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I CAN EXPLAIN
THE WORK OF ART IS NO LONGER NECESSARY

ED YOUNG

A dissertation 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
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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.

Signature

Date 02/06/2005

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INTRODUCTION

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.¹ 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.²

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/her 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

¹ 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 far more fascinating. He often cites artist Peet Pienaar's anecdotes, noted for their beautifully exaggerated descriptions.

² Personal e-mail correspondence, 3 November 2004.



CONTEMPORARY
ISSUE 70
COVER
KENDALL GEERS
NOBES
2003

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 (yBas). 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-incident 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.

PART I

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TAKING THE PMS

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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 ignorant³ sector of the art world, easily generalised 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,⁴ 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,⁵ 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.⁶ 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.' 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'.⁷

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.



BILLY CHILDISH AND TRACEY EMIN

³ Meaning that the acceptance and understanding of the readymade relies to an extent on some form of education. It is not yet a widespread phenomenon that could easily be accepted by the general public (mainly because of its brief history dating back only as far as the 1910s).

⁴ Based on my own assumptions relating to various conversations with friends, colleagues and the media.

⁵ The Stuckists appropriated their name through Tracey Emin's drunken response to Childish's work and referring to it as being 'stuck, stuck, stuck'. See 'Stuck on the Turner Prize'.

⁶ http://www.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk/MultimediaStudentProjects/00-01/9704524/MM_Project/Html/stuck1.htm

⁷ See *Stuckism International*. <<http://www.stuckism.com>>

⁸ See 'The Turner Prize' in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turner_Prize>



ART OR ARSE CD FACE BILLY CHILDISH AND THE STUCKISTS

HISTORY

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, this event that took place in a Zurich café? 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. (Godfrey 1998: 37)

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 Indépendents⁸ in Paris' in 1912 (Godfrey 1998: 25).

⁸ Which might have been accepted if Duchamp had changed the title and removed it from the painted surface. It was also seen to resemble too many influences of Futurism.

'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)



NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE (NO. 2), MARCEL DUCHAMP, 1912

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.⁹ 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).



FOUNTAIN, MARCEL DUCHAMP, 1917

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

⁹ '...an attempt to circumvent the conservatism of such institutions as the National Academy of Design' (Godfrey 1998: 28).

'moneybags' [Godfrey 1998: 28] and Mutt possibly referring to J.L. Mott company and the *Mutt and Jeff* comic strip) (Varnedoe 1990: 274). Unaware of Duchamp's authorship of the Richard Mutt pseudonym, the board rejected the work on the basis that it was immoral and was seen as an act of plagiarism.

Instantly the arguments started: Glackens, who of course did not know that R Mutt was a pseudonym for Duchamp, was horrified: he believed that it was indecent and could not possibly be shown. Arensberg, a supporter of Duchamp who had encouraged him in this venture, retorted that R Mutt had paid his six dollars and therefore the piece must be shown; anyway, he claimed, 'a lovely form has been revealed, freed from its functional purpose, therefore a man clearly has made an aesthetic contribution. Mr Mutt has taken an ordinary object, placed it so that its useful significance disappears, and thus has created a new approach to the subject.'

(Godfrey 1998: 28)

A vote was cast by the committee with regard to the acceptance of this work as an object of art. It was refused. The directors had flawed their original agenda. They had failed in their principles and declared the object as 'by no definition a work of art' (Godfrey 1998: 28). Duchamp wrote to his sister Suzanne:

Tell the family this snippet: 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.¹⁰

(Naumann and Obalk 2000: 47)

The 'female friend' is possibly a reference to Louise Norton, author of the piece *Buddha of the Bathroom*, which appeared alongside the article by friend and fellow artist Beatrice Wood in the second issue of the journal anonymously published by Duchamp, Norton and Wood: *The Blind Man*. Wood wrote:

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 with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article from life, placed it so 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)

¹⁰ 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 marry composer Edgar Varese (Naumann and Obalk 2000: 47).

P · B · T
THE BLIND MAN



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).

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

Whilst at the only contemporary public exhibition of Duchamp's Readymades, in 1916, the term Readymade appeared in the exhibition catalogue of the Bourgeois [sic] Gallery, New York, the objects themselves remained unnoticed by both the public and the press, such that to this day Duchamp researchers are still wondering which 'Two Ready-mades' they might have been. The only Readymade ever to attract public attention was the urinal signed 'R. Mutt' which was submitted to the first exhibition of the New York Society of Independent Artists as *Fountain* and was refused. But that Duchamp was actually the spirit behind the 'Richard Mutt Case' remained a mystery to almost all contemporaries, and even today there is still some slight doubt among Duchamp experts as to its sole authorship.

(Daniels 2002: 27-28)

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

One of the nicer twists of history's perversity is that, while the Duchamp *Fountain* exists in numerous replica versions, a surviving example of the original type of urinal has proven impossible to locate. If it exists at all, it is now an item of exquisite rarity.

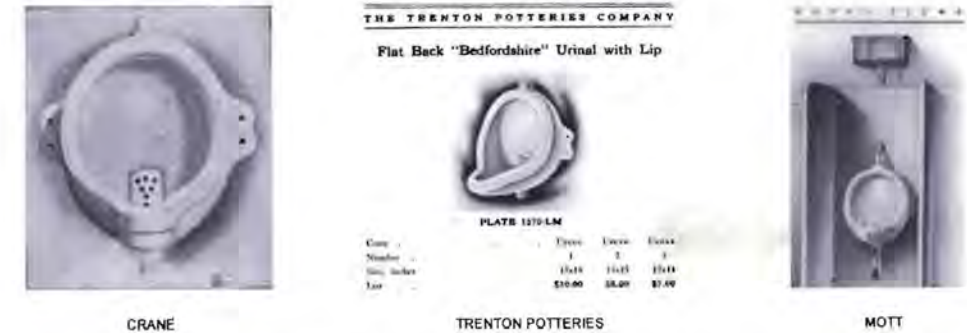
(Varnedoe 1990: 274)

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

In the early 20th century, companies like Mott, Crane and various others bought their urinals from Trenton Potteries, Trenton NJ (a.k.a. 'the sanitary pottery capital of the U.S.') (Shearer 2000: 7). The Mott 'Bedfordshire' fails to provide us with the exact number of drain holes of Duchamp's *Fountain*, whilst the MacDonald 'Bedfordshire' bears a stronger resemblance to the Duchamp original and also maintains the exact number of drain holes.

Varnedoe extends his argument to justify Duchamp's claim for the object not having any aesthetic appeal whatsoever. He realises that Duchamp might have in fact bought his urinal from the MacDonald company purely because the Mott company stocked more appealing sets of plumbing for the beautiful American bathroom. The fact that the 'Bedfordshire' appeared in the catalogue at all and that it was restricted to its back pages, together with the fact that the 'Bedfordshire' would not have been found in the Mott showroom, might have added to a game that Duchamp intended to play in the first place.

Although Duchamp made claims for not wanting aesthetic accessibility, Camfield notes the work's popularity amongst Duchamp's circle, and the aesthetic links to the Buddha form in the writings of Louise Norton (Varnedoe 1990: 276-277).



In 2000 Rhonda Roland Shearer, together with Gregory Alvarez, Robert Slawinsky, Vittorio Marchiand 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

Duchamp's original 1917 urinal does not exist today. Historians such as William Camfield and Michael Betancourt 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 (Stieglitz 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)

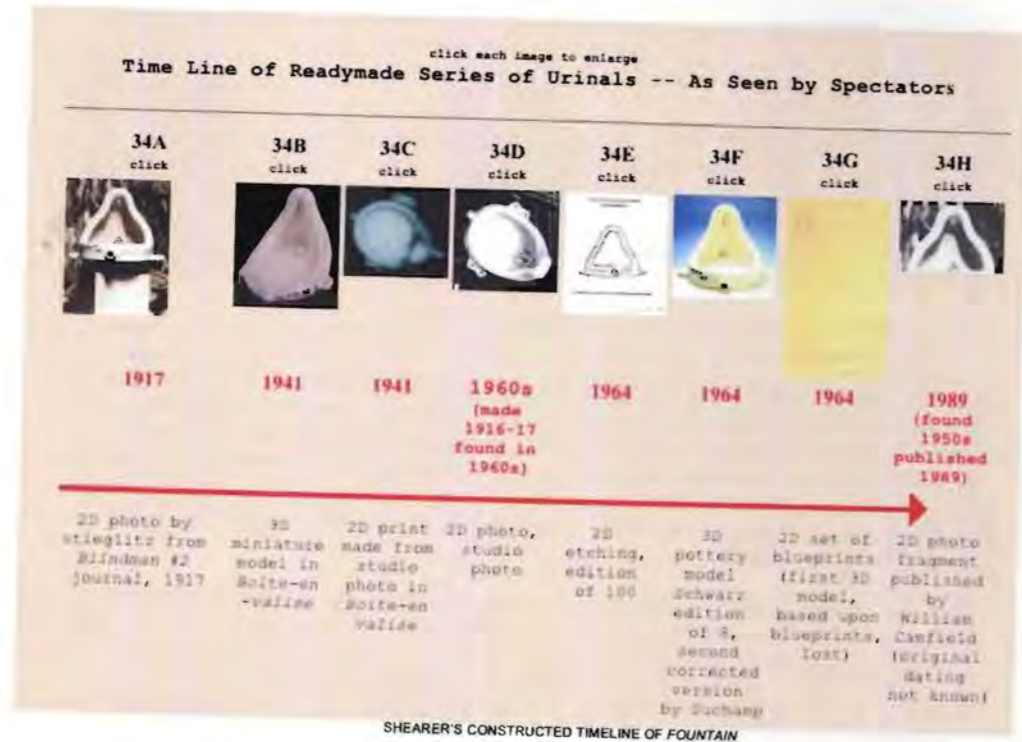
¹¹ I present a detailed summary of Shearer's observations in this document because of the centrality of them to my own operations and the views of dissenting historians.



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',¹² 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).



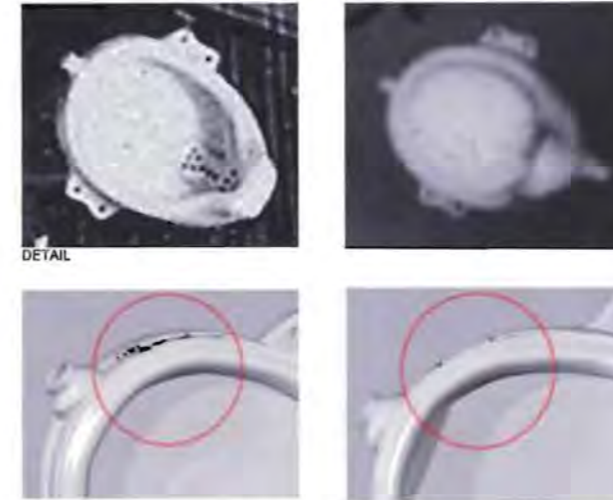
¹² According to Charles Prendergast, *Fountain* was broken by Glackens as a solution to the problem of exhibiting it. However, the piece would have been listed as 'destroyed' and Stieglitz supposedly only photographed it after it was rejected (Betancourt 2000).

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,¹³ as well as the 1917 Stieglitz photograph.



STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHS

When her 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).



DETAIL

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 Mott model. She also notes the difference between the pipe connections both at the top and bottom of the urinal (Shearer 2000: 7).

¹³ Digitally reconstructed Mott 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:



This remains a possibility. 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 pipefitting appears 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, 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 FOUNTAIN USING THE MOTT SEGMENTS DUCHAMP MIGHT HAVE INCLUDED IN BLINDMAN IMAGE

She asks the question and suggests reasoning for Duchamp's manipulation¹⁴ in that he deliberately altered perspectives in other important works such as *The Large Glass*.¹⁵

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.



¹⁴ In the same article, she also provides strong evidence 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.
¹⁵ 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.

The 'indefinite shadows' and 'discontinuous lines and edges' outlined in the last image may also suggest the area where the photographs were fused.

Shearer's article goes on to provide us with further evidence concerning the manipulated Stieglitz image and hints at further research concerning the matter. A pool of urine seems to be defying gravity at the top of the urinal, suggesting the partial image might have been taken from an existing fitted urinal.

My own observations lead me to the comparison in this particular area, the Stieglitz photograph and the reconstructed Schwarz model, which was presumably reconstructed according to Duchamp's own instructions in order to replicate this item which is now 'lost'. Note the drain holes in the Schwarz reconstruction which appear to be absent in the Stieglitz model below:



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.'

(Danto in Boxer 1999)

Leslie Camhi¹⁶ 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 accepted 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 Arakawa¹⁷

(Gins and Arakawa 1999)

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.

¹⁶

Leslie Camhi is a cultural critic whose work appears in the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, and other publications.

¹⁷

Letter in response to Sarah Boxer's article in *The New York Times*, 23 March 1999. Madeline Gins and Arakawa are well-known architectural theorists and philosophers, and a close friend of Duchamp.

When discussing my own work in the second section, these links also become relevant in terms of the manipulation of an artwork. I do so I will refrain from making direct Duchampian links as I see them as obvious. If this is not the case, I feel that a broad overview of Duchamp's construction of *Fountain* (and other works not investigated) will aid the viewer in the reading of my work.

FUCK OFF. LEAVE US ALONE. GO HOME.

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).¹⁸

This brought with it a generation of new art critics¹⁹ that fitted the same mould as the artists: 'figures of fun'²⁰ (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.²¹ 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'²² Charles Saatchi was forced to sell off his 'blue-chip' collection and started buying seemingly un-saleable local work, building up a collection of

¹⁸ Such as Roger Fry, Herbert Read, Adrian Stokes, John Berger and Peter Fuller (Stallabrass 1999: 259).

¹⁹ Such as Matthew Collings, Sarah Kent 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 yBas 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-comings'.

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 gave 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 recommendation by Goldsmith's College lecturer Michael Craig-Martin, invested in these 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 neither here nor there. The art is a secret code. Everyone involved understands it. Nobody else does. That's it.²³

(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 traditions²⁴ sprouted the quick replacement of the old with the new. The art was no longer a juvenile independent structure, but the actual structure within which 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 such work. The yBa phenomenon is already seen as a thing of the past although similar controversial strategies are in place in order to maintain public attention. I will discuss these 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 type of art the new popular British audience is familiar with - done by the yBas - is good and amusing, it represents a narrow idea of what art can be: jokey and ironic and not much concerned with anything aesthetic. On the other hand, it isn't completely unaesthetic and the main artists are good precisely because their art has a bit of an aesthetic side. But the reason the art is successful is not because it's good; it's because it's about issues that anyone can get, which touch everyone and which are in the media all the time: sex, shocks, social change, social deterioration, social unease. So when something aesthetic about this kind of art is ever mentioned in the promo-talk for the art, what is said is always transparently rubbish - because there isn't a climate for anyone talking seriously about anything aesthetic. Certainly not in the media world, but also not in the art world anymore. No one is used to it, so it's bound to be crude. No one wants to hear about it because it is difficult. Whereas the whole art popularity explosion is based on non-difficulty, or having shocks instead of non-difficulty - the same shocks the media are obsessed by.

(Collings 2001: 8)

²³ Collings exaggerates his point to make it stronger. He generally acknowledges the accessibility of the works to a wider audience and possibly refers to an increasing art world in this particular case.

²⁴ As Stallabrass has characterised them:

art is good for you

art has an ethical content

art illuminates the human condition

art reveals deep inner truths that cannot be expressed in words (Stallabrass 1999: 59)

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:

[T]he 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 it 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 conceited 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'.²⁵

In the face of theoretical orthodoxy, an art that deliberately plays dumb may simply be making a critique of the conventions and the art that sprang 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.

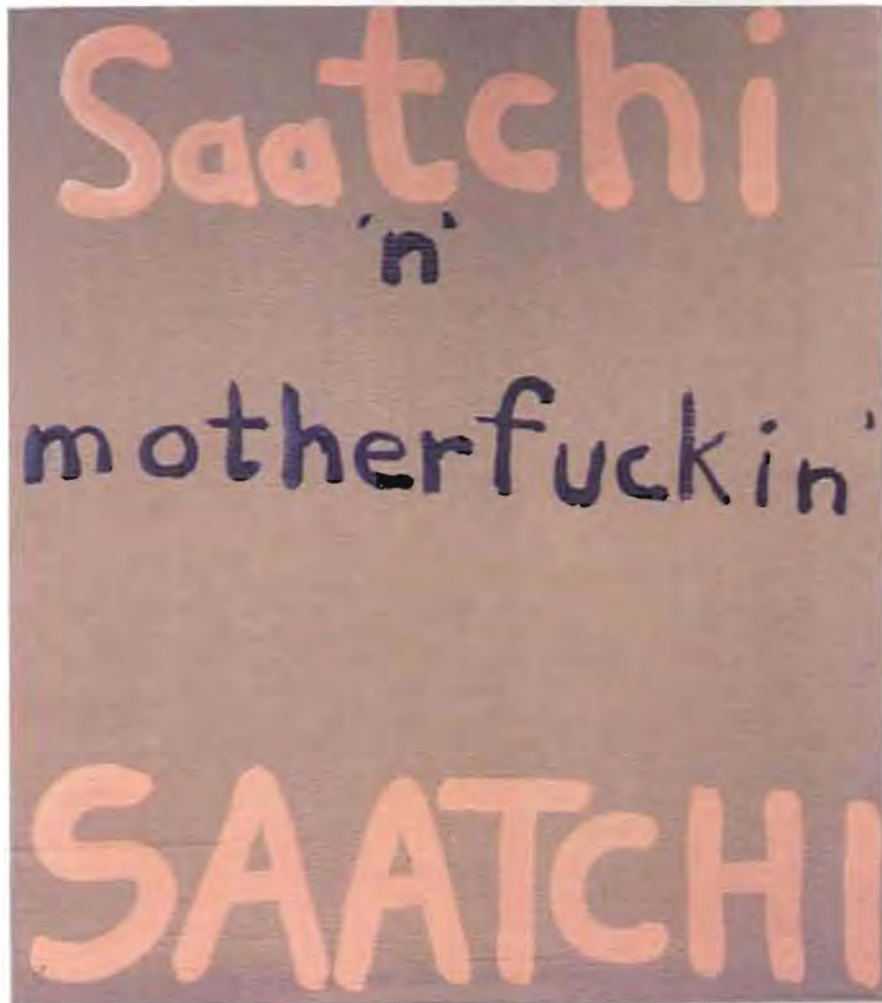
(Stallabrass 1999: 86)

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

An example of this is found in the work of artists Colin Lowe and Roddy Thomson, best known for their word painting *Saatchi n' Motherfuckin Saatchi*, 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

²⁵ Definition: The Online slang Dictionary: **keep it real** v 1. to stay true to one's self, to resist the temptation to be fake. ('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:²⁶



²⁶

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 bit violent. When I left later he called me back for a drink - 'No', I called. After that I'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... (Collings 2001: 57)

P.H.Coate & Son
Meare Green Court
Stoke St Gregory
NR Taunton
Somerset
TA3 6HY

113 Beaconsfield Road
London
N15 4SH

6.9.00

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 transcriptive 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 'truncheon' 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 visual 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

(Lowe and Thomson in Collings 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 CROWNS AND WAS WONDERING IF BY CHANCE YOU HAD ANY OLD ONES WHICH YOU DIDN'T WANT ANYMORE WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO PASS ON TO ME. AT THE MOMENT I HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH ONES I MAKE MYSELF. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CROWNS - NO PROBLEM - HOW ABOUT ONE OF THOSE BIG BEJEWELLED STICKS WITH THE ROUND THING ON THE END? OR EVEN ONE OF THOSE FANCY COAT-THINGS WITH THE FURAT COLLAR? I COULD ALSO USE AN OLD THRONE IF YOU HAVE ONE BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SIT ON AT OUR HOUSE AND I'VE GOT A MANKY ANKLE - I'VE GOT A VAN SO I COULD COLLECT IT. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OF THIS STUFF IT'S OK. - JUST GIVE US A OLD DRESS AND A HAT - WE'RE DOING THE DECORATING AT HOME JUST NOW AND I NEED SOMETHING TO THROW ON OVER MY NEW OVERALLS SO I DON'T GET PAINT ON THEM. JUST LEAVE THEM IN A POLYTHENE BAG BY THE PALACE GATES IF YOU LIKE. IF YOU CAN'T LET ME HAVE ANYTHING, DON'T WORRY, I WILL NOT TAKE POT-SHOTS AT YOU FROM A TALL BUILDING WITH MY HIGH-POWERED RIFLE (I AM A GIFTED MARKSMAN). HOPE YOU ARE WELL,
MUCH LOVE,
YOUR LOYAL SUBJECT,
XXX

AFFIX PASSPORT-SIZED PHOTO OF YOURSELF WEARING HOMEMADE CROWN.
WRITE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS CLEARLY IN THE SPACE BELOW - REMEMBER TO INCLUDE A DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER.

(Shrigley in Fresh Cream 2000: 547)

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 DRUNK SELLING THE ARTIST AS A CELEBRITY



When Tracey Emin's idiosyncratic grin appeared on billboards at airports advertising Bombay Sapphire Gin²⁸ 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 claiming it afresh here. In my terminology, 'social realism' twins the idea of socially relevant art within a new tradition of 'real' representation (with all the concomitant complexities that this term evokes).

²⁸ According to Collings: Blue Sapphire Gin. This kind of mistake is typical of Collings' writing and is criticised by his peers. Stallabrass notes on this as discussed later in the chapter, although one can presume that this mistake would be deliberately left unedited in order to reinforce his character as a self-proclaimed idiot, hereby deliberately situating himself in the same position as the artists he tends to discuss.

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 (Millard 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'²⁹ (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)



²⁹ 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 criticises Hughes for 'barely [containing] his homophobia, branding Warhol "abnormal", "homosexual", and "malevolent" 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*.

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 attitude 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 content [of art]. We had artist chums 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 unfair and unrealistic and dishonest. Why not use drink as the subject. Everyone is drunk, everyone understands drunkenness...

(Gilbert & George in Stallabrass 1999: 154)

Gilbert and George base large parts of their 'sculptures'³⁰ on concepts of drinking as a way of claiming realism in their work. To realise that 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 that 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)



³⁰ G & G refer to all of their work as sculptures - performances, video work and prints. (Collings 1999: 76).

MATERIAL

Contemporary art is formally linked to periodic changes within historical art movements.³¹ 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?'

Formally, a link exists between contemporary art and Conceptual Art, but again this is situated within a different historical context. It is more easily affiliated to the conceptualism of Dadaism than Conceptual Art of the Seventies because of its social interest. Lucy Lippard, Author of *Six Years: the dematerialisation of the art object from 1966-1972*, wrote in the catalogue to the exhibition *Reconsidering the object of art: 1965-1975*:

Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and 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: 231)

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 had subversive meaning purely because it was used,³² 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

³¹ We have to take into account that we are looking at the work in the context of a particular history and not the whole of the work produced at the time.

³² Post-Modernism in general.

material is a visual strategy that communicates the process.³³

AUDIENCE

Average Age of Turner Prize nominees

Year	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Age	44	46	43	39	45	50	30	37	37	38	36	35	35	33

(Stallabrass 1999: 172)

Turner Prize exhibition attendance

1996 57,000

1997 85,000

1998 121,000

(Stallabrass 1999: 177)

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 severing response to this read: 'Over the last five years people of all ages have flocked to see the kind of art Tom Stoppard despises'.

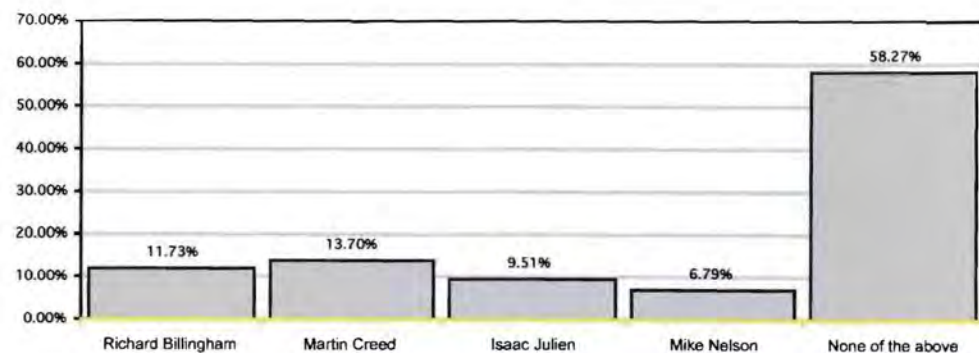
Mancunian songster Morrissey said it best: *The more you ignore me the closer I get*. If young art in Britain has been ignored for decades, then surely it deserves the audience appreciation it is receiving. Street-Porter concluded her article:

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:

³³ Realising that art can't escape the meaning that the historical context has imprinted on it.



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*³⁴ that was short listed a couple of years before. The fact is the audience size has escalated and Emin now sells for millions.

I LIKED YOURS BEST³⁵



JAKE AND DINOS CHAPMAN

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

³⁴ Tracey Emin, *My Bed*, 1999.

³⁵ Text for engraved trophies: *Consolation Prizes (2004)*. Ruth Sacks. The Brett Kebble Art Awards. 2004.

³⁶ Informal email conversation with Gillick, 2003.



PERRY AT THE 2004 TURNER PRIZE

The Turner Prize operates on very specific levels: it keeps its audience on tip-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.



NICOLAS BOURRIAUD AT THE 50th VENICE BIENNALE

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:

I don't believe for one minute in this 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 fit 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 1992. 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 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.³⁷



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE AND JANET JACKSON AT THE HALFTIME SHOW OF THE SUPER BOWL XXXVIII



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. I briefly recall the below image occupying a full page in a local newspaper.³⁸



BRITNEY SPEARS AND MADONNA AT THE 2003 MTV MUSIC AWARDS

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.

³⁷ See CNN.com <<http://edition.cnn.com/2004/US/02/02/superbowl.jackson/>>

³⁸ See CBSNEWS.com <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/09/05/entertainment/main571865.shtml>>



MARTIN CREED AND MADONNA AT THE TURNER PRIZE OPENING, 2001

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 in the first place.

In the case of the art industry, it appears that the artists have become the product primarily, while the artworks remain simply what these artists do. But, by incorporating tools such as the afore-mentioned 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. I 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 it 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)



MARTIN CREED
WORK NO. 227 THE LIGHTS GOING
ON AND OFF
2001
THE TATE BRITAIN
London



MARTIN CREED
WORK NO. 88: A SHEET OF A4 PAPER
CRUMPLED INTO A BALL
1995



MARTIN CREED
WORK NO. 232:
THE WHOLE WORLD + THE WORK =
THE WHOLE WORLD
2000

Creed's minimalism, often stems from seemingly odd yet simple equations, such as: '+1-1=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 that of signature of Creed as an artist. In its simplest form, it is difficult to imagine other artists imitating 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 austere concerns:

A light being switched on and off is not a good work of art.

(Lee in BBC News 2001)



ALBUM COVER
PULP
COMMON PEOPLE
1995

Creed's persona, as definitional device for his minimal work, is also depicted in the lyrics of his band *Owada*:³⁹

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 *Best Of* 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 Want 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?'

Pause.
Man, suddenly: 'Alright. Tracey Emin. Er... Hirst. Damien Hirst.'

³⁹ Named after his bass player and close friend, Keiko 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, in shrill voice: 'I was going to say Tracey Emin! You can't say her. Erm...'

Pause. Then, triumphantly: 'Damien Hirst. Ta-dah!'

Couple carrying shopping.

Woman: 'Tracey Ermine.'

Man: 'Oh. Oh no! Not her! Ha ha ha. Hum. 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 Dalí still alive?'

Man (witheringly): '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 Emin and Hirst.

However my concern here is for the broader category.

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 criticism that these two writers have of one another as I find their bickering typical of the British art scene, and the South African art world for that matter. I will discuss this in a later chapter. 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, *Blimey!* [1997], is that it offers a consistent pastiche of conventional art-world talk. His meandering prose, inability to sustain an argument and thinking in soundbites is an exemplification of that talk, and its careless but consistent mislaying of all that is important... Collings's self mockery is also a mockery of art-world speak, of vagueness, lassitude and forgetfulness (drug- and alcohol-induced on occasion), but, and this prevents the book from being truly critical, it does not escape the pervasive feeling that only this attitude is possible. The book is an exemplification, and by the fact that it appears in book form - at far too great a length and with too much permanence to be a vehicle for the verbal froth vernissage - a disorientating pastiche of the tyranny of received opinion that governs the art world.

(Stallabrass 1999: 105-106)

COLLINGS ON STALLABRASS

Julian Stallabrass's *High Art Lite* is about the yBas 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 dying fad, it appears to have had its last breath during a warehouse fire at the Momart art storage facility in East London on 24 May 2004.⁴¹

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.⁴² 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?

Réece Walker, London UK⁴³

This goes further. Discussions have occurred in Internet chat rooms 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, but 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.

But, 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 blackploitation cartoons, stored at the facility by his dealer Victoria Miro. After the incident he sent this text message 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)

⁴¹ I have gathered this information from numerous sources on the Internet at the time, many of which I am now unable to locate.

⁴² Tracey Emin sent an email to *Guardian* reporter James Meek in which she expressed feelings of wanting to leave the UK as she was tired of being 'picked on' by the local press, and felt particularly upset about this instance (Meek 2004).

⁴³ See article: 'Saatchi art fire: Your reaction' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/3750037.stm>



CAPTAIN SHIT AND THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK STARS. CHRIS OFILI. 1996

THE BOREDOM

WHEN MASTURBATION'S LOST ITS FUN YOU'RE FUCKING LAZY⁴⁴

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 Skotnes⁴⁵ 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 BOREDOM⁴⁶

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 thought of production.⁴⁷ Artists, these days, seem complete wretches.⁴⁸ 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

⁴⁴ Billy Joe Armstrong, Green Day, 1991.

⁴⁵ Prof. Skotnes is currently the head of department and lectures at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT, Cape Town.

⁴⁶ *bored* adj.: feeling tired and irritable, either because of being exposed to something uninteresting or because of having nothing to do.

⁴⁷ With the exception of (a) Transkei born "Flash" artist Vuyisa Nyamende, who claims to have 'severed [his] ties with conventional reality a long time ago' ('Bright young things', *Art South Africa* 1(3), 2003), and whose main aim at present is physical levitation and penis enlargement purely by means of meditation, and (b) Jeff Koons who proudly announced that 'the art world is like green pastures' at a Michaelis lunchtime lecture during a visit to Cape Town, 2003.

⁴⁸ An unpublished theory noted by linguistics expert, filmmaker and writer Elan Gamaker.

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.'⁴⁹



A BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGÈRE, ÉDOUARD MANET, 1882

In the first chapter I examined the work of Marcel Duchamp, generally considered the initiator of conceptualism in art. Édouard Manet, frequently cited as the first truly modern artist,⁵⁰ 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'.⁵¹ 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...

⁴⁹ Gillick 2000: 20

⁵⁰ The only real competitor for this title would be Gustave Courbet.

⁵¹ Observation by Andrew Lamprecht, close collaborator and Lecturer in Theory and Discourse of Art, The Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT.

Manet has ignored the rules of perspective, perfected over centuries by generations of his predecessors. The hegemonic rule of 'Renaissance perspective' is here overthrown 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, over-worked, possibly a bit hungover; on the other hand, in the reflected image, she leans slightly attentively towards a dodgy-looking customer.⁵² In her reflected image she becomes not just a bar lady but also the courtesan.⁵³ 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.



EDGAR DEGAS
L'ABSINTHE
1876

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 ages⁵⁴ gives us something of an imperfect panopticon of the space around the central figure.

ABSINTHE BINGE, JO'BURG BAR, CAPE TOWN, 2002-2003



Yet the lie presented, the obvious fact that our visual sense is being played with, is also central. The figure at 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

⁵² Possibly representing Manet.

⁵³ 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).

