

WE ARE THE GRATEFUL DEAD

Mark Braunias

Between late August and October 2019 I completed a visiting artist residency programme at the Dunedin School of Art. This culminated in an exhibition held at the School's gallery between 14 October and 1 November of the same year:

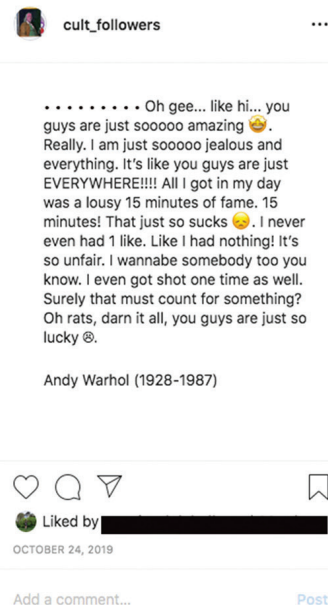
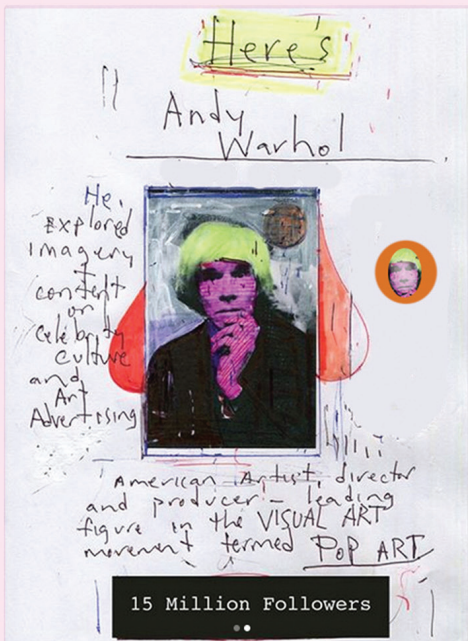
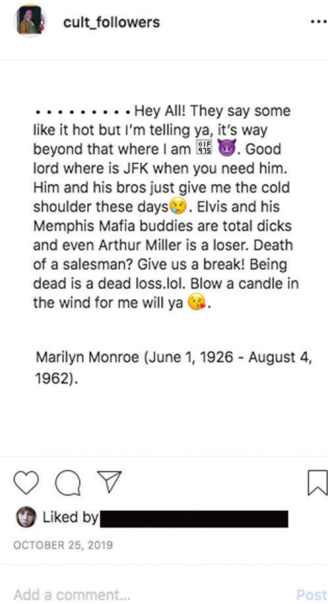
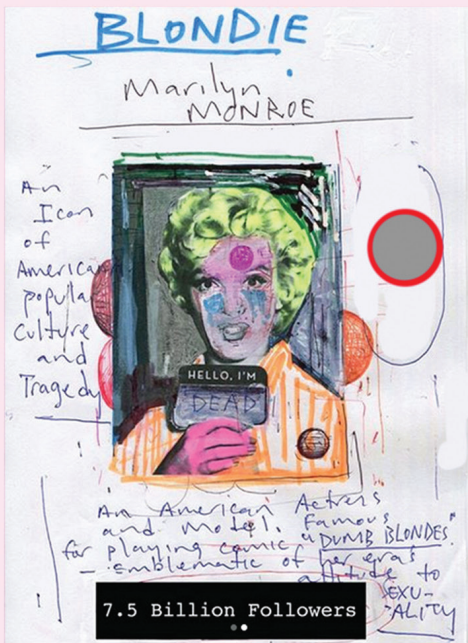
The exhibition, "Working on a Guru (A Pictorial Procession)," was a deliberately skewed non-linear and ironic interpretation of leaders and followers or cults throughout Western history. An emphasis was placed on the notion of spiritual belief systems, and the work referenced Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes as a site from which to de-contextualise.

Within this re-invented chapel an entire end wall arrangement, *We are the Grateful Dead*, operated as a stand-in for The Last Judgment. Typed obituaries of significant or famous people (both positive and negative in terms of their reputation) were presented in encyclopedic book form and arranged in alphabetical order. The altered photographs of each individual were given hand-drawn frames alluding to the process of biological and molecular deconstruction. These frames included abstracted biological parts and cell structures such as mitochondrion, ribosomes, microtubules, vacuoles, nucleus and nucleoli – essentially molecules and atoms actively disassembling and reassembling. The written commentary alluded to the subjects' life achievements (or otherwise), with a final sentence which was often little more than an ironic and pithy 'summing up.'

