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The Post Readymade Photographed Object

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The Post Readymade Photographed Object

Ioannis Galanopoulos Papavasileiou,¹ Zayed University, United Arab Emirates

Abstract: The Venus of Willendorf, a limestone figurine unearthed in 1908, has been considered one of the first found objects of our civilization. The Venus falls into the category “objects we find” and we consider as art, rather than in the category “found objects,” or “objets trouvés” in French, which has been associated with appropriating objects one finds and presenting them as readymade art. I argue in this article that in photography, especially on the eve of so-called post photography, the above terms converge and objects photographed can belong to both of the above categories. This is because their interpretation is heavily dependent on historical, ontological, and semantic information fueled by what I call “the dynamics of subject-object-viewer encounter.” The above dynamics constitute a discursive area which, following Chan, Luttingen, Gaskel-Thatcher, and Danto, addresses object materiality, utility, and function in society—viewers’ notions on object phenomenology and human visual perception. To test these arguments, I examine the properties of my portfolio “A World of Immaterial Objects, 2013–2019.” In doing so, I provide explicit details on my work processes, that is, how the transition of objects to photographs is realized and why. I then discuss the product of that process—the post readymade photographed object—and how its new immaterial version affects the dynamics of subject, object, and viewer encounter. Re-installing my hypotheses on the relationship between “objects we find,” “found objects,” and “objects photographed,” I re-join Chan and Luttingen and their notions on readymades, residual materialism, art, and thingness to draw comparisons to my notion of the post readymade photographed object. I foresee, after Gaskel and Thatcher, that post readymade photographed objects, in their immaterial versions as enchanted relics of our culture, will have a role to play in the writing of the history of our civilization.

Keywords: Art Photography, Objecthood, Materiality, Immateriality, Readymade, Post Readymade, Artifacts, Objets Trouvés

Objects We Find, Found Objects, and Objects Photographed

On August 7, 1908 during long hours of excavations commissioned by the Natural History Museum of the Imperial Court in Vienna at Willendorf, Josef Szombathy, the then curator of the prehistoric collection of the museum, accompanied by Hugo Obermaier and Josef Bayer, two young archeologists, unearthed a Paleolithic anthropomorphic limestone figurine that will forever be known as the Venus of Willendorf.¹ The figurine is a well-rounded woman (Figure 1) representing a “goddess, a good luck charm, or the fertility of nature.”²



Figure 1: The Venus of Willendorf

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/Venus_von_Willendorf_02.jpg

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² The University of Vermont, “The Statue of Willendorf,” Accessed January 13, 2019. <http://www.uvm.edu/~iwd/?Page=ww.html>.

From an art history point of view, it is worth making an observation. The Venus falls into the category “objects we find and we consider as art,” rather than in the category “found objects,”—*objets trouvés* in French—which is associated with appropriating objects and presenting them as readymade art. Works by Marcel Duchamp (Figure 2), as opposed to the works of Pablo Picasso (Figure 3), the Dadaists Man Ray (Figure 4), and Francis Picabia (Figure 5), as well as the work of pop artists Joseph Beuys, Andy Warhol, and Claes Oldenburg, fall into that category. The distinction between these two examples of appropriation is Duchamp’s signature and positioning the object in gallery/plinth context as opposed to Picasso’s subversion of the object to make sculptural referent. *Objets trouvés* are still used in contemporary art by practitioners like Haim Steinbach, Jeff Koons, Tracey Emin, and Damien Hirst.



Figure 2: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917.
 Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz, the Blind Man No. 2.
 New York, May 1917³



Figure 3: Pablo Picasso, *Bulls' Head*⁴



Figure 4: Man Ray, *Cadeau* 1921⁵



Figure 5: Joseph Beuys (1921_1986), *Table with Accumulator*. Tate Modern.
 Photo credits Marie-Lan Nguyen⁶

³ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Marcel_Duchamp%2C_1917%2C_Fountain%2C_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg.

⁴ <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/19/412>.

⁵ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/aa/%27Cadeau%27_by_Man_Ray%2C_iron_and_nails%2C_Tate_Modern.JPG.

