

VARIANT

a radical arts magazine



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ART CLASS SOUND SEX VIOLENCE

NO.1

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EDITORIAL QUOTES

"The way out of the ghetto and beyond the fragments (the avante-garde art world) can only be by crossover, hybridization with other sub-cultures, to connect and articulate a culture of resistance (a counter culture, if the term had'n't been pre-empted by just one subculture already) within, overlapping with and outside the dominant culture of the mediocracy. Clearly, this entails crossover between audiences as well as formal crossover and also the development of institutions, through which work can be produced, distributed, shown/bought." Peter Wollen.

"The best thing for art is for it to be treated as a hobby, an incidental thing. For after all, what do we artists, we insignificant little ants have to say? We who are nothing more than blown up frogs! Where is our influence? Where our significance? Do we change the general picture in the slightest?" George Grosz

"In 1959 the American sociologist Daniel Bell talked about the coming of a 'Post-Modern' society. A Post Industrial society in which power resides not amongst those who own the means of production but amongst those who control the flow and retrieval of information." John Roberts

"The collapse of boundaries - between cultures, between the sexes, between the arts, between performance and text - is what post-modernism is all about." Elinor Fuchs.

"Art is an alignment with the breakdown of our culture..."
John Stezaker

"There seems now to be an awareness of the falsity of an activity like art criticism which throws out terms 'isms', in collusion with the demands for rapid changes of style for the art world fashion industry.... once the terms have acquired a sufficiently broad and abstract meaning they are dropped for the next. There is no legitimation except for the in and out of fashion in which they mark out history."
John Stezaker.

"Art is the great refusal of the world as it is." Herbert Marcuse.

"...the continued existence of spectacular sub-cultures in a class ridden 'democratic' Britain testify to the fact that the creation of culture is **merely a problem of access**. No-one needs artists to tell them that anything can be art, but everyone needs art to remind them that reality can be anything - that all values are social and that everything is coded. Glyn Banks.

"Culture, being the broad effect of art, is rootedly irrational and as such is perpetually operating against the economic workaday structure of society." Jeff Nuttall.

"All rebellion expressed in the terms of art merely ends up as the new academy." Gianfranco Sanguinetti.

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HOPES & FEARS

The social situation in the mid-60's made it a challenging prospect to lay the basis for a magazine that sets out to discuss the status, role and value of art in the context of the modern world. The overall condition of art today is surprisingly sterile and involved considering the notion that as an inquiry grows in its severity, it usually breaks up being so advanced. At the same time, however, for better or for worse, ways of government are flourishing and those in power are finding it more and more difficult to contain people in normality as they play the slave compound treadmill towards the goal of despair.

Our present one is one of accumulated population in the absence of human needs and desires. Social democracy is collapsing, working-class community structures are disappearing, the old work ethic is dead and the old-style political bargaining is changing so fast it is no longer a question of accommodation between the state, bosses and trade unions, but is taking on the character of a conflict between the two separate interests.

Beneath the glamorous daydreams that pass for art, TV's and film's, and below the shallow waffle that passes as popular music, and behind the pseudo-aesthetic gestures of modern art products, the social fabric is disintegrating.



Cultural activity is once again in a no-go period.

For example, in an era of diversity and experimentation of late 60's/70's art product would appear on the face of it to be taking a back seat.

In the arts prevail accepted with the aid of New Foundation funding would be the popular music scene. After the accommodation of punk within the ruling hierarchy of the charts and the re-invention of starforn, the possibilities of a sub-culture of opposition were truly destroyed and the capitalist mode of production took over. Purely state-driven creation of those

artists who signed to the big record labels was never fully contrived except perhaps labels like Rough Trade and Factory Records, whose influence was however, vital and effective, on the whole minimal.

With such a predicament in front of those genuinely concerned with art's ability to communicate and to regenerate, it is high time to seriously discuss such issues and to contribute to the development of an independent means of communication. This should include not merely art in the dominant channels that the system uses to maintain the status quo and sell its products and which never yields debate on the role of the arts in society.

It is the unfortunate experience of many who go through official art training that the subjection of art to market forces and equality on the other hand, its subjection to marginal or ultimate truths is detrimental to the intrinsic vitality of art as an aesthetic experience or as a practical one. Anyone with a nervous system would realize that the traditional role of art education is neither conducive to creativity or of interest to the mass majority of people's needs, nor is it of much interest in furthering the great innovations that modernism has bestowed upon us: Dada, Russian Constructivism, Dadaism.

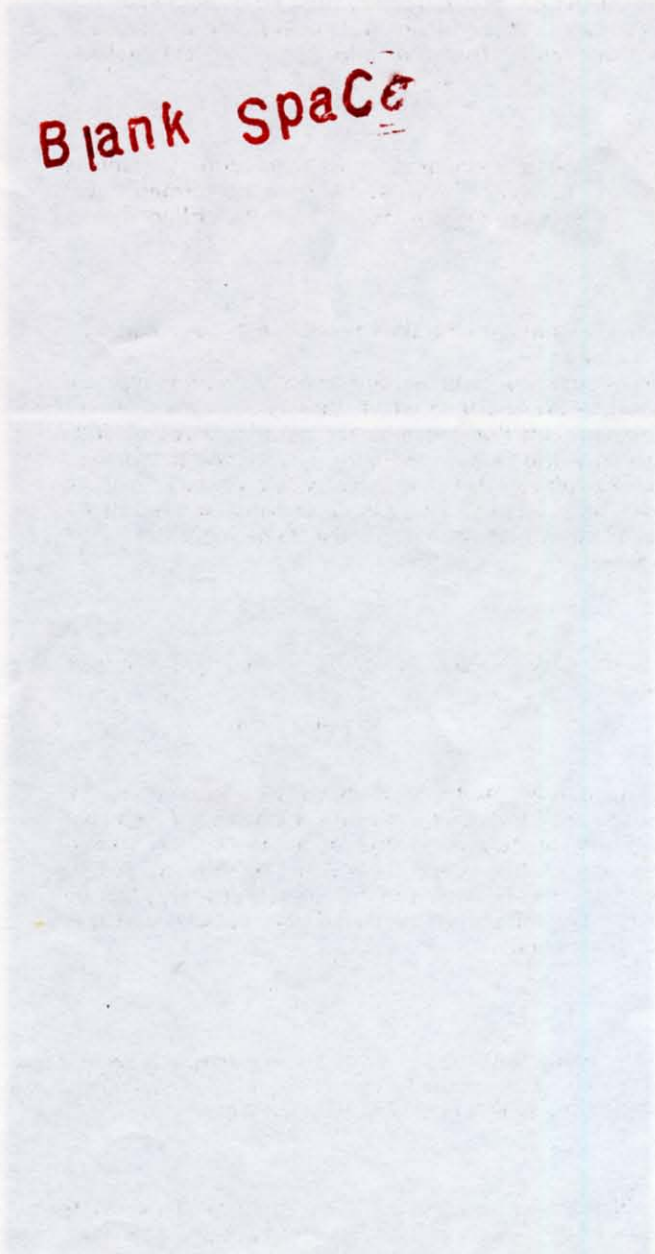


The discrepancies between what happens in the official art world and everyday experiences of people, are so evident and glaring that it is surprising that a well-thought out concerted attack on the pathetic excuse that passes as British culture through, it equally applies elsewhere has not occurred and that the theoretical

debates that dominate the art scene, in the West Coast and the East, without ever with them, without ever and attitudes that artists have exemplified with the degree of such people, the theoretical world and the actual world, their self-identified targets, they are beneath contempt. All sorts of people, who are a back to back, and all the while target a degree of self-interest and internationalism, are not so much artists as they are the result of a historical process, in considering the gap between freedom and people, or considering the difference between what people are told and what they actually want, as they are that prevent the creative role of the artist, who are someone and perhaps something, a bit, light on evidence.

What all these people, from the 1970's, with the artists, as a result of the fact that they are not so much artists as they are the result of a historical process, in considering the gap between freedom and people, or considering the difference between what people are told and what they actually want, as they are that prevent the creative role of the artist, who are someone and perhaps something, a bit, light on evidence.

Creative Blank Space



HOPES & FEARS

The social situation in the mid-80's make it a challenging project (to say the least) for a magazine that sets out to discuss the status, role and value of art in the context of the modern world. The overall condition of art today is surprisingly sterile and irrelevant considering the notion that as an inquisition grows in its severity, it usually throws up bands of visionaries. At the same time, however, for better or for worse, ways of governing are floundering and those in power are finding it more and more difficult to contain people in normality as this glorified slave compound trundles towards the peak of despair.

Our present era is one of accumulated production at the expense of human needs and desires, social democracy is collapsing, working-class community structures are disintegrating, the old work ethic is dead and the old-style political bargaining is changing so fast it is no longer a question of consolidation between the state, bosses and trade unions, but is taking on the character of a conflict between the two separate interests.

Beneath the glamorous daydreams that pass on our TV's and billboards, below the shallow waffle that passes as popular music, and behind the pseudo-aesthetic gestures of modern art product, the social fabric is disintegrating.



Cultural activity is once again in a no-go period.

For example, in art, the diversity and experimentation of late 60's/70's art product would appear (on the face of it) to be taking a back seat as cuts in the arts prevail coupled with the commercial ballyhoo of New Figurative painting. Another example would be the popular music scene, which, after the accomodation of punk within the mind-grinding banality of the charts and the re-invention of stardom, the possibilities of a sub-culture of opposition were truly destroyed and the question of the mode of production (rather than purely stage-style rebellion of those

anti-stars who signed to the big record labels) was never fully confronted; except, perhaps labels like Rough Trade and Factory Records, whose influence was, however, vital and effective, on the whole minimal.

With such a predicament in front of those genuinely concerned with arts ability to communicate and to regenerate, it is high time to seriously discuss such issues and to contribute to the development of an independent means of communication. This should bypass and intervene in the dominant channels that the system uses to maintain the status quo and sell its products and which forever avoids debate on the role of the arts in society.

