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To cite this article: Sebnem Timur Ogut (2017) The Struggle of Objects and Meaning: Design, Representation and Material Culture in the Everyday Objects of Orhan Pamuk's 'Museum of Innocence', The Design Journal, 20:1, 45-66, DOI: [10.1080/14606925.2016.1206721](https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2016.1206721)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2016.1206721>



Published online: 08 Aug 2016.



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The Struggle of Objects and Meaning: Design, Representation and Material Culture in the Everyday Objects of Orhan Pamuk's 'Museum of Innocence'

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ABSTRACT Having been awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize for literature, Orhan Pamuk's next novel was entitled *The Museum of Innocence*. The novel, which bears the same name as an actual museum, is one of a kind, because before writing the novel he started to collect the items that would be described in the story, then, or simultaneously, he wrote the novel and opened a museum that consists of the objects

depicted in the novel (Pamuk, 2008). He defines the novel as ‘an annotated catalogue of the museum, relating in detail the stories of each and every object’ (Pamuk, 2009: 702). This article sets out to explore, first on a semiotic level, the struggle between the objects and their meaning; secondly the dilemma between Lyotard’s figural and discursive fields within the novel/museum; and finally, with regard to its implications for design, the significance of objects will be discussed in relation to everyday life and material culture studies, with an emphasis on memory and identity.

KEYWORDS: objects, design, material culture, everyday life, representation, Istanbul, meaning, memory, identity

Introduction: Objects, Meaning and Value

To decipher the world’s signs always means to struggle with a certain *innocence* of objects (Barthes, 1994a: 158, emphasis added).



When the object becomes the actor of a ‘story’ that is shared by other people, known and told, then it becomes more than just an object having use value. Its exchange value is determined by its sign value: what it represents, what it is not, what it stands for. Orhan Pamuk in his novel, *The Museum of Innocence*, tells the story of Kemal who falls in an impossible love with Füsun and by collecting objects that belong to her, he builds a constellation of objects for his unattainable consolation. The basic plot is constructed around the fact that each object acts like a relic of a special moment or memory that belongs to Füsun. This is the way the novel is constructed, a meticulous weaving of stories of individual objects, things, articles that are collected physically before the novel is written. The stories that yield as separate chapters – each one centres around specific objects whose context is determined by real social, cultural, historical motifs, acceptions, rituals, phenomena and events that took place in and are part of Istanbul. There is a wide range of concepts that have been touched throughout the novel such as Turkey’s process of modernization; consequent tensions related to traditional customs, beliefs contradicting the forces and dynamics of modernity, struggles out of class differences, issues of gender and social roles, the effects of consumerism and media, among many others. A sharp sense, understanding and representation of time is embedded throughout different instances.

Let me begin with the big clock on the wall: It was German-made, cased in wood and glass, with a pendulum and a chime. It hung on the wall right next to the door, and it

was there not to measure time, but to be a constant reminder to the whole family of time's continuity, and to bear witness to the 'official' world outside. Because television had taken over the job of keeping time in recent years, and did so more entertainingly than did the radio, this clock (like hundreds of thousands of other wall clocks in Istanbul) was losing its importance (Pamuk, 2009, p. 389.)¹

Building a museum for the pieces that he has collected to write his novel and opening up questions concerning the values of objects, their meaning, their function, their representative character, Pamuk inverts our understanding of a museum in the first place. The museum, in its general understanding is the collection of objects or stuff that witnessed and/or was part of a certain period of time. The objects in Pamuk's museum are witnesses of a shared past and belong to a certain historical context, but what differentiates Pamuk's museum from a conventional museum is that they are not presented in a chronological or taxonomic order. The way they are displayed is determined by a construct, a fictitious love story in which 1970s Istanbul, with all its material culture, is a backdrop. Although denied by the author, Kemal; the main character in the novel has obvious similarities and parallels with Pamuk. This creates the possibility that the story could be a real one which in the end implies the objects depicted might be a part of a 'real' story, but both as museum visitors or novel readers we can never be sure of that. The objects are 'real'. They are in front of us. We recognize some of them from our shared past, but the story is a constructed one. This causes a parallax, a circuit, a mismatch. ... In museums the visitors mostly look for a reality check. When faced with a functional object, the visitor wants to understand the authentic context that object once really functioned in. That is why there are animations or drawings of people and places, trying to depict the 'real' context of an unattainable past. The more we are convinced that this life picture is real, the 'aura' of the object increases. This is not to say that Pamuk's objects are implausible. They are truly authentic and carry traces of a lived reality, but they are gathered together in order to be the elements of a decor for a constructed reality. If we are to look at the fact that the elements of the decor were there before there was even a scenario to connect them, then we can also question whether the objects are the decor, or the story is the backdrop for the objects to be the actors and actresses.

