

THE ,THING' OF THINGS

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Summery

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When my daughter was about two and a half years old, I used to sew her clothes myself. One day we went to the materials department of a large store to select material for new little dresses. Her permanent companion Lilly, a black baby doll dressed in a dress and a hand-knitted jacket, hat and scarf, joined us. We rummaged to our heart's desire in the hundreds of bales of cloth to find the ultimate material. Out of nowhere my daughter suddenly started crying in a desperate and heart-rending way. She was in a total panic. Lilly had disappeared, SHE had not paid attention, SHE had lost her.

I tried to calm her down and assured her that we would find Lilly again. She might be somewhere between the bales of cloth. But after half an hour of searching we still could not find Lilly . My daughter cried incessantly. Finally, I took her to a good friend of mine who lived close by with her three daughters. I briefly told her what had happened and took her aside to explain to her that I wanted to run back to the department store quickly to buy a new Lilly. I left my daughter with the other girls hoping to deflect her sadness by having her play for a while. I told her that I would go back to the lost and found office of the department store and to the police to ask whether Lilly had been found in the meantime.

My daughter flew into my arms sobbing when she saw me on the garden path, with the undressed Lilly on my arm. I started to come up with a story about why Lilly's clothes were missing, but as it turned out, all my daughter cared about was having her dolly back in her arms. After all, new clothes could be knit and sewn.

I have never forgotten these emotions, desperation and self-reproach over the loss of a doll and the relief and bliss with the reunion. It has shown me very clearly what an immense significance and valence a thing can have in someone's life.

Things in General

“The term *Thing* is complex: In Germanic time *Ding* (thing) is a hearing, people’s and governing assembly. We use phrases like: *good things take time, to stand above the things, strange things are happening, all good things come in threes*. A noun is a thing-word. Death and eternity are the last things. *Please give me ...uh... that thing there*, we say, if the right word is missing. Many philosophers have studied the nature of things. The prevailing thing-concept defines thing as the combination of matter and form, Heidegger introduces here things of the use such as jug and shoes as examples. *We seek everywhere the unconditioned and always find only things*, Novalis, writer of the Romanticism, brought to this elementary denominator.”¹

¹ Petra Noll, Kuratorin- <http://www.kunstnoll.de/index.php/archiv/sonstige-ausstellungen/das-ding-dingt> 10.10.2017

From the first moment on in which I started to explore more seriously the term thing(s), I became aware how complicated, varied and also bewildering the concept *thing* is. It encloses so many areas, as there are things. Things are discussed, examined and treated technically, philosophically, socially, politically, personally, emotionally, historically, economically and in the art. Like many words have several meanings, it is also with, the 'thing'. A thing can be an object, as well as a matter, a fact, a court case, a plan, a concept or a problem. And a 'matter' is much less manifestly and definable than 'thing' in terms of an object, because theoretical. However, the meaning of 'thing' is not less many-sided than those of a matter.

“The object as such is a linguistically used concept of a cognitive manifestation which is triggered by sensory stimulus and by thought processes. The recognition of an *object* is the starting point for further knowledge, for the application of the object, or for communication about the object. The term can mean *anything that is talked about at all*. Usually, the term does not refer to any living beings, except in the materialistic-biologically determined scientific-psychological literature. Particularly since Immanuel Kant, object has been conceived as a designation for all that confronts the subject as a knowing ego in the external world.”²

² <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gegenstand-08-10-2017>

Since human recollection, things have a great importance in their life, started with clothes, shoes, jewellery, dishes and tools.

Things have an individual, emotional, historical value. In today's highly technical, digitized time, things or objects are playing an increasingly important role in people's lives. We always identify more about having, than about acting and being. With increasing possession, respect and value of a person is rising. Collected objects fill whole houses and become the purpose of life or substitute social contacts and exchange.

Things are selected and acquired according to personal needs and purpose. They become roommates, store our memories, show our taste and style and become our expression of affiliation.

Things are images of the time in which they are created, manufactured and invented. They are generally recognizable, certainly by the corresponding generation.

“And then there are things in my surroundings which I appreciate. Maybe, they are valuable to me because of the amount of physical, economical, spiritual, emotional or other energy that I invested in them and that is accumulated in them to some extent. Maybe, because I realize in them a similar effort of other, to me maybe perhaps related, people. Maybe because I know it's hard, or even impossible to live without these things at all. These, to me expensive things in my surroundings can be summarized under by the tradition sanctified collective name: Values.”³

³ Vilém, Flusser (1993): Dinge und Undinge. Phänomenologische Skizzen. P. 8

Gifts

„Giving is an ancient tradition characterized by different times and cultures: sometimes a strict religious ritual, sometimes a political gesture, then a completely individual act.“⁴

We give presents to each other on special occasions, like birthday, first day of school, Easter and Christmas.

We celebrated the Christmas Eve together every year. Grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren and friends sang, dined together and offered gifts each other.

One Christmas present has remained to me particularly in my recollection. My mother had bought herself a new coffee machine, which turned out too big for her one-person household. So she gave it to my former friend for Christmas. At that time he rented a large studio together with other artists. So it was a very practical gift that he was very happy with. After unpacking the machine to take a closer look, a filter bag filled with dried, mouldy coffee powder fell out.

A murmur went through the living room and ended in loud laughter. For my mother it felt as a gigantic disgrace. It still is a thankful story to be told at family dinners, over and over again.

“The exchange in archaic societies, which Marcel Mauss explains in his 1925 published book *The Gift* (original titled *Essai sur le Don*), is in his view a comprehensive social activity. It shows a social complete phenomenon which encloses at the same time economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological and sozio-

⁴ Andrea und Justin Westhoff: Geschenke und Gefälligkeiten. Kulturgeschichte des Gebens und Nehmens. Deutschlandfunk. http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/geschenke-und-gefaelligkeiten-kulturgeschichte-des-gebens.1148.de.html?dram:article_id=270077 10.10.2017

morphological dimensions and, goes far beyond the image of man of the rational homo economicus and his economy. In the centre of his investigation of the gift, the question raises why one should react on gifts. The answer is, in fact, that person and things are mixed in the gift. You are giving a part of yourself, and the receiver makes an external experience of the other. Mauss examines this mixture of person and thing not only in foreign cultures, but also in different European judicial systems (the Romans or Teutons) to lead up finally, from the foreign and old cultures to the present societies to analyse the moral conclusions of the gift exchange method.”⁵

„Shared experiences and shared imaginations are staged in there and preserve a social cognitive importance.[]

Not only ritual and symbolic objects, are functioning as a social binding instrument with which individuals can identify culturally. Also all the other *things* which are exchanged in the gift exchange as a gift, moving back and forth in the social network, create a net of mutual obligations. This net of the obligation (and guilt) works highly stabilising on the social relations inside a group, on the trouble-free and positive functioning of the relations, and therefore on the social cohesion all together (cf. Marcel Mauss in 1989). The exchange of gifts promotes the stability of networks and societies, supports his informally significant effect and complements the formal social rules and laws of the social contact, this only then fills with living social events, with a vital social exchange. From the exchange of gifts, concrete rights and duties arise for the members of the community, their social exchange takes place by the binding instrument of the gift.

Especially socially binding is the gift of food, through banquet invitations. The common meal donates an imagined, but highly symbolic physical tape of the mutual

⁵ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Mauss 17.10.2017

attachment and obligation. *To eat from the same food, drink the same liquid and to smoke the same whistle are actions which establish a community in all societies, so a group whose members show common characteristics which is not limiting itself to the identity of the stomach or lung content, but is symbolised by it, like in the Christian Last Supper. The common consumption donates a common identity and with it peace, the banquet, the pipe of peace, the reconciliation food or also the business lunch. Because it is the most physical form of endowment, It presents the most elementary of identity by things: by the admission of substances the material substance of the person changes.* (Habermans in 1999:188) The physical transformation by the food symbolises the social change donated by the food, the social bond.“⁶

Unfortunately, in the today's time, celebrations, festivities and traditions degenerate for consumption purposes, and are exploited for the profit optimisation.

⁶ Bosch, Aida (2010): Konsum und Exklusion: eine Kulturosoziologie der Dinge. transcript Verlag, Bielefeld. ISBN-10: 3837613267 S.28

Globalisation

“The modernity has experienced a process of De-ritualization. But even when rituals have become rarer here, they still exist. Modern man needs an order of the knowledge and the perception as well as the premodern, he needs symbolic structures and ritualised practice for cognitive and cultural orientation. Douglas finds these ritualised practices that continue to exist in modernity, such as the temporal organization of the weekly structure, the social, regular design of meals, in the form of grooming rituals or biographical transition rituals such as baptism, communion, weddings and funerals, In these practices ritual objects, like Sunday clothes or working clothes, differentiated tableware, bath products and deodorant, baptismal font, wedding ring or gravestone, still play a role (Douglas in 1988). To this, one could add that certain brands absorb the symbolic and even ritual aspects by charging their goods with a layer of meaning and significance. Quite a few consumer items are consumed primarily because of its meaningful, symbolic importance, the practical profit goes to the background.”⁷

⁷ Bosch, Aida 2010- pg 28/29

„In the 15th century the expansion of interregional and then global trade intersected with the commercialization of everyday life.[] The spread of markets and the division of labour that came with it enable growing numbers to buy items they had not made themselves.[] But we must attend to quality as well as quantity if we want to understand the role of goods played in these societies, that is, we must follow their meaning, value and function. Demand was shaped by culture and social structure, and these differed in these societies.“⁸

„The conservative character of Renaissance consumption can be seen in the type, function and circulation of goods.[]

As well as being useful, and sometimes decorative, goods functioned as assets. In a cash-poor economy, and especially in times of inflation, clothes, linen and silverware were important ways to store value. For rich and poor, the pawnshop served as a local bank. If an individual needed some cash, they pledged their clothes or household goods, then, a few months later, redeemed them. Because goods were storehouses of wealth, they needed to be durable. A cloak, a ring or a detachable velvet sleeve was of little use if it was fashionable that in a year's time it would have lost its value as a pledge. The vast majority of people dressed like their grandparents. When Renaissance people accumulated goods, then, it was not because they had discovered fashion and went through things more quickly but because they were building up their assets.“⁹

„By the late twentieth century, consumption had reached a height unparalleled in the history of the world, in both its material scale and global reach.[] Consuming has been criticized as a fundamental threat to wealth and well-being.[] Shopping, materialism and luxury fever have been blamed for longer work hours, stress and time poverty,

⁸ Trentmann, Frank (2016): Empire of Things. How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First. HarperCollins Publishers, New York. ISBN 9 780062 456328. p. 28

⁹ Trentmann, Frank p. 33

the rise in inequality and selfishness, and a decline in civic feeling and politics; for good measure, some add that goods killed God. The consequences for the planet are, if anything, even more dramatic. Affluent societies, it is said, no longer make and care about things: they just throw them away.