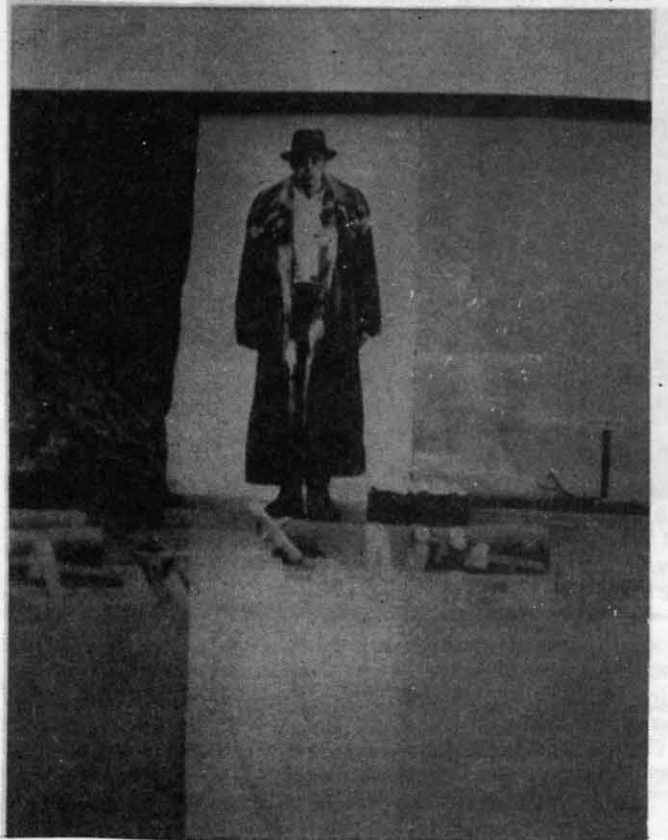
It is the unfortunate experience of many who go through 'official' art training that the subjection of art to market forces (and equally on the other hand, its subjection to morality or ultimate truths) is detrimental to the intrinsic vitality of art as an aesthetic experience or as a practical one. Anyone with a nervous system would realise that the sad spectacle of art education is neither conducive to creativity or of interest to the mass majority of people's needs, nor is it of much interest in furthering the great innovations that modernism has bestowed upon us: Dada, Russian Constructivism, Duchamp.

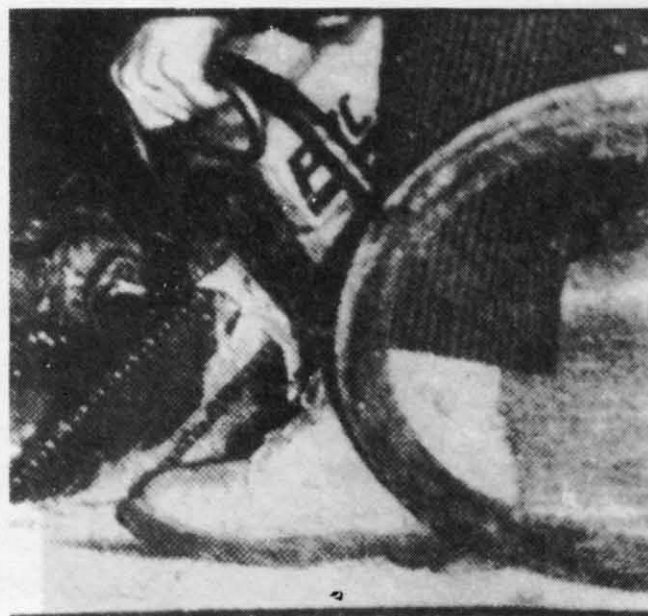


The discrepancies between what happens in the official art world and everyday experiences of people, are so apparent and glaring that it is surprising that a well-thought out concerted attack on the pathetic excuse that passes as Scottish culture (though it equally applies elsewhere) has not occurred and that the conservative

coterie that dominate the art 'scenes' in the West Coast and the East, still get away with forms of behaviour and attitudes that should have disappeared with the plague. Such people, like the international money-making cultural pimps and critics of the trans avant-garde, with their self-appointed labels, are a sort beneath contempt. All haste and no taste where there's a buck involved - and all the while forget the masses - such parochial and international 'men' are not so much as thick as shit in the neck of a bottle when it comes to considering the gap between modern art and people, or considering the difference between what people are fed and what they actually want, as the dirty cork that prevents the creative genie of contagious culture escaping and perhaps shedding a little light on everyday life.

Whilst all those returning from the 60's and 70's venture have less enthusiasm now than when they set out on it, those concerned today who don't relate to the turgid history of Glasgow/Scottish culture [a history that never was] and who can hardly claim to have a euphoric confidence in the future in these desperate times, face a negative present.





previous page: the Living Theatre, and below Joseph Beuys. This page: top to bottom: still from Jack Smith's 1963 cult film "Flaming Creatures", a Yves Klein Happening, and pop culture meeting high art in explosive form - German band Einsturzende Neubaten (trans: Collapsing New Buildings) literally carving up the stage at the I.C.A. last year.

While such a position may encourage a false despair, it could be the negative frontier of new fulfillments. A critical perception is arising which may fuel up the spirit of invention in these times of crisis. The bearers of this criticality are less tied to the values of the past and, perhaps, in many ways, have learned a lesson or two from the experiences of post-punk sub-cultural depression. Cultural activity over the last ten years, despite what has already been said, has established a situation of opportunity: many people do not want to differentiate between what should be happening in the gallery and art-house, and what can happen in street/sub-culture. This sensibility is in correlation with the 'forward-thinking' element in modern art since the middle 60's which has represented a broadening out in the arts to a wide tapping of cultural material as a whole: feminist art, video, film, performance, text and photography. 'In many ways, the seizing of contemporary media forms re-emphasised the artists social responsibility in what they were/are doing. However, cliched this may sound, it is the issue at hand and always requires re-emphasis and discussion. It may also seem cliched to advocate an intermingling of the arts, between popular culture and the elite arts, but it is the diversity of cultural activity where attitudes are changed, behaviour is confronted, understandings are established, and as the first issue of ZG magazine put it, it is this diversity which does "challenge our most deep-rooted orientations to the world whether they are in terms of art & culture, elite & popular or male & female."



A clarification of that pulse-beat on the periphery of the dominant culture is long overdue, and the sooner the crap is separated from the positive, challenging and worthwhile, then the better. This time though, no more heroes. It goes without saying that a critique of art is vital, but as long as it remains within the boundaries of art then it is useless and collaborative. Hopefully this magazine will provide a platform for a positive critique of cultural product and ideas, from painting to film, sub-cultural activity to the politics of the society of consumption, and lots more beside. It is possible, for example, that a future issue may concentrate on rock music culture or on Super 8mm film making, or decide to discuss some things that have a more direct and profound effect on our lives, such as urban planning and architecture, or on media forms of manipulation. The possibilities are endless and intentionally open-ended



in times like these, art must unsettle, must challenge, and must work towards creating positive communication between people, when at a point in history the technology at the disposal of modern capitalism further intrudes our space and our times time. This magazine is for an art of ideas. We must look at the situation of culture, politics and history and try to think of ways to describe it: what is it like? how is it structured? whose interest does it serve? what does it look like from somewhere else? what does it imply for the future? what will future historians write of the art of today? can we surpass it? can we contest it? It is not only a question of challenging the commercial values that dominate our art-spaces, but in challenging a system whose power lies in its total monopolisation over our access to information. With a commitment to such a political project as the meaning, function and purpose of art, we must combine it with the direct expression and willingness to experiment that was characteristic of new wave if we are ever to consider moving out of deadlock. It is no easy task developing a theory of action in the perspective of politics of theory, but it is the way that I see it, of fundamentally liberating ourselves from the sham of history and towards a new sensibility. Good art and good feeling is what gives you the confidence that you are going forward. ■

Malcolm Dickson.

WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE

by Ray McKenzie and Peter Seddon

On wet, windswept Glasgow nights one can imagine a small group of artists in their middle years sunk in the ancient armchairs of the Glasgow Art Club. In the comforting glow of the fireside, a whisky of questionable vintage creates an agreeable sensation of inner certainty that is proof against the storm of Modernist crisis lashing against the chimneys outside. Slowly the familiar ritual incantation begins of names from a glorious past - MacTaggart, the Glasgow Boys, Hunter, peplow and Cadell. A surface is recalled. It is modern. It has an oily bravura; wild but discreetly craftsmanlike; somehow contriving to be both daring and reassuring at one and the same time.

Like grouse shooting, this is an art for stout constitutions. *HARD AT IT*, as the title of one picture goes, reminding us that Scottish *plein-airism* was always a rather colder business than on the 'french Channel coast. But there was always the promise of a warm bath at the end. Before long the overhead grumbles are coming thick and fast. "you know when you compare it to"....."too clever by half"....."all words"....." but how many of them can actually draw?".....

For young West Coast artists today, if you ask them where is the Scottish Tradition, this is the direction in which they would point. But more often than not the gesture would be accompanied by a shrug. As far as they are concerned the real exemplars - the activities that actually mean something to them - originate elsewhere, outside Scotland and light years away from the clubland fraternising of Bath Street.

The fact is that Scottish artists are exiles in their own country. Propelled by an appetite for international contact many of the best have already gone to live elsewhere - like Davie, McLean, Bellany and Paolozzi they have become citizens of the world, turning their backs on the empty landscapes and still more vacuous portraits of a tradition that now has little left to offer except a debilitated painterly 'panache'. On this barren visual bedrock all true sense of the Scottishness of Scottish culture is either buried, or ignored or brushed aside as an embarrassment.

But why should this be seen as a problem? After all Scottish identity and nationhood have long since been relegated to the status of myth, wrapped like a stale fish supper in the pages of the Sunday Post and believed in by nobody except Oor Wullie. And if it is so difficult to see how tartanising nostalgia could ever be a serious concern in the studio, why do we not simply address ourselves to the issues of *British* art and say no more of the 'Scottish Tradition'? Did not Pollock say that the problems of painting are *international*, no more determined by the specific circumstances of place than science or mathematics?

Unfortunately this answer merely side-steps the difficulty. Such a de-contextualising use of Pollock's assertion is bound to lead to false solutions because it obscures precisely the most central aspect of the problem. Cultural statements in general, and visual statements in particular, are not a form of distance knowledge like science and maths. They are always necessarily grounded in the historically and geographically specific. Moreover, Pollock's plea was categorically in favour of an American national identity for art, forged out of a rapprochement in which modernism and parochialism played equal and mutually supportive roles. In essence his bid for internationalism was a demand to be taken seriously.

Once we begin to look in earnest at the gap between what Scottish art is and what it could be, the difficulties for the young artist come flowing out as if from a Pandora's Box. But what *opportunities* they bring with them! Questions of history, class, poverty, urban



decay, sectarian politics and a perpetually unresolved nationalism - all these issues demand the attention of our artists today, every bit as much as they did in the past. To bring such themes within the scope of visual expression it will be necessary to re-occupy a very un hospitable terrain - at the very least Guthrie's peasant girl must be shown that her country is a bigger and more interesting place than the cabbage patch to which she has been consigned.

Nor should we try to seek refuge in the delusion that the problems of Scottish art today all derive from the influence of Modernism, because the history of Modernism itself is littered with examples of the dynamic adaption of visual folk roots: Gauguin and Breton wood carving; Brancusi and popular Roumanian craft Malevich and Russian icons; Pollock and the Navajo sand painters. Even the new German painters are recycling their own ancient Expressionist tradition.

