

# Jeremy Deller

Revue de presse  
Press review



## L'ARTISTE JEREMY DELLER LIVRE SES CONSEILS POUR PRODUIRE UNE ŒUVRE NFT

Entretien avec l'artiste Jeremy Deller, qui va produire sa première œuvre NFT et la proposer ensuite aux enchères en collaboration avec l'édition internationale de *The Art Newspaper*. Il livre ici ses conseils aux artistes qui veulent créer une œuvre NFT.

Propos recueillis par Tom Seymour



Extrait de l'œuvre de Jeremy Deller, *The Last Day*, 2021. ©Jeremy Deller

**« LA PRODUCTION D'UNE ŒUVRE D'ART NUMÉRIQUE COÛTE GÉNÉRALEMENT ENTRE 70 ET 100 DOLLARS, SELON LA PLATEFORME »**

que votre NFT est créé, vous choisissez un prix de départ, déterminez le prix que vous voulez recevoir, faites la promotion de votre création sur les médias sociaux à l'ancienne avec un « lancement » - et attendez la bataille des enchères.

### *Comment créer un portefeuille ?*

Un « portefeuille » est un composant essentiel de tout système de la blockchain. Conformément aux principes de la blockchain, les utilisateurs auront besoin d'un portefeuille pour accéder à la plateforme, approuver les transactions et gérer leur solde. De cette façon, les plateformes recourant à la blockchain évitent de stocker les détails du compte des utilisateurs, ce qui rend la plateforme plus sûre.

Un portefeuille est composé de deux parties : une « adresse publique » et une « clé privée ». Une bonne métaphore pour décrire ce système serait « une boîte aux lettres » et « une clé de boîte aux lettres ». Tout le monde peut déposer quelque chose dans la boîte aux lettres, mais seul le propriétaire de la clé privée peut y accéder. La clé privée se trouve généralement dans la section des paramètres de votre portefeuille.

### *Combien coûte la production d'une œuvre d'art numérique ?*

La création d'une œuvre d'art numérique peut être gratuite ou, quand ce n'est pas le cas, sa production coûte généralement entre 70 et 100 dollars, selon la plateforme. Si l'œuvre se vend, cependant, vous devrez payer des « frais d'essence », qui fluctuent fortement. Il y a aussi des démarches à réaliser : vous devez créer un portefeuille, acheter des cryptomonnaies et choisir la bonne plateforme. Une fois

De nombreuses applications de portefeuille de cryptomonnaies sont facilement disponibles sur Apple et Android pour acheter et stocker des cryptomonnaies. De nombreux portefeuilles – comme BitPay, Bither et Unstoppable, par exemple – sont conçus spécifiquement pour les traders de Bitcoins débutants et inexpérimentés, et peuvent guider les utilisateurs en répondant à leurs interrogations sur les « frais d'essence », l'impact environnemental, ou encore les problèmes de sécurité et de confidentialité. Certains portefeuilles offrent une sécurité renforcée au-delà d'un simple courriel et d'un mot de passe, avec une phrase d'accès de 12 mots de type appel-réponse (également appelée phrase d'amorçage). Pour ceux qui sont intéressés par ce protocole de sécurité renforcée, Metamask est le portefeuille qu'il vous faut.

Un autre portefeuille qui mérite d'être mentionné est Fortmatic (Magic), qui ne nécessite pas la mise en place d'une phrase d'amorçage, un utilisateur peut simplement se connecter avec un e-mail et un mot de passe. Le portefeuille créera et stockera la phrase d'amorçage pour vous, sans que vous ayez à la voir ou à la stocker.

### ***Comment acheter des cryptomonnaies pour votre portefeuille ?***

Vous pouvez acheter des cryptomonnaies avec des monnaies fiduciaires traditionnelles, telles que le dollar américain, l'euro ou la livre sterling, auprès d'une bourse de cryptomonnaies telle que Coindesk. Pour les ventes en *peer-to-peer*, vous achetez normalement de la « crypto » auprès d'un vendeur en activité qui cherche à vendre de la crypto en créant un nouvel ordre d'achat. Une fois que le paiement convenu a été reçu par virement bancaire, la crypto sera envoyée *via* un « compte séquestre aveugle » à votre portefeuille numérique. Vous êtes alors libres d'échanger la crypto que vous avez achetée avec d'autres cryptomonnaies ou contre des devises fiduciaires. Binance est la plus grande bourse de Bitcoin au monde, tandis que BitForex est la bourse de cryptomonnaies la plus active. BitMEX est la principale plateforme d'échange *peer-to-peer*. Ramp vous permet facilement de recharger votre solde de cryptomonnaies avec de la monnaie fiduciaire via une carte de crédit ou de débit ou à partir d'Apple Pay.

**« LA PLUS CONNUE EST NIFTY GATEWAY, UNE PLATEFORME DE CRYPTOMONNAIES QUI A FAIT LES GROS TITRES EN "HÉBERGEANT" LA VENTE AUX ENCHÈRES DE L'ŒUVRE DE BEEPLE PAR CHRISTIE'S »**

### ***Comment choisir la bonne plateforme ?***

Cela dépendra en grande partie de votre expérience ou de votre capacité à naviguer à travers les nuances des cryptomonnaies, de ce que vous voulez réaliser en collectant et en échangeant des cryptomonnaies, ou de vos priorités concernant des questions telles que l'assurance, les coûts ou les problèmes de sécurité et de confidentialité.

Posez-vous la question suivante : êtes-vous dans une optique à long terme

ou souhaitez-vous négocier à court terme ? Avez-vous l'intention d'amasser rapidement une armée de NFT, de vous lancer sur un nouveau marché ou de jouer le jeu des contrats à terme, comme un négociant en actions traditionnel ? Le fait d'avoir une stratégie initiale déterminera les plateformes qui vous conviennent le mieux.

Les grandes plateformes comme Binance offrent des politiques d'assurance-dépôts particulièrement solides pour protéger vos investissements. Elles bénéficient souvent d'une protection intégrée de la Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

D'autres, comme Coinbase et Paxful, offrent des fonctions de sécurité de premier ordre, comme la technologie d'authentification à deux facteurs ou avec phrase d'accès, qui vous protégeront contre le piratage ou l'hameçonnage. Il existe également des plates-formes plus petites, connues pour leur facilité d'utilisation, comme Changelly ou Coinmama, qui, bien qu'elles soient susceptibles de facturer des frais plus élevés ou d'offrir une protection moindre à long terme, sont plus faciles à utiliser pour le trader NFT novice qui souhaite s'y initier. Mais la plus connue est Nifty Gateway, une plateforme de cryptomonnaies fondée en 2018, et qui a fait les gros titres dans le monde entier en « hébergeant » la vente aux enchères de l'œuvre de Beeple par Christie's.

### ***Y a-t-il des frais cachés ? Et qu'est-ce qu'un frais « d'essence » ?***

Pour les non-initiés, oui. De nombreux nouveaux collectionneurs se sont retrouvés rapidement à court d'argent après avoir été victimes de frais de conversion entre différentes formes de devises ou d'autres frais de plateforme obscurs qui interviennent au moment de l'achat et de la vente.

Mais les coûts réels proviennent des frais dits d'« essence ». Sur la plupart des plates-formes NFT, les opérateurs doivent payer l'énergie nécessaire au calcul – ou les « frais d'essence » – pour traiter les transactions sur leur blockchain. Et, comme les écologistes n'ont pas manqué de le souligner, ces frais peuvent être considérables.

### **« SUR LA PLUPART DES PLATES-FORMES NFT, LES OPÉRATEURS DOIVENT PAYER L'ÉNERGIE NÉCESSAIRE AU CALCUL – OU LES "FRAIS D'ESSENCE" – POUR TRAITER LES TRANSACTIONS SUR LEUR BLOCKCHAIN »**

Comme la plateforme Open Sea [que Jeremy Deller a utilisée pour son NFT], le recours au principe du « lazy minting », la production de *The Last Day* n'a pas nécessité d'« essence ». Cependant, une fois l'œuvre vendue, son transfert à un nouveau propriétaire nécessitera 48,14 kilowattheures d'énergie de traitement sur la plate-forme Ethereum.

Cela équivaut à 1,63 jour de consommation électrique pour un foyer américain moyen. [Jeremy Deller a également limité son édition à un seul exemplaire afin de maintenir un faible impact environnemental].

### ***Que se passe-t-il lorsque vous produisez une œuvre ? Comment fonctionne un dépôt ?***

Le processus de production de votre œuvre est peut-être la partie la plus simple du processus, et n'est pas différent du téléchargement d'une vidéo sur YouTube ou d'un MP3 sur Spotify. En monnayant votre œuvre, vous faites en sorte qu'elle devienne un jeton non fongible, ou NFT, doté de ses propres métadonnées uniques et traçables. En fait, vous vous assurez que votre création a une provenance traçable. Vous créez un actif unique qui peut désormais être vendu et possédé.

En « déposant » votre œuvre, vous annoncez votre intention de la proposer aux enchères sur la blockchain. Pour bien « lancer » votre œuvre, on pourrait penser à utiliser les bons vieux moyens de communication – un titre accrocheur, une histoire à vendre, une campagne sur les réseaux sociaux, une stratégie de presse, peut-être même un article dans *The Art Newspaper*.

### ***Que se passe-t-il après la vente de l'œuvre ?***

**« EN MONNAYANT VOTRE ŒUVRE, VOUS FAITES EN SORTE QU'ELLE DEVIENNE UN JETON NON FONGIBLE, OU NFT, DOTÉ DE SES PROPRES MÉTADONNÉES UNIQUES ET TRAÇABLES »**



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En créant un NFT, vous vous assurez que la propriété de cette création est enregistrée sur une blockchain, un registre numérique décentralisé, totalement transparent et impossible à manipuler, qui sert de preuve publique de la singularité de votre création. Les métadonnées uniques liées à votre NFT sont consultables sur un Grand Livre, de sorte que tout le monde peut les voir. Une fois que vous avez trouvé une personne intéressée par l'achat de l'œuvre, elle est libre de faire une offre via la blockchain. Si vous acceptez l'offre, la transaction sera enregistrée publiquement, la propriété du NFT sera transférée, et l'identité du propriétaire ainsi que les détails de la transaction seront enregistrés sur la blockchain. Vous pourriez alors vous réveiller et découvrir que vous êtes un crypto-millionnaire fraîchement ému. Il ne vous reste plus qu'à trouver comment échanger votre crypto contre de la monnaie fiduciaire avant d'acheter votre billet d'avion pour Palawan !

# Everybody in the place. Clubbing as an antidote to the contemporary art institution?

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by Benoit Lamy de la Chapelle

## PART 1

Lately, art criticism has been mainly focusing on the critique of the institution and the limits that are reached by cultural organisations. Be it harassment at work, tyrannical leaderships, art programs lacking in inclusiveness, perpetuated hierarchies, patriarchy within the executive boards, or the interference of patronage from major corporations, the most progressive people of the art world are trying these days to put an end to the machinations, schemes and habits which are all now too visible to be hidden. The hour has to come to imagine other models and to push past the cumbersome model of the institutional system currently operating. As stated through their cultural objectives and programs, the political authorities now in power have very frequently expressed their discontent with artistic programmers of these same institutions (which are thus subsidized by local authorities), for not being sufficiently open and accessible to non-initiated audiences. Although these rebukes are often questionable and rarely objective, they are sometimes shared by people involved in the arts, as they themselves try to make the dissemination of contemporary art ever more “democratic”. Winning over a vast diversity of crowds still remains nowadays a major aim for any department dealing with audiences. Yet, after some twenty years of cultural mediation and arts outreach programs, contemporary art institutions—which, incidentally, have at their disposal ever more effective and efficient means of communication—see themselves repeatedly and invariably accused of elitism. They are blamed for being clique-like coterie favouring their peer-groups and old-boy networks, so to speak. They are seen as divorced from the “general public” and struggling to put forward their “common good” role, unwilling to impose it by force.



Tony Regazzoni, *Boîte de nuit*, 2017.  
Vue de l'exposition au / Exhibition view at Studio 13/16 du Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Yet, at the same moment, club and rave cultures of the 1990s are undergoing a resurgence of interest amongst artists and people involved in the contemporary art world. This interest arrives at a timely moment for a socio-professional stratum who is not sure how to rid itself of the constraints of their own institutional system. A plethora of artists' works, critical essays and exhibitions attests to the revival of this culture and the “cool” attraction that can be wielded by emblematic clubs on the artistic globalized community. It would thus seem that contemporary art deciphers in clubbing an ideal solution for solving its “institutional crisis”.

“Nightlife” cannot be separated from the life of artists. It offers them inspiration, entertainment, socialization, licit and illicit alike, by way of music and various substances. It provides them with the refinement of professional networks thanks to increasingly more fluid encounters taking place in a festive atmosphere. The significance of the nocturnal world for artists goes way back, as pointed out by the exhibition *Into the Night: Cabaret and Clubs in Modern Art*, which was held at the Barbican Centre in London in 2019. Modernity has as such been thought of and built during nocturnal gatherings happening outside of venues traditionally earmarked for art. In these times of revival of the 1990s, the growing interest in club culture and raves appeared in the mid-2010s. The journalist Tobias Rapp acknowledged and pinpointed this new tendency in his overview of the German electronic music scene: “But if anything was clear in 2015, it was that electronic music in Germany is, above all, a generational project. Those born between 1970 and 1990 in East and West Germany alike use house and techno to tell each other about the world they know, people who came of age in the ‘90s and found rock music boring, who experienced as schoolchildren the fall of the Berlin Wall, who took part in the Love Parade (or some other street parade), who witnessed first-hand the rise and fall of the rave movement and were subsequently part of electronic music’s withdrawal into that ample niche in which it is now growing and thriving”.<sup>1</sup> If this is true of the German scene, the same goes for the Belgian and British scenes—all three being regarded collectively as the movement’s birthplace —, but also for the rest of Europe. Mark Leckey has constantly paid tribute to rave parties in his work, and quite specifically in 2003 during his performance *BigBoxStatueAction*. For this work, the artist re-created a monumental sound system which dialogued with a sculpture produced in the 1940s by Jacob Epstein, and which is presented at Tate Britain.



Jeremy Deller, *Everybody in the Place, An Incomplete History of Britain 1984-1992*, 2018, vidéo, 62 min. © Jeremy Deller. 2d. Courtesy Art: Concept, Paris

Similarly, Jeremy Deller developed an interest at a very early stage of his career in the popularity of club culture through projects such as *The Search for Bez* (1994), *Do You Remember The First Time?* (1995), —which highlighted the yellow smiley icon of acid house —, *History of the World*, and *Acid Brass* (1997). And yet, it was precisely in those latter years of the re-appropriation of club culture that the artist came up with the idea of a historicization of the movement with *Everybody in the Place. An Incomplete History of Britain 1984-1992* (2018). The work emerged from his concern with educational transmission to young generations, while it re-situates itself at the same time within his overall approach as a vernacular historian of counter-cultures, if not to say with a certain British paganism that is always very present. The spectator attends a very didactic class given by the artist himself, recounting the saga of a youth which, finding itself too cramped in night clubs, decided to use the English countryside to gather around techno, house and trance music, which was then all the rage. This video, which is extremely joyous but not devoid of nostalgia, can only give rise to a feeling of belonging to a past that is still within arm’s reach, and whose rebirth is not purely fantasy. Having grown up in Frankfurt in the 1990s, a city rivalling Berlin over the beginnings of techno in Germany,<sup>2</sup> Zuzanna Czebatul freezes *Tristan, Kewin, Joss* (2015)—the best dancers of the moment in Berlin’s nocturnal haunts—as they are in full motion. This sculpture is nothing less than an ode to clubbing, as it presents the legs of dancers clad in tracksuits, truncated but united forever. Simultaneously fun and lugubrious, the work reflects the uncertainties of a generation which, if it is doomed to fall, will do so with a festive and collective state of mind.



# Everybody in the place. La culture club comme antidote à l'institution d'art contemporain ?

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par Benoit Lamy de la Chapelle

## PARTIE I

La critique d'art s'est beaucoup penchée dernièrement sur le problème institutionnel et les limites atteintes par les organismes de diffusion culturelle. Qu'il s'agisse de harcèlement au travail, de directions tyranniques, de la programmation des lieux d'art manquant d'inclusivité, de la maintenance des hiérarchies, du patriarcat des conseils d'administration ou de l'ingérence du mécénat des grandes entreprises, les acteurs de l'art les plus progressistes cherchent aujourd'hui à mettre un terme à ces agissements et habitudes dorénavant trop visibles pour être dissimulés. L'heure est à l'imagination d'autres modèles afin de dépasser celui encombrant du système institutionnel actuellement en fonction. Le pouvoir en place, quant à lui, dans le cadre de ses objectifs culturels, reproche très souvent aux programmeurs artistiques de ces mêmes institutions (et donc subventionnées par les collectivités territoriales) de ne pas assez s'ouvrir aux publics non-initiés. Bien qu'ils soient très discutables et rarement objectifs, ces reproches sont parfois partagés par les acteurs de l'art cherchant eux-mêmes à rendre la diffusion de l'art contemporain toujours plus « démocratique ». La conquête de tous les publics demeure actuellement un objectif fondamental pour tout service des publics. Pourtant, après une vingtaine d'années de médiation culturelle poussée, les institutions d'art contemporain, disposant par ailleurs de moyens de communication toujours plus performants, se voient encore et toujours taxer d'élitisme, reprocher d'être des cénacles privilégiant l'entre soi et coupées du « grand public », et peinent à faire comprendre leur fonction d'intérêt général, ne souhaitant pas l'imposer par la force.



Tony Regazzoni, *Boîte de nuit*, 2017.  
Vue de l'exposition au / Exhibition view at Studio 13/16 du Centre Pompidou, Paris.  
Courtesy Diane Arques - ADACP, 2017.

Constatons qu'au même moment, la culture club et rave des années 90 connaît un regain d'intérêt chez les artistes et les acteurs de l'art contemporain, celle-ci arrivant à point nommé pour un milieu socio-professionnel ne sachant comment se délier des contraintes de son système institutionnel. Une pléthore d'œuvres d'artistes, d'essais critiques ou d'expositions attestent du renouveau de cette culture et de l'attrait « cool » que peuvent avoir des clubs emblématiques sur la communauté artistique globalisée. Il semble alors que l'art contemporain voie dans la culture club un format idéal de résolution de sa « crise institutionnelle ».

Le monde de la nuit est indissociable de la vie des artistes ; il leur procure inspiration, divertissement, socialisation licite et illicite par la musique et les substances, mais aussi affinage de réseaux professionnels grâce aux rencontres rendues plus fluides dans une ambiance festive. L'importance de l'univers nocturne pour les artistes ne date d'ailleurs pas d'aujourd'hui, comme le rappelle l'exposition « Into the Night : Cabaret and Clubs in Modern Art » qui s'est tenue au Barbican Centre de Londres en 2019 : la modernité s'est également construite à partir des rassemblements noctambules hors des lieux traditionnellement dévolus à l'art. En cette période de *revival* des années 90, cet intérêt poussé par la culture club et rave est apparu au milieu des années 2010, comme le soulignait le journaliste Tobias Rapp dans une synthèse sur les scènes de musiques électroniques allemandes : « si une chose était claire en 2015, c'était que la musique électronique en Allemagne était avant tout le projet d'une génération. Les personnes nées entre 1970 et 1990 en Allemagne de l'Ouest et de l'Est, utilisaient toutes de la même manière la house et la techno pour exprimer leur vision du monde ; des gens ayant atteint l'âge adulte dans les années 90 et qui trouvaient le rock ennuyeux ; qui ont vécu la chute du Mur à l'école ; qui ont participé à la *Love Parade* ; qui ont vécu en direct l'essor et le déclin du mouvement rave, et été par la suite partie prenante du repli de la musique électronique dans une ample niche, dans laquelle celle-ci continue de se développer et de prospérer. » Si cela est vrai de la scène allemande, il en va de même pour les scènes belge et britannique – toutes les trois étant considérées comme le berceau du mouvement –, mais aussi du reste de l'Europe. Mark Leckey rend hommage aux *rave parties* dans son œuvre, et tout particulièrement en 2003 lors de sa performance *BigBoxStatueAction* pendant laquelle l'artiste avait reconstitué un *sound system* monumental, dialoguant avec une sculpture des années 40 de Jacob Epstein dans la Tate Britain.



