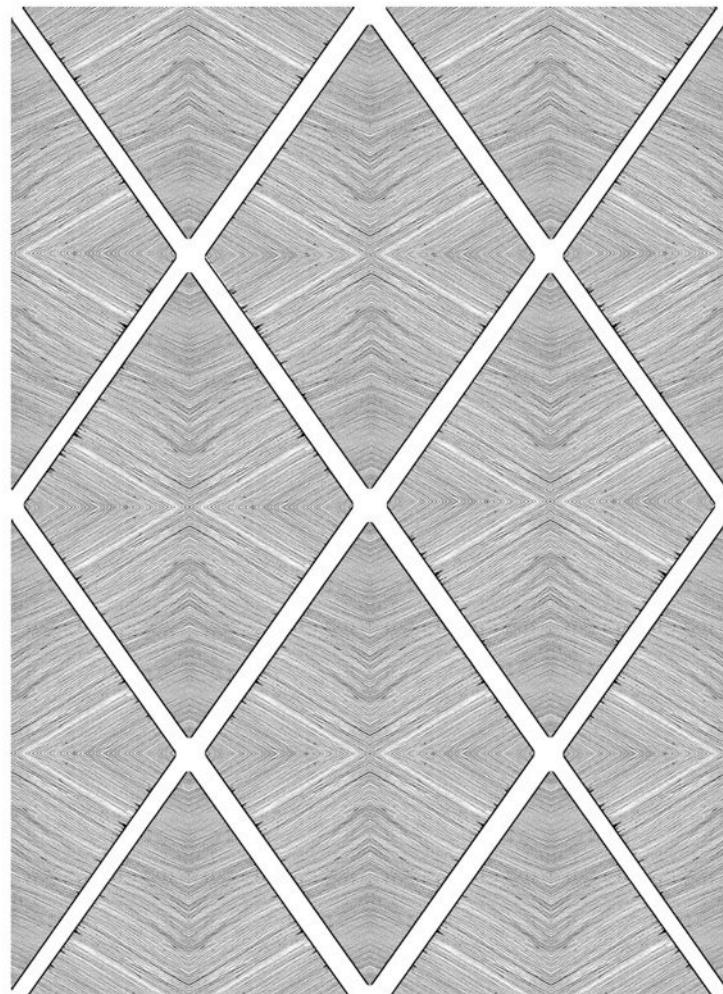


# Yuck 'n Yum

Winter 2011

David Fyans · Gucci Be Good · Anonymous · Devin Blair · Craig Barrowman · Milica Stefanovic · Sean Duffield & Noelle Barby  
Helen Flanagan · Lindsay Boyd · Jeff Linden · Ellyce Moselle  
Laura Tully · Mark Wallace · With texts from Yuck 'n Yum



Yuck 'n Yum is: Andrew Maclean, Gayle Meikle, Ben Robinson, Alexandra Ross and Alex Tobin.