This paper intends to build its main argument on three propositions. The first one deals with the struggle of the signifier and its signified; that of the object and its meaning. The second one suggests a reading of the museum and the novel questioning their compromise through Lyotard's concepts of 'Figure and Discourse'. Thirdly, the relations between material culture, design and everyday life will be reconstructed, taking the museum and novel as the centre.

Struggle Of The Signifier And Its Signified: The Object And Its Meaning

The basic distinction between a novel and a museum forms the first axis of the struggle of objects and meanings. While on one side there is the personal life of Orhan Pamuk as an inhabitant of Istanbul and his own personal history and memories that are surrounded by a neighbourhood and the material culture of this context; on the other side there is the fictional story, characters, spaces and objects that are mostly built upon this real context.

The struggle derives from the relationship between the linguistic sign, for example the 'quince grater' in the novel – 'the only object in Box 66² (Pamuk, 2012b), one of the strongest object–characters in the story – linked with the incidents related to the military coup in the 1980s – and a physical object: the specific quince grater in the museum (see Figure 1).

The story of the grater is told in an episode titled: 'What is This?' Kemal, while driving back from Füsün's family's house late at night is stopped by soldiers due to the curfew. Kemal had the quince grater he took from the house at the backseat as one of his relentless acts of acquiring objects that Füsün used. This time it was the turn of the grater. He was told by her mother that the whole afternoon they prepared quince jelly together with Füsün, filling the whole house with 'the lovely fragrance of' it (Pamuk, 2009: 522). So, he could not resist the temptation of having and carrying this memory back with him by the central functional element of a ritual. Throughout this episode, not a single specific visual cue is provided to depict the grater. While the linguistic signifier evokes different mental pictures in everyone's imagination, showing 'an object' saying that this is the artefact that the signifier corresponds to is to turn *langue* into *parole*, the mental image that is the sum of all graters that one experiences into a specific object, a single referent (Saussure, 1972). This way of rendering the imaginary and its plural hybridity into a specific real and singular object is like rowing against the soul of literature. In fact, this phenomenon reminds us of the *One and Three Chairs* (1965), by the US artist Joseph Kosuth, a key early work of Conceptual art by one of the movement's most influential artists where the definition of the chair, its photograph and the real chair itself placed together in the exhibition hall was one of the first works that played with the idea of representation itself.

A similar mechanism of the relationship between the text and its visual referent is explained by Barthes in his *Rhetoric of the Image* (1977). Barthes calls this relation of visual signs with their textual explanations, 'anchorage' (1977). *Anchorage* aims to anchor to one of the meanings – among many – of a particular sign to guarantee the desired perception. In this sense, by writing a novel with found objects, Pamuk has anchored a special story and contextual meaning among the many possible alternatives. Consequently, by building a museum with them he somehow both crystallized the



Figure 1

Quince grater in Box 66.
All rights belong to The
Museum of Innocence.

unstable relations between the many objects and also rendered their meanings permanent through the literary text, physical arrangement and visual composition. For example, as somebody who knows the Turkish context and has shared a similar repertoire of objects as those depicted by Pamuk, personally I have other values, meanings and stories attached to the items (like the Singer sewing machine or the radio that my grandmother had). Being put in a completely different setting than my own personal story, the feeling of being familiar and alienated at the same time, the struggle is that although the object has a forced meaning imposed on it, it always resists and floats away from any 'anchorage' through its materiality.

