

LIVE

performance art #3



**Robert Ashley • Dance Day at The Kitchen •
Intermedia Festival • Childs/Glass/LeWitt • S.F.
MOMA (Space/Time/Sound) • Performance Alla
Milanese (Sixto Notes Festival) • Performance Books •
Reviews**

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LIVE

performance art #3 magazine

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A Periodical of Performing Arts Journal Publications

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Performance Art Magazine is changing its name to LIVE, and expanding its size and format as of this issue. Several factors have contributed to this rethinking about the magazine and the areas of performance we are covering.

Namely, the *Soho Weekly News* seems to be phasing out performance coverage and the *Village Voice* has never expressed much interest in it; other publications coming out of New York have only given the area token coverage; museums and galleries are sponsoring fewer performance events. That pretty much leaves us to explore the vast field of performance activity in New York on a regular basis. The new, larger size of the magazine will allow us to increase our coverage and amount of photos in a more visually expansive format and design.

There is great deal of what one might call

"creative confusion" in the performance world today and this magazine was created to reflect the transformative nature of this activity. When we started the magazine last Spring we didn't realize the extent to which we'd be covering performances in lofts, clubs, and alternative spaces. Neither did we anticipate the amount of activity which could comfortably fit in the pages of this magazine.

In our three issues thus far we've expanded coverage in performance art and moved to include dance, film, video, music, and literary readings. The notion of performance itself is changing and newer and younger performers are working in all kinds of imaginative cross-over areas, helping to snape new audience ideas about the nature and shape of the audience experience. The title LIVE, we feel, better reflects the dynamism of the performance world and

the openness of this world to new definition.

We know from the response to this magazine, now in national and international distribution, that there is a great audience demand for a publication about performance, and performers, too, have begun to look to us for coverage of their work. We expect to grow into more national and international perspectives on performance as much as we can, though New York activity will always be our focus. As it is, we can't cover all of it.

LIVE will continue in its established format but we hope to more thoroughly pursue all kinds of performance activity, trends, and aesthetics — from the most out-of-the-way places to the more established spaces.

The Publishers

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PERFECT LIVES (PRIVATE PARTS)

Robert Ashley



Perfect Lives (Private Parts) deals with “life in the corn belt.” Are you from the Midwest?

I think where I grew up, Ann Arbor, Michigan, is considered to be right on the edge of the Midwest. The slides and map showed Galesberg, Illinois, which is on the far eastern edge of the corn belt. When I first drove across the country about ten years ago, I’d never really seen that geography and how it changed, and I started thinking about that image of flatness. I was also reading a lot about Egypt and geometry, the measurement of the earth and architecture, and all those ideas about how the earth is divided up. I thought about the Midwest flatness being something like other flat places on the earth. I really got interested in it because it was flat rather than because I was there. Everything I know about the place is so imaginary, I don’t really know anything about the Midwest.

Since the DTW performances were “in progress,” what else will we see at this Fall’s performance and broadcast?

This piece resembles most the way live performances are done when they’re done really well, such as baseball coverage where there are huge numbers of cameras and therefore a huge number of choices of what to show.

There will be six channels of imagery and each one with a different subject. The channels are set up in pairs. For instance, the outdoor landscapes will be compared to the piano players’ landscapes—the keyboard, his hands. And there are templates for all of the various layers of the parts, the musical layers and video imagery, and those templates are filled out by pictures of real things. Each song has its own template. The staging this Fall will be like that at DTW but expanded and taken apart. The separate areas, like Blue Gene at the keyboard, who is one subject, will each have one camera devoted exclusively to that. Jill and David are another study, and

one camera will be focused exclusively to that area, and so on. What we learned at DTW is that we need more room, so that those subjects can be more separated. What I expect the audience to see is us working on the television. For the Fall, I’m not thinking of it so much as the presentation of a theatre piece, but as a presentation of the way somebody from the Kitchen would do television.

And all of these different subjects will go into a master feed for broadcast?

Exactly. The master video will be made as a selection from six different channels, three pre-taped channels and three live camera

feeds. Each of those six tracks will be complete in itself for each of the seven songs, so that it becomes a kind of virtuoso mixing piece. As a television technique, it goes away from the narrative style of camera work that you mostly see on commercial television. This piece resembles most the way live performances are done when they're done really well, such as baseball coverage where there are huge numbers of cameras and therefore a huge number of choices of what to show. So the technical model for the piece is baseball rather than a movie. It's definitely not a film style.

How are your six channels going to relate to each other?

The video material is being designed to relate those different channels in a geometrical way which is what I call templates. For instance, in *The Park*, the template is simply the low horizon, which means the bottom half of the screen. The screen is divided into two horizontal areas, and the bottom half is smaller than the top half so that the camera that's studying the keyboard will design that shot so that all of the shots in *The Park* have a low horizon template. The same for the cameras on the narrator and on Jill and David. Those shots will have a geometrical interchangeability. They'll be interchangeable because of the geometry rather than any subject matter. The template for *The Supermarket* is the idea of perspective; of converging lines as a sort of zoom. *The Bar* template is a near area and a far area, looking over something that's close at something far away. The template for *The Church* is the rose window, the symmetrical pattern that is symmetrical in both axes. What we were working with at DTW was to see how to do that in performance for television with dif-

ferent cameras. This Fall there will be an artist at each camera and that artist will be doing something like a piece in his or her style but following those templates. I'm giving them a geometrical boundary, a shape definition within which to work and do something in their style that's unique so that each channel will look like a different artist did it.

And that's true of the music for each song as well isn't it?

I'm more interested in making a setting in which Blue Gene can play the piano so that you can really see him play the piano.

That idea of geometrical layering is very basic to multi-track music recording. First you divide the template by the tempo, and then you go into the harmonic sub-divisions of that tempo, and that becomes a fixed template. It's like paint-by-numbers. You just fill over that template with any kind of instrumentation you want. That's where my template idea comes from, and it's what relates the video and music in *Perfect Lives (Private Parts)* in a structural way.

So each song has a metrical template?

That's first, the time is divided. Then the next stage is to fill that template with words. Each of the songs is made up of a bunch of little songs of different lengths. Then there's an overall metrical template for each of the seven songs. The word patterns are set up according to the inflections that can fill that template. The template governs the rate of



**BLUE GENE TYRANNY
ROBERT ASHLEY**

speech and the inflection quality. That becomes the music for the narrator. And the piano player use the same template for his improvisations. I asked Blue Gene to design harmonic patterns which would be comfortable for his improvising.

So for you writing the words is like writing music?

Yes. Once you're in the tempo and in the key, then I put down a bunch of images that I want to get in. I don't think about telling a story. The images are to fill in that template as part of the family of images in the whole seven-part piece.

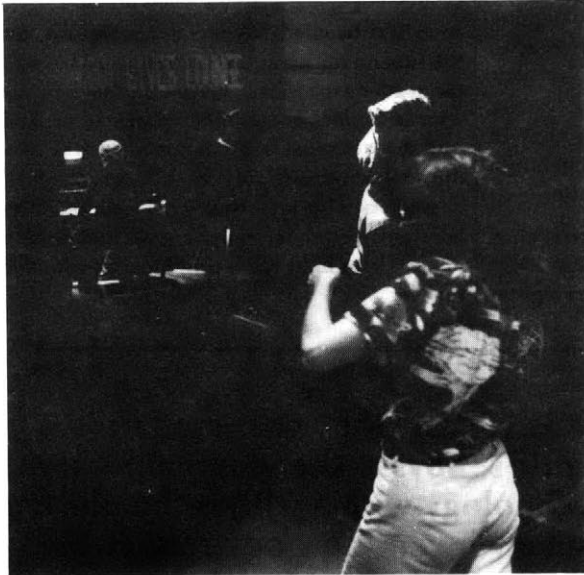
How do you want a viewer to listen to language arranged like that?

The only way to have a comfortable sense of improvisation is to have that thing as well mapped-out as possible.

I want the saying of the words, the singing of the words, to sound like another instrument. It's not like a voice-over in films. I worked with balances because I don't want the music to sound like accompaniment to my narration. The title, *Private Parts*, indicates how I think of the three parts: mine, Jill and



DAVID VAN TIEGHEM
JILL KROESEN



BLUE GENE TYRANNY
(background); STEVE
PAXTON, LISA NELSON

David's, and Blue Gene's as not inter-related in that way.

So you choose a shape within which to find something to say when you're writing?

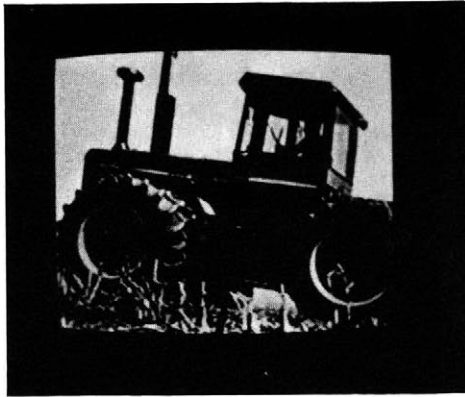
The shape is decided very arbitrarily. It's exactly the way I write music.

What makes the result seem not arbitrary?

That's when you're lucky, the shape and theme go together. When they don't work, you can hear it. There are some places in the songs where I feel a difference between the template and the words I came up with. It's not just the words but their inflection. I can have a sentence which sounds terrific in one template pattern but which will sound terrible if you read it in another template pattern.

So the arbitrary part is that the form is decided apart from the content.

Once you're in the tempo and in the key, then I put down a bunch of images that I want to get in. I don't think about telling a story.



It's imposed. I don't know anything about novels, and I've never written anything on this scale, but when I compose music, I can't go on very long without some way of relating what I'm working on now to what's gone on before, and what I think is going to happen at some future point. The only way to have a comfortable sense of improvisation is to have that thing as well mapped-out as possible.

That seems especially important for *Perfect Lives* because it's so long.

I chose to make each song fill up a half-hour television program . . .

And you decided to do seven songs.

And I chose to do seven half-hours. I had the structure and characters in mind, so that each of the images the song describes, even though they might last only thirty seconds or two minutes, would be recognizable enough and coherent enough so that if you referred back to them an hour later, there'd be some connection. It's not a narrative connection, it's like referring back to a piece of music.

But recurring musical themes are a kind of narrative even if they're repetitive or circular.

I don't know how writers do that. It seems to me that the reader of a novel remembers the structure of the plot. What I'm trying to get at is like the structure of a melody, of something you remembered as an aural experience, so that when you hear it later, you don't recall it as an event like character "A" going downtown. There's very little of that in *Perfect Lives*, of people actually doing things. The images are rhythmic and melodic.

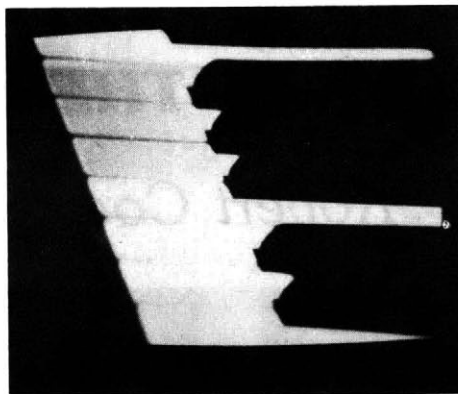
But a lot of scattered details can cohere when they're attached to names. All those repetitions of words and phrases in Joyce's *Ulysses* register

because they're attached to these named characters.

Names are very important. What is that famous thing in *Ulysses*, the man in the MacIntosh coat?

And that becomes his name, MacIntosh, for the funeral notice in the newspaper. That's all the reader ever learns, his description became a name for lack of any other information. And you have Proust organizing his novel in a musical leit-motif way with a set group of characters who recur but whose personalities constantly change. Assigning all that flux to names helps hold the writing together for the reader.

While the machine is often the post-modernist's answer to the romantic's abyss, the contemporary pathetic fallacy (of technology-with-a-will) is the more interesting in that human invention *does* reflect the characteristics of its creator.



I started out writing without naming anybody. I was just describing imagery. I realized very soon that if you describe a whole bunch of different images like snapshots, it becomes sort of arbitrary. If you just attach those things to a name, even though the names are doing totally different things, people connect them in some way.

How do you relate *Perfect Lives* in terms of what opera usually means?

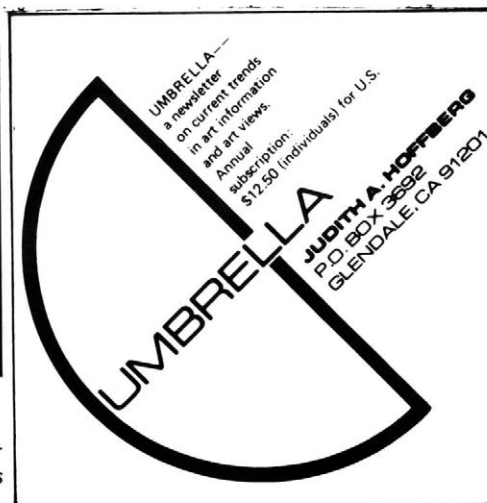
In traditional opera, which means nineteenth-century European opera, the author thought up an idea about a bunch of characters, then invented actions to define that character. Singing actors were hired to do those actions. I'm more interested in making a setting in which *Blue Gene* can play the piano so that you can really see him play the piano. It's like an American music tradition of jazz as when say, Duke Ellington sets up a

band. It's a collection of characters and Ellington understands it that way. Ellington's music is not written in the way a symphony, which can be played by anybody, is written. If you pull out a player in Ellington's band, you have to re-write the part. Each person writes his part. So that's like a theatre piece—the Ellington band is a traveling opera. The same with Miles Davis, his band is a group of musical characters. *Perfect Lives* is based on that model.

But you call *Blue Gene* "Buddy," not *Blue Gene*.

I call him Buddy so that I can refer to him without making the piece seem ironic, without disturbing the surface of the piece. Nobody can do any of the parts in this version of *Perfect Lives* except the people who are making them. I'll have to change the part if any of the people change.

Composer Robert Ashley in conversation with John Howell. *Perfect Lives (Private Parts)* will premiere in New York City this fall. Photographs by Nathaniel Tilsen.

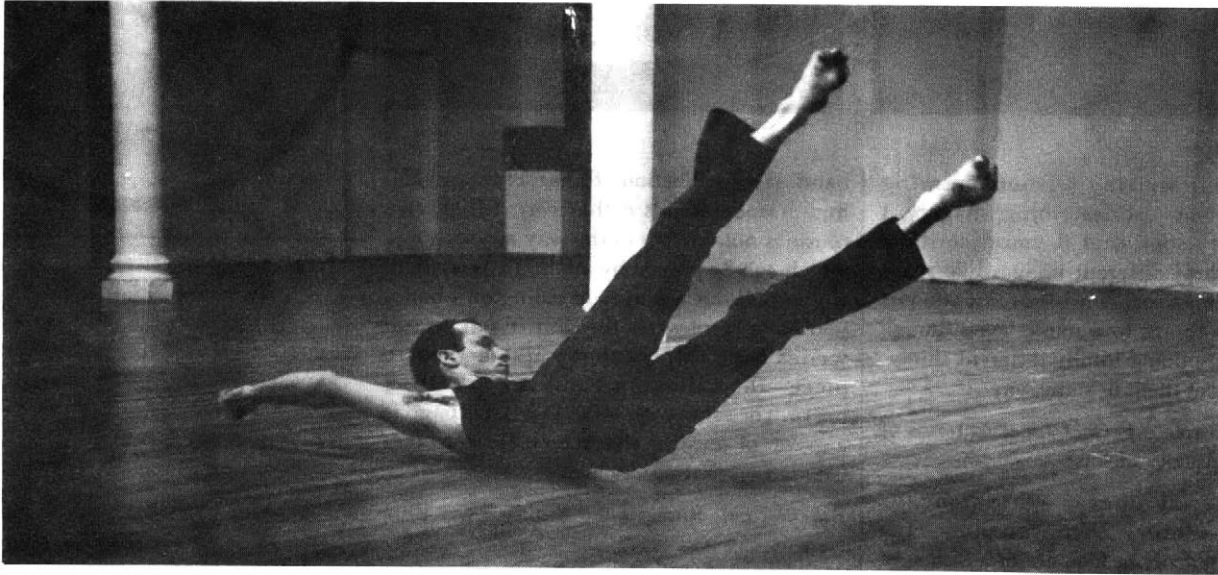


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DANCE DAY AT THE KITCHEN

Robert Coe



The pleasure of the Kitchen's eight hour downtown dance sampler was the chance to discover the shape of a seventies artistic legacy in what had seemed, particularly at mid-decade, to be little more than kinesthetic afterthought. Twenty-four artists, most of whom emerged in New York during the decade, were given twenty minutes each to perform, a format ideal for reconsidering the predictability and designing preciousness to which some people think the experimental scene has succumbed. The sheer variety of

CHARLES DENNIS

the work proved the biggest surprise, clarifying as it did a continuing impetus to make it new and see what has been made—one homiletic sixties strategy still capable of fostering integrity and innovation.

