

THE MAYOR GALLERY

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Press Release
DEAD LIFE
BANK

19 April - 25 May 1999

Private view: Friday, 16th April, 6 - 8pm

Left: Gallerist - James Mayor, Right: Entrepreneur - Nick Silver



"Hello!

My name is James Mayor and I am a gallerist.

This is my friend Nick Silver, he is a collector and entrepreneur.

We would like to introduce you to an interesting art phenomenon, namely BANK, a group of artists who work together as if one.

They will be showing in my gallery this month.

Meanwhile, allow me to say a few words by way of an introduction to their new work...

In an increasingly mediated world, where the individual is alienated by capital and distanced by cyber-space, television, radio etc, what BANK are doing, is recreating a relationship between themselves and simple, everyday objects. This is not an aesthetic exercise... this is something else entirely.

Let me explain: BANK have chosen oil painting as their medium, eschewing lens-based aids in favour of traditional transcriptional devices and opting for the polished, highly crafted feel of *painting-as-commodity*. The use of this ostentatiously traditional form is an attempt by BANK to "throw oil painting in the face of the public" - a public which, since Duchamp, has become used to consuming art merely in terms of *category*.

Mr. Mutt educated us to recognise that the classification 'art' is defined by *context*. Unfortunately there is now no possibility of contextualisation, because context itself, at some point in the chain, depends upon a certainty of place and time ("*real*" or "*imagined*"; it is the same thing); and this certainty, which allowed the contextualisation of Duchamp's urinal as art, has now been eroded by the very process of cultural consumption of which this piece of work was either a cause or a symptom.

But what, after all, *is context*? Presumably any given *context* is made up of people and places and could therefore equally be described as *form* (in the same way as line, colour, surface etc in the practice of painting); and then beyond this, if it were claimed that people and places are *contextualised* by culture, well, in this case, it can easily be counter-claimed that culture is made by people and places, and is therefore *also form*.

In this sense (or lack of sense) BANK *may as well* be formalists and as such (to continue a similarly senseless argument) *may wish* to replace the *theatricality*, both in art and life, which allows context to dictate to form... *and to re-establish a sense of self-sufficiency to the integers of reality*.

Whether the *art-ness* of BANK's paintings is itself merely 'category', is irrelevant, as BANK are not proposing a 'solution', but rather a problematic, earthy pragmatism, a workmanlike theoretical replacement for *the endless interchangeability of everything for anything else*; they are proposing an art that is static, *dead* if you like; *definitely dead*, but dead in a positive, progressive sense - a hot death, rotting and maggot-ridden, the scent of decomposition thick in the air - as against the business-as-usual knowing and melancholic celebration of futility, redundancy and the Death of Painting (there's good money to be made in the crisis of representation).

So, OK, art is dead, the culture that art existed within is dead... and so, similarly, BANK's works are dead. They are dead, yes, but these are no passive cadavers. No! These are the living dead, stumbling towards us mouths agape, ferrying messages between the real world of ordinary objects, and the mental world we all inhabit.

BANK's black-framed connoisseur objects are *indexes to reality*, keys to our relationship with the reality we all experience daily, using a commonly understood language which is immediately recognisable as art, *regardless of context*. The tradition of the still-life genre forces us into an interpretation based upon an expectation of narrative; forces us to look upon a Medusa's mirror of indexicality and inter-indexicality, where the Dead and the Modern clash, where the narrative between the past and the present is restarted... and thus: **the objects are real**. History has restarted. The corpse has risen from the grave... and *this* corpse has eyes!

I hope you will have time to pop in and see them.

Come along on the night of the Private View and have a drink!"

Yours

*James
& Nick*

James Mayor and Nick Silver



BANK: Dead Life: Resurrection I, II & III, 1999



Milly Thompson



Simon Bedwell



John Russell

BANK: the Artists