⁶ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Table_with_Accumulator_Beuys_Tate_Modern_AR00603.jpg.

Photography has built its own legacy in the representation of objects. In early photography, readymade objects were staged and captured in practitioners' attempts (see Figures 6 and 7 by Aubry and Talbot) to imitate the beauty of still life paintings.



Figure 6: Charles Aubry, *An Arrangement of Tobacco Leaves and Grass*, about 1864⁷



Figure 7: William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Fruit Piece*, from *The Pencil of Nature*. Salt Print from a Calotype Negative⁸

Modern artists like Laslo Moholy Nagy (Figure 8), Edward Weston, and Walker Evans followed different processes. They revealed the formal properties of objects and their uncanny beauty by using studio techniques and by studying them closely (i.e., photograms and close-up rendering, left to right). Especially with Moholy Nagy, the object acquires an ideal stature that effaces any trace of banality, underpinning at the same time the notion of the object captured without a camera. The picture in Figure 8 is a photogram of an object rather than an object found and photographed.



Figure 8: Laslo Moholy Nagy, *Photogram*, 1940, Gelatin Silver Photogram, 50.1 x 40.2 cm⁹

Others acting as documentary photographers, or as Andreas Mueller-Pohle calls “finders,”¹⁰ like Shomei Tomatsu capturing deformed objects of the Hiroshima blast, remained truthful to the medium’s core property—that is to record—and followed no staging strategies. A

⁷ <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/32575/charles-aubry-an-arrangement-of-tobacco-leaves-and-grass-french-about-1864/>.

⁸ <https://blog.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/art-arrangement-still-life-still-life/>.

⁹ <https://moholy-nagy.org/art-database-gallery/>. Courtesy of the Moholy-Nagy Foundation.

¹⁰ Andreas Müller-Pohle, “Photography as Staging.” *European Photography 34 (German Stagings)* 9, no. 2 (April/May/June 1988).

“finder” would treat the object as documentary evidence, hence as an object one finds and records with a camera *as it is*, without aiming at formalism or still life beautification. The legacy of found, recorded, and staged objects continued from modern to contemporary photography. Diverse functions, values, and messages of ordinary objects are rendered in the work of Lewis Baltz (Figure 9) and William Eggleston. These studies on the functions of photographed objects, as objects-in-place, highlight the objects’ relationship to suburban environments. Such approaches are often accompanied by particular handling of the vantage point.

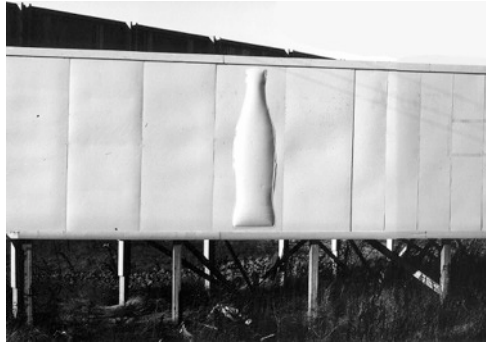


Figure 9: Lewis Baltz, Sign Gilroy, 1967, from the Series *Prototype Works*, 1967–1976, Gelatin Silver Print 8 x 10 inches. Estate of Lewis Baltz, © Courtesy Gallery Luisotti¹¹

Today, practitioners like Chris Jordan use the latest digital systems and specific vantage points in order to show extremely fine details of material objects and unravel the hidden stories behind their beauty. As Chris Jordan regards his practice in *Intolerable Beauty* (Figure10) a “slow-motion apocalypse in progress,”¹² others, like Rune Guneriussen (Figure11), select the staged object approach to construct new narratives around the role of objects and the environment. Guneriussen treats them as openings to fictional, but narratively worthy, sculptural worlds. In both of these cases, the narrative partakes in an imminent ecological downfall.



Figure 10: Chris Jordan, *Circuit Boards #2, New Orleans*, 2005, 44 x 57. From the Series *Intolerable Beauty*¹³



Figure 11: Rune Guneriussen, *Sustained Substance*, Digital c-print, 23.5 x 38in. Courtesy Galerie Olivier Waltman (Paris, Miami)¹⁴

¹¹ <https://galleryluisotti.com/images/prototypes/>.

