

BANK
presents

White³

Galerie Poo-Poo
34 Underwood St
London N1 7JQ

Tel/Fax +44 (0) 171 336 6836

ART & LANGUAGE

PRESS RELEASE



BANK (Simon): Well, Mel, Mike, it's great you guys have agreed to do this show, and what we were firstly interested in asking you is what you thought about the rather rhetorical nature of the show? Or at least, you know ... there seem to be a lot of quotation marks flying around... (Milly makes 'quotation marks' hand signals and everyone laughs).

A&L: It was always going to be a pleasure to have a show at a gallery called Poo Poo. To that extent the exhibition is the pinnacle of our ambition. It's unusual for someone to use the term "rhetorical" in that rather ordinary way. But perhaps you're not doing this. The observation about flying quotation marks addressed the fact that you have built up a strong sense of narrative and you have invited us to take part in this.

BANK (Milly): No I think there's a serious point here. Within the history of ideologies and their bankruptcies what do you feel of position(s) of which the 'white cube' is not an example but a symptom, where a definite position expressed in definite terms - in language - becomes untenable and then marketable as bankrupt ideology ie as a utopian window to what might have have been... is... er...in this sense we're using the white cube ... narratively -

A&L: As part of your narrative the white cube is somewhat displaced. It is possible that what is inside the cube is similarly displaced. But it may not be. What's inside might displace everything that's around it and insert it in another narrative!

BANK (John): Like yours might you mean...

A&L: Not necessarily... You've constructed a superannuatedly ideological site and set it up amongst productive ruins - in life perhaps. Now, one question might be whether or not your quotational exposure of such a site is itself rather passé. Everybody knows that galleries and museums are largely constitutive of the artistic stuff they contain, but the hypermodernist white cube has long been supplanted by the good-for-business dialectic between Wagnerian excess and fake domesticity...

BANK (Milly): It is passé, it's bankrupt, sure...but we're not interested in that. How can one, after the event, talk about a bankrupt position as a utopian possibility when the bankruptcy was always already present in the beautiful dream, the ideology that led to it ... what's the difference between a good bankrupt ideology and a bad bankrupt ideology? The 'white cube' with all it's 'issues' is indeed passe, but we've reconstructed it with all the rigour it deserved ie none...then again this is not to say that our position isn't idealistic, it's just that we know no examples of non-bankrupt idealism. Then again we're not casting ourselves as postmodern, philandering casualties, dandies to the concrete/non-concrete beautiful dream of modernism...

A&L: Anyway, the ascetic aura of the white cube has all but disappeared, residing only in the nostalgia of old bullshitters. It's possible that your white cube has the power to reanimate this aura (or the set of questions over which it is supposed to hover) as representation. And to animate it as representation you've had to make it social (sociable?).

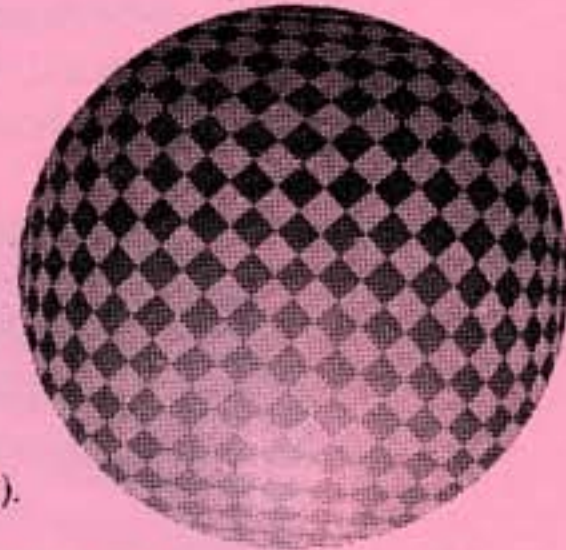
BANK (Simon): Well since the 'ascetic aura' is something we think never actually happened - and that therefore any debunking looks based on an initial 'willing suspension of disbelief' - I simply don't understand the earlier point about nostalgia... We're trying to do what has only ever been claimed, revealing past attempts as rhetoric: but as you note, we're only able to do this as representation...and, uh...what does 'social' mean anyway? We're not in the business of recreating bankrupt ideological sites for holidays into other people's nostalgias; neither do we blunder Schweik-like, knowingly/unknowingly re-inhabiting well-rehearsed theoretical cul-de-sacs of the past. Neither are we trying to exorcise positions or strategies that held out promises of idealistic solutions tarnished by their failure and commodified as the memorabilia of resistance, and by rehearsing these bankrupt strategies we create the original Frankenstein's monster in a new improved version!

