

THE MATHS TEST

By Emilie Bobek (2018)

PREFACE

I'm holding it in my hand. I press it in between the tip of my two fingers, and slightly let it rest against the inside of my palm. I turn it around with my thumb. I feel the edges of the small wooden fibers of its solid, but fragile shape.

Then I place it in between the inside of my middle and index finger and easily flip it up and down between the finger pair to the next. Making it dance acrobatically, like my hand is attached to gymnastic beams.

After flipping it a couple of times I place it in the air vertically, now only with two fingers touching it on each end. The pressure from the tip makes my skin go inwards like a big crater left from an asteroid. From the bottom of the crated finger rises a long wooden square, solid and with a thickness in the top similar to the one in the bottom. In the very top where the piece meets my hand again, it has a rounded ending, similar to the round shape of a balloon floating towards the sky.

It is imperfect in its shape, left with the traces from the machines it was made from. Small cuts and broken edges show that it was made quickly and with no extra caution. The wood itself is soft and easily marked when scratched with a nail. The object measures the width of four fingers, so it's rather small compared to the rest of the items in the room surrounding me.

At the very top of the wooden tower there is a brown sandpaper looking surface, almost like the colour of a mushroom, growing from the mulch. The head is raw and matte and with a perfect line the two parts unite; from a long wooden tower to a mushroom brown balloon.

The brown balloon makes me think of the dot I make after every sentence. The shape makes me think of the small head on someone's body I passed the other day. It makes me think of the tip of a shoe and a tick filled with nutritious blood. The wooden tower makes me think of a timeline with a beginning and an end. It makes me think of a nail holding the mirror from falling of the wall. It makes me think of a pair of skinny legs and a fairy tail about a little poor girl from H.C Andersen. It makes me think of the power poles that give us electricity every day and the fences around my family's summerhouse in the countryside.

I take the small wooden stick between my thumb and my index finger with the head of the stick in front of my hand. I place it on the area of the side of the box I took it from. The

one with the heroic Tordenskjold at the top cover. With the small stick in one hand and the Tordenskjold box in the other hand, I now press the head towards the side of the box and push it forward in one quick move. The flame appears together with a crispy sound and a silent smell of Sulphur.

The head of the stick is burning, the flame moves slowly and the wood inside turns black and thin. The flame continues in the only direction possible and leaves behind a thin and twisted stick of coal. In return I get a nice thick yellow flame. The flame suddenly gets very small and before it reaches my hand the flame is out. The fire is gone and I'm now left with a stick half burned half intact. Its now crooked body makes me think of a straw of grass playing in the wind. It makes me think of Karl Blossfeldt photographs of plants and flowers in nature. It makes me think of the beauty of a withering flower. It makes me think of CO₂ and global warming and burning forests in Canada, far away from my own small life.

INTRODUCTION

In my research around the match I'm interested to find out how we categorize and define objects. I can not tell the full story of when categorization takes place, but I can describe a personal selection of thoughts and considerations that I find essential in how I look at a man-made object such as the match. Some of my thoughts and research you might be able to relate to and some you may not. For me, it is interesting how the rules of language determine how one sees, feels, uses and relates to objects.

History, language, advertising, material and function are all key topics in my research which unfold some of the seen and unseen secrets of a match. My match. I find it interesting how communication is determining and defining objects, and I hope you as the reader will come to question the origin of objects as much as I have.

The selection of topics one can see as a mind map where one leads to the other. What

all chapters have in common is that they come from thoughts and questions evolving from the same match.

One should see my match as the red thread in my research about the categorization of objects. Therefore, the text does not explain the match from a scientific point of view, but rather from my own reflections. During the next chapters I aim to reveal some things or topics you didn't know or see in a match before.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE OBJECT

Chapter 1

In 1800 the first match was invented and it used to be called a '*Light bringing slave*'. It was highly toxic and was made by putting a piece of pinewood stick in Sulphur. The match would by the slightest touch burst into flames, which, of course, was dangerous. But the light of the match was a useful tool for emergencies during the night. Today we have many other light sources and therefore the match often becomes a symbol rather than a useful item to make light or fire.

As with many inventions, it can be hard to be accurate about when and by whom the match was first created. Today it is believed that the first self-igniting match was invented by Jean Chancel from Paris in 1805 or John Walker from England in 1826.¹

It is not hard to imagine why a match would be a revolutionary invention. In the end it could save lives, because light instantly was accessed compared to previous tools at that time. The match came to replace a much more difficult and heavy device like the tinderbox. I find it interesting how man-made objects that are aiming to solve the same problem can be so very different, but theoretically make the same thing. Historically the tinderbox, match and lighter do the same job; create fire. Yet they are perceived so differently.

