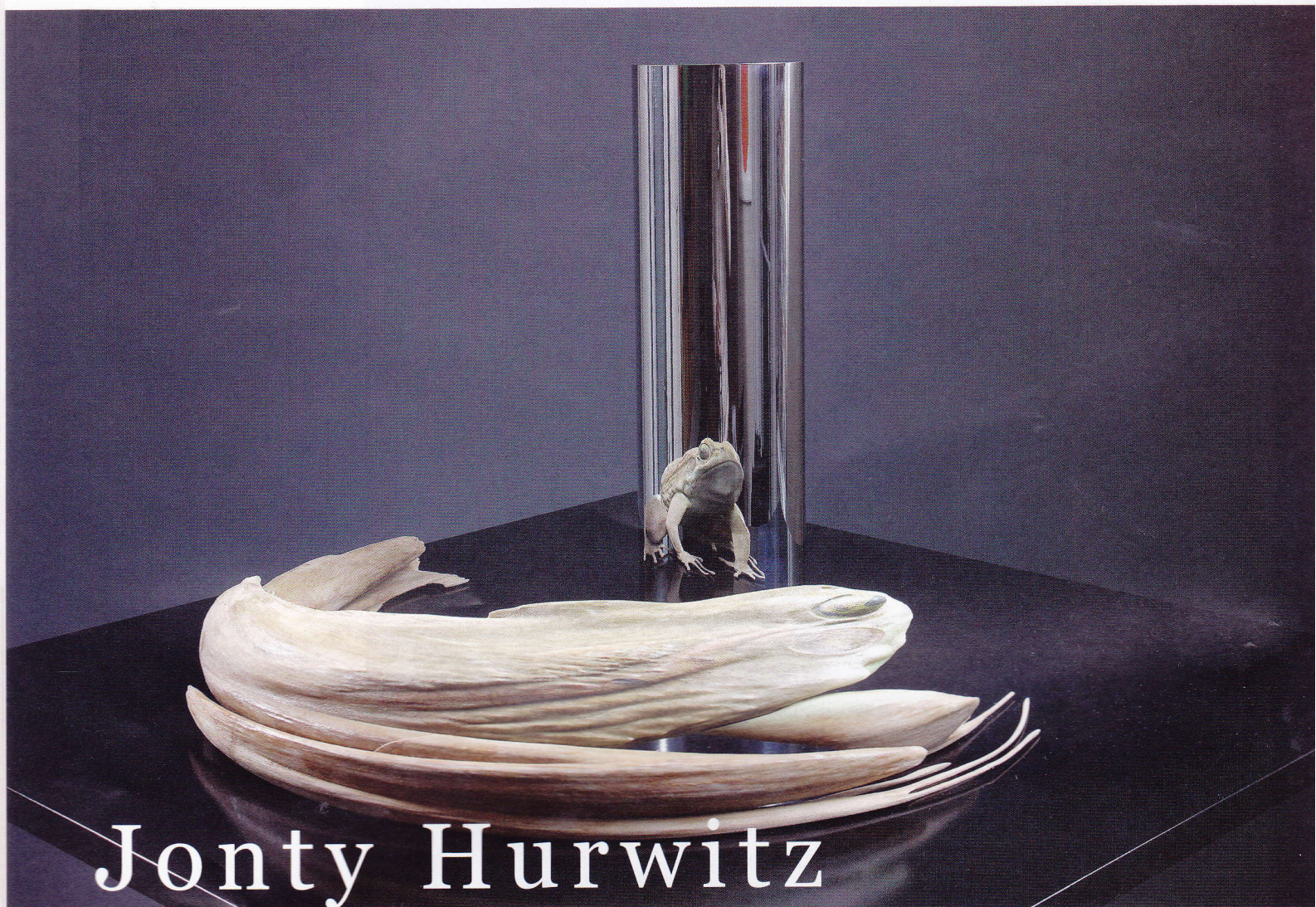




Jonty Hurwitz

by Estelle Lovatt

Imagine this. You stare at an abstract piece of sculpture without a clue as to its meaning, only what you perceive. But, hold this item up to a complementing curved mirror and there – on the mirror – unfolds a recognisable image of a man.