BANK (Milly): Actually, we don't know what we're doing, but do know what we're NOT doing. However we don't wish to see ourselves cast in the tedious clothes of the nihilist... I mean...

BANK (Simon): Yes, that's an interesting point about not knowing what you're doing...I mean, earlier on we were all talking about the book *Society of the Spectacle*. I mean I've never read it; the thing is I know instinctively what it's about...I find the same thing with Adorno...for instance when I was a child I always hated firework displays.

BANK (John, exasperatedly): Yeah sure but hold on- I mean, I actually like firework displays, I mean, what's wrong with that? I mean, isn't this all a bit Protestant? What about the politics of pleasure? Sure, capitalism's bad and stuff, but what about resistance at the point of consumption? When I'm in bed with my lover I'm not thinking 'hey, shit, capitalism's heavy'... I'm making love and I'm consumed by that. Actually, I'd like to ask A&L, 'What are your views on love?'

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What went wrong? You heckled. That has its pleasures.

Redundancy can be fun too. So here it is again remixed (twice).

Do we actually need to say that one-way-or-another we like your not-so literary-crittery use of the term "rhetoric"? Whatever.

Someone who builds a white cube inside a large but not very ritzy room is messing about with some form of displacement. They are taking a malingering look at the persistence of these places in the recent (and not so recent) history of art-land. Your project is a very interesting disfunctional form of "installation art". It turns the role of the artist as curator, critic and manager inside out. This requires some narrative – the telling of a story. This has complexity, detail. There are, indeed, stories within stories which narrate us to the point where we are uncertain as to what is being displaced by what and who is narrating what. This is the kind of circumstance in which we like to work.

The white cube is a significant feature of the managerial mode of modernity. Its protocols have tricked downward (or flowed upward) relentlessly over the past 40 years. Simply to point this out is dull. But we take it that you are doing more. We take it that you are trying to recover it socially by making it into something concrete, albeit representational. You have taken the risk of giving it a real location, rather than letting it drift in the distributional haze in which all unmanageable experience is slowly being replaced. To us, this seems to be real work on a real problem: how to be innocent when we've all already been proved guilty.

Or:

We were very glad to be asked to have a show at Galerie Poo Poo. We like the infantile scatology of the name. We therefore regard this exhibition as the zenith of our career.

Now, "rhetoric" is a modish term. The language and the conceptual apparatus of rhetoric is often very useful and enlightening. It can also supply the materials of an absurd solipsism of "figurality". "Rhetoric" often heads a menu groaning with pretentiousness and bluster. You used the word *ordinarily* in that you meant something "figurally" or "non-literally".

There is a story to be told (by you and by others) about Galerie Poo Poo. This is a history of events – of refusals and provocations. To insert the white cube into that story is to displace it – to remove it from a situation in which it might be thought somehow natural. Your narrative stops us looking at it literally. It is a trope. However, if you situate a work of art or something similar in your white cube, the effect of that might be that the latter might not have a similarly tropological effect upon the former. The thing contained by the cube might be made specifically to live within it and it might do this more or less successfully, or it might belong to a story which displaces your story and removes the whole thing to a different world entirely. There are, no doubt, other possibilities.



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Now, the ideological nature of the white cube has been exposed for some time. And an idealism which confers an aura of purity upon this and its propitious contents is an historical fact. The idealism existed even if the aura itself didn't.

How, then, do we defend the White³ project against the suggestion that it is an anachronistic jibe against something long disregarded? What seems to us to be interesting about your project is that it risks the reanimation in some form of what has already been dismissed and rejected by you, significantly, among others. This reanimation probably won't be "literal" – it will be a transformation insofar as it will be the product of a representation. But it might be interesting if we thought that this representational and non-literal world leaked into a relatively literal one. If we use a painting as something to keep out the rain, we definitely deprive it of its "aura" as art. In noticing that it is somehow misused we somehow restore that "aura" even though we already know that it is an absurd idealisation.

BANK (John): Dear A&L, thanks for your fax. We thought this would be good as the final press release (including this sentence) - what do you think?