

PRESS RELEASE
Rotterdam, December 2010

MAKING IS THINKING

23 January – 1 May 2011

Opening: Saturday 22 January 2011, from 6-9 p.m.

Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, is pleased to announce the exhibition *Making is Thinking*. This group show featuring fifteen international artists and curated by Zoë Gray will run from 23rd January until 1st May 2011.

Making is Thinking explores distinct artistic practices engaged with notions of conceptual craft and intuitive industry. It seeks to collapse the persistent dichotomy between the practical and the intellectual, and presents a range of works that refuse the binary of concept and form.

Artists: Wilfrid Almendra, Eva Berendes, Alexandre da Cunha, Julia Dault, Dewar & Gicquel, Anne Hjort Guttu, Hedwig Houben, Teppei Kaneuji, Edgar Leciejewski, Rita McBride, William J. O'Brien, Eva Rothschild, Hans Schabus, Koki Tanaka.

European society has been marked by an increasing division between making and thinking that finds its roots in the industrial revolution. With the decline of urban guilds and rural cottage industries in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent mechanization of labor, workers were separated into blue- and white-collar jobs. Today, our education system privileges the creation of flexible "knowledge workers" over those with practical skills or manual know-how.

It is possible to trace a similar division in art since the beginning of the twentieth century. With Duchamp's introduction of the readymade in 1913, the focus of avant-garde artistic practice shifted away from technique and the process of making to the transformative power of the artist's vision. This saw the flourishing of conceptual art and the movement that Lucy Lippard famously labeled the dematerialization of the art object, culminating in Lawrence Weiner's 1968 *Declaration of Intent* in which he announced that an artwork "need not be built." For Weiner, thinking is making. Nevertheless, today artists are still making physical artworks and engaging with tangible materials. In our increasingly dematerialized world, how are we to engage with materiality? How might thoughtful forms of this insistence on making relate to our supposedly post-industrial society?

In recent years, craft has been held up to epitomize an alternative set of social values in the face of industrial production, global capitalism and mass consumerism. Yet this idea of craft is broader than that defended by John Ruskin or William Morris at the start of the previous century. Incorporating many elements of Modernism and informed by postmodernism, it offers a radical way for rethinking questions of work, both within and beyond the artistic field. Many artists are turning to this expanded notion of craft as a paradigm for making that seems to fuse previously oppositional positions – such as the trace of the artist's hand and conceptual reflection – and are exploring its potential for reconsidering broader questions of production.

Among the artworks included in *Making is Thinking*, several recurring or overlapping areas of interest are discernible: There is a fascination with the role of the amateur, occupied with absurdly time-consuming activities that verge on meditation (Wilfrid Almendra, Dewar & Gicquel, Teppei Kaneuji, Hans Schabus). There is an analysis of the process of creation, and a transformation of this analysis into a new moment of creation (Hedwig Houben, Ane Hjort Guttu, Edgar Leciejewski).

[continued overleaf]



Witte de With
Center for Contemporary Art
Witte de Withstraat 50
3012 BR Rotterdam
The Netherlands
T+31(0)104110144
F+31(0)104117924
info@wdw.nl www.wdw.nl

There is an exploration of sculpture and the applied arts, a struggle between functionalism and formalism that avoids any hint of nostalgia (Julia Dault, Rita McBride, Eva Rothschild). There is a flourishing of decoration and beauty in the reassessment of certain Modernist tropes (Eva Berendes, Alexandre Da Cunha). There is the avoidance of conscious thinking and the emphasis on intuitive knowledge (William J. O'Brien, Koki Tanaka). And in many of the works, there is a knowing humor or irony that deflates the pious earnestness that can accompany discussions of craft.

Accompanying program:

- 25 January 2011: Masterclass by Julia Dault and William O'Brien.
- Throughout: Workshop by Hedwig Houben at Willem de Kooning Academy.
- Date tbc: Crafternoon, a discussion afternoon combined with making, open to all.
- Date tbc: Rita McBride will give a public lecture.

