

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

MICHAEL LANDY – 20 YEARS OF PRESSING HARD

1993-2013: A RETROSPECTIVE OF DRAWINGS AT THOMAS DANE GALLERY

11 Duke Street

ENTRANCE

### *Scrapheap Services* (1993-96)



*We Go Straight to the Heart of the Problem, 1995*

*Scrapheap Services* is a fictitious cleaning company invented by Michael Landy in 1993 and showed in 1996 as an installation at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Electric Press Building, Leeds and at Chisenhale Gallery in London. The installation, now in the Tate Collection, consists of piles of small silhouettes cut-out from rubbish, as if awaiting collection, mannequins in matching branded work-wear, an eleven foot shredding machine called 'Vulture' and stove enamel signs depicting an early paradise free from clutter and waste.

The installation is accompanied by a branded promotional video explaining how the company will "...cut through people instantly leaving them torn apart..." and "Why put up with people who are such a burden on your resources when you can turn to the Scrapheap Services people control range of products?"



Michael Landy *Scrapheap Services* (1993-96).  
Installed at Walker Arts Center

While preparing the installation and immediately after it was showed, Landy developed a series of thirty meticulous black and white ink drawings depicting the various aspects of the 'Scrapheap Services' project. Some were a way of envisaging the eventual installation, other were afterthoughts and reflections on it.

The original 1994 study is included here in the exhibition.

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

### CORRIDOR GALLERY

#### *No Frills* (2000-2008)



*Drawing (4)*, 2007

*No Frills* is a range of tautological art products – *No Frills, Paintings, No Frills Sculptures, Drawings and Prints* - derived from a now-defunct range of Kwik Save supermarket products. The first one, a *No Frills* sculpture, was created in 2000 for an exhibition in Iceland, and subsequently destroyed. The *No Frills* series re-appeared in 2008 to be installed at Art Basel Miami Beach art fair in December of that year.



Michael Landy *No Frills* (2008). Installed at Art Basel Miami

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### *Acts of Kindness* (2011-Ongoing)



*Acts of Kindness* is a celebration of compassion and generosity, inviting the public to notice and report random acts of kindness, however simple and small.

The project first manifested in the London Underground in 2011, as part of Art in the Underground series. Michael Landy asked members of the public to submit random stories of kindness that he would collate, publish, and scatter around the London tube network. Alongside this project he created a number of drawings based on the original Tube Map of the Central Line (on which he lives).



The project was then enacted in Sydney in 2012 where Landy created a drawing of the City Centre Map which was made into a giant puzzle on which the stories were plotted. The puzzle was then rebuilt in the centre of the City. The original drawing is included here in the exhibition.

*Acts of Kindness* will exist again in other cities, in different forms, in the future.

*Acts of Kindness, Sydney 2011, 2011*

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

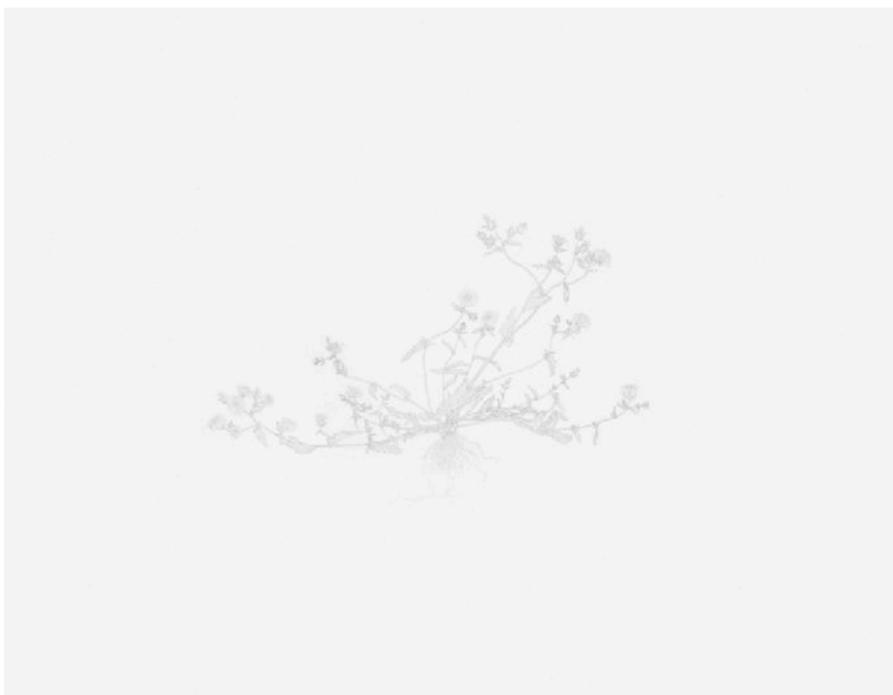
### *Nourishment* (2002)



*Shepherd's Purse*, 2002

Immediately after he completed his *Break Down* project in 2001, and free from all his worldly possessions, Landy embarked on a year-long project of making line etchings of weeds – these otherwise unwanted street plants known as ‘Shepherd’s Purse’, ‘Bristly Ox-tongue’ or ‘Black Medick’... The intricate botanical studies of the tiny plants that grow in the cracks in the pavement in the estate where he was living are a celebration of survival against the odds.

