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Shipping Container (Object Lessons)



Synopsis

Object Lessons is a series of short, beautifully designed books about the hidden lives of ordinary things. The shipping container is all around: whizzing by on the highway, trundling past on rails, unloading behind a big box store even as you shop there, clanking on the docks just out of sight. 90% of the goods and materials that move around the globe do so in shipping containers. It is an absolutely ubiquitous object, even if most of us have no direct contact with it. But what is this thing? Where has it been, and where is it going? Craig Martin's book illuminates the development of containerization—including design history, standardization, aesthetics, and a surprising speculative discussion of the futurity of shipping containers. Object Lessons is published in partnership with an essay series in the *The Atlantic*.

Book Information

Series: Object Lessons

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Customer Reviews

"The Object Lessons series achieves something very close to magic: the books take ordinary—even banal—objects and animate them with a rich history of invention, political struggle, science, and popular mythology. Filled with fascinating details and conveyed in sharp, accessible prose, the books make the everyday world come to life. Be warned: once you've read a few of these, you'll start walking around your house, picking up random objects, and musing aloud: 'I wonder what the story is behind this thing?'"—Steven Johnson, best-selling author of *How We Got to Now: Six Innovations That Made the Modern World*

The Object Lessons project, edited by game

theory legend Ian Bogost and cultural studies academic Christopher Schaberg, commissions short essays and small, beautiful books about everyday objects from shipping containers to toast. The Atlantic hosts a collection of "mini object-lessons", brief essays that take a deeper look at things we generally only glance upon ('Is bread toast only insofar as a human toaster perceives it to be "done?" Is bread toast when it reaches some specific level of nonenzymatic browning?'). More substantive is Bloomsbury's collection of small, gorgeously designed books that delve into their subjects in much more depth." • Cory Doctorow, Boing Boing • Shipping Container discusses in detail the mechanics of this object. It broadens this out to reflect on the significance of design and the efficiencies of standardization. Verdict: Borrow. Shipping Container is impressive in the way it manages to spin an apparently dull object into intelligent and interesting explanations of design and commerce. • "Book Riot

Craig Martin is Senior Lecturer in Design Cultures at The University of Edinburgh, UK. He is the co-editor, with J. Rugg, of *Spatialities: The Geographies of Art & Architecture* (2011).

These are great little books. Very informative.

VERY HAPPY, THANKS

Could have been better

Loved this book, which is as much about shipping containers as it is about how we think about space and portability. A friend of mine built an extension to his condo with a shipping container. The book made a great gift for him, and then I ended up getting a copy for myself. Like the rest of series, a great short read!

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