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Obsessive Consumption: What Did You Buy Today?

Kate Bingaman-Burt

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Obsessive Consumption: What Did You Buy Today? Kate Bingaman-Burt
Our daily lives are filled with consumption—$1.50 for a cup of coffee, $5.95 for a magazine, $17.99 for headphones, $1.79 for cough drops, $36.00 for a haircut. Whether bought out of necessity or indulgence, purchased alone or in a group, everything we buy has its own story to tell. We buy art supplies while feeling inspired, CDs while shopping with friends, and a new pair of jeans to give us a lift when we are feeling blue. Yet, these powerfully emotional experiences can be fleeting—quickly erased by the pull of the next "must-have" acquisition. In*Obsessive Consumption*, Portland-based artist Kate Bingaman-Burt holds up a mirror to her own obsession with shopping and acquisition. Faced with a mounting pile of postgraduation credit card debt, Bingaman-Burt concocted a unique artistic response to this all-too-common dilemma. She picked up a pen and began drawing her monthly credit card statements, painstakingly recreating every last ledger line and decimal point, vowing to continue serving her artistic penance until her debt was repaid. As a relief from this project—turning the idea of "retail therapy" on its ear—Bingaman-Burt began drawing one of her purchases from each day, losing herself in the items, patterns, simple lines, and typography.

Obsessive Consumption represents a selection of three years of Bingaman-Burt's delightful ink drawings of sundry items. Accompanied by witty and insightful annotations, these drawings mock her own relationship with her purchases and put a personal face on the mass-produced items of our shared experience. Readers can catch a glimpse into the life of the artist from the collection, which includes wedding bands, a dog, a moving truck, handmade items from friends, Mississippi beer, Portland pizza, and lots of pens and drawing paper to support her drawing habit. A celebration of the beauty of the everyday, *Obsessive Consumption* presents a microcosm of consumer culture that will appeal to everyone from a thirteen-year-old mall-dweller to a middle-aged anticonsumerism advocate.

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