I CAN EXPLAIN
THE WORK OF ART IS NO LONGER NECESSARY

ED YOUNG

A declaration submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Fine Art

Michaelis School of Fine Art
University of Cape Town
2005

Declaration
This work has not been submitted in whole or in part for the award of any degree at another institution and is my own unaided work. Each significant contribution to and quotation from the work of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO ANDREW LAMPRECHT, WHO HAS SEEN THE WORST OF ME

MY SUPERVISORS, BRUCE ARNOTT AND GAVIN YOUNG FOR PUTTING UP WITH ME

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF OF GALERIE PUTA

TRACY MURINIK

THE STAFF AT MICHAELIS, IN PARTICULAR MARTIN ADAMS AND CHARLES VAN ROOYEN, FREDDIE SCOTCHMAN, GODFREY KÖPF, LISA ESSEX AND INGRID WILLIS, WHO I AM SURE ARE HAPPY TO SEE ME LEAVE

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ESTELLE JACOBS AT THE AVA

BELL-ROBERTS GALLERY

MARIO TODESCHINI FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHS UNLESS SPECIFIED OTHERWISE

AND

BRUCE GORDON
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An artist doesn’t really exist unless they’re having exhibitions in a gallery. And an exhibition never really happened unless it’s been covered by an art magazine. Ad space is taken out in magazines to advertise the shows. And to keep the general communication system going. The system is based on the idea that magazines will cover the shows. It’s not a direct financial relationship, where reviews are actually paid for. But it is nearly. On the other hand, it’s a system that seems to work quite well.

(Collings 1998: 95)

The bulk of our knowledge of the international art world, and in many cases within the local South African art scene, is based largely on what we read in magazines, art books and the art press. To most individuals these exhibitions exist mainly in written form and within the viewer’s personal mental constructions. It is a different world to that of international metropolitan art centres such as Paris, New York and London, with their corps of professional critics, curators and above all, internationally recognised artists.

It is interesting to note the international art world’s acceptance of this status quo. However, it also functions within its own structures and complexities. Kendell Geers has commented that:

Life in the art loop is very fragile, even for those you think are secure. Not even the cover of an art magazine is a guarantee for longer than six months.

It should also be remembered that this applies mainly to those who have already broken through the international art system. Because of a lack of engagement and critical exploration, most young South African artists are easily satisfied with a mere mention in the popular press. Making the cover of the only art magazine in South Africa would be beyond the ambitions of most.

My interest is situated partially within the aspect of how the viewer constructs his own mental picture of the events of an exhibition. However, I am more interested in how the artist is able to manipulate and guide the media. It is for this reason that I have decided not to present a physical exhibition with the submission of this dissertation, but rather to include aspects of my work as they have been reflected in the popular press. I feel that the submission of any physical work (which might have consisted of the documentation of events) would cause the body of work to become redundant, as the work itself has relied more frequently on its existence within a conceptual sphere.

My work has constantly referenced media responses, thus the works developed parallel to the media interest that has frequently surrounded my production.

This dissertation operates on two central levels: each individual project should be considered in its own right, and more importantly, the work should be read in its entirety. Due to the performative aspects of the work, it would be pointless and even impossible to recreate these experiences. For the purposes of this document, however, the descriptions of the works appearing in these pages, along with the documentation and press archives stand in for the works themselves. Also significant are rumours and gossip, and to a large extent the public response to the works in general, and the traces of these responses. My work is based

Artist and educator Andrew Putter mentions his preference for personal anecdotes about exhibitions rather than attending these exhibitions himself as he finds these personal constructions or views more fascinating. He often cites Piet Humaar’s anecdotes, noted for their beautifully exaggerated depictions.

Personal e-mail correspondence. 3 November 2004.
largely on professional practice, consisting of several solo exhibitions, local as well as international group exhibitions, collaborations, writings and catalogues.

For comparative purposes, I have referenced work made prior to the MFA degree, with the full understanding that these do not constitute part of the examined body of work.

This study becomes the body of work.

As my starting point I shall set out to investigate possible constructs that may have occurred within the history of conceptualism. In the first chapter I investigate the possibility that some of Marcel Duchamp’s readymades never existed as actual objects, but rather as concocted fabrications. I also examine Duchamp and his circle’s use of the media and self-published journals to promote what has become the traditional historical view.

The second chapter deals with ‘Britart’ and the phenomenon of the young British artists (yBa). Here I am particularly interested in the way that art in Britain, predominantly in the Nineties, managed to infiltrate the media and construct specific personas for individual artists, including that of their main patron, Charles Saatchi. Similarities exist between the way that the public responds to the work of young British artists and to the way that many of Duchamp’s works were perceived. This concern is also evident in my own production.

Naturally I have excluded key aspects and movements during the 20th century, as this document does not intend to serve as a historical account of the events that built the contemporary condition. The Situationists International, the Fluxus movement and Conceptual Art of the Sixties, spring naturally to mind in this regard. I briefly investigate celebrity and pop artist Andy Warhol in order to direct my research on contemporary artistic practice of the late Nineties and turn of the century. However, the inclusion of Duchamp is due to the fact that he is perhaps the cornerstone of contemporary conceptualism and provides a relevant starting point. He has been an important influence on my work.

The third chapter investigates some of the conceptual underpinnings that have informed my individual projects. I look at issues such as laziness and boredom as two main topics, and as a response to such accusations in my own work. I relate these issues to contemporary examples that I present.

Amongst other things I have consciously adopted strategies such as not making work, getting others to make it for me and adopting co-incidental aspects, such as verbal and printed criticism into my subsequent production.

In the second section of the dissertation I describe my own work chronologically. I have adopted a somewhat anecdotal approach, mirroring the process by which each piece was shaped by its surrounding context. I hope that the reader will indulge the journalistic language and style I adopt, including aspects of humour, as this is the arena in which my work operates. I describe my work on a theoretical basis, linking it to contemporary art discourse, and the South African situation in particular. My investigation remains subjective.
I think art is the most useful of the useless things in the world.

(Bonami in Lamprecht and Young 2003)
The influence of the readymade as a means of contemporary artistic production seems to have engaged indifferent minds throughout the past century. It has situated itself primarily within the thinking space of an 'ignorant' sector of the art world, easily generalized as uninformed students, self-made artists and older traditionalists within the arts sector.

Due to little interest and a small art community, the public's reception of such work seems troublesome within a South African context, and proves to be fairly unstable in situations such as Britain's Turner Prize. In the afore-mentioned case, it has caused a certain amount of unease in terms of a public perspective and has drawn crowds protesting outside the Tate Gallery on opening nights of these events.

The Stuckists, of which Tracey Emin's ex-punk-rocker boyfriend Billy Childish was a founding member, exists as an 'anti-anti' contemporary art group, one that has grown to roughly 100 groups and 6 Stuckism International Centres globally. In 2000, they released the Turner prize song: 'Art or Arse (You Be The Judge), and have denounced the prize as an 'ongoing national joke' and a state-funded advertising agency for Charles Saatchi.3 They also refer to key artists such as the only artist who wouldn't be in danger of winning the Turner Prize is Turner' and that the prize 'should be re-named The Duchamp Award for the destruction of artistic integrity'.

This is a prejudice in the acceptance of a form of art which has a history dating back to Marcel Duchamp. It questions an artistic sensibility concerning the past century: a shocking and frustrating truth. However, a conclusion still remains to be drawn as to what the readymade actually is and what it meant in its original context.

Dada was initiated in Zurich in 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire. Although short-lived, the movement had immense impact on the structures of contemporary practice today. At its birth, Dada was primarily a protest against World War I and the prevailing ideas of art and conceptions of artistic beauty.

But by 1921 it was over: its participants had ceased their raucous demands for freedom and dispersed, to become career artists (Hans Arp), religious converts (Hugo Ball) and psychoanalysts (Richard Huelsenbeck). How influential was Dada? Can we agree with the philosopher Henri Lefebvre, writing in 1975, that 'to the degree that modernity has meaning, it is this: it carries within itself from the beginning, a radical negation - Dada, is this event that took place in a Zurich cafe'? If Dada can be seen as a first wave of Conceptual art, Surrealism, which followed it, had different interests and its investigation into the nature of art (begun by Dada) was less radical.

Marcel Duchamp, a key artist of the 20th century, moved from Paris to New York in 1915 after he was 'forced to withdraw his painting Nude Descending a Staircase (No.2) from the Salon des Independents in Paris' in 1912 (Godfrey 1998: 25).
'A nude never descends the staircase,' the hanging committee had pronounced. 'a nude reclines.'

'This was an outrageous piece of academic codswallop: perhaps in the unreal, pallid world of the academy, a nude did just recline, but in the real world people when nude do more than that.'

(Godfrey 1998: 25)

In 1916 in New York, Duchamp joined the Society of Independent Artists, an organisation of which both he and Man Ray were directors. One of its aims was to create an exhibition that was not prejudiced and conservative in the way that large parts of the art world were in New York at the time. In 1917, the 'Independents' set out to produce an annual exhibition of submitted works without any curatorial judgements. Any artist who paid the six-dollar submission fee was allowed to exhibit two works. Duchamp submitted Fountain (Godfrey 1998: 28).

The well-known controversial urinal has troubled historians and scholars for decades. We have relatively little factual information on which to base the history of this object (Betancourt 2000). It is recorded that Duchamp himself had purchased the urinal from the J.L. Mott Ironworks and had signed it R. Mutt (R for Richard which is French slang for 'moneybags' [Godfrey 1998: 28] and Mutt possibly referring to J.L. Mott company and the Mutt and Jeff comic strip) (Varnedoe 1990: 274).

Address on admission label attached to urinal suggests the 'female friend' is probably Louise Norton, nee McCutcheon (1890-1988). Married to Allen Norton and later to many composer Edgar Varese (Naumann and Obalk 2000: 47).

In 1917, the Independents opened here with enormous success. A female friend of mine, using a male pseudonym, Richard Mutt, submitted a porcelain urinal as a sculpture. It wasn't at all indecent. No reason to refuse it. The committee decided to refuse to exhibit this thing. I handed in my resignation and it'll be a juicy piece of gossip in New York. I felt like organizing a special exhibition for things refused at the Independents, but that would only be a pleonasm! And the urinal would have been lonely. Bye for now. Affectionately, Marcel.' (Naumann and Obalk 2000: 47)

The Richard Mutt Case

They say any artist paying six dollars may exhibit. Mr Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion this article disappeared and never was exhibited.

What were the grounds for refusing Mr Mutt's fountain?

1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar.
2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing.

Now Mr Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd; no more than a bathtub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers' shop windows. Whether Mr Mutt has his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article from life, placed it in such a way that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object.

As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges.

(Wood in Godfrey 1998: 30)

In 1912

NUDE

In 1912

1912
Varnedoe suggests: "Although this reference to the 'female friend' was probably a Duchampian joke, the faint possibility still remains that the true 'author' of Fountain was not in fact Duchamp, but his friend Louise Norton" (Godfrey 1998: 29).

Other scholars attempt similar arguments, but with less specified assumptions. Dieter Daniels writes:

"... Dieter Daniels Godfrey suggests: 'Although this reference to the 'female friend' was probably a Duchampian joke, the faint possibility still remains that the true 'author' of Fountain was not in fact Duchamp, but his friend Louise Norton' (Godfrey 1998: 29).

Historians William Camfield and Kirk Varnedoe also doubt the origin of Fountain. Varnedoe writes:

"... Varnedoe suggests that a closer example of Fountain, the porcelain flat-back 'Bedfordshire' urinal with lip, is found not in the catalogues of the Most Company but rather the 'Bedfordshire' in the A. Y. MacDonald Company catalogues.

In 2000 Rhonda Roland Shearer, together with Gregory Alvaraz, Robert Stawinski, Vittorio Marchand and Stephen Jay Gould published an argument supporting Varnedoe's 'Richard Mutt Case' titled: 'Why Hatrack is and/or is not Readymade' (Shearer 2000). Shearer's interest in Varnedoe's inability to locate Duchamp's original urinal is situated in the possibility that Fountain might only have existed in the Alfred Steiglitz photograph, produced for the Blind Man journal and also in the edition commissioned by Duchamp, reconstructed by Arturo Schwarz in 1964.11

11 Duchamp's 1917 urinal does not exist today. Historians such as William Camfield and Michael Basset have documented the contradictions and conflicting stories that leave us with effectively no definite evidence about the urinal's existence - including any potential witnesses of the object (the few testimonies that exist conflict); who photographed it (Steiglitz himself, who supposedly photographed the urinal for the 1917 Blindman publication, only briefly mentions the urinal in writing, and no negative or print was ever found in his archive); or how quickly the urinal vanished into thin air in 1917. (Shearer 2000: 6)"
Camfield, however, managed to track down a second version of the Stieglitz photograph, which was shown for the first time in 1989 after it "quietly appeared within the archive of Duchamp's main patrons, the Arensbergs, in the 1950s" (Shearer 2000: 6).

The fact that the urinal was "lost", together with the fact that the only physical Stieglitz photograph appeared with a missing bottom section, pointed to obvious difficulties surrounding Duchamp's urinal. Shearer produced a timeline of the readymade series of urinals, in the order in which the only images known to spectators were produced. Shearer attempts to show snapshots in time as many possible versions as Duchamp would have wanted us to perceive his work: "information" in addition to the "serial characteristic of the readymade" (Duchamp in Shearer 2000: 1).

She believes that 34A and 34C (created from a 1916-17 photograph) are in fact two different versions of urinals produced at the time. She argues that her 34C and 34D studio photographs present us with "close, but not exact" (Shearer 2000: 7) versions of the Bedfordshire from the Art Science Research Laboratory collection, as well as the 1917 Stieglitz photograph.

When she 3D model of the Stieglitz image is placed in a similar position to that of the studio photographs, the R. Mutt signature is visible, but absent in her analyses of the images taken in Duchamp's studio (Shearer 2000: 7).

She also observes that when the images (below) of the ASRL 'Bedfordshire' are placed in similar positions to that of the studio photographs, a vague resemblance can be noted. It fails, however, to provide us with exact details such as the size of the ear-like brackets, which appear both larger and different to the Mutt model. She also notes the difference between the pipe connections both at the top and bottom of the urinal (Shearer 2000: 7).

11 According to Charles Prendergast, Fountain was broken by Glackens as a solution to the problem of exhibiting it. However, the piece would have been listed as 'destroyed' and Stieglitz supposedly only photographed it after it was rejected (McManus 2000).

12 Digitally reconstructed Mutt urinal.
Shearer fails to acknowledge the strong resemblance between the studio photographs and the Crane catalogue entry (as outlined above). However, this does not resolve the problem with linking the studio photograph's pipefittings and brackets to those of the Stieglitz photograph in the 3D model (as outlined below).

She argues that Duchamp's (or should that be Norton's, or Stieglitz's, or Man Ray's?) manipulation of the urinal would have been achieved photographically rather than manually (which also remains a possibility). She notes the fact that the urinal seems to be in two different perspectives in the top and bottom half of the picture and demonstrates her point by trying to reconstruct the basic shape of the Stieglitz photograph by re-photographing the ASRL urinal in different positions:

Shearer’s own attempts to reproduce Fountain’s angle with the Mott model, fails to provide us with an even remotely similar shape to that of the Stieglitz image, but as outlined in the previous illustrations provide us with a similar perspective. She produces two different photographic angles that resemble Fountain only when combined.

She also provides us with an argument that the drain-holes in the Stieglitz model appear much closer to us than those of the Mott model (again suggesting photo fakery) and the pipefittings appear closer. The possibility is convincing, but she neglects from the start the fact that we are not dealing with the Mott model in the first place, or as mentioned before, but possibly the Crane model. As Varnedoe suggests, 'a surviving example of the original type of urinal has proven impossible to locate' (Varnedoe 1990: 274), and we simply cannot assume that the Crane model was in fact the model used by Duchamp in the first place.

This leaves her with a stronger argument.
Shearer's attempt to reconstruct a fountain using the motifs segments Duchamp might have included in an ancient image.

She asks the question and suggests reasoning for Duchamp's manipulation in that he deliberately altered perspectives in other important works such as “The Large Glass.”

Shearer goes as far as to illustrate the possibility that the drain holes might also have been added to the Stieglitz photograph existing today as the top half of the Blindman photograph, using a different method to 'cut and paste'.

The drain holes could have been added in by using 'dodge' and 'burning in' methods used in the printing process of early photo manipulation. This is demonstrated when amplifying the brightness and contrast levels of the Stieglitz picture, wherein a brighter border appears around the edges of the drain holes.

In the same article, she also provides striking examples of the similar photo-manipulation in the case of both 'hatrack' and 'coatrack' which have similar histories in that they were also lost and exist only in photographs and replica versions.

Because of length restrictions, I am unable to go into the details of Duchamp's reconstructed perspectives in other works, such as “The Large Glass,” for example.

Shearer's claims seem strong in some areas and slightly obsessive in others. In an article that appeared in The New York Times titled 'Taking Jokes By Duchamp to Another Level of Art,' Sarah Boxer wrote: "This has caused a small stir among Duchamp scholars. First is the factual question: Could she be right? Second, and perhaps more to the point: Would it matter?" (Boxer 1999). It would matter. But to what extent? It might not change the way that we perceive the readymade (to a larger degree), but the way that we perceive Duchamp. Arthur Danto writes:

Arthur Danto, the art critic for The Nation, is more blunt. "I guess it's possible that he made a commercial porcelain urinal and a grooming comb. But what would I think of him if his great contribution was as a ceramicist or a woodworker? I think it would make him far less important." Of course, that wouldn't change the readymade, that's part of the discourse now.

"But if she's right," he adds, "I have no interest in Duchamp."
Leslie Camhi also supports Shearer’s arguments in an article titled: *Did Duchamp Deceive Us?* She argues extensively in favour of Shearer, and provides us with cohesive arguments by other scholars:

‘If Rhonda Shearer’s theories [are] confirmed,’ says William Camfield, a scholar of Dada and Surrealism and the author of a groundbreaking study of the readymade Fountain, that would not rest easily with all kinds of interpreters of Duchamp’s readymades.’

(Camfield in Camhi 1999)

It should be possible for us to look further than the basic premise that justifies the readymade as a work of art. If the art world is incensed and cannot grasp Duchamp’s intervention with these works, are we not accepting these works of art with a similar conservatism with which his nude was excepted by the Salon des Independents? To feel that Duchamp played a joke on us and being disgruntled by it is a mere repetition of the controversy of Fountain, which occurred almost a century ago, but of course in a different context. These works may once again only fall into Duchamp’s categories of ‘assisted readymades’ or even his notions of ‘rectified readymades’. Therefore it would be more difficult to accuse him of deceiving his audience, and maybe the audiences need to take responsibility for their lack of understanding the clues that he left behind in the first place. Once again the artist has managed to elevate himself above the audience’s basic understanding of production, and until all the facts are uncovered and all the factual inaccuracies, created by the artist himself and those associated with him at the time, have been eliminated, will we not have closure on the Duchamp case.

To The Editor.

If our friend and supporter Marcel Duchamp were alive today, he would thank Rhonda Roland Shearer for her work on his behalf, applaud her audacity, marvel at her perspicacity - what an eye! - at last a super-sleuth! - and wink at her for not having him pull the wool over her eyes. In a courageous critical act, an important contemporary artist, but one who has faced down a master. Shearer has given Duchamp more nuisance time on this planet, if Duchamp did indeed blend his own face (and in another instance, that of his friend Picabia) into the moustachioed Mona Lisa (L.H.O.O.Q.) and therefore today stares out at us through her soft gaze. Shearer has no choice but to expose the dual nature of those eyes; for she is a heroic practitioner of a crisis ethics with no tolerance for needless lapses or inaccuracies.

Duchamp once said to us as we strolled together through Washington Square Park: No use being an artist unless you are willing at every moment to risk doing something that most people in the world will completely despise. Without such acts, nothing ever happens.

Madeline Gins and Arakawa

In the next chapter I will investigate similar occurrences within the work of artists in Britain. I realise that scholars of Duchamp might disagree with this comparison, as Britart is largely seen as a one-liner attempt to reach what is seen as Duchamp’s ’genius’. However, I find strong similarities in their approach, and I do feel that the context in which their work was produced plays a crucial role. It is difficult to apply comparable strategies almost a century apart.


17 Madeline Gins and Arakawa are well-known architectural theorists and philosophers, and a close friend of Duchamp.
If Duchamp's work caused discomfort amongst his contemporaries and even some scholars of today, it is interesting to note how the public is responding to the contemporary art works traced directly to his conceptualism.

A particularly good example of this may be seen in recent art from Britain. This work appears to involve and utilise the general public's response on a greater level than other parts of the world. The use of the readymade and similar Duchampian conceptual strategies seem to have provoked a response from both the art elite as well as the layperson over the past two decades. Even so, different tactics are in place.

As will be seen, the late Eighties art in Britain has shifted from a sophisticated traditional aesthetic to the popularisation of the young British artist, commonly known as the yBa. Because of the overall aesthetic accessibility and the sociological nature of the yBa works, the art succeeded in being less elitist and therefore accessible to a wider audience. The popularisation of this art combined with a wider viewing audience was a cause of celebrity status for the artist, and in turn brought a rejection of theoretical notions in the art world (Collings 2001).

The art world was no longer the art world anymore. It integrated a larger proportion of the general public who were not necessarily concerned with the general highbrow talk surrounding the arts. What the public wanted was to read in the tabloid newspapers what the artist was going to do next, and this is what the artists responded to. The platform for artists to engage with formal criticism slowly disappeared and, needless to say, so did the voices of many of the critics (Stallabrass 1999: 259).

This brought with it a generation of new art critics that fitted the same mould as the artists: figures of fun (Stallabrass 1999: 259). The work relied on its entertainment value rather than its artistic integrity and became more whimsical, ironic, paradoxical, more 'out there'. Whoever was more wacky or silly or shocking could get into the media and enhance as well as prolong their claims for celebrity status. The media itself became a vehicle or medium for artistic production.

A reason for the sudden interest in the younger local artists in London has been argued to be the recession of the British economy between 1989 and 1995 when, 'the stock market plunged and the Japanese Bubble Economy burst' (Stallabrass 1999: 5).

Smaller galleries in the East-End closed down and young local artists were reliant on fewer gallery structures. Being unable to sell work caused a revival in performance and conceptualism and the making of less permanent work. Artists curated their own exhibitions with some success and were taken seriously because of the level of professionalism. Due to this economic slump, 'supercollector' Charles Saatchi was forced to sell off his 'blue-chip' collection and started buying seemingly un-sellable local work, building up a collection of

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18 Such as Roger Fry, Herbert Read, Adrian Stokes, John Berger and Peter Fuller (Stallabrass 1999: 259).
19 Such as Matthew Collings, Sarah Hunter and Brian Sewell (Stallabrass 1999: 259).
20 Please note that this is a broad generalisation that forms the basis of this chapter.
21 I am referring to the general idea of the yBa’s as described in my references, and not necessarily to the more well known artists such as Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst. The description is of ‘pre-fame’ artists - the ‘up-and-comers’.
22 Taken from the book, Supercollector: a critique of Charles Saatchi: a socialist critique of the advertising tycoon and patron, written by Hatton and Walker, 2000.
work that became popular in these warehouse exhibitions.

These self-curated warehouse shows give artists a way of making less saleable work because it wasn't governed by the local galleries, but funded by the business sector. Saatchi, with seemingly un-saleable works. Humour became a powerful tool in questioning the structures outside of which these artists now stood. Insider jokes were the norm. Matthew Collings writes:

The shows are usually a bit silly or giddy intellectually, with interchangeable titles and a lot of art objects that seem either here or nowhere. The art is a secret code. Everyone involved understands it. Nobody else does. That's it.  

(Collings in Stallabrass 1999: 51)

The combination of the economic recession as a cause of young art becoming popular and the rejection of old art traditions sprouted the quick replacement of the old with the new. The British art world existed. (Because of the constant change in economical structures and the visual mentality and tolerance of an audience, it is difficult to determine the shelf life of this phenomenon is already seen as a thing of the past although similar strategies later, with the Turner Prize.)

DESCRIPTION

I said art becoming popular in Britain over the last few years had been a great surprise, since it never had been popular in the past. In fact it was hardly thought about at all. But although the main amazing, it represents a narrow idea of what art can be - jolly and ironic and not much concerned with anything else. On the other hand, it isn't completely mismatched and the main artists are not because it's good; it's because it's about issues that anyone can get, which touch everyone and so when something aesthetic about this kind of art is ever mentioned in the promo-talk for the art, it isn't tied to selling products or indeed to any obvious selling point.

(Collings 2001: 8)

When describing the work of the young British artists I will use the term 'media aesthetic'. By this I do not refer to the inherent beauty in the work of these artists, but the way that these works appear and how they behave in a public environment.

The work is based on a form of communication systems in much the same way that the media is. Conceptually it looks at social issues surrounding the artists in relation to a capitalist environment in England. It takes issues that the population of England are concerned with such as poverty, which is the cause of related problems in a society including crime, lack of education, and moral issues such as prostitution, rape, racism and abuse. The work often takes on the form of advertising media as a formal visual language. In the introduction to his book, High Art Lite, Julian Stallabrass proclaims young British art as 'an art that looks like but is not quite art, that acts as a substitute for art' (Stallabrass 1999: 2). He notes the aesthetic shift in the popular art of Britain.

Collings explains that:

'The art of the yBas is profoundly connected to the media, but not necessarily identifiable with the media or complicit with media evil. It's often funny and sharp on the subject of the mentality of the media. And the same with ads - the art is connected to ads but isn't the same as ads. It has the same power that ads have of getting information over in a quick blast. But unlike ads, the information is quirky and has a bit of lasting power; it isn't tied to selling products or indeed to any obvious selling point.

(Collings 2001: 8)

THE ARTIST AS AN IDIOT

These tools extracted from the media, form a user-friendly language for art production. The viewing of the work allows simplistic thought and emotion. Instead of a concealed reading of the work and extensive descriptions by both the artist and the audience, it has initiated a form of art which questions 'profound lyrical nature' in an artwork; one that exchanges 'intelligence' for voluntary idiocy in the attempt at being clever; one that exchanges theory for everyday thought as an attempt at keeping it real.

In the face of theoretical orthodoxy, an art that deliberately plays dumb may simply be making a criticism of the conventions and the art that spring from them, but it may do more than that. At its best, it can make the anti-intellectualism of large parts of British society a theme of the work. To play dumb is not just to defend yourself against attack for being high-brow but to take the first steps to save your work from being ignored.

(Collings 1999: 66)

This echoes the late Delueze's strategy of refusing to engage in debate when academic colleagues or students problematized his ideas and arguments in seminars, preferring to simply agree or disagree and then change the subject.

