



# VARIANT

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## INTERVIEWS

**GENESIS P. ORRIDGE**  
*TransMedia Exile*

**BRIAN ENO**  
*After The Heat*

## ARTICLES

*Demarco's  
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*ParaPolitics*

## REPORTS INSIGHTS COMMENTS

Canadian Artists' Movement Read My Lips Lux Europæ  
Moscow Art Now Haute Couture Queer Cinema  
Project, Media & Audio Reviews



VARIANT is a magazine of cross-currents in culture: critical thinking, imaginative ideas, independent media and artistic interventions.

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Design, Layout & Typesetting

Edward Smart

Production & Editorial assistance

Euan Sutherland, Ed Baxter, Billy Clark  
and Kevin Hobbs

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Editorial Address

Variant

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Scotland

G2 8QD

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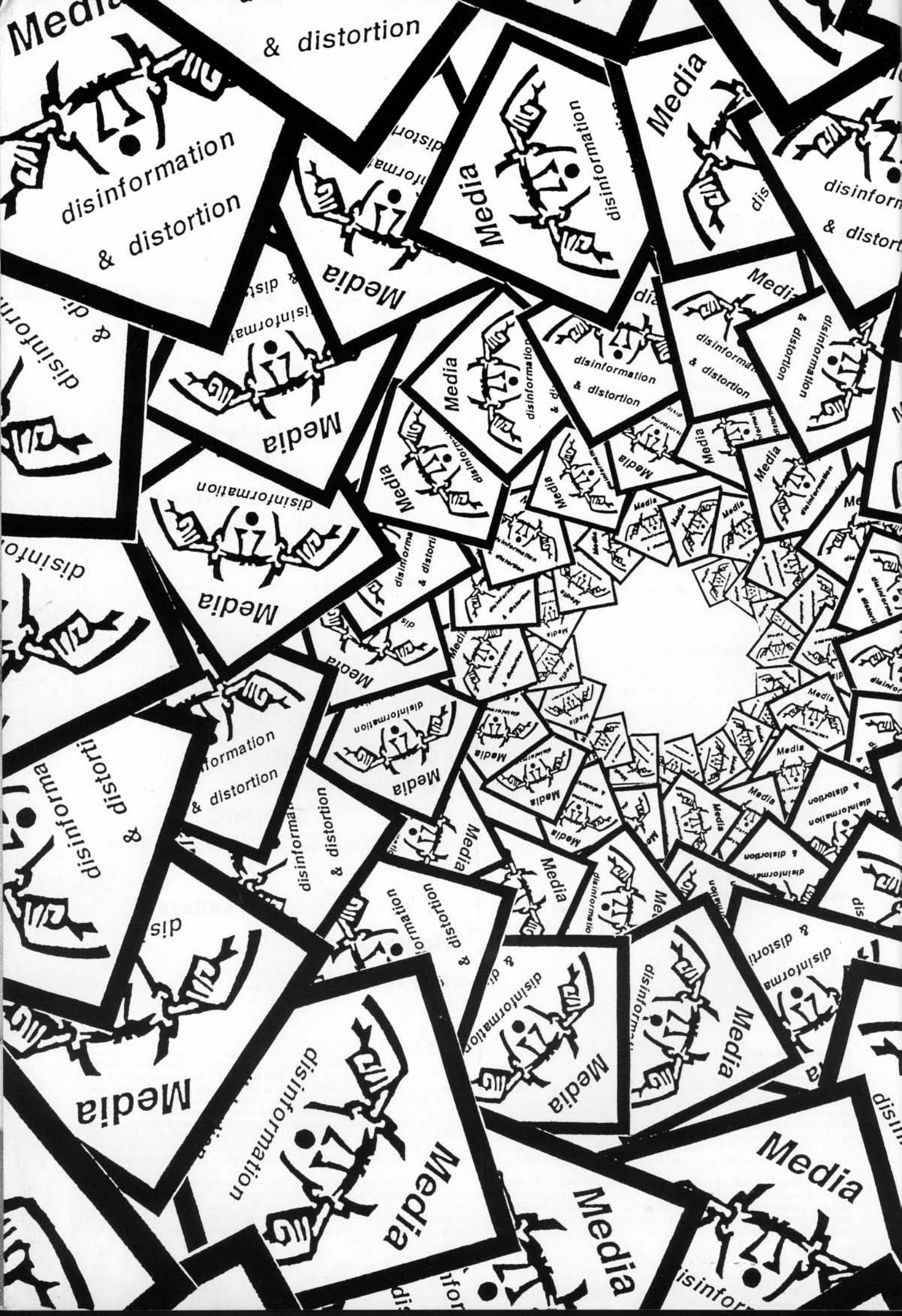
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**Contributors to this issue** **WRITERS** Ed Baxter is a writer living in London. Chris Blackford is a writer and is editor of Rubberneck, a free magazine covering experimental musics and creative writing. Catherine Brindley is a filmmaker living in Edinburgh. Billy Clark is a writer based in Glasgow. Nick Couldry is a musician and writer working in Oxford. Kate Elwes is a video maker and lecturer at Camberwell College of Art. Phil England is the administrator for the London Musicians' Collective and a freelance writer. Matthew Fuller is a writer and lives in London. Simon Herbert is an artist and organiser from Newcastle. He is currently Guest Curator at the Plug In Gallery, Winnipeg, Canada. Desmond K. Hill is a writer based in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. John Paul Jones is a writer living in Paris. Jon Jordan is an artist and a member of the arts and social science group Platform. Tracey MacKenna is an artist based in Glasgow. Mogg Morgan is a member of the Golden Dawn Occult Society. Ewan Morrison is a filmmaker. Mark Prendergarst is a music critic who specialises in writing about new and electronic music. Susan Reid is a Sheffield based art historian researching painting and criticism in the Soviet Union/Clif. Ross Sinclair is an artist and writer based in Glasgow. Charles Stephens is a writer based in Cambridge. He was an assistant of Richard Demarco for the Edinburgh Arts Summer Schools in 1974-75. Peter Suchin is an artist and writer living in Leeds and is a member of the Here & Now collective. Richard Wright is an electronic media artist who lectures at the city of London Polytechnic.

**VISUALS** John Yeadon is a painting tutor at Coventry Polytechnic. The colour images reproduced here are from *The Travails of Blind Bifford Jelly*, a series of works which was described as 'a brilliantly inventive allegory of it's time and place... transparently camouflaged by Yeadon within the critical tradition of Hogarth, Swift and the Fool, *Blind Biff* exposes with comic innocence the realities of the present'. The exhibition of the above was recently seen at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. **Angry Press Artworks** is a small press project involved in campaigning work using booklets, banners, prints, postcards, badges, stickers and T-shirts. The visuals on page 2, the *Media Distortion* stickers and the limited edition print have been produced specially for this issue. **APA** can be contacted via our address.



"...We're not in a society which has a Ministry of Truth which produces doctrine which everyone then must obey and at a severe cost if you don't. Our system works much differently and much more effectively. It's a privatised system of propaganda, including the media, the journals of opinion and in general the broad participation of the articulate intelligentsia, the educational part of the population. The more articulate elements in those groups, the ones who have access to the media, and who essentially control the educational apparatus, should properly be referred to as a class of 'commissars'. That's their essential function: to design, propagate and create a system of doctrines and beliefs which will undermine independent thought and prevent understanding and analysis of institutional structures and their functions. That's their social role... In a really effective system of indoctrination, the commissars are quite unaware of it and believe that they themselves are independent, critical minds.

...What one has to adopt towards one's own institutions, including the media and the journals and the schools and colleges, is the same rational, critical stance that we take towards the institutions of any other power.

For example, when we read the productions of the propaganda system in the former Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, we have no problem at all in dissociating lies from truth and recognising the distortions and perversions that are used to protect the institutions from the truth. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to take the same stance towards ourselves, despite the fact that we have to recognise that we're inundated with this constantly, day after day. A willingness to use one's own native intelligence and common sense to analyse and dissect and compare the facts with the way in which they are presented is really sufficient..."

Noam Chomsky *Chronicles of Dissent* (Interview with David Barsamian), recently published by AK Books, Scotland.

## THIS ISSUE

A FEW BRIEF WORDS. Again the design in this issue has slightly altered. Structural adjustments mean that we now cater for those who prefer to read from the back first and for those who randomly delve. The mixture throughout of articles/interviews, reviews, reports, insights, comments and visuals is intended to organise the diversity but retain the chaos (without losing the specifics of individual contributions) and the undercurrents running through the magazine, as a whole. Obviously, areas covered in the Media, Projects, Audio and Print sections will intersect with one another in terms of ideas and form – the divisions are not definitive but still, hopefully, well-informed. The Audio section has been extended with a new column titled *Off The Wall*, where vital and current record releases are reviewed, and related labels and projects profiled.

This issue has also expanded in page numbers and introduced a splash of colour. It is not a double issue (usually a good excuse to cut costs and go on holiday) and will have a shelf-life until April, when Issue 14 will appear. This means that our regular quarterly schedule is lagging by a month or so, but this won't affect anything except your patience. A new **Variant Video** will also materialise in the Summer of '93. This will be available in two parts; video & film works drawn from different countries addressing a changing Europe, plus a documentary section on guerrilla media.

Subscribers will continue to receive the occasional freebie, which in this issue is a limited edition screenprint by **Angry Press Artworks** (only available to subscribers). It is intended as a reminder of the EC Summits and the encroachments of civil liberties that European union heralds, but which you don't hear too much of in the mainstream media. The carving up of Europe into profitable regions, and the development of a Euro-wide security network will be used not only against guest workers and refugees, but what might be classified as 'enemies of democracy' – those citizens who decide to engage with the little semblance of democracy that still remains (the right to demonstrate a different point of view, for example). The apparatus of repression within state structures is nothing new of course, but the major attacks on democracy that are happening now are, as Chomsky has said, raising decisions about human life to a level that parliaments, elected representatives, but more importantly popular pressure can't touch. It is in making such mechanisms transparent that is the challenge for everyone. It doesn't need to be spelt out here. It is for that reason that we have used a quote from Chomsky by way of an editorial. Better to be curious than be dulled by servility, and see how many doors slam in your face before the night's out.





CORPORATE GREED, GOVERNMENT INACTION, AND PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE MAKE AIDS A POLITICAL CRISIS

Gran Fury Kissing Doesn't Kill



Simon Watney

# READ my lips

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
SIMON WATNEY

## REPORT



by Ewan Morrison

In New York on 10 March 1987, the AIDS coalition *ACT UP* was formed to create political confrontation and artworks. By using the skills of artists, designers, advertisers, filmmakers and media workers, *ACT UP* has changed the face of political activism in the US by its manipulation of mass-media.

*Read My Lips*, *New York Aids Polemics*, shown at the Tramway, Glasgow in late '92, illustrated for the first time in this country the history of *ACT UP*, but in many ways it also marked the end of their political life as an organisation. Here, Ewan Morrison talks to the writer, critic and AIDS activist **Simon Watney**, about the focus that AIDS activism has taken both in this country and the US, and the ways in which this has been shaped by their different political backgrounds.

**Ewan Morrison:** *Gay Men Fighting AIDS* (GMFA) is an activist organisation in the UK which is attempting to work in a manner close to that of *ACT UP*, but they are not yet as visible or vocal as their

American counterparts. Do you think that this is due to the fact that the AIDS crisis in Britain has not yet reached such epidemic proportions as in the US?

**Simon Watney:** I think the reason why AIDS activism is not as developed anywhere in the European community, is closely related to the severity of the epidemic in the US, but also to the fact that the consequences have been felt differently in North America to the way that it has been experienced in Europe. In America, activism almost invariably has stemmed from questions of access, whether that's access to drugs that may now be available in Europe, that people can't get in America, or whether it's access to clinical trials, or simply access to casualty, in the middle of the night, when the casualty rooms are completely overflowing, as they are in New York. America has no National Health Service, it's the only country in the first world apart from South Africa which doesn't. It is a terrible thing to be ill in America, unless you are very, very well off. Those conditions tend not to prevail

in countries with socialised medicine, and with much smaller epidemics.

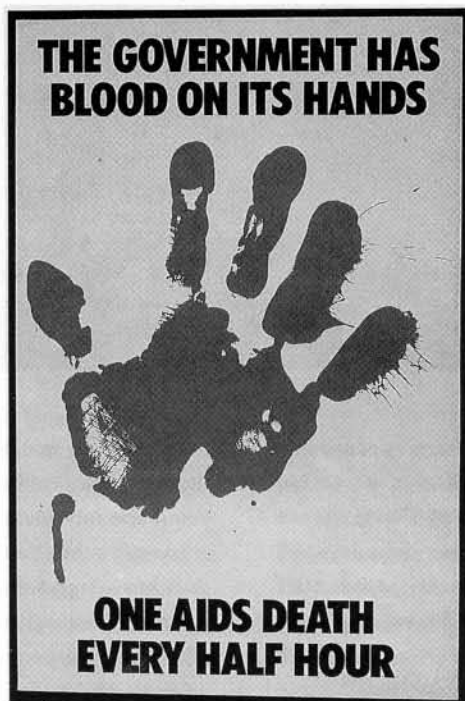
*ACT UP* seems to have been hijacked by the left in America, who are trying to use the specific politics of AIDS as a stepping stone for a more generalised form of political struggle. How do you see the relation between the left and AIDS activism in this country?

I think the relation between lesbians and gay men and the left in Britain is extremely complex and fraught. Certainly since the '70s, the far left have tended to play a major role in disrupting lesbian and gay politics. When people say that we haven't had law reforms in this country and blame Thatcherism, it all seems a bit naive. Equally problematic I think, has been the model of revolutionary politics which has tended to knock lesbian and gay rights work and AIDS activism off its course, as it has done with so many other political campaigns. Certain forms of socialised medicine, certain forms of social security, benefits and so on, are obviously necessary, in any kind of civilised society, and for example hardly exist in America. By the same token, the dominant model of leftism in Britain, I think has great difficulty in actually seeing what is specific to the AIDS crisis. It sees it as an example of wicked tyranny, or as a conspiracy or other abstraction, but tends not to see its actual concrete problems, such as homophobia, misogyny and racism; these are problems quite unlike any other political crisis in the last 20 years. We need immediate strategies for dealing with the AIDS crisis. The left seem like steam engines in the age of the computer. *ACT UP* no longer exists due largely to disruption by the left. Ten years ago, the founder members of *ACT UP* were forced to leave the organisation and establish the Treatment Action Group *TAG*, in order to deal specifically with AIDS treatment as a single issue, in a much more focused and concentrated way.

The role of art auctions and charity events has had a huge impact on AIDS funding in America. However there is a sense in which this supports the principals of private health care, volunteerism and charity. Contrary to its intentions this may be helping the American Govt. to deny responsibility for AIDS as a national crisis by enforcing the idea that it is a problem for certain minority groups, which should be dealt with privately.

In America, fundraising is absolutely necessary because the Government is doing so little. As **Fran Lieberman** said to me years ago "it's like trying to fund the Navy with bring and buy sales".

Hopeless. In this country, again, with cuts in NHS budgets it tends to be the area of care which attracts the art markets attention for the purposes of art auctions, theatre and other forms of fundraising. So, sadly, you will have one London hospital competing with another, with different art events. You are put in a problematic position where you have to choose between, say, going to a concert in support of St. Bartholomews, or buying a photograph at an exhibition for the Middlesex. Those are questions that we shouldn't have to be asking ourselves. It is entirely understandable, but entirely symptomatic of the state of funding. Pragmatically, we have to find other ways through policy and planning, so that these means are no longer necessary.



*ACT UP Poster*

Direct grassroots action is used by *ACT UP* to achieve their aims. Can you explain how they manoeuvre within the arena of mediated politics?

*ACT UP* in America are always seen in confrontational mode. One sees images of thousands of people sitting down in the streets, chanting slogans, demonstrating and so on. The heart of *ACT UP* has been spontaneous demonstration, an eruption of outrage against a company which has just fired someone for no other reason than for the fact that they are HIV+, or which has just hiked up the price of a drug on which tens of thousands of peoples lives depend, by 50 or 100% overnight. All of this activism is of course targeted on the basis of very good research. The reason that *ACT UP* was so brilliant in the last four years was that all of their

actions were targeted at particular institutions. They were not just grapeshot against something called 'The Government' or 'Power', they were targeted very specifically at particular branches of the National Institute of Health (NIH) and specific companies, newspapers and magazines. *ACT UP*'s genius lay in the fact that it could target symbolically and economically and politically with considerable precision. It could embarrass people, it could draw attention to the mis-behaviour of particular papers, and they have had consequences. *ACT UP* see engaging with the media as a necessary part of activism, not as a compromise. As a result *ACT UP* have changed media policy. The *New York Times* no longer rants in the familiar way of the British press. It is actually a much more civilised paper which reflects the real tragedy of the epidemic in New York City now.

Sadly no such organisations exists in Britain which could target with such intelligence and precision. Precisely, I think, because of the wider leftist imperative to have a line on everything, to lump issues together, and as a result have no specific target for attack, as if AIDS activists were some kind of political party, which they are not.





Felix Gonzalez-Torres *Billboard Poster, Glasgow 1992*  
 Photo: Ewan Morrison

*"In March of 1989... we reproduced the authoritative voice and mimicked the look of the New York Times, creating a double page wrap-around that we put in 6000 copies of the Times in New York City. People took them to work assuming they were reading the Times and consequently read all the news with our political spin from issues varying from AIDS behind bars to AIDS and women, to the subtext between the pharmaceuticals and how they are interrelated."* <sup>1</sup>

Earlier this year the Terence Higgins Trust brought out *The Gay Men's Guide to Safer Sex*, which rapidly became Britain's best selling video. It is however the first video of its kind, and has arrived comparatively late in the epidemic. What limitations has the trust had to deal with in terms of funding and censorship for such work?

I think the limitations of the Terence Higgins Trust are the limitations which were imposed on all voluntary sector organisations. But I think that to understand what has happened to organisations like the trust, and probably to *Scottish Aids Monitor* also, you probably have to go back a few years. These organisations were founded at a time when absolutely no-one was doing anything about AIDS, by people who were trying to do their best in a nightmare situation, they had to negotiate as best they could with civil servants, the Government, political parties and newspapers all of whom were deeply prejudiced. They had to try to get services provided for people who were ill, and people who were dying, and at the same time had to do prevention work. Now it was the prevention work which proved to be the most controversial in the '80s, because of all of the rhetoric and legislation about 'promoting homosexual values'. I think what has happened was that many of those organisations tended to

have extremely conservative people at top levels, as trustees or directors, who tended very frequently to inhibit the work of volunteers and volunteer groups, and even of paid professionals working on the ground. And that conflict has got worse rather than better, appointments often get made at the top of these organisations from outside the AIDS field altogether. The people who are most experienced are least likely to be able to influence policy or the direction of affairs, because the people at the top are frightened of having their funds withdrawn. Now that is a realistic fear, but at the same time compromises have been made which have had concrete consequences, and those consequences are a profound lack of health education for people most at risk in Britain, and that is gay men.

I think there has been a tremendous pressure from funders, especially from the Government to make health education a political platform. So that you are told to lead a healthy, good, non-promiscuous life and so on. I'm very opposed to anyone hijacking this epidemic or any other illness to promote moral messages in the name of health education. Therefore we were trying to produce something non-didactic, to point out that it's not numbers of sexual partners but what you do that matters.

We've had very little funds and huge amounts of obstruction in getting our materials out. With respect to the *Gay Men's Guide*, the way that came about however was not as a video generated from within the Trust, rather it was a production company coming to a group of volunteers and saying what do you think of this script. We had to decide whether to put a vast amount of our own time into this and get a product out from Aberdeen to Exeter, or to just leave it. In the end we participated and I think

produced a very good video. It was of course a compromise, but nonetheless it would never have come about from within the trust itself. That's the paradox.

As one of the texts by **Vito Russo** in the *Read My Lips* show pointed out; 'If I'm dying from anything I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anyone to give a shit'. The AIDS epidemic in this country has only now reached panic proportions in the media with the announcement that the largest growth statistic for HIV infection is amongst heterosexuals. By the end of '91 In Scotland there were 41 new reported cases of HIV infection amongst heterosexuals, 51 amongst gay/bisexual men, and 45 from IV drug use.<sup>2</sup> Can you foresee that the spread of HIV amongst heterosexuals will increase public awareness and Government funding?

If we consider the future of the epidemic in Britain, we have to look regionally, and see that different groups are effected in different proportions around the country. Now if you only talk about percentage increase, you can see that the largest percentage increase has in fact been amongst heterosexuals. But we are talking about a very small figure there. A jump from 20 to 40 is a 100% increase, whereas the curve of new infections amongst gay men may be less steep, and it may only be an increase of 10 or 20%. Very often these figures are abused. Of course we need to do prevention work which supports heterosexuals in all the complicated aspects of sex in their lives. I have to say with my hand on my heart that many millions of pounds have been spent on general public education, but looking at the pathogenesis of the epidemic in the UK it is gay men who constitute the largest number already infected and by far the greatest number of new cases is still amongst men coming out, young men, old men, who still haven't got the message properly. I think you have to target different groups. Prevention does work. Look at Scotland, five years ago 81% of new cases were amongst injecting drug users, this year it's 34%. This is because of the introduction of needle exchanges. The paradox of the British epidemic is that the Government has done pretty well in introducing needle exchanges, and in targeting injecting drug users with advertising but has done very little for gay men. Prevention is still being prevented.

After being presented in the US, the billboard work by **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** was on display in 10 sites around Glasgow during *Read My Lips*. Unlike much work by *Gran Fury* and *ACT UP* which is very direct and information based, this seems to be a very subtle work. In this country we are not as familiar with imagery that deals with AIDS, and as a result, this work could be interpreted in many different ways which may have little to do with the epidemic. It could be read in terms of the issue of homelessness for example. Do you think, as a public artwork, that it necessarily refers to the issues that the artist intended it to, or that it has been decontextualised by being shown in the UK?

All public art around AIDS, has to move between – on the one hand – an imperative towards being didactic, telling people to come to a demonstration, pointing out statistics, trying to inspire people. On the other, it will be much more poetic, much more concerned with feeling, with generalised imagery. I think the work by Felix Gonzalez-Torres is very much at the end of poetics. It is an image produced in his own personal mourning for his lover, which condenses in a very generalised way images of life and death and sexuality. What could be more powerful than an image of a bed, which tells us in the middle of the day, in the middle of the city, a message unconsciously about home and comfort, sleep and rest. Perhaps it does remind us of homelessness, fine, all to the good. Whatever it brings in locally will be a projection from the people who are looking at it. They are like screens for the unconscious if you will. In the context of an AIDS exhibition, it asks people to think about their sex lives, and to think about their sexuality in a public context. I think that's how the piece works ideally.

1 Avram Finklestein of *Gran Fury* in interview with Simon Watney. *Gran Fury* Press Kit, 1990.

2 Reported HIV infection figures:

Dr. David Goldberg, Ruchill hospital, Glasgow.

Simon Watney is an AIDS activist, critic and writer.

He is author of two prizewinning books on AIDS, and is director of the *Red Hot AIDS* Charitable Trust.

He has written a monthly column on AIDS in the *Gay Times* for six years, has frequently visited New York and regularly attended meetings of *ACT UP* since spring 1987.

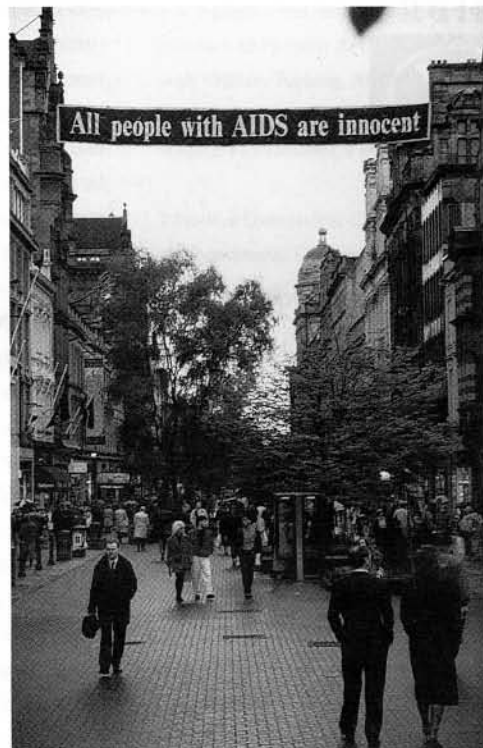


Photo: Ewan Morrison



# Génériques

## le visuel et l'écrit

Curated by *Nadine Descendre*,  
in conjunction with the  
Hôtel des arts



Thomas Locher 'Petite herméneutique du dialogue' 1991

Courtesy of Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris



by *Tracy Mackenna*

One of the purposes of *Génériques, le visuel et l'écrit* was to clear a space in which to examine the questions raised from the continuous integration by artists of image and text, and thus to provide a context for responses to this situation. This in turn raised questions as to the role of the institution/exhibition and its position in relation to the critical dialogue generated by artists, and therefore its responsibility as mediator between the works and the public.

The exhibition comprises 30 artists who use both the interior and the exterior spaces of Hotel des arts, a large centrally located building in self-contained grounds. In addition, a section of the building is given over to the display of seminal text from the '60s and '70s, mostly books, pamphlets, postcards and cassettes. These documents, in conjunction with the works in the exhibition and a programme of related events intended to open up a dialogue around image and text, represent an ambitious and multi-faceted approach to the presentation of the issues in hand. Commitment to these issues was demonstrated

by the ongoing programme of interventions and discussions occurring during the exhibition, regarded by the organisers as an integral component of the work.

That this exhibition is held in France, and in particular Paris, is relevant in that it provides a stringent and complex backdrop against which to look at the role of 'text' or the written word as it continues to assert its position within contemporary practice. Paris, traditionally a male-orientated intellectual climate, a centre of text-related output formed by a string of philosophers, sociologists and writers, still generates thinkers of world importance such as Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva.

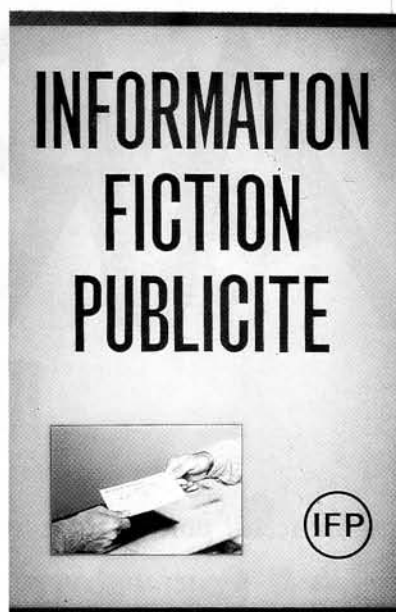
If the '80s produced a "separation of language and meaning" <sup>1</sup> in art that developed through an illusion presented as reality in the mass-media, then the artists of the '90s have to assume a far greater responsibility in dealing with the issues arising out of conditions which threaten to crowd us in and which are thrown up as a direct result of our present social conditions. If the 'written' and the 'visual' are becoming daily more entwined through the practice

of contemporary artists, then the methods of utilising these components in production is complex, and the linking factor lies not in the belonging to a particular art practice, but in the fact that this activity reflects the current international art scene in its state of dispersion. If reason is Western society's model, then the examination of text as a function of research in communication or in its ability to contextualise, is understandably an essential area of concern amongst contemporary artists. Language as art is the common denominator which continually refracts to appear as any one of a multiplicity of possibilities from the letter to documentation, and where these variables evolve into visual objects or images to assume form, however transitory, the most interesting occurrence can be the creation of a space in which the viewer is pushed to construct for themselves methods of engaging actively with the work. And is this not the persistent goal, this pushing of the limits of perception and interpretation?

**Nadine Descendre**,<sup>2</sup> curator of *Génériques, le visuel et l'écrit*, asks whether an exhibition can provide the right setting in which to initiate a process of reflection, if, as she suggests, the text in a work can be 'descriptive, metalanguage, fictional (fiction expressed as such or fiction inherent in the work)', and if as such it can also 'result from

the work without talking about anything else, be voluntarily art or non-art, be mis-en-scène and in an abyss of the sense and non-sense of the intertwining of the visual and of text; be uncertain DIY or combinative; make new from old; be recyclable or assume the effect of; suggest a "palimpsestuelle" reading of the work and superimpose the significances in order to better play with our memory'.

Artists in Scotland, and particularly on the West Coast, have developed a critical discourse in the absence of an existing structure and are constructing, from the perspective of the artist rather than the critic, a space in which art based on language and the written word can function as a crucial and absolutely contemporary agenda. That the attempts to integrate image and text since the '60s have been consistently pursued throws light on the



IFP Société Générale 1984

exceptional circumstances of that work which has been developed in Scotland in a situation comparatively bereft of critical comment, in contrast to, for example, France.

If critics help us to make sense of the way we 'make sense' of our lives, the implicit suggestion is that there is a need for critical discourse. But from where should this criticism come? From the artists themselves, from without, or from a combination of the two? Whatever the ideal, the notion that criticism is expertise in interpretation, as held by Frank Kermode, leaves the field open and goes some way to explaining why the range of criticism seems to swing violently between the mere descriptive, a will to understand the function of criticism and the ability of criticism to discuss the thing in hand.

Certain artists in Scotland have identified methods of control and access and have defined a space within which to set these concerns in motion, mainly through the engagement with a social and political context and partly due to Britain's missing-out on the focus on '80s New York. Without that history, there is room for experimentation and debate which is not determined by the market, and is therefore focused on reality rather than illusion. Another factor is the engagement with public work in Scotland, stemming from a growing awareness of and an immediate response to questions raised by the idea of the social, of public space and public art. That there are many

differing ideological positions involved does not detract from the growing emphasis on 'context, place, locality...meaning (contemporary and historical), and on legibility'<sup>3</sup>, and this in turn brings back the question of the public, the viewer, the spectator – who is the artist addressing, and who is the institution addressing?

#### Exhibition:

Gretchen Bender, Phillippe Cazal, James Coleman, Gérard Collin-Thiébaud, Michael Corris, Michel Dector & Michel Dupuy, Claire Dehove, Dellbrügge/de Moll, David Diao, Braco Dimitrijevic, Willie Doherty, Peter Downsbrough, Nancy Dwyer, Rodney Graham, Stephen Hepworth, IFP, Anne-Marie Jugnet, Serge Kliaving, Cary Leibowitz, Thomas Locher, Tracy Mackenna, Eric Maillat, Tania Mouraud, Marylène Negro, Hirsch Perlman, Olaf Probst, David Robbins, Wolfgang Stähle, Alberto Zanazzo, Rémy Zaugg.

#### Interventions and research groups:

Eric Colliard, Ghislain Mollet-Viéville, Olivier Zahm, Liam Gillick, René Denizot, Thomas Wulffen, Domenico Scudero, Xavier Douroux, Michael Newman, Bernard Marcadé, Catherine Francblin, Molly Nesbit, Frank Perrin, Jérôme Sans.

#### Notes

1 & 3 Declan McGonagle, Director Irish Museum of Modern Art in conversation with William Furlong, AUDIO ARTS Magazine in association with artscribe, volume 11 Numbers 3 & 4.

2 Nadine Descendre, *Complement d'informations, Exposition 'Generiques, le visuel et l'écrit', Hôtel des arts, Paris.*



Wolfgang Stähle  
Legalisation of Drugs 1988



Hirsch Perlman  
Rhetorically 1989



# PARA

make sure

**Parapolitics:** *A system or practice of politics in which accountability is consciously diminished. Generally, covert politics, the conduct of public affairs not by rational debate and responsible decision-making but by indirection, collusion, and deceit. Cf. conspiracy. The political exploitation of irresponsible agencies or parastructures such as intelligence agencies.*<sup>1</sup>

COMMENT



by Billy Clark



Cover Photo from SMEAR Photo: Popperfoto



# *politics*

you're connected

*LOBSTER*, run by **Robin Ramsey** and **Stephen Dorril**, is an authoritative and respected magazine devoted to the subject of parapolitical research. Put simply, it deals with areas which the British State do not want examined in any detail. Although delving into murky waters, they and their contributors handle their material with cautious restraint and deep investigation; it is an approach which, unlike conspiracy theory (which tends to offer singular, simplified fantasies which retreat from the reality of social/political events and standard criteria of evidence), confronts the complexity of these 'sensitive areas' head on, unravelling the strategies, tactics and philosophy of covert operations, cover-ups and conspiracies in high places. Fiercely independent (and completely unsubsidised), the magazine can be read as a challenge to the media's assumed role as the public record. It may not invite easy reading, but it is vital and compelling nevertheless.

The most significant influence on the magazine was its contact with the ex-Army officer Colin Wallace, whom they consider to be the most important 'defector' from the British secret service since the war. Wallace, through disclosing inside information on 'psychological operations' in the early '70s, provided them with a keyhole through which they could peer at the largely unexplored activities of the intelligence

services in British politics. They regarded the implications of his information so far-reaching that it should form the basis of a new agenda for describing British political history, and who moulds and controls it.

In their recently published book, *SMEAR* - which gathers together the results of their research so far - they outline a ramified network of bodies which escape both democratic accountability and serious investigation by analysts, despite their obvious power base. These are the 'Secret State'; the security services, MI5, Special Branch and MI6 - and the 'Permanent Government'; which includes the Cabinet Office, upper echelons of the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, the Armed Forces, MOD and the Nuclear Power Industries. They break this down further into the 'Permanent Secretaries Club'; certain groupings of Tory MPs, agents of influence in the media, former security service personnel, front companies and many think-tanks (who tend to be staffed by academics and the aforementioned), such as the Royal Institute for International Affairs.

