

Restoring Connections: How Mass-production Has Eroded Our Bond with Everyday Objects and How We Can Rebuild It.

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Abstract

This essay investigates how the rise of consumerism has weakened our connection to the objects we encounter, contributing to a throwaway culture. It discusses how embracing more of an artisanal lifestyle can restore our bond with craftsmanship, fostering a deeper appreciation for the items we use. This shift not only cultivates mindful engagement with possessions but also encourages a return to a more natural and sustainable way of living that benefits our planet.

Keywords

Mass-production, consumerism, sentimental attachment, sustainability, craftsmanship, artisan.

Acknowledgments

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Method statement

For this essay I used both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as primary and secondary sources. I created a survey to ask “What one item would you save if your home was on fire and **tell me why?**” to gain insight on whether people would choose sentimental or non-sentimental items and their reasons why. I compared a handcrafted item to a mass-produced one and visited the Russell Cotes Museum to see what value a collector’s items held. Secondary sources consisted of a wide range of books and online articles.

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Introduction

Today we live in a world where mass-manufacturing tries to fulfil our greed with an abundance of superficial, cheap, uninspiring choices at the expense of the depth, soul and individuality that come with genuine craftsmanship, for both the consumers and the craftsmen themselves. As a result, this essay delves into how industrialisation and the rise of mass-production has worn down our connection to everyday possessions; reducing them to mere commodities with little personal meaning; and fuels a throwaway culture. As I will discuss, industrialisation replaced unique, handmade objects with soulless, machine-made products, lessening the possibility of personal connection to objects that once accompanied what we owned. Therefore, this essay will argue that we must rebuild our connection to objects if we hope to slow down the relentless cycle of consumption, not only for the environment but to bring back meaning to objects that fulfil our desire for personal expression. One of the ways we can do this is by embracing an artisanal mindset and going back to our roots. By creating a human-scale world, we can restore depth and appreciation to the things we own. I will explain the importance of personal identity through objects, from minimalism to maximalism, and how we need to reduce throwaway culture by having physically and emotionally durable designs. I will also discuss that now that our world is becoming increasingly more digital, we are leaving the physical behind. Ultimately, we need to choose to value what we own. We need to move towards a more sustainable world where we become more in control of our lives, our belongings become more meaningful and we foster the desire to fix instead of replace.

Early Human Connection with Nature

Historically, objects reflected a deeper connection between humans and their creations due to the smaller scale world they lived in; where every item in your home, including the home itself, was fully man made. However, with the rise of industrialisation and mass-production, we often no longer even know where our items come from, therefore distancing ourselves from a more personal connection. Consumerism is rampant. Cheap, soulless items are made that either break easily or hold little to no emotional attachment, leading to a throwaway culture where such objects are easily discarded rather than cherished. Our world needs us to move towards a more sustainable future; one in which we return to an artisanal approach, where craftsmanship and sustainability are able to replace the consumerism that has taken over.

Our world is filled with a huge variety of colours, complex ecosystems and creatures, big and small. It is of no surprise that humans are filled with so much creativity. This instinct to create and bring more beauty and expression into the world is evident in our earliest history, from ancient cave paintings to the artefacts unearthed by archaeologists. Birren has described this by saying that “early man somehow needed beauty in his life and was inspired to surround himself with charming color in all art forms” (Birren, 1978, p.1). Nature has always been a profound source of inspiration, driving humans to replicate

its beauty in their own creations in a variety of different ways through two-dimensional drawings to architectural structures, that not only provide function but also hold a deeper meaningful connection.

This is further supported by Kopec, who agrees that “the natural environment contains many features that facilitate critical thinking skills and biomechanics” (2018, p.238). This gives us an insight into how nature encourages not only creativity but also deeper cognitive engagement. Biophilia is the term used to describe an innate connection with the natural environment (Kopec, 2018, p239). There is a reason why so many objects are inspired by plants or animals. Aesthetically, we seem drawn to more organic shapes: through billions of years of evolution, nature has perfected the form and function of living organisms. These natural designs have revealed their secrets to inventors, inspiring human innovation across all forms of design; one example being aerodynamic bird wings helping to inspire early aeroplane designs.



Figure 1, Lascaux cave: Hall of Bulls

We began as a part of nature, living in harmony with our surroundings. As humanity advanced, we created homes, farms, and communities, marking a shift from a purely natural existence to a human-made world. Bread came from your local baker, and clothes were made by the tailor who lived next door. This artisanal way of living encourages the emotional bond between people and the objects they use. Adamson said: “When we say that someone crafts an object, we mean that they put their whole self into it, body and mind alike.” (2018, p.16). The process of *crafting* an object by hand borders on being a spiritual process with deep personal investment, involving both physical and mental engagement. Compared to buying a machine-made object off the shelf, the end result, from this intense level of artisanal commitment, is the potential for a deeper relationship between the user and object.

