

LISSON GALLERY

Artlyst

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Artlyst

Ryan Gander A Principled Humanist By Sue Hubbard



The one thing I know about Ryan Gander before we meet to look at his new show at the Lisson Gallery is that he doesn't want to be seen as a disabled artist. He just can't walk. That, he says from his wheelchair, doesn't define who he is. What does interest him are ideas.

"Language is his subject, and art is simply the medium he uses to discuss it."

In his baseball cap and cool black garb, he's unashamedly intellectual. A conceptual artist who asks big questions about the modern world, about how we cope in societies driven by the need for constant economic growth and consumption. How we value our time when there are so many competing demands set against the continuous noise of the internet and social media. As we chat in the gallery surrounded by his work, I wonder if he'd have been just as happy being a philosopher as an artist. It's not the making of artwork, per se, that captivates him, he says, but how he uses it to explore the nature of the self and how language plays a part in defining who we are.

Language is his subject, and art is simply the medium he uses to discuss it. He wants his work to be unexpected, to take people out of their comfort zones. He's critical of the blue-chip nature of the art world and doesn't want to make art just for the cognoscenti. To be elitist. I point out that he's showing in one of London's most prestigious galleries, but he assures me that he's also about to show work on a boat and in a tattoo parlour.



Ryan Gander, *Something that 'is' versus something that 'occurs'*, 2023 Acrylic lockers with different contents inside, bags, umbrella, items of clothing © Ryan Gander, courtesy Lisson Gallery

On entering the gallery, it might not, at first, be clear what his concerns actually are. A wall of Donald Judd-style Perspex lockers, all packed with umbrellas and other personal effects like office lockers, are the first thing you see. Each is identically arranged, reminding those old enough of Pete Seeger's '60s song: little boxes made of ticky tacky. Little boxes on the hillside. Little boxes all the same. A social satire on the conformity and aspiration of middle-class life. On one wall is a strange clock that merges two displays to create a sense of double vision. While across the room sits an unexceptional metal office desk and fan. Disconcertingly, there's a distinct odour of damp and urine in that corner of the room. Hidden under the desk is a life-size, animatronic female gorilla – she's called Brenda, apparently. With her moving head and darting eyes, she's so engaging that I have to keep reminding myself she's not real as she appears to be trying to communicate, using her fingers to count or figure something out. What that may be is not at all clear. The question posed here seems to be whether our closest, non-verbal relatives are able to understand language or count? Is an ability to do so the thing that defines us as human? Very touchingly, Ryan Gander tells me he has a four-year-old non-verbal autistic son. It's quite clear that his child 'understands' what is being said to him even though he does not speak, forcing us to question and re-evaluate our understanding of language and communication.

Hung throughout the gallery are a series of steel plates that bear Gander's poetic and typographic compositions. (I'm a terrible poet, he admits, on learning that I'm a published poet.) But 'poetry' is not really the point. *You're my best machine* (Ee Ouw Arh 2003) presents the first sounds made by humans around 50,000 years ago, whilst a stainless steel door depicts different genres of language from official signage to graffiti. It is linguistics rather than poetic imagery that attracts Gander. In one of the side galleries is a series made this year: *Know not your place in the world*. Here, two life-size bronzes of Gander's eldest and middle children are dressed up in a collection of clothes and props. Their gaze is fixed on a couple of theatrical-looking masks painted in matt and gloss colours that have been strategically placed on the floor at their feet. This explores Gander's interest in make-believe and play – those important devices in any artist's toolbox – suggesting that if we don a mask, it allows us to present different versions of ourselves.

Among the most engaging pieces in the show is the re-worked documentary *Only a Matter of Time*. By wearing different hand-drawn masks inspired by Picasso – a reference to the 2017 exhibition at Remai Modern, Saskatoon, *Faces of Picasso: The Collection Selected by Ryan Gander* – Ryan Gander never has to reveal his true self. Like the heteronyms of the famous Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa, who wrote poetry in the guise of different poets, these masks allow Gander to be invisible and be whoever he chooses whilst conducting his interviews. He has, during his career, made work as eight other artists, including Aston Ernest and Santo Stern (an acronym). Some of these artists, he tells me, are more talented than he is. Others enjoy making deliberately trashy work. During the film, he explores the concept of the self/selves through that most contemporary of phenomena, the selfie. Narcissistic and always curated, the selfie encourages a discrepancy between who we say we are online and who we really are.

During the course of the film, he visits an Instagram influencer, and David Baddiel, who has a huge following on Twitter (now X), a man who cryogenically freezes the dead and another who is into trans-humanism and bionic body parts. He also visits Freud's house in Maresfield Gardens to discuss the splitting of the self into the id, ego and super-ego. There is also a pilgrimage to a modern-day female hermit living in complete isolation in a hut in a Welsh wood. There, beyond the reaches of the technological world, she talks of connecting with the earth and blocking out the negative noise of contemporary society.

Being enigmatic has long been part of the contemporary art game. It is, perhaps, what propelled Andy Warhol to fame. Ryan Gander is an exception among conceptual artists in that for him; there's no disguising his moral alarm at the idea of being cryogenically resurrected like some Iceland Lazarus or his distaste at the endless narcissism of social media influencers being played out in this repetitive world of the present tense. In his film, he makes no bones that his empathy lies with the woman in her Welsh woods, cooking on an open fire and living close to nature. Despite the apparently playful, postmodern aesthetic of his work, Ryan Gander's values, it turns out, are those of an old-fashioned, principled humanist.

Ryan Gander PUNTO!, Lisson Gallery, 27 Bell Street, London NW1 5BY, Until 28 October 2023

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The Observer

Interview

Ryan Gander: 'Going to a gallery is like taking your imagination to the gym'

Tim Adams



📍 Ryan Gander in his studio in Melton, Suffolk. Photograph: Joshua Bright/The Observer

The prolific British conceptual artist on the source of his creativity, why he left London - and a coin-based treasure hunt he is making for Manchester's international festival

The real killer of art, Ryan Gander suggests, is procrastination. His solution is always to act on ideas “before they lose their energy”. His studio, in a former register office and sports hall in the Suffolk village of Melton, is living proof of that determination. Before we sit and talk, he gives me a tour.

In one room are the moon paintings he is making for an exhibition in Tokyo, some using paint prints from upturned tables in a Chinese restaurant; in another are some of his draped mirror series in which the reflection-obscuring fabric is cast in marble; here are piles of art posters for exhibitions that never happened, there are animatronic “dying mosquitoes” twitching on gold playing cards; in one corner is a vending machine trading an alphabetic list of “everything you never want to run out of” - A is After Eights, B is Beer, # is a bag of marijuana; there are recreations of graffitied back alley doorways, recast in polished steel; plans for the most authentic lifesize gorilla robot ever made, with “smells, sounds, everything”, which should be ready for his [exhibition](#) at Lisson Gallery later this year; homages to 1970s slideshows; a recreated transparent Japanese gym locker...

Gander has always been a one-man group show. For a start, he has a small team of assistants making and planning; for another thing he's got eight artistic alter egos, who have created different strands of his work for more than 15 years. The fictional artist selves, he says, allow him "to make work better than I can make work, but also work that's more superficial and shallow than I would want to make". The tackiest of them is Santo Sterne and the most high-minded is Santo's anagram Aston Ernest.

Gander, as you'll have gathered, is a conceptual artist, but he is also a likeable kind of philosopher, providing ad hoc theories to order. My favourite piece of his is *The End* (2020), in which an animatronic mouse appeared through a hole at the bottom of the wall of an empty gallery room to talk about metaphysics (in the voice of Gander's nine-year-old daughter Olive). Gander's practice includes the ongoing lecture series *Loose Associations*, in which he riffs on ideas that interest him. He has never been afraid of risk. For the Documenta 13 show in Germany in 2012, he exhibited a cool breeze circulating in an empty gallery.



📷 The End, 2020, by Ryan Gander. Photograph: Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

We end up in his office - "I don't work in here that often," he says, "because I get lonely" - which has a couple of hundred printed notes pinned to the wall, as three-word "catalyst ideas" for future projects: "cartoon, poster, wobble", say. "You won't know what that means," Gander says, "but I do." The hope is that the cards start to make connections with each other, like a mind map, or a police investigation wall. There are also shelves of file boxes marked: "*chronos*" and "*kairos*", two ancient Greek words for different aspects of time. "*Chronos* is what I would make if I had more time and money," Gander says, explaining his system. "*Kairos* is more like 'readiness', for now. Like my son, Baxter, is three and he is autistic. You can't say to him 'wait until six o'clock to eat'. He has to eat when he is hungry. That's *kairos*." He pulls out a bunch of bundled photographs: "Baxter's lines," he says. "My son is quite compulsive and he puts all his toys and cars and stuff in long lines across the floor. I've been recording them in pictures, and I'll probably recreate them in a gallery at some point."

The particular project I'm here to talk about is Gander's gift to the people of Manchester for the forthcoming international festival. Gander grew up in the north-west and spent five years as an adult living in Salford. "My wife always says that I turn into someone different when I'm there - I scowl more," he says, with a grin.

The project for the festival - which he will headline alongside the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama and her famous infinity rooms - is a series of three coins, tens of thousands of which are currently being minted. The final number will depend on the "cost of the metals and the exchange rates", but the plan is to produce about 250,000, one for every other person in the city. On each day of the festival, Gander's coins will be scattered around the city on park benches and library shelves and tram seats and pavements, "a bit like a massive treasure hunt".

“No artist is supposed to admit it, but I'm both really ambitious and really jealous

Each coin shows a version of heads and tails, and they all relate, the artist says, to "values that we maybe don't think about often enough". The idea is people might pick one up, a little piece of art, and feel lucky to have found it. "They might put it in their pocket as a decision-making tool. It is a currency, but it's a currency of happenstance."

He picks up a coin from the box in front of him, turns it over to the light. "This one is 'listen/speak'," he says. "On the listen side, it says: 'Your silence is louder than their raised voice.'" Speak says: 'Panoramic voice, panoramic vision.'" He picks up a second coin; this one is 'pause/action'. The quotes here are two things his father - "the wisest man I know" - said to him as a kid. On one side: "Time is your greatest asset." On the other, "the most useful quote ever: 'Let the world take a turn'... My dad always used to say that if I was angry or frustrated. Things will look different tomorrow. He was a Stoic, without realising it."



📷 Ryan Gander holds up the coins he has had made for The Find at the Manchester international festival. Photograph: Joshua Bright/The Observer

In the course of talking about his art, Gander talks quite a lot about his father. Gander grew up in Chester, where his dad worked as an engineer at the Vauxhall factory in Ellesmere Port and his mum was a teacher and then a school inspector. There wasn't a lot of art around at home, he said, but his dad wrote good poetry. Before Ryan was born his parents had lived in California for a while, where Ian Gander was posted with General Motors. He brought a little of the summer of love back to 1970s Cheshire: "he came back with a fur coat, smoking Gauloises", and with a belief that the world was full of possibility. He conveyed that to his son.

Gander picks up the third coin. This one is "solo/together". On one side it advises: "Know your place in the world is not fixed." On the other, a quote from the artist Carmen Herrera: "Tend to curiosities beyond your own identity." That latter motto sounds like the closest to a personal statement for Gander. Before I'd met him, I'd been advised that he had no wish at all to talk about, or be defined by, using a wheelchair (he was born with a severe brittle bone condition).

He raises that idea, in relation to the Herrera quote. "The art world these days has a lot of artists who barter in unique selling points," he says. "But I don't identify with being in a wheelchair at all. As far as I'm concerned, I'm not disabled - I've spent my whole life trying not to be disabled. It's not something I want to embrace. Like anyone, there are some things I can't do and some things I can do. And that's the end of it."

Looking back, he suggests, if his condition had any effect on him, the fact that he spent half his childhood in hospital with broken bones meant he was "socialised with adults, not children".

"In hospital you can't physically play or experience things," he says, "you can't go to places, so I suppose you gain a sort of overactive imagination. And it's like any muscle, isn't it? I think my imagination was severely overworked in hospital because I had a fixed perspective on the world. So I had to imagine things. That's what I think going to a gallery or museum is like; it's like taking your imagination to the gym, just for a workout, to keep it active."

Does that help to explain his creation of artistic alter egos?

"I don't do autobiography a lot. But yeah. The alter ego thing is probably that idea of prototyping experiences. And for me, life is one massive prototyping experience."



That mind-wandering, these days, has a large physical component. As well as exhibiting across the world, Gander has recently produced public art works in Central Park, New York, and Mexico City Zoo among other places. He has been a visiting lecturer at the Royal College of Art in London, as well as the University of Southern California and Fudan University in Shanghai. He is a Royal Academician and an OBE. Is there a sort of pinch-yourself feeling, I wonder, in this dreamt-of life that has come true?

“I come here at night sometimes on my own, and I can’t believe it,” he says, of his sprawling ideas complex. “It’s like an art school and it’s all just for me.”

His work ethic comes in part from a knowledge of the alternatives. “I always like to feel as though I’m doing a real job,” he says. When he first left Manchester Metropolitan University in 1999, he worked in a carpet shop. And then as a not very successful trainee at a newspaper in north Wales. “A lot of artists make art to please themselves,” he says. “But my work ethic and my guilt about how lucky I am won’t let me do that. I don’t make art to enjoy it. I do it to discover stuff. Art has to be a bit mad,” he says. “Why would I just make one thing for 30 or 40 years in different sizes and different colours? That doesn’t make any sense to me.”

Does that absence of a signature idea make him an art dealer’s headache? “Yeah, I mean, in terms of selling art I think that’s probably my biggest downfall.”



📷 Dad's Halo Effect, 2014, outside Connell Sixth Form College, Beswick, Manchester. Photograph: Alamy

Gander has cared less about that world since he moved out of London with his wife Rebecca May Marston, former director of the Limoncello Gallery, about 14 years ago. They live not far from the studio in the town of Saxmundham with their three kids, in a magical house he has designed in a converted Victorian school. What they have bought there as well as space, Gander says - they used to live in a flat next to a strip club in Hackney - is time. "Up here, you notice people from London because they walk a bit quicker. But life literally lasts longer here. When I was in London I used to wheel myself around really quickly because it felt like that was what you did if you were ambitious," he says. "Here I take time to go the wrong way, and get lost. Though of course people still look at me anxiously: 'You don't live in London - where do you get coffee?'"

