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The Many Lives of Art Things

Like other objects, artworks follow a specific course through time and space, and have, in other words, a 'life'. Griffioen argues we need to not only examine these lives, but also the afterlives.

'Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it's art is dreadful. The whole network is important! Even spaghetti ...'
— Martin Kippenberger, *One Has To Be Able To Take It!*¹

'I don't want to work without the Master.'
— Blanksy, *The Brave Little Toaster*²

'Het loopt tragisch met mij af, daar lijkt het nu toch echt op. De schuifpui van het atelier staat open. Ik hoor vuur laaien. Het knettert. De wind staat pal noord, er slaan vonken in mijn richting, maar die worden asvlokken en dwarrelen als sneeuw naar binnen. Ik sta op de ezel en heb alleen het ergste te verwachten. (...) Ik vertel dit nu al, anders sluit u zodra u begrijpt wie ik ben dit boek, want u denkt vast en zeker: wat maakt die van zijn leven nu helemaal mee?'³

These are the opening lines of the novel *Specht en Zoon* by Willem-Jan Otten from 2004 ('Woodpecker and Son', translated as *The Portrait*, 2009). The reader steps into the story on the literary *instant décisif*, just before a painter named Felix Vincent throws a painting of his own creation on a pyre. What follows is an account of the events that led to this point, narrated from the perspective of the painting itself — or more accurately, from the support: an 'Extra Fine Quadruple Universal Primed' canvas. The story the painting recounts is essentially its own life story, from the first flicker of its awakening consciousness — emerging in the middle of a roll of canvas in a fine art supply store — to its (presumed) end in flames.

Interestingly, the painting is not the main character in its own life story. Despite its function as narrator, the allotted role of the artwork in the novel is quite limited. Yes, the painting is animated: it can see and hear, and it registers what takes place in its direct surroundings — the studio. It can contemplate the meaning of these events and it even has a personality of sorts.⁴ But it is not given permission to intervene in the chain of events. The function of the painting is simply to record the acts, the behaviour and the emotions of the human actors. It remains an outsider. The story is, ultimately, a human one.

In a peculiar way *Specht en Zoon* resonates with several popular art historical books that have been published recently. Take

for example, Gijs Hensbergen's *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon*, published in the same year as *Specht en Zoon*.⁵ Hensbergen's book recounts how Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* developed from a painted manifesto against fascist atrocities — an automobile *Bilderfahrzeuge* that was then transported all over Europe to rally money and support for the Spanish Republic — to a rather ubiquitous anti-war icon, more enigmatic and less accurate than in its first incarnation, but still powerful as an 'image'.⁶ What this book shares with *Specht en Zoon* is the assumption that an artwork has, or can have, a certain development: 'a life' one can write about. Other examples include Stephen Biel's *American Gothic: A Life of America's Most Famous Painting* from 2005, and Erica Hirshler's *Sargent's Daughters: The Biography of a Painting*, published in 2009.⁷

In each of these books the 'narrated' object remains a device, at least to a certain degree. If the artwork is placed in the centre, it is done so in order to illuminate a human world, to shed light on human problems, human relationships, and human history. Man still rules supreme in this world flooded with objects. Nevertheless, the object does possess agency, albeit in a passive manner. The painting in *Specht en Zoon* is an indispensable knot in the fabric of social and economic relations. In its existence other existences meet, clash and clasp onto one another. For instance, Otten offers a vivid interpretation of the 'relations of production' of the painter's workshop by implying that it is in the painting that different threads meet, connecting the painter and the critic, the client and the sitter. The book by Hensbergen similarly shows that a painting not only facilitates these relationships, it also renders them possible, alters, directs or creates them, by evoking emotions, catalysing discussions, mediating memories, et cetera. As such, the painting is an actant: a structural constituent around which the narrative spins.

