

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

BOMBSITE

BROCK ENRIGHT: CARMEN WINANT INTERVIEWS BROCK ENRIGHT ABOUT HIS UNUSUAL CV AND THE EVOCATIVE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN A MIRROR AND THE STAGE

CARMEN WINANT

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Brock Enright, *Untitled Stage*, 2011, 96×96 x 5 inches, wood, debris, paint, mixed media.
All images courtesy of Kate Werble Gallery, NY. All photos credited to Elisabeth Bernstein.

Brock Enright has an unusual CV for an artist. Over the past several years, the artist has staged abductions upon request, been the subject of a documentary film, held solo exhibitions in New York, London, Berlin, and Los Angeles, and appeared on *The View* and *Good Morning America*. His most recent work is now up at Kate Werble Gallery.

Carmen Winant So, before we speak about your current show at Kate Werble gallery, I am hoping to talk about your own mixed media practice. You work in performance, music, installation, drawing, and, perhaps you would even call yourself a director? I read that for your 2001 MFA thesis show at Columbia, you had your mother perform a body building routine. How would you describe yourself as an artist—and is it difficult to reconcile across different media, or decide what is most fitting for each project?

Brock Enright . . . I use the appropriate material to execute my hypothesis. By doing that, I am aware of the possibilities for misunderstanding, or the lack of interest or comprehension. The result is a larger bite than one normally eats in entertainment, or the art world.

I came into this whole thing—whatever *this* is—as a very young boy. From 3rd or 4th grade, I learned about *Dada* and *Deconstructionism* and *Expressionism*. To me, *art* is continuing the conversation with what came before you, and understanding that that is a responsibility. When I use different materials, I'm trying to keep that history going, to attempt to create something beyond trends.

I grew up very humble. I am the only person ever who graduated college in my family. It pushed me to do something, whatever that means.

CW How did you learn about art history from such a young age?

BE I was in elementary school, and I had an art teacher who recommended me for a special gifted program, which was down the block. I was really into *Nightmare on Elm Street*, and I recreated my own Freddy glove. It was 3rd or 4th grade, and I went to school and stood outside the class, wearing my weapon and mask, and scratched the windows when everyone was in class.

CW Did you get in trouble?

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BE Yes. Big trouble.

CW In 2002, *Rolling Stone* profiled your company, Videogames Adventure Services, which provided “designer kidnapping services”—an official business that staged false abductions for paying clients.

BE People do not realize that I started the company to be an empty vessel—I would do whatever you wanted. The tool—society or culture, or scene or market—pushed me on that shore. Kidnapping was not the intent. Kidnapping was the mirror.

CW Though once the company got to be known for kidnapping, you entered a kind of media circus, appearing on *The View* and *Good Morning America* . . . Did you get something in return from the experience of going on those morning shows, to be able to use their platform to define and expand your project?

BE Giving people what they wanted was a conflict for me. TV is another gallery, another space. In the end they are a client, and they want a story. They pick what they want to experience. They pick the footage that created ratings. They defined what it was that I was doing. So, it was a give and take. I did a performance in some ways. It was a work of art in a different medium. Let them take what they want and show it to a million people.

CW I haven’t seen the documentary about you, *Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be The Same*, which was made in 2007. But I did watch the trailer in preparation for this interview, and it looks like it captured a pretty volatile and generative moment in your life. It also looks like a really beautiful film, which reminds me of your own work in some way—dark, messy, and dangerous, but also deeply personal and visually appealing. How did the film come about, and more importantly, what did it feel like to be filmed? Do you consider it a kind of performance itself?

BE The other lens is framed. There is a certain measurement of that frame. That frame, by the person controlling it, is a locked off-shot. Much like how you look through a door viewer, you can only see the person just on the other side. You can’t see the hallway, or the person standing next to them. That is what happened: I was in front of the door. Jody [Lee Lipes, the filmmaker] has shot for me in other ways and is someone that I completely trust. The editing room is where the story really begins. That is where the creativity and story telling takes place. There are one hundred different perceptions of the same scene; you choose one. When I give lectures I say that am 28 different people. I allowed Jody full access. I had no control over the editing. Whatever he found through his lens he fabricated into his story, not unlike the viewer reading your lens of me. How many words is this piece allowed to be?

CW 1,500-2,000.

BE Right, exactly. There is only so much space in each market. The limitations are the same in cinema—you can only express so much.

CW Speaking of making work for specific contexts, you have a show that just opened at the Kate Werble gallery. Your work, as I had known and considered it, always had an element of danger and of mess. The new body of work feels like a more contained pathos. How did you arrive at the process of scratching into illuminated mirrors, which is kind of both violent and tender, and is there a method? They feel almost spiritual, which is not a word I use very often.

BE Place two mirrors facing one another—what do they reflect? If you scratch the both sides of the mirrors at the same point, so that those points become see-through, you open that space and you can see through both sides. You can pass light through it. It is an intuitive behavior, and I am attracted to the unknown. This work is difficult to photograph without exposing yourself to the

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camera. Its very existence is ephemeral. Like much of my work, it is about storytelling and myth. Like writing and even being on TV, there is an element of recording to it. It can create and kill at the same time. These scratches on a surface reflect and embody the madness that is constant that somehow turns into a hum that becomes peaceful. I call them light drawings; they are an attempt for me to levitate in a space that I am still trying to comprehend.



Autumn 3, 2011 Mirror, metal, florescent bulb 72×60 inches.

CW I am interested in thinking about the element of line drawing in your new work. I've heard elsewhere that you have incredible drafting skills. Are you formally trained?

BE As a child, I learned how to draw, how to match my eye with my hand. I can re-create the illusion of what I see that appeases the eye. So, these drawings in some way are an extension of my activities that I don't necessarily want to confine.

CW There is one piece in the show that is different from the others—it's a stage from a former performance. Can you speak about why you decided to include the piece in the show?

BE The mirrors and the stage to me are the exact same behavior, and the same impulse creates both. The stage is a foundation upon which one stands on it and does an action. It's very elementary in some way . . . it's a boundary. When I was in the studio making the mirror drawings, I had the stage on the wall. The result was a sphered perception in which I was continually pondering the activities that took place on these stages.

I do a lot with floors. I collect them. What catches things is the floor. The floor catches the drip. The drip is the happy accident between so many schools of thought in art making. With enough fluid and medium, with enough weight, the drip pulls down to gravity. If the platform, which is flat, were to be extended, it would reconnect to itself. It blows my mind! And the mirrors connect with the platform in this way—they conjure up this impulse, I fight myself all the time on this. It is like my ability to play chess—sometimes I think so many moves ahead, it feels intuitive, but really it's calculated. I don't want to be too calculated—I want to escape from what I know, and to forget what I know. So I create situations for randomness or chaos. But I know something. And I can't get away from what I know.

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