

What is the relationship between artists and copyright law? Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno offer some reflections on this topic in "Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy," 2004, a series of short animations riffing on that old cartoon staple, the cat-and-mouse chase. Commissioned by curators Åsa Nacking and Max Liljefors as part of the project "(rider): law and creativity," the ten-episode series was first shown at the Konsthall Lund in Sweden in conjunction with a conference held at Lund and Malmö universities in November 2004. Deploying a slapstick classic, Gillick and Parreno portray art and the law as engaged in an endless chase, demarcating copyright as their new field of conflict.

Apart from the clashes between the films' protagonists, the content is all in the fine print: The credits contain fragmented quotations about copyright issues derived from the input of an advisory group—consisting mainly of curators—that has worked with artists facing legal challenges. In one episode, music is attributed to "documenta II"; in another, the sound track is the work of "contested question of authority." Similarly, the director could be "workshop for smugglers," "self-knowledge," or "free software": all calls to arms in an emerging struggle between creativity and cash.

This work, whose collaborative origin complicates its ownership, explores how copyright could change our understanding of aesthetic autonomy. Traditionally art and the law have clashed on censorship—Western law typically protects artists' freedom, but occasionally ethically or politically troubling works are not afforded much protection. The rise in piracy on the Web—and in legislation to prosecute offenders—has shifted art's potential for offense from being centered on ethics and politics to questions of economics; from censorship to ownership. The radical misspelling of Bryan Ferry's name is a strategy for turning a public figure into art without the private individual's permission. Of course, the real cliff-hanger in this chase is whether the state will protect artists' independence—not their freedom of speech but their right to use images for free.—JENNIFER ALLEN

Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno

TALK ABOUT "BRIANNNNNN AND FERRYYYYYY"

The scenario of "Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy"—that of the cat-and-mouse cartoon—details the attempted overkill of a potential victim who offers violent yet always inconclusive retaliation. Our take on this story begins with the realization that the cat has finally killed the mouse, leaving us in a gap akin to that between the Second World War and the cold war, or between the cold war and the so-called war on terror.

The work is intended to critique a given relationship between law and creativity. Crucially, it also makes pointed reference to problems around the fact of us having been commissioned to develop an exhibition project in relation to this issue in the first place. From the outset, we decided that working together would be a way to develop modes of refusal in relation to the assumptions at the heart of the project without resorting to tokenism or didacticism in the face of an excess of analysis or anecdote. Positioned as "riders" to the main event of the conference, we deliberately marginalized ourselves, conscious that historically disenfranchised groups have not necessarily sought the most transparent relationship with legality.

To emphasize this self-consciousness, we put together a semi-autonomous group of advisers who could follow the development of the project and function in a precise relationship to the exhibition. The group consisted mainly of curators experienced in working with artists who have complex interactions with the law. Some, such as architect Nikolaus Hirsch, provided us with their own intricate and lengthy considerations of aesthetics and law; others, such as artist,

Opposite page:
Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno,
"Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy,"
2004, stills from a series of black-
and-white and color animations,
27 minutes 39 seconds.

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curator, and critic Peio Aguirre, directed us to various outside texts. Some responses were practical, such as the list of artists that curator Maria Lind provided; others were obviously last-minute and as vague as the invitation itself. By reproducing elements of the advice in the animations' credits, we at once acknowledged its supplementary nature and established a separate world of ideas. (The titles, credits, and other such information exceed the length of each episode.) We not only blurred authorial responsibility but integrated that blurring into the work itself.

Every part of the project was achieved collaboratively. Philippe drew the test sequences, which were then elaborated on by Ivan Orkeny, a young Hungarian artist based in New York. We edited everything together and created the titles and credit sequences as an integrated element of each episode. We are now developing new versions to be included on commercial DVD releases from Anna Sanders Films, a company founded in 1998 by Charles de Meaux, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe, Xavier Douroux, and Franck Gautherot.

The typeface used in the credits is Alien Gothic, which was originally designed by the Paris-based agency M/M for an exhibition of Philippe's work and was reused here before we told them what we wanted to do. The music at the start of each episode was originally produced to accompany the short clip that introduces every Anna Sanders release. (The clip itself is a collaborative work made by Sean Dack and Liam that has also been exhibited at Corvi-Mora in London.) The body of each episode includes new music produced while the film was being edited. The credit sequences feature a short segment of the beginning of a specific track by a specific group, presented as having been used in the context of academic research.

A number of potential legal complications thus arose in the production of the work, resulting not only from the extremely drunken condition under which the initial script was written but also from our parasitic relationship to a film company, our reuse of a font designed for another application, and our employment of music from a variety of sources. But none of these potential trouble spots proved to be straightforward, and the final effect of "Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy" is an excess of questions, quotations, and potentialities rather than a clear-cut demonstration of legal dilemmas.

Many artists working today—those who challenge immigration law, deal with questions of sexuality and identity, or fight the perversities of political regimes—test legal boundaries. "Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy" does not do this directly but has opened up a discourse in relation to the discussions that took place in the conference and, in Lund, created a point of entry to related ideas for passersby (the Konsthall is free and located on a busy public square). Copyright is an issue that artists tend to be relaxed about, as their work is protected by intellectual property law. But an artist may still choose to deconstruct his or her own protection on the one hand, and/or critique the control of ideas and information in the commercial sphere on the other. While "Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy" attempts this, it is not only inconclusive but potentially infinite—or at least open to endless late-night reruns. □