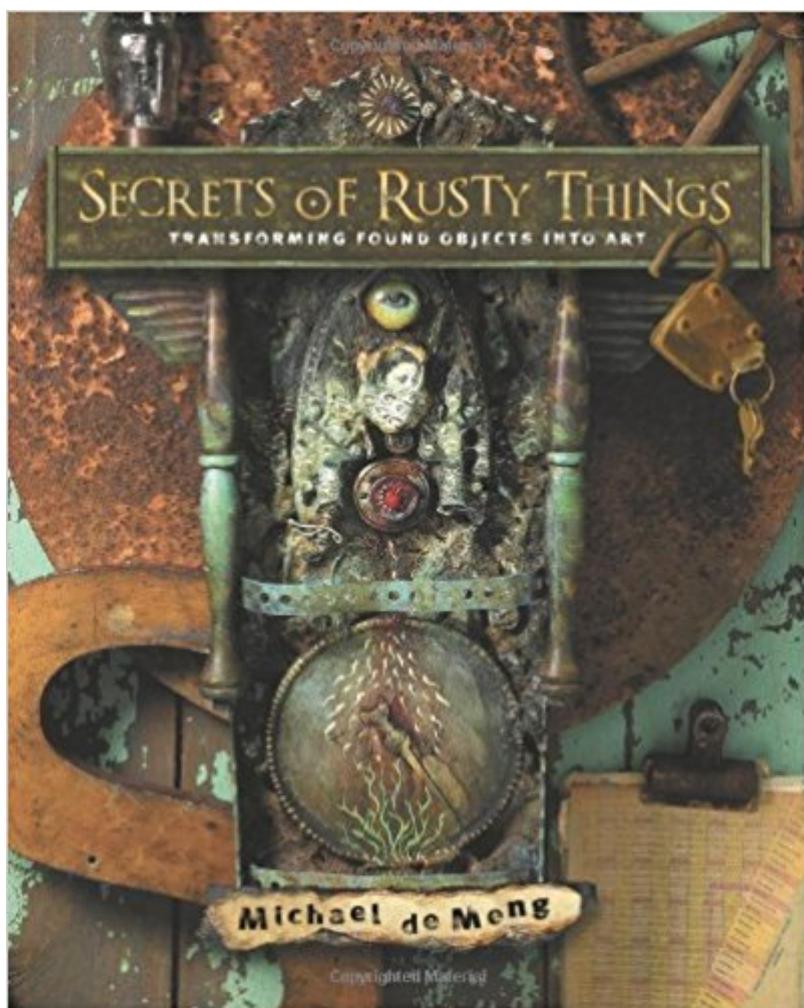


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# Secrets Of Rusty Things: Transforming Found Objects Into Art



## Synopsis

If you've ever wanted to learn the secrets which turn a tap handle into a mysterious woman from the sea, which transform plastic aquarium plants into subterranean roots stretching far beneath the known world and those which can make an icy cave from a bourbon box, then prepare yourself for inspiration that will have you checking your trash bin, twice. In *Secrets of Rusty Things*, renowned assemblage artist Michael DeMeng guides you down the intuitive, curious and often rock-strewn path of an artist's creative process, where illusions are just as important as any other aspect to the art. You'll discover new ideas of where to look for, not only discarded objects, but new items that you may not have previously seen as having a place in a future work of art. You'll be inspired by ways to add meaningful symbolism to your artworks' stories both through the use of color and shape. And you'll see how an ancient tale can parallel the artist's plight and invoke a new piece of art. From the pondering of each ancient myth and its connection to the modern-day artist, to the gluing together of objects, to the paint that unifies and disguises the original bits and pieces, this is an intimate view into the creative process unlike any workshop you've ever attended.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Assemblage artist Michael de Meng teaches mixed-media workshops around the world and regularly contributes to such publications as Somerset Studio and Expressions. His work frequently appears in galleries and exhibits. [www.michaeldemeng.com](http://www.michaeldemeng.com)

Interesting pictures along with sidebars of musings by the author of what he was going about.

Makes projects out of found objects and more-or-less quaint junk. What I missed about each project was a step-by-step, showing what tool did exactly what. It's almost like the reader is following a dream he's having upon seeing fleeting image in a pile of stuff. I purchased a used copy, thinking there was how-to for a neophyte doing similar. I haven't gained much, other than a Dremel roto tool is a must for any hobby workbench.

