

Greg Streaks solo show **Accumulative Disintegration**, is currently on at Bank Gallery. The exhibition's title creates an expectation of tension: a potentially fraught space created by a body of work that reflects "the battle of trying to pull things towards a whole whilst they disperse around us" (Streak, 2008).

The exhibition, in contrast to its title, is calm and considered, setting up the dichotomy that moves between works that appear to capture an accumulative essence and those that are fragmented. Whilst few of the pieces demonstrate the tension between these two concepts Streak rather utilises the ambiguity and contradictions between the titles, the works and himself as a conceptual device to explore these elements. Marks left on the surfaces of the works are emotionally charged by the titles, drawing the viewer to find personal meaning in the abstracted self-reflection. The paired down aesthetic, suggests an ordering or making sense of his internal conflict. The simplicity at times makes the dialogue seem singular, with the contemplative and repetitive mark making in the works adding to an insular feeling. The works that do not hold this mark are implicated as causal possibilities in the process of scaring or excavating through their positioning to the other works.

As Streak suggests he was trying to find the poetry of life, extending a mark in an attempt to find visual equivalents of darkness, penance and difficulty. The exploration across paper, super wood and canvas allows for the understanding of the single mark to shift as it translates differently on the surfaces of the varied media. The physical act of marking is now imbedded in the surface. These surfaces not only denote the passing of time but also serve as a metaphor for personal growth, in its varied intensities.

In ***Penance in progress*** and ***Paper cuts on the skin (random yet deliberate)*** 2008, the marks made with pewter "scars" and red thread respectively are raised from the surface and these, combined with the titles of the works, make a clear reference to martyrdom and the masochistic. This brings me to two questions; (1) Is this central to the audiences understanding of the show and (2) Are these works a reflection of the ritualised ways that society expects us to deal with and display pain?

A (1): I am not sure whether this is central to the audiences understanding of the show. These two works in particular (although others might also) do make reference to a self-flagellation - a personal underscoring. I do think that some of this work was a catharsis and a way of me working through some personal anguish and trauma. It was about an ending and new beginnings - about things falling apart and the human tendency to try and hold them together.

A (2): I am not sure whether there is any overt expectation of how we are to deal with pain. For me the works were most definitely a catharsis and a meditation and the process an exorcism of pain.

*... a rush of blood, Someday I will find you, The end always has a beginning* 2007-2008, are a series of archival digital prints scanned from original ink drawings. They shift our attempts of looking from the macro to the micro focusing our attention on the intensely rendered details. The titles of the drawings allude to what these unseen emotive spaces might look like: a haemorrhaging reality, an optimism to one day transcend the human condition and our inability to comprehend our own mortality. What stood out in these pieces was the intensity of mark making. Is this then an attempt of you trying to make sense or find meaning through catharsis?

A: Perhaps on a sub-conscious level, but essentially the works were really attempts at looking at the inter-connectedness of things. The way in which isolated nodes remain just that unless co-joined to another. I find **Someday I will find you** and **...a rush of blood** quite corpuscular - of the inside of the body – almost as if magnified under a microscope. **The end always has a beginning** is more cosmological – of another world. I really think these works were more about reflecting on individual and collective connections – in what I see as a very disconnected world.

During the walk about you commented on the banality of your materials. My understanding is that these materials are ordinary and commonly used. Can you elaborate on the choice of these materials and what you are attempting to do?

A: I think what I was suggesting is that some of the materials be they insulation tape, scotch tape or merely cotton thread are materials of almost everyday use. They are things we have lying in a drawer at home or on our desk. For me it was about taking the ordinary and imbuing them with value - about taking their banal and focused function and creating something more poetic and suggestive.

During the walk about, you suggested that the work could be read through many lenses or contextual references and that your objective was to promote self-reflection and personal interaction. When questioned further, your response was that the work might relate to how our senses of things are impacted by a state of dis-ease: contradictions and the manipulations inherent in the media and political institutions. You recently curated **Dis-ease -a new generation of video art from the Rijksakademie archives** that questioned the notions of art practice and identity within the “global village”. This is one of several bigger projects that you have conceptualised that deal specifically with social issues. How would you contextualise your solo show **Accumulative Disintegration** in this broader body of work?

A: Firstly I am not sure whether the objective was to *promote* self-reflection and personal interaction – I just think the work maybe has that element to it. I think that my artistic practise has been, for some time, split between two

realities. One that feels compelled to listen to my social conscience and construct projects and or debates around the impacts of living in an abnormal society that is South Africa, and more and more the global village we all find ourselves in. And then on the other hand the need to be more personally insular and reflect in a more acute way on that very same world. I think that **Accumulative Disintegration** was a long overdue body of work that allowed me some time in my own head for its own sake. I have spent the last few years focusing on the external and creating forums and opportunities for others to engage. It has been a much-needed relief to go inward for a short while.

**- Vaughn Sadie is a visual artist and founder of 031 - ART**