*Smear* introduces the notion of parapolitics into the complex history of the period inclusive of Harold Wilson's election (in 1964), his resignation (1976), and the aftermath which resulted



in the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. They thoroughly detail what they believe to be the massive covert involvement of the Secret State and the Permanent Government, originally put forward in *Lobster II*, in 1986, where they stated that ‘Thatcherism grew out of a right-wing network... with extensive links to the military-intelligence establishment. Her rise to power was the climax of a long campaign by this network which included a protracted destabilisation campaign against the Labour and Liberal Parties - chiefly the Labour Party - during 1974-76’.



Colin Wallace with Harold Wilson at a press conference 1971

One individual who acts as a thread through the labyrinth of plots and paranoia which generated this network is George K. Young<sup>2</sup>, who moved deftly through several far-right groups, including his attempted take-over of the Monday Club, the instigation of the para-military organisation Unison (which also involved ex-NATO commander-in-chief General Walter Walker; other private armies at the time included GB 75 run by David Stirling, who founded the SAS) and Tory Action, which aided the Thatcher/Neave group in their bid for the leadership of the Tory Party.

Robin Ramsey “What you have here is a group of people... whose entire life experience had been working in semi-open and covert operations, either in the military or in the intelligence services, or the Tory Party (which is, basically, a covert operation), or in fringe groups or in banking in the City of London. In 1971 they began to think that the world as they knew it was under serious threat from the Left, and they responded, they began to articulate their network in the way it operates, which was covertly. Now what their project was, what Young’s project was in particular, was to re-organise the Conservative Party and push it right-wards, to introduce a nasty right-wing government which would restore the world he thought had been in danger. I’m sure Young went to his grave thinking he’d succeeded: the hard right of your G.K. Young’s and David Stirling’s and company actually believed before they died that they had reconstructed the British political system and put in Mrs Thatcher. I am not sure how much the way the world is

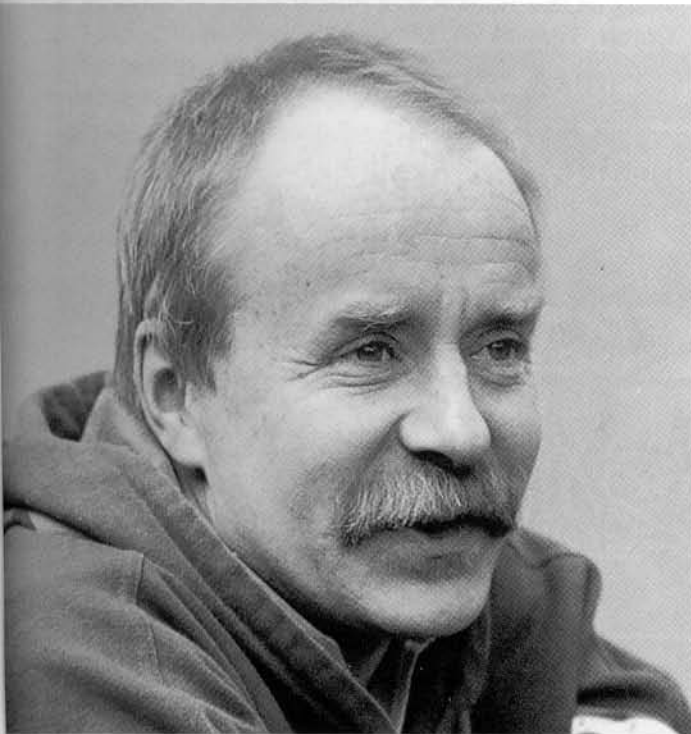
now is owed to them. What you have here is like a layer cake. On one level you have these people who have economic theories and they’re in the Conservative Party, and in another you’ve got politicians who don’t like Heath, who see that this isn’t working and the Labour Party and the Tory Party are the same, and you go down another layer and you’ve got senior figures and spooks in Whitehall committees and MOD and senior levels of the Civil Service. They all have the same anxieties, they all think the same but they don’t all operate in the same way. My own view is that Young quite consciously – and with a nod and a wink from the MOD, MI5 and MI6 – set up a series of long range psychological warfare projects to obliterate the Labour Party, by using the Union link to attack it. It succeeded a treat”.<sup>3</sup>

*Smear’s* interpretation of Colin Wallace’s papers of the period, particularly the psychological warfare project ‘Clockwork Orange’, casts light on a concerted effort by ultra-right factions within the security services (who provided the background briefing for Wallace) who used their abilities to plant black propaganda in the media, to modulate the threat of ensuing anarchy and the ‘collapse of democracy’; extending the threat of subversion to encompass their political enemies. Since such an enemy included Wilson, their draconian methods of counter-subversion included the concoction of ‘evidence’ revealing him as a KGB agent supporting an IRA also under Soviet control. This line is included in the ‘Clockwork Orange’ material, which was further disseminated through the intelligence-connected right (such as Airey Neave), using Wallace as a ‘deniable’ source. At this point, sections of the security forces seem wholly detached from government control.<sup>4</sup>

*Smear* also draws on Peter Wright’s statements to the media, that he was approached by MI5 personnel from F Branch (counter subversion) and K Branch (counter espionage) who discussed a coup attempt where, in the run up to the election in 1974, they began to pass round ‘intelligence’ aimed at smearing Wilson, with a view to him being considered a security risk by Parliament. Although ever critical of Wright, *Smear* claims that this actually happened; with exceptions to the details and Wright playing a fuller role. The project was aided by CIA agent James Angleton’s paranoid belief that Wilson was a Soviet agent, which matched the K5’s politically motivated harassment of Wilson and his group (K5 are a mixture of MI5 and MI6 with connections to the CIA). As the Tory party themselves decided to use the smears in their election campaign, this was converted into open season on Wilson by the anti-subversion faction, giving them the chance to develop more of a long-term strategy.

*Smear’s* interpretation of the fragments surrounding this anti-subversion faction determines that their focus became the National Association for Freedom. This gathered together organisations such as Aims of Industry and the British United Industrialists (major laundries of money from British capital

into political projects), key individuals from the Monday Club and members of the State/Private sector's interface to the anti-subversion tendency, and military intelligence (principally, Brian Crozier and Robert Moss). Their unveiling of these developments have, through the pages of *Lobster*, built up into a much needed history of the politics of the right. Recent investigations perhaps point to the British experience being viewed in a more European context. Smear talks about



Robin Ramsey

a 'strategy of tension' being employed to induce a climate of fear and anxiety and a popular acceptance of authoritarian government. Is this the key role of the security services?

Robin Ramsey again... "The right-wing have all the power in a western democracy, they control the military. The actual men with the guns, or the men with the bugging equipment always need pretexts to use them - some kind of threat. At an international level it's relatively simple, because you can just fake some kind of Soviet threat. If the joint chiefs of staff announce 10,000 Soviet missiles pointing in our direction, then apart from a handful of cranks, nobody knows. So we all say 'Yes sir, three bags full sir, build another Trident submarine'. But at a domestic level, the generation of a threat can be more complicated than that. It's hard to convince people there are terrorists when there aren't any. In Ireland it's easy, you've got real terrorists... In one sense, you can see in the post-war years that one of the things the right-wing security had to do was to generate threats. In other words, they created the reality that they needed to justify spending the money on themselves. You see that spectacularly in Italy, where they began shooting and murdering people and blowing things up. Ditto in Belgium and in Greece (before the Greek coup), it is now being revealed that the same thing was

going on; they were running a strategy of tension. I suspect the same happened in Spain, where I'm sure some of the things attributed to ETA weren't them at all...

...If you're going to be that ruthless, it's fairly easy because you only have to blow somebody up and say 'look we've got terrorists', which justifies the need for a Special Branch, or an anti-terrorist squad, or security cards, or a Prevention of Terrorism Act, or something else. In that sense that is what's going on now. My own feeling is that we may discover over the next few years that a lot of this in the Europe of the '60s was co-ordinated and that it was done through the Gladio network... The Gladio network was being nominally run and controlled by NATO. The final piece of the jigsaw may be the discovery that the British experience from '68 onwards, where there was some really strange stuff going on against the Wilson government, was at some level being controlled by the Gladio network. All over Europe there are enquiries into Gladio, but not in Britain, where it's still a blank sheet".

Notes

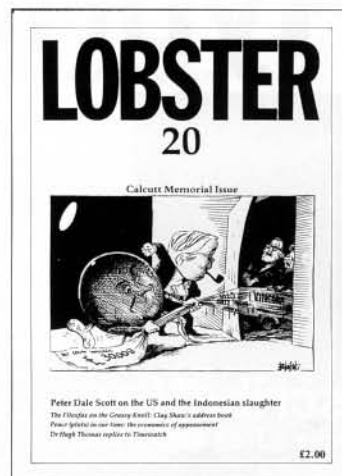
1 Quoted from Smear, Peter Dale Scott, 'Notes from a Future Unwritten Dictionary'.

2 Young was officer in charge of the British role in the Anglo-American intelligence operation which re-instated the Shah of Iran in 1951. He was also active at top level planning stages of the Suez invasion, and vice-chief of MI6 in 1958.

3 From an interview with the writer, August 1992.

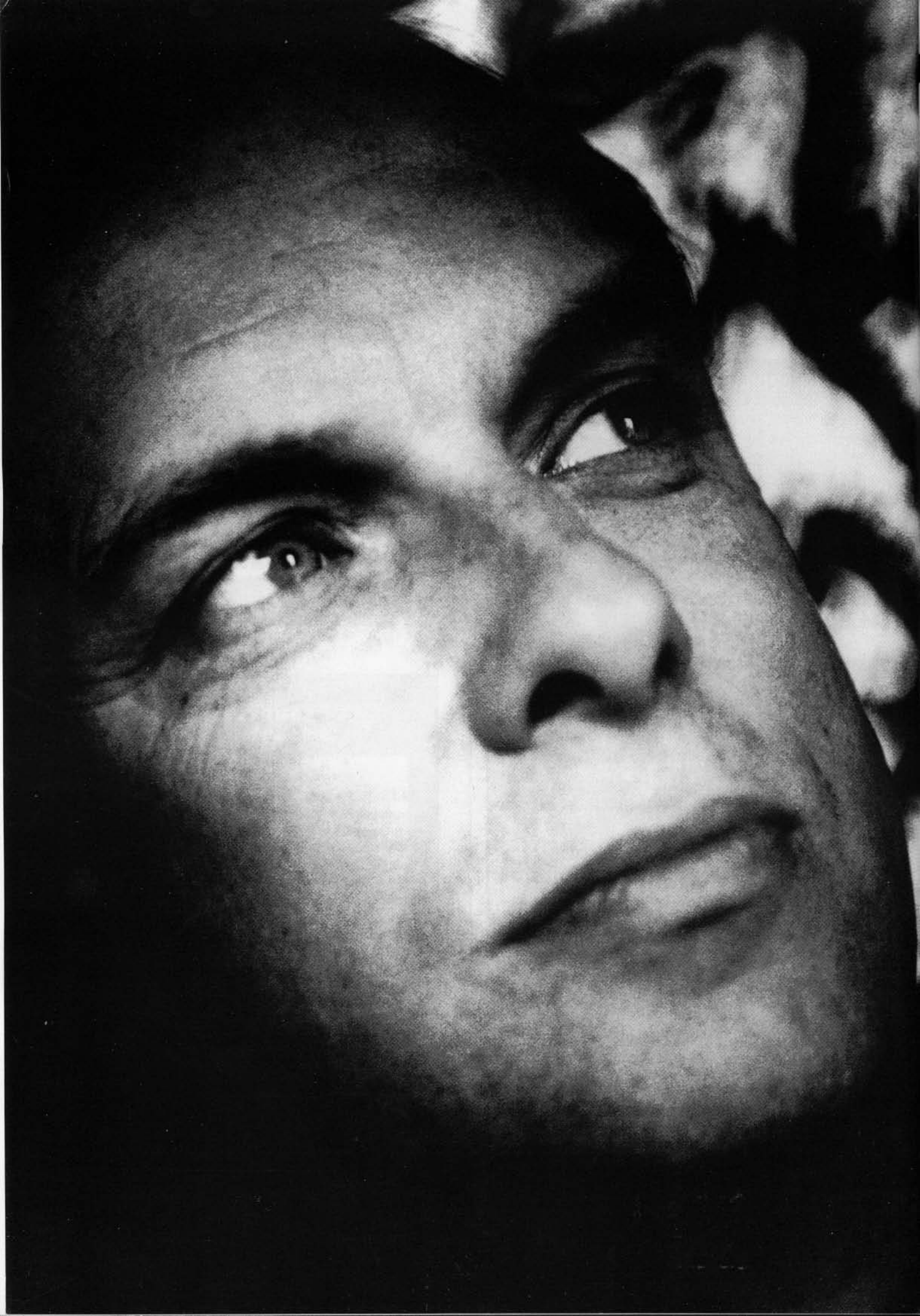
4 A full account of Wallace's background can be obtained, in addition to *Lobster*, from Paul Foot's book *Who Framed Colin Wallace* (Pan 1990).

*Lobster* is available from:  
214 Westbourne Avenue,  
Hull, HU5 3JB,  
priced at £2



Cover of Lobster





by Mark J. Prendergarst

# after the heat

Brian Eno *Ikebana I*  
Photo: Atelier Markgraph



Brian Eno *Natural Selection*  
Photo: Atelier Markgraph

Brian Eno's recent re-emergence into the British limelight (via a mainstream record deal with Warner Brothers) led to much press coverage and little or no insight.

Most writers trawled through the back catalogue, glutted themselves on post-modernist babble and threw the word Ambient around like a cliché

*The Independent* perched him on a chair in nouveau designer chic and begged the readers to wonder 'Oh, how clever you are!'. Paul Morley played with ideas of uncertainty in *The Guardian*, or should I say play-acted? *The Wire*, striking a ridiculous pose, pulled itself down into a semiotic mire giving Eno himself little or no room to breathe.

One might say that Eno invited this. His illustrated lecture at Sadler's Wells theatre (July '92) careered around thoughts on defence, perfume and map readings of people's movements at David Bowie's wedding. It brought the press out in droves. Any objective cultural observer will admit that the British press can only relate to ideas in two ways – knock them down as pretentious or pigeon-hole them in terms of a 'what-we-know philosophy'. Hence in Britain at any rate Eno is constantly pulled back into the post-Roxy Music, studio-dabbling egg-headed influencer of a 1000 bands stereotype. Much of this has to do with keeping up with ephemeral trends. House ufologists *The Orb* (including ex-EG/Eno label man Alex Patterson) scored a freak UK No.1 hit with an Ambient House album. So now in England, Eno is definitely in, while before he was definitely out.

Little was, or has been said of his years spent at Ipswich and Winchester Art Schools from 1964 to 1969, where he absorbed ideas of art as structural organization from Roy Ascott and art as experimental music from Tom Phillips. The latter pushed Eno in his fascination with tape recorders after the fashion of Steve Reich. It wasn't long before the youthful Eno was making art pieces like 1967's *Two Scores For Painting* or doing performance works like LaMonte Young's *X For Henry Flynt*. The latter saw him bang his arms down on a piano for an hour.

Of course Eno's various dalliances with serious music (Scratch Orchestra, *Obscure*, Michael Nyman), through Roxy to early solo records (*Jets*, *Tiger Mountain*, *Green World and Science*), Ambient music and Bowie/Talking Heads productions, have all been fashioned out of his early fine art discoveries. Only an artist could see video in terms of turning a TV on its side (*Mistaken Memories of Medieval Manhattan/Thursday Afternoon*). Only an artist could reject mainstream recording (seven years divides *Thursday Afternoon* and his latest Warners CDs) in favour of pan-global installation works involving video paintings/rainforest re-creations and Stockhausen-like park



events. In fact, since the late seventies Eno has comfortably exhibited his ideas in 'gallery situations', or made places like La Guardia Airport or the Botanical Gardens in Rome thematic for his ideas. It was in 1986 that his 'art works' seriously took on the status quo. Then his *Places Nos. 11-16* re-directed our attention back at the image and its location. Within spaces in London, Dublin, France and Italy, Eno's looping tapes imbued a darkened atmosphere with the hush of a chapel. Darkness enveloped the silent congregations of visitors contemplating moving colours on light-boxes varied in shape but close enough to the 'painting-on-a-wall ideal' to cause wonder.

After that, in-house and out-house concoctions came thick and fast as Eno pushed deeper into 'art'. His latest music/video work celebrates these 'art movements'. *The Shutov Assembly*, a collection of ten installation soundtracks assembled originally for a Muscovite painter (Sergei Shutov) is complemented by the video *Neuroclips* which adapts some of the more striking 'psychedelicised' images seen at this year's exhibition at The Academy of Fine Art in Charlottenburg, Denmark. The titles of the instrumental *Shutov Assembly-Triennale, Alhondiga, Riverside, Innocenti, Cavallino, Stedelijk*, and more – are mostly gallery or site names: Pieces from a roving '80s art career that is still moving faster than anyone can keep up. Eno admits that all his instrumental music from 1975's *Discreet Music* to *Shutov* – "has everything to do with visual and tactile experiences. Sound in terms of brightness, hotness, sharpness, clarity, murkiness, iridescence, angularity, coarseness, haziness, flatness. I want the listener to enter this space the same way that you might enter the space of a painting: finding a way around, seeing what's there, relating things to one another, leaving when you want to".

Kurt Schwitters, Peter Schmidt, Russell Mills, Andrew Logan, Kandinsky and Marcel Duchamp are some of the names which had an impact directly or indirectly on Eno's mind. Whether it be designing vases for Milan's Alessi (a limited edition using an I Ching-like application system) or decorating Trabants (and providing stage ideas/video images) for U2's luridly arty Zoo TV tour, the idea that Eno is anything but an artist seems facile. Yet Eno, ever the maverick, rails against the idea of art or artists. In lectures (most famously at New York's Museum of Modern Art in Oct 1990) Eno has dissected the perceived differences between High Art (masterpieces) and Low Art (popular culture) to the delight of audiences. More famously art critic Robert Hughes has ruminated quite intelligently about the crazy values that art is forced to hold.

*"The glittering and exorbitant surface of the art market does not conceal an immense sourness: the death of the old belief that great (and not-so-great) works of art are, in some sense, the common property of mankind. Locked in its frame of preposterous value, the Masterpiece becomes an instrument for striking people blind"*  
(Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* 1991)

*Tucked into a Window chair* at his airy North West London work space I come to him with no intention to speak of music. Art is on my mind. What does he think? Is there a real difference, when you get down to it, between High Art and Low Art?

Yes! There are commercial differences and those differences are very carefully defended by their practitioners. First of all you have to look at this not as two things, high art and low art, but as a continuum along which all cultural events will somewhere fall. A lot of the interesting things are not going to be either of those extremes. Now the biggest problem that high art has is separating itself off from low art. It's very important for its economic clout to be different, to be exclusive. It has to say '*we are the centre of culture* in the way that those other things are not. *This is where the value is, what we're doing*'. They have to be like that because otherwise how could you persuade someone to part with £<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>m quid for a contemporary painting? How could you persuade them, particularly when there are other people doing paintings that are almost indistinguishable and they are getting \$400 for them? You have to somehow say that this particular thing is invested with value in a special way.

Now two machines are at work – one is the currency machine. It is quite possible to trade cowry shells with one another, or large blocks of granite as items of currency without having to claim that they in some way represent the centre of culture. We can trade £10 notes with one another and we don't have to pretend that they are beautifully designed. We can make a separation between the currency value of something and the cultural value of something. *We can*, but the fine art people can't. You see what underwrites the currency value of what they are doing is their claim to cultural value.

Referring to Robert Hughes I talk about the essay in *Nothing If Not Critical* (a collection of blistering articles covering the whole history of art), where the Australian analyses art prices from the quattrocento to now in terms of inflation and real value, the manic disorder of New York in the '70s, the ever upped prices. I suggest that whatever the result with Cobi, a Madonna album, Leonardo's *Madonna of the Rocks*, there has been in each case a deliberate effort based on skill, ability, learning etc to create something tangible.

I don't think that's a relevant consideration. I don't think it matters how long it took or how accomplished the people doing it are. I've really got to re-define artists to answer this question. The old definition of an artist is someone who creates objects which have value in them... and that's done because of the artist's experience, vision or technical skills. All the things we traditionally believe. The residue of this process is these objects that have value in them, whether it be the Madonna, the Mona Lisa or whether it be a painting by Van Gogh. Somehow or other people believe that these objects



contain value, they contain Art, this thing with a capital A. I think a lot of confusion comes out of that idea. All the speculation about whether there's enough skill in it, or has the person paid their dues is irrelevant...

...If you define the artist in a different way, you don't have any of those problems. That is, the artist is someone who creates the occasion for an art experience. Now this can be done in all sorts of ways. The artist can be a good trickster, a conman and that doesn't devalue the art experience you have, if you have one. On the other hand, the artist can be the most accomplished, skilled, intelligent, well-meaning person on earth but you don't get an art experience. He or she hasn't succeeded with you. So the concept of the artist really has to be shifted a bit. If you accept the definition I gave you a minute ago you don't have any problems accepting the idea that somebody who just gets a sampler and sticks together lots of other people's ideas can be called an artist.

The problem with the whole art object theory, the idea that art somehow resides inside objects because artists have put it there or discovered it, creates a picture of an independent entity, a substance in the world called Art. And then the job of art historians is to decide which ones have it and which ones have more or less of it. I'm a great fan of Robert Hughes but I think he's completely off the mark on this. But it causes no end of problems. For instance, I could walk up Kilburn High Street and I could find people who had art experiences listening to Michael Bolton records. And is there any way that you could think of that allows you to say that was not a real art experience? There isn't! There's no measure! All you can say is that Michael Bolton makes art experiences for some people, maybe a lot of people. I make them for some others. Miles Davis makes them for some more. The guy down the pub who plays the spoons makes them for a small number of people, just for an evening. Rembrandt made them for a large number of people for several hundred years. As soon as you get away from the idea that art is this kind of nugget of material that sits...

...Monolithic in art galleries or comes at you like the Ark beside Hammersmith flyover? What you're saying really is; 'What is Art?'

But you can't answer the question, that's the whole point. It's a redundant question. Because it asks you to describe something that doesn't exist. It's one of those capital letter words like Liberty, Justice and Freedom – all those kind of words that create so much confusion in the world. If you get away from the idea that there is something there... and please let's get away from it because it has caused so much confusion.

Do you really think that will happen with all these people still writing these heavy monographs?

Oh, well it is happening. The weight of the books shouldn't make you think that anything is there you know. The middle ages saw the most intelligent people of the age writing very heavy books about whether Adam had a navel. The assumption they started off from was that Adam wasn't born of a man or woman. Then they wondered if he didn't have a navel was he



Photo: Koichi Hanabusa

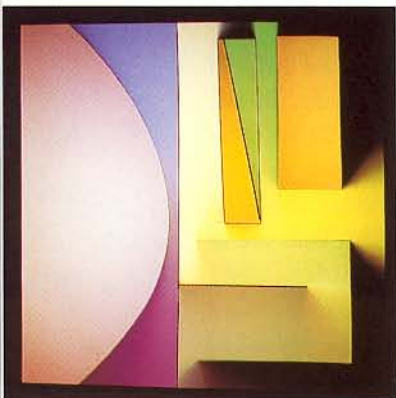
a real person and was he in the image of God etc. etc. If you accept the first premise that God made Adam then all the other complications follow. What I'm saying is just chuck out the first premise. If you find yourself with a premise that leads you to build a more and more improbable world which you've got to shore up by more and more intellectual gadgets, you might as well go back to the beginning and say, hold on, is the first stage in the right place? This is what I think has happened with the art discussion – that we keep getting this question coming up. The question is really different camps trying to defend the value of what they consider to be the place where this fundamental thing called art presides.

This is a really interesting thing to say because in the rock world there is a correct rockist perspective, particularly in the UK. Certain bands are hip, certain stances are cool while others are uncool. Then there's the kind of snobbery which separates, say, heavy metal from middle-of-the-road.

Well there are good reasons for people arguing strongly or making strong commitments to things they like. But there are not good reasons for them making claims that those things are in any ultimate sense better. That's what always underwrites their discussions. You know the whole justification for the arts council spending so much money on Opera is because there's an assumption that in the end Opera is a great and better form than all the other things we could spend money on. And I just don't accept it and I'm sure I could argue convincingly for a different point of view. It takes a mind change on people's part, it takes a letting go of something, of the certainty of a value-structure. And value structures are very consoling because they tell you that you are on the right side.

Eno talks at length about a review he wrote in a November 1991 edition of *Art Forum* concerning Jay David Bolter's book, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext and the History of Writing*. Given that Borges, Beckett, James Joyce and Burroughs among others have done their damndest to break down the linearity of narrative, this new electronic book idea seemed to inspire Eno. Within it an author would pass on a structure of his or her

book highlighted by windows so that the text is accessible from all kinds of angles. Moreover, the 'hypertext' is interactive, allowing anybody with a computer to add or delete bits if necessary. Bolter himself added a diskette of his book within the covers for this very purpose. Eno wrote: "Bolter's book may turn out to be primarily about the move away from old concepts of originality".



It is really a new form of writing. And any new form of writing is a new form of thinking. 'Hypertext' is the first revolution in writing as a technology for a very long time. And though it's horrible reading off a computer screen the important part of the revolution is that this idea exists. And this idea has really entered culture in a big way, the idea of distributed authorship. And it's a mortal blow to the fine art world. It cannot sustain it. And that's because

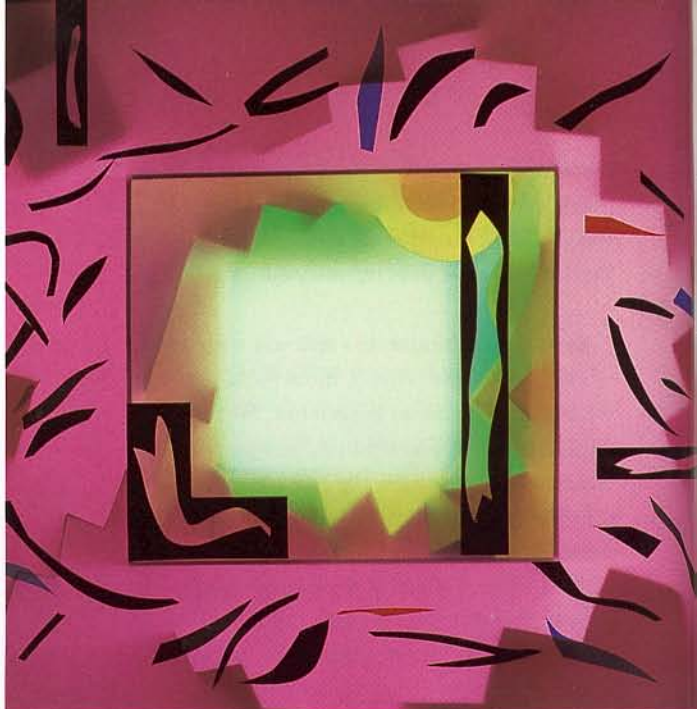
the fine art world depends for its credibility and consequently its high prices on the concept of single gifted authorship. That's how you support those kind of prices.

Arthur C. Clarke talked of his work as preventing the future from happening like it was something horrible to be avoided at all costs. In contrast you seem to want to make it happen more quickly?

Well the future isn't just one thing. There are a lot of futures. Starting from this point where we are now, there are a number of possible places we could get to and some of them I would certainly prevent. The really big problem in the future is that between people who are sure they are right and people who are not prepared to defend their actions on the basis that they are right. Between fundamentalists and pragmatists if you like. Pragmatism is saying *all I can do is make the best guess for now*. And I'll probably change my strategy next year. I cannot define or defend a single strategy and say this is how I'm going to always behave from now on. To fundamentalists this is absolutely anathema, they think it shows weakness of will, a lack of principle. And that attitude is what you get from political parties, a language of absolutism. The Tories spent most of the '80s crowing about monetarism whilst pouring more and more money into the biggest socialist economy that has ever existed, which is the defence system. That's a command economy, a way of hosing money to the places you want it to go. There's absolutely no difference between that and a socialist economy. But it's necessary because you can't map absolutist



with over the years. The first two look at population growth, life-cycles, economic expansion and capitalist ideology in terms of their negative fall-out, books designed to push western decision makers into a new awareness. The latter is more dense philosophically and hinges on the 'contingency' principle, an idea obviously dear to Eno's heart.



language (the language which speaks in terms of simple ideas like monetarism and free enterprise) onto the demands of the world. We are not (no matter what the Tories say) prepared to accept the circumstances of pure unrestrained capitalism, which include people lying around in the streets, the creation of a criminal class, private armies, private police etc. Nobody in all honesty is prepared to accept that. I don't mind at all if a Government said to me 'Well, essentially we lean towards this way of doing things but we realise we're going to have to improvise and lean back towards the other way to make the thing work'. But there's no political language in which to put

that – you're called weak, indecisive, insincere. Look what happened to Jimmy Carter. He was the best president America had in years because he was prepared to admit to the fact that he was uncertain.

Eno has always had a difficult reading list. Carrett Hardin's *Filters Against Folly*, Donella Meadows' *Beyond The Limits* and Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* are some of the 'heavy' books he has snuggled up in bed

with over the years. The first two look at population growth, life-cycles, economic expansion and capitalist ideology in terms of their negative fall-out, books designed to push western decision makers into a new awareness. The latter is more dense philosophically and hinges on the 'contingency' principle, an idea obviously dear to Eno's heart.

That's the concept that's important, the contingency concept. And fundamentalists don't accept contingency at all. They believe that the world has become the way it is because of a detectable, traceable sequence of events and they therefore think that it is possible to plan a world in that same way as well. And Rorty is saying it isn't. All of fundamentalism is based on the idea of creating cause or structures and ignoring the fact that everything in the world interacts. It's a bit like that metaphor for chaos theory, it's a bit of a flippant idea, but it



is that a butterfly beats its wings in Peking and a major hurricane occurs on the East Coast some six months later. It's stupid but it's a good image to keep in mind. It implies that most complex organic systems and most of the ones we live in, including City Hall and the Government, are very sensitive to initial conditions.

For instance I'll give you an example from my own life. I was 23. I was getting on a subway. I had to get home from somewhere. I just walked down to the subway station, got my ticket, walked up and down the platform a bit and got on the carriage that happened to be there when the train stopped. In the carriage was Andy Mackay who I'd met years before when he was at Reading University. We recognised each other and started talking. As a result of that I joined Roxy Music. Now for this tiny moment you either get mystical about it, 'oh it was fate, it was meant to happen' (and I don't have a lot of time for that idea) or you say it was chance, pure chance. How many other things in my life were decided by things as minute as that. What didn't happen!

Yet for all this 'pragmatism' there's a streak of spirituality which runs through everything Eno does. Many of his installations have a church-like familiarity. Much of his instrumental music can have a transcendent effect, particularly works like *Discreet Music*, *Music For Airports*, *Thursday Afternoon* and now *The Shutov Assembly*. Primarily educated by, and even named after the nuns and brothers of the de la Salle Order, Ipswich, Eno has an interesting Catholic background.

I believe that Catholics are much more inclined to argue about these kind of questions. Catholicism is a very active religion. It kind of trains you, even if you become non-Catholic, atheistic or whatever, the level of activity you expect to expend on spiritual matters doesn't decrease. You still expect to be working at that level but now it gets applied somewhere else.

All the teachers I preferred at College were not the ones who I thought were necessarily right, whatever that means, but the ones who took a strong position; because when you are faced with a very strong position it forces you to articulate. It forces you to find out where you stand in relation to it. A weak position – which is what I think the Church of England type religion is (it's a terribly weak religion, it's a feeble pathetic religion. It's too vague, how can one take a stance against such pusillanimous vagueness) – doesn't demand any action on your part. In contrast Catholicism is 'positive' – it takes positive positions on things. I don't agree with most of them – the 'positive' or should I say negative position on abortion, on contraception, on divorce. When you're faced with that, you really have to decide where you stand. You think, well there's just no ambiguity about the way this is being said. It isn't sometimes you can do it and sometimes you can not. It's no you fucking can't.

For the Olympics, he joined up with Peter Gabriel and Laurie Anderson to conceive The Real World Theme Park, a place in Barcelona where 'people could become artists'. Their ambitious plans missed the deadline and are still under inspection. A two year work time is expected on a space which involves the interaction between man (sic) and culture, nature and culture and man (sic) and nature so that a creative learning experience is generated.

We've done a lot of planning and thinking. It'll be in Barcelona and for everyone. I would like it to be free but a lot of the things that excite people about it are expensive – so there's a disparity there that has to be covered somehow. My solution to this is to make a great free park which has within it some things which you pay to use and not to make it this walled off area which you can't get into especially since it's in the city and not in a field outside. Imagine all the theme parks you've ever seen, imagine all the parks you've ever seen, imagine the best bits of them and put them together, and then imagine getting the best artists and scientists and technologists, and see what they do to it.

Brian Eno's extensive back-catalogue on EG is now available on mid-price from Virgin Records.

The dance CD singles *Fractal Zoom* and *Ali Click* plus the full-length albums *Nerve Net* and *Shutov Assembly* are all available via WEA.