There was familiar expressionist/experiential work, toeing the line between doing and being, dancing and behaving; work exploring the

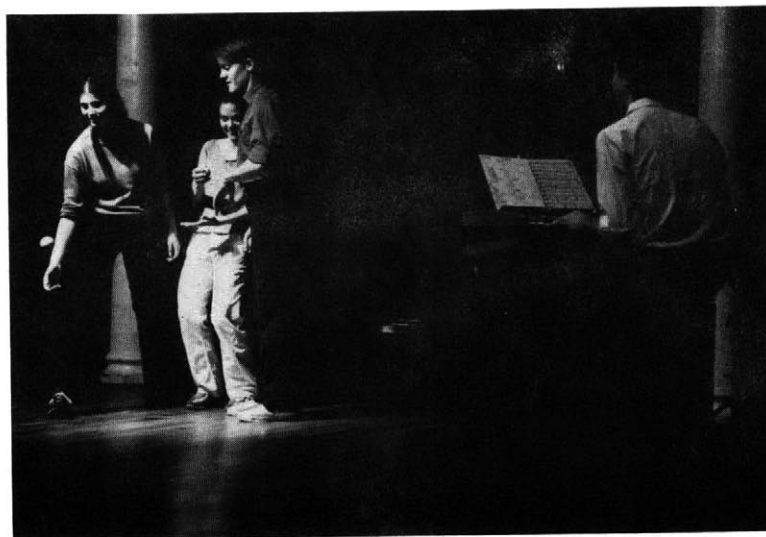
How and the When which remain at the bottom line of the downtown aesthetic. Along with Christina Svane's brash tomfoolery and Charles Dennis's schizoid Paxtonian collaboration with found-objects-musician George Cartwright, the inimitable Simone Forti transformed the Kitchen into an imaginary Sahara, moving like a scorpion, a camel, a scarab, to the shrieks and howls of Peter Van Riper's saxophones. (I hope I have the animals right.) Yoshiko Chuma screened her black and white film, *The Girl Can't Help It*,

done with Jacob Burckhardt. It exploded the $E = MC^2$ theory of natural and human objects, in a style reminiscent of the old films of Neil Casady on amphetamine.

The emphasis throughout the day and into the evening was on solos: 14 of them, with 6 works for couples and only 4 group pieces. Nearly half the dances were performed in silence, appropriate to the almost universal formal privatism. The exception to this and any other rule was Kenneth King as a prancing Jules Verne of *Space City*, signalling with gesture and a taped message his future for the art in outer space and New York City, not necessarily in that order.

Karole Armitage of the Merce Cunningham Company transformed herself into a primitive tool, essaying random, abstract tasks with and around an assortment of household, urban and industrial objects. Unlike the Grand Union's seductive alchemy, Armitage kept her chores and violent phrasing utterly mundane. Molissa Fenley's *Boca Raton*, performed with Elizabeth Streb to drums and a repetitive rock riff, also sought a mesh with a rawer energy. Surprisingly, it was one of the few works which attempted, with fitful success, to organize itself into a spacious, repetitive floor design. Nancy Lewis did her familiar ironic dancery ditzing around, negotiating personas, tossing them out, and ending up with an almost poignant dance about doing what she was doing there: performing. A pleasing discovery was Deborah Gladstein, whose liquid, sensuous solo was one of the only pure examples of what seemed in context an almost self-forgetful quality. The protean Cesc Gelabert, on the other hand, strung together *enchainements* as if they were amino acids, with facial expressions ranging from terror and amusement to benign apology.

There was widespread concern with explicit gesture and with games—not solemn ritualistic ones, but games useful for making, think-



SUSAN ESCHELBACH, JANA JENSEN, CHARLES MOULTON

Allowing for mistakes remains a cardinal downtown enthusiasm, a chance to see how things get put together—though it's an idea which can be taken too far.

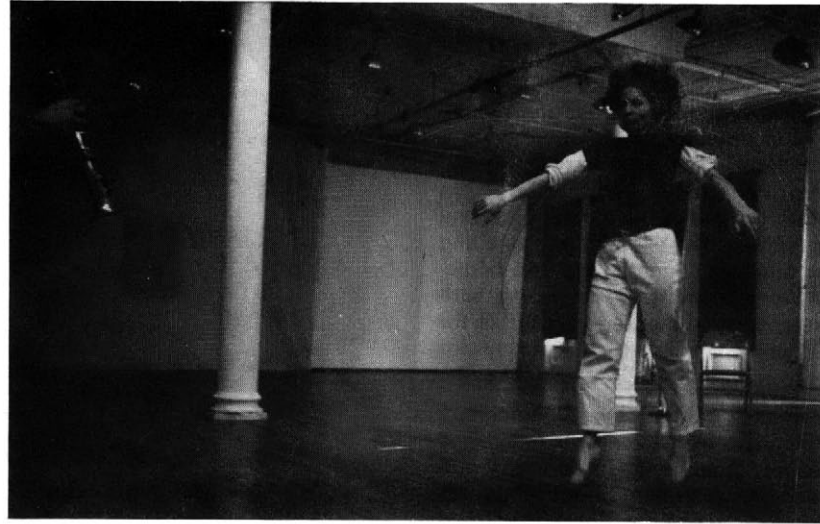


NANCY LEWIS



CHRISTINA SVANE

There was a widespread concern with explicit gesture and with games . . . games useful for making, thinking, and experiencing the dances themselves.



SIMONE FORTI

ing, and experiencing the dances themselves. Dana Reitz has become a master of gestural dance. *Steps* is no new direction for her but her richest, most sophisticated work to date: thinking with her hands and feet, she plied the space softly as if it were a loom. Nancy Topf traced invisible lines and squiggles; Mary Overlie and Wendell Beavers accumulated mundane semaphoric postures and repeated them, like characters trapped in a Robbe-Grillet novel. Charlie Moulton, Janna Jensen and Susan Eshelbach stood in a line and rapidly passed three balls between them. They kept dropping the balls. "This is a bitch," Moulton commented. "We wanna work it out, OK?" Allowing for mistakes remains a cardinal downtown enthusiasm, a chance to see how things get put together—though it's an idea which can be taken too far.

There were ritualistic, meditative works by

Ellen Webb and by David Woodberry, with Sara Vogeler. Robyn Brentano premiered a film of Andy de Groat's alert dancing in a seraglio of hanging yarn, to music and poetry by Michael Galasso and Christopher Knowles, respectively. And there were academic, ersatz classical works by choreographers uninterested in resisting or transforming the stigma of the dancery, though in general the leotard costume appears to have survived its recent desuetude. Choreographer Satoru Shimazaki fetishized Junko Kikushi's big extensions in a dance lithely performed but uncomfortably bizarre and rarified. Grethe Holby's disastrous sextet to a metronome forced non-balletic dancers through repetitive classroom exercises, like some postponed project of Dr. Coppelius. Holby may have hoped to both withhold and expose the secrets of classicism, but the concept deteriorated out of sheer technical in-

Nearly half the dances were performed in silence, appropriate to the almost universal formal privatism.

adequacy. It was not a kind trick to play on her dancers.

Conceptual work by theatre/dance people like Peter Rose, Joan Strausbaugh, Anne Hammel and Alice Eve Cohen was most compelling in the instance of Pooh Kaye and Elaine Hartnett, wearing only synthetic pink hula skirts and building a jungle of twigs to inhabit. They sat morosely, chattered their teeth, and shook their asses at the sky, like degenerate savages out of Levi-Strauss. Johanna Boyce presented a work in progress with her sixteen member troupe, dressed in colorful all-American polyester, like a class reunion at Willowbrook. Singing their names in round to the tune of "Hey Ho Nobody Home," they got into a clothes fight and ended up in their underwear. One had to have a high tolerance for the obvious.

The eight hour day was broken into four sets, with Chinese fire-drills around the block to clear the house for newcomers—a chance to get some fresh air and pick up on the Superbowl scores. Back inside, the changing light made the lighting troublesome, and too many dancers insisted on working in the distant end of the Kitchen loft. But in general, downtown dance appears to be sustaining a remarkable range of movement possibilities into the eighties.

Robert Coe has written for the *Village Voice* and *Soho Weekly News*. Photographs by Nathaniel Tileston.

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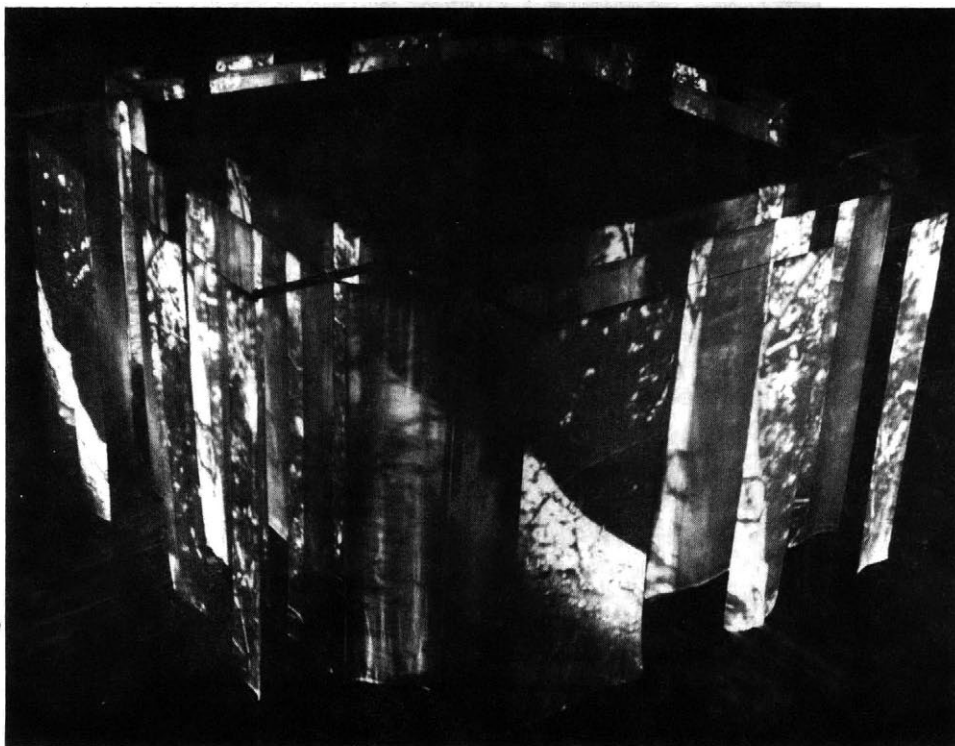
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INTERMEDIA IS

Elaine Summers' *Crow's Nest*



Davidson Gigliotti

ELAINE SUMMERS

One of the important things that happened with intermedia, because of women's liberation and the sociological-economic relationship of women now to our culture and society, is that it is the first time women have been able to have a pioneering role to play in the development of a new art form. This has not been acknowledged. In fact, if you read histories of intermedia the work of women has been ignored. I'm saying this partially as the first artist in New York City to combine multiple film images with dance, music, and sculpture in an evening-long concert—*Fantastic Gardens* in 1964 at Judson Church. Women have not received the recognition that men have received for being part of that field.

A wonderful thing happened that contributed to women's liberation and that was technology. You know that vicious cycle of being brought up to be dependent on the masculine strengths which were supposedly in science. When women from my generation approached technological things we were often intimidated at the beginning, then we discovered that technological tools are very easy for us to use; they don't require brute strength, they

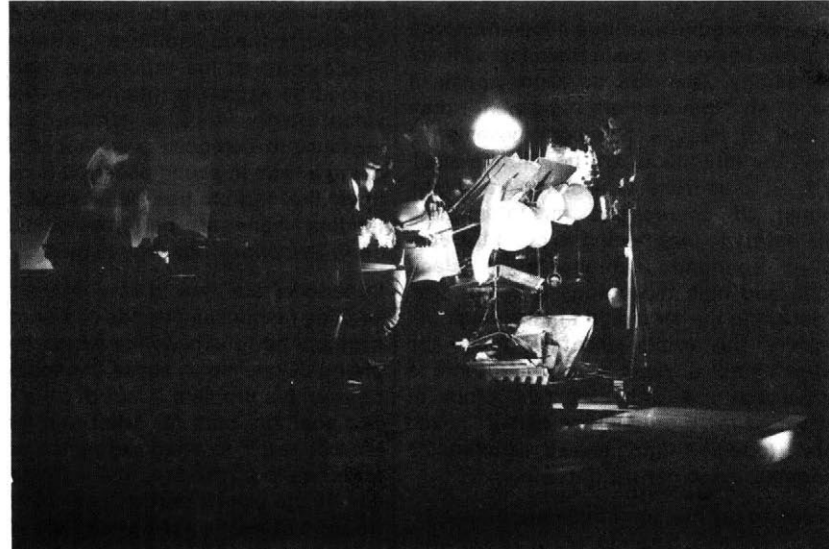
simply need co-ordination, ability to synthesize, and this synthesizing quality of intermedia is very important. Women suddenly began to see that they could edit film, do camera work, and that all of these things were easy. The wonderful thing about art is that it humanizes technology.

ALLAN KAPROW

The recent conference on intermedia at the Guggenheim Museum raised an old problem: the officialization of this or that phase of modern art. "Intermedia" is a nostalgic term of the sixties, evoking lots of hardware and mass media. The disco was (and is) its popular image. It has little relevance for experimental work today. (This is principally because the notion of a medium to be formed into some whole—like paint into a picture or words into a news article—is very ancient and doesn't adequately serve a modern continuous and changing reality, which has no clear wholes or part-to-whole relations.)

The issue today is firstly to bypass the conventional transmitting frames of the arts: galleries, museums, poetry books, concert halls, arenas, etc. Secondly, it is to eliminate the concept of the single art audience, and substitute a careful notion of the variable users (they are not uniform at all). Thirdly, it is to consider the different goals of such new arts (i.e., self-revelatory, decorative, political, theoretical, ritualistic, etc.) Fourthly, it is to reduce to a minimum the principle dialogue between today's arts and other art of the present and past, and to increase the dialogue with social, intellectual and spiritual currents of this time.

