

Gordon Froud's *Retrospective of Exhibitions I Never Had*



In David Paton's opening gambit for Gordon Froud's *Retrospective of Exhibitions I Never Had*, he describes the exhibition as "evidence of a thinking mind made visible through a thinking hand" with "content which, while never having been polite, never having been without its wry and often black wit, reimagines a deeper, bleaker, edgier, more critical world." The Art Times caught up with Froud to shed some light on the exhibition, which promises to be a prominent featured at the KKNK this year:

AT: Gordon Froud, you seem to have had your finger in quite a number of pies. As artist, curator and gallery owner, you have become world-renowned. Your work has been consistently shown in 20 or more exhibitions a year and you are a well-respected figure in the art community. Now, after 3 decades of active participation in the art-world, you are holding a 'kind of' retrospective of your own work, but with a twist. How is your retrospective different from those of your peers?

GF: I have become well known for the modular repetition sculptures that I have developed over the last 20 years and yet I have worked in a large varieties of other mediums and have exhibited these on various shows. This show includes ceramics, bronzes, linocuts, etchings, glass sculptures, drawings, animation, photography, artist's books and digital printmaking. It is thus a retrospective of shows I never had.

AT: Unlike many artists who stick to a particular style and medium, your art moves freely around this convention. How would you describe your art practice?

GF: I never really had toys as a kid, so I made my own - in this way I guess that the practice has not really stopped. I still play with material and form and through this meaning is made. I have always been more fascinated by materials and form than in deep social or political content. However in reviewing my work over the last 30 years, I am aware of quite a lot

of (often quite cynical) commentary in my work. The forms and mediums differ greatly but in true Post-Modern fashion still somehow cohere into a style that has common threads that go back 30 years.

AT: What would you say have been the greatest influential factors in your practice over the years?

GF: I guess it has been my desire to succeed at all I do. I was influenced to carry on making art by my former lecturer Karel Nel at an opening 25 years ago - he asked why I no longer made art, listened to my lame self-indulgent excuses and replied that I had always worked with materials in an interesting way and that I needed to keep playing. Guy duToit also once told me "make the work and they will believe it". And of course my 29 year relationship with possibly the greatest artist in South Africa, Diane Victor, has kept me going in the art world. I am also influenced by the teaching that I do at tertiary level (I am a Senior lecturer at the University of Johannesburg's Visual Art department). I get a kick out of working with students, getting their responses and helping to shape their thoughts and careers. I have been influenced by many artists materially and formally, but most importantly by attention to obsession and hard work. From Richard Deacon, Tony Cragg and Jeff Koons through to Walter Oltmann, Willem Boshoff, Alan Alborough and Paul Edmunds.

AT: With a fresh perspective on your practice gained through curating your past works, in what direction do you see your art heading?

GF: I am enjoying the eclecticism of my own work and the variety that this affords me in making things. I can see myself developing digital print as a medium in which my commentary can live and in which I can reach a greater audience than with sculpture alone. I am also looking forward to casting my first large scale bronze in many years. I certainly intent to keep playing, curating and teaching.



Above: Artist Gordon Froud / Middle: Gordon Froud run over by his own art "Ted Crash" / Below: "The Last Tea Party"