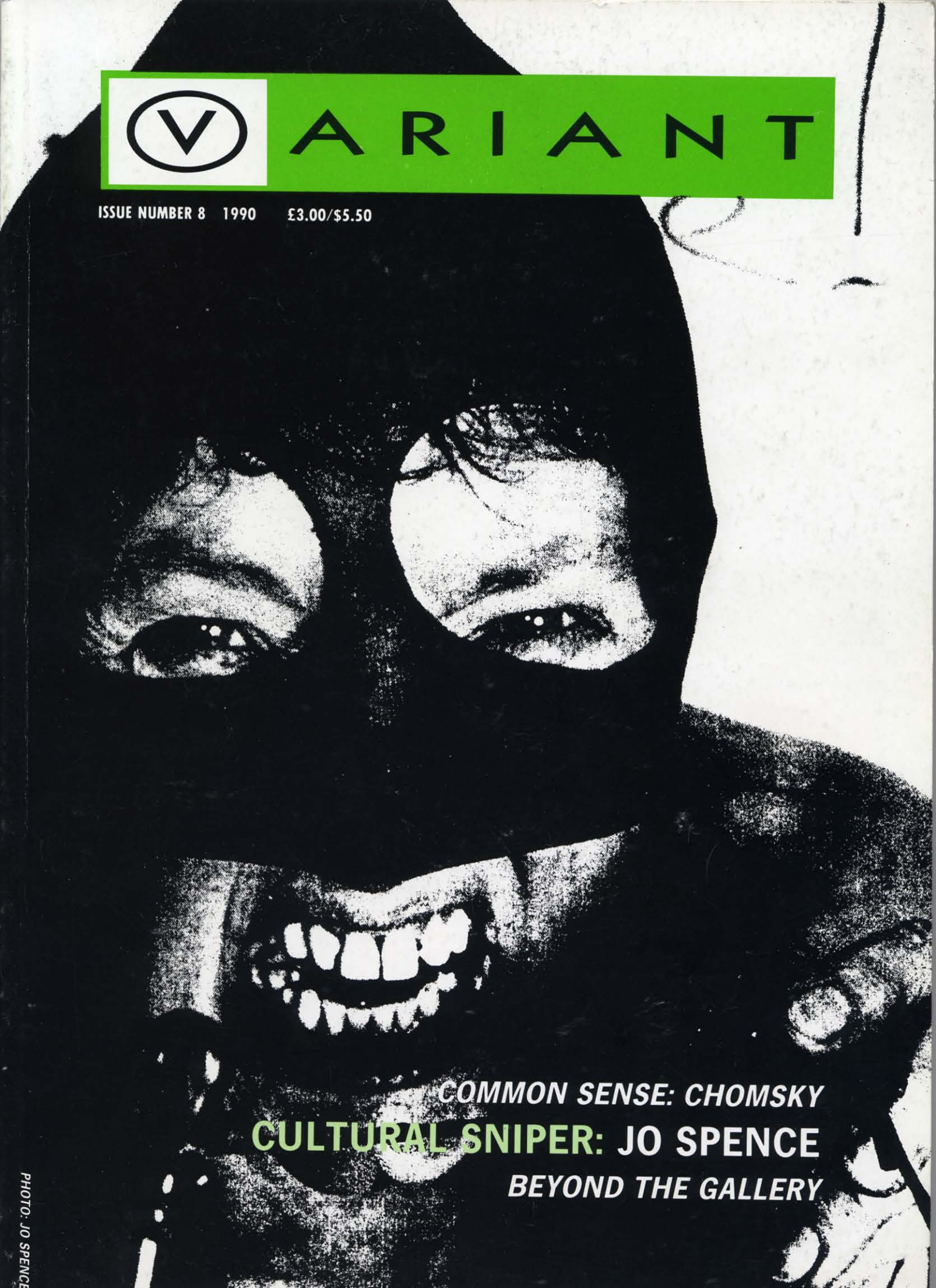
VARIANT

ISSUE NUMBER 8 1990 £3.00/$5.50



COMMON SENSE: CHOMSKY

CULTURAL SNIPER: JO SPENCE

BEYOND THE GALLERY

PHOTO: JO SPENCE

ISSN 0 954 8815

FUNDED BY SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

DISTRIBUTED BY: Counter-Distribution (London) AK Distribution (Stirling) Marginal Distribution (Canada) Variant

TYPESET BY KERRYPRESS, LUTON.

PRINTED BY WHITE CRESCENT PRESS, LUTON.

Contents

VARIANT is a magazine of cross-currents in culture: art practice, critical activity, imaginative ideas, challenging tendencies. We are a charitable organisation and publish with the assistance of grants, subscriptions, sales and advertising. We welcome contributions (contact the editor for guidelines), and we are responsive to areas of collaboration with other initiatives. Variant is an indispensable guide to 'all that's progressive' in Scotland and the U.K.

VARIANT
1/3,
61 CECIL STREET,
GLASGOW, G12 8RW,
SCOTLAND.
041 339 4287

EDITOR: MALCOLM DICKSON
PRODUCTION/DESIGN: ADAM GEARY
ADVERTISING: KEN GILL

News +

PUBLIC ART - COMMISSION OR TRUST?

Recent discussions in Glasgow on a proposal to set up a Public Art Commission for the City have ended with Labour Leader Pat Lally asking for a rethink. The District Council had offered a steering group money for a feasibility study if they could come up with an acceptable proposal. But Cllr Lally has sent the scheme back to the drawing board. The commission proposal was master-minded by David Harding, Head of Environmental Art at Glasgow School of Art (see interview in this issue). Commissions of this type exist in the United States, where they are composed of representatives of artists, architects, and the community. A Public Art Commissioner would normally be appointed, who would be independent of the local authority. Public Art Commissioners in the US monitor the operation of 'percent for art' legislation, which is mandatory in many American States, and is applied to public works and new public buildings.

Councillor Lally's problem may be the independence from the District Council a Public Art Commission (and Commissioner) would expect. The fuss over the Elspeth King/Julian Spalding affair will not have encouraged the Labour Leader to permit a new power base for opinionated artists and community interests. Especially as some of the activists supporting Ms King were clearly bent on using the business to challenge Cllr Lally's leadership. The message of the King affair is - 'the District Council's Labour Group rules'.

Over in Edinburgh, the Council's Planning Department has avoided controversy by setting up a 'Public Art Trust' within the Council. It is run without outside participation, and its first commission goes to Eduardo Paolozzi to build himself a monument at the top of Leith Walk.

(At time of writing, the proposal for a Public Arts Commission will be submitted to the District Council sometime in September '90)

STILL WAITING IN THE WINGS

Theatre writers in Scotland called a strike in June to back their claim for a rise in payments for scripts by Scottish Theatre companies. At the time of writing, negotiations continue. Although the writers have organised industrial action, they are not a bona fide trade union.

Visual artists in Scotland suffer an even lower profile. As 'industrialisation' creeps up on the arts, the need for 'worker representation' becomes critical.

In January, at a meeting in Glasgow, the formation of an '*Industry Lead Body for the Arts*' was discussed. Theatre and dance, film, publishing, galleries, local authorities, were all represented. Although printmakers and sculptors were also present at the meeting, there is no representative organisation of Scottish artists that can supply relevant information to the ILB. The information, on what working opportunities exist for artists and what training would best suit their careers, is needed by the Visual Art, Crafts and Photography sector of the Lead Body.
The function of this organisation will be to examine standards for vocational qualifications for those hoping to work in the arts. The training will be co-ordinated by SCOTVEC, responsible for vocational training in Scotland. But decisions on what type of training, who can best provide it, and how necessary it is for the employment of artists will be made by the ILB with a brief covering the whole of the UK.

In September, in Kiel, Germany, artists' organisation belonging to the European group of the *International Association of Art* (IAA) will meet to discuss artists' interests in the new 'single European market' that will come into effect on January 1st 1993. The new 'common European home' created by the collapse of a separate Eastern Europe will be another important issue, and delegates from some of the newly 'democratised' and independent nations are expected to attend.

NATIONAL ARTISTS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The NAA is holding a national conference at Chesterfield Arts Centre on Saturday 20th October - '*Public Commissions & Private Concerns*'

In order to inform a full debate on the issues arising from artists' commissions in public art (and other types of work), we welcome submissions from artists about their experiences (good, bad, or average) in this field.

We will respect complete confidentiality and/or anonymity if requested.

Submissions should be made in writing if possible by the 1st October latest.

Submissions may also be made in person at the Conference - to which all artists are welcome! - for details contact:

Shirley Cameron, 49 Stainton Rd, Sheffield S11 7AX tel: (0742) 669889.

ROYAL PREROGATIVE

The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is often ridiculed for its Summer Show - a cosy haven for Sunday painters, a sinecure for old-school-tie Academicians, whose own works gain automatic hanging space. Unfairly, the RA is an easy target, with its picture hats and Ascot and Henley image. It is part of the London Summer season. There is more to the RA than strawberries and cream, its Royal Academy schools, for example, and its often exciting special exhibitions. The RA has been a genuine popularizer of art.

But any reputation the RA has had as an organisation run by and for artists suffered two serious knockbacks recently. Earlier this year, when the Summer Show entry forms were sent out, the RA included a clause which, if signed, would have deprived would-be exhibitors of their moral rights in the works selected.

Moral rights were codified for the first time in British Law in the 1988 Copyright Act. These rights enable artists to claim authorship of a work, and have that authorship publicly acknowledged, or disclaim authorship if the work has been altered or otherwise treated in a way detrimental to the artist's reputation. The artist may also object to any alteration that harms the work's integrity. But these moral rights have to be asserted - which means claimed in writing - if they are to have legal force. As soon as the new Copyright Act was enacted (August 1989) alarm bells rang. The Writer's Guild warned members that major employers, such as the BBC, were threatening to put clauses into writers' contracts that effectively ceded their moral rights. Non-signature would mean no work.

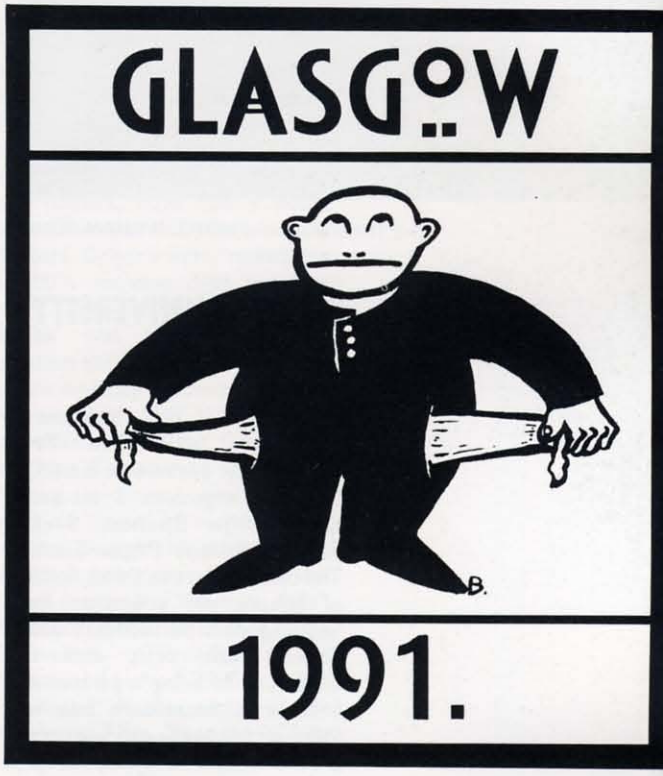
The Royal Academy tried the same trick. Fortunately, lawyers for DACS - the Design and Artists Copyright Society - were alerted and the RA admitted the error, saying the offending clause had slipped in 'by accident'.

Now a more blatant breach of artists' rights has occurred in the RA's London home - Burlington House in Piccadilly. The RA has been selling neckties and plastic boxes decorated with images lifted from works by Picasso and Matisse. This is a breach of international copyright laws. DACS, who act on behalf of the Picasso estates in Britain, spotted this lapse as well. The RA has had to forfeit its merchandise, which will be destroyed.

GLASGOW AFTER 1990

It seems that rumours circulating about Glasgow 1991 will have to remain just that for the time being, that is unsubstantiated. The present T-shirt image of an empty pocketed punter is one that many artists groups and organisers envisage feeling when it comes to financing projects. The existence of the **Festivals Unit** within the Council has meant that a vast resource of money has been available for non-gallery based activities and the Unit's relatively 'no-strings attatched' policy has given incentive to 'special projects', many of which are reviewed in this issue of **Variant. We contacted Tessa Jackson**, Visual Arts Officer at the Festivals Office who told us that no decisions have been made and the matter is *'being discussed'*, by, amongst others, the Policy Resources Committee, the Festivals Sub-Committee, and Pat Lally. If the Festivals Unit disappear, then it seems that organisers will have to go through the **Town Clerk's** Office whether a revenue client or for one-off grants, and this also means that there will be no 'art department' within the Council itself. A major disadvantage of this is that Council members judging applications might not be that well-informed or sympathetic to 'innovative' contemporary art. According to Jackson, the current Festivals Unit are keen to see that new arts organisations are *'nurtured and kept going'* and present 'discussion' about how the Council might take on the management of the arts, centres around whether the Council will fund it on a longer-term basis and just how that might manifest itself through existing venues programmes. If the Festivals Unit disappears, then it will take some high-powered ingenuity on someone's behalf to get some policies into operation which are not only proactive, but enlightened also when it comes to the arts across Glasgow. As with other matters on the Council's agenda, arts organisers and cultural workers in Glasgow are not, it seems, being consulted.

The current indecision obviously also affects **The Tramway**, the venue of the Festivals Unit, and one of the UK's most challenging art and theatre space's. In 1990, The Tramway has hosted installations by **David Mach**, **Le Cinq** (French Contemporary Art), **George Lappas**, and many theatre and dance events including **Test Department** in the former, and **DV8** in the latter. It seems that it might be incorporated within the Council's Museums and Art Galleries or Halls and Theatres, with biggest bets placed on the former. Should this occur then it would seem likely that entrance fees could be enacted, as they have been at The McLellan Galleries.



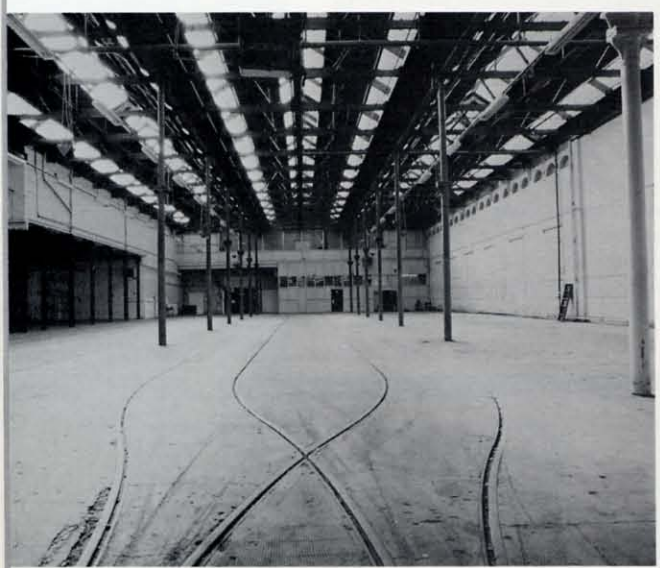
GLASGOW AFTER 1990

NEW NORTH AT THE TRAMWAY

Meanwhile, amongst other exhbitions coming up at The Tramway is New North from 2nd December to 27th January. Selected by **Lewis Biggs** of **The Tate** in **Liverpool**, the exhibition

includes 16 artists from the North in the U.K. It states in its publicity that it intends to contribute to the debate surrounding regionalism, '*especially relevant*' as Glasgow celebrates its City of Culture honour.

'*It is not a theme exhibition but shows a wide range of approaches and ideas celebrating the diversity of the North.*' Eight of the artists are based in Scotland, including **Eileen Lawrence**, **Thomas Joshua Cooper**, **Steven Campbell**, and **Dan Reeves**. Other artists include **John Hyatt**, **Leslie Sanderson**, and **Locky Morris**.



THE TRAMWAY PHOTO: WILLIAM LONG

THE FREE UNIVERSITY NETWORK

During July of 1990, **Variant** in association with **The Free University Network** based in Glasgow, organised 3 art-based talks by **Jo Spence, Stefan Szczelkun,** and **Peter Suchin.** The two former dealt with notions of culture and education from 'working-class persectives', whilst Suchin's talk dealt with the difficulties of being a painter and a theorist. Szczelkun's talk was followed by a one-day workshop around 'lifestories'. (Jo Spence and Peter Suchin both have items in this issue of Variant, and Szczelkun's book *'Class Myths and Culture'* is reviewed also.).

The Free University Network began in early 1987 when it became apparent that there was a lot of common ground between people involved in various projects based in the West of Scotland. These activities ranged from production of literary, artistic and political magazines to active interventions in these areas.

In its initial period, the Network has provided a wider base of interest and support to events initiated in these circles. A regular programme of discussions has covered a wide range of topics: the marketing of junkets like the Garden Festival; the lives and works of Joseph Beuys and Paulo Freire; radical art movements; Simon Frith on Pop Music; computers in the workplace; sexual politics; readings by writers, the German Green Movement; etc. These discussions have been informal: an initial talk that then leads into a disucssion.

Three larger debates have punctuated this period: the *Culture and Politics* day event in July 1987; the *Scratch Parliament* day in 1988; and the *Self-Determination & Power* two-day event (organised in conjunction with **Scottish Child** magazine) in January 1990. A book and a video documenting the *Self-Determination and Power* event are currently being prepared (see excerpts in this issue of Variant).

The Free University has recently set in operation a subscritpton system in an attempt to tighten up their co-ordination and their mailing list. It costs £2 per year to join. The Free University can be contacted at the following address:

p/h The Free University Network
Transmission Gallery,
28 King Street, Glasgow G1 5QP.

MUSICAL MINISTERIAL CHAIRS

On July 23rd Richard Luce retired after 5 years as Arts Minister in Mrs Thatcher's Government (but not in her Cabinet). According to The Times, he was the longest serving Arts Minister. According to his Labour Shadow, Mark Fisher, he was a very good Arts Minister. In fact the two men were remarkably close in their thinking. Last winter, Luce consulted Fisher on what to do about the Wilding Report on the Regional Arts Associations. Luce's plan for a policy-leading Arts Council, its main funding role devolved to the Regions is very like Fisher's projected Ministry of the Arts under a Labour government. Luce is credited with getting exceptional increases in arts funding from the Treasury. (A 22% increase over 11 years from an appallingly low base is not much of an achievement.)

Ironically, Luce's replacement, **David Mellor**, is the Minister, who in the Home Office was responsible for piloting the Broadcasting Bill through Parliament. It was over the issue of whether or not broadcasting should be included in a future Arts Ministry that Fisher was given what used to be Paisley MP **Norman Buchan's** job. Buchan wanted broadcasting in a labour Arts Ministry and he wanted Cabinet rank for the Minister. **Gerald Kaufman** (at that time Shadow Home Secretary) disagreed, and Labour leader **Neil Kinnock** got rid of Buchan, replacing him with Fisher. It was all a bit messy. The manoeuvring could have been triggered by the government's handling of the 'Zircon' spy satellite affair, in which they raided the BBC's Glasgow studios to confiscate 'secret' film. The Home Office directed the raid, prompting Kinnock to insist that a Labour government would fight fire with fire, and keep broadcasting in the Home Office.

The chance that the new Arts Minister Mellor will whip broadcasting across to his new Ministry cannot be ruled out. On a BBC radio interview he said he could see a case for change. He was not so keen on having Cabinet rank, however, but said that it '*could be an Election debate*'.

The Times gave '*Arts win higher profile in Thatcher reshuffle*' front page headlines, and on an inside page said it was a '*signal from Margaret Thatcher that the arts will be an election issue*'. Other papers have been less outspoken. The Guardian credits Mellor with '*zest and knowledgability*', and thinks '*Mr Mellor will bring a panache to the job that's been lacking since Norman St John-Stevas . . . Other appointments, too, have the tang of a coming election . . .*' The Independent flew different signals. On the one hand Mellor had conceded too much on the Broadcasting Bill, and was being replaced in the Home Office by a right winger (**Angela Rumbold**). On the other '*Mr Mellor is one of Mrs Thatcher's hard-hitting ministers. Clearly the Prime Minister had decided to get tough with artists.*'

It does look as though the Arts have become more important politically under the Thatcher government, although the Minister still doesnt't have Cabinet rank.

Luke Rittner, who resigned as Arts Council General Secretary because of the Luce plan for devolving arts funding to the regions was quoted

in the Times: '*it is very good that the prime minister has finally recognised that the arts are important in terms of votes, but I hope it does not mean an increase in the amount of government meddling.*' It is all a bit like the wish of American journalists in Vietnam to 'live in interesting times' - that turned out to be a Chinese curse!

INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER'S GROUP

In February of 1990, Colin Chalmers of Scottish Child circulated a notice to Scottish magazines concerning the formation of the **Independent Publishers Group** which has been set up to support and develop independent small magazines. Their press release was issued in August 1990 and states:

'A wide range of independent newspaper and magazine publishers have formed a new group to draw attention to the rich diversity of independent publications in this country, and to safeguard our future in the face of an increasing concentration of media ownership.

We are particularly concerned about the increasing pressure on our news trade distribution outlets, which is making it difficult for potential readers to obtain copies of our publications.

The number of newsagents with displays of independent titles is now a very small proportion of the total. This particularly applies to publications putting a different point of view to the mass-circulation titles in their field. The overall effect is that the general public has a diminishing choice of titles and points of view, with increasing concentrations of big-business ownership and right-wing politics.

Most of us operate as commercial publications, even though with far fewer resources, and do not ask any special favours or help in competing with the mass-circulation titles. However, we call on wholesalers and retailers in the news trade:

1/ To stop cutting out small independent titles from their system.
2/ To honour all orders for individual copies of our publications (or stop pretending that such a service exists.
3/ To provide display space for publications offering different ideas and points of view as a real service to their customers - and an essential element in a free and democratic society.

The Independent Publishers' Group was set up as a result of an initiative by **Everywoman** magazine and can be contacted **071 359 5496.**

Membership costs £20, and among the magazines supporting the network are New Statesman & Society, Sanity, New Internationalist, Feminist Arts News, Marxism Today, and in Scotland, Scottish Child and Variant.

WOMANHOUSE IN CASTLEMILK

Women and children throughout **Castlemilk** (a large housing estate in Glasgow) are being allowed the opportunity to help transform an entire tenement block, from empty flats to a collaborative art work.

The environment of the 4 flats within a residential area forms a natural context for the work taking place, inside and out. Artists working professionally, and based both locally and throughout Britain are working alongside interested women and children, in most cases relaying specific technical skills in a variety of creative techniques. The transformed building will be open to the wider public during the 2nd half of September 1990. However, the culmination of this summer's work does not end as a limited showcase, instead it will signal the beginning of a permanent resource centre planned and run by and for its users within Castlemilk. Facilities housed will be specific to local needs and may well include space for equipment for Arts activities.

WOMANHOUSE WORKSHOP

At present funding for future activities seems uncertain (see Preview piece on **Women in Profile in this issue**). Up until September 1990, the Womenhouse project was funded by **Glasgow District Council's Festvals Budget**, by the Council's **Local Area Grants**, and by **The Scottish Arts Council**. After keeping the application on hold for 18 months, **Strathclyde Regional Council** turned down the proposal for funding. The proposal may be resubmitted by **Womenhouse** organisers. Contact:
39 Glenacre Quadrant, Castlemilk, Glasgow. Tel: (041) 634 1371

FILM, VIDEO, TELEVISION

This year (1990) has seen a marked improvement in the coverage on television of work within Scotland which, if not about 'art', then certainly utilises creative approaches otherwise denied this erstwhile televisual 'region'. Filmmakers and originators of the underrated **'Scotch Myths'** exhibition, **Barbara and Murray Grigor** and now operating as **Viz** Ltd, whose work broadly investigates the links between art and politics, have had 4 hours Channel 4 time this year which, in Barbara Grigor's eyes, represents a 400% increase over previous years. Their film **'Lovers at the Brink'** was an evocative re-creation and part documentary, of a walk made by the artists **Marina Abramovic** and **Ulay** from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China. The opening section had Marina Abramovic describe the walk as '*lovers in search of one another*' though the reality of the situation being that they are ex-lovers in search of law-suits, didn't hinder the poetic intentions of the filmmakers. Broadcast on **Channel 4** in April 1990 and then 'privileged' at a screening at the **Glasgow Film Theatre** in June it represents some 6 years work and was luckily purchased by Channel 4 after it was made (as Barbara Grigor put it to us that funders wouldn't be interested in '*a couple of loonies walking the Wall of China*'). More local funding was put into their collaboration with the artist and sculptor, **George Wyllie, 'THE WHY?S MAN: In Pursuit of the Question Mark'** though it took a great deal of persuasion on the Grigors' part. This was funded by the **The Scottish Film Production**

Fund, Glasgow Festivals, and Scottish Television (as well as Channel 4). Their press release remarked: *'Wyllie's questioning art is grounded in his career as a Customs officer which trained him to question everything. This film was three years in the making and ranges from Wyllie's Straw Locomotive and the 80 foot long Paper Boat, to his spire for Gruinard Island . . .'* The film is both entertaining and quietly questioning, though the 'seriousness' and underlying humanitarian philosophy of Wyllie couldn't quite shine through his banjo playing and songs about the 'Great Bum Steer'. This is difficult to assess on one viewing in front of your TV, however. When we spoke to Wyllie and asked to sum up his thoughts on his **'Paper Boat'** project (which was seen at the World Financial Centre in New York in July 1990) his response was predictably unpredictable, and quoted the comedian **Simon Fanshaw,** who said (we are surprised to learn): *'the singluar thought of great simplicity will motivate a response across class and style, geography and politics, and emphasise a basic humanity common to us all'.* As with most of Wyllie's work, it uses a celebratory approach and has the ability to work on a variety of levels. Symbolising the lost energy of the Clyde, his **'Paper Boat'** makes reference to **Rimbaud's 'The Drunken Boat'** where you get *'rid of the flag and let it drift'*, on a journey of Truth seeking. Keen readers will spot the notice elsewhere in this issue of an invitation to Gruinard Island (which the Government of its day used as an experimental area for Anthrax and was until recently still infected) to witness his **'Spire',** Wyllie's testament, *'not for the people, for the place, for the island of Gruinard'.* For those who make the visit, they are invited to seek out the bottle of 10 year old whisky which is buried in the *'anthrax spores'* of the island and if successful in digging it up, are invited to *'have a dram'.*

As for the Grigors', their commitment to Scottish Culture and to film, combined with intellect despite the odds in an industry riddled with nepotism and vested interests, has for some time been 'out on a limb'. Does this recent TV time mean that times are changing? *'We've always done things that are unpopular'* says Barbara Grigor, 'Murray was always 3 years too early, his film on Mackintosh, the one on Frank Lloyd Wright, and the proposed film on Ian Hamilton Finlay at a time when he wasn't fully accepted. We now plan a film on Cunningham Graham, but nobody wants it; it's a bio-pic, it's historical'. The idea for the film came from Hugh MacDairmid when Murray Grigor was then working on a film with **Gus MacDonald** on the poet's life **'The Hammer and Thistle'** and MacDairmid remarked that they should be making a film on Cunningham Graham because *'he was a true aristocrat and a man of the people!'* Making films for the Grigors' is, according to Barbara, about *'generating ideas'*: now whether the climate has changed for that was left unanswered.