The rural regime has also, he suggests, allowed him to avoid a midlife crisis - he's 47 - "though people keep saying to me: 'You are making all this work about time and about value - are you OK?'" The fact is, he says, he's never stopped thinking about those questions.

"One of my kids, the other night was doing the thing that all kids do at some point: 'I'm going to die,'" he says. "I sat with her and explained some of the ideas of Shintoism to her, and how all things were collections of molecules and they didn't die, they formed themselves into other things. Because when I was a kid and I had that feeling, I convinced myself of reincarnation, and it suppressed the worry."



Did it work for his daughter?

He smiles. “She sat there for a while and was like: ‘I don’t know if I believe in that.’ But it distracted her for a bit.”

The abiding antidote to those thoughts is creativity, Gander suggests; it’s what always keeps him going. “No artist is supposed to admit it,” he says, “but I’m both really ambitious and really jealous. I think jealousy can be really healthy. I think some of the best works I’ve made have come out of sitting in a pub next to another artist and she’s gone: ‘I’m doing this.’ And I’m like: ‘Oh, shit, that’s so good.’ And I’ll be rushing back to the studio.”

How does he measure the quality of one idea over another?

“By its life,” he says. “I don’t mean the life of the object, I mean, the life of the story about it. For me, the only value art has is the conversation we have about it. The value of Cornelia Parker sending a meteorite back into space with Nasa, is not the meteorite, but the fact that maybe someone in a bar in Madrid is telling someone else about it right now. We tend to measure the world in physical, tangible things. And we don’t measure the world in ephemeral things like stories, moments, memories.”

Gander has plenty of plans to create many more of those moments - not least on the streets of Manchester over the summer. But he also knows there will never be enough of them, even with the help of technology.

“There is a work that I am doing at the moment which is a virtual reality goggles thing,” he says. “It’s called *Ryan Waiting*. You put the goggles on and you are in a white, perimeterless landscape, and I’m already in there, an animation of me. The animation is controlled by an algorithm that will last for 100 years; you might see me looking at my watch, or heading off into the distance, or whatever, I don’t know. I’m in there now, doing something.”

He laughs. The plan is for his ideas never to stop.

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Ryan Gander recreates high street mainstay, with everything down to carpet tiles and plants made from glass



📷 Artist Ryan Gander's glass betting shop in a retail unit of High Street West in Sunderland.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Yet another betting shop has appeared on one of Britain's high streets, full of screwed-up betting slips, little pens, newspaper racecards and discarded sweet wrappers. A pile of unopened post suggests the place has been abandoned.

So far, so depressing. But this bookie's in [Sunderland](#) is different. Titled Ghost Shop, it is remarkable because everything down to the sticky carpet tiles, fire extinguishers and CCTV cameras has been made from glass.

"I have always had a weird fascination with betting shops," said Ryan Gander, an artist whose always eyecatching work has included [an activity centre for zoo lions in Mexico City](#) and [marble replicas of dens](#) he made with his then three-year-old daughter.

"I like the beckoning doors of illicit sin that betting shops have," he said. "They're always covered - you never know what's going on inside so there is all this mystery to them. And betting is such a daft addiction in so many ways."

Gander is a conceptual artist known for irreverent works, which often stop people in their tracks, and the betting shop ranks as one of his most ambitious projects.

He estimates that curators say “it can’t be done” to about 90% of his wild ideas. When he proposed a derelict betting shop on the high street, the National Glass Centre in Sunderland said “yes” straight away.

“I’ve never done anything with glass and I always like the next thing I do to be completely different to the last thing,” he said.

The work might be seen as a comment on the decline of the British high street. It is also, said Gander, about how we never pay enough attention to dangers in plain sight - and glass was the perfect medium.

He said: “We see betting shops but they are kind of invisible because we pay no attention to them. They just become deleted from our awareness. We cancel out other people’s problems with addictions ... we just blank these things out. We make them transparent.”

Gander is one of four contemporary artists commissioned by [the National Glass Centre in Sunderland](#) to make works that will be on display across the north-east of England until September.

Another is Turner prize-nominated Monster Chetwynd, who has created glass dioramas of scenes from the lives of local saints St Bede and St Cuthbert. It includes [the story of Cuthbert](#) spending the night singing psalms in the freezing sea and emerging to bless otters on the beach.

Chetwynd’s installation will be shown in the [Galilee Chapel](#) - home to Bede’s tomb - at Durham Cathedral. The other two artists in [the Glass Exchange project](#) are Pascale Marthine Tayou and Katie Paterson.

The works are being made by artists and technicians skilled in the craft of glassmaking.

[Erin Dickson](#), a glass artist, has been involved in Gander’s project since October. It has been challenging but fun, she said, although Gander suggested it had been more like “a hundred days of hell”.

The biggest object in the installation will be a glass full-size fixed odds betting terminal, based on [the controversial slot machines](#) that campaigners argue have been cataclysmic for problem gamblers.

Gander is one of Britain’s leading conceptual artists but he is not expecting hordes of critics from London to visit what was once a tanning salon.

“I suspect that 99% of people who engage with it will be people who don’t know they’re engaging with art and I think that is the best art,” he said. “The problem is, especially in Britain, art is still a stigma for most of the population unless you live in Islington, or have been to art school, or are from an affluent background.

“Most people don’t want anything to do with art. It is just elitist, daft.” He hopes people will come across his piece and engage with it without thinking “oh ... bloody poets”.

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The Guardian

Ryan Gander's dolos opens a sculpture trail for the Yorkshire coast

'Giant brutalist-looking shape' can only be finished by nature, says the artist, making a point about the climate crisis

Mark Brown *North of England correspondent*

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We are only human (Incomplete sculpture for Scarborough to be finished by snow) by Ryan Gander Photograph: Jules Lister

Putting a large concrete block used to protect coastlines against erosion at the top of a cliff rather than at the foot of it is odd, the [artist Ryan Gander](#) cheerfully admits.

Calling it art may also get some people's backs up too. But that's fine. "I love Korean and Japanese food and I detest pizza," he said. "That doesn't mean we shouldn't have pizzerias."

On Friday Gander's new work will be unveiled to the public, the first in an ambitious new sculpture trail planned for the [Yorkshire](#) coast.

Positioned on [Scarborough Castle headland](#), with its incredible coastal views, the work is in the form of a dolos, the concrete structures used as a defence against coastal erosion.

Gander said he loved the shapes. “They are giant, concrete, brutalist-looking geometric forms that tessellate well together on the back of a lorry so they can be moved and they get placed on a beach in stacks,” he said.

“What I love about them is they are so War of the Worlds, so alien. Dolos don’t seem of this world, there’s something extra terrestrial about them.”

The work is called *We are only human* (Incomplete sculpture for [Scarborough](#) to be finished by snow).

As the name suggests, the work is unfinished and only will be when snow falls on it. But that may not happen so often because of climate change.

After the birth of his third child Gander said he became interested in how his son might well be someone who, in 20 years time, would brag that he remembered seeing real snow in the garden.

“He might be of the generation to say, ‘oh I made a snowman!’ Which is kind of terrifying.

If you take away the snow you’re left with an unfinished sculpture that can only be finished by nature, said Gander. “Because of human interference with nature, we can’t finish the sculpture. It’s like back to front ... payback time.”

Gander’s sculpture will be followed 10 days later by the unveiling of three benches for people to sit on along the Esk estuary, near Whitby harbour. The benches, the work of [Juneau Projects](#), are there for people to enjoy the views and contemplate the wildlife.

[The sculpture trail project](#), titled *Wild Eye*, aims to encourage people to engage with wildlife and marine life along the Yorkshire coast.

Gander’s dolos is cast in ultra-low carbon concrete which incorporates limestone formed from the shells and skeletons of prehistoric sea creatures.

People can sit on it and they will hear audio clips from different voices connected to the project, including specialists from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and English Heritage.

Public sculpture on Britain’s coast is nothing new and it is often divisive; none more so, perhaps, than Maggi Hambling’s 4-metre high Scallop on the beach at Aldeburgh still seen as either [a beauty or a blot on the coastal landscape](#).

Gander said he had no problem with controversy. “The best art is the stuff that when you are on the bus on the way home you are still thinking about. That might be ugly, beautiful, compromising ... you might hate the artist. Politically it might not be in tune with what you believe. That doesn’t matter. It just matters whether it bothers you.”

He said he was less interested in how art looked and more in how it made you feel and think.

“If people want to complain about art then they should complain about the conceptual nature of it, not what it looks like. It’s like if you go past someone’s house and you don’t like the curtains, you don’t knock on the door and tell them to change them.”

LISSON GALLERY

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Ryan Gander's 'prophetic' works come to Space K in Seoul



"The End" (2020) by artist Ryan Gander [MOON SO-YOUNG]

A black mouse pokes its head out of a hole in a wall of an art museum and delivers a prophetic speech about time and the end in a child's innocent voice. This is not a scene from a fable but what the visitors to a solo show of British artist Ryan Gander at Space K in Magok, western Seoul, will encounter.

The tiny robot mouse, voiced by the artist's youngest daughter, "delivers a profound sermon on some of the biggest questions that face humanity from our ability to cognitively time travel to our limitations in being able to foresee our own end," according to the London-based Lisson Gallery. To hear the mouse sage speak, including the sentence "Time is your *greatest asset*," the viewer needs to squat before the mouse hole in a humble gesture both in mind and body.

Gander, currently one of the most influential conceptual artists, completed the work "The End" in early 2020 just before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in earnest. Therefore, the work is considered to be very prophetic. Gander was quoted by Lisson as saying that the mouse talks about, above all, time and that "time really feels to me like it is the subject of our time."

"The End" is one of the 28 works on view in the solo show of Gander titled "Rates of Change." Regarding the title, Gander said in an interview with Space K, "the thing to think about the last year, is that because we have not been having a lot of new experiences, times go strangely quickly but then all the merriments, it seems to go on and on forever. So 'The Rates of Change' has to do with the way that we perceive time as humans depended on the context that we are in. (...) 'Change' is exactly the same as 'Time.' They can actually be one word because without change, time wouldn't exist."

He also said in the interview that his interest in time might have started with the concept of a "midlife crisis" when "we get to a point where we think we only have this much time left, as the time we've lived, and we freak out because all of a sudden, the end is closer."



"Up ended Breuer chair after several inches of snowfall" (2016) by Ryan Gander [SPACE K]

Many of the works on view are related with time and mortality — not only of humans but also of art. Among them are upturned iconic chairs designed by famous architects such as Le Corbusier and Marcel Breuer, on which Gander put piles of several inches of snowfall, actually made of marble resin, to show the passage of time. There is also "The Squatters" series, which feature furry cats occupying and sleeping on empty plinths, which Gander re-created based on his favorite historic conceptual art pieces. The cats, with realistic fur and bellies which move in and out as if they are breathing, are actually elaborately-made, battery-powered sculptures.



MThe solo show of Ryan Gander at Space K in Magok, western Seoul [MOON SO-YOUNG]



"The thermals made me lazy, or The squatters (Smoky meet Monk's Deflated Sculpture II (2009))" (2020) by Ryan Gander [SPACE K]

However, his works about time and mortality are not for pessimistic or nihilistic messages, the artist said. In the interview Gander said, "And I'm quite into this idea that we can control time and that we can control change. I don't think everything is written and I'm not a massive believer in fates. I believe that we will have an agency and we will have time and we will have attention and they are three of our greatest currencies and assets that we have. They're far more valuable than money for example, and I think with those assets of freedom and agency we can create change for a positive good or so."

The exhibition runs through Sept. 17. For more information, visit www.spacek.co.kr.

BY MOON SO-YOUNG [moon.soyoung@joongang.co.kr]

LISSON GALLERY

Arte Fuse

15 October 2020

ARTE FUSE

Ryan Gander: These are the markers of our time at Lisson Gallery, NYC



Installation view, Ryan Gander: These are the markers of our time at Lisson Gallery, New York



Installation view, Ryan Gander: These are the markers of our time at Lisson Gallery, New York



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Installation view, Ryan Gander: These are the markers of our time at Lisson Gallery, New York

Ryan Gander: These are the markers of our time at Lisson Gallery, New York

All Images courtesy of Lisson Gallery and the artist

Ryan Gander will open Lisson Gallery's new space in New York with an exhibition highlighting time as the new currency, reflecting on how – in an age of identity politics, selfie culture and an incessant need to shout the loudest – the focus of our time should be on the value of time itself. The exhibition is made up of many individual works that create a whole, like chapters in a book, but with no linear beginning or end. Upon entering the space, the visitor is presented with a feeling of disarray – from broken glass to graphite marks on the walls – where each work is a piece of the puzzle, referencing Gander's interest in chance, serendipity, and storytelling, laying out a series of clues and markers to be decrypted.

In his last exhibition at Lisson Gallery London, Gander encouraged the viewer to allow a natural course of action, claiming that time has its own course, a power that we cannot control. Gander now delves into the complexity of our experience of time, reflecting on the two Greek terms for time: 'kronos' and 'kairos'. While we just have one word to describe many realities, the Greeks used 'kronos' (or 'chronus', from which 'chronology' is derived) to refer to linear, sequential, measurable time, and 'kairos' to describe a circular time, dancing back and forth with no clear beginning or end. Arguably today, 'kronos' prevails, in a world driven by clocks and calendars. This also reflects our incessant growth-led culture and fear of the unknown, where all visualizations of the future are seemingly apocalyptic, contrasting to, for example, the optimism of futuristic science fiction films.

Leaning on one of the walls is the one figurative element of the show – Balthazar: Bit Part Player. Having just marked the pristine walls of the gallery, as well as his own perfectly white tracksuit, with smudges of graphite, the figure's posture is one of resignation or fatigue as his form leans downwards in an act of endless waiting. Gander here comments on our collective obsession with legacy, mark-making: our attempt to interrupt the natural course of time by reinserting ourselves within it.

A selection from Gander's Broken Windows series (2019-2020) – geometric, abstract paintings – are hung on the walls of the gallery. These works are created by happenstance: Gander places a sheet of glass on a table and, without being able to see it, smashes the glass with a hammer. He then tapes over the cracks with black gaffer tape, resulting in an abstracted composition that marks a moment in time, each different from the next, created by a planned accident. The theme of fortuity continues within the works: hidden within each Broken Windows painting hides a fortune cookie describing an idea for an artwork. This series also alludes to the 'Broken Windows Theory', referencing

the history of sociological transformation in New York, and demonstrating how profoundly humans are affected by the aesthetics of their surroundings.

