Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

Editorial

In a recent BBC documentary on "objectum sexuals" – people who have loving relationships with inanimate objects – Erika Naisho Eiffel spoke about her love affair with an archer's bow: "We were just such a great team because we had that connection on every single level. I'd almost swear that my blood flowed from my arm and went right into him. And it felt like the molecules in him were flowing right back into my arm."[1] It's no surprise that, before their love waned, Naisho Eiffel was a record-breaking world champion archer – a love story indeed. But more importantly, Naisho Eiffel's example seems to suggest that we might have gotten our relationship to the material world the wrong way round. Rather than resist the desires that surround the commodity, replacing them with transcendental, immaterial ethical imperatives (which, as we have seen, only lay the groundwork for commodities themselves to dematerialize), what if some kind of ecstatic overidentification with the commodity *as* material holds the key to its unraveling? Independent of the knowing subject, what secrets lie buried in the object? Maybe *we* are objects, too.

Hito Steyerl notes that emancipatory movements (feminism or anti-colonial struggles, for example) have always been built around the desire to be a subject – a sovereign, knowing, thinking, independent body. But why not consider being an object for a change? What happens if we work from the premise that we are already objectified, already objects? After all, not only is full-fledged subjectivity accompanied by the enormous burden of having to constantly, reflexively, individuate oneself by re-asserting one's autonomy, this burden itself renders subjecthood, as Steyerl puts it, "always already subjected." To accept being an object might be the beginning of moving beyond heroic expressions of pure, free will, and a means of bearing witness to its wreckage and decay.

Rather than consider the distinction between an artwork and a "simple thing," Boris Groys suggests that we consider how the avant-garde negotiated – and attempted to cancel – the distinction between the artist and the non-artist. By producing "weak signs," the early avant-gardes attempted to make universally accessible, "messianic" forms that would withstand the shock of contracting, industrialized time, and "triumph over the strong signs of our world – strong signs of authority, tradition, and power, but also strong signs of revolt, desire, heroism, or shock." But now, as even everyday life is absorbed into cycles of permanent change, how can one produce weak gestures capable of withstanding constant renovation, gestures that can

***themselves* absorb this contracting time by refusing to be crystallized as artifacts?**

Gean Moreno **looks at the increasing interest over the previous decade or two in recasting the space of the art installation as a question of interior design. While this apparently benign strategy has introduced a number of new methods for articulating shared space and conditioning human interaction in disjunctive, broken, or self-reflexive ways, it seems that the translation of art spaces into designed interiors has suggested the possibility of something unexpectedly more radical. What would it mean then to "apply lethal doses of ambiguity to the very idea of a signature language . . . to shift the points of stress and strain and torque the list of expectations (maybe the call for clarity in terms of brand identity becomes its opposite)"?**

Lars Bang Larsen **plays with the zombie as a figure of the mindless persistence of brain-eating capital and purposeless labor. If indeed capital knows nothing of life, then we look to the undead (and unliving) as an aberrational hybrid of living and dead thing, of consumer and commodity. The zombie is a hunger devoid of desire, one that is itself eaten away. It is "a slave morality that makes us cling to capital as though it were our salvation," binding the human together with the thing to embody a walking critique of alienated, dead labor.**

In the second part of his Art and Thingness series, "Thingification," Sven Lütticken **looks to the historical precedents that set the stage for the readymade to unleash its own dialectics into the world of reified commodities: after dialectical materialism abolished the idealist duality of subject and object, Lukács' returned to objects as "social things," or quasi-subjects, and Adorno warned against demonizing objects and objectification. As commodity fetishism has become an obvious trap, with entire "new" economies arising to evade the weight of objects and things, so things have responded by asserting their own kind of memory, testifying to how they themselves have been subjected.**

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1
Married to the Eiffel Tower, BBC, June 4, 2008. Note that the organization Objectùm-Sexuality Internationale firmly denounces the documentary for its "exploitative and sensationalized take on OS." See http://www.objectum-sexuality.org/.