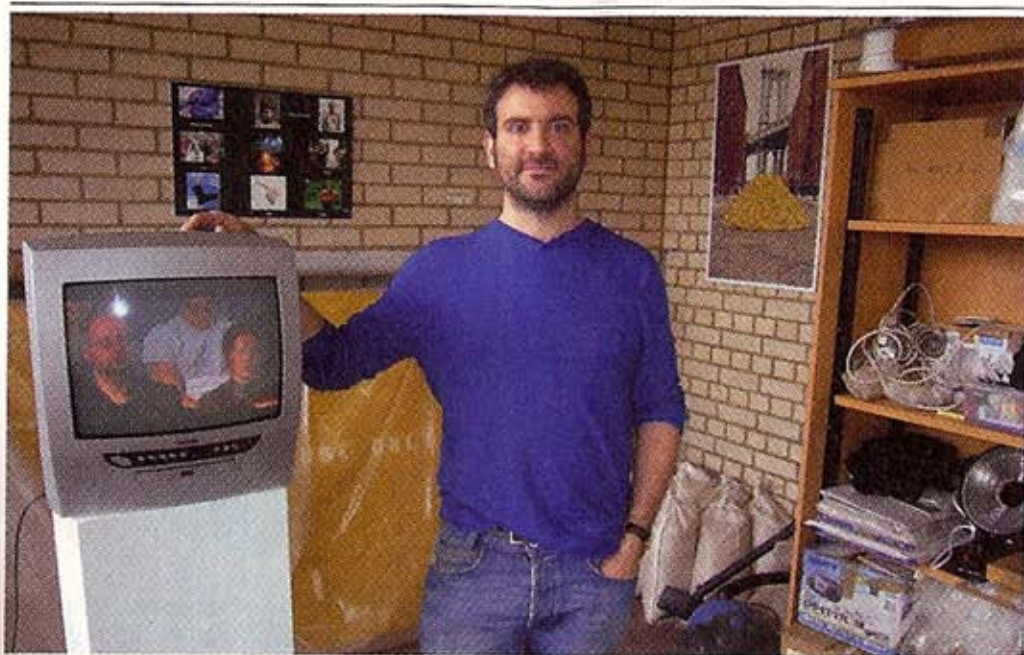


In the studio *Doug Fishbone*



Doug Fishbone's films and performance lectures connect streams of thought – from philosophical ideas to jokes – with mass-media imagery, to explore how information is disseminated, manipulated and received. His latest work, a two-screen installation for a group show at Rokeby, explores perception by using hypnosis. He has a studio in Hackney.

Have you come over all Derren Brown?

'I wanted to look further into the idea that the same event or object can be perceived by different people in very different ways. Hypnosis seemed a good tool. What you see in the gallery is two facing screens; one is showing a film of a group of 12 people who, under hypnosis, are responding to different visual and aural cues – for example by raising a hand, or clapping – in a film I have made which talks about connections between our fears, phobias and paranoid. That film is showing on the opposite screen.'

Was the hypnosis successful?

'I worked with a professional stage hypnotist and even he wasn't sure whether people would respond as instructed, but most did.'

Why the interest in fears and phobias?

'Again, it was about how associations are made and perceptions altered, either culturally or from the perspective of the present changing how we view the past. In '50s America people were scared of being overrun by communists, a fear linked to other "plagues" such as fire ants or killer bees. Then, almost overnight, that fear was gone and now we're afraid of terrorists instead.'

Do you have any phobias?

'I'm terrified of sharks, but like most phobias, it's a perceived fear – I'm not likely to suffer a shark attack in Hackney.' *Interview: Helen Sumpter. Doug Fishbone is showing at Rokeby until Mar 21 (see Soho to Hampstead).*

words J.J. CHARLESWORTH

Future Greats

25 artists you need to know

Doug

Paper Power! 2006, digital giclée print, 42 x 59 cm
Courtesy the artist and Gimpel Fils, London