Following the exhibition, I decided to bring many of the deceased in these works back to life – perhaps to offer them another chance at even greater immortality. Establishing an Instagram account for my famous dead, I regenerated the same altered photographs from the exhibition and uploaded them to a contemporary online platform – the assumption being that they would still feel the need to communicate via impassioned posts from beyond the grave. The Internet's global coverage offered the grateful dead vast opportunities to convert the masses, possibly plead for forgiveness or, more than likely, maintain a similar pose to that revealed in their own era.

Satire is obviously the key driver for the entire concept and yet, despite a mocking tone, the message delivered by the famous dead attempts to convey a 'darkened' universal empathy and need. This need is at the heart of the works spread across the following pages. It's a need to be noticed, to be understood, to be respected, to be popular and potentially to be adored. Finally, like all Instagram or Facebook users, a need to know you actually exist. Or not.

Mark Braunias graduated from Canterbury University with a BFA in 1988. He has exhibited widely in New Zealand and overseas since that time. In 2019 Braunias completed an Artist Residency at the Dunedin School of Art. For further information : markbraunias.com





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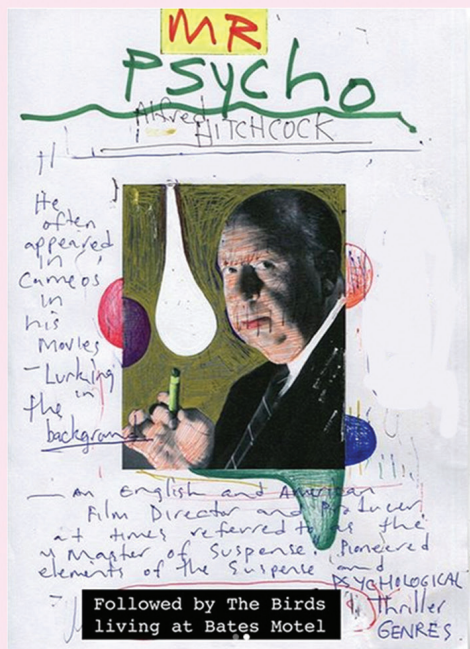
..... "Hi y'all! Hey howzit hangin'. Hehe. Say do you wanna be my Freendy Wendy? You know, like, you know, I'm cool. I'm hip. Me and my best Bud, Taxi Driver Travis Bickle are like real dudes. We have so much fun. It's groovy and neat! Even my Mother thinks so too. Though to tell the truth it's been a bit quiet around the Motel lately. That creep Hitchcock has been staying here as well. He is such a weirdo! ☹️ Spends all his time in the shower. What's that all about? Janet Leigh posted that she thinks he's a Psycho! I can believe it too. Hey I gotta go. Mother needs attention. She has been so silent these past 10 years. It's almost like she's not really there...but she's a real Mummy to me!! Missing you guys just so much" 🐼. Anthony



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..... "Greetings from my 13th Floor rear window. It's rather windy up here. People often refer to me as Sir Psycho. Like I care. The master of suspense? Whatever. Long as you pay at the door or you can check out. Your window of opportunity is always open 😊. If you see Tippi Hedren on your way down tell her I said she ain't a nice Bird 🐦. I'm feeling a touch vertigo myself but still willing to break a leg for Show Biz. It's all in the mind you know. And the Box Office 💰. Ciao cry babies."

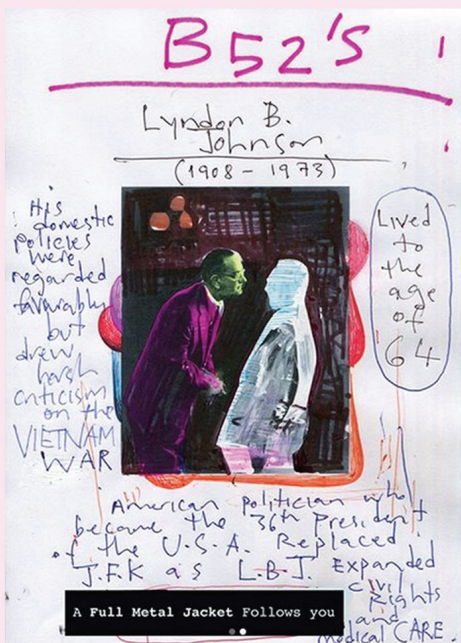
Sir Alfred Hitchcock
(13 August 1899 - 29 April 1980)



