

**PIETER
BRENNER
PROJECT BURNOUT**





project burnout 2012

Design and Art against Burnout

Pieter Brenner leads burnout patients to remarkable art with a social design project called *Project Burnout*, which took place in Germany, 2012. Pieter Brenner was able to re-integrate four out of five burnout patients to their former workplaces through a therapy process of destruction and creativity. The results are phenomenal artworks called *Décollages*. The burnout patients destroyed a complete advertising pillar with up to 300 layers of advertising posters. The unique artworks are the result of a process through destruction, reduction and reframing. The more layers they destroyed the less material is present. Discover more about the patients and the works of art against burnout.

Your Pieter Brenner Art & Design Agency

A close-up profile of a woman's face, looking upwards. The image has a dramatic, artistic effect where the edges of her face and hair are jagged and torn, revealing a bright red, glowing interior. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. The text is overlaid on the left side of her face.

Rebecca
32 years
Social Worker

Rebeccas story:

I am a young professional and I seem to have lost my passion for social work, and possibly the helping profession all together. I know that I wont find all my answers, but I thought it may help to hear if others are having this difficulty. Around the time I entered Psychology, I was feeling a bit anxious about the field, but more in an excited way. I grew concerned when I began to realize half way through that I did not have the same thrill of learning like I did in Psychology. I chalked up to a bad graduate experience and moved on to my first post grad job in residential (which I was really excited about). I thought this was a sure learning experience and way of looking at an old job in a new way, as I had done residential work as an undergrad. It happened to be the WORST experience of my life with unorganization and VERY poor supervision. Needless to say, the excitement of developing as a professional was lost when I was discharged from the agency. I am SOOO very lost and have tried to make the best of the experience to learn from, however, with all the stress and problems I have encountered in the field (wayyyy too many to tell) I am simply

left with a bad taste in my mouth and completely tired. I fear that I may be burned out, as fatigue and poor sleep have become a normal part of my non- working day. Due to the inability to see a doctor, (no insurance) I am left to attempt to remedy the problem on my own.

(July 20, 2012)

Rebeccas outcome:

I feel good, I can feel my energy rising and I am ready to work again and I have found at ease being under supervision. I want to change something in the world, I was able to channel a lot of my anger into action. I am thankful for the Pieter Brenner's experience, because I learned that aggressions and destructions have to be released. It is pure self-destruction to keep it all bottled up inside me. I have learned that I have to destroy things to build something new and to let go of my anger. I thank Pieter and his social design team with all my heart!

(September 4, 2012)



rebecca untitled one

26,5cm * 35cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: milling, cutting, sewing, polishing



rebecca untitled two

38cm * 45cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: milling, cutting, sewing, polishing



José
64 years
Pastor

José's story:

I've pastored churches for 27 years now. I have had my share of headaches and heartburn. I have lost a few battles and won a few. After nearly three decades of pastoral ministry I realize that I am not nearly the religious super-hero that some would like me to be. I am a man trying to keep the victory given to me by God. I love to preach. I try to pastor. I fight daily against the cynical attitude in my own life. It baffles me that I am trying to fix things in the lives of other people that are in disrepair not in my own life. I am daily reminded of the fact that I fall short. Sometimes I just fall flat. Then there are days when victory and progress are my companions. I have thought about quitting, but what am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Is it too late now? Or is this just life? I am holding on because I have no idea where I would land if I let go.

(July 30, 2012)

José's outcome:

Through Pieter Brenner I have accepted that I am both: good and bad, and I have learned not to divide the world with a straight line. I do not need to be the religious super-hero, because I do not live for the expectation of others. I can be bad as well. I want to be bad because without being bad I am not able to be good. If I gave hope to at least one person of my church I have done my job and I will continue to be the sheppard of my community.

(September 3, 2012)



José untitled one

24,5cm * 26cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



A woman's face is shown in profile, looking to the right. Her eyes and mouth are obscured by a dark, textured mask that glows with a bright red light along its edges. The background is a plain, light color.

