

THING NOTHING

17 October – 15 November 2015

Design Academy Eindhoven
Van Abbemuseum

The Van Abbemuseum is delighted to be able to host *Thing Nothing*. The exhibition explores the nature of things – as commodities, products, objects – and their limits. Together with *Self Unself*, 2013 and *Sense Nonsense*, 2014, it forms a trilogy of exhibitions held here over the last years that define the edges of design and its encounters with classical art, socially engaged art practice, consumption and production. These exhibitions have come to represent a different side to the Dutch Design Week, where reflection on the status of the practice and the value of design in all senses can be found.

Historically, this museum was limited to what were once called the ‘fine arts’. Function had no place here. From the 1950s onwards, this division between art and design (or use and uselessness as it was sometimes defined) was already being questioned. Yet the exclusive claim of fine art on the Van Abbemuseum largely held sway. After three years of co-operation with the Design Academy and Thomas Widdershoven; after the *Museum of Arte Util* and *Confessions of the Imperfect* exhibitions; after Li Mu’s current project in rural China and now with the new teaching role that the Van Abbemuseum has within the Design Academy, I hope that the spell has been broken and we can free ourselves to explore new boundaries and crossovers in general.

The collaboration between the Van Abbemuseum and the Design Academy is crucial to this process and our two institutes are also vital to making the city of Eindhoven a dynamic place for rethinking relationships between specialisms. For the museum, it is already an excellent example of how we can work with institutes and individuals from other disciplines, cutting through the divisions between areas of knowledge to invent new encounters for our publics. It is one we intend to build on.

I would like to thank Thomas very much for his innovative thinking, openness and generosity in working with us and I look forward to devising challenging future collaborations together. Meanwhile I do hope you enjoy *Thing Nothing* and find it an enriching experience.

Charles Esche
Director Van Abbemuseum

THING NOTHING

Thing Nothing is a research into the meaning, value and future of things. *Thing Nothing* addresses the relation between form and counter-form, between the real and the virtual, between technological possibilities and moral issues.

All ideas that can be applied to a cup – which can only ever begin as an empty vessel with the potential to contain something. A Taoist philosopher once said that to understand a cup you have to look at where the cup is not because the essence of the object lies not in the clay, but in the empty space in and around it.



Tray for washing brushes, brush washer, Ru yao, Celadon, 1120, Song (960–1279)

Throughout this exhibition we explore how even an environment of emptiness or nothing can be teeming with meaning and value. The Ceramic Museum Princessehof, for example, has a Chinese Ru cup that is valued at 26 million euros. A small empty vessel, an artefact that no Dutch expert has the expertise to accurately value. It is only through the cup's history, essence and potential that its meaning and ultimate value can be determined. To value a thing we must look beyond the material.



Ai Weiwei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995

But meaning and value are never fixed concepts – they change over time depending on circumstances, politics and culture. That is why the image of Chinese artist and political activist Ai Weiwei dropping another empty vessel to the floor – a Han Dynasty vase – is so compelling. He doesn't blink. The vase is some 2000 years old and undoubtedly valuable. His point is that change can only be achieved by destruction and one must sometimes opt for 'nothing' over 'thing' to make room for the new.



Aldo Bakker, *Artefact*, 2014
Commissioned by Sévres

Then we have renowned Dutch designer and Design Academy Eindhoven teacher Aldo Bakker whose oeuvre is full of empty vessels. Aldo embraces a very personal yet formal language with his objects that are both original, yet rife with references to the history of art and design. His 'things' are not just hollow shapes and spaces, but function metaphorically as symbols on to which meaning can be projected.

The academy has always encouraged this type of cerebral approach to the design discipline. We urge students to look beyond the material properties of things, to search for a presence in the space in and around an object. Even while embracing technology and social change, we strive for a kind of material poetry, where thing and nothing are linked.

And given the explosion of technology and the evolving prominence of virtual space, how to create this tension between the thing and the nothing is changing. Today designers need to be able to take their skills and translate them into the realm of the unseen, the unspoken, and the unmade.



Olivier van Herpt and Sander Wassink, *Adaptive Manufacturing*, 2014

Recent graduate Olivier van Herpt, for example, designed a 3D clay printer because he found the plastic used in normal 3D printers to be too slick and sterile. As the programmer, technician and craftsman, Olivier's work is both digital and analogue and connects with the latest techniques as well as the history of ceramic culture.



Jólan van der Wiel, *Gravity Tool II, Gravity Stool*, 2012

In *Gravity Tool II* Jólan van der Wiel explores the potential of the cooperation between technology and natural phenomena. Like Olivier, he developed his own tools and materials to create a series of objects. For the stool in *Thing Nothing*, Jólan disrupts the force of gravity – which has a massive influence on the creation of most shapes – by injecting it with magnetic fields. The natural pull is thus disturbed, and the result is a set of uniquely shaped stools.

The unlimited potential of technology, though, poses new ethical concerns about what moral codes are bounding the designer. Not a lot of discussion about what happens when aesthetics and functionality move into the realm of morality has been heard in the field of design.



Heather Dewey-Hagborg, *Invisible*, 2014

Invisible by Heather Dewey-Hagborg addresses growing concerns about genetic surveillance. We crave anonymity in an environment where we are being constantly watched, both online and offline. Her DNA eraser spray makes it impossible to be tracked,

analysed, or cloned and even adds a layer of DNA noise for extra deception.



Hongjie Yang, *Semi-Human Objects*, 2015

In *The Oneness of Existence* Hongjie Yang is arguing that the socially coded distinctions between man and object will soon collapse. Things in the future will still be designed but they will grow rather than be made, which is already influencing the debate surrounding human tissue engineering.

Imagine a domestic environment surrounded by objects that are grown from one's own cells. All objects will have a life – they will be born, they will live, and they will die. Yang calls this new class of objects 'semi-human'.



Edith Dekyndt, *One Second of Silence*, 2008–2009

By exploring the myriad and constantly-evolving tensions between the material and the immaterial, *Thing Nothing* quietly defines a contemporary moment in design. Like in Edith Dekyndt's *A Moment of Silence* – a transparent flag devoid of familiar symbols – the exhibition is a humble contemplation of how the past in design will continue to inform the future, but in ways we cannot yet fathom.

Thing Nothing is the conclusion of a trilogy. Its focus is on the 'what' of design – is it form or is it counter-form, or are designers producing meaning and value beyond the material world? Our 2013 exhibition *Self Unself* attacked the 'why'. Why design? What motivates this new generation of designers? Design Academy Eindhoven graduation projects are self-initiated projects, and stem from personal fascinations, but many clearly express a very unselfish attitude, a want to better the world.

The 'how' of design was addressed in 2014 in *Sense Nonsense*. In this show we researched methods and goals and showed how the path to innovation is not always rational. We need the mistake, the poetic, and the nonsense, to move forward.

Together this trilogy explores and forecasts the next generation of designers and how they are positioning themselves in the always-evolving field of design.

Thomas Widdershoven
Creative Director Design Academy Eindhoven

CONSIDERING VALUE

Ai Weiwei drops a Han Dynasty. Ted Noten cuts up a Mercedes-Benz. An unassuming little dish turns out to be one of the 79 Ru pieces known world-wide.

Whether its an ancient dish or a Mercedes-Benz, the regard that something is held to deserve is by no means fixed. Our perception of the importance, worth or usefulness of something varies over time, from person to person, and is something that ought to be contested.



Tray for washing brushes, brush washer,
Ru yao, Celadon, 1120, Song (960 – 1279)

This unassuming little dish is one of the most valuable treasures at the Princessehof National Museum of Ceramics. It was created especially for the Chinese Emperor during the Northern Song Dynasty (between 960 and 1127). It was donated to the Princessehof National Museum of Ceramics in 1981, and during a chance visit by expert Peichin Yu from the National Palace Museum in Taipei in 2014, it was uncovered that it was a

true Ru. While Taoist philosophy values its emptiness as its essence, one of the Ru pieces was sold at Sotheby's in 2012 for 26.7 million USD. There are only 79 pieces known world-wide, and this piece is the only one on the European continent.

We have brought this most valuable piece of the Princessehof Collection to this exhibition via live video stream.

Collection Ceramics Museum Princessehof.

Ai Weiwei
Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn, 1995

An empty vessel, latent with meaning, is destroyed by artist and political activist Ai Weiwei.

At the time, the work was criticized as vandalism of cultural antiques worth thousands of dollars. Ironically, this work is today perhaps Ai's most internationally renowned photographic artwork and has acquired a market value far exceeding that of the original vessel.

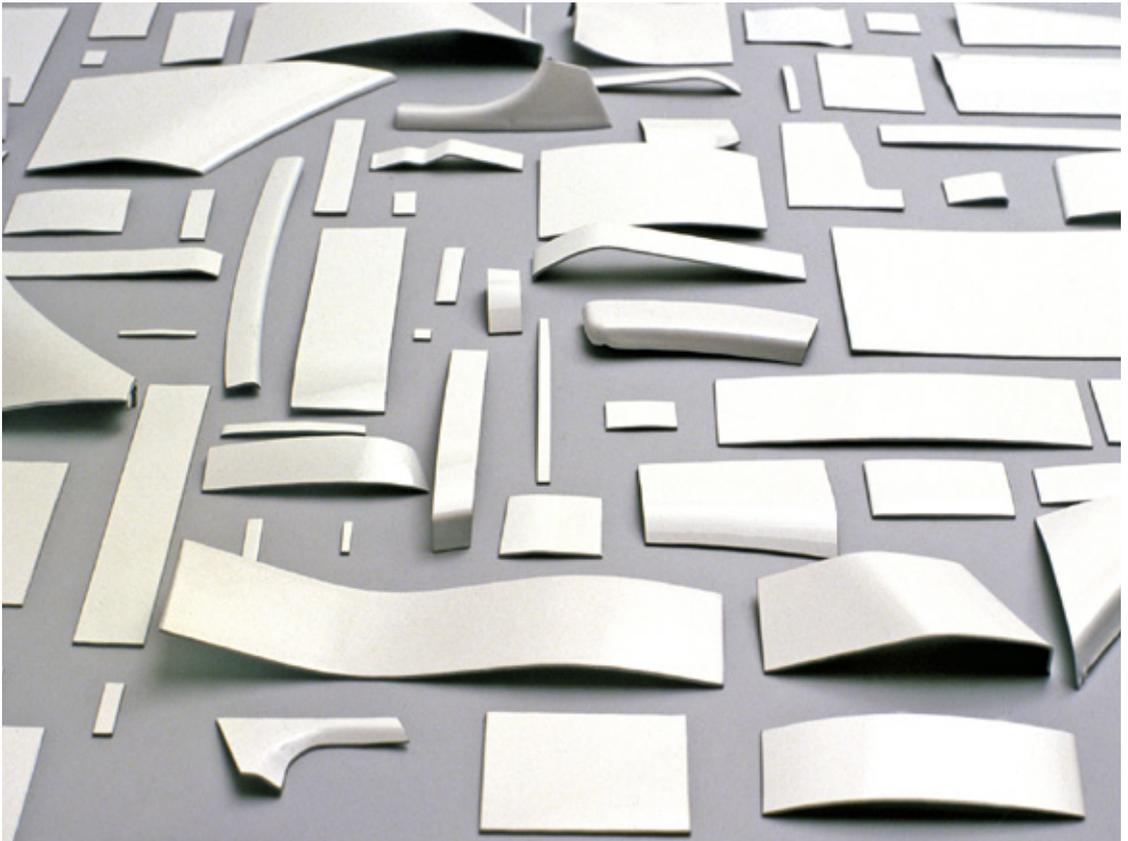
This act of destruction, like other iconoclastic works, holds a critical position in the history of art and design. For it is not only creation, but also destruction that actively shapes the trajectory of our time.