For many observers, the world has been reordered according to a neo-liberal diktat of individual choice and markets. But what about all the consuming that is not about individual choice but collective, and that takes place outside the market, such as welfare services? There are, on the other hand, also those who stress the emancipatory effects of consumption, its breaking down of old barriers of class and sex and setting the young free from established old hierarchies. Most optimistically, some look to consumers to lead us out of the moral, economic and environmental crisis by shopping for fair and sustainable products.“¹⁰

Today we are overloaded and confronted with permanent (super) offers, discount campaigns. Seducing cheap products in 1 euro shops, preferably from China, tempt us to buy often unnecessary and useless things.

Even before children consumption does not stop. It begins in childhood. Where childhood once was the time of growing, playing, discovering and learning, it is today partially alienated to marketing and advertising purposes for the promotion of consumption and production and profits.

„[Three-year-olds today can recognize McDonald's golden arches before they can recall their own surname. By the age of ten, British children command the knowledge of 350 brands but can name only twenty birds.]

¹⁰ Trentmann, Frank p. 403

In the united States, the market influenced by kids is said to be worth \$670 billion, and more than \$15 billion is spent on advertising and marketing to children.“¹¹

According to statistics, an average European owns about 10,000 things; Furniture, wardrobes, tables, chairs, pans and pots, knives, fork, spoons, clothing, shoes, bags, toys, books, shoes and socks fill our dwellings, cellars, roofs, garages, sheds and storage rooms. The range of things, however, has a larger radius than our home alone.

"If economic growth were to continue at this rate, our children would have twice as much, our grandchildren four times, and our great-grandchildren would have eight times as many goods at our disposal. This quotation from the Basel social scientist René Frey hangs close to a curve of economic growth which rises as steeply as the Eiger-Northwall. And another proof of the arms race of consumerism: in 1938 the German consumed 8 kilograms of textiles, in 1993 it was 23 kilograms. Durable products that help to avoid garbage have become rare. But the fact that longevity can also become a problem is shown by a photo with subtitles: An older man with a punk is standing in an old German living room and says: My son, once this will all be yours.[]

Some things are of accredited importance. A television today may not be impounded any more. Also, from any debtor will not be expected to brew his coffee without automatic help to themselves. A sewing machine, however, is impoundable because, according to a judgement - today any more that the housewife sews the ladies' clothing and child clothing herself.”¹²

¹¹ Trentmann, Frank p. 485

¹² Uta Kruse http://www.zeit.de/1995/25/Die_Dinge_des_Lebens

The Complexity of Things

This abundance of goods brings not only joy, but also problems. Some of them are the decreasing of resources, unfair wages, inhuman production and working conditions, human rights violations such as Child labour and the resulting garbage.

„The ambivalence of the garbage is not: at the same time culture and nature, but at the same time anti-culture and anti-nature, and it is a fatal mistake of for example ecology and depth psychology, the anti-natural in garbage to call the cultural, and the anti-cultural in it the natural.“¹³

„Culture is a process which, as in the metabolism model, informs and recycles negative entropic nature, thus transforms into product by production. A part of this product is, quite like in the metabolism model, consumed. disinformated, devaluated and returned to nature. In contrast to the metabolism model, another part is not consumed but broken, and this broken part is displaced and thrown into the trash. In this way, culture is a process that is transforms cumulative Nature into garbage, which is basically a negative entropy epicycle on an entropic process. The key problem in this model is obviously the disruption, that is, the inability of culture to consume some of its products. It is clear that this problem of the indigestibility of some cultural products partly relates to human digestibility and partly with the ability of nature to digest products. Some products form garbage because they are superhuman, in the sense of: indigestible for us, and remain, as garbage, testimonials of the fact that man is less limited in production than he is in consumption.“¹⁴

¹³ Vilém Flusser (1993) S. 23

¹⁴ Vilém Flusser (1993) S. 22

“Since human beings have been human beings, they have been handling their environment. It is the hand with its opposable thumb characterizes human existence in the world. This hand characteristic of the human organism grasps things. The world is grasped, by the hand, as being made up of things. And not just grasped: The things grasped by the hand are possessed so as to be transformed. The hand in-forms the things grasped by it. Thus the human being is surrounded by two worlds: The world of *nature*, (of things that are to hand and to be grasped) and the world of *culture*, (that of handy, in-formed things). Until quite recently, one was of the opinion that the history of humankind is the process whereby the hand gradually transforms nature into culture. This opinion, this *belief in progress*, now has to be abandoned. It is in fact becoming more and more apparent that the hand does not leave informed things, as it were, alone but that it continues to wave them about until information contained within them is worn down. The hand consumes culture and transforms it into waste. The human being is not surrounded by two worlds, then, but by three; of nature, of culture and of waste. This waste is becoming more and more interesting: Whole branches of knowledge such as ecology, archaeology, etymology, psychoanalysis, are concerned with studying waste. And it turns out that waste returns to nature. Human history, then, is not a straight line leading from nature to culture. It is a circle turning from nature to culture, from culture to waste, from waste to nature and so on. A vicious circle.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Flusser, Vilém (1999): *Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design*. Reaktion Books Ltd. London. S.90

Some things we preserve to save them from oblivion and destruction. They are often the only relics of the native country. Heirloom and family pieces form connectors to other generations, family belonging. Like a jigsaw puzzle these things merge together to a complete biography.

These objects accompany us as long as we live. An object which I particularly esteem is an old cast-iron door handle. I still remember the first encounter I had with this handle. As a child I reached out for it and as soon as I tried to open it, it directly came off. At that time it was already not really functioning any more. The handle was attached to a door of an ancient, 300 years old house, used as a passage from the kitchen to a garden with a small pond. As a child my only aim was to go through as quickly and as often as possible.[]

Today this house does not exist anymore. But this handle still exists. It still looks the same as it did back then. Turned upside down, it looks a little like an old fire hydrant. It is quite heavy, much heavier than handles which they're using nowadays. A small cloverleaf is decorating the grip. It is something, which still reminds me of the house and the situation experienced as a small boy. It's sort of an in and out without a door being necessary.[]

Things hold our lives. They are bridge from yesterday to today.[]

This can be an old wallet, a small wooden box, Father's lucky dime, lifelong-carried and wrapped in scotch tape, a ring or a sports shoe. Tilmann Habermans calls these beloved things *autobiographical souvenirs*. The stories of these things help us to construct our own biography. These things create identity.“¹⁶

¹⁶ Arp, Doris (2013): Vom Eigensinn der Dinge. Deutschlandfunk http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/vom-eigensinn-der-dinge.1148.de.html?dram:article_id=233000 20.10.2017



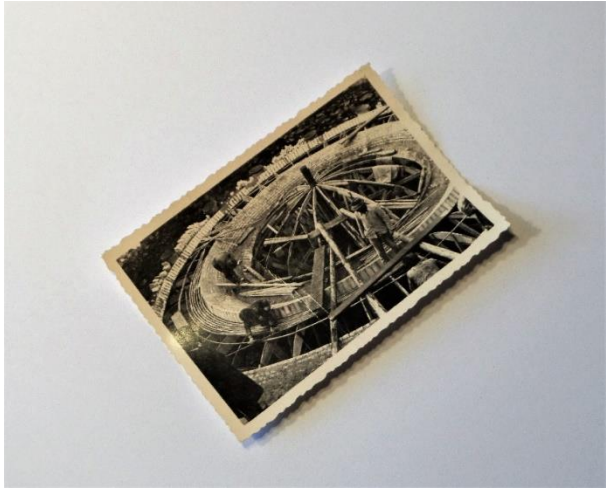
"DO YOU HAVE A HANDKERCHIEF, asked mother every morning at the house gate, before I went out into the streets. Every morning I did not have none because every morning I waited for the question. And because I did not have one, I ran once more in the room and took a handkerchief. I had any morning of nobody because I waited every morning for the question. The handkerchief was the proof that mother protects me in the morning. During the later hours and things of the day I was put on myself. The question DO YOU HAVE A HANDKERCHIEF was an indirect tenderness. A direct one would have been embarrassing, there was not such a thing with the farmers. The love has disguised itself as a question."

Thus, Herta Müller starts the speech for her Nobel prize lending for literature, and the handkerchief is here the object which is present in every interline. *Every word knows somewhat about the vicious circle* is called her speech.

