



# Cancelled



BRUSSELS, 17 MAY. – **Jonathan Monk**, *Cancelled Project Brussels*, 2004

# Page 3 stunnas!

**Wolfgang Tillmans** explains how and why he made this image

G2, the supplement to the British newspaper *The Guardian*, invited Wolfgang Tillmans last April for a contribution.\* Tillmans chose to write a text on tabloid newspapers' topless pictures. His text is reproduced in this newspaper with, for the first time, the photograph *nackt* (2003) which was deemed „too explicit“ by *The Guardian*. But here it is now, on page 3.

By WOLFGANG TILLMANS

**LONDON, 19 APR.** - In the 1970s in Germany there was a hardcore socialist magazine called *Konkret* that, for a time, used pictures of naked women on its front covers. Nothing inside the magazine reflected this: the stories inside were all about working towards changing society. The editors were just taking advantage of the fact that sex sells to spread that message. It's fascinating when sex is used to sell something that otherwise has intellectual high standards. Why, however, are the naked people shown in newspapers and magazines never men? This is blatant inequality. If people are equal, why would the sight of a naked man be undesirable - or, worse, obscene?

When I was asked to provide a page-three image for G2, I obviously wanted to do something that challenged the standard formula. Conventional page-three pictures aren't subversive. They're not even inclusive: they serve only half the population. My page three would be as modern as possible. I chose an unpublished photograph, which I had taken recently. It shows a woman sitting in a relaxed fashion, with her legs spread, as though she is at breakfast. She is nude and the image shows her body from her belly button to her knees. The facts of her body are just there - natural, striking in their presence, and fascinating for it.

The photograph shows very clearly what a woman's genitals look like - something few men, even heterosexual men, have any real idea of. Its focus is sex, but it also acknowl-

edges that this is where we come from. The image doesn't beat around the bush: It isn't titillating, nor is it shocking. However it was felt to be too explicit to be published in G2. I first started thinking about playing with the idea of male and female nudity in the early 1990s. The fact is, toplessness in a man is not equal to toplessness in a woman. For a man to experience the same level of exposure and commitment to the image as a woman posing topless, he must appear bottomless. That was the principle behind my series *Like Brother, Like Sister*, created for iD magazine in 1992 and showing a man and a woman side by side, she topless, he bottomless. The title had nothing to do with the relationship between the people in the photographs (both friends of mine); it simply registered the equality between the man and the woman. To the managers of WH Smiths, however, the title referred to incest and the images were obscene. The chain refused to stock that issue of iD, almost closing the magazine.

**'I want to show human beings who are at once vulnerable and confident about who they are.'**

Two years later, I photographed another set of nudes for a Japanese magazine. My G2 page three (here page 4) - *John and Paula, Sitting Bottomless* - comes from that series. The magazine published *John and Paula, Sitting Bottomless*, but couldn't do so without it being censored. And so John appeared with a big orange dot covering his penis.

It's important to show acts of censorship in this way - because otherwise no one notices that it is actually happening. This is what was great about Todd Solondz's movie *Storytelling*. It has a sex scene that is so explicit the producers wanted it cut. But Solondz refused. Instead he put big red bars over the actors' genitals for the duration of the scene. Every time the actors move, the bars move too. It looks hilarious - but it's much better

than if the scene had been cut altogether.

Censorship varies so much geographically. On the continent most publications will depict a naked man or woman. America, though, is completely different. Since the Mapplethorpe scandal in 1989 (his male nude photographs caused such a furore that rightwing politicians voted to ban government funding for "obscene or indecent" art), galleries can't afford to take any risks. In 1996 I made an installation for a group show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. All the work had to be screened by the curator. He waded through every female nude - but every male nude became the subject of discussion, and several were vetoed.

It's ridiculous that supposedly rational people can be so blind to this inequality. And it's not just an inequality between men and women. It is still considered more obscene to show two men kissing before the watershed on TV than it is to show two men kill each other. How can something as atrocious as the destruction of two men be acceptable, and the sight of men kissing scandalous? This isn't just upsetting. It's obscene. Essentially, ideas of obscenity are defined by powerful political interests. Sexuality is one of the few things that is absolutely free - sex can sell, but sex between two people isn't marketable. It's the one thing that people can do for fun for free. A lot of people have a problem with this - they think sexuality needs to be controlled.

