Beyond Consumption: Toward an Archaeology of Consumerism

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Introduction

In 1982, Kent V. Flannery ridiculed archaeologists—garbologists in particular—who had taken up the analysis of modern American artifacts. Despite Flannery's denunciation, Rathje's "Projet du Garbage" and other modern material culture studies have survived and prospered. As a genre of archaeology, however, modern material culture studies have low visibility because, we suggest, they lack a thematic focus. In this chapter, we attempt to remedy this situation by redefining modern material culture studies as the archaeology of consumerism, following scholars such as Martin (1993), Schiffer (1991), and Spencer-Wood (1987a).

Modern material culture studies are usually taken to be research on the artifacts of industrial societies that can furnish information about those societies (e.g., Gould and Schiffer, 1981; Rathje, 1979; Rathje and Schiffer, 1982). But, in light of current research in ethnoarchaeology and historical archaeology, this definition seems too limiting. For example, in the ethnoarchaeology of traditional communities, many investigators, including Lewis Binford (1976), Susan Kent (1984), James Skibo (1994), and Brian Hayden (1987; Hayden and Cannon, 1984), have recorded and analyzed imported artifacts of industrial manufacture. These projects suggest that ethnoarchaeology in traditional societies, and modern material culture studies in industrial societies, merge seamlessly. Evidently, the "us" in the "archaeology of us" is becoming more inclusive, taking in all peoples who participate, even marginally, in the modern world system.

The boundary between historical archaeology and modern material culture studies is also blurring as the temporal reach of historical archaeology, particularly in "rescue" and "cultural resource management" contexts, comes ever closer to the present (e.g., Adams, 1973; Carlson, 1990; Claassen, 1994; Delgado, 1992; Orser and Babson, 1990; Wood, 1991). If, as Leland Ferguson observed in 1977 in his introduction to *Historical Archaeology and the Importance of Material Things*, the "historic" period goes from "the seventeenth century through the present day," then modern material culture studies and historical archaeology may be indistinguishable.

As historical archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, and modern material culture studies continue to coalesce (e.g., Gould, 1990), the latter term is liable to disappear as the label for a distinct genre of archaeology. For pragmatic and intellectual reasons, however, we do not believe that this should happen. In the pragmatic realm, "material culture studies" is a term now widely employed in other disciplines. Thus, by retaining "material culture" and the modifier "modern," archaeologists signal some commonality of subject matter with sociologists, historians, folklorists, cultural anthropologists, etc. Examples of these multidisciplinary studies include Berger (1992), Ingersoll

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and Bronitsky (1987), Kingery (1996a, ed. 1996b), Lubar and Kingery (1993), Miller (1995), and Poicus (1991).

The intellectual reason for retaining the term "modern material culture" relates to the growing realization that archaeologists studying "modern" societies are concerned with phenomena of modernity—specifically consumerism. Although investigators might define modernity in different ways, most would recognize that one of its major features is consumerism. We suggest that modern material culture studies, which interdigitate with ethnoarchaeology and historical archaeology, can be defined thematically as the archaeology of consumerism or, simply, consumerist archaeology.

Consumerism is the complex of technologies, organizations, and ideologies that facilitate the mass production, mass distribution, and mass consumption of goods. A consumer society is one organized around the provisioning of its members—particularly those of the middle and working classes—with a seemingly limitless array of ever-changing products serving diverse utilitarian and symbolic functions (Miller, 1987, 1994, 1995; Schiffer, 1991). Consumerism also extends to behavioral components of societies, such as households, corporations, religious and social institutions, and governmental agencies (Rathje and Schiffer, 1982).

We emphasize that the study of consumerism goes well beyond consumption itself, taking in all aspects of consumer societies—political, religious, educational, legal, leisure, economic, aesthetic, and so on—including the infrastructure for transport, energy, and communication. Consumerism research also studies services, whether provisioned by the state or by private enterprise (Miller, 1995), because the delivery and use of services involves artifacts. Although consumerism seems to thrive best under conditions of corporate capitalism and "free" markets, attempts to create consumer societies on socialist and communist foundations are also of interest.

The Roots of Consumerism

The aim of consumerist archaeology is to explain, through comparative studies, differences and similarities in consumer societies and in their developmental trajectories. Conceived in this way, consumerist archaeology has no fixed temporal boundaries—one could, after all, investigate the stirrings of consumerism in the Italian Renaissance, as has David Kingery (1993; also Goldthwaite, 1993; McCray, 1996), but most studies will concern the eighteenth century to the present. Moreover, consumerist archaeology also lacks arbitrary spatial boundaries. Many studies would treat Western and Westernized industrial societies, but also encompassed are Second- and Third-World peoples who (1) make products in the factories of multinational corporations, (2) consume such products made elsewhere, (3) make craft items for mass markets in industrial societies, and (4) participate in "development" projects. Because studies of consumer behavior, per se, are nothing new in archaeology (e.g., see papers in Spencer-Wood [ed. 1987b]), much previous work—theoretical, methodological, and empirical—can be folded into a broadly conceived consumerist archaeology.

A consumerist archaeology implies no a priori commitments to a particular paradigm, conceptual scheme, or theoretical program. Not only are theoretically diverse archaeologists—behavioralists, systems theorists, structuralists, Marxists, and so on—developing the archaeology of consumerism, but their empirical studies exhibit surprising convergences in subject matter, problem definition, methods, and in the commensurability of results. This suggests that research on consumerism can integrate archaeologists across major theoretical cleavages, perhaps by fostering the growth of appropriate theory for linking consumer choice with large-scale processes of market societies (Spencer-Wood, 1987a:9–10). A consumerist archaeology also countenances, and gains strength from, asking both historical (particularistic) and scientific (general) questions.