Jeremy Deller, *Everybody in the Place, An Incomplete History of Britain 1984-1992*, 2018, vidéo, 62 min. © Jeremy Deller. Zd. Courtesy Art: Concept, Paris

De même, Jeremy Deller s'est très tôt intéressé à la popularité de cette culture dans des projets tels que *The Search for Bez* (1994), *Do You Remember The First Time?* (1995), mettant en avant le smiley jaune icône de l'acid house, ou encore *History of the World et Acid Brass* (1997). Mais c'est justement en ces années de réappropriation de la culture club que l'artiste propose une historicisation de ce mouvement avec *Everybody in the Place. An Incomplete History of Britain 1984-1992* (2018), dans un souci de transmission pédagogique aux jeunes générations, tout en replaçant cette œuvre dans sa démarche globale d'historien vernaculaire des contre-cultures, voire d'un certain paganisme britannique toujours très présent. Le spectateur suit un cours de l'artiste très didactique, narrant l'épopée d'une jeunesse qui, se trouvant trop à l'étroit dans des *night-clubs*, décide d'investir la campagne anglaise pour se rassembler autour des musiques techno, house et trance alors en plein essor. Cette vidéo, extrêmement réjouissante mais non dénuée de nostalgie, ne peut que susciter l'adhésion pour un passé encore à portée de main, dont la régénération ne relève pas du fantôme. Ayant grandi à Francfort dans les années 90, ville se disputant avec Berlin les débuts de la techno sur le territoire germanique<sup>2</sup>, Zuzanna Czebatul fige *Tristan, Kewin, Joss* (2015) – les meilleurs danseurs des nuits berlinoises du moment – en plein mouvement. Véritable ode à la culture club, cette sculpture présente les jambes des danseurs vêtues de joggings, tronquées mais rassemblées pour toujours. À la fois *fun* et lugubre, l'œuvre reflète les incertitudes d'une génération qui, si elle doit sombrer, le fera dans un état d'esprit festif et collectivement.

## Milan - Interviews

# Please, Jump on it!: an Interview with Jeremy Deller and Massimiliano Gioni

During the somewhat soggy opening of **Jeremy Deller's Sacrilege, a bouncy-castle Stonehenge**, at **CityLife** sculpture park in Milan, we interviewed both the British artist and curator **Massimiliano Gioni** to find out more about the installation and the collaboration with **Fondazione Trussardi**.

The installation will be erect until Sunday, April 15th.

With **Sacrilege**, Deller brings to the heart of Milan a life-size inflatable reconstruction of the archeological site of Stonehenge – an icon of British culture and heritage, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986.

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evident throughout our interview with him as he hastily encouraged all passers; the young, the old, two legs or four to get involved, jump and play on the inflatable.

## **Meeting the artist: a rainy interview with Jeremy Deller**

**Lara Morrell:** Well in true British style let's start by talking about the weather, how perfectly apt it is? (It has been pouring with rain in Milan for the last few days)

**Jeremy Deller:** I know, brilliant isn't it?! I'm soaking and we've spent the whole morning mopping and trying to empty the thing of water, you should jump on and have a go! (Jeremy interrupts our talk to usher a passerby and her dog onto the inflatable Stonehenge). Sorry, but the whole point is that people interact and play on it, that's what it's all about, for people to enjoy it.

**L.M.:** Could you tell us a little about the title – why Sacrilege? Is it perhaps a way of covering your back?

**J.D.:** Perhaps yes, but that's what I called it back in 2012 and that's how it stayed, people seem to like it. At the time I thought people may think turning a pre-historic site into a bouncy castle sacrilege, so to ward off any criticism I called it just that.

**L.M.:** 'A week or so ago you handed out posters to commuters in stations in London and Liverpool with instructions on how to delete their Facebook profiles. Now in the light of yesterday's Mark Zuckerberg hearing could you tell us some more about this intervention?

**J.D.:** Back in January I made a red t-shirt with a six step instruction on how to delete your Facebook account for an opening party at Kettle's Yard, this was before the Cambridge Analytica scandal broke, and London and also on the walls of the Facebook's London headquarters.

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*The Rapid Response Unit is a Liverpool based cultural experiment which encourages artists to respond creatively to global events, believing in public engagement and free distribution.*



**L.M.:** My Art Guides is based in Venice, you represented Britain in the British Pavilion for the Biennale in 2013 with English Magic, how has your vision of Britain and it's ever weirder status changed since then, regarding Brexit for example? What was your experience of Venice like?

**J.D.:** Wow, that's a big question and I need more time to think about it, but the show would be a lot different today, the country is ever more divided and bizarre. However in one of the rooms in the pavilion there is a reference to our relationship to Russia, with William Morris throwing a luxury yacht belonging to Roman Abramovich into the Venetian lagoon. I had a great time in Venice and the show was a great success, people reacted really well to it.

**L.M.:** On the topic of Brexit have you heard about the Brexiters proposal for the 'Museum of Sovereignty' a museum of Brexit leading to galleries displaying a selection of your old school friend Nigel Farage's tweed jackets.

**J.D.:** No I haven't heard about it, but I think its a brilliant idea, it will demonstrate just how absurd they all are!

### **From the curator's perspective: a few questions for Massimiliano Gioni**

**Lara Morrell:** How did the collaboration with Jeremy come about? When did you two start working together?

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first parades and then we collaborated in 2006 at the Berlin biennale and in 2009 at New Museum. We met again at the Venice Biennale in 2013 where he was not in the international show but in the British pavilion which was even greater, its a friendship and long-lasting collaboration and we wanted to bring the piece to Milan since he installing it in Glasgow and London. It took some time to make it happen on a practical level because the city has strict regulations that prohibit the erection of any sort of structure in public green spaces. So we finally found a way to do it because this park technically doesn't belong to the city yet as it's in transition between private ownership (those who built CityLife) and the city. So it was because of this transition period it was possible to have access, it's a technicality but it also demonstrates the patience Jeremy has when realising a project and it worked out well as its a strange and interesting context and it happens to be near miart.

L.M.: Why this specifically this piece of his? Is there any kind of underling message to the piece in this context?

MG: I don't even know if he had this in mind in 2012, but certainly this piece sadly becomes more relevant today when certain ideas of nationalism and populism appropriate these types of symbols with xenophobic or nationalistic messages, that was what I read in his piece but I don't know if this was what he had in mind. In Italy this type of imagery is very much associated with the myth of origins, which are regarded with suspicion, even in England as well. We had this occasion to work together in Milan and we took it and we'll most probably work together again in the future. Typically with the foundation during Miart we hold smaller projects like this, not it terms of scale, but smaller in ambition, one-off unique projects.

L.M: Any Milan highlights to suggest for the visitors

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disclose to the press! Ok, let me think...This is not meant to be self serving but what I do love about the Trussardi Foundation is that in a sense it has become a compass for the hidden history of the city tracing the different places where we have held exhibitions, for example two years ago in an abandoned art deco public bath near Porta Venezia we held a show by Sarah Lucas, Albergo Diurno – that's a really amazing space but can be accessed during special openings only ( currently it is closed).

Lara Morrell



Jeremy Deller at the opening of Sacrilege City Life Park



Sacrilege, Installation views, City Life Park





Beatrice Trussardi, Jeremy Deller and  
Massimiliano Gioni



Jeremy Deller

**It's Nice That**

# **Jeremy Deller designs protest flag for 14 American art institutions**



Jeremy Deller: Pledges of Allegiance flag

Artist Jeremy Deller has designed a flag that reads “Don’t worry be angry” as part of public artwork series Pledges of Allegiance. The project, which is produced by New York-based organisation Creative Time, will see Deller’s flag raised at 14 arts institutions around the US from New York to Texas to Florida.

Creative Time conceived the project in response to the political climate of Trump’s America, commissioning 16 artists to respond to an issue or cause that they were passionate about. Deller is the tenth artist in a roster that includes Yoko Ono, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Alex Da Corte, Trevor Pagan and Nari Ward.

Creative Time artistic director Nato Thompson says, “We realised we needed a space to resist that was defined not in opposition to a symbol, but in support of

A film released by Creative Time to promote the project features Deller’s flag flying from the Creative Time headquarters soundtracked to soundbites from President Trump, National Rifle Association advocates and student activists from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where 17 people were shot dead and 14 more were injured last month.

Of the design, Deller said, “I hope it’s pretty self-explanatory.”



# FLY LING LEAPS

THE BRILLIANT 'AWKWARD' ARTIST WHO HAD THE ANTIDOTE TO 'STRONG AND STABLE'  
ELECTION SLOGANS



Sacrilege (2012)



# Jeremy Deller

## STONEHENGE

As Jeremy Deller was being shown round Stonehenge its custodians were unaware his intention was to make a 'bouncy castle' replica of the late Neolithic monument. When official backs were turned PVC swatches were surreptitiously held up against the sandstone sarsens and bluer igneous rock in an attempt to arrive at satisfactory colour matches. The original subterfuge being well worth it when you saw what tumbling joy *Sacrilege* (2012) brought to huge numbers of people as it toured the country.

A significant strain of Deller's extensive body of work revisits the monumental, the mythological and regenerates it so presumed fixities in material and symbolic terms might be questioned. Maybe, as well as the performance of solemn rites, there *was* fun to had on that plain in prehistoric Wiltshire, if not bouncing then at least a great game of hide-n-seek. Deller brings back to life, restores to the public realm a site that seemingly in recent years has been ever more commodified, sold back to the public in aspic, on terms dictated by tourism and profit.



## The Battle of Orgreave (2001)

### **BATTLE**

But it's not just the distant past that the artist has drawn on for inspiration. A work for which the 2004 Turner Prize winner first became more widely known is *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001). This involved a re-enactment of the bitter 1984 conflict between police and striking miners: a violent culmination of a decades' long ideological battle between successive governments and the British trades union movement.

It was in his late teens that Deller first saw news footage of the brutal events of June 18<sup>th</sup> 1984 and remembered thinking 'There's something seriously wrong with this country if this is what we have to do to people.'

Nearly a 1000 folk took part in Deller's reenactment. And the work is as much about the participants – some were miners or related to miners present at the original fracas – as it is a prompt to considering what happened subsequently. A coming together of people who'd lived through recent history yes but hardly cathartic, more like (ironically) a police reconstruction of events relevant to a serious crime.

Deller challenges buried histories, brings unresolved issues to light, this is no exercise in healing but rather confronting something unresolved, bringing it back into discussion. Reminding us of the trauma of individuals, families and communities affected. 'There's no way you can recreate a 20,000 person riot but you can resurrect a version of it,' explained the artist. It opened up wounds that have been sunk by subsequent shifts in ideology. But there's also humour, a comedic absurdity as well as the very serious intent to challenge establishment cant.

In Mike Figgis' film about Deller's reenactment Tony Benn revealed how the BBC has always been a tool of the state. Journalists' footage of the battle near Orgreave coking plant showed that miners threw rocks only after a police 'cavalry' charge. When it was aired on television events had been edited, turned around to suggest it was miners who struck first. The BBC later claimed that the re-constructed truth (a lie) was an inadvertent mistake. Something not dissimilar appears to be happening with some of the current election campaign coverage.

So much contemporary, socially engaged art wants 'the world to be a better place' but Deller is neither confident in nor satisfied by such a pat answers. While emphatically oppositional the artist is never didactic, thereby avoiding the straitjacket of some politically inclined artworks. Instead, through what's been termed his 'curation of the improbable' Deller opens up and encourages debate, invites multiple viewpoints.

Admittedly the artist's practice sees him introducing what by his own admission are sometimes quite blunt instruments into the public domain. Deller wants to rile people, get them angry, to challenge how things stand and through a bringing together of disparate points of view and the people who hold them have a tangible social impact. The artists' role in society is s/he's 'always a bit of a troublemaker. They fight with ideas and imagery [...] of course there's artists who make beautiful things and that's fine but that's not where my focus is.'





## It Is What It Is (2009)

### **5TH MARCH 2007**

Take Deller's 'It Is What It Is' (2009) – labeled Baghdad, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007 – in physical terms the work consists of the rusted, mangled remains of a vehicle caught up in a car bomb blast that decimated an Iraqi street book market.

It's a formidable object, symbolising the vulnerability of the human body and a memorial to the dozens of people killed on that fateful 'everyday' in a war torn city: a sobering reminder of the impact of modern war on civilians.

Aesthetically, materially it is gruesome and fascinating. Some artists might be satisfied just to have come by this found object plucked from the morass of a very messy conflict. Its power as an index of violence is plangent. But Deller is never content with making a visual blast. He took the artifact on tour. There are artists who make 'trophy objects' and others who create experiences.

The potential for conflict while travelling across the U.S. with such a potent wreck was glaring. Making art in this way you really have little or no control over the weather, how people will react, on the road it could've become a farce, it could have turned nasty in a country that is much more overtly militaristic and gun loving. It was an exciting if somewhat dangerous way to proceed – Having the courage to 'risk' meaningful, honest, open relations with 'ordinary' people as well as specialists was something Deller learnt early on with *Acid Brass* (1997) and the positive outcome of which was something of a jumping-off point for subsequent endeavours – if you are clear and straight with people much of the time they will respond positively in kind.

Deller discerns a difference between art and activism. The Baghdad car wasn't an anti-war protest, again rather it was an attempt to provoke much wider considerations and reflection. If the car had only been shown in an art gallery then it would have lost some of its testimonial aspect and become an object appreciated for its formal qualities: its shape, colour, texture...

The artist doesn't hold much truck with that reading. Deller's said that after towing the work across America – together with an Iraqi and US soldier – again it was the prompting of numerous discussions amidst potentially risky encounters, reactions, that proved to be the salient meaning or value of the work. And now its permanent exhibition at the Imperial War Museum avoids it being bracketed out as an art object rather than a document of conflict.





We're Here Because We're Here (2016)

## IN MEMORIAM

More recently Deller's *We're Here Because We're Here* (2016) saw soldiers appear in mundane situations – transport hubs, shopping malls, Ikea – dressed in WW1 uniform across the UK to mark the centenary of The Battle of the Somme. These apparitions of the dead engaged with but didn't talk to 21<sup>st</sup> century passersby. If any member of the public appeared to show an interest they were simply handed a card bearing a real WWI combatant's name, their role and age at death. Seeing the 'dead' walk the streets (a phenomena understandably reported by loved ones as really happening after the war) caused a gamut of emotion in 2016 from bemusement to tears.

Deller likes to take his art somewhere awkward, not awkward for awkward's sake, but somewhere that's tough and unsentimental, an imaginary of various troubling situations that can be so easily papered over by subsequent events.

That the artist's 'toolkit' of media and approaches to work can make people cry, laugh and be genuinely afraid is pertinent because there are so many reasons to be affected by what's going on at local, national and international levels today.

Our consciences should, must be pricked at times. We deserve much more than the oftentimes patronisingly simple, binary choices on offer. We deserve better than politicians stabbing each other in the back, lying to us. Deller's work refutes the carping sophistry of silver tongued corrupt individuals and power blocs who sacrifice ethical social concern for the sake of their careers and vested interests of which they are often the direct beneficiaries.



Strong and Stable My Arse  
(2017)



## **FLYINGLEAPS**

A current work by Deller is a plain and simple street intervention. Appearing on hoardings around the country: a black and white poster bearing the words 'Strong and stable my arse.'

'Strong and stable' is a stock phrase, of course, and has become gratingly all the more so since Theresa May's flip flop snap election. Deller's unfussy black lettering on a white ground is a design knowingly spartan. That is 'showing or characterized by austerity or a lack of comfort or luxury.' Sounds familiar. Together with its somewhat melancholy 'black bordered tell of grief', as Dickens had it, the work resonates with the 'just about managing' state of the nation.

Because so many aren't managing, not without charity and as Mary Wollstonecraft noted 'It's justice not charity that is wanting in this world.' And Deller's pièce de résistance maybe somewhat base but at the same time it's pure gold. That terse, defiant and disapproving 'my arse' appended to May's glib attempt at verbal con trick.

'Grapefruit my arse' 'Bono my arse' 'Feng Shui my arse'... 'Strong and stable my arse.' Where's Ricky Tomlinson as Jim Royle? We need him voicing Deller's phrase twenty-four seven, to counter what is so often the mainstream media's biased, rank and insidious reporting.

Adrian Burnham

# Engaging 30 million people with heritage in a single day: We're here because we're here

How do you evaluate something that has never been done before? This was the challenge that 14-18 NOW posed with 'We're here because we're here', a modern memorial performed throughout the UK on 1 July 2016 to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme.





## A ground-breaking project

'We're here because we're here' was commissioned by 14-18 NOW as part of their five-year programme of extraordinary arts experiences connecting people with the First World War.

Conceived by Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller, the project was delivered through a unique cross-sector collaboration involving 14-18 NOW and 26 national and regional theatres across the UK.

Planned in total secrecy, 1400 voluntary participants dressed in First World War uniform appeared unexpectedly in locations across the UK; these 'ghost soldiers' were seen in train stations, shopping centres, mountains and industrial estates. A profound response saw 63% of the UK population aware of the project, two million people experience it live and 28 million via the media.



## How to capture total impact?

To capture the total impact of the project, MHM worked with 14-18 NOW to develop an **evaluation framework** that would encompass the experiences of the audiences, volunteers, theatres and artists. Through a programme of in-depth interviews, video diaries, workshops, voxpops and surveys we achieved a rich 360-degree view of the 'event' and all those who were involved.



“

**‘I felt quite emotional when I first saw them this morning, and when I realised what it was about, I was holding back tears for a while, and I was just really sombre for a good hour or so.’**

- Vox Pop respondent

## **The immediacy of the audience experience**

On 1 July 2016, we stationed interviewers up and down the UK to carry out vox pop interviews with members of the public who encountered the ghost soldiers. Interviewers approached people who they saw had stopped to watch and engage with the performance and who were starting to leave. This allowed us to capture the immediacy of the audience experience without interfering with it.



Afterwards, a question was sent to a panel of people representative of the UK population to gauge their experiences. We also carried out **social media analysis** to quantify digital reach and capture the digital experience.

We discovered the audience was mesmerised and deeply moved by the experience. Being confronted by living, breathing young men in everyday places impacted on the audience in ways that statistics never could and helped remind them of the reality of what each life lost on the first day of the Battle of the Somme really meant.

The project moved audiences who had never engaged with the Battle of the Somme before and changed perceptions of commemoration and memorials. People were stopped in their tracks, some moved to tears and 330 million impressions of the event were made on social media.



**'It's the way they make eye contact with you ... it really hammers home that you're remembering real people.'**

- Vox Pop respondent

## **The personal journeys of the volunteers**

Participating in 'We're here because we're here' was a profound experience for many of the volunteers. They represented a range of ages and backgrounds, including students, civil servants, sales assistants, aspiring actors and firefighters. Beginning months before the performance date, they attended weekly rehearsals and were given the identity of a real soldier who died in the Somme. On 1 July, they rose, donned their period uniforms and became someone who had died 100 years ago.





