



**STEWART
HOME**

**NEO-
IST**

MANIFESTOS

**AK
PRESS**

"Neoism is of particular importance because it engages many of the same issues treated by recent Postmodern work. It is the constant oscillation between practical engagement and detached speculation which defines the paradox of Neoism" — *New Art Examiner*.

While Stewart Home's outrageous Neoist Manifestos are prime source material for anyone studying the post-war avant-garde, many people will read them simply for their vitality and wit.

Home was the chief theoretician of the Neoist group. He introduced rampant plagiarism to the movement and was the first participant to stress the importance of the written word in the propagation of Neoism.

This volume brings together a selection of long unavailable material from issues 1 to 8 of *Smile* magazine. As well as Home's Neoist Manifestos, there are examples of his polemical writings from the period immediately before he joined the group and just after his break with Neoism. A sample of Home's poetry is included in an appendix.

Also by Stewart Home

The Assault On Culture:
Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War

The Festival Of Plagiarism

Pure Mania

Defiant Pose

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

Stewart Home

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The bulk of the manifestos and poems collected here were first published in 1984/5. The manifestos were revised by the author in 1987, additional modifications were made to the text in 1989. This selection was then edited by Simon Strong for AK Press in 1991.

Front cover photo is by Andrea James — it shows Stewart Home and Gabrielle Quinn performing at the Parachute Club, Aldershot, November 1986.

CONTENTS

Instead of an introduction, two reprints

- To tell the truth 1
Towards nothing – notes from the 6
Generation Positive on the Nature of the Conspiracy

THE MANIFESTOS

- Doing the obvious is more radical than you'd imagine 10
Proclamation of the Generation Positive 12
Ultimatum of the Generation Positive 13
The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy 15
First International Neoist Manifesto 17
Meaning, intention and the Neoist Conspiracy 19
Viva Neoism 21
None dare call it Nihilism 23
First manifesto of Neoist performance
and the performance of Neoism 25
The meaning and purpose of the Neoist cultural conspiracy 27
Blood, Bread & Beauty 28
Open letter to the Neoist Network and the public at large 31
Discourse on the Suppression of Reality 32
Praxis Manifesto 34
Basic Banalities 35
Slogans to be spread by every means possible 39

APPENDIX

- Selected Poems 1982 – 85 40

"When thinking of the Absolute as subject, men have made use of statements like 'God is the eternal,' the 'moral order of the world,' or 'love,' etc. In such propositions ultimate truth is just barely stated to be Subject but not set forth as the process of reflectively mediating itself within itself. In a proposition of that kind we begin with the word God. By itself this is a meaningless sound, a mere name; the predicate says afterwards what it is, gives it content and meaning: the empty beginning becomes real knowledge only when we thus get to the end of the statement."

Hegel, *Phenomenology Of Mind* (Bamberg, 1807).

"Philosophy has therefore to resign itself to becoming mainly *applied* philosophy; and just as the poetry of art becomes transformed into the prose of thought, so philosophy must descend from the heights of theory into praxis. Practical philosophy, or, more accurately, the philosophy of praxis (whose concrete impact on life and social conditions amounts to the employment of both within concrete activity) — this is the future fate of philosophy in general... Just as thought and reflection overcame the beaux-arts, so the deed and social activity will now overcome philosophy."

August Von Cieszkowski, (Berlin, 1838).

Instead of an introduction, two reprints

TO TELL THE TRUTH?

"There are many ways in which I could begin but perhaps it is best to start by explaining how I became Karen Eliot. The name Karen Eliot is a collective name. It is a name anyone can use — and many people do indeed use it. The purpose of having a number of people use the same name is to examine practically the philosophical question of individuality. It was interest in such philosophical questions and their solution which led me to adopt the collective pseudonym Karen Eliot.

"Of course, I am interested in many philosophical issues besides that of individuality, for instance, I am interested in notions of truth. To practically examine the question of truth, I spread ideas that I consider fallacious and carefully watch other peoples' reaction to them."

— Stewart Home (writing as Karen Eliot) *Nihilism, Philosophy Without Meaning* included in *Smile* No. 8, London November 1985.

THE CONFESSION

As the author of the preceding quote, and an advocate of 'positive plagiarism' and the 'refusal of creativity,' I'm at least partially responsible for the confusion surrounding the chronological development — and even the authorship — of 'my' work. I've been working with the concepts of 'plagiarism' and 'collective pseudonyms' since 1982, but it was not until 1985 — the year in which I plagiarised Gustav Metzger's Art Strike proposal — that the media, art world and anti-authoritarian milieu began to show any interest in my activities.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

THE BACKGROUND

My current activity developed from my exposure to punk rock as a teenager living in the London suburbs. From punk I developed an interest in dada and futurism — and by 1982, I'd decided to apply my 'knowledge' of the historical avant-garde to my activities as a 'rock musician.'

At this time I was working with Mike Kemp who, like myself, was interested in the anti-art tradition. I wrote some manifestos for our group, White Colours, and Mike got them duplicated. These manifestos were heavily influenced by dada. Among other things, they declared that we were an 'art movement' called the Generation Positive, that all art was based on plagiarism, and that all rock bands should be called White Colours. Pleased by the reaction of disbelief we received from the rest of our band and people in general, Mike and I were inspired to write and self-publish several more manifestos.

By the end of 1983, the group had fallen apart and Mike was preoccupied with his studies as a philosophy student. I'd spent much of the summer putting together leaflets advertising myself as an 'avant-garde artist'. Since I'd learnt from punk that I could be a 'musician' without knowing anything about music, I'd decided I could be an artist without knowing anything about art. At about the same time I discovered General Idea, whose work bore a conceptual similarity to my own, and this convinced me I was heading in the right direction.

SMILE BEGINS

In February 1984 I published the first edition of *Smile*, the official organ of the Generation Positive, a 'movement' which was so avant-garde that it consisted solely of myself. By the time I published the second issue of *Smile*, at the beginning of April '84, I'd applied the White Colours concept to the magazine and was demanding that all magazines should be called *Smile*.