For detailed information on Brian Eno's art career, write to:

Opal Information,  
PO Box 142,  
Leigh-On-Sea, Essex,  
United Kingdom

Photos

Page 16 Credit: Peter Anderson

Page 20 Top to bottom;

*Egyptian*; *Ikebana II*; *Natural Selection 6*; *Egyptian II*

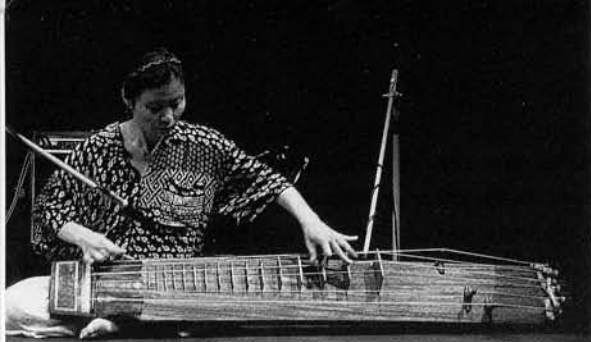
All works by Brian Eno

Photo Credit: Atelier Markgraph

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Jin Hi Kim

All Photos by Amalia Pistilli

## COMPANY WEEK 1992

The Place Theatre, London

21st – 25th July 1992

Company Week is unique. There is no other music festival like it anywhere in the world. In fact, it challenges so many of our expectations about what a festival is/should be that perhaps it isn't one. Where else could you expect to hear the same musicians, from a selected pool (Company), performing over the course of five evenings in groupings decided immediately before each performance. Bear in mind that a few of these musicians might never have met before, let alone worked together, and one or two might be new to improvised music; and the deal is that they get straight on with it – no warm-ups, no team-talks, no discussions about musical structure etc. Small wonder, then, that its founder and organiser, **Derek Bailey**, has described the event as "a non-promotional idea. It offends all the tenets of music promotion, of the music business. It doesn't fit in at all".

Non-promotional idea or not, Company Week has gained sufficient momentum and funding to see it through to its fifteenth year. This year Company comprised Bailey, seven other musicians and the American poet, music journalist and video-maker **Paul Haines**. The team sheet included the usual heterogeneous mix of youthful audacity and stalwart experience, and much else besides: **Reggie Workman** (bass), famous for his work with jazz legends like Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and John Coltrane; **Derek Bailey** (guitar) and **Tony Oxley** (percussion), pioneers of improvised music since the early '60s; **John Butcher** (tenor and soprano saxophones) and **Matt Wand** (tape switchboard), established 'younger generation' British improvisers; **Oren Marshall** (tuba), a versatile young musician with plenty of London orchestra work under his belt; New Yorker **David Shea** (turntables), who appears as comfortable

inside house music as he is in the outer limits of John Zorn's experimental eclecticism; and **Jin Hi Kim** who, on the face of it, seemed likely to be the 'unknown quantity' given her background in traditional Korean music.

Tuesday evening featured Jin Hi Kim, Tony Oxley and Derek Bailey. The two Britons, who know each other's game so well, kicked off in relaxed manner: Bailey producing long, single-note sustains, while Oxley whipped up intermittent torrents with those familiar, almost flippant, gestural sweeps across the kit. In their second piece, Bailey's playing appeared more fragmentary, jostling with abbreviated rhythmic patterns until finally erupting into a state of abandoned frenzy. Perhaps a loosener to get the circulation flowing for the Week's forthcoming demands.

It was a good idea to give Jin Hi Kim the opportunity to follow this with two solo improvisations, thus introducing the komungo – a 6 string zither originating in 4th century Korea – and her playing temperament which, on this showing, tended towards the restrained. While one hand plucks or strikes the strings with a short bamboo stick, the other applies pressure to the strings over a series of raised frets. As in Indian music there is much bending of notes. The resulting timbres tend to be dry, earthy, rather melancholy. In trio they performed intricately – the guitar's delicate glissandi complementing subtle drones from the komungo – though not without humour, Oxley exploiting the squeaky 'sonorities' his drum stool provided.

Company Week is a struggle and always has been. Compatibility is not a criterion by which Derek Bailey makes

Reggie Workman



personnel selections. It's got to be difficult. If he invites a group of musicians who are going to be okay playing together it might be all right musically, but it won't present the sort of challenges he wants everybody to work through, including the audience. Each year presents its own challenges and attempts are made to deal with the 'conflicts' arising out of differences in individual's musical backgrounds, techniques of playing, approaches to improvisation, and perhaps what they would like to get out of their involvement in Company Week itself. Improvisation, by nature, is a risky business and Company Week goes further than most improvisation set-ups by throwing together musicians who wouldn't normally work with each other.

Wednesday evening ushered in a taste of this year's challenges and possible 'conflicts', but before that we were treated to some particularly sensitive, stress-free playing from John Butcher and Oren Marshall. The hallmarks of Butcher's approach are fine detail and understatement, and he has harnessed an impressive range of experimental techniques to this temperament. Marshall's march-like ostinato provided the perfect impetus for some deft, warbling multiphonics on soprano saxophone. After a brief, but vehement section, the music tapered into an airy lyricism and then disappeared.

Derek Bailey and Matt Wand followed in the most spontaneous fashion after technical problems prevented David Shea's solo getting under way. Bailey explored pitch variations in the upper register, so Wand coaxed boomy resonances from the other end of the sound spectrum. From then on the polarities in approach became increasingly evident: Bailey's unified, unfolding delivery versus Wand's blitzkrieg of electronic jump-cuts, including American evangelists, saxophone phrases and hell for leather rhythmic disorientation. To say they represent different approaches to the use of amplification and volume would be a ludicrous understatement, though I'll say it nevertheless. There were times when I couldn't hear Derek Bailey playing and I don't suppose he could, either.

Of course, attitudes to amplification and volume are not the only differences at issue here; there's a deeper, more philo-

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sophical point which underpins these and much is worth highlighting. Bailey's playing is paradigmatic of improvised music's modernist phase begun in the early '60s, when he and a number of other European musicians evolved a "non-idiomatic" (Bailey's term) approach to improvisation. For Bailey as a guitarist this meant eschewing the influence of historical idioms like jazz, blues, classical, flamenco and so on, and finding a new form in total abstraction. This path he has pursued ever since, with laudable single-mindedness and determination

despite (surely mistaken) claims from some quarters that non-idiomatic playing is impossible. The '80s, however, saw a movement towards idiomatic playing within improvised music with musicians young enough to have been reared on '70s jazz and rock fusions, funk, punk and a host of other 'popular' styles, bringing these to

bear on improvised music itself. As a consequence, improvised music has not become diluted or compromised by this impact so much as fragmented. Abstraction is now one of a number of possible approaches. A broader eclecticism (the postmodern phase) is in the air, and this means more musicians coming at the music with new expectations from a wider range of backgrounds. This doesn't always make for cohesive improvising, but it does present fresh and invigorating challenges to both the performers and the audience. Many of the interactions at this year's Company Week served to remind us of this.

Like Matt Wand, David Shea typifies the eclectic approach to improvised music. His turntables welcome a world of genres irrespective of cultural origin or alleged 'high art' or 'popular culture' status. Anything goes. Sped up, slowed down, played backwards, hiphopped, or set into a loop with the aid of tiny obstructive dots on the disc. Tony Oxley appeared almost as non-plussed by all of this as Pope Gregory would have been had he heard what was happening to the chant named in his hon-

our. Reggie Workman took it in his stride, but continued to do what he does best which is to extract a wonderfully full and mellow tone from his instrument. Quite miraculously (or so it seemed to me) things cohered when Shea partnered Bailey (Saturday evening) for what was to become the most sublime collaboration of the Week. Beginning nonchalantly, Bailey drifted off into what felt like a lazy blues, while Shea gently introduced a manipulated cluster of Islamic voices, punctuated by some nicely judged, sub-aquatic depth-meter effects. Although the piece would undergo a number of major transformations, one always sensed that both players had grasped its essential character and would somehow reflect this in whatever was going to happen. When improvised music achieves this sort of expressive cohesion there is no other music to touch it, and even when it doesn't the transparency and vulnerability of the process itself can make it riveting to behold.

Paul Haines' impact on the Week was unfortunately marginal and disappointing. One of his video works featuring the trombonist Roswell Rudd was mistakenly (presumably?) shown twice, though even after a second viewing its dadaesque antics failed to satisfy. However, if video is to play a more important role in future Weeks a larger screen will have to be acquired; watching a TV set from the back of the auditorium does nobody any favours. One other grumble, this time to do with the placement of intervals. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings the traditional one-interval-in-the-middle was ditched for an on-going arrangement with breaks of two to three minutes between sets. What might have been gained by having more music was arguably lost by having insufficient time to adjust to each new line-up and its attendant demands. So, taking a lengthy breather meant missing music. Anyway, placed against the overwhelming achievements of this year's Company Week these only amount to minor grumbles. So, if you're the sort of person who likes a festival with teeth, a festival that happily raises more questions than it could ever hope to answer, then there is really only one place to be at the end of July next year.

*Chris Blackford*

## NERVE NET

Brian Eno

Opal/Warner Brothers, CD 9362-45033-2

'From quite early on I've always made this issue about contemporary music being something that actually anyone could do. You know, in the past... to be involved in music required actual physical skills. It really doesn't now. What it does require is judgement, and judgement certainly seems to most people like something that's easy to cultivate as opposed to skills. I don't think it is actually... I think there are just as many difficulties in that.' Brian Eno (extracted from *The Thing is... An Interview with Brian Eno*, Channel 4 TV, Wednesday, 13th May 1992).

Printed on the insert of Brian Eno's latest release is a list of thirty short, semi-ironic summaries of the recording itself. It is variously described as, amongst other things, 'a self-contradictory mess', 'frenetic', 'like paella', 'reckless', 'squelchy', 'technically naive', 'bluff', both 'too much' and 'not enough' and 'clearly the work of a mind in distress'. The other terms in this little kit of readymade critical descriptions are equally diverse but many border upon the (apparently) self-damning or self-dismissive. It's a curious list but one whose presence suggests a sharp awareness of the predictability of rock criticism. Notwithstanding his cult status as experimental composer, record producer, video artist, pioneer of serious environmental music, lecturer and implicit critic of the genres of rock and pop, Eno has often been attacked for what is seen as his all-too-theoretical approach to music making.

Rock criticism, deeply indexed as it is to the fast-turnover world of fashion and to the 'philosophy' of the commodity cannot allow itself the kind of reflexive stance that one often finds in the spheres of, say, literature and the visual arts. Even when critics praise Eno, as they often do, it's more for his ebullience, his articulate presentations of his ideas and for his commitment to a plenitude of interesting and unorthodox ventures rather than for his actual music. Journalists always seem to be trying to say that Eno's music can't really be all that good because he's an intellectual. It's the old artworld cliché that you can't be a 'proper' artist if you read books and actually stop every now and then to



John Butcher





think carefully about the thing you are making. If Eno feels that it's necessary to supply the listener with a range of optional readings of the record then perhaps we should consider this device as one designed to disturb, no matter how tentatively, the blasé, intellectually tepid interpretations so often offered as 'criticism' by the conventional pop press.

It might be argued that Eno is an easy target since neither he nor his music fit neatly into orthodox categories. He's been called a dilettante, a term that implies the practices of an amateur rather than the serious status conferred by the word 'professional'. But an amateur is someone who partakes in an activity for its own sake, for the love of being engaged in the task at hand. Eno gives being an amateur a good name. He's clearly committed to a plethora of experimental, optimistic approaches to music making. One of the claims he's frequently made in the many interviews he's given over the past fifteen or so years is that the modern recording studio is a place in which it is possible for virtually anyone to make music. Pop music, whatever else it is the result of, owes a great deal to developments in sound recording technology, and, indeed, to developments within the area of musical instrument design itself. The effects of such technological changes are considerable, allowing the erstwhile amateur musician or 'non-musician' (Eno's own term) to attain the status of that of the professional.

There's something potentially radical in this breakdown between expert and non expert but there is also inscribed in this cultural shift something like the conditions that have led to a widespread musical mediocrity. Pop music is frequently the site of banality and crudeness of thought. It isn't so much a question of musical proficiency but one rather of judgement, as Eno himself suggests in the passage cited above.

Eno's new record is then an impressive exercise in cultural judgement. *Nerve Net* is a curious accumulation of twelve (often jazzy) tracks, forming as a whole a sort of library or compendium of dizzy rhythms, fast, neat beats and sharp, synthetic speculations as to what form a multicultural, ultra-modern dance record might take. There's a type of democracy implicit in the multiplicity of ethnic traces, borrowed voices and wide diversity of musicians employed in the making of the record. Eno sings or speaks on only five of the tracks. Other voices are found floating in and out throughout a number of the pieces, notably within *My Squelchy Life*, in which a central passage of assembled voice fragments forms a discreetly eerie, enigmatic mood. *Ali Click* has Eno blandly reciting blunt rhymes (*'Jolly Rodger in a pickup has a packet on the horses/He's a docker with a bucket, just the ticket in a thicket...'*), phrasing his lines in a manner reminiscent of the vocal performances of the earlier *Taking Tiger Mountain (by Strategy)*. The drawn out construction of the 'Lascaux Mix' version of *Web* calls to mind the records Eno made in the late seventies with the German band Cluster, whilst the harsh but carefully integrated elements of *Web* proper raise memories of the metallic complexities of mid-period King Crimson (Robert Fripp's presence here, as elsewhere on the album should be noted). If the skilful instrumentation found throughout this record is often supplied by the guest musicians it is nevertheless Eno's sophisticated editing, his openness to the productive clashing of musical categories, and his entirely user-friendly reflexivity that give this recording its biting, brittle and decidedly memorable edge.

*Peter Suchin*

## FIVE FLOORS

By Hans Peter Kuhn  
Angel Square, Islington  
Central London  
October 1992

*Five Floors* (a commission by Artangel) was a series of sound installations on five successive floors of a new empty office

building: it took place at night. The extent to which the outside world (one of the busiest traffic junctions in London) was visible varied between floors but even if the outside world could be seen, its chaotic sounds were heard as if from a considerable distance. Indeed, the effect of distance on our perception of processes or events was an important dimension of this sophisticated work.

**Hans Peter Kuhn** is a sound artist who has created installations, sound environments and theatre music in many contexts in Germany, USA and elsewhere. His most recent work seen in the UK was his collaboration with the choreographer Laurie Booth, *Requair*, performed at London's South Bank in February 1992.

Movement is important to the understanding of this new work also: the movement of the visitor passing through the series of installations as she/he moves upwards through the building. For the imagery of each floor is highly concentrated and begins to reveal itself effectively only through the interrelationship of the five floors. The work could perhaps be approached as a series of five frameworks for meditation about our relationship to sound, exploring the different ways in which sound (or the memory of sound) can be related to and extended in space.

Floor 1 (*Elements*) began in sensory deprivation. Entering a completely dark room of unknown size, the visitor was forced to wait until a brief flash of light accompanied by a short explosion of sound pierced the darkness. The light was too brief to yield a clear grasp of all the contours of the space and the sound gave the impression only of fragments of a much larger process, the debris of some vast event. Instead of looking around at leisure before gaining a focus (normal behaviour on entering a gallery), the visitor was pinned back by the darkness, reduced (or raised) to the role of witness to the events, contemplating the silence between them.

Floor 2 (*Formal*), as with all the other floors was reached by lift, and was in complete contrast, emphasising the definite and the artificial. In what seemed to be a parody of a staged performance, a row of small speakers were mounted on immaculate white stands in a straight line which cut across the massive curve of the office floor.





Through sequencing, fast repetitive patterns passed along the chain of speakers, communicating vividly the sense of movement across a large space. The sounds themselves (such as repeated piano notes, patterns made of tape hiss or machine actions) were controlled and utterly devoid of emotional association, like the automated confections of Kraftwerk. As with Floor 1, the visitor was in a passive relationship, witnessing a larger event, sound always passing much faster than it was possible for the visitor to move through the space.



Hans Peter Kuhn

Floor 3 (*Djungle*) was full of signals with clear human connotations. Sounds of discrete events (a car passing, a telephone

ringing, a champagne glass falling) were repeated through a large number of speakers in endless overlapping sequences. Visually, the floor presented a relic of destruction and confusion: masses of unconnected (or perhaps disconnected) cables strewn around, lit by strip lights at random angles mixed up with the live connections for the sound sources themselves. Although the sound events were carefully chosen to carry definite associations of incidents in an imagined but specific space (a house in the country?), the endless looping of the sounds undermined any attempt to imagine a connected story. The effect was powerful and unsettling, like a film sound track with the moving image effaced. The effect perhaps was to question the visitor's relationship to his/her own memories, the distortions that they inevitably entail, even when most vivid.

Floor 4 (*Inside*) was the most effective part of the work and, by contrast with the rest of the floors, seemed designed to focus the attention of the visitor, both sound and vision working in parallel. Visually, red, green, yellow and blue stage lights projected onto a row of pillars made a

strong statement, demanding attention. The rest of the floor was empty of objects but the whole space was filled with a continuous tape of the most haunting and well-integrated sounds of the installation, a composite of ambient sound from factories and other industrial settings.

Floor 5 (*Museum*) was a rude shock: a silent museum of more than fifty objects that produce sound or are associated with it (for instance wrapping paper, a photograph of The Beatles, a dead fly). The objects were fastidiously lit in glass cases, a line of sand separating the cases from the visitor. As a joke (on museum practice or the very idea of a museum of dead objects) it seemed laboured and overblown. One could be more charitable and suggest that Floor 5 completed a progression towards internalisation developed through the work: the ultimate internalisation of sound in memory. Even so, such a point would have been more effectively dealt with if expressed simply.

The film director Andrej Tarkovsky wrote in his book *Sculpting in Time* about the role of music in film: "It does more than intensify the impression of the visual image by providing a parallel illustration of the same idea; it opens up the possibility of a new, transfigured expression of the same material: something different in kind". Tarkovsky was talking about the effect which music can have on the visual image. This installation offered a similar kind of revelation but in reverse: showing the process by which sound can be transformed by its relationship to space, lighting and the possibility for the listener of moving through, inside and away from it.

*Five Floors* as a work was not wholly successful and perhaps should be appreciated as no more than an interesting fragment from a potentially much larger body of work. Nonetheless, its seriousness of purpose made much installation work seen recently in Britain seem trapped at the level of word-play and posturing. What was of lasting importance about this event was the commitment it represented to exploring new relations between sound and visual information: a well-wrought example of the type of work which we desperately need to see more of in Britain.

Nick Couldry

## ...Off The Wall

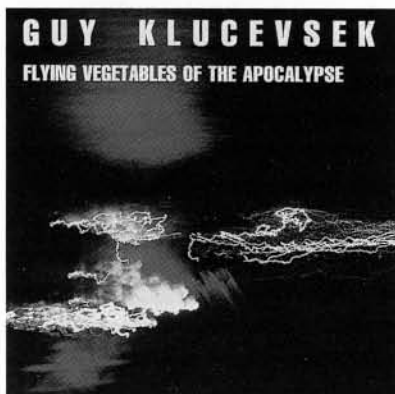
Recent records reeled off at random...

Possessed by **The Balanescu Quartet** (Mute) finds the hip, hyped string ensemble playing arrangements of Kraftwerk's sterile pop ditties. The result is quintessential Music for Yuppies (a little late, perhaps), even more kitsch than the much overrated originals. Amid the current liberal arguments about high versus low culture (currently centred on the activities of the ubiquitous Nigel Kennedy), it is unclear whether the record is intended to show that classical players can play pop (subtext: they/their instruments are as versatile as electronic technology), or that pop should be taken as seriously as classical (subtext: 'classical is pop'). Doubtless the point is democratically to blur distinctions, but ironically the result is merely to reinforce divisions, while catering to the snob appeal of a hackneyed, squeaky-clean seamless virtuosity. Kraftwerk's music, at its best a road-movie theme for the emotionally challenged, surely needs no further interpretation, let alone this kind of *faux naïf* homage. *Possessed* brought to mind two things: TV adverts for French cars and Rolf Harris' stylophone rendition of *A Whiter Shade of Pale*. It lacks the latter's humour and the former's aggression. Or vice versa. I found it tiresome and immensely trite.

From the ridiculous, then, to the sublime and **Tom Cora's** *Gumption in Limbo* (Sound Aspects), an album of solo cello works. In musical terms it achieves more with one instrument in three minutes than the Balanescu Quartet do with four over an entire CD. *Gumption* is studio recordings (with and without effects) of improvisations, plus a fine rendition of Joseph Spence's *There will be a happy meeting*. Technically dazzling and rhythmically elaborate, the pieces draw variously on folk, jazz, classical and freely improvised music to produce something uncategorisable - though the word 'music' will still do.

If an entire record of unaccompanied cello sounds unappealing (it isn't), how about a disc devoted to the accordion? For several years the Anarchist Book Fair in London featured a folk accordionist whose self-imposed task it was to entertain the





troops. After about an hour you realised why the piano had been invented. Memories like that are dispelled in an instant, though, by **Guy Klucevsek's** *Flying Vegetable of the Apocalypse* (Experimental Media Foundation), an hour of accordion music from the Pennsylvanian avant-garde maestro. Nine postmodern dance pieces, the compositions bring to bear on folk-derived idioms (the accordion music of South America and Madagascar, zydeco, the polka) the techniques associated with contemporary classical music. Klucevsek credits as a decisive influence the choreographers with whom he collaborated, 'whose in-

sistence on the impossible made this music possible'. In marked contrast to the general state of things in Britain, the American new music scene seems to thrive on such collaborations. Both Cora and Klucevsek appear again on *It was a dark and stormy night* by **Nicolas Collins** (Trace Elements Records), another gem to come from the melting pot of Manhattan. The title track, an involuted shaggy dog story, probably deserves an article in itself. Concerned with forgery, the complexities of influence, and the absence of origin, it is a theatrical tour de force, entertaining, elegantly constructed and superbly paced. On top of an electronic drone, a series of narratives-within-narratives leads the listener along a vertiginous oulipian path until, with a beautifully measured flourish, all is resolved in a brief, curiously uplifting performance of the Peruvian band number, *Tobabo Fonico* (the source of the musical material of

*Stormy Night*). The use of technology, including the sampling-trombones, voice-activated percussion, backward guitar and so on, would be interesting in itself; but this is neither a mere technical exercise nor a literary excursion - it's a remarkable and intelligent composition in which available means and possible meanings work together in dramatic harmony.

Collins is known as both an improviser and a composer - something rare here, but evidently not a problem in the States. **Jim O'Rourke** is an experimental guitarist following in the footsteps of Keith Rowe; he also composes for the Rova Saxophone Quartet and has played with the 'power electronics' band *Illusion of Safety*. He is



Jim O'Rourke

distressingly young and talented.

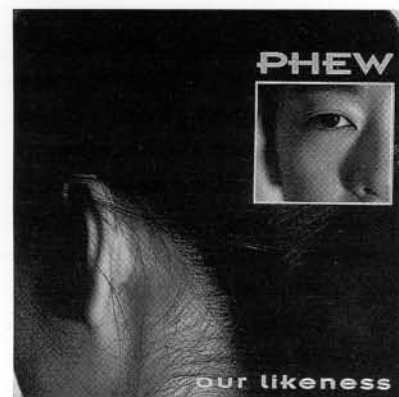
O'Rourke's latest CD, *Scend*, comes in an enigmatic cardboard sleeve. This is 'industrial' (or is it Ambient?) music of some depth. One track (neither package nor disc name titles) is almost-silence gradually giving way to din; the other contains scary noises which have you worrying about the neighbours and the loaned loudspeakers. Gulfs of silence, waves of white noise, an almost inaudible rumble, the ticking of a watch, the sounds of traffic and urban dissolution; all available in a bedsit near you, no doubt. O'Rourke's achievement is to make gripping music from aural pollution. Just as the sounds of an unfamiliar city seem alive when one's own hometown feels dead, these compositions clear the mind and make the familiar new again.

**Conspiracy** is a quartet based in London. Their studio recording, *Intravenous* (Matchless) is, like O'Rourke's *Scend*, an

aesthetic-of-noise work which stands in the area mapped out originally by AMM and, latterly, by post-Scratch Orchestra groups such as Morphogenesis (whose prepared-string player Adam Bohman is also a member of Conspiracy). The sleeve notes describe the music as 'overwhelmingly dark', suggestive of some grim ensemble of continental gnostic-fascists celebrating the collapse of civilisation. The instrumentation belies this, and indeed I found the music rigorously analytical, intellectual rather than emotive. The recording lacks much of the humour of the group's live performances, instead veering towards disjointed, even disorientating sound experiences in which deep structure is sacrificed for the sake of brevity (Conspiracy are not afraid to appear less than busy, something rare in their field), precision and instrumental clarity. At its best (*Unfurled*; parts of *Fear of a Vacuum*), the result is nervy, ecstatic and assured. At its worst (*Interstitial*, crushed by clichés), it's rather a shrill reminder of the hazards attendant to (the idiom of) non-idiomatic free improvisation. I would have welcomed more details about how it was recorded (especially as British improvisers tend to shy away from experimentation with recording techniques), even illustrative matter.

Also based in London, but more likely to be heard on the continent, are **Orchestre Murphy**, whose *Frankincense* (Out of Depression) Radio 3's *Mixing It* crew described as somehow 'amateurish' - missing the point, to my mind, and mistaking a considered aesthetic for lack of ability. Polish is so taken for granted these days that anything that allows uncertainty to shine through is thought a little inadequate.

The same charge was levelled at (for example) The Velvet Underground who, when they cleaned up their act, very quickly



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ceased to be interesting. *Frankincense* is comparatively crudely recorded, but it is surely the very lack of means which has forced the group to come up with musical solutions to technical problems and, in the process, produce something exciting and, I can safely say, sophisticated. The recording is marked by idiosyncrasy at all levels: line-up and instrumentation seem to differ on each track, no credits are given and the band appear as a smudge on the cover. The Orchestre play catchy lop-sided songs, unmechanical dance music of some charm in which humour, witty social comment, and fine playing combine to ease the passing of time.

Orchestre Murphy is one of those hard-to-categorise bands which, when they've nothing better to do, people like to say 'it's not rock'. This term was once applied regularly (circa 1975) to **Can**, a group whose work thoroughly informs *Our Likeness* by **Phew** (Mute) - unsurprisingly perhaps as this brings Can's drummer Jaki Liebezeit together with the Japanese singer (Can's back catalogue is also available through Mute). There are few surprises if you are *au fait* with *Soon Over Babaluma*, except in terms of how familiar it sounds - and not merely because of Liebezeit's inimitable drum patterns. The songs, lyrics delivered in the style of Japanese pop ballad, embrace ambient noise, fake-oriental organ sounds, and take on board Ruins-like rhythm-and-noise. The result is romantic 'international' rock music, a little too slick to be entirely convincing, but with 'edge' nevertheless. Polish makes technique invisible and can seduce the listener; it can also empty music of the very qualities that make it moving and valuable.

**Ed Baxter**

### TOTAL PLUG

**Total** is an 'audio-visual journal of provocative information' which takes the form of a printed magazine and CD with an accompanying radical attitude to packaging across a range of media. The broad theme of the first issue is 'Control and Manipulation', and includes articles on se-

cret societies, paranoid theories and many others, po-faced as well as anarchic. In *Money and Drugs: Drugs and Money*, Robert Anton Wilson suggests that big business, government and banks the world over are colluding in the laundering of drugs. *The Necessity of Deviance* (Jack Stevenson) proposes that industrial death culture is the product of middle-class life: 'a culture of



Tom Cora

cowardice, conformity and sterility whose holy ground became the suburbs'. Sickos, Gothic victims and intellectual tourists should take note. The fetishisation of mass murderers (Gilles de Rais, Ed Gein, Manson - a thoroughly overrated psychopath - John Gacy and Jim Jones) is fortunately contained to a few; the interpretation of this as being symbolic of modern culture's decline is appealing but ultimately unconvincing. In *Phreak Out*, Nick Toczek maps out a few ways in which individuals at war with information can beat the system through 'hacking' (breaking into computer systems) and 'phonephreaking' (getting calls for free). Useful information.

The CD provides some pacy music to intersperse the reading with. Comprising of material exclusive to TOTAL, it contains contributions from Jass, Flux, Front Line Assembly, Coil, Hole, Fini Tribe (more thumpy-thump pop) and others. Characterised mostly by industrial dance music, it has some compelling gems, such as The Occult Technology of Power's *Apocalypse Culture (Second Life Mix)*, which uses source recordings from Callanish and Turkey, of evangelical sermons and premonitions of doom. Irresistible.

TOTAL have just also released a 60 minute CD by Bourbonese Qualk, also contributors to the above. *Unpop* is their 9th LP in 10 years and combines urban funk - atmospherically reminiscent of ACR and Durutti Column (on tracks such as *Post Crash High, M25*) - with ethnic dance rhythms (VAC). An unself-conscious blending of the forceful with the unusually evocative which makes this 'highly listenable', as disc jockeys used to say.

TOTAL is the latest manifestation in a line that stretches back to 1982 and to the cassette label **Pleasantly Surprised** (releases including Band of Holy Joy, Test Dept) which developed into vinyl with **Cathexis Records** (including Pink Industry) and which now in the new multi-format approach, also organises concerts and exhibitions. Despite this heritage of a decade, the ideas behind the project remain fresh and they also plan to develop a video aspect to their publishing activities. It is also untouched by commercial resignation, as **Robert King** recently confirmed: 'we are unaffected by trends as we have always released records for ourselves, i.e. things that we would like to see and buy. Fashion is a fickle thing in which we would rather not indulge' (Peak Time Listening, No.1).

Look at the conventional concept and form of magazine publishing and you will understand why such projects exist: to map out a sense of purpose in the cultural domain expressed through media and to give some depth to ideas. Forthcoming CD's include the re-release of *Ecstasy Under Duress* by Test Dept, and new recordings from Jouisance and Left Hand, Right Hand. The second audio-visual production is available soon and has 'The Body' as its theme, with text and visuals from Derek Jarman, SRL, and audio contributions from Ivan Unwin, Zoviet France, Master/Slave Relationship, to name a few. It comes as an 84 page journal and a 79 minute CD.

All enquiries to: Total, PO Box 284,  
Glasgow G23 5QN  
Tel: (041) 946 5998

*Malcolm Dickson*





## LUX EUROPAE

Edinburgh

October 1992 – January 1993

The concepts and intentions which formed the core agenda of *Lux Europæ* grew from a desire of the City of Edinburgh to celebrate Britain's six month Presidency of the European Community. In particular the city wanted to mark the Occasion of the Meeting of the European Council, when Heads of State and government gather in the city in December. The exhibition consisted of outdoor installations of varying scale, placed within the central environs of Edinburgh. There were approximately 30 works by artists representing all 12 European Community member states. Lux received close to one million pounds of funding and sponsorship from a dizzying array of public and private sources.

The press release tells us that the exhibition is taking place at the darkest time of the year in Edinburgh; "Sculpture placed in orthodox ways will therefore be unsuitable". For this reason the organisers have encouraged the use of light as a medium for artists to work with. The theme of light is proposed as an appropriate metaphor for the positive aspects of the European community. We are also informed that many of the works comment on the nature of the community, its diverse culture and common aims. In today's political climate this should pose a challenge.

It is very difficult to know where one can even begin to discuss something as complex and contradictory as *Lux Europæ*. *Lux* is certainly an example of a new trend of large, blockbuster type shows which are fraught with many problems. It is politically loaded, happening at a crucial and unstable time in the history of the European Community. The celebratory premise is questionable, in this context. But it is happening in Scotland, attracting international interest and initiating relationships which could and should develop. In keeping with this blockbuster genre it is conveniently packaged in a simple and easily marketable manner. *Lux* has a certain novelty about it and aspires to a public 'user friendliness', a necessary requirement for fundraising.

Unfortunately this particular blockbuster appears to have been packaged to such an extent that you can't help noticing a certain *deja vous* as you wander around the installations in Edinburgh's cold night air. Neon works particularly can be seen in abundance. Ultimately a convenient package of similar work seems to have gained precedence over more complex and rewarding configurations. I was also rather disappointed that some of the more established British artists like **Ian Hamilton Finlay** could have used their 'home advantage' in a more prescient manner. His 75 ft. neon



Louise Crawford/Stephen Gueneau Photo: The Artists

work, *European Heads*, on New St Andrews house (home of the Scottish Office) seemed to have all the right ingredients but not much else.

While the most challenging and engaging of public art over the past decades has sought to shift responsibility and empower the viewer (which *Lux* artists like Finlay have ironically been a part of), dinosaur events like *Lux* appear to want to take it all away again. Much of the work in *Lux* unfortunately confirms criticisms that contemporary public art functions as little more than a temporary distraction, spectacular and undemanding. Can good work be produced out of such a difficult and prescriptive context?

The Italian **Vittorio Messina** contrived some interesting relationships in his installation, *Spostamenti sulla banda del rosso*. He selected 24 windows at various points around the city which were illuminated from the inside with an even red light. The obvious inference of a house of ill-repute was offset by the implication of simultane-

ous events occurring all around the city night after night, in a variety of different locations, public and private. A kind of solidarity of illicit activity. **Bernhard Prinz's** *Three Allegories* consisted of large projections on the roof of the 369 Gallery in the Cowgate. The images showed portraits of three women photographed in the austere style reminiscent of mainstream fashion advertising. However instead of posing aimlessly they each make a subtle gesture. One appears with both arms held tightly to her chest while another mimes a knock. They appear to be trying to convey some coded message from the constraints of their representations. The images appear strange, taken from the pages of a glossy magazine and projected into the alien atmosphere of the darkened rooftop.

