

Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, is proud to present the major solo exhibition of Billy Apple®, comprising two parts, A History of the Brand (31 May – 13 September) and Revealed/Concealed (26 June – 13 September). In addition to this major survey, Witte de With will present a new commission in public space by the artist, and a monographic publication titled Billy Apple® as part of Witte de With Publishers' ongoing Sourcebook series.

The artist Billy Apple® was created in 1962, when the New Zealand-born Barrie Bates changed his name, following his graduation from London's Royal College of Art. Initially part of the generation of British pop artists, Billy Apple® moved to New York in 1964, where the same year he exhibited with Andy Warhol in the seminal American Supermarket exhibition and then rapidly established himself as a key figure in the conceptual art scene. In 1969 he opened Apple, one of the first alternative spaces in New York. By the 80s, Billy Apple® was working in both New Zealand and New York, and in 1990 he returned to Auckland, where he continues to work and exhibit internationally.

A History of the Brand: 1962-2009

Occupying the 3rd floor of Witte de With, this exhibition will present works from Billy Apple®'s inception through to today, tracing a practice that has remained ahead of its time in analysing and incorporating the marketing of art.

Long before the likes of Gilbert & George began their life-long intertwining of art and life, and before Andy Warhol's self-appointment as the icon of Pop Art, Billy Apple embarked upon an artistic project that has shaped his practice for five decades. As Christina Barton writes, he has "spent much of his career creating and refining his 'brand' as an artistic manoeuvre geared to test the boundaries of art, examine the mechanisms that construct the artist as subject, and expose the value systems in which he and his works are mired". The culmination of Billy Apple®'s gradual transformation from an individual artist into a brand occurred in 2008, when he succeeded in registering his name as a trademark.

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