

[PDF] Killer Stuff And Tons Of Money: An Insider's Look At The World Of Flea Markets, Antiques, And Collecting

Maureen Stanton - pdf download free book

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Description:

One dealer's journey from the populist mayhem of flea markets to the rarefied realm of auctions reveals the rich, often outrageous subculture of antiques and collectibles.

Millions of Americans are drawn to antiques and flea-market culture, whether as participants or as viewers of the perennially popular *Antiques Roadshow* or the recent hit *American Pickers*. This world has the air of a lottery: a \$20 purchase might net you four, five, or six figures. Master dealer

Curt Avery, the unlikely star of *Killer Stuff and Tons of Money*, plays that lottery every day, and he wins it more than most. Occasionally he gets lucky, but more often, he draws on a deep knowledge of America's past and the odd, fascinating, and beautiful objects that have survived it.

Week in, week out, Avery trawls the flea and antiques circuit-buying, selling, and advising other dealers in his many areas of expertise, from furniture to glass to stoneware, and more. On the surface, he's an improbable candidate for an antiques dealer. He wrestled in high school and still retains the pugilistic build; he is gruff, funny, and profane; he favors shorts and sneakers, even in November; and he is remarkably generous toward both competitors and customers who want a break.

But as he struggles for a spot in a high-end Boston show, he must step up his game and, perhaps more challenging, fit in with a white-shoe crowd. Through his ascent, we see the flea-osphere for what it truly is--less a lottery than a contact sport with few rules and many pitfalls. This rich and sometimes hilarious subculture rewards peculiar interests and outright obsessions--one dealer specializes in shrunken heads; another wants all the postal memorabilia he can get. So Avery must be a guerrilla historian and use his hard-earned knowledge of America's past to live by and off his wits. Only the smartest survive in one of America's most ruthless meritocracies.

Killer Stuff and Tons of Money is many things: an insider's look at a subculture replete with arcane traditions and high drama, an inspiring account of a self-made man making his way in a cutthroat field, a treasure trove of tips for those who seek out old things themselves, and a thoroughly fresh, vibrant view of history as blood sport.

Author Essay: Cyber-Pickers--Knowledge Plus Technology Equals Treasure

In 2008 on eBay there were, on average, 133,096,249 items concurrently listed for sale. (A pair of shoes was sold every three seconds.) Imagine laying out all of these items at a huge flea market field and then searching by foot for the hidden gems. It's like trying to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. While flea market foraging is half the fun--mingling with people, seeing and handling unusual and interesting objects--on a rainy day or any day when there's no flea market nearby, you can "pick" the cyber-flea market and literally search 133 million-plus items at warp speed.

Master cyber-picker, Jimmy Desjardins, who tripled his income from antiques dealing through internet buying, says in *Killer Stuff and Tons of Money: Seeking History and Hidden Gems in Flea-Market America*, "I'm in a nice comfortable chair, I've got my music playing, and I'm searching eBay." Like the old slogan for the telephone book, Jimmy lets his fingers do the walking--over the keyboard and across the internet. A treasure-seekers most powerful tool is knowledge; the more you know about any category of antiques, the more success you'll have finding hidden treasures. But once you know what you are looking for, programs like AuctionZip, which claims to be "the world's largest online bidding network," allow you to "Find Auctions Anywhere!" and place absentee bids online. Now you really can be in two places--or more--at once.

Finding the best vintage, antiques, and collectibles is all about understanding which objects are the most valuable because of age, rarity, condition, authenticity, and other factors like desirability. Cyber-pickers combine old-fashioned know-it-all with new-fangled technology. John Dobson, a collector from Kansas, looks for misspelled or mis-listed sports cards. If the card is properly identified, it would be easily found by collectors. The truly "hidden" gems online are inadvertently disguised because they are misspelled, miscategorized, or given vague terms by sellers who haven't researched the objects. Daye Salander, who runs Junkbox Treasures in Marysville, Washington, says, "Many people on eBay just want to make a buck and do not do their homework." Jeff Browning, a

collector and dealer, who owns JDog's Treasures in Boca Raton, Florida, finds 90% of his inventory through online auctions. For Browning, cyber-picking is thrilling. "Nothing like the old ticker pumping 100 miles per hour as the auction gets close to the end and you're wondering if someone else found that misspelled word or that lonely Ma-and-Pa, no-one-knows-about auction." There are several programs that ferret out mislistings for free. AuctionBloopers, TypoBuddy, and TypoHound, which promises to "sniff out the best bargains on eBay!" Missing-Auctions.com locates "fat finger typos." The daddy of them all is FetchBid.com, which searches multiple auction sites, not just eBay.