Another project the Grigors are working on at the moment is an ambitious historical exhibition titled **'Scotland Creates: 5000 years of Art and Design'.** The exhibition is a collaboration between the 3 National Institutions in Scotland; **The National Library, The National Museums, and the National Gallery,** and hosted by The McLellan Galleries in Glasgow. The exhibition's focus is being devised by the Grigors, and it will include around 300 to 400 objects and treasures covering a multitude of eras, including archaeological, medieval, right up to the present day. Although it sounds like a normal big buster exhibition of treasures, the Grigors will be contributing a lively, if not unusual approach whose underlying theme is the *reconciliation of opposites.*

'Scotland Creates: 5000 Years of Art and Design' is at The McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, from 17th November 1990, to 1st April 1991.

GEORGE WYLLIE *The Sun Still Shines* 1990

THE SCOTTISH FILM TRAINING TRUST

The SFTT will be advertising towards the end of November for their 1991 intake to the **Scottish Film Technician Training Trust** and **ACTT** (the film and TV trades union), which takes on trainees every year. (NOTE: they don't offer training for producers, directors or writers.) Training consists mostly of intensive work experience which is achieved by a series of attatchments to productions in Scotland during the year. Early on in the year trainees are also sent on a 6 week introduction course run in association with the London based **JOBFIT** scheme. Their brief reads;

'What kind of people are we looking for? Well, you're probably in your early/mid twenties, perhaps you've already been assisting on student films and maybe you've had the odd job on

one of the bigger Scottish productions. You're committed to a career in the Scottish Film and Television Industry and you're articulate and talented enough to convince a selection committee made up of Scottish film and TV professionals. Want to apply? Send an SAE marked 'Technician Training Scheme' and we'll send out further details and an application form when these are availaible in November.'

SCOTTISH FILM PRODUCTION FUND

The Fund exists to stimulate and promote film and video production in Scotland. With an annual budget of £200,000 there are clearly severe limits to this wide ranging brief. However, script development is an area in which we can help (eg: A Fund financed adaptation of **Naomi Mitchison's MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN** is currently looking for European co-production finance) and there is now mounting evidence that even a modest cash commitment from the Fund at the production stage can be used to leverage further production finance - **VENUS PETER,** for example.

The Fund is growing both in ambition and financially. We are always looking for new writers, directors and producers with original ideas. If you're thinking about trying to interest the Production Fund in your script, idea, project, then your first approach should be to **Penny Thomson.** She assesses scripts and projects which then go to one of the quarterly Board meetings for discussion and decision.'

The address and telephone number for **The Scottish Film Training Trust** and the **Scottish Film Production Fund** is the same: 74 Victoria Crescent Road, Glasgow G12 9JN. Tel 041 337 2526. Fax 041 334 8132.

WOMEN IN PROFILE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL— HER TAKE.

Glasgow's first **International Women's Film Festival —Her Take** is running throughout September 1990. As part of the **Women in Profile** season (see separate Preview piece in this issue), the festival aims to highlight women's work and to create a platform for discussion and debate. **Her Take** has encompassed an extensive film season at the **Glasgow Film Theatre,** a two-day conference at **SCET** (Scottish Council for Educational Technology) on 29th and 30th of September, and an accompanying publication.

A strong international programme included films from Latin America **' Fina Torres, Sara Gomez'**; Hungary **'Dora Maurer'**; the Netherlands **'Monique Renault, Clara Van-Gool'**; Austria **'Susi Praglowski'**; Canada **'Kathleen Maitland-Carter'**; India **'Nina Sabnani'**; and the USA **'Kathryn Bigelow'**. Courtesy of the **'Goethe Institute'** and the **French Cultural Delegation, Jutta Bruckner** and **Suzanne Schiffman** were present to discuss their work.

Two archival programmes co-ordinated with the help of **Janet McBain** from the **Scottish Film Archive,** will feature work from the 30's, 40's, and 50's by Scottish women film-makers such as **Jenny Gilbertson** and **Helen Biggar.**

The absence of a Scottish contemporary programme at the GFT - due to the inaccessiblity of 16/35mm work by Scottish women - raises important questions about the current state of funding and distribution in Scotland. By screening current Scottish work, on video, Super 8 and 16mm, at the conference, it is hoped that the above issues and other concerns surrounding Scottish film-making will be a focus for debate. Other topics of the conference include: Black women - Image and Imagination (following a programme of the same name at the GFT); Contemporary Criticism, Sexuality and Eroticism, and a general International Dialogue.

Women's film-making is not necessarily a shared tradition. The tremendous range and diversity of work owes much to circumstance - of birth, economics, geography, language, funding, institutions - perhaps most importantly, prevailing attitudes towards women at a particular time may inform what films get made and what form they take. **Her Take** creates the opportunity to view many works otherwise not seen in Glasgow and offers a space to discuss those different approaches to film-making, to exchange ideas, and of particular impotance in Scotland at this time, to review educational structures and funding strategies, and to suggest new ways forward for all types of film-making in Scotland.

Her Take are:

Louise Crawford
Laura Hudson
Pauline Law
Jane Martin

For further details on remaining events within the Festival, the Conference or the publication, please contact Women in Profile, 5 Dalhousie Lane, Garnethill, Glasgow G3. Tel: 041 332 7377. Screening details in Glasgow Film Theatre September programme.)

SCOTTISH FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

On the 18th May 1990, Ian Laing, Minister for Industry and Education,announced to the press that a Scottish Film and Television School (SFTVS) would be established in Dundee. This has grown out of the Electronic Imaging Department within Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art at **Dundee**, and aims to be a country wide and decentralised institution incorporating the **Photography Department** at **Napier Polytechnic** in Edinburgh, and possibly the **College of Music and Drama** in Glasgow. The ideas for such a venture are without precedent in Scotland and would appear to radically contribute to a broadening - in practice and in definition - to Film and TV production in Scotland. *'I firmly believe in the creation of new opportunities especially where they are founded upon educational concepts which create optimal conditions for learning'* stated **Colin MacLeod,** Director of the Centre for Video and Computing in Dundee, in a statement given to Variant. He continued: *'Professional training in the fields of Film and Television Production requires to be underpinned in such a way and additionally needs to operate in an industrial climate which is both fluid and adaptable. The main problem to date in Scotland has been the existence of numerous activities, aspiring to industrial status, which have predominantly been static and reluctant to undergo change.')* Such ideas have not been met with open arms by some sections in the Scottish film and TV industry. **Penny Thomson,** of the Scottish Film Production Fund (see accompanying news), whilst admits that she applauds the ambitions of MacLeod and supporters of the SFTVS, thinks that they are *too*

ambitious and failing to consult people in the film industry in Scotland *'they have a growing repuation in video, but I'm sure they would admit that their film side is down'* said Thomson. Plans for the SFTVS have also come into conflict with figures involved in the **National Film and TV School** at Beaconsfield in England. Thomson thinks that for the SFTVS to work it would have to work in some way with the NFTVS since *'in no way can you compare the facilities with Napier College and Beaconsfield'.*

According to MacLeod, resistance to the idea seems to be coming from English people in Scotland, and Scots down in London. Thomson sees the over-ambition of MacLeod and co. as *'a particular Scottish problem, going from A to D without the plans to go through B and C as well'*, and continues, *'if Glasgow is considered beyond the pale when it comes to London, what about Dundee?'* In order to encourage more open debate on the matter, we are printing the rest of MacLeod's statement to us:

'...it is unproductive to place too much emphasis upon the parochial output of some of our producers or to become paranoid about the controlling interests of an imaginary elite. If these symptoms appear from time to time, contructing barriers to protect self-interest and discouraging the emergence of new ideas, then it is the responsiblity of would-be progressive people to stand up, be counted and do something about it.

It is exactly in this spirit that the people responsible for planning the Scottish Film and Tele vision School have worked to establish the means for fostering new talent. It doesn't matter that some self-appointed quardians of our'industry' have devoted a disproportionate amount of their time to negating the premise that Scotland needs and deserves its own school or that they see any activity like this created without their sanction as a diminution of their authority.

They, or their kind, will be the first to arrive at the celebration party when the school attains success claiming that they were not only always supportive but made the major contribution. In the meantime, there is sufficient support and finance to ensure that the School will open its doors in the Autumn of 1991 and that its courses will be directed towards a range of defined industrial needs over the next decade. Its principal course, a Master Degree in Film and TV Production, will address real and purposive training issues and provide the optimal educational conditions for those seeking the skills necessary for employment in an ever changing and adaptive profession. If the School has an overriding philosophy then it must be that of encouraging and developing ideas by skilled application for professional practice.'

NOT NECESSARILY?

Hot on the heels of the '19:4:90' Television Interventions project comes 'Not Necessarily' commissioned by **BBC Scotland** and produced by **Ken MacGregor** of the BBC, and **Steve Partridge** of the Electronic Imaging course now newly framed within the Scottish Film and Television School at Dundee.At the time of writing, **'Not Necessarily' is being screened sometime in September, and will include between 6 to 10 new works of approximately 10 minutes in duration, including pieces by Lei Cox, Doug Aubrey, Judith Goddard,** and **Kate Meynell.**

Co-producer MacGregor was hesitant to say whether this represented a more open-minded approach by the BBC concerning innovative work, *'TV has always used creative people'* says MacGregor, but does admit that

STEPHEN PARTRIDGE *The Sounds of these Words* 1990

the works do embrace *'more challenging subject matter, so it is a bit different in that it is using Television in a different way.'* Whether it will change our perceptions of Television or look different, is the challenge that artists, we hope, set themselves when moving into broadcast.

BOOKNOTES

'Body Space Image' by **Miranda Tufnell** and **Chris Crickmay**, published by **Virago**, August 1990.

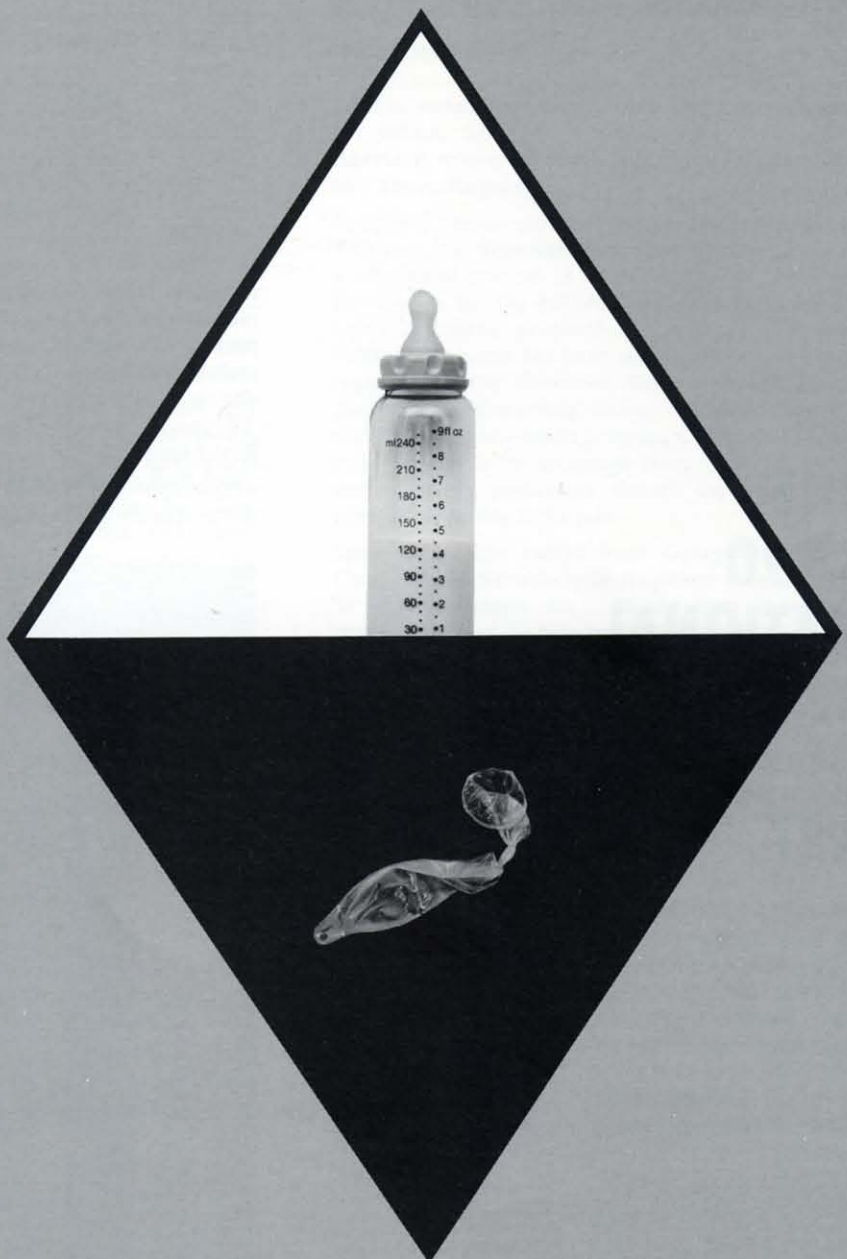
The book is subtitled 'Notes towards improvisation and performance' and it will surely become a classic. The authors explore the physical demands of movement in free space. Not 'dance', which is often constricted by theatrical expectations, nor exactly 'live art', which is often too cluttered by visual references outside the performer's body. With many fine illustrations, the book, looks at how different artists have produced work in a context, physical and social, and the spectators. One delight of the book is its acceptance of a historical framework, so often denied by live art commentators today. This has much to do with the work both authors have done at **Dartington College of Arts** where Chris Crickmay is Head of the Visual Art (**Art in a Social Context**) Department. Miranda Tuffnell has taught at Dartington, and they both acknowledge the influence of dancers, musicians, artists of all kinds on the place. This influence goes right back to the **Bauhaus** in the 1920's. In the 60's, **Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg**, and **Luig Nono** appeared at Dartington, inspiring and replenishing one of the well-springs of contemporary European live art - free improvisation.

EXTREMES

Between June 1976 and October 1975, 5 issues of a magazine called **'Extremes'** were issued. It was founded by **Gillian Clark** and **Shirley Cameron** (see preview of National Review of Live Art in this issue of **Variant**), and based in Yorkshire and the English East Midlands, although its scope and contributions included Poland and Portugal. The articles covered the prolific output of performance artists, musicians, writers, who had begun to gather round various venues in England, including the **Midland Group**, in Nottingham.

Issue No.5 of Extremes was devoted to the first tour of Britain by Polish performance artists **Jerzy Beres** and **Zbigniew Warpoechowski**. Eleven years on, Extemes back numbers 1 - 5 are being re-issued. Contact **0742 669889** (Shirley Cameron) or **041 332 7617** (Roland Miller) for information, or read the next issue of Variant.

THE RISK



RISING SLOWLY

Preview

THE 1990 NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART

Nice timing has meant that 'Glasgow 1990' provides this October's National Review of Live Art with a purposeful 'end-of-term' event: this year's Review is a special ten year anniversary celebration - specifically an appraisal of British work in the vast arena of live art. So a substantial part of the programme focuses on artists who have developed alongside or been involved with the NRLA's growth.

The history of the NRLA goes back further than these ten years: analysing its background, particularly in the context of the shift between artist-run initiatives and new-style curatorship, shows up the situation of the Arts in the past decade; it is impossible not to correlate the decade of 'Thatcherism' with a decade of 'professional' art marketing.

Briefly, the NRLA was the eventual outcome of a project by the now-defunct, Nottingham-based Midland Group . The Midland Group itself had a long, somewhat vague, history before the 1960's. Most members were traditional painters, so it was rather refreshing to learn that by the early-70's two elected members were performance artists Shirley Cameron and Roland Miller. They witnessed the decline of an exciting self-motivated project with a studio and exhibiting space in an old terraced house into a high-profile, Arts Council project; the Arts Council placed the Midland Group in its 'centres of excellence' funding category - a small select group of galleries mainly based in the South of England, including the Museum of Modern Art (Oxford), Ikon Gallery (Birmingham), Arnolfini (Bristol).

However, Cameron and Miller helped set up a Midland Perfromance Art Group within the Midland Group in the mid-70's (at that time, the Midland Group were funded on a local level by Gulbenkian Foundation as a Community Arts Centre. Around this time a then-sympathetic Arts Officer for the Midlands, Gillian Clark, coedited an experimental but short-lived independent 'performance' magazine called **Extremes** with Shirley Cameron.

In 1979 the Performance Platform which was to become the NRLA was formed. It took place one afternoon and was attended by about 30 people. In 1981 the Platform broadened to include a wider range of presentation of live art and became known as the NRLA. This was directed by the late Steve Rogers (**Performance** magazine started in the same year as the Platform - 1979 - which Rogers later edited). Since then, the NRLA has continued to develop, but has retained its fundamental function of providing a platform for a wide range of activities, not just performance.

The Platform selection has also changed with its growth: initially, artists were to judge applications, the first invited selector being Roland Miller. Until 1984, written applications for selection were submitted, but this procedure gave way to a set of Regional Platforms.

JEREZ BERES *at Cotes Mill 1979* **PHOTO: ROLAND MILLER**

Nikki Milican, who had recently taken over as Director, selected artists for the Review from those Platforms around the country. Disaster struck in 1986/87 when the Midland Group folded acrimoniously,amidst allegations of financial mismanagement, leaving the NRLA without a base. What made this ironic was the appearance of a lauded *Castle Museums Art & Performance Festival* at Nottingham Castle in 1987. It may be worth noting (if only for the humour) that the series curator, **Robert Ayers**, is the only Arts Council advisor ever to have abseiled naked down the walls of the Midland Group gallery, which he did in the 1984 NRLA.

In 1987 **Nikki Milican** found a new home for the NRLA at Riverside Studios in London. That move seems to have been successful in that it attracted the largest recorded audience to date and received good press notices. This transition to Riverside developed the video aspect as an important feature within the NRLA, although in the early days of the Review, video and other technically-orientated works reached a hiatus, and work just preceding Riverside had been less technically elaborate. That year Milican had moved to Glasgow to take up a position as Events Organiser for the Third Eye Centre. Not surprisingly, since 1988 the Third Eye Centre has hosted the NRLA.

The lack of Scottish and particularly Glasgow-based work at this year's NRLA is disappointing (the only notable Scot appearing this year being Belfast-based Alastair Maclennan) especially since the interesting contributions made by Glasgow School of Art's Environmental Art Dept. graduates '**Tradition:Debilitation**' (and later The Puberty Institution) and **Euan Sutherland**. What this indicates is anyone's guess, but the poor turnout for the selection held in Glasgow earlier this year dismayed Milican - considering that the Art School is only 100 yards away - leading the selector to conclude that this lack of enthusiasm must stem partly from the tutors' indifference.

However, this year's Platform is the largest yet, with around 20 new works. Commissioned works this year are from **Alastair MacLennan, Bow Gamelan Ensemble**, and **Roland Miller (appearing in the NRLA for the first time)**. Among the invited artists are **Dogs in Honey, Anne Seagrave, Marty St James and Anne Wilson, Claire MacDonald and Pete Brooks, Forced Entertainment, Ralf Ralf**, and the man whose reputation precedes him; **Ian Hinchliffe**. There will be numerous talks and workshops during the event and a debate entitled 'The Form - A Performance Debate' directed by **Nancy Reilly** of the Wooster Group, and moderated by the modest Neil Bartlett.

The Platform is the essential component of the whole Review and has always been the organisers' main point of interest. It is quite impossible, therefore, to highlight any one particular act amongst the commissions, invited artists, or in the Platform section. Although Milican refrains from suggesting any favourites, she believes that **DV8 Physical Theatre** and its particular performance commissioned two years ago '*Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*' was a much deserved exposure. She also greatly admires performance artist Alastair Maclennan, whose work she regards as outstanding. Of course many individuals

ZBIGNIEW WARECHOWSKI *at Nottingham Station 1979*

TRADITION: DEBILLITATION NRLA 1987

- artists, writers, performers - have been involved with the NRLA. Specially prominent have been **Neil Bartlett**, master of ceremonies since 1986, and the late **Steve Rogers**.

Funding is a major aspect of events such as the NRLA. This year, the **Scottish Arts Council** has allocated a substantial amount to its revenue client the Third Eye Centre for the NRLA. Unfortunately, the once highly optimistic proposal by SAC's *New Projects Funding Committee* has been scuppered and it is now replaced by the *Combined Arts Panel*, which now doesn't include working artists, who will make the decisions for multi-media projects. One of that panel's main policies is '*to encourage promoters to maximise earned income, particularly through the use of more effective marketing techniques*'.

Sponsorship also comes from **Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council**, and 'in kind' (i.e.hotels, etc.). At the time of writing, sponsorship and funding has still to be finalised and Milican believes that a full-time post of organising sponsorship should be created. It is perhaps unfair to suggest that those seeking sponsorship are acquiescing in art-as-marketing, but Roland Miller's provocative description of the NRLA as a promoters' trade show does sum up the position which those outside of large subsidy may be inclined to agree with. At the same time, Miller admires Milican for having developed the NRLA to its established status.

The paradox of funding is illustrated by two quotations from Steve Rogers in the 1988 NRLA programme: '*As the country geared itself up to return a conservative majority, the Arts Labs became the Arts Centres: respectable, popular, with an accent on tradition and craftsmanship, unlikely to annoy their new Conservative masters. Performance art and all the other outlandish practices of the Arts Labs had no place here...*
The Conservatives are still in power, the Arts Centres have declined, and performance art has re-emerged'. Actually it is the Arts Centres which house events like the NRLA, albeit under considerable persuasion to do so. Nevertheless, dressed up as culture shops, they need to attract this kind of event, although Milican firmly denies that the Third Eye Centre's recent facelift had anything to do with her involvement in the NRLA. The ambiguous position of arts' sponsors, their hard-headed business sense, leads to the high profiling of (marketable) work, as in large events such as **Edge**. In simple business terms, it is cutting fixed overheads to create a credit-line system: with or without an Arts Centre one ends up with a curator influencing the presentation of artists' work. (This is not always necessarilly a bad thing.)

Milican remains tight-lipped as to where and when the next event will be held, but it is unlikely to be in Glasgow, and past suggestions have been that it will become a biennial. In any case, she would like to freeze plans for the time being, and has patented the Review, not wishing anyone to stage a takeover of the event.

Since 1988, the NRLA has developed a working relationsip with video-makers in Scotland via the Video Dept. at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee. The video within the NRLA has thus constituted an event within the event, with installations and single screen work in the top floor of the Third Eye Centre.

The National Review of Live Art takes place at the Third Eye Centre from Wednesday 10th October to Sunday 14th October, all day and every day.
Contact 041 332 7521 for further information.

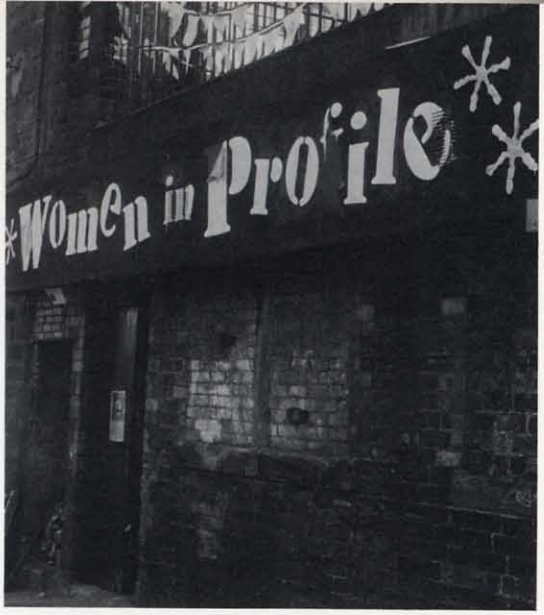


PHOTO: LOUISE BRADLEY

KAREN STRANG

WOMEN IN PROFILE: GLASGOW 1990 WOMEN'S SEASON

The evolution of the group **Women in Profile** can be seen as a direct response to the exclusion of many women in the realm of culture. The group aims to represent and promote work by women during 1990 and beyond. A reference point for the work done by the group up to the present, is the '*Women's Season*' of events in September of 1990. The time between the announcement in 1987 of plans for the group, has now seen the project expand and evolve into many different groups which function interdependently of each other. Women in Profile operates as an umbrella organisation constituting the projects, publications, exhibitions and work undertaken by women who have a commitment and involvement in the group and to its overall aims and objectives. The events during the women's season highlights the fulfilment of some of these goals whilst providing a focus for a discussion of agendas for change in the future.

PHOTO: ANNE SEAGRAVE

The conference '*Women Setting Agendas For Change In The Arts*' (incorporates the International Association of Women Artists Symposium) is intended as a meeting point for women locally, nationally and internationally. By concentrating on the importance of future agendas, the need for continuity is stressed, a pertinent issue in Glasgow, given the impermance of increased funding to the arts via City of Culture. It is hoped that the result of the conference will be the exchange of information and resources through networking, research and discussions, the latter reflecting the diversity of interests and interventions: theoretical debate on cultural/literary theory, women in philosophy, feminism, art and class, feminism and women's studies. Such topics indicate the importance of theory and writing which underscores any attempt to change both the representation and exclusion of women. Women and Performance, Women's History in the Visual Arts, Women and the Built Environment - further topics featured as workshops in the conference.

Running concurrently is The Women's Film Festival and Conference (see Film/Video/TV News section in this issue of Variant), and The History of Women's Aid in Glasgow Exhibition and the Photoworks multi-media show which aims to '*make visible women's work, crossing a broad range of disciplines around lens and time-based work*'.
The History of Women's Aid Exhibition, remaining unfunded due to the '*negative image*' of City of Culture it presents, will hopefully tour different venues in Scotland and secure finance for an accompanying publication. The work, research and documentation involved in the exhibition and book are of vital importance in acknowledging the position of many women and the pervasive reality of violent relationships and the story of women to this.

Women in Profile is based in the Garnethill community, and the space functions as an Archive, Resource Centre, Exhibition/Performance area and social area for women and the building of a place where women's work does not become lost or invisible. Another space has been secured in Castlemilk housing estate. The Womanhouse Project (see News) has a temporary

lease on housing which is being developed into an arts/resource centre for women, as an exhibition space which uses the space itself - domestic housing - as a critique of women's struggles and experiences within it. Certainty around the possibility of a longer lease beyond September is clouded by the indecision and doubtful commitment of funding bodies. A more central location may be desired for more women to become involved. Trust and involvement obviously require time to evolve and develop. It is important to the women involved to try and create somewhere which could function as a resource for a greater number of people. This involves dealing with the politics of community, the function of community spaces and a revision of the interventionist role they can play and the value of this. At a time when the questions raised by community arts in the seventies features on a possible agenda, the form and activities which surround the Womanhouse project take on a political dimension which must not be lost.

The activities of Women in Profile have led to the greater promotion and visibility of women's work in Glasgow which strengthens enormously the possibility for women to organise, intervene and challenge the changing nature of relations of production and meaning ascribed to women working in the arts. The publications arising from Women in Profile projects includes The History of Women's Aid book, A Directory of Women Artists and Hertake, an archival document to accompany the Film Festival which combines practical information and critical writing.

