

**Shane de Lange**



**Shane de Lange**  
**Ingrid Stevens**

Shane de Lange obsessively creates his own strange universe, or, according to him, his 'anti-verse' or 'multi-verse', where a multitude of sources, including graffiti, comic strips, electronic music, Japanese animations, Christian imagery, Dada and op art meet, and his crazily poetic wordplay combines with childhood memories in a dystopian space. Here, humanist dualism is reversed, man is both and neither a sad creature and a monster, at once childlike and threatening, sane and mad, in a world that is both funny and awful, logical and close to slipping into total chaos. Above all else, in these works the status quo, including the conventions of what art is and can be in a post-human era, is constantly under question.

So de Lange largely ignores artistic conventions. As a conceptual artist, he uses whatever material, medium and approach best express any particular idea. He works in chalk, charcoal and ballpoint pen on scraps of paper, then turns to the latest computer technology, paints directly on gallery walls, records random street sounds and splices them into accompanying 'music', scribbles and doodles, cuts and splices. The work expands beyond the picture frame to fill the gallery, and then implodes in on itself to focus on the most minute and trivial incident, like a smudged mark on some typing paper. Parts of some works pear off-hand, random, while others are fanatically detailed and carefully constructed.



pear off-hand, random, while others are fanatically detailed and carefully constructed. The various aspects of de Lange's work combine to form the visual equivalent of the stream-of-consciousness novel or a performance of the theatre of the absurd, updated and personalized. All of it nudges the viewer out of familiar and comfortable viewing spaces and perspectives, and wakes him or her up to the unfamiliar. De Lange's intention is the modernist one of defamiliarisation, while simultaneously he discards modernism's humanist philosophy and its visual tenets.

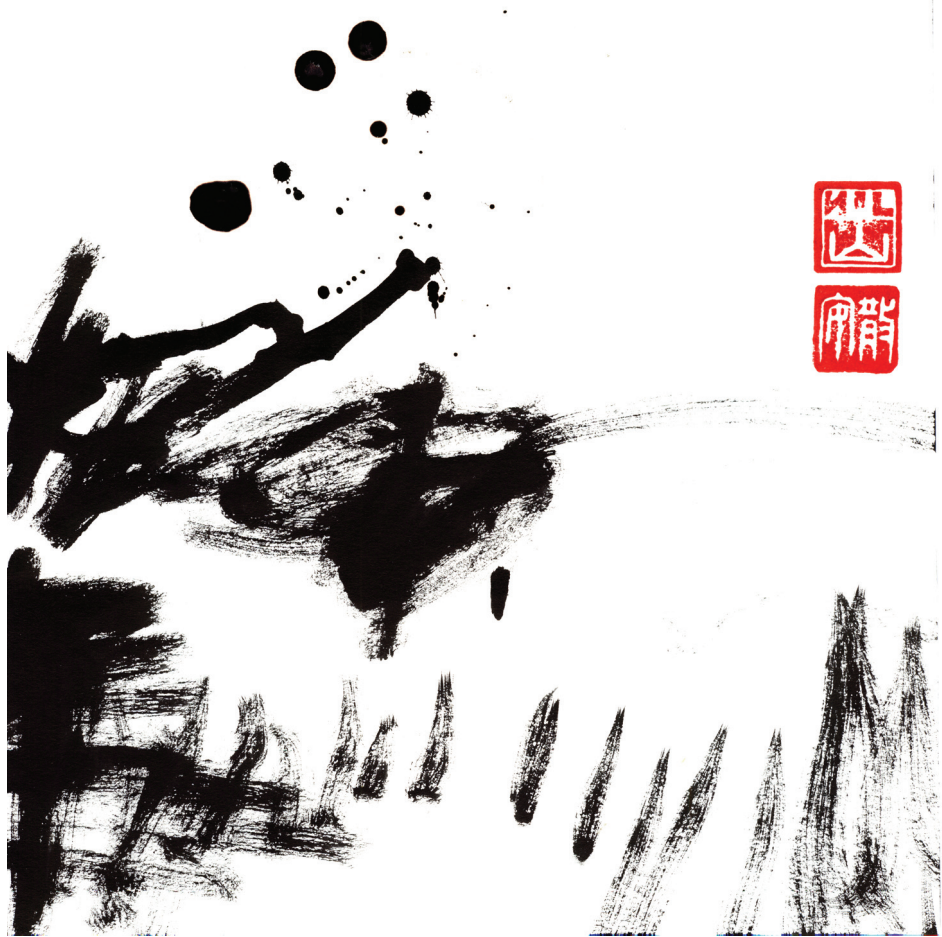
An alien figure appears again and again, a blobby blue man, part-amoeba, part-Casper the Ghost, part-extra-terrestrial: is he the post-human mutant or everyman? The artist himself? The other? He is a figure who seems to belong in an underground comic. Yet this is not to suggest that de Lange's work is unsophisticated: he bases his ideas on a cunning deconstruction of the deconstructivists, and knows Nietzsche, Heidegger, McLuhan, Derrida, Foucault and Baudrillard well enough to play his own games with their ideas. He is influenced by, among other artists, Schwitters, Escher, Mondrian, Basquiat and Picasso, and sees his work as both homage to and critique of theirs. It is his own strong vision (or perhaps 'anti-vision' would be a more apt word) that holds all this variety together in a convincing and very contemporary body of work.

