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Degas' dancer relaxing in Gander's new work, shown at Frieze

Ryan Gander: drawing the line from Degas to Dire Straits

Last summer, the artist Ryan Gander spent a week with his girlfriend in a house in a French forest. He took with him three sketchbooks each containing 50 or so potential works, representing six months' research. By the end of the week, he had worked out how to realise 33 of the possible 150 pieces—not bad, you may think, for a working holiday, which is the only kind of holiday you can imagine Gander taking.

He's an artist on a roll, with a full schedule of shows around the world until 2010. Still only 32, and just five years after his first solo exhibition, he has already forced himself to take a sabbatical year away from accepting new shows, not for relaxation, but in order to build a stockpile of new work.

Gander may not quite be a workaholic, but he certainly has a formidable work ethic. "It makes me very happy to make work," he explains. And

"Just making variations on a theme for 30 years seems lazy. Why would I want to do that?"

he's scathing about others who don't live up to his exacting standards—London art students, for instance, who know too much about the gallery scene and spend their time whinging about their courses instead of using the time to make work.

"This is all I wanted to do for ten years before it happened," he says. "If you've worked in Allied Carpets and all your friends just do 'job' jobs, you realise how lucky you are."

Gander tries to make each work different from the others, in both concept and medium—he might use video, sculpture, text, photographs, commissioned images, appropriation or narrative fragments, to name just some of the possibilities. "Seventy per cent of artists making work now only have one idea, but just making variations on a theme for 30 years seems a little bit lazy. Why would I want to do that? Someone like Rachel Whiteread has only had one idea, to cast negative space."

Despite his puritan streak, Gander has a very romantic attitude to art, which he describes as "alchemy" or "magic". He is constantly on the lookout for epiphanies: "seeing how things in the world collide, what sort of funny noises they make when they bang together."

This is a turn of phrase he

uses more than once as he describes how a work will come together by "making noises in my head". It's a process of chance and free association that can't be forced, so he travels everywhere with a tape recorder and camera to capture thoughts and images that strike him when he's driving in his car or wheeling around the streets of London in his wheelchair.

Gander's work may be difficult, he concedes, but it rewards viewers who are prepared to spend time and effort on it—as you might expect, he has no interest in people who expect instant gratification.

At Frieze, Gander is showing a new bronze, *I Don't Blame You, or, When We Made Love You Used to Cry and I Love You Like the Stars Above and I'll Love You 'til I Die*, 2008. The title uses a lyric borrowed from Dire Straits, and the statue portrays Degas' dancer relaxing with a cigarette and gazing at a small blue cube.

"It's hyper-realistic, so not at all in Degas' style," he explains. "It's not about reproducing his work, but about reproducing the character of the 15-year-old ballerina who posed for him." Gander's work is at Frieze booth F33; "Basquiat", his solo show, is at Store, Hoxton Street, N1, until 29 November