



YEAH, IT'S MY BANNER!, 2008 (Detail)
MIXED MEDIA
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS



*He just wanted us to call him Captain Da.
He said: "You can call me Dada", whatever that meant?*

Triggered by the avant-garde militancy in this paragraph from DJ Shadow's *Peoples Press* album, a number of bullets sufficient to form the word "Dada" were fired from an airgun replica of the Ak-47 assault rifle.

The origin of the name Dada has been the subject of a struggle never to be concluded. Allegedly inspired by his own frequent use of the expression "da, da", which is the Romanian equivalent to the English "yeah, yeah", Tristan Tzara claimed to be the inventor of the name, subsequently heralding him as the formative power of the Dada-movement. Paying his obedience to the Dada ideal of nonsense and nihilism, Richard Huelsenbeck, who later was to become a psychiatrist in New York, objected strongly to this, stating that he himself had found the name by randomly stabbing in a dictionary with a paper knife.

Nevertheless, as both parties were aware of, the word "dada" in French is a children's name for "rocking horse".

Concerned with the fact that small children routinely discard toys when playing, Sigmund Freud applied the term "fort-da" to conceptualize the individuating causality of this expressive gesture. Making a bodily, hence understandable, relation between time and space, the immediate disappearance of the object, later to be recovered, establishes the child's perception of being (a subject of action) differentiated from a world of other subjects and objects.





...IN DAYLIGHT OR COOL WHITE, 2009
SOLARIUM (ERGO LINE EXCELLENCE 700 TURBO POWER), WIRE, FITTINGS
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS

Responding to a contemporary imperative of ad hoc identification The Social Democratic Party in Denmark has now officially changed its name to The Social Democrats. Furthermore, the party is trying to remedy the fundamental left-wing identity crisis through intensified application of its new logo design, featuring the capital "A", which simply derives from the ballot paper listing. Intentionally or not, this symbol is a morphological move on the high spirits of anarchy. Part of the gain is a replenished dissociation from the totalitarian addendum to any systemic socialism, as it seems that chartered violence has always been the price to pay when that final dialectical leap into communist utopia just won't happen. Initially, this breach was constitutive to the party, and it has been formative in the attempt to reform capitalist society from within, regardless of the ideological proliferation. Reformist anarchy is a genuine mutant.

"In Japan", he said, "when we strike, we put on armbands to show we are unhappy, and we go into the plant and work twice as hard as usual to prove to the bosses how valuable we are."

(The New York Times; October 5, 2009)

For a long time, regular treatments with artificial daylight have been known as a cure for the prevalent disease "winter depression". Hence it should come as no surprise that recent installation of light therapy lamps at office desks and in staff break rooms across the world has ensured an overall positive performance rate. At factories, where production is sustained around the clock, the application of this device, which is attached to the ceiling armatures, counters the feeling of drowsiness and fatigue in the small hours of the morning, postponing it until workers are off duty.

The lamp's capacity to change the cosmology of circadian rhythm is due to the fact that its radiation strongly reduces the brain's production of the sleep hormone melatonin, which normally takes place when it's dark. Therefore, the greatest effect is obtained when your eyes are wide open, enabling the so-called "bright light" to reach the pineal gland directly through the retina.

During his rationalist manoeuvring, Descartes most unfortunately separated materiality (*res extensa*) from the mental sphere (*res cogitans*). To explain the indispensable interaction between the two, he located the meeting point between body and soul in the *glandula pinealis*.

At the price of only a few hundred Danish kroner, the light therapy lamp can now be found in just about any home. For instance, you can buy it at Imerco, a chain of discount hardware stores, the logo of which recently underwent a Japanese-inspired "radical makeover". And if you go to the branch at Amager Centret² - its trademark is a loosely sketched circumscribed A - well, then the circle is almost closed.

1) In 1935, The Danish Social Democratic Party and its leader Thorvald Stauning won a landslide victory under the slogan "Stauning or Chaos".

2) Amager Centret is a shopping mall located in the district of Amager, Copenhagen.