Tacit knowledge of materials is developed over years and used to be regularly passed down from one generation to the next. This succession allowed the sense of appreciation for artisanal skills to endure through significant parts of history. However, with the growth of industrialisation and mass-production, such intimate and familial connections are lost. Items are mass-produced by machines, stripping away the human element and reducing everyday objects to disposable commodities. This erases the personal touch that once defined our relationship with possessions. It makes it harder to appreciate or connect with the things we use daily as there is no depth, no years of refinement to master the skill, no human

joy behind finishing the product, or anxiety over making a mistake. A machine produces the exact same, uniformed shapes, feels nothing as it makes object after object, and has nothing of itself to invest. This is why we need to slow down the relentless cycle of consumption and embrace an artisanal mindset to create a world in which we have more depth and appreciation to the things we own.

Industrialisation & Modernism

After The Second World War, factories could be used for mass-production of consumer items instead of munitions for the war effort. People celebrated this industrialisation as it lowered costs and allowed for the rise of consumerism that people craved after rationing. This is supported by Batchelor:

“On an aesthetic level, the standardisation which it was believed mass-production demanded, was welcomed by modernists. Not only did it imply system, order and rationality at a time of perplexingly rapid change, it offered also a viable alternative to aesthetic values rooted in historicism.” (1992, p.95).

This points out how people felt security in the standardisation of objects as it brought structure and familiarity to a rapidly changing world. In addition, Batchelor also explains how people appreciated these standardised, simple, mass-produced designs as they were seen as fresh, original and modern. They wanted a brand new look for the future that did not mimic past forms. Modernism looked forward with hope for a better future: “Factories and the machines that they housed began to produce items faster and cheaper than could be made by hand.” (Rafferty, 2017). This suggests why people were excited for change as these labour-saving machines allowed for people on lower incomes to afford more items and start to fill their homes after the austerity of wartime. However, mass-production was not just for consumers. It was pushed by manufacturers for their economic gain. This is reinforced by Batchelor:

“The means of production – including mass-production – were controlled by manufacturers who principally wanted design, insofar as it was deemed necessary at all, to secure the best returns on their investments.” (1992, p.102).

This is when the connection to objects really started to diminish. People held less attachment to these standardised designs. Chapman supports this when he states: “waste is nothing more than symptomatic of a failed user-object relationship” (2015, p.25). When your cheap, mass-produced chair broke, you would just get a new one. However, if your beautifully bespoke hand-carved wooden chair, that was passed down from your grandfather, broke, you would want to fix it. Objects have become too disposable. Even if manufacturers tried to brainwash people into wanting mass-produced “modern” items for their economic gain, the fact is that some people do just prefer the more minimalistic design choice. Not everyone likes the same thing. Norman explains that products have different personalities and that “personality must be matched” (2007, p.57). Once our personalities change, we no longer feel an attachment to that object. *The Value of Things* explains that shopping is “the endless creation and re-creation of ourselves. [...] Rather than making a purchase, in a sense, a purchase now ‘makes’ us.”

(Cummings & Lewandowsha, 2000, p.131-132). People began to see modernism's linear, one-size-fits-all approach as inadequate in capturing the diversity and complexity of human experience. Some things are simply just there to do their job and blend in, but they are completely replaceable. If it breaks, you can just inevitably purchase the exact same one. These are not the objects to which people have particular attachment. Therefore, the rise of mass-production, while initially celebrated for its accessibility and uniformity, has ultimately fostered a culture where objects are easily replaced rather than cherished.

Personal Identity through Consumer Goods

Another reason why we should change how we make things to have more variety and uniqueness, is because we use objects and household possessions to show people who we are. “Objects, products, goods purchased help us to define ourselves to ourselves and to others; the things with which we surround ourselves help to tell us and others who we think we are.” (Batchelor, 1994, p.142). This highlights that we use the objects with which we surround ourselves, to reflect both our lifestyle and values. We see this manifested through people that identify as opposite ends of the design spectrum: minimalists and maximalists.

Minimalists and maximalists both utilise personal items in their homes to convey their values, identities, and lifestyles, but in different ways. Functionality and purpose are often given top priority by minimalists, who select a small number of necessary goods that fulfil specific roles, strengthening their bonds with the few items they keep. As they try to avoid the connection to material objects, they may be more inclined to choose simple, sleek, mass-produced items. This is a problem, as mass-produced objects are not made for durability. As Crouch states: “objects are made cheaply because they are not intended to last; their styling decrees this. Objects are not made to be repaired but to be discarded” (2005, p.153). How easily things can be replaced if broken, is the problem with not having a connection to the objects we own. If we cared more about our items we would invest in more durable design.

