

ROLAND

The ICA's Magazine
Issue 8
November 2010–February 2011

—
FEATURING BACKGROUND
MATERIAL ON

- 4 Bloomberg New Contemporaries
- 12 Rhythm Section
- 20 6a Architects Residency
- 28 Gustav Deutsch
- 36 The Trouble with Painting

—
ARTIST PROJECT

Siôn Parkinson

—
ICA BOOKSHOP

—
INCLUDING TEXTS &
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Gavin Brown
Patrick Coyle
Sacha Craddock
Thierry de Duve
Tom Emerson, Stephanie Macdonald,
Erin Byrne & Emma-Jayne Taylor
Albert Goldbarth
Tom Gunning
Jeremy Hyman
Kid Millions
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Cover, p. 13, 18 and 19: Drum notes from
99Boadrum, performed at ATP, May 2010, p. 5:
Raphael Hefti, *In Memory of Phlogiston*, 2009

Font by B&P Foundry

The ICA is proud to present the eighth issue of ROLAND, which has been produced to accompany the programme from November 2010 to February 2011. During this period, we present the return of Bloomberg New Contemporaries to the ICA; *Rhythm Section*, a five-day event that explores the experimental potential of the percussive technique; an in-depth look at the work of artist-filmmaker Gustav Deutsch; a residency with London-based architects 6a, and a debate on the position of painting within contemporary art.

ROLAND includes introductions to each featured project, as well as background material from a wide range of authors, artists and commentators, providing a broad context within which to view the events. The publication also contains a section devoted to art intended to be experienced through the published format; in this issue we feature a contribution from New Contemporaries participant Siôn Parkinson.

Bloomberg

New Contemporaries 2010



ICA

26 November 2010 – 23 January 2011

BLOOMBERG NEW CONTEMPORARIES

The Institute of Contemporary Arts is pleased to welcome back Bloomberg New Contemporaries after a hiatus of more than twenty years. New Contemporaries was presented intermittently at the ICA between 1964 and 1989 and has consistently provided a critical and engaging insight into emergent trends within contemporary art. Simply referring back to the participants in its last year at the ICA before venturing on its nomadic path reinforces the impact that New Contemporaries has had on British art since its inception in 1949.¹ In 1989, the exhibition featured future Turner Prize nominee Glenn Brown alongside future winners Damien Hirst and Mark Leckey.² This year, New Contemporaries offers a new generation of art students and recent graduates an internationally recognised platform to present a collection of sophisticated and experimental works that confidently combine concept with visual flair in a variety of media.

This year, Leckey returns to New Contemporaries, but as one of the internationally acclaimed panel of selectors, which also includes British painter Dawn Mellor and the Mexican sculptor Gabriel Kuri. The rigorous process of selection takes place over a number of days, with the selectors studying thousands of images sent by applicants from colleges around the UK.

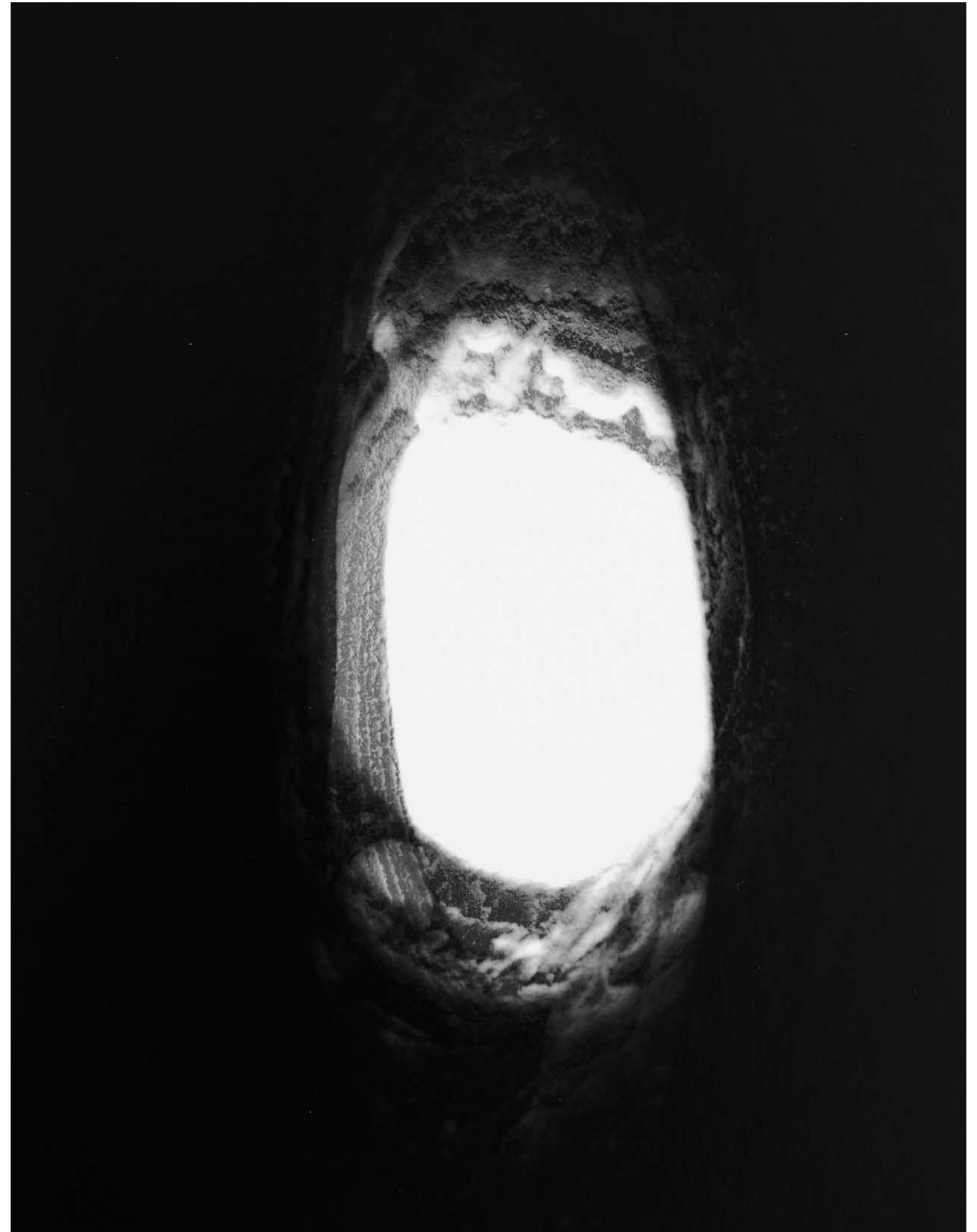
To mark the renewal of its longstanding relationship with New Contemporaries, the ICA presents an expanded programme of events that explores the themes prevalent

within the exhibition and in contemporary art in general. These events include a comprehensive programme of film screenings from the New Contemporaries archive, a series of professional practice workshops and a programme of gallery talks by respected academics, artists, critics and curators including Maria Fusco, Stuart Comer, Brian Dillon and John Russell. A series of debates such as 'The Trouble with Painting' and 'The Trouble with Sculpture' focuses on themes inspired by or involving participants from New Contemporaries.

Complementing the education and events programme is a Live Art weekend entitled 'Against Gravity', during which an international selection of artists, curators and musicians presents an array of philosophical positions, manifestos, images, films and performances.

To accompany the exhibition, the ICA and New Contemporaries have commissioned Andrea Büttner, Alistair Frost, Gabriel Kuri and Daniel Sinsel to create limited edition prints.

1. From 1949 to 1973, New Contemporaries was titled 'Young Contemporaries'.
2. The catalogue essay from New Contemporaries 1989 is reprinted in the following pages of this magazine.



THE BRITISH TELECOM NEW CONTEMPORARIES 1989

SACHA CRADDOCK

This year's New Contemporaries features far fewer artists than usual. When possible we have shown more than one work by each artist in order to avoid the jumbled lack of context that often blights these kinds of shows. We chose what we thought was the very best; we had no desire to represent what was going on in art schools generally. This is not a liberal show to please all. It is intended to do justice to those chosen by giving them space and calm in which to be strong. As we emerged from the darkness after three days of slides, we were sure that what we had retrieved from the mass of confusion would stand up for itself and undoubtedly provoke response. There is no set quota of painting to sculpture, photography to print; it was judged all at once in order to avoid the false divisions that sometimes get in the way of collective choice.

What have the works got in common? Why did we choose them? Of course, there is never any real line up in the sky, or total 'truth' about quality, but there are certain things you desperately seek. Clarity, for one: the sense that what you see is what the artist means you to see. Those three days in the dark were pretty desperate at times. Slide after slide gave off the air of directionless confusion, the general hedging of visual bets. As beasts and monsters, angels and ideas clicked before us by tens, we waited for someone's confidence to lift us out of the general blur. When we found it we could not help but agree.

The work in this exhibition seems self-contained to a degree unusual for the 1980s. There are hints and suggestions of the world outside but a lack of symbolism for its own sake. The shopping list of meaning and rationale, whether pushed in paint or hinted as concept, is replaced by the object itself. Perhaps this is in a way old-fashioned modern with its cooled-down areas of concern.

All of the sculpture uses materials in a direct and deliberate way. When Maggie Ellenby uses latex rubber she means to use latex rubber, not just because of certain connotations, but because it hangs in swathes in such a way. Much of the sculpture feels at home with its size. Some of it is very small. Martin Haycock's piece uses familiar domestic shapes – a key, a ladle – but the possible qualities of line and curve transcend the notion of those objects' former uses. There definitely seems to be less of the found, more of the bought. Sculpture students used to bring any old thing back to the studio and then depend on the dirt and history of the found object to do the meaningful work. These artists have all been most clinical and calculating in their creation. They do not bring the order out of chaos; they build, bend and construct in a cleaner, calmer way. Tom Freeston's small, red, two-way bollard is like much of the work here for it feels familiar and down to earth. Resembling a spent

WHEN FORM HAS BECOME ATTITUDE – AND BEYOND

THIERRY DE DUVE

It used to be that the teaching of art was academic and proud of it. Rooted in the observation of nature and the imitation of previous art, the long apprenticeship of a would-be painter or sculptor was primarily an acquisition of skills put under specific cultural constraints. Life-drawing and its underlying discourse, anatomy, provided the basic skill ennobled with humanistic knowledge. Never, though, was art equated with skill. What deserved admiration in the accomplished artist was talent, not craftsmanship. Skill could be acquired, talent could not, since talent was thought of as a gift of nature – a gift, however, which could neither develop nor express itself outside the rules, conventions, and codes provided by the tradition. Tradition set the standards against which the production of art students was measured. Academic teaching had great ambitions as regards the maintenance of tradition and the passing on of quality standards; it had little vanity as regards its ability to 'turn out' individual artists. All it could hope to do was nurture and discipline its students' gifts within the limits of nature's generosity, and to grant even the most ungifted students a technical know-how capable of securing them a recognised, if humble, place in society and a plausible, if modest, source of income. Between the work of the artisan and that of the genius the Academy recognised a leap in quality, but also the cultural continuity of one and the same trade in which everybody held his (or her) rank.

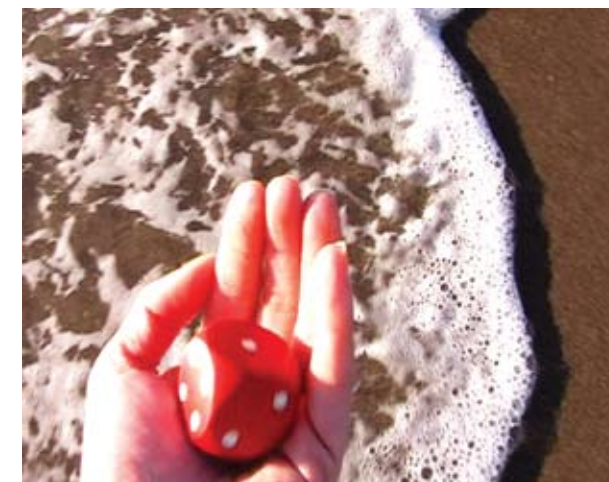
All this was destroyed in less than a century. Reynolds was probably the last great academic pedagogue; a century after him, the Academy had withered into academicism. As industrialisation and the social upheaval, scientific progress and ideological transformations that went with it decomposed the hitherto stable social fabric and, on the whole, more or less destroyed all craftsmanship, the examples of the past lost their credibility, in art and elsewhere, and the chain of tradition was eventually broken. To the sensitive artist, academic art and training became just that,



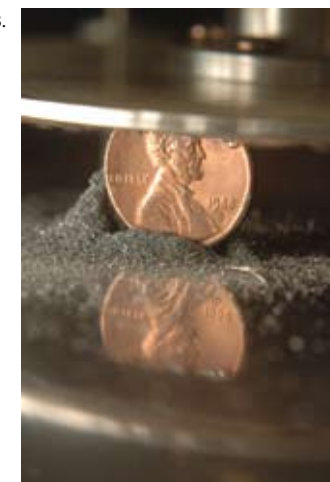
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academic, and the new art began to look toward the future for its legitimation, with fear and hope alike. The avant-garde was launched. Painting and sculpture, progressively turning away from observation and imitation of outside models, turned inwards and started to observe and imitate their very means of expression. Instead of exerting their talent within relatively fixed conventions, the modernist artists put those conventions themselves to an aesthetic test and, one by one, discarded those by which they no longer felt constrained. Excellence in art came to be measured against the resistance of the medium, with, as yardstick, the honesty with which the artist yields to it. All tradition rejected, painting came to be seen as a sort of essence, present in all painting, past, present or future, as if the medium in its purity could set the rules by itself, command over skill, and provide a vessel for talent. Sculpture, architecture, photography, even cinema became similar essences.