Financial support for the future depends on evolving and broadening out funding sources. The money available this year will not be around next year. The cross-fertilisation of information and organisational resources which will be an inevitable result of the conferences, exhibitions, discussions, writing groups and the function of the resource centre and Womanhouse project point to a possibility of a strong foundation for women's cultural work in Scotland. If the opportunity provided by the Year of Culture enables the beginning of women's attainment of a higher visibility and radical presence within Scottish culture, then the irony is worthwhile.

Contact;
Women in Profile,
5 Dalhousie Lane,
Garnethill,
Glasgow G3 6PD.
Tel: (041) 332 7377

LORNA J. WAITE

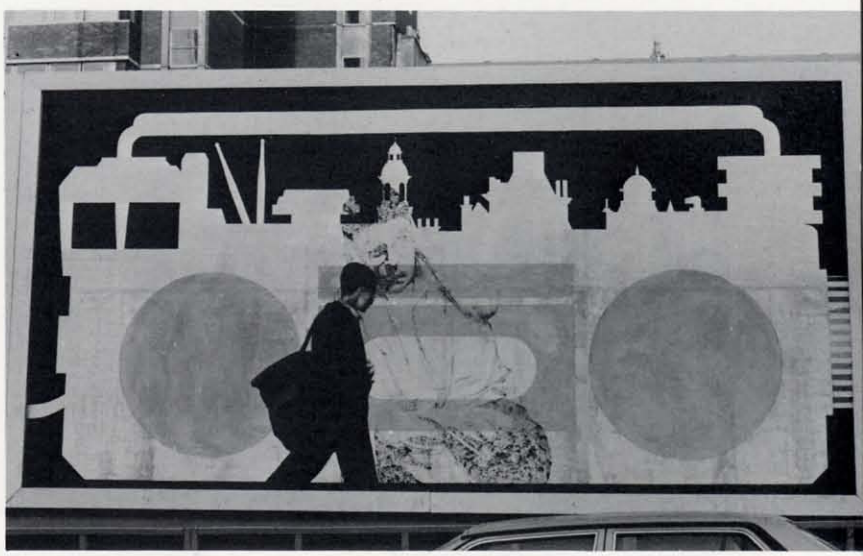
ARTISTS INITIATIVES

Commencing in September 1990 is the **Bellgrove Station Billboard** project initiated by Glasgow based artist **Alan Dunn**. Unhappy with the conventional billboard work, Dunn has undertaken a number of billboard works himself whilst a student on the **Environmental Art Course** at Glasgow School of Art. Initially funded by **The Scottish Arts Council**, Dunn has made a billboard site which will be placed in the station for a twelve month period, with twelve different monthly presentations.

Dunn says: *'Standing on the sunken island platform, waiting to go somewhere, one is faced with the green grass area of Brandon Street to the south and the brick retaining wall to the north. The majority stare at the retaining wall'.*

Proposals for January 1990 onwards are welcome. Funds are very limited and applicants will be expected to self-organise their own project. Collaborative work is particularly sought after.

Contact:
Alan Dunn
186 Barrchnie Road,
Garrowhill,
Glasgow G69 6PJ



BELGRAVE STATION BILLBOARD 1990

TSWA – 4 CITIES PROJECT

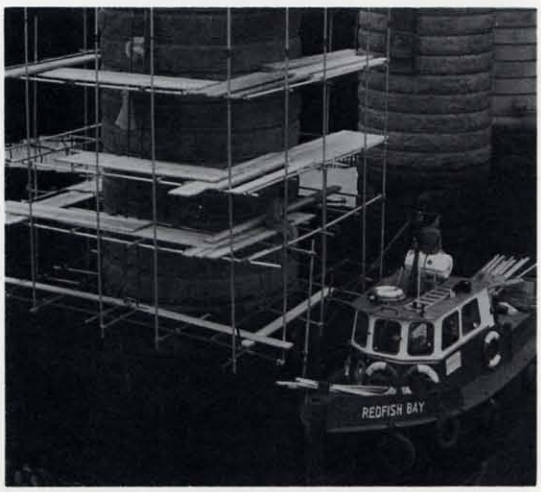
In 1987, TSWA made bold claims about its TSWA 3D Project; *'challenging the tyranny of the predictable'* and the tendency of *'extra gallery initiatives'* which *'often plump for safe locales'*, as Richard Cork put it.Unlike the 'anodyne' public artwork, or that which enhances the corporate spaces of our cities, TSWA set out to imbue the area of public art with more expansive and critical ideas.

One image from that project 3 years ago still stands the test of time; George Wyllie's 'Straw Locomotive' which hung from Finnieston crane, and which was ceremoniously set aflame in empty ground in the formerly thriving Springburn area of Glasgow. Such a work remains a symbol in memory (of many things, most pertinently the decline of Glasgow's industrial past) rather than a permanently visible monument, and thus challenges such notions of 'the temporary' and 'the permanent' in public art.

The 1990 project is titled **TSWA - Four Cities Project** and is occuring in **Glasgow, Plymouth, Newcastle,** and **Derry**. It takes off from the last project in investigating the temporary nature of public art works in a massively administered project which the organisers have been working on for the past year. The notion of 'temporary' artworks is not policy, however, and one of the co-organisers, **James Lingwood** indicates that the project has a more open

attitude than this:

> *'At a time when public art is increasingly becoming the recipient of a vast amount of public funds through the 1990's...it seems an opportune moment in 1990 to try and present a number of projects, and a number of models which in a way will try and shift the perception of what public art - or art outside the gallery - could be, and suggest ways in which sites might not just be 'occupied' but be 'transformed'...We are not imposing a notion of 'site-specificity, it's much more than that. Definitions will come out of the way the artists have chosen to work.'*



Over 20 new works by a range of artists from the very well known (in the art community, anyway) to the lesser well known, will be created. In Newcastle, this includes **Stefan Gec,** and **Mona Hatoum**. In Plymouth, **Richard Deacon, Ron Haselden,** and **Magdelena Jetelova**, whilst, Derry includes two interesting artists from the USA, **Dennis Adams**, and **Nancy Spero**.

Six projects are occuring in Glasgow. At Glasgow Airport, Swiss artists **Fischli** and **Weiss** have made a comment on the banality of our culture with 4 models of air stewardesses (*'the contemporary variant of the mother figure'*, as Lingwood puts it, *'as a placcid, allegorical figure of monumental statuary'*). **Judith Barry** (USA), is undertaking a projection installation in the former Cheesemarket building in the Candleriggs area. **Rosemary Trockel** (Germany), has made an advertisement pillar in St.Enoch shopping centre comprising of material sent from Germany giving publicity information on Glasgow as Year of Culture (how others see us through the mediation of the hyped gloss?). **Kevin Rowbottom** and **Janette Emery**(UK) have made what appears to be a gold column on the Caledonia Road Church. **Stuart Brisley** (UK) has made a sculptural based piece in a Govan dry dock which in itself investigates the condition of the monument. These graving docks become inverted plinths in which the artist has placed carved fragments which are taken from a plastic model representation of the heroic, male, Western worker. **Ian Hamilton Finlay**'s work on the Bridge Pillars in the River Clyde meditate on the symbolic nature of pillars, and the historical condition of the monument in contemporary society.
Inscribed on these columns are words in Greek and in English, a reworking of a particular line in a translation from Plato's Republic, which says that *'All Greatness Stands Firm in the Storm'*, a typically ambiguous statement which nevertheless comes at a pivotal time, it would seem, concerning the role of creative activity and imaginative ideas. This work will also be permanent.

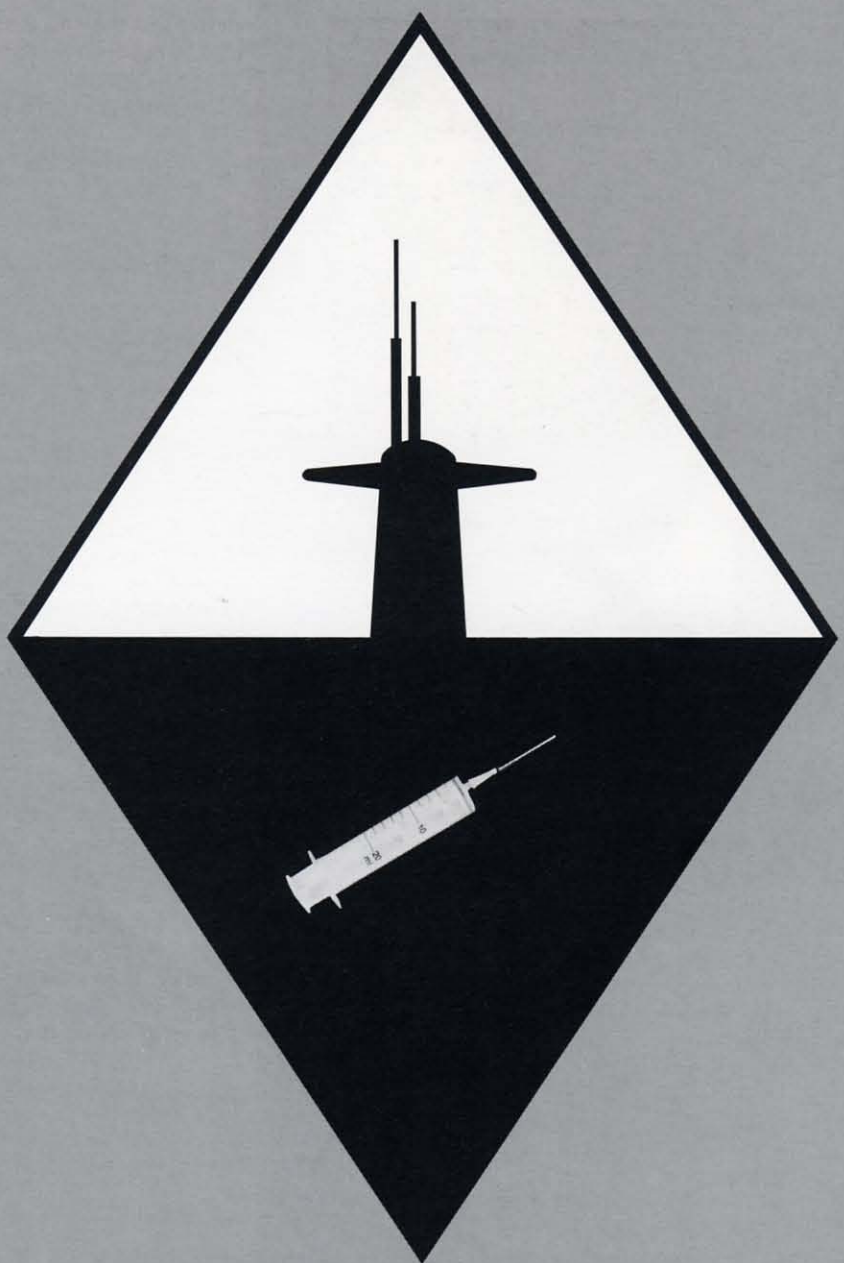
The problems that are encountered in the organisation of such projects are highlighted by the attempt to secure permission to use John Street Arches, which is by the City Chambers, for a project by the Brazillian artist Cildo Meireles.
This was to involve the construction of a scale model of a Council house of the sort found in the 'peripheral estates' in Glasgow. Not surprisingly, such a project did not meet with the approval of the City Fathers, so Meireles adapted the idea. The new proposal was to place gold wire stretched between the Poll Tax office and the Court and to balance a small model of the Council house on it. Such a reworking sidestepped the obstacles of Health and Safety and Planning regulations which blocked the original idea. Despite 'high level' talks between TSWA organisers and the District Council, this also was refused, thereby confirming that the bureaucratic red tape preventing this project from taking place was the result of political and ideological decisions by overly defensive figures high up in Glasgow District Council. (This also illustrates the powerlessness of the Festivals Office within the Council and leaves further doubts about support for the arts after 1990.)

The efficacy of site-specific and temporary projects of this nature, especially such highly funded event like TSWA, require discussion. TSWA acknowledge this in this years project, with an extensive education programme and a public conference which will aim to address the plurality of opinions concerning public art. It seems contradictory, however, that Glasgow should have such a wide-ranging education programme, with community workshops, local history projects, animation workshops, heritage walks and more, and that Newcastle, for example, do not have an education officer at all (or is it simply a question of money, which in itself raises questions about the motivation of 'education programmes'). One of the other organisers, **Tony Foster**, called TSWA in 1987 the 'big splash' approach, which was taken up by **David Butler** who wrote in **Artists Newsletter** that *'if prestige governs funding and organisation to what extent does it govern the art?'* This leads on to a criticism in the selection since no new artists seem to be represented. To be honest - and to leave the resonance of their work aside for one moment - do artists of the stature of **Ian Hamilton Finlay** or **Stuart Brisley** need a project like TSWA? What initiatives are issued from a local community themselves and in what ways can this take effect in working with a fine artist. What is the difference between public art, community art, and art in public places? In what ways will the 'art institution', the artist, and the administrator respond to the increased need for a reassessment of art's social value at a time of diminishing public sector funding?

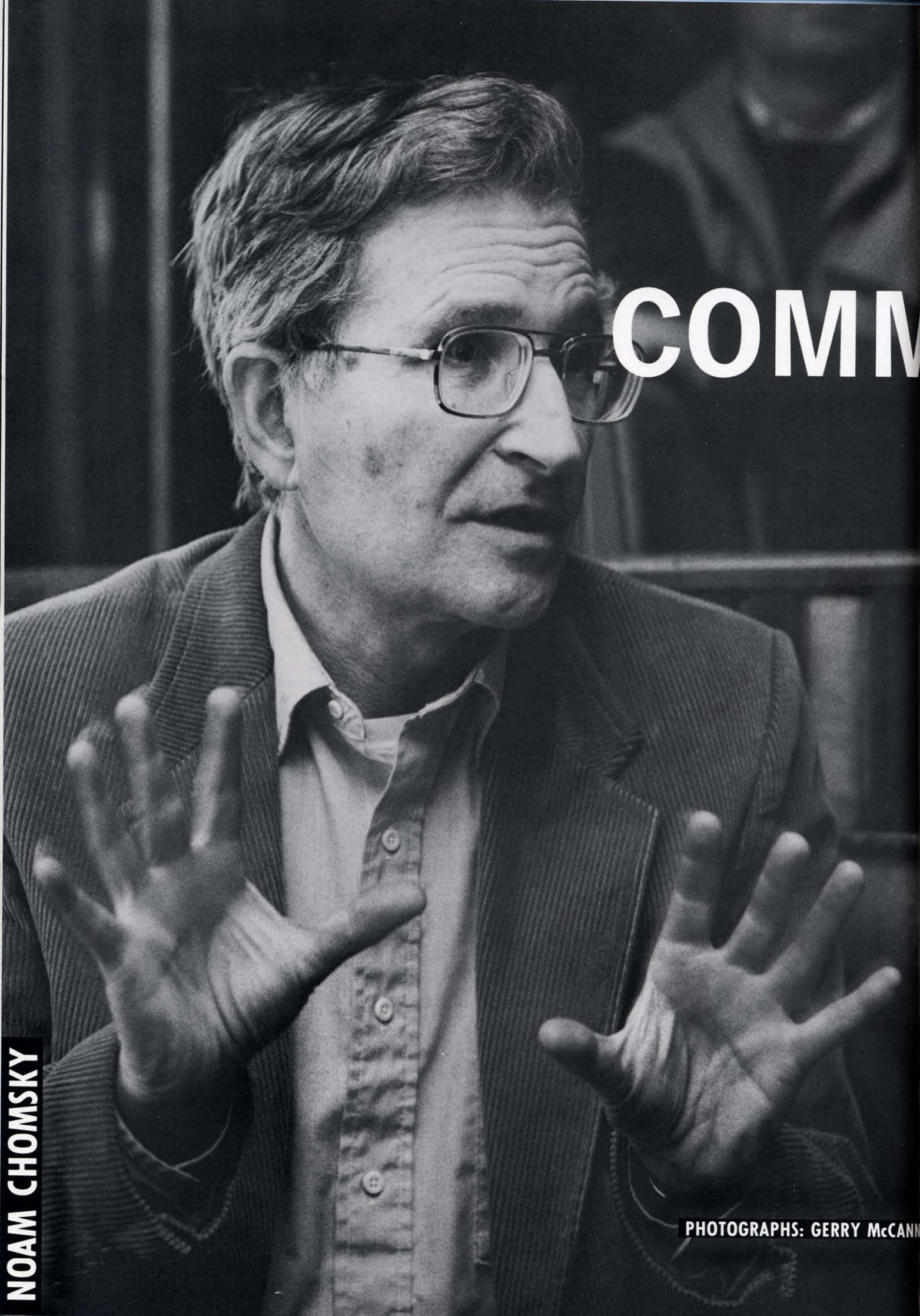
TSWA - Four Cities Project *is taking place in Glasgow from 8th September to 28th October 1990.The conference occurs on approximately the 20th October. Check Third Eye Centre for exact dates and venue. There are also 4 bus tours every 2 weeks during the event. For details of other educational events contact Graham Johstone, or for information on any of the art project, contact Euan MacArthur at the Third Eye Centre on 041 332 7521.*

MALCOLM DICKSON

THE DEBT



RISING SLOWLY


COMM
NOAM CHOMSKY
PHOTOGRAPHS: GERRY McCANN

ION SENSE +

FREEDOM

In January of 1990, a two-day event took place in Govan in Glasgow titled **SELF DETERMINATION AND POWER**. Organised by the Free University of Glasgow, Scottish Child Magazine and the Edinburgh Review, the event was attended by over 300 people over the two-days (with many more turned away due to demand), this conference was one of the largest independent events of its kind ever seen in Scotland. Those attending included groups and organisations from tenants groups, educational campaigning groups, anti-racist, women's aid, anti-poll tax, artists, writers, and activists of all description. The keynote address on each day was delivered by **Noam Chomsky**, the American dissident thinker. Prior to the event, one of the key organisers - Glasgow writer and activist **James Kelman** - wrote:

'Chomsky's thesis, and that of the Common Sense philosophical view in general, is the apparently obvious point that people can think for themselves - 'apparently obvious' because nowadays most ruling minorities tend to regard it as dangerously subversive. 'Common Sense' takes the view that the reasoning skills which we use in our everyday day to day life are there to be developed and applied to any subject we want, and not just subjects like 'foreign languages', 'geology', 'dog-racing', or 'criticising TV programmes' - but subjects like a country's foreign policy, or the correlation between cuts in welfare benefit and infant mortality, cuts in welfare benefit and suicide, and drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gambling abuse, suicide, local crime and violence, prostitution, madness.'

We interviewed **KELMAN** at the time of the eventabout the ideas behind the event and the connection with Chomsky. Following that, we include excerpts from Chomsky's key address on the first day.

'About 18 months ago I was writing a review-cum-essay on Chomsky's work and the deeper I got into it, the more I realized that ther were parallels with something else I was reading which was the work of **George Davie**, the Scottish philosopher. Basically there were lines coming together to do with **Common Sense** philosophy which, to me, the way it operates is that it provides a philosophical context for a political struggle. It connects with the Enlightenment period.There was also my own knowledge of the time, I've written a play near the period so I knew that around the mid to late 18th century not only was there a French Revolution but also that there were great things going on elsewhere, in Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. These

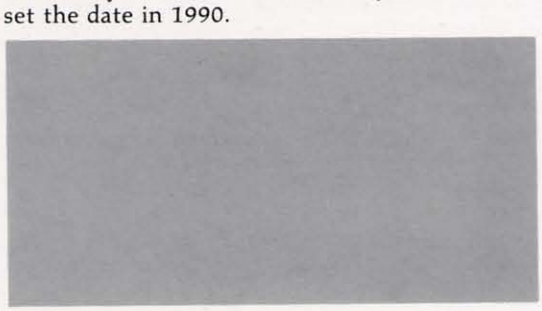
connections were interesting. The Common Sense idea seems to me basically the right to self determination, the right to freedom.

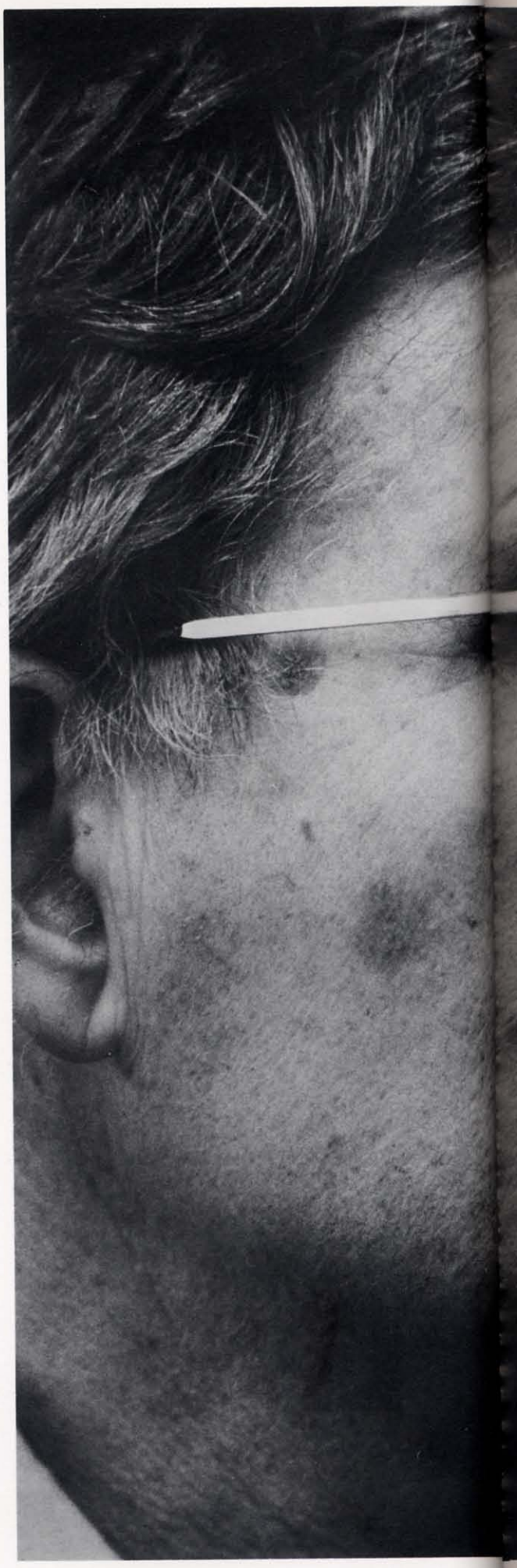
When I was doing the Chomsky thing and getting into the technical side of his work I wanted to show how powerful it was - I had done a little bit of reading on it before. I wanted to draw some links and when I was exploring his work there was something he said which made me realize that he wasn't aware of a certain part of the Scottish tradition in philosophy. This was all fairly recent to me and had only come through reading George Davie's work in **Edinburgh Review** magazine; I was seeing there were things in this country outside of the Anglo-American tradition in philosophy.

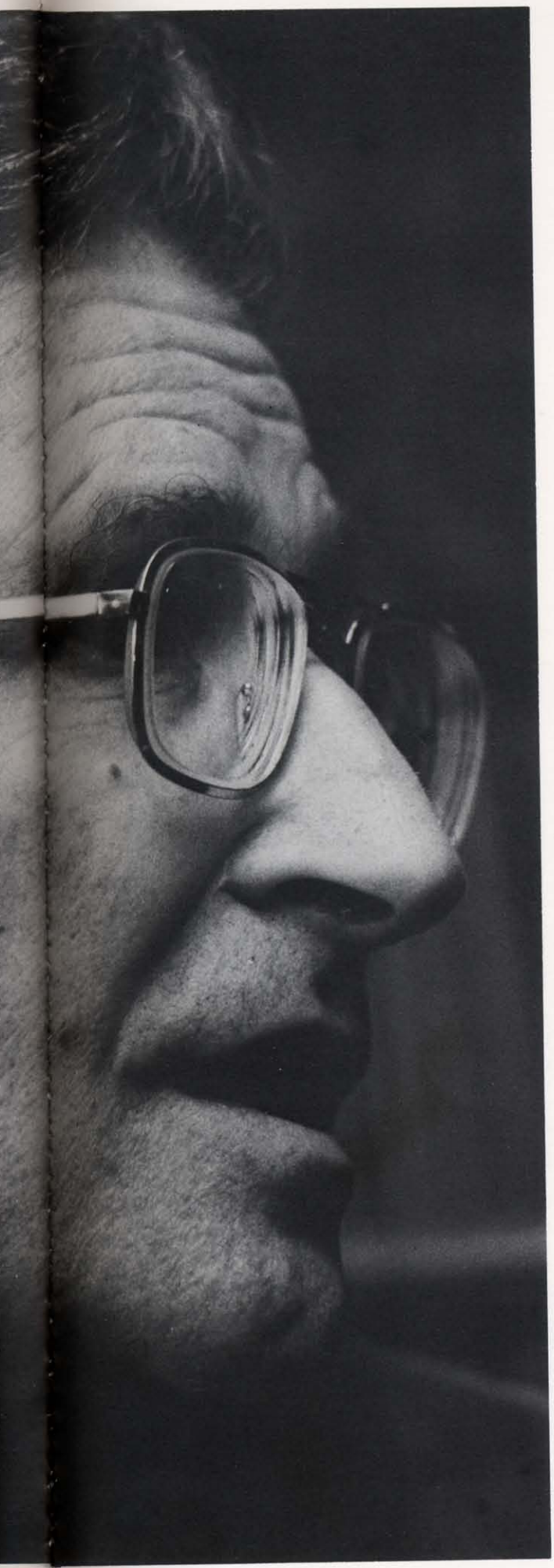
I sent some of Davie's work to Chomsky so he would get some idea of the Scottish tradition which has virtually been wiped out by the Anglo-American tradition- done in by it, for I think political reasons an apology for imperialism. David Hume makes a case for treating black people as inferiors and then of course the West can go and exploit them and make slaves out of them. The first thing to do is to say that this person is not a person, this object is something that resembles a person, but isn't - and then basic human rights like freedom and self-determination just don't apply.

Chomsky got this work and I thought that this will mean something to him, to be interested in.
There's another technical aspect to be mentioned here, which is Chomsky's approach to rationalism, and the Scottish tradition seemed to be offering a way out of that. By 'rationalism' I mean an 'innateness hypothesis', meaning that people are born with knowledge, forms of it, not got through being in the world. That's why Chomsky is on a radical limb even within his own field and that's why a lot of people regard what he does as anachronistic, a throwback to early 17th Century, **Descartes** especially. It struck me, as it still is the case, that the Scottish tradition offered the possibility of **Rousseau**-type principles of freedom, and 'human nature'; it didn't have to get bogged down in an 'innateness hypothesis'. I felt excited by the way all of these things were being drawn together. I sent the finished article off to him and made a case for him coming to Glasgow since he was going to be visiting Oxford in 1989. He couldn't make it then though.

I later discoverd that someone else had offered Chomsky an invitation to Scotland at about the same time. This was **Derek Rodger**, the editor of **Scottish Child**. Because the way that magazine operates meant that he was very open in coming in on it together with the Free University in that. It was Chomsky himself who set the date in 1990.