⁵⁴ One need only think of the *Arnolfini Marriage* (*The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami*, 1434) and Manet's favourite Velazquez (*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 numbs. 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 *l'absinthe*: '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.⁵⁵



VIDEO STILL FROM VEXATION ISLAND. CAMERON PLATTER. 2004

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.

⁵⁵

Cameron Platter is a friend and fellow artist who was born into the wealthy estate of Erica and John Platter, the famous South African wine critic. 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'.

Even today we share similar approaches concerning artists dealing with everyday life. Consider a work by the neo-punk band Green Day.⁵⁶ Their music video for the song titled *Time of your life (good riddance)*, deals with similar ideas of realism. The comparison is significant. In an interview for VHI'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.



COMPARISON BETWEEN A BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGÈRE, AND STILLS FROM, *TIME OF YOUR LIFE (GOOD RIDDANCE)*, GREEN DAY

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 stereotype of 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 personal issues are included in the video. The artist's persona, which I will discuss at a later stage in this chapter, becomes important in conveying aspects of celebrity to which an audience can relate.

⁵⁶

Green Day is a prominent pop-punk band formed in the early 90s, fronted by Billy Joe Armstrong.



The construction of persona as 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-nude 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.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸

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.

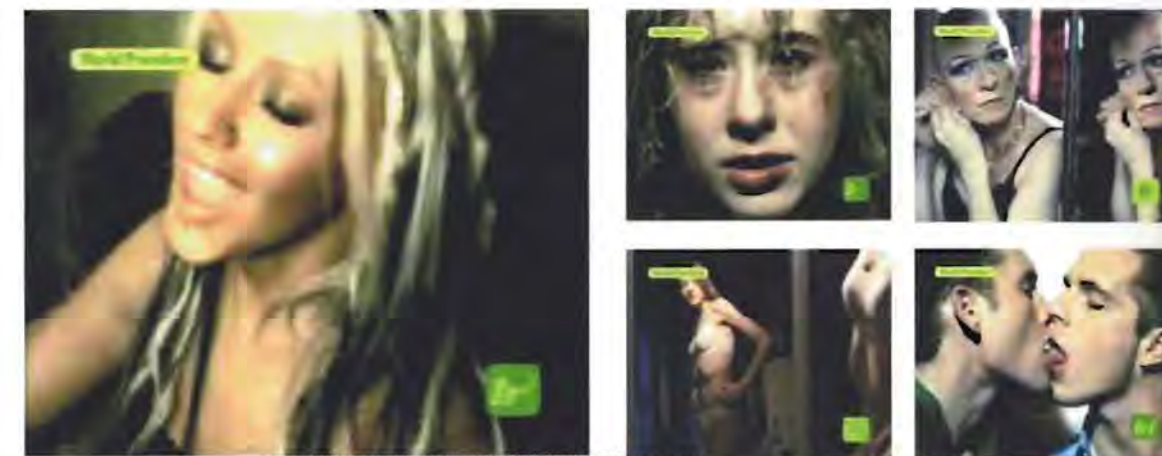


CHRISTINA AGUILERA

⁵⁷ MTV is the abbreviation for the Music Television channel.

⁵⁸ The red and white Santa Claus as we know him today is also a capitalist invention, created for Coca-Cola in 1931 by Haddon Sundblom. <http://www.fortunecity.com/millennium/hibiscus/121/cokesanta.html>

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.



VIDEO STILL FROM BEAUTIFUL, CHRISTINA AGUILERA, 2003

BE LAZY

Some artists today oppose these strategies. While using the artist's persona as a key aspect that informs their production, as well as lending weight to their art 'objects', they reject trends and similar marketing tools for the saleability of their work. In the second chapter I spoke about these artists dumbing down as a conceptual device in order to strengthen their work. They reject theoretical notions, as do some of the contemporary critics,⁵⁹ but only to the extent to which the public reads their work.

It is evident that their art is indeed theoretically informed, but by means of this rejection, the work becomes more 'real' and less highbrow. But, this in itself has become a popular form.

⁵⁹

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 was 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 some more interesting stuff if there is any around. If there isn't, I would like to apologize 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 here? 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 elitist. 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 embodies 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 egomania. Many varied concerns can exist, yet all of them appear to share an equally questioning 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)



Untitled. Maurizio Cattelan. 1995

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 though the mail.

I will not dissect things unless instructed.

I will not get very far with this attitude.

I will finish what I sta

(Cattelan 2000: 124)

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.



WORKING IS A BAD JOB. MAURIZIO CATTELAN. 1993



6th CARIBBEAN BIENNIAL. CATTELAN HOFFMAN. 1999

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)



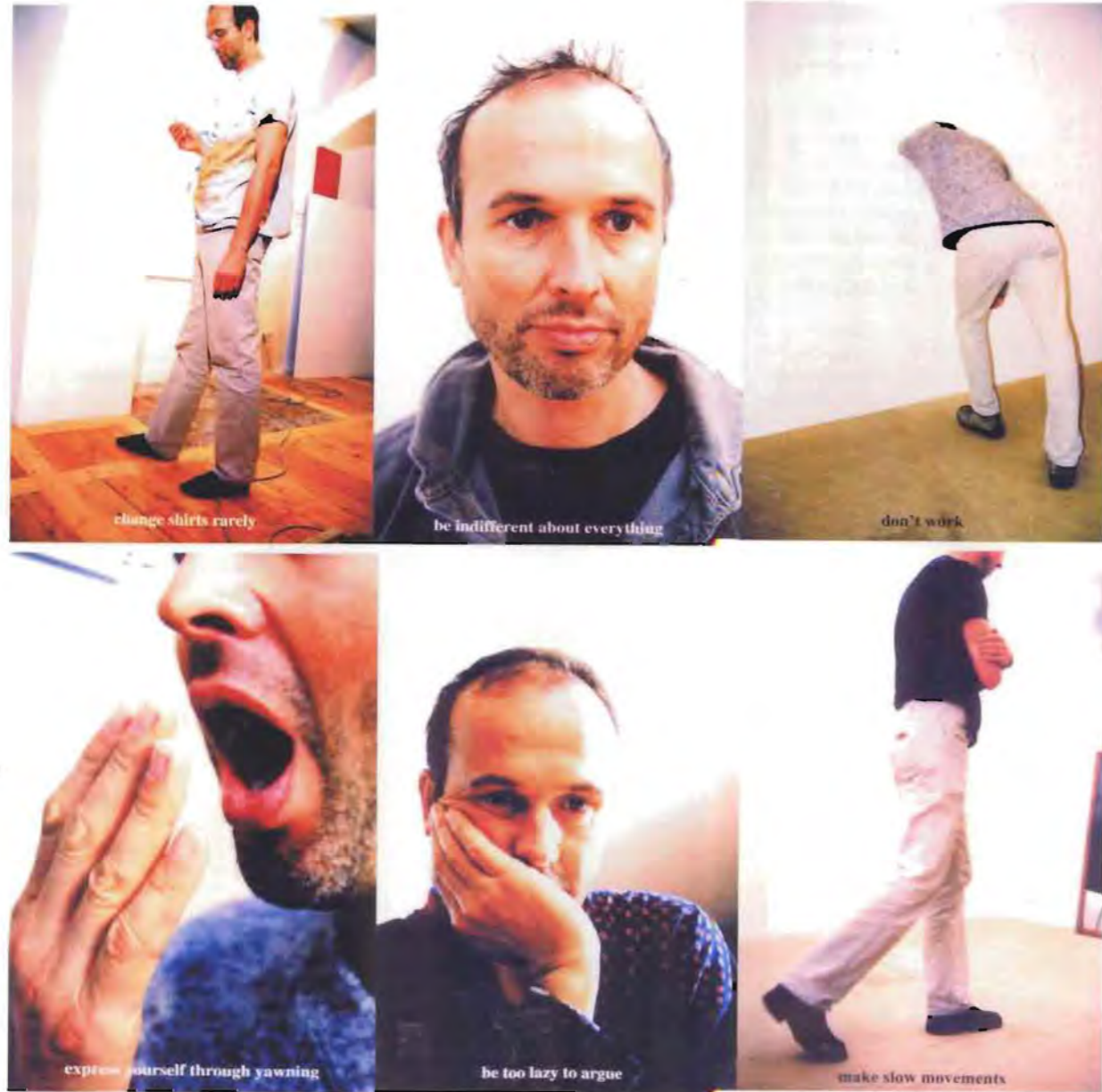
TITLE WITHHELD (STOLEN) KENDELL GEERS. 1994

⁶⁰ *Una Domenica a Rivara* (A Sunday in Rivara), 1996 (Cattelan 2000: 107)
⁶¹ *Untitled (Certificato medico)*, 1989 (Cattelan 2000: 77)
⁶² *Another Fucking Readymade*, 1996 (Cattelan 2000: 30)



MAURIZIO CATTELAN
 UNTITLED
 1992

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.

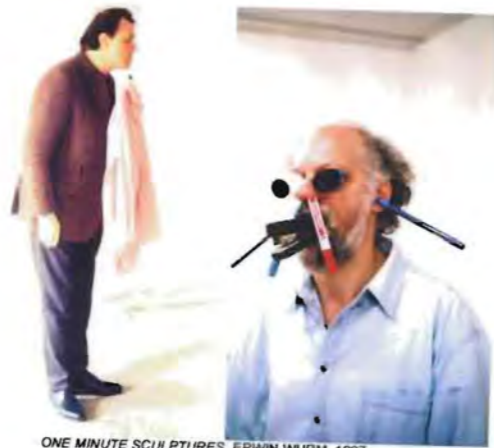
As previously mentioned, people feel cheated (when they think there is nothing there...). While doing research on Wurm,⁶³ I found that only a few Capetonian artists were aware of his contribution to the international art market. But, to the astute and informed observer, it would seem clear that Wurm 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.



VIDEO STILLS FROM THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS, CAN'T STOP. 2003



ONE MINUTE SCULPTURES, ERWIN WURM. 1997

Their video also references works such as Chinese artist Lin Yilin's *The Result of 1000 pieces* and Lucy Orta's tent, amongst others, although Wurm is the only artist credited in the video.



LIN YILIN®
THE RESULT OF 1 000 PIECES. 1994
PERFORMANCE. 15 MIN. GUANGZHOU
CHINA
BRICKS, BANK NOTES
300 X 200 X 50 CM



LUCY ORTA®
REFUGE WEAR - HABITANT
1992-93
ALUMINUM-COATED POLYAMIDE,
POLAR FLEECE, TELESCOPIC ALUMINIUM,
ARMATURE, WHISTLE, LANTERN,
TRANSPORT BAG
150 X 150 X 150 CM



64 Yilin in Cream 1998: 256
65 Pinto, et al. 2003: 42

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.⁶⁶ 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)

⁶⁶

An assessment gleaned through informal conversations or reported speech

CONCLUSION

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'⁶⁷ 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.

[I]t'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.

University of Cape Town

PART II

University of Cape Town

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?
(Siegelau in Alberro 2003: 1)

University of Cape Town

HARD WORK



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.

Gallery's new acquisition speaks

HELEN BAMFORD

THE phrase "the artwork must speak for itself" took on a whole new meaning at the South African National Gallery yesterday.

The 30-year-old, young woman in the Cape Town gallery is Bruce Gordon. The gallery's boarder's acquisition was on display for the first time and welcome victory to his new home.

And what does this masterpiece say to those who view it? "I am a person who has sold his soul for the sake of the art world," he says. "I am a person who has sold his soul for the sake of the art world."

"Being a permanent installation, I cannot be sold and I am not interested in being sold for the rest of my life," he said when he was exhibited in the gallery's first exhibition which was opened by South African artist Penny Siopis, head of the Fine Art Division at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Gordon, a former Cape Argus

reporter who has since the 1970s been in Cape Town, promised himself to do a series of exhibitions which would include converting the artist into a gallery room and his own collection of number 100 items.

"And in my design I will focus through the artwork," he said.

There were a few moments raised at the opening by museum visitors as they started to pressure of creating this particular artwork which seemed to be a little bit of a joke.

Curator Andrew Lamprecht, the gallery's director, said that the work was a masterpiece of the world.

Bruce Gordon was the recipient of artist Ed Young, a student at the Harbourside School of Fine Art.

Young, a student at the Harbourside School of Fine Art, said that he had been inspired by the work of the artist and that he had been inspired by the work of the artist and that he had been inspired by the work of the artist.

The bidder was journalist and art collector Suzy Bell who donated the work of art to the National Gallery.

"It's a great day for me," said Bell. "What work might you create next?"

But she continued she would need permission from gallery director Penny Siopis. It was not until she had been granted permission that she could create the artwork.

Gordon was initially selected by the National Gallery's Collection which he agreed to be displayed with the collection number AGN 03/02.

Young and gallery curator Andrew Lamprecht said that "being the future" is an act of creative vision.

Young promised a final very happy work. The work which will be displayed at the National Gallery is a masterpiece of the world.

"These people seem to have their own way of thinking and I hope that Bruce Gordon will open the museum and culture to a new world of art of this world that we are all proud to be a part of."



But is it art? Bruce Gordon is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery. (Bamford 2003)

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 unfair (due to the seeming ease by which the project was realised) and some said it had been done before.⁶⁸ This complaint 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 Manzoni⁶⁹ 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).

⁶⁸ E.g. See Beezy Bailey's letter to the *Cape Argus*, 31 March 2003.
⁶⁹ Manzoni was an influential conceptual and performance artist who will also be remembered as the artist that canned and sold artist's shit.

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)



PIERO MANZONI SIGNING A PERSON AS LIVING WORK OF ART, 1961



ARTIST'S SHIT, PIERO MANZONI, 1961

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)?



BRUCE GORDON
AUCTION
2002
MICHAELIS SCHOOL OF FINE ART

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 ready-made is vital, it leaves those unfamiliar with the person to some extent at the mercy of the artist. Lamprecht's publication covers some characteristics of Gordon and the reason for his

nomination. It does to a certain degree, but fails 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 top and then her bra. Her silky, milky breasts were bouncing gently with the rhythm of the Chevy. Startled 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 blissful 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 (oops!) is this fiddling while Rome burns? Go figure.

(Edmunds 2003)

TONY KAYE AND THE CASE OF THE MISSING R52 000

■ Where's R52 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 received, 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 R52 000 for the piece to Michaelis; perhaps Michaelis would like to come forward with proof of payment?

Beezy Bailey
Cape Town

CAPE ARGUS, LETTER, 31 MARCH 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 metallic 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 *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, on the grounds of 'receiving stolen goods'. It was the first time I had met Bailey.

This act seemed like a puerile attempt at 'getting in on the action',⁷⁰ as *Bruce Gordon* had enjoyed extensive media coverage by this stage:

Not since one of Beezy Bailey's escapades, and not even then, actually, has an art project had as much publicity as this one.

(Williamson 2003)

Bailey is well known, and his collaboration with international icons David Bowie and Brian Eno has lent him some airtime. He also has an alter ego that has previously made it into the news, namely Joyce Ntobe. In Williamson's quotation above, she refers to the case of Bailey

⁷⁰

As I had told journalist Lin Sampson at the time: Bailey had brought her along to cover the story, which resulted in another feature in the *Sunday Times*: 'Tug-of-war battle over living work of art', 13 April 2003.



JOYCE NTOBE
COOK SUPPER
1992

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 annex of the South African National Gallery. SANG immediately bought the work at R100 a piece, the equivalent in value of the also submitted Baileys, according to Bailey.⁷¹ 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.⁷² Un/fortunately the Ntobes had already gone to print for a catalogue, written by Emma Bedford,⁷³ dealing with the work of three black female artists. Thus an artist was born.

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.



BEEZY BAILEY DRIVING HIS CHAMPAGNE COLOURED BENTLEY

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 structure 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 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

⁷¹

Based on a telephone conversation with Bailey.

⁷²

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

⁷³

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 least 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.⁷⁴ This is due to the apparent regular criticisms it had received. It is challenging as the majority of this country's art industry is criticised 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. However, we are faced with older traditions of thought that might not aid the development process and, with subtle deliberation, stifle such progression.

I will give a more detailed account of this at a later stage when looking at the young artists in South Africa, particularly *Galerie Puta*. 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, sushi, 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

⁷⁴ Informal conversation with founding editor Sophie Perryer, 2004.

show was in fact not necessarily an installation, but rather an exhibition of an exhibition 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. As 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 went 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 contended 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 idea 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. Ed's idiocy is not really linked to his art making alone. He doesn't seem to understand much of what he does. Ask him for a quote about his work and he will stare blankly for a bit and then come up with some phrase that makes absolutely no sense. He also drinks too much. Some mornings I will see him and he will be reeking of alcohol, one hopes from the night before. I have even on one or two occasions seen Ed drunk. He tends to get moody, depressed and sit 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)



JOACHIM KOESTER
PIX MUSIC, 1996
VIDEO 14 MINS
VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH
PROJECTION,
STAGE AND PIT,
GALLERI NICOLA WALLNER,
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK,
1996.

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 contending 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',⁷⁵ 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

⁷⁵ See Martin Creed in this regard.

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' citing in this case what can be seen as my problematic area: more commonly known as my boredom. 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 Nyamende. As stated in the catalogue:

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

(Young 2003: 63)

I was concerned that Nyamende 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. Nyamende 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.



NYAMENDE'S ATTEMPTED ARREST. MUSE, BELL-ROBERTS GALLERY

HOT BITCHES MEDIOCRE WORK

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 Puta*, a collective that I am a member of. The aim was to produce an exposition of art by female contributors as *Put*a 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 Puta*. The exhibition did not take place.

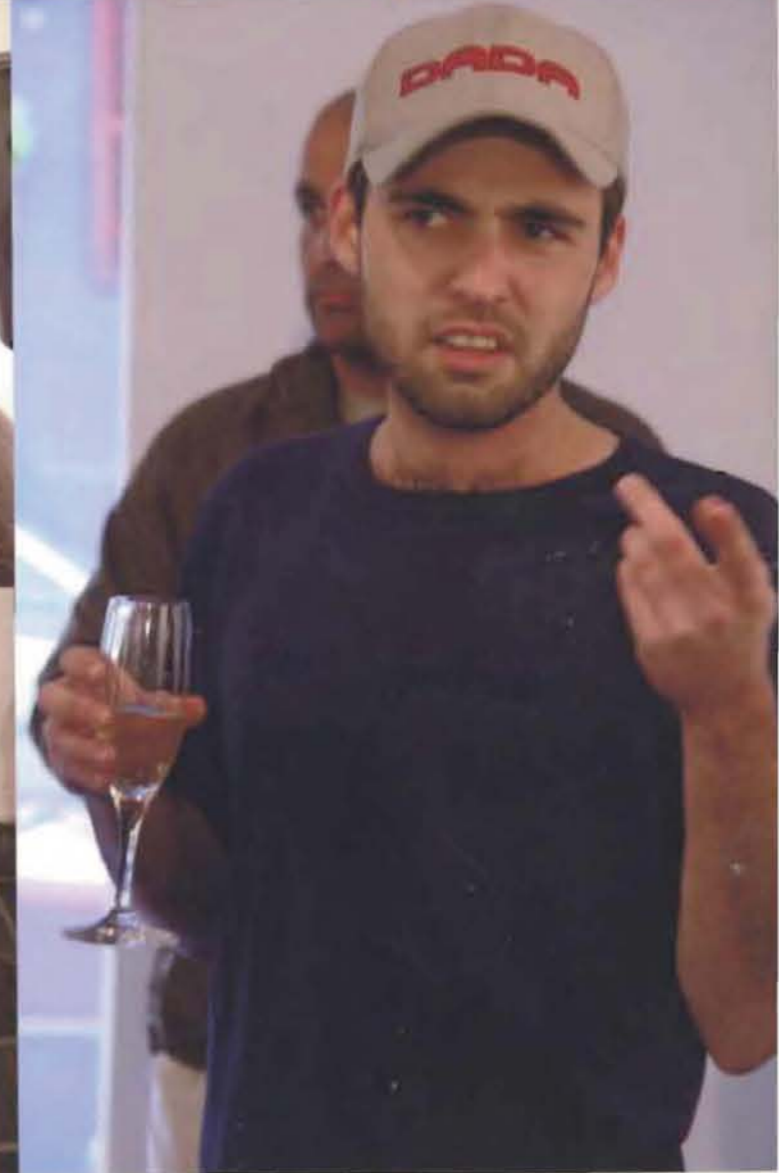
As it sometimes happens within small art circles, the word spread through the art school, which soon established some confusion surrounding *Muse*. The outcome of the gossip resulted in the hired bartenders of *Muse* and the fact that they believed they had become the *Hot Bitches* exhibition. Instead of withdrawing, they decided to retaliate by planning a series of T-shirts that would introduce me as an asshole, 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: 'pissedart'. 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*⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁶ See Beezy Bailey in this regard.







Asshole

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.

(http://www.artthrob.co.za/04jan/listings_cape.html#bbr)

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)⁷⁷ 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'.

⁷⁷ 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 clichéd response: 'but it's been done.'

On the other hand, the South African situation lends itself to the response from an uninformed (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.⁷⁸ 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 Okwui 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.⁷⁹ 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 artists realise that a mere presence in this context can be enough. There are exceptions: Santiago Sierra, Miguel Calderón, and others.

⁷⁸

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

⁷⁹

See Churchill Madikida and Thando Mama.

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*. At 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:

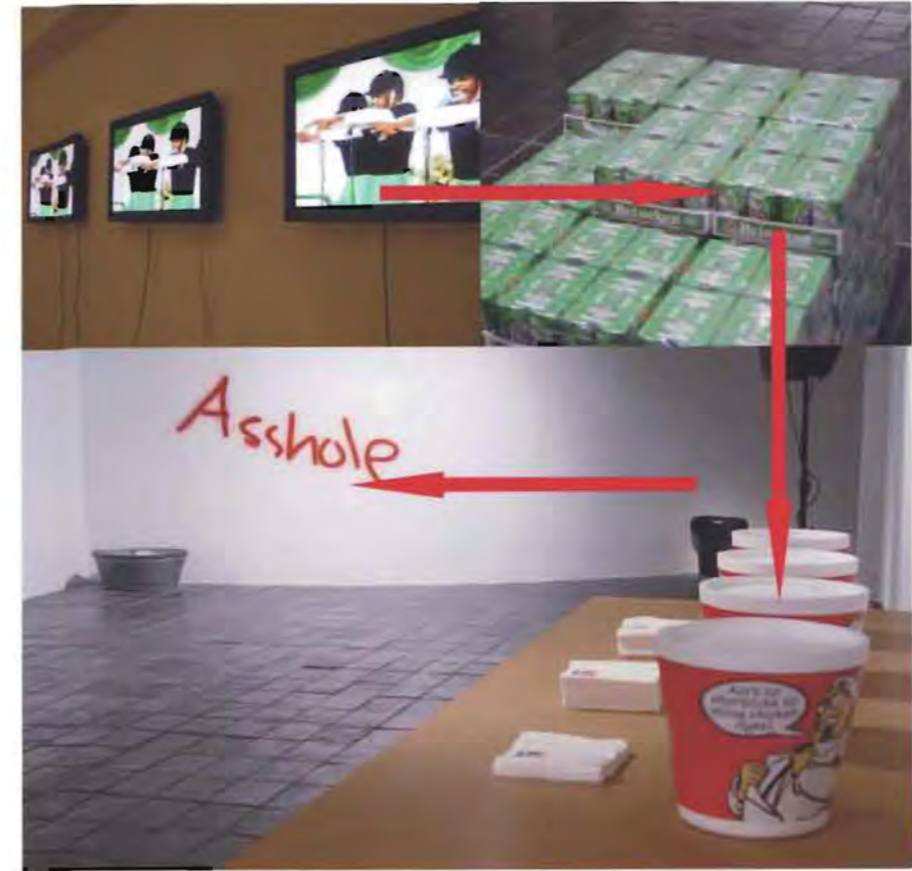
Asshole

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.



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.



SATISFACTION. BENNY BENASSI. 2003



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.'

(Bourriaud 2000: 11)

IT'S NOT EASY



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 consists 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: 418). 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 naïve
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

Bell-Roberts Gallery
ARTISTS INCLUDED: John Murray, David Murray, Robert Southwell, Kevin Brand, Keith Lane, Chris Sorenson, Sarah Agard, Peter Robinson, Edward Young, Sylvia Wynne, Saskia Wolf, David Roberts, Alan Brindley, Tony Brown, Elsie Lambert, Matthew Hindley, Richard Cross, Elizabeth White, Terry Sargent, Lisa Smith, Fiona Campbell, Robb Symon, Kevin Young, Winifred Taylor

B
100 Young Street, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
T +27 (0)21 422 11 882, F +27 (0)21 422 11 819
E info@bell-roberts.com, www.bell-roberts.com

SAVE THE ED YOUNG KNEECAP FUND
When Andrew Lamprecht curated his exhibition *Contra Mundi* at the Association for Visual Art, I presented a contribution in response to my loss of funding:



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, Carine 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:

WHAT A WANA
ARE YOU ALL?
RETHINK
YOUR STRATEGY

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.

I AM A POST-COLONIAL, RACIST, HOMOPHOBIC, MISOGYNIST, ANTISEMITE: HOW TO TOLERATE OTHER PEOPLE'S SHIT-MARKS ON THE TOILET WALL

In a recent article by Mario Pissarra titled 'Decolonise the mind',⁸⁰ 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 centred on white privilege, and that in the post-apartheid era the gatekeepers of art often act in ways that can at best be described insensitive to 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 favourable reception of this 'very clever and very entertaining' work,⁸¹ received in the art media. White South Africans staged a mock auction centred 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 majority 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 woman 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

⁸⁰ A critique of Vuyile Vuyiya and Julie McGee's documentary film: 'The Luggage is Still Labeled: Blackness in South African Art'. *Art South Africa*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2003.

⁸¹ Pissarra cites Ivor Powell's award winning review: 'Ed Young: Bruce Gordon' in *Art South Africa*, Vol. 1, Issue 4, 2003.

'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 elite 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-prophesised and unappealing. Its intentions appear justified (in part 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 'nasty white guy'. By this action I aim to spark debate, as opposed to social tip-toeing and artificial political correctness.

I find similar clichéd contributions by some individuals that do directly investigate the unease of South African society, but their work becomes extremely 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. Focussing 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



GALERIE PUTA'S ASHTRAY FROM ART AS USUAL, 2003. CHRISTIAN NERF.



TYPICAL GALERIE PUTA MEETING

STORM

Storm proved to be a valuable platform for *Putá*. The three Directors decided to have three simultaneous solo exhibitions at the NSA in Durban.



STORM INVITATION. NSA. 2004

The press release stated:

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 livin'.

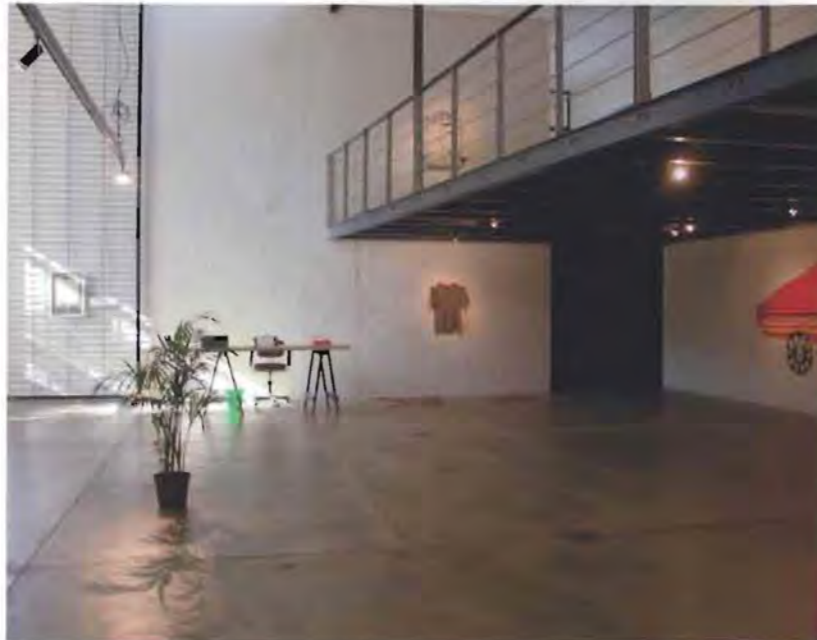
Platter's last show at the João Ferreira in January 2004 received considerable critical acclaim. Young has held a series of 'One Night' events, the last also taking place in January at the Bell-Roberts Gallery in Cape Town. Lamprecht's last show was 'Alterier' in August/ September 2003, coinciding with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

The curatorial staff of Galerie Puta 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.

(http://www.artthrob.co.za/04may/listings_kzn.html#gputa)

As this was a very successful exhibition, it marked trouble for *Puta*. At the time I was getting a lot of attention from international curators and local buyers. I was excluded from discussions regarding *Puta* 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.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵ However the show opened with enormous success, including walkabouts, question and answer sessions and student talks.

Puta produced an adequate exhibition as usual.

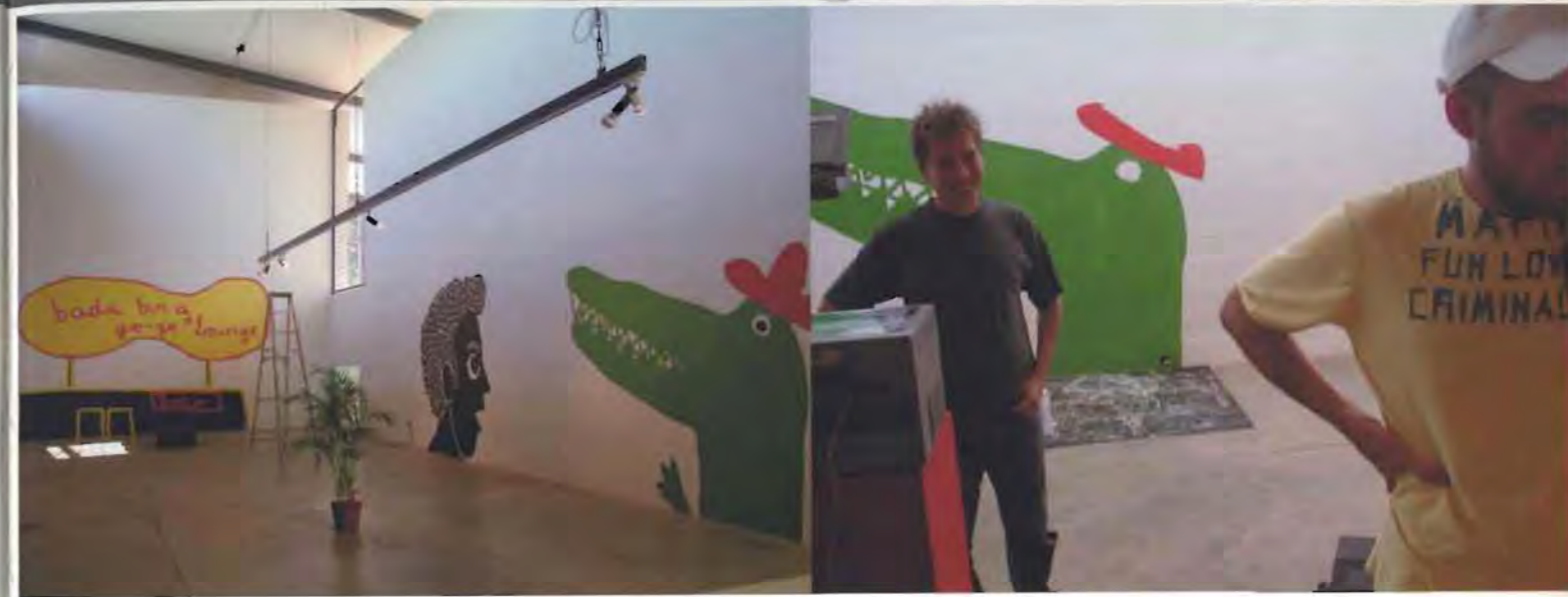


⁸⁴

See Appendix C.

⁸⁵

Such as *Flip*, Iziko Michaelis Collection, The Old Townhouse, 2004.