OBJECT, 2009
FLESHLIGHT – PINK LADY ORIGINAL, SLICED WHITE BREAD
11 x 12 x 35 cm



As an adolescent I watched the movie *Trading Places* a dozen times. Towards the end, a prostitute, tangled up in a game of changing stereotypes and all dressed up in lederhosen and a blond wig with braids, gets her cover blown, because she keeps claiming:

I'm Helga from Sweden.

I also remember the following scene most vividly: A supposedly blind man, pretending that he lost his legs in the Vietnam War, is on his knees begging outside a bank. Every time a beautiful woman passes by he grabbles for her while shouting:

Pussy on toast, give me pussy on toast...

Growing older, I have come to understand that this is probably what you eat when drinking tea from Méret Oppenheim's fur cup.



NEW DAWN FADES, 2010
UV LIGHT TUBES ("BLACKLIGHT"), WIRE, FITTINGS
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS

0/1, 2009
POLYSTYRENE, GLUE
45 x 55 x 120 cm



OBJET TROUVÉ, 2008
"AFRICAN SCULPTURE", IPOD SHUFFLE, HEADPHONES
CABARET VOLTAIRE: BAADER MEINHOF / SEX IN SECRET ON A FACTORY PLANT
16 x 20 x 90 cm



It is a fact that Picasso never visited Africa and did not know the continent first-hand. His "Africa" was in showcases, masks, postcards, in his studio, and in his spirit. From the moment in June 1907, when he had his first encounter with African art in the galleries of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, he had a sense of the objects as being charged with emotion - a magical force capable of affecting us deeply. At the same time, the politically conscious Picasso challenged Western artistic traditions and colonial exploitation with this admiration for, and appropriation of, African art. Making the "primitive" sculpture *Tête de Taureau*, he joined a bicycle saddle with handlebars to form a bull's head.

By the time of the *Surrealist Exhibition of Objects* in 1936, a whole range of readymade sub-classifications had been devised, including: "found objects, natural objects, incorporated/interpreted natural objects, perturbed objects, and Oceanic objects."

In my childhood, our home was full of seemingly un-identifiable items passed on in the family for generations; corrugated iron and wood darkened by age and use. It seems they must have been everyday tools that once served pre-industrial hunting, agricultural and naval purposes, at the time of their production as exotic as an mp3-player is nowadays.

Cabaret Voltaire's collages of sampled speech and industrial sound were regularly accompanied by the audience's utter dissatisfaction. In one incident, performing *Baader-Meinhof/Sex in Secret on a Factory Sample*, founding band member Stephen Mallinder was hospitalized with a chipped backbone as a result of the objects the crowd hurled at him.



OBJET TROUVÉ, 2008 (Detail)
"AFRICAN SCULPTURE", IPOD SHUFFLE, HEADPHONES
CABARET VOLTAIRE: BAADER MEINHOF / SEX IN SECRET ON A FACTORY PLANT
16 x 20 x 90 cm

EVIL IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER, 2009
MYLAR EMERGENCY BLANKET, STRETCHER
120 x 190 cm





SEXY BEAST, 2008
INKJET PRINT ON PAPER, ARTIST'S FRAME
43 x 43 cm

The Rorschach Inkblot Test (RIT), created by Hermann Rorschach in 1921, is a method of psychological evaluation, originally employed in cases where the patients were reluctant to openly admit to psychotic thinking.

Since then, much effort has been put into an improvement of the scoring system. In an attempt to make it more statistically rigorous, John E. Exner summarized some of these later developments in his comprehensive Exner system, whereas Evald Bohm based his textbook on the psychoanalytic concept of object relations.

The basic principle of the test is that the subject gets to study all the inkblots twice. The second time, the subject is asked if each inkblot still appears like it did the first time, and also what he/she thinks make it look like that which it is said to resemble. Afterwards, responses are scored with reference to a cluster of variables:

- The level of vagueness or synthesis of multiple images in the blot.
- The variety of determinants used to produce the response.
- The formal quality of the response (to what extent is a response faithful to how the actual inkblot looks).
- The contents of the response (what the respondent actually sees in the blot)
- The degree of mental organizing activity that is involved in producing the response, and any illogical, incongruous, or incoherent aspects of responses.

