



The thing is: between the designer poet and the artist bricoleur

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The starting points for this study are the texts *Art and its Objects* by Richard Wollheim; *The Field of Cultural Production* by Pierre Bourdieu and the work on material culture notably that of Daniel Miller. Central to this thesis is the desire to combine the analytical and methodological approaches in these fields in order to introduce a new model of contemporary analysis and criticism for art and its objects. Is it good or bad design? Is it good or bad design in a fine art context? Has it become an art object? What differentiates objects in their domains?

When design objects are employed as art objects they are given another layer of meaning. How we see and interpret the world through art and design objects is brought into question and we are forced, in an assortment of ways, to look at the world differently, to view our lives from another perspective. We need to see and understand all over again, to refute what we know and to develop new critical languages for the appraisal and criticism of the new meanings that emerge from these objects when transposed into an art context. The conjunction between contemporary art criticism and the critique of consumption provides a rich context for this discussion.

The discussion of objects here is centred around theories of social development and interaction on every level of perception and cognition. The important role of objects in play for example, and the ways in which objects intervene at an early stage of our psychological development, are accepted as fundamental and elementary aspects in the evolution and construction of society. Finding the inner logic of a work, using codes, encoding information and describing objects through those codes leads to an understanding of them metaphorically. Other object identities are made available through the evolution of new object languages and a new kind of literacy.

However, it is said that once language becomes developed it signals the demise of the object as a means of self-expression and articulation. This could in many ways account for the loss of significance in the position or status of objects as devices of communication or social evolution, as writing and language skills begin to replace their role. Reception theory attempts to address the linguistic function here. This domain has never been so complex or so exacting in its need for a different array of critical tools for analysis. If we set this against prior art historical positions I believe it is possible to see a new model emerging. This emergent model is a complex set of mapping processes of contemporary culture and production. It is in fact a 'coming of age' set of visual statements which derive their intensity from the passage through to the other side of consumerism and material culture. In this model consumerism and society is no longer about decline and fall. It has fallen. The preoccupation is with the meaning of the fall and its epiphanies. The proposal attempts to form new critical tools for the understanding and evaluation of the object.