

The Useless Store

“Selecting Products, Pricing Arbitrarily, Scanning Code, Buying Quickly”

“The Useless Store” is a selling space structured within the gallery space, presented to the viewer in the form of a supermarket sales table and shelves. The display is accompanied by a specific live performance and mode of selling, attempting to explore virtual and real materials in the form of non-functional blind boxes. The interaction between the product and the viewer becomes part of the work, with the consumer following the guidance of the salesperson and pricing themselves an empty white box with the outline of the work. After scanning the QR code inside the box, the virtual electronic images of the work is available.

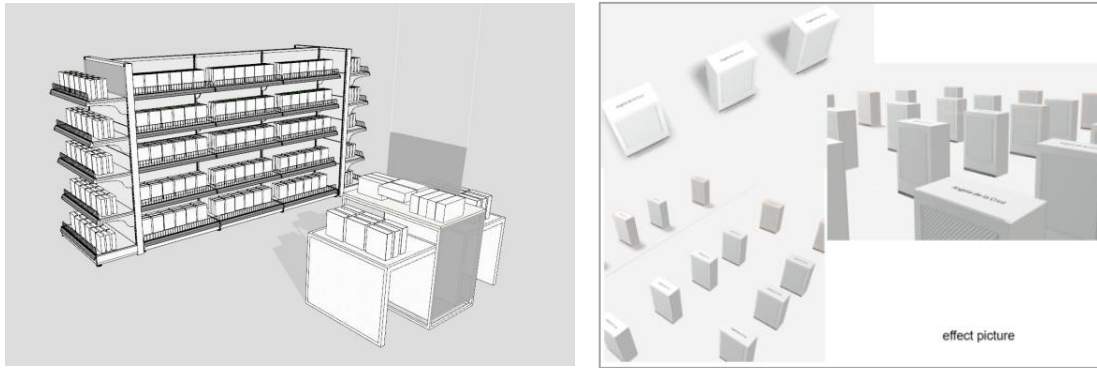


*Useless Store, 2021, Dingyi, Installation and performance

This project is based around the recent buzz about the NFT¹ art exchange. I am concerned with whether this transformation of the exchange, in which the object becomes a “digital abstraction” and a “digital asset” for the owner, will lead to a disruption of the way the viewer experiences and perceives the artwork itself, as well as a reflection on the themes such as the fragility of existence and material transformation, consumerism and so on.

My intention is to create micro-scenes in the gallery space that contain shelves, sales desks, sales posters, etc. that refer to shops and to think about how to sell these “digital abstractions” in real space. It begins with a “product-making” based on an artistic productivism orientation, and I choose to amplify this impression by creating an empty white box product with pictorial properties.

¹ NFT (Non-fungible token) are units of data on a digital ledger called a blockchain, where each token can represent a unique digital profile. See more https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-fungible_token



*Virtual Installation View and packaging modeling of Useless store

For the selection of artworks, I have used various websites such as Artnet, Art Basel and Artforum as search engines to create a database of contemporary artists based on images as the basis for this work. The essence of the image collection revolves around images of works with spatial scenes uploaded by painting practitioners in virtual places such as online galleries, art websites and artists' personal websites, using digital and generative art as a vehicle and in conjunction with the mechanisms associated with online sales. This is certainly a large and challenging work of collection.

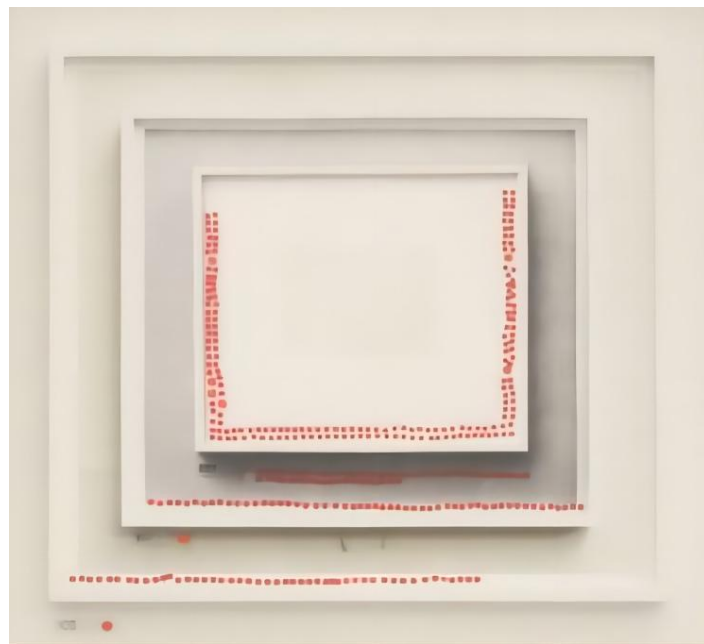
- Alan Charlton
- Andrew Bick
- Angela de la Cruz
- Cornelia Baltes
- Gregor Hildebrandt
- Imi Knoebel
- Niele Toroni
- Ron Gorchov
- Terry Haggerty