Ahn (2014) defines this as an ‘uneasy experience’, explaining in a review:

Looking closely at Pamuk’s display cases, as the exhibition catalog invites us to do, can be an uneasy experience. The cosy feel of the museum’s interior, the antiqued numbers over the vitrines, and the faded beauty of its objects are all part of the same curatorial strategy: to generate in us a false sense of longing, a nostalgia for something that neither we *nor anyone else* has ever experienced. When we look at real mementos and relics – a ticket stub from a first date, a drawer full of a dead family member’s possessions – their emotional power derives from a painful tension: the mundane materiality of the things versus the invisibility of the history that resides in them. We look at the artifacts, and they signify because they survive, while so much else has perished. To present *fake* artifacts, then, as this museum does, is a fundamentally awkward proposition, no matter how eloquently it’s rationalized or how beautifully it’s executed (Ahn, 2014, emphasis added).

Describing all the artefacts in the museum as ‘fake’ would be to exceed the intention of criticism. The objects, the pictures, the tickets, the ID cards, indeed most of the items are extremely ‘real’ and this physical or historical reality that these things carry is what lends the story its credibility within the context of the museum. Somewhere, sometime, somebody has used them and they have become part of that person’s life having witnessed their reality with the traces of time marked on them.

Quite ironically, on the other hand, the story starts with the purchase of a designer bag which is the object of the first encounter of Kemal and Füsün, the subjects of the love affair in the novel. Jenny Colon, the brand name of the bag (see Figure 2) that Kemal purchases for his fiancée, is an imaginary brand (Fowler, 2012). As Pamuk states, he commissioned a bag to be produced by local craftsmen with the fake brand of Jenny Colon. Making and selling counterfeits of designer bags is a common practice of the informal economy in developing countries and it is found out that the bag is a fake Jenny Colon in the novel during the course of the storyline. Actually Jenny Colon is an actress with whom Gérard de Nerval, the French poet, was desperately in love. It has been stated that this was Pamuk’s implied salute to Nerval in the novel. It also hints that the incident that circles around the handbag is, or will be, related to a desperate love affair. When we are faced with the beige leather handbag with the brand engraved on a piece of brass within a cabinet in the museum, if we are careful readers – as Pamuk often puts it himself in the novel – we enjoy the pleasure of facing the fake of a fake designer item that becomes an actress in the cast of objects he creates. What is stunning in these different encounters with imaginary or real objects, stories, characters, is that, objects

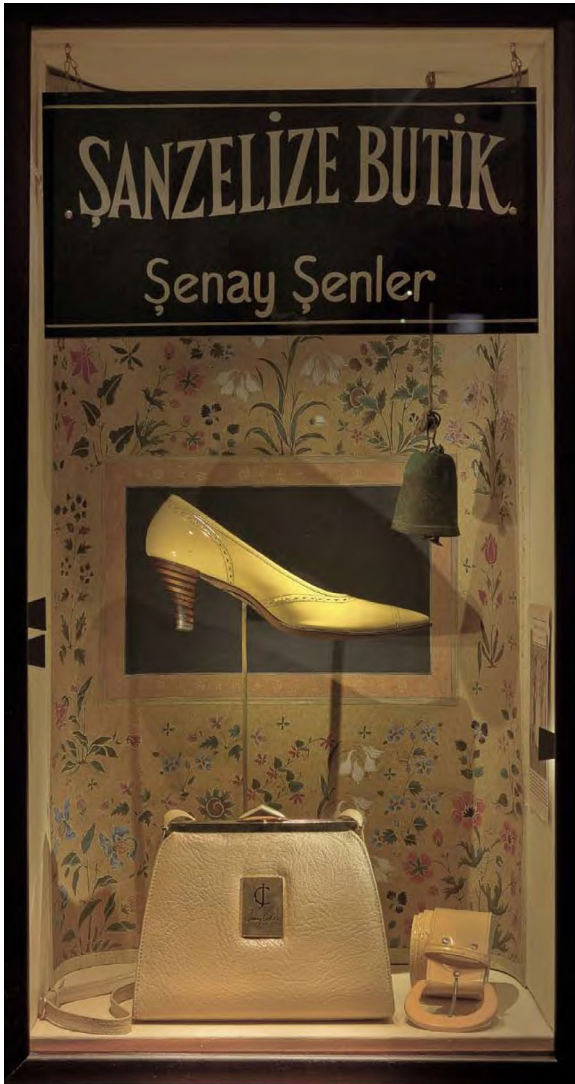


Figure 2
Cabinet Number 2
displaying the Jenny Colon
handbag in the Sanelize
Boutique. All rights belong to
The Museum of Innocence.

are also constructed as characters of the novel. Pamuk suggests what Latour (1992) has offered in the field of sociology: to include the missing masses; the objects, in literature. That is not to say that objects were absent in literature before, but Pamuk renders the objects physically in front of our eyes, first by the novel, the catalogue, then by the museum itself. It has to be noted that objects lend their agency from the museum that Pamuk has set up inviting the visitors into this game of signification to take place.