If the chances of this kind of strategy working for Scotland seem remote it is only because all the known avenues are blocked by a hydra beast with a tartan bonnet on every head. Scottish popular culture has always been so hopelessly tacky that even the ironic Sixties could not do a thing with it.

What all this points to is that the question "Where do we go from here?" cannot be answered satisfactorily unless it is construed as posing a cultural problem in the broadest possible sense. No apologies are made for the familiar overtones of the question, because the problems are ultimately one of politics. Yes of course there is a need to reconsider and rescue a moribund painting tradition, and to reassess the worth of past heroes. But there is an equally pressing need to examine popular culture both within our cities and outside. At exhibitions of work from beyond our borders we should be asking, with sympathy and understanding what does it look like *from here?* we need to look at all the major institutions which contain the word 'Scottish' the S.A.C., the R.S.A., as well as the four Scottish art schools - and ask if their claim on this adjective signifies anything more than their position on the map of the British Isles. And in this we would do well to draw a few lessons from the achievements of our co-workers in other fields like film, T.V. and theatre.

Above all we must find a way of combining Pollock's commitment to Modernism with the breezy self-confidence of somebody like Joseph Beuys, and to inject both into a usable Celtic tradition that at least attempts to do more than merely invoke the music hall of Harry Lauder, or stare saucer-eyed into the Ossianic mists of a Scottish art history that never was.

THE UNDERGROWTH OF CRITICISM

For centuries the criticism of Art has existed in natural tandem with Art itself, but there now exists an interdependence; a mutual interest of unprecedented intensity. Succeeding (and successful) generations of Modernists have been forced (due largely to the rise of photography) into flights of fancy which claim to 'free the human spirit' but really do no more than dredge the imagination. A Surrealist manifesto (paradoxically) demand the exploration of disorder and nonsense - originally a Freudian notion, this harmless mind-game refused to blend gracefully into Art History, and persists even now in the form of the monstrous fancies which masquerade in the guise of 'New Image' and various other contrived labels.

The aims of specific artistic movements have on occasion taken the form of manifestos. When declared and duly documented, these provide critics with a solid starting point for their work, a platform from which they can criticise in the knowledge that if defence of their writing is called on they have only to say, "well you stated in your manifesto that what you would do is A but what you have actually done is B." However, a reviewer, speculating on the aims of the artist, may find himself trying to reconcile his own wishes for the treatment of the subject with the actual results as seen in the works. This all too frequent speculation is really just another form of that element which has been so instrumental in the construction and perpetuation of Modernism - conjecture. When a writer dares to speculate in this way he should in theory, lose the advantage of defensive retort, and it should be easy for artists to publicly discredit irresponsible writing. But it is not, and even if it were, it is highly unlikely that most artists would take the opportunity to kick back at an establishment which through publicity bad or good, can guarantee them notoriety if not success. The criticism of Art through the various media, and particularly journalism, has become the mainstay of the international Art business, with writers and artists now firmly embroiled in the most astonishingly lucrative bluff the world has ever seen.

Gombrich wrote of the 'modern' situation in 1965:

"...The new tolerance, the readiness of critics and manufacturers to give new ideas and new colour combinations a chance, has certainly enriched our surroundings and even the rapid turnover of fashions contributes to the fun. It is in this spirit, I believe, that many young people look at what they feel to be the art of their own time without worrying over-much about the mystical obscurities contained in the preface to the Exhibition catalogue. This is as it should be. Provided the enjoyment is genuine, we can all be glad if some ballast is being discarded."

The keener the human intelligence, the sharper the aversion to bullshit, but under the influence of writing which has behind it the full power of modern advertising and endorsement of major publishing houses, this aversion can be skilfully manipulated to arouse feelings of bewilderment and confusion, and the 'mystical obscurities' which Gombrich mentioned are powerfully forced into the mould of universal truths. But look again at the Gombrich passage; it is as straightforward and simple a piece of writing as the history of Art criticism has ever seen, as indeed is the entire book *The Story of Art* has become the handbook of art students and enthusiasts because it reflects the awe which one feels when confronting the history of our art for the first time, but all the while manages to retain a child-like enthus-

iasm for the subject. Gombrich even admits to a temptation to dismiss the latest developments as 'pleasant curtain material', but then concedes that these advances can only enrich our surroundings, but that perennial clown we call 'fashion' is put firmly in its place as something which merely 'contributes to the fun'. It is art writing at its best; it is clear, simple, honest. Many of those others who have attempted to chronicle our art are clumsy dinosaurs in comparison; heavy minds who attempt to see the answer to the world's problems amongst the drip and spatter of the latest 'advance'. For example, would Harold Rosenberg ever have called the products of his favourite child (Abstract Expressionism) "pleasant curtain material"? Would he ever have seen it in terms of fun? I think not.

In 1820, Goethe fired a bitter broadside on the popular Romanticism of the time, but it is ever more relevant now when the contrived imaginings of a fevered press can make or break whole philosophies, the very history of our art can be prostituted to satisfy the whims of a fickle public, and the artistic achievements of past ages are used at random to lend justification for the efforts of the latest 'Golden Boy'. Those who have abused their literary abilities, those masters of verbosity who will always use fifteen words in place of five, those who would purposely give Art an importance it neither needs nor deserves should heed well the words of Goethe. They prove a most important point; that simple, honest writing has never fallen prey to the vagaries of fashion in the shameful way that Art has. Only the vigilance of editors and the writers themselves can ensure that it never does to the same appalling extent.

"There is an empty spot in the brain, a place, that is, where no object makes an impression just as the eye too contains a blind spot. If man pays attention to this place, he becomes absorbed in it, he falls into mental illness; he imagines things of another world, which are in fact pure nothings and have neither form nor boundaries, but cause fear like that of night's empty space, and pursue more cruelly than spectres anyone who does not tear himself from their grasp."

Posterity will siphon the vast body of literature which has been devoted to our art, and it alone can reveal the identity of those who could view the changes so frequent in our age with clear-minded honesty. That honesty can be the only worthwhile aim of any writer, of whatever ability. If Art is to lose the stigma it has brought upon itself, writers must make all effort to refrain from perpetuating the mystical obscurities of which Gombrich spoke, thereby discarding that ballast which has made Art a sinking ship.

Ian Brotherhood. May 1984.

reference

Gombrich, E.H., *The Story Of Art*, 1966. *Postscript* p468

NOTES FROM A WORK BOOK

Farquhar McLay

1

Denise and Felix graduated together and screwed for the first time after the party that night. It was the first time Denise had been able to dampen down certain misgivings regarding Felix's right to access. It was the first time Felix had felt himself worthy of access. They perused each other's scrolls to banish the last vestiges of disquiet. Denise was now quite confident of her lover's credentials which even her mistrustful father, the businessman Mr R.O. Wright, whose wont it was to characterize Felix as "that insipid shit", would not be able to impugn. Denise indeed was all Felix could have wished for: a managing director's daughter, fastidious of countenance and voluptuous of buttock. He felt safe in her hands. His link with the past a fine thread, drawn still finer by Denise, then snapped. Her Anglified east-coast speech thrilled him to the marrow of his bones. "O speak, my darling, say something, anything, please," he urged. "bottle me, bottle me rotten" she pleaded. It was his first real erection in four years. His performance veered from the fumbling and inept to the over-expectant. The unexpected themes in Felix's love-making, little eddies of perversion of which he had betrayed no sign until that night, she quickly snuffed out. Mud stains from the past still clinging to him would be washed away in crocodile tears. And as Felix was penitent so Denise was forgiving. They were wed in the High Presbyterian Old Parish Church, the Rev. P.W. Turner, D.D., officiating. It was the top hats and Winsor grey tails.

They honeymooned in Jersey where Denise went to work on Felix's accent and table-manners. Also she had to instill in him the right prejudices, the right inhibitions, the right politics. Landing the right kind of job depended on all traces of Felix's keelie origin being ruthlessly extirpated. He was a willing pupil: No exaction was too demeaning. No constraint was too irksome. At the end of the month she fetched him home debased and dislocated in every fibre and glad to be so.

Felix entered upon his new role in a spasm of flushed and jubilant optimism. His wildest dreams seemed to have come true. He had cash, comfort, a sense of rectitude, and a house in a fashionable suburb. Best of all, he had Denise and Denise had class. It wasn't just flesh in those delectable hams, it was class. It wasn't just any old crumpet she was offering, it was class crumpet, and that made all the difference.

In the evening they watched telly together and after the Felix walked the poodle. Felix liked walking the poodle. Indeed walking the poodle had become an integral part of Felix's love-life with Denise. For coming into the avenue with the dog, staying on the far side for a better view of the bungalow as he approached, its pitiless and unrelenting look, a superior dwelling with windows tastefully draped, elegantly aloof, and the superabundant garage alongside, where both their cars lay snug and safe - taking it all in bit by savoury bit as he made his way along the exquisite avenue never failed to quicken Felix sexually and prepare him for the vigorous demands Denise made nightly.

□ □ □

2

The night of big Kilna's murder was the last time I'd had a drink with Robert. Kilna and Robert were fast friends. Although I had known Kilna all my life - we were born in the same tenement and went to the same school - we had

never been close. He had a long record of mayhem behind him by the time he met up with Robert. A long gruesome catalogue of knifings and slashings and shotgun maimings. If you left out the recurring episodes of violence in Kilna's life you weren't left with much - until, that is, he got to know Robert.

In his heyday you would see him in the pub, stylishly tailored, basking in the "respect" he was getting. All round him soft and flush-looking businessmen - bookies, publicans, money-lenders - who always laughed to loud if Kilna was laughing or looked too stern if Kilna was stern. And there was those who craved to be near him, to feel themselves part of some dangerous exploit. And they would keep buying him drinks - Kilna's was whiskey and green ginger out of a mixture of fascination and apprehension. The terror he aroused in these people was sustenance to Kilna's soul: its only sustenance. Too long an interval between blood-lettings robbed him of identity and diminished him. But all this was to change.

The story that Kilna had painted the sign over the Red & Black Bookshop in Ross Street took a bit of swallowing. "WHERE NO ONE OBEYS, NO ONE COMMANDS." He had made a good job of it as well. The story was that Kilna whilst doing a sentence in Peterhead, had received in the post a book from Robert.

It was V. M. Eichenbaum's *THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION* - the story of Nestro Makhno in the Ukraine and the guerrilla war he waged against Trotsky and his Red Army. The right book to the right man at the right time in right place - and a fire was sparked in Kilna's Ukrainian soul.