¹² Chris Jordan, 2003–2005, *Intolerable Beauty*. Accessed January 15, 2019. <http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/intolerable/#about>.

¹³ <http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/intolerable/#circuit%20boards%20202%2044x60>.

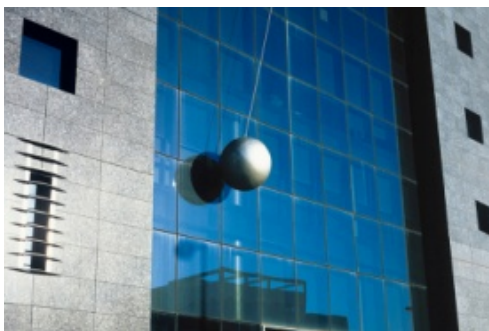


Figure 12: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Pendulum*. A World of Immaterial Objects¹⁵

Another group of practitioners, like Chema Madoz and me (Figure 12), re-approach the issue of object materiality, utility, and function in society and rework the notions people share in terms of object appearance, objecthood and, on the whole, of visual perception. In such cases, the shift in perspective to flatten the real into abstract form, without taking a complete turn from realism, as well as the use of coloring and titling, creates a quasi deceive-the-eye condition (*trompe-l'œil*) uncommon to formalistic, documentary, and conceptual approaches of representing objects, discussed above.

Reconnecting with my above observation on “objects we find,” “found objects,” and the Venus, in photography, the terms “objects we find” (and we consider art) and “found object/objet trouvé” converge. Objects photographed (including both found and staged objects) can belong to both of the above categories. Yet, the problem with this convergence is that when it comes to photographed objects’ ontological and semantic identity, they are often falsely considered as 2D readymades of 3D objects and not as things of art. To further complicate this convergence, there is a shortage of scholarship on the way objects photographed function as readymades. Especially on the eve of so-called post photography, which includes simulated objects and more sophisticated than Moholy Nagy’s non-camera practices as well as image appropriations in the likes of objet trouvé, what is evident in current practice-based scholarship is the belief that a photographic readymade is the outcome of appropriating pre-existing visual material and creating what is called a composite object. Bearing in mind the so-called post photography approach, a vivid example of such a product would be Julia Borrisova’s DOM project.

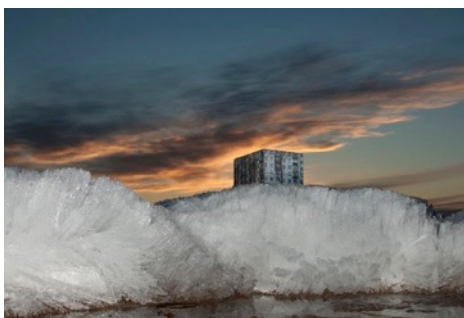


Figure 13: Julia Borrisova © *DOM*¹⁶

¹⁴ http://www.galeriewaltman.com/en_Rune_Guneriussen.html; <http://www.photosaintgermain.com/editions/2017/parcours/galerie-olivier-waltman>.

¹⁵ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

¹⁶ http://juliaborisova.ru/Julia_Borrisova_PhotoSite/Projects/Pages/DOM_Part_1.html#5.

Although it was a very well thought out digital composite, and it was wonderfully executed by Borissova (Figure 13), with this article, I deliberately overlook portfolios by artists pursuing post photography practices, because I believe that objects photographed in “direct capturing mode,” that is captured by a camera, already function as something beyond readymades. By breaking apart the convergence between objects we find, objects trouvés and objects photographed, I am offering the term “post readymade photographed object.” To elaborate on the relationship between photographers and objects photographed, I analyze the photographic processes I used for one of my portfolios assembled between 2007 and 2017 titled *A World of Immaterial Objects*. I argue that the found object photographed under a condition of versioning is a rather flexible post-readymade product, in terms of image representation and interpretation. Its appearance and its meaning heavily depend on historical, ontological, and semantic information fueled by what I call “the dynamics of subject-object-viewer encounters.” In what comes next, I discuss the product of this encounter, that is, the post-readymade photographed object, and how subject, object, and viewer affect the dynamics of subject-object-viewer encounter. Last, I tackle the value of the post readymade photographed object and its worth as a thing of art. To develop my arguments, I join other scholars, like Chan and Luttingen quoted below, and their work on residual materialism,¹⁷ and Art and Thingness¹⁸.

