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### *4213 Cigarette Stubs: An Ineffable Display of People and Things*

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#### Abstract

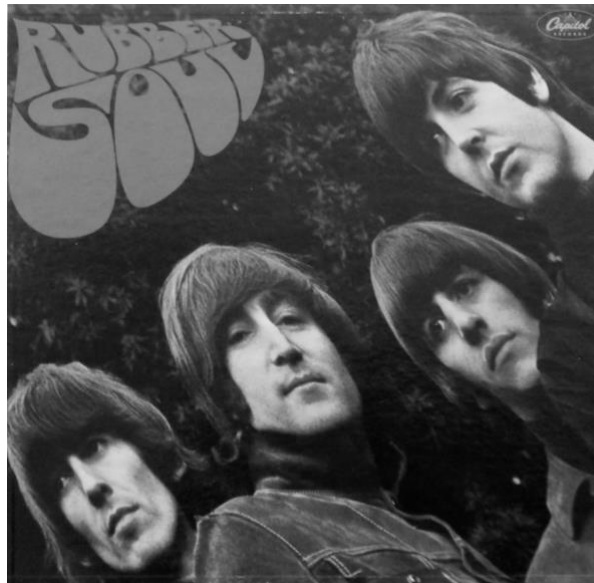
This essay includes descriptions of three instances of artistic production: A song, a tapestry project, and a novel-museum duo. All three convey a mutual inclination toward individuals and objects in differing ways. The third instance, a non-traditional permanent installation in *the Museum of Innocence* in Istanbul, is called *4213 Cigarette Stubs*. In the final sections of the essay, singling out this installation, I try crystallizing the educational aura even mundane objects can create when they are presented within the playful context of artistic expression. The focus in the discussion is on such aura in which sensing, remembering, thinking, comparing, empathizing, interpreting, and learning cohabit.

*Here and there in the brain, keepsake  
boxes that preserve fragments of the past*

Henri-Louis Bergson, 1911

This essay is comprised of textual and visual depictions of three instances of artistic production: A song, a tapestry project, and a novel-museum duo. In all three, a mutual inclination toward individuals and objects comes to the forefront, yet all have differing angles. I begin with a commentary on a Beatles song that alludes to things without even naming them, as an entity of one's private world; then touch briefly on Grayson Perry's tapestry, *Vanity of Small Differences*, which displays altered details of everyday objects and provides a rather satirical portrait of a whole culture; and finally, I move to my main topic, *The Museum of Innocence* which captures the cultural flavour of an era in Istanbul through collected objects as they played roles in a fictional love story. In the concluding paragraphs, singling out the *4213 Cigarette Stubs* installation in the museum collection, I try crystallizing the educational role even everyday objects can play when they are staged within thought-provoking and evocative art installations.

## I



*Figure 1. The Rubber Soul Album Cover. Lettering by Charles Front. Photo by Robert Freeman. Courtesy of Parlophone, London, UK.*

The fourth song on side two in the 1965 *Beatles* album *Rubber Soul* is ‘In My Life.’ Noted as the first major piece of work by *the Beatles* (Ono, Sheff & Lennon, 2000), the song elegantly conveys young John Lennon’s take on persons and objects of his past:

Though I know I’ll never lose affection  
 For people and things that went before  
 I know I’ll often stop and think about them  
 In my life I love you more

A popular debate on whether this song is about the sweet nostalgic qualities of a beautiful past or a mindful rumination upon a better future has come to my attention recently. For me and for the sake of this essay, I would put aside the fruitless dichotomy this debate dictates and suggest another possibility. I think the song is simply about a clear articulation of one’s current phase based on a tender connectedness to the past through individuals and objects, aka “people and things.”

## II

What Lennon did with words and tunes in *In My Life* has affinities with what Grayson Perry, when he plays with taste and class in his *Vanity of Small Differences* tapestry, did with threads and knots. For his 2012-project, Perry created six large tapestries (in *Figure 2*, one of them is shown) while filming a three-part documentary series for TV. He visited three very different regions of England, exploring the people and things he encountered. Throughout the project, Perry, as if he is conducting an autopsy of attachment to objects (Moore, 2013), underlines “the emotional investment people made in the things they chose to live with, wear, eat, read or drive” (Douglas, Lowe, Moore & Perry, 2013, p. 12).



*Figure 2. The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*, 2021, wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry, 200x400 cm. Courtesy of the Art Council Collection, London, UK.

### III

In the same decade, Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk published *The Museum of Innocence* (2008). The novel, in the context of 1980s' Istanbul, narrates the obsessive, romantic interests of *Kemal*, the principal character, in his beloved *Fusun* through hundreds of objects (Soganci, 2017, p. 79). Throughout the novel, Pamuk conveys his own attachment to certain objects by having *Kemal* collect them almost as “talismans of his sentimental longing” for *Fusun* (Ahn, 2012).