CONTAINING THE THREAT OF DEMOCRACY
(excerpts)

by

Noam Chomsky

In his illuminating study of the Scottish intellectual tradition, **George Davie** identifies its central theme as a recognition of the fundamental role of *'natural beliefs or principles of common sense, such as the belief in an independent external world, the belief in causality, the belief in ideal standards, and the belief in the self of conscience as separate from the rest of one.'* These principles are sometimes considered to have a regulative character; though never fully justified, they provide the foundations for thought and conception. Some held that they contain *'an irreducible element of mystery,'* Davie points out, while others hoped to provide a rational foundation for them. On that issue, the jury is still out. **(1)**

We can trace such ideas to 17th century thinkers who reacted to the sceptical crisis of the times by recognising that there are no absolutely certain grounds for knowledge, but that we do, nevertheless, have ways to gain a reliable understanding of the world and to improve that understanding and apply it - essentially the standpoint of the working scientist today. Similarly, in normal life a reasonable person relies on the natural beliefs of common sense while recognising that they may be too parochial or misguided, and hoping to refine or alter them as understanding progresses.

Davie credits **David Hume** with providing this particular cast to Scottish philosophy, and more generally, with having taught philosophy the proper questions to ask. One puzzle that Hume raised is particularly pertinent to the questions we are hoping to address in these two days of discussion. In considering the First Principles of Government, Hume found *'nothing more surprising'* than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis therefore, an opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends

to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular.

One questionable feature of this analysis is the idea that force is on the side of the governed. Reality is more grim. A good part of human history supports the contrary thesis put forth a century earlier by advocates of the rule of Parliament against the King, but more crucially against the people: that *'the power of the Sword is, and ever hath been, the Foundation of all Titles to Government.'* **(2)** Nevertheless, Hume's paradox is real. Even despotic rule is commonly founded on a measure of consent, and the abdication of rights is the hallmark of more free societies - a fact that calls for analysis.

The harsher side of the truth is clarified by the successes, and the tragedies, of the popular movements of the past decade. In the Soviet satellites, the governors had ruled by force, not opinion. When force was withdrawn, the fragile tyrannies quickly collapsed, for the most part with little bloodshed. These remarkable successes are a sharp departure from the historical norm. Throughout modern history, popular forces motivated by radical democratic ideals have sought to combat autocratic rule. Sometimes they have been able to expand the realms of freedom and justice before being brought to heel. Often they are simply crushed. But it is hard to think of another case when established power simply withdrew in the face of a popular uprising. No less remarkable is the behaviour of the reigning superpower, which not only did not bar these devlopments as it regularly had done in the past, but even encouraged them, alongside of significant internal changes.

The historical norm is illustrated by the dramatically contrasting case of Central America, where any popular effort to overthrow the brutal tyrannies of the oligarchy and the military is met with murderous force, supported or directly organized by the ruler of the hemisphere. Ten years ago, there were signs of hope for an end to the dark ages of terror and misery, with the rise of self- help groups, unions, peasant associations, and other popular organizations that might have led the way to democracy and soical reform. This prospect elicited a stern response by the United States and its client regimes, supported by Britain and other western allies, with slaughter, torture, and general barbarism on a scale reminiscent of Pol Pot. This violent western response to the threat of democracy left societies *'affected by terror and panic,' 'collective intimidation and generalized fear' and 'internalized acceptance of the terror,'* in the words of the Salvadoran Church, well after the shameful elections held to satisfy the consciences and propaganda needs of the masters. Early efforts in Nicaragua to direct resources to the poor majority led Washington to initiate economic and ideological warfare, and outright terrorism, to punish these transgressions by reducing life to the zero grade.

Western opinion regards such consequences as a success insofar as the challenge to power and privilege is rebuffed and the targets are properly chosen: killing priests is not clever, but union leaders and human rights activists are fair game - and of course peasants, Indians, students, and other low-life generally.

The pattern is uniform. U.S. occupying forces in Panama were quickly ordered to arrest most political activists and union leaders, because they are *'bad guys of some sort,'* the U.S. Embassy told reporters. **(3)** The *'good guys'* to be restored to power are the bankers who were happily laundering drug money in the early 1980's. Then

Noriega was also a *'good guy,'* running drugs, killing and torturing and stealing elections - and, crucially, following American orders. He had not yet shown the dangerous streak of independence that transferred him to the category of demon. Apart from tactics, nothing changes over the years, including the inability of educated opinion to perceive that 2 and 2 is 4.

Central America represents the historical norm, not Eastern Europe. Hume's observation requires this correction. Recognizing that, it remains true, and important, that government is founded on opinion, which brings willing submission.

In the contemporary period, Hume's conception has been revived and elaborated, but with a crucial innovation: the theory is that control of thought is more important for governments that are free and popular than for despotic and military states. The logic is straightforward: a despotic state can control its domestic enemy by force, but as the state loses this weapon, other devices are required to prevent the ignorant masses from interfering with public affairs, which are none of their business.

The point is, in fact, far more general. The public must be reduced to passivity in the political realm, but for submissiveness to become a reliable trait, it must be entrenched in the realm of belief as well. The public are to be observers, not participants, consumers of ideolog as well as products. Eduardo Galeano writes that *'the majority must resign itself to the consumption of fantasy. Illusions of wealth are sold to the poor, illusions of freedom to the oppressed, dreams of victory to the defeated and of power to the weak.'* **(4)** That is the essential point...

1. Davie, **The Democratic Intellect** (Edinburgh University Press, 1961).
2. Marchamont Nedham, 1650, cited by Edmund S. Morgan, **Inventing the People** (Norton, 1988), 79; Hume, 1, cited with the qualification just noted.
3. Diego Ribadeneira, **Boston Globe**, Jan, 1990.
4. Galeano, **Days and Nights of Love and War** (Monthly Review, 1983.

The above is an excerpt from an extended essay by Chomsky. It will appear in the book publication **SELF DETERMINATION**, which will be published by **AK Press** in late 1990. It will also include work by George Davie, James Kelman, Gus John on **Race, Class and Education**, prose and poetry (Tom Leonard, Gerrie Fellows, Mandlacosi Langa, Alisdair Gray) and more besides. It will be available in both paperback (ISBN 1 873176 05 8) and hardback (ISBN 1 873176 10 4) formats. It will be distributed by **Bookspeed** in Scotland and by AK Distribution.

AK have also published an essay by **Chomsky** on American Foreign Policy, titled '**Terrorising The Neighbourhood: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era**'. It is based on a lecture he gave in Edinburgh in early 1990, and it also contains an introduction by **Linda Gray**, the director of **Scottish Education and Action for Development** (SEAD). It costs £2.95 (ISBN 1 873176 00 7).
AK Press and Distribution can be contacted at 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, Scotland, FK8 2RD.

"Illusions of Wealth are sold to the poor, illusions of freedom to the oppressed, dreams of victory to the defeated and of power to the weak."

"Could do better . . ."

TOWARDS A PERSONAL AND POLITICAL THEATRE OF THE SELF?

by
JO SPENCE

SHAME: A painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcomings, impropriety, or disgrace.
(*shorter Oxford English Dictionary*).

The final phase of my on-going identity crisis happened when I was 46 years old. I finally got my act together, took my intellectual *chip on the shoulder* and enrolled at the Polytechnic of Central London to do a degree in the theory and practice of photography. By that time I had already been a professional photographer for nearly 20 years, but nobody seemed to be very interested in that, nor in my political achievements within photography. Within weeks of the term beginning I was already filled with the shame of what I didn't know, what I lacked. This has never fully gone away in spite of all the work I have done since. In this respect, I come from a background where, within state education, I was systematically treated as if I were stupid, so clearly this was not a useful start. Even if, rationally, I knew that to be untrue, nonetheless I persisted in my irrational belief that because of the way I was treated it must be true. Entering higher education for working class people is problematic if it does not address the realities of our lives, not the ways in which our particular subjectivities were formed.

In view of my early experience it is hardly surprising that the area of cultural practice to which my work relates is one which could be

most usefully described as *unofficial storytelling* - both in its sense of lying, and of narrating. As a photographer, my ways of storytelling use different modes of address and appear in variety of spaces, ranging from the uses of snapshots through to techniques of psycho-dramatic re-presentation in front of a studio camera. I work in a variety of situations both in the independent sector and within Adult, Higher and Further education. For example I run workshops and evening classes in Adult education on *The Family Album and the fantasy of everyday life*, setting projects on *life mapping or unfinished business* using automatic cameras, counselling in pairs and doing creative journal work with family snapshots. (**footnote 1**). We also explore other forms of self documentation, for example by constructing autobiographic tableaux for the camera, using either ourselves or each other as social actors, with props and simple sets, sometimes working just with the use of objects. Such work is useful for unblocking and reconstructing memories, working alternatively within emotional, social or economic frameworks, or moving from the private to the public, ending up with a kind of social plus psychic realism. All work is shot in colour, processing and printing being done very cheaply through major processing houses such as Bonusprint.

Such work facilitates a way of dialoguing with the self and with others. Sometimes it enables those who have a political, theoretical or accademic approach to life (by using techniques drawn from different aspects of therapy, eg: co-counselling, psychodrama, maskwork, drawing, movement) to work through and into their still inexpressed emotions and feelings, especially in relation to family life which is our earliest encounter with authority. In this way I , and many of those I have worked with, have created new levels of awareness, often synthesising the personal with the political with the ideological, thus becoming more empowered to work for change. All such work is *process* orientated and is often the raw material for later forms of (more public) cultural production. It is also a way of understanding what has often been rendered structurally absent from all forms of mediation and storytelling.

Another current area of my practice is to work collaboratively on *my own* history (I am training to be a therapist, working with various techniques of person centred photo and art therapy). Very often the core of such work involves establishing deep levels of safety and privacy so that I, as my own storyteller, can begin to recount fragmented narratives of life events and memories that are painful. In this process I am always aware of much self-censoring, evasion, resistance and shame as my psychic defences try to screen me from past memories and traumas. Of particular interest have been encounters with *shame scenarios* and personal taboo thresholds - eg: death, cancer, sexuality, intellectual inadequacy, physical ugliness, aging. Often in moving into such areas (mostly revolving around the im-potency of my aestheticized or medicalized body and to early internalized shame of my working class roots) I have located the split between surface information and the deeper structures of memory (**footnore 2**)

My work in the last 18 years has always been on a reciprocal, collaborative or collective basis (**footnote 3**) trying to shift the balance of power within the production process and make it visible in the gallery , or wherever, by including the names of all the people involved (**footnote 4**).

I either act as a cultural midwife for the work of others, or as a social actor representing my own life, history, struggle. When I fell ill in 1982 I began to make my own life an object of study, to understand my psychic formation and my social and economic history. I was already immersed in a study of theoretical considerations of representation and now tried to bring them all together. How to be useful to myself, for once? Coming from a workaholic and highly repressed family, forever pushing poverty to arms' length, clad in the cloak of 'respectability' and 'self sacrifice', I found it difficult to play and explore my emotions and feelings, to 'expose' myself to myself. In working on *The Picture of Health?* (**footnote 5**) I began to discover that one of my major defensive strategies was to hide overwhelming feelings of shame. Shame at my 'ugliness', at my deformed and injured body, at my inability to carry on being 'successful', shame at my inability to perform whilst I was ill, shame at my poverty (I got behind with the rent, had the phone cut off, sold my car), shame at my inability to form the perfect relationship, shame at not being the daughter my parents had hoped for, shame at not being the intellectual my tutors had expected. *'Could do better...'* As the year progressed I began to be in touch with a buried structure of shame in relation to my class and background. I found in my therapeutic explorings that in spite of all my parents had done for me that when I had become socially mobile that I had become a monstrous daughter, looking upon *them* with shame. I had forgotten the history of my subjectivity because it was just too painful to remember.

'Imagine looking into a mirror. Instead of an act of pleasure, or confirmation, or of vanity, think of it as an act of anxiety. Imagine then that every time you opened your mouth you were aware of the potential for giving the game away, knowing you might be found out, seen through. That you faced the world as a masquerader. This was the story of my life from as early as I can remember as the daughter of working class parents: pushed to be socially mobile through education, fashion, social contacts, love affairs, work. Unconsciously encouraged to assimilate, to pass into middle class culture - yet underneath still remaining somebody else. But who? All that wasted energy used in denying my own realities, my own needs, my own shared history. Think then of family snapshots as those kinds of partial mirrors where the masquerades of appearing to be something which you know you are not is viewed as a high achievement'

Artworks or exhibitions which have come out of the 'process work', and gone into the public domain include work on breast cancer, my teenage sexuality, my reworked shame of my family/self, ageing, my lack of role models as a cultural worker from a working class background. I call all these my *narratives of disease* (**footnote 6**). Apart from deciding to show such work whenever an opportunity occurs or if I am invited to submit work anywhere, I also use it as the basis for lecturing on Fine Art courses and want here to concentrate on one aspect of that arena.

ART EDUCATION?

As a *post education* working class woman now lecturing within Higher Education, I am constantly aware of the contradictions and ambivalences of many arts students wanting to articulate their (our) class realities/fantasies whilst at the same time needing to be validated by people/bodies/institutions/discourses which invariably disapprove of , or have no value for, or see as inappropriate or inadequate, the utterances we might be groping towards. As somebody who has trodden the same path as countless other students from my background, I am conscious of the double bind of this situation, ie: 'please listen and accept me for what I *really* am' at the same time as 'please validate me for being critical of your class and your use of power'.

In moving across the boundaries of being in therapy, back into working as a visiting lecturer on a range of arts courses, I have become aware of the different (hidden) agendas working in both sectors. Equally I am aware of my own taboo thresholds, of how I have constantly censored myself for not wanting to be perceived as *too powerful* or *too middle class*, depending on who I am speaking to and how safe it feels to reveal myself. Every day, in a variety of different situations, I carefully choose my modes of address, whether or not to signal my 'authority' or 'knowledge' or 'superiority'. On the other hand, when in an amenable or 'therapeutic space' I am less guarded, more vulnerable and in consequence I am able to speak in a more fractured, tentative, incoherent way.

PHOTO A

Because the theoretical debates within higher education (in particular in arts and media courses) have begun to engage with the representation and deconstruction of racial and sexual difference, many students are now opening up these areas in a range of work on identity. This however, brings with it a rather paradoxical situation. With this apparent encouragement to open up cultural agendas, instead of a *blossoming* of work many students are rapidly encountering their own fear and taboo thresholds. Working on identity is not merely a theoretical exercise: it means engaging with the fantasies of an actual past which is perhaps better hidden from institutional scrutiny, especially if such work is being evaluated and assessed by tutors who are not doing parallel work on their own social or economic histories, or on their psychic or subjective processes. Very often on such courses a major component (and crucial factor) in the lives of those of us from a working class background is rendered absent; namely a theorisation or discussion of class and power *differentials*. On many courses, social or socialist realism or dcumentary practice has been ridiculed in favour of post-structuralist image/text work, leaving the rest of us with less and less sanctioned ways of dealing with the overlap between the personal and the public, the psychic and the social. I would argue we still need forms of realism which elide the psychic with the social, the unconscious with the material, the construction of desire with the experience of fear.

PERFORMING FOR WHOM?

If we were to take account of unconscious psychic processes, most of us would discover that we are still performing for internalized parents or super ego figures (now embodied in tutors, bosses - the last of a long line of authority figures). In contradiction to this, work on identity might also be us trying to speak to ourselves about something that is *unspeakable*, or *unrepresentable* - trying to explain something but never quite getting it into focus - too afraid, too ashamed to look, too scared of the pain of knowing, too apparently alone?

We might also be performing for/speaking to the group with whom we align ourselves: socially, familially, politically or economically. Work might be around *issues*, or around *crisis* (eg Poll Tax, Clause 28, Homelessness or Drug Addiction). It might be about the complexity of a fragmented or diversified cultural identity, never fixed or stable, always sliding about. Other starting points for such work might be rooted in the history of our damaged lives. It might also be that we can't deal with the *personal* but

JO SPENCE'S CULTURAL CONUNDRUM LIST:

Splitting the self: - assimilation, masquerade or rebellion?
A need to re-construct and affirm my roots.
Or did I assimilate so well that no one would know?
Secret/unofficial/naughty/wrong/undercover/ pretence/shame.
Low class/inferior/ashamed/stupid/bad taste/under privileged.
Whose words are these?
How did they become so important to me?
Labels: artist/photographer/cultural worker/fine artist/ artworker?
Who am I?
No role models - only a history of great names.
No visible spectrum of practices - only a history of limitations.
New orthodoxies/avant gardes to be aspired to?
Artwork viewed not as part of a general process of living?
Viewed as something separate?
Only valued for our final 'performance'?
'Who is it for?'
Complex questions.

need to seek refuge in theories or abstractions or politics as a way of having some control in the world. Or that we feel so powerless that we are unable to place any faith in theoretical work and want to be left alone to paint landscapes. We might merely see our work as part of a career structure. Or, if we are students, our primary objective might be to cynically get through the courses, get our degrees and get out. A juggling act to conjure with, for these are not necessarily compatible frameworks for study or for the production of work.Their structuring presences are all around us all the time within educational and art institutions, whether we are students or artworkers. Yet they are seldom addressed.

SO WHO AM I WORKING FOR?

When I ask the question of my work *'To whom am I speaking?'*, followed by *'Whose interests does this serve?'* I have needed to be honest with myself and work out strategies for dealing with unfamiliar and possibly alienationg situations. For example: in many instances on entering some arenas of the art establishment I try to garner my psychic resources by appearing to be something I am not. I still masquerade, pass myself off. In so doing I speculate on whether my identity be perceived in such a way that I am colluding in something I disagree with by my passive participation? How do I attempt to inhabit the categories on offer in the world of art? How does anybody with my background proceed unproblematically to be an *'artist'*? As

PHOTO B

a partial solution I decided years ago that, coming from a political family, the term *'cultural worker'* was more appropriate, offering a category that embraced the notion of work or of cultural production. Within this category I have worked to make visible the processes involved in my work rather than expecting to be understood merely by the fetishized products of my labour, cut off from its own history, elevated to object status. Later, I styled myself the term *'Educational Photographer'*.

So what models were available to me as a working class woman involved with a range of cultural practices and working in a diversity of cultural venues? For a start I do not easily inhabit the bland label of *'woman'* (it has to be further sub-divided - I am both similar to and different from other women). I do not inhabit the category of artist - therefore who am I? (My work has been consistently ignored by both the new Feminist Orthodoxy and most of the Post Structuralist avant garde as *'too popular'*). It fits well into the concept of *'popular culture'* yet where are the venues for such work except the odd spot on television. In mulling on this question I decided to do a piece of autobiographical work and try to tell myself the story of who I am. Done over a period of two years this culminated in the following image.

As soon as I knew I was telling myself a story that made sense to me I felt I had discovered a major structuring absence in the middle of my identity. There are no categories for artists which invoke notions of class. By taking a metaphor from outside the art world, the sniper, terrorist, freedom fighter (a metaphor for anti-oppression and for solidarity), I was able to understand that there are many others like me. It is now a question of continuing to identify each other so that we can form alliances and create cultural groupings which are more complex than those of being *'black'* or being *'women'*. Now when I lecture, teach or lead workshops, instead of my previous confusion over my identity (I've dropped the masquerade of being in a position of *'knowledge'* and work rather through the shamanistic idea of visibly *'sharing my wounds'*, thus offering the framework for an egalitarian relationship), I see that I am no longer an ugly duckling trying to be a swan but that I belong to a very specific and previously unlabelled group. When I go back through the histories of art I can see that I *am* aligned to other oppressed groups, including working class artists. I am not talking about being social workers with cameras or paint brushes, or appealing on behalf of oppressed people, but rather that within the theoretical debates about identity and the ways in which our subjectivity is constructed, how we represent our inner world and connect it to the world of the social, the economic, the ideological and the potentially political, that we need to discuss a more complex model of identities.

Of course I am outraged when I learn my history, when I take off the mask of being someone I was not. I am outraged at what the dominant culture (which produced me) has done in colonising and destroying other cultures, other economies. I am outraged at how we still differentially continue to benefit from this. Yet

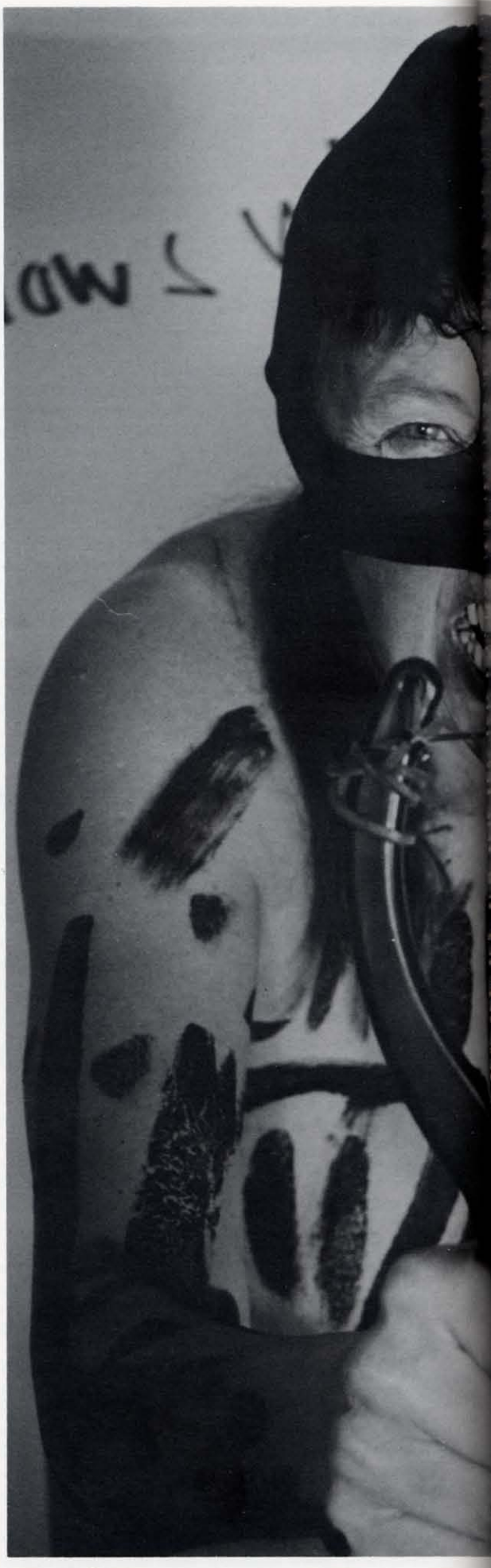
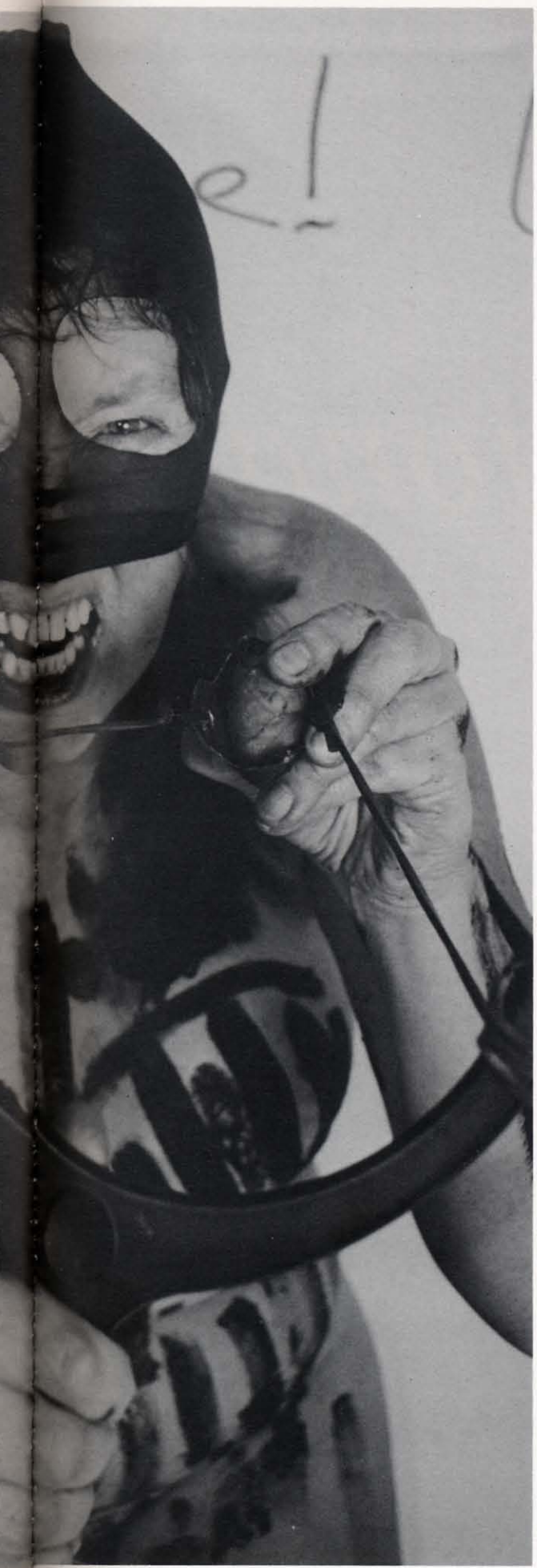


PHOTO C



I cannot fully engage with these struggles until I fully understand what I am still trying to work through and make visible - ie the shame of who I was told I was/what I lacked. In this way I am beginning to be more congruent within myself so that all my energies can be directed outwards in a pro-active (rather than a re-active) way. I can't go backwards to any physical roots, there was never any pure state left behind to be recovered, only half truths, evasions, fabrications, fantasies, memories, hypotheses. The best I'll ever be able to manage will be a montage of fragments of reconstructed histories in which I can gain new knowledge and wisdom and perhaps begin to share it. Not merely a history of victimisation and injury, nor a shift into a utopian world of *'positive images'*, but one which represents the continous struggle to speak, to re-define, to name, of coming into being. Where I become the subject of my own enquiry rather than the object of someone else's, where I act rather than am acted upon.

FOOTNOTES:

1. See 'Reworking the Family Album' by Jo Spence, **MEDIA EDUCATION** No. 12, 1990.
2. See 'Disrupting the Silence: the daughter's story', Jo Spence, **WOMEN ARTISTS SLIDE LIBRARY** No. 29 (paper given at Art Historians' Conference, London 1989).
also: 'Photo Therapy: Psychic realism as a healing art?', Jo Spence and Rosy Martin, **TEN 8** magazine, No.30 1988.
3. See **PUTTING MYSELF IN THE PICTURE** by Jo Spence, Published by Camden Press, 1987.
4. For example, touring exhibition 'Remodelling Photo History - a collaboration between photographers', Jo Spence and Terry Dennett, 1982.
5. 'The Picture of Health? New approaches to breast cancer' by Jo Spence, Maggie Murray and Rosy Martin. A Cockpit Gallery touring exhibition.
6. 'Narratives of Dis-ease' by Jo Spence in collaboration with Dr Tim Sheard, included in **THE GREAT BRITISH ART SHOW**, Glasgow, 1990.

