

FEATURE: SCHELTENS & ABBENES

There is some sort of unsuspected life in each and every lifeless object. In still life photography, the object takes the role of the protagonist and consequently becomes an actor. But few objects are fit to act without support—they need agents. Artists like Maurice Scheltens and Liesbeth Abbenes, who study structures and surfaces in order to, in their own words, “understand what all these things are trying to tell us,” help objects be understood by putting them in proper perspective.



“Photography has the potential to reveal something, to show us the unimagined side of things that is only visible from the point of view of the camera,” Scheltens and Abbenes say. And viewed through their lens, some things look incredibly different indeed. They use perspective as a tool to take products apart, to deconstruct or dissect them. Drawing inspiration from the object itself, they focus in on its core features, the “building blocks of their composition,” to steer us straight into the thick of things. Whether portraying fashion or furniture, Scheltens & Abbenes’s pictures

always reflect a keen interest in material properties and promote photography as a means to explore them.

“We are fascinated by how things are made, by anything that is carefully crafted, no matter the field,” Liesbeth Abbenes notes. A graduate of the Gerrit Rietveld and Rijksacademy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam, Abbenes had worked on hand-embroidered wall tapestries before she met Maurice Scheltens, who had studied photography at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague in the early nineties—a time when the still life was not very popular, which, in his view, only made it more interesting to specialize in. ▶

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