There are many tropes that we encounter when we follow the life of an artwork, for instance 'the artist', 'the studio', 'the collection', 'the museum', and 'the art market'. Perhaps a 'biography' of a work can alter the way we perceive and understand these tropes. This methodology can make us aware of the

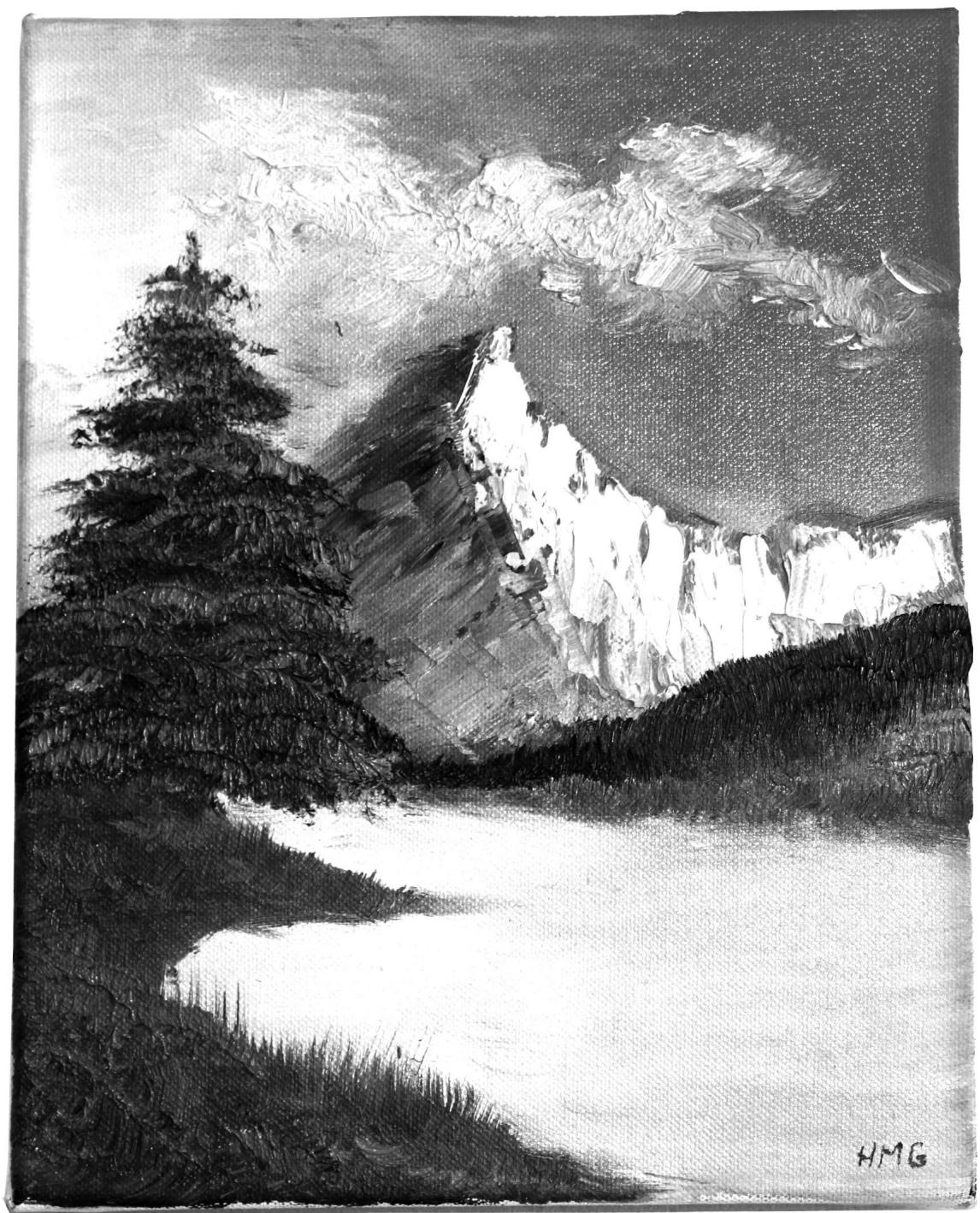


Fig. 1. Painting by Henk Griffioen, after Bob Ross, 2010. Courtesy of the owner, Roel Griffioen.

shifting contexts through which the artwork moves, the architectures of power that house it, the stages on which it performs. It can even allow us to see that the work and stage are interdependent, that they are woven into the same web of people, things and events. And yes, if we are very lucky indeed, it will give us insight in how work and stage are not two colourfast ontological entities, but how they, as in a Latourian miracle, flow over into each other.

If we accept that the artwork has a 'passive' agency, and that this agency becomes visible in its life story, this can present all kinds of methodological blessings to art history and theory, some of which we can foresee and others that will come as a surprise. I want to explore some of the blessings in this article, mainly concerning our understanding of the economic and ontological status of the artwork, but I also wish to speculate on the limitations that we may expect to encounter. Could it be that our newest 'methodological fetishism' — can we call it materialism with a touch of animism — also has its blind spots?⁸ What happens when the object dies? Or when it reincarnates as an image? Or as a multitude of images?

