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# HYPERALLERGIC

ART

## illuminating the Contents of Our Junk Drawers

Claire Voon November 25, 2015



Jil Weinstock, “Mrs. J Horwitz Crafting” (2015) (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

We all have those drawers filled to the brim with objects we use only occasionally or keep simply for sentiment, knickknacks united only by the fact that they lie in an enclosed box. For years, artist Jil Weinstock has amassed such troves that once belonged to people from all over the country, purchasing the contents of their drawers off eBay and Craigslist. She then embeds the objects in layers of translucent rubber, each item separated from its neighbor like a specimen, and illuminates the entire collection from behind, thus revealing what’s usually kept tucked away in the dark.

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*Things Arranged Neatly*, an exhibition of these curious lightboxes now on view at Winston Wachter Fine Art, compels you to wonder why we have a tendency to collect — or hoard, depending on how you see it — treasures that others may call junk.



Giving off white, yellow, or orange light, each box is affixed to the wall, its objects buried within an inch or so of urethane rubber. Weinstock laid down the adhesive layer by layer, placing objects at different depths so that while some appear distinct, others exist as hazy forms. Fossilized and bathed in warm light, the bric-a-brac transforms into an array of glowing relics; the value that the owners of

these items saw in them, and that helped them survive years of spring cleanings, is realized.

Some of the absent drawers were clearly designated for certain objects: one was once filled with drawing supplies, another held spools (which here eerily resemble mummies), yet another housed tools. *Things Arranged Neatly* doesn't offer any information on the drawers' histories, aside from including their owners' names in the titles of the artworks, but this excavation of the drawers — their contents spread out and lit as if X-rayed — encourages close examination of the mostly mundane artifacts. Many of them hint at their owners' idiosyncrasies or certain aspects of their lives: Tom, the owner of the tool collection, for instance, apparently liked only blue tools; Mr. Talbot, who had a drawer that held just paper punches, perhaps taught art.

Other collections reveal a deep human desire to store things, no matter how seemingly random or useless. Someone chose to keep a whole selection of belt buckles, another a

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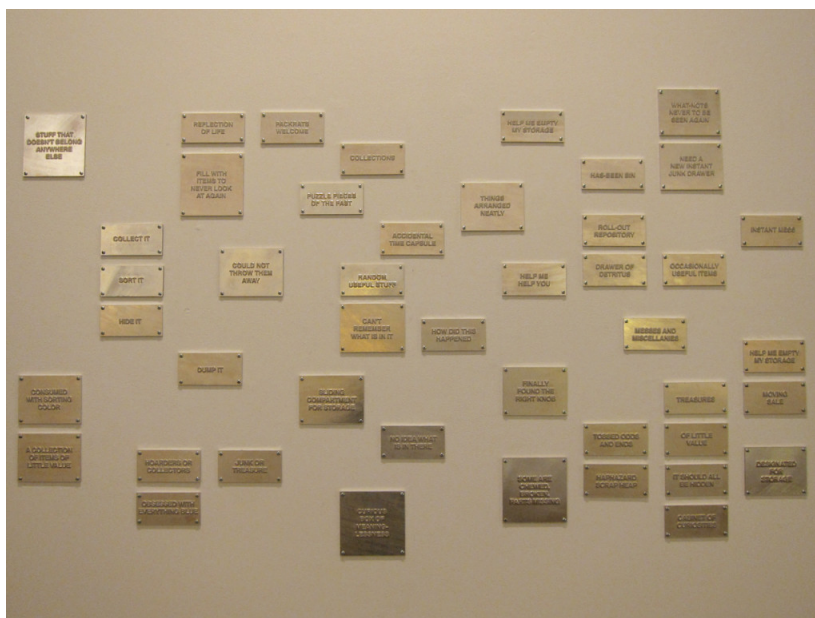
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drawer full of oven knobs. One Gus Jarvin even amassed a group of splintered wood chips. More relatable are the drawers that seem closer to what you'd find in most American homes: Mr. Jacob's nightstand, which contained combs, an assortment of buttons, and a notebook, represents the kind of hodgepodge of ephemera that typically fills one of our most personal spaces. One family's kitchen drawer is endearingly familiar, containing a bottle of Elmer's glue, ballpoint pens, matches, toothpicks, batteries, Band-aids, a deck of cards, candles, lozenges, keys, rubber bands, tape, and a classic no. 2 yellow pencil.

Further commemorating these assortments of miscellany are a number of metal plaques on one of the gallery's walls — themselves a peculiar collection — that form the exhibition's eponymous work. Etched into them are phrases suggesting the different approaches people may have to accumulating things in their drawers: “Hoarders or collectors,” “Stuff that doesn't belong anywhere else.” Some are more frank, like, “Fill with items to never look at again,” “Could not throw away,” or the foreboding “Haphazard scrap heap.” Whatever the reason we store knickknacks for years, Weinstock suggests that the places where they're gathered become time capsules of sorts, holding an emotional value that anyone can appreciate.



