

CHRIS EVANS

Chris Evans' work pattern usually begins with a personal encounter and then develops into a visual re-working, conceptually formed along the way. For instance: years ago, at an art academy he met a part-time mature student and ex-policeman, interested in drawing. When the ex-officer was out of the room for a minute, not being able to withhold his curiosity, Evans quickly took a look through his sketchbook and saw portrait after portrait of judges. *The Rock & The Judge* is the title of a series of works for which Evans has asked police officers around the world to make a drawing of a judge who had made a significant impression on them. In response to each drawing, Evans makes a sculpture of a rock to be positioned in front of the original drawing, taking on the role of imagined defendant.

A series of airbrush paintings are the beginning of a new project called *Bent Aura and other sculpture parks*. They portray outdoor sculptures loosely based on existing ones from European sculpture parks, and placed in fictional landscapes. *Bent Aura and other sculpture parks* will be a touring exhibition and book of fictional narratives that have sculpture parks as their context. A starting point for the book will be a chapter from Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus* (1914), a fictional account of what we would today understand as a sculpture park. In addition to the series of paintings, Evans has commissioned texts by, amongst others, Lucy McKenzie, Liam Gillick, Will Bradley, and Paulina Ołowska. The publication is due to come out in the summer of 2005.

Power—the subtle hierarchy that goes along within its precarious relationship, and the law and order prevailing that enables its successful continuance—this is in essence what much of Evans' work researches. Or, as Will Bradley so

aptly put it: 'Evans is deeply concerned with the impossibility of separating the artwork from the social and political conditions in which it exists, but unlike the politically motivated artists of the last generation he doesn't ask that art give up any of its connection with personal, poetic or imaginative investigation.'

MK

The Rock & The Judge

Non so se mi sono spiegato. This is a conversational expression used in Italy that I've been becoming aware of more and more—it means, 'I don't know if I have explained myself', with reference to a just-made conceptual point, idea, or description. It is mostly introduced unsolicited—a checking that's constantly updated, a paused opportunity to recap, to compare notes on the state of transfer. What's interesting is the crafty inversion of power implicit within it—at first it seems utterly humble and mannerly, as if the only possible reason for the listener not being fully informed is the poor resources of the explainer's linguistic skills—a personification of the limits of language. But it also heralds an invisible yet clearly envisaged concept to which the speaker alone is partial, whose clarity must remain intact in delivery; recognising the danger of a rough passage (like an 8 megapixel idea seen on the back of a 2 meg camera).

The expression is much more rich and subtle than, *you know what I mean?*, with its sometimes palpable emptiness and uninviting punctuation, or *Are We Clear?* with its sink-or-swim power relations and ante-placings of responsibility. I think there's a similar subtlety and power (not immediately discernible, but in feeling) of com-



THE ROCK & THE JUDGE (2005), plaster and pigment, commissioned drawing by Officer Erik Mei, Tallinn Police, Estonia

municative strategy worked into the presentation of Chris Evans' two-part works consisting of a police officer's drawing meeting artist's sculpture, *The Rock & The Judge*.

To begin simply, there's a refreshing first inversion; in that judges are (liberally) famed as impassive, severe and remote as asteroids, part of a machine devoid of empathy; and the accused the nervous human through whom all emotions flow, wherein all tension and releases are inscribed. In extending the depiction of the judge to one drawn by a police officer, and the equivalence of the accused with a stone, there's an examination, by jarring means, of the hinging of those languages in use on both sides of a democracy's gulf of power—where each side sees the other as only a node of misunderstanding—'Not living in the real world' or 'a spanner in Our Good Works'. Until the end result, a clear definition of status has not yet been resolved, and so all is up for grabs, and untrustworthy.

Two examples of points arising—the dog in the drawing of blindfolded justice has a remarkable characterization—as if known, by a name, personally and through experience, to the officer. Which is rather a different picture to the anonymous, noisemaking and functional face of teeth summarizing the view of a dog that's part of a raid team or crowd control. The rocks are a form of non-innocent abbreviation that could imply an original 'sociological' formation in fire, or sedimentation, and worn to shape by environmental weathering. Eyeless but capable too, as portraiture, of further extorting anthropomorphic expression from themselves, aided by their white surface harmony flayed by the core's angularity, kicking off apocryphal stories of Henry Moore finding 'expressive' stones on the beach and passing them to his assistants to render up at a ten times the size.

