



Overleaf: *Ikea Lagerphone*. 2010. (Ikea Bertil chair, beer bottle tops, nails, key rings).

Thanks to The Builder's Arms, Utopian Slumps, J Marlow and everyone I've shared a beer with over the last 12 months. Thanks also to Anusha and Fayen for writing, Woody for sneakers and Don for building.

www.adamcruickshank.com

This poster is printed in an edition of 300 only on 100% recycled paper.

#### WEST SPACE

1st floor, 15–19 Anthony St,  
Melbourne, Australia 3000.  
www.westspace.org.au



This project was supported by a City of Melbourne arts project grant.

# DOMESTIC DEATH RATTLE ADAM CRUICKSHANK

## AHHH GORGEOUS! 🍷

I've just started renovating my apartment and have no idea what I'm doing. This morning, trawling the web for how-to guides on kitchen design, I stumbled across a lively thread on VogueForums called "What do *you* put on your dining table?" Defiant\_chic has three martini glasses full of small white pebbles and tealight candles. Sarah\_work60 has a large metallic green bowl with "ball things and a fake coconut! I love the coconut and it only cost \$5.00 from Freedom!" Schmick\_aka\_Mrs\_Hippy bought two rectangular vases in which she has placed three white lilies then half filled the vases with clear glass pebbles (also from Freedom). She likes the way the colour and curves of her arrangement repeat the colour and curves of her light fixture.

Ordinarily, my attention wouldn't have been captured by this thread, except perhaps to muse over the stylistas' exuberant punctuation with flashing smiley face gifs. But my other task today is to write something for Adam Cruickshank's upcoming West Space show, and the DIY design habits of Defiant\_chic and her virtual gal pals are what Adam is railing against – but somehow, also coveting – as he prepares for his show. Adam appears alternately confused and bemused by the mass-produced home renovation and interior decoration objects he has gathered around him. He pauses to marvel at the pretend-weave on the white plaster cast of a small basket and to savour the lustre of his own collection of glass pebbles. By taking time to admire such aesthetic particularities, he seems to want to abstract his objects from their banal manufacturing origins and flourish them as legitimate totemic treasures.

Pointing to a plaster ceiling rose, once necessary to hide the ventilation grills of Victorian gas lighting but now glued up enthusiastically on ventless ceilings as a period detail, Adam puzzles over mainstream amnesia regarding historical function-form relationships. I've been reading lately about the Shakers, who crafted their furniture as an act of prayer: a devotional quest for pure utilitarianism, free of vain adornment. I imagine they would be horrified by the glamour reveal moment of TV shows like *Changing Rooms* or *Design on a Dime*. Of course, thanks to a strict celibacy rule that cuts out the possibility of breeding, there aren't too many Shakers left to censure the flounces of today's budding DIY stylistas.

Browsing the VogueForums thread archive, it's clear that Freedom wins hands down as the shop of choice for gorgeous, creative accents for the modern home. This amuses me as I think of Adam, sitting amidst his studio paraphernalia, also speaking of freedom but in relation to Beuys' proclamations that everyone is an artist, and art is the only evolutionary/revolutionary power. I think back to the Diesel billboards that reigned over New York's Union Square in the early 2000s, plucking direct action imagery from the heated WTO protests of the time, mocking activism (Free the Goldfish!) to cultivate their multi-billion dollar brand of post-punk-irony and luxury grunge. Instead of reclaiming a Shaker-esque commitment to integral form, Adam has applied a Diesel-esque strategy of reappropriation, propelling amnesiac DIY interior decoration into uncharted territory. He flagrantly decorates and repurposes his objects with cavalier disregard for their proscribed use in the DIY world.