The works of the younger Scottish artists, each asked to collaborate with another artist from a European member state, were some of the most interesting and insightful. **Nathan Coley** and **Gerard Byrnes's** *Proposal for Portikus, Frankfurt* occupied a disused entrance way at the bottom of the High Street. Glass objects which looked like blank canvases were placed casually around

the yard (separated from the street by heavy iron gates) with their appropriate packing cases stacked adjacent. The viewer was left to decide exactly what was being proposed for the German gallery and how these 'glass paintings' related to the inhospitable context in which they sat. Interestingly, this was one of the very few works which relied on ambient light and seemed to work more effectively through the interesting use of materials and context.

Further up High Street, the film *Festung Europæ: Shifting Peripheries* by **Louise Crawford** and **Stephan Gueneau** was projected in a High Street shop front. This intervention made an interesting break in the continuum of media imagery usually served up with numbing banality in the public arena.

The installation *End-el-echia* (a term used by Aristotle to describe reality as a continuous, unchanging truth) was constructed in a gutted shop by **Kenny Hunter** and **Petros Bazos**. This work re-

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Kenny Hunter/Petros Bazos. Photo: The Artists

joined in a distinctly theatrical and self consciously neo-classical feel. Strewn around the floor were plaster casts of arms, hammers and loaves which could be seen through a wall of white blocks which almost filled the windows. The windows were lit with a very cool blue light while the interior was bathed in a warm orange glow. The result was intriguing and engaging, and I think accessible to the casual viewer.

There were other interesting works, notably those by **Louise Scullion, Patric Corillon, Titus Nolte** and **Juan Luis Moraza**. But when you return to the politics of why *Lux* has happened, one can only conclude with the greatest regret that the *raison d'être* of *Lux Europæ* really wasn't about ART at all, was it?

Ross Sinclair

## JIZO GARDEN

Dan Reeves  
Scottish Arts Council  
Travelling Gallery  
September-October '92

'Video poetics' has characterised both the single screen and installation work of media artist **Dan Reeves**. Embracing humanitarian and ecological themes, informed by Zen Buddhism, it is not surprising that Reeves is a product of the '60s American West Coast, products of which still reverberate through present pop novelties. Unlike others, Reeves didn't burn out or re-invent the counter-culture as a capitalist project (which it always was). Previous tapes, such as *Smothering Dreams* and *Ganapati/A Spirit In The Bush*, are impassioned statements deploring man's

inhumanity to others: the former deals with the calculated destruction of war based upon Reeves' experiences in Vietnam, the latter with the mindless slaughter of those who can and will never answer back - animals. These works still resonate with a quiet outrage and concern with their content that make present technopap passing itself off as art as a superficial indulgence.

More recently, Reeves has been concentrating on video installation. *The Well of Patience* was shown in Glasgow in 1990: a work made up of a massive cylinder into which the viewer could enter via a raised platform and observe a panorama of images and other 'sculptural' embellishments. The themes of the work, that of the impermanence of things material, the dichotomy between the man-made and the natural world, and the gathering of source images from 'otherplaces', find an echo (but not a repetition) in his latest piece *Jizo Garden*.

Constructed for the SAC's 'Travelling Gallery' (mission: to go where no culture has gone before), the *Jizo Garden* contained various structural elements, tactile and experiential. Housed within a purpose-built gallery on wheels (a converted double decker), the work is modelled on Zen Gardens which are commonly found in Japan. It comprised 14 monitors set face up and surrounded by pebbles, rocks and several Jizo statues, each one a small Buddha like statue who holds a jewel which is supposed to be symbolic of the Earth. Jizo's might be said to be the whimsical equivalent of the Garden Gnome, commonly found in suburban cess-pits. The monitors acted as 'pools of light', containing urban and rural images of Japan, collected on a six-month journey in which he attempted to record aspects of the country's vanishing agrarian culture. At any one time, there were 4 channels of vision with selected ambient sounds, the images gliding past the screens and slowly dissolving into one another: a close-up of a snail, a worker/peasant in a field, busy city street, shots from a moving vehicle, clouds in time-lapse, etc. Disguising the screens as 'pools' and the use of glass bowls placed upon some of them added to their mysterious aura and the 'soothing' intentions of the installation. Incense was burned to en-

hance the sense of serenity, which may have provoked some frightening flashbacks for those old enough to remember their afghans. Although structurally problematic, despite being solid in construction, the installation was re-housed in Glasgow's *Centre for Contemporary Arts* as a circular stage onto which the viewer could walk and gaze down into the monitors, like electronic crystal balls. Re-built in a theatre space, the work still did not get the context it deserved, space again being the problem.



Dan Reeves *Jizo Garden* Photo: Sean Hudson

The video passages lasted more than an hour, but time is not a determinant in the piece. There was no conclusion or trumpeted finales, it could be entered at any time and left also at one's own discretion. Neither was there a reducible message. In a world punch-drunk with information, the installation was described by Reeves as "a signless introduction to the world" and in a suspension of our three-minute culture, "an antidote to the TV process, to take video and slow it down", not just in technical terms but in duration. Like his American counterpart, Bill Viola, Reeves utilises extreme close-up and slow-motion as magnifying effect: the *Jizo Garden* miniaturised, both structurally and conceptually, the symbolic themes of the subject.

The catalogue is interspersed with Eastern parables to provide further reflection, such as 'a good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving'. The notion of travel as expansion, both inwards and outwards, is appropriate in its recogni-

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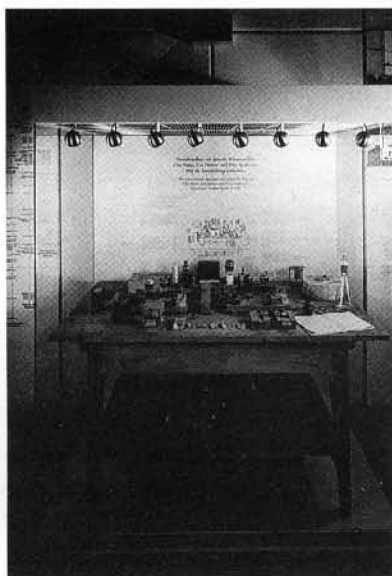
tion of such philosophy, that the journey itself is the point. The installation also makes reference to meditation, that state of being where the 'point of life' is arrived at in the immediate moment, or so Alan Watts has proclaimed. Reeves attempts to induce quiet and contemplation so that we may come to feel our utter inseparability with the universe. If you already believe that this is full of cosmic vibrations then symbols such as this one will be worthless, but there are serious issues raised by the work. An ecological approach will comprehend the interrelatedness of all things, that environmental degradation, industrial abuse, economic decline, political neglect and the 'loss of meaning' are causing deep psychic bruising which takes great endeavors to analyse and to resist. The *Jizo Garden* avoided the didactic sanctimoniousness of the collection tin, but also the esoteric aggrandizement of modern art, so had 'broad appeal' (a term loaded with assumptions) which provides further proof that the public, inhabiting the cultural exclusion zones defined by the centre, are media literate and can appreciate ideas beyond the 'obvious'. For marginalised multi-media art forms in Scotland this is a bonus, as is its resonance beyond the 'critical decor' of 'the new'.

Malcolm Dickson

**ANDREW STONES & LOUISE WILSON**  
Sheffield, August 1992

All too often scientism and technology, in their opposition to art, are seen as scapegoats for an imperfect social order. Andrew Stones and Louise Wilson's work is an attempt to embrace these dichotomies, and present new visions of worlds where art and science can meet in creativity. In July, Stones and Wilson presented two complex video installations commissioned by the Sheffield Contemporary Art Trust as part of the Sheffield Festival. The pieces were shown in complementary contexts: Stones' *Flare/Cataract*, which questioned the sinister implications of sight as the dominant post enlightenment cognitive tool, was set in a darkened film studio. Wilson's *The Eros of Splitting*, which

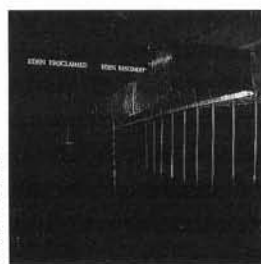
explored the location of the erotic in body scanning imagery, was sited in the sterile empty rooms of a science park. The extraordinary normality of both places provided perfect contexts.



The Eros of Splitting Louise Wilson Photo: The Artist

*Flare/Cataract* and *The Eros of Splitting* virtually worked as companion pieces. Stones' imagery was obtained from observatories in the United States and Wilson spent last year working with Siemens Ltd in Germany. Working with science, in a 'homeopathic' way, their work sits powerfully between fiction and reality.

Stones' video installations are always rich, textured experiences. Viewing *Flare/Cataract*, one is mesmerized by an enormous video projection of close-up images of the sun. Orange columns of gas twist and explode in an apocalyptic dance. Pointing at the projection, hanging awkwardly in the centre of the space, is a long polished steel tube, part supergun, part archaic telescope. The black side walls are illuminated by a projected allegorical frieze, a collage of engraved images: starting with the alchemical figure of research (male) refraining from touching nature (female) and ending with the figures of man and woman on the side of Pioneer 10, the



Flare/Cataract Andrew Stones Photo: The Artist

space module that will ironically outlast the existence of the earth. On the opposite wall a large graph charts sun spot activity throughout history. Glowing red, mounted high above the words *Eden proclaimed/Eden rescinded*, it is all like a strange theme park to millennialism, filled with an impending sense of threat.

The work is completed by looking through the end of the telescope structure. Expecting to see the enlarged image of the sun, we are confronted by a grossly cataracted eye that twitches as it returns the gaze. To the classical mind, the very essence of madness was blindness and dazzlement. *Flare/Cataract* describes the madness of a civilization obsessed with the veracity of vision, where the eye is transformed into technology and the world re-defined to suit the eye. The video image of the sun becomes another manageable form of the terrifying, that repels our distanced gaze.

In Wilson's *The Eros of Splitting*, the smaller yet equally fearful abyss of the inside of the body provides the starting point. Wilson's fascination with Magnetic Resonance diagnostic (literally, to know something through seeing it) procedure, has led her to create a discrete yet disturbing work.

MR is a system that creates images of internal organs without actually penetrating the skin. Subjecting the body to forces of 15,000 times the magnetic pull of the earth, MR is able to create spellbinding images of our insides without actually touching us.

*The Eros of Splitting* is divided into three rooms. Red museum ropes lead the viewer through these contrasting spaces. An empty sales pitch, with projector screen and chairs laid out, is faced by a wall of photographs and text, two speakers whisper in the corners. One has a woman telling the Babylonian creation myth of the violent dis-memberment of the goddess Tiamat. The other is the voice of Otto Han describing his discovery of nuclear fission. The next room is dark, the only light comes from a vivarium holding two live fire salamanders, in the distance an unrecognizable pulsating sound beckons us into the final room. In the half-light, cold steel tables are lined up; on them, monitors show the swirling images of a human brain scan. In

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the far corner a wooden table covered with rabbit skin has a monitor with the throbbing scan of a heart.

These troubling images of the body do not assure us of its inner vitality, but curiously suggest a vague premonition of death. Wilson asks where the eros is located in these hypnotically beautiful images of our selves. Freud's notion that every cell in our body has a libidinal quotient and contemporary physics' revelations of the essentially erotic (i.e. desiring) nature of highly energized matter, do not help our faith when confronting these ghosts of transparent bodies, that float between life and death. To open the installation, Wilson invited the marketing manager of Siemens UK (who build MR machines) to give a presentation, which was a fascinating complementary 'live' aspect of the work. He admitted that science did not really understand how these stunning MR images were created, and he confided to me privately that he also had no understanding of 'modern art'. This event merged the boundaries of science and art, in ignorance and awe.

Both works provided a place where scientists and artists could and need to work together, a place where the heart of intuition could beat comfortably with the eye of reason.

Jon Jordan

### MUTE 3

Terry Atkinson

Cornerhouse,  
Manchester

October/November 1992

Melted into the bitterly bright polystyrene surface of one of the strategically misshapen works in this large and in some ways rather viscous exhibition is the nom de plume *Terry Actor*. Another similarly irregular polygon carries the word 'signature', again literally inscribed into the surface of the piece itself. The rest of the show offers for consideration a range of paintings and constructions that play, like the signature pieces, upon the various borders, codes and technical conventions of recent and contemporary art. Terry Atkinson's work has always emerged out of a concern to

suspend under scrutiny the rules, implicit or otherwise of western art practice. In this show his critical vigilance materialises in a number of guises. Its practice, I suppose, that wears many masks whilst operating, deliberately and consistently, in a manner designed to unmask, to pull apart and, dare I say it, to 'deconstruct' the artistic and political predicaments we find ourselves. To take on this role is to ascribe to the artist and his or her work a complex, perplexing task, particularly as one is working within, as Atkinson remarks in his catalogue essay '*a culture that asks only that its art be mute*'. (*Mute 3*, p.31)

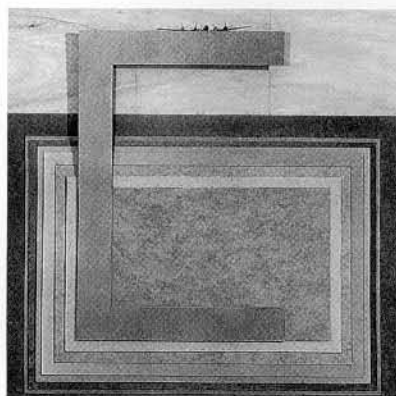
What can it mean to title an exhibition with the word *Mute*? Surely there's an irony here when one finds so many artists and art students claiming that their entirely visual objects 'speak', conveying messages and meanings that are conveyed, they claim, only at the level of the ineffable. But works of art don't talk, and, by something of a paradoxical tension of this point, capitalism doesn't want its subjects – be they artists or other ostensibly critical citizens – to speak out beyond a carefully controlled horizon of meanings. The border between the visual and the verbal, the slippage between different articulations of a post-Hiroshima, post-Auschwitz, post-post painterly abstraction world is a difficult and melancholy edge to thread. But it's here in this hinterland that Atkinson places himself.

Many issues apprehend the acute reader of this show: the relations between theory and practice, the use of conventional and unconventional materials, the question of the politicising of aesthetics and of the 'disaffirmation' of the affirming culture of capital. This last point is an important one. Is it legitimate to produce works of (any kind of) poetry after the enacting of the horrendous events that have come down to us under the names of Hiroshima and Auschwitz? The philosopher Adorno proposed that after Auschwitz art had become an extremely disenfranchised activity, merely one more tool in the armoury of devices deployed in order to police, restrain and administer the culture of late capital. Indeed Atkinson's point of departure is the view that the culture of repression and restraint is already in place. Modernism's contribution

to that culture is essentially one of complicity (not critique). Any ground gained, any opening up of culture and practice is lost, subsumed, shattered into an aesthetically acceptable style.

The pieces on show at the Cornerhouse address these issues through the format of their construction. Employing troughs of axle-grease attached to a framework of natively manufactured slats of wood, these seemingly stable (and unstable) assemblages represent an attempt to take the artworld convention of using novel materials to a new extreme. Other works, sometimes called *Ruses* or *Muses*, offer different combinations of codes – random abstract marks merge into carefully executed, yet conventionally eclectic electric chairs (Warhol). Garish fields of flat colour (alas poorly executed in contrast to the slats and greasers) are slyly and subtly marked with the ghostly logo of 'Enola Gay', this being the name of the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. This image, a front-view of the aircraft, acts as a signature on the canvas, an insignia of the horror that haunts modern culture. The society that produced the atrocities of Hiroshima and the concentration camps is the same society in which modernist art flourishes, gaily reproducing itself as an exercise in style, and blissfully ignorant of its (represented) memory of Death. Atkinson manages to convey or at least open up to discussion these many contradictions. The juxtapositions in the works are critical, though whether or not art can have, ultimately, any real and effective resonance within the increasingly darkening nightmare of the totally administered social sphere remains a difficult and unresolved question.

Peter Suchin



Enola Gay Terry Atkinson

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# trans

# MEDIA

ex*ile*

by  
Desmond K.  
Hill

**ARCH-ANARCHIST** and prime-time prankster **Genesis P. Orridge**, has been making media trouble again. Always an advocate of empowerment through artistic ritualised structures, some incorporating tattooing and body piercing, he is now a fugitive in his own flesh, exiled to the United States. Under British law, the imagination has been criminalised.

On Saturday 15th February 1992, 23 Scotland Yard detectives from the Obscene Publications Squad, armed with a search warrant and a video camera, raided the Brighton home of Genesis P. Orridge. They seized two tonnes of photographic and video material, from a twenty year old arts archive. At this time, Genesis P. Orridge, his wife Alaura and daughters Carresse and Genesse, were organising soup-kitchens in Nepal, for Tibetan exiles and the beggars, street children, lepers and urchins of Kathmandu.

On Sunday 16th February 1992, The Observer newspaper ran a story entitled, 'Video offers first evidence of ritual abuse'. It reported that a film of 'a bloody satanic ritual' had been seen by the Observer and passed to the police. It would be featured in a television documentary to be screened by Channel Four later in that week. Andrew Boyd, the reporter on Channel Four's *Dispatches* programme was quoted as saying, "The video shows the abuse of young adults in what is clearly a ritual context. Sex and blood rituals are taking place beneath a picture of Aleister Crowley. The trappings of black magic are obvious". These claims were backed by the testimony of a cult survivor, and by the accounts of medical and police experts. Channel Four's senior commissioning editor for news and current affairs, David Lloyd, was also quoted: "I do not think a single television programme will clinch the whole question of satanic ritual abuse, but after watching this programme, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to judge it does not exist".



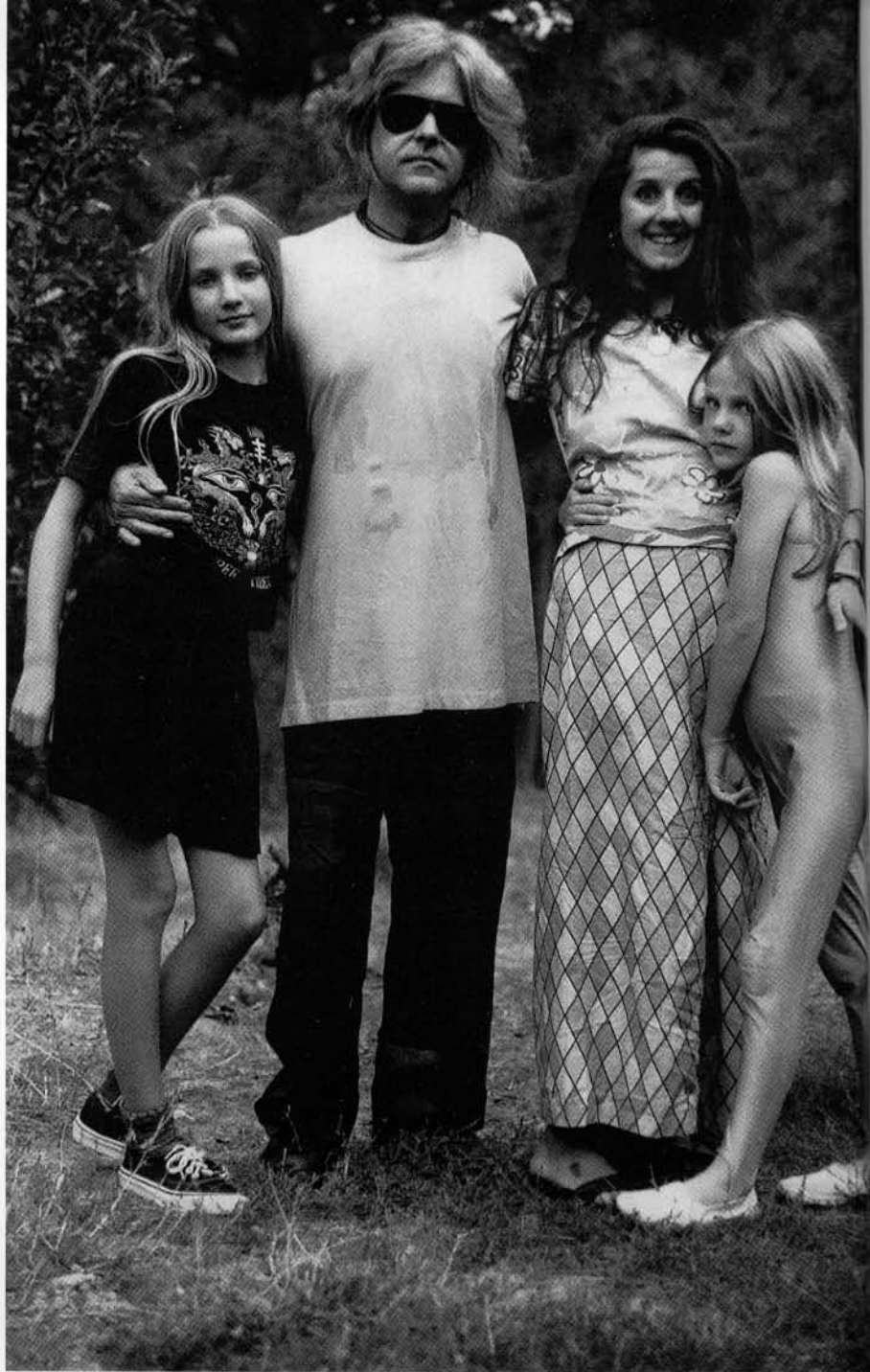
On Wednesday 19th February 1992, Channel Four screened their report including excerpts from a video of very hazy, blurry and distorted images, narrated by a woman identified only as 'Jennifer'. She told in graphic detail that one scene was an enforced abortion of a foetus which was to be used in sacrificial rituals.

On Sunday 23rd February 1992, The Independent on Sunday had reported that the video, claimed to be 'the first hard evidence' of satanic child abuse, was made nine years ago as 'performance art' and featured film director Derek Jarman as visual presenter. He was quoted as saying, "At first I was horrified and then very, very angry that they had so misrepresented scenes from the video. I did not see the video but what 'Dispatches' showed from it did not in any way show what they claimed it represented. It was not at all about child abuse or murder. It seemed too much when you had a lady on the telly, blacked out, saying she had killed her child. I mean, doesn't anyone smell a rat?"

By Sunday 1st March 1992, The Mail on Sunday had traced the elusive 'Jennifer'. She was named as Louise Errington, mother of two healthy children and one-time born-again Christian. In 1990 Louise had stayed at Ellel Grange, a Christian 'healing centre' in Lancaster. She was quoted as saying, "There, the charismatics had an overpowering effect on me. In many ways it was the worst three months of my life... They told me I was possessed by demons because of the sins of my mother and father. They prayed over me in tongues and taught me to face my own guilt."

One day, she said, the spiritual leader, lay preacher Peter Horobin, told her one of his prayer team had had a vision. "He said he had seen a mind picture of me standing over a tiny baby, helping a devil priest to wield a knife. We cut into the baby's chest and the blood was collected and we drank it. The baby's body was a sacrifice to Satan".

Until that time, Louise Errington was not aware that she had had this child. "I screamed and pleaded with them to please stop saying it. I had a sort of fit and had to be held down. I fought people off physically. Finally I broke down and confessed it was true. I said, 'Yes, I did it. I killed my own little daughter and helped others to kill their babies'. The confession of the key witness



The P. Omidge's, California 1992. Photo: Desmond K. Hill

to the *Dispatches* programme was brought about by the horrific vision of hysterical born-again Christians.

The Mail on Sunday had also traced television presenter Andrew Boyd: to the fundamentalist Petersfield Fellowship Church, of which he is a prominent member. Co-incident to broadcast, Andrew Boyd published his latest book *Blasphemous Rumours*. The *Dispatches* programme was constructed directly from his research for the book: research which was collated from the anecdotal evidence of fundamentalists at Ellel Grange.

By 8th March 1992, it became apparent that Channel Four themselves had commissioned the video material for an arts programme concerning the power

and language of the televised image. But the video, of which only three copies were said to exist, was not made by Genesis P. Omidge.

On 22nd March 1992, author, researcher and presenter, Andrew Boyd acknowledged on Channel Four's *Right to Reply* that he had been fully aware of this, yet declined to inform viewers, and declined to identify the background of the video. This partial, inconclusive research combined with entirely fabricated testimonies, has ruined people's lives.

In the summer of 1991 Scotland Yard arrested Mr. Sebastian, a gay man in his late 50s, a tattooist and body piercer by trade. His studio in Earls Court, licensed by London Council and by the Government, was

extensively searched. Scotland Yard took away every photograph taken of people he had tattooed or pierced. He was to be charged on 14 counts of grievous bodily harm, against people he had pierced, taken apparently at random from his appointments book. GBH is the charge below manslaughter, and carries up to seven years imprisonment.

He was tried at the Old Bailey, usually reserved for spies and mass murderers, without a public jury. Found guilty on 13 accounts, he received a two year suspended sentence with a large fine, and had to meet his own costs. In summing up, the ruling judge, Lord Lane set a legal precedent. He said that it was not illegal to have decorative body piercings, but if at any time these piercings played a part in sexual activities or erotic pleasures, then that was "unnatural sex", sado-masochistic, and now illegal. A piercing, since it makes a hole in the flesh, injuring the skin, could be construed as grievous bodily harm. To own a whip, leather thongs, a blindfold or mask, handcuffs or any other items which might be used in sado-masochistic practice, was now an illegal act, complete with retrospective sentencing.

Lord Lane then retired, leaving a law by which even married, heterosexual people with body piercings could be arrested and imprisoned if it was proven that they had ever had an orgasm. For some people, the act of making love has now become illegal.

The ruling was appealed against as anti-homosexual, and as an 'outrageous attack' on what people choose to do with their own bodies. *Liberty*, the civil rights campaigning group, said that the decision showed, "a level of intolerance which is unacceptable in a democratic society".

In February 1992, on Appeal, Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, rejected claims that people should not be brought to trial because they had consented to sexual acts in private. He said that individual liberty was not to be confused with license to commit acts society regarded as cruel. These statements were recorded as amendments to this new legal precedent. It now became illegal for one partner to give another a love bite, because in leaving a mark, technically, this becomes an 'injury'.

Mr. Sebastian was the voice on the original film commissioned in 1981 by

Channel Four, and shown in 1992 as evidence of satanic ritual abuse (a film purposefully made to illustrate how easily people can be misled by sophisticated editing). It was as a consequence of these allegations that Scotland Yard searched the P. Orridges' Brighton home. Their arts archive included unpublished films by writer William S. Burroughs, experimental films by artist Brion Gysin, films by British director Derek Jarman which had never been shown, videos of 'Fantasia' and 'The Care Bears', videos of the P. Orridge children's birthday parties, every single photographic negative that was in the house, and DAT and U-matic film tapes containing studio master recordings for the P. Orridges' next *Psychick T.V.* album.

For a tense month they monitored the situation at home with phone calls and faxes. Although they have yet to be charged with anything, Scotland Yard could still allege that 'someone' in the video was subjected to GBH. The P. Orridges, both of whom have pierced genitalia, could also be prosecuted for possessing the chains and leather thongs used in the video.

Eventually it became apparent that if the P. Orridges returned to England, Scotland Yard would arrest them, hold them for questioning indefinitely, and take custody of their daughters, who would likely be interrogated for evidence of child abuse. Unwilling to put their children through such an experience, said Genesis P. Orridge, the family are now "triggered exiles". They have relocated to America, staying briefly with original counter-cultural guru and acid propagandist Timothy Leary, at his home in Beverley Hills, before settling in Northern California five months ago.

Leary, himself a previous exile hunted by both the American government and the C.I.A., recognised the implication of the police raid as a deliberate attempt to crush a sense of life, imagination and possibility. He believes that the archive not only documented but symbolised the entire language and power within digitally recorded media - an archive founded on the premise that video is one arena of an 'Information War', and collated specifically to analyse how images are controlled and used to indoctrinate.

On the night of the rioting in Los Angeles, 3000 fires were lit; thick columns

of smoke rose out of the city. On the television news channels, the Police kept beating Rodney King. An exasperated George Bush kept crying, "if only you could see through my eyes". Genesis P. Orridge was at Timothy Leary's home watching television: "I began to notice that all the images were of people with VCRs and televisions. Almost constantly you would see people stealing VCRs, and I realized that perhaps it was because they knew that that is where the power is. A video tape is what triggered the riot, and there in the media, that's where the disinformation is being given. That's where the battle is taking place," reflected Genesis.

Long before television, writer William S. Burroughs advocated the 'cutting up' of pre-recorded written material, in order to "see what's really there". Since 1981, committedly, single-mindedly and often in a cheap, underfinanced way, Genesis P. Orridge has taken this idea further, into pre-recorded visual material, and into 'psychic television'. Here the invisible line of the editing process becomes the key to a new post-McCluhan language of power and manipulation.

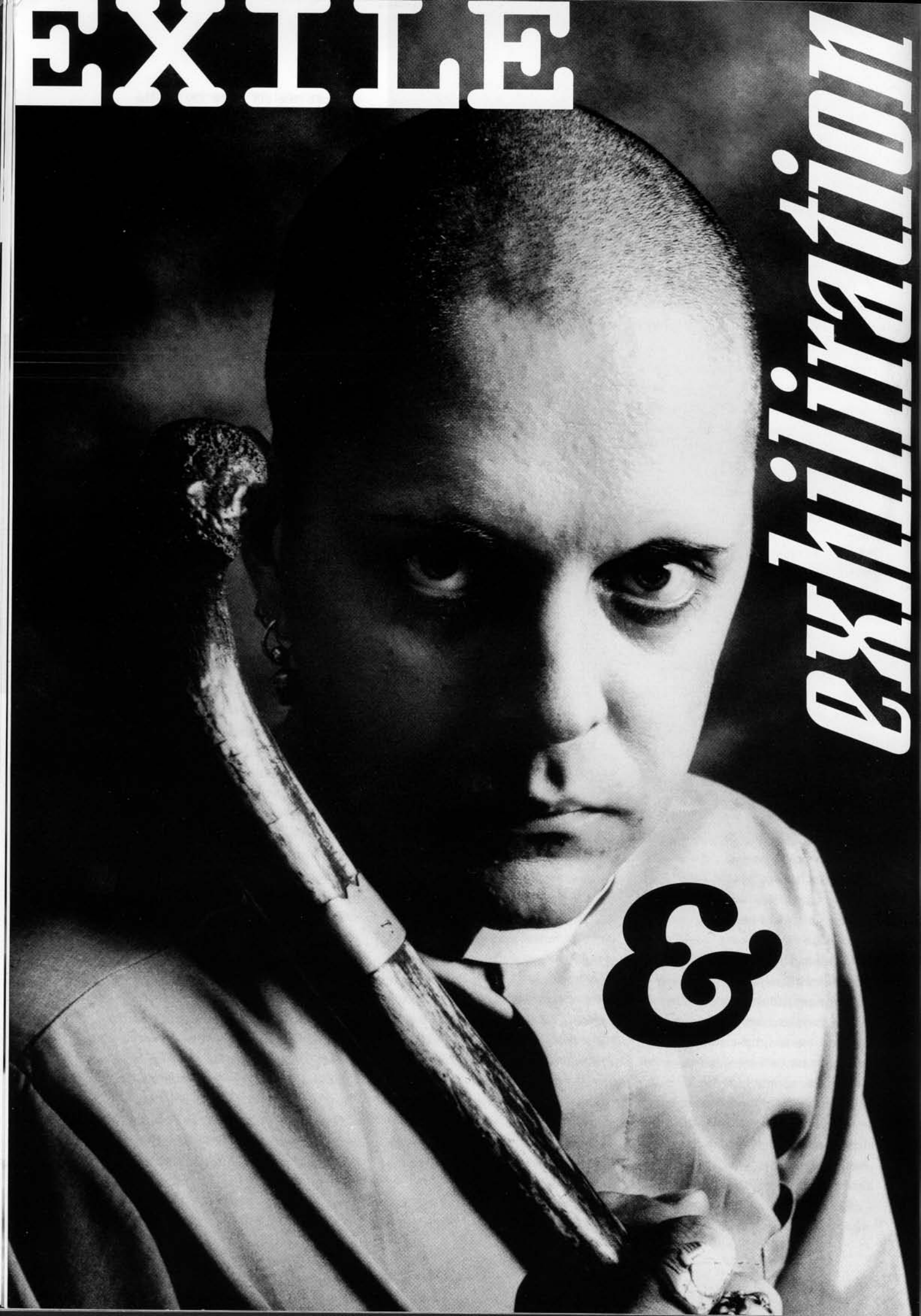
Video, film and television are deemed as inviolate, because they present the way the world is reputed to be; in a specific order and in a specific direction. Whether conscious or not, the VCR has become a basic tool of choice, allowing the operator to then deconstruct, re-assemble and ultimately, make irrelevant all imagery. Curiosity has always been a wonderful survival instinct, if a little dangerous. Now even innocent 'cutting-up' for no sake other than simple, pure exploration, becomes a subversive motion, cutting into the heart of this new digital, visual media. It might sound like a child's game, but the repercussions prove otherwise.

In Britain in 1992, where ownership of one's own skin becomes a question of seven years imprisonment, where the police seize an arts archive of individual empowerment, where freedom of association, gathering and sexual expression are legislated against, is it not time that we all finally realized that truth is not something we see on the television screens. We have only to look elsewhere.

