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Surface tensions: Surface, finish and the meaning of objects (Studies in Design MUP)

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Surfaces are often held to be of lesser consequence than 'deeper' or more 'substantive' aspects of artworks and objects. Yet it is also possible to conceive of the surface in more positive terms: as a site where complex forces meet. Surfaces can be theorized as membranes, protective shells, sensitive skins, even thicknesses in their own right. The surface is not so much a barrier to content as an opportunity for encounter.

Surface tensions includes sixteen essays that explore this theoretically uncharted terrain. The subjects range widely: domestic maintenance; avant-garde fashion; the faking of antiques; postmodern architecture and design; contemporary film costume. Of particular emphasis within the volume are textiles, which are among the most complex and culturally rich materializations of surface. As a whole, the book provides insights into the whole lifecycle of objects, not just their condition when new.

The contents will be of interest to any practitioner or scholar who considers the surface within their work, whether from the perspective of fine art, craft, design, history or anthropology.

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