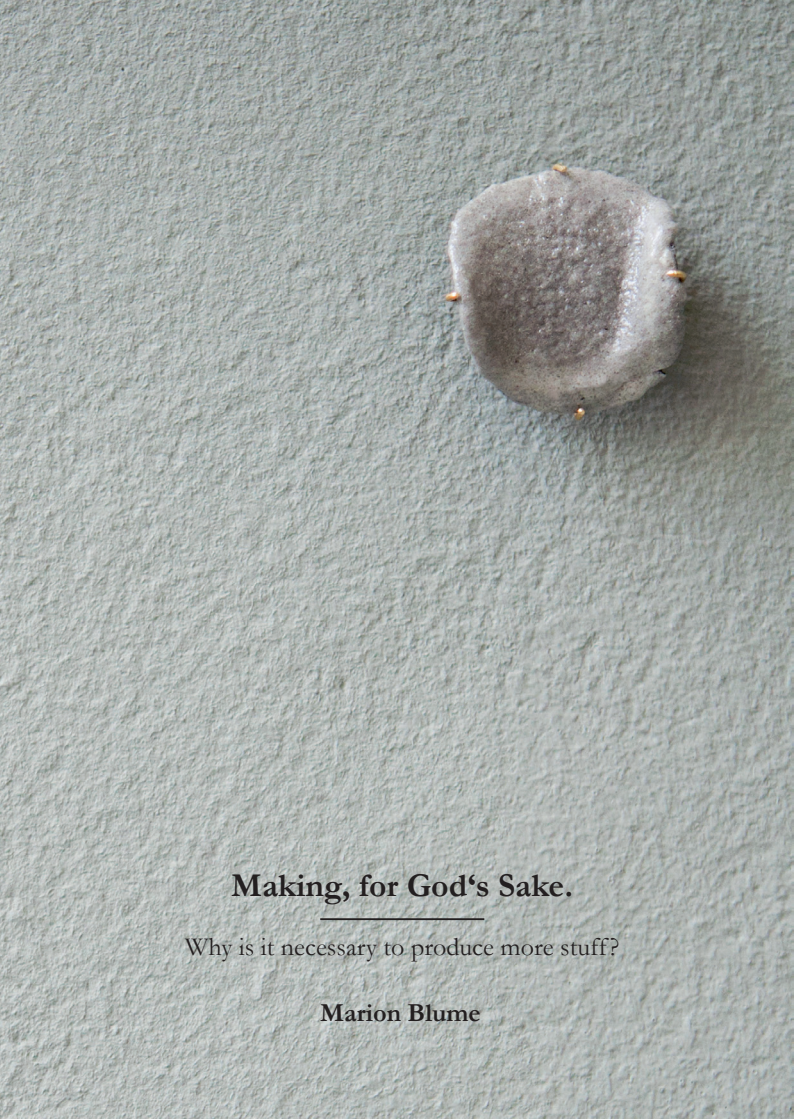

Making, for God‘s Sake.

Why is it necessary to produce more stuff?

Marion Blume

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Introduction

One evening I was scrolling through the webpage of *Current Obsession*, a magazine which focuses on the promotion of young jewellery artists. I was randomly flipping through the page, until one picture suddenly made me stop. What I saw was an exact copy of my assessment project of 2015. The piece on the picture was a silver ring in its mould, casted in the carved, hollow space in between two sliced branches. On the webpage I found out that the project was from 2013. It was me who copied this artist, without even knowing it. My feelings were mixed, I was shocked and surprised, even amused and a bit flattered that my project made it into the magazine, even though I wasn't the artist.

However, this unexpected discovery confirmed what I already suspected: everything is already out there. We can not make anything new anymore, we can just repeat what was already

done before. Why should I continue making? If we can just repeat, doesn't that mean that everything is already done, that there is no need to add more to this world?

This discovery brought back some feelings I have suppressed. What am I doing? People are starving, the sea level is rising, and I just sit here, thinking about unnecessary projects no one will ever be interested in. I felt completely useless and desperate, regretting the past nine years I have spent dealing with jewellery - a discipline what I now regarded as nonsense. Should I have studied something more useful, something that contributes to this world, like environmental protection, with which I may at least help to lower the sea level?

Time passed by and I floated with the current happenings of my everyday life. I went to school and continued doing what art students do - making stuff.

The following text is a reflection on things, objects and stuff. It deals with the terms themselves, as well as the relationships formed with people and the attitude of the maker towards objects. It is divided in two parts: the first part focuses on the history of objects and the clarifying of what objects are; the second part deals with the role objects play in different kinds of art.

The first part starts 150 years back in history, when objects were emerging in the form of commodities. During the Industrial Revolution, the first mass produced commodities were flooding into the world which radically changed people's life and their attitude towards objects.
Karl Marx criticized this radical change, saying that people had to drudge in factories for a poor salary, contributing with their labour to the wealth of the factory owner, the capitalist. In this system, every worker is responsible for just a fragment of the production, so that

the worker loses the vision of the complete product. Marx called that process alienation.

After this look back at history, this text continues by considering the thing theories of four different philosophers and anthropologists of the 20th century: Martin Heidegger, Bruno Latour, Bill Brown and Daniel Miller. These theorists share commonalities, but also diverge from one another on how they would define the terms *thing*, *object* and *stuff*.

Having discussed this, we turn towards the function of objects and why their production might still be necessary and meaningful for us today - clarifying the question of what is function. To do this, the term *function* will be subdivided into the technical, aesthetic and emotional function.

