

<p>There was a bad tree a bad tree, that people hated. The leaves gave off a foul smell, and the flowers had a bitter stink. If you got too close, you vomited. The fruit was poison, one bite and you were dead.</p> <p>Everyone really disliked it. The bad tree stunk. They talked endlessly about it; and decided to cut it down. Get rid of it. They chopped with axes, and barely made a dent; wearing breathing masks, they whacked at it and whacked at it, and nibbled and chipped. Oily powder from the shiny dark green leaves, got on their skin, blistered, and was really itchy; and they scratched bloody red.</p>	<p>They put on protective gear with oxygen, and went at it with electric buzz saws and heavy equipment. Working 24-hour shifts, finally, the tree was cut down.</p> <p>Everyone was very happy, and celebrated the great victory. A noble deed, well done; and they went to bed exhausted. The next morning, the bad tree had grown back, had sprung up new and bigger, and more beautiful and ugly.</p> <p>It was very discouraging. They talked a lot about it, and cut it down again, and poured gasoline on the roots, and burned all the leaves and branches in a big fire. After the smoldering embers got cold the tree grew back, bigger more bad, and really gorgeous.</p>	<p>Other people had been watching from their houses, waiting their turn. They thought themselves smarter, with higher intellectual capabilities, they knew how to get rid of the tree. It was a growing plant, a wood tree that grew in the earth.</p> <p>They incinerated it, burned the roots with chemicals, vaporizing acids, and robotic lasers; detonated on the ground, bombed from the air, hit with smart missiles; and bombarded with radiation. They made a fire storm; and covered the ground with concrete and steel.</p>	<p>The tree grew back, more fresh, more elegant, even gracious: and really ugly. The wood was harder, darker, more shiny, thick hot muscle; and the leaves, full and lush, moved like underwater plants luxuriously in the breeze.</p> <p>Everyone was very depressed, extremely discouraged. It was a catastrophe. They had made for themselves a hell world.</p> <p>They talked incessantly about it, and came to a big decision. The Mayor resigned in disgrace, those, who had worked so hard, left, humiliated, departed, stayed away, moved to the other side of town.</p>	<p>Then, out of the blue, appeared these beautiful people. They were simple and humble, a little like peacocks, and seemingly well- intentioned, with a great sense of humor.</p> <p>Radiantly relaxed, Dozing loving kindness and compassion, they walked right up, and started eating the leaves. They ate the leaves and enjoyed them, became happy, and laughed and laughed; and chomped on more leaves. You could tell they really liked the taste. They pressed their cheeks to the flowers, black velvet coated with transmission oil. They licked the sweet juices that seeped from the petals. The pollen was coal dust and petroleum gas. Burying their noses, they sucked in deep breaths, eating the smell, great bliss.</p>	<p>They discovered the fruit hidden beneath the leaves, overripe mangoes with sticky eggplant skin, hung like testicles; and inside the fruit was rotting meat, like liver.</p> <p>The special people got their faces into the stinking slime, and really got into it; inhaling with their lips, and teeth, and tongues. They licked and drank the thick red juice. The seeds, like carbouchon rubies, seemed particularly potent, and were chewed with great delight. The fruit contained the five wisdoms. The men and women became luminous, their skin was golden and their bodies, almost transparent, were clothed in shimmering rainbow lights.</p>	<p>They became sleepy, yawned, and curled up under the tree, and a took a nap. While they slept, music filled the air. Lounging against the gnarled tree trunk and protruding roots, their huge bodies colored red, yellow, blue, green, white, rested in great equanimity, and radiated huge compassion.</p> <p>Inside the tree were the secret homes of many demi-gods, hungry ghosts, and earth spirits, who were very pleased with all the positive attention being paid them. After years of abuse mutilation, and being destroyed, they were tickled; even though, they were being ravaged and their flowers wrecked.</p> <p>At the root endings, there were jewels, diamond and emerald and rubies, which were stars in the sky of the world below.</p>	<p>The beautiful men and women woke up, and nibbled on the leaves, again; They ate the leaves, like deer, pausing between bites, looking up at the vast empty sky. The leaves and fruit increased their clarity and bliss, and introduced the nature of primordially pure wisdom mind.</p>
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There Was A Bad Tree, by John Giorno, 2002