The struggle of the real and the imaginary oscillates throughout the museum and novel. There is a passage where Kemal, the protagonist tells an imaginary story to his brother. Later the author says that everything told in the imaginary story turned out to be true, just like a

mirror effect (Pamuk, 2008). Similarly, all the objects that Kemal compiles in the absence of Füsün are used to construct a parallel reality that is built reciprocal to her lack. The objects are used as material to fill the hole Füsün leaves by her absence. The object of desire is reciprocated by other objects that function as the indexical signs of her existence. The whole portrait of Füsün is constructed through pixels of object images that are made up of an imaginary dream world, in which memory can be revived through a cinematic experience where objects become tools to animate what was once lost. As Attfield (2007) beautifully puts it:

The interpretation of objects as material culture includes dealing with the way in which a variety of shared and individual meanings is invested in specific objects, within both their social context and the life stages of individuals. It is therefore appropriate to consider how people relate to loss through objects by investing things with meaning so that they act as memorials of past times or stand in for the deceased. (137–138)

The further from Füsün Kemal gets, the more he constructs her through the objects he compiles, culminating in a whole house of objects, which is the museum. The objects themselves are posited as innocent, because they do not have their own will and they are subject to human manipulation. Just like the ‘object of desire’, Füsün herself, they are ignorant of the passionate love that surrounds them. As if in the definition of a sign, the signifier depends on physical existence and the signified depends on absence of it; the agency that ‘invests things with meaning’ (Attfield, 2007) is the will that is the power that manipulates a whole museum filled up with objects that are devoted to the reconstruction of a person during her absence. Füsün’s driving license is displayed in one of the cabinets, giving a clue as to why the museum is called the Museum of Innocence. It is the first time we are faced with the fact that Füsün has another name, *Masume*³, which means ‘innocent’. A museum that is devoted to innocent Masume; to represent her in her absence. The empty, floating dress without Füsün’s body is both the reminder and the embodiment of the total lack of her. (see Figure 3).

Compromise Of The Museum And The Novel? ‘Figure And Discourse’

The interaction between the museum pieces and the objects depicted in the novel can be discussed through the concepts of ‘figure and discourse’.

Only from within language can one get to and enter figure. One can get to the figure by making clear that every discourse possesses its counterpart, the object which it speaks, which is over



Figure 3
Füsün's floating dress from
Box 73. All rights belong to
The Museum of Innocence.

there, like what it designates in a horizon: sight on the edge of discourse. And one can get into the figure without leaving language behind because the figure is embedded in it. (Lyotard, 2011: 7)

Any kind of visual stimulus or an image is perceived through linguistic signs. This implies that meaning squeezes into our visual realm and it may cause us to perceive only the name of the thing that we are facing, not what we actually see. Of course it is not that simple. Lyotard (Readings, 1991)., while criticizing Saussure and structural linguistics as being one-dimensional, only working on the textual level and then switching back to the meaning, introduces the concepts of 'figure and

discourse' to deconstruct, or let us say to break, this diachrony and shows that it is possible to activate at both visual and textual levels synchronically, at one and at the same time. Lyotard puts visual against the textual, because he argues that an object cannot be singularly represented within the system of language as a system of differences. It is not possible to say everything about an object. An object will remain as an 'Other' to all discourses about itself. What Lyotard defines as the 'figural' suggests a heterogeneous structure that is put against, but works within the area of the 'discursive' in which concepts are represented. Figural in the discursive and discursive in the figural, a mixture in which one cannot be replaced by the other nor measured in terms of the other. That is why the name of the object and its referent cannot be easily separated.

The object resists being reduced to the state of mere equivalence to its meaning within a system of signification, and the figural marks this resistance, the sense that we cannot 'say' everything about an object, that an object always in some sense remains 'other' to any discourse we may maintain about it, has a singularity in excess of any meanings we may assign to it.