Living Things, Dying Things

The proposition that objects have a life that can be described in a biography was famously advanced in the seminal work *The Social Life of Things*, a compilation of essays edited by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai.⁹ In this book, a 'thing'¹⁰ is not treated as a static and neatly delineated entity, but as something that follows a specific course through time and space, and has, in other words, a 'life'.¹¹ By following their trajectories, Appadurai writes in the introduction, we learn to recognise the meanings inscribed in their forms and their uses: 'It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.'¹²

If things, indeed, have lives, it is a logical next step for us to study them through 'biographies', descriptions that capture their temporal and spatial movements, as Igor Kopytoff argues in his contribution to Appadurai's book 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process'. A

biography can trace the existence of a thing all the way back to the stage of production, and follow its path through its different stages in life, in which the thing may have different social functions and cultural connotations. The questions that could be productive in a biography of a thing are by and large the same as in a biography of a human life, for example: Where does the thing come from? What is its social or economic background? Who made it? What has been its career so far? How does this career correlate with what is deemed a 'normal' or 'ideal' career for such a thing? What different stages in the life of a thing can one discern? What happens to a thing when it loses its use value?¹³

Paul Chan suggests that art is both more *and* less than a thing (*more* because it shapes matter without dominating it; *less* because, contrary to things like tables, the parts do not make a whole).¹⁴ To Kopytoff, however, it is *more or less* a thing. Art does not require a special methodological treatment. Questions that are relevant to the biography of a Suku hut in Zaire also apply to a painting by Renoir, irrespective of the fact that their different habitats, and the fact that their distinct economies, geographies, and politics are unlikely to overlap. In one of the rare passages devoted specifically to art, Kopytoff writes:

'To us, a biography of a painting by Renoir that ends up in an incinerator is as tragic, in its way, as the biography of a person who ends up murdered. That is obvious. But there are other events in the biography of objects that convey more subtle meanings. What of a Renoir ending up in a private or inaccessible collection? Of one lying neglected in a museum basement?'¹⁵

Kopytoff's indiscriminate treatment of an artwork as a thing like any other, implies that he convicts it to the earthly realm of kitchen utensils, surveillance cameras, monobloc chairs, and charmingly horrible amateur paintings. This does not mean that Kopytoff denies that the life path of an artwork has unique properties; rather, he asserts that asking the right (biographical) questions will automatically expose these properties.

If we agree, then, that an artwork is a



Fig. 2. Artworks travel too. The site of Lieven de Boeck's *The Museum of Modern Art. Section of the Lost Eagles*, 2010. When this picture was taken, the work was on show in Marseilles, leaving behind this empty wall with forty nails in the home of the collector. (Photo: Philippe de Gobert)

thing and has a life, and attempt to chronicle its trajectory, even in a very broad sense, we are instantly confronted with the instability of the status of the object. An archetypical trajectory might look something like this: the work is conceived in the studio, be it a physical place or an electronic extension such as a laptop. After the materialization of the work, which takes place in the studio or is outsourced to an external location, it is shown for instance in a museum, gallery, or another space that is to a certain extent publicly accessible. It is here that the work *appears* in public and is acknowledged as an artwork. This often brief moment of public appearance is generally followed by a temporary or permanent disappearance. The work becomes part of a wider context of works that have appeared before and are now part of an 'archive' of sorts. Under the most favourable circumstances this means that the work is sold. In this case the work joins the collection of a museum or collector. If the work is unsold, it is stored in

the depot of the gallery, or travels home with the artist, where it might end up in an attic with the other market cast-offs.

