Gavin Turk: The Art of Faking It

BY JOHN KING. PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIERRE COURTIEL

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Gavin Turk defines himself as a "negative space" in the sense of being an imposter, a "blatant fake" who can provoke a deep-seated conversation about the authenticity or otherwise of works of art.

"Gavin Turk (that's me) meets the rugged head-down-looker over the fish-tower door at Gavin Turk's studio in London's East End. This little piece of self-determination is, of course, a reference to the now not-so-young British Artists' production piece at the Royal College of Art, by which he offered up an entire blown room, bar a true place (of his kind) found around London to denote the one-time residence of some important or famous that announced that Gavin Turk, Sculptor, worked there 1898-1901. His future was not impressed. Turk did not yet have his qualification.

"That was difficult for me at the time," says Turk, zipper-uped in a padded coat of the cold of his unheated studio. "But I was also good. I was really stupid, although it also grew me a story — there was an immediate mythology to it. It grew me a kind of history of how to tame the people. People like his artists to be extraordinary. Certainly that's a stereotype. Some artists play it up, or do the audience project. I mean, it was something in them. You know, the right formula, the right well-trod of art."

Could he possibly be referring to Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin? His contemporaries in the Young British Artists' movement yesterday, not only are they British contemporary art on the map in the late 1990s but also helped defined new forms of engagement, making a public interest further to her or to them. Other artists, like his friends and partners, while Turk established a reputation for making himself (or the series of his own artistic output. Here was Turk as a waster of Salvia. Turk as a surreal print Dile (or as Andy Warhol). Turks as an Monster Turks and Stuart Singe his signature on his view of contemporary art, transfers an ordinary house brick to a work of art on an ordinary house-brick with a name written on it.

"Other what's involved in a picture of no-one-s wraps. It's a lift me as Andy Warhol as not Andy Warhol. It's me as negative space. I'm there as the innovative, the idea. I'm by as a blank slate, a conversation about authenticity can't be too fast. Question of what specificity you're looking at most important for me in terms of art. Artists don't work directly. I've become an imposter. Everything has to be made through a surreal filter. So I am a real spirit."

Is it the ability to analyze both what he does and how he does it. It's to his credit. It's a way of thinking. Turk sees his role as being about the process as much as the end result that has given him the reputation as the instigator of the Young British Artists. His gallery, originally known as a "pop-up" art group, which one can be of a desk male, more, but which Turk convincingly defines as an "artist" who works with ideas that seem to stand out more than the things themselves, which isn't always a good thing, because I am physically of things and making things. But there's a conceptual element to thinking just you're going to do something called "art."

My work exists within the comfort of art. Standing in his studio, for example, an oil van without paint, one real, apparently in a bronze solid, potentially treated to make it look like the real thing. More recently, he created another surreal place, painted in Momo glass, for Benetton Studio's "Glass Art: Light: Lifeboat" — Contemporary Artists & Banks exhibition at London's Whitechapel Gallery until 29 February 2005. "We went to Venice, saw the glass shown, went the art, one piece changing into another, and it looks a bit like a smoke poll, which leads us to Mishima, Lapps, rays of emeralds..." says Turk, giving a glimpse to the thoughts that underpin the piece. Quite unlike anyone else's act as he does, rather than as an easily attractive stylist, or as something that sparks private thoughts and connections, is another thing. In no small part.

Turk has been part of the process that brought many more people to that point in the first place, as recognized by the recent year by publishers Press release of the first monograph of his work titled, simply, (Gavin Turk). This is a benchmark moment he describes as being "beautifully brilliant," not least because he recognizes the importance of making fake to tell a story through gathering all my work together, especially because my work jumps around so much that unless something has its name on it, you might not even know it's by me. Now I'm established — because there's a two and a half pound book that says I am.

That such art books are even published by mainstream houses perhaps speaks to the newfound interest in the subject. "I think it's great that art is bigger now," Turk adds. "It's wider for the audience, not for an art elite, although a lot of artists are a bit shocked, more to make art for a wider audience. But there is always going to be an element of people feeling that art is excluding or not for them that galleries and museums don't show what they want to see. People want to put their rock in the world." As in, a sense, Turk does one of his side projects — more he was Deborah in all — is the House of Play Tarts. This is a charity that creates and runs art workshops to help children, and persuades "name" artists like Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton to make portfolio of work to be sold to raise money and from there dates her own workshops (some of which will run in schools or in conjunction with festivals or exhibitions such as Tate Modern). "When we had kids we saw what seemed to be a gap between their schooling, art and community, and thought there was a space for this kind of thing. Turk explains. "There's a long row of seats we don't want to just take esoteric kits and turn them into any esoteric kits. So it's a pretty nice project."

Art could work for them, for he has worked for Turk seminars, naming an opportunity to think big, and to make the world think about itself and what it creates. I am very surprised to be making a living through it," he says. "Because when I tell people what I do, they look shocked, so I guess it must be unusual. Obviously I could always make more money, but then I'm not sure what I would do it. I'd probably buy art."

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