

charmingly dilapidated former Postfuhrant and competed against each other for the visitor's exhausted attention. Most of the wall works were presented in the renovated, pristine Kunstwerke, the other pivotal exhibition space in Berlin Mitte. Two other venues, several archways of Berlin's unique viaduct public transit railway and the cooperative Allianz Treptowers, both located at the waterfront further east in the city, could have functioned as interesting satellite branches using Berlin's very own infrastructure, but none of the works selected for these venues was related to its particular location within the city. It seems that the meaning of "connectedness" as engagement with the urban development context was not sought at all and led to a problematic gap between the profound specificity of the sites and the intentional non-site-specificity of the artworks.

Instead of creating contextual relationships, the second Berlin Biennial succeeded in engaging in various social, cultural, and political ones and corroborated the manifold possibilities of participation opened by works of art. Saskia Bos created a platform for today's diverse artistic concerns and provided space for the most divergent themes raised by different artists.

—Raphaella Platow

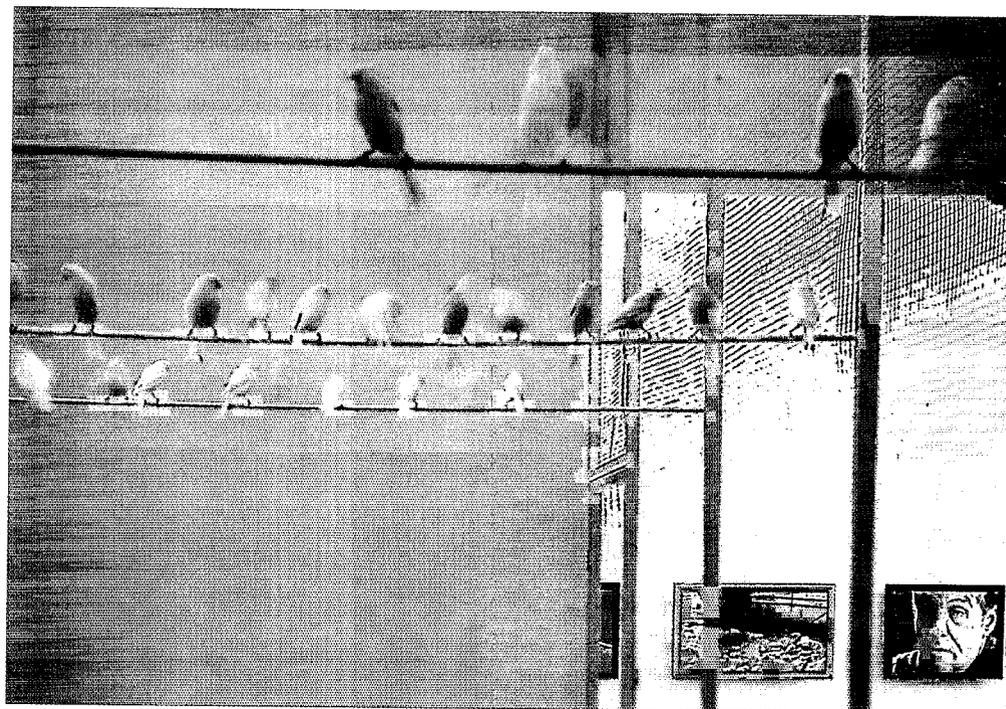
Amsterdam

Darren Almond

De Appel

Thirty-year-old British artist Darren Almond recently exhibited several installations and photographic works, illustrating his investigations into time, space, and the body in relation to the effects of machines, transport, and industry. The overall effect was one of coolness and detachment, with overtly rationalized forms and content acting as starting points for open-ended sensory experiences.

Produced in conjunction with the Kunsthalle in Zurich, Almond's



Above: Darren Almond, *Coming up for Air*, 2001. Mixed media with canaries, installation view. **Below:** Darren Almond, *Shelter*, 2000. Stainless steel, oak, glass, and zinc, two bus shelters 603 x 303 x 270 cm. each.