EXILE

Exhibition

3





**GENESIS P. ORRIDGE'S** past projects map out an undervalued and often ignored strand in Britain's cultural underground. Active as a mail artist, he founded COUM Transmissions with Cosi Fanni Tutti in 1969 and terminated it in 1976 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in a wave of media controversy concerning their 'Prostitution' show. At the time of its demise, COUM had undertaken over 200 performances around the world. Whilst involved with Space studios in London, he worked with many transmedia artists including Bruce Lacey, David Medalla, Derek Jarman and Hermine Demoriane. Other spin-offs have included collaborations with William Burroughs and Bryon Gysin. In 1975 he formed Throbbing Gristle, founders of 'industrial music' and one of the UK's truly cult bands. With Alex Fergusson, Sleazy Christopherson and Paula P. Orridge, *Psychic TV* was established in 1981 which he describes as a 'sonic/transmedia music-performance collective', who are listed in the Guinness Book of Records for releasing more albums in one year in one territory than any other band. The Temple of Psychic Youth is an international network for creative and occult philosophies which he is a full-time member of and which has over 5000 members in 23 countries.

by Malcolm Dickson

In the previous article, Desmond K. Hill detailed the circumstances which have led to his exile in the USA following a raid on his home by the Special Branch. Allegations that he indulged in ritual sexual abuse and even mass-murder have been proved to be false, but that doesn't mean he is forgiven in the eyes of morality-tabloids or the police. In the following interview, he talks to Malcolm Dickson about his reactions to this and about his recent work which continues to enforce behavioural, consciousness, sexual and ritual life-systems.



Photo by Desmond K. Hill

**Malcolm Dickson:** There has been little response to what happened to you and your family in the UK. How would you explain this?

**Genesis P. Orridge:** People are scared. The raid and the allegations involved were part of an orchestrated paranoia generating era with the Tories trying to make sure they got back in as the Government. A lot of people we thought might speak out didn't - Derek Jarman courageously stood up to them which triggered questions which made them look and realise that it was all untrue. A lot of other gay people - seeing what happened to Mr Sebastian and other gay men - were probably scared of what could happen or just didn't know how to deal with it. It's so left-field and irrational. How could they even begin to pretend they had a 12 month investigation and none of these supposedly professional detectives bothered to find out that people were inventing stories and that our house didn't even have a cellar, that we didn't have the money to go to South America, never mind fly people out for years. We were public figures in Britain, whose front door was always open - not the kind of situation where you could hide several years of serial killings. But the actual allegations - or the pretence of it - that we were mass murderers is still so outrageous and my main project is to find any way possible to

raise funds to sue them for damages and libel, for defamation of character and loss of earnings. Otherwise they could just keep on doing it to anyone.

Such distortions and infringements of individual liberty are 'abnormal' everyday occurrences, but they do seem to be happening more frequently. Take, for example, the victimisation of travellers for the simple reason that they have consciously decided not to be forced into a slot society has allocated for them. Do you see your own situation in the broader framework of the suppression of 'subversive' alternative cultures and 'deviant' lifestyles and how do you interpret it historically?

For several hundred years, and even longer, murder and intrigue imposed by violence if necessary, have been the basic means for people in control, for the highest authority in the land, for the Government, the Church and the Crown. The way we - the British - became rich was not because we were brilliant at producing things so much as as we were at murdering, committing genocide and destroying other people's minds on the pretext that 'those' people were an ethnic minority, therefore deviant, uncivilised, primitive, or literally inhuman and therefore valid as a target. That was how the Empire was seized, but with the Empire gone they are



Genesis and Alaura

basically doing the same thing. They will isolate a certain group, label them as uncivilised and therefore justify their need to attack and destroy. So nothing has changed. Now they rip themselves apart because they are so frustrated with this basic loss of power and their basic loss of a potent sexual identity which is turned into economic and military might.

That would seem to confirm some of Reich's undermined theories of power and the conditioning of people having some foundation in the suppression of sexuality.

That's why they are so twisted about sexuality, about erotic exploration, about people becoming self-empowered in that area because its exactly the area where their self-image – sexual, political and military – is becoming impotent and castrated. The last thing they can stand is seeing other people getting joy and empowerment and energy from those areas in their private lives that those people in their political life can no longer exercise. It requires a very cynical view of what they are about, which is what I've got and I admit that straight away. My premise is that those are sick, confused, hypocritical, vicious, perverted and paranoid/psychopathic unhealthy

people, therefore their behaviour will reflect that. They will cover this up with a big smokescreen and then they scream all these labels at everybody which are actually descriptions of themselves. Most of Europe now seems to be rushing head-long backwards into the Holy Roman Empire. Its scary that they've not moved forward in their heads and hearts at all. That's why they'll attack travellers who are in a sense the leaders of the resurgence in understanding with their respect for pagan sites and festival, a nomadic and in a sense the Celtic, truly British existence, of going back to their pre-Roman heritage. They are actually being more patriotic in trying to learn their own history like the native Americans and African Americans. Its very significant that the government and the powers that be wish to use any means, legal and illegal, in order to prevent people from retaining a genuine historical heritage. We are supposed to have freedom of worship in Britain, but pagans can't go to Stonehenge and worship or to any stone sites for the threat of losing their homes and being beaten up by the police. The later organised and patriarchal religions are tolerated without any problem, but the matriarchal, goddess, pagan and pre-Roman religions are still being exterminated. What are they scared of? It has to be the empowerment and the regaining of self-esteem by individuals and groups.

All I'm about is discovering what reimpowers people and what gives them a comprehension of why they have traumatic feelings or why they have reflex actions that weren't their own choice. Those are important issues that probably indicate where you've been affected by authority and control in order to do what suits their greater good rather than your individual one. When you've been terrorised by supposedly your own government, the representatives of what they pretend is your society, you become polarised by this experience. I feel much clearer now as to why I was always so suspicious and sceptical of those people.

**By moving to the States, have you avoided being entrapped by these circumstances?**

Not only that but I've not been scared of them. I feel more determined to expose them for the scum they are. After all these years of trying to shut us up by ignoring us, ridiculing us, taking away our Arts Council grants, threatening us – all the things which are a part of the game of being at war with the status quo – the only thing left was to try and attack us through our children, which to me is such an abomination and beyond a value judgement, its so sick.

Throughout the '70s, the performances and interventions of COUM were making some impact in the 'art world'. The recognition of the sterility of official culture and societal values relates to this notion of exposing moral hypocrisy. Were COUM informed by a belief that art was about something more than our ordinary constructed reality and that through ritualised and confrontational performances some connections could

be made with our deeper selves? If so, isn't there an incompatibility with this and the machine that surrounds creativity?

The normally laid out pattern of how to become unaccepted is an influential part of the art world. We were able to be more successful in certain areas than we had ever expected. There came a point when our work, no matter how unacceptable, could be put into that context that became known as 'performance art' and through that it had its pigeonhole where people could end their analysis and see it once again as 'entertainment' or decoration, although there wasn't the saleable residue. Other people who worked in performance art quite deliberately moved towards finding a commodity, beautifully photographed documentation that could be sold as fine art afterwards, but some of them were obviously looking for the 'art career'. Our work, by contrast, was about giving nothing more than what those present at the moment of the performance could really take away, which was the memory you had of it. Everyone would describe it differently.



Throbbing Gristle LP cover 1979

Of course, the original premise that I believed was that art had to be about life, life about philosophy, philosophy about the entire human race and ultimately the omniverse; time, light, energy and everything we could conceive and beyond that. If it wasn't about all those incomprehensible matters then it wasn't art as far as I was concerned. The individual, the collector, the curator, the members of the public were not really very relevant. The only relevant thing was the drive towards something outside every possibility of the human brain to comprehend, beyond what we would name 'God' and the limitless. I was always being influenced by the ultimate test, the ultimate trial of which I was quite aware that I had no words for and hoped that I would never find the words for that. Otherwise it was decoration, or cultural description, or it was 'shamanism', 'sociology' or 'anthropology' or many other things, but it wasn't art. Art was about this massive spiritual quest. Still is.

The spirit of confrontation seems to have subsided in art practice today, some would even say is 'unfashionable' if you abide by such norms. Do you think that contentious practice and thought has just gone more underground?

I have felt disappointed at the very slow response factor in the UK. The issue is not what happened to me, but that it is part of the basic continuance of the reduction and erosion of all spiritual, physical and conscious life of the individual. We are being told now in the UK that as a people, we do not own our own skin, that we do not own our private sexual lives, we do not own the right to expand or change or conceive the change of our consciousness. Erotic play is not allowed, unless it is ordained and ratified by the political power of people who secretly control you: your movements, where you live, whether you choose to live in a house or a vehicle is not your

choice. What a woman does with her body and whether she chooses to have an abortion, what happens to us when we become ill with the 'wrong' disease - these things are becoming politicised in order to repress and remove even more rights. Censorship has gone beyond the written word and the image to where we have no implicit rights whatsoever. The parameters and the borders are changed at random and made retrospective. That is a destructive situation. I think that people - who are innately bright and potentially very intelligent in inarticulated ways - are descending into a paralysed state of being, quite deliberately numbed and made afraid. We've been taught that money is the measure of security instead of an investigation of one's individual sense of morality. Each generation and each group of people should make their own choice as to what they feel is the right interactive morality of themselves. We should not assume that what was correct and appropriate last decade is going to be this decade because everything is constantly changing and in flux. As technology and ecology and many other factors alter and adjust so do our ways of interacting with them, or so they should,

yet we are basically given the message that everything must remain the same or even regress to this mythologically better day and mythologically safer moment. No moment is ever safe. Given that nothing is fixed we have to keep having a constant, ongoing, open hearted dialogue with those we meet, work with, live with or have to deal with everyday. The whole premise of society, the media, TV and culture in the West is based on a status quo backed up by violence which is paid for by vested interests. That's how it works. It's a complete fallacy and not a real picture of anything that's going on. It is imposed and perpetuated by violence which doesn't have to be the obvious violence: it can be the winding down of the Health Service, or it can be censoring art and literature, or putting people into exile or it can be turning the rest of society against an ethnic minority. The very top secret power brokers are the people who originate this. To impose their will, Western powers, or any military force will use the most violent power it has to attack and destroy and decimate those who disagree.

The USA is a hotbed of fundamentalism yet exercises a more principled freedom of the press than the UK. What is the political climate like there?

In the UK we all tend to forget that the USA is lots of different countries. Wyoming is different to California, which is different to Texas and so on. Each has its own government as well as being a part of a federal system. Luckily, what that tends to do is to make the concept of the constitution as holy as the Koran might be to a Muslim. There is an obsession here with the constitution, which in some areas is healthy, but it leads to ridiculous legal decisions. Because freedom of speech is written into the constitution, they rule that the Klu Klux Klan burning a cross is in a sense a political statement,



therefore speech, but that meant they had to repeal the law against burning the American flag because that also had to be seen as political speech. Black lawyers have defended the KKK because they said that freedom of speech was more important. With Bush gone, California's breathing a sigh of relief, at least there's possibly four years to think about what we want to do. But these vicious and unbalanced people are still there, the same kind of people who used to burn witches and lead Jews into concentration camps with smiles on their faces. There are people who love to see suffering, who revel in destruction and who know how they can commit mental, moral and physical violence.

So we mustn't lower our guard but try and out-manoeuvre them by collective dialogue and by being less afraid of each other. We need to realise that we are not alone, that there are other people that feel that already, as the underground community gets stronger which it will have to, but it's not going to be easy. It is ridiculous that no matter how many people protect and nurture each other in a crisis, in famine or in a war or in any other horrible situation, and no matter how much courage and solidarity demonstrated by ordinary people, we are still vulnerable to these unpleasant, power hungry control addicts. I feel that an unnatural state for human beings has developed, just like a virus. The old analogy is true that they mutate and I think they become slightly different in their DNA structure. I don't hold them therefore ultimately responsible. I just think, wouldn't it be nice if they just shut up, give up and try a different tack, like swapping destruction for creativity.

It's interesting how systems of authority and its attendant technology throw up possibilities for alternatives in the dissemination of information. For example, the use of computer networks, the circulation of domestic video, pirate radio and TV is much more widely practised in the States than in the UK.

Since we've been here we have been given a gift of a computer, then we were given a free subscription to electronic mail, a modem, and a fax machine. People here have been so generous. It's much more 'new edge' rather than new age out here. I can talk to people in Tokyo on electronic mail, there's NTT, which is the biggest phone company in Japan who are installing fibre optic cables now so that all the cities will have video phones within a year - and this will be the standard phone in Japan. They approached us last week via a collective of computer artists and pranksters to do a proposal for an art work to launch the video phone network and the idea is that we totally disorientate the user, they want it to be as confusing as possible, like some weird prank, just push it to its limits. That just doesn't happen in Britain, you don't get BT ringing up and saying 'can you totally screw up our system, because that's how we want you to advertise it for us?'

You have been working on a script for an Oliver Stone mini-series and doing 'raves' with Timothy Leary. Could you say

something about your current work, and future collaborative projects with other TransMedia activists?

Well we're natural workaholics. We met Timothy Leary when we first got here, and then Michael Horowitz & Cindy Palmer who since the sixties have been the curators of Leary's archive, hiding it and keeping it safe for him when he was in exile and on the run from his government. They let us stay at their house first and said that they'd look after us. That was at a point when no one knew how far this might go, so that was quite brave and remarkable. Over at their house Timothy rang them up, and found out we were staying there and it turned out he had known all about our work for a long time and he invited us to LA for a few weeks. He knew what it was like to lose your house and have the government trying to attack you and turn you into a scapegoat. He knew that we would need the rest, somewhere quiet to go where people would understand us. We discussed his lecture tours and we suggested using video screens to project ideas, images and programming that reflects and amplifies what is being discussed orally. Alaura could do tape loops and ambient sound, so that also gives another level to it in that it becomes a trans-media event, not just a person with a microphone talking to people,



Psychic TV

they don't even have to listen, because it's going on in front of them. That appealed to him and we've been doing that ever since on a regular basis. From that we're now working on a series of cable television shows in Los Angeles, in December, one each Monday for four weeks, utilising the same techniques for live cable. We'll have pre-recorded things and we'll be mixing sound live, we'll have different people as vocalists: Timothy Leary will be one, possibly Ken Kesey, Terence McKenna and others. What we're really trying to do is realise how to animate conceptual information so that it fits the time, and then be adapted and adopted by almost anybody with a little bit of knowledge of cheap equipment.

Is that what the 'Day Ov Thee Dead' was?

That was actually more of a private underground party, because people organising the rave were getting a bit bored with it becoming formalised. It was great, coming the day before the election. It was one of those raves where we played for two and a half hours but it felt like two minutes. It was very trance-like, minimal stripped-down music, all hard edged guitar but also very Tibetan-like. In the end it was stopped because the police came in and turned everything down, even though it was in a proper club. We're doing one a month now. What else? We're working in Japan a lot. Next year is the 50th Anniversary of the discovery of LSD by Hoffman. In Switzerland there is a bike-run organised where people

follow the route he took driving on LSD. What we want to do is organise a week long festival and symposium, with parties and exhibitions in San Francisco and also in Tokyo. Michael Horowitz is planning a tabloid newspaper of the first 50 years of LSD, that's going to be fun and, in a sense, it will be the first new underground newspaper in San Francisco since the late '60s. We'll launch that with a rave. We're trying to get the City Council here to back it and become proud of San Francisco being the home of the explosion of LSD culture over here. Oliver Stone had done a series for ABC Television called *Wild Palms*, that's already finished and they've decided to do a spin-off book. So they approached different people, writers and artists, and offered them characters to programme. I got the main character, Senator Kreuzer. My task was to



concoct and write convincingly all of his secret writing, theories and philosophies between the years 1968-73, when he was taking huge amounts of Fugu, the blowfish poison, as a psychedelic. He's building this religious cult and philosophy into what became virtual reality. By the year 2000 and something, he's got the biggest TV station doing virtual reality and running for President. But his real aim is to become immortal and separate his consciousness from his body, so that he can remain aware of himself as a

being but not be limited by any physical manifestation. If Stones' programme does well they've suggested that I do another book with the secret thoughts of Senator Kreuzer, which is a great platform for coming out with outrageous speculations. Because it's fictional I can put in things that would go further than normal and its acceptable. If I said it as me, people would go, 'he's finally going over the edge!' – with Senator Kreuzer I can take him anywhere I want, so its nice owning the brain of a character like that.

In the introduction to *Ratio:3's* 'Trans:Mediators' issue which you share with Andrew McKenzie and Z'EV, it is stated that within *TransMedia* 'we can detect a sharpening of the human creative instinct, and a desire to unlock new levels and formulations of consciousness'. This reminds me of Colin Wilson when he talks about his theory of Faculty X, of individuals having a sixth sense which is central to occult experience. What is your opinion of him?

He is more of a reinforcement than an influence, I mean I think its a shame that so many people think of him as a hack writer. He's just a very professional writer who is able to write to order quite often, which having just done something of that ilk myself for Oliver Stone, I realised its an amazing skill, not easy, and it does require just a huge amount of mental leg-work and research to do it. You go through this doorway with this task, and you haven't got a clue how you're going to

manage to get back out with the result. But reading books by him earlier on, I definitely empathised with him and I felt I really understood a lot of what he was trying to imply or explain in a very deep and intuitive way. You know that old adage, you can't learn something from books or somebody, you can only recognise something you have already experienced, and that's very true with a lot of things. I feel he's been really instrumental for many, many people, in giving shape, form and substance to feelings or suspicions or speculations they'd had, which they couldn't pin down until they'd read his books. That's a great gift to be able to do that for a lot of people, he's an under-rated serious writer, and very much a philosopher; and he does take on theories that other people are afraid of, or think might be too flakey, or too unspecific to give them the kind of self-esteem that they had chosen as intellectuals. And that's also a brave thing to try to do, to go into things people are afraid of, and eventually give them enough credence, that it becomes more acceptable for academics to deal with. He's done a lot of really important work.

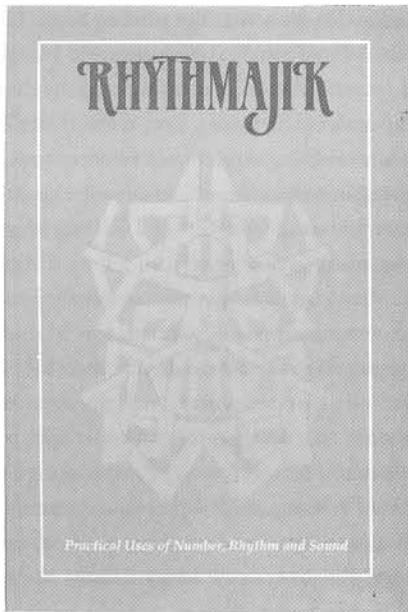
#### In what ways does *TransMedia* manifest itself?

I feel *TransMedia* is a medium as you would have the medium of art or film. *TransMedia* is of the present and the future, in fact very much the future. It is one medium, but it encapsulates anything of other media, so a *TransMedia* event will use film, live videos, computers, vocalists, books, leaflets, political action, sexuality and anything appropriate in order to communicate at all costs. It does that in order to stimulate and awaken and reinforce the dilation of the brain, just as art tries to dilate the pupil. To try to dilate the brain isn't just something I've come up with Timothy Leary. In introducing his lectures he often says he is the 'master of the bumper sticker' and that the only bumper sticker you won't see is the one that says Think for Yourself. No matter how simplistic that might seem, that's what Socrates was saying, that's what the Egyptians were saying and it's what all the important thinkers and radical were saying – Think For Yourself. Amazingly, most people avoid it or aren't encouraged, or simply forget how. That's the great tragedy of human existence, we have to keep going back to the obvious. But the obvious, if its presented in a novel and challenging way can be revealing and exiting. We've been deluged with so much input, we just don't see it.

#### Postscript

**To date, the lawyer working on the P. Orridge's behalf has done so voluntarily. Genesis P. Orridge intends to start a petition to demand a full apology from Scotland Yard, Channel Four and the guilty newspapers, for compensation for crimes against consciousness by the State.**

**Donations can be sent to the lawyer,  
Mr. Paul Spraggon of Hills/Searle,  
322 King Street,  
London W6 0RR  
(cheques payable to 'Hills/Searle').**



## RHYTHMAJIC

Practical Uses of Number, Rhythm and sound,  
by Z'ev

Temple Press 1992 £10.95 207pp  
ISBN 1 871744 40 7

The author is a comparatively well known performer on the industrial music scene although largely unknown in the burgeoning neo-pagan world to which most of the material in this book is aimed. My first experience of Z'ev's style of Rhythm magick was at a performance last year of the Mercury Rite of Eleusis. This was part of a sequence penned by the self-styled 'great Beast' Aleister Crowley and last performed eighty years ago at Caxton Hall, London. Members of **The Temple of Psychic Youth** (sic), whose past illuminati include Peter Christopherson and Genesis P. Orridge, did the honours. TOPY as they prefer to be known, displeased many by their radical decision to cut up the original script, place the invocation bisexual deity Mercury to the monotonous Rhythm patterns performed by Z'ev — 1,2,3,4,5, 1,2,3,4,5, 1,2,3,4,5, 1,2; etc. I admired TOPY's effort to breath life into the event, but it was certainly Z'ev's drumming that drove the thing along.

This is a serious, almost scholarly book, if one accepts the initial premises that the whole thing forms a coherent and rational whole. It is based on the Hebrew mystical system known as the Qabala - a magical system that became universal property when the Jews were expelled from Spain

in 1492 (eat your heart out Columbus). From the magical point of view, Z'ev has succeeded in devising a system that turns the ancient (and to some, the dry) formulas of qabala, into rhythm patterns that can be played on the drum or percussion instrument.

Like all the best insights it is surprisingly simple. It stems from the fact that Hebrew, Greek and one or two of the other languages lend themselves to a basic form of numerology. For example the Hebrew word for blood DaM, (Daleth Mem). But these characters must also serve as numbers, for Hebrew unlike Arabic or Sanskrit has no special characters to act as numerals. The two syllables of DaM (blood) must also serve as the number 4 (D) and 40 (M). It would obviously be ridiculous to try to play four strokes followed by forty. So Z'ev resorts to an ancient rubric called the Qabala of Nine Chambers, which allows him to reduce the numbers, in this instance 40 or 400 to it's root 'number' four. Thus blood is stroked 4-4, a playable rhythm. All this is explained quite succinctly in the book, although it might be heavy going for the unprepared. If this initial leap is made in the understanding, that in Hebrew and some other languages, all numbers are words and all words are numbers - then the next step is easy. For wherever one has number one has Rhythm.

The core of Z'ev's book is the system, derived from genuine initiated sources, for converting key words into either Hebrew, English or Greek into drum beats. This system will not really work with languages such as Sanskrit, which very early on invented its own set of characters to represent the numbers. The process can be worked both ways, enabling rhythms 'found' in dreams or visions to be converted into words and analyzed. Z'ev has some interesting suggestions how an artist can generate new rhythms this way, and even non magicians should have some success if they use his suggested visualization technique.

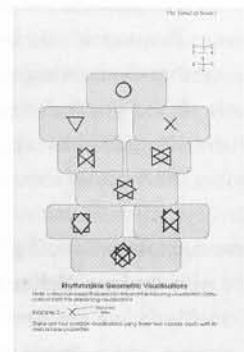
It is the axiom of magick that sound is everything and everything is sound. It follows that by turning our thoughts into struck, external sound it is possible to change our environment and ourselves. Thus a large part of this book is given over to one possible use of sound: to alter the

rhythm of the body and thus return it to a primal, equiposed state of healed wellbeing.

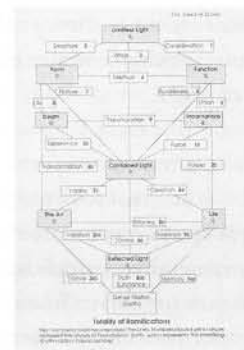
What then of the non-magical reader - is there anything in this book for you? It may be that one does not need to know all about the genesis of the rhythm in order to make use of them for therapy, for stimulating the imagination or just for fun. You will have to take on trust that here is indeed a grammar of sound which like all real grammars is based on the basic patterns of our bodies - the vocal chords, the in and out breath, the heart beat and the other occult sequences unfolding inside us.

However I do not think Z'ev has written a book that will allow such a half hearted approach. You could skip the complex theory and get straight to the beat, only to find that the dictionary of working expressions is still incomplete and that you must help to complete it. In the end Z'ev is trying to speak to everyone - music is after all a universal language, and indeed one that has it's roots in the ritual and our magical past. It is through it that the non musician may be able to glimpse just one part of what the magical quest is about.

Mogg Morgan



Illustrations from part I





## SOUND BY ARTISTS

edited by Dan Lander and Micah Lexier

Art Metropole & Walter Phillips Gallery 1992

385 pp, 63 illustrations

ISBN 0 920956 23 8

This is the sixth anthology in Art Metropole's "...by Artists" series, the other subjects covered being Video (two volumes), Performance, Books and Museums. So the title of this book is an inherited framework rather than one which comfortably describes a definite area of artistic practice. The editors take this problem as an opportunity to map out the many possible solutions to the title: radio art; *musique concrete*; phonographic art; installation; environmental recordings; sampling; the aural art of the futurists, dada, cubists and so on.

The terrain is ambiguous and crosses into multi-disciplinary areas and into the conceptual areas that were the concern of dada and fluxus. It provides an exploded notion of art that would often point us back to ourselves and our environments and certainly towards a 'heightened sensitivity towards sound'.

A possible history of this area emerges in Douglas Kahn's essay *Audio Art in the Deaf Century* and is corroborated and extended by others in the collection. Initial experiments predate the phonograph and audio tape to sound film, and before that to the direct performances of Futurist Luigi Russolo's 'intonarumori' noise machines. There were a handful of early texts either pre-empting recording technology or wide-eyed at the possibilities of the new media, but very little action until the end of WWII. In the late '40s, Pierre Schaeffer started his concrete composing, with phonographs as his source material, and in 1953 Cage and others made the first American tape works. In 1952 Cage wrote '4'33"', the symbolic resonances of which are apparently still being felt. Despite my gross simplification here, this volume is remarkably detailed and well-researched.

Cage necessarily recurs as an important figure, introducing liberating notational systems and the concept of inter-determinancy so that music might better represent nature and the phenomenal world. Cage's essay from 1938, *The Future of Music: Credo* (updating and pro-

jecting from Russolo's 1913 *Art of Noises*), is reprinted as the first essay, and later on conversations with Cage on his radio and audio tape work are reprinted.

Some of the most illuminating pieces in this book are artists' scores and descrip-



Max Neuhaus

tions of their own projects, often backed up with interviews. Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* is a piece in which the successive tape recording and playback of a short spoken text in a room transmogrifies it into a singing, ringing representation of the room's particular resonant frequencies. Gordon Monahan's *Speaker Swinging* explores another natural sound phenomenon, the Doppler Effect, by having three people swing small speakers emitting sine tone frequencies. In both cases the audible result is transfixingly beautiful.

The means of distribution of audio works are briefly discussed in the postscript to an essay by Bruce Barber. Many of the artists appear to be attached to art centres, various funding bodies and a multitude of independent record labels with limited distribution. As an alternative, the cassette networking culture is represented in this anthology (in *Cassette Culture and Anti-copyright*), but it is radio - discussed in articles by R. Murray Schafer, Gregory Whitehead and others - that stands as a much more persuasive option.

As 'the cave of the imagination' and as a medium where the lack of a visual element is accepted, radio is an ideal vehicle for audio art. Co-editor Dan Lander describes himself as a Radio Artist, and in Canada - where the arts are still healthily

funded (by comparison) and a number of stations are open to (some of) the possibilities - this is a feasible proposition. In America too, subscriber radio has enabled, for example, the media-active band Negativland to host an interactive, weekly radio show for the last 10 years (sadly not discussed here), while college radio offers its own opportunities. Meanwhile, in the UK, radio control is tightening and generalised access seems an increasingly distant possibility.

Also included here: a piece by cyberpunk artist Stelarc on his body amplification performances; Marysia Lewandowska on the London-based *Women's Audio Archive*; Bill Viola on synaesthesia; descriptions of projects by Christina Kubisch, Ian Murray, Annea Lockwood, Rita McKeough, Hildegard Westerkamp and Moniek Darge and Godfried-Willem Raes; a piece on Developments from Industrial Music and a piece on sound collage; descriptive and historical pieces from sound art exhibition catalogues; extensive bibliographies and discographies; and an unplayable flexi-disc inserted as a page by Christian Marclay.

The ability to capture sound in a medium, divorcing it spatially and temporally from its original context in a way that is analogous to photography, opened up huge potentials for an audio art, potentials which has - if the often polemical stance of the authors here are to be believed - largely been unfulfilled. Histories here seem to leave us wanting after the initial post-war activity. Omissions are inevitable, but the lack of any history of the more recent electro-acoustic, sound sculpture, live electronic music, sound/noise-based improvisatory music, and tape.

On the whole though, this is a valuable collection of articles driven, as Dan Lander says in his preface, 'by the noticeable lack of information and critical analysis regarding an art of sound' despite the 'abundance of activity centred around explorations into sonic expression'; and is a useful discussion document for re-visioning what might be a more healthy and innovative future for audio art.

Phil England

PRINT



## STEPHEN CRIPPS – PYROTECHNIC SCULPTOR

ACME, 1992 £15 108pp, 33pp illus.  
ISBN 0 9506923 3 6

This lavish book - 108 pages, most of which contain both black-and-white and colour images documenting Stephen Cripps' live works and preliminary drawings - may well finally lay to rest the polemical debate about the worthiness of recording ephemeral live works via secondary formats. The decade-old complaint of the performance purist has been that images can never match up to - and may even corrupt - the effect of the original cathartic, uncontrolled process. If Cripps were still alive today he might well take a similar line, a fact which is pointed out in the foreword.

Nevertheless, it takes little analysis to realise just how much importance practitioners of live works place on their documentation. The desire to achieve a record of human and artistic activity is understandable in the face of its transience, never more so in this case, when a talented artist enjoys a tragically short creative period.

The images of Cripps' activities stand up well to such an analogy; a pyrotechnic sculptor who produced a prolific body of work between 1974 and 1982, his work consisted of gently wooing new secrets from redundant materials, often resulting in climactic and potentially dangerous explosions. His work was not one of bending the intangible to a concrete will, neatly packaged for the consumption of a passive audience; rather, he appeared to revel in the delights of spontaneous process, achieving both funny and sad evocations from his manipulation of sound, energy and light. Although Cripps' drawings testify to his ability to prepare an event in advance, he was probably more excited than his audience as to where the live work

would finally take him. His collaborators were fire and magnesium, rope and chains, gongs and trumpets, straw and mattresses, particles and chunks, decibel collisions and muted whinings; potential prima donnas who could get their own way when not properly treated.

That David Toop's excellent subjective description of the artist and his work does much to flesh out the accompanying



Studio Experiments 1977

visuals is a bonus, for the energy in Cripps' live works and drawings do much to transcend their mute stasis. His preliminary sketches, in particular, give a sense of a man whose creative gusto could not be limited for long to advance design; his pen strokes, whether for *A Speaker being subjected to Extreme Distortion throws out Ball Bearings onto Percussion*, or for *Crop Sprayers - Short Blasts of Fine Powder*, prefigure the frenzy of his eventual creations. Although Cripps' artistic evolution followed a traditional educational path, the overwhelming portrait is one of that strange breed of obsessives who compulsively pursue their quests within an 'art' context only because this provides the most useful support structure. Photographs such as that taken of the moon with a moving camera at Glencoe, Scotland - a glowing coruscating arc bobbing around the firmament - echo emotive drives beyond the confines of categorised representation (this image is a virtual simulacra of the fire-trail left by the Challenger space shuttle, an explosion pre-mimicked by works such as *Roundabout for Crashed Helicopter*).

Toop partially links Cripps' enigmatic creative force with that of Led Zeppelin's

*Physical Graffiti*, and in this and other references perhaps unconsciously alludes to the greatest asset of this publication; for Cripps, and his colleagues, are seen in aspic, recorded at a critical juncture in British artistic activity that has now gone. In this respect, the book is a memorial not only of the work of one artist, but of the gestalt that he was part of. Cripps' studio, a formidable environment of fighter cockpits, garden sheds and dark objects waiting to be re-animated, was at Butlers Wharf, a temporary space that housed many fellow artists who still make a case for experimentation and process in a consumer-led marketplace. One of his primary sites was the Acme Gallery, a breeding ground for other seminal artists (such as the also deceased Kerry Trengrove), artists who approached a showing space with a destructive acumen that was doubly shocking to some, at the time, in that such an approach was actively encouraged.

Given that - as progressive spaces have gradually disappeared, many art students seem embarrassed by the experimental legacy, and that our 'culture' is gradually osmosing into 'heritage' - we live in far more conservative times, the publication also begs the question of what Cripps would be doing today. One could project, perhaps, that he would have been a part of the Bow Gamelan Ensemble (his close friends and colleagues would doubtless cite him as an influence). In a more negative sense, one could hardly imagine Cripps being overjoyed at the length of time it would take to receive and produce a public art commission for his *Mechanical Garden*, or at the fact that most arts organisations in Britain would do nothing other than balk at the logistical complexities of presenting his *Underwater Ballet*.

In this respect, this book could be seen as a requiem for not only the artist but for his generation (or, rather, a series of belief systems increasingly devalued by the dominance of product over experience). It is testament to the (recorded) power of his work that such observations can be transcended, upon confronting the celebratory motivations so inherent and visceral in these images.

