

The Cartier 2007: And the Winner Is...?

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Mario Garcia Torres and Herve Chandes

On the first day of London's Frieze Art Fair, a full house of serious art buyers and seriously puzzled artists laughed and scratched their heads as the 2007 Cartier Award recipient, **Mario Garcia Torres**, used an actor representing a pseudonym to present his winning project.

The Los Angeles-based Torres, who has exhibited at the Tate Modern, Kadist Art Foundation and Venice Biennale, took 'playful' to another level with a droll monologue for a nonexistent but notorious entertainment world scapegoat, **Allen Smithee**. Beginning in 1968, Hollywood directors would credit Allen Smithee, an anagram for 'The Alias Men', when they felt they lost creative control of their film. Allen Smithee's filmography has 67 films so far.

"I am a dustbin of creative work, an unlikely collection of artistic rubbish and cobbled together leftovers. You can really make it as a garbage collector," cautioned the actor, employed by Torres as Smithee. Torres managed to challenge the confines of a creative act in only thirty minutes, pointing out that a collective body of artistic failure can turn into success.

Curator of Frieze Projects, **Neville Wakefield**, describes Torres' work as, "an irresistible combination of dry wit and conceptual elegance sure to perplex, confuse and hold everyone's attention." Indeed, Torres managed to genuinely confuse the audience, who craved a glimpse of the elusive artist and wondered if Allen Smithee was, in fact, a famous director.