Maximalists, on the other hand, celebrate personal expression through objects. They relish in collecting items that have character and are unique, resulting in more of an emotional connection. If something was to break, they would be more inclined to fix it, as it is not as easily replaceable.

Both groups are on the same page regarding throwaway culture. Minimalists will avoid buying things in the first place that they do not need. However, maximalists will tend to pick out items that they have created an emotional bond with, meaning they are less likely to throw it away. In *Fewer, Better Things*, Adamson explains that “it is hardly ever wrong to value an object. The problem lies in not valuing things enough.” (2018, p.9). This attachment to our items is what we need to slow down our descent into throwaway culture. However, as people grow older and experience more things in life, they may change their aesthetic choices.

Humans are constantly growing and changing throughout life. The prefrontal cortex only fully develops by the age of twenty-five years old, which is very important for complex behavioural performance. (Araín *et al*, 2013). Not only this, but there are many experiences that can change a person's attachment to their belongings throughout their life. This is supported by Chapman in *Emotionally Durable Design*: “we keep objects that reflect current desirable identities and throw away ones that do not” (2015, p.48). People may have started off having a connection to the object they bought when they were children, but by the time they transition into adulthood they may have outgrown it. That is why Chapman explains that it is important to “cut waste by increasing the durability of relationships between people and things.” (2015, p.22). This will ensure we care about things enough to want to fix or upcycle them. It is so easy to get bored of the old and want a fresh change, but if we cared more about our objects, we would not want to replace them or we would upcycle them to fit in with our developing aesthetic choices.

Attachment to Sentimental Objects

Some objects hold a lot of value to us due to sentimental reasons. Experiences in life and memories are what makes us who we are and the objects that relate to those memories hold a deeper importance to a person, due to the nostalgia it creates. Things we had as a child remind us of our childhood and objects, linked to people that have passed away, remind you of them. I was curious to find out the one thing people care about most and whether it was due to sentimental or economic reasons. In a simple survey, I asked: “What one item would you save if your home was on fire and **tell me why?**”

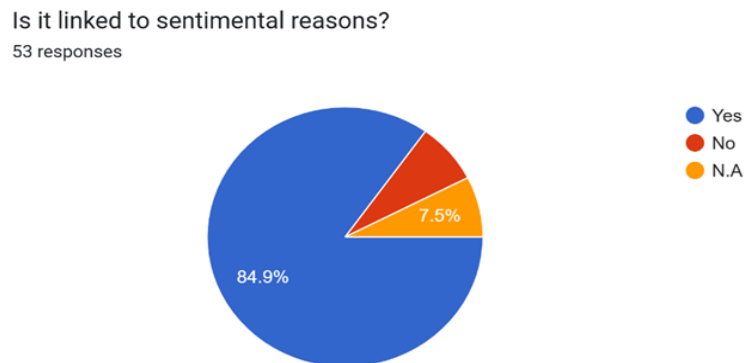


Figure 2, Percentage linked to sentimental reasons.

The answers consisted of 84.9% being sentimental reasons, 7.5 % being non-sentimental and 7.5% not choosing an inanimate object to save. There were two definite groups of people saying the same things which involved photographs and childhood teddy bears. This supported the quotation from Norman's *Emotional Design*: "a person's most beloved objects may well be inexpensive trinkets, frayed furniture, or photographs and books often tattered, dirty or faded" (2007, p.6). These items hold barely any economic value, yet they are irreplaceable to their owners, due to the memories they hold. However, 7.5% of the survey chose their object instead due to monetary value.

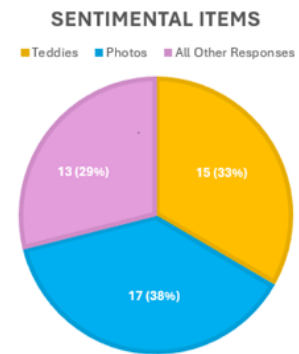


Figure 3, Sentimental items

One response, who chose their childhood teddy, explained; "My teddy, it's not the most valuable item cost-wise but the most valuable in sentiment". The acknowledgement of their teddy not being the most expensive thing they own, shows that cost does not matter in the creation of an emotional bond. A lot more people explained that they had their teddies their whole life, therefore they were irreplaceable due to the memories they held. You physically outgrow so many things from childhood that cannot all be kept due to space, but a childhood teddy is a thing that can stay with you. This underscores how objects can serve as vessels for cherished memories.