Simon Herbert

## AGAINST ART AND ARTISTS

Jean Gimpel

Polygon, Edinburgh 1991 171 pp

ISBN 0 7486 6123 9

'Iconoclastic and brilliantly argued', enthuses the cover blurb, *'Against Art and Artists is a book with profound consequences for Western culture'*. In fact it is an intemperate, spluttering diatribe against the moral rotteness of this decaying civilization and its degenerate culture. Its central theme is no more than a sophisticated version of what you'll hear in any pub where you're unwise enough to describe yourself as an artist. Essentially, it is this: that art, or at any rate modern art, has nothing to offer ordinary people, that it's a nonsense, a con, and only exists because a few muddleheaded intellectuals have brainwashed themselves so much that they can't see the emperor has no clothes – or maybe they can, but daren't admit it in case people think they're stupid. **Jean Gimpel** propounds his argument – you can almost hear him thumping the table – with the same aggrieved air of someone being taken a lend of as the philosopher in the pub.

The old cry of 'Why can't artists paint things the way they are?' is echoed in Gimpel's complaints about Picasso's 'deformation of reality', i.e. non-naturalistic way of painting. Being a plain man, he takes it for granted that reality and what is perceived by the senses are one and the same. Now if there is one common thread linking all the bickering schools of modernism, it is the affirmation of the exact opposite. Reality is not the perceptual world as such; the artist uses perceptible forms in order to evoke a reality of a different order. As Klee put it, the artist does not represent the visible, but makes visible. Gimpel denounces this as mysticism, which for him is a symptom of decadence.

But in actual fact it was also the basis of medieval art, which, like the art of all traditional societies, used this worldly forms only as signs pointing to other-worldly realities, and was therefore not interested in naturalistic rendering for its own sake. One would expect Gimpel, as a historian of the Middle Ages, to be familiar with this. He holds up as exemplary the medieval artist, the anonymous, humble but hon-

ourable workman, fully integrated into society and sharing its values, and contrasts him with the individualized and marginalized artist of today. It doesn't seem to occur to him that in those days everyone believed that the primary reality was not of this world, and the entire culture was based on this belief; whereas today *Una trägt kein Volk*: we have no sense of community, of a people for whom and with whom we



work. That is the tragedy of the modern artist, and only those who are blind to their own social disunity and spiritual separateness blame the modern artist for his obscurity (Herbert Read, in *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, 1964). Which is precisely what Gimpel does. For him, integration into society seems to be a self-evident value – despite his poor opinion of contemporary society.

From the Romantics on, artists have abandoned society, along with the author's much reiterated values of 'realism, reason, progress, science and democracy', and are now leading the rest of the intelligentsia, who should be Society's leaders, down the same road to perdition. The motive force of the book is anger. What is it based on? There are other groups of people who live by different norms from those of the wider society (like monks, there are followers of cultural forms with a minority appeal, like jazz or bhangra). These people may be thought crackpots, but no one gets angry

at them. Why then the resentment against artists?

As early as 1925, José Ortega y Gasset wrote, in *The Dehumanization of Art*, of the anti-popular nature of what was then the 'new art': "...*(it) compels the average citizen to realize that he is just this, an average citizen, a creature incapable of receiving the sacrament of art, blind and deaf to pure beauty. But such a thing cannot be done after a hundred years of adulation of the masses and apotheosis of the people. Accustomed to ruling supreme, the masses feel that the new art, which is the art of a privileged aristocracy of finer senses, endangers their rights as men*".

Gimpel quotes this (which is ironic, given that Ortega was an avowed elitist). The problem is then compounded by the fact that 'high' art has been elevated into a pseudo-religion and given official recognition both in state cultural policy and within the education system – so that what is really the culture of a small section of the leisured classes is falsely claimed as universal, with the inevitable stigmatization of those unable or unwilling to submit to its standards. This history of the divinization of art is one of the stronger parts of the book, along with the parallel history of the divinization of the artist, who evolves into a kind of demiurge, exempt from the normal rules and constraints of civilized life. This leads ironically to the trivialization of 'artist' into a label under which you can opt out of ordinary social responsibilities and lead a life of complete self-indulgence – another reason why artists are so resented both by M. Gimpel and our friend in the pub.

However, the book does cut through a lot of art-crap. There are undoubtedly plenty of chancers, flannel-merchants and persons-on-the-make in the art world. But finally it comes down to whether or not you believe in the transcendental claims made for art by Klee, *et al.* If, like M. Gimpel, you're an unbeliever, then his argument is unassailable, and artists should either go back to painting reassuring pictures for people who know what they like or give it up and take to designing chanty-pots instead. But we've heard it all before.

**Simon Brown**





## EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

August–September 1992

At the Edinburgh International Film Festival screening of *Man to Man*, the left-field luminaries are out in force. Director **John Maybury**, producer **James MacKay** and actress **Tilda Swinton**, standing at the front of the cinema in Filmhouse One, were answering questions from an audience not sold-out, only by virtue of a badly-timed television screening of the same film.

Their presence in Edinburgh was unsurprising as the project originated locally when the Traverse Theatre offered a version of **Manfred Karge's** one-woman play of the same name. Though she was keen to emphasise that the performances were entirely different in nature, then as now, Tilda Swinton played Ella Gericke, disclosing in fragmented monologues the story of how one old woman survived Germany in the difficult middle years of this century, donning her dead husband's donkey jacket to assume his pale life amidst the impersonal world of "beer and schnapps and bugger all else". Towards the end of the piece the deliberate element of fracture is almost too disjuncting, and John Maybury, linked as much with the avant garde of the ICA (if there is one) as with the mainstream of his pop videos, has succeeded in using the clinical edge of the video image, here to create a stark and amoral arena for Swinton to act out the passions and the disappointments of the aged misanthrope with venomous intensity.

Yet despite the fact that the film was later to be highly commended in the FIPRESCI competition, the award decided by the international critics jury, its makers were not happy. Their complaints were many. The money for the film was raised not by virtue of the script and its merits, but because Tilda Swinton lent her name. They had wanted to make the project on film. This was not the final version as

conceived, they had planned a further stage of transfer, where the video image as it was projected for the festival would have been tele-cined, transferred to celluloid. They appealed to the BFI for help.

Whether it is down to finance or not, it is this tone of potential not quite fulfilled that dominated the Edinburgh Interna-



Film Still from *Leolo*, by Jean-Claude Lauzon

tional Film Festival this year. Though the success of its director, **Penny Thompson**, and the Festival administration in turning a loss-making event into one where house full signs were a common occurrence should not be underestimated, it is the quality of films on display which will be remembered. This year, although the programme was packed tightly into two weeks and a new one-venue policy, between the glitzy frivolity of *Strictly Ballroom* and the consummate effort of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, there was much worth seeing and hearing, but perhaps not much that had to be seen.

Of the British films both *You Me and Marley*, a forceful drama, written with a street level awareness, about the joyriders of west Belfast, and *Wild West*, a musical knockabout also from the heart, though a less bloody one belonging to three honky-tonk Asian cowboys, transcended the made-for-TV look of most of the rest of

the films in that strand. At last there was **Roeg's Cold Heaven**, held up by litigation for two years: but it suffered from a convoluted storyline. The 'Syberburg strand' was obscure enough to satisfy anyone in love with the peripheral. **Richard Linklater's Slacker** won praise for its John Sayles-like treatment of a day in the life of poor, but hip Californians, who have time to consider, rather than time to kill. It was a film that could easily just drift by without resonance, though that may have been the intention.

The best film I saw by a wide margin, and the only one I witnessed to stun an audience into silence, was a French Canadian film called *Leolo*, about a young boy trying to grow up in the world of his family – all peculiarly afflicted by emotional troubles. Here director, Jean Claude Lauzon delivers a profound story charting the difficulty of reconciling the brutal realities of the world in which older people live, with a child's need to look kindly on those around himself. The intimacy of the script is such that the boy's retreat into surreal misconceptions, and finally coma, are completely at home with the

more this-worldly sequences.

In one scene, when Leolo attempts to hang his grandfather, who is lazing in a bath which backs onto a lift shaft, the assurance of the edit equals that in *Vertigo*. In another scene, where the boy is fantasizing about walking through ancient ruins with the Italian girl-next-door, the camera zooms out to lose him in the rubble of the vista just as he loses himself in the fantasy of being with her.

This is cinema with a quality akin to the visceral power of Sam Fuller, the enduring maverick film-maker, and also survivor of a Festival retrospective, who returned again to Edinburgh this year as a speaker, to remind his audience that imagination is as important in the making of a film as the budget. Perhaps this is what was to be gleaned from Edinburgh in 1992.

*Catherine Brindley*



## EUROPEAN MEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL

Video Installations in Osnabruck  
September 1992

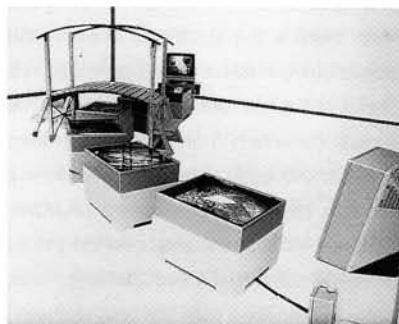
The European Media Art Festival is now in its 12th year. Its reputation as a major venue for video installation is considerably enhanced by this intelligent selection of works. Avoiding the big names that grace Documenta, the festival offers a group of mutually illuminating works tied to the very specific setting of the magnificent Dominican church in the centre of Osnabruck.

The blissful absence of loud soundtracks reflects the contemplative spirit of both the church and much of the work on show. Very little is heavy-handed, technology is placed firmly in the service of ideas, and humour is often manifest as a quiet irony or a push-button playfulness that the more sinister connotations of technology often masks.

The Croatian artist **Dalibor Martinis** evokes a familiar Christian image with his installation *Supper At Last*. A long table draped in a white cloth and set for thirteen invisible guests invites the viewer to sit and listen both to the ambient sound of a dinner party and the individual voices of modern icons delayed through headphones. We get the sense of eavesdropping on echoes of absent friends, and the voices of Freud, James Joyce, and Marilyn Monroe seem peculiarly reduced and transient. Like the voices, the plates, cutlery and food are all illusions. A series of video projectors transmit the images from above. The table cloth turned blood-red by the projector makes the table into a sacrificial altar but its more modern accoutrements evoke the violence that has shattered the communities of Martinis' homeland. The fragility of our western affluence belies the cosiness of a middle-class meeting of minds across the dinner table.

**Simon Biggs** also takes his central images from the Christian tradition in an ambitious work. A video projector fills the high-domed ceiling with Tiepolo angels and demons as well as a modern mix of anatomical features and medical instruments. Below, a camera records the passage of spectators across the floor and by means of a computer, links their movements to

the animated sequences above. Each spectator generates a 'guardian angel' which follows her/him like a celestial doppelganger. As with any interactive work Biggs has been dogged with technical problems – a sudden surge of electricity elsewhere in the exhibition can blow the whole system and the light levels necessary to activate the camera weaken the projected image above. However, the idea of a virtual Tiepolo ceiling created on the spot with a seemingly limitless library of cross-cultural images is intriguing and Biggs' use of architectural space categorises *Heaven* as a truly site-specific work.



Chris Meigh-Andrews *Streamline*

Where Biggs draws attention to the ceiling of the church, **Chris Meigh-Andrews** shifts the focus back to the floor space with a meandering video stream forded by an elegant wooden bridge. In *Streamline* a series of nine upturned monitors carry the stream across the floor like capricious stepping stones. The space between the monitors becomes the site of the imagination as we fill in the gaps to complete the stream. This process is emphasised by the sudden appearance of a hand at one end which launches a small paper boat. The boat travels down the stream appearing and disappearing across the monitors in a game of conceptual 'Fort/Da'. The delight with which children follow the boats' progress is a testament to *Streamline's* breadth of appeal. The more adult viewer can also notice a narrative content which casts the female hand as the launcher of boats and the male as the recipient of the 'messages'. These fragile communications make their way down the line with some difficulty but always reach their destination, their meaning undoubtedly compromised by their traumatic journey. A poignant and rather magical metaphor for the vicissitudes of human communication.

These take on a specifically verbal dimension in **Cornelia Franke's** installation *Da-Ja-Ich*. A male and female voice call across to each other from two rows of small speakers suspended from the ceiling in long transparent tubes. Their words are fragmented and repeated in a series of hypnotic phrases producing a muted polyphony that at times formalises into a kind of Gregorian chant. At the end of the rows a monitor displays a fast-moving montage of the words in stark black and white. A basic knowledge of German will pick up on familiar words – Rot (red) Ja (yes) Schule (school), but perhaps their Russian meaning of *month/mel/cheat* that the male voice intones are a little more obscure. However the word-play has the desired effect of reducing language to utterance and returning communication to an impulse of the body that is both pre-lingual and outside the confines of a symbolic order dominated by the centrality of the male 'Ich'. The physical sensation of being surrounded by layers of sounds whose source(s) are impossible to locate by ear lock us in our own Physical present. The floor seems to disappear, and the oceanic feelings we experience are primal and intensely pleasurable.

In *OT*, **Eva Koch** returns us to the body through the more confrontative use of physical discomfort. A large cylindrical structure presents an unbroken mass to the viewer as she approaches, drawn perhaps by the warm light emanating from somewhere in its centre. The push/pull aspect of this initial experience is intensified by the discovery of two entrances – one dark and the other seemingly leading to the light. Preferring light to dark the viewer is drawn into the spiralling centre of the structure. The light intensifies and gradually becomes intolerable as the viewer is dazzled by the light and heat of an arc light that sits like an intimidating warder at the core of the work. The viewer beats a hasty retreat and tries the darker entrance. Here she is soon reassured by the discovery of two familiar objects – monitors set in to the wall showing a day in the quiet life of a Spanish street and a compilation of news footage representing dramatic world events. The incongruity of cold aluminium beneath the tall stone arches of the church and the ambivalent play with audience

MEDIA  
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response make this work a highly personal statement.

If it is possible to personalise sheets of aluminium, it is equally within the artist's power to drain a highly potent image of all spiritual content. **Bruce and Norman Yonemoto's** *Land Of Projection* presents us with a life size effigy based on the stone figures of Easter Island, placed within the Dominican church setting. Although obscured by time and successive cultures, the sacred meanings invested in the figure still resonate and combine with our Christian myths to form a testament to the universality of spirituality. But this impression is short-lived. The Yonemotos turn the figure into a screen onto which they project a montage of cheap contemporary images. Although I can get the point that they wish to link our media cultural icons with those of an ancient culture, the effect is to somehow drain each of any real significance and in some sense to defile the church. Perhaps this was the intention. But overall this exhibition highlights the ability of media work to explore spirituality and human interaction which is not usually associated with high-tech. Osnabruck, perhaps more than Documenta is responding to a shift in focus in media work which may prove to be more significant than the technological advances it exploits.

**MEDIA**

Kate Elwes



## **ACM SIGGRAPH '92**

(Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on GRAPHics)

McCormick Place, Chicago, USA

July 1992

*'We are all participants in an amazing week of information exchange, networking, presentation, demonstration and exhibition', declared the convention programme, '... where our collective involvement creates a tremendous force that rejuvenates the life-blood of the computer graphics industry'. At this signal 34,000 delegates descended on the city of Chicago and the Mayor proclaimed the week of July 26 to be Computer Graphics Week.*

Are they serious? You know they are. From all over the world scientists, academ-

ics, educators, the media industry, artists, business executives and sales reps converge on one US city for five days of intense pixel bashing. The sheer number of things to attend at **SIGGRAPH** is enough to stagger the unprepared, and one must accept the fact that one will not be able to see any more than a fraction of what is on offer. The first two days are relatively gentle, consisting of a range of 44 different courses covering mainly technical subjects. Then comes the technical programme and panel sessions where scientists present their latest research results. There is the trade show, the 255 vendors providing the commercial driving force behind the convention, and then there is the Electronic Theatre and numerous special exhibits. There is an Art Show, but it has rarely been more than a means by which **SIGGRAPH** members could show each other their work — a random collection of pictures on walls, plodding installations and assorted pieces of hardware thrown into the foyer area between the food bars, the escalators and the electronic message centre.

Once you begin to take in the variety of events, you realise that one does not have to know anything at all about computer graphics to be able to attend this conference — indeed, you do not even have to be interested in the subject. The fact is that computer imagery is now the common currency for many of the most important dealings in our daily lives, requiring an event with totalitarian aspirations like **SIGGRAPH** to cover an impossibly vast panorama of applications, businesses, cultures and sciences. When the convention started in 1973 with a few dozen scientists their common language was mathematics and electronics and the goal was just to get a reluctant computer to make any kind of a useful picture. But by the eighties research money began to pour into research centres that could put together any kind of a programme that mentioned 'state-of-the-art imaging technology'. **SIGGRAPH** took on a carnival atmosphere, a celebration of the industry that was riding high on the gadget fetish of the decade, always in the public eye, always able to showcase the effects it had contributed to the latest blockbuster Hollywood film, a spiral of higher resolution displays, wider data bandwidths, larger data bases, faster proc-

essors — the perfect postmodern designer science.

But this year, with just weeks to go before the convention opened, the co-chairs had called an emergency meeting. Major sponsors had pulled out at the last moment, they had run out of money, and the show would have to be scaled down. But although the bubble has burst, these new winds of change are blowing in several different directions at once. After many years of criticism that **SIGGRAPH** negotiates its unique position as a focus for so many different interests by keeping the level of debate entirely technical and narrowly defined, next year it has been agreed that there should be panel sessions addressing social and cultural aspects of electronic visualisation, education and effects on medical practice and ethics. The token Art Show will now be a specially curated installation-based exhibition on the theme of 'Machine Culture' — with its own space and possibly screening room and seminar session.

As 'The Big S' approaches its twentieth birthday and confronts the harsh economic conditions of the nineties, it has to ask how an event which sits at the fulcrum of Big Science, little science, commercial cowboys, artists and defence contractors can define a role for itself that is relevant to all of these. The promise of **SIGGRAPH** was always that computer imaging provided a common language whereby people from vastly different cultural and social backgrounds could come together and apply their skills to advance knowledge, expression and the means of production with an enhanced mutual respect and critical awareness of each other's points of view. The tragedy was that the pace of technology propelled by economic and political imperatives reduced everything to a giddy whirl of techno fascination. 'We strongly believe that it is **SIGGRAPH's** responsibility to educate the technologists, scientists, engineers, artists and practitioners on the power of the picture'. Perhaps as **SIGGRAPH** comes through its identity crisis new interests can seize the initiative and start to promote a wider range of opinions of just what that should mean.

**Richard Wright**



## THE ODD COUPLE?

Arts & Broadcasting Conference  
Brighton, October 1992

It would be too simple a dismissal – but not untrue – to say that at £295 a head registration, *The Odd Couple?* conference on Arts and Broadcasting excluded many artists who could otherwise have injected some impetus into the debate. Being the 'twin pillars' of our culture, they are probably unreformable anyway, but that didn't stop many from attending through bursaries and other enticements to participate in the three day shin-dig which had as its theme tune 'Give us more culture!'

The event was organised by the Arts Council of Great Britain and it consisted of plenary addresses, wall-to-wall broadcaster workshops and panel sessions. Topic titles included *Commerce and Culture* (on TV sponsorship), *Watching Paint Dry?* (on the kind of programmes artists would make had they commissioning capacity), and *The Go-Betweens* (on the way broadcasters are forming alliances with arts organisations in the commissioning of new work). A problem, however, was that there were too many workshops, too many panels with too many people on them, which meant that debate could not develop, leading to frustration all round. This was particularly so in *The Culture Debate*, where rapid-fire statements were launched on a variety of subjects interconnecting and clashing with one another: questions of broadcasting and democracy, the distribution of culture and the questions of *cultures*, and the well-rehearsed positions around the popular culture/high art dichotomy. Lunches with executives and TV personalities were also on offer for those who like to fraternise with important folk.

There were presentations not irrelevant to the theme of the conference or to the more progressive arguments therein. In *TV State of the Arts* (presented by **John Wyver**, writer and producer with 'Illuminations'), the lack of innovation and experiment on UK TV was illustrated by examples of the opposite from Europe where he roughly outlined 10 ways in which 'they do it better': amongst these were confrontation, performance, new collaborations, expanded TV, and in the tackling of ideas, philosophy and theory.

Just to sow the seeds of envy, the Wyver talk was followed by an onstage discussion with **Thierry Garrel** from ARTE, a French TV channel devoted exclusively to the arts, which illustrated further the lack of an imaginative structure for creative TV here: funded by \$130 million from the French/German States in public money and subsequently can resist the compromise to advertisers.

Unfortunately the keynote address by the Director of the Royal National Theatre, **Richard Eyre**, set a high moral tone which was not repeated in the course of events. Lambasting market economics and the Thatcherite denial of 'society' and its attempts to destroy any evidence that it ever existed (witness the recent pit closures and the mentality of 'I cannot read therefore I wish all books burned'), he called on TV to rectify the disenfranchisement of millions. Criticising the BBC as unprincipled (a direct reference to the Gold Repeat channel) and as patronising, his pragmatic solution was that of legislating for a plurality.

Art is, of course, a political construction and broadcasting is political. What it chooses to represent operates to the exclusion of many groups in society: the working class, women, the disabled, and many others. **Jeremy Isaacs** could not have epitomised this more elegantly with his remark about culture "having no reserved seats". The justification for this was his childhood reminiscence of instilling the High Art Tradition into his schoolchums by taking them to the theatre. Money ensures reservations in all areas of life, why should art be thought of as different? Isaacs may believe that TV caters for more tastes but this isn't to say that it deals with the more important question of the democratisation of culture, as raised by **David Hevey**, on what culture is to different people, or even more succinctly in the words of **Liz Lochhead**, "Who picks the mix?"

Issacs should also have come in for more criticism in his almost contemptuous view in defense of the Royal Opera House's – in which he is the General Director – lack of amenities for the disabled by calling his staff 'heroic' in their chore of carrying wheelchair users up to the balcony. There's Equal Opportunities and Access for the disabled *in action*. Needless to say, too

much focus was on London – a tiny elite area of the arts where all the power seems to lie. How this affects small nations was quite trenchantly 'brought home' in an article in the brochure by **Neil Wallace** who had the foresight to criticise the 'metro-parochialism of the whole media industry. A cosy, chummy M25 circle doesn't just control network resources and schedules, but also the closed circuit of ideas and issues that surface as national television'.

In the closing session, the restlessness of the Hoi Polloi could not be contained by the chair, and many artists did express their disgruntlement of being spoken down to continually by broadcasters. But it was too little, too late. **Waldemar Januszczak** accused the other people on the panel – **Melvyn Bragg** (the Alan Whicker of culture) and **Michael Jackson** – of being duped by the BBC attempting to score 'brownie points' for the franchise fee and for its public role. Being Commissioning Editor for Arts at Channel 4, he managed to score a few in return.

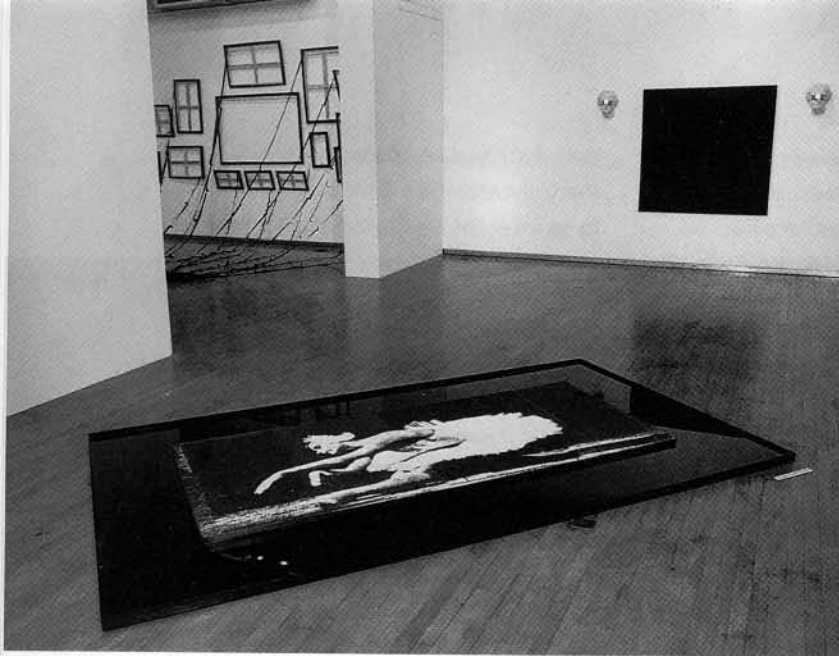
Hidden agendas are the great danger of arts conferences in general, and mostly convenient ways of letting off steam without effecting any change, in recuperating dissenting viewpoints, and also of tapping into sources of topical funding – for example, the spate of conferences on all things European. Things are so bad now that anything is possible in terms of dismantling what was previously taken for granted. Januszczak again articulated this point that there is too much emphasis on the past, on heritage and on what **Peter Palumbo** defined as "the return to some semblance of an underlying order in these unstable times". The good old days are exactly that, history, but are defended in fear of looking ahead and forging what Eyre would propose as a moral agenda appropriate for the needs of the present and our technologised future. The broadcasters have only dramatised the future, the point is to create it.

**Malcolm Dickson**



Richard Eyre presenting his keynote speech





Oleg Timchenko  
Heat & Conduct exhibition, Mappin Gallery, Sheffield 1992

# MOSCOW

IN THE  
PERIOD OF

art

THE PRIMITIVE  
ACCUMULATION

NOW

OF CAPITAL

Susan Reid

## REPORT



In the midst of the social turmoil accompanying the introduction of market forces into all spheres of Russian public life, art in Moscow seems becalmed. The formerly oppositional art of Moscow Conceptualism has lost its opponent, and Russian capitalism is as yet too new and fragile - and too close to the artists' own interests - to become a new target. Bored with the irony and appropriation of the eighties, nevertheless neither the artists nor their audience are sufficiently ingenious for such values as sincerity and commitment to be fully reinstated.

Over the past two years, and especially since the failed coup of August 1991, Moscow has developed a lively - if somewhat superficial - gallery life. It is too early yet to speak of a fully developed art market: many of the galleries are non-profit making, supported by business sponsors. But there is now a diversity of venues for art spread across the whole city, including temporary space rented for the duration of a particular exhibition (for example a show of women conceptual artists this summer was held in an army officers' club)

as well as a good number of permanent galleries with distinct profiles. A recent article by Nestor Nebaba in the cultural newspaper *Gumanitarnyi Fond*, sent up the Moscow art public's frantic chasing after aesthetic and gastronomic pleasure, by laying out the map of Moscow's galleries in terms of the hospitality provided at private views, from fruit juice through vodka to champagne and caviar.

Several of these galleries co-exist under the umbrella of the **Centre of Contemporary Art**. They include the **Guelman Gallery** (vodka cocktails and a special interest in Ukrainian and Moldovan art), **The School** (photography and conceptual art) and Levashov's pluralist **I.O.** The Centre was established last year after long negotiations by Leonid Bazhanov (who has recently been appointed to the Russian Ministry of Culture). A second Centre for Contemporary Art has also opened recently, but the relations between the two are unclear. **L-Gallery**, directed by Lena Romanova and Lena Selina, focusses on Moscow Conceptualism. It quickly established a reputation for high quality,

well-curated exhibitions that challenges perceived notions in the use of the gallery space.

Perhaps surprisingly, recent developments indicate a divergence between the geopolitics of cultural life and the processes of political and economic decentralization (or alternatively reveal the extent to which the latter is only apparent and superficial). Although in some of the capitals of the newly independent states - notably Kiev - an indigenous art world is emerging, supported by local finance; the dissolution of the Soviet empire has not led to true federalism in the art world. The belief that it is only in Moscow that one can become a successful artist, risks draining other cities of their most energetic and independent artistic spirits. It is still in Moscow that the greatest concentration and variety of exhibition spaces and opportunities to sell or buy work is to be found. Reasons for this include the Soviet legacy of an infrastructure and of curatorial expertise, and the presence of a large foreign community and concentration of potential buyers and sponsors in the metropolis. Moscow is the most cosmopolitan city, the locus of the fullest and most rapid exchange of information with other parts of the world. It represents the way out from local interests to an international level of discourse.

In an age dominated by media and information technology, which in many areas of human activity and in many parts of the world render the distinction between centre and periphery negligible, the Russian art world has, paradoxically, regressed to the epoch before the invention of the printing press. Admittedly, television occasionally covers contemporary art events. But the fate of the specialist art press is a sad story. The most important of the long-standing official art journals which had, over the last couple of years, become interesting, lively, and reasonably informative, have been forced to close for financial reasons. The USSR Artists' Union, whose organ they were, followed the Soviet Union into dissolution at the beginning of this year, amidst wrangling over its assets. Many projects exist to establish a new independent art journal. But these require sponsors to cover the soaring costs of paper, typography and distribution, and in a time of

financial instability sponsors show a tendency to pull out at the last moment.

In the absence of regular discussion in print or of reproductions of current work, exhibition openings take on a special role. Only by being physically present at the numerous such events that take place every week in Moscow is it possible to keep abreast of developments in the art world. Openings are lively occasions here, when the artistic community of Moscow and its fashionable hangers-on congregate and share opinions and information about the latest developments in the art world of East or West. Such gatherings thus perform the important function of keeping art before the public eye and providing a forum for discussion. This social function seems to take precedence over the apparent pretext for the openings: the art object. The opening has become an event in itself, even a happening. The studios on Trekhprudny Lane specialize in this genre of exhibition-happenings. A programme of such events is run by the artist Avdei Ter-Oganian in a small space reached by a narrow spiral staircase. They take place every Thursday with a reliability which is rare in Moscow.

The **Regina Art Gallery**, sponsored by a Moscow businessman, also specializes in one-off events. At the end of June it showed classics of Moscow contemporary art from its collection. The paintings were held by seemingly disembodied hands which belonged, in fact, to soldiers hidden behind a false wall. The result was a dynamic and unsettling exhibition. The art was enlivened by being in constant slight motion, while the viewer felt uncomfortably conscious of her gaze being reciprocated by the hidden bearers.

A more disturbing event at Regina was the culmination of an 'animalistic festival', a series of shows/happenings by various authors. Here the relation between the gastronomic and the aesthetic, between the animal and cultural needs of man, was manifest in brutal terms. A professional butcher was invited in to slaughter a pig and divide its carcass into portions for distribution among members of the audience to take home and cook. Outside the gallery animal rights demonstrators protested against these atrocities committed in the name of art. In the public discussion

which arose spontaneously outrage was expressed less at the fact of slaughter itself than that it was taking place in a supposedly cultural establishment, an art gallery, and, what is more, in the capital city. The event revealed a mutual hostility between the uncomprehending and disgusted general public and the somewhat condescending, westernized and fashionably dressed young people who made their way undeterred to the gallery. The event generated great interest among the Moscow art-going public. The atavistic reinstatement of slaughter as a cult/cultural act may be indicative of a growing hunger for total, embracing experience for the duration of which gut reaction overpowers the habits of intellectualization, and which unites the rite's participants as initiates set apart from those who remain outside the door.

The Moscow art world's anxiety about its marginal position in relation to New York and Western Europe sometimes expresses itself as an exaggerated fear of provincialism and the persistence of prejudices about cultural life outside the metropolis. Moscow Conceptualism, dominant in the capital since the late eighties, has provided the standard against which art from other cities is measured, and according to which it has been assimilated or rejected from the metropolitan art world. The hegemony of a fairly small group of artists of the 'school of Kabakov' has not only tended to exclude the alternatives represented by other would-be cultural centres, it has also marginalized many artists and groups within Moscow itself. As dissatisfaction and boredom with Moscow Conceptualism set in, there is a growing swell of opinion which may draw certain marginalized tendencies into the mainstream, as a source of new energy.

At its inception Moscow Conceptualism was in part a rejection of the ethos of the artistic underground of the 1950s-60s. That was nonconformist art's age of innocence and idealism, associated with a search for truths higher than those the social order provided, a quest for psychic liberation and self-expression. This project was challenged in the seventies. At that time, under Brezhnev, some nonconformist artists and writers came to regard as futile the search for a position outside of - and supposedly untouched by - the perva-





sive official ideology. They responded by a rejection of all totalizing belief systems and a denial of authenticity, in favour of the adoption of shifting and manifestly contingent authorial positions. This agnosticism associated with Moscow Conceptualism, and encouraged both by a reading of Bakhtin and by Western postmodernism and poststructuralist thought, became the orthodoxy of contemporary art of the late eighties.

However, the ideology which provided material for the conceptualists' subversions has powdered into irrelevance, while that which has displaced it is still inchoate and embattled. The developing language of Russian advertising - still a novelty in the former Soviet Union - might yet provide new material for deconstructive practices, but has not so far received significant attention. There is a growing sense that something new is needed to replace the cerebral coolness, the sophisticated irony and outworn irreverences of the eighties. Now there are signs of nostalgia for material certainties beyond the shifting sands of language, for visual satisfaction and visceral impact, for emotional engagement, for spiritual concerns and acts of faith, for the ability even momentarily to suspend disbelief and wholeheartedly commit oneself. But how is it possible to take up such positions in the 1990s without appearing naive or disingenuous?

Perhaps one path out of the impasse may be to confront the undeniably real and universal human experiences and animal instincts, such as sexuality, greed, violence and the horror of death. The transformation of the gallery into an abattoir at Regina belongs in this category. Mortality was central to a recent two part installation by Iurii Leiderman in the School and I.O galleries, which nevertheless preserved a reliance on textual reference - in this case Thomas Mann.