By the time Kilna came out of prison he was convinced anarchist. He had made good use of his time to acquaint himself thoroughly with the history and philosophy of the movement. He became Robert's co-worker in the shop, addressed meetings and sold literature in pubs where he had once lorded it as a gangster.

There would have been no essential contradiction in the Kilna of old joining any of the political parties. Force is which all believers in State control readily accept. The State's ultimate argument is always terror, and there would have been nothing inherently odd in Kilna wishing to legitimise his violence. But for Kilna to embrace a system of thought which worked on the opposite principle - that took everybody by surprise.

But the light had come to late. The dark days of violence were not so easily transcended. Kilna had made enemies. Men who carried the same darkness within them as he had known. And on a winter's night in a back close in Anderson they came at him with butcher knives. There were 28 stab wounds on his body when they found him. Not that it was just Kilna's blood that flowed that night. Down Washington Street a gushing stream, Kilna's blood and theirs. And all the big books, and all the new hope, of no avail.

So Robert was talking about Kilna, his voice barely audible amidst the hubbub of the Burnt Barns. Felix is not listening: he has his sights on other frontiers I think I can see why people shy away from this noblest of all philosophies. Man's unrelenting distrust of the voice of love in his own soul. Not to love others but to be stronger than others is all we want: to be taller, and handsomer, and richer, and cleverer, and if we are not these things ourselves, at least always to make quite certain we are allied with those who are. That is the basis of the hierarchies.

5

So keep to the hierarchies: that is the teaching of the ages. There is no certainty in any other thing but power: That is the voice of the Pharaoh. It is the only voice that is echoed to infinity. The echo is always decisive, final, unanswerable, leaving room in the world for nothing but itself. If you cannot join in the echo you are either mad or just plain bad and you and your little voice will be cast down and swept aside in the thunderings of Pharaoh. Your little degenerate voice will be stifled and put to shame. You have hardened your heart against Pharaoh, you have calumniated his hierarchies, and when the time is ripe you will pay a sorry price. There will be no happy day for you, no rank, no redemption. Not for you, Pat ~~Kenna~~, nor for you, Robert Raeside. You will never know how it feels to be among the chosen. Ask Felix there what it's like. That sweet moment of his dreams: the day they called his name and he marched up so proud and took the rank Pharaoh laid upon him. Ask Felix about the lovely feeling in his bowels that day: something sweet and warm swelling up inside him - one of the elect at last.

A good boy at last. And Felix will cherish the moment. Let there be no talk of illusion, sham, fraud. Nothing in Felix's soul ever savoured as that moment savoured. Without Pharaoh the soul was cold but that moment was a fire. Felix will hug it close for his lasting comfort. He will sleep by it for the rest of his days and when he sings it it will be a paean to Pharaoh and the hierarchies for the peace which only authority could bring him.

□ □ □

3

In THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV the Grand Inquisitor saus: "What though man is everywhere now rebelling against our power, and proud of his rebellion? They will cast down temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will see at last, that, though they are rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to keep up their rebellion. We shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us." Out of that rebellion of which the Grand Inquisitor spoke grew the new age of science and socialism - the great new age of materialism. And when he said the people would return, begging to be able to renounce their freedom, he was at least half-right. They would indeed return, but not to the Church, whose fastnesses in the course of four centuries would be breached, and whose mystery and miracles and authority would be exposed and undermined. For the Church, in turning her back on the eternal values enshrined in the Jesus story, and taking up instead the sword of Caesar, stepped straight into political history and thus ensured her own eventual decay and dissolution.

Old and impotent, unable to wield the sword in her own right, she would become the tool of new tyrannies. The scattered flock would certainly return, ready for complete submission, but it would be to the State that they would abase themselves, and the totalitarian nightmare would follow. "They will be like pitiful children," the grand Inquisitor says. "They will be timid and look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen."

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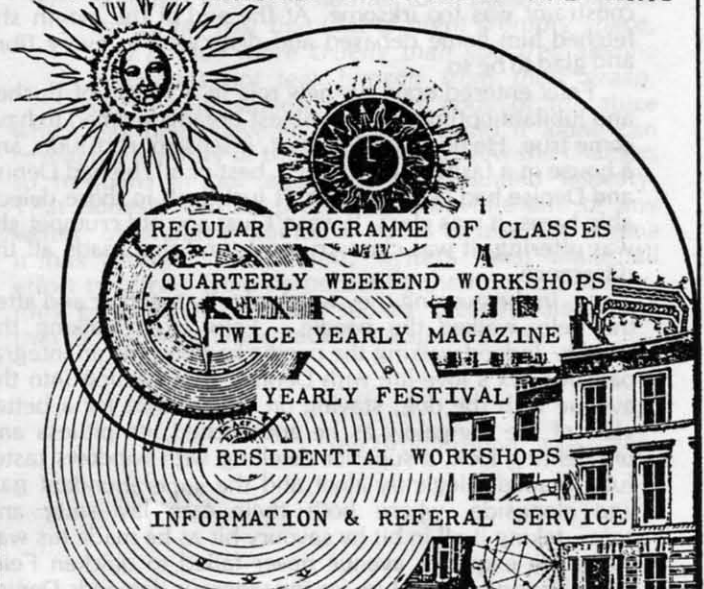
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"IT IS HARD TO LOCATE OUR TORMENTOR, BECAUSE IT IS SO PERVASIVE, SO FAMILIAR. WE HAVE KNOWN IT ALL OUR LIVES. IT IS OUR CULTURE. THE SPECTACLE."

(Carol Ehrlich)

by GERRIE FELLOWS.

We exist in a society which not only art but the whole complex of social structures is itself a commodity. Social relations under capitalism are commodity relations. Society is consumed as a whole. We become the passive spectators of our lives. Consuming appearances, frozen into the shapes of the semi-human, we are inhabitants of a world in which love and communication are made impossible.

A world of separations in which our lives, our very ways of thinking are split into polarities of masculinity/femininity, adulthood/childhood, work/play, of organisation/spontaneity, rationality/sensuality, which divide us from each other and from ourselves, alienating us from the continuum of mind-body experience; the possibility of being human.

Within such a society art acts as a justification for the absence of creativity and play in other aspects of our lives. By recognising the need for self-realisation but only in terms of passive identification, art renders impotent "the will to realise oneself by transforming the world". The transformation remains on the level of appearances. Believing in the 'reality' which art shows us, seduced by it, as in a dream-we are unable to reach our own reality. We cannot discover it. Creativity activity is channelled into the production of appearances, reinforcing the ideology of the spectacle.

Sensuality and emotion-aspects of humanity assigned by capitalism to woman and banished with them to the sphere of the 'private', the personal-make a brief appearance in the 'public' world safely confined behind the plate-glass walls of art. Within art man has vicarious access to his denied 'femininity' without affecting the wider world or disturbing the patriarchal balance of power.

Men are impoverished by sexual stereotyping but are not imprisoned in it to the same extent as women. The erroneous definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are male created and access to them is controlled by men. Thus not only are women almost totally excluded from the 'masculine' cultural mode, technology but art, the feminine mode- the representation of the world- remains male dominated. That representation inevitably carries the perceptions of its makers; perceptions which are themselves culturally-created. It is a self-perpetuating process through which sexual and social role-models are reinforced. (Not only content but our very ways of organising space reflect the mind-set of hierarchy.)

Female reality is doubly denied by the woman as object of male bourgeois culture- and in that cultures pretence to embody the human condition.

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men. They describe it from the their own point of view which they confuse with the absolute truth." (de Beauvoir)

Male power has been maintained by consistently denying women the chance to perceive themselves and their relationships to the world through their own eyes.

Surrounded by a male culture which claims to be universal, women have hidden or repressed aspects of their experience which have no 'cultural' existence' or which conflict with the dominant culture. Thus, male bourgeois 'reality' comes to be accepted by women themselves as reality.

Re-creating ourselves and the world entails discovering who we really are, uncovering the falsity of the image which has been reflected back at us. Yet who are we now, necessarily must include the effects of having looked for centuries into the dist-



orting mirror of that culture. Alongside the telling of female experience and the uncovering of our own de-valued history we need to examine that culture for its meanings, to unravel it.

It is not only 'a war of images', a question of an imbalance of 'cultural representation'. The very form, the very structure of bourgeois culture has been, and continues to be determined by power's need to perpetuate itself. To participate in that culture without acting to change it at its root, is simply to re-organise, to alter the form of our own oppression- to shift position within the organisation of appearances

A feminist art which does not act against its own role as art will simply be co-opted by power. Expressed in terms of art, its rebellion will remain imprisoned inside art, unable to affect reality itself. It is only in the search for a 'non-hierarchical dialogue', when we use "our ability to conceptualize form to create new social forms as well as aesthetic ones" (Chicago) that we can begin to break through role pattern and refuse our relocation within the hierarchy of power.

Any "revolutionary art" contains a paradox in that its revolutionary aspect is always contradicted by the the power relations inherent in art- the passive identification which is intrinsic to the Spectacle-Spectator relationship.

None the less, art acts as an alibi for the alienation of our lives, precisely by containing within itself the seeds of self-realisation, of play, of communication. By attempting to act against power on the terrains of art it is necessary to distinguish within it between those processes which maintain the power principle and those which are capable of being disentangled from it and which, freed of their cultural chains, could become a part of free life.

We have to be able to act now, to experiment, to invent solutions; to create, at the same time to destroy the social and cultural forms which oppress us, "free zones" in which to nourish the imagination and creativity which could fill free life; to create these "free zones" in every aspect of our lives, confronting the culture in its entirety, breaking through the definitions of art-those boundaries which serve to contain, and thus maintain control of human creativity.

To end culture itself as we know it and create in our own lives what previously has been only an artistic memory or an illusion, dreamed and preserved.

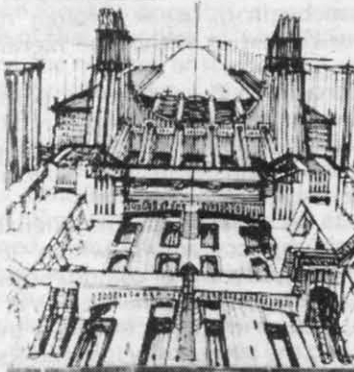
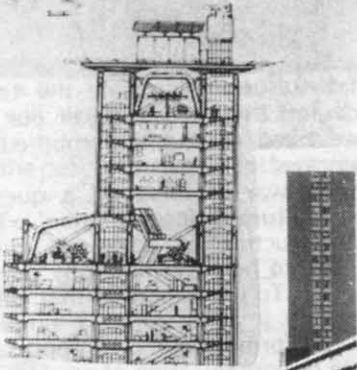
"The imaginary is not a parallel world granted the mind to compensate for its failures in outside reality. It is a power that will fill the abyss separating inside from outside."