Gertrud

54 years

secretary

mental health

clinic

Gertrud's story:

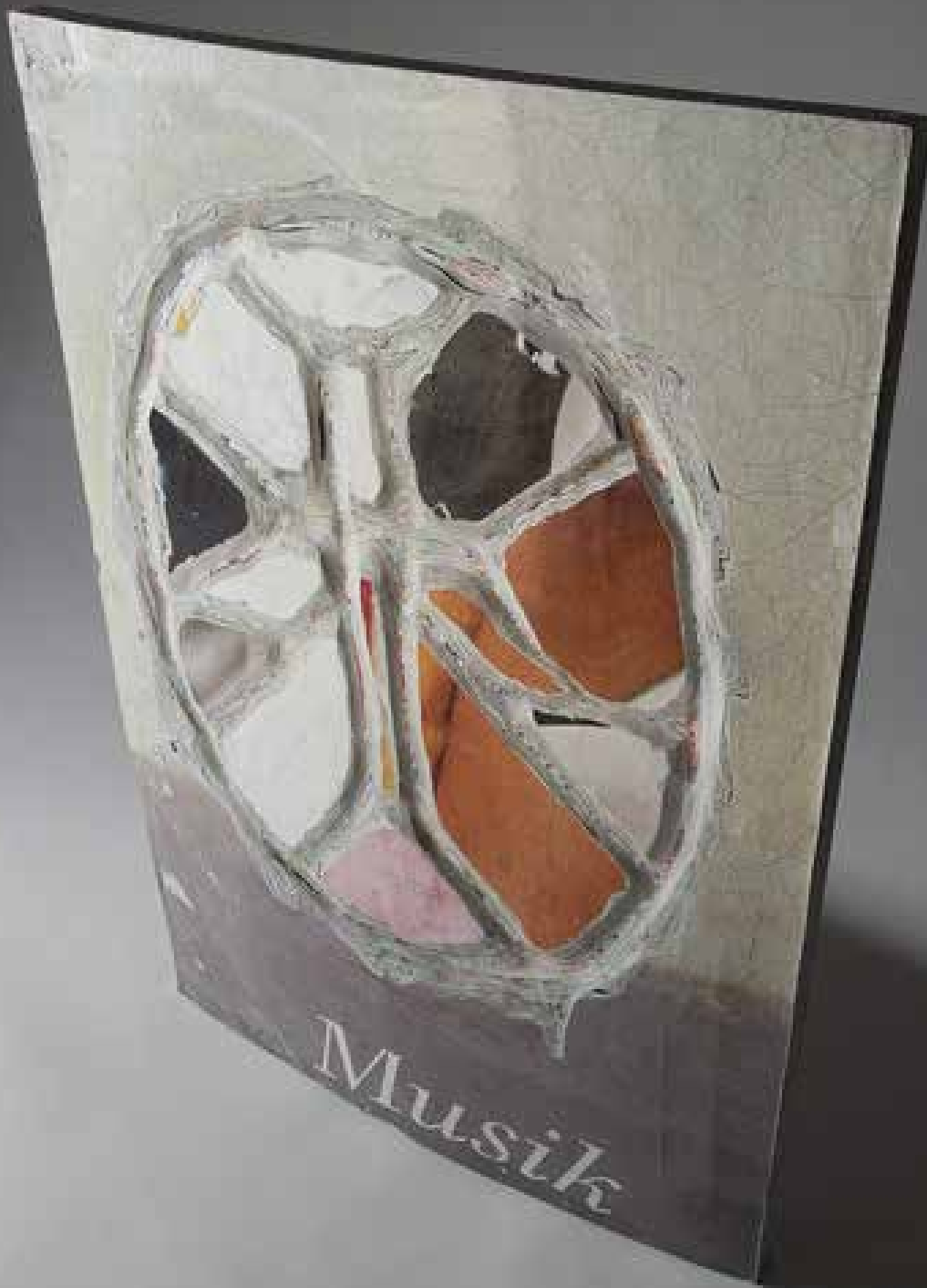
I work as a receptionist/secretary at a mental health clinic. It sounds easy, doesn't it? Well it WASN'T. My immediate boss was a tyrant, and since we had different bosses, we were constantly being reprimanded for following one's instructions and not the others'. We were severely overworked and underpaid. We had to take the brunt of client complaints since we were the first faces they saw upon entering the clinic. We were interrupted on breaks, asked to work overtime but never appreciated for it, and basically we were doing the work of just about everyone in the office, even though it was NOT our jobs to do so. It was the HARDEST job I ever had, and it gave me plenty of health problems (an ulcer, headaches, acid reflux, and weight gain) as farewell gifts. I suffered extreme burnout and we decided to participate in the Pieter Brenner experiment.

