

# Marvin Gaye Chetwynd

## Galleries 3 & 4

Most of the sculptures and installations in Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's exhibition started life as handmade puppets, costumes and sets for her anarchic, joyful performances. She is not interested in the high production values of mainstream movies, preferring to champion instead the spontaneous creativity of improvisation and the exuberance of the amateur realised in her low-fi artworks.

Chetwynd is influenced by the history of popular performance, including medieval mummer's plays, carnivals, communes, drag acts and political demonstrations. Her art also draws on the history of performance in avant-garde art. She moves easily between 60s Happenings, folk tradition, literary classics, sci-fi and contemporary moral dilemmas. She is never shy of taking on big issues, such as the highly contemporary problem of personal debt, explored in her new performance *The Green Room*, specially commissioned for her exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary.



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, *A Tax Haven Run By Women*, Frieze Projects, Frieze Art Fair, 14 to 17 October 2010. Photo Polly Brennan

Her works here include *Brain Bug* and *Cat Bus*, shown first at the New Museum in New York and Frieze Art Fair respectively. The former was inspired by *Starship Troopers* and the latter by the 1988 Japanese animated film *My Neighbour Totoro*. They have been brought back to life in our galleries with some fully staged performances.

Marvin Gaye Chetwynd was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2012. This is her first solo exhibition at a public gallery in Britain.

### Literature and the Classics

“I have more respect for literature than anything. I find magic realism and literature the most satisfying way to understand history or politics. I studied Latin American History at UCL, and found reading Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) more helpful than any of the texts in the curriculum. I made work from Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* (1950) in 2011 and I’d like to make a mime comparing this novel with D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928).

When I was at the Royal College of Art, I developed a project called *Audio-Theory*. I made a website, and I recorded anyone who had a relationship with a classic text. They chose a section or a chapter and read it. The last recording I have made was my Dad reading Italian writer Lampedusa on literature.”



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, *A Tax Haven Run By Women*, Frieze Projects, Frieze Art Fair, 14 to 17 October 2010. Photo Polly Brennan



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, *Diorama*, 2012.  
Installation view, New Museum, New York, 2011 – 2012.  
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## Performance

“I was born in 1973, so I relate to that 70s Happenings’ dynamic, where you forsake everything and change your life. I respect it, but there’s not enough humour in there to glue me. You literally experiment and try to live in a commune, off-grid. Hopefully Glen Baxter is in charge of the endless co-op meetings.

I would say the Marx Brothers and Vaudeville theatre are important to me, as is American actress Mae West. The Futurist Manifesto (1909) and their Manifesto of Futurist Cooking (1930) have influenced me a lot. I love their use of language, their passion and zeal. I also love Constructivist theatre such as Meyerhold.

I am very interested in the origins of theatre, folk theatre and mumming. I like carnival, comedy and nonsense. Any processional quality could come from researching British architect Inigo Jones (1573 – 1652) and the pageants he made.”

## Brain Bug Performances

Sat 1 & 15 February 2pm

Sat 1 & 15 March at 2pm

Free. Drop in

*Gallery 4*



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Installation view, Home Made Tasers, New Museum, New York, 26 October 2011 – 01 January 2012. Copyright the artist, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London

## B Movies

“B movie directors are often inventive due to their lack of budget and the results are really interesting. The audience have to fill in the parts that are missing. It is almost as if B movies don’t underestimate the audience. A parallel Brecht plays. The lack of finesse enables a less defined suspension of disbelief. When I was in art school, Ed Wood was really important to me. I like his working pace, but also his use of stock footage and split screen. My friends tease me that I make art as if I was running down a hill, and that’s what I like in Ed Wood’s films. In his science fiction thriller Plan 9 from Out of Space (1959), he has a buffalo stampede edited into a proposal scene!”

## Production values

“Simply put, I am expressive and I find expression in making things very satisfying. I would not work with bigger productions as I find it doesn’t interest me. I like the excitement of problem solving when you have a low budget, and the sense of autonomy and spontaneity that comes from working on my own or with a small team. The performance event The Green Room at Nottingham Contemporary is green screen technique exploded, rather than a step up into high production values.”



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Delirious, Serpentine Pavilion, London, summer 2006  
Copyright the artist, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London.

## Debt

“I fell into debt as a student at the Royal College of Art. It was at this time that I became really convinced debt was bad. I watched Alvin Hall’s TV programs on debt counselling, and began to be more and more curious about debt as a subject matter. I realised money is a tool and the psychological weight we give to it complicates the relationship we have with it. I started to make cross cultural and historical comparisons, looking into medieval debt culture for example, and their idea that you could buy your way into heaven. With *The Walk to Dover* (2005) I researched Victorian debtors prisons.

For the new commission at Nottingham Contemporary I have developed an idea that I’ve had for years, which is to run a debtor’s counselling group in the same vein as weight watchers or anger management programmes.”

## Bat Opera Paintings

“Cognoscenti have told me how much there is in common between the Bat Opera series and the performances I make. There are similarities in the staging and composition. The bat series are like a story board, with close-ups, long shots, medium shots, and so on.

I like to have different ways of working. When working on the bat paintings I am reliant on paint, light and me, rather than listening to other people’s needs and organising. With the performances I am like a tour guide.”

*Marvin Gaye Chetwynd*

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Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, *Bat Opera # 7. 2004-5*  
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