The Contribution of Archaeology to Consumerist Studies

With so many researchers in so many disciplines now studying material culture, consumerism, and consumer societies, it is appropriate to ask what practitioners of archaeology can contribute to this

multidisciplinary enterprise. We suggest that archaeologists have much to offer; at the very least, we can introduce a modicum of methodological sophistication. Although investigators in countless disciplines have at last discovered material culture, the studies carried out are usually "material culture" in name only. The actual artifacts examined and analyzed are often limited to documents, including texts about other texts and questionnaires; and the discourses tend to omit a discussion of people actually making, distributing, using, and reusing the material culture at issue (Schiffer and Miller, 1999:5–6). Thus, an archaeological perspective, developed from nearly two centuries of hands-on experience with every sort of artifact, can, at the very least, furnish instruction on how studies of consumerism and consumer societies can be empirically grounded.

In particular, we suggest that a consumerist archaeology is built on the following methodological commitments:

1. A concern to describe and explain the time–space parameters of events and processes, such as manufacture and use, in the life histories of artifacts and artifact types;
2. An appreciation for the involvement of people in the entire suite of activities making up the life history of an artifact or artifact type;
3. The recognition that artifacts carry out diverse utilitarian and symbolic functions;
4. Employment of a comparative perspective, both diachronic and cross-cultural, but one that also acknowledges contingent, contextual factors in specific cases;
5. A commitment to achieving an understanding of the operating principles of technologies and artifacts and then using that knowledge when constructing explanations of variability; and
6. Use of a hands-on approach for recording the formal, spatial, quantitative, and relational properties of artifacts themselves.

Building on these foundations, archaeologists—perhaps uniquely—can obtain *comparable* evidence on consumption patterns that spans decades, even centuries. Thus, our storied "time depth" can furnish long-term databases for evaluating the abundant hypotheses, served up by investigators in many disciplines but seldom tested, that purport to explain the development of consumer societies. And, in striving to explain long-term patterns, archaeologists can formulate their own theories and models.

Drawing on modern material culture studies, historical archaeology, and ethnoarchaeology, we identify the kinds of long-term research programs that establish a framework for building an archaeology of consumerism.

First, we call attention to "foundational studies." These contribute two major kinds of information: (1) basic parameters of an artifact type or types—that is, when, where, and by whom it was manufactured; and (2) specific inferences about behavioral processes in the life history of artifacts, including materials procurement, manufacture, distribution, use, maintenance and repair, reuse, discard, and postdepositional processes. Although foundational studies themselves yield research products that can stand alone, as the name implies they are also building blocks for higher-level inferences and explanations. Examples include Noël Hume's (1970) work on British artifacts in Colonial America, Toulouse's (1971) classic work on glass manufacturers' marks, and Godden's (1964) universally referenced compendium of makers' marks found on British ceramics (see Lehner [1988] for an "encyclopedia" of U.S. marks).

A second set of research projects is concerned with elucidating the life histories of product types. Most product types in industrial consumer societies pass through three stages: invention, commercialization, and adoption (Schiffer, 1996:656–658). We now briefly define each stage.

In the *invention* stage, people—working alone or in behavioral components such as corporations—devise models and prototypes of new artifacts that can be used to demonstrate the invention to potential entrepreneurs or financiers. In evolutionary terms, invention is a major source of new variants; most inventions, however, fail to reach the next stage.

During the *commercialization* stage, products enter production and are brought to market, sometimes after a lengthy and costly period of research and development. Commercialization is often undertaken by corporations, but individuals, government agencies, and so forth can also bring products to market. Once the commercialization process is characterized—perhaps by drawing upon

data in antique collector catalogs or by reconstructing company histories through archival research, oral history, or both—a major goal is to identify the technological, social, cultural, and behavioral factors responsible for changes in the diversity of manufacturers and products. Another important focus in commercialization studies is to explain artifact designs. Specific designs represent compromises in performance characteristics responsive to varied technical, social, cultural, and behavioral factors (see Schiffer and Skibo, 1997).

Adoption is the purchase of commercialized products; this stage ends when the purchase of a product type, as *new* goods, ceases. Reliable data on adoption are surprisingly difficult to obtain from documentary evidence. However, the archaeological record itself, especially secondary refuse, is an important—often unique—source of information on adoption.

Many questions about technological change can be fruitfully considered in the context of adoption processes, particularly when there is competition between different artifact types or technologies (see O'Brien et al., 1994; Schiffer, 1996). In explaining adoption patterns, the archaeologist often takes various social groups as the unit of analysis, seeking to specify relationships between products and social groups defined, for example, on the basis of class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Let us now look more closely at large-scale patterns of adoption, which furnish an important empirical basis for developing the archaeology of consumerism.

In his pioneering 1977 study, Stanley South identified artifact groupings associated with certain historical-period activity sets, such as food preparation in the household and military activities in frontier forts of the eastern United States. In subsequent studies, investigators have refined and extended South's patterns. All such studies, in effect, examine large-scale adoption/consumption processes and thus contribute directly to the archaeology of consumerism. As their units of analysis, these studies employ social groups or "behavioral components" (sensu Rathje and Schiffer, 1982; Schiffer, 1992:14–15).