Within the last 10-15 years, the RIT has come to play an important part in the personality tests used for recruiting corporate executives, officers in the US army, and politicians for high-ranking offices. In these contexts, it is used as a means of indicating whether the person is mentally capable of extensive creative thinking within the borders of the non-pathological

Unlike the common popularity of "Rorschach blots" as a general cultural concept, the actual use of the RIT is extremely limited, since the restriction to only 10 original inkblot images invalidates the test for those who have previously been exposed to it.

Furthermore, several critical studies have suggested that conclusions reached by test administrators are akin to "cold reading", the infamous technique used by fortune-tellers. By carefully analyzing the person's body language, manner of speech, clothing, hairstyle, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc., a practised cold-reader can quickly obtain a great deal of information about the subject without prior knowledge. This involves high probability guesses emphasizing and reinforcing any chance connections the subject acknowledges while quickly moving on from wrong guesses.

*

Things are more confused now. A scratchy recording of the Norwegian national anthem blares out. The oil tanker being greeted flies a Bahamian flag of convenience. It was built by Koreans labouring long hours, and the crew, underpaid and overworked, could be Honduran or Filipino. Only the captain hears a familiar melody.

Allan Sekula: Fish Story, p.12)

Although coming from this side of the Atlantic Ocean, the music of Kings of Convenience might be considered part of the ever-growing genre 'Americana'. The Norwegian group has just released the album *Declaration of Dependence*, and Erlend Øye, returning from Berlin, is back in safe harbour in Bergen.

The immediate past of the Middle East conflict can be discovered in a cultural maze of Islamic fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, American foreign policy and domestic affairs. But essentially concerning fossil fuels this is all based in geological time. The possible future of any solution more or less coincides with that of planet Earth.

Some years ago, Danish designer Henrik Vibskov engaged in a conspicuous happy-go-lucky attack on the so-called partisan scarf, and with the series *Arafat-Remixes*, recently launched by the accessory brand Erfurt, the trickle-down effect of "quotation marks" is still underway.



KING OF CONVENIENCE, 2009
ERFURT SCARF FROM THE COLLECTION ARAFAT REMIXES, STRETCHER
90 x 92 cm



An eponymous work by Swiss artist John Armleder comprises a transparent plexiglas box displaying regrouped magnetic recording media, left blank and signed by the artist.

The present piece consists of my late father's reel-to-reel tape recorder introduced along with all his youth recordings from the early sixties' dawn of hit parades on Danish radio. Being a man of meticulous order, my father unquestionably kept a register of all these recordings, enabling him to find whatever tunes using the counter. This tracking, however, is now lost.



PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, 2009
(AFTER THE ICAROS WOODCUT BY ALBECHT DÜRER)
ROTATING ELECTRIC FAN, FLUORESCENT ACRYLIC PAINT
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS

DANSE MACABRE, 2010
(AFTER EPONYMOUS WOODCUT BY MICHAEL WOLGEMUT)
FLUORESCENT AKRYLIC PAINT, ROTATING HEATMAX HALOGEN HEATERS (1200 W)
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS



MIKKEL CARL
**BACK
TO THE
FUTURE**

Introduction: Anders Gaardboe Jensen
Other texts: Mikkel Carl
Photography: Honza Hoeck, Mikkel Carl