(July 24, 2012)

Gertrud's outcome:

I took a chance with Pieter Brenner's one month workshop and I can say that he has truly changed my perspective. I believe that even the smallest cell in my mind has reframed. I am now able to see that work is just one part of my life and that I don't concern myself with the problems of others. Now if there are problems at work I am just able to ignore them, because I know: all that matters is myself. That is the point when I felt healthy again.

(September 4, 2012)



gertrud untitled one

33,5cm * 49,5cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



gertrud untitled two

27,5cm * 41cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



gertrud untitled three

22cm * 58,5cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



Valentin

36 years

Blogger

Valentis story:

I find myself staying awake until midnight or 1 or 2 in the morning and then have to come in to work the next day exhausted, unable to focus. The wheels kept spinning even when the machine was exhausted. In this industry, that's been known to happen. But for me, it is happening a lot. That's not healthy for anyone, and a lot of things suffer because of it. My work suffers, my relationships suffer. I start using the platform to have meaningful interactions with people, and you substitute it for the meaningful interactions you could have in person. I put a lot of things on hold or on a delay or skip out on them altogether, and sometimes you have to in order to get the job done. But if I'm constantly doing it—and I am constantly doing it—that's not healthy. Pixels and screen names are people to me. That's not good. It's a good feeling to read two chapters in a book over the weekend, or have in-person interactions with friends over drinks or dinner.

(July 21, 2012)

Valentins outcome:

I think it was something I obsessed over. If you work in news, Twitter is where the action is. It's where stories develop in real time, 24/7. It doesn't stop. I got sucked into that. I loved it. I still love it. But at some point you have to take a break. I've probably gotten better sleep over the past week than I have in the past four years.

(September 4, 2012)



valentin untitled one

22cm * 56,5cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



valentin untitled two

25,5cm * 86cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



valentin untitled three

34cm * 78cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



Maurice
46 years
Advertiser

Maurice story:

The last few days, and in some part, the last week I just didn't even want to think about the company. I still got a few solid hours of work everyday, but my heart wasn't in it. In the last 48 hours, I more or less shut down completely. I wasn't physically sick (I don't think); just mentally drained.

A little backstory. The few weeks before that my co-founder and I had been working non-stop to get some major pushes out the door. Now, this may be slightly condescending of me to say, but 'non-stop' for advertising-founders has a much more literal meaning than when normally used. We were catching a few hours of sleep each day, rolling out of bed, and back to the computer it went. We torture our bodies with caffeine, take the occasional food break (though we sometimes forgot), and kept sugar handy to keep our brains functioning around the clock. People weren't made to be that efficient. It's not sustainable. Yes, we outputted quite a bit of work. Yes, it's our top speed that we use to hit our internally set deadlines. But as a health company, we shouldn't be doing this often (or really, ever). It has a whiplash effect known as burnout. Many

of my recent posts have been about striking a healthy work-life balance. But we get (read: I get) so frustrated with not progressing that cranking seems like a necessary evil. I haven't decided if it is actually any more productive in the long run.