Many archaeological studies of adoption have been carried out in relation to social class and ethnicity. The actual unit of analysis, however, is usually families and households whose socio-demographic characteristics are gleaned from documentary evidence. Consumption is inferred mainly from the contents of refuse associated with structures (LeeDecker, 1994). On the basis of household refuse samples, one generalizes about consumption patterns of socio-demographic groups.

The adoption/consumption patterns of task units, communities, regional systems, and empires can also be characterized. Because these larger behavioral components consist of ever-greater aggregates of households, variability in large-scale artifact patterning is explained in part by the factors that influence household consumption. Other factors are at work in the larger behavioral components because they contain organized religions, polities, corporations, and so on, which engage in their own consumption processes.

We propose that the kinds of studies just enumerated, which many archaeologists are already undertaking and for which methods are well developed, provide a firm foundation for approaching higher-level questions about consumerism. Indeed, it is time to step boldly beyond the study of consumption, which archaeologists have always investigated, to the study of consumerism. According to Martin (1993:143), consumption implies a process or means by which consumer goods and services move through the general economy; its study ranges widely to include the institutions that produce, market, and sell those goods and services. By contrast, the concept of consumerism extends well beyond acquisition; it subsumes the cultural relationship between humans and consumer goods and services, including behaviors, institutions, and ideas. It is potentially a unifying concept for many areas of scholarship (Martin, 1993:142–143).

Mapping Out the Scope of a Consumerist Archaeology

Martin (1993:142) outlines what she considers to be the most important thrusts of the study of consumerism: (1) the way material goods mark or confer position in a social hierarchy; (2) the role of fashion and demand in spurring economic growth and changing manufactures; and (3) the ways in which people can construct their own meanings for objects produced by themselves or others.

The themes identified by Martin are, of course, not new. Her point is that their contemporary study, within the context of consumerism, "moves the scholarly eye from institutional forces to personal choices" (Martin, 1993:142) and places more emphasis on the role of bourgeois consumers of nonutilitarian goods and services, particularly women, as agents for change in the material culture repertoire of a society.

In this section, we present a series of broader themes and related questions that can help to build on Martin's points to map out an expanded scope for a consumerist archaeology. While we agree that inquiries into the role of the consumer are central to any reasoned study of modern material culture, it is also important to consider a variety of other issues to help us round out investigations of makers, buyers, and users.

Structural and Behavioral Aspects of the Emergence, Growth, and Maintenance of Consumer Societies

How do structural factors, such as capitalism, mercantilism, relatively "free" markets (for goods, services, and labor), profit-making corporations not controlled by polities, lack of sumptuary rules, and social mobility, interact over time and contribute to the emergence of specific consumer societies? By what processes are a society's laws and regulations modified to provide favorable conditions for the growth of consumerism? By what general processes does any activity become "consumerized"? That is, how does it come about that an activity's competent performance requires continual expansion and updating of the required material culture? What do long-term changes in toys, games, models, and books reveal about the role of children's material culture in reproducing the values, attitudes, skills, and activities of a consumer society (see Berger, 1992; Formanek-Brunell, 1993; Schiffer, 1991). How have huge corporations, only loosely under the control of nation-states, reconfigured people's lives during the twentieth century by internationalizing manufacturing, marketing, and consumption? Although consumer societies are resource- and energy-intensive, under what conditions do concerns over resource and energy exhaustion begin to affect policies, activities, and technologies? What role is the ideology of "sustainability" coming to play in the maintenance of consumer societies?

The Effects of Consumerism on the Life Histories of Specific Products

When and how does novelty in material culture become highly valued as "progress?" How does the pursuit of novelty in products become actualized in the consumption patterns of middle- and working-class people? When, where, and for what products does the annual model change become an effective strategy for selling products to varying kinds of households and to other behavioral components? By what processes did the annual model change spread to an ever-greater variety of consumer, commercial, and industrial products?

Advertising and Communication

How are the mass communication media—newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and now the internet—involved in the maintenance and spread of the "novelty orientation" and other values necessary for the functioning of consumer societies? Magazine advertisements by the Radio Corporation of America in the 1920s proclaimed, "A Radiola for every purse." By what processes did price-based differentiation spread to virtually every kind of product—from houses to neckties?

Explaining Apparent Alternatives/ Reactions to Consumerism

Are certain "nonconformists" practicing strategies of resistance to consumerism, such as hermits, people of means who buy only used products or only "organic" foods, families without televisions, and ethnic enclaves that reject most modern technologies? In what ways do these people employ artifacts

to create meaning and define their own identities? What ideologies justify these lifestyle alternatives? Do institutions such as universities promote resistance to the vulgar ideologies of consumerism (that is, new = progress = good)? If so, are contrasting ideologies realized in different consumption patterns? How and why do handcrafted products of traditional societies become integrated into the consumption patterns of industrial consumer societies?

The Commercialization Process of Consumer Services and Societal Practices

How do religious observances and objects become secularized, commercialized, and consumerized? By what processes have personal services, such as grooming and medical diagnosis and treatment, been consumerized?

Ideological Expressions of Consumerist Societies

When and how did the ideology of science and technology as founts of wondrous new products become entrenched? How is this ideology related to the artifacts purchased by middle- and working-class people over the last century? How is the erection of monumental architecture in cities since 1850 related to changes in the relative wealth and social power of churches, polities, various kinds of corporations, and sports franchises?

