

ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY BEYOND BEAUTIFUL REPRESENTATIONS: THE MATERIAL HYPERREALITY OF ARTISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY

Sergio Jarillo de la Torre

Sergio Jarillo de la Torre has a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Cambridge. Address for correspondence: Darwin College, Silver Street, Cambridge, CB3 9EU, UK. sj323@cam.ac.uk.

This paper takes its cue from two art objects that can be considered in themselves as nontextual experiments in ethnographic research. The series *Museum Photographs* by Thomas Struth, as Guggenheim Museum curators put it, “captures anonymous individuals and crowds looking at iconic works of Western art in the world’s most popular museums.” More than the aesthetic value of the artwork and its meaning, Struth’s reflection emphasizes the audience’s reaction to the art object, evidencing his concern with the social potential of artworks in the art world. In a similar way, Christoph Büchel puts the public at the center of his installation *Simply Botiful* by soliciting affective responses to hyperrealistic and emotionally loaded issues. This paper purports to look at Büchel’s installation with Struth’s conceptual lens as a methodological tool to disentangle the complex web of relations between people and things that gravitate around the art world. Ultimately, it poses the question: if art objects are mediators of and commentaries on reality, under which conditions can artistic practices serve the purpose of exploring new avenues of ethnographic inquiry?

Keywords: Art; Photography; Struth; Büchel; Ethnographic Conceptualism; Authorship

In the syllabus-informed institutional frameworks that parse the academic disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, art and anthropology are commonly held to be two separate domains, where the latter explains the former so as to produce an understanding of art that departs essentially from it. Despite recent theoretical and methodological reconceptualizations,¹ the analytic flow is traditionally held to be one-

¹ Most notably the expographic experiments of Latour and Weibel (2005) and the experimental modes of anthropological research through art collected in Schneider and Wright (2006). Arnd Schneider (2008) in particular is an advocate of the role of the visual art in anthropological representation and research. Beyond the realm of visual art, Max Liboiron prompts interesting ethnographic performances through his interactive art installations: the public engage with traditional anthropological themes such as exchange, consumption, regimes of value, the ecology of the landscape, trash-based social economies, and so on (see <http://emedia.art.sunysb.edu/maxliboiron/webpages>).

sided. Anthropology explores art objects either as endorsers or subverters of given social systems (Foster 1996; MacClancy 1997; Phillips and Steiner 1999) or, in its more symbolic role, as vectors of embedded meaning or aesthetic structures (Forge 1973; Bateson 1973; Morphy 1991; Coote and Shelton 1992).² The underlying rule of anthropologic hermeneutics treats art as a dividing sphere of cognition from which a type of mediated knowledge issues that requires further transliterations. If art is often the expression of an observed/perceived inner or outer world, the anthropology of art is a successive exegesis of that observation/perception. Art and anthropology are therefore incommensurate, at least up until anthropology effects art's translation, the result of which is, in Alfred Gell's uncompromising view, the "dissolution of art" (1992:41).

Or is it? As they both render perceptions, ideas, and visions of the world through means that are inherent to their own expressive forms (textual and plastic, for example), their exegetical scope brings together what their methodological tools of apprehension set apart. Art and anthropology abut on a "metonymic juxtaposition" that results in "a movement of metaphorical comparison in which consistent grounds for similarity and difference are elaborated," as James Clifford has eloquently argued (1988:146). It is in this dialectic of metaphors that anthropologists have found a way to expand referential frames so as to trace all-encompassing relations between the world and its representations (see Wagner 1981), including those devised by art forms. Thus, artists and anthropologists are the agents of similar mediations enacted through dissimilar instruments. Simply put, one of their common aspirations is to (re)present the self and the other and to establish a nexus of relations between their (re)presentations and an audience. Furthermore, modernist art and anthropology partake of a common critical gaze, expressed in their efforts to evaluate these representations (see Miller 1991:50; Marcus and Myers 1995:6) and even deconstruct them, making the unfamiliar familiar and vice versa.³ Once art has been consciously and officially welcomed into the realm of culture (Foster 1996:306), it starts sharing referential discourses on representation, creativity, authorship, reflexivity, intersubjectivity, and other etic and emic analytics with anthropology.

Given their similar scopes, it is legitimate to wonder what insights can be gained from an outlook switch. What would happen if art explained anthropology in a nontextual way and if anthropology conceived its data as artistic performances? Does the metonymic contact zone between art and anthropology allow for a reversal of the analytic flow, where the artist experiences the anthropological enterprise of

² Bateson's concept of art is particularly interesting. He considered art "as a part of man's quest for grace," where grace denotes the "naïveté of communication and behaviour found in animals lacking deceit and self-deceit purposes" (Bateson 1973:235). The quest for meaning in art, according to Bateson, was indeed a search for "pattern, redundancy and information" (237), hence the hermeneutic role of anthropology in uncovering its meaning.

³ Museums have played a key role in the development of this common idea of modernity (see Prior 2002; Henare 2005). For a general view on their ongoing role in shaping and communicating representations of others from an anthropological perspective, see for instance Karp and Lavine (1991), Ames (1992), Haas (1996).

knowledge creation *directly* in the field? Pushed to the exploratory confines of their broader (for a nonspecialized audience) consequences, these actions would entail a conceptual displacement of ethnographic authorship and of the notion of field that goes beyond the experiments in the aesthetics of representation advocated by the *Writing Culture* critique of anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986). For all its wishful suggestions of dialogic engagement, multivocality, and collaborative creation, the interpretations offered by the discipline since the “reflexive turn” have lingered over textuality and univocal authorship. Museological interventions aside, anthropological research is generally constricted to literary or visual forms only that invariably bear the signature of the Fieldworker, aka the Anthropologist, as an endorsement of a paradigm-grounded professionalism asserted within institutional limits. Likewise, the concept of field—even in its multisited configurations—is predetermined and circumscribed a priori by the anthropologist as the unit chosen for observation, writing off spontaneous claims of field sites that are not recognized as such in advance by research agendas.⁴ It is no surprise that with all these boundaries enclosing its scientific heart, anthropology has failed to yield to any impetus that distances it from its aspiration to be a producer (and a product) of truthful, verifiable written descriptions and comparative accounts. Nor can anthropology, for that matter, distance itself from anthropologists. More often than not, the anthropology of art stays closer to anthropology than to art. There are, nonetheless, instances where artists can be considered fieldworkers carrying out ethnographic research through their artworks (see Calzadilla and Marcus 2006:96). I argue that such artworks can double as nontextual artifacts of ethnographic inquiry with multiple authorship, assembled as they are by a plurality of subjects and performed outside the limits of academic convention.

