

# Flash Art

## JIM LAMBIE

LOW KICK AND HARD BOP

Lee Triming

**J**IM LAMBIE HAS a new show. Actually, he has a bunch of them (either current or imminent), not the least of which is the forthcoming Venice Biennale. Like pink and grey in the '80s, the dude is everywhere. *Zobop*, in all its various remixes, has been hypnotizing crowds around the globe nonstop for a good while now, on a scale Blur can only reminisce about; and if the work in "Kebabylon" — Lambie's excellently skeez-glam titled solo show at Edinburgh's Inverleith House — is any indication, things are only getting darker and sexier. The kids are gonna lap this up. Over e-mail, I managed to catch a rather

under-the-weather Jim between flights to Turin and Dublin (I like to imagine he has a special plane for this — a stripy one with streamers on the wings), and he graciously answered a few questions through "a haze of Benylin and Lemsip — hmmm, feels quite nice, actually."

**Lee Triming:** *Environment is obviously an essential element for you, not just in terms of installing, but also making the work. The space you'll be showing in at the Biennale sounds very swanky — big chandeliers, silk-lined walls — so how do you anticipate that affecting what you do?*

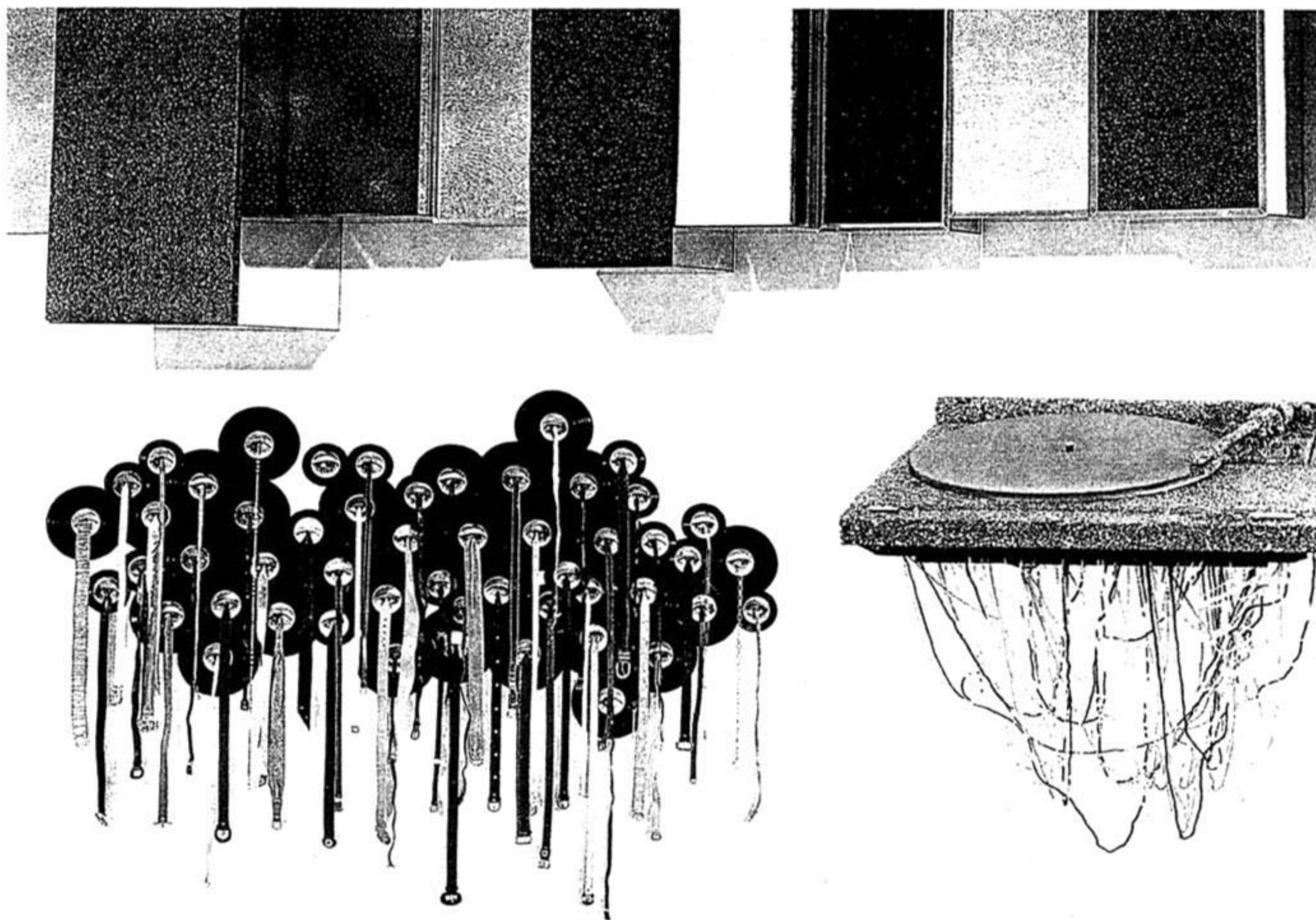
**Jim Lambie:** Yeah... I went on a site visit recently, and you're right, the rooms are kind of lush. But I'm not sure how much I want to get involved with that aspect. The starting point can always be much simpler than trying to take on the whole immediate visual impact of a given space.