Anticipating that volunteers would experience a personal journey as a result of the project, we asked some to keep **video diaries**, interviewing them before and after the experience. Many participants cited having grown in confidence and become more outgoing. There were examples of personal networks that were strengthened and expanded. Volunteers were also asked to complete an **online survey** after the event. Over 98% agreed that they felt proud of what they had achieved and that they felt like they were part of a real artistic experience.

## **The experience of the theatres and artists**

‘We’re here because we’re here’ was a cross-sector collaboration between visual artist Jeremy Deller, the three National Theatres in England, Wales and Scotland, and 23 national and regional theatres. 14-18 NOW were keen to know what the experience was like for their partners, and whether it would strengthen partnerships amongst them.

We conducted a series of **in-depth interviews**, **evaluation workshops** and a **survey** with those involved, revealing that the project had indeed strengthened partnerships.





**"MHM rose to the evaluation challenges of this innovative, UK-wide project with tenacity and creativity. They provided both robust data on audience reach and deep insight into the experience of and impact on the producers, artists, volunteers and audiences who created and engaged in this unique event, which saw 30 million people connect with the heritage of the First World War."**

**- 14-18 NOW**

Even the highest expectations were exceeded in all areas of the project. 83% of staff expected to feel inspired and 79% expected to feel excited but 94% and 96% experienced these outcomes respectively. Many benefited from professional development and new thinking about their practice.

The viral nature of the project was its most unexpected aspect. 66% of those involved in creating 'We're here because we're here' gained new insights into the use of social media to capture audience response (compared to only 18% who had anticipated this).



The most profound outcome for the participants and the staff and other volunteers was the human benefits of being involved in a project that was such a big unified collaboration and had such meaning for those involved.

## **Pioneering a new way of memorialising**

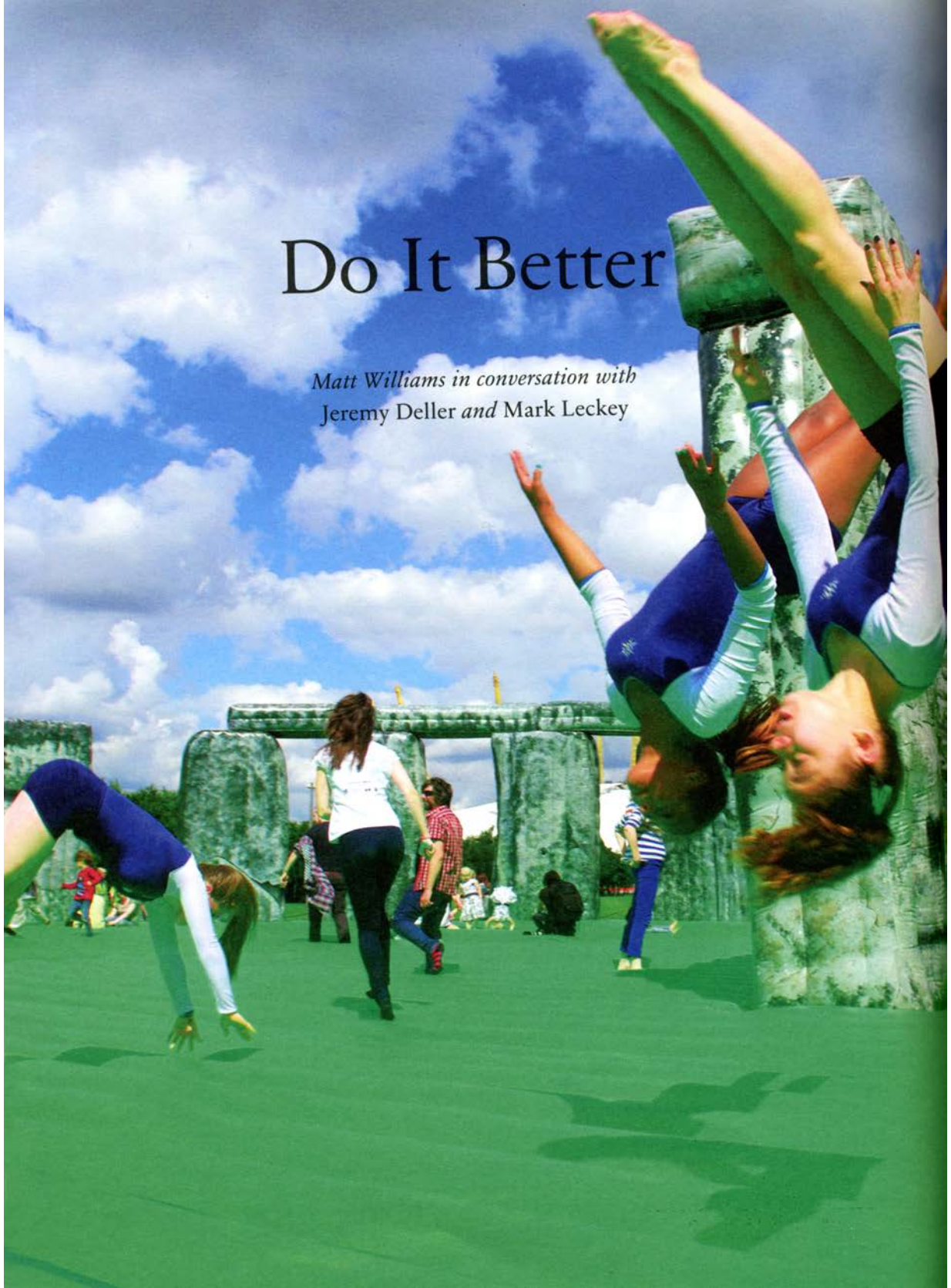
‘We’re here because we’re here’ broke truly new ground in engaging people with the heritage of the First World War through an astonishing public art performance, delivered on a single day, on a national scale. It illustrated how museums and heritage organisations can harness the public realm and the phenomenal power of digital media to engage the widest possible public with a battle and a war that took place 100 years ago.





# Do It Better

*Matt Williams in conversation with  
Jeremy Deller and Mark Leckey*







Turner Prize winners Jeremy Deller and Mark Leckey have respectively engaged with various aspects of popular and traditional British culture throughout their artistic careers. Independently, they have investigated their understanding and ideas through collaborative public art works, performances, collages and sculptures. I met with them on a wet and wintery afternoon in North London, at a café known endearingly by the local community as the Grumpy Cow, to discuss their approach to recent curatorial projects, the British class system and their shared interest in Little Richard and dub reggae sound systems.

**Matt Williams:** *You were both recently commissioned by the Southbank to curate touring exhibitions. Jeremy, you presented "All that is Solid Melts into Air," and Mark, you did "The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things."*

**Jeremy Deller:** It was a show about the Industrial Revolution and rock culture. It was a musing on the subject — it wasn't fully coherent — which is why artists are asked to curate exhibitions, isn't it? You get to take liberties, which curators probably can't because it can prove detrimental to their careers!

**MW:** *The image of the glam rock figure in full regalia standing next to a coal miner was truly striking and felt incredibly poignant.*

**JD:** That was Adrian Street, the wrestler, with his father, a miner, at the pithead in an image of brotherly and fatherly tension — and also the tension of the UK in the 1970s as it becomes less industrial and more "showbiz." There was also a jukebox full of sounds of industry rather than music in the exhibition. Each track, each song on it, is actually up to two minutes of factory sounds from the 1930s and 1980s. For example, the sound of a steam hammer just pounding, and so on.

**MW:** *And how did you research and collate all of the sounds for the jukebox?*

**JD:** I contacted lots of archives. The British Library, but also the North West Sound Archive, which is an amazing building in the middle of a castle owned by the council in Clitheroe, with these two curators sitting there with tapes and tapes and tapes. It felt like something out of a film. I couldn't believe it existed. They continue to conduct interviews and produce material.

*Previous page:*  
Jeremy Deller  
Sacilege Greenwich  
(2012) *Courtesy of the Artist; Art: Concept, Paris; and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow*  
*Photography by Jeremy Deller*

*This page:*  
Mark Leckey  
My Album: A Rough-Demo Video (video still; 2014-15) *Courtesy of the Artist; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/ Cologne; and Cabinet, London*



FEATURE

Next page:  
Mark Leckey "As If,"  
installation view at Haus  
der Kunst, Munich (2015)  
Courtesy of the Artist and  
Haus der Kunst, Munich

[Editorial note: the North West Film Archive closed in November 2014. It was obviously too good to be true.]

**MW:** In "The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things," images and objects from popular culture were juxtaposed with various artifacts. Was it an intuitive process when you were collating and determining the relationships between the works on display?

**Mark Leckey:** It was a thought I was trying to populate.

**JD:** Because we were doing a show at the same time, almost simultaneously. I was looking at what Mark was doing; it seemed genuinely interesting. I was thinking: this is really good — I hope mine is as good as this.

**ML:** That is the thing, isn't it? There is a certain point in your career when you get asked to curate a show, and it can just end up as an exercise in taste — to approach it in a kind of cool and slightly disinterested way. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to give it my all. So, when I was invited, the first thing I did was start Googling everything, and dumping what I liked in folders, and that happened to include artworks and also non-artworks; it's just the nature of amassing stuff online, isn't it? So Jeremy is right when he says that as an artist you're not expected to work within curatorial parameters. You get to be a bit more free range. You can be a lot more inclusive.

**JD:** In a way, as an artist, you're almost a research and development project for like-minded museums to see what's possible. So you're allowed to go out and experiment.

**MW:** A curatorial trailblazer?

**JD:** Definitely. You experiment and see what's possible, and if it works they may adopt some similar strategies.

**ML:** You're a bit undisciplined, a bit wild, if you know what I mean? It's like, you set out on with a little pat on your arse, to go and have some fun... There was kind of an expectation that it will be a little bit whacky, a little bit quirky. It did threaten to diminish the experience for me a little bit.

**JD:** I think the only problems I have ever come up against have been budgetary. You're allowed to do more or less what you wanted, provided it's not too expensive.

**ML:** When you are referring to artist-curated exhibitions you have to consider Warhol. That exhibition he did was the benchmark for me, but I only really thought about it halfway through working on "The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things."

**JD:** Yes, the show he did was called "Raid the Icebox."

**ML:** It's got to be one of the great artist-curated shows.

**JD:** It was at Rhode Island School of Design in 1968 or 1969 I think. It's a decorative art museum. And he jammed it full of items from storage. The documentation from the exhibition suggests that Warhol, along with everything else he did, was the Internet, really, but before the Internet.

**ML:** I think the difference today when putting a show together is that you have access to all this imagery, all this video, and you can pull a show together from the Internet. I don't think I went and visited any institutions or any museums; it was all done remotely.

**JD:** You have to remember though: in a lot of those collections not everything's online. There are works that you would never know about, unless you go there.

**ML:** I didn't even think about that.

**JD:** There are things that are not on the Internet.

**ML:** No there isn't... I don't believe it.

**JD:** If it's not on the Internet it doesn't exist.

**ML:** They're a myth...

**MW:** Both of you have also made work about sound systems?

**JD:** Yes, Alan Kane and I photographed them for our "Folk Archive" exhibition, but we haven't made them. They are beautiful things, aren't they? Almost folk art. They're such a statement as well. When you see a sound system being used, it means something. It's a sonic weapon.

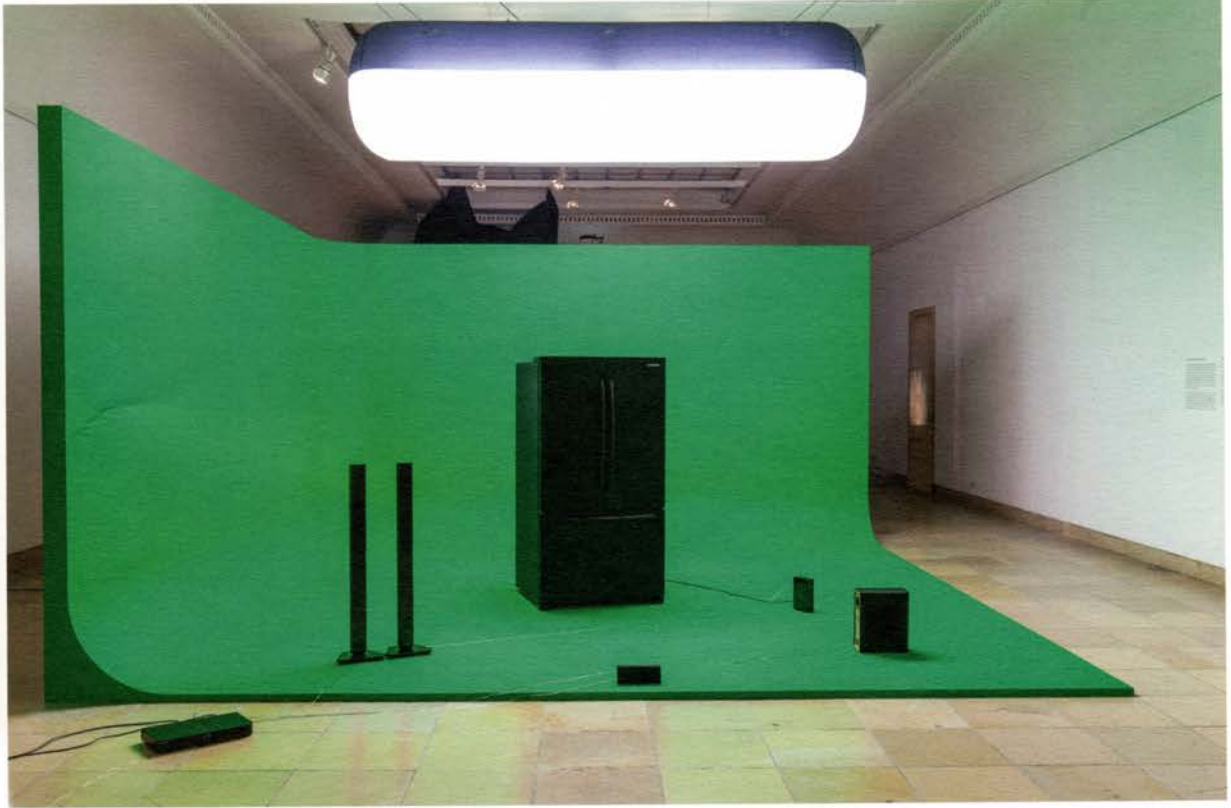
**ML:** I made a sculpture of a sound system that played music. At the time I definitely thought of it as folk art in relation to West Indian culture.

**JD:** We took the Folk Archive to India. That's an amazing country for folk art.

**MW:** And how was it received?

**JD:** Well, I think. But their view of Britain obviously is skewed anyway; like most countries it's basically the Queen and *Downton Abbey*. It was quite shocking for a lot of people in India to sort of see the chaos and anarchy of British life, as I see it. It's more like India basically, and less like Buckingham Palace changing the guard and so on.

**ML:** Maybe that's one of the things about a curatorial mindset being different from an artist's. It's that I'm not thinking in terms of "folk art" or "popular culture."









FEATURE

It's just stuff, material.

**MW:** *So you don't believe that there is a hierarchy between the objects?*

**ML:** I mean, there obviously is, because things do have different values and meaning.

**JD:** That's where institutions and historians come in, isn't it? They give you the hierarchy because they come with their two curators and their conservators. They preside over and create the hierarchy. But I think a lot of artists are interested in folk art. I mean, the show "Love is Enough" that I curated of Andy Warhol and William Morris at Modern Art Oxford evolved because they were both very interested in vernacular and folk art; they both collected it; it inspired them massively. And I think that's something that most artists are really looking at. They are interested in *things* and not really in the hierarchies as such. Because they know they can probably get more from popular culture than other things.

**ML:** It's about the values you know, because it's not universal, is it? But at the same time you are not universally saying all pop culture's great. You are saying there are things *within* popular culture that are great — there is a hierarchy there. Part of the reason I made *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* (1999) was so I could say that there were moments in rave culture, the casuals, etc., as great and good as whatever else you wish to compare it with.

**JD:** I have invested in it — like the sound system. We know what that means, and you know what happens around it or how it's used or what it does. And it's a statement, isn't it? A call to arms, or music.

**MW:** *When you were developing the performance Acid Brass (1997) were you consciously trying to engage two different cultures that had arguably evolved from working class communities at different periods of time?*

**JD:** That word community gets used a lot now, doesn't it? It's to do with, unlike formerly, communities where people never meet each other like they used to — they knew each other, met each other and lived with each other almost. Not now, because it's used in so many different ways. Or it's usually used when a community is dying or is dead, or in big trouble, so it's often now used as a negative term. But I wasn't trying to use it for me. It was all about British history — through music. How music tells a story, a historical story and is part of history, and you can't separate the two.

**ML:** This is interesting for me because I think the sound systems are particularly troublesome. I find them quite awkward when I put them into a museum because I feel that I am disenchanting them slightly. I am draining them a little bit of their mystical aura and the life they have outside of those institutions.

Plus, I recognize that the sound system isn't as vital as it was twenty or thirty years ago, but that's exactly what allows me to use them. So, you go in at a point where this thing is just about to die. But that's because I think that something in our culture — that belonged to our generation — is dying.

**MW:** *This "thing" that's dying — can you elaborate?*

**ML:** For me I think, what Jeremy and I both have in common is that we are a product of a type of British popular culture particular to the last century. I'm not talking about the death of music, or even the death of popular culture, but of a particular set of conditions that produced an effect, and I think that it's waning or has been waning. It's entropy. It's akin to the big bang and the energy's dissipated. And what we probably both make work about is the desire to revive or cherish that period.

**MW:** *And is that death or waning of a certain strand of British culture symptomatic of class politics?*

**JD:** Yes, it's probably the worst it has been in the last twenty years.

**ML:** I don't know how you articulate it in a forum like this. You can't really speak about class in that sense; it just gets absorbed into middle-class ridicule. Even if people are sympathetic, you sound as though you have got a chip on your shoulder, because you can't articulate away that chip. It can't be done. You just shut up.

**JD:** But that's the class system.

**ML:** It's because the debate or the discourse in itself is middle class. So you have to learn the language to be able to participate. It can only accept it as theatrical "realism" or as a caricature. It can't be dealt with in any other way. But that's why you make art, because you can use images...

**JD:** Because you don't have to talk?

**ML:** You don't have to talk or write it down. You can just demonstrate. That's why music and sounds systems are kind of PAs for the working class.

**JD:** It's interesting we're talking about sound systems; they're built, like a castle or battlements, a physical statement saying, "Right, deal with this."

**ML:** It's the potential that I believe in. This is my culture, you can touch it and it's big and makes these very basic sounds that can do things to your body. It's for broadcasting, and you know if you're in an area with one, you're going to hear it and it's going to take over that area, basically. It's about taking over an environment with sound rather than speech, which is the best way class speaks.

*Previous page, above:*  
Jeremy Deller  
Justified and Ancient  
(2014) Courtesy of the Artist  
and The Modern Institute/  
Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

*Previous page, below:*  
Jeremy Deller  
Monarchs of the Glen  
(detail, 2014)  
Courtesy of the Artist and  
The Modern Institute/Toby  
Webster Ltd, Glasgow  
Photography by Max Slaven



FEATURE

**JD:** My genuine fear is that Prince Harry and Prince William are influencing the musical tastes of the nation. Just the rubbish they like. But, if you accept the kind of basic tenants of pop culture or rock and roll or whatever you want to call it, then that's a good thing. Because that will give rise to people making music in opposition to this or that. You can argue that there isn't enough or there is no longer a generational friction. And music needs some kind of friction; so maybe if it does develop into, you know, an upper-class occupation, then that would be a good thing because a counterpoint would emerge.