When people deem an image obscene, often it's not just because it shows someone naked, but because it shows someone who is empowered. Since the mid-1990s youth magazines, such as the *Face*, have prided themselves on pushing the boundaries with their fashion stories. There was a lot of very crass sexual photography used at that time. But the models were always tools of a male fantasy - they were never empowered beings. Such images may have shouted, "*Hey, I'm shocking*", but their risqué wildness was just self-congratulatory. This style of fashion photography shared all the faults of an ordinary tabloid page three.

If sex and violence are used to entertain

\*© G2, supplement to *The Guardian* (19/04/04).  
Guest editors: 'Franz Ferdinand'



**Wolfgang Tillmans**, *nackt*, 2003 (Courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne)





**Wolfgang Tillmans, John & Paula, Sitting Bottomless, 1994**

people or to market something, they are acceptable. It's aimless, directionless sex that shocks and scares people most. Normally when women are photographed they are offering themselves in some way. People don't mind that - it's when self-affirmed, powerful women are shown to be in control of their sexuality that people feel threatened. And yet to me such images are harmless - innocent, even. How odd, that the most innocent image should seem the most obscene.

Nudity is such a powerful thing that I try to avoid using it gratuitously in my photography. And when I do use it, I want to do so only in a disarming - and so shocking - way. I want to show human beings who are at once vulnerable and confident about who they are, about themselves inside their bodies. This is such a fragile thing to represent that I don't want to overdo it - which is why I have taken perhaps just three dozen images involving nudity. Although I'm still interested in nude equality, I haven't returned to the image of John and Paula I took in 1994. The pictures I took then still make their point, one there is no reason to carry on making.

Ten years ago, I couldn't have created such a matter-of-fact image of a woman's body as I did in the crotch shot. That was a step forward for me. And the friend who modelled for it is extremely happy with the picture. She is happy because it shows the vagina as something that is actually present: not as a negative, a hole, as it is in many men's imaginations, but as an organ with protuberances. And there is nothing obscene about that. ●

## In brief

*This is exchange* (2002-2004) by **Tino Sehgal** has been acquired by the Institut d'art contemporain (Frac Rhône-Alpes / Nouveau Musée) in Villeurbanne (France). The work is currently part of their show *Communauté* until 4 July.

**Deimantas Narkevicius** has received the DAAD-stipendium and will be a resident of Berlin in the year 2005.

The film *Sylvia Kristel - Paris* (2003) by **Manon de Boer** is selected for three film festivals that take place this summer: *Ecran total* (Arenberg, Brussels), ISFF, Vila do Conde (P) and the International Documentary Film Festival in Marseilles. More information in the agenda.

The next part of *The Gallery Show* is postponed till September 2004. In collaboration with **Joe Scanlan**. ●

# 32

(advertentie)

Tentoonstelling Exposition 27/5-3/7

**PIERRE  
BISMUTH**

**DOUGLAS  
GORDON**

**SHARON  
LOCKHART**

**TINO  
SEHGAL**

Jan Mot  
Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190  
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# Look at him. About **Johan and François**, and eventually also about **Eva, Michael**, you and me.

At Manifesta 5, which takes place in San Sebastian this summer, Sven Augustijnen will show two video portraits of patients who suffer from aphasia. For the curators, Augustijnen's work will be the central point of departure of the show in the Koldo Mitxelena-building relating to the notion of the rupture as the temporal gap that holds the past, present and future. On his aphasia portraits the artist wrote the following text:

By SVEN AUGUSTIJNEN

**BRUSSELS, APRIL** – "A man is speaking to the camera. His name is Johan. We gather that he is in some sort of institution, but it is not clear what type that may be, a prison or a hospital. If the latter, is he suffering from some fatal illness or is he in a mental clinic? As he answers the questions of the filmmaker and a doctor in the room, it slowly becomes clear that he is suffering from aphasia, defined in the 'Collins English Dictionary' as a 'disorder of the central nervous system, characterised by partial or total loss of the ability to communicate, especially in speech or writing'. At one point, Johan keeps responding to a prompt from the therapist by saying 'I want to know', 'I want to know'. She cannot get him to say 'what' he wants to know.

Is this not the position of the viewer in watching this 'documentary' by Sven Augustijnen? We want to know what is going on; we want to know more about this 'subject'; we want to know that the filmmaker will not abuse his position of power. And we can only know by trusting the filmmaker, by trusting the camera, by trusting that we (and Johan) will not be manipulated. But that, of course, is a contradiction in terms. Better to accept the manipulation and go from there."