As an example of this is found in the work of artists Colin Lowe and Roddy Thompson, best known for their word painting Sasch n' Matherfucked Sasch. 1996. This is a particularly good example of art playing dumb. It does so both in the work of the artists and their lifestyles as a marketing point of their work. They accept their working class status in order to make demands on the capitalist environments surrounding art, the media and the ignorant business sector. Their work often consists of letters which adopt the formal visual language of a legal:

26 Definition: The Online slang dictionary. Keep it real. 1. to stay true to ones self, to resist the temptation to lie. (I'm not acting like someone else, I'm trying to keep it real.)
document, demanding off-cuts or material subsidies for some or other project that they had been working on, or at least have thought about for some time.\footnote{Collins 2001: 57}

Colin was in the street after the private view. Somebody introduced us. I said I admired his work and asked him if he wanted a drink. as everyone was going to the pub now. Then he launched into an insult tirade and I couldn’t understand why. it just seemed to take him over. My glasses slid down my nose because of the nervous sweat. ‘Do your glasses always do that?’ he asked. Somebody came up and asked him if he was going for a drink now - ‘Yeah. otherwise I’ll have to go with this motherfucker’ , he said , meaning me. Another time they came to a book launch of mine. Colin put his cigarette out on the cover which had a picture of me on it. The fag went right on the face. It seemed a violent. When I left later he called me back for a drink - ‘No’ , I called. After that “d bump into Roddy at openings , and he didn’t seem so unhinged. He said that Colin wasn’t either, in fact. They just both thought of me as a fictional person ... (Collins 2001: 57)

\begin{flushright}
P.H. Coate & Son
Meare Green Court
Stoke St Gregory
NR Taunton
Somerset
TA3 6HY

Dear Mr Coat

I am going to be on the telly advertising a work of art, eight years in the making. Utilising your thick sticks I have come up with something quite awe inspiring combining cannibalism, tempestuous seas, and issues of personal space. The whole tableau fits into an old fashioned marmalade tin and is about as much use as an ashtray on a motorbike, nevertheless Channel Four have failed to see the Achilles heel and are coming round to film my shameless and frankly boorish attempt at a transgressive analogy which on reflection has been watered down further than a bottle of Vimto at a diabetic kids party.

My dilemma, sir, is to source a supplier who would be willing and able to supply me ‘muncheon’ sized charcoal and would be prepared to be remunerated in the next life,

Could you send me a catalogue and pricing details and any literature you may have to hand on the charcoal burning as the only useful information I have is the Jack Daniels advert on the tube. I am sending a postal order to cover you for postage.

I can get hold of a car with a roof rack if this is of any use to you in planning this transaction,

Looking forward to working with you closely on this project. I have decided to move to Stoke St Gregory, just down the road!

Yours in every sense of the word

Colin Lowe & Roddy Thomson

\end{flushright}

(Lowe and Thomson in Collins 2000: 62)
This, it could be argued, belongs in a category of art that merely ‘takes the piss’, typically labelled juvenile.

Even if this art does exactly this, it sits firmly within a history of the avant-garde and absurdist work that takes us back to Dadaists such as Benjamin Peret, during the mid-1920s, insulting Catholic priests in the streets whenever the opportunity presented itself (Godfrey 1998: 40).

Similarities exist between the work of the yBas and Dadaists as a social reaction against what the artists found problematic within societal norms. This social reaction is a direct link between Dada and the work of the yBas, although one can’t be sure that the yBas are constructing a deliberate protest as in the case of the Dadaists. Even if the young British artists are protesting, there is also the direct link between their work and the money/fame game that they play. The reaction becomes obscured.

David Shrigley reworks the same concept. The work starts off in a childlike letter that develops into a perverse tirade, but succeeds in addressing issues of serious social significance concerning the ‘normal folk’ (working class) in context of the history of the royal family in England:

DEAR YOUR MAJESTY,
I have long been a fan of yours and love the way that you dress. It's so regal. I particularly like your crown and was wondering if by chance you had any old ones when you didn't want anymore. I have to make do with ones I make myself.

If you don't have any crowns - no problem! Now if you have one because we don't want any. Grass are perfectly fine with the furry collar. I could also use an arm cheap - if you have one because we don't have any.

I have one of those big, bouffant wigs with the big thing on the end? Or even one of those fant round thing on the end? Or even one of those fant round thing on the end? Just give us a good arm cheap - if you have one because we don't want any.

I have one of those big, bouffant wigs with the big thing on the end? Or even one of those fant round thing on the end? Just give us a good arm cheap - if you have one because we don't want any.

When Tracey Emin's idiosyncratic grin appeared on billboards at airports advertising Bombay Sapphire Gin in 1998, one realises the degree of celebrity status of the young British artist. It might not be to the extent of movie/pop stars are celebrated, but it is clear that she has at least become a popular household name and familiar face. The idea of popularising the artist as a selling point for a commercial product is still growing, and therefore does not occur as

Apart from being ‘flashy’ and the desperation for media attention, the actual cause of production is located within the social unease concerning British society as a whole. It could well be confirmed as an act of ‘social realism’.27

MARKETING POINT

SOLD TO THE ARTIST AS A CELEBRITY

TASTE AND SEE

When Tracey Emin's idiosyncratic grin appeared on billboards at airports advertising Bombay Sapphire Gin in 1998, one realises the degree of celebrity status of the young British artist. It might not be to the extent of movie/pop stars are celebrated, but it is clear that she has at least become a popular household name and familiar face. The idea of popularising the artist as a selling point for a commercial product is still growing, and therefore does not occur as

27 I am aware that this term already has a standard meaning in art historical discourse but I am deliberately subverting that usage by defining it anew here. In my terminology, ‘social realism’ means the ideas of socially relevant art within a new politics of ‘real representation’.
frequently as using other celebrities as marketing tools. There are, however, other cases such as Gary Hume modelling for Hugo Boss, Volkswagen utilising Gillian Wearing's text photographs as a campaign, Go Airlines imitating Damien Hirst's spot paintings (Collings 1999: 12), and Hirst's sheep subverted in a Young's beer ad (Mildred 2001: 35).

American artist Andy Warhol endorsed Puerto Rico Rum and Pioneer Radios and, according to Robert Hughes, 'his image sold little rum and few radios' (Hughes 1990: 244).

What these ads are selling is not the idea of the artist's work specifically, but rather the artist and the attitude as a whole. Emin gets associated with Bombay Sapphire Gin. She sells a specific attitude. The public is used to Emin's drunken behaviour and because this is what she is sold as, it is simply what the audience expects her to be. In response to a question on a live Channel Four broadcast in 1997, she said the following before storming off the set:

"I'm here. I'm drunk. I've had a good night out with my friends and I'm leaving now. I want to be with my friends. I want to be with my mum. There's no fucking way that I want this Mike on me."

(Collings 1999: 83)

According to Jerry Saltz, Warhol was also represented by the Ford Modelling Agency, endorsed Diet Coke and Braniff Airlines, and played himself on Saturday Night Live and The Love Boat. He also 'criticised Hughes for 'hiding behind his homosexuality, branding Warhol a "nostalgic", "patriarchal", and "independent" in the same sentence' (Saltz 2000). Saltz's criticisms of Hughes are often valid in the light of such disparaging comments. See Hughes on Julian Schnabel in Nothing if Not Critical.

Gilbert and George base large parts of their sculptures on concepts of drinking as a way of claiming realism in their work. To realise this drinking is a large part of British working class culture is their means of fitting into that societal class structure. This provides an entry point for the viewer to identify with these artists on a personal level rather than their elite celebrity status. Their active ingredient is not purely the drink as they claim in the above quotation, but rather the concept of annoyance. They want to annoy their audience and they realise this is why their work has lasting power (Collings 1998: 76). Being drunk is part of that, because they can be inane when they are drunk. Collings mentions a moment:

"Normally, 'George is saying now, 'we only drink this champagne called Ruinart.'

"Ruinart! I don't know it,' I say.

"There is one called Ruinart."

"Cheers!"

(Collings 1999: 78)

G & G refer to all of their works as sculptures - performances, video work and prints (Collings 1999: 76).

It is not really possible to imagine Tracey Emin having a discussion along the lines of 'my latest work deals with notions of...' and the like. The drink has not only been made the subject of a variety of artists, but in the case of Gilbert & George (who have a longer history of being drunk), they claim to make drunkenness the subject of the work:

"We used drinking as the subject and concept [of art]. We had artist friends at the time drinking with us and then they would get up in the morning and make these appalling, abstract, cool, sober pictures. We thought it was infra' valid and dishonest. Why not use drink as the subject? Everyone is drunk; everyone understands drunkenness."

(Gilbert & George in Stallabrass 1999: 154)
What we are getting at is a situation for discussing contemporary art where the material is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious, and/or dematerialized. (Lippard in Godfrey 1998: 15)

It is largely in terms of material rejection that we can see links between yBa production and Conceptual Art. The main concern of Conceptual Art seems to be a protest against notions concerning artistic production rather than a socially driven concept. Even if Conceptual art does indirectly address social issues through the act of questioning artistic structures, it is more subtle and maybe unaware of its cause. The current rejection of the material object, as well as the rejection of material beauty is, however, under crossfire for merely following trends of the time:

In a lecture given in Oxford, one of the directors of London Electronic Arts, George Barber, outlined three rules for ‘young British artists’ to follow in making fashionable video:

1. Rough it up.
2. Don’t try too hard.
3. Keep it short. (Stallabrass 1999: 221)

The rehashing of ideas and the sampling of images and objects becomes an important process by which art has been produced from the late Nineties until today. It is different from Duchamp and Jeff Koons because the context in which it is produced has changed. The idea of sampling cultural objects from the world and inserting them into an artistic process does not deliberately make claims for subverting art disciplines, although it might be implied.

Today, it does not necessarily claim to be what Duchamp was saying about the ‘artist’s gaze brought to bear on an object instead of manual skill’, and it does not intentionally admit to what Koons was arguing for the Western world’s ‘need for the material object as an act of self-identification’ (Bourriaud 2002: 19-21). It is different because it is located in a different context. It is the same because it looks similar. The sampling of objects in its historical context has subversive meaning purely because it was used, while today it is removed to be an actual process of art making.

What we are getting at is a situation for discussing contemporary art where the material is not necessarily important. It is the thought process that leads the artistic process and the material is a visual strategy that communicates the process. (Stallabrass 1999: 172)

**AUDIENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Age of Turner Prize nominees</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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The decrease in average age of Turner Prize nominees, particularly during the Nineties, is directly proportional to the increase of Turner Prize exhibition attendance. The people want it. The art world doesn’t.

In 2001, playwright Tom Stoppard gave a public address at the annual dinner of the Royal Academy of the Arts. What he said was that art not being made/handmade was hard for him to consider as art, purely because it wasn’t what he was used to and it wasn’t what he grew up with. Stoppard (2001). The title of critic Janet Street-Porter’s conversation severe response to this read: ‘Over the last five years people of all ages have flocked to see the kind of art Tom Stoppard despises’.

Mancunian songster Morrissey said it best: “The more you ignore me the deeper I get. If young art in Britain has been ignored for decades, then surely it deserves the audience appreciation it is receiving. Street-Porter concluded her article:

“Stoppard’s uncharacteristically feeble outburst represented nothing more than a jealous tantrum, a big fit of the sulks that this particular command of the centre stage in the arts has been usurped by a lot of people under 35 who probably wouldn’t sit through Travesties if you paid them. He might not like their art, but should not deny that it’s a potent comment on our times.” (Street-Porter 2001)

Keeping in mind that his speech was given shortly after the release of the 2001 Turner Prize shortlist, the BBC conducted an online survey to establish the public’s prediction of who the winner might be. The result was this:

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31 Material is formally linked to periodic changes within historical art movements. It accepts and respects those periodic attempts at originality. It uses the spectrum of visual languages and forms, but only to appropriate these to a non-original cause. The art is no longer worried about ‘it’s all been done’, but more concerned with ‘what do we do with it?’

32 Realising that art can’t escape the meaning that the historical context has imposed on it.

33 Post-Modernism in general.
Almost two thirds of the general public felt that none of the nominees were worthy of this prestigious award. The Turner Prize is known for this sort of controversy, however, and again we are reminded of the history of the prize, such as Emin's bed\(^{35}\) that was shortlisted a couple of years before. The fact is the audience size has escalated and Emin now sells for millions.

Controversial awards such as the Turner Prize have played equally important roles in the construction of the public's reception of artists. The Chapman Brothers were nominated for the award in 2003. The general consensus amongst the public was that the brothers would win the award, since they are well known for their controversial and somewhat over the top work. They were also seen to be Charles Saatchi's 'golden boys' at the time (Saatchi apparently bought out the entire content of a previous exhibition for £1 000 000).

The award went to ceramicist Grayson Perry. Artist and writer Liam Gillick commented:

> [A] transvestite potter. What were those Brits thinking! It's not clever and it's not funny.\(^{36}\)

The Turner Prize operates on very specific levels: it keeps its audience on tippy-toes and constantly guessing.

Winning it now means instant stature for both the artist and his/her gallery. Losing it has caused breakdowns. Is this good for art? (Millard 2001:21)

As with most things, the shock of Britart has somewhat passed its sell-by date and the prize is changing; the interest is changing. In a way, it has become more reliant on its audience and therefore its entertainment value. Britart is often criticised on this point, and it is this that infuriates international critics. It is a theme that has become popular in other major expositions.

A recent example is found in Francesco Bonami's curatorial strategies for the 50th Venice Biennale: The Dictatorship of the Viewer. Theorist Nicolas Bourriaud comments:

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\(^{35}\) Tracey Emin. My Bed, 1999


In informal email conversation with Gillick, 2003.
I don't believe for one minute in the idea of the dictatorship of the viewer... actually. If you say that, for example in the TV world, it means that you are going to sell as much crap as you can, because then you provide a kind of consensual situation for advertisers. That is how it goes... actually. You know, whenever you talk about the majority and reaching the mass, for example, it means that you're just trying to please the people who give you money. So it's not the viewer that you are talking about, it's just the money world... the dictatorship of the viewer is just the dictatorship of money... nothing else.

(Bourriaud in Lamprecht and Young, 2003)

When accounting for the role of sponsors and advertisers, it is possible to believe that these exhibitions and awards are constructed to fill the bill of these sponsors. If this is the case then these exhibitions cannot be taken too seriously in terms of the artists that they represent.

Bourriaud compares the art world with the "TV world". This is particularly interesting in terms of the Turner prize since Channel 4 has been the main sponsor of the event since 1993. It was only in 2004 that the Turner established a three year contract with Gordon's Gin, which doubled the prize money to £40 000. It is possible to imagine that with the interest of Channel 4 at hand, the prize was somehow constructed to enhance television ratings.

If it is predictability that the prize is trying to avoid, then it has succeeded in the case of Perry, and took an even more surprising turn in 2004 when it was awarded to artist Jeremy Deller.

Julian Stallabrass has noted that only three black artists are signed with private dealers in London: Chris Ofili (Victoria Miro Gallery), Steve McQueen (Anthony Reynolds Gallery) and Yinka Shonibare (Stephen Friedman Gallery) (Stallabrass 1999: 117). Both McQueen and Ofili are previous winners of the Turner Prize, while Shonibare was shortlisted in 2004. Shonibare's contribution to the art world is respected internationally and he seemed like the most obvious candidate to win the award, whereas Deller's international presence until then was debatable. The fact that Shonibare did not receive the award might have been linked to the possibility that the jurors feared predictability.

But these systems are radically complex and we can merely speculate about the reasoning behind decisions that seem erroneous. One could argue that Deller's work was chosen on the basis of being stronger than Shonibare's, but I have always suspected that no art prize is ever awarded merely on the merits of the work. I might be running the risk of appearing the conspiracy theorist, but I am interested in strategies that might be utilised to enhance the public's interest. These strategies are often abused in the television and media world.

A recent example is an incident in which pop-singer Justin Timberlake 'accidentally' ripped off Janet Jackson's breast pad during a live performance of the halftime show at Super Bowl XXXVIII. Jackson's breast pad happened to be removable and happened to wear a star shaped nipple cap underneath. The media attention was enormous. The live viewing audience was estimated at a 140 million, this representing only a fraction of the world population exposed to the event. The incident seemed deliberately staged, and even though (I presume) a large part of the world knew this, it was ignored to an extent. Timberlake and Jackson went ahead and released press statements, claiming the incident as a 'wardrobe malfunction'. Apologies and press statements were extended to the audience, American television channels MTV and CBS, as well as the NFL (National Football League). The conservatism of both the audience and television networks are clear in this instance, although this does not detract from audience reception. The stock price of CBS's parent company, Viacom, rose by more than one percent by the following week.

It was also seen as an attempt at increase in record sales.

Another example is the 2003 MTV Music awards when, during a live broadcast, pop legends Madonna and Britney Spears exchanged a kiss (involving tongues). This example provoked less aggravated public responses and no exorbitant fines to major television networks, as did the afore-mentioned example. However, the intentions seem similar in the case of global press coverage. Madonna also caused some controversy by using the word "fuck" when hosting the 2001 Turner prize. Martin Creed was the winner for his 1995 piece Work No. 227: The lights going on and off. Some contended the incident was mere media spin.
Like any industry, the art sector is a business. It operates within similar conventions and guidelines as most industries. In order to be successful, it must understand its target audience and what it is selling as the first place.

In the case of the art industry, it appears that the artists have become the products primarily, while the artworks remain simply what these artists do. But, by incorporating tools such as the aforementioned media stunts, the audience becomes largely unaware of its careful staging. Martin Creed is a good example of this.

CRUMPLE UP PAPER

Creed is known as the man that sent a crumpled piece of paper to the Tate (Millard 2001: 67).

When I discuss this example with younger artists, I generally find this example especially interesting to consider. Deliberately use this case in point as it invokes a reaction of ‘feeling cheated’ from most. They do not understand why they need to be at an art institution when this kind of work is recognised as an important piece of art.

What is interesting about this work is its combination of certain strategies such as conceptualism of the late Sixties and concepts of minimalism of hard edge modernism, while once again it is situated primarily within Creed’s context and his own conceptual dilemmas. Creed reckons that ‘The only thing, which I... that I feel like I know is that I want to make things... and other than that I feel like I don’t know’ (Creed 2001). Creed also explains some methodology concerning this particular work. The piece has been cited as his signature work (Creed 2002: 98).

The crumpled ball of paper came about as an attempt to make something from a piece of paper. I made that at the same time when I had very little money, and to make a ball out of the paper seemed like the most simple shape that I could make out of it. The sphere is equal in all directions and it’s a simple shape. But it was just an attempt to make something using a piece of paper. One of the things I like about it is that is kind of disappears when you put it in the world and it can be something quite precious and it’s also a piece of rubbish. I like that about it.

(Creed 2002: 98)

Creed’s minimalism, often stems from seemingly odd yet simple equations, such as ‘V - 1 = 0’ and ‘the whole world + the work = the whole world’.

My interest with Creed in this particular instance is not necessarily with his ideas of conceptual minimalism, although this comes into play when discussing my own work in a later chapter.

My concern is not that of signature of Creed as an artist. In its simplest form, it is difficult to imagine other artists inventing similar strategies, and therefore Creed has set himself up for this kind of production which can possibly only be successful when applied by his own hand. Creed is a minimalist in persona as much as within his production.

David Lee, editor of satirical art magazine The Jackdaw, expressed aseem concerns:

A light being switched on and off is not a good work of art. (Lee in BBC News 2001)

Creed’s persona, as definitional device for his minimal work, is also depicted in the lyrics of his band Owada.38

From none
Take one
Add one
Make none40

The combination of the Turner, the television, the tabloid media, and other popular media stunts, has secured an advantageous celebrity status for some British artists.

As previously mentioned, this status is still limited to a particular audience, but to a similar extent that pop music is. It is interesting to note that artists are moving in similar circles to other celebrities, and in some cases collaborating. Pulp front-man Jarvis Cocker references his days at St. Martin’s art college in the song Common People. Both Hirst and David Shrigley have directed music videos for Brit pop group Blur. Julian Opie designed their latest album cover. Sam Taylor-Wood is married to Jay Jopling, owner of the White Cube gallery and she is a close friend of Elton John and the actor Robert Downey Jr. Shortly after Downey Jr.’s last major cocaine trial, Taylor-Wood incorporated him ‘lip-synching to the Elton John music video I Won’t Love’. They are also seen together in glam social pictures.

While artists operate in their own semi-closed celebrity environments, the British public has somewhat latched onto the YBA circuit, but surprisingly the obvious stands out. Emin and Hirst have become the household faces of new British art. Rosie Millard:

OK, let’s see if it works.

Man, walking along road.

‘Excuse me. Can you name a living British artist?’

Passer.

‘Emin, Hirst, Damien Hirst.’

---

38 Named after his bass player and close friend, Kohe Owada.
40 Work No. 208: Blow and Suck, 1996 (Creed 2002: 108)
Those are the first two that spring immediately to mind. Alright.

Two women, one pushing a buggy.

'Hello. Can you name a living artist?'

Women One: 'Tracey Emin.'

Woman Two: 'I was going to say Tracey Emin! You can't say her. Em...'

Passer. Then, triumphantly: 'Damien Hirst. Ya-ha-ha!'

Couple carrying shopping.

Woman: 'Tracey Emin.'

Man: 'Oh. Oh no! Not here! Ha ha ha. A living artist. David Hockney.'

Cosy-looking couple with baby in sling.

Man: 'Oh, I know. The horrible one with sheep in formaldehyde.'

Woman: 'Is Salvador Dali still alive?'

Man (mirthfully): 'No. He is dead. Totally dead. Is Max Ernst still alive? What is the other guy's name?'

Another man joins us.

Other man: 'An artist! How about the chap who cuts cows in half! Damien Hirst.'

First man: 'Hirst! That's it!'

Other man (continuing on): 'I'm not sure if I regard him as an artist or not. Ha ha ha.'

(Millard 2001: 7-8)

SHOOT ALL CRITICS/FICTIONAL PEOPLE

I am aware that when the general public hear 'yBa' they tend to think of classical art critics who have informed my reading of young British art. Below follows a more natural interpretation of the situation.

I have focused on the writings of Matthew Collings and Julian Stallabrass as two contemporary art critics who have informed my reading of young British art. Below follows a more natural interpretation of the situation.

Collings accuses Stallabrass of plagiarising the cover design for his book from one of Collings's own, apparently so that the reader will mistake the book for Collings's and therefore be tempted to buy it (Collings 2001: 122).

STALLABRASS ON COLLINGS

One of the virtues of Matthew Collings's book, Generics (1997), is that it offers a consistent pastiche of conventional art-world talk. His meandering prose,ability to sustain an argument and think in soundbites is an exemplification of that talk, and its context is what makes the book so important.

Collings's self-mockery is also a mockery of art-world jargon, vacuousness, and both of these seem to go with an inability exactly to set the page on fire with his prose. (Stallabrass 1999: 105-106)

COLLINGS ON STALLABRASS

Julian Stallabrass's High Art Lite is about the yBa and the new popularity of art. Stallabrass is a 30-something who lives in Henley and looks a bit windswept and handsome in his dust-jacket photo... He wants to deconstruct what 'success' means in current art, but he doesn't have a lot of natural talent for seeing why something is successful in the first place. He approves of the artists if there's some clearly flagged politically correct content, plus a bit of modern style... He doesn't have a lot of mental jumping about energy, and he has a horror of camp, and both of these seem to go with an inability exactly to set the page on fire with his prose. (Collings 2001: 124)

BURN ART

What started in a warehouse seems to have ended in one.

With numerous critics and members of the public speculating the yBa phenomenon as a dyingfad, it appears to have had its last breath during a warehouse fire at the Momart art storage facility in East London on 24 May 2004.

Over 100 artworks belonging to art patron Charles Saatchi, estimated at £50 million, were destroyed in the fire. These included works by Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin and the Chapman brothers.

Opinions over the loss of some of Britain's most important contemporary art works varied. Some thought it tragic, while most celebrated the damage. The general consensus seemed to be in favour of the fire. As mentioned before, the public does not really approve of the conceptualism of contemporary British art, even as they celebrate the scandal that accompanies much of its production. In an online debate, the BBC asked for public responses concerning the fire. These were mostly negative and/or ecstatic about the incident.

I am outraged. Doesn't Mr. Saatchi know it is illegal to burn garbage without a permit?

Reece Walker, London UK

This goes further. Discussions have occurred in Internet chatrooms with the topic of conversation implying that Saatchi's collection was insured when the art works were at a peak. It was proposed that because of the decrease in interest in 'Britart' many of the works in the collection might have decreased in market value and conspiracy theories have emerged that Saatchi had committed arson upon his own collection in an attempted insurance fraud. Although this is a possibility, it is highly unlikely, this indicates the loss of interest in many of the artists that were 'big' during the yBa phenomenon, and the possible end of this trend.

As many art experts are foreseeing an end, it might seem more plausible to anticipate a reinvention.

Amongst the destroyed works were some of Chris Ofili's Captain Shit paintings; a parody on early black-exploitation cartoons, scrawled on the facility by his dealer Victoria Miro. After the incident he sent this e-mail to art critic Adrian Searle:

The Superhero Captain Shit has inbuilt protection against the flames of Babylon. HE WILL RETURN...

The saga continues.

(Searle 2005)
CAPTAIN SHIT AND THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK STARS. CHRIS OFIU 1996
WHEN MASTURBATION'S LOST ITS FUN YOU'RE FUCKING LAZY

Going through some notes pertaining to my work I could find little sense in anything whatsoever; jargon splashing ubiquitously with a touch of taste malfunction slipping though the cracks.

Needless to say, I was incensed at my inability to concentrate and find significance in any word I had ever written, or uttered for that matter: those poor souls. I had bored myself to death. I started convincing myself that it would be possible to raise enough funds to do very little. Except maybe Heineken. This itself proved laborious and time consuming. The little I had left was running out. I thought about sex. I thought about sex a lot. I had stopped masturbating as this proverbial function too had let me down. I was tired and bored. I would find myself not completing the adolescent procedure because I got tired. 'It’s ok. You don’t have to cum all the time'. But you did. After all, Prof. Pippa Skotnes had told me days earlier that 'darling, don’t you know that all art is about the erotic' to which I humbly replied: ‘really?’ I had turned myself into my own artwork and had not a single ejaculatory accomplishment to show for it. Pathetic.

THE BOREDOM

I once thought I had mono for an entire year. It turned out I was just really bored. (Wayne Campbell in Wayne’s World, 1992)

Art making is not always as exciting as it is made out to be. In fact, most artists I know are at best irritable, stressed, highly-strung and overly sensitive and at the worst of times depressed at the mere thoughts of production. Artists, these days, seem complete wretches. Self-pity, angst, the seeking of approval from others, the paranoia of one’s ideas being usurped by others, amongst other challenges, seem to have become more important than the production of work itself.

The idea of the artist seeking fame has yet again become relevant. However, in a contemporary art world this is better described as the individual’s need for affirmation: the need to be loved by the community that lends weight to the artworks surrounding it. The fear of abandonment also becomes troublesome for most. A bad review in the popular press evokes emotional angst such as ostracisation by an art community: the fear of terminating one’s career because no one is interested.

My work is not concerned with this matter. I find these issues tiresome and unappealing. My work would not survive without bad press and, as a result, the work has entertained bad press and an even worse public reception. Individuals have remarked that I am lazy and that they feel cheated. I am not lazy. I am bored. I find making and speaking about art frightfully tedious. In this chapter I wish to outline the influence of a certain level of boredom on my

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45 Prof. Skotnes is currently the head of department and lectures at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT, Cape Town.
46 Prof. Skotnes is currently the head of department and lectures at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT, Cape Town.
47 Tired and irritable, either because of being exposed to something uninteresting or because of having nothing to do.
48 With the exception of (a) Transkei born "Flash" artist Vuyisa Nyamende, who claims to have ‘saved’ his life with conventional medicine a long time ago (‘Bright young things’, Art South Africa 12(3), 2003), and whose main aim at present is physical revitalization and penis enlargement purely by means of meditation, and (b) Jeff Koons who proudly announced that the art world is like green papaya at a Michaelis lunchtime lecture during a visit to Cape Town, 2003.
own art production to date. It is possible to outline the trajectory of my use of physical objects, becoming jaded, moving away from physical artworks altogether – and being bored with even that at present. However, I feel it is more interesting to look at what effect this boredom has on my work, other related topics, and how it forces my research into alternative strategies and interests.

THERE IS A JOKE: Q. "WHY DID THE CONCEPTUAL ARTIST MAKE A PAINTING?" A. "BECAUSE IT WAS A GOOD IDEA."