But the placement of 'Rock' and 'Judge' does justice to one clear idea—they do not touch;

the judge, a voodoo carrier, lets the law speak through his mouth, the defendant with the language universal—of what anyone might say, and how anyone might hold themselves. In fact, though theatrically in confrontation, these works speak mostly of the way in which the elements hinged by the police across power and the law do not see each other at all, or make themselves see and be seen according to a decision that relies upon predetermination and not the actual situation. Can we believe that the gaze of the judge is looking anywhere but straight ahead, even when blindfolded? And if it could be called an outward gaze at all, the first thing to which it would refer would be the Police Officer, the operator and action of the hinge, who is the fact-gatherer and presenter of the relevant information. A gulf-runner, whose quality of objectivity is liberally and conservatively prejudiced by the job they do in life.

The judge in sentencing, far from his political, public relational office of Reforming, is protecting himself and his status. The defendant, by definition, is doing nothing but the same. The invention and maintenance of the gulf, as the most apparent alienation between the 'Rock' and the 'Judge', is also the nearest thing to being negated by their alloy of division.

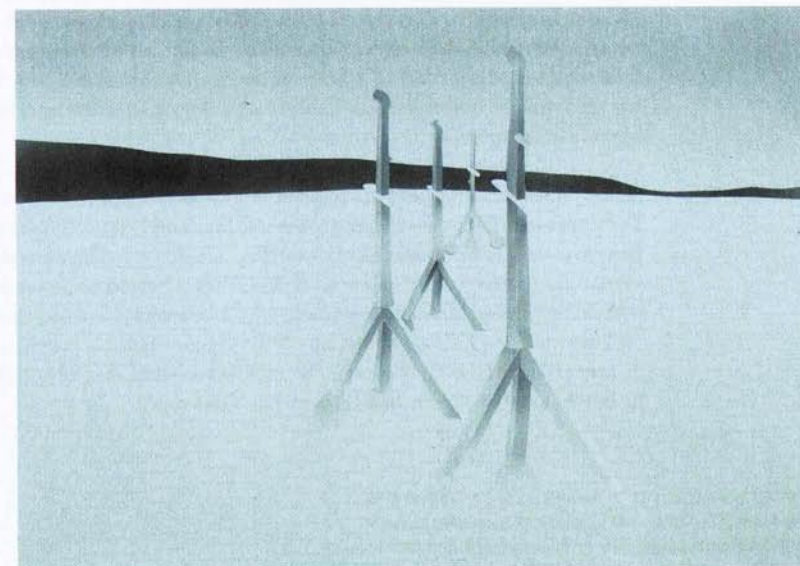
That the courtroom and gallery are pitched together is a timely coinage, in a period of cultural production that seems to be mostly speaking International Tiredness and has works coming on like a half-step backward in expectation of a blow. The dramas of the court are rarely seen by everybody as a waste of time—and neither are the durations of a show or the visits to it. With great economy, the whole process of looking, is revitalized within a linguistic frame of 'seeing-as'; ourselves alone taking the opportunity to try the facts as presented, to feel rather than hear the likely stories and hollow sounds that, given our experience of how things really pan

out, are part of the net convincingness of a real explanation.

The beauty of this is that the work fully allows awareness, accepts in fact, that given the battle of the contexts and the agreements therein, we are going to see all the things that we bind ourselves to see. And outside such institutional talk, there's the madness of the confrontation, the embodiment of the abstract of law, the rock becoming *expressive*, such twists that are deliberately valued within language, and the personalized impartiality of the series itself, engineered as incapable of enjoying its own effect as such, too entranced and busy grinding away on similar but other fronts—all those that are operating simultaneously to this repetitive and energized confrontation. I still don't know if Chris Evans has explained himself.

Padraig Timoney

Chris Evans: born in 1967 in Eastrington, United Kingdom; lives and works in Amsterdam and Berlin [Selected solo exhibitions](#) 2005: Store Gallery, London; Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam; 2004: Artconnexion, Lille [Selected group exhibitions](#) 2005/06: *The British Art Show 6*, (Haywood Gallery, London) touring U.K.; 2003: *Ill Communication*, Dundee Contemporary Arts; *Other Criteria: Sculpture in 20th Century Britain*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds



MAGNETIC PROMENADE (2005), airbrush painting on paper, 74 x 98.5 cm