Herta Müller fetches back her childhood. *No other object in the house, not even we ourselves, were ever as important to us as the handkerchief. It was universally usable for: a cold, nosebleed, an injured hand, elbow or knee, to cry or to bite on, to suppress the crying.*

With Herta Müller it's always the things and their language, her dumb testimony, her reminiscent breath which represents her writing. The handkerchief is a changeable, multiform object. It is like in Shakespeare's *Othello* where the handkerchief is equally a symbol for love, betrayal and tragedy, the metaphor for the life which refuses to be put into a drawer."¹⁷

¹⁷Müller, Herta, Schriftstellerinn, Nobelpreis Literatur 2009. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/15127668> ©2017 21.10.2017



“I grew up hoping that objects would connect me to the world. As a child, I spent many weekends at my grandparents’ apartment in Brooklyn. Space there was limited, and all of the family keepsakes - including my aunt’s and my mother’s books, trinkets, souvenirs, and photographs - were stored in a kitchen closet, set high, just below the ceiling. I could reach this cache only by standing on the kitchen table that I moved in front of the closet. This I had been given permission to do, and this is what I did, from age six to age thirteen or fourteen, over and over, weekend after weekend. I would climb onto the table in the kitchen and take down every book, every box. The rules were that I was allowed to look at anything in the closet, but I was always to put it back. The closet seemed to me of infinite dimensions, infinite depth.

Each object I found in the closet - every keychain, postcard, unpaired earring, high school textbook with its marginalia, some of my mother’s, some of it my aunt’s - signalled a new understanding of who they were and what they might be interested in; every photograph of my mother on a date or at a dance became a clue to my possible identity. My biological father had been an absent figure since I was two. My mother had left him. We never spoke about him. It was taboo to raise the subject. I did not feel permitted to even think about the subject.

My aunt shared the small apartment with my grandmother and grandfather, and sometimes one of them would come into the kitchen to watch me at my investigations. At the time I didn’t know what I was looking for. I think they did. I was looking, without awareness, for the one who was missing. I was looking for a trace of my father. But they had been there before me and gotten rid any bits and pieces he might have left - an address book, a business card, a random note. Once I found a photograph of a man standing on a boardwalk with his face cut of the picture. I never asked whose face it was; I knew. And I knew enough never to mention the photograph, for fear that it

too would disappear. The image had been attacked, but it contained so many missing puzzle pieces. What his hands looked like. That he wore lace-up shoes. That his pants were tweed.”¹⁸

¹⁸Sherry Turkle, Graham Mindell (2011). *Evocative Objects*. The MIT Press Ltd, Cambridge USA and London UK. ISBN 978-02-625-16778

Things which have become superfluous or which lost their value otherwise, will be banished in cellars, on the attics or in sheds, until they are forgotten. Where this room does not exist or is filled already, business minded firms offer storage space and storage sheds to evacuate excess things and eliminate them from the everyday visual field.

Sometimes, the evacuated things will be rediscovered by somebody, maybe the next generation. Or they will be thrown away and end up lying on the garbage dump. Things are not only things in the material sense. From some of them we can free and unlink ourselves, others will lifelong accompany us. In them sticks a captured story, an emotion, the history or the appreciation of the craftsman or artist.

As a child and also as a youngster, I have spent a lot of time in the house of my grandma. The house, which was a true goldmine, always aroused my interest with its old, historically significant and amusing things, and has formed me in my observation, attention, appreciation and love (not only) for things in my surroundings. I was always interested in the story that stuck to these things.

This environment has laid the foundation for my imagination and creativity. Many of these things are still a part of my life, some of them in the form of my memory.

'Love pearls', small coloured sugar pearls, were a popular candy when I was a young. While my granny was busy in the kitchen, I sat at the kitchen table creating my own tiny worlds with these sweets. From the farm, shopping store, and zoo, up to the vegetable garden, I sorted them according to colours and gave to each of them their own role. They could illustrate people, animals and plants. As the Yellow ones were the chickens, the white pearls could be the sheep or formed the fence, the red ones were apples, yellow ones - pears, and the greens - salad. Imagination was absolutely unbounded. For hours I could immerse into these worlds.

In grandma's cellar, between the glasses with preserved fruit and vegetables, big carboys filled with fruit wine, hanging dry sausages and buckets filled with sand, in which carrots and celery were preserved for the winter, there were boxes stuffed with pieces of 'gold'. I was totally fascinated with them. I had discovered them while I was secretly poking around in the basement, and I just couldn't believe my granny owned such treasures.

In the same cellar stood an old antique cupboard, in which I found glittering, old Christmas decoration, silver cutlery, a shiny little silver milk jug and a sugar bowl. They aroused my young imagination, and I was thinking of appropriate stories belonging to these things. The protagonists in these stories ranged from castle owners, princesses up to thieves and other villains.

So, already as a teenager I developed myself as a collector and a preserver of special and interesting things. I either restored them or gave them a new purpose. When someone in our family would throw away something, I was there.



As many and varied as there are objects in our life, so different are the thoughts, memories, opinions and beliefs that are linked and coupled to them. Things are complex and influence every aspect of life in various ways. They offer us an opportunity and a possibility to think about certain aspects of life and to reconsider our perception, needs and actions.

Vilém Flusser discovered and developed a method of looking at things, as if it were the first time. Through observation from a different angle on the basis of everyday objects and situations, such as bottles, gardens or pots, he explains profound relationships and finds in every thing a philosophical, social or political aspect.

„In his posthumous philosophical autobiography, written in 1973 after his return from Brazil to Europe, Vilém Flusser reports how he discovers a simultaneous despairing and burningly indifferent attitude to the breaking of the familiar reality through the Nazi invasion of Prague, followed by the increased groundlessness due to exile. Surrounded by the war and, as a Jew knowing that to be dedicated to death, thus in a situation where it was about pure survival, the world to him finally seemed like an absurd "puppet theater" in which anything was possible.

With the escape, first to England and finally to Brazil - in a geographic and existential peripheral position he had left everything behind and sacrificed dignity to life.

But unlike the existentialism of a Camus or Sartre, which also emerged during the Second World War, who were not uprooted, Flusser felt an *enthusiasm for playful watching*, because everything was indifferent. This indifference is not a devaluation, but the experience of the equivalence of everything in the face of destruction. Thus opened to him a more distant , but also discovering view of the world in its most banal ways: *The Nazis were just as interesting as the ants, nuclear physics as interesting as the English Middle Ages, and our own future as interesting as the future of cancer research.*

In this phenomenological perspective, the familiar context in which the world is embedded breaks apart, and connections can be drawn between things which at first sight have nothing in common with each other. When groundlessness tears down the hierarchies of the world order and the ideologies or world ideologies that support them, we you will find something to philosophize everywhere; because you are always in a world and surrounded by things that open up, determine or obstruct possibilities.“¹⁹

„ To look at things as if you were seeing them for the first time, is a method used to discover aspects of them which previously unobserved. It is a tremendous and fruitful method, but it requires strict discipline and therefore can easily fail. Discipline is basically a forgetting, an exclusion of habituation to the prestigious thing, thus all experience and knowledge related to the thing. This is difficult because it is easier to learn than to forget.”

Flusser came to the conclusion that things cannot be classified because they often fall into more than one class. He divided things into *goods*, *evils*, and *values*. What about the things that do not fit into one of these categories - the *natural things* like air, water, earth?

¹⁹ Flusser, Vilém (1993): S. 141

The garden, for example, is, according to Flusser, the result of the attempt to transform nature into an ideal environment for humans. Through this intervention, nature becomes unnatural. Plants are changed and bred according to needs and profit opportunities.

The summit of unnaturalness is probably the European standards for fruit and vegetables, such as the prescribed degree of curvature of the cucumber or the legal length of the banana.

„Like all other natural beings, including themselves, man has found the plants as given, but he has not accepted them as such. Instead, he deeply intervened in their structure and subjected them to self-designed processes in order to seize them. Thus he has raped their naturalness and created cultivated plants out of them. His aim was to use the plants, thus to separate useful plants from pests.²⁰

The garden is that part of our environment codified by convention to nature, in which we attempt to escape the mechanism of the cultural apparatus. An attempt that must, however, from the outset be regarded as thwarted, because it is inherent in nature to be *given*, that is, not to be codified conventionally as such. So that when we are in the garden, we do not actually go out in nature, but function in a section of the cultural apparatus titled *nature*.²¹

But what most deeply affects the essence of the gardens is their illusory character, which is what one calls an *ideology* in certain contexts. The garden is a delusion, not only in the superficial sense that it pretends to be nature, like miniaturized nature such as fish ponds and rocks, but in the deeper sense that it pretends land ownership. It pretends that the person who owns him is on his own soil, that he has roots, that there is a piece of earth on which he stands for himself. The garden pretends

²⁰ Flusser, Vilém (1993) S.49

²¹ Flusser, Vilém (1993) S.48

that *cultiver son jardin* (cultivating its garden) is still possible, so that one can return from the ordinary and the political into the separate and private, without falling out of culture. This deception is the real purpose of the garden, its contribution to the preservation of the established apparatus. Because *cultiver son jardin* is no longer possible today.

The horticulturist is no longer a farmer, because being a peasant means opposing nature and wresting goods from it, rather than fleeing into a pseudo-nature before culture. Because the farmer does not cultivate his garden, but farms his field in order to market the fruits. In this sense, being a peasant is a political commitment in the true sense of the word. That is why he is anchored in his earth, because he publishes his goods and reveals them to society. The farmer is publicist of the earth, and he has private in the sense that he has his own contribution to the community."²²

Enjoying this reading changed my view of my little garden behind my house and encouraged me to think about things. I always liked the wild, the weeds and now I appreciate them many times more. Anarchy in the garden.

²² Flusser, Vilém (1993) S. 51

A souvenir I bring with me from every visit to my native country are potatoes. The soil of each country is differently composed and gives a different taste. Homeland potatoes taste different, like childhood, the kitchen of mother and grandma. They contain memories of taste, fragrance, emotions - HOME.



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²³ Erwin Wurm "Köstlich! Köstlich?" im Leopold Museum mit Carl Spitzweg. Foto: Tanja.S.Vogel <http://downtownvienna.com/524090> 19.10.2017

Digitalisation

In today's world of machines and world-wide production, things are infinitely multiplied, interchangeable and thus lost in value (estimation). The fulfillment in the manufacture of hand-made items is therefore forfeited. The world is flooded by often unnecessary, superfluous things, produced for profiteers. The abundance and the thoughtless handling now causes problems at different levels and turns against man and nature.

