

## Antithesis: Product Packaging, Manual and Cover

What interests me is the image, not the photograph. I want to clarify this from the beginning because it means that the medium I will be using is not limited to photography. While my current exploration might give the audience the impression that "wow, this guy's work is about real images," that's not the only focus. If an image is created to describe an object, then whether it's 2D or 3D, static or dynamic, Adobe or coding, it is all an object of my interest.

Images and photographs are entirely different objects when it comes to the relationship between image and object. 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. A photograph separates the image of the object from the object itself, turning it into a representation of the object. The photographer uses the camera to cut out a fragment from the real world and place it there, allowing us to view an image of the sea without standing on the shore. "A photo of the sea" becomes "the sea," and "my photo" becomes "me."

The image, on the other hand, is more often used as an explanation of the object. Packaging, posters, adverts—images quietly placed next to things, both present at the same time. For example, *Juicy Salif*, the juicer resembling an alien; when people first see it, they are often puzzled about what it is. However, Philippe Starck placed an image of a lemon on the packaging.

When people feel unfamiliar with the product, they look at its box, see the familiar image of a lemon, and immediately realize that it is a lemon squeezer.



Philippe Starck, Juicy Salif's initial packaging

Similarly, I recently bought two knives—one with an image of a halved purple cabbage on the packaging, the other with a halved fig. The image of the knife itself does not appear in these visuals; instead, the knife exists as a real object—a physical knife placed over the image of the sliced produce. In this combination, the image functions as something akin to a manual for the knife.

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Packaging for two knives I bought

In the past few weeks, my work has focused on exploring these two logics. I try to use images as a tool for explanation, conveying the essence of objects through indirect representation. The knife and the orange transition between object and image, interfering with and explaining each other. I tried to use images to explain a knife, much like designing product packaging or a manual. I created a book where all the images aim to illustrate the knife: it can slice apples and cakes, spread butter and injure a finger. Here, the focus is not on "the knife"; the knife itself is not important. What matters is how the image indirectly conveys "the feeling of a knife," specifically how the image illustrates the knife.

