



*Thomas Demand. Daily #14. 2011.
All images © Thomas Demand, VG Bild-
Kunst, Bonn/ARS, New York.*

Dailiness According to Demand

HAL FOSTER

Let's begin with the title of *The Dailies* (2008–), the twenty-plus photographs that Thomas Demand has worked up from iPhone snaps of everyday things in everyday settings, such as cigarette butts snuffed out in a bowl of sand or colored fabrics loaded in a washing machine. Newspapers were once called “dailies,” as was movie footage shot the previous day, and together these references suggest the ephemeral and the fast. Yet *The Dailies* are hardly transient or rapid in these ways: Even if the initial snaps were taken quickly, Demand mulled them over slowly and selected them stringently, and a great deal of effort was put into the construction of each picture—not only into the usual making of paper and cardboard models that are then photographed, but also into the special dye-transfer process that was chosen for this series in particular. (“It takes 40 hours for each print,” Demand tells us.)¹ Different orders of time and attention are thus in play in *The Dailies*, and in this respect they prompt the question, Can art be made of our smartphone-image repertoire? That phrasing might sound too grand for such modest subjects, but then the modest and the grand often converge in ambitious work.² It is also the case that these pictures of the mundane revisit the momentous debate as to what constitutes photography as an art.

Certainly *The Dailies* mark a turn for Demand from his many images based on media stories about important events, such as the death of a German politician or a British princess, images that we might call, collectively, “The Histories.” Whereas “The Histories” are often freighted with obscure significance—each detail looks as though it might be clue, in large part because most details are suppressed—*The Dailies* are not so laden with hidden meanings. “It’s still the same author,” Demand says simply, “it’s

1. In the dye-transfer process, there are three printing matrices (one for each primary color), and gelatin is used to fix the colors, which possess more tonal range than those derived from any other technique. Eastman Kodak stopped production of the materials required for this process in 1994, and very few printers still have the equipment and the expertise necessary to accomplish it. Demand discusses the making of *The Dailies* in *Thomas Demand: The Dailies* (Sydney: Kaldor Art Projects, 2012). A first version of the present essay was published in *Thomas Demand, The Dailies* (London: Mack Books, 2015); I am grateful to George Baker for his suggestions on this revision.

2. In this light, consider *Daily #18*, a picture of a drink cover and straw without the cup. So much garbage on the sidewalk, it lies on its side like an abandoned top, yet with the rotation it suggests and the semi-elliptical shadows it casts, this little top projects a planetary system.

just a different form.”³ We might think of this shift as one from a high genre—“The Histories” connote the highest category of all, history painting—to low genres of picture-making: Most of *The Dailies* are interiors, and nearly all qualify as still lifes. This is but one way that Demand positions photography in relation to painting here.

As in most still lifes, the focus is on things at hand, such as the comb under a bathroom mirror in *Daily #3* or the two coffee saucers on a breakfast table in *Daily #13*; these are images of near space into which we want to reach. Of course, we cannot do so, not merely because the pictures are artworks, but because there is nothing there to touch: The model has displaced the referent, and both are long gone. Still lifes often set up a tension between haptic implication and optical distance, and sometimes an ambivalence between a sociable offering (of food, say) and a cool withholding (the food cannot be eaten).⁴ Both kinds of ambiguity are active in *The Dailies*, and they are heightened by the ontological ambiguity of the constructed motifs.

