



Press Release

Media Contact: C.J. Lind | 773.702.0176 | cjlind@uchicago.edu
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Adaptation Artists and Works



Guy Ben-Ner

Since the early 1990s, Guy Ben-Ner has filmed a series of short videos starring himself and his family, often using the intimate spaces of their home as ad-hoc set, studio, and fantastical playroom. For several of these videos, Ben-Ner has adapted classic films and novels into playful and profound investigations of his intertwined roles as artist and father. In doing so he exploits conventions of narrative film: he knows how to tell a story, to hook an audience, to keep them entertained. His videos also brim with witty intertextual cross-references not only to particular aspects of his sources but also to specific episodes and genres within the histories of cinema, video, and performance. Ben-Ner provides layered points of entry into his videos by combining such references with comedic bits of slapstick, an affectionate and humane sensibility, and a gently surreal visual style that includes both sophisticated cinematic devices and crafty, do-it-yourself elements.

Ben-Ner's adaptations entertain with their clever retellings of familiar tales, but that's only part of the story. His videos probe the frustrations, pleasures, and ongoing negotiations of individual identity that comprise relationships between parent and child. They also address the complexities of the creative process. Like any artist, Ben-Ner has to navigate constraints that might hinder his practice; here he ingeniously makes space for art within, rather than in spite of, the demands of day-to-day domesticity. By adapting classic sources in fresh and personal ways, he also models a central process within artistic development: investigating the art of prior generations and choosing some attributes to carry forward, some to abandon, and others to re-imagine on one's own terms.

Works on View

For high-resolution images, please call C.J. Lind at 773.702.0176, e-mail cjlind@uchicago.edu, or visit <http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/pressroom>

Moby Dick (2000) condenses Herman Melville's classic 1851 novel into a brief single-channel video filmed entirely in Ben-Ner's small apartment.

Moby Dick, 2000
Running time: 12.5 minutes
Color; silent
DVD shown on 42" plasma screen

The slightly longer and more complex *Wild Boy* (2004) adapts François Truffaut's film *L'enfant sauvage* (*The Wild Child*, 1970). The video is projected within an installation that evokes the woodland set that the artist built in his kitchen, complete with a tree and a carpeted "hill" on which visitors may sit to watch the video.

Wild Boy, 2004
Running time: 17 minutes
Color; sound
DVD shown as projection within sculptural installation
Dimensions: 12' x 16' x 30'
Image width: 12'

About the Artist

Guy Ben-Ner (Israeli, born 1969) studied at Hamidrasha B.E.D. Art School in Israel and received his MFA from Columbia University in 2003. Recent major projects include a significant new work for Skulptur Projekte Muenster (2007), the Israeli Pavilion in the Venice Biennale (2005), and a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2005). His work has also been shown in P.S. 1's Greater New York and in museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Herzliya Museum of Art, Israel; and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Ben-Ner received a DAAD grant from the German government (2006–2007) and currently resides in Berlin.

Left image: Guy Ben-Ner, video still from *Moby Dick*, 2000. Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York.

Right image: Guy Ben-Ner, video still from *Wild Boy*, 2004. Courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York.