

Christophe Dillinger, 2010.

Artist statement for the piece “The woman in red (three degrees)”

The object

“The woman in red” is a used filing cabinet, containing cardboard folders with labels. The cabinet is not new and some scratches are visible, as well as specks of rust. The labels are handwritten or typed on with a typewriter, or are original printed labels that came with the cabinet when it was bought.

The labels

The labels come in three categories

- Original labels, with original text, supplied with the filing cabinet (first degree).
- Handwritten, personalised by and meeting the needs of the users (second degree).
- Typed on using a second hand typewriter (third degree)

First degree

This is the “common” degree, the cultural stage, the preoccupations shared by a vast majority of members of the western civilisation. The labels bear titles such as “Bank”, “House insurance” and “Tax”. They represent the hold of society on people’s lives, the boxes we are supposed to fit in. They also represent the industry’s attempts at formalising our existence in terms of conditions we all share. The fact that these labels are actually issued with the filing cabinet is very telling, as it presupposes a tacit acceptance to the present economic and social rules and also, in the same movement, propagate this very acceptance.

Second degree

The labels depict the personal preoccupations of the user, still connected to the world and society at large. They represent the middle ground, the adaptation of humanity to its surrounding. They bear words such as “Water”, “Electricity” and the name of a particular banking establishment. This is, spatially and intellectually, the domain of the family, or at least of the individual moving in society (whereas the first degree was more about static, unmovable sections of civilisation). The handwriting is a manifestation of the link between personal and general.

Third degree

This is the personal, the identity, the microcosms. These labels depict dreams, actions, needs, thoughts and grammatical options that are applied and felt by the individual and that are open to them. This is the last layer before intangibility, the mystical and the religious. Here labels are typed with a typewriter, to simulate a vestigial relationship between the personal and the general. This level is where reality is perceived both at its strongest and most fleeting states.



