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What do things mean? What does the life of everyday objects after the check-out reveal about people and their material worlds? Has the quest for 'the real thing' become so important because the high tech world of total virtuality threatens to engulf us? This pioneering book bridges design theory and anthropology to offer a new and challenging way of understanding the changing meanings of contemporary human-object relations. The act of consumption is only the starting point in objects' 'lives'. Thereafter they are transformed and invested with new meanings that reflect and assert who we are. Defining design as 'things with attitude' differentiates the highly visible fashionable object from ordinary artefacts that are taken for granted. Through case studies ranging from reproduction furniture to fashion and textiles to 'clutter', the author traces the connection between objects and authenticity, ephemerality and self-identity. But beyond this, she shows the materiality of the everyday in terms of space, time and the body and suggests a transition with the passing of time from embodiment to disembodiment.