



SECOND THOUGHTS

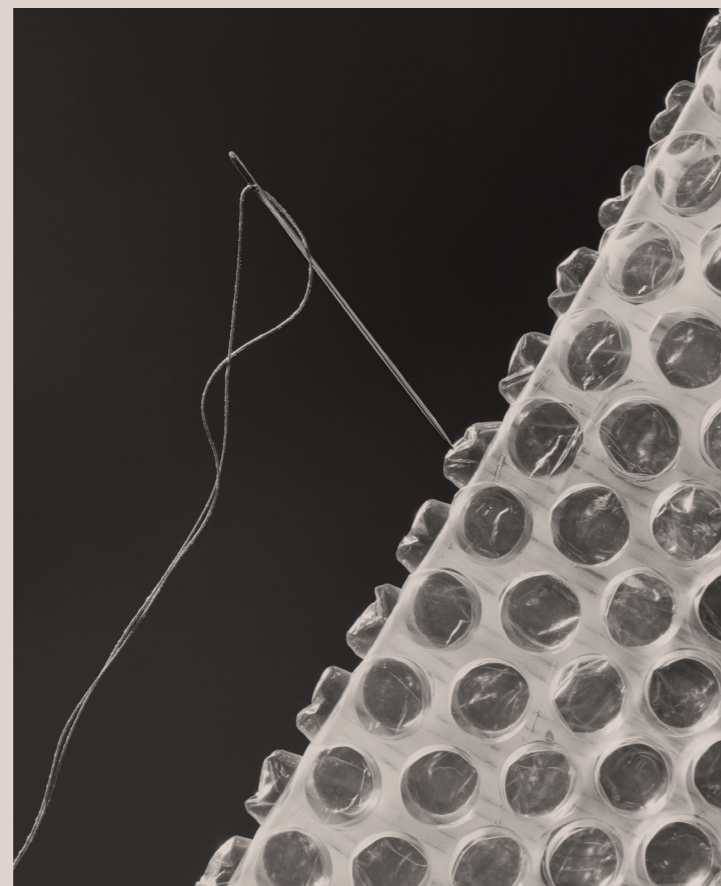
by Harriet Fitch Little

Bubble wrap isn't the only invention that sidestepped its original purpose. Mouthwash (Top: Mouthwash by Aesop) was intended for cleaning hospital floors and as a surgical antiseptic, because of its bacteria-killing properties. Tea bags (Center: Tea from A. C. Perch's Thehandel) were initially conceived as just the small silk bags that loose tea was to be sold in—until smart customers realised that the brew tasted a whole lot better if the leaves were actually left in the bag while dunking. Post-it notes (Bottom: Adhesive notes by Craft Design Technology) were a happy accident resulting from a scientist who, while trying to develop a super strong adhesive, accidentally created a super weak one instead. He shared his mistake with colleagues, one of whom used the weak glue to invent the Post-It note—a story that has been co-opted by management gurus as an example of how companies can learn from their mistakes.

KATIE CALAUTTI

Object Matters

A pop history of Bubble Wrap.



In the pecking order of packing materials, Bubble Wrap falls somewhere in the middle—above polystyrene peanuts, with their mess of static cling, but below environmentally friendly options like cornstarch packaging. But Bubble Wrap still reigns supreme when it comes to one thing: the delight factor that comes with finding it wrapped around shipped valuables, its air bubbles waiting to be popped.

Bubble Wrap wasn't originally intended for packaging. In 1957, New Jersey-based engineers Alfred W. Fielding and Marc Chavannes threw something at the wall—literally—and it didn't quite stick. After sealing a set of shower curtains, they grew excited by the ensuing air bubble-filled sheets of plastic and decided to market them as of-the-moment interior decor—meaning Bubble Wrap began as wallpaper. When that venture failed, they switched to pawning it off as greenhouse insulation—which turned out to be another misstep. They pressed on, and its true calling arrived

when it served as the transport material for IBM's newly launched 1401 computer.

In 2006, the amount of Bubble Wrap manufactured in a year by Sealed Air (its parent company) could circle the equator 10 times. Since then, its status has deflated thanks to space-saving and cost-cutting shippers looking for more efficient alternatives. In response, the company invented collapsible sheets called iBubble Wrap. But the newly competitive product has one big downside for Bubble Wrap fans: The revamped version doesn't pop—when pressured, the trapped air simply redistributes within the sealed plastic.

Although traditional Bubble Wrap is becoming something of an obsolete offering, ingenious uses are still being found for it. Home security amateurs make a "Bubble Wrap burglar alarm" by laying sheets in front of doorways, Norwegian EMTs use it in hypothermia-prevention wrappings and some daring brides have even turned it into wedding dresses.

Left: Photography: goodhoodstore.com (Top), Christian Møller Andersen (Center and Bottom), Right: Photograph: Aaron Tilley

Laura Waddell pays homage to Anaïs Nin: the erotic novelist who awoke desires in generations of young women—and became the patron saint of social media over-sharers.

LAURA WADDELL

Peer Review

In her own lifetime, Nin was better known for writing about other people than herself; Henry Miller and Gore Vidal were among the famous friends whose lives she chronicled in her published diaries.

Photograph: Carl Van Vechten, © The Anaïs Nin Trust

When choosing a subject for my high school English dissertation, it was with glee that I paired Anaïs Nin's *Delta of Venus* with D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, intent on shocking by writing on literary eroticism. I'd been put onto *Women in Love* by a gay friend a couple of years older. On a day we played hooky from school, he showed me the well-used VHS film adaptation, kept hidden from his father, and one thing led to another—as subversive art does. From an internet search of erotic literature, I plucked Anaïs Nin and began reading.

Her prose elicited such extremes of feelings: It was an experience as stimulating as rolling in a bed of velvet. In Anaïs' writing, sensuality gushes everywhere, spilling over. As a hormonal 14-year-old prone to weeping under the covers at midnight, I modeled my inner life on Anaïs' raw excessiveness.

Anaïs generously documented her own bisexual attractions. Of her intimate friend June, she wrote, "To think of her in the middle of the day lifts me out of or-

inary living." She had darker preoccupations too, only in part reflecting the social standards of the day; her forays into fetish chase taboos into the darkest of corners, and she worried orgasm encouraged pregnancy, holding back from "radius and rainbows." Anaïs is excess in all things, every nerve rubbed raw, but as a woman in the 20th century, some realities pervaded.

The misfit maximalist with a penchant for masochism returns often to the theme of scooping up all pleasure a lifetime could offer. "I want to kneel as it falls over me like rain, gather it up with lace and silk, and press it over myself again," she said of happiness. Anaïs the sensualist, Anaïs the fantasist. And to what end? "Had I not created my whole world, I would certainly have died in other people's."

It is no surprise, then, that her book titles have been snapped up as provocative pseudonyms on every social media platform; entering her world is, for many readers, an introduction to one's own inner ecstasies.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL VAN VECHTEN