My Work, Versioning, The Dynamics of Subject-Object-Viewer Encounter

Following the common belief I mentioned earlier (despite the work of prolific thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and Susan Sontag, to name a few, questioning the status of belief in an immutable truth of the essence of things) that objects photographed are considered (by the common viewer) 2D immaterial copies of 3D readymades and not as things of art, one should ask: Why are objects photographed not readymades of readymades? This question is not rhetorical. They are readymades of readymades and they do not need to be digitally composited to be considered as such. Even via direct computational capturing mode, which means captured on site by a digital camera, the readymade acquires, by default, a post-thingness state after its transition to a digital photograph. This is not only because of digital technology, but also because photographers, after encountering their objects, are altering/versioning (on site) the found object into something that barely or nostalgically resembles its previous state



Figure 14: Yiannis Galanopoulos,[©] Eight Cube. *A World of Immaterial Objects*¹⁹

¹⁷ Sven Lütticken, “Art and Thingness, Part One: Breton’s Ball and Duchamp’s Carrot,” *Journal #13*, February 2010, Accessed January 12, 2019. www.e-flux.com.

¹⁸ Paul Chan, “What Art Is and Where it Belongs,” *Journal #10*, November, Accessed January 15, 2019. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/95>.

¹⁹ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

The act of computational on-site capture is not at all a direct process. It demands noetic mediation and negotiation between not the man and the camera in the modernist regime, but also on-site noetic mapping and critical discourse analysis between photographer, the object, and culture. Whenever the shutter is pressed, teleportation to this highly discursive noetic territory/process begins. The process of gathering my portfolio *A World of Immaterial Objects* highlights the above versioning process and hence underscores the way in which objects function as readymades of readymades. For its production, drawing and departing from Eggleston and Baltz, I focus on material objects in my immediate environment whose role is seemingly decorative or informative. The objects' transition to photographs entails their rendition from 3D to 2D, by altering them on-site with the use of photo aesthetic tools (such as framing, vantage point, coloring, titling), the disappearance of their utility, as well as their installation/projection in a gallery environment. The on-site transfiguration with the use of photo aesthetic tools is what I call the versioning process, which wholeheartedly differs from postproduction. It echoes John Szarkowski's "the thing itself, the detail, the detail, the frame, time and vantage point" in *The Photographer's Eye*.²⁰ Versioning, however, unlike in Szarkowski "modernist, formalist approach,"²¹ is far from being 100 percent controlled by the photographer.