At first the match was only used by wealthy people, but it soon became a large industry,

made for common citizens as well as the upper class. A businessman from London saw the potential of the match and made a factory. He called his matches Lucifers and gained a great profit from the discovery of the invention. This is interesting because the way the match was presented to the public was through a name that is referring to something else. References to something else is used a lot in the advertising business, but it is also influencing our way of looking at a product/object in other aspects of society. I find this topic of leading or influencing the viewer central when it comes to today's perception of objects.

The history of the match is filled with death and disease. Lucifers name became common slang for matches far into the 20th century. You can still find the name on various matchboxes, such as the Tordenskjold matchbox. The name seemed to fit the man-made objects quite well since they were still highly toxic and caused death and illness, especially among the factory workers at the time. The toxins from the production process caused deformation of the bones in the face. It was then called '*Phossy jaw*' because the lower jaw would be affected very badly by the chemicals.

The word Lucifer comes from Latin: *lux* light and *ferre* to bring and means bringing light or light bearer. In Latin the name refers to the morning star, Venus, but in Christianity it became associated with the angel who rebelled against God's rule in heaven. He was casted out of paradise for treason and has several names today such as devil, Satan, antichrist, deceiver, Lucifer and many more.² Yet still it is the same figure. He came to represent chaos and fear for the Christian people. Chaos and fear since he did not follow God's order. He was from then doomed to live on earth, with no security from God's protection.³ The history of names that an object has can therefore be a powerful tool toward how the object is perceived. This is important because it makes one realize how much power words and language has. In the end the

object itself is often understood differently when language is introduced.

The match in the past was given the same name as the devil. The fear and chaos that Lucifer represents, can therefore be seen as a powerful tool in order to play with meaning. I believe that looking into the mind through our emotions we are able to find out why we categorize objects in our surroundings and how fear plays a part in that act. Fear and categorization possibly have a relation to be unfolded.

FEAR, CHAOS AND CONTROL

Chapter 2

I wonder what fear towards an object did to people's thoughts and the way they interacted with objects at that time. In terms of use, would it make any difference if matches were to be associated to another light carrier such as Apollo?⁴ Apollo was a god from ancient Greek mythology who was, as Lucifer, referred to as the god of light but also the god of truth. Apollo is a more positive figure of speech. Yet the businessman who named his matches Lucifers, did not name the match after a caring god, but gave it the name of the devil. This choice could affect the way in which people would experience the match. It implies that it had to do with evil which could scare them or enhance its power as a symbolic figure. The name strongly stood out because of its ambiguous meaning. What does this do to our behaviour, if we associate an object with evil? And maybe more importantly, chaos? And is fear a stronger and more powerful feeling than the contrary as happiness, joy or safety?

From ancient human survival methods unpredictability could mean danger. This could be a bear coming from behind, but also from the inside of the mind. We are afraid to lose it, to go too far away from the stable pattern of what is *normal*, because in the end it can

mean danger to our selves or others. We are gregarious animals and very socially dependent. It is not in our interest to expose the group to harm by adding a dangerous person. Someone we consider as disordered or threatening, could be a mass murderer or a psychopath. But the human mind is not one-sided. Both when it comes to fear and chaos we are contradicting ourselves, because it is also the way to tell one thing from the other.

When it comes to the physical experience of fear adrenaline is released in the body to make it ready for fight or flight⁵ from the thing that threatens us. This is an incorporated reaction in our body happening in order for us to survive dangerous situations. Therefore, you could say, it is a necessary and basic mechanism. Besides preparing us for fight or flight, fear generates distraction from whatever was on one's mind. It simply makes you focus only on the fear because the feeling overrules all other emotions. This could be running away from the bear in ancient human time, but today in daily life, it also means more simple things like trouble at work or in school. The fear distracts you and can be a way to move on or escape from a problem.

There are different factors which can scare a person, and this can be influenced by the context, the distraction itself and social learning. Fears are very individually provoked, but one thing we all have in common is that when we overcome fright we feel in control again. An example could be to watch a scary movie or to be surprised in an unpleasant way. First you get frightened, which releases a lot of adrenaline⁶ in your blood, but after the first scare you realize that you are not in danger and that the movie or shock is not a real threat. Then we are able to enjoy the thrill of the moment and feel in control over the situation. We are proud of ourselves to have faced our fears and that relieves endorphins in the brain which gives a feeling of joy, comfort, and happiness.

Fear physically makes the body capable of handling obstacles making a person even stronger or faster and it will overcome other

emotions. Lastly, there is the interesting fact that we can enjoy fear and that it gives us a feeling of control.