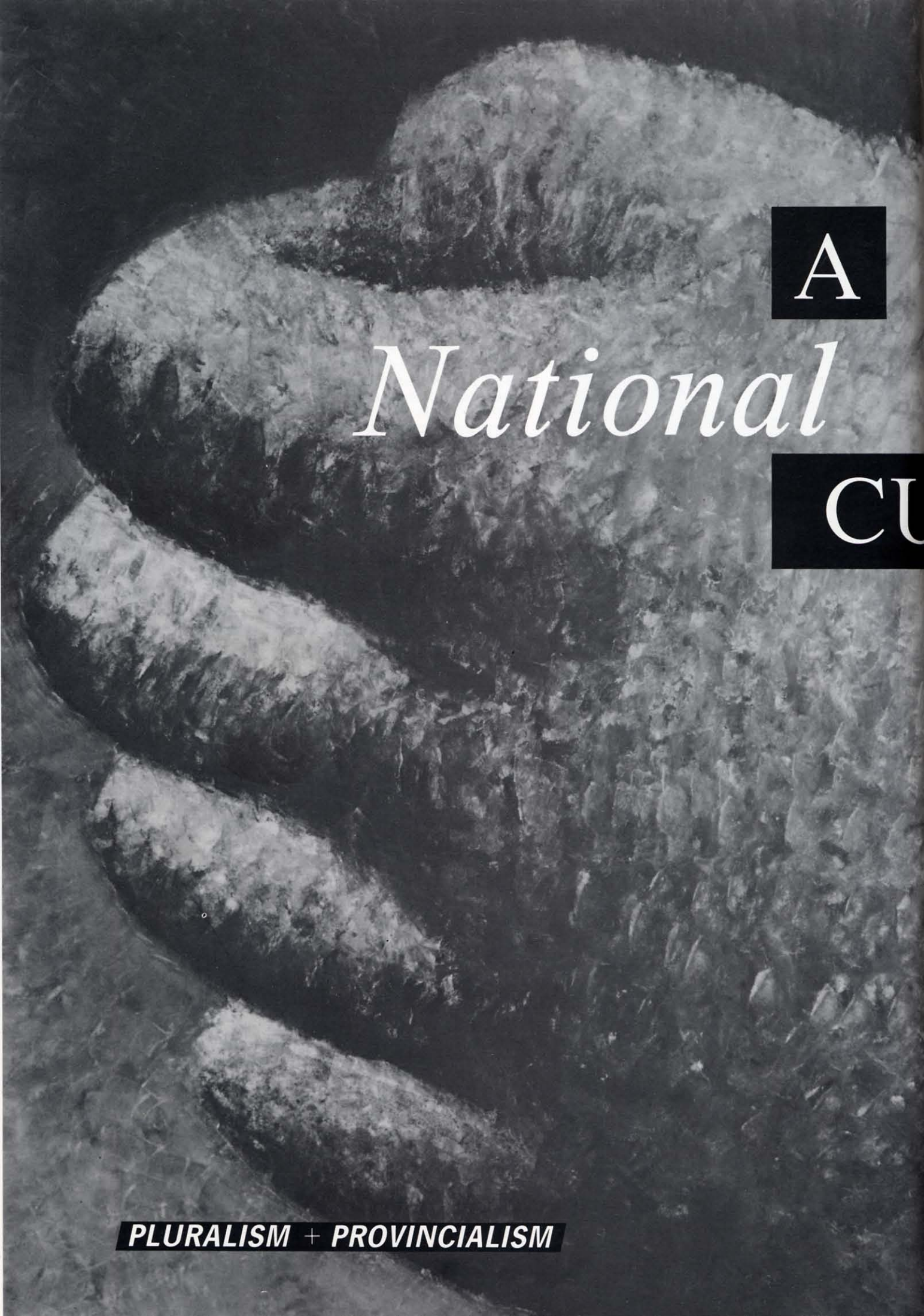
My thanks to Julia Tante for our many inspired converations on the subject of class.

CAPTIONS:

A With some disgust I enact my image of the pinnacle of my educational aspirations within Higher Education where I was taught to shed a theoretical tear. (*Credit: Jo Spence in collaboration with Valerie Walkerdine, 1988*).

B With some guilt I enact my personal stereotype of the mother I was ashamed to be associated with whilst in the socially mobile flight from my class roots. (*Credit: Jo Spence in collaboration with Valerie Walkerdine, 1988*).

C The crisis of identity in my late forties, resulting in total body and mind burn-out, is enacted in various photo therapy sessions until five years later I finally come up with the category which has evaded me: self as a cultural sniper. Once I know who I am then I can appear anywhere, in any guise, use any mode of address, making alliances, choosing strategies to be heard which I had ignored before. (*Credit: Jo Spence in collaboration with David Roberts, 1989*).


A
National
CU
PLURALISM + PROVINCIALISM

LTURE

by
PAUL WOOD

The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh mounted a large exhibition of **'Scottish Art Since 1900'** from June to September in 1989. It was the first attempt at such a synoptic survey (and to date the only one). It was not, however, an isolated occurrence; it is possible to specify some of its causal conditions. First there is the recent popular success of **'The Vigorous Imagination'** (August/October 1987). The impetus it gave was partly the very prominence it conferred on Glasgow, which given the disposition to a vendetta mentality is enough of itself to cause the Edinburgh establishment to want to get back on the map. And partly because in the final analysis 'The Vigorous Imagination' was something of a Colour Supplement success. It did however guarantee the space for a more serious enterprise: getting the history written right; elevating Scottish art to its 'proper' place. This in turn points to a second main support. **The Royal Academy in London** has in the last few years hosted a series of major exhibitions with a national theme: **The British Art Show; German Art of the 20th Century; Italian Art of the 20th**. In a favourable climate of opinion the opportunity arose to insert **Scottish modern art in the emergent pantheon** of cultural nationalisms. It is entriely consistent with this logic that 'Scottish Art Since 1900' should travel to London: where it was seen at the **Barbican Art Centre** in Spring 1990. It is a serious enterprise, accompanied by a copiously illustrated book. It is an attempt to flesh out a hegemonic representation of Scottish Art, under the rubric of a national school, a multifarious but somehow coherent tradition. Cultural nationalism, whatever form it takes, deserves debate.

Modernism was based on nothing else so much as a cosmopolitan internationism. This was the ethos of the avant garde and nationalism something to be avoided, part of a generally conservative attempt to have art serve ends other than its own. Times have changed. In the new *radical orthodoxy* - and the oxymoron is intentional - modernist internationalism stands accused of a variety of crimes. Elitism. Irrelevance. And most atrocious of all, by its claims for the disinterest and autonomy of art, of creating a mask for the advance of western cultural hegemony, and in more strictly politico-economic terms, a veil for American imperialism. In a phase of development marked by anti-imperialist struggle, nationalism has become respectable from a radical point of view. **Cuba, Nicaragua, Chile**, have all been avowed as examples of the organic integration of allegedly national traits in the art of developed countries, not least of during the period since the late-1960's as part of a determination to roll back the rhetoric of the Triumph of American Painting, and reassert the homegrown vitality of arts nurtured on their own people, their own landscapes, and their own traditions.

'Scottish Art since 1900' was part of a much wider climate of opinion, one bolstered by notions of the crisis of modernism and the pluralist virtues of the postmodern. It is an ambitious attempt to inscribe the characteristics of a 'national school' across a re-written history of 20th centry art.

Since the show there have been some calls for the Scottish exhibition to be made permanent. Though there is no danger of this happening it is symptomatic of a species of breast-beating which threaded through much of the press coverage. Sample: *'Scottish art has never presented such an exciting, strong and corporate image...a Golden Age'*; an *'artistic Renaissance'* accompanying a claimed *'economic revival'*. More sophisticated commentators were able to see it as evidence of the virtues of continuity and as offering support for that variant of the 1950's End of Ideology thesis which has taken on renewed vigour in the postmodernist, postmarxist, posthistorical 80's. Thus: the benefits of *'an old fashioned art education'...reliance on sound techniques and impeccable draughtsmanship'. An 'enthralling exhibition...disconcerting to those who advocate 'modernist*

and internationalist' approaches to the arts' and *'to those of a culturally conservative disposition', showing 'How meaningless the terms 'reactionary' and 'avant garde' have become in the arts'* (**1.**).

This is part of a neo-conservative language of resolution. It is itself quite ideological, that is fictional; and its fictions are self-serving. In the present period, fuelled in part by a relative decline in the power of religion, culture has been perceived to be an important glue in the fabrication of national unities. The arguments in the present, Scottish, example are a case study in having it both ways. On the one hand, anything decorative, pattern based, linear, colourful etc will be ascribed to a Highland legacy of peasant craft; on the other, anything whose geometry smacks of the constructed can expect to have its patrimony traced to 19th Century heavy urban industry on Clydeside. On the one hand, again, anything with universalising tendencies is likely to be held evidence of mythic, Gaelic archetype underwritten by the misty authenticities of the Gaelic fringe. On the other, anything with a point to prove, particularly if it wears its heart on its sleeve, will set off evocations of the Teutonic Scot, a German, 'expressive' ancestry, and a litany of convenient exemplars from Grunewald and Breughal to Munch and Beckman. This kind of specious opportunism, this lineage-mongering, is the result of a concept of tradition innocent - though that is hardly the word of the implication of interests in the production of knowledge. Its solecisms mark the writing of the entire 'history'.

JAMES PRYDE *Lumber: A Silhouette* 1521

Perhaps two aspects, then, need to be distinguished: the virtues or otherwise of the work on show, and the value of the claims made about it in the press and the accompanying book/catalogue.

Overblown partisanship notwithstanding, the lasting impression of actually walking through the exhibition's 20-odd rooms is of an awful lot of variously competent and derivative modern art; sometimes more alert and close to its models in Paris or New York, sometimes such a diluted variant of those models as actually to be worse than that perenially conservative neo-academic art which consistently refused to have anything to do with them.

One highlight of the show came in fact near its beginning in a series of resolutely non-modernist, yet also non-academic paintings by the relatively unsung **James Pryde**. Though born in Edinburgh, Pryde worked mostly in London. His main technical debt appears to be to Sickert, though his work has a theatricality to it not to be found in the latter's Degas-inspired representations of modern low-life. Rather, it is derived both from an actual experience of the theatre and from as it were - theatricalised memories of the architecture of old Edinburgh. Between about 1909 and the mid-1920's, Pryde produced an extraordinary series of a dozen paintings (plus an unfinished thirteenth) collectively titled *'The Human Comedy'* organised around a bizarre and overbearing image derived from a memory of Mary Queen of Scots' four poster bed in a room at Holyrood Palace. Four of these genuinely atmospheric and strange works were in the exhibition.

One of the more intractable stumbling blocks to the assertion of a coherent tradition of Scottish painting, is that so little of it was actually made out of a long-term involvement with the material circumstances and institutions of Scottish culture. Thus the sustained high water mark of the early period is the post-impressionist/neo-fauvist work of Fergusson and Peploe which, in amongst its timidities, nonetheless evinces at its best and least pretentious a real freshness of effect in still life or landscape. Almost without exception these were made in France as a result of long pre-war residence in Paris and first-hand familiarity with avant garde debate there. It is, however, telling where that familiarity ended: namely, short of any serious engagement with Cubism. A long quotation from Fergusson in the catalogue serves to situate them firmly on the modernist terrain being mapped out then, or even slightly later, by the influential English critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell: *'Art being purely a matter of emotion, sincerity in art consists in being faithful to one's emotions...What is on the surface may explain everything to one with real insight.'* (Fergusson, 1950).

Fergusson and Peploe made something of the ambition which took them to France. In that, they are exceptions. The career of the slightly younger **Stanley Cursiter** is exemplary. Nowhere is the truth more strongly borne out of T.J.Clark's comment on the avant garde as a kind of trek out into the bush, the winning of spurs or whatever, before returning to pursue a thus authenticated career at the centre of things. Cursiter got run over by Futurism in 1913 at the age of 26. During that year he painted

seven 'futurist' pictures. Up to that point he had been submitting Celtic revivalist paintings to the **S.S.A.** (The Society of Scottish Artists) with titles like *'To Odin', 'Sigurd Fafnir's bane and Brynhild the Shield-May'*, and *'Thor goes to visit Utgard-Loki'*. After that he settled down to society portraiture and a career in administration, first in the Portrait Gallery and then as Director of the National Gallery from 1930 to 1948. By then the one-time Futurist had been appointed 'Kings Painter and Limner in Scotland'. Four years previously, Marinetti had died in the fascist redout of Salo, having just composed a poem in favour of the Black Hundreds. It is tempting to assume that Marinetti would have shot Cursiter if he had ever met him.

This involvement with institutions, particularly institutions of education, has been a drain on the vitality of Scottish art throughout the period. Minding your P's and q's in order not to offend someone higher up the career ladder must reflect in the work. **Hugh Crawford** painted the only picture in the exhibition to acknowledge the existence of the Second World War: his *'Tribute to Clydebank'* of 1914. It is a big picture, about seven feet wide, but without being very dynamic; owing perhaps to Paul Nash's representations of the First World War. At least it seems to have been impelled by some social demand, instead of a routinely shallow 'inner need' for self-expression, but it is basically academic. Not surprisingly, Crawford had been teaching at Glasgow since 1925. By the time he left in 1948 he was Head of Painting. As if that wasn't enough, he went on to become Head of Gray's School in Aberdeen and the Principal of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee, until 1964 when, one assumes, he retired. **William Gillies** taught at Edinburgh art college for no less than 40 years, again up to the mid-60's. These may be extreme examples, but they are examples of a type. Even the catalogue is moved to comment on the propensity of Scottish colleges to *'cherish tradition'* by employing former students. The result of this nepotism has been that the four big colleges, Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh, particularly the last two, have exerted a virtual stranglehold on Scottish art. Most things of any value have been done by people outwith their orbit - as **Alan Davie** apparently testified. It is all the more ironic that this incipient academicism, the insistence on 'proper' drawing from the figure, and the concomitant resistance to critical modernism - particularly American modern art in the sixties - should now be paraded as the underlying reason for Scottish art's postmodernist resurgence. Paradoxically, perhaps it is: it demonstrates just how reactionary some postmodernisms are. It is all too redolent of putting on old clothes when the fashion comes round again and failing to notice that the lapels are too wide, or the toes a little too pointed - and still claiming that you had been right-all-along-and-this-proves-it. What does the graffiti say? *'No return to the 1930's'*; some, it appears, have never left.

In the years between the two world wars a lot of symptomatic art was made in Scotland. The period was another one of heightened nationalism, and **William McCance** and **William Johstone** at least seem to have been involved in a substantial cultural nexus around the poet **Hugh MacDairmid** and the journal '**The Modern Scot: the organ of the Scottish Renaissance**'. MacDairmid and **Sorley MacLean** forged a poetry of international stature out of a twin commitment to Scotland and communism. But McCance's painting on this evidence was little more than a derivative, late Vorticism, and Johnstone's, though more substantial, one again derived from the experience of residence in Paris.

ALAN DAVIE *Jingling Space* 1950

The best work in the show was contained in one room, and it was somehow characteristic of the exhibition that it failed to make the best of it. The abstract painting of **Alan Davie** and **William Gear** was displayed around the edges of a forest of early **Paolozzi** sculpture. Seldom has there been a truer instance of Ad Reinhardt's quip that sculpture was what you tripped over when standing back to get a better view of a painting. Although this work has a fair impact, seen ensemble, the conjunction also masks a significant difference. What it shares is little more than that ts authors were born in Scotland. What differentiates it is rather more substantial. Paolozzi and Gear both got it initially out of Paris, or at least Europe, in the years immediately after the Second World War: Paolozzi from residence in Paris and in particular a close acquaintance with Giacometti; Gear from Paris just before the was, with Leger, and a period in Germany just after. From 1947, againg in Paris, he was part of a reviving Ecole de Paris and an exhibiting mamber of COBRA until 1950, when he made the mistake of returning to a teaching post in England. Alan Davie, on a travelling scholarship to Europe in 1947 met Peggy Guggenheim and at that date was introduced first hand to the new American painting including work by Pollock and Rothko. His six paintings exhibited here, dating from 1950 to 1956, particularly earlier ones such as *'Jingling Space'* and *'Blue Triangle Enters'*, show the impact of this exposure to the new transatlantic abstraction. In placing together the works of Davie and Gear from these crucial years an opportunity is created - and missed - to analyse an avant garde watershed: that moment when the paradigmatic nature of Parisian art seemed to cede its power to New York. None of this has much to do with buttressing the claims of a Scottish national culture, but it is no less interesting for that.

Another important conjuncture is fudged in the representation of the 1960's and 70's. Culturally,

Edinburgh seems to have been quite lively during this period in a rather 'Undergroundish' sense, with the founding of the Traverse Theatre, Jim Haynes' multifarious activities of an Arts lab type, and the opening of Richard Demarco's gallery(ies). But none of this carries much weight in a context of contemporary international avant garde debate. The very prominence of **Sandy Moffat** and **John Bellany's** anti-academic protest in 1964/5 is testimony to little more than parochialism, however laudable the original gesture may have been.

Conceptual art is one of those journalistic misnomers for something actually quite serious. Modern art had always been open to attack - for its formalism, its lack of humanity, or popularity, or whatever; but these criticisms were typically conservative and relatively ineffectual in the face of palpably the most vivid art of the epoch. The difference from the mid-60's on is that modernism came under a critique from within. The classic conditions of paradigm-breakdown seemed to be in evidence. All this gave rise to a considerable range (including a range in value) of anti-essentialist questioning of the conditions of art: principally directed at the time against those, as it were, managerially modernist practices which refused to acknowledge there was a problem, not least that they were it.

It is just curatorially indiscriminate to exhibit **Bruce MacLean** and **Mark Boyle** alongside **Colin Cina, Alan Gouk,** and **John MacLean** without engaging these issue: as if all one were faced with were the endless, multifarious creativity of Scottish artists, individuals who as if by grace happened to express themselves in a bewildering diversity of forms, now in *'an abstract idiom'*, now convinced of the need *'to bring reality, life as it is, back into art'*. The fact that activities such as Bruce MacLean's derivative performances wouldn't have counted as art to the avatars of Cina's anemic stripe painting isn't dealt with. Or rather, it is avoided. Such omissions render the 'history' vacuous. Normal service drones relentlessly on. All one is ever permitted to notice is that the 'influences' (sic) change. Where once stood Gaugin and Matisse, or Munch and Picasso, or Kokoshka, Lohte, Klee and Segonzac, now one finds Pollock and Rothko, or Louis and Stella, or for those in the fast lane, Beuys and Smithson, or Baselitz. They are not all that is upside down. Culture appears to be...Natural. No explanantions are needed. No attempt is made to explaing these transformations. Just a wonderful unfolding plenum of the diversity of Scottish art. Of precedents, institutions, discourses, ideologies, interests, conflicts, contradictions: nothing. This is the authentic voice of an establishment: papering over the cracks, forgetting to mention how little any of it has to do with nationality, pureeing everything into a bland soup of Scottish creativity - from postimpressionism to postmodernism. Perhaps establishments get the rebels they deserve. When it comes to conceptual art and its metamorphoses into the postmodern, the Scots got **Ian Hamilton Finlay**.

All one is ever permitted to notice is that the 'influences' change.

This is the authentic voice of an establishment: papering over the cracks, forgetting to mention how little any of it has to do with nationality, pureeing everything into a bland soup of Scottish creativity - from postimpressionism to postmodernism.

Of course it is the international success of the figurative painting of the 1980's, principally from Glasgow, that has bestowed the desire and the confidence for this kind of retrospect. The soft football of big money around **Steven Campbell** et al is no little spur to shepherding a lot of history through the arch of publicity. It matters little whether the tartan is flung over sheep or goats when the market is going like a fair - and tomorrow it might rain again. However mendacious the historicist ambitions of the enterprise, if this work were really vivid then the provincialism of the previous decades would not really matter. In fact, however, the boot is on the other foot. The relatively competent provincial modernism that is occasionally evident in the trek through the decades of 'Scottish' art actually outshines the overinflated claims of **New Image Glasgow**. Filling a biggish room with biggish paintings can't conceal the little ideas. Much has been made of this figuration's break with the predominantly painterly concerns of mainstream Scottish art and its repetition of the unambitious genres of landscape, portrait and still life. Yet **Campbell** and **Wiszniewski**, **Howson** and **Currie**, are no improvement on the more modest successes of Fergusson, Peploe, Johstone, Gear, and above all Davie. The most calculating, and possibly the most symptomatic works of this set are those by its newest hero, **Stephen Conroy**. As Peter Fuller could not resist pointing out in the Sunday Telegraph, the joke is that this frozen academicism is the result of

teaching by what he calls *'socialists and nationalists in Glasgow'*, a matrix simultaneously *'politically radical and culturally conservative'*. Fifty years ago, Walter Benjamin tried to argue the necessity of connecting aesthetic and political tendencies. The consequence of failing to acknowledge this are as deleterious now as they were then, be it in the shape of a clerisy of true believers willing to change everything but themselves.

Postmodernism has been trumpeted in terms of a return to relevance, an alliance with the socially marginalised, a new commitment of art to social responsibility, or on the other side for a suspicion of dogma, a demonstration of meaning-making, and a lightfooted refusal of outmoded rhetorics, mostly in the name of pluralism. So much for the publicity. The paintings look increasingly vacuous, or stylised and inert; just big, in the way that corporations are big, or salesmen talk 'big'. It still seems, amidst all this noise, that only a relatively few paintings from relatively early in her career, by **Gwen Hardie**, of parts or the whole of her own body, might be of lasting achievement. *'Fist'*, of 1986, is the best example.

Scotland is a small country. In cultural terms its main achievements have been literary and philosophical. Red Clydeside notwithstanding, its 20th Century has seen no major social or political upsurges, such as fuelled the work of the Mexican mural painters. Its modern art is what you would expect: as honest and good as the individuals who made it, in conditions of overall cultural dependency. Provincialism does not mean that nothing good can be done. But it does mean that the sources which are taken up are not transformed into anything which in its turn can be generative of further transformation. The trouble comes when dishonest attempts are made to inflate such a tradition. This ranges from the minor dishonesty of claiming that Fergusson's two small paintings from 1918, of a dockyard and a destoyer, each about 3 feet square, *'come close to rivalling the heroic modernism of Delaunay and Leger'* (**2.**): to the more far-reaching and ideologically conformist dishonesty of trying to produce a history which will pump up the claims of minor and for the most part relatively conservative art under a rubric of national identity, pluralism and so on (while using in order to do so the most threadbare categories of the most discredited aspect of that very modernism which, the implication runs, we are getting out from under: 'schools'; 'style'; 'tradition'; 'influence'). This lack of conceptual rigour, lack of any critique of the comfotable nostrums of provincial modernism - which of course has itself been the object of radical refusal throughout the internationalist avant garde - is the surest indication of the enterprise's failure. It was utterly, and irrevocably, complacent.

The radical wing of contemporary thought on the national question has been derived principally from **Antonio Gramsci's** conceptions of *hegemony* and the *national-popular*. This spectrum of thought is indeed a presence in modern Scotland. In terms of artwork exhibited here, it is manifest only in Currie's *'Glasgow Triptych'*; although works by the under-represented **Alexander Moffat**, and the totally unrepresented **Transmission Gallery** 'collective', also arguably engage with Gramsci's legacy. The organisers

GWEN HARDIE *The Fist* 1986

of 'Scotish Art since 1900' appear to be incapable of addressing certain issues: debates over the relative autonomy of art, of questions of form, of the critical responsibilities of cultral practice, of the critical power of modernism, the (in- corporative dangers posed by certain visions of the postmodern. Scotland, its people and culture can have a significant part to play in cultural and political regeneration, in the face of a period of profound and widespread reaction. The thinking behind an exhibition is in the last instance a barrier to such emancipation. It is a symptom of a disease of which it proclaims itself the cure.

(1.) Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. Press cuttings display during exhibition. Quotations respectively from: Edward Gage, Scotsman; Marina Vaizey, Sunday Times; Peter Fuller, Sunday Telegraph.

(2.) Scottish Art since 1900. catalogue by Keith Hartley. National Galleries of Scotland/Lund Humphries 1989.

THE BIGGEST FREEBIE OF THEM ALL

by
ROLAND MILLER

Free festivals are one of the myths of popular culture.Someone has to find the money, even if the bands play for nothing. There are always overheads. Cost effective accounting demands that the cash-books balance, under market forces. The only way to avoid this is to write off the actual box-office income and count the benefit in other ways. Free events like Glasgow's **The Big Day** (3 June 1990) capitalise on social benefits, publicity (for the city), goodwill and the crucial advertising revenue for TV coverage, not forgetting the value for promotions by commercial interests, like Tennents brewery.

Channel 4 paid £1million of the estimated £2million that the event cost. The rest came from the District Council's Festivals budget. The additional sums that charity events raise - The Big Day was also a street collection for the Glasgow Council for the Single Homeless - further complicate the notion of 'free' festivals.

Politically, free pop concerts are a winner. Although, overt politics was not on the programme, there was a discernable pink hue in the air. Billy Bragg at the Custom House Quay - the only stage with crowds so thick you couldn't get near - the ANC choir at the Peoples Palace, and Hue and Cry at The Haugh on the Green, were the political focus. But there were firty bands in all, and most, like the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, not particularly noted for their radical politics. The Big Day was billed as street party; it felt more like Glastonbury with buildings.

Gerard Kelly, the actor, introduced the final act at The Haugh: 'There have been many famous brothers in the history of pop: The Everleys, The Alexanders, The Krays. But here are two who are a bit more politically sound...' When Pat and Greg Kane took to the stage, things took a radical turn. The night was called a homecoming for Glaswegians, and the copywriters' phrase 'Music from the heart of Glasgow' didn't sound quite so daft. Pat Kane told us of his 'pity and anger at the homelessness caused by the obscene Tory Government Poll Tax'. Their songs told it again.

In Stirling on July 14th, there was another pop festival, the STUC's Day for Scotland. This was overtly political, celebrating Scottish culture and

Constitution. It ran into trouble, possibly because it was not free. The Scottish Tories, embracing any chance to distract attention from their own infighting, claimed the guarantee against loss of £50,000 promised by Stirling District Council contravened the Local Government Act. Stirling MP and Scottish Tory Chairman, Michael Forsyth claimed the council were 'trying to push its own politics down the public's throat at the public's expense'. But what really hurt the Stirling Tories was the thought that profits could have been made. 'People were grossly undercharged when you look at the names (of the artists) there' said Keith Harding, Conservative group leader on Stirling Council.

At The Big Day, the crowd gave only one performer a rough time: Sheena Easton. Perhaps this was due in part to the incongruity of someone sounding like Dallas claiming a birthright in Bellshill. The localness of the Big Day was an important part of its success. Many of the acts could claim a genuine connection with the city. The setting of The Haugh - properly called 'Fleshers Haugh' - was poignant. In the background, across the Clyde, the equivocal housing blocks of Hutchesontown, the white plume from the Gorbals distillery stack; and underfoot the despised red shale of the football pitches the developers have their greedy eyes on.

The Big Day was many things. It was a huge, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes live, 'video' of Glasgow and its people. Even if you were on the spot, you could see what the worldwide TV coverage was showing. There were giant screens beside the stages and at the bottom of Buchanan Street. Watching Lulu in the pre-recorded inserts illustrating 'Glasgow's social history through pop music' in a packed and appreciative sandwaich bar next to Paddy's Market , was pure joy. And on top of that, there was a continuous programme of street entertainment between the sound stages.