**MW:** *You have both also used ephemera from popular culture — for example, the image of Little Richard and club flyers. And you have, in the process, arguably removed them from popular culture.*

**JD:** Yes, I think it's because I think they're very important people. Especially Little Richard — he's as important as Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud. In the second half of the last century, it's Little Richard and Andy Warhol; what they did was a liberation of the people. They liberated people's minds through their writing and their theories, and Little Richard liberated people, as did Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis through their music.

**ML:** So there are two things here. Firstly, when I made the image of Little Richard it was because I had read this article about Jah Shaka, and that whenever he performs he takes a picture of Haile Selassie and pins it just above his eye level. So he can look up at his image as he's playing. I wanted that relationship or experience with Little Richard; I want that image to basically drive me. Hence the reason why he's next to where I work. And the second point is I think the use of this term "popular culture" is a corral for everything else that's not... what? Art? That's a lot of culture. And it's as if "popular culture" in itself doesn't have any values — that Little Richard and Jah Shaka are one and the same as Katy Perry or Twitter. That's a kind of old-fashioned way of thinking, maybe, but it's now mutated into this idea that everything's been flattened out by the Internet, and that everything is somehow equal and therefore dissipated. But it's not. There's still peaks and troughs and things that have more popularity or value.

**JD:** That's why artists are still so considered and revered in society. It's stupid really, but that's why they get access to the richest people in the world. Those people want to have art — because it has and always has had the power, since tribal times almost. And it provides us with access. If you want things, want things to get done, want things to get made, the door's open.

**ML:** You can do things as an artist that no one else is allowed to. It's like the exhibitions we discussed earlier. You are allowed to travel and play around and have access to stuff that is very cool. But you know, my problem with being an artist is that we talk about

Little Richard. For me he is a shaman. He takes all the trash, all of the abuse and disrespect he received, and alchemically transforms it into something powerful. He creates a space, and a space gets created around him where he can act or enact this ritual, where he can intoxicate people by his kind of magic. That's the reason why I started making art, because you can do that in art in a way that is no longer possible in music. It seemed that could be a potential space for these rituals and moments that have been lost.

**JD:** We were basically believers. I actually still am, and you still are, and it carries on.

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*Jeremy Deller (b. 1966, UK) lives in London. Recent solo shows: Turner Contemporary, Margate; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester; British Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; WIELS, Brussels; The Modern Institute, Glasgow. Recent group shows: Modern Art, Oxford; 10th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju; Tate Liverpool, Liverpool; ICA, London; MoMA PS1, New York; Biennale of Sydney 2008, Sydney; CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco; 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow. Upcoming shows: Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Birmingham (solo).*

*Mark Leckey (b. 1964, UK) lives in London. Recent solo shows: Haus der Kunst, Munich; WIELS, Brussels; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Serpentine Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne. Recent group shows: SculptureCenter, New York; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; 2013 Carnegie International, Pittsburgh; MoMA PS1, New York; White Columns, New York; 55th Venice Biennale; New Museum, New York; Tate Modern, London. Upcoming show: Museo Madre, Naples (solo).*

*Matt Williams is curator of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Since his appointment he has worked on a number of exhibitions including the group shows "Remote Control" and "Journal," as well as solo presentations by Bernadette Corporation, Bjarne Melgaard & Snøhetta, Hannah Sawtell, Lutz Bacher, Neil Beloufa and Viviane Sassen.*

*Next page, above: All That is Solid Melts Into Air, installation view at Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2013) Courtesy of Manchester City Galleries*

*Next page, below: Mark Leckey Lending Enchantment to Vulgar Materials, installation view at WIELS, Brussels (2014) Courtesy of the Artist and WIELS, Brussels*



Matt Williams, "Do It Better, in conversation with Jeremy Deller and Mark Leckey", in *Flash Art*, n°301, March-April 2015, pp 80-87



ISSUE 69

SUMMER 2013

# Art Review:

Contains 4% ANRI SALA; 3% TAVARES STRACHAN; 6% LOWER EAST SIDE;  
34% PANTONE 801; 1 STRIPED HAIRY-NOSED BAT

## Great Britons

JEREMY DELLER'S BRITISH  
ART HEROES

Is  
the Venice  
Biennale  
still top of  
the pile?

A GUIDE TO THIS YEAR'S  
ART EXTRAVAGANZA

UK £5.95



# Jeremy Deller

Jeremy Deller's artwork spans a variety of media, from installations, processions and posters to documentary films. Among his best-known works are *Acid Brass* (1997), which fused traditional brass-band music with acid house, and *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), a filmed reenactment of a notorious conflict

between miners and the police during the 1984-5 miners' strike. Deller, who won the Turner Prize in 2004, cocurated Folk Archive (2000-, with Alan Kane), a touring exhibition of contemporary British folk art. Last year *Joy in People*, a midcareer survey, opened at the Hayward Gallery, London, while *Sacrilege*, a bouncy castle modelled on Stonehenge, toured the country during the summer of the 2012 Olympic Games. This summer he has been commissioned by the British Council to exhibit at the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. To mark the occasion, ArtReview asked the artist to guest-edit a special features section in the magazine.

Interview by Mark Rappolt

## ARTREVIEW

What does it mean to be in the British Pavilion at Venice? Does it mean anything different from another exhibition?

## JEREMY DELLER

It's a lot of work! I think that's the most immediate thing. And I think people assume it means more than it does. Once you get to a certain point, in terms of career, you're used to having challenges and being put into quite high-profile environments. Obviously it's... I'm going to contradict myself: I think people invest a lot in it, but people outside it probably invest a lot more into it. I'm just treating it like a big exhibition, but people around me, maybe, or yourself or within the artworld, as it were, invest a lot of attention into it, don't they?

*You don't think of yourself as an artistic symbol of Britishness in a way you didn't before?*

JD: No, I don't, because it's not really meant to be about Britishness, the British Pavilion, is it? Oh dear, Ed Vaizey will be upset

*Well, I guess historically, at some point, it was.*

JD: I suppose in a wider sense you're probably right. It is; it's meant to represent British culture. This is the best you can get [laughter].

*If you read some of the reviews of the Biennale from the 1950s - say - in the British press, you'd think it was all about showing how brilliant British culture is and how superior it is to other countries' cultures.*

JD: Really?

Yes.

JD: Well, it won't be happening this time round, I think we've learned our lesson about that,



this page:  
*Acid Brass*, 1997, performance in Regent's Park, London, 2006. Courtesy the artist

facing page:  
California leafnose bat (*Macrotus californicus*). Photo: Jeff Foot/Discovery Channel Images/Getty Images

but obviously there are references to British culture. It would be strange if there weren't. So people probably read a lot into that, and I think probably Venice has become, even in the last ten years, like the artworld itself, a bigger and bigger deal. It's become more of a news story as opposed to an art story. So inevitably there'll be a bit of fuss for a day or two, and then that will die down and it will be the next thing, so I'm not so worried. I mean, the thing that is - I wouldn't say 'bothering' me, but I am aware of it - is that everyone will have an opinion about the pavilion. Of course, they'll compare it to other pavilions, but they'll have an opinion about it, even more so than the Turner Prize.

*Yes. They give prizes at Venice, too...*

JD: Yes, which I'd never really thought about. I didn't even know about that until recently, that you get this... there's potential. But it's not like the Turner Prize, where you've got a one-in-four chance. You've got a one in 100 chance or something, so I'm not really thinking about that.

*It highlights the fact that you're being compared, though.*

JD: With other pavilions? Absolutely. You're used to that as an artist, I think. The skill is not actually reading it and not paying so much attention to it. You're really doing your best to worry me, aren't you?

*In terms of the broad ideas of the pavilion, are you starting by looking into your own practice or thinking about your audience?*

JD: Both. I haven't tried to tailor it in any way, but of course you have a building, a very specific building, so that's interesting. So I've worked with the space. I mean, it's actually a really elegant space. I've quite enjoyed having it to myself for six months to wander around and check emails in. It's a structure and it can structure a show, and that's what it's done, I hope.

*I'm interested in Venice and the audience because partly you get the weird crush of professional art people at the beginning and towards the end a much more diverse audience, some of whom aren't particularly there because there's an art show but will wander into it.*

JD: I like that. I like grabbing the unsuspecting passerby - not literally, of course. That's almost my core audience, the person who wasn't expecting to see an art show or not expecting to like something. The randomness excites me, the randomness of showing work and giving a talk. When you give a talk, there are 200 people or 10 or whatever in an audience, you don't know who they are and what their interests are and what they've done with their lives, and that's interesting - to see what reaction you get about certain things. I like the random nature of art.



*Do you think you have to make an effort to get that audience?*

JD: I don't work consciously to do that, but that's how I work. I know that it will have a broad appeal, and I like that. I'm not a snob in terms of who sees work.

*There's some part of the audience that will come to Venice knowing your work and having expectations.*

JD: Yes, which may or may not be met.

*Maybe there's a choice about meeting it or not meeting it.*

JD: I don't really think about that. I really don't! I need to actually surprise myself rather than anyone else, so I'm not going to give people exactly what they're expecting or looking for. It's recognisable, but it's not a definite product as such, I hope.

*If you wander around an art fair or something, there are people who will talk about your work in terms of 'a Jeremy Deller'.*

JD: Would they? [laughter] The problem with art fairs is they're so powerful, so many sales come from that, that you have to show. I've always done quite badly at art fairs on the whole, especially in America.

*But you have made works that are well known and that people will always think about when they think of you, regardless of what you're showing now.*

JD: Exactly. That is a problem but it's a great problem to have, like the problem of writing *Stairway to Heaven*. The burden of your history. I have a little bit of that with *The Battle of Orgreave*. Every week I get an email about it from someone, from a student writing about it or someone doing some report on the effectiveness of community art and all that. You reply to those questions and just hope that at some point – and to continue the analogy

– you'll write another classic rock song that people will want to write about as well. I think you don't want to give people what they want really, do you? A lot of people didn't want *The Battle of Orgreave* and still don't, I'm sure.

*Sometimes it's hard to know what they do want.*

JD: Well, you want to give people what they didn't know they wanted, and they realise they want it when they see it. It's an unfulfilled need almost sometimes. In terms of this show, I have no idea, and because I've made the show in relative secrecy, things haven't been shared. I have no idea really what the public reception will be. I've been allowed to do exactly what I wanted, so it's all my fault

*Do you normally do that?*

JD: Well, you normally talk about things a little bit more freely than I have with this show, so that's unusual. I quite like the secrecy, I think it's fine. It gives it a sense of expectation, I think.

*Perhaps it's quite constructive to have certain constraints.*

JD: Exactly, because we live in a world now where everybody knows everything about everything or at least thinks they do. You can find out anything. Look at how David Bowie handled his album [*The Next Day*, 2013] and single release. It's unheard-of now to have a secret that big kept for years. That in itself is almost an artwork. So I'm doing OK, but not as good as he is. [laughter]

*Do you see yourself as a political artist at all?*

JD: Well, with a small 'p', not in a party-political sense. I'm not an activist, I'm not very good at joining in on things or going on demos or speaking in debates or platforms. I'm better at other things, I think. I quite like provocation and I quite like art that is provocative and can

say things in a slightly different way, so I'm happy with that. I'm not the kind of person that would sit next to Ken Loach on a stage and talk about cuts to the National Health Service. I just don't think I'm qualified for that. I'm qualified to do other things. I was asked by the BBC to take part in this debate they did about the war in Iraq. I just couldn't do it. I think people think that you can be a spokesperson because you make work about something. If anything it's the opposite. You make the work so you don't have to be a spokesperson. You make your point in a different way. Having said that, Bob Smith manages to be both with panache.

*Let's talk about some of the articles you've commissioned for this issue of ArtReview. There's one on the British wrestler Adrian Street...*

JD: He is a character, to put it mildly. I've made a film about him, I'm very interested in him, and my mission is to make him better known in the world, because I think he deserves to be. I think he needs to be seen as the hero of his own life. It started with me seeing a photograph of him and his father at the pithead, which I just thought was the most incredible image about Britain after a war, about Britain trying to come to terms with the new role within the world, as an entertainment service economy, basically. Adrian embodied that – literally within his body. So I saw him as a historical character on a grand scale. I wanted to meet him and talk to him about the photograph and then talk about his life and so on. So it was really to make a little film about him. That was the best way to understand him. I did that [*So Many Ways to Hurt You (The Life and Times of Adrian Street)*, 2010], and I've kept in contact with him. It's just an unbelievable life that he's had, and all the looks he's had, all the things he's done, all the time very closely related to art and performance art. He understands that instinctively. It's just an interest/mild obsession of mine. As are some of these other things, like the bats. So that's a more visceral, purely visual, aesthetic interest: I just like to see these photographs, and I'm just happy for other people to see them as well.

*What about Ken Russell?*

JD: I would say he's a kind of film visionary. A lot of British filmmakers – like Ken Loach and Mike Leigh – are known for this 'realist' approach. He's the opposite end. He's a fantasist, a fantastical filmmaker, very romantic, a romantic filmmaker. I love the way he uses classical music and music in general, so he's been a massive inspiration to me, massive. I saw *Tommy* [1975] at the age of twelve or thirteen at my school in the gymnasium, after school. They had a cinema club, which is probably the best education I got at my school. They showed the craziest films to twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys. They showed *Performance* [1970] and I

this page  
*The Battle of Orgreave (An Injury to One Is an Injury to All)*, 2001.  
Photo: Parisah Taghizadeh.  
Courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

facing page  
*So Many Ways to Hurt You (The Life and Times of Adrian Street)*, 2010, film still. Courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow







THAT IS A PROBLEM  
BUT IT'S A GREAT PROBLEM  
TO HAVE, LIKE  
THE PROBLEM OF WRITING  
'STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN'.  
THE BURDEN OF YOUR  
HISTORY

was sitting in the front row. I really had no idea about this film, and it comes on and I was just like...

*Who chose the films?*

JD: This physics teacher, who was obviously doing it on purpose just to bend the brains of the boys. The way we were taught was so rigid and old-fashioned and learning by rote. It was a Michael Gove [Britain's current secretary of state for education] view of education – just remembering facts, really structured and intensely unimaginative. Then every other week the film club would show freak-out films – *Tommy* being one of them – that went against everything you were being taught at school. We were being shown films we shouldn't have actually seen legally because we were underage. They showed us *Jubilee* [1978, dir Derek Jarman], for example. They showed X-rated films to thirteen-year-old boys, so that was just like an education. That was like growing up on the screen.

*Do you think that experience relates to how you think about showing work?*

JD: Maybe. You do realise when a young person goes to an exhibition that the effect it might

have on them could be huge because they will keep that with them for the rest of their lives if they like the show or have had an impression. I wouldn't say it 'formed' them, but it would be a 'formative' experience, and I'm aware of that.

*You were talking about the provocation as well.*

JD: Yes. I'm aware of that. When I was a teenager, I was doing my A-level art history project on Francis Bacon, and I met him, totally by chance, in a gallery. I wasn't expecting him to be there. You don't expect the artist to hang around. He was there with his sister, and so I had this 15-minute conversation with him, which was just mind-blowing for a sixteen-year-old. You don't forget those moments, and so you realise people who are that age now will have similar moments when they see work, and it really is important. You get to a certain age and you think, 'Maybe this is why I do this – because of that film or because of this exhibition.' So Ken Russell is the attitude, the excess, the fancy, the mixture of fantasy and reality, the mix of religion and music, all those things, the war, history, biography. I mean; he did it all, all those things that I'm interested in.

*Do you think Adrian Street fits into that category?*

JD: Yes. Adrian Street is like a self-made version, in a way. He should have worked with Ken Russell. He would have made a great subject of a feature film. If Adrian had been born into a more supportive environment, he probably would have been an artist. Because he was given no opportunities and no encouragement, he found fame and was creative in a different way. So Adrian is an artist effectively, a self-taught performance artist. That's the way I see him. That's one reason I like Adrian – because he's not an outsider artist, that's a totally different thing, but he is like a folk performance artist, as I'm sure a lot of wrestlers and performers are.

*Do you think you have an interest in art that comes about outside the conventional spaces of a gallery or a museum?*

JD: Yes, maybe. I mean, having said that, I have nothing against galleries in art. Obviously I spent most of my teenage years in galleries, or seemed to. So I'm very much at ease in museums and galleries and with the language of them and the display of them and most importantly the people that work in them. That's something that will be clear in the pavilion. But yes, you look elsewhere, don't you? You look around you for influence.

*Yet, for many people, a work being in a gallery is what makes it art.*

JD: Yes. It validates it. That's the problem sometimes.

*And such people wouldn't necessarily say that Ken Russell was an artist in the same way as Picasso was an artist.*

JD: No. I suppose these are relatively recent definitions of artists, aren't they? Relatively.

*Do you think you're addressing those definitions? Not consciously necessarily...*

JD: Maybe I'm confusing everything. Myself included.

*Or expanding it.*

JD: Expanding it and confusing. I'm opening things up, maybe, which I'm happy to do, but I'm sure some people will just think it's reductive rather than opening up. But I do like playing with objects, playing with ideas. There's a sense of play and playfulness about the work. Mike Pitts worked on the Stonehenge project – *Sacrilege*. I wanted him to write about what may be the first artworks ever made in Britain, or the very, very early objects that have the look of artworks – ceremonial objects and so on. Also, talking about public art – some of these sites, are they forms of public art? So that's what I'm really interested in him looking at, maybe the first artists in the country. Often you're quite nervous of presenting ideas to people who are experts in their field, like that. Like with *Acid Brass* [in which brass band music is fused with acid house and Detroit techno], and with the miners and so on, you think, 'Are they going to think I'm a total idiot for doing this?' It goes to plan 99 percent of the time. I could make probably a lot of money doing some sort of management classes or something; how to convince people to do things they might not think they want to do. Having said that, I'm not entirely sure how I do it myself. I think much of it has to do with people being bored of routine and predictability.



*Do you have kind of a reaction, a kind of feeling you want people to take away from the British Pavilion?*

JD: I want them to have the same experience as if they went to a museum they'd never been to before – you can go to Philadelphia and you walk into the Museum of Art, which has objects and art from all over the world, for example – that for me is my height of experience. It's not going to be quite as exciting as that, but you just want people to walk in with an open mind and feel that they're wandering around freely. Museums should be places of freethinking and of freedom, visual and intellectual freedom almost, aesthetic freedom. I mean, a good museum is almost like being on drugs or being drunk slightly when you walk around and you're just looking at things very randomly, almost getting high off objects and images and experiences. That's maybe what I'd like people to have, that kind of narcotic experience.

*Is that reacting to a sense that people aren't exploring those freedoms in daily life?*

JD: Yes, because they don't have the resources to, or are not allowed to maybe. That's the thing about artists, they are given so much money and resources and freedom – certain artists are – to do exactly what they want and just to do these ridiculous things that no one else would be allowed to do. That is the greatest thing about being an artist, especially with artists at a level I'm at. Let's face it, I'm at a certain point where, you know, people are begging you to do things, they don't even know what it is, but they want you to do it. That's why I think that someone like Damien Hirst is such a failure, really, because he has the world at his feet and yet he'll just do the same thing. That really is just sad. It's almost your duty to do stupid things and get away with it and do things that no one else would be allowed to do.



this page, from top:  
Sacrilege, 2012, commissioned by Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art 2012, photo: Angela Catlin, courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; *It Is What It Is*, 2009, the car in front of a mural depicting the fall of Baghdad near 29 Palms, California, photo: the artist, courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

facing page:  
Seba's short-tailed bat (*Carollia perspicillata*). Photo: Robert Pickett/Visuals Unlimited, Inc./Getty Images

That's why, again going back to *Sacrilege*, I wanted to make a work that was just absolutely out of control in terms of when people were on it. Simply the most random, out-of-control work, just chaos, effectively, as was taking a car round America [*It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* (2009), in which the artist toured a car from a bombing in Iraq through the US and held ten public conversations in which Iraqi refugees, soldiers and scholars shared their memories of the last decade in and out of Iraq]. We were out of our depths.

