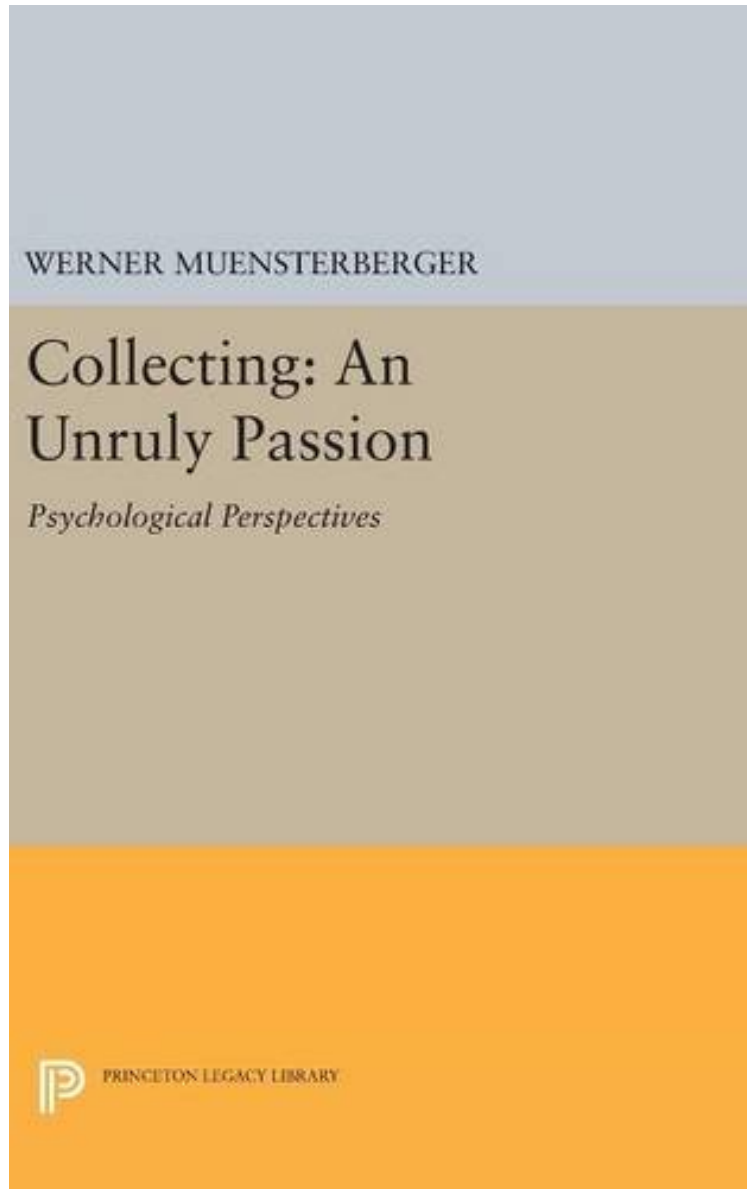


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Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives (Princeton Legacy Library)

Werner Muensterberger

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Werner Muensterberger : Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives (Princeton Legacy Library) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives (Princeton Legacy Library):

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. You'll Love it if You Love Freud
By damg1
This book has become the de facto text on collecting psychology. That's too bad. It's an interesting topic that deserves additional treatment and scholarship. This book is tremendously valid and insightful if you subscribe to the early/mid-20th Century school of Freudian psychology that essentially roots and reduces 90% of adult behavior to childhood experience. If you are of that bent you'll enjoy this book. Plenty of infantile deprivation correlates to be found within. The book would be better titled *Collecting: A Freudian Perspective*. Despite the title, there is no plural here -- it's one perspective delivered with a fairly heavy hand. Enjoy it for what it is until something something a little less rooted in 1880s Vienna comes along.
8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Collectors are really Obsessive-Compulsives!
By Johnnyjaguar
People who aren't collectors have wondered why some people have the compulsion to collect (worthless) stuff. This book is great because it doesn't just label collectors as obsessive-compulsive, as many psychology books do, but explains the particular type of obsessive-compulsives that are collectors. Society often accepts the idea of collecting as a type of hobby and thus, normal behavior. However, when the inner life of collectors are exposed, as in this book, one begins to see a pattern of deep unresolved psychological issues which plague collectors; One begins to see that this so-called "hobby" is really an outlet for unresolved emotional problems. Their collections of (often) worthless stuff are a way to symbolically regain mastery of control in their lives, explains this book. The detailed accounts of collectors lives also reveal the individual idiosyncracies which may drive different collectors to collect the same kind of worthless stuff, but for different personal emotional reasons, thus exposing the real psychological motive in the collector's "ambition". The psychological concepts in this book may be a bit advanced for some, but Werner Muensterberger makes these easy to understand.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Brian S.
Great book!