The urge to be in control is among the most interesting things about humans, and I believe it is connected to the essence of categorizing and defining. This is a way for us to try and understand why things exist and by categorizing we give objects a purpose to fulfil – not unlike what we try to do with ourselves. Controlling and categorizing come out in many layers and does not only refer to the distinctions we make between things or concepts, but can also give an idea of why we act as we do towards certain things. It can, I believe, describe why you would name a match after an evil figure as Lucifers; it can give the user of the match the feeling of control over danger.

The name Lucifer creates a different understanding of the match. I've come to think of language and how categorization in language also determines the purpose of the object. A word of an object can also lead to a direction of thoughts that we all commonly share as we do with signs and symbols, but also concepts in language overlap or even have exceptions from the rule.

The topic I want to discuss in the following chapter is about the homographs and semiotics that we find in our language and how that leads to defining and categorizing objects.

HOMOGRAPHS AND SEMIOTICS IN LANGUAGE

Chapter 3

A Match. A Lighter. A Tinderbox. A friction between a piece of flint and steel. A drill spinning against dry grass. A lightning bolt from the sky. A chemical reaction between two components. There are many things that can light a fire. What if all the objects that light fire would be called the same. How would it make a difference in terms of communication and

how we categorize? I've come to think of language and how languages have the same name for several things. We call it *homographs*.

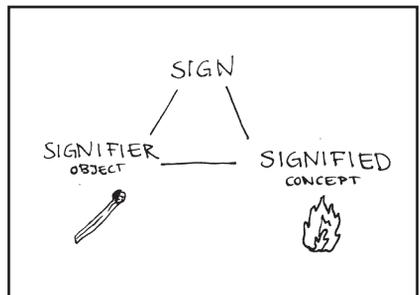
A homograph could be:

- 1) A Match: piece of object that lights fire
A dual/match between two people fighting against each other – Two pieces of colorants matching – or two people matching each other.
- 2) A piece of Lead as in metal – Someone leads the direction of where to go.
- 3) Bass is a low deep sound – A type of fish?

'Row' is both a homonym (the word having the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings and origins)⁸ and a homograph (each of two or more words spelled the same but not necessarily pronounced the same and having different meanings and origins)⁷ which in the end gives one word many meanings.

I can from that conclude that language has exceptions when it comes to categorizing. The play on words is used as a tool to open up for different interpretations. This is used in poetry and music, and can be seen as a way to incorporate other meanings or messages into the context.

Furthermore, there is the study of semiotics⁹ which is a study of sign systems. It explores how words and signs make meaning together. In semiotics, a sign is anything that stands for something other than itself, like a



red traffic light which makes us stop, but is not telling one directly what to do. A sign with a match makes or mean; fire.

The match, in the theory of semiotics, is also referred to as *signifier* (something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted) and the; fire *signified* (the mental concept) of what the object does. Together the signifier and signified creates the sign. The sign is what implies an act, feeling or meaning.

Barthes, Roland (1915-1980), a French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist, critic, and semiotician¹⁰, believed that myth played a great role in terms of semiotics. He believed that a myth is a system of a special type of speech. This means that a myth isn't just a genre of stories, its a way of saying something.

According to Barthes' theory on myths, he distinguishes between two sociological systems that he calls *language-object* and *metalanguage*, Barthes, Roland; *Mythologies*, 1957 Vintage, 138.

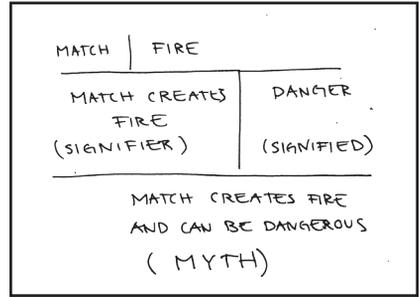
Language-object, is a system where the signifier and the signified are in an even relationship, one can refer to the other.

Then there is the metalanguage, which builds its own signification (the exact meaning or sense) which can be that the objects or word, has inherited other meaningful signs.

An example is H.C Andersen fairy-tale about the little match girl whom is very poor and very cold and is selling matches on a cold New Year's Eve. The signifier is; the little girl with the match, and she is also the signification which means that she is a symbol already formed by previous systems. A result of metalanguage. The match is a symbol/signification for the little poor girl short and fragile destiny. She heats up, from the cold and cruel street, by lighting the matches one by one. The warm and love she finds in the flame dies as the match burns out and so does she.

In some way, I find the match a very melancholic object and maybe the feeling is attached to the image or myth of the little match girl. The match attachment to fear, like the little match girl, can also be an assumption

of previous systems. (see drawing)



Barthes believes that the signification is notifying us – it makes us understand something and it imposes a meaning on us¹¹ – it makes us understand way beyond what is actually happening in the act and that is myth.

I wonder how much symbols and signs are imposing on us in our daily lives, how much myth is influencing how to think about an object.