(Vaneigem)

THE

PERMANENT

CURFEW

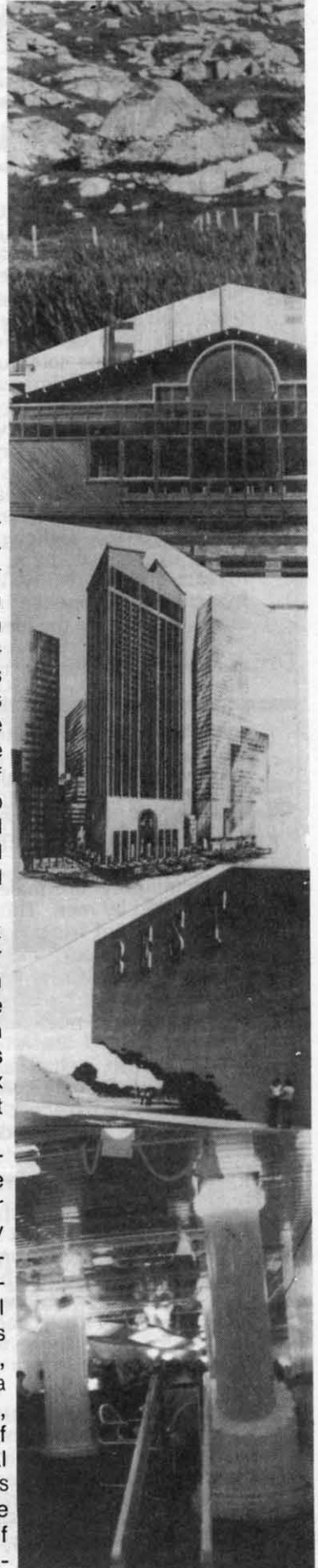


Today's built world is unloved, well, *mostly*. Favoured modern artefacts deal with escape (leisure) or have a real or apparent connection with nature or our *simple and idyllic distant past*: *PUT* simply, fantasy is as popular as always. Professionals working in building design are increasingly displaying a lack of confidence and schizophrenic willingness to seize on fads symptomised by the stylists and writers looking now at various panacea; high tech/low/intermediate tech, community, feminist, and so on. Post modernism in other words (including the paste on pilaster mannerist joke re-cycled modernist brigade). The main stream designers are so submersed in their own ideas that when attempting to re-think old theories the *new* come out merely as distorted reflections based on the same premises as the previous and at one with the powerful myths which support the dominant culture.

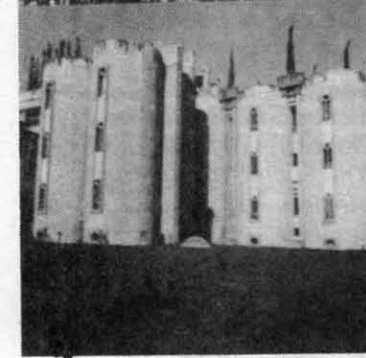
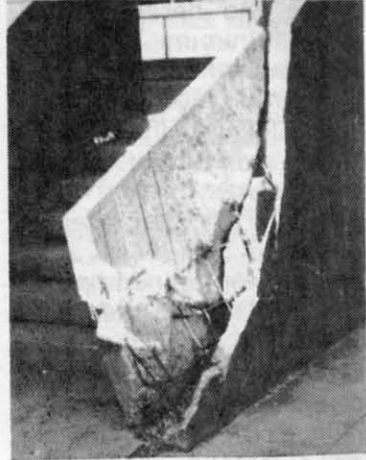
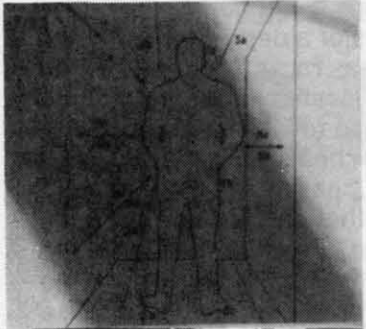
So it is that Venturi's famous duck/decorated shed aphorism neatly provides the means for company architects to economically dress up a building to make the same old thing seem new or through mannerist jokes provide a building which works as a humorist advert, Johnson's column pastiche tower being architectural and Best supermarkets being popular style examples. Venturi's choice of 'popular' styles (the Las Vegas strip) is commercial and the chic results of his ideas are built for those who derive gross profit from the capitalist system. In looking at the proposals of the more formalist post-modernists it is hard not to recollect all those town planners who have planned for easy control of the population or have designed stage sets which dwarf the individual and celebrate the power of the state.

And so it is, in support of these myths, that purveyors of 'high tech' promote a style for industrialists and financiers which through an absurd use of materials will keep those same people in business through the entire consumption of the building and certainly give the occupants the idea that they are in a machine far too complex for their own control or for any non-technologist to build.

The other categories in this partial list (low-/intermediate tech, community, feminist) make proposals apparently more at odds with their cultural and political surroundings. It has recently become apparent that third world self-build settlements are developing their own mafias of entrepreneurs and bribeables sadly returning the control of building by the individual to others and it has long been apparent that the local equivalent, community architecture has gone through a similar process whereby the residents, the clients, are professionalised and numbed by the mass of bureaucrats and intermediaries preventing real control. The currently developing feminist ideas on design will no doubt soon appear in more buildings and perhaps briefly ease the lot of some women before undergoing bizarre distort-



OF SPACE & TIME

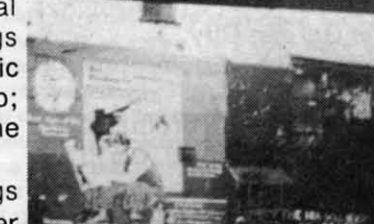
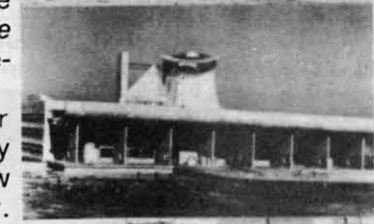


ions at the hands of the compilers of regulations and codes of practice.

The now universal results of the modern movement are still the mainstay of many designers and the relics of its theories permeate the new. It was, and often still is, assumed that there is an ideal or average person -- the modular man, the letraset person, the ergonomic being (all outlines and empty inside). It was also felt that there were universally applicable improvements in the lot of these people that the missionary modern architect could provide - hygiene, open space, healthy living, separate work and play; a tasteful and controlled universe whether in India, Algiers, Le Harvre, Letchworth or East Kilbride. The distortions imposed on these ideals when built result from the unfortunate and unheeded discrepancy between the user's and the architect's world views and have rendered such places less than charming to live in. These theories in simplified form suited accountants and politicians - people dealing in big numbers and simplifications - since they seemed to offer a means of codifying and controlling the world. Anyone who has familiarity with the statutes, codes of practice, regulations and standards relating to building will be aware that this control has been attempted by the lorryload. The objectives, more or less those of the modern movement, have totally eluded the legislation: planning control will accept buildings designed to the *sympathetic* taste of the planner or *profitable* to the area. The objective and methods are hopelessly muddled, the results appalling.

The view held by the designer of the person for whom a building is to be provided is highly influential on the building's form and that view often bears little resemblance to the future user. It is built up in professional isolation and superiority, by academic competition and hurdles which filter the licensed designer and by the need to be unthreatening to those with enough money to commission a building. This means that until recently designers would all appear to share common attitudes on a large number of matters. These attitudes, combined with abstract images of the building user have resulted in the building and planning of the last sixty years; an environment built *for* people and rejected. The underlying ideology was so strong that interpretation of the act of 'vandalism' was needed. In the early '70's this was provided and surprised architects. Thoughts were far from taking the hint - the discussion was mainly on how to *control* it! (people very rarely appear in architectural photos!) Architects' discussions of buildings are usually confined to assessment of aesthetic and technological merits and insider gossip; not of whether they should have been built in the first place.

The choice of the techniques used in buildings has multiple effect: on the environment and worker



during mining, manufacture and transport of material, on the building workers during construction, on the richness of experience of the user and of course their health and convenience. In the long term the conservation of resources, the adaptability of the building and whether it is actually possible to demolish or remove it are all important.

Choice of technique has recently been reckless: it was known from 1906 that asbestos was harmful, (just as it is presently known that many similar materials are harmful, fibreglass etc.). It should be obvious that transporting universally available materials, stone, brick etc around the world is wasteful. It should have been obvious that repetitive work numbed the mind and abilities of the worker but all efforts were to ensure repetition. (there is a severe current skill shortage as a result) Choice of technique has been based on theoretical and stylistic guides, by what is well known i.e. profitable enough to enable the manufacturer to swap the designer with advertising and incidentally thereby to control the range of information in specialist journals accepting advertising and by what is easy to specify and will please officials. The choice of new materials, concrete, glass and steel had a huge effect on the environment and resulted in buildings of unassailable hardness, of total and untouchable completeness and as they age of a shabby and bedraggled unpleasantness. The use of new materials for their own sake continues. There are many *convivial* materials available which avoid the danger of extraction and manufacture, which do not lend themselves to repetition, which are understanding enough to allow non-specialist alteration and which, significantly, are generally locally available though not so profitable as the convenience materials. However with the designers sealed off within offices and unable to dirty their hands an awareness of these choices is unlikely. The *plans* remain neat.

Choice of terminology is always revealing. House plans often have master bedrooms, words

become complex codes which mean whatever the author wants, the arch example is function - a real fetish term. The word is now out of favour but there are plenty of current jargon terms which convey muddled meanings. *Function* turns out to have meant those aspects of a design which interested the designer and was recently re-discovered to not only relate to the location of one part with relation to another but also to less tangible effects of design; psychological richness, ritual and context (historical, conceptual and physical).

Many of the ideas that present day strivings for richness are based on are so entwined in the specialist world that their meanings are lost on the non-expert viewer. Many are not possible because of the professional's distance and because the funds for more than the minimum quality are directed to the ramified organisations of social production and financial control reaching the public through the related 'leisure industry'. Any 'richness' is distorted as a result, it is as constipated and stiff as the big bosses.

The above attempt at a summary of the present situation must be well known to some, will be trashed by others. It is certainly very generalised and has all the dangers of generalisation. It leaves the question of how to devise ideas for making building sensual, useful, rich, controllable and as little tied to sterile and unstated ideologies as possible. It should remind that as the world adapts and shifts, ideas held as axiomatic gradually become half truths - in other words, the relevance of all axioms is questionable. The eighteenth century conception of the professional gent is anachronistic. In the short term theories of new approaches which are more satisfying in all ways have to be discussed.

This magazine exists for the development of such ideas and hopes to hear from those developing them. It also hopes to hear from those working on the margins and attempting to work outside the current mainstream situation.

