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Chance encounters: The construction of meaning through the process of assemblage in the boxes of Joseph Cornell and contemporary jewellery of Thomas Mann

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the box constructions of New York artist Joseph Cornell from the early 1930s to the late 1960s, and the influence of his work on that of contemporary American jeweller Thomas Mann, as well as my own artistic production. The key areas of focus are the process of assemblage and the implications of the box format, with the following themes being explored: miniature space and time; preciousness; fetishism and voyeurism. These are followed through into the section on my own work, where the additional subjects of the history of collecting, automata and the stop-frame animation of filmmaker Jan Švankmajer are discussed. The conclusion that I reach is about the potential power residing in found objects, which form the basis of Cornell's, Mann's and my own work.

KEYWORDS

Cornell; Mann; Fenn; assemblage; box; found objects; preciousness; jewellery; miniature; collecting; fetishism; voyeurism