The information Totem, a mirrored screen, displays a controlled reading of new work, Gander's *Staccato Refractions* (2019-2020). Taking the form of a digital animated concrete poetry, the Totem displays the prose, choosing chapters in a random order, meaning any given visitor receives a unique narrative. The text investigates our fascination with the invisible values represented by tangible things, nationality represented by a flag for example and the opposing notion of the Black Box, the devices that we interact with that we can't comprehend... (in science, computing, and engineering, a black box being a device, system or object which can be viewed in terms of its inputs and outputs without any knowledge of its internal workings, highlighting the way we give value to objects that we cannot physically understand. A transistor, an engine, an algorithm, the human brain, an institution or government.)

In the far side of the gallery, a tiny brown mouse emerges from debris in the wall. "If you had ten days to live, would you spend it looking at Instagram?", the mouse asks. Written by Gander and read by his youngest daughter, the mouse sermonizes some of the biggest questions that face humanity, from our ability to cognitively time travel to our limitations in being able to foresee our own end. Demanding our attention by refusing to be the one that shouts the loudest, we kneel down to hear what the mouse has to say. Watch a video of the work [here](#). Nearby (first greeting you by the window), three animatronic stray cats can be found – one ginger, one tabby, and one white. Luckily for the mouse, The squatters (as Gander titles them) are relatively benign and disengaged, instead found sleeping on their newly-claimed homes: pedestals previously owned by historic works of art by Susan Hiller, Richard Wentworth, and Ceal Floyer.

The theme of play and chance continues throughout the exhibition with a vending machine filled with graphite pebbles – cast from real pebbles found on the beach, one of these holds the key to the whole machine and its contents – and a crumpled up letter, *A Letter to a Young Artist*, written by Gander to himself when he was eight years old.

The exhibition follows the release of the British rock band, the IDLES' new music video, directed by Gander; and precedes the launch of a new Gander-designed sportswear line with Kappa, realized with A FOUR Labs and Kazuki Kuraishi which will be released later this year. The texts featured in this exhibition were realized during an extensive period of research supported by Princeton University, Hodder Fellowship 2019.

Ryan Gander Exclusive Q&A



Ryan Gander, Photography by Jon Gorrigan, Lavenham Jackets.

Ryan Gander work 'The End' the third and final work in Ryan's trilogy of philosophical mice went live on the Lisson website last week. It was completed just before the start of coronavirus but strangely is very in tune with our current climate... they are called the prophets for a reason!

Alongside this you can see a never-before-seen film by Ryan called Only a matter of time [here](#) a take on his BBC documentary, Me, My Selfie and I. Also on his Instagram Ryan launched free tutorials for BA & MA art students, with 5 other artists helping out- so with all this stuff going on we decided to ask Ryan some questions and see what he came back with – as ever totally cool..



Ryan Gander *The End* 2020 Animatronics Room variable dimensions. Mouse unit: 19.5 x 24 x 22 cm Room variable dimensions. Mouse unit: 7 5/8 x 9 3/8 x 8 5/8 in

1. Hi, I just watched 'The End' online and was thinking maybe it even works better online? I actually listened to the whole thing which I wouldn't have done in a gallery setting – for me, the 'whisper' works better online than in the gallery – is that good?

Personally, I'm of the opinion that nothing works better online, the world is a beautifully rich and stimulating place, full of chance, and risk, and consequences, nothing can better that. Whispers work very efficiently in any context, because we know the world is too loud, too fast, too distracting and too unethical. This is a reality we've accidentally created for ourselves through the acceleration of everything. For decades we wanted everything quick and easy, but only now are we realising that most things are only a rich rewarding experience when they are slow and difficult.



Ryan Gander *Only a matter of time* screen gab

2. Only a matter of time is a take on your BBC documentary, 'Me, My Selfie and I' – I really liked the BBC documentary, in fact, I like all your BBC stuff especially the Japan one. However, I can't help thinking that if something works you shouldn't mess with it – should you?

It depends on your view on the value of originality and authenticity. A4 paper is 21cm x 29.7cm because it has been reworked over hundreds of years by different people to be the most

economic and efficient promotion for its use. Do you prefer tainted Love by Soft Cell, Coil, Grace Jones, Marilyn Manson or The Cure...? A lot of people are hung up on copyright and plagiarism, although making a cover version of your own material is not likely to entail copyright infringement, it is nevertheless an interesting subject. For me, everything in the world is material... like a painter perhaps understands colour, everything is to be used, sampled, reworked and collided with other things, that's how accidental and unexpected transformations occur. Usually, the people who perceive ideas as property, are the people that don't have a lot of ideas of their own but really wish they could have. As my mother says "There's no pockets in a shroud" – by which she means you can't take it with you. The value of an idea is the enjoyment of having it and watching the consequences of it unfold in peoples' lives. Growth economy means we spend our time accumulating stuff, and the more we gain the less time we have to enjoy it... Time is running out. We should enjoy ideas like we enjoy the taste of different food, they're not property, they're not for accumulating and their value fluctuates through time.

3. You seem to be keeping busy with work and the tutorials on Instagram – in your conversation with Cory in *The Art of Conversation*, you mention you had three teaching jobs to keep your practice going – are you a great believer in hard work?

I believe people that work hard must enjoy work, or see what they do not as work, otherwise they wouldn't be doing it. An online student from Free Tutorials said "thank you for doing this, it's very generous" to me last week. I explained that this wasn't done through generosity... I enjoy seeing and thinking about art, I enjoy meeting new people and I enjoy talking about art... If anything it's a selfish act, perhaps I get more from it than the students. Weirdly though if I was paid for it I was thinking perhaps I would enjoy it less. There is a liberty in having agency over how you choose to spend your time, that being paid to do something can take away.



Ryan Gander I be... (xxv), 201 Antique mirror, marble resin 160 x 85 x 15 cm 62 7/8 x 33 3/8 x 5 7/8 in

4. Final question – painting is something else you and Cory talked about – there seems to be a boom in painting especially shiny cartoony colourful stuff – have you felt tempted to pick up a paintbrush during lockdown?

Hahahah, would it add a zero to my bank balance? As I said above: There is a liberty in having agency over how you choose to spend your time, that being paid to do something can take away. It doesn't matter what it looks like, it matters what it is...

designboom
12 May 2020

designboom®



Dad

ryan gander shares a message of hope during coronavirus lockdown

artists share messages of hope: as parts of the world continue to endure lockdown conditions as a result of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, designboom — whose headquarters is in milan — has reached out to artists to share messages of hope with our readers worldwide. since beginning the initiative, dedications have been kindly contributed to us by olafur eliasson, david shrigley, julian charrière, doug aitken, monica bonvicini, tomás saraceno, and tony oursler.

british artist **ryan gander** now shares with designboom a saying that his father often repeated throughout his youth — an anecdote that takes on a poignant tone in the context of today's global challenges.



Let the world take a turn.

Dad

let the world take a turn (poster encounter), 2019

a saying often repeated by the artist's father when he was a young boy

for this message of hope, **ryan gander** draws on the simple yet significant advice that his father imparted to him – *'let the world take a turn'*. the artist encourages viewers to sit back and watch, to pause, observe and allow for a natural course of action. time has the uncanny power to heal, shift perceptions, transform situations and bring forth change. rather than trying to control, stop, or change time, gander embraces a more interference-free attitude, allowing things to change as the world does. if we remain open to this perspective, we can see the world, and our place in it, in a more honest and empathetic light.

discover more of gander's work on [his instagram](#), and at [lisson gallery](#).

The Art Newspaper
9 April 2020



Artists show us what they have been up to during the lockdown ahead of Ryan Gander's live studio tour today

LOUISA BUCK

9th April 2020 10:08 GMT



Ryan Gander during a virtual tour of his studio

Along with inspecting the domestic habitat of colleagues via Zoom meetings, another by-product of the coronavirus crisis has been the opening-up of hitherto private studios, as artists under lockdown increasingly reveal their places of work to online audiences.

This sanctum-baring often takes the form of brief and selective sneak peeks viewable on gallery websites or Instagram accounts. The night before the full-UK lockdown on 23 March, Hauser & Wirth livestreamed Martin Creed clad in back-to-front “staying-in clothes”, jamming on guitar and accordion from a cluttered corner of his London studio. Since then H&W have also launched a series of short films of gallery artists living and making their work behind closed doors. So far these have include: George Condo producing *Drawings for Distanced Figures*, showing socially-spaced people from the quarantined “wilderness” of his studio in New York State; Zhang Enli making Chinese pancakes in his pristine Shanghai kitchen; Guillermo Kuitca keeping his Buenos Aires studio assistants well exercised with YouTube salsa classes; and Luchita Hurtado admiring a eucalyptus tree and drawing one of the jungle of plants on her Santa Monica balcony.

On White Cube’s Instagram account, He Xiangyu in Berlin has presented a four minute in-progress demonstration of his painted and drawn *Palette Project* in which he gives visual expression to the inside of his mouth, while in London first Tracey Emin and then Antony Gormley have each been posted a week’s worth of daily images showing what they have been creating in lockdown.



A screen shot of Ryan Gander's studio tour

But for those hungry for a more intense in-situ experience, later today (9 April) at 6pm BST, Ryan Gander is offering a comprehensive inspection of his studio and a discussion of his ideas via Zoom. The live virtual studio tour lasts for nearly an hour and is organized by Lisson Gallery. An earlier trial run on Tuesday attracted nearly 365 visitors, according to the gallery. Viewers who logged on were able to accompany Gander and his remote interlocutor, the gallery's Ossian Ward, in his expansive studio housed in a former radio factory in the village of Melton on the east coast of England. The format will be the same on Thursday, just a little later timewise, to make it easier for more viewers across the globe.

Whizzing round with two cameras strapped to his wheelchair, Gander describes himself as a "double dolly" and his normally buzzing studio as being "like a ghost town". All his assistants are closeted in their various homes and the artist himself has likewise been working from his kitchen

table, an experience he is finding “liberating and frustrating at the same time”. Now the studio is only inhabited—or perhaps haunted—by some decidedly uncanny artworks that form the focus of the tour. These include a life sized *Bit Part Player* figure made from graphite who has left a series of grubby marks trailed along an adjoining wall. “It’s visualizing an event or a touch which shows where the figure has been,” Gander says. There is also an illuminated staircase leading to a portal-like doorway drenched in light and a tiny animatronic mouse poking its head through a hole in the wall and declaiming *The End*, an apocalyptic text written by Gander and spoken by his six-year-old daughter. Gander explains that the loquacious rodent is the final one in his trilogy of *Prophet Mice*. “It talks about the idea that the real threats are the ones we cannot see,” he says.

All these works were made in advance of the coronavirus crisis, yet it is hard not to view them in the current context, something that Gander himself concedes. “We see things in context and their meaning changes,” he says. “It is interesting the way that art changes as the world changes around it.” Back in his studio for the first time in several days, Gander feels that time spent at his kitchen table has underlined the benefits of slowing down. “Maybe a part of this change will be that the time famine we have been experiencing over the last decade will evaporate and we might start feeling the world as we are in it rather than navigating our way through and always living in the future or the past.”

• To join Ryan Gander’s livestream tour today, join the Zoom meeting by clicking [here](#) (ID: 819 421 858; password: 950869) at 10am PST / 1pm EST / 6pm BST



RYAN GANDER Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland

It rarely ever happens that people kneel down to listen carefully to philosophizing mice. It is even less common for mice to share their philosophy with humans. At Kunsthalle Bern, however, mice listeners were a common sight during Ryan Gander's solo show, 'The 500 Million Year Collaboration'. Sticking its head out of a hole that the British artist had drilled into the gallery wall, a computer-animated robot mouse addressed the audience in a child's voice (in fact that of the artist's 9-year-old daughter): 'You can be anything you want if you put your mind to it! But your achievements mean nothing if they are not of your own making'.

In choosing to have the mouse (*2000 year collaboration* (*The Prophet*), 2018) speak these lines based on Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940), was Gander offering us a moment of ironic self-reflection? The artist has developed a multi-faceted, multi-media practice that provides a witty take on the disillusionment of post-conceptualism. Today, art has become largely indistinguishable from our broader cultural lives: as Hito Steyerl noted in *Art as Occupation* (2011) 'nowadays, the invasion of life by art is not the exception, but the rule'. And Gander, who recently co-founded the homeware-design 'lifestyle venture' Otomoto with Tony Chambers, has certainly made his mark in this regard as a post-art artist. In this connection, he has refrained from developing a unique style or 'brand' that would make his work 'recognizable at first sight'. What is original about Gander is his circumvention of originality.

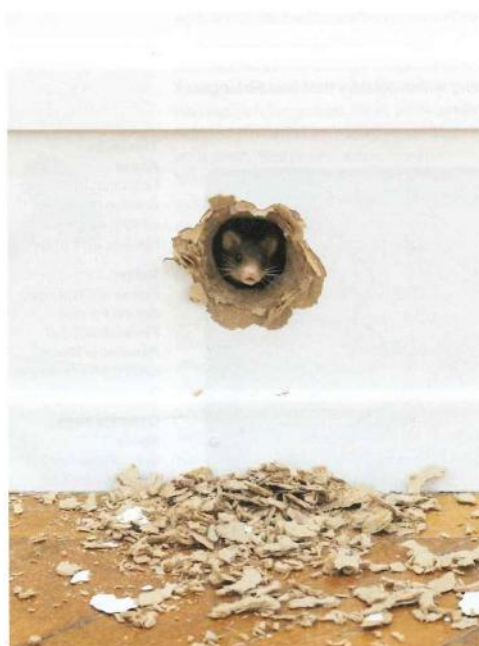
This show is Gander's most comprehensive to date and comprises 38 works, dating from 2006 to 2019, a number of which have not been exhibited previously. *Equivalent Economies and Equivalent Means* (2018) is a vending machine filled with stones, costing €9,999.99 each, which replicate ones found on a beach by the artist's children; a lone slot contains a wad of euro notes totalling €10,000. A crossbreed of a schoolboy prank and what Marcel Duchamp termed 'rectified ready-mades', this patently ludicrous vending machine stands solemnly in the Kunsthalle's stately interior.

