



The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

Ron Giii

Independent Curator's Selection

November 16 - December 9, 2006



Commentary by Oliver Girling

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Commentary by Oliver Girling
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Ron Giii by Oliver Girling

Inde-Picks (Independent Curator's Selection)

Where to begin? At the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve and Pinch-me and the whole nine yards. Usually thought to have been located in the fertile delta between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in northern Iraq, there is nevertheless another good candidate in the same country, namely the marshlands of the south, historical home to the so-called Marsh Arabs. Home to countless species of birds, otters, turtles and other freshwater creatures, it remained a natural paradise over the course of millennia. That is, until Saddam Hussein, in a fit of genus- and genocidal pique, drained the marshes in the early 1980's, monstrous payback to the residents for a failed rebellion against his rule that had been encouraged (but not supported) by the Americans.

Can we spare a thought for the marshes, the marsh people, the Iraqis? Ron can, and that's why my thoughts about his work begin with *The Marsh People Iraq 2004*. It's a rare "cameo" in the show, that is, head and shoulders shot, the head surrounded as usual with a saturated oil halo, but here the halo also bleeds down the page where the rest of the body would have been. The top of the skull is separated from the face, perhaps a skullcap or a kefyá-furrow in the man's brow; his raccoon-eyes peering into the middle distance. His ears and narrow nose are terra-cotta, his mouth a thin, sensual slit.

Rauschenberg once said of his "Combine" pieces that they were invitations to look away from the artwork, at something or anything in the gallery other than the wild chaos of his assemblage. Gillespie invites us to *think* away, using an opposite strategy: all his heads are stylized and simplified, so that the artist gains access to a wide range of subjects under the imprint of this hieratic human presence. Zoological, geometric, pathological, the faces are sometimes those of Gericault's asylum inmates, but also by turns eager and gormless, idiots savant and Savonarola.

The Desert Night Air 1963 is a pool on a blinding white expanse of Fabriano, recrudescence of cold-pressed linseed bearding the face orb with the concentric circular hat. The fisheyes wave over a weathervane nose that could've wandered out of Paul Klee circa 1930, but it's about the '60's, the great first years of independence for many African countries. The face is confident, inquisitive; what does history hold in store?

Too Roberta Smith is the art critic, looker and seer, magnificent expanse of unwrinkled forehead; intelligence inherent in sight. The palpable generosity of those who toil in the ocular salt mines. *Mr. Kim/Sherbourne and Queen* is a posthumous tribute to a Korean convenience-store owner near that corner who was murdered in his shop. An Elizabethan ruffled collar offers a light magnificence to this modest man, under the obligatory halo; and is it his fatal wound we see in the oil lozenge near the bottom of the page?

Les Archades the3rd year is one record of a reading adventure, Walter Benjamin's fantastic *Arcades* project. Brains are roiled and sparkling with silver highlights; and the iconic flat nose has acquired a mini-bridge, as if actually smelling the words on the sensual page.



Summer Thinking
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



Desert Rain
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



Les Arcades, the 3rd year
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



The Rings
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



The Archeologist
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



The Desert Night Air
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



Truth & Passion
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



Mr Kim / Sherbourne & Queen
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



Too Roberta Smith
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004



The Marsh People, Iraq
pastel & sanguine on paper
30 x 22 in
2004

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Exhibitions and Related History

- 2007 Survey Exhibition, Doris McCarthy Gallery (touring, with catalogue), Toronto
- 2006 *The Identification Theatre* (performance with Veronica Hurnik, ABC No Rio, New York, NY
Tom Dean, Ron Giii, Catharine MacTavish & Olia Mishchenko, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto
The Atomic Theatre, Ron Giii & Mimmo Paladino, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto
- 2004 *The White Prince*, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto
- 2003 *The Dreamer*, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto
- 2002 Group show (cur. Anne Dean), Toronto Arts Council, Toronto
- 2001 *Hydrogen*, Paul Petro Gallery, Toronto
Group drawing show, (cur. Jay Isaac), West Wing Gallery, Toronto.
New acquisitions show, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- 1999 Drawings accepted by Edmonton Art Gallery
Group show of photographs, Saydie Bronfman Centre, Montreal
- 1998 Group show, Tableaux Vivant Gallery, Toronto.
- 1997 Wrote text for ABC No Rio (NYC) performance, "Chocolate Soup".
Drawings accepted by Art Gallery of Windsor.
Piano CD recording, "Ron Giii Playing Solo", published by Random Parallel Gallery, Toronto.
- 1996 Published text in New York entitled, "What Language Are We Having for Dinner?", collaboration with Bruce Eves.
Recent acquisitions show, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
Drawings accepted into Carlton University Art Gallery, Ottawa.
- 1993 *Heavy Mental* (group show, cur. Philip Monk) The Power Plant, Toronto.
- 1992 *The Geometry Shop*, Evelyn Aimis Gallery, Toronto
- 1991 *The Bourgeois Opera*, Evelyn Aimis Gallery, Toronto
- 1990 *The Anti-Conscious, The Atomic Theatre*, Evelyn Aimis Gallery, Toronto
- 1989 *The Gas Works*, Evelyn Aimis Gallery, Toronto
- 1988 *Body Is A Loaded Word* (group show), Evelyn Aimis Gallery, Toronto
- 1987 *The Dictator's Opera*, Cold City Gallery, Toronto
- 1986 *The Atomic Theatre and The Dictator's Opera*, 49th Parallel, New York
- 1982 Founder of TRY Organization Theatre Co. for ex-mental patients
Produced, directed and wrote text for production of "The Outer and Inner Universe" performed by members of TRY Organization, Art Resource Culture Gallery, Director, Derek Dowden, Toronto
Produced, directed and wrote text for "Schizophrenic Opera", TRY Organization Theatre Co. Joseph Workman Auditorium, Toronto
Wrote text "House with no Rugs", performed by TRY Theatre Co. Cameron Tavern, Toronto
TRY Organization Performance at Rivoli Rest, Toronto

