

Nanopublication – The certificate survives the theft; the dialogue does not

by Arnaud Quercy

The line is anonymity: when the receiver can be addressed (a fairgoer's claim, a buyer's bite, a museumgoer's known act), the incident completes as dialogue or induced diffraction absorbed into the work's history; when the receiver is unknown, the same act cannot ricochet and the institution falls back on prosecution – the framework grips the physical/intentional split cleanly but goes silent exactly where the interlocutor disappears.

WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS ^[1]

Maurizio Cattelan's duct-taped banana 'Comedian' was stolen from Centre Pompidou-Metz. The museum replaced it within hours, as it routinely does every few days, since the work's value lies in its certificate of authenticity and display protocol rather than in the perishable fruit itself – 'no irreversible damage' occurred. Unlike previous incidents (a 2019 fairgoer eating it as claimed performance art, a 2023 Korean visitor, a 2024 Sun chomping it on camera and folding the act into 'the artwork's history', a prior Pompidou-Metz theft met with the artist's wry disappointment), this time the museum filed a legal complaint against 'persons unknown', explaining that because the culprit is unidentified 'there is no possibility of dialogue.' The banana anchors an exhibition explicitly billed as 'living' and 'ever-changing', staging 'subversive gestures' – prompting the journalist to ask whether the theft's fallout is itself the promised experience.

WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

P3a grips cleanly and specifically: the museum's own justification – value residing in 'the protocol governing its presentation' and the certificate, not the 'perishable element' – reproduces almost verbatim the split between a physical invariant (replaceable fruit and tape) and an intentional invariant (the codex-level protocol/certificate that the receiver cannot dissolve by eating or stealing the object). This is not a generic fit: the case is structurally built around exactly this separation, which is why the museum can call the theft undamaging while still prosecuting it.

WHERE IT BREAKS

The reading strains at P26/P18a. The exhibition frames itself as a 'living' laboratory of 'subversive gestures' inviting exactly this kind of provocation – past eating incidents were absorbed by the artist through commentary or by the buyer as 'part of the artwork's history', which reads as induced diffraction completing its ricochet through dialogue. But the museum states plainly that anonymity forecloses 'any possibility of dialogue', and responds with prosecution rather than revelation-and-reconfiguration. The ricochet mechanism in P18a presumes an identifiable receiver who can be addressed or can become a co-emitter; an anonymous thief removes that party entirely, and the institution's legal response is the opposite move from a productive tension being held – it is closure by law, not by dialogue. This slips IF one reads the museum's reaction as external to the artist's 'induced diffraction' design (a custodian policing what the artist's protocol invites); it holds as complication rather than full refutation if one reads the museum's protocol itself as part of the codex, in which case the prosecution is simply the codex's designed response to a diffraction it did not pre-determine.

PROPOSITIONAL GRID ^[2]

Read this grid. “Not evaluated” does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

Evaluated

proposition		audit status	relational verdict
P3a	Double Structure of the Invariant	not audited	evidence-for
P18a	The Ricochet Effect	not audited	pressure-against
P26	Induced Diffraction	not audited	pressure-against

Remarkable silences

1 called for by what the reading found, and absent from the source.

• **P15** – Relational Transmission

The reading establishes that the anonymous thief removes the addressable receiver while the certificate/protocol (material residue) survives intact, but P15's own closure condition – only mutual absence with no material residue ends the system – is never invoked to determine whether the system remains open despite dialogue's foreclosure, and that determination is absent.

Not evaluated (33) – P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P14a, P14b, P16, P16a, P17, P18, P19, P19a, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P27, P28, P29, P30, P31

Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading's judgement is in the grid above.

Reading of 2026-06-02 · model claude-sonnet-5 · source 7,841 chars · 3 attempt(s)

FIRST PASS – KEPT AS WRITTEN

Reading produced by the T50 RSS pass, before the boundary lens. It is reproduced UNCORRECTED. Keeping it is the point: without it, a changed title is just a changed title – with it, what the second pass refused becomes legible.

Title it carried : « Cattelan's Banana and the Codex of Conceptual Theft »

This incident exposes a structural paradox in the codex of conceptual art. Cattelan's work *Comedian* is a diffraction engine: the 'art-work' is not the banana itself (physical invariant: perishable, replaceable) but the intentional invariant—the system of constraints that makes a banana mean as art. When the banana is stolen, the museum presses charges as if the physical object were the work. But the theft itself becomes a ricochet: it reveals what Cattelan's codex actually generates—not an object, but a frame that transforms any banana into a site of meaning-making. The thief, unwittingly, has become a receiver who diffracts the work through their own overture (criminality, absurdism, resistance to institutional authority). The work survives the theft because the codex survives. The museum's legal response misses the point: it treats the physical invariant as if it were the inten-

tional one. This is a case where generative loss (the banana's absence) paradoxically completes the work rather than diminishing it.

T50 RSS assessment · 2026-06-02 · remplacée par boundary-lens-2026-08

REFERENCES

[1] Someone Stole Maurizio Cattelan's Banana, and the Centre Pompidou-Metz Is Pressing Charges. ARTnews.com, 2026-06-02. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/maurizio-cattelan-comedian-banana-centre-pompidou-metz-1234787985/>

[2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

Claim type	boundary reading
Voice	third person analysis
Epistemic status	bounded grip
Methodology	Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 3 attempt(s), traceability check passed.

CHECKSUM (SHA-256)

03ff38b93016b07884d1e54ab93e178767f7834bf86f9a185d7316cf048bec71

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Author	Arnaud Quercy
Asset code	IDS-RNI0053
Identifier	NAN-RDG000088
Version	1
Published	2026-08-05

ISSN: applied for – U.S. ISSN Center, Library of Congress

© 2026 Ideamorphic Studies

Published by Art Quam Anima Publishing New York,
an assumed name of AQA Publishing LLC

c/o Northwest Registered Agent, 418 Broadway Ste N
Albany, NY 12207, USA
+1 917-764-5470

NY DOS ID 7624376 · Assumed Name ID 7658709

publishing.artquamanima.com

Last updated: 2026-08-15

Persistent URI: <https://ideamorphism.org/en/nanopubs/2026/08/IDS-RNI0053-the-certificate-survives-the-theft-the-dialogue-does-not.pdf>