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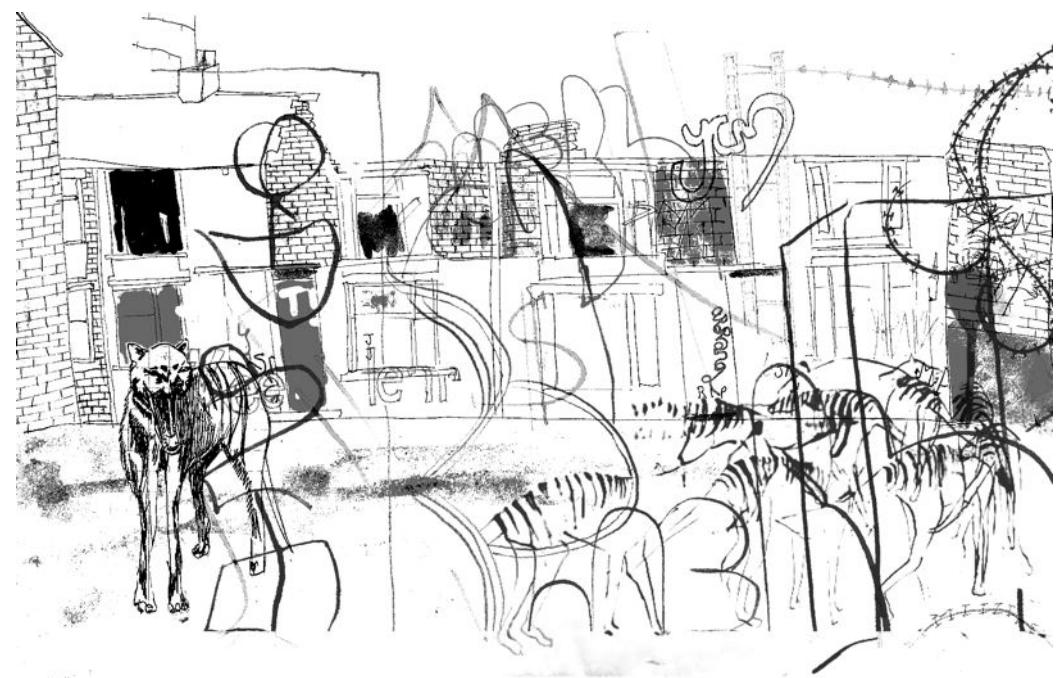
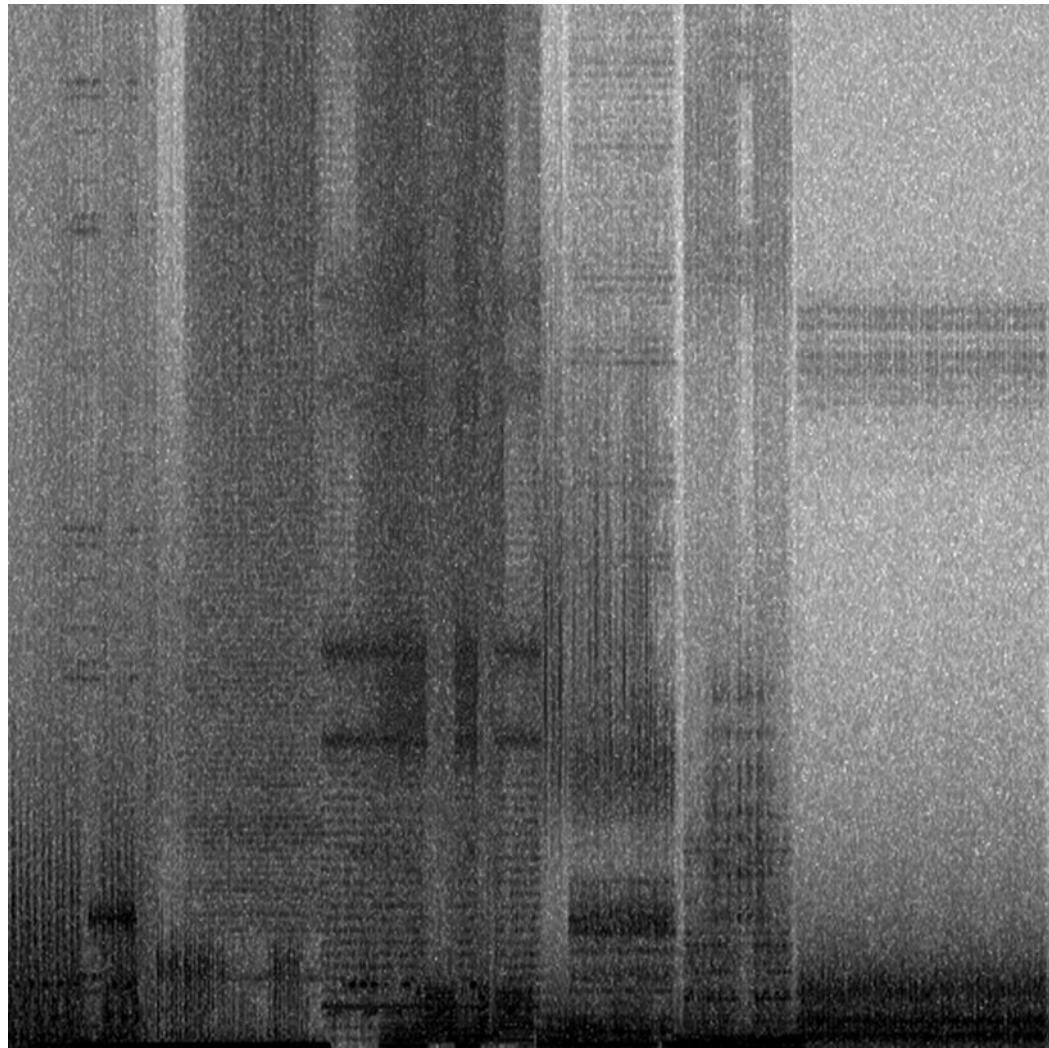
“Goldie fuckin’ loves paint”