Michael Tarantino<sup>1</sup>

Reconstructing that hot summer of 2003, I realize now, while Michael, with his 'self-deprecating, downbeat wit, his hangdog, lugubrious look<sup>2</sup>', was writing probably one of his last texts, I was editing *François*.

Suffering from aphasia as well, François gropes at a certain moment his head with his hands: 'I would like to know what is going on here upstairs... my spirit can't grasp all this anymore!'

And then he looks into the camera and asks: 'Are you telling him my entire memory? You're not writing it down, I hope?'

Who is the 'him' I am telling his entire memory towards? Or is it the camera that is telling...? Or regarding Michael's text more abstract, that despite the manipulation or better by means of the manipulation... that all I can say is by means of somebody else's words?

Eva, the speech therapist intervenes: 'Not writing, he's filming.'

'He can film me.'

That's okay. That looks smart.'

'Look at him.' she remarks of his twinkling eyes ready and proud for another prank.

I look at him and can't help smiling.

'I can still drivél.'

But that's the problem.

I can still drivél.

I can joke around.

But anything more serious...' he could keep on jumping nervously from one topic to the other, finally ending up with: 'Seriously, I would like to know...'

What a smile can do! But how do they affect us?

How comfortable are we in the face of a one's in a life time stroke or tumor?

'In the beginning was the word! ... Why?' the child asks his father in the introduction scène of Tarkovsky's last film *The Sacrifice*. We have the answer on the tip of our tongues... ●

1. Michael Tarantino, 'The index of truth', in *Wiel's*, exhibition catalogue Brussels 2003

2. Adrian Searle, 'Michael Tarantino, Creative curator of contemporary art', *Obituary*, Friday December 5, 2003, *The Guardian*



Sven Augustijnen, *Johan*, 2002, 23 min.

# Pay Dirt: A manifesto

By JOE SCANLAN

**SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME** — As an artist I am often asked, “Where does your money come from?” The question usually comes in two variations. The first is largely innocent and occurs whenever my relatives or members of the nonart public, having in my presence come across an artwork I have made, genuinely wonder how it can be possible to get paid for having made it. When I explain that there are many people who like to look at artworks and compare them to other ones over time, and a few in that group who are even willing to pay extraordinary amounts of money (relative to materials and labor) for what they feel are the most interesting examples, my nonart friends squint their eyes a little and cock their heads at me, as if something nefarious was going on. When I resort by way of example to the goings-on at craft fairs or the Antiques Road Show, they brighten, because they all know someone who earns a living making handbags or whose Star Wars paraphernalia was appraised at fifty thousand dollars. After they tell me about someone who

has been similarly fortunate, I nod and say, “Yeah, art’s just like that.” Unfailingly, their heads straighten and their squints dissolve. They still don’t know anything about art, but at least they understand how it works, and how something works is always a more nagging question than what the same thing might mean.

The second variant of the question about my money is usually posed by graduate students and architects, and is much more angry and troubling. It is intended to undermine my authority as an invited speaker or to expose a conceit I clearly have, a brickbat hurled from behind the stanchions of real-life drudgery that is the domain of graduate students and architects. That doesn’t bother me. My veins are already coursing with the homeopathic toxins of commerce, so I’m immune to such naïve humiliations.

What does bother me about total strangers being concerned with my money, though, is the presumption that earning a living is not an acceptable motivation for an artist. To me, and for better or worse, all art is nothing if not a proposal for how the current situation might be altered at a profit. That that profit is often not immediately apparent to us is nothing against an artwork or its maker, and I, for one, refuse to live in a society where skilled individuals cannot earn a living however they please. If my best chance at making a living entails patenting a recipe for synthetic dirt, then I can only expect that a liberal capitalist democracy such as ours will afford a niche in which I can ply my trade; otherwise, the philosophical pillars of our society would be revealed to be not as liberal or democratic as they seem.

For that reason, and that reason alone, nothing is more impressive or politically reaffirming than an artist who is gainfully self-employed.

The energies that have produced this romantic pragmatism are complex and quite unintended. Ironically enough—and as strange as it might seem to people today—such liberal, tolerant, encouraging ideals were an essential part of the founding of our country. Now, amateur scholars and paid commentators alike tend to assert that digital technology is responsible for making our atomized world of independent contractors more viable than old-fashioned, centralized workplaces. That may be true, but it doesn’t explain how such a broad appreciation for being self-employed came about in the first place. Having grown up in Niagara Falls, New York,



a region of the country that is only now recovering from the recession of 1991 and embracing the infotainment casino economy, the current spate of self-reliance is in fact the natural fallout from four decades of corporate merging, downsizing, and outsourcing. The initial shock of so many people losing their jobs and having their lives disrupted has been more than offset by their bedrock mistrust of any institution or corporation that promises to look out for their well-being when profits are at stake.