Where to Look for Answers

Many of the questions above have been raised previously by students of consumerism in other disciplines. However, the answers tendered by these investigators tend to be just-so stories, foundering on abstract discourse divorced from the materiality of human life. In contrast, the archaeological perspective, which illuminates concrete consumption patterns by exploiting myriad lines of evidence in relation to artifact life histories, furnishes an empirical foundation for research on consumer societies that goes well beyond the study of consumption itself. Below we provide an example of how a particularly informative material class—historical ceramics—can be used to study some of the more salient questions related to consumerism.

Why ceramics? As a material class, ceramics have long been a favored focus of analysis for both prehistoric and historical archaeologists. In addition to being plentiful in archaeological deposits, they are the primary tools for establishing chronology and site function, and are also used to establish behavioral information about such topics as the social status, ethnicity, and foodways of a site's prior occupants. Being at the same time fragile and durable, ceramic objects tend to enter the archaeological record fairly frequently and survive to be recovered at a later date. Because there is such wide variability in ceramic composition and style, wares are readily identifiable with adequate study.

The example brings together pieces of information from archaeology, the decorative arts, history, and economics to illustrate that a consumerist approach is a viable means of integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives. To explore the feasibility of using this approach, we first outline the state of "foundational" knowledge about the topic and provide contextual background. We then briefly consider the life history of ceramics made in a particular late-nineteenth-century "style"—the Japanese-influenced Aesthetic movement—before moving on to an assessment of the potential value of the information for investigating some of the higher-level questions regarding consumerism posed earlier. Although the Aesthetic movement flourished on both sides of the Atlantic, our primary focus will be on its expression in America.

Ceramics as a Mirror of Consumerism

As noted above, ceramics are perhaps the most ubiquitous material class found in archaeological sites dating to the historical period. Apparently, however, they represent a minor class of goods in terms of overall household expenditures (e.g., see Wettstaed's [1999] analysis of early-nineteenth-century day books from a store in the Missouri

Ozarks). Nonetheless, they are powerful tools for the archaeologist, and provide a range of information critical to site interpretation. Blaszczyk (1994:126) notes that "Expenditures on ceramics constituted a small portion of consumers' annual budgets, but the act of possession mattered more than the money spent. Ceramics were signs whose cultural value was derived from their inherent qualities and, to a lesser extent, from their prices." In this section, we consider a small subset of historical ceramics—those decorated in Aesthetic-movement style, and even more specifically those influenced by Japanese arts and crafts. Given a working knowledge of the technology of ceramic production and stylistic trends, we can use ceramics to study and illuminate many of the themes outlined above.

As background to the example, we offer a brief introduction to nineteenth-century trends in the decorative arts. The reader should keep in mind that two basic decorative styles (in all areas of design) will prevail at any one time: the style(s) of the moment ("high style," or "popular style") and traditional styles (Majewski, 1996). A ceramic example close in time to our own experience would be wares influenced by the tenets of modernism (stark design, minimal or stylized decoration, form incorporated into style) produced during the 1950s compared with contemporary traditional wares, such as those decorated with floral decal sprays. The focus here will be on "high style," keeping in mind that these coexisted with traditional styles in the material culture repertoire.

Nineteenth-Century Styles and Ceramic Expression

Prior to the beginning of Aesthetic influences in design, two high styles—Neoclassical and Gothic revival (Samford, 1997)—followed one upon the other in popularity. The Neoclassical style was at its peak from the late eighteenth century to circa 1830, with an emphasis on classic revivals in architecture, ceramics, and other media. Some of Wedgwood's most famous products were made in imitation of Etruscan and classical Greek forms. Neoclassical ceramics were characterized by clean lines, symmetrical proportions, and restrained decoration. Transfer-printed motifs used at the time included urns, acanthus leaves, columned temples, and figures in classical garb. The Gothic-revival style was in vogue from the 1830s through the 1860s, and heavily influenced architecture, particularly public forms, but made an impact on the decorative and useful arts as well. Gothic-revival-style ceramics often exhibited angular, paneled shapes, which were frequently decorated with transfer-printed scenes of architectural ruins or buildings with turrets, arches, towers, or battlements.

These styles or movements were parts of the lengthy Victorian era (1837–1901), a critical time for the Western world in general, but in particular for America. Howe (1976:3) sees this era as one of crucial transformation for the United States, in terms of industrialization, rapid developments in knowledge and communication, immigration and significant population growth, urbanization, geographical expansion, and changing race relations. These transformations accelerated after the American Civil War. Literacy increased, and communication networks expanded. Industrialization and urbanization went hand in hand with modernization, which Howe (1976:7) identifies as the central process characterizing the era. In addition to social and economic effects, the modernization process also had cultural impacts (also see Stein, 1986). As a value system, Victorianism represented a combination of premodern modes of thought (patriarchalism, English common law) with ideals specifically linked to the modernization process (work ethic, delayed gratification, discipline, sexual repression, rational order, the cult of domesticity) (Howe, 1976:17–18, 25).

Cohen (1982:292) writes that the American home "from the 1840s to the 1880s mirrored the nation's transformation from an agricultural to an industrial society." More importantly for the purposes of our discussion, she notes that

> The home served as an accurate indicator of one's relationship to the industrial economy, not by accident, but as a result of the Victorians' contradictory attitude toward economic and technological change. Enthusiasm for, as well as anxiety toward, industrialization provoked both an appetite for new products and a need to incorporate them carefully into private life. . . . The home embodied a contradiction as both the arena for and the refuge from technological penetration. Insofar

> as people could tolerate this contradictory domestic environment, the home provided a setting for gradual adaptation to a technological and commercial world. . . . The parlor best represented this accommodation to industrial life [Cohen 1982:292–293].