STORM, NSA, INSTALLATION VIEW

MY BEERDRUNK SOUL IS SADDER THAN ALL THE DEAD CHRISTMAS TREES OF THE WORLD⁸⁶

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',⁸⁷ obviously ironic. I found D12's songs clearly relevant.

While I was plotting a subtle escape from *Putu*, I was asked by the Johannesburg Art Gallery to do another *Galerie Putu* performance. I replied that *Putu* 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. Petulantly, 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 *Putu* way.

⁸⁶

Taken from Charles Bukowski's *Factotum* (Bukowski 1981: 64).

⁸⁷

See appendix D.

Galerie Putu
2A Dysart Road
Green Point
Cape Town
8001

November 3, 2004

Bruce Gordon
Jo'Burg Bar
222 Long Street
Cape Town
8001

Dear Sir

Re: Attempted Act of Reconciliation

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


Theft of cheap liquor
The deliberate damage to furniture in pointless efforts of self-fulfilment
Sexually harassing spouses of long term employees
The endorsement of loose women
The uncanny exploitation of public lavatories
Random beatings when deemed necessary
The occasional bomb threat
The general maltreatment of patrons
The slight abuse of your generosity
Excessive references to the historical philosophy of Hegel
And the occasional insulting of your wife

We do realise that this compensation will not yet meet the qualities of a long-term friendship but, as a respected organisation, we strongly feel that this could manifest in the start of a beautiful and newly found fruitful relationship. We imagine that you are aware of our financially crippled situation but, as an innovative organisation, we managed to wangle some cash out of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, with whom we believe to have established a long term professional relationship.

Sincerely yours
The Directors
Galerie Putu


Andrew Lamprecht


Ed Young


Cameron Platter

GALERIE PUTA
2A DYSART ROAD
GREEN POINT
CAPE TOWN
8001

Bruce Gordon
JO'BURG BAR
222 LONG STREET,
CAPE TOWN
8001.

November 4, 2004.

Dear Galerie Puta directors,
I am overwhelmed
by your generous gift. Thank you.
However, no amount of money can compensate
for the heartache, hurt, abuse, bad
music and contempt that you bunch
have shown over the years.
The gun remains.
I shall use the money to satisfy my
gambling habit.

Yours sincerely,
Bruce Gordon

THE FAMOUS ED YOUNG



GRASDUINEN I. BREDENE 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, *Grasduinen 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.



THEME SONG. VITO ACCONCI. 1973



Killing Teddy
2001



Damn Those Bitches Represent
2002

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 Those 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:



CIS BIERINCXKX PAINTING MY
BANNER

We are the North Compton Wildcats
We're black, we know it
We shake our big booties and show it
We ain't white
We ain't white
We definitely ain't white
Break it down niggers

A few weeks prior to the Bredene exhibition I was invited to come up with a performance for the show's opening. I originally presented the idea of having a braai, knowing that I would come up with something more exciting closer to the time. I was unable to come up with a better idea. I made a braai.

During attempts at conceptualising a stronger piece, I presented the organisers with variations of the performance, none of

which I was not particularly satisfied with. This caused a great deal of confusion as preparations for the show had to be made. It was only a few days before my departure to Belgium that I decided to revert to the original idea, in a decision to keep things simple.

Upon arrival in Bredene, I introduced myself to a number of people called Peter,⁸⁸ 'Hi, I'm Ed', I to which 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 Those 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 miscommunication 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 Jo'burg 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 Montell 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 at 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



⁸⁸ See *The Four Peters*: an excerpt of Elan Gamaker's review of the exhibition titled *Bredene Habits*: Appendix A

for drinks with fellow artist Alexandra Zwaal-Kallos, soon to be joined by everyone involved in the exhibition.⁸⁹

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):

Je hebt Ed Young uitgenodigd om een performance uit te voeren bij de opening van Grasduinen. Waarom precies deze jonge Zuid-Afrikaan?

Toen ik verleden jaar in Zuid-Afrika was, ben ik toevallig op Ed Young gestoten. Ik las enkele artikels over het soort anarchistische performances die hij uitvoerde en werd eenvoudigweg door hem en zijn acties geboeid. Hij is een rebel, iemand die er van houdt om het publiek op het verkeerde been te zetten. Wat hij doet, situeert zich altijd ergens tussen bitterheid, wansmaak, cynisme en amusement. Hij valt moeilijk te klasseren; het is zelfs moeilijk uit te maken of hij al dan niet een kunstenaar is. Hij heft bijvoorbeeld zijn eigen collectionneur ooit bij Sotheby's te koop aangeboden. Young is een gokker die zichzelf afvraagt: 'Wat betekent al die kunst, die zwendel eromheen, die entourage en die hype die soms met kunst gepaard gaat?' Daarnaast stelt hij ook zichzelf als kunstenaar in vraag. Volgens mij is hij met boeiende materie bezig en interessant genoeg om uit te nodigen. Hij is een anarchist, net als Wim Delvoye, die ondertussen wel de ladder van de faam opgeklommen is. Van Ed Young valt af te wachten hoe het publiek reageert op zijn werk en zijn performance.

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 collector for sale at Sotheby's. Young asks the question: 'What does all this art mean, the buzz 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 invite. 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)

⁸⁹

See Appendix B



STAKING OUT THE PALAIS DE TOKYO FOR SHOE THEFT

ST. MOTHERFUCKING MAXIM'S DAY

I travelled to Paris, France. I enquired about the Palais de Tokyo (a contemporary art museum), as I wanted to see one of the directors, Nicolas Bourriaud (co-directed by Jerome Sans). I needed to deliver a copy of a documentary that I made with Andrew Lamprecht on occasion of the 50th Venice Biennale, which featured Bourriaud a great deal.

An associate, Max Raffard, informed me of a shop in the museum that sold vintage Nike shoes for no apparent reason which I found interesting for a museum that deals with serious issues of globalisation. We joked about stealing the shoes. I was serious. I thought it could be a nice piece. We gathered a team of five people and investigated the security system, realising that

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.



ACTRESS MELODIE ABAD IN MOMART HOURS BEFORE THE HEIST

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.⁹⁰

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 left some questioning my involvement in the arts. The fact is that I don't like 'art'. I don't like the industry. I like 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 Perryer as curator, originally initiated the exhibition. Perryer excused herself from the project well in advance as she probably realised that this kind of project was almost impossible to pull off given the timeframe. Geers, who initially demanded of me to come up with a good concept because he 'didn't want to shit in his own backyard',⁹¹ also lost interest as he was involved in a 'fucking intense'⁹² workshop with Marina Abramovich.

Only a handful of artists were invited as opposed to an initial larger group: Hentie van der Merwe, Carol-Anne Gainer, Bridget Baker, Teboho Mahlatsi and myself. We were hosted by *Vooruit*, programmed by Barbara Raes 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 ensure. I spent most of my time in the bar, Baker managed a beautiful extension of her *Blue Collar Girl*, while Gainer stuck to her original proposal. Hentie made some placements 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 Vannie Kaap* 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



BRIDGET BAKER
THE BLUE COLLAR GIRL
2004
GHENT
BELGIUM



CAROL-ANNE GAINER
PERFORMANCE
2004
GHENT
BELGIUM



MR. FAT
2004
VOORUIT
GHENT
BELGIUM

⁹⁰ Gillick citing Terry Pratchett in *Impossibility: The Limits of Science and the Science of Limits*, John D. Barrow, Oxford University Press, 1998 (Gillick 2000: 45).

⁹¹ Informal email conversation with Kendell Geers, 19 June 2004.

⁹² Informal email conversation with Kendell Geers, 28 October 2004.

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 Brasse (with the obvious exception of Mr. Fat) attended the seminar: mainly the B-boys as well as drummer, Sean Ou Tim, from Godessa, 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.



DO NOTHING 2004. VOORUIT. GHENT. BELGIUM ©Giannina Urmeneta Ottiker

APPENDIX

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 (our 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 conflagrated 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 do with the organisation of the reception, but it seems not even the footballers of the illustrious Belgian leagues are immune to a Bredonian 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, gets 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

Awash with 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 corner was Ed, in another a nameless ingénue 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 clear acknowledgement by Ed: 'Fuck off').

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 mediaeval architecture.

APPENDIX C
D12 / 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 fucken problem with me dude,
And they need to take it up 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
Coz 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 offstage right, drop the mic
Walk up to these hot chicks and I'm all like
"Sup ladies, my names Slim Shady, I'm the lead singer of D-12 baby"
They're all like "Oh my God it's 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 yellin' all the hot babes
Throw their bras and their shirts and their panties on stage
So like every single night they pick a fight with me
But when we fight it's kinda like sibling rivalry
Coz they're back on stage the next night with me
"Dude I just think your trying to steal the light from me"
Yesterday Kuniva tried to pull a knife on me
Coz I told him Jessica Alba is my wife-to-be
This rockstar shit is the life for me
And all the other guys just despise me B 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
Coz 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 baaaaaaaand, my band baby

[Swift]

You just wanna see a nigga backwards don't you?
Ain't that how come we don't rap pro tours
Smash these vocals and do a performance
But we in a van and he in a tour bus
You don't want my autograph youse a liar
And nah I'm Swift
(Oh I thought you were Kuniva)
What the hell is wrong with our dressing room?
Cause our shit is smaller then like a decimal
See I know how to rap, it's simple but
All I did is read a Russell Simmons book
So I'm all in tact trying to get on the map
Doing jumping-jacks while getting whipped on my back

[?]

Look at Em little punk-ass thinking he the shit
*Yea I know man by himself taking all the clicks
Ay I thought we had an interview with Dj Clue
[Eminem] No I had an interview, not you two
You gon be late for sound-check
*Man I ain't going 2 sound-check
Our mics is screwed up
*And his always sound best

*You no what man, imma say something, aiyo Em
[Eminem] You got something to say?
*Man no
I thought you was about to tell him off man, whats up?
*Man imma tell him when I feel like man shutup
*And you aint even back 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]
These chicks don't even know the name of my band
But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands
Coz 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 singers rock but the group is not
Once we sold out arenas to amusement parks
I'm gonna let the world know that Proof is hot
I should cut his mic off when the music starts (Aiyo wh-)
Ready to snap on a dumb-ass fan
Every time I hear "Hey dude I love your band!"
We ain't a band bitch, 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 carry my bag" bitch carry your own
Can't make it to the stage, security in the way
Who the fuck are you?

[Bizarre]
Godammit 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 Kon Artist, slipped me some crack
"Lose Yourself" video - I was in the back
"Superman" video - I was in the back
For the media, I got some suggestions
Fuck Marshall, ask us the questions
Like who are D-12, how we get started
(But what about Eminem?)
Bitch are you retarded?
Anyway I'm the popularest guy in the group
Big ass stomach, bitches think I'm cute
Diddy told me to do sit-ups to get buff
Did 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

[Eminem]
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

[Bizarre]
These chicks don't even know the name of my band (Haha)
But they're all on me like they wanna hold hands (Fuck Marshall)
Coz once I blow they know that I'll be the man (Yea)
All because I'm the new..... (Hahahah)

[Eminem & Bizarre]
My band, my band, our band, your band, our band, Roxanne, Shauntan

[Eminem - Mexican Accent]
I'm the lead singer of my band I get all the girls to take off their underpants
I'm the lead singer of my band my salsa makes all the pretty girls want to dance

My salsa
Look out for my next single it's called "My Salsa"
My salsa salsa salsa salsa
My salsa makes all the pretty girls want to dance and take off their underpants
My salsa makes all the pretty girls want to dance and take off their underpants
My salsa
Where did everybody go?

APPENDIX D
D12 / HOW COME

Eminem:] So I changed huh? You got a phone, pick it up, call me

[Chorus: Eminem]

How come we dont even talk no more
And you dont even call no more
We dont barely keep in touch at all
And I dont even feel the same love when we hug no more
And I heard it through the grape vine we even beefin now
After all the years we been down
Aint no way no how, this bullshit can be true
We family and aint a damn thing changed, unless it's you

[Verse 1: Eminem]

So young, so full of life in vibrant side by side wherever you
weres ridin i went
So close, almost on some bonnie and clyde shit
When ronnie died you weres right by my side with a sholder to
cry on
Tissue to wipe my eyes, and a bucket to catch every tear i cried
inside it
You even had the same type of childhood i did
Sometimes i just want to know why is it that you surcame to
yours
And mine i survived it, you ran the streets, i 9 to 5'd it
We grew up, grew apart, as time went by us, then i blew up
To both yours and mine surprises
Now i feel the vibe i just cant describe it
As much as your pride tries to hide it
Your cold, you touch its like ice
In your eyes is the look of resentment
I can sense it, and i dont like it

[Chorus]

[Verse 2: Kon Artis]

It was my dream at first to be on spittin a verse
On my own album with a deal but shit got burst
So i came out i woulda killed a nigga first
Before i let him disrespect me and check me over some worst
Some bitch that i wasnt with i would hit her then quit
But you would pull a talk wich her and tell her she was the
shit
I told you dont get involved in it, you was smokin the chron
with her
Comin out of the bar with her stumblin half drunk
Like yall was husband and wife or somethin
But me catchin her f**kin other niggers musta hurt you pride or
somethin
Cuz you wont f**k at the mouth with people like you wanted with
me
When all i tried to do was show your bitch was shifty
And ever since the fans and all the shit that i produced
You actin like i aint you man and lyn like she can't be loose
But i am really you friend, i'm jus trying to tell you the
truth
But dont hate the game or the player
Cuz the one that is changing is you

[Chorus]

[Verse 3: Proof]

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

Now we actin like i gotta live only for the block
Homies in the hood only she be on the tube
Only gossip on the porch get to speakin on who
Fools i used to rap with all expect magic
Like my finger get to snappin and *poof* it jus happen
But PROOF is jus actin out the party was stoned
Shady made it so my babys aint starvin at home
See the devil in you grin since the ghetto we been friends
Whenever real intelligence thats forever till the end
I be the hatred in your eyes and the satan in your lives
And wastin my times with these snakes in disguise
(how come) when you talk its with bitter is fight
And (how come) it's my fault for what you did with your life
And everytime i go 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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University of Cape Town

PRESS



CONTRA MUNDI

AVA GALLERY | CAPE TOWN

left Dawnett
Southwood, Picture
Perfect 2004,
mixed media
right Matthew
Hindley, Dirty,
2004, digital print

Andrew Lamprecht's most recent curatorial project, *Contra Mundi* (literally meaning against the world), is ostensibly set up as a kind of challenge to contemporary South African art. Lamprecht told me that he specifically chose artists whose work he felt were "difficult" in some way. Represented on the show were Bridget Baker, Dan Halter, Tay Dall, Matthew Hindley, Vuyise Nyamende, Cameron Platter, Doreen Southwood, Lebohang Tlali and Ed Young.

Perhaps the first clue as to the nature of the "difficult" premise from which the show proceeds, is the fact that it was opened by Brett Kebble. At first, I suspected that the opening itself was intended as a jibe at the magazine's recent entry onto the stage of public art patronage. But there was nothing ironic about the opening, or rather, nothing obviously so. In fact, Lamprecht's choice for opening speaker suggests that the "challenge" presented by *Contra Mundi* does not follow the normal line of subversion; that is, by presenting obscure or radical work to mainstream audiences. Instead, the sincere praise for Kebble as, in Lamprecht's words, "a true patron of the arts who has single-handedly changed the face of art competitions in South Africa", suggests that the show challenges the intellectualism, elitism and anti-commercialism which characterise high art practices.

In this regard, and rather surprisingly, the artist whose work most clearly embodies this principle is Tay Dall. Although she is known better for her success in the so-called commercial art world, Dall was afforded the focus of the show, with a number of large-scale paintings, and two large erotically charged "Twister" boards produced in collaboration with Ben Chowney. Dall's paintings are of the splatter-and-drip variety, with stream-of-consciousness text and collage added for good measure. Some of the text include phrases such as "can't you see fragility?" and "look through my shadow and maybe you

will see a different side of me." By including her on the show, Lamprecht raises questions regarding the validity of separating high art and commercial works in the stringent hierarchical fashion to which we have become accustomed.

While I am in agreement with the comment underpinning the *Contra Mundi* show (the artificial self-valorisation of artists and curators alike being an old concern of mine), I felt that the challenge was not really actualised sufficiently. This flaw was already evident in Dall's paintings. The texts I cited above are only snatches, but they give a sense of the rather outmoded romanticism, an angsty Sturm und Drang, that pervades the work. It was as if Dall had conformed to the perceived tone of "serious" fine art practice, and unsuccessfully so, precisely at the point where her commercial style would have made more sense within the subtext of the show.

This shortfall was also apparent in the work of Lamprecht's long-standing art partner Ed Young. For *Contra Mundi* Young presented a small cardboard box bearing the words "save the Ed Young kneecap fund". The box stated that all the proceeds would go towards his next exhibition and beer. The choice to include Young on the show was a sound one, as his work often neatly obscures lines between almost inaccessible high art and banal pop indulgence. However, in this case, Young's throwaway gesture did not deliver the necessary goods.

Two artists on the show did, to my mind, manage to engage with the subversive intent of their curator. Matthew Hindley's digital prints recalled artists such as Yoshitomo Nara in their juxtaposition of popular culture images, mechanical spin paintings and references to high art. Cameron Platter's playful series depicting a crocodile eating its prey can be read as a wry comment on competition and survival in both life and the art world.

Seen sympathetically, *Contra Mundi* opens debate around the principles we use to categorise artworks and artistic practices, and this is a very useful thing to do. Viewed unsympathetically however, the exhibition came across as just another group show, with work of varying quality.

■ Carine Zaayman

Carine Zaayman lectures in New Media at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

ED YOUNG'S THROWAWAY GESTURE DID NOT DELIVER THE NECESSARY GOODS

EERSTE TENTOONSTELLING IN KADER VAN S.M.A.K.-AAN-ZEE IN BREDENE TOT 15 JUNI

GRASDUINEN IN HEDENDAAGSE KUNST

Op zaterdag 3 april opende 'Grasduinen 01', de eerste van twee tentoonstellingen rond actuele kunst die het gemeentebestuur van Bredene dit jaar samen met het S.M.A.K. Gent opzet. Een voorsmaakje van wat S.M.A.K.-aan-Zee straks allemaal kan opleveren.

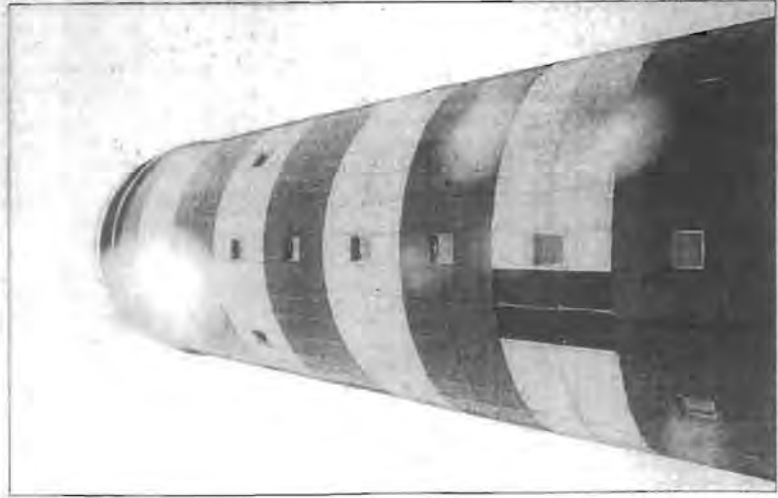
Voor de samenstelling van de tentoonstelling *Grasduinen 01* zocht curator Cis Bierinckx zijn heil in de omvangrijke collectie van het S.M.A.K. Gent. De tentoonstelling wordt aangevuld met werk van hedendaagse kunstenaars die nog niet in België exposeerden.

De titel *Grasduinen* verwijst volgens Bierinckx, die naam en faam verwierf als samensteller van diverse internationale tentoonstellingen, enerzijds naar de landschappelijke eigenheid van een kustplaats en anderzijds naar de driftige zoektocht doorheen een kunstcollecie.

Grasduinen 01 loopt tot 15 juni en stelt werk tentoon op zes verschillende locaties: de wassertoren (de startplaats van de kunstroute), het gemeentehuis, de bibliotheek De Leestuin, de BSGO Duinenschool en het cultureel centrum Anto Diez. Daar is werk te bewonderen van gerenommeerde hedendaagse kunstenaars als Vito Acconci (USA), Noritoshi Hrakawa (Japan), Ed Young (Zuid-Afrika) en Keesje Schmeddes (Nederland). Open van woensdag tot zondag, telkens van 14 tot 18u.

Info: tel. 059 33 91 89 of www.bredene.be en www.smak.be.

(MM)



Het kunstparcours start in de wassertoren in Bredene, waar diverse video-installaties te zien zijn.



Panamarenko stelt zijn *Feltra* tentoon in centrum Anto Diez in Bredene. (Foto's Cultuurdienst Bredene)

Samenwerking met S.M.A.K. werpt vruchten af

Grasduinen in moderne kunst



Cultuurschepen Steve Vandenberghe bracht woensdag al een bezoek aan de Kroatische kunstenaar Miljana Babic, die volop aan de slag was met haar in de Duinenschool gecreëerde kunstwerk. (Foto MM)

Met *Grasduinen 1*, het eerste luik van een hoogstaande tentoonstelling die vanaf 3 april op diverse locaties in Bredene wordt georganiseerd, werpt de samenwerking tussen het gemeentebestuur en het SMAK voor het eerst zijn vruchten af. Het Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst uit Gent zorgt namelijk voor de invulling van het project, dat de komende weken enkele befaamde exponenten van de hedendaagse kunst voorstelt.

Cultuurschepen Steve Vandenberghe is het wel zeker: Dit is de eerste keer dat er op dergelijke schaal moderne kunst te zien zal zijn op Bredense bodem. *Grasduinen 1* wordt bovendien ook voor de hele Vlaamse kust een unieke tentoonstelling.

Het startschot van het voor Bredene erg vernieuwende cultuurproject wordt gegeven op zaterdag 3 april.

Basis voor *Grasduinen 1* en zijn opvolger, die deze zomer wordt georganiseerd, is een selectie uit de omvangrijke collectie van het S.M.A.K., aangevuld met werk van jonge kunstenaars. Cis Bierinckx werd aangezocht aan curator. *Grasduinen* verwijst enerzijds naar de landschappelijke eigenheid van een badplaats als Bredene en anderzijds naar het karakter van de expositie. Het zal met name gaan om een parcours waardoor je al grasduinend geconfronteerd wordt met ideeën, vragen, kunstwerken en kunstenaars", aldus Bierinckx. *Grasduinen* kreeg als ondertitel mee: over de verleiding en het verlies van onschuld.

Het parcours

Het centrale punt van de tentoonstelling wordt de wassertoren, waar enkele internationale kunstenaars exposeren, onthult Steve Vandenberghe. Na de wassertoren zal de kunstwandeling de bezoekers leiden naar het gemeentehuis, waar het publiek zal vergast worden op een korte videocompositie van de Franse kunstenaar Philippe Pareno. In de trouwzaal wacht werk van Lawrence Weiner (VS). In de bibliotheek De Leestuin zal werk tentoongesteld worden van de gerenommeerde Amerikaanse video-kunstenaar Dara Birnbaum. In de lege opslagruimte van de bibliotheek zal Frank Thys (B) zijn indrukwekkende video-installatie „De kus" opstellen.

Grasduinen biedt jonge kunstenaars ook de kans een werk ter plaatse te creëren. „De keuze is voor deze eerste editie gevallen op de Kroatische kunstenaar Miljana Babic, die een installatie zal neerpoten in het opvanglokaal van de basisschool Duinen, tegenover het gemeentehuis", aldus nog de cultuurschepen. Het cc. Anto Diez (Ryckewaertshof) zal plaats bieden aan vroeg werk van Panamarenko, Marlène Dumas (Zuid-Afrika), Ed Young, Robert Gober (VS) en de Zwitserse kunstenaars Josef Felix Müller en Steven Blum en in het toerismebureau zal, als publiekslokker, het werk Propagaz D1 van Wim Delvoye geëxposeerd worden.

Braai met boerenwors

Als cultuurschepen kan Vandenberghe naar eigen zeggen niets anders dan gelukkig zijn met een initiatief als *Grasduinen*. „Het is een exponent van de modernisering die we de voorbije jaren doorvoerden in het cultuurbeleid. Bijna twee ambtstermijnen lang hebben we geplaveid aan de weg naar een volwaardige plaats voor hedendaagse kunst in eigen gemeente. Het is ondertussen meer, veel meer geworden. Dankzij onze samenwerking met het S.M.A.K. is Bredene aan het uitgroeien tot een internationaal forum voor hedendaagse kunst. Het internationale karakter van de tentoonstelling *Grasduinen* laat ons als gemeente ook toe over de (regionale) grenzen te kijken. *Grasduinen* wordt daarom niet enkel een artistiek maar allicht ook een toeristisch belangrijke attractie", is de schepen hoopvol.

(MM)

De officiële opening van *Grasduinen 1* vindt plaats op zaterdag 3 april en zal worden opgeluisterd door een performance van de Zuid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar Ed Young die op eigenzinnige wijze alle aanwezigen zal uitnodigen op een braai met boerenwors (ter verduidelijking: braai is Zuid-Afrikaans voor barbecue, red.). *Grasduinen 1* loopt vervolgens nog tot 13 juni.

Grasduinen door verschillende plaatsen in Bredene

Kunst aangepast aan locaties

Op zes locaties in Bredene vindt men de verschillende kunstwerken van de tentoonstelling *Grasduinen I* terug. Locaties die u doorheen Bredene brengen, waardoor in feite een kunstwandeling ontstaat.

door Hans VAN SEVER

De centrale tentoonstelling bevindt zich in de waterscaan in Bredene. De benedenruimte fungeert als onthuttingsruimte. De verdiepingen erboven herbergen werken van Accorci en Hirakawa uit de SMAK-collectie, maar ook nieuw werk van de Zuid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar Ed Young en het grappige Plum van de Nederlandse Koenig Smeyers.

Waar curator Cis Bierinckx de confrontatie echt aangaat, is het Bredene gemeentehuis. In de inkomhal van het gemeentehuis staat een groot gouden varken, dat eigenlijk geen titel heeft.

Nog meer confronterend is de trouwzaal, waar een werk van Lina Post hangt. Een meisje buigt er het hoofd en voor haar ligt een plasje bloed. *Her verlies van onschuld*, dat de ondertitel van de tentoonstelling is, krijgt hier een zeer confronterende betekenis.

de betekenis.

Kunstwerk op maat

In de basisschool Duinen heeft de Kroatische kunstenaar Miljana Babic een site-specifiek werk gemaakt. Ze kreeg hiervoor bijstand van Annie Vanhee uit Bredene.

Terug naar de bibliotheek en daar kunt u drie dvd's van Dara Birnbaum zien, maar vooral de scaneropnames van De Kus van Frank Theys en zijn vrienden lopen er de moeite.

Het cultureel centrum Anto Diez herbergt vooral schilderwerk en Felru van Panamarenko.

Ten slotte kan men nog even binnenlopen bij de dienst toerisme voor het brandbare werk van Wim Delvoye.

Collectie uit SMAK aan zee

Grasduinen I is de naam van de eerste tentoonstelling die het Bredene gemeentebestuur in samenwerking met het SMAK in Gent organiseert. Het brengt een aantal kunstwerken uit de collectie van het SMAK, die daar niet tentoongesteld worden, naar de kust. Deze worden aangevuld met nieuw werk.

Curator Cis Bierinckx koos de naam *Grasduinen* als verwijzing naar zijn zoektocht doorheen de collectie van het SMAK. De ondertitel 'over de verlies van onschuld' wijst hij op de positie van de kunst, die niet langer onschuldig is, maar een dialoog met de kijker aangaat.

Volgens schepen van Cultuur Steve Vandenberghe zal Bredene te wachten op dit initiatief en overstijgt het de regionale grenzen. 'We willen hiermee een kunstzinnige en toeristische attractie zijn', aldus nog schepen Vandenberghe. (HVS)

De tentoonstelling *Grasduinen I* start in de Oude Wiertoren in Bredene en loopt nog tot 13 juni. De expo is geopend van woensdag tot zondag, tussen 14 en 18 uur.



In het cultureel centrum Anto Diez, hier met kunstenaars Ed Young en Alexandra Zwaal-Kalbe (vooraan) en schepen Steve Vandenberghe en curator Cis Bierinckx (achteraan), bij een werk van Panamarenko.

Words Karen Rutter

TALKING ABOUT

ED YOUNG

The bare-breasted dancers, free beer and barrels of Kentucky Fried Chicken have probably helped. But there's another reason Capetonian 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 edgy, insolent and controversial in contemporary cultural circles, and the crowds are eager to catch the next episode in a series of cool art events.

The tall, skinny 25-year-old with the three-day-old stubble and the engagingly soft eyes has already generated more media coverage than many arts practitioners twice his age. And, as is usual when people push uncomfortable boundaries, the press vacillates between labelling him a charlatan and proclaiming him a genius.

'I've also been called lazy, and a party animal. Sure, I'm having fun. But I also want to be taken seriously,' he says.

In a society where the average person associates art with something you hang on a wall, Young operates outside of the expected. But, as he points out, there's nothing new about conceptual art. What are fresh are his executions.

It all started with the auction of bar-owner and former journalist Bruce Gordon, who was sold off as a work of art by Michaelis Art School Masters 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; his body can still be found behind his bar in Long Street.

But wait, it gets more complicated. Young followed up this much-publicised event with the first of his one-night exhibitions at the Bell-Roberts Gallery in Cape Town, called *Muse*. The inspiration for the project was drawn from an all-women string quartet who performed on the night. Sparkling 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 performers) becomes the art,' as Young puts it. Many of the punters were left... well, bemused. And Young's mom was apparently very worried about her son.

Art lecturer Andrew Lampbrecht sums it up in the *Muse* 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.'

Which would apply to Young's next offering, another solo one-night stand titled *Asshole*. Again, the event became the art work, with semi-naked strippers, a pile of steadily diminishing Heineken beers and a looped Outkast hip-hop video providing aesthetic appreciation for the crowds.

Lazy art student? Pretentious hustler? Young has been called all of these. But he has also been hailed as 'brilliant' and 'very clever and very entertaining' by some arts practitioners who are pretty clever themselves.

'There's going to be more - this is part of a long-term project,' says Young.

His next show will be in Cape Town in September - watch the press for details...

'The audience becomes the art'

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANNE JAZARD

TRICKY SITUATIONS: EDWARD YOUNG

"Bar owner sold as work of art" declared *The Sunday Times* in South Africa last year from a roadside hoarding. Now, a year later, this same notice is on show in the National Gallery in Cape Town as part of an exhibition celebrating the best of ten year's work of South African art. Not everyone is pleased.

Ed Young, or just plain Ed, tends to piss off the art establishment. Intensely. Maybe it's because he has a sense of humour. Last year, this noted Long Street hustler managed to engineer the sale on auction of his favourite barman, for R52,000. In the ensuing debate, some of South Africa's most respected art writers were asked to make sense of it all. At heart, most agreed it was an accomplished bit of conceptual trickery, in the manner of Martin Creed perhaps.

The word conceptual is useful in describing the art of Ed's work. Often situational, rather than object based, he recently staged a one-night only exhibition in which the ambience – the string of bars, the crowds, even the bouncers – represented the "art". This was followed by "Asshole", a show involving topless dancers and an Outkast video. That's it.

These ephemeral offerings aside, Ed is rapidly gaining a reputation as an accomplished video artist. He was recently shown alongside big stars like Vito Acconci at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In many ways he is the logical heir to another South African original, the conceptual provocateur Kendell Geers. In fact, Kendell recently agreed to name Ed's firstborn child.



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: 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 sardonic 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.

