



present

BANK



Private View Friday 19th June 7 - 9pm
20th June - 23rd August 1998
Fri - Sun 1 - 6pm

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Stop short-changing us.
Popular culture is for idiots.
We believe in ART.

*"Wonderful ... in my opinion BANK's work represents a solid gold investment opportunity!"
Ivona Blazwick - Curator, Tate Gallery of Modern Art*

*"A better investment than the Franklin Mint Diana Doll."
Sadie Coles - Art dealer*

*"I would recommend BANK as a wonderful investment to any serious-minded collector!"
Matthew Collings - Art critic & TV presenter*

*"Nothing like it - this is the real thing. An absolute must!"
Dazed & Confused magazine*

*"It promises more than Darwin's tangled bank"
Phillip Dodd - Director, Institute of Contemporary Art*

*"This show is a must for anyone who really loves art."
Adrian Searle - Art critic, The Guardian*

PRESS RELEASE

The thing is, there is a long history of artists working collectively. In the distant past, of course, artists such as Rubens or Michaelangelo worked alongside studio assistants or artists who were acknowledged experts at a certain type of painting, for instance painting fruit or shrubbery; however this system was strictly hierarchical with Rubens or whoever *definitely in charge of proceedings*, so this could not be described as a *collective situation*, in terms of it being a *partnership*.

In more recent times, when artists have worked collectively, it has often been as a stance pitched against the predominant myth of the "brilliant individual" or "genius" (as constructed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries around artists such as Van Gogh or Picasso). This strategy can be placed alongside other one dimensional clichés such as Andy Warhol or Donald Judd's use of an impersonal or factory aesthetic as a contrast to the bourgeois individualism of the abstract expressionists - *factory* is obviously the key buzz-word here. Artists such as General Idea, Langlands & Bell, Gilbert and George etc have, through their collaborations, developed *corporate identities* which *appear* to balance against and oppose the image of the brilliant individual in the same way that the corporate images of contemporary multi-nationals have replaced the image of Adam Smith's 18th century *individual capitalist* as the preferred market configuration: *"...he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention ... by pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it."*

BANK adopt a different approach. BANK is a family. To it's four members BANK represents the possibility of *creative ways of living* - caring for each other, co-existing, inter-relating, socialising, whilst simultaneously producing art. BANK believe the real revolution is **in the head** - *not through the imposition of structural solutions, but through the provision of a new world consciousness.*

In **'Stop short-changing us. Popular culture is for idiots. We believe in ART'** BANK themselves become the subject matter in a two-way play off between *the production of art and the act or process of living while making art* - the communal give-and-take and the act of creation become one.

For instance, the **"Recovering Ourselves: Group Empathy Series"** (1998) involves the idea of *group emotion* - this is a process which is described by the group in the following way:

"We have all come up with memories or images to which we have individually strong emotional responses or feelings. We then explain them to each other and, working as a team, paint them on canvas. each member of BANK attempting to empathise with the described feelings of the originator. BANK believe **FUNDAMENTALLY** that empathy between human beings IS possible and we see **EXPRESSIONISM** as a possible antidote to recent nihilistic and individualistic fashions. The idea that artists such as Monet or the members of Die Brücke are *bourgeois*

individualists is ridiculous and even *more* ridiculous, is the generally held idea that the contemporarily fashionable *post-conceptual-style-well-made-object* is, as well as being cool and distanced, the result of a greater intellectual and political insight than a more instinctive approach."

The bankruptcy of this binary - the wild, non-intellectual and instinctive versus the cool, intellectual and conscious - though being one of the mainstays of recent art history, is now evident in the general flattening of all art practice into a limited non-variety of recognisable house styles, each equally facile. It has in fact recently become popular to produce non art/art, where **art** is caricatured as "elitist" and "bad", while **popular culture** is dumbly assumed to be "democratic" and "good". This results in artists producing techno records, running hotels/galleries/laundries in galleries, which is generally seen as being "good" because it is 'social' or 'outside the art world', especially by the new breed of curator emerging from the middle-management curation and art administration courses so popular at present. BANK disagree with this idea:

"That's why we called the show '**Stop short-changing us. Popular culture is for idiots. We believe in ART**'. We are sick of popular culture, after all we grew up with it! We all watched children's television and listened to pop music and it was all shit! Nowadays you're more likely to hear techno music *in an art gallery* than in a night club. We are bored with this. We believe in **art** and the idea of the **avant garde**."

In fact the reintroduction of avant garde practice and the recovery of the subject are high on BANK's agenda:

"... the large paintings are depictions of us, *by us*. Rather than trying to make sense of who we are, as in the smaller paintings, in the larger ones we have tried to make sense of *where we are* culturally, socially and personally. We understand we are in the universe but we want to try and paint out, or in, the specific relations that exist between us and everything else. Perhaps the best example of this is "Origin of The Universe, II" which shows us painting ourselves within a world *entirely constructed by human thought*."

BANK believe other areas of cultural activity are futile and believe that when art can re-map the thoughts or ideas of individuals, or when, as Malevich maintained, the forms and structures in painting move out into the world where they are re-modelled and reconfigured, then art can claim an influence of much greater importance than the naïve authoritarian strategies of politics or any other structuralist manifestation.

"The sculptures ... yes the sculptures. Yes they are a different thing. They relate to other work we have done. We've made waxwork casts of each other - group portraits of ourselves, as a group holding hands. We even designed and made our own overalls. And once we had created this sculpture complete with clothes, we felt we had to create another sculpture where we were depicted naked, because this is a state we often see each other in - emotionally that is! We painted each other's faces and tried to express what our feelings were and how we felt about the person we were painting. I mean, the other sculpture came about because of our interest in traditional bronze casting. We moulded it out of clay before we cast it - clay is a very sensuous medium and we all pushed it into shape with our fingers. We tried to *feel* ... to express ourselves *directly* through the modelling and then freeze it in resin. We have photographed it in different public sites, like the Docklands, housing estates and Trafalgar Square. It was an attempt to reclaim these sites from the *alienation of capital*, to reinvest them with a sense of community. It's not about the finished object. We don't see art as a unit of exchange. Art is how we live; it's our love affair with life. It is how we relate to life or the more interesting things in life and we believe in ART.

Art is a leap into the unknown."

