

# Jury report ABN AMRO Art Award, 2006

In choosing Ryan Gander as the winner of the ABN AMRO Art Award 2006 ABN AMRO has made a unique statement. The award has thus gone to an artist who, in a short space of time, has built up an exciting and monumental oeuvre, and to a body of work that is decidedly multi-layered and refuses to reveal its significance at a single glance. It is precisely the work of this award winner which can serve as a catalyst within the context of ABN AMRO and the bank's art collection.

Ryan Gander is unanimously praised by the jury for his unique and mercurial attitude as an artist and the multiform nature of his work which varies from installations and sculptures to texts and performance-like readings. The work of Gander consists in essence of an intelligent game with everyday objects, events, situations and structures upon which he projects his own 'tantalisingly elusive' story. Gander's objects, spaces, texts and readings testify to a scintillating sense of humour and a light-heartedness and ostensible simplicity that actually conceal a highly developed form of conceptual thinking.

Each and every work of Gander appears to be a new experiment and the jury describes it as tangible yet by no means easily graspable. Though his work is officially categorised as sculpture, Gander makes sculptures that don't want to be sculptures and tells stories that are not stories in themselves. In an interview he himself once said: "I do not choose a particular medium (...), good art is not sculpture, for the simple reason that good art is too good to be so conveniently classified as a painting or sculpture."

Gander is a storyteller. His stories rest on the ability of art to challenge the viewer to engage in an active dialogue with the work. His projects – the 'situations' that he creates – function both in exhibition rooms and in public spaces, in the area outside art where they effortlessly continue to exert their powerful presence. The context in which the work is displayed or out of which it was born is, as it were, magnified in each project, thereby activating the role of the viewer. The things, or rather the elements that underlie his projects and which he also often re-uses, are manipulated by Gander in such a manner that they are familiar yet alienating at the

same time. And it is up to the viewer to unravel the tangle of fact and fiction so as to discover his own associations and thus, as it were, provide his own ending to Gander's story.

One telling illustration is the project entitled *Your Clumsiness is the Next Man's Stealth*, 2005-2006 that Gander showed in the exhibition area of Witte de With, in Rotterdam. In the context of this work he made a reconstruction of the map of Rotterdam by making use of lost routes, where he rediscovers streets which have disappeared in this largely rebuilt city, and where he unearths long-forgotten archive documents that bear witness to the city's rapid and frequently chaotic transformation. Gander thus lays bare the vulnerability of the organic structure of a city through its exposure to the rigorous demands of the urban economy. And in doing so he appeals above all to the viewer's (emotional) relationship with his or her 'own' city. Whether that city be fiction or reality...

The ABN AMRO Art Award is designed to stimulate young talent and an exchange of contacts between artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. This year the jury once again faced the difficult task of selecting 'the best' from a series of interesting artists. With Ryan Gander as the winner, the award has gone to an artist who has electrified the international art world with work that is both expansive and surprising - even to himself, for he once said: "There is really no artist who wants to make work that he can describe or understand. The work is not intended for lazy people, is it? Lazy viewers can walk on as far as I'm concerned."

## Members of the jury for the first ABN AMRO Art Award

Steven Aalders, artist

Marja Bloem, freelance curator

Hedwig Fijen, director of Manifesta

Tom de Swaan, member of the board of directors of ABN AMRO, chairman of the board of ABN AMRO Art Foundation, and chairman of the jury

Pietje Tegenbosch, adviser to ABN AMRO Art Foundation

On behalf of the jury,  
Pietje Tegenbosch