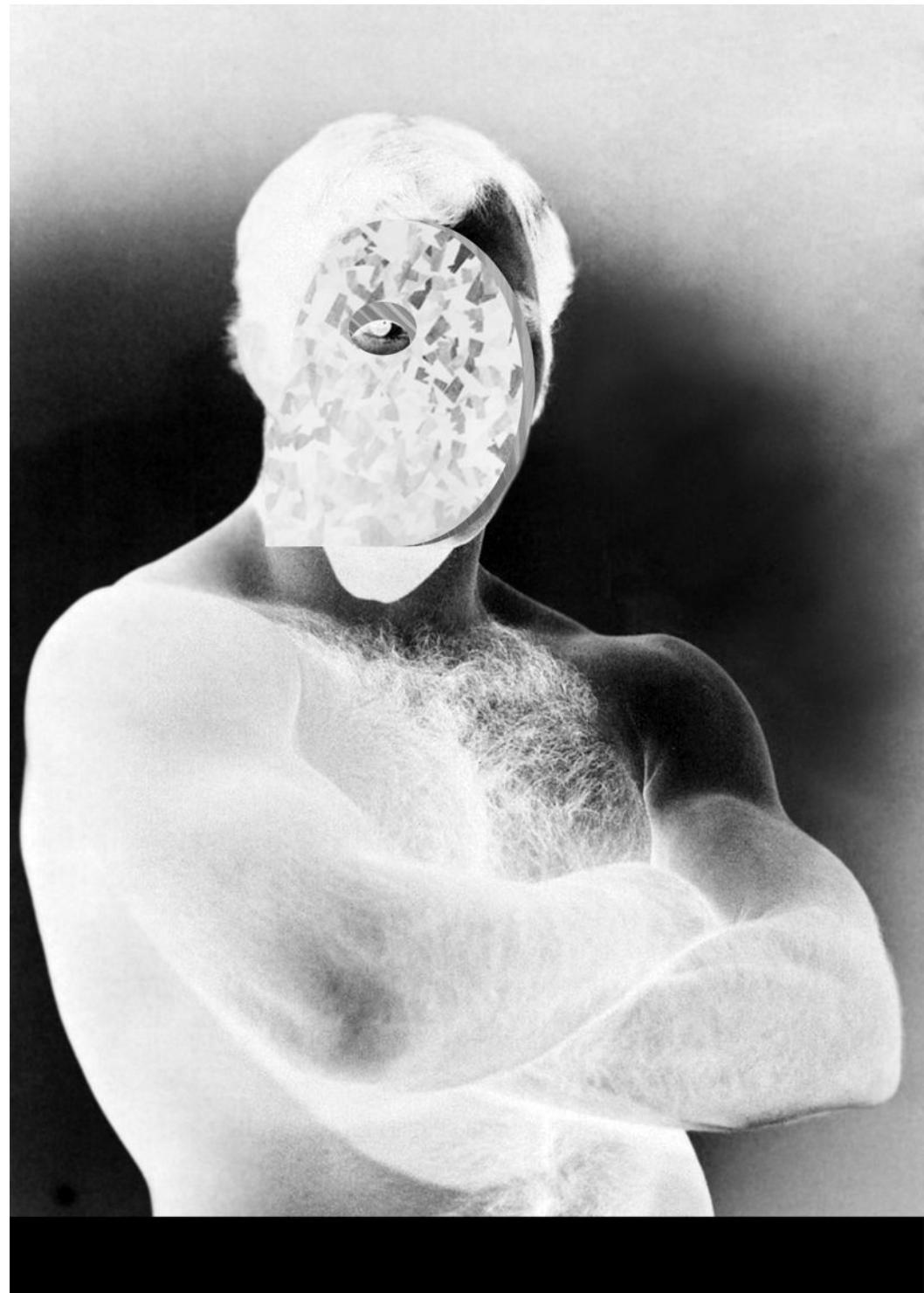
# Yuck 'n Yum

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