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SELECTED WORKS BY ARTISTS ANONYMOUS

Artists Anonymous

Hunger

2006

Dptych

Left Panel: Oil on canvas

Right Panel: Photograph

190 x 150 cm



ARTICLES

I DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW WHO I AM

Nadja Sayej interviews Artists Anonymous

"Anonymity is the truest expression of altruism." – Eric Gibson

Artist Anonymous is a collective group of five unknown artists currently working in Berlin. If we look past the initial mysteriousness, we'll see their identities are not meant to hide anything at all. If anything, they are revealing what the rest of us are overlooking—the honesty behind the artist's ego.

Why do you conceal your identities?

Nils: It's a long story and we try to make it short. Like in AA, you just say your first name here. To be a member, you can't take any drugs. And we don't take any new members. Artists Anonymous is about working together, really working together. We paint together on one canvas, because it's about the work, not the ego of the artists. We believe in the work. We want other people to see the work first, then the people after.

Astrid and I are in Berlin. There's a drug scene here. There's a middle class existence, and to break out of it, people like to live life with drugs. I had the biggest problem in drugs; I had a really big problem with it. I couldn't do work with others, it put so much distance between us.

Astrid: We don't just share a studio; we work really closely together. With the way we work, it's almost impossible to hide things, to keep it apart from the other person, to be clean.

What is the goal of your collective?

A: It's important to have a mission or a goal, but we didn't come together in Artist Anonymous to make a manifesto. It was an emergency situation, we had a bad time in our lives and we wanted to stay together and help each other out. We couldn't work alone anymore, making artwork. It became a new way to do it together; we lived together for a long time, worked together for a long time, and as artists we became closer and closer. And then we had to start thinking about what our goal is.



In a joint venture between Artists Anonymous and the worlds leading modelling agencies to show our mutual concern for the child victims of famine worldwide, we have arranged the charity event "Eat our left-overs 2006". To give an example to the western world how our "left-overs" could help feed hungry children, ten of the worlds top super models will be flown to the worst regions of famine in Sudan, Ethiopia and Mozambique. To show their solidarity with their starving brothers and sisters in these poor countries, this beautiful woman won't eat a thing for the month before they arrive.

These beautiful angels, ambassadors of good will and charity will feed the hungry mouths they find there, with the exquisite banquet they have denied themselves in the weeks before. Using their purified bodies as vessels of bounteous plenty, the gift of nutrition will be passed directly from their beautiful forms into the hungry little mouths desperate for every drop of nourishment they receive. Each merciful goddess filled with a different flavour of specially prepared luxury pudding will feed these famished little souls with a feast beyond their wildest dreams.

These divine creatures, the dream of man and women the world over, will then deliver their deliciously prepared contents in the fight against starvation and suffering. Empty and exhausted from their month of hunger and hardship and naked in solidarity with their bare skinned African kin, these girls will be filled up from behind with the most sumptuous deserts that London's best chefs can create. Echoing Jesus' miraculous conversion of water into wine, each woman's "left-overs" will be replaced with heavenly ambrosia. Each hungry child will have the chance to be fed these mouth-watering "left-overs" brimming directly from the body of one of the world most beautiful women.

Like the earths ripest peaches each of these ten girls will be bursting from behind with the miracle of life. Their wonderful naked forms ritually oiled and bent forward in pious prayer, displaying their celestial organs of reproduction and birth to the heavens. Behold, directly above each holy orifice, a black hole transformed into a wondrous star of nourishment and plenty. Hundreds of hungry mouths will be satisfied from this tiny opening, each starving little boy and girl licking and lapping up God's plenteous and delicious gift. Each model's anus blossoming like an orchid in God's garden of plenty, drawing hungry mouth dying to taste her heavenly nectar.

Ten beautiful girls, each with a different enticing taste, little naked bodies clambering hungrily like drunken bees, pushing their tongues greedily deeper and deeper into their beauties forbidden flower. Press coverage is vital that this message of mercy and kindness be transmitted around the world. Pictures of starving babies suckling on the arseholes of these divinely perfect beings. These ripe and godly beauties knelt in prayer, naked before God, giving his manna into the desperate mouths of the needy. Each anus sucked dry of its bounty by small hungry glowing faces licking out each last drop of goodness.

These heroic women will talk directly afterwards live in television of how they gave every last ounce of themselves to help others before returning by private jets to their glamorous and demanding careers in the west. The huge cost of helping these poor souls can only be met with your help. Whatever "left-overs" money you donate, will go directly to organising our next celebrity fund raising event against child slavery in Mali in 2007.

Working together with a world famous Mexican based Spanish conceptual artist, we are hoping to produce the world largest and most opulent child snuff movie. Thousands of young lives will be sacrificed to highlight the plight of these poor forgotten children. No expense can be spared to show in detail the tortures and agonies these poor children must suffer daily. All donations payable totally tax-free to our account in Switzerland, the home of freedom and compassion.

N: I could never do this alone, what we are doing. You have to open yourself up; it's about finding out what we're doing here. There's 20,000 years of painting and you have to stop and ask what you're doing, 'What is it all about?' It's a very existential way of thinking for us, finding out about what it's all about. If I was alone, with the tough things in the art world—the paranoia, the jealousy, the things that happen along the way of showing your art—I wouldn't have had the chance. But together we can put our experiences in our work, which is what art and life are about.

What is the "Hunger" painting about?

N: It's a diptych that has both a negative and a positive. It's much like photo film, inverted from the original.

A: After completing the paintings, we make an inverted photograph of it. It's called an "afterimage," like when you look at the sun and directly, and whatever you look at after will have a blue or black spot in your eye. Your eye makes the second image.