Towards the end of April, I came into contact with Pete Horobin, the Scottish Neoist. He told me about the Monty

Cantsin 'open pop-star' concept. An American called David Zack invented the name in 1977. A Latvian musician, Maris Kundzin assumed this identity — and he and Zack mailed out post-cards asking other artists to adopt the Cantsin persona. As it tied in with my White Colours and Smile projects, I decided to adopt the Cantsin identity — and do my best to encourage other people to take on the persona.

COLLABORATORS

At the same time, I decided that the Generation Positive and Neoism should join forces because the post-dada lunacy of Neoism seemed conceptually close to my Generation Positive campaign. Consequently, I worked under the aegis of these twin movements from May '84 until April '85. During this time I coined the phrase 'multiple names' to describe the Smile, White Colours and Monty Cantsin concepts.

My enthusiasm proved to be infectious and these projects became truly collective. Mark Pawson and Erica Smith issued the first Smile related magazines during the summer of '84 — *Slime* was a joint production, while *Limes* was Erica's baby. Joki Mail Art issued the first 'second generation' Smile towards the end of '84. Meanwhile, Pete Horobin and Arthur Berkoff had become enthusiastic about the Monty Cantsin concept and were both using the name. By 1985, editions of Smile were coming thick and fast — and I'd lost count of the number of people using the Cantsin identity.

BREAKDOWN

As the multiple name concept developed, I became more critical about its use. This attitude was fuelled by an increased interest in Situationist theory and Fluxus. I was engaged in a lively correspondence with numerous individuals about multiple names, of which the theoretical elaborations of TENTATIVELY a CONVENIENCE — in particular — were crucial to my developing understanding of the project. As a result, I became somewhat frustrated when the self-styled 'founder of Neoism' claimed to be the 'real' Monty Cantsin. I also disliked the use various Neoists made of

fascist imagery and decided to dissociate myself from the movement.

After I left the Neoist Network, some interesting work was done with the Cansin identity — in particular, a number of projects initiated by Graf Haufen and John Berndt demonstrated various ways in which the concept could be developed.

From April till July of 1985 I went through several months of soul searching. Eventually, I decided I could only continue with my activities if I made a decision about when they would stop.

In 1974, Gustav Metzger had called for a total strike by artists between the years 1977 and 1980. Metzger requested that artists refuse to make, sell or exhibit works. He hoped that as a consequence, the art world would collapse and that artists could then seize control of the means by which their work was distributed. The plan failed because — when it came to the crunch — Metzger was the only artist to strike.

Taking up Metzger's idea in 1985, I issued a call for artists to strike from 1/1/90 to 1/1/93. What interests me is not the prospect of the art world collapsing, but the effect such a strike will have upon my own — and any other artist's — identity. Such a 'refusal of creativity' ties in very neatly with my interest in plagiarism and multiple names, since all three concepts stand in opposition to contemporary Western notions of identity.

A NEW IDENTITY

By July 1985, I'd abandoned the Generation Positive as a framework for my activities and begun to use the word PRAXIS to promote the concepts of plagiarism, multiple names and refusal of creativity. Simultaneously, I decided to launch the name 'Karen Eliot' as a new collective pseudonym.

In 1986, I shifted from doing performance to 'straight' gallery work (mainly installations) and started getting respectable reviews. As a consequence, a number of individu-

als active in the London art world began to treat the name Karen Eliot as being synonymous with me. I counteracted this tendency by using a variety of different names, as well as my legal and birth names — and more or less abandoned using the Karen Eliot identity. Such strategies are essential if multiple names are to remain 'open' and function for collective use.

New editions of Smile continued to appear under the aegis of PRAXIS and various other groups such as Schiz-Flux and the Pregropatavistic Movement.

The success of these collective projects inspired me to organise more ambitious events, such as the Festival of Plagiarism (London January/February 1988). This provided both a critique of 'serious culture' and a platform for alternatives to the elitism of ruling class art. Subsequently, Festivals of Plagiarism have taken place in San Francisco, Madison, Braunschweig and Glasgow.

Recently my chief activity has been writing. My first book *The Assault On Culture: utopian currents from lettrisme to class war*, was published by Aporia Press and Unpopular Books in the summer of 1988. My first novel, *Pure Mania*, will be published by Polygon Books in the autumn. As is the case with all my writing, plagiarism plays a major role in the process of composition. In *Pure Mania*, I take Richard Allen's skinhead books as a role model for my prose style and narrative technique.

My publishers have requested a second novel, which I've promised to complete before the end of the year. This is the only cultural project I'll be undertaking in the foreseeable future. I will not create any new work during the three year period of the Art Strike. However, since the 1990 Art Strike is directed against the identity of the artist — rather than the consumption of cultural goods — I will be allowing the circulation of extant material.

Stewart Home — originally commissioned by *Lightworks* in 1987, updated 1989.

TOWARDS NOTHING

Notes from The Generation Positive on The Nature of The Conspiracy

We are the White Colours, Slaves Of Freedom, Second Coming, Babes On Acid, Flame Thrower Boys, Hip Troop, Jack Off Club, Flat Cap Conspiracy.

We refuse to be limited to one name. We are all names and all things. We encourage other pop ensembles to use these names. We want to see a thousand ensembles with the same name. No one owns names. They exist for all to use. Names like all words are arbitrary.

We attack the cult of the individual, the selfists, the attempts to appropriate names and words for exclusive use. We reject the notion of copyright. Take what you can use.

We reject the notion of genius. Artists are the same as everyone else. Individuality is the last and most dangerous myth of the West.

We assert that all art is propaganda. As part of the super-structure it reflects the base.

We affirm that contradiction is the basis of all thought.

We affirm that plagiarism is the truly modern artistic method. Plagiarism is the artistic crime against property. It is theft and in Western Society theft is a political act.

