

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Artists' Things

Book Subtitle: Rediscovering Lost Property from Eighteenth-Century France

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Published by: Getty Publications, Getty Research Institute. (2024)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.8916143.5>

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Introduction

Artists are makers of things. Yet it is a measure of the disembodied manner in which we generally think about artists that we rarely consider the everyday things artists themselves owned. And not for lack of evidence. Though most eighteenth-century artists' Lives are reticent about their subjects' belongings and refer only briefly to, for example, a lute, or a dressing gown, or a wine glass, wittily to figure some aspect of personality or character,¹ the painters, sculptors, and printmakers of early modern Europe were in fact generally sufficiently rich in stuff to warrant, on death, the drawing up of estate inventories that run, in some cases, to tens of pages listing hundreds of items.² Since the 1980s, such notarized lists—which survive in great number for the early modern period—have been the focus of studies of consumption by economic and social historians,³ but they have mostly not commanded the same level of critical attention from art historians.⁴ Although no longer regarded as transparently factual because bound by legal convention and by local practices of expertise, inventories nevertheless afford a detailed picture of things—their material, size, condition, value, location—the critical reading of which has the potential to yield a richer understanding of artists' relations to their work and their world.⁵ This book thus begins in paradox. We know things about artists the knowing of which is often discounted in advance as irrelevant by normative art-historical discourses on the artist, then and now.⁶ Does it matter, in other words, that the portraitist Maurice-Quentin de La Tour had a passion for telescopes, that history painter Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre kept chickens, and that sculptor Clodion owned a clyster for administering enemas?⁷

Our aim in this book has not been to write a definitive history of the material culture of painters, sculptors, and printmakers in eighteenth-century France, but, less ambitiously, to open up a line of investigation into things overlooked by, which is to say effectively lost to, the discipline of art history, and to see where it leads. Though we have been inspired by a range of interdisciplinary work, none provided a genre with which our project seemed entirely to fit. It is not, for example, in the tradition of studies of the artist-as-collector, because we do not confine our investigations to the art object.⁸ Neither does it follow in the footsteps of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of taste, because things are not for us exclusively, or even always primarily, indexes of social stratification—that is, of class.⁹ Nor does it sit neatly alongside studies of commodity chains, which attend to the “career” of specific objects as they move in and out of exchange, because not all our things behaved like commodities.¹⁰ And while we share Daniel Miller's concern with the affect of things, our own microhistorical studies of the relationships between owner and possession are driven by a more art-historical attention to the materiality of the thing itself.¹¹

For lack of an obvious model for our hybrid inquiry, we turn to Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham's *The Art of the Project* (2005).¹² The "art" of the title of this collection of essays is both denotative and sly. It indexes contemporary art practice, or project art, as a distinct field of study, and it alludes to the skills of experimentation and exploration on which projects in the conventional sense generally depend. Gratton and Sheringham identify the following characteristics of projects. First, the procedures that enact projects are at least as important as, if not ultimately more significant than, the findings they generate. Second, projecting often involves a conscious act of re-siting, that is to say, projects relocate the field of operation outside and beyond habitual places of research and study. Third, projects unfold within and are shaped by self-imposed and self-consciously acknowledged constraints. And lastly, lacking respect for disciplinary boundaries, projects are often the work of "amateurs"—investigators moving and operating beyond their professional expertise.

To begin with the last feature, we are both art historians. By vocation and training we are specialists in the history and critical analysis of the visual arts of eighteenth-century France. This project has turned us into would-be ethnographers—participant observers, so to speak, of eighteenth-century artists and their stuff. We have collected, compared, listed, and classified things as we found them. It has led us beyond the sensory dimension privileged by our discipline. The scope of artists' things encompasses the whole sensorium—taste, hearing, touch, smell, as well as sight—and has encouraged us to work across the subdivisions of history and material culture studies that enclose books, fashion, food, musical instruments, natural history objects, tools, vehicles, etc. into their particular scholarly specialisms.¹³ Our lack of expertise in these fields has been turned to critical advantage, we hope, and has produced the kind of "inter-in-disciplinarity"—the stepping forward unprejudiced into the unknown—advocated so compellingly by Gratton and Sheringham.

