



Onomatopée 55.1: Cabinet Project
Field Essays/Issue one

Jonathan Muecke
Bas Princen
Sophie Krier

Every object contains an image
image object



Onomatopée and Atelier Sophie Krier present *Field Essays*: an ongoing research into the tactile world of design thinking and making. This publication contains both reflection and fieldwork in an effort to unveil creative processes on the frontier of the design field—where imaginative tactics and territories are tested.

¶ Every issue is a renewed attempt at formulating a visual grammar of design research: ultimately, *Field Essays* strives to emancipate the design process from its instructional image by gaining understanding of its complex nature. To achieve this, initiator Sophie Krier intuitively matches a designer with an artist or thinker able to create an interesting collaboration and asks them to produce new work together. By writing notes and making drawings about their work process, Krier tries to articulate the underlying motives, implications and connections of their practices.

ISBN 9789078454977



¶ Issue one: *Every object contains an image* juxtaposes the work of designer Jonathan Muecke (USA) and the work of artist Bas Princen (NL). With his photographs, Princen recomposes built and un-built landscapes—revealing their mind-blowing oddities. On the other hand, the core motive of Muecke's design practice is "to retain potential in an object". Muecke's bold artifacts function as probes that venture into the realm of our perception—attempting to detect its hidden mechanisms. Both create visual propositions that "make room"—thereby making room for another reading of the world.

Included in this issue are a Manual by Muecke and a Reference Booklet by Princen, printed in a numbered edition.

Titles.

I like them with two words.

You have to know both words.

Together they should make something you don't know yet.

Jonathan Muecke

When I see the picture I want to take, I know where it comes from.

Bas Princen

Included in this publication are two separate booklets: the first is assembled by Bas Princen using reference images from his digital archive, which are paired with a selection of Jonathan Muecke's objects (*Reference Booklet*, Bas Princen, 148 x 210 mm, Utrecht, 2012). The second, blue, booklet can be used as a manual to read the objects that Muecke constructed during a work period in The Netherlands (*Manual for Horizontal Expander and Vertical Expander*, 139 x 216 mm, Jonathan Muecke, Utrecht, 2012).



5	Foreword
7	Conversation
13	Ping-pong
16	Every image contains an object
20	Every object contains an image
22	Together they should make something you don't know yet
27	I want to relate to a certain amount of images
31	If the line thickens the conflict remains
38	The raw state interests me
40	I would like to be as generous as possible
42	I want to be able to walk away, and that it can stand on its own
46	The uncertainty of who made it
53	Like humans
55	Trying to measure something
59	In this way potential remains in an object
62	How to work, or, The Miracle Box, by Francien van Westrenen
66	Annotated <i>Reference Booklet</i>

Many corners were taken in the process of making this publication; a journey that spanned about two years from my initial invitation to Jonathan Muecke on a summer's day in 2010. That day, Muecke and I were sitting on the pavement of a milkshake stand along the M-1. The Michigan Highway, commonly known as Woodward Avenue, is the first mile of road in the world that was paved with concrete in 1909.



Copper Stool
Jonathan Muecke
2009

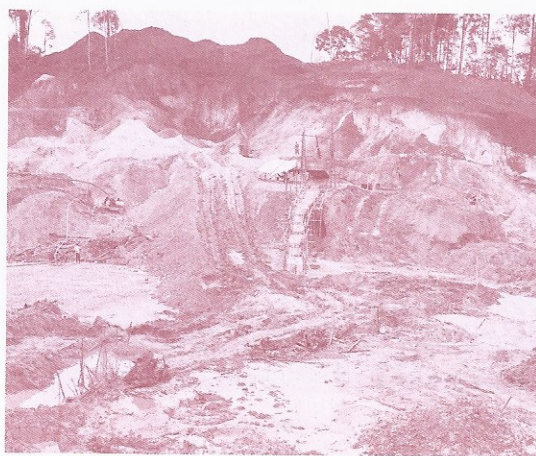
¶ Over the past two years, I have learnt that such an anecdotal event can turn out to be the most important thing. For instance, it makes total sense that this issue was first imagined on the side of the first asphalted mile in the world: because the idea of the primary (the first in a series/not derived/at raw state) turns out to play a key role in both Muecke's and Princen's work. The first motive of Muecke's design practice is to retain potential in an object—"going forward"—bringing out the raw quality of an object. "People don't buy the object, they buy the material", says Muecke about **Copper Stool**. On the other hand, Princen works with the idea of "a travelling image"—by which he means an image whose manifestations vary, but primary meaning remains intact. In his work, the physically transformed and visually captured landscapes take on a reality of their own—"the reality of the image space"—cut loose from its particular origin, and hence made universal again.