"YOU KNOW, I DON'T GET THE WHOLE VEGETARIAN THING: I mean, if we're not supposed to eat animals, then why are they made of meat?" Doug Fishbone likes a joke more than most artists. Moving from mass-media manipulation to stand-up and politics, this New Yorker has pitched his wise-guy 'conceptual art' into the London scene with a vengeance. From the man who dumped 20,000 bananas on Trafalgar Square, Fishbone's absurdist stream-of-consciousness PowerPoint presentations were a highlight of last year's British Art Show 6. At the recent *Paranoia* exhibition at the Freud Museum, Fishbone installed a young Asian man in Muslim dress, seated impassively inside a cage-like fence; a razor-sharp comment on the domestic hysteria spawned by the 'war on terror'. Fishbone takes an energetic and direct approach to art. Disarming and democratic, the mix of shock and humour makes for a winning combination.

Fishbone's work rag-picks the avalanche of verbiage and second-hand ideas that make up the mass media, to critique some of the more unseemly aspects of life in the modern age. His presentations and lectures focus on themes like corporate greed and violence, obesity, indifference and the inability of cultures to understand each other. Appropriating imagery from the Internet, his hilarious and shocking narratives question how we take an opinion on controversial visual images and concepts. New Age hokum, terrorists, the political elites, the battle of the sexes, conspiracy theories, sex, drugs, fast food, religion, freak-show obscenities, offensive jokes about minority groups – nothing is spared in the deranged kaleidoscope of disinformation that Fishbone remodels from the wilder edges of contemporary life.

Offending and cajoling, moving in one breath from charming anecdote to bizarre non-sequitur to a horrendous gag about your mum, or Arabs, or Jews, he disarms by adopting every position at once. You laugh when you know you shouldn't, and Fishbone is gleefully aware that humour can undermine the repressive etiquette that distorts our relationship to real life.

Fishbone's interest in the corrupt seductions of junk culture and voodoo politics is taking him further into the realms of that most venal and empty figure, the celebrity. At his recent solo show at Gimpel Fils, he presented his smooth-talking, Hollywood-bulshitting alter ego in the video *It's Not You, It's Me* (2006). Hustling money for a movie project, Fishbone shamelessly pulls every emotional string he can: "let's do it for the children", he implores. The irony is that Fishbone is actually working on a film project of the same name. Art's always been antagonistic to the mass media. Fishbone's work suggests that if you can join them, you can beat them too.



REVIEWS

Doug Fishbone

DOUG FISHBONE: THE IDEA STORE

GINPEL FILLS, LONDON
10 OCTOBER - 18 NOVEMBER

'How do you get a Polish girl pregnant? Cum on her shoe and let the flies do the rest.' Nice. Doug Fishbone deals in jokes. Jokes exist ready-made and anonymous, expressing the desires, insecurities, resentments and prejudices existing in the culture, and implicating anyone who finds them funny. In a series of digital prints, the weirdly disembodied texts of jokes are accompanied by images culled from Google, thus emphasising the subconscious fantasies the jokes feed off and awaken, while simultaneously estranging us through an over-literalisation. For example, in *Some of My Best Friends Are Polish* (all works 2006), four images of symmetry occupy the four corners of the print: the spread eagle of Poland's flag, a girl in national costume with her hands on hips, a diagram of a fly and a drawing best described as gynaecological. In the centre is a picture of fresh spunk dripping from a shiny high heel. Tapping into fantasy, jokes have an adhesive presence against which rational discourse is helpless. However, like artworks, context goes a long way, and the liberal space of contemporary art seems to offer immunity from offence.

Jokemaster Jr. is a little Walkman-shaped guy with crossed eyes and a cheesy grin. If you press his nose he will tell you a joke (that is, if he doesn't develop *sniffitis* - 'a combination of the common cold and venereal disease. You sneeze so much your nose falls off'). Used in moderation the *Jokemaster* could be a therapeutic device, but the knowledge that you're just one touch away from another joke - perhaps a better one, perhaps the best one - is compulsive, and the urge to press the nose one more time hard to resist.

A dulling aspect of Fishbone's art is the branding of himself as a reputable commodity, as with the logo of his name that appears in all his works. Because there is nothing caustic, nothing risky (just the opposite) in this work's mode of highlighting artworld realities, the self-reflexive irony feels hollow, threatening to deflate the show's energies.