- 1981 Lecture and Performance at Remont Gallery, Warsaw, Director Henry Gajewski
Performance Reading from Text on Polysexuality, Published by Semiotexte,
New York, Mercer Union Gallery, Toronto
- 1980 Contextual Performance and reading of text, entitled "Jupe", A Space Gallery,
Director, Peggy Gale
- 1979 Appointed Director of Television Production Studio, Toronto
Organized, Language Art Performances, Poetry readings, video screenings,
Performance Art Open Exhibits
Produced, directed and wrote script for Video Body Art Performance entitled,
"Belt" 23 mins, colour, æ inch format.
Video Tape Body Art Performance shown on European tour of Missing
Associates, Lilly Eng and Peter Dudar
- 1978 Group Theatre Performance, Alternative Space, Detroit City
Contextual Performance, CEAC Gallery Toronto
Invited to attend International Performance Festival, Remont Gallery,
Warsaw, Poland
- 1977 Performance at London Art Gallery Feb 16th
Contextual Art Performance, Franklin Furnace Gallery, New York, Director,
Martha Wilson
Behaviour Performance, Pier 52, New York, March 24th
Wrote text "The Last Individual", performed on Pearl St. CEAC Gallery, Toronto
Text on Marxism and Alienation published in ACE Magazine, CEAC Gallery, Toronto
Performance, Lecture, Seminar at Joseph Beuys, Free International Univ.
Documenta 77, Kassel, Germany
Performance, Lecture, Seminar, Univ. of Lecce, Italy, Lecce., Director Franco
Geli, Publisher of Genetic Art Magazine
- 1976 Spontaneous People Show, Organized and performed at CEAC Gallery, Toronto
Perception Room (design) Summer of 76, CEAC Gallery, Toronto
Body Art Performance, entitled Katchibatta, CEAC, Gallery, Toronto
Body Art Performance, entitled, "The Biological Beggar", Gallery
St. Petri Lund, Sweden, Director, Jan Sellen
Body Art Performance, Kunstmarkt, Dusseldorf Art Fair, W. Germany
Body Art Performance, Lecture with students of Ferrara University, Museo de
Arte Moderna, Director, Lola Bonara
Body Art Performance at the ICC, Antwerp, Belgium
Body Art Performance at Salvatore Ala Galleria, Milan, Italy, Director of
Gallery, Salvatore Ala, Nov 2nd
Screening of Super 8 mm film of Body Art Performance on Marlene Elasz
CEAC Gallery, Open Screenings, Toronto

1975 Founder of *Shitbandit* organization
Organized show of Performances Art, drawings, sound recordings, video screenings, body-art, texts and installations. Gallery 76, Toronto
Art Gallery of Ontario Chair Show (cur. Alvin Balkind), installation work

Permanent Collections

Museo de Ferrara, Italy
Video Franklin Furnace Archives
Museum of Modern Art, New York (video)
York University Library Archives
National Gallery of Canada
Art Gallery of Ontario
Winnipeg Art Gallery
Edmonton Art Gallery
Art Gallery of Windsor
Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York
Carlton University Art Gallery, Ottawa
Art Metropole, Toronto
Osler Hoskin & Harcourt, Toronto
Agnes Etherington Art Gallery, Kingston
Private Collections

Education

1962 - 64 H.S.C. Prince of Wales College, Nairobi, East Africa
1972 - 75 Ontario College of Art, Hons. A.O.C.A. (Lieut. Gov. Gen. Medal)

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