

# SEANKELLY

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## The New York Times

### 'The Thing and the Thing-in-Itself'



"Material Described" (1965), by Joseph Kosuth, in "The Thing and the Thing-in-Itself." Credit Joseph Kosuth/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Lance Brewer/Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

This spare, thought-provoking exhibition's title derives from a distinction posited by Immanuel Kant. That is, a thing can be known by a human being only from his or her unique perspective. What the thing is, in and of itself, independent of any perceiver's view of it, isn't fully knowable. Organized by the art historian Robert Hobbs, the exhibition presents seven things, which he introduces as "works that pit people's sight and insight against the limits of what they are able to comprehend."

The show's earliest piece is a found object by Marcel Duchamp from 1916: an iron comb and the box it fits into. Most recent is a 1968 sculpture by Robert Smithson consisting of an aluminum bin filled with pieces of broken concrete. A 1936 piece by René Magritte depicts a man studying an egg while painting a picture of a flying bird. From 1954, there's an all-black painting by Ad Reinhardt. The text on a small pink piece of paper certifying that someone named Hans Hartman Paulsen "is to be considered as an authentic work of art" was produced by Piero Manzoni in 1961. "Material Described" (1965), by Joseph Kosuth, has a word painted on each of four sheets of glass: "glass," "words," "material" and "described." Yoko Ono's "Sky TV" (1966) is a vintage television playing a real-time video feed of the sky.

None of these things will be incomprehensible to people familiar with modern art. Outside any human frame of reference, however, things like an egg, concrete rubble, the sky, the color black and a person remain at least partly unfathomable.