

'Is the "philosopher" still possible today?' asks Pierre Klossowski at the opening of *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1969), his magisterial study of that supremely Nietzschean motif: the eternal return. The question is a dual one, asking at one and the same time not only about the very possibility of philosophy but also about the possibility of Nietzsche himself, about his relevance and necessity as the thinker for whom the recurrence of the same was a revelation, and a creation, of the self.

This 'self' has served as a central concern of what we might as well call Jimmy Raskin's aesthetico-philosophical researches, which have assumed written, sculptural, pictorial, diagrammatic and filmic form over the last 15 years. And it is this self which once again assumes a central role in *The Confession I* (2007), a new hybrid sculpture and video piece which finds the artist, filmed in black and white and facing the viewer from within an egg-shaped projection of light, attempting to explain himself, or rather his self's tragic 'fall' into critical self-reflexivity – the 'severing of the poet from his poem', as Raskin says.

This being a Nietzschean endeavour, Raskin's *Confession* 'returns' to scenes and figures from the artist's earlier projects. Sculptures, drawings and diagrams of 'Pinn', represented by a cartoonishly ovular head and conical nose (that's 'Pinn' as in 'Pinocchio', 'pinnacle' or 'piñata') serve as an analogue of the Tightrope Walker who appears in the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5), and it is the Walker's fall off the rope, his

necessary detachment from the poetic 'line', which marks the tragic yet heroic act of, as Raskin confesses, 'the possibility of artistic meaningfulness'.

Such deaths require memorials, though, which Raskin has provided in different sculptural, drawing and collage configurations, most of which include diagrams of Raskin's other alter egos too: Pinn is ubiquitous, but so is 'Corner Man', a stick figure of two arms, two legs and no head, which stands at once as a diagrammatic line drawing of a room's corner (a reference to an earlier work in which the artist filmed himself performing an undeniably Bruce Nauman-inspired series of leaps into the corner of some nondescript interior) and as a reference to the headless figure of the *Acéphale* (that dissident surrealist antidote to the stultifying rationalism of the 1930s). When combined with a horizontal line, Raskin's Corner Man becomes the Tightrope Walker, whose fall begins the artistic process again and again, but always as if for the first time.

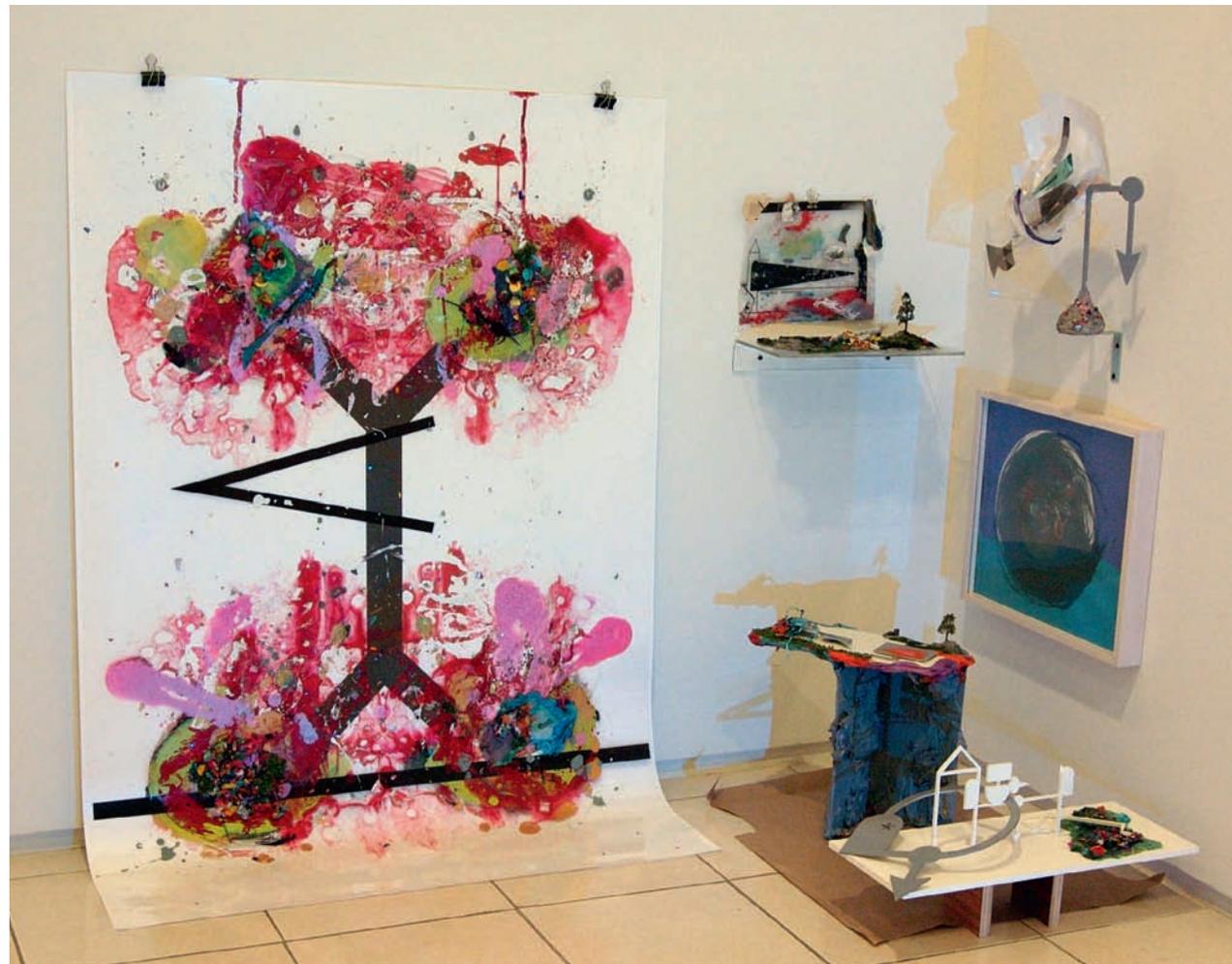
All of this is to say that, in Raskin's work, Klossowski's question is answered overwhelmingly in the affirmative, and what results is perhaps one of the most genuine and engaged meditations on the possibility not only of making art at a moment when cynicism has given way to a kind of market fatalism but also of the creative act itself, an act which, as Raskin's show suggests, may indeed necessitate more of a sacrifice of one's self, in *all* of its iterations, than we are accustomed to seeing at present.

Jonathan T.D. Neil

## JIMMY RASKIN'S CONFESSION

MIGUEL ABREU, NEW YORK

9 SEPTEMBER – 14 OCTOBER



*Corner Man Collaboration & Midnight Memorials (in six parts), 2006–7, mixed media, 114 x 152 x 78 cm*