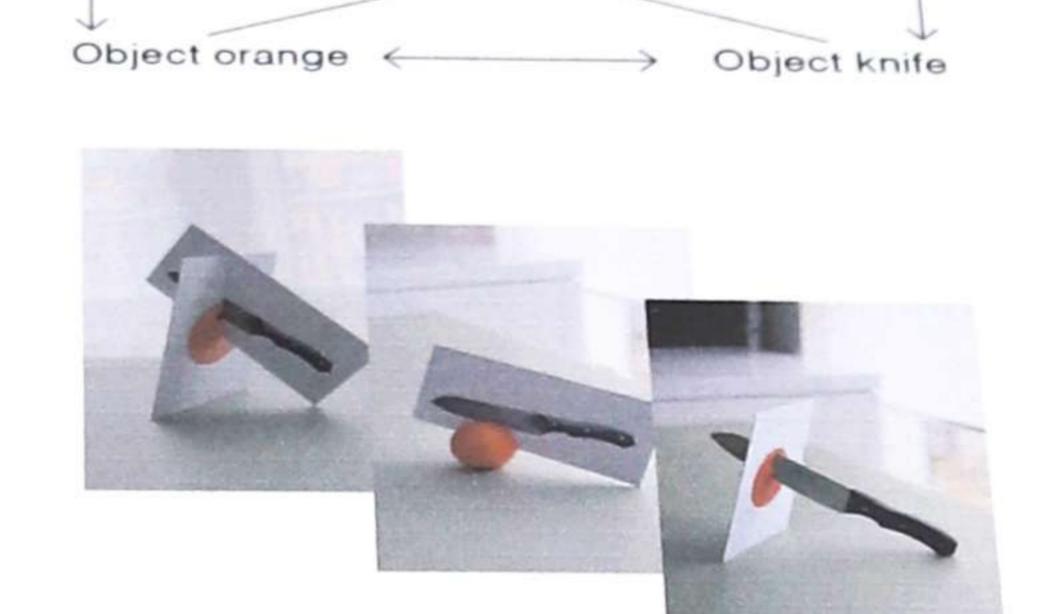
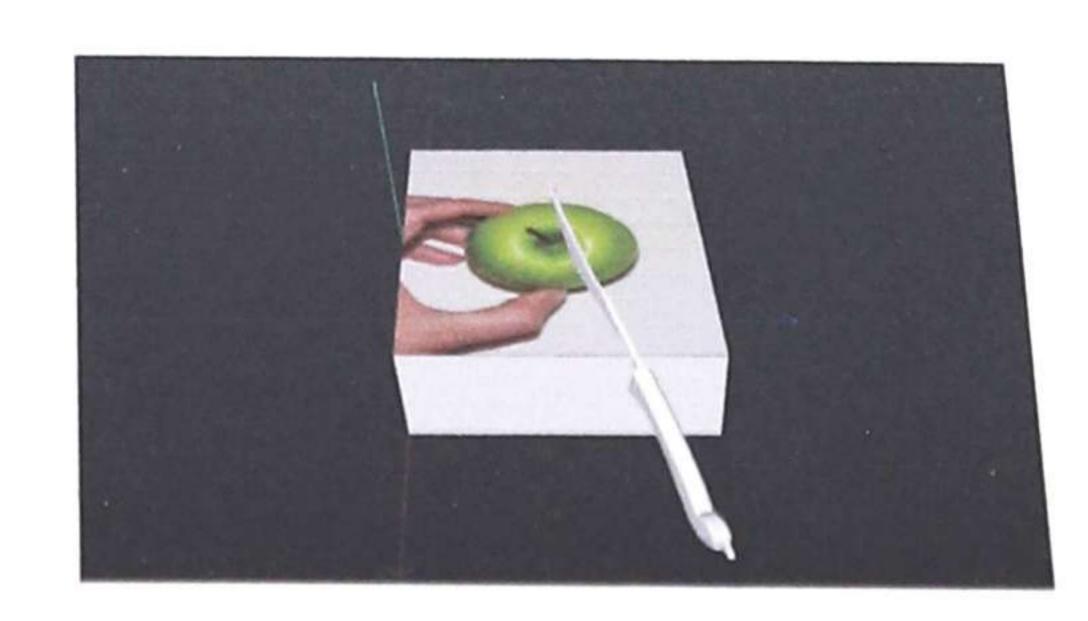
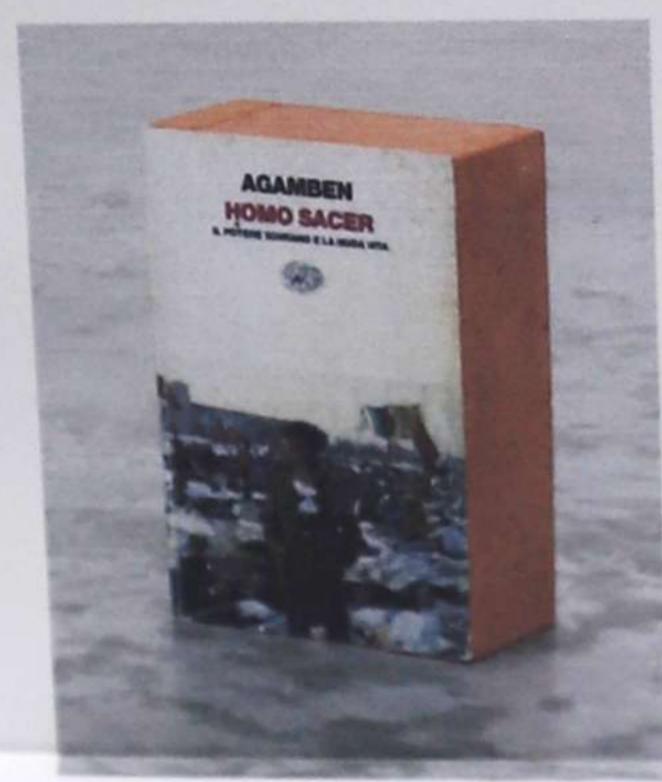


Image orange



Yuqing Lei's Written Response

Claire Fontaine's work made me realize another relationship between image and object: the image can explain the object in a less faithful way, even distorting its meaning. In her series Equivalent, she covers each brick with the cover of Gallimard's Folio series of essays, which is the cheapest and most popular format for French essays. By redefining and deconstructing the traditional functions of objects, she prompts the audience to think about the objects themselves and the socio-cultural contexts they represent. A book is deconstructed into two parts: the cover and the bricks. However, even when all the content is solidified into a single brick, the image on the cover—this thin layer of paper that exists only on the surface—is still sufficient to explain that this is a book. The book's cover is draped over the brick, so the book becomes a brick, a brick becomes the book, erasing the difference between them. The distinction between books and between books and bricks becomes equivalent.



