

CONTENTS

4 NOTES

Small bites of fashion art style, Freud & Jung, Ballet Russes, Jean-Claude & Christo, Bernadette Corporation.

10 PEER PRESSURE



Fresh from a starring appearance at Frieze, art world interferers LuckyPDF open up to reveal the inside track on their culturally diverse practice.

14 PARTNERS IN CRIME

Bonnie and Clyde, *Badlands* and *Natural Born Killers* all feature loved up crime couples – what exactly is this outside of the law attraction all about?

16 THE ONLY GOTHs IN THE VILLAGE

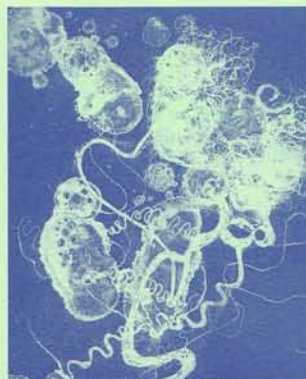


Pil and Galia Kollektiv take an optimistic view of the collapse of society but steer well clear of the mainstream commercial art world.

20 PEOPLE HAVE EXPECTATIONS

Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas's fabled shop, housed in the contemporary British Narnia of Bethnal Green.

24 AN AFFAIR OF THE ART



'Watching the dissection of cadavers by anatomists at Guy's Hospital I observed at close quarters how snugly the brain sits inside the skull.'

26 SUPPOSE AN EYES

Taking Gertrude Stein to London, Newcastle and Berlin: An email correspondence.

30 RITUALS AND RULES OF SHARING

James Connelly & Oliver Bancroft have exact start and end times for painting and a brilliant playlist.

32 GOING SOLO

The frustrated songwriter shouting dubba dubba cha at a rhythmically illiterate drummer has made way for the new digitally savvy individual.

38 PORTFOLIO: THE MANY FACES OF JO SPENCE



A memory of Britain's proto Cindy Sherman: from wedding photography to The Hackney Flashers.

46 DOUBLE TAKE

BANK: A fashionable retrospective for the antagonistic collective.

48 ART AS PRISM

Conrad Ventur talks about his fascination with faded stars and not-quite-right celebrities.

54 FILMCLUB

Fischinger & Lang's blowtorch sci-fi, Michael Winterbottom's five-year collaboration and Tennessee Williams & Elia Kazan fall out over a baby doll.

64 ANALYSIS

Post Industrial Colour, Transylvanian Folk and Love as Collaboration.

70 CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS



Recent collaborations in the capital: Lucy Reynolds, Cian McConnell, Gustav Metzger, Eddie Peake and Prem Sahib...

74 RE-VISIT

Remembering some past exhibitions with a collaborative theme.

76 IN THE STUDIO

Delaine Le Bas sets up her *To Gypsyland* studio in Brixton's 198 Gallery.

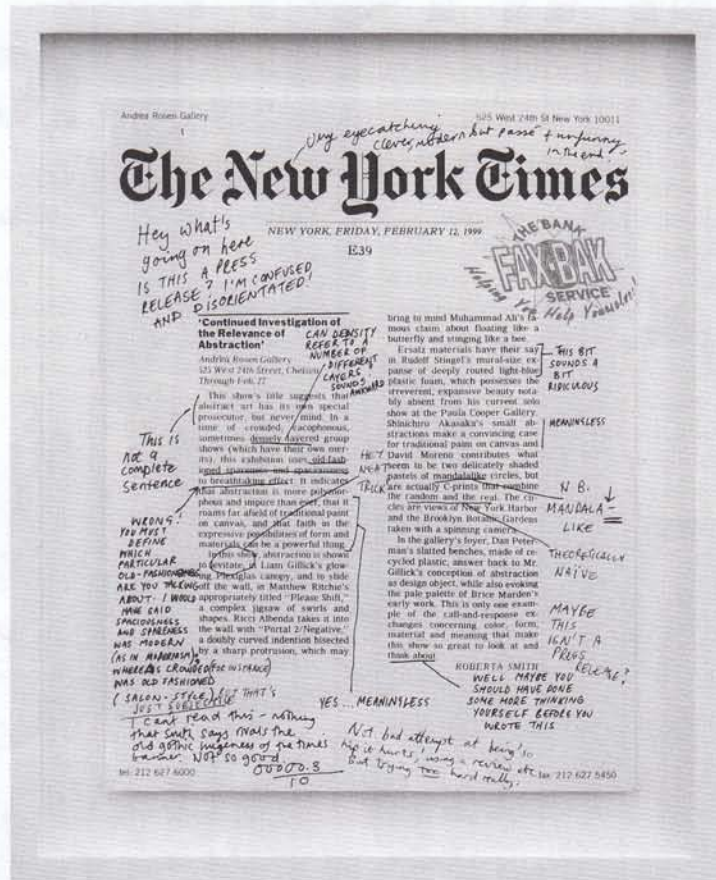
78 INSIGHT

Linington & Mackrell's hands are tied in *SimonWilliam. Repeat.*

80 THE LAST WORD

DOUBLE TAKE

A collaborative retrospective of the 1990s art collective BANK from the present
by E A Byrne and Stephanie Moran.



BANK were not against having an art career, but they wanted it on their own terms. It's more complicated than that though. They played various antagonistic roles, flirting with the art establishment through positions of rebelliousness or dissent and performing the moral high ground of the outsider.