Teddies and photographs both embody significant life experiences or emotional milestones, making them irreplaceable in a way that other possessions may not. However, the majority of photographs people wanted to save were on their phones and computers. As we become more digital, this signifies a move towards a more abstract form of attachment, in turn making us less materialistic. This transition may lead to more of a diminished emotional connection to physical objects, as digital media can easily store vast amounts of memories and experiences. This is supported by Adamson in *Fewer, Better Things*: "On the other hand, to the extent that these children clutch a smartphone rather than a teddy bear to their small selves, they may be losing an intimate connection to physical objects, which has nurtured human development for many thousands of years." (2018, p.2). This is evident with the new generation of children becoming "iPad Kids". In the Ofcom report *Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2022*: 78% of 3-4 year olds use a tablet, 39% use a mobile phone, with 17% of them having their own phone (Ofcom, 2022). Children are being raised more and more online which means they are not playing or engaging as much with the world around them.

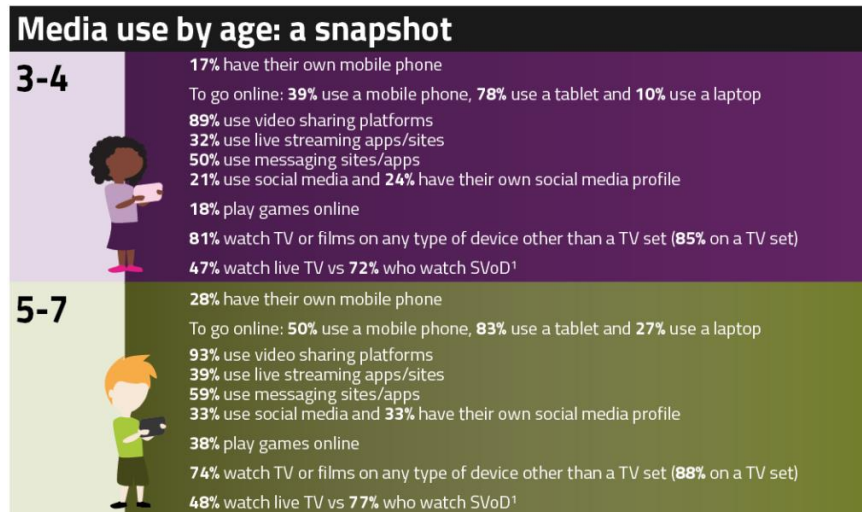


Figure 4, Media use by age

This is a problem, as playing with physical things is a massive learning opportunity for children. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) explain that playing with toys “contributes to the development of cognitive, motor, psychosocial, emotional, and linguistic skills. It also plays a key role in raising self-confident, creative, and happy children.” (Dag, 2021). Technology is an amazing resource that can have some positives to mental development, however, it should not be used to replace physical things or to keep children quiet. Being bored can result in stimulating your imagination. We fill boredom now with quick dopamine surges from videos or games, when we could have used the time to be present and find ways to fix our boredom that holds a deeper meaning. Kopec explains “the natural environment contains many features that facilitate critical thinking skills and biomechanics.” (2018, p.238). The diminished connection to multi-sensory experiences can hinder children's learning in fundamental ways. Children need to explore and learn about their world in a primary and meaningful way: climbing trees and feeling the texture of the bark. These tactile interactions are crucial for encouraging creativity and fostering curiosity for the sensory world we live in.

There were four responses from my survey that did not choose an item to save (see Figure 5).

People that did not choose an item.

4 responses

- My dog Oliver
Nothing else is important
- I would save my dog Dolly, everything else is replaceable
- I can't think of anything that would make me stop leaving the house...I could replace objects, but not people
- My cat only, not materialistic

Figure 5, People that did not choose an item

The idea that “everything else is replaceable” resonates with modern attitudes towards consumerism. Such people might not hold attachment to their objects because they could be mass-produced and easily replaceable. There is also the possibility that some individuals simply have not yet acquired their own irreplaceable object. Important items are often passed down through families only after someone has passed away, and many people may not have had the opportunity to travel or experience moments that lead to finding meaningful treasures. For example, my favourite item is one I recently purchased at a second-hand furniture shop. I was initially looking for a cheap side table to serve a practical purpose, and there were two options at the same price.