In the first chapter I examined the work of Marcel Duchamp, generally considered the initiator of conceptualism in art. Edouard Manet, frequently cited as the first truly modern artist, so is of interest to me because his painting may be seen to parallel several of my chief concerns. These would include ‘hanging out at bars, getting women to take their clothes off and transforming stale modes of artistic production,’ This may seem to be a grand sweeping statement but as I hope to demonstrate there is more to the Folies-Bergère than just female trapeze artists in tights...

Manet has ignored the rules of perspective, perfected over centuries by generations of his predecessors. The hegemonic rule of ‘Renaissance perspective’ is here overturned and, in a way that Marcel Duchamp would perfect in Nude Descending a Staircase, inserts a non-static, dynamic element into the work. We see the bar lady in two distinct poses, one in reflection. On one hand she faces us, bored, overworked, possibly a bit hungover; on the other hand, in the reflected image, she leans slightly tentatively towards a dodgy-looking customer. Our sense of unease is increased as we realise that if indeed the mirror is curved, as some commentators have suggested (Godfrey 1998: 19-20), then we are in the exact position of the customer. Yet the predominant emotion of this work is that of emotionlessness. The bar lady’s boredom is blatant to all who see her. If she knew the lyrics to Morrissey, she may have been humming, ‘I’m not happy and I’m not sad’. In any case she stares at us and we stare back.

A Bar at the Folies-Bergère presents us with a new scopic regime. The use of the mirror, the much trusted assistant to artists through the ages, gives us something of an imperfect panopticon of the space around the central figure.

Yet the lie presented, the obvious fact that our visual sense is being played with, is also central. The figure as midpoint, a significant compositional device, is deliberately subverted by the destruction of conventional systems of imaging. Manet expresses the essence of drunkenness in a busy space. Time itself fragments. Refractions are no longer true. We as viewers are locked into the space of the customer but relate most intently with the lot of the bar lady. Andrew Lamprecht has noted that this work is perhaps without parallel in the history of painting: ‘it is about expressing truth through a visual lie’.

A while ago I got into absinthe drinking. Absinthe is credited for being the drink that created impressionism. If you drink lots of it, as close friend and collaborator, Andrew Lamprecht, possibly representing Manet.

It was common knowledge at this time that certain ‘legitimate’ professions were covers for prostitution. See also Degas in this regard. Many ballerinas supplemented their incomes as sex workers (Godfrey 1998: 19-20).

One needs only think of the Arnolfini Marriage (The Marriage of Giovanna Canavesi and Giovanni Arnolfini, 1434) and Manet’s favourite Velázquez (Las Meninas, 1656) in this regard. See also the recent researches of David Hockney in his Secret Knowledge in this regard.
once saw me doing; it is possible to see the world as the impressionists did. Once you realise this, you discover that they were not actually being innovative; they were in fact hyperrealists. In the afore-mentioned work, Degas shows a bored absinthee. The actress Ellen Andrée stares at her glass with a mix of abjection, melancholy and tiredness. Here we see the figure of a woman who has succumbed to her fate. She is a drinker and her drinking is not going to make things better. This is the essence of her boredom. The thing that, in theory at least, should stimulate only numbness. It is significant that many of the bored subjects of Manet (and in this case Degas) are artists, actors, writers, and prostitutes. It is as if the people generally considered by society as living exciting, daring lives, or at the very least presenting such experiences to the public through their art, are the ones exposed as living lives less-than-riveting. Ellen Andrée remembered long sessions sitting for Degas's colleague: "I am in front of an absinthe, Desboutin has something more innocent, what a reversal! and we look like two idiots." (Cachin 1991: 128)

Manet was born into a bourgeois system, yet he managed to turn it on its head. In dress, tastes, type of friends and way of life, even in outlook, he was every bit a part of the well-to-do upper-middle class into which he was born... In one of their frequent quarrels, Degas snapped at his friend: "I have long known how much of a bourgeois you are!" (Schneider 1968: 8). Manet's insider class status had lent him endless possibilities. "An urbane, fastidious aristocrat who was seldom seen in public without his carefully brushed top hat, Manet hardly looks like the man who would scandalize Paris society, almost single-handedly overthrow the art establishment, and revolutionize painting" (Schneider 1968: 7). I am reminded of my friend, artist Cameron Platter.

When considering Manet's realism, it is evident that he was painting Paris: Parisian lifestyle and life at the time. This not only includes the bourgeoisie, but also those who served the upper-middleclass: prostitutes, bar ladies (the working class) and other servants with menial jobs and depressing lives. Realism has not changed. The context has changed.

Even today we share similar approaches concerning artists dealing with everyday life. Consider a work by the neo-punk band Green Day. Their music video for the song titled "Time of Your Life" deals with similar ideas of realism. The comparison is significant. In an interview for VH1's "Top 90 of the Nineties," lead singer Billy Joe Armstrong disclosed that for this video (probably one of their only acoustic compositions at the time), he wanted the characters to look not only sad and bored, but also hungover:

Billy Joe's representation of tired, hungover individuals with menial everyday jobs (including himself) might be related to the fact that the song was written during a period in which his then girlfriend had left him to join the Peace Corps somewhere in Central America. The song was not written within the stereotypical songs dealing with love loss, breaking up and longing for love that is lost. Rather it was about a circumstantial break up: the fact that he and his girlfriend's lifestyles were incompatible, possibly due to economic circumstances and clashes in their respective careers.

It is an issue that appears to be more real than the fantasyland of pop song love. Prior to this incident, Armstrong had suffered serious burnout due to his excessive rock-star lifestyle and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties. These aspects of real life and his major success at a very young age during the early Nineties.

55 Cameron Platter is a friend and fellow artist who was born into the wealthy estate of Elsa and John Platter, the famous South African wine critics. Until recently, Platter had not worked a single day of his life and yet still manages to throw extravagant pool parties at his newly renovated dwelling, conveniently located in upper Green Point, Cape Town. I feel it is highly unlikely that Platter will single-handedly overthrow the art establishment.

56 Green Day is a prominent pop-punk band formed in the early 90s, fronted by Billy Joe Armstrong.
The construction of persona as a marketing tool is a fundamental contribution to the artwork itself. It is interesting to note how pop stars, like artists, are represented today in terms of marketing strategies and saleability. The plasticky, 'bubblegummy' appearances of certain pop idols are constructed for a specific target market.

In the adjacent image, pop singer Britney Spears poses semi-naked for the cover of *Elle* magazine. I do not read *Elle*, but did purchase the magazine late one night at a local corner shop (and admittedly have not yet opened the magazine). Britney is lovely. Here she is presented professionally made up, seductively lit, photographed and 'Photoshopped' to the nth degree. I was caught. While watching Christina Aguilera's music video, *Beautiful*, I was reminded by a concerned friend of mine that 'Baby, I hate to brake it to you, but you know that Christina isn't real. She looks nothing like that in real life. She's MTV'. I'm sorry'. I was struck with comparable disappointment and overcome by similar emotions to those I felt at the time of being told, by a freckled kid, that Santa Claus did not exist, while having a fairly enjoyable time on the playground, aged five. Yet Aguilera is presented showing concern for serious issues. In this video, she is juxtaposed with an anorexic girl, an 'ugly' girl with braces, a transvestite, a punk, and a gay couple kissing in public, amongst others. The video quite literally deals with human rights issues, problems with adolescence and how the media influences young people to follow the typical construct of ideal bodies, looks etcetera. Ironically, Aguilera herself is presented as the attractive, gorgeous idol that the anorexic strives to be, while her angelic voice carries the lyrics: 'We are beautiful, no matter what they say'. Once again, I admit, I was sold: a sucker for pop.

The misuse of realism, or rather the misrepresentation of issues concerning contemporary life becomes highly problematic as the motives behind this representation are mostly financial: a capitalist exploitation of real issues.

Below follows an example of contemporary art writing that rejects art writing in general:

Hello. I am Ricardo P. Floodsky. No, that is not my real name. And no, it does not matter that I am using a ridiculous pseudonym. I write about contemporary art in a variety of guises. I also edit a website called artrumour.com - a gossipy trawl through the murky world of contemporary art. I like art a great deal. In fact, I would say it is one of the most important things in my life at the moment. Now, I am not the type of person to bandy claims like that around lightly, so I would like to think that you are at least momentarily touched by my moment of sharing. Presumably, you are quite interested in art. Or perhaps you think it is all a con. Either way, here is the first piece of advice. Stop reading. If you have not bought this book and are just leafing through it in a bookstore, do not buy it. Put it down and leave the store. If you have bought the book: hard luck. Whatever. Put it down. Go and see some art. If you do not like the art you see, go and see some different art until you find some stuff you like. Find something written about the art you like and read about it. If you think the stuff you are reading is boring, chuck it away. Find something more interesting stuff if there is any around. If there isn't, I would like to express on behalf of the community of writers and scholars whose job it is to write about art - a community I am proud to be a part of. Unfortunately, quite a few of my colleagues are fairly useless at this. I am sorry. Still love it? Well, that is your choice. Don't tell me I didn't warn you.

(Floodsky 2002: 13)
Using tools such as celebrity, combined with hints of idiocy, real people and irony or humour, they poke fun at an art establishment that seems more elite. The persona of the artist, as well as his/her celebrity status, rejects the constructed celebrity of the pop star and makes Britney seem mindless, controlled by the music industry in which she is 'in too deep'.

Some artists that come to mind are Tracey Emin, Martin Creed (as discussed earlier) and Maurizio Cattelan. First, I want to look at what these strategies are and what purpose they serve in a contemporary environment. Liam Gillick argues:

The notion of refusal has a long precedence, and combined with a degree of insolence, leads to work where a desire to undermine accepted levels of gravity underlies certain ideas of extreme personal engagement and autobiography. A rejection of gravity leads to adoption of strategies that include elements of insolence, laziness, humour and egalitarian. Many varied concerns can exist, yet all of them appear to share an equallyquestioning status. An injection of contradiction, specificity, vagueness and a desire to start again.

(Gillick 2000: 19)

Maurizio Cattelan embraces some of Gillick’s chief concerns. His work, at best, combines many of these strategies. This was demonstrated in a recent interview with Nancy Spector:

**Spector** Maurizio, I sense a certain reluctance about being interviewed.

**Cattelan** My issue is not with the principle of the interview. Rather, I don’t think I have anything interesting to say. When I read other interviews, there are always parts that strike me, and I ask myself, ‘Why don’t I just take this section since it’s so interesting? I certainly can’t do any better on my own.’ The idea then is to reorganize something that already exists. I’d be happy to do this now. We just have to think about which interviews we like and which ones we can use.

**Spector** I find it strange that you asked me to interview you for your monograph if it were going to be a cut-and-paste operation. I know that the artist’s interview is a fundamental component of this book series so the editors must have discussed this process with you. What were you thinking initially?

**Cattelan** Well, they reviewed a list of names with me and I selected yours, since your office is closest to my apartment. It’s a matter of convenience.

(Cattelan 2000: 8)

**Things I’ll Never Do Again: The Truth Is Not Out There**

I will not do that thing with my tongue.
I will not fake seizures.
I will not eat things for money.
I will not reincarnate as Sammy Davis, Jr.
I will not instigate revolution.
I will not draw naked ladies.
I will not see Elvis.
I will not encourage others to fly.
I will not be a thirty-two year-old woman.
I will not cut corners.
I will not sell land in Florida.
I will not do anything bad ever again.
I will not show off.
I will not be a dentist.
I will not torment the emotionally frail.
I will not carve gods.
I will not aim for the head.
I will not send lard through the mail.
I will not dissect things unless instructed.
I will not get very far with this attitude.
I will finish what I start.
Cattelan is renowned for making laziness the key aspect of his work. In Working Is a Bad Job (1993), he sold his space in the Arsenale at the Venice Biennale to an advertising agency, so that they could promote a new perfume package they had been working on. Cattelan made a 'quick buck'. It is not as much of a conceptual statement as a way of gaining financially from the art event: something for which most artists strive. Several Italian newspapers covered it in their news section, while the arts sections of the same papers failed to engage with the work.

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There was the 6th Caribbean Biennial of 1999, in collaboration with Jens Hoffman. Famous artists were invited to not make any work and to drink cocktails with little umbrellas. The project was fictional. There were one or two incidents where Cattelan escaped from the exhibition space by tying sheets together, climbing down a tall building through the window and was spotted running away from the show.60

There is the incident of the fake doctor's certificate, when Cattelan was too lazy to attend the preview to his own exhibition.61 There is also the time when he robbed the entire contents of an art museum, and exhibited the stolen goods at De Appel in Amsterdam.62 And, of course, the submission of a police report for a stolen invisible artwork that was apparently taken from the back seat of his car when in fact he had nothing to show for an exhibition. This work has more weight than that of a similar work produced by South African born conceptualist Kendell Geers, Title Withheld (Stolen), 1994, which consisted of an empty sculpture podium.

Untitled, 1992 (a police report: for a stolen invisible artwork), is another work on the idea of theft, which enters into the conceptual world of artists such as Marcel Duchamp or Piero Manzoni. Unable to produce a work for an exhibition, Cattelan decided the night before the opening to go to the nearest police station and report the theft of the non-existing work. With some persuasion, a policeman eventually diligently typed the legal report, asking for details of size and materials. Cattelan then framed the report in the gallery. Without didacticism, the artist was addressing one of the worst vices of Italian society: his surreal idea was matched by the surreal world of Italian bureaucracy.

(Bonami in Cattelan 2000: 73)

60 Una Domenica a Rivara (A Sunday in Rivara), 1996 (Cattelan 2000: 107)
61 Untitled (Certificate medical), 1989 (Cattelan 2000: 77)
62 Untitled (Readymade), 1996 (Cattelan 2000: 107)
Cattelan's work is echoed in the laziness of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm with Instructions for Idleness, 2001.

Wurm's underlying approach is based on this specific strategy. Most parts of his work rely on ideas of nothing, which is clear in the above example Fantasize about Nihilism. He implements absurdity, ideas about nothing and formulating one-minute sculptures. And, what I meant by laziness earlier is that things get appropriated. Therefore, the reusing of art strategies or form becomes particular. They are invented systems by which artists start communicating to a specific world. Wurm's one minute sculptures were the basis of appropriation for the neo-funk band, the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Appropriation is a problem only in small art communities: Cape Town being a particular case in point.

As previously mentioned, people feel cheated (when they think there is nothing there...). While doing research on Wurm, I found that only a few Capetonian artists were aware of his contribution to the international art market. But, to the astute and informed observer, it would seem clear that Wurm is worthy of his cover feature in Art in America.

It is not my aim to point out lack of knowledge amongst contemporary art experts and academics in South Africa. Instead I am in the mood to demonstrate laziness, an accusation commonly affiliated with contemporary production in most parts of the world. The Red Hot Chili Peppers:

63 My research is often based on conversations about art.
Their video also references works such as Chinese artist Lin Yilin’s The Result of 1000 pieces and Lucy Ortí’s tent, amongst others, although Wurm is the only artist credited in the video.
Appropriation and similar art strategies are seen as major forms within contemporary production, as I have discussed in a previous chapter. French theorist Nicholas Bourriaud explains that notions of originality are slowly getting blurred and that it has become the artist's task to reuse already existing forms or ideas, reinserting them into current cultural production. In a recent interview Bourriaud examined contemporary practice during the 1990s and discussed the 'logical conclusion' (Bourriaud in Lamprecht and Young, 2003) that contemporary art has reached. By this he means that the rehashing of goods and materials, and the so-called 'messy atmosphere' in contemporary curation, is largely due to a Duchampian trend of reusing existing structures and ready-made forms.

While appropriation still confuses large parts of the South African art world, the international art world is already bored with it. My own work has entertained stale responses such as 'but where is the art', or the common feeling of being cheated. Not only are these responses not noteworthy and quite pathetic, but they also demonstrate a lack of engagement with contemporary art globally. If the works I am about to discuss were to be shown internationally, they would be less successful. Their strength relies on the context in which they are exhibited being, in this particular case, South Africa. Liam Gillick has critiqued similar art forms:

There is a current critical tendency that makes far too much of the quasi-Duchampian habit of recent artists to bring temporarily un-art like structures, rather than just un-art like objects into the gallery space. The reliance on this minor shift alone is not enough. It ensures a feeling that we remain stuck and forced to deal with a form of baroque conceptualism rather than a fundamental shift in approach.

(Gillick 2002: 26)
THE WORK OF ART IS NO LONGER NECESSARY

When recently questioned on what I thought the new ‘form’ in contemporary art was, I suggested that there was no more form.

Although a fairly insignificant need still exists to allocate specific pockets of classification to the production of art even today, my understanding of art is different. With the increased blurring of boundaries in terms of material, disciplines and job descriptions within the art world, the idea of form is also making a crafty escape. Artists are curators. Curators are administrators. Artworks need not exist. Exhibitions become theme parks. Art programmers are composing and structuring new ideas and perceptions through methods of DJing and mixing works and cultural signifiers. There is too much ‘stuff’ in the world and the whole mix fits neatly into a Ziplock bag known as art.

I have come to believe that the production of art is sometimes less important than the ‘beast’ itself. It is a machine that operates with interchangeable rules and structures. I find the actors of the art world as Bourriaud refers to them, (Bourriaud in Lamprecht and Young 2003) more interesting than the ‘work’, as a primary structure. The work exists in a conceptual sphere and not in a particular strategy of form. Whether I am writing, making work, curating, talking, drinking, performing or just simply being, seems somewhat irrelevant. My mere existence and presence within the art world could be enough, and maybe my persistence as well.

This contradiction has confused many. It is not important. The work of art has disappeared and has been surpassed by its mere existence within an art structure. I care less for art and so does much of the audience. Form is dissolving. While I cannot account for numerous contemporary critics, I prefer this current state.

I have not found any answers.

“It’s not fantasy land anymore, it’s like real life, and you can do it, too. You just make a slight conceptual side-step when you wake up one morning. You decide to get involved.

(Gillick in Renton and Gillick 1991: 11)

67 Meaning the extremely complex systems that the art world incorporates.
The economic aspect of conceptual art is perhaps the most interesting. From the moment when ownership of the work did not give its owner the great advantage of control of the work acquired, this art was implicated in turning back on the question of the value of its private appropriation. How can a collector possess an idea? (Siegelaub in Alberro 2003: 1)
BRUCE GORDON
Bruce Gordon (Found Object [concept]), 2002, consisted of the concept Bruce Gordon, a real person. He was put on auction and sold for R52 000 to journalist and media personality Suzy Bell before being donated to the South African National Gallery. It was exhibited in March 2003 and tattooed with a gallery accession number, SANG 03/02.

Andrew Lamprecht, who was arranging a fund-raising auction for the end-of-year graduate exhibition, invited me to submit a work for sale. After weighing up some possibilities, including putting my immaculate 1971 vintage Mercedes, I hit upon the idea of putting Bruce Gordon on the block. Through a process of creative discussion the separate roles of artist, artwork and curator/auctioneer were defined. Much speculation has taken place around this process and if ever the truth were to be told it would be here.

BRUCE GORDON

BAR OWNER SOLD AS WORK OF ART

Sunday Times

But it does not. The exhibition was opened by Professor Penny Siopis of the University of the Witwatersrand. Some of Cape Town’s art world understood the work. Most did not. Many thought it was viti fall (due to the seeming ease by which the project was realised) and some said it had been done before. The complaints leaned towards a form of professional distrust. It had indeed been done before. The historical precedents are many: Duchamp, Gilbert & George, and Maurizio Cattelan.

Piero Manzoni was said to sign living people as works of art as early as 1961, including Annina Nosei, who became Jean-Michel Basquiat’s dealer. She still owns her certificate of authenticity (Collings 1998: 86).

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Explaining some basic principles of contemporary production today, Bourriaud has this to say:

The material [contemporary artists] manipulate is no longer primary... objects already informed by other objects. Notions of originality (being at the origin of) and even of creation (making something) from nothing are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape marked by the twin figures of the DJ and the programmer, both of whom have the task of selecting cultural objects and inserting them into new contexts.

(Bourriaud 2002: 7)

Whether the concept of Bruce Gordon is a wholly new idea is irrelevant. It sits firmly within its own context, contemporary South Africa. The construct of Bruce Gordon formed an integral part of the piece's success. Without any of its constructs, it would have meant much less in terms of public perception. These collaborative constructs; who was bidding, who bought, who paid, through to who spoke, the pretty bartenders, the Muse string quartet, the wine, the nuts and the location, together with the publication by Andrew Lamprecht, formed an integral part of the piece. But, does this change the actual found object (concept)?

The piece as it stands can live without its accompanying constructs. However, denying Bruce Gordon of this becomes problematic, as the latter constructs enhance the piece. Bruce Gordon appears more significant in a public interest. This introduces another situation. Andrew Lamprecht noted that 'Bruce Gordon as concept functions in a manner that questions all assumptions and preconceptions (to those that may by chance know him) and the idea of a person as person (those that do not)' (Lamprecht 2003: 19). Although the act of nomination in the conception of this readymade is vital, it leaves those unfamiliar with the person to some extent at the mercy of the artists. Lamprecht's publication covers some characteristics of Gordon and the reason for his nomination. It does to a certain degree, but falls in crucial aspects. He makes Gordon out to be a seemingly pleasant person, but shows no knowledge of Bruce Gordon as a high maintenance artwork. Gordon is often late and complains about small things.

As with most readymades, there are specific reasons for inclusion and Gordon's nomination was definitely not random. Bruce Gordon is actively involved in the Cape Town art world. He is a director of the section 21 arts organisation Public Eye and he is the proud owner of an astute contemporary South African art collection. He also owns a bar. I will not declare my intentions for the specific qualities that made Bruce Gordon the obvious choice. However, some of these personal characteristics are outlined in Lamprecht's publication:

It was at the age of six that I shared a very special gift with my mother, it happened at the time of an annual trek to the coast for the summer holidays. There was much excitement in the house. As usual we left at 4 A.M. My father drove the strip roads and my mother took over the wheel just across the border in the Northern Transvaal. It was a blisteringly hot day. The Chevy was loaded to the roof and the rest of the family were sleeping in the back. My mother took off her cap and then her bra. Her silky, milky breasts were bouncing gently with the rhythm of the Chevy. Stirred pedestrians waved and shouted and smiled. The telephone poles flew past, I curled up into my seat and watched my mother as she sang beautiful songs with gay abandon. I was overcome by a feeling of utterful contentment. Today I am able to recall this moment whenever I feel stress and of course I thank her dearly for it.

(Gordon in Lamprecht 2003: 20)

The act of choosing becomes important for the work in order to evoke a public response. In an earlier chapter, I spoke about young British art and how it has become increasingly popular and more accessible to a wider viewing audience including a larger proportion of the general public. In a sense, this is an aspect of what Bruce Gordon seems to have done in a South African context. It does not necessarily have to be pleasing, but should at least leave its audience pondering. And for the artist's sake, be a bit amusing. Following the opening speaker, Gordon as person spoke a few words:

"We also heard the artwork (insofar as the artwork comprises him in the flesh) speak for himself [itself], welcoming us all to his new home, where 'some changes are going to have to be made.' A poker bar in the annex, he proposed, and conceptual strip shows in the Lieberman room... On the other hand, it's interesting to ponder just what the said R52 000 bought. How can it be utilised? Or is it just the art-world having a little laugh at itself? Or (cough) is this fiddling while Rome burns? Go figure."

(Edmunds 2003)


Not long after this letter appeared in the Cape Argus newspaper, I was outside the main entrance to the Michaelis School of Fine Art, exchanging words with the founding editor of the periodical Art South Africa, Sophie Perryer. A man drove into the premises in a flashy champagne coloured Bentley waving a police docket in the air. It was Beezy Bailey. He had come to arrest Malcolm Payne, who was heading the art school at the time, for ‘fraudulently misleading the public’. Bailey demanded proof of payment for the work. He had come to arrest Malcolm Payne, who was heading the art school at the time, for ‘fraudulently misleading the public’. Bailey demanded proof of payment for the work.

This act seemed like a puerile attempt at ‘getting in on the action’ as Bruce Gordon, and threatened that if Michaelis failed to provide it, he would arrest not only the art school director, but also the director of the South African National Gallery, Marilyn Martin.

Although Bailey seemingly had good intentions in uncovering the biased approach by which major art institutions can operate, the piece might have failed in its aims.

Bailey is known to be from an extremely wealthy background. It is difficult to imagine that he could even remotely comprehend Ntobe’s background, even if rumours were true that Ntobe was based on the domestic worker of Bailey’s partner, Nikki Douglas.

Further, his commentary on Kaye is inaccurate: Tony Kaye submitted a homeless person to walk through major international museums as an attempt to win the Turner Prize. Charles Saatchi never bought the concept and it was probably more of a comment on elite art structures as novelty as opposed to real life. Kaye himself was once homeless.

And the South African situation is not resolved. At the time when Bailey launched his ‘clever’ attack on over-compensation regarding racial prejudice of the ‘white male’ in the cultural industry, South Africa had not yet had a moment to breathe from its past. Transformation does not happen instantaneously. Today, transformation has still not happened even after over a decade of democracy. Ntobe’s inclusion was important because it was an inclusion of something lacking in the art world. Even these days we observe sufficient evidence of a change in the art society. In cases like this, the inclusion of female black artists is more creating this alter ego in order to contest racial preferences and inverse racism, as opposed to aesthetic selections the he believed were being made by South Africa’s leading institutions.

In 1992, for the last Cape Town Triennial, Bailey submitted a triptych of linocuts by Ntobe. Rumour: The judging panel accepted these works. Fact: Ntobe was not accepted onto the main exhibition but was shown in a ‘Salon de Refusees’ in the annexe of the South African National Gallery. SANG immediately bought the works at R100 a piece, the equivalent in value of the also submitted Bailey’s, according to Bailey.11 His personal submission made it into the second round of the Triennial: an artist making a point. He then submitted a small letter in fax form to both the Gallery and fourteen local newspapers stating that he was in fact Joyce Ntobe. This ‘caused a small stir’ and the Ntobes were removed from the SANG walls that same morning. Unfortunately the Ntobes had already gone to print for a catalogue, written by Emma Bedford,12 dealing with the work of three black female artists. Thus an artist was born.

As a senior curator at the SANG at the time.

10 Based on a telephone conversation with Bailey.

11 Based on rumour and reported speech. Also conversations with Kevin Atkinson, 1998.

12 A senior curator at the SANG at the time.
relevant to the South African art cultural industry as it promotes development. ‘Artistic genius’ becomes peripheral in this context, as it has always been acknowledged in the past. And I personally find Ntobe’s work stronger than that of Bailey.

But, as the South African condition is largely based on Western thought, or at last recorded South African rationale, we are constantly faced with its logic: binary opposites of what goes and what does not. The in between is ignored and yet far more relevant.

Overcompensation is problematic when facing exhaustion. I have been informed that the local periodical Art South Africa’s aims at maintaining an 80% black content. This is due to the apparent regular criticisms it had received. It is challenging as the majority of this country’s art industry is critical for being predominantly white. The black content gets exhausted. If a balanced demographic equation cannot be attained, the representation of black artists cannot be sustained.

There are constructive angles to the editorial weighting of black content. The ‘black explosion’ within cultural production during recent years might act as an equaliser for the lack of racial representation of the past. Cultural inclusion/exclusion can start to even out. There are constructive angles to the editorial weighting of black content. The ‘black explosion’ within cultural production during recent years might act as an equaliser for the lack of racial representation of the past. Cultural inclusion/exclusion can start to even out.

I will give a more detailed account of this at a later stage when looking at the young artists in South Africa, particularly Galerie Puts. For now I will continue with my own work chronologically, and the problems it has caused conceptually.