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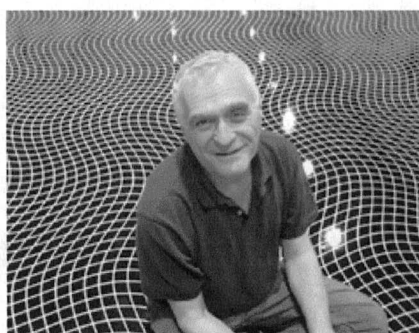
DRAWINGS clockwise, starting at left.

1. from *Gravis*, set of two drawings, Flick Collection
2. from *Geige*, set of three drawings, Sadie Coles HQ
3. from *Good Smell Makeup Tree*, set of two drawings, 2000, Speyer Family Collection
4. from *Scenes From the Internal Backdrop*, set of five drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
5. from *Was ist der beste Satz den du je gehoert hast*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
6. from *You Know You Hate You're Never Perfect But it Doesn't Matter*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
7. from *Never Tell Never Know Never Perfect*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
8. from *Powergame Leftovers*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
9. from *Scenes From the Lost Internal Backdrops*, set of five drawings, Sammlung Ringier
10. from *You Know You Hate You're Never Perfect But it Doesn't Matter*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
11. from *Sailors Grave*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
12. from *Basalm, Zukunft und Vogel*, set of two drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
13. from *Sailors Grave*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
14. *Before or After Willie Nelson*, 2000-01, Flick Collection
15. from *Scenes From the Internal Backdrop*, set of five drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
16. from *Empty Foxhole Serenade*, set of three drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
17. from *Empty Foxhole Serenade*, set of three drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
18. from *Scenes From the Internal Backdrop*, set of five drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
19. from *I Get a Heater*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
20. from *Geige*, set of three drawings, Sadie Coles HQ
21. from *Never Behind Your Curtain*, set of two drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
22. from *Geige*, set of three drawings, Sadie Coles HQ
23. *Denkst Du auch so viel an Dich wie ich*, 2001, Flick Collection
24. from *Gravis*, set of two drawings, Flick Collection
25. from *Never Behind Your Curtain*, set of two drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
26. from *Scenes From the Internal Backdrop*, set of five drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
27. from *Sailors Grave*, set of three drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
28. *I Get a Heater*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
29. from *Scenes From the Lost Internal Backdrops*, set of five drawings, Sammlung Ringier
30. from *Scenes From the Internal Backdrop*, set of five drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
31. from *Scenes From an Old Internal Backdrop*, set of two drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
32. from *Twilight Officers*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection

- 33. *Days With, Days Without*, 2001, Flick Collection
- 34. from *Powergame Leftovers*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection
- 35. from *Scenes From the Lost Internal Backdrops*, set of five drawings, Sammlung Ringier
- 36. from *Scenes From the Lost Internal Backdrops*, set of five drawings, Sammlung Ringier
- 37. from *Scenes From an Old Internal Backdrop*, set of two drawings, 2000, Flick Collection
- 38. from *Was ist der beste Satz den du je gehoert hast*, set of two drawings, 2001, Flick Collection

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POETRY READING
THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002, 6:30 PM

JOHN GIORNO
THERE WAS A BAD TREE

The SI is pleased to announce the forthcoming poetry reading by John Giorno. Collaborator in the current installation, *Lowland Lullaby*, and seminal spoken-word poet, Giorno will grace the Swiss Institute with a performance of his poetry. Join us atop the dazzling Rondinone stage for this unique event.

Gallery Hours: Tues – Sat / 11am – 6pm

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