*Is the work about putting you out of your depth?*

JD: Yes, absolutely, that was. We really didn't know what was going to happen to us, who we were going to meet, what was going to happen from minute to minute with the weather, with people, with everything. So every day it was different and we were just making it up, basically, and it was making it up for us as well. I love that. I absolutely loved the random element of it. Of course, that still happens in galleries, where people react to things and the way they look at things, but as soon as you get out of a

gallery, that's when you can't control things. If you try to, you're insane, basically, so of course every artist is interested in what people think about the work or how they react to it, unless you're doing paintings that the second they leave will go onto someone's wall somewhere. I know artists who have that kind of career and they're successful, but they end up working in a void, and you talk to them, and you can tell they feel they're just not part of anything. They just have these sort of crises about that.

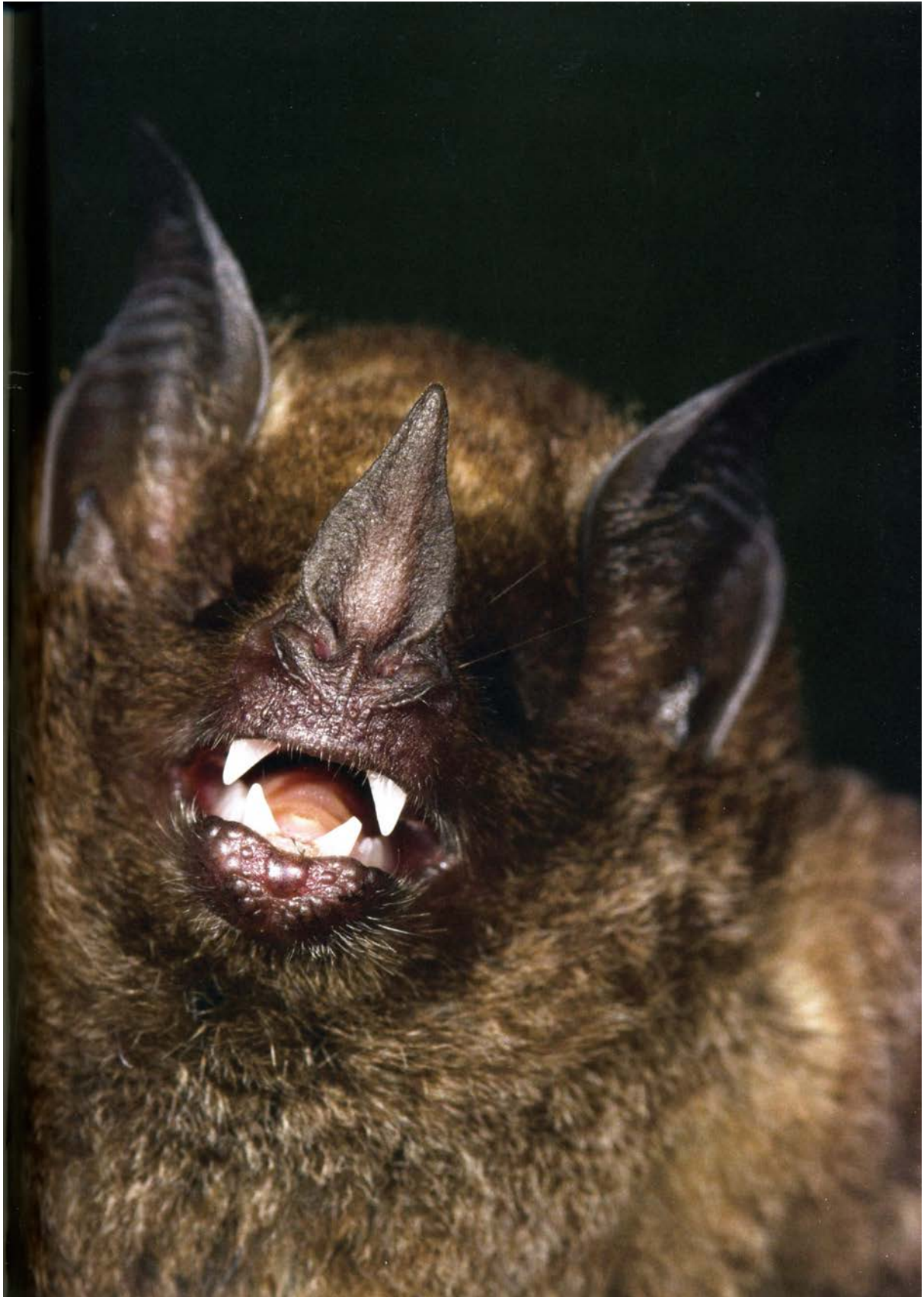
*Has that been important to you in your work, avoiding the sense of working in a void?*

JD: Life's lonely enough as it is, so it's good to have reaction. I like people. As human beings, we want company, we like company, so it's only an extension of that, and I like people looking at work and trying to work out what they think of it. Even if they say something totally different to what I thought, it's fine. Unless they think it's super-racist or something weird like that. You go to an art gallery or a museum, and the first 20 or 30 minutes you're looking at objects, and for the rest of the time you're looking at people looking at objects – well, I am – especially at the British Museum, where people from all over the world are looking at their own cultures or other people's cultures and interacting with it. I think that's such an amazing thing. I love people crowding round maybe the Rosetta Stone and taking pictures of it as if it's Jude Law. These are superstar objects. I think that's fantastic! It makes me very optimistic about the world if people are still interested in cultures and other cultures in the past, and history, and each other and so on. So if you're interested in objects that are made by people, that means you're interested in people. ♫

*Jeremy Deller's British Council commission is at the 55<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale until 24 November*







Mark Rappolt, "Jeremy Deller", in *Artreview*, été 2013, pp.80-85 + couv



# art press

SUPPLÉMENT AU N° 401 JUIN 2013 BILINGUAL ENGLISH / FRENCH

**55<sup>e</sup> BIENNALE DE VENISE**

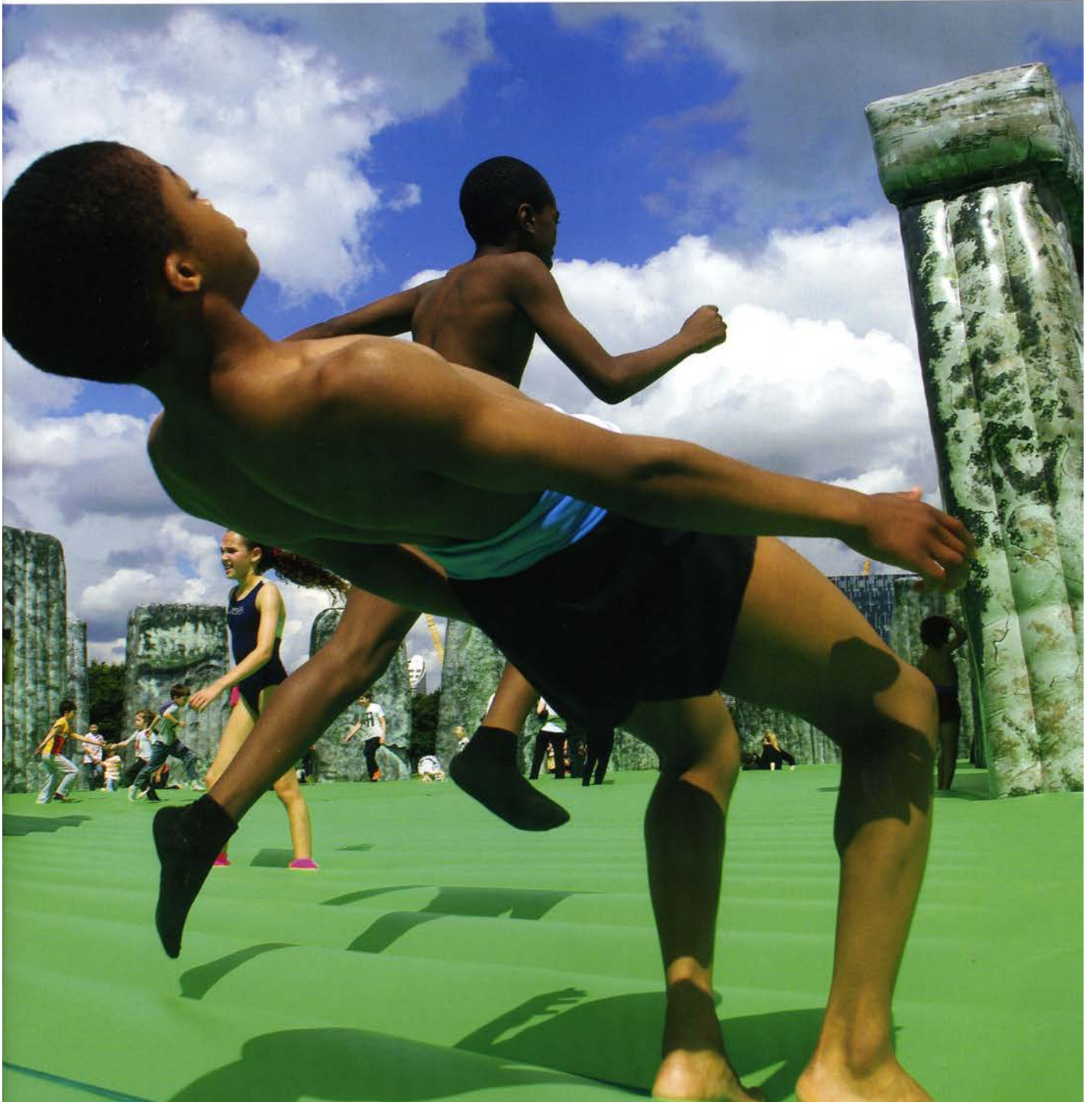
INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION

**MASSIMILIANO GIONI /**

ENTRETIEN AVEC ROBERT STORR

**NATIONAL PAVILIONS**

**GERMANO CELANT INTERVIEW**



GRANDE-BRETAGNE

# JEREMY DELLER

Commissaire Curator

Andrea Rose

■ Les réactions au décès de Margaret Thatcher auront permis à ceux qui l'avaient oublié, ou l'ignoraient encore, de comprendre combien les plaies ouvertes par la politique libérale de la Dame de fer étaient toujours béantes dans le monde ouvrier, et particulièrement chez ces mineurs du nord de l'Angleterre impliqués dans de violents conflits à l'encontre de son pouvoir au milieu des années 1980. Si les mineurs ont alors perdu une bataille politique, ce qu'ils savent depuis longtemps, ils n'ont pas depuis abandonné le terrain symbolique où se décident ses suites, ainsi que le montrait déjà le film documentaire réalisé par Mike Figgis à l'occasion du *reenactment* désormais célèbre de ce conflit orchestré par Jeremy Deller à Orgreave en 2001 (cf. *artpress* n° 311, mars 2005 [ndlr]).

*The Battle of Orgreave*, chef-d'œuvre qui ouvrirait le 21<sup>e</sup> siècle en rétablissant la vérité d'un conflit falsifiée par le pouvoir au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, affirmait aussi, pour l'art, d'autres moyens de se relier à l'histoire et au politique. Plus de dix ans plus tard, ces moyens n'ont pas encore

rencontré l'écho qu'ils promettaient dans un milieu toujours obnubilé par les « résistances » en tout genre et qui assimile la dimension politique d'un travail à la teneur thématique d'un objet, chérissant avant tout des formes d'énoncés ou d'actions au parfum vaguement révolutionnaire. Jeremy Deller est étranger à cette rhétorique de la résistance et de la subversion, son propos est détaché des positions de jugement et de savoir impliquées par cette idéologie et par cette morale. Son rapport aux objets et aux pratiques populaires est adossé à des collectes et des enquêtes, mais aussi à des jeux – de langage, de rôles, de déplacements – au sein desquels, subtilement, le pouvoir est pris en écharpe.

Dans ce lieu où coexistent des affiches à la gloire de l'*acid house* et des collections de banderoles, un Stonehenge gonflable et les archives du folklore contemporain (*Folk Archives*), des mémoriaux à la gloire d'événements minimes et tragiques ou des machines à vapeur reliées à des ordinateurs... sont localisés des cultures populaires et leurs acteurs,

des savoirs, des tactiques et des stratégies collectives... À ce titre, si l'on doit mentionner une ascendance au travail de Jeremy Deller, il faut aller la chercher du côté de Richard Hogart – dont l'artiste a d'ailleurs repris le titre de l'ouvrage majeur, *The Uses of Literacy*, pour l'une de ses propres œuvres. Mais à la différence du sociologue, la recherche engagée par Jeremy Deller ne se résout pas en étude, puisqu'elle n'a de cesse de remettre en jeu les signes et les objets de ses collectes et enquêtes, comme les collectifs qu'ils réunissent, dans une opération qui leur accorde le statut de monuments. Loin des projets qui accordent des suites littérales et scolaires à l'impulsion et au programme engagés par Michel Foucault dans son article consacré aux « Vies des hommes infâmes », ces monuments, chez Deller, trouvent des formes inattendues et inventives, travaillées par l'esprit et par la malice. ■

Christophe Kihm

Christophe Kihm enseigne à l'École d'art et de design de Genève. Vient de publier : *l'Épreuve de l'image (Bayard)*.







The reactions to the death of Margaret Thatcher will have shown those not aware of the fact that the wounds opened by the Iron Lady in the working class continue to gape, especially in the North of England, among those mining communities involved in violent clashes with power in the mid-1980s. If the miners lost a political battle, as they have long known, they did not abandon the symbolic field where subsequent events were decided. Witness the documentary made by Mike Figgis about the now famous reenactment of a major incident from the miner's strike at Orgreave, staged in 2001. (See "Jeremy Deller, *Thinking with the People*," *art press* 311, March 2005.)

*The Battle of Orgreave*, a masterpiece which opened the twenty-first century by re-establishing the truth of a conflict that was falsified by power in the twentieth century, also affirmed that art had other ways of connecting with history and politics. More than ten years later, these possibilities have still to be properly explored in a milieu that remains obsessed with "resistance" of

every variety but which equates the political dimension with thematic work on an object, putting its emphasis on statements or actions with a vaguely revolutionary drift. Jeremy Deller does not go in for this rhetoric of resistance and subversion; his work is free of the judgment and knowingness implied by this ideology and morality. His relation to popular objects and practices is articulated through collecting and investigating, but also games—language games, role plays, displacements—which subtly outflank power. In this place where posters in honor of Acid House cohabit with banners, an inflatable Stonehenge and contemporary (*Folk Archives*), memorials to the glory of minimal events and steam engines hooked up to computers, he explores popular cultures and their actors, forms of collective knowledge, tactics and strategies. In this regard, if we wanted to find forerunners of Deller's work, we would have to look to Richard Hoggart, whose major book, *The Uses of Literacy*, he quotes as the title of one of his own works. The difference being

Page de gauche/page left:

« Joy in People » Vue de l'exposition au Contemporary Museum of Art, Saint Louis. 2013. Exhibition in Saint Louis.

(Court. galerie art: concept, Paris ; Ph. Todd Owyong) Ci-dessus/above: « English Magic ». 2012. Tirage lambda contrecollé sur dibond. 40 x 50 cm (Court. galerie art: concept, Paris). Lambda print

that Deller's work does not lead to a study, like the sociologist's, because it is constantly putting into play signs, objects, collections and information, and the groups they bring together, in operations that bestow on them the status of monuments. Much unlike the projects that apply in literal and classroom fashion the implications of the ideas put forward by Michel Foucault in his article on "The Lives of Infamous Men," Deller finds unexpected and inventive forms, full of wit and mischief. ■

Translation, C. Penwarden

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## JEREMY DELLER ART: CONCEPT - PARIS



Jeremy Deller is a man of action as well as a great spokesman. Somehow the perfect picture of the contemporary artist. The interesting aspect of it is that Deller does not bother the viewer with this attitude in his work; on the contrary. If it wasn't for some of Jeremy Deller's remarkable pieces, we would forget what happened in the Battle of Orgreave in '84, or *Memory Bucket*, a documentary on customs and pattern in Texas (rewarded at the 2004 Turner Prize). He always gives a hint of ludicrous, sometimes cynical in his practice, yet he deeply researches each subject. The result is never didactic. The show at Art: Concept is an extension of the special project he conceived at the Esplanade des Invalides during FIAC, *Sacrilege*, already presented all around London in occasion of the Olympic Games. A huge inflatable Stonehenge, where kids (and obviously some young at hearts) can find their own entertainment by jumping on it, is built not far away from the Grand Palais. In the gallery, a slide show presents Deller's different outdoors projects, concocted during his ten first years of career. What strikes the visitor when experiencing the inflatable oldest monument in

Europe, is the sanctity question and prohibition to enter such respected columns and turn them into a playground. In Deller's work the question on which models to follow and which not, what rules can be broken and what need to be followed is more visible each time. "The stones themselves still stand, enduring in a society which is not," argues *Stonehenge Complete's* author, Christopher Chippindale. I believe this is also Deller's question: whether or not this society has any role models left.

*Sacrilege* was unveiled in April and spent a couple of weeks on Glasgow Green, as part of the International Festival of Visual Arts, partly funded by the Scots as a fun dig to Southern England and the Olympics.

If Jeremy Deller's first works were ironically Bertol Brechtian, now they are Spinal Tap's dream come true.

Gea Politi

JEREMY DELLER, *Sacrilege*, 2012.  
Vue de l'installation, Esplanade des Invalides, Parcours Hors les Murs, FIAC 2012, in collaboration with the British Council.  
Courtesy Art : Concept, Paris. Photo: Rebecca Fowade

## WORKING CLASS HERO

PAR JULIE PORTIER

Le Wiels, à Bruxelles, accueille la première exposition rétrospective de l'artiste britannique Jeremy Deller, sous le titre mêlé d'allégresse et de mélancolie, « Joy in People ». Le parcours revient sur les moments forts de vingt ans de carrière au cours desquels celui qui représentera son pays à la Biennale de Venise en 2013 a, plus qu'aucun artiste de sa génération, élargi encore la définition de l'art et réfléchi en acte à son rôle dans la société, parvenant à séduire le grand public autant qu'à capter l'attention du monde de l'art : un petit miracle. Deller met en abyme son goût des reconstitutions historiques en recréant *Open Bedroom*, sa première exposition organisée en 1993 dans la maison de ses parents pendant leur absence. Plus que le

décor d'une autobiographie trop intime, la chambre d'ado dans un lotissement classe moyenne désigne un territoire à investir autant qu'un bastion d'observation (par le *vasistas*). Et, en évoquant les modes de diffusion imaginés par les artistes conceptuels, revendique un positionnement dans le monde de l'art, dans ce qui a tout d'un double ironique des vastes « Ateliers ouverts » où les Young British Artists présentaient leurs productions à des collectionneurs au nez creux. Ces « *photographies, fragments de journaux, graffitis, t-shirt, de petites choses en fait qui étaient à la fois bon marché et facile à faire* », contiennent le programme artistique de Deller, collectionneur, archiviste, médiateur et entremetteur

CATALOGUE, Hayward Publishing, 40 euros.

de folklores de tous poils, des défilés patriotiques aux rassemblements gothiques, dans un esprit toujours en équilibre sur la faîtière du pavillon de banlieue, entre l'hommage et l'(auto-)dérision. S'aperçoit ici l'exploration des rhizomes qui relie à la source les sphères culturelles a priori opposées, comme la musique de fanfare et l'*acid house* dont Deller orchestre l'hybridation dans le projet *Acid Brass*. Enclin à la caricature de ses sincères rêveries de réconciliation sociale, il force aussi d'inconcevables rencontres en envoyant à des adolescentes de l'aristocratie, à la saison des débutantes, des cartes signées par des hooligans...

