

DOMESTIC SCIENCE

ANNEGIEN VAN DOORN



16 MAY – 24 JUNE 2014

We see two men sitting in a stationary car. They are talking to each other but without looking at each other. One man sits in the driver's seat, the other in the passenger's seat. The man behind the wheel slowly pulls a shoelace from his All Stars. He forms it into a loop and secures it with a knot, creating a lasso. Almost motionlessly, he lowers it over the accelerator. He asks the man next to him to pass him a paperclip from the dashboard. He pulls the shoelace through the paperclip and secures it between the jaws of a pipe wrench. With his feet he carefully places this between the floor and the brake pedal. Finally, he pulls the lace through the steering wheel and hooks it behind the door handle.

on a bottle of ketchup. The construction looks rather shaky, but is perfectly in keeping with her way of working. Her creations are often experiments, and failure is a possible outcome. That does not make her work any less good, however, there are simply no criteria for the success or failure of a piece. For Van Doorn, the criteria for success are not to be found in self-imposed rules. She works with whatever is available. Situations she encounters form the basis of her works, whether that is a tangle of cords under a desk, two water bottles that spontaneously break into a dance on top of a spinning washing machine or a wigwam built of incense.



In the next shot we see Murdoc standing a short distance away and behind him two assistants pointing bazookas at the car. It starts to become clear what MacGyver plans to do with his makeshift construction: exit the car in one swift movement and take out the bad guys at the same time. By jumping out of the car, the door handle will pull on the shoelace, the accelerator will be pushed down and the car will plough into the gangsters, allowing MacGyver to escape.

"I want to show you some ugly sketches," Annegien van Doorn says to me as we discuss the plans for her exhibition in Foam. I see photo-shopped designs of trolleys mounted with Hantarex monitors propped

In the book *Homo Ludens* ('Playing Man'), Dutch historian Johan Huizinga describes how play is one of the most important conditions for the generation of culture. 'The elasticity of human relationships underlying the political machinery permits it to "play", thus easing tensions which would otherwise be unendurable or dangerous – for it is the decay of humour that kills.' Although this quote dates from 1938, it is highly relevant to the work of Van Doorn. Examining the most basic structures gives rise to striking results. Just as babies explore new toys by putting them in their mouths, so Van Doorn uses objects she finds around her, touches them, plays with them, tries to pull them apart, turns them upside down. As if holding a birthday streamer in her hands

for the first time, she examines the mechanism, discovers how it works and then gives it a different, unintended function.

An air bed, a tube of toothpaste and a draining board have little more in common than the fact that they can be found in almost every home. They have no logical connection, they are simply the things that we all acquire over time. The mundane objects used by Van Doorn are often regarded as practically worthless. In her films and photographs, however, those objects and phenomena appear to have qualities beyond their practical or economic value. On closer inspection, they reveal



characteristics that are easily overlooked. It is precisely the unintended functions that add the greatest value to these objects, and precisely what Van Doorn looks for.

She shows that we cannot really know the objects around us. They derive their value from the way in which we view them, and the value we attach to them. All those phenomena around us have characteristics that we will never fully be able to comprehend, although we can try to establish a new relationship with them by viewing them differently. Precisely because we cannot know everything, it is necessary to look for the unpredictable and intangible. As a result of the transformation

that the everyday items in her films and videos undergo, she suggests a new paradigm, in which the most trivial objects suddenly pay tribute to our imagination. She does so not by classifying, but by speculating. Her suggestions on possible new functions for the most mundane objects show that they have functions and characteristics of which we are hardly aware.

Like an archaeologist back from a dig, Van Doorn challenges the viewer to study these everyday objects, just as she does. She shows that reality can be far stranger than we could possibly conceive. By perverting

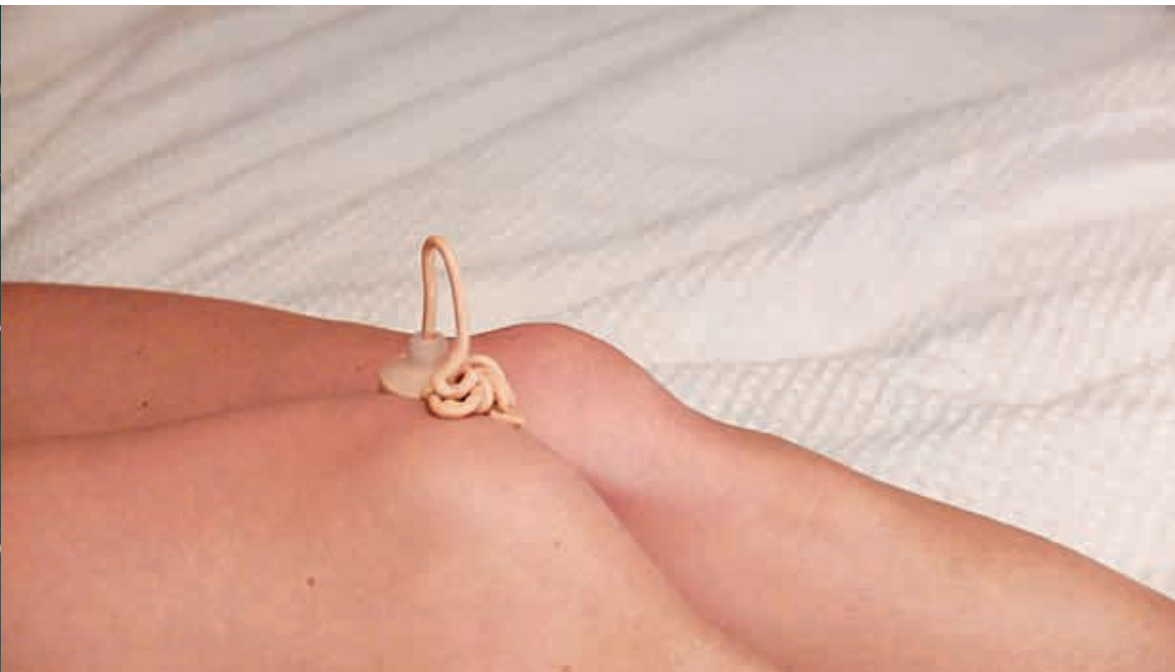
the characteristics of the objects, she raises questions about the way we see. The fact that we try to contextualise those objects in order to grasp them says more about the way we think than about the things themselves. However much we may want to believe it, Van Doorn's works prove above all that we are not always the centre of the universe and that man is not always the measure of all things.

~ Bas Hendrikx

Annegien van Doorn (1982) is a Dutch visual artist born in Vlissingen. In 2004 she graduated from the St. Joost Art Academy and from 2006 until 2008 she followed the Master of Fine Art program 'Arte y Contextos Intermedia' at the University of Barcelona. She makes use of various media in her work, such as video, photography and installation.

This booklet is designed by Merel Karman, a final year student graphic design at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie Amsterdam.
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Bas Hendriks (1986, The Netherlands) is a curator based in Amsterdam. He has been co-director of Hotel Maria Kapel, an artist residency and project space in Hoorn, where he has previously worked with Annegien van Doorn for the exhibition Full Focus (2012). He furthermore works as associate curator at P/////AKT, platform for contemporary art in Amsterdam, and will participate in De Appel Curatorial Programme 2014-2015.

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