This paper proposes two examples from two affirmed artists whose interventions I have taken to be “artistic ethnographies,” the first one providing a nonliterary lens that is conducive in understanding the intricate world evoked by the second. By artistic ethnography I intend those artworks or art installations that function as de facto ethnographies in exploring, exposing, and analyzing sociocultural patterns of livelihood beyond or besides offering purely aesthetic pleasure. The envisaged installations share a twofold constituent that makes them particularly appropriate (and appropriable) for the present experiment: First, their execution is comparable to an ethnographic inquiry in the field, conceived by both artists as a locus with potential for the production of a type of knowledge that can be labeled as anthropological and can be apprehended through a sensory grasp that prescinds from the textual output. And second, notwithstanding the latter premise, none of the artists make an explicit claim for their artworks to be an anthropological study. Their artistic interventions propose a “reading” of sociocultural models whose principal characteristic is to be open ended, admitting the inductive elaboration of dynamic hypotheses and conclusions by the public while remaining works of art.

⁴ Sure enough, the discipline also produces its own exceptions to the established tradition of setting delimited research agendas (see for instance Cerwonka and Malkki 2007).

The first example considers a series of large-format photographs by German artist Thomas Struth in which the audiences of museums and art galleries are photographed in their contemplation of iconic artworks. Struth's photographs outline the connections between art and people across history. The concept behind these visual artifacts is an immediate perception that reaches beyond the field of the material object. It explores a series of relational possibilities between the artist, the artwork, and the art world. Struth's photography works as a revelatory artifact that uncovers the relations between the world and its possible representations.

The second example comes from a hyperrealistic⁵ art installation where the public actively engages physically and emotionally with an unconventional art setting that evokes social issues via the material reconstruction of a lived/liveable space. Swiss artist Christoph Büchel has created an artistic representation of the world that does not just lie metonymically next to it, nor is it an aesthetic commentary of it. Rather, it is a full-scale indexical superimposition of realistic art on reality, as it were, that requires—ideally—the audience's immediate commitment to seizing a space that bears no didactic marks or explanatory signposts for the conceptual positioning of the viewers.

Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that it is possible to use art conceptually as a theoretical and methodological medium to enhance our perception and understanding of sociocultural practices, not only in the art world but also in the everyday.

THOMAS STRUTH AND THE ETHNOGRAPHIC GAZE

Thomas Struth first studied painting at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf under Gerhard Richter and Peter Kleeman before moving on to photography. Previously reputed for its stress on the pictorial above other languages of artistic expression, the Art Academy of Düsseldorf opened up to photography in the mid 1970s, largely under the influence of Struth's mentors, Bernd and Hilla Becher. In their acclaimed series of black and white architectural pictures, the Bechers portray typologies of anonymous industrial buildings endowed with a sculptural simplicity that verges on diagrammatic reification. Struth made the Bechers' aspirations for objectivity in photography his and set off to reproduce what he considers to be an unbiased and ideologically void perception of the world.⁶ It is with this contextual background that since 1989 Struth has been exploring the relations between art and the crowds that attend art exhibitions. In his series *Museum Photographs*, the spectator's gaze is singled out as the central element in the artist's composition, emphasizing the audience's reaction to the art object over the object itself. In all of the photos there

⁵ It is indeed a type of representation that stays true to life, to a point where the whole installation superimposes the reality it has taken conceptually as a model or reference point. As I use it in this paper, the term hyperrealistic is not interchangeable with the term hyperrealism used in art history to define paintings or sculptures that have a photograph-like quality to them.

⁶ Struth's claims of objectivity are best expressed in a group show staged at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1988 entitled *Another Objectivity*.

is a common spatial denominator that is highlighted beyond ambivalence. The coordinates are recognizable as those of a highly ritualized art space that acts as the operative contextual grounding for the photographer's inquiry, limited, so to speak, to the museum. Struth has been snapping museum visitors in the likes of the Prado, the Hermitage, or the Louvre, among many other well-known museums and art galleries. In some of the plates, masterpieces—like Velázquez's *Las Meninas*—can be seen in the background, whereas in many others the image does not reveal a particular work of art as much as it evokes the reverential, fetishized, or vulgarized breath of art in general. His photos show an indiscriminate array of women and men, encompassing different ages, classes, ethnicities, and nationalities, in larger or smaller groups or as dissociated individuals. The visitors are displayed with natural nonchalance in their unposed demeanors, entranced in contemplative stances or caught in the proverbial indifference provoked by museum fatigue. Their body language is captured in more or less explicit attitudes of appreciation, curiosity, awe, study, and even joy or bliss, all of which—mind you—are just the inference of the viewer of Struth's photos (in this particular case, mine). Emotional, intellectual, or affective responses are not presented as an existing feed uncovered by the photographer and directed to the onlooker as a given. Rather, these are conjectures constructed by us, subject to alternative and perhaps even contrasting readings. In that sense, Struth's explorations take on the value of raw data collected randomly in the museum field.

This perceived and performed randomness is the operative key in the artist's theatrical depiction of cultural mass consumption. Although it has been rightly observed that for Struth "the photograph documents above all a visual and psychological encounter" (Haxthausen 2002:586), in the *Museum Series* the encounter seems to take place by chance and not as the enactment of a carefully planned research agenda. Through the artist's reproductions, our eye is allowed to wander around the galleries more with the casual curiosity of the flâneur than with the attentive scrutiny of the anthropologist doing fieldwork. How then, are Struth's photographs ethnographic, if at all? Although his prints search for the reactions of the viewer confronted with artworks that are representative of a familiar, historical tradition, they do not provide an articulate answer in themselves, in the sense that they are not a didactic commentary on those reactions. Rather, they formulate a series of visual questions that interrogate the relations between audience, artist, artifact, and art space. Making good Robert Doisneau's well-known motto ("to suggest is to create, to describe is to destroy"), Struth's visual inquiry is not put forward directly to the public as his own, prepackaged set of assumptions based on his own observations but takes instead the semblance of an open-ended object that is susceptible of varying assemblages, offering to the audience the opportunity to create their own item.