Regardless of the status of the archive (institutional, commercial, or private) and the status of the work (sold or unsold, collected or stored), the archive functions as a waiting room, a static situation (a purgatory) between appearance and reappearance, or oblivion. These pauses between appearances, existential gaps in which the work is invisible to the public, are rendered visible in John Baldessari's *A Painting That Is Its Own Documentation* (from 1968 onwards).¹⁶ A text painted on the blank canvas summarizes the conception and execution of the work, followed by the instruction: 'FOR EACH SUBSEQUENT EXHIBITION OF THIS PAINTING, ADD DATE AND LOCATION BELOW. FOR EXTRA SPACE, USE AN ADDITIONAL CANVAS.' The first two entries read: 'NEWPORT HARBOR ART MUSEUM / BALBOA, CALIF. MAY 11 — JUNE 19, 1969' and 'NEWPORT HARBOR ART

MUSEUM / NEWPORT BEACH, CA. OCT. 26 — NOV. 24, 1974'. The career of the work took off slowly, but was fully airborne by the early 1980s, as is testified by entries from the New Museum in New York (1981); Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands (1981); Museum Folkwang Essen in Germany (1981); The Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati (1982) and the MOCA in Los Angeles (1982) show. Progression in time shows professional progress: the temporal gaps between exhibitions become smaller while spatial gaps widen and the institutions at which the work is displayed increase in prestige.

In chronicling the major events of its own life (with some goodwill we could regard the painting as an *auto*-biography), *Painting That Is Its Own Documentation* displays a certain reflectivity regarding the relation between temporality and transformation. The same can be said of artworks that embrace their own mortality, and account for change or even decay. Many of Eva Hesse's pieces, for instance — some of which have already disintegrated — seem to carry a sense of their own expiration within. When recalling a visit to Hesse's studio in the 1960s, Robert Smithson remarked that he felt her works 'derive from a biological-organism kind of view of things' and that they were 'like mummifications' to him; the art had a 'rather funereal quality to it'.¹⁷

Hesse, Smithson, Baldessari, and contemporaries wrote and produced work that contested the idea, still dominant in the public imagination in the 1960s, that proper artworks are forever, or should be. Hannah Arendt wrote in her 1961 essay 'The Crisis in Culture' that the 'excellence' of cultural objects (artworks, architecture, et cetera) 'is measured by their ability to withstand the life process and become permanent appurtenances of the world'.¹⁸ This view is tightly connected to a certain epoch in the history of the art institution, during which artworks, cherrypicked from the sea of common and anonymous objects, are selected for eternal life in the museum. The white cube, as we know today, was the clearest manifestation of the belief in the immortality of art. Effectively, the white cube is a time capsule, a void in which the eternal figure of the work can appear. The institutional frame is camouflaged to honour this ideal of timeless *appearance*.

History, production, language, and culture all disappear against the whitewashed walls. In this Kantian showbox, the artwork is brought back to the fiction of its intrinsic properties, to its own corpus. Stripped naked, it shows itself *as it is*, and can facilitate the modernist aspiration that Pierre Bourdieu typified as the dream of 'the pure gaze'.¹⁹ Daniel Buren already hinted at this tendency when he stated that preserving and showing artworks in a museum or gallery 'perpetuates the idealistic nature of all art since it claims that art (could be) eternal.' By forgetting that a work of art is always limited in time and space, Buren writes, 'one can pretend there exists an immortal art, an eternal work'.²⁰

The Artwork Formerly Known as Commodity

In his project *Manet-PROJEKT'74* Hans Haacke mapped out the history of ownership of Manet's *Une botte d'asperges* from 1880. Haacke's work was commissioned for an exhibition called *Kunst bleibt Kunst* (the title *Art remains Art* is in itself a perfect example of the belief in the immortality of art), but was refused when the artist's endeavour established a link between the painting and Germany's Nazi past. To the curator it was perfectly clear that the painting as made by Manet is one thing and its provenance another. To Haacke (and Buren, who placed a miniature reproduction in his work when he heard that Haacke's work was refused; and subsequently found himself censored by the organisation, which covered the reproduction with a cloth) this only stressed how a work can evoke endless cultural responses through its existence, and that these responses may contradict each other.

This example — and, in another way, John Baldessari's *A Painting That Is Its Own Documentation* — illustrates that the dynamic of appearance and disappearance is embedded in a certain economic undulation. If Roland Barthes was right and the relationship an author has with his work is equal to the relationship between a father and son, the moment of sale would then be the point at which the son leaves the family home to start a life of his own. It marks the moment that, to quote Smithson, 'the artist becomes estranged from his production'.²¹ The product is separated from the producer, the umbilical cord is cut, and the object

is transformed into a commodity. The exchange value that it is then allotted dominates the other features of the object.

