

The inner concept

Since my 2003 work, *Set Candid*, I have been intensively engaged with the concept of the readymade. The cucumber and the entire constellation of this work can be viewed as a ready-made in the broadest sense. The concept of the ready-made is enveloped in a very particular aura, namely, that of the Contemporary. For me this means that an artist who wants to act within the *Zeitgeist* self-evidently has to present ready-mades. I have tried to translate this master key to the Contemporary and now rename it the Prefabricated. (Industrially) prefabricated materials may be regarded as ready-mades. The crucial point consists in the fact that an artist like me uses prefabricated materials that lie outside the standard materials for artistic production, in my case, the cucumber, meeting EU standards and produced industrially in the Netherlands or Spain. For some artists these prefabricated materials are their own bed, motor bikes or musical instruments, for others bricks, vacuum cleaners, even porno stars or skulls.

The conventional conception of the ready-made compels artists to maintain their originality through the use of extraordinary materials. In the art scene there is something resembling a competition or an arms race with ready-mades. All questions are directed toward 'finding'. For my own work, I would say that something like that intentionally happens coincidentally. Thanks to the body all this happens, and only later can I consciously adopt a stance toward it. With this intentional coincidentalness I stuck a cucumber into salt at that time, and suddenly a small, multifaceted sculpture was standing there. The difference from other works resided in the unusualness of the materials employed. The exception confirms the rule, and it occurred to me that the whole of my work constituted a fund or storehouse — that there is something archetypal inherent in these works, something that was always there, something culturally prefabricated. Thus I began not only to view these works as ready-mades, but also to treat them and deploy them as such. The funny thing about this is that outsiders also drew my attention to this circumstance several times without being asked.

These thoughts are mirrored also in language. As part of the storehouse, the works become objects, whereby in my view the German word is better suited. Whereas the Latin word, 'ob jacere' ('to lie there'), suggests a passive role, with the German word, 'Gegen-Stand' (literally, something 'standing over against') one's own existence is confirmed through the relation to that body standing over against oneself. As a human being creating art, you are producing objects that ultimately stand-over-against in their finished state, 'eye-to-eye', so to speak. The German word even suggests that what now is standing before you precisely wanted to be found as such, as an *objet trouvé*. When, for instance, I decide to separate one empty space from another and fill it with plaster, ultimately I will find a sculpture before me. Viewed this way, the question arises whether an object produced by me as an artist is just as much an *objet trouvé* as something that was not produced by me, but was found by me and employed for my artistic expression. If that were the case, in both cases one could speak of a ready-made. The objects in my storehouse are *objets trouvés* for me, and when I deploy them in installations, they become ready-mades.

And in this way, I think, artists live through their works. They primarily show themselves, but also viewers, who they are. Thus it has no importance to spend time with an individual work, but it becomes an existential exigency to discuss the entire context: Duchamp's "*Étant donnés*" ('Given'), an installation. To be viewed from one viewpoint only. Appearing from there as an image. The title hints at an interconnection of givens, of given circumstances through which the image arises. Thus one can surely say that this artist has drawn conclusions from his experience with *objets trouvés* and ready-mades.

Among other things, Duchamp also called his parents ready-mades. That is plausible in today's reality: date of birth, one's own name, parents, milieu, the upbringing resulting from that, language or languages, gender, social and ethnic affiliation, Consequently, life and fate could also be viewed as *objets trouvés*. In this regard, one's own body is already a found object. All this can be cynically confirmed by the fact that each individual today is registered and ascertained on the basis of his or her personal data. Anyone who has been registered is, in the perception of the one recording these data, a ready-made. The ready-mades bring their attributes along with them that are investigated with respect

to norms and abnormalities, thus as a means to an end. Duchamp's Fountain is, in spite of that, no more and no less an art work than Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Both confirm their status as art works and their artists through their abnormality, through their deviation from the norm.

For me it is becoming ever more apparent that only one aspect of Duchamp's methods has been investigated. Apart from that which has always been singled out as a concept, there is also something that is engaged immediately with life itself. In a 1967 interview on British BBC television, the interviewer asked what role chance plays within his work. He responded calmly, "It is the consideration of chance as an almost religious element". The artist's object has to be evoked by him himself. This applies surely also to the bottle dryer, the Mona Lisa and all the other works. Contingency, sexuality, science, religion, boredom, etc. — everything resonates along with everything else. It is all material for the construction of an artistic image, and I believe, an artist wants to and must bring forth and portray this material so that viewers, freed from it, can freely complement it, since it is also their material. That could have led to this idea being misunderstood as a concept, for the viewers are not supposed to complete the work as an artist, but as themselves. (Heiner Müller, Rainer Werner Fassbinder,...). Artists breathe, live and act. They necessarily comport themselves toward God and act from within their human situation. "I do not seek, I find." — precisely Picasso, who is regarded as the antipode of Duchamp, seems to confirm Duchamp as the finder of his art. I think that both artists represent two sides of the same coin.

This is the way I understand the Sisyphus whom Camus presents to us, namely, Sisyphus as the identification figure for all art-creating, happy people. In that Sisyphus seeks his happiness in his present circumstances, he confirms his will to understand fate in his own favour: happiness as an intellectual achievement characterizes this artist. A human being who despairs with the boulder on the steep hill becomes weak in expectation of circumstances, in the fallacy that he or she could become master of them. This person will turn away from circumstances and seek happiness in ideas. Sisyphus finds himself in hard circumstances, but decides nevertheless against alienation because he places trust in his physical, sensuous and intellectual abilities. Dealing with fate is decided by finding solutions in action, and that is a very delicate, although fulfilling task. During my time as an architect and designer I was able to become familiar with the other side of the *pissoir*. For design it is important to seek solutions because an idea is anticipated. Here it is a matter of the answer. Over time I found that very dissatisfying and began to work 'just for the day', in a sense, with the boulder on the hill. Objects arose that I was able to treat further as material. The above-mentioned storehouse allowed me to combine and stage various elements, depending upon the situation. I was now able to formulate new scenarios in my own language of images, and I suspect that, through the experience with design, I have a certain scepticism vis-à-vis the Prefabricated, against that which I expressed at the beginning as the master key to the Contemporary.

In this way I also came to use materials, as diverse and as simple as possible, if you like, traditional materials: oil paint, plaster and cucumbers.

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