**MUSE**

The solo exhibition MUSE consisted of four bar ladies, oysters, sake, expensive sparkling wine and one all-girl string quartet. All the elements in the space, including the audience and my favourite flowers, St. Joseph’s lilies, formed an integral part of a larger work. What was on

The opening itself. People ate and drank well, watched a remarkable performance by the Muse string quartet, while many expressed concern at not being able to locate any physical work.

Well known Cape Town art consultant Rose Korber was particularly fascinated by the plethora of Knysna oysters. The question of art is easily countered within an over catered environment. Enough alcohol can provide an answer to seemingly unresolved problems. However, my own mother was not convinced and spent the next few days weeping before expressing her concern. Apparently this had to do with the police arriving to arrest me, as described below.

However excess ‘booze’ does have negative qualities: innocent gallery attendees vomited inside the gallery space and later a person was discovered lying outside the space in a pool of her own urine.

An observation I have frequently made is that when the alcohol is depleted, the audience almost immediately disappears and can then be found in a nearby pub. At the sparkling wine ran out (seventy two bottles in under fifty minutes), I made an arrangement with Bruce Gordon, owner of Jo’Burg bar, conveniently located around the corner from the gallery. We decided to supply harder liquor, not to encourage heavier consumption but rather to stifle the intake. This did not work. The audience were savage. Nevertheless, Muse played while the viewers watched in awe.

A portion of those having attended considered the exhibition to be an exhibition of nothing (which it was and certainly fits my production). Others considered it as a mere enjoyable experience.

For many in the audience an element of performance art was apparently lacking, given that I, the artist, was not personally involved in the performance. This is a fundamental aspect that is lost with an uninformed audience when the relation between performance and the performance aspect gets blurred. Bourriaud notes similar concerns in the work of artist Rirkrit Tiravanija:

> When Tiravanija offers us the experience of a structure in which he prepares food, he is not doing a performance: he is using the performance-form.

_Bourriaud 2002: 11_

Although the performance in this case seems clear (and to the layperson it might not), Muse’s performance becomes secondary and even peripheral. The actual work exists with my catering for the exhibition and this merely includes the performance by Muse. In a way, like Tiravanija, I locate the work to a category of performance-form. In the case of Tiravanija this aspect is apparent, but I feel that contemporary production often utilises this generally, even if it is not always clear: the ‘persona’ aspect, discussed earlier.

Performance is not necessarily reliant on ideas of performance formulated in the Seventies. It is embedded in layers at which the work can exist, regardless of its end manifestation, that being the form of physical objects, video documentation, material residue or nothing at all. The ideal of form essentially starts to dissolve. Bourriaud describes this as the ‘peripherating
of families of form', rather than the dissolving of form (Bourriaud in Lamprecht and Young 2003).

What was implied earlier about 'all the elements forming part of the work' should now become clearer. I used similar constructions to those employed in Bruce Gordon to aid the viewer and in return the viewer became a 'performer'. Ironically though, the viewer also became a pawn in my game. Similar constructions appeared in the catalogue text in which I asked Andrew Lamprecht to 'do his worst':

I think Ed is really a bit of an idiot. It seems he can't really come up with any good ideas. All this stuff about making people into art is old hat. I am sure I remember someone like Beezy Bailey or someone else doing this sort of thing ages ago. He also drinks too much. Some mornings I will see him and he will be making of alcohol, one hopes from the night before. I have seen one or two occasions seen Ed drunk. He tends to get moody, depressed and to with one hand on the side of his face. At times like this he likes to blink a lot. I really don't understand all this behaviour. Maybe he thinks it has something to do with art-making [sic]. (Lamprecht in Young 2003: 19)

Lamprecht's text provides a framework that portrays me as seemingly juvenile and idiotic. I will discuss some works later that serve a similar purpose. In this case, however, his text is less of an informative device, than a collaborative one, as the author deliberately subverts the form of the standard catalogue essay. If the catalogue serves the purpose of guiding the audience through certain conceptual underpinnings of the artist, then this one functions to confuse even more. What seemed simple was lost in this case and rightly so. Most of the readers agreed with Lamprecht, while failing to engage with the fact that I myself published the catalogue. The success of this subtle construction depends on the viewer's engagement on a superficial level as such constructions are less successful in the case of the viewer getting the 'joke'.

Again we are faced with another contradiction. When the joke is out we are merely confronted with some contesting the work obtuse, while others appreciate it at face value. Neither of these aspects negates the work as it relies on both support and negative criticism in order to be successful. Without this, the piece does not work. Both angles extend the shelf life of the work. 'There is no such thing as bad publicity', and in my case, it is the negative publicity that fuels the work.

This aside, it is necessary to provide some contextual information surrounding Muse.

When I subsequently came across Joachim Koester's Shostakovich's String Quartet in C Minor, Op. 110 (1996), with almost exactly the same form as my piece, it is an addition rather than a crisis as far as I am concerned. The discovery of this work after much time had past since Muse merely confirmed my suspicions; in a world already full of 'things', it almost seems presumptuous to believe that one's ideas are original. With the amount of artists and art students in an already too full world, most ideas have been replicated over, while the only knowledge we have of some of these are from the small percentage of works reproduced in art journals and art books.

Originality does not exist today.

Nicolas Bourriaud argues around this point extensively in his book Postproduction. Artists today utilise this perspective of originality and find ways to make it work, such as appropriation, conscious plagiarism and the like.

In the case of Muse I appropriate Manet's 'Bar' (see Martin Creed in this regard). I appointed the same bar ladies that Lamprecht employed for Bruce Gordon, but in this particular case, they were featured in the catalogue as part of the work. My intention was for them to re-enact the expression of the Manet's barmaid. Unfortunately they were unfamiliar with this work, even though they were third year art school students. I had them imitate the pose during the stills shoot and ended up with this result:
Admittedly, some of these elements were a bit of an in-joke, but they were mainly for my personal enjoyment. One of these was the exclusion of fellow artist Vuyisa Nymende. As stated in the catalogue:

Contemporary flash artist, Vuyisa Nymende, is not permitted inside the exhibition space, even though a personal invitation was extended to him. A bouncer is stationed at the door with only his name on the non-guest list to prevent Nymende from doing any harm to unsuspecting gallery goers and/or himself.

(Young 2002: 63)

I was concerned that Nymende might behave somewhat irrationally, as he is known to do so when upset, and seeing that I had deliberately scheduled my exhibition to take place on the night originally allocated for his first solo show, and at the same gallery, this kind of action was likely. Nymende telephoned the police on the night, claiming that a theft was in progress, in an attempt to have me arrested for 'stealing his intellectual property'. This only resulted in him almost being arrested for wasting the time of the local authorities.

As with most of my exhibitions, it is those elements that I have no control over that intrigue me the most. At the time of Muse I was also in the process of curating an all-girl exhibition: Hot Bitches Mediocre Work. The exhibition was to fall under the auspices of Galerie Futur, a collective that I am a member of. The aim was to produce an exposé of art by female contributors as Pota had been criticised for being a 'boys club' with no real representation of women. The Hot Bitches exhibition was not meant to be derogatory, but rather to showcase work of high standard by young as well as up-and-coming female artists. It was just a clever title.

The project's strength was intended to be located within the viewers' conception of such a project: a form often utilised in my production. This is, as discussed previously, an attempt to confuse the audience by using generalised preconception by which an audience receives a work. In the case of Hot Bitches, it is a politically correct exhibition in combination with a misogynistic title or curatorial approach, highlighting myself as the 'bad guy'. This should have functioned as a comment on the generalisation of male dominance in the art world. The device as a whole would have operated as a technique of enhancement of the work on display. And although I cannot make presumptions as to the outcome of such a project, I predicted that once again the larger part of the audience would not get the 'joke'. It is here that the strength of the piece would have lain. If successful, the exhibition would not have become a show of curated works, but a singular work by Ed Young under the auspices of Galerie Futur. The exhibition did not take place.
As it sometimes happens within small art circles, the word spread through the art school, which soon established some confusion surrounding Muse. The outcome of the gossip resulted in the hired bartenders of Muse and the fact that they believed they had become the Hot Bitches exhibition. Instead of withdrawing, they decided to retaliate by planning a series of T-shirts that would introduce me as an arsehole, literally with an image of an anal sphincter imprinted on them. At the fear of being humiliated, they did confront me, at which point I explained that these were in fact two unrelated exhibitions.

I will presume that it was the possible termination of Hot Bitches/Muse that they found exciting. With this not being the case anymore the group nevertheless went ahead with printing a new series of T-shirts reading ‘pissed art’. I was unaware of their intervention prior to the exhibition, which was only revealed halfway through the show by removing the black sweaters I insisted on them wearing during the performance.

I deem these interventions valuable, sometimes more so than my own intentions. And similar things have happened in other works such as Bruce Gordon and works to be discussed in the remainder of this document. Given that I am often interested in events and happenings surrounding my works, even more than the work itself (a preference to the notion of social pages rather than academic criticism) I include below such contextual images. ‘Real life’ rather than older ideas of what an artwork should be.
ASSHOLE

The exhibition Asshole formed a logical follow-up from Muse. On the surface, this work was a response to my numerous critics (audience and art writers). The press release stated:

Ed Young's third successive one-night exhibition is titled 'Asshole'. [Nothing coy in the title is there! - ed.] The new work has been produced in response to the numerous derogatory comments about Young's previous exhibitions, which have included the sale of a local bar-owner and his subsequent donation to the National Gallery ('Bruce Gordon') and the presentation of the all-girl Muse string quartet in a commercial gallery space ('Muse'). Through this process, Young acknowledges his status as an arsehole and brings together a number of elements in order to create an installation environment that stresses this point.

Unlike on his previous two outings, Young here presents a range of more traditional artworks, including painting, print media, video, as well as performative works. In his own words: 'Some bare naked ladies can be expected. Delicious food and excellent drink will be served'. A catalogue will be available on the night.

Although the press statement implied an exhibition of 'stuff', there was again an exhibition of nothing, or at least something disguised as nothing. But as Andrew Lamprecht explained, there were more intrinsic details than met the eye: 'The astute observer could see that Young had presented one work in each of the codified disciplines of contemporary art production' (Lamprecht 2004: 51).

By employing existing art disciplines I was commenting on an aspect of accepted and respected norms within most South African galleries, and because these norms were masquerading as an empty exhibition, I felt that it was successful. And it is this characteristic that generates the necessary ambiguity. It is an aspect of contemporary art that creates subtle comments on production, rather than a literal one-liner that spoon-feeds its audience, and dramatically reduces the strength of an exhibition, aesthetically and conceptually.

Bruce Gordon set a precedent. With the piece's conceptual underpinnings aside, something struck me concerning the high attendance, the exhibition of nothing and the way it was perceived. Muse was another sort of experiment. I applied most of the basic elements of Bruce Gordon and placed them in a commercial space as a very plain, beautiful yet slightly kitsch performance, but so that Bruce Gordon's significance disappeared. Asshole was another performance of conceptual minimalism. The more absurd the exhibitions became, the higher the attendance: Asshole saw close to a thousand attendees.

Due to the marketing strategies embedded in these pieces, the attendance did not only consist of a curious art world, but also a large part of the contemporary Cape Town street crowd (young individuals within the applied arts: fashion, advertising, street culture etc.).

The fact that the audience again experienced problems with no art on the walls is interesting. I relayed an impression that in today's age of production one could still come up with such a contrived argument about art. And, the "but is it art?" kind of art also has its resting place somewhere in the Nineties, where a form of what is known as relational art (an art that questions itself and that interprets the art structures surrounding it) has become somewhat stale, and not necessarily a common form of production. Kendell Geers refers to this as the art world's 'circular navel-gazing', which he also observes as being recently unnecessary and 'frankly uninteresting'.

See Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics
On the other hand, such art has a place in South Africa, typically because of our exclusion from the international art sector for such an extended period of time. We are confronted with options: an informed audience that responds to a conceptual work with ideas such as 'Duchamp', or 'Kendell Geers did this stuff here about fifteen years ago' and the well cliched response: 'but it's been done.'

On the other hand, the South African situation lends itself to the response from an un-informed (as well as a sometimes visually illiterate) audience, who claim to have never heard of this kind of art before.

This particular situation is unique because it opens up a grey area, which I see as a playground that some, but not all 'peripheral' countries might retain. It is a playground that has been utilised internationally (which seems more exhausted in the international arena). At the same time these artists can articulate themselves within international practice today, provided their country of origin remains South America, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or the like.

A majority of curatorial platforms existing recently appear to cater for this: examples that come to mind are Olkwa Enwezor's Documenta 11 in Kassel, 2000, and Catherine David's Contemporary Arab Representations at the Venice Biennale, 2003.

This means that if the artists were to rehash missing strategies within these peripheral contexts, the artworks would probably not be as strong, but when he/she takes into account his/her own context, the context of the international circuit, as well as maintaining the vanguard of international practice, the art form might not yet be stale. As noted from my individual experience, this notion of over-exploitation of collective memory and cultural identity is well explored within a South African context. This can allow for growth where both the artist and the audience are concerned.

However, these kind of peripheral contexts can (in the eyes of collectors and curators) mean sufficient material for investment rather than significance of work. This leads to an obvious lack in quality as many of these artist realise that a mere presence in this context can be enough. There are exceptions: Santiago Sierra, Miguel Calderon, and others.

Currently I am not at a stage where I feel I have remotely figured out this particular situation, but I do use this as a primary formal strategy to provoke a response from an audience: both sides of the fence, pro and con. It is important for me to mention that both sides of this spectrum have demonstrated considerable support for my projects.

In the case of Asshole, I wanted to push the idea of Muse in order to generate a response. I wanted to see if the work would have more appeal if I used different elements within the same formula as the previous exhibitions.

The show was well attended. Almost a thousand people came to see what the fuss was about, as opposed to the four hundred seen at Muse. The newspaper headlines read 'One lame asshole for sure' (Willoughby 2004) and 'Oh Ed, what were you thinking of' (Bell 2004).

In this work I presented a wall painting consisting of the word Asshole. As first glance it appeared to be a piece of sloppy graffiti, although the design was a carefully and painstakingly airbrushed enlarged replica of the image printed on the invitation to attend the opening:

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See Emma Bedford's recent seminar at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, based on an invitation to curators not signed in international art centres, 2005.

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In fact this defining image was produced in a matter of seconds when I was offered a free advert in Art South Africa if I could produce the copy immediately as the issue was going to press and there was a last-minute cancellation. I happened to be enjoying a chilled beverage in the office at the time. The advert happened to be paid for by another client. This is an example of my opportunistic exploitation of the co-incidental and unforeseen.

I repeated the formula generated for Muse, and to an extent for Bruce Gordon. As Muse was interpreted as a pretentious exemplification of what the art world can provide, Asshole contributed something different.

Although Asshole played the same game in terms of formula, it was less pretentious. It was an exhibition of things that I personally liked. The Pongraz bubbly was replaced by Heineken. The sushi and oysters by Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Strippers from the nearby-located 'Teazers' adult entertainment club replaced the bartenders.

Ashole
The classical musical component was substituted by a recent music video by southern American group Outkast. This video was edited within a continuous seamless loop, to the extent that members of the audience only realised the repetition after a considerable period of time.

Although the presentation appeared to be relatively random, I did include limited aesthetic devices. The green of the Outkast video was a formal link to that of the Heineken sculpture. The red of the Heineken logo to that of the KFC logo, and in turn to the red in the wall painting.

The composition was broken by a pale blue and gold, which was incorporated with the ‘hot pants’ worn by the strippers. I designed these with the help of young fashion designer Richard de Jager. I based the design on a then recent Benny Benassi music video.
The exhibition was continually confronted by numerous individual commentaries and questions: 'But what does it mean?'

[Rirkrit] Tiravanija often cites Ludwig Wittgenstein’s phrase: ‘Don’t look for the meaning, look for the use.”

This work marked the last of my one night solo exhibitions as an attempt to enter an apologetic phase of my production. If Asshole was an acknowledgement of my status within the Cape Town art sector at a given moment, It’s Not Easy was meant to generate a different response.

The work consisted of re-edited footage from the Superman films portraying the superhero as a real person. According to Andrew Lamprecht, the video portrays ‘the fall of the Man of Steel into a drunken shadow of his former self’ (Lamprecht 2004: 41B). The soundtrack (which formed the inspiration for the piece) was produced by the band Five for Fighting, its lyrics allowing for similar interpretations. This particular piece had to mimic these lyrics very literally in order for it to be successful:

I can’t stand to fly
I’m not that naive
I’m just out to find
the better part of me
I’m more than a bird
I’m more than a plane
I’m more than some
pretty face beside a train
And it’s not easy to be me

The exhibition consisted of this re-edited footage presented simultaneously on ten plasma screens. Because of the music video nature of the work, it was to be presented synchronised every ten minutes or so. The space was to be painted chroma key blue, with a single red couch to break the colour. At the time I was working on other details, which were never realised.

Both Asshole and Muse (extremely expensive productions) were funded by a high-profile cigarette company. During the preparation stage of this exhibition, I received word that the company had strong feelings about me ‘getting more mileage’ out of the exhibitions than they did and were reconsidering their funding of my future projects, starting with It’s Not Easy.
My liaison in the company had ethical issues with the promotion of cigarettes and quit her job, ironically moving on to work for the Heart Foundation. Her replacement showed no interest in the arts and focussed his budget elsewhere.

As the show drew closer, I was hard at work with fundraising the event, but as time passed, I lost more interest in the show, probably because of the one-liner aspect of such an exhibition. I had no money, and felt like my exhibitions were becoming repetitive. I literally ignored the exhibition. Its only physical existence took place in magazine adverts, while the rest was uncared for. I was not interested in observing the audience arriving at a closed exhibition. I ignored the show, while still including it as an exhibition in my Curriculum Vitae.

It appears as a listed solo exhibition in my entry in 10 Years 100 Artists. This is a logical extension of the process that I hinted at in the introduction to this document.

Waddy Jones
The Fantastic Kill
2 June - 19 June 2004

Edward Young
It's Not Easy
7 July 2004

Kevin Brand
14 July - 7 Aug 2004

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

The inscription was not entirely untrue. It did represent my lack of funding, and more importantly, my lack of enthusiasm to gain such funding. Unable and unwilling to produce an artist's statement for the exhibition, Lamprecht merely noted that 'Ed Young is depressed'. This grabbed the attention of art patron Brett Kebble, who opened the exhibition.

The work did not receive much attention, but I had hoped to make some money... not necessarily for art. The only real contributions came from fellow artist Matthew Hindley’s R5-something. In her review, Carrie Zaayman’s sub-heading read: 'Ed Young's throwaway gesture did not deliver the necessary goods' (Zaayman 2004: 80). An anonymous serviette gesture from a gallery goer read:
The young artists involved in the creation of this exhibition had little attachment with such commentary. There was no underlying strategy. Artists were merely applying individual ideas to an exhibition, without much concern of what the general public was interested in seeing. Even though Lamprecht's exhibition translated as being 'against the world', this was not necessarily the intention of any individual artist. The exhibition served as a showcase/platform for young individuals expressing their concerns. It had very little to do with a current trend of bandwagon social issue based-work, seen at the time in numerous recent international representations, but rather individual dilemmas. The critics misconstrued this. As it is difficult for a 'white male' to rely on government funding, I wanted to include the public and buyers in raising my riches. Though Lamprecht's exhibition translated as being 'against the world', this was not necessarily the intention of any individual artist. The exhibition served as a showcase/platform for young individuals expressing their concerns. It had very little to do with a current trend of bandwagon social issue based-work, seen at the time in numerous recent international representations, but rather individual dilemmas. The critics misconstrued this. As it is difficult for a 'white male' to rely on government funding, I wanted to include the public and buyers in raising my riches.

I AM A POST-COLONIAL, RACIST, HOMOPHOBIC, MISOGYNIST, ANTI-SEMITES.

HOW TO TOLERATE OTHER PEOPLE'S SHIT-MARKS ON THE TOILET WALL

In a recent article by Maria Pissarra titled 'Decolonise the mind', Bruce Gordon was labelled as one of the most racist works produced during 2003: Certainly there is enough anecdotal evidence to support perceptions that art in South Africa remains centered on white privileges, and that in the post-Apartheid era the gatekeepers of art often act in ways that can at best be described (ironically) as the barbarism of our imperial and colonial heritage. In my view, the most vivid example of this is provided by Ed Young's Bruce Gordon, and the generally favorable reception of this 'very clever and very entertaining' work received in the art media. White South Africans staged a mock auction centered on the notion of selling someone as art (the 'work' was later 'donated' to the South African National Gallery). They did this less than a decade after the black masses acquired rights not to be treated as the property of whites. They did this a short walk from where human beings were sold into slavery. They did this in a context of increasing awareness of trafficking of women and children. Yet we are expected to discuss this cheap act of self-publicity within the context of Western art and theory. If one of the premises of 'real time' work is to bridge 'art' and 'life', then Bruce Gordon presents a strong indictment of the failure of elements within the white art scene to bridge that gap. (Pissarra 2003: 37)

There is a current critical tendency to indict young artists of this country for issues of the past. Although valid, this argument seems easy, un-engaging, self-prophesied and unspeakable. Its intentions appear justified (to some at least), while it is mostly reliant on a kind of self-promotion through older liberal actions. As mentioned before, progress does not happen immediately, but my point here is that some of our older critics fail to see new strategies that younger artists are concerned with. Pissarra highlights the 'cheap act of self-publicity' while failing to engage with the piece on a more critical level, especially within a South African context. He does not mention Bruce's tattoo (which evokes links to slavery, Nazism, property, etc.) almost as if he is unaware of this aspect of the work. Nonetheless, he links the sale of Bruce Gordon to these critical aspects. It is not that the individuals involved accidentally overlooked this point, nor was it intended to make a racist statement, but rather to use sensitive elements that enhance the public's reception of an artwork. I am not trying to create awareness, and I certainly do not think that art can change the world, although I do believe that using sensitive issues concerning society does make a work of art more powerful. Although the seriousness of the social issues facing South Africa are extremely complex, I feel that space should be opened up to investigate other issues, such as the state of white privilege in South Africa. Unlike 'privileged' artists who deal with personal and introspective issues in their work, I deliberately set myself up to be typecast as the 'naive white guy'. By this action I aim to spark debate, as opposed to social slip-tilting and artificial political correctness.

I find similar clichéd contributions by some individuals that do directly investigate the unreason of South African society, but their work becomes increasingly literal and in my opinion, conceptually easy. As a result this leaves very little room for contemplation in the mind of the viewer, which could be the overriding factor by which such work becomes popular. Not only does the system thrive on this, but it also serves to ease guilt and as a money gathering strategy for both the viewer and the audience.

A 'vivid' example of this is found in the recent high-profile exhibitions. Focusing on selling art at comfortable prices, a trend has developed to showcase portraits of black people and landscapes where bad things have happened, primarily to black populations. Such a capitalist venture seems exploitative to my mind, and has not been contested by local critics.

A reason for this might be located in entrenching the comfort of a predominantly white audience when viewing portraits of dying black individuals. In order to protest unhealthy strategies within complex art systems, it is easier and more effective to do so from inside those systems, rather than rapid firing from the outside. These systems are more powerful than the individuals that contest them.

There exists a current trend in the young white art scene that is not particularly interested in treading softly around social issues, as there is a realisation that these issues exist in real life, and not the 'fantasy land' of the art world. This is not from a position of ignorance or disinterest, but rather a case of exposing the machinery by which the art world operates. It is opposing similar power structures that young black artists are challenging, but from a
different angle. The so-called 'young white scene' would rather poke fun at and ignore the transparent insincerities of some of South Africa's leading art practitioners. If it has a cause it might be that art is about more than issues of social discomfort. They have been labelled Eurocentric, racist, rich and not much concerned with local issues, but these are the issues that fuel the work.

By this I specifically refer to a collective known as Galerie Puta.

In his article 'Dada and development in Cape Town', American scholar Zachary Yorke wrote in respect of the theft of a sculpture of mine and the malicious vandalising of a print at Andrew Lamprecht's summer exhibition Pula (Bell-Roberts, 2003):

> Apparently these occurrences are typical in Cape Town's avant-garde circles, apparently the thief acted on behalf of an art collaborative known as FlashArt (i.e. Galerie Puta), and apparently Cape Town's art world is dangerously incestuous, a self-sustaining playground for rich kids posing as artists.

(Yorke 2003: 13)

**GALERIE PUTA**

Puta is a delocalised gallery, initiated as a response to the fact that many significant young and edgy artists, as well as ourselves, were looking at the ABSA Art Salon, but were not being shortlisted in local art competitions. In particular, we were looking at the ABSA Fossil or award. Cameron Platter, Andrew Lamprecht and myself originally founded Puta. The idea was not to formulate a type of 'salon de refusés', but rather to provide a platform, both for ourselves as well as other artists in need of adequate exposure.

Puta introduced itself to the Cape Town art circuit in the form of a curated exhibition called Meeting Art in the Water Closet, a suite adapted from an editorial title of the show, as we never actually got around to discussing a title. The exhibition was held in a bathroom, in the house that Bridget Baker had bought at the time. Platter was renting it, sharing the space with an art collaborative known as FlashArt (i.e. Galerie Puta), and apparently Cape Town's art world is dangerously incestuous, a self-sustaining playground for rich kids posing as artists.

(Yorke 2003: 13)

The exhibition was held on the night of prominent art gallerist Ettiene Jacobs' birthday party. This ensured that none of the invited guests would attend this exhibition. It was very secret. Lamprecht organised this one, so secretly that at the time the other Directors did not know about it. Unaware, all the Directors of Puta were at the party, mingling with the A-crowd.

The most interesting aspect of Puta was its development. The change from being an art facilitating company seamlessly morphed into an art collective, mainly responsive to negotiated performances. The defining moment in this transition occurred in Johannesburg when invited to participate in Christian Nef's 24/7 programme at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Puta interfered by hijacking my personal invitation.

The project was a performance. The requirement was that any invited artist would participate by working in the space for 7 days, making up 24 hours in total. Puta realised a work for a consecutive 24 hour run, i.e. a 24-hour performance. Starting at 6 pm, we left at 6 pm the following day. The basic idea was to drink alcohol and play the game of global world domination, Risk, to kill time. We did this. We bought R 3 000 worth of drinks and when we ran out of alcohol we phoned the assistant curator to bring some more. She did. Unfortunately this consisted of a single bottle of Kippies and no Coke Lite. This is a typical misunderstanding from one who is not au fait with the Puta way. In contradistinction, Tommy, the Johannesburg-based Administrator of Galerie Puta arrived with a cooler bag groaning with iced beverages. We finished the project. Nef kept an ashtray.

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(Yorke 2003: 13)

Meeting proved to be a success. We invited a fairly small number of people, including significant individuals within the local art world. We showcased the works of a number of established artists, alongside fairly young and unknown ones.

Platter did a performance. He willingly prepared many vodka Martinis. Lamprecht did a performance: he managed to clean and polish all the used Martini glasses to a brilliant shine.

Andrew Lamprecht's summer exhibition Pula (Bell-Roberts, 2003):

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The second in the series was the secret exhibition. The exhibition was held on the night of prominent art gallerist Ettiene Jacobs' birthday party. This ensured that none of the invited guests would attend this exhibition. It was very secret. Lamprecht organised this one, so secretly that at the time the other Directors did not know about it. Unaware, all the Directors of Puta were at the party, mingling with the A-crowd.