This was all a bit subtle for the printed media, used to pop festivals that either happen on stage or end up in the police cells. The papers concentrated on raw statistics: 300,000 (Evening Times), 200,000(Glasgow Herald) packed the streets, squares and Green. The Scottish press was generally ecstatic; it was 'one gigantic international plug for the city of culture', the 'largest pop event ever staged in Europe'. Anticipating the Scottish fans' performance in the World Cup, the boys and girls had done good by behaving themselves - there was very little trouble. Only the English papers sneered: The Guardian in a patronising piece, described the George Square stage and WET WET WET as an accoustical disaster, adding that it should never be used for a concert again. The (Scottish) Daily Express claimed '400 hurt in havoc' and reported problems with underage drunks. All of this was untrue. Many of the English journalists had come to do the picture story on Sheena Easton, to them the big story of the Big Day.

The real media coverage, the Channel 4 live programme in two massive chunks, was quite astonishing. With 114 cameras in total, up to four in helicopters, some on remote control booms swooping over the crowds to the stages, it made Berlin's 'The Wall' concert look very tame. For the Big Bay a TV production company Liveshot, made up of Big Star in Wee Picture, Regular Music and Skyline Films. Regular Music had something to prove after the Hogmannay in George Square debacle. Big Star also had a point to make. The company's co-founder, writer and radical communicator, Stuart Cosgrove has been not a little critical of the 1990 programme. He has used the pages of the New Statesman and Society to say that 1990 isn't reaching the parts of Glasgow most in need. But the Big Day did come close to the type of people's celebration the authorities in Barcelona, Bologna and many other cities in Bicentenial France put on to fulfill both ideological and cultural ambitions. West German radicals, in the days when the phrase had meaning, used to organise great free outdoor rock events to protest against nuclear policies. That hasn't happened in Britain since the Rolling Stones used Hyde Park as a platform for the legalisation of cannabis.

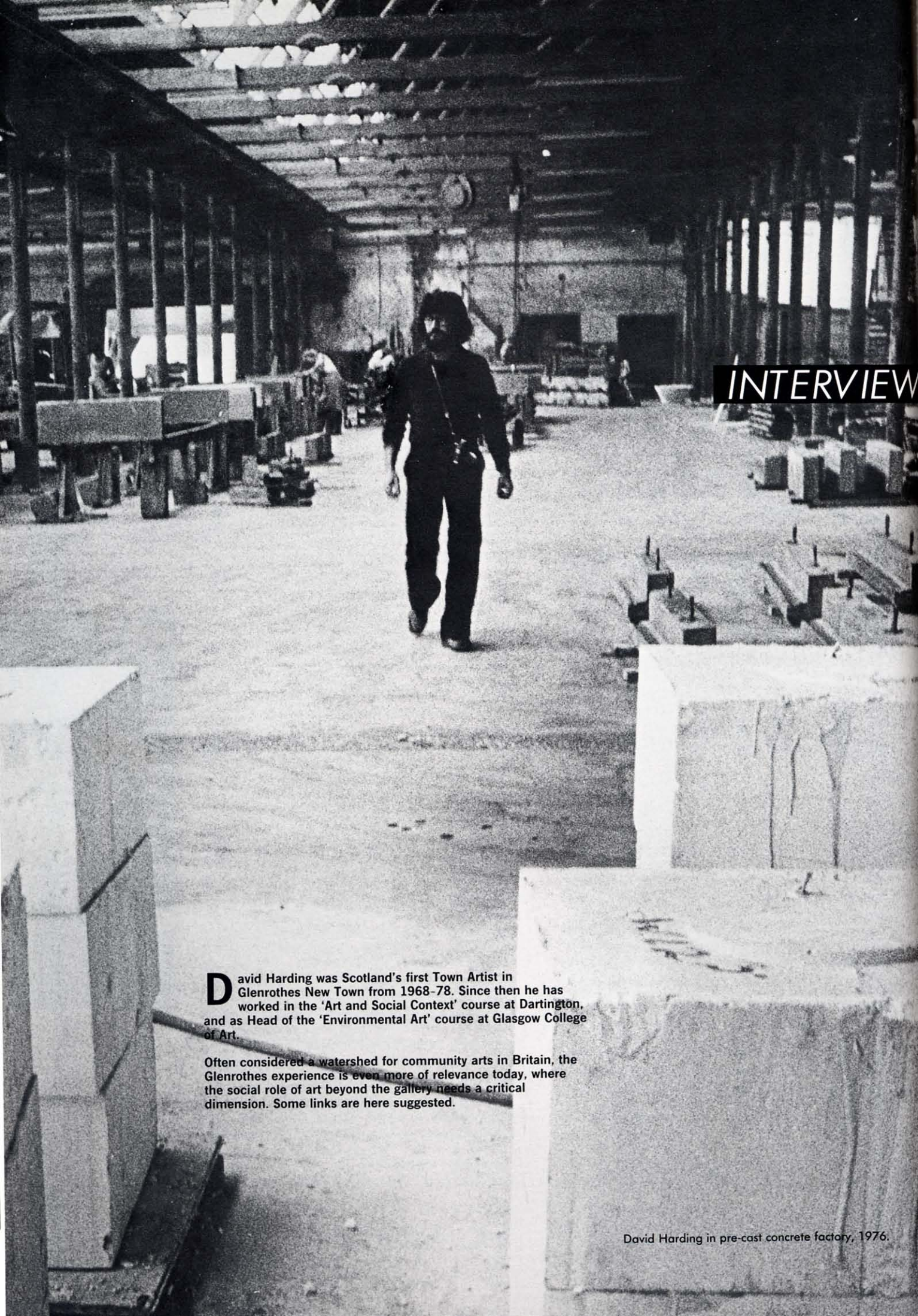
Stuart Cosgrove may not be a Workers City supporter, but he would surely side with those who see the future of Glasgow Green, especially The Haugh, as an issue of major political and cultural importance. This is where the politics of pop culture gets sticky. Even if you don't want to make actual cash out of a 'free' festival, political capital is there for the taking., Billy Bragg, A Big Dayer, was one of the founders of Red Wedge, an idealistic group of London based pop artists active in the mid-80s who helped Neil Kinnock lose the 87 election. The Labour Party had itself previously launched 'Arts for Labour', as a sort of cultural escort agency, providing high profile media personalities to accompany candidates on electioneering photo-calls. Glenda Jackson being the only one to transend the roll and become a potential candidate herself. Red Wedge became worried at too close identification with Labour, and kept their image under close control. There was a row when labour supporters in Bradford wanted to set up their own red wedge, on being told they couldn't they formed 'Redder Wedge'. This in turn was perceived as a Militant plot. An even earlier political rock movement was Rock against Racism -RAR - in the 1970s, which sprang up to mobilise youth against the National Front, and to disassociate itself from an unfortunate remarke made by Eric Clapton...

So was the Big Day a populist sop to those who say Glasgow District Council's Labour Group is milking the city through 1990, as James Kelman claimed in New Stateman & Society (3.8.90)? Instead of allowing Fleshers Haugh to go to the developers and the People's Palace (with Elspeth King's head)to the flash harry school of museum curators, would the Council consider a Big Day in the city every year? Or regular free events, each one celebrating visually and musically the glories of a city that, for a day at least, really does belong to its people? Well, they might...

INTERVIEW

David Harding was Scotland's first Town Artist in Glenrothes New Town from 1968–78. Since then he has worked in the 'Art and Social Context' course at Dartington, and as Head of the 'Environmental Art' course at Glasgow College of Art.

Often considered a watershed for community arts in Britain, the Glenrothes experience is even more of relevance today, where the social role of art beyond the gallery needs a critical dimension. Some links are here suggested.



David Harding in pre-cast concrete factory, 1976.

DAVID HARDING

by

MALCOLM DICKSON

What kind of thinking and ideas were behind the Glenrothes Councils' advertisement or a resident artist in 1968, and why did you apply?

I had been working in Nigeria for 4 years (1963 to 1967)and the major lesson I learnt there was that you couldn't import a European culture to the Nigerian people I was working with. As an artist, I saw my role as being a vehicle through which the local people could develop their own visual art, their own culture. That notion of cultural imperialism became a very signal lesson to me and influenced me in other situations. Coming back from Nigeria I worked for a year on my own - self-employed - getting commissions to do sculpture works in housing areas with 'Scottish Special Housing' (now Scottish Homes). In 68 an advert appeared in the press which seemed to meet some of my ideas - Glenrothes were asking for an artist to work with the architects and the planners, to work on the external built environment of the town. The chief architect and his deputy (Merlyn Williams and John Coghill) were both totally committed to the idea of the artist being involved with architects and planners. Glenrothes at that time was only half-way developed so there was a huge amount of contributions to be made. The idea of actually involving the community was something I actually brought to the job. Within about a year or two, I started to get local people to make a contribution to the built environment as well, because it seemd to me that the privilege of doing so just shouldn't remain with the artist or the architects, and that local people should also be involved in it. Although there were small contributions, they were significant ones in that I believed they could have an effect on people's sense of belonging, sense of ownership of the place.

Some council officials were anticipating that the artist would come in and make *'an avant garde'* statement, the kind of thing they could ridicule and the kind of thing that would be inappropriate. So for the first year I literally did very little, but just tried to assess the way I could intervene in the planning and the design process of the town. I had to gain the support of the architects and show them that I wasn't going to be a threat to what they were doing. It was often said to me that I would be taking away from the architects the very things they enjoyed doing, the little extras they could get involved with outwith the basic building form. There was also the faction within the Development Corporation, especially on the administrative side, who were also worried about the notion of the artist making works that would be public and how it would relate to the town itself, would it be good thing or a bad thing, would it bring notoriety or a sense of support. So on both counts it was really important to play a very low level game. Another important aspect was that one needed to find out where the money could come from because there was no budget

given to me. I soon found out that there was plenty of money, one just needed to find it, often on contracts with builders and engineering firms - they would have hidden sums of money built in for contingency and if this didn't arise then I fell heir to this money, so much so that towards the end of my period there I had so much work that I had to refuse large sums.

Is Glenrothes the only exception in the context of art in Scotland at that time?

If we take Britain, I think the first significant step was **Victor Pasmore** working in **Peterlee** in Northumberland in 1958. He was brought in by the general manager of that New Town because he was so appalled by the houses that were being put up by the architects there, that Pasmore was brought in as consultant. But he remained very distant, he would maybe have one or two meetings in Peterlee every 2 months and he'd work on his ideas in his studio in London or Malta, but he made a contribution in terms of housing and architecture as to how public art works. **Skelmoresdale** in Lancashire also had employed an artist and significantly **Cumbernauld** in Scotland employed **Brian Miller**, an engineer/draughtsman who was actually working in the Development Corporation, but who was a very creative person who had a great predilection towards a number of the arts.He was a playwright,and visual artist and he still lives and works in Cumbernauld. There were these precedents but I dont think any other New Town or town had made such a permanent commitment to the notion. In my contract it said that I was to retire when I was 65 so I was on the payroll, I was a member of the Planning Department, and the Planning Briefs were altered accordingly to say that the artist had to be consulted at every stage of development. In theory that's terrific, but as we all know, working that out in practice depends very much on the personalities. So the actual concept of the artist playing this very significant role was developed most forcefully at Glenrothes. The term **Town Artist** came from a friend, **Paul Millichip**. We promoted that name and got inundated with requests about how to set up artists in both England and Scotland, and we managed to get an artist into **Livingston (Dennis Barnes)**, into **East Kilbride (Stan Bonnar)**, and then in **Glasgow (Bob Laing)** during that period when environmental improvements were just beginning. I became a consultant to **Glasgow District Council**, to their Department of Environmental Improvement and we worked in **Possil, Keppoch** and **Govan**. That was in about 1975 - Ted Heath had visited Glasgow and he was so appalled by it he gave them 5 Million as a straight gift from central government to do something about environmental improvements. My role was 2 pronged in Glenrothes, being involved in **public art** and **community art**. It became a milestone in the whole of community arts development in Britain and people setting up community arts in England were forever visiting Glenrothers just to see how it was set up, and a lot of community artists and community muralists in England see the Glenrothes contribution as very important, which is a bit paradoxical in the sense that community arts never really took off in Scotland to the extent it did in England. One other major

Harding with Alan Bold (poet) and paving engineer with poetry path, 1977. "Path Poem".

development out of Glenrothes is undoubtedly the **Dundee Public Art Project**, because the initial steps to get that project going were undertaken by **Lizzie Kemp**, who had written her dissertation on the work of Glenrothes. She took the first steps in setting up the Public Art Project in the **Blackness** area and a number of artists who worked with me in Glenrothes went on to Dundee to work there: **John Gray, Stan Bonnar, Keith Donnelly, Ian Swan. Hugh Graham** , who also worked with me, went on to Glasgow to work in Nitshill and Priesthill. His position is unique in that he is employed by **Strathclyde Regional Council** as an Outreach Visual Art Worker.

When did you meet John Latham and Barbara Steveni, who had founded the Artists Placement Group?

John Latham and **Barbara Steveni** founded the **APG** in 1965, and I went to Glenrothes in 1968. It was the general manager of East Kilbride who actually first made contact with them and he organised a meeting at Glenrothes of the general managers in all the New Towns and invited Barbara to come and address them. **John Coghill** - who was then Chief Architect at Glenrothes gave a talk and I remember Barbara endorsing absolutely everything that he said about the town and it paralleled so much of the thoughts of the APG. At that time the APG were trying to get a placement in the **Scottish Office** and officials from there were present at that meeting. John Latham then did get a 6 month placement in the Scottish Office which resulted in the West Lothian Bings being designated as works of art. The APG were always very supportive of what was going on in Glenrothes.

What about Scotland in the mid-70's, the Craigmillar (Edinburgh) and Easterhouse (Glasgow) Festivals Societies?

Craigmillar was also seen by others in Britain as also being a major community arts activity that had happened and the one from which they also took reference for their own development. Craigmillar had started a couple of years before I went to Glenrothes. The Craigmillar Festival Society grew out of **Helen Crummy's** frustration at not being able to get her daughter music lessons in the school and she felt that this was criminal that this couldn't happen. The headmaster said that no-one would be interested and so she set up a music teaching group in Craigmillar for young people to learn music, and out of that came the Craigmillar Festival Society. What was really significant was that it wasn't a top down operation. It wasn't community arts moving in to assist an underdeveloped and depressed area, it grew out of Craigmillar itself and that character has stayed with the Festivals Society ever since. Helen was always at pains to point out - quite rightly - that when they had professional artists working at Criagmillar, whether they be visual artists, musicians or theatre people, they were always all there in Craigmillar's terms -they called the shots, which was very different to Glenrothes where it was a top down thing, it was the professionals offering *the community* arts activities. **The Scottish**

Arts Council (SAC) certainly supported a lot of activity in Craigmillar, but they never developed a policy in Scotland and I think this is an inditement of SAC, that they funded things purely on a project basis.

In the mid-70's, a number of people who were involved in community arts in Scotland - **Neil Cameron, Ken Wolverton,** lots of the Craigmillar people, Easterhouse people - all got together to try and persuade SAC to actually set up something specific and to respond in a structured way to community art, but they never did. So a lot of people working in Scotland at that time simply left, there was no support, no funding of any significant kind, it wasn't revenue funding and therefore people just grew tired and frustrated and left. A huge hole was cut into what could have been a very productive activity in Scotland.

"Henge" — 13 pre-cast slabs in spiral form. 1971.

What about funding structures in England at that time?

The Arts Council of Great Britain continued to revenue fund major commmunity arts organisations like **Free Form** and **Welfare State** and a number of others and they still exist. The **Regional Arts Associations** (RAA's) had a structure for Community Arts.

It seems that the role for community art became that of involving people in activities which would encourage them to participate in high cultural forms, like attending art exhibitions, the theatre.

Yes, since this was the policy of the **ACGB**. A lot of the fears for community art on the radical side of the political spectrum were that it would anaesthetise community politics and community action: just giving the working class nice things to play at. The rigid political community artist certainly saw community arts as a method or a way of creating social change. The purest form of community arts was seen as giving expressive tools to people to whom it had been denied through education, through class structures and deprivation. That is the ideal of community arts that I still stick to and abide by, that is, that transference of power through expressive arts. The problem was that those coming out of art schools didn't see it as that. If it involved a lot of people daubing paint on walls and a mural was created then that was the success of it.

The idea of the artist as artisan is also anathema to the art school notion of the isolated artist.

That description of the artist as artisan is one I tried to promote in Glenrothes. I had a studio in the Development Corporation Offices and after about 6 months I said that I wanted to set up my studio where the direct was so that I could actually develop a rapport with the masons, builders, labourers, electricians, and painters. At a later stage I took on 6 graduates over 5 years and then took on 16 year olds who had just come out of school on the **Youth Training Scheme**. Two of them worked with me for 2 years and at that time I began to see that there could be a possibility that that experience could be seen as part of their art education and in a way they could be given credit for having worked with me.

How did the experience of Glenrothes affect what you did at Dartington College, and what you are doing now at Glasgow School of Art?

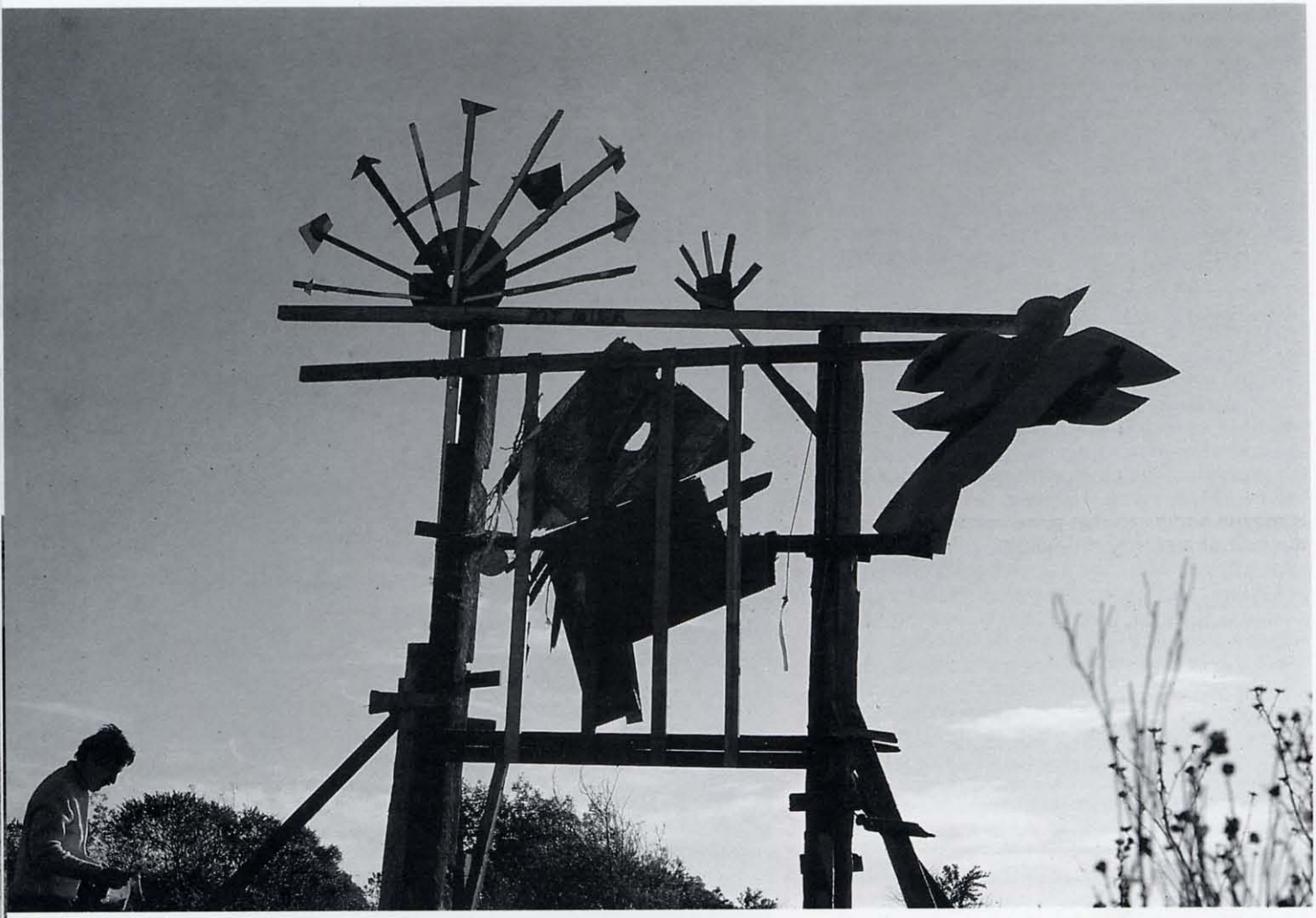
After about 7 years in Glenrothes I began to get itchy feet and feel the need to move on. I was 10 years in Glenrothes and that length of time was important because if you are working in planning cycles it takes about 3 or 4 years to get ideas through the 'planning stage' and actually 'on site'. I wondered how I could put some of the lessons in Glenrothes into practice for art students. The job that was advertised at **Dartington College of Art** which was to develop a degree course called **Art and Social Context**. There I was able to put into practice a new form of art education where students were introduced to the notion of collaboration, introduced to notions of cultural democracy, and a lot of people who graduated from there went on to work in similar fields. I was there for 8 years. **Glasgow School of Art** then advertised in the national press for someone to head a new department called **Environmental Art**. I could have written the job brief myself, it was so close to my own ideas. Here was a situation where a School of Fine Art was actually taking on the notions of 'other' culture, of cultural democracy, of students not directing their work to gallery exhibition, but directing their work to 'public spaces', to 'unloved spaces' of cities. So there's been the model of Dartington in the non-Fine Art tradition and now we've got the model of Glasgow with a Fine Art tradition whose present aim is to create artists whose priority practice is to be found in the street, the city, the 'public space'. As **Lawrence Alloway** said in 1972, the minute you start to do that then you change the perception of what art can be - it's not in the closed, regulated space of the gallery, but in the unregulated space where the public have access 24 hours a day. The development of 'public art' is something we are still in the process of learning about.

Tell us more about the Enviromental Art course.

The philosophical base of the Environmental Art course, and I take this from the Artists Placement Group, is that '**context is half the work**'. To my mind that is the significant difference to gallery based work, wherever artists find themselves working in, they have to take the context on board. That could be the physical context; it could be the architectural context, the urban sapce in its physical sense, it could be the political context of the work, it could be the cultural, or some other psychological context. It's not limiting in the sense of 'art and architecture', it's not simply for buildings, as monuments; it's art that can exist in a multitude of different spaces and places and if the artist seriously takes on the context, seriously addresses the space or place in which the artwork exists, then that contextual element is the element which gives the broad public the 'in' to the work and begins to set up that communication of understanding that can come out of the artwork. If you take the cultural context it could be the area where community arts could function. In the course, students each year will do a public art project, a term here which is very broad, it means that students will make a piece of work in a non-gallery space, that they have to take the context of that space into consideration when they are evolving the work. It could involve discussions with the owner of the site or those who use it, it could extend into a collaborative work with the people who live around the site, if that were appropriate. One thing one doesn't want to do in a course is to produce one specific model for a public artist - that would be the death of public art. If one was to limit public art simply to monuments or relating to architecture I think you narrow down the intellectual space that's necessary for artists to work in. Craft in architecture is something we take for granted, but it is too limiting in terms of the potential for a public art. The students have to document their discussions with the owners of the site, get planning permission, possible interviews with people who use the site, who feel it's theirs, and they have to document their own research into the site in the form of photographs, drawings of the site, then the development of ideas, the development of the work, then the placing of the work 'on site'. One important thing here is that I don't believe that student work should be placed permanently 'on site' - only in very rare instances - because student work is immature and we also don't want to take work away from professional artists, we're kind of creating precedents, although I am personally interested in permanence. If we take this year's students, **Jim Harvey** has done stone carvings and he found an old dilapidated well south of the Gorbals. He decided he would like to refurbish that and it was set up in a little park opposite the Citizens Theatre. He organised the whole refurbishment and its relocation, he became the clerk of works, the resident architect and saw the whole project through as well as contributing his own element which was 3 carved stone relief panels which made social comment on the demise of Glasgow's heavy industry. **Helen Maria Nugent** decided to make a critical response to **1990 Year of Culture**, and she got permission to take up 15 draincovers in Buchanan Street and replace them with slabs of gold which made the comment about the city being paved with gold. But on the slabs there were inscribed the words *'Fools'* and *'Gold'*. This aimed to alert people to the transience of such celebrations and that its success could only be in terms of the permanent things it could put in place that are going to affect the culture of Glasgow in its broadest sense in the long-term. **Chris Wallace** got permission to use a railway carriage for a week and he changed the seat

Helen-Maria Nugent "Walk on Gilded Splinters", Buchanan Street. 1990.

"Industry Wall" — in-site cast concrete. 1970.



Driftwood sculpture at Emeryville in the San Francisco Bay Area, "Four More Years" — on the re-election of Ronald Reagan. 1984.

covers, every seat in the carriage, 54, and all were different. So for a week this carriage travelled between Helensburgh and Lanark with this very strange compartment. That's three examples, one reinforcing and enhancing the built enviroment, one a critical example, and the other making a simple suggestion that things could be different.

Public Art is still associated with the 'Turd in the Plaza' school and lacks a set of critical definitions. You obviously have some clear idea about what you consider Public Art to be.

We could begin with the term 'Envronmental Art' because it's a problematic one for the department.It's an umbrella term which offers the opportunity for a broad range of things to be done. It's a problem for those who see art in terms of a single medium, 2D work like painting printmaking, photography, or in 3D work in sculpture. Under the umbrella we are interested in developing skills in public art and community art. The course encourages an experimental attitude to the potential of public art and community art, but it allows latitude outside of that. If you put the word 'Public' before the word 'Art' then you've actually said something quite specific and different to 'art' itself, as we presently perceive it. Alloway alerted us to this in 1972 when, reviewing the disaster of the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation exercise,15 artists were commissioned to make works in 15 different cities in England, the results of which were vandalized or rejected or demolished by local people or by the city authorities in which they stood. Alloway said that public art must be something different. That's our search. You have to be specific, you have to go back to define what makes it different to artists working in a gallery, because public art cannot simply be the enlarged, extended work which is aimed at the gallery, is cynically enlarged and then put on site. You have to speak to a general audience. If it doesn't then it's simply gallery art parachuted down into the street which becomes the 'Turd in the Plaza'or a piece of 'Cultural Shrubbery'.

The starting point for me is an article written by **Kenneth Frampton**, teacher and philosopher.He's appalled by the eclecticism of **Post-Modernism**, which in some ways can be termed a style, so we get a bit of Greek, a bit of Roman, a bit of Tudor, a bit of this and a bit of that. Frampton is a Modernist but sees that we are not in a Post-Modernist style but we are in a period of Post-Modernism. By that he means that we have to learn from the lessons of the past, we don't reject it altogether, but that we have to devise ways of using Modernism in the late 20th Century, and the way he says it can be used is through **Critical Regionalism**. Up to now, the notion of regionalism has been something that has been abhorred by Modernists and internationalists. Modernism has an important role to play in feeding what might

be called the centre, maybe the people on the fringes have the answer to the Modernist dillemma. Another way of putting it is that I believe public art has to be local and universal. The local is the regional and the universal is the modern, so it has to speak to a local audience but yet it has also to speak to a universal audience. Now in addressing the local, that is the context of the work and it is the context of the work which introduces the general viewer of the art to the message or the answers in the work, the layers of meaning. There is a difference between Public Art and Art in Public Places, the latter doesn't give that kind of shock and dramatic change of perception that the term Public Art does. If we don't have that clear view then the whole thing remains totally confused.