People are wasting their lives to earn a livelihood in order to buy, among other things, unnecessary, useless, superfluous things that alleviate their frustration about their situation and give them consolation and distraction. Artificial needs are aroused to maintain the system of world-wide profit-making trade, steadily increasing production and profit figures, and to keep people in the treadmill, after all, they want to participate in consumption.

Through actions, collection points, discounts lure, animate and seduce us corporations to purchase things, and try to get our personal data to bombard us more specifically, customized to our person.

„As *things* (Internet of Things - IoT) collect, store and share data, they also collect data about their users and users. These may be of interest to economic operators, states, or organizations, so that they may seek access to them. However, their interests often do not agree with those of the users. Therefore, maintaining the sovereignty over the personality or customer profile of the users is a crucial concern of data protection.“²⁴

²⁴ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_der_Dinge 19.10.2017

Constantly, new styles are presented on the market, new colors and shapes are declared fashion, fun and games are invented to draw consumers' money out of their pockets. The Magic Cube, Tamagotchi, Pokémon Go, Spinner are examples that led to a global hype and generated billions.

The smartphone is currently the most popular, familiar, appreciated and indispensable thing, with the greatest impact on the lives of every individual and society as a whole. For some, it has become the content of life. It always guarantees 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the connection and affiliation to family and friends, colleagues and business partners, all over the world. Culture, politics, social matters all united in a box measuring 70 x 140 x 7 mm.

We can choose, order and let deliver everything from the world wide web (www.), From pins to foodstuffs to the home furnishings, without having to leave the house. We can even download our own art collection - and it all goes without any human contact. The impression of constant contact, exchange and affiliation is overriding the real solitude and exclusion.

In this digital world, things are in a virtual state, not tangible and material. Eye contact, conversations with visible and tactile emotions, body contact are lost. Another reality in which one can lose oneself or even flee into it.

With the www. we are connected with the whole world and have access to endless, inexhaustible sources of information. Events that take place at the same moment in completely different places are transmitted through the media into our private rooms and thus coupled with and with private experiences - public and private merge with each other

We are confronted with natural catastrophes, wars, famines in our living rooms, and in the next moment we

can lay down together on the couch with Paris Hilton or
lose ourselves on Mars and the infinite cosmos.

An inexhaustible source of possibilities and expressions
for everyone.

The Politics of Things

One thing or case that concerns us all, each one of us, is the policy of the parliaments. Everyone is asked to leave the zone of indifference, negligence and disinterest and to get involved to put important things on the agenda. Redefining politics as an interest in the things to which attention should be directed.

„The German word message (*Mitteilung*) first lets one think of a conversation within the conversation. But if we listen to it more precisely, the distinction of it is emphasized. It is Bruno Latour's message that this disagreement is the prerequisite for people to get together and talk at the same time, when he wants to put things back into their primordial meaning: things are contentious matters for the sake of which and around whom they gather themselves.

For this reason, assemblies were called *thing*, and that is why they were called those cases, which are all addressed, until the early modern period *res publica*. In today's realpolitik, these things - or realities - are only be heard out by etymologically educated ears. Apart from that, politicians have the say to pay attention to things only as administrable facts. Modern policies are aimed at immediacy, without going through things. This thing-oblivion, indeed their explicit denial, Latour makes responsible for some of the evils of this world, ecological crises, for example, or fundamentalism. These are far-reaching keywords, and Latour's vision of a *thing-policy* is just as far-reaching as the abolition of such evils. It exceeds what a single person can say or even do to their realization. That is why Latour's little text, with the great theses, is only the beginning of a matter which in its dimensions cannot yet be foreseen. What is the matter? Precisely those who gather together according to their purpose.

Making things public is an exhibition that Latour has set up together with Peter Weibel at the Karlsruhe Center for

Art and Media Technology (ZKM), which is now being transformed into a catalog. The exhibition featured various representations of gatherings, such as the much quoted and reproduced fresco of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's to the *Buon Governo* of 1338/39 (painting Allegory of good and bad government). On the guideline of his booklet, Latour threads these and other presentations of idealized and failed, historically obsolete, utopian and highly real assemblies.“²⁵

„With the neologism of *thing-politic*, we want to describe a tentative and risky series of experiments in which we try to figure out what it might be for political thinking to turn things around and become a little more *realistic* than has been attempted so far. Some time ago, computer scientists created the wonderful expression of *object-oriented* software to describe a new form of programming their computers. We want to use this metaphor to ask the question: What would an *object-oriented* democracy look like?

The general hypothesis is so simple that it might sound trivial - but it could be trivial to be what it means to become a *realist* in politics. It might be that we are more connected by our worries, the things around us, the questions that concern us, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes, or principles. The experiment is quite simple. The reader needs only to think about any number of questions: Turkey's accession to the EU, the Islamic headscarf in France, the spread of genetically manipulated organisms in Brazil, the pollution of the river near her house, the collapse of the glaciers in Greenland, the lower return on their pension fund, the closure of their daughter's factory, the imminent repairs in their dwellings, the rising and falling of the stock exchanges, the last hostage of fanatics in Fallujah, the last American election. With each of these items, another series of passions,

²⁵ Cicero. Magazin für politische Kultur. Kurz und bündig. Bruno Latour: Von der Realpolitik zur Dingpolitik. <http://cicero.de/kultur/bruno-latour-von-der-realpolitik-zur-dingpolitik/45028> 20.10.2017-

indignities, opinions, as well as another series of interested parties, appear, and other ways of solving them in part.

It is clear that every object - every question of dispute - produces a different pattern of emotions and breaks, inconsistencies and coincidences. Possibly there is no continuity, no coherence in our options, but there is a hidden continuity and a hidden coherence in what we are connected with. Each object brings together a different assembly of relevant parties. Each item offers new opportunities for passionate difference and discussion. Each item can also offer new opportunities to complete the debate without having to agree a lot. In other words, objects - understood as just as many questions of dispute - keep us all in different ways, and these different ways mark a public space that is fundamentally different from what is commonly understood by the 'political'. We want to explore this space, this hidden geography, here and in the exhibition.[]²⁶

With what we will call an object-oriented democracy,[] two different meanings of the word representation are to be brought together which are separated in theory, although they have always been mixed in practice. The first meaning of representation, well-known in law and political science, is the way in which the legitimate people are to be gathered around a particular issue. In this case, their representation is considered to be faithful if the correct procedures have been followed. The second, well-known in science and technology, presents, or rather represents, what the object is about the eyes and ears of those gathered around it. In this case, a representation is considered to be good if the upcoming matters have been accurately portrayed. Realism implies that both aspects of representing a matter are given the same attention. The first question sketches something like a place, sometimes a circle, which can be called an assembly, meeting, meeting, advice; the second question brings into this newly created place a theme, a

²⁶ Latour, Bruno (2005): *Von der Realpolitik zur Dingpolitik*. Merve Verlag, Berlin. S.10/11

matter, a question of dispute, a topos²⁷. But the two have to be taken together: Whom does it concern? What should be considered?²⁸

So what is *thing-politic*? It is the degree of realism that is gained when:

- a - policy is no longer confined to people, and also includes the many disputes with which they are connected.
- b - objects become things, that is, facts will make way for their complicated complications, and become things about which they are concerned;
- c - the gathering no longer takes place under the already existing globe or the dome of some previous tradition of the establishment of virtual parliaments;
- d - the inherent limitations imposed by language impairments, cognitive weaknesses and all kinds of disabilities are no longer denied, but prostheses are accepted;
- e - the gathering is no longer confined to properly speaking parliaments, but extended to the many other collections that are in search of a lawful assembly;
- f - the assembly takes place under the provisional and fragile phantom public, which no longer claims to be the equivalent of a body, a leviathan or a state;
- g - and, finally, *thing-politic* could become possible if politics are freed from their obsession with the period of succession.

If fundamentalism is convinced that mediation can be circumvented at no cost, then it is the ultimate 'ding-

²⁷ Topos stands for: topos (spiritual science), place in the figurative sense, in the modern understanding truism, stereotypical idiom, pre-formed image, example or motif.

²⁸ Latour, Bruno (2005) S.13/14

loose' way of doing politics. In the end, a question really interested us: Can fundamentalism be reversed? When will the spirits of the Apocalypse cease to interfere in politics?"²⁹

THE TABLE

Table (of contents)

Tableau

Tablature

The bed, the table

The horror of the restaurant table: hideous, really

The altar table

{The table {generally a quadruped (even more recalcitrant than a donkey) | must be dragged along or carried: it can't move itself (that's what's nice about it).{{Faithful, but you have to go to it. | The table is a faithful friend, but you have to go to it}}| is a wooden platform, square or rectangular} on which to place any old things, things that could become useful, and sit beside it or facing it with feet tucked under or laid atop.

Kind of like a bed, almost.³⁰

It is convenient, and so dependable. I could never Live without it (easy to say), maybe I could live without It, my writing case on my knees, feet up on some big rock. But with a table, I also rest my (left) elbow on it and lay out all my things ashtray tobacco pencils etc.³¹

²⁹ Latour, Bruno (2005). S. 80/81

³⁰*Crossed out*: I like it as much as I like my bed. What am I saying? In a way I dread my bed.

³¹ Ponge, Francis (2017): *The Table*, Translated by Colombina Zamponi. Wakefield Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. ISBN 978-1-939663-24-5.

„Hannah Arendt once had compared the function, not to say, the service of public space with that of a table in a meeting: the table separates the people and prevents them from falling on top of each other, but as a common object it simultaneously ties them together. The image of the disappeared table, whether it is a negotiating table of different partners that separates and yet unites, remains a fascinating thought - until the traffic jam (the encounter) dissolves and the traffic takes us.