All of these aspects are important in order to understand what objects are and what role they play in our everyday lives.

The second part initially deals with a number of case studies around artists and how they treat objects in their art. We look at two controversial artistic approaches. The *Readymade* for example, declares the everyday object itself to be art, wherein the object is the focus and it is instead the context which reveals that it is a precious object, art. Secondly, *Participatory Art* focuses primarily on the process of time and creativity, the concern is the moment or *happening* itself - objects play a supporting role in this case.

Artists, and critical makers in general, are faced with the contradiction between the urge to make things and the awareness that there are already enough objects in the world circulating within a complex landscape of value and consumption, the topological foundations of which lie in the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution and Karl Marx

Around 1776, the invention of the steam engine and the consequential industrialisation of the manufacturing of things changed society radically: it set the stage for the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Before, society was dominated by agriculture, "manufacturing was often done in people's homes, using hand tools or basic machines."[1] Prior to the Industrial Revolution, people were producing their own food, clothes, furniture and tools. The traditional system of learning skills was to hand it down from generation to generation with an apprenticeship system. Most manufacturing was done in homes or small, rural shops, using hand tools or simple machines. Usually the craftsman dealt directly with the consumer and could consider his suggestions and requests. The crafted products often had decorations and ornaments which showed the typical style and mark of the craftsman.

Machines were invented, big factories were built and plenty of new jobs emerged so that many people moved from the countryside to the city. Suddenly everyone could afford buying products, and the invention and production of more and more products made life easier and more comfortable. Modern buildings were constructed; the public transport system made travelling convenient and the telephone was invented. People started to earn more money and a middle class emerged. There was access to plenty of goods in a relatively inexpensive way, which brought comfort in people's lives, for example, the production of cheap clothing and household goods. What had been made before by the hands of a skilled craftsperson was now produced by machines. The craftsperson's critical eye and artistic expression were swapped for the fast and cheap production of identical products. Workers just had to feed the machine with a raw material, which then took over the rest of the production process.

The Industrial Revolution refers to a period of massive economic, technological, social and cultural change, which affected humans and their relationship with things, both from a maker's point of view as well as from a consumer's point of view. It was the starting signal for assembly line work and mass-produced objects, which changed material production, wealth, labour patterns and people's relationship to things, objects and stuff.

Karl Marx was a philosopher, economist and sociologist. He criticized the Industrial Revolution because it dehumanized and exploited the workers, leading to their loss of dignity through operating in bad conditions for very little pay. Meanwhile, the factory owners profited through the labour of an underpaid and wholly exploited working class. Labour, for Marx, determines the economic value of a good or a service. "The value of a commodity can be objectively measured by

the average number of labour hours required to produce that commodity."[2] That simply means that, for example, a pair of shoes - assuming that it needs double of time to produce than a pair of pants - is twice as valuable than the pants, regardless of the material value. This example shows that the value is not inherent in an object, rather it comes from the real labour expended to produce the object. The commodity materialises labour as capital through buying and selling or exchange. It is the fruit of labour, which can be exchanged on a market for money. The price represents the time that it takes to manufacture the product. A product which takes more time to be generated has more value on the market than a product which can be produced quickly. Marx therefore concludes, "As exchange-values, all commodities are merely definite quantities of congealed labour-time."[3] The connotation of the word *exchange-value* is described in the following paragraph.

One Item - Two Values

The commodity has a use-value and an exchange-value. The use-value pertains to the usefulness of a commodity and is inextricably tied to "[...] the physical properties of the commodity."[4] It "[...] is the utility of a thing for human life"[5], which has the purpose to fulfil human needs. While the use-value describes an object-human-relationship, the exchange-value dominates the capitalist marketplace and defines the exchange relation of two commodities. It characterises the quantity of other commodities for which another consumable can be exchanged. If we compare two products, for example a shirt and a loaf of bread, we can represent their relationship in an equation that correlates a certain amount of shirts as equal to a certain amount of loaves of bread. This equation says that the same value exists in two different things and that one commodity is quite as good as every other, if it is put in the right proportion. To

transform this into a universal system, money was introduced as an established unit which makes it possible to liken it to the commodity, so that it can be equated with a certain monetary value.

Machines vs. Makers

The Industrial Revolution caused profound and long-term changes regarding living and working conditions. Marx assumed that people are free and creative by nature. Through monotonous and tedious factory work they lose touch with reality and environment, just fulfilling their task dictated by the capitalist. "In the end, people themselves become objects - robot-like mechanisms that have lost touch with human nature - that make decisions based on cold profit-and-loss considerations, with little concern for human worth and need."[6] Marx concluded that capitalism blocks our capacity to create our own humane society.

Objects turn into subjects and become active and decisive while subjects become static and passive objects. The consequence is that humans become alienated from their own humanity. Marx calls this *Entfremdung*, the German word for *estrangement*. The workers feel foreign to the products of their own labour. In a production chain, one worker is responsible for just one section of the whole production. Often he or she stands at an assembly line and does the same work step over and over again which makes her loose her consciousness that it ever was her creation.

While these cheap mass products might seem to be a competition for the craftsperson, there are some qualities which can not be imitated by machines and can only be done by technically skilled human hands. While a machine basically produces the same product in the same quality, the craftsperson is able to produce individual products with character and soul. Even if she will do the same thing

again it might look slightly different. This uniqueness in itself can only be produced by hand and in a small amount. Craftspeople, as thinking beings, can make use of the machines which were invented, as a means to improve their own work. They can manage the balancing act between tradition and modernity. Perhaps paradoxically little irregularities which distinguish the crafted item from a mass-produced one, become a clear sign for quality and craft. The reflective craftsperson is not competing against the machine, he is rather looking for distinctions between human and machine and therefore he first needs to cherish his own imperfection, before he can make use of it.