Nam June Paik and Charlotte
Moorman in performance



DICK HIGGINS

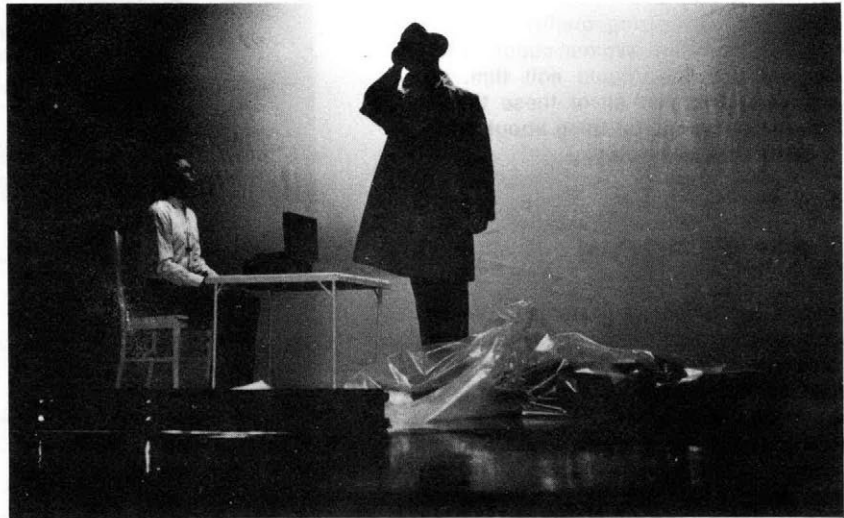
My current definition for "intermedia" is metaphorical—after a seance two *mediums* meet and make love. In due course an *inter-medium* is born.

"Intermedium" in the sense that Samuel Taylor Coleridge used the term in 1812, and in the sense in which I revived the word in 1962, is a formal concept—a category for subsumption. Confronted by a strange work, one can obtain a little understanding of it by asking oneself, "Between what two media does this work lie?" For making such explanations, twenty years ago, intermedia such as "sound poetry," "concrete" and "visual poetry," "happenings" and "fluxus" were difficult to explain on the theoretical level without the concept of intermedia in general. Because so many hybrid forms of intermedia did, in fact, appear in the early 1960s, intermedia gave the appearance of being a trend or even a movement.

But the intermedia have little in common with each other besides a basic fusion of concept or sensibility. One can no more speak in terms of an "intermedium movement" than one can of, say, a "collage movement." Rather, the intermedia are new forms available to all of us from many schools and generations. Of course the mis-Information Media did try to pick up and to blunt the concept—it sounded fashionable to blend fashion and high technology with the arts. But debasing the term didn't make much difference to the artists who have found the concept useful anyway, even when there is no particular link with high technology or what would more properly be called "mixed media" (operas, light shows, multimedia spectacles, video derivations, etc.).

But back to my metaphorical definition.

Having examined the offspring of the two



Ping Chong's *Fear and Loathing in Gotham*

mediums, one source of freshness in these 1980s is to examine the parent media anew, bringing to these traditional, perhaps "purer" media some of the experience that one has gained by exploring intermedia. After doing video poetry it is a strange and novel pleasure to compose a sonnet. After developing a form in sound poetry, it is exciting to apply that form to traditional music. After attending many art performances, Mahler's *Sixth Symphony* has new magic.

Intermedia are here to stay. The problem of keeping fashion and trends in art out of one's own aesthetic experience where they could prejudice one's own sense of necessity or integrity, this problem is not at all a new one. The solution, both for artist and for spectator/receiver, is to avoid paying too serious an attention to what one is told is the fashion, to see things clearly and to leave historicity to future historians; their views will never correspond with present fashions in any case.

KENNETH KING

Certainly the direction of intermedia, mixed media, and what I call "transmedia" will develop in the future for several very clear reasons. I use the word "transmedia" because I am also writing and doing word experiments, both with projection and superimposition, and spoken text with dance. The term "transmedia" has to do with language extension.

Let's go to the source which is Marshall McLuhan in the sixties talking about the media and the extensions of man. Also, the concept of dual correlatives in T.S. Eliot's literary criticism: things correspond in hidden or overt correspondences and that means images or structures, principles, concepts, ideas words, movements. In many dances I'll have a text either spoken or recorded, going on with the dance, and perhaps



Ken Dewey's *Sames*

video. Those correspondences will happen by chance, and they're also planned in the programming of the separate tracks or media.

The reason I feel this is going to be important for the future is that we are entering more and more the age of supersystems, information-retrieval systems, and the computer. The computer will be able to deal with many different channels or tracks of information simultaneously. That's why I'm interested in intermedia or "transmedia."

I do have a literary interest. I'm fascinated by

words and always have been. I'm divided between being a dancer and a writer, so I try to find a way both activities can go on. That's why I use the word "transmedia"—in words and images and concepts we can see their activity or relevance across the disciplines that are engaged in a certain activity or event.

"Transmedia" has to do with transformation: total change rather than change in separate parts. That is the fusion goal. To get to that point where it breaks through to become another form.

JOAN JONAS

Early in my performance pieces the idea of the filmic cut was a way to join one image to another. This desire to move suddenly from one space to the next, continuously breaking the spell (illusion), resulted in fragmentation. In the pieces using video/film, the audience saw simultaneously the video image and the live activity which was the result of the performer making the images for the monitor or the projection. The process was exposed—the making of the tape, the making of film, the space outside illusion which creates illusion, and the resulting discrepancies or distances between the object seen in a physical space, and how it appears to the camera. The image on the monitor or in the video projection was a displaced detail of the whole, fragmenting the space which contained a continuum of fragmented time.

Sources for my work were always diverse, multiple—mythological, anthropological, the Noh Theatre—and this involvement in ancient rite resulted in the ritualization of object, gesture, and movement, and technology served to anchor and accent these rituals in a particular space.

Inspired by the magic show I moved through various identities (the sorceress, the floozie, the dog, the chanteuse) while exploring the possibilities of female imagery. Video and film reflected these alternate personalities on illusionistic surfaces in a close-up which gave them a certain power.

In Anthology Film Archives the space made by a white film screen (framed in black velvet) which changed size and shape provided the structure for *Twilight*, for example. On either side of the screen was a monitor, the camera for one feeding it images from behind the screen (a place invisible to the audience), the camera for the second filming the space

behind that monitor creating the illusion of transparency. The audience saw through the monitor. Front lit the screen was opaque, back lit it was transparent. Projected film images and video tapes alternating and shown simultaneously with the movements of five performers appearing and disappearing in the physical space and on the monitors created a kind of modern magic show of multiple image in synchronic time.

Technology does not make more magic, it simply provides different tools. Because I wanted to draw on other sources I gave up such elaborate games for a few years and turned to the problems of translating the Fairy Tale into a pictorial language, which is merely to continue as always.

PETER FRANK

The history of art has not been the history of activity in segregated realms as much as the activity that has resulted whenever these realms have met. As such, intermedia has a long, very august, history.

Intermedia is not a movement, but an attitude. It tends in its social implications to be anti-academic. (I identify the academy as the source of modal segregation.)

I have always thought of Dick Higgins as the principal spokesperson of the intermedia attitude as it has manifested itself in the world. In 1965, he came out with the essay on intermedia and the next year I met him, became familiar with the Something Else Press and saw that statement. I was in high school then, was very influenced by that, and have remained that way.

The term intermedia doesn't identify a miscellany. It is not the other in a list of art forms. The term I would like to propose iden-

tifies an overall complex of modes, many of which are readily identifiable, which are not fixed in their definitions as we at least like to think the traditional art forms are, but are at present undergoing a process of identification. This process, which I admit threatens constantly to collapse under its tendentious potential, is still what interests us. That process, however, rarely, if ever, produces worthwhile art in any direct way.

Intermedia is a term for critics, curators, theoreticians, and historians, and their public. For the artists themselves it is only a crutch or a sales strategy. But so are nomenclative terms like music, theatre, or language. The intermedia are not dead because the idea of intermedia remains useful. It must be pointed out though that it remains useful more to commentators than to artists themselves.

Intermedia is not a mode. The intermedia are modes. Intermedia as a term provides a field of nomenclature. The intermedia can be distinguished one from the other: concrete poetry, visual poetry, performance art, happenings, conceptual art, conceptual music, etc. The intermedia can in fact be as readily distinguished one from the other, as from the traditional media which they fuse. The intermedia differ from the traditional media in that what defines each mode has only recently been isolated and remains, perhaps deliberately, in a process of flux.

MEREDITH MONK

If the concept of intermedia means utilizing different media, then it is the center of my work. Using forms available to make one unified form — juxtaposition of differing concepts, visual rhymes, counterpoint, multidimensionality — and to be able to work in multiple realities constitutes the intermedia

for me. By placing one thing against or with another makes each element become more mysterious and the whole more luminous. I believe in using whatever I need to say exactly, and within a perceptual spectrum, my immediate concerns. If it is more effective in sound, then I use sound, and if I am working with scale, then I use film.

I am not interested in the narrative form, or rather not in *mixed* media. Inherent in my work is a more rigorous structural sense — I am working more out of a performance poetry, visual and aural poetry. As such, I have no real fascination in technology for its own sake, or any other media for that matter. In fact, what I really think important is for my work to have a home-made quality about it. Historically, Happenings or mixed media had concentrated on the arbitrary bombardment of sensory information, and the power of each separate media as a separate entity, even though any and all material was usable. Thus, historically, these various media have become available to all artists. And now I see myself as the carcass of the mixed media form, which may now well be intermedia. My axiom is that I use whatever I need as I need it.



Joan Jonas' *Mirage*



DANCE/Childs

MUSIC/Glass

FILM/LeWitt

The surprise of **Dance**, a collaboration by choreographer Lucinda Childs, composer Philip Glass, and visual artist Sol LeWitt, is the film which is LeWitt's contribution. With his collaborator, Lisa Rinzler, LeWitt has filmed three of the work's five dance sections using an anthology of basic film techniques: close-up, freeze frame, overhead shot, split screen, lateral tracking shot. These filmed sequences are projected on a large scrim (twenty by thirty feet) placed in front of the stage.

The effect of the giant images is stunning, and gives **Dance** some badly needed spectacle to counterpoint its structurally brainy, constantly yoked-up music and dance elements. For although

Childs and Glass contribute some excellent work (at least two of the dances, 4 and 5, and two of the music pieces, 3 and 4, are as good as anything each has done), neither takes any big chances within the usual, rigorously systemic methods. And the dances' persistent echoing of the music's repetitions and permutations adds up to a didacticism which makes the logical collaboration between these compatible artists look almost too logical.

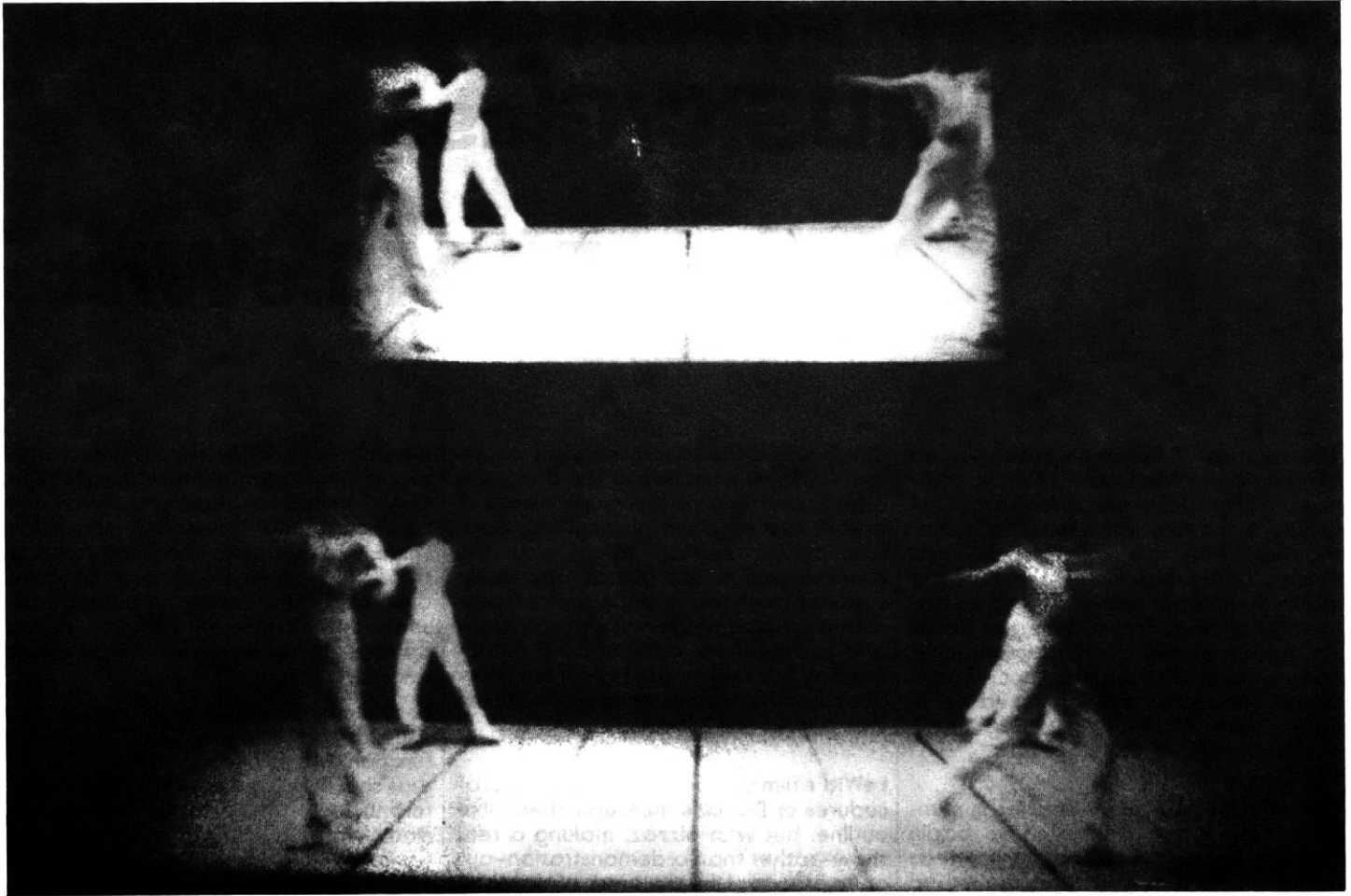
LeWitt's film conforms to the unified procedures of **Dance's** thorough, thesis-like outline, but with pizzazz, making a real show—rather than a demonstration—out of its process. Like the work of an early LeWitt inspiration, photographer Ed-

