



# GRANTS & RESIDENCIES

OUR CRITICS AND WRITERS PRESENT ARTISTS AT VARIOUS STAGES IN THEIR CAREERS WHO ARE BEING SUPPORTED BY ARTS FUNDING BODIES TO DEVELOP NEW WORK.

## 01 DANI MARTI

**Dani Marti** is off overseas for the first half of 2012. Marti arrives in New York in February to take up residency in the Australia Council's Greene Street studio. He is excited at the prospect of working and showing in New York. "Initially I am going because **Octavio Zaya** – a curator who was involved with Documenta last time – is curating an art space there called All City, a medical arts centre," he says. "I'm having a solo show there in June."

Marti, who'd come to Australia from Barcelona in the late 1980s, switched careers from being a trade delegate for the Spanish government to an artist when he signed up for a course at Sydney's Julian Ashton School in 1990. From there he studied in New York at the Art Students League and then did a Master of Arts back in Sydney at the University of New South Wales's College of Fine Arts. All the while he was exhibiting his work in artist run galleries in Sydney and he quickly became known as the maker of beautiful sculptural works that hung on the wall like paintings but were typically made from woven ropes, plastics and other tactile materials. He was picked up by Sherman Galleries and his work was being bought by both private collectors and public galleries.

But in the midst of all his success he was feeling restless. "I began to feel uncomfortable. I was looking for inspiration," he recalls. "In 2004 I decided to study art properly, to get a Masters of Fine Art, and so I went to Glasgow." Instead of continuing with his woven works, Marti turned to video making. "I put aside my ropes and just started shooting, shooting." Marti began making videos of meetings with male prostitutes, casual acquaintances and family members – videos that are part interview and part sexual encounter, depicted with a frank and touching honesty.

For someone whose work was so apparently connected to a formalist, abstract mode of art making the move to video seemed like a big break, but Marti sees a logical connection; the wall works and the videos are about his relationships with people. "I had a show called *Coco*," says Marti recalling an early show in 2000 at the artist run space Rubyayre. "The whole show was inspired by **Coco Chanel** and fashion. What I have been doing all along is an emotional reasoning, a departure. I work through repetition, through DNA, getting to know [my subjects]. It occurred to me in my second year at the Glasgow School of Art that all my work was connected by the idea of getting close to someone. They are independent streams of work but they are connected."



Marti was the subject of a career survey show at Newcastle Art Gallery in 2011 and the exhibition featured what has become a celebrated work – *Bacon's Dog* – an intimate video portrait of art collector and curator **Peter Fay** captured in the throes of a sexual encounter. "Video is used as a device to get to know someone, like a sketch," says Marti. "The video was accompanied by a work that was made of coloured plastics collected by Peter for many years." For Marti, these works combine to make a portrait of a person and so the Newcastle show, under the title *Touch: The Portraiture of Dani Marti*, sought to bring these streams together.

Marti's show at All City in 2012 brings together another important aspect of his work – a concern for men's health. "Zaya had seen the Glasgow work I had made, on gay men's health," says Marti. "He wants me to do something similar to that with the Hispanic community in Harlem. It will be video-based and installation. It's a very alternative gallery space that is a clinic for young people by day, a gallery too, and it is a club at night."

In an interview with Zaya – to be published in a monograph on the artist's work to be published mid 2012 – Marti explains the passion behind his work. "I come from Barcelona, Spain and I am afraid that has an effect on what I do," he told Zaya. "Baroque painting, its imagery, has transformed me. Seeing that pain, that drama on the canvas, has excited and scared me for a very long time, since I was a kid."

For Marti, the space of the canvas and the video is a way of recapturing that drama and making his audience feel it too.

Andrew Frost

Clockwise from above left:

Dani Marti, *My sad captain (take 2)*, 2011. Polyester, glass beads, diameter 210cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GREENAWAY ART GALLERY, ADELAIDE

Dani Marti, *Untitled (Peace to you Eva)*, 2001-10. Polyurethane ball used for industrial purposes and polypropylene string, 45 x 80cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND ARC ONE GALLERY, MELBOURNE

Dani Marti, *Time is the Fire in which we Burn (Take 2)*, 2009. Stainless steel, galvanised iron, copper scourers and galvanised fencing, 610 x 260cm. Installation view. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND ARC ONE GALLERY, MELBOURNE

Dani Marti, *Bacon's Dog*, 2010. Two channel HD video, 11 min 30 sec. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GREENSPACE, SYDNEY

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