Dans le catalogue de l'exposition, le sociologue Stuart Hall, figure majeure des *Cultural studies*, cerne la singularité de la posture artistique de Deller qualifiée par l'expression « vernaculaire contemporain », en identifiant la valeur politique d'une démarche qui consiste à célébrer dans le champ de l'art contemporain la créativité de ceux « qui sont présentés comme n'étant pas dignes d'être écoutés ». Ajoutons que, dans l'histoire de la revalorisation de la culture



Jeremy Deller, vue de l'installation *Open Bedroom* (1993) dans l'exposition « Jeremy Deller: Joy in People » au WIELS, centre d'art contemporain, Bruxelles. Photo : Filip Vanzieleghem.

populaire comme une source légitime de l'art, Deller va jusqu'à en importer les Cultes – qu'il pratique sincèrement –, dans une forme certes teintée (au fluo) d'ironie, avec ses posters imaginés au croisement d'une église évangéliste et d'une boîte de nuit mettant en exergue des méditations tirées de chansons pop (*Quotations*, 1995). Mais il s'agit bien de prendre au sérieux le rôle de la culture pop dans les constructions identitaires au même titre que d'autres religions. À ce titre, le film *Our Hobby is Depeche Mode* (2006) est probant, tant il dépasse la question du nivellement culturel ou celle de la passion grégaire mondialisée, pour discerner les mécanismes d'appropriation singuliers d'un mythe musical comme emblème d'une revendication politique, sociale, ou générationnelle émancipatrice. Même si Deller ne cesse de mettre en doute l'efficacité de l'art comme moyen d'un réveil démocratique, à en juger par l'ambiance morose qui baigne volontairement cette exposition – qui s'achève sur un recensement des « échecs » des projets pour l'espace public –, c'est bien ce potentiel qui bouillonne ici, cette énergie canalisée, détournée par le spectacle et la consommation, qui trouve à s'exprimer violemment dans la reconstitution de la bataille d'Orgreave (2001) ! En surprenant naturaliste, Deller signe là un dernier film en guise de conclusion allégorique : *Exodus* est le spectacle en 3D (l'accomplissement technologique de l'apathie du regardeur) d'une envolée majestueuse et bien pilotée de chauves-souris hors de leurs cavernes. ■

JEREMY DELLER, *JOY IN PEOPLE*, jusqu'au 19 août, Wiels, 354 avenue Van Volxmen, Bruxelles, Belgique, tél. +32 2 340 00 50, [www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)





**MATTHEW COLLINGS** // DIARY

## Good Miners, Bad Miners

On the difficulty of constructing mental frameworks for appreciating current art

### DELLER: TWIT OR GOOD?

In a long film created by the BBC to celebrate his retrospective at the Hayward Gallery, in London, Jeremy Deller explained a work he'd made about a battle between police and coal miners that took place in the north of England in 1984. He said at the time he made it, in 2001, he was angry about the persecution of the miners by Margaret Thatcher's government and what it meant for society, and he was still angry now. In the same program, he talked about another, more recent, work about a coal miner's son who was teased for being different when he worked in the pits

in the 1950s, but then went on to forge a successful career as a cross-dressing wrestler. This time, Deller expressed contempt for the lack of imagination the coal miners displayed in their attitude.

Good miners, bad miners? No one involved in the making of the film, including the artist, had anything to say about the contradiction, or appeared to notice it. At yet another point in this slickly executed but unctuous film, which nevertheless conveys a sense of Deller's genuine achievement, there is a deliberate but ineffectual staging of a contradiction of another kind. Deller tells the camera he is unlike other famous

Brit artists of the 1990s because he has never sought attention—"even though here I am on camera saying this." Was I supposed to think this was brilliant and honest? It seemed inane and foolish, especially when he could only conclude lamely that the notorious Brit artists he wants to define himself against never realize how "annoying" they are.

One point where the film took off positively for me was a sequence about people in various parts of the world, including Mexico, Brazil, and Eastern Europe, obsessively worshipping Depeche Mode. We learned that in 2006, while working on a film celebrating







this phenomenon, Deller was met at airports by fans holding up banners announcing their adoration for the band, but gradually as filming went on, the banners said it was Deller himself the fans adored—he was revered by virtue of his interest in their love objects. Somehow his narcissism wasn't the main thing here, and I found myself laughing with him instead of icily withdrawing my approval. A genuine community looking for something—anything would do—to express a genuine community experience, had been captured by art. I certainly enjoyed the fleeting impressions of *Our Hobby is Depeche Mode* conveyed by clips of it in the BBC film. I saw fans, haircuts, posters, and an amusing overflow of love and enthusiasm.

I've never seen Deller's miners' strike video, *The Battle of Orgreave* (directed by Mike Figgis), and I expect this is true for the majority of art people who praise it. Again, clips were included in the BBC documentary. A bloke in ordinary clothes shouts: "Arrgh, gerrof me, yer feckin' bastards," as four other blokes dressed up as police pretend to act rough with him. The scene failed to make my hair stand on end, despite the knowledge that some of the men were miners who'd been in the actual battle. The lack of affect was emphasized all the more by the BBC director's choice to juxtapose newsreel footage of the real event—mounted police, people getting beaten—that immediately struck an emotional chord. Reflecting on the difference between the two representations, one powerful, one feeble, though possessing a genuinely distinctive power, I thought about how hard it is to construct mental frameworks for

appreciating current art. Plus, how much effort typical TV (in its refusal to deliver anything but missionary-like enthusiasm) puts into its coverage of such art, while ignoring the problem, as if it demands belief in a seamless continuity between Rembrandt and us.

In the course of watching an interview with one of the miners who'd taken part in the original battle and Deller's recreation, I felt uncomfortable with the apparent vaingloriousness of one of Deller's questions: "What did you think of an artist doing this?" I was so tense from recoiling at the documentary's relentlessly mindless promotion of Deller—lacking the slightest trace of counterargument—that I assumed Deller was fishing for praise. But in reality he got the answer he was after, which was that previously the miner had assumed an artist was someone who had a little beard and painted pictures, whereas now he had a notion of art's capacity to raise consciousness about political meaning. The miner brilliantly summed up the implication of Deller's film for an audience today. A political move made 30 years ago to destroy any kind of communitarianism set up instead a social system based entirely on individualistic wealth-creation. Now that the resulting worldwide system is in the process of exploding, we all suffer the consequences and see clearly what the score is. I found this impressive, because Deller seemed to be getting over for the TV audience, via someone else's reflections, a meaning that *The Battle of Orgreave* really does have, in fact the essential reason for its success, even if—judging from the clips I'd just been treated to—watching the actual film might be a tedious experience.

Although he didn't put it like this, it emerged from the BBC documentary that what made Deller deserve his reputation was a combination of heart in the right place (a feeling for community) and an intelligent eye for content. I had to struggle, though. Whenever he spoke he made it clear that he was convinced he was at the epicenter of every kind of rightness—social, cultural, moral, and ethical—which was unpleasant because he rarely said anything that bore thinking about. And everyone else who appeared, including Hayward director Ralph Rugoff, seemed to have been instructed never to say anything he didn't personally find hilarious, resulting in the alienating effect of constant objectless chortles. There were a lot of mentions by Deller of Andy Warhol. One of the purposes was to make clear to ordinary people that Deller is within the orbit of the great. Another had to do with a more specific claim, that only a certain kind of art matters now, and it must be without barriers or rules, and, as Deller said, about creating "your own world."

#### LAUGHABLE SHOW AT WHITE CUBE

The new White Cube space in Bermondsey Street, South London, is staggeringly beautiful, as if a pharaoh were born in our own age, spent the whole of his life planning his memorial with the aid of the greatest artists of all time, and then Horus the Sun God came down with the cash for it to be built. The space is vast, the walls high, doorways just as high, white light streams everywhere, and wherever you look, you see vistas onto yet more equally impressive spaces. It's a shame

ABOVE, FROM LEFT  
**Jeremy Deller**  
*I ♥ Melancholy*,  
1995. Gloss-black  
paint on matt  
black painted  
with particip  
Dimensions v

*Valerie's Snack  
Bar*, 2009.  
Mixed media

OPPOSITE:  
Still from  
*The Battle Of  
Orgreave*, 20  
Digital video,  
63 min.





From left: Jeremy Deller, *Open Bedroom*, 1993, mixed media. Installation view, 2012. Photo: Linda Nylind. Jeremy Deller, *Valerie's Snack Bar*, 2009, mixed media. Installation view, 2012. Photo: Linda Nylind. Jeremy Deller, *Beyond the White Walls* (detail), 2012, slide presentation.



## Jeremy Deller

HAYWARD GALLERY, LONDON

T. J. Demos

**THIS RETROSPECTIVE** presented a formidable challenge: How to organize a show of an artist who has defined his practice precisely by working outside the white cube? The problem of institutionalization is hardly uncommon, of course—artists who work site-specifically confront similar challenges—but Jeremy Deller's profound social engagement raises the stakes. With its conventional approach, however, the Hayward Gallery exhibition skates over the contradictions: It focuses on Deller's commemoration of folkish creativity (the show is titled "Joy in People") but invites aesthetic appreciation from an urban cosmopolitan audience; it celebrates the lowbrow, but with its ten-pound admission fee, the gallery depends on viewers with disposable income and leisure time; it features collaborative projects but assembles their documentation in a monographic survey, reifying a singular artistic identity.

Viewers first enter *Open Bedroom*, 1993, a re-creation of an exhibition Deller set up in his childhood home (where he lived at the time) while his parents were away. Printed T-shirts, rock posters, and photographs of friends line a low-ceilinged and carpeted room, while a TV near a bed in a corner plays a low-tech video documenting the dangerous pleasures of joyriding. If the piece prefigures Deller's later investigations of the pop- and subcultural, it is provocative mostly in that it recalls the audacity of the original show; indeed, the reconstruction presents Deller

as an installation artist without the ability of a Mike Nelson or a Ryan Gander—or indeed, of Deller himself—to produce mysteriously compelling spaces.

After a few more early works—including *The Uses of Literacy*, 1997, a collaborative project with fans of the Welsh rock band Manic Street Preachers, and *Jerusalem*, 1993, a short film about popular pageantry and protests in London—the show leaps forward to *Beyond the White Walls*, 2012, a slide show of documentary images of past projects with witty voice-over descriptions of their real-life context and motivations, which directly address the conflict at the heart of the show: Deller's narrations bring out aspects of the work that the exhibition simply can't access or reproduce otherwise. For instance, the original iteration of *Valerie's Snack Bar*, 2009, was an impressive reconstruction of a local café from the Bury Market in Manchester, UK, which Deller presented on a float for the city's International Festival parade. At the Hayward, the small structure is surrounded by handmade banners (crafted by Ed Hall), the increasingly uncommon kind carried by union members in British demonstrations, and one could squeeze into a small plastic chair and enjoy a cup of free tea served by volunteers. While it was clear that the original presentation unleashed surprise and celebrated the singularity of its local context and clientele, the reinstallation loses its charge and appears as reductive participatory art.

*The Battle of Orgreave* (*An Injury to One Is an Injury to All*), 2001, comprising an archive and a documentary, occupies the two subsequent galleries. The piece represents Deller's best-known project: a thousand-person reenactment of the infamous 1984 British miners' strike, that emblem of the early Thatcher years, when the Tories set out to break the unions and privatize industry. A time line of events interspersed with printed and audio materials and ephemera from the brutal operation offers a historical account of the confrontation. The film, made by Mike Figgis, carefully contextualizes and documents Deller's mass staging, in which some of the original strikers and police intriguingly switched sides for the reenactment. Interviews show this history as an

open wound, with Deller's event providing address the trauma and take the first steps to existing community ruptures. Going beyond complexity drawing on participatory agency, historical consciousness, and psychological depth. The work's best examples of socially engaged art of the past and here the documentary successfully situate

For *It Is What It Is*, 2009, Deller toured States in an RV towing the remains of a car destroyed by a bomb in a Baghdad marketplace, 5, 2007—what the artist calls "a conversation hell." The mangled hunk of metal appears near the show, next to a few chairs and a coffee table with videos of the often fascinating conversations

**Going beyond social work, Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* instilled an aesthetic complexity drawing on participatory agency, historical consciousness, and psychological depth.**

artist—along with an Iraqi citizen and a veteran who accompanied him on the road trip—held up people on the streets of places such as Houston, Texas. The design for another work featuring an explosion from Iraq, a project for the Fourth Plinth in London Square, appears in a final section of the show "Failures," presenting unrealized proposals that have challenged the politics of public space. The white walls and enclosed space of the Hayward Gallery Deller's collaborative and site-specific principle under the burden of their context. □

*Travels to Wiels Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels, Jun. 19; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Sept. 19; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Feb.–Apr. 2013.*

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Jeremy Deller et deux "vitrines cercueils" regroupant des pièces de son "geste d'amour et projet anthropologique" Folk Archive (The Joke Shop, Blackpool, Lancashire, 2005)



# Jeremy Deller

## penser avec le populaire

CHRISTOPHE KIHM

*Jeremy Deller est jeune, il est anglais, il est artiste et ne fait absolument pas partie des Young British Artists. Son travail, depuis plus de dix ans, maintenant, s'intéresse aux formes populaires de la culture, à l'histoire d'individus, de groupes sociaux, à l'examen de situations politiques, à travers l'étude et la documentation de modes de représentations. Une reconnaissance très officielle vient de lui être accordée, puisqu'il fut récompensé par le Turner Prize 2004 pour son installation Memory Bucket.*

■ Dans le travail de Jeremy Deller, certaines constantes s'affirment, relatives aux protocoles engagés par l'artiste dans la réalisation de ses œuvres. La pièce primée à Londres, *Memory Bucket*, en regroupe les principaux arguments. Bénéficiant d'une résidence de deux mois à San Antonio, Jeremy Deller a réalisé un film de type documentaire, *Memory Bucket*, qui s'articule autour de deux lieux, théâtres d'événements marquants dans l'histoire récente du Texas : Waco, tristement célèbre pour le siège de la communauté des Davidiens par l'armée américaine en 1993

(avec son issue tragique, près de 80 morts) ; la petite ville de Crawford, où se trouve la maison de l'actuel président des États-Unis George Bush. Pour réaliser ce film, Jeremy Deller a eu recours à différents types de matériaux : majoritairement des interviews (un survivant du siège de Waco, un homme chez qui George Bush vient acheter ses hamburgers à Crawford, une femme Quaker qui donne son point de vue sur la guerre en Irak), puis des images d'archives, reprises dans les médias, proposant une autre image du peuple. Ce film, qui a fait l'objet d'une présentation à

ArtPace, à San Antonio, comptait parmi les éléments d'une installation, composée également de tirages photographiques, de T-shirts, de stickers et de différents documents en relation avec le parcours géographique engagé par le film, les rencontres humaines qu'il avait favorisées, les situations sociales et politiques qu'il avait révélées.

Le voyage, la résidence et la collaboration avec les « autochtones » sont trois modalités protocolaires que l'on retrouve au cœur de cet autre travail de Jeremy Deller, *After The Goldrush* (2002). En résidence pendant un an



«Untitled, from Veteran's Day Parade». 2002.

Photographie couleur. 10,5 x 15,5 cm. Color photo





«Memory Bucket» (Série de 22 photographies). 2003.  
Lambda print. 34,5 x 26,7 cm. From a series of 27 photos

à San Francisco (au CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts), Jeremy Deller a collecté documents, photos et témoignages, afin de réaliser cette fois-ci une sorte de guide de la Californie du Nord, sur le modèle d'un guide touristique. Enrichi par des rencontres, depuis Dixie Evans, directeur d'un Musée du burlesque, jusqu'à Alan Laird, ex-Black Panther aujourd'hui directeur d'une galerie d'art, ce guide combine les témoignages oraux et les documents visuels glanés par Jeremy Deller au fil de ses pérégrinations. Aux confins de l'anecdote personnelle et de l'Histoire collective, se dessine un «itinéraire bis», dans les marges de l'Ouest américain, qui dispose même de sa bande-son. Le guide est en effet accompagné d'un CD (*Live at Melancholy Ranch*) enregistré avec William Elliott Whitmore (joueur de banjo), dans une parcelle de désert dans la région de Trona, dont Jeremy Deller a fait l'acquisition avant le terme de sa résidence. Fin de l'aventure...

### L'aventure, aux marges

La pratique artistique de Jeremy Deller ne se restreint cependant pas à l'application de protocoles identiques, puisque chacun de ses voyages, chacune de ses résidences et collaborations, rejouent les termes de la production artistique en ceux d'une aventure. Ainsi, le déplacement, comme point de départ de différents projets, vaut-il avant tout comme générateur de rencontres et de situations nouvelles, accordant une réelle efficacité à l'imprévu et au hasard. Un déplacement qui, par ailleurs, n'engage pas obligatoirement de

grandes distances géographiques. La majorité des travaux de Jeremy Deller, à ce jour, situe au contraire le terrain de l'aventure dans des lieux que l'artiste connaît particulièrement bien : l'Angleterre, le Pays de Galles, etc.

À l'exotisme, que soutient légitimement tout désir touristique de voyage, Jeremy Deller préfère donc la recherche, qui, partout où se développe son travail, engage deux opérations : la collecte (de témoignages, de documents), l'assemblage (soit la présentation de ces mêmes éléments et donc la forme de visibilité qui leur est accordée dans les productions artistiques). En glaneur, qui collecte, réunit et rend visible, Jeremy Deller n'est pas un scientifique, pas même un ethnologue, car aucune hypothèse préalable ne détermine la nature des données utiles à sa recherche. Déterminée par un intérêt envers tout ce qui s'inscrit aux marges de l'Histoire, son activité est celle d'un médium : porté par une dynamique de la rencontre, l'artiste adopte une démarche qui instruit des liaisons entre les êtres et les choses (le médium, en ce sens, est dialogique), puis entre les espaces et les temps (soit entre le passé et le présent, l'individuel et le collectif, l'expérience et l'Histoire – le médium étant, en ce sens, dialectique). Cette position de l'artiste en médium s'explique également au regard de la nature des objets pris en considération par sa recherche : à savoir la culture populaire, le folklore, les combats sociaux et les histoires des peuples eux-mêmes. Car il n'est d'autre fonction possible que celle de médiation à l'artiste qui veut entendre, comprendre, documenter ou traduire les mots, les comportements et les

modes de représentations culturels du peuple (sur des plans à la fois formels et symboliques) : toute forme de surplomb ou de jeu savant en modifierait le régime d'énonciation comme elle en déplacerait le sens.

Il serait sans doute pertinent, en cela, de spécifier la position artistique de Jeremy Deller au regard de celles, majoritaires, qui s'attachent aux formes ou aux régimes de production de la culture populaire. Deller n'est pas un pop artiste, s'intéressant aux icônes ou aux emblèmes de la société de consommation en tant qu'ils désignent une sphère visuelle dominante et concurrentielle des signes de l'art. Il n'est pas, non plus, un artiste post-moderne, asseyant une partition de signes de la culture pour mieux pouvoir en manipuler et en combiner les registres. Pour Jeremy Deller, l'important semble lié à la médiation des acteurs de la culture populaire – qu'ils soient humains ou non humains –, plus qu'à la manipulation ou à la métamorphose des signes de la culture. Sa démarche, contrairement aux deux autres ici brièvement évoquées, n'a pas pour effet de poser l'artiste au centre du monde des signes : au contraire, en tant que médium, elle le situe exactement au milieu, à ce point de connexion entre des réalités, des espaces et des temps disjoints ; en passeur... de passage, pourrait-on même ajouter, puisque ce milieu se déplace et se redétermine sans cesse.

