

**Ryan GANDER**

*Championed by rigour*

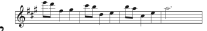
September 4 – October 4, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday September 4, 6-8pm

**Gallery one**

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present *Championed by rigour*, an exhibition of new work by Ryan Gander, and the artist's first solo show with the gallery.

Focusing his critical and investigative eye on the minutiae of contemporary life, Gander uses everyday experience and collective consciousness as the substance of his often self-reflexive projects and artworks. Employing a broad range of processes and media, the artist simultaneously draws attention to the fault lines between communication and interpretation, between the object and its given context, and between the artist and their audience. Gander's works investigate political models, social systems, modernist theory and the verbal and visual semiotics that give form to contemporary society. Imbued with a fundamental conceptual rigor, Gander suggests that his works' starkly formal appearance, or 'face', is only secondary to a more enigmatic, substantive, yet elusive, content, one the artist might dub the artwork's 'soul'.

Among the several dynamic works of sculpture, photography, works on paper and installations featured,  (the title of this work is written as a musical score) is a key example of the complex relationship between form and content that informs Gander's practice. First appearing as a randomly discarded, perhaps Minimalist, grouping of brass tubes, the arrangement actually carries with it a specific narrative. Each length of brass is tuned to a note from a section of the classical music composition, *Gran Vals*, known more widely as the mobile telephone company Nokia's first default ring-tone. Once elevated to the most widely distributed and recognized tone in the world, the momentary supremacy of this simple arrangement is now nearly forgotten as Nokia's pre-eminence has passed and more sophisticated ring-tone technology has developed. The work represents this passing with a discarded arrangement of bells loaded with the potential of the tune. In fact, Gander has arranged the tubes to allude to a fantastical scenario where the melody may have actually played had they fallen together in just the right order before being settling in silence.

This dichotomy between visible form and thematic content is further illustrated and explored in "This shit can't go on forever," a sculpture comprised of the faded remnants of signage from a fictional gallery named after "JC Fare", a fictional artist; "Available in three different sizes and four different colours" a smashed neon sign that had spelled out the phrase, "say what you see"; "Felix provides a stage No. 6," a large image printed as wallpaper that features the artist's studio in the process of producing another sculptural work; and "The New New Alphabet," an arrangement of wooden printing blocks featuring the text of a new alphabet font conceived and designed by the artist.

"Relic from a Living Man (Alchemy Box #6)," part of an ongoing series by Gander collectively known as the "Alchemy Boxes," is among the show's most literal illustrations of an artwork's mysterious inner workings. At first sight the work seems devoid of content, an empty display case sits atop a pedestal. However, an accompanying wall text itemizes numerous dissonant objects, found and made, that have been sealed into the pedestal invisible from view. Each of these items discursively relate to an early work by Chris Burden – from which the title of this piece is derived. Burden's "Relic from 'Dead Man'", consists of a similar display case and pedestal presenting the components of an early Burden performance. The Burden pedestal was first loaded with these elements when the two artists exhibited together, and Burden's pedestal subsequently became part of Gander's work along with a replica display case. Gander's intervention speaks of many associations, preeminently the history of both artists' actions. Displayed as a discrete object in this context however, it is the potential of these entombed artifacts, and the faith in the existence of the invisible that overwhelms the formal presentation.

Perhaps the most spectacular new work in the exhibition, "As it presents itself – Somewhere Vague," is a video installation presented as a large projection in the gallery's darkened rear space. Produced as a stop-frame animation, the work utilizes claymation characters, each of which is seen preparing for a performance on a grand piano set on a stage. The narration, spoken by a single voice, repeats questions in a random order that refer to the action being played out, and represent

questions the artist has invented for each of the characters as if they are responding to the video itself. Each character has a different viewpoint on the content of the video, the context of its presentation and their awareness of it as an “artwork.” Taking the stage are the Lumiere brothers who represent expertise in entertainment and the projected image; Matthew Higgs, representing the arts professional, while Ganders mother and the British writer/comedian Spike Milligan represent a personal viewpoint and the performance expert respectively. Finally the skeletal structure on which all these clay models are constructed is seen appearing on the stage as representing the animator. As the scenes are looped four times throughout the one continuous soundtrack, the questions posed differ from one repeated scene to the next heightening the sense of ambiguity. Questions here are raised as to whether the narrator is part of or separate to the work, whether he is speaking on behalf of the performers, the audience or the artist. This cyclical work comments on the nature of the work of art, the audience’s relationship to it and the role of the artist.

What interests Gander most crucially here are the decisions that the audience makes that complete their unique understanding of the work—indeed the audience member’s interpretation plays an essential role in the final act of the artwork’s creation. Throughout the exhibition this comment on the process of the construction of ideas and our understanding of them is paramount.

Notable recent exhibitions include *Something Vague*, St.Gallen Kunstverein, Switzerland (solo), 2008; *Life on Mars*, 55<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (group), 2008; *Revolutions – forms that turn*, 16<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (group), 2008; *The Last Work*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (solo), 2007; *More than the weight of your shadow*, Daiwa Radiator Factory Viewing Room, Hiroshima (solo), 2007; *Short cut through the trees*, MUMOK, Vienna (solo), 2007; *00s - the history of a decade that has not yet been named*, Lyon Biennale, Lyon (group), 2007; *Cinema Verso*, Whitechapel East Wing, London (solo), 2006; *Tate Triennial*, Tate Britain, London (group), 2006; and *But it was all green*, Artist Space, New York (solo), 2005; among others.

The solo exhibition *Something Vague*, can currently be seen at the Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn until November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008.

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For further information please feel free to contact the gallery at [info@tanyabonakdargallery.com](mailto:info@tanyabonakdargallery.com) or 212-414-4144.

**Picture This**