Having said this, when shameless egoism is the subject, Fishbone is good. He's one hell of an actor in the *It's Not You, It's Me Promo* (with Catharine Patha), in which he plays a gruesome Hollywood-celebrity type beseeching, or rather bullying, his TV audience to fund his new film. The figure of the millionaire star asking the less fortunate to put their hands in their pockets is all too familiar, and from his leather sofa next to the marble fireplace Fishbone pulls out all the manipulative stops, playing on our self-esteem ('Isn't it about time you stood up for yourself and told the others to go to hell?'), our patriotic duty ('Let's not let the terrorists win') and our sentiment ('Let's do it for the children'). Real humour is always bodily, always somewhat disgusting, and with his faked (and to a British audience very 'American'), exaggerated facial expressions of emotion, Fishbone is in this piece a match for the best dirty joke. *Dean Kenning*



A woman goes into a gallery and sees two still life pictures.



Both are paintings of a large piece of ham. However, one painting is selling for 600 pounds and the other costs 1000.



She's curious so she asks the gallery owner why there is such a big difference in price.



The owner points to the 1000 pound painting and says, "This one comes with a bottle of wine."

Ham Suck, 2006,
digital screen print,
edition 1 of 4 (+1 AP),
42 x 59 cm.
Courtesy the artist
and Gimpel Fills, London



● **Muntadas & Doug Fishbone** London



Antoni Muntadas continues his decade-long quest to find cultural enlightenment in this new exhibition called *Stand By*. After travelling across the globe, he has discovered we are all sheep. In airports and post offices, museums and bus stops, we are happy to subscribe

to a simple system of order and queue. It's something Doug Fishbone (work pictured) could make a joke out of. His exhibition downstairs offers gags at the touch of a button. Appropriating them from the internet, he draws out a collection of hackneyed one-liners in a deadpan manner. Not content with making our sides ache, he also hustles us for money in an attempt to fund a film project. In a performance as slick as George Hamilton and as shifty as a second car salesman, Fishbone taps his audience for cash: "Go on," he says, "do it for the kids." JL
Gimpel Fils, W1, to Nov 18

Arena O₂ X Club Awards

Talent-spotting the leading performers on the UK's cultural stage



6 Doug Fishbone

With an oeuvre that includes a (real) caged Arab, a self-portrait carved out of kebab meat, and the installation of 30,000 bananas in Trafalgar Square, recent Goldsmiths graduate Doug Fishbone is the best thing to come out of that venerable YBA breeding ground since, well, the YBAs. While his sculptural works have the biting wit of a brilliant one-liner, his videos, such as the sublimely funny *The Ugly American*, are what you'd get if you gave Woody Allen a bag of chronic and a better therapist.

Model army
Fishbone's
Autodancer self-
portrait (below);
Double blind 8-
band by Keith
Wilson (left); the
crowned Arena O₂ X
Club award (above)



WIM DELVOYE

Doug Fishbone, 30,000

Bananas, Trafalgar Square,

London As part of Tom Morton and Catharine Patha's Man in the Holocene project, Fishbone piled thirty thousand bananas in Trafalgar Square on the morning of October 5. At 3 PM, bananas were given away to passersby, just in time to raise their plummeting sugar levels. The work is part seduction, part potlatch or conqueror's gift, and contains odd ghosts that sour its sweetness (I'm reminded of piles of abandoned shoes at Polish railway stations in the 1940s). All the best art involves the squandering of time, or resources, or both.



X Awards ARENA+O₂

Conceptual artist Doug Fishbone has brought a lightness of touch and a rare humour to what is frequently a po-faced genre. In practice, this has seen him dump a mountain of bananas in Trafalgar Square, carve his own head out of a revolving kebab shop 'elephant's leg' and pay an Arabic student to sit inexpensively and caged in the centre of a gallery launch while the canapé-munching crowd milled around him.

Underlying all this artistic tomfoolery is a more serious attempt to use "the language of the mass media to critique some of the more problematic aspects of our culture – greed, violence, pornography and indifference – by using its own delivery of imagery as the basis for the work". And incidentally, after a long stint at Ma Fishbone's house, the kebab-head is doing well in the freezer of the girl he took to the school prom...