Deflated 21 (Red),
2011
Angela de la Cruz

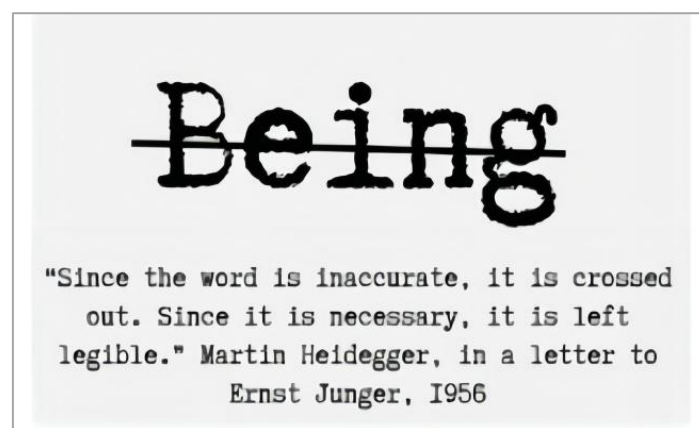
*Establish a database of contemporary artists

Erasure became central to the design of my product packaging, with the philosopher Martin Heidegger's "*sous rature*"² and Derrida's "*Under Erasure*"³ and the artist Cornelia Parker's series of *Stolen Thunder* became the basis for my work. I erased these images digitally (in photoshop) and kept the remaining space and the relative position of the transparent layers as part of the post-production of the images. The essence of this is to hide and dissolve the identity and distance between the images, to give an equal environment and to highlight the relatively coherent remaining image space.

"The way to exist is to exist in a way that does not exist."



*Stolen Thunder III (Red Spot), 2015, Cornelia Parker, Digital pigment print

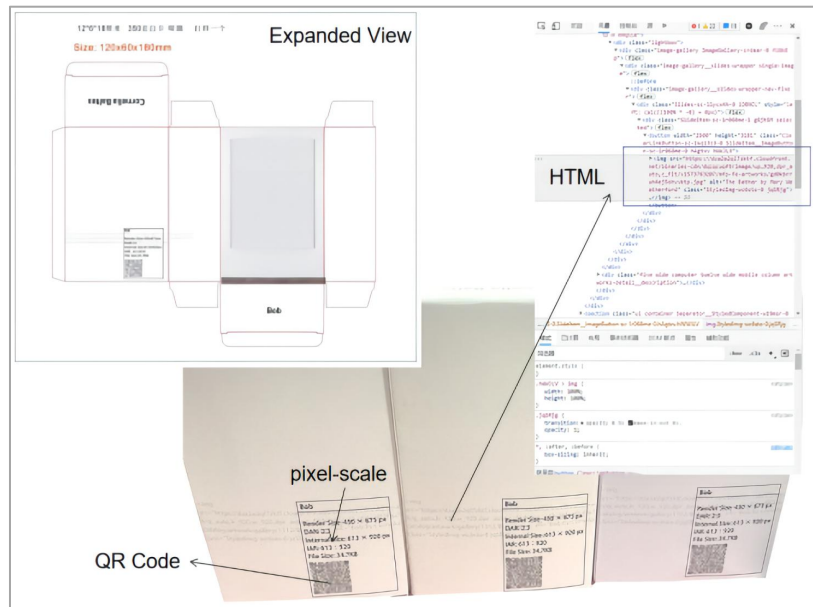


*A letter "Zur Seinsfrage" (The Question of Being) to Ernst Junger in 1956

² "sous rature" has been described as the typographical expression that seeks to identify sites within texts where key terms and concepts may be paradoxical or self-undermining, rendering their meaning undecidable. (by Martin Heidegger) See more https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sous_rature

³ "under erasure" Under Erasure means that a word is crossed out (literally on the page, as if it were deleted by an editor) but allowed to remain in the final text. (extensively by Jacques Derrida)

In addition to the image post-production, the product also contains a pixel scale, QR code and HTML⁴, which are marked on the back of the product as labels. This computer-age translation of the image is perhaps a response to J. Kosuth's *One and three chairs*⁵ from the virtual age.



*Pixel scale, QR code and HTML



*One and Three Chairs, 1965. Joseph Kosuth

These white boxes are arranged in an orderly fashion on the shelves like the glass display cases and plinths of a classic museum, losing their identity to each other.

⁴ HTML(Hypertext Markup Language) is a standard markup language used to create web pages. See more <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTML>

⁵ https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/joseph-kosuth-one-and-three-chairs-1965/



*The Installation view of Useless Store

The salesman's rigid slogan "Selecting products, Pricing arbitrarily, Scanning code, Buying quickly" controls our perception of the artwork itself.

Once the visitor has made a purchase at any price, the QR code is scanned and an image of the purchased artwork is seen via the mobile phone.



*The Exhibition view of Useless Store

So, do you actually own it? What are you buying? Do these 'digital abstractions' know that they have been wiped out and then resurrected? What can you (or I) put in that blank box to reconstruct the world?

The uselessness of these vacant white box products is a reflection of the convergence of images existing in a white box space, and I tend to export this “mediating power between one reality and another”, as Baudrillard put it, as a form of representation with a socially active production and institutional criticism. I have been trying to explore the relationship between virtuality and reality, the fictioning⁶ of scenes that construct our reality in the “post-internet” and “perceptual management” era.

Reference:

Martin Heidegger,1983,The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics

Derrida, J. 1967, Of Grammatology,

Boris Arvatov,1926, Art and Production

Luiz Renato Martins,2017,The Conspiracy of Modern Art “Transition from Constructivism to Productivism, According to Tarabukin” (194–212)

Francois Colbert,2017,Marketing culture and the arts(4th edition)

Jean-Drancois Lyotard,1979, la condition postmoderne,

Simon O'Sullivan ,2015, Art Practice as Fictioning or myth-science

Jean Baudrillard,2009, Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared

⁶ Fictioning in art is an open-ended, experimental practice that involves performing, diagramming or assembling to create or anticipate that which does not exist. (by David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan)