

de l'archéologie industrielle aux États-Unis, compte tenu des influences que cette discipline a eues au Canada, notamment au point de vue méthodologique. Il nous semble que la problématique soulevée dans les différents chapitres aurait sans doute bénéficié des articles de la revue *IA*, de la Society for Industrial Archaeology, des inventaires dressés par le Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) et des recherches conduites sur des sites comparables en Pennsylvanie, au New Jersey ou en Alabama.

En fin de compte, cette monographie industrielle sur les débuts de l'industrie sidérurgique au Canada aurait pu offrir une analyse plus poussée, plus articulée au contexte international. Elle pourrait autant servir de

phare à des recherches spécialisées portant, par exemple, sur l'histoire des fouilles en archéologie industrielle au Canada, ou encore sur l'apport du *green engineering* dans la conception architecturale et muséographique des lieux historiques canadiens.

La démarche retenue par l'auteur, le contenu encyclopédique, la qualité du texte et des illustrations, enfin l'accessibilité à un vaste bassin de lecteurs – incluant des chercheurs en sciences humaines et la population de la région de la Mauricie – constituent des ingrédients de choix pour apparenter l'ouvrage de Roch Samson à une histoire populaire des Forges du Saint-Maurice. En ce sens, la publication mérite d'être retenue comme exemple intéressant d'histoire appliquée.

## **Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison, *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field***

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Martin, Ann Smart and J. Ritchie Garrison, eds. *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*. Winterthur, Delaware and Knoxville, Tennessee: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum and University of Tennessee Press, 1997. 428 pp., illus. Cloth, \$39.95, ISBN 0-912724-35-8.

*American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field* is a collection of fourteen essays that comes out of the Winterthur Museum's 1993 conference by the same name. The goals of that conference were to assess the state of American material culture study, explore emerging questions and determine how the field had changed since 1975 when a previous conference examined similar issues. In their introductory essay to the volume, editors Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison argue that this conference and the publication reflect a maturation of the field. According to Martin and Garrison, material culture studies' coming of age is characterized by a move from detailed description of individual objects or groups of objects to a greater appreciation of the context in which the objects were made and used; less concern with the existence of deep structural patterns by which a people organized things into meaningful relationships and greater interest in the role of human agency in

particular historical circumstances; and a growing understanding of the past as a process of cultural change that advanced at irregular rates in different places and times (p. 20).

The collection begins with three papers that explore old themes through new approaches. Gary Kulik examines American distinctiveness through a case study of the American axe as an American innovation and response to American landscape. Bernard L. Herman, influenced by Lévi-Strauss's concept of "*bricoleur*" and the art of Joseph Cornell, analyses probate records to show how an African American widow manipulated elements of the material world to gain a measure of social and economic independence. And, Katherine C. Grier applies the concept of rhetoric to material culture in order to better understand American Victorians' changing relationships to animals.

The next two papers explore ways that people imbue objects with meaning. Dorothy K. Washburn draws on cognitive anthropology and anthropology of experience to decipher meanings children assigned to dolls from 1900 to 1980 and Pauline K. Eversmann, Rosemary T. Krill, Edwina Michael, Beth A. Twiss-Garrity, and Tracey Rae Beck expand the application of linguistic models to material culture by incorporating a whole language approach. Three papers explore elements of consumer culture.

Joseph J. Corn offers an analysis of early owners' manuals where he contends that manufacturers reconfigured people's relationships to material goods by fostering new ways of talking and thinking about objects and ultimately trying to control ways consumers used them. Ann Verplank looks at multiple meanings assigned to the creation, exchange and wearing of portrait miniatures in Philadelphia 1760–1820 and points to their connections to status and hierarchy as well as to family and group identity. And, Alison J. Clarke presents a case study of Tupperware that challenges the usual separation of male/production/public and female/consumption/private dichotomies.

Four papers address contact among different ethnic groups that stimulated the transfer and transformation of new forms of material culture. Linda R. Baumgarten explores complex symbolic messages of clothing worn by native Americans and Europeans in the 1700s; John E. Crowley traces the evolution of the piazza and connected ideas of comfort, sociability, the picturesque, and links between domestic and natural environments; James Gregory Cusick discusses material culture's interconnections to class and ethnic identity; and John P. McCarthy examines burial practices among members of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia, 1810–41 as performance of socio-cultural identity, community, ethnicity, and agency.

Finally, the last two papers consider ways in which scholars use objects. Ellen Paul Denker presents an overview of exhibitions that addresses the balancing of visitors' desire for entertainment and academics' increased participation in museums. And, the last paper in the collection by Cary Carson re-examines the nature and impact of material culture studies.

As one expects of a Winterthur publication, the essays are of a consistently high quality. They are thoroughly researched and well written. Overall, there's a good balance of micro and macro studies and I appreciated the initial and concluding papers that thoughtfully reflect on trends and directions in material culture studies. While the focus of the volume is squarely on elements and issues of American material culture, several of the articles draw on Canadian materials and theories, such as Kulik's discussion of the American axe and Cusick's analysis that relies on Heinz Pyszyck's research on eighteenth-century Orkney and French Canadian fur traders in western Canada as a model.

As always in a collection of this nature there are specific papers that stand out. I'm sure I'll return to Crowley's sweeping historical analysis of the piazza. And for me, the real gem in this compendium is Clarke's essay on Tupperware. Her research challenges earlier analyses that separate Tupperware's design and marketing or that see Tupperware as totally exploitative of women's social relations. I would rate her subtle gendered analysis as the best article in the book.

But, with the exception of the Clarke article that I've just raved about, I found most articles theoretically conservative. For example, several authors challenge the earlier reliance on socio-linguistic models in material culture analysis but don't offer substantial alternatives. So, while the papers cover key areas one would hope to see included in this kind of a volume — such as the construction of ethno-social identity, consumerism and critiques of museum exhibition — they raise familiar questions and issues too often without full appreciation of broader political issues.

In 1977 James Deetz talked about butchering as a new area of material culture studies and I'm sorry not to see more fulfillment of that promise of boundary-pushing here. Perhaps this relates to the fact that the book might more accurately be titled, *American Material History*. If the editors' claim is right that multidisciplinary perspectives are the field's source of energy (p. 1), part of the lack of excitement I find in this work might stem from the strong historical bias of nearly every essay. This heavy diachronic bias is understandable in a publication of a museum but I couldn't help but think that the overall collection falls short when compared to other recent publications like Daniel Miller's edited volume of essays, *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (University of Chicago Press, 1988) that is both more theoretically engaged and more adventuresome in its subjects, considering objects from English gardens to Coca Cola. As I read *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*, I found myself thinking about the type of research that graduate students in my department carried out this past semester: analyses of yard art, body piercing and menstrual products. Their work doesn't seem to fit easily into the "shape of the field" as it is defined by this volume and I leave the collection of essays hoping that *American Material Culture* is neither the total shape of the field as the subtitle suggests nor its maturation as the editors believe.