

50]

Dolls

The word Voodoo has come to be associated with lore about Satanism, zombies and 'voodoo dolls'. There is evidence that 'zombie creation' is a minor phenomenon within rural Haitian culture but it is not at all a part of the Vodoun religion as such.

The practice of sticking pins in dolls has its history in European folk magic, but its exact origins are unclear. How it became known as a method of cursing an individual by some followers of what has come to be called *New Orleans Voodoo*, a local variant of hoodoo, is a mystery. There is a practice in Haiti of nailing crude poppets with a discarded shoe on trees near the cemetery to act as messengers to the otherworld, which is very different in function from how poppets are portrayed as being used by Voodoo worshippers in popular media and imagination. Another use of dolls in authentic Vodoun practice is the incorporation of plastic doll babies in altars and objects used to represent or honour the spirits, or in *pwè*, which recalls the aforementioned use of *bocio* and *nkisi* figures in Africa.

ALICE ANDERSON
(b.1976, London, England)

'Deciding to make a replica of myself, I contacted Madame Tussaud's and a sculptor, Livia Turco, came to work at my studio every day for two months. During the sessions I was not allowed to move, and we talked about very private matters. Even though I hardly knew her, a very strange relationship developed between us. Looking back, I believe that the doll witnessed a kind of psychoanalytic session. The more I talked, the more the doll grew. I remember being very sick at the time, while the doll got stronger and stronger. Later it became a sort of guardian, my invigilator. Then, bit by bit, I felt threatened by its presence. That's when I made the series *Puppet Master*. In this picture, the doll seems to be an excrescence of myself and it looks like she's up to something. A sort of Mr Hyde. I put her in a coffin because I was trying to free myself from her influence. I committed an act of violence against my replica, but didn't chose to just put her in a closet and forget her. On the contrary, I put her in the centre, exhibiting her like a precious object. I'm protecting her...'

Alice in Andersonland interview by Jason Farago. Extract from Art Press Magazine #344, April 2008
Alice Anderson is a recipient of the Gilles Dusein Prize, given by the European House of Photography (with kind permission of Yvon Lambert, Paris).

Opposite **ALICE ANDERSON** *PUPPET MASTER* Silicon and plaster, 15ins. 2007

Below **RICHARD NIMAN** *HEAD IN THE CLOUDS* cast bronze figure, shoes, found objects, tin bucket (ed.17/21). 2004





RICHARD NIMAN
(b.1932, Middlesborough, England)

"I frequently work with dolls, mannequins, shop window installations and other readymades. I regard such objects in their original state as aesthetically dead. I have always tried to administer some form of surprise or shock to the viewer, but in order to do this I have to bring the dolls to life. This I do by transforming them – by decontextualising, stripping them of certain things and bringing in other parts of other objects that don't normally fit with them. I believe my function is to make the incredible believable.

Art I consider to be a form of magic – and this is what distinguishes good from bad or 'non-art'. However, unlike with alchemists there is no spell, no formula or recipe to produce that magic. Every work must be an emanation from the very centre of the artist's being. It must be an expression of his or her "Weltanschauung", the window from which the artist perceives existence. Consequently the artist must keep himself or herself constantly charged and alert spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. For this reason I see the practice of art as a moral pursuit because it seeks to broaden, deepen and sharpen awareness in others – which cannot be anything other than good".

PIERROT BARRA
(b.1942, ?????? - d.1999, ????????)

Barra's works are inspired by dreams set by his divine mentor, the Loa or spirit Ogou, and are primarily intended to serve as 'little alters' for members of the vodou pantheon, often relating to the Atlantic ocean's duality as a site of burial and death, but also Fertility and rebirth.

HARDY BLECHMAN
(b.1968, London, England)

Blechman recycles military-wear by re-dying, re-shaping and adding embroidery, converting tools of war into fashion-wear, toys and art. He is the author of the 900 page 'encyclopaedia of camouflage' DPM and was one of the curators of the Imperial War Museum's Camouflage exhibition in 2007. He is the figurehead and designer behind the culture and brand of the clothing and toy company Marahishi.

54]



HARDY BLECHMAN VODOO DOLL. 46 x 36 x 33cms. Embroidery and acrylic on US Army Marpat (Marine Pattern), Rucksack Recycled to Pyramid

Opposite left **GÉRARD QUENUM FEMMES PEUL.** Wood, dolls, wire and hardware, 180 x 37 x 16cms. 2007

Right from top **ROMUALD HAZOUME BRUT.** found objects, 34 x 35cms. 2001.
BLUE MÉTALISÉ, found objects, 34 x 35cms. 2001. **BOULE DE NEIGE,** found objects, 40 x 50cms. 2001





57]

GERARD QUENUM
(b.1971, Porto-Novo, Benin)

Like Richard Niman, Gérard Quenum makes use of discarded children's doll parts, and draws on the Fà and Vodun traditions of the Republic of Benin which resonated across the Atlantic in various guises.

ROMUALD HAZOUME
(b.1962, Porto-Novo, Benin)

Romuald Hazoumé is of Yoruba ancestry. He addresses the legacy of the kingdom of Dahomey, once infamous for the brutality and scale of its slave trade, as it plays out in the present-day Republic of Benin. His plastic petrol-can masks carry small objects or other symbols which relate to particular Yoruba gods. His photographic panoramas offer profound reflections on past, present and future. Hazoumé lives and works in Benin where he recently collaborated in the founding of the Fondation Zinsou in Cotonou. He contributed to *Africa Remix* at the Hayward Gallery and to the Victoria & Albert's *Uncomfortable Truths* exhibition. Hazoumé was awarded the prestigious Arnold Bode Prize at Documenta 12 in Kassel in 2007.

