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Artist of the week 89: Ryan Gander

Here's a quick list of some of the things Ryan Gander has produced over the years: a chess set, a new word, a children's book, jewellery, customised sportswear, glass orb paperweights and maps. Then there's the stuff that you'd fully expect to find in a gallery: photography, films, drawings and sculpture. Gander's varied output keeps his imagination nimble. Often described as a storyteller as much as an artist, his work is packed with narrative prequels and subplots spun from cultural history and personal anecdotes.

This is most overtly the case with the work that shot the Chester-born Gander to art-world attention: his Loose Associations lecture, first performed at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, when he was a student there in 2002. Gander's talk rambles from 'desire lines' (imaginary paths across public spaces) to outlining fake furniture, touching on Christine Keeler's connection to Homer Simpson, Inspector Morse, morse code and much else en route. Often, though, Gander's stories are more secret. His Alchemy Boxes, begun in 2007, contain models of work by other artists, alongside personal items such as Truffaut DVD sleeves and books. Or so the wall text says.

What does it all mean? Gander's convoluted puzzles never come with easy solutions. Bauhaus Revisited, one of the works shown when Gander was nominated for Becks Futures 2005, was a chess set based on Josef Hartwig's 1924 egalitarian rethink of the game, in which the shape of the pieces helped players understand how to move them. But Gander's version, carved from mottled brown-and-white wood, looked deliberately confusing. He invites us to take part in mysteries where the plot is ever-thickening.

Why we like him: You Walk Into a Space, Any Space (2010) features a reproduction of Degas's Little Dancer Aged 14, but the bronze girl has escaped from her plinth to wreak havoc with a bunch of Bauhaus-inspired geometric objects scattered over the gallery floor.

Give us a clue: Gander has a passion for figures such as Inspector Morse and Sherlock Holmes, who often make elusive appearances in his work. British actor Roger Lloyd-Pack, who stars in the artist's film Man On a Bridge, might be best-known as Trigger from Only Fools and Horses - but according to Gander, he has also played Holmes more times than anyone else.

Where can I see him? Gander's solo exhibition You Walk Into a Space, Any Space is at Lisson Gallery, London, until 5 June 2010. With his sculptures, stories and passion for Sherlock Holmes, this Chester-born artist draws us into visual mysteries for which there are no easy solutions

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