

Breaking the banks

During a period when the dematerialisation of knowledge, communication and memory, and the relocation of production are widespread phenomena both for the economy and art, the idea of a "banquet" reuniting around the same table those we generally refer to as "visual artists", "designers" or "craftworkers", who have all engaged in work with materials, could appear rather untimely. Yet could material and making in art be staging a comeback?

The exploitation of Duchamp's gesture in the 1960s, and his later assimilation by the academy, established a radical partition between making and conceptual creation in art. This process of theoretical and aesthetic discrimination, based on the production method of works of art, revisited a medieval hierarchy between "liberal" and "mechanical" arts, confining those who make to the world of craft, while reserving the domain of art for those who don't make.

Thus an entire field of art and art history which discovers intellectual and imaginative fulfilment in an intimate engagement with material - from Henri Cros to Marinot, from Gauguin to Fontana, via the English Arts & Crafts movement and Jorn's Imaginistic Bauhaus - has been marginalised.

But the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of art, for several decades asserted within artistic institutions as a form of consensus, from schools to modern art museums, via art centres and artistic authorities, would appear to be on the verge of a breakdown.

Indeed, an increasing number of visual artists and designers are asserting the importance of making in art, paying particular attention to how materials are used.

By opening a shared space for all these artistic disciplines, by bringing all works associated with making and materials to the same table, without regard to specific or certified production

methods, this "banquet" aims at abolishing hierarchy between art forms and genres, and at challenging the legitimacy of dogmatic discriminations that vainly oppose making and not making, concept and material, and that seek to legislate as to what is 'contemporary' and what is not.

Here, all a priori judgments, all forms of sectarianism with regard to production methods, whatever they may be, would be banished: the artist is free to engage with their material, to define their methodologies, or even to entrust the realisation of his or her work to third parties. Each and every one will defend their personal choices.

The context of practice is equally a question of art and craft, a dichotomy that could well be erased, leaving way for a broader conception, a dialectic of making and material in art, beyond the "well made" rejected by Duchamp with his "ready-made".

This exhibition will create an opportunity to gauge the degree of emancipation, in certain fields of art practice, from the technical domain to which they have for too long been relegated, and the extension of the scope of contemporary art practice. It will demonstrate that academic discrimination, more-or-less in keeping with historical methods and moments in history, no longer stand when the 'border controls' that separate artistic domains and artistic practice are relaxed.

Furthermore, the layout of this table will only allow a single horizontal interpretation, with works devoid of wordy museography; the unmediated and admiring eye will not be subject to any prejudice arising from pre-established categories, and will judge for itself.

The presiding conceptual hegemony will undoubtedly have reached its limits, in the very instant when the emerging field presented here, integrating design, the visual arts and craftsmanship, will have acquired its own critical mass, no

longer questioning whether making and materials are admissible ingredients of contemporary art.

In truth, this claim for the legitimacy of making in art is as decisive as was its, often prolific, negation throughout the 20th century. Times change, yet the sense of urgency remains strangely the same: to overcome any Academy whose aesthetic dogma, however founded on an ideology of fracture, will always remain fixated upon ideas that are already a century old.

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July 2013