



English version

Denis Brun creates collage and assemblage. He also makes “soft paintings”, covered in skins of transparent plastic under which are secured tickets, flyers and little souvenirs of daily life. Denis Brun sews and sticks together pieces of cloth and shiny sticky tape which turn into dresses for men and women. He writes short stories and takes photos. He samples and composes music on computers. He also makes videos.

For the artist, there is no hierarchy in all these approaches. He says that “each one gives in its own way a means of apprehending reality, each one brings its own specific torment.” In spite of this declared equality, the video seems to hold a particular place, perhaps because it is “a medium which has not yet been ossified.”

The series entitled ‘The shortest path from the weather vane to the satellite’, throws perhaps the best light on the rigorous exactingness on which the artist’s system of interlocking pieces is based.

Representative of three successive stages, this group of videos also shows that the medium is ideally suited for the exploration of a field that Denis Brun favours: the zone of interaction between the self and the collective imagination – between the film that I play in my head and the events which I consciously and unwittingly absorb from the outside world.

To start with, the artist has set himself strict rules in order to protect his field of exploration from the excesses of “the self”. The first video, ‘My Lost Paradise’, has the haiku as its model: a very short time span, and an encounter of sounds and images coming from different sources. Another constraint: the sources are ready-made, and the image is treated in low-fi: with a thin re-recording in black and white the video loses all immediacy in favour of recollective impressions. A stroboscopic effect is created by the over-presence of the structure of the narrative, which takes the place of the story it announces. Here, this device cuts any narrative thread, but not the sensation of a narrative; in the same way, the ready-made sources in no way erase the feeling that a certain subjectivity is at work (a subjectivity which dreams of the skaters amazing liberty): An “I” is constructed from this information, information which it receives as so many blows. The following sequence of videos retains most of these principles but progressively opens up to a more supple temporality, enabling the deployment of narrative functions : because it is indeed the workings of the narration that emerge in

their full diversity , and not the linearity of causal stories. Freestyle Mental 99 and “Petite Mutinerie du Printemps” last for the duration of pieces of well known music (by James Brown, by Kraftwerk), with the whole gamut of personal and collective emotions that their popularity carries. Contrary to the promotional production of a musical clip which must reinforce the aura of a group or singer, the images of the two videos have been chosen with “objective” occurrences in mind: television news, scientific documentaries. As we can also see in the next video ‘Doppelganger’, these images, disconnected from their commentary, reinvested with emotionally charged sonority, call out to each other and outline narrations that fade away or collide together. These images do not in any way create a hierarchy between surprise, feelings of loss or speed, hurricanes, knowledge, fiery clouds, the tempo of Kraftwerk, the sexy voice of James Brown, or the playful rehearsal of a lesson. Behind the scientific images, an artistic vision develops a world of catastrophes and phantasmagoria which questions the role of man in a microscopic existence, and in a planetary macrocosm.

Both ‘Doppelganger’ and ‘The And’, are more ample than the precedent videos, and graft musical compositions and personal images onto television or film extracts in the manner of cadavres exquis. Texts are fitted in, as is colour itself, rather like the news or ads on the surface of an uncertain awareness, suggesting a sense in order to gain reason. Opening onto an interspace between conscience and fantasy, these videos nevertheless contain lucid and humorous distancing. For example the flying saucer which has come as if to puncture terrestrial elements, appears to be an amusing metaphor of scientific observation. In ‘The And’; this observation takes the form of Robert Smith’s insistent eye, a Robert Smith who is so animal behind his mane , but so human with his art of stratagems (make-up). As for the woman who moves in an unsettled sleep, she becomes the screen on which the meteorology of the human mind can be visualised, and also perhaps a figure of the video itself, both a producer of fantasies and a support for the projections. In a certain manner, Denis Brun’s videos update the surrealist quest in their syncopated, layered, broken-up narrations, which intermingle the imaginary, from science to science-fiction, from skate to punk.

Sylvie Coellier
*In Prêts à Prêter: Acquisitions
and activity report 2000/2004*

PERPETUAL WONDER PROJECT
By TOSHIRO BISHOKO

This attempt to reflect on an object – or how to create neo-minimalism using four cider bottle corks (2) and a cheap vase (1) – produced for a design competition which I didn’t go in for, was transformed as time went on:

Into a recomposed still-life (3) for the needs of a photo, into a recyclable post-Halloween lamp (4 and 5), into a digital painting (6) that was never printed. The unmentionable, and not yet healed, goal of this initial project: to produce millions of copies of the vase, conquer the Asian market and get rich.

Toshiro Bishoko was born straight off at the age of 17, in general indifference and the cotton-wool secrecy of a false veterinary clinic specialising in artificial insemination.

At this time there was already talk of an extra-terrestrial plot , although the real extent wasn’t really known, and it was in this unstable geo-political context that TB was immediately abandoned by his Belgian/Burundi mother (Helen Steinbock) resident in Anvers, Belgium , and his Mexican/Porto-Rican father (Ricardo Reyes) living in Silver Lake L.A.