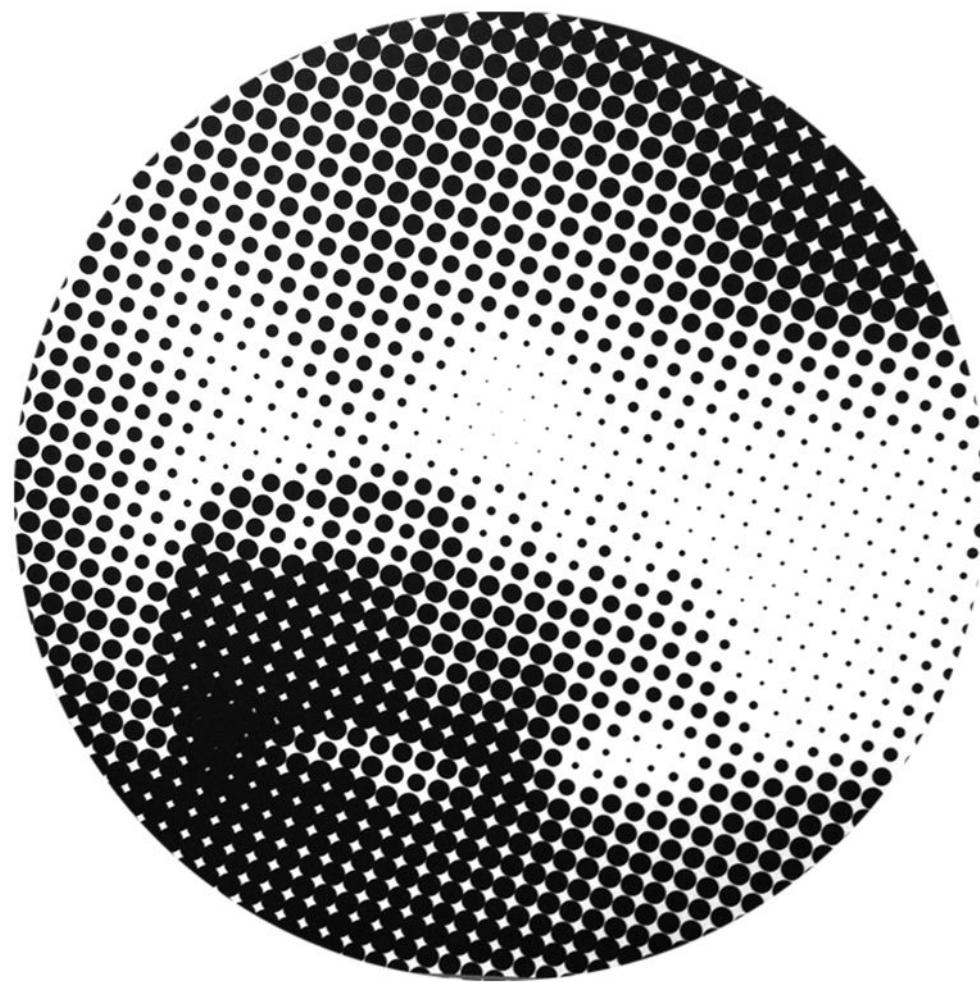
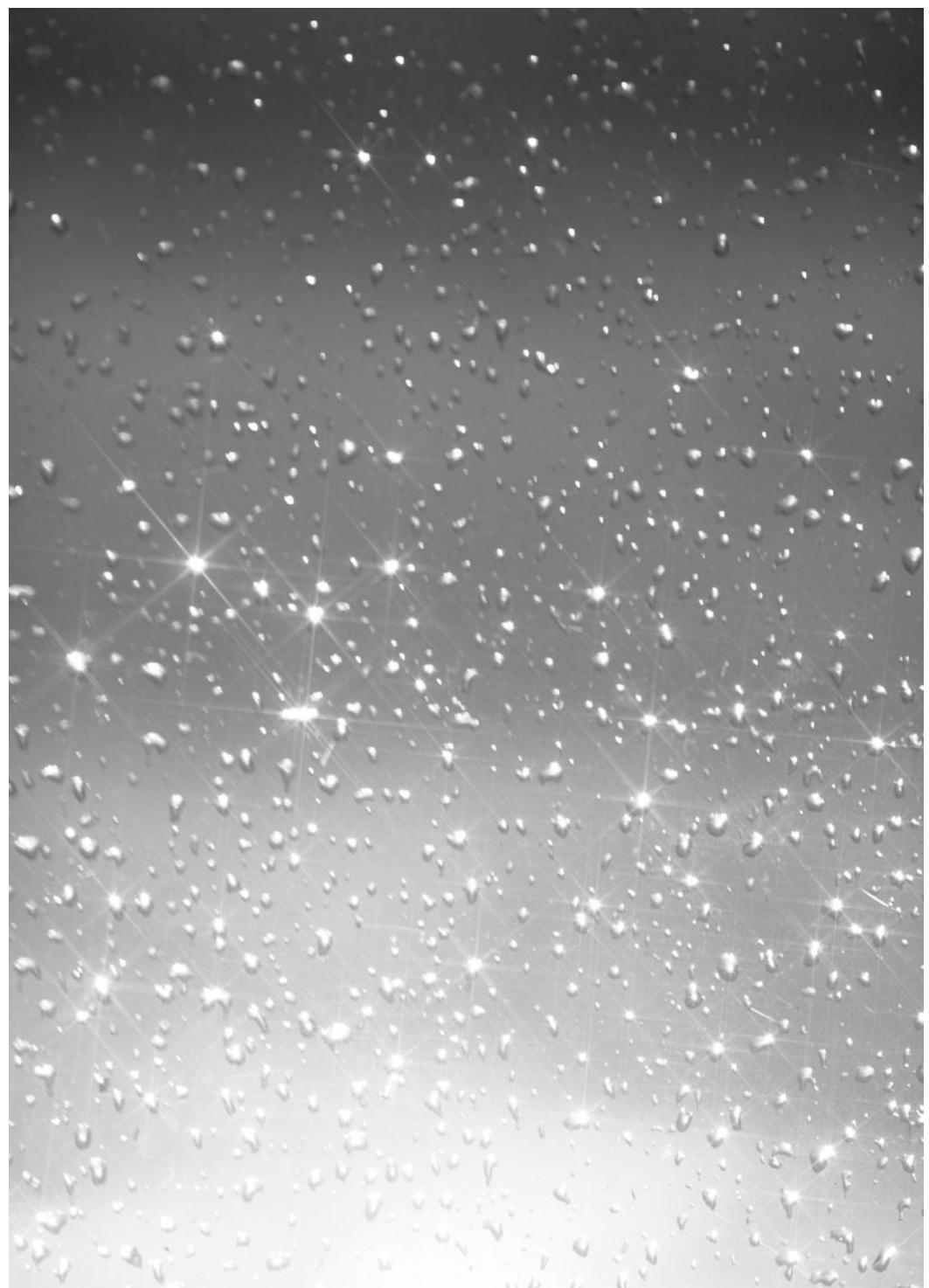
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Cover by Ross Hamilton Frew