The theory of semiotics describes a system of how we think about an object. We can say so much without really saying it in text messages and written letters, and that I find extremely interesting. It is still a language and a way of saying something. Drawing a match and writing match on paper can mean many different things, such as homographs or semiotics even though we consider them as being similar or the same as an object.

I imagine that the signification¹² of a sign, that Barthes describes, is the controlled part of an association. A system we all follow. Categorizing objects, if applying Barthes theory about myth, have been formed by previous systems as well, which makes the match never only a match. It can simply never stand alone or be categorized as being just one thing.

With semiotics, we are able to describe more than just a word when using language. With homographs we can use the meaning in a sentence, and that brings me to the next chapter which is about wordplays or the game we play when we use words. It focuses on the book *Language*

Games of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

In the next chapter I want to discuss when a name is attached to objects, ideas or concepts. I'm interested in how language decides how we understand and give a meaning or purpose to an object.

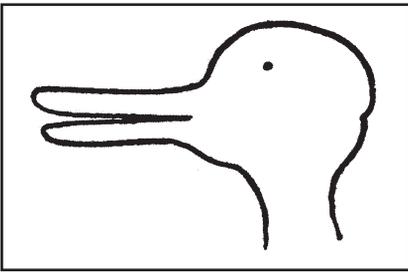
SETTING THE RULES WITH LANGUAGE

Chapter 4

The Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) was a philosopher who, among other areas, worked on the fields of philosophy of mind and language. He only published one book in his lifetime *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and later his work on *Philosophical Investigations* was published in 1953.¹³ He has come to be recognised as one of the most important figures of philosophy in the twentieth century.

He said: “understanding language means knowing how to use it”¹⁴

Meaning that there is no absolute meaning of a word. One example he gives is the picture of a duck-rabbit. “What is it we see? A picture of a rabbit or a duck? Again, there is not a single answer for what the picture represents.”¹⁵



Ludwig Wittgenstein – *Philosophical Investigations*

So what is it then? Does it have one truth more than the other? Can we accept that it is both, or does the human mind always try to make it more of one thing?

Wittgenstein said, that language is understood when we are able to set and agree

on an assumption of names. He refers to this as *language games* like the word *game* suggests – language is played if we can agree on a set of rules, that we all follow. Then we are playing the same language game. This means that there is no real meaning of a word, only we can know how to use them. One of Wittgenstein's most famous quotes is: “It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it, and the context in which you say it. Words are how you use them.”¹⁶

I find the use of words very interesting in relation to objects as the word represents the object itself. Wittgenstein gives an example of how we use the words to preform an action. *Philosophical Investigations*:

“Now think of the following use of language:

I send someone shopping. I give him a slip marked “five red apples”. He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says the series of cardinal numbers—I assume that he knows them by heart—up to the word “five” and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer.—It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words.—“But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word ‘red’ and what he is to do with the word ‘five’?”—Well, I assume that he acts as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere. However, what is the meaning of the word “five”? No such thing was in question here, only how the word “five” is used.¹⁷

So the way in which the shopkeeper dealt with the words ‘five red apples’ is interesting, because the words themselves do not say anything about how to act. But the instructions must be somewhere else in the mind. The memory of picking an apple as a kid together with a store manager pointing at the drawer under the desk, could lead to the

shopkeeper actions. So, it is the personal images of experiences that acts out through the words. It makes me think: How do we know how to pick five red apples or even how to use a match? Does it matter how we used to use it in terms, of how we use it now? We already know that the shape indicates the usage. For example, in some cases the matches tip is coloured red to indicate fire. But I am not sure it would be enough for me, in order to know how to use it if I had never seen it before. The size is small and can easily be picked up with hands, so in that sense it is leading in the right direction. How would I know how to use a match stick and a match box if I have never done so before? Maybe if I already have the experience of the contact between a pencil and paper I know the movement of stroking one material against the other. How else would I know a pointy surface could make a reaction or change of material? A spear maybe! Could the act of stroking a match derive from the ancient hunting method through the use of a spear?

In the end the match is not saying how to use it, but the context, the shape, material and the cultural knowledge about the object might do. Saying the word *match* brings a lot of images in my head about how it works. One image leads to the other: A candlelight standing in the window frame and a pair of matches lying next to it. Me and my cousins competing in lighting a match with one hand. Then there is the story I mentioned before about the little girl and her matches. As in my introduction these images are all leading to the next and in total they describe not the match but the concept around it. They do not say what a match is, but describes the perceptions connected to it which, in the end, I believe is the *real* definition. I visualize that the mapping of personal associations to every object would look a bit messy and hard to grasp for one person, but it is in these associations one can come close to understand why nothing really can be reduced to a single definition or categorization.

