

the
collector's
room

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition Guy du Toit: Linear Algebra, the first exhibition held in the Collector's Room at Fried Contemporary
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linear algebra

guy du toit

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IN CONVERSATION WITH
GUY DU TOIT
BY JOHAN AND MIKA THOM

MT: The installation in the Collector's Room is specifically arranged to mirror or perhaps mimic a classroom. Rather than being pedagogical, I think it draws attention to the act of viewing and its intrinsic reward, is this your intention?

GDT: Yes. Here I want the viewer to experience a space of contemplation, so it almost becomes spiritual.

JT: It reminds me of Rothko's chapel which he built specifically as a space where art had to be viewed. Perhaps in your work here, one can say that it is like Rothko's chapel in that it becomes a safe space?

GDT: I think it becomes more of a contemplative space. Contemplation becomes the reward.

MT: The title of the show is: Linear Algebra. What is the idea behind it?

GDT: Linear Algebra is a system by which mathematicians makes order out of chaos. It is a scientific 'formalism'.

JT: So the question really is what is that order?

GDT: Yes, you must sit in the Collector's Room and find that solution (or 'order'). The viewer has to go through a similar process as the mathematician does in trying to find that order in the chaos.

MT: In one of the works there is a skull between two quotation marks. It is also referred to in the title: 'Cock on bell, on anvil, on flower pots and skull, between quotation marks'.

GDT: The skull is symbolic of a 'full-stop'. Everything ends there. It is also a way of honouring our past, for example the use of Mrs Ples. Skulls have been a part of my





oeuvre for a very long time. These days it has become a very fashionable item. One cannot buy a copy of Mrs Ples, so I had to steal one.

JT: Like Cildo Meireles' Coke Bottle, where the act of taking something that doesn't belong to you becomes an act of defiance, or perhaps more 'civil disobedience'?

GDT: Exactly! The skull is also a symbol of socialist anarchism.

MT: Why did you decide to title the works in the order that the objects are grouped together? Is there a reference perhaps to the way that parts of a body or an object are named and referred to in a school biology or science textbook?

GDT: I wanted to emphasise the arbitrariness of the objects, in a way that it is referenced in a textbook - almost as if the process of naming it, or referring to it in a diagram, makes it less important, i.e. like something you could learn like a parrot without really thinking about its meaning.

MT: The objects that you arranged together appear to be random, everyday 'things'. Are these found objects or do they mean something specific to you?

GDT: Yes they are pretty much found objects, and I use a lot of them in other works as well. The bell for example is used as a form of communication, i.e. the liberty bell or a church bell. There are numerous ways in which bells are used to communicate. A fire engine's bell, for example, communicates something entirely



different to a school bell. However, they are all official forms of authority.

JT: So what does it do here?

GDT: It's reduced to being a formal shape only, just a reference.

JT: So again a politics?

GDT: I suppose so. The anvil is the same. It is a symbol of labour. A means to arm yourself.

JT: The technology of it...

MT: It's as if you reappropriate its power and subvert it by taking ownership of it, i.e. through the process of art making.

GDT: Yes exactly!

MT: I find the appearance of the cock simultaneously humorous and disconcerting? For example, there is a distinct difference between a cock and a cockerel, and of course, a hen too.

GDT: I, in no way, identify with the cock if that's what you mean! But, yes I see the reference to a cock being an older male fowl... And I think there is something tongue-in-cheek about it being positioned on top of all the other objects. As if it's guarding a secret or the 'order' that is sought by the viewer of the artwork or even the mathematician who applies the rules of Linear Algebra.



MT: I think you said that you found the chairs at one of the sculpture classes where you teach. Why was it important for you to re-appropriate the chairs from one classroom setting to another where the viewer becomes the student?

GDT: Yes, I found the chairs in one of the sculpture classes where I teach. It reminds me somewhat of a naughty chair actually. I think it has found it's perfect home now, forever monumentalised in a collector's room setting whereby the viewer becomes the student and the collector.

MT: One can still see a lot of the detail on the flower pot like the stamp which identifies the type of flower that was planted in it. Are you inviting the viewer to inspect your work more closely? Why?

GDT: Yes, I definitely invite the viewer to inspect my work more closely. It is after all a conversation. There is no use in having a conversation if it doesn't involve the viewer.







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