The figural arises as the coexistence of incommensurable or heterogeneous spaces, of the figurative in the textual or the textual in the figurative, for example. (Readings 1991: 4).

The wall where 4213 cigarette butts are displayed is a good example of this mix of the textual and the figural. The cigarettes, that represent the ones Füsün has smoked throughout the novel, are pinned on a big board like a large painting which is accompanied by Pamuk's own handwriting and certain phrases related to incidents (See Figure 4). This is one of the pieces where the museum gets closest to the text itself. The novel squeezes through the pinned cigarettes into the domain of the figural; takes the museum visitor inside the story that is hiding behind the walls of the museum.

While experiencing the textual through the novel and the catalogue; and the physical through the museum, Pamuk offers a heterogeneous space, such as Lyotard describes. where there is the 'figurative in the textual' or the 'textual in the figurative'. It is heterogeneous with levels of meaning within each other. That is why it is possible to visit the museum without reading the novel. The visitor to the museum who is completely ignorant of the constructed story behind, can still enjoy what is being offered on a figurative level; by the agency of the objects and their self-contained stories. Whereas the reader of the novel might experience a clash between what he/she read and imagined through the textual and what is being presented physically and figurally. While reading the novel, the reader is faced with Kemal, visiting the museum in that sense is like confronting Pamuk



Figure 4

Cigarettes smoked by Füsün from the Museum of Innocence, with accompanying handwritings of Pamuk. All rights belong to The Museum of Innocence.

himself. The reader realizes the actual references of the object-world that is depicted textually: it is like watching the ‘making of’ a novel. It offers a totally different experience where through the authenticity and variety of the objects, the museum visitor is hosted by Pamuk to the reality of Istanbul; its real people, its history, its clash of tradition and modernity, its lost beauty and one’s own personal story. Pamuk opens up the doors of Istanbul to the visitors through the physicality of the objects that seem so obviously to have come from the text. This is the dialogue of the city, the writer, memories, reality, nostalgia and a lost time. It should be noted that although the concepts of the figure and discourse can be thought of as compromising the novel and the museum, there is not any real compromise, they still remain as different entities within a dialogue, just like the figure and discourse themselves.

Pamuk, who has been dealing consistently with objects, representation and meaning, narrates in his novel *My Name is Red* the drawing of a tree from an Ottoman miniature book (1999). This tree which is on a piece of paper is extremely happy for *not* being drawn according to the Western conventions and it says: ‘I want to be the meaning of a tree, not the tree itself’ (Pamuk, 1999: 63). Similarly, the objects in his museum of innocence are begging a similar wish, that of being more than physical objects. They want to be objects with stories ...

Material Culture, Design And Display Of The Ordinary

Everyday life studies and design has been the subject of academic inquiry in the last decades by scholars from different backgrounds,

like sociology, anthropology, consumption, science and technology studies, etc. (Appadurai, 1988: Asa Berger, 2009: Douglas and Isherwood, 1982: Latour, 1992, 2000: McCracken, 1988: Miller, 1987, 2010). There are various views on approaching material culture and its relationship to design (Shove *et al*, 2007; Attfield, 2000), and the methods or methodology incorporating the theory of everyday life with practices of design is developing (Fulton Suri, 2005: Mattelmäki, 2006).

Everyday life has always been a topic of interest for artists, designers and design thinkers. Starting with paintings and depictions of everyday life, continuing with the 'ready-made' of Duchamp at the start of the century, changed the whole system of representation and conceptualization through artistic media. Since then there have been numerous projects, books, exhibitions, literary work on everyday life and design (Betts, 2004: Glenn and Hayes, 2007: Johnstone, 2008)⁴. A practice of counting, classifying, documenting and exhibiting accompanied the desire to captivate the everyday through objects of daily use. It should be noted that the interest of designers has always been slightly different than that of artists, documentarists or collectors. Designers or design researchers have tended to approach the matter mainly from this 'use' perspective. The work on everyday life sometimes ended or synchronically developed through thinking through projects on everyday life that ended in exhibitions (Antonelli, 2005: Blauvelt⁵, 2003: Fukosawa and Morrison, 2008) or compilations of objects (Lukas⁶, 1997: Mendell *et al*, 2009: Mustienes, 2000, 2003: Osborne⁷, 2010).