In terms of procedure, our project consisted initially of no more than the simple injunction to search and find things of undisputed artist provenance. Whatever surfaced from museum and library displays, stores, stacks, and databases, or came to light in response to the questionnaire we sent to museum professionals, would be included in the corpus.¹⁴ In short, we put aside the conventions of the artist monograph and its often grand narratives of artistic self-realization in order to gather *sans* prejudice, and without preconception of value, what things had survived: curious or mundane, useful or symbolic, affective or trivial, learned or dumb. None was ruled out in advance so long as it had once belonged to an artist active in eighteenth-century France. One might, following Ursula Le Guin, call the result a "carrier bag" history of art and artists, one held together, that is, by unanticipated, contingent, yet often powerful threads, which variously connected things, and artists through things.¹⁵

With stuff surfacing—the remnant of a **hot-air balloon**, a couple of annotated **books**, the Académie's **document box**, a **gaming set** in a fancy lacquer case, a sculptor's **modeling**

stand, a **sketchbook**, an antique-style **table**, etc.—we moved to the second phase of the project: imposing constraints and order on the rising number of discoveries. An obvious limit could have been number: twenty-five, fifty, or even one hundred. But round numbers imply unity, an internally coherent collection. In Neil MacGregor's *History of the World in 100 Objects* (2010) that logic was supplied by time: cultural millennia reduced and condensed to one hundred significant moments embodied in specific objects.¹⁶ We, however, were less concerned to reduce history to a collection than to open up our research practice of collecting to history. Our things were self-selecting by virtue of survival alone; they were not picked to exemplify “the advent of bureaucracy” at the Académie in the early 1700s (**document box**), or “the birth of bourgeois leisure” in the 1770s (**gaming set**), or “the triumph of science” in the 1780s (**hot-air balloon**). We therefore opted for the arbitrary and value-neutral order of the alphabet. A dictionary, we thought, would accommodate the potentially random nature of the items yielded by our fieldwork, and we embraced its textual form as peculiarly apt for a project set in the great age of dictionaries and encyclopedias.¹⁷ Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert gave their *Encyclopédie* dictionary-form in order, among other reasons, to attract the general reader; dictionaries meet their readers halfway, providing a locus where their curiosity, their need to know, can come into first focus.¹⁸ Understanding in the *Encyclopédie* is supplied later, on second encounter, by analysis within each autonomous entry, which likewise aimed for openness, eased by the simple layout of the text in columns, uninterrupted by commentary and unencumbered by excessive scholarly apparatus.¹⁹ We intend similar advantages for our project, though without Diderot and d'Alembert's additional ambition for synthesis. There is no “tree of knowledge” to which the individual artist items can be referred for classification and further context.²⁰ Our things are gathered but not collectively explained. As such, dispute, competition, conquest, struggle, the conflict implicit in history conceived as “progress” (toward enlightenment, empire, and modernity) is absent from the modest narrative of this whole, though matters of desire and discord, of difference (in class, gender, and ethnicity) do arise in relation to specific things and therein lie the histories of things larger.²¹

The choice of alphabetical order, once made, suggested limits of its own: one thing for each letter, we thought initially, for twenty-six in all. However, that constraint soon began to chafe, not least because the things emerging were not, we realized, evenly distributed across the alphabet. Some letters were oversubscribed: How could we decide between a **camera obscura**, a **carriage**, and a **color box** to figure C? Others proved unexpectedly elusive: How to find any relevant thing beginning with N?²² Moreover, it had become clear that records of ownership (visual and textual) were far more numerous and just as fascinating as actual things. Why exclude François Lemoyne's **sword**, the instrument of his death, depicted so vividly in the city's police reports, simply because the object itself survived only in words? We changed our rules. We opted to include those items of secure artist provenance for which we had good documentary and/or visual evidence.²³ And to improve our chances of filling A to Z, we increased the total number to fifty. In the end, that total was exceeded, and the alphabet not quite completed (no X, Y, or Z). The book's

final form is thus unfinished. The numerical oddity of fifty-something things—neither a round number, nor exact, but random—recalls the project's original purpose of open, continuing process.

To touch briefly on site, the feature of the art of projecting that remains still to be discussed, our project's dedication to surviving artists' things compelled us to re-orient our activities, where it did not oblige us fully to re-site them. We were forced to expand the scope of our object research, to look, that is, beyond the habitual *art* gallery to museums of all kinds, to auction houses, libraries, archives, repositories, etc., and to inquire about things as disparate as weapons and military regalia, umbrellas and copper cisterns. The priority of provenance led us to ask curators questions that none, it sometimes seemed, had thought it relevant to ask before: whether, for example, that watch (in a museum of science and technology), or that pair of glasses (in a museum of optical instruments), or any of those devotional objects (in a museum housed in a former convent) had once belonged to an artist? Systems of museum classification and the relevant histories of technology, medicine, and religion narrated by the museum displays in these cases foreclosed our concerns.²⁴ In some instances we discovered our things repurposed for the needs of today: for example, we found Houdon's **modeling stand** functioning as a pedestal at the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, its original function as tool obscured by the imposing classical bust of Antoine Barnave placed upon it to tell a story not of studio practices in the capital during the 1780s and 1790s but of political culture.²⁵ In other cases, our things were not on display at all but in store. If the environment of the storeroom can often seem dead, without the least historical resonance, it has this advantage: stores are places where one is allowed to handle things. At the History of Science Museum at the University of Oxford we picked up drawing instruments, experienced how they fit into the hand, and were able to imagine the effect of the weight and balance of an eighteenth-century brass **porte-crayon** on the pressure and velocity of lines drawn by it. We became aware of the intimate sounds made by the folding and working of these pocket instruments, and we even caught the faint whiff of leather from the case in which they were kept. Likewise, at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire's subterranean storage facility in Geneva, we unpacked the nesting boxes of Jean-Étienne Liotard's Chinese **gaming set**, removed their lacquer lids, and rehearsed the gesture of a bet placed, gently tossing mother-of-pearl counters onto an unfurled silk cloth and hearing the quiet clatter as the pile grew. Such multisensory experiences enabled us to understand our things in action better.

