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This much I know: Gavin Turk

The artist, 45, on drifting into his trade and living in a prototype world

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Gavin Turk: 'As an artist you have to balance being clever enough to have an idea and stupid enough to make it a reality'. Photograph: Suki Dhanda for the Observer

People tend to attach an artist's place of birth to them, as if where you were born says something about the art you create. It's widely said that I'm Gavin Turk from Guildford, but I actually grew up in Weybridge, Surrey.

There was no "road to Damascus" concerning me becoming an artist. Just a gentle drift into what I do now. I went to art college because I was curious and interested in it, and it just all worked out.

I'm scared of not getting everything done in time. In the minor way and the major way. And there are a lot of things in life that I won't ever get to do: be a weather man on telly, or a fireman – the possibilities lessen as I get older.

My dad always said that you can never have too many friends. It seemed silly at the time, but I realise he was right. There is something to be found in the broad ability to get along with other people.

Art school is absolutely incredible. When I left, I felt that everybody in the country should do an art foundation course before doing anything else. It is a brilliant opportunity for people to think about themselves in a cultural context.

I was gutted when I failed my MA. But in the end it was more of an education not getting it than getting it.

I'm a happy person and I don't get depressed. I went to see a therapist 15 years ago because I felt I should. It didn't go very well, although I did feel better when I realised that I didn't need to have therapy.

It's a careful balance being an artist. Being clever enough to have an idea and stupid enough to go ahead and actually make the idea a reality. It always surprises me when I join things in my head to form an idea. It's normally when I'm doing something else – driving, listening to the radio or brushing my teeth.

I care what my peers think of my work. Art is a dialogue – a living, growing, breathing language – and it's great to have people around who you can have that conversation with.

My family is a little gang. I've been with my partner Deborah since college, and having children early [aged 23] took the pressure off. Deborah and I always give one another space to grow and change.

There was a separation between me as a person and me as an artist in the early days. As time has gone on, my personal life and my art life have intertwined – it's much more difficult for me to step out of myself.

We live in strange times. The fact that we can access things very quickly means that they don't get much time to be tried and tested. We're living in a prototype world and we are the guinea pigs.

Feel free to name hospitals, schools and libraries after me. Maybe even a museum or two. I'd like to be remembered well when my time comes.

The nastiest thing anybody has ever said to me? "You can't park there."

Gavin Turk is showing new work in his show [Gavin & Turk at Ben Brown Fine Arts \(benbrownfinearts.com\)](#) until 20 April

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