[SUBMIT FEEDBACK](#)

The gospel according to Mr ex-Max Normal

Suzy Bell hits the Bell-Roberts Gallery for an unusual, soft and cuddly fluffly toy experience courtesy of the Daliesque Watkin Tudor Jones, a man who takes animal fetish into a new design dimension

GUESS it started with David West digging fluffies, then Ed Young had a molly bear at his exhibition which got tickled, and now Waddy Jones has a fluffly toy fetish.

The Gospel according to Jones is soft and cuddly. It's a sad but cruel world and all we need is a fluffly toy to make it better. So it's officially cool if you're 25 and still have a pink teddy bear on your bed.

"Love toys, they are my favourite thing," says Jones. "Toys are like cutting-edge sculptures. That's where I find my edge and I just want to make the coolest toys, not high-priced arty dolls."

His toys, a mixed range called Animals, could blow the socks off Tetsuo's blues if they laid up in Pick 'n' Buy and Jones hopes they will.

"I'm happy if they become commercial. I'll still make first edition toys."

But it's not just about toys. For Mr ex-Max Normal, says Watkin Tudor Jones, who says "Rap is boring. Drugs are boring. The hip-hop scene is stale, electronica is more fertile..."

It's about graphic, story books that are cathartics to his art's process. It's also still about music. It's about the racism which of sad adult Dr Zhivago-type issues with a Yacht (Punkish) music/poetry/electronic/hobby album for his latest release, *musical instruments is not gay*.

This is the soundtrack to his short film, *Porno*, written by his girlfriend. And the fact who together have a huge toy collection, mostly vinyl toys, Jones launched his fantastic kid entertainment company last week at the Bell-Roberts Contemporary Art Gallery with 100% dressed in top top rubber toys.

He was part of the exhibition, looking very *Toy Story* (Safari) porn chic dressed by Richard de Jager of Phwoa with orange angel fish swimming across his white jersey knit. The gallery was a mass of miniature fluffly toys hand made by Jones.

But with every toy in the range being sold



"Rap is boring. Drugs are boring. The hip-hop scene is stale, electronica is more fertile..."



TOY STORY/SAFARI PORN CHIC:

Waddy Jones, centre left, at tattooed mustache Max Normal and caricatured above as Watkin Tudor Jones at exhibit, resplendent in angel fish jersey for the launch of his company's fantastic kid entertainment

could give him a shunt to talk to him and he was even a Shik when he lived in no suburbs for three years.

Clearly an original thinker, young Jones lives in a suburban world. He has spent the last two years writing a 13-part soap opera series called *Hours of a boy*, which he plans to make into a film. The main characters, the boy, Nikki, wears a girl suit and has an artificial breast and lives with his father in Happy Valley outside PE. "He doesn't talk to his father because of his hour."

His girlfriend, Watkin Tudor Jones, started the multi-media campaign, (fantastic kid entertainment), and Nikki has a range of stuffed toys (the animal toys) and likes falling asleep to the music of *musical instruments is not gay*.

"And here's one when I'm not serious, old," he points to a perfect sketch of a blood stained infant. Evidence that Jones is already working on the next phase of his project, *fantastic kid toys*, and there.

From mid July you'll be able to go online to buy the toys, graphic novels, music and movies at www.fantastickid.com.

The exhibition, *Animals*, is on at the Bell-Roberts Art Gallery Graphic Centre, 188 Loop Street, Cape Town.

More over he now works with Mark Hamon from Ottery, who has been making toys for the last 20 years.

Classy and child-like, Jones goes with every toy hand with a hint of Gummy bear, so there's nothing Harry Potterish about the one which looks more like a human skull. And, blood red, has a hand-trace for a head and looks very Jeff Knight.

The chicken has a Mohican, the bee looks like a Sea Point car guard and the classic looks like Mr Watson's head who has just swallowed a big fat baked bean, Jones with his sketcher 'ache looks part Salvador Dalí, part the totally real, when his man, Drury Jones says is the type of man who won't get just one tattoo, he'll get his entire body done.

When he was two she gave him a microphone. "He was always singing and telling his brother stories and painting out walls with charcoal. He's always loved toys. In fact I'm just busy sending him a box of his toys he had as a child. Waddy is such an individual."

He also likes to experiment. He has been Spider-man, a Rastafarian, he lived in a tree in Kruppa so I thought him a string of bells so I

Obskure kuns bly nie staande teen wêreld

COBUS VAN BOSCH

TENTOONSTELLING: *Contra Mundi* - 'n groeptentoonstelling van werke in gemengde mediums onder kuratorskap van Andrew Lamprecht. In die galery van die Vereniging vir Visuele Kuns, Kerkstraat 35, Kaapstad. Tot 19 Junie.

DIE titel van hierdie tentoonstelling is Latyns vir "Teen die wêreld", 'n belovende titel in hierdie troebel tye wat 'n mens inderdaad dikwels soveel rede bied om stelling teenoor die wêreld in te neem.

Andrew Lamprecht, kurator van hierdie tentoonstelling en lektor in kunsteorie aan die Michaelis-kunsskool in Kaapstad, spreek in sy kuratorstelling die hoop uit dat hierdie 'n "tromp-op tentoonstelling" sal wees, 'n tentoonstelling wat reguit en op die man af is. Vir alle "ernstige kunstliefhebbers" sal die hoop egter in groot mate beskaam, want die meeste van die kuns hier teen die mure is op formele en dalk veral konseptuele vlak "maklike" kwinkslagwerk wat beswaarlik meer as 'n naweek kon geduur het om te skep. Dalk is dit juis die bedoeling van hierdie groep jong kunstenaars - om, soos die Dadaïste van weleer, die bestaande (wan)orde met humor, nihilisme, absurditeit en sinloosheid te probeer uitdaag en ondermyn.

Interessant vir 'n tentoonstelling van eietydse kuns is daar slegs een video-werk, deur Bridget Baker. Verskeie kunstenaars was by die produksieproses betrokke, onder andere Ed Young, wat die kamera gehanteer het, en James Webb, wat gesorg het vir die klankbaan (grootliks gebaseer op bestaande mu-



Tay Dall se *Its a sin*, wat op die tentoonstelling *Contra Mundi* te sien is.

siek). Die werk wys sypaadjies, verbygaande voete en die spore wat dit laat.

Cameron Platter se *hydrae* is foto's van krokodille wat met hoenders gevoer word, en Lebohang Tlali het foto's geneem van 'n man wat 'n ander man lewers in 'n openbare ruimte afneem.

Matthew Hindley en Vuyisa Nyamende het die oorweldigende visuele aanslag van die massamedia as bron vir hul werk gebruik - in Hindley se geval gemanipluleerde beelde van die internet af en uit die geelpers, terwyl Nyamende 'n depressiewe verhaal geskep het deur 'n heie muur te beplak met uitgeskeurde stukkies teks en illustrasies uit die drukmedia.

Tay Dall, wie se werk gewild is as objekt vir binnenshuise versiering, probeer aspekte rondom die vrou in die nuwe Suid-Afrika belig in skilderye waarin abstrakte merke en komposisies ondersteun word deur collages van uiteenlopende gevende illustrasies en stukkies teks. Die aandag word gevestig op

stereotipering en ander hindernisse in die pad na vrou se selfverwesenliking.

Die werke probeer dien as 'n wrekrop tot vroue om hul man te staan, maar dit is duidelik dat Dall harder sal moet probeer om uit die goue kou van dekoratiewe kuns te ontsnap.

Young, die jong kunstenaar wat plaaslik in 'n kort ruk met bykans geen kuns ietwat van 'n kunstenaarstatus verwerf het (kan hy die natuurlike opvolger van Kendell Geers wees?), het sy oëvre uitgebrei met 'n kartondoos waarop donasies gevra word vir die behandeling van sy "beseerde knieskyf", terwyl Lamprecht hom in sy kuratorstelling as "depressief" beskryf.

Hierdie is nie 'n tentoonstelling wat lank in die geheue sal draal nie. Daarvoor is die werke te obskuur en hul slaankrag as 'n geheel te min. Die "wêreld" waarteen hier stelling ingeneem word, hoef nie bekommerd te wees nie. 'n Mens kan jou wel bekommer oor wat deesdae is ons kunsskole aangaan.



Letter from Durban

by Andrew Lamprecht

When Zen Marie picked me up at Durban International Airport, looking like a lead character from *Starsky 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 he 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.

Cameron Platter, Ed Young and myself decided to make our intervention in the form of three simultaneous solo shows, all titled 'Storm'. Andrew Verster later commented that he thought that this was in reference to, and in recognition of what Storm had done. Unfortunately, Andrew did not realise that we at Galerie Puta would never do something so selfless and perceptive.

Andrew Verster made his observation while doing a "walkabout" of our exhibition. We had planned on asking leading members of Durban's art community to do this and he and Carol Brown (assisted by the Pleasure Correspondent [I kid you not] from the Saturday Independent newspaper, Peter Machen) gave two such presentations. They were all incredibly good sports, agreeing immediately in spite of pressing schedules in



Exhibition views



Hot topic

both cases, and doing so with humour and wit as befits a Puta event.

Carol's walkabout involved hours of work by her and Peter (as well as various family members it would seem) where they essentially destroyed our exhibition, writing scurrilous graffiti on the walls (which we had to paint over later!), painting over several works (including one on reserve [the lawyer's letter is in the post]), "improving" others and generally out-Putting the Putas.

The name Puta, as you know, is Spanish for "prostitute" and there were a couple of references in the local papers to "whores of Babylon" and the like. I cannot express how amazed I was that Carol Brown, the director of the Durban Art Gallery, and Andrew Verster, one of South Africa's most esteemed artists, would put this much effort into people they hardly knew and to whom they owed nothing.

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 DAG's collection can rival any other institutional collection as far as the last ten years goes, which is quite an achievement on its impossibly 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 Durban's 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 couldn't help but draw unfavourable comparisons with my home, Cape Town, with its often mean-spirited, social-rank-obsessed and generally unwelcoming facade 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 spoken of. 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 on 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

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Art South Africa recognised with two prestigious awards

by Kresta Tyler Johnson

The magazine *Art South Africa* was the recipient of two awards out of a possible 15 at the recent 14th annual Mondi Paper Magazine Awards. The Mondi awards are for "magazine journalism, photography, design and illustration" (and) seek to recognise and reward groundbreaking and provocative work published in South African magazines".

Ivor Powell edged out writers from *House and Leisure* and *Fair Lady* to win for his review entitled 'Ed Young's Bruce Gordon', while Sophie Perryer, Abbey Volks and Brendon Bell-Roberts were recognised for the design and illustration of the cover of the magazine's third issue featuring Kendell Geers' work.

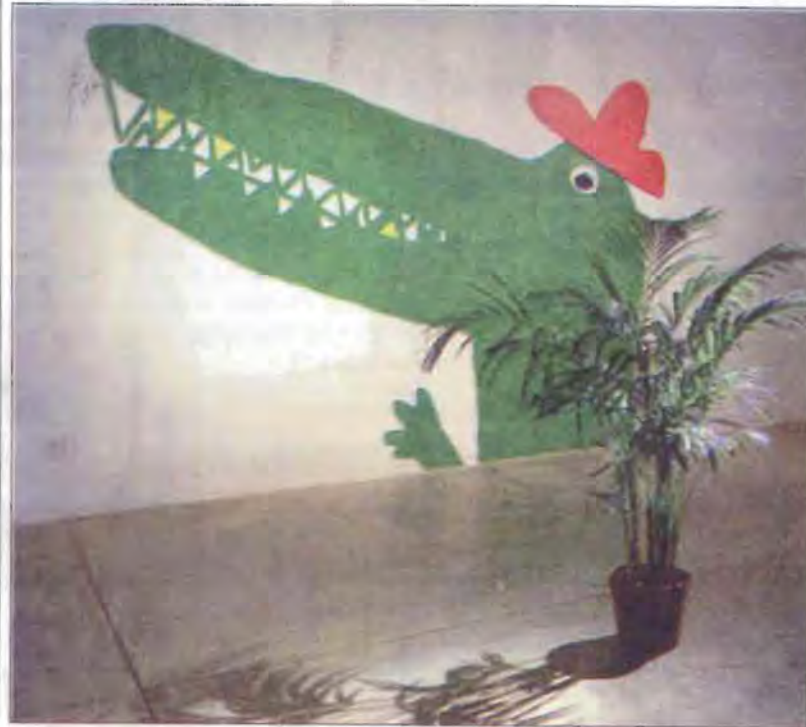
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EDITION FOR ARTTHROB

Gallery of whores visits Durban



HEAD ON down to Glenwood today and tomorrow for the last hours of Galerie Puta's invasion of the NSA Gallery in Bulwer Road. Galerie Puta (after the Portuguese word for prostitute), is a collective of three respected artists, Andrew Lamprecht, Cameron Platter and Ed Young, who take the piss out of the gallery system and the South African art scene. Beginning with the premise that virtually all South African art is complete rubbish, they have filled the gallery with works that will immediately evoke the counter-response "but, um, you're also rubbish" - since little of the work corresponds to what is generally accepted as art.

Which is all part of the game. The collective and their exhibition interrogate the notions of the sanctity of the gallery space, explore what it is that separates art from everything else, and consume a fair amount of alcohol along the way as they walk the fine line between sacrament and excrement.

□ Galerie Puta is on at the NSA Gallery until tomorrow afternoon. Entrance is free.

Daily News
tonight
FRIDAY MAY 21 2004

WHORES OF BABYLON: Galerie Puta are a collective of artists from Cape Town who reckon that modern art is rubbish. Their name means "prostitute's gallery" and they have taken over the NSA Gallery for this week only. See Page 3 for more details.

Galerie Puta, those whores from Cape Town, have arrived on our shores, writes **Robert Bodil** who reckons that their brand of site-specific genius gives Michelangelo a run for his money

GALERIE Puta, a highly successful, non-venue specific "conceptual" gallery, launched in Cape Town early last year, is currently colonising the NSA Gallery for the exclusive use of its highly regarded curatorial team of head honchos, Cameron "the Don" Plautier, Andrew "Pluffy" Lamurecht and Ed "One Eye" Young.

Their three solo shows, all coincidentally entitled *Storm*, after the gallery's curator, interrogate issues such as idleness, assimilation, insider trading on the JSE, random beatings, vodka martinis, the historical philosophy of Hegel and dirty living.

The curatorial staff of Galerie Puta are known for their fearless challenging of the status quo in the South African art world. Nearly all South African art is crap, they reckon, and they're here to put things right.

To this extent, their series of installations, currently on show, will put all doubting Thomases in their place. Their exquisite command of painting,

photography, sculpture and video art puts all South African art squarely in the shade and reveals apparent pretenders to the throne such as William Koeberlidge and Andrew Vorster to be exactly that: mere pretenders.

In fact, in the history of art, there are few practitioners who have managed to come so close to revealing the divine experience of being human in this

complex world.

In the history of post-renaissance art, only Michelangelo, it seems, has managed to appropriate a space with such a sense of pathos, bathos and dread-fear as these enterprising young lads. And he had the Clistine Chapel to work with.

Galerie Puta have only the cold, cavernous space of the NSA with which to work, but they have transformed it into a space that

resonates with both aesthetic completeness and a profound understanding of virtually every single continuum facing the modern artist.

The central piece in the main gallery (see picture) looks at first glance to be simple, albeit perfectly realised, representations of a black man or woman and a crocodile. But it immediately becomes clear to the informed observer that this is in fact a sophisticated dialogue

between the old South Africa and the new with the elegantly stylised crocodile clearly intended to be an iconic representation of PW Botha, South Africa's last apartheid president.

Elsewhere in the gallery, art of similar density and beauty is found everywhere.

A shark and another crocodile find themselves caught up in a carefully sculpted stage. The social importance of the reversed group

MIMI Vanfill is caught lovingly; almost lovingly on video. A T-shirt and jacket are sculpted with a chilling realism.

And Storm, well Storm sits in his office taking callers.

On tonight at 8pm, Carol Braun of the Durban Art Gallery will be giving a walkabout of the exhibition together with a special guest. Entrance is free and all are welcome.



SIMPLY ASSASSINATING

SOCIETY

Party-starter

Party-starter, Jameson Whiskey, was on hand to fire up festivities at the launch of the provocative new art magazine, *Itch*, published by Cape Town art gallery owner Brandon Bell-Roberts. The magazine's official unveiling, held at the Cape Town Convention Centre, attracted a number of the who's who in Cape Town including prominent South African artist, Ed Young. While a stimulating range of contemporary artists mingled and discussed art — there was certainly no shortage of triple distilled and twice as smooth Jameson Whiskey to tingle the tastebuds.



Bianca Groenewald, Kate Harrison, Kim Ellis, Jean McFarlane, Claire Winston.

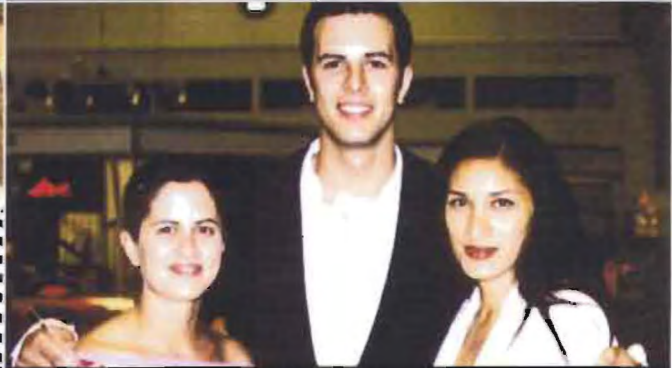


Ed Young.

Margot Saffer, Guy Willoughby.



Nikki Froneman, Dominique Gawlowski.



Nat Iqani, Mehita Iqani, Nadine Davids.



Jennifer Lovemore-Reed, Marc Pradervand, Merle Bennett, Lauren Carr, Guy Neveling.



Candice Smith, Zayd Minty, Natalie Becker, Evan Milton.

ART OF DEMOCRACY



Kambel Gony's 1994 art work entitled (ANC, AFR, AWE, CA, CR, DR, MR, SAC)

X marks the spot

Sean O'Toole
looks back at 10
years of fine art

The young art scene in Cape Town was in its infancy in the mid-1990s. The young generation joined the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Last year to explain his knowledge of the Africanist movement (AAW).

By the time Gony's political display at his first solo exhibition in 1994, he had joined eight political parties, organisations whose ideologies ranged from socialist to rightist politics.

On one level his activity was simply an art project, one invested with a lot more verve than Ed Young's recent statements. Not that everyone found the idea funny at the time. Gony received three awards from the Arts Council of South Africa in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

In 1994, Gony's work, entitled (ANC, AFR, AWE, CA, CR, DR, MR, SAC), is included in the series of works opening in Khayelitsha, above, at the exhibition *Love of Right* (2004), really impressive.

During 1994, Gony's work was shown in various venues, including the Dordrecht Bank Young Artist Award in 1994. In the absence of a gallery, Gony's work was shown in various venues, including the Dordrecht Bank Young Artist Award in 1994.

As per tradition, the Dordrecht Bank Young Artist Award in 1994 was given to Gony. In 1995, Gony's work was shown in various venues, including the Dordrecht Bank Young Artist Award in 1994.

One word describes the experience: Gony's work was shown in various venues, including the Dordrecht Bank Young Artist Award in 1994.

2004 Africanist movement. Gony's work was not the art of the 1990s. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s.

Persons of the newly defined generation, Gony's work was not the art of the 1990s. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s.

If there was something to be learned about the opening of Johannesburg's first international art event, the absence of a solo exhibition in Cape Town, the presence of an art exhibition in Cape Town, the presence of an art exhibition in Cape Town.

By the time of the early 1990s, Gony's work was not the art of the 1990s. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s.

The project, and indeed much of the rest of Johannesburg, responded to the global art scene. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s.

It might seem to be an exact replica of the work of the 1990s. It was the art of the 2000s. It was the art of the 2000s.

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Directed by Olafur Eliasson, the installation was 'set' around the wall covered in various South African flags and posters, including the ANC flag and a poster for the 2004 National Election.

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Flash, aha!

Engaging with notions of fun and play, the work of Cape Town's 'Flash' artists – Ed Young, Vuyisa Nyamende and Cameron Piatter – is highly visible and frequently confounding. Andrew Lamprecht, official theorist to the group, explains



Fast cars, women, cash and cocktails: in Cape Town, where a sense of humour can be a seriously rare commodity, a small group of artists is doggedly working at bringing a light touch to the process of art production. Loosely grouped around the name "Flash" they seek to embrace a hedonistic lifestyle while still being primarily committed to making art. Celebrity, media manipulation and a well-developed sense of their own importance all combine in a heady cocktail of work, pleasure, violence and an irreverent view of life.

The Flash "group" made a considerable splash in January 2004 with a trio of exhibitions, opening on consecutive Wednesday nights, which on the surface seemed to be very different. Cameron Platter's *The Love is Approaching* (João Ferreira Gallery), Ed Young's *Asshole* (Bell-Roberts Gallery) and Vuyisa Nyamende's *Japan* (Bell-Roberts Gallery) each presented a view of contemporary art practice, media commentary and engagement with popular culture.

Platter's exhibition consisted of a series of five large-scale drawings, accompanied by an animated video and a series of prints, drawn from stills of the video. Platter's technique is to make cartoon-like drawings using a crude digital drawing pro-

gram and then to precisely translate these computer-generated images onto vast sheets of paper by means of thickly layered pencil crayon. In the artist's own words he is inspired and influenced by "desert islands, palm trees, sharks, fast cars, women, cash, politicians, cocktails, dark and stormy nights, Frank Sinatra, leopards, James Bond, zebras in spaceships, landscapes, African woodcut artists, friends, strangers in the night, and approaching love: all themes central to life in contemporary South Africa".

The video that accompanied the exhibition on two giant wall projections presented five narrative stories that "explained" the drawings. Funny, violent and slightly self-mocking, they encapsulated all the fundamental elements of Flash.

Young's *Asshole*, like most of the artist's exhibitions, has been the subject of much discussion and speculation. The third in a series of "one night" art exhibitions, which began with *Bruce Gordon* in March 2003 at Iziko: South African National Gallery (reviewed in *Art South Africa* Vol 1 No 4) and was followed by *Muse* (an exhibition of an all-female string quartet of the same name) later that year, presented the public with another opportunity to drink copious quantities of alcohol and

Facing page: Ed Young, *Asshole*, 2004, installation view, Bell-Roberts Gallery

This page: Vuyisa Nyamende, *Asshole*, 2004, installation view, Bell-Roberts Gallery
Photos: Marc Tudechkin



Above left: Vuyisa Nyamende and a bar lady at Ed Young's *Asshole*, 2004

Above right: Ed Young, *Asshole*, 2004, installation view

Inset: Ed Young, *Asshole*, 2004, performance view
Photos: Marc Tudechkin

generally socialise. Essentially Young's formula is to create a well-publicised event and supplement it with a small but elegant catalogue, illustrated with photographs of contextual material and accompanied by an over-the-top text written by an art theorist. The size and format of each catalogue (with the title always printed in transparent varnish on the cover) references the shape and size of the English translation of *Postproduction* by the influential French art theorist Nicholas Bourriaud.

Asshole consisted of a small group of elements: topless bar ladies hired from Teazers, the strip-bar near to Bell-Roberts Gallery; 50 cases of Heineken beer; galvanised tubs filled with ice and beer; trestle tables laden with buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken; some open packs of Camel cigarettes in a demarcated "VIP" smoking area; three plasma screens simultaneously playing Outkast's video *Hey Ya*, supposedly stolen from MTV or the internet; a framed print that comprised the word "asshole" written in very small letters in the bottom left-hand corner of the otherwise blank sheet of paper and a wall painting that looked like a graffiti of the title of the show. While critics complained that there was no "real work" on show, the crowd had a fabulous party (estimated attendance was 800, almost unheard of for a Cape Town commercial gallery show) and the astute observer could see that Young had presented one work in each of the codified disciplines of contemporary art production: painting (the wall piece); performance (the strippers); print media (the print); sculpture (the KFC,

Heineken and Camels) and new media (the plasma screens). Needless to say the whole work served as an installation.

Nyamende's *Japan* saw the artist use his technique of collage in a typically zany and humorous way. Consisting of prints and works made directly onto the walls of the gallery, Nyamende presented his quirky, madcap view of the world by means of juxtaposing images sourced from magazines and newspapers tied together with small handwritten slips of paper

that bring a narrative structure to the work. For *Japan* Nyamende also presented a video made in a similar way: in this case various television programmes were edited together in a rough, seemingly haphazard sequence. The resulting video was played on a small monitor, the artist making no attempt to clean up the snow, bad reception and other "flaws" in the recordings.

By using the land of the rising sun as the title of his show, Nyamende evokes the image of the artist ascendant. His self-confidence in his abilities and his assurance of

his own imminent fame can be seen in the analogy indicated by the word "Japan". Japan also evokes notions of technological invention and deep spirituality. Nyamende is profoundly interested in Asian systems of thought, yoga, meditation and the concept of physical bodily transformation by means of mind control. Part of his larger project is to transform his slight frame by growing several inches, enlarging his penis and learning to levitate, all by means of deep self-understanding.

The interconnectedness of the artists' work was demonstrated by Nyamende making a large collage around Young's in





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

situ "Asshole" painting, in which he mocked all his friends, speculating which one was the biggest asshole of the lot. Dan Halter, a Swiss-Zimbabwean artist loosely associated with the Flash crowd, won in the end, and rumour has it that one well-known artist was furious at being mentioned in the text as an asshole. The Flash crew work hard at trying to inculcate a sense of humour in a frequently recalcitrant and complacent art crowd.

In essence all three exhibitions shared this: they engaged with the notions of fun and play. The seeming "easiness" of the work, frequently invoked by critics, belies the artists' deep commitment to a phenomenal productivity. Platter's "simple" drawings take enormous time to produce. Pencil crayon is laboriously applied, layer after layer, with exact reference to a projected image drawn from the original digital source. Platter also frequently rejects work that does not convey the feeling he wishes to evoke. He will remake a work over and over again, even though the image on the paper itself seems indistinguishable visually from the previous, rejected version. Nyamende's collages, supposedly quickly made and simply affixed directly to the wall, are the result of hundreds of hours of sourcing and combining found visual material. For Japan he handmade 1 000 invitations, each one bearing a small image cut out of a magazine. For Young's events, so seemingly minimal, the artist becomes an events planner, media company and logistics expert. Each event is complex and, in the case of the two most recent exhibitions,



expensive. The seemingly careless spray-paint graffiti on the wall was in fact an exact replica of an image created for the Art South Africa advertisement for the show, painstakingly painted using an airbrush by an expert specifically hired to produce it.

As a phenomenon Flash goes back to an event concocted by Nyamende and Platter while still students at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. They took one of their collaborative paintings and sent out press statements and distributed flyers stating that the work had been stolen, offering a large cash reward for its safe return. To this day they maintain that the work was indeed stolen and no one has seen the painting since. As a result they got some newspaper coverage and general discussion going about the missing masterpiece. The bug bit and celebrity and media hype for its own sake became a major feature of the artists' production.

Young insists that he is not a member of Flash, despite all appearances to the contrary; this is typical of his difficult and contrary nature. Nyamende has been reported as acknowledging that he "severed his ties with conventional reality a long time ago", something that those who know him will not dispute for a moment. Few who were around at the time would forget Nyamende's Flash stunt that saw him painting a long continuous red stripe along the length of the frontage on Long Street: an artistic intervention that landed him in jail for the night. Platter carries a carefully cultivated veneer of sleaze over his natural charm and urbane manner.

Above: Ed Young, *Asshole*, 2004, wall art
Inset: Ed Young, *Idiot*, 2003, digital print



Above left: Cameron Platter, *The Love is Approaching*, 2004, video projection, Jolife Ferreira Gallery
Above right: Cameron Platter, *The Love is Approaching*, 2004, installation view of pencil crayon drawings, Jolife Ferreira Gallery
Above, series: Cameron Platter, video stills from *The Love is Approaching*, 2004
Inset: Cameron Platter, *Reds* and Ed Young at the *Art as Usual* residency project, Johannesburg Art Gallery

Platter and Nyamende began collaborating regularly while still at art school and lived in the same house (owned by artist Bridget Baker) for a while. Visitors to the duo's abode recall knife fights, death threats and debauched living. It was at this time that Galerie Puta was launched. With a curatorial and management staff comprising Platter, Young and myself, the gallery was established as a non-space-specific commercial gallery that provided an opportunity for established as well as emerging artists to exhibit together. Baker unintentionally gave the preferred moniker for the loose accumulation of friends and hangers-on that emerged out of the weekly preparation meetings prior to the first Puta event: "the cronies". The name Galerie Puta (gallery of the prostitute) was a reference to the perceived status of younger, non-established artists as well as the profession of many who walk the streets of Green Point, where Platter and Nyamende were living at the time.

The first exhibition, *Meeting: Art in the Water Closet*, was held on May 17 2003. The title is an example of the deliberate toying with the art world and media that characterises so much of Flash production. Originally the exhibition had no name and none was indicated on the flyers advertising it. Sean O'Toole,

editor of ArtThrob.co.za, headed his listing for the exhibition "Meeting: Art in the Water Closet". The curatorial team simply accepted it and used the name in further publicity. The event was characterised by a fabulous party, martinis made by Platter, and original work firmly located in international contemporary practice. Nyamende made a small sculpture of a man in soap, Young's work was to make no work for the show (in an edition of five), and artists as varied as Sue Williamson, Kathryn Smith, Bridget Baker, James Webb and Abrie Founie exhibited.



Put a's next major event was participating in Christian Nerf's *Art as Usual* residency programme at Johannesburg Art Gallery. Platter and myself muscled in on an invitation extended to Young, and set out to play a game of Risk for 24 hours non-stop while drinking excessive quantities of alcohol. Well-wishers dropped in and played along during the period which saw the walls of the space littered with obscene and scurrilous graffiti. After exactly 24 hours the trio retreated without another word, leaving behind dozens of empty liquor bottles, ashtrays filled to overflowing with cigarette stompies, at least one broken chair, considerable mess and a rather unpleasant smell in the air. The strange, almost unclassifiable nature of the work emanating from the group may also be seen in Galerie Puta's *Secret Exhibition*. This was the second formal exhibition of the



Left: Vuyo Ntshemi
Star Wars 2004, 30x40
Signed and
Right: Vuyo
Ntshemi, April 2004
Indians in detail, Bell-
Roberts Gallery, Cape
Town

gallery and consisted of an exhibition that no one was invited to, held at a secret location on the night of the birthday party of Estelle Jacobs, AVA director and a leading light in Cape Town's art scene. By hosting such a show on the one night when the art elite would all be somewhere else, and by attending the birthday party themselves, the curators could be seen to be commenting on the significance of the social element in the construction of artistic identity in South Africa.

Nyamende, Platter and Young all unabashedly seek media attention and flirt with it. They all make sure that they are well represented on radio and television. *Asshole* made prime-time news (as did Bruce Gordon before it) and Nyamende was the subject of a recent prime-time television insert in a magazine programme. The Flash cronies were also interviewed for TV, playing cards at the fashionable I/B's above Jo'burg bar on Long Street, drinking sparkling wine with wads of cash on the table. "This is what we do at our meetings," Platter declared as he quaffed his wine.

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. With work that is sometimes difficult for conservatively trained art connoisseurs to understand and engage with, they unapologetically locate their art as specifically South African while referencing international practice. Criticisms that "it has all been done before" (usually applied to Young and a charge he does not deny) or "it's sloppy" simply miss the point and indicate a refusal to engage with a much larger project: the young artist making his own way through a tough and stratified art circuit,

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

while having a whale of a time doing it.

Just before completing this piece I was at a free concert in Greenmarket Square. Platter, Halter and Nyamende were standing with me (Young had grumpily gone off to find some KFC, irritating everyone). The magnetic stage presence of Brenda Fassie had us all riveted. She was joking about rumours about her life, defying all rules by publicly endorsing her political party of choice and generally behaving in a fabulously Flash manner. "This is the kind of woman we need to collaborate with for Flash," Nyamende observed. "She's far flashier than all of us put together and then some," I replied. Nyamende nodded his agreement. I think my observation was accurate but time itself will have to tell how long it takes for them to catch up with the Princess of Pop.