We want everyone to use our names. Use these names because they are yours. These names do not belong to anyone. Become the White Colours, Slaves Of Freedom, Second Coming etc.

The conspiracy cannot be evaded, all must be absorbed. We exist only by implication. We combat the plague of innovation.

We seek enlightenment through confusion.

We work miracles in audacity.

We will be prosaic. Our meanings will be plain. We will not hint at some beyond. The beyond is the creation of people who lack the ability to give a full embodiment to the real.

We affirm that we are content just to go through the motions.

Twentieth century man is a historical animal. We seek to make twenty-first century man ahistorical. We will live in present time. Past and future exist only by implication. We will get out of time by switching to right brain modes.

We will strive towards nothing because nothing is the truly stable state.

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THE MANIFESTOS

THE MANIFESTOS

DOING THE OBVIOUS IS MORE RADICAL THAN YOU'D IMAGINE

The claims we can make for our art are limited but within these limitations, we have an absolute freedom.

We recognise that what we do is dependent upon the art which preceded it.

Much recent art has been negative, in reaction to this, much of our work will be positive.

We have declared ourselves to be artists because we desire fame, money and beautiful lovers.

We believe that contradiction is the basis of all thought, that plagiarism is the modern aesthetic — and that as artists, we are extremely glamorous people.

While we have no intention of issuing serious expositions of our creed, we do believe that everyone has the potential to be happy.

Above all, we believe in marriage and the family as the essential institutions of a free society.

We are happy to plagiarise. Originality is of no consequence, we seek ideas and actions which will transmit spiritual values.

Change is not necessarily progress. However, novelty usually suffices to entertain the masses.

Personal integrity is more important than artistic integrity. A degenerate artist has no integrity, regardless of the content of their art.

We will be positive. The artist is as fallible as everyone else. Young people of twenty-one wonder why they are nothing in society, without ever realising that they constitute the future.

There is no such thing as selling out. If a work is positive, then it ought to appeal to the mass market.

We believe that there is a place in this world for everything as beautiful as a boy and a girl who fall in love.

The avant-garde tradition in art is now over seventy years old. It has not changed at all during this period of time.

General Idea have repeated the satirical anti-art actions of the futurists, as did several generations of artists before them. These tired cliches are being reiterated yet again by myself and a whole new generation of cultural workers.

Through repetition, the spontaneous gestures of the futurists have been transformed into acts of ritual. Rather than signifying revolt, they now constitute an avant-garde tradition.

We must remove the sick, the perverted, the pornographic and the violent from art, as part of an effort to remove them from life.

The individual artist is incapable of judging his/her own work. The public must be the final judges of meaning and intention.

If life was simple, it would afford us no pleasure.

NO MORE WARS. NO MORE BOHEMIANS. NO MORE ATHEISTS. HONOUR YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR FATHER. NO MORE MISERY. NO MORE HATE. NO MORE DOUBTS. NOW IS THE TIME TO BE JOYFUL. NO MORE ORIGINALITY. NO MORE ANTI-ART. NO MORE WORDS.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GENERATION POSITIVE

The Generation Positive is the secular arm of The Church Of Logical Positivism.

The Generation Positive will appropriate the modernist tradition of revolt by revolting against this tradition and returning to pre-modern values.

The Generation Positive will sing the love of hot running water and colour television.

The Generation Positive worships a new beauty, a beauty of its own creation.

The Generation Positive creates an art that is as delightful as the mass production of ornamental china.

The Generation Positive creates an art to be hung above fire places.

The Generation Positive asserts that truth is beauty and beauty is truth.

The Generation Positive is a club that anybody can join.

By elaborating theories, we would fall into the absurdity of philosophy. We do not elaborate theories.

- a) art is part of life but not its most important part.
- b) life has a meaning and that meaning is to be found in morality.
- c) individuality only has a meaning in the context of collectivity.

These are not assumptions, these are facts.

Facts are a by-product of reason, intuition and faith. The systematic application of these principles produces truth.

ULTIMATUM OF THE GENERATION POSITIVE

We demand the abolition of capitalism at 3pm on Sunday
24th March 1985.

We demand that at 3.15pm on Monday 25th March 1985,
STEWART HOME is declared President of the Western
World.

We demand that at 3.30pm on Tuesday 26th March 1985,
STEWART HOME is crowned King of England in Westminster
Abbey.

We demand that STEWART HOME be made the sole subject
of study for all school children aged twelve and above.

We demand the adoption of the GENERATION POSITIVE as
the sole political party in the assemblies of all freedom loving
peoples.

We demand the adoption of ENGLISH as the international
language of the world.

We demand that all flared trousers are publicly burnt at
3.45pm on Wednesday 27th March 1985.

We demand the disbanding of all existing armies and police
forces and their replacement with the freedom loving forces
of the GENERATION POSITIVE.

We demand that WOKING be declared international capital
of the world.

We demand the introduction of International Poetry Service
— during which, all youths aged between 18 and 20 years
are to be instructed in the composing and performance of
BRUTIST, SIMULTANEIST and STATIC poetry.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

We demand that March 24th be set aside for the annual staging of World Revolution.

We demand an end to culture, ethics and inwardness.

We demand that beige and brown be banned from use in clothes manufacture and interior design.

We demand that everyone join the GENERATION POSITIVE by declaring themselves GENERATION POSITIVE.

We demand that television be declared illegal.

We demand the RIGHT to annual shortages and strikes.

We demand FREE, FAST and FREQUENT public transport.

We demand free FRUIT and VEGETABLES on the National Health Service.

We demand the draining of the ENGLISH CHANNEL, so that bicycle races may be held between DOVER and CALAIS.

We DEMAND that all our DEMANDS are met.

THE NEOIST CULTURAL CONSPIRACY IS A QUEST

The object of this QUEST cannot be recognised until it is found — and even then, it may not be recognised.

The QUEST involves a total commitment to honesty and truth.

The QUEST takes the form of random train journeys, made from unspecified points of departure, to unspecified points of arrival.

