

Abstract: A Sense of the Holy. Sensing Materiality in Late Medieval Dominican Culture

The article discusses the importance of objects and materiality in late medieval religious culture, especially within the Dominican order. Many religious objects, which to modern eyes seem to be passive or dead or just objects, were in the medieval context considered not only to be almost alive – as things in many current discussions when they are seen to have their own agency – but also to be really living and acting. Relics, statues, paintings, and illuminated manuscripts were open to changes: statues could bleed and paintings come to life when touched. We argue that sensing material objects was essential for late medieval religiosity. Even though the theoretical and educated discussion about the subject was never settled, stories in which objects came to life became more and more common during the Late Middle Ages. The article shows that, in some cases, the objects themselves had qualities that directed the sensory experiences of people and attracted them to touch the objects. However, the need to sense the holy was, in other cases, so immediate that the material relic that did not exist was made tactile through other means such as liturgy, which combined sensuous words and music.

Keywords: materiality, object, Late Middle Ages, Dominicans, religious culture, senses, sensory experience

Johanna Ilmakunnas

Abstract: Work table. An everyday feminine luxury object in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe

For historians, objects and images can be equally significant sources as textual documents, which are perhaps more familiar to the majority of scholars within the humanities. However, digitization has opened novel possibilities for exploring material and visual sources through digitized museum collections and online auction catalogues. In this research article, the work table (sometimes also sewing table) is explored as a feminine luxury object. The work table serves as an example of how, through one object, historians could approach questions about women's work, the production and consumption of luxury goods and the space and place furniture occupied in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European societies and homes. Moreover, the article discusses methodological issues in working with digitized material and visual sources and proposes solutions historians could use in exploring digitized museum collections.

Keywords: furniture, material culture, gender history, digital history, Europe, 18th and 19th century

Abstract: Poverty in the museum collection. Collecting museum items from the Povolzhye Famine in Soviet Russia

One of Russia's many minorities are the Mari, who live in the Middle Volga region, which was affected by the Povolzhye Famine in 1921–1922. In this article, I interpret and analyse a collection of folk clothing from Mari people acquired by the National Museum of Finland in 1924. The collector, Timofei Evseev, acquired 21 items of clothing that showed the poverty of the Mari after the famine and the process of modernization in everyday life, too. The traditional white dress decorated with rich embroidery was reserved only for feasts and rites, while colourful dresses began to be worn in everyday life. The background to this was the changing position of women: Mari women also began working in the kolkhozes and did not have the time to embroider. In this article, I focus on the historical objects and ask how different meanings of clothing can be identified.

Keywords: Mari people, clothing, Povolzhye Famine, 1920s, Timofei Evseev

Heini Hakosalo

Abstract: The TB bomb and the glass rod. Emotional objects in Finnish tuberculosis sanatoria from the 1920s to the 1950s

The paper makes use of two common objects from tuberculosis sanatoria in order to approach the history and patient experience of sanatoria from a fresh angle and to explore the notion of "emotional objects". The bulk of the source material consists of over 300 written accounts produced in and around 1970 by former sanatorium patients. The paper first discusses the study of emotional objects and the use of patient narratives as source material, then shortly describes the "emotional economy" and the material culture characteristic of Finnish tuberculosis sanatoria. It goes on to discuss the various emotions that patients associated with the thermometer and sputum containers in their reminiscences. It asks what sort of emotions patients (and nurses and doctors) invested in these objects, and how these emotions influenced the ways the objects were used, "misused" and remembered.

Keywords: emotional objects, tuberculosis sanatoria, patient narratives, thermometer, sputum container

Abstract: Tangles. A tool for studying material actors of the past

This article proposes the concept of *rykelmä* (“tangle”) as a possibly useful tool for historians wishing to study the material life of the past as well as the mutually constitutive agency of historical material actors. Tangles are groups of things, bodies, spaces and other material entities that have enabled certain recurring, culturally and socially significant and recognized, temporally limited situations or events. The concept draws from the theoretical perspectives of material culture studies, technology studies, practice theory and new materialism in order to provide a flexible theoretical tool especially suitable for historians. It allows researchers to broaden their view from the study of certain things to the recognition of rich connections between and interactivities of the material past, and also to take into account the interdependence of the material and the discursive.

Keywords: new materialism, material agency, practice theory, history of technology, historical methodology

Abstract: Messy Materiality. From Past Meanings and Anthropocentrism to the Temporality of Objects

Materiality is a phenomenon with a long research tradition. In the 2000s, however, archaeology has adopted a particular interest in materiality, which has led to calls for returning to objects. The present article describes these archaeological discussions on the character of material culture and articulates their implications for the study of objects. Two kinds of criticism of previous ways of studying material culture and objects are presented. The first point of criticism is directed against ‘meaning’, and the second against ‘anthropocentrism’. After presenting the criticism, I will sketch out how it plays out with archaeological source materials, i.e. objects. In order to conceptualize materiality on a new basis, I describe the particular non-linear temporality of objects with the concept of ‘messiness’. This refers to the human and nonhuman aspects of objects and their multi-temporal existence. Humans and meanings are no longer in the centre of scholarly work, but part of a broader material network, implying how archaeological finds from the past are actually memory objects. This has implications also on how historians approach the past.

Keywords: anthropology, archaeology, historiography, material culture, materiality, memory, objects