Ian Brown,
Editor
page 10

There are no specific references.

These books form a background to the argument put here.

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Bateson, Gregory. *Mind and nature*.
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Venturi, R. *Complexity & Contradiction in Architecture*.
Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*.
Jenks, C. *The language of Post Modern Architecture*.
Plus architectural journals, looking,.....

'SCOTTISH ART NOW' & CULTURAL GUERILLAS

During the 1982 Edinburgh Festival the Scottish Arts Council (S.A.C.) ran an exhibition at their Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh called 'Scottish Art Now'. This was to be the first of a number of Festival shows, based on the argument that although much foreign art was shown in Edinburgh during the Festival there was no showcase for contemporary Scottish artists.

The selection method was comparatively complex. Three S.A.C. committee members, John Houston, Chris Farrell and Alexander Moffat, selected three selectors, Sandy Fraser, Glen Onwin and Albert Irvine. These men then selected six artists; Jack Knox, Ian McKenzie Smith, Derek Roberts, Michael Docherty, John Kirkwood and Graham Durward.

There seems to have been two main criticisms coming primarily from artists who were excluded from the favoured six; that the exhibition was a product of the east coast artistic Mafia and that there were no women. Both of these shortcomings may have been redressed, however, in subsequent exhibitions.

Reviews ranged from the headline "THIS IS ART - BUT IS IT ALSO RUBBISH?" (Evening News - Sept. 13th 1982) through mild praise to "both derivative and dull" (Marina Vaizey - Sunday Times, 29th August 1982) There was in fact, nothing controversial about the show and the work of all these artists is familiar to anyone who knows the Scottish art scene.

It was Waldemar Januszczak, Art reviewer of the Guardian, that became the proverbial cat among the pigeons. He described the exhibition (Guardian, Aug. 25th 1982) as a 'corpse' and described the artists as "Art school boys going through their paces". The main thrust of his attack, however, was not so much on the artists but on the introduction to the catalogue by Duncan MacMillan. He describes the introduction as 'ranting, jingoistic' and accused MacMillan of advocating 'cultural Fascism'. His honour having been stung, MacMillan quite understandably refuted these accusations in an article in the Guardian (Sept. 2nd). But there was one comment of Januszczak that no one attempted to refute and I would suggest was central to the whole argument. He says,

"He (Duncan MacMillan) complains of cultural colonisation. Yet he is prepared to heap lavish praise on an exhibition which is nothing if not an unpleasant reminder of the successful cultural colonisation of Scotland's Art Colleges in the late Sixties and early Seventies by a dull international aesthetic."

It was the gap between the Nationalist pretensions of the introduction and the reality of the exhibition that Januszczak drove his wedge into. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with the introduction as a statement of Duncan MacMillan's views, but it was not the proper introduction for this exhibition.

All this would have been a storm in a teacup but it had serious repercussions. In a society where art criticism just doesn't exist Januszczak's harsh words caused serious tremors. The S.A.C. intended to continue the 'Scottish Art Now' series during the Festival of 1983 with a selection of artists made by the London based artist John Bellany. This was to have included such well known names as Sir Robin Philipson, John Houston etc., but somehow it became caught up in the bizarre intrigues of the S.A.C. visual art committee and the Festival public ended up viewing an exhibition of the Italian 'New Wave' artist, Chia. One cannot help seeing this as a lamentable failure of nerve by those who have taken the duty on themselves to further the interests of Scottish Artists.

I mention this to show how puerile the Scottish Art world really is. On the one hand a learned Art Historian hoisting his Nationalist flag on a boat that is full of holes and on the other, the artists, oblivious to any ideological claims being made for them abandoning ship at the first shot across their bows.

One of the complaints that Januszczak made of the 'Scottish Art Now' exhibition was,

"No one dares to speak of politics. No one looks outside the studio window to see what is happening in the rest of Scotland."

This complaint could surely be echoed at a thousand exhibitions throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. But I would go further. I would say that Scottish artists are congenitally deficient, that they have inherited a practice whose ideology, based on middle class tastes makes it extremely difficult for them to make a connection with politics. That it is possible to evolve a relevant artistic practice that can communicate with a wide audience I will demonstrate by discussing the work of two Scottish artists, Eric Marwick and Douglas Gray.

Both these artists share a common background but their response to these circumstances could not have been more different. They studied at Dundee College of Art in the second half of the Sixties then moved to London and the Royal College of Art. This move to London was vitally important as it forced them to re-assess the practice in which they were involved in relationship to a wider context. During the early seventies there was a groundswell of discontent at the R.C.A. which Gray and Marwick were caught up in. When they left college they became involved with a group of artists, designers and film makers who were concerned with the social responsibility of their practice. It was a period of frustration and intense argument which influenced the development of such diverse characters as David Grant of Highland Stoneware and the London based independent film makers Ed Bennet and Phil Mulloy. In Gray and Marwick it developed a strong socialist consciousness and a discontent with contemporary practice in the Arts which they felt by its rigid formalism alienated the vast majority of people not versed



The kiln block after a clean up.

Early one morning we were told that one of her Majesties inspectors of factories would visit our block. Instructions came down to us from the highest authority to shut down No.1 kiln because of the appalling dust emission. It should have been pensioned off years ago. Unfortunately our department manager wasn't allowed into the secret. The kiln was shut down and labour designated to clean up the mess. At midday, when the place looked spotless our department manager came in with a stranger in a white coat. He asked Jack, the chargin' hand, why No.1 kiln was off.

"Christ" said Jack "If the factory inspector saw the dust from that he'd shut the whole fucking plant down."

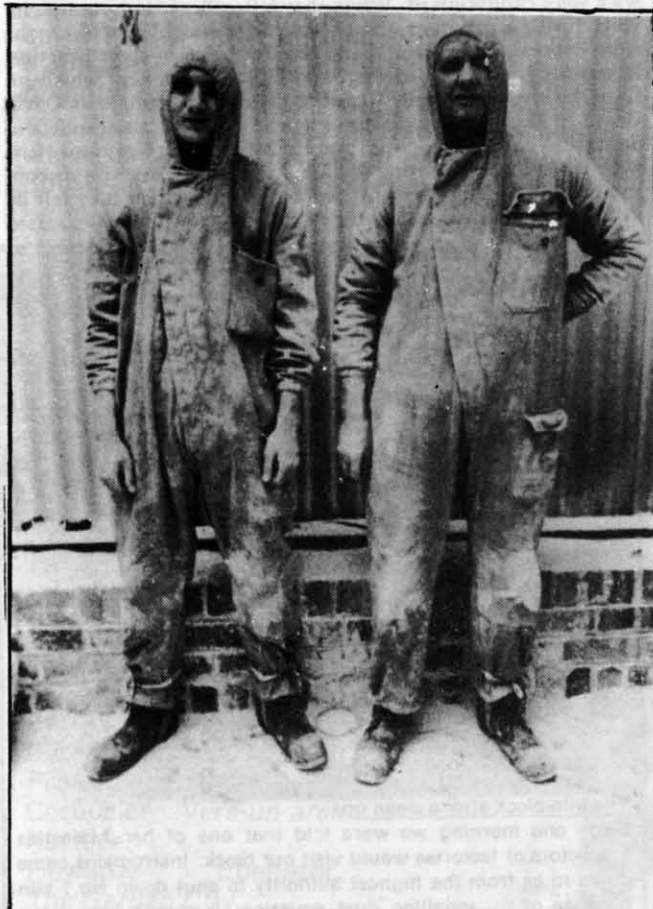
"This is the factory inspector", replied our boss.

in the latest Art fashions. After a few years teaching in London they both found their way back to Scotland, Gray to work as a shift operator in a factory and Marwick as a school teacher in Dundee.

Gray had all but abandoned visual work but after several years working in a factory he embarked on a project which is exemplary of its kind. He was influenced by the comments of the German Marxist theoretician Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

"Tape recorders, ordinary cameras and movie cameras are already extensively owned by wage earners. The question is why these means of production do not turn up at factories, in schools, in the offices of the bureaucracy. In short, anywhere there is social conflict. By producing aggressive forms of publicity which were their own, the masses could secure evidence of their daily experience and draw effective lessons from them."

With this in mind he began carrying a camera into work. Although lacking the expertise of a professional photographer and as an employee only able to take photographs in secret he had the co-operation of his workmates and was able to penetrate into areas that would be forbidden to casual visitors. After two years of taking photographs he put together an exhibition first shown at the First of May bookshop which was very critical of the work situation. He holds strong views as to the nature of photography as a social document rather than as a work of Art and each sheet of photographs was accompanied by an explanatory text. The exhibition was called 'How it is', a shift workers view of work and his aims were to go "beyond the mere appearance of things, to hint at non-visual relationships such as subservience, exploitation, alienation and the oppressive nature implicit in this form of collective economic effort." To what degree these aims were achieved is arguable but under the circumstances it was a brave attempt and to the best of my knowledge without precedent in Scotland.



Electricians about to enter the dust collections chamber of a kiln

The greatest hazard in the kiln block is dust. This is supposed to be non-injurious to health but it gets everywhere and makes life extremely uncomfortable. Men are transformed into pale, unrecognisable ghosts and the abrasive nature of the dust blown at pressure along pipes and fluidors erodes steel so that leaks burst out frequently and moving parts rapidly grind down.

Grays photographs were firmly rooted in his own experience of working in Scotland but the nature of the industrial system is world wide and because of that there was nothing characteristically Scottish about the images. Marwick's works, however, deals specifically with images that have become synonymous with Scotland, exploring the mythology of the Scottish people and the nature of their relationship.

In 1982 Marwick had an exhibition of Lino prints at the Printmakers workshop in Edinburgh. Much of the work was satirical in nature and popular, almost comic like in style. He felt discontented with this means of production, believing that the original popularity of printmaking, as a cheap, reproducible medium had been overtaken by modern reproductive techniques and that the traditional craft and its archaic equipment had been left to elite 'Fine Artists' who were more interested in formal aesthetics than communicating ideas. For many years he had played around with the construction of clay figures and it was this technique of constructing scenes out of ceramic which were painted and decorated with a variety of materials that he chose to develop. His theme was influenced by the state of the Scottish nation after the debacle of the Devolution referendum. Much heart searching and demystification has taken place in the pages of 'Cencrastus', the 'Scotch Reels' forum and around the exhibition organised by the Grigors about 'Scotch Myths'. It was around these myths that he began to construct his hilarious, satirical images.