In summary, the rules and practices of our experiment with the scholarly monograph has involved a denaturalization of the mimetic design of the "life," individual or collective. It has diverted attention from understanding the exceptional individual via the narrative of biographical events and the history of works, to carrying out repeated investigations into possessions and things. Repetition of procedure according to the alphabetical protocol and chance's role in our discoveries have together led to a modest but creative remapping of art's history in eighteenth-century France. No one thing is here emblematic of the artist,

not even the **palette**. Instead, our gathering proposed multiple oblique views of the artist from the refracted perspectives of the everyday.

Turning our art-historical attention to artists' things has required definitions of both and a reckoning with the nature of the possessive relation between them. What is a thing? Who are these artists? And what do their relationships tell us about each? Most of the things in this book might also be described as objects (an **armchair**, a **teacup**, an **umbrella**), but others are less amenable to that classification (a **dog** is a sentient being, but still belongs to its owner; **red lake** is a substance, but also a recipe to which a claim of intellectual property might be made). This book also contains many things that *are* objects but tend not to get treated as such. **Books** and documents (**baptism certificates** or **wills**), for instance, are often detached in historical analysis from their thingness and examined for what they relate in words rather than for what they are (materially) and where they have circulated (spatially). Artworks too, especially in relation to artists, normally reside in the aesthetic and the discursive realms of objecthood, but are more rarely explored through dynamics of function and use, were they decorative (a **picture** to enliven a room), educational (a sculpted **écorché** to teach anatomy), or spiritual (a **votive** to save the soul). Connecting all these things is their status as both property and material culture. They are all things that were once owned by an artist, either legally as property or in a more subjective sense as a belonging. And they are all traces of the stuff that once filled people's homes and workplaces, the elements that composed the material environments of the eighteenth-century art world.²⁶

Artists have in some ways been easier to define, by borrowing the delineation established by the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture—France's definitive early modern art institution—whose membership was restricted to painters, sculptors, and engravers.²⁷ While the owners of our things thus shared a set of trades, their experiences as artists were inflected by differences in institutional affiliation, gender, nationality, wealth, religion, and generation, to name but some of the factors distinguishing this book's community of roughly fifty artists, whose collective life spans stretch from the mid-seventeenth into the mid-nineteenth century. The Académie's dominance, both in eighteenth-century Paris and in the subsequent narratives of French art history, persists in the existence of sources: surviving things and archival documents tend to privilege academicians. Wherever possible, however, this book attends to those who worked elsewhere, often as members of Paris's guild, the Académie's abiding rival.²⁸ Artists outside the Académie figure both as owners of things (Marie-Anne Collot, Alexis Grimou, Renée-Elisabeth Marlié, Jean-Étienne Liotard) and as agents in others' stories (as suppliers of **mannequins**, **pastels**, or **crayons**), emphasizing the often-overlooked connections between the city's art worlds. Diversity of experience surfaces similarly in the narratives of women, whose professional lives we have foregrounded in working objects (Marlié's **burin**, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's **palette**), alongside the less visible roles they played as wives or daughters (see **harpsichord**, **marriage contract**, or **umbrella**). Mobility and transcultural

exchange also emerge as crucial dynamics at a historical moment when technology and infrastructure, as well as interest and opportunity, increased movement and relocation. Most artists gathered here were French (some Parisian, like Jacques-Louis David, others provincial, like Joseph-Siffred Duplessis), but some were immigrants, either short-term (Liotard from Switzerland) or long-term (Johann Georg Wille from Germany). Many others traveled internationally as tourist, envoy, or emigrant (Jean-Baptiste Le Prince to Finland, Marie-Anne Collot to Russia, Charles-Joseph Natoire to Italy), as did many of their things, some made or acquired abroad (a Chinese **gaming set**, South Pacific **shells**), others designed to voyage (a traveling **color box**, a **hot-air balloon**). While we have thus emphasized circuits of movement and intersecting networks, most of the possessive relationships in this book reside with the individual. There are, however, a handful of exceptions that directly explore the dynamics of collective ownership, whether institutionally within the Académie (the secretary's **document box**, the concierge's **funeral book**), or privately, between family members (the **harpsichord**) or a group of artist-neighbors (the **lantern**).

