

Galerie Neu

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BANK, *Status Quo*

We wanted to paint the walls pink and blue and have a golf buggy in the gallery but all we got was this white cube graveyard

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Galerie Neu is pleased to present BANK's original Fax-Baks in its most comprehensive demonstration to date.

*"Press releases are genuinely fascinating documents. They're usually unsigned, which is perhaps why they're so often absurdly pompous. But the really interesting thing is, who are they for? Rich collectors, who must be presumed to be stupid and talked to like children? Other gallerists, to show them that they read the backs of theory books too? Artists? Students? Just who is being addressed by these things? The endless nonsense they contained meant that we could be brutally honest about their conceits, assumptions and errors to the point of outright rudeness, under the none-too-convincing cover of offering free advice as to improvements. There was also a hopefully infuriating holier-than-thou tone to the whole project, and a hypocritical undercurrent."*¹

Taking on the unsolicited role of a service provider specializing in helping the institutions of the art market, BANK systematically pointed out the press release's conceptual jargon, its historical approximations, fashionable but meaningless phrasing, and the typographical, syntactical and grammatical errors these incurred. In doing so, BANK undertook a thorough critical questioning of the literary and theoretical format of cultural mediation.

The exhibition at Galerie Neu follows the publication of *The BANK Fax-Bak Service*², which catalogues their inexhaustible practice of correcting and annotating press releases and then faxing these back to the very institutions disseminating them: From national venues and publicly-run galleries to commercial galleries and artist-run spaces.

BANK was formed in 1991 from a series of encounters between a group of young art school graduates following the group exhibition BANK they had organised in a disused bank building in London. With Milly Thompson, Simon Bedwell and John Russell at its core, their respective studios were occasionally transformed into galleries, such as "Gallerie Poo Poo" (1996 – 1999 where the Fax-Bak project started) "BANKSPACE" and "DOG", which played host to numerous group exhibitions, the collaborative practice of the group increasingly subsuming the works of the artists invited for the occasion, allowing for a decade of joyous curatorial experimentation. These installed scenarios served predominantly as a critique of dominant positions of current art practice then typified by the reception of the Young British Artist(s) and demonstrated the critically aggressive, irreverent and satirical nature of their activity, albeit without taking sides. BANK's applied modus operandi, happily expressed their dismissive attitude against everyone and everything.

1. Bank, Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 2000

2. *The BANK Fax-Bak Service*, Edited by Tenzing Barshee, Gallien Déjean and Dan Solbach
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