As Rita McBride once said: "Art doesn't matter, it is the doing, the learning, the scrambling, the growing, the discoveries along the way that matter." Continuing Witte de With Education's successful series of "art confrontations", interactive tours of the exhibition will be available throughout its duration, structured to explore the "discoveries along the way."

Publication:

To highlight the importance placed on process, the accompanying publication will be produced over the course of the show, and made available to the public in online installments. It will be an illustrated downloadable file in English, available free of charge from www.wdw.nl

The publication will feature an introduction by curator/editor Zoë Gray followed by four essays. The contributors include Gavin Delahunty, Head of Exhibitions & Displays, Tate Liverpool; Alice Motard, curator, Raven Row, London; Solveig Øvstbø, director of Bergen Kunsthall; Yoshiko Nagai, curator, Tokyo.

Curated by Zoë Gray, assisted by Amira Gad

Supported by Goethe-Institut Niederlande, OCA, CulturesFrance.
Witte de With is funded by the City of Rotterdam and the Dutch Ministry of Culture.

PRESS:

For press requests, please send us an email via press@wdw.nl or call us on + 31 (0) 10 411 01 44.

Further information available on www.wdw.nl or send us an email via info@wdw.nl or call us on + 31 (0) 10 411 01 44.

Coming up at Witte de With in 2011:

THE END OF MONEY, 22 May - 7 Aug 2011

MELANCHOTOPIA, 4 Sep - 27 Nov 2011

ANGELA BULLOCH, 27 Nov 2011 - Feb 2012

ing mak

**Wilfrid Almendra Eva Berendes
Alexandre da Cunha Julia Dault
Dewar & Gicquel Ane Hjort Guttu
Hedwig Houben Teppei Kaneuji
Edgar Leciejewski Rita McBride
William J. O'Brien**

**Eva Rothschild
Hans Schabus
Koki Tanaka**

is

ing think



introduction

An accelerating division between making and thinking has marked European society since the Industrial Revolution. In our current digital, (allegedly) post-industrial epoch, we in the “developed” world are increasingly distanced from physical production. Consumer goods are manufactured far away by people we never meet, distributed through channels too complex to trace, and transported by means we never see. When our products break, we replace them, unable to fix their high-tech circuitry or rewrite their computer programs. Daily life is filtered through the screen of the television, laptop, or smartphone. Even the most symbolic entity—money—has become digitized, traded and placed in virtual pyramids to the point of vanishing completely.

Several movements are emerging that seek to reclaim production, to regain a sense of control by getting involved once more in the processes of making. The revival of self-sufficiency is fuelled as much by the growing debates on sustainability as by the economic recession and its accompanying conservatism.² And this resurgence of interest in making is not limited to grass-roots activists or enthusiastic hobbyists, but is shared by politicians and policy planners alike. In his bestselling book, *The Case for Working with Your Hands or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* (2009), Matthew Crawford argues that manual work is more intellectually engaging and rewarding than so-called “knowledge work.”³ Crawford—who quit his job as head of a Washington think-tank to repair motorcycles for a living—writes: “We want to feel that our world is intelligible, so we can feel responsible for it. This seems to require that the provenance of our things be brought closer to home. Many people are trying to recover a field of vision that is basically human in scale, and extricate themselves from dependence on the obscure forces in a global economy.”³ He calls for a rethinking of the hierarchical separation of workers into blue- and white-collar jobs, and a total re-evaluation of our education system, which currently privileges the creation of flexible “knowledge workers” over those with practical skills or manual know-how. While his vision of different vocations is rather polarized, his book convincingly traces the separation of makers and thinkers that characterized the twentieth century.

In recent years, craft has re-emerged as a way of making that offers an alternative set of values to those of industrial production, global capitalism and mass consumerism. The title of this exhibition

¹ See also Suzanne Moore, ‘Bland leading the bland’, *The Guardian*, 26 November 2010, p.21

² According to the British Minister for Culture, Ed Vaizey, this is now “the hottest book in political circles.” Cited by John-Paul Flintoff in ‘White-collar work is doomed: get your hands dirty’,

The Sunday Times, 2 January 2011, p.19. Flintoff continues: “Michael Gove, the education secretary and David Willetts, the universities minister, are among the book’s biggest fans.”