These journeys may be made at any time of the year — there must be a time span of at least one week separating each journey.

A minimum of three journeys must be undertaken a year. No more than sixty-two journeys should be made during a three year period.

Journeys may be made individually or by groups of initiates. There is no need for groups to stick together or for individuals to remain alone — the journey is an open situation and change is permitted as it progresses.

Records may be kept of journeys — these are in no way essential.

Postcards should be sent to friends and acquaintances during the course of the journey.

Seekers are advised to travel first class — it may be necessary to spent large portions of any given journey in train toilets, in order to avoid ticket inspectors.

Initiates are warned against the dangers of eating, drinking or sleeping during any journey undertaken as a part of the QUEST.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

Seekers should carry NEOIST materials with them at all times.

Initiates are warned that Cultural Customs Checkpoints may be set up at any point during the course of their journey — seekers should be ready to declaim the NEOIST catechism at all times.

The recruitment of new initiates is to be encouraged during the course of the QUEST.

Seekers have the right to strip-search other passengers. However, initiates are warned that such action should only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances.

Seekers are not subject to the lies of science and may flout the laws of gravity at their own discretion.

Once embarked upon, the QUEST must be maintained for a lifetime.

BE WARNED, MONTYCANTSIN is a hoaxer, a practical joker and a thief. However, behind this facade there is a **GREAT TRUTH** which awaits the more discerning among you. This **TRUTH** will **ASTONISH**, **AMAZE** and **ASTOUND** you. This **TRUTH** can only be revealed to those who embark upon the **QUEST**.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL NEOIST MANIFESTO

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy calls for self-aggrandisement in all aspects of life. Neoism demands that the individual sings his own praises.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy calls on all Neoists to elect themselves to the Pantheon of Genius.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy calls for the overthrow of the current artistic order, so that it can be replaced with the freedom loving Neoist Cultural Elite.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy is an alliance of all Neoists everywhere, a band of heroes who seek to overthrow everyday reality and replace it with Neoist myth.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy has no aesthetic theories and consequently it is the most radical of all avant-garde tendencies.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy will admit anyone to its ranks. All members of the movement are to be addressed as Monty Cantsin.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy promotes the established (post) modern formula of no formula.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy encourages plagiarism because plagiarism saves time and effort, improves results and shows initiative on the part of the individual plagiarist.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy works within the boundaries established over the past century by neo-plagiarism.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy is against the cult of the artist because it is bad for art.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy is for the cult of the artist because it is good for the individual artist.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy hails cycling as the highest form of aesthetic experience.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy asserts that beauty will be beautiful or it will not be at all.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy draws its inspiration from everything that has preceded it because it believes in the value of tradition.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy is a Yea-Sayer offering praise and affirmation.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy repudiates the use of violence unless its deployment furthers the aims of the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy calls for a new purity — a purity of intention.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy affirms the need for bold lines and noble simplicity.

The Neoist Cultural Conspiracy affirms the need for the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy.

MEANING, INTENTION AND THE NEOIST CONSPIRACY

The historical task of the Neoist Conspiracy is to create a rupture in the development of post-modernism and to thrust a revolutionary popularism into this breach.

This popularism is to be achieved by manipulating the mystification process involved in the manufacture and marketing of art.

This process of manipulation will consist of a series of ridiculous demands made on behalf of the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy.

Via this series of demands, the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy will achieve a monopoly over the commodities of blood and gold.

Through control of these commodities, the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy will raise sufficient capital to finance ventures which will further blur the distinction between Neoist myth and reality.

The blurring of myth and reality will serve to strengthen the Neoist Movement and ensure its onward march through history. We will thus secure the immortality of the Neoist leadership, while simultaneously allowing the rank and file members to play a key role in the apotheosis of these Great Wo/men.

The apotheosis of the Neoist leadership will serve as the basis of a tradition which will create social stability and peace through strength.

Future generations will see the Neoist Movement as having stood for the values of honour, courage and international patriotism.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

It is through the propagation of these values that the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy will attract a loyal following within the masses.

It is the masses who will serve as the shock troops of the Neoist Revolution and oust the tyranny and degeneracy of bourgeois liberalism.

It is only through the political defeat of liberalism that Neoism can halt the decline of post-modern aesthetics into a pseudo-mysticism.

Only through the true use of myth as a living form can the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy bring about the defeat of the reigning liberal ideology.

The true use of myth can only be achieved in the context of a radical objectivity, such as the one the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy has worked so hard to bring about.

Remember, the success of Neoism is historically inevitable. In time all our myths will be history.

VIVA NEOISM

Neoism is a cultural movement influenced by Futurism, Dada, Fluxus and Punk, which emerged from the Mail Art Network in the late seventies.

Neoism is a methodology for manufacturing art history. The idea is to generate interest in the work and personalities of the various individuals who are said to constitute the movement. Neoists want to escape from 'the prison of art' and 'change the world.' With this end in mind, they present capitalist society with an angst-ridden image of itself.

Anyone can become a Neoist simply by declaring themselves to be a part of the movement and adopting the name Monty Cantsin. However, Neoists don't restrict themselves to using the name Monty Cantsin, they use the name Smile too. Neoists call their pop groups Smile, their performance groups Smile — even their magazines are called Smile.

This is a genuine existential experiment, it is an exercise in practical philosophy. Neoists wish to determine what happens when they cease to differentiate between assorted artefacts and individuals.

However, while Neoists place their faith in practical philosophy, they DO NOT endorse the study of logic as pursued in the universities and other authoritarian institutes. Neoist philosophy is to be tested on the streets, in pubs and night clubs, it involves the creation of a communist culture — not theoretical abstractions.

Capitalism masters the material world by naming and describing those objects it wishes to manipulate. By rendering names meaningless, Neoists destroy the central control mechanism of bourgeois logic. Without these classifications, Power cannot differentiate, divide and isolate the revolutionary masses.