¶ The work of Muecke and Princen may come across as formal or abstract to an uninformed reader. In my notes, I argue that it is precisely this removal from direct, instant involvement with the world that lends their work generosity and relevance: their visual propositions literally "make room"—and by doing so, they make room for another reading of the world. It was a mind-bending venture and great pleasure to orchestrate their work bit-by-bit, word-by-word, and side-by-side for this publication. I want to thank Jonathan Muecke, Bas Princen and all those involved in the making of this *Field Essays* for their sustained commitment and critical feedback.

The raw state interests me

I have written briefly before about Muecke's object **Copper Stool** and its suggestive potential. Who or what is the step stool meant for, I wondered? What difference does it make to step up a mere thirty centimeters?²²

¶ I now realize that the core value of **Copper Stool** is—literally—its material nature: copper. By choosing to manufacture the step stool out of massive, industrial copper rods, Muecke establishes a direct link to the extraction and processing of this increasingly wanted resource. "In design, material is often being taken from the end of the line. Whereas I want to use materials before they get (industrially) processed. The raw state interests me. Then I process them in my own way."



Rosebel Placer Mine
Bas Princen
2008

¶ Muecke's attitude ties into a story that Bas Princen told me about the gold mines, which he photographed in Suriname in 2008. Because the price of gold has risen so much lately, mountains of residue material from fifteen years ago are being excavated again. Gold fever is a fascinating phenomenon: the promise of something makes you dig, and the digging makes your

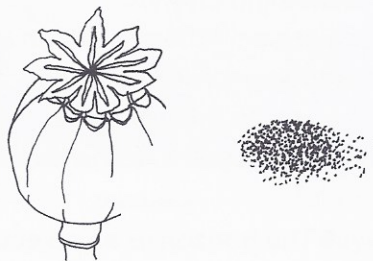
hope grow even more. Unfortunately, the reality of gold mining has to do with large scale and violent resource depletion, abuse and poverty. According

to online statistics, an 18-carat golden ring of 10 grams produces the unimaginable amount of 18,000 kilograms of waste!

¶ Princen's picture of the **Rosebel Placer Mine** depicts an achingly beautiful site. The bloodshed colors, the heroic composition with the minuscule toy-like machines: it is impossible to look at this

22 *Field Essays, Issue 0, Pick of Sticks/ Embodied, Lucy and Bart, Marek Pokropski and Sophie Krier, Onomatopoe, 2010.*

¶ For design at large, developing a position and work method with regards to our use and misuse of—mental and physical—resources is primordial. Too often, a design's aesthetics are pleasant, but that's all there is to it.



*in which way
is your work
resourceful?*

picture without feeling the huge gap between the idealized story of gold and its material reality.

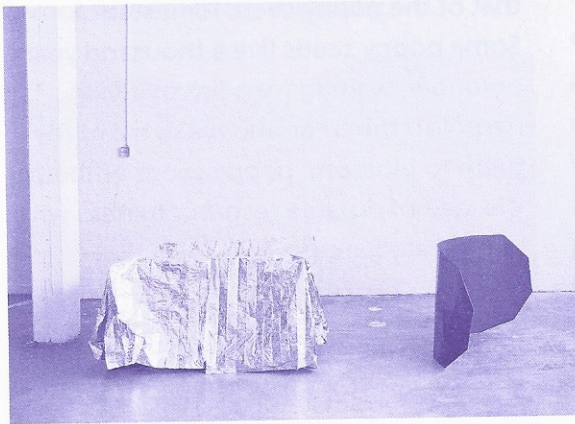
¶ One cannot write about resources without addressing the much-debated issue of durability. This is indeed a complex issue, seen from the perspective of today's globalized and industrialized economy. But durability can also take on very simple logic: that of the poppy seed, for instance. Some poppy seeds live a thousand years or longer, waiting for a fire that will demolish the trees and make room for them to blossom: poppy seeds embody the idea of durable resourcefulness with natural elegance.

I would like to be as generous as possible

Generosity is generally considered a socially embedded virtue—charity and voluntary work are built

on the principles of generosity and reciprocity. In Muecke's and Princen's work, I sense a more indirect type of generosity, reminiscent of the land worker's attitude: labor and time are relentlessly invested in the production of new work, in an effort to grow and harvest something of value.

¶ I like to think of generosity (the willingness to give) in relation to design as making room for otherness—like when you let a stranger into your home. A generous attitude in design demands you to be able to think and act beyond established frontiers, and to dare to forget what you know in order to build up your knowledge from scratch.