Another response in the current atmosphere of uncertainty lies in affirming the present-day relevance of the long unfashionable principles of underground art of the fifties and sixties and their continuation either by the veterans of that period or by younger sympathisers. An exhibition this summer in the **Central House of the Artist** entitled 'Romanticism', constructed an unbroken tradition for such work from

the artistic underground of the sixties to its continuators in the present. Curated by Natasha Brilling and Sergei Kuskov, *Romanticism* complemented and contrasted with another show taking place in the same building at the same time. *Diaspora* - an exhibition of Jewish artists from Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and other cities of the CIS - was dominated by work which could be characterized as conceptual or postmodernist. Both these exhibitions were too large and diverse to be satisfactory, but their juxtaposition was an interesting reminder of the growing pluralism of contemporary practice.

Alternatives to Moscow Conceptualism have existed throughout, although they have received less attention in the Western press. It would be wrong to overemphasize the division between the mainstream and the marginal: there are no

clear-cut lines of battle between different camps. Indeed, the qualities sought now, including an emotional impact and physical presence, were never absent from the best work of Moscow Conceptualism. And it is symptomatic that the interpretation of its acknowledged leader, Ilya Kabakov, seems to be retroactively shifting emphasis away from the textual towards the experiential aspects of his work. Representatives of different tendencies mix socially, attend each others' openings, even collaborate. However, the selectivity of market success inevitably causes resentment and accusations that the art world is controlled by an elite or even a 'mafia' (the referent of this word varies according to the user). By choice or by necessity some artistic enterprises remain private or subcultural phenomena, whose habitat is mainly outside the gallery circuit, in the studio or in experimental theatre and alternative music. An important centre of such activity is a squat, led by one Petliura, where every Sunday Garik Vinogradov performs his quasi-shamanistic rituals. Slava Ponomarev, who sometimes collaborates with Vinogradov, does solo performances in his studio (but also at suitable art openings). They consist of music produced in an elaborate apparatus of metal sheets and tubes, inspired by Tibetan Buddhism.

Another centre of creative and imaginative energy is Boris Lukhananov's **Studio of Individual Directors**, whose 'Garden' project occupies an area between theatre, fine art and real life. The *Garden* involves group play and fantasy, taking as its starting point Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, concerning the conflict between outlived systems of belief and an emergent brash, dynamic and pragmatic capitalist order. But Lukhananov and his group have reinter-



White House, Moscow. The day the Coup was defeated

preted Chekhov's play not as a tale of disappearing beauty, but as a myth of the indestructible garden. It has accrued layer upon layer of improvisations, acquired new characters and plots. The garden serves not only as the setting of the play but as a metaphor for the self-generating organic principle of growth and regeneration which is fundamental to the work of the Studio.

Within the context of the play an exhibition developed, apparently spontaneously, which was shown last year in a temporary gallery called **The Orangery**. It consisted of objects associated with or used in the extended and developing production of the play, reified commentaries on the text or free improvisations around its characters.<sup>1</sup> The *Garden* project also succeeded in implanting itself as a parasitical growth into the Aleinikov Brothers' recent remake of the Stalinist film, 'Tractor Drivers'.

A further potential source for new tendencies - and for new blood to fill the Moscow galleries - may be provided by the distinct traditions in contemporary art of other cities of the former Soviet empire. Immediacy of feeling and directness of physical statement - which the textual and theoretical burden of conceptualism makes it hard for a Moscow artist to achieve unironically without appearing faux-naïf -

can be furnished by, for example, an artist like Oleg Timchenko from Georgia.<sup>2</sup> His work is formally simple, often employing materials which have a prehistory of human usage and associations. He takes images which have been reduced to kitsch, emptied of their emotional content by excessive repetition, and restores their power to move. In one recent piece the nostalgic power of smell added to the physical and visual impact. His work is about human experiences and ideals, about beauty and romantic longings, sadness and loss. It has an autobiographical element which does not, however, limit it to his own personal experience alone. Autobiographical intimacy is also present in the evocative photographic series of Ketevan Kapanadze, also from Georgia. Both these artists have recently begun to arouse interest among

some Moscow curators.

It is perhaps inevitable that such a time of rapid change, bringing new freedoms of movement and the opportunities and pitfalls of an embryonic art market, should leave artists and curators uncertain how they should proceed. The temptation is to chase after the latest art fashions of the USA and Germany. Yet the most fruitful path for Moscow, as the aspiring art capital of the CIS, may yet be the pursuit in practice of cultural diversification, a goal which was repeatedly claimed in the rhetoric of the Brezhnevite Soviet Union. In this way the CIS could realize the best hope held out by the USSR: its potential for multiculturalism.

<sup>1</sup> Ekatenna Bobrinskaia, 'Svobodnye igry svobodno sobravshikhsia liudei' *Stolitsa*, No.35, 1991, p. 64

<sup>2</sup> Oleg Timchenko has been showing work in four venues in Britain this year and has just completed a residency at Bristol Art Space.



# PASSEPART



SFR JUGOSLAVIJA  
СФРЈУГОСЛАВИЈА



Gergely Urkom



Marina Abramovic



Nesa Paripovic



Richard Demarco



Sanja Gligorijevic



Cristina Floyd



Sally Holman



Zoran Popovic



Jasna Tijardovic



Marineia Kozelj



Rasa Todosijeic



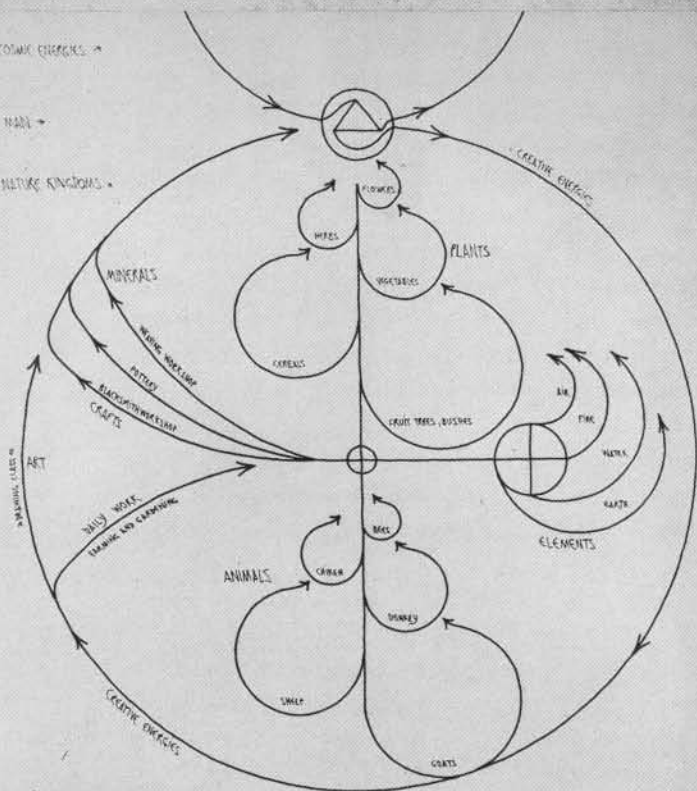
Zika Gligorijevic

ASPECTS 75

VIZE — VISAS

SEMPAS COMMUNITY "NA GRAJINI"

- ① COSMIC ENERGIES →
- ② MAN →
- ③ NATURE KINGDOMS →

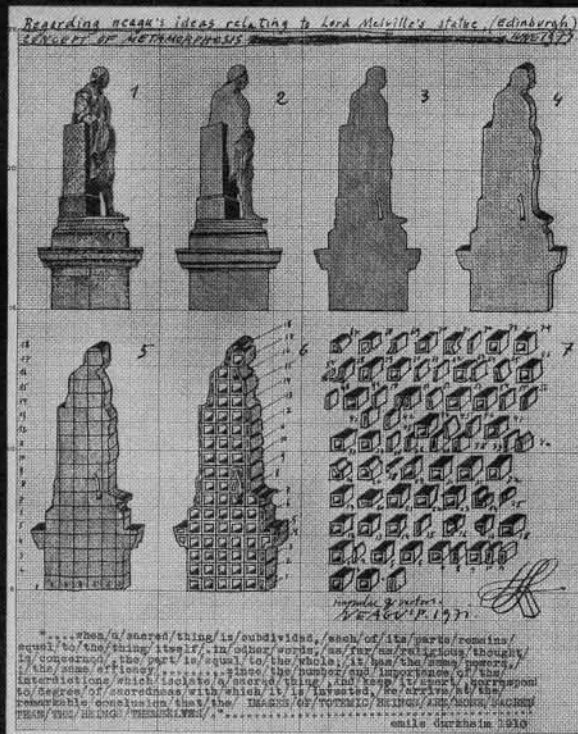


DEVIČINA U SEMPASU IMA GRADINU  
SEMPASU U NAŠIM GRADINAMA

OUR COMMUNITY LIVES AS ONES OF NATURE BEINGS, MAN AND COSMIC ENERGIES. MAN IS REPRESENTED BY: GEORGE (B. 1935), EVELYN (B. 1934), ANA (B. 1935), MIRO (B. 1937), ANA (B. 1937), LUKA (B. 1938), ANĐELKA (B. 1935), MARIKA (B. 1937) AND MARKO (B. 1938). MANY DIFFERENT PLANTS AND ANIMALS SHARE THIS LIFE WITH US, GIVING US OUR DAILY BREAD AS THE PERPETUATING CYCLE OF OUR LIFE, SEEDS AND CARE FOR THEM. MINERALS ARE INCLUDED THROUGH FEW MINERALOGISTS, THE ELEMENTS ARE PRESENT IN THEIR PURE FORMS, THE CONCENTRATED BEING IN ART WORK. IN AUTUMN 1974 WHEN WE STARTED THE "DRAWING CLASS" WHICH IS PRESENT ON THIS CREATION.

WE IDENTIFICATION: DVO GRADU VIZAR (1956-1972)  
COMMUNITY IN SEMPAS, STARTED 1974

# Neagu'P



Paul Neagu  
22nd February 1938 — born in Bucharest  
1967 — Moved to Timisoara town in Banat  
1968 — Studied technical drawing  
1983 — Worked at a draughtsman and topographer in Timisoara  
1985-1986 — Studied Bucharest Institute of Fine Art—painting section  
1986-1988 — Lived and worked in Bucharest  
1988 — Traveled to East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Budapest  
1989 — One-man show—Bucharest—Anghara Gallery  
1989 — One-man show—Richard Demarco's Gallery Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Scotland and Palazzo West Germany—wood stadium objects.  
1990 — One-man show—Edinburgh Festival, Richard Demarco Gallery—show in darkroom  
1990 — Show at Vienna, Erasmus House, Austria  
1990 — Show at Turin, Italy with Romanian Contemporary Artists (paintings)  
1990 — Two-man show with H. Barnea—Edinburgh Festival, Richard Demarco Gallery  
1991 — Two man show with H. Barnea at Birmingham  
1991 — Show (sculpture and objects) at Eric Krauss Gallery, London  
1991 — Two-man show—Eric Krauss Gallery, London  
1991 — Two man show—Compass Gallery, Glasgow  
1991 — The Works Cafe Man event — Eric Krauss Gallery, London  
1991 — The Works Cafe Man event — Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh



# from the earth to the sun



Joseph Beuys

## Richard Demarco & Edinburgh Arts '72-'74

by Charles Stephens

*"The artist is best suited to deal with the false promises of revolutionaries, anarchists and the builders of brave new worlds who share a blind belief in a future opposed to all past ages"*

*"The world of true myth and magic must always be our own human environment under the ordinary light of day or night, when we realise that every human being that we meet is more complex and mysterious in their movements than any star"*

**"The gallery director must spend much of his (sic) time in missionary work in defence of the artist, whose job it is to reveal 'every bush afire with God'. He must warn men of science, politics, commerce and religion that he can lead us, perhaps unwillingly at first, to a world as strange as that which beckons to the astronaut"**

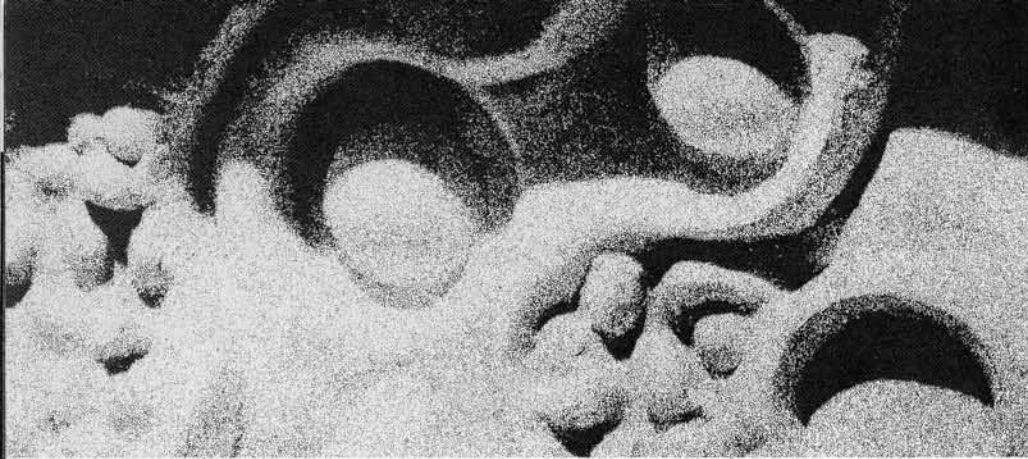
Richard Demarco

In 1970, just before the *Strategy: get arts* exhibition, Richard Demarco could have been described as a sharp, trendy gallery director who had brought something of the excitement of Bond Street to Edinburgh's West End. He was alert to the contemporary trends embodied in the 'theatres of the absurd' and 'cruelty'. He understood the principles of 'existentialism' and the 'nouveau roman' whose practitioners had been published by his friend John Calder and whose work had been staged and promoted in Edinburgh's Traverse by his erstwhile colleague Jim Haynes. 'Minimalism', 'Conceptualism' and 'Arte Povera' were familiar to him. He would not have been alarmed by the works of William Burroughs.

During the 1970s, to the frequent frustration of his admirers and delight of his detractors, Demarco was invariably ahead, or far to the other side, of his times. He became a leader, but only a few knew where he was leading. Three artists; *Joseph Beuys*, *Tadeusz Kantor* and *Paul Neagu*, all of whom were introduced to the British art world by Demarco, catalysed his metamorphosis from 'dedicated follower of fashion' into original enigma.

"The university under a tree - where the poet or the philosopher speaks in a human dimension to those who wish to share a dialogue with him... it should be difficult to distinguish the masters from the students".

The first *Edinburgh Arts* took place in 1972. It lasted for the whole of July. The participants were largely, but not exclusively, American art students who were keen and full of expectations. Between 1972 and 1975 Demarco lectured in art institutes and universities in Canada and the USA - in his four whirlwind lecture tours in the winter months of January and February he crossed and recrossed the boundaries of Rhode Island, New York State, Pennsylvania, Ontario, New Mexico and several other States. He was no longer a tourist, as in his previous visit in 1959. He was communicating his vision of an arts summer school in Scotland which would allow the crossing of all the barriers between the arts, be informed by the ancient land and history of Scotland and be abreast of the contemporary movements in art represented by Beuys, Kantor, Neagu and the many European artists shown by the Richard Demarco Gallery since 1966. Demarco's



Gabriel Caruana  
Stone Sculpture

efforts did not go unrewarded; between 1972 and 1975 several hundred students from all over North America participated in *Edinburgh Arts*.

One aim of *Edinburgh Arts '72* and its successors was to provide a practical, first-hand experience of the contemporary arts – performance, dance, theatre, sculpture, environmental and conceptual art. What distinguished *Edinburgh Arts* from the vast prairie of summer schools for visiting foreigners and enthusiasts were three interrelated factors: its involvement with radical forms of artistic creation, a range of concerns which extended far beyond the limits of 'art' and in effect addressed the condition of modern humanity, and finally an educational philosophy which contrasted strongly with traditional ideas in both its theory and its practice.

The kinds of artistic activity which flourished in the vicinity of *Edinburgh Arts* were very different from the traditional skills of charcoal drawing and watercolours which were the staple fare of art summer schools in Scotland and elsewhere at the time. In contrast with such exemplars as Constable, Bonnington, Cotman and a whole wealth of minor nineteenth century watercolourists, some of whom were Demarco's own personal favourites, the faculty members and participants of *Edinburgh Arts* looked for inspiration to figures such as John Cage, Antonin Artaud, Yvonne Rainier, Merce Cunningham, Donald Judd, Sol le Witt, Carl Andre, Robert Smithson, Richard Serra, Andy Warhol, Walter de Maria, Bruce Naumann, Dan Flavin, Eva Hesse and Robert Morris.

Consequently, the activities engaged in by the participants were exceedingly

various. Dance, video, photography, body art, archaeological excavation, public performance, group work, talking, statements, interventions, provocations and many other manifestations occurred in profusion. It was not so much that *Edinburgh Arts* sponsored a different style of art as that it introduced a wholly different universe into the classical squares and terraces of Edinburgh's New Town. In 1971 Paul Neagu had proposed enveloping the statue of Lord Melville in a cellular carapace; in 1972 the Polish artist Magdalena Abakanovic, a participant in the *Atelier 72* exhibition, slung red ropes round St. Mary's Episcopalian Cathedral. She was assisted by *Edinburgh Arts* students.

The art which was generated by the students and other participants in *Edinburgh Arts* did not restrict itself to refined discussion and contemplation, nor was it defined by a single discrete art object such as a piece of paper with marks on it or a moulded piece of wood or stone. The aesthetics favoured by *Edinburgh Arts* participants cast doubt on the very meaning of such activities. The artistic practice of *Edinburgh Arts* sought to intervene directly in 'ordinary' life, to generate exchange and dialogue between individuals and to act as a means of transformation for those who make art and for those who meet what they make. This was not a programme to change the world in a twinkling of an eye, but it did offer the prospect of unusual experiences which could heighten, and perhaps change, a person's life. The many letters which Demarco received from participants in *Edinburgh Arts* often reveal an almost religious sense of personal awakening and growth. *Edinburgh Arts* acted, uniquely in Britain at that time, as an

arena for participation in a contemporary art which was too frequently reviled by its enemies or else castrated by its friends in the numbing atmosphere of white-walled galleries, the 'museums' of modern art. Students are always more alert to the pulse of the time than their teachers or art critics. For a few weeks in the summers of the early 1970's, Edinburgh was the unwitting host to a summer school of young artists whose ideas and ingenuity were the equal of any that were current in Britain. Demarco brought contemporary art, live, to the streets of Edinburgh.

Although rooted in the soil of contemporary art, the range of ideas and issues encompassed by *Edinburgh Arts* was considerable. The lectures and dialogues with individuals which occurred during *Edinburgh Arts* between 1972 and 1975 covered the architecture of Edinburgh, the exploitation of the Earth's natural resources, the politics of oil, the intellectual history and heritage of Eastern Europe, Iona, Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' of Scottish history, the Picts and the Ogham script, the megalithic monuments of Argyll, the Gaelic language, Scottish folksong and folklore and many other subjects.



Richard Demarco at Edinburgh Arts '72

*Edinburgh Arts* may have started as an arts summer school, admittedly of a very special kind, but it was subtly changed by its close association with the art which Demarco was exhibiting in the early 1970s. The first *Edinburgh Arts* coincided with the Polish *Atelier 72* exhibition. *Edinburgh Arts* participants were actively involved in Tadeusz Kantor's Cricot 2 production of Witkiewicz's *The Water Hen*. Kantor, and through him Witkiewicz, instructed

a group of young artists in a tradition of Central European art and thought which was more potent than Dada, Surrealism, the theatre of Brecht, Meyerhold and Stanislavski, the posturings of Mayakovsky and Ysenin and the whole arid gamut of Russian Constructivism. The tradition defended by Kantor and Witkiewicz, that of Polish 'modernism' was epitomised by the works of Kafka, Schiele, Mahler, Berg, Kokoshka, Musil and Schoenberg. Kantor had studied in Cracow, Witkiewicz's home town. He met Witkiewicz at the end of the 1930s, shortly before his suicide which was coincidental with the German invasion of September 1939, the fire which began the conflagration of the Second World War. Kantor was a Jew who survived the Gestapo, the SS, the Red Army and the Warsaw Uprising. Such masterclasses as he provided for the students of *Edinburgh Arts* in 1972, and again in 1973, were not rare, they were unique, unrepeatable.

Beuys was in a class of his own as a visiting lecturer to the summer school. Not many summer schools are blessed by having the 'leading figure in Western Art' (William Feather, *The Observer*) on

their faculties! In 1973 and again in 1974 Beuys delivered long 'lectures', of the kind for which he was already renowned, to *Edinburgh Art* students. Beuys' lectures were not 'star turns'. His commitment to radical pedagogy went back to his period as Professor of Sculpture in Dusseldorf.

Beuys supported *Edinburgh Arts* because he shared Demarco's concerns about the state of education. Both men believed that education had lost its way, that it needed to embrace the totality of life and experience and that visual artists could make a significant contribution to its regeneration. He considered Demarco's *Edinburgh Arts* to be close in spirit to his *Free International University* which had been set up in the autumn of 1972, a few weeks after the first *Edinburgh Arts*.

Beuys also spoke at *The Black and White Oil Conference*. The conference was concerned with the immediate issue of Scottish oil and the nature of long-term energy policy in a time when non-renewable resources were apparently reaching their limits. These were the kind of matters with which the *Free*



Charles Stephens in *Rat-Trap*

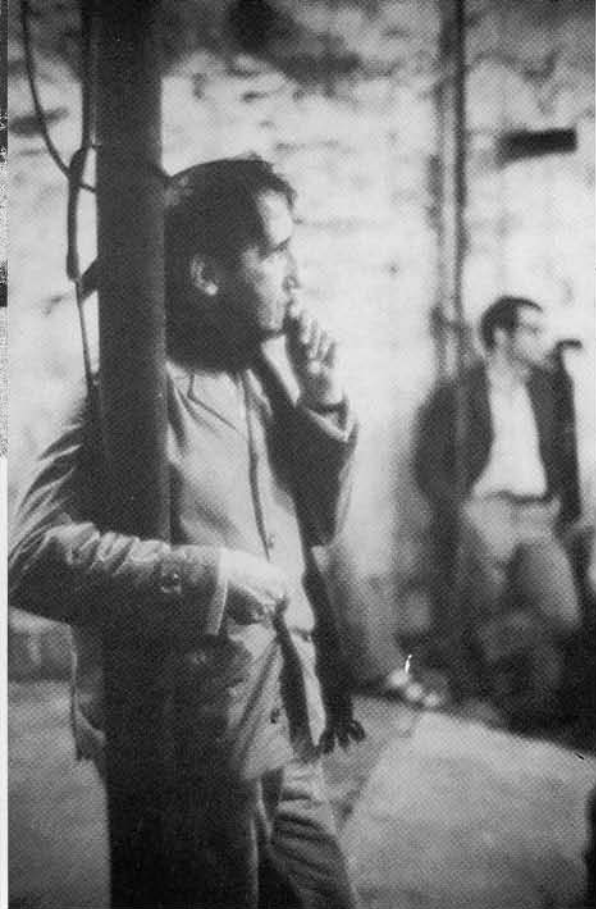


Leith Walk shop windows installation

Joseph Beuys speaking at the Black And White Oil Conference 1974







Tadeusz Kantor at the Poorhouse, Edinburgh

*International University* was concerned. *The Black and White Oil Conference* provided Beuys with an opportunity to reveal the face of the artist as 'social sculptor'. It was also the culminating event of *Edinburgh Arts '74*. The event brought together politicians, energy experts, religious leaders, educationalists, media people, students, artists and the venerable laureate of Scottish poetry, Hugh MacDiarmid, to consider the vital question of energy. Demarco also secured the attendance of Buckminster Fuller. Fuller was a clear headed polymath in an age of monocular myopia. His interests extended from conventional engineering to geodesic-dome construction by way of systems analysis and domestic architecture. Demarco had a penchant for utopian architects, he also persuaded the visionary 'arcologist' Paolo Soleri to give a lecture to *Edinburgh Arts '74*. Two of the participants were members of Soleri's Cosanti Foundation which was based in the Arizona desert. Soleri sought to unite ecology with architecture, hence the concept of 'arcologies'. One of the 'arcologies' was, and still is, under construction in Arizona. Energy, utopian architecture, ecology and technology were as much the proper concern of



Caroline Tisdall, Beuys and Buckminster Fuller listening to Gavin Strang at The Black and White Oil Conference 1974

artists in 1974 as the designing of pyramids or the construction of flying buttresses and rose windows had been their ancestors. *Edinburgh Arts* embraced the neolithic shamanism of Beuys and Argyll's stone circles as well as the futurism of speculators like Fuller and Soleri. It literally stretched from the earth to the sun.

This article is from an unpublished book titled *Finisteré – A Memoir of Richard Demarco 1962-1980*.

Charles Stephens has written the introduction to the catalogue accompanying the Beuys exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1993. His article 'I see the land of Macbeth: Joseph Beuys and Scotland' appeared in *Variant* No.6, 1988.

Demarco's *Scotland and the New Europe*, an exhibition held in Glasgow in late 1992, was the first exhibition since the closing of his Edinburgh gallery earlier that year, after 26 years. He founded the *Demarco Gallery East Europe Art Foundation* in 1991, aiming to promote the experience of British Art in Budapest. *Edinburgh Arts* journeys will be continued.

Photographs courtesy R. Demarco.

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EDINBURGH ARTS FESTIVAL CATALOGUE 1975  
 Edinburgh Arts Festival Catalogue



Film Still from *No Skin Off My Ass*



Cover from Pride Production's *No Skin Off My Ass*

## REPORT



# Money is'nt homophobic

**New Queer Cinema  
Conference,  
Institute for  
Contemporary Arts  
London  
September 1992**

*Ewan Morrison*

If Queer culture is the most happening, radically transgressive movement of the moment then as one of the many active audience members pointed out, there is nothing less 'Queer' than paying twenty quid to sit at a conference in the ICA. Such events usually signal the end of an era, a name fixed to the end of a dead movement, presented retrospectively within an institution. Queer cinema though has this unusual quality of revelling within it's own commercial status, embracing its own name, selling itself. Since mainstream distributors have discovered that there is a vast guaranteed audience for films by gay and lesbian filmmakers, the margins have found themselves pushed centre stage. There is a new market, a new audience, a new term, and new scope for sexual identities. We are 'queer', we just got here, and we're going to stay - as long as the money lasts.

Whilst much debating was done to try to define exactly what 'Queer' might mean, it became apparent that it was of greater value to define what it is not. Definition is always a question of exclusion, and it is precisely the exclusive and fixed identities of '80s gay and lesbian culture that Queer tries to re-address. A whole section of gay and lesbian history has been revised and rejected. The '80s were so preoccupied with positive images that the 'perverse' and the diverse had become marginalised. Remember all those circular arguments about whether transvestites were acceptable within the gay community, whether drag queens were insulting to women, and whether S+M was ideologically sound?

Within the gay community the assertion that gay men should be seen as 'real men', created a stereotyped role model that was at odds with the womens' movement and that pushed feminine men and gender bending firmly back into the closet. The ideological correctness of lesbian politics had excluded not only men and gay men, but many dykes who were into role playing and S&M. And then there was always the problem of the bisexual. Bisexuals have always been frowned upon as thrill seeking gender tourists who were too afraid or ashamed to take up the responsible position of a real gay or lesbian identity. Queer blows the distinction between these rigidly defined sexual identities and opens up the possibility of fluidity and polysexuality. Camp is back, sex is sexier, changing sexual identity can be as simple as buying a new wardrobe. Political correctness is out, and positive images have been rejected to the point where self exploitation is a new right on the agenda. All the old derogatory terms have been turned on their heads and invested with a new positivity. This may sound like some promised utopia of plurality, but such a transition is not without its differences and difficulties. While the old arguments still exist, there is a new awareness of the fact that being divided is intrinsic to being conquered. An awareness that, as Derek Jarman pointed out, is in no small part due to the need for community, which has grown out of AIDS activism.

There is nothing like a bit of financial success for shaking the foundations of years of resistance and strategy. Theory

and criticism that developed in the isolation of the margins, may now seem obsolete. Su Friedrich, (director of *Sink or Swim, and Damned If You Don't*), warned of the implications behind the mainstream push towards narrative, proposing that lesbian filmmakers were in danger of losing their critical background in the rush towards acceptance. As she pointed out, the formal concerns of a film cannot be separated from its content, Queer cinema cannot just accept the conventions of narrative as the evolution of narrative has been totally complicit with representations of monogamous heterosexuality. In the same way that homosexuality has been perceived as stemming from immature and maladapted heterosexuality, so too Experimental film has been seen as a phase which is passed through on the way to mature narrative filmmaking.

In contrast Isaac Juliens, (director of *Looking for Langston* and *Young Soul Rebels*) welcomed the commodification of Queer cinema and could see no point in holding onto what he termed 'remnants of '70s high modernist anti-narrative criticism'. Again there is a danger of categorisation and exclusion from a position of power. Commercially successful filmmakers such as Juliens should be wary of the fact that where you are in relation to the money may determine your political position. As Friedrich replied to Juliens -"I don't think anyone chooses to make themselves a minority". The reality of the situation is that within Queer cinema, work by Lesbian filmmakers is still relatively under-funded, under-exposed and undistributed, and there is an obvious hierarchy with gay men on the top of the money pile. Much of the work by women is being filmed and/or released on video, which means that it is often excluded from film festivals and is reaching a smaller and more private audience. This is regrettable as it is work by women which is really pushing the limits of queerness. Claudia Schillinger's *Between bends and blends* gender roles with an erotic forcefulness that has potential to unleash the latent bisexuality of its audience. Annie Sprinkle's and Maria Beatty's *The Sluts and Goddesses Video Workshop* is a sex education video which unlike its mainstream counterparts does not set up a new norm of sexual behaviour, but pro-

motes a diverse range of sexual pleasure so extreme that it makes being Queer seem more like a life's work than a passing trend.

Derek Jarman stressed the continuity between narrative and experimental forms within his own oeuvre, commenting that he found making *Edward II* a liberating experience, in that he proved to himself and to everyone else how easy it was to work with narrative and opened up a form



Film Still from *No Skin Off My Ass*

of representation from which he had previously felt excluded. Similarly Tom Kalin (director of *Swoon*) proposed that it was necessary to adopt narrative forms in order to deconstruct their traditions: Using narrative as a means of looking critically at the history of homosexual and lesbian identities, revealing the problematic dark areas, the negative representations, the mysogony of gay men, the gender inequality, the class and racial issues, and the internalisation of power relations within personal relationships. The developing role of characterisation within narrative is central to this project. There is a need to get away from the mute eroticisation of anonymous bodies, that was typified by early films such as Jarman's *Sebastian* towards understanding the social background in which characters exist. The static tableau 'embrace' may have expressed the right to portray gay and lesbian sexualities and to challenge a heterosexual audience, but this form of confrontational representation was devoid of emotional content, and expressed sexuality without in itself being sexy. The

new films such as Todd Haynes *Poison* and Pratibha Parmar's *Khush* and indeed Jarman's *Edward II*, have an erotic sensuality to them which is directly a result of their use of characterisation and the creation of emotional responses through the seduction of narrative.

While it may be of use to try to pinpoint changes in strategy, it is of little value to try to define and prescribe a singular Queer aesthetic. There should be freedom to work on many fronts and within different forms and formats. Format however, is an ongoing problem. Whilst feminist film theory problematised the use of narrative, its oppositional practices cannot be blamed entirely for the marginalisation of women's cinema. It is largely a question of finance as female directors wanting to work with narrative still don't have the same access to feature length film funding that the big boys do. Working with narrative does not necessarily mean rejecting years of critique, as criticism is a question of context. The mainstream must be addressed, and exploring the compromises this may entail should be seen as a challenge. Without this critical background however, it is inconceivable that we would have got to where we are today, and Queer cinema would be directionless. The question is how to move on without becoming subsumed.

So is there a New Queer Cinema or simply a new Queer distribution network? A long term project or a market trend? One would hope that Queer cinema will exist as long as we have money enough in our pockets to be its audience, but as filmmakers we should be wary of selling ourselves short in the name of free enterprise. Money may not be homophobic, but it is still to a large degree, racist and sexist. If the promised Utopia of Queer is to be more than just a name, then its financial base has got to expand to include and promote work by women and queers of colour. Otherwise 'Queer' will simply repeat the failures of 'Gay'; a term which was first intended to cross both gender and race.