*Nourishment* weed etchings are scattered throughout both gallery spaces, as if growing there anarchically.



*Bristly Ox-tongue 2*, 2005

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### BACK GALLERY

#### *Welcome to my World (2004)*



*Self-contained (Head), 2005*

On 21st July 1977, John Landy – Michael's father - a miner, suffered severe injuries when a tunnel roof collapsed on his head and shoulders. Having not been able to work since and confined to his home, John Landy became redundant within the labour force.

The accident in turn became a seismic event for the Landy family and provoked Michael Landy to undertake a thorough investigation of his father's life, spending time with him in his home and conducting a forensic study into what happened to him by surveying his medical records, physical condition, house and possessions. The project culminated in 2004 in the recreation in its



*Michael Landy Semi-detached, 2004.*  
Installed at Tate Britain

entirety and minute detail of Landy's parent semi-detached East-End home in the Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain.

A number of drawings of John Landy and the mundane objects surrounding him was exhibited at Thomas Dane gallery later that year.

#### *Orchidectomy (2005)*



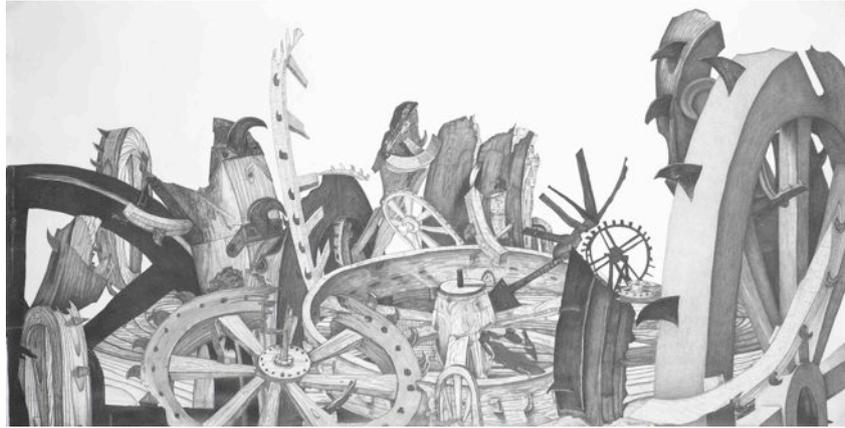
*Radical Orchidectomy for a Solid Mass in the Upper Pole of the Left Testis 2005*

In 2004 Michael Landy was diagnosed with testicular cancer. The following year, he began a series of detailed drawings in pencil which documented the scar left by his surgery.

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### *St. Catherine Wheels (2012-2013)*

During his two year long residency at the National Gallery in London, Landy made various studies and drawings of works in the collection. There, he became increasingly fascinated by the way saints and their attributes are portrayed in historical painting.



*Saint Catherine Wheels found dumped outside The National Gallery. 2012*

The *St. Catherine's Wheels* pencil drawing in the exhibition here was made whilst trying to collect reproductions of every St. Catherine wheel that appears anywhere in the National Gallery collection.

Catherine of Alexandria is almost always depicted with her famous attribute: the spiked wheel on which she was condemned to be tortured by Emperor Justinian but which was miraculously destroyed by an angel.

Various collages and drawings of the same subject, as well as a monumental sculpture of a wheel of Misfortune appear in Landy's current National Gallery show *Saints Alive*.

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### FRONT GALLERY

#### Around *Break Down* 1998-2002



*Break Down*, Oxford Street, 2001

In 2001, Michael Landy completed *Break Down*, an ArtAngel commission. Over the course of three weeks, in the old C&A building on Oxford Street (now the site of Primark's flagship store) he and his assistants systematically destroyed every single of his 7,227 worldly possessions, which had been collected and inventorised in the previous years.



*Compulsory Obsolescence*, 2002

Immediately prior to and post this life-changing event, Landy made several preparatory studies and reflections on the event in ink, three of which are included here, alongside an inventory of his own drawings that were destroyed during *Break Down*.

#### *Run for your Life* (1993/2013)



*Run For Your Life*, 1993-2013

In 1993, Landy showed at artist-run space City Racing in Kennington, in an exhibition called 'You've seen the rest, Now try the best'. Within that show Landy included a large wall drawing made in black marker pen titled *Run for Your Life*. The work was destroyed after the show but is re-made here, using oil-stick on paper. The drawing is made of imaginary symbols 'collected' by Landy over the years and depict a multitude of figures in a state of crisis.

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

### 3 Duke Street

#### *Portraits* (2007-2008)



*Maureen, 2008*

The 'Portraits' series occupied Michael Landy for over a year (during 2007-2008). He dedicated himself to drawing someone for two entire days each time, eight hours a day, seven days a week. The ten portraits included here are all of Landy and his family and are selected from the larger group of eighty meticulously executed pencil drawings of his friends, family and other sitters from the art world.