**LT:** *How did that work at Inverleith House?*

**JL:** My handling of the space was the main concern. Many things were occurring to me throughout the installation. I began the week not really knowing how much or little would go into the show, and many of the works came







together or appeared because of the space itself; an important factor being the actual walk-round 'pace.' Given that the gallery is within a Georgian home, the sense of upstairs/downstairs and the circulation of movement through the space seemed to suggest a more composed series of works. Each room playing its part within a larger compositional structure. I had asked what the [given] movement was throughout the space, and was told that it was right to left downstairs and left to right upstairs. The show itself starts slowly, with an opening bar, and builds. As you enter the upstairs, it peaks in terms of visual volume, before starting to break down again to one sculpture as you leave.

**LT:** Walking around the upstairs at Inverleith House, with that blacked-out floor, those lumpen shapes forcing the mirrors out of their frames, all these vaguely threatening, obliquely aggressive objects, I found myself thinking about the Black Lodge from "Twin Peaks" — a dark, unknowable parallel reality that hides underneath or behind the everyday, occasionally and unpredictably insinuating its influence into our lives. You seemed to have created an environment with a similarly ineffable, supernatural whiff of in-

*timated danger. Is that something you were thinking about?*

**JL:** I agree that the upstairs is a darker environment than downstairs. There's also a lot of drawing and painting. The tape cross hatching the floor. The mirrors being prised apart by paint. The handbag straps being used like single brushstrokes. The paint from the glove sculpture running down and onto the floor. The white-out *Revolver* poster. The taped-over text on the vertical portrait wall reflecting the taped-out horizontal floor and portrait mirrors.

**LT:** Yeah, a lot of the work seems to deal with ideas of erasure or covering up, blanking out — Chops totally obliterates the floor — you have all these mirrors reflecting blank areas of wall and ceiling, the taped-out text...