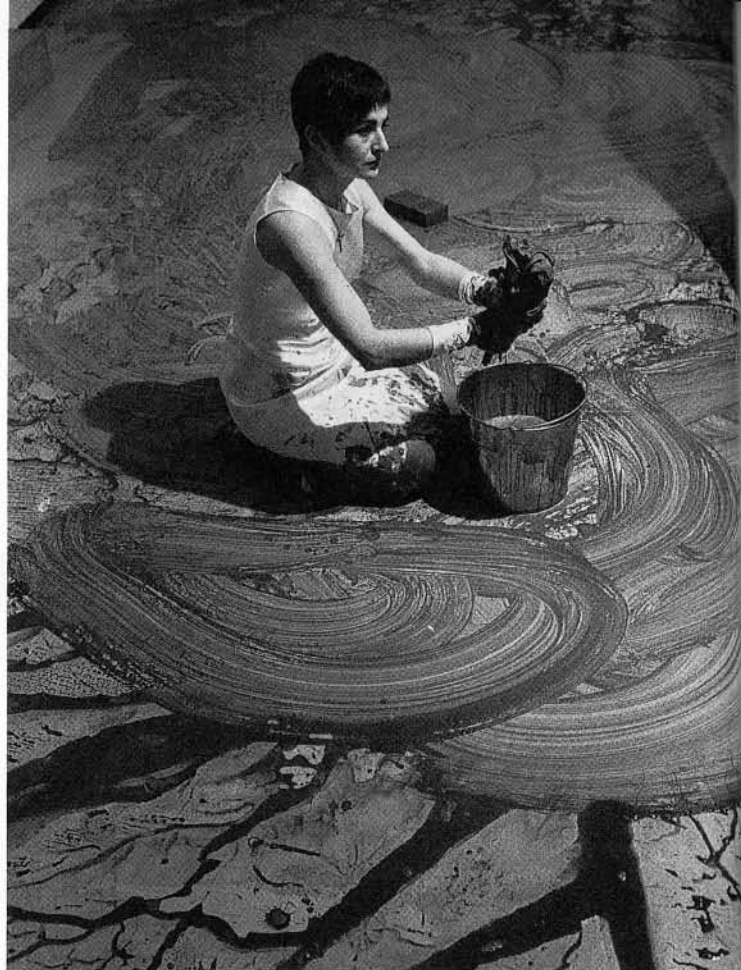
**Bruce La Bruce's 'No skin off my ass' is on Pride Video Productions Ltd, PRI 11004, distributed by Simitar Entertainment.**



# ANNPAC

## *The Status of the Canadian Artist in the Nineties*

Simon Herbert



Sharon Alward Totentanz Plug In Inc. Photo: Sheila Spenee

### REPORT



Since the mid-seventies, ANNPAC – *The Association of the National Non-profit Artist's Centres* – has been at the core of one of the most remarkable developments in any nation's history of artistic practice. From the East coast to the West coast of this massive continent, it has provided a forum for defining the role of the visual artist in a range of differing contexts. If it has a tenet, it would be unapologetically to lobby for a system of evolving discourse and communication that incorporates – rather than excludes – the presence of the artist as a crucial and active participant in contemporary Canadian society.

This may not appear too radical at first glimpse; after all, questions relating to social responsibility are raised in microcosm on every Arts Council funding form, and most artists in the United Kingdom would make similar claims about the aspirations of their individual practice. However, there are two basic points about ANNPAC that serve to illustrate just how far behind we are in prioritising the importance of our artists.

Firstly, as the title suggests, ANNPAC is unique, in that a process of self-determination is not carried out by a bureaucracy that lobbies on behalf of the professional practitioner, but is run by artists themselves. ANNPAC represents over 70 artist-run spaces (also known as parallel spaces) that form a chain of communication, exchange and distribution across Canada. Each space is run collectively, with a small paid core of staff working in tandem with a management board (also artists) which provide a mechanism for both financial accountability and artistic monitoring. Although the individual remit of each space may vary widely in terms of artistic focus (spaces in denser, urban populations are more likely to engage with issue-based and progressive art forms, whilst more rural centres are more likely to focus on craft and folk art), the national organisation as a whole consciously avoids the divisive pitfalls in debating the worthiness of one art form over another. This therefore allows artists to work within the historical and contemporary perspectives of their own regions whilst simultaneously implement-

ing a mandate which politically supports the aims and objectives of the Association on a national scale.

Secondly, despite the massive potential problems of bonding together a coalition of macramé weavers and performance artists (presenting work in radically different geo-political contexts and environments ranging from the trendy streets of Toronto to the snow-bound ranges of Nova Scotia), it works. Artists are, by their nature, critical creatures, and the Annual General Meeting that I attended was certainly not short of people willing to point out ANNPAC's shortcomings; however, any criticisms raised were inherently part of a desire to evolve the Association into a unit which more effectively represented the wishes of its members. Unlike the situation in Britain, where artists are divorced from the decision-making apparatus, the guiding Canadian principle (at least) is one of constructive self-criticism. Any gathering in which utopians

and dystopians sit together will never be one of perfect harmony, but perhaps the reason that they come together again every year is that both voices can be heard.

The roots of why ANNPAC was formed, and still exists, may point to why this is. In the late seventies there was little doubt that the arts in Canada were in crisis, specifically with regard to representing the voice of the alternative practitioner. Divorced from the conservatism of mainstream institutions, isolated from practitioners thousands of miles away working in a similar manner, unwilling to propagate modernist methodologies of art production, hungry for new contexts for artistic frisson and dismissive of a nationalist art style, which ignored the status of the female artist – groups of artists did what their colleagues in other countries started to do: set up alternative spaces. In time-honoured fashion, this usually involved a collective of motivated practitioners temporarily taking over a disused space (or public area) in order to provide a catalytic flag to rally around. Also in time-honoured fashion, these interventions were almost always inevitably brief, a lack of sustainable

funds and organisational burn-outs being the principal factors.

In most countries, things would have ended there. Certainly, the European model is still marked by cycles of activity and inactivity, with very few collectives sustaining their events long enough for funding infrastructures to take notice (in the present recession, it is tempting to think that we will have missed the boat forever). However, in 1972 the **Canadian Council** (the equivalent of the Arts Councils) invited visible arts activists to discuss a possible



Photo: Michelle Anne Duguay

package of funding that would represent the alternative voice. The immediate aim was to initiate communication between disparate geographical loci, and was partially fuelled by the formation of the **Canadian Artists' Representation**, a loose-knit group of artists who began to develop guidelines for minimum artists' fees.

The result was a pilot project in which 17 artist-run centres – *Parallel Co-operative galleries* – were formed. A key point of criteria for support was a demonstrated ability to raise a portion of core funding on a provincial level. Each Canadian province has a representative arts body similar to England's Regional Arts Boards – Manitoba Arts Council, Alberta Arts Council, etc.

Armed with a mixture of core and programme funding from both federal and provincial sources, the Parallel spaces embarked on a series of provincial initiatives which gave rise to a 'Renaissance' of Canadian alternative art. Whilst artists such as Chris Burden and Vito Acconci made performances in the United States, Stuart Brisley enraged critics in Britain, 'poetrie concrete' flourished in France, and the avant-garde generally flourished across the

globe, an astonishing confluence of Canadian artists worked on installations, interventions, video programmes, temporary site-specific sculptures, and anything else that they could bend to their collective imagination – from "sea to shining sea", (as A.A. Bronson puts it in the subjective history of artist-initiated activity in Canada).

Throughout the eighties, ANNPAC expanded its membership, and at its peak represented over sixty members and thirty associate members (initial restrictions on the existence of no more than two collectives in a large population centre were eventually lifted). As the membership swelled, so did the diversity of issues of art production and presentation. What is perhaps most surprising about the Association, then and today, is the non-competitive nature of its members; the divisive parochialism and paranoia so evident in British culture is not so readily apparent in Canada. Whilst it would be naive to say that

such a large coalition does not generate internal envy and disaffection, it is also true to say that group recognition of the status of the artist as cultural worker goes a long way to healing or suppressing in-fighting.

Nevertheless, the AGM in September 1992 addressed a number of internal crises. Approximately 100 artists descended on the small town of Moncton, New Brunswick, from points all over Canada. It's members saw this time as one of renewal, a chance to actually meet those other artists who have been a disembodied voice over the telephone for the last twelve months. Seated around a huge table, they debated and shaped issues for two days, defining their national policy for the next year, as well as discussing broader topics of artistic practice over the previous two days in a more informal conference format. All those present demonstrated a need for – as many put it – "renewal". Although membership of the Association had grown exponentially throughout the eighties, its structural apparatus had remained inert. Any infrastructure will lag behind the expectations of its members; but this factor, coupled with limited re-

sources (the Association is run on an approximate annual budget of \$300,000), a geographical base in Ontario which makes 'hands-on' contact with individual members virtually impossible, and an equivalent rise in complex issues of parallel critical cultural production, meant that the Executive 'head' of the ANNPAC 'body' has been operating under a form of crisis management for the last five years. Over this period, many of its members began to feel isolated, especially when the last three AGM's consisted of attempting to turn the ocean liner on a better course, rather than diving into the waters of artistic discourse. The 1992 conference was, therefore, marked by an ambitious agenda which proposed radical internal re-structuring: a proposal which in itself, in the words of the Executive, "has taken five years in identifying the most crucial issues to pull out of an immensely complex range of debates".

Another factor in the urgency for structural renewal came out of larger issues of Canadian life, principally the issue of self determination for French-speaking Quebec. Just as issues of identity and hegemony have eluded clear-cut resolutions for the Canadian populace (the national referendum, held on the 26th of October, did not offer a "yes" or "no" vote which could be remotely polarised into a left or right-wing choice. The "no" majority that emanated from the polling booths signalled two things: firstly, that Canadians were unwilling – or unable – to resolve such a complex issue, and, secondly, that they saw the matter as less of a priority than a need to focus on national economic growth). So has it divided the artistic community. The 1991 AGM marked the worst crises in the history of the Association when the Quebec artist's caucus—**RCAAQ** (*Regroupement des Centres d'Artistes Autogeres de Quebec*) walked out, advising all other members to similarly withdraw.

Its basic complaint was that the Association fundamentally misrepresented all its members, as it would not fully accept all the RCAAQ's propositions in regard to the larger issue of independence. Such an assertion marks one of those strange moments when 'larger' issues impinge on the relatively 'cocooned' world of the artist. Consequently, it provoked particularly ve-

hement discussion among artists, whose own passion and historical struggle for self-determination both converged and diverged with a minority within its own lobbying body.

A key demand of the RCAAQ was that the association accept all new members that were nominated; as the Quebec caucus was operating an open door policy of accepting any and all comers (raising its provincial membership from 14 to 40

Issues of representation were therefore high on the AGM agenda, particularly with regard to incorporating the voice of the 'other'. As in Britain, there is intensive debate surrounding issues of participation by artists of colour. Consequently, an Advisory Committee for Anti-Racism Implementation was formed "to provide support and resources for artists, potential artists from targeted communities – First Nations, Black, Asian, South-Asian and other



Photo: Michelle Anne Duguay

groups in a short period of time), this raised issues about the disproportionate size of the RCAAQ as a lobby group within ANNPAC, and, more importantly, about the suspension of the usual criteria of membership – the question of 'what defines an artist-run centre?' One year on, the impasse was still evident. Although some Association members based in Quebec have retained their membership, both in terms of ideological support for the Association, as well as hoping to form a bridge that might eventually bring the two groups back to the discussion table, little appears to have been achieved yet. The situation is not without irony; the Association was formed partially to combat the geographical isolation of its members, yet it is the same issue of geographical determination which has split it. The current hope is that in time the split will be healed, and in some ways is an example of the members' determination to address the complexities of Canadian national life.

*Peoples of Colours – to become part of the artistic and cultural process, to bring forward the reality of the vision".*

The basic contention of the group – known as the **Pre-Minquon-Panchayat Council** – was the possibilities for multi-cultural artistic activity would only increase when the multi-cultural voice is heard from a position of authority within the ANNPAC Management Committee. Since it's formation, the Management Committee has consisted of a representative from each of the provinces, acting as a conduit of information exchange between ANNPAC and it's members. The most fundamental recommendation of the Pre-Minquon-Panchayat Council was to appoint a second provincial representative who would effectively implement non-racist policies.

Acceptance of the proposal hinged on a number of complex issues, which will be familiar to any British artist/administrator who has delved into the murky waters of multi-culturalism. The Arts Council's own



attempts to instigate a proportional financial allocation for multi-cultural activities failed to materialise. Known as the 4% scheme, it proposed that its clients allocate 4% of funds to multicultural activity. Some of its detractors came from the community it proposed to serve, claiming that any organisation could consider its provision met without spending a penny over the 4%, and also that, as the percentage was so small, it could only be allocated to exhibitions & events, as opposed to actually employing a multi-cultural worker within an organisational infrastructure. The Pre-Minquin-Panchayat Council's proposal raised similar areas of potential ideological conflict. First, was it appropriate for an association which represented a hugely diverse range of art forms and philosophies to give disproportionate resources to a single issue (for instance, would this mean a women's caucus, or gay caucus, could accept a similar response?). Some artists present, whilst supporting the need for recognition, felt that ANNPAC was not the appropriate body, and the Pre-Minquin-Panchayat Council should be set up as an independent unit. Outside of the meeting format, there was talk of 'multicultural terrorism' and also, that in terms of the general recession, operations of artist-run centres, all members of the AGM, could consider themselves as outsiders.

There were doubts also about the effectiveness of the proposal. Members of the Management Council do not have a mandate to dictate programming to individual centres. In effect, each organisation could operate its own policies regardless of this new representation. A Director of an avant-garde space generally works, it could be said, from a Eurocentric perspective, one in which interventionist strategies are not necessarily complemented by a show of Aboriginal folk art.

The opposite argument to all of this, of course, is that such issues have been debated *ad nauseam* for years, with no demonstrated handover to the multi-cultural community. In addition, the assumption that Aboriginal art continues to evolve purely via a tradition of folk art is fallacious, given the growing number of multi-media and installation works which address the perspectives of Canada's First

Nations. Maybe ANNPAC was not the appropriate organisation to deal with the issue, but the fact that the proposal went through with no objections voiced, illustrates that a room-full of artists will usually follow the path of empowerment, regardless of potential future risks. The Council's findings are to be reviewed over a two-year period, and there is little doubt that they will generate much further discussion. As for the work of its artists, the process is one of experimentation and inclusion.

In this respect, it was difficult as an observer to remain dispassionate; artist-run centres are few and far between in the UK, yet here was a room full of artists who were forging a path of self-determination. Aware of the complexities of their debates, they would return to their own centres, share information with a board also made up of practising artists, and continue to contribute to a contemporary cultural dialogue. In recessionary times, Association members are feeling the pinch as much as their British counterparts, yet they have a different form of security to fall back upon: a sense of history, a sense that the status of the artist is – if not protected – then at least consolidated by the collective efforts of so many.

Unfortunately, history does not count for much beyond its own advocates. Like arts infrastructures world-wide, ANNPAC is faced with destabilising forces looming on the recessionary event horizon. Not only are its individual members generally receiving stand-still grants in inflationary times, but the Canada Council is commonly perceived to be an eventual casualty of devolution.

Reactions to the possible dismantling of the Canada Council are mixed; some argue that it reflects the inherent conservatism of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's New Democratic Party; others state that the Canada Council has acted as a bulwark that at least attempts to protect grass root strategies and communications. However, no one doubts the potential catastrophic loss of funding support to ANNPAC, should core federal support be dissipated to the provinces. The organisation as a whole would be forced to put together an incredibly complex coalition funding policy, dealing with each province individually rather than receiving a block fund from a

single federal source. In addition, each **Provincial Art Board** incorporates radically different processes and criteria for their cultural mandate (for example many PABs actively distance themselves from using a peer assessment panel, a selection process in which professional artists and administrators are the critical arbitrators for directing portions of provincial funds), some of which may be at odds with the Association's ideological aspirations.

Even if such an approach could be successfully co-ordinated, there is no evidence, as yet, that devolved monies would go directly to the Provincial Art Boards. By abrogating responsibility for 'culture' to the provinces, the NDP is in effect inviting a new mandate for the definition of 'culture'. As we have seen in Britain, bureaucracies prefer the concept of 'heritage', and visual artists in Canada may lose out on a number of counts: the museum lobby, the favouring of prestige activities such as ballet and opera, or just the fact that new bodies would divert what relatively small monies exist to a magnified administrative core.

In the final analysis, the danger of cultural funds being directed towards, say, a skating rink cannot be ignored (witness the formation of our own Sports and Heritage fund). However, through the efforts of ANNPAC and its members, the role of the contemporary artist has symbiotically intertwined itself with the national character in a way far more profound than other western countries. Pragmatic pessimism may be borne out, yet it remains difficult to be unimpressed by the future power which will be exerted by a group of artists who recognise the vital need for their inclusion in society at a fundamental level.

**Simon Herbert** is currently Guest Curator at the *Plug In Gallery* in Winnipeg, Canada.

Thanks to the following members of the ANNPAC executive for their help and enthusiasm: Helen LaRoche (President), Robert Labossiere (Managing Director) and Nancy Shaw (Vice-President).

Thanks also to Monika Gagnon and Anne-Marie Beneteau of *Parallogramme*, and Diane Shantz of *Gallery 101*.

For more information on ANNPAC, the Association's magazine – *Parallogramme* – provides a quarterly analysis of Canadian culture and debate. Contact: *Parallogramme* 183 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Canada MST 2R7 Tel: 0101 869 3854.

## LETTERS



Dear Variant,

We would like to reply to your recent feature on Edge by 'Ronnie Kael'. Though well researched, it contains a web of half-truths, complete untruths and innuendoes which we have decided not to try and unravel. The article is written on the 'where there's smoke there's fire' principle and to get involved in the game of allegation and counter-allegation would feed the conflagration your writer no doubt desired.

We are not afraid of criticism though, and Edge 92 had many managerial problems for which we can only take responsibility. However we would like to address the thrust of the article which seems to arrive at a conclusion that reflects an overall tendency of Variant's policy, one that becomes increasingly at odds with your growing professionalism, scope and outlook. It suggests that those working in the independent sector of the visual arts should necessarily limit their activities to a certain level, that when an event becomes so large and complex as to have a major European and international significance it must automatically be ideologically suspect. The metaphor of the plucky (regional) outsiders versus the metropolitan/international sophisticates getting too big for their own boots is brought into play. Is this really a metaphor that a European cultural journal published in Scotland wishes to cultivate forever?

Edge came out of an 'alternative' art practice, created by individuals, not by policy or decree. Your article would have us believe this changed overnight, the organisation sprouting into an arrogant bureaucratic monster. But it was always a fragile undertaking, stemming as it did from outside the museum/gallery/educational system. To organise an exhibition involving difficult and demanding art simultaneously in two European cities was maybe a mad challenge. We took it on and some great work was produced in both cities (it's a pity such an emphasis in the press has been on our problems, rather than the outstanding efforts of the artists concerned), but as many may have heard by now our financial difficulties became too great and despite our efforts to save it the Board of Trustees decided to allow the company producing Edge 92 to be compulsorily wound up in late July. Criticisms of the volume raised in

the article thus prove to be a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Finally we would like to question your use of pseudonyms, or collective names in serious critical features such as this one by 'Ronnie Kael' and that on Projects UK by 'Alex Fulton'. Everyone knows that pseudonyms are used for writings as artworks, and more dubiously as a way to editorialise plugs. But these articles raise serious points. So why are Ronnie and Alex so scared of being identified by your readers? I think we should be told.

Rob La Frenais  
8 Arrow House, Phillip Street  
London N1 5NX

Tracey Warr  
1 Fountain Row, Spital Tongues  
Newcastle Upon Tyne

Dear Variant,

Since leaving the Edge organisation in January '92 I have, in part, been establishing a new project and time-based arts commissioning facility for the North of England. As part of this research I have met a number of artists and arts workers who were involved in Edge and, in support of the prescient Comment item in the last issue, have repeatedly come across very strong feelings of anger and frustration stemming from the dramatic crash of the Edge organisation in July of '92. The main reasons for this response is the absence of information, the complacent silence by the main participants and lack of any Arts Council response to the Edge collapse.

There is little doubt that Edge 92 and the nature of its demise have damaged the status of this area of practice in this country and abroad. Sadly, the atmosphere of 'schadenfreude' is almost palpable and I have yet to meet either an artist or arts worker who will admit to having had a positive or pleasurable experience with Edge, indeed many now regret their involvement. In the confusing circumstances of a collapse such as this where allegations follow counter-allegations and culpability is difficult to

apply or is avoided, artists or individuals are reluctant to speak out for fear of isolation or damaging their strategic relationships with other arts organisations or principal funding bodies.

Artists and arts workers are a disparate group with neither a form of recourse in cases of exploitation or abuse or a system of supportive, collective representation to these powerful patrons. The Arts Councils silence and inaction appears to be evidence that the interests of a small group of administrators are of higher value than those of a much larger group of artists, the audience, arts workers, volunteers, etc. The reasons for Edge's financial difficulties and eventual downfall are unknown but it is a fact that numerous small businesses, artists and others are helpless creditors and/or in debt. Further, fuelled by rumour and speculation, Edge 92 is being perceived, perhaps wrongly, as an example of managerial and financial incompetence and damaging to artists' reputations and careers. The list of creditors and the ruined reputations of those involved in Edge is a high enough price to pay but it is a situation that can be treated quickly and positively.

I and others feel that the Arts Council, embarrassment aside, should commission (and quickly publish) an independent review of Edge 92 that identifies the problems and makes recommendations that address, amongst other things, the protection of artists rights and the promotion of professional practice for this area of work. This document could feed into the work already begun by Northern Arts and the National Artists Association towards an Artists Charter (part of the preparations of Year of Visual Art 1996) but would be seen as a much needed, positive, pro-artist gesture of commitment to the future.

Jon Bewley  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Dear Rob and Tracy,

Where there's smoke there usually is fire, or an attempt to dampen the impending outbreak. The liquidation of Edge does not negate the points made in Ronnie Kael's 'Comment' piece carried in the last issue and your letter suggesting that it contained 'half-truths' and 'untruths' doesn't cut much ice unless your'e prepared to deal with them.

The ACGB did advance £77,000 for the year 92/93 and the DTI did award £15,000 as an advance for a Richard Wilson installation in Seville which did not take place and which they attempted to retrieve. The ACGB awarded a further £18,000, £10,000 of which was to replace a grant awarded to Virginia Nimarkoh which Edge is allegedly to have spent, despite the fact that this was an independent award. Some people would lead me to believe that this was more, but let's stick with conservative estimates. There was an error in Ronnie's original figures, however, in that the Australia Council did not contribute £5,000 as he stated but A\$40,000 (perhaps around £20,000?) for a project in Perth as part of Edge 92, which again did not take place. Erring on the side of caution we might say that in addition to the original £320,000 awarded to Edge, a further £130,000 was found, but apparently it was not enough to avert disaster.

The issue here, however, is the scale of the money involved. Where did it go? Another issue is the position of Variant. It is not a question of organisational initiatives growing to a certain level that you assume this magazine resents, but the mode of operation that seems to accompany increased funding, that is, an increased inability to do anything interesting with it and in the increased distance between facilitators and artists. I have never personally thought of Edge as a bureaucratic monster, but now I would say it was just badly managed. The implication that Variant promotes a parochial bias at the expense of an international perspective exposes your thought patterns rather than any 'pluckiness' on the magazines part.

The use of pseudonyms in Variant is not widespread and is not something I gener-

ally agree with when it comes to public speech. The 'Comments' section in Variant is designed for polemical points of view (but not exclusively so). A great deal of self-censorship exists in the art community due to the concentration of power and scarcity of funds. Many artists and organisers are reluctant to say what they really feel for fear of recrimination. On that basis, our guidelines state that pseudonyms can be used on the condition that I am aware of the writers true identity and credibility of the facts as they are known. Ronnie Kael has reasons for not disclosing his/her name, even if I don't agree with them, but an obligation is an obligation.

I am aware of the tradition that Edge has emerged from, I have attended many Edge events and the magazine has covered some of them in four separate issues (6, 8, 9 & 10). *In addition*, there was a favourable review in the same issue that the Kael piece appeared, on the work of Pepe Espaliu and Rose Finn-Kelcey. There is always a tension between artistic appreciation and critique of the structures surrounding it, but an understanding of the distinction is critical. It is nothing personal.

Finally, the details of this fiasco should be taken up elsewhere in a public arena, as Jon Bewley's letter suggests, not without irony in my opinion, since he is an ex-Development Director of Edge. It is not the function of Variant to crucify organisations (since most manage it without assistance), but to provide a temporary platform through which debate can be generated outside of the promotion of interest groups and beyond personal gain. This is not to say that it doesn't occupy a position, however.

Malcolm Dickson  
Editor, Variant





*Tuesday the 28th of July* 1992, and they're double-parking outside the Pavillon Gabriel. Those without the fortune to be dropped from stretch limos have to fight for spaces. It's now past the time when the show was due to begin. Those waiting outside with invitations for standing room only are starting to get twitchy.

It's fashion week in Paris. All the Haute Couture fashion shows are on and today it's Louis Feraud. Haute Couture is the sharp edge of the fashion industry, an intoxicating mix of wealth, glamour and theatre. It's very much the Formula One of the business. It makes no money, but it monopolises prestige. Some of the dresses will be sold to personal clients, but personal clients who can afford to buy a dress here are few. A dress here will cost £15,000. A hat, which I was informed was a 'joke', meant to be 'funny', contains the pelts of 24 foxes. It will never be worn. But the technology invented here will be diluted and will trickle down to the ready-to-wear, eventually its traces will be seen on the boulevard. Technology or art? If the definition of a work of art as that product which lacks functionality is sufficient, then these clothes certainly might count. Many interested parties would tell you as much; after all the rich are always willing to pay for what they believe is art.

And the Parisians of the patrician class lap it up. These events get played to a maniacally fashion-conscious public with an insatiable thirst for image. Image here means substance and money. Image pushed beyond superficiality. To see this spectacle is to be initiated into the dream of pure and utter luxury, there can be no blanching before wealth here, the display is quite brazen. Fashion makes fortunes. Pierre Cardin, the couturier, bought the whole area surrounding the Pavillon, just off the Concorde in the centre of Paris, from the French government on a ninety year lease. It is now the Espace Cardin.

I'm waiting outside with all the rest. Those with seats along the catwalk have already gone in. All the photographers are in. The international clients are in: the Japanese, the Germans, the Saudis,

the Americans all augment a selection of bourgeois Parisians. See and be seen. I'm waiting for Nathalie, who is the girlfriend of Mario Bernardi, one of four stylists at Feraud. She arrives late and out of breath - we wait as she smokes a cigarette to calm her nerves. It's as if she's already been drinking or on the valium this morning. She has that lubricated nervy air, if everything engaged it might just crack apart. Mario hasn't slept for forty-eight hours with the anxiety of the final preparations.

# haute

Not only is he responsible for the conception, design, and realisation of most of Feraud's collection, at the last minute he finds out that he has to choose the music and organise the lighting or it won't get done. Mario has a long-standing bitterness towards the industry which at length he has tried to overcome with wistful irony. Now forty-five, he has been in the business forever, but gains no public recognition, and beside the oceans of capital which slosh around here, he feels as if he's on the breadline. Mario has the mentality of an artist; exclusively concerned with the life of his creations, he puts everything into them and has got trapped in the cogs of a machine driven by big money. Feraud himself is a major millionaire but apparently can't draw and doesn't know what's going to be in his show until the last moment. Mario doesn't even have the right to sign his sketches in the studio, all the credit goes to the Maître.

Finally we are let in and there is an unchic rush through the foyer into the show. We pass a bank of TV screens covering one wall which relays the show for people who can't handle the crush. The first spell of the cult of image is cast. We find a place at the back of the hall

about ten metres from the end of the catwalk.

The girls, the most expensive girls in the world, move down the catwalk like panthers, limb over limb, all grace and cold serenity. The catwalk and hoarding at the back are a simple white. As the girls come on and strike their pose in the embrasure, below the bi-lettered name of Feraud, the lights are gently coloured, switching gradually to white so we can see the colours of the dresses. The designs are not so wild just yet, the music

spectator finds himself sucked into the dream as well, seduced into the world of high fashion, living on the pages of the glamour magazines. But the separation is profound, this is all illusion. The clothes are only real in context; on these girls, in this show. For a paying client they will have to be remade. The clothes don't have a real life, it's all magic and dream.

As the show goes on, the audience responds. Feraud seems to be making a hit this year. If a model walks on with something appreciated by the crowd, she gets a ripple of applause as she returns up the catwalk. Occasionally there is a theatrical gasp of wonder as she enters and strikes her pose against the Feraud hoarding. By the time the last set is out the audience is rapt. The last set is unbelievable, a collection of evening dresses embroidered in magic stones, displaying motifs of Paris, the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe etc, but finished with the utmost taste. The dresses themselves jump like chimeras.

The show is a triumph. As the wedding dress comes out (always the last), the crowd is on its feet. Feraud appears on the catwalk, a grey head and shoulders below the two models who have taken his arms. He comes out and milks the applause of the crowd who are happy thinking they've seen everything: beauty, taste, art, money; in a word, fashion. Beauty of a sort it was, but what costly artifice to prepare the illusion!

All at once the illusion is broken. It has lasted just forty minutes. The crowd leaves, Mercedes and Aston Martins jockeying for position. The photographers pack and go to the next show of the afternoon. The catwalk is unceremoniously butchered within five minutes and replaced. I wait with Nathalie to find Mario and we go off quietly for a beer. Mario, in the sudden release from the tension and exhaustion, says he feels like crying. No one congratulates him and he won't be going to the cocktails tonight. High fashion can be an ugly business.

INSIGHT

John Paul Jones



couture

is Edith Piaf, the register of the show is assured, aiming for a steady seduction rather than a quick surprise. But there is definitely tension in the air. To warm up the crowd at a fashion show is not easy. With the savants of the business and the bourgeois Parisians it's a mixture of the hyper-critical and the ultra-inhibited. But the odd photographer among the ranks at the back next to us shouts out something to try to get a girl's attention, warm things up.

The show moves through the moods. The music picks up a beat as the cocktail and evening dresses get paraded. There is really a feast for the eyes if you are not afraid of fare too fine. The sheen of pure luxury starts to exercise fatal seduction. The richness of the materials is such that you can feel it with your eyes. The clothes don't hang like normal clothes, they sway and breathe, having a life of their own. The ornamentation on the dresses itself is something to marvel at. The dresses are jewelled, and as they coruscate under the lights, the models become transfigured; now projections of the imagination, separated from the spectator in the distance of image. To the steady hypnotic sound of the motordrive and camera shutter the



**I**F YOU WERE IN OXFORD over the weekend of the 24th and 25th of October 1992, you might have noticed billboards gradually disappearing under a tide of xerox filth, shopping streets slowly clogging up with posters strapped to lamp posts and weird little sculptures made from melted record singles emerging from the pavements like urban crop circles. What you were seeing was the results of the *Seizing the Media* congress. *Seizing the Media* brought together a diverse collection of people to discuss and put into practice the creation of subversive media. It had a twin purpose; to connect people from a variety of different areas and to project this contact into the streets of Oxford.

The sixty to seventy participants came from wide ranging concerns: green groups from round the UK and the Netherlands as

well as local anarchists, Anticopyright – a network of people producing and using flyposters, *Race Against Time* - a world wide walk by two gay men with AIDS from the US, computer networks - from the UK, *Community Information Network*, *ArtNet* and *Fast Breeder* and people from the US involved in constructing other 'virtual communities', *Riot Grrrl* - female hardcore bands and 'shit-stirring hussies', *Miss Akira* from *Radio Patapoe* - an experimental pirate radio from Amsterdam, *Despite TV*, and *Californian Labor Video* - radical video producers, along with many others who aren't so easily tagged by organisation.

The variety of media seized over the weekend ranged from video to flyposting. When relatively high technology was used it was always the most readily available - and cheap. Mass produced electronic tools were utilised because they did the job, or did it differently, not just because they were 'new'. Machines originally intended for business use become almost reinvented when used to enable dialogue rather than order giving. They were used with tools whose ancestry is almost as old as the human body. In this way, photocopiers, personal computers, scissors, consumer grade video, buckets of paste and paper, when brought into conjunction with people - with their needs and dreams synthesised - an array of possibilities can be both realised and glimpsed. Typifying this most over the weekend was the scene in the work-room where scraps of colour, hissing copiers, computer generated imagery and torn up magazines deftly composed themselves into amazing, chaotic arrangements which gradually became resolved as posters and billboards.

The image and text manipulating techniques used in the billboard 'improvements' made over the weekend, can be loosely categorised as being of three varying types: Scattershot collages, which were often the quickest to make, involved the use of raw material from magazines - images of glamorous products, headlines proclaiming the ultimate in lifestyle choices - all destroyed by the feedback generated by their over-amplification or a lacerating few words. Many people at the congress used this method as it didn't require the production of any new imagery; given our saturation in advertising it is a language we are all familiar

with and are readily able to manipulate when the possibility arises. Secondly, the production of entirely new billboards is a seemingly massive task made easy by the enlarging capability of photocopiers. Several groups or individuals were able to almost completely obliterate full billboards with images and text totally discordant with their usual message. Lastly, replacing the wording of advertisements with new text is made easier and more effective by the availability of desk top publishing systems where the typeface for the addition can be matched up with that used on the poster allowing the cheap and seamless derailment of these highly polished, highly expensive, persuasion machines.

Importantly, all the funding and publicity for the event - which had no fixed entry fee - was generated by the participants who were largely on the dole or in low paid jobs. Organisational support was provided largely by Bloomin' Arts (a community arts centre for East Oxford where the congress was held), Oxfin (a local independent resource centre) and people involved in Anticopyright. Whilst not advocating an avoidance of grant aid, this example points to the possibility of constructing vital cultural activity beyond official administration, corporate sponsorship and scrabbling for the pitifully few grants available.

Implicit in the idea of the event was that participants blurred the division between artists and activists. The concerns were - and remain - the same; to open up new channels for the spread of information, ideas and action and to creatively challenge the mainstream media.

That people were able to work and talk together so effectively does not disguise the fact that disagreements occurred or that more would have been made evident had the event been longer. Those involved in producing video work particularly had difficulty in rallying to the call made by Steve Seltzer, of Californian Labor Video, to campaign for public access to cable TV, which in Britain is almost non-existent. That such access is widely available in some areas in the States made this a useful intervention. What is important is that such interlacing of different purposes is possible and immensely productive.

Use it in the bath.

Or in the shower.



## REPORT



# SEIZING the MEDIA

Matthew Fuller