In a change, or rather in a desecration, of a philosopher's word,

I would say: the table has four sides; one for solitude, two for intimate conversation, three for conspiracy, and four for socializing.

The table also has four corners, which are pushed:

- the one corner is called the conversation - no hierarchy between artist (art) and the public, every participant is bound to the realization and quality at the mercy of the artist. It stands or falls with it - the responsibility of every node of a network.
- the second corner - the gift - takes the object of respect out of the ground of things and lifts it to a (pedestal, altar), which becomes a gift and draws me as a gift.
- the third - the connection in the distance, conversation becomes civilizing action, communication is agreement and contract.
- The fourth - social order - hospitality - the gift as an act, the ritual, the performance, the memory, the culture of the encounter.

The table also has four legs (mostly) and there are hot tables and there are cold tables. What about the *round tables*?

Reflections on the modern history of the images were always woven by the web of ephemeral solutions. Their performative places are, and were, tables, tables of conversation, round tables, at which contradictory world views were savored, dissected, distributed and tasted, walloping pushed under each cloth. Disparate spirits

recognize themselves there. Verbal understandings fly in the wind and are nevertheless oriented to the body. Still in zeal, they are already bearers of the memory of all the pictorial contests.

To visualize the table as a word, as an idea, as an object in all its meanings and manifestations, to exhaust it, and thus to create it again and again, thus to express it completely and definitively, without merely making statements about it to the project table and to its temporary form, the table transaction.

Table: common center. If impulsive centrifugally, then a negative table, which is considered a common vanishing point, e.g. the television.

No human being can develop a grammar; it is, logically, always a system of existing language, and I still do not know what the language of the *tables* really is.

- As far as the table - as far as the tables carry
- LIT: Francis Ponge La Table The artistic use of the table. has so far (somewhat coarsened)two directions as categories:
 - The table as a center of artistic attitude as a continuous sculpture of the encounter *bearers communicative utterances*, the ritual center
 - The table as a base, as a general, sculptural thought. Object of prosaic use.“³²

³²Fragmente eine Annäherung. Der Tisch-Ethnographische und anthropognostische Belege- Semiotik einer Tischordnung: die Gnade an sich. http://www.asa.de/projects/tisch/tisch_fragmente.htm
07.09.2017

„The public space serves as a stage, *the space that people need to be able to appear at all.*

Hannah Arendt illustrates this in her metaphor: *living together in the world essentially means that there is a world of things between those whose common dwelling she is, in the same sense, in which there is a table between those around to sit around; like every intermediate, and separates the world from those to whom it is in common.* In Arendt's public space, people meet independently of the necessities of everyday life in order to discuss the design of their common world. The table symbolizes both the discourse platform and the public. At the same time, the picture confers equal access to discourse. The table, therefore, is what to Aristotle was the assembly-place, it is a precondition of action, and offers the power of appearance. By leading the discourse at the table, each individual brings in his individuality, thus revealing aspects of his identity. Hannah Arendt assumes an incomplete and unpredictable self-disclosure, since no one can know the way in which he is perceived. In addition, there is an interaction between the individual agent and the group. Since they influence each other, only certain aspects of a personality come into play. The actor sets things in motion, which the other *members of the table* must endure. At the same time, they themselves are stimulated to act; the table community reacts to the actor, which he can withstand. Here, too, is reflected a principle of the Aristotelian polis, where every citizen is supposed to learn both governing and being a subject. Overall, the processes at this table are not tangible, neither action nor power manifest themselves in a way that makes them measurable, *as opposed to means of violence that can be stored*“.³³

³³ Roth Monika, Demokratiekonzeption von Hannah Arendt. https://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/u61/roth_demokratiekonzeption_von_hannah_arendt.pdf 12.10.2017

Art unites Thing and Matter

In art, things and matters are united. Here, things become an object of art, thus becoming the medium of expression, the bearer of the concept, or the total work of art. Artists try to look at and explore things from different and several angles in order to translate them into their visual language in relation to the environment, the habitat, to other disciplines. Things and matters are material.

Art is the space of the greatest possible freedom, in which various disciplines such as politics, philosophy, psychology, history, personal life and life itself are united. Here is accepted what is not admitted in other areas. In addition to being beautiful, lovely, charming, funny and colorful, art must also be ugly, provocative, dark and disturbing.

This offers an artist many possibilities of communication, provocation and influence on all areas of (daily) life.

„As for those empty bottles, which were preserved to be used for purposes not intended by their producers, for example as candlesticks, flowerpots, or ashtrays, such bottles are witness of a human capability which deserves, to be almost called the human. That is, the ability to distance oneself from things and to see them from previously uninhabited points of view.

The bottles come into the house, not only with a visible label, which names their contents, but also with an invisible one, which in command form indicates how bottles are to be viewed and handled. All things in our environment are endowed with such imperatives, and it is above all in this sense in which they impel us. But we can ignore this invisible imperative by a very definite effort, which might be called phenomenological, and then the bottle does not appear to us as what it is to be. A bottle thus liberated by its value can then be evaluated differently by us, for example just as a candlestick. Through such a reevaluation of the values imposed on us by the cultural apparatus, we can partly free ourselves from the encirclement of our condition, and the reevaluated bottles are testimonies to our freedom.“³⁴

³⁴ Flusser, Vilém (1993) S.17

„The origin of the work of art is a treatise by the philosopher Martin Heidegger from the years 1935-36, in which he deals with the question of what *constitutes art as art*.

What the art is, then, should not be explained by scientific disciplines, such as psychology, or by means of sociological approaches that examine the role of art in society. Heidegger also does not want to present a traditionally aesthetic theory of art, which sets normative standards for what can be regarded as art or which describes art as an experience for an observer or even binds to metaphysical concepts. Heidegger tries to determine the essence of art from itself, instead of these super-temporal explanations, by resolutely thinking it *historically*. This is done by means of two theses: the first is that the work of art has *put the truth into the work*; the second, the essence of art consists in *the foundation of the truth that builds the history*.[]

The fact that the work of art is also a thing, and only means something else beyond the being-thing, as symbol refers to something, or as allegory interprets something differently, describes the mode of being of the work of art from out the ontological model, which is given by the systematic primacy of scientific knowledge. What it is really, is the thing-like (Dinghafte), the fact given to the senses, which is brought forward by the natural science of an objective knowledge. The meaning which it attaches to it (the work of art), the value which it has, are, against it, additional conceptions of only subjective validity.“³⁵

„In art, too, things are basically made as a still-life are arrested (*dingfest*): they are painted on canvas, captured in sculpture and with the camera. This is the only way to get life and movement through our feelings and projections, as well as the imaginative transformations of the artists. Since the still life of

³⁵ Heidegger, Martin.
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Ursprung_des_Kunstwerkes
10.09.2017

the Renaissance, the portrayal of everyday objects has been an independent theme in art. Highlights of "ding-art" are mainly found in the 20th century."³⁶

„*Objet trouvé* (in French *an object found*) is an object, an everyday or natural object, or a part of it, which is made into a *work of art* by the artist *finding* it and transforming it into a work of art. Additional alienation by, for example, decomposition or new coloring is possible.

Formed in the circle of Dadaism, designed as a three-dimensional extension of the collage, e.g. with various finds in an unambiguous combination of trivial things and materials in new senses of context, the *objet trouvé* is 'abused', deprived of its original purpose of existence and use.

Thus, primarily the formal-aesthetic quality of the objects, which, placed in this new context of the 'work of art', often develops new, 'surprising' properties and trigger associations. As a rule, the individual object remains recognizable as such, which creates a link between work of art and non-artistic reality (read: everyday life).

Playful, anarchic, provocative - the *objet trouvé* marked in artistic design principle the character of the accidental as well as the playful fact of creativity. In Dada and Surrealism art, it became an important element of design."³⁷

„In surrealism, the *objet trouvé* got a rather fetish-like character. Lautréamont's 1874 metaphor from the Songs of Maldoror *Beautiful as the encounter of a sewing machine with an umbrella on a dissecting table* (meaning a young man) not only became the slogan of surrealism, but is also a literary anticipation of the *objet trouvé* in this *surreal* form. The best-known example of the surrealist

³⁶ Noll, Petra: Rede zur Vernissage der Ausstellung Das Ding dingt <http://www.kunstnoll.de/index.php/archiv/sonstige-ausstellungen/das-ding-30.08.2017>

³⁷ <http://www.kunst-welten.de/kunst-lexikon/o/objet-trouve.html>
15.09.2017

objet trouvé is Meret Oppenheim's *Breakfast in Fur* (1936), a cup with saucer and spoon, all covered in fur.[]

Radical and formerly a Dadaist and Surrealist, the Frenchman Marcel Duchamp realized the concept of the *Objet trouvé* in his *ready-mades* such as the *bicycle wheel* (1913), the *bottle dryer* (1914) and the *fountain* (1917). While the bicycle wheel still consists of a combination of wheel, bicycle front fork and wooden stool, an industrially produced wire rack for bottle drying and a urinal are quickly placed on a pedestal and explained too.³⁸

The object is solved from its original purpose of use and semiotically recharged by the set-up and the selected title. The artistic act thus primarily lies in the selection or recognition of the artistic potential of an everyday object, which at the same time ironizes the traditional concept of art.³⁹

An object of everyday life was able to turn the entire world of art upside down and provoke it in 1917 (*Fountain* - Marcel Duchamp). Marcel Duchamp became one of the most important artists of the 20th century with the transformation of an ordinary everyday object into an art object. „In this tradition is also Picasso's bull skull (1943), the bronze casting of a bicycle saddle as a skull with a railing for the horns.“⁴⁰

„The ready-made is still the most influential zero-point medium of the 20th century.“⁴¹

„With the *Multiple I do not know a weekend*. (1971-1972), Joseph Beuys reflected on the Duchamp's *Boîtes-en-valises*, the portable artist museums with reproductions and small objects. In a suitcase, a ready-made, which serves to convey artist graphics, Beuys mounted on the

³⁸ http://www.weltum.de/weltum/themen/thema.php?thema_id=1787

³⁹ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objet_trouv 

⁴⁰ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objet_trouv 

⁴¹ <http://www.designwissen.net/seiten/der-konsum-die-form-das-ding>

inside of the lid further ready-mades, a Maggi bottle and a copy of the Reclam edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, stamped with BEUYS: *I do not know a weekend*. In the bottom of the suitcase are - covered and not visible - the graphics of KP Brehmer, Karl Horst Hödicke, Peter Hutchinson, Arthur K pcke, Sigmar Polke and Wolf Vostell.⁴²

„Two things happen when an everyday thing is transported from its function and the order given by us into art, a system of spiritual conflict. Firstly, it is given more or other attention. Its significance grows beyond its mere existence and purpose. Heidegger has said that art brings things closer to us again (but he did not mean ready-mades).