Here, it is important to note that Struth's photography makes no claims to be visual anthropology (a hermeneutic device with a historic trajectory and within a precise academic tradition), no matter how instrumental it may turn to be in understanding details of social life through images. Struth's is a work of art in itself that hangs in museums and art galleries. His photos are big reproductions on

plexiglass, recognizable in themselves as artworks and endowed with a high commercial value. One of the photos in the *Museum Series*, a self-portrait of Struth himself looking at Dürer's self-portrait at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, sold at an auction in New York in 2006 for almost \$300,000,⁷ hardly your conventional piece of anthropological inquiry. The *Museum Photographs* are works of art, yet we can also see them as ethnographic devices. They reveal more than the aesthetic object in itself as a manifestation of the here and now. The uncovering of associations in Struth's photographs becomes a process protruding in time, expanding thus the notion of the field to any successive views of the artwork, bringing the past into the present, and suggesting a multiplicity of causalities as potential future interrogations. The historicity of the museum context and its artworks and its ongoing validation by the public as a functional example of high culture is only one aspect of this process suggested by the *Museum Photographs*.

But in order to stay faithful to the more experimental intent that falls within the remit of this paper, it is key to use Struth's oeuvre as a *modus operandi* and not as a material description. That is, to focus on the trajectories of his photographic gaze and conceive it as a flexible methodology instead of looking at the final result as a formed object. Viewers of the *Museum Photographs* reflect on where and when is art, but if we take this reflection to be a process capable of running parallel to the artist's process of inquiry we might find that there is room for applying it to other instances beyond the bounded and well-defined art scene.

ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS AS ANTHROPOLOGY: FROM DEDUCTIVE CONTEXTUALIZATION TO INDUCTIVE CONCEPTUALISM

Does looking at art through art amount to a "metacommentary" of an artwork on another one? One of the fortunes of photography is its capacity to be self-transcendent, to "annihilate itself as a *medium*, to be no longer a sign but the thing itself," as Barthes puts it (1981:45, emphasis in the original). If the very agent of the mediation is obviated, there is no case for digressive translation: the artwork does not get subsumed in explanations that depart from it, conserving its original form and meaning. The object stays the same, and to the deconstructionist (or superfluous) comments the non-comments of a superimposed paraphrase are preferred. But in Struth's case, this fortune would be insufficient if the purpose of his obviation was focused exclusively on the artworks hanging from the museum's walls. If the photographer was to present us only with the thing itself, he would be staging a mere substitution, hardly an improvement from the mediating metacommentary. Yet Struth's interventions are no "paraphrase" of other artists' representations, in the

⁷ The hammer price was \$296,000. See Christie's catalogue, sale 1727, lot 517 (http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4816569). The price is even more remarkable if we compare it to that reached by other photographs on that day. Indeed, in the same auction, a four-photograph grid of industrial buildings by Struth's teachers at Düsseldorf, the Bechers, sold for "only" \$18,000 (http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4816582).

sense that they do not effect any symbolic or semiotic transformation of the photographed artworks. Despite Barthes's observation, paraphrase—and not plagiarism—is indeed the right word here. Jorge Luis Borges's short story "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," tells us of a French symbolist writer who, after a thorough study of Cervantes's novel, has "rewritten" *Don Quixote* as a verbatim copy of the original—although conceived by Menard as entirely his and by his readers as "more heroic" and richer in alternative meanings than the original, since Menard wrote it from the temporal and philosophical perspective of a more "knowledgeable" epoch, imbued, so to speak, with further contextual possibilities than the original. If Struth were concerned only with the paintings in museums, he would be trying to "pull a Menard," redoing the artworks' intrinsic characteristics by just snapping them as they are; he would be inducing new readings of old artworks by situating them outside of their original sociocultural contexts through his photographs. Instead, Struth urges us to look *around* the art pieces and—observe more than their essence—the changing consequences of their existence in time (see below). Unconcerned by hermeneutic issues to start with, Struth's photography does not make any attempt at commenting and understanding artworks. His gaze bears no material nor conceptual appropriation and/or reelaboration of the cultural elements intrinsic to the art pieces he portrays in his plates (see Schneider 2003:217–218). In lieu of a gloss on the meaning of the artworks and a reduction in scale of the art space into a consumable, definable trope—as anthropology or art history would have it—Thomas Struth's series of photographs demand a continuous positioning of the audience regarding the changing relations between that object, the artist, and the art world, and the situation of the viewer in connection to other viewers.

In his quest to evince the links between the world of art and its consumers, Struth carried out further investigations through the deployment of his photographic scrutiny. In the summer of 2004 in Florence's Galleria dell'Accademia, Struth produced a series of pictures called *Audience*⁸ that can be inscribed within the *Museum Photographs*. In it, the viewers observe Michelangelo's *David* on the occasion of its special unveiling in its quincentenary after its restoration. *Audience* takes the proposal that any vision of the world conceived by the artist is invariably assembled through a series of object-subject exchanges one step further. Struth portrays the crowds almost frontally as they glance upwards to admire the towering marble sculpture. Standing next to the base of *David's* pedestal with his large-format camera and a strobe light, the presence of the photographer is as evident as that of the participant observer. Like the ethnographer, Struth is an active agent within the research process, so much so that in some of the plates the occasional viewer diverts his attention from the sculpture to stare at him (see, for example, *Audience 7*). Even more so than in any of his previous series, here the German artist succeeds in carving out the viewers from the background, making their reactions almost tactile. Unlike other plates in *Museum Photographs*, the photos of *Audience* dwell deeper in the complexity of the relations between *David's* viewers and the viewers of Struth's pictures. Here, the artwork is

⁸ <http://www.thomasstruth32.com/smallsize/photographs/audiences/index.html>.

obliterated as manifest object and hinted at through the reactions of the public, providing us with the realistic fiction that it is the gaze of the crowd that creates the artwork. Simultaneously, we are reminded that this (to us invisible) art piece is instrumental in creating the audience, lending support to the hypothesis that any knowledge on the world fabricated under these circumstances is always the product of a triangular mode of inquiry involving art, artists, and the public.

