

**ROB PRUITT** "Idea No. 28 : Make a painting with make-up." This deadpan, irreverent directive taken from "101 Art Ideas You Can Do Yourself," Rob Pruitt's 1999 exhibition at Gavin Brown's enterprise in New York, sends up a warning flare to anyone who would dare classify him simply as a "painter." Without an overview of Pruitt's turbulent career, such an oversimplified label might be understandable. While his recent production has primarily involved making pictorial works on canvas, it is impossible to understand these "panda paintings" apart from the tropes that run throughout his work. Underlying his use of the traditional medium runs a deeply humorous, sometimes flippant engagement with the history of conceptualism coupled with a brazen insider commentary on the art world's contradictions and excess. 000 Pruitt's recent celebrated New York exhibition "Pandas and Bamboo" (2001) featured a series of enamel and glitter paintings. In order to understand his preoccupation with this beloved endangered species as well as his recent foray into "painting," it is necessary to briefly recall the artist's early career. Unlike his cuddly panda alter ego, Pruitt hasn't always been an art-world darling. He unwittingly became an infamous figure in the early 1990s while working in collaboration with Jack Early. Pruitt completely disappeared off the map following their 1992 exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery entitled "Red, Black, Green, Red, White, and Blue". In a climate of politically correct militancy, Pruitt and Early attempted to discuss the commodification of African-American heroes by predominantly white-owned companies and were attacked as cynical and racist. Not until his "101 Art Ideas" exhibition did Pruitt slowly begin to emerge from obscurity, his comeback assured only after a public avowal of remorse for his Pruitt and Early days in a feature story in *The New York Times*. 000 Following this volatile beginning, Pruitt has chosen to harness the "power of the panda" as a weapon to woo and disarm a hypercritical reception. The irresistible innocence and adorableness of his animal stand-in ("I am the panda" was sung over a dance beat throughout the exhibition) finds a subtle betrayal in Pruitt's choice to use glitter rather than oil or acrylic paint to render his otherwise "realist" subject matter. Whether resurrected from summer camp "arts and crafts" sessions or perhaps from a timely sense of nostalgia for the decadence of 1980s fashion, a cryptic edge underpins Pruitt's glitter pandas. 000 The facetious devaluation of painting's history, weight, and aura implicit in "Art Idea No. 28" seems to be pushed further in Pruitt's turn to "painting" with his most recent series. In the art-market boom of the late 1990s, the choice to make "paintings" is both economically savvy and aesthetically consensual. Always pushing things to their limit, Pruitt capitalizes on glitter not only for its intoxicating visual qualities but for a light-handed commentary on the art world's status quo. As critic Meghan Dailey has noted, "If one wanted a material metaphor for an art world about to collapse under the weight of its own fabulous excess, glitter would be the perfect choice." 000 Alison M. Gingers

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1964, lives and works in New York 000 **Selected One Person Exhibitions:** 2002 - Galerie Air de Paris, Paris; China Art Objects, Los Angeles 000 2001 - Galleria Franco Noero, Turin, Italy; "Pandas and Bamboo", Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; "101 Art Ideas You Can Do Yourself", Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio 000 2000 - "Flea Market", Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; "Psychic Predictions For The New Millenium & Things To Do With Lemons", Cabinet Gallery, London 000 1999 - "101 Art Ideas You Can Do Yourself", Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York 000 1993 - Galleria Il Capricorno, Venice, Italy; Mulier & Mulier, Knokke, Belgium 000 1992 - Leo Castelli Gallery, New York **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2001 - China Art Objects, Los Angeles; "The Americans: New Art", Barbican Gallery, London; "Two Friends and so on", Marc Foxx, Los Angeles; "Vantage Point", Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin 000 2000 - "Salon", Delfina Project Space, London; "Protest and Survive", Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; "Greater New York", P.S.1, Long Island City, New York 000 1999 - "Free Coke", GreeneNaftali Gallery, New York; "Village Disco", Cabinet Gallery, London 000 1998 - "Home and Away", Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York **Selected Bibliography:** 2001 - Meghan Dailey, "Rob Pruitt", *Artforum*, May; Mia Fineman, "Back in the Arms of the Art World", *The New York Times*, 17 June; Michelle Grabner, "Rob Pruitt", *Frieze*, June/August; Tim Griffin, "A Man, a Plan, a Panda", *Time Out*, 1 March 000 1999 - Katie Clifford, "Rob Pruitt", *Artnews*, Summer; Kim Levin, "Rob Pruitt", *The Village Voice*, 9 February

1. Un carton de Duraflame, 2000, Cardboard box, enamel paint, and glitter, 8 x 15 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches, 20.5 x 39.5 x 34.5 cm
2. Un carton de Alanbrand, 2000, Cardboard box, enamel paint, and glitter, 14 x 9 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, 35.5 x 24 x 21.5 cm
3. Idea No.51: Make Mud, 2 Parts Dirt, 1 Part Water, Use as Paint or Clay, 2001, Installation at Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio
4. Panda and Bamboo, 2001, Enamel paint and glitter on canvas, 98 x 72 inches, 249 x 183 cm
5. Winter, 2001, Enamel paint and glitter on canvas, 98 x 72 inches, 249 x 183 cm
6. Pa, 2001, Enamel paint and glitter on canvas, 96 x 72 inches, 244 x 183 cm

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