

Title: Loompanics
Project by: Bik Van der Pol
Curator: Raul Zamudio
White Box, New York, 2001

Randomly Shooting a Gun into a Crowd and other Acts of Beauty

Art's relationship to crime has paradoxically been one of the more enlightening or darker moments in the history of twentieth-century art, depending, of course, on how one perceives art's function.

The Futurist manufacture of counterfeit administrative documents and their dispersal into the public sphere, or the Surrealist act par excellence of randomly shooting a gun into a crowd are historical cases of pushing the limits of art's *raison d'être*. While the particular contexts of these two acts magnify their historical importance, that may not be so with more recent examples of the convergence of illegality and art. For even in Fred Tomasselli's use of illicit drugs in his paintings or Mike Bidlo's forging of Picasso there remains a certain ceding to the status quo. The reason being is that in these ostensible vanguard gestures the site of social transgression remains safe and benign. Both artists work in the sphere of iconography where the referent is foregrounded yet severed from the social world where art not only operates, but where it may be most effective. This is not the case with the dialogical dynamic inherent in Bik Van der Pol's Loompanics project.

Loompanics is a publisher of what maybe construed by some as subversive material, and by nature, serves as catalyst for the possibility of realizing the information found in its publications in a variety of contexts that, in turn, can become ethically questionable. Yet this ethical gray area is exactly where Bik Van der Pol wishes Loompanics to operate. The day to day world that we live in is, for most of us, a site where black and white never remain distinctly apart. It is in that same space of the quotidian where art can have its most urgent sense of the immediate, and where Loompanics is situated. By the same token, the re-contextualization of Loompanics the publisher into Loompanics gallery installation, is also about hijacking structures and circuits of information that are already in place and merging them to problematize or heighten their social roles. In other words, both publishing and exhibition practices are sites of discourse and are never free from the ideological underpinnings that permeate other forms of cultural production. Since the installation, moreover, is also hypothetically linked to the acquisition of textual materials from Loompanics and the execution of instructions found in them, Loompanics never achieves formal or conceptual closure. The work that becomes enacted by way of soliciting materials into what one person may, for instance, call a terrorist and cowardly act that another may call politically justified violence, is the ground zero of ethics that Bik Van der Pol astutely interrogates. Stated differently, the participatory or interactive artwork that is a formal and conceptual linchpin to Loompanics can have different, if not deadly ramifications altogether. By allowing this degree of elasticity in the work that allows the viewer to act according to her or his convictions, the work reflexively questions the user of such materials as well as the complacency of the viewer of the work of art, whether this be Loompanics or the Mona Lisa. The viewer of Loompanics cum user of its materials, for whatever reason, faces the philosophical conundrum of acting in whatever manner that he or she chooses....

Raul Zamudio

Bik Van der Pol consist of Liesbeth Bik and Jos Van der Pol, two Rotterdam/New York-based artists who have had numerous solo and group exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. Their most

recent solo project titled Absolut Stockholm, Label or life city on a platform for the Moderna Museet Projekt, Stockholm, Sweden, 2001, consisted of appropriating an Absolut Vodka ad furnished by IKEA which the artists found on Lafayette St. in New York City. Bik Van der Pol work within systems of information that are contingent on collaboration. Their works can be described as context dependent rather than just site-specific. Their projects have thus led from institutional contexts to the broader social body as evinced in their activities that run the gamut from a studio space with a program of exhibitions, as well as arranging lectures, seminars and performance festivals. Raul Zamudio is a New York-based art historian, critic and independent curator. His essays have appeared in the Encyclopedia of Sculpture and in catalogs of university and museum exhibitions. His other critical writings and reviews have been published in such journals and magazines as Estilo, Art Nexus, Zingmagazine, NYARTS, PART, Journal of the West, and TRANS. His recent curatorial project titled "The Parallax Hotel," was part of the New York Independent Art Fair, November 2000.

<http://www.loompanics.com>