Precisely, what *Audience* corroborates is the lack of an exclusive concern with the art object by itself, with its aesthetic attributes, its iconological meaning, or its semantic characteristics only. What is, then, the substance of the photographer's intervention? It is noteworthy to remember here that Struth does not think of his work in conceptual terms. He wishes not to communicate an idea but to present an objective image. Yet, even if he is not presenting us with a formed concept, he nevertheless undoubtedly gives us the material necessary to elaborate one, or several. As Struth himself puts it:

[T]he viewer of the works seen in the photograph finds him/herself in a space in which I, too, belong when I stand in front of the photograph. The photographs illuminate the connection and should lead the viewers away from regarding the works as mere fetish-objects and initiate their own understanding or intervention in historical relationships.⁹

However, when highlighting these connections, Struth's scrutiny is not devoted to the social dimension of art *without* the artwork, no matter the obvious intensity of his antifetishistic attempt in diverting our stare from the object. Whatever the artwork expresses, it does so in conjunction with the people's indissoluble reaction to it (or lack of it). Struth's *Museum Photographs* call attention to the extended social relations emanating from the artwork, providing an immediate visual template for the relations between us and our world. His visual cues suggest that any artistic perception of the world should not be contemplated as an inert vessel of meanings crafted by the artist in historically located contexts. By directing his gaze and ours *around* art, his proposition turns into an effort at hyper-contextualization. Indeed, the focus of his unmediated photographic comment is not just the artwork but the artwork—the art world—and the public. Accordingly, what Struth's reflection seems to be pointing at is that art is not a detached form of representation/interpretation of reality or even a distinctive judgment of it. In his view, art is, mostly, a dynamic, ever-changing, and collective process of intersubjective participation, where the subjects have the capacity (if not the will) to produce new understandings in a porous world inhabited by people and things. Anthropologists will no doubt hear the echoes of a Latourian ontology resonate in the interstices of this object-subject porosity. Latour's insights are indeed particularly well suited to accommodate the complex multiplicity of the art object, understood of not as an objective matter of fact but as a disputed, changing matter of concern (1993, 2005b).

⁹ *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999 (http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1999/muse/artist_pages/struth_galleria.html).

Yet unlike Latour's model, Struth's photographic analysis is not necessarily object-centric. It revolves around the museum space and the art pieces, the crowds, the artists, and even across historic epochs without pledging exclusive allegiance to any of them. Associations are multiple and potentially seizable from contrasting perspectives. The links thus established (or to be established) can be uncovered by all the actors involved as they move along their respective perceptual paths, apprehending the represented through a series of exchanges of flexible representations. Under this light, artists, objects, and public become active nodes whose extended interconnectedness can be evinced through an interplay of description and suggestion.

Sheldon Annis (1986) has explored the physics of this type of museum-object-audience interactions, deconstructing the type of visual interplay suggested by Struth's photographic inquiry into three different yet overlapping categories: First, the social level or museum pragmatics, where relational processes are constructed through intersubjective links (subject-object-subject). Second, the cognitive or rational level. This plane is connected to museum rhetoric, understood as the mechanisms of persuasion acted through legible cognitive associations. At this level, didactic guidance is enhanced via graphic juxtapositions, indexicality, text labels, and other devices that allow the museum, as institution, to "discipline" the visitors' sight—and, one can argue, also train their responses. And third, the emotional or suggestive level (Annis calls it "oneiric"), a nonrational receptacle for individual memories and sensibilities that is more appropriate to file under museum poetics. Without sidelining completely the museum poetics and the informational rhetoric (implicitly encoded in the familiar setting of an iconic art space), Struth forces us to pay closer attention to the museum pragmatics in his photos. The interconnectedness, from which audiences derive knowledge in the museum context, lies in the dialectic enacted between this type of objective and subjective worlds: the extension and juxtaposition of inner representations and an objectified "reality." A directly experienced and distributed comprehension of the world rests upon the fluidity of these exchanges and the viewers' capacity to first initiate and subsequently follow the links between objects and subjects.

Indeed, one immediate consequence of the relational reassessment impelled by Struth's visual methodology is the realization that the position of the museum has moved on from that of a static shrine displaying "deductive knowledge" on alterity through artistic samples/examples of "cultural truth" to a dynamic forum where knowledge is a disputed construction, induced by the participation of the public. Truth has been replaced by the truths issuing from the traffic of representations that every actor contributes in her/his experience of the art world, in conjunction or in contention with other actors. But if the openness of the suggested inductive approach makes it legitimate to raise the possibility of a recombination of these exchanges, it is also true that there is, in traditional museums and art galleries, a controlled viewing context that sets down a series of rules for visitors to "consume" art in a prescribed, almost ritualistic manner. Explicit as it is and full of potential to open up authorship to multiple subjects, the "inquiry" proposed by the "researcher" Struth is nonetheless

vitiated by a perceptual rigidity: the apprehension of the objectified other is limited to yet another genre, not literary but visual. Furthermore, the transposition of research media is paralleled by that of the context for its presentation, shifting from one institutional framework (academia) to another (the museum). Substituting ethnographer for artist can also and only imply the substitution of a type of authority for another, or be the equivalent of a change in scale of the same cultural set. In short, Struth's experiment is achieved in the museum, but is it achievable outside of it?

Or otherwise: is it possible to enact another kind of artistic experimentation, one where the assemblage of cultural representations is not circumscribed to the laboratory-like conditions found in the temple of the muses, with its prescribed, limiting subject-object constructive possibilities and its delimited educational tags? A type of inquiry that—like Struth's photography does—defetishizes the art object while keeping its poetic sensibility alive? And most importantly, if experiencing this type of interconnected knowledge is a possibility realizable in the field, can it be experienced and performed beyond the textual and the visual?

CHRISTOPH BÜCHEL, A HYPERREALIST FIELDWORKER?

I have taken Struth's photos to be art objects and visual methodologies of ethnographic inquiry at the same time. Although the obviousness of the former is compounded by the author's intention and the market's recognition of it, the latter partakes of neither, for Struth is no aspiring ethnographer (at least not explicitly), nor does academia (the marketplace where scientifically accepted ideas are traded) see him as such. Struth gives us no theory to be decoded, interiorized, and applied to the world he sees so we can see the world. Instead, he insinuates a type of engagement that invites the audience to trace a series of associations instrumental in making *a* world. Or at least so we are led to think. His gaze takes the value of a "tool of uncovering" as opposed to a "tool of description," but the uncovering surmises a precedent without necessarily giving us evidence of it. The world of objects and ideas is not always viewed as artistic.

