

This month's Sleaze artist commission features a project by John Russell, ex-founder member of irreverent London art collective BANK, of *Zombie Golf*, *Cocaine Orgasm*, *BANK Fax-Bak* fame.

Since leaving the now defunct group over three years ago, Russell has worked independently and in collaboration with performance artist Fabienne Audéoud. The performance and video *John Russell kills Fabienne Audéoud in the style of William Burroughs*, raised eyebrows, but Sleaze got a real kick out of their Wayne Lloyd performance/collaboration *The Withdrawal from Conversation, The Return to the Oceanic, The Weight of the Breast, 20 Women Play the Drums Topless*, at South London Gallery in 2002. Russell's first solo show, at The Trade Apartment, combined cut-up collages with a rant about contemporary art, written as a virtuoso Wagnerian/Nietzschean Burroughs-esque/horror-story pastiche.

Sleaze emailed John Russell about his current and ongoing project, *Frozen Tears*, a series of book-cum-art objects, edited, designed and presented by the artist. The following is an exact transcript of the exchange...

Your recently published book, *Frozen Tears II*, is the sequel to *Frozen Tears I: The Word is Flesh* (2003). Both books have the appearance of horror bestsellers and contain texts by invited contemporary artists. What is the concept behind *Frozen Tears*?

It's an object ... and a sequel. Not just a sequel to a previous book but to other objects. It's an equivalent. And, as a bestseller and a commodity, there's a demonic dimension to it. It's kind of demonically social ... it's singular but it's also an abstraction. And

it has been prophesized that a commodity will come that will transform the world ... or will allow the world to be transformed. It might also contain content ... maybe in the texts or behind the texts or as an object or maybe somewhere else. You can look at it or read it but as has been said before: *reading is not the same as looking, unless it is.*

Obviously it can also be an art object but it is no longer interesting to think about why or when or how it is (or is not) called art or what that signifies. The limits are not interesting – this is trying to be limit-less. Anything is possible. This is about progress.

***Frozen Tears II* includes contributions from transgressive US writer Dennis Cooper – known for his writing on art, sex, violence and death – and Damon Packard, director of the “gore-filled, vomit-encrusted” film *Reflections of Evil*. What's your thinking behind this sequel?**

I was thinking of the cross-over between French writing, in the tradition of Bataille, Blanchot, Genet and Guyotat and American Beat writers (and beyond) e.g.: Burroughs, Acker, whereby Bataille's aristocratic vision of libidinal excess is relocated into a pop landscape of pulp fiction and film, post-beat horror, violence, pornography, high school massacres, dysfunction, expressionism, overdose etc. The writers just wrote what they wanted. There are some brilliant texts.

You wrote inviting artists to take part in this book: “If A CERTAIN TYPE OF THEORETICAL WRITING, in its managerial role, is suggestive of the repressed and the bureaucratic; then the Horror novel refers to the viscerally and visually explicit, the violent, the excessive, the hysterical, the cataclysmic and the apocalyptic.” What did you mean by this?

That certain theoretical or ideological positions become institutionally or academically approved and trapped by the language they use, or the way they use language – which is meant to be reasoned or reasonable or something.

For the book launch of *Frozen Tears II*, you're putting on the Italian heavy metal band *Frozen Tears*. Can you say something about this collaboration?

It's purely the coincidence of the name *Frozen Tears* – the book and the band are both called the same thing. That's all it is *the name*. I want to keep it as simple as that. It's just the name. They look good... and they sound a bit like Judas Priest. They were voted Best Italian Heavy Metal Band in 2002.

Will the book and the band be touring?

The book will be touring the USA. To fulfill its destiny. There are launches in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Some of the artists in *Frozen Tears II* are taking part in the group show *AXXXPRESSUNIZM* that you're curating with Mark Beasley. LA-based Matthew Greene's work draws on 70s horror flicks and rock-album graphics and NY-based artist Brock Enright kidnaps and tortures people. Both are allied to the so-called “new gothic art” which is defined by an interest in transgression, violence and heavy-metal. Is this a trend that you're representing in the show?

Mark and I were thinking of a kind of pop expressionism – an axxxpressunizm... a kind of affirmation... a kind of feeling or an attitude. A kind of NON-ARISTOCRATIC EXCESS AND BOREDOM... or a super-abundance and over-production; a surplus value of signification, of culture, of poverty, of violence, of commodity, of death. An axxxxxsspressssunizmmmm of “the everyday” which extends out and through popular culture, art, music, and advertising to the limits of the known universe and cosmic time. I think it's going to be the best show for years.

Frozen
Tears



THE THING



FROZEN
TEARS II



ITSELF

THE NAIL



THE SEQUEL

JOHN RUSSELL

PRESENTS



THE NAIL

Frozen
tears

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9.99