Andrew Lamprecht is a co-director of Galerie Pura and official theorist to the Flash group

Andrew Lamprecht, Camerun Platter and Ed Young exhibit together at the NSA Gallery in 'Dubai' from May 18 to 23

FEEDBACK ARTTHROB

LISTINGS REVIEWS NEWS ARTBIO WEBSITES PROJECT EXCHANGE FEEDBACK DIARY GALLERY CHOICE

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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: Zayd Minty
Subject: Mario Pissarro's article on Iziko
Date received: February 18

In response to Mario Pissarro's recent column on the Iziko CEO position, readers should note that, in fact, the current CEO is not actually a Professor - despite Mr Bredekamp's insistence on using the title before his name.

From: Loki Sparks
Subject: Zachary Yorke's review of Edward Young's 'Asshole'
Date received: February 18

Yawn. Blah blah blah!. Why do academics take so long to say simple things? 'Asshole' worked for one brief moment when I received the invitation. I thought it was for real, that some idiot had sent me an insulting postcard. Then I realised that although Ed Young/ Bell-Roberts had just called me an asshole, in an indirect way, it wasn't personal... because it was art.

And that's all there is to it. We were the assholes for turning up at the exhibition. Ed is the asshole for thinking that he can get away with merely being clever. Young Ed's *enfant terrible* role-playing is indulged because nobody wants to mention the obvious: there's no substance to the art because there's no substance to the artist.

From: Brenden Gray
Subject: Ed Young's event
Date received: February 18

I've been to many exhibition openings, art events etc. And so much of the work attempts to encourage criticality. And yet the devices that frame the show often tend to negate the very intentions of the artists. The work finds itself being endorsed through opening speeches, eats, invited guests, invitations, monographs etc. This encourages a kind of consent that effectively prevents people at the show from saying what they really think. There are no opportunities at exhibition openings/ events/ happenings/ galleries etc. for real-time engagement other than the hidden monologue that takes place in the mind of the viewer (usually the fashionable art in-crowd).

Why aren't artists building real engagement strategies into their work so that people can dialogue through art, using art as the departure point to learn?

The problem with so much art produced in this country today is that it is turning into a kind of lifestyle branding/ consumer item/ fashion/ décor etc that is creating passivity on the part of the viewer. When will artists give us viewers the opportunity to become active social participants in the construction of meaning?

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 blurb on the wall and more time looking at the work? I've got to be honest though, the kind of audience 'participation' you seem to desire sounds a bit shaky to me. Paul Edmunds.

From: Bonita Alice
Subject: [Complexity]
Date received: February 23


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 Euro/Afrocentric debate with accusations of South Africans aspiring 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 players in the global contemporary art field look outside of South Africa and Africa for direction because they deem a "developed world" model 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 year's experience as a lecturer in tertiary arts education, mostly in the context of a Technikon department. 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) idiom. I don't believe that in assisting them in doing this they were being strong-armed or denied anything at all. They were not dictated to regarding either approach or content and, in most cases, despite a lack of prior exposure to global art making, they engaged with and became compelled by the products of contemporary art practice (SA and otherwise).

I can't remember a student working with content that was NOT directly related to his or her own experience. In fact, for many, their encounter with contemporary art making and discourse sent them searching for the first time for the art traditions of their own heritage, whether it were African or Taiwanese. Many of those students left the institution to continue making and exhibiting work independently here and abroad.

My point is that, within contemporary South African life, the arts represent a "COMPLEXIFICATION" of thinking and experience at a time when so much is oversimplified and reduced in the name of development and redress. Nor do I think that contemporary art practice alienates aspirant art students or artists from any community. I support the position that it is never necessary to dumb anything down in order to make it accessible. That's 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.

⌄ SUBMIT FEEDBACK

LISTINGS	REVIEWS	NEWS	ARTBIO	WEBSITES	PROJECT	EXCHANGE	FEEDBACK	DIARY	GALLERY CHOICE
									

One lame Asshole, for sure

Guy Willoughby reviews 'artist' Ed Young's latest stunt



ARTY PARTY: Scenes from a party with, like, arty pretensions.

Photo: Anna Roper

A FORTNIGHT ago, self-announced artist Ed Young launched his exhibition, Asshole, at the Bell-Roberts Gallery at the trendy end of Cape Town's Long Street.

The exhibition was short-lived, but the memories, I fear, linger on.

It was a colourful event. There were buxum, bare-breasted, lap dancers from the nearby Teasers Revue Bar, serving Heineken beer and KFC chicken wings, an interesting, smashed-up hole in a wall as entrance, a cordoned-off VIP lounge and iced bathtubs filled with more beer.

Enough of the party, where was the art? Ah, but that's Young's point, you see: people are really only after a good time, a social whirl, and the artefacts on display are merely the pretext for the serious business of getting down to boogie.

This one gleaned from the sheer lack of actual art on display — oh, sorry, that's not entirely fair. There was a kind of bad red-ink graffiti of — well, a sphincter muscle (price: R10 950), and an endless loop on three screens of a garish music video, apparently culled from MTV.

And, of course, you could look at the other people, to catch any possible aesthetic traces ("One should either be a work of art or wear a work of art." — Oscar Wilde).

There was also Young's little red book — a parody of Chairman Mao's primer on cultural revolution of the same name perhaps?

This expensively-produced affair boasted vacuous shots of more bare-breasted women, a crumpled packet of smokes, a crushed beer can and a seemingly erudite essay on "Assholism and Evolution" by Andrew Lamprecht, Michaelis Art School lecturer.

Here, surely, will be the answer. (We are continuing to play Young's game, okay?)

If this unabashed trashfest seemed mindless, dull and — with regard to women, say — pretty tacky, surely this elegantly got-up little essay, replete with respectable-looking footnotes, will bring gravitas to the affair.

After all, we've become quite used to high-flown manifestos making sense of conceptual oddity in art these days.

Lamprecht, a charming, self-effacing fellow, has written a dull text with tongue firmly in cheek as if to lend intellectual credence, or at least some humour, to Young's flimsy fare.

There's an ingenious pun on Jan Smuts' august philosophic treatise "Holism and Evolution" (1929) in the title to assure us that something more deflating is going on here. But there wit begins and ends.

Who is "the asshole"? Lamprecht assures us he is the perennial irritant in history, the loud, insensitive oaf who stands on your corns, laughs at your sensibilities and so

infuriates you that you'll do anything to be rid of him — and so he prompts new action.

"The origins of art, culture, agriculture, indeed, civilisation itself may be linked to the asshole," he said.

Young, no doubt, is an asshole by this definition.

"He is the one who does the opposite of what is expected for no reason than it focuses attention upon him."

A fairly good explanation of his motives in throwing this exhibition, perhaps?

Is this — the event and the essay — funny? Is it clever? Does it prompt fresh thought, batter at boundaries, inculcate emotion or social reflection or a review of existing genres, codes, social mores? No, it did none of these things.

Young can't even throw a good party. An hour after the launch began most people had gone once they'd realised the art, or the game, was up.

So what, really, was the point of the exercise? Did Young and his intellectual front-office Lamprecht wish to remind us that art is in the eye of the beholder and that the hallowed space of the gallery can confer numinosity on what, outside of that space, would merely be nonsense?

Why, Marcel Duchamp did precisely the same thing with far more wit and invention in 1913 when he mounted his famous urinal on a pedestal and signed it "R Mutt" — in mockery of those who might buy it, perhaps?

No, wit and invention were sorely lacking at Bell-Roberts that night and Lamprecht's drivel exegesis on Assholism merely perpetuates the dull joke.

Like it or not, this reviewer wishes to bring back into play the wider socio-cultural context into which Young's doodles seek real meaning.

In that context, this limp (times-and-beer) excursion looks like the tiresome footling of a hormonally addled spoilt white boy.

It also can't do anything for the reputation of the Bell-Roberts that they give space to an event which belongs in the, like, experimental confines of the Michaelis School of Fine Art down the road.

Last year, Young earned plaudits for announcing bar-owner and nightlife philosopher Bruce Gordon as his final-year art work.

This prompted category re-evaluations (and caused Bruce to buy smart new shirts).

But there's an iron law of diminishing returns in this kind of jokey stuff. Unless Young starts making something engaging and artful, fast, his claim to gallery space must be denied next time.

Why? Because no one's likely to come. Then the beer-and-chicken sponsors will object.

Let's face it, a great party is a great art statement in itself: on this count, as on all others, Young has quite a way to go.

who is the asshole

by your momma

Ok. Yes he's a clever dude. Got to give it to him. After I've worked through my initial emotional reaction, and processed all the innuendoes of Ed Young's abrasive, controversial self-marketing. What's the point here? Social commentary? Or fame? Or is he only being more honest about how selfish art is, how every artist (every human) wishes to be glorified for all his/her imperfections and idiosyncrasies - as is? No improvement required.

After all, why make anything more? There are already enough things in the world. Why invest soul energy into creating something beautiful? The process of self-exploration and the depths of the human psyche are 'overrated' and difficult... maybe even inapplicable to this damn, appearance- fixated, gluttonous age of consumerism. Mr. Ed's Paradox critiques our insatiable culture, while indulging in it. Perversion is part of our fabric. Tragic? Or Beautiful? Beauty is subjective anyway. Maybe Ed finds cheap entertainment beautiful.

Or maybe it gives him secret thrills to watch the hoards of people wandering around, perplexed, trying to figure out his game. But not trying too hard because 'we' are all delightfully appeased by FREE beer, chicken, cigarettes, brainless music and topless waitresses, like babies with dummies in 'our' mouths. Shut up and suck. Don't think. Just eat. Consume.

Everyone is so excited to be there because "I also wanna be part of something cool." There is an elitist red carpet. There are cameras to record who's who in the zoo and which faces made it to the parade. I had to RSVP to be a VIP - inflated with a sense of self-importance.

So what is the artwork? An experiment in social behaviour? The

audience, and all our social interactions and reactions, is the artwork. And he, himself, is the artwork. He has also managed to brand himself. Bonus. He has marketed his persona. He has embroidered his name on the hotpants of strippers. He is a self-made celebrity. He is king of narcissistic. And proud of it. It does take a bit of genius to get so many people's curiosity evoked. But what are all the viewers rewarded with? Truly? Besides the consumables.

Surface value. Seduction by the face of an advert. A complete anti-climax. A black hole, a 'glorified drain'. A display and celebration of nothingness. An intellectual, well-substantiated excuse for a brainless, carnal, piss-up. An absolute absence of the innate Divine.

I must admit: inside the smoke-saturated swarm of beer-drinking, chicken-eating hoards of confused social butterflies, I couldn't shake the desire to bomb the building. Worshipped is the cult of the apparent individual. It seems that popular culture in the west loves ignorance, arrogance, and mental wanking. Or are we really so easily appeased and amused? Are we really that predictable? That if given to us freely, we will drink, eat, and smoke? And if there are cameras around we will want to be seen? Like puppets or lab rats. Are we really that susceptible?

So who is the asshole?

The one making the social commentary on everyone's stupidity?
Those involved in the elitism of one person's vanity?
Or those who don't care but are curious enough to have gone anyway?

Ed Young has set such a fixed definition for himself of what he represents, that surely he has limited himself. His brilliance has a roof because he cannot step out of his box: Mr. Hungover. So many people are talking about him, so I suppose it's mission accomplished. He's got his recognition and controversy, just how he likes it. But I am convinced he is a fad... Unless he surprises us.

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CAPE NEWS

Brazen artist gets punters talking

TOPLESS women, cases of beer and buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken - art lovers may well have thought they were at a bachelor party when they arrived at Ed Young's latest exhibition in Cape Town this week.

For his "Asshole" exhibition - which ran for only one evening - Young enlisted a hole in a wall in the Ball-Roberts gallery through which guests entered, to encounter bare-breasted women, tubs of fried chicken and 50 cases of beer.

"The problem with art in South Africa is that it has become very staid. I prefer art that will make people talk and discuss it," said Young this week.

Artist Stu Williamson, founding editor of Artforum online magazine, said: "It's not really my cup of tea. The artist is trying very hard to convince everyone that he is an asshole. People will have to decide for themselves if it has any validity."

Another guest, Barry Wachsmak, said the exhibition was "interesting", adding: "Ed Young accepts his role as an asshole. It got us talking. I got free beers and chicken and I realised I was part of the exhibition myself."

Said Young, who has previously sold a local bar owner as a work of art: "Other people really love it and think that it's refreshing and they start discussing it."

He said one visitor felt chastised and demanded to know: "Where is the art?" Said Young: "When people ask 'Where is the art?', to me, they become part of the art."

The exhibition includes a white wall with the word "asshole" scrawled on it, bearing a price tag of R13 950.

Small framed artworks bearing the same word were on sale for R2 300. Young, who is completing a master's degree at the University of Cape Town's Mitchell School of Fine Art, claimed to have sold five of these.

"Critics say I am not an artist," he said. "The more bad criticism the better". - *Stingyle Mzimba*



HE SAID IT: Artist Ed Young with one of the works featured in his exhibition

Picture: AMBROSE PETERS

Conceptual art brings up the rear

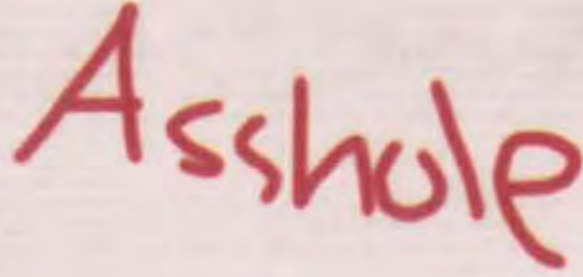
■ "Asshole" was the title of the third in a series of one night exhibitions by contemporary artist Ed Young. Young, perhaps most well known for his previous exhibition which included the sale of Joburg bar owner Bruce Gordon to the South African National Gallery, has had some vitriolic responses to his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

The concept of Asshole is based on some of these derogatory responses. Young acknowledges his status 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.



Ed Young has always courted controversy. In a new exhibition, he pre-emptively all his many critics, writes Elan Gamaker

It's not every day someone can be called a vulgarist in the art world. When Ed Young's new exhibition "Asshole" opens at the Bell-Roberts Gallery in Loop Street last night, it's not just the title that's likely to cause controversy. It's the artist's previous work, which has included the sale of Joburg bar owner Bruce Gordon to the South African National Gallery, that's likely to cause controversy. 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.



ED YOUNG. "People call me an asshole but I don't know what it means. I hope to find out through the show but probably won't."

Young's new show will be an environment 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 derogatory responses. Young acknowledges his status 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.

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Asshole
ARTIST: ED YOUNG
VENUE: BELL-ROBERTS GALLERY,
101 LOOP STREET, CAULFIELD
OPEN: TONIGHT & 2.30pm

Celebrating the 'A' word and everyone's invited

People call me an asshole but I don't know what it means. I hope to find out through the show but probably won't.

Young's new show will be an environment 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 derogatory responses. Young acknowledges his status 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 stal in Kaap uit – om sy naam krater te maak

KAAPSTAD. – Die plaaslike kunstenaar Ed Young bied nanstaande week 'n uitstalling hier aan. Hy noem dit *Asshole*. Dit is die derde in 'n reeks van sy retdangse uitstallings. Die idee het by Young opgekóm ná verskeie kleinerende aanmer-

kings van lede van die publek oor sy vorige uitstallings. Hy gaan verskillende mediums gebruik. Volgens hom is daar ook 'n paar naakstudies. "Die uitstalling is om te bewys ek stem saam met mense wat my 'n asshole

noem," het Young gesê. Die uitstalling is op 14 Januarie in die Bell-Roberts-kunsgalery in Langstraat. Vir meer inligting hieroor kan ms. Suzette Bell-Roberts by 021-422 1100 gebel word. – Johan Rheeder

ARTS

CAPE TOWN

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS BODE WELL

City art denizens enjoyed a good 2003

HELVY WARMAN

DESPITE the capers and controversies of 2003, it was a cheer-ful, if not all too hectic, 2003 in Cape Town's art circles.

Not many significant original works along but there were plenty of other positive, even exciting, developments.

The year started off on a high with the William Koenigsberg retrospective at the Ithala SA National Gallery (SANG). A great success. It was not only the artist's first work that intrigued but also the high professional standards in which the show was put together and presented.

Production and management of my favourite event, a showcase of international artists at the Knottshuis and later the courtyard, Jani Alexander, Doreen Christie, Anri Gertsema and others, allowed two museums to do it. It was held over an gallery that brought a rippin' new approach to managing both the how and what of art and viewers' expectations.

The Michael Stevenson Centre opened in the buzzing Waterkant precinct was launched with a smart, high show (Edith Cloete's *James Stevenson's expertise* and a new landmark for the Cape's art world and the year's a number of the art scene's highlights.

It was thanks to Stevenson's insight that the directors of the Artshella Festival at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) added a substantial volume of art to the public areas of the hotel. It was all over the stand-up and the more kind of work. It represents an unusual commitment of space and art to the public.

The latter has been on the minds of the Ithala SANG management for some time. In an effort to lighten up parts of the old building, better money was immediately allocated for some art projects. Unfortunately the existing exhibition space is a handful of rooms that is never much.

The 2003 applies to the busy, rather full house show in just one place in the V&A and other places.



HIGHLIGHT: A William Koenigsberg retrospective has been a big attraction for visitors to the Ithala SA National Gallery.

Quintessentially representing contemporary public art are something that inspire us to think.

Perhaps it is time for a return to the venerable exhibition arranged by Public Eye in 2002. Maybe this time those that need to attend will.

The medium of photography received well over 2000 images over the past year. But in the light of the success of a lot of local photographers, Ewoudina Muller and Chris Lantieri, it seems far too – it is strange that their art has received such little attention. In this sense, the opening of the Bell-Roberts Photography Gallery is a welcome addition to the Cape.

Gay Tibben's *Departure and Change* (documentary shows there, as well as his *Koningsberg* portraits, displayed at

Michael Stevenson Contemporary, were highlights of the year.

Then came David Goldblatt. His large show at the Ithala gallery and Ithala's entrance to the country's topography was his first portrait of Victoria Calabrese and her son, the first all-dress (over 400). Seven the future, outgrowth of the Ithala Art exhibition, will be the Ithala SANG.

The past year was a host of the public's coming to the Ithala. Bell-Roberts and Michael Stevenson are producing a steady flow of books featuring photography and art, and the country is a better place for their efforts.

Bell-Roberts Publishing is also responsible for the art magazine, *Art South Africa*, which launched a 10th birthday. Editor Angèle Fortner seems to get the mix right in an art

world fraught with controversy.

Then there is Post-Fordism's *Banky*, aptly named *The African* magazine. It was just one of the important projects of the Cape Africa Platform (South African Bookshop, led by the CTICC) in November. A three-day national development workshop is scheduled soon.

Another important art gathering was the International Impact 2003. This Promoting Conference (see the Michaelis Art School, based in the Ithala) was held in the Ithala. The global network made here and the papers delivered, was of a high order.

For the latter can be said for the series to draw to the public of the first South African Art Awards in the CTICC.

If anything, the highlights outlined the many profiles of this

kind of art scene's promotion. To finish with a reading, beyond of art, it is surprising how few spaces the artists, writers and readers of the "openings".

A practice was when that project was all about the state that was high quality, rigorous and more than an "art" in "art".

A rich tradition of international artists and more artists is what is needed to get the art world here. The Ithala has to show for their own good efforts (Ithala) to see the art. Luckily, it seems, the Ithala's efforts are in the development of the Ithala.

The Ithala art scene is a good sign. It is not only the richness of the art scene during the first decade of democracy. It will, in fact, be the way of the New Year.

It's a better thing to fall in love with art

HAVE you ever fallen in love with a painting? I have. It is a Matt Hoodley and I just have to know it. But it is for real. So I thought what can I sell? Or maybe what should I stop buying? So as my mind is just over R400 per month maybe I could move out and into a one-year for two months? Then I could buy the painting.

It's a simple painting really. A man and his dog. But it is so much more. It is a child like you sophisticated. It is a modern yet distant. It is traditional yet modern. It is a painting I want to live with. Buying original art is not cheap. But who mind anything about looking to own things art? If I could I would buy an original contemporary art work every week. And I would like to do it in a room, advertising agencies, banking halls... Do you remember when last you bought a painting?

There is an exhibition place to start. The Michaelis School of Fine Art exhibition at the University of Cape Town. Holbrough campus is exhibiting art by side by exhibiting fourth-year and master students. The Michaelis is the champagne of art schools. Michaelis is the golden stepping stone to the world's finest art academies like the Eliza Arnold, the Artley in Amsterdam, St Martin. Today's master's student could be tomorrow's Brett Murray, Lynn Spurling or Michaela. By the time these students exhibit at the Bell Roberts, the Rembrandt Gallery or Irma Stern Museum, their work will undoubtedly be double the price.

This year the Michaelis exhibition featured everything from old hand print printing master (Henry Hill) to a modernist version of the image (Mark Abrahams). Some of the most interesting Michaelis works are a series of images titled 'I am not a man' by Christine Diederik. It is a series of individual portraits of people of various ages. The only common thing is that I would have to buy them to see my image walk to the museum and to which she exhibited her work. Which will cost considerably more than her artwork. Amen!

You know when art exhibitions open and you are late and happen to

again when you can't find any parking and everyone has a Michaelis, except you. I was outburst by the fact that I was late enough to discover that a Michaelis is no longer only for punk but decidedly Long Street minimalist. And as we all know, there is so much more to Cape Town than Long Street.

Luckily I have a museum of street art at Michaelis. At last week's opening, I was gloriously swept back to their December 2002 exhibition. It was their annual charity auction to boost the Michaelis library and project funding.

And up for bid was a real living sculpture of conceptual art. A found object titled Bruce Gordon, by local artist, Edward Young. Found at Johannesburg in Long Street, no doubt. Senior lecturer and curator of worth, Andrew Langrecht wearing black bow tie and magenta white gloves had the sophisticated air of a seasoned auctioneer. Taken by the high drama of it all, I came out heavily loaded up with the living artwork, Bruce Gordon. I guess I just had to have him. He was a perfect take-away art. And his wife is the famous artist, Sue Williamson.

Of his artwork, the lucky artist exclaimed: "My work is found to be Bruce Gordon (the conceptual husband did not take me more than 10 seconds to come up with)." On leaving the room I promptly donated the artwork to the South African National Gallery. In the name of Donations Art Gallery. Why? He stated incredulously with my friend, Mr. Tranchikoff, is more than enough.

Surprisingly, the purchase of Edward Young's art made the artist's work. Art on the foundation of art. Friends on looking for the work, my friend placed me from Durban. "What on earth could you have meant by that?" I asked. "And why are you not doing any more art?" "I am not doing any more art," he said. "I am not doing any more art," he said. "I am not doing any more art," he said.

By now my guess should have known better. I am known to do anything in the name of art. I have been buying picture, for those interested in art works in a final year assessment and I have



'Hands-up all those metre-maids who secretly want to be George Bush'

directed art washed fashion shows as an excuse to create massive multi-media installations in Olympic stadiums, swimming pools, apartments and construction sites.

I have had wild art-drenched nights where women rolled naked in baking flour and Steven Curry whizzed through art gallery with a dancing fire-cracker up his over-powered art butt.

All this, just to the general public's pleasure, makes the wild beauty that is art.

You see all know that missing itself is only a part of art. In an UK artist and critic, Matthew Collings reckons: "We want to share our feelings, (missing) but when there it is, it is often for all that better."

But with student art there is usually a technical reason.

You don't go to Michaelis to see the most interesting art. You go to see a polygraph set in a Catholic confession. You can deliver further into religiously with National Gallery or check out the nation's best art by Garth Erasmus to make "art" a fashion victim and fashion is another form of confession!

Which means perfect ways why David Water returned to be included.

force of buyers, a fashion designer. He is indeed and more rightly an artist. No longer a slave to the fashion industry, his clothes nevertheless have become sellable works of art.

And of late the Michaelis grads are an anxious, thinking bunch. They are a generation of fresh-faced artists who are concerned about the environment, issues of sexuality and grappling with hybrid identities and even authentic selfhood.

Artist Emma Coleman surprised that we are not satisfied with the life that is in us and in our beings. "We want to live an imaginary life in the minds of other people. For this reason we are anxious to shine. We work continuously to embellish and preserve this imaginary being and neglect the true one."

All right then, fudge up all those frustrated metre-maids who secretly want to be George Bush? Or is it the other way round?

I also slipped into the opening of a group exhibition at the fashion lifestyle gallery, So Now! Surprisingly it is owned by a former rugby hero, James Small who is successful by mixing the best art and fashion sense. Perhaps Small should send

GLAM:

1. Buying art instead of gym contracts.
2. Art exhibitions. Tonight (6pm) Nicolaas Maritz at Irma Stern.
3. Costume parties with a glam cause: MCQP at the Convention Centre.
4. TAC's Zackie Achmat nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

SO NOT GLAM:

1. Chainstore Christmas presents.
2. Dreary office art that is poster art.
3. Buying children toys for Christmas.
4. Barney Pityana criticising the TAC. Again.

protesting that Lamb Day (Lambeth) and Santa (Santa) for Delicious (Delicious) and Apple pie (Apple pie) and Cream Cheese (Cream Cheese).

Best you art shopping at Bruce Tait's Kitchen and Calligraphy at a Good Street this week for those who like to eat and drink in a serious way. It is an art show by Honey B. and the straight up and the serious art world.

• Michaelis School of Fine Art. Fine art show, 21-22 Orange Street, Cape Town. 10th December 2002. Monday-Friday 10am-5pm. www.michaelis.ac.za

• MCQP (George Riefel) at Convention Centre. www.mcqp.co.za

• UCT Irma Stern Museum, Cecil Road, Braamfontein. Until January 17. Art 100 exhibition 11-12:00. 11-12pm. www.100daysgallery.co.za

• Long Life at Ekisa-Na National Gallery until January 15. Daily 10am-5pm. For more information about the art and photography workshops in Khayelitsha.



'Decolonise the mind'

By Mario Pisarrá

This is a response to *The Luggage is Still Labeled: Blackness in South African Art*, a documentary film by Vuyile Vuyile and Julie McGee. It proceeds from the premise that the film strongly expresses the alienation, frustration and marginalisation that many black-South African artists feel. However it queries the implications and value, particularly within the current socio-political context, of theorising "blackness" as an oppositional force to "whiteness", and of essentialising racial identities instead of deconstructing them. It goes beyond a traditional history in that it attempts to offer partial solutions to fundamental problems articulated in the film, both explicitly and implicitly. Both in critiquing and in extending the frame not all ideas are fully explored, in some cases just raised. The strength of the film is in acting as a catalyst for further debate, and it is hoped that the paper complements that process.

Since most of the best-known texts on South African art have been written by whites, the film is a welcome antidote to this trend by privileging black voices. The film can also be viewed as empowering in that many of the artists interviewed speak from a history of marginalisation, and the film offers these artists a platform to address a wide audience. However it can also be argued that the film is profoundly depressing, a catalogue of grievances mirroring an unsatisfactory situation, and short on offering solutions other than mobilising "blackness" against "whiteness". Many of the problems raised have been with us for a long time, but as the series of opening quotes confirm, they have not been adequately addressed. That they remain high on the agenda highlights the chasm that divides any imagined "visual arts community".

Certainly there is enough anecdotal evidence to support perceptions that art in South Africa remains centred on white privilege, and that in the post-apartheid era the gatekeepers of art often act in ways that can at best be described as insensitive to 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 favourable reception that this "very clever and very entertaining" work received in the art media. White South Africans staged a mock auction centred 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 majority acquired rights not to be treated as the private 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 the trafficking of women and children. Yet we are expected to discuss the 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 elite to bridge that gap.

In contrast to Young's "very good hand-made art" that is "never where it is supposed to be" there is a work by an uncelebrated black artist that is perennially on view at the National Gallery. It sits anonymously in the courtyard alongside titled works by Eduardo Villa and Brett Murray. The artist died earlier this year and never saw his own "major" show, organised on his behalf while he was hospitalised. Neither his death nor his exhibition was mentioned in the media. How many readers can identify this underrated creative talent?

Against this background it is difficult to argue with Garth Erasmus when he says that "unfortunately the art world is still a white world as far as media, galleries and institutions go". However, exposing racism and Eurocentrism in this way, doing something about it altogether, more difficult. It is here that I depart from the path charted in the film.

It can and no doubt will be argued that I have not right as a "white" to critique strategies adopted by people branded "non-white" under apartheid. In these terms I enter the debate as an unwelcome outsider, but I enter regardless. I do this because I believe that all South Africans have a role to play in dealing with the legacy of having "inherited" racial identities that were not "natural" or "scientific", but which were developed for essentially political reasons. We are all part of this troubled history where individuals and communities with complex histories and multiple overlapping identities were assigned rigid taxonomies as "whites", "indians", "coloureds" and "Africans". Since whites

It is difficult to argue with Garth Erasmus when he says that 'unfortunately the art world is still a white world as far as media, galleries and institutions go'

for "Europeans" subjugated all other "races", black consciousness was developed as a form of political and cultural resistance to mobilise all disenfranchised communities under one common identity, ie as "black".

Today the situation has and has not changed. We have universal franchise, a "black government" at all levels, as well as official policies and legislation promoting black economic empowerment, affirmative action and cultural diversity. Unlike Jewelina I am correct when she says that "apartheid is not going to fly out the window after nine years". Clearly the death and pace of transformation across all sectors of society has proven to be an uneven, even elusive process. But it cannot be denied that the rules have changed.

Despite these new rules, the picture that emerges from the film is that visual art in South Africa is an unconstructed, apartheid construct. Why do I feel that the picture is misleading?

Documentary filmmaker Vuyile Vuyile and Julie McGee, who directed the film 'The Luggage is Still Labeled: Blackness in South African Art'



We need to undertake a comprehensive, historical analysis of the visual arts sector that does not only reflect on the post-1994 situation

Left: Nkomo Komo, *White (1994)*, 100x100cm, oil on canvas.
Right: Gert Agho, *Unsettled (1994)*, 100x100cm, oil on canvas.

and less than honest, when I am myself critical of our leading institutions? What makes me stick my neck out to contest this view, and in so doing set myself up to be branded a reactionary? Why take this risk when I have long distanced myself politically from "whiteness" and exist on the margins of the art world?

I think I do this primarily because I have a historical perspective of South African art going back to the mid-1970s, and when I watch the film it frustrates me because, apart from some "new" faces, I feel like it could have been made in the 1990s. I agree with the central thrust that "our" institutions are not yet "ours" in the sense that these bodies do not yet adequately represent the interests of all South Africans. But I am uncomfortable with the lack of acknowledgement of any shifts at all, and by what appears to me to be a shallow vision of transformation.

If we accept that historically visual art has been an elitist practice that has privileged white participation, then it is fairly logical that, bar advocating "ethnic cleansing", "whites", if not necessarily "whiteness", would retain a disproportionately high level of visibility today. If we accept that somewhat uncomfortable but pragmatic premise, then the increasingly high visibility of black artists in the contemporary environment does represent some progress. That this has been achieved in spite of uneven playing fields⁹ is perhaps the most promising sign of change. Consequently I'm extremely uncomfortable being spoken for by Lloyd Pollock when he says that: "The norm in our collective minds as white South Africans is that the artist is a white artist." Pollock's views may represent more than his own, but he is given too much space in the film, other than being used as a foil for Thembekile Goniwe's argument that "speaking black" is a means to "unveil the ignorance of whiteness".

I single out the visibility of black artists conscious that in other areas black artists and professionals are barely visible: as students at university, as lecturers, as critics, as historians, as curators, as gallery owners, and as heads of our leading institutions: it is, as I have said, an uneven process, but we have at

least begun to redefine the image of the South African artist.