Their essence is made experience able, they get something mysterious, indeed an aura, which they often lost through our pragmatism in everyday life. On the other hand, we learn more about our relationship to the world, our desires, habits of taste by means of the things processed in a special way in art. A thing becomes art only if the subjective intervention of the artist is felt by it through a poetic transformation, through irritations, through alienation. Even the really unpretentious ready-mades make the artist noticeable behind it.⁴³

„Since Joseph Beuys, the avant-garde and also the development of art history have taken a new direction. Which? What has changed since Beuys and with Beuys? I will try to explain it by an example.

In the mid-1960s, Beuys created a work that he called *Marcel Duchamp's silence is over-rated*. You know that Marcel Duchamp is one of the great idols of this century, whose influence could not be escaped by the few - perhaps only by the *pure* painters such as Picasso or Gris, and even then not always. Marcel Duchamp is the great skeptic

⁴² https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objet_trouv 

⁴³ Noll, Petra: Rede zur Vernissage der Ausstellung Das Ding dingt. <http://www.kunstnoll.de/index.php/archiv/sonstige-ausstellungen/das-ding-30.08.2017>

at the beginning of the century and modernism, a fundamental questioner and a challenger. The fundamental questioner and questioned controllers, who nipped so many traditions in the bud, and inspired so many new by this. Beuys's work, or some of his actions, is a conversation with Duchamp, a dialogue between the gnostic and the skeptic.

If the work of Duchamp was to give things new ideas, then the work of Beuys is to give ideas again to things, that is, make them palpable in the psychical as well as in the physical. When Duchamp has taken things out of their intimate connection and undressed their function, Beuys wants to create a new context, giving orientation to people under things and give things their space. What Beuys would like to do is to return the art from the coldness of abstraction to the objectivity of things, to return to the light of knowledge the warmth of outlook; he wants to bring together thoughts and feelings. What an immense task! How can an individual undertake to do so? What kind of faith must he possess? This is what I have always asked myself, thinking of Beuys, before the eyes the failure of so many, to follow him on his way, so often my own failure.[]

It is the things that his work provides, recurring elements that point to constants of his thinking: fat, felt, wax, tallow, copper, aggregates and batteries, honey, flashlight, Eurasienstab⁴⁴. These are elements

⁴⁴EURASIENSTAB was an action by the German artist Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) in collaboration with the Danish artist and Fluxus composer Henning Christiansen. Beuys first performed this performance on 2 July 1967 in Vienna in the Galerie *Nächst St. Stephan* as "*Eurasienstab 82 min fluxorum organum op. 39*"; then he repeated the action in 1968 in the gallery Wide White Space in Antwerp. The term *Eurasia* = Eurasia is a phrase from Europe and Asia. The first sculpture by Beuys *Eurasier* was made as early as 1958, it was a figure made of gauze bandages with a rod made of wire, which stands on a felt surface. Beuys aimed in the later shamanic performance on a critical examination of the Cold War and on a separation and connection or reunification of Western and Eastern cultures. "*Joseph Beuys designed a utopian internationality in 1967, which he called the state 'EURASIA' [...] (Eugen Blume)*"

which repeatedly refer to protection, to warmth, to contacts, to communication, to union, to movement and life. They preserve and convey energy. Copper leads, fat stores, felt warms, honey nourishes, the hat protects, the battery recharges - the symbolic content of all the Beusian elements is obvious, their mental context is easy to see. Their simplicity amazes. What often gives us trouble is to translate what is meant as an example into the context of one's own experience, or, in other words, to find correspondences in one's own existence for the elements of Beuys' world conception, spelling our own being descriptive.[]

Thinking is sculpture, says Beuys. To think of his life means to move it from the passivity of suffering to the possibility of active design.[]

This once points in the direction, that modern art has taken for a long time, I mean the insight that a work of art ultimately exists only in our consciousness - that therefore the outward appearance of a work is less decisive than its counterpart in our imagination, to put it another way, that it is not the mastery of craftsmanship, but the processes that triggers it in us in our consciousness.

In the course of the persecution of this path, art has in recent years, in the work of so many distinguished and gifted artists, removed more and more from the view, has expected an ever-greater share of co-operation by the

On May 12, 1967, Joseph Beuys *unceremoniously* founded the fictitious "*free democratic socialist state 'EURASIA,'*" which he did not want to associate exclusively with East or West, but as a link and an interplay of democracy and socialism. To understand the principle of 'EURASIA', one has to include the background of the student movement in Beuys' work of the late sixties. Beuys reflected on the rigid conformism and the restrictive dogmatics of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism.^[2]

1. University of Education Heidelberg

2. Joseph Beuys: *Eurasienstab*, Introduction

<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurasienstab&prev=search>

public, the recipient, and overstrained it again and again.[]

This art is out of its innermost essence, without beauty, never flattering, but it nevertheless wants just as much to speak to our heart as to mobilize our mind.

This art aims at our lives. It will help us to find orientation, to discover living forces in dead matter - how to develop our own forces - to identify and name the surrounding things in their transcendent character. This is the meaning of the hearth and the earth telephone, the fat deposits and the honey pump. This is the message of the *dead hare*.⁴⁵

„Objet trouvé and ready-made have retained great influence to this day - the *found object* is an essential element in Pop Art and Land Art, for example. The concept of the *Objet trouvé* is somewhat more comprehensive than that of the *ready-mades*, by including everyday objects integrated into a work of art. The latter, on the other hand, are not to be regarded as ready-mades, at least in Duchamp's understanding. The notion of object art has established itself as a cross-breed of art, which consists mainly of found materials.“⁴⁶

A wonderful example of the fact that each thing has a task and one influences the other is the film of the media artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss from the year 1987 with a running time of 29m 45s. Pio Corradi was responsible for the camera. *The way of Things* is an art film which, with few cuts, reproduces the continuous flow of a kind of Rube-Goldberg apparatus. This series of improvised devices for the generation of flame, movement, chemical reactions, foam and the like, constructed

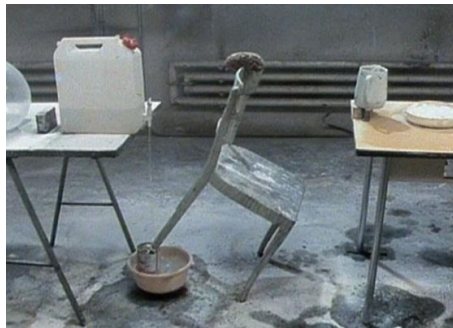
⁴⁵ ZEIT ONLINE. Denken ist Plastik. Verleihung des Goslaer Kaiserrings an Joseph Beuys. <http://www.zeit.de/1979/38/denken-ist-plastik> 10.10.2017

⁴⁶ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objet_trouv 

linearly over a length of 20 to 30 meters in a warehouse, is initiated at the beginning of the film and then proceeds in a manner similar to a chain reaction. In each case one movement pulses to the next. Use is made here of inclined planes, tin cans, tires, plastic bottles, firecrackers, balloons that are filled with gas or brought to burst and more.

An important role is played by the concatenation of fundamental physical principles, such as the utilization of the gravitational force, the centripetal force, the moment of inertia, the 3rd Newtonian axiom, and the lever law. In addition, various chemical reactions are used to trigger the next action. For this purpose, for example, various liquids are mixed which expand, produce gases, dissolve or ignite plastics.

Through the repeated questioning *how* and *whether* it goes on and by the temporal delaying of the individual events, the viewer experiences an up and down of tension, relaxation, expectation, unexpected events and effects. Each end of an event is also the beginning of a new one.⁴⁷



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⁴⁷ [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Lauf_der_Dinge_\(Film\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Lauf_der_Dinge_(Film))

⁴⁸ <https://nl.pinterest.com/simonekappeyne/postmodernisme/>
19.10.2017

What moves me

by Rainer Maria Rilke

You have to give your own, quiet,
leave undisturbed development,
that comes from deep inside,
and pushed through nothing
or can be accelerated
everything is exhausting-
and then
Give birth ...

Tire like the tree,
who does not push his juices
and confidently stands in the storms of spring,
unafraid,
that no summer could come behind it.
He is coming!

But he comes only to the patient,
that are there,
as if eternity were before them,
so carelessly silent and far ...

You have to have patience,
against the unsolved in the heart,
and try,
to love the questions,
like locked rooms,
and like books,
written in a very foreign language.

It's about living everything.
If you live the questions,
maybe you live gradually,
without noticing it,
a strange day
into the answer.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Rilke, Rainer Maria: What moves me.
<https://elwoodundharvey.wordpress.com/2015/02/20/rainer-maria-rilke-was-mich-bewegt/> 29-12-2017

Rilke points out to us that careful and accurate observation is necessary to find and grasp hidden beauties.