This view was also supported by a group of painters, architects, jewellers and designers who formed the Arts and Crafts movement in the middle of the 19th century in Great Britain. In times of mechanical production they wanted to return the focus back to craft.

The group attached great importance to manual labour and the beauty of the material.

Now that we have addressed when and how mass produced objects emerged in Western society, we can have a closer look at some theories which began to arise in philosophical discourse with the ever increasing production and global trade of the 20th century.

Thing, object, stuff.
A Terminology Chapter.

Thing, *object*, *stuff* - three words which seem to describe one and the same thing. The following section takes a brief look at four different theories on things, objects and stuff which have emerged in the last century. Before providing background on these different thing theories, I want to show that there is no universal view on how to look on things, objects and stuff. These philosophical viewpoints are proposals of possible perspectives on certain circumstances - there is no right or wrong. Meanwhile, the dictionary provides a clear definition of *thing*, *object*, *stuff*:

Thing: *An object that one need not, cannot, or does not wish to give a specific name to.*[7]

Object: *A material thing that can be seen and touched.*[8]

Stuff: *Matter, material, articles, or activities of a specified or indeterminate kind that are being referred to, indicated, or implied.*[9]

Thing

Martin Heidegger is a German philosopher. In his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" from 1937, he writes that a thing is "every being what in any way exists."[10] It can be material, non-material and non-human. "*Thing* applies to anything which is not simply nothing."[11] He sees the thing as a core, around which are gathered its characteristics.[12] These characteristics are the properties of the thing, its so-called *thingness*. This *thingness* effectuates how we look at things. Heidegger defines the thing as "formed matter."[13]
In his speech on "The Thing" in 1950, Heidegger differentiates between *thing* and *object*. He takes the jug as an example to explain what *things* are. "Near to us are

what we usually call things."[14] A thing for Heidegger has a purpose besides waiting for the human awareness. Humans have to accept that there is a world apart from the human-object-relation, which inherits the *thingness* of a thing. A jug, for Heidegger, is a *thing* because it is independent and can stand on its own. According to him, this is how the jug differs from an object. A thing can become an object if its purpose is representing itself. Also, the fact that the jug was handmade by a potter makes it a thing, showing a rich set of connections between art and craft. "When we take the jug as a made vessel, then surely we are apprehending it - so it seems- as a thing and never as a mere object."[15] Heidegger further says that this independency of the jug comes from the making. "The making, it is true, lets the jug come into its own."[16] Apart from the making, the jug is a vessel and its task is containing. The production method and the capability to contain turns the jug into a thing and not an object.

Object/Ding

Bruno Latour is a French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist. For him, objects have the same impact subjects have because they have rights and responsibilities, which makes them similar to subjects.

For Latour, the *thing* refers to an issue between the subject and the object; the two form a social network which is strongly intertwined. *Things* have the power to create social relations, they unite people and objects; they are "matters of concern", complex issues of society which occur in the social interaction with humans.[17] A thing (*Ding)* designates both the concern and the reason of a concern; it is "the issue which brings people together because it divides them."[18] Therefore we should put our focus on things. Bruno Latour proclaims "Back to things!"[19] as a thrilling political slogan.

Objects on the other hand are "matters of fact" - they are less abstract, independent and aesthetical; they form the base of modern society as the result of science and technology.

Latour takes the space shuttle *Columbia,* which exploded in March 2003 as an example of an object which becomes a thing. "What else would you call this sudden transformation of a completely mastered, perfectly understood, quite forgotten by the media, taken-for-granted, matter-of-factual projectile into a sudden shower of debris falling on the United States, which thousands of people tried to salvage in the mud and rain and collect in a huge hall to serve as so many clues in a judicial scientific investigation?"[20] Before the explosion, the Columbia was an autonomous, complete and highly complex object. After it exploded, people gathered the fragments of the shuttle in a hall where a team of specialists tried to understand what went wrong. "But what has exploded is our capacity

to understand what objects are when they have become *Ding* "[21] The object turned into a complex issue, a "matter of concern", a thing.

Thing

Bill Brown is a professor in American History at the University of Chicago. Like Heidegger and Latour, he is also differentiating between objects and things. To the question "What separates an ordinary object from a *thing*?" he answers that objects are "what we don't notice."[22] He puts forward the example of a glass of water which we pick up unconsciously to drink from. Suddenly, the glass breaks. "We begin to confront the *thingness* of objects when they stop working for us."[23] The *thingness* of an object becomes palpable when there is an interruption, when it stands out against its own context, which changes the *object* to a *thing*. He describes objects as windows through which you can look through and see

glimpses of history, society and realities and what they disclose about us, whereas things can not function as a window. It is the relation between the human and the object which changes and makes the object to a thing. "The object world helps to form and transform human beings."[24]

Stuff

Daniel Miller preferentially uses the term *stuff* to describe things or objects. In the introduction of his book *Stuff*, he refuses to give a clear definition because he "personally has a horror of pedantic semantics."[25] To avoid setting up another theory of things, Daniel Miller uses a term which is quite untouched. *Stuff* is a new and fresh term which wasn't already discussed so much as *thing* and *object*. He just allows himself to say: "This is a book about the variety of things that we might term *stuff*, but nowhere in this volume will you find any attempt at a definition of that term."[26]

