

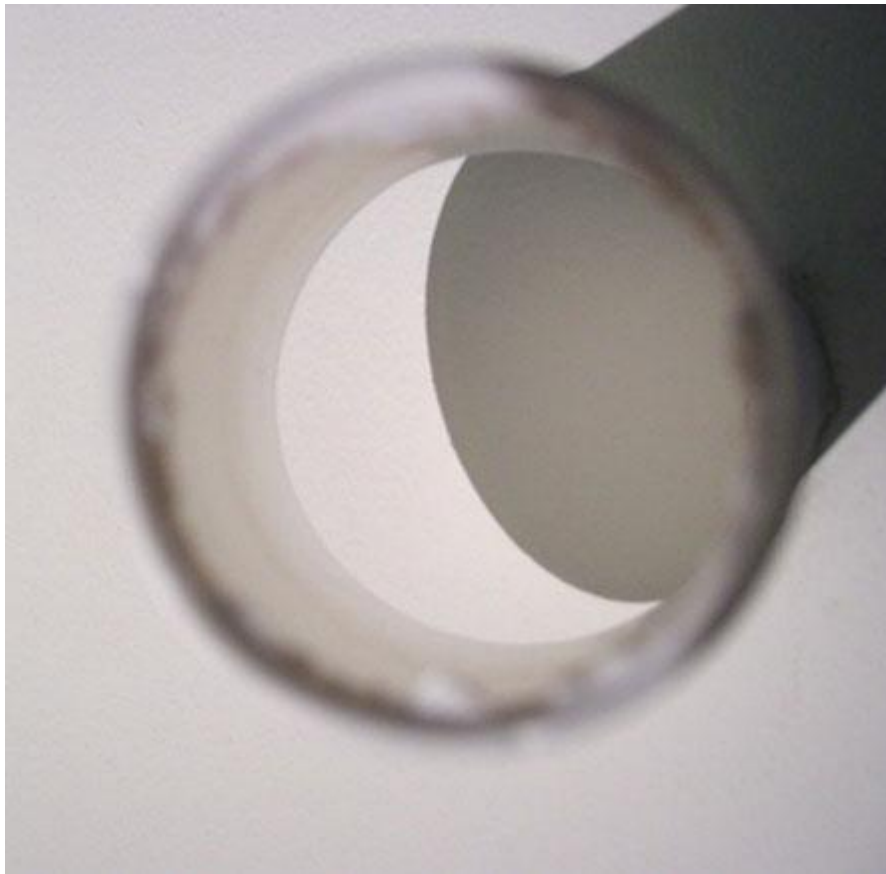
Danny Yahav Brown

Mixture Contemporary Art

- Chris Ballou -

Sometimes life seems full of futility ironically, never more so than when, in a world full of words, language actually fails to communicate. And while a stale old adage tells us a picture is worth a thousand words, pictures are just another type of language, conveying meaning to some but leaving others puzzled. This condition has vexed the art world since the 19th century, when artists abandoned the traditional work of public edification for a more personal agenda.

The resultant gap between artist and audience has rarely been bridged since, leaving art, according to skeptics on both sides, firmly rooted in the realm of folly. This breach the point where communication fails is the liminal territory that artists like Danny Yahav-Brown rush into headfirst. Through an economy of gesture and the use of minimal materials, Yahav-Brown embraces potential futility by remaining skeptical of the potential of his own attempts to communicate.