„The life of man finds an answer outside of the things: What sleeps in us, awakes in things (B I 241). And all things sisterly related to man speak to man. In particular, the poet's preference is for the small, modest things in their inconspicuous beauty. He emphasizes that most people do not know how beautiful the world is and how much splendor is revealed in small things, in any flower, a stone, a bark, or a birch leaf. The list of the examples: flower, stone, bark and leaf shows clearly what Rilke understands at this time mainly among the things. On a larger scale he counts in a different context: the great real things, as there are rocks, mountains, a tree (IV 41). He sees his task in understanding the beauty of all things, the beauty of a small, inconspicuous, and generally small thing (B III 119). He pursues beauty in a secret way, and in this respect he turns against the human scale of distinguishing between things beautiful and ugly. He refuses to choose among things between beautiful and non-beautiful things. Each thing is only a space, a possibility, and it is up to me to fulfill it completely or deficiently (B I 242). The diaries of this period (1899/1900) are completely filled with the discoveries of ever new beauties.[]

Rilke's experience is that the work of art succeeds in something that goes beyond the individual human being, that in the work of art the perfect reality is reached which remains unattainable to man in life.[]

The work of art is therefore to be explained as a more profound confession, which can be issued on the pretext of a memory, an experience, or an event, and can stand alone, detached from its author.

*This independence of the work of art is beauty. With every work of art a new thing, one thing more in the world, is born. Here, therefore, the beauty of the work of art is seen to be of its own materiality.*⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Bollnow, Otto Friedrich (1956): Rilke. III. DER KÜNSTLER UND DIE DINGE. W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart. http://www.otto-friedrich-bollnow.de/getmedia.php/_media/ofbg/201411/61v0-orig.pdf 02.09.2017

The viewer is a very decisive factor in any work of art. This is always more integrated in contemporary art and encouraged and asked for interaction. After all, art is not private but public, in other words, art is created from the private and released to the public. No art without an observer.

“In this exhibition *Making Things Public*, we are trying the impossible feat *to fill* the phantom public *with life*. We want to bring the difference between the following attitudes to the visitor: to expect something from the political body, which it cannot give - and from which a monster will emerge - and to be moved by the phantom public. The idea is to take the word phantom and to give this fragile and provisional concept more reality - at least more realism - than the phantasmagoric spheres, globes, common good, and common will that the Leviathan should embody. In other words, the problem of forming a body from a multitude of bodies - a problem that is subject to review by many exhibition exponents - we want to tackle again, but this time with today's instruments and media.

Designed by Michel Jaffrennou and Thierry Coduys, the phantom is an invisible work of art. As visitors move through the exhibition, it is activated by their movements, so that each viewer is both an actor in the exhibition and the only screen onto which the entire drama is projected. During the tour between the various exhibits the visitors will trigger various sensors, which serve as input to trigger different outputs that convey the indeterminate and uncertain feeling that *something is happening* for which the bystanders are responsible, but not in directly comprehensible wise. Politics will pass through them as a mysterious power just like a phantom. In addition, the input/output ratio will vary depending on the time of the day, the number of visitors in the exhibition, the answers given to different questions, the cumulative effect of past exhibitors, the somewhat invisible presence of web visitors. Sometimes the relation will be traceable in a kind of one-to-one

connection (*I did this, and that happened*), while in other cases the whole chain of action has completely disappeared (*I did not do anything and that happened*) and on other occasions the effect will be direct again, but will be done to other visitors. Through this complex, invisible (and expensive!) Work of art made possible by the ZKM's complex technical infrastructure, we hope, in the visitor's mind, to substitute the light spirit of the phantom for the crushing weight of the total political body."⁵¹

Each artist involves the visitor into his art in his own way. „Erwin Wurm (62) has redefined sculpture. With his material sculptures, performative sculptures, actions, videos, photos, drawings and action instructions, he is one of the most internationally successful Austrian contemporary artists.“⁵²

„Erwin Wurm has expanded the sculpture concept materially. He has given a major boost to the performative turnaround - the transformation of art objects into forms of action and the expansion of the concept of sculpture into the media. Wurm makes sculpture performances, sculpture installations, space sculptures and architectural sculptures. Sculpture becomes architecture and action and media notation.“⁵³

„Erwin Wurm is one of those artists who have made a globally recognized autonomous contribution to an international tendency, namely the performative turnaround of sculpture, or sculpture as a form of action. Photography and video are thereby the medium of sculpture and the sculpture itself has become an object of use. The classic sculpture was a three-dimensional object on a pedestal. Wurm first reinterpreted and processed the classical criteria of sculpture-volume, weight, statics, gravity, form, mass. He photographically

⁵¹ Latour, Bruno (2005) *Von der Realpolitik zur Dingpolitik*. Merve Verlag Berlin. S.70

⁵² <http://derstandard.at/2000055992058/Erwin-Wurm-Mir-war-meine-Kunst-zu-schade-fuer-Politik>

⁵³ http://labiennale2017.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Presseinformation_Austrian-Pavilion_Biennale2017_082016-1.pdf
15.10.2017

fixed people and their actions with everyday objects in unusual positions that they can only assume for a minimal period of time. With these famous *One-minute sculptures*, he has made the audience part of shaping the sculpture and turned the sculpture into an open field of action.

After all, he offered the audience the production of sculptures in the museum room on the basis of various instructions for use. Participation of the audience is required, their actions determine the form of art. Wurm subversively animates the individual to participate in social action. What is meant is: active art instead of passive consumption. In precarious times marked by crises, such a turn of culture can lead to the release of energy in a society with the potential to resolve conflicts.

Wurm has consistently proven that in a genuine artistic way - sometimes sublimely, often philosophically - he can find in images and objects a response to the moods and social conditions of the time. Wurm refers in his work to an expanded concept of sculpture which circles with a variety of materials and media that are explicitly on the traditions of the international avant-garde, where provocation and risk-appetite are always sedimented.

In his most recent work groups we recognize the retransmission of the insights gained by the action sculptures to the static objects. In doing so, he succeeded in spectacular signatures such as the house on the house or the boat on the roof of the house. With its architectural interventions and large-format sculptures, especially in the public space, Wurm has opened new options in the field between sculpture and architecture.

What is often expressed by Wurm in a playful way, however, is more than an aesthetic strategy. The oversized police cap of 2010 is not only a biographical reference to the profession of his father who was a cop, but also a precise plastic translation of the subjects of authority and surveillance. He also transformed the narrowness of the petty-bourgeois family into sculpture

in an optimal way through his eye-catching *narrow house* (Biennale of Venice, 2011).

All his works point to critical, media-analytic thinking about the concept of sculpture, in which he transcends the boundaries between object and performance, between architecture and design, between sculpture and photography, between artist and audience. Therefore, his work also provides a broad basis for reflections on sociocultural and socially relevant issues.”⁵⁴



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⁵⁴ Erwin Wurm - <https://www.labiennale.at/index.php>

⁵⁵ Photograph: Eva Wuerdinger. Erwin Wurm, *Head TV, One Minute Sculpture*, 2016.

“The theory of *Social Sculpture* states that every human being can contribute to the well-being of the community through creative action and thus have a plasticizing effect on society. From this idea the much quoted thesis of *Social Sculpture* emerged: "*Every human is an artist*" which Joseph Beuys first expressed in 1967 as part of his political activities. On the other hand, in the usual language, people who are creative in the field of visual or performing arts and music are regarded as artists. They create works of art or provide ideas for their creation.[]

The basis of the idea of a social sculpture is the man who develops social structures through thinking and language. Joseph Beuys understood this development of society as a continuous creative process. The task of art is to make man aware of this process. The overall context of social sculpture can be explained by a social action, i.e. the common good, and by the term plastic, which names a sculptural and malleable structure that can be experienced visually, haptically, acoustically and thermally and equated with the perception of society. In contrast to a purely formal aesthetic concept of art, social sculpture as an anthropological concept of art encompasses all creative human activity. With all that man shapes and thus creatively creates as an intellectual achievement, the individual weighs as an active society-changing one.[]

From this assumption art is no longer confined to material artefacts exhibited in a museum or a gallery, but to society as a whole, in which art must take its place according to Beuys's claim, to replace obsolete forms of life with new ones.

According to Beuys, every human being, with the demand of social sculpture in the widest sense, receives the inner and individual freedom to act as an individual within society; thus the individual is also responsible for the whole society. Social plasticity brings the various sectors of society and, in particular, the problems of a society, such as the military threat, the ecological

crisis or the problems of the economy, through a creative design and co-responsibility in a content overlap, which could enable a *healthy* exchange. In this he saw the concept of design as an opportunity to transform the *social organism* - also called *social body* - from its diseased shape into a healthy one.

Behind the demand of social sculpture there is therefore also the hope that art as an interdisciplinary language between nature and man can mediate in relation to the existing environmental problem and thus the realization in all spheres of life of society changes the life on earth to the positive. The extension of the concept of art to politics had the consequence that Beuys' artistic work was at the same time regarded with political values, although Beuys did not want to achieve a superficial political effect. The universalization of the concept of art, however, equally affected the political."⁵⁶



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⁵⁶ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soziale_Plastik 12.09.2017

⁵⁷ Foto: Walter Vogel, wize.life- Joseph Beuys said: „I am the rabbit“.

„*Every human being is an artist* did not deny special gifts, as in painting, and was not an instruction to anyone to become artistically active in the classical sense. Beuys, on the other hand, claims that, for example, society, a democracy as well as a work of art can be regarded as necessary for its success, especially individual spirituality, openness, creativity and imagination, attitudes which are actually rather the artist's attitude towards his subjects. He attributed these qualities and abilities to every human being. He thus turned against a formalized, rigid distribution of roles in a specialized society which wanted to assign art only to a niche, or as the taz⁵⁸ finally brought to the essayist point: thus the expanded concept of art wanted to: *out of the niche, 7,000 oaks plants and pump honey into politics!*“⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The daily newspaper (own spelling die tageszeitung, abbreviated taz) is a superregional German daily newspaper.