In many still lifes the objects are centered or seen straight on. Not so here: Often caught at an angle, they appear as if glimpsed, usually from above, as if they had caught the interest of the artist, here in the guise of a flâneur-observer of the everyday, in passing. Yet the objects are usually set indoors: The days of *The Dailies* are passed mostly in apartments, offices, and hotels. In fact, not only is the natural world largely absent, but the quotidian environment of *The Dailies* is highly administered; it is made up, almost entirely, of the “second nature” of man-made things and denatured spaces.⁵ In these pictures abstraction often connotes alienation; the blank red DON’T DISTURB sign on the anonymous hotel latch in *Daily #12* is especially chilling in this regard. If windows are pictured at all, they are frosted, as in *Daily #14*; covered with a blind, as in *Daily #16*; or grated as well as blinded, as in *Daily #19*. The thing seen prevails over the view out.⁶

Window and Mirror

In her classic *The Art of Describing* (1983), Svetlana Alpers considers still lifes and interiors in seventeenth-century Dutch painting and presents a strong opposition between two models of representation during that period: a dominant, Southern type, the picture as a perspectival window onto the world, which she attributes to Alberti; and a subordinate, Northern type, the picture as a mirrored reflection of the

3. Coline Milliard, “Same Author, Different Form,” *Artinfo UK*, April 18, 2012. Already implicit in “The Histories” is the claim that the little things of everyday life coexist with the grand events of official history.

4. On this point see Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

5. Georg Lukács discusses “second nature” in *The Theory of the Novel* (written in 1914–15), as do several Frankfurt School critics after him; I return to this notion below.

6. Demand laminates his photographs behind Plexiglas and mounts them on aluminum without frames; that is, he presents them as objects too.

world, which she associates with Kepler.⁷ In her account, the first kind of representation privileges the viewing subject (“I see the world”), whereas the second focuses on the observed thing (“The world is seen”). In addition, the first type proposes that the world exists for the viewing subject to command, whereas the second imagines that the representation, even the subject, might not exist at all: It is as though the world simply appears as an image. *Pace* Alpers, the models of window and mirror are not necessarily opposed; Michel Foucault and Louis Marin saw them as complements that together constitute the great achievement of “classical representation,” as epitomized, for Foucault, by Velázquez in *Las Meninas* (1656) and, for Marin, by Poussin in *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1655). Located between the Italian and the Dutch, the Spanish Velázquez and the French Poussin partake of both kinds of picturing.⁸

Demand also plays with both modalities in *The Dailies*. It is not merely that windows and mirrors appear here; rather, the two dispositions underwritten by the two models—“I see the world” and “the world is seen”—are placed in tension, with each other and internally: Windows are obscured, mirrors reflect little, and so on.⁹ (Demand also introduces presentational surfaces that are neither window nor mirror, such as the bulletin board in *Daily #8*, which recalls the use of similar devices in the trompe l’oeil painting of William Harnett, John Peto, and others—another association that brings together the painterly and the photographic.) Alpers associates photography with the Northern type of picturing, and the common understanding of the photograph as a direct imprint of the world supports such an art-historical filiation, yet Demand has long worked to complicate this indexical account of the medium.¹⁰ Even as the objects in *The Dailies* seem simply to appear, we know that the images are constructed several times over: They imply not only a viewing subject but also a hyperactive artist—taking shots, selecting images, building models, determining views, lighting scenes, arranging compositions, and deciding on prints. If people are explicitly nowhere in his photographs, Demand is implicitly everywhere; indeed, for Michael Fried these works are artifacts of “sheer artistic intention.”¹¹

7. Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

8. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970); Louis Marin, “Toward a Reading of the Visual Arts,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Svetlana Alpers, “Interpretation without Representation, or, The Viewing of *Las Meninas*,” *Representations* 1 (Winter 1983); and Craig Owens, “Representation, Appropriation, and Power,” *Art in America* 70, no. 5 (May 1982). Here I still agree with Owens, whose dispute with Alpers on these points (he argued with Michael Fried as well) was a telling instance of the tension between art history and critical theory during the advent of postmodernism.

9. The opposition between window and mirror in Alpers maps onto the one between theatricality and absorption in Fried, a great advocate of Demand’s (as we will see). Yet both these models miss how Demand works to confuse such binaries.

10. For the persistence of these paradigms in the discourse of photography, see John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978).

11. Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 271. Like painting, photography presents but one vantage, unlike sculpture, which is why the young Baudelaire dismissed sculpture as “tiresome” in his Salon of 1846. Both Fried and Demand have cited this argument.

Accident and Inadvertence

Demand puts this strong formulation under real pressure in *The Dailies*. Certainly they test the sense of “sheer artistic intention” with scenes that appear incidental or accidental: An outlet sags from a wall in *Daily #1*, four panels have fallen from a cheap ceiling in *Daily #5*, a green tissue is caught in a gray grate in *Daily #7*, and so on. The root of both “incident” and “accident” is *cadere*, to fall, and gravity is foregrounded in such images as *Daily #11*, which looks down on green maple seeds that have landed on a brown wood deck.¹² Also featured in *The Dailies* is the contrary state of suspension, as in *Daily #17*, which shows five pins on a clothesline strung across a blue sky. Other images thematize a precarious balance between the two conditions: A plastic glass with a bilious liquid sits uneasily on a window ledge in *Daily #20*, as does an orange bar of soap on the edge of a white bathtub in *Daily #21*.¹³ When an accident is not staged, then, an inadvertence is suggested, again in a way that pressures the intentionality that otherwise suffuses the work. In the series Demand seems to turn his eye to his scenes and

12. A late addition to *The Dailies* presents an array of letters dropped through a mail slot—a chance event for an absent addressee.

13. Gravity and suspension are conditions negotiated by bodies and pictures alike, a sharing that might underline the subtle sympathy between the two that Demand is able to elicit here.



Demand. Daily #20. 2011.



Demand. Daily
#8. 2011.

away from them at the same time (the *advertere* in “inadvertence” means “to turn to”). Perhaps the world pictured here is not as administered as it initially appears.

Demand pressures the ultra-composed nature of his photographs in other ways too: There is relative disorder to the cigarette butts in *Daily #2* and found abstraction in the bulletin board in *Daily #8*. The aleatory strategies of the historical avant-garde are also evoked by the dropped panels in *Daily #5* and the fallen seeds in *Daily #11*, which call up famous experiments by Duchamp and Arp such as *3 Standard Stoppages* (1913–14) and *Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* (1917). In short, Demand plays the appearance of noncomposition against the fact of composition, and the result is a set of paradoxical images that appear both meditated and arbitrary, which is not the same thing as random. In the light of *The Dailies*, twentieth-century strategies of chance suddenly appear more arbitrary than aleatory (an arbiter, after all, is a person who decides), and intentionality and indeterminacy no longer form a stable opposition.

Through this conflation *The Dailies* disturb conventional assumptions about photography and painting alike. Central to the discourse of nineteenth-century photography was the conflict between art and automatism; in its claim to be an art, photography was compromised by its reliance on mechanism as well as its susceptibility to chance. In *The Dailies*, however, that double relation to automatism is both staged and suspended.¹⁴ No less crucial to the discourse of modernist painting was the opposition between abstraction and representation. Given that they are manifestly both at once, *The Dailies* trouble that old binary, too.

14. For an excellent account of these old concerns, see Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Details and Dummies

In his influential “L’effet de réel” (1968), Barthes considers the function of the detail in narrative, both fictional and historical (his test cases are Flaubert and Michelet, respectively). In a narrative, Barthes argues, everything is expected to signify, and incidental details that seem not to signify do so nonetheless, for what they signify is insignificance—the insignificance of the mere facts of the contingent world—which helps the author create an impression of reality.¹⁵ When a photograph is bound to the world indexically (a condition often understood to be necessary, even natural, to the medium), it refers to the world intrinsically; in a sense it is nothing but details and so can only produce “effects of the real.” With his imperfect models Demand stretches this old bond between photography and reality even as he does not sever it. Like his other images, *The Dailies* give us only schematic illusions, as the discrepancies between the constructions in the pictures and the things in the world soon become apparent. For Fried this is essential: The images are thereby able to register “sheer artistic intention” because they contain only the details that Demand mandates. Yet this does not explain why some details are included and others are not.

