With the holiday season approaching, apexart presents Thanks: Returning the Favor, a non-curated group exhibition exploring the relationship of philanthropy and the visual arts. Ten local artists, invited by ten arts professionals, were commissioned to produce original small works, which will be forwarded as gifts to ten arts philanthropists at the conclusion of the exhibition. We do not know if they will be accepted. Philanthropy, value and money in the arts can be a volatile mix and a compelling topic for consideration. Interesting issues surface when these concerns are reordered. It was our hope that this exhibition would create interesting discussion. Instead it proved to be quite inflammatory. Five initial responses/rejections are contained herein.

Dear apexart,
Thank you for agreeing to be part of the show. However the idea as stated in our correspondence is “The exhibition invites 10 artists to produce original works of art, which will be forward to 10 philanthropists at the conclusion of the exhibition.” The idea being that one responds in some way (or not) to the parameters of the show. It need not be an elaborate piece, but this is the point to the show. Will this be a problem? As stated we will show whatever work you produce regardless of content or message.

Thanks,
apexart

Dear apexart,
This is the piece that best represents what I want to say about philanthropy. I cannot imagine making anything else that would say it more clearly. So either we can just change the date on it, or perhaps I can devise a clever way of mounting/displaying it.

Thanks,
apexart

“I have to be honest, I really don’t understand this at all. The premise is that I give away my work to a billionaire who would never buy it? I am curious what this is meant to be about, I really don’t get it. Who is the intended audience for a show like this—page six of the post?” Artist

“Philanthropy is the refuge of rich people who wish to annoy their fellow creatures.” Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)

“Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” John Wesley (1703 - 1791)

"Do not trust the horse, Trojans! Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks, even though they bring gifts.” Virgil, The Aeneid

--Felipe Arturo

Felipe Arturo, A Conjuration of Mirrors, 2006, intervended monitor, VCR, VHS tape, looped youtube video 14"x14"x15"
Dear Artist,
You seem personally offended and this was not our intent. I'm not sure why you think we expect artists to be hungry for a free opportunity. The letter that we sent to people asked for a new work and I am confused as to why you agreed. Do you consider apexart to be a hand that feeds and a relationship that cannot be dog eat dog? Biting the hand that feeds you is for many artists part of the process, or at least part of the thought process in being critical of the structure you describe. We don't think art is worthless - we are giving artists $600, which may not be much but for some it is significant. More importantly, the work that we asked for bore no bounds. One could write a haiku or submit an empty box. For some this will simply be what it is - an opportunity to have some fun or make a statement. Your discussion about taxes and write offs speaks more to issues of frustration and believe me, we have them also. However, I don't see the relevance. We don't even know if the philanthropists will accept your gifts.
This show is not intended as a way of inclusion into a collection, though I guess it could be for some. And if you are concerned about your reputation from doing something out of character, this is a baseless one I think. No one really cares that much about these sorts of things. You speak of your very generous offer, and it is, but we are not looking for works of value, so this issue also confuses me. If sales value is an issue then please free to reconsider and send us a much less valuable work. We (and your invitee) will appreciate it just as much.

The reluctance of people to speak their minds and stand behind their words is a problem however. You don't want your feelings made public because you not believe what you are saying or are you afraid to say these things to us especially if you are used to being censored? Standing up for ones beliefs is important. Your response is very practical but not very imaginative considering the ways it could have been handled. The anger that you seem to have could have been channeled into a productive end for our show, but unfortunately sometimes we often work harder to put up the front that cuts us off and (we think) protects us. I hope you will not be bited by this and not participate. Consider smashing something end it to us. It might make you feel better and we'll show it.

Your letter was compelling. With respect, apexart

apexart, Clearly you do not know me or my work. But you lack of knowledge does- n't stop you from making sweeping assumptions about my work and my character. If you want to criticise me, fine. But do a little research first. And stick to the work – don’t make it personal. It is only out of respect and admiration for the person who recommended me that I will remain in this show. As I said, I have your fedex number. You will receive a work. It will be beautiful. And you can do with it as you please.

Artist

Dear Artist,
It doesn't seem fair to the others and the idea of the show for you to submit an old work. All the other artists were willing to do so and worked very hard. We would like very much to have a piece by you, but if this is not possible we respect your decision.
apexart

Hello apexart,
Thank you for the invitation I look forward to the project.
Artist

Lisi Radolin, Wind Tunnel, 2006, graphite and collage, 35 5/8” x 33 1/2”

Paul Wither, Children’s Globe, 2006, pigment, egg, dimensions variable

Vandana Jain, Faeries, 2006, tea, gold and resin paint with graphite, piercing and burning on paper, 23 1/2” x 12”

Alejandra Villasmil, Dress to Kill (Take IV), 2006, graphite and
collage, 35 5/8” x 33 1/2”

Matt Keegan, Untitled, 2006, Ephemera and documents related to opening a business ac-
count, dimensions variable

Kambui Olujimi, Too Big for Your Bridge, 2006, mixed media, 20” x 12” x 12”