Gordon Froud

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To say that Gordon Froud is continuously toying with
ideas would be no lie. Perhaps not only with ideas, but
also with materials, form and meaning; or, in terms of his
research project for his Master's degree, with modular-
ity, repetition and meaning. In any description of Froud's
work, the notion of toying — or playfulness, quirkiness,
an odd sense of humour — comes into play.

In 2000 his toying — at that time with disposable crock-
ery and cutlery — led to a well-received exhibition in
Paris while he was a resident of the Cité International
des Arts. The next year he elaborated on this concept when
he exhibited *Plastic by Nature* at the Open Window in Pre-
toria, a show conjuring a Legoland created out of white
plastic plates, cups, bowls, knives, forks, spoons and
other disposables. With these two shows, Froud the "play-
ful engineer" made his mark through an innovative use of
found objects.

Since then Froud has moved on from found objects to bought
objects to create his sculptures. By using materials such
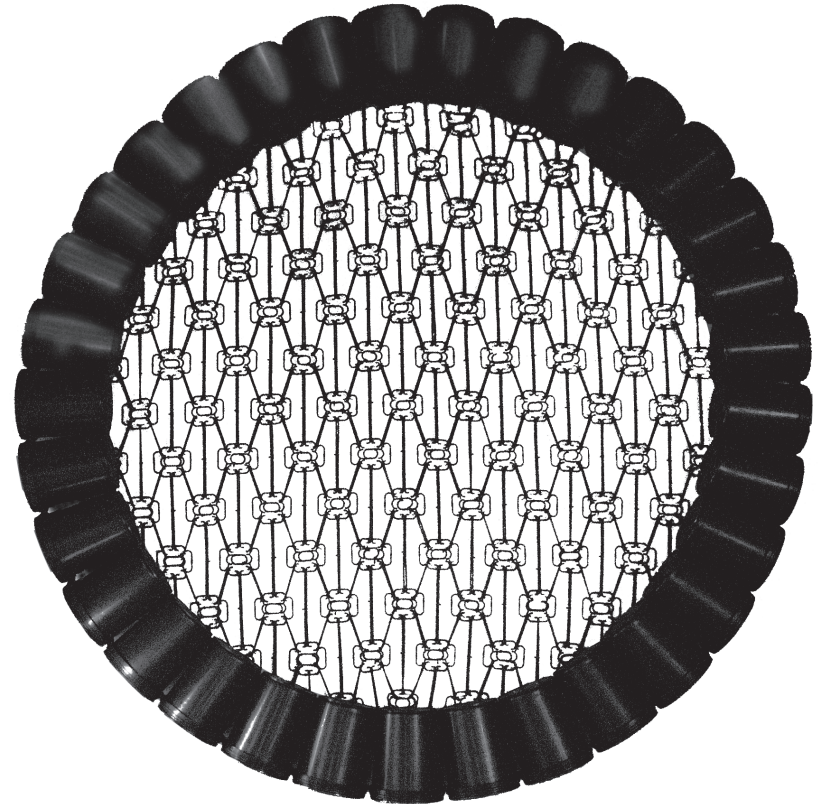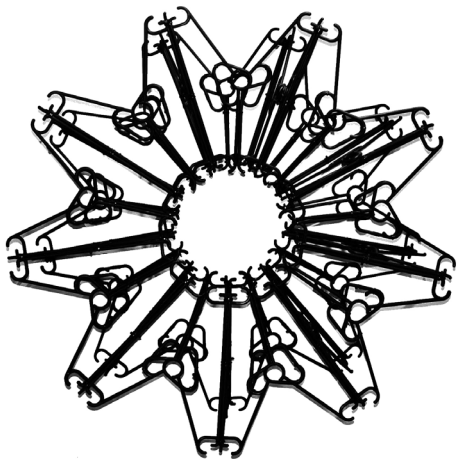
as plastic coat hangers, buckets and plastic garden rakes, he turns everyday functional objects into quirky works of art — through repetition he constructs new meaning from these modular units. They are no longer mere coat hangers, but become a trellis or a rose window; no longer plastic bucket handles, but an armadillo; no longer plastic wine glasses, but a big tit ball.

Trained as a sculptor — "I've always been an assembler" — Froud is drawn to experiments in shape and texture. But his application of these elements leads to new forms and possibilities. On the one hand, he maintains the integrity of his material by not overextending it and by eschewing support structures. The plastic, for example, has to withstand the weight of the work in its assembled form. On the other hand, Froud takes plastic to its limit. By adding bucket handles to a metal rod to form a "coil", as in *Transformed*, he "stretches" the physical properties of the medium as far as he can, while remaining faithful to its intrinsic qualities. Ultimately the material dictates the form, and generates a surprise element in the work. One needs to look twice to recognise the material as familiar utility items. And once one has seen these everyday objects assembled — a green garden rake becomes the circular floor piece *Rake's Progress … After William*, for example —

one can hardly view them in quite the same way. "Plastic out of context is beautiful", remarks Froud when describing his fascination with the material.

Rake's Progress … After William, brings the work of two Williams to mind: Hogarth who created *A Rake's Progress* and Kentridge who reinterpreted Hogarth's etchings in a series of works made in the mid-1980s. But Froud introduces a third William into his work: "the worker on our plot, William, who is obsessed with raking every piece of ground into a dustbowl, to our total dismay".

In *Rose Portal* Froud turns black plastic coat hangers — framed in a giant circle by thirty black plastic buckets — into something resembling wrought iron, or a floral motif in an enormous latter-day gothic stained glass window.

Froud's playfulness not only generates experiments with ideas and materials, but it also has in it an element of "taking the piss out of high art". When asked what guides his eye, he responds without blinking: "Potential."

Title: (page 3) Rose Portal
Medium: Plastic coat hangers, cable ties and buckets
Size: 350cm x 350cm x 50cm
Edition: 1 of 3

Title: (page 4) Badges of Honour?
Medium: Plastic coat hangers and cable ties
Size: 100cm x 100cm x 30cm
Edition: 1 of 10

Title: (below right) Transformed
Medium: Cable ties and bucket handles
Size: 45cm x 45cm x 45cm
Edition: 1 of 10

Artist: Gordon Froud
Concept: Harrie Siertsema
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Text: Johan Myburg

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