Demand likens *The Dailies* to haiku, which suggests a degree of descriptive detail, and many images do possess a poetic concision.¹⁶ For example, the green seeds on the brown wood in *Daily #11* call up Imagist poems inspired by haiku, such as the famous lines of Ezra Pound—“The apparition of these faces in the crowd / Petals on a wet, black bough”—and William Carlos Williams—“so much depends / upon / a red wheel barrow / glazed with rain / water / beside the white/chickens.”¹⁷ Some *Dailies* are apparitional in this way (the dance of the colored pins on the clothesline in *Daily #16* is so for me), and this quality invites us to reflect on the status of such experience today. Can the ephemeral still touch on the eternal, as Baudelaire proposed 150 years ago in his inaugural charge to modern artists? (“By ‘modernity,’” runs the celebrated line, “I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.”)¹⁸ More modestly, can everyday things still prompt epiphanic insights

15. Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect” (1968), in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986). “Semiotically,” Barthes writes, “the ‘concrete detail’ is constituted by the direct collusion of a referent and a signifier; the signified is expelled from the sign, and with it, of course, the possibility of developing a form of the signified; i.e., narrative structure itself” (p. 147). Here the detail almost obstructs meaning, and this opposition recalls not only that of “the world is seen” versus “I see the world,” but also that between description and narration, which Lukács used to distinguish between naturalist fiction (which he deplored) and realist fiction (which he championed because it involves a narrative understanding of the social world). In this sense Demand is more realist than naturalist.

16. Demand in Milliard, “Same Author, Different Form.”

17. Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro” (1913); William Carlos Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1923).

18. Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), p. 13.

in an administered world? Imagism arose in the second decade of the twentieth century during an intensive period of technological transformation (often called the Second Industrial Revolution), and it stressed perception precisely because perception was threatened by this increased mediation. Like Russian formalism and phenomenological philosophy, Imagist poetry sought to refresh the human sensorium against a second nature on the rise. So, too, does Demand a century later in *The Dailies*, but the great difference is that he accepts his more mediated world as a given, and proceeds from there.



Demand. Daily
#11. 2011.

For Demand, his photographs also have to do with recognition. “My sculptures are only imitations,” he says, “dummies [*Attrappen*] made of things that bear precisely the right number of symbols to be recognized as such.”¹⁹ His play with detail, then, not only underscores that his images are fabrications; more importantly, it activates them as tests of our seeing, reading, and remembering. (*Dummies* is a suggestive term in this respect: It is as though we are asked not merely to caption his photographs but to speak them, to ventriloquize them.) Distraction is “the actual state of what we absorb as news,” Demand comments in a statement that refers to “The Histories” but pertains to *The Dailies* as well. “What is decisive,” he continues, are “the blurred traces left in the media by the incidents” that they relay. On the one hand, distraction produces “a very diffuse sense of dullness,” Demand believes; on the

19. “A Conversation Between Alexander Kluge and Thomas Demand,” in *Thomas Demand* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 2006), pp. 51–112. Unless otherwise noted, all other Demand and Kluge quotations are from this text.

other, it allows the “blurred traces” of incidents to “lodge in the memory,” a memory that he sees as collective as well as individual. Could it be that these blurred traces are somehow evoked in the blunted details of his photographs? Certainly our shared media memory is a deep subject of this work, and *The Dailies* also point to a mnemonic dimension buried in the trivia of our lives.

“Blurred traces” is a near oxymoron, but it is useful as such. In order to be potent, a detail, a punctum in the Barthesian sense, need not be precise; for example, there are blurred traces with traumatic force in Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter, and so there are in Demand too.²⁰ Not only is the symptom lodged in the detail; often enough death is as well: Frequently it is the little things that kill one. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), Tolstoy leads his protagonist to this recognition, as Ilyich watches with anguish as an innocuous bump become a relentless enemy that stakes him out, then stalks him, and finally takes him away. He calls this mundane-mortal thing It, and I find that I scan *The Dailies* for signs of its appearance. Might It be there, for instance, in the discolored water in *Daily #20*?