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

Because they are sick of the fragmentary world in which they live, the Neoists have agreed to adopt a common name. Every action carried out under the banner of Monty Cantsin, is a gesture of defiance against the Order of Power — and a demonstration that the Neoists are ungovernable. Monty Cantsin is a true individual in a world where real individuality is a crime!

Ultimately, Neoist philosophy is a revolutionary project which is undertaken with a view to improving the lot of mankind. Neoism supersedes all previous philosophies because it consciously founds itself on rhetoric rather than factual observation.

Neoists believe in the value of fraud as a revolutionary weapon. They practice an impure science and regularly fake their results. Using this methodology, Neoism has effortlessly refuted the dominant illusions connected to the mental set 'individuality' and now claims its right to slaughter all those who refuse to realise their true humanity. The success of Neoism is historically inevitable. **LONG LIVE DEATH!**

NONE DARE CALL IT NIHILISM

Neoist aesthetics are characterised by the practice of plagiarism and the use of collective pseudonyms. Plagiarism is a means of attacking private property, while the adoption of the name Monty Cantsin by all members of the Neoist Network, is central to the movement's death struggle with capitalism.

Backtracking for a moment to the late sixteenth century, we find that playwrights such as Shakespeare and Marlowe often plagiarised plots and ideas from earlier writers. In this plagiaristic aspect of Elizabethan drama, we can discern a highly advanced form of proto-modernism.

Plagiarism was also particularly well-used by Lautreamont/Ducasse (1846-70). Similarly, the work of William S. Burroughs is heavily dependent on plagiarism in terms of both content and style. This is particularly noticeable in relation to the texts of Tzara and Artaud.

The great advantage of plagiarism as a literary method is that it removes the need for talent, or even much application. All you really have to do is select what to plagiarise. Enthusiastic beginners might like to start by plagiarising this essay. A hardcore nihilist might choose to plagiarise it verbatim; while those individuals who labour under the delusion that they are of a more artistic bent, will probably want to change a word here and there — or even place the paragraphs in a different order!

It should not be forgotten that plagiarism is a highly creative exercise and that with every act of plagiarism a new meaning is brought to the plagiarised work. Unfortunately, this does not alter the fact that the capitalistic forces controlling Western culture have proscribed as illegal the plagiarising of modern texts. However, do not allow this to deter you from plagiarising modern work. A few sensible precautions will

protect you from prosecution. The basic rule in avoiding copyright infringement is to take the idea and spirit of a text without actually plagiarising it word for word. One of the best examples of this is Orwell's *1984* — which is a straight rewrite of Zamyatin's *We*. Anyone with a serious interest in neo-plagiarism should spend some time comparing these two texts.

In the area of popular music, a good example of neo-plagiarism is the way in which the chord sequence was lifted from *Louie Louie* and married to the words of *Wild Thing*. This is plagiarism at its best, with no redeeming factors such as a clever change of context.

In short, plagiarism saves time and effort, improves results and shows considerable initiative on the part of the individual plagiarist. As a revolutionary tool, it is ideally suited to the demands of the late twentieth century.

FIRST MANIFESTO OF NEOIST PERFORMANCE AND THE PERFORMANCE OF NEOISM

In Neoism, individual performances are approached not as isolated pieces but rather as part of the performance of a much larger work, Neoism itself. As such, everything done under the banner of Neoism — from writing a poem or letter, to being interviewed by a newspaper or magazine — is to be considered a performance which in turn forms part of the performance of an art movement called Neoism.

While the performance of Neoism is quite obviously a cynical ploy to gain attention for the individual performance pieces which constitute this mythical art movement, it is no more contrived or unreal than the performance of Dada, Futurism, Surrealism, Situationism or Fluxus.

In the performance of Neoism, actual performance pieces play an important role because we have chosen to create a late twentieth-century art movement whose precursors are Situationism and Fluxus. It logically follows that the artistic substance of Neoism will be performance and text, especially manifestos, rather than work in mediums such as painting and sculpture — which are characteristic of nineteenth-century art movements.

In Neoist performance, as in the performance of Neoism, actions should be humorous — with particular emphasis laid on slapstick, farce and parody. Neoist performance emphasises roughness, irregularity and sudden variation. It is boisterous and — due to our belief in relative naturalism and synoptic realism — always deadpan.

Rather than being concerned with images, Neoist performers are interested in the social relation between people whose lives are mediated by images. Neoism has more to do

NEOIST MANIFESTOS

with the social uses of myth, than the means by which individual myths are created.

Thus in the performance of Neoism, we are more concerned with creating a media representation of ourselves than any physical interaction with our audience. Likewise, we are more interested in what we are imagined to be, than in our imaginative vision as artists.

During the performance of Neoism, we are equally concerned with ideas and action. Without action, our ideas are utterly useless. The popular imagination is attuned to action rather than ideas, the masses lack any sense of the ridiculous, while their drab lives give them a thirst for colour and drama. Therefore, action is the only means by which we can engage the popular imagination. As a consequence, Neoist performance should always be irrational, illogical and spectacular.

To sum up, Neoist performance consists solely of acts which spread the virus of Neoism. These actions are necessarily self-referential. As long as the Neoist performer bears these facts in mind, there is no way s/he can go wrong.

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THE NEOIST CULTURAL CONSPIRACY REVEALED

The Neoists, temporarily located on the Earth, are here to act as the vanguard in the future revolutionary struggle.

We left our home in a distant galaxy so that we could prepare the Earth people for the total revolution which will occur at the end of this century.

At this time, our UFO's will mass in the Earth's skies and lead the world proletariat in a final victory over the reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie.

This victory will mark the death of history and the beginning of a new era in which total subjectivity rules.

Earthlings will no longer adapt to the world, they will make the world adapt to them. There will be a return to the freedom of childhood. Wo/man will break the bonds of bourgeois paternalism and master her destiny by attaining total subjectivity. The Neoists will assist in this matter by presenting the revolutionary masses with a set of black boxes — wo/man will then employ Neoist technology to control the forces of nature.