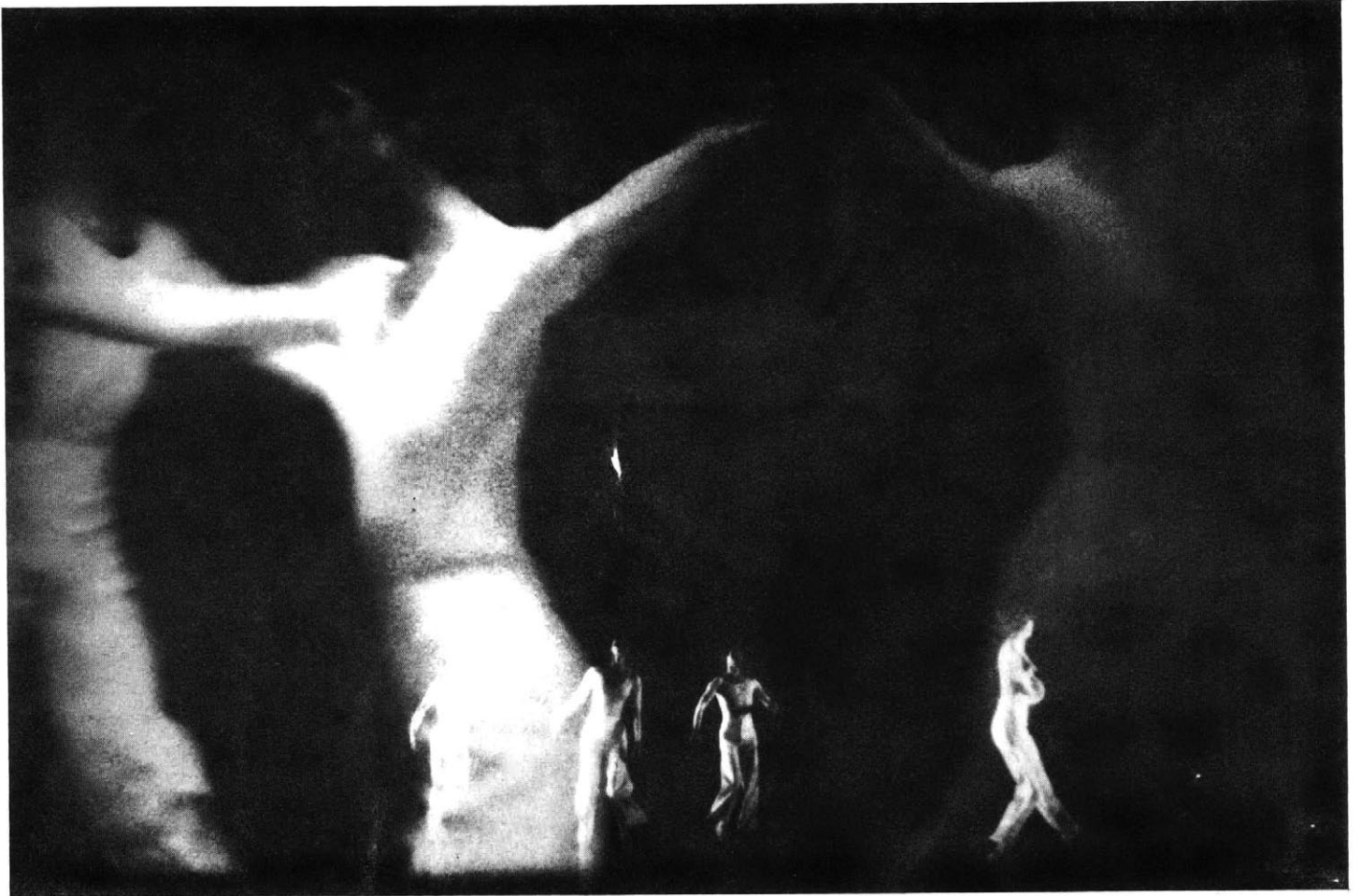
ward Muybridge, the film examines simple physical motions in detail (here, Childs' limited vocabulary of steps) with an apparently "scientific," sequential stare. And the super-imposed projection clearly illustrates its conceptual point, that the same action simultaneously seen from different angles yields another kind of action in both perceived and perceiver.

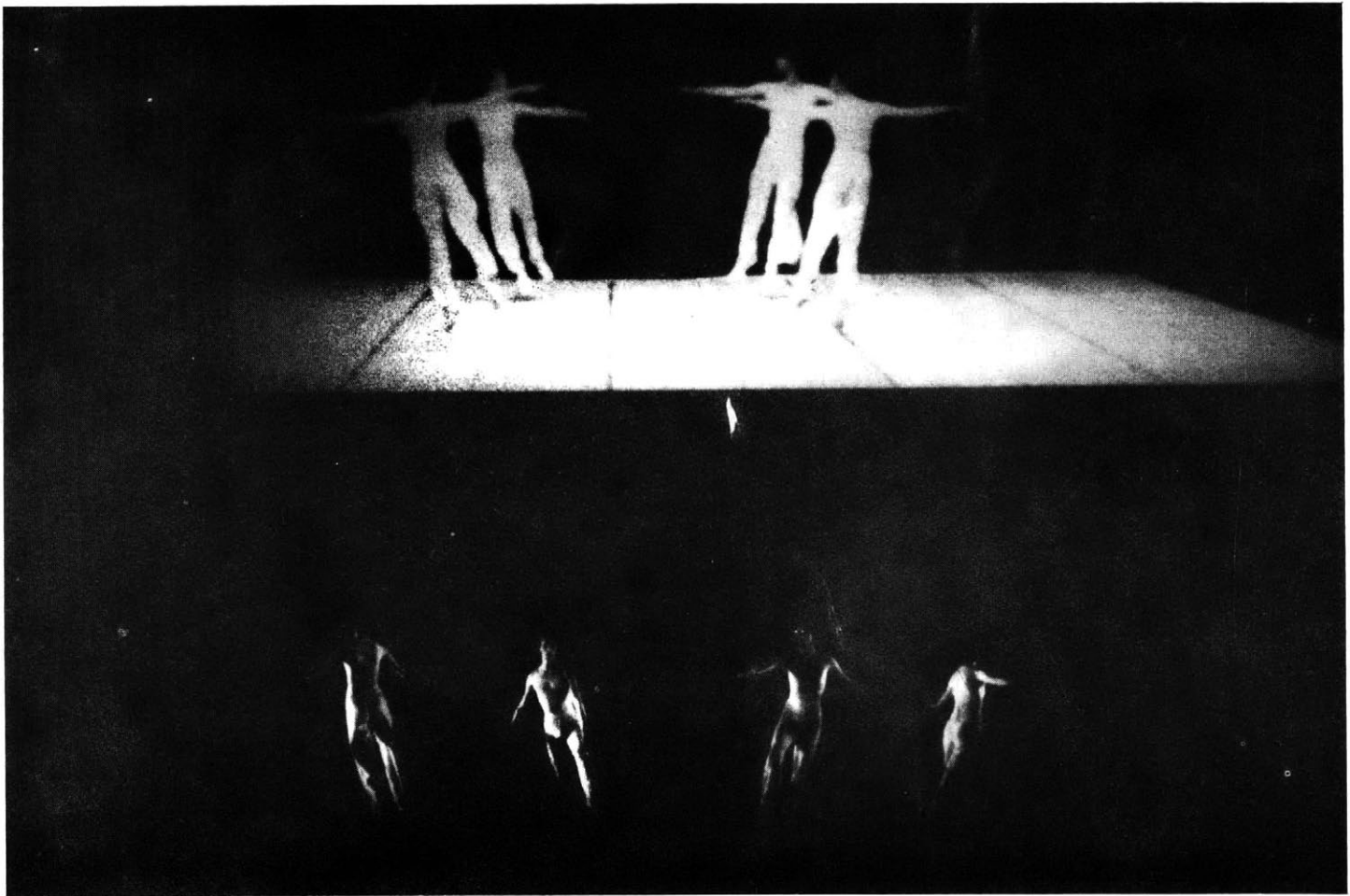
Yet the impact of the huge images is as exciting as it is logical. Such big visuals function as close-ups even when the actual shot is a medium take, and therefore bridge the distance, both literal and figurative, at which **Dance** operates. The result is a nice touch of magic without any tacked on hocus-pocus. When the film rolls, **Dance** moves.

Text/Howell

Photographs/Tileston









SF MOMA

Space

Time

Sound

The Seventies

Robert Atkins

Until recently, the response of museums to performance art has been marked by fear and loathing, paranoia and ambivalence. Given the anti-commodity orientation performance art has traditionally embodied, this comes as no surprise. No longer subversive, the institutionalization of performance art has occurred with the swiftness and ubiquity of a tidal wave.

The late seventies brought the academic stamp of approval with instruction in performance and its history in numerous art schools and university art departments. Codification comes in the form of texts by RoseLee Goldberg, articles by Moira Roth and recently published anthologies by alternative spaces like Toronto's Art Metropole or San Francisco's La Mamelle, Inc. Commercial viability is insured by artists' use of booking agents and the sale of documentary artworks. Possibly the ultimate irony is provided by the newly revived *Life Magazine's* proclamation that "live art" has indeed come of age.

Now we have the museum-organized group performance retrospective. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *Space/Time/Sound 1970s—A Decade in the Bay Area* is a show of gargantuan proportions and galling *chutzpah*. While the credentials of the "codifiers" mentioned above attest to a long-standing interest in performance, the museum's record in this area is checkered. (Most of the artists featured in the show have received little support from the museum and currently the rotunda, the museum's only real performing space, is being overhauled as a sculpture court.) As far as I know, this exhibition is the first undertaking of this scale by a major museum. I doubt that it will be the last. *Space/Time/Sound* showcases the work of

twenty-one Bay Area artists, mostly conceptualists, active locally during the seventies. Richard Alpert, Ant Farm, Paul Cotton, Peter D'Agostino, Terry Fox, Howard Fried, Suzanne Helmuth and Jock Reynolds, Mel Henderson, Lynn Hershman (founder of the Floating Museum), Paul Kos, Stephen Laub, Tom Marioni (Museum of Conceptual Art), Jim Melchert, Linda Montano, Bill Morrison, Jim Pomeroy, Darryl Sapien, Alan Scarritt (Site Gallery), Bonnie Sherk (The Farm), T.R. Uthco and John Woodall are the artists represented. Virtually all of the exhibited artists have, at various times, created performances, videotapes *and* installations, although approximately one-quarter are not performance artists in the sense of making art involving personal interaction with a live audience.

To many of us, *Space/Time/Sound* looks like a post-mortem for the seventies.

Certain key art makers are omitted—Bruce Nauman, Dianne Blell, Margaret Fischer, Joe Ress, Joel Glassman, Susan Wick, Anna Banana and Bill Gaglione—but it's not a bad sampling. The crucial omission is that of art. A few recreated installations and performances and non-performance related videotapes don't fare badly in this documentary context, but many performers are represented only by documentation—and the quality of that documentation is generally execrable. Performances of note are encapsulated in a few small PR-style photographs totally inappropriate for exhibition in an enormous gallery. Others, such as Stephen Laub's elusive slide projection performances in which he merged with autobiograph-

ical photographic imagery, have been essentially, perhaps inevitably, falsified through video recreation.

The key to the museum's exhibition strategy is the show's historical nature. One traditional function of a museum is to conserve art. In the case of *Space/Time/Sound/* this means the conservation of information about ephemeral art works and events. The show is really designed as a book at what looks like minimal cost. Unfortunately, the catalog will not be available until long after the show has closed. It promises to be extensive. Given the kind of interpretive material available at the exhibition, it also promises a standard biographical approach incorporating these artists into a linear vision of the history of sculpture.

The unfathomable lack of contextual material provided helps to guarantee the shows unpopularity, as well as its total unintelligibility to a general audience. (Remember that this is the museum which premiered Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* to SRO crowds, a museum where attendance figures are scrutinized *very* carefully.) In one gallery, for instance, Bonnie Sherk recreates her installation, *Living in the Forest*. An outdoor installation moved into a neo-classical gallery space, *sans* performance, it consists of live and dead trees, plants, birds and animals living in a microcosm of an environment where the physical and existential realities of life are daily enacted. What is the typical museum visitor to make of this? What is anybody to make of it? The museum can now cite lack of interest by paying customers as justification for its continued non-support of such work, or any unconventional work which comes along.

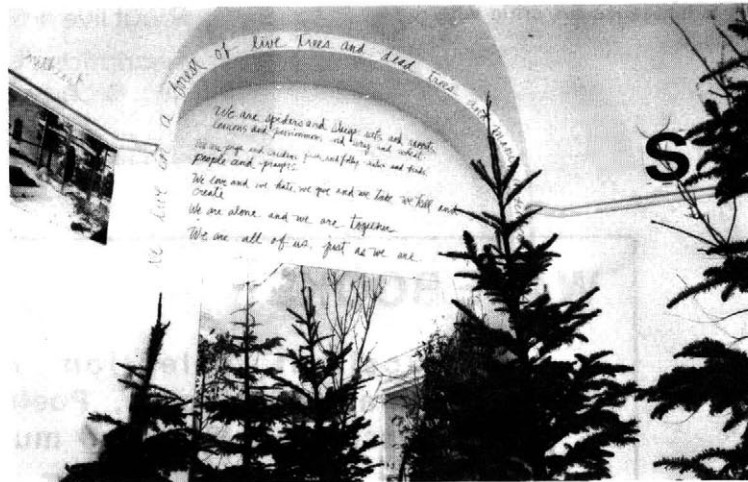
Unlike the lively—and live—art it appears to champion, *Space/Time/Sound* is a dispiriting

As far as I know, this exhibition is the first undertaking of this scale by a major museum. I doubt that it will be the last.

TERRY FOX



Phillip Galgiani



Phillip Galgiani

Bonnie Sherk's *Living in the Forest*

and moribund affair. Despite the fact that most of the artists shown are still living in the Bay Area, the exhibition has been augmented by just two lectures and two performances: Moira Roth and Phil Linhares lectured; Linda Montano presented *Listening to the 80's*, a surreal, 12 hour musical meditation involving Pauline Oliveros, George Coates, John Dykers and Bill Farley, all in clerical, "gender—fuck" drag [see review, p.38] and Terry Fox orchestrated an event for which he mounted, stretched and played guitar—like strings in the bowels of the museum's catacombs. The space in which Fox chose to perform neatly symbolizes the role of the museum as mausoleum. To many of us, *Space/Time/Sound* looks like a post-mortem for the seventies.

Robert Atkins is a free-lance art critic who lives in San Francisco.

HIGH PERFORMANCE

the performance art quarterly



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Performance alla Milanese

Giorgio Verzotti

Milan doesn't love performance very much. Apart from private galleries, there are almost no spaces devoted to this kind of art. One of the few is SIXTO/NOTES which within a year has become a reference point with very precise tendencies. The organizers concentrate on events, installations, and environments, with particular attention to media-oriented ones (film, video, and photography).

This season SIXTO/NOTES began with a festival, "Lo Scarto Dell'Occhio" (in Italian, this phrase has three different meanings: the refuse of the eye, the swerve of the eye, and the difference of the eye). The festival opened with three young artists working for the first time in Milan. Vincenzo Ghiroldi's performance was based on elementary gestures, like putting up a tent in the space and plaiting his partner's hair, that give shape to symbolic structures (such as a speech about sexuality). Arturo Reboldi and Giovanni Caligaris taped all the action, balanced between the analytic and the existential.

Jurgen Olbrich followed with a performance somewhat similar to the work of Marina Abramovic and Ulay, and not very different from the corporeal expressionism typical of the Viennese body artists. Roberto Masotti



Paolo Liaci

EGITTO, EGITTO!

set up a photographic installation in the first room and a simultaneous frequency-concert in a second room. This concert was based on improvisation and on the idea of "theft," for example, using quotations from other European contemporary musicians.

More complex works which clarify the tendencies of SIXTO/NOTES were those by the artists Luisa Cividin and Robert Taroni (*Interval at Limehouse*)—who are the organizers of the center—and Ferruccio Ascari and Daniela Cristadoro (*"Egypt, Egypt!"*). These pieces were elaborate semiotic inquiries into space and time that used visual and aural media as instruments of analysis. *Interval at Limehouse* was made up of two sequences performed both outside and inside the space. In the first part, Cividin and Taroni sat and held on their laps two slide projectors which produced their own images on a grating over their heads. In the second sequence, they fell outside a car with a slow and sudden movement. Indoors, there were three TV monitors showing flashbacks of the action, and a film projected on a wall. These sequences were structured as repeated "moduli" with an intensity increasing to a breaking-point, resulting in a violent bodily encounter. At the same time, the actions were vehicles for the

emission of visual signals fed into a continuous circuit, a flux involving inside and outside—real factuality and virtual reference. Inside, the two sequences of the video tapes which correlated with the film inserted another perceptive process, that of the comparison of common codes in analogous systems (film and television images).

