

Lost and Found: Assemblage Artists of Northern California

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Esther Siegel & Spencer Brewer (Aug 29, 2022)

Hardcover \$49.95 (208pp)

978-0-578-33772-2

Lost and Found is a magical coffee-table book that features the work of eight thoughtful artists alongside a history of assemblage as a form.

Esther Siegel and Spencer Brewer's stunning art book *Lost and Found* showcases the work of eight Northern California assemblage artists.

This book includes a succinct history of the art of assemblage alongside its featured pieces. Assemblages, it notes, are three-dimensional, shape-shifting works made of dissimilar objects, such as cast-off furniture, feathers, vintage toys, and driftwood. In detailing this art form, the book ranges from its vague beginnings in the early 1900s into the present. It asserts that this once-"outsider" genre influenced, and was influenced by, movements including cubism, futurism, and surrealism, holding in its lineage artists including Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, and Louise Nevelson.

The pieces featured here are provocative, representing unsettling breaks with convention. They feature once-mundane objects like spoons, repurposed to disorienting effect (here, a spoon becomes the arm of a strange figure). They suggest stories and imaginary worlds, using items like abandoned bird cages, old clothing, and fanciful papers to do so. A featured work by acclaimed assemblage artist Larry Fuente is mesmerizing in its symmetry and is made entirely of objects designed to kill human beings. In these works, items from beads to bullets are made to come together to create either a feeling of rightness and harmony or to deliver a message that shocks. Great skill is evinced in each piece; so too is considerable imaginative play clear in the final products.

Designed so that each exquisite piece takes a turn on center stage, the book includes ample representation of each featured artist's work, together with a brief biography and an artist statement from each. Some of the pieces are pleasing; others are disturbing. Each reflects a bit of the inner world of its maker—an artist who wanders with eyes wide open to see what others might miss, a mind open to see hidden possibilities in what someone else has discarded, or an imagination on fire. And the artwork is also represented well by Larry R. Wagner's photography, which exemplifies thoughtful lighting and the careful use of spare backgrounds. The book's grammatical errors are a distraction from this presentation, though.

Boundless human creativity is on display in the magnificent artworks of *Lost and Found*, a tribute to the genre of assemblage as seen through the work of eight artists.

KRISTINE MORRIS (June 23, 2023)

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