Tension can arise between histories of things and of artists. The importance we attribute to the role of things in making individuals into persons has led us to emphasize the horizontal social networks connecting artists, their things, and the immediate court and urban societies in which they lived and worked. Things, however, also invite a vertical reading, because the material flows they instantiate are often extensive in both time (production, distribution, consumption, destruction) and space (local, regional, national, global).²⁹ In prioritizing artists' consumption and use of things over vertical commodity chains, we sometimes risk becoming victims to the same commodity fetishism (meaning, oblivious to the interests and rights of producers of goods) that Madeleine Dobie describes as characterizing eighteenth-century commercial and colonial discourse.³⁰ We risk, to put it another way, not seeing the sugar for the **sugar spoon**, the snuff for the **snuffbox**, or the tea for the **teacup**.³¹ If we have, in some instances, added an outsider perspective to mitigate that danger, our concern remains to understand artists' relations to their stuff from the inside. This is not to say that the provenance of things was without significance. That Jean-Marc Nattier's **teacup** was imported from Japan, that Jean-Baptiste Perronneau's **porte-crayon** was made in England, and that Natoire's **intaglio** was excavated in Rome contributed appreciably to the value and meaning they had for those to whom they belonged. But these things are not studied here in the context of Arita's porcelain industry and Dutch East Indian trade in the 1720s, or London science and precision instrument making in the 1760s, or, again, Rome's archaeology and antiquarianism in the 1760s to 1770s. Ours is, in that sense, not a multisited art history.

France is the spatial unit of our study, more particularly Paris. Art history's European eighteenth century has usually taken for granted Paris's position as center of the arts, birthplace of the Enlightenment, and capital of the consumer revolution. Though we do not conspicuously challenge this view, some of our artists' things do contest the assumption implicit in it, that the arts could only have developed as they did in Paris. For

example, Perronneau's peregrinations to Lyon, Orléans, and, notably for this book, to Bordeaux (where he lost his *porte-crayon*) suggest that for this portraitist France afforded alternative centers for the progress of his art, ones bustling with industry and international trade, the ports on the Atlantic coast especially. Moreover, the Paris that materializes from this alphabet of things is one closer, we think, to the urban experience of eighteenth-century artists than the reified category "Paris" sometimes becomes when serving as "context" or container for histories of eighteenth-century French art. The scale and heterogeneity of the city is made apparent: Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's *carriage* was necessary to him, a luxury to get him to the monthly meetings of the Académie at the Louvre from his house in Montmartre. In part for the lack of one, Charles Parrocel felt isolated and marginalized at the Gobelins, located on the other side of the river and at a similar distance from the center. Paris consisted, moreover, of multiple artistic centers: those of the print trade in and around the rue Saint-Jacques (*burin, journal, umbrella*), and of the Roule (*égorché, model*), where sculptors' studios and foundries took root from the late seventeenth century, as well as that of the Louvre and other privileged, princely enclaves, such as the Temple in the Marais, which, for instance, gave Nattier shelter for the better part of his career. Thus, while *books* and some luxury goods such as *robes de chambre* and *watches* uphold Paris's premier status in learning and fashionability, other things (*handkerchief, intaglio, nightingale, wine*) complicate this narrative and suggest that artists were sometimes equivocal in their attachment to the capital and its material culture.

As spatial entities spanning scales from body to globe, things must reside somewhere. Place therefore emerges vividly in this book, coproduced with things as its encompassing horizon. Some things, like *snuffboxes* and *watches*, scaled experience down to the intimate reaches of the pocket and the confidence of a drawer; others (*carriage, hot-air balloon, quill*) scaled it up, actually or in imagination, to sometimes dizzying distances through the city, around the kingdom, across the world, or up in the air. The "placial" setting of the bulk of our things was, however, the median zones of rooms, apartments, houses.³² Broached from the perspective of things, our research reinforces what historians of material culture have long known, that division of architectural space in the eighteenth century did not correspond neatly to the distinctions we are apt as scholars to draw between social functions: production and consumption, work and play, public and private.³³ Making and collecting, for example, were sometimes imbricated activities in François Boucher's studio (*shell*), and apparently private spaces—Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne's bedroom (*sword*), Jean-Siméon Chardin's kitchen (*water fountain*), a Louvre corridor (*lantern*)—were the setting for public, or at any rate extra-domestic, as well as intimate behaviors, for both short and extended social relations. Common to all these experiences with and through things was the body, its compartments and its gestures. The focus of our thing-history of eighteenth-century French art is therefore phenomenological rather than psychoanalytical, trained not on interiority but on corporeal gesture and activity.³⁴ How did artists engage with the places they inhabited? What relationships did they form with (and through) the material things in their possession?