1990 Year of Culture has made available a lot of money for projects outside the gallery which is maybe adding to that general confusion and the lack of a critical definition.

Optimistically one could say that the built environment needs everything it can get and that there should be space for everything to happen. I'm not totally opposed to that idea, it would be restrictive to say that it can only be this. I think there's a germ of an idea that needs to be addressed if Public Art is to become 'meaningful' to a broader audience. A lot of art in public places during 1990 has been difficult,

"Molendinar's Mural", collaborative work with students and people of Blackhill. 1987/8.

and also that a lot of the funding has gone into transient events. Right from the very beginning my whole commitment has been to be setting up a structure that would put in place the opportunity for Public Art to be carried on into the future with a greater sense of the notion of permanence. That hasn't really been taken up in 1990. One of the first thing I started to do when I came to Glasgow, was to write to the District Council and to the SDA (Scottish Development Agency) and to the Tourist Board and said that we needed a programme of Public Art in this city. A landscape architect and myself eventually were commissioned to do a survey of the city centre in terms of the potential for Public Art. We wrote up a strategy for Public Art in Glasgow city centre, but that is just sitting on a shelf somewhere in the Council. A small working party was set up and we sent in our report in January 1990 suggesting the setting up of a Public Art Commission in Glasgow of roughly 12-15 people that would represent the broad constituency of Glasgow: architects, artists, engineers, community, Trades Unions, business, elected reps. That would be the 'engine house' to develop Public Art in the city. But the District Council Policy and Planning Committee turned it down for the present. Last week in 'The Times' there was a half page article on Cardiff and the launching of its Public Art Strategy. Cardiff started looking at it 2 years ago, they took the Glasgow strategy on which to model theirs and now they've got it going. It's somewhat disheartening, it's now 4 years since this was proposed in Glasgow. I'm not so pessimistic about 1990 and believe that there wil be other benefits to the city in terms of image of the city, in terms of inward investment, regeneration. But in terms of overall cultural development, it could all be transient if structures are no put in place. Glasgow had no real Art Department within the Council, unlike all other major British city. What are we going to have after 1990? We don't know.

What about community arts now?

I wonder if there is still a role for community arts in Scotland or has it died a death? Are we into a different kind of period. There are still lots of people doing it in small ways. I get inundated with requests for murals from community groups. What's interesting is that a lot of the areas of Glasgow are rather like Craigmillar in beginning to take it on board themselves: Drumchapel are developing an arts policy, and Castlemilk. If they are given funding and if they are given local control then I think then what we know as community arts could develop in spite of everythingelse and we've learnt a lot of lessons from it. But it cannot simply be decoration, the elastoplast on the disaster, it has to be something quite fundamental in terms of touching people in a very radical kind of way.

EITHER/OR

Oladele Bamgboye, Matthew Dalziel, Stephen Hurrel. July-August 1990

Described as an '*integrated art event*' by the artists, the first part of this project comprised an audio-visual installation in the Kelvingrove Museum. Twenty video-8 Walkmans showing images of manuscripts, representations of deities and utilitarian vessels from a wide range of cultures and periods, had been placed in the display cases of the balcony in the west wing of the museum. The images had been photographed outside their natural setting in the collections, isolated and scanned , and all contained within the Walkman's tiny 'personal' screen. The accompanying audio work could be heard on headsets, positioned a careful distance from the display cases. This distancing of the components of the work was designed to encourage the listener to contemplate on the setting of the exhibition; the trophies of empire, the plundered armaments of war lying below. The sound work itself, composed under the creative direction of **Michael Reynolds-Forsyth**, accentuated the histories of the objects and their present setting.

The second part of the project was set in the St. Enoch Shopping Centre and featured 23 sets of headphones relaying six different compositions, revealing a more alienating character indicative of the setting along the thoroughfares of the centre. These two aspects of the project were intended to invite comparison between the Museum and the shopping centres socio-cultural function. The museum, in one sense embodies the manipulative 'choice' of what is or is not culture, what has been (presumably along with its values) consigned to history, at the same time constructing the 'progression' of western culture. The St. Enoch Centre, part of the current 'cultural renaissance' of Glasgow, is one of many such complexes, designed on an American model, whereby an entire lifestyle is on sale, devoid of the much vaunted cultural illusions of the museum: a cathedral to consumerism, which the artists inform me is actually owned by the Church of England!

The group intended the work to have a subtly built-in critique of the elevation of materialistic value systems at the expense of more human ones: the insidious inescapable direction of materialism's aim to instal an internalised form of self-oppression is perhaps represented in the use of the Sony Walkman as an icon, as a supposedly desirable object, which ultimately can only virtually convey reality and in effect estranges rather than enjoins, offset against objects which are imbued with meanings which are directly connected with sustaining human needs and values.

These themes were extended further through the third part of the project. One particular object, a bowl used in the Japanese tea ceremony became the central image displayed on 30 billboards throughout the city. The image had been constructed from hundreds of

IMAGE & INSTALLATION *Either/Or* 1990

signatures gathered on the Big Day in Glasgow. The billboards were positioned according to the areas the signatories lived in, in an attempt to reappropriate what is once again taken as a facet of our everyday life, but represents the control of our environment by the dictates of commerce rather than culture.
The artists describe the main ideas of the project as an examination of choice and participation - their limitation and withdrawal implicit within western materialism, and the complete disregard for the true quality of the individual's life. The central image one of many equally rich ones within the exhibition, a simple ceremonial bowl, was used as a gentle reminder of the many other ways of organising society. The tea ceremony itself was designed to promote awareness.

WILLIAM CLARK

SITES/POSITIONS

Sites around Glasgow, March 1990

EDGE 90

Dundas Vale Teachers Centre
and Third Eye Centre, June 1990

Critical discussions about artistic 'intervention' into urban space and social situations are political. The intention of the project *Sites/Positions* was to fuel the self awareness of a community and also to enlarge the critical sphere in which artists work. But how is the value or success of the work in *Sites/Positions* fully measured when importantly the artists became the mediators, in the community, of messages and methodologies which it was unable to receive through any other channel?

A growing concern over the damaging effects of the 'City of Culture' construct permeated *Sites/Positions* in its entirety, most poignantly in the work by The **Prolific Pamphleteer**. A complex image and text arrangement relying upon the recognitory power of symbols and logos could be come across in selected bus shelters around Glasgow. In this, and the smaller posted sticker version, a stocky male figure was given a comic, almost music hall character by the addition of the Scottish Development Agency logo as a large blue bow tie. The SDA and Glasgow District Council were further implicated in a manipulative and ultimately foolish on-going Glasgow 1990 enterprise through the text '*Artificial Intelligence*' headlined across the work.

Based at Springburn Museum, **Gillian Steel's** collaborative project '*Animate Her*', a short video and exhibition, suggested an on-going inventive process between Steel and six teenage girls from Sighthill. Through the use of photomontage and drawing, and the disruption of glossy women's magazine imagery by animation and personalised voice over, the girls recognised and projected their own views on a number of sexist and disabling devices

On view in the well-worn Maryhill Arts Centre it was blatantly apparent that an unfair financial wedge has been driven between Fine Art and Community Art practices.

Douglas Gordon's textual installation *Proof* on the interior remains (the facade and a supporting wall) of the old Glasgow Green Station disputed the centrally validited view of Glasgow's history by suggesting an alternative set of commemorative dates. *Proof* implied that these dates - referring to people's uprisings or city bye-laws preventing insurrection - had been conveniently forgotten or discarded and may remain subjectively unclassified. However, the size and overlaying imposition of the text 'Mute' on one wall and the dates upon the other defied the *chosen* history and are no longer silenced - for the time being. As with many monuments a fine balance was achieved between information given and emotions invoked, suggesting that questioning viewers investigate further.

The retrieval of vital memories was also apparent in **Alison Marchant's** installation *Household*, an audio-visual work for a tenement in Govan. Marchant investigated and explored the threat and violence of eviction during the Rent strikes, in the earlier part of this century, and the role that women played in them. The various means for imparting these memories to the visitor - harshly lit aestheticised rubble, peeled and scarred wallpaper, juxtaposed with Sean Damer's taped interviews, xerox texts and large documentary photographs - at once emotionally involved the spectator in an atmospheric tableau only then to be more distanced by the more literal translations of real witnesses to these events. Through the 'Household's' absense of furniture, the invigilation, by local women implying local control, and the obvious signs of destruction with the threat of Poll Tax Warrant Sales was unavoidable

Euan Sutherland's installation and mail-out work *Renovation-Reaction-Reactivation* at the closed down Colston Secondary School similarly evoked enforced abandonment and subsequent environmental and psychological dilapidation. Rather than polemicising on the local authority's schools closure campaign, the sculptural arrangement, from large highly placed shelves, delivered skips, and most poetic of all a cream painted school desk and chair in a pool of rain water, mourned the waste and lack of social care implicit in the controversial education plans.

From the seclusion of Summerston refuse dump on the outskirts of the city, to the familiar surroundings of Kelvingrove Musuem in the centre, **Christine Borland** rendered visible, through access, methodologies present in both institutions via a 3 part installation.

DOUGLAS GORDON *Mute* 1990

A reworking of archaeological and historical concerns was developed in the Museum and a conciliatory, though critical, relationship between classificatory systems, refuse and the desire to maintain and conserve was presented overall. A researched environment was very much in display, from what Borland termed a *devastation aesthetic* of the dump to the museum's thermohydrograph's quiet assurance of preservation. Although not directly critical of her chosen sites, Borland undermined their constructed and therefore

problematic permanence, both socially and environmentally.

Edge 90, Glasgow, similarly produced a number of memorable works with performances and 'performing' installations at Dundas Vale Centre (**Blackmarket, Cornelia Parker, Mark Thomson, Bill Henson**) and at the Third Eye Centre (an atmospheric performance by **Marina Abramovic**).
At Dundas Vale, sites ranged from the dustier parts of the disused school, including the bell tower, to the playgrounds where Cornelia Parker covered an entire building in small chalk marks evoking childhood and the passing of time whilst playing with language and sight in an intriguing manner

That the event was a satellite to the larger Newcastle Edge need not imply afterthought in some of the artists involvement, Parker and Alastair MacLennan especially, but in Bill Henson's case, his photographic environment was installed in his absence.

The assumed radicality of **Edge 90** lay in the specific works, not in its overall unspecified aim. Although used as the formal backdrop to the works, the grounds for using Dundas Vale remained unclear and in a sense a meaningful context had been substituted as a makeshift gallery, insofar as it recreated various gallery circumstances.

Being outside the gallery does not stop unconstructive deliniations, communication between those 'inside' and those outside the centre only happened as a side effect and was never regarded as necesssary. Granted never an aim or intention, the local communities were not alerted to the ten day event. However important or exciting these events were the flow into this arena was constricted, almost fixed in advance. An unavoidable situation occurs where to paraphrase Elias Canetti, the visitors were exhibiting themselves to themselves.

Unhindered access is no guarantee of the success or merits of socially engaged art, but it is the quality of the works evidenced and the suggestion of the event's title and sub-title (*Art and Life in the 90s*) that left this viewer feeling that possibilities and promises were less efficacious than desired.

CRAIG RICHARDSON

WHAUR EXTREMES MEET

Wendy Gunn and Gavin Renwick, June—July 1990

'I'll hae nae hauf-way hoose, but aye whaur
Extremes meet - its the only way I ken
To dodge the curst conceit o' bein' right
That damns the vast majority o'men

These lines from Hugh MacDiarmid give focus to the art/architecture collaboration which **Wendy Gunn** and **Gavin Renwick** set up under Nelson's obelisk on Glasgow Green in July. But the project **Whaur Extremes Meet** is much more than this aluminium wood and canvas structure, it functions as a meeting point for different opinions - a place for the mutual illumination of blindspots, to use George Davie's expression. It is a sort of instant college building in the sense of a place where a company of people can congregate, essentially provisional (ie: meeting neccessity) in a society in which channels of communication between people have either been severed or have become clogged with irrelevances.

The project started life a year and half ago in Istanbul where it was located in a peripheral area of the city. Now it has completed its journey to Glasgow thus linking geographical and cultural extremities of Europe. In the interval, it has generated discussion in Athens, Belgrade, Budapest, Prague and Berlin, in each place acting as a 'a' point of challenge to the flaws of the modern urban environment and at the same time creating a network of culturally active people throughout Europe.

Among the memorable experiences of Gunn and Renwick was the intellectual intensity of Prague. A key point for discussion there was the effect of totalitarianism on planning, but now in Glasgow this becomes a paradox due to the fact that the 'democratic' planning of urban housing, at least in terms of urban space and greenery, seems to be even worse than the experience in Prague. That will surprise no one but visitors from, Eastern Europe.

Linking the Czech and Scottish experiences brings to mind Zdena Tomin's comment 'relearning Czech meant relearning freedom', and more distant than Charter 77, but equally to the point, the words of Jan Huss: 'Let everyone have the truth'. This reformer of fourteenth century Bohemia seems to have summed up one of the recurring themes of the Glasgow discussions, both formal and informal, namely a desire among people to get information about the future of their own city, their own homes, their own parks and a consistent failure to get that information.

On Glasgow Green people wander in and out of the building. When I was there these ranged from a homeless woman who sleeps under a tree 25 yards away, through community professionals, to friends and passers-by. Gunn and Renwick use this place for asking questions and those who visit, however briefly, find themselves participating in a conversation of which their own circumstances are a part. And this is the heart of the project. It enables meaningful conversations about cities, without the usual constraints of pre-existing bureaucracies and institutions. Experts are as welcome as anyone else

but they have no power here and their roles are open to scrutiny, not only by others but also by themselves. The building is so different from most that it is easy to be self-critical within it. Firmly held views need not be maintained. The design informs you that you are there to communicate and it is difficult not to use the space in this way. A curving row of eleven wooden stools gives an immediate humanity. The construction as a whole has a beauty and this is important because it helps the function but this building insists on being recognised in term of its purpose rather than its appearance.

MURDO MacDONALD

THE WELL OF PATIENCE

Pearce Institute, Glasgow.
June—September 1990

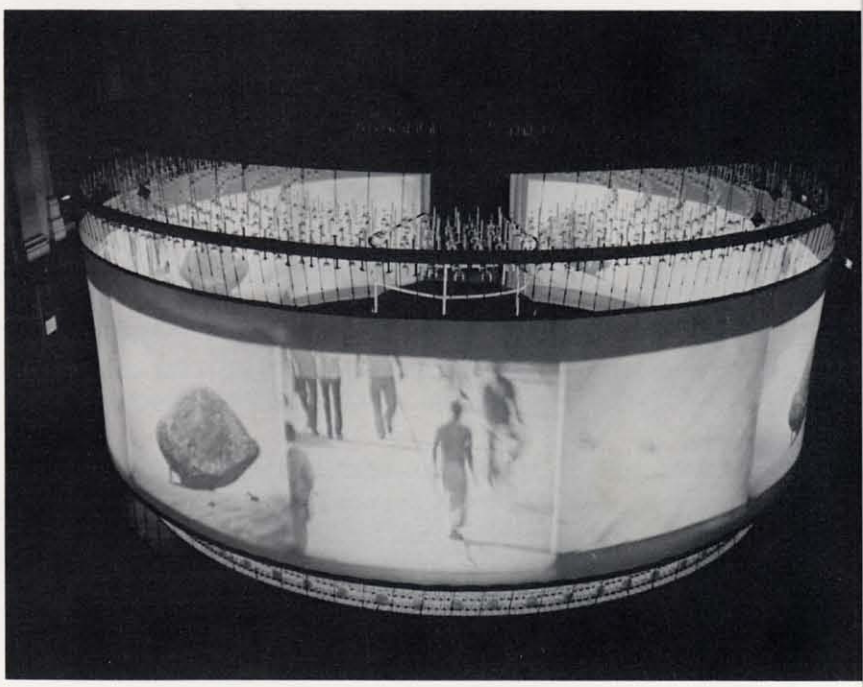
'The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection
The water has no mind to receive their image' **(1.)**

Much modernist and late modernist work uses montage and fragmentation of imagery and content to dissect social reality or to speak of anomaly and loss of meaning. Buddhism, which informs **Daniel Reeves'** 90 minute video installation **'The Well of Patience'**, and western Gestalt theory, tolerate empty spaces in the life experience. Willingness to stay in a state of confusion and uncertainty enable sensation to emerge as a figure from a ground which is at once empty and chaotic with possiblities and potentials. Thus 'futile voids' are transformed into 'fertile voids' **(2.)**. 'The Well of Patience' uses deconstructive devices towards an integrative end, and paradoxically, *authentic individual* experience is achieved without recourse to empathy, linear narrative, or expressionism. For 90 minutes the visitor enters a distinct, dynamic, transitive space which places the person at the heart of the matter; body and consciousness come together, in time, the subject of the work.

The installation is located in a darkened room. Walking up a ramp to stand on a raised platform the visitor is encompassed by a circular video screen 12 metres in diameter and 10 feet high. A shifting triptych or rural and urban imagery surrounds the viewer; particular shots are shown singly or repeated simultaneously to form a moving kaleidoscope pattern on all sides of the screen. (The rotating video turntable on which the projectors sat would have heightened the perception, but were out of order when I visited.)

Natural sound accompanies each sequence, so for example, a dog barking, the cutting of foliage and sitar music intermingle. The images are cut continually and experienced as a sequence of unintentional moments as in the poem above, operating in the manner of the 'empty spaces' discussed earlier. Each moment is a new set of beginnings.

Below on the floor, representing the earth and sitting on rat-traps, seven concentric circles of Buddha's face inwards. At head level, in the 'Heavens', 7 sets of forty-nine 8 inch wine goblets hang paired with white hammers of equal size. Activated by a fan, random but continuous chiming disrupts engagement with the video sequence, maintaining the spectator in the *eternally real present* and reinstating the installation's physical structure. The 10 feet video screen is the 'horizon' and stunning juxtapositions - huge soft flames, hail on water, a floating lily, compell an intense physical experience. The camera zooms in or out, from left to right. Equivalences are established. Breathing is something a person does, and is constantly, a living rhythm. Here the 'horizon' is also the body, the



DANIEL REEVES *The Well of Patience* 1990 PHOTO: KEN GILL

sequence of video images reflecting the self as a temporal process. Rhythms are established between images, between movements, between ideas, as in the Gestalt cycle of sensory awareness, echoing the kaleidoscope effect. However, although the experience will be different, these perceptions are not only particular to Buddhism as the following Haiku poem and quote from Louis MacNeice demonstrate, the latter catching something of the completeness of Reeves' installation:

'You light the fire,
I'll show you something nice -
A great ball of snow!'

'Snow

The room was suddenly rich and the great bay window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkeness of things being various.

And the fires flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes -
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hands -
There is more than glass between snow and the huge roses.'
Louis MacNeice

Throughout the video sequence incompatible images become collateral, as with the soft flames, hail on water, and floating lily mentioned earlier. A Buddha lies in a vortex of water, a mountain boulder is upside down with sky for ground, and traffic simmers in a city street crazier and incorrigibly plural. The world is spiteful and gay - a woman gives birth in pain, a model in a leopard skin coat walks and twirls accompanied by the living animal on a lead, the Buddhas sit on rat traps. As the unsaid meaning of the poem is revealed in its music and tonality, Reeves' selected images and sounds call up absent aromas and a quality of light or being. In themselves the images read like Haiku poems.

Syncretic in its approach, 'The Well of Patience' draws on different traditions. Wine glasses are emphatically Christian while there is film from Hindu India. These are linked through the themes of life, birth, and death, the overall experience is one of completeness. Here each tradition is presented as a set of equivalences, the tripartite imagery and circular screen working together in a non-hierarchical model, where references to the wider social and economic order are implicit in the juxtaposition of sequences, a nuclear power station, a whaling ship at sea, black and white footage enabling the artist to work both through and across time.

1. 'The Way of Zen' Alan W. Watts, Pelican 1976.
2. 'Gestalt Counselling in Action' Petruska Clarkson, Sage Publications 1989.

FIONA BYRNE-SUTTON

19:4:90 TELEVISION INTERVENTIONS

Broadcast on Channel 4, May/ June 1990

The notion of 'intervention' implies the taking up of some position which intends to challenge accepted ways, power structures, the mainstream, etc. Whilst it might be wholly unfair to say that the '19:4:90' project was invested with a radicality it did not in fact possess, it is not incorrect to say that the pluralistic nature of TV embraces acceptable critical stances but denies dissent and creativity. '19:4:90' set itself a difficult task.

The '19:4:90' project avoided calling itself art, realising that people might be 'telly-literate' and more open to material if it wasn't attached to a label. This was 'innovative television' (much more fashionable than 'video art') which used a form of popular culture in order to underline the problem that lots of people with all kinds of potential are denied access to TV — for some it might be to thwart expression and to marginalise art, for others the repression is not so benign — those disenfranchised from 'media coverage' in terms of their own voices. Getting stuff onto TV involves a long journey of control and censorship, and it takes a great deal of ingenuity, resilience, and professionalism to carry through good ideas.

The '19:4:90' project involved several 4 minute pieces transmitted by Channel 4 during the spring months of Glasgow's Year of Culture. It included work by **Pratibha Parmat, Rose Garrard, Stephen Littman, Stephen Partridge, Alastair MacLennan,** and **Peter Missoten**. The forerunner to the project is **David Hall**'s "7TV Pieces" which he made in 1971 and which were broadcast on Scottish Television (in the days when at least one member of staff recognised the 'other' potential of TV). Series producer **Jane Rigby**, and producer, **Anna Ridley**, stated their brief as encouraging artists to "explore the creative potential of television and production processes" and to "employ them in new and surprising ways".

One of more considered successes of the '19:4:90' was the '*Telly Pieces*' project, conveniently labelled a 'youth and community project', it is also where the questions of 'communication for whom?', 'what resources?' and 'what kind of access?' entered into the initiative. The project involved 3 stages — the first of which was a series of screening, equipment and storyboarding workshops with various groups throughout Strathclyde. Eight pieces were made on 10-band format of which 2 entered into the third stage, broadcast standard.

'*Crisis, What Crisis*' by **Carswell Short** and **David Sinclair** dealt with the threat of the large number of nuclear armament bases on the West Coast of Scotland. **Allan Trotter** and **David Black**'s '*Another Victim*' was also set on the West Coast, in Greenock, and its theme was one of unemployment and industrial dereliction. It was one of the few in the whole '19:4:90' project which dealt with the reality of life as it is lived today by many working-class people. It seems pertinent, therefore, if not ironic, that it chooses a medium in which the mass act of viewing represents the shattered fragments of human communities re-grouped into the pseudo-community of late capitalism, a situation of one-way communication.

'*Telly Pieces*' was about those who are normally the subject of a documentary actually making TV themselves. The role of the professionals (in this instance, **Doug Aubrey** and **Jak Milroy**) was that of providing direction without too much directing.

TV carries with it the paradigm of our culture — incessant consumption. The question is, 'why intervene?'. The answer lies somewhere in **Anna Ridley**'s belief that you have to take risks and to defend that kind of work which is coming in from a different angle. Two quotes from **David Hall** also go some way in setting out the critical agenda (written in 1978):

". . . socio/political work is undoubtedly necessary and beyond dispute, but in many cases the method, structure, treatment (not content) is handled in a way which is directly analagous to that traditionally employed by the very establishment it implicitly, often overtly deplores . . ."

"Video as art largely seeks to explore perceptual and conceptual thresholds, and implicit in it is the decoding and consequent expansion of the conditioned expectations of those narrow conventions understood as TV."

The role that artists play is not to parade some kind of neutrality, but to articulate and build up a critical context which can also resist TV rather than celebrate it. This necessitates alternative methods of production and distribution working in tandem with initiatives such as '19:4:90'.

CALUM McKINTYRE

Review

BOOKS

THE MISSING LINE: POSTMODERNISM, POLITICS AND ART

by John Roberts
(Manchester University Press, 1989)

> *The possibility of making an affirmative culture today seems to me to be ... absurd. The world's dominant political systems are prurient, self-regarding and barbarously repressive. Any cultural work that celebrates such a world -intentionally or not - that holds uncritically to the status quo of the relations of production and relations of distribution can be seen to have, on rudimentary historical reflection, a carefree charlatanism or - in harsher judgement - a grotesque negligence.*
>
> **— Terry Atkinson, 'Predicament', in Terry Atkinson, 'Brit Art'. (Gimpel Fils, 1987, p.3)**

In this dense, detailed, but sometimes confusing book, John Roberts offers a critical redefinition of certain prominent modes of 'postmodernism' and gives, as part of this critique, an outline of what he describes as

> *'the work of that group of artists and writers who have attempted to theorize a way out of late modernism, empiricism and social realism within British culture, without loss of cognitive complexity and political acumen' (p. 84)*

The book is divided into two sections, respectively entitled *'The Dialectics of Postmodernism'* and *'Postmodernism and Representation'*. The first of these contains four chapters outlining Roberts' general theoretical position; the second section offers four fairly specific accounts of particular examples of work offered up as paradigmatically critical, 'disaffirmative', approaches to art practice, the central elements, so to speak, of a kind of counter-canon of practices presented as implicitly anathema to what has now become an institutionalised modernism. Here are chapters on **Terry Atkinson**, Art and Language's museum paintings, *'Painting and Sexual Difference'*, and on the work of **Rasheed Araeen**.

Modernism, Roberts argues, broke with nineteenth century realism and aestheticism in order to provide not only a more diverse mix of cultural elements than had hitherto been acceptable within western art, but also to 'make a prefigurative claim upon the supercession of capitalist relations' (p.1) - by which Roberts is referring to modernism's avowedly anti-capitalist programme. The artists he has chosen to discuss are presented as continuing this programme. Roberts emphasises, following TJ Clark, Art & Language and others, that the perimeters of our approach to both aesthetic and everyday social practice continue to be those put in place by the modernist project. Notwithstanding the various claims made for a recent break with modernism it is the framework of modernism which *'remains prior and determining'* (p.22) Yet Roberts acknowledges an actual shift in relations which have resulted in a 'second order' position for art (which means art practice has become intensely self-reflexive regarding all aspects of its production and status). He also attributes the development of 'black','feminist' and photography-based art practices as a factor of some importance vis-a-vis the rise of postmodernism as a plausible, critical category.

What most distinguishes the book, however, is its emphasis on *realism*, the word being employed to denote not social realist-type of work but a concept of a more problematic import. It is a model which owes much to the writings of *Art & Language*, though just how so is not made as clear as it might be. (See Art & Language, 'Portrait of V.I. Lenin' in Art & Language, vol 4, No. 4, June 1980, for an extensive account of the model taken up by Roberts). What this realism entails is 'the determining and examining of the conditions of the relevance and adequacy under which art addresses/symbolises/articulates/shapes/resists the experience of capitalism on a global scale' (p.38). It is therefore a question of knowledge being secured in and through practice itself, a modus operandi which refuses prior closures, but which retains a sense of an objective, that is capitalist, context.