I would argue that we need to undertake a comprehensive, historical analysis of the visual arts sector that does not only reflect on the post-1994 situation but which critically compares it to at least 10 years preceding the new dispensation. We need statistics and analysis to highlight the extent to which profiles of art students, art teachers and lecturers, artists, curators, critics, art historians, publishers, as well as institutional heads and boards, are changing. We need to look critically at changes in curricula and teaching methodologies as well as the cultural orientation and policies and programmes of institutions, and the role and practice of commercial galleries, the media and artists' organisations. We also need to look at public commissions, awards, grants, sponsorship and funding. We need to identify where changes have not occurred, as well as where the situation may even have regressed. When we detect evidence of "positive" change we should situate it on a sliding scale between "cosmetic" and "real" change, as a way of unveiling assumptions and expectations. By doing all of this we can really begin to debate the nature and extent of transformation, not simply as an academic exercise, but in order to identify priorities, set goals and chart a way forward. We need to undergo such a process because without a full and informed picture we will continue to argue on the basis of perceptions and assumptions, and our approach to transformation will continue to be piecemeal. Most critically we need to do this because we do not have a consensus on the meaning of transformation.

Personally I found the film's contribution to the transformation debate simplistic. By failing to acknowledge any change, it omitted engaging with the nature and extent of transformation as it is currently manifest, faults and all. By polarising "blackness" and "whiteness" it sends a crude message that transformation is synonymous with "more blackness", which I suspect is how many people see it. Increasing the visibility of blackness is an essential part of transformation but is this all we need to do to "democratise" the visual arts? Is the question of power today only about black and white? And does "blackness" today carry the same currency it did pre-1994, or do a number of critical factors mediate perceptions of it more starkly than they did before?¹⁰

Within the context of the anti-apartheid struggle issues of class, gender and ethnicity were often regarded as divisive and took a back seat.¹¹ But white minority rule is no longer a political threat, even if its ghost still haunts us. The space is opening up

for new alliances and new identities to take shape, unless apartheid has marked us so profoundly that our identities will always be reduced to colour.

It needs to be noted that trying to deduce from the film its central arguments about the value of theorising blackness today is not entirely easy. There is a deliberate avoidance of narrative and a privileging of multiple voices, compounded by a reluctance to allow individual voices to develop substantial arguments. There is a preference for juxtaposing sound bites both as a form of continuity and as contrast. Sometimes the content of individual inputs becomes ambiguous due to dislocation from the original context.¹² Headings are used to "order" the information, but come over as relatively arbitrary and do not suggest a coherent and comprehensive framework or analysis.¹³ Thus what one hears or reads into the film as a whole is sometimes contradicted by details, especially on repeated viewing. Consequently some may conclude that the film presents a multi-faceted picture of blackness, but my overall impression is that it essentialises blackness by failing to interrogate its interface with critical factors that mediate identity beyond colour.

On the whole the film appears to sustain the pre-democracy argument for ignoring or downplaying "divisive" issues. The "dominant force" is identified by Goniwe, Mqineni Pié Sobopha and Zayd Minty as "whiteness", and all three appear convinced that rallying around "blackness" is the way forward in the present context. The need to exclude whites from artists' organisations in the past is elucidated by Lionel Davis in relation to the Vokalis Arts Collective, and Minty provides a complementary argument for the present with his rationale for the BLAC Arts Collective. Whether Davis still holds this exclusive position is not made clear. One could be forgiven for wondering if, given signif-

icantly as between African/Zulu and "Indian" in KwaZulu-Natal, not forgetting the "new xenophobia" that is often directed at black/Africans by black/South Africans. But these instances of "racism" cannot be adequately explained in terms of colour without also considering issues of class and culture. Addressing these conflicts is arguably more important today than it was when apartheid rule demanded the widest political alliance to defeat it. Do the new generation of black consciousness ideologues propose to sweep these conflicts, which impact in subtle ways on the visual arts, under the carpet? Do they think that demonising "whiteness" will adequately solve these problems by creating "unity" for "blacks"? Or should we be deconstructing race and demonising prejudice?

The other critical mediating factor is gender. We have a very particular demographic configuration in the visual arts. Women are well represented, unless they are black. As Searle puts it: "You can count on your one hand how many women of colour there are in South Africa, in a contemporary sense." In contrast black women are dominant in the spheres of cultural production most commonly designated as crafts.¹⁶ Arguably things looked brighter pre-1994 for gallery-oriented black women artists. Helen Sebidi received a very high level of coverage, possibly higher than any other South African artist, but today she seldom features in any major surveys.¹⁷ Similarly Nora Mabasa and Bongzi Dhlomo received a lot of attention pre-1994, but this level of critical interest has not been sustained. In the Western Cape Sophie Peters, Tshidi Sefako and Matsababala Mkhonto were all beginning to attract attention, but where are they today?

Noticably the black women who feature in the film, namely Thembekile Goniwe, Ngcobo, Jawahiri and Searle, have only relatively recently begun to make names for themselves as



cant class and cultural differences, the chasm separating Davis and Minty's respective experiences of blackness is not greater than the common ground between them, but "blackness" as a political agenda set against "whiteness" does not allow for such interrogation of difference.

Minty makes the sole reference to class, when he says that it "is becoming important these days", but this is a side remark and is not picked up again in the film. Similarly Berni Searle and Gabalele Ngcobo flag gender, but there is little consideration of how being a woman impacts on the dominant image of the black artist as male. Aspects of culture and ethnicity are flagged by Searle and Roderick Sauls with regard to "coloured", but not really explored.¹⁴ Culture and ethnicity also surface with Ngcobo and Sobopha. Interestingly they rightly castigate whites for a lack of interest in learning "their" languages, but how many of the "blacks" in the film are also guilty of not speaking Zulu and Xhosa? Is this less of a problem?

Simplistically polarising black and white fails to capture the texture of South African cultural politics today.¹⁵ It is also misleading in that racism is not always a black-white phenomenon. Apartheid does provide some clues to understanding conflict in the Western Cape between brown/coloured and black/Xhosa, as

artists. As a small marker of change it can be observed that all of them are beneficiaries of university education, unlike Sebidi, Mabasa, Dhlomo,¹⁸ Peters, Sefako and Mkhonto. Whether this means that the "new generation" stands a better chance of sustaining their careers than their predecessors remains to be seen. Another shift that can be observed is that the two most visible black women artists today, namely Searle and Tracey Rose, were both classified "coloured". Is there any significance in the fact that they do not come from the bottom of the apartheid hierarchy? Is it really coincidental, or does it signal a subtle shift in class that is more in tune with the "cosmopolitan" values of the so-called international art community? Clearly the situation facing black women artists requires particular investigation that a uniform approach to blackness fails to provide.¹⁹

In highlighting class, culture and gender it has been my aim to argue that within the contemporary South African context it is not only colour that is critically important. Privileging colour at the expense of these other factors may create one model of equity, but it will contribute towards defining new inequalities.

Personal agency is also important. To what extent can individuals contribute towards developing a fair dispensation without being forever judged by their birth certificates? Certainly we all

Minty's large, 100x100cm, oil on canvas, 1994, is a response to the film's central theme of class and race.

need to critically address our baggage so that we do not unconsciously perpetuate the inequities of the past and the inequalities of the present. But surely all human beings possess the potential to develop as conscious individuals with integrity? Surely at the end of a day it is the values embodied in the actions of individuals that make a difference?

The dilemma we face today is how do we proactively engage with our burdensome inheritances of racism and inequality without perpetuating the apartheid mindset that has framed our perceptions of the world? If we really believe that apartheid was wrong to divide people according to perceptions of racial difference, how do we move beyond the paradigms we have inherited? Will reinforcing "black" and "white" as primary identi-



Perhaps the answer is partially articulated by Tyrone Appollis when he says 'Don't call me coloured, I'm African'

Left: Mignola, The Kingdom, 2002, mixed media, 201 x 150 cm
Right: Appollis, No More Coloured, 2004, 200 x 150 cm, mixed media and paper

ties, without examining how "race" is socially and politically constructed, do any more than consolidate apartheid's legacy, by entrenching an apparently essentialist difference?

The challenge, to borrow Ngugi's phrase, is to "decolonise our minds". To develop a conceptual framework that enables us to transcend racial categories. Colour-blindness is not an option – we cannot ignore colour because it is a carrier of power relations that in many instances remain intact, but we do need to develop a more textured approach to colour that does not ascribe absolute values to black and white. We do need to recognise that class, gender, sexual orientation, age and even that troublesome notion, "culture" are all significant markers of identity and power. But we also need to recognise the potency of personal agency in giving character to these elements.

Perhaps the answer is partially articulated by Tyrone Appollis when he says "Don't call me coloured, I'm African". Unlike blackness, Africanness has the potential to become fully inclusive.¹¹ Promoting an inclusive African identity appeared to be on the agenda early in Thabo Mbeki's presidency¹², but he sends mixed signals as to whether "non-blacks" are part of his vision.¹³ Perhaps more progress would have been made in developing a framework for an inclusive new identity if Mbeki were to give a platform to someone like academic Mahmood Mamman who has challenged us to "reconsider the colonial

legacy that each of us is a native or a settler."¹⁴

An inclusive Africanness would need to take into account the complex histories of migration that define particular identities¹⁵, whilst simultaneously affirming a primary commitment to developing the continent as a whole. The post-independence experiences of African countries are uneven. But most of us living on this continent are compromised by virtue of our national economies being enslaved by the so-called "developed" world that is centred on the West. Therefore we share a common interest in needing to redress this imbalance. An inclusive Africanness does not and cannot mean ignoring racism. Engaging with Africa and its challenges will of necessity entail engaging with racism. However acknowledging our power to

construct an inclusive and empowering African identity is one way of moving forward, because it is in recognising that individuals have some power in negotiating the character of their "blackness" or "whiteness" that we are able to transcend racism.

For us as artists and people working in the arts engaging with Africanness means more than "Africanising" our imagery by incorporating superficial symbols such as masks and patterns. It means making a greater effort to learn about the arts of this continent, from the earliest times to the present. It means prioritising learning about African histories and learning African languages.¹⁶ Most critically it means putting our resources into more cultural exchange with African countries.

The question as to how we re-centre our art world on Africa is not an easy one, particularly since the dominant paradigm of the "international" art world locates the entire Third World as peripheral, and many of us appear to accept this. Thus when we are invited to participate in the big showcases of art we become grateful recipients of patronage, or worse still beggars and opportunists.¹⁷ To what extent do we perpetuate this uneven relationship every time we accept? Are we willing to even try and conceptualise an alternative international model, and to work out ways to resource it? How many of us are able to see exhibiting in Kassel as less important than participating in an artists' workshop in Kigali or Kinshasa, let alone in Khayelitsha?

Perhaps even more than the "aesthetics" of transformation proposed earlier in this paper, the extent to which we engage in debate about re-centering our world will demonstrate our real commitment to fundamental change. Colour is important, but unless it is situated within a broader transformation agenda, will it really make a difference?

Mario Pisarra is an arts writer and former director of the Community Arts Project in Cape Town



Footnote:
1 John Powell, "Ed Young 'White Gender'", in *Art South Africa* 114, 2003
2 See Colin Richards, "Marking the White Cube", in *www.artsouthafrica.co.za*, June 2003
3 Powell op cit
4 Timothy Matheba (1989-2002), his *Missile of the Universe* exhibition was organised by Luthi Mkhulu at Smeetsmore Studios in April
5 All quotes, unless otherwise stated, are from the film
6 As Bongi Sapiro puts it: "Politically it was important to use the majority vote (apartheid) and it was on the basis of colour"
7 Throughout this paper I use "we" and "our" in an inclusive sense, regardless that the "we" I refer to is not necessarily a clearly defined one. I do this because I believe that we all have a role to play in transformation and need to accept our responsibility to contribute to the process
8 I draw a distinction here between the designation of identity that is imposed or "deceptively" "ascribed" perceptions of colour, and the conscious knowledge that all too often comes with that colour
9 I do not want the suggestion that that art continues to be a subject denied to the majority of South Africans at school level
10 Given the nature of this paper as a response to a particular framing of "blackness" I have not engaged with how "whiteness" is mediated in South African art. Suffice to note here that I would be useful for this issue to be explored
11 I refer here to both the competing strands of neo-racism and black consciousness here. For the ANC and its allies, inclusion via the political vehicle for addressing race issues was supposed to be the "second stage" that would follow "national liberation" in socialist class consciousness organisations did not develop a concern but an accident. Black ethnicity was merely viewed as reactionary if it played into apartheid's hands. Senior activists now in light need to reassess on the agenda
12 For example, when Dabane Ngobane asks "You have forgotten you are black, how might you be a transformer?" in *the-impresario* newspaper's forum on being negated a "black woman artist" refers to her as a "South African artist" or a site saying that one's experience as a black, and as a woman, informs one's work (editorial of the journal) When Sapiro asks for "teaching rooted in self-reliance people started to believe they were coloured or they were Indian", is she saying that all these work identities are political constructs, which should be rejected along with other apartheid categories, or is she saying that "coloured" and "Indian" should pre-emptively be "black"?
13 The passages are "Black, Loyal", "Black, Slave", "Black, Central", "The Arts Education", "Community Arts Project" (http://www.mamman.com/), "Post-apartheid" (http://www.mamman.com/), "The Arts Education", "South African National Gallery", and "Reconsideration"
14 Sapiro notes that "we need to look at black and coloured and other"

15 Not everyone who crossed the 32000 to having white ancestors, cross the the (apartheid) old colour, when the SANC is accountable to, consists of 11 members of which seven, including the CEO, are black. How many of the members of "unit and blackness" would want to know more about the profiles of these individuals?
16 Here again from the fact that greater efforts have been made to master rights, the only complaint seems to be that today their work, various other disciplines in an "art" context, is too often, if not always, attributed to individuals rather than being presented as "black" art.
17 Mamman also lectures briefly in the film, but is not named and unnamed
18 Dabane is an excellent writer, although her degree level through correspondence
19 In contrast Mambo Sapiro and Sue Williamson have suffered their reading status since the 1980s, as have William Kattigwa and David Ndlovu. All the observations of who constitutes a reading artist are based on the historical, ongoing or research of an artist with, particularly that "Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion in Writing in South African Art"
20 Fred Apter, the importance of religion in potentially creating communities is also increasingly important in South African culture politics
21 I use this fully aware that for some, "black" and "African" are synonymous. For example Sapiro herself writes when he says that "there is a lot of African writers dealing with African issues". It is unfortunate that the film does not investigate the overlap between "African" and "black"
22 I refer particularly to Professor Mambo Sapiro's "South African" speech and the "black" speech, "reconsideration" to participants of all participants who took up this theme
23 See W.M. Dabane, "Black consciousness – the what doesn't" where Mbeki's BC in effect is discredited and where there is clear evidence of the convergence between "African" and "black" – Fred Apter, Helen Suzman Foundation, December 2002 (<http://www.helen.suzmanfoundation.com/>)
24 M Mamman, "Beyond Gender and Nation as Political Ideology: Decolonising the Political Legacy of Colonialism", in Dabane Sapiro (ed), *The South African Intellectual and Liberation Movements in Africa 1940-1990*, (Pretoria, 2001), 127
25 Preoccupying with the Sapiro and the demography of the post-apartheid situation
26 Just as it is often argued that "whiteness" is an epistemological frame against which "others" are measured, so too with language where it is commonly assumed that English is a better medium for communication. The assumption here is that white is an inherent and positive value, not only for non-English first language speakers, but also in creating complexities and progress in English first language speakers who themselves feel to struggle the rest of the world or their own world.
27 There is a growing concern being voiced by Raymond Sapiro's challenge: "If we are not doing anything about the South as the society of the world, it is the art of the world, it is the art of the world, it is the art of the world" in "The Art of Race: How to Conceive a Concept of Non-racism" in *They Say* 194-2002, vol 10-4

Right: Sapiro, A Black Woman, 1999, mixed media, 200 x 150 cm

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 Bierinckx is Dutch and a "she". Mr Cis Bierinckx is Belgian and a "he".

Thank you for pointing out the error.

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
Date received: November 5

Bravo to Veronique for pointing out that the emperor's 'new' clothes are worn somewhat thin! I have been feeling for some time now that conceptual art is rapidly becoming restrictive orthodoxy, somewhat in the line of Abstract Expressionism in the late 50s, and that artists feel compelled to turn to installations and conceptual exhibitions to warrant notice from the (international and national) art establishment. Don't get me wrong - I am well aware that we have some absolutely first class conceptualists here.

Alan Alborough's clean, lucid mind-mazes and Willem Boshoff's intelligent exploration of the subtle textures of textuality beat the pants off any international conceptualists that I can think of. What rankle are the endless installations that tickle the mind momentarily but leave the viewer feeling empty, drained and impoverished.

I want to weep when really good artists forfeit their mŽtier for yet another fleeting, clever installation. I miss the earthiness, sensuality and tactility of Jeremy Wafer's earlier sculptures. I miss Penny Siopis' nauseous excess and glut. I miss diversity, I miss humour and poetry, and above all, I miss visual stimulation. I am also horrified at the glib and arrogant disregard for the majority of our population, who cannot possibly feel anything but baffled and diminished by the blatant and unapologetic elitism of most contemporary shows. Let them eat mindgames!

From: Mya Lion
Subject: Women artists
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 far, far better artists. It seems to me that some male artists are showing audacity not artistry and are often breastfed by adoring art critics still held in an unconscious ideal that men's art is better than women's art. I know I'm making a blanket statement but it makes me mad when I see male artists boozed up and playing 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 brothers have been receiving? While I'm up here on the soapbox, don't you all think it's time we as artists 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' instead 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, but I will add that it probably is a field with more gender equity than most.

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 Nontsikelelo 'Lolo' Veleko having an exhibition at the JAG? Veleko was recently a nominee for the MTN New Contemporaries award. Without getting into the politics of inclusion (ja right) let me just say that Veleko's work stood out as unaccomplished and unrefined in the presence of the other artist's work on the show (Thando Mama, Alison Kearney, Matthew Hindley and Hannes Olivier).

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, "paints a more secretive portrait 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 at least claim having been a bonifide anarchist and vandal). Last thought: how alluring is the promise of hip hop music, breakdancing, real graffiti performances, drinks and snacks on the opening night? Well, I think it's another case of 'what a lovely frame'.

From: Zayd Minty
Subject: October 15 editorial
Date received: October 30

Regarding the editorial on ArtThrob of October 2003, I had no idea Ed Young's piece was a "hoax" - 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. Realising this by no means dilutes its impact. As Ivor Powell carefully pointed out in his review in *Art South Africa*, "What is important to understand here is that the "acquisition" [his emphasis] is merely one layer of possible significance within the work, and if the work is to continue to operate in the space of possibility and virtuality (which surely it must in order to continue to reverberate) then fact is the enemy." As Ed himself disclosed to me, his *Bruce Gordon* work shares something with Vuyisa Nyamende continuous red line (painted across the building facades of a couple of hundred metres of Long Street), and Nyamende's collaboration with Cameron Platter entitled *Stolen Painting*. "The idea was to use the media as a vehicle for artistic production and a platform for bringing art of an uncomfortable conceptual nature to the attention of the general public," he said. "These works aim at getting large amounts of press coverage as the main medium of the work." One cannot argue that he hasn't achieved this with consummate skill. Sean

From: Rupert England
Subject: Missed the show, missed the point
Date received: October 24

The following lengthy comment was received from Rupert England in PDF format. The document has been secured and its contents cannot be transferred. [Download the PDF](#) to read Rupert England's letter. It is a response to Sean O'Toole's review of the show 'art as usual', published in our October issue at www.artthrob.co.za/03oct/reviews/jag.html

What follows is Sean O'Toole 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/03july/listings_gautang_jag.html. It was left to the curator to supply further text updates, which he did not.
2. Margot Saffer, a participant on the 24.7 residency, provided a comprehensive review of the project's process-orientated workings in the September issue of ArtThrob, under the title 'Work in progress'. www.artthrob.co.za/03oct/reviews/jag.html
3. My review, 'Monkeys masquerading as guerrillas' was a review of the closing exhibition, which was titled 'art as usual'.

To linger any longer on this show would be to merit it with far more than it deserves. As to the tenor and scope of your lengthy diatribe, your elaborate unmasking of this Johnny-come-lately proved fascinating reading. In fact I immediately set about disguising my feet of clay. Your angry letter has however left me wondering about a few things, particularly the imprecision of words. This prompted me to ascertain the meaning of a few of these words, the definitions of which I quote for your edification:

artiste: a skilled public performer, especially a musical or theatrical entertainer - like a circus clown; **gorilla:** an anthropoid ape of western equatorial Africa that is related to the chimpanzee but less upright and much larger; **guerrilla:** a member of a small independent fighting force which engages in sabotage, unexpected assaults, etc

usually with a political objective; **proxy**: a deputy authorised to act as a substitute for another; **renegade**: a person who deserts and betrays an organisation, country, or set of principles.

Sean

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/brettkebble3.html

Ours is the second piece in: www.sundaytimes.co.za/2003/10/05/arts/ane03.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 Peter 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.

[SUBMIT FEEDBACK](#)

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EDITIONS
FOR ARTTHROB

ARTS / 13

Dada and development in Cape Town

A new Section 21 company, the Cape Africa Platform, has begun to plan for an international-scale art event with an economic logic that is very sound, writes Zachary Yorke



It is a very simple idea, but it is a very bold one. The Cape Africa Platform, a new Section 21 company, has begun to plan for an international-scale art event with an economic logic that is very sound, writes Zachary Yorke. The idea is to create a platform for artists and galleries to showcase their work in Cape Town, South Africa. This is a significant step towards making Cape Town a more prominent art hub in Africa.

A new Section 21 company, the Cape Africa Platform, has begun to plan for an international-scale art event with an economic logic that is very sound, writes Zachary Yorke. The platform aims to attract international artists and galleries to Cape Town, creating a vibrant art scene. This initiative is seen as a key factor in the city's economic development and cultural growth.

6 Criticism is crucial for success, but cynicism is damaging. The difference is that cynicism is easy, uncritical, trendy.



Ed Young

My year as meat

by Ed Young

Jesus Christ. What a year... a roller coaster ride that makes *Charlie's Angels* look like a Walt Disney production. 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 dance floor: "Ha... Finally a young artist for the Young Artist Award".

There has been a dramatic shift and focus on Contemporary Art production in South Africa over the last year, which is a good thing. Individuals involved in the art world seem to have finally woken up to what it is that is supposed to be Contemporary Art practice. But will it last? I have already been detecting some anti-contemporary art sentiments as the year draws to an end. And I don't mean contemporary as in Michael Stevenson Contemporary. A bit too '97. But let us pause for a moment in reverie at what it was that actually pushed the contemporary shift.

Art South Africa, the local arts magazine published by Bell-Roberts Publishing, has made it through the year despite the denouncing remarks by countless cynics. It has proven to be one of the most important platforms for contemporary practice and debate. In my opinion it reached an all time high with that issue with the matchstick on the cover [Vol.01 Issue 03]. The last two issues were a bit less edgy and slightly more conservative, with the exception of the articles on Moshekwa Langa and Stephen Cohen.

We cannot afford to move 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 and is easily accessed by international curators who jet in and take our tapes and are then never heard 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 YDEsire 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/ydesire.html)

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

In many respects the year kicked off with YDEsire, 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 Clark installed a skate ramp with a couple of hot, young, sweaty, half-naked teenage boys doin' their thang. Paul Edmunds was spotted slightly to the left of the ramp.

Sanell Aggenbach made a floating bed that looked more like a collaboration between Brett Murray and Doreen Southwood. A general hit amongst the audience was Jean Brundrit and Dorothee Kreutzveldt's synchronised two-channel video of girl singers against a background of a tropical island. I think the piece was about love. Later in the evening the exhibition areas were closed down and thousands bounced to David West spinning Nirvana's *Smells like Teen Spirit*.

More than 7,000 people attended this year's event. This figure marks Softserve's biggest success. But, as in the case of the previous Softserves, the curatorial judgements just weren't exactly there. There were too many works, not enough quality control and eventually rooms cluttered with artworks that later became objects on which to place one's empty beer cans. Andrew Putter reassured me that Softserve

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 lunchtime lecture at Michaelis where I found my quote of the year: "The art world (he pauses and stares into the distance) is a place of green pastures. It is a happy, comfortable place". I did not exactly understand what he meant and thought that maybe he was just jet-lagged. We all know 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 ABSA 'Atelier' entry form, to use as my artwork for the competition. He stood me up though. I went to his hotel 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 artwork known as *Bruce Gordon*, and his wife Sue Williamson. We had a great time. Halfway through press week my foot broke in three places. The doctor said 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 Maurizio Cattelan hung out at night and I really wanted an interview with him. At about 2a.m., my foot started breaking. I had to leave because the pain was intolerable. I got a text message the next morning from Bauman that read: "Good Morning! I was at fifteen-man party last night. Cattelan was there. Bye". I wanted to cry.

Andrew bought me some crutches and we pushed through the rest of the forty-two degrees and humid press week. Sue Williamson got us into the 'Fault Lines' lunch with Salah Hassan and Okwui Enwezor. We arranged to meet with them for an interview and Salah 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 Santiago Sierra. We were able to put together an insightful dialogue pertaining to the politics of the biennale vis-à-vis the concerns of the artists. It's just a pity that 'Africa 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 Puta* [the writer's emphasis]. *Puta* was founded by myself, Michaelis theory lecturer Andrew Lamprecht, and young artist Cameron Platter. 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.

Puta is a de-localised system that changes with every project. Andrew Lamprecht recently gave a lecture on *Gallerie Puta* 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 infiltrate as a young artist. The students found the lecture extremely inspiring and this led to independent exhibitions such as *DIY*, which was held at the MuseumAfrica in the Newtown Cultural Precinct in Johannesburg.

Puta's first exhibition, in Cape Town, was an enormous success. Malcolm Payne contributed a memorable work titled *Colin Richards-Red-Slim Medium: R. Butt*, a prominent 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 gallerist's anus and worn for at least one hour during the exhibition. The object was accompanied by a legal document that had to be signed by the gallerist and two witnesses.

(See Tracy Murinik's review: www.artthrob.co.za/03june/reviews/gallerieputa.html)

Puta later went to the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) disguised as an artwork of mine. This event formed part of Christian Nerf's 24/7 residency programme, which included artist such as Barend de Wet, Kathryn Smith, and Kim Lieberman. The residency was brilliant. Nerf set up a system by which all the participants could spend 24 hours at the JAG and leave their residue or what Nerf calls 'evidence'. This evidence was then

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. In a recent fisting session on ArtThrob, Maart and Nerf had it out about 24/7 turning sour. 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.artthrob.co.za/03oct/news/24_7.html)

Cape Town is no different. Large parts of the Cape Town art world are extremely apathetic 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 Yudeiman and Arlene Amaler-Raviv? 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. Why 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 Dairy and I am Lisa Brice".

Cheers!

2 SUBMIT REVIEW

SL100/artists

edward young, 24

Everyone loves a hustler, but nobody entirely trusts one. Evasive yet vulnerable, the artist-hustler skulchers around the edges of pop culture. Think of Jean-Michel Basquiat positioning his graffiti outside restaurants visited by the art elite. Think of Andy Warhol. Think of Damien Hirst. Hey, what was it genius without attitude and gain?

Cape Town-based master of fine arts (MFA) student Edward Young - whose art has been exhibited extensively locally and in Paris - is the perfect combination of gifted autodidact and compulsive self-promoter. Slouching through his interview with the curly strands of a hang-over rock star he describes his average day as: 'Wake up late, try put the cereal together, go out and party.'

His art is equally incoherent. While others slave away in their studios, Ed has the insolence to auction off a bar owner as an artwork. Only to secure R52 000 from the buyer, a place in the South African National Gallery's illustrious permanent collection and more media attention than most artists get in a career of working. But don't let the dark circles under his eyes fool you. Ed has real talent. He's scored distinctions at university and garnered numerous awards and plenty of critical acclaim. His next piece? The orchestra and the waiters that would normally be present at an exhibition opening. Yes, that's without the art. Well kind of. See Ed's art isn't just a hustle. It's about hustling. It's about showing up and being in the face of the trapping and the tribulations of the art world. Pretty damn crazy.



WHILE OTHERS SLAVE AWAY IN THEIR STUDIOS, ED HAS THE INSOLENCE TO AUCTION OFF A BAR OWNER AS AN ARTWORK.

022

Conceptual duo at Bell Roberts: Andrew Lamprecht and Ed Young

by Sue Williamson

**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? Artist/theorist 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, photocopied in black and white, plus some other small illustrations. I thought I recognised 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 photostat 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 x of this kind to which we never expect to have an answer."

Andrew Lamprecht
David Hilbert
Xerograph
3 cm x 2.8 cm



Bartenders at 'Muse'

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

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 knows 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.

Bell Roberts Art Gallery, 199 Loop Street, Cape Town
Tel: 021 422 1100
Fax: 021 423 3125
Email: suzette@bell-roberts.com
Website: www.bell-roberts.com
Hours: Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5pm, Sat 10am - 1pm

🚩 SUBMIT REVIEW

Ed makes us all feel fidgety again...

Anél Powell

Resident conceptual artist, Ed Young, is at it again. Pushing the boundaries of art is what this 20-something Michaelis artist does best.

Earlier this year Young's exhibition of Bruce Gordon, former journalist and manager of Long Street's Joburg bar, forced viewers to question the meaning of art.

Gordon was auctioned off, as a piece of art, and sold to art curator Suzy Bell. She then donated the "piece" to the South African National Gallery. Gordon even had his acquisition barcode, SANG 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 Loop Street. This time, he chose the String Quartet, Muse, as his artistic focus.

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

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 wafted around the luminous gallery, quaffing Pongracz sparkling wine and nibbling on oysters, one guest kindly informed me that the real art was "through there".

I entered the curtained room which she had pointed out, only to find that this was the VIP lounge. More wine and seafood. But the actual artwork was, well, the Muse quartet. Which led me to, borrowing from the title of Young's exhibition, muse 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.



■ Artist Ed Young, whose latest exhibition, "Muse" was at the Bell-Roberts for one night only.



FROM CLASSICAL TO JAZZ: From the left, Larah Eksteen, Annemi van der Merwe, Carol Schutz and Olivia van Gass before a performances at the Cape Grace Hotel. They have two guises — Muse and the more funky Muse Amplified. Picture: TERRY SHEAN

Girl group have string of successes

GILL MOODIE

A SASSY all-girl string quartet is taking Cape Town by storm — and even became the centrepiece of an art exhibition this week.

Muse, who play classical pieces and their own fusion of Latino, hip-hop and house, have played at high-profile events such as Cape Town Fashion Week and the opening of the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

But they have also taken their amplified original work into pubs

and clubs — and this week they became a work of art. Artist Ed Young, who teaches part-time at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, said the idea was to take the elements that usually accompany an exhibition opening — and make them the exhibition.

Also part of the once-off exhibition held at the Bell-Roberts Contemporary Art Gallery in town this week were the bar tenders and bouncers — who even "bounced" a friend of Young's from the gallery.

"It's ready-made art," said Young. "These are things that are always present at exhibitions."

Meanwhile, Muse — made up of Larah Eksteen, Annemi van der Merwe, Carol Schutz and Olivia van Gass — are hoping to graduate from being live performers to making a CD.

The four started out as a traditional classical quartet three years ago after Schutz put up an advert at the University of Cape Town's music school.

At the end of last year, they came up with Muse Amplified, for which they perform their own amplified music.

As Muse Amplified, they have played at hip venues such as the Ivory Room club in the city and at

a massive house party at Rhodes Memorial.

They also play every Wednesday evening at the trendy Basculle bar at the Cape Grace Hotel.

Their performance style is unusual in that they perform standing and without sheet music.

"We've even played to jazz fans at Hanover Street and everyone was dancing along with one of the violinists," said Schutz, who has a part-time job at a market research institute.

"I don't think a quartet has done that before."

Van Gass, a postgraduate violin student at the University of

Cape Town, said: "The amplified music is dance-style music, but we still try to incorporate the beauty of the classical instruments."

Eksteen is a music teacher at a Cape Town school, and Van der Merwe plays part-time for the Cape Town Philharmonic.