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Galerie Puta, a highly successful, non-venue specific conceptual gallery, launched in Cape Town early last year, is proud to colonise the NSA Gallery for the exclusive use of its highly regarded curatorial team of head honchos, Cameron 'the Don' Platter, Andrew 'Fluffy' Lamprecht and Ed 'One Eye' Young from May 18 to 23. Their three solo shows, all coincidentally entitled Storm, will be held concurrently.
in the NSA space. These exhibitions will interrogate issues such as idleness, assassination, insider trading on the JSE, random beatings, vodka martinis, the historical philosophy of Hegel and dirty laundry.

Platter’s last show at the João Ferreira in January 2004 received considerable critical acclaim. Young has held a series of ‘One Night’ events, the last also taking place in January at the Bell-Robertson Gallery in Cape Town. Lamprecht’s last show was ‘Alterier’ in August/September 2003, coinciding with the Impact! International Printmaking Conference.

The curatorial staff of Galerie Puto are known for their fearless challenging of the status quo in the South African art world, their deep commitment to development and outreach projects and for being exceedingly pleasant people.

As this was a very successful exhibition, it marked trouble for Puto. At the time I was getting a lot of attention from international curators and local buyers. I was excluded from discussions regarding Puto artworks to the extent that I was neglected and left sleeping on the day of installation, after a particularly draining all-night executive business meeting. It was at this time that Eminem released a single with his band, D12, relating the fact that no one cares about his band but rather focuses on his own accomplishments. If truth be told, Cameron Platter is frequently unavailable and busy with pressing book club commitments and Andrew Lamprecht lacks originality, as demonstrated by his recent exhibitions. However the show opened with enormous success, including walkabouts, question and answer sessions and student talks.

Puto produced an adequate exhibition as usual.
MY BEERDRUNK SOUL IS SADDER THAN ALL THE DEAD CHRISTMAS TREES OF THE WORLD

Upon arrival back in Cape Town I realised that I could not work with the collective anymore. At this point Eminem released the song How Come, a follow up from My Band in which the band express concerns like 'we don't even talk no more'. Obviously ironic. I found D12's songs clearly relevant.

While I was plotting a subtle escape from Puta, I was asked by the Johannesburg Art Gallery to do another Galeria Puta performance. I replied that Puta would not perform unless paid. The curators agreed to relinquish R 3 000, with information that no other artists received funding for the project. The money would hardly cover our air tickets to Johannesburg.

I did not want to participate, having already seen some of the Negotiate projects and Platter wanted to go to Brazil. Persuaded, Lamprecht insisted on us participating. He threatened to go on his own.

The exhibition was about reconciliation. Ignoring the fact that the invitation clearly stated that we headlined the final phase of the exhibition, we decided not to attend but rather to donate the fee to friend and collaborator, Bruce Gordon, in a worthless attempt at reconciling. Gordon was not convinced but took the cash.

In spite of this intervention being acknowledged as the highlight of the entire Negotiate project, individual Directors have been confronted with hurtful comments and actions by the comparatively inexperienced, depressed and wretched members of the curatorial team. In attempts at wheedling free drinks, they have even been known to go so far as to allege that the money was not given to Gordon, but spent on alcohol. This is not the Puta way.

86 Taken from Charles Bukowski’s Factotum (Bukowski 1981: 64).
87 See appendix D.

Bruce Gordon
Jeffrey Dene
322 Long Street
Cape Town
November 3, 2004

Dear Sir

Re: Attempted Act of Reconciliation

Please find enclosed the amount of R3 000. We seek for this to act on behalf of the directors of the highly successful Galeria Puta, as an act of reconciliation for the improper way in which we treated your bar in the past five years or so. These include (inter alia):

Thief of cheap liquors
The defacement of lantas with pointless efforts of self-promotion
The destruction of decorative objects of long-time employees
The harassment of spouse of long-term employee
The invasion of private spaces

We do not expect this compensation to yet meet the qualitites of a long and hail relationship, but as a respected organisation, we strongly feel that this could mark the start of a beautiful and mutually beneficial relationship. We strongly believe that we have the potential to go on and create a fruitful and successful relationship with the Johannesburg Art Gallery, with whom we believe to have established a long-term professional relationship.

Sincerely yours,

The Directors

Galeria Puta

November 3, 2004
When invited to submit two video works in a small seaside town in Belgium called Bredene, I presented Damn Those Bitches Represent and Killing Teddy. The exhibition, Grasshopper I, was one of the S.M.A.K. (City Museum of Actual Art) in Ghent’s satellite projects curated by Cis Bierinckx. It was an exhibition that showcased young artists as well as well-known names from the S.M.A.K. collection, including Vito Acconci, Wim Delvoye, Philippe Parreno, and Marlene Dumas.
Killing Teddy is a work in which I administer a number of beatings and various other forms of random acts of sadistic cruelty on fluffy toys. The piece has very little to do with childhood trauma, as some have speculated in the past. It was merely produced as a component of an installation for my final year in an undergraduate programme.

Damn These Bitches Represent presents a situation where the viewer is forced to engage with an American cheerleader's buttocks for a considerable length of time. The footage was taken from a film called Not Another Teen Movie (2001). It is a spoof on the film Bring It On (2000), which revolves around a white middle class cheerleading squad who have been 'ripping' cheers from a black squad in a poverty-stricken area. The white group is caught in a catch-22 situation when the black squad is invited to participate in the state cheerleading championships. My work is a reworked section of the spoof, which I found particularly interesting in terms of the South African art situation. The duration of the loop varies from one exhibition showing to the next, but the original footage is always presented.

Upon arrival in Bredene, I introduced myself to a number of people called Peter. Hi, I'm Ed, I told most of them (almost without exception) responded: 'Ah, the famous Ed Young' at which point the curator embarrassingly scuttled off to attend to more important duties.

My Friend Dan's Crappy 90's Mix
I did a performance. The group of Peters, not much involved in the arts, were confused as well as organised. As with Killing Teddy and Damn These Bitches Represent, everything was arranged by the curator. I only needed to arrive and perform. I had a braai. I was also given two substantial marquee tents in the likely event of rain. With everything literally being done for me I thought it a good idea to not do anything physical at all, other than the braai. I asked the curator to paint my banner, which he did. Throughout the discussions, there was considerable micromanagement as to what I was supposed to do and what was to happen at the opening reception. The curator insisted that I did not concern myself too much with these technicalities, as he felt my performance more important than what the organisers had planned. They had not realised that my performance was in fact an opening reception.

I requested things. They had arranged for 300 pieces of boerewors, which would ensure that I would not run out of performance time. Considering the amount of people attending, to run out of food would be inadvisable. I demanded a lot of beer for the audience; they gave me a couple of kegs. A strange conflict developed between my 'opening function' and that of the Peter who organised the event. He had arranged for delicious snacks and elegant wines as well as a contemporary brass band to open the proceedings. At the same time I was provided with a large PA system through which I pumped an old mix of tracks that my friend Dan and I used to play at Joburg bar and other venues during 2000-2001. This consisted of Nineties R&B tracks, which (at the time) ensured a couple of lemons and other obscure items being launched at our heads. Because there was no official programme I decided to interrupt the brass band as soon as they hit their peak. I started off with a very loud version of Msell Jordan's 'This Is How We Do It'.

This generated some tension between the audience and myself, but their discomfort was soon smoothed over by the provision of boerewors. After a few Belgian beers my interaction with some of the audience improved (and I suspect that not all of them were involved in the arts, as I was told that my performance was the 'best work on the exhibition'). The guests were happy as the thought of a second helping. After approximately two hours I became tired, and it was getting cold. I had also consumed vast amounts of beer myself. The sausage-eating attendees would have nothing of my thoughts of retirement, so much so that I told them to 'fuck off'. When this did not work I handed over my tongs with the instructions: 'do it yourself then'. I was released from my duties by an eager clan of sausage grillers and retired.
for drinks with fellow artist Alexandra Zwaal-Kallos, soon to be joined by everyone involved in the exhibition.

To this day I am not entirely sure why I was the only artist to present three works. I was also the only young artist to be written about in the interview with Cis Bierinckx in the catalogue, in which he somehow compares me to Wim Delvoye. Below follows a translation of the catalogue entry (my translation):

You invited Ed Young to do a performance at the opening of Grasduinen. Why exactly this young South African?

When I was in South Africa last year, I happened to come across Ed Young. I read a couple of articles about his sort of anarchistic performances and became interested in his actions. He is a rebel, someone that likes to antagonise the public. What he does is situated somewhere between bitterness, bad taste, cynicism and amusement. He is hard to classify: it’s even hard to make out if he is even an artist. For example, he presented his own collection for sale at Sotheby’s. Young asks the question: “What does all this art mean, the bullshit around it, the entourage and the hype that is often associated with art?” Then he also puts himself as artist in question. According to me he is busy with gripping material and interesting enough to entice. He is an anarchist, like Wim Delvoye who recently climbed the ladder of fame; it will be interesting to see how the public respond to Ed Young’s work and his performance.

(Bierinckx 2004: 43)
the guard spent most of his time in his office between 7 pm and 9 pm. I found a pair of vintage Adidas which happened to be in my size.

We went back the following night and I stole the shoes while Max was filming me from inside the gallery. This is another piece where chance played a crucial role and (possibly) saved the piece. Originally, the idea was to create a three-channel video: Raffard filming from the inside, me carrying a rolling camera as if I was just carrying it, and actress Melody Abad filming the entrance of the space, capturing my entrance and exit.

Apart from this team, we had a driver of a car who would take everybody home, and a Scooter waiting for me at the entrance as an escape vehicle.

While filming, the outside camera ran into problems and we were left with two channels. Max Raffard bumped into an acquaintance from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, whom he interviewed; I suspect partly because he was nervous and because he was attempting to disguise himself as a tourist filming someone else. This, for me, saved the video. The dialogue between Max and Fabrice formed the banal tension, which provides the piece with the necessary content.

I escaped on the back of a scooter.

BIG IN GHENT
In the beginning there was nothing. And the Lord said ‘let there be light’ and there was still nothing, but now you could see it.

I have always intended to master the art of doing as little as absolutely possible. I even aimed at convincing a group of students that for me the ultimate performance would be to be flown out to a foreign exhibition and do exactly what the audience comes there for: drink the wine and talk a bit of art nonsense and not be much concerned with the work on display.

It is not that I think that art should be ignored on purpose: I find that most art bores me. This has led some questioning my involvement in the arts. The fact is that I don’t like ‘art’. I don’t like the industry, I dislike the bickering, the backstabbing and constant references to: ‘but I did it first’ and ‘she stole my idea’. Basically I like the bullshit. And it is not that I really dislike all the art; I just think that my work is better.

I was invited to Ghent to do absolutely nothing. Kendell Geers, who proposed Sophie Perry’s curator, originally initiated the exhibition. Perry’s curator realised that this kind of project was almost impossible to pull off given the timeline. Geers, who initially demanded of me to come up with a good concept because he ‘didn’t want to shit in his own backyard’, also lost interest as he was involved in a ‘fucking intense’ workshop with Marina Abramovich.

Only a handful of artists were invited as opposed to an initial larger group: Hendie van der Marwer, Carol-Anne Gainer, Bridget Baker, Tebako Mahlatsi and myself. We were hosted by Yosvall, programmed by Barbara Rans and Eva de Groote, in conjunction with the Flanders International Film Festival. Unfortunately, we were abandoned by our own curators and administrators.

Do not let a couple of young South Africans loose to do as they please: absolute chaos will ensue. I spent most of my time in the bar. Baker managed a beautiful extension of her Blue City Girl, while Gainer stuck to her original proposal. Hendie made some plans for the restaurant where we ate soup on a daily basis. We barely saw him.

The South African debate came up a couple of times. A memorable moment was after the Brasse Vienne performance when I was sitting backstage taking advantage of the free Belgian beer. Four journalists were interviewing Mr. Fat, one of the main MCs from ‘Brasse’. I was listening to his input about...
South Africa and its young artists, when Fat got increasingly angry and spouted little sense about the bad situation as to why the young white artists are so very racist and why it is so hard to be coloured in a developing South Africa.

Given that what Fat was saying is true to a large extent, he neglected to note similar strategies emanating from the very people he was attacking. Many young South Africans address a similar cause within the arts. He became more aggressive. I find this kind of dishonesty, excluding the facts alarming especially when fed to a confused first-world society. It took me about fifteen minutes of impatience to interrupt the interviews with: 'You're talking absolute kak.' Mr. Fat, alarmed at realising he was sitting next to an Afrikaans speaking South African in the first place, went red with anger and proclaimed: 'Kom hier, ek sa jou klap!' This sent our assistant Valerie into a complete frenzy at the thought of me—skinny Ed—being beaten up by an extremely large Mr. Fat.

I was surprised that Geers managed to attend a seminar of ours as he refused to host it in the first place. He contributed some commentary about uniformed young South African artists, but the conversation was carefully steered back into position by Bierinckx, who was hosting the forum and somehow understood the current funding issue in South Africa. Some members from Brosse (with the obvious exception of Mr. Fat) attended the seminar: mainly the B-boys as well as drummer, Sean Ou Tim, from Godesso, who also performed at the festival. It was interesting to get these performers involved in the conversation and to find that the performers had as bad, if not worse of a struggle than visual artists.

My piece, Do Nothing, somehow marked an end to a specific mode of production that I was dealing with during the past few years. Although I wanted to leave my production open ended in this dissertation, stopping mid-sentence so to speak, I realised that my production will take on a different role in the future. What will be is unclear at present, but the seminar that I presented in Ghent seemed to package everything together: Combined with my doing nothing project, the whole MFA project seemed to come to a logical conclusion, and this was evident in my presentation in Ghent.

Geers left early but left with a statement: 'Let me just tell you all this: This is the first time that Ed has done what a curator has told him... and I am very disappointed.'

Apparently he really was.
APPENDIX A
THE FOUR PETERS
Ed Young's audacious performance piece - a braai - soon turned allegorical. Somewhere in the skewed (skewered!) logic of reheating food above charcoal (but hosts had provided pre-cooked chipolatas that resembled dildo casts gone horribly wrong) came a disquiet highly uncharacteristic of the Belgians.

As if the show itself were collapsing under the weight of counter-colonialism (Young has always wanted a Weber), an unlikely approbation with regard to the braai's stupidity melted into appreciation with regard to its gustatory integrity.

But this soon conflated into a rage at what were undersubscribed portions. Tall chino-wearers came to the rescue with freshly reconstituted pork replenishments.

And their names were Peter. Peter to a man, a parental act of democracy designed to keep even nomenclature as even-keeled as the weather-beaten barks bobbing against the jetties.

Culture Peter was in charge of administration, devoting himself to red tape with the aplomb of an Indian gentleman set to profit directly from partition.

Soccer Peter had something to do with the organisation of the reception, but it seems not even the footballers of the illustrious Belgian leagues are immune to a redonian destiny. He spent most of his time lamenting his distant days as a professional soccer player.

Creepy Peter's involvement was largely unclear, but his mere presence provoked discomfort among women and a gender identity crisis in just about every man.

And Unnamed Peter, a SMAK employee, got the nod here not merely because of his name but for the distinctively Flemish alacrity with which he set about the task of becoming invisible.
APPENDIX B
THE LOVE SQUARE

Awaiting liquor in a late-night tavern like bow-legged scabbies ashore for replenishments, we soon found ourselves caught up in a love square - a love triangle with an extra participant.

In the red comer was Ed, in another nameless ingenue dubbed Tinkerbell (polka dot dress and matching Dorothy slippers), along with her hapless boyfriend Steven (an absentee landlord in the house of love) and Plum Girl (an expert in the combination of fantasy and defamation designed to drag Steven's name through the mud).

Conflict soon ensued, scarcely helped by Ed's manipulative and mendacious disclosure about his homosexuality, leaving Tinkerbell in a crisis, Steven (potentially) in a quandary and Plum Girl in tears (her claims that her first sexual experience had been with a woman were met with a dear acknowledgement by Ed: 'Fuck of I').

By the time the locals of the Helvetia had gone home to prepare for their hangovers, we were left with the elegy of a sartorially challenged local artist who was, after decades in the game, still confused with his twin brother: 'I've spent half my life being someone I'm not.'

Therewith we retreated, past the empty family homes and garden gnomes waiting patiently for season, through farms unpredictably set in the middle of the road, and along the flat pale sandy beach to our army camp-style lodgings.

Sleep was fitful, haunted by broad-cheeked people who showed us blueprints for 2004 medieval architecture.
APPENDIX C

DIJ / MY BAND

[Eminem]

I don't know dude, I think everyone's all jealous and shit,

Coz I'm like the lead singer of the band dude,

And I think everybody's got a fucking problem with me dude,

And they need to calm it down with me after the show, because

[Chorus - Eminem]

These chicks don't even know the name of my band

But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands

Cos once I blow they know that I'll be the man

All because I'm the lead singer of my band

[Eminem]

So I get onstage right, drop the mic

Walk up to these hot chicks and I'm all like

"Hey ladies, my name's Slim Shady, I'm the lead singer of D-12, baby"

They're all like "Oh my God its him, Becky oh my fucking God it's Eminem, I swear to fucking God that you fucking rock, please Marshall please let me suck your cock"

Now by now, the rest of the fellas get jealous

Especially when I drop the beat and do my acapellas

All the chicks start yelling at the top of their lungs

So I was walking down the street with the mic in my hand

But when we fight it's kinda like sibling rivalry

Cos they're back on stage the next night with me

Yesterday Kuniva tried to pull a knife on me

Cos I said to Jessica Alba is my wife, bitch

This rockstar shit is the life for me

And all the other guys just despise me coz

[Chorus - Eminem]

These chicks don't even know the name of my band

But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands

Cos once I blow they know that I'll be the man

All because I'm the lead singer of my band

[Bridge - Eminem]

My band, my band, my band, my band, my band, my band, my band, my band, my band, baby

[Emce]

You just wanna see a nigga backwards don't you!

And his always sound best on the mic

Look at Em little punk-ass thinking he the shit

You know me by my own taking of the chicks

Ah I thought we had an interview with DJ Clue

[Emce]

No I had an interview, not you two

You got to be for sound-check

*And I ain't going 2 sound-check

Our mics is screwed up

*And he always sound base
"You no what man, imma say something, yo Em
[Verse] You got something to say?
[Em] No
I thought you was about to tell him off, what up?
[Em] Sorry fell in love when I feel like man should
*And you just make me up we supposed to be crew
Man I was about to talk right after you
*Oh man whatever
I swear, I swear man

[Chorus - Eminem]
Those chicks don't even know the name of my band
But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands
Cos once I blow they know that I'll be the man
All because I'm the lead singer of my band

[Proof]
They say the lead singer rock but the group is not
Once we sold out arenas to amusement parks
I should cut his mic off when the music starts (Ayo wh)
Ready to snap on a band like Em
Every time I hear "Hey dude I love your band"
We ain't a band bro, we don't play instruments
So why he getting 90 and we only get 10 percent
And these guys acting funny every area code
*Proof spittin' fire, bitch carry your own
Can't make it to the stage, security in the way
Who the fuck are you?

[Bizarre]
Goddamn I'm sick of this group
Time for me to go solo and make some loot
I told you I made the beats and wrote all the raps
Till Kay Arntz, clipped me some crutz
"Lose Yourself" video - I was in the back
"Superman" video - I was in the back
For the media, I got some suggestions
Funk Marshall, set up the questions
Like who are D-12, how we get started
Proof, let's get the group
Both are you reuired?
Anyway, I'm the songwriter guy in the group
Big ass stomach, bitches think I'm cute
CDBB told me we do sit-ups to get buff
Did I 2 and a half and couldn't get up
Fuck D-12, I'm outta this band
I'm bout to start a group with the real Roxanne

[Verse]
Girl why can't you see you're the only one for me
And it just tears my ass apart to know that you don't know my name
You don't know my name

[Refrain]
These chicks don't even know the name of my band (Haha)
But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands (Funk Marshall)
Cos once I blow they know that I'll be the man (Yea)
All because I'm the lead singer of my band (Hahaha)

[Chorus - Eminem & Bizarre]
My band, my band, our band, your band, our band, Roxanne, Disturb

[Chorus - Maroon Accent]
I'm the lead singer of my band I get all the girls to take off their underwear
I'm the lead singer of my band my solo makes all the pretty girls want to dance

My solo
Look out for my new single it's called "My Salsa"
My solo solo solo solo solo
My solo makes all the pretty girls want to dance and take off their underwear
My solo solo solo solo solo
My solo
Where did everybody go?
APPENDIX D

encentric] How come we don't even talk no more
And you don't even call no more
We don't barely keep in touch at all
And I don't even feel the same love when we hug no more
And after all the years we been through
Are no way this bullshit can be true
We barely even are a damn thing changed, unless it's you
We barely keep in touch at all

[Chorus: Eminem]

We family and ain't a damn thing changed, unless it's you
After all the years we been down
Ain't no way no how, this bullshit can be true

[Verse 1: Eminem]

So young, so full of life in vibrant side by side wherever you

(Verse 2: Kon Artis)

So tame out woulda killed a nigga first

[Chorus]

(Verse 3: Proof)

You're only at the top cuz my homie had to stop

[Chorus]
Now we act like I gotta live only for the block
Homies in the hood only see me on the side
Only gossip on the porch get to speak on who
Fools I used to rap with all respect still
Like my figure get to happen out proof it just happen
But PROOF it just ain't out the party was planned
Shady made it so my babies also amongst us
Footprint in the blood of my enemies friends
Whenever real intelligence dies forever till the end
I sit in the blood in your eyes and the tears in your eyes
And wasting my times with these snakes in disguise
How come when you ask us with bitter fight
And (how come) it's my fault for what you did with your life
And everyone goes to hear you and play you look away
We barely embrace, you can't even look me in my face

[Chorus]
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Street-Porter, Janet. 2001. ‘Over the last five years people of all ages have flocked to see the kind of art Tom Stoppard despises’. The Independent. 3 June. [Accessed online] URL unavailable [2 May 2005]


CONTRA MUNDI

André Langaoum's most recent experimental project, Contra Mundii literally meaning against the world, is presented to us as a kind of challenge to contemporary aesthetics. It came out of a need to recapturing an intuitive ability that he found was "missing" in works he felt were "difficult" in some way. Represented on this shelf with David: Delia, David, Matthew Hodge, Victor Huynh and Cameron Parker, Dessie Southwood

Perhaps the first clue as to the nature of the "difficult" phrase is related to his political process, or the fact that it was created by David. He first identified the painting as the most supportive of the artist's attempt to engage in the stage of public art production. But there was nothing wrong about the painting's appearance. He felt the painting was driven by a desire for the audience to say that the "challenge" presented by Contra Mundii does not follow the normal line of exhibition, that is to say, it is a kind of challenge to the main audience. Indeed, the picture price for Delia and in Langaoum's words, "a true challenge of the era in which we are in a transitional phase."

It is important to mention that Contra Mundii does not come to a conclusion of the exhibition, that is, it is not a kind of work that is maintained by the audience. Indeed, the picture price for Delia, in Langaoum's words, "a true challenge of the era in which we are in the transitional phase."

In the end, rather oddly, the artist who has most clearly embodied this principle is David. Although he is known better for his success in the limited commercial art world, Delia was still a significant work. His notable contributions to Contra Mundii and two large, meticulously crafted "Titan" boards are in collaboration with David Slayer, Delia's paintings are of the avant-garde and still very much in support of the new. Some of the text include phrases such as "can you see granite" and "look through my window and maybe something different"..." the text is a different side of me..." By including her in the show, Langaoum states questions regarding the validity of separating high art and commercial art in the permanent historical timeline to which we have become accustomed.

While I am in agreement with the comment underpinning the Contra Mundii show, the critical self-criticism of works and creators alike being an old concept of mine, I feel that the challenge was not nearly actualized sufficiently. This was evident in David's painting. The work is notable above all as an aesthetic, but fails to engage the audience. Contra Mundii has been the work of David Slayer, Victor Huynh and Cameron Parker, it pervades the work. It was my feeling that it had confronted the perceived line of "sloppy" old art practices, and was unsuccessful so, certainly at the point where it is presented as a potential constructive possibility. I have seen other works within the ambit of the show, for example, Langaoum's Young's " sensation " and not deliver the necessary goods.

Top piece on the shelf did, to my mind, manage to engage with the subject of the art world, in the sense of the world of David Slayer. Young's Thrownaway Gesture is an important work, considered in the context of the "boundary" and "sensation" and "sensation" and "sensation" manners. Some of the text include phrases such as "look through my window and maybe something different..." the text is a different side of me..." By including her in the show, Langaoum states questions regarding the validity of separating high art and commercial art in the permanent historical timeline to which we have become accustomed.

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Samenwerkingsuitblik voor hedendaagse kunst


Kunst aangepast aan locaties

Collectie uit SMAK aan zee

Onder de naam 'collectie uit SMAK aan zee' fühlt man sich von verschiedenen Plätzen in Bredene inspiriert.

The audience becomes the art

The scenically located venue has been described as beautifully situated. Frieda Kupfer has probably helped. But there’s another reason: Capetown Ed Young's art exhibitions attract up to a thousand people at a time. The artist's name has become synonymous with all that is radical, intense and controversial in contemporary cultural circles, and the crowds do care to catch the next episodes in a series of cool art events.

The sell-out 25-year-old with the three-day-old stubble and the engagingly self-served and so-called social-media hangout have already generated more media coverage than many art practitioners together.

And, as is usual when people push uncomfortable boundaries, the press exhibits itself, labeling him a student and proclaiming him a genius.

You can’t be called late, and a party around. Sure, I’m having fun. But also want to be taken seriously, he says.

In a society where the average person associates art with something you hang in a wall, Young operates outside of the expected, fun, and in points out, there’s nothing new about conceptual art. What are fresh are his emotions.

If all started with the auction of bar owner and former journalist Bruce Gordan, who was sold as a work of art by Michelle Art School master-student Young. Gordon was then donated to the South African National Gallery, where he is part of the permanent collection. Or rather, the concept of Gordon belongs to the SANG, but his body can be found behind his bar in Long Street.

But wait, it gets more complicated. Young followed up this modestly published event with the first of his one-night exhibitions at the Bell- Roberts Gallery in Cape Town, called 'Blocks'. The inspiration for the project was drawn from an all-woman string quartet who performed on the night, sparking wine and stylish canapés were served. It was the epitome of a modish art opening. And this modish art opening was also the artwork itself.

"The audience (and performance) becomes the art," says Young. It's a lot of the artists' work. Young’s mode is womanly questions about itself.

All the while Andreas Lambrinides was up in the Alice catalogue. His production makes most people a bit fidgety. You are not quite sure what it is you are supposed to be looking at as art.

Would apply to Young’s new offering, another side-one might say. Again, the event became the art work, with semi-naked strippers; a pile of newly released Helsinki board and a looped Outdoor hip-hop video provoking aesthetic appreciation for the crowds.

Later art student. Promotion brochure: Young has been called all of these. But he has also been hailed as 'brilliant' and 'very clever and very amusing' by some art practitioners who are prettily clever themselves.

“There’s going to be more – this is part of a long-term process,” says Young.

His next show will be in Cape Town in September – watch the press for details...
From: Jeanette Gilks  
Subject: Hot Topic Q&A Session  
Date received: June 15

Dear Andrew Lamprecht,  

I read your long letter on ArtThrob and am pleased that you enjoyed your Durban stay. I’m sorry you didn’t like my questions at the Hot Topic Q&A session at the NSA gallery. Annoying to be sure, considering your otherwise arcadian Durban visit.

And then a small, insignificant blight in Paradise:

“... a very irritating person who asked endlessly irritating questions ...”

Yes, I’m the worm; fun-spoiling and critical. Critical of the Critical.