One was plain and unremarkable, while the other was a beautifully hand-carved wooden side table with intricate patterns. I felt incredibly lucky to discover it and now wish to keep it forever. We are not exposed to as much bespoke, beautifully crafted items anymore, due to mass-production of cheaper alternatives and the scarcity of well-made items that most could not afford new. Therefore, I did not expect to find a side table I loved this much, as finding a beautifully crafted hidden gem is very rare. For me, I also enjoy that this item has a history and although I do not know what that history is, you can tell it has so much more soul than a mass-produced item. This experience illustrates, if more objects were unique and beautiful, they can foster a deeper emotional attachment and find ‘forever homes’. I see these items I connect with and collect from charity shops as pre-loved souvenirs in my life.

Consumerism encourages us to buy more than we need, which can make hoarding seem like a natural extension of modern life. Like all relationships, there is a possibility for our connection to objects to become toxic, if it starts to take over. This is shown by hoarders, who get so attached to their possessions that they allow them to consume their life. Having too many possessions can have a detrimental effect on one's physical and emotional well-being (2022, NHS). Therefore, we need to maintain a healthy balance to ensure a space filled only with meaningful, carefully selected items, instead of creating a connection to anything and everything.

Consumerism and The Artisan's Return

Consumerism is one of the main challenges humans face in maintaining meaningful connections with the objects around them. Manufacturers know that people crave more than just mass-produced objects. Therefore, the customisation of these started to happen. Different colours and patterns attempt to make more of a connection and meet their aesthetic choices. Furthermore, as Crouch says, it only gives “the mass-produced object the illusion of individually, or, if we are to be more correct, gives the customer



Figure 6, Hand carved side table and plain side table

the illusion that the mass-produced object that he or she has consumed reflects his or her individuality.” (2005, p.151). Although it works on a superficial level, as it taps into our desire for self-expression, in reality the possibility of true artisanal lifestyle, would hold so much more personalisation and connection to things. Manufacturers are trying to reach more consumers by convincing us a different colour of the same mass-produced mug is all we desire.

Consumerism is constantly pushed on us to replace the old with the new. Newer and better iPhones are made almost every year, (Hunter, N. 2024) encouraging people to “upgrade” even when their phone is fully functional. People are always chasing the next new thing. In addition, these desirable objects are rarely made to last because they are relying on you to spend more money to get it fixed or get a new one. A study of two thousand adults found six in ten are more likely to replace a broken phone with a new one than fix it. (Mirreh, 2020). Not only this, but in December 2017, Apple confirmed a long-held suspicion among phone owners by admitting it had deliberately slowed down some iPhones as they got older. (Gerken, 2024). Such marketing decisions by manufacturers discourage long-term attachment, as people know their possessions are designed to lose value or function. Quality and durability is not what manufacturers want and the lack of knowledge of how these things are made, makes it nearly impossible to fix things ourselves.

Jane Ní Dhulchaointigh invented “Sugru”; the world’s first mouldable glue that turns into silicone rubber. Her intention was to put “the opportunity to fix things into our own hands.” (Cited in Adamson, 2018, p.65). This allows people to fix cheaply made products, rather than just replace them. “It is meant to reshape attitudes to the materiality around us, putting us less at the mercy of the objects we own and enabling us to fix and alter them as suits us best.” (Adamson, 2018, p.64). When things break, our consumerist instinct is to throw them away and get another one, but our natural instinct should be to fix them. Sugru attempts to put the power back in our hands.

A fantastic tool for fixing, making & DIY

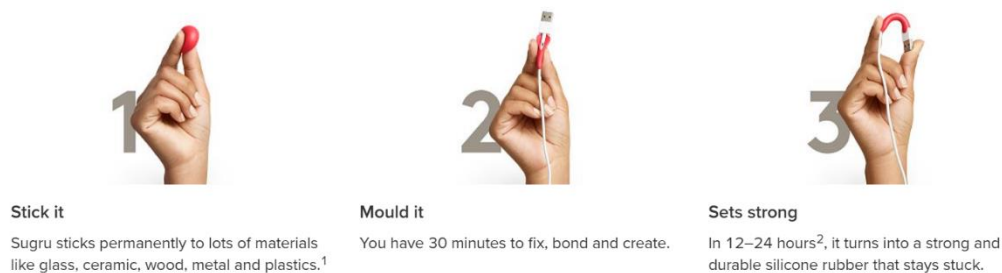


Figure 7, Sugru

Charm in Handmade Imperfections

Kintsugi is another amazing example of caring enough about your objects to fix instead of replace. “The Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by meticulously joining pieces back together and filling cracks with lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver, or platinum, thereby highlighting the flaws in the mended object.” (OED, 2024) You can create something even more beautiful through the art of repair. Additionally, the act of doing it yourself adds to the connection of the item. This is supported by McCracken:

‘DIY matters because it is an excellent way to embrace things that are defined by their imperfection, their near misses, their “OMG, I can’t believe this thing actually works.” But most of all, what matters about DIY tech is that we think with it, we tinker with it, we put it together, we do it ourselves. And this puts humans back in the driver’s seat.’ (2022 [1951], p.31-32).