I is ... (xii) (2015) is a marble resin sculpture replicating an assortment of furniture that the artist's young daughter had covered with a blanket to make a den. A series of ink drawings depicts candles at the moment of their extinguishment (*Embrace Your Mistakes ... Your Mistakes Are the Markers of Your Time*, 2019). The installation *Staccato Reflections* (2017)

contains a stele-like, reflecting flatscreen upon which some stream-of-consciousness text is floating, comprising phrases such as: 'I see. I look. The look I see?' Elsewhere, the undersides of an inverted Wassily Chair by Marcel Breuer are covered with raised white marble bulges to appear snowed upon (*Upside Down Breuer Chair after a Couple of Inches of Snowfall*, 2017). The ostensible silliness of such works recalls early Romantic aesthetics, when silliness was associated, positively, with boundlessness. Every joke has a punchline. But silliness, a Romantic boundlessness shared by contemporary art, may go on forever.

Gander dives into the stream of life, picks out seemingly random elements, alters them or commissions new versions, charges them with new meaning augmented by shrewd titling, then dives back in again. What connects these heterogeneous elements is the artist's selective process and what he invests them with: interest, humour, nonchalance. 'Art', Andy Warhol is alleged to have once said, 'is what you can get away with.' Gander's tricksterish, boundless art, infused with ambiguous humour, perfectly encapsulates the freedom, openness and caprice of our neoliberal era. Resisting confirming his own position on neoliberalism – whether critical or favourable – Gander simply, strategically, embodies it. There's a story, but it has no plot. 'Defy expectation and allow your assumptions to be defied,' as the mouse says.

Jörg Scheller



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LISSON GALLERY

Fortune Art Magazine

August 2019

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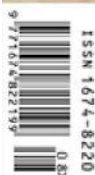
财富堂

2019. VOL.4
因财富而自由·因艺术而美好

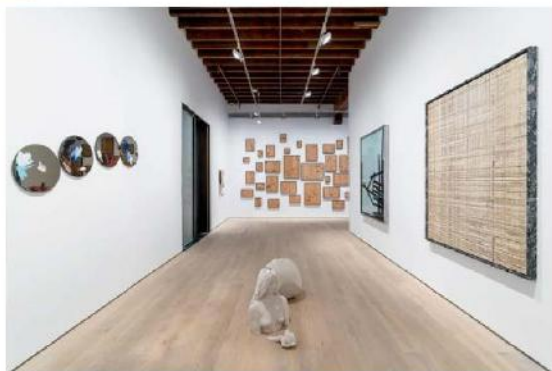


科技、艺术与未来

Science, technology, art and the future



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石上纯也 自由建筑 郝经芳 & 王令杰 理性浪漫 吴俊勇 千月 Joe Webb 诗意拼贴 时空、想象、智能、虚拟。梦。
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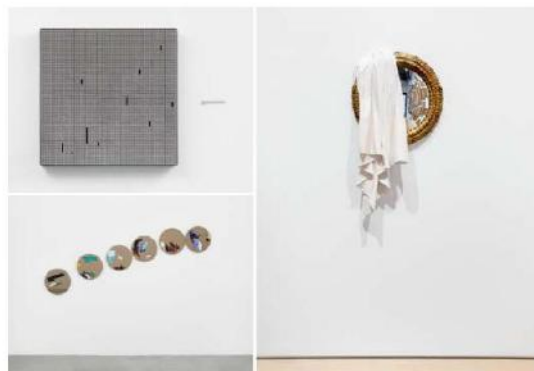
"Ryan Gander: 'I see you're making progress'"

Ryan Gander 瑞安·甘德 我看到你正在进步

瑞安·甘德是英国著名当代艺术家，他的作品常常探讨社会、政治、文化等主题。在《我看到你正在进步》展览中，他通过一系列作品，探讨了人们在日常生活中所面临的种种困境和挑战。

此次展览“我看到你正在进步”展出了瑞安·甘德的多件作品，包括雕塑、装置艺术、绘画等。这些作品不仅具有强烈的视觉冲击力，更蕴含着深刻的社会批判和人文关怀。

在展览中，观众可以看到瑞安·甘德的多件作品，包括雕塑、装置艺术、绘画等。这些作品不仅具有强烈的视觉冲击力，更蕴含着深刻的社会批判和人文关怀。通过他的作品，观众可以感受到艺术家对现实世界的敏锐洞察力和深刻思考。



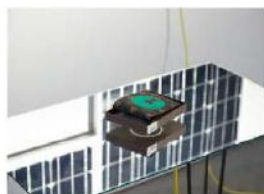
Haroon Mirza 哈龙·米尔扎 电之离调

哈龙·米尔扎是一位著名的当代艺术家，他的作品常常探讨社会、政治、文化等主题。在《电之离调》展览中，他通过一系列作品，探讨了人们在日常生活中所面临的种种困境和挑战。



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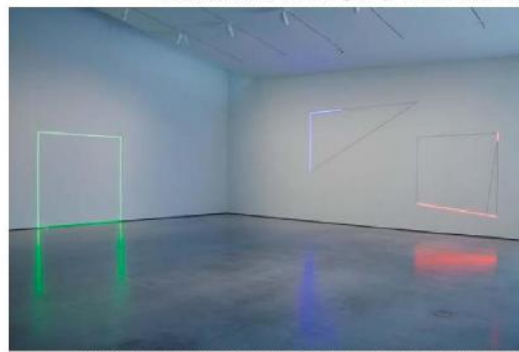


"Haroon Mirza: 'Tones in the Key of Electricity'"

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"Haroon Mirza: 'Tones in the Key of Electricity'"



"Haroon Mirza: 'Tones in the Key of Electricity'"

LISSON GALLERY

Randian

Undated (May 2019)

燃点 Ran Dian



[See all photos \(1\)](#)

地点

Lisson Shanghai 里森画廊

日期

2019.05.18 Saturday - 2019.06.29
Saturday

Opening Exhibition

18/05/2019

地址

2/F, 27 Huqiu Road Huangpu District
Shanghai, 200002 China 黄浦区虎丘路27号2层

电话

开放时间

Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm or by
appointment
每周二至周六，上午11点至下午6点，其他
时间接受预约观展

负责人

Nicholas Logsdail, Greg Hilty, Alex
Logsdail

电子邮件

David Tang

[>> 访问网页链接](#)

[>> 见地图](#)

里森画廊

瑞安·甘德“我看到你正在进步”

[新闻稿]

这是瑞安·甘德 (Ryan Gander) 继2017年在收藏家周大为的Cc基金会成功举办个展“人类/非人类/破损/非破损”之后第二次在中国举办个展。此次展览将在上海拉开帷幕，全方位呈现艺术家利用多种媒介创作的标志性作品，包括时序动画、LED全息图像以及自2016年以来创作的雕塑和“肖像”。展览标题“我看到你正在进步”反映了甘德在多个领域取得的进步和创作实践的发展轨迹，也表示喜欢他作品的观众越来越多，还标志着他的努力和创造力的发挥——或者缺失——都是艺术创作的必经阶段。



2019年的新作《工作室的窗外 (2017年11月8日)》呈现了从早到晚24小时之内艺术家工作室外面逐渐变化的朦胧景象。把显示器放在磨砂玻璃后面的设置方式相当准确地模拟了当时的光线和天气条件——甚至还出现了晃动的树影和铁丝网的阴影。展览中还有另一块全白的“窗户玻璃”，不过已经被打碎了。艺术家率性而为，利用看似随意黏贴的强力胶带创造了一种新的“绘画”形式，简直让人看不出来作品其实也是一幅纸上墨水画。

在凝视窗外的同时——犹如卡斯帕·大卫·弗里德里希 (Caspar David Friedrich)、亨利·马蒂斯 (Henri Matisse) 的此类作品中也都弥漫着浪漫气息，甘德还关注艺术创作中经历的失误、失败和困境：它们都是在寻求进步的过程中必须越过的坎坷。雪糕 (实际上是青铜制品) 孤零零地摔碎在地板上，已经开始融化；利用LED全息图像技术呈现的“鸡蛋”打着蝴蝶结，看上去像是一件虚拟的礼物，不过就如同电子游戏中的奖赏一样，永远也不可能真正握在手里。

此次展览中规模最大的作品当属《这是创造性的游戏，有些冒险——自动抽象》（2016年）。这件作品由44个组件构成，每一个组件里面都是20世纪最伟大的教育家玛丽亚·蒙特梭利（Maria Montessori）设计的儿童数学教具。这些简单的彩色木棒通常被用来帮助儿童学习加减法、理解分数概念，不过甘德把它们当作是促进自由联想的工具，曾经在学校里举办过相关的工作坊，也利用它们教导自己的孩子。甘德意图放弃绘画，展出的作品看上去更像是用于混合颜料的调色板，从概念性的角度比拟了已经被遗忘的群像，不过他正在创作的以熟人为对象的肖像系列依然反映了协作和共鸣的概念。甘德近期创作的翻点显示板系列作品表现了万物终将衰败的命运，随机产生的形状持续不断地像雨滴一样在显示板上流淌，其中涉及的算法是艺术家自己设计的，再一次体现了“进步”，不过是以更加缓慢、更加痛苦的幅度。

>> 打印

The Guardian
18 March 2019

**The
Guardian**

Documentary

Ryan Gander on the hell of selfies: 'The world has gone mad'

We're drowning in self-imagery. Is it harming the world? And can we wake up to ourselves again? The artist's new documentary is on hand to help

Eleanor Morgan

Mon 18 Mar 2019 10.23 EDT



678 315



▲ 'The craze of individualisation' ... Me, My Selfie and I with Ryan Gander. Photograph: Sam Anthony/BBC/Swan Films

Earlier this month, a woman was attacked by a jaguar at a zoo in Arizona. The jaguar lacerated her arm after she climbed over the concrete barrier to try and take a selfie with it. Last year, a global study found that the quest for extreme selfies killed 259 people between 2011 and 2017. We cannot stop taking our own picture, even when it puts our lives in danger.

And yet the word 'selfie', now so embedded in our day-to-day language, only entered the Oxford English Dictionary in late 2013. In just a handful of years, the term has become as quotidian as the act it describes: taking a photo of oneself, invariably with a smartphone, usually to be posted on social media.

There is much cynicism about so-called narcissistic millennials who can't get enough of their own image; the pouting, the filters that turn one's face into a puppy, the 27 'takes' to get the perfect shot. But as artist Ryan Gander points out in new documentary *Me, My Selfie and I*, this 21st-century phenomenon doesn't signify a boom in narcissism so much as modern technology powering us to radically rethink who is looking back at us.

“It’s a revolution like the Industrial Revolution,” says Gander, drinking strong tea in his Haggerston studio. “But we are at this point in history where we haven’t worked out what this social acceleration does to us. The world has never changed as fast as it does now, but the speed means you don’t have time to address the morals, ethics and values of what’s happening.”

We know social media encourages us to present an idealised version of ourselves - particularly Instagram, where most selfies end up. We can filter ourselves to be shiny, exciting or covetable, creating digital holograms of the person we want to be. A fascination with “the modern idea that there is always something better for us to do or be” took Gander on a journey to meet a selection of ‘modern selves’, including: a woman living tech-free in rural Wales who believes the energy released through self-broadcast is harming the world, a YouTube star with an audience of millions, a [transhumanist](#) and a man who cryogenically freezes dead people who believe they will one day be thawed and live again. “This is not about science,” says Gander. “It’s about ego; the inability to let go of the idea that the world might not remember us when we’re gone.”



▲ Gander with a woman living off-grid in Wales, who believes the energy released through self-broadcast harms the world. Photograph: Sam Anthony/BBC/Swan Films



Each person has their own existential plight and there are fascinating insights into the different ways we try to make an impact on this world, whether that’s the overwhelming sense of responsibility a YouTube star feels to entertain his audience, or a transhumanist’s desire to draw out their life by replacing flesh and bone with robotics and circuit boards.

Gander’s lines of questioning make for compelling viewing. It would have been easy to be cynical, particularly when addressing the relationship young people have with social media, but as Gander points out when interviewing a twentysomething Instagram ‘influencer’, these people have barely been without it in their lives. How are they deserving of our judgment when they’ve never known anything else?

Gander is acutely self-aware (“It was a weird mirror for myself, because here’s me going on about everyone wanting to be noticed and here I am on bloody telly”) and talks a lot about perspective. “The problem we’re facing now is that people often only see things from their own singular perspective.

I kept saying during filming that the world has gone mad, and that's why." He feels we're in a "craze of individualisation", that we have forgotten "our thoughts don't just stop at the edge of our heads."

One of the most striking scenes in the documentary is when the transhumanist with a chip imbedded in his palm to open doors implies that Gander might be "improved" with bionic limbs modelled on cheetah legs. It angers him. "Being in a wheelchair doesn't affect my view on the world. In an age where everyone identifies with being different, I am someone who actually can't walk and don't associate with being disabled. I don't tick the Arts Council funding box that says 'disabled' because I don't identify." As he says on screen, "I don't want cheetah legs. I don't know any cheetahs."



▲ 'This is not about science, it's about ego' ... Gander with a man who cryogenically freezes dead people so that they might live again. Photograph: Sam Anthony/BBC/Swan Films



The assumption that Gander would want to be superhuman when he says he is "happy being exactly the way I am" is a metaphor for what the social media monoliths compel us to do: keep reappraising who we are and, based on the positive feedback loops of likes, comments and retweets, keep reappraising some more. You end the documentary aware that Silicon Valley may actively be trying to hinder self-actualisation, because then why would you need them? Better to be stuck in self-questioning perpetuity. But Gander questions the mark we are trying to make with all these images of ourselves. "No one will be looking at all the selfies we take now because there's too many. We've almost become drowned in self-imagery."

There is hope, though. By examining our modern compulsions, Gander makes room for the idea that there is, in fact, real peace to be found in acknowledging the "perpetual present tense" we create on social media, putting our phones down and listening to other people's stories. We all want to be seen. We all want to be liked. But in this Age of the Self, there may be a freedom in accepting that trying to be special and unique all the time can be bloody tiring.