In *Egypt, Egypt!* Ascari and Cristadoro created an analytic structure which produced relationships between images and screen. Each element—even the performers—assumed the role of images and of support. The image was projected on screens which betrayed it by withdrawal; the first part of the film was projected on a transparent curtain that gave an inconsistency to its thickness while the direct action of the performers dancing (visible through a window) was continuously interrupted and repeated.

The same operation was executed in the soundtrack with music by Strauss and Ravel decomposed into moduli-cycles. In the second part of the performance, the images of two films were sent around on the walls through a system of mirrors set in front of the projectors. Another sequence was projected on a container filled with white lime while the performer's body, used like a pure element of support, again sent the fixed images of its double in a neutrally-treated nude body.

Both these performances worked at causing a blackout in the processes of *significance*. This short circuit is obtained by creating a

Roberto Masotti's
Giustapposizioni Improprie

INTERVALLO AL LIMEHOUSE



Silvia Masotti

The practice of linguistic transgression is very similar to the semiotic theories of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, whose procedures interest many Italian performance artists.



Paolo Liaci



INTERVALLO AL LIMEHOUSE

"denotative flux" which precludes total reception in real time, and therefore a "connotation" from the audience. This flux, moreover, does not construct a hierarchy among the signs; it doesn't become a "vehicle" for the appearance of a meaning. Performances are centered on the analysis of the ostensible sign, so there is no *representation* but only the *presentation* of linguistic elements which are taken for reality in themselves. The elements are taken for reality in themselves. The elements are analyzed in their grammatical structures, not on the level of the message in the sign.

This practice of linguistic transgression is very similar to the semiotic theories of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, whose procedures interest many Italian performance artists. These artists are defined by the unsuitable designation "Post-avanguardia," a

term which includes a new generation of groups close to the theatre, and supported by critics like Giuseppe Bartolucci. There are also other groups closer to visual art, and those interested in the idea of mixture. In the SIXTO/NOTES festival, for example, Mario Martone, who belongs to the theatrical group "Falso Movimento," gave a solo performance based on American cinema language as the mythological moment of its cultural ghosts. "Think about the big screen of a drive-in," said Martone, "with the intense colors of a Hollywood film crossed by the invisible nerves of an explosion: this is the theatre which we want to do."

Giorgio Verzotti writes about Italian performance.

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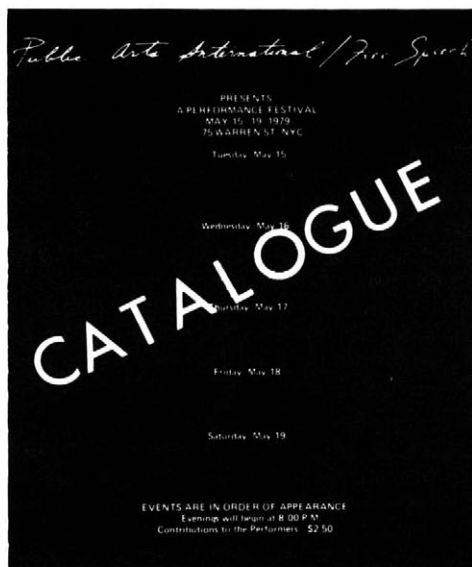
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BETWEEN THE COVERS

with Ken Friedman

CATALOGUE (78pp., \$2.50)
Public Arts International/Free Speech
361 Canal Street
New York, N.Y. 10013

CATALOGUE is a document in book form which attempts to record the performance festival sponsored on May 15-19, 1979, by Public Arts International/Free Speech. Edited by the organizers of the festival, Carol Parkinson, Joseph Nechvatal and Cid Collins, it is packaged in an attractive black cover with white type. Unfortunately, that is the only part of this book which is genuinely attractive. (Permit a brief clarification: I did not see the festival. I am not reviewing the festival, I am reviewing a book.) It was prepared after the festival and seems to be intended as a document to stand on its own. It does stand on its own. It simply doesn't stand well. Even if it is not a performance, a book does perform for the eye and mind. In a sense, therefore, the designed book which communicates about performance does have a function to "perform" and can offer something of its own if executed properly.



The book is reproduced by what appears to be the rapid-offset process, sometimes known by the brand name of the company which pioneered it, ITEK. The illustrations were prepared through screening via xerox. (It may be that the book is xeroxed; it seems open to question.) My argument with the book is that it doesn't need to look bad. Economy of means needn't mean poverty of expression. As proof, one need only recall the elegant and stunning performance scores and posters printed by the late George Maciunas using both ITEK rapid offset and xerography, or the masterful graphic works of Joseph Beuys done in a variety of cheap media during the '60's. Both are well-known in New York. Those who wish to dig a bit more deeply into fine printing done cheaply are commended to the less-known but equally worthy projects of Czechoslovakia's Milan Knizak, J.H. Kocman and Jiri Valoch; Switzerland's John Armleder and the Ecart Performance Group; England's David Mayor; Mexico's Felipe Ehrenberg; Holland's Ulises Carrion, Aart van Barnveld and Mick Gibbs; or France's Ben Vautier. All are visual artists who have been involved with performance. Their documents and catalogs have found form in beautiful books and pamphlets done

by the least expensive means while communicating well through strong visual presentation and useful, readable format. As one reads through this "book" one comes across single spreads and presentations that have real potential. It might be a far more interesting book if it were presented well. The poor presentation unfortunately makes a bad blend of promising contents.

The contents themselves are rather intriguing. Despite being continually rendered ineffective by poor presentation, quite a few pages have a lot to offer. (How true the lessons Dick Higgins taught at Something Else Press: good design does make a difference!) Theodora Skiptares offers a story of the historic Theodora, a Byzantine Empress, which is charming in its simplicity and instructive for the sociological data it presents. (Note that I said *sociological* and not *social*. It is sociological because it studies and describes social situations and information. One of the minor triumphs of the recent visit of Joseph Beuys to America was the neat distinction he drew between those two terms. An American artist asked him about his "sociological art." Beuys noted, before answering, that his art was "social, not sociological.")

A photograph of a piece by Cid Collins and Joseph Nechvatal on pages 35 and 36 is forceful. The words—in a neat block, well-balanced visually—indicate that the piece had something to do with Tibetan Buddhism. A shame not to know more. (The layout of the pages suggests that if everyone in this catalog had worked at it, perhaps the book would have worked in this format. Unfortunately, Collins and Nechvatal must be inexperienced enough as editors not to have known that one of the tasks of an editor is to plan on the fact that very few artists are good documentarians of their own work.) Sally Cummings' poetry has lovely moments. It portrays travel, and has the flavor of travel about it. The line "In the daylight, it is easier to believe that you're heading somewhere," is a gem of a motto for those who travel much at all. Having heard Ned Sublette, however, I know that whatever the work was to which

his two pages alluded, it could have been nothing like the work itself. Cummings' poetry suffices. Sublette needs more, as did Collins and Nechvatal. This is particularly the case given the hints toward content offered by the story at the right of his two-page spread.

Jeffrey Lohn and Yoshimasa Wada offer the best pages in the book. Both Lohn and Wada knew something the others didn't. They knew enough to understand that the book was bound to be a failure as a publication by virtue of the way in which it was being compiled. Failing to be able to release much information at all, the best bet was to produce a one-two punch which would serve more as a strong little artwork-as-ad than anything else. Lohn's torn photo of himself playing the keyboard stands next to a curt note bearing his name. Yoshi Wada faces a school photo from 1948 against a photo from 1949. Both artists made works which function well in the book, rather than works which either remind those who were there of what they saw or frustrate those who weren't there with an unsuccessful hint.

Disband, the orchestra of Ingrid Sischy, Ilona Granet, Diane Torr, Donna Henes, and Martha Wilson presents a funky four-page spread which is workable precisely because they offer completed works. They don't present their performance. A quirky photo of the band with its back to the audience is first, doing a reverse Rockettes leg-kick somewhat reminiscent of a publicity shot by Paul Revere and the Raiders (remember them, rock fans?). Then . . . simple: the lyrics to three songs. You can't hear the music, you can't catch the action, but the lyrics work as lyrics. Good enough. I must admit that I have never ceased to wonder about Wilson's piece, "The Snatch Song." I've never heard it. Some day I must. It is, well . . . peculiar. It's got a rare mix of crudity and sexuality mixed with little-kid brag-talk that really packs a wallop. Altogether, however, the brag-talk transcends the school-yard squabbles of little girls and comes more closely to resemble that old frontier brag-talk for which the early American West was famed. Is Martha Wilson

contemporary America's answer to Davy Crockett and Mike Fink? Time will tell. At any rate, it's clear that with Disband, feminism has found a good, pushy voice which matches any macho band of guys in the house.

Jackson Mac Low's pages work as visual art, too. Mac Low, always the master, was another smart one. The genius of words and sound knew that in context, his words would disappear. Ergo: he used none, and as a poet, he is heard all the more audibly for his choice.

Willoughby Sharp's piece doesn't matter if it was performed. He includes his phone number at the end of the male and female elements of "The Phone is My Clone" and invites the reader to carry on the performance with him. This is another good use of the space allotted. Joseph Nechvatal's epilogue reminds the reader that "The forms we have seen (in the catalogue) are but remnants from a total picture." True enough. But this could have been a total picture in itself as a *book*.

PERFORMANCE BY ARTISTS (320pp., \$18.00)
Edited by A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale.

Art Metropole
217 Richmond Street West
Toronto, Canada M5V 1W2

The essence of *Performance by Artists* can well be summed up by the note in the first paragraph, stating that the book is offered with "a narrow time reference in the present and a broad geographic one." The problem with the book is that in scope and in the word that has been out on the grapevine, the book is considered a "major anthology" with all that the term implies: serious research, heavy scholarship, and a comprehensive viewpoint.

If this book is understood as a sampler, selected by the editors with regard to what interests them, it is an excellent book. As a major anthology, it fails for precisely the reasons that it succeeds as a sampler . . . it

is far too limited and subjective. This subjective attitude seems to me reflected in the artists selected for presentation, a mixture including international inevitables (Acconci, Anderson, Beuys) and a scattering of others. More than a few significant performance artists are absent.

The commentaries offer little which is not available elsewhere. The one piece of major work offered in *Performance Art* is a singularly rich piece of scholarship by Bruce Barber entitled "Indexing: Conditionalism and Its Heretical Equivalents." In his text, Barber traces the evolution of the application of words to art, and—incidentally, but to good purpose—demonstrates the application of appropriate scholarly technique to the understanding of art. The other texts are solid enough, by critics and writers I respect deeply—but nothing has been brought together here in a manner compelling enough to make the book come alive as a book. It remains a scattered collection.

The bibliography, suggested at the beginning as a somewhat comprehensivist addendum which would make up for the narrow frame of the basic book, is sadly lacking. One wishes that in addition to his article, Barber had compiled the bibliography. A bibliography compiled with the rigor of conception and the clarity of execution that Barber brings to bear would have in itself been worth the price of the book.

Several comments on the book seem proper. First, in a 320-page book, there was enough room for more material than is presented here. The format is spacious. So spacious that with a little redesign about one third again as much information could have been included. In that additional space, a greater variety of selections could have been added to this material, with an eye toward a larger catholicity of expression. The geography does range wide—the varieties of expression and viewpoint, however, are not as wide-ranging as they may seem at a quick glance. The pieces, to some degree, lack the focus that a little advance editorial direction might have brought up. To a certain degree, good

writers who produce well were not given a clear enough task, but were each seemingly asked to "do something." That's a mistake when the something they all do lies not only perhaps slightly off their specialties, but in the aggregate becomes too ambiguous within the whole. The massive collection of talented writers used here could have produced much more forceful work with focus in advance (structural editing, not textual editing).

Performance by Artists is unquestionably a good book. It can be recommended as a supplement, and—when the definitive anthology on performance becomes available—it will be a useful supplement. As one of the first "major anthologies" on performance, however, it had a responsibility it did not fulfill. It lacks those qualities which would make a compelling book to either reader or researcher, with the exception of the Barber text. The talents of the editors and the stature of artists and authors included are such that this is twice lamentable—first for what could have been, second for the fact that this cast could have done it with only a slightly greater effort.

Ken Friedman is an artist and editor of *Art Express*.

Jamie Canvas

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PERFORMANCE ART Magazine is interested in receiving short essays on aesthetics and theory, and reviews of performance, music, video, dance, and literary events from around the world.

REVIEWS

Eric Bogosian, *Party*.
112 Greene St. (December).

The Kipper Kids.
Pat Oleszko.
The Kitchen (November-December).

By now the notion of doing bits of pop entertainment in art performance is an acceptable, almost commonplace, one. As such, its impact as an art concept has considerably diminished, laying a neat trap for unwary performers. When the idea/art end of such a performance fails or the script fails to be original, the audience will soon succumb to comparing this performer to the pop idol he is referring to. The result is usually a new appreciation of the prototypical media star, whose technique is invariably perfect. Three recent performances come to mind.

The Kipper Kids all but threw up all over the Kitchen, and were quite funny at times. Very professional for an art performance, I kept thinking, a relaxed, well timed pair. Amusing material, but not very original: fart noises, diaper antics, food fight. The audience liked it, but how much more might they enjoy Moe, Larry, and Curley, or even Buddy Hackett and a frozen yogurt bar. I do admit to being irritated by their proffering the accumulated

mess as the new painting, so I suppose they score some points there somewhere. I shouldn't care.

Pat Oleszko's installation and performance at the Kitchen was separated into live work and short films. Although all of the work was highly produced, the films were considerably more animate, more focused, possessed of genuine charm. In the first, she personified her lower legs as a strolling couple, taking in the streets of Manhattan. The small faces painted on her knees were wonderfully expressive. In the second, an uncanny pair of tiny shoes transformed her fingers into a pair of legs. Her hand became a pert pedestrian, beautifully mimed. The gags were clear and nicely developed. The third film, a version of Cinderella, seemed less to the point, but managed a certain buoyancy. The costumes and decor were disappointing. The performer herself, when confronted with the live audience, seemed at a loss for a stage presence. The physical comedy was awkward and low voltage, and one sensed an ambivalence on her part about her role in the proceedings. She was at all times either enmeshed in an elaborate mask of some sort or sharing the spotlight with a filmed image of herself. I found her performance an uneven affair.

Eric Bogosian's *Party* at 112 Greene was a tougher nut to crack. I liked it, but I didn't, yet I did . . . for reasons having to do with Lenny Bruce and Danny Ackroyd. In the end, it was not Eric's surprisingly good manic stand up comedian bit, for that remained a take-off on a media prototype, but his role for Barbara (Barbie) Allen which established an original point of view. Her desperately grateful chanteuse was both subtle and hysterical, and created a focus for the evening. Barbie was radiant yet passive, the necessary counterweight to Eric's opaque and aggressive persona. It's too bad that their wrap up rap into shared hand held mike was so terse; one wanted to see more of the possibilities explored. In the end, this work which had seemed so obvious at first, revealed itself as a considerably more complex affair.

Bogosian, simply by having the sense to leave the production raw, discourages any confusion of this with the "real" thing. Instead of a failed approximation of Hollywood/Vegas technique, we get fairly satisfying manipulation of contexts and strong performance energy. This is perhaps because behind the scenes, the writer has a firm grasp on his material and the nature of his imagery.