Ted Noten
Mercedes-Benz E-Class 210,
Brooches, 2001

Is there any greater icon in the industrial world than the Mercedes-Benz? CEOs, real estate agents, small-time hustlers in the building trade, politicians, Mongolian drug dealers and Birmingham green-grocers: all around the globe they share the love for a Merc. More than any other ornament it symbolizes success and social status.

Both as a symbol and a sophisticated design object, the Mercedes has become raw material in the hands of jewellery designer Ted Noten. The refined curves of its body and its glossy surface coating have defined the aesthetics of a series of brooches that Noten sliced from its bodywork. With this act, coming to own a piece of Mercedes has become much easier.





Marlies Kolodziej
Hidden Values, 2015

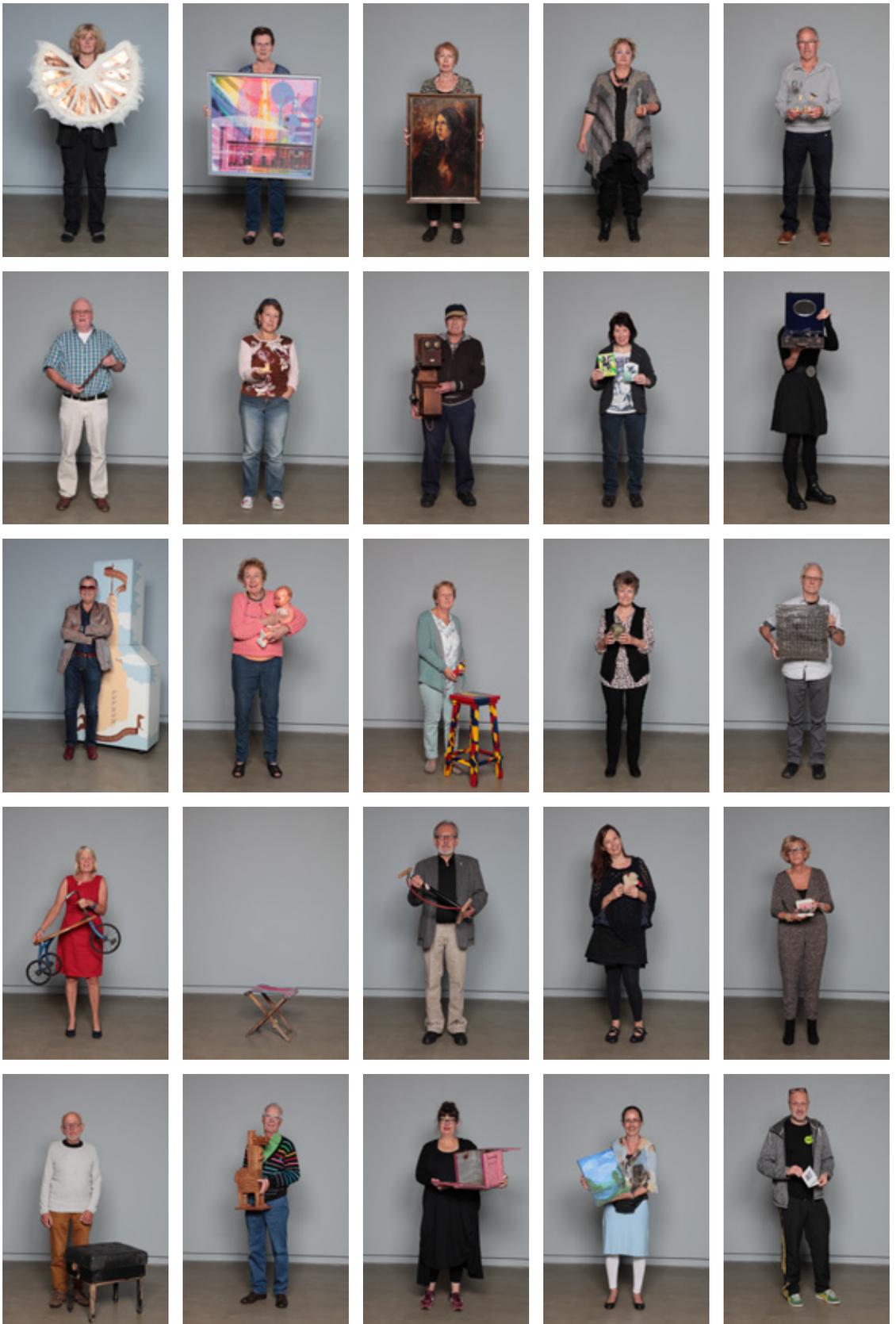
What is the value of things in a time of sharing and open access? We are brought up in a time where it is normal to watch a movie with little effort, listen to whatever music we feel like, share our pictures with friends and a car with strangers. We give away things for free and follow the education that fits our dreams and talents.

Designer Marlies Kolodziej believes the emphasis is shifting from what we buy to how we relate to what we own, and how we combine our possessions. *Hidden Values* is a series of objects that do not suggest particular functions, but rather the potential to become what one sees and makes of them.

MOST PRECIOUS THINGS

What is worthy of being shown in a museum? Having posed this question to the residents of Eindhoven, this room is a 'wunderkammer' of loaned personal artefacts collected from dozens of households in Eindhoven.

This project is a re-enactment of a concept by Belgian curator Jan Hoet (1936 – 2014), who strove to bridge the gap between high-art typically found in a museum and the things owned and valued on a more personal level by the local community. In *Rendez-Vous* (1993) he asked the people of Ghent to bring their most valuable object to the museum 'to get to know each other' and make a collective presentation.



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RENDEZ(-)VOUS IN BET MUSEUM VAN HEDENDAAGSE KUNST

Het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst organiseert de tentoonstelling 'Rendez(-)vous' en vraagt aan alle inwoners van Groot-Gent een object hiervoor uit te lenen. Hun lievelingsobject.

Het museum vraagt voor één keer geen kunstwerken, maar dat voorwerp in huis dat voor iemand persoonlijk het meest waardevolle is. Welke 'waarde' voor iemand het meest belangrijk is, dat is aan haar of hem om te beslissen. Misschien is het een ding dat elke dag plezier doet omdat het zo mooi is, misschien is de waarde emotioneel, misschien is het een symbool voor een manier van leven. Drie beroemde kunstenaars zullen die objecten presenteren binnen hun eigen wereld. Een vierde zet dit proces verder tijdens de eerste dagen van de tentoonstelling, de periode van het Time-festival.

Dit is de vraag zoals ze zou kunnen worden geformuleerd : het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst vraagt U om uw voorwerp dat uw keuze is. Als U een van de volgende dagen in de buurt van het museum komt, waarom dan niet even binnenlopen, met uw voorwerp (of een foto/beschrijving ervan) en buitengaan met een bruikleenformulier?

Voor wie wil bijdragen aan dit project, het adres is : Hofbouwlaan 28 (9 - 12 u. en 14 - 17 u., aan de achterzijde van het museum (tijdens kantooruren). Meer informatie kunt U krijgen via tel. 091/21.17.03.

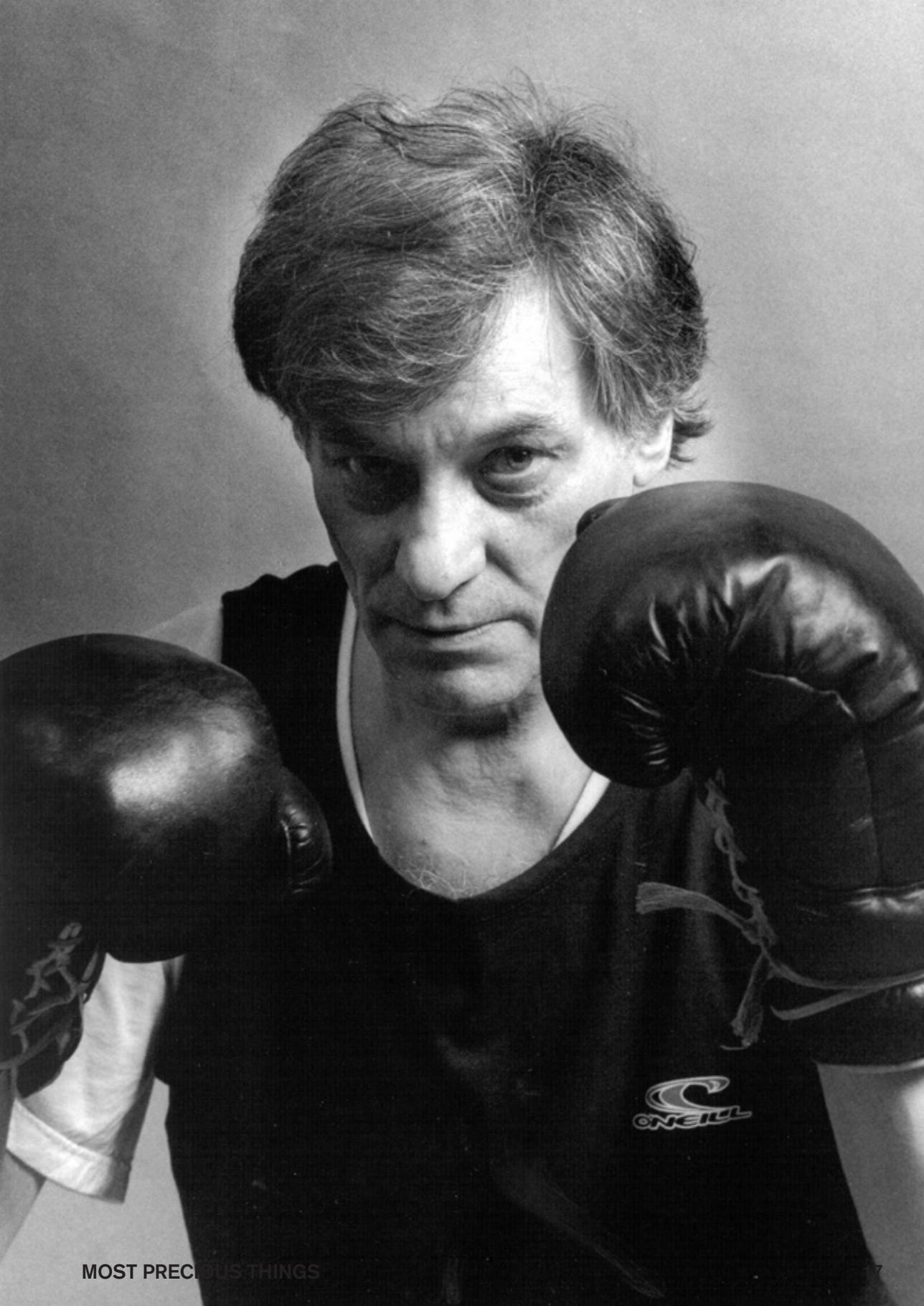
Jan Hoet heeft zijn Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst internationaal beroemd gemaakt met projecten waarin de kunstenaars intensief betrokken werden bij het tot stand komen van de tentoonstelling.