With a heavy heart and a light spirit, he wandered around Paris, London, Warsaw, listening to the Sparks and the Buzzcocks. He discovered Warhol, Haring and Basquiat while decoding Actuel – he was then dazzled by the work of Diane Arbus and John Coplans, and filched their catalogues from the library at the Villa Saint-Clair in Sète. From then on he never stopped painting and photographing, all the while hoping that it would go on for ever.

Settling in Nice in the 90’s, he met his master (Ben Vautier), then his adoptive Japanese grandmother (Yoko Gunji), and his paternal grandfather (Joseph Mailland). They taught him the art of ceramics, the fundamentals of video, the laws of perspective and the techniques of flat tints of black acrylic paint. A friend of Hélène Arnaud, he adopted the psychobilly look while at the same time

listening to the last electrolysergic echoes of Summer of Love 1988. He also learnt off by heart the Inrockuptibles during the five years that it was published, and parodied Bukowski in his university room. It was while reading Céline or Hubert Selby Jr, under the benevolent eye of Jean-Pierre Arson, that he started to experiment with a cocktail of alcohol/tranquilisers/MDMA. He did so with as much enthusiasm as was his admiration for Christian Bernard, who was already a prophet in his country.

In 1997 he left to take refuge in Anvers and Brussels, after surviving a Stendhal syndrome.

It was in March 2000 that I became aware of TB through the intermediary of a radio host who, in order to illustrate what he was saying, suddenly invented “Toshiro Bishoko” as an illustration of a Japanese disc-jockey who had just arrived in Paris for a gig , and whose name he had forgotten.

From then on I associated this disincarnated “Toshiro Bishoko” with the author of a story that I had just finished writing in a moment of boredom and with certain non-assumed literary pretensions.

This first founding text was published by the Inrockuptibles a few months later, in the reader’s section, which made me very proud of myself and of my new invisible friend.

Later I published other texts, more or less auto-fictional or pseudo-journalistic, signed TB, which have been forgotten forever or published in Spore.

Hiding behind this name, I suddenly had access to a means of creation that I had forbidden myself to use up to then.

So I decided to continue to write under this pseudonym, and also to give the pseudo certain technical competences in an “uninhibited Warholianesque “ approach to object production, potentially profit making concepts, or concepts that were simply on the ‘outer edge’ of the artistic sphere, in a “noble” and “classic” sense .

In November 2000, a friend (Gauthier Tassart) sent me a sound sampling programme “Sound Edit” which I feverishly installed on my computer, a Power Mac 8100.

I used it first to make a musical creation commissioned by Gilles Barbier, and then, almost in an obsessive way, I used it to make experimental electronic pieces, naïve and dream-like, which quickly ended up on: “Can’t buy me glo-hove” Prince de Bontempi ®, Toshiro Bishoko’s first self-produced album. The months went by, the second album arrived fast, and by the fourth album I had also passed the entrance exam for the Marseille Conservatoire, in the electro acoustic section, in Pascal Gobin’s class.

I was at last going to learn how to LISTEN, while the musical path of TB and Denis Brun gradually combined in a joyful wide-spectre sonorous schizophrenia, spreading itself not only across video, but also performances and audio cds.

I had three years of acousmatic happiness at the Conservatoire, and in June 2004 I left for a residence-ship of six months in Los Angeles, where I met a Japanese musician-stylist (Lun*na Menoh) who was married to an essential figure of the Los Angeles underground movement (Tosh Berman). I collaborated on a collection that she recomposed from different clothing sources, and which Toshio Bishoko decorated with serigraphs in the final phase. Boosted by this new energy, I created a series of T-shirts and shirts reprinted by TB, that were bought second-hand, sold in my work-shop or by word of mouth , or at Tetsu's in a creator's boutique in Hollywood. Meanwhile, TB shook hands with Marilyn Manson after queuing for six hours for the group's autograph on a red maxi-picture of Personnel Jesus.

The following week he was at the last concert of the American tour "Lest we forget", before leaving for San Diego. There he met by chance Ween's drummer, who enabled him to see the concert by getting his name down on the guest list at the last moment in exchange for a TB t-shirt.

Back from the Los Angeles residence-ship, I stopped off in Belgium where I had a very good restaurant owner friend (Laurent Olivès) and had led an almost double life for several years. I stayed there regularly in order to think, cycle, do collages, drawings, or just simply live under the special light of the North and disappear in the country-side of this doubly flat country. Two friends of friends, incorrigible night owls who weren't very given to sleeping, one from the fashion world and the other from a novel by Bret Easton Ellis, suggested that I do whatever I liked to add an arty touch to their hip restaurant, Easy Tempo.

Toshio Bishoko accepted their offer and suggested three luminous white caissons representing the face of a 60's top model, in black and white over three different coloured bases. A heavy allusion to pop-art and to the Generation X aesthetics of the retro-sixties record jacket of the 80s. The installation that was set up bears the same name as TB's last album: Fashion-victimism, and had a very favourable reception from the clients.

Back in Marseille, Toshio Bishoko finished his tenth album and founded 'Damned und Herren' with Sandy Ohmygod! and produced for Borderline Calling, a unique concert of Proto-Music at the Usine in Istres, with three

other experimentally diverse formations. At the very moment that I write this text, I have no idea exactly where TB is, but at the slightest indecision of my creative integrity, he will jump in the first plane, train or bus he can find, and go where I cannot go.