Jock and uncle sam

His first piece was called 'Jock and Uncle Sam' and depicts Uncle Sam as a door to door salesman selling weapons. Jock stands at his front door, his head in profile is the map of Scotland. Uncle Sam kneels on the ground displaying a case bursting to overflowing with sweets, bombs and missiles. This was first shown in an exhibition about the nuclear debate at Dundee City gallery. It proved incredibly popular with children who appreciated its rich detail and was purchased for the gallery collection. 'The Marriage', depicts John Bull and Scotland surrounded by the bric-a-brac of Imperial conquest. The bride, whose head again is the map of Scotland is spotted with syphilitic chancres. The 'Jock in the Box', a parody of the childhood toy, is a grotesque, geriatric Highlander with a broken broadsword and a blind man's white stick popping out of a box decorated with a silhouette of Queen Victoria. In these and many more pieces he hits at the subservient, acquiescent nature of the relationship between Scotland and England but also at the myths and fantasies of the Scots. These objects are intended to be photographed and used graphically for postcards, illustrations etc., much in the manner of the modellers Fluck and Law.

It is serious work, about a serious subject. It is direct, vigorous and most of all funny. It is satire at its best, at the level of a Daumier or a Hogarth. For after all, when all else fails it is to the absurd and the joke that we turn to relieve unbearable tension.



The marriage

Both these artists have attempted to deal with subjects avoided by the majority of Scottish artists and they employ one guiding principle in anything they do; that th work should be accessible to the widest possible audience. This is heresy in the present Art climate, where intentional obscurity and mystification pretends profundity. They have seen through the cultural colonisation that took place when they were art students in the 1960's and have developed methods that go to the heart of the subjects they are dealing with. Their work is essentially 'realist', an unfashionable term these days but one that I use to mean going beyond the superficial, purely visual aspects of things to explore areas that have a more general interest. Their art is not an end in itself and whether it be Grays factory workers or Marwick's Scottish anti-mythology they are both criticisms of contemporary Scotland and pointers towards greater human wholeness.

FERGUS MORE

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1. Escape: Las Vagas.
2. Hi Tech: Hi Waste.
3. Hi Tech: Highly inappropriate.
4. 1913 pre-fascist vision.
5. Now: Glasgow.
6. Rural past: Harris.
7. Decorated shed: Glasgow.
8. Johnston: corporate image making.
9. Best supermarket.
10. Bar with icing by B.R.
11. Ergonomic being.
12. Building modified by inhabitants.
13. Bank + gun emplacement? (sympathetic materials)
14. Berlin squat & mural.
15. Conversion: cement silo to office.
16. Post modern planning! ...
17. The 'second largest court in Europe' - a sure fire money spinner for the Gorbals!
18. Tasteful & controlled universe.
19. Ideal. (handbuilt in India).
20. Controlled. (Glasgow)
21. Community art, Falls Road.
22. Inventive. decorative drainage to balcony, Gaudi, Barcelona.

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CONTEXT AND DESIRE FOR AN ART OF IDEAS

by Malcolm Dickson.



" if we believe that the function of good art is to make the world intelligible (deconstruct it) in order to re-imagine it, then we must acknowledge that its explanatory powers are transitive, a moment within the historical possibilities that such an analysis unfolds " John Roberts.

In 1982 when John Berger visited Glasgow School of Art for a seminar with students, he was on a number of occasions asked about the function of the artist in modern society, which, surprisingly - he seemed reluctant to answer, or couldn't, considering the uncompromising manner in which some students threw up the questions. The question was simple and valid, and I remember correctly it - at least in my mind - amounted to this: if artists could not define a *function* for themselves in the *context* of mass consumer culture (the Post-industrial Society) then they should not exist.

In the end, however, an analogy was thrown up (by Jack Knox - in desperation I suspect?) that the modern artist faces a wall, a wall as high as the Tower of Babel, and that his or her function is to throw pebbles over that wall. It seems fitting to add that 1982 was quite a good year for poetic analogies concerning the artist's dilemma, for I'm sure the above analogy would sit neatly alongside the most conservative and evasive excuses for the artists' function. As David Donaldson, Scotland's Royal Painter and stalwart reactionary put it in an interview with Brian McGeoch on TV.

"We've been in a desert - *DON'T INTERRUPT* - [to McGeoch] - where it would appear empty and we've brought back some wonderful things to put in front of you, and say, 'Look at that'".

The Tower of Babel analogy sounds fine, and to give its author credit, is quite 'realistic', but it misses out on the reality of the situation to an extent. The Wall obviously represents the Media, the *Dominant ideology* the Spectacle of appearances. The dominant ideology is a whole system of representations which mask real life and distort the truth. The artist's pebble - images and actions thrown up into the auditorium of everyday life

- by the time it has fallen on the other side of the wall is changed substance, it no longer means what it was originally intended to since the whole social and psychological climate on the other side of the wall is completely different. This view, however, is assuming that the artist's pebble is in the first instance not alluding to the social, political and psychological climate - something that cannot be boasted of in many so-called artists. And what do the pebbles say on those heads that they fall? Judging by the cultural poverty of the artist today, most would rather not attempt throwing their pebbles in the first place, since this would introduce a spanner into their sordid works; i.e., the fundamental questions of representation and meaning, between the 'artist' and the 'voyeur'. In other words, it would demand that the artist considered the question of communication in their practice; it would have to involve dialogue.

Chris Cutler (ex-Henry Cow) in the booklet accompanying the *Art Bears "Winter Songs"* expresses the task of the artist today:

"All artists have no choice but to bring to bear in their works, the sentiment and learning - the 'Being' of their age, and inasmuch as they have mastered this 'Being' and its totality, so much then can this 'Being' reside in them and use them as its vehicle....."

Exactly how, through the artist, society and History speak to each other in the present, and how what they say shall be used to comprehend the world and give birth to a conscious future - this must be the province of each one of us."

John Roberts in an article entitled "Making Modernity Work", which appeared in Art Monthly, discusses the crisis of representation and would. I presume, agree with the idea that the power at which the pebble flies through the air so that it may become lodged in the back of people's heads will depend on its "maximally explanatory power" in collusion with the Wall's (the media's) POWER TO BECOME A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE communication and information it was meant to be a means of.

To be direct then, since the media (TV/Publicity/Ads/News and the products of leisure consumption; Sport/Videos/Music/Space Invaders/Computer Games etc) has come to deprive actual space of its reality, it will and this is the crux of my argument - involve political decisions and political acts by individuals to rectify the situation, however slightly. It is a question of intervening in that fabrication of reality.

...The question of a harmonious balance between art and politics, culture and history, form and content, means and ends, or for that matter, the question of the positive aspects of post-modernism over the past 15 years is, to say the least very far removed from the mothball smelling structure of the Glasgow 'art-scene'. For too long, now, artists have been adopting an oafish simple attitude to knowledge and experimentation, and have since avoided the attempt of coming to grips with the uncertainty of our age

Glasgow art is a mansion for obsolete ideas, and it comes across as a long drunken monologue, with its incomprehensible allusions and tiresome delivery. What is representative of art in Glasgow seems to be like a dream hungover from a more pastoral past, when everyone was satisfied with their lot, when people were more orderly, decent, voted accordingly; before the oil crisis, before the Middle East crisis, before Thatcher's and Reagan's and before industrial disputes became more than just a question of pay. In other words, in a time when the artists activities were never questioned. Half asleep with stale alcohol on their breath, these stumbling examples of Scottish cultural agents still take that dream to be reality, but it is merely the flash from a distant past that never really existed outside the garrets of the elite.

My dears, the old ways won't and don't work anymore

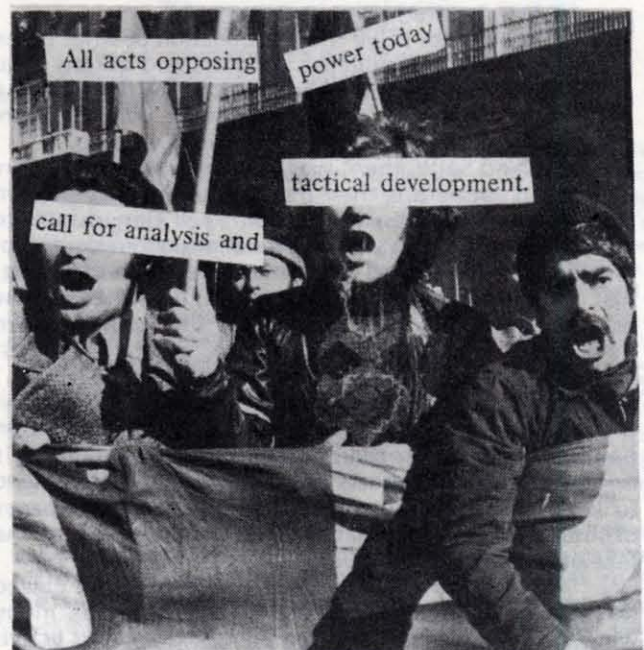
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When Duchamp painted a moustache on the Mona Lisa it was an inspirational act. It violated the dominant notions on the sanctity of art works and threw into question the meaning of art and how that meaning is read. That act, however, is by virtue only of the moment it was lived. Today, Duchamp's Mona Lisa is no more shocking than the original, and his bronze cast ready-mades say no more to us than dog-shit on the soul of a priest. Perhaps we have reached the limit. More than sixty years after the Dadaists declared that 'art is dead', the message is finally hitting home; there is nothing left to change, "the intransitive world of convention has taken its revenge..." as Roberts put it. There is nothing left to change, all except ourselves and the way we relate to the world and the values and attitudes which dominate it. And this is where we can return to art with the certainty that things can always go forward if we only redefine our relationship with that which we are addressing. It is significant to note that with now 21 weeks into the miners strike (as I type) that some critics and artists (John Tagg, John Roberts and Terry Atkinson) have come up with the idea of bullying artists into donating work for an auction where all proceeds go towards the miners strike fund. It is one of the few useful things that art can be put to, yet it is pitiful that it takes the profit motive to get the scoundrels who will buy the works with the view that

they will accumulate in value to give money to such a worthwhile cause. This sort of practice neither eliminates the strict division between modern art and the public at large, and I'm sure that if this auction takes place it will simply add prestige and a little proletarian credibility to these rich artists (among them Hockney, I hear) who will remain in the public's eye as distant, mystified and a little eccentric.

During the Dresden insurrection of 1849 Bakunin suggested that insurgents take all the paintings out of the museums and place them on the barricades, as this might prevent the ruthless troops from shooting on the insurgents. This was not carried out, but what more of an appropriate homage can art pay to workers in struggle, and what scandalous a paradox that art or property is considered more important than human beings by those who have a measure of control over others. I relish the thought of barricades built from the pickings of that millionaire magpie known as Burrell, and protecting pickets on the line at Raivenscraig. Admittedly an idea that shall never be fulfilled, but an image cute nevertheless, don't you think?