Bij 'Kunst in Europa na '88', 'Chambres d'Amis', 'Open Mind (Closed Circuits)' en 'Ponton Tams' was er telkens een zeer grote betrokkenheid vanwege de kunstenaars die hun werk niet alleen op de zaal maar ook op de hele situatie betrokken, zoals dat ook tijdens de laatste documenta soms gebeurde.

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Jan Hoet, Opening S.M.A.K.
Museum, 1999

Extract from press release for
Rendez-Vous exhibition, 1993



PROGRESS

This room features new frontiers of material and production technologies, with a focus on the unseen.

A machine employs magnetic forces to determine the form of the objects made. A script enables a printer to sense and react to its environment, imprinting its variants onto the resultant objects. Real-time influence of local conditions and surrounding forces have a tangible impact on product outcomes. The invisible is made tangible.

Our post-industrial condition gives rise to novel materials. Hazardous chemical waste and radioactive by-products left over from mining resources become raw material for objects that grapple with our human impact on the planet. They deal with the undesirable consequences of our material desires.



Jólan van der Wiel
Gravity Tool II, Gravity Stool, 2012

Jólan van der Wiel explores the potential of the cooperation between technology and natural phenomena, developing tools and materials that enable new forms to take shape.

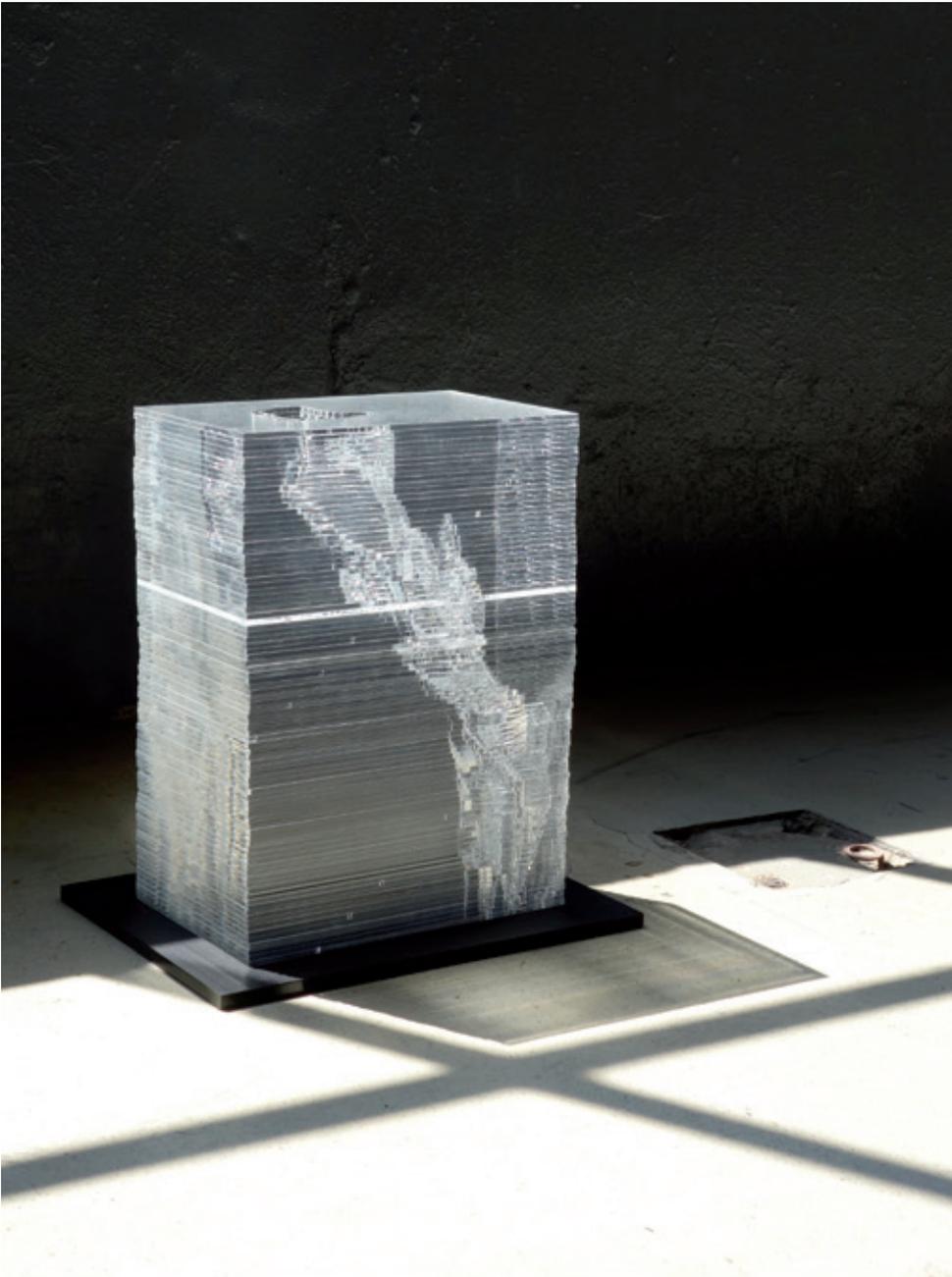
Departing from the idea that everything is influenced by gravitation, a force that has a strongly shaping effect,

Van der Wiel manipulates this phenomenon by exploiting its own power: magnetism. Each stool is uniquely shaped by a cooperation between magnetic fields and the force of gravity. The works of Van der Wiel translate a fascination for natural forces into objects of design.

When the craftsman was replaced by the machine we lost the translation of local influences into our products. Olivier van Herpt and Sander Wassink explore how machines could become more sensory and locally orientated; how they could build in response to their environment and give us back a sense of effort, time and local diversity.

Adaptive Manufacturing is an ongoing experiment in which Van Herpt and Wassink research the relation between the machine and its context. They design scripts that distil shapes and textures from external phenomenon. The software then translates this external information measured by sensors into specific realtime behaviours of the printer. You could call it a sensory machine that feels its environment, and all of its output becomes a real-time document of a specific time, location or raw material.





Hannah Hiecke
The Wandering Hole, 2015

Germany is perceived as an international example for its investments in renewable energy. But there is a down side: Germany has become more dependent on brown coal to fulfill its energy consumption needs.

At a speed of 2.3 centimeters per hour the brown coal mining hole Garzweiler II 'wanders' through the landscape of Germany. Everything has to give way

to its path. Ecological systems and social entities are put under enormous strain, as the trail of Garzweiler II is estimated to obliterate up to 4800 hectares by 2045. Until today the route of the hole is clear. Garzweiler II is still moving ahead. Yet, it remains unclear how far the mining hole will wander and to what extent national energy policies will collide with regional and individual interests.

Unknown Fields Division
Rare Earthenware: Radioactive
Ceramics, 2015

While journeys to extraordinary places are the cornerstone of luxury travel, this project follows more well-concealed journeys taking place across global supply chains. It retraces rare earth elements, which are widely used in high-end electronics and green technologies, to their origins. A film, composed as a single panning shot along a planetary scaled conveyor belt, documents their voyage in reverse from container ships and ports, wholesalers and factories, back to the banks of a barely-liquid radioactive lake in Inner Mongolia, pumped

with tailings from the refining process. To accompany the film, *Unknown Fields Division* have used mud from this lake to craft a set of three ceramic vessels. Each is proportioned as a traditional Ming vase and is made from the amount of toxic waste created in the production of three items of technology – a smart-phone, a featherweight laptop and the cell of a smart car battery.

Film and Photography in collaboration with Toby Smith. Ceramics work in collaboration with the London Sculpture Workshop. Animation assistance from Christina Varvia.







Studio Drift

The Obsidian Project Part II, 2015

The basis of *The Obsidian Project* can be found in twelfth-century philosophy. In this period, Europe began to expand its knowledge of alchemy in a quest for the Philosopher's Stone. Using ancient alchemical methods, Studio Drift is working with a 21st century chemist who discovered a process of abstracting gold and other precious raw materials from chemical waste. The material that is left over from this ingenious process is called 'synthetic obsidian'. This black paramagnetic stony glass has very specific properties.

With *The Obsidian Project Part II*, Studio Drift investigated the typical light absorption of obsidian. Its light absorption transforms the reflected environment into a spectacle that relaxes the eyes. In the 17th century, artists turned to this semi-precious stone when focusing at length on the still lives they were painting.

"The reflection formed in an obsidian mirror gives a different version of the truth. It is a portal to a realm that can be seen, but not interacted with. In the darkness of these objects, our effigy of the future rises from our own heritage of the digital age." – Studio Drift



PERFECTION OF FORM

This collection of objects by Aldo Bakker is derived from an intricate study of form, function and ritual, but they seem to capture something more. Born from an unprejudiced approach, the resulting forms are strangely familiar and express the essence of the object itself. True to the tradition of designer as form-maker, Bakker achieves a perfection of form that is increasingly rare in the field.