"It is sweet , when one is safely on the shore, to see the sea, wild in the storm, take out it's anger on the unfortunate; not that the misfortune of others gives pleasure , but because it is always pleasant to be but the witness of ills that we do not share."

Lucretius, *Of Nature*

Denis Brun 2007.

Low-couture

When I ask people to wear my dresses during inaugurations, I feel as if I am creating a sham (not discreet enough to pass without notice, but almost...) and to be playing the part of a false stylist who is explaining his work to anyone who wants to listen.

Sometimes I have the impression that it is dangerous to want to parody the fashion world using the under cover of art.

Effectively, people believe me capable of technical exploits which are above my capabilities, far removed from my artistic preoccupations, whereas I simply want to construct collections by hand and get them worn at inaugurations, and then present the dresses that have been worn, as sculptures. If I repeat the same movements and recreate using the same pattern over and over again, it is with the determination to fix time on a piece of clothing. Little by little, it loses its first use which is to dress in the most flattering way possible, and becomes "penetratable matter" in which the body continues to express itself very simply.

In the same way, the dress keeps its identity without the automatic application of a "representation/body/clothes" synthesis in its most common evocative and restrictive sense.

Photographs

I have a relationship with photography of pure pleasure, in the sense that I pass my time taking photos mentally, which means that I don't necessarily have a camera to hand but that I am nearly continuously in the situation of a photographer who is on the look out. When the context allows it, I take the photograph in the most spontaneous, fast, and joyful way possible.

The subject matter of my photographs, when it isn't auto portraits, is made up of diverse scenes from which potential narratives can stem. In both cases, it reflects very subjectively a state of mind that is often close to that which I have when I am working on videos, composing my dreamlike fictions. Effectively, I am interested in the evocation of an imaginary world, approaching reality from a different angle, in keeping with a dreamlike tradition on which my work has been hinged for a long time.

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SK8

I have been collecting sk8s since 1996; and beyond a certain fetishism that is totally (?) assumed, and which is a result of a boundless love of skateboards linked to the "old-school" ideology (skating for skating's sake), and to the old-fashioned and joyful spirit of rebellion in both appearance and behaviour, and....to two long years of waiting before I had my first skate board, I consider the object of my dreams to be an almost perfect modern urban vehicle. Not only does it give a distanced posture, slightly above the tarmac, but also a certain freedom in its use, because it can have both a decorative and a sportive value. What is more, it is not only "autonomous" in relation to the rider, but the wooden support decorated with serigraphic motifs will be even more interesting after being ill treated for numerous hours on certain "spots"....

DB

Blue Wednesday, le reste est ailleurs Or the terrible vacuity of a mental monologue.

In truth, I have never chosen a film subject. I have let ideas enter my head, grow and develop; I have taken notes and more notes, and at the instant when I felt myself suffused: forward march ... It's a way of going on, not by choice or by adoption, but by progressive invasion.

Extract from François Truffaut's *Correspondence*.

As far as I'm concerned, the progressive invasion has been going on for 35 years, which doesn't stop me from being a fervent disciple of intellectual laziness and gratuitous contemplation. I enjoy understanding approximately things that are inherent to my life as an artist and to life in general, it allows me to advance, groping, in concentric circles, towards an opaque and moving vanishing point. I often have the impression of passing from one idea to another, stopping sometimes at a medium without however investing in it totally. But in fact, why should I legitimise the present instant by fixing it in a creative approach that is so standardised that it would become yet another plastic affirmation in a world that continually spews up sense and nonsense? Has not freefall, at least in galactic obscurity, far more exciting properties than a simple turn on a round-about in a fun fair which leaves you with an aftertaste of frustration, mixed with a "post-popcornian" desire to throw up?

No, clearly, I only know how to do one thing naturally , and that is "global remixing", the experimental synthesis of ideas, forms, colours and sound ,in real-time with sometimes an improvised recording session which is immediately put away and listed , and is taken out later, when the time is right for a creative attempt .

Over time, all the more or less successful artistic projects form a landscape which we can apprehend in different ways, according to the angle we view it from, and the season in which it takes place.

Viewed from above, I could also look like a character playing at planes by himself, arms outstretched, eyes wide, ears on alert, murmuring an electro-bucolic refrain that everyone has already forgotten. Clearly, the plane isn't the best way to keep ones feet on the ground, but why walk in the direction that inevitably leads to the same exit as your next door neighbour?