What was your highlight of the last year?

"Piling up 30,000 bananas in the middle of Trafalgar Square and watching all the different responses was pretty amazing. It was a wild thing to be able to do, especially in such a fantastic space. I am deeply grateful to all involved."

Who would you have given an award to?

"My friend Tolga Saygin, who is one of the video technicians at Goldsmiths. A very cool guy, who on the quiet is behind much of the art being produced at Goldsmiths. I'd give him a gong."

Doug

Fishbone

Coat by Gucci, shirt and jacket by Berluti, tie by Gucci



From pop to classical music to contemporary art, our critics name the young stars who will make their mark in the coming year

Big in 2008



Yes, we have 30,000 bananas: conceptual artist Doug Fishbone with his work

CONTEMPORARY ART BY BEN LEWIS

DOUG FISHBONE

It's difficult in the overcrowded and derivative world of contemporary art to come up with a new idea, but Doug Fishbone has. The thirtysomething London-resident American is a conceptual stand-up comedian who gives lectures about how confusing life is, illustrated with images found on the internet.

By turns funny, arcane and obscene, he turns the traditional form of spoken academic instruction on its head, manufacturing not clarity but bewilderment.

He first drew attention five years ago by exhibiting a pile of tens of thousands of bananas in Trafalgar Square. Since then, he has produced a range of entertainingly tasteless works that have included exhibiting an Arab-American male in a cage.

Fishbone is not yet a brilliant artist, nor a leading one, but he is on his way, slowly building an increasingly provocative body of works. He is included in *Laughing in a Foreign Language* at the Hayward Gallery, opening 25 January.

Q&A

Doug Fishbone



Most famous for filling Trafalgar Square with 30,000 bananas last year, artist Doug Fishbone has contributed to British Art Show 6, a touring exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1969 and now lives in Hackney, London.

What is your greatest fear?

Oddly enough, sharks. For a New Yorker now living in London, it seems unlikely to be much of an issue, but you never know.

Which living person do you most admire?

My brother Alan – a man of great integrity, humour and intelligence.

What is your favourite word?

I like 'Flod', though it may not be a real word.

What is your greatest extravagance?

I like to travel as much as I can, despite being unable to afford it. I figure that's why the good Lord gave us credit cards.

What makes you depressed?

Lack of inspiration in my work. Unrequited love, too.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Narrow-mindedness. Humourlessness is pretty bad, too.

Who would play you in a movie of your life?

Not sure who could capture the sense of gravitas tinged by a wry wit and my slightly boyish charm... Pierce Brosnan, perhaps? And playing me in my years as an OAP, Sean Connery.

What is your fancy dress costume of choice?

I've always wanted to wear a chicken suit, for some reason.

Cat or dog?

I am allergic to cats, and have always found them a bit distant and aloof – more like tenants with a meal plan than real family members. I like a nice, silly, friendly dog, like a basset hound.

What do you owe your parents?

Everything. Most parents would despair at having a son who took so long to find his path, and who seemed destined to be a bum and a wastrel. My parents never pushed me to do something I hated, and supported me in whatever way they could. I hope I can honour that properly, because it's an enormous and humbling gift.

What is your greatest regret?

Being an artist is a pain in the ass. I should've been a doctor.

What keeps you awake at night?

Voices. Strange voices. Why don't they stop?

Rosanna Greenstreet



As Hirst hits 40, meet new faces of UK art scene

By Arifa Akbar

The new faces of the contemporary British art scene are revealed today – and they hail from countries as far afield as Guyana, Bulgaria and Canada.

The international range of artists selected for the prestigious British Art Show reflects how London's art scene is fast usurping New York and European cities as the place to be.

Launched in 1979 by the Arts Council, the show's aim is to survey the development of British art every five years. This year, the chosen ones were selected from a list of 500 artists living and working in Britain.

The final list of 49 artists unveiled today – a day before the original Young British Artist (YBA) and former *enfant terrible* Damien Hirst turns 40 – incorporates more than 18 different nationalities.