Tony Mascatello



Paula Court

PARTY

**Women Artists Performance Festival.
A.I.R. Gallery (February).**

Although none of these womyn artists' performance pieces explicitly relate themselves to feminism, by the sheer fact of being created/performed by womyn I take them as expressions of—and only possible by way of feminism as—an (un)consciously integrated concept. Feminism, in its crudest definition, may be viewed as an ideology striving to break stereotypes—both male and female. Thus it is an ideology that any human being may adopt. I should like to propose another definition, another "label": womonism, that I define as an inquiry (a process on a continuum) into womon (as a verb); an inquiry that uses various methods such as description, analysis and vision in order to arrive at a plan and/or theories; an inquiry into womon enabling us (womyn) to develop a language uniquely womonly, i.e., gender oriented/based, creating symbols that are of immediate communicability. In the confrontation of such a language with the existing (male) language the breaking of static molds is possible and a creation of a unifying paradigm can occur.

Womyn artists' performances are not merely effects of a social situation; they are part of a movement (inquiry)—movement defined presently as women's liberation (from what? towards what?)—that always existed at least as a shadow (passive) but has now emerged as a global communication (active).

In viewing the three performances at the A.I.R. Gallery similarities in form and content were apparent. Form of presentation was performance art—a montage structure that opens up the almost unlimited associative processes both in the artist and among the audience. Content was self—the private and the public. This meant that imagery as well as text/language were, to various degrees, of autobiographical orientation.

Sue Heinemann's piece was based upon the concept of separation-individuation as described by Margaret Mahler, a psychoana-

SUE HEINEMANN



lyst. It is a concept of growth (inquiry) that Ms. Heinemann integrated as a tool both for private/personal as well as artistic/public development and expression. On the walls of the Gallery, huge pieces of paper were exhibited upon which a penciled outline of a human being was drawn in various stages of realization. During the performance piece itself Ms. Heinemann drew yet another lifesize outline of herself—the process being interspersed with slide projections of a naked body (hers?), of rock formations, as well as slides of herself creating the exhibited pencil drawings. At various times she sat down and read passages from the program notes on separation-individuation. The piece was about self and the image of self—the image of self as outlined body on paper—and how the energy contained in self (as womon/artist) breaks the boundaries (the body-outline) in playful, aggressive, rapid pencil lines—thus visualizing the concept of moving from one defin-

ition of self to another. The self projected as image is more and different than it seems to be! Ms. Heinemann did not re-create an image of womon; re-create presupposes an already existing image of womon. She created in the immediacy of her own outline and its myriad explosive lines an image of womon as womon (as verb), naming herself (the private self) and activating (communicating/sharing publicly) that entity. In this sense she is aligning herself to the inquiry.

On Valentine's Day, Elaine Hartnett, wearing a red (symbol of red hot love(rs)) long dress approached the audience with questions about love and offered heart stickers (Americana!) to each member. French chanson music was played on a tape recorder. Ms. Hartnett then began a narration of self: as object for love, meaning self defined by (love) relationships with various men (father, son, lovers, husband), (womon) as passive,

somebody acted upon, identified from without—but shadow-like, with a painful idea of a self different from the one projected. The narration focused on the mutilation of self (woman) by social (uncontrollable?) forces in an accusatory fashion—thus rendering that self (woman) passive, alienated and seemingly with no chance to break the distortion of imposed self/image. The self as projected image never aligned itself to its inner dialogue that could lift the veil from the very private sphere so that the Medusa's face (the seemingly external enemies?) could be turned—and seen as/for what it is—Ms. Hartnett's own!

Carolee Schneemann's performance piece *Dirty Pictures, Dirty Pictures*, was a more intricate piece. Characteristically, Ms. Schneemann used her own body (self) as the converging as well as diverging vantage point of observation; objects such as flashlights used for their defined purpose, to see better, and clothing used to cover or uncover were part of the performance. Various "dirty" pictures as well as not-so-dirty ones were projected on three screens behind a white-clothed table on which Ms. Schneemann at one point framed parts of her body with a neon-lit cylindrical object—thus connecting the picture of a girl looking through a keyhole mentioned earlier with an audience looking through a "keyhole" onto areas of bodily (erotic) taboos. The piece invariably deals with prejudices—such as the language of sex (eroticism) being masculine, or such as sex being dirty. By the way of the keyhole concept—looking at someone/something without being seen—she seems to be placing the audience in a position of voyeurism. The keyhole is also related to the vagina—looking from one side it is from where we emerge—"looking" (peeping); from the other side it is where men gaze into a mysterious ("dark," "dirty," and "dangerous") cave! Ms. Schneemann seems to be one of the few womyn artists attempting to break through pornography by creating womyn erotica that often makes womyn—and men(?) laugh.

All of the performances used art as a

paradigm for woman's inquiry into woman (as a verb); the inquiry in most of these performances remained fragmented. Basically the mode was descriptive which is not to say that one could not detect specific attitudes or directions but simply that the performances stayed in a realm of hesitant (passive) search. Obviously the womyn artist's personal/private experiences aligned with her art have the power to affect change providing the private is translated into tangible and comprehensible imagery/language. Art is/becomes a method or a ground for/of symbolic interaction, communicating truth of observer and observed—dialogue of dialectic between self and image. We aren't simply painting one painting, but myriad paintings. We aren't simply writing one monologue, but myriad dialogues. We aren't simply singing one song, but myriad choral works.

Ingrid Nyeboe



Lisa Kahane

DIRTY PICTURES

Wendy Perron, *A Three Piece Suite*.
Susan Rethorst, *Swell*.
Cunningham Studio (February).

Christina Svane, *How Long Will It Take You To Pack*.
St. Mark's Parish Hall (March).

Susan Rethorst seems interested in logging hours in a studio, exploring and discovering ways to move which are uniquely hers, ways which are not necessarily comfortable or pretty or exciting. She is not concerned with collecting as many kinds of movement material as possible nor with presenting visions. This is to her credit because now her work appears inimitable, totally focused on its own kinetic possibilities.

Rethorst emphatically uses the mass of her own weight. She refuses to set up harmonious phrases of shapes and often picks the least direct and most physically taxing way to get from one place to another. In classical modern dance terms, her movement is limited because it uses only the medium-to-low levels of space; she rarely stands up straight.

Because Rethorst's work is original, i.e., recognizable, it has become a style. In *Swell*, a large group piece using nine women, the kinetic impulses which appear so inevitable on Rethorst seem to be just shapes when performed by other dancers. When a movement style is transferred from the maker onto a group it requires something besides itself to make it seem real again. Transferring movement to others implies problems in form. Until now Rethorst hasn't encountered this problem because she has substituted aggressive spatial emphases for temporal structures.

Built on canoning and some large group shapes, *Swell* needs a structure less conceptually recognizable from other pieces by other choreographers. Perhaps a style as organic (in the radical sense of the word) as Rethorst's needs a framework which is more

jagged, more uncomfortable in terms of time length and its use of space. The most successful use of space in *Swell* is the unusual and somehow disturbing spillover of the performers into the audience area and onto the walls, almost as if the three-dimensional terms of the physical world (as we know it) do not apply to Rethorst's kinesthetic talents. I don't think they do.

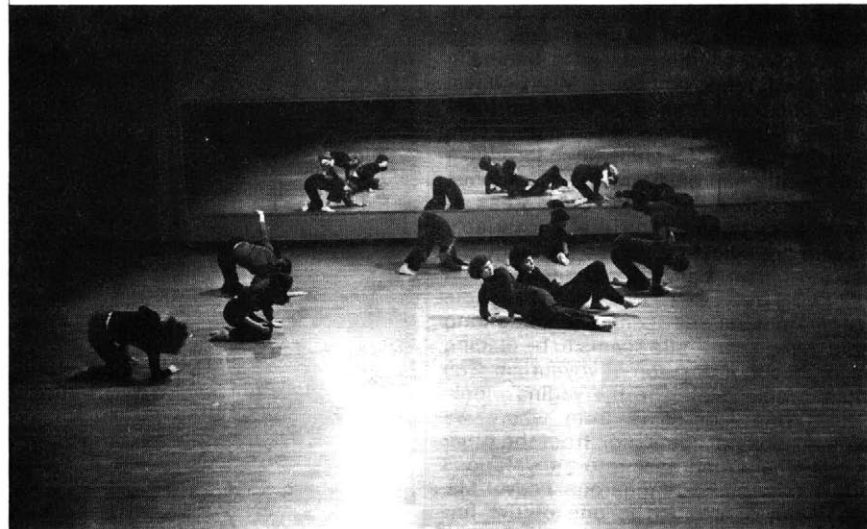
Wendy Perron's *A Three Piece Suite* puns lightly on relationships—to this eye, love relationships—between women. Choosing a spatial, costume, and movement motif for each of two duets and a solo, Perron manages to make her points in low-key theatrical ways. The first duet (for Paula Clements and Kyle deCamp) takes place on a long path from the mirrors to the small stage in the Cunningham studio. They wear dark pants, t-shirts, and ties, and seem to address one another in a follow-the-leader, mirror-like manner. The movement vocabulary is limited to an uncomfortable-looking, percussive, pogo stick-like motion occasionally augmented with gestural arm movements.

The transition between duets is the most successful segment of the piece. The second couple enters and assumes the same sleeping postures already taken by deCamp and Clements. In unison, the two couples move through a series of sleeping positions. Gradually the second couple (who have added vests to the costume) begin to take on their own identity. Theirs is a stormy relationship, larger and more openly violent. Weight is thrown in such a way that it appears difficult to be inside a body. As performed by Margot Crosman and Susan Rethorst, the dance outlines a strong/weak symbiotic situation through movement, not pantomime. At the end, Perron allows a concise vignette to spell it all out. Crosman collapses and Rethorst rescues her from falling. Rethorst falls and Crosman ignores her. Rethorst passively rejoins Crosman and they exit together.

Perron explodes into the space in her solo, wearing the jacket which completes the three piece suit(e) of the title. Her dance is full of



A THREE PIECE SUITE



SWELL

Nathaniel Tlleston

Nathaniel Tlleston

bouncing, rebounding and off-balance dancing in a style which is nameless as yet but which appears more and more to be about almost falling—but not really—in circular paths; the earliest example of it might have been Trisha Brown's exquisite *Water Motor*. Perron is a very feminine, involved dancer, and it is pleasant to watch her dance alone because the detail in her hands and head is more visible. The solo itself needs a clearer spatial focus as it has a tendency to sprawl. Near the end she taps the mirror and says, "No words here tonight doesn't mean no voices." Of course it doesn't.

How Long Will It Take You To Pack, "organized and directed" by Christina Svane, begins as a danced interior monologue framed by props, theatrical lighting, and costuming which heighten the apparent autobiographical hermeticism of the material. As a TV broadcasts "Casablanca," Svane enters and performs a solo which is at first offhand, then increasingly urgent in attack. Lying on the floor close to the TV set, Svane begins by stretching, goes to the window to gaze outside, then turns off the TV and finishes with dancing which pitches her off balance and hurls her big body awkwardly through space. This solo establishes a mood—ruminative, associative—which resembles more a catalogue of memories than a big story.

This pensive dramatic focus works until about half way through the piece. Then the tasks performed by the large group stop interacting and influencing one another, and become just lists of separate acts. The problem is often one of repetition. A storytelling game involving frozen postures taken by individual performers goes on too long and so dissipates its impact of a poetic puzzle. When Margaret Hoeffler and Cynthia Hedstrom direct each other in attempts to pour water from one glass to another while holding the glasses over their heads, it's a great task and a good light moment. But it goes on too long, is repetitive (first they stand on a window sill, then near to the audience) and although overlapped with another task involving the lining up of shoes by another performer, it's not enough to look at. At this

point the piece starts to resemble a variety show.

What becomes misplaced is the initial impression of a sixties-eighties, interior-narrative hybrid, a style exemplified by the striking moment near the beginning when the large group enters and starts to pull off sweaters; they freeze in mid-action as a big blond man (who looks as if he could be Svane's Swedish uncle) walks across the darkened space carrying a video monitor on which plays a closeup of Svane calling "Julio" again and again. Here a kind of polynant formalism is achieved.

When the piece works, it does so because the layering of task and image collide and synthesize. Another good example is the incident of Svane and a man walking outside on the fire escape, two steps down and one step back up, while inside Bogart asks Bacall "How long will it take you to pack?" (from "To Have and Have Not") over and over on a

tape loop. But when Cynthia Hedstrom's solo near the end of this long work (one and three-quarter hour) is paired with some jazzy singing which has already overstayed its welcome, nothing adds up. Consequently Hedstrom's whimsical exploration of small-big gestures loses some of its pithy impact.

How Long . . . is inventive in its use of the St. Mark's Parish Hall's theatrical limitations, and in its casual costuming, lighting, and performance manner. And despite its sprawling format, the work's material is worth a second look.

Meg Eginton



Nathaniel Tilleston

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU TO PACK?

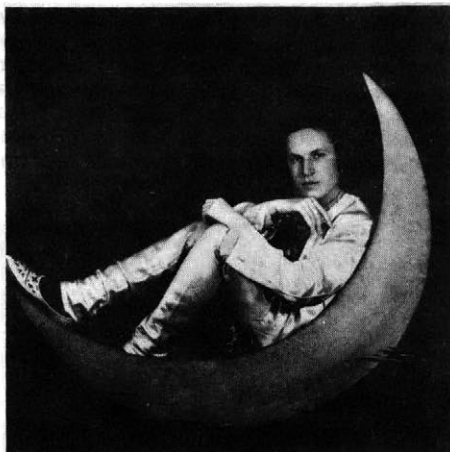
Marc Camille Chaimowicz, *Doubts* . . .
Luigi Ontani, *Astronaut*.
The Kitchen (November).

Untel.
C Space (November).

One of ex-Kitchen curator RoseLee Goldberg's better ideas is the "Imports" series. Many performers outside New York and the U.S. are known only through media, and Goldberg's efforts have made it possible to more accurately gauge some well-publicized but unverified reputations. Two of this fall's "Imports" shows not only gave performers New York exposure, but pointed out the absolutely opposed performance tendencies which now exist in Europe and America. Both Luigi Ontani and Marc Camille Chaimowicz set up a static tableaux as a kind of non-performed performance. Each event is made up of one slight gesture rather than any large action or series of actions, and each presents itself as a brief moment (Chaimowicz's lasts for fifteen minutes and Ontani's for as long as the viewer can stand to lean in from the hallway door to view it, a length which seemed to be about five minutes). Finally, both performances offer a withdrawn presence within a simple but lushly beautiful mise-en-scene accompanied by soft music.

In *Astronaut*, Ontani stands in the middle of the Kitchen, its space transformed into outer space by the use of celestial slides from twenty-four projectors and by the recorded music of Verdi, Hadyn, and Puccini. *Doubts* . . . begins as Chaimowicz enters, sits with his back to the audience and swings a pendulum; this activity appears on a video monitor visible to both performer and audience. Then Chaimowicz exits and the monitor shows domestic scenes: Chaimowicz writes a letter, has tea, looks out a window. A slide of double doors is projected against the black wall and Eno's "*Discreet Music*" and Lou Reed's "*Coney Island Baby*" provide nouveau muzak.

Presumably, something interior and subjective happens for these two performers, but the viewer is left to infer what that might be as nothing is shown except for the works' seductive surfaces. *Astronaut* and *Doubt* . . . are the performance equivalent of Eno's ambient music, a pleasant aesthetic object to have around whether attended to or not; the pieces go on even if the active mind goes elsewhere. Worth noting is a particularly European erotic style as both performances look sensual but don't arouse. It's also a let-down that so few people bother to check out these events—the total audience for both might have been thirty viewers.