But it was, after all, a “Hot Topic Q&A session... at the gallery.” Consequently I DID imagine that there would be Questions! And Answers! possibly Answers-Framed-As-Questions!

Verbal exchange/interaction with the audience was, however, mostly avoided. Dialogue was replaced by long interruptions of loud music and on one occasion there was a tape recording of some fellow swearing loudly in Afrikaans. And I mean LOUD! I was not provoked by this, I just found it irritating like the relentless ads on TV where I can, fortunately, zap the mute button. Was this an intended response, perhaps? (Another endlessly irritating question, no doubt.). Since I found this antic silly, I was not tempted to giggle as some people did. Not even once. Not my sense of humour. Sorry. But then I called you Red Cap and Ed Young White Cap and I thought THIS quite amusing (considering that both of you were wearing caps- one Red One and One White One,) but you got a bit cross, I think. Not YOUR sense of humour!

Seriously though, I had imagined SOME kind of discourse. Something entertaining, and tongue-and cheek certainly, but nevertheless mentally stimulating and provoking sharp and witty responses and repartee, given the nature of the Puta event and your clear enjoyment of piss-take and puns.

ABSOLUTELY my sense of humour! That’s why I came.

I expected more of a storm from the “... highly regarded curatorial team of head honchos.” I had expected a more ironic, possibly satirical look at the Puta performance in the “... trendy, hot and relevant space for Contemporary art.” Instead we got, on the whole, fairly immature and on occasions quite petulant responses to the questions asked by the audience. The development of the evening put me off attending the walkabouts by Carol Brown, Peter Machen and Andrew Verster.

I must confess that I had hoped for a dialogue that reflected, even fleetingly, some community standards of rational debate.

S U M M I T  F U N U A
The gospel according to Mr ex-Max Normal

Suzy Bell hits the Bell-Roberts Gallery for an unusual, soft and cuddly fluffy toy experience courtesy of the Daliesque Watkin Tudor Jones, a man who takes animal fetish into a new design dimension.
Letter from Durban
by Andrew Lamprecht

When Zen Marie picked me up at Durban International Airport, looking like a lead character from Starzky and Hutch in his bright floral shirt and straw hat, I should have known I was in for an interesting time. I had arrived to take part in a weeklong exhibition and series of events at the NSA Gallery as part of the work of Galerie Puta.

Zen was "missioning" for the Puta, (an activity he usually does with consummate ease and skill for his grandmother, parents and other members of his family) while preparing for his participation in a major group show to be curated by Zayd Minty at the NSA in June.

The Galerie Puta event was received well by the seemingly small but incredibly loyal Durban art crowd. I decided to write this letter to convey some of my sense of amazement and positivity towards the way things seem to happen in Durban, as opposed to Cape Town, and also to send out a thank you to all who made the events work so well.

The NSA, for those of you who have never been there, is a truly beautiful building, completed less than a decade ago. I had the good fortune to meet the architect, usually resident in London, who came to the opening of the show and I gushed to her about the wonders of the space.

On one side, the gallery is separated from an adjoining small park and outdoors area by a restaurant. Incredibly there is no solid wall between this outdoor area and the restaurant, but rather an open wooden lattice-like structure. The large gate and grill that demarcate the gallery space are also open to the elements, meaning that air flows freely from the outside to the inside of the gallery at all times, day and night. Only in Durban with its wonderful winter weather!

Storm Janse van Rensburg is the director of the NSA and all with whom I spoke agreed that she has managed to make it a truly cutting-edge space for art in a relatively short space of time. Next year the NSA will celebrate its centenary and he and his committee have seen to it that it will turn one hundred not as a doddering fossil but as a trendy, hot and relevant place for Contemporary art to be seen and appreciated. Most exciting of all, though, was the armful of catalogues she gave each of us - and even a set for my institution's library to boot.

This amazement continued throughout the trip when I found that in almost every sphere Durbanites are friendly, helpful, generous to a fault and openhearted. When Carol invited us for a guided tour of her gallery we left in amazement at how this human dynamo had built up a superb collection.

The DAGOs collection can rival any other institutional collection as far as the last ten years goes, which is quite an achievement on its impossible small budget. Aside from the collection Carol offered a good hour of informed and intelligent discussion on art; gave us a new understanding of the Red Eye events, which have brought art to a sector of Durbanites citizenry that would never look inside a gallery. Most exciting of all, though, was the armful of catalogues she gave each of us - and even a set for my institution's library to boot.

This is typical of the sort of response I got, and I could not help but draw unfavourable comparisons with my home, Cape Town, with its often mean-spirited, social-rank-obsessed and generally unwelcoming face that seems to be visible more and more often these days.

While Galerie Puta is clearly about having fun with art, everyone still took it seriously (even a very irritating person who asked endlessly irritating questions during an evening HotTopic Q&A session that was held at the gallery). Even as they destroyed our work, Carol and Peter were doing so with understanding of what it was that we were about. Durbanites seem to engage with art in a way that few of my townspeople do.

The HotTopic series is organised by Hillary Graham, who also teaches Theory and Practice of Art at the DIT, and was another example of the hospitality I have been shown. After we did an early morning seminar with one of his classes, Graham invited all of us over to his house for a braai on the weekend.

This letter has gone on too long, but I wish to conclude by noting that everything seems to be just dandy in Durban's art world as far as I can see. I understand that it is quite small but that smallness may in part have caused it to engage with the worlds of dance, theatre, fashion and music in ways that I have never seen anywhere else in insular South Africa.

During my time there I encountered almost no bitchiness, so universal in my town, but only true, genuine support for any sincere worker in the arts field. This was beautifully illustrated by the "coffee room" in gallerist Karen Bradtke's spacious and inviting new gallery, artSPACE Durban, where not only are all the flyers of all the shows (and not just art but also theatre, fashion, dance, etc.) to be found, but also proudly pinned up are positive reviews from rival galleries.
I look forward to witnessing such a spirit in Cape Town. And maybe we will still get that spirit. One person who seemed ever-present although physically absent during the entire period of the excursion was Virginia MacKenny. Her name came up constantly, invariably accompanied by a sigh and not infrequently with a touch of moisture appearing in the eyes of the speaker.

Virginia was Durban's top art critic, an artist and a teacher who left generations of students with nothing but love and respect for her (not to mention superb training). She has clearly made an astonishing contribution to Durban's art structure. She has now moved from the DIT to teach at Michaelis in Cape Town.

Now I have gone on and on about how nice Durbanites are and how beastly Capetonians are as if I were not a part of the latter bunch. So, I'll sign off with a typically ungenerous, thankless Cape Town note and say sorry Durban, your loss is our gain! But seriously, I think Durban has a great deal to teach me about how to conduct myself in the sphere of art and I am sincerely grateful for this, first, lesson.

Love,
Andrew
Gallery of whores visits Durban

HEAD ON down to Glenwood today and tomorrow for the last hour of Galerie Puto's invasion of the NSA Gallery in Bulwer Road. Galerie Puto offer the Portuguese word for prostitute to a collective of three respected artists, Andrew Lamprecht, Cameron Potter and Ed Young, who take the pat out the gallery system and the South African art world. This Saturday afternoon and Sunday, they have filled the gallery with works that will immediately evoke the counter-response "But um, you're also 'prostitute'" - since little of the work corresponds to what we'd traditionally term art. Which is all part of the game. The collective and their exhibition interrogate the notion of the sanctity of the gallery space: exposes what it is that separates art from everything else, and consumes a fair amount of alcohol along the way as they walk the fine line between sermon and excrement.

Galerie Puto is on at the NSA Gallery until tomorrow afternoon. Entrance is free.
SIMPLY ASSASSINATING

In the United States, in the city of Los Angeles, in the heart of the entertainment industry, there is an art gallery called "Puta." The gallery is known for its controversial art exhibitions. The most recent exhibition, titled "Galerie Puta," was considered by many as a statement against the established art world. The gallery's mascot, a green alien with red eyes, became a symbol of their rebellious nature.

The exhibition included works by artists who challenge the traditional norms of the art world. One of the pieces that received the most attention was a sculpture of a naked man with a gun. The sculpture was made of bronze and was placed in the center of the gallery. The man was holding a gun and was looking directly at the viewer. The sculpture was controversial, with some critics calling it a commentary on violence and power, while others saw it as a piece of provocative art.

The gallery's founder, Robert Bodil, was interviewed about the exhibition. "We believe in breaking the rules and challenging the conventional art world," he said. "We want to show people that art can be more than just pretty pictures. It can be a powerful tool for social change.

The exhibition also included several paintings that were explicitly political. One painting showed a group of women protesting, while another depicted a landscape that had been destroyed by industrial development. The gallery's website includes a section where visitors can learn more about the artists and their work.

The gallery is located on a street corner in downtown Los Angeles. It is open daily from 10 am to 8 pm. Visitors are encouraged to come and see the art for themselves. It is a place where people can express their opinions and challenge the status quo.

The gallery's tagline is "simply assassinating," which is a play on the word "assassination." It represents the gallery's goal to disrupt the norm and make a statement. The gallery's owners believe that art should be challenging and thought-provoking, and they are committed to creating a space where people can express their ideas freely. The Puta Gallery is a place where artists can experiment and take risks, and visitors can be inspired by the creativity that surrounds them.

The gallery's mascot, a green alien with red eyes, is a symbol of their rebellious nature. The alien represents the gallery's ability to break free from conventional norms and create art that is truly original. The green color of the alien represents nature, while the red eyes symbolize a strong presence. The alien is a representation of the gallery's goal to challenge the established art world and create a space for artists to express themselves freely.

The Puta Gallery is a place where art and politics intersect, and where people can come together to challenge the status quo. It is a place where artists and visitors can come together to create a true sense of community. The gallery is a place where art is not just a pretty picture, but a powerful tool for social change.
Engaging with notions of fun and play, the work of Cape Town's 'Flash' artists – Ed Young, Vuyisa Ntamende and Cameron Platter – is highly visible and frequently confounding. Andrew Lamprecht, official theorist to the group, explains
Fast cars, women, cash and parties in Cape Town, where a sense of humour can be as seriouslyโบราณ as a small group of artists is skilfully working on bringing a light touch to the often heavy-handed political graffiti that is sprayed around the city walls. They seek to transform a tabloid-trailed image of their work into one that engages with popular culture.

Vuyiswa Nyamende's 'A view of contemporary art' at the Ferreira Gallery, Ed Young's '2004 violence and an Irreverent Importance' all combine in a heady cocktail of work, the process of art production. Loosely grouped around the group of artists is doggedly working at bringing a light touch to reality, making an approachable mix of hedonistic lifestyle making an appeal to the masses.

The Flash group made a considerable splash in January with 'Flash - they seek to embrace the light touch of contemporary art.' In Cape Town, where a sense of humour is often masked behind a tabloid-trailed image of reality, the Flash group seeks to transform the notion of art production into one that engages with popular culture.

Bruce Gordon's 'The Love Practice' at the Gallery, Ed Young's '2004 violence and an Irreverent Importance' all combine in a heady cocktail of work, the process of art production. Loosely grouped around the group of artists is doggedly working at bringing a light touch to reality, making an approachable mix of hedonistic lifestyle making an appeal to the masses.

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six,"Anarchist" paintings, in which mocked at his friends' speculations which were the biggest vices of the Six. Dan's Whiskey, a South-Zimbabwean artist closely associated with the Flash Street, went so the crowd, and somber face! that one well, and regularly a Allowed to live in a sort of experimental existence. The Flash crew work hard at trying to include a sense of humour in a frequently exhaustive and compulsory art event.

In addition all these exhibitions are relatively small because the notion of free play. The seams.

The astute observer could see that Young had presented one work in each of the codified disciplines of contemporary art production.

Youngists make a substantial contribution to what they do. Young's work was to make its work for the show. An edition of two, and comes as a surprise as Sue Williamson, Kenneth Varty, Brylan Baker, James Chirwa, and the like. Palace, and original work firmly placed in figurative, contemporaneous Youngists make a substantial contribution to what they do. Young's work was to make its work for the show.

Youngists make a substantial contribution to what they do. Young's work was to make its work for the show.
Their rapid fame, irreverence, lack of respect for the holy cows of the art establishment and seemingly 'easy' art have earned them not a few enemies and critics.

...
The participation of South Africa's art-makers and thinkers in the global visual arts field is something that has happened inevitably, organically and compulsively for some time now, and must surely be seen to have been hugely beneficial both to our own and the larger field. There have been criticisms within the context of the Eurocentric debate with accusations of South African art seeming to something other than the nurturing of the South African visual arts, or the general enrichment of a contemporary South African experience. Or the suggestion that aspirant plays in the global contemporary art field take outside of South Africa and Africa for direction because they deem a "developed world" mode to be the starting point for art production of any significance. For a number of reasons, I am one of those who believe this to be a dangerously narrow view of the situation.

I have a number of years’ experience as a lecturer in tertiary arts education, mostly in the context of a Technical College. For most of the students I encountered, the visual arts were not a familiar realm when they first registered. However, year after year, by their second and third years in the department, these students were independently and very successfully producing work within a contemporary (global) contemporary art practice (SA and otherwise) which was directly and distinctly related to their own cultural backgrounds.

"I can’t remember a student working with content that was NOT directly related to his or her own background," states Lamprecht, a school lecturer. "Many of those students left the institution to continue making and exhibiting work independently here and abroad."

My point is this: within contemporary South African life, the arts represent a "COMPLEXIFICATION" of thinking and experience at a time when so much is compartmentalised and reduced in the name of development and redress. Nor do I think that contemporary art practice alienates aspirant artists or offends any community. I support the position that it is never necessary to dumb anything down in order to make it accessible. That is a sure fire way to guarantee that, in the longer term, everyone loses. Creativity and energy is required in the development of methods to facilitate access, and I reject the idea that this amounts to forcing engagement with an alien animal.

From: Bonita Alice
Subject: (Completely)
Date received: February 23

I think your broad strokes take in a number of issues. Firstly though, I would be reluctant to make such a generalisation about a diverse range of artistic practices. I don’t think I could honestly say that things are as fraught with problems as you suggest. Secondly, I think the responsibility for the problems you see as ubiquitous lies as much with the viewers. When will they spend less time reading the blurbs on the wall and more time looking at the work? I’ve got to be honest though, the level of audience ‘participation’ you seem to desire sounds a bit shaky to me.

Paul Edmonds

---

One lame Asshole, for sure
GuyWilloughby reviews 'artist' Ed Young's latest stunt

AFOREMENTIRED, you--well-known zeitgeist Ed Young launched his latest instalment of the "Theatre of the World" at the local little theatre, where the food is lousy, the drinks are weak, and the service is even worse.

Young's latest stunt was an attempt to draw attention to the plight of the working class, particularly those living in the townships. The performance was a series of skits, each one more absurd than the last, with Young himself playing the lead role in each.

"Young's latest stunt is a sad commentary on the state of our society," said Lamprecht, a school lecturer. "It's a shame that someone with his talent and resources would choose to waste them on such a肤thless effort."

Young's performance was met with mixed reviews. Some found it offensively lowbrow, while others praised the star's willingness to take risks and push boundaries.

"I think Young's latest stunt was a brave move," said GuyWilloughby, a local art critic. "It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there like that, especially when you're dealing with such a controversial topic."

In the end, Young's latest stunt was a mixed success. While it generated a lot of buzz, it also received a fair amount of criticism. Despite this, Young is determined to keep pushing boundaries and challenging convention.

"I'm not sure if this was a success or not," Young said after the performance. "But I'm proud of myself. I took a risk and I'm not going to let anyone tell me I did it wrong."

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ARTY PARTIES: "Sedum" is a party with 50% more hip than you.
who is the asshole?

By your mother

On the face is a clown nose. Go to give this bone. After the section through the quasi-spiritual section, and proceed to the inception of Ed Young's adventure, revealing the total in a pandemonium of emotion and two mugs, it is time to make sense of the whole mess. The question is, how does every single human walk in the gap for an emotion of performances and dissonances; as if it's not enough.

After all, why back anything? There are already enough things to everyday life, in the moment of feeding. The choices of self-fulfillment and the death of the human species are connected and difficult—more than it's always in the idea of how to explain the complexity of human culture, when involving in the emotional aspect of your mind. Want to be beautiful? Speed is subjective anyway. Maybe Ed finds cheap entertainment beautiful.

Or maybe it goes ten second limbs to watch the heroes of people watching, people watching. One way to look into the very young, just to enjoy. In a moment, a phenomenon, to be: manic, regressive, beakish music and cellular wandering. Is that what people in our minds. Blue up at kids. Don't worry.

Everyone is in explicit to be there because it's gonna be zain or something else. Those are, where? Self-realize. There are several of naked reality in the gap which makes them in the position they're sold in the 299. There's a series of self-fulfillments[

Do what is the artwork? An experiment in social behavior? The audience, and all other social mediators and readers, is the artwork. And so, it's Ed's adventure. He has always been in total isolation. Ed has no idea what's happening in the human species. He is a kind of occasion. And given a 25% risk of going in every single picture, there is no purpose. And if it's just to what the moment we're asked when? Truly electric the emotion?

Finally, what's the basis of an artist. A console and others

A black hole, a 'portal' thing. A display and celebration of non-growth. An experimental, anti-social activity for a% or more. An abstract distance of the inner being.

There's work, made the same outward sums of being-drinking, children's musing, and an aesthetic act of the inner being. Art makes it easier to watch the math. Following the flow notes of the artists of_sense. It's all the same thing. Or are we really so easily exhausted and precipitated? Are we really the people for which we draw the fire? What goes on after we kill? The gaze of the gap. Are we really that susceptible?

So who is the asshole? The one wearing the social commentary on everyone's ability? Or the one watching in the group of one person's safety? Or the one who is really feeling the risk of it all? Or the one who is really feeling the risk of it all? Or the one who is really feeling the risk of it all? Or the one who is really feeling the risk of it all? Or the one who is really feeling the risk of it all?
Conceptual art brings up the rear

"Asshole" was the title of the third in a series of one-night exhibitions by contemporary artist Ed Young. Young, perhaps most well-known for his previous exhibition which included the sale of Joburg bar owner Bruce Gordon to the South African National Gallery, has had some vitriolic responses to his often-bizarre exhibitions.

The concept of Asshole is based on some of these disparaging responses. Young acknowledges his reputation as an asshole, and through a range of more traditional pieces, he has created an installation environment to stress this point.

These traditional elements include painting, print media, video, as well as performative works. The one night exhibition took place at the Bell-Roberts Gallery in Loop Street last night.

For more information, contact the gallery at 422 1100.
Kunstenaar stai inKaap uit – om sy naam krater te maak

KAAPSTAD – Die onvoltooie kunstenaar van die Young Painters Week is sy werk te voltooie onvoldoende. Toen sy werk aangepas, het sy naam 'Krater' te maak.

Sy werk, 'Young Painters Week', is vir oor 14 Januarie in die Sam Roberts Artilleryl in Londen.

Die kunstenaar, die onvoldoende werk van sy werk, het sy werk met 'Krater' te maak.

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City art denizens enjoyed a good 2003

We were back off our trip with the Young Painters Week in Londen. The city was very full of art and culture, and the Young Painters Week was a big attraction for everyone.

The city was a busy place with a lot of art and culture happening. The Young Painters Week was a big attraction for everyone.

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ARMS

Cape Town
"Decolonise the mind" by Taryn Peake

The so-called "identified art" of South African artists and theSouth African art system is a documentary film by Taryn Peake and Lenore Sneyers. It is produced from the perspective of the film's director and producer, Taryn Peake, who is also the film's co-writer. The film explores the art system and the art world of South Africa, focusing on the experiences and challenges faced by artists, curators, and art practitioners. The film aims to shed light on the complexities and contradictions within the South African art world, highlighting the ways in which power dynamics and systems of exclusion and marginalization persist in the art world. The film also examines the role of institutions and galleries in shaping the art world, and the ways in which artists and curators navigate these dynamics in their practice. It is a powerful critique of the art world's complicity in maintaining systems of power and privilege, and a call for change and transformation within the art world.

It is difficult to argue with Garth Ennams when he says that "unfortunately the art world is still a white world as far as media, galleries and institutions go". It is a response to the so-called "identified art" and theSouth African art system. It is made by Taryn Peake and Lenore Sneyers, and is produced from the perspective of the film's director and producer, Taryn Peake, who is also the film's co-writer. The film explores the art system and the art world of South Africa, focusing on the experiences and challenges faced by artists, curators, and art practitioners. The film aims to shed light on the complexities and contradictions within the South African art world, highlighting the ways in which power dynamics and systems of exclusion and marginalization persist in the art world. The film also examines the role of institutions and galleries in shaping the art world, and the ways in which artists and curators navigate these dynamics in their practice. It is a powerful critique of the art world's complicity in maintaining systems of power and privilege, and a call for change and transformation within the art world.
We need to undertake a comprehensive, historical analysis of the visual arts sector that does not only reflect on the post-1994 situation and less than whole, when I am myself (more or less) an "academic" who makes me, the art world, to be examined more and in order to be assessed more or less. Why also the other when we (also) disturbed our own world.

1. The paradox: since 1994, the visual arts sector has been experiencing a period of unprecedented growth, but at the same time, there has been a significant transformation of the sector. This growth has been accompanied by a number of challenges, including the need to reevaluate the role of the arts in society and to address issues such as cultural convergence and the impact of globalization.

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Perhaps the answer is partially articulated by Tyrone Appollis when he says 'Don't call me coloured, I'm African'.
Feedback is an open forum for readers to share any comments and insights relevant to art practice in South Africa. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

From: Gert-Jan
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: November 11
In Babic takes on Europe by Virginia MacKenny it says that Cis Bieric<x is Dutch and a "she". Mr Cis Bierinckx is Belgian and a "he".

From: Linda Stupart
Subject: Student artwork stolen
Date received: November 8
I took the image in a case of mistaken identity. You see it looked and seemed exactly like a cheesy nude photograph that I had taken and, apparently, left a trace of in the Michaelis network. I assumed, incorrectly, that it was mine. The matter has since been resolved, with the artist supplying a fitting reward for the return of his (? image.

From: Lize van Robbroeck
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: November 8
Bravo to Veronique for pointing out that the emperor's 'new' clothes are worn somewhat thin! I have been wrong - I am well aware that we have some absolutely first class conceptualists here, the endless installations that tickle the mind momentarily but leave the viewer feeling empty, drained and textures of textuality beat the pants off any international conceptualists that I can think of. What rankle are impoverished. nauseous excess and glut. I miss diversity, I miss humour and poetry, and above all, I miss visual contemporary shows. Let them eat mindgames!

From: Mya Lion
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: October 29
As a young professional artist I always stand back in aghast amazement when I see white and black males in the art world receive a great deal of support and trips overseas when I know that a lot of women are the cockerel, even though their talents are moderate, thus seducing others with their egos and really, really talented women with powerful art sit back and say, 'Oh, my stuff isn't important'. When are we as women going to grow brass breasts and start expecting the same recognition that our fellow made really good money and stopped scrounging for scraps? If anyone out there knows how to make lots of money please let me know.

While I wouldn't claim that art-making will make many of us rich, it's certainly more viable to make some kind of a living out of it than it was even five years ago. On your first point, are you suggesting that women artists should be 'playing the cockerel' in stead of men? I can't agree with you there, but I do agree that art-making in South Africa is to some extent dominated by men, will add that it probably is a field with more gender equity than most.

From: Rupert England
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: October 24
The idea was to use the media as a vehicle to supply further text updates, which he did not.

From: Zayd Minty
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: October 30
Regarding the editorial on ArtThrob of October 2003, I had no idea Ed Young's piece was a "toula" - or rather its the first time anyone in the arts sector has called it such in writing. I wonder what the responses of the artist or the curator are to this revelation.

I would stand by my choice of word, as on one level Ed Young's piece was an elaborately orchestrated hoax. Revealing this by means other than as an act of Ed Young himself points out his article on ArtThrob.

"What is important to understand here is that the "acquisition" (in the emphasis) is merely one layer of possible significance within the work, and in the work to continue to speculate in the fields of possibility and visions which surely must itself in order to continue in movements) then led to the "emery". As Ed himself disclosed to me, his Bruce Gordon work shares something with Vuyisa Nyamende continues red (in point out the buildings) before a couple of recorded metres of Long Street.

Both works collaboration with Catherine Peloso entitled "Kinsing Painting." The idea was to use the media as a vehicle to supply further text updates, which he did not.

From: Sean O'Toole
Subject: Babic takes on Europe
Date received: October 15 editorial
Missed the show, missed the point.

The following lengthy comment was received from Rupert England in PDF format. The document has been secured and its contents cannot be transmitted. Download the PDF to read England's letter. It is a response to Sean O'Toole's review of the show 'let us usual', published in our October issue at www.artthrob.co.za/octoberreviews/jag.htm.

From: Ann-Marie Tully
Subject: Another exhibition of bad photographs
Date received: October 30
At the risk of being burnt at the stake of political correctness, I would like to ask the question: why is Nocstrelk's 'Lotus' Veale's having an exhibition at the JAG? Veale's was recently a nominee for the MTN New Contemporaries award. Without getting into the politics of induction (as right) we me just say that Veale's work stood out as an accomplished and unifined in the presence of the other artist's work on the show (Thando Mama, Alison Keaney, Matthew Hindley and Hannah Oliver).

The fact that she is now being feted at the Johannesburg Art Gallery with an exhibition of what appears to be the same unremarkable work is nothing short of astounding. Her photographs of graffiti, which she poetically muses, "pasts a more secreted portal of society" are unoriginal to say the least. How many more contemporary artists are going to jump on the graffiti wagon (or should I say skate board) of American artist Barry McGee (who can do nothing being a baronite anarchist and vandale). Last thought: how alluring is the promise of hip hop music, breakdancing, real graffiti performances, drinks and snuffs on the opening night? Well, I think's another case of what a lovely frame.

From: Ann-Marie Tully
Subject: Another exhibition of bad photographs
Date received: October 30
Another exhibition of bad photographs

What follows is Sean O'Toole's response:

Facts first:
1. ArtThrob established a template for an informal, bi-weekly update of the 24.7 residency, which you can view at www.artthrob.co.za/247/feelings/jaglong_jpg.html. It was left to the curator to supply further text updates, which he did not.
2. Megan Butler, a participant on the 24.7 residency, provided a comprehensive review of the project's process-oriented workshops in the September issue of ArtThrob, under the title 'Work in progress'.
3. Nontsikelelo 'Lolo' Veleko (Nambino) was recently a nominee for the MTN New Contemporaries award. Without getting into the politics of induction (as right) we me just say that Veleko's work stood out as an accomplished and unifined in the presence of the other artist's work on the show (Thando Mama, Alison Keaney, Matthew Hindley and Hannah Oliver).
4. Rupert England's collaboration with Catherine Peloso entitled "Kinsing Painting." The idea was to use the media as a vehicle to supply further text updates, which he did not.

To longer any longer on this show would be to treat it with far more than deserves. As to the tens' and scope of your length disparity, your elaborate unpacking of this, Johnny come-lately proved fascinating, reading. Fact I immediately set about disguising my foot on the. Your angry letter has however left me wondering about a few things, particularly the impression of words. This prompted me to excerpt the meaning of a few of these words, the definitions of which I quote for your edification:

artistes: a skilled public performer, especially a musical or theatrical entertainer - like a circus clown; guerrilla: a member of a small independent fighting force which engages in sabotage, unexpected attacks, etc.
From: Gillian Anstey
Subject: Brett Kebble Art Awards
Date received: October 15

Please note that an ArtThrob article incorrectly states that I wrote the piece in the Sunday Times about the Brett Kebble awards. It was in fact, and this was stated in the article, written by Bonny Schoonakker from our Cape Town office. Could you please correct this?