The speed with which the Earth moves around the Sun will be increased until this journey is completed in just twenty-four hours. Each day will be a year long. The life-span of individual Earthlings will be multiplied by thousands of years. Time itself will dilate and eternity will be defined as one hour of present Earth time.

BLOOD, BREAD AND BEAUTY

From Lautreamont onwards it has become increasingly difficult to write, not because we lack ideas and experiences to articulate — but due to Western society becoming so fragmented that it is no longer possible to piece together what was traditionally considered 'good' prose. That is, writing which is unified by a single idea or body of ideas, where each sentence follows logically from the preceding one — and where every paragraph and chapter flows smoothly into the next. Today, thoughts seem to break before they are fully formed, they turn back on themselves, contradict each other and make it impossible to write in a style which appears harmonious.

The great problem with twentieth-century art is the constant demand for something new and original. As a consequence, while everything appears to be in a state of flux, nothing actually changes. Instead, the same half-baked ideas constantly re-appear under a succession of different names. It took thousands of years to develop perspective and yet today people demand radical innovations every week. The result is they get exactly what they deserve — insults.

Neoism is opposed to Western Philosophy because it repudiates the rhetoric of logical argument. Logic is the road that leads to no-where, or at the very best madness. Neoism has never claimed to resolve anything, Neoism simply is. It asserts no more than is obvious and nothing is more obvious than Neoism. Neoism is the ultimate form of Western Philosophy because it is not a philosophy at all, it is an illegible note that Tristan Tzara allowed to fall from his breast pocket prior to a performance at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. It is no more than a sneeze, or rather hollow laughter. Neoism is undefeatable, self-refuting and incomprehensible.

Every act of superstition confirms and reinforces a belief in something above and beyond wo/man. The whole point of revolution is to smash the fragmentary world of capital and lynch the bosses who quite deliberately promote an ideology of individualism in order to prevent the development of class consciousness. Because religion is a support, a crutch, a recognition that wo/man can't live fully as an isolated individual, it contains within it the seeds of a mass revolutionary consciousness.

Today, the dead weight of history oppresses us with more efficiency than the most reactionary politicians of the past could imagine in their dreams of bureaucratic perfection. We stagger and suffocate under the burden of thousands of years of accumulated debris. Debris that stifles anything but the most aggressive of creative sparks. And today, that spark threatens to burn us alive in a prison of our own making. Today, the urge to smash the venerable museums has reached a point from which it threatens to become more burdensome than any previous history.

The only movement to work consistently towards the death of history since the disbanding of the Situationist International has been the Global Neoist Network. Only Neoism carries within it the revolutionary potential for the realisation of our complete humanity. Since 1979, Neoism has been defending the revolutionary gains made by the Situationists and Fluxus. The Neoists are the only group to have brought about the conjunction of nihilism and historical consciousness—the two elements essential for the destruction of the old order, the order of history.

Neoism stands at the end of history, the present. Despite the uncertainty such a position inevitably entails, Neoism draws strength from its sense of history, its sense of the reality of the past — and of the importance of Lautreamont, the Situationists and Fluxus. We have studied these people carefully and discovered that there is nothing to be learnt

from them. Those who look to the past walk blindly into the future.

Neoism has always been more concerned with propagating confusion than serving itself up in consumable chunks. A Neoist is somebody who believes in the value of carrying an umbrella on a rainy day, or rather in stealing someone else's umbrella if it starts to rain. S/he is someone who, as a matter of conviction, refuses to work. Who would rather survive on someone else's money than the fruits of their own labour. Someone who seeks gratification in the present rather than security in the future. Someone who is quite genuinely surprised when their relatives express anger at their turning up at five in the morning demanding to be lent a considerable sum of money. Someone who, utterly convinced of their own genius, believes that not only are they owed a living — but that their very existence entitles them to be kept in the lap of luxury at somebody else's expense. Above all, a Neoist is someone who believes that art, rather than being the creation of genius, is merely an exercise in public relations. A dull sham, not even worth debunking in public.

OPEN LETTER TO THE NEOIST NETWORK AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE

As soon as I got back from the Neoist Festival in Ponte Nossa, Italy, I ceased to be a Neoist and moved to Stoke Newington in North London. As an ironic gesture, I named my new house Akademgorod. I felt it fitting that upon ceasing to be a Neoist, I should realise the six-finger plan, the establishment of Akademgorod. As Akademgorod is a promised land, I'm keeping its whereabouts a poorly guarded secret and using a box number for my mail.

My approach to art, life and politics has not changed. I simply feel it's no longer feasible for me to be a 'Neoist.' Splits and schisms are essential to my conception of Neoism — and any public slanging match between an ex-Neoist and the remaining members of the group is worth twelve dozen great works of art. Ultimately, what all Neoists should aim for is an acrimonious split with the movement. To leave Neoism is to realise it.

DISCOURSE ON THE SUPPRESSION OF REALITY

Today there is nothing left to hope for but the safe arrival of the next welfare cheque. Radical art and politics are dead.

Rather than being the birth of a new era of struggle, the activities of the Dutch Provos, the Situationists, King Mob and the Angry Brigade, were — in reality — the swan-song of the avant-garde tradition.

Slowly, we are reclaiming the European heritage (Lettrisme/ Nuclear Art) which marked the end of the classical avant-garde — and which was, until recently, obliterated from our consciousness by its inferior American contemporaries such as Abstract Expressionism and the Beat Generation. However, all this increase in our historic consciousness has achieved, is the underlining of the idea that our belief in change is simply one of a number of things which never changes.

Today, there's not a single expression of defiance left to be made. Everything has been done, all that's possible is the addition of irony to a decadent discourse through the repetition of single gestures isolated from the avant-garde tradition — and performed in full consciousness of their futility. Nothing can be taken seriously — and this is especially true of statements which imply it is no longer possible to be serious.