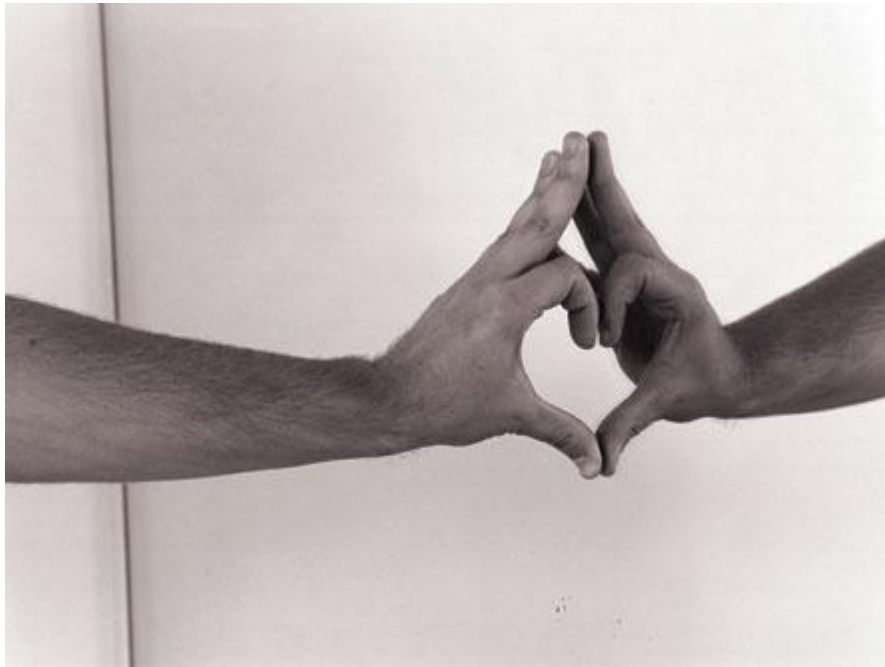


Danny Yahav-Brown, *Ill Bring You The Moon*, 2003
Styrofoam, desk lamp and wood
Dimensions variable

In a memorable episode of the *Shields and Yarnell* variety show, Yarnell (playing an Earthling) says in groovy 1970s parlance lets split. Shields (playing an alien) doesn't

understand her meaning but says OK anyway. Pressing a button on a device attached to his belt, TV trickery literally splits Shields in half. (Hilarity ensues.) Yahav-Brown finds life to be full of such misunderstandings, and embraces the absurdity that results. Take *Trying to Extend My Lifeline*, a photograph of the artists hand with small clamps pinched at each end of his palm or better yet, *Ill Bring You the Moon*. In this piece, the artist takes the cliché at face value, undaunted by its implicit impossibility. Through a bottomless Styrofoam cup, he casts a crescent moon on the wall with a desk lamp, at once creating a valentine to the inexpressibility of love and delivering on the phrases outlandish promise in a marvelously poetic way.

Even together, words and pictures can fail to communicate a singular message. Yahav-Brown uses the interplay of title and image to render each as an elaboration and a punch line of the other. These dichotomies create a friction of meanings that is the very source of the works complexity and the reason they don't read as simple one-liners. Whether title or the image is the starting point, a full set of expectations and assumptions are formed by one and frustrated by the other.