## The Mordant Liquor of Tears: Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece

Although regarded as a masterpiece of Renaissance religious art, the Isenheim Altarpiece is unlikely to feature on any of your supermarket Christmas card designs anytime soon. Created near the French Alsatian town of Colmar between 1512 and 1516 for an audience who suffered the debilitating effects of ergot poisoning, the Altarpiece is an artwork whose central panel, a horrifying, visceral crucifixion scene, was originally intended as a form of medicine. Patients at the monastery hospital's chapel had been struck by ergotism, a malady contracted by eating fungus-infected rye bread. They experienced an array of unpleasant symptoms such as vomiting, gangrene, intensely painful burning sensations in their limbs and extremities, hallucinations and madness. Their fingers and toes would be dropping off and their skin would have broken out in painful sores. This is the context in which Grünewald's magnum opus was originally seen, and his agony-wracked Christ was there to provide sympathy and to share in the victims' suffering. His green, rotting corpse cries out in an empty desert, and the artwork conveys the message that pain will bring one closer to God.

Stanley Meisler's September 1999 article for The Smithsonian magazine explained the artwork's origins:

"The monks treated the sick with a balm made from herbs and other plants and with prayers to Saint Anthony, who was believed to possess miraculous curing powers. The monks also tried to bolster the faith of the sick by reminding them that Christ - and Saint Anthony as well - had suffered even greater torments. Grünewald's altarpiece played an important mystical and psychological role in the Isenheim treatment program."

Ergot poisoning went by the name of Saint Anthony's fire and was a regular epidemic in the Middle Ages. Fungus-infected bread was to blame, the local rye bread developing hard, dark spur-like structures. This contamination would thrive in damp conditions and affect hundreds at a time. The cause was then unknown, though was often blamed on witchcraft. The monks would serve the sick with good quality food, have them drink a holy fortified wine, and let them contemplate their rich collection of artworks.

The Isenheim Altarpiece takes the form of a multipanelled polyptych whose wings open out to reveal a Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Of these multiple scenes it's the Crucifixion whose force has held sway over generations of artists and writers throughout the centuries. In the French decadent writer Joris-Karl Huysmans' 1891 novel *Là-Bas*, the protagonist Durtal contemplates Grünewald's picture, his musings forming an extended meditation on the work's exquisite horror. In his description of Christ's wounds, Huysmans doesn't stint on the gore:

### Commercial Break:

AM: What are people saying on Twitter?

AT: hamssayshey says, "Who is the blondie presenting the Turner Prize?"  
Someone is tipping Karla Black and they have a photo of Jedward as their avatar.  
"None of the Turner Prize people are very good this year" says Gloomsam.

AM: There is no transparency in how the selection takes place.

AR: It's complete and utter politics.

BR: The whole system of prizes for cultural endeavours is bullshit.

AT: (With more Tweets)

"I thought I was being pretentious watching the Turner Prize until I saw Goldie and Lauren Laverne were on."  
"Goldie needs to do one, his thoughts on the Turner prize are lame."  
"The bearded bloke (Mathew Collings) talks faeces."

### The winner is Martin Boyce!:

AR: WHOOP!

AT: Well done Martin.

BR: Well, I am suprised.

AM: Didn't they used to have dinner tables etc.? The recession is hitting us all.

### Post-announcement:

AT: Goldie's looking pissed!

AM: I am off to write to Ofcom cos what I just watched was soooooo controversial!  
But maybe I'm being a dick, maybe I sound smart arsey, perhaps that was controversial to others!

