

RYAN GANDER

'And it came to life'

Opening reception: October 9, 10 p.m.
October 10 through November 22



For the opening of MARZ – Galeria's project space in Lisbon on October 9 of 2008, London-based Ryan Gander (b. Chester, 1976) will be presenting a unique installation, titled *And it came to life* comprised of three individual works, all produced during the course of 2008: *Flashes of Beautiful Thinking – 10 October 2008*, *The Klingon frowns and simply replies, "Sorry I don't understand you"* and *Linus Van Pelt and a world of Endeavour, Ambition and Optimism*.

Rather than collate these works into an intelligible whole where one element takes precedence over the other or leads to another in a linear and sequential order along a one-way street, resulting in a sense of completeness, order or closure, Ryan Gander seems to work as an assembler who gathers together fragments or runes - things like calendars, left-over messages from crackers, grocery bags and mysterious crystal balls – which he then arranges in shifting constellations. When broken away from their original material context and reassembled, not in fixed positions, but in fluid compositions, Gander plunges these fragments into a complex network of signification with less and less reference to a determined, perceptible or ascertainable reality, but one which many writers and curators have associated with fantasy, story-telling or one might dare say, animation, from the Latin *animare*, to give breath to, which necessarily implies a certain role and disposition on behalf of the beholder, a disposition that Gander as an artist takes as his role to instigate.

As such, it is by no particular or commendable order that viewers see or should come across the crystal ball and sealed black polythene bag containing 6 hidden calendar pages for October 10 2008, objects in waiting that comprise, but do not in any way exhaust *Flashes of Beautiful Thinking – 10 October 2008* (2008). Opaque too is the discarded fortune cookie slip with a punch line to a joke about a Klingon (a dark skinned warrior with a ridged forehead from the fictional Star Trek series) and an artist being unable to communicate; another piece on view which stands as a discarded or surplus element which literally has the potential for fluttering and unintentionally moving within space, elevated by something as poetic as a sudden gust of wind or as mundane as being kicked aside, unnoticed.

How do we relate these two pieces, how does one pacify their mood of dispersal? Rather than provide us with instructions or a script, Gander withdraws from us, his viewers, the pieces to this puzzle's completion. Instead, he provides little more than odd bits – disconnected singularities – that remain as such: episodes with an inherent potential to break open thought. These frayed elements demand spectatorial attention and a certain willingness to believe, or to make believe.

Gander's objects are undeniably compelling. In the case of the baby-blue fleece blanket with its blue silk edging, hung above a grocery bag on the floor – one cannot help but feel drawn to the inherent intimacy of this transitional object and disturbing piece of wreckage, "rescued" for *Linus Van Pelt and a world of Endeavour, Ambition and Optimism* (2008). By way of the title, Gander returns this blanket to the thumb-sucking Charles M. Schulz creation, Linus Van Pelt and his remarkable belief in the unknown, and in so doing, confirms our suspicion that this is indeed a security blanket, something other than a mere inanimate object. The nature of this object however is intentionally unclear, for it was used by a particular subject, an existing, real-life unnamed child as relief from strain, as a space of transition between inner and outer reality, but at the same time, is linked to a fictional character. This is an instance of how Gander intentionally blurs certain distinctions and places the elements he chooses – elements which already contain this dubiety - on a threshold between fact and fiction: we see the crumbs and dirt, indices of a child's use – fact – but at the same time, the artist draws a shroud of fiction over these elements by way of the drawings on the wall, which emerge as a continuous line made of variable brownish blotches. These blotches are the reproduction of the shapes made by the Peanuts cartoon's mouth during his high school presidential election speech in the episode entitled 'You're not elected'. As such, *Linus Van Pelt and a world of Endeavour, Ambition and Optimism* speaks too of promises that prove hard to keep, those made by wound-up presidential candidates at the height of their campaigns, or that it is best not to promise the world, or in our case – enlightenment.

An installation that refuses to provide viewers with a key, a solution or formula to congeal the sense of fragmentation that reigns over it. Rather than prescribe an interpretation or provide solutions to moral inquiry, Gander, like Linus, chooses to prolong uncertainty.

He seems to tell us once more that it is by loose association that certain things can be animated; what we see is somehow intertwined, somehow strangely linked. These apparently mute, vague emblems, these scattered ciphers, can, if we so choose, come to life with a certain gaze. ND

Ryan Gander studied at the Manchester Metropolitan University before he continued his studies at the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (1999–2000) and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam (2001–2002). His works have been displayed amongst others in: South London Gallery, London in 2008; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 2008; CCW Wattis Institute, San Francisco in 2007; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2007; MUMOK, Vienna in 2006; Tate Britain, London in 2006. He received the Baloise Art Award for his audio/video installation *Is this guilt in you too – (Study of a car in a field)* (2005) at Art Basel 36 in Basel. *Something Vague*, an expanded version of his recent show at the Neue Kunst Halle St. Gallen, will be on view at the Bonner Kunstverein until November 2, 2008.

MARZ – Galeria is located at Rua Reinaldo Ferreira 20 A, 1700-323 Lisbon.

Gallery hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 12 noon – 8 p.m.

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