Soon, art schooling was affected by the avant-garde. As the examples and standards of the past could no longer be trusted, as imitation and observation could no longer provide the basis for the apprenticeship of art, the teaching of art had to look elsewhere for roots in both nature and culture. This it achieved in two ways. The figure of Man – the universal measure of all things in nature – was relinquished as outer model for observation, but was recouped as inner subjective principle. Psychology replaced anatomy in its function as foundational discourse for a new artistic humanism. The new doctrine stated that all men are endowed with innate faculties which it is the function of education to allow to grow. Thus, specialisation in the visual arts meant the specific training and growth of the faculties of visual perception and imagination. How to train them became the pedagogical issue. Again, psychology – not the introspective kind but perception psychology, Gestalt theory, and so on – provided the idea that the ability to perceive is, by nature, already cultural, that perception is, so to speak, a basic reading skill. It followed from there that imagination was a basic writing skill of sorts. 'Creativity' is the name, the modern name, given to the combined innate faculties of perception and imagination. Everybody is endowed with it, and the closer it remains to sheer, blank endowment, the greater is its potential. A child, a primitive, has more creativity than a cultivated adult. The ideal art student, the artist of the future, came to be dreamt of as an infant whose natural ability to read and write the visual world needs only to be properly tutored. The problem became to find the appropriate means. If only the practice of

cartridge case, it sits on the floor, a useless but apparently ordinary object. Thierry Hauch's *Untitled* is a frustrating piece. He has covered a mirror with a white acrylic sheet to deny normal practical use, and create something else. This is a calm work that avoids the confounding aridity of conceptual art by balancing the concept with seduction.

Although it is not a particularly humorous show there is no place for the cynical. Rather than adopting the detached pose of irony, these artists are rooted in the landscape of the late twentieth century. Grand gestures and other-worldliness have been replaced by a quiet reflection on the physicality of our mechanised existence.

Apart from Damien Hirst's cabinets, which tell a story from pill to potion, none of this work apes the outside world in a straightforward way. Nothing has been brought in, photographed, or merely displayed in order to say 'life is like that'. It has all gone through a proper process in order to justify itself. Julian Lee's photograph of Professor Alan has a frighteningly Victorian 'Turn of the Screw' precision to it – gone wrong. The professor has a blurred face, a smear that makes this fictional character unnervingly authoritarian. Maud Sulter's perfect portraits use an advanced photographic slickness to say something confrontational. Her awareness of this technique and all its connotations allows questions to be asked and answered at the same time.

Architecture features strongly. Michael Minnis' high buildings are painted in a full and bursting way. Their overall control gives the illusion of detail that is not really there; the detail is just the paint as it pushes forward from the windows and walls. Glenn Brown's painting from a photograph is good in itself; its subject is a building in America by Philip Johnson. This monochrome work, painted from a photograph, is sympathetic to the hopes that modern architecture had at that time and avoids simplistic moaning about the brutality of modern architecture. The process of painting it in this way almost protects the building from criticism.

John Howard's powerful etching of the soaring space inside a foundry has a hardness that is perhaps Victorian in feel, with none of the romanticisation. The light pierces the gloom in this contemporary cavern but his use of the medium manages to be powerful without depending upon apocalyptic grandeur.

There are some very beautiful paintings though often limited in the range of space, colour and gesture. Michael Hinkling's abstract paintings may seem familiar with their sections of colour slotting around a dark off-centre, but the twist is in the fight against geometry and a subsequent disorientation that goes on within. David Foster uses colour as if he had taken most of it away; his painting has a surface that resembles a worn wall with a pink glow emanating from the background.

A mass of earth-coloured paint is collected together and driven across a surface of fine silk in Sehnaz Hanslot's paintings of unrecognisable shapes. The contradiction between dirty paint and subtle silk is obvious but the real beauty lies in more than that.

This show tells us that the end of art is not nigh (though the end of art about the end of art probably is). This selection of work from art schools – undergraduate, post-graduate and

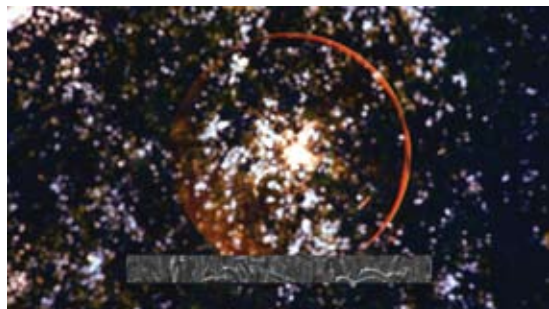
the first year out – really does display a sense of hope and a faith in the reason for doing it in the first place. Never should order and restraint in art be confused with commercial slickness. Art schools encourage you to be ‘honest’ and ‘truthful’ with your work, but sometimes that is where the trouble lies. Of course, no one can develop properly at this stage if they settle for the crass and then continue to reinforce that, but confidence builds on confidence and there is nothing wrong with appearing to be deliberate while considering your next move.

Extract from Sacha Craddock, ‘The British Telecom New Contemporaries’, *The British Telecom New Contemporaries*, 1989.

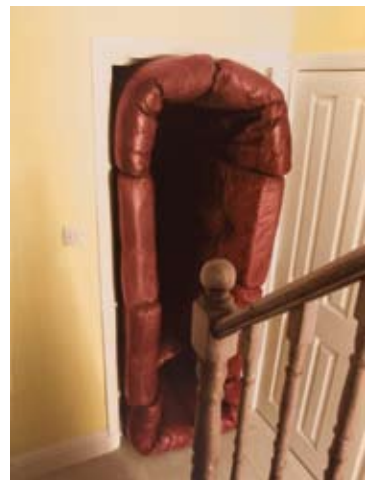
painting and sculpture could be broken into semantic ‘atoms’, if only some elementary visual alphabet and syntax could be set up, then art – art itself, not merely skill – could be taught and taught without resorting to a now obsolete tradition. Talent, as such, no longer exists. It lies in a raw state in everyone’s creativity, and skill lies, so to speak, ready-made in the properties of the medium: in the linearity of drawing, in the two-dimensionality of the picture plane, in the volumetric properties of sculpture. In principle, if not in fact, the learning of art became simple: students should learn how to tap their unspoilt creativity, guided by immediate feeling and emotion, and to read their medium, obeying its immanent syntax. As their aesthetic sensibility and artistic literacy progressed, their ability to feel and to read would translate into the ability to express and to articulate. Nurtured perception and imagination would produce artworks of a new kind.

This pedagogical programme proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. All progressive pedagogues of this century, from Froebel to Montessori to Decroly; all school reformers and philosophers of education, from Rudolf Steiner to John Dewey, have based their projects and programmes on creativity, or rather, on the belief in creativity, on the conviction that creativity – not tradition, not rules and conventions – is the best starting point for education. Moreover, all great modern theorists of art, from Herbert Read to E. H. Gombrich to Rudolph Arnheim, have entertained similar convictions and devoted considerable energy to breaking up the ‘visual language’ into its basic components and demonstrating the universality of its perceptive and psychological ‘laws’. And finally, needless to say, there is not one pioneer of modernist art, from Malevich to Kandinsky and Klee, or from Itten and Moholy-Nagy to Albers and Hofmann, who has not been actively involved in the creation of art schools and teaching programmes based on the reduction of practice to the fundamental elements of a syntax immanent to the medium. Kandinsky wrote *Von Punkt zur Linie zur Fläche* in 1924, and since then every art school in the world has a 2-D and a 3-D studio to prepare its students for painting and sculpture. If they had been strictly faithful to Kandinsky, if they had also taken their cue from Cubism, they would have a 1-D and a 4-D studio as well.

My point is not just to be ironic, and certainly not to dismiss this philosophy without further trial, but merely to stress that a philosophy it is, a biased one and a dated one. Let’s call it the Bauhaus model. It was never carried out with the radical purity of my description, not even at the Bauhaus itself, which died under the pressure of its own contradictions as



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1. Alec Kronacker, *20th Century Man*, 2010
2. Joe Clark, *Somewhere in West Virginia*, 2009
3. Emma Hart, *Dice*, 2009
4. Kiwoun Shin, *Dis_illusion_Coin_Faces*, 2007
5. Ed Atkins, *A Thousand Centuries of Death*, 2009
6. Nick Mobbs, *Red Leather Sofa*, 2009

Extract from Stephen Foster and Nicholas deVillie (eds.), *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in Fine Art Education and The Wider Cultural Context*, John Hansard Gallery, 1994, pp. 23–40. Reproduced with permission of Stephen Foster. This paper was originally presented at a conference, ‘The Artist and the Academy: European Perspectives on Today’s Fine Art Education’, held at Chilworth Manor, University of Southampton, UK, on December 9 and 10, 1993.

much as it did under the hand of the Nazis. But the Bauhaus model, more or less amended, more or less debased, has set a series of assumptions about art teaching upon which dozens of art and architecture schools around the world have been built, and which are, as of today, still underlying, often subliminally, almost unconsciously, most art curriculums, including (if I’m well informed) a great number of foundation courses across the UK. Moreover, it is seemingly the only model that pits itself coherently against the old academic model, such as it also survives, equally amended and often degenerated beyond recognition, not just in the very few Ecoles de Beaux-Arts that still defend it (actually, I don’t know of any that still do), but also in the immense majority of art schools and academies around the world that seek to find a compromise between traditionalism and modernism.

I have sketched out an oversimplified picture, a caricature, even, of the postulates underlying the teaching of art up to recent years. But a caricature is all the more truthful in that it is exaggerated, and I will not hesitate in exaggerating it even more forcibly, in order to make those postulates appear as postulates – that is, as mere postulates. Two models, even though in reality they contaminate each other, divide up the teaching of art conceptually. On the one hand, there is the academic model; on the other, there is the Bauhaus model. The former believes in talent, the latter in creativity. The former classifies the arts according to techniques, what I would call the *métier*; the latter according to the medium. The former fosters imitation; the latter invention. Both models are obsolete. The academic model entered a deep crisis as soon as it began to deserve the derogative label of academicism. Its decadence was accomplished under the pressure of modern art, which is why no return to the past is thinkable lest the blackout is pronounced on all the art and all the artists of modernity. The Bauhaus model also entered an open crisis. That phenomenon is more recent but it isn’t new, dating from the 1960s, I would say. It, too, goes hand in hand with the art of its time, and it is contemporaneous with the deep loss of confidence that modernism has undergone since those years. Now, it is dramatic to have to teach according to postulates one doesn’t believe in anymore. But in order to change them, one has to see them clearly. Let’s review the evidence: do we have to choose between talent and creativity, between *métier* and medium, between imitation and invention?

HOW HAS ART CHANGED

—
GAVIN BROWN

The fundamental reasons why art is made, looked at and thought about have never changed, but no one knows what those reasons really are. However, the structures that surround this process have ballooned, and like dust they will blow away in the first cold breeze. This industrialisation of the ‘art world’ is a purely social and financial phenomenon. In fact, it has now grown to such bureaucratic dimensions that a new and unprecedented ugly hybrid has emerged – the local government / contemporary art / real estate exploitation Godzilla – coming to an overlooked and underpriced area near you – SOON. In Paris in the 1920s it was inspirational to see Cubism on the side of a camouflaged tank, but who would have thought that in the twenty-first century art would be the perfect carrot to wave in front of Mr Mayor? Contemporary art Disney-fication is dressing up the corpse of every grey rusty town that capitalist industry left for dead when it moved to Asia.

NO MORE TV DINNER BIENNIALS!

Like the American industrialisation of food, this is alienating and makes us fat and lazy and greedy. It makes us very bored and very boring. Worst of all, everything starts to taste the same. It is important to eat fresh, local produce. We all want to grow the tastiest tomato, but we don’t have to sell it at Wal-Mart. There is nothing wrong with the local farmers’ market. And when the oil prices hit \$100 a barrel, none of us will be leaving home anyway.

NO MORE FACTORY FARMS!

NO MORE TV DINNER BIENNIALS!

EAT MONEY SPEND FOOD!

LEAVE THE ART FAIR AND NEVER COME BACK!

Extract from Gavin Brown, ‘How has art changed’, *Frieze*, Issue 94, October 2005.

FURNISHINGS

Selections from the
New Contemporaries Archive

PATRICK COYLE



Nathaniel and Barney Mellors, *Furniture Village / Jewson*, 1999

“I had a letter from one of the Young Contemporaries, Alan Holt, asking us if we could store his work *Blue Drawer* until the beginning of the Young Contemporaries tour – 29 July, 1967. I explained that this would be quite impossible in our own store rooms, but wondered if there was a chance, as it seems stupid for it to have to go all the way up to Cardiff and back to London again, of it just remaining in the warehouse until then. I know you have had a lot of unnecessary trouble with these students, but hope this would not cause any extra bother.”¹



Hilary Wilson, *Drawer IV*, 1990

“I like them because of their [sic] impossibility of these drawers. The space behind the actual handles, it’s like completely imaginary space, it doesn’t really exist. Imaginary times, elasticising time and space. Sculpture up to a certain point, also the friendship with furniture.”²

“Video of a character playing an apparently mad war veteran who plans an attack on a Furniture Village store and Jewson’s building merchants.”³



Jackson Webb, *Untitled (lamp)*, 2006

“There’s a strangeness to these artefacts that changes how I read the different parts. Furniture/art/decoration – which is the sovereign form? For me this puzzling piece reads as a satirical take on the economy of art reception, consumption, and the homogeneity of some corporate and domestic art displays... Lamps, paintings, striving between still sculptural object, picture and function.”⁴



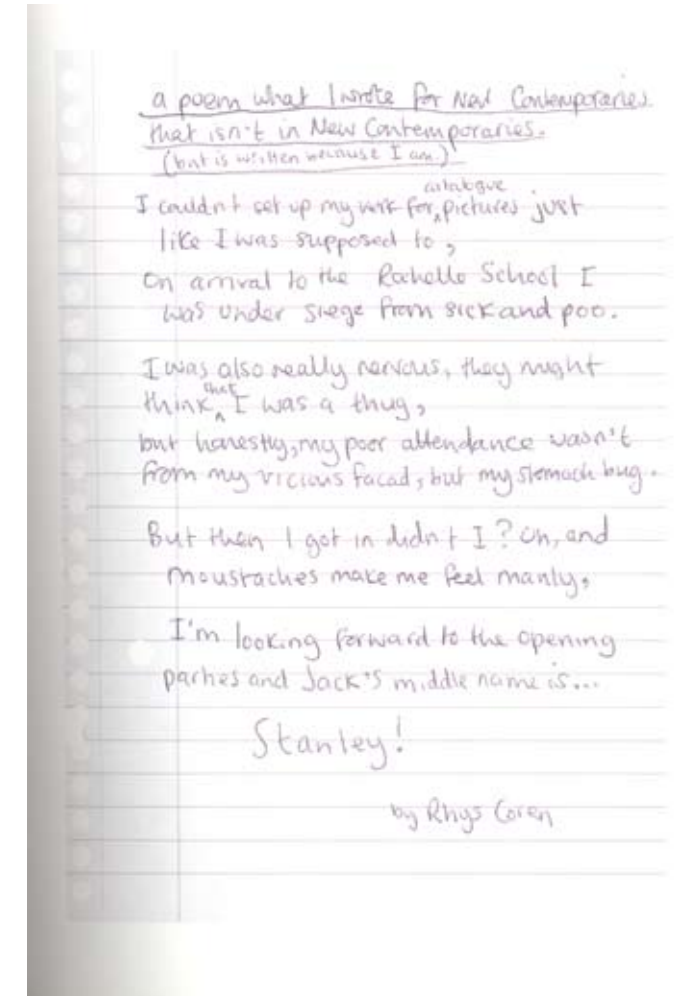
Karen Grainger, *Sky TV: The Universal Godless God Channel; Being Playing; Eye in The Sky; Blip*, 2002. Still from video

“Sky TV goes literal with a series of similar skies: blue with clouds. Normally seen ‘in-between’, here clips constitute the main programme. The work has an intelligent/corporate tone, perhaps even cooler than what it is trying to emulate. This branding gives way to hallucinogenic strangeness when the sky begins to pulsate.”⁵



Mark Leckey, *Hard*, 1989

“Wall-mounted black box frames present fluorescent tube lights from behind coloured film, and emit a bluish ethereal light.”⁶



Rhys Coren, *A poem that I wrote for New Contemporaries that isn't in New Contemporaries [but is written because I am]*, 2007

“He’s turned his self-doubt into a form of engagement with the audience, and converted the optional paralysis of what art to make into a voice in itself. He likes art really.”⁷

1. Letter from The Arts Council of Great Britain to Judith Cloake, 1967, Tate Archive.
2. Selector’s comments on Hilary Wilson, *The British Telecom New Contemporaries*, 1990–91.
3. A Database entry for Nathaniel and Barney Mellors (www.adatabase.org).
4. Selector’s comment on Jackson Webb, *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, 2007.
5. Selector’s comment on Karen Grainger, *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, 2003, catalogue.
6. A Database entry for Mark Leckey (www.adatabase.org).
7. Selector’s comment on Rhys Coren, *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, 2007, catalogue.