Gaze and Punctum

The artist has a gaze, and we viewers do as well, but other looks are also involved in *The Dailies*. Sometimes it is as though a detail, an object, or the photograph as a whole gazes back at us.²¹ Not only does “I see the world” vie with “The world is seen,” then, but “I see it” is also troubled by “It sees me.” What do we mean when we say “It caught my eye,” as the elliptical rubber band within the concentric coffee saucers in *Daily #13* catches mine? What gives a particular detail its special power, and where exactly does this power reside—in the detail, in the viewer, or somehow in both at once? This seizing of vision by the thing is thematized by the green tissue trapped in the steel grate in *Daily #7* and the brown cups stuck in the wire fence in *Daily #15*: Captured in mesh, they capture our gaze in turn.

In *Looking at the Overlooked* (1990), an essay on still life, Norman Bryson plays with the double meaning of “overlooked.” The objects in this genre tend to be minor, overlooked things, but often they are depicted in a way that elicits an excessive looking from us; we overlook them in this sense, too, sometimes with an almost Medusan intensity.²² Again, our gaze gets stuck in details, and this is one

20. On this point see my *The First Pop Age: Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). As Demand has suggested on a few occasions, the “punctal” is not opposed to the banal.

21. See Andreas Ruby, “Memoryscapes,” *Parkett* 62 (2001). “Something seems to stare back at us,” Ralph Rugoff writes. “Rather than mirroring our gaze, these compositional black holes solicit the blind spots of our subjectivity. They do so, in part, by evoking that ‘beyond’—that unknown other towards which desire ceaselessly circulates.” See Rugoff, “Instructions for Escape,” in *Thomas Demand: Phototropy* (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2004). Again, for me this “beyond” has to do with death more than desire.

22. See Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1990).



Demand. Daily #13. 2011.

way they seem to possess power. This power might come with a hint of threat as well, a threat precisely to our vision. The English *detail* derives from the French verb, which means “to cut from,” and psychoanalysts since Freud have noted a psychic connection between the fear of blindness and the threat of castration.²³ For Lacan there is a gaze at large in the world, one that preexists the subject, who thus feels it as a threat, and so it is, he argues in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), that the gaze “comes to symbolize this central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration.”²⁴ This notion of a traumatic gaze influenced Barthes when he theorized the punctum in *Camera Lucida* (1980), that unexpected detail in a photograph that not only catches our eye but also pierces our psyche.

23. See in particular Sigmund Freud, “Medusa’s Head” (1922).

24. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 77.

According to Barthes, the punctum is not intended by the photographer; it is an accident experienced only by the viewer. But in Demand we confront the paradox of a punctum that, if not always intended, is not entirely accidental.²⁵ Certainly in *The Dailies* there are details that qualify as “punctal” for me (I mentioned the rubber band in *Daily #13*), just as there are views that approach the Medusan (the cigarette butts in the sand bowl in *Daily #2* have some of this force). At the same time, the smooth facture of both the models and the photographs softens our looking; as Ralph Rugoff has remarked, Demand images “seem to welcome our gaze with a pacifying order and stillness.”²⁶ If some pictures effect a *trompe l’oeil*, a tricking of the eye, almost all pictures, Lacan argues, aim for a *dompte-regard*, a taming of the gaze. At different moments *The Dailies* activate all three kinds of looking: There is a tricking of our vision, a wilding too, and a taming as well.²⁷

