

EGON VAN HERREWEGHE 'High Fidelity'

08 March – 02 May 2020

The image in front of you is the result of a conversion of a digital, low-resolution image that circulates at a high speed (and therefore seems to lack any fixed abode), into a somewhat cumbersome material image-object that can only be seen here for a certain period of time. In contrast to the advertising image from which it is derived, it is a strongly situated object, craftily reproduced for this specific exhibition space. Moreover, the visual object that looms up in front of you is a somewhat strange image: it does not do what a 'normal' image should do. Even though it shows an overwhelming reproduction of a real existing object (in this case the *JBL Tune 120TWS Blue - Fully Wireless Bluetooth Earphones*), it does not so much refer to what it shows, but to another image, a pre-image. The question then remains what exactly appears here? What does this literal repetition, this sudden displacement and standstill, this 'arrêt-sur-image' reveal? What exactly does this fake image want from us?

After all, the function of the original image seems pretty clear: it is there to convince potential clients to buy the advertised product. It does this according to the standard codes of advertising photography: to clearly highlight the product so that it can appear in all its glory. No disturbing shadows that could hide something from view: the image is radiantly present, showing itself without any hesitation. Because the image is composed of pixels, that is to say, of radiant light, and not of light that has been deposited on or absorbed by a photochemical layer, it also elicits a very specific reaction from the viewer. We who look at this image on our screen, bathe in its glow. The rays of light it emits, lure us, embrace us, swallow us up. The radiant light brings the referenced object awfully close, an effect that is further enhanced by the website's ability to zoom in on the image. This magnification reinforces the hyper-presence of what is being shown: the product shows itself even more eagerly, is even more pronounced. By moving the cursor over the image, our viewing becomes tactile: the sliding mouse an extension of our caressing finger. Even though the image is immaterial, it feels like if we can touch it (and therefore already possess it).

Dematerialization, hyper-presence and speed of circulation are intricately linked. Only that image that is not anchored anywhere but always remains available, is the image that is forever present. Even where it is not, it can appear unexpectedly. By converting this digital image into an image-object that has to be viewed attentively (and is therefore taken out of circulation), Egon Van Herreweghe (°1985) radically breaks with the new visual regime that the dematerialized and networked (advertising) image has installed. Immediately a new paradox arises: even though this image is eminently material, it eludes our grasping hands. It is seductive there (and the enlargement even makes it obtrusively present), but at the same time it also withdraws: it is stowed away safely behind glass, does not catch us in its glowing light, but merely reflects it. While the advertising image wants to eliminate every critical sense, here the opposite happens: this is an image as a thought experiment, an object that offers resistance, that does not want to be a simple gateway to the referenced product but needs to be questioned. Whereas the digital advertisement can only be successful to the extent that it is able to erase itself for the benefit of the product to be sold, this image explicitly puts itself in the 'here and now' of perception. It only exists for us because it hangs here, appears here, right now. There is nothing behind this image: this flat object cherishes no secret plan (and is therefore puzzlingly unpredictable).

Steven Humblet

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.