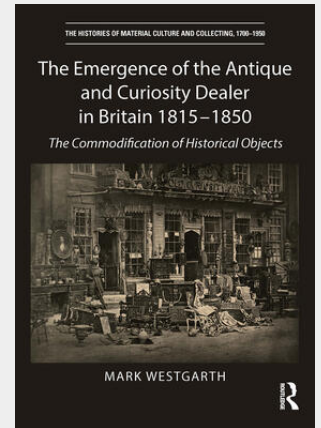


Westgarth

## The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer in Britain 1815-1850

The Commodification of Historical Objects

Rather than the customary focus on the activities of individual collectors, *The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer in Britain 1815–1850: The Commodification of Historical Objects* illuminates the less-studied roles played by dealers in the nineteenth-century antique and curiosity markets. Set against the recent ‘art market turn’ in scholarly literature, this volume examines the role, activities, agency and influence of antique and curiosity dealers as they emerged in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. This study begins at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when dealers began their wholesale importations of historical objects; it closes during the 1850s, after which the trade became increasingly specialised, reflecting the rise of historical museums such as the South Kensington Museum (V&A). Focusing on the archive of the early nineteenth-century London dealer John Coleman Isaac (c.1803–1887), as well as drawing on a wide range of other archival and contextual material, Mark Westgarth considers the emergence of the dealer in relation to a broad historical and cultural landscape. The emergence of the antique and curiosity dealer was part of the rapid economic, social, political and cultural change of early nineteenth-century Britain, centred around ideas of antiquarianism, the commercialisation of culture and a distinctive and evolving interest in historical objects. This book will be of interest to scholars in art history, histories of collecting, museum and heritage studies and nineteenth-century culture.



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