Victorian parlors, whether located in Great Britain or in the as-yet-untamed American West, were crammed with carefully arranged, store-bought, mass-produced objects (Fig. 1).

During the decade beginning circa 1870, the ceramic "market basket" (described by Miller [1990, 1993]; also see Majewski, 1996; Majewski and O'Brien, 1987) available to American consumers primarily consisted of heavy, semivitreous white-bodied wares, either left plain or with molded body decoration (properly called "white granite," but also known as "ironstone" by antique collectors and some archaeologists). White granite and nonvitreous white-bodied earthenwares ("c.c.," or cream-colored) remained popular in some regions until well into the early twentieth century. Transfer-printed wares are relatively uncommon in collections from sites dating to the early 1870s, though some traditional styles continue, such as the willow pattern, which has been in continuous production since it was first introduced onto the market in the late eighteenth century (Copeland, 1980). Occasional traditional-style floral transfer-printed patterns were introduced to consumers during this period.

"Aesthetic" influences, however, dramatically changed Victorian design concepts, including those expressed on ceramics. The Aesthetic movement—the prelude to Art Nouveau—was one of the most original art movements in British history. It began in England in the 1860s as a reaction by a "few architects and designers" (e.g., Christopher Dresser) against Victorian excesses and eclecticism in decoration (Aslin, 1969:13; also see Kurland et al., 1993). The term itself refers to the introduction of principles that emphasized art in the production of furniture, metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, wallpapers, and books. During its height, from the mid-1870s through the 1880s, the movement affected all levels of society in both England and America (Aslin, 1969:13; Burke et al., 1986:19). The Arts and Crafts movement was also influential in Aesthetic design. In America, these two "styles," together with the Colonial Revival style, contributed to the formulation of an aesthetic that would replace European-inspired and technologically sophisticated styles (Cohen, 1982:293). William Morris's Gothic Medievalism and the work of the

Fig. 1 The parlor of an officer's home at either Fort Huachuca or Fort Bowie, Arizona, in the late nineteenth century (courtesy Fort Huachuca Museum)

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood also had an important impact on the Aesthetic movement, but probably the strongest contributions to the style were made by things Japanese.

Impetus for the movement came with the "opening up" of Japan in the 1850s (thanks to the American Admiral Perry)—an event that revitalized taste in Europe. Japanese or "Japonesque" motifs were applied everywhere—sprays of cherry blossoms and clumps of bamboo, birds, diaper patterns, fan shapes and cartouches with scenes within a scene, and stylized clouds to name but a sampling, were placed with casual asymmetry on everything from pots to postcards (Fig. 2). The Japanese decorative arts and architecture displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia (and at expositions later in the century) began a widespread interest in Japanese art in America. This phenomenon is variously referred to as the "Japan Idea," Japonism, Japonisme, and the "Japan Craze" (see Cameron, 1986; Hosley, 1990; Rydell, 1984; Spencer, 1973).

Partly as a vehicle for expressing Aesthetic motifs on ceramic tablewares, teawares, toilet sets, tiles, and decorative wares, the use of transfer printing as a decorative method was "revived" and surged in popularity beginning in the late 1870s through the end of the century. The underglaze transfer-printing process began with engraved copper plates into which ceramic color mixtures had been worked.

Fig. 2 Transfer-printed earthenware plate showing typical elements of Japanese-influenced Aesthetic decoration. On reverse, printed diamond-shaped registry mark for April 8, 1881; pattern name "Louise"; and Wedgwood & Co. (Tunstall, England) printed unicorn mark with "Trade Mark" and impressed mark (Majewski/Fox Collection; Andrew Saiz, photographer, Statistical Research, Inc. [SRI])

Special papers were then laid over the plate to make an impression of the motif. The paper was then laid on an unfired ceramic body, smoothed on, and removed. The design was then dried on prior to glazing and firing (Drakard and Holdway, 1983; Majewski, 1996; Majewski and O'Brien, 1987). Colors used for late-nineteenth-century transfer prints differed in tone from those used earlier. Especially popular for "revival" transfers were subdued or even dull colors, particularly a range of dull greens and browns. The use of secondary or tertiary colors was the aesthetic reaction to the bright, harsh colors favored in the mid-1800s (Aslin, 1969:63).

An interesting variation includes non-Japanese motifs displayed in Japanese style or together with Japanese motifs (Fig. 3). This strategy was likely an attempt on the part of the creators of pottery designs to reach an even greater portion of the market, i.e., those who preferred more traditional motifs on their ceramics, such as English country scenes or architectural or nautical elements. Other colors were used in various anglicized adaptations of the style, e.g., turquoise and various other bright overglaze colors on bone china; pastels on majolica; and red, black, blue, and blue-black on transfer-printed earthenwares. One pattern might be transformed into many through the use of handpainted accents, gilding, or luster decoration. While underglaze transfer printing was the primary method of decoration for Japanese-style earthenwares, some earthenware and bone china forms were handpainted (painted under the glaze) or enameled (painted over the glaze).

Other wares were concurrently produced and marketed alongside Japanese-style earthenwares and bone china. The 1880s *Silber & Fleming Glass and China Book* (Silber & Fleming, 1990) includes examples of traditional wares with handpainted rim banding and others with floral borders. The catalog also includes undecorated white earthenware (c.c. ware), much of which is shown in utilitarian forms such as foot baths, bed pans, chamber pots, and slop pails—a perfect illustration of Miller's (1993) concept of "demand entropy" in operation. As applied to ceramics, demand entropy results in a situation where, through time, originally popular wares cycle down in price and form or drop out altogether.