During my youth, many of my parents’ friends had no choice but to capitalize on whatever they were good at as a means of making a living, turning weekend avocations like crocheting afghans or restoring cars into legitimate business enterprises. Over time, self-pity evolved into self-survival evolved into self-actualization as entrepreneur, a low-tech, self-sufficient state of mind that is ideally suited to the cottage industry that is the Internet. Current Internal Revenue Service statistics report that one in every five working Americans is self-employed, and some economists, counting people like commissioned salespersons and waitstaff who are technically employed but whose incomes are largely self-generated, put the ratio as high as one in three. Thus, the more the necessity of having a unique and profitable skill permeates our culture the more the occupation of being an artist is appreciated, and the more young people can look to John Cage or Vija Celmins when choosing a livelihood.

If you are like my relatives and nonart friends, at this point you will be completely satisfied with the legitimacy of my profes-

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(advertentie)

4/6-5/6

**IAN WILSON**  
**PRIVATE**  
**DISCUSSIONS**

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sion, and even go so far as to wish me well at it since, given our shared belief in the aforementioned principles, it would be unpatriotic not to be so. Of course, if you share the same chemistry as graduate students and architects, you will first need to square my philosophy with a major historical precedent in order to bring it under control. Which usually means that you will cite Warhol.

It might surprise you to learn that when I say artists are the epitome of independent contracting, I do not have Andy Warhol in mind. I admire his enterprise, it was impressive in its day and all, but there is very little about Warhol's methods or his oeuvre that is of use to independent-minded artists now. The idea of art being made in a factory might have been a radical concept in the 1960s, but we do well to remember that corporations at that time were already in the process of rendering Warhol-type factories obsolete. Factories mean overhead, and if contemporary art and being self-employed share anything it is the desire to minimize overhead costs. Even if I were to assume that Warhol's Factory was important in some absolute sense, the fact remains that Warhol still didn't make anything of greater intrinsic interest or better quality than what could be found in the nonart world of his time. And that may have been his point. Indeed, that lack of distinction was perhaps Warhol's most important contribution to the then broad (and earnest) assault on art and life. Warhol meant to rely on the category of Art to distinguish his sameness from the sameness of the rest of the world.

Naturally, the category of Art no longer holds once we lump its practitioners in with all other people in trade—except, of course, when the activities of an artist are truly unrivaled by anyone else in the world, at which point it doesn't matter whether that person is an artist or not. He or she is simply “the best.” It is on the basis of that often highly profitable status that the value of anything rests.

Take Agnes Martin. Now in her nineties, she still dominates the market for imperfectly ruled pencil lines on unprimed canvas, even though her materials are inexpensive and her technique can be performed by anyone with a pencil, a work surface, and a yardstick. No one does. Martin has so thoroughly woven her endeavor into herself as to make it seem physically impossible to impede on the terrain of her invention. In fact, her paintings—stripes and grids of graphite on canvases whose interstices are sometimes filled in with thin washes of color—can be seen as poetic evocations of the absolute distinction that the work itself has come to represent, the meticulous delineation of precise points in space that cannot be confused with any other, equally precise, points. Despite her best efforts—or perhaps

## FOUND TEXT SECTION



*Cité Radieuse, Nantes, March 2004. Photo Sonia Dermience*

because of them—every line, space, and intersection Martin draws is different from every other, due to the weave of the canvas, the graphite dragged across it, and the fact that Martin herself pulses and breathes. The sublime factual imperfection that results is unmatched by anyone in any field.

The lesson, of course, is that it's much easier to be the best at doing something if as few other people as possible are also doing it. Where Warhol's thousands of imitators continue to burn money and resources slavishly mocking a mainstream culture with which they can never compete, the real growth opportunities are in obscure enterprises where competition is low and materials are cheap. *Voilà. Pay Dirt.*

Just as Marshall McLuhan observed that people didn't know they wanted televisions until televisions were invented, how can the

audience for art know what it wants until we, as artists, invent it for them? And, given that opportunity, how can any of us believe it's in our long-range interest to go on appropriating a popular culture that our customers already know and have? In the end, and quite ironically, a “difficult” artist like Agnes Martin is a much more useful role model than her more celebrated counterpart could ever be. Her arcane skills and restrained production methods epitomize such concepts as personal branding, value adding and inventory velocity, state-of-the-art business innovations that she and the likes of On Kawara and David Hammons have never gotten credit for.