In April 2012, *The Museum of Innocence* became an eponym for a museum housed in a real building in one of the old central districts of Istanbul. The novel became embodied in a small-scale museum and Pamuk took on the role of chief curator, turning his text into an interesting collection of objects and their inter-connections. Opening its doors four years after the publication of the novel, this real-life museum now exhibits “objects ostensibly belonging to *Kemal*, who amasses an enormous collection related to his dead beloved and to the era in which he loved her” (Ahn, 2012).



Figure 3. The 1897 building housing The Museum of Innocence, Istanbul, Turkey. Courtesy of Tracy Ireland (2017).

The tiny four-floor museum consists of 83 display cabinets, which correspond to each of the chapters in the novel. Pamuk wrote the novel as he collected dresses, earrings, slippers, matchboxes, and similar objects that would end up in the museum. It is not easy to say with certainty whether the museum's exhibits are references to the text or vice versa. His personal memory, as well as the objects and events that he has chosen through meticulous research, played important roles in determining the content of the novel and the accompanying museum (Ozengi, 2012). The overall purpose was to grasp "the whole epoch" in Istanbul through physical remnants attributed to imagined characters (Rahim, 2012) and to exemplify how invented worlds can orient our lives through objects (Allmer, 2009, p. 172).



Figure 4. A photograph of one of the 83 display cabinets in *The Museum of Innocence*.  
Courtesy of the Museum of Innocence, Istanbul, Turkey.

For Pamuk, attachment to objects is an essential human trait (Gardels & Keating, 2014). *Kemal*, with his inquisitive attention to objects, displays variations of this essential trait in the novel. He "cherishes every physical relic of *Fusun* that he can save or steal: a barrette, a salt shaker she once touched, the little China dog that sits on top of her family's television" and those objects eventually find themselves in the museum of the novel's title, almost as a shrine to everyday life (Gorra, 2010).

In Chapter 68, we even witness *Kemal* collecting cigarette stubs *Fusun* left in ashtrays. He, with a weird mixture of affection and desperation, mentions how he “squirrels away 4,213 of *Fusun*’s cigarette butts” (Pamuk, 2009, p. 393). The museum displays this obsessive act of collecting with brilliant precision through a collection of 4,213 cigarette stubs. In the museum, each individual stub is handcrafted and attached to a wallpapered surface. Moreover, all are arranged in long columns by date and captioned with handwritten words to represent *Fusun*’s emotions at the exact time she smoked them. Some are angrily twisted, some only half-smoked in a rush, and all have traces of her lipstick. Under each stub, Pamuk added a sentence that reflects a miniature history of their relationship: “You’re very cautious; Late-night shame; There is no turning back” (Rahim, 2012, para. 13).



Figure 5. A scanned page from the museum catalogue *The Innocence of Objects* showing a detail from *4213 Cigarette Stubs* and a photograph of Orhan Pamuk working on it. Courtesy of the Museum of Innocence, Istanbul, Turkey.

The display of 4,213 cigarette stubs is a vivid example of Pamuk’s typical focus on objects, or if a more scholarly rephrasing is needed, “the empirical particulars of the world” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 101) in such a way that we find ourselves “paying attention to things in new ways” (Weber, 2008, p. 44). Through this display, we once again witness that “images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into-words” (Weber, 2008, p. 44).



Figure 6. A scanned page from the museum catalogue *The Innocence of Objects* showing another detail from *4213 Cigarette Stubs*. Courtesy of the Museum of Innocence, Istanbul, Turkey.

Existing “in the tensions of blurred boundaries” (Finley, 2008, p. 72) of experience, emotion, memory, record, words and objects, this work uncovers the expressiveness of experienced things in the Deweyan sense:

[Art] quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms. It intercepts every shade of expressiveness found in objects and orders them to a new experience of life (Dewey, 1934, p. 110).

