

Text accompanied by:

Graduation Piece (official title: "*Work where Daniël Dennis de Wit can close his studentship with, which could have been an Artwork by Wouter Sibum*")

objects and texts

July 2005

The artist as Idea

One's actions don't make a person who he is. Vice versa this is also the case. Someone who often makes meals, is not by definition a cook.

An office-employee who always works from 9 to 5 is, during that time, mainly what he's been hired to do. In this case: an office-employee. When this person gets home, he probably doesn't see himself as an office-employee anymore. Artists often have a lot of difficulty recognizing this line between work and private life, and have the tendency to see themselves as an artist all the time. This gives them a separate status. The *title* of 'artist' can work stigmatizing. Any action done by an artist can be seen as a work of art because of this. Manzoni understood this ridiculous notion, and successfully showed its absurdity by canning his excrement. Sierra never called himself an artist; "That is up to others to decide".

The (partly) unique character that is inherent to an individual, also becomes projected onto that persons actions/work. I however stick to the opinion that my work could have been made by anybody else, which in some cases also (partly) is. As an individual I may be unique, however as a human being I am also part of a larger social context which has transferred many of its (cultural) customs over to me, which I emit again, deliberately or not. My work therefore is not at all a complete unified aspect of myself, likewise my thoughts and concepts also aren't by definition completely unique and 'mine'. Concepts are mostly formed in language, which is a common good.

This notion works through in my graduation project which is shown parallel with someone elses presentation whose work/concept I try to approach, and vice versa. We do not execute each others work or idea, but rather play with the self-regulating system which forms definitions and conventions that show the pseudo-unique characters commonly attributed to people in general, and (in this case) artists in particular. We have exchanged the 'caricatural form' that has been?attributed to us and our work. Wouter Sibum is commonly known as the person who 'exhibits benches'. And I am usually seen as a person who 'makes conceptual paintings' (in which I've also parodied myself and the notion of 'conceptual painting' by making a painting which displays the text: "a conceptual looking painting").

Borders are always being pushed forward, but they're never broken. Just as the benches I'm showing, art is always a series of conventions, somewhat like the existence of countries. All conventions and arrangements...

What we define as a "bench", is nothing more than some material we can sit on. Meanwhile there is loads of other matter that we also can and do sit on, but that is not referred to as "a bench" (think for example: a rock, the kitchen-counter, the floor). A bench doesn't inherently have a function of it's own, we accredit it's function. It doesn't seem strange then that the Japanese have difficulties concerning the terms 'bench' and 'chair'.

When I show "benches" as if they're "mine", the question of intellectual property mounts. The benches sort of less remain part of 'the work of Wouter Sibum'. The appropriation and transformation to a "genuine" work of mine lies in two components. The first is the origin of the bench that I exhibit: "Witte de With", which refers to my surname. Secondly, because we also exchanged the rights of our works, which now makes me the owner of what can roughly be described as "Showing Benches as an Art Object". The contracts therefore are not explanations of our work, but have become an essential part of it. The whole context after all can be seen as a part of our form, including yourself.

Daniël Dennis de Wit