I hope that you understand this; I do not

particularly want to consider my work globally, at the moment this does not interest me, and the less I know the more I do without having the impression of doing it. While at the same time I tell myself that I am doing something terribly important but that I don't understand it. I do not like working, I get bored very quickly, and because of this I find myself with a diverse production, made out of pain, fragile and more or less finished, and which I don't really know what to do with. Nihilism I write your name. I am literally overwhelmed by doubt, growing doubts, about the advance and the pertinence of the artistic projects I have undertaken over these past years. However, one thing I feel is certain, and that is that it is impossible for me to stop my ceaseless search in redefining the frontiers of my mental universe, using the mediums of drawing, sewing, collage, writing, murals, painting, video, vestimentary action or performances. I try to create a vocabulary of objects, forms, images, sounds or attitudes which will be able to show my moral state at that moment, the understanding I have of myself at the very instant that I am thinking of or doing things. Effectively, it is pure subjectivity that motivates me when I catch a passing idea and try and customise it, in order to make it compatible with a whole stable of rickety metaphors, of spicy tales or naïve images. But already at this level of representation, the main sense which might appear in my work (this sense that I cannot name, this semantic matrix, this plastic soul recorded under X or in a "dossier without a title"), only appears pre-recorded. The precious dimension, rare, euphoric, the dimension that I feel when I find a new idea, is no more than a far off echo. The only thing left for me then is a solution of replacement to use as an interface between my conscience and the exterior: it is the "if" or "it looks as if".

Yes, I use with conviction and from a very early age, the schizophrenic functions of my mind, those that haven't learnt to communicate conventionally with the outside world and which only have my two hands to express themselves. Could I have done anything else but art? What is the point of knowing, as apart from the pleasing side of DIY, using everything and anything, and being aware that it could be good, or interest someone other than me, there is a state of survival that I try to maintain in order to push back the desire of death which underpins my artistic and human equilibrium.

No, I am no more prone to suicide than Ian Curtis, Kurt Cobain, Nicolas de Stael, or any other person who smokes too much, drinks too much, eats too much, and watches TF1 more than thirty seconds a day. My work

takes its roots in a past that was no more than an absolute attempt to escape from a vulgar and insipid reality. Because of this, the accumulation of creative desires that unconsciously filled me during the first half of my life, could logically have only found an outlet in the domain of the arts in the very largest sense of the term.

And as we are touching on the slippery slopes of the anecdote, I can give you a last "freestyle" figure in a 100% "old-school" spirit: at four years old I decided to paint some enormous wood shavings in sky blue to give to my mother as a present. I was so certain of the beauty and the power of these large three dimensional commas that I quickly forgot the little interest they would cause when they would be given. The important thing in my eyes was to make something different with what was to hand, the rest, that is everything else, had little importance. I managed to extract myself from my own conscience, and at last I was in communion with the odours, a colour, and forms. The sincerity of this first artistic approach, as strong and naïve as it was did not derogate from a pitiless rule evoked by Marcel Duchamp himself: in order to make art, sincerity is not enough, my housekeeper is sincere, but that does not make her an artist.

But the quest for sensations in creation still guides my artistic research in those fields that constitute the basis of an imaginary world, a world lived from inside, dedicated to the dream in all its aspects, and rejecting all kinds of general moods or ways of doing things.

To live and create by default, that is my credo. To try to develop an approach generated by uncertainty, and of which the mobile anchoring points are in keeping with both empiric reality and congenital hallucinations. At this little game one is never totally disappointed, and to end, I will conclude with a last quote by the situationist Raoul Vaneigem, taken from his 'Traité de savoir vivre à l'usage des jeunes generations' published in 1967: the show is over, the audience stands. Looks for their coats to go home, turns around, no more coats, and no more homes.

Denis Brun

Marseille 28th January 2002

Autofiction Sound System

As both a road movie character filmed under the Californian sun , and an ultimate fan of the dark suicidal pop music of the 80's, Denis Brun draws a self-portrait at the Centre for Contemporary art in Istres , in which opposite identities are reunited in a schizophrenic form of creativity. A programme that is prolonged by Videochroniques, with the projection of his videos at the Miroir.

In the clip 'Enjoy the Silence' (Depeche Mode), we can see the 'king' Dave Gahan carrying a pathetic chaise-longue, wandering alone in a desert kingdom, admiring magnificent landscapes. Denis Brun has chosen it as the title of his exhibition at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Istres, finding in it a sort of self-portrait. A voyage around my home studio? An enormous sheet of painted paper, photocopied and stuck to the wall displays his self-portrait like a poster, making one think of all those who have in the past mimed a musician in front of a mirror: dressed in a rock-garage outfit, in a robotic position, his reflection is fragmented by three mirrors, the face is erased. All identities are available – schizophrenia as a method: to make no choice today between painting and video, between the skaters and the Goths in an 80's secondary school yard, between adolescence and adulthood.

Opposite, Denis Brun has placed a joyously funereal oeuvre, a sort of clover which declines the head of Robert Smith of The Cure , and which is covered with a cemetery of plastic flowers – a fan’s commemoration he” buried once more the person he was the day before”. So then, there is an identity to be reinvented, or rather to be borrowed, in order to fill a vacuum. As soon as one goes in, one discovers an engraving from the middle ages of child Siamese twins with Marilyn Manson’s head divided in two, post-nuclear bodies which return like an obsessive fear of youth, “Flee from me, I’m following you...” (The more you ignore me, the closer I get, title borrowed from Morrissey). Yet the gothic singer is an “adopted” kid of Los Angeles, the sunny Californian town, which Denis Brun fantasised about for a long time, until a recent trip when he filmed ‘Drive this Way’, a physical and sonorous drifting, mixing home, road and teen movie .A town where one doesn’t walk, a town which has created a whole mythology around the car, and where the skate board was invented – this form of surfing on concrete appeared on a wave-less day in Venice Beach. It is the point of impact