Once you find that misspelled inkwell that you know is rare, or the coveted sports card, or vintage signed brooch, you still have to win the auction. This is where computers handily trump human ability by "stealing" auctions just as they close. After you place your highest bid secretly for your targeted treasure, you can use a "snipe" program to one-up your competitor's bid by a small increment just seconds before the auction ends. The tagline for PowerSnipe, which costs \$45.99 per year, boldly promises to "Win Every Auction." EZSniper claims to snipe "more auction sites than any other service," but AuctionStealer gives you the skinny: as of March 2011, they have placed over 31,467,800 bids. Through this stealth digital technology, you can win auctions at the last crucial, hair-raising seconds--while you snooze. But while computers can do some of the leg-work of finding treasures in the digital flea market, you still have to do your own homework. --Maureen Stanton

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Review "Endlessly interesting, the writing is superb." *Favorite Books of 2011 Chicago Sun-Times*

"Page-turner." *San Jose Mercury News*

"Killer Stuff is a killer read." *BookPage*

"Utterly engaging." *Washington Post*

"An intoxicating read." *Parade*

"[F]ull of interesting tidbits told in a fascinating way...hard to put down." *Coastal Breeze News*

"[D]ynamite...one of those books you'll start early and won't really be able to put down...Stanton's a great writer [and] she's a great guide." *The Kenyon Review*

"A treasure-trove of a book." *Kirkus*

"[A] deeply researched, memorably written narrative...For already obsessed shoppers who frequent flea markets, antiques stores and auctions, *Killer Stuff* will become quickly addictive. For outsiders, the book is a pleasurable education...[S]uperb writing, the book will please page after page." **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**

"[*Killer Stuff*] is quite a read, often hilarious, well written and a great mix of trivia and story-telling ... [Stanton's] book had me from the moment I began reading." *Pure Green Magazine*

"Stanton captures the lower and middle echelons of the [antiques] business with great skill...her diverting and wholly unpretentious book makes a fine companion for a day at the beach--or a weekend treasure hunting." *Wall Street Journal*

"Ms. Stanton captures the lower and middle echelons of the business with great skill, and her diverting and wholly unpretentious book makes a fine companion for a day at the beach—or a weekend spent treasure hunting at Brimfield."

(The Wall Street Journal)

"An intoxicating read that rips away the lace curtains from the antiques biz."

(Parade)

"After whipping through Maureen Stanton's utterly engaging, heavily researched account of her old college buddy's life on the yard-sale flea-market antiques-show auction-house circuit, I wanted to invite myself into his multi-state universe and hang out with all those dealers... Not since Larry McMurtry's fictitious rogue 'Cadillac Jack' has there been such a charming emissary from the world of the previously owned."

(The Washington Post)

"Ms. Stanton has a light, sure touch...if you truly love the subject matter, you will truly love [*Killer Stuff and Tons of Money*]."

(The New York Times)

"A fascinating look at the life of professional dealers who check out all the stuff at these shows before the rest of us even show up."

(The Associated Press)

"Maureen Stanton rips the lid off the whole business of antiques, hidden gems, dealers and auctions and the fevered American trade in objects of the past...Shaker furniture. Navajo rugs. Heirloom jewelry. Whale bone and weathervane. She takes us deep into the antiques biz."

(Tom Ashbrook, on NPR's On Point)

"*Killer Stuff and Tons of Money* is a deeply researched, memorably written narrative about the world of people who buy and sell antiques as their livelihoods...For anybody who treasures superb writing, this book will please page after page."

(The St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

"One of those books you'll start early and won't really be able to put down or shake till you're finished...You should be reading this book. You should be purchasing this promptly and giving yourself the time and quiet and cool to sit and get through the whole thing."

(The Kenyon Review)

"A fascinating look at Americans' obsession with collecting stuff and searching the shelves of antiques markets for some kind of jackpot."

(The Portland Press Herald)

"A treasure-trove of a book, especially for would-be antiquers."

(Kirkus Reviews)

"*Killer Stuff* is a killer read. Enjoy it, then hop in the station wagon and see if you strike gold."

(Bookpage)

"Stanton does a great job of educating the reader, of weaving in the history behind both objects and shows and recognizable names...Start this book when you have lots of time, because you won't want to put it down."

(New England Antiques Journal)

"Fascinating...Anyone who has ever wondered what life would be like as an antique dealer should read this eye-opening account."

(Detroit News)

"Very well-written... a truly good education about the lonely and hard life of the single middle market dealer struggling to make ends meet...a must-read for everyone in the trade [and] a narrative that will appeal to many people."

(Antiques & Auction News)

"[Stanton's] book educates and entertains while giving an honest insider view of the trade."

(Maine Antiques Digest)

"Full of interesting tidbits told in a fascinating way...I found this book hard to put down. [It is a nonfiction book so full of unbelievable stories you will think you are reading a novel.]"

(Coastal Breeze News)

"Treasure seekers will find plenty in this penetrating and lyrical account of flea market culture. From the provenance of the Ouija board, to where to find the greatest "steals" in antiques (and it's not where you think) *Killer Stuff and Tons of Money* is chock full of wit, wisdom and surprises. As Maureen Stanton's colorful protagonist puts it, "gold is where you find it," and this book hits the mother lode."

(Ellen Ruppel Shell, author of *CHEAP, THE HUNGRY GENE, A CHILD'S PLACE*)

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