Of course, there's a danger that Adam may be stepping into a relativistic appropriation-reappropriation vortex. It would only take one of the VogueForum girls to happen across a media shot of Adam's alluring treasure assemblages and his humorous provocations could be recast as the new season's style inspiration. All too soon, Freedom will be featuring Adam's balustrades-repurposed-as-barricades in a glossy ad campaign promoting Gen Z home decoration, and Etsy.com will have cute homemade ikea-chair-lagerphone knockoffs. Yep, everyone is an artist. – *Fayen D'Evie*

## MAKING A RACKET

In a discussion about the work for this exhibition, Adam Cruickshank sent me a link to a news item from *The Guardian* on the 25th of May 2010 reporting on gun fighting in Jamaica's slums. The story concerned a man named Christopher "Dudus" Coke, who is known to the US government to be one of the world's most dangerous criminals, responsible for drug trafficking around the Caribbean, North America and the UK in exchange for guns and money.

To the residents of parts of Kingston, Jamaica, where his gang 'Shower Posse' has immense support, he is a benefactor who provides them with food, acts as mediator in disputes and even sends their children to school. They call him Presi, Bossy, Shortman or, most commonly, Dudus. Unfortunately, pressure from the Obama administration has forced the hand of the Jamaican Prime Minister to hand over the alleged drug lord, but authorities have been met with immense resistance.

The neighbourhood has barricaded itself, overturning buses to block off roads, and positioning snipers firing at police from invisible vantage points. The community has sectioned off whole areas to the authorities in order to shelter Coke, a man who is the head of a gang responsible for more than a thousand murders.

What is interesting here, in relation to Cruickshank's *Domestic Death Rattle*, is that the event represents a moment of effective resistance that appears to me to be marked by significant contradictions. For example, the resisters have bumper stickers on their cars marked with their slogans, an indication of organisation and a marketing plan, at the same time as using the most basic forms of resistance: throwing rocks and making noise.

This symbolic and literal 'clashing' of signifiers at this moment in late capitalism is apparent in Cruickshank's practice. In his work, we find familiar signifiers are recontextualised and arranged in order to make new objects that are given a new use as low-tech rattles. For example, a 'ceiling rose' – those ornate fittings that are found around the light fittings in houses of a certain era – is found upturned, unplastered, and spinning like a Lazy Susan against a piece of plastic to make a clicking sound. The pine Ikea chair is covered in bottle tops to make a lager-phone, as is a broom stick with keys and other jinglers at the top, and a \$300 designer shoe for stamping out a beat.

In *The Radicant*, Nicolas Bourriaud paraphrases Sartre, saying (and I paraphrase again) that in this moment in culture there remains a fixation on old rites, customs and collective representations, but in our contemporary context these particularities no longer signify anything, since the climate that had given them a material basis no longer exists. This is evident in the continuing presence of the 'ceiling rose' in new buildings, but the same principle can be applied to the idea of protest, literal or figurative, which now is so quickly subsumed by market.

In this way, *Domestic Death Rattle* can be seen as Cruickshank's own protest, and instead of Dudus Coke, Cruickshank shelters Joseph Beuys, and in him the idea that art is the only remaining revolutionary and evolutionary power. – *Anusha Kenny*

## DUMB LAUGHS

Thirty years on and we've arrived in Beuys' utopian future of social sculpture where we are all collectively involved in a transformational, participatory art. Mostly this seems to involve decisions about which coloured pebbles to put in which bowl on which distressed coffee table. Last stop, all disembark.

Somewhere between uselessness, ubiquitousness and the culturally meaningless replication of styles (point a) and entirely new ways of thinking (point b), there is a transitional point of transformation. A rite of passage from one state to another, where both points coexist, like in some shamanic ritual facilitated by rattling instruments. In fact those ceremonies lead, supposedly, to a space between reality (its a chair) and the spirit world (it's a magical instrument). Which in turn suggests revolution, in that during this process the established order is in the midst of being replaced by new meanings and the liminal space inbetween is where all the interesting shit happens. But then, everything's transitional isn't it? Maybe you have to pass through dumb laughs on your way from superficiality to utopia? Maybe we're just not there yet? Alright, everyone back onboard. – *Adam Cruickshank*