Although monochrome outline decals, or lithotransfers, were used as the basis for handpainted fill-in by 1885 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1915:156; Wood, 1953:77, 487), and thus would have been available to potters decorating in the popular Aesthetic style, it did not appear to be the decorative method of choice. Polychrome decaling, however, essentially replaced transfer printing by around 1900 (Fryman and Majewski, 1995), and in the 1950s was still "the most common decorative technique used for dinnerware" (Taylor, 1950:33).

By the 1890s, the Japanese style was no longer popular in ceramics, but asymmetrical placement of transfer-printed motifs (e.g., floral sprays) continued

Fig. 3 Earthenware plate with European-style arch within a "reserve," combined with Japanese motifs (asymmetrically arranged foliage and insects) arranged in Aesthetic style. Rectangular arch-within-a-block arch element is an imitation of a Japanese woodblock print. Printed diamond-shaped registry mark on base for May 6, 1882; "London" pattern mark; and mark indicating manufacture by Powell, Bishop & Stonier, Hanley, England (Hughes Collection; Gerhardt Alt, photographer; courtesy Vernon Hughes)

as did use of more muted hues and restrained handpainted color accents and gilding. A resurgence in popularity of flow-blue transfer-printed floral patterns occurred (on British and non-British wares), often on thinly potted bodies with some relief molding (Gaston, 1983). Also occurring late in the century were bold floral handpainted motifs combined with cut-sponge stamping, and vessels with transfer-printed stylized Chinese motifs, often with luster accents and other light color washes (exported to America from Great Britain and Holland). Both of these types can be considered traditional in the sense that they were reincarnations of styles popular in early centuries.

"China painting" on porcelain blanks (frequently Bavarian or French) was a favorite avocation for women during the last part of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. Many pattern books with instructions were available and frequently featured Aesthetic designs, particularly those in the Japanese taste (Blaszczyk, 1994; Hosley, 1990; Wood, 1953). From the late 1890s until circa 1910, Art Nouveau-style motifs were popular with amateur china painters.

Aesthetic-Movement Ceramics as Case Study

An investigation of the Aesthetic movement—as expressed in the Japanese-style decoration used on ceramic goods—can provide useful insights into the development of consumerism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the movement was infrequently mentioned in publications on the decorative arts sources written prior to the 1980s, a considerable amount of research on its context and influence on various kinds of media has been accomplished since that time. From a decorative-arts perspective, much of the foundational work has been done. We essentially know when, where, and by whom Aesthetic-influenced artifacts were manufactured (see Blaszczyk, 1994; Hosley, 1990).

Much of the supporting data for answering these questions comes from backmarks containing manufacturer and temporal information found on Japanese-style pieces in private collections and museums, published sources, and archaeological specimens. While some Aesthetic-influenced wares were produced in America (see Blaszczyk, 1994), most were potted in Great Britain. Hosley (1990:154–160) lists some of the most well-known British manufacturers: Gildea & Walker; Brownhills Pottery Co.; Wedgwood; Henry Alcock & Co.; Edge, Malkin & Co.; Minton and Company; Royal Worcester; and Beleek. From 1842 to 1883, Victorian ceramics bore a diamond-shaped mark to indicate that the design or shape had been registered at the Patent Office in London (see Godden [1964:526–529] for information on how to "read" these marks). Registration provided protection from "design piracy" for an initial period of 3 years, and apparently could be renewed. Beginning in January 1884 (and continuing into the twentieth century), registered designs no longer appeared as diamond-shaped marks, but were numbered consecutively following the prefix "Rd." or "Rd. No." These trends in ceramic registration and marking illustrate that proprietary design was becoming an increasingly important concept by the mid-nineteenth century.

Still lacking, however, is a complete understanding of the behavioral processes associated with the life histories of these artifacts. As noted above, home interiors were the vehicle for displaying the occupants' level of articulation with the popular trends of the times. Hosley (1990:16) notes that "Where Victorian Americans at mid-century [1850] knew little more about Japan that its place on the map, a generation later Americans of all classes and backgrounds exhibited a cultlike fascination with the distant island nation." If we are to equate a person's intellectual acceptance of the "Japan Idea" with ownership of the material trappings of the movement, we are required to learn how effectively goods in Aesthetic style reached American homes of all social classes. This will allow us to begin to evaluate the movement's impact on American culture. A combination of historical and archaeological research can begin to fill in the gaps.

Historical sources are particularly useful for answering behavioral-process questions. Photographs, stereographs, and illustrations from contemporary printed materials of late-nineteenth-century home interiors may be used to document the use of Aesthetic ceramics and other items of material culture in decorative and useful

contexts (e.g., Blaszczyk, 1994:Fig. 10; Formanek-Brunell, 1993:Fig. 8; Frelinghuysen, 1986:Illustrations 7.1, 7.3, and 7.4; Hosley, 1990:Illustrations 90–98b). Illustrated period catalogs, such as those from Silber & Fleming (1990) and A. A. Vantine & Company (see Hosley, 1990:44), illustrate the range of items available in popular versus traditional styles at a particular time. A casual perusal of the Silber & Fleming catalog, originally published circa the 1880s, indicates that at least 50 percent of the ceramic items illustrated were decorated with Aesthetic-influenced Japanese-style motifs. Other useful printed materials include art books, periodicals, and variety and women's magazines, as well as domestic-advice books and women's "do-it-yourself" art manuals for decorating ceramic blanks.