Yet art and aesthetics are, indisputably, part of Struth's analysis. His view seems to be limited to what is seen and what is art, and his field of action limited to *where* is art. This raises a question of epistemological referentiality. In other words, is the type of knowledge produced in this way limited to a reflection of the art world on the art world? Is this a short circuit staging a paltry substitution of textual self-critique for a visual one? A bounded sphere of inquiry for another limited field site? In the contemporary artistic tradition of the Western world, at least, this is not an inescapable trope. As Hal Foster has it, contemporary art has transcended the "physical space (studio, gallery, museum and so on)" to become a "discursive network of other practices and institutions, other subjectivities and communities" (1996:305). The point being, the epistemological and ontological expansion of art practices covers a much broader field than the representational scaling down of the world into a medium by artists for art institutions. If we follow Gabriel Tarde's insight, art, like the social, is "not a special domain of reality, but a principle of connections" (Latour 2005a:13). In sum, art is not segregated from the everyday; it's part of it.

The second artistic intervention considered in this essay highlights the role of the artist and the public in activating this principle of connections as a type of phenomenological knowledge. Like Thomas Struth, Swiss-born artist Christoph Büchel was also a student at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. Like Struth, Büchel too is attentive to the interactions between the audience, the artwork, and the space. Yet unlike the German photographer, Büchel's artistic representations are not guided by a principle of objective reduction of the world into a series of snapshots. Quite to the contrary, Büchel represents the world by recreating it full scale, so instead of looking at it we can be in it. As we shall see next, the complexities of Büchel's interventions are too many to be thoroughly enumerated in this essay.¹⁰ If we were to single out one for our experimental purposes, it would be the fact that they do not look anything like art installations. At all. One of his most recent ones, *Piccadilly Community Centre*, was precisely that, a fully functioning community center in one of London's most upmarket and fashionable areas, one where you would not expect to find a community center. And yet for an extended period of time, Büchel's installation worked as one, a common space where several charities set up well-attended activities, like "Mother and Baby Yoga" or "Singing in Spanish," fulfilling the purpose of providing the community with activities and social services free of charge while successfully promoting a truly democratic participation in an otherwise highly gentrified area. All with such degree of realism that talking about accuracy is a banal truism.¹¹ Nevertheless, this functional mimesis is in fact an artistic intervention, for visitors to the art gallery share the same (unbounded) space with those attending the community center, participation and awareness being the only thin lines conceptually dividing a public of art consumers from those "consuming" the activities proposed in the public space.

Büchel's are interactive, sensorial installations that tend to deny the art space. The relations between the objects used in the installations, the audience, and the space can be inferred through a framework of everydayness in contrast to the professed patina of exclusivity of the art world. Deprived of a clearly recognizable Western aesthetic context and a likely hermeneutical analysis of signs, his interventions do not seem to need a translation. Instead, they propose a personal encounter always experienced through interpersonal interactions. His installations encourage the audience to enact their own associations. As we shall see, Büchel tries

¹⁰ Adding to the complexity of his installations is Büchel's carefully calculated opacity of intentions. The Swiss artist seldom releases declarations. His opinions on the installation analyzed in this essay were obtained through George Moustakas (to whom I am indebted for his contribution to this piece), an artist appointed by Büchel himself as onsite curator. Moustakas acted as a liaison with the media, getting feedback from visitors to the installation but also from local workers, neighbors, passers-by, and gallery managers alike. Moustakas was instrumental in offering otherwise hard to access information on all these people and also on art patrons or potential buyers, as well as on the thoughts of Büchel himself on the crowds' reactions to the installation when he discreetly visited it.

¹¹ Although he is mostly known for this type of installation, Büchel is no stranger to conceptual art either. After receiving an official invitation from the organizers of Manifesta 4, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art held in 2002 in Frankfurt am Main, Büchel proposed to the curators that his art piece be the sale on eBay of his rights to participate in the exhibition.

to replicate/fabricate reality (or even simulate it; see Baudrillard 1983), to a point where the audience is confused about the plausibility, coherence, and suitability of their own reactions to the issues with which they are confronted. In these hyperrealistic contexts, the public is forced to piece together a perspective (cognitive, affective, political, etc.) by coming to terms with the feelings experienced, not knowing whether those pertain to the artifact (the installation) or the artifact's model (the particular social aspects of life reflected on the installation) and equally confused about who needs to take responsibility for them: "Büchel repeatedly manipulates and exploits the perceived power of the social and legal contract, subverting the relationship between artist and audience while insisting on a more active political role for both."¹² Expressed in these terms, the sentence is a manifesto of ethnographic conceptualism (see Ssorin-Chaikov, introduction, this issue). Büchel puts the audience in a position from where it can undermine the authority of the artist. It can discuss the artistic object, experienced firsthand and in an embedded way beyond the didactic and the visual. It can accept it or deny it, modify its ontological significance, and change its cultural value. In sum, the audience is given the possibility to produce its own understanding of the proposed contemporary landscapes or even depart from them. And it can do so in individual singularity or as a group. These are, in brief, the idiosyncratic traits of Büchel's installations in general and of this one in particular.

SIMPLY BOTIFUL: WHEN THE ARTIFACT IS (A) REALITY

The exhibition I want to take into consideration for the purpose of this article is a very large installation that challenges its definition as an art object. In this description of the exhibition I am trying to avoid giving any aesthetic appreciation or any interpretation that comes close to those given by canonical art history analyses. They would not be fitting anyway. The description tries to be precisely that. It is not a critical review and it does not intend to partake of the critics' jargon. This is not a rejection of institutional theories on art, nor is it a claim for alternative, unconventional positions on the nature of the interpretation of artworks. Without commenting on the epistemological accuracy of such approaches, I wish to portray in this section the main characteristics of an art installation in mere descriptive terms. However, the idioms used to convey some of the situations encountered at the exhibition may, sometimes, overlap with that of the art critic or the anthropologist (indeed, even though the exhibition was dismantled in 2007 its description is in the ethnographic present to avoid an awkward narrative style). This is perhaps the ineluctable consequence of dealing with art in a Western context. In spite of this, the section aims to give a necessarily contained picture of the setting of an exhibition that, given its overwhelmingly sensorial characteristics, struggles to be explained in descriptive terms.