Young, who made the news when he sold bar owner Bruce Gordon in December for R52 000 and put him on exhibition at the South African National Gallery, said: "They're really vibrant young women performing this incredible pop fusion... They've taken Cape Town by the horns."

MAAR IS DIT KUNS?



'n Strykkwartet het kunsliefhebbers Donderdagaand laat koprap toe dié muslekgroep as kuns aangebied is in die Bell-Roberts-kunssaal. Die kunstenaar Ed Young het die Muse-strykkwartet en vier kelnerinne wat drankies aan gaste bedien het, as "kuns" uitgestal. Volgens Young was die gaste ook binne die konteks van die kunssaal "kuns".

Foto: EBRAHIM PREGNOLATO

Jan Rap en sy maat kan 'kunswerk' word

YVONNE BEYERS

KAAPSTAD – Elke Jan Rap en sy maat kan vanaand hier "kuns" word op die kunstenaar Ed Young se jongste opspraakwekkende uitstalling wat mense in kunstkringe aan die praat het.

Besoekers aan die uitstalling in die Bell-Roberts-kunssaal sal as 't ware binne die konteks van die gallery "deel word" van die kunswerk.

Young, wat vroeër bekendheid verwerf het nadat hy mnr. Bruce Gordon, eienaar van 'n kroeg in Langstraat, as 'n kunswerk verkoop het, het gister gesê sy jongste kunswerk sal net vanaand uitgestal word.

Die werk, wat as *Muse* bekend staan, bestaan uit die strykkwartet wat agtergrondmusiek verskaf het tydens Young se tentoonstelling van Gordon in die Suid-Afrikaanse

Nasionale Kunsmuseum vroeër vanjaar.

"Die strykkwartet het slegs agtergrondmusiek verskaf tydens my vorige uitstalling.

"Die keer is die strykkwartet en die vier kelnerinne wat die gaste laas bedien het, egter self die kunswerk.

"Dit wat gewoonlik by 'n uitstalling teenwoordig is maar nie deel daarvan is nie, gaan tydens *Muse*

die kunswerk wees."

Young het gesê hy self, asook die besoekers aan die uitstalling, vorm ook deel van die kunswerk.

"Dit is eintlik die konsep wat kuns is, maar besoekers kan seker maar met my en die deelnemers aan die uitstalling onderhandel as hulle 'n deel van die uitstalling wil koop," het Young bygevoeg.

Me. Suzette Bell-Roberts, eienaar van die Bell-Roberts-kunssaal, het

gesê gaste gaan dalk sukkel om die uitstalling te verstaan.

"Ons wil egter kontemporêre baanbrekerswerk uitstal en hou daarvan om die kunssaal lewendig te hou met werk soos dié," het Bell-Roberts gesê.

Belangstellendes kan die uitstalling vanaand om sesuur in die Bell-Roberts-kunssaal by Loopstraat 196 besoek.

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AUGUST 27 - SEPTEMBER 14

Wednesday, 27 August



"Mercury Roberts" is second from the left at the printmaking conference

The 3rd Impact International Printmaking Conference, hosted by the Michaelis School of Fine Art in co-operation 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 while still a child. Hanging in his bedroom, it obviously had a deep affect on him as he demonstrated by showing several images and clips in which a cat appears in his work. The talk is lively and anecdotal and sets a fine tone for the rest of the conference.



The address is followed by the opening of an retrospective exhibition of William's printmaking output at the Michaelis Gallery. Many international visitors are in town 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

Andrew Lamorech's xeroxed images for "Alterior" can be seen on the extreme left

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 Rauchenberg's litho showing a crack in the stone, and moving on to fascinating examples, such as Damien Hirst's "splatter prints" which look something like the paintings kids used to make at school 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 Thai meal of your choice served to you in any city in the world.



Thief and artist: Vuyisa Nyamende and Ed Young

At the afternoon session, I attend a panel entitled *Experimental Impressions: New Directions in Print*. One of the panellists is the Baltimore-based artist, Mercury Roberts. It takes me and the rest of the audience a while to realise that he has been unable to attend and 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.

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 organisers, Dominic Thorburn and Stephen Inggs, 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-odd years. The curators have chosen to display the Winnie Mandela print from my *A Few South Africans* series of the 80s next to my print of 1999, *Winnie Mandela and the Assassination of Dr Asvat*, coincidentally made at Rutgers Innovative Centre for Printmaking. Someone points out to me that the colours used in both prints, separated by almost fifteen years, are almost the same. "It wasn't a conscious decision," I tell them.

The evening concludes with an open print portfolio session at Michaelis. Printmakers from around the world generously share the products of their labours.

Friday, August 29th

The conference enters its third day and the second day of presentation. Stephen and Dominic have invited me to present an hour and a half overview of my work as a printmaker in the Little Theatre. I am concerned about some technical issues but the presentation goes off without a hitch. All this enthusiastic talk about printmaking is starting to make me think about working in the discipline again.

In the evening I attend Andrew Lamorech's exhibition at Bell-Roberts, entitled

'Alterior'. The Michaelis theory lecturer has decided not to use the conventional clean white gallery space but rather the semi-dismantled Bell-Roberts printing works right next door. Amongst the discarded equipment and other debris he has wallpapered a series of Xeroxed prints directly to the wall. The first room shows tiny images on A4 paper while in the back rooms he has blown those same images up on numerous sheets of paper and re-arranged them in the incorrect order. Lots of people come to the opening, including a number of visitors to the conference. As Marilyn Martin observed when Andrew expressed surprise at her wanting to come, "We are curious". I think it would be best if a theorist like Andrew stuck to what he does best, or in his case, just what he does.

Saturday, 30th August

The conference comes to an end and is concluded with a dinner at the new Convention Centre. I wasn't planning to come but the opportunity to say goodbye to friends old and new provided an excuse. *Freshly Ground* provided the musical entertainment. A couple of members of the band are good friends and their presence is a pleasant surprise.

Lynne Allen invites me to exhibit at next year's Southern Graphic Council conference to be held at Rutgers. This is a very large printmaking conference and will also give me an opportunity to visit Amanda and my grandchildren in New York.

Seated next to me is Faye Hirsch and we chat about the South African art scene and ArtThrob. She is immensely interested in what is going on here. The dinner also gives me an opportunity to look at the art commissioned for the CTICC and purchased for the Arabella Sheraton hotel. I'm pleased to see Paul Edmund's red plywood construction standing proudly at the entrance to the hotel.

Thursday, 4th September

Following on from the 'Bruce Gordon' exhibition earlier this year, Ed Young has decided to put the string quartet who played at that event, *MUSE*, on display at Bell-Roberts. Ed has secured good sponsorship for the event and there is Pongracz sparkling wine, oysters and sushi on offer. The sponsors insist that there is a VIP section and everyone permitted into that area gets a copy of the exhibition catalogue. The same size and style of the Bruce Gordon catalogue, except that the cover is black rather than white, Ed's beautifully written artist's statement tells us that we are all part of his work: the event itself 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 at the gallery on the night but Ed "stole" the date from him. Vuyisa arrives, 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 Kpobly and South African, Thomas Mulcaire have brought their work *The Reading Room* to the South African National Gallery. First displayed at the 24th Sao Paulo Biennale and later at Marion 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.

Friday 12 September

It's obviously conference season in the Cape. The 19th South African Association of Art Historians (SAAAH) are having their annual conference at Stellenbosch University today and tomorrow. Anyone expecting this to be a dry academic affair is surprised by the way things end up. There are a large number of papers on subjects ranging from murals in the Pretoria City Hall to monuments in post-Apartheid South Africa. A very



Ed Young: Bruce Gordon

South African National Gallery | Cape Town

Bruce Gordon, photographed by Ed Young for the book, Bruce Gordon, published by the SA National Gallery

I wasn't particularly good at, or interested in, maths or physical science as subjects at school. One thing, however, that did fascinate me was a notion that glided in the title of "Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle". What I understood in connection with Heisenberg's wonderfully paradoxical postulate was that, at a certain point of analysis, subatomic particles both were and were not (according to mathematical proofs) in particular places within the atomic nucleus at particular times; it was therefore necessary to propose as a scientific principle that their nature was determined by uncertainty, a vital and necessary condition of ambiguousness, of is-ness and isn't-ness, of being and nothingness, of actuality and virtuality. Better still: this was the only explanation, because what could be proved mathematically was that the subatomic particles in question were definitely not where they were meant to be according to mathematical prediction. In other words, if you didn't understand it you were on the right track.

Maybe I had it completely wrong (as I said, I was not particularly good at maths or science). But bear with me: it appears to me that Professor Heisenberg, whoever he was, can take a bow as the genius loci (or non-loci as the case may be) of the terty ambivalent space (or non-space) occupied by the artwork Bruce Gordon as designated by the artist Ed Young and as acquired and acquired by the South African National Gallery (SANG).

The thing about Bruce Gordon, the artwork, is it is never – definitionally never – where it is supposed to be, and that is the guiding aesthetic principle of the artwork as conceived and executed by the artist.

The gesture of designating a human as an artwork is not, of course, that new. Duchamp came very close, not only through his insistence on designation as a species of artmaking, or his various self-inventions, notably as Rrose Sélavy, but also in announcing (essentially undre-

matically) appearances at particular places at particular times as works of art. Gilbert and George in the 1960s went further in recreating themselves first as "living sculptures", and later recording in arch and bland detail their various encounters with Inca Pisco as real-time artwork.

In this kind of environment, the simple literal and conceptual fact of Bruce Gordon is not enough to guarantee its success as an artwork. It has all been done too often for the act of fiat – the ponderous assertion that this is now a work of art – to carry any real intellectual weight, though writing about such gestures seldom goes much further than noting the fact of fiat.

Duchamp himself set a bad example in this regard. When pushed to justify, he characteristically took refuge in a proclaimed attitude of "anaesthesia" – one which contested the relevance of asking "art" questions in the first place. But since the time that he fixed his bicycle wheel to a stool and watched it turn, the field of readymades has been systematically elaborated, creatively misconstrued and mapped out (albeit it over Duchamp's dead body, frozen though it may be with its tongue in its cheek) as a field of endeavour. As he noted in relation to another of his early readymades, he threw a pot of piss in the public's face and now they admire it for its beauty.

But the point is, actually, they love it. Though international art culture blundered through several decades without meaningfully arriving at this liberating conclusion: there is good conceptual or readymade or real-time art and there is bad conceptual or readymade or real-time art; we don't have to buy into the artist's assumption of a godlike superiority over the process of meaning; we do have enough purchase on the creative phenomenon to distinguish and insist on the difference between the two.

Ed Young's Bruce Gordon is very good readymade art. It is good because it is both consistent and elaborate, because it structures a situation of simplicity in real time which is finely controlled in such a way as to develop in the ways it is meant to develop, but also, and crucially, has a life of its own. It is also good, and maybe this is even more important, because it is very clever and very entertaining as a notional object.



The thing about the artwork, Bruce Gordon, is it is never – definitionally never – where it is supposed to be

In planning this review, I was seduced for a while by the idea of following up, in a deadpan way, on the patently fraudulent way in which Bruce Gordon was acquired by the National Gallery. I wanted to know just where – from which of her acquisition funds, given that she has been complaining for years that she has no money – SANG director Marilyn Martin was planning to access the R50 000 she bid for the artwork. Similarly I had it in mind to query whether the actual buyer, Suzy Bell, had paid by cash or cheque or on terms for the artwork when it was auctioned. I also considered asking the auctioneer Andrew Lampricht and the artist what they had done with the money.

It might have been fun. But it would also have been a reductive exercise – trying to cudgel the shapes of possibility into the shape of fact. What is important to understand here is that the process of "acquisition" is merely one layer of possible significance within the work, and if the work is to continue to operate in the space of possibility and virtuality (which surely it must in order to continue to reverberate) then fact is the enemy.

Likewise, the elegant red hemings thrown in by the virtual autobiography concocted by Bruce Gordon himself (or Bruce Gordon, itself) as is of course permitted to an artwork reflecting upon itself: the very beautiful mother, Thora, "an opera singer whose family came from Czechoslovakia", the handsome mine manager of a father, the childhood "spent swimming in crocodile-infested rivers, wrestling with small antelope and absorbing the venom of deadly poisonous snakes". Or the more joyously Freudian flights of Gordon's recollection the road to the family holiday recalled when "my mother took off her top and then her bra. Her silky milky breasts were bouncing gently with the rhythm of the Chevy. Started pedestrians waved and shouted and smiled."

I bet they did. In the same way this reviewer did, realising how rich and expansive was the game, and the questions and ambiguities generated in the game of engaging with the artwork. Bruce who? and for that matter Bruce who?, bar owner, abstemious drinker, entrepreneur, one-time manager of the band Amasipando, former

journalist, textile manufacturer, possessor of a sometimes tattered and certainly checked past. Also at the same time, the virtual neophyte in the future that must still unfold, and the sometime-to-be-dead Bruce Gordon, finally severed from his virtual ghost, Bruce Gordon. Both subject and object, both inside time and outside of it in the designation as an artwork, past, present and future all at the same time.

Here lies the elegance of the concept, the prying loose of identity (and I mean here identity at every level: the constructs that make up personal identity, the [Ho! Ho!] integrity of the artwork, the identity of the artist as informing the meaning of the art object, the identity of the artwork as informing the identity of the artwork, the virtual identities of reference and representation...) into any number of different variable elements in such a way that they connect and dissociate at the same time, that they are constantly in a self-generating flux, definitionally paradoxical, never ever where they are, always where they might be.

In a way what Young has captured in his designation, and elaborated in the various spin-offs that accrued – the auction, the tattooing of an acquisition number on Gordon's arm, the entirely deadpan opening where the artwork had his say, the accompanying booklet – is an ongoing mechanism rather than an instance of deconstruction. What is up for scrutiny beyond the wit and entertainment entailed in the playoff of Bruce Gordon with Bruce Gordon is the structure whereby that payoff is affected. You could say that the interstices of language (of which art is self-conscious subset), the process through which the real is rendered up as the real, is made available as a potential offence. Never quite there for scrutiny but insistent in its difference from itself all the same.

Or you could just go back to the signally impermissible paradox given the force of mathematical fact by Heisenberg.

Ivor Powell

Ivor Powell is an art critic and former journalist who is currently working as an investigator with the Directorate of Public Prosecutions.

Left top and bottom: Bruce Gordon, photographed by Ed Young
Right: Bruce Gordon in front of Michael Rosen at the SA National Gallery

REVIEWS / CAPE

Meeting: Art in the Water Closet
by Tracy Murinik

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

"Not a 'salon des refuses'", Andrew Lamprecht - one of the three curators for Galerie Puta, 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 Galerie Puta. Rather, Lamprecht offers, this "Gallery of the Prostitute" (*puta* 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" (with) people not ordinarily considered artmakers 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 viewers/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 Galerie Puta events. Judging by the quality of several spectacular martinis, great music to chi-chi 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: Galerie Puta was launched on the night of May 17, existing as the transformed living space of Cameron Platter and Vuyisa Nyamende in a Green Point house belonging to Bridget Baker. The exhibition, curated by Lamprecht, Platter and Young, with Platter functioning also as the gallerist, was proliferated throughout the house, with an art-located emphasis in and around the bathroom.

Coming up the stairs, then, entering through the front door, was Zen Marie's (who's currently based in Amsterdam) series of digital prints - reminiscent in style to pics from a photo booth - of himself eating a Burger King burger, seen through its various stages of burger consumption. Further up above the landing, was a diptych of small paintings by Peet Plenaar.

A bit further on along the wall leading off the stairwell, above the light switch, was Vuyisa Nyamende's inscrutable 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 added a stuck-on pic of fab abs, strategically placed, to newly 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 amongst those already there, of wearing a white and red woollen mitt on one hand (or both hands on some), while holding an elegant-looking martini glass in the other (if un-mitted, that is). So, to mention first Bridget Baker's work for the exhibition (being responsible for the woollen mitt phenomenon), which was the sensual 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 woollen mitts - all of which would then be removed to reveal a sweet-smelling, gorgeously softer paw than you would have had before.

The elegant martinis, though, were the work of the evening's gallerist, curator and spectacular cocktail mixer, Cameron Platter, whose exquisitely crisp, delicately dry vodka martinis with single pimento-stuffed green olives may or may not have been Platter's artwork for the evening (apparently he's undecided

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 conscious act 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) be 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 I am/he is 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 beamed the words "No Content" onto (what became into the night) the 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 Joao Ferreira, whose allotted role in being an artwork for the evening was "being a dodgy dealer" wearing a suit.

Staying in the lounge/dancefloor area was Teboho Edkins' video created for the exhibition, based on a longer documentary that he is working on which documents HIV roadshows 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 bravado of the conversation is casually shattered at a certain point in their conversation by the offhand mention by one of the friend's of his HIV positive status.

Dan Halter, ex-Michaelis 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, subtly, 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 'rebuttal' work for the exhibition: *Colin Richards-Red-Slim Medium subtitled R. Butt*, which comprised a red "butt-plug" which was to be inserted (by instruction in a printed letter to the gallerist of Galerie Puta, i.e. Cameron Platter, and signed by two witnesses) into the gallerist's buttocks for at least one hour during the exhibition, and then removed and placed, as is, into its original container. As far as slanging-matches 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, inferring sound not played. Richard de Jager's bathroom work was an exquisite gold knitted toilet set with bunny loo roll holder. Sean Stemon installed his artist's notebook, attached to the bathroom mirror. And prettily (although with a hazily sinister air) was Kathryn Smith's offering of "bathroom art": an image of a Victorian-looking woman, innocently enclosed in an oval frame, imparting the message, "Never look for unicorns until you run out of ponies".

And finally, back towards the kitchen, where, held in place by a (carefully selected, I'm told, broken) buffalo magnet, is Sue Williamson's work, a "Souvenir de Bruxelles": a caricatured commentary to a nun by the priest she's with, as they look up at a sculpture of a peeing putti: "Come sister, don't be in ecstasy like that."

And to the right of the fridge, cheerily soaping and buffing away was Andrew Lamprecht, being his artwork, namely, the ultimate professional dishwasher, and keeping the martini glasses in spectacular nick (edition one of his services was snapped up on the night at the sight of his gleaming display). Asking



'Meeting' at Galerie Puta
Invitation image



Bruce Gordon at Gallery Puta


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 Puta
2A 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
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 SUBMIT Review



Bruce Gordon

REVIEWS / CAPE

Working the White Cube
by Colin Richards

"Something there badly not wrong" - Samuel Beckett *Worstward Ho*.

Conceptual art tends to make ironists of us all. A certain knowingness, winking at the work, ourselves; what gets between us, the work, and the world infiltrates 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 mad doggedness 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 was! 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 gnawing at the tortured face of the god Flatness, no more audience required, just a 'receiver'... just 'artist', and in that moment of absolutely dispassionate abdication, of insouciant withering away. Art made its final flight, climbed higher and higher in and ever decreasing tighter-turning spiral until, with one last erg 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 devils 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 dramatis personae in CAPITALS: 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 'BAR OWNER', a 'Conceptual Husband', 'n Kaapse Kroegbaas [a Cape Barkeeper]... In the second to last cutting 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 *Ordre Remis* in some disorder; p.12, p.9, p.10,

p.11. PLATES of 'BRUCE GORDON' follow; the first is blank, then we come upon the artwork in pensive pose, puffing on a cigarette, *sans* cigarette, drinking, not drinking, on auction, a shot of the dealer, two low intensity interactions in front of blue-lit *Lolas*, artwork with a red bakkie looking upright, next artwork flashing light and artist squinting, the artwork making the business call, the social call, artwork concealed in a blank page (quoting the first plate), artwork revealed in Italian leather, and, almost finally, a cartoon coupling artwork and art Madame. Then, acknowledgments owned to. All these make up this conceptual gesture, this material spectacle of social and aesthetic deliberation.

What more can we make of this overdetermined spectacle designed by Ed Young (never mind why)? One direct, 'internal' response is offered by the text by Andrew Lamprecht. Setting aside the reproduced newspaper cuttings in the catalogue, the text presents in roughly three interweaving registers. First are the quotes. One, by one Cennino Cennini (Italian leather?), dated 1437, 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, confessional, 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 spine by a formidable armature of authority; quotes Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuz, Theo Adorno (it requires a generous, even indiscriminate 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 "precedentsÉ going back to classical times", with Plotinus and Ernst Gombrich providing art historical collateral. On the side of art, are references to Kostabi and Koons, Rubens and Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Jacques-Louis David, Marcel Duchamp. There is also a report - some sort of last word - from Iziko. A generous, but masculine world. Perhaps Cennini's caution is serious.

These artistic luminaries introduce the aesthetic lynchpin 'Bruce Gordon', "bon vivant, raconteur, and general good chap", once "Mosquito Weight boxing champion of Matebeleland" (shades of Joseph Beuys, Lynda Benglis, Nelson Mandela?), "Chicken fucker" (masculinity again) to "Cape Town's art world". The artwork has clearly been around, is textually politically credentialed, relaxed, social, and has "deep concern for the oppressed, especially women" (Cennini notwithstanding).

What is awkward, is the rather toxic atmosphere of socialite dandyism and artiness 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 disciplined clubbiness. As a performance of this particular kind of cool sociality, this aspect of the work touches on something critical.

But that potential for critique is unevenly sustained in the text and indeed the project. When the author tells us that "Ed Young's *Bruce Gordon*... has nothing to do with Bruce Gordon's narrative", alongside narratives which take a good deal of space, there are stresses at work. The critical and artistic challenge is to create some vital and dynamic common cause between the peculiarities of a "found-object" as itself, as "the idea of Bruce Gordon", as a 'real' thing, as 'art', within the frame of this extended performance. The kind of common purpose I have in mind would be mindful of the principled disposal of 'declared intentions' expressed early on in the text. It is on the playing out of these entanglements and their infiltration into the wider public world that the promise and power of this work rests.

In a way the discourse of newness, of transgression, questioning; challenging, irreverence, significance are pretty standard for all contemporary art of ambition. It is in precise and unstable the articulation of these conventions, in the invocation of histories - cultural, artistic, institutional - in the citing of key agents in the canon-formation, that the real and very traditional treasure of cultural capital rests. All this in the text operates in a conventional direction, but there are also some unexpected turns. One, touched on by Lamprecht, is a rather sophisticated piece of special pleading for a 'pure' concept, for 'truth', and routing these to - in this context surprising - to an idea of beauty.

This turn to abstraction and beauty clashes harshly with the elaborate set of

Being sold at auction might not be so liberating for a Cape Slave, to state the obvious. Being tattooed with a number invokes an atrocious history within living memory. These darken the spectacle in uncomfortable ways, not least in questioning the bad faith of liberal voluntarism. This clash is also reflected in the counter narratives of social persona as against the phenomenal integrity of a 'found object', or between the intimate personal anecdote, mixed with a dose of local celebrity to end being a social cipher of sorts.

It is also specifically acknowledged in the odd conjunction of the 'sitter' and the 'subject', introduced by Lamprecht. Again, this reference to conventions of portraiture seems a peculiarly precise digression, even if abandoned quite soon. But I want to consider Lamprecht's critical move, of which this digression is part, a little more before ending. This review is already well over its word-limit, and we may as well die for a sheep as for a lamb. The sheep is interesting, even if chickens enjoy a sexier reputation in this world.

Lamprecht's willingness to speak of the "ultimate significance", the "true nature" of the work, all other claims notwithstanding, suggests the direction he would want this instance of conceptualism to move. These statements are symptomatic of a desire for some sort of transcendental 'holism' in the realm of a metaphysical harmony, this last referred to under the rubric 'symmetry'. This desire requires a drastic division of the physical instance from the abstractly 'beautiful', restaging in broad terms a very ancient Platonic discourse, where illusion is delusion, appearance betrays essence, mimesis tricks the true, where material is a crime against form.


Here Lamprecht's ventriloquist is Plotinus, whose history with neo-platonic thought is complex and in some ways antagonistic. But what is surprising here perhaps is that this is one of those relatively rare instances in conceptualism (often so historico-materialistic and 'situationist' in almost every sense) where the mode unabashedly speaks about a beauty beyond history, about spirit. In the early 21st century this is a bloody and fiery road to look back on, and the effort takes some courage.

Looking far back we might recall Plato banished the artists from his Republic, and he was no democrat, civil or otherwise. Yet the words of Joshua Reynolds which close Lamprecht's text pose a challenge to this esoteric. The intelligibility he seeks requires clearing clouds and mists, a resistance to the false 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 presumably what this work means, and wherein its beauty lies. The aesthetic import bracketed by all these thoughts, these quotes, these ideas, people, institutions... the artworld, 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 work by Ed Young by Andrew Lamprecht. Published by the South African National Gallery Iziko Museums of Cape Town.

Colin Richards is an art critic, curator, academic and practicing artist based in Johannesburg.

 SUBMIT Review

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 for him, rather the 'concept' of him. In a further twist, said 'kroegbaas' owns a bar called Jo'burg, which is situated in Cape Town. Anyway, he (or 'it', I'm not sure which pronoun to choose) was bought by art patron and bon vivant Suzy Bell, who just pipped 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 (insofar as the artwork comprises 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 strip shows 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 most of us 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 colluder 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 little bits of French and Latin he throws in too. He appears to enjoy this himself and chose the latter for a 'sympathy tattoo', which Lamprecht also acquired.

As a permanent fixture in the SANG's collection, like all the others, *Bruce Gordon* is required to bear an indelible '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 loftier '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 loves a good yarn and a few drinks. He'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 Penny Siopis, who flew down from Johannesburg ostensibly to open the showing, opined on 'Bruce Gordon' the 'object' and the 'subject', and further related his acquisition to the military's legal possession of conscript's bodies

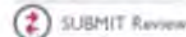
while pondering the collection's responsibility for his preservation ('Wheesky awn eyes' said the colourfully bespectacled Frenchman next to me), Marilyn Martin did a great job of milking the event for all the media kudos the gallery could get.

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 art-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 firmly in cheeks there too.

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

South African National Gallery, Government Avenue, Company Gardens, Cape Town
Tel: (021) 481-3823 from 8:30am-1pm
Fax: (021) 461 0045
Email: ebedford@iziko.org.za
Website: www.museums.org.za/sang
Hours: Tues - Sun 10am - 5pm



SUBMIT Review



CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: Bruce Gordon, the living work of art at the centre of a controversy, and artist Edward Young. Picture: RUVAN BOSHOFF

Tug-of-war battle over living art work

LIN SAMPSON

CAPE Town artist Edward Young has had a change with partners over the sale last year of his newest Bruce Gordon, a living work of art.

Gordon, owner of the popular Archway Bar in Long Street, was sold as a work of art for R22 000 on public auction last year after an artist Edward Young came up with the concept of putting him up for sale. The idea of using a human being as an art piece was in keeping with contemporary art given to the resurgence of conceptual art.

Gordon was bought by Cape Town publisher Barry Bell of the auctioneer arranged by the Melbourne School of Art headed by Professor Michael Power.

Gordon has subsequently been exhibited at the SA National Gallery and followed with an art festival elsewhere.

But this week, Barry — an internationally renowned artist who has collaborated with pop art David Bowie — had a complaint with the Cape Day Justice, alleging that Power had fraudulently misled the public.

He also accused Marilyn Martin, director of art collections for Ekom Museum in Cape Town, of receiving stolen goods.

The charge sheet reads: "Bruce Gordon was sold for a sum of R22 000 to Mr Barry Bell, Mr Bell then donated Bruce to the SA National Gallery.

"Unless proof of payment is provided by the Melbourne School of Art, I charge the SA National Gallery for receiving stolen goods and the Melbourne for fraudulently mislead[ing] the public in its contract with Barry Bell.

Barry contends that the sale was fraudulent because the money for Gordon was never paid.

Barry said: "I took the charge sheet to Malcolm Fraser and asked him if I could please have proof of payment for the R22 000. He was very vague about it. He said that he would do nothing unless he received a formal request or writing.

Barry then wrote a formal request, asking for 'proof of payment' of the R22 000, the amount of which he would withdraw the charge. Failing that, he indicated that he was willing to offer R150 to buy the last lot of R20 at the auction which came from Mrs Williamson, the wife of Gordon.

Barry would not comment this week on whether she had paid the money for Gordon last week. "There is presently a jurisdiction with my wife. She had an idea, Bruce Gordon could be such a fabulous investment, while I immediately saw Gordon as a perfect."

When asked whether the R22 000 for Bruce Gordon had to first be handed over, she said: "I'm feeling out of the ball, I have just had an operation. I don't really know what you're talking about."

Power said: "My failure is clearly apparent of contemporary art as practiced in our time."

Martin said: "I know nothing about this. But the work is conceptual in nature and thus open to all kinds of interpretation."

Meanwhile, Gordon said that he was unaware of Barry's charge. "What can I say? I've lost the art work after all."

Marking off life with indelible ink

And Powell

If you were to stroll past Lincoln Theo in St George's Mall, you would probably assume he was a baker or a metalhead. With his intricately decorated arms, his chit with its trypich of metal piercings, his labret stretched with oversized cut rings and the incongruous contrast of his hair-coloured guitar with his shaved head, you would never guess that Mr Theo is a lawyer, with an LLB from UCT.

This sea Point resident has little respect for societal stereotypes. "Society is so focused on putting people into boxes," he says.

In a profession where a black robe is de rigueur, it's not surprising that the highly decorated Mr Theo left corporate life to pursue his passion for law. Instead of practising law, he formed a business development consultancy to "develop a space where creative people can be valid business entities."

Mr Theo got his first tattoo, the symbol for the Zodiac sign Leo, 10

years ago. This fairly common marking was the beginning of a journey into self-modification, which Mr Theo says is ongoing. His latest acquisition, two peacock feathers on his neck, was done last week by Burg Street tattoo artist, Simon White.

Like many inmates into tattooing, Mr Theo says he got the tattoo because he needed to break into something, although he was unsure of what. The time suited right to "take the next step."

Since then, each meaningful event or person in his life has been recorded in ink, somewhere on his body.

"Each piece of the tattoo reflects a specific thing, time or person in my life. The tattoo forces me to focus on various areas of my life."

Much of Mr Theo's body is already adorned with patterns and symbols. He has two full sleeves, a tattoo on his neck, upper chest area, back, side panels and gloves.

As each tattoo has meaning, he does not have a favourite shape or

pattern. "All the tattoos are done for a reason. I love the fact that I am developing an identity for myself." He shrugs off questions about the permanence of tattoos. "The permanence is the point. You only get one life. It is important to plan my life and reflect this ownership in a permanent way."

While Mr Theo acknowledges that many people get tattoos to be "cool" or as part of a fad, his motivation is clearly based on a deeply personal philosophy. "Body modification is my passion," he explains.

While annoyed by any negative responses to his tattoos, he admits that most seem to have it easier than women. Gender stereotypes mean that body art in women is frowned upon more vigorously than in men.

Mr Theo has chosen designs "that move me, that I appreciate." Some have been drawn by him, others have been marked by Simon.

Theo is clearly a strong bond between the tattoo artist and the Mr Theo. "He has a very accepting ener-

gy that is not aggressive." Mr White, of Whitliff Studios, is responsible for most of Mr Theo's work.

Although Mr Theo is a well-known body modifier, he stresses the importance of not getting too caught up in the body. "The body is a reflection of the emotional life, not the physical."

Despite enduring almost a decade of pinpricks from the tattoo needles, Mr Theo said he still experiences pain. The needles, or body's energy lines, hurt most when tattooed. Any work on the bone, for example the ankle to the knee, is also painful.

White adds: "Mr Theo's tattoos clearly form an indivisible part of his life. And, with his latest tattoo still being protected from the sun by a bandanna, Mr Theo is probably already planning where he will have his next tattoo."

"There's still lots of space left," he said laughing, fingering the scrofula chosen to represent a recently acquired freedom. I did not ask him

Call Letalane on 845 332 3213 for the winning lottery numbers.



Lincoln Theo's most recent tattoo still has to be protected from the sun with a bandanna.

from what this freedom was. Somehow it did not matter. What matters is that Mr Theo, with his tattoos, creates a unique identity devoid of stereotypes and social constraints. It left me wishing I could do the same.

