

Series: My week

## My week Gavin Turk

The Young British Artist on his new show at Tate Modern, a hilarious lunch with fellow artists and his upcoming work with fairy tales

The Observer, Sunday 11 October 2009

 Jump to comments (0)

I've been sulking for much of the week, because my scooter – my beautiful scooter – has been stolen again from outside my house in east London. I have the privilege, at least, of being able to use the national press as a big notice-board for getting the scooter back. So here goes: it is a black Vespa 50 with a GT sticker in place of the usual GB version – number plate LK05CWX.

If you have seen it, please contact the *Observer* or, indeed, the police. The stickers are an artwork I originally made for an Art Car Boot Fair in 2007. The conceit at the time was to sell 12 signed and stickered old dented car boots (literally a car boot sale, geddit?) from the back of my van – a van that has also been sadly stolen.

My sculpture "Pop" is in the show Pop Life, Art in a Material World, which has just opened at [Tate Modern](#) – not yet stolen, as far as I can tell. The show has, it seems, been pushing back the edge of the cultural envelope a bit too far.

The police's obscene publications squad has been on a visit (encouraged by some newspaper coverage apparently) and had to close down part of the show, a red room containing a text and an appropriated photograph of naked 10-year-old Brooke Shields, taken originally in the Seventies by ad photographer Gary Gross. Artist [Richard Prince](#) photographed this photograph in 1983 and presented it as an artwork with the title *Spiritual America* with a text that explained the image as a metaphor for America.

Since then, Prince has become one of the most celebrated artists of his generation and the artwork has been shown throughout the world, appearing in countless art publications. So I was really surprised when this rather regressive action occurred and wondered – forgive my cynicism – whether it wasn't slightly pleasing to the Tate's marketing department.

The artists' lunch was a hilarious affair. [Jeff Koons](#), [Maurizio Cattelan](#), [Tracey Emin](#) and myself found ourselves rather self-consciously seated in the public Tate restaurant.

This perhaps inspired the rather strange behaviour over lunch, which instead of consisting of intelligent conversation with our contemporaries – perish the thought – ended up in a performance artwork.

Our complementary show catalogues – the catalogue has now also been withdrawn; missing items are obviously a theme of the week – were passed around in a private social experiment of book signing as we all (initiated as I remember by [Maurizio Cattelan](#)) got each other to sign or doodle in each other's books. Something of an anthropological curiosity to put it kindly, I'd imagine, for the rest of the public looking on.

The show traces the legacy of [Andy Warhol's](#) kind of pop art through various different tendrils. I was pleased to be included, even if the room where the work is showing is titled "the almost infamous YBA's" – which is a bit of a puzzle. (Should we feel insulted? Not that I want to add to my sulking...)

The works of mine in the show are from the early Nineties. I have since then made many pieces which even more directly reference Warhol, including a 2m sq me as Andy, a camouflage self-portrait wearing a super spiky Andy fright wig.

But this work didn't make it into the show. The irony about the piece which they *did* include is that it is addressing a cultural preoccupation with nostalgia – which has now become some of the stuff of nostalgia itself.

Last week also took me down to the Essex-Suffolk coastline to visit various sites that have fallen under my gaze as the so-called "Lead Artist" for the contemporary phenomenon of an art-inspired "regeneration" project. We could call this the "Gormley Effect", an attempt to bring culture and creativity to places and sites that have been targeted for regeneration.

A buzz word that keeps being mentioned is "sustainability" which sometimes seems so distant from the market-driven global art world. My challenge is to balance this local community action with my knowledge of international art "dialogues". All the while without pandering to the government desire to turn the whole of Britain into a giant tourist theme park. That'll be simple then...

To Knebworth, on Friday, for a meeting about a possible House of Fairy Tales residency next summer. The House of Fairy Tales is a project that my partner, [Deborah Curtis](#), and I set up to reinvent real, live, active experiences for children and young people in this world of computers, health and safety and the aforementioned national theme park.

This year, we have taken our travelling art circus all over the country introducing thousands of families to – we hope – the absurd, surreal and catchingly playful. This beautiful venue of Knebworth is ripe for reinvention as a magical world of play and discovery because [Robbie Williams](#), [Metallica](#) et al have embedded it in the public consciousness as a rock venue for the masses (this association will no doubt go down very well with the teenagers).

Unfortunately, I forgot that I was supposed to be meeting some Korean collectors at my studio that morning – I trust they managed to cope with their disappointment at not being shown the art by the artist himself. And I just made it back to London in time to help judge the [Saatchi New Sensations](#), showing in London at [Rochelle school](#), [Arnold Circus](#), east London, where we discussed, as you do, the nuances and agendas of emerging artists.

[Deborah](#) and I might ask some of them to come and take part in our next event at the [New Art Gallery Walsall](#) at Halloween. Artists need to interact directly with the general public, at least sometimes – ideally, it's about loving the whole audience not just the art world.

Perhaps the highlight of my cultural week was an evening spent visiting the newly opened [Museum of Everything](#) space in [Primrose Hill](#), a refreshing display of unfashionable work by "outsider" artists and the opening of [Victor Wynd's](#) [Last Tuesday Society](#) shop with its museum of curios for sale in the basement. And then there was the "psychological" installation of artworks at the [Freud Museum](#) in [Camden](#), north London. Consider this tour of quirky shows a great starter for the overblown medieval banquet otherwise known as the [Frieze Art Fair](#).

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### The Turk CV

The Life Born in Guildford in 1967. Attended Royal College of Art. Lives in London with his partner, artist [Deborah Curtis](#), and their children

The Work From the start of his career, the focus has been himself. At the Royal College of Art, he received no degree because his final show contained only a blue heritage plaque to himself, though it provoked the interest of [Charles Saatchi](#), and a leading place among the Young British Artists.