Located in a warehouse in London's East End, *Simply Botiful* is best defined as an art installation or assemblage. Christoph Büchel has created a complex scenario that

¹² *Simply Botiful*, Hauser & Wirth Art Gallery, London, 2007 (<http://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/36/christoph-buchel-simply-botiful/view>).

requires the visitor's active engagement. The audience does not simply look at artworks from a spectator's viewpoint, like Struth's museum crowds do. Here, there are no artworks to look at, and this is definitely not an iconic museum. Visitors to the Hauser & Wirth Art Gallery at Coppermill move and (inter)act through the exhibition and their demeanor is not the contemplative one of the *Museum Series*. They are expected to engage with the thousands of objects that are disseminated throughout this composite cluster of materials. Adding to the physical intensity of the installation is Büchel's use of narrow spaces—holes, subterranean passages, trapdoors, and ladders, requiring from the public crawling, squeezing, and climbing. The crowd is urged to leave aside any measure of reverence for the space they are entering. In fact, they need to sport a degree of curiosity to uncover the many hidden spaces scattered throughout the warehouse. Nothing is signaled in the installation, calling for visitors to make their own way along with their own inferences. Moreover, nothing is signaled as an art space. There are no indications that we are about to enter an art exhibition by a reputed Swiss artist, sponsored by a well-known international art gallery. The architectural style and the visible features of the building where it is located share the same dimensions as the nearby warehouses. There is a harmonic spatiotemporal identification with the surrounding neighborhood. A shop window displays secondhand fridges and piles of prayer rugs celebrating the attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center. A dull sign at the entrance reading "Hotel" leads into a shabby reception where the visitors check in, leaving all their personal belongings and signing a disclaimer before making their way up the grim staircase of the "hotel." Corridors are crammed with undone bunk beds. Rooms display the intimate paraphernalia of prostitution, complete with used condoms, underwear, and cigarette butts. Loud metal music leads the visitor through a hole in a wardrobe into an unsettling space with elements suggesting child abuse. There is a desk full of archaeological samples and objects that look like old curios from distant places. The sometimes-ironic surrealism of the situation, where visitors exchange bemused glances and follow each other into secret areas, does not entirely overcome a powerful sensation of realistic discomfort: smelly food scraps, personal belongings scattered throughout a miserable and dilapidated domesticity, dying plants, and filthy beds. Many untidy beds and soiled mattresses, indicating the immediacy of the dwelling sphere that permeates the space, at this point clearly an illegal refuge for outcasts that are nowhere to be seen, even though their presence floats everywhere. And yet again visitors breach the taboo of the private domain, spurred by this evocation of a fleeting other that was there not long ago, that lives there, that may come back soon. They open drawers, cupboards, handbags, and purses, casting irreverent peeps at this not-so-fictional shadows of alterity, manipulating artifacts, perhaps handling other peoples' lives, alternating irreverence with utter respect. A woman before me is visibly upset when she finds some pictures in a drawer. They show a smiley family with little children somewhere far from England, and maybe it is a family that still needs to be reunited.

A door at the end of the hotel corridor opens into the warehouse interior, a vast space over which the visitor dominates from above, pausing before exploring its

chaotic and hidden corners. Such as the dark inside of a truck, once again furnished with bunk beds, ashtrays, socks, shoes caked with mud, beer cans, and photos among many other objects, each of them casually left there, each of them occupying a precise space. A trap on the floor of the truck takes us into an oppressive prayer room, where Bibles stand next to pornography and Muslim prayer rugs. Everything seems clandestine. All is imbued with confusion. There is also a sweatshop, a couple of decaying motor homes, a maze of piled-up fridges, a precarious gym in a shipping container. Some four or five of these containers are used as homes, accommodating kitchens or improvised workplaces. Some of the workers, it is clear upon examination of their working spaces, are busy translating the Quran or sewing fabrics, fixing computers or soldering pieces of junk, salvaging metals. A freezer contains a ladder that goes down into a subterranean archaeological dig. A pair of impossible mammoth tusks stick out of a massive cube of soil. One feels cold crawling through the narrow passage to get there. It also feels strangely lonely and absurd, as visitors are asked to descend into the excavation one at a time. The mammoth cave is the only space in the whole exhibition that has to be experienced in solitude.

Back in the warehouse, the junk piles of electronic appliances are evidence of confusing intentions. They seem like rather unintentional arrangements leaving, nevertheless, a register that traces the artist's orientation. All the objects (at this point you cannot quite fathom how many thousands) are accurately and invisibly catalogued to the most insignificant screw, including the distance between a vase and a window, the type of red paint used in the reception walls or the amount of dirt allowed to cover a CD player.¹³ In fact, after its time is up, the installation is to be dismantled and stored. Since this is not conceptual art, eventual sales of parts of it or the whole thing would not amount to the reenactment of a concept. Büchel insists his is not conceptualism but an exact, delimited material object. If and when needed, *Simply Botiful* will be reassembled exactly as it was, either in a museum or a private collection, entirely or by sections. The objects were in fact searched and researched by Büchel himself, a condition of their presence in the installation being that they had to be secondhand. Büchel used everyday household items to create an environment of lived familiarity, so that the indexicality of the whole installation could be played through a confidential continuity between visitors, used artifacts, and their imagined owners. Objects in *Simply Botiful* become the material traces of the invisible tenants of the building. When visitors experience the installation they do so through their physical bodies and the imagined ones of an evanescent other—immigrants, prostitutes, illegal workers.

Thus the attention to detail is not haphazard. Everything is accurate and is so for a reason. The Muslim prayer mats are oriented to the east; a torch found in a closed drawer is working. But everything is for you to find out. There are no didactic instructions other than the price tags at the fridge shop, where copies of Hitler's

¹³ The installation was constantly rearranged by the gallery attendants, following a photographic manual put together by Büchel that showed the exact order of all the elements and gave instructions so as to how often decaying food had to be replaced or surfaces dusted, among many other details.

Mein Kampf are sold in its Arabic translation. A surrealistically stereotyped other that the audience struggles to pin down in its miscellaneous manifestations. Like the space, the heterogeneity of the personae is also calibrated through sensory devices: smells, an oppressing subterranean dampness, atmospheric mold, sweaty bed linen, the imagined taste of real rotting food. The sensations ought to be as real as the objects and are equally cataloged, marking the space with a density of perceptions that configure a lived environment far flung from the institutional. Noise (music, an accentuated silence, a football match on the TV, the hissing static of a radio, etc.) and the possibility of touching everything (and even of getting physically hurt, hence the disclaimer) complete this mapping of the territory through the senses. A page posted at the entrance of the container gym features a life-size picture of pop singer Kylie Minogue's booty. This tabloid page, captioned "Simply Botiful," is the only reference to the exhibition's title.

