PRODUCT RECALL

Economic forces have a great effect on us. But actually, people's ideas have enormous consequences.

Adam Curtis in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, New York, 2012 1

When, in 2007, Amsterdam advertising agency Tribal/DDB issued a print advert recalling' the 1974 Volkswagen Golf Type I motorcar, the company cleverly subverted the protocol for retrieving manufactured items with potentially injurious defects. This protocol, whereby a recall notice for the product must be published in the national press, via broadcast media and the internet, follows set criteria. The object is generally visually identified, the faults and potential danger described, and the method of returning or reporting it to the

The Volkswagen advert used these manufacturer outlined. criteria to imply the very opposite of a sub-par item, apologising for possible issues with the glove compartment of a vehicle more than thirty years old. The ad men overturned the usual message carried by those dowdy little public service announcements that occasionally appear in the back pages of the newspaper.

I have collected these notices for many years, drawn to their ugly aesthetic, dull copy, and poorly reproduced images, so far from the slickly produced commercials we are accustomed to. There is a pleasing hubristic undertone around the fact of the powerful marketing colossus reduced to placing adverts that appear with no more fanfare than the humble classifieds advertising used cars and second-hand sofas. Recalled products can include anything from killer toys (such as the infamous lawn darts, banned from sale in the USA in 1988) to health campaigns gone wrong, like the New York State drug awareness crusading pencil bearing the legend "Too Cool To Do Drugs" Unfortunately for the campaign, the text was oriented so that as the pencil was pared down, the precise opposite message

This trope of the defective product, as communicated. its correlation with socialist views of is one starting point for this exhibition. Mass consumerism neoliberal capitalish and its roots in the post-colonial free market economy has long been a focus of the art world. Appropriation art, where the product is recast, has stoked debate (chiefly about whether or not it is art) since and to the present, where artists such as Richard Prince appropriate popular as Richard Prince appropriate popular will work with local draws are not present an interactive recture about the development of her own perfume, and development of her own perfume, and images. This returning again and again to the unveiling of Duchamp's readymades, ds Kichara Prince appropriate popular averagement of the own perfume, and development of the own perfume, and the own perfume, and the own perfume of the own perfume, and the own perfume of the own perfume, and the own perfume own perfume, and the own perfume own perfume, and the own perfume own perfume own perfume own perfume. through to Warhol's ersatz product objects and to the present, where artists such sharp subversion evidenced by the selfthe use of the 'thing' is more than just the referential Volkswagen advert. In the art ecology, there is agency in this purloining of the object. In his trio of essays Art and Thingness, critic Sven Lütticken maintains:

"a properly reflexive work be only about its status as art, abou It is this agency of the 'product' and the itself"."2

increasing commodification of ideas that are explored here through the praxis of four practitioners whose focus interrogates aspects of material culture. These artists are makers whose work calls us to reevaluate our relationship with the object through physicality and production, unlike, for example, the rejection of consumer culture characterised by artists operating within the field of relational aesthetics. By inviting a response to the 'recall' of

an imagined object or idea, Product Recall seeks to offer a new ideation around the temporal world, through four contrasting explorations, each rooted in their respective Damien Flood's paintings are expressive area of enquiry.

their economy, objects and scenes suggested through haptic brush strokes. Here, one consideration is the legendary doomed Atari ET computer game, an early cartridge-format game issued in 1982 that went unsold in its millions. Disposed of in a vast New Mexico landfill, the games were unearthed in 2014.

Veronica Forsgren has been researching notions of intangible products, prompted readings of writer Philip K. Dick's protagonist in his short story We Can Remember It For You Wholesale, who can pick and choose 'memories' off the shelf. Forsgren's 'soft activism' of object-making demands that we consider dystopian ideas through a variety of media including textiles, paintings, drawings and toys.

Tom Watt's interest in manipulating perceptions of architectural space has culminated in the bisecting of the upper galleries of Galway Arts Centre. This creates a supervened space with a defined 'above' and 'below', perhaps suggesting a tiered status of the desired object versus

the discarded one.

And for Sarah Baker, an exploration (1) Obrist, H. Ulrich, of luxury and storytelling are central to In Conversation with Adam Curtis, her practice, which uses narrative and her fabricated self-brand to examine our Part I, www. flux.com, 2012, ner rapricated sell-pland to sold flux.com, 2012, New York. (2) New York. (2) of perfume bottles are objects of desire Lutticken, S., Art or perfume poures are objects or desire that speak of the iconic status afforded to that speak of the iconic status afforded to certain consumer goods. Baker will also present an interactive lecture about the

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Product recall. Volkswagen Golf Type I, 1974 model $_{
m WR}$ that, due to vibration, the **closing mechanism of the glove compart** It has been shown that, due to vibration, the **closing me**ment can be subject to wear. In the long run, in some cadifficult handling of this mechanism. Even though no
complaints have been registered, Volkswagen is making COMPRISHED THE OWNERS AWARE OF this, as a precau As this is not in line with the high standards of quality As this is not in line with the high standards of qualit that Yolkswagen has for its products, owners of the above-mentioned model are requested to go to www.yolkswagen.nl/recall before 12 January 2008. _{sm} replaced free of charge. ww.voikswagen.ni/recall before 12 January 2008. necessary, Volkswagen will have the closing mechan me closing mechanism **replaced free** nce caused, This is why Volkswagen of $Volkswagen\ emphasizes\ that\ this\ only\ applies\ to\ the\ Volkswagen\ Golf\ Type\ 1,1974\ model.$ en offers its apologies for any The hoax 'recall' advert for Volkswagen was produced by advertising agency Once again, Vo The noax recall advert for Volkswagen was produced by advertising ager Tribal Amsterdam and published in Dutch national newspapers in 2007.



New York drug awareness campaign in 1998, the "Too Produced as part Cool to Do Drugs" pencils were inadvertently radical. A 10-year old student noticed that when the pencils are sharpened and get shorter, the message becomes "Cool to Do Drugs, then simply "Do Drugs."

Lawn darts were banned by the US Consumer Protection Society Commission (CPSC) in 1988, following an investigation that showed that over a period eight years, lawn darts or eight years, lawring to the had sent 6,100 people to the emergency room. 81% of those cases involved children 15 or younger, and half of those were younger, and hair of those were 10 or younger. The majority of injuries were to the head, face, eyes or ears, and many had led to permanent injury or disability.



2012, New York.