Until now.

The avant-garde lives! Not because it's more meaningful or radical than any other activity, but because it fills a legitimate market niche. ●

# Agenda

## Sven Augustijnen

*Manifesta 5*, San Sebastian, 11/6-4/9 (cat.)

## Pierre Bismuth

*Accrochage*, Jan Mot, Brussel/Bruxelles, 27/5-3/7; *Social Creatures - How Body Becomes Art*, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, 29/2-13/6; *Louder this time*, City loop 2004, Villa Galvani, Pordenone, 22/5 - 30/6

## Manon de Boer

International Competition of the 12th Vila do Conde ISFF, Portugal, 6-11/7; 15th Marseilles International Documentary Film Festival, 2-7/7, Théâtre National Marseille La Criée; Ecran total, Arenberg cinéma, Brussel/Bruxelles, zomer/été 2004

## Rineke Dijkstra

*Strange Days*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, tot/jusqu'au 31/7; *Photo Espana*, Real Jardin Botanico, Madrid, 2/6-18/7

## Honoré d'O

Presentation of the artist's editions, Bureau d'Art et de Recherche, Roubaix, jusqu'au/tot 5/6; *Olympos Sport and Body Art*, Nicosia art Centre, Cyprus, 1/5-1/8

## Dora García

Ann Arbor Film Festival, Michigan (USA), mei/mai; *Intolerable Light & The Sphinx*, Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid, 2/6-9/9 (solo, cat.); *Secret Affinities*, Caja Madrid, Madrid, 29/6-9/9 (cat.); *Art from Portugal and Spain in the 90s*, Serralves Foundation, Porto, vanaf/à partir du 2/5 (cat); *Procesos Abiertos*, Hangar, Barcelona/Terrassa, vanaf/à partir du 16/6 (cat. and website: [www.p-oberts.org](http://www.p-oberts.org) [www.elfactorhumano.net](http://www.elfactorhumano.net)); *Forever*, permanent work, Frac Lorraine, Metz, vanaf/à partir du 15/5, <http://aleph-arts.org/inserts/forever>

## Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

DAK'ART 2004, The Biennial of Contemporary African Art, 7/5-7/6, <http://www.dakart.org>; *Space odyssee, les musiques spatiales depuis 1950*, Musée de la musique, Paris, 15/1-5/9; *The Big Nothing*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Pennsylvania, 1/5-1/8; *Alphavilles?*, de Singel, Antwerpen, 14/10-19/12 (solo); Jan Mot, okt-nov (solo)

## Douglas Gordon

*Accrochage*, Jan Mot, Brussel/Bruxelles, 27/5-3/7

## Joachim Koester

*The Big Nothing*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Pennsylvania, 1/5-1/8

## Sharon Lockhart

*Whitney Biennial*, New York, 11/3-30/5 (cat.); *Accrochage*, Jan Mot, Brussel/Bruxelles, 27/5-3/7; *Strange Days*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, tot/jusqu'au 31/7

## Deimantas Narkevicius

*Brainstorming, topographie de la morale*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Ile de Vassivière, Limousin, 20/3-27/6; *The Role of the Lifetime*, Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, 11/5-juni/juin (solo); *Kartografien - Tracks & Territories*, Filmcasino, Wien, 1/6-7/6

## Tino Sehgal

Statements/Art Basel, Jan Mot, 15/6-20/6 (solo); *Accrochage*, Jan Mot, Brussel/Bruxelles, 27/5-3/7; *LAB*, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, tot/jusqu'au 26/9; *Communauté*, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne, 7/5-4/7

## Jan Wilson

*Private discussions*, Jan Mot, Brussel/Bruxelles, 4-5/6

# 34

(advertentie)

15/6-21/6

## TINO SEHGAL

Jan Mot at Art Basel  
Messeplatz Basel

# Vernissage

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# Closed

Please note that the gallery will be closed during Art Basel. From 14/6 till 21/6.

(advertentie)

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donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 14-18.30 u  
jeudi-vendredi-samedi 14-18.30 h  
en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous