

Felipe Arturo
Nayia Frangouli
David Greg Harth
Vandana Jain
Matt Keegan
Kambui Olujimi
Lisi Raskin
Alejandra Villasmil
Paul Wirhun

November 29 - January 6, 2007

*and best wishes for the
2007 New Year
from all of us at
apexart*

apexart

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



"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

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

*"Make all you can, save all you can,
give all you can."
John Wesley (1703 - 1791)*

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 inviting me to participate in **Thanks: Returning the Favor**. I am writing to confirm my interest in being part of the show. Please do be in touch with the important dates and can you let me know for which philanthropist I will be making my piece?
I look forward to hearing from you.
My best, **Artist**

Hi **apexart**,
Here is how to retrieve my image for the brochure:
Go to my ftp site. Simply drag it onto your desktop and it will download.
The info for it and for the work I will be sending is:
title omitted, 1999
photograph
14 x 11 inches, unframed
I will send the work soon, I think it would be a good idea to get the photo matted and framed, something very simple and classic would be best.
Best, **Artist**

Dear **Artist**,
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, **Artist**

Dear **Artist**,
Please indulge me in this discussion. While the premise may sound simplistic, the intent of the show was to see how artists might address the situation and whether any would take the opportunity to be critical



Nayia Frangouli, *Pleasing vernacular window-view to remember*, 2006, Installation of drawing and sculpture: gouache, acrylic, graphite, hand made paper, dimensions variable (detail)



David Greg Harth, *Happy Meals*, 2006
Stills from video documentation of performance



Felipe Arturo, *A Conjunction of Mirrors*, 2006, intervened monitor, VCR, VHS tape, looped youtube video 14"x14"x15"



Paul Wirhun, *Children's Globe*, 2006, pigmented egg, dimensions variable

about the current environment or the show's premise. It was expected that the artists would think about and respond to the situation by doing a small work of some kind, even if it insulted us for doing this show or me for writing this

letter to you. Perhaps you can write a text that explains this, that we can include/place it next to the photo, making the work new. And please excuse my saying this, but if we send you only the \$200 you have



Vandana Jain, *Faberge*, 2006, tea, gold and iridescent paint with graphite, piercing and burning on paper, 23. 1/2" x 22"

already received, you would tell us that the agreement was for \$600. Our response would be that we asked for new works, and you agreed to this by accepting. Now you want to send an older work which we are essentially just buying. Something we don't do. How about

if we include a text to this effect next to the work? Or maybe you want to ask someone else to do a piece that you submit as "your" statement, but we really don't think we should include work that people have seen and is not related to the show.



Matt Keegan, *Untitled*, 2006, Ephemera and documents related to opening a business account, dimensions variable

Our exhibition brochures go to more than 8000 people in more than 90 countries and we are in service to our audience. An old idea but one we subscribe to and base our integrity on. I look forward to hearing your thoughts

on this as an artist as well as an educator. My best, **apexart**

Dear **apexart**,

Although you ask (and expect artists) to be hungry for a free opportunity to address and/or be critical of the fiduciary relationship between philanthropists and artists, your insistence on new work creates a situation in which the artist is in his usual position of working on spec and donating his work wholesale to millionaires. So, regardless of the content of the show, it marches in lockstep with the entrenched notion that art is worthless until somebody pays for it.

(There is no better example than the fact that, when an artist donates an artwork to an auction and a collector buys it, the collector gets the tax write-off for the "donation," not the artist.) Your show is no different. It only allows the artist--at their own time and expense of course--to bite the hand that feeds it before the hand walks off with all the goodies.

My very generous response (which I am only doing as a favor to a dear friend) is to allow you, for the sum of \$600, to display and then donate a work for which I would otherwise receive \$4000. And now you say that's not good enough, I must invest even more of myself and my time and materials creating a new work.

Apparently, philanthropists are so important that denying myself the opportunity to make an additional \$3400 is not enough. Actually that's not right, What really seems important about your show is creating the appearance of critiquing the power and class politics of the art world, all the while flattering power with publicity and give aways at the artist's expense. The same old story.

I have your fedex number. You will receive a work from me. It will be beautiful and complex. And I will have made \$600 in twenty minutes. Not the kind of money your philanthropists make, mind you, but better than most days for me.

Sincerely, **Artist**,

p.s. I am not interested in displaying a text next to my work. And I presume (although I am not certain) this email is a confidential correspondence and is not going to end up in a press release or wall label somewhere. I would appreciate that.

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 that one cannot be critical of also? 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 certainly 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 our/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 please feel free to reconsider and send us a much less valuable work. We (and your inviter) 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 except in a closed session? 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 offended by this and not participate. Consider smashing something and sending 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 your lack of knowledge doesn't stop you from making sweeping assumptions about my work and my character. If you want to critique 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
best,
Artist



Lisi Raskin, *Wind Tunnel*, 2006, graphite and collage, 35 5/8" x 33 1/2"



Kambui Olujimi, *Too Big for Your Bridgets*, 2006, mixed media, 20" x 12" x 12"



Alejandra Villasmil, *Dress to Kill (Take IV)* 2006, watercolor, glitter and confetti on paper 22" x 30"