AT: Do you think there was anyone who was offended by it in the entirety of the UK?

BR: I don't think anyone could be offended by anything on this year's shortlist.

AM: What about previous years? Probably the most controversial thing in its history is Damein Hirst's shark... is it?

AR: "Lights on and off! That's not art!" I'm sure was a massive complaint.

AT: That's the main controversy isn't it, that people go "That's not art!"

AM: The papers used to put a lot more effort into highlighting the "controversy".

I think they miss it, maybe that's why the TV coverage was constantly mentioning it every 5 seconds.

AM: Does it really mean much for the winning artist?

BR: 25 grand is fuck all to most artists.

AR: Are you having a laugh?

AM: Does it really make them household names? The Turner Prize claims to educate the general public.  
Martin Creed did inspire my dad, who has no real interest in art, to make a piece involving two Post It notes in dialogue with the glass shutter between our kitchen and our living room. Maybe made possible by the coverage of his work beaming into our house, but I argue he would not have watched it had his son who was at art college not been home at the time.

AT: I do think it increases their profile.

AR: I don't think there are many artists that play the celebrity card though.

AT: OH I think there are!

AR: Not on the same scale as gossip mags etc.

BR: I think more artists should.

AR: The Turner Prize can arguably have a negative impact on an artist's career as it can time-tag them. We talk of them existing in eras. We keep mentioning past winners and consigning them to that time!

AM: Yeah, but all cultural media is guilty of that, constantly looking for the next big thing.

AM: How many times have you watched the Turner Prize?

BR: Every year since it's been on TV! And I used to bet on it every year, but William Hill don't seem to accept bets anymore.

AT: Never.

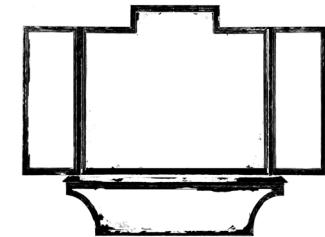
AR: This is the third time I have watched it.

AM: This is the second or third time I have tuned in.

AR: It's a privately-funded competition, the selection is made behind closed doors but it has a tantalising edge.

BR: I want to make the point that the Turner Prize is a really good spectacle. It's pretty damn good, some art on TV getting looked at by Goldie, and Lauren Laverne hosting it. You could say it's pretty stupid but it's good fun!

Ben Robinson will be doing something not too silly somewhere soon.



## **Yuck 'n Yum Turner Prize Party!**

For years I have been trying to get the Yuck 'n Yum crew to come together for an X Factor Party! It's all the rage y'know - young people get together, eat Pringles, drink Coke, and laugh at Kelly Rowland. These parties have a virtual dimension too. Most young people have two screens on the go at all times, allowing them to pass off quips on Twitter as their own in the real world, and vice versa. The gang, however, seemed uninterested. Desperate for social contact (I am so lonely!) and knowing Eurovision is too far away, I suggested a Turner Prize Party. This appealed as we are constantly on the look out for controversy, and this year's Channel Four coverage was proudly assuring us that the Turner Prize was indeed the most controversial thing in existence. We ordered Thai food and quaffed champagne like a bunch of disgusting art elitist swines preparing ourselves for controversy that would be greater than one million Jeremy Clarksons.

### **As it begins:**

Ben Robinson: I've got to say George Shaw is nailed on to win... if he doesn't win then... I'll do something silly.  
Alex Tobin: How silly are we talking?  
BR: Not that silly.

### **George Shaw VT:**

BR: I've had tutorials from him when I was in Staffordshire. Nice bloke.  
AT: I don't like how he talks about his work.  
BR: Nah, George Shaw is cool.  
AT: I don't like people who sort of fetishise their past. Nostalgia... bit boring.  
Alexandra Ross: (It's) bleak nostalgia, not through rose-tinted (glasses).  
AT: It doesn't matter, anything where they're clearly obsessed by their own childhood is a bit dull. Very interesting for them, not so much anyone else.