Naming and defining objects evokes my interest to an extent where I feel lost in words

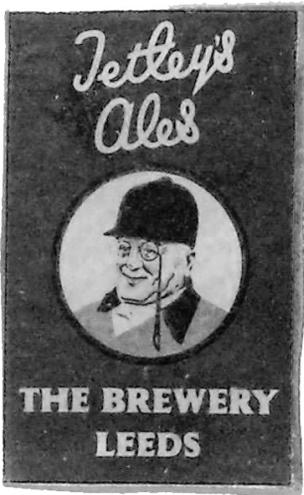
and meaning. So much of our communal and individual understanding of an object is dependent on the fact that we agree on a certain logic. If I, for example, claim that a match is a chair and a chair is a match, it would not make sense to how other people see and experience it, but also it could mean exactly the same thing because the word is just a word not a meaning. We have learned to agree on what a match is, but we would actually never know if we see the same thing. Semiotics and signs can demonstrate that we have learned to think about some things in the same way. I find it intriguing to see language as a game that we have to play in order to come close to understand each other, but in fact we can never communicate in an equally corresponding way or at least we can never be sure that we do.

The way in which we communicate is through *Language games* Wittgenstein says. We use the rules of language. I believe that this as a subject spread out to other parts of our behaviour as well. In marketing, or more specifically advertising, we find *hidden* powers where language is used to make messages stronger using these *rules*. Affecting behaviour with language is essential to our way of telling and selling an object. In advertising we *play* with the unconscious mind and the desires lying there.

THE “HIDDEN” POWER OF ADVERTISING

Chapter 5

We constantly determine the direction of how other people should view objects. When it comes to selling products and objects we are appealing to the hidden and unconscious desires of the human mind. There is a whole industry of how to manipulate thoughts and associations. Nowadays we call it marketing¹⁸ or more specific advertising. The main idea of advertising is to make us buy certain kinds of objects/products.



Studies show that people rely on emotions, rather than information when making decisions about a product and that emotional responses to ads and labels are more influential on a person's intent to buy than the content of an advertisement.¹⁹ In short: we act on our emotions, when we make decisions about objects or at least when we intent to buy them. Can emotions and desires decide how we look at objects in general aspects then?

Edward Berneys (1891-1995) was an Austrian-American pioneer in the field of public relations and propaganda. He took the psychological theories and practises of his uncle Sigmund Freud and applied them in PR (the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization).²⁰

Edward Berneys came to be known as the 'the father of public relations'. He is especially known for having removed guilt of using cake-mix, for the housewife's in the early fifties. He did it by adding an egg to the recipe, which made it seem like the housewife did more than *just* adding water. In the Freudian theories this egg would be a symbol for the housewife's own egg, providing her husband fertility.

Berneys said in a very famous quote "*We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of*"²¹

Berneys also began the practice of selling products by playing to our needs for social acceptance and our fears of rejection, which also came from Freudian theories.

When the matches were first invented, it was not named public relations, marketing or advertising of course, but it did have a great impact on the way people understood how and why to use the object, which can lead us to how we use it today. Forming or leading a human mind is not always bad, it can be natural thing in life as well. For example, when a child is raised by its parents.

To be exact the forming of an object happens when the matches are marked by a name (like Lucifers). It happens in the symbols and

placement of the product. These ideas are ways to be able to play with basic human instincts. Therefore, our interaction and ways of understanding or looking at a product or object is also determined by marketing and advertising.

The way Berneys played with desires in advertisement came, as mentioned, from his uncle Sigmund Freud's theories about the unconscious mind. He made women smoke. It was not *well seen* to be a woman smoking in the 1950's but through the right appeal Berneys was able to make it seem independent to be smoking. A 'torch to freedom' he called it.

The way most cigarettes were lit up back then would be from a match or a lighter. Both easy at hand. I've come to think, of whether the match has gained power and status through the cigarettes on growing industry. When a match is placed next to a cigarette case on a poster with a beautiful smiling woman, I believe that this poster as well has been *signified*. This means that the match identity, after the 50's, always will be associated to a very manipulated industry: the cigarette business.

We can not be free of other influences when it comes to the objects that we interact with in daily life. Advertising guides us in how to see the product, but that is, at the same time, also the problem. It guides us far more than we are aware of by manipulating our unconscious mental life, implying how you should use it, look at it and appreciate it or not. It is not only in advertising, because we are continuously influenced by other things, elements that is not our own and most of them we are not aware of. It makes me think: can you even be yourself in the society we have today or are we just a result of constant manipulation and constant controlling when it comes to our physical and emotional needs? We are a result of upbringing, pictures, people, ideas, but we don't get to choose our life really. It makes one think that every move you make has a very determining consequence.

