



Specials > OBJECTHOOD

The *Specials* podcasts focus on projects by artists and curators who have some kind of connection to the Museum's programme and the MACBA Collection. **OBJECTHOOD** is a series of podcasts on new approaches to the role of the object in contemporary art and philosophy.

PDF Contents:

- 01. Introduction
- 02. Biographies
- 03. Timeline
- 04. Related links
- 05. Credits
- 06. License

Production, interviews and documentation: Roc Jiménez de Cisneros.

Roc Jiménez de Cisneros is an artist. He lives and works in Barcelona. vivapunani.org

OBJECTHOOD #2

This podcast is about objects and, more importantly, about some recent new theoretical conceptualisations of objects in contemporary philosophy and art. In this second episode, sound artist Florian Hecker discusses the idea of sounds as objects and the notion of decomposition in his recent chimerical pieces, and Erick Beltrán addresses different aspects of epistemology, the self and identity that have been part of his artistic practice.

01. Introduction

Many of the theories developed in contemporary philosophy, such as the ones expressed in the first episode of this series, also make their way into art. This episode starts off with audio snippets from Scott Spiegel's film *Intruder*, from 1989. This charming slasher film contains a whole catalogue of weird points of view and unusual subjective camera action. Not just 'human' subjective camera, but also non-human: a supermarket seen from the inside of a shopping trolley, a girl sweeping the floor from the point of view of the floor itself, a telephone conversation from the inside of the telephone, a man seen from the point of view of a door knob, where the whole image rotates slowly, as the killer opens the door. This, of course, predates Graham Harman's inaugural paper on object-oriented ontology, and needless to say there are many similar examples across a number of artistic disciplines, not just cinema. *Blank Process*, a work by New York artist Clement Valla, puts a simple yet effective twist on the notion of the subjectless object, applied to photography. The images in the piece, subtitled 'areas of interest on the studio wall as determined by a computer vision algorithm' are not chosen by a human photographer but by face recognition software and other image processing and machine vision mechanisms in the camera. In other words, it's the camera's own point of view that makes up the work. Ian Bogost calls that Alien Phenomenology.

Indeed, the question of objecthood has powerful echoes in the art arena. Western art in the twentieth century became to a large extent an exploration of the functions and basic properties of objects: from the implications of the '*objet trouvé*', to the comment of mass reproducibility in Pop art, or the disappearance of physical artefacts in many Conceptual works. As hinted by Sven Lütticken in his essay 'Art and Thingness', there is a somewhat invisible string connecting Duchamp's readymades and Natascha Sadr Haghghighian's 2008 *Solo Show*, which exposed the largely unknown role of companies that produce pieces for world renowned contemporary artists. We could as easily conceive additional imaginary lines populated by other works that explore the notion of objecthood within art from a variety of standpoints. To name but two obvious classics, Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* puts a linguistic spin on the subject, while many of Christian Boltanski's installations address the symbolic potential of household objects as substitutes for human stories. These and many other pieces reflect a common interest in the complex network of links between substance, matter, subject, object and properties, which unravelled during the past hundred-odd years throughout many other disciplines.

In the study of sound and music, for instance, Pierre Schaeffer's early notion of 'sound object', which echoed Husserl's phenomenology to accommodate the demands of the acousmatic experience, has been supplemented by other theories using similar terminology, applied to psychology and metaphysics rather than music. Authors such as Casey O'Callaghan have drawn on recent advances in auditory perception, most notably Albert Bregman's influential Auditory Scene Analysis model, in the definition of their auditory ontologies. O'Callaghan says that 'sounds are best conceived not as pressure waves that travel through a medium, nor as physical properties of the objects ordinarily thought to be the sources of sounds, but rather as events of a certain kind. (...) Sounds are public objects of auditory perception.'



[Scott Spiegel's *Intruder* (1989)]

02. Biographies

Erick Beltrán's work is based on ongoing research and reflection upon the structural mechanisms of systems, especially those that come into play in the power relations between the editing process and the construction of discourse. Through diagrams, information compilations, archives and media inserts, he explores the way images are defined, valued, ordered, classified, selected, reproduced, and distributed to create political, economic and cultural discourses in contemporary society.

Florian Hecker was born in 1975 in Kissing, Germany. Working in performance, studio and installation, he frequently collaborates with academic researchers in the fields of auditory perception and computer music, as well as with fellow artists such as Aphex Twin, Russell Haswell and Cerith Wyn Evans. His solo exhibitions include: MMK, Museum für Moderne Kunst (Frankfurt am Main), IKON Gallery (Birmingham) and Chisenhale Gallery (London), all in 2010; Bawag Contemporary (Vienna) in 2009; Sadie Coles HQ (London) in 2008 and Galerie Neu (Berlin) in 2007.

03. Timeline

- 00:19 Introduction
- 04:46 Erick Beltrán, scale, the self, folding and cutting. An unusual guide to objects
- 14:40 Negotiating with reality
- 24:45 Hecker discusses the notions of sound as event / stream / object
- 36:50 Beyond Schaeffer's *objet sonore*

04. Related links

Florian Hecker's blog
<http://florianhecker.blogspot.com>

About Erick Beltrán's *The World Explained*
<http://www.afterall.org/online/the-world-explained/#.U35w4a2SxYw>

Hecker's *Chimerization* piece for dOCUMENTA (13)
<http://chimerization.documenta.de>

Text by Nizaia Cassian Yde on Beltrán's work (Spanish)
<http://www.a-desk.org/spip/spip.php?article125>

Hecker's piece for Composing With Process (Ràdio Web MACBA)
http://rwm.macba.cat/en/research/composingwithprocess_exclusives_florian_hecker_ryoji_ikeda/capsula

Erick Beltrán interview for Ràdio Web MACBA's FONS series (Spanish)
http://rwm.macba.cat/en/specials/fons_erick_beltran/capsula

05. Credits

Produced by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Voice: Barbara Held. Recorded in Lisbon and Barcelona with a Beyerdynamic MC 930 condenser microphone on a Tascam DR-100 digital recorder, edited with Sound Studio.

06. License

2014. This podcast is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.