By putting time and care into fixing, we add memories and build more sentiment to the object, which allows for a better human connection. This is what we need to reduce throwaway culture and rebuild our connection to objects. We should return to valuing well-made, repairable items that foster attachment and connection.



Figure 8, Kintsugi

People started to crave human crafted items after they got bored of the uniformity of the mass-produced. They tried personalisation of objects, yet there is still something about handmade items holding more emotional attachment to us as humans. Etsy is a great example of people looking for handcrafted items. It started out as a humble handmade goods platform, but now has “over 39.4 million active buyers buying from 4.7 million merchants, selling everything you can think of.” (Iddenden, 2021) The uniqueness and creativity from these handcrafted items gives us an appreciation for the craftsmanship that went into it. This is also supported by McCracken: “The artisan works by hand. This is a guarantor of imperfection. This is true because most human hands can't make things without making them a little bit crooked. Hand work is charmingly crooked.” (2022 [1951], p.66-67). Even if a machine could mass-produce the same thing, it could not create the same feeling. The beauty of hand-crafted, is that you cannot make everything perfectly the same and it feels more special to have something more unique

that not everyone has. The fact that Etsy is a platform for small businesses, with handwritten thank you notes, helps create the human connection in the purchase.

The artisanal approach offers something machines cannot: a piece of the maker's soul in the object. Humans' connection to creativity and making something by hand is described as a "spiritual process" by Korn (2017, p.37). He goes into depth to explain: "I have witnessed the pleasure and empowerment that skilled craftwork offers. There is a deep centeredness in trusting one's hands, mind, and imagination to work as a single, well-tuned instrument, centeredness that touches upon the very essence of fulfilment." (2017, p.53). For many artisans, the act of creating something by hand is a source of deep personal satisfaction. They combine their creativity with their physical skill to create something uniquely beautiful.

When machines took over, workers that used to have years of tacit knowledge of materials and processes, now have to undertake repetitive jobs. Their sense of fulfilment was lost, and consumers did not even want it anymore. This is supported by McCracken: "The triumph of the machine, the ability to make every object perfect and identical, for some part of the twentieth century this was a triumph. But by the twenty-first century we were wearying of it." (2022 [1951], p.68-69). Restoring our connection to objects involves giving the power back to craftspeople and appreciating the importance of expertly crafted, human-made goods. Machines should be tools to help us, they should not take over.

People need the artisanal way of living. The human connection to the objects we own is greater when they come from human hands. "The artisanal revolution helped recover the world we had lost. [...] we wanted to see the face of the man who grew our food and shake his hand." (McCracken, 2022 [1951], p.83-84). Knowing where things come from gives us more admiration for the world we live in and in turn will make us more sustainable. This appreciation for craftsmanship and human-made objects is incredibly important for the future of craft and our attachment to objects.

Brand new handcrafted items are understandably more expensive, as you are paying for the time and skill put into it. Another great way of owning items that are unique and beautiful, other than being lucky in a charity shop, is through making them yourself. In my survey, a few people answered that the item they would save in a fire was something they had made themselves. Making it yourself means that it is personalised exactly to your desired specifications or whims. This person explained: "The guitar I made. I love music and it represents my history with it and my second hobby is woodwork." Another response explained: "If my guitars burn, that's a great opportunity to buy new ones!" which highlights that the person who made their own has a deeper connection to it than the one that has them for their function.

Reclaiming craftsmanship

Reclaiming craftsmanship allows for people to be more self-sufficient and sustainable. This is supported by the ‘make do and mend’ and ‘grow your own’ movements needed during the Second World War. We lost the positive results of this after the war due to technical advances and the rise of consumerism. Gandhi once said “earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed” (Gandhi cited in Chapman, 2015, p.41).

If we had a choice, people would always prefer to pick the more environmentally friendly option, as we feel better about where our money is going. “Consumers feel that they are investing in a good cause and their consumption is, in some way, helping to make the world a better place” (Chapman, 2015, p.173). However, unfortunately, the cheapest option is the only option for a lot of people and although most likely everyone would rather take the moral option, some cannot afford this choice. We have enough food produced in the world that could feed the 800 million people that suffer from hunger and undernourishment. “All these people could be fed by less than a quarter of the food lost or wasted in the US and Europe.” (The World Counts, 2024). In addition, the amount of clothes being made has a significant impact on the environment, contributing to climate change and pollution. “Of the 100 billion garments produced each year, 92 million tonnes end up in landfills.” (Igini, 2024). No mass-produced items are ever made for the exact amount of people that want them. There is always physical waste which comes with environmental waste too. We should realise the harm that it is doing to our planet and return to more sustainable self-sufficiency.