The in-placeness of things and the exhibition they necessarily make of their spatiality through the obtrusiveness of their material forms positions this book as a contribution to the recent spatial turn of eighteenth-century studies.³⁵ Chronology is not abandoned, but as a structuring force it becomes secondary. To be sure, individual entries trace historical narratives about specific artist's things, some of them in consciously biographical terms (like **harpsichord**, **journal**, or **order book**). But, as already noted, the alphabetization of the corpus breaks up emergent grand narratives, even at the level of the individual, in spite of suggestive sequences such as **B**(aptism certificate)—**M**(arriage contract)—**W**(ill), where by chance the **marriage contract** pinpoints the midpoint of the book and the other two help contain its edges. The writings of Michel Foucault inaugurated study of the Enlightenment as the patterned configuration of emergent spaces—those notably of the asylum, the clinic, and the prison—in place of a chronological measuring of the temporal unfolding of the Enlightenment's liberalist ideas.³⁶ To these spaces of modernity, art historians have added the Salon (the Académie's biennial art exhibition at the Louvre) and also the museum.³⁷ The things in this book make a compelling case for another place—the studio—to join this schema.

As a place, the studio emerges as pervasive yet elusive. A reading of **votive with hot-air balloon** might look like a desacralization of the studio and a secularization of its practices in between the 1730s, when Pierre-Imbert Drevet engraved the first, and the 1780s, when Jean-François Janinet fabricated the second. Likewise, reading **bed with bath** could imply substitution of commodities for symbolic goods and, by extension, the transformation of rank and status by money, in between the lived experience of Charles-Antoine Coypel, who commissioned the first, and Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, who owned the second. However, this book's spatial orientation more forcefully reveals the instability of the studio in the eighteenth century, literally as physical space and figuratively as an artistic institution. Duplessis's problems with his **bath**, a thing essential to safeguard his sight (so he claimed) and therefore to the fulfillment of his vocation, arose partly from the forced removal of his studio from place to place. In that regard his studio can, arguably should, be read as of a piece with the discourse of an earlier generation of artist's lives—that of Coypel's (**bed**), in fact—in which the space of artistic creation was not only a dedicated *place* but knotted in a network of social relations with patrons, assistants, family, and students that constituted art production prior to the marketization of the art world.³⁸ Likewise, Janinet's repurposing of his innovative skills in printmaking to the lacquering of balloon envelopes, though absolutely unique, nevertheless speaks of the multifunctional practices of eighteenth-century studios, a multifunctionality more usually associated with the Renaissance workshop than the dedicated offices of the modern studio.

If there is a story to be told about the enclosure and specialization of the studio in the eighteenth century, it is seemingly not one that can be told as a straight linear progression. The pattern of its emergence was more complex and demands tracing across multiple sites: the home, the street, the city, as well as the Académie and the Salon. Crucial also was the power of the state. The Bâtiments du Roi, the royal division responsible for cultural

production (buildings, artworks, tapestries, porcelain, etc.) looms large throughout the book's narratives, often in the form of its directors-general and their multifaceted relationships with artists that encompassed official affairs (like the administrative rigmarole involved in securing a chivalric **decoration** for Joseph-Marie Vien) and more unexpectedly intimate interactions (like Duplessis's vulnerable exchanges with the director concerning the death of a pet **dog**). The Bâtiments was also in charge of assigning *logements* at the Louvre, studio-lodgings for artists and their families that became, over the course of the eighteenth century, increasingly central to the city's art world, geographically, socially, and symbolically.³⁹ Since the seventeenth century, successive royal administrations had strategically used the granting of *logements* to shape and discipline production to meet the material and ideological needs of the Crown.⁴⁰ For artists, in turn, the bestowal of this royal privilege became an object of professional ambition and an external marker of their success once attained, a dynamic evident in different ways in the stories of the **almanac** and the **order book**, among others. Perhaps most significant to the experience of the studio, however, was the inextricable entwining of individual and collective afforded by this palace neighborhood of artists living and working side by side. Traces of communal life were borne in the material environment of the *logements*, both in architectural transformations to the building (see **Bed**) and in the accumulation of objects that responded to its exigencies, whether demarcating shared space from private (**key**), negotiating community responsibilities (**lantern**), or managing neighborly jealousies (**bath**).