Emerging from Büchel's installation (more than from a description of it) is a continuum of questions, from those proposed by the artist to those envisaged by the audience as a reaction to the artist's solicitations. Religion, identity, slave labor, child abuse, pornography, poverty, colonialism, globalization are some of the themes mentioned by the public that walked *Simply Botiful*. What is relevant, in terms of the social processes and relations that stem from an "artistic" object like this one, is to discern to what extent these themes are presented (if at all) as the artist's elaborated reflections in a more or less artistic form or if, instead, they are experienced by the audience with a certain degree of independence from the artist's intention. Following feedback from participants, the latter is the case. Interviews with visitors and onsite curators and attendants reveal that, despite Büchel's attention to detail and his preplanned calculations, the artifact he has created is unfinished and unbounded, inasmuch as it mutates with each perception of it, with the public adding or removing social, cultural, or affective value to the installation as they proceed.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE OVERLAPPING OF REALITY AND ITS RECREATION

In *Simply Botiful*, some of the relations suggested by Struth in his visual study of connectedness are actually performed in the field as the visitors amble along the Coppermill. In extending the anthropological analysis of these connections as they are conceived through artistic interventions, the question is to establish to what extent it is possible to affirm that Struth's gaze makes visible what Büchel has made livable.

At its core, *Simply Botiful* proposes a contiguity between reality and the artist's installation, a juxtaposition observable in the public's reactions. Some people enter Coppermill in search of a room or with the genuine purpose of buying a cheap fridge. Büchel studied the environment and proposed a metonymic solution of continuity with the surroundings that puts the art-going audience and those who ignore that they are entering an art space in apparently contradictory positions. The visitors that come to the Coppermill knowing that it is an art installation are confronted with an inconvenient artifact that closely resembles reality, to the point of becoming the

context itself. Büchel's intentions are to place his recipients in a politically and morally challenging situation loaded with tension, a position where the visitor is mesmerized by an "art object" that goes unnoticed as such, trying to pass for the real thing. The feelings and sensory experiences induce claustrophobia or aversion, trauma or fear, as Büchel had expected. The extremely detailed grid of cataloged reality is set as a fiction that mimics real life, where the presence of "real" persons is itself a projected object put together by the visitors.

Yet not all visitors are passively invested by Büchel's intentionality. Some try to actively shape the artifact, fashioning it to their own expectations, refusing the artist's mediation, evidencing that the same object triggers different, opposing relations. Whereas some people indulge in the artificial dimension of this fictionalized reality others withdraw in disgust from this hyperreal fiction. The former act freely, assuming an active position towards the artist's intentions. They reject any political or moral implications and indulge in the eroticism of the voyeur, the trespasser that enters the private, intimate realm of the others. Some visitors are reported to have tried to lock themselves in rooms to have sex. A playful sensation of sexual arousal is a common feature among a part of the audience who ascribe it to diverse reasons: a feeling of intimacy and isolation in some areas of the gallery or an urge to infringe a taboo they deem to be fabricated. Some visitors do not feel any kind of reverence for a space that—for them—is not a model of grim reality. It is just "an art gallery" where they can wander around and touch things, an interactive happening that seems to enhance the individuals' freedom and their capacity to perform an installation of their own, or at the very least to inscribe Büchel's with their own meanings.

Another marker of the visitors' potential authorship is their capacity to experience the installation by adding another dimension to it. The exhibition space is indeed four-dimensional: that is, it involves the perception of time. Visitors need to traverse the gallery, to dwell in it actively, to subject themselves to a prolonged exploration of its meandering corners and secret spaces. The audience's involvement is assessed through their patience, the time they spend onsite and how they perceive this time (or fail to, as many visitors claimed they did not realize they had been in the gallery for so long). Visitors allow themselves to be upset, insecure, distressed, disgusted or bored, indifferent, slightly amused, and the qualification of their discoveries and experiences is partly given by the time they dedicate to negotiate the exhibition. To them *Simply Botiful* is either overwhelming or powerless in their exposure to the artwork.

Needless to say, the historicity of these perceptions is by no means as extensive as the broad historical relations between past and present elicited by Struth in his *Museum Series*. Büchel's experiment is more contemporary. The connections engendered by *Simply Botiful* are those of the here and now. Whereas Struth projects his gaze in time within a constrained space, Büchel expands the field of his performance beyond the art space within a limited temporality. Despite considering different uses of spatiotemporal coordinates, both propositions highlight similar possibilities: the object-subject relationality and—as a result of it—the preminent

role attributed to audiences in terms of authorship. Indeed, in Büchel's projects there is a practical completion of Struth's insight in terms of encompassment. The viewers are incorporated in the artistic process. Essentially, they stop being an intrinsically alien other. Even more so in *Simply Botiful*, where every "other" becomes inquirer, uncovering spaces and associations that include the self and assembling her/his knowledge in a field that is not identifiable as a museum. The visitors of *Simply Botiful* are authors with authority. They can turn the artist's assemblage upside down. As a preliminary work for this installation, Büchel carried out research (e.g., visiting refugee camps) in order to shape his artifact. During the exhibition, the audiences become the material authors and subjects of that artifact. In this setting, observation is participation. Notwithstanding, his project has a direction and aims at producing an installation in harmony with his own designs, the potential that lies within his own artifact (as it is composed of people, things, and a malleable space-time) is independent from his will and drifts away from the artist's purposes. With these conditions, any aspiration to an authoritative voice in the display of alterity must be surrendered. Whatever cultural knowledge is arrived at in *Simply Botiful* it is assembled outside cultural agendas.

In Büchel's installation, the dynamic relational network turns the space into an open field site. In it, the participants expand the perception of a mediated reality through the objects that mediate it, with the peculiarity that, in doing so, they become objects of the mediation themselves. Büchel has short-circuited his own artwork, making it redundant with a hyperrealistic template superimposed on reality. In fact, it must be said that the artist does not appreciate how part of the audience has altered his artistic object. Halfway through the exhibition, Büchel visited Coppermill, only to realize how unexpectedly popular his installation had become. Although popularity is a good asset in the highly competitive art market, Büchel's conceptual intentions were more political than commercial. The artist was not pleased with the visitors' self-indulgent attitudes enjoying a free Disney-like visit to a space filled with other peoples' pain and suffering, as he had intended it. Somehow, Büchel's artifact had failed to convey political awareness in those active recipients that were refusing to pick up the "data" he had disseminated and assemble it as he had envisioned.