Paula Antonelli's exhibition (2005) is one of the significant compilations that plays around with the notion of the everyday through objects. The exhibition was followed by a book entitled *Humble Masterpieces: Everyday Marvels of Design* which consists of 120 objects that were collected to be displayed in MoMA, New York. A wide variety of everyday objects that are humble, mundane but effectively part of our lives were displayed, from a crown bottle cap to Lego, from M&Ms, to a safety pin. The everyday objects that meet the museum are screened through the perspective of design.

Fukosawa and Morrison's Super Normal Exhibition in 2006 at Axis Gallery, Tokyo can be considered as the design manifesto of two significant designers of our age. When Fukosawa's stools that were placed in the Salone del Mobile in Milan were mistakenly used by the people in the fair rather than being 'only' exhibited, Morrison noticing this incident, labelled it in his excitement: 'That's Super Normal!' (Fukosawa and Morrison, 2008: 20). Fukosawa tells this story in their book which marks the invisible border of an object of use and an object of 'design': Design in the sense of exhibited 'design' in a fair. Designers play with this notion of being 'ordinary' as a property to be preserved and incorporated while proposing new designs.

The *1,000 Extra/ordinary Objects* book series is a project of Benetton's *Colors* magazine, so the objects that are included in the volumes focus more on culturally significant items that cover a wide range of different geographical production and consumption patterns

(Mustienes, 2000, 2003). The definitions and explanations accompanying the objects provide insight into making sense of them, otherwise the functions would be abstract and unidentified for foreigners. According to the description on the *Colors* magazine website:

COLORS 1,000 Extra/Ordinary Objects is a collection of objects gathered together by Colors, the magazine published by Benetton, during its ten years of activity. Objects which are useless and bizarre, but also commonly used objects which become extraordinary outside their normal context: from diet pills for dogs to lollipops containing a worm; from a toy vulva in satin and velvet to ethnic plasters in three colors; from Texan golf boots to a pubic wig. Food, fashion, sex: every excuse is valid to tell a story of different world cultures through a collection of objects which, as Peter Gabriel writes in his introduction to the book, are a valuable indicator of the habits, crazes, dreams and nightmares of our times: 'We have made pictures of our ancestors from the things they have left behind. So it will be for the archaeologists of the future-by our objects you will know us.' <http://www.colors magazine.com/project/1000-extra-ordinary-objects>

Mudac; the *Musée de Design et d'Arts Appliqués Contemporains* in Lausanne, Switzerland housed an exhibition entitled No Name Design consisting of 'the cabinet of curiosities' compiled by Franco Clivio in the winter of 2014 (2009). For this exhibition he collected anonymous, yet spectacular items, some presented in constellations of the same kind of objects, like different types of hammers; or objects that share the same material properties like things that are formed of metal wires. His compilations are divided mostly by their functional, material or aesthetic properties and most of the items can be considered as anonymous. The way they are put together creates a material dialogue between the objects in their three dimensional properties.

Put in contrast to these different constellations of objects for different purposes and formats from different parts of the world addressing a global audience, 'Museum of Innocence' can be seen as an instance of a novelist who is passionate about objects depicting the everyday life of Istanbul in the 1970s.

It is by dissolving the boundaries between Kemal and his social milieu and by embedding his story within the social history of Turkish modernization that Pamuk can achieve such an anthropological materialism, and hence imply a radically different relationship between subject and the object. Kemal's story could never be told without the cultural history embodied in the objects through which he aims to reconstruct his experience. (Ertuna, 2010)

Objects are rendered visible in front of the socio-cultural background represented in the novel. Apart from their ability to portray and portrait, like building up *Füsün* with her earrings, dress, skirt, shoes, etc. objects are used as agents to show attachment to a certain time. Sense of time enables the representation of identities, history and memory. When approached as a cultural history of things, both the novel, but more the museum and the objects displayed inside offer a lot to their viewers in terms of knowledge and inspiration through their materiality and design, because the Museum of Innocence is not only a museum of the novel, but also it is a museum of Istanbul. It bears its power and significance from this simultaneous textual relation provided by the novel and independent autonomy owing to the physicality of objects offered by the city.

