

*Introduction text to 'Sig mig, at tingene taler'*  
*-sent to the artists in august 2014, together with an invitation.*

*The material is everywhere (...) in the apparatus, in the body, in screens, in projections, in graphics, in plaster, in sound, in colours* writes the former principle for the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Mikkel Bogh, in this years Degree Show catalogue. His observations reflects a broader movement in contemporary art, a reappearance of the material, and the materiality in art. A tendency where he traces a renewed interest for objects and material processes not only at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen but also at international exhibitions like 'Documenta 13' and the Venice Biennale.

In 'New Materialism', the material is not seen as something passive or inanimate, but on the contrary, is it ascribed intrinsic properties and histories. Objects are seen as thinking substances with both subjective and objective properties.

Bogh sees at the schools Degree Show (if he must generalise) a generation of artists with an expanded understanding for the material, artists who are thinking *both in and outside the material*. Showing an optimistic belief in the power of the object and the artists ability to see and use it.

In 2012, in the text 'Neo-Modernism' published in 'October' nr. 139, the writer David Geers describes what he calls 'Neo-Formalism' - a reemerging interest in abstraction, materiality and process, where young artists (e.g. Josh Smith, Alex Hubbard or *students at any MFA program*) mimic the formal moves of modernist art. Geers describes a tendency that uses the aesthetic of formerly revolutionary models such as Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism, Arte Povera, Minimalism etc. and makes collages without grasping what todays social and cultural configurations are calling for. Putting it against technological developments like Internet and social media, which have had an important role in society (for example during the Arab spring or Occupy Wall Street) the art world seems to, according to Geers, be addressing too much of its emancipatory rhetoric to the art market instead of examining its materials discursive potentials. In other words young artists are taking "a safe path" by making objects in an aesthetic established amongst collectors (and in their own minds?) seemingly lacking other intentions other than making sellable products.

Both 'Neo-formalism' and 'New materialism' have many similar traits, the interest in the material, the emphasis on process and abstraction but described quite differently by the two writers. Why is that? Is the difference that big between the European scene that Bogh is in, and the American which Geers mainly refers to? What is demanded by an artist to seize *the materials discursive potential*, to take the object seriously not using it as an "accessory" to express her/his own uniqueness? And what is demanded for the spectator to grasp the artists material reflections? And how can we talk about it?

In 1964, in the text 'Against Interpretation' Susan Sontag called for a different way of talking about art, to help us practice our senses, senses which she suggests had suffered a steady loss of sharpness caused by a culture based on excess and overproduction. *What is needed is a vocabulary – a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary – for forms. The function of criticism should be to show how it is, what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than show what it means.* Maybe that is what Bogh means the young Danish artist are on to when he concludes his preface with the words *the return of the materiality is the return of reflection?*

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