



Reading Recommendations

Thorsten Brinkmann: Portrait of a Serial Collector



Thorsten Brinkmann is a passionate collector of everything that is bulky, ageing, and somewhat musty. A book now offers the first overview of the Hamburg artist's work.

In the lobby of the Land Insurance Agency stands an impressive Cube. One or two of the staff recognise within the structuring of this sculpture what used to be their office furniture. Shelving crammed with files for many years is now part of a more than life-size monument made out of bulky discarded objects.

Innumerable cabinets, cupboards, chairs, and desks were spread across the five buildings of the Land Insurance Agency (LVA). When the Agency moved in 2002 it wanted to get rid of this stock, but artist Thorsten Brinkmann took over everything and compressed this to the greatest possible degree, producing a cube whose sides each measured exactly 3.6 metres. He then placed this work, entitled *Büro Büro (Office Office)* in the LVA's new reception area.

A new book presents Brinkmann's Cube in the context of other works by the Hamburg artist, offering the first overview of his oeuvre. Just glancing at this book quickly makes clear that Brinkmann (born at Herne in 1971) is a passionate collector of everything that is bulky, ageing, and somewhat musty. Brinkmann implements his ideas using unwieldy relinquished material, and in one group of works calls himself a "serial collector".



The lettering used for *Thorsten Brinkmann* on the book's cover imitates what was employed by a shop of the same name, selling electrical goods and other hardware, which used to exist in North Germany until a few years ago. "That seemed appropriate for the objects I work with" – explains the artist. "Brinkmann didn't only sell electrical goods. It offered everything you could possibly need in a household. The fact that I work a lot with everyday objects and am also called Brinkmann gave me the idea of imitating the lettering".

The Great Mountain Temple



When the Altona branch of the Karstadt department store in Hamburg closed down, its wide range of stock didn't vanish. Thanks to Brinkmann, in 2006 this stood prominently in front of the Karstadt building as *The Great Mountain Temple*, one of the first of an entire series of art projects in a hitherto much neglected area.

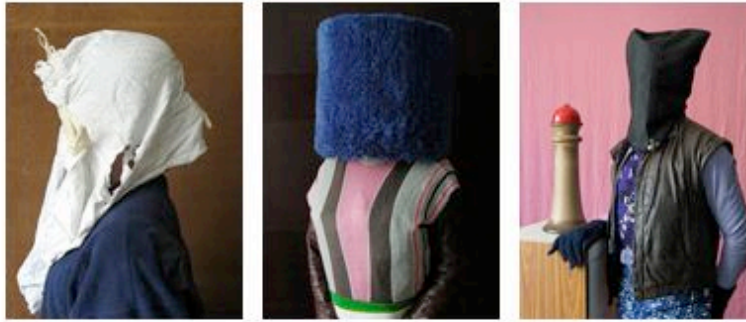
Brinkmann's work mainly relates to the location where it is created, and his combinations of objects are strongest when constructed in the very place where the materials were gathered. "In spaces like the LVA entrance-hall or with Karstadt I always carefully check out what kind of place and institution are involved" – he says. Taking a particular setting as starting-point, he looks for concrete references in developing his installation. In such cases the artist works exclusively with things he finds on the spot. "That's more interesting since staff in the building involved have a greater possibility of identification than is the case when I lug there whatever materials I've assembled elsewhere".

The LVA cube provoked a great variety of reactions. "It was constructed from aged office furniture, some of it 20 or 30 years old. Many employees were glad to have got rid of this, and then there it was once again – very changed – in their reception area. Some people are pleased about this transformation and others only see their old desk peeping out of the Cube and are not at all impressed".



When Brinkmann installed this sculpture in 2002 he had just completed his diploma course at the Hamburg College of Visual Arts where he studied with Bernhard Blume and Franz Erhard Walther. After two months the sculpture vanished from the LVA lobby. The photographs taken depict the structuring of this cube whose colour and form are reminiscent of paintings by Piet Mondrian. The LVA bought these photographs and they now hang in the building's corridors.

Orderly Craze for Collecting



Brinkmann's craze for collecting isn't blind. He always elucidates what he is doing. In *93 in One* (2003) the artist demonstrates how much can fit into a VW bus. The 93 simultaneously transported objects and the bus were also individually photographed against a white background and documented in a series of photos.

Carrying as much as possible at one go (So viel wie möglich auf einmal tragen) is the name of a personal experiment by Brinkman in 2003. Laden with household equipment, a blanket and mattress wedged between his legs, and a plastic bowl on his head, Brinkmann personified the "serial collector" for the first time. Since then an entire series of self-portraits has come into existence, and the second half of the book is devoted to them.

In one the artist looks like a knight. His face can't be seen. With a lampshade over his head, second-hand clothes worn in several layers, part of a drainpipe as gloves, and a curtain-rod as a sword, Brinkmann has just ten seconds to adopt a pose while the delayed-action shutter release is ticking.

Here Brinkmann presents himself as *Biggi Di Innozenzia*, posing as a bedecked Renaissance Prince in profile with a cushion-cover over his head. The "serial collector" can choose between all kinds of appearances.

Stefanie Feldbusch, Andreas Wiesner:
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Verena Hütter
Goethe-Institut online editorial office

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Any questions about this article? Please write to us!
✉ online-redaktion@goethe.de
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