Aldo Bakker
Oil Pipe, 2014

Commissioned by Georg Jensen

AT THE EDGE OF THE PHYSICAL

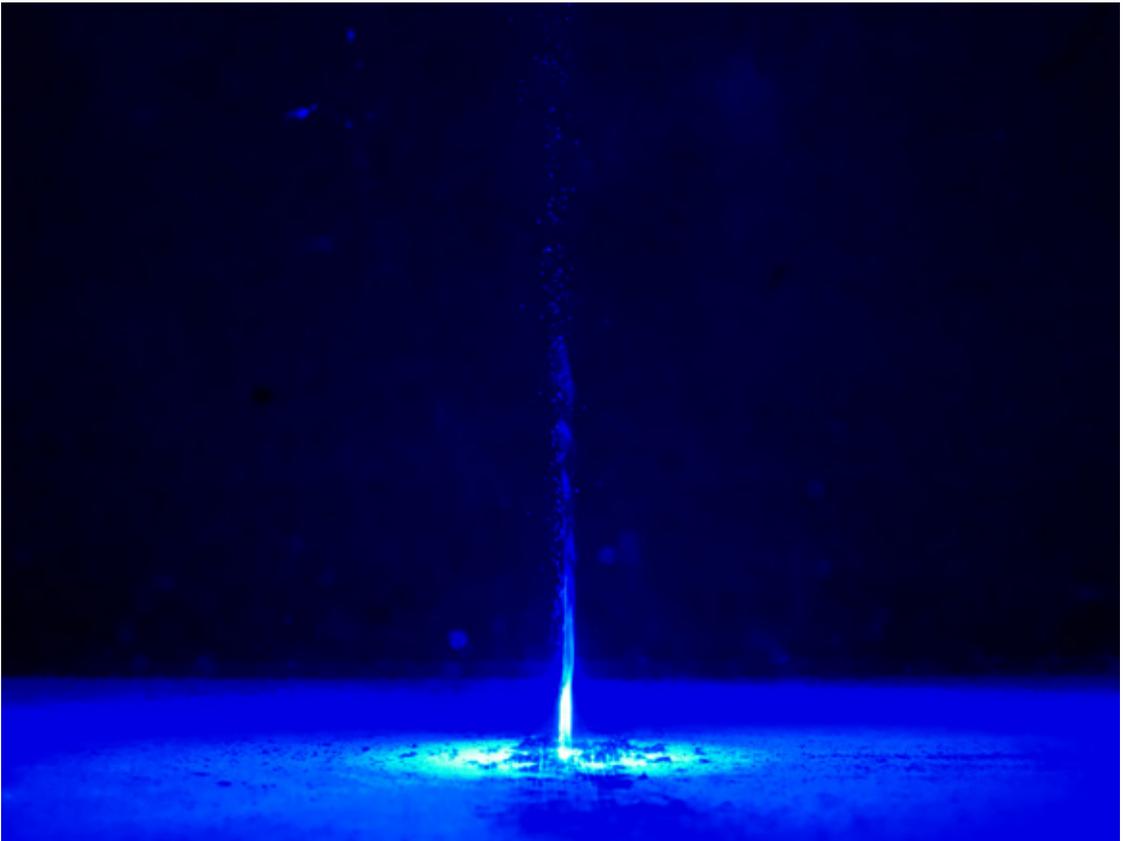
Diamond dust, a nano-chair, metal 200 times lighter than styrofoam.

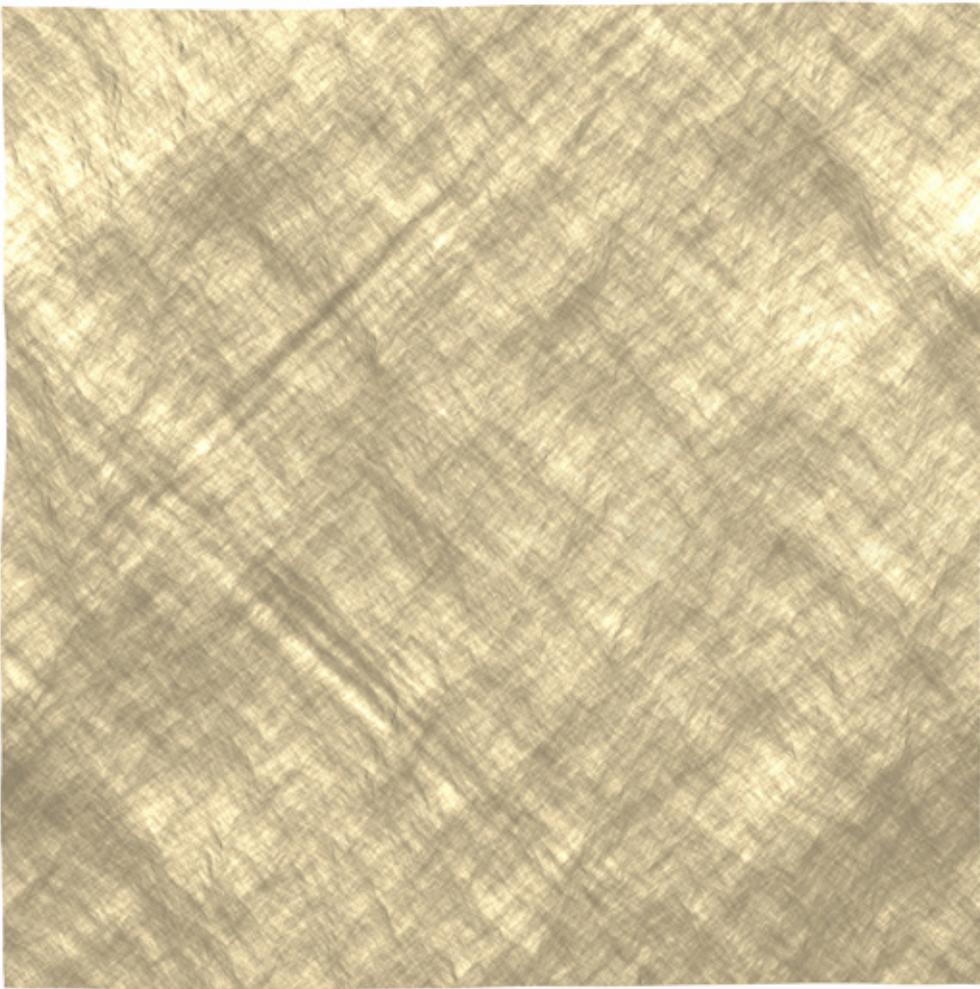
Visual explorations, technical achievements and conceptual objects; the works in this room challenge our understanding of the material world. Expanding the notion of physicality, they manifest a convergence of tangible and intangible realms, a quest to push material properties to the extreme, and a desire to materialise the ungraspable.

Evelina Domnitch and Dmitry Gelfand
Photonic Wind, 2013

Shining into a vacuum chamber, a laser beam levitates and propels diamond micro powder.

Photophoresis (light-induced migration of matter) has recently been proposed as the phenomenon responsible for planet formation. Light-propelled rotation of cosmic dust gradually snowballs into a planetesimal, the seed of a planet. Simultaneously revealing the slow motion birth of a planet and the rapid dynamics of photo-molecular interactions, *Photonic Wind* extends the viewer's sense of spatial and temporal scale.





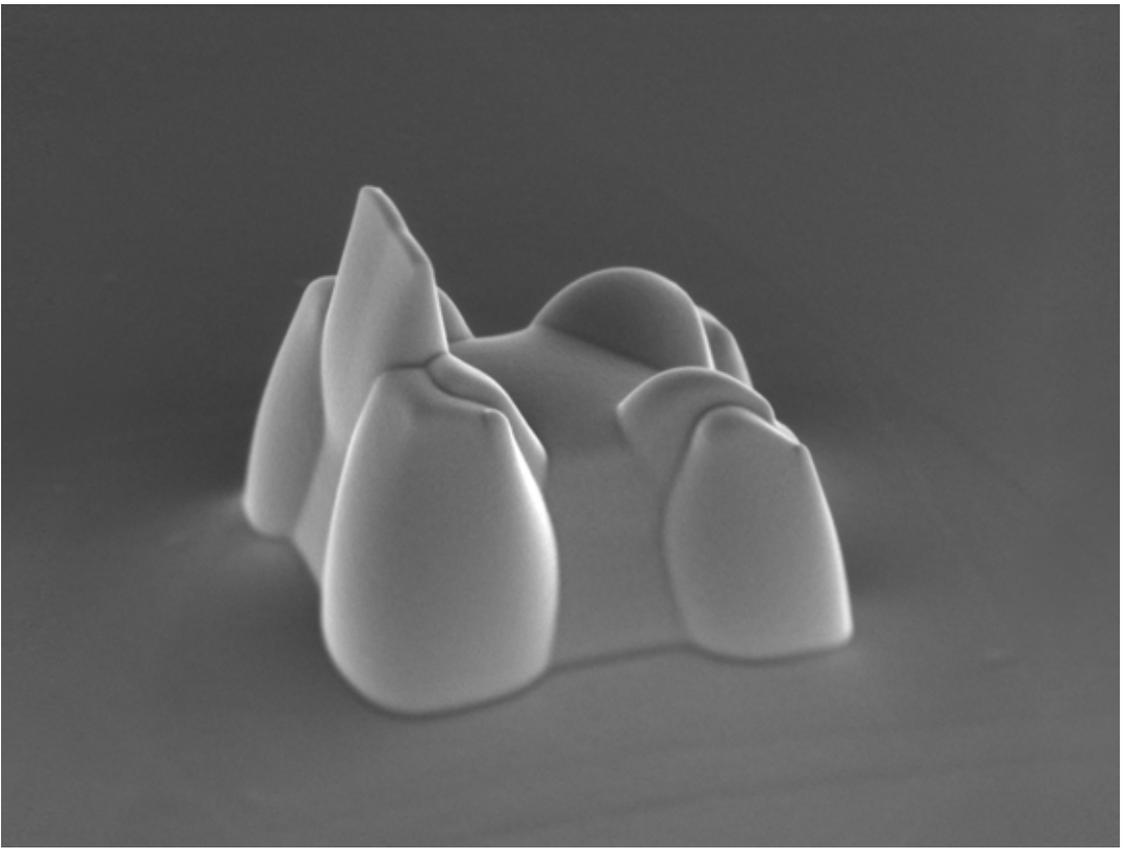
Emilie Pallard and Niels Heymans
Virtual textiles: Shimmer, 2015

When is something a material? Technically speaking light is a material. Emilie Pallard and Niels Heymans have created two bodies that mimic water. One is a hand-woven textile, meditatively crafted. The other is a virtual fabric, meticulously simulated. Questioning the materiality of light and the weight of particles, these works search for an in-between medium to capture this fleeting material typical of our time.

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Emilie Pallard and Niels Heymans
Casting Spells, 2013

Seeking to manifest the material quality of the imaginative realm, Emilie Pallard and Niels Heymans developed a fantastic object. It got shape while growing up in a fantasy world, being surrounded by stories, movies, video games and music. A sense of fantasy has become intrinsic to its visually-crafted physical properties.





Lucas Maassen
Nano Chair XXS, 2009

Exploring the nano-frontier, Lucas Maassen manipulates matter on an extreme scale.

This chair is only visible with a SEM microscope which obtains information by shooting ions at an object that then reflect the image. Its 3 micron dimensions make it the smallest chair in the world.

Mark Bain
Mur Mur, 2015

Sound can be a beautiful non-thing, laden with meaning and expression. *Mur Mur* explores the pure object-ness of architecture as defined as an immaterial sonic instrument. With a special installation at Van Abbemuseum, sound artist Mark Bain captures its own acoustic fingerprint. Through the use of seismic sensing technology, sensors are placed at key structural elements of the building which can capture its unique molecular makeup with extreme clarity. An audio signal is generated then relayed to the exhibition space where it can be presented through specialised transducers.

Constructed into a wall, this large planar 'speaker' gives a tactile impression if touched and when heard through bone conduction, relaying the acoustic 'murmur' that is the architectural drone. *Mur Mur* can be seen as a kind of architectural stethoscope conveying the invisible 'heart beat' of the museum.

The *Mur Mur* sound installation can be experienced in the front foyer of the gallery.



HRL Laboratories, LLC, Malibu,
California, USA
Metallic Microlattice, 2011

Metallic Microlattice is 99.99% air – the remaining 0.01% consists of ultra thin walls of nickel (100 nm in thickness). This material redefines the limits of lightweight materials due to its unique micro lattice cellular architecture. Using an innovative fabrication process HRL Laboratories was able to make a material that consists of 99.99% open volume by designing the 0.01% solid at the nanometer, micron and millimeter scales.

MVRDV
Disappearing Act, 2015

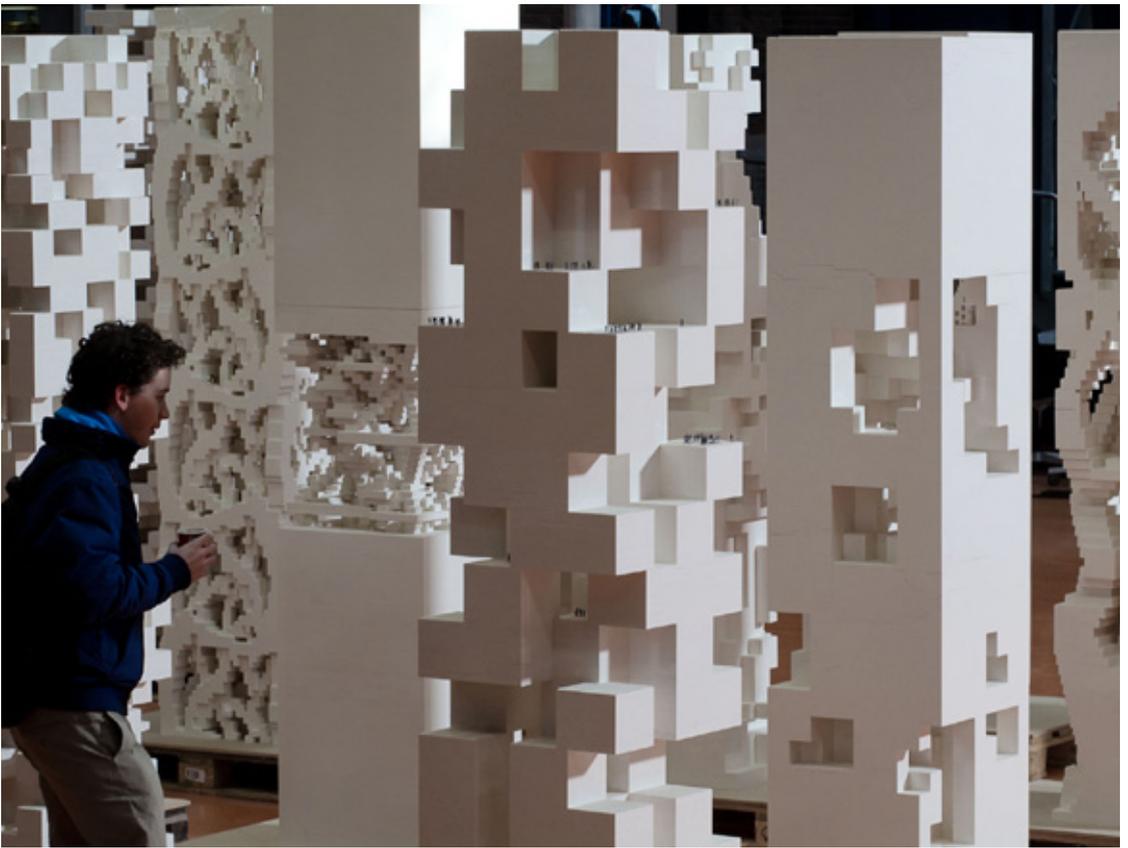
Buildings have always been heavy, solid things made to house, to contain, to shelter. But will they always remain this way? Might they transform into something lighter, something more ephemeral? *Disappearing Act* shows a building component on the edge of its existence. It is recognizable as a typical brick wall in texture, but at the same time escapes the feeling of heaviness we associate with such a wall, by changing its material and becoming transparent. It is on the verge of disappearing.



FUTURE

This room features two future scenarios.

With rising scarcity of space due to rapid urbanisation, one scenario paradoxically proposes to introduce voids into otherwise solid buildings as a means to expand public space in the vertical dimension. The other scenario deals with an abundance of material resources left behind when an office worker finds himself to be the only person left on Earth. With a sense of fantasy and renewed optimism, he builds an unprecedented material world.



The Why Factory
The Porous City, 2012

At a scale of 1:100, these towers investigate the development of new relationships between mass and void in large-scale architecture. Resulting from a two-week workshop that took place at the Faculty of Architecture at TU Delft, these experiments were carried out by systematic manipulations of the correlations between private and public spheres, respectively represented in an abstract way by the closed and the

open pixel. All experiments were conducted with the premise that their results should remain abstract, binary and measurable. They addressed interrelations between open, closed, empty and full.

The results can be understood as a set of three dimensional Nollis Maps of non-existent cities, representations of complex urban realities, which articulate relationships between full and empty spaces, in this case volumes.



An optimistic apocalyptic fiction, *The Last Man* is a story of an office worker who finds himself alone in the world but with all of its resources intact. Free from obligation, economics, politics, fashion, society and the constraints of time, he begins to get excited about the advantages of being truly alone. He begins to design and build his own material world.

He looks to the future with a hearty ambition to construct an environment and an array of artefacts that perfectly suits his practical and emotional needs. Crucially, he has all the time and left over resources he requires for this undertaking.

The Last Man describes the joy, obsessions, frustrations and ingenuity of a single person struggling to maintain hope and purpose through an engagement with his material world.

ANONYMOUS

The vastness of goods traded on the darknet. A floating data centre that roams international waters to keep data outside of any national jurisdictions. A spray that eradicates the DNA you leave behind.

The works in this room offer a series of strategies and tools for an anonymous existence.



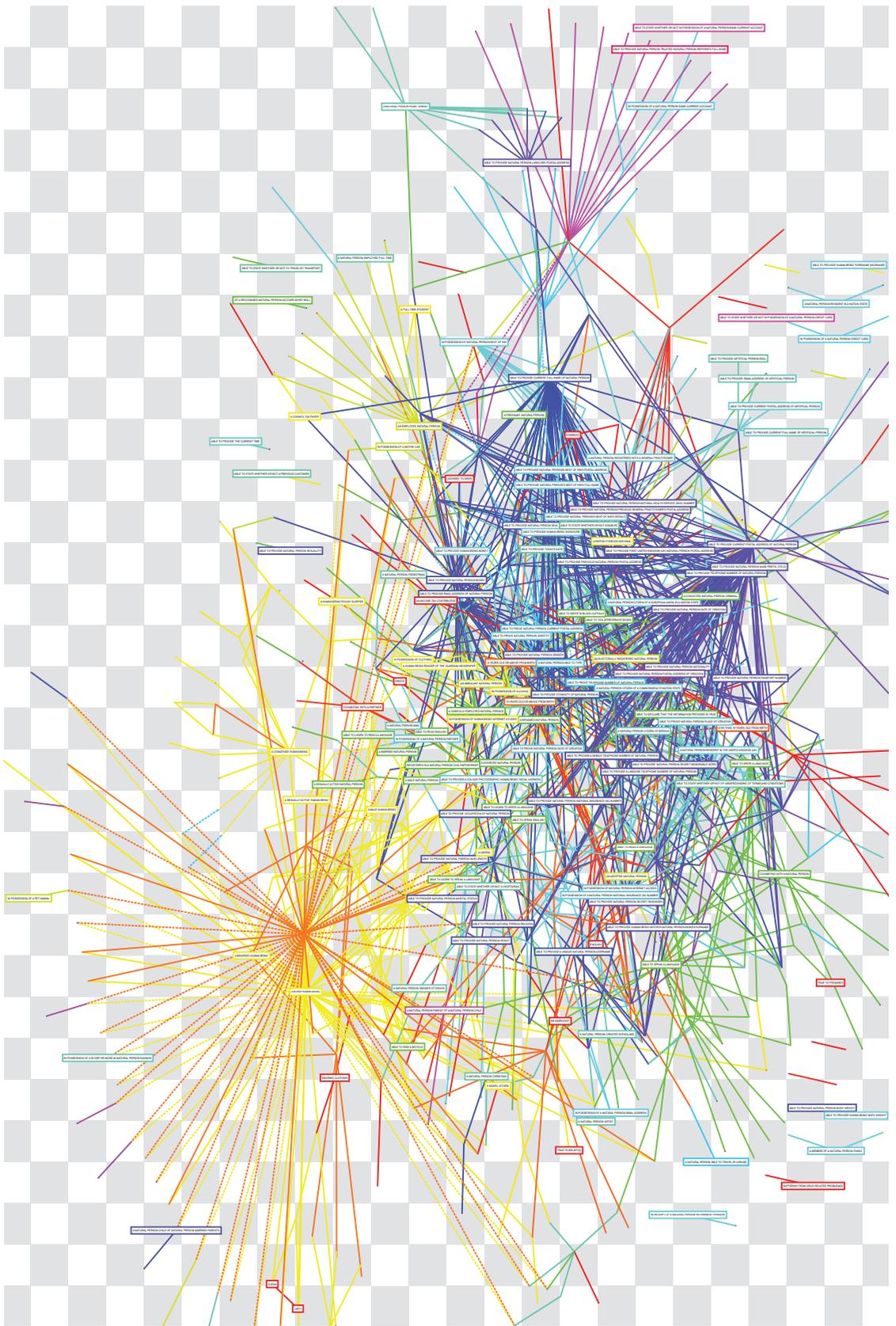
!Mediengruppe Bitnik
Random Darknet Shopper, 2014

The Darknet is an overlay network isolated from the mainstream Internet. It is a hidden, anonymous underbelly of the searchable Web, operating beyond the law.

Random Darknet Shopper is an automated online shopping bot which the artists !Mediengruppe Bitnik provide with a weekly budget of \$100 in Bitcoins.

Once a week the bot goes on a shopping spree in the deep web where it randomly chooses and purchases one item and has it mailed to the artists.

Random Darknet Shopper is an exploration of the deep web via the goods traded there. Each randomized purchase helps to construct a landscape of traded goods from the Darknet.



←

Heath Bunting
Synthetic Natural Person, 2012 (ongoing)

As a human being one can have many legal identities. These identities are constructed via a network of registrations – loyalty cards, telephone cards, bills, government correspondence, etc. The vaster the network, the stronger the legal identity.

Heath Bunting creates off-the-shelf persons to be put up for sale; new legal identities built up from a portfolio of unique legal relationships. With this work, Bunting provides insight into the different networks, databases and systems in society that make up an identity: banks, health care, education, shops, addresses, etc. It thus becomes clear that identity depends mainly upon administrative systems, rather than personality or even a physical body.

Metahaven
The Good Ship Anonymous, 2013

The Good Ship Anonymous is a speculative floating data centre. Anchored in international waters, it is connected to Iceland with a submarine data cable and registered in Liberia. Data exists in a jurisdictional void where, effectively, no national regulatory regimes apply. In an age of mass surveillance, design and research studio Metahaven explores visual and geopolitical strategies for personal data privacy and forced institutional transparency. Their project *Black Transparency* is a nomadic, re-iterating design project which manifests the paradox of a generation to which the Internet is presented as liberation, while simultaneously subjecting them to total surveillance.





Alix Gallet
Tricking Biometrics, 2014

In the intangible world of the internet the most reliable security criteria is still represented by very tangible information, such as biometric data. This project explores the widespread use of biometric recognition by creating tools that allow people to anonymise themselves and trick biometric recognition.

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Imme van der Haak
Beyond the Body, 2012

Imme van der Haak's work questions the conventions we uphold regarding our view of what constitutes a 'normal' body. Layers of translucent silk create the possibility of physically layering different bodies, ages, generations and identities. When performed, the body and the silk become one, distorting our perception or revealing new physical form.





Heather Dewey-Hagborg
Invisible, 2014

Invisible is protection against new forms of biological surveillance. Created by information artist and bio-hacker Heather Dewey-Hagborg, the first spray is called *Erase* and it's an 'anti-DNA cleaning product' similar to a disinfectant spray. *Replace*, on the other hand, is an obfuscation spray that adds a mixture of genetic material to a DNA sample to cloak the details of the original. As a set it can be used to wipe everything clean, or leave an alternate genetic sample to protect one's genetic privacy.



Y.Lo
Amnesia State, 2015

While *Amnesia State* is a design fiction, the lack of civic freedom in the digital age is a frightening reality. This project deals with the behaviour of both the private individual and the government in an information environment where censorship is pervasive. In a closed state, government ideology legitimizes the lack of freedom that characterises the mass media and people's access to

having and sharing information. But what if we could develop a way of sharing banned information that evaded the censors? What if we could inject information – that would otherwise be banned – with a temporary loss of memory? Imagine if information had amnesia and could dodge surveillance. Can this design metaphor evade detection and reach as many people as possible?



Giuditta Vendrame
What is the purpose of your visit? –
A Journey Towards the High Seas, 2015

Global communication, information and markets foster an idea of a borderless world, but paradoxically visible and invisible frontiers rise everyday. While we may assume citizenship is something we are born with, it is in fact a social and political construction that introduces friction to this borderless world.

Giuditta Vendrame journeyed to the high seas where she collected fifty litres of 'international waters' in a critical response to the institutionalization of our identity.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, no state can claim sovereignty in the high seas. The international waters, once collected, can be shipped anywhere and function as a symbolic zero degree zone, where it is possible to rethink the meaning of citizenship.

SIGNATURE

Two approaches for object design stand in stark contrast.

Japanese lifestyle brand MUJI is known for its emphasis on simple and efficient design, meant to convey a quality of emptiness. It is a brand that propagates anonymous design.

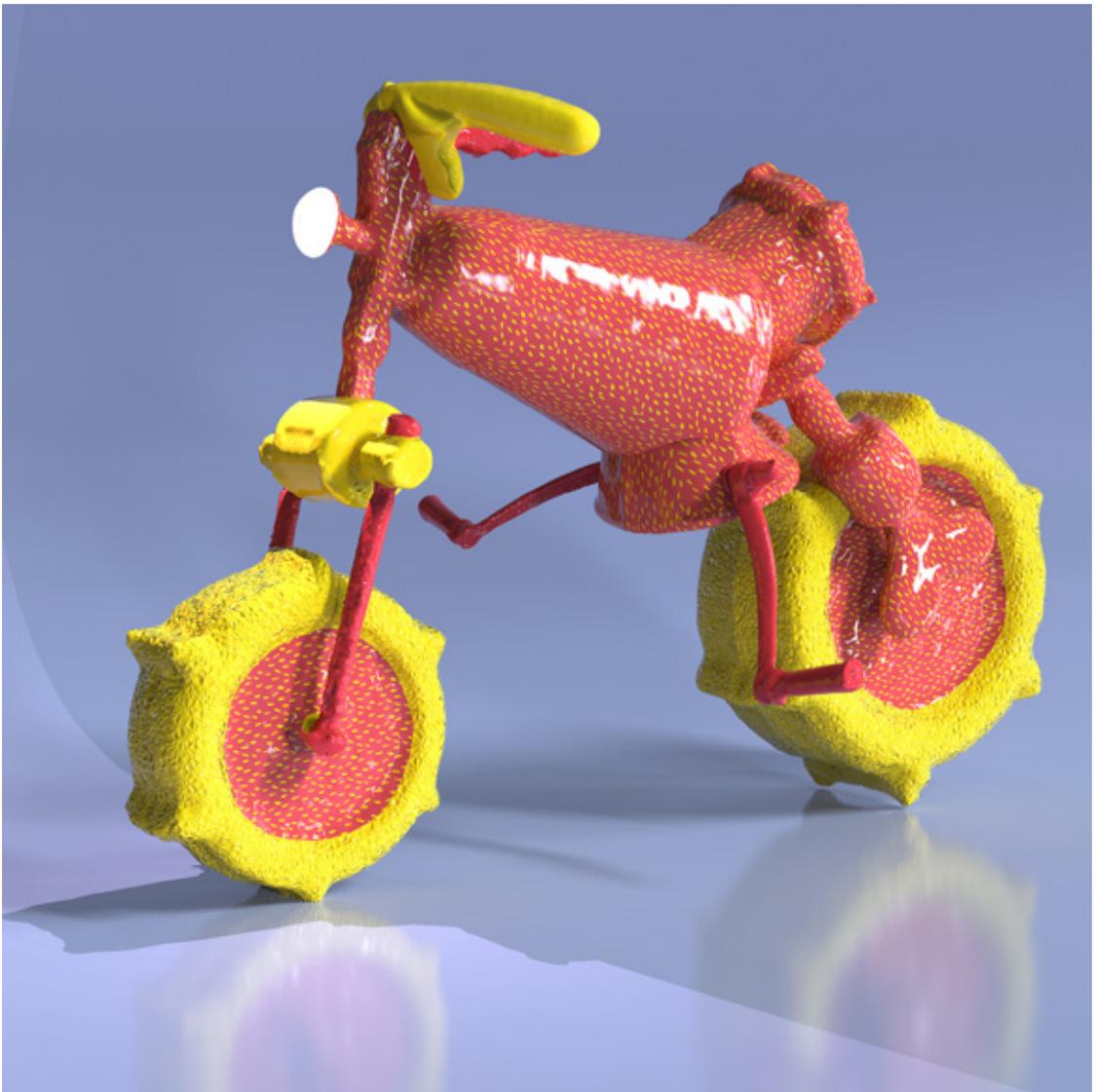
Young designer Bastiaan De Nennie searches for principles for signature design of physical goods in a world that is rapidly digitalizing. His sketches generate ideas for completely new objects.

Naoto Fukasawa
Rice Cooker with Rice Paddle, Pop-up
Toaster, Electric Kettle for MUJI, 2015

White is symbolic of the emptiness
Japanese lifestyle brand MUJI strives
for. Its generic, anonymous products are
a statement against the excessive
design and high price tags
accompanying luxury goods.

Naoto Fukasawa's clean aesthetic aligns
with MUJI's rational design philosophy
which values simplicity and efficiency in
their product development. The company
name is short for Mujirushi Ryohin, which
translates as "no-brand, quality goods."





Bastiaan De Nennie
Digital Virtuosity, 2015

Bastiaan De Nennie's project proposes a new set of principles for the design process, which is fast digitalising. His method takes physical objects, often with a distinctively nostalgic feel, deconstructs them in the computer and puts the different parts from different objects back together. With suggestions for surfaces and colours,

his 'sketches' generate ideas for completely new objects. In a world where craftsmanship is becoming synonymous with digital fluency, developing a signature style is essential to distinguish one designer from the next. *Digital Virtuosity*, with its man-made choices and computer-generated distortions, leads the way.



POST-HUMAN

Human skin that is able to repel a moving bullet.
A hypothetical euthanasia machine designed to kill its passengers.

Whether for protection, enhancement, remembrance or annihilation, humans are increasingly able to control life. This room features a number of projects that raise questions about the nature of human existence in relation to material and technological capabilities.



Julijonas Urbonas
Euthanasia Coaster, 2010

The wish for death can be understood as a wish for nothing. *Euthanasia Coaster* is a hypothetical euthanasia machine in the form of a roller coaster, engineered to humanely – with elegance and euphoria – take the life of a human being. Riding the coaster's track, the rider is subjected to a series of intensive motion elements that induce various unique experiences: from euphoria to thrill, and from tunnel

vision to loss of consciousness, and, eventually, death.

