

# PAUL STOLPER

## IN COURSE OF ARRANGEMENT

Anna Blessmann and Peter Saville

You might never have noticed them; you might have walked past ten times, twenty times, on your way through the vast collections of the V&A, or the Met, or the Louvre, and not have seen them. Small signs, sometimes glassily translucent, sometimes tagged with a brightly coloured dot, declaring 'object removed for photography', or otherwise for restoration, or maybe research. Temporary interruptions in the logic and flow of the museological display, they make a double promise; that an object was there and that it will be returned.

Anna Blessmann began noticing and photographing these placeholders in museums and galleries across the world more than a decade ago. The series of photographs that she produced of these discreet and tucked-away missives provides a loose taxonomy of their varying forms and tones, but their interest lies less in the differences between individual examples and more in what, as a genre, these stand-ins stand for.

They act as markers for missing objects but rather than representing a lack of something, they in fact act as guarantors of possession in absentia, assuring the integrity of the collection. (Their twin sisters are the small red stickers that you might find stuck next to sold items in a furniture shop, or maybe even at an art fair. These also symbolize possession, but through an inverse mechanism. In their case, the object is physically present but, having already been purchased, is no longer available. The dots therefore perform an absencing of sorts.) As to what form the absent objects take, this may be suggested by a halo of sun-bleached backing paper or the faint outline impressed in a fabric covering by the weight of years, but on this matter the signs themselves are silent. They divulge nothing; representing whilst remaining entirely non-representational. Which is to say that they leave endless room for imagining.

Anna Blessmann and Peter Saville use the form of these museum placeholders to explore ideas of possession and collection, potential and imagination, and the art object itself. Available for purchase as a limited edition, these 'Art Accessories' have a transformative potential: any domestic setting can become a collection. As artworks in their own right, they allow the public to become collectors even as they explicitly disavow their own status as object.

These works are playful and slightly irreverent, gently mocking the imperial passion for possession and categorization from which the museum was born. But they also get to the heart of what it is to collect and the slipperiness of this term in an era when the notion of the art object is undergoing sustained critique: by the ideas proposed by relational aesthetics; by an increased blurring of the formally discrete realms of art and performance; by technological advancements which have complicated the notions of possession and authorship. Blessmann and Saville recognize the impulse to possess, to have, to collect; they play up to it. But they also recognize its limitations, declaring that it is enough to imagine and to suggest.

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