³ Matthew Crawford, *The Case for Working with Your Hands*, Penguin, London, 2009, p.8

comes from a book that makes just such a proposal: *The Craftsman* (2008) by Richard Sennett. “Making is thinking” was his maxim as he wrote the book. Sennett is a sociologist and ethnographer who has written extensively on capitalism and labor, studying the new economy and its effects on the way in which we work. His motivation for writing *The Craftsman* came from a desire to know “what life was like for ordinary workers within the machines of contemporary capitalism.”⁴ In talking with these “ordinary workers,” Sennett discovered that work had become “a privatized domain in which the emphasis was no longer on doing work well,” but on doing it efficiently, which led in turn to the loss of a sense of agency.⁵ In examining the quality of work under new capitalism, Sennett asked himself what an alternative could be, and struck upon the notion of “craftsmanship.” Through a wide range of examples, Sennett argues that craftsmanship offers continuity between pre- to post-industrial times. For him, craftsmanship is anything that involves a literal connection between the hand and the head.

Such a reassessment of craft offers a radical way for rethinking questions of work, both within and beyond the artistic field. Strangely, neither Crawford nor Sennett explore visual art in their analysis of “manual” work that is intellectually rewarding. This is precisely the location at which I wish to posit this exhibition. At stake here is a paradigm for making that fuses previously oppositional positions, which I have tried to evoke by using seemingly paradoxical terms such as “conceptual craft” and “intuitive industry.” The artists included in *Making is Thinking* are people whose work I have encountered over the course of my travels in the past few years, from Ghent to Tokyo, Cholet to Chicago. Hailing from diverse backgrounds, their work presents alternatives to the products of the aforementioned rational, post-industrial, digitized European society. The idea for the exhibition emerged from my discussions with them and they represent a subjective selection rather than an exhaustive illustration. While each work has its own agenda, several overlapping areas of interest are discernible: There is a fascination with the role of the amateur or even hobbyist, occupied with absurdly time-consuming activities that verge on meditation (Wilfrid Almendra, Dewar & Gicquel, Teppai Kaneuji, Hans Schabus). There is an analysis of the process of creation, and its transformation into a new moment of creation (Hedwig Houben, Ane Hjort Guttu, Edgar Leciejewski). There is an exploration of sculpture’s relation to the applied arts and a flourishing of decoration in the reassessment of certain Modernist tropes (Julia Dault, Rita McBride, Eva Rothschild, Eva Berendes, Alexandre da Cunha). There is the avoidance of conscious thinking and the

emphasis on intuition, instinct and tacit knowledge (William J. O’Brien, Koki Tanaka). In many of the works there is a knowing humor or irony, which deflates the pious earnestness that can accompany discussions of craft. In all, there is a proximity to production and a keen awareness of process.

The author E.M. Forster famously asked “How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?”⁶ For me, the process of curating is comparable to the thinking process. An exhibition is not a *fait accompli* – it is just the beginning. To highlight the importance placed on process by *Making is Thinking*, the accompanying publication will develop over the course of the show. It will think along with the exhibition, if you will, and be made available online in installments, each free to download from www.wdw.nl. Four writers have been invited to contribute: Alice Motard, who shares my curatorial interest in craft, will give a historical perspective by writing about William Morris. Solveig Øvstebø, whose exhibition *Looking is Political* (2009) was influential on my thinking, will interview Ane Hjort Guttu. Yoshiko Nagai, whose conversation and original way of looking at artwork I have long valued, will write a short story inspired by the work of Teppai Kaneuji. And curator Gavin Delahunty will write about thinking. These chapters and the shorter texts that follow in this guide provide some entry points into the practice of the participating artists. However, what you make of the exhibition could be another story entirely.