Celebrating the limits of the human body, this 'kinetic sculpture' is in fact the ultimate roller coaster and makes the fatal journey a pleasing, elegant and meaningful one.

Medical advisors: Dr. Michael Gresty, Spatial Disorientation Lab, Imperial College, London.
Model making by Paulius Vitkauskas.

Niels Hoebers
Walter: a dialogue with the
imagination, 2010

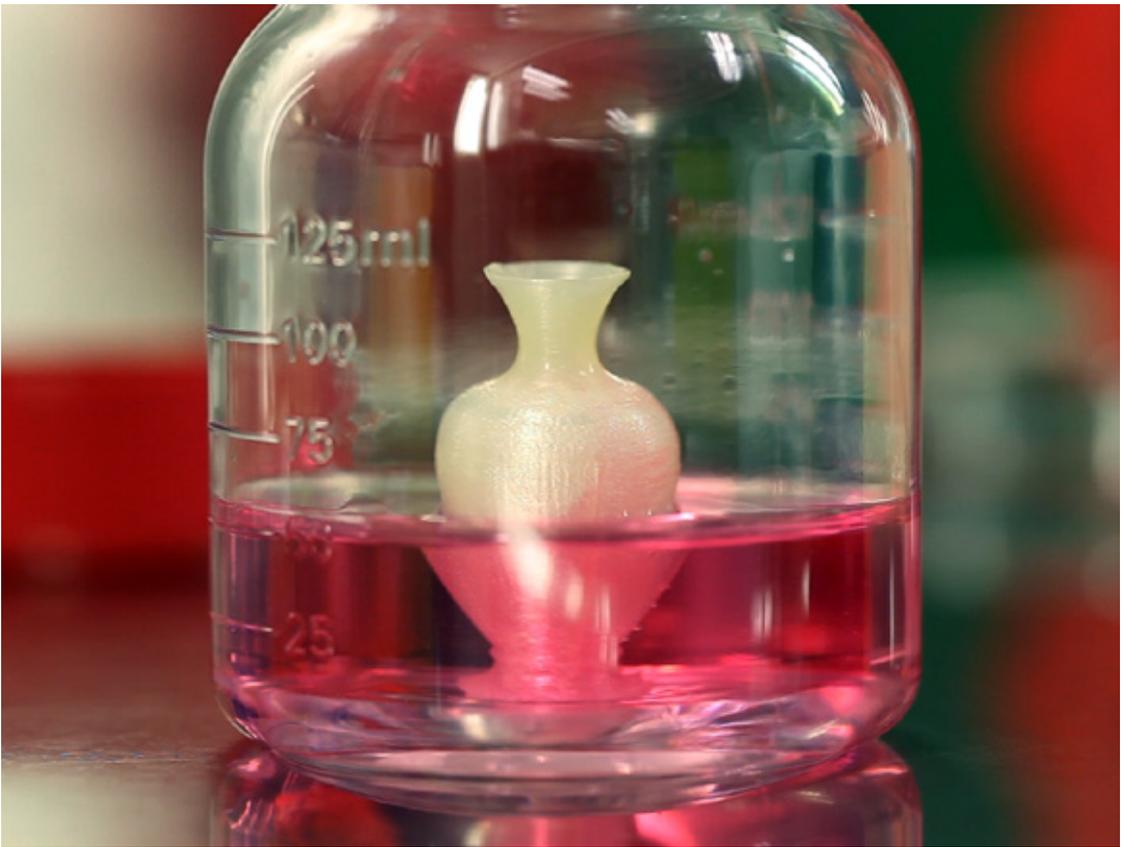
Walter is a metaphor for the design process that is being visualised through an animation. The idea is to realize a creative concept that in the end will start living its own life. This is all approached from the point of view of the imagination.

In the animation *Walter* the puppet confronts reality, but reality has a completely different meaning for puppets than for humans. Humans judge things based on their experiences. Walter sees this as

short-sighted because there is so much more than what only our senses can tell us. But how safe is it for humans if fiction becomes reality?

So as *Walter* starts to doubt his whole existence, he is reminded that his reality can only ever be about a cooperation between man and puppet. He has to accept the higher power. In return it is the responsibility of the higher power to make sure that *Walter* leads a happy and pleasant life.





Hongjie Yang
Semi-Human Objects, 2015

Things in the future will still be designed, but might they grow rather than be made? Hongjie Yang envisions that developments in tissue engineering will open up new aesthetic and perceptual possibilities within design, opening a new class of 'semi-human' objects.

Semi-Human Objects investigates the design implications of human tissue engineering. In this emerging strand of

biotechnology, grafts of human tissue grow in vitro on a three-dimensional scaffold. We will be able to derive objects from ourself and these objects will share the exact same material properties and genetic codes of our bodies. Socially coded distinctions between man and object will thus collapse.

In collaboration with Dr. Patricia Dankers,
Eindhoven University of Technology.



Auger-Loizeau
Afterlife, 2009

Science and reason have started to undermine what people tend to traditionally believe happens after death, but it has yet to offer any tangible proof of continued existence, after death.

Afterlife proposes the harnessing of a person's chemical potential after biological death and the conversion of that potential into usable electrical energy. A microbial fuel cell uses an electrochemical reaction to generate electricity from deceased organic matter.

In Phase II of the project Auger-Loizeau asked people to propose what they would do with an afterlife battery charged either by themselves, their partner or other loved one.

Simon Warne
Afterlife Torch, Part of Afterlife
Phase II, 2009

Simon Warne, father of two, envisions his afterlife battery to be used to power a torch, which he would like it to be kept in the drawer next to the sink. In his words:

“The idea of being useful during a power cut, or camping, or looking for stuff in the shed, really appeals to me. You’re always glad when you find a torch. It’s obvious to say but light makes us feel secure and I would like to carry on doing that.”



Dunne & Raby
After Life Euthanasia Machine,
Part of Afterlife Phase II, 2009

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby proposed to use their afterlife battery to make a euthanasia machine, a device next to the bed powered by the battery. "As we are a couple, once one goes, we're not sure how long the other one

would be able to hang on. So, if it's all too much, we could use the energy from the first one to go, to help the second one on their way. We're not sure if it would be a form of conceptual murder or not, but definitely an 'assisted' suicide."





Floris Kaayk
Human Birdwings, 2012

Human flight is arguably one of humanity's most universal dreams, representing the overcoming of our own physical state as human beings. Over a nine month period, Floris Kaayk staged an online media stunt – a 'transmedial mockumentary' – in which a fictional character succeeded in achieving the dream.

The main character in this story is Jarno Smeets and he is a DIY handyman. He is not just a guy with a hobby, he is a robotics engineer at Philips with a dream: to fly like a bird with flapping wings. The story was carefully crafted and built, creating the fictional character of Jarno as well as several

other characters, backstories and the storylines leading to the final flight. Jarno took inspiration from visionaries like Otto Lilienthal and Leonardo DaVinci who worked at the realisation of this primal mythical dream before him. But most of all he wanted to fulfil his grandfather's dream after Jarno found sketches of a flying device in the attic. A dream his grandfather never accomplished, a dream Jarno is determined to accomplish. This was the key underlying idea of this transmedial experiment because it connects our ideas and feelings about progress, technology and the will of mankind to reach out to unknown futures.



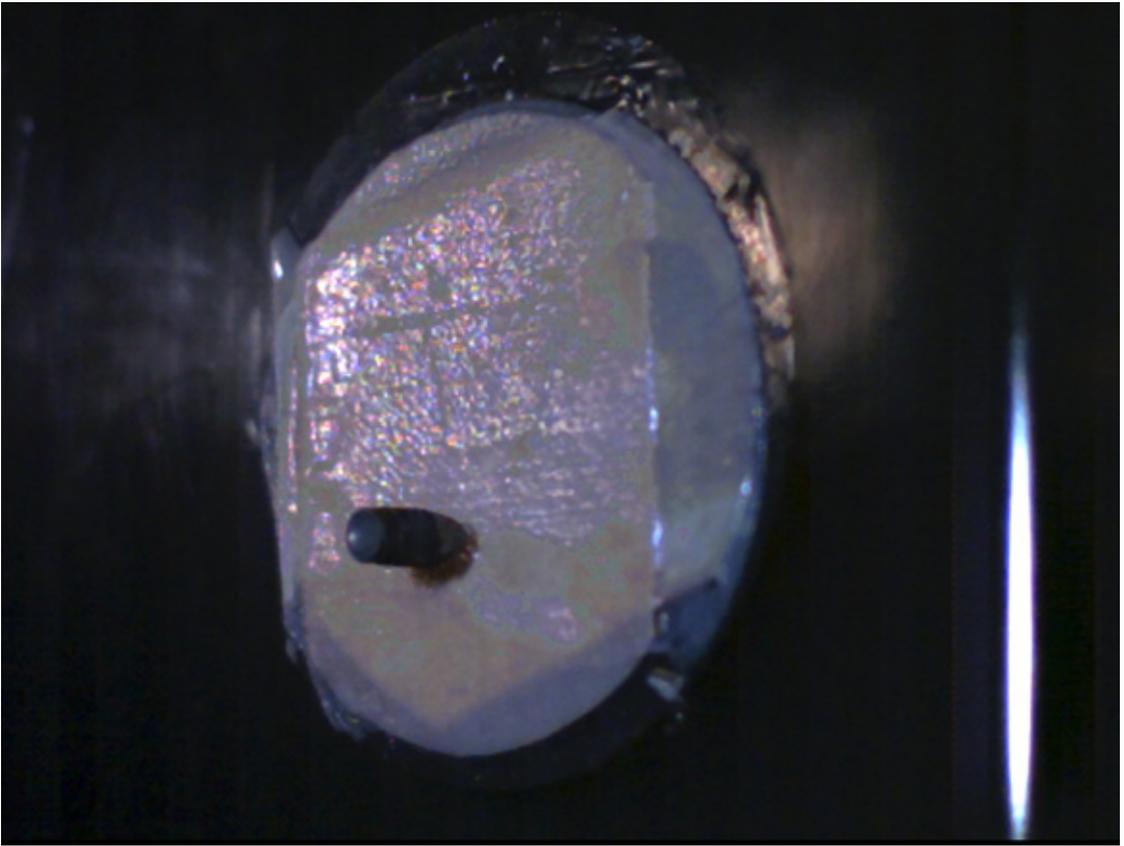
Isaac Monté
The Art of Deception, 2015

Using a decellularizing technique Isaac Monté has taken a pig heart and manipulated it into a material. Decellularization marks a new era of synthetic biology – organs are stripped of their cellular contents, leaving behind a sterile scaffold that can be repopulated with various cell types. While the medical utilization of this resource is being realised, the artistic and creative value of ghost organs represents unexplored territory. Can the ghost organ be a blank canvas for designers? Can organs be objects of design? Will humans be able to manipulate organs for aesthetic purposes?