Curators of the exhibition said its diversity was a reflection of how London had become a magnet to growing numbers of international artists who were enriching the scene and re-defining the notion of "Britishness".

Andrea Schlieker, who curated the show alongside Alex Far-

quharson, said the original YBAs had placed London firmly in the centre of the artistic map, yet the new generation were moving away from their legacy.

"This year's artists have made the term 'British' more elastic than any other Art Show. Outside New York, London has become the main centre for gravity in which to live and work. Since the late 1980s, it has become such a magnet for artists and the climate is fantastic," she said.

Among the paintings, sculptures and live performances at this year's show, film and video installations are numerous. Zineb Sedira, who was born in France and is of Algerian heritage, has compiled a film interviewing her parents about the Algerian civil war, while Zarina Bhimji returned to her Ugandan homeland many years after emigrating to make a film. Doug Fishbone, an artist from California who last year created a sculpture in Trafalgar Square made of 30,000 bananas, has made a video which evokes the spirit of the US writer Spalding Gray.

The show is organised by the Hayward Gallery and will tour from Gateshead to Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol from September this year.

▣ Rising stars of contemporary art



▣ DOUG FISHBONE

The 35-year-old, born in New York, said he came to Goldsmiths College, London University, because he was accepted on the Fine Art MA course but "coming to London turned out to be the best decision I ever made". He stayed because there is a vibrant arts scene in Hackney, East London, where he lives, and he

feels that art has "a real importance in London" while New York's scene is larger and possibly more corporate. He is best known for his sculpture called '30,000 Bananas', which he created last year in Trafalgar Square, London. He was awarded the Beck's Futures Student Film and Video Prize last year, and nominated for the prize this year.

▣ ERGIN CAVUSOGLU

Born in Bulgaria in 1968, he graduated from the University of Marmara, Istanbul, in 1994, and from Goldsmiths College, London, a year later. He now lives and works in London and he has had solo shows both in Britain and Turkey. He was short-listed for the Beck's Futures Prize last year for a video installation that included close shots of oil tankers crossing the Bosphorus Strait in the dead of night.



▣ SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS

Born in Breda in the Netherlands, the 33-year-old graduated from Amsterdam in fine art before coming to London to enrol at the Chelsea College of Art & Design in the mid 1990s. Her solo and group shows span across Europe and America and she is known for creating videos of surreal fairy tales. She was last year short-listed for the Beck's Futures Prize for a film about a man waking from a coma in the hospital where he previously masqueraded as a doctor, shot through the mesh of a hamster cage.



▣ DARIA MARTIN

Aged 32, the San Francisco native graduated from Yale in humanities before a degree in art at the University of California in 2000. She describes her films as "like magic acts that show how the trick is done". She has had solo shows in London, including at the Tate Britain, as well as Zurich and was short-listed for the Beck's Futures Prize this year. Her films combine influences from fashion to dance with painting and sculpture.



▣ GORDON CHEUNG

Born in London in 1975, he graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2001. He received the BOC Emerging Artist Award and the Jerwood Drawing Prize last year. He uses computers to construct images and, using a combination of collage, ink, spray paint and computer print-out, translates the images to large-scale canvases. In 2000, he helped to organise Assembly, an exhibition in east London involved more than 170 artists.



You Only Live Twice

★★★☆☆

Fortescue Avenue East End

On the door of No 33 is a notice put up by Jeremy Deller; it reads, 'Anyone found on the premises "on drugs" will be off their heads.' The final show to be curated by Man in the Holocene has a humorous slant; in the case of Annika Eriksson's video 'The Session', I'm not sure that this is intentional, though. Two men sing and play tam-



bourines with four young rappers who bop about behind them, while trying to manoeuvre to the front. The jostling for attention is the most interesting aspect of these Sao Paolo street performers, whose music is somewhat repetitive and banal. In his video 'Pink Space', Peter Land makes a virtue out of ineptitude. A stool awaits the arrival of the performer; a pianist plays easy listening

music as he enters wearing a blue lamé jacket, but dramatically fluffs each arrival. Falling arse over tit, he plummets to the floor. At first his failure is funny but slapstick requires enormous skill and the pratfalls aren't clever or varied enough to keep you watching for long.

