

EGON VAN HERREWEGHE 'High Fidelity'

6 September – 26 October 2019

Photographic images have always had a performative character. They were made to document, to prove, to thrill, to denounce, to excite, to sell ideas, feelings, products. Photographs are not quiet, silent images that operate in the dark, they clearly want something from us. A specific class of such performative images can be found in advertising and product photography. Although both practices seem to be very similar, they are strictly hierarchical. At the top are the advertising photographers who, directed by an advertising agency, hope to persuade the potential consumer to buy the product in question through cleverly constructed images and image strategies. They create images that weave a story around the product: to charge it with a value, a meaning, that goes beyond its purely functional aspect. At the very bottom of the hierarchical ladder are the product photographers. They mainly make pack shots: a photographic mass production of images in which it suffices to make a precise visual translation of the product. In today's digital, dematerialised visual culture, pack shots occupy a special place. To begin with, they are only rarely photographic anymore. Pack shots are increasingly made on the basis of the digital designs used in the development of the product. While the 'classic' pack shots still refer to a material reality, this is no longer the case with the current pack shots: they are nothing more than coded data.

The work by Egon Van Herreweghe (°1985), based on such a pack shot of a *Google Chromecast Audio* (for sale in the regular online store for €49.55), operates within the aforementioned aporia of an image that shows 'something' which nevertheless does not really 'exist'. It activates a multitude of oppositions: digital versus analogue, technique versus craft, immaterial versus material, appliance versus artistic object, and so on. By relying solely on the information that is visible in the image, the 'counterfeit' object shows a number of flaws. The yellow cable for instance is not completely round (after all, we do not see the back of the cable in the image) and the black disc has no depth or volume (the frontal viewpoint turning it into a flat surface). What we see here can best be described as a phantom object. But what exactly is the result of this re-materialization of an image object that is neither an image nor a full-fledged object? What remains is the stupidity of the naked object which, operating in a vacuum of meaninglessness, can only refer to itself. There is a deep fascination with an object that withdraws, that refuses to give itself completely over to the scrutinizing gaze of the viewer. It is the same fascination that strikes us when we look at a photograph: there too, reality is hidden behind a transparent window. Tantalizing there and yet unassailable absent.

Steven Humblet

Egon Van Herreweghe presents a new series in the Window this season. It features painted woodcuts of hi-fi equipment that can be purchased through web stores. He focuses on small, non-essential parts that condense visual codes and messages. Once photographed, the disproportionate objects resemble packshots on bol.com.

A short text by Steven Humblet will accompany all five objects; the text will be available at the gallery and will be published in its entirety along with the photos in the summer of 2020.

Egon Van Herreweghe (1985) lives and works in Ghent. He studied photography at the KASK in Ghent and has been a laureate of the HISK since 2015. He has had solo exhibitions in FOAM (Amsterdam) and Netwerk (Aalst), but also participated in various (inter) national group exhibitions including: *Every Letter is a Love Letter* (Tallinn 2016), *Friendly Faces* (New York 2015) and *The Catwalk* (Brussels 2015). His work has been included in private and public collections such as FOAM, Martin Asbæk, Pieter and Marieke Sanders and Frédéric de Goldschmidt.