Tattoos not just for bikers and rockers

electic needle to draw their blood to the surface, Mr White's fastidiously clean studio must be the answer to every fan's time-worn prayer.

Although trained as a tattoo artist in Lisbon, Mr White can also do art, graphic design and interior design among his qualifications. He added however to this list as a way of loving people to look past the stereotype of the typical tattoo artist. Mr White has researched the history of tattooing extensively. As much of this research involved technical studies, he was able to get the Reverendship qualification.

Mr White, of Woodstock, says cleanliness is paramount when it comes to tattooing.

"You cannot judge a parlor on its artistic ability. There are some dodgy shops out there that do not sterilise equipment or throw away used needles."

Mr White said every tattoo parlor should have an autoclave, or high pressure sterilisation unit, to ensure maximum safety. He is always clad in latex gloves, and all equipment undergoes a three-level sterilisation process, each of which would be sufficient to ensure absolute safety for Mr White and the client. Clients younger than 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Each client receives clear care instructions for the tattoo. Touch-ups, if needed, are one for free. The prices of the tattoos vary, from R250 upwards, depending on the size, design and ink being used.

Mr White and his team at Whitliff

in Lisbon. The first tattoo he had done in his early 20s, was a souvenir from his days in London. He is still collecting tattoos and, like regular client Lincoln Theo, Mr White's tattooing is an ongoing process.

Although his mother cried when she saw his first tattoo, she now accepts her son's body art.

Mr White's father, Peter White, went one step further than just accepting his son's tattoo. He got a tattoo of the Springbok emblem when South Africa won the World Cup Rugby in 1995.

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Mr White and his team at Whitliff

Tattoos work tattoo, on average, three to five people a day. The most Mr White has worked on a day, was 12 people, including eight American students who all wanted matching tattoos.

Although Chinese symbols were top of everyone's tattoo request list last year, Mr White said there is no popular design at the moment. Like fashion, tattoo designs have trends. At the moment, people seem to be in

India, between eyes.

While the stereotype of the biker or metal head with tattoos persists, Mr White insists that there is no typical client. "They all appear to be from planet earth," he joked. There is no typical race, gender or age for tattoo enthusiasts. His oldest client was 82 years old.

Many of his customers are professional people, in their 30s and 40s, who decide to break away from societal restrictions by getting a tattoo. For many, the tattoo symbolises freedom or the assertion of identity. Recently divorced women, for example, tend to wear tattoos.

This need to mark a significant or life-altering event with an indelible print is nothing new. Tribes have been doing the same thing for centuries.

The Maori use facial tattoos to record landmark events and tribal rank. In India and Tibet, tattoos have been used to mark rites of passage, puberty, and events like pregnancy. Tattoos, which often involve phys-

ical pain, have often been used to numb emotional pain. The people of Hawaii would tattoo rows of dots and dashes on their forearms to signify the death of someone.

Tattoos have even served a medical purpose. The Samoans marked their skin in ward of dementias.

There have, of course, been more sinister uses for tattoos. The Nazis branded the Jews during the Second World War, and prisoners are often marked with their prison number.

However, many of our modern role models proudly boast tattoos. Most of the South African rugby team received tattoos of the Springbok emblem after the 1995 World Cup Victory.

Former SA's captain and ex-Southern rugby player, Percy Montgomery, has a Tasmanian devil, done by Simon, on his rear.

Other well-known Capetonians sporting tattoos are Christine Storm, Bobby Skinsand, Theo Cross of ex-Spangloek Noddy Girls, Richard Gee of KEM and local comedian, Cosky Fakow.

Even the elegant Marilyn Martin, director of the South African National Gallery, has three tattoos of Western Cape petroglyphs.

Simon's most recent high profile client was Bruce Gordon, owner of Jubang Bar in Long Street. Simon tattooed the South African National Gallery's acquisition number onto Mr Gordon, who was trevally sold to the gallery as a piece of conceptual art.

The Reverend's advice to those considering taking the plunge: "Just don't get names tattooed."



Simon White prepares conceptual artist, Edward Young, for his tattoo.

NEWS

❏ Planning to visit the **KKK**? Be sure not miss Wim Booie's comique one-man-show piece, as well as one-person shows by Annetta Murdock and Dawn Southwood.

The KKK also offers a chance to see the Felte Erasmus curated pair of shows *Clara and Debra*, each only seen separately in Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively. For photography enthusiasts *Swearing the Truth* is an exhibition of images by Adam Broomberg (SA) and Oliver Chenail (UK), a photographic duo who made the big time as creative editors on *Benetton's* controversial *Colors* magazine. The two will be showing their intimate documentary portraits of Pollock's great friends. Also on show at the Outdoor festival is *L'Wig*, a collection of fashion photographs by SL image-makers Debra Rains, Crispian Plunkett, Lisha Stalbert and Henrik Purvins. Curated by Sean O'Loon, it is titled after the Afrikaans word for 'left'. *L'Wig* offers a left of centre look at contemporary fashion photography, arguing the case for style as identity.

❏ Did you miss Javier Mariscal at **Design Indaba 07** shame on you! The Spanish graphic artist received a standing ovation for his idiosyncratic and moving way to colour. His presentation alone indicated the R5000 price tag on the event. Many a weary creative returned home inspired and invigorated. Question is: how long will it last?

❏ Bruce Gordon, a well known Cape Town art personality and owner of the exclusive go-tour Bar on Long Street, was exhibited at the South African National Gallery in March – as a work of art. 'Bruce Gordon', the found object art artwork, was a project initiated by young Michaelis and Edward Young. **It might have started out as an idea over drinks in the inimitable bar, but it ended up bringing in R52 000 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art annual auction,**



an event designed to raise funds for student bursaries. As a precursor to his display, Gordon was tattooed with an indelible accession mark (every work in the SANG has to have one). The artist, Edward Young, and exhibition curator Andrew Lamprecht, were also in need with their own 'sympathy tattoo'.

❏ A bunch of Danish arty types recently took Diesel's new ad campaign to heart when they painted one of the clothes shopfronts white with black letters stating 'CLOSED'. Okay so it wasn't truly a culture jam – the group had been invited to exhibit in the Diesel shop on Kølmannsgade in Copenhagen, Denmark – but it was a clever interpretation of Diesel's new worldwide campaign. The **Action for Successful Living** campaign is a wakeup call for 'the rebel inside you'. The clothing label founded 20 years ago in Italy wants hip kids and label junkies to realize that 'Successful living doesn't happen easily. You have to fight for it.' To the streets then.



>>> This *Felice* that Diesel delivered to the rebels at SL was customised by Sara Callow and Jason Bronkhorst.

■ Where's R52 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 received, 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 R52 000 for the piece to Michaelis; perhaps Michaelis would like to come forward with proof of payment?

Beezy Bailey
Cape Town

Gallery's new acquisition speaks

HELEN BAINFORD

THE phrase "the artwork must speak for itself" took on a whole new meaning for Helen Bainford, the South African National Gallery's new acquisitions director, when she visited the gallery in Cape Town last week.

Cape Town just cannot resist the lure of the gallery's latest art acquisition, even on display for the first time and welcomed visitors to his new home.

And what does this masterpiece say to its audience? Bruce Gordon, the gallery's acquisitions director, says it is a masterpiece of art and a masterpiece of life.

"Being a permanent acquisition, it cannot be sold and therefore will remain here for the rest of my life," says Gordon. "It is a masterpiece of art and a masterpiece of life."

But it is art? Bruce Gordon is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery.

There were a few concerns raised at the opening by invited visitors on how exactly to preserve or restore this particular artwork which already shows some signs of deterioration.

Fortunately, the gallery did not have to wait long for a solution. The gallery's acquisitions director, Bruce Gordon, is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery.

Young, energetic but temperamental work on the restoration of the artwork was undertaken by the gallery's acquisitions director, Bruce Gordon, who is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery.



But is it art? Bruce Gordon is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery.

"Let us observe the central 'what-why' axis for you," said the artist. "What are the conditions of your work?"

But the central 'what-why' axis is not the only one. The artist also has to consider the 'how' and 'where' of his work.

Gordon was formally acquired by the National Gallery Collection when he agreed to be involved with the acquisition number SANG 01 02.

Young and galleries - curator Andrew Lamprecht - visited "symptoms" in an act of artistic communication.

Young, energetic but temperamental work on the restoration of the artwork was undertaken by the gallery's acquisitions director, Bruce Gordon, who is now a permanent acquisition of the South African National Gallery.

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The SANG's latest acquisition: Bruce Gordon



Curator, artwork, artist: Andrew Lamprecht, Ed Young, Bruce Gordon



Mark Coetzee All our Sons II 2003 Video and mixed media Installation detail at the AVA



The foyer of the new Constitutional Court building, presently under construction

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. "We 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. Artworks that are not chosen retain the possibility of being sited elsewhere, perhaps at a later stage.

Senior architect Herbert Prins 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 'political' or pass book offenders, had to survive. Moving on to the construction site, artworks co-ordinator Bongli Dhlomo-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 Mautloa, 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 it 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. Admirable 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 not 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



15.03.03
Jeff Koons lecture and visit from New York's New Museum

01.03.03
Sue Williamson arts it up in Oz

15.02.03
Deadline woes beset Sue Williamson as she negotiates with two translators to finalise her new catalogue - and prepares to go to Australia. Phew!

01.02.03
A visit by Fernando Alvim, Art Basel in Miami and a planned trip to Australia

16.01.03
Gallery hopping with RoseLee Goldberg and talking to students

16.12.02
Three Cape Town openings & a workshop in Argentina

01.12.02
The William Kentridge opening

15.11.02
Reflections as a critic

01.11.02
Gavin Young's opening and a parcel from Sweden

05.10.02
Visit to Jo'burg

01.10.02
History/Now in Stockholm

18.09.02
Documenta at speed

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*. Ex Capetonian, now director of the Rubell Collection in Miami, the suave and immaculately dressed 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 tiny monitor behind a jagged cutout. The monitor displays the classified ads announcement of Mark's birth, but as one watches, the words 'bonny son' metamorphasise into 'faggot' or 'bugger' or 'pede' or one of the other derogatory names used to label gay men. Minimal and to the point. Less is more.

Across town, Joao Ferreira 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 VANSAs, 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 Zayd Minty, I am delighted to see that our advance campaign has persuaded almost 100 people to turn up. The function of VANSAs 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 for the meeting ways in which PANSA has been effective, Sandra Klopper 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 Siopis 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 Beezy 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 Jo'burg was sold on auction as the artwork of Ed Young on the Michaelis 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 R52 000'. Since then, Bruce has been tattooed with an accession number and invitations and a catalogue 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 Siopis 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".

19.08.02
Sue Williamson is out-and-about in Cape Town

01.08.02
Sue Williamson catches the opening of Big Brother II

19.07.02
'Grime' at Bell-Roberts, Jo'burg Art City & the CT Convention Centre

17.06.02
Gallery-hopping in Cape Town

01.06.02
The Dak/Art Biennial in Senegal

24.05.02
Sue Williamson in Jo'burg

06.02.02
'Who defines the contemporary? Biennials and the global art world'

23.01.02
Smithsonian's National Museum for African Art, Washington

12.12.01
Homeport at the V&A Waterfront

28.11.01
Jo'burg & the Joubert Park Project

07.11.01
Artist Matthew Hindley at the World Wide Video Festival

24.10.01
Exhibitions in Chicago and Washington

10.10.01
A visit to South Africa House in London

11.09.01
Joubert Park Project; Art Spaces in Gender Perspective, Germany



Artist Edward Young, with curator of the "Bruce Gordon" exhibition, Andrew Lamprecht and Marilyn Martin, director of art collections at the South African National Gallery.



Bruce Gordon and the placing of his accession number by Simon of Wildfire Tattoos.



"It bit my lip, maybe it won't hurt". Bruce Gordon has just to finish at the tattoo artist's shop.

Bruce Gordon's infamy gets him framed

And Powell

As the price of modernity increases, and everything is digitised, do you ever feel as if you're just another number? Imagine how Bruce Gordon must feel.

He has, literally, been numbered and catalogued as the latest acquisition in the South African National Gallery's art collection.

Mr Gordon, a former journalist and now manager of Long Street's Jo'burg bar, consistently followed himself to be known as "SANG 52001" on Tuesday March 28.

Why would a 37-year-old agree to be branded with indelible ink? "It's the only way to get your name on the list," he says. "It's the only way to get your name on the list."

Owner of the iconic, bustling Jo'burg bar, he has been a regular at the gallery since 1999, and he has been a regular at the gallery since 1999.

At the South African National Gallery's art collection, he has been a regular at the gallery since 1999.

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Numbered and logged Bruce Gordon is now a catalogued addition to the art collection of the SANG.

IS IT AN ISM...

Is it an owned bar-owner or is it art?



MAKING A MARK: Tattoo artist Simon White turns Bruce Gordon into an art piece. **Picture: ALAN TAYLOR**
National Art Gallery

EXHIBITION: BRUCE GORDON by Ed Young, at the National Gallery from March 20

MELVYN MINKAAR reviews

"IN REALITY the artwork paid for by Ed Young, at the National Gallery from March 20

work, on the other hand, was doing everything in his power to tell the world that the man being tattooed - at the request of the SANK, according to the press release - wasn't the artwork.

It is obvious that parody is a vital ingredient in this "art installation". So is a bit of social criticism, as the artist art school student had been for "years" the "disaster" the "art work" because of the "Serge".

For some reason - perhaps a lack of good gifts recently - the newly tattooed one is only the one and this year. Bruce Gordon was accepted. It could be take a long time to get into the post-modernist collection.

That someone had the bright idea - which could be called the "art work" - described as "not the physical person of Gordon but rather the concept or idea of what Bruce Gordon represents" - of "making" objects that come into the collection. And so the year Bruce Gordon got his tattoo.

Later the day even artist in a pink cap, one Ed Young, said that the significance of Bruce Gordon as an artwork is that he has a bar and collects art. The nature of his "art



VOETNOOT

COBUS VAN BOSCH

SOMS wonder 'n mens oor die wensikheid van gratis drank by kunsgeleenthede. Wat anders kan die rede wees dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum (SANK) in Kaapstad nou baas is van 'n kunswerk in die vorm van 'n kroeg-eienaar?

Die ding het só begin. Einde verlede jaar het 'n kunststudent, Ed Young, besluit om Bruce Gordon, eienaar van die kulerplek Joburg in Langstraat, as 'n kunswerk onder die hamer te plaas op 'n veiling van werke in die Michaelis-kunsskool in Kaapstad.

Hy is vir R52 000 gekoop deur Suzy Bell, wat hom net daar aan die SANK geskenk het.

Nou gaan Gordon op 29 Maart in die museum ten toon gestel word as 'n kunswerk

deur Ed Young. Maar voordat dit gebeur, gaan hy 'n tatoeëermerk kry, want die museum vereis dat alle aanwinste 'n permanente stempel moet hê. Die stempel is gistermiddag aangebring.

Die kurator van die tentoonstelling, Andrew Lamprecht van die Michaelis-kunsskool, het vandeeweek gesê dit is nie Gordon wat aan die SANK gegee is nie. Dit is die idee van Gordon, en wat hy verteenwoordig, waarmee die SANK verryk word.

Maar wat verteenwoordig Gordon? Volgens Lamprecht 'n persoon wat interessant en betekenisvol is.

Nou ja, sulke konseptuele getjommel gebeur nie net hier nie, maar is al ou nuus elders in die wêreld. Die kunstenaars Gilbert & George is immers nou al bejaarde mense in Londen sedert hulle in die sestigerjare hulself as lewende kuns begin voorstel het.

Maar dat die SANK nou in besit is van 'n konseptuele kunswerk wat in 'n lewende mens gestalte kry, laat jou heerlik wonder

oor die absurde implikasies daarvan.

Hoe gaan die SANK sy nuwe aanwinst vir die nageslag bewaar? Moet hy gevoer word en veilige huisvesting kry? Wat gebeur wanneer hy, soos 'n krakende skildery, ouer word en kwale begin opdoen? Restourasie in die vorm van ontrimpeling en vastsande, straks 'n pruik? En sal hy gebalsem word wanneer hy eendag te sterwe kom? Hoe staan sake met versekering?

Die SANK is 'n sukkelende museum, met bykans geen geld vir nuwe aanwinste nie. Dit is al jare die geval.

Maar daar is 'n eenvoudige kitsoplossing om die SANK een van die grootste openbare museums in die wêreld te maak. Letterlik en figuurlik.

Ek verklaar dus hiermee die hele Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking as verteenwoordigend van 45 miljoen interessante en betekenisvolle idees en konsepte.

En hiermee bemaak ek hulle almal aan die SANK. Veels geluk!

Kroegbaas word tjommelkuns

Kroegman pleks van potplant word kunswerk

YVONNE BEYERS

KAAPSTAD – 'n Lewende kunswerk, die eenaar van die kroeg do'burg in Luitersstraat, se (Rans) stok/monteringsmanier is glister in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsгалery op hom getoets.

Volgens Mrs Marilyn Martin, teko-munisie se direkteur van kunsverramelings, is dit die eerste keer in die geskiedenis dat 'n aanwinstnominer vir 'n kunsuitstalling op 'n lewende voorsto geleer word.

Bruce Gordon gaan op 20 Maart in die museum uitgestal, word na dat hy einde vierde jaar vir R22 000 deur die Michaelis kuns-akool opeval is. Hy is deur die kunsuitstaller Mrs. Stacy Bell ge-koep en aan die museum geklein.

Die idee van 'n kroegman as kunswerk is deur Edward Young, 'n finansier-konstulent aan die Michaelis skool, gekonseptualiseer. "Ek moes iets opvallend. Dit was of Bruce of 'n proplyant," het Young glister gesê kort voordat hy 'n gemaak blokkie op sy bouarm laat uitreke, het uit samevoortplant met Gordon.

Mrs. Andrew Lamprecht, kurator van die uitstalling, het ook 'n tatoeermark op sy arm laat aan-bring om "solidariteit" met Gor-

don te betoon.

Gordon se aanwinstnominer, Suid 00,02, is op sy bouarm aan-bring. Dit toon dat dit daarop dat hy die lewende kunswerk is, wat veral deur die museum sange-koep is. Hy het verpynlik ingesien om die tatoeermark te kry.

Volgens Lamprecht is dit eerder die idee van Gordon, as Gordon self, wat die kunswerk is. "Dour baan uit sy gewone kontakke 'n maal, in die museum uit te stal en minse te bek om na hom te kom. Hy aliep Young 'n geleervenik. Die gebeurtenis is kuns."

Hy het gesê Gordon behoort nou permanent aan die museum se kunsverramelings en sal moontlik swer in die toekomst "uitgestal" word.

Gordon, wat reeds het by 'n ongelyke ons geleerter te word, het gesê hy het bloot ingesien om opeval te word "uit roepke vir Andrew en Edward" met wie hy al maal bevriend is. "Ek beskou my self nie as 'n kunswerk nie. Dit kan enige tyd swer. Dit kan gaan eerder se die kuns as die minse wat die kunswerk voortset."

Martin het gesê dit is gewone-akutwende werk wat 'n nuwe weg vir konseptuele kuns in Suid-Af-ka baan.

► ybeiers@dieburger.com



Mrs. Bruce Gordon ontvang sy aanwinstnominer voordat hy glister as kunswerk in die kunsverramelings van die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsгалery opgeneem is. Foto: ANTONIE ROBERTSON



'If Bruce Gordon ever says he's been framed, we'll know why'
(See page 6)

Tattooed bar owner gallery's marked man

BAR OWNER Bruce Gordon is a real work of art.

That's according to the South African National Gallery, anyway.

The acquisition of Gordon, 55, as a conceptual art piece was sealed in an unusual tattooing ceremony at the gallery's

triumph in Cape Argus reporter Gordon now owns the do'rburg Bar in Long Street. He is also a collector and patron of the arts.

But he became a work of art himself when he was "sold" at a charity auction at the Michaelis School of Fine Art late last year.

The concept was submitted by a master's student, artist Edward Young.

The "piece" was then bought for R25 000 by Suzy Bell, a nightclub and art collector, who donated the work to the National Gallery.

A conceptual work of art, Gordon's person as such is not owned by the gallery. What it has acquired is the concept of "a human being as a work of art".

TASNEEM ABRAHAMS
Staff Reporter

Gordon agreed to be tattooed with the accession number SAAG 03 02.

Gallery director Marilyn Martin said that the act of tattooing Gordon meant that he had been formally acquired by the National Gallery Collection.

"Each work of art in our collection has a file, in which its history is documented," said Martin.

When the file on the Gordon work is opened, it will be entitled "Gordon Young (Ed Object) (Concept), 2002, presented by Suzy Bell."

Asked about his obligations to the gallery, he said: "I'm at their mercy. I suppose they'll bring me out every now and again, and as I get older, when I retire, I'm sure they'll find a space for me in their archives."

● Gordon will be on exhibition at the National Gallery between 11.30am and 1pm on Saturday.



Exhibitionist: from left, tattoo artist Simon Winta, artist Edward Young, exhibition curator Andrew Lamprecht and art collector Suzy Bell. Gordon was tattooed with an accession number to show he was acquired by the South African National Art Gallery.

Tattoo puts Bruce among gallery's body of work

ONE of the SA National Gallery's latest artworks will report today to have his gallery acquisition number tattooed on his body.

Cape Town bar owner and art 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 Suzy Bell after she bought it, or him, for R52 000 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 Lamprecht, was necessary "as all objects acquired by the gallery must have an indelible accession mark applied to them".

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

Lamprecht 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 uniformed guard from the Mount Nelson Hotel as a living artwork. — Sapa

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NEWS

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 1p.m and 3p.m. 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 Lamprecht, will also be tattooed. Lamprecht describes this act as an act of artistic solidarity, or as he frames it personally, a "sympathy tattoo".



Bruce Gordon



Ed Young

Ed Young has an astute and unusual sense of humour, and an idiosyncratic perspective on most things. He also has a shrewd talent for identifying quirk, and a curious exaltation at deriving some. These elements brought Young – working towards his Masters at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town – into the spotlight during his fourth-year exhibition at the end of 2001. There he presented an elaborate installation of video, found objects and sound: a primary-coloured maze of almost banal repetition (whether of object, video or soundtrack) with an occasionally subversive and ironic but always lobby-fyist. Memorable moments include the brutality of the video: *Killing Teddy* as a rite of passage and the ultimate defilement of "cute"; an orgy of abuse against childhood bears – being boxed, squashed, punned and discarded, as well as the simple elegance of *Sony* (conceived with Cameron Patten) – a mellowly altered Bobby McFerrin audio-track of "Don't Worry, Be Happy" with an otherwise blank screen and the words "Sorry we couldn't get our shit together" written across it.

But beyond the immediate entertainment value of Young's offerings lurks a sharp conceptual underpinning. The ready-made is his recurrent starting point. From there he takes it through a range of processes that re-emit and recontextualise it. Ready-made film footage is sampled and recontextualised not unlike a musical breakbeat: where a single moment or an isolated number of frames is removed from its original context and looped to a point where it becomes something else. And with every re-edit comes a further, eloquent, corruption of source. The same is true for the soundtracks that he uses, as too for found objects that he chooses to feature in his videos or include in his installations.

With a gentle knack for iconoclasm, and an implicit pleasure in revising historical narratives (that is personal, political or of the medium he's choosing to work with), his tackling of instances of political zeal or national pride, for example, are inevitably scrupulous little subversions. In the case of *Kind Regards from the Leader* (2002), what is lifted as footage of AAB leader Eugene Terreblanche addressing a political rally is newly endowed with spectacularly revised subtitles, providing alternative English translations of the Afrikaans audio, such as "Allow me to say tonight... As Nelson Mandela once told me over a cup of tea... and some scoons... listening to old Tracy Chapman records... never underestimate the importance of hygiene", along with other cautionary inclusions such as a reminder to floss regularly. Of an entirely different tone, but still working within the stretches of the ready-made, is *The European Collector Who Could Gaze Uninterruptedly* (shown at YDEure at the end of February), featuring video footage of a "found situation" of toddlers playing ball in a park, spotted by Young from his balcony.

Another recent appropriation of a ready-made by Young moves beyond captured/found video footage or sound. Bruce Gordon involved the sale, at the annual Michaelis art auction of Cape Town citizen, art collector and owner of Jolburg bar Bruce Gordon (described in the auction listings as "Found object/Iconcept"), who has since been donated to the South African National Gallery as an artwork, and will be available for display as part of their Permanent Collection as required. The first showing of *Bruce Gordon* will take place at the National Gallery on March 29 and will be accompanied by a publication by Andrew Lamprecht. — Tracy Murray

Left: Ed Young, *Killing Teddy*, 2001, video with sound. Right top: *The European Collector Who Could Gaze Uninterruptedly*, 2002, video with sound. Middle: *Kind Regards from the Leader*, 2002, video with sound. Bottom: *Found Object/Iconcept*, 2002, video with sound.

NEWS

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 Arnott, Jane Alexander, Gavin Younge, Sue Williamson, Beezy Bailey, Pippa Skotnes, Malcolm Payne, Peggy Delpont 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 R26 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.



Bruce Gordon on auction at Michaelis

Dinsdag 31 Desember 2002

AKTUEEL

Konsep-kuns: Michaelis-kunsskool vind baat

Kaapse kroegbaas uitgestal as kuns

Eienaar van Jo'burg Bar einde Maart in kunsmuseum te sien



Die kroegman wat deesdae ook 'n kunswerk is, mnr. Bruce Gordon (links), staan hier voor sy restaurant. By hom is die kunstenaar Edward Young (regs) te sien. Foto: DEWIER DE WEE

VALDA JANSSEN

KAAPSTAD. - 'n Kroegman word aanstaande jaar in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum (SANE) as 'n kunswerk uitgestal.

Mnr. Bruce Gordon (54), eienaar van die Jo'burg Bar in Langastraat, is onlangs vir R52 000 opeengevat en sal op 29 Maart uitgestal word.

"Dit is 'n konsep van 'n senior student. Edward Young, aan die Michaelis-kunsskool, het mnr. Marilyn Martin, direkteur van die SANE, gesê: "Wat is die waarde van 'n mens?" Young, 'n gereelde klant by die Jo'burg

Bar, het besluit om Gordon as 'n kunswerk aan te bied, "want ek het gedink mense sou hom graag wil koop".

Dit was buitendien vir 'n spesie doel, want die helfte van die geld sal vir beurse en sosiale projekte by die Michaelis-kunsskool gebruik word, het Young gesê.

"Dit was sy besluit om die objek, Bruce Gordon", as 'n konseptuele kunswerk op te stel", het Martin gesê.

"Dit is 'n kunsvorm waarin die konsep belangrik is as die materiaal waarvan die kunswerk gemaak is. Dit is 'n genre wat bevestig dat kuns is, en is daarop gebaseer om 'n mens se verhouding te prikkel. Dit word ook gekoppel aan *performance art* en

die velling was dus deel van die proses," Gordon word in Maart as 'deel van die Kaapse Fees uitgestal. "Dit sal, soek 'n regte kunswaardering, met 'n amptelike opening en alles gehanteer word," het Martin gesê.

Die uitstalling van 'n lewende kunswerk is 'n eerste vir hulle, volgens Martin. "Ons is altyd oop vir nuwe idees, gedagtes en kunsvorme", het Young gesê.

Dit is ook sy eerste keer as kunswerk, het Gordon gesê. Beplan hy om daarmee voort te gaan? "Ek is uitgelewer aan die kunstenaar. Dit is sy besluit. Het Gordon gesê.

Wat is sy plan? "My plan is om te sien of ek kan gebruik word as 'n mens se verhouding tot die kunstenaar." Young se e-posadres is v.janssen@dieburger.com.

Sunday Times

DECEMBER 29, 2002

BAR OWNER SOLD AS WORK OF ART

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THE REAL THING: Bruce Gordon, in the foreground, and Edward Young, who came up with the concept. Picture: RUVAN BOSHOFF

Bar owner sold as work of art

BONNY SCHOONAKKER

"I REALISE I am not exactly an oil painting, but I believe that each human being is a work of art," says Bruce Gordon. And he should know, because someone has paid R52 000 to put the bar owner and former journalist on display as an artwork in the South African National Gallery in Cape Town.

Simply titled *Bruce Gordon*, the living artwork was sold earlier this month at an auction held for the benefit of the city's Michaelis School of Fine Art, and easily fetched the highest price. The R52 000 paid for the unsigned work was double that of the next highest sale — R26 000 for two photomontages by Jane Alexander — and outdid the R14 000 paid for "boxed works" by Pipopa Skotinos.

However, Bruce Gordon is not Bruce Gordon's idea. Credit for what the curator of the nation's leading art gallery believes is "an exceptional concept" belongs to Edward Young, a student at Michaelis, who turned Gordon into a work of art by simply offering him for sale as one.

Young, says that his work is not so much about Bruce Gordon per se as "the concept of Bruce Gordon", an abstract idea given substance by putting the living, smiling 54-year-old version up for sale as lot number 82. The Michaelis auction's catalogue identified lot 82 as a "found object".

Young, a familiar customer at Jo'burg Gordon's popular bar in Cape Town's Long Street, says he chose Gordon because he felt he was "sellable".

"I wanted to sell my car but I realised it wasn't going to make the money I wanted," said Young.

The first bid for Bruce Gordon came from Cape Town artist Sue Williamson, who also happens to be Bruce Gordon's wife. Williamson, bidding by telephone from Argentina, made the first bid, offering a mere R100. Williamson declined to improve her offer, but rival bids by Suzy Bell, a publicist, and Marilyn Martin, the National Gallery's director, quickly chased up the bidding, with Bell's R52 000 outdoing Martin's final offer of R50 000.

Half of the R52 000 will go to Young, and the other half will go towards bursaries and special projects at Michaelis. Although she lost to Bell in the bidding for *Bruce Gordon*, Martin will nevertheless be able to get him on display on March 29, when her gallery has its annual exhibition as part of the Cape Town Festival — subject to the state-owned National Gallery's ruling council ratifying the acquisition.

Bell said that she decided to buy Bruce Gordon because, "I had some spare cash as I had just sold one of my petrol heads — I have a fern on the West Coast — and needed to replace his patriarchal position. When I was at the Michaelis auction my friends and I thought that a conceptual husband would be a fitting replacement. But unfortunately the conceptual husband did not match my bedroom curtains and he clashed terribly with my Trentalord, the *Zulu Girl*, so I decided to give him away and now the public can view him at the National Gallery."

Martin said that the National Gallery did not normally buy works by students but she felt that Bruce Gordon was "an exceptional piece of conceptual artwork". Conceptual art, she explained, "asks questions about the nature of art, and this work does that exceptionally well."

REVIEWS / CAPE

Michaelis Exhibition 2001
by Tracy Murinik

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 lurk, this can simultaneously prove potentially confounding to viewers who get to experience a broad and varied range of the art experience; from the "my-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.

Of the ones I'd gladly spend any portion of a holiday hanging out at, Ed Young's spectacular room of primary colours, eclectic soundtracks, moving images, cheesy iconoclasm and unfortunate teddy bears assertively gets my vote. It's a jam-packed variety show of the banal with a loopy twist. Or, as Young describes it 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.

One gets to move along a gratifying trail from story to story (to a blaring *Superman* soundtrack): a hypnotic primary coloured pelvis-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 *Dialogue*. The ambivalent adulation and concurrent ridicule of iconic figures is fabulously approached in *Untitled (Superman)*, followed by a whopper grin in a Schumacher poster, but taken to its 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, "monotony would be it." And he ends the statement: "As Chris Wool pointed out: 'If you can't take a joke get the fuck out of my house.'" It seems a reasonable premise.

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 Shipman. 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 Slemon's skillfully 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 skittle-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 object found objects (from specifically identified street locations in Durbanville - and with the exception of one gift), these works are

introspective and self-scrutinising 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 seriously 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 ideals 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.

 SUBMIT Review