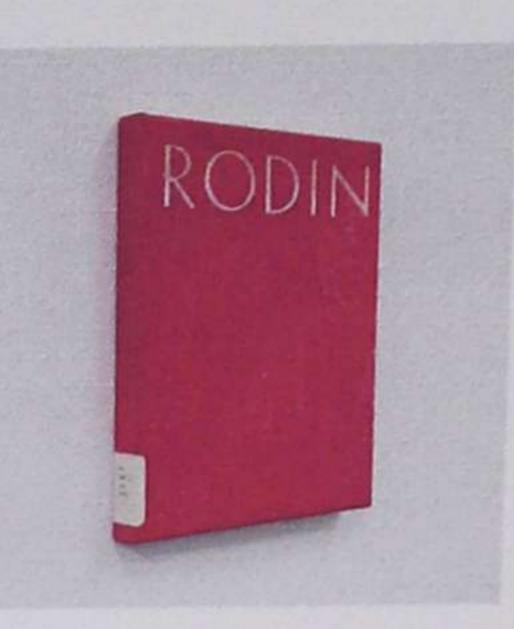
Claire Fontaine, Homo Sacer brickbat

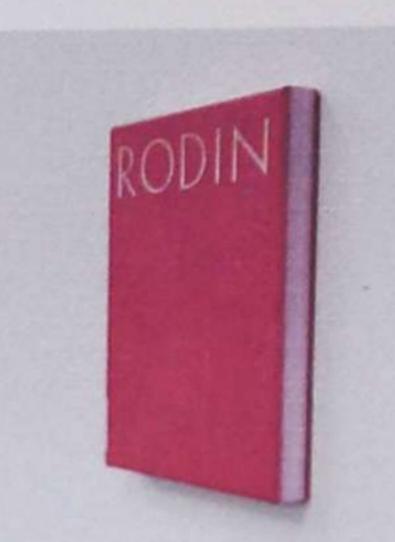
In the structure of this work, the cover is more regarded as the packaging of the book. The cover of a book serves a functional role similar to that of product packaging—it explains the content of the book to the reader. Therefore, this work can also be understood as the author using packaging that does not correspond to the content to hold incorrect contents. As a result, due to the intersection (where the packaging fits the dimensions of the product), two puzzle pieces that are shaped to fit but have incorrect patterns can still fit together. The packaging continues to effectively explain the contents inside, albeit in a distorted manner. This erroneous explanation brings about subtle and interesting visual effects.

The above examples correspond to three logics for using images to explain objects:

- \*\*The Logic of Product Packaging\*\*
   E.g.: An image of a lemon explains the object:
   Lemon + glass bottle = lemonade
   Lemon + spray bottle = lemon perfume
   Lemon + knife = fruit knife
- 2. \*\*The Logic of Product Manuals\*\*
  E.g.: Images related to a knife explain the knife itself:
  Sliced fruit + a knife = cutting
  Bloodstains on a chest + knife = stabbing
  A rope cut in half + knife = slicing

- 3. \*\*The Logic of the Cover\*\*
  - E.g.: The cover's image explains the content:
  - Book cover + stack of paper = a book
  - Book cover + a brick = a book that cannot be opened
  - Book cover + a canvas = Image of the book





Dabin Ahn, Picture Book (Ephemeral)

## New Thoughts:

In my work, the image serves as an explanation of the object, but how does the image explain the object? Does the image need to faithfully represent the object, or is a certain degree of deviation equally effective?

Should I consider incorporating text to create a fusion of object—image—text, which similar to *One and Three Chairs*? Would the inclusion of text introduce new and interesting directions to the discussion?

- Barthes, R. (1982). Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography. Hill and Wang, New York.
- Sontag, S. (1977). On Photography. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.
- New York.

  3. Fontaine, C. (2007) Equivalent (I). Available at: https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/ressources/oeuvre/cyXkjdA (Accessed: 27 October 2024).
- 4. Ahn, D., Picture Book (Ephemeral). Available at: https://dabinahn.com/ (Accessed: 27 October 2024).
- 5. Kosuth, J. (1965) One and Three Chairs [Conceptual artwork]. (Accessed: 27 October 2024).

Yuqing Lei's Written Response