



Andries Botha, *You can buy my heart and my soul*. Photo: Dirk Vermeirre

# Sculpture to Inspire



Gordon Froud. Photo: Brendan Croft

In this April 2016 edition of the Art Times, we acknowledge all things sculptural – whether in bronze, stone, wood, resin, ceramic, or even in soil!

As world-renowned artist, curator, gallery owner, and University of Johannesburg (FADA) Senior Lecturer, Gordon Froud is a respected figure in the South African Art community – especially when it comes to sculpture.

We took the opportunity to enquire which contemporary sculptural work inspires him. To this, he responded with a review of Johann van der Schijff's recent exhibition, *I to I*, featured on page 7.

We hope that you too are inspired by van der Schijff's work and all that there is to discover in this exciting Sculpture Edition.

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**COVER SHOT:** Group X's *Subterrufuge* at AfrikaBurn 2014/2015. Photo: Jan Verboom – given freely, in the spirit of AfrikaBurn.



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Guest Writer, Gordon Froud, Presents:

# I to I

The magnificence of the mundane in the works of  
**Johann Van der Schijff**  
 (Exhibited at Art on Paper, Johannesburg – November 2015)

**Below:** Detail of one of Gordon Froud's sculptures

**Right:** Johann van der Schijff, *Security Camera (kiaat)* & *Security Camera (beech)* 2015, Wood, stainless steel screws, aluminium bracket, enamel paint 395x300x150mm (kiaat) & 410x300x140mm (beech).

Image Courtesy Gallery Art on Paper



Eight years in the making, this exhibition proved to be one of the finest shows that I have encountered in many years. Many other exhibitions that I have seen are conceptually strong, visually rich or technically well made, but *I to I* manages all of this in one show. The 17 sculptures that make up the show are seamless, tight and gloriously made with careful attention to detail, finish and presentation. The show made me feel nostalgic for a time when craft and finish were as important as material and meaning as demonstrated by sculptors like Gavin Younge, Bruce Arnott, David Brown and the late Peter Schutz. In the changed world of contemporary art, process is often seen as more important than the finished work, resulting in an interesting visual experience but sometimes a hollow end response. In the work of Van der Schijff, this is not so, the richness of the pieces satisfied my every need as a sculptor and art collector. I would willingly have taken any piece to my collection.

But what is it that makes this exhibition so complete? In the manufacture<sup>1</sup> Van der Schijff creates sculptures that are so beautifully made that the viewer pours over the work lingering on details and marveling in the craftsmanship in the way that one would a fine piece of Chippendale furniture. In the presentation everything is finely tuned<sup>2</sup> and operates as one large installation where every work speaks to every other work on many levels. But it is in the conceptual richness that the show excels most. Van der Schijff examines the world around us, his world, and presents snapshots of the everyday, the mundane, the ordinary but framed in a new way. Everyday objects<sup>3</sup> like dog food bowls or soft drink can and plastic sandwich wrapper are represented as wooden sculptures, monumentalised in their making. In addition to these types of works are those that set up enforced binary conversations or implied interactions where

the viewer is invited to complete the work in their mind. *Arm wrestling podium*, *Public foot washing podium*, *Truth and Confession podium* and *Confession podium*<sup>4</sup> are 4 such works.

The human figure is absent but implied in relation to the interaction suggested. These politically charged pieces imply power struggles, confession and perhaps forgiveness and are framed by the history of South Africa over the last two decades.

This powerful exhibition is thought provoking, emotionally charged and magnificent in its portrayal of the mundane.

1. I use this word purposely because the artist makes use of industrial processes like CNC milling, Laser cutting and Computer Aided Design programs to achieve his aim.
2. Van der Schijff even prescribes the distance between works in the captions to images in his noteworthy catalogue.
3. Which he says are connected to daily rituals like feeding the dog or eating store bought packaged lunches.
4. All bronze and steel marquettes 2007/2015 – ideas towards monumental public interactive sculptures (Arm wrestling podium has been realised as a full sized erected in Cape Town – inviting the public to play)

johans borman

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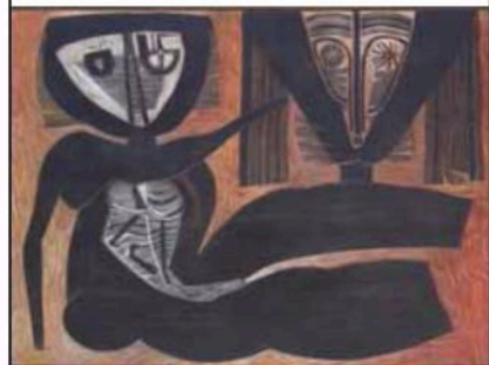
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