As most mixed media artists who've "come of age" in the post-scrapbooking/craft/art revolution, I've been a fan of Michael deMeng's work for some time. I was delighted to catch an episode of DIY's Craft Lab in which he showed some of his rusting techniques (basically paint is what he uses to get that effect but with other surprises like spray insulation foam). This book is just beautiful, from the matt fold out covers to the unique presentations inside. Based in myths from around the world, each piece represented is beautiful and a step-by-step process is shown. But not clearly. Don't get me wrong—the photos are clear but the process isn't necessarily clearly outlined. I haven't minded at all bc the book is so awesome but I doubt I'll be combing any scrap yards anytime soon. Still it's wonderful to see his work in detail, watch it come together. Don't expect a true "how to" book but more of a beautiful insight to how a true mixed media assemblage artist works. I'm not at all sorry I bought it! And I'm proud to be the first to review it.

Not exactly my kind of thing, but it did stretch my imagination and made me "think outside the box" I am now seeing things I find from a different view. I found the pictures a little small to see what he was doing. But he shares his thought processes as he chooses items for a project and I like that.

As a child, I spent many hours reading fairy tales and myths. The myths I read and studied were ancient. I loved them and they came from all over the world. I related to each one of them intuitively. I couldn't help it! Many readers, like me, begin as children, loving myths. Possibly you agree that the human condition, our joys, trials, everything, is distilled myth, be it Inuit, Hindu, Greek. Myths can seem grand and off-putting. However, when you pair them with the writing of the often humorous, occasionally mystical (I am thinking of his walk in the woods where he found some stove pieces, way away from any house, and wrote a lovely and visually elegant vignette about it) and frequently charming style of assemblage artist/teacher Michael de Meng, they are lively, full of energy and fun to view as potential subjects for artworks! Read this book and you are reading two books side by side: de Meng recounts the myth he is concerned with, then begins to discuss the process he goes through when he creates an art piece representing that myth. Simultaneously, he comments in

journalling script form on the side of each page about what is going on in his real life with a different sort of emotional immediacy, as he is making the art piece, or recalling something to do with it. Both segments of the book intersect and cross over in certain ways...but the main segment essentially deals with the original myth and his work on creating the piece he makes inspired by it, using bathroom scales he alters, or funky "Brady Bunch '70's clocks", the insides of irons, and things he likes. You read a variety of discussions and tales of the processes he goes through in order to do create his art pieces. The notebook part basically discusses life stories: where he was when he found something, how he was feeling, why it was great. What is super unique and good about this book? Without being "grand" about it, Michael de Meng explains that artists are the people who climb to the top of the pyramid...who get that chance to look all around with that "all seeing eye" (he mentions eyes quite a bit and uses them in his work frequently), and then, when inspired, they climb back down to earth and, without being frightened by being judged, express themselves through creating. Some readers have commented that the photography is too dark in this book. I disagree. This is a mysterious book and the photography is perfect for it. It is extremely cool. I don't want to be Mr. de Meng, however, if I lived near him, I would certainly take a class from him, because I believe he really has a lot to offer, and he offers up his heart and soul, in an incandescent manner, in this remarkable, fascinating book. If I were teaching a class on found objects and altered art, I would insist that this book, *The Secret of Rusty Things*, by Michael de Meng, be on the reading list. It is illuminating.

Good book. Some neat ideas. The pictures are a bit dark and could be better. I would like to see more cool projects, but not bad. A good starter book.

This is an amazing book. I've noticed some reviews complaining that it isn't enough of a "how to" book, but actually all the techniques used are described fully and they aren't that complex (excuse me, but what part of get a dremel and some liquid nails is confusing?). What it is NOT is a blueprint for someone to duplicate the projects shown, because each is unique and very quirky. It isn't a book for the scrapbooking crafting crowd who would like templates and stickers - not that there's anything wrong with that, it just isn't that kind of book. It is actually a book about creating art - both the process and the products of that process. It is so well-written and often very humorous that it's a worthwhile read just for the text, but in addition of course are the wonderful photographs of the art pieces and the information offered about the process of creating them. This is one of the books I come back to most often for inspiration.

I won't beat the dead horse... if you've read the other reviews then you know Secrets of Rusty Things isn't a "how-to" book. In fact I think I really wouldn't have enjoyed it much if Demeng provided actual detailed instructions on how he makes his art. The real magic in this book is how it is truly written from his "voice". Perhaps the publisher did a great job of fooling me but all the narratives seemed to come straight from Demeng with what seems like very little editorial intervention. If you've ever pulled a stool up to a bar and delighted in finding out you were sitting beside an interesting character, then you are in for a treat. Part mythology lesson, part studio visit, part malty-brew-induced story telling.... this book is a refreshing take on one man's creative process. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in mixed media artwork - whether you are an artist or just a like minded soul.

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