### Passages et médiations

L'artiste, en médium, conçoit donc des protocoles d'expériences et de passages qui lui permettent, dans un premier temps, de provoquer des rencontres avec et entre différents acteurs qui déterminent la construction de phénomènes ou d'objets communs (1).

À ce schéma de relation s'appliquent trois projets différents tels qu'*Acid Brass*, *Steam Powered Internet Computer* (réalisé en collaboration avec Alan Kane [2]) et *The Battle of Orgreave*.

Dans *Acid Brass* (1997), deux histoires parallèles, culturelles et sociales, sont réunies, qui réfèrent au démantèlement du monde ouvrier sous le régime libéral de Margaret Thatcher. Traditionnellement, les ouvriers travaillant dans les grands conglomerats industriels situés au Nord de l'Angleterre se retrouvaient dans des fanfares ou Brass Bands. Un effet direct de ce démantèlement fut la disparition de ces orchestres et de leur répertoire. Dans le même temps, dans ces mêmes villes du Nord, une nouvelle musique émergeait : l'Acid House. Dans les clubs, une génération de teenagers s'inventait une vie clandestine rythmée par les fêtes, la musique et la drogue. Avec *Acid Brass*, Jeremy Deller organise un dialogue entre ces formes musicales qui rapprochent leurs revendications minoritaires : la dernière fanfare ouvrière en activité interprète les «tubes» de l'Acid House (3). Cette rencontre musicale, opérée par le biais



d'une transposition, associe un monde qui disparaît (celui des confréries ouvrières) à un monde qui émerge (celui des technologies numériques et de la révolte adolescente), et favorise l'émergence d'une profonde mélancolie.

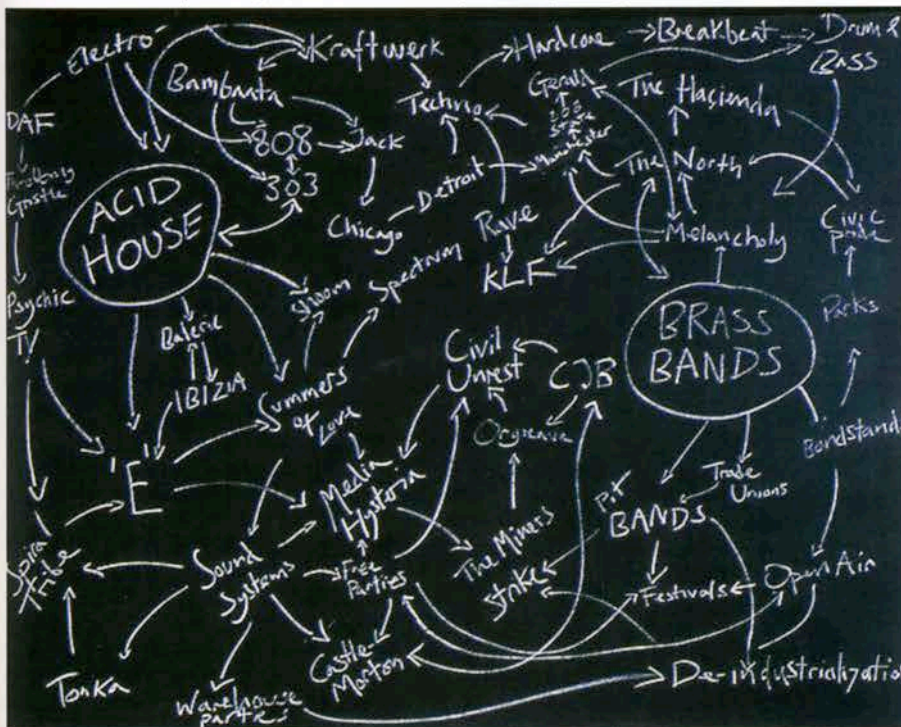
Ce passage d'un monde à travers un autre – coexistence de l'un dans l'autre et co-extension de l'un vers l'autre –, Jeremy Deller le

## Jeremy Deller: Thinking with the People



«The Battle of Orgreave». 2001. Photographie

Œuvre commandée et produite par / commissioned and produced by Artangel



«History of the World». 1996. Craie sur bois. 122 x 152,5 cm.

(Coll. Frac Nord-Pas-de-Calais). Chalk on wood

Jeremy Deller is young, he's British and he's an artist, so what is he? Not a Young British Artist, for a start. The work he has been doing these last ten years or more probes modes of representation so as to gain a better understanding of forms of popular culture, the history of individuals and social groups, and the reality of political situations. On December 6 last year Deller was awarded the very official, very high-profile Turner Prize for his installation *Memory Bucket*.

■ The constants found in Jeremy Deller's work arise from the protocols brought into play in making it. *Memory Bucket*, which won him the Turner, has most of the main characteristics. The installation centers on the documentary of the same name made during the artist's two-month residency at San Antonio, Texas, and articulated around two emblematic towns: Waco, notorious for the siege of the Davidian community by the American army in 1993, and for the four score deaths that resulted; and Crawford, the small town where George W. Bush has his ranch. Deller's film comprises mainly interviews (a survivor from the siege at Waco, the man whose shop in Crawford sells Dubya his hamburgers, and a Quaker woman who gives her views on the war in Iraq), along with archive images from the media offering a different view of the people. *Memory Bucket* was originally shown at ArtPace, San Antonio. In the Tate Britain installation, it was surrounded by photos, T-shirts, stickers and various other documents reflecting the geographical itinerary taken to make the film, the people Deller met on his travels and the social and political situations that it brought to light.

### Adventures on the Edge

The same defining protocols of travel, residency and collaboration with the "natives" are central to Deller's *After the Goldrush* (2002), as well. Here, the residency was in San Francisco (at CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts) and lasted a year. The documents, photos and testimony collected were to go into a kind of guide to North California, based on the tourist guide model. Enriched by the artist's encounters, ranging from Dixie Evans, director of a museum of burlesque, to an ex-Black Panther, Alan Laird, who now runs an art gallery, the guide combines oral statements with visual material gathered by Deller on his various journeys. At the edges of both personal anecdote and collective history, what is adumbrated here is an "alternative itinerary" through the margins of the American West. It even has its own sound track:



reproduit dans *Steam Powered Internet Computer* (2003). Mais, ici, c'est une construction mécanique qui en est l'objet. Elle met à nouveau en dialogue deux époques ; le 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'un côté, avec une machine à vapeur, et les 20<sup>e</sup> et 21<sup>e</sup> siècles, de l'autre, avec un ordinateur relié au réseau Internet. Deux machines que Jeremy Deller et Alan Kane connectent, de sorte que la production d'énergie de l'une puisse devenir la source d'alimentation de l'autre. Entre les deux éléments en présence, un hiatus, car l'imposante machine ne peut fournir que de petites quantités d'énergie à l'ordinateur. Une fois l'intensité nécessaire produite, cependant, ce dernier envoie un mail qui témoigne de son bon fonctionnement à d'autres utilisateurs. Pour *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), Jeremy Deller a fait appel aux vétérans d'un conflit ayant opposé les mineurs et les forces de police au cours des années 1984-85, en Angleterre. L'objectif était de rejouer ce combat, qui fut l'un des plus violents de l'histoire de la contestation ouvrière en Angleterre. Cette reprise de l'événement, quelques années plus tard, fit l'objet d'un tournage documentaire dont la réalisation fut confiée à Mike Figgis. On retrouve, dans cette dernière œuvre, sur un registre social, cette même traversée d'un monde par un autre (même si l'on doit considérer que ces deux mondes ne diffèrent ici que par leurs temps). Et l'on comprend, peut-être plus explicitement encore, comment chaque passage, qu'il introduise le spectre du passé dans le présent, qu'il exhume un corps, engage le travail de la mémoire.

## Le langage des franges

Il est un dernier point commun aux différents travaux de Jeremy Deller, qui concerne la collecte de signes culturels : slogans, formules sur des patches, stickers, pochettes de disques, des posters, des T-shirts... soit toute une production de langage sur différents supports qui conditionnent leurs messages et leurs modes d'expressions. Parmi ces productions de langage, celles qui retiennent l'attention de Jeremy Deller participent explicitement à la construction d'identités individuelles et collectives. Ce sont des inscriptions qui s'affichent dans la rue, sur des pancartes, sur des voitures, dans les toilettes publiques ou sur des corps, à travers lesquelles s'exprime une appartenance à un clan ou à une communauté (depuis le soutien accordé à un candidat pour des élections, jusqu'à l'identification de fans aux apparences physiques, aux discours et aux musiques de groupes de rock).

L'artiste a réalisé à ce propos un travail, *The Uses of Literacy*, qui réunit une collection de références artistiques, de poésies et d'écrits retrouvés chez des fans du groupe gallois Manic Street Preachers. L'une des contributions à cet ensemble – la collection des livres

auxquels se réfère le groupe dans les textes de ses différentes chansons –, a fourni le modèle d'une exposition à Jeremy Deller, *Unconvention*, au Cardiff's Center of Visual Arts. Celle-ci rassemblait toutes les œuvres qui avaient inspiré le groupe, depuis Francis Bacon jusqu'à Martin Kippenberger. Quelques structures associatives, dont les activités entretenaient une relation avec le groupe, avaient été invitées par Jeremy Deller à dresser des stands dans le centre d'art, aux côtés d'autres stands, tenus par les membres de la communauté locale.

Ici, encore, Jeremy Deller fait une proposition à échelle humaine, qui remet en jeu les termes d'une construction identitaire dans une production de masse, qui s'attache au destin d'objets communs dans un usage singulier. Car ce qui sépare, selon la logique appliquée par l'artiste à ses différentes productions, doit devenir l'objet d'une réunion : c'est à partir de ce principe que se développe, chez lui, la dynamique nécessaire à la réalisation d'expériences artistiques. Il ne s'agit donc pas, simplement, de rapprocher des réalités disjointes, mais de faire d'un vecteur de séparation entre les



«Memory Bucket» (Série de 22 photographies). 2003. Lambda print. 34,5 x 26,7 cm

êtres et les choses, l'opérateur d'une réunion. Ici, se situe, précisément, la dimension politique de ce travail. ■

(1) Sont acteurs ceux qui prennent une part déterminante à l'action, c'est-à-dire des personnes, des machines, des objets, etc.

(2) Voir également avec Alan Kane le travail engagé sur les archives du folklore en Grande-Bretagne, consultable sur le site [www.folkarchive.co.uk](http://www.folkarchive.co.uk)

(3) Le résultat fut à la fois un enregistrement en studio édité sur CD et une série de concerts du Brass Band jouant ce nouveau répertoire.

## JEREMY DELLER

Né en/born 1966

Vit et travaille à/lives in Londres

Expositions récentes / Recent shows:

2004 Turner Prize 2004, Tate Britain, Londres ; *Situations construites, 10 ans d'attitude*, Galerie Attitudes, Genève ; Biennale des Arts Visuels, Pancevo, Serbie-Monténégro 2005 Biennale de Moscou ; Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (jusqu'au 20 mars) ; *Faces in the Crowd*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (28 mars au 3 juillet) ; *No Manifesto, Gamec*, Bergamo

the guide comes with a recording (*Live at Melancholy Ranch*) with William Elliott Whitmore (a banjo player) made on a plot of desert land in Trona that the artist purchased before the end of his residency. End of adventure.

But Deller's practice is not limited to the simple application of unchanging protocols; each journey, each residency and collaboration replays the terms of artistic production as an adventure. Thus the movement that is the starting point for the projects is important above all as a generator of new encounters and situations. Unpredictability and chance events play a significant role here. Nor does movement necessarily require great distances: on the contrary, most of Deller's works so far find the material for their adventures in England, say, or Wales—places the artist knows especially well.

## The Artist as Medium

Rather than exoticism, legitimately supported by the tourist's desire to travel, Deller's real interest is research, which translates into the twin operations of collecting (testimony, documents) and assembling (presenting the resulting elements, choosing their visibility within the artistic production). A gleaner who collects, centralizes and makes visible, Deller does not proceed as a scientist or even an ethnologist, for there is no preliminary hypothesis defining the data that will be useful in his research.

Determined as it by an interest in all things on the margins of History, Deller's activity is that of a medium. Impelled by a dynamics of encounter, the artist takes an approach that discovers links between beings and things (the medium is, in this sense, dialogic), and then between spaces and times (that is to say, between past and present, individual and collective, experience and history: here, the medium is dialectical).

The artist's position as medium can also be understood in the light of the kind of objects that interest him, in other words, popular culture, folklore, social struggle and the history of peoples. For mediation is the only viable position for an artist seeking to hear, understand, document or translate popular speech, behaviors and cultural forms of representation. Any kind of overview or intellectual patterning would change their mode of manifestation and displace their meaning.

Here, no doubt, it would be worth trying to specify Deller's artistic position in relation to the majority of artists concerned with the forms and systems of production of popular culture. He is not a Pop Artist, interested in the icons or emblems of consumer society insofar as they stand for a dominant visual sphere that rivals the signs of art. Nor is he a postmodern artist, laying down a score of cultural signs the better to manipulate and combine their registers. For Deller, it seems, the important thing is more to mediate the agents of popular culture, whether human or non-human, than to manipulate or





«The Uses of Literacy». 1997. Technique mixte  
 (Vue de l'exposition à Cabinet, Londres). Mixed media

metamorphose the signs of culture. Unlike the two others just mentioned, his approach does not have the effect of placing the artist at the center of the world of signs. On the contrary, as a medium, it locates him at the interface, at the point of connection between otherwise separate realities, spaces and times. He passes things on—and is, we might even add, just passing, since as a medium he is constantly shifting and being redetermined.

### Passing and Mediation

The artist as medium thus conceives of protocols for experiences and interchanges that, to begin with, enable him to bring about encounters with and between different actors.<sup>(1)</sup> These in turn determine the construction of shared phenomena or objects.

This relational principle applies, notably, to the projects *Acid Brass*, *Steam Powered Internet Computer* (in collaboration with Alan Kane <sup>(2)</sup>) and *The Battle of Orgreave*.

In *Acid Brass* (1997) Deller brings together two parallel cultural and social phenomena, both related to the dismantling of working class traditions under the government of Margaret Thatcher. On the one hand, we have a brass band, representing a working-class phenomenon whose existence and repertoire is associated with the traditions of heavy industry (and especially mining), mainly in northern England: such bands began to decline with the industrial heartland that spawned them. On the other, there is the new music that began to appear in

those same towns, Acid House, with which a new generation of teenagers invented a secret lifestyle based around parties, music and drugs. In *Acid Brass*, Deller organizes a dialogue between these two musical forms emblematic of minorities by getting one of the last surviving brass bands to play Acid House hits.<sup>(3)</sup> This musical encounter, effected via a transposition, brings together a disappearing world (that of working men's groups) and an emerging one (digital technologies and adolescent revolt). The effect is profoundly melancholic.

Deller produces this same movement from one world through and into another—one world coexisting in the other, coextended with the other—in his *Steam Powered Internet Computer* (2003). Here, though, the relation is between two machines: a nineteenth-century steam engine on one side, and a twentieth or twenty-first century computer hooked up to the Internet on the other. Deller and Alan Kane connected the two so that the steam engine could power the computer, but the imposing industrial machine could produce only tiny quantities of energy; there is a real disparity. Still, once sufficient impetus was generated, the computer did manage to send off an e-mail to other users showing that it was working properly.

For *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), Deller brought in veterans of the running battle between miners and police during the strike of 1984-85. This was one of the most violent clashes between workers and the authorities in English history. Now, over fifteen years later, the conflict was played out again, and Deller got Mike Figgis to film the

results as a documentary. Once again, but this time in a social register, this work brings together two different worlds (even if, on this occasion, the only real difference between the two is temporal). Once again, and perhaps even more explicitly, we can see that each of Deller's transpositions—whether bringing the ghost of the past into the present, or disinterring a corpse—sets in train the work of memory.

### Fringe Language

Another common feature of Deller's works has to do with collecting cultural signs—slogans, words on patches and stickers, record covers, posters, T-shirts: a whole world of linguistic output whose nature is conditioned by its support. The varieties that are of interest to Deller are those that play an explicit role in constructing individual and collective identities. These are inscriptions that are brandished in the street, on picket signs, on cars, in public rest rooms or on bodies. They express an identification with a clan or a community (this may range from support for a candidate in an election to fans' identification with the looks, statements and music of rock groups).

The work that came out of this interest, *The Uses of Literacy*, features a collection of references to poetry and other writings kept by fans of the Welsh group The Manic Street Preachers. One of the contributions to this ensemble—the collection of books to which the group refers in its songs—provided Deller with the model for an exhibition, *Unconvention*, at the Cardiff Centre for Visual Art. This featured all the artworks that had inspired the Manics, from Francis Bacon to Martin Kippenberger. Deller also invited a number of associations whose activities were linked to the group to set up stands in the art center, alongside others run by members of the local community. Once again, Deller's proposition was on a human scale, and deployed the elements of identity construction in a mass-cultural production, examining the singular use of common objects. According to the logic of Deller's productions, that which separates must also become the object of a conjoining. It is by means of this principle that the artist develops the dynamic needed for his artistic experiments. Thus it is not just a matter of bringing together separate realities, but of turning the vector of separation between beings and things into the agent of a joining. And it is here that we can begin to appreciate the political dimension of Deller's work. ■

Translation, C. Penwarden

(1) An actor is any person, machine or object that plays a decisive role in the action.

(2) See also Deller's work on an archive of British folklore, with Alan Kane, accessible on the site [www.folkarchive.co.uk](http://www.folkarchive.co.uk)

(3) This bore fruit in a studio recording (CD) and a series of concerts at which the brass band played this new repertoire.



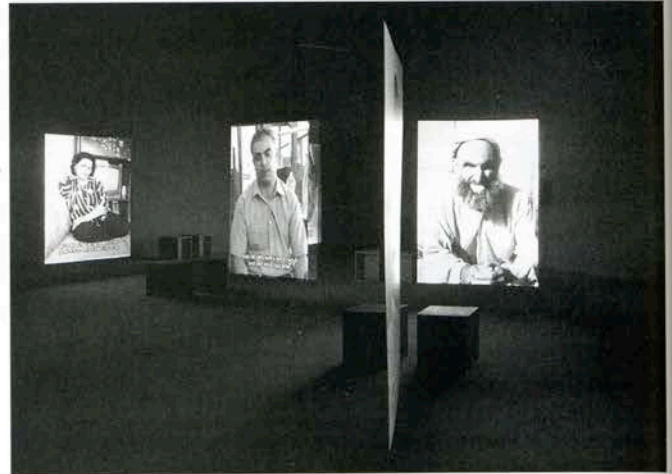
lasser, continue ses réflexions post-coloniales sur les notions d'hybridité et d'authenticité. Et ce, toujours par le biais du seul et même motif, les «Dutch wax fabrics» – tissus imprimés portés par les Africains et fabriqués à Manchester jusque très récemment –, motif décliné depuis 1995 dans tous les médiums possibles (peinture, sculpture, installation et film). Pour le Turner Prize, il exposait notamment sa célèbre installation *The Swing (After Fragonard)* [2001] et son nouveau film *Un Ballo in Maschera (A Masked Ball)* [2004] qui réinterprète l'assassinat du roi Gustav III de Suède en 1792. Dans un théâtre rococo, une horde de jeunes gens affublés des fameux textiles africains imitant les vêtements de l'époque se livrent à une danse minutieusement chorégraphiée. Celle-ci trouve sa cadence dans les mimiques exagérées des acteurs, auxquelles s'ajoutent les sons saccadés émis par le frottement des tissus et les bruits de pas. Le processus maniériste qui mène à l'action meurtrière est d'autant plus irritant qu'il est répété plusieurs fois.