(July 24, 2012)

Maurice outcome:

What a great experience with Pieter Brenner, he really was an inspiration for me. I realized what life really is after I destroyed my own work. Basically I thought advertising is the most important thing in life, but it's not. Do you realize the absurdity in my thinking? They have engrained me with this thought, but it was never my idea. I was a poor little one, now I am grown. I have a life to live and living is the part I appreciate the most. I quit my job and told my boss that he can spend his life with his work on his own. I am out and I am glad I don't need to go back there anymore. I'm not whether or not I will pursue art, or if I just get up and go to some other country, I just know that I will turn out great.

(September 14, 2012)



maurice untitled one

27,5cm * 29,5cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing



maurice untitled two

30,5cm * 31cm

© 2012, Pieter Brenner, Project Burnout

Décollage: cutting, sewing, polishing

Prevent economic loss through art therapy

„We started the project from the point that every sick day of a worker costs up to 2000 Euros for the company and that we could limit the economic losses with design.“ says Pieter Brenner.“

Increasing productivity, increasing worker engagement and satisfaction, while preventing economic loss as well as turnover rate through art therapy:

After different companies released five employees from work that had been in a very critical psychological stage, Pieter Brenner set up a therapeutic process with an interdisciplinary team for one month. Check out the design approach for healing [here](#).

Through the art process the patients could destroy advertising works and elevate their anger and destruction into art. Through this change of context four of five patients are back at their former workplaces since the project has ended. One patient decided to quit his job and become an artist.

* Nondisclosure agreements and privacy regulations prohibit the release of company names as well as those of patients.

Design Approach

Pieter Brenner explores the borders of potential from Design: „Design is not only chairs any more, it is about process, even the process of healing.“ The term „Social Design“ describes all the designed processes that have a social impact.

„We started with the question of how much it costs a company with a burnout-employee and what we found is that a sick day costs up to 2,000 Euros for companies. Secondly, how could we limit the economic losses of psychological burden that is calculated to 6.3 billion Euros in Germany.“ says Pieter Brenner.

Experts suggest there are 9 million people in Germany dealing with Burnout, that is 20% of the work force. If you take the average time of up to a year of rehabilitation, the project saved up to a million for our society. This is just an example how effective social design works.

“We as designers can rid the world from its problems, because now we have the right methodology. If the problem is „sickness“ we can solve it with design(ed) methodology to „health“ because in our digital society, knowledge is everywhere accessible.” says Pieter Brenner.





Art Theory Background

Discover more about the details of the artworks.

Destruction and Deconstruction

The art method used in the project is called *décollage*. In a traditional collage elements are added and in a *décollage* material is removed like archaeologist lay free information. Pieter showed the patients how to remove material with sews, cutters, chainsaw, milling machines, etc...

Art 2.0

The well-known designer and artist Pieter Brenner surprised with a new kind of art participation. The starting material consists of up to 300 layers of advertising posters, that can be altered by ways of carving, cutting, chipping and engraving.



Contemporary Art

There is always the possibility for new forms and patterns. Advertising Pillars are a symbol of post modernism: Behind every layer might be lying a better one. But, the more layers are removed, the less material is left from the artwork.

Materiality and Content

With the décollage, Brenner is blurring the traditional boundaries between materiality and content. „The medium is finally the medium, and behind a medium is just a medium.“ Brenner thinks the approach of Marshall McLuhan to its logical conclusion.

More and Less

Brenner meets the „more“ with “less” by reduction, removal and separation. By separating the artwork from its context, the original message of consumption is destroyed.



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Pieter Brenner

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www.projectburnout.com

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patients*

Rebecca, José, Gertrud, Valentin, Maurice

contact:

Pieter Brenner

Designer and Artist

www.pieterbrenner.com

Cologne • Buenos Aires • New York • Munich

mail@pieterbrenner.com

art purchasing

info@projectburnout.com

thank to all supporters and the whole team!

Photos by Bettina Malik

Consultant: Phillip Vodermayr

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