ASTRONAUT

Another kind of European gesture performance appeared as Untel, a French group which presented a performance with their exhibition at that more modest alternative gallery, C Space. The displayed photographs show a group of men in various street actions which seem grounded in a strategy of sixties counter-culture sociology. For their live act, three men enter the darkened gallery, each man doubling over with laughter to the tape-recorded accompaniment of portentously spoken Social Nouns. Each finally falls to the

ground, spray-paints a black X on himself, and becomes quiet, then gets up, pastes small stamps on each viewer, and exits. As a performance in a gallery the action was negligible in every way, and it's hard to see how this kind of anemic commentary could stir up some excitement (as the photographs seem to claim) even in a provincial French town. Oh yes, they also beat their heads against the wall.

John Howell

Linda Montano, *Listening to the 80's: Inside/Outside*.
San Francisco MOMA (January).

As a major dictator of dogma and decorum for the past two thousand years, the Catholic Church is a rich storehouse of solemn rite and syncretized paganisms. Many performance artists simply borrowed the trappings or liturgical formulae of the Church; a few have attempted to capture something more of the spirit of Christendom. Linda Montano appears to be one of the latter group. Montano and a group of six performers (George Coates, Steve Collins, Vincent de Luna, John Duykers, William Farley and Pauline Oliveros) lived for twelve hours according to an invented Christian discipline in their performance, *Listening to the 80's: Inside/Outside*.

Listening . . . consisted of four actions: *sitting, standing, walking* and *singing*. Each section began with the ringing of a small bell and lasted for 15 minutes. At the end of the hour, the cycle of actions began once more. The final quarter of each hour—*singing*—was performed outdoors and was the only officially public section of the piece. The other actions were carried out in an upstairs room of the museum and were semi-private, though many observers strolled through.

The setting was a central fact of *Listening* . . . SF-MOMA is housed in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium building, an imposing Beaux Arts structure directly across from Ci-

ty Hall. For *singing*, the performers grouped in the central alcove of the pillared balcony which extends along the second floor of the building. The *sitting*, *standing* and *walking* actions were carried out in a large reception hall in which green and gilt antiqued pillars support a thirty-foot ceiling.

Six of the seven participants in *Listening* . . . were dressed in vestments of the opposite sex. The two priests were women; the four nuns were men. The sisters' habits were virtually identical: modest black robes with white wimples. Significantly, the two priests were easier to differentiate. The portly, goateed one wore the black suit and Roman collar of the parish priest—newly-ordained, perhaps, preparing to assume pastoral duties. The lanky dark-haired one was dressed in altar vestments—alb, cincture and the black and white dalmatic of the requiem. A third priest, not in travesty, stood to one side, marking time with mallet and bell.

An increasing degree of community could be traced in the cycle of actions. *Sitting* was a period of solitary contemplation. For the hours that I was present, *standing* was suspended; instead, *sitting* was extended to a full half hour. A friend related that at earlier hours, the group would stand in place, arms at side, a group gesture after the internal solitude of meditation. In *walking*, the performers paced counter-clockwise within the circle of chairs. At the signal for the final quarter hour, the sisters and fathers filed out to their places on the balcony to sing a wordless choral song. The music was melismatic, like much traditional Church music: long phrases unfolded on a single vowel sound. At all times during this action, two or three performers made a droning, burbling sound by singing while brushing their lips with index fingers. The initial impression was of the choir at an asylum; the overall effect was intricate and strangely beatific.

The well-amplified singing was easy to hear from the Opera House down the block or the bus stop across the busy avenue, attracting the attention of many passersby. The subtitle of the piece, *Inside/Outside*, came to mean

not just the physical movement from cloister to balcony, but also a cyclic progression from solitary contemplation (listening to oneself) to co-operation with others (listening to each other) to inclusion of the world-at-large (allowing others to listen) and back to solitude.

Many things about *Listening* . . . were beautifully in tune with its churchly theme.



Minnette Lehmann

LISTENING TO THE 80'S

The circle of chairs, the pacing in a circle, and the cycle of actions mirrored the repetitive routine of ecclesiastical life as well as larger aspects of the Church, such as the yearly cycle of feasts and the Christmas-Lent-Easter re-enactment of Christ's life. Staging the piece in a large urban museum assured a hushed and slightly awestruck set of observers, such as might visit a cathedral. The museum setting was appropriate to *Listening* . . . in another way, too: The architectural majesty of the exterior majesty of the

exterior scene suggested the visible power of the Roman Church, while the placid interior scene evoked the cool recess of the Church everlasting. Curiously, the cross-dressing was not generally a distraction. Aside from the moustache sported by one nun, the drag was very well done, especially on the part of the priests.

The burbling drone of the singing action

made a disturbing break in the atmosphere. The sound was a lovely musical effect, but the Looney-Tune motions required to produce it were irrevocably comic. The *singing* was a highly visible part of the piece and Montano must have realized that many of the "outside" observers would see little else. What seemed an inconsistency of tone may actually have been a covert comment on the piece's theme. To the non-believer, the profession of inner faith seems like the babbling of the idiot, like the insanity of speaking in

tongues. The external edifice of the Roman Church remains incapable of conveying the internal message of the Church Eternal.

Joe Hannan

Betsy Damon, *A Blind Beggarwoman: Memories and Images*.

**Barbara Hammer, *Be Mine, Valentine*.
Franklin Furnace (February).**

**Rosemary Hochschild.
Mudd Club (February).**

In two of the four "feminist performances" featured recently at Franklin Furnace—California filmmaker Barbara Hammer's *Be Mine, Valentine* and New York artist Betsy Damon's *A Blind Beggarwoman: Memories and Images*—the frame of reference was the inner life, and the relation to the audience based on the notion of "sharing." Both works attempted to define or create a specifically feminist space, which notably did not show women engaged in the world. Damon created a privatized, mythic space, while Hammer physicalized a psychic inner space which corresponded to stages in her self-development. The personal, private interior spaces articulated by these women are interestingly contrasted with a Mudd Club performance by South African Rosemary Hochschild, who placed herself directly in the public space/context of the world-out-there.

The central "performer" in Damon's piece, dressed in a tunic of small earth-colored pouches with gauze taped over her eyes (the blind beggarwoman) crouched over a "begging bowl" filled with still more pouches and asked the spectators to "share" stories with her. The conceit of the piece was that women's stories have not been told. There has been no space for storytelling. This performance was to create that space. "Women have had no keepers of their history and few



A BLIND BEGGARWOMAN: MEMORIES AND IMAGES

memories of their traditions."

Although no one could quarrel with the truth that history has not concerned itself with women and their deeds, the assertion that women have had no space for story-telling is more dubious. In fact, Damon's piece seemed to recreate certain aspects of the hearth, woman's traditional place/space. Most of the performers either crouched low or sat on the floor, as did the spectators. The colors: mauve, brown, pink, red were all earth colors. The repetition of gestures throughout the performance—a woman endlessly reciting beads to the Virgin, another transferring sawdust from one bucket to another, a third, dressed in a mound of the small pouches filled with colored powder, systematically slitting them open with a knife until she was nude—were suggestive of women's endurance and of the cyclic nature of women's work. My argument with these images is that they merely repeated the stereotypes, without situating them in a fresh context. Nothing was done to de-mystify them. In fact, the beggar woman's passive role as receiver of whispered stories (she told none—the memories we were offered were strictly our own) seemed only to emphasize

the traditional feminine role of supporting and nurturing others. In addition, the whispering of stories meant that the notion of "sharing" was limited quite specifically to a private act rather than to a communal one, underscoring the enclosed and isolated quality of this story-telling space.

Be Mine, Valentine began with Hammer's remarking that, "Before there was heart space and before there was love space there was available space" and ended with her saying "Found my available space, my art-space, my nature space. Found my own space." Thus, the piece was framed by her quest and eventual discovery of her own creative space, her own power. Between these observations, a film ran which opened with Hammer's bare feet and naked body running very freely across an open stretch of sand, and ended with an image of her bare arm ripping a white paper wall, as Hammer simultaneously tore into the paper wall on which the film was projected. Her emergence from this screen seemed to be a reflection on "having a breakthrough," expanding interior psychic space and sense of personal power and control.

For the rest of the performance Hammer iron-

ically commented upon the illusions and myths of love. My favorite sequences were her reading from Freud's text on love and hypnosis, for which she donned male attire, and her aiming arrows at a video heart as a voice-over spoke of a dying heart patient's new hope—a transplant—for treatment of a broken heart. Hammer's piece, like Damon's, was highly personal, yet she seemed to articulate a more creative space for herself in the process—a sort of "open heart" space.

What was so interesting about Rosemary Hochschild's performance at the Mudd Club, in contrast to the two previously mentioned pieces, was that she situated her piece very much within the world, wryly commenting on and criticizing that world with wit and irony rather than with the mythic images or self-conscious seriousness of Damon or the self-indulgence and private language of Hammer. The myths Hochschild addressed were social: the goddess conjured up was not the archetypal earth mother, but the Madison Avenue idol, Georgette Klinger. A magazine ad featuring Klinger and her daughter was projected onto a screen. The mythology of commercial advertising—"buy these products and you will be beautiful," and the promotion of a cool, stereotyped, artificial beauty—was satirized by Hochschild addressing this image in various voices: that of a working class South African girl who determinedly wants to be a movie star ("gotta make up my face if I'm gonna be a movie star. A movie star in New York City"), and that of Klinger herself. Coming forward to a table with makeup mirror and donning high heels, she, while applying make-up, told the story of an upper-class "tragedy": how the family's Bantu maidservant, brought over with great difficulty from South Africa, abandoned them at the instigation of other maids in Central Park and went to work for Harry Belafonte.

While assuming poses—one of the classic ways of being in the world for women—she subverted the stereotypes, showing the alienation in them. She dealt to a degree with how women are socialized, and how media manipulations become internalized and

alienate us. In contrast to Hammer's and Damon's focus on inner questions—Hochschild placed her alienated self in the world outside herself, and demonstrated her struggle against stereotypes in a social, as opposed to personal, context.

Lenora Champagne

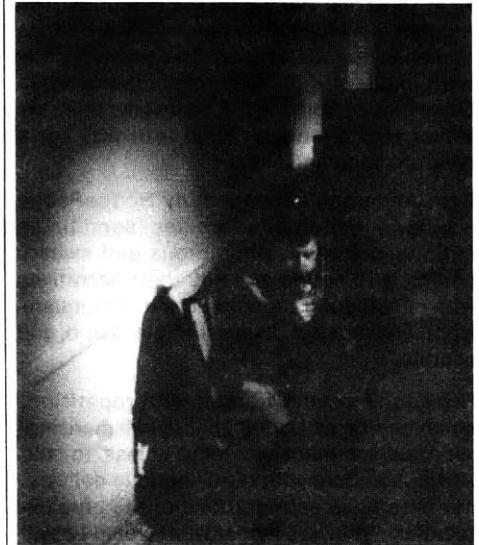
**Walter Abish, *The Idea of Switzerland*.
Beth Anderson, *Hegemony Hodge Podge*.
Douglas Davis, *Night Voices*.
Franklin Furnace (February).**

The January Performance Series at the Franklin Furnace carried the title *Words and Music* which was a nice umbrella, vague enough to encompass almost any contemporary performance, yet seeming to bristle with specifics. Walter Abish's prose *does* have that special rhythm and assonance which invites a "musical" description. But a straight-forward reading is not a performance when the reader is not a performer (no vocal exercise, no chanting, no sense of ritual, no action—only a writer reading with a sore throat), no matter how (very) provocative the material. The F.F. deserves credit for providing an audience for a writer of Abish's obvious merit—but his work deserves attention as literature, not performance.

The series' moniker was more direct with Douglas Davis's *Night Voices* and Beth Anderson's *Hegemony Hodge Podge*; the pieces may be poles apart in the arena of theoretical assumption, but they stand side-by-side in their respective concerns for the affective powers of verbal and non-verbal sound. Davis's urban orientation paid more attention to the politics of sound technology, while Anderson's was pastoral, focusing on the emotive interplay of the structure and con-

tent of sound.

Davis performed in collaboration with a voice broadcast over WBAI Radio. Those with their dials tuned-in heard only the radio voice, while the F.F. audience was privy to both the sounds of the radio and Davis's resistance. Using elements of radio melodrama and science fiction, Davis's performance developed along a fairly conventional plot line.



NIGHT VOICES

The radio voice boomed its presence with a muscle-bound display of Big-Brotherish insight and infiltration, of fact and evidence, of cajole and threat. It was a full-fledged battle of the wills, with each performer striking at the weaknesses of his adversary. The radio emitted sounds with culturally potent content (snippets of vaudeville, a Jack Benny routine, news broadcasts from wartime London, children playing, and rock 'n roll) and Davis

retaliated with the synthesized sounds of technology.

While the machine is often the post-modernist's answer to the romantic's abyss, the contemporary pathetic fallacy (of technology-with-a-will) is the more interesting in that human invention *does* reflect the characteristics of its creator. It is not too far off the mark to say that *Night Voices* was a sort of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in minor key; in a small way, Davis and the voice did for radio what Dave and Hal did for the computer. The thought of a technology tearing away from its humanist foundations by its own volition is both exhilarating and terrifying; and when Davis rushed from the F.F. to pull the plug, the joy of fear avenged faded into pity for a creature dead and silenced.

Beth Anderson's *Hedgemony HodgePodge* was a collection of exercises (sometimes tedious, sometimes humorous and sweet), poems with sound as text, short narratives with or without a brooding B-flat accompaniment, and musical pieces for flute, piano, and ocarina.

The sound poems worked with repetition, which can be as boring as it is mesmerizing, but Anderson managed, more or less, to hold off the boredom with rambunctious delivery. Her reiterative permutations of the phrase/question "If-I-were-a-poet-what-would-I-say," came out sounding like a half-crazed yokel/hermit breaking out of silence on a hilltop under the stars. That was nice. The light-weight quality of word-play can be good, clean fun; a magic-square piece, *Poem to Pauline, John & Martha*, reduced Martha Graham's name to "Art-Hag." However, not all the text/sound poems were as successful; after three minutes of "can't stand it I can't stand can't stand I can't it stand can't," this witness couldn't care, and standing was not even a possibility.

Six Stories in a Series was a train of narratives

Gretta W. Miller



HEGEMONY HODGEPODGE

of personal catastrophe, rather like plot summaries of magazine stories from *True Life* or *True Romance*. The readers' voices provided the irony; they were naive and cheerful, with that special, depraved, "oh-by-the-way" quality of the Southern-Gothic mood.

The musical pieces were distillations from medieval and folk traditions—light and soft with a slow and careful exploration of scale. They were full of "sweetness and light"—especially the final ocarina solo, "*Preparation for the Dominant*" which cleared one's mind of the occasionally pithy ironies of the preceding pieces and again filled the evening with air.

