

My Work, *A Knife*

What interests me is the image, not the photograph. When it comes to the relationship between image and object, they are entirely different entities. In discussions of the image-object relationship, photographs often signify “something,” “something like this,” or “this particular thing.” To borrow from Roland Barthes, when someone shows another person their photograph, they say, “Look, this is my brother; here I am as a child.” This is the grammar of the photograph.

What fascinates me about the image is its grammar. One of the key differences between images and photographs lies in their grammatical structure, specifically the positional relationship between the object and the image. Photographs separate the image of the object from the object itself—the photographer uses a camera to cut out a piece of the real world and place it elsewhere, so we obviously don’t have to see the real ocean when we look at a picture of the ocean on the desktop. As for images, we often use them to explain objects—packaging, posters, adverts—the image sits quietly beside the object, both present at the same time.

Here are two logics, and they both hold true:

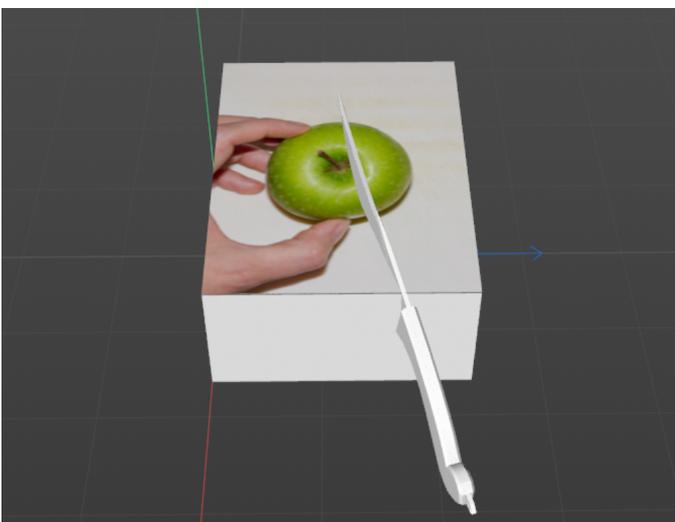
The logic of product packaging

E.g.: An image of an orange explains the object:
Orange + Glass bottle = Orange soda
Orange + Sprayer bottle = Orange perfume
Orange + Knife = Fruit knife

The logic of a product manual

E.g.: An image about a knife explains a knife:
Fruit + A knife = Cutting
Blood on the chest + A knife = Stabbing
Rope + A knife = Slicing
Conclusion: The knife’s functions are cutting, stabbing, slicing.

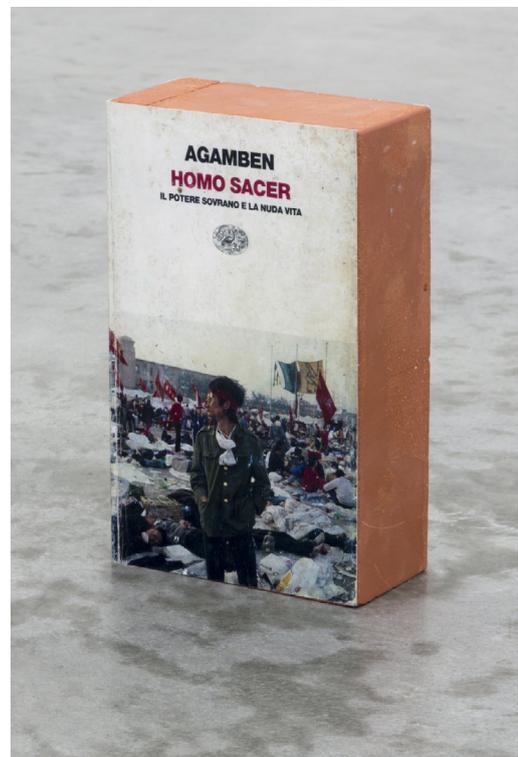
Over the past few weeks, I’ve experimented with the logic of product manuals: explaining an object through a series of images. I made a book where all the images are meant to describe a knife. The knife can slice apples, cut cakes, spread butter, or injure fingers. This image-based book serves as the manual for the knife.



A rendering of my book

Claire Fontaine, *Equivalent*

Later, Claire Fontaine’s work made me realize another possible relationship between images and objects: images don’t always need to explain objects faithfully. In her series *Equivalent*, the images incorrectly or even distortively describe the objects, and this mismatch produces something new. She deconstructs a book into two parts: a cover and a brick. Even though all the content has been welded into a single brick, the image on the cover—just a thin layer of paper—still sufficiently explains that this is a book. If we consider the cover as the packaging for the book (a book cover, functionally, does the same as product packaging—it explains the contents to the reader), this work can be understood as the artist using packaging that mismatches its contents. The result, due to the shared intersection (the packaging fits the dimensions of the product), is that the two visual elements still align. This incorrect explanation creates a subtle and intriguing effect.



Claire Fontaine, *Equivalent*

New Thoughts

1. In my work, images explain objects, but how? According to what logic?
2. How about adding text? Creating a fusion of object–image–text.