De Appel show began with *Thames to Hudson* (2000), an installation consisting of four R-type prints opposing a 16mm film projection on the subject of sea travel. The piece deals with the passage of time and transport, framing the machinery and processes and placing an emphasis on trade. Shipping docks and container ships provide an impression of colorful, abstract paintings. But Almond documents the process of shipping an oversized digital clock—built into a shipping con-

tainer—as it travels across the Atlantic from England to the New York area. *Thames* recalls his earlier work, the large-scale, digital *A Bigger Clock* (1997), which produces an unnerving, amplified tick every minute. In addition to reminding viewers of time's passage, Almond's clock pieces recall On Kawara's explorations in time.

Throughout the exhibition, the pieces were nicely woven together. The emphasis on time in *Thames to Hudson* led to *Tuesday (1440 minutes)*, 1,440 small photographs

documenting minute-by-minute light changes within an interior. The selected works then leaned more directly toward the physicality of the human condition. In *Traction* (1998/99), Almond presented a video triptych that he describes as "an emotional landscape which becomes a family portrait and at the same time a self-portrait." To the right, Almond's father talks to the artist about the many injuries he suffered while working in building demolition—with visual reference to the scars on his body. Meanwhile to the left, his mother is silent but emotional. In the center, industrial activity takes place. The title plays on two meanings of the word—the act of pulling and a medical treatment.

With industrial and personal references and usage of the religious triptych form, *Traction* led to *Coming up for Air* and *Mine* (both



2001). The former consisted of an installation of several live canaries in cages flanking viewers as they passed through the transitional space. The piece acted as a gateway to the video installation *Mine*, which was filmed in a shaft mine in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, similar to those used in Northern Britain in the late 19th century. Almond presented back-to-back projections in a pitch-dark room, with one side showing the transitional space of a ski-lift as it descends from daylight into darkness. This contrasted with the opposing screen showing miners changing into—and out of—their work clothes. The piece reflects on passages of transitional space and time and stimulates discussions of industry, class, and danger. Both works refer to the artist's grandfather, a coal miner. For sound, Almond chose suggestive shamanistic singing and drumming, which refer to the mine's location while evoking a mysterious mood.

The exhibition culminated with *Shelter* (2000), a sculpture consisting of two facing bus stops, replicas of structures built in the 1950s near the Auschwitz concentration camp. The exhibition's press material rightly discusses time, space, and the body, and the site's implied movement and lack of it, along with the act of being transported, take on horrific meaning. While sitting on one of the benches, the contrast of *Shelter's* subject and its sterilized and clinical Modernist form in De Appel's pristine white cube environment, was to say the least, an unsettling experience.

—Robert Preece

Yokohama

Yoshitomo Nara

Yokohama Museum of Art

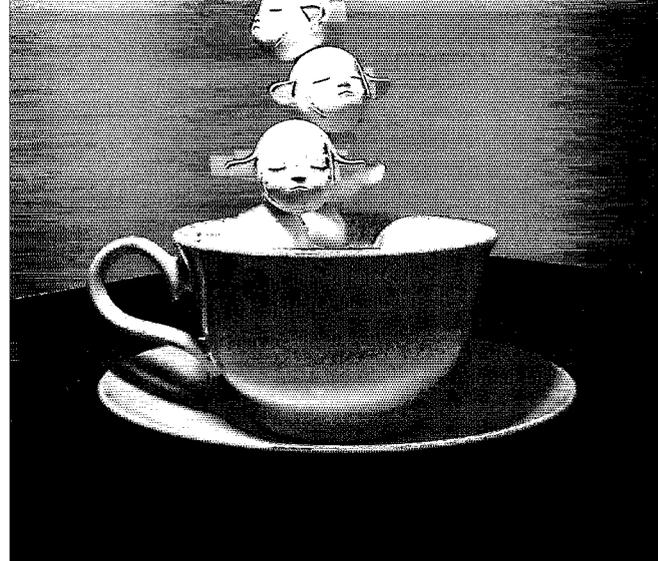
A sculpture of a white plastic dog stood at the entrance of Yoshitomo Nara's latest solo show, and a little sign nearby encouraged the audience to pet it and take photos. On any given day while the exhibition was on, a group of young women, often high school

girls, could be found cuddling it and screaming, "Kawaii!" *Kawaii* is an adjective that originally meant "cute," but it has expanded its meaning over the years; now it can be everything from "cool," "pretty," "sweet," and "smart" to "elaborate." This first large-scale solo exhibition the Japanese artist put together in his own country was all these things, and more.

