

**John Roberts. 'Zombie Golf' (1995).
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100 **Zombie Golf** (Bankspace, 1995). An old woman in a headscarf and a blue dress lies slumped, barefoot on the floor. Behind her a man in a cap and striped shirt with his right arm missing at the elbow hides behind a pillar. His head is slumped to one side as if his neck is broken. At the other end of the gallery a tall man in a suit pulls violently at the outstretched arm of a woman bent double, as his accomplice holds her from behind. The tall man appears to be about to fall over with the exertion. In front of this group another man kneels with a piece of raw human flesh between his legs. Close by a bloodied and eyeless corpse lies on a patch of golf course green, the fingers of his right – and only – hand outstretched in horror. BANK's 'Zombie Golf', was a show that produced a swerve in how people believed things should be done and how they should be thought about. It seems strange to say this now, after the demise of the original group, and the dissipation of the critical energies that brought the work into being, but *Zombie Golf*, was one those shows where dissidence and disaffirmation as means of stock-taking counted for something. That is, it connected with what other people were thinking and doing, or wanted to do, and therefore made not just some kind of cultural sense but cognitive sense. The show highlighted two things: what could be made from collective and collaborative activity that didn't look like a clerisy or a sect, and what could be made from popular modes of attention that didn't look like Pop art or the mass cultural image-as-simulacrum of the 1980s. It wasn't so much the theatricality of the curation or the horror-content, then, which carried the show – these things were hardly novel for art of the early 1990s – but the forms of recalcitrance and irritability that they imposed on the viewer. The zombies in the gallery, interfered with, or hindered, the untroubled viewing of the art on the walls and hanging from the ceiling (Dave Beech, Adam Chodzko, Maria Cook, Martin Creed, Peter Doig, Matthew Higgs, Sivan Lewin, John Stezaker). Indeed, the zombies and their bloody activities dominated the space, reducing the art on the walls to a side-show or a curious remnant from a previous exhibit. But, of course, this recalcitrance wasn't that much of a hardship. The pleasure lay in seeing the zombies do their fiendish deeds, and not being frustrated in getting to the art.

This conflation of installation with curation was something that was gathering pace in the artworld in the early 1990s. Yet BANK gave it an expanded content and a corrosive twist. The zombies were themselves 'stand-ins' for BANK. The

painted wax figures were based on the features of the group and their artist friends. This provides a suggestive range of motives for the zombie's heinous crimes. Were the zombies/BANK in the process of attacking the art they had curated and/or disrupting a private view – a kind of anti-art vanguardism – or were they, as the title of the show implied, simply the indiscriminate killers of golfers? The first claim is perhaps more auspicious, given the theme of cultural violence which underwrote the tension between the installation and the art on the walls. By functioning as artist-surrogates the zombies physical violence became a form of symbolic violence. That is, the zombies appetitive disregard of others and their iconoclasm becomes the art-lover's worst nightmare: the aesthetically desensitized spectator. In other words the zombie's lack of subjectivity stands in for a notion of the would-be uncultured. BANK's zombies are the spectre of the culturally excluded. But the show was not a kind of grim anti-art gesturalism, a Bourdiean debunking of art as cultural capital. BANK's zombies unveiled a world of logical complexities, that produced a more exacting encounter between art and anti-art, the cultured and 'uncultured'.

Zombies supposedly do not have powers of self-reflection, their agency is preprogrammed. To have them stand in as artists, therefore, is, to both derogate the artist-as-thinker, and, obviously to overinflate the intellectual capacities of zombies. Daniel Dennett in a dismissal of the scientific possibility of zombies, calls the imaginary category of zombies-with-powers-of self-reflection 'zimbies'. So maybe really BANK's zombies-as-artists are actually zimbies. Or zimbies pretending to be zombies. And maybe this is what artists have to be now, at some level, in a world where the relations between art and anti-art are necessarily intertwined: smart zimbies. In this 'Zombie Golf' was able to foreground some of the pressing problems which faced artists in the 1990s, specifically, thinking the place of art beyond both the critique of the spectacle and the critique of the critique of the spectacle. Artists, in the 1990s, were much more amenable to using the 'popular' as a deflationary and non-popular tactic. In *Zombie Golf* and other self-curated shows at the time, BANK were perhaps more adept at this than most. John Roberts