He considers objects as something which silently set the scene, without actively being seen. That is what makes them so powerful because "they determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so."[27] This fact can be also be described with the term *blindingly obvious,* which is "an adjective describing something that is so plain to see that it is easily overlooked."[28]

The entirety of invisible objects can be summarised as *material culture*, which exists "as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us."[29] Through objects we gently learn how to act appropriately - they teach us how to deal with our everyday life and they make us into what we are. It is not accidental, that Daniel Miller chose to use the term *stuff*, when he talks about objects or things. For him, the relations between objects or things are most important when they form a background scene, where we then perform. *Stuff* only exists in the plural, which emphasizes his point:

"We should not regard entities in isolation, rather we should start from the relationship between the things."[30] We can only understand an individual object when we see it in relation with other objects. Only the entire system of things makes us the people we are.

We just encountered several philosophical proposals on how to look at things, objects and stuff. With some of these opinions I can relate, such as Heidegger's, who states that the usage of the word *thing* is ambiguous. It can be used for objects, happenings and relations. When we say *thing,* we describe something by not describing it. Everything and nothing are a *thing*. It is the embedded context which makes it more clear. "This thing I bought to clean my carpet." We use the word *thing* when we circumscribe something but we don't know exactly how to name it. It tells us about an existing something and refers to a possible materiality. When we talk about *thing*, we mean everything apart from humans; *thing* leaves

space for interpretation. What a *thing* is can also be read out of the context. The word *thing* alone gives no further information, other than "not human". It can be used for something non-material: "I still have to go to this thing at five." In this context, the word *thing* refers to a happening. "Tell me about this thing you have with the neighbour's son." Here, the word *thing* stands for a relationship between two people.

Another interesting approach derives from the statements of Bruno Latour and Bill Brown, who say that there are moments when objects turn into things. In other words, the definition and designation of something has to change when the context changes. Concrete objects turn into things when they lose what defines them. This also relates to Heidegger again, who said that things are less concrete than objects. A glass is a glass, but a broken glass is not a glass anymore because it has lost its qualities which defined it being a glass. This is similar to Latour's example of the space shuttle.

In that sense, I understand Daniel Miller, who said that instead of setting up another theory of things he would use another word to describe the material world. What is special about *stuff* is that this word just exists in its plural version. Using this term, which carries within it the notion that it refers to something more than just one object emphasizes his argument that it involves not a single item but the whole system of things and the relations between them to make us the people we are.

It is interesting and indeed necessary, to address how we relate to objects, stuff and things today and with that, why it is that objects, things and stuff continue to be produced. To do so, I will introduce three forms of "uses" which I call functions.

Objects and Function.

In the essay "Neo-Materialism, Part One: The Commodity and the Exhibition", Joshua Simon states that "we dwell in the world of our commodities."[31] This statement arises from the fact that the lifetime of our objects is often longer than ours. After our death, our commodities will remain, ready to be passed on to the next generation. Commodities are the centre point of our lives. "[...] we have more intimate relations with commodities than we do with each other."[32] Every action we perform is an interaction with an object, for virtually everything that we do, we make use of an object. We can't do anything without them. Objects form our culture; as private property they are "the key to understand our relation with each other and with objects, as well as between objects."[33]

With all this relational complexity, it would be difficult and maybe even impossible to look

at objects neutrally. However, for the sake of argument, if we would do so, we would see two aspects: its material and its shape. You could say: object = material + shape. Shape and material are forming every object.

Apart from the external appearance, an object holds function which describes its compiled task. Daniel Miller says this about function: it "[...] tends to remain our default gear in driving towards any explanation of why we have what we have. It is the way we label goods from frying pans to swimwear."[34] The invention of functional objects is an aspect of humanity's adaption to its environment, which brings comfort into life. The proper handling of objects has to be learnt because often it is not recognizable at once. We can not see the function, we have to know it. Throughout our lives, we have learnt how to use a spoon, a percolator or a bike. If we know how to use them, we can experience the advantage they bring along. This knowledge is something we

often take for granted, until we get confronted with an unfamiliar object. That makes us realize that it is not only the object which has to function, we have to function, too. If we do not understand the object, we can not benefit from its use. What we then encounter is the naked object; we look at the material and the shape. All objects are gathered in a realm called *material culture*, "they work by being invisible and unremarked upon, a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted."[35] This action loads the object with a lot of meaning, making it impossible for us to look through the fog of culture on the true thing itself with a neutral eye.

To show the diversity of function, I will split it up into three sub-divisions.

1. Technical Function

The technical function is the ability of the percolator to brew coffee, of the fridge to cool the food, of the plate to contain the meals. With everyday objects, it is mostly the technical function which is paramount.

The technical function explains the mechanical characteristics of the object. It makes the object work, breathes life into it. Objects become useful helpers; they overtake tasks and make life easy and enjoyable. They reveal much about our habits and preferences.
The technical function ensures the smooth flow in the chain of our daily routine. They are the tools with which we shape our everyday life. Every object is contributing with its technical function to a successful routine.

2. Aesthetic Function

Apart from the technical function, there is the aesthetic function. This is the look, the appearance, the decorative element: colour, shape, material, texture, everything that we can see. With some objects it is more important that they look good than with others. Especially the things which leave the house represent our taste and it is crucial that they are beautiful. Most people emphasise that their clothes look good but they don't care of the external appearance of their printer. We want that the objects around us to look nice, according to our taste.