As I assume you, as the reader, do not wish to be manipulated, neither do I. I believe it is inevitable to be influenced or formed in a modern society. That thought makes me jump to a simpler concept as material, because that is also unconsciously influencing of how we use or look at objects. Material is an overall term for something we call; glass, wood, rubber and so on. It is not a random choice how we dress or use object in terms of its quality. We are able to play with different ways of using an object, when the material or the perspective of material is changed. In the next chapter I want to discuss how material plays with ways of looking and using an object.

MATERIAL-LANGUAGE AND LENS-LANGUAGE

Chapter 6

The Material which can be seen as a part of the object, plays an important role in terms of how we use, experience and understand it. This implies that value can decide how we categorize objects. The surface indicates how strong or fragile the object is and the material instantiates the feeling of interaction. Maybe the piece indicates to be hold or to be touched. Maybe it's soft and smooth or maybe pointy or sticky. The choice of a material of an object without shape already communicates a great deal.

Through material we see value and quality. For example, the aspen wood we know from the match is a very basic material. Not rare or unusual therefore it has a low cost.

Some materials we can agree on has a higher value in a western society than others.

There are also cultural and individual differences on how we value material, but most of the time there will be some common or shared materials that we socially and culturally find valuable.

What does choice of material have to do with our behaviour towards an object in contemporary time? How does the material inter-

act with us emotionally and does this influence the choice of how we define and categorize it?

Wood, which the match is made from, is good for making a fire, but in a modern western world we don't really need it anymore to keep us warm. We can simply pay for a heating system instead. We don't dress up with wood, we dress up with far more exclusive and rare materials such as gold, silver and diamonds. This attraction we are all familiar with. Shiny things indicate ability to be used, for example are plates and cups are often glossy because it easier to clean after use. Smooth material, such as a shiny rock or fuzzy and soft wool, gives us the urge to feel and touch it. In my own practise as an artist and ceramicist I see it in the ceramic studio all the time. if something is shiny, people want to touch it. But the instinct drive of just touching is interesting because the emotion comes before the rational feeling of holding their unconscious desires back.

The desires are interesting because they play with a part of the brain that is usually hidden or under some control. Furthermore, in the unconscious mind, material indicates human desires on a very basic level. This is for example that we tend to think that shiny things have better quality.²² Most of all, it is attractive to us because it reminds us of our thirst for water. In an experiment where 126 test participants were divided into three groups, one group had eaten a bunch of crackers without any water. Another had eaten the crackers but also drank some water after. A third did neither. Afterward, each group looked at eight photographs, half on glossy paper and half on matte. All three groups preferred the glossy pictures, but the groups that had eaten crackers rated them as much more attractive. Therefore, researchers argue that an instinct thirst for water play a role in the affection for a glossy surface or material. There are of course developed personal preferences over time when it comes to attraction for specific surfaces or materials, but it is inevitable that this is an influence of how material plays with human instincts.

I could make my match look attractive if I made it shiny. Then maybe it would be treasured more. If I made it shiny, I would evoke a different physical attraction to the match. I consider how other elements of shape communicates language.

There are a lot of elements communicating when looking at one object. Therefore, it is difficult to look really careful at an object without any distraction. It is not about spirituality when you look for longer than five seconds at an object, but it is about seeing what is in front of you. I want to introduce a term that I call '*Lens-Language*'. This is a term that allows you to focus on one thing of an element or object, that I believe creates a language in itself.

With lens-language an object is placed in a lens making everything around it blank. It does not have to be done in real life, but can be done hypothetically as well. It is an attempt of not categorizing immediately, leaving a bit to the unknown where our subconscious mind can play with different aspects such as material or shape. The '*Lens-Language*' is therefore a part of the material language and as the word *language* indicates, it is saying something that redefines the object.

We are subconsciously directed in what kind of context we should put the object in, both from our instinctive drive but also by other cues. If we look around we follow these rules that are given to us most of the time. We use the match as a match, we light fire with it and make it long and pointy and made of wood. But what if we could exclude all these elements of how to look at it and call it an object. I could imagine looking at a match through a magnifying glass to be very interesting, here I would not be affected by the other qualities of the match, but I could simply focus on one.

For example, the material of object is rather small and hard to sense in daily use.

It could be the very wood fibre of the match edge or the very tip where the Sulphur is formed in a round shape. Wittgenstein is saying that it is the context and the use of the

words that creates its meaning. With lens-language I am able to play with this exact thing, creating a new context and therefore meaning.

Similar to the way we use language and how Wittgenstein refers to words. Lens-language should be seen as a concept or idea of how to use material to create different categorizations in daily life.w



Ludwig Wittgenstein – *Philosophical Investigations*

We immediately add a reference, feeling and meaning to an object or material (if we know what it is, look at the text under the picture above). I believe that by putting away the context of shape or context of material we are able to see more potential in certain objects. I believe that looking through the lens-language we come to realize that more objects from our daily life are connected and share far more common stories, background and genesis than we would think.