Zoë Gray

⁴ Talk by Sennett at Arminius, Rotterdam, 26 November 2010.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Aspect of the Novel*, 1927, u.p.

mark

ing

is

think

ing



frieze

THE NETHERLANDS **Making is Thinking**

By Sean O'Toole

Witte de With Rotterdam



When Marcel Duchamp walked into J.L. Mott Iron Works in the Spring of 1917, accompanied by Joseph Stella and Walter Arensberg, it is unlikely that any of them would have described the Bedfordshire-model porcelain urinal that caught their attention as an 'off-the-shelf' product. This doesn't mean that it wasn't; it was – the expression just hadn't been coined yet. The first recorded use of the adjective 'off-the-shelf' was in 1950, 36 years after workers at Henry Ford's manufacturing plant reduced the assembly time of a Model T from half a day to 93 minutes using standardized parts and procedures. Not to belabour the point, but it would seem that language, rather than always offering the consolation of off-the-shelf words to make sense of our actions and thoughts, arrives after the fact.

I had this distinct sense looking at French artist Wilfrid Almendra's *Handcrafted Pick-axe* (2003) and two *Handcrafted Trowels* (2003), pristine reproductions of off-the-shelf implements made in collaboration with the artistic duo Daniel Dewar and Grégory Gicquel. Displayed in a Perspex vitrine, the buffed and engraved tools were more than reactionary memorials to the notion of physical labour; Almendra's artisanal creations are mute visualizations of the trio's enquiry into mass-production and standardization. They elegantly animated (rather than merely illustrated) curator Zoë Gray's theme for 'Making is Thinking', based on her interest in recent sociological enquiries into the alienation implicit in global capitalism's increasingly atomized and deskilled production processes.

Two books framed Gray's thinking for this show: Matthew Crawford's *The Case of Working with Your Hands or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* (2009), a popular broadside against 'ignorance of the world of artefacts', and Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008), a lapidary argument for the physical act of making as congruent and proximate to thinking. Famously, neither Crawford nor Sennett explicitly engages the visual arts, where the decoupling of labours of hand and head are pronounced. This omission allowed Gray some licence to fashion an idiosyncratic interpretation of Sennett's declaration that 'making is thinking'. Eschewing masonry, she presented a more applied and unstable reading, drawing on the practices of contemporary artists working with photography, video, sculpture and performance. The protagonists included Edgar Leciejewski, who makes austere photographic studies of the 'raw state' of his Leipzig studio, and Chicago native William J. O'Brien, whose pencil and ink drawings possess a rich materiality despite the hard-edged abstraction of their composition. Sculpture was well represented with Alexandre da Cunha's quixotic four-by-seven-metre ceiling-hung work made of mop-heads (*Palazzo*, 2009), and Rita McBride's freestanding red room divider, *Stratacolour* (2008), based on the shapes of plastic templates formerly used in technical drawing.

Unavoidably, there were cleavages between the conceptual terrain being mapped and the works themselves. What group exhibition framed around a speculative position doesn't get similarly tripped up? Peculiarly, many of the sculptural and photographic works tended toward a minimal formalism, and in some pieces, as in Teppei

Kaneuji's Tower (2009), a hand-drawn animation of a smoking tower, the evidence of making didn't always prompt a thinking reflex in the viewer. Diversions and dead-ends notwithstanding, Gray managed to piece together a 'strangely coherent sprawl' (an expression I borrow from Scott McLemee's engaging review of *The Craftsman* in Bookforum).

The museum-quality pickaxe and trowels aside, standout contributions included Dutch artist Hedwig Houben's video discussions of her sculptural practice (*About The Good and The Bad Sculpture*, 2009, and *Colour and Shapes, A Short Explanation of My Artistic Practice*, 2010), from its rootedness in geometric forms to why it sometimes fails. The deadpan narration, which is resolutely earnest but subtly mocking, lends the commentary a comic tension. It also suggests that making is a series of complications, difficulties and solutions that challenge the mind as much as frustrate the hand. Los Angeles-based Koki Tanaka, an admirer of Bruce Nauman, also employs video, albeit as a tool for recording his fascination with cheap domestic objects, most of them plastic, and the peculiar sounds they make when swivelled, twirled, thrown or kicked. *Everything is Everything* (2006) replays an infinite loop of Tanaka's field recordings of, variously, an aluminium ladder being kicked over, an inflatable bed falling down stairs, and two yellow hardhats colliding. Gee whiz, you appreciatively think.