Often the commodity status is seen as ontologically branded into the object. Once a commodity, always a commodity. The moment the value of a thing is expressed in monetary value, its soul belongs to the market. Kopytoff questions this narrow conceptualization of commodification. In his view, a thing is a porous body that can move in and out of the commodity condition. In fact, 'the only time when the commodity status of a thing is beyond question is the moment of actual exchange.'²² After this brief flash of ontological clarity, the thing can resume its life outside the trade system, away from the abstraction that is required for exchange. Is the exchange value of the aforementioned Renoir painting still relevant to an owner who has no intention of capitalizing on his property? What if the work temporarily or permanently 'disappears' into the archive of his private collection, screened off from the public, but also from the market? What happens when the work becomes overgrown with values other than the prevalent economic one, with personal sentiments, histories, and so forth?

Opposite to commodification, Kopytoff places another force: 'singularisation'. With commodification the object is made exchangeable, which means that it becomes part of the realm of comparable values. Singularisation is the process of individualizing the object, the desire to set it apart, to make it singular. The object is safeguarded from the machinations of the market. A typical response to commodification is the assertion that the value of a thing cannot be conveyed in a sum of money, that the thing itself is *priceless*. The museum is an institution invented from this desire to singularise selected objects; artworks, in the case of the art museum. From this perspective, the task of the museum is to be a 'safe haven' in which the work is defended from the corrupting powers of the market — a trope that is connected to the idea that the museum is a deepfreeze in which the work can attain immortality.²³

But it would be wrong to believe that where commodification is a move towards the market, singularisation is the total retreat from it. Eternity, or rather; the promise of eternity, is attainable only by the most successful art-



Fig. 3. T-shirt by Forty Seven Press. The designer, Brandy, 'had the vision of merging Cecilia Gimenez's "Monkey Jesus" with another well known figurehead, Che Guevara. The result is our "Che Gimenez" shirt (...) "SOCIALIST JESUS RED"!.' Accessed through www.fortysevenpress.com on 28 August 2013.

works. Art, in Arendt's view, must be protected from powers of commodification in the art market, because commodification renders the work exchangeable, and therefore banal, consumable, destroyable. This assertion is both right and wrong. Arendt is right that artworks with unsuccessful careers are at risk of losing their 'artwork' status and slipping back into the sea of common objects, to drift there between the monobloc chairs and the Bob Ross copies. But safeguarding a work from the market does not isolate it from the economy. On the contrary, by setting it apart in a museum, it is granted a very special economic status. The life span of a work is connected to its monetary value, and the promise of eternity is the platinum chip.

Incarnations

In the last chapter of *Specht en Zoon* the reader finds, to his surprise, that the ritual burning of the 'Extra Fine Quadruple Universal Primed' canvas does not result in the anticipated death

of the narrator. The storyteller lives on in a Polaroid taken of the painting before its destruction. This presents us with an interesting set of questions: where does the life of an artwork end? Where does the 'art' of art reside; in the support, the thing, or in the concept? Or is it a spiritual 'image' that can be transposed from medium to medium while retaining some of its 'aura', as in the imprint of the face of Christ on the veil of Saint Veronica?

The continuum of a human life is not broken after plastic surgery, or after a gender change. Still we hesitate to call the nineteenth-century *Ecce Homo* fresco of Jesus in a church in the Spanish village Borja 'art' after its recent 'renovation' by Cecilia Giménez, a local woman in her eighties who acted, as she asserted on national television, because she was sad that parts of her favourite fresco had disappeared into the moist church walls.

Such questions, and their economic and ontological consequences for the status of the artwork, are deeply problematic, but can perhaps still be suppressed when one thinks about the relation between for instance Gordon Matta-Clark's building sculptures, and the films, records, and material remains of the buildings that were put on the market. The commodification of the ephemeral has been a classic but under-researched problem for artists of the 1960s and 1970s who dealt with dematerialization but still needed to pay the rent. Their relation might equal the relation between the painting in *Specht en Zoon* that was destroyed, and its 'living dead' afterlife as image on a polaroid. A harder case to crack is the relationship between the 'original' works of conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s, and their

incarnations in the oeuvre of New York based artist Eric Doeringer, who recently received some acclaim with seemingly uncritical, but meticulously executed copies of 'conceptual masterworks'. This example of the Bob Rossification of the legacy of the conceptual generation poses the question if 'art' indeed migrated from the support to the concept, as many artists in the second half of the twentieth century imagined, can simply move from oeuvre to oeuvre. Perhaps the 'image' became the most stable currency in art; perhaps the most inflated one.