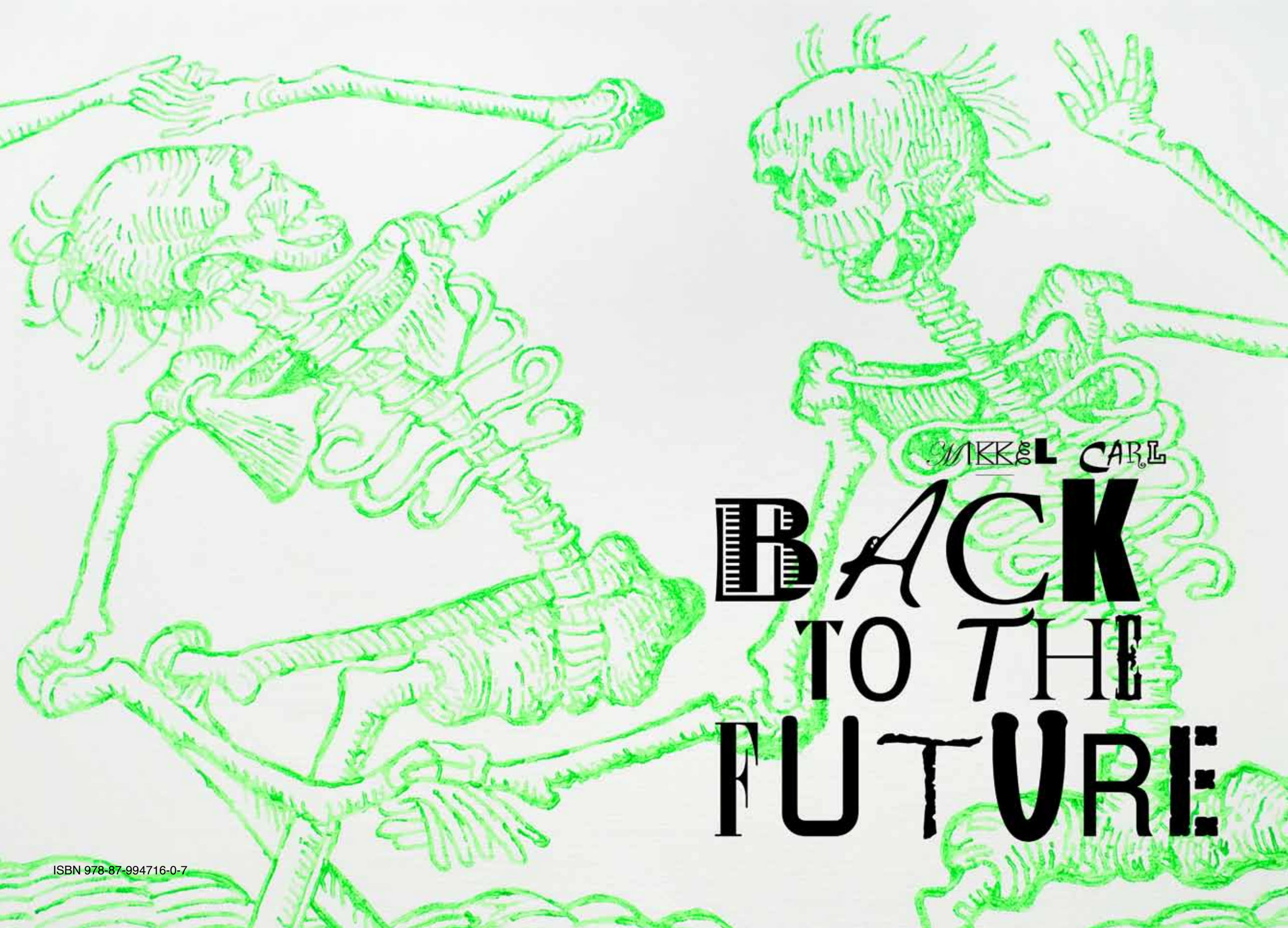
Cover: Danse Macabre, 2010

Printed by: Narayana Press
Edition: 1000

ISBN 978-87-994716-0-7

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MICHAEL CARL

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Mikkel Carl's artistic practice undoubtedly develops a thematic, which ranks among the most urgent ones in the field of contemporary art - the relationship between language and perceptual experience, concept and materiality. This takes place through a cross-media practice, which often enters into a critically inspired dialogue with some of the efforts of 20th century avant-garde and neo-avant-garde movements, in particular Conceptual Art and Minimal Art. Accordingly, he shows a continuing interest in 'found' objects, which are modified and staged anew in order to displace their original registers of aesthetic and semantic content. We recognize here an affinity with Dadaist ready-mades, the unexpected and 'fantastic' combinations of Surrealist assemblages, and above all postmodernism's strategies of appropriation; and inspiration is provided more specifically by engagement with some branches of industrial design, fashion, as well as popular and material culture.