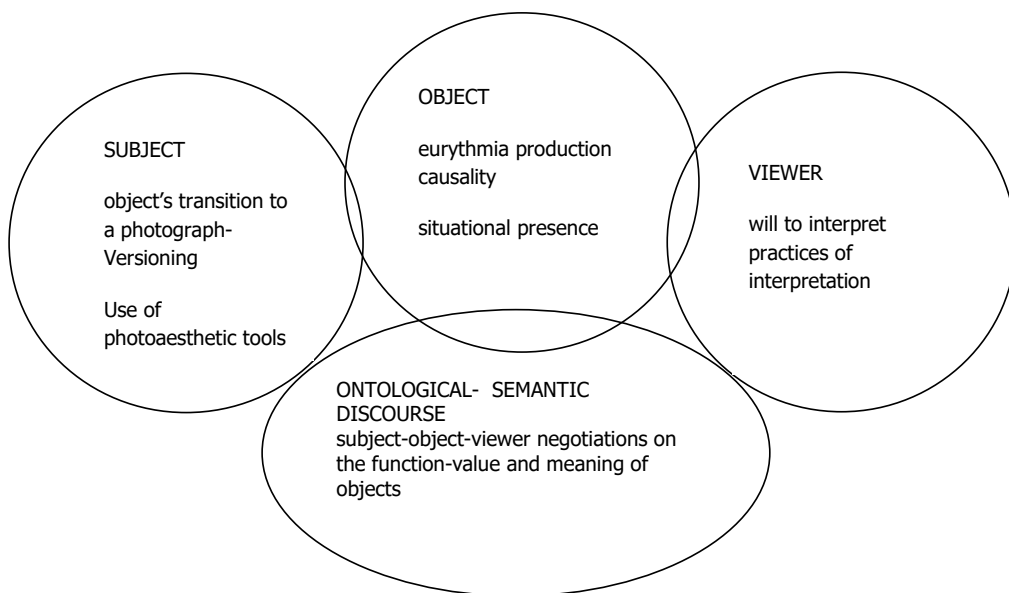


Figure 15: Versioning with Photo Aesthetic Tools, the Becoming Active State of the Object, and the Post Readymade Photographed Object
 Source: Papavasileiou

What is proposed here in Figure 15 is that the object's thingness, along with its capacity for versioning and its situational presence, has an active role in the transfiguration of the object into a photograph. Thingness can be theorized as the object's vestigial value against man, his culture, place, and time, while situational presence refers to the instant when object and subject meet. In this instant of their encounter, a rather intricate spatio-existential exchange between

²⁰ John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, (New York: MOMA, 1976), 18–50.

²¹ Liz Wells, *A Companion to Modern Art*, (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 2018), 182.

object and subject takes place, which from my perspective is not exclusively driven by the photographer. The product of this complex process and interaction is what I call the “post readymade photographed object.”

At this moment, it is probably worth asking how versioning with photo aesthetic tools and the becoming active state of the object affect and is affected by viewers’ interpretation, which is the third element of our equation (shown in Figure 15). The photo aesthetic tools, which are pertinent to versioning and to the birth of the post readymade photographed object, are framing, vantage point, coloring, and titling. I will begin with color, taking as an example the uniform and seemingly deliberate way color is used in *A World of Immaterial Objects*. A mix of found and preset numerical color is at play (but not to a point of reauthoring), which (along with framing, safe distancing, and object rescaling) certainly provides the viewer with the benefit of questioning the object’s substance, meaning, and function in society. Viewers’ questions that have been collected after screening of the works include: Are these tampered through Photoshop, Lightroom? What type of camera filters do you use? That red looks really red, don’t you think? Is this art?, etc. Regarding titling, most of the times the titles answer one’s questions on what the object is, but never what it does, or where on Earth it is located. Occasionally, titles work in a conceptual manner and tend to encourage viewers to decipher what they see. For example, the image below (Figure 16) was titled *Chess Alarm*. It portrays a checkered triangle with a big orange caution light at its top and some yellow and red ones on its sides. This is not a chessboard, but it could be; therefore, the title hints at a non-phenomenologically factual visual element. This ambiguous clue can easily lead the viewer to a semantic breakdown.

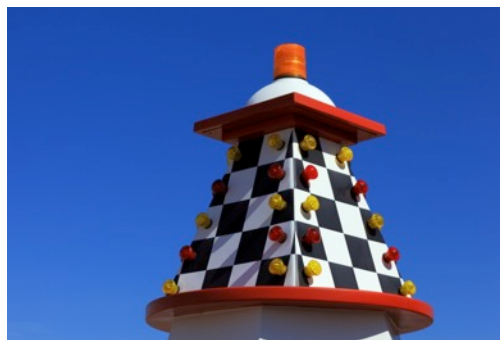


Figure 16: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Chess Alarm*. *A World of Immaterial Objects*²²

The issue here is that the viewer gets caught up in a game of choosing the proper interpretational mode (descriptive or ironical) to decipher the post readymade photographed object following a reduction *ad absurdum* process. This underlines viewer engagement and its importance in the subject-object-viewer encountering process. I will continue by explaining how the use of framing, safe distancing, and rescaling affect viewers’ interpretations and, hence, the dynamics of the subject-object-viewer encounter. Arthur Danto, in the *Transfiguration of the Common Place*, remarks: “one sort of condition for something to be in candidacy of interpretation (by the viewer) title, or structure will be certain assumptions with regard to its causes.”²³ That being said, when an object is deliberately “edited out” of its context due to the properties of framing, safe distancing, and rescaling, it bears no casual history. It is literally suspended, its vestigial value as well as its function and meaning in society are being altered. What is more, this suspension of the objects is falsely applied exclusively to post photography practices where image appropriation, compositing, and algorithmic capture take place. In the