My mind jumps back to how changing the material of the object, in order to make it more attractive, makes one categorize objects differently. The way we define objects by its material is similar to how we define functional objects. In the next chapter I want to discuss how we, with material and function, differentiate between objects and how that changes or challenges our perspective of it.

CATEGORIZING MATERIAL FROM FUNCTION

Chapter 7

I'm fascinated how we as human compare items in our surroundings, but most of all I'm fascinated in why and how we define and categorize objects. I wonder how objects share function or appear to be related when they have the same shape or material. An example of this could be; my lamp in the ceiling is round so why not use it to play ball? A lamp-ball. The material tells us not to, but the shape is imitating the round shape of a ball. And what about my match, could we use it for something else? If it was made of grass, it could theoretically still be called a match, as dry grass can also light a fire.

When does the material or shape decide what we can use an object for?

Square shaped ball

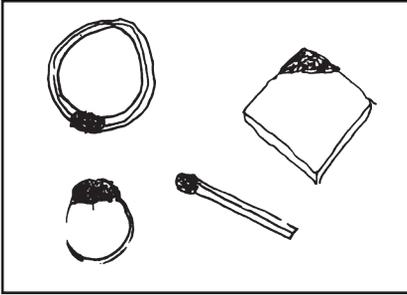
1) The ball won't work with a square shape because it won't be able to be thrown and bounce back in a way we can predict a ball would do. By changing the shape, we are interacting with the definition of what a ball is.

Round glass ball

2) The material of the ball won't work as a ball if it is made of glass. As soon as it is thrown and touches the ground, it will break into millions of pieces. The game will end very quickly and challenge our expectation of a ball is and its behaviour.

The definition of a ball made of glass or a ball in the shape of a square changes it into something else that diverts from how we commonly understand its use and meaning. But what if a ball could both be made of glass, be a lamp and be a football. Giving the materials all the qualities at the same time wouldn't we have a problem of defining? Categorizing? I imagine that one day in the future there will be many more materials that would have to make us reconsider our way of categorizing.

I wonder how much the appearance of the match would have to be altered in order for it to no longer be called a match.



This is a set of different matches, they have exactly the same amount of components. The definition of a match is; a slender piece of wood, cardboard, or other flammable material tipped with a chemical substance that produces fire when rubbed on a rough or chemically prepared surface.²³

My versions above do not completely fit the criteria, but because they still have the right components they would work and function as a match normally would.

The heads of safety matches contain Sulphur and oxidizing agents such as potassium chlorate, with powdered glass, colorants, fillers, binders and so on. A match's head is sometimes red to indicate that it is the end that catches fire. However, now my problem is that the matches I have in my drawer do not contain Sulphur. My matches have a brown tip. Furthermore, from reading about the origins of my match I can tell that they are toxic free, which is far from the original Lucifer matches 1826.

One might question why this matters. It matters because the match has changed over time, and that makes the definition shift as well. So the materials have changed, but we still call it a match, but is it really so? What about an object that lights fire, that would be more correct in terms of communication and use. Even though we still rely on definitions there is a lot of misleading terms we still hold on to. However, maybe it is because we have nothing else to replace it with. No other words for it.

It intrigues me if we, as humans, are able to avoid specific definitions of objects as simply being one thing with one function, and whether we are instead able to use a non-specific language. It might cause difficulties at first, but I believe that it would create more meaning to more objects. Maybe we would care more about the things around us if we were less specific. Less categorizing.

My mind goes back to the trouble of categorization. The example of the glass, lamp and football objects from previous chapters makes it difficult to categorize them if it were to be all things at once. The tendency within the world of design to appoint numerous functions to one object makes me question how multifunctional objects differ (or not) from other items. Are all objects not always multifunctional? In the next chapter I will discuss how we categorize these multifunctional objects, hereby referred to as *multi-objects*. Further, when does new technology change the concept of multifunctional; can we constantly keep combining objects?

MULTI-OBJECTS

Chapter 8

When talking about function I think most people would also come to think of design. There is a wide range of objects/products today that are multifunctional, which makes me wonder when an object is multi? I believe objects potential to be multi comes from our childhood.

As a child I recall using the broom at my grandparents' house for building a tent in the living room. Books were perfect to hold down the blankets over the top of the broomstick, leaving no light to enter the tent.

I knew what the broom and the blankets were for, but it was like their intention or practical purpose did not matter. It does not stop kids from using it for something else, so why does it often hinder adults? What is it that

stops our brain from using a screwdriver to open a milk carton? I come to think of not only combing objects but also giving them a new *role* or name. This makes me consider if functionality is not just a myth? Does everything not have a multi-function and is it not just changed in terms of use.