The prominence of the studio in this book—in all its centrality and permeability—was not necessarily intended at the outset. Our search for things was certainly concerned with the paraphernalia of making (**burin**/printmaking, **modeling stand**/sculpture, **palette**/painting), but it was also premised on expanding the art-historical consideration of artists' "working lives" to retrieve the myriad intersections therein with other realms of experience: leisure (**gaming set**, **wine**); domestic labor (**lantern**, **water fountain**); family relationships (**journal**, **marriage contract**); animal interactions (**dog**, **nightingale**); religious inclinations (**picture**, **relic**); sartorial pleasures (**robe de chambre**, **watch**); or even alternative professional aspirations (**armchair**, **quill**). But like people, things do not live their lives statically. Constantly on the move between already shifting spaces, these things have stories that rarely limit themselves to a single focus and sometimes careen in unexpected directions. The **watch**, for instance, leads to a parish church, while the **relic** ventures toward luxury boutiques. The **marriage contract** calls attention to the finances of the studio, while the **burin** directs us to the conjugal hearth. Despite the range of our selection, however, nearly every thing, by dint of ownership no doubt, situates us in some aspect of the art world, revealing something about its owner's artistic practices, professional networks, or acts of making (**glasses** that facilitated an artist's vision; **letters** that expose institutional hierarchies; or a **table** that was needed to make a painting).

In our consideration of the professional, the personal, and everything in between, this retrieval of lost property has been a conscious effort to push against art history's often uncomfortable relationship with the artist's life. While far from advocating a revival of

Vasarian *Lives*, this book does seek a re-engagement with the biographical, both as subject and mode of inquiry, to restore the agency of the artist as a historical actor and to reorient the social history of art toward an anthropology of experience.⁴¹ To answer “yes,” in other words, to the question posed at the beginning of this introduction, it *does* matter to art history that these artists owned these things. Tuning in to the meaningfulness of objects for their owners, our approach also recognizes agency in the thing itself, via the particular actions, behaviors, or relationships it affords for those around it. Written as a series of object biographies, this is a book about the lives of things, which (with a nod to the eighteenth-century literary genre of the it-narrative) can be called upon as intermediaries to relate the lives of their owners.⁴² These lives are by necessity partial—no artist can be represented by a single possession—in fact some owners appear more than once, each of their things granting access to a different dimension of experience. Crucially, however, our take on the biographical is also set against the monographical, that focus on individual artists that has persisted through art history’s critical interventions. Dispersing that spotlight on the individual to encompass instead networks and communities, our book’s multiple entries might indeed be described as together forming an object prosopography—a collective biography-by-thing of an eighteenth-century art world.

How, then, to read this book of things? First and foremost, it is not designed to be read from A to Z. The order of things here does not relate a sequential narrative but rather that arbitrary arrangement owed simply to the initial letter of the signified’s signifier (A for **almanac**). Of course, the reader is free to choose an alphabetical approach, mobilizing it for a random path through non sequiturs (from **gaming set** to **glasses**; from **handkerchief** to **harpsichord**) and unexpected connections (**porte-crayon** to **quill**, both implements of mark-making; **key** to **lantern**, two items granting access to the infra-ordinary materiality of the Louvre’s corridors; **snuffbox** to **sugar spoon**, two European commodities implicated in the circulation of colonial commodities). Choice, however, is the operative action. The reader of this book is envisaged as an active participant in a process of use in which reading becomes a project in its own right, with its own procedures, constraints, re-sittings, and interdisciplinary risks. In place of the habitual cover-to-cover journey, this book invites a trajectory traced at the reader’s desire, following paths of interest and curiosity, whether pre-existing (a penchant for **dogs**, an obsession with **wigs**, a scholarly concern with **wills**), or ones that emerge extemporaneously through the reading project.

To facilitate the reader’s wanderings, the book is equipped with a range of wayfinding mechanisms. First, it deploys a system of cross-references. Every thing with its own entry appears in bold (as throughout this introduction) whenever it makes an appearance somewhere else in the book, drawing attention to the connections between these objects and the connectedness of their owners’ lives within the eighteenth-century art world. Like the “renvois” of the *Encyclopédie*, these cross-references provide alternative paths of discovery, sometimes no less random than the alphabetized route, but sometimes providing a thematic train of thought (a musing on studio props perhaps, from **écorché**, to