It has to be seen to be believed. This is the new reality in art. In the hands of sculptor Jonty Hurwitz, Brave New Realism is going to be the art world's next Big Bang. Its treatment of representation is so realistic, it'll confuse you. The ingredients of an optometrist's nightmare ('Is it real? Is it there or not?'), its visual power and ocular uncertainty is incalculable. Actually, no, it isn't! It's $E = mc^2$. But please don't expect me to explain it. For most of us, schooled in the classic styles of paint, brush, perspective, line and form, this form of art requires not the tutelage of the masters, but, possibly, a degree in Physics! To

achieve these images requires billions of calculations, so essentially I can't explain it. But, from the perspective of contemporary sculpture, let me say that Hurwitz sculpts with numbers, not clay.

Using algorithmic calculations and equations to create a great dynamic visual effect, it is surprising how human Hurwitz's sculptures feel. How? Simply put, they are composed in conjunction with traditional fine art illusions of depth, foreshortening, volume and spatial dimension. You have to think of Holbein's *The Ambassadors skull*; reflections in Monet's water lily pond; and Hoogstraten's peep-

how box, as you look at Hurwitz's clown smoking a cigarette in *The Thinker*, 2010.

How does he do it? A stretched, cloud-like, abstract shape (think Dali-esque melting camembert watch) reflected on to a central mirrored post that pulls the image together like magic, out of thin air. As bizarre as a lobster saddling a telephone, and just as elegant, it is Hurwitz's separation of the parts (the abstract form against a reflective pillar) that makes the artwork 'whole' and recognisable as anything from a head to a complete figure. The marriage of his hand and your eye fuse the seemingly incompatible together in total agreement. The separate parts of the sculpture are needed intact before it can be converted to become one piece - spiritually complete.

But, of the parts, which do you look at first? Through an ornamental one-sidedness, offering substantially more than the mere interior decorativeness of an executive toy for the bored white-collared, *Yogi Credit Crunch*, 2010, deals, Zen-like, with how we, "spent a lot of time and energy trying to get to the bottom of what precipitated the credit crunch," says Hurwitz. "Following a spiritual conversation I had with a powerful Goldman Sachs' banker, I am trying to show the transformations through my work, that the ingredients through the good times were greed, mathematics (risk models) and confidence." Presenting a hand, palm upright, index finger and thumb joined, remaining fingers cupped, it is apropos the give-and-take of greed versus philanthropy. It takes advantage of the symbolism of man's economic strivings of consumption in competition with his personal, spiritual and social growth. "It was only in the aftershock that we turned to fear, begging and prayer!" says Hurwitz. Whilst under Buddhist philosophy, *Yoda and the Anamorph*, 2008, (finalist in the 4th International Arte Laguna Prize) honours The Enlightenment. In essence, its greatest obstacle is the 'self' because of our reality built on the foundation of ego. And a conscious-free ego, dependent on complete identification with the 'not-self' encapsulates this deeply complex, if not temporal, spirituality. Or, if you're more religious-lite, it's a Jedi *Star Wars* conviction ("Looking? Found someone, have you, eh?" Yoda). Dematerialising man from the world, Hurwitz explains how, "in hindsight, it would probably have been easier to go straight for Buddhist enlightenment, as it took over 1 billion calculations to produce this sculpture!"