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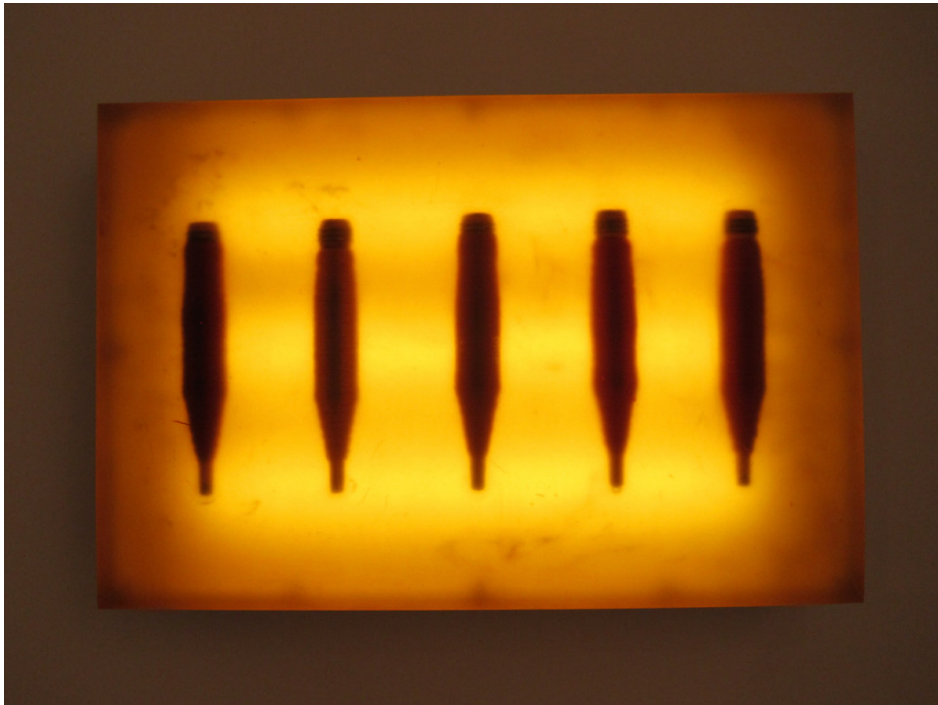
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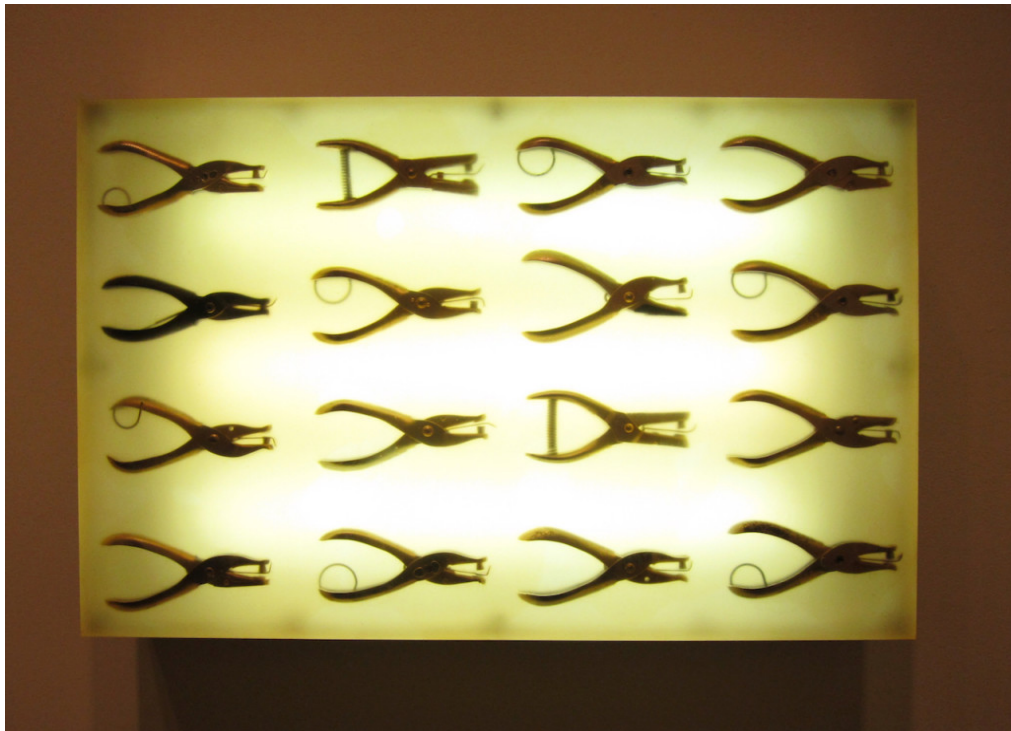
