

Grant Lingard

New Zealander, 1961-1995

Flag and Boots

1994, underpants, flag pole and soap

Purchased 1996

Reproduced courtesy of L. Lingard



About the work

With *Flag and Boots* Grant Lingard makes playful but poignant comments about the homosexual experience within New Zealand society, using symbolism which is both political and highly personal. The flagpole juts out from the wall at an aggressive angle recalling flags of protest and revolution. The flag itself, stitched together from Jockey Y-Fronts, defies the enforced invisibility of gay culture. Its unrelenting whiteness is suggestive of society's obsession with homogeneity and intolerance of variation.

Y-Fronts represent all that is 'blokey', solid and dependable, yet so easily threatened by the merest hint of difference. At first sight the underpants appear humorous, yet the sheer number of them begin to represent the individual lives which are often blanketed by a single, overwhelming stereotype.

The boots are lovingly modelled from scented white soap. By juxtaposing the pristine white flag with sweet-smelling boots,

Lingard parodies boot-boy thuggery and queer bashing, metaphorically and physically. The work was created after a series of racist and homosexual attacks in Christchurch by skinheads who tend to wear this type of footwear.

Typically, Lingard works with symbolism, both abstract and figurative, with a political and personal narrative. Elements of Dada are evident in his work. The use of the found object, taken from its everyday function and reassigned to a new context as a work of art, is a familiar and effective technique of avant-garde modernism. Lingard said that by disrupting the accepted order of place of an object, by stripping it of its domestic function and placing it within a position of contemplation, I hope to break down assumptions and beliefs. To ask the viewer to forget preconceived notions, to put away ideas of the Masterpiece and the Master-Artist and simply look and question. To take part in a dialogue with a work of art.

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About the artist

Grant Lingard was born in 1961 in Blackball and brought up in Greymouth and Dobson. He studied painting at the University of Canterbury, graduating in 1984. He received a CSA Guthery's Travel Award in 1987 and moved to Sydney in 1989. In 1994, Lingard completed a three month residency at the University of Canterbury, funded by Creative New Zealand. He participated in solo and group exhibitions in both New Zealand and Australia until his death in Sydney in 1995.

Lingard began his career as a painter, however, he is best known for his sculptures. This is a late work, made just one year before his early death. The subversive nature of his art, however, is very much of its milieu. The 1980s and 1990s saw an increase in the inclusion of minority concerns as subject matter.

Flag and Boots was part of an exhibition called Smells like Team Spirit (1994) which contained works investigating two seemingly incongruous themes - rugby and gay culture. The works in the exhibition aimed to disconcert viewers and to raise serious critical issues concerning gay culture.

Other works by the artist in the Collection

Black and White

Wood and nails
Presented by Jonathan Smart and June Keenan to the memory of Grant Lingard 1996

Collector of Beauty

Glass, metal
Presented to the Gallery by the Estates of Grant Lingard and Peter Lanini 1998

Mummy's Boy - smells like team spirit

Soap
Presented to the Gallery by the Estates of Grant Lingard and Peter Lanini 1998

Smells like team spirit I

Cotton, soap
Presented to the Gallery by the Estates of Grant Lingard and Peter Lanini 1998

Smells like team spirit II

Plastic bucket and cardboard
Presented to the Gallery by the Estates of Grant Lingard and Peter Lanini 1998

Self Portrait (1987)

Charcoal
Presented to the Gallery by the Estates of Grant Lingard and Peter Lanini 1998

Further reading

Grant Lingard, Swan Song, J. Millner, catalogue, First Draft Gallery, Sydney, 1996.

Art Now: The First Biennial Review of Contemporary Art, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, 1994.

Desire and Derision: A Personal Take on Grant Lingard, Brent Skerten, Jonathan Smart Gallery, 1988.

Here and Now, catalogue Robert McDougall Art Gallery and Contemporary Art Annex, 1988.