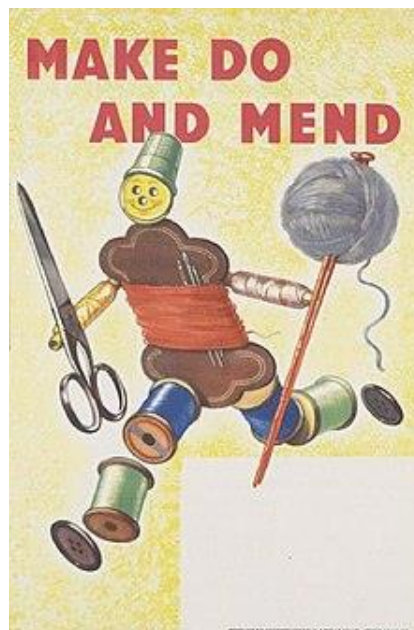


Figure 9 – Make Do and Mend

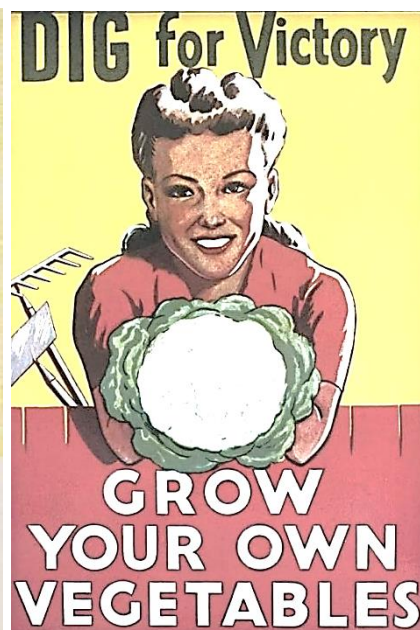


Figure 10 - Dig for Victory

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay highlighted the decline of our attachment to items as a result of mass-manufacturing that puts efficiency and surface-level diversity ahead of genuine craftsmanship. We discussed how, unlike cheaply made items, objects crafted with skill and care are more emotionally durable as well as physically durable, as they fulfil our innate desire for human-centred design. We explained that it is important to keep our attachment to physical items, particularly for younger generations who are brought up in front of screens, instead of the natural surroundings that formerly fostered our creativity. We run the risk of losing the rich sensory experiences and deep connections that physical items once provided, as the mass-produced items that are being pushed on us through consumerism, do not foster the same connection to unique hand-crafted items we used to create. As Chapman reminds us,

“earth is finite, balanced synergistic and reactive, and yet we design the world as though it were separable, mechanical and lasting [...]we see ourselves as being so powerful and magnificent that our abilities have outgrown this fragile planet’s ability to support us.” (2015 , p.26-27).

Together, these points have illustrated the urgent need to reassess our relationship with material items and embrace the artisanal way of living that is not only more sustainable but also kinder to our planet.

I discussed how, by caring about our items more, we will put more time into them, taking back control by repairing instead of replacing, like in Kintsugi, which in turn will deepen our connection to them. As Adamson explains “Craft is a two-way street: as you shape the material, it shapes you right back” (2018, p.28). By returning to our artisanal roots and fostering appreciation for the items we already own, we can encourage a deeper value for our possessions. In doing so, we counter the wasteful cycle of endless machine-made consumption and disposal. According to Norman, “humans evolved to coexist in the environment of other humans, animals, plants, landscapes, weather, and other natural phenomena.” (2007, p.65). It is not natural for humans to live in an entirely machine-made world. Ultimately, I discussed how we need to build a society where possessions are made to last, to combat the effects of mass-production. It is also important to note, not to take it too far, as I discussed the negatives of a hoarding mentality and how we need a healthy attachment to our items. Our possessions should be reflections of who we are, rather than them taking over or becoming disposable commodities. Valuing what we own can transform our industrialised, mass-produced world into one that exists on a human scale, allowing us to address the waste we create and restore our bond with the physical world.

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Appendix

What one item would you save if your home was on fire and **tell me why?**

53 responses

My PC, probably the most expensive thing I own, it has all my family photos on it and is the thing I feel would cause most detriment to me if it was destroyed.

