



A “quodlibet” is a form of *trompe l’oeil* still-life painting containing domestic and other paraphernalia, such as books, letters, scissors, and playing cards, composed as if left lying around in a haphazard, informal manner. Historically they have been used for dissident comment, the interplay between objects producing subtle narratives specific to their context, visible only to those who lean in for a closer look.

Quodlibet paintings of both tabletop arrangements and pinboards have been central to my work since studying at a private school for decorative painting in Brussels in 2007–8 where I was required to make one as part of the coursework. Since then I have produced over 50, using them to explore the possibilities and limits of the genre—for instance, how they can act as an indirect form of portraiture (and self-portraiture) or define their own rules as commodities, having sentimental value to those who have had them made as private commissions. *Quodlibet XXVIII* contains material relating to the plot of a crime fiction story I had recently written, incorporating false evidence that would incriminate my gallerist of a malicious act I had performed; *Quodlibet XL* depicts objects and printed matter that are all part of the oeuvres of various convicted or self-confessed paedophiles, such as the designer Eric Gill; *Quodlibet LVI* is merely a selection of old magazines piled on a doctor’s waiting-room table.

The labor-intensive mode of production, and the inevitable alignment of value with craftsmanship, makes the quodlibet an innately conservative idiom. Yet it is precisely this conservatism that facilitates the tense relationship between intent, form, and content that gives the genre its dynamic force. In many ways it could be considered the “opposite” of a collage, given collage’s democratic and subversive legacy. In my newer quodlibets, however, I have collaged digital printouts into my compositions. For *Quodlibets XLV–LII* these are derived from the bureaucratic paperwork necessary for the management of my design collaboration Atelier E.B as a commercial concern (in contrast to the working material depicted here in *Quodlibet XXXV*). These new works were made as an attempt to undermine the equation of value with virtuosity that the previous work had engendered, and reset the terms of my paintings’ reception.

– Lucy McKenzie

Cover: *Quodlibet I* (Van Der Kelen), 2008
 Page 119: *Quodlibet LVI* (Waiting Room Table), 2014
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