Objects can overflow their maker, to paraphrase Bruno Latour.²⁴ Should we not also equip ourselves to examine how artworks can overflow their own materiality, their own life? *Bleibt Kunst Kunst?* The power of the image became apparent once more when Colin Powell delivered his notorious 'weapons of mass destruction' speech before the United Nations Security Council to rally support for the invasion of Iraq — the tapestry reproduction of *Guernica*, a cry against war, hanging in the background was covered. 'Mr. Powell can't very well seduce the world into bombing Iraq surrounded on camera by shrieking and mutilated women, men, children, bulls and horses', Maureen Dowd wrote in *The New York Times*.²⁵ While Powell was making his appeal, protesters outside the building held up small copies of the painting. Especially in an age in which objects are intertwined or overgrown with images, an age in which *the thing as such* (if there is such a thing) is veiled by its innumerable mediations, it should be the hybrids, the image-objects and object-images that we should keep an eye on. They, too, have lives.

Parts of this essay are written in dialogue with Lieven de Boeck. Many of the ideas developed here resonate with De Boeck's ongoing project *The Archive of Disappearance*.

- 1 From: 'One Has to Be Able To Take It!', interview with Martin Kippenberger by Jutta Koether, 1990-1991, in: Ann Goldstein (ed.), *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective*, Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008. Cited in: David Joselit, 'Painting Beside Itself' in: *October* (2009) 130, fall, pp. 125-134, p. 125.
- 2 The Brave Little Toaster, Walt Disney Pictures, dir.: Jerry Rees, 1987.
- 3 'I'm coming to a tragic end, there is no denying that now. The studio's sliding doors are open. I can hear fire blazing. It crackles. The wind is due north, sparks lash out in my direction, but they become ash flakes, and gently drift inside like snow. I'm up against the easel and can only expect the worst. [...] I'm telling you this now, otherwise you will shut this book once you understand who I am, because you will certainly think, what could he possibly experience in life?' (translation by Kunstlicht).
- 4 *Specht en Zoon* was probably the most discussed novel of the year in the Netherlands. Reception in the press revolved around the question whether or to what extent *Specht en Zoon* is a covert Christian apologia. Another, more interesting, problem that receives little if any attention in the press is that the remarkable narration mode in *Specht en Zoon* complicates immersion into the story. It proves too difficult to uphold the diegesis for the entire length of the novel; in my opinion the book crosses the critical point where the rubber band called 'willing suspension of disbelief' actually snaps.
- 5 Gijs van Hensbergen, *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2005.
- 6 'Automobile Bilderfahrzeuge' is a term Aby Warburg used for Flemish tapestries to describe their remarkable mobility and reproducibility. Cited in: Sven Lütticken, 'Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images', *e-flux journal* 09/2009 #8, s.p., accessed through www.e-flux.com/journal/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/ on 15 August 2013.
- 7 See for literature on the narration of objects: J. Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: how things tell the stories of people's lives*, London: Routledge, 1998; Sandra H. Dudley, Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie e.a. (eds.), *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories*, London: Routledge, 2012. This trend may itself be part of a wider trend that touches many fields, and that manifests itself, for example, in the emerge of 'material cultures' in anthropology; the ever-growing popularity of the work of Bruno Latour in humanities (especially in newly invented subdisciplines such as 'design cultures' and 'visual cultures'); Bill Brown's engagement with Thing Theory, his theory to explain What Things Are And What They Do; the Animism project by curator Anselm Franke, that spans several exhibitions across Europe and a publication. All these examples mark and are marked by a gradual shift of attention from the subject to the object. In many cases, however, objects are not studied in and for themselves but from the presumption that they can tell us something about Man; similar to how Otten and Hensbergen use paintings to tell human stories.
- 8 See: Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- 9 To get a grasp of the influence and range of Appadurai's book it is suffice to list some the countless publications that explicitly refer to it in their title, such as *The Social Life of Avatars*; *of Money*; *Coffee*; *Emotions*; *Information*; *Libraries*; *Postsocialism*; *Opium in China*; *Numbers*; *Fluids*; *Climate Change Models*; *Small Urban Spaces*; *Trees*; *Video Games*; et cetera. The list goes on forever.
- 10 The difference between 'things' and 'objects' is much debated. In this paper, I use them as interchangeable concepts.
- 11 Focussing on the 'trajectories' of objects might not be enough; it implies that they are ontological monoliths, entities so to speak. Latour: 'Take any object: At first, it looks contained within itself with well-delineated edges and limits; then something happens, a strike, an accident, a catastrophe, and suddenly you discover swarms of entities that seem to have been there all along but were not visible before and that appear in retrospect necessary for its sustenance' (Bruno Latour, 'Networks, Societies, Spheres: Reflections of an Actor-Network Theorist' in: *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011), pp. 796-810, p. 797). By now, these ideas are slowly becoming mainstream. The Latour citation could be the motto for what seems like a new wave in Dutch consumer television. Programs such as *Keuringsdienst van Waarde*, *Klootwijk aan Zee* en *De wilde keuken* acknowledge the fact that consumer goods are designed to efface their own production and attempt to trace the histories of the separate ingredients. The shell of the object changes from a protective shield against questions and criticism of the consumer, to the thin wrapper that holds together the potentially endless collection of 'life stories' encapsulated in the faux-unity of the object. A similar desire to x-ray the deceptive shell of the object can found in art projects such as Allan Sekula's *Fish Story* (2002).
- 12 Appadurai, op. cit. (note 8), p. 5.
- 13 Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process' in: Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 64-90, p. 66.
- 14 See: Paul Chan, 'What Art Is and Where it Belongs' *e-flux journal* 11/2009 #10, s.p., accessed through www.e-flux.com/journal/what-art-is-and-where-it-belongs on 15 July