Me, My Selfie and I with Ryan Gander is on BBC Four tonight at 9pm.

LISSON GALLERY

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2 March 2018

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Ryan Gander: The Self Righting of All Things

Lisson Gallery, London

Fri 2 Mar 2018 to Sat 21 Apr 2018



Visit



67 Lisson St

Special event:

Ryan Gander in conversation with Gábor Domokos at the Potting Shed Bar & Restaurant at the Dorset Square Hotel, London. Saturday 14 April, 11am. RSVP: rsvp@lissongallery.com

Ryan Gander's sixth exhibition with Lisson Gallery draws on notions of time and its passage. With a philosophical overture and a sharp existential focus, the exhibition illustrates the innate ability of all things, in both physics and the wider human context, to naturally self-right themselves.









Drawing on the simple yet profound advice given by his father – “Let the world take a turn” – Gander encourages the viewer to sit back and watch, to observe, and allow for a natural course of action, as time has power: to heal, transform, shift perceptions and elicit change. Rather than trying to control time, to stop it or to change it, Gander embraces a more *laisse faire* attitude. Things change as the world changes, while everything stays the same, and if we are open to this approach, we can see the world, and our place in it, in a more honest and empathetic light.

A cube made entirely of flip-dot panels, like those formerly found in public transportation timetables, hangs from the front ceiling of 67 Lisson Street. Analogous to a massive clock, the large-scale installation measures time in an abstract way, showing its passage both audibly and visibly. Different tears of coloured dots rain down each panel, programmed according to an algorithm set by the artist. The clicking sound of the dots is accompanied by Gander's voice, telling autobiographic stories that are at once humorous and melancholic. Each story hints at the destruction that surrounds us, shadowed by an overarching sense of anxiety and loss, although not without a touch of the artist's usual hope and playfulness. The texts, which include a series of poems and essays, will be transcribed on the back of a poster, with the quote by Gander's father on the front, the first 100 of which will be given away through a social media competition announced on the artist's Instagram page (@ryanjgander).

Gander activates the gallery completely by the passage of time, with the entire front spaces turned into a giant architectural hourglass, fully visible from the façade of the building off 52 Bell Street. At the start of the exhibition, the top half of the gallery will be filled with black sand, cascading down to the ground floor below. As the sand trickles through the floor, it reveals a series of stone sculptures – mythological nymphs like those found in classical Victorian paintings, rendered in 3D with precise replications of figurative poses, albeit removed from their original context and altered by their new surroundings – all the while slowly covering up the sculptural realisation of a Gömböc on the ground floor. An ancient problem first conjectured by Russian mathematician Vladimir Arnold and later proved by the Hungarian scientist Gábor Domokos, these convex objects have countless varieties but hold in common a simple mathematical equation: when resting on a flat surface, each Gömböc has one stable and one unstable point of equilibrium, adjusting to find balance in its own instability. From a mathematical point of view, the Gömböc can be regarded as the origin of all shapes: all other form types can be evolved from the Gömböc by a man-made algorithm. From the point of view of natural philosophy, as well as a broader sociological perspective, an opposing interpretation emerges: the Gömböc represents the ultimate though unattainable goal of shape evolution in the non-living world. It represents both the starting point of life and the deterioration of all things. Here one can see and experience the moment of time elapsing. The presence of the Gömböc in the context of Gander's installation alludes to both the search for balance in a mathematical sense but also for the redress of imbalance and mass inequality on a global scale.

The relationship between Gömböcs and spheres is further explored in an oversized snow globe, nearly one metre in diameter, in constant motion with blurred visibility – a snow globe that never stops snowing. Snowfall itself is a temporal marker, a more evanescent sand of time: one wants to know when it will stop snowing and how long it will last before it melts into spring. The work relates to Gander's participation in the 21st Biennale of Sydney (16 March – 11 June), where he will turn the UNESCO heritage prison Cockatoo Island into a giant, walk-in snow globe. The globe at Lisson will be presented next to a chair designed in the 1920s by Marcel Breuer, flipped on its side, seemingly discarded and removed of any function, with several inches of snowfall cast in marble resin moulded on top.

A new font, titled 'Set in Stone' and available to download for free at setinstonetypeface.co.uk, will feature throughout the exhibition. Gander and his daughter often collect stones from a nearby beach in Suffolk, and as part of a lesson in semiotics, they created a new Roman alphabet from the stones and turned it into a typeface. The stones themselves are significant in that amongst the millions of them found on any beach, there is an infinite probability that they exist as Gömböcs. A copy of 'How to Lose Friends and Alienate People' rendered with this font will be available from the desk at reception.

Ryan Gander; The Self Righting of all Things 2 March – 21 April 2018. 67 Lisson Street London. Photographer: Jack Hems © Ryan Gander. Courtesy Lisson Gallery

The Guardian
18 September 2018

The Guardian

Art and design

Knock Knock review - 'I like a laugh as much as the next miserable critic!'

★★★★☆

South London Gallery

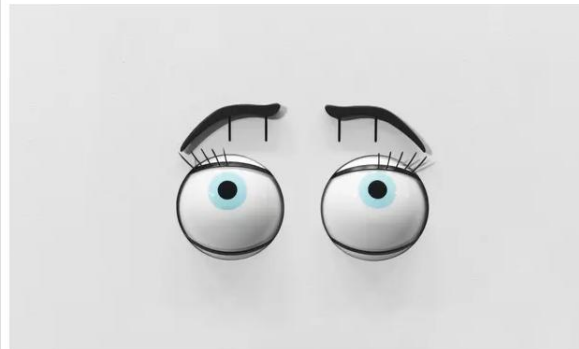
There are old jokes, new jokes, even Welsh sheep jokes. But the real star of this show about humour in art is the rescued fire station much of it is housed in

Adrian Searle

@SearleAdrian

Tue 18 Sep 2018 13.08 EDT

154 22



▲ Eyes that follow you round the room ... Ryan Gander, *Dominae Illud Opus Populare*, 2016. Photograph: Ryan Gander. Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Knock Knock! Who's there? A Welshman overly fond of sheep. Rodney Graham, seated on a park bench, eyeing the world through two small holes torn in the newspaper he's pretending to read. A clown and a tin-foil flailing rock-god guitarist. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse and the real Snow White. Here comes everybody.

Filling the South London Gallery and its new expansion into the 19th-century fire station across the Peckham Road, *Knock Knock* - the title taken not just from the hoary old formula for a joke, but also from a drawing by Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein - has been curated by South London Gallery director Margot Heller and artist [Ryan Gander](#).



▲ Roy Lichtenstein, *Knock, Knock* Poster, 1975. Photograph: Estate of Roy Lichtenstein/DACS/Artimage 2018

Knock Knock jokes usually evince a groan. Stop me if you've heard this one before. Stop me before I kill again. Artists who are genuinely funny, and whose wit is complex enough to sustain, and even to deepen, on repeated viewings are uncommon. Swiss duo [Fischli and Weiss](#), David Shrigley, Ed Ruscha, Nicole Eisenman, Paul McCarthy, Bruce Nauman all come to mind. They're not here. Nor is [Andy Holden](#), whose recent animated films, as well as being very funny, analyse humour itself in deft, often sly ways. Perhaps a funny thing happened to him on the way to the gallery.

I like a good laugh as well as the next miserable art critic. Featuring a mix of old works and new, of pieces and artists who have shown previously at SLG, much of the humour here really has to be worked at. One-liners and no-liners, impenetrable sight gags that leave me dumbfounded, things that just aren't funny at all, and perhaps aren't even trying to be, fill the galleries. In one of the best works, [Harold Offeh's](#) 2001 video *Smile*, the artist grimaces with a rictus grin to Nat King Cole's 1954 version of the song *Smile* (Charlie Chaplin composed the music). Offeh follows the song's injunction to smile, but it looks like a terrible ordeal.

The big, open space of the original 1891 gallery is dominated by Joyce Pensato's *Take Me to Your Leader*, an enormous charcoal drawing in which Mickey Mouse confronts a group of Donald Ducks. I like the drawing well enough, though its scale seems unnecessary. Martin Creed's big, black diagonal stripes on an adjacent wall evince a sort of blank fury. A saw seems to be about to cut a circular hole in the gallery floor from below in a work by Ceal Floyer. Maybe she's trying to help us escape. A brick foot and a brick ball, by Judith Hopf, aren't going to have a kick-about soon, and if you try to have a go with Basim Magdy's basketball hoop you would break it. It is made of glass. Ba-boom.



▲ Joyce Pensato, *Black and White Mickey*, 2018. Photograph: Joyce Pensato, Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Many things here defeat me. Heman Chong has printed the internet 404 error phrase "Something went wrong. We're working on getting it fixed as soon as we can" on one of the doors, while Maurizio Cattelan's stuffed flock of pigeons have infested the gallery eaves. An old gag, but sometimes they're the best. Bedwyr Williams has parked his bike in the corridor. The bicycle's frame has been upholstered in sheep fur, the handlebars are a pair of horns and there's a sheep skull poking out the front. Fucking Inbred Welsh Sheepshagger, it is called, turning the xenophobic English insult against the Welsh back on itself.

The real star of the show is the building across the street, where the show continues in the old Peckham Road Fire Station, donated anonymously to the gallery after it was sold at auction in 2008 and left derelict for several years. Built in 1867, the fire station - with its horse-drawn carriages kept on the ground floor, and the firemen and their families housed above, has been gutted and rebuilt. 6a Architects have provided a stack of larger and smaller exhibition and project spaces, an archive room and a kitchen. Various original features remain (a fireplace hangs high on a blank wall in the opened-up full-height stairwell, and a replica of the original station gaslight hangs outside, the word *ENGINES* printed on the glass). A small group of concrete sheep nestle in the vertiginous stairwell. Basic concrete blocks mounted on old table legs, Judith Hopf's little flock are only identifiable as sheep by the cartoonish sheep faces drawn on the bare concrete. Better keep Bedwyr Williams away from them. He might do himself a mischief.



▲ (left to right): *Campaign Volunteer* (2018) by Rosemarie Trockel, *Yves* (2018) by Sarah Lucas, and *Biological Clock 2* (1995), *Call Me* (1987) and *Seduction* (1985) by Lynn Herschman Leeson. Photograph: Andy Staggs



On the floor a man lies sleeping. Wrapped in a sheepskin and a towel, and his face painted as a clown, Ugo Rondinone's lifelike sculpture has a drift of glitter at his feet. Like several other works here, the title of Rondinone's sculpture is at least as intriguing as the 2002 work itself. If *There Were Anywhere But Desert, Friday*, it is called. Upstairs, Sarah Lucas's latest mannequin perches on a chair. With her lewd breasts, long bendy legs and clumping blue velvet shoes that look far too big, Lucas's *Yves* (named after

Yves Klein, maybe because of the blue heels she wears) is as vulnerable as she is provocative. Ryan Gander's animatronic pair of eyes, inset in the wall, blink and follow you round the room. Tom Friedman's kitchen-foil guitarist flails his silver-foil hair. On a grainy video, [Lucy Gunning's 1994 The Horse Impressionists](#) whinny and neigh. Still funny, Gunning's work also feels old-fashioned, even quaint, like an old comedy re-run on a dead-zone channel. In its way, there's human pathos in there, too, oddly amplified, like Offeh's Smile, by the passage of time.

With its beautiful Gabriel Orozco garden, its incursion into adjoining buildings and the council estate behind, where it hosts community projects and art classes, and now with the fire station across the street, South London Gallery has slowly, incrementally expanded over the past decade. And the works keep coming, as you mount the stairs and go from room to room. Cartoons, sound works, an ice cream cone, slightly sinister drawings and in-jokes I'm still trying to get. It's not exactly a bundle of laughs but it keeps you on the move, looking for a punchline, which might be the point.

● Knock Knock: Humour in Contemporary Art is at the [South London Gallery](#), from 22 September until 18 November.

● This article was amended on 24 September 2018 to correct the spelling of Basim Magdy's name.

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Outside the Box

Whether sending audiences on sleuthing missions
or employing an actor to play his future self,
RYAN GANDER won't be hemmed in by the
gallery. PAYAL UTTAM meets the art world's
playful prince of the unexpected

ON THE FLOOR at the centre of a bustling art fair, a small girl begins to emerge from a white wooden box, reaching forward tentatively and craning her head into the light. The girl is a bronze replica of one of Edgar Degas' renowned ballerinas, and focus of a sculptural installation by British artist Ryan Gander. "She's crawling out of the plinth, which represents the institution of art. She's freed herself. But what's she hiding from? Probably all the terrible contemporary art," Gander jokes, cheekily gesturing from his wheelchair towards other works on display at Art Basel in Hong Kong. An elfin figure dressed in a velvet jacket, white beanie and blue polka-dot scarf, the artist has much in common with the little dancer. Despite his standing invitation to flashy art-world parties, he eyes the system with suspicion.

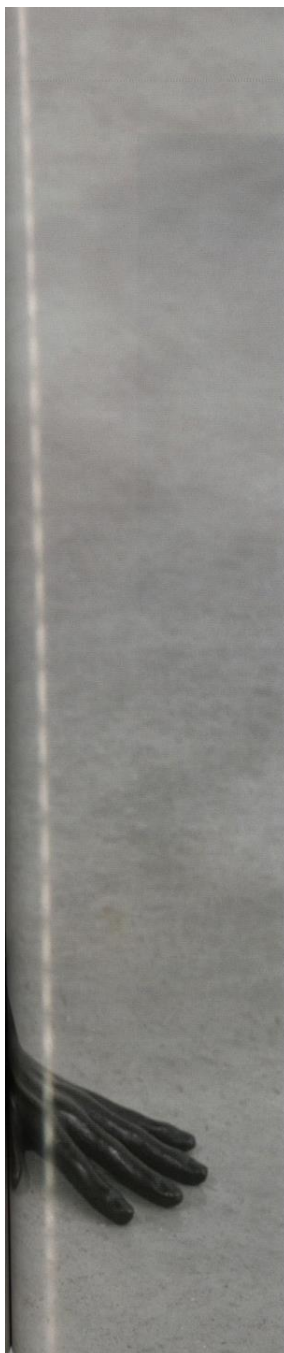
Known for his irreverent approach, Gander smuggles viewers into unexpected situations,

opening them up to new ways of experiencing art. At first glance, some may read his works as abstract and difficult to grasp, but unlike many of his conceptualist peers, Gander infuses his work with a child-like wonder and curiosity that's infectious. He once hid an exhibition in a London warehouse, leaving clues that forced visitors to take on the role of detectives to find it. For another work, he hired two bodyguards to escort curator Nicholas Baume around Art Basel in Miami Beach, raising questions about the cult of celebrity in the art world.