in 'Ride this Way', a double video projection of a round trip on a skate board, a way of integrating its own mythology in the décor. How can something that was no more than an idealised projection be appropriated? By adding one's own fiction, following the example of this skater of whom only the black outline on a white background remains alongside palm trees under a sequined sky. (Death in Venice). A phantasmic presence in a summer décor: Denis Brun has chosen not to choose between opposing universes. He has covered the art centre stair ramp with wax – a gesture used in skateboarding to facilitate sliding, and over-played here to the point of making us think of a gothic church mass (SK8 Goth Waxing Mood). A universe which is continued in a little metallised room, where one can hear bird song and the story of the lunatic Billy Name, who slept in the toilets of Warhol's Factory. Over and above the endless "mixing" of references – which has become a pre-wrapped discourse in art – or of yet another post pop chapter, Denis Brun appropriates a form of self-portrait which is closer to a narcissism displayed in the field of pop music rather than an art which would repress ego and pathos." My work simply takes root in a past that was only an attempt to escape from a vulgar and insipid reality". A time that no doubt is associated with the albums that punctuate the exhibition (signed New Order, Bauhaus, Joy Division, Neon Judgement...), and which are drawn recto verso on plastic bags, under the neon light of a New Wave. And yet the Californian sunlights cohabit with suicidal urges. Digital paintings with abstract light show colours are placed opposite a strange piece of piano-furniture, a black box with no other opening than that given by the sound of piano punk dating from late adolescence, and which is never ending.

Pedro Morais
In *Ventilo* February 2006

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During the exhibition “OUTSIDING” at the Logoscope in Monaco in January 2001, Toshiro Bishoko’s first album was played non-stop in the framework of a visual and sound installation, on a mini-disk player, on a loudspeaker baffle made out of a petrol can. I had just integrated music as such in my artistic production, by using it as a sound link, a producer of active ambiance, complementing and adding to the underlying narrations.

When it comes to editing, Denis Brun is an artist hyped up by Granolas®: on the one hand because the creative seething which invades him and the time limit, allow him to eat nothing but those little biscuits. On the other hand because he is just simply a hyper artist, hooked rather on imaginary and fictional substances. Hyperactive, schizophrenic? That fits as well, and it is not his fictional alter-ego Toshiro Bishoko who would tell you the contrary. Often led, especially through this character, to imagine the New wave youth which he would have liked to have lived, Denis Brun has though, nothing to envy in the non- conformity of this fashion. At least with regard to his artistic and therefore personal path. He was first a pupil at the Villa Saint Clair in Sète, a fan of Combas and Di Rosa, and then a pupil at the Villa Arson in Nice. A lover of coloured figurative painting, before abandoning it for all possible and imaginable mediums, he was also at the Marseille Conservatoire in the electro-acoustic class. All this was interspersed with artistic residencies, notably in Los Angeles, which was a minimum for a fan of urban 80's culture with a leaning towards the skate and the Cure. Fan Club 3000 is an understatement: multiple influences make his work explode, and these influences are carried by pure fascination which once digested turns his creation into a unique experience. His ubiquity and his sensitivity have allowed him to distance himself from the literality of 3bisf, in order to better extract his spiritual potential, his disquieting but fascinating strangeness. This shift has been guided by Denis Brun's wider approach to spatiotemporal digressions, furtive yet decisive moments and ports of call, and which result in the transformation of a hospital into a lynchian motel. Denis Brun's oeuvres are therefore the result of a double wager: that of a long project of artistic research guided by curiosity and cultural fascination, and that of artistic coincidences, of "Duchampian" chance – in other words the unsuspected and creative encounter between plastic and visual data. Haunting the spaces of 3bisf, Denis Brun's video creations and monumental installations, cohabit in an unexplained but coherent manner, a manner that is both fictional and sensitive. Denis Brun is a fascinated and fascinating experimentalist, an artist who works to reduce the space between the different thresholds from which the world can be apprehended.

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Self-portraits.

It was when I was doing several self-portraits in a hotel room in Lisbon in 1997, that I officially made the decision to become an artist. It was above all a question of seeing myself exist, and to be in keeping with the application of a classical subject, while at the same time "protecting" myself from a non-artistic reality.

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Multi-frame photocopies

In the field of the multi-frame photocopy, and as sources of my visual discourse, I use images that I enlarge by 1000% and stick to the wall like wall-paper. This wall-drawing technique enables me to visually establish certain reference marks based on original drawings or images borrowed from my daily life, from adverts, from magazines, and to create a mood, a semantic bath, which perhaps helps (or not..) the global understanding of my production , however disparate it is. In the long term, beyond the exhibition or its' social effect, through the use of the multi-frame photocopy I can create a re-exploitable link between the various other oeuvres that make up my universe.