FINAL REMARKS

The commonly held assumption that anthropology aspires to coherence (that is, to give meaningful interpretations of observed sociocultural practices) seldom coincides with the purpose of art in general. Although it can be so, art needs not to be coherent outside the boundaries of its own self-referentiality, circumscribed as it is to schools, ateliers, tendencies, movements, and avant-gardes within the art world or, in its least relational competence, to the author's exclusive concept of it. But mind the paradox here: coherence aside, because anthropology too is an assemblage of commentaries on the observed or experienced reality of the world, it often coincides with art. Where and when artists purport to apprehend the world and display it back to where it came

from they are offering a commentary on an artifact through another artifact, not unlike what anthropology usually does. It was Alfred Gell's contention that "[t]he essential alchemy of art ... is to make what is not out of what is, and to make what is out of what is not" (1992:53). When it does the former, art takes from reality, and when it does the latter it *makes* reality. But reality is not always realistic. And although we tend to conceive of reality as a factual given, Gell's intuition reminds us that realities are also created, and in ways that are not always anticipated by those who purport to create them, hence the idealistic semblances reality can have for some. Anthropology and art are generators of ideas and objects. However, this does not imply that the demiurges of these worlds are anthropologists and artists only. Going back to the questions posited in the introduction, anthropology is urged to challenge its own modes of apprehension of these objects. Textual exegesis is the common one, but it is neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Furthermore, it perpetuates a series of selective hierarchies that situate the scholar above her objects/subjects of study and her readers. Instead, the propositions put forward by Struth and Büchel implicitly show us how realities are constructed by all those who observe them. In their examples, authorship is distributed and hierarchical distinctions are leveled, evidencing the modes in which the relations, representations, and experiences that (in)form sociocultural processes are composed. To put it rather simply, Struth could be seen as an inquirer that tells us how to uncover data in a given setting. Büchel takes this one step further. He "creates" this data to construct a meaningful model in that given setting, yet a model that could also work elsewhere. In short, we could take their artistic expressions to be nonwritten manifestos for a redefinition of the anthropological idea of field site and inclusive invitations to carry out further explorations in the way we look at things in our interactions with the world.

Struth proposes a direct mode of observation in which the objects of knowledge, like knowledge itself, are partible. They can be collocated in different ways and in different contextual grids altogether. Furthermore, he suggests that they can also be experienced (and not just discussed). His suggestion is carried by Büchel. Büchel's intervention is a type of inductive inquiry because data is not gathered in the field after a prior deployment of a research agenda that locates research items beforehand. Instead, Büchel's installation creates a type of sensorial knowledge *in the field* from which inductive inferences can be made, assuming the value of an ethnographic research project where the audience interrogates its own role apropos issues that transcend the art installation. What Büchel's proposal advances is a practical approach to Gell's (1998) well-known ontological postulate. In essence, that there is no distinction between people and things. In Büchel's intervention the agency of the art object is extended beyond the realm of visual art and the art space. *Simply Botiful* sets up a series of objects and people in a place without any visible artistic connotations and lets them interact and exercise their respective agency on each other. The resulting relations and associations are readily traceable and as such they can acquire the value of ethnographic research. They tell us about the issues the artist had in mind at the outset of the exhibition but they also go beyond it. The connections are not limited to those envisaged by the artist's intentions, earning a

life of their own, reassessing social values and creating new ones. These recreations are possible only through the participation of an audience that has gained consciousness of its role in redefining cultural processes, both through the revelation of the structures that shape the practices of artistic production but also and foremost through their active incorporation into the artwork, not as consumers but as producers of ideas and experiences that transcend the art world itself.

Thus art, like anthropology, can illustrate and elucidate sociocultural processes in ways that cut across the textual, affecting the ways in which we see things and understand them, be they images, objects, or relations. From the artist's side this is hardly a novelty in itself. That is, unless we take artistic interventions to be open theoretical and methodological inquiries rather than the formed tokens of sociocultural realities of distinct, recognized, and more or less affirmed authors. This raises the question of whether this alternative understanding is just another point of arrival from a different perspective, another type of objectivity set in motion by the artist's orientation, or if a diverse way of apprehending these sociocultural processes prompts a different kind of knowledge in the making altogether. In that sense, both Struth and Büchel are enacting a type of inquiry that engages with the main tenets of ethnographic conceptualism as it is postulated by Ssorin-Chaikov in this issue's introduction. Firstly, they are both aware of their presence as artists and its effects in constructing the reality they are commenting upon. Secondly, they also acknowledge the presence of the audience, elevating it to a central position, the viewer-participant as creator not only of commentaries but also of the reality in which she is also embedded, together with the artist, the object, and their milieu. Thirdly, theirs is a type of inquiry that functions as a research tool with a proven capacity to work in other contexts beyond the museum. And lastly, Struth and Büchel purposefully devise techniques of exploration that allow whatever conclusions assembled to stay open ended and in occasions well beyond the control of their artistic agendas.

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ИСКУССТВО И АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ ПО ТУ СТОРОНУ КРАСИВЫХ ИЗОБРАЖЕНИЙ: МАТЕРИАЛЬНАЯ ГИПЕРРЕАЛЬНОСТЬ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЭТНОГРАФИИ

Сергио Джарилло де ла Торре

Сергио Джарилло де ла Торре получил докторскую степень в области социальной антропологии в Кембриджском университете. Адрес для переписки: Darwin College, Silver Street, Cambridge, CB3 9EU, UK. sj323@cam.ac.uk.

Эта работа основана на исследовании двух произведений искусства, которые могут считаться нетекстуальными экспериментами в этнографическом исследовании. В серии *Museum Photographs* («Музейные фотографии») Томаса Струта, по словам кураторов музея Гугенхайма, «запечатлены случайные люди и толпы, рассматривающие культовые произведения западного искусства в самых известных музеях мира». Фотографии Струта отражают в первую очередь не эстетическую ценность искусства и его значение, а реакцию зрителей на произведение искусства – что свидетельствует об озабоченности фотографа социальным потенциалом художественных произведений. Подобным же образом Кристоф Бюхель помещает публику в центр своей инсталляции *Simply Botiful*, вызывая эмоциональные отклики на гиперреалистические и эмоционально нагруженные стимулы. Статья предлагает посмотреть на инсталляцию Бюхеля через концептуальную призму Струта – используя последнюю в качестве методологического инструмента для распутывания сложной сети отношений между людьми и вещами, вращающимися вокруг мира искусства. Кроме того, автор статьи задается нетривиальным вопросом: если арт-объекты являются посредниками между людьми и реальностью, а также комментариями к реальности, то при каких условиях художественные практики служат задаче изучения новых путей этнографического исследования?

Ключевые слова: искусство; фотография; Струт; Бюхель; этнографический концептуализм; авторство