Nancy Jones

**Beverly Brown and Ruth Maleczech, *Vanishing Pictures*.
The Performing Garage (February).**

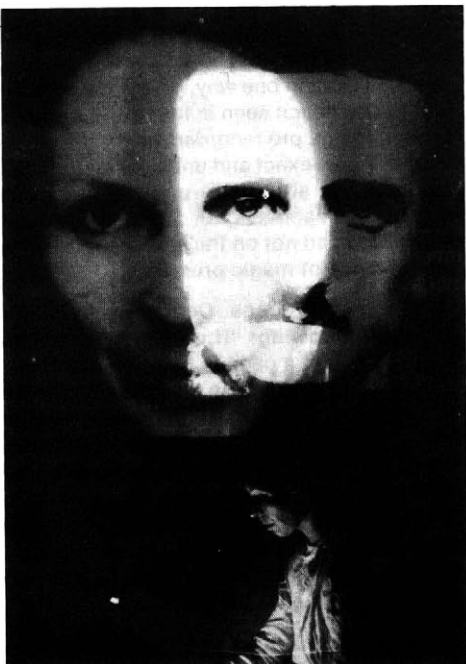
Vanishing Pictures, directed by Ruth Maleczech, and performed by Beverly Brown, is a current example of how the theatre world is absorbing attitudes from performance art. One might, in fact, call this piece with vocal music by Debussy, Ravel and Satie a performance art song of sorts. But it is not only music that makes the piece, it is the intertextuality of Poe's "The Mystery of Marie Roget," letters of Baudelaire, poems by the latter and Mallarme, and the film soundtrack of *Murder in the Rue Morgue* that really comprise the narrative.

Maleczech's directorial approach is essentially semiological: how to turn language into signs. This she does often affectingly because she knows how to think visually: overlapping images on projected photographs concretize Baudelaire's obsession with Poe, small scale models of settings from the narrative suggest a poetics of space, slides projected on the body of the performer produce an eerie gothicism that is at home in the Romanticism of this period piece. The small photographs that line the back border of the space suggest a subconscious acknowledgment of the link between impressionism, which is the style of the piece, and the creation of photography, which is its generating spirit. (Maleczech has, incidentally, added photography to the already lush image repertoire of Mabou Mines, of which she is a founding member.)

If I have pondered the imagery too much it is because that's all there was of *Vanishing Pictures* for me. Beverly Brown, who worked closely with Maleczech in shaping the material, performed it without penetrating beyond the surface of technique. Maleczech directed

it with the focus on how to imagine the text, almost as if that were a problem to be solved. Maleczek, whose first directorial effort this is, is a good director but her work doesn't express any involvement with the text, or urgency on her behalf. It is as if *Vanishing Pictures* exists solely in terms of its performance vocabulary, yet is unable to speak.

Stephanie Rudolph



VANISHING PICTURES

The lack of soul that is apparent in the work of third wave theatre avant-gardists is in part responsible for the crisis of that world. Many people now have the skills to execute work but not the burning need to do what they are doing. So, while I applaud the care Maleczek took in finding images to dramatize the text, I cannot find necessity in her work with it. Doing "takes" on gothicism, pornography, Grand

Guignol, symbolism, and the romantic imagination is not enough because takes are only copies of a vision, not a vision of their own.

Vanishing Pictures is the first piece of Recherchez, the studio in the East Village founded by Maleczek and Lee Breuer who initiated the place to investigate the increasingly intertwined aesthetics of performance art and theatre. As such it exists to investigate the difficult area of performance vs. acting which is one of the most provocative dichotomies in the world of performance today. The larger significance of Recherchez is, of course, the fact that it is the only formal studio in the country that provides an alternative to Stanislavsky-style training and all its off-shoots. That is a tremendous hope for the training of a new generation of artists who will have the opportunity to absorb and build upon the experiments of twenty-years of avant-garde performance, in a laboratory setting, and under the guidance of experienced performers.

Bonnie Marranca

**Jill Kroesen; Peter Gordon.
Squat Theatre (February).**

Like all kinds of current art, music-performance now looks *out* at the question of audience as much as it looks *in* at its own processes. Economic motives and the resulting dominant cultural conservatism of the day figure here, as does the high level of recording business activity where all is in flux. Rock has the audience numbers of course, but it also lures art-music with big bucks and a kind of glamor-fame (as opposed to prestige-fame) which exert a tremendous pressure on experimentalism to succeed. So the downtown club

scene is overrun with born-again conceptualists who are "intrigued" with the idea of rock and roll as if it were simply a new kind of old suit to put on. These "artists" play at rock's forms and roles—the pose is all—ignoring a history (and common sense) which clearly shows that the greatest acts add up to something more than calculated attitudes.

Two obvious and available measures of musical sincerity for such experimental-rock attempts are shifts in venue (from performance spaces to rock clubs) and the cold fact of a recording. A recent twin bill by performer-musicians Jill Kroesen and Peter Gordon illustrates how their work might affect and be affected by such circumstantial crossovers.

The Squat Theatre's space has become a notable venue for blues, jazz, and new music which draws on those idioms. Kroesen led off with a solo version of her mock-innocent, "abnormal love" song-theatre, material known for some time now as the *Lou and Walter Story* in a variety of performance formats. With their cartoonish lyrics (sample title: *I Really Want To Bomb You*, "Russia's love song to the USA") and minimalist bluesy music (simple melodies repeated at length, usually played on an electric piano), her work always risks terminal archness. The large-scale *Lou and Walter* productions (big cast, elaborate sets, musical comedy costumes) have swamped her idiosyncratic skills with a deliberately giggly playfulness which presents something more like a smarmy home theatrical than a serious voyage into some truly funny weirdness. Kroesen's solo acts using the same material have always seemed more compelling, even genuinely moving, as her low-pitched voice, wavering pitch, and only adequate piano-playing skills somehow enhance a mood of soulful isolation, filling the absurdist lyrics and childish tunes with crazy sincerity.



JILL KROESEN

At *Squat*, she offered her songs in a quasi-programmatic sequence: "song about where you love somebody and they don't love you" (*I Want To Get High On You*), "song where you love somebody but you can't stand them" (*You've Really Got A Hold On Me*), "song where lots of people love someone" (*I Want To Be Your Leader*), "song where lots of people love someone but he's good" (*Freak Of Nature, Child Of God*), and so on. The songs were embedded in her delightfully loopy patter about life in the comic book world of Lou and Walter (where girls over fourteen live outside of town, where there is a Sodom Union, where disappearing "things" lead to a feeling of empty pants).

Unfortunately, *Squat* and/or the performer were unorganized, and the show started at midnight, over an hour late. However well-performed (which it was in this case), Kroesen's funky but low-key song cycle is not the kind of stuff to win over the irritated energy of and impatient audience, so heckling and a lethargic response persisted throughout her

performance. Kroesen couldn't do much about it except carry on and cut short her set. Her first record, currently in production, should provide a better test of how her work can establish its moody comedy as music as well as music-theatre performance.

Peter Gordon's *Love Of Life Orchestra* followed Kroesen, and although his set was also slow to get under way, it was better received, being amplified (loud) with a variety of rock beats and full of musical punch. Previously, Gordon's sprawling "orchestras" and eclectic compositions have tried to cram in every influence and reference (from Cage to Glass to disco to bubblegum), every textural and rhythmical combination of instrumentation and vocalists as if there might never be another gig or even another song. And the whole shot used to come on like an Event as well, as an ersatz party band with balloons and booze for artists, a tongue-in-cheek display for people who really knew better but who liked to slum around in their nightclub fantasies.

Now both band and pieces are pared down, better focused, and finally convincing. While still inventively busy, the current LOLO sounds more investigative than genre-mongering, and more confident than smug about its brand of smart rock and roll. There's not much "show" left—the band pretty much just plays away—and that too seems an improvement. LOLO's new EP *Extended Niceties* exhibits these new strengths in a sparkling production (engineered by Kurt Munkasci) which is a performance number in itself.

John Howell

Julian Maynard Smith, *Peaches, Conjuring Tricks, Psychoanalysis, Opera*. London (November).

In the first piece *Peaches*, his concern is to display the evidence for the conclusion that you can't un-eat a peach. If you see two pictures of someone eating a peach, it is either two pictures of the same act, or two peaches. In this piece there is the action of eating four peaches seen in one way, or is it the action of eating one peach seen in four different ways? He employs a pre-recorded video, the screen displaying an exact and uncanny match of the complex live situation—uncanny not solely due to the exactness, for at times a peach is eaten here and not on the screen and vice versa—a sense of magic prevails.

Of the second piece, *Conjuring Tricks*, he says the following: "If one has two homes, and one writes a page in one home, a similar page should be found in the other. To achieve this, sometimes tricks are required." His two homes are again the pre-recorded video and the live situation, but the mirror image here is reversed; one begins where the other ends. He's drinking himself to death, an orgy of wine, very tense, glasses get smashed against the wall, and, amidst this formal bacchinalia, the wine glass gets reconstituted.

Psychoanalysis, the third performance, exhibited one of the best pieces of "genius loci" I have seen in a long while. The Gallery is situated well above street level, and the audience faces two warehouse loading doors. He enters one from "mid air" with the words, "I was seated at a table," and leaves by the other, defying gravity once again, in search of, or simply returning to, the other world from whence he came. His text, of great craft, was the language of dream, haunting us with death in the guise of a taxi that is full of green plants. It was shrewdly constructed to allow him to play an endless cat and mouse game not only

with his own schizophrenia and his unconscious—pre-recorded— voice, but also with the taxis going about their own business in the street. At times accident read perfectly as intention and the memorized text as spontaneous reaction.

Opera was a premiere and was still at the sketching stage. His area of work obviously demands this first "free session" like airing, and knowing the integrity of the other pieces he will probably spend a year or so testing the basic component elements and questioning the concerns until the model has been finally molded into the product he requires. There were some extraordinary sequences, not the least being his departure, rising vertically off a table accompanied, of its own volition, by a brown paper bag—but more at present I can't say.

Thinking back to those performances—well over a month ago—his images and *raison d'être* haven't lost any weight. This quality we require in the contemporary arena. He strikes memorable discord of strangeness and offers a powerful presence. His movements, although often formally based, display the lawless co-ordination of the tall person, and his voice has the resounding clarity of one with a cavernous sound box. The performances are executed with a considerable ease, his own very particular way of being a fish in water, and he has the alertness one associates with the good comedian, enjoying the job and rarely missing opportunities. At times, maybe, he's a little too present. He displays a love for devices, tricks and the asking of ridiculous questions, which are so simple to the point that they begin operating at a kind of "zero level," and become marvelous.

The drama of the performer's real life at the time of performance is evident, and he doesn't attempt to solve all the problems, which allow the audience the opportunity to elucidate the rules and judge for themselves how the game



JULIAN MAYNARD SMITH

is progressing. His game is a pretty oblique one, and for some maybe a little esoteric, but he can hold both the conceptual and physical form of a work that is potentially chaotic, as if attempting to describe some new relationship between complexity and order (in the East they would say "the Sharawadgi is fine"). He certainly gives you what you haven't seen before, and happily he selects just one very small slice to be tested for reality, with nothing added on or mistakenly left in. One receives very little help in the way of tools for explanations, nor nothing for the theatre critic's analysis of what happened. The works just insist that you make a note that a game has taken place: you are given nothing but evidence with which you can do nothing but allow it to work away inside you for months on end. Getting a years worth of queries and inefable images from a seat in the auditorium is no small achievement.

Peter Stickland

Lawrence Weiner, *There But For Mudd Club*, (January).

There But For A Structure of Lawrence Weiner is a twenty minute color videotape built on references to logical positivism and similarities to the soap opera format. The title serves as the prototypical proposition. The structure is the situation, standards and rules determined by the artist by which to verify the facts of experience with public sense perception. Weiner defines the participants before the camera as players; players take part in games and execute set standards and rules. (Game playing has been used in many of Weiner's past tapes.) It appears that the players and the cameraman were given specific instructions and placements within the sets, but not told how to relate (i.e., "how to actually construct the piece). In 1971, Weiner said, "What I'm doing is setting up situations where any way that the piece is built is alright." In the past he has created the terms within which a piece



THERE BUT FOR



can be created and it applies to this tape, too.

In *There But For* there are two sets (a living room and a bathroom) and five players. The camera (John Sanborn) observes the players' interaction (usually hostile) and alienation from each other, along with being a sixth player at times when the players interact with it. Music is composed and performed during the taping by Peter Gordon. It accompanies the players in a way similar to soap opera music.

There are other allusions in *There But For* to soap opera. Half hour TV shows usually have ten minutes of commercials and twenty minutes of show. In this tape one could easily imagine commercials inserted between the edits. Soaps tend to focus visually or aurally on an object or subject at the end of one scene and then begin the next scene in a different set, focused on the same object or subject in a different context and point of view. In this tape, for example, Leslie Schiff is standing before the bathroom mirror shaving with a steak knife. After she is finished, she sticks the knife in the waistband of her skirt. The camera begins the next scene focused on her holding the knife while eating.

There But For is edited so that there is a switching back and forth from one set to the other as in soaps. However, in Weiner's tape all of the players are in the same set at the

same time. In soaps, this almost never occurs because characters exist within a continuous present and it would be impossible for a character to be in two places at the same time. Another major difference between *There But For* and soap opera is that soap opera characters never acknowledge their structure. In this piece, the players refer to Weiner, the camera and the script. Also, the players initiate how they relate to the situation to show what they want to the viewer. In the beginning of the tape Schiff wants to leave. Weiner enters into the tape (situation) and convinces her to stay. Her departure would challenge the structure—the proposition—and change Lawrence's initial decisions (judgments). Except for Schiff, the other players never challenge the structure or piece; they do judge each other, the camera, Weiner, and the script. Britta Le Va calls Peter Downsbrough disgusting when he pisses in a plant holder. Peter Nadin is annoyed with Weiner for telling Michael H. Shamburg to say "mediocrity is its own reward."

Like logical positivism on which it draws, *There But For* doesn't acknowledge values (because they are not objects which can be empirically perceived). Therefore, as an ideal viewer I don't think it is important or interesting whether or not I liked the tape.

Cewzan Grayson

Pat Molella, *There's A Price for Everything*. WPA, Washington, D.C. (January).

Pat Molella's slide performance *There's A Price for Everything*, looks the way an Alain Robbe-Grillet novel reads. Objects in Molella's performance piece function as though they were objects in Robbe-Grillet's stories: flexing their substance, they stretch and shake in an undulating landscape of transient meanings. Objects no longer exist merely for themselves or to accentuate their own "thereness," but to build a kaleidoscopic narrative through variation.

The performance primarily consists of slides projected through a dissolve unit onto a large screen. Molella has photographed "immobile" objects—a gate and garden path, lawns, trees and shrubbery— and "mobile" objects—a jet of water, soap bubbles and an inflating balloon. Like Robbe-Grillet, Molella thwarts the expectations "mobile" and "immobile" objects create when seen in a "real" context. In their objective presence, the objects are concretely "there," but their properties act as materials for shifting and sinuous vistas.

Two moments in the twenty-minute performance are particularly effective because each juxtaposes "immobile" objects and animated performers to renovate our percep-



THERE'S A PRICE FOR EVERYTHING

tion of things. Projected on the screen is an image of a gate at the end of a garden path. Subsequent dissolving slides bring the image closer as though a "mobile" someone was approaching an "immobile" gate. Molella enters from behind the screen, walks backwards to a point within ten feet of the audience, turns, pauses, slips a mask off her face, then exits. In retrospect, the approach toward the gate yields a new impression. First seen from the perspective of a person walking toward the gate, it now appears that the "mobilized" path and gate made an approach toward an "immobile" audience.

Later, a slide of a man inflating a striped balloon fills the screen. A spot illumines a male performer sitting on a truncated, narrow staircase beside a t.v. set. He inflates a blue balloon. The live and slide images are variations or echoes of the same activity: inflation. The visual interest lies in the shapes the various phases of inflation give to the balloons and bubbles. The slides freeze and compartmentalize the incremental swelling; consequently, the live activity becomes compartmentalized in the imagination while

in the process of inflating. Here, the still images immobilize the live image. To recreate the coincidence between photographic image and live image, to restore a "real" context, the balloon deflates beside a video image of melting butter.

J. Garret Glover

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