"I thought it would be really ironic if he'd allotted a budget and invited me to do whatever I wanted, and then I turned it back on him," Gander says with a grin. "Bodyguards are a signifier of prestige, so you had people crowding around this curator and they didn't know if he was important or not."

Gander decided he wanted to become an artist when he was 16 years old, while working a dead-end job in a carpet shop. "I realised that having a job was really shit," he says. "You end up doing the same thing every day. So it was a problem-solving exercise: trying to identify a job where I could have fun."

Fame came fast for the young artist, who won





A RYAN GANDER INSTALLATION, EXHIBITED IN HONG KONG AND SHANGHAI THIS YEAR. QUESTIONS HOW WE PERCEIVE ART



"Artists spend their whole lives trying to remain children"

a prize at Art Basel at the age of 30, and showed at the Venice Biennale just a few years later. It wasn't long, however, before the London art world took its toll, and Gander moved to the slower-paced county of Suffolk. "Being in London was turning me into a right arsehole," he says. "It's so competitive. You're looking at everyone all the time, gauging yourself against them. It's not healthy."

Today, he keeps the art world at arm's length, regularly retreating to his rural studio while juggling a busy travel schedule. In recent months, Gander has had multiple shows across the globe, including *Human / Non Human / Broken / Non Broken* at the Cc Foundation in Shanghai, which wrapped up in May. He is currently showing at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and at Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum in Michigan. This summer, as well

as participating in an exhibition at Beijing's M Woods museum, he will install enlarged versions of tiny key rings used in his self-deprecating performance piece *Earnest Hawker* at The Contemporary Austin museum in Texas. For the original performance, staged in 2015, Gander asked an actor to pose as an obnoxious future version of himself – a failed artist in New York. He then tried to sell small key rings, featuring replicas of works from his more successful days, to the public.

Recently, Gander has been preoccupied with broader issues related to technology and growing egotism in society. "It's a generation of the self, isn't it? That's what wrong with America and Britain," he says. "There's no longer society, there is only 'I,' and social media obviously plays a massive part in that. It's not very good for humanity. You lose empathy." Among new works exploring the issue is a series of mirrors

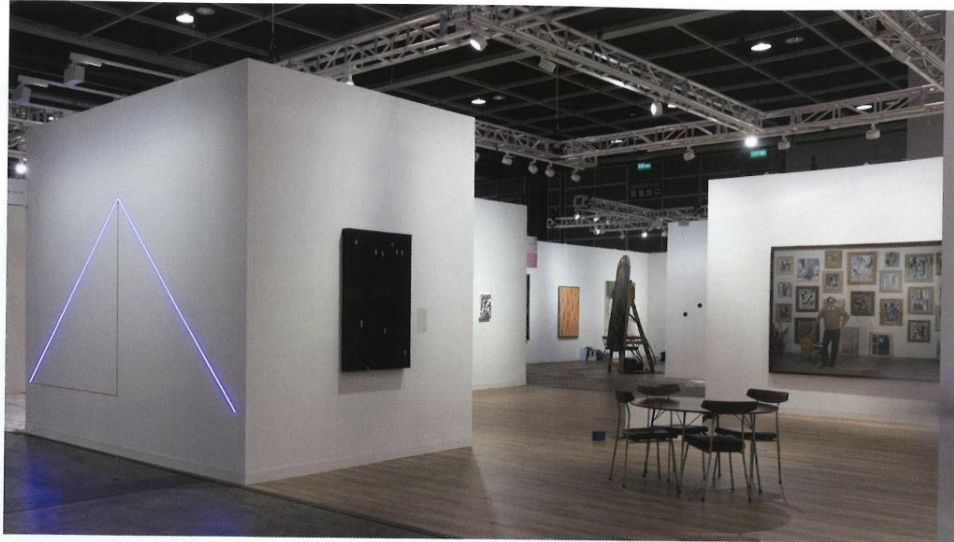
shrouded in cloth made from marble. They were part of his recent solo shows in Shanghai and at the National Museum of Art, Osaka, and he describes one piece, called *I be...CXVID*, as "an antique French mirror that is about 200 years old, but you can't see yourself. It negates the self-image. People will probably take selfies with their back to it, which is a perfect contradiction."

Gander also continues to poke holes into preconceptions of art through new works such as *Strong Signifiers and Understanding Poetic Value (Dramaturgical Framework for Structure and Stability)*, which was shown in Shanghai and consists of a metal armature of a man facing a lightbox. "It's basically from a kid's stick drawing of a human," Gander says of the work, which takes aim at the limits of contemporary art in galleries. "It's the most basic figurative sculpture that you get, and that is looking at an illustration or pastiche of a contemporary artwork, which is just a lightbox."

According to Gander, the world outside the gallery walls is infinitely more interesting than what's inside. "In a gallery, you see stuff because the space charges you to observe," he says. "You become a spectator, but as soon as you leave, spectatorship stops. But if you just wonder around with that [creative] valve open, then there is definitely more interesting stuff outside the gallery."

Gander has made it his life's work to keep the valve open, though he admits it's increasingly difficult as he gets older. "You can't control it, but it's usually open when I'm driving between London and home, in the shower, when I'm about to fall asleep or wake up," he says. "Or wheeling around a new city. But when you're a kid, the valve is open all the time. There's a cliché quote by Picasso about how it took him four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child. It's so true. Artists spend

THIS PAGE: RYAN GANDER. OPPOSITE FROM TOP: PIECES AT ART BASEL IN HONG KONG; GANDER'S ART AIMS TO SPARK THE IMAGINATION



their whole lives trying to remain children."

Lately, Gander has been prolific in his output. Not only does he create public works and shows in art institutions, but he also designs clothes (collections for Japanese clothing brand A.Four; Adidas shoes caked in fake mud) and advises companies on art and even

landscaping. To juggle all his projects, Gander has an eccentric process that's "quite anal and logical". He begins by snapping photographs, colour-coding them with Post-it notes and grouping them with specific paperclips from Japan. They are then placed in box files on eight table-tennis tables. Like an external brain, of sorts, they serve as catalysts and reminders.

One of the latest ideas fastened together with one of those paperclips is a football kit he

designed for the team of Chinese art collector and patron David Chau. "And I haven't talked to anyone about it yet, but I want to make a feature film in 36 parts," Gander reveals. "It's just hard because films cost a lot of money. But that's my guilty pleasure. In a way, it's better than going on holiday: spending money on stuff that's so bonkers no one wants it."

Whether via experiments like his film project, or the little dancer who raises questions about the institution of art, Gander says his aim is to create cognitive works that trigger viewers' imaginations and stoke their curiosity about the world, which he fears is on the decline. In today's age of Instagram, retinal art (he gives the example of sad-clown and unicorn paintings popular on social media) is on the rise.

"But that's just a fruitless adolescent shouting," Gander says. "There's no nuance to that visual language. There's no intonation to the voice. Cognitive art gives you something that I would read differently to you, and we would leave it with different ideas. And that's the expansive possibility of art. That's what art is good for." **P**



LISSON GALLERY

Art in America

May 2017

Art in America

RYAN GANDER

CURRENTLY
ON VIEW
"Ryan Gander—These
Wings Aren't for
Flying," and "The
Greatest Story Ever
Told—The Collection
curated by Ryan
Gander," at the
National Museum of
Art, Osaka, through
July 2; "Night in the
Museum," at the
Attenborough Arts
Centre, Leicester,
UK, through May 21;
"Human/non Human/
Broken/non Broken,"
at the Cc Foundation,
Shanghai, through
May 14; "Ryan Gander:
Soft Modernism," at
Hyundai Gallery, Seoul,
through May 7.

Interview by Elizabeth Fullerton
Portrait by Tom Mannion

ELIZABETH
FULLERTON
is a writer living
in London. See
Contributors page.

IN THE STUDIO



Ryan Gander:
Ye-yo Criticism,
2014, sneakers
commissioned by
Adidas Originals.

All images, unless
otherwise noted,
courtesy Lisson
Gallery.



BRITISH ARTIST Ryan Gander is an ideas man. They are his métier and material, not just because he is a conceptual artist but also because he has an insatiable, childlike curiosity about everything. Arriving before Christmas at Gander's studio in a picturesque village in Suffolk, northeast of London, I was eager to peruse his legendary "ideas wall," having seen the floor-to-ceiling expanse of white typed sheets on a television program. However, Gander was in the process of building a new space, and the wall had been dismantled. But he photographed it with myriad props beforehand, turning it into the subject of a series of artworks.

Gander's work encompasses a wide range of forms, from sculpture (life-size figures made of artist-model armatures, or animatronic eyes embedded in the wall) and wall-hung pieces (mirrors draped in bedsheets made of marble) to books, fictional characters, concrete poetry, and fashion. He has produced limited-edition sneakers with fake mud on the sides and dresses made from postal sacks. Despite this diversity of mediums and styles, themes recur often, including the relationship between spectator and spectacle, parallel realities, incongruous collisions, and access and accessibility, which are especially pertinent for the artist, who uses a wheelchair.

A keen storyteller with a love of puzzles and intrigue, Gander offers the viewer economical clues to kindle the imagination. For example, he paints portraits and self-portraits but exhibits only the palettes, whose daubed pigments yield no clue as to the sitters' identity. He had several glass or mirror palettes strewn around the studio.

Gander has also turned viewers into detectives hunting an elusive group show, made children's forts out of marble, and presented vitrines that turn opaque on approach. At Documenta 13 in 2012, Gander's work consisted of nothing but an

almost imperceptible breeze wafting spectators through the gallery. He prefers to deal in the creative potential of absence rather than the satiety of presence.

Gander was born in 1976 in Chester, northwest England, and earned a BA in interactive art from Manchester Metropolitan University. Between 2000 and 2004 he completed postgraduate studies at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, and the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. He has exhibited extensively and lives between London and Suffolk with his wife and two daughters, from whom he takes frequent inspiration.

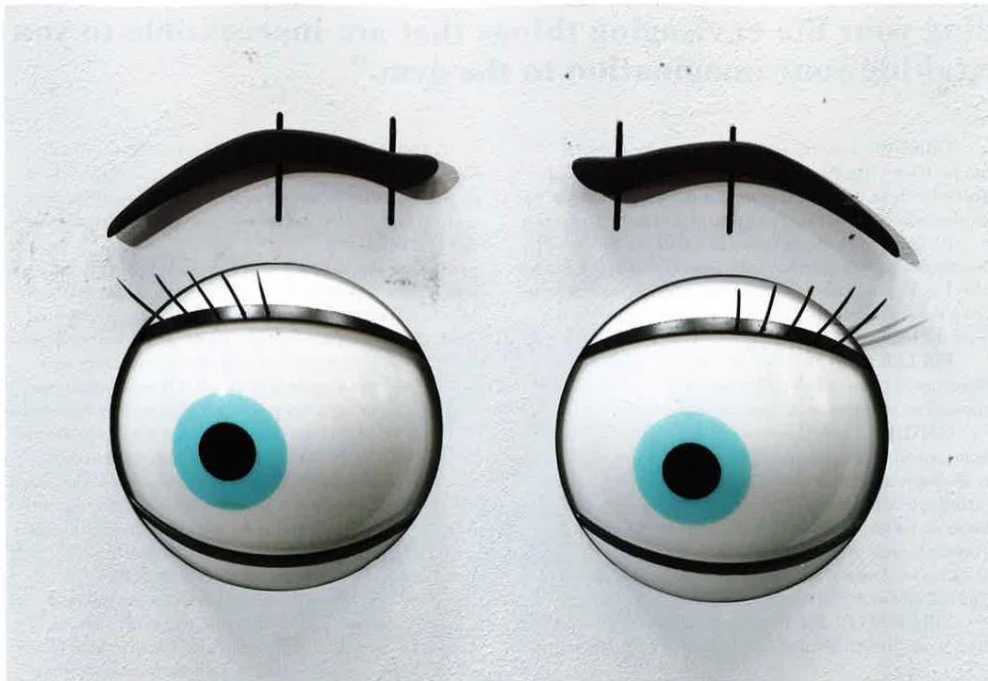
This spring Gander has solo exhibitions at the Cc Foundation in Shanghai, the National Museum of Art, Osaka, and the Hyundai Gallery in Seoul. "Night in the Museum," his curated selection from the British Arts Council Collection, tours the UK until May 21, and he will have the inaugural exhibition at the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Canada, opening Sept. 30.

After visiting Gander in Suffolk, I met him in his East London studio, where he handles the business side of his practice. Among the topics of conversation were the nature of creativity and madness, and the difference between art shows and art exhibitions.

ELIZABETH FULLERTON Will you resurrect your ideas wall in your new space?

RYAN GANDER The wall makes me panic a bit. It's like having so many children that you can't feed them all. I made a resolution—not at New Year's—to finish more things before starting new ones. There were too many on the go.

Do you want to see a secret? You know all the portraits that I paint and never show anyone? Do you want to see [a photo of]



Dominæ Illud Opus Populare, 2016, animatronic eyes and sensors, 13¾ by 6¾ inches.

one? They're actually really good. People think I don't do them, and that's annoying. I enjoy painting them.

FULLERTON Why do you show only the palettes?

GANDER The palette means more because the palette represents all the paintings that could have been, not the painting that I decided on. The self-portrait palettes are like a tongue-in-cheek dig at how ridiculous it is to build clumsy egocentric monuments to yourself, which is what so many artists do.

FULLERTON Your practice extends to writing, sculpture, architecture, and design. Is there any hierarchy to your production?

GANDER No. I like things that are outside the realm of art. I like the trainers [*Yo-yo Criticism*, 2014], and I like the cocktail book [*Artists' Cocktails: A Compendium*, 2013], and I like designing buildings and doing consultancy work for property developers, and I like doing public art. It's just a different context, a different audience. There's a functionality about these things. They exist in the real world. The trainers are a great artwork because thousands of people wear them on the street. It's astonishing and really exciting. You can tell when people are making or curating art for the right reasons, because they do things that you wouldn't expect. I think that a key way to identify quality is expectation. It should surpass expectation. If I go to a show and it's what I thought it would be, then it's pandering to being successful.