Everyday Life And Objects: Museum, Collecting, Memory, Identity

The visible or even touchable objects in the museum can only become visible in the novel through our mind's eye. Only in the process of transforming words into images, with our imagination fully employed, can we bring the world of the novel into its complete existence. And it is in this transformation that the novel as museum achieves its fundamental effect, a doubled staging of Pamuk's individual self and his national identity. (Xing, 2013)

'Museum', wrote the Jesuit Claude Clemens, 'most accurately is the place where Muses dwell' (Findlen, 2004: 159) and according to the dictionary definition: 'As a verb, to *muse* is to consider something thoughtfully. As a noun, it means a person – especially a woman – who is a source of artistic inspiration'⁸

Pamuk has mused by and through objects to construct his novel and created a space: a museum that inspires people by the spirit of a certain time, passion, history, traces of a lived reality of Istanbul. Designed in the form of a cabinet of curiosities⁹ (Cavallini, 2013) within a restored three-storey building that is built so that each floor is visible from the others with the help of a central staircase, the Museum of Innocence is unique architecturally (Allmer, 2009; Hanks, 2009; Pamuk, 2012b).

Each one of the cabinets is designed according to the chapters of the novel, so the novel is said to be the catalogue of the museum. Again, each one of the cabinets is like a stage in which each chapter is represented as if they are nature morte paintings. It becomes clear from the sketches and from the discourse in the later printed real catalogue of the museum, *Innocence of Objects*, that Pamuk has made the most of the design of the cabinets himself (2012a). The cabinets and also the objects they carry seem to have originated from a time outside of our own. The duality of West and East, modernity and tradition and related dualities that define the characteristic of most of Pamuk's work

is also visible in these cabinets. He once again becomes the witness to his own life and culture; representing it with found objects just like an anthropologist does (see Figure 5). He can be considered what Kosuth describes as the artist-as-anthropologist (1991).

.... as we said, the anthropologist has always had the problem of being outside of the culture which he is studying. Now what may be interesting about the artist-as-anthropologist is that the artist's activity is not *outside*, but a mapping of an internalizing cultural activity in his own society. The artist-as-anthropologist maybe able to accomplish what the anthropologist has always failed at. A non-static depiction of art's (and thereby culture's) operational infrastructure is the aim of an anthropologized art. (Kosuth, 1991)

Now the only way I could make sense of those years was to display all that I had gathered together – the pots and pans, the trinkets, the clothes and paintings – just as that anthropologist might have done. (Pamuk, 2009: 681)

The very act of collecting objects of the past, involves alienating one's self to display what once existed, alive and representative; then bonding them with an imaginary storyline, anchoring their meaning to a single story and to make signification itself figural, reducing them into painting-like cabinets. While it was quite possible for the museum to stand on its own, even though the novel would never have been written, to tie the object to a piece of text creates such a context that enables things to be more than just themselves. While facing an object, the museum visitor is always under the impression of Lacan's concept of love, defined by the statement: 'in you more than you' (Alain-Miller 1977), because having read the novel they have been close enough to grasp the imaginary object in the novel through the real object in the museum. If they have not read the novel they remain with this 'lack' of meaning that insists on being filled with something else, information boards, leaflets, or finally purchasing something from the gift shop that would make the connection possible. Sometimes the connection naturally occurs with a mechanism that is similar to intertextuality. If we are to be able to catch an object that we share from our own past within the museum, like the wall clock, then it is possible to enter in the sacred world of the object-cabinet. The novel functions like a piece of advertisement, 'substituting the spectacle of the world where it is natural' to use a specific object -as Barthes explains in the 'Advertising Message' (Barthes, 1994b). The novel readers know the approved scenario in which these object-actors dwell and are part of a 'natural' world that exists somewhere at a textual or literary level. It is a museum of everyday objects that act like a patchwork of anonymous memories.

