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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**MIT List Visual Arts Center to present**

### ***AA BRONSON: Mirror Mirror***

**February 7 - March 31, 2002**

#### **Opening Reception**

Thursday, February 7, 5:30 – 7:30 P.M.

**CAMBRIDGE, MA** – The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to announce the opening of *Mirror Mirror* by *AA Bronson*, a celebrated Toronto and NY- based multimedia artist, on February 7, 2002. Bronson is the surviving member of the legendary Canadian conceptual art collective General Idea, and this is his first solo exhibition in New England, since his 25-year collaboration in art and life with Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal was ended when they died of AIDS in 1994.

In this exhibition, Bronson explores the crucial theme of how to persevere and learn to flourish in the face of the unavoidable tragedies of life. It includes photographs, installation works, wall paintings, and video. Weaving together concepts derived from such seemingly disparate sources as Tibetan Buddhism and Post-Modernism, Bronson uses the particulars of his own biography - professional and personal - to address the universal issues of humanity. Utilizing language taken from the Holocaust and our knowledge of post-traumatic stress disorder, Bronson's works transport us from the specific traumas of his personal loss, to the global tragedy of AIDS, to a beginning understanding of the transient and illusory nature of life and love. Employing dream narratives and conveying a Buddhist understanding of perceived reality as an illusion, Bronson's new photographs and objects transform crippling tragedy into spiritual growth.

General Idea was a unique, influential practitioner of a type of high-camp conceptualism in which performance strategies, punk-rock aesthetics, drag queen bravado, intellectual rigor, and political resistance were blended into an irresistible mélange. Bronson, with Partz and Zontal, is among the first internationally recognized contemporary artists to produce artwork in a group structure. General Idea's later collaborative works, produced in response to AIDS, are among the masterworks in the literature of this plague. His partners' influence on Bronson during their lifetimes, as well as the legacy of their deaths, figure prominently in the artist's current work.

In his early small black and white photographs, made before General Idea coalesced, Bronson depicts the messy process of attempting to create a whole, coherent identity. Employing the disorienting properties of convex mirrors and other strategies, he presents his body as a collection of disassociated fragments. Thirty years later, he tackles issues of identity and loss from the perspective of a survivor. Bronson bears

testimony to great trauma and spiritual right of passage in the documentation of the deaths of his colleagues through a series of photographs and journal and dream related texts. *Felix, June 5, 1994* is the striking centerpiece of the series, a larger-than-life image of Partz taken shortly after his death. Enveloped in the brightly colored and luxuriantly patterned bedclothes that comforted him in illness with the television remote control still in his hand, the contrast of Partz's skeletal face and unclosing dead eyes reveal the inescapable reality of his passing and a sorrow too profound for words.

In *Arbeit Macht Frei (Work Will Set You Free)*, Bronson reinvents his use of the convex mirrors, installing the mirrors in the gallery, so that the viewers are essentially viewing themselves. The words *Arbeit Macht Frei* are reproduced digitally, translocating the slogan which originally appeared at the entrance to Auschwitz into contemporary culture, and relating it to the work ethic in North America. For the Canadian Bronson, the axiom, "Work will set you free," is a conspicuously American idea of freedom.

*Nayland and AA, June 20, 2001 (Coat)*, a video collaboration with Nayland Blake, an American conceptual artist, will be presented in the Bakalar Gallery through the exhibition. The images of Blake's and Bronson's cake-frosting each other's beards and kissing, projected with two monitors, explore the ideas of sexuality, masculinity, food and nurturing, and the complexity of multi-racial identity.

Most recently, AA Bronson has been awarded the Bell Award in Video Art (2001). Other awards include The Gershon Iskowitz Prize (1988), The Lifetime Achievement Award from the City of Toronto (1993), the Banff Centre for the Arts National Award (1993), and the Jean A. Chalmers Award for Visual Arts (1994). Bronson's work has been shown in numerous places such as Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and The Balcony, Toronto, and he is one of the participants in the 2002 *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. General Idea exhibited in private galleries and major museums in North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia, and undertook countless temporary public art projects around the world. This exhibition, organized by the List Visual Arts Center, will accompany the artist designed exhibition catalogue with an introduction by LVAC curator, Bill Arning who is organizing the exhibition.

#### Public Programs:

Artist Talk by AA Bronson

Friday, February 8, 6 P.M.

Meet at the gallery front desk.

An evening of videos by General Idea

Tuesday, February 26, 7 P.M.

MIT Bartos Theatre, located in the lower level of the LVAC Building,

20 Ames Street, Cambridge, MA.

Curator's walk-through

Friday, February 15, 7 P.M., Sunday February 17, 2 P.M., and Wednesday, March 27, 12 P.M.

Given by MIT List Visual Arts Center's curator Bill Arning.

Meet at the gallery front desk.

#### Gallery Talks

Wednesdays at noon and Sundays at 2 P.M.

Group tours can be arranged by appointment during the gallery hours. Please contact Hiroko Kikuchi, Education/Outreach coordinator, at (617) 452-3586 or hiroco@mit.edu for inquiries.

Special thanks to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Consulate General, the University Park Hotel at MIT, Minuteman Press, Circa50.com, and for their assistance with this exhibition. The List Visual Arts Center's programs are generously supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Massachusetts Council, and the Council for the Arts at MIT.

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### **How to Get to the MIT List Visual Arts Center**

The List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames St., at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

All exhibitions at the List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public. A donation is suggested.  
Wheelchair accessible.

By T, take the red line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main St. west to Ames St., turn left, walk the distance of about one block to the cross walk and the List Visual Arts Center, housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway) during business hours and on campus after business hours and on weekends.

### **Gallery Hours**

Tuesday – Thursday 12 – 6 P.M.  
Friday 12 – 8 P.M.  
Saturday/Sunday 12 – 6 P.M.  
Closed Mondays.

### **Information**

(617) 253-4680 or <http://web.mit.edu/lvac>

