

Oriol Vilanova

Segundo mercado. Secondary Market

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Bestiary XIV. Materialistic material.

One thing. A thing that is not objectified. A thing that has a biography, problems of identity, a thing that wonders what it is a thing for. We think of it as a poetic object, a work of art, something more than a commodity. A thing that continues to work, to work itself, even after it has passed its original function, its utility, its service. Commodities also claim their rights, they have their demands, they aspire to form a labour union. Things look at us, but there is a moment when they look at us from there with their eyes open.

If all the Catalans die, Catalonia ceases to exist, but if all the people of Barcelona die, Barcelona still survives. Things have a mineral insistence so as not to disappear. Things take on many meanings, with that way they have of giving themselves a language of their own. Things speak, if we would like to reduce the idea of speaking to communication. What we do know is that things do transmit. They accumulate time and they transmit. There is a moment when things stop accumulating labour and they accumulate time, and it is this operation that becomes evident when they look at us. They are there and they are a body made of labour that accumulates time, that has been accumulating time for a long time. A thing is an assemblage of times. There is neither nostalgia nor melancholy in the thing. Kitsch or cheesiness, for example, repel the smell of "we sing to what is lost"¹. It is of precise years, they have a date of manufacturing, but it speaks of other times, of other moments in history and, strangely enough, of our present. And it foretells the future.

In the thing coincides the history in small letters with the History in capital letters. They are not anachronic things but anachronistic things. The capacity of things to inhabit two or more times at once. It is not just a question of an economy, which is also the case. Anachronic things are about politics. The city is able to survive its citizens but not its things. The capacity of things to continue to be, to repeat themselves. It is curious how a thing that repeats itself ends up differentiating itself, by insisting on repeating itself, it becomes a different thing. A thing that is a serial commodity and that insists on being that same thing for so long that it has ended up becoming a different thing. A thing has in these differences of time all its political strength. A flea market thing is not a marketable thing and it is not the market. A thing is an economy of excess. Scavenging for things. But it is the thing that is rummaged. Almost all of us look for images on the internet, political imagery. This collaborationism with capital, this belief that we are doing something when we are only repeating the logic of capital. And, to top it off, we think that this collaborationism, this recycling of political images, has some critical component. It is mere collaborationism. Some people confuse collaboration with collaborationism.

I meet Oriol Vilanova on Sunday at the Sant Antoni market and we talk about things. We look like Silverio Lanza² and Ramón Gómez de la Serna³ at the flea market. We're at the market, but we also call it a street market. Flea market. It is the kingdom of things, its republic, the Iberian federation of the autonomous regions of things. The things there take on a democratic status, like the one they have in museums, but only democratic. Things there are things, pure materialism. Historical materialism, historical writing like that, with small letters. The culture of the search, the culture of google, of the search in the dark web, that which seems the same as going to the flea market, that is collaborationism. Mere capitalist or trans-capitalist or post-capitalist collaborationism, whatever you want to call that collaborationism. Going to the flea market, however, is collaborating with things. It is not anachronic but anachronistic. It is the same as looking for mushrooms in the countryside. The spore has remained spread under the ground, in the earth, and at a given moment, with the right humidity and temperature, the mushroom comes out and you have to go and look for it there, and in that forest there are precise ecological conditions and there is a walk and an effort made by the whole body to be there and to pick, with delicacy, the

¹ "Se canta lo que se pierde" in the original Spanish version of the text. It refers to Antonio Machado's note that his brother José found in his jacket pocket after his death in Collioure on the 22nd of February 1939. In a small, crumpled piece of paper the poet included a correction to one of his verses; in it he replaced "te enviaré" ("I will send you") with "te daré" ("I will give you"), and the quotation remained as follows: "And I will give you my song: / 'we sing to what is lost', / with a green parrot / to say it on your balcony".

² Silverio Lanza, was the pseudonym of Spanish writer Juan Bautista Amorós, who was born in Madrid in 1856. From 1880 he published several books that circulated among the members of the Generation of '98 and the writers of those years, on whom he exerted an attraction that is recorded in some of his memoirs. His books have an impressive authenticity, but they were scarcely circulated, and only among a very small group of people. They were totally ignored by the general public. He died in 1912 and the only literary representatives at his funeral were the writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna and the journalist Roberto Castrovido. His last work, *La Antropocultura*, is a collection of discontinuous, fragmented writings, without a specific genre, was published by Ramón Gómez de la Serna after his death. The work represents the first radical and pre-avant-garde modernities of Spanish literature.