FULLERTON Is there one medium that you enjoy most?

GANDER Writing, I guess. Not just writing books. There's writing in everything, because everything's a story.

FULLERTON Where did your love of storytelling come from?

GANDER I spent a lot of time on my own when I was little; I didn't go to school. How do I say this without sounding twee and needy, because it's not a wheelchair thing. It's something different.

Accessibility is very overrated, and that idea fuels my work, and me as a human. Let's say I'm at a party in Berlin and it's up a flight of steps. I'm in the room downstairs, and I don't know what's upstairs. So I imagine what would be there. Spending your entire life envisaging things that are inaccessible to you is like taking your imagination to the gym.

And then when you think about my work and about the flak that I get for being inaccessible or elitist—it's because there's always something missing or covered or negated or latent. But the beauty of that lies in the spectator's need to imagine. Enabling people to imagine is a gift as valuable as education.

FULLERTON In New York this past fall you showed a 2016 version of the installation *Fieldwork* at Lisson Gallery, comprising objects—such as an urn that held your aunt's ashes, a baseball bat covered in nails, a pair of taxidermied pigeons—parading past an opening in the wall on a conveyor belt. Each object forms the basis for a discourse in your accompanying tome *Fieldwork, The Complete Reader*.

“Spending your life envisaging things that are inaccessible to you is like taking your imagination to the gym.”

GANDER I was trying to make vessels for powerful stories. It's not that the work needs support from the book. I wanted to make the book, and then the fallout of that desire was to physically manifest the objects. I wanted to make a collection.

It's going to be the first show at the Remai Modern in Saskatoon. They've got a big collection of Picasso prints. I love that I make a collection that goes into a collection. I want to hang the entire collection of Picasso prints around the box with the conveyor belt in it.

FULLERTON *Fieldwork, The Complete Reader* recalls Montaigne's *Essays* or Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* in that your musings are witty, personal, digressive, and random.

GANDER I love those books. I love the short chapters. That is, in general, what my practice is: short chapters that contain a massive amount of work and time. They're economical, because each chapter could be a book. The most inspiring parts of those books are the contents pages, definitely, because the chapters potentially could be about anything and most of them don't relate to each other. I wanted to test myself and do something that I'd find really difficult. And writing the book was really difficult.

FULLERTON The title of your New York Lisson exhibition, “I See Straight Through You,” sounds almost accusatory.

GANDER It was a bit cynical, wasn't it? Obviously there are works like the [animatronic] eyes, and then there are works like the armature men, which essentially present the structure of a human without any of the substance. Yet they give emotion.

The title also had to do with New York. When you go to galleries in New York, most of the shows are one work made many times in different colors and sizes. And that's it. They don't feel like exhibitions, in the sense that a greater artwork is being made from the individual pieces. For an exhibition, you curate your own work. You have a palette of ideas that form a broader concept. But I would say a tiny proportion of shows that I've seen in New York are exhibitions—instead they feel like car showrooms.

FULLERTON For “Night in the Museum,” the exhibition that you selected from the UK Arts Council Collection, you explored the theme of spectatorship further, positioning figurative sculptures in front of abstract works containing the color blue. So Kerry Stewart's 1996 sculpture of an early human, *Untitled (Lucy)*, stared intently at Garth Evans's *Blue No. 30* from 1964.

GANDER When the exhibition was at the gallery in Yorkshire Sculpture Park, a lady came over to me and said, “I keep saying ‘sorry’ to all these sculptures. I walk in front of one and think it's a person.” I liked that. I'd not thought of it but when we tried it, we really felt like we were disrupting a gaze. It's strange how much power you can create with inanimate eyes made with bronze or plastic.

FULLERTON Your curatorial strategy generated unanticipated associations between the pairs. What is the significance of the color blue for you? Could it equally have been red?

GANDER Blue, historically, in color theory and popular culture, is often associated with an optimistic unknown. It's about exploration, it's about an abyss that is not empty, something that is full but you can't see what it is. It's an absence, but you are given the possibility to imagine what is absent. So I guess all my work should be blue.

If your TV loses its signal, the screen goes blue—it encompasses every possibility of everything that could be shown on TV. When you look into the sea, the blue is the depth. When you look into the sky, the blue is the depth. Blue is important.

FULLERTON The starting point for “Night in the Museum” came from your ongoing series of artworks that couple one of your bronze versions of Degas's famous ballerina with a blue cube, which is intended as a cartoonish emblem of modern art. You have freed the girl from her plinth and shown her smoking a cigarette or lying outstretched on her elbow. What fascinated you so much about the dancer?

GANDER I thought she was really sad. When I was installing my work for the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh in 2009, I kept passing her, and every time I thought, “God, I bet she's seen a thing or two.” And then I thought she was so immovable for a ballerina, so stationary and heavy.



Mr. Modern
Classical Conceptualist
(Dramaturgical
framework for
structure and
stability), 2016,
stainless steel, brass,
aluminium wire,
and plastic sleeving,
72½ by 24¾ by 16½
inches.

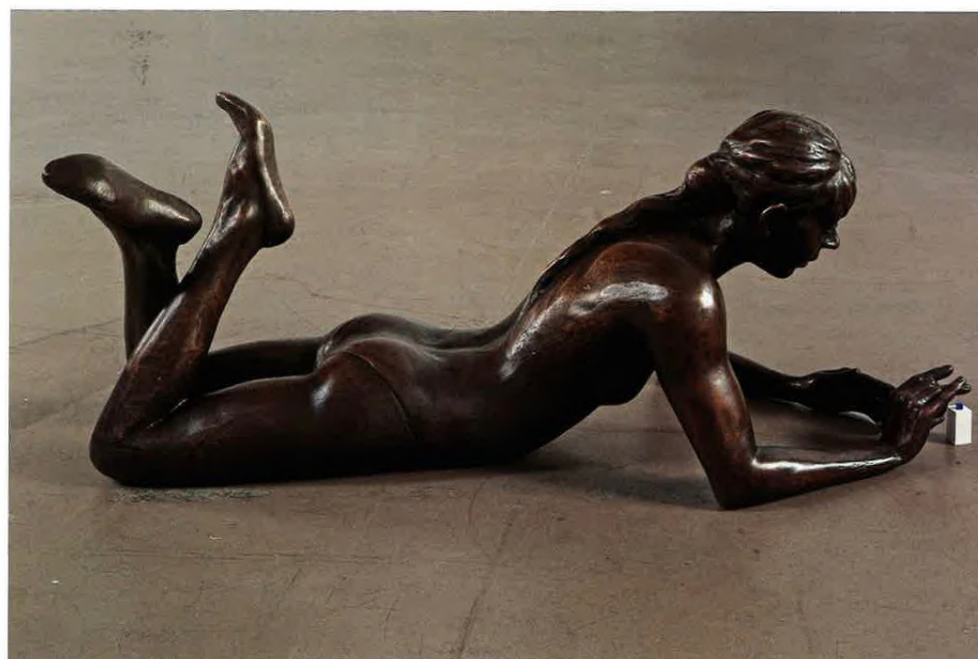


View of
Fieldwork, 2015,
34 objects on
plinths presented
on a moving
conveyor belt.

View of the exhibition "Night in the Museum," 2016, at Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Courtesy Arts Council Collection, London. Photo Jonty Wild.



You Ruin Everything (The Economy of Zero's), 2011, bronze, plinth, blue cube, approx. 12¼ by 34¼ by 11¼ inches. Courtesy Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam.





Staccato Moments,
2016, brushed
aluminum, LED
video screen, and
potted *Monstera
deliciosa* plants,
dimensions variable.
Courtesy Taro
Nasu, Tokyo. Photo
Yasushi Ichikawa.

“The palette means more than the painting, because it represents all the paintings that could have been.”

FULLERTON You have made at least ten versions. What are her next outings?

GANDER It's funny when people talk about the different sculptures, because for me they're not really different. It's just one *her* in different moments. I'm writing a storyboard following her explorations of the institution of art and her adventures around the plinth and blue cube. At the moment there are three that I definitely want to make and two of those I want to keep, so it's just finding the money. One is where she's crawling out of her hollow plinth, which lies overturned on its side, and there's another where she's dead over a plinth.

FULLERTON That's the end of the series?

GANDER Yeah, but she's not ready to die quite yet.

FULLERTON Recently, you have been displaying word compositions on the type of information monitors found in hotels or corporate lobbies.

GANDER I just showed one of the info totems called *Staccato Moments*. It plays with all the conformity of writing. The compositions are in sections: the conference room, the ballroom—each section is from a room in the game Cluedo [Clue in the United States]. There are all these visual devices on the screen that relate to the word compositions, which are basically streams of thoughts. [He recites.]

Laggards,
Early adopters, hear me now,
here me now ...
Here I am!
Am I here?
I'm here ...

... Guinea pigs, Pigs, Hogs, Boars, Sows, Grunters,
Screamers,
Fakers, Lovers, Haters,
Swine you are here
Sign you are here
On the long dotted line, you are here

The work is like a game in itself that contains references to other games. It is made in my mind like a puzzle, so it's a bit like explaining what my practice is.

FULLERTON And you're writing a new info totem with animated visual elements that will feature in your forthcoming exhibition in Korea.

GANDER *Staccato Reflections* is based on the idea of the self in culture, the obsession with the me and the selfie and the narcissist wand. The surface is mirrored, so as you read the words, you see yourself. The work has devices in it that are self-referential. It asks you to touch the screen, and then says “don't touch the screen.” So it seems like it is responding to you, but it's not.

FULLERTON You also have a major exhibition coming up at the National Museum of Art in Osaka. It will consist of

your own work as well as an exhibition curated from their collection. What are your plans for the curated section?

GANDER It's called “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” and the works are in pairs. So you get a Picasso with a Man Ray and a Jiro Yoshihara painting with an Isamu Noguchi sculpture. There's obviously a visual association to these pairings, and they jump around in history, geography, art movements, and mediums.

It's based on one of my “Associative Photo” works from 2004 that is in the museum's collection. For this series, I take materials like photos, photocopies, and letters, put them on the wall and make a caption. Then I photograph it with a plate camera and reprint it as a single image. The shadows make it look like a trompe l'oeil of things stuck to the wall in a frame. Each of the items has associations connected to the diverse research I've collected over the years.

FULLERTON So for the exhibition you are curating, you are using your “Associative Photo” ...

GANDER ... as a material, yeah. It's like using ideas as material rather than material as material. It's about being prolific enough and varied enough to create a collection or a stockpile or a toolbox of work that you can then use to make into masterworks for exhibitions.

FULLERTON Speaking of materials, you frequently create works where things are not what they seem. For instance, what appears to be drapery is marble, or a used condom is made of the same wood as the chest of drawers it sits on. Is it about experimenting with materials or are you prodding the spectator toward fresh perspectives?

GANDER There's a certain currency in not being sure whether what you approach is an artwork or not, and then there's also a currency to the materiality of things in general. You can construct an artwork from those currencies as if they were materials. So instead of having burnt sienna or ochre, you have the currency of the double take.

It's hard to explain. This is why it's visual language. Only a tiny section of art practitioners are into the semiotics of visual language, and some of them are very eloquent, like Pierre Huyghe or Rosemarie Trockel. Being that light on your feet with language and with meaning, it's a beautiful thing. It pushes the brain and everything that you know. And, for me, that's true creativity.

FULLERTON Working across a broad spectrum, as those artists do, seems key to you.

GANDER The artists that I'm not into are the ones who just do the art thing. Because if being creative is applicable to the whole world and can go anywhere, why would you just do the one thing? I think you have this valve in your head that lets you read information in an abstract, unprejudiced way. When you're a kid, it's fully open, but over time it gets smaller and smaller.

The exercise of seeing—[he looks around the room] like seeing the rhythm of the Christmas lights on the plants and seeing air pulled into the humidifier and turned into water, and



thinking about the air in the lungs and the water we drink—that's having the valve open, taking the time to notice all those things. I sound like a mad person.

As you get older, the valve closes. Art becomes logical, it becomes your job, and it doesn't feel mad anymore.

I've just told you about things that I know I'm going to make and that don't make me feel so mad at the moment. But there are all these other things that we haven't talked about.

FULLERTON Can you discuss some of those?

GANDER It's just a big list. One idea is this robot arm that would be made in Germany to sort small plastic animal toys. While it divides different species into mothers and children, it plays music to work to. You have a zebra baby next to a lion baby, and a lion mother next to a bear next to a seal. It randomly mixes them up and then sorts them back out.

FULLERTON What was the genesis of that?

GANDER My kids play with toy animals, made by Schleich. I like the idea that when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, the guy left in the shuttle had to orbit the moon. So while Armstrong made "one small step for [a] man, one great leap for mankind," there's this poor dude that no one remembers. There's a futility to the shuttle going around and around. The robot arm is a bit like that. Pure futility. But it's massively loaded with politics and emotion.

FULLERTON Yes, and of course German history.

GANDER I didn't think about that. Fuck! I need to change it. I need to get some Swiss animals, make a politically neutral artwork.

Then there's the snow globe that never stops snowing. An internal blizzard keeps you from being able to see the object inside. And there's a film script that I need to finish. The actor Jim Broadbent has agreed to play me when I'm old. He sees systems that happen all around him: the heat signature of all the things in the kitchen, the footpaths of all the people moving around the café. It's like a portrait of someone who's mad.

FULLERTON Do you think all these works manifest madness?

GANDER Let's call it illogic rather than madness.

FULLERTON How important is humor in your work? Is it a by-product or a conscious element?

GANDER That's what trying to be creative is. It's playing, because you understand stuff through play. I'm interested in accidental art-making, in compositions that come about through happenstance. The structure of comedy is grounded in making collisions and associations that are illogical and absurd. My work uses the mind to think about things in depth, so it's not surprising that what I do is funny. Because it's out of the ordinary. It's not of logic—it's of illogic. ○

View of Gander's exhibition "Make Every Show Like It's Your Last," 2013, showing (on floor) three marble resin sculptures, and (on wall) acrylic-on-glass paintings; at Le Plateau, Paris. Courtesy FRAC Ile-de-France. Photo Martin Argyroglo.