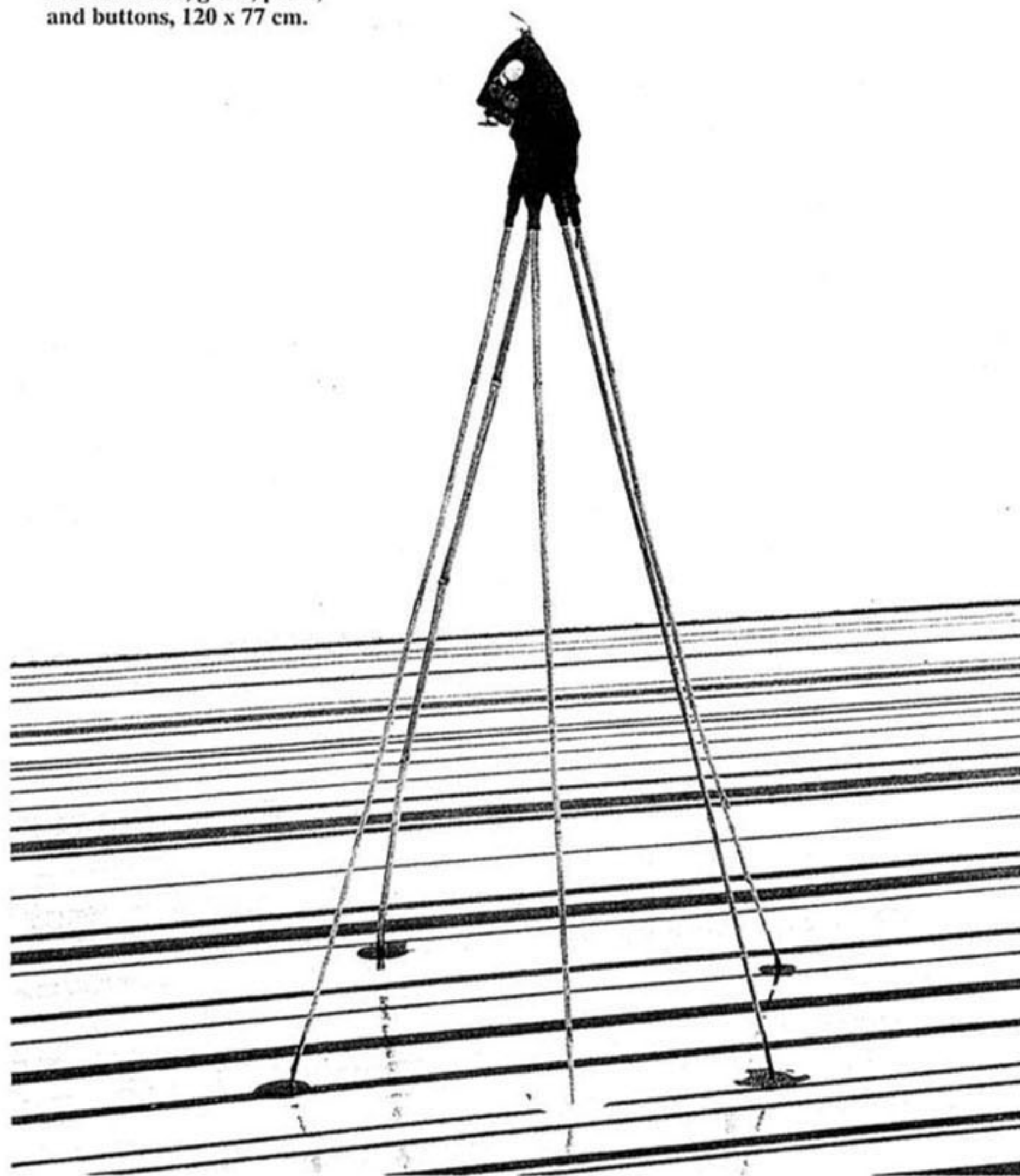
**JL:** The use of tape or paint to delete information from the *Revolver* poster was really just my attempt at making a text work. I've never really felt that comfortable when thinking about making a written text work; there seems to be too much hard-edged commitment behind it for me. Of course there are artists who do it well, much better than any attempt I could make. By using the poster it seems 'once removed' and floats more as an idea. It just

Clockwise from top left: *In the Bush*, 2002. Speakers, fabric, mirror plexiglas, 53 x 219 x 27 cm. Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London; *Hardcore*, 2000. Record deck, glitter. Courtesy Sonia Rosso, Turin/Pordenone; *Acid Perm*, 2002. Records, printed vinyl, belts, tape, 210 x 275 cm. Opposite: *No problemo* (foreground), *Head and Shoulders* (background), 2003. Installation view at the Inverleith House, Edinburgh. Courtesy The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

seems easier. The record sleeves in *Head and Shoulders* (with *Conditioner*) work in the opposite direction, where the image is left and all written information is deleted. I wanted to make a wall which made eye contact with you. A portrait wall, something which seemed repetitious at a glance, but which had these incredibly subtle emotional changes running through it. Taping out the text and leaving the head and shoulders photo portraits seemed to make all those things happen. Covering and resurfacing objects has also played a part in my work, whether its the glitter record decks or the striped floor. Again both these works appear to use the same moves, but begin from different conceptual bases. The spinning glitter decks were an attempt to make a hypnotic field, whereas the floor's primary concern was a more psychological description of architectural space. The cross-hatched floor at Inverleith



**Erotic Discount, 2002.**  
Bamboo cane, glove, paint,  
and buttons, 120 x 77 cm.



House was more about drawing, more about shading than obliterating. Of course, we can start to open up many layers which I believe exist within these works, but you have to start somewhere, and I think that most good art starts from a simple place. The world will complicate it enough after it arrives.