Japanese-style ceramics may have been widely available to most consumers, but investigating issues related to consumer choice is more difficult. The archaeological record may provide some answers (see Majewski and O'Brien [1987] and Spencer-Wood [ed. 1987b] for discussions of this topic). Archaeological evidence for the distribution and pervasiveness of Japanese-influenced Aesthetic-style ceramics must necessarily be cumulative and focused on household contexts. Descriptive and quantitative information on materials found in both urban and rural sites from throughout the United States is necessary to understand how extensively the "Japan Idea" penetrated all aspects of American life. Consistency in identification and recording of ceramics decorated in this style is an essential first step (see Hosley, 1990; Samford, 1997).

As noted earlier, excavation must be accompanied by archival research designed to uncover the identity, social class, family composition, and ethnicity of a site's occupants if we are to understand the behavioral implications of the materials recovered. Optimal contexts for analysis are those features that can be linked to known households. Recent work on late-nineteenth-century deposits at the Superblock site in downtown San Bernardino, California, has yielded promising results in this vein (Doolittle and Majewski, 1997). One of the 50 features excavated at the site, a privy, was associated through archival research with the dwelling of a particular middle-class family—the Whaleys—who apparently lived at that location from circa 1860. Almost 800 ceramic sherds representing 150 vessels were recovered from the privy, and most dated to the 1870s and 1880s. Figure 4 illustrates two examples of transfer-printed vessels from this feature that were decorated in Japanese-influenced Aesthetic-movement style. The next step would be to begin constructing profiles of ceramic use by this household and other contemporary households in the area and elsewhere (e.g., percentage of popular versus traditional wares, range of forms used, etc.). Comparisons of ceramic use profiles and use profiles for other archaeologically recovered Aesthetic-influenced materials with those from contemporary sites in California and elsewhere could be used to build a broader understanding of the impact of the Aesthetic movement on the material culture of the times.

In situations where households can be linked to archaeological deposits, what can be learned about the "lady of the house"? Women were likely the primary purchasers of Aesthetic-style goods that were used and displayed in the home. Formanek-Brunell ([1993:15–17] and caption to her Fig. 4) notes that shopping had become a central activity for middle-class women after the American Civil War. At this time, Americans were becoming increasingly affluent. Personal incomes were rising, and new outlets were available to consumers—retail stores for those who lived in urban settings and mail-order catalogs for those who did not. Middle-class Americans were now able to purchase items formerly available only to the wealthy. First published in England in 1868, Charles Locke Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details* was published in America in 1872 (Voorsanger, 1986:423). Lynes (1949:100) notes that households were completely refurbished to follow the book's teachings.

In summary, studies of Aesthetic-influenced Japanese-style ceramics, whether based on documentary or archaeological evidence (or both), can provide specific information on the life histories of products associated with this apparently pervasive, but short-lived movement. Understanding the role of international expositions in promoting material culture associated with the Japan Idea is pertinent to the invention stage (Blaszczyk, 1994; Hosley, 1990), and an intensive examination of available documentary and published materials of the period would illuminate the commercialization stage. Study of the latter would also benefit from an analysis of the source materials for the engraved copper

Fig. 4 Transfer-printed Aesthetic-movement ceramics from a privy feature associated with the Whaley household at the Superblock site, San Bernardino, California: *left*, reconstructed, partial earthenware toothbrush holder decorated with an unknown pattern (unmarked, but may have been potted by William Brownfield & Sons, Cobridge, as early as 1880); *right*, reconstructed, partial earthenware saucer with a printed diamond-shaped registry mark for January 6, 1881, and pattern name "Paiva" on the base (probably manufactured by Benjamin & Sampson Hancock, Bridge Works, Stoke, England) (SRI archives; Cynthia Elsner Hayward, photography; courtesy SRI)

plates used in transferring Aesthetic designs to ceramic bodies. For example, one might investigate why some of the designs were more Europeanized. The adoption stage can be elucidated through analysis and interpretation of the archaeological record. Particularly interesting will be archaeological data relating to "competing" artifact types (popular versus traditional) being produced at the same time.

Moving Beyond Foundational Studies

In the previous section we introduced the reader to some of the foundational information necessary to understand Japanese-influenced Aesthetic-movement ceramics from the late nineteenth century within a consumerist perspective. Emphasis was placed on defining the basic parameters of the artifact type and making specific inferences about behavioral processes in its life history. Here we would like to briefly relate this information to some of the broader themes raised earlier.

Perhaps most obvious is the potential of the example to contribute to our understanding of the structural and behavioral aspects of the emergence, growth, and maintenance of consumer societies. We have outlined some of the processes that led to consumerization of Aesthetic-movement ideals. During its 10-year heyday, the movement made an enormous impact on the material culture of the late nineteenth century. Traditional nineteenth-century British design, and most early American design, was based on the symmetrical arrangements of elements

in decorative arts, architecture, etc. Aesthetic designers introduced an entirely new grammar and syntax of ornament. Some design innovations introduced during this period, particularly the asymmetrical arrangement of motifs, carried over into the subsequent Art Nouveau and Art Deco popular style movements. Thus, consumers were in a sense "preconditioned" to accept the later styles that were completely alien to their way of thinking. Nonetheless, while the Aesthetic movement may have emerged as a "contradiction" or "opposition" to contemporary Victorian norms, it coexisted with traditional Victorian material culture and in some instances even merged with it.