3-7 November 2010

RHYTHM SECTION

From 3-7 November, the ICA looks at progressive and ideas-based approaches within experimental and popular music under the banner *Rhythm Section*. The fourth in a series of 'Live Weekends', *Rhythm Section* proposes that percussive technique is a highly fertile ground for musical experimentation, both as a basis for musical content and as an inspiration to the artistic community. From the electronics of new genres such as dubstep or funky to the physicality of the established rock, jazz or afrobeat media, the act of 'banging the drum' remains as pervasive as ever, with performers, musicians and composers creating a wealth of output from rhythmic foundations. Encompassing performances from alternative, experimental, jazz and electronic practices, *Rhythm Section* presents a snapshot of the music currently on offer, featuring exclusive and improvised collaborations, collective productions and conversational moments from, amongst others, Tony Allen, Shit & Shine, Deadboy, Soft Circle and EYE, founder and frontperson of Japan's Boredoms.

Following 2009's *Calling Out of Context* season, *Rhythm Section* demonstrates the ICA's continuing commitment to contemporary music in Britain and its audience. The ICA has staged a variety of events informed by rhythm in the recent past such as the clubnights of *Dirty Canvas* during 2006 and 2007 and the *Nightclub* and *Danceschool* events of 2008 and 2009, alongside calendar regulars like the London Jazz Festival (which is presented again at the ICA on 18, 19 and 20 November). *Calling Out of Context's* onsite recording studio hosted rhythmic sessions from Actress, Lukid, Wobot, Seb Rochford, Kwes and Micachu, some of which can be heard on the ICA's website. *Rhythm Section* is a concentrated celebration of these high-impact occasions past, present and future and a marker for the contemporary moment in 2010.

In 2007 and 2008, Boredoms, with assistance from Hisham Bharoocha of Soft Circle, hosted two mass-collaborative performances

entitled *77Boadrum* and *88Boadrum*. The first of these featured 77 drummers assembled underneath New York's Brooklyn Bridge on the date 7/7/7. On the following pages we've printed some notes from *77Boadrum* participants Kid Millions and Jeremy Hyman. Shit & Shine's performance during *Rhythm Section* provides audiences with a similar mass performance with the use of multiple drum kits, whilst elsewhere in the programme EYE and Hisham present performances of their own, preceded by a conversation referencing the Boadrum experience.

In 1992 *The Wire* magazine published an article entitled 'Top 50 Rhythms of All Time' and it has now commissioned its writers to suggest a further fifty, identifying a diverse range of popular and leftfield offerings. This new commission forms the basis of *Rhythm Section's* participatory installation in the ICA's gallery space, where the public is invited to accompany a selection of compositions on V-drum stations. *The Wire's* 2002 book of collected essays *Undercurrents* features a chapter written by Peter Shapiro on the mechanisation of rhythm, which we reprint in the following pages. Shapiro looks at the historical roots of the mechanised beat, drawing a line that begins with early twentieth-century American marching bands, pivots via Kraftwerk and culminates with the invention of the drum machine. The appliance of technology, instrumental in the development of electronic and dance music and blurring the distinctions between the 'programmed' and the 'played', is one of the touchstones featured during *Rhythm Section*.

Rhythm Section is organised by Jamie Eastman, Head of Live Programme at the ICA, and presented in association with *The Wire* magazine and Upset The Rhythm, and kindly supported by the PRS Foundation for Music and Tickle.

I AM 7

1 cym/1 tom/2 tom/2 hat/1 snare/15

cymbal swells / tom hits-temple / Eye sits + screams / Stop /

~~Eye scream - ONE hit / 2 hits / 3 times~~ / ~~Eye scream - ONE hit / 2 hits / 3 times~~ / ~~Eye scream - ONE hit / 2 hits / 3 times~~

16 Fast tom hits / 16 SNARE th-h / Stop / Yo-chan - 4 tom beat /

cymbal swell for 4 / join beat / Red stick stop / Eye + Yo /

Eye cues back to tom beat / tongy tom beat / Yoshimi

cues w/ tom triplets / ~~BORE tom roll w/ SNARE accents~~

4 - then we join for 4 / Back to tom beat w/

hi-hat stop / Back to Beat / triplet / Beat

to triplet STOP / BORE tom roll / vocal accents

hit SNARE / stop w/ Yoshimi / Yo plays cymbal roll

Eye cues big cymbal (no kick) / FREE / Eye cues

Back + Gaiter free + cymbal - P V - double time kick

Funk beat > ~~SNARE ROLL~~ Red stick / Funk beat together

PED stick / SHINE ON -> FREE / RED STICK / Yo starts Funk Beat / Round

Robin -> Zeh / Big Roll / Funk BEAT / SNARE ROLL - Round Robin / 7 BEAT

CLOCKWISE

OKU KARÉ SAMA DÉSKA

1-5-6-9 / short beat / 6-9 /

triplets

"TANKA"

Tom / SNARE beat -> we join for 8 -> STOP -> 8/8/8/8 -> 6/6/6/6 -> off ACCENT

Tom / SNARE

KARATA / washing machine beat / 77 rolls that speeds up / Yo does

fill -> round robin -> 32 times -> Yo Acid polve beat -> free

AUTOMATING THE BEAT: THE ROBOTICS OF RHYTHM

PETER SHAPIRO

The adaptation to machine music implies a renunciation of one's own human feelings.

Theodor Adorno, 1941

We have grown used to connecting machines and funkiness.

Andrew Goodwin, 1988

The pioneers of mechanical music either saw it as a vehicle for superhuman efficiency (Thomas Edison's phonograph) or as a way of transcending the weakness of the flesh and achieving the purity of function of the machine (Luigi Russolo's *intonarumori*). But the ultimate triumph of machine music has been achieved in genres concerned with shaking butts and moving booty. Dance musics like rock 'n' roll and funk are almost always discussed in terms of their 'primitive' and 'natural' characteristics; but this ignores the machine-like qualities of the element that purportedly embodies this naturalism: the rhythm. Although he is now routinely trashed in cultural studies programmes the world over, the German critic and philosopher Theodor Adorno was one of the few commentators who actually got it right. In the 1950s, while America's moral guardians were fretting over the effects of 'jungle music' on their under-sexed children, Adorno was warning that "the standardised meter of dance music ... suggests the coordinated battalions of mechanical collectivity", and that "obedience to this rhythm" leads people to "conceive of themselves as agglutinated with the untold millions of the meek who must be similarly overcome. Thus, do the obedient inherit the earth". Even if he did see fascism everywhere he looked, Adorno raises a salient point: why have we entrusted to machines that which makes us most human – moving in time to sound? Perhaps it is the logical outcome of music's often expressed desire for the perfect beat, which is

rooted in the drum's historical role as an instrument of war.

Modern popular music was born at the dawn of the twentieth century in Congo Square, New Orleans, where marching brass bands comprised of freed slaves and immigrants from Haiti and Cuba would congregate on Sundays. One reason for the popularity of the marching-band sound was that a large number of decommissioned soldiers ended up in the city after the Civil and Spanish-American Wars, making brass instruments readily available – a fact that served as a constant reminder that the marching band was originally developed as the motor force of the military's killing machine, disciplining and regimenting the troops with metronome beats. If the same beat discipline is at the root of dance music's proximity to mechanisation, the New Orleans bands customised the military's march steps to satisfy their very different needs.

Not as well trained as the mixed-race Creole groups who enjoyed white patronage, the black bands developed a style of playing that was 'hotter' and more rhythmically charged than the European brass band orientations of the Creoles. The gatherings in Congo Square represented the first 'cutting sessions' and the group who played the 'hottest' would take the 'second line' with them as they marched in victory (the second line being the crowd that marched behind the group and clapped, stomped and shouted along with the music). As it became an established pattern, the second line, musically speaking, was a combination of John Phillip Sousa with Latin American clavé patterns. This syncopation is at the root of not only jazz but just about every form of African-American music.

Even in the hands of New Orleans's funkier musicians, the second-line pattern couldn't escape its mechanical roots. Thanks to his transposition of the local marching-band style to the drum kit, Earl Palmer is the father of funk, yet whenever he played,

regimentation and swing existed in tense communion. His drumming on Dave Bartholomew's 'Messy Bessy', which was recorded in 1949 but only released in 1991, sounds like the fount of modern rhythm. Palmer's controlled torrent of triplets and snare rolls anticipated rock 'n' roll, surf music and the funk of James Brown and The Meters. At the same time, his rhythms sounded as though they could be transposed back to a fife and drum band leading the Minutemen against the Redcoats at the Battle of Concord in 1775.

The ground zero of dance music's militarist metaphor is represented by Palmer's performance on Jesse James's 'Red Hot Rockin' Blues' from 1958. On this track and Eddie Cochran's 'Somethin' Else' (1959) Palmer's punishing percussive volleys were so overwhelming that they browbeat Phil Spector into recruiting him for the 'wrecking crew' that helped create Spector's wall of sound. Here is the proof that the drill-sergeant precision of Palmer's drumming was primarily responsible for the creation of rock 'n' roll's monolithic backbeat.

Long before Miami and New York had Hispanic populations to speak of, Latin rhythms took hold in New Orleans's cosmopolitan melting pot. At the turn of the century the city contained significant numbers of Caribbean immigrants, and the practices of voodoo and Santería were widespread. Inevitably the clavé, the basic 3/2 pattern driving the ceremonial cross-rhythms used to summon voodoo's loa and orisha spirits, spread outside the shrines and was integrated into the brass bands. Elsewhere, however, people couldn't afford tubas or drums, so they created bass lines by blowing into empty moonshine jugs and made beats by thrashing cheap guitars. The rhythm of life in most of America was created by the railroad, and pre-war blues and Country records were often little more than imitations of the locomotive using jugs and guitars: listen to The Memphis Jug Band's 'KC Moan' from 1929; Darby & Tarlton's 'Freight Train Ramble', also from 1929; or Bill Monroe's 1941 'Orange Blossom Special'.

As the funkyfied marching-band sound advanced up the Mississippi from New Orleans, it was smelted together with the new piston-pumping train rhythms, and the Bo Diddley beat was born. With its chugging momentum, Diddley's first single, 1955's 'Bo Diddley',

established his trademark rhythm. Everything, including the guitar, which imitated the sound of steel wheels on a track and a steam engine going through a tunnel, was at the service of the beat. 'Bo Diddley' may have sounded a bit like the 'Little Engine That Could', but by 1956's 'Who Do You Love?' and 1957's 'Hey Bo Diddley', the Bo Diddley beat had all the forward motion of a Japanese bullet train.

The link between the noise of industry and 'the backbeat you just can't lose' was emphasised at the tail end of the 1960s by The Stooges. Motown may have appropriated the car industry's production-line techniques, but The Stooges harnessed its sound. With their Detroit homebase just down the road from the enormous River Rouge car plant, The Stooges banged metal against metal, emitted enough noxious feedback fumes to set a river on fire and suggested links between machines, sex, animal debasement and technological alienation.

Along with The Beach Boys, The Stooges were Kraftwerk's favourite rock group. Indeed, The Stooges' industrial clangour and motor rhythms are at the heart of the German power plant's greatest record, 'Trans-Europe Express'. Like Bo Diddley, Kraftwerk created the end of the century's most enduring rhythms by mimicking trains and, later, computers. Where Diddley's guitar was a steam engine moving off in the distance, Kraftwerk's synth lick was the Doppler effect trail left by a French TGV. Sounding more locomotive than any of its competitors, 'Trans-Europe Express' is the greatest train song of them all, the final link in the man-machine interface.

Significantly, when they produced 'Planet Rock', Arthur Baker, John Robie and Afrika Bambaataa lifted the most futuristic, un-locomotive element in 'Trans-Europe Express' – its melody line. Even though HipHop kids were busy bombing the A Train with their graffiti tags, their imaginations and fantasies were being spurred by video games and computers, just as their parents had been by trains and automobiles. HipHop was the first music to realise that travel wasn't necessarily about physical motion anymore, but a virtual journey inside your own headspace. Thus, for the bottom end of 'Planet Rock', Baker, Bambaataa and Robie

borrowed the beginning of Kraftwerk's 'Numbers', from their *Computer World* album, which sounded like the transfer of information between two microchips.