Both technical and aesthetic function are inherited in the same object, however they are not equally important. How the technical and the aesthetic function relate to each other can even change if the context changes. The importance of the appearance is very subjective and personal, strongly dependent on our own preference and taste.

3. Emotional Function

Next to the technical and the aesthetic function there is a third function, the emotional function. This function can occur in different strengths, depending on the object's lineage, and also on the other functions. Some objects might remind us of a certain occasion, person or happening. This doesn't always have to be objects overloaded with meaning, like the dead grandmother's wedding ring; also simple objects of daily use can have an emotional function and remind us of small stories when we actively engage with them. Thereby the emotional function might not be the main function, but every object carries a story, however marginal it may be. When the emotional function exceeds the other functions, we talk about the keepsake, which has the emotional function as a main function.

The emotional function of a keepsake is something which only the beholder sees and feels. It allows for the recollection of a certain

memory the owner associates it with. Instead of the material and shape, you see the story in front of your inner eye. The emotional function is a reminder - to remember someone or something, when looking at the object. As long as you keep the object, you will keep the memory. It is the personal value which makes the keepsake so precious, important, unique and irreplaceable.

The object is material evidence that what transpired really happened; it is the carrier of an anecdote. If you throw it out it is equally a statement. It means that the memory is not important any more.

The emotional value catapults the object to a higher level, above all other objects. It becomes kind of a meta-object. The longer your life lasts, the more of these objects you will collect, or better, the more of these objects will collect you. Objects with memory are something you cannot wish for or request from someone.

It may happen that throughout our life the emotional value vanishes. What is left is the empty shell of a useless object, which can finally be thrown out.

An example of this function at work is apparent in the practice of Emilio Moreno, an artist interested in the biography of objects. In his work "Heirloom" from 2011, he was inspired by a little figurine.[36] His friend bought the figurine for his mother in 1972. After she passed away, the friend kept this statue as a carrier of the memories of the deceased mother. Emilio Moreno asked his friend if he could borrow the statue, promising to give it back safe and sound. After two weeks his friend came to pick up his statue, and found two statues instead of one. Emilio Moreno made an exact copy of the statue which has so much value for his friend, so precise was the copy that he didn't know any longer which one was the "right" one. His friend wasn't able to differentiate the original from the replica, so he took both of them with him.

Every object consists of three functions, the technical function, the aesthetic function and the emotional function. Each function is not equally important, the importance changes with the context.

The function of each object is a contemporary snapshot. It is dependent on a lot of influencing factors around the object, which form its context. Those factors can be a temporary need, taste or preference. It is comparable to a sensitive ecosystem where every animal and plant has a certain role and when one dies out, the whole system changes.

Making, for God's Sake.

Having established that we need objects, as they carry so many functions, the question arises if it is necessary to produce more of them. Materialism is one of those ugly words that gets thrown around a lot in relation to this subject. Its negative connotation came first up during Marxism, when the world got flooded with all sorts of mass products. We use the word *materialistic* for people who overstep the line of a natural reliance on objects, stuff or things, for people who possess distinctly more than what we consider as the average. Quickly we have lumped them together: these people are *materialistic*. In doing so, makers forget that they too are materialistic, not only consuming but even producing things for further consumption.

To balance the materialistic world, minimalist lifestyles have developed all over the world, in which people only accumulate what is

essential – often times in connection with an ideological, political or religious cause. Minimalism proclaims the benefits of owning less: having more time for socialities, spending less money, being environmental friendly, having less stress. Minimalists search for happiness not through things; many define minimalism as "a tool to rid yourself of life's excess in favour of focusing on what's important to find happiness, fulfilment, and freedom."[38]

A contemporary example of a minimalist approach to *stuff* can be seen specifically in Petri Luukkainen, a Finnish film maker who both directed and played the main role in his self experience documentation called "My Stuff" in 2013. When he made the film, Luukkainen was 26, single and in the middle of a soft life crisis, during which he decided that he wants to find out what he really needs to be happy. That decision formed the start of a one-year experiment. Luukkainen's self

imposed rules for this year were: he brought all his possessions to a storage space and allowed himself to take back one item per day. Also, it was prohibited to buy something new besides food.

The experiment starts with Luukkainen sprinting naked through snowy Helsinki to the storage space. His first item he decided for was a coat. The next morning he contentedly states that if you put the legs in the sleeves, the coat transforms into kind of a veritable sleeping bag.
In this film, Luukkainen invites the public to reflect on which things they possess and what they consider as essential among these. His movie responds to the contemporary consumer society where people tend to define themselves through their possessions and shows that it is possible to live a lifestyle of less.

Unmaking

For many people who make stuff, like artists, designers and jewellery makers, there is a constant tension between the joy of creating new things and the problems of materialism, consumption and production. Making things requires having a lot of things, which are preferably gathered in an atelier, a workshop, where there is space to store tons of materials, drawers full of experiments, shelves with found objects and various kinds of tools. If you decide to become a maker, you automatically decide against having a minimalist lifestyle. To work properly you need huge amounts of stuff. It functions like materialised knowledge to which we can resort to when needed. In the process of experimenting, it is most handy and easy to revert to materials and tools without running out to get everything anew. Don't dare to throw something out; it will be the first thing you miss badly a few days later.