ADRIAN DI DUCA
(b.1966, Middlesborough, England)

"To maintain and to extend the private there is a need to make it public. In order for this to happen, to assist in this transition, I look for the non sequitur and for a de-sublimation which transforms a self-indulgence into a "thing" out there in the world. This is the creative act. To turn the 'sacred' into the secular, the sublime into the ridiculous. In the words of Jesco White, last of the Appalachian mountain dancers, '*I enjoy myself, from within myself, on behalf of myself*.'" Adrian Di Duca, London 2008

HANS BELLMER
(b. Katowice, Silesia 1902 – d. Paris 1975)

Bellmer initiated his doll project in opposition to the Nazi Party by declaring that he would make no work that would support the new German state. Represented by mutated forms and unconventional poses, his dolls were directed specifically at the cult of the perfect body then prominent in Germany. The dolls are said to have been catalysed by a series of events in the artist's personal life, including meeting a beautiful teenage cousin in 1932 – among other unattainable beauties – and attending a performance of Jacques Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* in

Opposite **ADRIAN DI DUCA** *CORPUS CHRISTI* mixed media and sound installation, 2008

58]

which a man falls in love with an automaton after receiving a box of his old toys. From these events he began to construct his first doll. Bellmer explicitly sexualizes the doll as a young girl. He also incorporates the principle of “ball joint”, inspired by a pair of sixteenth-century articulated wooden dolls in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum.

The artist’s anonymous book *The Doll (Die Puppe)*, produced and published privately in Germany, contains black-and-white photographs of Bellmer’s first doll arranged in a series of ‘tableaux vivants’ (living pictures). He worked in isolation, and his photographs remained almost unknown in Germany. The work was eventually declared ‘degenerate’ by the Nazi Party, and he was forced to flee to France in 1938.

In Paris, Bellmer gave up doll making, and spent the following decades creating erotic drawings, etchings, sexually explicit photographs, paintings and prints of pubescent girls. In 1954 he met Unica Zürn, who became his companion. He continued making work into the 1960s.

UNICA ZÜRN

(b.1916, Berlin-Grünwald – d.1970, Paris)

Sadly and ironically, such attacks were witnessed as well, decades later, by someone whom Bellmer knew intimately, the German Surrealist writer Unica Zürn. In 1954, a year after Bellmer met her on a visit to Berlin, Zürn moved to Paris with him, and the artist captured her in a typically somber, pensive mood in a portrait now in the Art Institute’s collection. On the verso of the sheet, a large, double-sided white-ink drawing on black paper, Zürn is shown standing, head lowered, eyes downcast, hands folded demurely in front of her, and dressed in a modest suit. A network of lines and bricks animates the background, while to the right, closer to the picture plane but also implicated in the abstract web, Zürn’s face emerges in three-quarter view. Inexpressive and wide-eyed, she wears her hair tied back with a bow.

CHOSIL KIL

(b.1975, Seoul, South Korea)

Birthday presents given to the artist: piled up, covered in fabric and painted black. Chosil Kil takes existing, often donated objects and adds new meaning to them using her own language. Her recent exhibition *Drawings* was at Rifleman. She also took part in *Wouldn't It Be Nice* at Somerset House, London October 2008.

Opposite **CHOSIL KIL PRESENTS**. Birthday gifts covered in fabric, the whole painted black
25 x 25 x 40cms, 2008





SIMON HENWOOD
 (b.1965, Portsmouth, England)
(See image page 3)

Simon Henwood's exhibition at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles provided an insight into his vast range of entrepreneurial creative energy. Paintings and drawings, book and magazine projects and animated film pour out of Henwood's uniquely personalised idea of Wonderland. The paintings in particular make us question how childhood is or should be dealt with in art. These subjects are not so much posed as 'captured', often in ungainly, unflattering mode which highlights their awkwardness and 'the monster at the heart of the innocent'*. The artist often making a series of works of the same subject as he or she grows up, 'tagging' them in the manner of Michael Apter's popular documentary series *28 Up*. The artist employs an almost atomic brightness and flat pools of background colour, wary of letting outside influences; too much shading, layering or decoration influence the potent child.

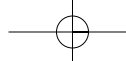
"Henwood's work is fully cognizant of the anxiety and exploitation that surround childhood. He reminds us that in a media-saturated society, even if the old myth of innocence has collapsed, childhood should remain a subject for celebration, not least because of its ability to function as a round-the-clock factory for the imagination". Raphael Rubenstein, 'Art in America'.

Simon Henwood is also the writer of two children's novels, *A Piece of Luck* 1990, and *The Troubled Village*, 1991.

* Manuel Santos Vargas, *Hipolite*

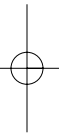
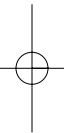
Solo Exhibitions: ICA London 1998. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2002

Opposite MAURIZIO ANZERI (b.1969, Loano, Italy) *LATE AT NIGHT*
 Synthetic hair, threads. 180cms (h). 2008



62]

63]



ROMUALD HAZOUME MARKET FORCES: (BETTER TO SELL MEAT THAN MEN!)
Panoramic photograph, 2007