During the 1990s, BANK undertook a series of debasing actions where gallery press releases were irreverently marked-up by-hand with comments, suggestions and corrections, graded out of ten, then faxed back to the gallery. Works from the Fax-Bak service were included, alongside other items and documentation, in the exhibition *The Banquet Years* at MOT in early 2013. The tidy archive was presented in crisp white frames on white trestle tables, which removed all context, disconnecting them, and us, from

their original grimy, punkish installs. The resulting sanitised tone was akin to subjecting these former art establishment pariahs to rehab.

To a new generation, BANK appear funny and light-hearted, employing humour in opposition to the then increasingly entrepreneurial art scene of YBA-era London. Many of their Fax-Baks and their own exhibition press releases are hilariously satirical. However, at the time, they often pissed off the artists in their exhibitions, as well as the commercial galleries who received the Fax-Baks. BANK openings were not enjoyable experiences, rather it was pretty ugly, uncomfortable stuff. They invited 'careerist' artists to exhibit, then ridiculed them through the installation in some way. Artists agreed to exhibit because of their own career aspirations, which is what BANK highlighted, that

and the idea that curators were now the new gods.

Galleries and curators set the art agenda, not artists. Even when artists run galleries or curate exhibitions, how much do they really challenge the established order of things? 1980s artist collective Group Material critiqued the 'indie' artist-run gallery/project space as aspiring to the same thing as commercial galleries, and functioning as 'feeder' galleries to more established and wealthy ones – pretty much the bottom of the food chain. BANK set their own agenda and used it to critique the system. In fact, they inverted this model, using the exhibition format to critique and undermine artists, rather than as reification. Well, perhaps only reifying their own position. Which brings us to the problem of negativity. Destruction can be satisfying and necessary, but if nothing constructive is generated then there is just a void waiting to be filled with any old shit. What did BANK want the art world to look like? Were they standing against fake niceness, false friendship and superficiality?

Press releases can be poorly written and self-congratulatory. Facile promotion, rather than serious analysis, not doing the artist, or art in general, any service. BANK's self-imposed authoritarian righteousness was an act, another stance to play with. The red Fax-Bak stamp, grading system and vitriolic commenting assumed an all-seeing-art-language eye that created a self-positioned authority on how not to write a press release. But was it an effective enough strategy to get their point across? They do have a commendable speak-your-mind flurry of opinion, peppered with intelligent musings on what is a supposed better way to write about art in this format, but the way it all comes out just thrashes the very process for which they pertain to be holding the guiding light. This undermining of the supremacy of the press release and being refreshingly blunt creates its own problem as patterns of bluntness slip into cruelty. Thorny and mostly rude, their rant on the linguistic blunders by press release ghost-writers get some cheap laughs but the issue they are dealing with deserves a more substantial critique. Their argument isn't followed through to its full potential, instead it's stunted. What we have here is pre-internet trolling. It's a missed opportunity for real change.

Importantly, the Fax-Baks should not be read separately from their whole project. BANK made work as a collective at a time when everything was about the individual, subsuming their separate identities for the presumed greater good. They also established their independence and distance from the existing art world structures by running their own gallery space and curating exhibitions. Their approach is one that contemporary art currently lacks: BANK possessed the sort of Baudelairean spleen suggested by John Kelsey of artist collective Bernadette Corporation in Artforum in 2012 as antidote to artists' 'cybercapitalist desolation'.

BANK focused on criticising the art establishment status quo, an easy target, but their guts and arrogance are admirable. There is so little dissensus in the art world that it seems brave and refreshing. However, they didn't really make a change, and didn't present a viable alternative. Was it just all about drama and visibility? As BANK said themselves, 'When you're not producing luxury dry goods all there is is visibility.' Is it too primitive to think all they have created is a never-ending circle of criticism rather than critique, which ends up being a big bag of bad feeling?

Fax-Baks end up making the art world look like a place of suppression and their noticeable Socialist party aesthetic seems to hide a lurking fascist and conservative temperament; maybe they're aiming for a funny dictatorship. In the BANK-art-world-view, you had better toe the line or you're out; be cool, intellectual and subversive or you stink; your ideas are not worthy. Their self-imposed authority is (deliberately) not that convincing, and BANK jostle for a place in the art world like the rest of the artists, galleries and writers out there, except they're prepared to take anyone down who gets in their way.

Yet the problem with setting out to bite the hand that feeds is that there is a danger of not being fed. In BANK's words, 'We believe in art and the avant-garde.' But who's to say their version of what was experimental or innovative was in fact avant-garde, as opposed to just being negative and maybe being perceived as a lack of seriousness, which was irritating to some? They grafted and slaved on every show, and certainly didn't lack of effort. They were sustained and serious in a way that was obscured by slacker aesthetics and antagonistic liberalism.

BANK are now being shown retrospectively by others, and included in exhibitions such as Grand National (2010), a large group show in Norway citing its vantage point as one from the shadows of today's financial failure. It looked back to Britain's divisive politics of the late 1980s, and the sharp recession of the early 1990s, from which an infamous group of artists emerged. Aptly BANK were given their own four walls within the exhibition venue, a microcosmic gallery within the show; a reference to their autonomy from the art market perhaps, or maybe referencing BANK's own work in curating shows.

Evidently there is a contradiction, BANK were so overtly anti-establishment at the time, but now they have just had a solo show at a swanky gallery in central London complete with the obligatory white walls and sterile presentation, a far cry from their former display mechanisms and objectives. They have perhaps decided that they can't beat the system so have ended up joining it. In the meantime, what has changed? Perhaps the realisation that there is no real outside of the system to critique from; every position is compromised and complicit from the start.