When the avant-garde succumbed to fragmentation, there was a serious decline in the quality of its thought. Today, the truly avant-gardist work achieves a banality unthinkable at the turn of the century.

Fragmentation within the avant-garde eventually resulted in the separation of its art and politics — without either ever achieving a genuine autonomy. On the one hand, there was

Fluxus and on the other, the Situationists. Both are marked by a reactionary attitude towards wimmin which expresses itself in the form of a supposedly liberated sexuality that is, when examined, both repressive and moralistic.

Today, we are no longer stupid enough to imagine that what we do is new, or even that such an assertion does not imply a progression — and hence a certain amount of 'originality.'

PRAXIS MANIFESTO

Previous avant-garde movements have sought the realisation of aims and principles set out in an endless series of manifestos. In PRAXIS we arrive at practice.

PRAXIS abolishes the divide between theory and practice by defining itself in terms of the tautology 'I am what I am.' That is to say that whatever we are or do is PRAXIS.

Where previous avant-garde movements sought to define themselves through the exclusion of ideas, PRAXIS finds coherence in the totality of human endeavour and particularly in the endeavour to seek definition through exclusion.

PRAXIS supersedes Neoism precisely because it does not seek new artistic methods or aesthetic criteria. In PRAXIS, we practice plagiarism as an artistic technique and investigate the use of the multiple name aesthetic. Individuality is to be questioned by everyone adopting the name Karen Eliot and issuing a magazine called Smile.

BASIC BANALITIES

In the West time has always been linear. However, it was not until the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century that a dynamic notion of progress was effectively coupled to this. Once the bourgeoisie installed itself in power, the implications of this coupling invaded every area of life. In the arts, this manifested itself in a fetishising of 'originality' in the form of stylistic innovation. The upshot of this is that eighteenth century rationalism became nineteenth century romanticism which, in turn, became twentieth century modernism. It should be emphasised that these 'innovations' were always in terms of style and never in terms of content. That is to say, they were essentially hollow and that beneath surface appearances, there was no change at all.

Having looked at the 'broad' categories, we will turn our attention to the sub-divisions which art historians make a living from elaborating. The first modernist sub-division of any consequence is futurism, which was essentially a fusion of cubism, expressionism and the ideas of Alfred Jarry. The futurist obsession with shock, originality and innovation, mark the movement as a typical product of bourgeois society. It was only natural that the futurists should develop from such criteria a love of speed, machines and war.

Due to the bourgeois demand for continual pseudo-change, futurism was soon overtaken by dada as an artistic force. Dada was basically futurism with knobs on — but where futurism balanced its negative aspects with a belief in technological progress, dada embraced an entirely nihilistic perspective. Dadaistic negation reached its peak with Club Dada in Berlin — after which its nihilism was negated by the Parisian dadaists who went on to rename it surrealism.

The surrealists achieved their negation of dadaist nihilism by rationalising the irrational with badly digested fragments of Marxist-Leninism and Freudian psycho-analysis. Where dada

had destroyed the language of alienation elaborated by de Sade, Lautreamont and Rimbaud — surrealism held up these pornographers of the human soul as liberators of repressed desire.

As surrealism faded into academicism, it was replaced by fresh groups of avant-gardists. The first of these, the Lettriste Movement, was founded in 1946 by Isidore Isou — a Romanian living in Paris. The Lettristes identified creativity as the essential human urge and then defined this solely in terms of originality. Their interests were initially literary and resemble inferior works of concrete poetry. Isou believed he had superseded all aesthetic structures and re-systematised the sciences of language and sign into a single discipline which he named 'hypergraphology.'

The left-wing of the Lettristes, led by Guy Debord, disrupted a Charlie Chaplin press conference at the Paris Ritz in the summer of 1952. Isou denounced them to the newspapers which resulted in the left-wing splitting from the main body of the movement, renaming itself the Lettriste International and issuing its own bulletin 'Potlatch.'

The main activities of the Lettriste International were 'drifting' and 'psychogeography.' The former consisted of wandering around a city following the solicitations of the architecture. It was an attempt to find types of architecture one desired unconsciously. Psychogeography was the study and correlation of the material obtained from drifting. It was used to draw up new emotional maps of existing areas and plans for Utopian cities.

While the Lettriste Movement was primarily a literary phenomena and the Lettriste International was chiefly concerned with urbanism, there existed other groups whose energy was focussed on painting. One such movement was COBRA, formed in 1948 out of the Dutch Experimental Group, the Danish Spiralen group and the Belgian Bureau Internationale de Surrealisme Revolutionaire. COBRA's work

was a European reaction to Abstract Expressionism. The movement lasted three years and was partially reconstituted when Asger Jorn, a former member, founded the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus in 1953. Jorn was assisted in his formation of the Imaginist Bauhaus — which was set up in opposition to the New Bauhaus of Max Bill — by Enrico Baj, who was at that time, the leading light of the Nuclear Art Movement.

Nuclear Art had been founded in 1951 by Baj and Sergio Dangelò. The membership was drawn from a number of Italian avant-garde groups including MAC, T and Group 58. It also included as members or close collaborators former futurists, dadaists and surrealists (for example Raoul Hausmann). Between 1953 and 56, there doesn't appear any clear distinction between the membership of the Imaginist Bauhaus and Nuclear Art. And membership seems to be the only thing which differentiated Nuclear Art from the Spatialists — a Milanese group who, like COBRA and the Nuclear Artists, were experimenting with a European style of abstract painting.

In September 1956, a conference was held in Alba, Italy, to bring together members of the European avant-garde. In reality, this meant members of the Lettriste International, Nuclear Art and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus. Before the conference began, there was a split with the Belgian representative Christian Dotremont, a former surrealist and ex-member of COBRA. Enrico Baj was excluded on the first day and the conference then confirmed its break with the Nuclearists. The meeting created an accord which formed the basis for the unification in 1957 of the Lettriste International and the Imaginist Bauhaus. The amalgamated groups adopted the name Situationist International.

