

# PROTEIN

NINA BEIER  
SIMON DYBBROE MØLLER

We used to first imagine, discover, conceive, make, or invent a thing, then produce its image, but the relation between the thing and the image has changed. Rather than moving from sketch to technical drawing, to thing, to image, we now simply go from image to thing to image. This is the binary ping pong of our post-indexical day and age. Today the image, like a scout in old fashioned warfare, is sent out ahead of the thing to collect information about the terrain and the enemy (the customer, the audience). Only if the image is successful in its mission, will the thing follow. We order novel objects from Chinese factories, based on images found online: a solar powered, slightly oversize representation of an ant, for example. Often these hybrid commodities are only actuated upon us placing an order. They are algorithmic and homeless, they are "potential objects", they are whims rather than epiphanies, machine dreams rather than inventions. They are intentionally ambiguous proposals for objects, their utility outsourced to the worldwide human hive - a brainstorm. As this inventory of "potential objects" grows, the catalogue becomes simultaneously more specific and more generic, messing with age-old tensions at the heart of invention in general - between the formulaic and the original, the familiar and the novel. Holding them in our hands, they are like images made flesh - or they are representations of an image. For now, they exist as objects, with all the clumsy, complicated, real-life problems of 3-dimensional materiality. Next, they become images again.

horizontal, spatial, and decidedly paratactic.

Imagine 500 solar powered plastic bugs ordered from different factories in China, 9 framed portraits of real estate agents culled from the internet and a poster repurposing the logo from the club night *Ants at Ushuaia* in Ibiza. Sculpture and photograph and poster, bugs and houses and dancing, toys and the housing crisis and entertainment, factory work and portraits and horror, commodities and images and advertisements, fossil fuel and art and leisure, global warming and representation and swarm intelligence, sustainability and gatekeepers and vacation, plastic and appearance and style, scale and surface and sound, automaton and profession and coat of arms, solar powered plastic bugs and traits of real estate agents and clubbing on Ibiza. Their job is to maximize the number of deals and the value of each of these. The realtor - their looks, their smiles, the quality of their voices and handshakes - are placeholders for abstract emotions of security and care, they are lucky charms for successful investments and safe futures. A physical embodiment of the ritual we call the deal. The real estate agent performs the role of the human; they are an insertion of flesh and bone in an otherwise entirely bureaucratic agreement. They are images of real people, their real lives subtracted.

The real estate agent must accept being portrayed. Image and name are both surface and core of the real estate agent's profession. This deal with the devil, a job that requires little formal education but promises a substantial income, demands the complete surrender of the surface markers of the employee's identity. They hand over their name given to them by their parents, when they were born, their last names inherited from their grandparents and their grandparents' grandparents, their looks - a result of biology and life circumstances - all the signifiers of identity and real lived life. Their portraits are like the framed images in our homes depicting our loved ones. They display the human qualities that we value and trust.

Real estate agents are matchmakers, experts in doublespeak. Like most finance,

Islands tend to be mirrors of the rest of the world, their isolation allows them to become sites for experimentation and contradictory co-existence. They are small, contained ecosystems, where experimental co-existence can be studied, where relations play out unspecified except for their proximity. The island becomes a cultural seismograph, a kind of utopian experiment. It captures our imagination as a refuge for renegades and criminals, a place where fortune favors the brave. Island communities tend to avoid conflict; internal rift is the small society's biggest threat. Instead, difference and juxtaposition are allowed to exist unquestioned. The island lends itself to a parataxic mode of experience - to seeing casual relationships between events that occur simultaneously but are not logically related. Parataxis is a literary term describing the placing of phrases one after another, no hierarchy, no subordination. It is something, and something other and something else. It is a chain dance of words, images and stuff.

Parataxis is horizontal, whereas the list - think here of the shopping list or the inventory, or the checklist - is vertical and often much more expansive. Exhibitions are

Ants live in giant communes, with a simple but radical hierarchy. They all serve one bug. The party *Ants*, at the Ibiza club institution *Ushuaia*, is built on this logic. Here, clubbers go to lose themselves. Checking in their belongings at a luggage hotel, they literally rid themselves of dead baggage and join the colony. They become slaves to the music, they become almost mechanical. Like the queen ant, the DJ only lays eggs, she does not rule; like worker ants, clubbers rely on tactile communication to organize their activities and navigate the environment around the queen. No individual ant knows what's going on. Each ant just keeps track of its recent experience meeting other ants, in one-on-one encounters touching antennae, or encountering a chemical deposited by another. This is society as one large homogeneous superorganism, a well-functioning machine.

Like the Ibizan *Cathedral of Our Lady of the Snows* - a cathedral on top of a mosque on top of a roman temple on top of a Punic settlement -

the foundation of the island's club culture was laid by 60's hippie culture, consolidated by mass tourism in the 70s, and developed into its current might by influences from Chicago house, Detroit techno and the Second Summer of Love. When British Prime Minister John Major passed the Criminal Justice Bill of 1994 - legislation against gatherings in the open air of 12 or more persons at which amplified music is played, the bill included a legendary sub-clause clarifying that the state's definition of music, in this case, was: "sounds wholly

or predominantly characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats." This de facto crack-down on the acid house movement, alongside the rise of middle-class wealth, facilitated the consolidation of Ibiza's clubbing industry. Like migratory birds, British youths would spend their term breaks partying night and day on this little Balearic island. An economy that used to be built on salt, fish and wool turned to club culture, tourism, and real estate. It soon became clear that if visitors are customers, a party is business, a home for sale is real estate and ants in real estate are a pest. As this and other histories show us, our perception of a thing is entirely circumstantial. If food becomes scarce for example, bugs will become protein.

Nina Beier  
Simon Dybbroe Møller