts and images stand in an interesting relationship with material practice, sometimes coming before to shape it (like the didactic literature on cooking, music

or militia training), sometimes after to record it, and sometimes maintaining a seemingly more complex connection to it – the text of a play, for instance, which might have been performed both before and after it was printed. We might also see writing *on* things in this latter context, as developing literacy changed attitudes towards **memory and identity** – ‘textual and ornamental markings on items used for cooking’ such as a skillet marked ‘ye WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH’ (Pennell); writing on portraits which described the individuals depicted and their merits (Tittler); the handwritten text, ‘The Persian sybill letts us knowe, that Christ should come to us before, and riding on an asse in peace, shall cause all oracles to cease’, added to a banqueting trencher (Jackson); funeral monuments on which a verse about a mother’s grief ‘explains the kerchief that her effigy carries’ (Llewellyn); the names and dates on elaborately decorated shoehorns (Cope) or plates (Chung) or woven into decorative braid (Sibthorpe). This movement between doing and thinking explicitly about material actions is a feature of a period of developing print, literacy (broadly conceived) and material environment.

In the case studies that follow of material culture in action across Europe we can glimpse a range of early modern ‘curiosities’ for new goods, different environments and distinctive ways of living life. A larger group of individuals came to see their material interactions in a wider European context across this period – a mental map of the continent and its material exchanges was coming into focus for men and occasionally women further down the social scale than ever before.

Note

- 1 Written on the back of woodcuts held at the Huntington Library, as part of the assertion that they can be traced back to the seventeenth century: ‘The notes continually emphasize the ancient character of the cuts and also their pre-circulation through all of England . . . reiterated are phrases such as ‘very curious’’. See Chapter 23.

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GLOBAL THINGS

Europe's early modern material transformation¹

Giorgio Riello

Unique objects and global commodities

On the 29 January 2013 at Christie's auction house in New York a modest 9¼ x 11¾ inch print was auctioned. Estimated to be valued between US\$100,000 and \$150,000, it was sold for a staggering US\$866,500, the highest ever price for a German Renaissance print. This was no ordinary print but one of the famous rhinoceros prints produced by the artist Albrecht Dürer five centuries earlier, in 1515 (Figure 1.1).

The commotion caused in the New York art market on a cold January morning early in the twenty-first century was nothing compared to the uproar that the real rhinoceros caused when it arrived into the port of Lisbon in May 1515. This was the first animal of its kind to be seen in Europe since antiquity. People flocked to see the strange creature, a gift from Sultan Muzafar of Cambay to King Emanuel I of Portugal (1469–1521). To verify the reports of ancient Greek and Roman writers that rhinoceros would overcome larger animals, a duel with an elephant was hastily organised; the elephant fled upon seeing the mighty rhino.

The presence of a rhinoceros in Lisbon in the early sixteenth century should not surprise. European traders, travellers and adventurers had been exploring the Atlantic and the coast of Africa for nearly a century. The breakthrough came in the 1490s when first Columbus and Da Gama just six years later reached the Americas and India respectively. These voyages inaugurated what was once defined as the 'European age of exploration' or 'age of European expansion', a new era for the continent, leading to changing commercial, political and cultural relationships with the rest of the world. Such voyages opened up also a material relationship with other continents that brought to Europe a variety of new and strange things such as exotic animals, specimens and stones and new plants, woods and manufactured commodities. These came to change the material landscape of Europe and, historians now argue, also its political and economic trajectory (Berg 2004).

Yet Dürer's print opens for us a problem of perspective. The animal that it represented was very much a unique living artefact. Indeed, it remained alive only for a short time: after the novelty was over, the Catholic king of Portugal thought it a suitable present for Pope Leo X and sent it to Rome. The animal was therefore gifted twice between rulers, a sign of the prestige that such exotic objects could hold in Renaissance elite culture. Alas, the unfortunate animal never arrived, as the ship that carried it sank in the Mediterranean. Yet its lasting fame was ensured through a print. Dürer was based in the German city of Nuremberg at the time and never saw the animal. However, he received a verbal report and a sketch from a printmaker who had been in Lisbon.

