

OBJECTS in an EMBASSY

Objects in an Embassy establishes a diplomatic arrangement between design and fine art objects. Disciplinary segregation is diffused; in the designer's invitational, the more traditional works of art—textile, sculpture and painting—command the space bilaterally with tables, chairs, lamps and other things “functional” amid the opulence of an old general consulate, resulting in the objects' categorical indeterminacy. Debate about what is hushed by an interest in the how of making things. The congregation folds together under the totalizing force of domesticity.

“Visual language changes according to the needs of the day,” whose primacy at present need be multiplicity and cooperation.¹ The reemergence of craft as culturally significant, in tandem with the disintegration of spaces for culture in the neoliberal city, suggests the art object and its adjacencies are valuable inasmuch as they propose an aesthetic order that combats the atomization of society. Our social conditions are most legible digitally mediated; it matters that the objects in this embassy are made individually, bound up in the subjectivity of their crafters. The commodity in both art and design has been decoupled from work being made to look seamless. Objects which index human touch now speak the language of luxury.

Against the modernist paradigm which produced art and design indistinctions, this curatorial assemblage propels a metamodernist project, where design is thought through—in part—iconically, as subject. Sophia Borowska and Brian Rideout explore these concerns pictorially, in textile and painting respectively, emblemizing the ethos of design's past reflexively. Intellectual ruminations on function produce a closed loop in the design objects present, too, resisting physical activation beyond the looking act. Chris Fusaro's Kennel Chair offers no comfort or integrity as furniture, mixing disparate uses to the effect of obsolescent cruelty. Susan for Susan's couch is bulbous, made of concrete, more medium of art than anything to sit on. Laurence Veri's work straddles the line between functional teapot and ceramic simulacra, etcetera.

The conversation between art and design is historically exhausted, though not insignificant. In Canada, a severe lack of experimentation is present in design practices and their showing venues. Above all else, Objects in an Embassy is an excuse to mobilize a scene that doesn't otherwise exist, where design is considered like art: a set of formal constraints, histories and conceptions to be fucked with beyond its prescriptions.

Fittingly, the general consulate which stages the show is between purposes. Once a primary site for diplomacy between the country formerly known as Czechoslovakia and Canada, the property is set to become a new housing development in the near future. Staging a show in this liminal space is generative, incubatory. It takes advantage of formality in entropy as an atmosphere, or more loadedly, a proposition, for design to look act feel be different than what's conventionally appropriate, a space where engineers showcase their poetry, and poets their engines.

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¹ Design as Art, Bruno Munari.