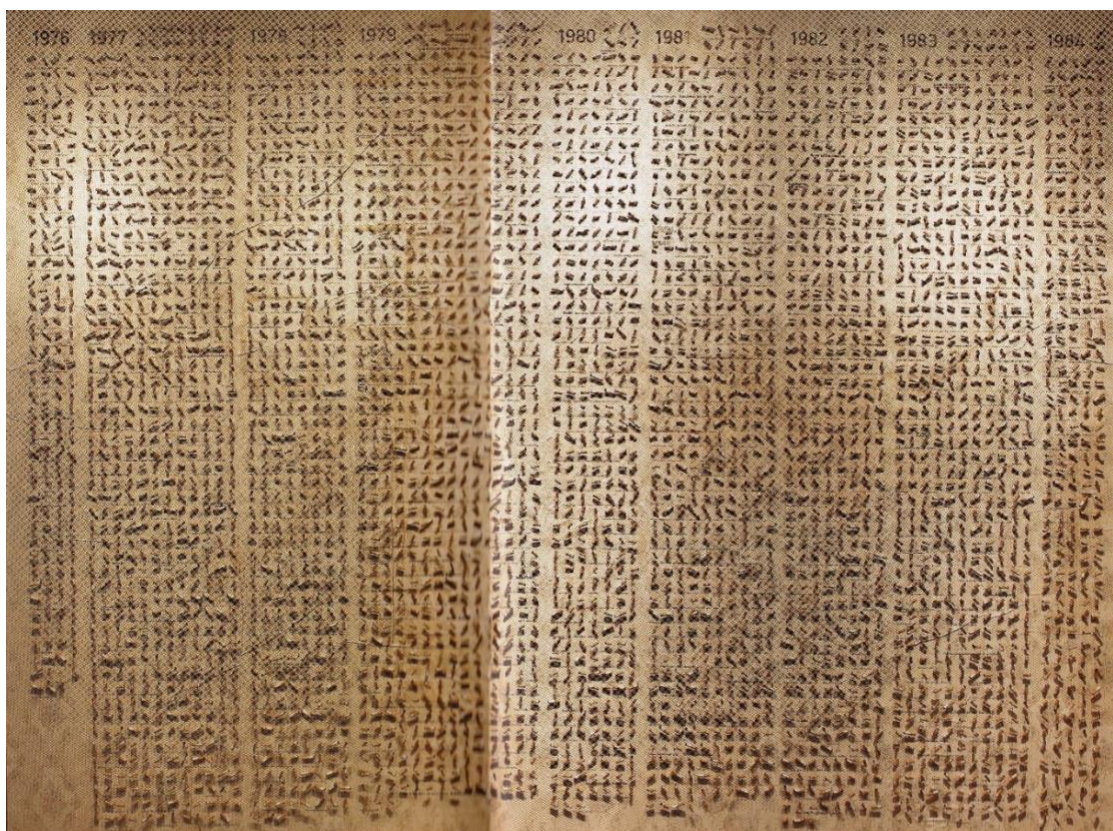


Figure 7. A scanned page from the museum catalogue *The Innocence of Objects* showing 4213 Cigarette Stubs. Courtesy of the Museum of Innocence, Istanbul, Turkey.

### Discussion

Some would probably diagnose Pamuk, in his assembling of the cigarette installation, with “ethnographer envy” (Foster, 1996, p. 183), yet from an educational point of view its contribution to “the enlargement of human understanding” (Eisner, 2008, p. 11) cannot be ruled out. The specific arrangement of the cigarette stubs deepens our knowledge of the human condition by “addressing the qualitative nuances of situations through empathic feeling” (Eisner, 2008, p. 10). With its continuous documentary impulse, as in Susan Finley’s (2008) description of arts-based research, the stubs “makes use of emotive, affective experiences, senses, and imagination as well as intellect, as ways of knowing and responding to the world” (p. 72). As Pamuk (2012) summarizes, “the power of things inheres in the memories they gather up inside them, and also in the vicissitudes of our imagination, and our memory” (p. 206).

The things exhibited in *The Museum of Innocence* are not “museum objects” in the sense that we cannot associate them with some religious, aristocratic, nationalist, or capitalist ideology, with power or wealth, or with some superior patrimony. In contrast, the museum shows us



objects belonging to lay people: cheap lighters, casual clothes, mass-produced saltshakers, and thrown away cigarette butts. In doing so, the museum expresses Pamuk's (2012) idea that, the stories of ordinary people and things are much better suited to displaying "the depths of our humanity" (p. 206), which, by the way, constitutes the essence of a more holistic educational practice. In such practice, small institutions like *The Museum of Innocence*, through their focus on persons and objects would help create a less linear art classroom, because the flow from linear art curricula toward a holistic one is possible through a move "from histories to stories, from epics to novels, from monumental buildings to homes, from nations to persons" (Pamuk, 2012, p. 57), and from imperial treasures to daily objects of ordinary individuals.

In Lennon's "people and things" and later in Perry's search for taste, we see hints of such a humane flow. *The Museum of Innocence* takes this flow further by unveiling the power of real objects to trigger memories and imagination. It is in this unveiling that we as educators come across a particular kind of instructional opportunity that expands and overflows the shallow bowl of linear curricula. The opportunity,

to be moved to tears, tickled pink, shocked or disgusted by a museum object, or simply to reflect upon it, as a result of sensory and emotional engagement with its physicality before necessarily knowing anything at all about it, is itself a powerful component of what a museum experience can offer—not just as a step on the journey towards cognitive understanding of the story the object helps to tell, but as a potent and sometimes transformative phenomenon in its own right. (Dudley, 2012, p. 2)

Museums such as *The Museum of Innocence* do not teach in the one-size-fits-all, step-by-step, do-as-I-say education model. They, in Bachelard's (1964) words, sink us "into profound daydreaming" (p. 142) where sensing, remembering, thinking, comparing, empathizing, interpreting and learning cohabit. Such institutions not only provide invaluable experiences for our students on site but set fresh examples for us so that, as teachers, we find in ourselves the strength and faith to embrace new teaching ideas, models, and contexts as well.

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### **About the Author**

Ismail Ozgur Soganci is a Professor of Art Education at Anadolu University in Turkey. His recent research concentrates on links between teaching and various modes of visuality along with historical and cultural constructs that shaped them. His work often focuses on various modes of pictorial representation in traditional formats such as drawing, oil painting, and book art.

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