²² <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

²³ Arthur C. Danto, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 2 (1974): 139–48.

spirit of Danto, however, even via “direct capturing mode,” that capture with a camera through the use of photo aesthetic tools, the new, altered on site, in active state photographed object, although seemingly immaterial, mundane, and banal, gains life beyond the readymade. This ultimately modifies the subject-object-viewer relationship. Being active, and more than a readymade means that the post readymade object photographed via versioning, thingness and viewer reading practices will claim an identity of its own, at both the ontological and semantic levels after its transition to a photograph. Why is that? Because once this object is stripped out of context, it will be shown as an enhanced new version of itself (not simply a 2D immaterial copy of its counterpart 3D object), it will have a different impact on different viewers, and it will evoke different meanings. Hence, the object plays a more active role in the subject-object-viewer encounter process. This rather pluralistic condition ultimately demands that the viewer changes his/her relationship with the object and its former function, feeds his/her curiosity about these out-of-context, beyond readymade photographed objects, and inquires more about what he/she sees. To go even further, it can be safely said that the more suspended the photographed objects become, the less discernible their spatio-temporal coordinates and their stories are.

Having said that, let us examine the examples below, touching on Abraam Mole’s *Degree of Iconicity*²⁴ to better understand this analogy. Based on Danto and Mole’s “scale of iconicity”²⁵ a photographed object can be classified as less suspended in terms of interpretation when it resembles a familiar object and the viewer can track back its spatio-temporal coordinates and its casual histories (i.e., info on what, where, and why they were photographed) and can interpret it. It may be considered more suspended when the viewer cannot (Examples 1, 2, and 3 in Figures 17, 18, and 19).



Figure 17: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Yellow Towel*. *A World of Immaterial Objects*²⁶

Example 1: Familiar objects—yellow towel, wall, etc. The viewer has more chances in determining the objects’ casual history, i.e., information on what, where, and why they were photographed.

²⁴ Abraam Mole, “Degree of Iconicity,” In *L’Image Communication Fonctionnelle*, (Bruxelles: Casterman, 1981). See Sonesson, 2008.

²⁵ Göran Sonesson, “Pictorial Semiotics” in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok and Marcel Danesi, 3rd rev. ed. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010.

²⁶ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.



Figure 18: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Follow The Yellow Tubes. A World of Immaterial Objects*²⁷

Example 2: Not quite familiar objects, but close enough. The viewer can partially perceive the objects' story, i.e., information on what, where, and why they were photographed.



Figure 19: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Passing Yellow. A World of Immaterial Objects*²⁸

Example 3: not at all familiar objects. The viewer cannot (easily) deduce the objects' casual history, i.e., the information on what, where, and why they were photographed. In Sonesson's words in *Prolegomena*, "a car, which is not a sign on the street, becomes one at a car exhibition, as does Man Ray's iron in the museum. We have to know the show-case convention to understand that the tin can in the shop-window stands for many other objects of the same category; we need to be familiar with the art exhibition convention to realize that each object merely signifies itself; and we are able to understand that the tailor's swatch is a sign of its pattern and color, but not of its shape, only if we have learnt the convention associated with the swatch"²⁹

Through camera position, framing, cropping, and color alteration, these works deny "the real" and the substance of objects photographed. Without taking a complete turn from realism, the resulting photograph flattens the perspective and moves away from object thingness. It is therefore more about surface and light than about object. This condition, as well as the use of coloring and titling, creates a quasi-deceive-the-eye- condition (almost a *trompe-l'œil*). The illusion of the surface, the trickery of the artist, and the nuance of such result could be further enhanced and supported by viewers' interpretations and exhibition conventions.