Quant à Langlands & Bell, c'est une autre histoire, et on jugera peut-être qu'ils ont été lésés dans cette édition du Turner Prize. Le duo présentait *The House of Osama bin Laden* (2003), une animation interactive construite à partir d'images réelles prises lors d'un séjour en Afghanistan en octobre 2002. À l'aide d'un joystick installé au milieu de la salle, le visiteur peut visiter l'ancienne chambre de ben Laden (on peut voir ses chaussures aux pieds du lit) ou l'extérieur de la maison-bunker désertée par les militaires. L'œuvre entend refléter le manque de couverture médiatique,

l'oubli dans lequel les peuples sont plongés une fois l'intérêt tari. Elle est, malgré son message éthique, infantilisante et peu efficace. Une vidéo promettait d'être plus intéressante – elle filme le premier procès capital tenu à la Cour suprême de Kaboul depuis la «chute» des talibans –, mais elle n'a malheureusement pu être montrée, puisque l'accusé a été extradé et que son procès est en cours à Londres. On saura plus tard si cette œuvre aurait pu ou non peser dans la balance pour la décision du jury dans l'attribution du prix.

Anne Colin

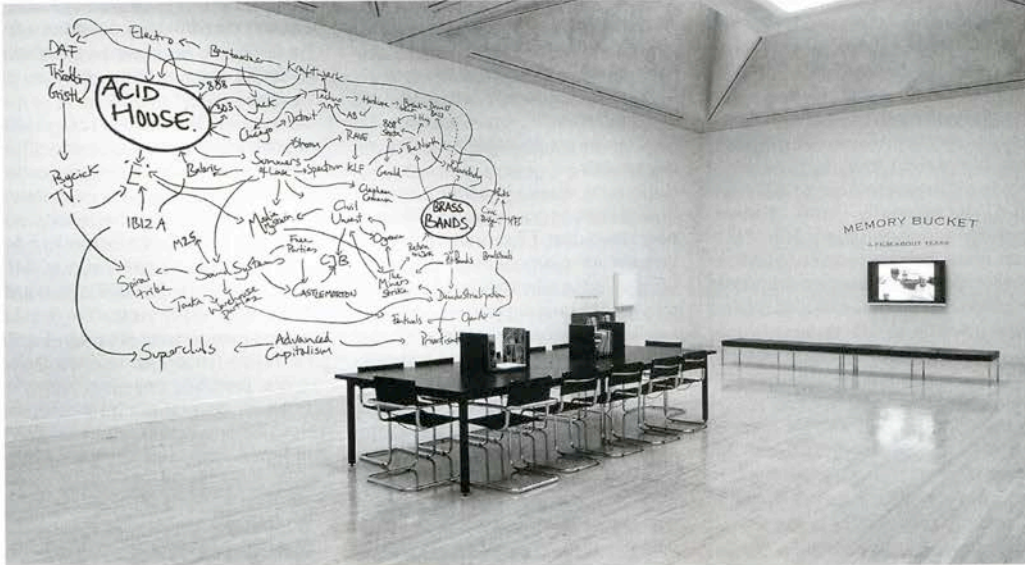
What with the big discussion about the revival of political art (cf. *Artforum* Sept. 2004 and *Frieze* Nov.-Dec. 2004), this year's Turner Prize selection was right on the button: Kutlug Ataman, Jeremy Deller, Langlands & Bell and Yinka Shonibare were all shortlisted, and Jeremy Deller finally chosen for "his generosity of spirit across a succession of projects which engage with social and cultural contexts and celebrate the creativity of individuals." Deller dedicated his triumph to London's cyclists, the miners in northern England, bats, and the hundreds of people he has worked with over the last ten years. Because, yes, Deller's work is about other people; he gets other people to express themselves. It is an exercise in collaboration and outside participation. All Deller's projects have a sociocultural dimension to them and are only really meaningful if they reach out to a lot of people. His work is indeed



Turner Prize. Jeremy Deller. «The History of the World» 1997-2004. Mur peint. Dimensions variables. (Court. de l'artiste et The Modern Institute, Glasgow ; Ph. J. Fernandes et M. Heathcote). Wall painting. Dimensions variable

so democratic and humble that to some it seems suspect. Relational artist or social activist? This often-raised question can perhaps be best answered as follows: Deller is one of the few artists of his generation who has an impact outside the world of art. He does more than question various political spheres, he is also active in devising strategies for answering his own questions. His biggest project so far is a recreation of the notorious 1984 "Battle of Orgreave" between the striking miners and the police, under the orders of the Margaret Thatcher government. Seventeen years after this tragic clash, a cast of about a thousand, some of whom had been there in 1984, was mustered to re-enact this historic event for posterity. *The Battle of*

*Orgreave* (2001) was seen by millions of viewers on Channel 4. At the Turner Prize exhibition, Deller presented a series of photographs with texts (*Five Memorials*, 2004) showing commemorative plaques he positioned around London and beyond referring to events such as the death of a cyclist in a London street, or, further back, the first immigration plan drawn up by the British government after World War II (on June 22, 1948, the *Windrush* sailed in from Jamaica with 500 West Indian immigrants). In the middle of the room was a table with leaflets on road safety but also about bats. At weekends, volunteer experts on these different subjects were on hand to talk to visitors. *Memory Bucket* (2003) is about Deller's travels around Texas. The film compiles life stories and experiences told by the Texans he met between Waco (famous for the Davidian sect tragedy of 1993) and Crawford (where Dubya has his ranch). He also presents some of the unusual (if not "degenerate") practices of the locals, many of whom see no difference between politics and religion. *Memory Bucket* ends on an apocalyptic note, with hundreds of thousands of bats flying out to hunt, as they do every night between May and October. *Twelve* (2003), the video installation presented by Kutlug Ataman, has a number of points in common with *Memory Bucket*. Ataman interviewed the people in a zone of southeastern Turkey, on the Syrian frontier. His film evokes inter-community tensions going back two millennia. In this area where incarnation is a strongly-held belief, his speakers tell him about their present life and the one before it. In a big room we hear the merging



Turner Prize. Kutlug Ataman. «Twelve». 2003. Installation vidéo avec 6 écrans. (Court. de l'artiste et Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York ; Ph. J. Fernandes et M. Heathcote). Six-screen video installation



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# Flash Art



*Jeremy Deller*  
*"The Battle of Orgreave"*  
*Film Still*

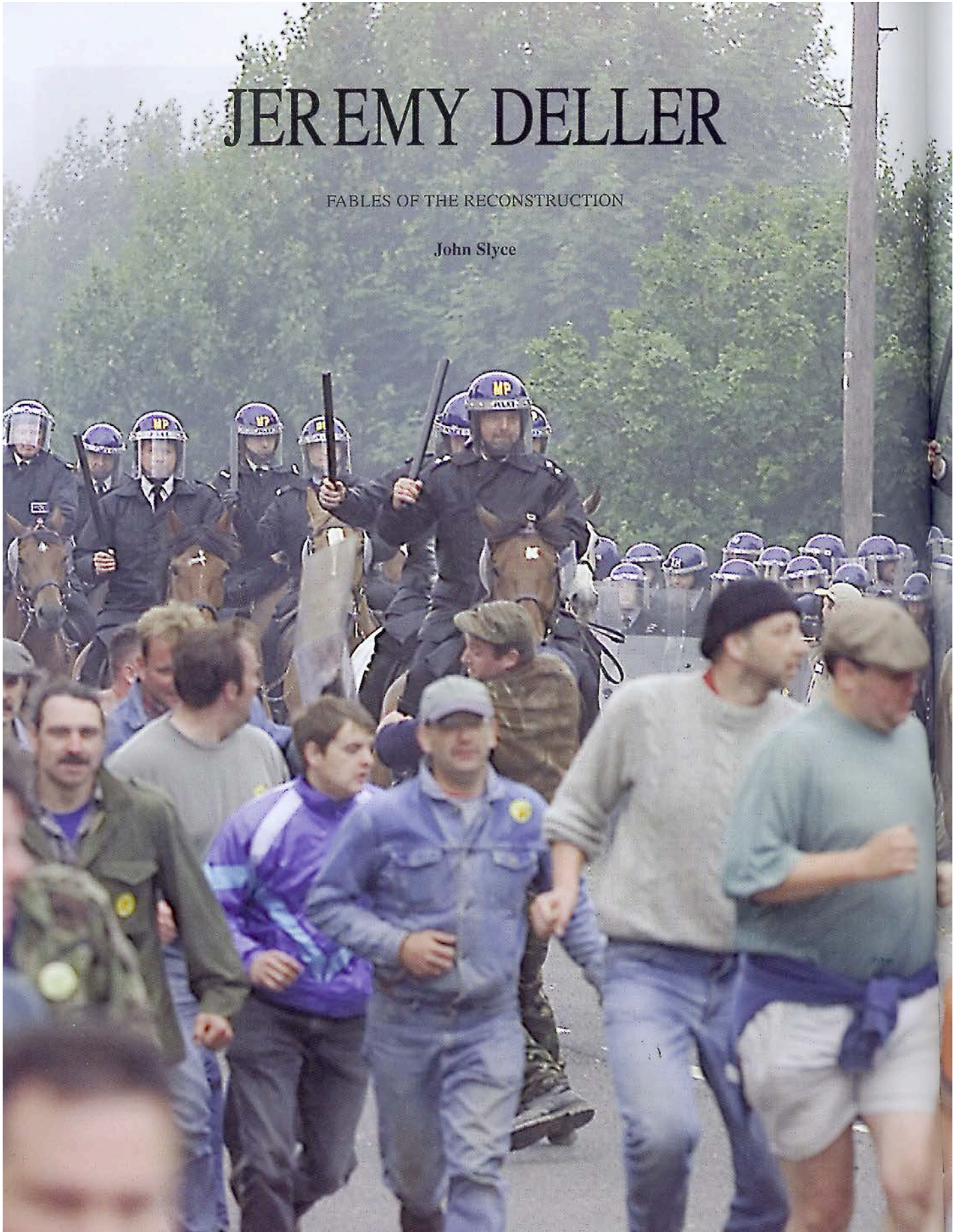




# JEREMY DELLER

FABLES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

John Slyce





The Battle of Orgreave, 2001. Film still.  
Courtesy Artangel, London.



**JOHN SLYCE:** *You just returned from America, didn't you?*

**Jeremy Deller:** Yes, I am still trying to deal with that and am beginning to organize a tour of the Folk Archive. The archive is a piece of long-term research that I and a colleague, Alan Kane, have undertaken to document and exhibit contemporary British and Irish folk art.

**JS:** *The archive is still growing isn't it?*

**JD:** Yes, it's an ongoing project. We try not to collect objects because of problems with storage, but we do try to document events and artwork when we can. We continually take photographs but we have moments when we work on it more than others. We're hoping to put together a tour of Britain with it in two years, to go to all these new public galleries that have been built around the country and set up camp.

**JS:** *What was the initial impetus with the Folk Archive?*

**JD:** Well, it was twofold. Alan and I have always been interested in the things that people make or do outside a traditional art context. We both love fetes, fairs, parades, and the like — we've always been excited by that side of British life. So we've constantly been on the look out for it anyway. And then in 1999 we were having a conversation about what would be in the [Millennium] Dome, and we just knew that there wasn't going to be anything that reflected that side of British life. And there wasn't. It was very corporate and inhumane even — like a big trade fair for newbritain.com with a lot of video projections and LCD screens and touch-sensitive stuff. But there was very little that was actually made by hands — it was all steel, plastic, and glass. There was very little there to engage you with the world. There was nothing actually living in it or anything that suggested life.

**JS:** *Or culture for that matter.*

**JD:** Right — it was incredibly depressing if that's how we are meant to think of ourselves as a nation, country, or culture. So, in response to that, we thought we might show the Folk Archive — it was in the millennium year. In a way it was an alternative exhibition, however modest, of all the energetic and enthusiastic things that happen around Britain — what happens when people make and improvise on things and are creative on an everyday basis. As an installation it was quite contradictory, even at times un-PC, confusing and chaotic — like Britain basically — not this corporate image that we are meant to recognize ourselves in.

**JS:** *The Folk Archive has always struck me as an interesting model of what art can be since it opens up a space for using that kind of material which has been largely shut down now even in academic pursuits of lived history and culture.*

**JD:** One of the problems is that the UK media (by which I mean London media) has very little time for this kind of activity and actively

ridicules and sidelines it in favor of a fame — and celebrity-based take on culture. This is reflected in the art world's current obsession with fashion in both senses of the word. In some ways these two worlds are ideally suited because they take themselves so seriously. It will end in tears though because the fashion business is a vampire that will get all it can from artists and then rip them off for the next five years. When folk art does appear in the public arena it's often de-politicized. A lot of the work in Folk Archive is very political — in fact there is material in our collection that is guaranteed to offend almost everybody. There were shows in the 1970s here of trade union banners and circus art and that has been totally abandoned since the 1990s.

**JS:** *That's linked directly to the way the commercial world appropriates and privatizes modes of culture.*

**JD:** Exactly, and that's why we were looking at the activities that are in the archive. We knew that artists were using this material to base their art on (me included). We were interested in that relationship in culture but also in how contemporary art has had an effect on the vernacular. So we were presenting the raw materials — showing these amazingly creative conceptual pieces of work that people make everyday and not as a special art environment for a specialist art audience. For example, we invited the Women's Institute to make flower arrangements every week for the show "Intelligence" at Tate Britain, and they would conceive of a flower arrangement dealing with folk art, or an idea in the exhibition, or from art history, and they came from all over Britain to do this. People are interested in art and are interested in making art or being part of an event or exhibition. Rarely are they antagonistic. Take *The Battle of Orgreave* for example: everybody locally understood why that project had to happen or why it was good that it was going to happen. The problems most often come from the art world which is by its nature very conservative and often the people within it are very suspicious of your motives. (Which is why working with Artangel was such a breath of fresh air). But also there are those who don't like losing control of their space or curatorial ideas when other people come in and start making or doing things.

**JS:** *The Orgreave project was something long overdue — at least as an act of memory or memorializing that moment. You would have thought a labor government would have had something like that on their agenda. In the aftermath of your Orgreave piece, the participants talked about it being a first moment of dealing with the emotional fall-out.*

**JD:** It is a shame that they had to wait so long. I wouldn't expect the current administration to be interested in this though. But it is still such a traumatic experience for many involved on both sides and they are still living through it. I think the closest comparison there is, which may sound dramatic, is that of a de-





feated army returning home like the Vietnam vets, where no one wants to talk about what has happened. A lot of the miners told me that their children had no interest in it. It's a further pity that the most famous depiction of the miners' strike is the travesty of *Billy Elliot*. There is an amazing film to be made about the strike, but maybe it is still too early.

**JS:** Especially given that what came after the initial battle was their complete loss of identity.

**JD:** Which was even worse than the strike itself. Many miners were paid redundancy money and they bought their council house and that was it really, that was all they had. It's been a long 17 years and some people have coped better than others. In my research I met up with people and visited them in their houses and some you could tell were fine and had got on with their lives, but others were stuck there and couldn't get over it. I was surprised people said it was a healing experience. That wasn't really why I did it. I wanted to remind people that something had happened there — not the locals, because they knew exactly what had happened. If anything, it was about digging up a hastily buried corpse and giving it a proper

postmortem. I was interested in the coverage it would get outside of the art press, and the wider media did pick it up. On a personal level too, it was about my own history and what I remember from that time.

**JS:** As a project, *The Battle of Orgreave* is timely, given that the *Fire Service* is out on strike. The re-enactment and film both have real social and historical value, but I wonder how well-prepared the art world is to accept such an unfashionable work.

**JD:** I was really happy to make something that was as far away from that element in the art world as possible — as un-fashionable, as un-London-centric and un-Elton John as you could get — and try to actually deal with something. The project was something that I had always wanted to do, but for me the timing was fortuitous.

**JS:** As art, *Orgreave* is anti-our moment because the project is about living history in a way that contemporary art — especially as it is often represented in magazines — would be very uncomfortable with.

**JD:** I wanted it to be as unsentimental and un-ironic as possible and yet wear its heart

on its sleeve. Living history is a good term to use. That's the phrase re-enactment groups use all the time to refer to what they do. But often their performances have no social or political context — you just see this battle and it is all about mechanics of a battle and the details of war, cannons, horses, etc. It's not about why those men are fighting each other, especially when they are from the same country. What I wanted was for re-enactors to be in a situation where they would be fighting with and against men that were part of an unfinished messy history. I wanted some of them to see that history didn't end in 1945. That was initially almost as much of an interest as the event itself. A lot of the members of historical re-enactment societies were terrified of the miners. During the '80s they had obviously believed what they read in the press and had the idea that the men that they would be working with on the re-enactment were going to be outright hooligans or revolutionaries. They thought it would turn into one huge real battle.

**JS:** How has *The Battle of Orgreave* been received in the art world?





Folk Archive, 1999. (Clockwise from left: Tom Harrington, Cumberland and Westmoreland Wrestler Egremont, Cumbria; Blair Mask, J18 Protest, The City of London; World Gurning Champion Egremont Crab Fair, Egremont, Cumbria). In collaboration with Alan Kane. Opposite: The Battle of Orgreave, 2001. Film still.

**JD:** Generally good but there are people who continue to be unhappy with it.

**JS:** Why do you think that is?

**JD:** Maybe because they didn't have the idea and go out and do it. They probably just think it's dodgy or just wrong — exactly the kind of things we get accused of with the Folk Archive or working with the Brass Band. This kind of work is open to such accusations that are often knee-jerk when any interaction with the general public is involved, and its subtext is that the general public is not intelligent enough to understand the context of or ideas behind the work. The fact that not only do they understand the process but they enjoy it and then "make" the work almost makes the critics' role redundant. People aren't stupid. I think any miner who has been effectively at war with the government for a year can

handle himself working with an artist. In fact with *Orgreave* I happily lost control of that project to the point where it's not really mine anymore, if indeed it ever was. And there is an absurdist quality to some of my projects. And the miners knew that. They are having a laugh winding up the re-enactors and playing off the image of miners that the re-enactors received from the media. They totally read and understood the situation. It was a complicated and messy thing, and I think that maybe that complexity may be upsetting to certain people. There are a lot of people who write from a left position in the art world who see themselves as carrying the beacon for a pure "holier than thou" left-wing ideology. I think that historically it has always been a mistake for the left to divide itself up like this.

**JS:** How would the art world get a commercial grip on a project like *The Battle of Orgreave*?

**JD:** The re-enactment was a means to an end — an opportunity to put a book together and make a film about the miners' strike. Currently it would be difficult to get either done in Britain in any other way. So essentially the book is a history book and the back 20 pages

are about the re-enactment. But the bulk of the book is about the 1984-85 strike. What is so great about making art is that it can outmaneuver orthodoxy. Perhaps that's why there is some hostility towards it — it existed in the public domain before it existed in the art world and it doesn't need [the art world's] approval. Also there is no art product for sale.

**JS:** As it should be.

**JD:** Totally. With the Folk Archive as well, even though it is an exhibition it is not something that can be bought en masse. And *Acid Brass* is a CD and an event. A lot of what I do does not have a conclusion as an object or a thing. ■

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**Jeremy Deller** was born in 1966 in London, where he lives and works.

Selected projects: 2003: "Echolocators," a collaboration with Bats; 2002: "After the Goldrush: A California Guidebook and Treasure Hunt"; 2001: "The Battle of Orgreave." Commissioned by Artangel, London; 1999: "Folk Archive," (with Alan Kane) an ongoing research project into folk and vernacular art in The British Isles and Ireland; "Unconvention," Center for Visual Arts, Cardiff; 1997: "Acid Brass," a musical collaboration with The Williams Fairey Brass Band; "The Uses of Literacy," a collaboration with fans of the Manic Street Preachers.