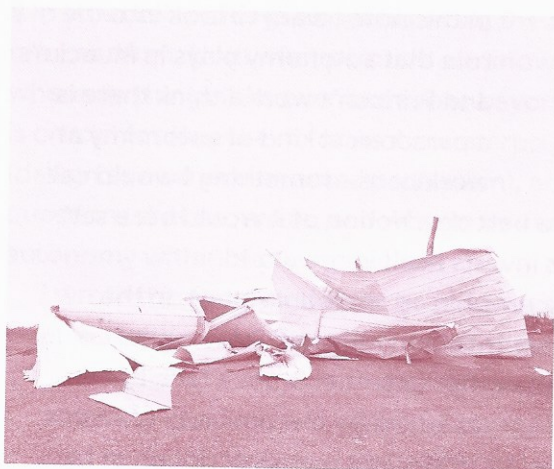
Shield
Jonathan Muecke
2011

¶ The horizon as an object. A force field in the shape of a carpet. The sun trapped into a single line. A sun engine. A hat that behaves like a cloud. A dirt road from outer space. Listening to satellites. Geodesic fantasies. An image scrambler. Going through the *Reference Booklet*, my mind finds it difficult to

ease down. What am I looking at? What does it do? Why does it look like this? Why is it mirrored with this object or that image?

¶ Clearly, each depicted object is one made with a strong reason—with a *raison d'être*. The configurations of the images, their shape and situation emanate urgency. The images tell the marvels and downsides of a world under continuous (de)-construction, oscillating between nature and artifice.

¶ As such, they engage at a profound level with narratives of the planet such as survival, evolution, destruction, and beauty.



Port Arthur
Bas Princen
2005

¶ **Shield** is a faceted surface standing upright, which one can use as a divider in space. It enables concentration or privacy in a direct way: by shielding off spatial or visual noise. **Port Arthur** is an image of a collapsed roof on a runway. The viewpoint that Bas Princen chose enables you to picture the forces that were at work on the structure very clearly: by retracing the

ways in which the structure gave in to gravity, and collapsed.

¶ Through their meticulously articulated imagery, Princen and Muecke nuance our collective visual grammar and sharpen our senses. This is the gift that is embedded in their work: a revived awareness for and interaction with our surroundings.

Jonathan Muecke Design Office (USA) was established in 2010, after testing was completed at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, which was preceded by an education in architecture and an architectural internship at the office Herzog & de Meuron in Basel, Switzerland. Muecke's design practice works at design through object editions and test projects. www.jonathanmuecke.com

Bas Princen (NL) is an artist who lives and works in Rotterdam. He studied Design for Public Space at the Design Academy Eindhoven, and Architecture at the postgraduate Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. Princen has published a number of books on his work. His most recent publication *Reservoir* was published by Hatje Cantz on the occasion of his solo show at deSingel in Antwerp. In 2004 he was awarded the Charlotte Köhler Prize, and in 2010 he won the Silver Lion, together with Office KGDVS, at the Venice Biennale.

Atelier Sophie Krier (LUX/B) is based in Rotterdam, and explores the peripheries of the design field in editorial and socially driven projects. Atelier Sophie Krier has recently curated a series of symposia on education, craft versus industry, and visual culture. Between 2004 and 2009, Krier led the BA course designLAB (Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam). She lectures and conducts international workshops on a regular basis. In short, Atelier Sophie Krier develops tools for collective narration and reflection. www.sophiekrier.com

Previously published in the same series:



Onomatopée 55.1: Cabinet Project
Field Essays/Issue one
Every object contains an image
image object

Artistic research: Atelier Sophie Krier
Graphic design: ÉricandMarie (Paris)
Artistic advice & Project coordination: Ellen Zoete
Onomatopée
Text editing: Arden Rzewnicki, Ellen Zoete
Photography: Bas Princen, Jonathan Muecke, Sophie Krier,
and all copyright owners
Documentation photography: Mathijs Labadie

Sophie Krier wishes to thank Jonathan Muecke, Bas Princen, Victor Margolin, Jurgen Bey, Anne Holtrop, René Put, Janneke Wesseling, Mariëtte Dolle, Andreas Tscholl, Felix Peter, Carlos Casas, ÉricandMarie, Freek Lomme and Ellen Zoete for their support and their critical voice in the process.

This issue of *Field Essays* was generously supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Field Essays was realized in partnership with Utrecht Manifest No. 4, Biennale of Social Design, and with the Sandberg Institute/Studio for Immediate Spaces (Amsterdam). *Field Essays* was conceived within the context of the Research Group of the Professorship of Art and Public Space of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam. It has been supported by The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture as well as the Onderzoek & Ontwikkeling (Research & Development) grant of the Centrum Beeldende Kunsten, Rotterdam.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the authors and the publisher.

© 2013 Onomatopée and the authors