²⁷ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

²⁸ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

²⁹ Göran Sonesson, "Prolegomena to a General Theory of Iconicity," In *Naturalness and Iconicity in Language*, edited by Klaas Willems and Ludovic De Cuyper, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), 42–72. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ill.7.05son>.

The Birth and Role of the Post Readymade Photographed Object

Viewers' reactions, an integral part in this dynamic process, that have been collected after the digital exhibition of the works specifically target the ontological and semantic properties of the versioned post readymade photographed object, and include questions like: What are these? Where are these? Where did you find this? Are these real?, etc. With all the above in mind, I seek out a further definition of the beyond readymade photographed objects, as "flexible objects." Being dynamically cut out of their existential and interpretive context, abiding to deliberate and non-deliberate processes, pertinent to the use of photo-aesthetic tools, thingness, and viewer practices, these flexible objects seem to have their own will and choice. By the use of photo-aesthetic tools and the subsequent objects' transition to a photograph, the found material object is versioned, layered up by a "transparent cloak," which will make it appear as something else after its transition to an immaterial state. This can only be a readymade version of a readymade, what we will henceforth call a "post-readymade" photographed object. The above arguments hint at a shift in the traditional dialectic of subject-object-viewer encounter. Once a process of interpretation driven by the will-of-the-subject to applying deliberate characteristics on the final product looks like it is inextricably linked with the non-deliberate nature of the "becoming active" post material object and the viewer's "will-to-interpret," as we saw above in the diagrams and through the Abraam Mole example. This, in turn, scaffolds the discursive relationship between subject-object-viewer (in direct capturing mode of photographing the object) as a highly dynamic process. This process deserves to be distinguished from the process of gathering objects we find and consider as art, and align it more with the process of creating post-ready photographed objects for the sake of art and art alone.

With regard to the value of the post readymade photographed object as a thing of art, in *Art and Thingness*, Sven Lüttingen states that "any readymade object, in its obtuse materialism, is always potentially a thing, which is to say: a ruin."³⁰ I support this idea of objects photographed as things, because it shows the convergence between "objects we find and consider art" and "found objects," and to some extent the convergence in the working process of archeologists and artists. If the above idea is valid, the same obtuse materialism could be claimed for its immaterial counterpart, the photograph as a post readymade photographed object. Their transition to photographs, through the dynamic process of subject-object-viewer encounter, lifts their value from the status of the material object alongside the readymade to one attributed to things versioned on-site and to-be-interpreted as art (Figure 20).



Figure 20: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *The Target*. A World of Immaterial Objects³¹

³⁰ Sven Lüttingen, "Art and Thingness, Part One: Breton's Ball and Duchamp's Carrot." Journal #13 - February 2010 Accessed January 12, 2019. www.eflux.com.

³¹ www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/.

Flexible in terms of representation and interpretation, they are not abstract byproducts of their material counterparts. They are rather visually enhanced “things” being disguised in front of our eyes, through a seemingly illusionistic process, fulfilling Plato’s saying that phenomena can be deceptive. To say this better, in the spirit of Inwood quoting Heidegger’s *False Logos* that builds upon Plato, these flexible post readymade objects “let something be seen, but not in their uncoveredness.”³² This whole process is very ironic in and of itself, if one were to think that, within the realm of contemporary art, many of these objects could be easily placed in museum stalls (like Duchamp’s urinal) and exhibited directly as they are. Their quality of description, their uniqueness, and their ontological and semantic ambivalence would be indisputably enough to be presented as things of art. For example, could the object below (Figure 21), *Red Steaming Pot* (if that is what it is), be placed right in the middle of a gallery and exhibited as such? Of course, but it would not have the same appeal as the photograph, which is not a readymade as we saw, but rather a post readymade photographed object. This visually charged photographed object is a flexible post readymade photographed thing set free to speak for itself, its use, value, and function, within the realm of the subject-object-viewer discourse. Like a contemporary Roman dodecahedron (in digital) it is rather an optical riddle awaiting to be deciphered.