Doug Fishbone's jokes are just as excruciating but last longer because they are static; you can revisit them at your leisure. There's the one about the guy who thinks he's obsessed with sex; he goes to a psychiatrist who shows him pictures (a cardboard

box, a TV dinner), but he sees only people making love and accuses the shrink of exposing him to 'dirty pictures'. Fishbone's beautiful presentation elevates this corny joke to the level of a classic. 'Untitled' (pictured) shows a naked man hung like a horse; his prick reaches mid-calf. The image is completely daft but, because of the man's joyous grin, utterly compelling. During the closing party on Friday Oct 21, Fishbone is doing a performance at 7.30pm. Given that he once filled Trafalgar Square with bananas, one wonders what phallic delights will be on offer.

In Sean Landers's mind, sex and fame collide. Drawn onto yellow notebook pages are cartoon characters; one wears a T-shirt reading, 'I ate my own cum.' As a hairy performance artist wanks continually for a month, a speech bubble remarks that, in the past, 'Some good body art was wasted on ugly people.' Is he referring to Vito Acconci or his audience, I wonder? Are you good-looking enough to take it? *Sarah Kent*

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The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2002



Photographs by Andrea Mohin/The New York Times



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

ORANGE YOU GLAD DEPT. BANANA MAN



When people came across the pile of bananas that Doug Fishbone had arranged in the middle of Washington Street, in Brooklyn, the other day, they naturally had a lot of questions. They wanted to know how many bananas Fishbone had used (seventeen thousand), where he had got them (from a wholesaler at Hunts Point Market, in the Bronx), how much he had paid for them (almost seventeen hundred dollars), and whether he intended the pile as art. (He did, but he wasn't particularly insistent on this point.) Many people took one look at the pile and immediately decided that it was time for a snack. When Fishbone's mother, Anita, caught them, she would run over and say, "Excuse me, would you put that back? It's an art exhibit," at which many would be-

come huffy and stalk off. Perhaps not surprisingly, several viewers asked Fishbone whether his mom, too, was supposed to be part of the exhibit. (She was not.)

Fishbone, who is thirty-three and has been told, with some justification, that he resembles Sly Stallone, came up with the banana project, as he calls it, by chance. A few years ago, after working as a financial

adviser at American Express, as a sales rep in the textile industry in Israel, and as a publicist at the firm that manages Luciano Pavarotti, he took a job at a bronze foundry in Queens. Several of his co-workers were from Ecuador, and Fishbone got the idea of going there to live. In the city of Cuenca, he saw a huge pile of plantains being sold by the side of the road as animal feed.



less than twenty-five dollars," Markowitz said, holding up the bunch and giggling. So many people stopped to have their pictures taken next to the bananas that soon the fruit at the edges of the pile was all squished.

In what might be called the conclusion of the banana project, or, alternatively, the beginning of the cleanup effort, Fishbone invites his audience to dismantle the pile. The other day, in the late afternoon, Fishbone and his mother started handing out "I ♥ NY" shopping bags that had been specially purchased for the occasion. Some passersby were bemused; others were downright greedy. A crowd gathered, and someone had the idea of starting a counter-project, a few yards away. As the pile of bananas shrank, a pile of banana peels began to grow. This seemed to fulfill some deep aspiration of Fishbone's. "That's crazy," he said, admiring the peels in the fading light.

—Elizabeth Kolbert

Recently, Fishbone, who is attending art school in London, has begun to branch out into other materials; in September he exhibited a model of his head, sculpted out of gyro meat and twirling on a spit. The piece is being stored in the freezer at his mother's house, in Forest Hills. ("She wants me to throw it out," Fishbone acknowledged.)

For the Brooklyn installation, it took Fishbone more than five hours to arrange the bananas. When he was done, the fruit formed a conical heap nearly six feet high and ten feet in diameter. It was, if nothing else, an arresting sight—exuberantly yellow and yet oddly serene. Washington Street had been blocked off as part of a neighborhood art festival, and at

THE
NEW YORKER

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