What is required and what is essential is in the eye of the beholder. Daniel Miller says that "the reason why we make things is because they potentially extend us as people."[39] Creating satisfies a basic human impulse, which is the desire of doing a job well for its own sake. It contains thinking and feeling. Things become concrete, they go out of your thoughts into reality. Making brings you to a point when you are totally focused on what you are doing, enthralled by the fascination of when ideas become material. It is the immediate feedback of seeing your progress which gives a feeling of satisfaction.

Material is the medium through which the maker expresses her dearest feelings and wishes, which gives her the notion of completeness and understanding and provides the words for an artistic language. Through the making the maker creates not only something physical, he also creates and develops himself. Longings, desires and opinions get discovered

and explored through visualizing them and making them a graspable and tangible object. Letting thoughts become visible for everyone, assigning them with material; this is reserved for the few ones who dare to make. Making things, visualizing thoughts, creating by hand, this is always an exciting action where everything is possible. Still, making turns material into objects.

To combine the urge and joy of making and creating with the conscious awareness that the outcome will be another object set out in the world is a narrow path which every maker needs to find independently. In the following section I introduce some quite controversial approaches of how to deal with this conflict.

"An everyday manufactured object, as a bottle rack, a snow shovel, a urinal, or a comb, that may by the creative act of selection and designation by an artist attain status as a work of art."[40] Simply by putting the object in an art context, the readymade approach claims it as art and it becomes the carrier of a certain meaning. Readymades represent something else of what they actually should be. The most famous example is probably Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917). The object was a customary urinal which was signed with the pseudonym R. Mutt (which was the name of the manufacturer of the urinal) and the year 1917. Duchamp presented the urinal turned onto its back which removed its original function and made the signature readable. The artwork was handed in for the yearly exhibition of the *Society of Independent Artists* which took place in the Grand Central Palace in New York. The society promised an uncensored participation

for the exhibition, but with the explanation that a mechanically made object is not an artwork, it was determined that the *Fountain* could not participate in the exhibition and therefor got excluded.

Weirdly enough, the original is lost, and what can be seen now in several museums are 17 replicas by Duchamp of the original artwork. Nowadays, the *Fountain* is seen as a major landmark of 20th-century art.

The absence of several criteria of what an artwork has to contain raised the question of whether a signed and inverted urinal can be something valuable, a precious object, an artwork. As the object was simply bought in a plumber store the artist was neither a big creator nor was the artwork itself a unique creation of the artist. In this case, the artist is not a maker, because the readymade is not made by the artist. The work of the artist lies more in carefully choosing the object and

deciding where and how to position it. It is the gesture which is important. By ennobling an everyday object to an artwork, it suddenly catches the awareness of the viewer. The urinal in a public toilet might not cause any confusion or attraction, but encountering it in an art exhibition alters its identity. It is not only about the urinal anymore, the context also plays an important role.

Every object we possess is an active player on a stage. This scenery is something we are used to; it is the background scene of *material culture*, usually remaining invisible until we hit upon something where it doesn't belong. In the current time, if we find a urinal in a modern art museum, we might not be totally surprised, because we know that readymades exist and that objects can become art. It became almost trivialised, as more and more non-art was put on exhibit by other artists.

Until today it has remained popular to make art with already existing objects. This is also the case in jewellery art, as I will show in the next example.

Lisa Walker is a jeweller based in Wellington, New Zealand and has a more contemporary approach to this notion of the readymade. She mostly works with found objects, alienating them through painting, cutting, drilling, filing and sawing. Most of her work is very colourful, made out of plastic or painted wood. On her webpage she states: "I don't want to make pieces that are easily steered through our established channels, I want people to be forced to work on new syllogisms, analogies and positions."[41]

A picture shows Lisa Walker in her studio; on the walls are shelves filled with little objects, which might one day become part of her work. For her, almost everything has the potential to become material for her work:

piles of wool, fabric, soft toys, redundant technology, bottles, plastic, and all manner of found objects. All these things are given new life; transformed into unique jewellery pieces that can be found in galleries, museums and collections all around the world. Her aim is not to recycle these objects; rather, she takes them because she is interested in the history of second hand objects. In the necklace called "What Karl didn't take with him" (2010), she uses objects which her husband left behind in his drawer before the couple moved from Munich to New Zealand. Her interest is in how the act of wearing can transform stuff. For the necklace she took disused objects like buttons, pens and paper clips and gave them a new meaning by transforming them into a wearable piece of jewellery. The context changed from loose pieces, which were almost left behind in a drawer, to a wearable agglomeration of objects forming a necklace.

Another example of the readymade is the cell phone necklace (2009). Lisa Walker puts seven old fashioned mobile phones on a string, every phone is painted all over with a lacquer, each in a different colour, some of them are turned around. This necklace can be read in various ways: if you look at the way of making, you get reminded of traditional tribal necklaces usually made from natural materials like bones, stones or shells, which were popular in New Zealand in the 1980s. Along with this, it is about progress and tradition, as well as the transformation of everyday objects into jewellery through small interventions to the original object.

The readymade plays with the idea that an ordinary object can experience a shift in its use- and exchange-value, exiting the realm of regular commodities into the realm of art or design, by transforming its meaning through presenting it in a different context. Counter to the readymade's strategy, participatory art

focuses on the moment itself; the happening becomes the art piece and the involved objects take a backseat.