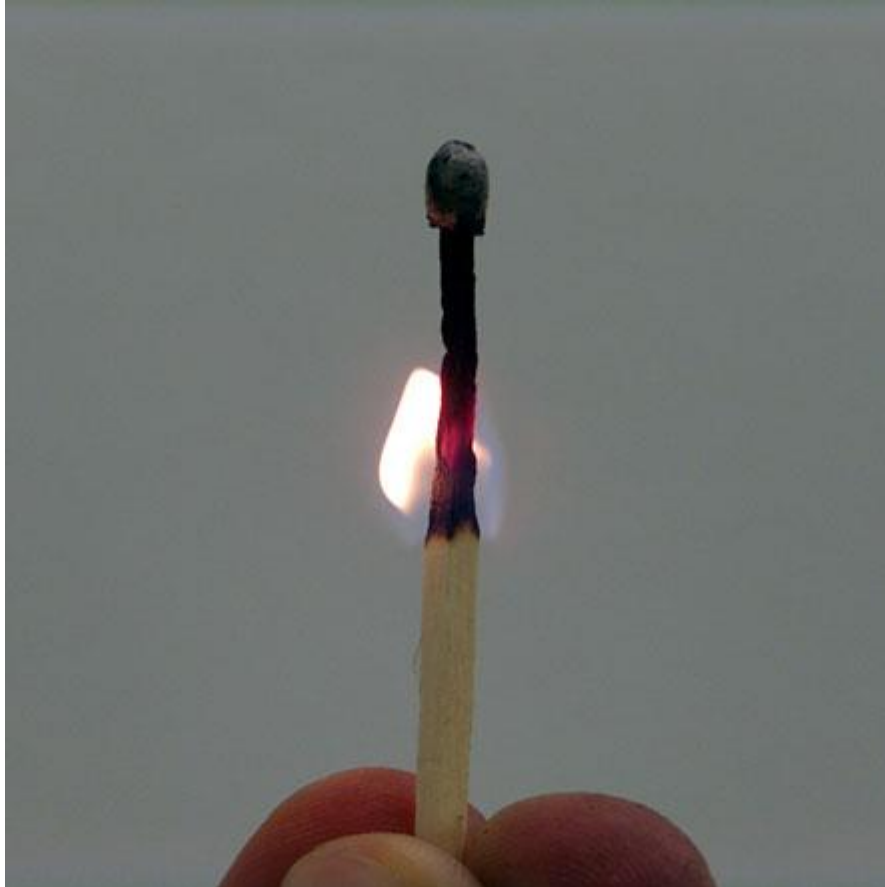


Danny Yahav-Brown, *Making Love in the Men's Bathroom*, 2003
Chromira print under Plexiglas
30 x 40 inches

For instance, the title *Making Love in the Mens Bathroom* might conjure up scenes of decadent, liquor-fueled copulation in a public bathroom stall. Instead, the photograph depicts a modest gesture: the artists fingers pressed against a mirror. Together, the fingers and their reflection form the shape of a heart an innocent and playful fulfillment of the title. In *Almost There*, Yahav-Brown employs a phrase that typically implies a journey's end or a project's completion. Instead, the photograph depicts the watery reflection of a brief-clad torso on a tile wall a body that, well, almost there a shade passing between this world and the next.

Friction of meanings is also a result of temporal affinities these photographs share with video art. Mind you, none of the images look like video stills. Instead, each reads

like a compressed event, edited down to the essential moment—the moment that represents not only itself but also all the moments leading up to and following it. In capturing the end of a burning match's short life, *Burnt Out* and *Still Going* a reconfiguration of the classic half-full/half-empty glass polarity also suggest the match's entire life span, from ignition to inevitable exhaustion.



Danny Yahav-Brown, *Burnt Out*, 2003
Chromira print under Plexiglas
22 1/2 x 22 1/2 inches

Likewise, the plastic bag in *Mountain with Shoe (Disciplining the Heat from My Shoe after a Five Mile Run)* stands at turgid apex, but the image alludes to both its incipient inflation and ultimate collapse. The intention of these images is not documentary, at least, not in the sense that they are the artifacts of a performance. They are Yahav-Brown's attempts to re-fabricate the essence of a quotidian moment—a nostalgic reflection of the artist's personal experience. Wisely avoiding the closed loop of anecdote, Yahav-Brown presents these inscrutably resonant moments through simple gestures and a few modest props.

But while Yahav-Brown probes the failure of language, he must, like everyone else, resort to its employ. And, in spite of his misgivings, he hopes as much as anyone to connect with whomever is listening. Like a semaphore for these dueling viewpoints, *Doubt* depicts the artist's own hands in a gesture similar to those of Jesus and Thomas in Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*. Just as Jesus' hand guides Thomas towards the wound in his side, Yahav-Brown points to the gallery's exit with one hand while restraining the motion with the other. Together, these hands convey resignation

(there's the door) and hope (please don't leave yet). Skepticism coexists with sincerity. In that moment of sincerity when Yahav-Brown risks vulnerability without a wink of irony, futility dissipates and communication seems possible.



Danny Yahav-Brown, *I wish I could Love*, 2005
30 x 30 inch aluminum road sign on 7 foot pole
Installation view