From rare books, valuable sculpture and paintings, the relics of saints, and porcelain and other precious items, through stamps, textiles, military ribbons, and shells, to baseball cards, teddy bears, and mugs, an amazing variety of objects have engaged and even obsessed collectors through the ages. With this captivating book the psychoanalyst Werner Muensterberger provides the first extensive psychological examination of the emotional sources of the never-ending longing for yet another collectible. Muensterberger's roster of driven acquisition-hunters includes the dedicated, the serious, and the infatuated, whose chronic restlessness can be curbed--and then merely temporarily--only by purchasing, discovering, receiving, or even stealing a new "find." In an easy, conversational style, the author discusses the eccentricities of heads of state, literary figures, artists, and psychoanalytic patients, all possessed by a need for magic relief from despair and helplessness--and for the self-healing implied in the phrase "I can't live without it!" The sketches here are diverse indeed: Walter Benjamin, Mario Praz, Catherine the Great, Poggio Bracciolini, Brunelleschi, and Jean de Berry, among others. The central part of the work explores in detail the personal circumstances and life history of three individuals: a contemporary collector, Martin G; the celebrated British book and manuscript collector Sir Thomas Phillipps, who wanted one copy of every book in the world; and the great French novelist Honoré de Balzac, a compulsive collector of bric-a-brac who expressed his empathy for the acquisitive passions of his collector protagonist in *Cousin Pons*. In addition, Muensterberger takes the reader on a charming tour of collecting in the Renaissance and looks at collecting during the Golden Age of Holland, in the seventeenth century. Throughout, we enjoy the author's elegant variations on a complicated theme, stated, much too simply, by John Steinbeck: "I guess the truth is that I simply like junk." Originally published in 1993. The Princeton Legacy Library uses the latest print-on-demand technology to again make available previously out-of-print books from the distinguished backlist of Princeton University Press. These editions preserve the original texts of these important books while presenting them in durable paperback and hardcover editions. The goal of the Princeton Legacy Library is to vastly increase access to the rich scholarly heritage found in the thousands of books published by Princeton University Press since its founding in 1905.

From Kirkus
A blend of compelling anecdotes and dull psychoanalysis, as Muensterberger (an N.Y.C. psychoanalyst) examines the whys and hows of manic collecting. Collecting, Muensterberger establishes at the outset, can be an "all-consuming passion"--whether the quarry be seashells, books, paintings, or women (he cites Don Juan as a prototypical collector). The act of accumulating repeated examples of a beloved collectible, he says, reduces "the tension between id and ego" and becomes "an experiment in self-healing"--invariably, of a childhood trauma or anxiety. A magical relationship develops between collector and object, most blatantly in aborigines who collect heads or in the faithful who gather saints' bones, but evident in all collecting. Upon this familiar premise (that collecting is a sign of insecurity), which sometimes leans towards reductionism (belief in the power of relics is "an illusory attempt at self-preservation"), Muensterberger lays a banquet of fine stories. The centerpiece consists of three psychobiographies: of Thomas Phillipps, a cruel and selfish man who longed to possess one copy of every book in the world; of the novelist Honoré de Balzac, obsessed with bric-a-brac; and of "Martin G.," an acquaintance of the author's who adored porcelain, bronzes, netsuke, and other objets d'art. Around these three men flutter a host of other collectors, from Petrarch (who had a passion for coins) to Mario Praz (who spent his honeymoon collecting Roman antiquities) and the 17th-century Dutch who spilled fortunes on tulips. Almost all are men; most are smart; many are aware of the extent

of their mania; and the one certain rule that governs them all is that they reach no saturation point: Collecting is the addiction par excellence. Too ideological to entrance most readers--but students of psychology will want to add this to their collections. -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. "What compels some people to buy the same object, albeit in different versions, over and over again? ... To find out why collectors lift their auction paddles long past sanity ... read *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*."--*Art and Antiques*"As a study of the phenomenon of private collecting, Werner Muensterberger's book, based on wide reading and personal acquaintance with many collectors, rings true."--*The New York of Books*About the AuthorDr. Werner Muensterberger (born 1913 in Germany), is a collector of African art, a psychoanalyst and an ethnopsychiatrist. As a youngster, certain collectors, including his kinsman, Eduard von der Heydt, introduced him to ethnographic art. After immigrating to the United States in 1947, with \$100 and two African sculptures, one a Guru mask, Muensterberger continued to collect African art, practice psychoanalysis and taught ethnopsychiatry. Returning to the U.S. in 1985, from London where he had "retired" in 1974, Muensterberger reopened his private practice. Muensterberger has written books and articles on ethnographic art, including *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (1994). This article contains photographs of certain African sculptures in Muensterberger's collection, most notably the Guru mask, and is followed by some Thoughts on Collecting, a dialogue between the article's author and Muensterberger.