Anti-cube is an installation that brings together some as-

pects of de Lange's work. He creates an environment by painting on the walls of his exhibition space, making distorted perspectival spaces that collapse into organic disorder. This space plays with dualisms such as organic-inorganic, machine-human, controlled-uncontrolled, order-chaos, inside-outside but, furthermore, is the habitat of the human/non human creatures that are surely the alter ego of the artist himself, as well as being representative of the viewer. This dystopia is relevant to the South Africa of today, with its radical alterations, paradoxes and contradictions.

The works are strangely moving, and in spite of their anti-humanist and post-humanist origins, they still refer to the human condition, which is an alienated and fragmented one in a late capitalist, consumerist world dominated by the mass media.





**From pillar to posthuman: the mechanics of Anti-Cube consciousness**

**Miranthe Staden-Garbett**

Shane de Lange qualifies his work with two prefixes and a treatise on the hyphen. For reasons that will hopefully become clearer, the prefix and hyphen, indicating as they do relational value, provide useful tools with which to examine the mechanics of Anti-Cube consciousness.

Behind the cool comic characters of Anti-Cube lies a calculated, complicated cosmology. We slip in past the prefix and across the hyphen. Upon entering, we may hear a faint chorus of unis, avants, antis, archies, homos – the modernist war cry turned stultifying drone. This is the official language of 'Cube', speaking with authority on all things rational, advanced, real and normal. De Lange's relation to the 'Cube' is ambiguous. His 'anti-' is not so much an attack, but a playing hard to get. 'Anti-' assimilates with the aim of undermining the centrality of 'Cube' mentality. This 'deconstructive operation' occurs with an arsenal of like-minded prefixes, which do not replace their roots but incessantly counteract them. This process may be compared to a game in which the goalposts are incessantly moving. There is no winning or losing here because this game is not goal-oriented, but play-oriented, and anything goes.

Though de Lange describes his style as a fusion of post-modern trends, cites numerous poststructuralist writers and debates posthumanism, it is this erratic in-between that characterises Anti-Cube. Nevertheless we all leapt into the shallow end after the intellectual elite declared the solid 'post' official. While an end of any sort, even a shallow one, seems daring and kind of thrilling, this way it was safely tied to the pillar of its predecessor even while refuting it. This is in keeping with the aggressively parasitical relationships we in the West have come to know and love.

We are concerned here, however, with a more interesting, less solid place. Let's call it a bridge or hyphen, an in-between where before and after dissolve into a very slippery 'now'. Words cannot hold this moment, nothing can, but it could be described in terms of a 'cross', an 'inter' or a 'para'.

We see these cross-cultural, inter-textual elements in Anti-Cube, where the incorporation of the gallery into the artwork is one aspect of a grander interplay of paradoxes – inside and outside, construction and collapse, narcissism and nihilism, art and design, allowed and outlawed. It is what de Lange calls an Apollonian declaration of Dionysian ecstasy.

The Anti-Cube multi-verse is by nature schizophrenic. It has the shape of a die, but it bounces like a ball. It is



FREUD ©



large, it contains multitudes and is able to sustain contradictions. The hybrid creatures that inhabit Anti-Cube form a happy, scary Afric-Graphic-Manga-Post-MTV-Anti-Family. Take Milk Bride, who is Ms Global Village, a pastiche of African, American and Asian elements, juxtaposed with iconic irony. Here citizen and alien are joined at the hip in a Siamese jive. Other characters appropriate the holes and nails associated with African nkonde and nkisi figures, which are ceremonial objects that have holes stuffed with magical potions and into which nails are driven. They are out of their depth in the hyper-real and float like ghosts next to their textual counterparts.