Artifice and Obstnacy

The Dailies are visual aperçus, yet often they trigger a sense of déjà vu, and this paradoxical combination of the fresh and the familiar is typical of Demand. “The images that come to me,” he tells Alexander Kluge in an extraordinary conversation, “some are very banal, others greatly laden with meaning, but actually they are all things I know.” And we know them too, or think we do. In part this is because Demand builds his images from prior representations, such as news photos, postcards, and iPhone snaps. Yet this doubling is not performed in the interest of a post-modernist critique of reality as a construct. Demand treats the photographic mediation of the world as a given, and he assumes that we do as well; his project is less to demystify the real than to remodel and reimage it. In this way his art is indicative of a cultural shift in the perceived relation between representations and referents, one in which the old opposition between the indexical and the constructed becomes less relevant. In a world in which almost every image is both photographic and contrived, the indexical aspect of the medium does not automatically trump its other aspects: We no longer assume the truth-value of the photographic image, and we are alert to its fictive capabilities. In this condition a new realism becomes necessary, one that uses artifice to make reality real again—that is, sensible, credible, or simply effective as such. Demand is a key figure in this new art of artifice in the service of reality.²⁸

This artifice makes his photographs appear to precede us somehow, even to

25. See Walter Benn Michaels, “Photographs and Fossils,” in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2007).

26. Rugoff, “Instructions for Escape,” n.p.

27. If Lacan understands the gaze as maleficent, Walter Benjamin understands it as beneficent, at least when he thinks of aura as the capacity of an object to return our gaze. Tricking of our look is everywhere in Demand, and I see wilding in *Daily #19*, for example, and taming in *Daily #14*.

28. This artifice often takes the form of a reconstruction, a repetition aimed to actualize an event, whether historical or imagined, and it is pervasive in contemporary art, performance, fiction, and other forms. Signal examples for me include the novel *10:04* (2014) by Ben Lerner and the film *Event for a Stage* (2015) by Tacita Dean. For my views on the pitfalls of this strategy, see “In Praise of Actuality,” in *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (New York: Verso, 2015).

anticipate us, and this imbues them in turn with an “obstinacy” in the sense of the term developed by Kluge in *History and Obstinacy* (2008)—the obstinacy of things that persist, things that belong to the “the underside of history.”²⁹ “Your images,” Kluge comments to Demand, “are suffused with the absence of humans.” He does not mean simply that people do not appear in the photos; rather, he intends the paradoxical presence of others who are absent but whose traces remain. “There is no vacuum that is empty,” Kluge continues. “To my mind that vortex is a key medium in your images.” This remark is cryptic, but the presence-absence that intrigues Kluge is not only that of prior representations but also that of prior people whose activities live on, again obstinately, in the everyday furniture of our existences. This is precisely the material of *The Dailies*, “the residues of dead labor,” as Kluge remarks. Might this be another way to think of the “blurred traces” in this work, and another way in which its making is not a matter of “sheer artistic intention” alone?

“Your images unfold,” Kluge continues, in a second nature where all things are man-made and where “human abilities appear outside us and confront us” as alien. The “medium” of a Demand image, then, might be understood as one that aims to reanimate the “residues of dead labor,” to open up this second nature, to reclaim the “human abilities” that are alienated there, or at least to point to this project. This is not easy—in fact, it is utopian—but it is thus that his images might function as both “vacuum” and “vortex.” Here “medium” touches on the old meaning of the word as a form of contact with the dead.