**LT:** *You've said that the work is always about sculpture first and foremost — but you use a lot of objects that are encultured, and therefore loaded, with meaning. If sculptural problems are the first things you engage with, how do other sorts of meaning unfold for you within the work, and how important is that?*

**JL:** The use of encultured materials is really to give an inroad to the work. I believe it allows the object a more multi-layered reading, that there aren't such hard-edged parameters on the work, that it isn't just about one thing, and that most people could find a way into the conversation. I would like to

think that all my worked looked 'easy,' that the complications, both physical and emotional, of day-to-day living had been pared down to something less hysterical. Each work has its own conceptual base, and once I find that starting point, then I do the art bit. The emotional zone. Sometimes that can be quite cool... other times, really full and frantic. Just depends on the day. But this starting point is pretty crucial I believe. If we pick any piece within my work and start to strip it down, then we could see where I started. This is always a concern. Where to start. I believe in strong bass lines, melodies, and titles. With music you can mess around with chord structures, etc.: with art, I tend to set myself problems or interests in order to give myself a platform: how can I make a corner piece? What if I just dealt with making a floor work? What about the context? If I separated the back of the mirror from the mirror itself, then I could squeeze some emotional space

in that between area. All my work has had these types of questions presented to it. How can I make something appear to float?

**LT:** *Mirrors are used to that effect in a number of works in "Kebabylon," and I wanted to ask you about your use of them in general. I guess a big part of your interest has to do with mirrors as interesting sculptural devices, ways of playing with ideas of space and surface and solidity. Is there anything more to it than that?*

**JL:** Using the mirrors, it's all those things you said, but to be honest my initial interest in them stemmed from looking at old photographs of Mod scooters. (The craze for mirrors had started in '63 and was all but dead by the end of '64, the height of the Mod thing back then.) Now if I was another artist, I could probably eke out the fact that I was born in '64; but I won't, because it doesn't matter a fuck. So, from thinking how great these scooters looked with all these mirrors hanging off, I decided to make my own version, a self portrait, for everyone. *Boy Hairdresser* was a large hinged and bracketed mirror/wall work shown at Anton Kern gallery in New York. From then on I started to see more reasons for working with mirrors. The ones in "Kebabylon" work from an entirely different idea base. Mirrors obviously have been loaded with all sorts of meanings and descriptions through art. As a surface it's fair to say that they open up space where there isn't any, that they suggest portraiture, suggest self portraiture, have surrealistic qualities, have a real history within modernism. You could start dragging in Lewis Carroll if you like. And all this stuff is there, in the background, like a white noise. But you've got to make the work, and like the floor, or the handbag straps in the downstairs room, or a number of other works that I have made, the mirrors and the 'space between' the mount and the mirror itself gave me the kick-off point, to start to describe the possibilities of what that space could be. A more psychological, emotive space. The conceptual base meant that I could indulge in pure imagination, take the outside and drag it inside. Right now I want to go further inside, deep inside. And I'm taking the outside with me, I'm taking it all with me... all the titles, all your gloves, all your mirrors, your record collections, the lot. And when it comes back out into the real world, your world, it'll feel familiar, but it won't be. ■

*Lee Triming is a writer and artist based in London.*

**Jim Lambie** was born in Scotland in 1964. He lives and works in Glasgow.  
Selected solo shows: 2003: MoMA, Oxford; Inverleith House, Edinburgh; 2002: Sadie Coles HQ, London; 2001: The Modern Institute, Glasgow; Anton Kern, New York; Jack Henley, San Francisco; 2000: Konrad Fisher, Düsseldorf; Sonia Rosso, Pordenone (Italy).  
Selected group shows: 2003: *The Moderns*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin; 50<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale; *Objects in mirror are closer than they appear*, Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; *Tate Triennial*, Tate Britain, London; *The Fourth Sex*, Pitti Immagine, Florence; 2002: *New*, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; *Early One Morning*, Whitechapel, London; 2001: *Painting at the Edge of the World*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