Participatory Art

Many artists make objects because they want to represent themselves and their views on the world. Participatory Art, which emerged in the latter half of the 20th century functions a bit differently. In this field, the artist involves the public in the process of making or in the execution of a performance. While painters are working with canvas and paint, the artists of Participatory Art work with the audience and the interactions we have with one another. They create a scenario in which the audience is invited to participate. Participatory or, Interactive Art, creates a dynamic collaboration between the artist, the audience and their environment. Everyone is co-creating the thing or object. Observers are experiencing

the piece, and through interaction they become a part of it: art, artist and audience blur. The audience as the subject becomes the object of the piece; the artist is like a script-writer, sometimes arranging and presetting the circumstances, sometimes participating, too. Participatory Art aims to break down the wall between artist and observer. Art isn't always the most inviting and accessible medium when it comes to the understanding of the public: it can often seem to exclude rather than involve the viewer. People who participate often have a better understanding of the concept through their experience.

Many great examples of Participatory Art exist; in the following section I include a few of these.

Allan Kaprow (1927 – 2006) is an American pioneer of performance and participatory art. In his essay from 1986 "Art which can't be art" he writes that "It's fairly well known that for the

last thirty years my main work as an artist has been located in activities and contexts that don't suggest art in any way."[42] He decided to focus on brushing his teeth, on the movement of his hand, and the tension in his elbow and fingers, which made him wonder, "that 99 percent of my daily life was just as routinized and unnoticed; that my mind was always somewhere else; and that the thousand signals my body was sending me each minute were ignored."[43] In Allan Kaprow's performances there is not always a viewer, or an artistic setting. When he observed himself brushing his teeth, it was only he who was present.

In another performance without audience, called "Pose", he carried a chair around in the city, made photographs of himself - sitting on the chair, and left the photos on the spot. "Kaprow's happenings changed the definition of the art object. Art was no longer an object to be viewed hanging on a wall or set on a pedestal; rather, it could now be anything, including movement, sound, and even scent."[44]

Allan Kaprow was the first artist to introduce the term *happening*, a word for "something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen" in a regular or special context. There is no beginning or end, no distinction or hierarchy between artist, participant and viewer. This loss of hierarchy is also an important criteria in *democratic jewellery*, which I will explain later in the text. Moreover, the reaction of the participants make it a unique experience that cannot be replicated.

In his installation called "Yard" from 1961, he put hundreds of used car tires in the sculpture garden of the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York. They covered the ground and lay there in no particular order. "Visitors were encouraged to walk on the tires, and to throw them around as they pleased."[45]

Perhaps as part of the same tradition, we could turn to the more recent work of Ted Noten, a jewellery designer based in Amsterdam. Noten

is known for stretching the term *jewellery* until it almost splits. Unlike many makers in the field, an object being "wearable" is not a criteria jewellery necessarily has to fulfil for Noten. Nevertheless, he is a craftsman and an incredibly skilled person. His work is more a comment on jewellery through jewellery, which often turns out to be cheeky and provocative. In a documentary about his work Noten states the following: "Why does jewellery always need to be wearable? Who did make that up? I never had the urge that people have to wear my work. Imagine that you pick something up and hang it around your neck and wear it for ten seconds. And that's it. And in this moment you find that it's beautiful to see yourself like this, or you think it's shocking; than it fulfilled its function. I try to be something like a catalyst, to turn things upside down."[46]

It could be said that Noten is the punk of the jewellery scene, his work is provocative and

contains both typical masculine stereotypes like guns, bullets and machines and very female stereotypes like handbags and high heels. This clash often turns out to have a sexist notion. Each of his works is equally a statement. Most of his work is indeed not wearable. Ted Noten challenges both the viewer and the wearer; the latter needs to bring a strong personality with a pinch of self-irony and some exhibitionistic tendencies because he or she will definitely attract attention by wearing one of his pieces.

In several of his projects, Noten lets the public or the wearer become a part of the making process. In his project called "Chew your own brooch" from 1998, he provides a chewing kit which contains a strip of chewing gum, like we know it from the classical Wrigley's chewing gum stripes. The wrapping derives from the original layout, with the difference that instead of the brand's name it says, "Chew your own brooch". The idea is that you chew the gum and send it back to Noten, as the primary

"maker" of the work. He will cast the chewed gum into silver or gold, attach a pin and send it back.[47] By carefully setting the scene, Noten allows everyone to participate. Everyone can chew a chewing gum and send it back. The wearer turns into the designer, he determines the shape of his future brooch, and Noten stays "just" a craftsman, who has no say in the design of the brooch but simply functions as the man providing the settings of the project with skills, tools and material.

Another of Noten's projects in which the public is involved is the wall installation "Wanna swap your ring" which was exhibited during the Tokyo Design Week in September 2010.[48] The installation was built out of 500 "Miss Piggy" rings, affixed on the wall in the shape of a gun, which is the identifying feature in many of Noten's works. The public was invited to swap their ring for one of the "Miss Piggy" rings. Again, Ted Noten sets the circumstances and allows full bent. Everyone

can participate by swapping a ring with one of the provided Miss Piggy rings. How the installation will look like in the end is therefor not predictable.

In both of the above examples, Noten involves the public in the making of the piece. This is an exciting moment for both sides, the public gets the opportunity to actively participate in a work and Noten gives up the control and turns the piece into a performance-like action. Naturally, jewellery always involves many people: there is the maker as the creator of the piece, the later wearer who is going to carry the piece out in the world, and the viewers, who are going to see the piece on someone's body. Noten however draws attention to this process in a particular way, establishing the term *democratic jewellery* by which he means that everyone can be involved in the creation of the art piece. According to the dictionary, being *democratic* means "Believing in or practicing social equality"[49] and by conceding

the execution of the project to the public, Ted Noten encourages the participants and believes in their ability to be a creator, too.