Written sources emphasize the pervasiveness of Aesthetic-movement goods in American culture. This is difficult to quantify, however. We have suggested that data from the archaeological record, while challenging to collect, may provide some of the best information on the actual use of these materials by members of different social classes. In addition, the ideological impacts of the movement (see Stein, 1986) have yet to be fully investigated from an archaeological perspective.

The Aesthetic movement might accurately be termed a "late-nineteenth-century fad." As such, looking at how it played out can help us to understand the role of fashion and demand in spurring economic growth and changing manufactures, one of Martin's (1993) most important thrusts for the study of consumerism. The roots of the movement are traceable to the opening of Japan in the 1850s, and its success in America was fueled by a combination of factors: the consumer's desire for something new (a reaction against Victorian excess); increased prosperity following the Civil War; expanded opportunities for consumption through catalogs and retail stores; and expanded communication, transportation, and advertising networks. By the late nineteenth century, women were the primary purchasers of household goods, a fact that has not received the attention it deserves in research on consumer behavior and the consumerization process.

This example also contributes to our understanding of how and when novelty in material culture becomes valued as progress. Products and artifacts have always gone through cycles of popularity, and demand entropy (Miller, 1993) is one way of characterizing what happens when an item is on the downward spiral. Take the example of Josiah Wedgwood's creamware, developed in 1743 but not perfected until the 1760s (Young, 1995:9). During the 1770s, the ware graced the tables of European royalty; by late in the century the elite were losing interest, and use of the ware was more widespread among the middle and lower classes. By the early 1800s, creamware had been replaced in popularity by other wares, but as a ceramic body it persisted until well into the twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, it was known as "c.c. ware," and was one of the materials of choice for manufacturing chamber pots, urinals, invalid feeders, and foot baths!

Something different began happening in the late nineteenth century, however. It is interesting that at the height of the "Japan Craze," Japanese-influenced Aesthetic-movement motifs appeared on ceramics of all levels of quality and cost, from bone china down to the cheapest earthenwares. This may be one of the earliest examples of price-based differentiation (though we suspect it was also occurring with goods other than ceramics). We suggest that by compiling quantitative and distributional information on popular- versus traditional-style tablewares, teawares, and toilet sets, it may be possible to gain insight into how "novelty" products become actualized in the consumption patterns of middle- and working-class people.

Studying "high style" material culture invites a consideration of alternatives to consumerism. In the example we presented, we noted that many consumers continued to choose traditional forms. Manufacturers of Aesthetic-style goods even catered to potential consumers by producing "toned-down" expressions of the style using non-Japanese motifs (see Fig. 3). The coexistence of traditional and popular styles is an important research theme in the study of consumerism, and is one that can benefit from information provided by the archaeological record.

Aesthetic-movement design elements even made their way into the late-nineteenth-century bathroom. In keeping with the Victorian obsession with cleanliness and sanitation, a profusion of hygiene-related products were available. In the ceramic medium, "toilet sets" contained numerous pieces, including basins, ewers, slop pails, and a variety of soap dishes and toothbrush holders (see Fig. 4). Well over 50 percent of the examples

illustrated in the Silber & Fleming 1880s catalog (Silber & Fleming, 1990) are decorated in Japanese-influenced Aesthetic style, which illustrates that the influence of the movement had spread into even the most personal areas of life.

An equally fascinating topic for further study relates to how children's material culture serves to reproduce the values, attitudes, skills, and activities of a consumer society. In an important study of the relationship of dolls to the commercialization of American girlhood during the period 1830–1930, Formanek-Brunell (1993:20) points out that in the decades following the Civil War:

> Adults expected girls to imitate the new rituals of high society with their largely imported dolls in their nurseries. Elaborately dressed dolls were thought useful in the instruction of social conventions such as housewarmings. Far more common, however, were dolls' tea parties, frequently depicted in stereographs, tradecards, and books like *The Dolls' Tea Party*. Adults proudly noted that "The children's doll parties of to-day are counterparts of grown-up people's receptions."

There are numerous extant complete or partial examples of children's tea sets decorated with Japanese-influenced Aesthetic-movement motifs in museums and private collections, which apparently indicates that the "Japan Idea" had been deliberately introduced to society's youngest members in a way that would be used to prepare them for their roles as adults in a consumer society.

The themes touched upon here are only a few of those that can be used to investigate the development of consumerism. To build upon the work presented here, comparative studies would be productive, focusing on ceramics decorated in later styles, such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco, or on earlier styles (e.g., Rococo, Neoclassical, or Gothic revival). This would not only allow for the development of a temporal perspective on the themes discussed here, but could suggest other equally productive avenues of research.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have outlined a strategy for investigating the development of consumerism that is grounded in compilation of foundational and life-history information about material culture and artifacts. This essential basic information is then used to investigate broader themes. Our approach is multidisciplinary, cumulative, comparative, and inclusive, but emphasizes the unique contributions that can be made using archaeological data.

Archaeologists, especially historical archaeologists, are in a position to use their intimate familiarity with archaeological and historical evidence pertaining to particular classes of goods to answer higher-level questions about consumerism. The information presented in the case study is only the beginning, but we can already envision linking what we have learned about the consumerization of household ceramic goods with information about other classes of material culture. It is our earnest hope that the ideas presented here will foment synergies among practitioners of ethnoarchaeology, historical archaeology, and modern material culture studies to develop an explicit archaeology of consumerism, an enterprise that will contribute importantly to discussions of consumerist societies taking place across the academy and in other contexts.

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