Having addressed the signifier/signified and the figural/discursive regarding the museum and the novel, the final battleground is that of memory/identity. Although objects and therefore museums most of the



60

time, imply a 'natural' connection with memory, Forty suggests quite the contrary:

... it is clear that the relationship between objects and memory is less straightforward than Western thinking has been in the habit of assuming. We cannot take it for granted that artefacts act as the agents of collective memory, nor they can be relied upon to prolong it. The French philosopher Michel de Certeau writes suggestively that 'memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable'. For de Certeau, the principle feature of memory is that 'it comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself, it moves things about', and that when it ceases to be capable of this alteration, when it becomes fixed to particular objects, then it is in decay. Seen in these terms, objects are the enemy of memory, they are what tie it down and lead to forgetfulness. (Forty, 1999: 7)

Pamuk provides us with a repertoire of objects in which it is possible to forget about the Istanbul where the tensions of tradition and cultural modernization take place reflected in objects and material forms of everyday life. We are thankful to him, whether we be foreigners or inhabitants of Istanbul, for enabling an island of objects to remain untouched by the ongoing changes that this crowded and ever-growing metropolis encounters in the name of societal modernization, industrialization, unplanned urbanization, gentrification and more. We know even though our memories fade away with time, that the objects lucky enough to be displayed in the 'Museum of Innocence' will bear witness that they were once saved and put in safe cabinets within a museum by a 'flâneur', a 'collector', a 'storyteller' or an 'urban poet' (Benjamin, 1968) and they will continue to inspire those who are willing to listen to the stories that they whisper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Prof. Dr. Victor Margolin and Prof. Dr. Tevfik Balcioglu for sparking the idea to write this article.

Notes

1. For a similar account reading the ritual of smoking shisha or water pipe in terms of time see; Timur, S. (2006). Pamuk goes deep in the meaning of television viewing and passing time together through the home visits of Kemal where he says: 'Sometimes we'd *do nothing* but *sit there* in silence' (Pamuk, 2009: 546, emphasis added). This is an implication of a more Eastern conception of time and

set of practices that are centered around accordingly. For different examples concerning alternative modernities relying on different modes of acquiring modernity see the special issue devoted to the subject in *Public Culture: Society for Transnational Cultural Studies*. Millenial Quartet, Volume I: Alter/Native Modernities. Guest Ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. Duke University Press. and for a more specific account on the notion of 'doing nothing' and its cultural connotations, see Timur, S. and M. Bagli (2006).

2. Each box in the museum corresponds to the episodes in the novel.
3. Actually the word 'masum' means innocent in Turkish, but with the suffix 'e', 'Masume' becomes a female name that means 'innocent'.
4. For a detailed account of the relation between everyday life theory and art see *The Everyday: Documents of Everyday Life* edited by Stephen Johnstone (2008). Key writings were edited on the concept of everyday by key figures like Lefebvre, Duchamp, Perec, Virilio, Paul Auster and Sophie Calle under the themes Art and the Everyday; The Poetics of Noticing; Documentary Style and Ethnography.
5. Like the one curated by Andrew Blauvelt named *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life* for the Walker Art Center, in which 50 artists produced different work on the topics of Rituals of Use; Portable Structures; Multifunctional Objects; Transforming the Everyday.
6. Paul Lukas who is a columnist for *New York* magazine started to publish a zine called *Beer Frame* in 1993, in which he made reviews of 'certain aspects of products and services we might otherwise overlook, things that are either so obscure that we never see them or so ubiquitous that we've essentially stopped seeing them' (Lukas 1997: 13).
7. Usborne offers a classification and collection of different objects under the functional headings of: hitting, cutting, gripping, holding, rubbing, shielding, moulding, spreading and testing (2010).
8. In mythology, the Muses were nine goddesses who symbolized the arts and sciences. Today, a muse is a person who serves as an artist's inspiration. Often filmmakers talk about a certain actor being a muse – meaning the actor inspired a movie. Writers, painters, musicians, and other artists have muses. *Muse* can also refer to thinking deeply. If you muse about something, you're giving it serious thought. You can't muse in five seconds. People muse on certain ideas for years. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/muse>
9. Koeppe (2002) provides a brief summary of the history of cabinet of curiosities where he defines them as: '(Wunder): the *Kunstkammer* displayed an encyclopedic collection of all kinds of objects of dissimilar origin and diverse materials on a universal scale.' The concept of displaying and cabinets has always been a part of daily life in Turkish household through the use of china cabinets, so called

vitrin – a type of furniture to display valuable yet mostly unused items due to their precious nature; like porcelain items, crystal glassware, etc. Tying this custom of ordinary display, Pamuk's choice of cabinets that share a similar characteristic of being a piece of furniture that is covered by a glass front can also be considered as a salute to the already existing practice of untouchable display within Turkish households.

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Biography

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