

# Esther Schipper

Ryan Gander

## **THIS IS FEELING ALL OF IT**

November 1 – December 7, 2024

Esther Schipper, Berlin



Ryan Gander, **Swan Song (They will only encourage you to perform the script)**, 2024, animatronic doll, audio, bin bag, rubbish. Photo © Ryan Gander Studio

Esther Schipper is pleased to announce **THIS IS FEELING ALL OF IT**, Ryan Gander's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

**THIS IS FEELING ALL OF IT** draws on Gander's research into human perception and cognition, investigating the variety of ways in which humans navigate and perceive the world around them. Particular focuses include his research into Autism, with his six-year old son Baxter having been diagnosed several years ago, alongside ongoing themes around attention and distraction — terms highly charged in cultural discussions of the last 150 years, and increasingly so in the context of social media and their impact on changing human cognition. Gander's exhibition addresses these topics as artist and father, transforming them into artworks that are profoundly moving and thought-provoking, a subtle celebration of cognitive diversity. The exhibition also premieres Gander's first artificial intelligence virtual reality artwork, co-commissioned and presented by global arts and technology initiative VIVE Arts in partnership with Esther Schipper and organised with Olivier Renaud-Clément.

The first work visitors encounter is a giant upended balloon blocking the entrance to the exhibition space. Bearing the question "Do ghosts have teeth?", the work represents the inquisitiveness of children who ask what more jaded grown-up minds often dismiss as non-sensical or illogical. What is here the obstacle? The ball or our inability to engage with such feats of the imagination?

Moving instead to the next entrance, visitors pass a machine that dispenses Gander's unrealised ideas for artworks. Producing them at such speed that giving them away is preferable to feeling the burden of holding onto them, and realising that he can never execute all the ideas, Gander's work is both an act of generosity and an acknowledgement of his own mortality.

Looking inside the exhibition space, a sea of tiny toys becomes apparent. Aligned in neat rows they only leave open narrow pathways just wide enough for a visitor to travel through. The work is both a collaboration with his son and a portrait of sorts, by means of the young boy's favourite activity of ordering these toys. For Gander, it is a celebration of his son's particular sense of beauty and order and the toys a representation of an emotional landscape. Navigating its paths is a symbol for the distinct ways we, and Baxter, are operating in the world.

Next to the entrance a small-scale doll version of Ryan Gander appears to be resting on a garbage bag. Moving his head from one side to the other, his chest rising with regular breaths, the toy-like representation of the artist also speaks. The doll represents a fictional alter ego, an artist who has not been successful, who is obsessed with attention, overly narcissistic and generally disinterested in contributing to human culture. At the same time, one senses, the „little stink“ as Gander calls him, is also stand-in for the artist's fears: is the real Ryan really better than that? Has he transcended his dread of becoming like him?

Baxter is also the subject of a new major work that covers almost one entire wall. A postcard rack holds over 1500 cards in a grid that together create an image, the rendering of an unexecuted marble sculpture of his son. The portrait is durational: the sculpture is based on a 20 second scan of Baxter. Having created several sculptures with his elder daughters, Gander sought to portray his son true to his being, in near constant movement, a coping strategy which is part of a self-stimulating behaviour called stimming, that can alleviate an overflow of cognitive information.

Exhibited as both an individual VR headset experience and a wrap-around environment of monitors for visitors to walk into, **Ryan Waiting** features an avatar of the artist waiting in an empty, perimeter-less landscape, showcasing an uncanny life-likeness due to motion capture which retains characteristic gestures and body language. Acting as a durational hundred-year performance and taking two years to develop, the avatar's actions are continually self-written in real-time whether there is a spectator watching or not; affected by time of day and external data gathered from the internet, the avatar's mood is in constant in flux and will ultimately outlive us all. The focus of Gander's work is not just on longevity but it also addresses the spectacularisation of everyday life. The experience highlights the state of being in-between—waiting—even deliberately ignoring any supposed audience. Gander's work shifts the emphasis onto a rare commodity in today's life—doing nothing, waiting, enjoying boredom, ennui—traditionally the state of inspiration, creativity, and sudden ideas. But, what is Ryan waiting for? Clearly not us, as the avatar seems to deliberately avoid us.

A work, **Couvrir**, may be a portrait the artist made with his son. But, just as we can never experience the entirety of **Ryan Waiting**, this paintings also remains partially hidden, its contents forever shielded from view. Two mirrors in antique gilded frames are also partially obscured. Draped with heavy white cloth—actually consisting of marble—their mirrored surfaces are permanently veiled, impeding the spectators' desire to see their own reflections.

The title, **THIS IS FEELING ALL OF IT** is both a reference to the artist's earlier exhibition entitled This Feeling is Everything, and as such acknowledging the passage of time, and a description of Autism's central feature: an unfilterable onslaught of all sensorial stimuli.

Ryan Gander was born in 1976 in Chester, England. He received his First Class Degree, BA (Hons) in Interactive Art at Manchester Metropolitan University and was a Post-Graduate Fine Art Participant at Jan van Eyck Academie Maastricht and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. The artist lives and works between Suffolk and London. Gander has been invited to teach and lecture at numerous institutions, such as the AA School of Architecture, London; Barbican, London; Barnard College, New York, and École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Lyon. Gander has been awarded numerous prizes including: the 2010 Zurich Art Prize, the 2006 ABN Amro Art Prize, and the 2003 Dutch Prix de Rome for Sculpture. In 2015, he received the honorary degree Doctor of Arts of the Manchester Metropolitan University. In 2017 he was awarded an OBE (Order of British Empire) for services to contemporary art. In 2022 he was elected as Royal Academician.

The artist has had numerous solo exhibitions, among them: **Grunts, hoots, whimpers, barks and screams**, Museum of Contemporary Art Helga de Alvear, Cáceres, SP (upcoming); **I'm just resting my eyes**, Ishikawa Cultural Foundation, Okayama (2023); **The Markers of our Time**, Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Tokyo (2022); and **The 500 Million Year Collaboration**, Kunsthalle Bern (2019).

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