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COOPER HEWITT RELEASES NEW E-BOOK, *WIDOWS UNVEILED: FASHIONABLE MOURNING IN LATE VICTORIAN NEW YORK*



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Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum today announced the release of its sixth DesignFile e-book, *Widows Unveiled: Fashionable Mourning in Late Victorian New York* by Rebecca McNamara. Illustrated with images of period costumes, jewelry, accessories, drawings and photographs, *Widows Unveiled* analyzes mourning etiquette and its accoutrements, interprets the abundant negative stereotypes of widows in visual culture and explains the slow, uneven demise of mourning practices in the 20th century. DesignFile is a line of e-books on design writing and research published by the museum in consortium with academic and institutional partners.

McNamara's *Widows Unveiled* intends to dispel the assumed frivolity and superficial nature of Victorian mourning dress and custom by introducing the complexities of widows' experiences, primarily in middle- and upper-class New York society between the Civil War and World War I. By examining particular aspects of material and visual culture, McNamara exhumes subtle social cues that come into play and reorients Victorian women who confront new lives as widows.

Widows Unveiled walks the reader through social expectations placed on the Victorian widow, the widow's navigation of the materiality of mourning and the visual presentations that were promoted of the Victorian widow in her contemporary society. The attention paid to the oscillating demands of social and economic

constraints put on widows offers a reading that complicates the flattened, popular image of the Victorian widow.

Rebecca McNamara is a museum professional and historian of 19th- and 20th-century American art, design and material culture. She holds a Master's in the History of Decorative Arts and Design from Parsons School of Design, in conjunction with Cooper Hewitt, where her thesis examined the material and visual culture of late Victorian widows in New York. Her first book, coauthored with Martin Barnes Lorber, *A Token of Elegance: Cigarette Holders in Vogue*, was released in fall 2015.

ABOUT DESIGNFILE

Launched in January 2013 by Cooper Hewitt, DesignFile features a wide range of books and reaches audiences who are passionate about design practice, theory and pure aesthetics. All DesignFile publications are distributed by Artbook D.A.P. and formatted as EPUB 2.0 files and accessible through any e-book reader.

DesignFile is the latest addition to a robust series of initiatives and partnerships undertaken by Cooper Hewitt to broaden digital access to the collection and transform the museum's website into a leading design research and educational resource.

ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

Founded in 1897, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. On Dec. 12, 2014, Cooper Hewitt reopened in the renovated and restored Carnegie Mansion, which offers 60 percent more exhibition space to showcase one of the most diverse and comprehensive collections of design works in existence. The renovation of the Carnegie Mansion and museum campus was recognized with LEED Silver certification. Visitors can experience a full range of new interactive capabilities, including the opportunity to explore the collection digitally on ultra-high-definition touch-screen tables, draw their own designs in the Immersion Room and address design problems in the Process Lab.

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