### **Karla Black VT:**

AT: WHEY Karla Black!  
AR: WHOO!  
AT: She sounds tiny!  
Karla Black: "What a sculpture is is something that stands up by itself."  
AR: I have heard her say that so many times.  
Karla Black: "I don't like the idea of competition between artists. I think it's quite destructive."  
Andrew Maclean: Do you think they are all going to say that?

### **Goldie and Mathew Collings' comments:**

BR: So this is pop stars talking about art.  
AT: ... and we are talking about them!

### **Hillary Lloyd VT:**

BR: Don't know much about her at all.  
AR: She is not nearly as articulate as Karla Black was.  
AM: I don't mind that though.  
AR: But I think the fact she is saying, "I think my work should speak for itself" but unfortunately I'm not getting this as we are watching on TV and we're not seeing it.  
AT: I don't think they are doing justice to her work in how it's been shot.  
AM: Perhaps it's a failure of the coverage? It looks like some kind of AV equipment advert.  
AR: I am interested in it though.  
AT: Yeah, I want to see more of it.

### **Martin Boyce VT:**

AR: When I went to see his work at the Scottish Pavilion two years ago, moving around, moving through the stones... it felt much more romantic... a bleak romanticism.  
BR: I saw the photos of his work in Venice and it looked a lot stronger than in the DCA, cos there was this contrast between the work and the surroundings.  
AR: His work does react to the surroundings. I think it did suffer out of context.  
Goldie on Hillary: "For me I want to smell the paint"  
AT: Goldie fuckin' loves paint.

"Purulence was at hand. The fluvial wound in the side dripped thickly, inundating the thigh with blood that was like congealing mulberry juice. Milky pus, which yet was somewhat reddish, something like the colour of grey Moselle, oozed from the chest and ran down over the abdomen and the loin cloth. The knees had been forced together and the rotulae touched, but the lower legs were held wide apart, though the feet were placed one on top of the other. These, beginning to putrefy, were turning green beneath a river of blood."

Durtal experiences a spiritual crisis, disgusted by the emptiness and vulgarity of the modern world, while in the altarpiece's depiction of unalloyed suffering he can glimpse salvation:

"(Grünewald) had gone to the two extremes. From the rankest weeds of the pit he had extracted the finest essence of charity, the mordant liquor of tears. In this canvas was revealed the masterpiece of an art obeying the unopposable urge to render the tangible and the invisible, to make manifest the crying impurity of the flesh and to make sublime the infinite distress of the soul."

In his overarching and accessible *Story of Art*, E.H. Gombrich wrote, "Art for him did not consist in the search for the hidden laws of beauty - for him it could have only one aim, the aim of all religious art in the Middle Ages - that of providing a sermon in pictures, of proclaiming the sacred truths as taught by the Church. The central panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece shows that he sacrificed all other considerations to this one overriding aim."

You'd be forgiven for assuming this art would hold scant appeal for modernism, but many artists did return to it repeatedly. The altarpiece had always held an evident lure for the grotesque and visionary Max Beckmann, and in 1932 it also inspired Picasso to complete a series of ink drawings of the Crucifixion. Christ's twisted limbs and diseased wounds would be shadowed in the paintings of war veterans by Otto Dix and George Grosz, while Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* used Grünewald's 1503 *Mocking of Christ* as an influence for the blindfolded central figure. Bacon's piles of source imagery teemed with photos of the crucifixion panel. The avowed atheist eventually travelled to Colmar two years before his death to see the Isenheim Altarpiece for himself in the green, decaying flesh. You'd hope this pilgrimage was no mere eleventh-hour religious conversion, but rather a meeting of two like minds. At a distance of five hundred years Grünewald and Bacon had between them performed the most forensic renderings of the human situation's enduring anguish. I'd quite fancy making that trip myself at an apposite moment, whenever such a time might be.