The Kraftwerk fetishism of 'Planet Rock' meshed human and machine like no record before it. Its influence rapidly transmitted down Highway I-95 to Florida, where the ultimate fusion of flesh and metal was born in the back rooms of the Orange State's strip clubs. Even though it came out of Fort Lauderdale, MC ADE's 1985 single, 'Bass Rock Express', was one of the founding moments of Miami Bass. As its title suggests, the track reimagines 'Trans-Europe Express' as a neon-lit nightride through south Florida's strip malls, complete with additional clavés from a Roland TR-808 drum machine, scratching, a vocoded voice listing the equipment used to make the record, a snippet from the theme of the US sitcom *Green Acres*, and an over-modulated synth bassline. Within a couple of years, however, Bass music had become firmly fixated on the female posterior, and while its union of ass and steel may be perilously close to Freud's infamous equation of shit and gold, Bass music is the ultimate victory of mechanical regimentation over human feelings. For all Bass music's claims to innovation, however, its march to victory was marked out decades earlier by the cyborg timekeepers of funk.

According to its self-image, funk is supposed to be greasy, dirty, stinking of sex – the epitome of human earthiness, in other words. But funk is as rigid as any current 4/4 House track – and Earl Palmer laid down its ground rules once again with his metronomic precision. However, the finest exponent of the New Orleans swing that eventually mutated into funk was Charles 'Hungry' Williams. As the drummer behind Huey 'Piano' Smith & His Clowns on records like 'High Blood Pressure', 'Little Liza Jane', 'Everybody's Whalin'' and 'Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu', Hungry took the marching band's gumbo flavour into more polyrhythmic directions. Hungry swung like crazy, but however far out he went, he never forgot 'the one'. 'Everything on the one' is funk's only commandment, and those who break it have their own circle in Hell, where they are condemned to an eternity in a dentist's waiting room with Perry Como on tap.

Hungry taught the New Orleans mandate to Clayton Fillyau, drummer on James Brown's *Live At The Apollo*, and in Fillyau's hands the James Brown beat was born. On Brown's 1962 single 'I've Got Money', perhaps the most intense and electric record of his entire career, Fillyau's rapid, syncopated chatter-notes behind the main beat set the new standard for modern funk drumming: a kind of live Junglist percussion thirty years before the fact. Fillyau, and every drummer who followed him, hit 'the one' with digital accuracy – back in the 1960s and 70s they used to get fined if they missed it. From the immaculate stage outfits to the precision-tooled beats, every one of Brown's groups was a well-oiled machine. With Brown policing the hard and fast rules governing the rhythm like a Stasi enforcer, you didn't really need The Gang Of Four to spell out the connection between funk and control.

What Fillyau started, The Meters' Joseph 'Zigaboo' Modeliste raised and refined to hitherto unimagined levels of dexterity by combining New Orleans martial rhythms with the JB beat. Modeliste may sound like an octopus behind the kit, but the reason he's such a badass is that he keeps time like Swiss quartz – it's not for nothing that the group is called The Meters. Modeliste played on Labelle's *Nightbirds* album, the record that truly subsumed funk into disco. On its two best tracks, 'What Can I Do For You?' and 'Lady Marmalade', the drums are flat and angular; the N'worlins swing only implied.

Given funk and soul's marching band roots, the kind of severe regimentation advanced by disco was inevitable. The hit-factory output at Motown was already close to assembly line interchangeability when the label released the first two disco records into the world. Eddie Kendricks's 1972 single, 'Girl You Need A Change Of Mind', was disco's prototype even though its main beat, which sounded like a snare rather than a kick, was a bit too human (the drummer is noticeably late a couple of times during the track). But no such flaws marred The Temptations' 'Law Of The Land', released a year later, in which producer Norman Whitfield made his apocalyptic funk even more dystopian with a strict 4/4 beat that embodied the inevitability of human nature described in the song.

Sceptical of the 'certainties' of the material world, disco once and for all banished the naturalism ascribed to dance music. Academic Walter Hughes has called the music 'a form of discipline' in which, along with body-building and safe sex, gay men turned the practices of regulation into acts imbued with eroticism. "Disco", wrote Hughes, "takes the regular tattoo of the military march and puts it to the sensual purposes of dance music". Of course, this had been happening all along; but with its own self-awareness, and an insistence on the metronomic 4/4 beat, which was aided and abetted by the development of the synthesiser and the drum machine, disco made discipline its main attraction. Disco's greatest moment was Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love'. Dumping on the concept of biology from a great height, producer/arrangers Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte cast Summer as a Teutonic ice queen with a machine heart and surrounded her with the most synthetic textures ever heard on a pop record. Through the music of Summer, and artist/producers such as Sylvester and Cerrone, disco fostered an identification with the machine. By strongly identifying with this increasingly mechanical music, gay culture took to it as a release from the tyranny of the natural that dismisses homosexuality as an aberration, a freak of nature.

Although disco was a world populated by the utterly fabulous, one of its strangest phenomena was Hamilton Bohannon, a strait-laced session musician who used to drum in the Motown touring ensemble. No one has taken 'groove' as literally as Bohannon – there are no peaks, no builds, no intensity anywhere in the records he made for Brunswick between 1974–76. Working for the Motown hit factory had left its mark, for Bohannon made dance music like an assembly-line worker – his hypnotic rhythms were so monotonous you could get RSI just listening to them.

Bohannon's numbing regularity was taken up by 'the human metronome', Chic's Tony Thompson, whose unwavering timekeeping, synthetic sound and hi-hat hypnotism might have provided the model for Roland when they developed their first drum machines in the late 1970s. In 1979, a year before Roland's TR-808 came on the market, Candido's version of Olatunji's 'Jingo' would set the pattern for the most novel use of the

rhythm box. Remixed by Shep Pettibone into a fierce soundclash between dub effects and percussion pandemonium, 'Jingo' turned the clavé bionic. With the advent of the 808, US producers like The Latin Rascals and Chris Barbosa combined disco and 'Planet Rock' to create an android descarga called Latin Freestyle. With its angular rhythm tics and woodblock percussion, Latin Freestyle sounded like a cross between Gary Numan and Tito Puente.

Perhaps the most startling example of the meeting of futurism and roots music, however, was Madame X's 1987 obscurity, 'Just That Type Of Girl'. Madame X was a trio of LA vocalists who wanted to be Prince girls. The real star of the show was producer Bernadette Cooper, who was the drummer for the all-female funk troupe Klymaxx. Even more than Freestyle's robotic rumba, Cooper's drum programming is suggestive of cyborgs playing mbiras, balafons, cowbells and congas in a Kingston dancehall designed by George Lucas.

Unlike 'Just That Type Of Girl', which probably owed its existence to the kind of serendipity that occurs when a producer is looking for a new sound to get a leg up on the competition, A Guy Called Gerald tried to make explicit the connection between machines and ancestry. With its atomised beats and gravity-defying Nyabinghi drumming, his 1995 *Black Secret Technology* album expanded on his idea that the sampler was a time-machine by explicitly linking ancient African rhythms and more modern funk beats with futuristic breakbeat science to produce, in his words, "trance-like rhythms [which] reflect my frustration to know the truth about my ancestors who talked with drums". As Gerald understood, music organises time with its rhythm, and dancing to it is one of the few ways we have to suspend and stretch time. Even more than solar and lunar cycles, rhythm machines are presently the arbiters of time.

Extract from Peter Shapiro, 'Automating The Beat: The Robotics of Rhythm', in *The Wire's* book of collected essays *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring Of Modern Music*, Continuum, 2002.

Free → Popul Vuh → Sp60 → Redstick → ZACH SOLOS
 cymbal → marriage begins with YOSHIMI (X) EYE 4x →
 SNARE/TOM part x8 → Cowbell 40 ^{YOSHIMI} rams into →
 HAT x4 → Floor x4 → HAT x4 → Cymbal x4 → Floor x4
 HAT x3 → CYM x1 → # ROLLS (6) →
 yo starts snare roll → fade ^{CANDROLL} over snares → press roll
 (EYE to Zach Solo) yo - Hi-hat roll → round robin →
 Yoshimi Cymbals → round robin cymbals (v/volume
 change) → Marriage part - Yoshimi x4 EYE
 does phrase 2x → BLASTBAT x3 → DNE
 Cymbal ORC. → x12 TOMS → CYMBAL ORC x1 →
 x2 Fast Cymbal → yo ROLLS into SP60 →
 EYE SIGNALS cymbals ma stops us. →
 "MAKUBA" - 2-2-2-9-3-3-3-8-
 ((2x 2 rest)x8) → yo solo → Yoshimi tom beat →
 stick scrape → rim hits ^{clicky} part (4x rest 4x2)
 KARATA → Latin section - washing machine →
 ACID POLICE → ^{double long} 2x round 2x all together / stop
 ACID ^{form + press dot}
 8 measures tom round robin → 8th with snare
 2 cre.



October 2010 onwards

6a ARCHITECTS RESIDENCY

The ICA is proud to announce a new residency strand as part of its programme. The residencies will provide an opportunity for artists and practitioners to directly engage with staff, communities and audiences through visible events, meetings and collaborations. During a period of research within the institution, participants in the residency will be invited to reflect on and respond to current conditions at the ICA, stimulating dialogue about art, culture, society and the role of a public institution.

London-based architects 6a launch the new programme of residencies. Founded by Tom Emerson and Stephanie Macdonald in 2001, 6a has recently received critical acclaim for its extension of the South London Gallery, which opened in June 2010, as well as for Raven Row, a new contemporary art centre in Spitalfields, which opened in February 2009, and the exhibition design of Ed Ruscha's retrospective at the Hayward Gallery. For their ICA residency, 6a will work with staff to explore the ways in which the ICA's spaces function, especially in light of the restructuring that has taken place within the institution over the past year. The residency will consider how the functional and programming divisions that currently define the ICA might be removed to create a more open field of spaces that overlaps different media, events and audiences. They will make small interventions in the building, with the aim of improving its appearance, usability and efficiency.

On the following pages, Tom Emerson and Stephanie Macdonald discuss their ideas for the residency with the ICA's Head of Learning Emma-Jayne Taylor and architectural designer Erin Byrne, who leads the monthly *Play / Works* workshops. The discussion is accompanied by an essay by *ArtReview's* editor Mark Rappolt.

AN INTERVIEW WITH 6a ARCHITECTS

TE – Tom Emerson, 6a architects
SM – Stephanie Macdonald, 6a architects
EB – Erin Byrne, architectural designer and leader
of *Play / Works*, a series of workshops that looks at
creating environments for play within the ICA's different spaces
EJT – Emma-Jayne Taylor, Head of Learning, ICA

EJT — Let's start with this issue of staff being departmentalised. This is something that's been addressed as part of the restructuring at the ICA. For example, the responsibility for selling tickets and books is now shared within a sales team as opposed to having separate departments for these tasks. It's clearly having an effect in terms of how the box-office space functions and in terms of sharing information. The barrier that we have now is the architecture of that space.

TE — Is there any reason why somebody can't pay for their book at the box office? The reform has been done organisationally, but it's still the old system, physically, in the foyer.

EJT — Potentially, there could be just one point of sale, which is tickets, books, regardless; not two separate points of sale. I think it's interesting how staff are now sharing knowledge amongst one another; there's a greater sense of ownership on the part of staff that leads to a wider understanding of the building.

EB — One thing I've noticed is how the gallery assistants deal with the public. They're a font of knowledge about the whole building rather than just what's happening in the gallery. That's something that's improved.

EJT — But there's still a sense that the cinema belongs to one department, the theatre belongs to another department. We still have these spaces that are historically linked to departments.

SM — That's what we were saying: you need to ban all departments!

DOES THE ARMOURED SHELL DETERMINE THE FORM OF THE SOFT-BODIED SNAIL?

MARK RAPPOLT

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, operates a store in the centre of Tokyo; the Rijksmuseum has a gallery in the departure lounge of Amsterdam's Schiphol airport; and, whilst the French government is busily kicking out its Roma population, the Centre Pompidou is planning to embrace the gypsy lifestyle via a travelling museum that will tour the country in an architect-designed mobile home. Like a bunch of quietly rampaging triffids, museums are spilling out of their traditional homes and infiltrating the fabric of our cities.

The current relationship between arts organisations and cities (and the takeover of the latter by the former) found its quintessence and impetus in Frank Gehry's much-lauded Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, which opened in 1997. As well as appearing – as a cipher for the contemporary – in everything from James Bond films to Mariah Carey videos, the swooping curves of the Guggenheim's distinctive silhouette are used on motorway signs to stand for the city of Bilbao as a whole. Indeed, such was its success, that by 2003 that same silhouette was featuring as the 'build a museum' icon in the city-building *Sim City 4* computer game, advancing the notion that there is an explicit connection between urban progress and the construction of such iconic museum buildings.

Despite the success of Tate Modern, and the carnivalesque (but extremely popular) exhibitions in its Turbine Hall, the most obvious articulation of the expansion of museums into London's urban fabric was the National Gallery's 2007 *Grand Tour* campaign, in which 'treasures' from the collection were reproduced, framed and hung at various locations on the capital's streets. The sight of Salome receiving the head of St John next door to a licensed Soho sex shop was less about a democratic vision of taking art to 'the people' or a quirky publicity stunt designed to get those people to come to the art, than a proposal of the idea that art had a place in the very fabric of the city: asserting, for example, that there was some sort of equivalence between Georges Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières* (1884) and the Hamleys toy store, outside of which it hung.

Even though there are those people who still decry the emergence of a 'culture industry' and its consequent 'dumbing down' of culture, there is nothing inherently wrong with placing the arts within a context of entertainment if you want to reach out to a general audience (and if you don't have the ambition to cultivate an audience then who cares about your problems anyway?), as Tate's theme-park spectacles – Carsten Höller's 2007 slides or Olafur Eliasson's 2004 glowing sun have shown. Indeed, the 'Save the Arts' campaign currently being waged against immanent government funding cuts rests some of its most basic arguments on their economic value – the

classic line being that for every £1 spent a £2 return is produced in urban regeneration, tourism and employment.

But if, to paraphrase urban theorist Tracy Metz, art is entertainment and entertainment is everywhere in the modern city, then what, precisely, do you need a place like the ICA for? Make no mistake, each component of the ICA's programme is to be found on the very streets that surround it, with their cinemas, theatres, bookstores, bars, 'concept' stores (themselves modelled on past manifestations of conceptual art) and ever more and bigger commercial art galleries – then what, precisely, do you need a place like the ICA for?