Figure 21: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Chess Alarm. A World of Immaterial Objects*³³

This discourse at large has been the quintessential topic of many academic disciplines. Ivan Gaskell and Laurel Ulrich Thatcher in *The Riddle of a Riddle*, sustain that “while most historians and art historians set the greatest stories by written documents, few would disagree that any object with a past might disclose aspects of that past, if they could but discover adequate means of addressing it.”³⁴ What about post readymade photographed objects? How can one address them? Do they not have a role to play in the writing of history as well? I foresee, after Gaskell and Thatcher, that post readymade photographed objects, in their immaterial versions, as enchanted relics of our culture, will have a role to play in the writing of the history of our civilization. The subject-object-viewer encounter process leaves explicit traces that can salvage the post readymade photographed object’s residual materiality, their ownership, and their flexible use-value and meaning. This may also empower archeologists and art historians to invest more on the ontological and semantic values (i.e., what, where, and why they were photographed) transparently embedded in these objects, by reconstructing stories around them, before “the hard drives, the servers, and the clouds” of our digital humanity finally crash. Somehow and in the near future, I see a subversion of Magritte’s surrealistic

³² Michael Inwood, *Heidegger and Plato: Toward Dialogue*, edited by Catalin Partenie and Tom Rockmore. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005) 8081.

³³ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

³⁴ Ivan Gaskell, and Thatcher Laurel, “The Riddle of a Riddle,” 6 (2008). From the paper presented at The Annual Meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics, Milwaukee, November 2006.

painting (Figure 22) titled *This is not a Pipe* (The Treachery of Images 1928–29)³⁵ alarming us to question the ontological status of the visual in its very core. The new paradigm for this would not be a painting but a post readymade photographed object. Hence a digital fragment like the below image (Figure 23) most likely accompanied with the following inscription;



Figure 22: Rene Magritte's *La Trahison des Images* (The Treachery of Images) (1928–29) or “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” [This is not a Pipe], sometimes translated as “The Betrayal of Images” 1898–1967. The work is now owned by and exhibited at LACMA³⁶



Figure 23: Yiannis Galanopoulos, © *Swans. A World of Immaterial*³⁷

These swans are neither holograms nor digitally generated images with the use of graphic generating software. They are actually representations of material effigies or “real” objects transitioned to photographs, under fair use. They were captured (this was the term back then) by an analog SLR-type camera (camera obscura consisted of a box, a lens, a shutter mechanism, a mirror and a prismatic viewfinder), loaded with an analog film, which also means that the photographer could not see the final image on his LCD screen, and finally transfigured into a digital object with a use of digital scanner. The swans were not made to appear as digital simulations. The objects were, in fact, present at the time of the capturing process, although date, place, geographic coordinates, subject motive are undisclosed.

It is then no exaggeration to say that like the Venus of Willendorf, the limestone figurine unearthed in 1908 on which we have based our whole material object civilization, “the objects we find and we consider as art” of the future will be “post readymade photographed objects.”

³⁵ Rene Magritte, “La Trahison des Images” (The Treachery of Images) (1928-9) or “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (This is not a Pipe), sometimes translated as “The Betrayal of Images” 1898–1967. The work is now owned by and exhibited at LACMA. Image taken from a University of Alabama site, Approaches to Modernism, accessed January 15, 2019. <https://tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T311/MagrittePipe.jpg>.

³⁶ Image taken from a University of Alabama site, “Approaches to Modernism.” <https://tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T311/MagrittePipe.jpg>.

³⁷ <http://www.lefteyer.com/portfolio/a-world-of-immaterial-objects/>.

Their quality of description, their uniqueness, and their ontological and semantic ambivalence would be indisputably enough to be presented as things of human culture and art alike. All things considered, the post ready-made photographed objects, as flexible digital fragments of our civilization, stand on the cusp of the transition of our culture from material to immaterial. Their questionable thingness and questionable materiality, therefore, will be the only trace back to a world of material objects we once knew.

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The International Journal of the Image interrogates the nature of the image and functions of image-making. This cross-disciplinary journal brings together researchers, theoreticians, practitioners and teachers from areas of interest including: architecture, art, cognitive science, communications, computer science, cultural studies, design, education, film studies, history, linguistics, management, marketing, media studies, museum studies, philosophy, photography, psychology, religious studies, semiotics, and more.

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