

the FIREPLACE project

MALCOLM MCLAREN

Malcolm McLaren has proven to be a visionary of pop culture and a pop cultural icon for over thirty years. An artist in the most post-modern sense of the word, time and time again, he has been at the forefront. Starting as a young student in London's art schools including Goldsmiths Art College and St. Martin's, he studied drawing and painting before experimenting in radical, politicized artworks inspired by art movements like *Situationism*, the most famous of which was *Punk*. All his various life-long activities—as legendary shop conceptualist (*Let It Rock, Too Fast To Live Too Young to Die, Sex, Seditious, World's End and Nostalgia of Mud*), fashion designer, pop music group creator and manager (*Sex Pistols, Bow Wow Wow*), singer/composer/musical artist (*Duck Rock, Fans, Waltz Darling, Paris*), lecturer, performer, producer, filmmaker, director, philosopher, politician (running for Mayor of London in 1999) are expressions of his art. There has been on-going confusion on who and what Malcolm McLaren is, but in fact, Malcolm McLaren is and has been an artist in the purest sense of the word for his entire adult life.

A few astute people, including the curator Paul Taylor understood this early on. In the catalog of his retrospective exhibit of McLaren at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1988, Taylor pointed out that with McLaren, a new kind of artist was born, one which today is largely taken for granted:

To many in the worlds of art and social criticism, ... McLaren is like a new type of artist. A "producer" in more than one sense of the word, he has literally orchestrated new musical events and created provocative "cultural texts" within the mass-media. He has also shown that art in the post-avant-garde era is a matter of synthesis, of combining elements from radically different sources. Inspired by the artistic avant-gardes of the 1910s, McLaren has applied the artistic methods and ideologies of the Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists and Constructivists to everyday life and spectacular popular culture alike.

The Art World has always appreciated McLaren and his works have been collected and shown in museums around the world. His appropriation of Manet's *Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe* with the members of the pop group Bow Wow Wow was exhibited at the Sydney Biennale in the 80s and was the poster for the event. In 1999, the Bonnefanten Museum in Holland commissioned him to create a self-portrait for their show, *Smaak*. For this exhibit, McLaren created *the Casino of Authenticity & Karaoke*, (a multi-media converted series of one-armed bandit slot machines) which afterwards traveled to the ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie) in Germany. Last summer, at Art Basel, he was invited to lecture as part of *Art Basel Conversations*.

With this new series of works, McLaren is formally announcing his identity as an artist.