



# **Matchsafes: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian (Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution)**

*Deborah Sampson Shinn*

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The collections of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, comprise a unique history of design. The department of Applied Arts and Industrial Design is home to more than 30,000 three-dimensional objects, well over 4,000 of which comprise a rare and extraordinary collection the most unusual of these items. Matchsafes (or Vesta cases) were designed to keep friction matches safe and dry at a time when they were as vital for lighting kitchen stoves as they were for lighting gentlemen's cigars. In this book, Deborah Sampson Shinn traces the history of these compact metal containers in America, Britain, Europe, and Japan from the 1850s up to the 1910s, when cheap matchbooks and petrol lighters heralded the decline of the matchsafe.

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