This question (which doesn't even begin to consider the challenges brought about by the digital revolution) is something that architecture alone cannot answer. But on a fundamental level (going back to its founding as an alternative to the Royal Academy), the ICA has a duty to persevere with its impossible task – to reinvent itself constantly – to remain true to some idea of 'contemporary' – whilst providing a permanent and stable structure in which emergent or alternative arts practices (which of necessity will be unpredictable in their format and medium) can develop. Its brief is so paradoxical – create an institution that is anti-institutional – that it's no wonder that there are many people who have argued, during the Institute's current crisis, that the ICA should simply close rather than struggle on.

Since Bilbao, the relationship between architect and arts institution has become akin to that between therapist and patient. This is not the kind of therapist who calls himself a doctor – despite what many architects might have you believe – but the kind who has a brightly coloured card, a shabby office and tells you how he can help you to 'become what you really want to be'. And what most institutions want to be is popular, profitable, instantly recognisable and indispensable to the local scene: what is known as 'the Bilbao effect'.

The ICA, however, with its well-documented problems of identity and budget, requires a rather different treatment. In its circumstances the adoption of an architect in residence, acting not according to the rules of some grand design, but adapting to the challenges that are thrown up by the activities in the building so that it functions more like a city – constantly changing and evolving – is a more fitting way to go. Indeed, some of the ICA's recent exhibitions, such as *Nought to Sixty* (which presented a number of emerging practitioners from the UK and Ireland, in quick succession) and *Talk Show* (a programme of activities which looked at the voice as a medium and included a number of short residencies) anticipated just this.

On the one hand, it's a return to the old-fashioned idea of art as a mirror (with the occasional funfair distortions) of life. On the other hand, it's a more viable alternative to the existing trend for big-budget and attention-grabbing architectural statements: instead of a building that seeks to change the space around it, a building that is transformed by what occurs within it; or, to be blunter still, an exhibition space rather than an exhibitionist space.

TE — Is the music venue ever used for cinema? Because presumably its capacity is massive.

EJT — It's interesting, the only time that there's that crossover is for Artists' Film Club, and that opens up the whole question about the placing of artists' film. For some reason, it makes more sense to place it outside of the cinema, but it doesn't necessarily work the other way round. We wouldn't necessarily have a screening of our standard art-house cinema programme in the theatre.

TE — But maybe you could. There's something quite thrilling about that. One of the things we were thinking about was what is the ICA in relation to London compared to what it was? The idea that the ICA is about provision seems to be quite old-fashioned: the idea that it's the best cinema, that it's got the best acoustics in its music venue. Now, given the financial climate, it's probably more about what it programmes and how it can layer different types of programmes together. That's the thing that places like Tate Modern can't do.

SM — It can instigate change.

TE — Yes, it can create a situation where you can say cinema isn't cinema, gallery spaces don't have to be white spaces – there are plenty of those in London, there are plenty of very good cinemas.

SM — But you get something different here.

EB — The diversity of all those spaces together, and it being a public space that mixes them all together, almost like a streetscape.

TE — Exactly. Or a market, or something that's deeply social. But although it's huge, it's got no great public spaces in it. I think that's really striking, for an institution as big as this, not to have a foyer like the one in Nantes, or the Palais de Tokyo, or the Turbine Hall. All these great public spaces are basically the anchor for all the other specialist stuff. We know that the entrance and the foyer need attention, that's been clear from the start.

SM — It's not using its character. It's actually got all that character hidden, but there's a layer of dulling.

TE — Maybe it's a product of the time in which it was built. It was built pre-Tate Modern, when it had much more responsibility to act like a museum in terms of the sorts of things it had to show and now it doesn't need to do that.

EB — But even then, that's the opposite of what Herbert Read wanted when he first described the ICA. He was talking about it as an adult playground, or a workshop where work is joy. It was never supposed to be a white cube, a transitional functional building. Looking at the

Reading Room as a case study – that's a new, very positive hub for the Learning Department, and has given it a really visual space in the centre of everything. But at the same time, it's still quite an enclosed, finite space. It's almost as though the Learning Department needs to be able to bleed into all the spaces. The statement that you put together about your ideas for the residency talks about the whole ground floor as a kind of 'mixing bed'.

SM — I think there should be less separation between front of house and back of house. There could be a visual link between the two, where people working on a theatre show, for example, can see people coming into this space. It would be nice to see further – I don't know if that's possible, with the fabric of the building.

EJT — As you said in an early meeting, you could have a window that looks through into the workshop space, so just as you enter the building you've got a sense of something happening that's going to form part of the forthcoming programme.

SM — It makes it quite exciting if you're coming in and you can see someone building something interesting. It gives a really active and dynamic sense of things going on.

TE — I was wondering if we should think about the foyer more like a station concourse.

SM — It doesn't mean that it needs to be completely open plan. You can still have the flexibility to do things within that. You can change things round. There's probably a natural condition for this building that we can't see because it's been built over and over and over. That's one of the interesting things about dealing with a historic Regency building: it will never have the neutrality of a modern building if you strip it out. It will never suddenly be a flat, regular grid.

TE — Even if you stripped it completely, the building would have so much complexity and topography in its structure, in its historic layout, that there'd be nooks, crannies, big spaces, little spaces, open ones.

EB — I tried to locate the original plans of the building. It seems that the front part is an extension of the houses and that the cinema space was stables and carriage stores.

TE — It would be interesting to find out more, because there may even be bits of façade buried deep in the building.

EB — One of the things in your proposal was about decommissioning the back entrance and making the Mall entrance the focus. What was the motivation behind that?

SM — It felt like there was no reason for any of the staff, or people

London-based 6a Architects is particularly suited to the task of intervening in the ICA's architecture because it has a history of tackling paradoxical briefs – a permanent store for online fashion retailer Oki-Ni; a pastoral 'summer house' for the Architecture Foundation when it was based on the urban highway of Old Street; or, more spectacularly still, the Raven Row arts space, which seeks to marry a contemporary exhibition venue with a listed building that is fundamentally entrenched in a historic urban fabric. 6a's pragmatic approach to the problem of designing for the contemporary is perhaps best witnessed in its most recently completed project, the highly praised refurbishment of the South London Gallery.

Comprising a new education centre, gallery spaces, artists' accommodation and a café, the scheme is articulated via an architecture that both looks back to the site's past (easy) and forwards to a future that it nevertheless allows to remain unknown and undefined (relatively difficult). The renovation, which extends the gallery's facilities into a formerly residential building located next door, incorporates a commemoration of the site of a lecture theatre destroyed during the Second World War, as well as traces of brickwork, fireplaces, exposed beams and other features from the transformed residential building. If such elements articulate a certain hybridity, they also propose a potential: in admitting that the space has been something else, they suggest that it might be something other yet again. 'The architectural language is abstracted and reduced like an image faded through time', the architects say. This is also an admission that the building is a work in progress rather than a static complete whole (a picture that never changes, never fades). And, crucially, it admits inhabitation (a frequent criticism of a building such as Gehry's Guggenheim is that it dictates terms to the art it houses rather than allowing for the possibility – however mythic – that it might be a space for free expression). So what better idea than for these architects to inhabit a building as it changes around them, to observe and respond to a living thing?

6a's residency proposes a stripping back of the ICA's structure – removing fixed elements such as the bookstore, box office and temporary gallery walls – in order to encourage greater flexibility and mobility within the programme; in short, to allow the institution to swell and distribute itself freely within its shell. One model for this idea of inhabitation is described by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard through the example of Victor Hugo's Quasimodo, the hunchback who physically takes on the gnarly shape of the cathedral (Nôtre Dame de Paris) that he inhabits, until he and it are as indistinguishable from each other as a snail is from its shell. This model in turn prompts the question that underwrites 6a's project for the ICA, and one that the director of any arts institution ultimately has to confront – does the armoured shell define the form of the soft-bodied snail or does the growth and evolution of that body define the spiraling of its carapace? If there is an answer to that, then perhaps it will emerge during 6a's time at the ICA.

Mark Rappolt, Editor of *ArtReview*, was invited by 6a Architects to introduce and contextualise their residency at the ICA.

coming to corporate events and hires, to see the shows. I could imagine that people going in and out the back door could go for months without seeing a show – even if they're in the building all day. And it seems a real shame that you don't get a cross-fertilisation amongst your audience.

EB — The Carlton House Terrace entrance reinforces the idea of the building being like a tower – the staff upstairs and then the low-lying ground-level public spaces.

TE — And there's the whole corporate-hire aspect, which sends a conflicting message about the confidence that the ICA has about itself – that its main entrance isn't the one that it promotes as the corporate entrance. The more we consider things like that organisationally – who uses what, where – the more momentum we'll get behind changing things.

EJT — Talking of how staff use the building, I'm reminded of an incident yesterday. We used the staff room, which is situated between the male and female toilets, to store some materials. There was this sense that it shouldn't really be stored in there because it's a quiet space for staff, but actually the number of staff using that space now is far fewer than it used to be. This is a really curious space: it's quite bunker-like. How do we bring that into the building?

TE — Do you need a staff room?

EJT — Exactly!

SM — You have a bar, and a café.

EJT — Exactly. Instead of being tucked away in a broom cupboard, the staff could take ownership of the bar so that it becomes their social space, where the public get to overhear their conversations.

TE — The Architectural Association has no staff room. I think that's what's made it one of liveliest architectural debating spaces in London – because there's nowhere to hide. There's one coffee bar open morning to evening and that's where it all happens.

EB — Whenever we have meetings, we always have them in the café. It's not like that at any other institution. Even at an architect's office there's always a meeting table. There are staff who are using these spaces already and it's just a matter of reinforcing that. I also think the idea about bringing tables into the foyer so that it becomes a meeting space is a really good one because you see it immediately when you walk in the door; it's not hidden away.

EJT — Also it creates the chance for staff to overhear their colleagues' conversations, so you hear the creative team talking about the forthcoming programme, and you feel part of what's happening.



The ICA under construction, printed in the ICA Bulletin in 1968

TE — Another thing to consider, which is implicit in the proposal that we did, is the technical team and building-management team at the ICA.

EB — Having an experienced in-house staff of technicians is an amazing opportunity because they're constantly building walls, ripping them down, but it's often within the isolated zone of the gallery. With Oscar Tuazon's piece, he started to puncture through walls, so suddenly the technicians had to raise their game and think about how to deal with structural issues, and how to get through walls and stairs.

SM — Those are the kinds of gaps that we're looking for: between programming and budget and people's time, we might find the moment where some intervention can happen that's the natural extension of what's happening anyway.

TE — Typically when architects come in, they bring change from the outside. Here the change is something we want to try and find from within.

SM — That's the critical thing, and finding it's in the people as much as in the building. There are things we could play with, if people really want to play.

TE — It's in the constitution of the place, this ludic quality, which I think would be nice to keep going, so it doesn't seem too self-reflective and serious.

SM — I like the idea of having a party to take some structural things down – just a staff party, but a really good one. We could get everyone to help take something away.

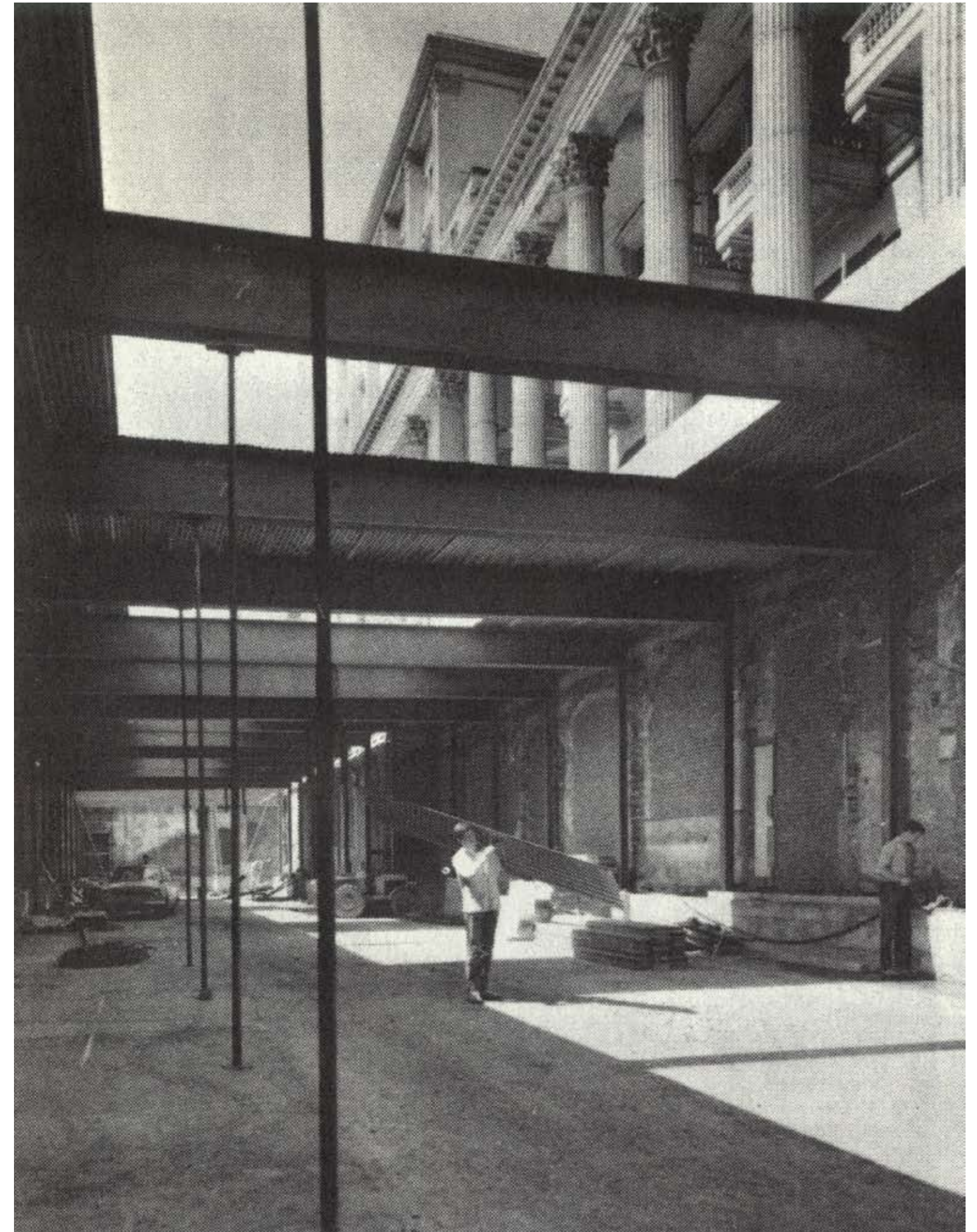
EJT — It's that idea of bringing people together to celebrate the dismantling of a particular structure and the conversations that come out as a result of that.