Aesthetica

art

A Reaction to Globalised Production

Making Is Thinking

15 INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS' EXHIBIT IN ROTTERDAM, IN A GROUND-BREAKING EXHIBITION THAT
DECIPHERS NEW MEANING WITHIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAKING AND THINKING.

The difference between production and consumption informs group show *Making Is Thinking*, curated by Zoë Gray and assisted by Amira Gad at the Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam. Featuring the work of 15 artists, the show approaches a multitude of oppositional relationships, including form and content, thinker and maker, as well as conceptual and applied arts at a time when such debates are needed. As far as metaphors go, a separation between mind and body could easily describe increasing divisions between government and populace in a world driven by industrialised wants and needs.

The exhibition contemplates labour divisions that emerged from factory systems at the start of the Industrial Revolution in 18th century Britain; then known as the workshop of the world. This transformed Europe and the United States' productive capabilities, irrevocably changing societies in the process. Citing Matthew Crawford's book, *The Case for Working with Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* (2009) Gray explains: "Crawford makes various salient points about the way the mechanisation of labour and [Henry] Ford's creation of the assembly line [at the start of the 20th century] divided the craftsman's skill into the manager's knowledge and the workers' labour – a division that persists today in many fields. It is as if know-how was split in two: know and how. This has had wide-reaching ramifications on all areas of work and education – artistic or not."

While manufacturing processes separated concept, materiality and making, the traditional crafts diminished, as did the presence of the craftsman's hand, something Rita McBride's inkjet prints of pre-digital French curves and engineering tools evoke. As technology continues to evolve alongside the expanding industrial model, the distance between human input and industrial output widens, with efficiency, productivity and progress continuing to fuel a globalised reality where nations are organised under the industrial hierarchy

of primary, secondary and tertiary industry. Looking at Dewar & Gicquel's enlarged necklaces combining worry beads with battered helmets in *The Hairdresser's Birthday Treat* (2006) and wooden shells and cars with cricket bats in *Cocoa Turismo* (2006), the industrial legacies of imperialism, trade and consumption remain largely unresolved.

But do we have reason to fear those dark Satanic Mills that created a reaction against industrialisation in the 19th century Arts and Crafts Movement, led by William Morris and John Ruskin? Gray observes current parallels, but does not succumb to moral judgements. "An interest in craft is re-emerging in part as a reaction to the globalised economy and its re-localisation of production. However, for Ruskin, there was a close association between craft and morality, something that contemporary theorists of craft such as Glenn Adamson are keen to avoid. It would be naive nowadays to suggest that craft is good, while industry is bad; things are not that simple ... The most interesting artists have always been those who combine brilliant ideas with exciting forms. I'm not so interested in the presumed division between making and thinking as in their fusion. The title establishes equivalence rather than opposition."

This invites a non-hierarchical assessment of art and life in a mechanised world nearly a century after the Duchampian readymade marked an artistic separation between thought and practice, commonly pinned on *Fountain* (1917). The industrially-produced urinal was presented, and rejected for lack of artistic integrity, as the world's first fully industrialised war was raging, forcing society to re-examine its structured reality on all levels, from methods of warfare to the relief of bodily urges. In doing so, Duchamp exposed divisions between designer, maker, and user as large as those between factory workers supplying weapons to frontline soldiers to those managing the conflict. This reclaimed thought and perspective in a society numbed by mindless mass-production



Alexandre da Cunha
(Background) *Green Fountain*, 2009.
Courtesy of the artist & Vilma Gold, London
Dimensions variable.
(Foreground) *Kinbucky Mocramé*, 2010.
Courtesy of the artist & Dennis Braddock & Ms. Janice Niemi
Installation photo Witte de With 2011; Bob Goedewaagen.



(Background) William J. O'Brien, *Untitled* (2009). Courtesy of the artist; Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; Maranna Borsky Gallery, New York. (Foreground) Eva Rotschka, *Y/Inner Child* (2009). Courtesy of the artist; Collection Ken and Helen Row, London. Photo: Bob Goodswain.

and divided by the actions produced from it.

As Teppei Kaneuji's reference to Babel in *Tower (Movie)* (2009) remembers, enforced divisions can lead to chaos and decline, both individually and collectively. Sometimes, the body needs the release of creative expression without being restrained by conceptual structures, as the immediacy of small, spontaneous acts using everyday items in Koki Tanaka's video montage *Everything is Everything* (2006) suggests. In the case of William J. O'Brien's coloured pencil and ink works on paper exploring colour, shape and line, instinctive expression can manifest as rich meditations. Though in certain circumstances, it can also come to resemble O'Brien's installation (*Untitled*), *Topical Descent* (2010), containing explosive, childlike outbursts on paper exuding violent spontaneity not unlike the way individuals might react to discipline, or how suppressed groups might resort to protest.

“The mechanisation of labour and [Henry] Ford's creation of the assembly line [at the start of the 20th century] divided the craftsman's skill into the manager's knowledge and the workers' labour.”

In this sense, the works on show reveal innate conflicts that exist when concept manifests in reality; as with any idea, from an architectural design to a political ideology, formation demands continuous trial and error – making and thinking – directed by circumstantial factors. From Eva Berendes' combination of found ceramics with painted silks spray-painted by the artist to Julia Dault's site-specific banded Plexiglas and Formica compositions titled according to the date and time they were made, crudely anchored to the gallery wall, to Edgar Leciejewski's insular photographic *Wands (Walls)* series (2008) that systematically documents his own studio, there is a sense that the process of making liberates latent thoughts not yet fully formed. The importance is to allow ample room within rigid processes for such concepts to reveal themselves physically, while still allowing room for them to grow.

Alexandre da Cunha appropriates mop heads – a domestic material, used in this instance to create an extravagant hanging screen in the case of *Palazzo*

(2009) or in turning a plastic planter filled with concrete into an exotic macramé art object in *Kentucky Macramé* (2010). Deconstructing the mop's materiality, da Cunha's crafted process recognises the hidden potential of a replicated object with a singular role. This creative response re-invigorates the industrialised domestic space with new possibilities, proving that anything can change into something else should we allow it to happen.

This adaptive quality is necessary not only in the creation of a single artwork, but in the entire process by which art is created, presented and perceived. Discussing the political potential of art to change things, Ane Hjort Guttu writes in the exhibition catalogue: “I'd like to see art emancipated from itself to a greater extent so that we can experience it as an expression of the humanity that lives in all of us, and on which everyone can draw.” This inclusivity is explored in Hedwig Houben's *Colours and Shapes, A Short Explanation of My Artistic Practice* (2010).

Taking on anthropomorphic qualities, five shapes represent artistic practice, from instinctive making, to evaluation and analysis, revealing the process of conception, production and evaluation and thus including the audience entirely in the creative process.

Guttu's 2009 series of 20 black and white photographs portraying three-dimensional shapes discovered in the attic of Oslo's former national college of arts and crafts invites similar engagement. Titled *Static Dynamic Tension Force Form Counterform* (2009) after the project undertaken by college students between the 1960s and 1980s, Guttu revives the virtues of making by elevating educational studies to high art through photography. Observing her young son create readymade compositions around the house in video *How to Become a Non-Artist* (2007) she notes: “Eina got the impression that objects only become more interesting when they are photographed.” As a viewer, objects become more interesting when they are actively perceived on a more conscious level.

“Quoting Berendes, it is more about a question of reception; of how we have a more tactile approach to the applied arts, a greater proximity to the way items are made, as compared to our reading of fine art, where the concept has become all-important,” Gray explains. Perhaps this outlook is closer to Duchamp's



Tepuk Kencana, Iwer/Mweit 2009. Animated by Tepuk Kencana. Oh Non Non and Kerji Jagak. Filmed and music by Tepuk Kencana and Lupa. Edited by Kerji Jagak. Courtesy of the artist & ShogunArt, Tokyo. Installation photo March 2010. Bob Gendekwainy.