LISSON GALLERY

Time Out

01 September 2016



The top 10 NYC gallery exhibitions in September

Check out our list of the best gallery shows of painting, sculpture and more opening during the first week of September

[Labor Day](#) is almost here, which means the end of summer is nigh and the art world's sleepy season is almost over. Most of the top [art galleries](#) in Chelsea, the [Lower East Side](#) and Uptown have been closed for August, but they're about to come roaring back to life with dozens of new shows in September—including many featuring [hot young talents](#). To help mark your art calendars, we've assembled the best [art shows](#) to see when the art world re-opens next month.



“Ryan Gander: I see straight through you”

This British Conceptualist is something of a prankster, and in for his first solo show in New York since 2008, he brings his considerable wit to bear on the “psychology of the body” and the figurative tradition in art. One of the highlights includes a follow-up to his *Magnus Opus* from 2013: A pair of cartoonish animatronic eyes embedded straight within the wall; activated by motion-detectors, they follow you around the room in a way that's both amusing and disturbing.

Ryan Gander, installation view

Photograph: Jack Hems



Friday September 16 2016 - Saturday October 15 2016

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet News

22 July 2016

<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/ryan-gander-interview-night-in-the-museum-550574>

artnet®news

On View

Ryan Gander Talks Art, Curation, and Politics for His 'Night in the Museum' Exhibition

The show involves figurative sculptures "looking" at blue art.

Carol Civre, July 22, 2016



David Batchelor, *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me*, 5, (2001) (back). Uli Nimpf, *Seated Figure*, 1951. Photo by Anna Arca courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Ryan Gander, one of Britain's leading contemporary artists, never ceases to surprise and enthrall with his varied practice. Never sticking to any particular style or category, Gander tackles ideas through a variety of mediums, from sculpture and installation to language and commercial products. His artwork is frequently seen as a harmonious mix of complex and conceptual notions carried out using humorous and nonsensical elements. Narrative plays a big role in Gander's practice, as many of his pieces serve to tell a story or share a thought.



Ryan Gander, *As old as time itself, slept alone* (2015-16). Photo by Anna Arca courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

For the Arts Council Collection's exhibition "A Night in the Museum," which opened at Yorkshire Sculpture Park's Longside Gallery on July 6, Gander assumes the role of not just artist, but also curator. This exhibition brings together more than thirty works from the Arts Council's wide collection, including a new piece from Gander himself, *As old as time itself, slept alone* (2015-16).

We were able to speak to the artist about his selection process for the exhibition, the significance of his dual role as curator and artist, and about the tumultuous politics of his home country post-Brexit.



Richard Paul Lohse, *Kreuz aus Gleichung und Kontrast* and *Horizontal – und Vertikalpositionen aus Extrem – und Nachbarfarben*, (1975) (back). Reg Butler, *Girl and Boy*, (1951) (front). Photo courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

As curator of the “Night in the Museum” exhibition you were invited to select art works from the Arts Council Collection, which features over 8,000 works of British contemporary art. You narrowed this vast collection down to only 30. How did you go about this laborious process?

It wasn't laborious it was exhilarating, I learned more in a couple of weeks than in the last couple of years, but the collection is so diverse and so large that I was like a kid in a candy store. So I went about it very logically, anally even. I set a series of methodological constraints to restrict me, to narrow down the choice. The formula consisted of only showing figurative sculpture of the human form and artworks containing the color blue. These works were then paired into a spectator (the figure) and the spectacle (the work containing blue) and positioned so that the figure became almost another visitor to the exhibition, with a directed gaze to the artwork it was paired with.

The color blue is of some significance to you both in the context of this exhibition as well as in your general practice. What about this color draws you to it?

Poetically, blue is the color of an untuned television, the depth of the ocean and the atmosphere, for me blue is the color of nothingness and of the absolute depth of the infinite. It's a kind of zero point/neutrality of color. In ancient Egypt blue (irtyu) was the color of the heavens and hence represented the universe. It's a color of neutrality, rebirth, a beginning. Logically from my perspective, it is a good color for a stereotype of what we think of contemporary art. If Bugs Bunny walked into a gallery, the contemporary artwork he would see would most likely be an abstract organic shape in ultra-marine blue... within the history of art it seems to be a sort of cliché, because we are all in agreeance of the contemporaneity of the color.



Gareth Evans, *Blue No. 30*, (1964) (back). Kerrz Stewart, *Untitled (Lucy)*, (1996), (front). Photo by Anna Arca courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Do you think that the works you selected form an exhibition that as a whole reflects your personal style?

Idiosyncrasies of course will always prevail, even in a logical system. To an extent my taste was formed by “things I wanted to see out in real life” as opposed to on the page of a catalog or database, but it would be wrong to say that that followed a personal aesthetic, as one of the objectives of the work I make is to try to avoid stylistic signature or conformity to repetitive aesthetics, even if I don’t always achieve it. Conceptually I guess there is an underlying interest in the idea of the gaze, the viewer and the viewed, who exactly is looking at what and why... I would hope the show is diverse, full of collisions and clashes, that’s the type of show that ordinarily I am challenged by.



Patrick Caulfield, *Dining Recess*, (1972) (left). Henry Moore, *Head of a King*, (1952-1953) (right). Photo by Anna Arca courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Your piece included in the exhibition, titled *As old as time itself, slept alone*, is commissioned by the Arts Council Collection, which relies on public funding. You shared your opinions of Brexit with our readers previously—how you think Brexit might affect this type of funding in the future?

Asking me that is like opening a can of worms... I don't think anyone can predict anything at the moment, not even Mystic Meg, everything is uncertain and in turmoil, whilst a few weeks ago everything was quite stable and positive.

The title of the exhibition might be familiar to the public because of its relevance in popular culture. Is there any relationship between the Ben Stiller film titled *Night at the Museum* and this exhibition, which shares a strikingly similar title?

I'm not sure because I've never seen the film, but I do know that the name isn't "exactly" the same so we are totally safe legally... But essentially the show for me is about activating two artworks by making them collide. It sounds like a Woody Allen gag he would serve up at an Upper East Side dinner party, but "What did one artwork say to the other artwork?" ... Well I guess a multitude of things, it depends on who is watching...



Wolfgang Tillmans, *Beerenstilleben*, (2007). Photo courtesy of Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Ryan Gander, "*Night in the Museum*" will be on view at [Longside Gallery](#) from July 16 – October 16, 2016.

The New York Times

Inside Art

Robin Pogrebin

From Ryan Gander, More Moving Objects

Imagine a conveyor belt with 32 objects that you can view only through a single window, one object at a time — a selfie stick, three pairs of stockings, a collection of mints from all over the world.

This is the installation that the British conceptual artist Ryan Gander will bring in September

to Lisson's New York gallery, which recently opened in Chelsea.

"Usually the spectator moves around an exhibition," Mr. Gander said in a phone interview from his home in England. "I quite like the idea that the exhibition moves around the spectator."

The piece, "Ryan Gander: I see straight through you," expands on Mr. Gander's similar installation at Lisson's London gallery last year.

"It's about the passing of objects," said Alex Logsdail, the director of the New York gallery. "It's very poignant for this moment when everyone's attention span is so short and everyone is scrolling through images and texts and just skimming the surface of things."

The Lisson show will also include a new series of figurative sculptures — essentially milled stainless-steel skeletons. "There is no face, so the emotions you get from human eyes aren't there — all I can manipulate are the body parts," Mr. Gander said. "They're a little bit scary, they're comical and, when I look at them, I see a lot of failed hopes, lost dreams, regret."

Mr. Gander's disability — he has used a wheelchair since childhood — is not integral to his artistic identity, but his work often deals with themes of inaccessibility, Mr. Logsdail said, "things that are hidden or out of reach or unattainable."



RYAN GANDER, LISSON GALLERY

A teddy bear, one of 32 objects in Ryan Gander's installation "Fieldwork" at London's Lisson Gallery last year.

FINANCIAL TIMES

11 June/12 June 2016

★

FTWeekend

7

Collecting

Exhibitions | From Dürer to Hirst, artists have amassed rich collections by swapping work. By *Melanie Gerlis*

Think of the serious art collectors in the 21st century, and bankers, investors and commodities billionaires come to mind. But among the ranks of the newly minted magnates are also the artists themselves whose superstar status has made them some of the most powerful collectors of our time.

Nowhere is this more evident than at the Jeff Koons exhibition *Now*, which opened to the public at London's Newport Street gallery last month. The private museum was founded by artist Damien Hirst last year and the exhibition is the second display drawn from his 2,000-strong collection. It features one of the five existing pieces from Koons' recent *Play-Doh* series, completed in 2014, as well as the huge, highly polished "Balloon Monkey (Blue)" (2006-13), also one in a series of five. The orange version sold for US\$25.9m (with premium) at Christie's in 2014.

Hirst is not the only artist-collector to open a privately funded museum. German artist Thomas Schütte opened a museum for sculpture (his own and others') in Hombroich, near Düsseldorf, in April. Belgian artist Wim Delvoye is restoring buildings in Kashan, Iran, that he intends to open as a museum. And in Beijing, Zeng Fangzhi is planning a museum to show his collection.

Are artists just a subset of today's wealthy collectors? Despite the similarities, artists occupy a distinct position. "The artist is both in the middle of the art world, and on the fringes of its market," says Andrew Renton, director of London's Marlborough Contemporary gallery and a professor of curating at Goldsmiths College.

Such a position brings several advantages to the artist-collector. First and foremost, "they have well-trained eyes and they see more art than anyone else," says Fru Tholstrup, director of Sotheby's S12 gallery. And, as Brazilian artist Vik Muniz says, "I don't consciously look for things to buy, but I somehow keep bumping into them."

Renton says artists are also "afforded a position that others are not. There is a set of rules that an artist is entitled to break, extending from curating through to collecting." This includes the ability to make what he describes as "quirky" choices outside of the market's conventions – and do what they want with the art. Renton cites American artist Robert Rauschenberg's "Erased de Kooning Drawing" from 1953: Rauschenberg asked Willem de Kooning for permission (which was granted, albeit reluctantly) to have a drawing by the older artist, which he then mostly erased. It is difficult to imagine an artist giving up a work for this sort of treatment to an outsider.



The artists' artists



Clockwise from top: Jeff Koons' "Play-Doh"; "Erased de Kooning Drawing" by Robert Rauschenberg; Ryan Gander's "As old as time itself, slept alone"; Lucian Freud's "Self Portrait: Reflection"

But artists are not only collectors of their contemporaries. An exhibition that opens at London's National Gallery this month, *Painters' Paintings*, explores the significance of artists' collections. The exhibition of around 80 works spanning 500 years highlights Lucian Freud's penchant for 19th-century works and Anthony van Dyck's passion for the Italian Masters, particularly Titian, as well as featuring many peer-to-peer collectors.

Artists often have the best access to their peers, and understand how the galleries work. Also, by not thinking about

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gathering works as "collecting" in the traditional sense, they have a different engagement with the art market. "The last person who thinks about art as a commodity is an artist," Tholstrup says. There is a more informal system of exchange between artists, where the middle man is cut out of the process.

"The way most artists collect is through trades and swaps with their peers and contemporaries," says British artist Ryan Gander. There is, he explains, a "weird economy" to such trades, in which the value is often more "sentimental" than financial. He has swapped works with others represented by his gallery (Lisson) including Jonathan Monk and Cory Arcangel.

Such trades are an important part of art history. Gauguin swapped works with Van Gogh and Degas; Andy Warhol, who had a huge collection of other artists' work, traded with Jasper Johns; records show that in the 16th century, Raphael exchanged works with Albrecht Dürer. Picasso understood art's currency and would pay for meals with a doodle – a winning bet for the restaurants, and a practice that eateries such as Scott's in Mayfair adopt today.

Muniz says that "artists start collecting immediately after they start meeting other artists". The author and academic Olav Velthuis cites these initial informal exchanges as an important stepping stone in the development of an art scene. He gives examples including the Bombay Art Society, founded in 1888, and the Stars group that started out in Beijing in 1979 (whose members



included Ai Weiwei). Velthuis describes a "circuit of commerce", including the exchange of works, in which "artists manage to make ends meet without negotiating in formal trade".

The ability to operate outside of the market can continue throughout an artist's career. Even once more formal collecting begins, dealers generally offer artists a cut-down price. Muniz believes this reinforces the fact that "artists tend to value art differently from the average collector. They employ more subjective, if not biased criteria... Because of this, they have a tendency to deride the

market's conventional criteria when assembling their collections."

Artists are also particularly inclined to be patrons of the next generation. Even Hirst, the most business-like of artist-collectors, is routinely described as "generous" by those in the art world.

As Gander puts it: "I often buy work by young artists and students, not necessarily because I like their work but because I know that they don't have the money to better themselves by producing new work." The first work he bought was a video by Jack Strange, who was his student at the Slade School of Fine Art. He bought the work for £500; Strange now sells for around £5,000 on the primary market.

Collecting habits can inform and influence an artist's own work. "Hirst is aware of linking himself to a bigger history," says Francis Outred, head of contemporary art at Christie's. Hirst's



trademark formaldehyde was influenced by Koons' equilibrium tanks (in which basketballs are suspended in a sodium chloride solution). Koons' *Banalities* sculpture series (kitsch angels, animals and teddy bears on plinths) refers back to the medieval church sculptures in his collection.

Artists rarely cash in other artists' works. "Even if I wanted to sell one of the works, I wouldn't," says Gander. "They are part of an agreement of trust and integrity between artists." Yet the value of an artwork can increase simply by being bought by artists. Some artists not only have access to the best art but can influence what is seen to be the best. When Sotheby's sold Warhol's vast estate in 1988 (the year after he died), the 10-day, 10,000-item auction made a total \$25m, \$10m more than expected. Works by Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp were popular, but so were Warhol's more eclectic pieces. A group of 175 ceramic cookie jars that he had bought obsessively from flea markets and junk shops sold for a quarter of a million dollars. The artist's touch can extend well beyond his own work.

'Jeff Koons: Now', Newport Street Gallery, London, to October 16, newportstreetgallery.com; Ryan Gander curates the Arts Council Collection at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, July 16-October 16, ysp.co.uk; 'Painters' Paintings', National Gallery, London, June 23-September 4, nationalgallery.org.uk