

Essay on Value Enhancement through Presentation Rituals

VALUABLE

valuable existence

The valuable requires conditioning

The valuable needs to be demonstrated

The valuable wants to be displayed preciously

The valuable only becomes perceivable as a monstrance

The valuable is ennobled through a genuine presentation form

The valuable presents itself as something valuable through significant rituals

The valuable is never valuable per se

The valuable requires rituals of demonstration in order to be seen as something valuable, precious

The frame and base, screen label, *passe-partout* and size, environment and color scheme, light and conventionalized value of the materials, manners and methods of presentation, their being in space and style, the surroundings and atmosphere ... All of these attributions attest to the value of what is presented – not only as always external constituents; rather, it is only they themselves that create, as it were, this value as a convention – and they do so with increasing significance by becoming, as an internalized condition of value, a constitutive part of the externally recognized thing of value.

The location of a find at an archeological dig is merely a place revealed from below the surface of the earth, the find itself an artifact lifted out of the earth. Seen in this way, this revealing and lifting out turn out to be early, profoundly modern gestures of presentation – strategies for recalling the historical, and as such (due to the convention that relativizing oneself historically is valuable and value-conscious) constitutive of value.

Yet aren't these gestures and strategies and conventions and constitutions also necessarily part of what is being presented in each case? At this point, don't cordons and bulletproof glass belong to the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre, the centralized display and approach to Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* in the Frari church in Venice, waiting-in-line at the Biennale to Gregor Schneider's *Totes Haus u r* and the media's real-time presence to Banksy's shredder stunt at a Sotheby's auction? What is still visible of Minoan palace architecture in Phaistos or Knossos? And what of cave civilization, the Ice Age, in the form of mammoth-ivory carvings on the Swabian Alb?

Pars pro toto we search for the whole, the great, the complex in the detail, the small, the individual. We extrapolate the being of the sea from a drop of water and try to preserve, in a memorable way, the experiences of days and weeks in a sand souvenir.

Ben Greber shows us found things he perceives as being of value in valuable presentation forms as work. What becomes undecidable here is the question of the value of value within what is shown: Is it in the internally shown or the externally seen as a moment of visualization, or in the holism as the entirety of the present?

Ben Greber's *Evacuations* take a highly complex question and raise it to a decidedly extroverted level. Were an art space and art business necessary to Marcel Duchamp's strategies of presentation and reinterpretation of values, the art business to Damien Hirst's shark in formaldehyde, the arcane realm of art to Reinhard Mucha's "monstrances" of his studio and the historically contaminated German Pavilion to Gregor Schneider's Mönchengladbach-Rheydt rooms in the "Haus u r" and Warsaw flooring for the rubble from the house where the Nazi minister of propaganda, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, was born?

Yes!

In "Evacuations," Ben Greber transforms something that looks like presentations of reports

from an “excavation,” including photographs of the locations of finds – a gesture, a ritual, for which he also uses the term “Aufbahren,” laying out. In this way, Ben Greber ennobles, as it were, excavated found items into salvaged items – things handed over in order to be valued in our future, things meant not only to be contemplated henceforth, but also to be valued as something perceivable.

And he goes even further with his works, which he also calls “presentation architectures”: Through his open presentation forms, Ben Greber opens the space of representation to the presented as a work-whole. The viewer is thus prompted to think – to imagine – far beyond what is offered for viewing. For the “only”-fragmentary always becomes clear in its presentation. Ben Greber speaks of the “aura of the missing,” and thus of the fact that the physically non-present is nevertheless present spiritually, of the fact that something more is present imaginably, and thus conceived as part of the work, so that it is, as it were, also present empathically.

There are precursors to this strategy (see above), the manner and method, the form, but above all the future. Completely transparent, through their presentation forms, the found items become something perceivable from all sides. In this way the display rituals invented by Ben Greber guarantee an adequate contemplation that goes far beyond looking at what can be seen. They demand a quasi-performative, comprehensive perception on the part of the productive viewer, just as a comprehensively motivated desire to discover the precious underlies the discovery of the valuable. Ben Greber asserts what is valuable by presenting parts so nobly that the non-present what-is-more emerges as something unimaginably valuable.

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