The goal of this project is to further explore how biological interventions and aesthetic manipulation can be used as tools for the ultimate deception: the transformation of inner beauty, from grotesque to perfect. The ghost organs in this case work as a metaphor for regenerated, artificial life. The discarded dead hearts will not function as genuine organs, but rather as a representation of how far science can manipulate the human body.

The full Art of Deception project by Isaac Monté in collaboration with Toby Kiers will be on view at MU art space on Strijp S in Eindhoven between November 27 2015 and February 7 2016 as part of Body of Matter and the Bio Art & Design Award exhibition.

In collaboration with Toby Kiers
(Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)



Jalila Essaïdi
2.6g 329m/s, 2011 – 2013

Also known as 'bulletproof skin', Jalila Essaïdi has reinforced *in vitro* human skin with spider silk from genetically modified organisms in order to stop a speeding bullet.

She is designing this skin to meet the performance standard for bulletproof vests of 2.6g 329m/s, the maximum weight and velocity of a .22 calibre Long Rifle bullet from which a Type 1 bullet-proof vest should protect you.

This project alludes to an arguable necessity for redesigning the biological properties of human skin as a response to increased exposure to violence, whether in actuality or via the news.

→
Jetske Visser
Forgotten Memory – An Image
of Dementia, 2011

What is a teapot when you no longer know what a teapot is? How does a person suffering from dementia experience his or her surroundings? In Jetske Visser's film *Forgotten Memory* the viewer is submerged in the world of dementia.

By doing research and examining literature on the subject, and by spending time with elderly people suffering from the condition, Visser has created an image of their hazy, fragile and precarious existence. As a metaphor for the condition she has transformed a series of everyday objects.



THINGSTEAD

In the past 'a thing' was the governing assembly of a Germanic society, made up of the free people of the community presided over by lawspeakers. Its meeting place was called 'a thingstead'. The thingstead of this exhibition is a reflection room which raises several contemporary issues for contemplation.

A virtual reality device takes you to another world. A transparent flag flutters in the wind. A headscarf is pinned to the wall. A film walks you through the invisible sites of immigrant deportation. Smoke signals a changing view on ethics.

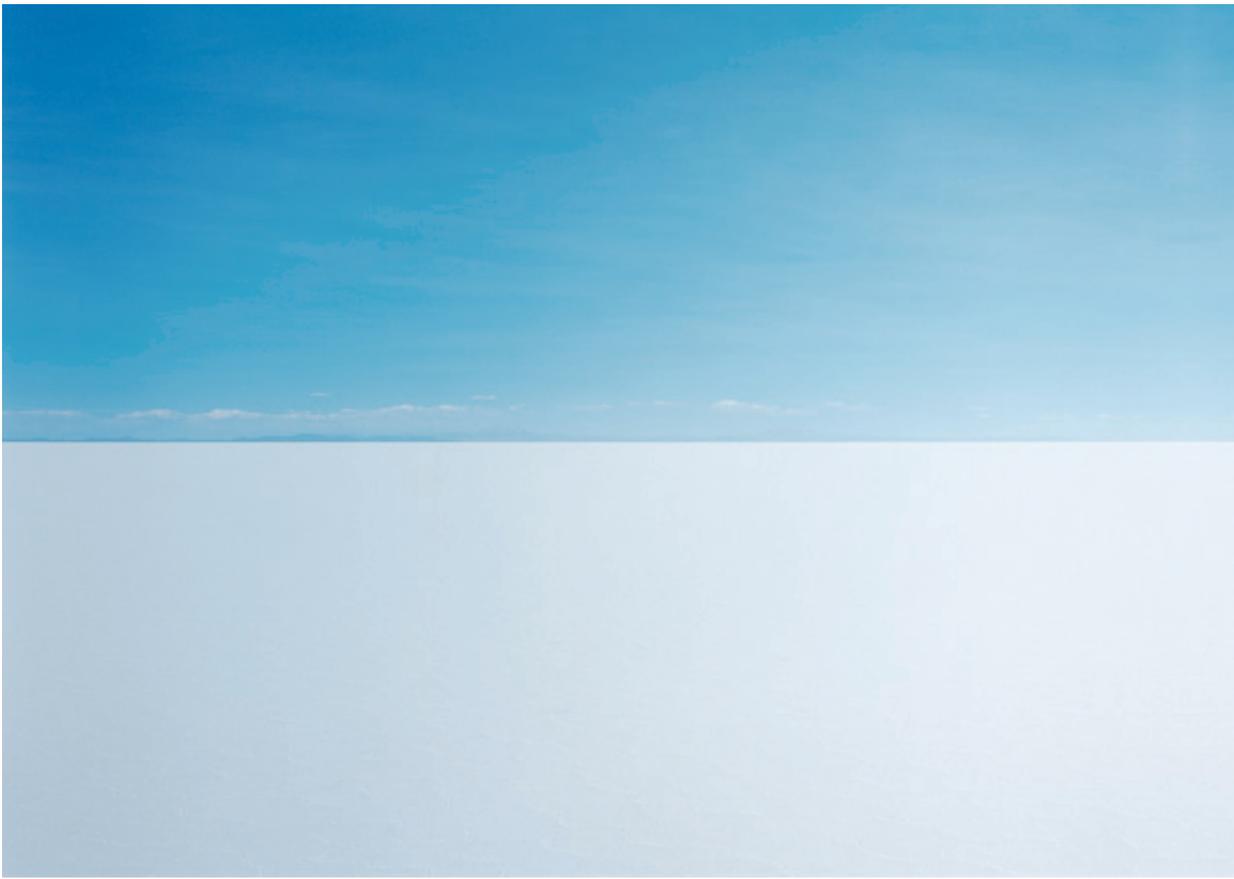


Allison Crank
The Reality Theatre: Shopping in
the Ludic Century, 2015

With this VR device, Allison Crank invites you to immerse yourself in a virtual stage and performance that she envisions to be the future of shopping. Based on the premise that physical stores and shopping malls are becoming obsolete, Crank envisions stores transformed into playgrounds for experience, where consumers become actors with the ability to perform, spectate, play and indulge themselves

in the environment.

Reality Theatre is a vision of the next urban shopping machine, an experience stager of limitless possibilities. *Reality Theatre* is a new third place. Architecture, props, clothing and even movement are augmented and celebrate virtuality. Realms blend with other realms, and virtual movement allows the visitor to consume the space as spectacle and animation.



Kenya Hara
MUJI Poster Design, Horizon, 2003

Kenya Hara is art director at MUJI, one of the most influential sustainable design brands in the world. The company's core value is subtlety and all its products stay true to its ethos: "Sometimes simplicity surpasses splendor". Kenya's ongoing exploration of emptiness and the absolute void – which he has written extensively about – informs much of what he does. In his visual communication there are often signals that work like an 'empty vessel' thus permitting every signification and a limitless imagination. Here the horizon might be the endless environment and MUJI's ambition to

have as little impact on it as possible. Or, it may connect to another MUJI principle – that something as simple as a small household appliance can transition into something larger – a small thing can, in other words, create an entire lifestyle. Because for Kenya Hara design is about communication – communication that stresses the importance of listening over the more aggressive tendency to press one's opinion onto an opponent. Subtle communication connects again to this concept of the 'empty vessel', or even a flat horizon – it is packed with potential and can lead to almost anything.





Le Grand Jäger's work contextualizing ethics in design has resulted in a speculation about a new era they call *The Era of Khaki Ethics*. In *The Era of Khaki Ethics*, ethics are blurred toward a new mental state, where people can feel comfortable with contradiction and multiplicity rather than adopting simple extremes. Khaki, an undefined color which is the product of mixture, is used as a metaphor for multiple truths, and non-polar positions. Legrand and Jäger use found footage, interviews, and activations to produce creative content that propagates an active uncertainty in the 'khaki' era.



Chris Kabel
Stack Ring, 2013

Wood is becoming a scarce material in China, especially in large lengths necessary to build the Wood Ring. So instead of wood Chris Kabel used a material that China has in abundance; products, more specifically stackable products like stools. Kabel contacted a plastic factory that allowed him to take over one of their injection moulding machines. Starting with a white stool Kabel added more and more red pellets to the white pellets so that every time a stool came out of the machine it was a bit more red. In about 250 steps

the stool changed color from white to red. Kabel then stacked the stools and pushed them in the shape of a circle, like a snake that eats its tail, to create a circular bench with a diameter of 3.5 meters.

With this work, Kabel investigates how an abundance of products can be treated as a raw material, searching for ways to manipulate them into new objects.

Created in cooperation with Beijing Green Leave and New Land Plastic Company.



Atelier Yuri Veerman
The Third Dimension, 2012

While each religion and region applies their own cultural codes to the headscarf, and each woman has her own personal motives for wearing one, we can not seem to escape the urge to perceive it as a one dimensional phenomenon. Different people or parties state that the Islamic headscarf can only be a symbol of oppression, or freedom, or protest, or self expression, depending on their own motives and cultural background. With this work, Yuri Veerman invites us to reconsider our urge to define such complex cultural phenomena. By pinning the headscarf to the wall, he deconstructs the mystical link between an overloaded symbol and a piece of silk.



James Bridle
Seamless Transitions, 2015

Seamless Transitions is a visualisation of three sites of immigration judgement, detention and deportation in the United Kingdom.

As these sites are 'unphotographable' for reasons of security, secrecy or law, artist James Bridle used investigative journalism techniques, eyewitness accounts and other research to reconstruct each

of them. With the use of architectural visualisation techniques, the resultant film – a walkthrough of the virtual environments is a simulacram that nevertheless reveals a reality, one which has remained hidden behind law and indifference.

Commissioned by the Photographer's Gallery.
Visualisations by Picture Plane.



Edith Dekyndt
One Second of Silence, 2008–2009

Intended to elicit silent contemplation, *One Second of Silence* is a film of a flag fluttering in the wind. The flag is transparent, silent or mute – having no words, images or symbols. The flag is a void, leaving only the sky behind it.

THING NOTHING

Van Abbemuseum
17.10 – 15.11.2015

Concept

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Creative Director Design
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