Photo box

childhood plushie

Teddy

my dogs ashes

This is unfortunately going to be really sad but my phone, it allows me to have that connection to people and people are a huge support system for me to keep going and be strong even in harsh times!

mine and my girlfriends anniversary book, lots of good memories in there.

(Bella (dog) if she needed saving) photo albums & or photos on computer if not backed up

My childhood toy

Phone. Because it is expensive and holds lots of memories on it. And I can call emergency services.

My cat only, not materialistic

I would save my Nan's jewellery box as it holds a lot of memories from when she was here with us, I used to play dress up with it every time I visited as a kid! I wear the jewellery now as an adult.

Xbox cause I can play games and watch movies on it

My dog Oliver
Nothing else is important

Depends if there's people or animals in the building. Otherwise... Picture albums of my family

Photo board/book as there are lots of memories in a photo

My childhood teddy

My soft toy. A build-a-bear bunny, called fluffy, I have had her since I was about 7. I cannot replace her and she certainly wouldn't survive. She has also seen so many things that people in my life at the moment weren't there for or don't really talk about often. She 'remembers' one very important person in my life who has now passed away. So often when I think about fluffy I think about things that happened with that person as well and I can't replace or lose those memories.

Weirdly, when I was a younger I used to think about this often (just being really anxious when trying to go to sleep). I always used to think of three things, and the answers would pretty much vary between fluffy, our family cat, old printed out photos and some of my mothers fancy jewellery

A painting from a holiday because it is irreplaceable

My records / music collection.

A lot of memories connected to so many songs, through different stages of this journey

If we're discounting important things you might have on your person, such as wallet, phone, etc. I would probably save an item that is unique and irreplaceable, that has great personal meaning to me, such as an album of non-digital photos.

My grandma and grandads urn. It means a lot to our family and a lot to me too.

my cross that hangs above my bed, i pray to it every night it reminds me to be grateful no matter what's going on in my life, could never leave it behind, and i got it in Rome so it's sentimental to me

The teddy bear I've had since I was born because he holds a lot of sentimental value to me. When I was a child he used to come with me everywhere and I was devastated if I left him somewhere or he had to be put in the wash. He's very well loved now but he feels slightly like an extension of me still.

Watch - a gift from elderly relative as wedding present - connection to happy event & relatives loved

I would save my dog Dolly, everything else is replaceable

My Computer because it is expensive and costly to replace and I built it myself which holds sentimental value

The guitar I made. I love music and it represents my history with it and my second hobby if woodwork.

Assuming my wallet, phone and car keys are in my pockets, and the cats aren't counted in this, it would be my laptop. Without my laptop I can't work

If I could get it out of the house, the piano my godmother left me. Playing it is my happy place and I adored her

My daughter's toy quackers as she needed it for so long as it made her feel safe.

My computer as it provides me with my platform to work, holds pictures/documents that have sentimental value. It also provides me with entertainment from playing PC games.

My phone as it has all my photos with memories and a lot of apps I use every day

Family photos before digital - losing them would be memories lost 😞

My teddies without a doubt because they might as well be people to me

My laptop. Although its sentimental contents should be backed up, I don't trust the Cloud completely. If my guitars burn, that's a great opportunity to buy new ones!

I can't think of anything that would make me stop leaving the house...I could replace objects, but not people

My phone - so many pics and memories on it!!

Photos especially those of my mum and dad and my children as they are irreplaceable.

My denim jacket because it's my favourite item of clothing. I don't have any particularly special thing I care about that can't be replaced. If they weren't so big and heavy, I'd take my new home gym, the piano and the sofa because they are our most expensive items.

Photo albums because of years of reminders of memories

It has to be my computer, EVERYTHING is stored on it, all if my childhood photos, videos from a baby till now are scanned and backed up on it etc...

i dont think my cat counts as an item... but if he does then id obviously take him instead!

My leopard stuffed animal I've had since I was a child, because it's not something I could replace like a phone or a laptop and even if I could replace it, it wouldn't be the same.

my teddy because i couldn't sleep without it

My PC because it has all my photos on it

My big plushie, I got it the day my friend died and it's named after him, I think if my house burned down and I had nothing I'd still want him to cuddle.

My teddy, it's not the most valuable item cost-wise but the most valuable in sentiment

Laptop, since it's got so many of my projects on it

My childhood teddies, everything else is replaceable or buyable and they have been with me my whole life and mean a lot to me

My childhood stuffed animal because I've had it my entire life and it is very valuable to me

my teddy bears, they're the bear gang and as a unit count as one item. no bear gets left behind

my perfumes because they hold sentimental value and good memories

Photos, Memories of life