DB

Acrylic painting 1

Free representation, via 80's society magazines, incited me to paint during the first three years of my studies. The very naïve approach that I had to this medium wasn't satisfying enough for me to make it my favourite subject. In fact I completely forgot it when (horrifyingly) I found that I had the same sensation when painting a vulgar chair as I had when I was working on a blank canvas. Later, I found an ersatz of pleasure in painting, while experimenting with Photoshop. I therefore decided to reproduce in acrylic medium on canvas, my digital drawings, which were made up of flat tints and simple forms. I photographed the computer screen with a slide film in the camera, and then I projected the slide on the canvas, but without success. It was only when I reproduced the faults of the shot as well as the digital drawing that I came to the conclusion that it was impossible for me to pass with impunity from one medium to another without removing or adding something to the "pictorial defector". This attempt to continue painting is still very important, and enables me to rework my relationship with colour in a joyously regressive way.

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Acrylic painting 2

When I photographed the skaters at Venice beach, I always had in mind Franck Romero's paintings that I had discovered at the MOCA in San Diego – I decided to reproduce some of the photos in paintings, following a principal that I had been thinking about for years: introducing into the image, zones where the tones changed, and using varnish as a coloured extension, positioning it vertically on horizontal bands, thus producing a chromatic grille.

DB

An extract from *LOzLA*
A residence-ship report.

Opinions about objects that don't have any opinions

In order to kill a sub-culture, the extent of the difference that the subculture expresses, must be reduced to a homogenous state by trivialising its' nature. ¹

It was while he was in residence in Santa Monica, California, that Denis Brun (re)learnt how to do things. A double return to the roots happened, and produced a series of hand made paintings, and another series created on the computer. If the first series is a preparation linked to the move to another creative space, then the second series is a sort of consequence of this, the movement of a journey in the troubled waters of American culture. Does this mean that there is a line of causes and consequences in Denis Brun's so very varied work? Can one seriously believe that a journey can influence an artistic project and constitute the origin of an artist's fictional world?

First of all there is the culture, that of Denis Brun's American adolescence, which is made up of a universe full of images that have been unstuck, recycled, reassembled and finally relocated. Then there is the manner in which the now floating images are organised or rather territorialised. It is at this precise moment of interaction that the artist comes up with different faces. For the out and out wanderer who, discovering a new universe every second, congruent with his own, interior, in constant upheaval, and that of the street that has to be understood step by step , there develops a certain state of mind which helps to alleviate the entropy. The use of recycled supports in his soft paintings, where heterogeneous objects are placed in collages, rejoins a chaotic organisation of space which is at the very limits of excess. Therefore then, a spatial system must be reconstructed, and over-abundance must be redefined by recycling, which pre-supposes a certain degree of loss. In short, a wealth of abundance opposes a concern of the minimum. The use of recycled forms is balanced by the artist's eye. Collecting becomes his new activity, constituting an appropriation process where, in recording mode, the imaginary mixes with collective spaces. Collecting the dross of common culture amounts to finding a support on which the imaginary can flower, and when all is said and done, provides material that can be cultivated. It is here that two notions become part of the creative field, the notion of belonging to a given culture, and the misleading notion of the sense that one can

find within it.

From Marseille to Santa Monica, since the start of the so badly named concept of globalisation, in trying to bring men and their cultures up to the same level, we listen to the same Marilyn Manson, but in different ways. In the same manner, the use of a pasting technique multiplies superposition, but makes the image more and more unstable. In the series 'Death in Venice', the areas of colour delimit the images, referring back to their role as motifs, a flat décor where backdrops and forms merge. The black line then plays a major role. It separates the surfaces and makes the space of the sheet of paper breathe. A white margin stands out, opening a spatial and neutral interspace, between sky and earth, between painting and drawing, just like the guard-rail which outlines the contours of urban culture. Writing becomes the element of connections, animating the shapeless chaos of the street and the images it projects. In this way, Denis Brun finds in the ultimate figure of the skateboarder, the person who actually navigates, between the margins of the culture that he appropriates and the culture he recreates, in the spaces lining the streets.

The image can become a simple logo, functioning as an independent signature, like the graffiti that the artist takes from comic books, in the effigy of the death's head. By reinventing the simple black line, in the overlapping of universes frozen in the moment of flight, the representation of death plunges the lineation into a feeling of doubt about its identity: "Skateboarding could perhaps survive on black and white pages, without all the gloss and colour of advertising campaigns for surf clothes".²

Writing linked to skateboarding (, the frustrated figure of a surfer when there are only small waves,) is born on the pages of those magazines which would want to transform the town into a skate park. Formats become evident for Denis Brun. Whether they be newspapers where the print merges with the free line, plastic bags which have become patterns, or customised T-shirts, the whole of it is but a subject for his inventiveness. The painter, who covers pre-existing surfaces in order to show even denser palimpsests, is on the same line as the graffiti artist. The urban space is deconstructed as the intervention takes its course, and forms a strange film. It is the film of *Mort a Venice*, where, through too tight a helmet oozing haemoglobin, one can see a series of sequences in which the passer-by's vision is blurred.

