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The Sum of Things

An exegesis presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of

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Abstract

Consumption as witnessed under advanced capitalism is seemingly insatiable. Consumer desire, coupled with a burgeoning world population and increasing demands on ever scarcer resources heralds dark days ahead. What compels us to consume at such a tireless rate? This thesis seeks to unpack contemporary consumer culture, citing key thinkers and artists on the subject in order to shed light on the phenomenon. Referencing Guy Debord's incendiary critique of the *Spectacle*, and its ongoing influence over public consciousness, photography is discussed as a potential tool for consumption related critique. However, photographs are entrenched in the consumer realm, illustrating commodities and perpetuating spectacular culture. This thesis explores the ramifications of this convoluted relationship, examining various strategies for overcoming the baggage of the spectacle, including: detournement, ambiguity, banality, and the poetic.

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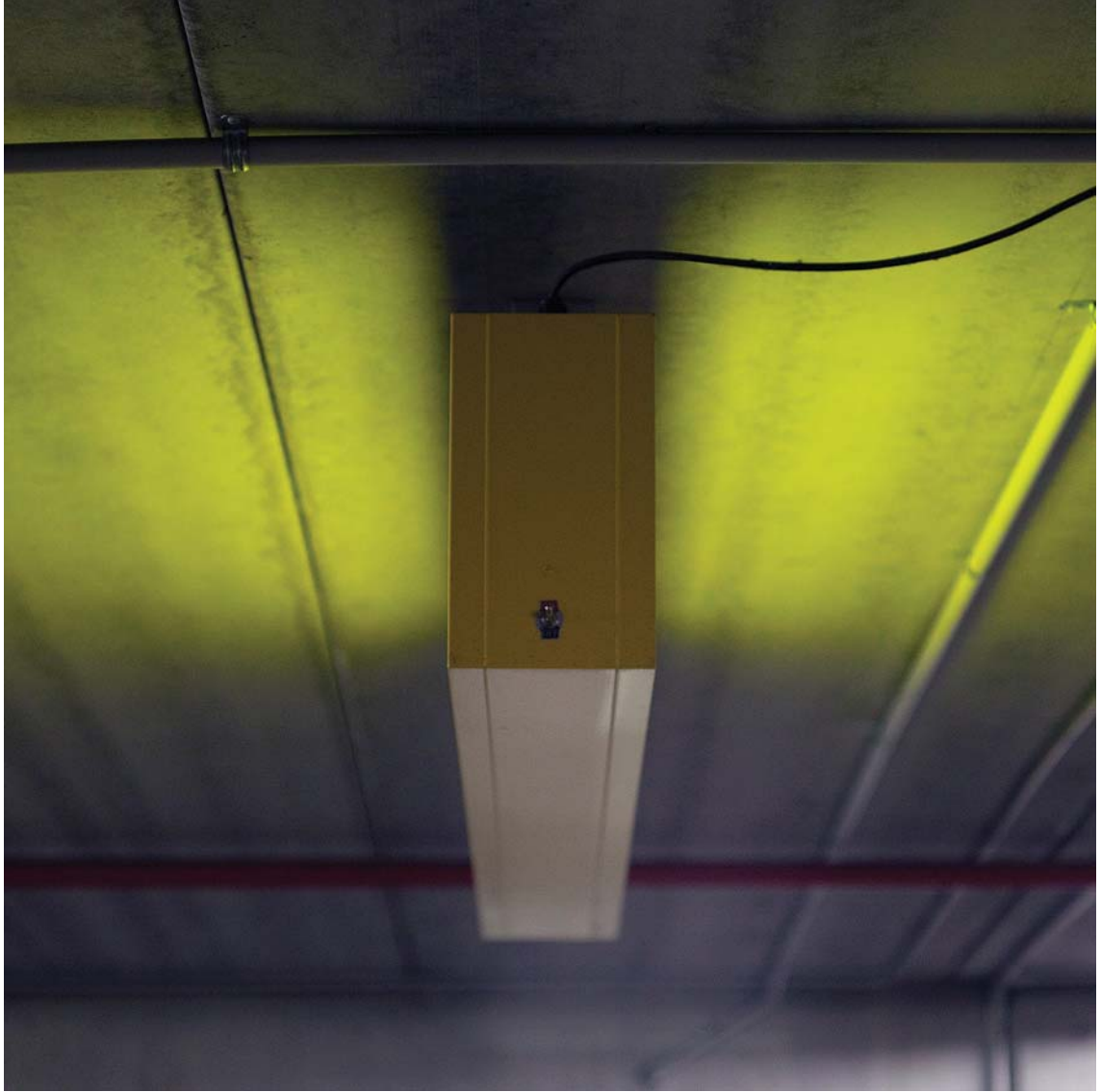


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