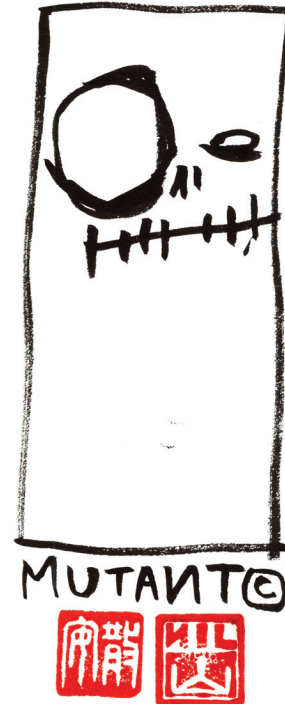
Reversal Universal is a phrase, like these phantoms, caught in a vicious loop. 'Re', implying reproduction/copy/clone, keeps second guessing the idea of an absolute original implied by 'uni', but holds it in its slipstream. The 'de' in deconstruction tells a similar tale of undoing – a creativity that turns itself inside out, much like the self-sustaining donut shape ascribed to black holes and gyres.<sup>1</sup>

The citizens of Anti-Cube are similarly formed with holes instead of eyes and hearts. They are the one-eyed sons of bitches who invent instruments to measure spring with.<sup>2</sup> They are the voids through which information streams and plays itself out.<sup>3</sup> Does this make them degenerate or regenerate? Does it matter?



These prefixes - 're', 'de' and 'un', with their emphasis on flux, help us to expose the delusions of monumentality that sustain pillar/post/pole mentality. Monuments, whether concrete or abstract, are places where 'the lights are on, but nobody's home', buildings which Elvis has left, pillars made of salt. Posterboy<sup>4</sup> is a vacuous face with long arms that refers to the 'monuments' of imperialism. A graffiti-inspired messianic character, he co-inhabits Anti-Cube with various lesser characters, such as Barracuda Guy, Milk Bride, Freud, Heidegger and the Sinking-Ship Worshipers. Theirs is the 'ecstasy of alienation' which is played out past the posts, down the rabbit hole, in the infinite space of the hyphen. When there is nothing to belong to, we may pick and choose what we want to become.

With no clear allegiances, Anti-Cube is both here and there. It can be seen as a parallel universe, much like ours in fact, in which order and meaning have been scrambled. It is empty and full, threatening and liberating. It is a series of signs on a dual carriageway, still under construction.





1. For more on this read:

Bentov, I. 2000. *Stalking the Wild Pendulum: On the Mechanics of Consciousness*. Vermont: Destiny Books

Bentov, I. 2000. *A brief tour of Higher Consciousness: A Cosmic Book on the Mechanics of Creation*. Vermont: Destiny Books

Hawking, S. 2001. *The Universe in a Nutshell*. London: Bantam

2. From voices to voices, lip to lip in cummings, e.e. 1969. *Selected poems: 1923-1958*. London: Faber and Faber

3. Refers to Jean Baudrillard's 'Ecstasy of communication'

4. A name derived from a term which refers to a personality that represents the 'face' of a specific corporation or institution, thus its brand or label.

Images: (page 2, detail) Anti-Cube Self;  
(page 4, detail) Anti-Cube Mutant #3;  
(page 7, detail) Anti-Cube Mutant #5;  
(page 8, detail) Anti-Cube Inksplatter;  
(page 11, detail) Anti-Cube Freud; (page 13) Anti-Cube Milk Bride; (page 15, detail) Anti-Cube Mutant #7; (page 17, detail) Anti-Cube Mutant #2.

Medium: Ink on paper

Dimensions: 20cm x 30cm

2005-2006





Image: Shane de Lange at work at work on Anti-Cube at outlet, Tshwane University of Technology, July 2005.

Map - South Africa

PO Box 39  
Groenkloof  
0027

[info@map-southafrica.org](mailto:info@map-southafrica.org)  
[www.map-southafrica.org](http://www.map-southafrica.org)

Artist: Shane de Lange  
Concept: Harrie Siertsema  
Text: Shane de Lange - Ingrid Stevens  
From pillar to posthuman: the mechanics of Anti-Cube consciousness  
Miranthe Garbett  
Co-ordination: Abrie Fourie

⊕ - Graskop

⊕ - Dullstroom

⊕ - Pretoria - Tshwane

⊕ - Irene - Tshwane

⊕ - Richmond

⊕ - Cape Town