Your article is: www.artthrob.co.za/03oct/news/berkellbelle8.html
Ours is the second piece: www.sundaytimes.co.za/2003/10/05/arts/news03.asp

"JUST as well no one was taking any bets at the inaugural Brett Kebble Art Awards this week - shrewd punters knew in advance that sculptor Doreen Southwood would be the night's big winner, says my colleague Bonny Schoonakker."

Gillian, we wish to apologise for this erratum. Sean

From: Pete Probst
Subject: Peter Clarke
Date received: October 10

I was interested to read your "bio" on Peter Clarke the South African artist/writer. My father knew Petor in the early 1950s and bought a number of his early watercolours. In 2002 I visited Peter in Ocean View; fascinating work he does. We purchased some work from him and also he showed us around Simonstown where I was born. Thanks.

From: Kathryn M. Hegarty
Subject: Thank you
Date received: October 3

I'd like to say THANK YOU for your magazine. I am an avid reader and I very much appreciate being able to sit down with a magazine and read it as I would a book with stimulating and funny issues. So, thank you for making a magazine that makes people think about things, instead of being told that one way is better than another.
My year as meat
by Ed Young

Jesus Christ. What a year—a rollercoaster ride that makes Disney look like a West Wickham play. A lot of ups and downs, and a little bit of sideways shagging thrown in for good measure.

Congratulations, first off, to Kathryn Smith, the new Standard Bank Young Artist for 2004. She is definitely my hero. James Webb hit the nail late one night on a noisy Walt Disney production. A lot of ups and downs, and a little bit of sideways shagging. Congratulations, first off, to Kathryn Smith, the new Standard Bank Young Artist for Stevenson Contemporary. A bit too '97. But let us pause for a moment in reverie at where we seem to have finally woken up to what it is that is supposed to be Contemporary Art. We cannot afford to look back to the state the visual arts were in a few years ago. We have come too far.

ArtThrob continues to provide a remarkable platform for discussion and records almost everything of importance happening in the South African art world. It provides an incredible support structure for artists, easily accessed by international curators who jet in and take our lapses and then never hear from again. It is insightful, serious when needed and light when necessary. We have seen another great year.

Like almost everything good, we encounter little wobbles. An ArtThrob favourite of mine was Paul Edmunds’ account of the YDE'sure exhibition earlier this year. As I recall it went something like this: “Oh, Julia Clark is so great, so beautiful, so intelligent.” No Paul, but what about the hundreds of artworks, the people, the party? Paul: “Oh Julia, how you make me feel like a seventeen year old ‘sk8er-boi’. Oh, my cranky knees”.

(See Paul Edmunds’ review: www.artthrob.co.za/03mar/reviews/yde.htm)

Note one Paul. He did, however, manage to redeem himself a couple of reviews later.

In many respects the year kicked off with YDE'sure, the YDE sponsored art party at the Castle of Good Hope. It was big. It was so big that I had trouble locating my own work after a couple of Heinekens. In the first quad, immediately to the left, Julia Clish, installed a skate ramp with a couple of hot, young, sweaty, half-naked teenage boys dueling their Yang. Paul Edmunds was spotted slightly to the left of the ramp.

Sanath Aggenbach made a floating bed that looked more like a collaboration between Bruce Gordon, and his wife Sue Williamson. We had a great time. Halfway through party week my foot broke in those places. The double bed it was a mosquito bite. The mosquito was almost as big as a medium-sized dog.

The night before, I had gone off to the Haig’s Bar and Grill with Swiss art duo Daniel Bauman and Sabina Lang, because this was apparently where Italian artist Mauricio Castellon hung out at night and really wanted an interview with him. At about 2am, my foot started bleeding. I had to leave because the pain was intolerable. I got the last message the next morning from Bauman that read: “Good Morning” I was at Williamson party last night. Castellon was there. Bye. I wanted to cry.

Andrew bought me some cabbages and we pushed through the rest of the forty-two degrees and humid press week. Sue Williamson got us into the ‘Fast lane’ lunch with Sabine Hering and Diederik Eusebi. We arranged to meet with them for an interview and Sarah gave us his business card to phone him. When we tried to call, we found that the card only had his Cornell University landline on it. That was not a very nice thing to do.

We did manage to secure some shrewd interviews with a number of high profile individuals including biennale director Francesco Bonami, French theorist Nicolas Bourriaud, and artists such as Moshekwa Langa and Sisanda Gcina. We were able to put together an insightful dialogue pertaining to the politics of the biennale vis-a-vis the condition of the artist. It’s just a pity that Afrika in Venice pulled a fast one on us, and as a result the African voice had to be excluded to some extent.

A definite highlight of the year was forming the curatorial collective Gallerie Pula (the writer’s emphasis). Pula was founded by myself, Michaelis theory lecturer Andrew Lamprecht, and young artist Cameron Patzer. It is an initiative that aims at circumventing the normal art elite structures in the small Cape Town art scene. It provides a platform for younger artists to show their work alongside more established artists, the latter in order to maintain public interest.

Pula is a decentralised system that changes with every project. Andrew Lamprecht recently gave a lecture on Galerie Pula at Wits University for the postgraduate students, in which he outlined methods for graduating students to make their mark in an art scene, something extremely difficult to inflate as a young artist. The students found the lecture extremely inspiring and the hint to independent exhibitions such as DIY, which was held at the MuseumMABoik in the Newtown Cultural Precinct in Johannesburg.

Pula’s first exhibition, in Cape Town, was an enormous success. Malcolm Payne contributed a memorable text he created Richard’s Red Studio. B. Salt, a portrait response to a remark that Richards made about the artist in an article on conceptualism. The work consisted of a red butt plug that was to be inserted in a gallows’ arm and worn for at least one hour during the exhibition. The object was acquired as a legal document that had to be signed by the gallerist and two witnesses.

(See Tracy Muhl’s review: www.artthrob.co.za/03mar/reviews/galeriepula.htm)

Pula later took up the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) disguised as an arm of mine. This event formed part of Cheryl Nett’s 24/7 residence programme, which included visits from Ed Young, Kathleen Smith, and Kim Lieberman. The residence was brilliant. Nett laid out a system by which all the participants could spend 24 hours at the JAG and leave their residue or what Nett calls ‘evidence’. This evidence was then never attempted to be a kick-ass show, but rather an exhibition that provides possibilities for young artist to exhibit, as this country lacks the infrastructure to support our younger artists. So it’s a good thing.

Then Jeff Koons came to town and we were all very happy. He gave a luncheon lecture at Michaelis where I found my quote of the year: “The art world (he paused and stared into the distance) is a place of green pastures. It’s a happy, comfortable place.” I did not exactly understand what he meant and thought that maybe he was just pulling our leg. We all knew how emotionally and economically difficult the art world is. It’s not an easy job.

Afterwards we all went for drinks and Jeff agreed to fill in and sign my AISASSA/Asaler entry form to use as my approach for the competition. He stood up me down. I went to his house the next morning finding a message saying “Sorry, I had to leave, I had to fill out my own form. That’s probably why I didn’t win.”

So Andrew Lamprecht and I went off to Venice to make a documentary film about this year’s biennale. We met up with the writer known as Blicx Gordon, and his wife Sue Williamson. We had a great time. Halfway through press week my foot broke in those places. The double bed it was a mosquito bite. The mosquito was almost as big as a medium-sized dog.

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(See Tracy Muhl’s review: www.artthrob.co.za/03mar/reviews/galeriepula.htm)
collected at the end and reconstructed as an exhibition called "Art as Usual."

Once again we encountered the problem of people in power not being able to identify contemporary art systems. JAG curator Brenton Maart failed to understand how an exhibition of evidence was to work and also did not seem to get the fact that paintings and sculptures were not displayed as the product of the residency. The problem however, seems to lie with the power structures of our art institutions. They really just do not seem to understand or even attempt to engage with contemporary art. I felt that my "ashtray overflowing with butts" was the perfect evidence of our performance at the JAG.

(Refer to: www.artlhrob.co.za/Shortnews/07_10.html)

Cape Town is no different. Large parts of the Cape Town art world are extremely skeptical towards contemporary art production. It is not that we as artists can't do it. It's just that powerful people are ignorant. How will we compete in an international arena when our representation internationally relies on Dale Yudelman and Antene Ameter-Arias? Why are we showing the world that we are still learning to paint?

We should rather aim to realise our capacity to promote our contemporary artists. We will have to stand together and really educate ourselves with what is happening in places outside our country. Maybe new super structures like the Cape International exhibition initiative will allow us to show the world that we are able to compete. We just have to concentrate and try not make the same mistakes twice.

The increasing interest in contemporary art over the last year has been matched by a decline of art criticism. In the popular press, with the exception to the new newspaper ThisDay, we see endless newspaper articles with critics hitting their heads on their typewriters and not actually engaging with what is going on. Chris Roper does not even attend most exhibitions, does not set a foot in the AVA, and apparently on one occasion even embarrassingly reviewed a show two weeks before it opened. Artists get upset. The critics just don't seem to want to engage.

Maybe it just boils down to good old laziness, or attention deficit disorder. Melvin Minnaar reviewed the tattooing of Bruce Gordon based on a two minute SABC news insert. The best he could come up with was that I was a doe-eyed artist and that Andrew Lamprecht was ugly. "My was he not there? Instead of coming to the actual event, Minnaar made up for it by feeling my arse at Estelle Jacobs' birthday party. He continued doing so after I told him that I was a heterosexual male. I thought that I would at least get a nice review for that one - nothing!

Wake up sleepy heads, and thanks to those who are actively engaged. In the words of Liam Gillick: "...it's not fantasy land anymore. It's like real life, and you can do it too. You just make a slight conceptual side-step when you wake up one morning. You decide to get involved."

It has been a long year. I sold a bar owner and exhibited a string quartet. I am tired now. I want to fall asleep in the arms of Christina Aguilera. By the way, Andrew Lamprecht has read my article and complained that he was not mentioned enough. He suggests: "Just imagine this is Sue Williamson's Diary and I am Lisa Brice." Cheers!
Andrew Lamprecht: *Alterior*

To paraphrase Jane Austen, it is a truth universally acknowledged that an artist in possession of a new body of work must be in want of an audience. Or is it? Art historian Andrew Lamprecht seemed determined to deny his opening night audience their usual art experience of some measure of enlightenment. *Alterior* (you look the word up) although shown in the Bell Roberts Gallery, was in the untidy printing side of the business, the blurry miniature prints, hardly larger than postage stamps pasted directly onto the wall.

Portraits, most of them were, photographed in black and white, plus some other small illustrations. I thought I recognized one of the subjects at least - James Joyce, but it was not he. Must be the hat, I thought. The deliberately made double images have their charm, but one does wonder if Lamprecht really wants us to know - or care - what this series is about. A consultation of the catalogue is not terribly helpful, (all the pages are blank except for the printed images) though the last page is a photograph of a page which includes the following statement: “Even if there is a sequence of 100 zeros in our calculated expansion, we could change the question to 1,000 successive 9’s (for example) and still have an open question. The point is that there are now, and always will be, simple questions about π of this kind to which we never expect to have an answer.”

O.K. Everybody clear now? It’s a history of important moments and figures in the history of mathematics. Next test please, Professor.

August 29 - September 12.

Ed Young: *Muse*

‘Muse’ was a one night event which took place on September 5 at the Bell Roberts, Ed Young’s follow up to his ‘Bruce Gordon’ piece at the end of last year.

The title of the event derives from the name of the four woman string quartet which played at the Bruce Gordon opening at the South African National Gallery, and who were engaged again for the occasion.

The artist’s mother, who attended the event, declared herself mystified and distressed to see no artwork on the walls. The ‘artwork’ was all the people who came to the gallery that evening, and the events that took place: a mass performance, if you will. Young’s artist statement lays out his position with perfect clarity: “I desire to force the art public who engage with this work to set their assumptions aside and to see the work as a statement of intent for future practice. It is my sincere desire that all who engage with this work enjoy it. The entire event is predicated on rich but wholesome pleasures. This mirrors my own form of art making. I reject the “art as struggle” milieu and opt for an engagement with art that sees it as primarily a space of living.” In staking out this position, Young reflects an attitude which has become increasingly apparent amongst younger artists in recent years.

On the evening in question, ‘Muse’ played agreeably in the centre of the gallery, specially clad bartenders handed out champagne, and plates of sushi circulated. Bit of a change from the boxed wine and peanuts if you’re lucky routine, and one clearly designed to put cash strapped artists in a good mood. A black curtain demarcated the entrance to a VIP lounge. The evening was further enlivened by a chase and a contretemps between the bouncer and fellow artist Vuyisa Nyamende, who accused Young of stealing his exhibition date, and handed out his own collaged artworks to visitors.

For me, the lasting and most important element of the entire evening is the small black covered catalogue produced by Young with an amusing foreword by Andrew Lamprecht. Great photographs of the various participants are included. Young knew how to balance the serious with the witty - a rare skill. As with the Bruce Gordon catalogue, this one is masterly, and I have no doubt will become a collectors item.
Ed makes us all feel fidgety again...

Art Young

Resident experimental artist, Ed Young, is at it again.

Pushing the boundaries of art is what this 28-something Michaelis artist does best.

Further this year Young's exhibition of Brent Gordon, former artist and manager of Long Street's JoMu, forced viewers to question the meaning of art.

Gordon was auctioned off, as a piece of art, and sold to art curator Barry Hill. He then donated the "piece" to the South African National Gallery. Gordon even had his acquisition barcode, NANG 03/02, tattooed onto his arm as proof of his purchase.

On Thursday September 4, Young exhibited his latest work, "Muse" at the Bell-Roberts gallery in Long Street. This time, he chose the String Quartet, Muse, as his artistic focus.

In the catalogue explaining the one-night only exhibition, Andrew Lamprecht wrote: "They are the very antithesis of him and as such present a useful counterpart.

His production makes most people a bit fidgety, you are not quite sure what it is you are supposed to be looking at as art. Indeed this was the case. As people walked around the homogenous gallery, quaffing Pongracz sparkling wine and nibbling on canapes, one guest kindly informed me that the real art was through me!

I entered the curtained room where the exhibition was held and was not surprised to find that this was the VIP lounge. Muse wine and seafood, but the visual artwork was, well, the Muse quartet. Which led me to interviewing the title of Young's exhibition, music about how one defines \"real\" art. What is art? What isn't art?

As Young explained: "To enjoy the work is to literally become part of it. The work clearly exists beyond the mere act of presenting a string quartet. It is the whole which is here catalogued in a fragmentary form.

For those who thought the real art was behind the black curtains, at least they could enjoy a superb performance by the quartet. It was just a pity that they did not realise that they were in fact part of the exhibition they had come to see.

ART OF THE CITY

Thursday September 11 2003 CapeTowner

Girl group have string of successes

Art Young

A SHORT dziewent quarter is flying "City Tune" to their success. The group have inspired a coming attraction for "Art Young's experimental art exhibition of Brent Gordon, former artist and manager of Long Street's JoMu. Gordon even had his acquisition barcode, NANG 03/02, tattooed onto his arm as proof of his purchase. On Thursday September 4, Young exhibited his latest work, "Muse" at the Bell-Roberts gallery in Long Street. This time, he chose the String Quartet, Muse, as his artistic focus.

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Jan Rap en sy maat kan 'kunswerk' word

’n Strykquartet het kunsflethouers Donderdag laat kopkrap toe dit musiekwerk as kunswerk aangelyd is in die Bell-Roberts-kunsaal. Die kunsenaar Ed Young het die Mues-strykquartet en vier kelnerinnes wat drankies aan gaste bedien het, as "kunswerk" uitgelaat. Volgens Young was die gaste ook binne die konteks van die kunsaal "kuns".

Foto: EBRAHIM PREGNOLATO
AUGUST 27 - SEPTEMBER 14

Wednesday, 27 August

The 3rd Impressed International Printmaking Conference, hosted by the Michaelis School of Fine Art in cooperation with Rhodes University's Fine Arts Department kicks off today. The keynote address is by William Kentridge and he gives a charming account of his lifelong association with prints and printmaking, revealing the significance of a print of a cat by Cecil Skotnes, given to him when still a child. Hanging in his bedroom, and dips in which a cat appears in his work. The talk is lively and anecdotal and sets a tone for the conference and I meet up with several acquaintances, such as Lynne Allen, Professor and Director of Rutgers University's Centre for Innovative Print and Paper.

Thursday, 28 August

Faye Hirsch, founding editor of Art on Paper and recently appointed to the editorial staff of Art in America, gives the second keynote address of the conference in the morning. Her paper is a survey of accidents and spontaneity in contemporary printmaking, starting with Rauschenberg's little showing a cat in the stone, and moving on to forlorn examples, such as Damien Hirst's 'spatter prints' which look something like the paintings kids used to make at school fêtes by dropping paint on a piece of black card that is spinning on a fast-moving wheel. Another example she gives is Rikrit Tiravanija's print which consists of two Thai-language newspapers and a photograph of a tree.

At the afternoon session, I attend a panel entitled Experimental Impressions: Now and Then, followed by a reception. One of the speakers is the Baltimore-based artist, Mercury Roberts. It takes me and the rest of the audience a while to realize that he has been unable to attend the figure sitting at the table on the stage in Hiddingh Hall is not Roberts himself, but a perfectly scaled photographic cut-out. A witty gesture at an academic conference.

Another session on contemporary printmaking goes off without a hitch. All this enthusiastic talk about printmaking is something like the paintings kids used to make at school fêtes by dropping paint on a piece of black card that is spinning on a fast-moving wheel. Another example she gives is Rikrit Tiravanija's print which consists of two Thai-language newspapers and a photograph of a tree.

After the conference panels we all go off for an evening reception at the South African National Gallery to mark the opening of the exhibition Then & Now: South African Prints Before and After the Demise of Apartheid. Curated by conference organizers, Dr. Asvat and Stephen Leggs, it shows a representative group of prints illustrating the diversity of form, medium and subject matter that we have been working on in the last twenty-five years. The curators have chosen to highlight the Wienie Mandele print from my A Few South Africans series of the 60s next to my print of 1999, with the same size and style of the Bruce Gordon catalogue, except that the cover is black rather than white. It's beautifully written and the artist's statement lets us know that it's all part of his work, the exhibition is what he has created, rather than just putting the quartet on display. Part of his work was to have two bouncers with a non-guest list of one person. Everyone was welcome to come to the exceedingly well-attended exhibition except for his friend Vuyisa Nyamende. It turns out that Vuyisa was scheduled to have an exhibition of the gallery on the night but Ed 'stole' the date from him. Vuyisa enters, is bounced, and proceeds to hail the police demanding that they arrest the artist for 'theft of his work'. It's a good thing they did not enter the gallery insisting that the artist Young come with them on a charge of stealing other people's work as Gavin Younge was in the VIP room at the time and might have got a bit of a shock.

Saturday 7th September

Benin artist Joseph Kpobor and South Africans, Thomas Mulcaire have brought their work The Reading Room to the South African National Gallery. First displayed at the 24th São Paulo Bienale and later at Martin Goodman in Paris, the work here subtitled The Library of Congress consists of a collection of books by African or about Africa arranged in a film set designed to evoke infinity. This room-within-a-room is beautifully made and furnished with comfortable chairs upholstered in African fabrics and even has a hammock in the corner. Visitors are encouraged to take a book of the shelves and read. At the opening address Emma Bedford notes that anyone may donate books to the project and this indicates that the work will grow and develop over time.
interesting panel, held at the Sasol Art Gallery, features Astraf Jamiel analysing terror and the work of Kendell Geers and two papers about Steven Cohen.

However it is the last panel that really took centre stage. Pro Sobopha looked at the issue of white curators and black artists. He asked when will black artists and curators truly be at the centre of the representation of art in South Africa. This was followed by a scholarly paper by Thembinkosi Goniwe critiquing a project by Zwelethu Mthethwa and Stevey Blesley in which the latter, in “blackface”, dresses up as a black woman, alternately “maid” and “madam”. He takes the work seriously but finds it highly problematic. He sends out a challenge to the SAAAH by asking why he, as a man, must address the gender issues raised here. “You should be ashamed there are so few black women here” he charges. Vuyile Voyiya and Julie McGee end the session off. One distinguished art historian chooses to sleep through much of Voyiya’s talk: an impasioned plea for racial equality in the arts.

The session almost runs over time but chair Zayd Minty allows a few questions. Suddenly all hell breaks loose. Anita Nettleton from Wits says that she has heard enough of all this, noting that she has been involved in promoting black artists for over thirty years. She says that these papers lack rigour and are unacceptable. Sandre Koorper of Stellenbosch refers to a video made by Voyiya and McGee that was shown the previous evening on the subject of black artists, saying that Thembinkosi has betrayed her and Michael Godby by mentioning them by name and portraying them as “unreformed racists”. She notes that Michael and her helped Thembinkosi get into his PhD programme at Cornell. The discussion is ended by a call to board a bus for the conference dinner at the Gold of Africa Museum in Cape Town. After a welcoming address from museum director Christopher Till, the debates continue over snacks and wine.

Saturday 13th September

The conference carries on its business but there can be no doubt that the debates of the previous afternoon have got the delegates thinking.

Sunday 14th September

Felling rather ill today and spend much of the day trying to recover in bed. Really can’t face doing the diary in this condition so I arrange to have the whole thing ghost-written for this update which will explain the peculiar style and odd reference to one or two events at which I was not present. The writer of this edition of the diary insists that it is a conceptual piece.

- This week’s edition of Sue Williamson’s diary is, in its entirety, ghost written by Andrew Lampard.
The thing about the artwork. Bruce Gordon, it is never — definitionally never — where it is supposed to be
Meeting: Art in the Water Closet
by Tracy Munik

If Duchamp brought bits of the bathroom into the gallery, then Gallery Pula takes the gallery into the bathroom.

"Not a 'salle des refusées'," Andrew Lamprecht - one of the three curators for Galene Pula, alongside Cameron Platter and Ed Young - clarifies for me when I ask him about the concept behind "Meeting: Art in the Water Closet" and the launch of Galene Pula. Rather, Lamprecht offers, this "Gallery of the Prostitute" (also meaning prostitute in Portuguese), is a "proactive" venture, "where a group of artists have gotten together and created their own space where they can exhibit, and sell, new work."

Lamprecht describes the group as being made up of "serious, established, artists" and young, new emerging artists doing cutting-edge things. People not ordinarily considered artists being given opportunities to make something. The general idea is fun and light-hearted, but ultimately taken quite seriously by those involved who hope that interested visitors to the space will take it quite seriously too, while also being fun and light-hearted about it.

Lamprecht further comments that this marks the first of what will become a regular programme of Galene Pula events. Judging by the quality of several spectacular moments, great music to chill to, delightful visitors to the space and, well, even some very cool artworks, we should all be looking forward to the next editions to come.

To begin, Galene Pula was launched on the night of May 17, existing as the transformed living space of Cameron Platter and Vuyiswa Nyamende in a Cream Point house belonging to Bridget Baker. The exhibition, curated by Lamprecht, Platter and Young, with Platter functioning also as the gallery, was proliferated throughout the basement, with an art-located amphitheatre in and around the bathroom.

Coming up the stairs, then, entering through the front door, was Zen Marie (who's currently based in Amsterdam) series of digital prints - reminiscent in a way to pick from a photo booth - of herself eating a Burger King burger, seen through various stages of burger consumption. Further up above the landing, was a dipth of small paintings by Petie Pienaar.

A bit further on along the wall leading off the stairwell, above the light switch, was Vuyiswa Nyamende's incongrous little soap man presented to Nyamende and Platter when they moved into the house. The story goes that the original soap man was a gift of soap by Bridget Baker - bearing a picture of a man, Nyamende finally carved the resultant soap man to echo the original picture, and subsequently add a stick-on pic of tab abs, strategically placed, to newley endow him.

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Further on down the stairwell, above the light switch, was Vuyiswa Nyamende's incongruous little soap man presented to Nyamende and Platter when they moved into the house. The story goes that the original soap man was a gift of soap by Bridget Baker - bearing a picture of a man, Nyamende finally carved the resultant soap man to echo the original picture, and subsequently add a stick-on pic of tab abs, strategically placed, to newely endow him.

At this point of entry into the house, and from a quick glance around the room, what became quickly apparent was a predominant trend among those already there, of wearing a wide and red woolen mitt on one hand (or both hands on some), while holding an elegant-looking boxing glove in the other (if un-mitt, that is). So, to mention first Bridget Baker's work for the exhibition (being responsible for the woolen mitt phenomenon) which was the seminal offer to anyone willing to insert a hand through a hole in the wall and receive a delectable hot wax treatment. This would then be followed by a ten-minute treatment period during which your hot-waxed hand was left to soften, covered in cling-wrap, and protected by said woolen mitts - all of which would then be removed to reveal a sweet-smelling, gorgeously soft feeling paw that you would hold before...

The elegant mitains, though, were the work of the evening's gallery, curator and spectacular cocktail mixer, Cameron Platter, whose exquisitely crisp, delicately dry vodka martini with single pineapple-stuffed green olives may or may not have been Platter's artwork for the evening (apparently he's undecided on that point).

Bumping into artist Ed Young, I later learned that his artwork for the exhibition was, in fact, his considered bid to "do nothing for the exhibition" - a nice self-conscious twist, perhaps, to his other recent project of having the person (Bruce Gordon in that instance) for the artwork.

On that score, enter Bruce Gordon: Bruce Gordon, (the artwork and in this case also the artist), brought with him to the exhibition journalist Bonny Schoonakker, as his artwork for the night, (another nice twist on the theme in the artwork scenario) and encouraged people to ask Schoonakker to tell stories of his first-hand experience, as a journalist, covering the recent war in Iraq.

If it felt occasionally challenging trying to determine whether the people around you were or were not part of the evening's artworks, then Matt Hindley's video projection - which formed the words "no content" onto what became the night's dancefloor, and often onto people's heads and bodies - was a shrewd and charming turn: both in its reflexive scrutiny as a work being essentially projected light and thus essentially having "no content," and in its capacity to bring into question whether those that its words labelled in the process, were required to declare or defend their "substance" as people or lurking artworks.

Oh, and also a good time to mention another lurking artwork-as-person or vice versa in the form of Jos Femella, whose allotted role in being an artwork for the evening was "being a dodgy dealer" wearing a suit.

Sitting in the bathroom area was Tekelo Edkins' video created for the exhibition, based on a longer documentary that he is working on which documents HIV roadblocks in Lesotho. The video records an exchange between friends, chatting over drinks, describing their sexual exploits and tips on how to please their women. But the light, friendly brands of the conversation is causally shattered at a certain point in their conversation by the offhand mention by one of the friends of his HIV positive status.

Dan Hatter, ex-Michigats graduate, now successfully running a coffee shop in Switzerland, apparently, and making art, occasionally, when he chooses to, created for the exhibition a compilation CD which, for the first part of the evening, was displayed, scarily, as an object placed to the right-hand-side of the television, and later played and danced to.

Moving into the passage, on the wall, towards the bathroom, is Malcolm Payne's "reflection work" for the exhibition: Colin Richards-Red-Slim Medium stickled R. Butt, which comprised a red "butt-plug" which was to be inserted (by instruction in a printed letter to the gallery, i.e Cameron Platter, and signed by two witnesses) into the galery's butts for at least one hour during the exhibition, and then removed and placed, as, into its original container. As far as going-ins and outs go, this one might well have made it completely into the bathroom, rather than just the passage.