TE — What's interesting is how you can change the building's culture.

EJT — I was asked in a creative meeting the other day – in terms of the residency, what are your criteria for success, how do you know if it's going to work? I can't answer any of those questions right now, but I've got a really good feeling. This is a new way of working; a new way of thinking.

TE — And if it's successful you'll want to repeat it.

The ICA under construction, printed in the
ICA Bulletin in 1968



17 & 19 November 2010

GUSTAV DEUTSCH

The ICA is pleased to present an in-depth look at the work of Gustav Deutsch, the maestro of found-footage filmmaking. Born in Vienna in 1952, Deutsch creates extravagant 'remixes' of film history from every genre imaginable: fiction and document, magic fables and newsreels, amateur and scientific films.

In his three-part series *Film ist.*, Deutsch investigates the endless wealth of cinema, and how it has grown from two 'birthplaces', the scientific laboratory and the fairground. He travels to film archives worldwide, where he researches and excavates clips from obscure films and then reassembles them into compelling visual narratives. Whereas the first part, *Film ist. 1–6*, consists almost exclusively of sequences from existing scientific films, *Film ist. 7–12* addresses questions of magic, the circus and the fantasy aspect of cinema that can be traced back to Georges Méliès. In the final installment, *Film ist. a girl & a gun* (2009), he adroitly assembles a precisely constructed, mesmerising ebb and flow of images from a variety of genres, including scientific, erotic, fiction and actuality films, into extraordinary montage sequences divided into five acts: Genesis, Paradeisos, Eros, Thanatos and Symposium.

Although his works are highly playful and often humorous, Deutsch is not concerned with ironic effects when choosing and editing his found materials. Essentially, he is looking for a "sensual comprehension" of the medium, and for an understanding of the ways in which cinema, history and individual lives are intertwined. The title of one of Deutsch's major works sums up this perspective: *Welt Spiegel Kino* (World Mirror Cinema, 2005).

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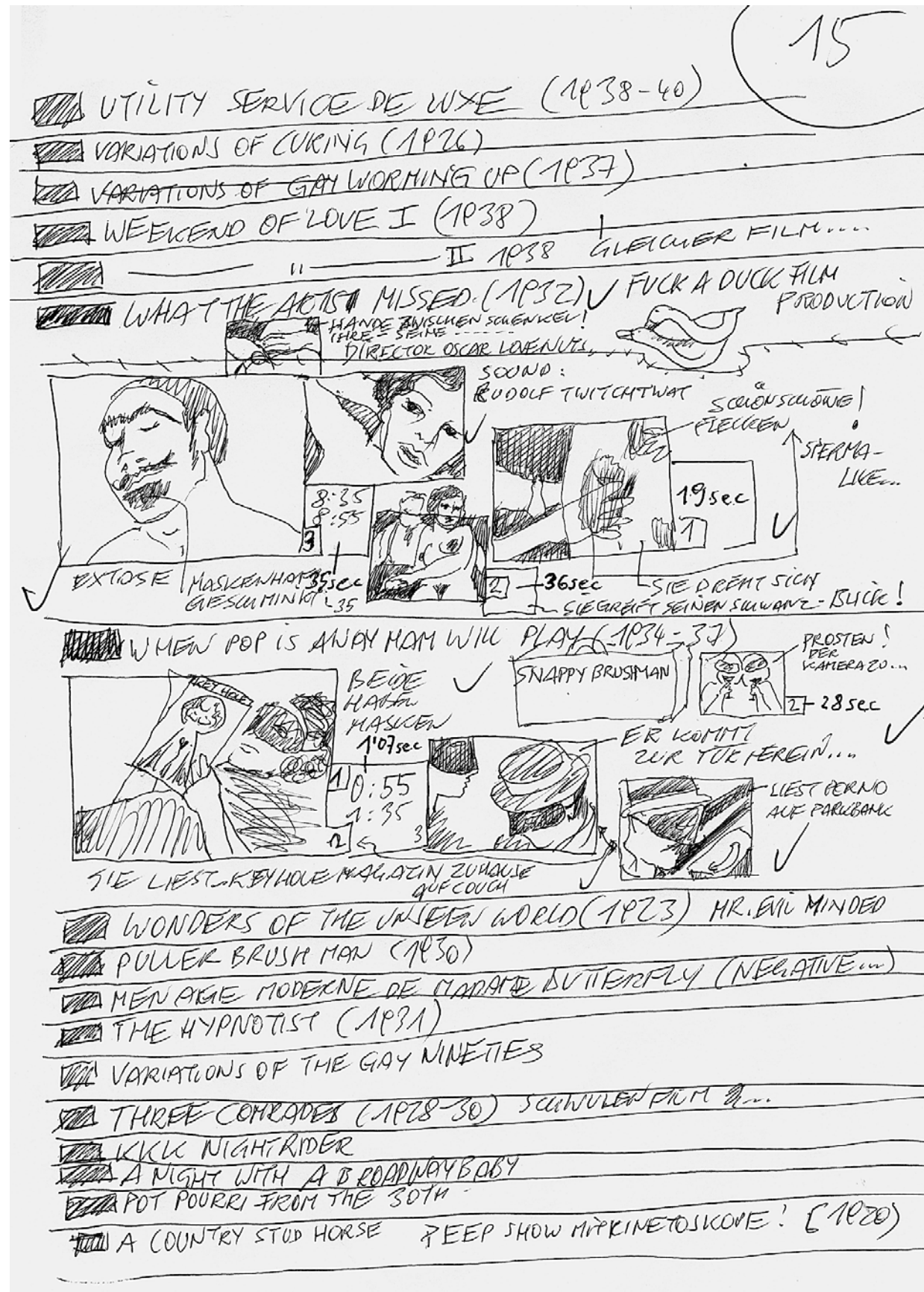
Prehistory

The "Frenzy of the Visible"

1878: the Muybridge equine series
*Studying the horse, we understand
how hard-core followed the invention
of photography. There's a dark compelling
muscle framed by the flanks. There's
a question, an academic question, of at
which point in a leap the female breast
is highest? In the early stopwatched studies,
light sloped down the breasts like a scree.
There's a question of time, there's a sepia
exactitude. The powder erupts:
in the foreground—two lovers / a basket / red wine.
In the back, a clocked thoroughbred sudses.
Is there ever a moment when all four feet
leave the ground?*

And so we invent pornography.

Extract from Albert Goldbarth,
'The Origin of Porno', Comings Back, Doubleday, 1976.



Film ist. a girl & a gun, Facsimile, Sketches and Notes
The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and
Reproduction



Film ist. a girl & a gun - Genesis.
Excerpt from:
What the Artist Missed, 1932

FROM FOSSILS OF TIME TO A CINEMATIC GENESIS

TOM GUNNING

[...] If the first two sections of Gustav Deutsch's series *Film ist.* invoke (without being limited to) science pedagogy and the narrative of history respectively, the latest episode – bearing the sinister number 13 – probes the secret forces of cosmology, sexuality and the drive towards death. Its title, *a girl & a gun*, refers to a definition of cinema offered by DW. Griffith, rediscovered by Jean-Luc Godard. The phrase identifies sexuality and violence as driving impulses

behind the manufacture of moving images. But more than this, the phrase also invokes cinema's fundamental affinity with the dynamic that psychoanalysis calls *displacement*, in which one thing stands in for another. In the movies sex is never simply sex and violence is rarely simply violence; indeed, one substitutes for the other. The gun exerts a phallic force, but sexual desire is also channelled into national fantasies of dominance and conquest. Movies not only combine sex and violence, but fuse the energy of one with the other. But *Film ist.* episode 13 *a girl & a gun* goes beyond a critique of film's exploitation of sex and violence, and fashions an overarching mythology from images of these primal energies. The episode extends from genesis to apocalypse, exposing the forces underlying modern history and perhaps the cosmos as well. Simultaneously a myth and an anti-myth,



v. l. n. r. / f. l. t. r. :
Doc Black, 1932–35; *Nuss*, 1932–34; *The Modern Magician*, 1933; *What the Artist Missed*, 1932; *Die Büchse der Pandora* (Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1929) / *The Modern Magician*, 1933; *La Storia di una Donna* (Eugenio Perego, 1920) / *Paris Girls* (Henry Roussel, 1929) / *La Contessa Sara* (Roberto Roberti, 1919)

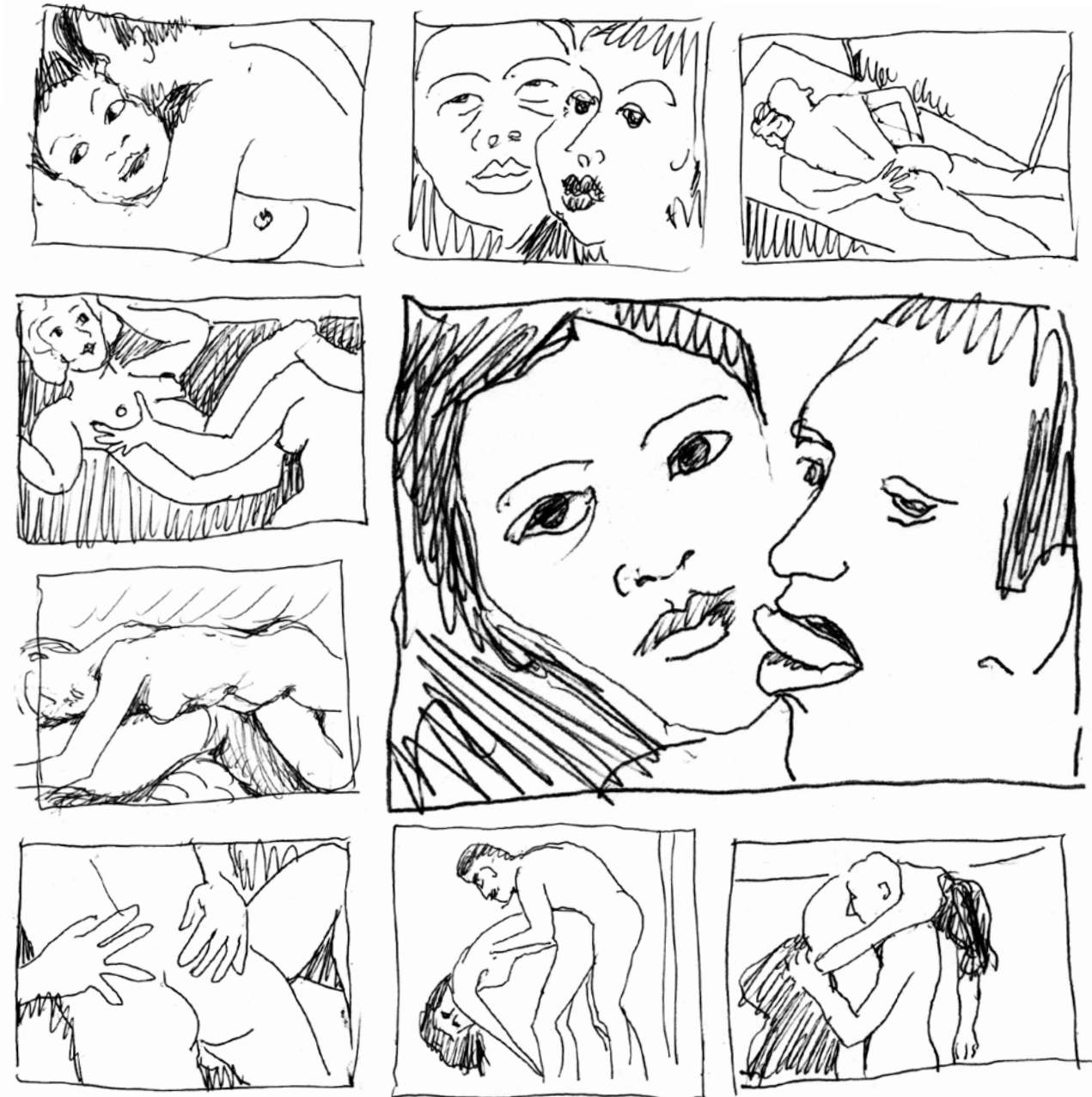


Film ist. a girl & a gun – Genesis.
 Excerpt from:
Three Graces, 1930

episode 13 stages the battle of *Thanatos and Eros*, using the imagery of cinema to create a new epic form with found footage drawn from pornography, historical documentary, fictional dramas and images of nature. *A girl & a gun* blends these varied modes of filmmaking and their different temporalities in order to fashion a cinematic myth in which the full course of time and history unwinds within an eternal process of union and division.

Episodes 1–12 of *Film ist.* derived a new ambiguity and range of meanings from found footage. Episodes 1–6 loosened the images of scientific films from their intended pedagogic purposes, while sections 7–12 liberated gestures, emotions and incidents from the narratives to which they originally belonged. But in episode 13 the images are impressed into a context that endows them with heavily symbolic

roles and meanings. Images that may have originally demonstrated the patterns of smoke or the flow of molten magma become embodiments of the titanic forces of world creation, the energies of growth and genesis. Pornographic films evoke copulating deities. These images become the vehicles of metaphor, cogs within a cosmic mechanism. Sexuality does not appear here as the erotic gags or double meanings that enlivened the previous sections, but rather as the force that moves the sun and all the other stars, the momentum that fuses images into metaphors, triggering explosions and transformations. The cultural weight of the inter-titles that quote religious and philosophical texts in this episode (as contrasted with the laconic section titles of the previous episodes) gives this succession of images a profundity that contrasts with the light-hearted puns and random



v. l. n. r. / f. l. t. r. :

Darkie Rhythm, 1928–30; *Massages*, 1920–25; *Darkie Rhythm*, 1928–30; *Naked Truth*, 1925–1931 / *Re-United Foursome*, 1921–23; *Busy Lesbian Club*, 1930–33; *Darkie Rhythm*, 1928–30; *Jazz Mania*, 1936–38; *Gay Count*, 1925

associations in which the previous section often revelled. Repetition, formal similarities and actions that seem to flow across the cuts create a tsunami of meaning that sweeps across the film. A series of twined bodies are intercut with the tale from Plato's *Symposium* of the primal separation of the original androgynous human into separate sexes (which then strive for their entire lives to find their twin and reunite). This series of mirror images seems to illustrate this mythic account, documenting the primal desire

to recover a primal wholeness. The struggle of these bodies to merge rehearses the film's logic of juxtaposition, portraying the energy of editing itself, making visible the rhythm of a fission both nuclear and cinematic. [...] The archive of cinema supplies the matrix of a new mythology, as the process of editing becomes a process of mythopoesis, manifesting the struggle between contraries and the conjunction of opposites.