⁵⁹ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soziale_Plastik 12.09.2017

„Here I would like to ask the following question: To what degree and in what way can individuals hope to change the world in which they live? Let us, then, consider art as a field in which individuals regularly make attempts to change the world and see how these experiments work. If artists want to change the world, the following question arises: How is art capable of changing the world in which we live? Basically there are two answers to this question. The first is that art can influence the imagination and change people's awareness. When human consciousness changes, the changed people will also change the world in which they live. Here, art is understood as a kind of language through which artists can send a message. And this message should penetrate the souls of their recipients, change their feelings, their attitudes, their ethics. It is a, we say, idealist understanding of art - comparable to our understanding of religion and its impact on the world.

In order for the artist to send a message, however, artists and the public must speak the same language. The statues in ancient temples were regarded as embodiments of the gods: they were revered, supplicants were kneeling before them to pray and to plead, they asked for help and feared anger and imminent punishment. Christianity has a similar, long history of worshiping icons - even though God is invisible there. Here, the common language of artist and audience has their reason in the common religious tradition. On the other hand, no modern artist can expect someone to kneel in front of his artwork, seek practical help from it, or use it to avert danger. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in this loss of common faith in embodied, visible divinity, Hegel recognized that art had lost its truth. According to Hegel, the truth of art is a past.

Here comes the second possibility to change the world through art. Here art is understood not as the production of messages, but rather as the production of things. Even if artists and the public have no common language, they share the material world in which they live. As a

specific type of technology, art does not aim at changing the souls of the viewer. Rather, it changes the world in which these viewers actually live so that they must change their feelings and attitudes as soon as they try to adapt to the new conditions of their environment. The radical artistic avant-garde pursued this type of world change. They tried to create new environments for people and change them by that. In its most radical form, this concept was pursued by the avant-garde movements of the 1920s - Russian Constructivism, Bauhaus, De Stijl. The art of the avant-garde did not want to be liked by the public. The avant-garde wanted to create a new audience for their art. In fact, when you are placed in a new visual environment, you begin to adapt your own feelings to them and like them at some point. The artists of the avant-garde also wanted to create a community - but they did not see themselves as part of this community. They shared the world with their audience - but not the language.

Previously, the artist produced his work in seclusion, far from the public's view - in a private apartment or in a studio. This absence of the public view is constitutive of what we call the creative process. André Breton tells a story about a French poet who - when he wanted to sleep - put a sign on his door saying, *Quiet please - the poet works*. This anecdote summarizes the traditional understanding of creative work: Creative because it takes place beyond the control of the public eye - and beyond the author's control. The time of seclusion could take days, months, years - or even a whole lifetime. It was only at the end of this period of absence that the author was expected to present a work, and it was considered creative, precisely because it seemed to have emerged out of nothing.

Today the situation is different. Contemporary artists work with the Internet - and put their work on the Internet. The works of a particular artist can be found when I search his name using Google - and they are shown

to me in the context of other information that I can find on the internet about this artist: biography, other works, political activities, reviews, details from life, etc. The author uses the Internet not only to produce art, but also to buy tickets, to make restaurant reservations, to do business, etc. All these activities take place in the same integrated space of the Internet - and they are all potential accessible to other Internet users. Here, the work of art becomes *real* and profane because it is integrated into the set of information about its author as a real, profane person. Art is presented on the Internet as a specific activity: as a documentation of a real work process that takes place in the real offline world.

On the Internet, art works are operating in the same space as military planning, tourism business, capital flows, etc.: Google shows, like much else, that the space of Internet has no walls. The Internet user does not switch between the everyday use of things and their interesting contemplation. The Internet user uses information about art in the same way as information about all other things in the world. It is as if we have all become museum or gallery personnel - art is explicitly documented as something that takes place in the unified space of profane activities.

Artistic practice is usually understood as an individual, personal practice. But what does individual or personal mean here? The individual is often understood in its difference to others. However, this is not so much a matter of their own difference to others, but rather the difference to themselves - the refusal to be identified according to the conventional criteria of identification. In fact, the parameters that define our socially coded, nominal identity are external to us. We did not choose our names, we were not aware of the location and the time of our birth, we chose neither our parents nor our nationality, etc. All these external parameters of our personality correlate with no subjective evidence we can

have. They just show how others see us.”⁶⁰

“The two major differences (the world of today's art and 25 years ago) have to do with the advent of the Internet as a digital archive. First, that it puts pressure on the classical role of writers, philosophers or artists to convey between archival and contemporary life by expressing themselves in everyday life. Thanks to the Internet, everyone can now present themselves directly all over the world. It is no longer the mass culture of consumers like Adorno, the mass culture of the manufacturers described: with selfies, videos or blog posts now everyone manifests himself as a writer, philosopher, artist. We no longer need traditional agents.

Only, and that's the second difference, the Internet still does not have the stability and protection that traditional archives offer. We often think that this is a setup or technological problem, but in reality it is an economic problem. Internet platforms are owned by a few private companies: they must make profit, that is the reason for their existence. You can never take over the function of the museum, or any other archives. And that will not change soon, I'm afraid. If you now want to expand an online archive, you have to deviate from existing archives. Only museums like the MOMA or the Tate can build a real digital archive, also with regard to the high costs. In the EU, the protection of your online archive is only guaranteed for up to 30 years.

So we are in a transitional phase. On the one hand, classical structures such as museums, universities and institutions are still functioning as before, on the other hand the effects of Instagram, virtual reality and viral videos are increasing. I'm not saying that we have to make a choice between both parallel worlds, but that their relationship has become very blurred and uncertain.

⁶⁰ Neue Züricher Zeitung. Boris Groys. Die Wahrheit der Kunst. https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/kunst_architektur/boris-groys-ueber-kunst-die-wahrheit-der-kunst-1d.110732 12.09.2017

If the archives do not dissolve into nothing, the new one disappears as a category, but also all philosophy and art disappear. Perhaps politics will still be, but it also has direct reference to the archives. "⁶¹

Thus, the Internet, like any new development, change or innovation involves tasks and issues for the artist and the art. They are requested to develop the challenges, the uniqueness and the need to translate them into works.

⁶¹ Interview Thijs Lijster mit Boris Groys.
<https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/wint-de-supermarkt-het-van-het-museum>. 15.09. 2017

The Ode to Things

by Pablo Neruda

I love things about
everything,
everything.
I like the pliers,
the shear,
I adore
cups,
napkin rings,
soup bowls -
from the hat
not to mention.
I am in love
all things,
not only
the higher standing,
rather
also
the in-
finite-
ly
small
the thimble,
spores
plates,
vases.

With my soul,
is the planet
beautiful,
full of pipes that
from hands
through the smoke
be guided
full of keys,
full of salt barrels,
full of
all

what created by human hands,
all things:
the curves on the shoe,
the tissues,
The second
this time bloodless
birth of gold,
the glasses,
the nails,
the broom,
the clocks, the compasses,
the small change, the soft
softness of the chairs.

Ah, that much
pure
things
has the human
designed,
made of wool,
wood,
of glass,
from knitting -
tables, wonderful tables,
ships, ladders.
I love
all
things
not because she
burn
or
smell,
rather
I do not know why,
because
this ocean belongs to you,
with heard:
buttons,
the wheels,
the small
forgotten

treasures
the subjects,
in their feathers
love her
orange blossom
blew,
Glasses, knives,
scissors -
on everything
on the handle, on the edge,
a fingerprint,
the trail of a rapt,
forgotten forgetting
sunken hand.

I go through the houses,
roads,
elevators
and touch things,
recognize objects,
I secretly desire:
because they ring,
because they
are so soft
like the softness of a hip,
then again, because they are
like deep water
dyed or thick as velvet.

O irreversible
river
of things,
nobody can say
I only had
loved
the fish
or the plants of the jungle
and the meadows,
I would have
just loved,
which hops, climbs, survives
and sighs.
Not correct:
many things said
a lot to me.

Not only they touched me
or my hand touched them,
but so close
they run
next to my existence,
that they were there with me
and so much for me
that they lived half a life
with me
and one day a half death
die with me.⁶²

⁶² Pablo Neruda "Seafaring and Return. The Lyric Work III" in
Kämpf-Jansen, Helga (2002): Aesthetic Research - Paths through
Everyday Life, Art and Science. Cologne: Salon-Verlag.

Conclusion

..In all the societies which immediately preceded or surround us, and even in the numerous customs of our own people, there is no middle way: either full confidence or full mistrust. They lay down their weapons, renounce the magic, and give away everything, from occasional hospitality to daughters and goods. Under such conditions, people have learned to renounce theirs and to commit to giving and responding. They had no choice. When two groups of people meet, they can either dodge each other - and beat each other in the case of mistrust or challenge - or act together.“⁶³

⁶³ Marcel Mauss: The Gift s. 180

I have looked at things and matters, both objective and mental, from different perspectives and from different disciplines, and to this I also count the perhaps useless and superfluous, because the needs are as different as there are things. Things are a reflection of diversity, variety, personalities, situations, circumstances, needs that all influence and enrich life in their own way. Without all these innumerable different things and matters, the world would be much poorer and more boring, but it also demands the responsibility of each individual to determine with care, attention, sensitivity, decency, respect and consideration for contexts and conditions the value of things and matters and to decide if and how much it would or should occupy, in the individual life or in society.

I have come to the conclusion that every thing, whether personal, philosophical, political, historical, whether it is a memory, a tool, a toy or a concept, has its justification.

And each one has a task, as well as the potential to preserve and share history and stories, to encourage reflection and reflection, to encourage discussion, to create material for conversations, to summon protest and indignation, to activate our creativity and our imagination to name just a few.

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