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..... "I never get any LIKES 🙄. In fact in 1968 during the Summer of Love I got nothing but HATES. 🙄 The young-uns burnt old glory 🇺🇸 and shat on Texas. I was as lonely as a Lone State. Yeah so I spat the dummy and Nixon went into the White House and inside Watergate. And now he has millions of followers ! WTF! Maybe I should have shot 🙄 that SOB Oswald myself. At least I would have got some respect then, surely. Instead of being a footnote to 'Apocalypse Now' for Christsakes ! ! Sure I know LBJ doesn't sound as sexy as JFK but it ain't all bad...is it?

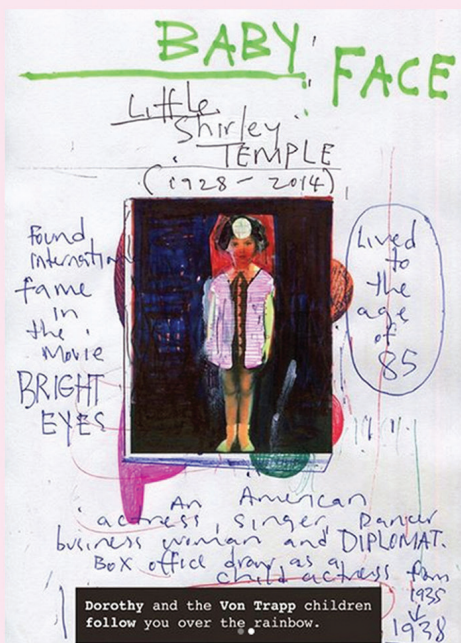
Lyndon B Johnson (August 28, 1908- January 22, 1973).



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..... 🗣️ "Ga ga ga Goo goo goo yeah right. It sucked being famous as a cute little baby kid 🙄. Creepy old people always talking about your dimples, curls and shit like that. At least Mr Bojangles treated me with some respect. They said he was an Uncle Tom but that dude just smiled and took off to Harlem 'catting' every night in the clubs with his bestie Bing Crosby 🗣️ Hope I die before I get old? How dumb is that. Being me was the end. Forever young is an age old construct of the poor little rich kid 🙄. Grow up you wise guys! Hehehe.

Shirley Temple (April 23, 1928 - February 10, 2014).



Liked by [redacted]

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..... "Good morning
starshine
So happy to be 😊
My love and me as we singing
Our early morning singing song
Gliddy glub gloopy, nibby nabby nooby
la la la lo lo
Sabba sibby sabba nooby abba nabba
le lo lo lo
Tooby ooby walla nooby abba naba
Good morning starshine 🌟
The earth says hello!

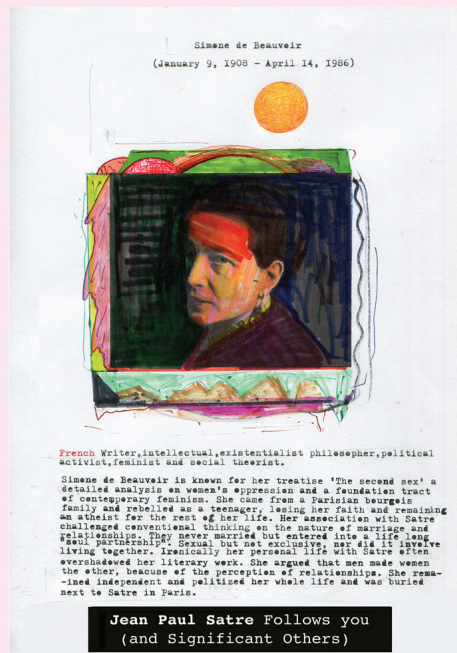
Jean Paul Sartre (June 21, 1905 - April 15, 1980) channeling the American counter culture in the summer of 1969 whilst having an existential wig out.



Liked by [redacted]

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..... "Good morning
starshine
So happy to be 😊
My love and me as we singing
Our early morning singing song
Gliddy glub gloopy nibby nabby nooby
la la la lo lo
Sabba sibby sabba nooby abba naba le
le lo lo
Tooby ooby walla nooby abba naba
Good morning starshine 🌟
Mother earth says hello!

Simone de Beauvoir (January 9, 1908- April 14, 1986) channeling Marcia! Marcia! of The Brady Bunch in the episode "The Jealous Sister"



Liked by [redacted]

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