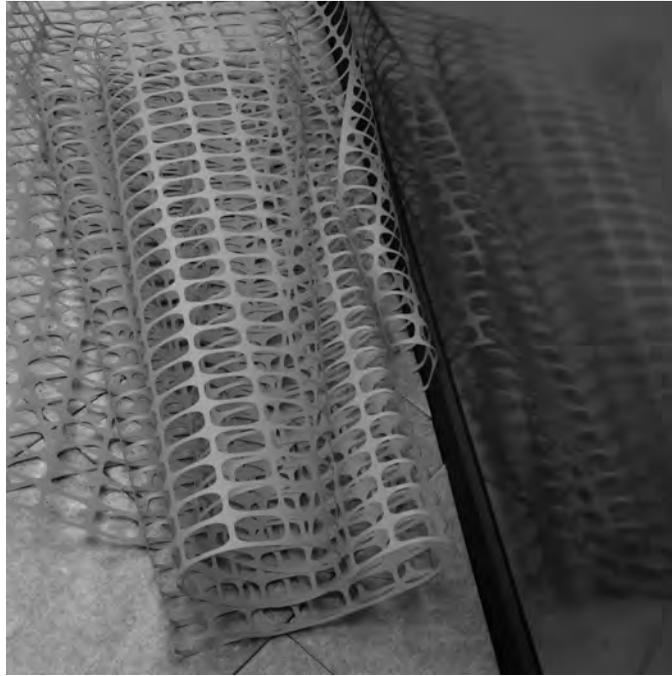
Kluge and Demand also speculate about a “third nature,” by which they refer to a world that is not merely man-made and machine-produced but also driven by structures, systems, and networks that are largely beyond human control. “If the public sphere, the arts, the relationship to people no longer grows with the complexity of society as a whole,” Kluge warns, “then third nature arises.” Yet this is also where Kluge believes artists such as Demand can intervene: “The core of your entire oeuvre” is focused on “the way people oscillate between first, second, and third nature.”³⁰ But what, precisely, does this entail at the level of artistic practice?

Consider the kinds of objects pictured in some of *The Dailies*, such as the loose roll of orange fencing in *Daily #9* or the tacky stool in the changing room in *Daily #10*. They are the very stuff of capitalist junkspace; they appear so artificial and so alien as to be almost posthuman.³¹ Not many people understand how such things are produced, yet they are used, every day, by many of us. And in *The Dailies*

29. See Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *History & Obstinacy*, ed. Devin Fore (New York: Zone, 2014). In his brilliant introduction, Fore glosses “obstinacy” as follows: “The word *Eigensinn*—rendered variously into English as ‘autonomy,’ ‘willfulness,’ ‘self-will,’ and, here, ‘obstinacy’—implies a degree of stubborn obtuseness, an imperviousness to directives from above. Hegel, for example, describes *Eigensinn* as ‘a freedom’ that is ‘enmeshed in servitude.’ Kluge, in contrast, describes *Eigensinn* as ‘the guerrilla warfare [*Partisanentum*] of the mind.’ Obstinacy is the underside of history. . . .” (p. 36).

30. Implicitly here, Kluge, a great legatee of the Frankfurt School, pushes back on the notion, advanced in the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour, that agency is distributed among people, things, and systems, even as he also pushes back on the fatalism of his own critical tradition. Demand would appear to agree on both counts.

31. See Rem Koolhaas and Hal Foster, *Junkspace with Running Room* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2013).



Demand. Daily
#8. 2011.

they appear more than used; they are broken, like the outlet in *Daily #1*, or discarded, like the drink in *Daily #18*. Paradoxically, however, this use, this breakage, this trashing, renders them human again: At least they show the signs of our consumption, if not of our production. And this is where Demand intervenes with his “organized tinkering,” which is how he describes his selecting, modeling, and photographing of the banal things that stock our daily lives. “Things must be slowed down,” he says, if the mediation of our world is to be understood and the second and third natures that weigh on us are to be resisted.

“We see what the specters of history left behind,” Kluge remarks to Demand; “it looks ghostly and yet realistic.” But the traces of past representations and the residues of dead labor that Demand offers us are not only uncanny. Again, he aims to trigger a recognition that has a mnemonic dimension: “A bell rings in your long-term memory.” And, paradoxically, this mnemonic dimension can have a projective force, a future vector, as well, one with an ethical component. This is the material of our lives, *The Dailies* say to us. It is often tacky, trivial, tiresome; it is sometimes a little deadly. But there is beauty here too. It is not redemptive, but it can be apparitional; it might even be epiphanic.