Denis Brun seems therefore to have this blurring of vision twice. In Santa Monica, the land of his fallen heroes, he finds those

beautiful losers who have their skateboards tilted towards inconsistent reflections³ and who finally do exactly what they want. Spiderman exclaims "I don't give a fuck...shit", his faded hero's costume contrasts with the red jet that he throws. Has he, like the artist, given up a long time back his role of saviour of humanity, by adding a reverse comic side to his character? It is from this fall of the hero, that for Denis Brun begins a return, not to painting as this has already happened, but to its' pictorial quality. The term seems abstruse, but is legitimised by the technique that is used. This consists of digital paintings, made on the computer, following a process of manipulation of forms and colours, which gives an autonomous and balanced result in the artist's eyes. Each composition is printed on rectangular formats of average size. The blurring of vision is first of all situated in a relationship of seduction. These paintings propose the application of a child's game, where one must recognise in the sky exactly what the clouds are suggesting. The hypothesis of abstract painting is immediately rejected, following the other cloud theory, that of Hubert Damisch: the cloud in the representation of the Renaissance is this ground zero of painting, an immaterial substance, and also a presence, a pictorial "stain" of its impure materiality.⁴ One can find a hint of this paradox in the use of the computer in the "return" to painting. The final aspect is determined for Denis Brun by a certain sense of guess-work, that is to say free choice, a casual stroll forming the composition and in the end a certain roaming pleasure. During these roaming moments, the cloud becomes the mirror of the town that is wandered through. The artist leaves clues behind him, thanks to the titles of the paintings which are always suggestive but never precise enough to know where one is. And through the impressions of the lights of cars and buildings, and in the ordering of psychedelic colours, one can ask oneself if the artist was rocked by the effects of urban drugs.

This paradox of using the impure graphics of the computer in order to return to painting brings with it a double challenge. The art object is reintroduced, with all the ideology of market commodity that it carries, and in this sense it brings another stone to the edifice of Americanisation which the artist's references convey. But Denis Brun isn't fooled, and as the magnificent loser he is, he introduces this seduction of the object, in order to attract, limit, and finally lead astray. The road-movie that he never stops writing seems to have several actors; the artist sends us an invitation card, not to take part

but to strangely appreciate.

The leap between France and the USA is made in this way, finding in the pictorial quality the pledge of a new artistic experience.

Two more general consequences in the form of an interrogation, allow us to appreciate this residence-ship which is full of interest. At these times of a massive return to considerations about paintings⁵, the question of quality is clearly expressed in the path that leads Denis Brun to display a certain seduction for the 'object picture'. The return of the manufactured object, of optimum quality, contrary to aesthetics of the minimal, helps to reassure this protéiform artist. Painting returns to its specificity in the realm of a widened creativity. Denis Brun mounts videos, sews, sometimes draws, listens to and makes a great deal of music, but isn't at all worried by labels. In short, he liberates himself from his old French demons ⁶. Painting and making pictures allows him to slip between the continent of origin and his American mirror which is but parody and mimicry. If it's a question of displaying a seduction for the pictorial medium then it is just for a laugh, or at least in order to not worry about it anymore. Like any Hollywood dream, the light only projects a shadow of itself; it is the same for digital paintings. Away from the impressions of urban peregrinations, the re-appropriation of cultural heritage knows no frontiers any more. Between the "sub-cultural" gap and reworked tradition, Denis Brun sets a question which engages a to and fro' movement that ignores all national attachments completely. Effectively, in questioning a last time identity and painting, as Denis Brun has done, new surf waves have been created there where world culture seemed like a strangely calm lake.

Damien Delille

San Francisco April 2005

1 – Dick Hebidge, *Hiding in the Light*, On images and Things (Comedia), London, Methuen Drama 1989 p. 113

2 – Alex Baker, "Transforming terrains", *Beautiful Losers*, Cat. Exp. From the Yerba Buena Centre for The arts, San Francisco, and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Iconoclast Production and Dap 2004 p. 131

3 – During the opening of the artists' *workshop in Santa Monica*, Denis Brun decided in effect to tilt a skateboard upside down, and place it against the wall opposite a mirror that was on the floor.

4 – Hubert Damisch *Theory of Clouds* Paris Seuil 1972

5 – Cf La desire of the magazine ArtPress to dedicate a series on reflection of the medium , from the beginning of 2005

6 – As he explains himself, painting was incarnated by Noel Dolla and the sacred and traditional way of "doing" at the Villa Arson in Nice, where he studied.

Since he settled in Marseille in 1999, Denis Brun's videos and sound productions have been attentively focused on by Vidéochroniques, (because of the association's essential role), while at the same time other structures have efficaciously dealt with his work in their various fields (Astérides, Triangle France...). According to our archives, Denis Brun was rapidly able to claim the honour of being "VidéoChronique's most distributed artist "irrespective of category, (Les VidéoGrammes festival in 2000 and 2003); prospect #1, Objets Vidéos Non Identifiés and 58 films cash in 2001, Expérimental point d'interrogation in 2003, Les Affinités électives in 2005...) This simple statistical and book-keeping style of approach turned out to be rather lacking however: effectively, nothing had been dedicated exclusively to Denis Brun..... Until the "retrospective" programming that we devoted to his work at the Miroir cinema in February 2006.

has progressively re-appropriated the spaces that had purposely been left vacant (the making of images, the use of colour, the composing of music...), with a new mastery and liberty which accentuate even more the tensions inherent in his work: between its verbose, even long-winded aspect and the economy even the modesty which the artist displays. Between the distance and the affection on which they are based, with their inspired melancholic character both luminous and opaque, his videos find their substance as much in the vehicles and models of "mainstream" ideology as alternative cultures.