Nuclear Art, like Isou's Lettriste Movement, continued to develop its own theses and ignored the formation of the Situationist International (SI). Indeed, 1957 — the year of

the SI's founding — was to prove the high water mark of the Nuclearists' activities. It was at this time that they issued their 'Against Style' manifesto, whose signatories included Piero Manzoni, Yves Klien and at least one member of the College de Pataphysique. The manifesto stated that 'every invention becomes convention: it is imitated for purely commercial reasons, which is why we must begin a vigorous anti-stylistic action in the cause of eternally 'other' art.' It concluded, 'Impressionism helped painting to get rid of conventional subject matter; cubism and futurism later got rid of the need for realistic reproductions of objects; and abstraction finally removed the last traces of representational illusion. A new — and final — link today completes this chain: we Nuclear painters, denounce, in order to destroy, the final convention, STYLE.'

In March 1962, the Situationist International split into two factions. Most of the Situationists based in Northern Europe — slightly more than half the movement's members — broke with the French speaking faction and formed the 2nd Situationist International. Those whose activities were centred on Paris, responded by 'excluding' the Northern Europeans from 'their' group and became — in effect — a fringe organisation on the margins of the French ultra-left. Deriving their theory from Paul Cardan, Henri Lefebvre and the Frankfurt School, this group developed a politics based upon the concept of 'the Spectacle.' The idea being that under Capital, the consumer is reduced to the level of a passive spectator who observes life rather than participates in it. The Spectacle is treated simultaneously as a generalised and a localised phenomenon. By offering a series of overlapping — but hardly regimented descriptions — the French Situationists were unable to arrive at a uniform notion of their theoretical construct. They appraised the various movements of the Spectacle without demonstrating any real relationship between them. Fortunately, the resulting theoretical fall-out has only contaminated a very small section of the revolutionary movement.

SLOGANS TO BE SPREAD BY EVERY MEANS POSSIBLE

Leaflets, announcements over public address systems, comic strips, speech bubbles on paintings in the National Gallery, during the disruption of films and concerts, sprayed over advertising hoardings, before having sex, after having sex &c.

**THOSE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE
MEANING OF THESE WORDS WILL BE IGNORANT
OF THEIR IMPLICATION**

STRENGTH THROUGH POWER

CREATE THE FUTURE BY DESTROYING THE PAST

LIFE BEGINS WHERE HISTORY ENDS

ART IS SANCTIONED PORNOGRAPHY

LOOTING TAKES THE WAITING OUT OF WANTING

PLEASURE IS THE NEGATION OF DESIRE

DEMOLISH SERIOUS CULTURE

**SHOPLIFTING: EVERYTHING YOU WANT FROM A
STORE AND A LITTLE BIT MORE**

LIVE NOW, DIE LATER

**LOVE IS THE INTERNALISED INVERSION OF THE
SPECTACLE OF OPPRESSION**

ABOLISH TRUTH

CHOOSE ALIENATION

APPENDIX – Selected Poems 1982–85

Dish Bananas Black

I walked past the fruit dish
Smiling at the bananas —
They were yellow and black

Aulton Place London SE11

there is a house
beyond the factory wall
where people live behind drawn
curtains

Trilogy

a)

autumn leaves
distant supermarket
my heart beats faster with thoughts
of you

Peanut Butter

spread the word
spread peanut butter
it tastes so good with everything

b)

snow in winter fields

birdsong

a passing car

we two
together

Than curtains centre through

life is so much more
than

a pair of lace
curtains

c)

English Channel

Irish Sea

Atlantic Ocean

Nothing can separate us now

parted at the
centre

with eyes peeping
through

Lumsden

Sitting on a mountain

Drinking coffee

Cloud above

Mist below

Gravity

Gravity's a useful thing

It makes the world go round

It keeps the stars up in the sky

And us down on the ground

Press

O

The Sea

The sea is green

And grey and blue

And very big

Daisies

puss purr

yellow and white

eyes on fire in the sunlight

Journal

in may

we bought toilet rolls

by the dozen

The Human Condition

Cure acne and blackheads

With the human condition

Develop confidence

With the human condition

Be the first on your block

With the human condition

Aradia

ah aradia

i sent her flowers

the day after

i shaved my pubic hair

The rain fell like water

I sat in the orange chair

As the rain fell like water

On the other side of the window

Tomatoes

I'm sick and tired
of fried tomatoes
that always sound the same

that sizzle in the fat
and then fall silent
on my plate

Hedonism

E R O S
R O
O R
S O R E

Water River Sea

the water
in the river
always flows towards the sea

Thames

Thames
Angel of this city

Thames
Saviour of our town

Thames
Tell me the first law of motion

Ode to British Rail

North

South

East

West

Whichever way the train is best

Cucumber

when
she answered the phone

i
stretched out on the floor

and
placed cucumber slices

on
my eyelids

Beyond the Wall of Sleep

Those familiar hands
Vast and silent
Against a darkening sky

Uncollected

anyone who has written anything
has written too much

words can only hint at what must
be left unspoken

Stoke Newington

subjectivity flowers
amongst coffee cups
and wilts when the waitress
comes to clear them away

Key

hours pass

the telephone rings

a message

Customs Event

opening a closed suitcase

closing the opened suitcase

Singing Surgeon

needles

thread

music

When I was a Cowboy

The mountains stood
Solid as rock
At the end of the buffalo plain

Snowdonia

swallow

falls

Virginia Water

the lake reflecting in the trees

the park

the sun

the sky

the gardens

Spring

pour water over an unwound coil

Swinging London

I've trawled this town

one time too often

my face blank

my heart broken

Sunset Over Richmond

the outline of an ice rink

frozen against the sky

Grove Road E3

the first flying bomb on london

fell here 13 june 1944

Making a Splash

Tower Bridge

The Thames

Well Street After Dark

wind

litter

the plate glass front of a supermarket

The Assault On Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War — Stewart Home

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