- 2013; see also Sven Lütticken's Thingness Trilogy for *e-flux journal*: 'Art and Thingness, Part I: Breton's Ball and Duchamp's Carrot' (03/2010 #14); 'Art and Thingness, Part Two: Thingification' (04/2010 #15); 'Art and Thingness, Part III: The Heart of the Thing is the Thing We Don't Know' (05/2010 #16).
- 15 Kopytoff, op. cit. (note 13), p. 67.
- 16 For a discussion of Baldessari's *A Painting That Is Its Own Documentation* see Martha Buskirk's excellent *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2003.
- 17 Lucy R. Lippard, 'Out of the Past: Lucy R. Lippard Talks about Eva Hesse with Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson' in: *Artforum International* 46 (2008) 6, pp. 237-249.
- 18 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York: Penguin Books, 1954 (1993), pp. 205-206.
- 19 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993 (2009), p. 256. See especially chapter 10, the essay 'The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic'.
- 20 Daniel Buren, 'Function of the Museum', in: Richard Hertz (ed.), *Theories of Contemporary Art*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985, pp. 189-192, p. 192.
- 21 Cited in Craig Owens' essay 'From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After "The Death of the Author"?' in: Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, p. 122. This also reminded me of Lee Lozano's appeal: 'Boycott galleries & dealers too. Collectors chosen by artists as "allowed to buy" strictly on basis of how interesting they are when they visit artist. Collectors as entertainment for artists. Price of art fixed.'
- 22 Kopytoff, op. cit. (note 13), p. 83.
- 23 This was illustrated recently when the Nederlandse Museumvereniging (the association of Dutch museums) and the artist Marlene Dumas lashed out at MuseumgoudA [sic], because the small and ailing museum decided to auction a work by Dumas (*The Schoolboys*, 1986/7) to settle their debts. The museum was expelled from the Museumvereniging on the charge of acting 'unethically'. Dumas stated that if she sells a work to a public institution, she assumes the institution does not purchase it with the aim to put it back on the market and make a profit. 'If this becomes normal, the Netherlands risks losing the artworks that it cares about.' The word 'losing', in this case, not only refers to the unholy perspective that the new buyer may be foreign, but can also be taken figuratively: the public 'loses' the work, because it disappears into a private collection. The artist's galerist, Paul Andriesse, was even less ambiguous in his judgment. According to him the director of the museum in Gouda knew the price of art but 'not the value'. This is what Kopytoff might have had in mind when he wrote that 'the cultural responses to such biographical details reveal a tangled mass of aesthetic, historical, and even political judgments, and of convictions and values that shape our attitudes to objects.' Ibid. p. 68.
- 24 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 85.
- 25 Maureen Dowd, 'Powell Without Picasso', *The New York Times*, February 5, 2003, accessed through www.nytimes.com/2003/02/05/opinion/05DOWD.htm on 15 July 2013.