N: Hunger is actually one of our performance pieces. One of us runs around with a camera and watches everything. It's about having the feeling of being alone, but without hurting yourself. It's about staying sober. Feeling how it is to be alone, really alone. We made photographs and performances and that's where Hunger comes from.

A: It's not so easy to talk about. It's like we invented a superhero alter ego in Hunger, and she's like an ancient mythological character. It's like a goddess or an Amazon, this is our archetype.

N: We were analyzing her, our superhero as who she is, abused. The piece is not a human being anymore; it's somehow a sign, our apocalyptic warrior.

As artists with no names, how are you treated differently in the art world?

N: We had a really tough time. It was really hard to deal with it. The art world just wants a certain part of you—like an arm or a leg—but not the whole body. But it's not like that.

A: We still get the reaction where people are interested, but are unsure about the connection between the name and the work, and the responsibility that comes along with that.

N: Most art groups focus on carrying on, so it will not fall apart. But we're more of a band than a collective. Everyone can paint but there's no main painter. Everyone can play every instrument, but we're not musicians. We're artists. We're not art designers or illustrators. We are artists.

A: Just like sometimes in order to make a huge photo there's an acting part of it, where I have to act. But I'm not an actress.

N: We are the images that we make. We play with everything in the images. Sometimes we do take something in from the outside, but it's never the main theme. We are the actors, the painters, the photographers, the protagonists of the whole thing.

How much is the work about your non-identity?

N: Totally. It's very important. It's so much about the non-identity, and its always changing. Together we are each 1.6666 of an artist, while alone we would be only 0.5 of an artist. Somehow, you lose your identity, your self in the group. And together, we find it again. We are married, Astrid and I. We couldn't do it before, and then we could. Our son is 10 and I didn't even meet him for a long time. We had so much bullshit in our lives. We've known each other for 14 years and came back together to each other about 4 years ago. It's important to be anonymous. It's important to give the ego away.

A: It's so close to yourself, you can't imagine people seeing that about you.

N: We feel a responsibility to give it our best. There's no difference between us and our work.

What's your one regret?

N: There's a lot of things I wish I did do.

Is that the negative answer of the question?

A: That's true.

N: Yes, that's the negative of my answer.

Have you had a negative experience with the art world?

N: It's hard. There are so many people who don't really care about art in the art world, those who are willing to look past what's obvious. Some people will never know their names but they're doing so much in this art world. As an artist, if you have a voice you are an artist, but if you don't have anything to say, if you don't have a voice then go and be something else. Being an artist is also having the responsibility to do things that are not nice or easy but somehow an artist has a responsibility to bring people to another view. This is the problem; this is what is not happening. The art scene is very boring. You can see a lot of good art but it's always the same. Art is not about selling a painting, but you do have to make a living. It has to be seen for it to be art. Most of the stuff out there is just a waste of time.

A: We talk to a lot of artists here, we ask ourselves: 'What does it mean to have this position as an artist?' I'm here I have a place to live I have this choice to make art, to fight for my life. I have a very different point of view of the world because of what I do.

N: Art is about communication

A: We think a lot about that, 'What is it for?' What will people get from that? We are anonymous so our work is not categorized like a "woman artist" or "Canadian photographer." We had a group show in Israel and because we were "A" for Artists Anonymous, people thought we were a surprise artist, a surprise guest. It's not about who you will see, it's about looking at the work. The lesson is to look at the work.

Do people pressure you to reveal your identities?

N: No, not really. But I could show you how to paint. I can't paint like Rembrandt, but it's not that hard to learn. It's very hard to make art, though.

A: For example with drawing, it's important to be trained at school as a good draftsman, but it's more important to learn what you thinking about in your work.

They don't teach you how to communicate?

N: No, you can't learn that in school, although you can learn how to respect it. It's great to be a draftsman, painter or photographer. But you can't just learn it by studying it. It's something you learn by doing. Astrid is not a painter but she's doing it. It's not about the painting or how well it's done. That's not the point.

A: There are many possibilities. Photos, for example, are not less valuable than paintings. All those techniques you learn at school are nothing if you don't do anything with it.

N: You can be a good painter but have nothing to say. That is our mission, that's what we want to say.

How can we communicate better?

N: Communicate with people who will accept you for who you are, and be fucking honest. Find the good people because there are so many wankers out there. It's like a fairytale book; all the people you meet in the beginning are the bad characters, like the foxes, you know? You never know.

A: It's like an adventure.

N: We're not just the superheroes; we're the stupid main characters. We're people who are totally normal, people who you can identify with. We're asking questions and somehow, this is what we do.

Nadja Sayej is an arts journalist who works in New York and Toronto.

ARTISTS ANONYMOUS

Artists Anonymous' universe is Yin and Yang. A negative in a positive environment, becomes a positive in a negative environment. AA use everything

to build their pictures, be it through projections, from Nature or if it's invented, it's almost as if each picture were an installation or an object. It is not about simplifying things; rather it's about expanding the universe, consciousness and perception. AA no longer limit their consciousness through drugs, thereby life is experienced and communicated fully through their work.

It concerns the expansion of the Universe or virtually to create or expose a new Universe. A Universe that forces itself into this one ever more, replacing and subverting it.

A picture also always has a positive, or a negative, similar to a sculpture and it's mould, and AA show that because there is never either a finished picture or a truthful reproduction there can also be infinite reproductions due to the infinitely various methods of reproduction and possible viewpoints. There is still no "true" image just because a choice has been made.

In the end it's such that the viewer becomes part of the installation; the Mirror that Universes face themselves with. However the viewer isn't depicted in the mirror but nevertheless he discovers himself again in it and will be able to take something with him. Human beings pass away, the pictures remain, the tension, the force field that occurs between the pictures can be entered and experienced, everyone can become a wanderer between these worlds.

[Read the entire article here](#)

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