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# Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving



## Synopsis

Transporting readers from derelict homesteads to imperiled harbors, postindustrial ruins to Cold War test sites, *Curated Decay* presents an unparalleled provocation to conventional thinking on the conservation of cultural heritage. Caitlin DeSilvey proposes rethinking the care of certain vulnerable sites in terms of ecology and entropy, and explains how we must adopt an ethical stance that allows us to collaborate with—rather than defend against—natural processes. *Curated Decay* chronicles DeSilvey's travels to places where experiments in curated ruination and creative collapse are under way, or under consideration. It uses case studies from the United States, Europe, and elsewhere to explore how objects and structures produce meaning not only in their preservation and persistence, but also in their decay and disintegration. Through accessible and engaging discussion of specific places and their stories, it traces how cultural memory is generated in encounters with ephemeral artifacts and architectures. An interdisciplinary reframing of the concept of the ruin that combines historical and philosophical depth with attentive storytelling, *Curated Decay* represents the first attempt to apply new theories of materiality and ecology to the concerns of critical heritage studies.

## Book Information

Paperback: 232 pages

Publisher: Univ Of Minnesota Press (February 14, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0816694389

ISBN-13: 978-0816694389

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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## Customer Reviews

"Curated Decay offers a sophisticated and novel account of sites that challenge the current paradigm of conservation. It also proposes a wealth of concepts by which the curation of such sites may be rethought in terms of ecological culture. The writing is fresh, direct and exciting and carries

the reader along effortlessly." — Amanda Boetzkes, University of Guelph "Curated Decay is wondrously marvelous — a brilliant and beautiful exploration of how we can and might engage with the ultimately evanescent companions (landscapes, buildings, objects) that accompany our own evanescent lives. Caitlin DeSilvey sets her deeply thoughtful meditations on our ambivalent interactions with the transient things we cherish in evocative discourses about a dozen hauntingly depicted diverse threatened and beleaguered locales, from Montana to Cornwall to Scotland and the Ruhr. These illustrative stories are couched in a narrative of personal travel and discovery that is a continual joy to read, fresh, witty, and jargon-free." — David Lowenthal, University College London "You get the sense quite quickly that it would be fascinating to spend a morning with Caitlin DeSilvey going through a neglected industrial building or some other ostensibly uninteresting structure on the verge of collapse." — The Journal of Wild Culture

Caitlin DeSilvey is associate professor of cultural geography at the University of Exeter. She is coauthor of *Visible Mending* and coeditor of *Anticipatory History*.

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