Edouard Monnet

Marseille, 18th February 2008

First of all it was an opportunity to "brighten up" the oldest works that had been filmed and mounted on analog supports, and to prefigure the DVD section of this present publication, whose multimedia character clearly shows the richness, the explosion, and also the paradoxes which characterise Denis Brun's work.

This section refers to a corpus consisting of a dozen or so oeuvres which were produced between 1997 and 2006, and of which the oldest stood as a manifesto (La mort d'Adèle, My Lost Paradise, Freestyle Mental). They crystallise the decisions that the artist took at this time, and which led him to formulate this radical protocol: to stop filming, above all not oneself, as an author to keep in the background, not to be over authoritarian, avoid directing the "onlooker" and orientating his interpretation, cover one's tracks, limit the interventions to a sort of "cut and paste", and use austere black and white effects....

He had to break away, start from zero again, relearn by himself, and that coincided with a turning point in his personal journey. In limiting himself to the use of pre-existing visual and sound material which he "remixed" in order to create those collisions which he calls "dream fictions" (a tribute to David Lynch?), Denis Brun decluttered, he decluttered himself. These were constraints that, retrospectively, seem to have been put in place in order to be taken away, step by step and day by day, without ever there being a question of strategy. In this way he

Digital paintings.

These paintings were the fruit of an encounter a few years ago between my first computer and graphic software. Wishing to continue painting in other ways than on canvas or wood, I first composed images following an aesthetic of the record sleeve for about six years. Then I slowly, and after several manipulative errors, succeeded in approaching a “form of abstraction”, which seemed to suit me and lend itself to potentially vast possibilities. I am still looking for new compositions after laying what I consider to be solid foundations.

I do not start out with a precise form, but rather a coloured composition which comes from a detail of a photo or an amalgam of coloured patches which I redraw myself. I excessively enlarge the starting detail in such a way as to render it unrecognisable, and then mix it with other coloured groups which I transform again and again with the help of different filters. I then look for a “form” which seems to me to be harmonious, balanced, structured. I work on it from different angles so that I am certain that it will “hold” my personal aesthetic criteria, and I consider it finished when my eye stops fixing on a precise spot on the image, but turns freely leaving the way for contemplative sensations. D.B.

LA1

We were in the middle of august, I was coming back, quietly rocked by the stream of traffic on Highway 5S, and I had the impression that a very strong relationship was building between the angel city and me, something progressive , passionate and at the same time very personal.

It didn't matter what I thought I knew about the town, because an immense charm was working and I let myself be guided by my instinct, drifting along with my inspirations. I was constantly split between the American cultural bath in which I was plunged deeper and deeper, and the fact that my time was short. At this very moment I still don't know if for a given instant I actually switched off my European conception of time and space or if deep in my unconscious I kept a few temporal beacons telling me that inevitably there would be a return to France.

However it may be, the daily spectacle gave me many more colours, sensations and ideas than I could ever have hoped for; I progressively realised that the spirit of my work, defined according to a modest perspective, non strategic, existential, adapted perfectly to the “work in progress in an open house “ spirit of this residence-ship.

Drawings.

Drawing enables me to put in place narrative ideas, whose sources are diverse, while at the same time concentrating on the harmony and forms of the colours on the page. It is both a log book containing elements from daily life, and a discipline of purely visual composition, which I adhere to regularly.

Soft Paintings

I started to plasticise using adhesive tape in 1991 when I was making collages decorated with paint on aluminium leaves. Then in 1994, I used this technique to assemble plasticised paper cubes, sewn by hand, padded with mousse or under-pinned by a polystyrene structure. It was in 1998 that my first rectangular soft paintings appeared, fixed on the top edge to a cardboard hanger which could be hung on a nail.

Rapidly, the hanger (an evident reference to sewing techniques), disappeared so that the soft painting could become independent both in its composition and its size.

Up to June 1999, the soft painting was, at its maximum, the width of my outstretched arms, around 178cm. When I was given a workshop at the Astérides Association, at the Friche belle de Mai (Marseille), I succumbed to the temptation to produce paintings the size of the walls of my place of work; and so I created three soft paintings of 3,4/2,6 m and one of 3,2/2,2m. Some of them were presented at the gallery of the Friche for the residents' annual exhibition in October 1999.

When I travel, I often collect diverse papers which I store or which I assemble on the spot, trying to create a pictorial composition which could tell me a story. When I place the adhesive bands, I varnish in a monomaniac way, a painting that becomes....soft, and therefore easy to carry and make, wherever I find myself.

Water colours.

The collages containing water colour are an extraverted colourful variation of those, much smaller, that I have been doing for years in the same format (20cm/20cm). They generally imply a larger format and a relationship with gesture that is more evident, via “dripping” or streaks.

They are axed more towards a narration which combines writing and drawing through diverse mediums, and represent perhaps a far off echo of free figuration.