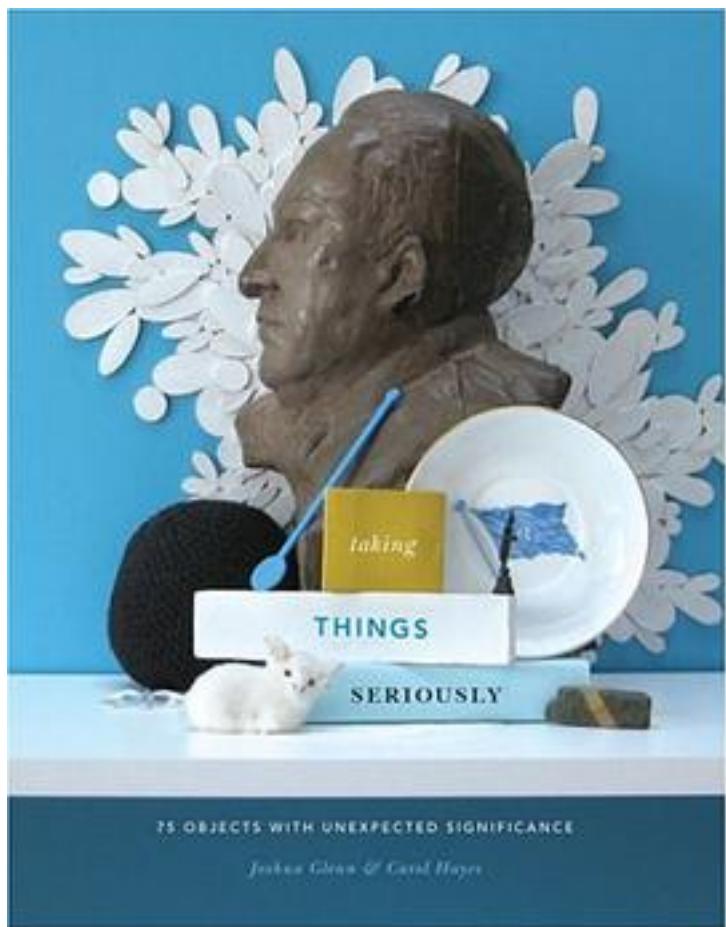


# Taking Things Seriously



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出版者:Princeton Architectural Press

出版时间:2007-08

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9781568986906

We all have something in our lives that while not obviously valuable, is displayed as though it were a precious and irreplaceable artifact. Inquire about the object's provenance and you'll likely be treated to a lively anecdote about how it came into

your host's possession. Keep digging, and you might even crack the code of what the thing "really" means. "Taking Things Seriously" is a wonder cabinet of seventy-five unlikely thingamajigs that have been invested with significance and transformed into totems, talismans, charms, relics, and fetishes: scraps of movie posters scavenged from the streets of New York by "Low Life" author Luc Sante; the World War I helmet that inoculated social critic Thomas Frank against jingoism; the trash-picked, robot-shaped hairdo machine described by its owner as a chick magnet; the bagelburned by actor Christopher Walken, moonlighting as a short-order cook. The owners of these objects convey their excitement in short, often poignant essays that invite readers to participate in the enjoyable act of interpreting things. You'll never look at the bric-a-brac on your shelves the same way again.

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