



An Extraordinary Theory of Objects: A Memoir of an Outsider in Paris

By Stephanie LaCava

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It's *Girl Interrupted* meets Miranda July—with a touch of Joan Didion—in this captivating collection of original essays revolving around a young American girl's coming of age in Paris. As an adolescent in a foreign country, Stephanie LaCava found an unconventional way to deal with her social awkwardness and feelings of uncertainty about the future by taking solace from the strange and beautiful objects she came across in her daily life. Filled with beautiful illustrations and providing a retrospective of nineties fashion and culture, *An Extraordinary Theory of Objects: A Memoir of an Outsider in Paris* is sure to be a collector's item for Francophiles or anyone who has ever found security in the strangest of places.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Displaced as a young teen to Paris for her father's job, LaCava collected peculiar objects for therapeutic comfort from the unhappiness she found there. If you take her at her word, her curious little book is based on her strangeness and odd habits, and she is exorcising any remaining demons by creating a written record of that difficult time. Interrupting the narrative—and her interruptions sometimes run half a page in length, with her clear intention to do so made obvious—are researched footnotes for the favorite precious objects that the author has encountered, outlining their history and lore: a kaleidoscope, a glass eyeball, a mushroom picked during a late-night walk. LaCava's descriptions are well matched by Matthew Nelson's delicate line drawings. In the end, what cleverly fills the honeycomb of LaCava's own story—one that feels more special than upsetting for its strangeness—is a compassionate, evocative biography of seemingly aberrant things and a collection of historical anecdotes that most readers would never otherwise learn, let alone find gathered all together in one small (but not diminishing), deliberate, and careful book. --Annie Bostrom

Review

"This captivating, wonderfully strange little book is like no other I've ever read. Stephanie LaCava has created something original and true, at once emotionally resonant and intellectually challenging. A sheer delight." (Dani Shapiro, author of *Devotion* and *Slow Motion*)

"What cleverly fills the honeycomb of LaCava's own story is a compassionate, evocative biography of seemingly aberrant things and a collection of historical anecdotes that most readers would never otherwise learn, let alone find gathered all together in one small (but not diminishing), deliberate, and careful book." (Booklist)

"A series of wistfully illustrated essays. . . . A strange and lovely journey." (Flavorwire)

"Its brilliance lies in the depth in plumbs. . . . Stephanie LaCava, along with the lovely illustrations throughout the book, shows us just how extraordinary these odd things are." (*Matchbook Magazine*)

"Truly a lovely book in every sense." (Minnesota Public Radio's "The Daily Circuit Blog")

"With help from Matthew Nelson's elegant drawings, the worldly LaCava impresses by unearthing hidden treasures from a painful youth." (*Interview Magazine*)

From the Back Cover

A haunting and moving collection of original narratives that reveals an expatriate's coming-of-age in Paris and the magic she finds in ordinary objects

An awkward, curious girl growing up in a foreign country, Stephanie LaCava finds solace and security in strange yet beautiful objects.

When her father's mysterious job transports her and her family to the quaint Parisian suburb of Le Vésinet, everything changes for the young American. Stephanie sets out to explore her new surroundings and to make friends at her unconventional international school, but her curiosity soon gives way to feelings of anxiety and

a deep depression.

In her darkest moments, Stephanie learns to filter the world through her peculiar lens, discovering the uncommon, uncelebrated beauty in what she finds. Encouraged by her father through trips to museums and scavenger hunts at antique shows, she traces an interconnected web of narratives of long-ago outsiders, and of objects historical and natural, that ultimately help her survive.

A series of illustrated essays that unfolds in cinematic fashion, *An Extraordinary Theory of Objects* offers a universal lesson—to harness the power of creativity to cope with loneliness, sadness, and disappointment to find wonder in the uncertainty of the future.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Musselwhite:

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