In terms of the various sources, subjects and stylistic impulses employed or 'borrowed', the works take a stand that is ironic and contesting in equal measure. However, Mikkel Carl is not satisfied with merely placing the exhibited objects in exchange with consumer society's already existing social signs and their field of connotation. For it is characteristic of his practice that it involves a semiotic approach to cultural production, insisting that art objects gain meaning in the context of an exhibition primarily as a result of their individual as well as their interrelated capacity for substitution and serial opposition. The grouping of artworks and their internal organization of meaning thus becomes a demonstration of a particular visual grammar vis-à-vis the distinctive material properties and connotative interfaces of the objects displayed. Through subtle modifications and by removing artifacts from their familiar circumstances and environments, the artist orchestrates a play of meaning in which certain iconographic and/or stylistic similarities and associative connections both motivate and challenge the underlying structural consistency.

This means that in terms of the criteria for selecting specific objects Mikkel Carl often works with a combination of exoteric and esoteric elements, i.e. something almost all too familiar is connected in a more or less cryptic manner, thus explicitly appealing to many types of viewer engagement and investment of knowledge. This is how his artistic practice never solely refers to a self-referring universe or a personal mythologizing, but rather continuously inscribes itself in history - and in particular the history of the avant-garde.

While the avant-garde is usually associated with the dematerialization of the artwork, hence transforming the context of art into a cultural endgame, Mikkel Carl is more readily interested in recovering the 'unwritten' or not-yet-acknowledged tradition of the ready-made - which involves how the meaning of culturally commodified objects is communicated through the imaginative sensations of the body. This especially holds true for the part of his work that first and foremost attempts to connect fundamental phenomenological and semiotic categories. With an insistent presence these works often present themselves as spatial installations, clearly blurring the boundaries between inside and outside; and because visual seduction is certainly there the works often succeed in changing the viewers' patterns of behavior and even imposing upon them a bodily vulnerability.

Furthermore, Mikkel Carl's awareness of tradition takes place on a thoroughly tactical and well-considered basis insofar as his artistic practice includes previous (modernist) experiences, genre conventions, and forms of critique. Moreover, the works emphasize certain aspects of art history that are very often overlooked - such as e.g. the visual 'exactness' and flawless design inherent in many ready-mades. By working methodically with repetition, re-contextualization and the radicalization of the material properties of the art object, 'inverse' or retroactive traces in history are generated. And by maintaining the question as to what actually counts as artistic meaning - and not just what constitutes the meaning of an object as such - Mikkel Carl sets out to re-emphasize how the sensory object and the immaterial sign become one.

Anders Gaardboe Jensen



WYSIWYG, 2008 (Detail)
"PARTISAN" SCARF, STRETCHER
100 x 100 cm



WYSIWYG, 2008
"PARTISAN" SCARF, STRETCHER
100 x 100 cm

I'M RIGHT AND YOU'RE WRONG, 2009
THE IKEA SHELVING UNIT *BESTÅ** TURNED INSIDE OUT
30 x 80 x 130 cm
*Translates as 'endure'

UNTITLED (END OF ORGY), 2009
DEFACED PAGE FROM THE BOOK *LIFE, LOVE, DEATH, AND OTHER SUCH TRIFLES* BY JAN SAUDEK
29 x 36 cm

MRS. WESSELMANN, 2009
LATEX SHOWER CURTAIN, STRETCHER
120 x 200 cm



Tom Wesselmann used his wife Claire Selley, a former fellow student with whom he had a unique sexual relationship at Cooper Union, as a model for the series *The Great American Nude*. These erotic inventories violate the smooth surface of Pop Art by fitting physical objects into the cartoonish naturalism of the paintings. This can be seen, for instance, in *Bathroom Collage no.2*, where a showering woman exposes her somewhat woollen private parts.

Being a symbol of elaborate coercive sexual acts, latex is probably more closely related to the overall creative eye of any nude portrait than to straightforward misogyny, of which Wesselmann's great hero Willem de Kooning has been unjustly accused. Nevertheless, turning the shower curtain upside down does emphasize general anthropomorphic concerns through simple metonymy. The top rod pocket, made to fasten the fabric in the actual shower cabin, may now resemble a pretty sexy miniskirt, while the large variety of tiny cracks and ripples visible on the outstretched surface will recall former use.

Not even Malevich's *Black Square* manages to recede completely into space. Its equally porous skin testifies to an underlying coloured composition initially preventing the black oil paint from setting.