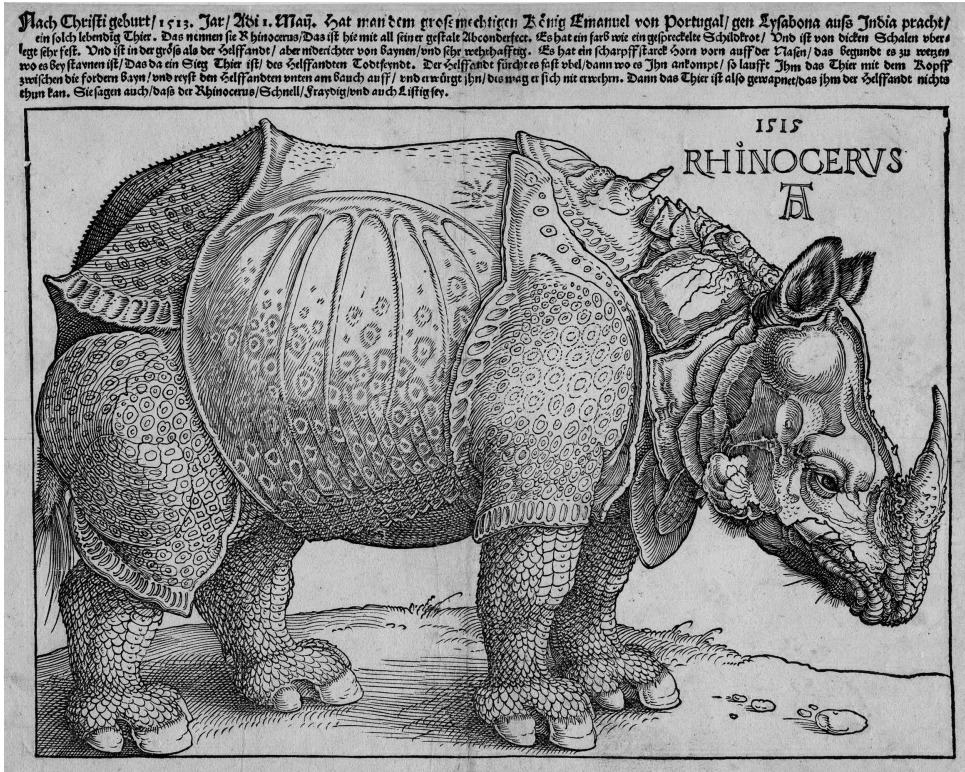


Figure 1.1 Broadside on a rhinoceros; with a woodcut of a rhinoceros standing in profile to the right, and five and a half lines letterpress above; from the second edition of the 1515 woodcut and letterpress by Albrecht Dürer. 21.0 cm x 29.7 cm. Prints & Drawings 1895,0122.715 © Trustees of the British Museum.

The result is a print that looks very unlike a real rhinoceros: ‘It has the colour of a speckled turtle. And it is almost entirely covered by a thick shell’ says the cartouche in Dürer’s print. The artist also added an extra horn. Through this print, the rhino was not just modified but also commodified. It is estimated that 4,000–5,000 prints were produced in Dürer’s lifetime, a true bestseller by sixteenth-century standards that made the artist rich.² If no one had a real rhinoceros in Europe (it took 60 years to get hold of another one), thousands could have one on their walls.³

The real animal and its two-dimensional representation are also indicative of a split in the scholarship concerning Europe’s early modern material transformation brought about by new geographical horizons. On the one hand, the last decade has seen a thriving series of studies on what can be called ‘unique objects’, artefacts whose material beauty, exceptional value, or imaginative power make them suitable to encompass an entire world of material change and exchange. The British Museum’s well-known series ‘A History of the World in 100 objects’ (that indeed included the rhino print) is a good example of telling a complex story through the lens and perspective of a hundred carefully-chosen objects that spark the imagination and capture complex narratives of trade, encounter, diplomacy etc. (MacGregor 2010). This methodology has been – and continues to be – deployed especially in museum displays and exhibitions where we are often presented with *extra*-ordinary rather than ordinary objects not