Eva Rothschild, *SUPERNATURE*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist & The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow. Installation photo Whitefriars, 2011. Bob Goodswain.

intent for the latrine than its common association as benchmark upon which the traditional process of making is rejected in favour of a conscious critique on practice, exemplified in Lawrence Weiner's notorious *Declaration of Intent* (1968), which stated that thinking could replace making.

When explaining video work *About the Good and the Bad Sculpture* (2009), Houben notes that divisions between two objects into "good" and "bad" creates a duality that demands constant reinterpretation. In this sense, the potency of the readymade does not lie in the need to challenge or reaffirm its authority, but in its continuing – and developing – relevance. For example, how far do *Handcrafted Pick-axe* and *Handcrafted Trowels* (2003), handmade tools fashioned by Wilfrid Almendra with Dewar & Gicquel to look like their mass-produced counterparts, really challenge Duchamp's industrially-made wood and iron snow shovel *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915)? Gray posits; "In a sense, this absurdly time-consuming activity is a complete reversal of the readymade." Conversely, as *Fountain* critiqued mass-production in the early 20th century, these contemporary "handmades" carry a similar reminder; though technology and industry directs the way we live, we still have the physical and mental tools to create new possibilities from existing realities.

But does this require a re-assessment of value in a world in which economy often overrides humanity? "It is absolutely about questions of value. Time is the most precious 'commodity' today and several of the works in the exhibition explore how we spend our time, and what value that activity is given." Gray uses Hans Schabus' *Der Turmbau zu Babel* (2010) as a case in point. In a sequence of framed jigsaw puzzles completed over one winter named after Bruegel's 16th century painting *The Tower of Babel* (1563), Schabus presents the puzzles on their reverse side. "Doing jigsaw puzzles is perhaps the least respected pastime, requiring little skill, but infinite patience. What does it mean when an artist such as Schabus presents these mute puzzles as highly eloquent artworks about art and work? What value do we put upon it? These are extremely interesting questions to me."

After the rise of boom-time artists in the late 1990s and early millennium, exemplified by Hirst, Koons and Murakami, who all worked within a factory-

based practice that often saw them oversee production of ideas rather than making work themselves, the role of the artist is a contentious issue from the perspective of human skill, monetary value and market integrity. Following the economic crash in 2008, does this more materialised, tactile approach reflect a change in perception of worth? Gray responds: "I think the term 'tactile art' is misleading. For me, Koons' work is extremely tactile. However, I do see a certain backlash against, or perhaps reassessment of, the dematerialised, globalised world in which we live in the West today. Across society there is a renewed interest in re-taking control of making processes as a way of becoming more engaged with and responsible for the things that surround us."

By challenging the industrial process, artists are taking steps towards reconciling the negative impacts of industry and the opportunities it represents. Eva Rothschild's formalist sculpture *SUPERNATURE* (2008) exists on three levels of the industrial process; mass-produced PVC sheets are wall-mounted to reflect a wooden frame designed by Rothschild and fashioned by technicians intertwined with leather and rope-like forms, hand-woven by the artist and assistants. "These different forms of making come together in one impressive work, which for me suggest a 'return to nature' of a piece of modernist sculpture as it is overgrown by the concrete jungle," explains Gray.

In the end, when it comes to making and thinking, or thinking and making, what's the difference? Either way, everyone needs to see, feel and understand. With the industrial age hurtling into an unknown future as evidenced in the nuclear crisis in Japan, the rise of China and India as industrial nations and their metamorphosis into consumer societies, *Making Is Thinking* is a timely and relevant exhibition. Along with the rising oil prices caused by political turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East, flexible re-unification of body and mind, craft and industry, artist and audience, production and consumption and a myriad other dualities prove useful in a world grappling with readymade structures desperately in need of re-evaluation, resolution, and inevitably, reconstruction. Visit www.wdwnl.nl for tickets and information.

Stephanie Bailey

Eva Bermejo, *Untitled (Background)*, 2009. (foreground) *Untitled (Comment)*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist & Judy Street Gallery, Frankfurt/Main. Installation photo, März de 2011, Bob Goodwin/gsm.