WYSIWYG, the acronym for What You See Is What You Get, is a technical term describing a situation whereby edited material appears on the computer screen in the same quality as the final output. American housing advertisers used similar guarantees as early as in the 1940s, and in the late 1960s, TV-star Flip Wilson's alter ego, the drag queen Geraldine, immortalized the phrase.

The geometrical illusionism of Rodchenko was an early example of a phenomenological emphasizing of social construction and as such a specific critique of Malevich's suprematist prophecy regarding the metaphysical transformation of mankind. And the supposedly definitive monochromes, Ad Reinhardt's signature black paintings, were accompanied by his long list of negations, stating what these paintings are not. The self-referential absolutism of pure opticality carries with it a rhetorical parasite.

Yasser Arafat once claimed that he, through the simple folding of his traditional Arab headscarf, had fashioned Palestine. Thus, in the 1970s and 80s, left-wingers wore the so-called partisan scarf to show general sympathy with rebellious struggles for freedom, and in the 90s it was still in vogue among high school students. A couple of years ago, the scarf very surprisingly appeared on the podiums in Paris, and any radical claim this particular garment might have had now comes in all the colours of the rainbow.

Notwithstanding modernistic condemnation, neither Muslims nor Jews consider ornament a crime.

★

Life, Love, Death & other such Trifles is a Taschen publication showing Czech photographer Jan Saudek's hand-coloured portraits. Accompanied by a variety of naked women, some suspiciously young, and some rather old and fat, he also poses himself in these surreal narrative tableaux.

In my earliest engagement with the photographic medium, I found those pictures disturbing, yet very arousing. So, upon the rediscovery of the aforementioned book more than a decade later, I tried to come to terms with my adolescent bewilderment by means of collage. This was certainly not a success, and instead, I have found myself simply removing the actual imagery, keeping only the title and page number. Maybe this kind of artistic work presents an answer to the trick question Jean Baudrillard so famously posed in his *Cool Memories*:

A man whispers to a woman, "What are you doing after the orgy?"

Well, maybe it doesn't. But Saudek's kitsch eroticism does strike me as an adaptation to a fundamentally political trauma. In fear of imprisonment by the secret police, he lived and worked in a ruinous cell-like basement, which had only a single small window.

Considering the depersonalizing black bars explicitly occurring across people's eyes and/or genitals, it is evident that our imagination is generally encouraged by censorship. This makes you wonder how the politics of abstract art really works. Try to reimagine the short-lived endorsement of Russian avant-garde art by the changing regime, or the benevolent American export of abstract expressionism. In both cases, a pervasive sense of emotional and economic liberation was offered.

Mel Ramsden's *Secret Painting* consists of a black monochrome and a slightly smaller, framed photostat stating:

The content of this painting is invisible; the character and dimension of the content are to be kept permanently secret, known only to the artist.

I wonder if this is still the case.



UNTITLED (END OF ORGY), 2009
DEFACED PAGE FROM THE BOOK *LIFE, LOVE, DEATH, AND OTHER SUCH TRIFLES* BY JAN SAUDEK
ARTIST'S FRAME
29 x 36 cm

I'M RIGHT AND YOU'RE WRONG, 2009
THE IKEA SHELVING UNIT *BESTÅ** TURNED INSIDE OUT
30 x 80 x 130 cm
*Translates as 'endure'



RE-ERECTION OF THE MONUMENT, 2009
ELFA MODULE SYSTEM RACK
218 x 225 x 233 cm



BACK TO THE FUTURE, 2009
OIL PAINT ON SYNTHETIC LAMB SKIN
55 x 87 cm



WALL DRAWING (STUDIO), 2009
INKJET PRINT ON PAPER, ARTIST'S FRAME
30 x 40 cm



Their hopes that "conceptual art" would be able to avoid general commercialization, the destructively "progressive" approach of modernism, were for the most part unfounded ...art and artist in a capitalist society remain luxuries.

(Lucy Lippard: *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, p.263)

In 1988, Megadeth made a cover version of The Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK* from 1976. With reference to the difficulty of actually understanding what Johnny Rotten was singing, an aggressive tonality one might venture to call constitutive of the genre, the setting of the song was moved to the U.S., though without changing the original title. This ironic conduct of the term origin was emphasized by the album title *So Far, So Good... So What*. Five years later, in 1993, comedy metal band Green Jellÿ, released *Anarchy in Bedrock*. Meet The Flintstones, punk's retroactive apotheosis.

Glen Matlock was the original bass player of The Sex Pistols. But soon he was replaced by Sid Vicious, whose notorious diminutive musical abilities were intimately associated with a punk attitude far more genuine. So, Vicious' instrument consistently remained turned off during concerts, while Glen Matlock kept doing the playback plus studio-recordings.

Launched to coincide with the official celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee, the single *No Future* was renamed *God Save the Queen*. Released in a cover that English print workers flat-out refused to manufacture, this song obtained the status of pure negation when several UK charts deliberately omitted the title of that period's best-selling single.

As one of the last remaining monarchies of Europe the Danes can also now dine like royalty when it comes to chocolate. From now on the RITTER SPORT Gold Edition befittingly presents itself to our neighbours in a lustrous gold wrapper. And because it is so good at creating such illustrious attention among friends, the Danes are sure to keep living up to their reputation as a hospitable folk.

(www.RitterSport.de)

MONARCHY IN THE UK, 2009 (Detail)
144 PACKETS OF RITTERSPORT GOLD LIMITED EDITION (250 g)
171 x 191 cm





THE RETURN OF THE REAL (I), 2010
 LOW RESOLUTION IMAGE OF *FUCK FACE TWINS* BY CHAPMAN BROTHERS MOUNTED ON A POSTCARD PICTURING
 ODD NERDRUM'S *SELF-PORTRAIT IN GOLDENKIRTLE* TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, ARTIST'S FRAME
 21 x 24 cm

THE RETURN OF THE REAL (II), 2010
 DEFASED POSTCARD PICTURING *LE CANARD INQUIETANT* BY ASGER JORN , ARTIST'S FRAME
 26 x 30 cm

THE RETURN OF THE REAL (III), 2010
 PENCIL ON A CATALOGUE PAGE PICTURING KRISTIAN DEVANTIER'S *PIGERNES LATTER OG LYSE HÅR**
 ARTIST'S FRAME
 18 x 25 cm

*The original title, which is taken from a danish folksong, translates as *THE GIRLS' LAUGHTER AND BLOND HAIR*.
 Replacing the L with a P in the Danish word LATTER (LAUGHTER) changes its meaning to TITS.



THE RETURN OF THE REAL (I), 2010 (Detail)
 A LOW RESOLUTION IMAGE OF *FUCK FACE TWINS* BY CHAPMAN BROTHERS MOUNTED ON A POSTCARD PICTURING
 ODD NERDRUM'S *SELF-PORTRAIT IN GOLDENKIRTLE* TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, ARTIST'S FRAME
 21 x 24 cm

THE RETURN OF THE REAL (III), 2010 (Detail)
PENCIL ON A CATALOGUE PAGE PICTURING KRISTIAN DEVANTIER'S *PIGERNES LATTER OG LYSE HÅR*
ARTIST'S FRAME
18 x 25 cm

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PIGERNES **P**ATTER OG LYSE HÅR
2004
Papirer, collage, 62x44 cm.



MEANWHILE SOMEWHERE ELSE, 2009
ENAMEL PAINT ON CAMOUFLAGE FABRIC
50 x 90 cm

MEANWHILE SOMEWHERE ELSE, 2009 (Detail)
ENAMEL PAINT ON CAMOUFLAGE FABRIC
50 x 90 cm



THE X-LINE OF HERITAGE, 2008
TWO UNACKNOWLEDGED COPIES OF THE X-LINE CHAIR
VARIABLE DIMENSIONS



In 1987, Danish architect Niels Joergen Haugesen designed the *X-line Chair*. It has proved to be an icon of the industrial romanticism now generally identified as one of that decade's most prominent features.

Confronting this spirit with its ancestral metaphysics, intensified through the failed utopia of social levelling, an unacknowledged, but widely popular copy of that chair has been transformed somewhat in the style of Russian constructivism.

This act can be said to express the X-line of heritage.