I imagine that we are nest building, building our fortress to protect ourselves from harm. Many different tools make life easier, rationally speaking. The amount of tools we have today are beyond the amount we need for survival. While being more aware of this issue in a greater world perspective, we continue our quest of making things that make our life better.

I've seen, as you, many kinds of products and objects, serving more than one kind of purpose. Especially when it comes to kitchenware and housing equipment many designers attempt to make multifunctional pieces. Even though it is not a new idea, it is interesting in regards to the definition of things. Now we have products that can be both a washing machine and a dryer. Clever, but what if it was more complicated and unusual things, like a toothbrush and a lamp? Could we continue combining? A door, a computer and a bottle opener. We are still drowning in objects, even though we make them more effective. This makes me think how many possible combinations of objects exist today.

match and a motor engine 

match and a pillow 

match and a wine glass 

It will have to challenge the original use or function of the objects if these combinations are made. Maybe we would have to invent a new way of drinking wine.

New technology helped three design students from London in 2014.²⁴ The students developed water-bubbles from seaweed based membranes. The water is retained in a capsule and after drinking the water you can eat the capsule. The bubble challenges our

way of drinking liquid by having no glass and non-disposable waste. I believe the match and wineglass combination is not so impossible after all. When talking about a multi-object we agree that the object is capable to do more than one thing, but what if the objects was something before and became a new object – would it then also be multifunctional?

What if I said that this match, that I now hold in my hand, is a chair? To convince you about the fact that this is true, I would have to play with the function of it. It would have to be so you could sit on it, if you were to believe me. Maybe I could push the concept a bit, and convince you by just giving it four legs but it is still made from the same wood and shape.

It could even be that it is both, I believe. From the concept of recycling, what if the piece of wood the match was made of came from an old chair. The match would be a chair because it used to be one. Do objects ever stop being something? It is arguable that the match is not a chair because it looks different and is used differently than before. However, the history plays in, not far from the concept about metalanguage, and makes this match more than a chair. The history of the match or the material or the language or maybe the function. I believe that none has a greater importance than the other, but we still seem to categorize and define through this system of importance. If I told you that this match came from a chair from an ancient Greek emperor, I believe it would make you change your mind about it.

I believe it is among our abilities as humans to see the objects' new potential when being placed out of context. I also believe that if there were to be many objects within the same object our mind will stop thinking or working proper. On the other hand, if there is a combination of hundreds of objects in one item, our mind is forced to work again. In the case of an object having only two or three combined functions, this may not challenge our logic to the same extent. Thus, it does not leave room for us to imagine further functionalities, decreasing the likelihood of questioning the object itself.

The logic I refer to is for example a sharp thing that can cut. Yet, we already have hundreds of objects that can cut articles for all different purposes. This is not about going back to nature, but about that there is a solution for everything if you look for it. Having hundreds of possibilities, the mind will create more answers than if only faced with two or three options. The same holds for the dryer and washing machine – going further apart or adding more, the categorization creates more possibility and opportunity than it does now.

The last bit of text is my thoughts and considerations about my match summed up. I find that all the themes or chapters together create, define and categorize how I see my match. I find that my research of categorizing the match creates a unit or mind map of concepts that can describe why we do what to we do. Most of all, I find myself critical when it comes to labelling objects in general, but also I come to realize naming objects is language. This fact can be played with, and should be considered a great deal when used.

THE END

Chapter 9

I have touched many subjects in my research about categorizing the match. It is not a complete map of how the match is looked at, used and defined today, but what I found is that a small and insignificant object such as the match can reveal far more subjects and meaning than I first estimated.

I consider now how we close objects by giving them a name. This is not to say that we should not give objects names, but rather that we should be aware of that we are constantly doing it, and therefore give it more consideration.

I believe names should be carefully used because it leads to a path of determining how one understands it. Unspecified names for objects does not make the object itself something abstract, but rather allocates it beyond

the immediate factor of recognition. Yet, this does not mean that we do not understand it, however we are forced to think beyond our instinct to categorize. If one could truly comprehend that, it would make us see more opportunities within objects itself. I trust that an object can be touching many functionalities and concepts at the same time. I believe that an object such as the match and other man-made objects hold far more combinations than what we acknowledge them for. For me the match is the perfect example of how an object is so much more than what meets the eye. An object such as the match is a starting point of a big mind-map of thoughts, ideas and concepts. I am different from you and that will make our relations to objects different as well, but the stories unfold when an object is looked at closely. This it not only a story about a match, it is about how we look at it, talk about it, experience it and what we expect from it. It is about ideas of how to change perspective. This is important because we can benefit more from the things in our life beyond their immediate definition.

I will end with a final question: How many concepts, ideas and even objects stay the same? I cannot think of one thing that will stay the same forever. Everything will sooner or later change, shift, move, break down, grow up.

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