

Take a seat. There are fifteen chairs in front of *charm of tradition*, by Haim Steinbach. Look at it. Stare. Take your time. The first thought that comes to mind is usually pretty bland or predictable, so best to wait until you actually have something to say — although not saying anything is fine too.

On three consecutive evenings, three meditations. And before each one, some reading. In fact, there are three completely different texts to read, one for each occasion.

#1 Since the mid 1980s, the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has been writing about the biography and social lives of objects. As in: *things are congealed moments in a longer social trajectory*. He veered away from a strict Marxist understanding of commodities and towards the idea that objects could move in and out of commodity states— in certain contexts and under certain *regimes of value*, they might be *commodity candidates*. Social, political, and aesthetic forces have intersected with and acted upon the shoes and the lamp in *charm of tradition*, and they have moved on from their lives as commodities. They have a new career now, and are busy doing other things.

#2 Cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker are among those who are considering the world that comes after postmodernism's reign of deconstruction and pastiche—something they call metamodernism.

The metamodern oscillates between a modern commitment and a postmodern detachment. The metamodern understands modernism's shortcomings, but chooses to continue its tasks regardless. It seeks a truth it does not intend to find—the way Romanticism tries to turn the finite into the infinite, while recognizing that it can never be realized. The metamodern is tied to the space between desire and apathy and between sincerity and irony, creating a new *narrative of longing*. Kitsch still exists, but isn't enough anymore.

#3 If the Internet used to be reserved for tech-heads, it isn't anymore—our parents use it to buy socks or look at cats. Some say that means we live in a *post-internet* age, when the Internet isn't a tool we use but is in the water we drink. In art, post-internet is not so much a category as it is a condition—tumblrs, surfing clubs, and flickr streams excavate a growing archive of image artifacts and level the playing field between disparate sources.

The artist Artie Vierkant points out that we live in a time when *everything is anything else*. Objects lack fixity in representational strategy, which is to say that an artwork exists equally on its pedestal in a gallery, through its image online, or as it is edited or recontextualized by any other author. Steinbach has long appreciated an object's movement between art and non-art—though one wonders what that means to a new generation.

These three meditations take place on November 30th, December 1st, and 2nd, 2012, organized and hosted by Institute research fellows Samantha Best, John Henry Donner, Ryan Lauderdale, and Sara Shaoul. For those who come: be sure to do the reading.