And in the bathroom: James Webb's offering was an elegant sculpture circle made of audio-cassettes - a nicely ironic play using the physical vessels of the art he's better known for (Webb is a sound artist) as self-reflexive reference, enduring sound not played. Richard de Jager's bathroom work was an exquisite gold knitted toilet set with bunny too roll holder. Sean Slimon installed his artwork, a red "butt-plug" which was to be inserted (by instruction in a printed letter to the gallery, i.e Cameron Platter, and signed by two witnesses) into the galery's butts for at least one hour during the exhibition, and then removed and placed, as, into its original container. As far as going-ins and outs go, this one might well have made it completely into the bathroom, rather than just the passage.

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declared: "Most dishwashers use one cloth for drying and polishing. My technique is to use a highly absorbent cloth for drying, followed by treatment with a lint-free one for that final crystal glint".

Don't say you don't learn anything practical from visiting art exhibitions.

May 17

Galerie Pute
24 Dysart Road, Greenpoint, Cape Town
(Off Greenpoint Main Road, turn up Wigtown Road. Take the second stop street left into Dysart. It's the last house on the left.)

For further details contact Andrew Lamprecht on 083 530 6141 or alamprecht@hlddlog uet za

REVIEWS / CAPE

Working the White Cube
by Colin Richards

"Something there badly not wrong" - Samuel Beckett

Conceptual art tends to make ironists of us all. A certain knowingness, working at the work, irrespective of what gets between us, the work, and the world infects our aesthetic experiences. The tone of appreciation - or is it understanding? - in this mode is cool, cosmopolitan, diffident. There is little of that earnest, energetic wrestling with demonic creativity, breaking expressive sweats in the messy, manic and maddenedness of our more muscular aesthetic desires.

But conceptualism is also not entirely free of all this. It has its own romances, gravitas and sense of the game. Its pleasures are indirect.

This review is about how I know this particular performance of "conceptual" art; that is, through the catalogue. A bad sign for those who like their art less adulterated, or more adulterated with "expressive" "traditional" art forms. For these art people, to mistake the cover for the book, to mistake the art for the comment, amounts to an aesthetic atrocity. They really should get out more. At any rate, here, the catalogue, cover, contents, pictures, performances, press, actors, documents, designs, reports and rumours all fall within the frame of the work.

Immediately striking, this little book is literally a flat, white cube. And, as we might recall, the white cube of the ideal modernist gallery was the haunt of visual art's affair with medium purity and "flatness", the affair which incubated conceptualism all those years ago. So, in a way this book describes a tight circle. It is worth pausing to remember a conservative Tom Wolff practising his faux philistinism in satirising conceptualism in the The Painted Word (my Bantam copy is dated June 16 1976);

And there, at last, it all... No more realism, no more representational objects, no more lines, colour, forms, and contours, no more pigments, no more brushstrokes, no more evocations, no more frames, walls, galleries, museums, no more gazing at the banal face of the god Flaneur; no more audience required, just a "receiver", just "artist", and in that moment of splendidly dispassionate abdication, of insouciant withering away. Art made it final flight, climbed higher and higher as and ever decreasing tighter-turning spiral until, with one last sigh of freedom... it disappeared up its own fundamental aperture and came out the other side as Art Theory (pp 108-109).

Nothing is given in art, and to expect more these days is to date disappointment. In situations like these, the work becomes what a viewer will notice, and what we as viewers will make of what we notice. This is an elastic, fluid field, and all of us are drawn into the devil's dance of choreographed indirection that conceptualism stages.

The outside of this catalogue-cube is not sheer... Secreted on the front surface is a glossy name "Bruce Gordon", mirrored on the back by "Scan Shop", patron printers of the project The title page lists the dramatls personae inCAPITALS , BRUCE GORDON AN ART WORK BY ED YOUNG ANDREW LAMPRECHT CAPE TOWN SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL GALLERY 2003. The dedication page memorialises a cute canine called Roger in a roundel. Reproductions... surprisingly sensuous - of news posters and cuttings follow. In these the artwork becomes a "BART OWNER", a "Conceptual Husband", a Kaapse Kroegbaas... In the second to last cuttings we see the artist and artwork pictured together: one unamused, one bemused. The final image is artist and artwork lounging with other artworks. The buyer, one Suzie Bell, is mentioned but not seen, while the white-gloved Teboho Edkins - the auctioneer functionary - is also pictured. The money is also mentioned.

After the essay-text (of which more soon) the book closes with FIFTY YEARS, an autographic text associated with artwork (BRUCE GORDON) written on the visually exquisite pages of an Ontre Reprint in some disorder, p.12, p.9, p.10.
there are also some unexpected turns. One, touched on by Lamprecht, is a
agents in the canon-formation, that the real and very traditional treasure of
within the frame of this extended performance. The kind of common purpose I
to do with Bruce Gordon's narrative", alongside narratives which take a good
In a way the discourse of newness, of transgreSSion, questioning; challenging,
create some vital and dynamic common cause between the peculiarities of a
particular kind of cool sociality, this aspect of the work touches on something
find mention of "precedentsE going back to classical times", with Plotinus and
Kostabi and Koons, Rubens and Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Jacques-Louis David, Marcel Duchamp. There is also a report - some sort of last word - from (iko). A generous, but masculine world. Perhaps Cennini's caution is serious.

These artistic luminaries introduce the aesthetic linguistic 'Bruce Gordon', 'Don vivrant, necromancere, and general good ship'; once 'Mosquito Weight boxing champion of Matebeleland' (chauds of Joseph Bisesi, Lynda Rasking, Nelson Mandela?), 'Chicken fadder' (masculinity again) to "Capetown's art worlds". There is also a report - some sort of last word - from (iko). A generous, but masculine world. Perhaps Cennini's caution is serious.

What is awkward, is the rather toxic atmosphere of societal dandysm and
struggles around the project. This feels like a clique. And, in a way, this is as it
should be, as conceptualism is no more immune than any artistic orthodoxy of
recent vintage to a certain discursive stubbornness. As a performance of this
particular kind of cool sociality, this aspect of the work touches on something

But that potential for critique is unevenly sustained in the text and indeed the
project. When the author tells us that "Ed Young's
announces the text; with cautionary tales of moderation and the exhaustion
occasioned by consorting with women. Then there is the voice of the author.
This voice is orthodox, instructive, citing, arguing, quoting. And finally, there is
the voice of the artwork, a laconic, confessed, narrative, anecdotal auto­
history. These words too are quoted, this time from a birthday speech.

The middle voice - depending on how one does the ordering - is that of Andrew
Lamprecht. Lamprecht is given space by a formidable armature of authority;
quotes Joan Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Theo Adorno (it requires a generous,
even indiscernible world where the third would even be seen dead with the other two). This voice establishes a quick archaeology and a genealogy. We find mention of "precedential going back to classical times", with Plotinus and
illUSion is delusion. appearance betrays essence, mimesis tricks the true,
and buttressed by the memories of chickens. But I guess that is what comes
from ambition.

Looking far back we might recall Pato barnashed the artists from his Republic
and he was no democrat, civil or otherwise. Yet the words of Joshua Reitsheld
which close Lamprecht's text pose a challenge to this easiac. The intelligibility he
speaks requires clearing clouds and mists, a resistance to the metaphorical
magnitude with which the metaphysical attitude covers the object world, and
effort to "see things as they really are".

And where all this leaves us is what this work means, and wherein
its beauty lies. The aesthetic import traced by all these thoughts, these
voices, these ideas, institutions... the artwork, is what we presumably
need to see and heed. This is a lot for a middle-aged white man to carry, even
equipped with the prophylactic of owning a bar called Jo'burg in Cape Town,
and buttressed by the memories of chickens. But I guess that is what comes
from ambition.

Bruce Gordon: An Art

by Andrew Lamprecht. Published by

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Johannesburg.
REVIEWS / CAPE

Bruce Gordon at the SANG
by Paul Edmunds

Of course, what everyone's neglecting to say is that this whole lark is mad. R52,000 exchanged hands for a 'Kaapse kroegbaas', although it wasn't really Bruce Gordon at the SANG's Marilyn Martin at the post. Bell kindly donated a bar called Jo'burg, which is situated in Cape Town. Anyway, he (or she, I'm not sure which pronoun to choose) was bought by art patron and bon vivant Suzy Bell, who just popped the SANG's Marilyn Martin at the post. Bell kindly donated Gordon to the SANG.

Following this, people flocked to a first showing at the venue (and not just for the free drinks and nuts) where they listened to well-respected artist and academic Penny Siopis (her glasses slipping critically far down her nose) expound the virtues and ramifications of the museum's latest acquisition. We also heard the artwork (resulting in the artwork comprising him in the flesh) speak for himself, welcoming us all to his new home, where "some changes are going to have to be made." A poker bar in the annex, he proposed, and conceptual stripe shown in the Lieberman room.

And let's not forget the artist at the centre of all this - Edward Young. Says Ed: "My work is cool to do. Bruce took me 10 seconds to come up with." Young got R26,000 for his troubles, a tattoo thrown in for good measure and he also got to keep his vintage Merc, which he had originally planned to auction.

Lost? Read on. In December last year, Michaelis School of Fine Art held their annual auction, takings from which are used to fund scholarships and other special projects of the school. Staff and senior students are expected to donate work for the auction and are given, in return, 50% of the funds generated. Ed Young chose to sell 'Bruce Gordon' (with and without the quotation marks), whose medium is described as 'found object (concept)', Gordon's wife and ArtThrob's founding editor, Sue Williamson started the ball rolling with a R100 bid. Eventually Marilyn Martin was left to battle it out with Suzy Bell, known to me for her early involvement with the Durban Art Gallery's 'Red Eye' events. Her R52,000 bid won and she duly packed 'Bruce Gordon' off to the SANG's acquisitions committee, who approved their latest donation.

Now personally I got a little lost when reading the texts accompanying this whole shenanigan. Prepared by Andrew Lamprecht, Michaelis Art Theory lecturer and Ed Young's collaborator in all of this, these texts describe in detail the art historical precedents and the ramifications of this artwork, both for the SANG and the art-world in general. I believe Lamprecht implicitly, and I do enjoy the tongues firmly in cheeks there too.

As a permanent fixture in the SANG's collection, like all the others, Bruce Gordon is required to bear an indecipherable accession number. It was elected that Gordon (the person) should bear this number in a tattoo. Young and Lamprecht each had one in sympathy. Young chose a black rectangle and Lamprecht the word 'felicitas' - Latin for 'luck'.

I think it's important that we don't ignore the person of Gordon in favour of the latter 'concept'. Gordon's bar, after all, is Cape Town's unofficial art HQ (at least for those of us young enough to stay awake until a suitable arrival time). His career has spanned anything from clothing salesman, to manager of Amampondo, to journalist and, most recently, bar-owner. He's not short of charisma or stamina and knows a good yarn and a few drinks. It's a founding member of Public Eye, and Suzy Bell paid for him with the money she got from the sale of a stud bull. Apparently, though, she couldn't keep her acquisition because it clashed with the curtains and the Tretchikoff print. (I think she's serious.)

So while pondering the collection's responsibility for his preservation ('What a shame!'), the colourfully bespectacled Frenchman next to me, Marilyn Martin did a great job of milieu the event for all the media ladies the gallery could get.

Gordon, who was apparently not required to be at the opening, elected to speak and was very amusing, even while appearing to take his acquisition quite seriously. I confess that it is to the real figure of Gordon I continually return, and I don't think I'm alone. On the other hand, it's interesting to ponder just what the said R52,000 bought. How can it be utilised? Or is it just the ant-world having a little laugh at itself? Or (oops!) is this fiddling while Rome burns? Go figure.

For a more sober view of things, check out the catalogue which Ed Young and Andrew Lamprecht have put together. It's a solid, sexy little booklet that adequately explains what I have failed to. But don't think that there aren't some tongues very thick in cheeks there too.

'Bruce Gordon' opened at the SANG on Saturday March 29.

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Website: www.sang.org.za

Hours: Tues - Sun 10am - 5pm
{SUBMIT Review}
Tug-of-war battle over living art work

Marking off life with indelible ink

Tattoos not just for bikers and rockers
NEWS

It might have started out as an idea over drinks in the常委会 bar, but it ended up bringing in R520,000 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art annual auction.

A bunch of Daniel who have recently attended the Annual Auction campaign which showed the students' progress with their works that were sold for over R5,000. The group has been invited to exhibit at the Michaelis show as an indication of their progress.

Where's R520,000?

IN 1997, THE LA artist Tony Kaye was the first to conceive of using a person as an art piece, in this case a homeless man. The collector Charles Saatchi bought the concept and the homeless man was exhibited in the Tate Gallery.

So although Ed Young's work is not original, it is nonetheless appropriate for a Fine Art master's student to be taking this further and an achievement to have achieved, through choosing an ex-journalist as the art work and a journalist as the "buyer", a lot of media coverage. This is the best thing about the piece apart from having a lot of fun, it has served to an extent to educate people about conceptual art. What troubles me is the question of payment of R520,000 for the piece to Michaelis; perhaps Michaelis would like to come forward with proof of payment?

Beezy Bailey
Cape Town
SUE WILLIAMSON’S DIARY

Saturday, April 15

Rise before dawn to catch an early flight to Johannesburg for a briefing session on the new Constitutional Court currently going up on Constitutional Hill, next to the site of the Old Fort prison, Hillbrow. Unique in the world, the Constitutional Court is the highest court in the land, an expression of democracy at its most democratic. Here, eleven Judges listen to cases and give rulings according to the new constitution, even parliament and the president must accept the rulings, and all may come and listen to the proceedings. Currently working from buildings nearby, the judges will move into the new court buildings at the end of 2003, in time for the significant year of 2004, which will mark 10 years of democracy.

By 10:15 a.m. around thirty invited artists from around the country have gathered at the entrance to the Old Fort prison. Judge Albie Sachs welcomes us warmly, sketching the history and background of the project. While all artists have been invited to submit proposals for certain open sites and such details as screens, carpeting, even stair edgings, five selected sites in the new buildings have been reserved for limited competitions by invited artists. Albie tells us of a federal court in Boston he visited where there was no art to be seen. “No Americans can’t agree on iconography!” he is told. “We trust our artists”, Albie says now, assuring us that he knows each of us could make a strong and compelling artwork for our selected site. Artists that are not chosen retain the possibility of being sited elsewhere, perhaps at a later stage.

Senior architect Herbert Pétre gives us a tour of the Old Fort prison, now in a state of extreme dilapidation, and describes the appalling conditions under which the prisoners, many of them “politicals” or pass book offenders, had to survive. Moving on to the construction site, artworks co-ordinator Bongi Chiongo-Mautloa gives an introduction to the artworks programme.

The aesthetic which has determined the form of the new court buildings is very African - based on the idea of the tree in the village beneath which all may gather to debate and discuss matters of common interest. The support columns in the court foyer lean at angles, like the trees of a forest around which a building has been constructed, and irregular slots in the ceiling will allow dappled splashes of light to move across the floor through the day. Leading up to the foyer from the lower side of the site are the Great African Steps, flanked on one side by the old stone wall of the prison, and with a wheelchair ramp zigzagging across the steps.

The site to which I have been allocated is a small courtyard flanking the library, and my fellow artists in competition for this site are Penny Siopis, Patrick Maudsley, Kay Hassan, Wilma Cruise and Sam Nhlengethwa. Submission date for the concept is April 23 - five weeks hence. The site is so different to what I had imagined I would be, that my original idea falls away completely. It will be back to the drawing board. Immediately in front of the site, is one open to the public to submit a proposal for a fountain. Admiraible and democratic as the artworks programme is, the architects and others who will decide on the accepted works will have to be careful that more is not less.

I am flying back to Cape Town tonight, but first I want to make a trip to the Goodman Gallery in Rosebank to see William Kentridge’s exhibition. William was one of the artists involved in today’s briefing session, listed to make a three dimensional piece at the bottom of the Great African steps, also a large site. William’s work at the Goodman is around the work he did for Confessions of Zeno - the video, etchings, drawings - a remarkable display of power and virtuosity. There are large numbers of people in the gallery, almost everything has been sold. I am excited by the thought that the next print for the Editions for ArtThrob series will be William’s, and can’t wait to see what he will do. He told me this morning it will be worked on this week.

Thursday, March 20

Art Night kicks off the Cape Town Festival tonight. Budget cuts have prevented
any funding for street performances as in some previous events, but a band is playing on the pedestrian mall outside the Association for Visual Arts, and the crowd sips wine while waiting to enter, one by one, the gallery to view Mark Coetzee’s new installation, *All our Sons II*. Ec Capebornian, now director of the Rubell Collection in Miami, the space and immaculately crossed Mark is here for the event. Entering the AVA, one finds that the entire gallery is darkened, the single source of light emanating from a floor monitor behind a jagged cutout. The monitor displays the classified ads announcement of Mark’s birth, but as one watches, the words ‘homo-sol’ metamorphase into ‘faggot’ or ‘bugger’ or ‘peede’ or one of the other derogatory names used to label gay men. Minimal and to the point. Less is more.

Across town, Joan Pameira is showing work by American artist Lorna Marsh downstairs, and in his new upstairs space, work by Robert Hodgins and others. Curator Emma Bedford and I stroll up Long Street, take in a fashion show with gasmasked models in war protest fashions, and finish at a welcome to the festival party at the Bell Roberts Gallery. I am ejected for not being on the guest list, but Mike van Graan intervenes and I am invited back inside.

**Thursday, March 27**

The Western Cape launch of VANSA, the Visual Arts Network of South Africa, takes place tonight at the Centre for the Book, part of the Cape Town Festival. As a member of the steering committee, along with the AVA’s Estelle Jacobs and BLAK founder Zayid Minty, I am delighted to see that our advance campaign has persuaded almost 100 people to turn up. The function of VANSA will be to act as an organisation which will lobby for the rights of visual art and artists to provide a voice and conduit through which state, local government and business can communicate.

PANSA (the Performing Arts Network of S.A.) founder member Mike van Graan lays out the meeting ways in which PANSA has been effective. Sandra Wupper hopes that the new organisation will not founder and come to up a stop, like others have in the past, and Lionel Davis adds his endorsement. An enthusiastic new committee of no less than 16 is elected, to work towards the national launch in July.

**Friday, March 28**

Pick up Penny Slopis from the airport. She has been invited to Cape Town by curator Andrew Lamprecht to open the exhibition ‘Bruce Gordon’ at the SANG tomorrow. Not since one of Beatty Bailey’s escapades, and not even then actually, has an art project had as much publicity as this one. For those who do not read the local and national press or watch television news, Bruce Gordon, owner of popular Long Street bar J’Buff, was sold on auction as the artwork of Ed Young on the Michalowski School of Fine Art auction at the end of last year. Bruce happens to be my husband, and I was in Argentina at the time, and the bidding was opened with a mock phone bid from me of R100. This miserable offer was soon overtaken, and the bids shot skywards, with the hammer falling to socialite and arts organiser Suzy Bell, who then donated her purchase to the SANG. A headline in the *Weekend Argus* read ‘Conceptual husband fetches R520 000’. Since then, Bruce has been mobbed with an accession number and invatations and a cataloque printed.

**Saturday, March 29**

A packed South African National Gallery audience hears Marilyn Martin describe how the artwork Bruce Gordon pushes the boundaries of conceptual art. Penny Slopis talks of the slippage between life and art that has opened up through this concept, and Bruce himself announces that now he is part of the gallery collection, he envisages a few changes — like turning the Annex into a venue for poker evenings. In fact, it is interesting how what first seemed perhaps a slight idea has gathered weight over the intervening months through the development and framing of the concept: the tattooing of the accession number, the witty and challenging little catalogue, the endorsement of the SANG in holding a full scale event. Official proceedings concluded with Penny’s announcement that ‘Bruce Gordon now declares himself open’.

**Sunday, March 30**

Bruce Gordon’s infamy gets him framed
Kroegbaas word tjommelkuns

VOCNoot
CORUS VAN BOSCH

KROEGBAAS word tjommelkuns

Was die S.A.N.K. nie meer aangeneem vir die mening bewys nie? Was hierdie selfsensasie na verwesenliking? Dit is net soos wanneer 'n man jou saam wil met sy band van die S.A.N.K. wat nie trek in as hy sien dat dit sal sluit in sy eg. Sokker ontdek dit, dat ek nie doet nie. Ek noem dit "tjommelkuns".

Die S.A.N.K. was 'n geval van die saak dat nooit nie so meer word nie. Dit was nie net soos "tjommelkuns" nie, maar ook 'n geval van die S.A.N.K. wat byna soos 'n hyena klink. Neem die naam "tjommelkuns" as 'n aanbieding van die S.A.N.K. wat nie trek in as hy sien dat dit sal sluit in sy eie band.

Hoe gaan Gordyn op 20 Maart in die nuwe nuwe son genot word as 'n Kroegbaas. "Hoe kan sy?" is die vraag wat in die nuwe nuwe son genot word. Die naam "tjommelkuns" as 'n aanbieding van die S.A.N.K. wat nie trek in as hy sien dat dit sal sluit in sy eie band. Neem die naam "tjommelkuns" as 'n aanbieding van die S.A.N.K. wat nie trek in as hy sien dat dit sal sluit in sy eie band.
Kroegman pleks van potplant word kunswerk

"If Bruce Gordon ever says he's been framed, we'll know why"
(See page 6)
Tattoo puts Bruce among gallery's body of work

ONE of the SA National Gallery's latest artworks will appear today as Bruce, his gallery acquisition number tattooed on his body.

Cape Town bar owner and personality Bruce Gordon is to be exhibited later this month as a "found object" by city artist Ed Young.

The work was donated to the gallery by art lover Sury Bell after she bought it, or him, for R500 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art annual auction last year.

He is now part of the gallery's permanent collection.

The tattooing, explained exhibition curator Andrew Lampecht, was necessary "as all objects acquired by the gallery must have an indelible connection mark applied to them.

He and Young would have "sympathy tattoos" at the same time.

Lampecht said that what had been sold to the gallery was not Gordon himself, "but the idea of Gordon, what Gordon represents".

"My understanding from the art is that he represents a person who is interesting and significant."

The gallery has previously displayed a self-installed guard from the Mount Nelson Hotel as a living artwork. — Sapa

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Bruce Gordon Gets Tattooed

On Saturday, March 29, Bruce Gordon, a well known Cape Town art personality, will be exhibited at the South African National Gallery as a work of art. Bruce Gordon, the found object, was a project initiated by young artist Edward Young. The work was purchased for R52 000 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art annual auction and donated by Suzy Bell to the National Gallery.

The event attracted some media attention, even making the Sunday Times. The work now forms part of the permanent collection of the Gallery.

As a precursor to his display, Gordon will be tattooed Tuesday, March 18 at the National Gallery, between 10 am and 1 pm. The tattooing is necessary as all objects acquired by the gallery must have an indelible accession mark applied to them. The artist, Edward Young, and exhibition curator, Andrew Lamprocht, will also be tattooed. Lamprocht describes this act as an act of artistic solidarity, or as he frames it personally, a “sympathy tattoo.”
The Sale of Bruce Gordon

by Andrew Lamprecht

Bruce Gordon, owner of Long Street's Joburg Bar (the watering hole of choice for many in Cape Town's art world), was sold for R52 000 at a charity auction recently held at the Michaelis School of Fine Art to raise funds for student bursaries and special projects.

Edward Young, a Masters student at Michaelis, submitted Gordon as his work of art for the auction, which also included works by Cecil Skotnes, Bruce Arnold, Jane Alexander, Gavin Youngs, Sue Williamson, Bessy Bailey, Pippa Skotnes, Malcolm Payne, Peggy Delport and a host of other friends, staff members and students of Michaelis.

Young's work, entitled 'Bruce Gordon', reached the top price at the event, held after the opening of the graduate exhibition of the School on Wednesday December 4. Other high prices included two photomontages by Jane Alexander, which fetched a total of R28 000, and boxed works by Pippa Skotnes, which made R14 000. After an opening bid of R100 conveyed from Argentina by Sue Williamson, the bidding soon escalated for 'Bruce Gordon', with Marilyn Martin being pipped at the post by art aficionado Suzy Bell. In an act of considerable and unexpected generosity, Bell donated the work to the South African National Gallery at the end of the auction to rousing applause.

"Obviously, it's a very innovative and exciting form of conceptual work," noted Lyndi Sales, exhibition and auction co-ordinator. "The idea of being able to auction a person at an art auction is something new and refreshing."

The work has raised much discussion and was the subject of a weekend newspaper article. Responding to the media attention his work has received, Young stated "The work of art is no longer necessary." In spite of this, it is hoped that the work will soon be on display at its new home, the National Gallery.
Bar owner sold as work of art
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It is that generally exciting time on the local arts calendar when the up-and-comings get to show their student work to the public. And although intriguing to see what’s new in the creative lurch, this can simultaneously prove potentially confounding to viewers who get to experience a breadth and varied range of the art experience; from the ‘I’m-god-the-being’s-a-genius’-type encounters, to those visions that feel somewhat treacherous and ill-fated to one’s viewing.

This year’s Michaelis exhibition lives up to all that. There are profound and playful sightings worth returning to multiple times, and many that are not. One gets to move along a gratifying trail from story to story (to a blaring Superman soundtrack): a hypnotic primary coloured pelvic-swinging trio sequence in Crotch; the bare-breasted, red/yellow/blue coloured bikini-donned babe athletes in Breast (who wisely wear helmets whilst in motion). A spectacular cautionary demonstration of the hazards of trying to speak with your mouth full, featuring a splice of young Travolta in Dog/19. The ambivalent adulation and concurrent ridicule of iconic figures is fabulously approached in Unfilled (Superman), followed by a whopper grin in a Schumacher poster, but taken to rts heights in the abuse and abandonment of a childhood teddy bear in Killing Teddy.

"If I can give you only one tip for the future," writes Young in his artist’s statement about the work, "It’s a circus." Young has plotted an extensive and elaborate circuit of tricks and acts that roll themselves out in a chortle-Inspiring maze around and through the space. Each video monitor, vase, mooing cow and bandannaed plastic pig has been deliberately placed and arranged: OTT perhaps, but nothing’s random - and irony pervades.

In the adjoining room to Young’s installation, grazing, not inappropriately, is a flock of perfectly pleasing and consumable wax sheep (among other ruminant encounters, revealing an apparent sheep fetish) by Megan Shupman. Light, pretty and playful. Staying with the animal theme are Samuel Allerton’s bold and wonderful wooden Orang-utans out on the lawns in front of Michaelis, apparently produced in his third year. His fourth year work (also on show) is far more formalized, though, and lacks the same engaging energy.

Sean Stemon’s skilfully crafted sculptures of heads and busts, exploring the complexity of being, are sleek, meditative and beautiful.

Zen Marie, who walked away with this year’s Michaelis Prize, offers an installation featuring brown paper-wrapped, numbered bottles in a precarious slide-like landscape. These are pristinely framed by two canvases by Cameron Platter: one of pinned green silk-bladed leaves and another of pinned red strips on white canvas. It’s an aesthetic, serene and conceptual haven.

Bronwyn Carr’s self-portraits in red and in white bring an exciting and incredibly competent new edge to the painting generally on offer. Interfaced by tiled panels of abject found objects (from specifically identified street locations in Durbanville - and with the exception of one gift), these works are introspective and self-reflection and highly evocative.

And then there’s Masters student Mgcineni Pro Sobopha, whose works on the subject of circumcision and in particular, of botched circumcisions, profoundly chill the space that they inhabit. Experiencing these works specifically at this time of the year, when reports of ritual circumcisions during the annual initiation ceremonies that have gone very wrong abound, has them take on a particular urgent significance. Sobopha’s work is engaged and insightful, exploring the beauty of the masculine form as well as issues surrounding ideas of masculinity and, occasionally, its dire contradictions. There’s a lot of work to get through at this year’s student show, but there are undoubtedly intermittent treasures worth the sifting and enough of them to want to bother.