³ Ramón Gómez de la Serna (1888-1963) was a prolific writer and journalist from Madrid, a member of the Generation of 1914 or Novecentismo. His vast literary output ranged from articles and essays to erotic dramas and more or less novelistic works, and he also wrote film scripts, poetry and biographies. He perfectly embodied the spirit of the avant-garde, to which he dedicated a book entitled *Ismos*, and he had a crucial role as a vehicle for the entry into Spain of the most innovative European currents.

blooming mushroom. That is what the thing is grateful for. The chosen thing adds biography. Another milestone, another moment in its history in which, moreover, it pours its biography. The logic of the *object-trouvé*, of the *ready-made*, the logic of the museum apparatus, which is hegemonic, is the logic of the thing. When we go to the flea market, we go to the place of original production. The operations that we see there, the relations that are established between things, that is the logic of original production. The way the thing has of adding biography is through the relations with other things. For things, animals and plants, we are things.

Even if you go to a painter's studio you see there, open the internet on his or her computer, images from google, not even from *e-bay* or *todocolección*, images from *yahoo!* or *bing*, mere capitalist rapaciousness. It is a computer (tr. from the Spanish "ordenador") he has, not a computer (tr. from the Spanish "computador")⁴, a computer ("ordenador"), and this precision of language betrays and betrays him. The thing, however, has a resistance that messes up the world. Those who use the repository of digital images, whatever it is, order the world. Some think it is an original combination, some think they can alter the images and endow them with a decolonial or feminist or environmentalist or whatever message. However, the imagination in bits organises the world, orders it. In sequences of ones and zeros, but it organises the world, it orders it. The thing resists organisation. The thing messes things up. You will never see a flea market organised, even if it is a priori organised, because the thing messes it up. We talk about baroque economy or plebeian economy or plebeian baroque. I don't like the word baroque. It is a Protestant word invented by Protestants just at the beginning of the 20th century to keep the disorder of things at bay. That is one of Max Weber's main convictions in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Things have to be ordered, taxonomised. There are no critical taxonomies, there is no order other than order, and all classification is oppression. There are things, the things that come out of the flea markets, that resist. In the periphery of cities, immigrants organise their markets to try to create an alternative economy. They invent a new life for things, to create an economy and a politics that does not depend on the hegemonic economy and politics, that does not depend on big financial capitalism, nor on the internet, nor on public finance. In Seville it is called Charco la Pava, for example. In the Charco la Pava there is more political resistance than in any hacker's agenda. In the Charco de la Pava one knows about the materiality of things. The smell that envelops things in the Charco de la Pava has to do with surplus value. A market is not the great market of the world. You set up a junk shop and you don't run a Silicon Valley-like operation. Not only is it not on that scale. Not only are they different operations because one is humble and poor and marginal and the other proud, rich and hegemonic. They are different operations because the flea markets act as the thing. They are the things, the materiality of things, the materialism of things. If Walter Benjamin were to go to Charco la Pava, he would continue to see that things keep theology locked inside them. He would see these or those things, he would shake them, but he would see that inside them, locked up and inside, theology still remains. If Walter Benjamin were to go to Silicon Valley he would see that theology is liberated, it is loose all over the world, a Pandora's box that has unleashed all the theological winds that are blowing through the world right now. Walter Benjamin would see many more dwarfs than giants in the Charco de la Pava. He would see this life that things have because they have biography and because they have theology not on the outside, but in tension, trapped inside. When you squeeze the thing you feel that tension, that locked contradiction. In his hand, he would shake a thing, and he would know its pulse, its life, its biography, he would feel looked at by the thing because, as he knows well, the thing keeps theology trapped inside.

Pedro G. Romero. January 2022

Secondary market is Oriol Vilanova's first exhibition at àngels barcelona, a project in which he brings the flea market to the forefront.

Oriol Vilanova lives in Brussels. He has had solo exhibitions at: Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; CA2M, Móstoles; M Museum Leuven; Centre d'Editon Contemporaine Genève; L'Appartement 22, Rabat; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, among others. Group exhibitions at: Palais de Tokyo, Paris; MACBA, Barcelona; FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; Kunstverein Langenhagen; PetahTikva Museum of Art, TelAviv; Villa du Parc, Annemasse; La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Centre d'art Fabra i Coats; Kunsthalle Mullhouse; Les Abattoirs de Toulouse; Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles; Fundación Botín, Santander, among others. He has held residencies at Delfina Foundation, London; Sommerakademie, Bern; Le Pavillon, Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Fondazione Ratti, Como. His work is part of the collections of: Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; MAC'S Grand-Hornu; M-Museum Leuven; MATHAF, Doha; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco; FRAC Grand Large, Dunkerque; DZBANK Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt; MACBA, Barcelona; Centre d'Art La Panera, Lleida; Fundación Botín, Santander, among others.

⁴ The name given in American Spanish to devices that allow computations to be carried out is *computer* or *computador*. In Spain they are called *ordenadores*, from the French *ordinateur*, from the Latin *ordinator*. Therefore related to the verb "to order, to organise" instead of the verb "to compute, to calculate".