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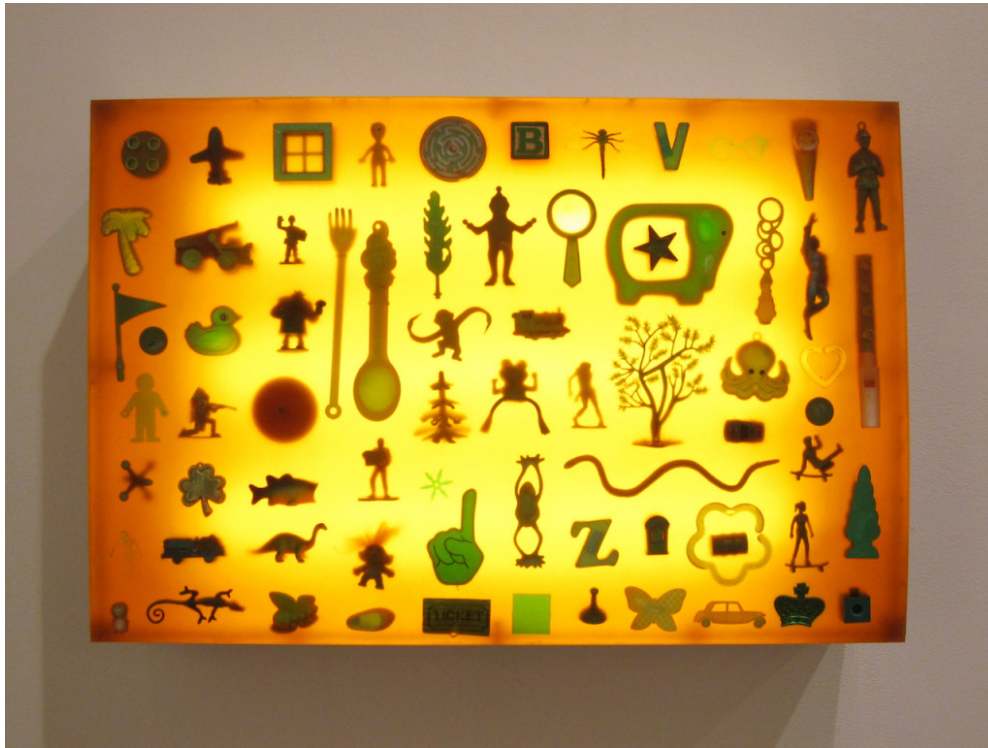
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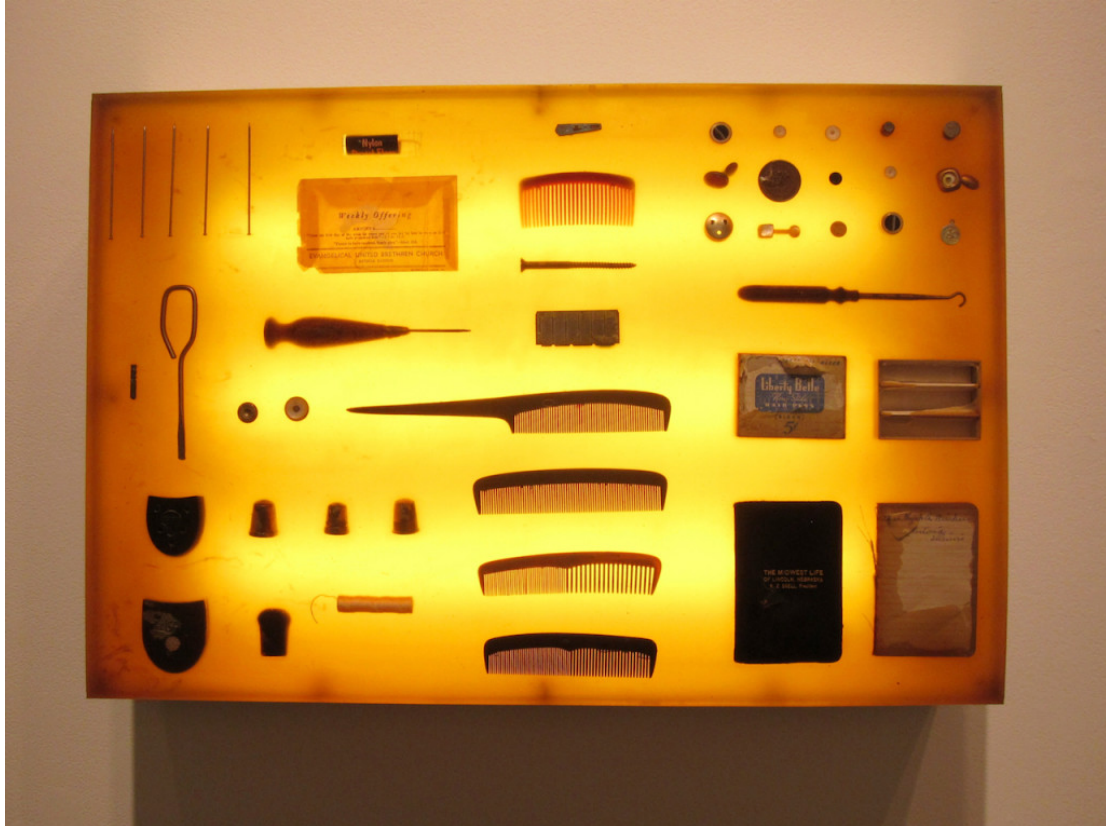
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