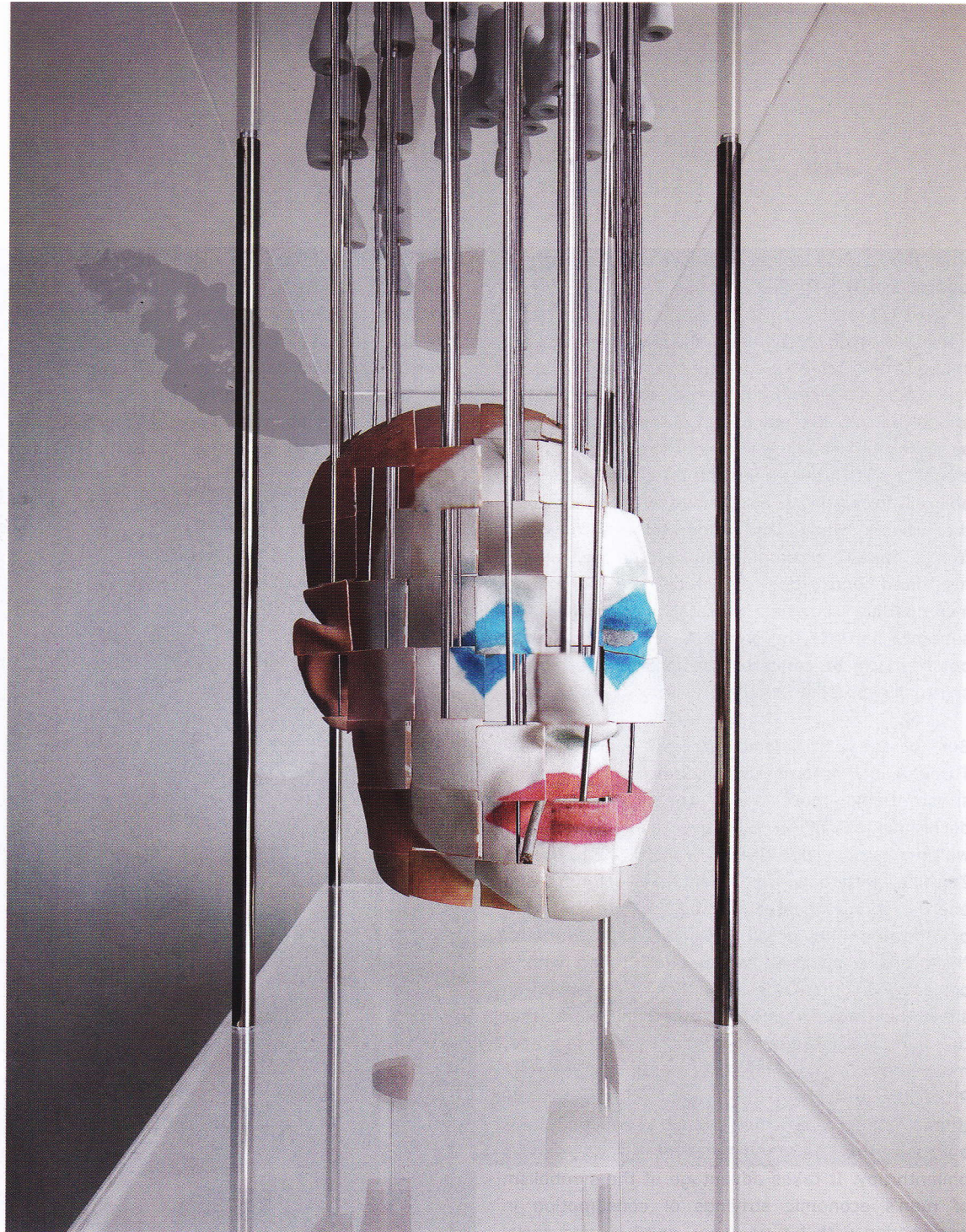
Hurwitz makes art of the world through complex calculations and algorithms, something that has

spilled over into all aspects of his life. An engineer by training, he went on to co-found Wonga.com which uses a unique risk engine to simultaneously trawl the web searching, collating and cross-referencing abstract data to create a real picture of credit worthiness. Similarly, through his art, Hurwitz takes an abstract object and projects an image which we can recognise as reality, knowing

opposite: Kiss of Chytrid

below: Thinker





that that reality doesn't really exist. He plays with our perception of reality by using the most traditional of props employed by artists throughout western art history - the trickery of mirror and reflection, in both image and meditation. His sculpture, like his business, is formalised, schematic, stylised and symbolic in supporting concentrated thought of logic and analysis, which, again, makes me ask - science or art? Thinning the dividing gap between art and science, Hurwitz is cognisant of the two being holistically co-joined, in the same way that we are naturally, comfortably, split between our spiritual and operational self. Shaping amorphous matter as emblematic, revolutionary and truthful as *The Creation*, Hurwitz - the scientist of the art world - could only make his artwork at this point in time.