This is all very well so far as it goes. I say this because the book is a frustrating as it is informative, though the problems are, to be fair to Roberts, often firmly embedded in the material he's selected for exposition. But Roberts's prose is sometimes itself the problem. There are confusions. For example, after listing an impressive array of left-wing critical practices which have accumulated in the UK in the 1980s and among which is mentioned the so-called New Art History (p.85), he appends (p 88-89) remarks on that same New Art History which label it as *'a new set of career moves'*, which it may well be, but which does not of not of course square with his earlier claims. Similarly, right at the beginning of the book, after an opening comprised of a hard hitting amalgum of critically acute

observations which are at the same time lucidly outlined, one encounters the abruptly inderted and ubsubstantiated claim that *'meaning under patriarchal culture circulates around the primary signifier of the phallus'* (p.5). At this point the text leaps, as it also does at other points, to a different tone of writing. One gets the impression that someone at Roberts' publishers has been tampering with the text in an unsuccessful attempt to make the book viable at both the 'introductory' and 'advanced' levels of the academic market. If one does not already know that this reference to 'the primary signifier of the phallus' directed one to the theories of Lacan, one would not find out by reading the book.

Roberts tries to pack everything in, with thumbnail critiques of Lyotard, Berman, Jameson *et al*, which too often read as only partial and distorted accounts of these writers' theoretical leanings. On the other hand, there are some extremely clear and informative passages, of which the chapter on Terry Atkinson is a good example. Too often though the book makes for frustrating reading. The analysis given, promise much, but the writing is impregnated with asides (such as the remark 'what little art might have to offer', p. 140), which irritate because they are seemingly extraneous with regard to what has gone before. What then is the critical value of these ostensibly disaffirmative practices if art has so little to offer? I am not suggesting that art *does* have much to offer from the point of view of throwing capitalism into crisis, but after some going-dogmatic claims as to what constitutes valid critical practice today, such remarks begin to shatter in an unproductive manner, the plausability of the book's assertive thesis. It is, furthermore, never quite apparent why Roberts foregrounds certain works and not others with regard to the model of realism which he deploys. Could, say, the work of Gilbert & George be convincingly indexed to this realism? If so, this would, I think, render the relations between realism and historical materialism not a little problematic. Roberts' selection of artrists is obviously not arbitrary, but it is hard to see how works placed in the realism category could be 'proved' to be more socialist than not.

On, or rather absent from page 41 of my copy of *Postmodernism, Politics and Art* there is a line missing. Its space is present, but there are no words. I assume the printers are to blame. Yet this ambiguous absence is cruelly pertinent in a book which is many times to the point in matters of contemporary critical aesthetics, but which dissapointingly exhibits an absence of perspicuity just when the going is getting good.

PETER SUCHIN

ART & LANGUAGE *Index: Incident in a Museum (111)* 1985

DADA TURNS RED: THE POLITICS OF SURREALISM

by Helena Lewis
(Edinburgh University Press, 1990, £8.95 soft)

Surrealism has long exerted a fascination based on its perceived depth. Behind the paintings, beyond poems (about which less is said), lurk the associations of the famous. If their project, its scandals and splits, decompose into anecdote, their political commitment testifies to their unltimate high mindedness.

Surrealism purported to blend Marx's injunction to 'transform the world' and Rimbaud's desire to 'change life'. Like other intellectuals of their time, the surrealists took the Soviet Union as the model of how their desires could become reality. And despite Herbert Read's characterisation of Surrealism as an 'organism' rather than an 'organisation', they organised themselves as an avant-garde group, imitating the apparently successful Bolsheviks. Politically and culturally, the vanguard group appeared in the early 20th Century, a product of the aspirations of substrata of the metropolitan intelligensia.

Unlike others who fell under the Bolshevik spell, however, the Surrealists' attempts to participate in Communist International cultural groups led to conflict, because they refused to sacrifice their principles to Comintern interests. Fundamentally, a group on the fringes of the economy committed to *'chance, dream, fantasy and the irrational'*, in short the abolition of the proletarian condition, couldn't be expected to coexist with organisations seeking to expand the domination of Capital.

Helena Lewis's book documents that development of a political project by Surrealists' ideologists (notably **Andre Breton**), their misunderstanding of the Comintern's purpose, their rejection of the doctrine of Socialist Realism as it emerged through the Twenties and Thirties, and their eventual position outside Popular Front leftism. The period covered effectively ends with the beginning of the postwar period.

Dada Turns Red is a worthwhile narrative of these years, crediting Surrealist politics with greater substance than might have been expected. The books primary concern is with relations between the Political and the Artistic vanguards, categories whose boundaries were as jealously guarded by the Comintern bureaucrats as by the French bourgeoisie.

What purpose can such a book serve today? Like any book on Surrealism, much of it rounds-up the usual anecdotes (around the figures of Anatole France, Charlie Chaplin, Louis Aragon, Ilya Ehrenberg) but in several respects, *Dada Turns Red* accomplishes more. This is partly due to the implications of matters which Lewis covers more thoroughly than previous writers, and partly due to the inherent strain in the received categories.

The first difficulty concerning Surrealism is that of justifying its specific existence. Lewis' title implies that Surrealism originated as a politicisation of Dadaism.

Others - and her introductory chapter supports this - believe that Dada already exhibited the political commitment; Surrealism was just a brand name imposed on Paris Dada, with Andre Breton as copyright holder. As for the famous blend of Marx and Freud, the Freudian contribution seems to have been little more than the operation of a local franchise in 'the unconscious': Freud's structural motivation was absent from Surrealism. What remains is a business which proclaimed its novelty while pursuing a joint-venture with a larger overseas corporation: the Comintern.

Comintern politics were dominated by the interests of the Soviet state. That consideration coloured such fronts as the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists. The Surrealists' sincere desire to place themselves 'at the service of the Revolution' while pursuing radical cultural activity gained them little but criticism. This contrasted with the enthusiasm with which such fronts affiliated 'name' writers and artists whose activities were far from radical.

Surrealism's pivotal crisis was precipitated by the attendance of two Surrealists (including Louis Aragon) at the Kharkov congress of 'revolutionary writers' in late 1930. The conference debate centred on the idea of proletarian literature, to be written by 'worker correspondents'. Who was right and who wrong? Surely the very situation of the conference - in the Ukraine during famine and the terror of forced collectivisation - indicates the conference participants' abstraction from reality. No side appears to have regarded the actual fate of the population as relevant.

As the thirties went by, the Suirrealists were split, marginalised and forced out of such Comintern-front organisations. Aside from the question of legitimate cultural activity, the remaining Surrealists' opposition to the Moscow show trials had branded them as Trotskyist saboteurs. When Breton and Trotsky met in 1938, they wrote a joint manifesto on revolutionary art. While apparently leaving more autonomous space for cultural work, that retained a position wedded to Trotsky's power struggle with Stalin.

While the lads are issuing manifestos, proclaiming breaks, clamouring for attention, who's washing the dishes? If one weakness of radical culture has been fondness for anecdote-as-history, another has been a confusion of freedom to depict as liberation itself. Herbert Read, for example, reassured reactionary doubters that 'Intolerance for women...is certainly no part of the Surrealist creed' (Footnote 1) Well...

Unlike other writers on Surrealism, Lewis examines *Surrealism and Sexuality* in suffiecient detail to conclude that

> *'The Surrealists generally did not share the most progressive ideas on women and sexuality' (p.74)*

Their *Hands Off Love* tract on Chaplin concluded by playing off the 'man of genius' against the 'wretched, spiteful little bourgeoisie'. But the *Bourgeois* was firmly placed in the heads of our men of genius: during a group discussion on sexuality, Breton insisted that 'her preferences have nothing to do with it'. He later divorced his second wife because she aspired to become an artist herself. Women could serve as muse, or could serve the coffee, but no more.

By the time Breton returned to Paris after the Liberation, the publicity of novelty had passed to others, notably those who had had a 'good war'. New avant-garde groups cocooning themselves in contemptuous opposition to the world, new 'popes', new scandals.

Unfortunately, *Dada Turns Red* devotes only a short postscript to these years. The postwar settlement propelled Breton and his associates into more flexible attempts at orientation. Lewis documents their fondness for hopeless 'world citizenship' movements, but barely mentions their collaboration with French Anarchist Federations weekly magazine *Le Libertaire* between 1951 and 1953. Other commentators (**footnote 2**) indicate that their articles published there were sufficiently clear as to denounce illusions about the anti-colonial struggles then being fought, whether about their apparent 'national' unity of interest or their independence from superpower bloc manoevring.

There is obviously no superiority inherent in adherence to Anarchist doctrine rather than Leninism or Trotskyism. However, debate away from the lecturns of State-sponsored conferenmces is no less worthwhile, especially when the corruption of the orthodoxy of these conferences is today visible for all to see.

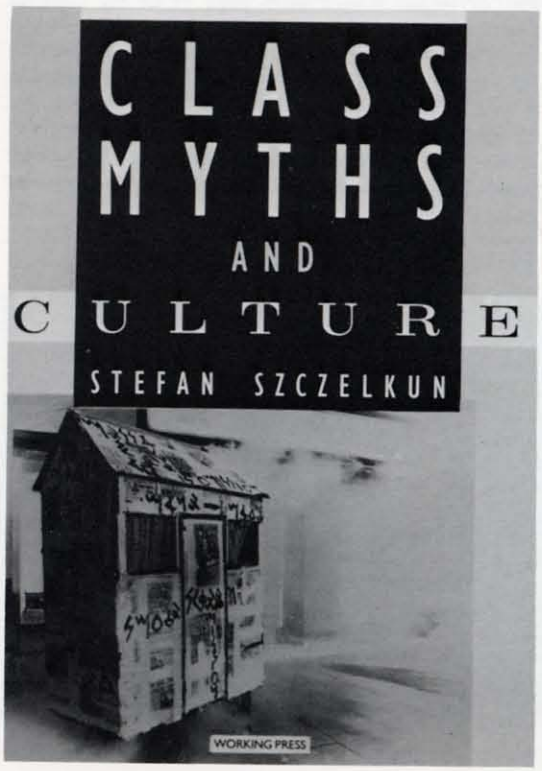
If Surrealism is of interest today, it surely cannot be through ascribing positive value to involvement in Third and Fourth International Communism. I Nor is there any worth in a revivalism which would proclaim Surrealism as the once and future True Faith. An admiring contemplation of Andre Breton's path through life is equally frivolous. If the trajectory of the Surrealist has interest, it must be because it illustrates that the time for vanguards, avant-guardes and 'men of genius' lies firmly in the past.

Footnotes:

1 'Surrealism and the Romantic Principle'

2 Pietro Ferrua's pamphlet *Surrealisme et Anarchisme.*

ALEX RICHARDS



GIVE ME THE ORDER, AND I'LL CROSS THE BORDER

CLASS MYTHS AND CULTURE
by Stefan Szcelkun
(Working Press, 1990, 86 pp, £5.95 illus)

MINEFIELDS: 4 SITES
by David Goldenberg
(33 Arts Centre Catalogue, 1990, 12 pp)

IF COMIX, NO 2
various
(Working Press, 1990, 48 pp, £2)

Identity', wrote Marshall McLuhan, 'is always accompanied by violence'. In his new book of essays, Stefan Szczelkun proposes an economy of violence in which class struggle is conducted in terms of self-realisation. The ruling class, the argument goes, imposes its values on the working class and in so doing stifle the working class's self expressivity. The working class, aspiring to bourgeois status, go along with this and abandon their true identity: solidarity and *'lively, physical and spontaneous behaviour'* are replaced by a competitive mean-spirited and ultimately shallow aping of those in power. The result is profound psychic damage which Szczelkun, being an optimist, believes can be overcome by a variety of therapeutic artistic strategies. These focussed as they are on individuals, are to be complimented by political change across the board.

But this is no blueprint for a future of proletarian bliss: the Marxist-Leninist's belief that *'Socialism is the inevitable next stage...it will prevail all over the world'* (**Cornelius Cardew**) is severely tempered by experience; and though Szczelkun is both bold and unfashionably positive in his declarations, **Class Myths and Culture** is less a statement of belief than a probe into the possibilities for human improvement from the perspective of one baffled, as many of us are, by the thoroughly uncivilised civilisation to which we are obliged to be party.

Less this sound from my precis too much like naive guff, it is worth bearing in mind where Szczelkun is coming from: in these times of immense shallowness, when any kind of historical depth has been abandoned in favour of a kind of 'spot the reference' quotation of the Big Guns of Yesteryear (even, of Yesterday), it is perhaps to Szczelkun's disadvantage that he fails to tell us more of his immediate background. A more thorough and considered indication of the context in which he has been working for the past twenty years would have been very useful in the present book, particularly when it comes to such essays as *Artists Liberation*, which suggests that artists a) can and b) should *'meet around...very specific issues of identity'*. However, the reader is obliged to take it on trust that Szczelkun is the voice of experience, delivering his considered opinions after two decades of solid activity. Readers of his *Collaborations* (Working Press, 1987) will have gathered some indication of the range of his work, from the Scratch Orchestra in the early seventies to the more formal art activities in the eighties, working with as diverse and upwardly mobile a crowd as one would wish. Szczelkun has come out of these encounters surprisingly intact - he has even thrived in them - and what he has to say merits serious consideration.

In his attempt to tell a tale of class oppression over several generations - oppression by no means resolved in the figure of Stefan Szczelkun - details are replaced by didactic generalisations. We are given thumbnail sketches of his parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, following their route of social rootlessness across the decades. And while Szczelkun calls for a 'telling of our own life stories', one is ultimately paradoxically, grateful - in the context - that he doesn't tell us his. He does not say why exactly we should find his autobiography of any use, and one's suspicion is that such self-exploration and self-cataloguing are merely a New Times style throwback to the golden age of Romanticism. Szczelkun wishes for a radical society, but he does not make clear how this is to be achieved out of the kind of radical individualism some of his writings imply. It is obviously more than a case of artists *'leading and defining culture'*, as indeed his comments on glamour and his efforts to engage in artistic projects with diverse communities (whether they be fellow artists or a fishing community in Hull) clearly indicate. In his descriptions of his works, particularly the elegant, eloquent *Dance of Cranes*, we get a more focussed picture of the possibilities for types of action issuing from the community rather than from the self, but there is still a confused uncertainty which Szczelkun allows repeatedly to creep in - indicated, for example, by the appearance of that well worn badge of poverty in thought, the 'Karen Eliot' by-line, here used as a tag to Szczelkun's description of his *Skyline* performance.

As one might expect in a collection of essays that try to communicate in shorthand fashion, ideas that really require lengthy analysis, there is a certain amount of what can only be termed silliness: the valuable work of Cecil Sharp is pooh-poohed in a pointless aside; we are told - jokingly? - that *'Radicals all want glamour'*; and right at the end of the book we are faced with a short assault on 'the authority of the printed word'. The book's faults all arise from an urgent hurry to express complex thoughts in bite-sized chunks and to explore profound issues in a way which avoids the esoteric and which enables the general reader. They are minor faults in a work which, coming from a long-term practitioner in the British arts scene deserves and rewards some attention.

As is often the case nowadays, the reader is obliged to take on the role of copy-editor (a problem that is certainly not exclusive to marginal and independent publications). This applies to the reader of **David Goldenberg**'s *Minefields: 4 sites* pamphlet, where inadequate punctuation sadly obscures an interesting attempt to steer clear of Modernism, to *'disengage...from the prescriptions of the available configuration of social existence'*. Goldenberg asserts that it is *'necessary to reach absolute radical self-consciousness of what art is and does'*. He adds, tellingly that, *'It seems that unless you do so you end up simply making contemporary work for contemporary life., Or by intending making critical work making reactionary work instead.'* What precisely are his objections to 'contemporary work for contemporary life' are not revealed, but

suffice to say Goldenberg grapples head on with the somewhat premature announcement of the 'death of art'. The attempt is not altogether successful: philosophically, concepts such as 'absolute self-consciousness' are dubious; and that art activity, in failing to be critical, should therefore be neccessarily reactionary reveals a severely prescribed vision of its potentialities which experience undercuts; while on the simply technical level, it is reasonable to demand accurate grammar in a theoretical text, however anti-social its tenets. Whinges aside, it is a stimulating effort and in the face of the overwhelming preponderence of purely decorational contemporary art, much of it lamentably issuing from the art schools, one can only be encouraged by such interventions.

As Szczelkun asserts, in a truism that could have come from his Scratch Orchestra days, and which is still pertinent today, *'we know that there is more in the failure of an attempt at something important and difficult, than in the success at something easy, foolproof and of no consequence anyway'.*

Such a comment can be applied negatively to the back page of **If Comix** No. 2, a picture of Christ with the caption 'Hitler'. Beautifully executed and quite clever, yes, but also a bit glib and , more significantly, quite in keeping with the spirit of the times - which is to say, not so much that it is of any contemporary relevance as that, ultimately, the process of which for convenience we term 'Thatcherism', has informed all kinds of thought and action. Yawn. The rest of the comic, from which the cheap outrage is likely to detract, is well executed and printed, with some genuinely substantial strips which extend the comic form amid smart space fillers and one-liners. The first issue of **If** was an intriguing, wordless single narrative by Graham Harwood; this second issue is more lively but less focussed, though Harwood's fine computer-generated urban nightmare dominates. This blurs the boundaries between fine art and trash comic to the point where, like Szczelkun's 'mixing exclusive metaphors' and Goldenberg's 'constructive negations', fresh configurations of thought, social action and aesthetic experience are suggested - which is as much as could be reasonably asked.

ED BAXTER

EUROPEAN ECHOES: A REVIEW OF SOME RECENT MAGAZINES

LJ (Lovely Jobly) magazine
Vol 1, no 1, March 1990
75 Lambeth Walk, London SE11

COME TOGETHER magazine
Vol 1, no 1 and cassette
9 Rue Marquis, 76100 Rouen, France

WEAST magazine
No 1/89 European Neighbours: Germany
Urbanstrasse 48J, 1000 Berlin 61, FRG

VERSION 90 magazine
107 Brighton Avenue, Allston,
MA 02134 USA
(UK distribution: Counter Productions,
PO Box 556, London SE5 0RL

This disparate batch of publications emanate from what might be called 'peripheral culture'; largely self-motivated and self-funded, of no interest to weekend supplement readers. Although their diversity resists comparison and classification, some common concerns, in response to our times, allow us to follow one path among many.

The Berlin based magazine **Weast** is an initiative by German and Polish artists and writers using English as a neutral language running alongside the original German and Polish texts. The aspiration to overcome the geo-political boundaries separating people is explicit in the first issue's theme: *European Neighbours*. The articles and images are fragments of contributors' personal/group projects and as such are of variable interest. Possibly the most interesting article is by the Polish Neue Wilde painter Wodziemierz Pawlak, which is rooted in the reference points for his own paintings. On the other hand, some articles, particularly the German ones, are fixed within a world view irreducibly foreign to the British reader. For example Helmut Mittendorf's 'My Dream of Freedom and Love': *the mail artist's love aims at merging with the chosen beloved object. His love intends to bring the object in its essence and existence into his self.'*

The influence of the cultural links formed across the Iron Curtain from the late 70s onward in the collapse of the Command Economy System remains to be fully assessed. A project like **Weast**, conceived in the later stages of that search for *'human contact between the populations of these systems'*, now inhabits a phase in which aspirations towards a unity transcending particularity may fall by the wayside. The question

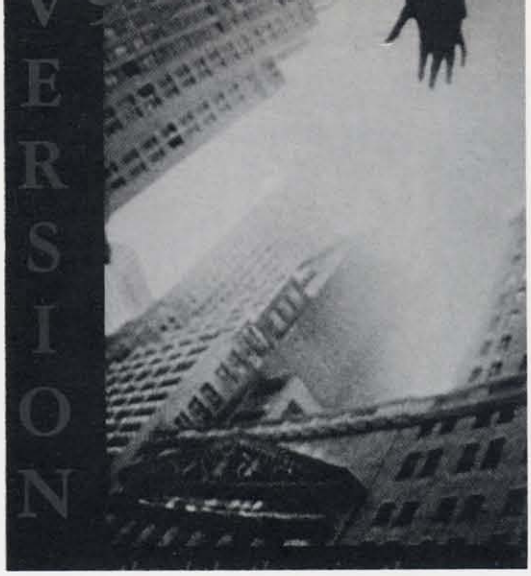
is whether the 'Hopes and Fears' (the theme of issue 2) survive the possibility of Poland finding itself in a subservient economic role to the new Germany. Certainly, the magazine's hope is that it can thrive on contradiction.

Lovely Jobly (to a Scot, the title recalls repressed memories of toilet training) also orients itself toward *international cultural engagement*. In the first issue, this is largely through articles on aspects of Samuel Beckett's work, often academic marginalia. The example of Beckett opens the magazine to issues of exile and emigration, in recent years often the experience of those escaping from the Soviet block. An interview with Richard Demarco dicusses the influence and inspiration for the apparent vitality of cultural activity in Eastern Europe. In a sense, it was previously 'our' Eastern bloc, a place where artists and writers took on the moral responsibility for opposition to the state and hence subverted its totalising aims. The end of the cold war brings a fear of victory for a US influenced monoculture, the fragmented totality which subverts all morality.

Version 90, a 152 page book-like journal, focusses on other escape routes from the monoculture, through activity around the idea of '*the dub, the mix, the version*', diffuse networked activities: with cumulative rather than exemplary effects on social space.

Among the interesting articles is an interview with the mail-art publishers *Xeroxial Endarchy* (3141 Williamson, Madison, Wisconsin 53703,USA). Drawing on past movements such as Lettrism (Europe, again!) XE see the fragmentation of content in mail art as an encouraging sign of powerful diversity: '*...the experimental underground is rushing towards some sort of explosive power where collectively we will be impossible to sweep under the carpet*'.

The interest in mixing diverse elements brings V90 into areas of detournement and plagiarism. This and Boston's bleated encounter with the touring Situationist Show are reflected in a long review of Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces*, which sidesteps Marcus' hero worship in favour of what the magazine describes as *the noise of the last years of the century*. But can the term 'noise' carry the weight placed on it in recent years? Does it serve as a term of apparently uncompromising radicality, outside all systems, while in fact operating well within the arts system?



Come Together Productions is a Rouen based 'counter-culture' organisation aiming to publish magazines, cassettes and videos and to organise exhibitions and concerts. They are attracted to *creation, situationism, plagiarism, art, individualism, cinema, literature, pop, psychedelia and punk*, you get the picture? And in this, despite the fanzine-like production, is a desire to escape from 'alternativism', from the self styled 'underground', towards developing a new and active 'counter-culture'.

The first manifestations do not differ discernably from normal self-duplicated 'alternative' magazines and music. The cassette features eleven compositions, mainly tape/electronic based not-quite-songs material. A second tape is promised to be a *bit more poppy*. The magazine comprises of cartoon strips and short typescript articles, some pasted over extracts from British **Vague/Festival of Plagiarism** publications. Above all, **CTP** wishes to escape the negativity and lethargy of alternative lifestyle groups, to accept the risks of naivety and confusion in the hope that their participative activity can make small changes in the state of things. Welcome as positive action can be, the danger is that of also over estimating an anti-elitist potential in new technology, in video, etc.

ALEX RICHARDS

Comment

Surveying a recent copy of Independent Media recently I was struck by the irony of almost every article's terminal pessimism at the current state of the grant aided sector in England/Wales. Ironic, because in Scotland we aren't experiencing the on-going recession in the sector, because we never had a boom in the first place. In fact we've never got off the starting blocks.

Leaving aside the very pertinent problem of regional discrimination suffered by producers of every hue when attempting to hussle money for projects from London based Film and TV companies. There is an urgent need, in Scotland, for some kind of impartial 'Research & Development' fund to be established on the models operated over the last 15 or so years by ACGB, WAC and some RAAs. This system of small, 'materials only' grants nurtured Sally Potter, Derek Jarman, Peter Greenaway, among *many* others. ACGB also operate a range of other more ambitious schemes which lead directly to broadcast, which we could emulate too, once the bridgehead has been established. The argument was made to SAC and SFPF 18 months ago. Penny Thomson later wrote and told me she was going to discuss it further with Lindsay Gordon (of SAC), but the situation, to my knowledge, remains in stasis.

Inseperable from this first question is that of how to sustain the recipients of any funding effectively through a formalised system of access to equipment. This can be achieved by funding facilities workshops. The two or three that exist in Scotland are falling apart through lack of funds, but potentially they provide many spin offs like screenings and discussions, in/formal training and the meeting of like minded folk to work with collaboratively. This problem is as old as the hills. SRC have always maintained the argument that they would *love* to fund workshops if they had the money. They along with ACTT and SAW drew up a development plan and mission statement setting out the case for infrastructural funding, which was published in late 1986, and promptly forgotten by SFC, although they were under review by SED at the time and had an opportunity to prioritise workshops and gain the appropriate investment capital. But they did not do it.

The problem

SFPF is part funded (12%, £25,000) by SAC. SFPF operate a general policy of only funding projects with a potential TV or Cinema outlet, though their policy is much more bizarre than that. Applications for *production* are for 'first brick/last brick' amounts to attract other investment. The idea is any project that takes off at the box office will return the sum granted with interest. They also give *development money*, which has been up to 60% of their grant aid in any year, so many of their funded projects never see the light of day. In 1984 they even granted £3,000 to one project for storyboarding! In the same year a friend of mine produced a videotape for a third of that and got first prize at San Sebastion Film and Video Festival in Spain. There are scandalous clashes in economies of scale here.

However, the basic problem is that the Trustees of the Fund do not have a broad enough range of skills to assess some of the projects that come their way. The blindspots of the Trustees are openly acknowledged. The normal practice with applications they can't deal with has often been to steer them toward SAC. Given the increasingly pluralistic nature of TV, this is very surprising. Lindsay Gordon is an observer at SFPF meetings and can propose new trustees. He could influence the policy of the fund through this capacity, if he felt change was necessary. He supports SFPF in its policies adding that SAC supports the art of film and video, and expresses it through its grant to the Fund.

SAC *does* fund artists' F/V projects, but applications go into the hat along with the sculptors and printmakers. There's no seperate panel. There was a panel (Special Projects) for things like video installation, etc. but ominously this has been reabsorbed into the general Exhibitions budget.

Let's face it, the kind of money needed to establish a R&D fund is handed out each year by SFPF on script development. SAC should withdraw its funding from SFPF and establish it. SFC and SAC should recognise that there are problems and encourage initiatives and proposals to develop facilities access centres. A conscious prioritising of small scale film/video making is required, the aim of which would be to facilitate people onto the first rung of the ladder. Infrastructural development will require new money, but the private sector could play an active role in this, as well as local authorities such as Lothian and Strathclyde.

All this has the all too familiar felling of pissing in the wind, because there are very influential and conservative lobbies at work in Scotland to keep things the way they are. If I were paranoid I might even believe that Scottish IPPA and the Scottish Freelance ACTT were in league, which would implicate the SFPF and consequently SAC. What a hysterical notion!

SFPF — *Scottish Film Production Fund*

KEN GILL