

The characteristic of modern art is to participate in our life. A painting in an interior spreads joy around it by the colors, which calm us. The colors obviously are not assembled haphazardly, but in an expressive way. A painting on a wall should be like a bouquet of flowers in an interior. These flowers are an expression, tender or lively. Or, the pleasure simply comes to us from a yellow or red surface, which accounts for the more tender expression of the flowers, like roses, violets, daisies, compared with the bright and purely decorative orange of marigolds.

- Henri Matisse



**Henri Matisse, *Luxe, calme, et volupté*, 1904**

There, all is order and beauty,  
Richness, quiet, and pleasure.

Highly polished furniture,  
Made beautiful by time,  
Would decorate our room;  
The rarest flowers  
Mingling their odors  
With the vague fragrance of amber,  
Rich ceilings,  
Deep mirrors,  
Eastern splendor,  
Everything there would speak

- Baudelaire, in *Luxe, calme, et volupté*

## Live Free or Die



Painting by Basquiat, arrangement by Adam Lindemann and Amalia Dayan, and architecture by David Adjay

The biannual Concord, New Hampshire Art, Design, and Antique Fair is in several historic buildings. The city commissions architects to design temporary pavilions in between the historic sites. The fair brings together fine art and artifacts from different historical periods including the present.

Like any selling event, dealers select the objects they put on display. The dealers also commission artists to make new works in relation to each site and their selection of artifacts.

Like most art studio practices in the United States, the artists are free to criticize or empathize with the artifacts, buildings, and fair in any way they see fit, but within limitations. The artists will navigate through the event's contingencies and adjust their pure vision accordingly. There is a time and place for pure vision in a seemingly white room, and this is not one of them.<sup>1</sup>

The dealers' price structure is agile. It is a combinatoric field. The buyer may walk into a space similar to Lindemann and Dayan's home and choose to buy one or more of the objects. They may even buy a replication of the entire environment. The buyer may hire affiliated artists, designers, architects, and dealers to make a new structure and object combination in another space. Any commissions stemming from the fair will be documented and included in the fair archive.

Intersecting the art fair with the antique and design fair leads to a better understanding of how people arrange invaluable, valuable, and kitsch objects from different times prior to their permanent installment in public collections, redistribution into other contexts, or demise in landfills. In other words, the Concord Fair develops an archival record of objects' importance in our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Institutional critique' and/or 'site specificity' are fancy ways that art critics describe this negotiation of freedoms relative to site conditions. This kind of practice has been a norm in architectural form from the very beginning. This is one of the many ways that artists today borrow from design traditions, knowingly or not.

And you saw all these things. Beautiful objects, beautiful books, all displayed, and instruments too – a harpsichord, violins, etc. But those books! Anyways, it all made a great impression on me; it was very expressive. And I got to wondering whether the job the architecture had set itself here was to create these receptacles to house objects.

- Peter Zumthor



**Dior Haute Couture, Spring 2004**

### Historical Pastiche , Eclecticism, and Styles

When people live with objects there is always an eclectic layering of styles. There is less eclecticism in extremely rare cases when a single designer controls every aspect of an environment. Philip Johnson's iconic modern Glass House is one of those rare cases. Eventually eclecticism wins. Layering becomes obvious in Johnson's highly erratic buildings that later surround the Glass House. He submits iconic modernity to late-modern historical pastiche.

In more common cases, objects have a way of layering histories through memory. Layering happens to an object internally (blemishes, oxidation, etc), in the memory of people living with it (life associations like I kissed him here and read that book there), and in the meaningful network surrounding it (in the dressing room is Mother's heirloom mirror behind a newly minted fragrance, to put on after a shower in the bathroom, and a drying and drinking ritual in the drawing room).

The Concord Fair does not separate art objects from memory at large. After all, art objects are not fully self-contained and controlled things. In other words, art objects are memorable in the larger net of meaning. In this context it is the feeling of people living with the objects that brings everything together. If an artist wants to productively tap into this net, then one of the biggest challenges is to figure out how to interact with and express the significant memories of others. Next, artists will come to understand objects through dealers' knowledge of provenance (a system that moves between different ownerships, condition reports, geographic regions, and times). To goal of the fair is to simulate and express as fully as possible this complex of memories.



Anselm Kiefer with Mies van der Rohe, ink jet print, dimensions variable, 2013

### **Where does your attraction to the monumental come from?**

It's not that I like it. It's so people can't put the painting over the sofa. If you want to have this, you have to decide to put it in a room with nothing else.

- Anselm Kiefer

Does the monumentality of a painting preclude putting a sofa in front of it? Does it determine other things in the room? Does it determine whether someone matches the colors of a picture with the colors in an evening gown? Does it determine the furnishings in a museum? Absolutely not. Contracts have a better chance of determining the performance of a painting after it leaves the hands of an artist. Obviously, Kiefer's statement is rhetorical, and he is putting too much power in artistic intention. Art, like other artifacts, lives outside the intentions of its maker.

Anyone that buys a work of art uses it for many more reasons than pure contemplation of artistic intention. Is it wrong to use a serious painting as an accessory to one's lifestyle? Does this somehow diminish its importance? Absolutely not. It diminishes the importance of a picture to cut it off from life in the present, and it diminishes the agency or aura an object gains from casual conversation around it. In short, it loses the ability to speak. Kiefer is exceptionally consistent here. To go along with his content/subject, he is a totalitarian painter that speaks at people but does not converse.

The Concord fair is not an argument against an artist like Kiefer that wants people to encounter his work in austere circumstances. Many people that purchase a Kiefer will in fact put it in a room with nothing else and will get a lot out of that experience. Nevertheless, the Concord Fair does argue that there are still many things surrounding the Kiefer that construct its meaning, including the objects and memories in the outer rooms. There is nothing to guarantee that all people of all time will adhere to his desire. The fair puts forth the argument that austerity and domesticity are not antithetical but rather part of the same network of meaning.