Ignoring the rest of the body and the surrounding environment and focusing solely on the head, Landy's portraits capture what he describes as an 'inventory' of the sitters' face.

The complete series of portraits was exhibited in two separate exhibitions in 2008 at Paul Andriessse Gallery in Amsterdam and Thomas Dane Gallery in London.

#### *Joyous Machines* (2006-2010)



Michael Landy *Credit-card Destroying Machine*, 2011

Landy first came across the work of Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely as a student in 1982 at the Tinguely retrospective at Tate. During this visit to Tate he made an abstract drawing based on the Tinguely works which was later destroyed in *Break Down*. For the exhibition here, Landy has included a large charcoal drawing (*Machine created to destroy Tinguely Museum*) drawn from component items each copied and enlarged from the catalogue of the Tinguely Museum in Basel.



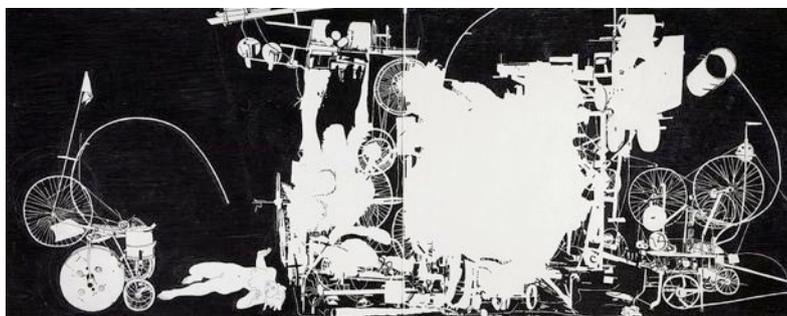
*Machine to Destroy Tinguely Museum (2)*, 2010

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The first of the autonomous, Tinguely-inspired, kinetic sculptures was *Credit Card Destroying Machine* (2011), a mechanical 'junk' sculpture, which was ironically displayed at the new Louis Vuitton store on Bond Street and a year later at Frieze Art Fair in London. In return for destroying their credit card, the machine presented the participants with a drawing signed by the artist (*Meta-matic Drawing*). During Frieze Art Fair 2012, 450 credit cards were successfully destroyed.

*Credit Card Destroying Machine* is now in the D. Daskalopoulos Collection in Greece and functioned again there in the Summer of 2012.

### *H.2.N.Y.* (2006-2009)



*H.2.N.Y.* Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York Fails to Destroy Itself in the Sculpture Garden at MOMA in*

In 1960, Jean Tinguely installed 'Homage to New York', his infamous self-destroying machine in the sculpture garden at MoMA in New York. The machine was primed to fulfil its suicidal destiny but after 27 minutes caught on fire causing museum guards and fire fighters to take action and interrupt the performance. Landy became increasingly obsessed with this failed auto-destructive action and in 2006, started drawing the machine using bleach, correction fluid, oil-stick, charcoal, glue, wax and ink. For the *H.2.N.Y.* series Landy worked from black and white photographs and films from the event as well as referring to eye-witness accounts.

Landy had ultimately hoped to fully re-enact the original Tinguely project, in the sculpture garden of MoMA, but this has not been possible yet.

In 2009-10, Landy co-organised *Joyous Machines* at Tate Liverpool, in which his H2NY works cohabited with original Tinguely sculptures.

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

### *Closing Down Sale* (1992/2013)



*Closing Down Sale*, 1992-2013

In 1992, Landy made *Closing Down Sale* which was installed at Karsten Schubert Ltd. It was an installation made up of hundreds of 'Sale' signs, other discount announcements and recorded message urging visitors to buy something, though things to buy seemed to be absent. One of the signs from the *Closing Down Sale* has been made again and shown here.

Visiting the exhibition, the public would have heard Landy's recorded voice urging them: " You walk in here sad, we'll send you out smiling, bow-legged, knock-kneed and knackered with bargains!!"

### *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*



*Forever Blowing Bubbles V*, 2005

This is Michael Landy's rendition of 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles', the popular American song written in 1918 by Jack Kelleter. The song was a hit in British Music Halls and theatres throughout the Twenties and featured in numerous films, famously sung by Doris Day in 1951 'On Moonlight Bay'. It is now better known in the UK as the anthem of West Ham United Football Club.

"I'm forever blowing bubbles – pretty bubbles in the air – they fly so high – nearly reach the sky – then like my dreams – they fade and die..."

### **The National Gallery residency (2011-2013)**

Landy has been the Rootstein-Hopkins Associate artist in residence at the National Gallery in London for the last two years. His residency has led to his current solo show there (*Saints Alive*) in which Landy has created a number of kinetic sculptures of saints derived from paintings in the



*Bathers (after Cezanne)*, 2011

National Gallery collection. Landy also developed a series of paper collages and drawings as studies for these sculptures which appear alongside them in the show. During his residency, Landy also made drawings derived more generally from the collection. These drawings centred mainly around Cezanne's *Bathers* and El Greco's *Christ Driving the Traders From the Temple*. After obsessively drawing these paintings the subjects finally metamorphosed into dustbins.