Before the exhibition, which featured some 40 new pieces, Nara was generally known for his drawings. In Japan, he had mainly shown in space-impaired galleries, and collaborated with noted novelist Banana Yoshimoto, illustrating her books. But in the Yokohama exhibition, Nara was determined to present everything he did, and he included some outstanding sculptures and installation works.

His signature child-dolls and animals, which have tiny, cartoonish bodies, bulging foreheads, protruding ears, and sometimes angry, sometimes round and curious eyes, were everywhere—on large cotton-covered plastic plates, paintings, and sculptures such as *Three Pairs from Three Triplets* and *Dog from Your Childhood*. Looking like "cute" characters out of the animated films Japan endlessly produces, they were adorable at first glance, but soon began to look complicated. Nara once said that every kid has many more feelings than a grown-up cares to remember. His dolls, under the façade of innocence, reminded the viewer of those childhood emotions of sadness and loneliness.

One of the most memorable works was *Fountain of Life*, a blue-white plastic fountain, in which seven dolls' heads are piled up in an oversized teacup. Tears—real water—constantly streamed down from closed eyes, over plump, smooth cheeks. The sound of water, and not the echoes of *kawaii* screams, filled the gallery. One wondered why they were crying, because the dolls seemed neither sad nor overjoyed. The beautifully styled work surrounded itself with



Above: Yoshitomo Nara, *Fountain of Life*, 2001. Fiber-reinforced plastic, lacquer, urethane, motor, and water, 175 x 180 cm. diameter. Below: Yoshitomo Nara, *Three Pairs from Three Triplets*, 2001. Fiber-reinforced plastic, lacquer, wood, and iron pipes, installation view.

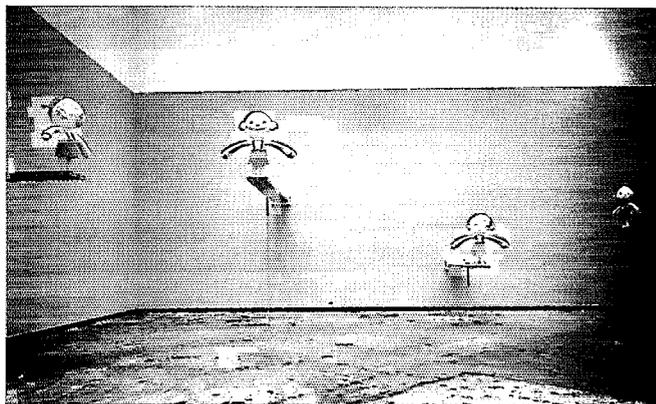
an air of something quiet, lyrical, and even spiritual.

Another focal point of the show was an installation work, a small plywood hutch Nara built outside the main galleries. He filled it with numerous drawings on torn slips of paper, used postcards, and old envelopes. This was his giant, three-dimensional diary. He has been drawing these children and animals over the years—sometimes as cartoonish characters, other times in more realistic forms, with short sentences such as "I hope you had the time of your life" and "Already we have no future but we have to create" attached to some of them.

In the last few years, Nara, 41, has gained a kind of rock-star status rare in the Japanese art world. His *kawaii* characters not only grace book covers, T-shirts, alarm

clocks, and many other items, but the artist himself has also appeared in countless magazine features and TV shows. But he seems to remain distant from all the buzz. Take, for example, the exhibition's title piece, made of Plexiglas box letters which spell out "I don't mind if you forget me" in English. Each letter, of transparent plastic, is crammed with stuffed dolls, more than 1,000 of them, modeled after his kids and animals. They were made by 375 Nara fanatics, who sent them so the artist could use them for this installation. The phrase may be his declaration that he knows that he could be the hottest artist today and forgotten tomorrow, but that's okay, as long as his work remains in the viewer's memory. This exhibition will.

—Kay Itoi



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