Flying on the wings of his extremely imaginative mind, its reliance is hinged on the advancements of

science alongside the mechanics of technology, our internet age and digital media. Where Henry Moore would have used graph paper and Leonardo a 'cartoon', Hurwitz fuses Einstein's theory $E=mc^2$ (energy, mass and the speed of light) to equate illusions of solidity, "making subatomic space understandable". Sculpting with physics as much as clay - creating that unlike anything I've ever seen before - in sculpture or installation, Hurwitz is a special-effects artist, whose effects are, indeed, very special. Great art, its roots are in the soil of art history that, bound by the fundamental forces of fine art, need science, just like a sprout needs watering. You don't need to be an art aficionado or physicist to understand, engage with and feel touched by Hurwitz's brilliance in configuring Darwin and Freud pitted against Duchamp and Picabia.

Hurwitz engineers it all, changing the way you'll look and think about sculpture, about art, indeed,

about everything around you. Compounding and confounding classification, he (re)constructs reality in a higher high definition HD (High Definition) – that of a Fourth Dimension. Less-circus-like than Kapoor and with more brains-over-brawn than Jeff Koons, you've got to see it to believe it. From what I can see – or not – is that when Maths, Physics and Philosophy cross, they cancel each other, denying facts and blurring existence between reality and non-reality to within a believable pragmatism that is abstract not imitative. Hurwitz's supremacy is being able to restore the abstract, returning it back to reality saved – the inanimate from the animate; the outside from the inside; the transparent from the subversive; the poetic from the physical; the mindless from the mindful; the playful from the subdued; philosophy from pre-science as a sort of baroque resonance, inherently making a virtue out of the ambiguity, as you're taken to a sense of hope; an apparition configuring the Holy Ghost, before it evaporates once you move.

Not what it seems, the whole concept of what we see as real – or void – is simply a visual contradiction as deceiving, spectacular and theatrical as trompe-l'oeil illusionism occupying Vermeer, Van Eyck, Magritte, Escher...right up to Bridget Riley. Hurwitz's unique technique in working methods translates an abstract world back in to the figurative, to concepts of representation of surrealist fantasy conjured in earthly time. Bound back to the future, it's a peculiar hybrid that, as Hurwitz intends, "gives us the opportunity to digest how matter is a matter of perception". Once his narrative appears in front of you, you are permitted an entertaining philosophy that disappears as fast as it came, around the twist of an axis; experience its impact before it shifts out of sight. As in *Rejuvenation*, 2009, as Hurwitz notes, "the resistance to the process of ageing as being an ancient human preoccupation, from Aeson in *The Golden Fleece* to the latest wonder drug that jump-starts dormant stem cells, our desperate belief in the fountain of youth refusing to die." And so, *Kiss of Chytrid*, 2009, looks at the "end of the amphibian frog, toad, salamander and newt. These cold-blooded, creeping, hopping creatures of fairy tale, biblical plague, proverb and witchcraft; from Medieval Europe, which saw frogs as the devil, to the ancient Egyptians for whom they symbolised life and fertility; to children throughout the ages who saw/see them as a slippery introduction to the natural world; to scientists to whom they represent an order that has weathered over 300 million years to evolve into more than 6,000 singular species, as beautiful, diverse – and imperilled – as anything that walks, or hops, the earth," claims Hurwitz.

Perhaps, when he says that "Everything is expendable and throw-away...quickly discontinued and made redundant", he best describes his artwork, as inconceivably conceivable though contradictorily accessible.

Oh, come along now, do get a grip! Only you can't. Eyeing up a Hurwitz sculpture (don't forget it has to be in your line of vision), you soon realise it doesn't actually exist. Invisible (pending your manoeuvre around the sculpture), it's an optical proportion of falsehood nothing more than a projection; projected Uberreality making Super-Realism sharper, crisper and more defined – to what purpose? Hurwitz's most realistic sculpture serves a reality that he plagiarises from abstraction, to show how everything is, indeed, really nothing at all. Things, not what they appear to be, materialise as quite brilliant.

*Jonty Hurwitz is a Featured Artist on
www.gofigurative.com Telephone: +44 (0)20 8905
5872.*



*opposite: Thinker
below: jonty hurwitz*