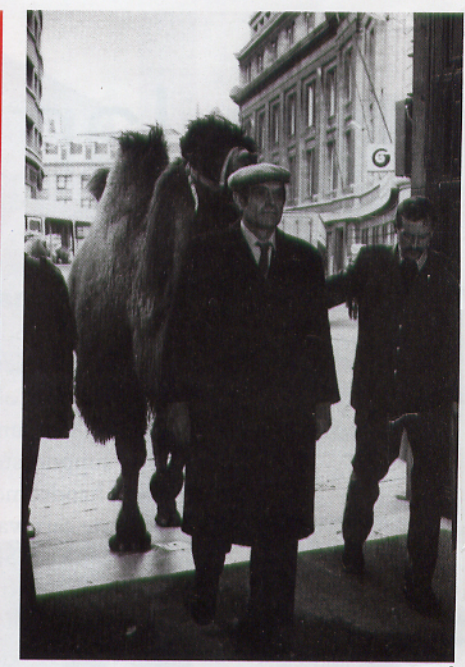


Stupidity  
 RONELL  
 WAYNE KOESTENBAUM  
 Andy Warhol  
 ILLINOIS



# Bruce Hainley

**1 Trent Harris, *The Beaver Trilogy***  
 Duchamp proffered the *infra-mince* as a way of describing the imperceptible differences between identical things or concepts, but I don't think he ever tried representing the idea. In Trent Harris's *Beaver Trilogy*, Beaver, Utah, native Richard Griffith (aka Groovin' Gary) does his "pantomime" of Olivia Newton-John's "Please Don't Keep Me Waiting" as the culmination of his self-proclaimed Beaver High School talent show. Then Sean Penn interprets the Beaver Kid doing Olivia, and Crispin Glover does Sean doing the Beaver Kid doing Olivia. The film gives new resonance to the expression "laugh until you cry." Tracing the blurring concepts of "being," "impersonation," and "acting" (in life or more formally on stage), the movie explores fandom as the fundament of fame. Harris provides a Warholian stare at the stupefying trauma of the posited masculine real as well as some proof that the technology of video (TV) can short-circuit seeing or witnessing, deranging their links to responsibility or consciousness. Forlorn yet miraculous, the trilogy interrogates repetition's traumatic difference from imitation's narcissistic drives. Bluntly, it's sui generis and fuckin' awesome.

That's somehow sadly appropriate, given Broodthaers's questioning of institutions and media and his poetic interrogation of Belgian identity. With more than 340 pieces, the retrospective had some lulls, but awe ruled.

**5 Olivia Newton-John Leitmotif**  
 Given my enthrallment with the Beaver Kid, imagine the thrill I got from discovering an ONJ leitmotif in 2001's two most acute, heartening, yet radically different performances. In *Sonic Dan* (which had its American debut this year), Stephen Prina finds the structural bridge, ca. 1981, between Steely Dan and Sonic Youth—which he straightforwardly but meditatively performs—in a weirdly moving cover of the number-one song of the entire '80s. Yes, ONJ's "Physical." And for *Present Absence*, Claude Wampler, walking the tightrope between performer and director (aka "life" and "death"; "action" and "art"), used Steamer Cry Wolf (a Belgian rock band), a six-foot-four male ONJ double, Elizabeth Taylor, and a fart machine, all on or in collaborator John Tremblay's dazzling inverse-catwalk stage, to reinterpret *Xanadu*, that sublime roller-skating wreck of a film musical.

**2 Evan Holloway** (Marc Foxx, Los Angeles) Perception's his plaything. With *The Sculpture That Goes with the Bank*, Evan Holloway games with modernism's public face. A huge sculpture dwarfs a model bank, a juxtaposition that slyly reveals and disturbs art's relation to economic institutions. Situated on gray industrial carpet, *Incense Sculpture* deliriously problematizes pedestal and support, warping the clichéd fact that after Brancusi, support and sculpture are a Möbius strip.

**6 Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin** (Matthew Marks, New York) Attempts to show fashion's imbrication with art or vice versa are usually depressing. For all their fashionista cachet, van Lamsweerde and Matadin didn't really attempt this at all, and the nondepressing result was magically more than the sum of its parts—super Franz Gertsch and Robert Greene paintings, cool Jeff Koons sculptural porn, always so-so Marlene Dumas. Topic for discussion: With the same seasonal slot and same art star-turned-curator conceit, consider that it was riskier and more challenging than Robert Gober's show two years before.

**3 Alair Gomes** (Fondation Cartier, Paris) Not "phagotography" but masculinity taken as obsession's vernacular. More than 400 images (of Brazilian beachboys, at rest or not) from an archive of 170,000, all movingly scopophilic and perhaps salubriously beyond art.

**7 Mark Roeder** (Low, Los Angeles) Mark Roeder dreams Smithson's *Enantiomorphic Chambers* back into existence—but this time only as reflections. If I were mean, I'd talk about how many pointers he could give Sam Durant. Instead I'll just offer that Roeder may be showing art's mirror stage, in which art sees itself as other.

**4 Marcel Broodthaers** (Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) The Belgian national museum is falling apart because of factioning state politics:

**8 Buffy the Vampire Slayer** (UPN) What comes after the gothic outgrows its dark adolescence and becomes adult? Sadness and the knowledge that this existence, even with joy and love, may be hell. Joss Whedon remains as ruthless an artist as he is a loving endurer of life.

**9 Jim Lambie** (Anton Kern, New York) "Boy Hairdresser." He had me at the title. Plastic hair bands and album covers. Glitter and fandom. Great use of a fake ventilator to flutter a paper cutout of a slight (boy?) odalisque.

**10 Avital Ronell, *Stupidity*** (University of Illinois Press)/Wayne Koestenbaum, **Andy Warhol** (Penguin Lives/Viking) Ronell: "To the extent that writing appears to be commandeered by some internal alterity that proves always to be too immature, rather loudmouthed, often saddled with a pronounced narcissistic disorder no matter how much it makes you want to hide and isolate; or, as part of the same debilitating structure, to the extent that the powerhouse inside you is actually too smart for the dumb positings of language, too mature even for super-ego's sniping, and way too cool to attempt to put the Saying into words; to the extent, moreover, that writing makes you encounter time and again the drama of the lost object never lost enough, summoning you once more to commit to pointless chase scenes and sizable regressions, all enacted before a sinister superegoical tribunal of teachers and colleagues and those who dumped you and mean-spirited graduate students trying to surpass you, packing heat (sometimes they're on break, but not all that often)—it abandons you for these and other reasons, more reasonable ones that momentarily elude me, to the experience of your own stupidity." Koestenbaum: "Words troubled and failed Andy Warhol" too, and he found living in a body, surrounded by objects and others, no more illuminating. Ronell opens a dossier on nonunderstanding; Koestenbaum, one on Warhol's "ur-sexual" being, which transformed even boredom into erotic thought. Both texts are philosophical meditations on the misunderstanding known as embodiment. Thinking and writing in and of the new century begins here: Consider this stupid at your peril. □