A girl & a gun may not be the final episode of *Film ist.*, but it does constitute its alpha



Film ist. a girl & a gun – Paradeisos.
Excerpt from:
L'île des nudistes, 1936

and omega, as these orphaned images unite to form a new cosmology of cinema. In the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, creation began with a disaster, as the vessels of the cosmos shattered when divine energy streamed into them. This divine tragedy caused fragments of the transcendent energy to fall into a world of matter, seeding it with sparks from the heavenly realm. Religious meditation and rituals seek to restore the divine unity and heal this breach, liberating the captive sparks from their earthly container, and allowing them to re-ascend to their original source. I believe this process stands as an ideal metaphor for Deutsch's transformation of found footage, reworking archival material, seeking to release and gather the energy contained within them: from the scientific exploration of the laws of motion, to the enigmatic configurations of narrative and history, to the expansion and

contraction of the energy of the universe itself in the rhythms of erotic union and deadly division. In *Film ist.*, the past knits together and unravels before our eyes, demonstrating the way energy emerges from fission, worlds are created from disasters. Images of the past are refined and transmuted to yield a range of temporal experience, as a new present arises from fossilised films and the conjunction of shots revitalise slumbering meanings. The essence of film consists in endowing still images with movement and life. *Film ist.* awakens the archives of moving images into new discoveries.

Extract from Tom Gunning, 'From Fossils of Time to a Cinematic Genesis', in Wilbirg Brainin-Donnenberg and Michael Loebenstein, eds., *Gustav Deutsch*, Filmmuseum / Synema Publications, 2009.

18 November 2010

THE TROUBLE WITH PAINTING

In the context of Bloomberg New Contemporaries, the ICA presents a timely discussion on 'the trouble with painting.' Despite the advances in the range of media available to artists, painting remains central to art practice. Why do artists continue to paint? Is it because painting is considered in art schools to have an intrinsic value that makes it of itself worthwhile, or does painting maintain a relevance because of its potential for innovation and influence on other modes of art-making?

In seventeenth-century Europe, the painter was the servant of the aristocracy, recording the values, status and property of his patron. By the twentieth century, painters had moved from the salon culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into an era when their works ceased to be an overt record of status and started to consider the medium's intrinsic conventions. When Georges Braque said, 'The painter thinks in forms and colours. The aim is not to reconstitute an anecdotal fact but to constitute a pictorial fact', he was claiming the inner conventions of painting as its prime, if not sole, territory. It is arguable that the response to painting is still primarily aesthetic, but the necessity for art to be aesthetically satisfying is a condition that has been marginalised in the canon of contemporary art. The linearity of modernism, the centrality of painting and the merging of the avant-garde

with the mainstream has been succeeded by the plurality of postmodernism, the dominance of the art market and the return of the high-status object.

A painting has become the commodity *par excellence* – a venal symbol of the commercial degradation of art. The more sublime and autonomous a painting, the more readily the wealthy buy it, reducing it to 'pure wall decoration'. It is elitist entertainment, a status symbol, an investment property – everything except the sacred object it purports to be.

Contemporary art presents itself to its audience in myriad forms, media and styles, from the digital to installation and the expanded forms of sculpture. If there is anything that can be claimed to approach a constant it could be said to be painting. Time and again audiences are reminded of painting's 'New Spirit' or 'Triumph', as if every few years an astonishing discovery has been made; artists continue to paint. How has painting maintained this position? Is it as a result of the dominance of the art market sustained by dealers and auction houses, as Donald Kuspit suggested ten years ago? If so, how much of a difference will the credit crunch make to the practice of painting?

THE PAINTED WORD

TOM WOLFE

People don't read the morning newspaper, Marshall McLuhan once said, they slip into it like a warm bath. Too true, Marshall! Imagine being in New York City on the morning of Sunday, April 28, 1974, like I was, slipping into that great public bath, that vat, that spa, that regional physiotherapy tank, that White Sulphur Springs, that Marienbad, that Ganges, that River Jordan for a million souls that is the *Sunday New York Times*. Soon I was submerged, weightless, suspended in the tepid depths of the thing, in Arts & Leisure, Section 2, page 19, in a state of perfect sensory deprivation, when all at once an extraordinary thing happened:

I noticed something!

Yet another clam-broth-coloured current had begun to roll over me, as warm and predictable as the Gulf Stream ... a review, it was, by the *Times*' dean of the arts, Hilton Kramer, of an exhibition at Yale University of Seven Realists, seven realistic painters ... when I was jerked alert by the following:

Realism does not lack its partisans, but it does rather conspicuously lack a persuasive theory. And given the nature of our intellectual commerce with works of art, to lack a persuasive theory is to lack something crucial – the means by which our experience of individual works is joined to our understanding of the values they signify.

Now, you may say, My God, man! You woke up over that? You forsook your blissful coma over a mere swell in the sea of words?

But I knew what I was looking at. I realised that without making the slightest effort I had come upon one of those utterances in search of which psychoanalysts and State Department monitors of the Moscow or Belgrade press are willing to endure a lifetime of tedium: namely, the seemingly innocuous *obiter dicta*, the words in passing, that give the game away.

PRATT INSTITUTE LECTURE

FRANK STELLA

There are two problems in painting. One is to find out what painting is and the other is to find out how to make a painting. The first is learning something and the second is making something.

One learns about painting by looking at and imitating other painters. I can't stress enough how important it is, if you are interested at all in painting, to look and to look a great deal at painting. There is no other way to find out about painting. After looking comes imitating. In my own case it was at first largely a technical immersion. How did Kline put down that colour? Brush or knife or both? Why did Guston leave the canvas bare at the edges? Why did H. Frankenthaler use unsized canvas? And so on. Then, and this was the most dangerous part, I began to imitate the intellectual and emotional processes of the painters I saw. So that rainy winter days in the city would force me to paint Gandy Brodies, as bright clear days at the seashore would force me to paint De Staels. I would discover rose madder and add orange to make a Hofmann. Fortunately, one can stand only so much of this sort of thing. I got tired of other people's painting and began to make my own. I found, however, that I not only got tired of looking at my own paintings but that I also didn't like painting them at all. The painterly problems of what to put here and there and how to make it go with what was already there became more and more difficult and the solutions more and more unsatisfactory. Until finally it became obvious that there had to be a better way.

There were two problems that had to be faced. One was spatial and the other methodological. In the first case I had to do something about relational painting, i.e., the balancing of the various parts with and against each other. The obvious answer was symmetry – make it the same all over. The question still remained, though, of how to do this in depth. A symmetrical image or configuration placed on an open ground is not balanced out in the illusionistic space. The solution I arrived at – and there are probably quite a few, although I know of only one other, colour density – forces illusionistic space out of the painting at a constant rate by using a regulated pattern. The remaining problem was simply to find a method of paint application that followed and complemented the design solution. This was done by using the house painter's technique and tools.

Extract from Frank Stella, 'Pratt Institute Lecture', 1959–60, in *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., Blackwell Publishing, first published 2003, pp. 820–21.

INTERVIEW

LUC TUYMANS AND
KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

KJM Given all that we've talked about so far, when you think about yourself as a painter, as an artist, somebody who's driven to gather images and then to make pictures, do you see yourself engaged in any kind of discursive practice aimed at determining a value for painting in this moment in history?

LT Actually, Kerry, I see it much more as an element of resistance. It's not so much to go into the discourse of how and why and in which way we should validate or re-validate painting, because I don't think that's an interesting discourse and I think it's invalid. Why should I answer that question, if it's something that I just do and many others did before me? The whole discourse about whether painting is dead or alive is born of a huge misunderstanding. There are – and I've been part of most of them – a lot of shows about painting and only about painting that have piled up paintings and reduced them, in a sense, to wallpaper, but they also ghettoise the medium, which is a strange thing. And then of course there's the fact that to this day, a painting is the most expensive artefact, because it demonstrates uniqueness: it ends and begins; it has a middle and a stop somewhere. It's something that somebody wants to have. It's a very strange thing to acquire a taste to have those things. Part of it goes back to the fetishistic character of the object itself and a certain idea of animism, because it has to do with nature. It has to be made by somebody who's part of nature. That character carries this ultimate immediacy and prolongs it, because it's frozen onto a surface.

KJM If we agree that making paintings and the compulsion to depict things is not unique, not particularly special, and you're describing some exhibitions that get made about painting, that then reduce the pictures to something like wallpaper, and if we go back to the original point I was trying to make when we started the conversation, about what people want to hear when they hear artists talk about what they do, the question persists: when you're looking at paintings, what are you looking for? Where does the value get assigned to the painting?

LT I validate something I look at, specifically a painting – it has to capture my attention, which happens in different ways, visually and physically. And whenever I'm convinced about it, and that's something that happens within seconds, I'll investigate the imagery, look at it again and again and even come back to look at it again, to see if the experience is correct, if it stays the same. A convincing picture carries that load and it carries it across—

KJM That suggests that whatever the value is, it's intrinsic to the object itself or to the image itself.

LT Both. It has made a transgression. The object and the image function as transmitters;

What I saw before me was the critic-in-chief of *The New York Times* saying: in looking at a painting today, “to lack persuasive theory is to lack something crucial”. I did read it again. It didn't say ‘something helpful’ or ‘enriching’ or even ‘extremely valuable’. No, the word was crucial.

In short: frankly, these days, without a theory to go with it, I can't see a painting.

Then and there I experienced a flash known as the Aha! Phenomenon, and the buried life of contemporary art was revealed to me for the first time. The fogs lifted! The clouds passed! The motes, scales, conjunctival bloodshots and Murine agonies fell away!

All these years, along with countless kindred souls, I am certain, I had made my way into the galleries of Upper Madison and Lower Soho and the Art Gildo Midway of Fifty-seventh Street, and into the museums, into the Modern, the Whitney and the Guggenheim, the Bastard Bauhaus, the New Brutalist and the Fountainhead Baroque, into the lowliest storefront churches and grandest Robber Baronial temples of Modernism. All these years, I, like so many others, had stood in front of a thousand, two thousand, God-knows-how-many thousand Pollocks, de Koonings, Newmans, Nolands, Rothkos, Rauschenbergs, Judds, Johnses, Olitskis, Louises, Stills, Franz Klines, Frankenthalers, Kellys and Frank Stellas, now squinting, now popping the eye sockets open, now drawing back, now moving closer – waiting, waiting forever waiting for ... it ... for it to come into focus, namely, the visual reward (for so much effort) that must be there, which everyone (*tout le monde*) knew to be there – waiting for something to radiate directly from the paintings on these invariably pure white walls, in this room, in this moment, into my own optic chiasma. All these years, in short, I had assumed that in art, if nowhere else, seeing is believing. Well – how very shortsighted! Now, at last, on April 28, 1974, I could see. I had gotten it backwards all along. Not ‘seeing is believing’, you ninny, but ‘believing is seeing’, for Modern Art has become completely literary: the paintings and other works exist only to illustrate the text.

Like most sudden revelations, this one left me dizzy. How could such a thing be? How could Modern Art be literary? As every art-history student is told, the Modern movement began about 1900 with a complete rejection of the literary nature of academic art, meaning the sort of realistic art that originated in the Renaissance and which the various national academies still held up as the last word.

Literary became a codeword for all that seemed hopelessly retrograde about realistic art. It probably referred originally to the way nineteenth-century painters liked to paint scenes straight from literature such as Sir John Everett Millais's rendition of Hamlet's intended, Ophelia, floating dead (on her back) with a bouquet of wildflowers in her death grip. In time, literary came to refer to realistic painting that comes not from the artist but from the sentiments the viewer hauls along to it, like so much mental baggage. According to this theory, the museum-going public's love of, say, Jean Francois Millet's *The Sower* has little to do with Millet's talent and everything to do with people's sentimental notions about The Sturdy Yeoman. They make up a little story about him.

What was the opposite of literary painting? Why, *l'art pour l'art*, form for the sake of form, colour for the sake of colour. In Europe before 1914, artists invented Modern styles with fanatic energy – Fauvism, Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Orphism, Supermatism, Vorticism – but everybody shared the same premise: henceforth, one doesn't paint “about anything, my dear aunt”, to borrow a line from a famous Punch cartoon. One just paints. Art should no longer be a mirror held up to man or nature. A painting should compel the viewer to see it for what it is: a certain arrangement of colours and forms on a canvas.

Artists pitched in to help make theory. They loved it, in fact. Georges Braque, the painter for whose work the word Cubism was coined, was a great formulator of precepts. “The painter thinks in forms and colours. The aim is not to reconstitute an anecdotal fact but to constitute a pictorial fact.”

Today, this notion, this protest – which it was when Braque said it – has become a piece of orthodoxy. Artists repeat it endlessly, with conviction. As the Minimal art movement came into its own in 1966, Frank Stella was saying it again: “My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there. It really is an object ... What you see is what you see.”

Such emphasis, such certainty! What a head of steam – what patriotism an idea can build up in three-quarters of a century! In any event, so began Modern Art and so began the modern art of Art Theory. Braque, like Frank Stella, loved theory; but for Braque, who was a Montmartre boho* of the primitive sort, art came first. You can be sure the poor fellow never dreamed that during his own lifetime that order would be reversed.

they have a special quality that's outside of language, which mutes the thing to the point where silence becomes like a weight. And you can feel that. Those elements are really fascinating because they're in a sense not there; after all, they're depicted. Like Magritte said, “This is not a pipe” – it's a depiction of a pipe. Which is true, but then again, that painting he made doesn't really function for me as a painting. It functions as a work of art. That's the reason I don't think that the discourse about painting as such is a real discourse, because you can do the test. You can put somebody who's completely unprepared in front of a painting and see how they respond, and it will have nothing to do with the discourse of which they're knowledgeable or not. It will have an immediate effect.