mannequin, to dressing-up box). Next, in the book's contents, along with the alphabetical inventory of things there is also a "List of Owners," providing a differently inflected arrangement of this stuff, each thing restored as property to its erstwhile possessor. A reader interested in a specific artist might go directly to retrieve their belongings (Coypel, for instance, with his **bed and watch**; Van Loo via his **robe de chambre**; Giroust for her **pastels**). Finally, at the end of the book, there is a set of taxonomies that offer further re-orderings of these things to accommodate navigation by chronology (according to its owner's birthdate), type (the category of thing it was, from studio tool to family heirloom), theme (the discursive realms it encompasses), and material (the substances from which it was made). These taxonomies provide summative encapsulations of the book's historical scope (from the birth of Nicolas de Largillière in 1656 to the death of Vigée-Lebrun in 1842) and its thematic scope (from global commerce to religion, from death to travel). They also tabulate the material composition of the eighteenth-century art world (its animal, vegetable, and mineral forms) and the range of dynamics, agencies, relationships, and functions that its inanimate inhabitants were required to enact (whether tool, gift, souvenir, or weapon). While serving as navigational apparatus, these taxonomies are also offered as sets of analytical data (some empirical, some more subjective) that the reader is invited to interrogate, perhaps to disagree with our interpretations, and ideally to devise alternative classifications and re-orderings of these lost things of the Paris art world.

1. For some exceptions, see Antoine-Joseph Dézallier d'Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres* (Paris: De Bure, 1745–52) 2:370–71 ("Elizabeth Chéron"—musical instruments: refinement); 287 ("Joseph Vivien"—*robe de chambre*: fashionability); 243 ("Jean-Baptiste Blin de Fontenay"—wine glass; *bon viveur*).

2. For an introduction to the inventory in early modern Europe, see Giorgio Riello, "'Things Seen and Unseen': The Material Culture of Early Modern Inventories and Their Representation of Domestic Interiors," in *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500–1800*, ed. Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2013), 124–50.

3. Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris* (Oxford: Polity, 1992). A corpus of 2,306 Paris inventories formed the basis of her study of the eighteenth century. See also Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4. The notable exception is the history of collecting. See especially Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800* (Oxford: Polity, 1991); Colin B. Bailey, *Patriotic Taste: Collecting Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); and Rochelle Ziskin, *Sheltering Art: Collecting and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2012). The periodicals *Archives de l'art français* and *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* prioritize the publication of artists' inventories.

5. On the inventory as a "representation" of wealth, and on the "art" of appraising, see Donald Spaeth, "'Orderly Made': Re-

Appraising Household Inventories in Seventeenth-Century England," *Social History* 41, no. 4 (2016): 417–35.

6. For a classic critical analysis of eighteenth-century attitudes to wealth and the artist, see Mary Sheriff, "Love or Money? Rethinking Fragonard," *ECS* 19, no. 3 (1986): 333–54.

7. According to La Tour's will of 9–20 February 1784, he owned two telescopes by the London instrument maker Peter Dollond. See Neil Jeffares, "Chronological Table of Documents Relating to de La Tour," *Pastels and Pastellists*, 67, http://www.pastellists.com/Misc/LaTour_chronology.pdf. According to Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre's *inventaire après décès*, AN, MC/ET/XXXI/253, 25 May 1789, a hen hutch with fourteen hens and a cock were to be found in the courtyard of his house at the Louvre, rue Fromenteau. In Clodion's study, after his death, were inventoried a tin clyster and five water jars, along with a "bad" razor, razor blades, and the conventional furniture for such a room. See Jules-Joseph Guiffrey, "Inventaire après décès de Clodion (30 avril 1814)," *AAF* 6 (1912): 223.

8. Michael Yonan, in his review of the relations between art history and material culture studies, notes that the two come closest to one another in the field of collecting. See Yonan, "Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture Studies," *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Art* 18, no. 2 (2011): 236.

9. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

10. See Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

11. Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).
12. Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham, eds., *The Art of the Project: Projects and Experiments in Modern French Culture* (New York: Berghan, 2005).
13. On the multisensory study of material culture, see David Howes, "Scent, Sound, and Synaesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture Theory," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley et al. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2006), 161–72; specifically in relation to France, see Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam Kochan, Roy Porter, and Christopher Prendergast (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
14. We sent a questionnaire to national, municipal, and other related museums in France. It asked conservators to indicate whether they had in their collections objects of professional use (palette, easel, paintbrush, modeling stand, chisel, copperplate, burin, etc.) or domestic use (furniture, musical or scientific instruments, silver, jewelry, dress, etc.). We received few replies.
15. See Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, with an introduction by Donna Haraway (London: Ignota, 2019), 25–37. Our warm thanks to Harvey Shepherd for this reference. For an anthropological study of the narratives of and on the carrier bag, see Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell Stories of People's Lives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), chapter 2, "The Betel Bag: A Sack of Souls and Stories," 25–58.
16. Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, BBC Radio 4 broadcast in 2010; published as a book under the same title by Penguin Books, 2010.
17. See Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); special issue, "Dictionnaires en Europe" in *Dixhuitième siècle* 38, no. 1 (2006).
18. See Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, "Discours préliminaire," in *Encyclopédie*, <https://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/node/88>, 1:ix, xviii, in particular. See also Judith Flanders, *A Place for Everything: The Curious History of the Alphabetical Order* (London: Picador, 2020), on the alphabet as a navigator for readers.
19. The design of the *Encyclopédie* was in marked contrast to Pierre Bayle's multilayered dictionary, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 2 vols. (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697).
20. The "Système figuré des connoissances humaines" (Figurative system of human knowledge), the taxonomic tree is included in the *Encyclopédie*'s front matter.
21. Thus, following Le Guin, our book more nearly resembles the novel than the "killer stories" of much conventional history. See Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, 35.
22. We are very grateful to all our friends and colleagues who have generously proposed things for our attention. "N" is a particular case in point. Thank you, Melissa Hyde.
23. On working with documentary traces of lost things, see Glenn Adamson, "The Case of the Missing Footstool: Reading the Absent Object," in *History and Material Culture*, ed. Karen Harvey, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 192–207.
24. Curators frequently mentioned, however, that their response would have been different had we been inquiring about the nineteenth century, by which time things were invested with value as souvenirs of people as well as places. See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).
25. Antoine Barnave (1761–93) was a lawyer and a member of the parlement of Grenoble who promoted the cause of constitutional monarchy in the early years of the Revolution.
26. Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).
27. On the history of the Académie and its development, see Christian Michel, *The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture: The Birth of the French School*, trans. Chris Miller (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018); and Hannah Williams, *Académie Royale: A History in Portraits* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
28. On relations between the Académie and the guild, see Charlotte Guichard, "Arts libéraux et arts libres à Paris au XVIIIe siècle: Peintres et sculpteurs entre corporation et Académie Royale," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 49, no. 3 (2002–3): 54–68; and Katie Scott, "Hierarchy, Liberty, and Order: Languages of Art and Institutional Conflict in Paris (1766–1776)," *Oxford Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (1989): 59–70.
29. See, for example, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016).
30. Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010). Dobie does not, however, mobilize the Marxist concept of fetishism but rather the Freudian notion of displacement for her interpretation.
31. On not seeing the "fingerprints of exploitation" on the surfaces of things, see David Harvey, "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 3 (1990): 423. On the particular methodological challenges presented by substances as opposed to things, see Hans Peter Hahn and Jens Soentgen, "Acknowledging Substances: Looking at the Hidden Side of the Material World," *Philosophy and Technology* 24 (2011): 19–33.
32. The term is Edward Casey's. See Edward S. Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: A Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 13–52.
33. See Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy*; and the essays in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).
34. See Julian Thomas, "Phenomenology and Material Culture," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley et al. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2006), 43–59.
35. For a review of this reorientation see Daniel Brewer, "Lights in Space," *ECS* 37, no. 2 (2004): 171–86; as an example, see Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
36. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* ([1961] New York: Vintage, 1988); *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* ([1963] New York: Pantheon, 1973); and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ([1975] New York: Pantheon, 1977).

- 37.** See, for example, Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); and Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
- 38.** At greater length, see Katie Scott, "Parade's End: On Charles-Antoine's bed and the origins of inwardness," in *Interiors and Interiority*, ed. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Beate Söntgen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016) 17–48.
- 39.** On the shifting geography of artistic communities, see Hannah Williams, "Artists and the City: Mapping the Art Worlds of Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Urban History* 46, no. 1 (2019): 106–31.
- 40.** On the history of the *logements* see Jules Guiffrey, "Logements d'artistes au Louvre," *NAAF*.
- 41.** Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* (1550), 2 vols. (London: Penguin, 1987). Historiographically this tradition continued through eighteenth-century works like: Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres*, 4 vols. (Paris: De Bure, 1745); François Bernard Lépicié, *Vies des premiers peintres du Roi, depuis M. Le Brun jusqu'à présent* (Paris: Durand & Pissot, 1752); [Pierre-Jean Mariette], *Abecedario de P.-J. Mariette*, ed. Philippe de Chennevières and Anatole de Montaiglon, 6 vols. (Paris: Dumoulin, 1851–60). On experience as a subject and object of social and historical analysis see, for example, Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, eds., *The Anthropology of Experience* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986); and David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 42.** Our invocation of object biographies acknowledges Kopytoff but describes narratives more embedded in experience than abstracted from economies. Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91. See also Janet Hoskins, "Agency, Biography and Objects," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley et al. (London: Sage, 2006), 74–84. On it-narratives (such as Claude Crébillon fils's *Le sofa, conte moral* [1742]) and objects in French literature, see Jonathan Lamb, *The Things Things Say* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Rori Bloom, "'Un Sofa rose brodé d'argent': Crébillon fils and the Rococo," *Eighteenth-Century* 51, nos. 1–2 (2010): 87–102; and *Esthétique & poétique de l'objet au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Christophe Martin and Catherine Ramond, special issue of *Lumière* 5 (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2005).