Transforming Latour's expression of the "matter of concern" into "jewellery of concern" might fit well here, as jewellery clearly shows a power to create social relations. In the aforementioned examples, jewellery stands for interaction and for networking. The jewellery represents a happening and becomes a complex issue. The outcome is not an empty object, it stands for the whole process: it is the carrier of a concept.

Usually in contemporary jewellery, there is only one maker - the creator, the master, the artist. It is important to know the maker, since typically a name is strongly connected with the piece. There is no nameless contemporary jewellery piece that exists within a commercial sphere - a process originating with traditionally crafted jewellery. By opening the creative work

to the public on a level where everyone can get involved, jewellers like Ted Noten allow for the audience to become enthusiastic and offer a means to understand a makers intention through experience. Now, it is not only the "master" maker who is important: they give up their unique position to share it with others. Everyone can become the creator. The maker becomes the person who prepares the conditions. In a way, that the maker is still making, not by hand, but by presetting the conditions to an extent where he can not predict the outcome anymore. This is exciting, both for the maker and the user or participant, and it becomes a complex issue.

If we now think about jewellery, the act of wearing is, besides the making, a performative and participatory act in itself. We could say that making a jewellery piece is the first part, wearing a piece of jewellery is the second part. Through wearing, the wearer becomes part of the piece. The setting changes, depending

on where the wearer carries it. This allows jewellery to be looked at in many settings.

As Allan Kaprow already noticed when observing himself brushing his teeth, the question is where does the work start and where does it end? Everyone potentially becomes the viewer of an art piece; it is not restricted to a space where art is expected, like museums or galleries. Jewellery has the great potential that it is a part of everyday lives. It can reach a broad public and surprise people with art where they didn't expect to encounter it. Art of this kind belongs in public space rather than in museums and galleries, to de-alienate critically made objects, things and stuff and to bring them closer to us.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this thesis we got to know the different kinds of functions which are applicable to objects. Can we transfer this concept also to art taking shape as music, painting, sculpture, jewellery, photography, architecture, literature, just to name a few which is something abstract and less concrete? In contemporary art, the technical function is not important; if it would be, in my opinion, it involves design rather than art. The aesthetic function is more important - people like to surround themselves with beautiful things. As most important I would consider the emotional function. Apart from everything, the main purpose of art, and more specifically, art jewellery, is triggering thoughts and creating the possibility to internalise new knowledge or experience.

Every maker has her own motivation why she is making. Generally speaking, art and craft enrich and deepen our understanding of the world

around us, not only from a maker's point of view, but also as a public, be it a viewer, user or wearer who can become inspired to see different approaches on what is happening around all of us. A critical making practice can cause people to look closer at social issues and the environment that surrounds them with its everyday objects, and help to see what is already there, but cannot always be easily perceived. This is what Daniel Miller describes as *material culture*, which exists through objects we are so used to that they become invisible for us.[50] A reflexive approach to the production and circulation of materials can help people to reexamine their thinking on a subject, to actively see things again and to get a fresh view on what is happening around them. There is no need to become an expert to have a meaningful relationship with things, objects and stuff; all it takes is a moderate attention to detail, a little bit of patience and a willingness to reflect on your own feelings.

In my own practice, I am at a point where I ask myself if it is really necessary to produce more -

I feel that there is already enough out there. Why should I contribute to this overload of things? And if doing so, in what way can I contribute so it creates something fresh, which wasn't already done before.

In the process of writing this thesis, I reached the point that what constitutes art in all its forms is not an object, like a painting or a piece of jewellery. An expanded sense of art includes what these objects stimulate inside the viewer and with a context. It is the experience, which can be triggered through an object, like Duchamp's *Fountain*, or through the active participation in a piece, like Kaprow's happenings. Making jewellery requires a critical making practice, in which the maker has the choice to act responsibly, the same way any citizen of the world might act responsibly when you buy food or clothes or when you interact with fellow human beings.

In my role as an artist and critical maker, I automatically have the authorization and maybe even the obligation to provoke something in the

minds of viewers, wearers and users, offering them a new perspective on what they consume. I regard the profession of the jeweller as someone providing a service to the public. The mission is: blowing minds and habits. Now.

I like it when people can interact with the pieces I make, to allow them to touch and to experience them. This is not so often the case with most art pieces as they are kept safe behind the glass of showcases. I deem jewellery as a good artistic medium to carry ideas and to invite people to interact. A recent work of mine from 2015 consists of seven little tumblers, made from branches. They need human interaction to display their ability to never lie down and always come back to an upright position, to reveal this playfulness and to create joy.
Making and wearing contemporary jewellery is a catalyst for human interaction. It is already a performance in itself, because contemporary jewellery often consists of unusual material and shape, which will often cause a stir. The user/

participant/wearer turns into a walking canvas and becomes a contact person for curious people who want to know more about the piece. This determines whether people want to wear jewellery or not. I often hear the question as to why I don't wear jewellery, as people often assume that making jewellery is somehow equated to wearing jewellery. Wearing jewellery is a very extroverted activity, something you choose, in the same way perhaps that one may have a disposition for making jewellery. My interest in jewellery lies in this latter position of making: in the responsible but playful approach to materials and in the execution of my ideas and concepts, which are aimed in particular at inviting people to participate and perform with them, to create an experience.

And while I have not found the final answer to whether it is necessary for me to produce more things, objects and stuff, the most important thing is perhaps that I continue to ask the question.

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