Extract from Luc Tuymans and Kerry James Marshall, *Bomb 92*, Summer 2005.

* Twentieth-century American slang for bohemian; obverse of hobo.

Tom Wolfe, ‘The Painted Word’, 1975, in *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers & The Painted Word*, Picador, 2002, pp. 1–8.



SETT

two wee chough choughs

Siôn Parkinson

(1) A coaster lies broadside on the beach, her backside gently pressing a spindly looking wooden pier. The sea is dull in the March mid-morning and the water breaks weak, metres from the drying hull. After ten days ruin the sandbed is cracking, under her dead weight, and she has begun to lean with the slope of the shore and the gradation of the shingle as if long tantalised by the tide.

(1.1) Level to the jetty, two jacketed lifeboats rest side-by-side, redundant, an oak funnel sprouting at their feet. Beneath, soot black timber-trimmed brass-rimmed windows look out onto a stagnant image in an altogether too unbroken, too unmoving frame. (Sickening, to be sure!) Look onwards. A mast, crooked as if recently battered by a storm, it supports a confluence of slack lines, heavy with days of spray and inaction. The cabins and the deck are empty. The crew have long gone, save the skipper who joins the crowd in a ring on the other side in the ship's shadow. We keep moving and sweep around to meet them all, and see as we do the white-painted name two men high on the bow, traced once over (twice christened).

(1.2) The ship is not in one piece, as we first guess, but is stretched in sections upon the shore, its stern half-sliced like a knife and a ham. The village has emptied onto the beach, greedily peering in to the gloomy hollow. The settsmen and the thrumping *creigwyr* sit upright and equal among the larger rocks, thumbing them out of habit. Their mothers and their wives and their daughters stand in front with their heads wrapped in scarves, and the sons in between, impatient as short-legged dogs in black collars strain under arm and foot. Three children stand atop an upturned ECHO margarine crate, blank-eyed and

Parkinson's art takes in sculptural installation, writing and singing, and for Roland he has combined these practices in a short text in the form of a song. 'SETT' tells of a boy, Bogdan, who whilst climbing the steep cliffs of an abandoned quarry steps on a cough—a crow-like bird with black plumage and bright red feet, legs and bill—and sees in its spilled entrails visions of the demise of the isolated Welsh quarrying village, Nant Gwrtheyrn. For over a century, the Nant provided the granite cubes or 'setts' that paved the roads in the developing industrial cities in the north of England. These setts give the song its name and the punning stage 'set' of Parkinson's empty cover image. Parkinson's song is a correlative to the artwork *Lower, Lower* (2009) exhibited as part of Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2010.

On 23 March, 1951, the Amy Summerfield, a coal-burning coastal steamer, was wrecked in the bay of Porth-y-Nant, northwest Wales—the stage of three granite quarries set in the rising mountains. Amy had sunk once before off the mouth of the Mersey, re-floated, and unusually for a sunken ship, was re-given her original name. She was finally sold for scrap to one William Williams who stripped her down and drove her in fragments over the hill to Harlech.

slack-mouthed in expectancy, O—O. And the out-of-towners mingle with smacking chops and errant purpose, much as the baker, and the shopkeeper, and the chapel minister, and the manager, and the loading foreman, and the skipper, and the scrappers, and all the players are there.

(2) No loading today, says the loading foreman, and again and once again looks to the tugs and the steamers and the schooners and the smacks that fatten the horizon, all waiting to snatch a cargo. No, says the skipper but they'll may be for some. And he turns to beyond the line of the pack. Two men in ratters caps look on with their backs to a Bren Gun carrier, hovering like a buzzard, away to strip a girl of her worth.

(2.1) First scrapper, Poetchy-Poetch, scans the bay, and says, Ah, such a funny sway, gravity, that works its way down here. Roads that float on seas... —And ships that sail on mountains? finishes Spoonly, Second scrapper. Roads, roads, *y Gamfordd!* to live and die by roads. A pause as the men survey their task. Then, together, in the leap of epiphany, they sing.

(2.2) Steel her on up the hill,
We will,
Steel her on up,
We will.

(3) Look up again, farther still, and view the tumulus village in the floor of the valley. From the roofs of the barracks rise three rival hills, once cooked then cooled 'til hard and set. Industry! A triad of quarries bruise the mountainside like silvery sores in the orange blaze of the brake and the yellow and the black of the broom

and the blue and the purple and the pink of the heather. Come chisel, come lump, come make sense of this *ith-faen!* Twenty—crunk—by twenty—crunk—by twenty—crunk—by twenty.

(4) A hundred feet from the sea up on a broken stage west of the bay, Bogdan, a boy, is soon to be lost to his ignominy.

(4.1) *Carreg y Llam*. A not long abandoned granite quarry. Tube-legged trousers tied loosely round his stomach and holding a slow-bending steel rope, the boy Bogdan begins to climb the quarry face. Emyr, his older brother, Dewi, a short wee shrike, Mair, the chapel minister's daughter, and Gwen, a girl with sagging cheek, look on. They flaunt their indifference to the boy and his feet, though they keep an eye, none being without their stake.

(4.2) The boy Bogdan is barely begun when from a foothold five feet up, something falls black from under his boot. It hangs in the air, then drops muted onto the heath grass with soft, horrible doubt. Mair takes a chary step, the others stretch out their necks. Un-noticing, Bogdan kicks at the spot, and hard again with probing toe in the rock. Wet-faced and weeping wet, it trickles thrice.

(4.3) A sudden shriek of laughter crashes in, ricochets once round the huge horseshoe wall, through the backcloth, and out. And we see Dewi's dark face contorted with horrible leer at the soured pitch, his voice cutting through, Ooo—hoo—hoo—hoo! (And yet we can't quite see it there, limp, a glimpse, a peep, a downy discolouration encircled by a fiery halo.) And we hear the jeering clatter come again, but this time drawn out, stingers in cruel segmented woops, each a barb in a still pulsating abdomen. And now in Bogdan's ear as it pricks him late, he hears his brother's rebuke. Jesus God, says Emyr.

(4.4) From his little height, Bogdan looks down, sees it. Black feathers and bloodied beak, a vermillion belly-

worm, rashing from its breast. Then, as the children point and *ach!* and run and *y—fi!* we see its wild giblets strewn like stew on the scree.

(4.5) Haruspicate, what augurs this?

(5) In the bird's guts glittering wet, we see a coiling landscape, one that clearly resembles this, and within it, a slew of images come rapid-fire. On fish bit and crab shell rotting shores, we see lacerated sea-beef washed up with hardened bottlenoses, and pebble-packed blowholes-es. At the foot of the corkscrew road, eighteen men dressed like cobs, ropes lashed around their necks, hauling. The dead in slow Ascension to earth holier than this, a train of heel-worn corpses wrapped in a blanket carapace. Rows of piss-eyed houses with stinging nettle gardens, their floors raised by a hundred years of hard skin shed. Up in the hills we see wire-haired terriers with lamb-legged mouths — a yelping carousel. Woolly teratomas, bone and hair and teeth in a muscle-y embryonic mash, their meaty stock seeping into the soil like a gooey ragout. A thousand black slugs in a sticky mass of particles, little soggy boggy blanks, half-thunk, half-drunk diluents. And three great gouges in the ground, long given up the ghost, remembered only by the lament of some electric champion cry carried down a steel wire, struck between fence posts.

(6) Black luck! says the boy Bogdan, still a few feet from the ground. He pushes firm with his leg, lets go of the rope and lands in the chip. He moves his hands red with rust to his head, and there scratching as if searching for some rote-ful maxim, he sings, strained.

(6.1) Too wee chuff chuffs,
peckin' at the turf turf,
All shall be well,
an' all shall be well.
An' all shall be well,
an' all shall be well...

(6.2) (*Distantly*) Chee—ow, comes the riposte like some Mexican girl halloo-ing. A burning ember in her mouth, chewing chee—ow! chee—ow!

(6.3) Bogdan moves quick. He pulls down his tweedy sleeves, picks up the dead bird, and walks cautiously across the flat stage, twenty or thirty feet to the cliff edge, speaking to the leaking fowl nestled in his cloth hands...

(6.4) Music. Gentle at first, but building with each step as if bouncing in from the rocks behind. The song: a call-and-response sung by one voice. Slow, doleful, but threatening, it comes in throbbing vibrato like a long wavering baa—a—a. To the dead bird:

(6.5) Rid you of your ballast, did I?

(chee—ow)

For you to fly higher.

(chee—ow, chee—ow)

And you! free of your vows, now?

(chee—ow)

Fly higher, still!

(chee—ow, chee—ow)

...

(6.6) With that, and the music without break, we see Bogdan reach the cliff edge, stopping and tossing the bird over the crag. A few seconds and we hear it hit the sea with a hiss as the viscera suddenly (and inexplicably) cools.

(7) Moments before, we see Dewi leading Gwen and Mair down to the beach, Emyr lagging a little but quickening now with final resolution. As they reach the throng, still absorbed by the fathoms of the wrecked coaster, the boys and girls disband to their mothers and their fathers, to whisper in their ears, and point upwards to where near Bogdan crouches. The whole crowd follows the four fingers, and up, and sees there a boy with strange stumped hands releasing, a black mess falling, bracketed two points red with entrails trailing. An incandescent flare.

(7.1) Music becomes suddenly louder, then stops.

(8) Still peering over the cliff at the sea below and the smooth print on the surface of the water where the bird fell like a fluke, Bogdan with a brief look of relief, passing, he raises his head and turns to the north, to the crowd, to the ship and its last berth. Beat. And there electrified to meet the wide-eyes of the entire congregation, stock-still and staring up at him with ferocious condemnation.

(9) Chee—ow! closer now.

(10) Music swells once more. A drum lift.

(10.1) The skipper from the jetty pulls an oar from a lifeboat, jabbing it in the air, pitchfork-style. The loading foreman pulling a face there, behind, and kicking his heels on the boards in rhyme, landing bock—a—da—bock. A steady rhythm to the work now. The pull of the waves on the shingle becomes the scraping russ of a cabasa. The boys on the beach pick it up, rushing to the grounded ship and pounding on its heavy hull with flat palms. A slack-skinned funeral drum, driving. The dogs bark in fighting taunt, run about, in and out, of beat, and off-beat. And the settsmen rise and the ring of their feet on the rocks, as they spin each other round, faster and faster. The scrappers from the steel box belly of the Bren stand straight from the knee, arm-in-arm, dancing, smiling idiotically. And they move it up a gear. The wives clap their hands, and the girls pinch their noses, and the men their arses. And the canon blasts high in the mountainside, shaking free legs and grit. (And some way off, circling the third peak, a familiar rippling preep of birdsong.)

(10.2) As the hullabaloo wanes, the music drifts up and over the corkscrew road, leaving behind the sounds of the waves and the winds. The settsmen turn to their stone chisels, and the scrappers to their quarry, and the sheep on the hills to their shilly-shallying, and the slugs bide their time with their dilly-dallying.

(11) We return, abruptly, to the table-top stage of *Carreg y Llam* and Bogdan on the brink again, where of course he has been throughout. But here his countenance recalls the brief reprieve before the explosive (and exuberant) indictment from the crowd below. Indeed, as we see, the villagers have returned to their work with ease, and the mood over the valley is hushed, restored, telling us something of the fantasy we have just witnessed.

(11.1) Bogdan swings around and slumps down heavily with his back to the bay. A bird flies down to a tumbling track of cube-block scree, and perches there. An extraordinary picture. Its glassy eye gazing past the boy to the sea, unblinking. This is undoubtedly the trampled bird's mate in blue-black mourning clothes.

(11.2) Chee—ow, says the bird. Chee—ow, chee—ow, doubly. The boy, feet away, stiffens.

(11.3) Ah, you have come to lay blame, I suppose, to charge me, and berate?

(11.4) Chee—ow.

(11.5) There. I admit. I put my foot in it. But was I not so deft with it? Unbuttoned his breast coat, and unloosened his girdle, freed those silly billy big boy pectorals from his sternal keel with my heel, unfastened the fuse of his fancybone — all with nice incisive boot-crack...

(11.6) Chee—ow.

(11.7) And Spatchcock! Blew all nine bellows of the fellow, puff, puff. You should have seen it! His gizzard a spring of seal grey gastroliths, Gullet, regurgitating crop coloured cornsilk, the soil supping up his inky ant-sy milk. Smack! And ground into ash the white comb of his bone, fit for a porcelain plate, Heart, stomach, kidneys, liver, mince, grind, grate...

(11.8) Chee—ow, says the bird, with an absurd little lilt. Chee—o—ow?

(11.9) *Brân Goesgoch!* bursts Bogdan. You bemoan what, with your painted lips and your legs like a tart? How affected this is, he mocks. Pause.

(11.10) Chee—ow, says the bird, drawn and steady.

(12) And the two unaccompanied voices take us towards finale, ringing out among the broken stones and whistling through the valley.

(13) (*Exasperated*) What, you croak-voiced korax?

Chee—ow.

What, you gangling gull?

Chee—ow.

What, you snivelling rictus?

Chee—ow.

What, you...you...?

(13.1) Loquacious old crow.

Chee—ow, chee—ow.

Spill your guts out, why don't you? Chee—ow, chee—ow.

Shush. *Wisht!*

Chee—ow, chee—ow.

...

(13.2) Oh Mam! thinks he.

Chee—ow, chee—ow.

Oh Neptune! cries she.

Chee—ow, chee—ow.

(13.3) Chee—oww! Chee—oww!

Chee—oww! Chee—oww!

—Murder! Murder!

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13 essays by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Boris Groys, Hal Foster, Jan Verwoert and others attempt to illuminate the title question.

4

ARTIST PROJECT: SIÓN PARKINSON

Blue Remembered Hills
Dennis Potter
BBC, 2005 (first aired 30 January, 1979)

This film portrays a summer afternoon in 1943, and a group of seven-year-olds playing in the hills and fields. The film uses mature adult actors to play the children, obscuring the sentimental mirage of childhood innocence.

Under Milk Wood: A Play for Voices
Dylan Thomas
Penguin Modern Classics, 2000

Dylan Thomas' densely lyrical evocation of a day in the life of Llaregrub, a fictional Welsh fishing village (originally imagined as being enclosed by barbed wire), as witnessed by Richard Burton's all-seeing narrator.

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