If it is true, and I've heard that Carl Andre was attempting to undermine the art world by exposing its banality with his bricks in the Tate, then I suppose he succeeded in the sense that it sold at an incredibly high price. To make masses of cash out of this useless project (he must have known that it would sell since the art world, like the masochist, is titillated by little pointless lacerations) from a fairly despicable bunch is all well and good, but at the expense of the ignorance of others, and even mocking people's gullibility, is quite inexcusable. Surely the most sensible thing to do with Andre's bricks is to throw them at the Tate, preferably at the windows whilst its own opening is taking place. But that would mean the artist revolting against his/her own role as reminders of the ruling classes banality and futility. Modernism is the admission that art has got nothing left to say, but money can still be made out of its total artistic bankruptcy. Today, when our culture is all too willing to preserve and glorify art works of the past, what constitutes the artistic milieu is unable to create one of its own. The past is dead. The dilemma is of overcoming the anachronism that artists have previously relished as their privilege and recluse from a world where only others feel misery and exploitation. How then, can art challenge its own poverty when it is outdistanced by modern society's ability to produce, in abundance, material goods which claim to epitomise virtues and characteristics which moribund artists claim that painting upholds: compassion, transgression, aspirat-

ion, freedom, exhaltation, individuality, truth etc. ?

This, it must be admitted, is not a completely answerable question, but only when we start addressing ourselves to such, shall an art of ideas moulded with the positive self-consciousness of our age - ever emerge.

□ □ □

This comes back to the resources of painting today. It is not surprising to learn that the current rejuvenation in painting has gone hand-in-hand with the creeping conservatism in art and society. It is not a simple case of the market forces giving itself another shot in the arm, but goes deeper in that as conditions in society have become more unstable, it may be, as Roberts suggests, "the real expression of a real need for some sort of stability and re-connected with tradition." It may be suggested that in Julian Schnabel's paintings for instance - we witness a fueling of such needs, with his themes of a heroic and mythological nature. David Salle, who along with Schnabel is America's top selling artist, has stated:

"you do not solve the the question of what is the nature of art by going up to art and asking what is your nature? If I had to get up in the morning and define my relationship with contemporary culture... I would'nt be an artist."

Schnabel and Salle, then, would be well advised to stay in bed and not parade their mumbo-jumbo aesthetics in front of us over here who wouldn't sell tinned farts to the Yanks as Scottish soul, unlike some of our contemporaries who don't need to be mentioned with their haggis, heather and arrogance mental debilities whose Scottish authenticity is as real as the long drunken monologue encounter earlier on. Salle continues; "culture doesn't submit to critique so passively..." Is this not a subtle sidestep to avoid genuine debate on the current crisis of representation? The dilemma in painting is far wider than simply defending painting's critical status, as Roberts suggests it is also the "need to keep the expressive resources and content-spaces of image-making open and as rich as possible in the face of ideological reduction."

In a world where systems of meaning are closed then the development of an art of ideas is one of many ways in which we can maintain the world and our activities as open-ended, that is, subject to change. Painting, it cannot be denied, has always been a reactionary discipline, but that does not rule out the possibilities of using the medium radically and progressively, for mediums, as Stuart Brisley said, are not neutral in themselves, but indeed can be active, "according to historical use and placement". There is no wealth of justification in defending painting as such, but what is necessary is an active examination and an articulation of what its resources are being upon to do. It is, by all accounts, a CLASS WAR OF IMAGES, and painting must be reclaimed from the innocuous parasites that merely uphold market forces.

"If art contributes to, among other things, the way we view the world and shape social relations, then it does matter whose image of the world it promotes and whose interests it serves." Hans Haacke.

Most painting today confirms the essential hallmark of bourgeois society - namely the negation of transformation and of movement, the elimination of any risk of change. Art lives in a situation of opportunity, not certainty, when its experimental powers are linked with the variety of its functions and resources, when the production of art is open-ended, transitive. Certainly as Roberts has pointed out, we have reached the limits of formal progress, but we have not burnt-out the possibilities of formal representation, because the art-work is a social product, and if one believes in its capacity to

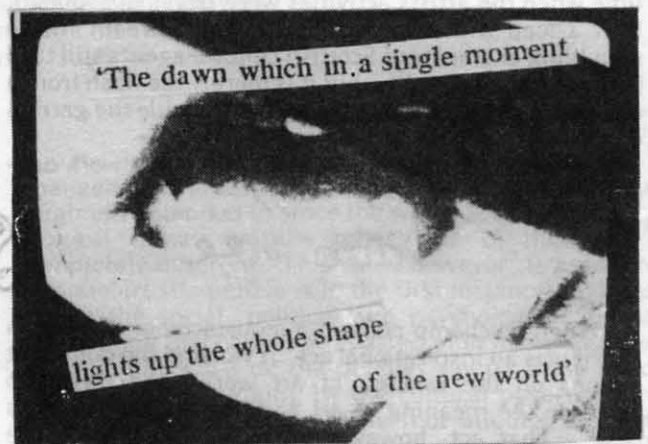
intervene in the world, then it is obviously linked to previously established ideas in the world, and it is these ideas that art has to address for they are constant and they are reflections/conditions on the way we live.

For fear of putting the moral cart before the creative horse, I am not advocating that all paintings must be ideologically and descriptively sound, but the act of reading a painting is not, like the act of painting itself, a self-contained activity. Simply stated, it's what goes in and it's what comes out; the whole attitude, and it is essentially the context and desire which are important. It is the relationship of the parts to the whole; representation to meaning, art to society, context to desire, trajectory to destination etc

□ □ □

To summarize then, we must pull our experimental and critical powers in justifying art as a variable activity and to re-examine the artists role in a time when we walk like ghosts - in limbo - between the technological era and the infirmation age. Art is only worth discussing in respect of its critical justification with regards to values and trends in society. Art has been uninspiring and merely decorative for so long because it has become severed from its social context and magical roots, that is of working in society, of actually having any relevance to people.

To start here and now, more emphasis must be put on the artist basing his or her work on the experience of the present to challenge the premises, components and power of the enslaving culture which is that wall as high as the Tower of Babel. Hammers sound out progress at its foundation. ■



MICHELANGELO'S SOCKS

According to Vasari, Michelangelo wore the same socks for months on end without changing them; and when he finally did take them off, the skin on his feet came off as well.

According to Adrian Henri,

"From the beginning of the Romantic movement it became clear that the artists life, or legend, constituted some part of public reaction to his work; vide Byron or Gauguin. Van Gogh's severed ear may well be his best-known work as far as the mass of the public is concerned." (1)

An artist called Jerry Dreva created a work called *Wanks for the Memories*, which consisted of the semen produced by 1,000 acts of masturbation deposited on to sheets of paper and assembled into black-bound volumes which Dreva sent to his friends as keepsakes.

Rudolph Scarzkobler perfected a form of performance-art which consisted of self-mutilation, from which he eventually died.

These are stages in the historical development of the creative individual.



The creative Individual, like geometric perspective, was an invention of the Renaissance, although even Michelangelo would have been surprised that anyone was interested in his socks — after all, he did a bit of sculpture and painting as well. Medieval artists, to the despair of modern art historians, didn't even bother to sign their works. They thought of themselves as working *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, humble participants in the Divine work of Redemption; the idea that they were *creating* in their own right would have seemed to them both absurd and blasphemous. There were a few exceptions to the general rule of anonymity: for example, when Crete was ruled by Venice, the ikon-painters of that island took to signing their works as the Italians did; but the artist's name was invariably preceded by the words, "Through the hand of". And it was not impossible for an artist to become famous, at least in his own locality. This was because people valued his work. It had nothing to do with his socks at all.

Only at the end of the eighteenth century, however, did the Creative Individual really come into his own. Several circumstances conspired to bring this about. Robespierre and the Terror had blown apart the Enlightenment's identification of Reason and Liberty. Reason was seen as the domination on things, and, by extension, of people; and the sober management and factory discipline of the Industrial Revolution continued the process. The goddess Reason, having deposed God, was herself dethroned and reduced to menial status, practical and instrumental only. The individual was now absolute. But there was still the unfulfilled promise of Liberty — which meant that henceforth the individual and the world were at war. This war still continues.

Romanticism expressed itself in politics as well as in the arts. *"Evil is the satanic rebellion against divine authority, a rebellion in which we, nevertheless, see the fruitful seed of every form of human emancipation."* This is not a romantic poet, but Bakunin. (2) *"The passion for destruction is also a creative passion."*

The most logically extreme example of romantic individualism is Max Stirner. In his book, *The Ego and his Own*, Stirner rejects out of hand any guiding principle other than the individual will. In the name of the Ego he rejects the State and all forms of collectivism. He rejects revolution also, as seeking to organise and order society, and instead exalts *crime*:

"A revolution never returns, but a might, reckless, shameless, conscienceless, proud crime, does it not rumble in distant thunders, and do you not see how the sky grows presciently silent and gloomy?" (3)

And in the late nineteenth century there was no lack, especially in Russia and in the Latin countries, of that species, half rebel and half bandit, who appears in literature as Balzac's Vautrin. Their successors still exist (the Press lumps them together

with revolutionaries of various kinds under the blanket term 'terrorist'). Romantic artists and romantic rebels share the same ideal of freedom — conceived as absolute — and of the *abolition of history*.

"The individual (in revolt) cannot accept history as it is. He must destroy reality, not collaborate with it, in order to affirm his own existence." (4)

Just as the creator, being above ordinary mortals, is not bound by the laws, written or unwritten, of human society, so the rebel is not bound by the laws and determinism of history. He also is 'free'. Can we not regard the rebel, who destroys, and the artist, who creates, fundamentally one? As Andrew Breton wrote in his manifesto:

"The question of social action — I repeat and insist on this — is merely one aspect of a more general question which surrealism has taken upon itself to raise: that of human expression in all its forms." (5)

By the time this was written, the Dadaists had already brought 'free' (i.e. socially unacceptable) self-expression off the canvas and into the street. The surrealists tended unfortunately in the long run to put it back on the canvas. But surrealism's earlier ideas taught the Abstract Expressionists to regard the finished canvas as no more than the record of a *creative moment*, or, if you prefer, a moment in the life of a creative individual, omnipotent in his isolation. Clifford Still: *"Demands for communication are both presumptuous and irrelevant."* Barnett Newman, describing his works: *"Original man, shouting his consonants, did so in yells of awe and anger at his tragic state, at his own self-awareness, at his own helplessness before the void."* (6) De Kooning, according to Harold Rosenberg, *"discards all social roles in order to start with himself as he is ... creation by a mind devoid of background."* (7) Pollock spoke of living on canvas, *fucking the canvas*.

Later artists, logically enough, dispensed with the canvas and proceeded simply to live or fuck or whatever, and so we have what is loosely termed Performance art. This is a misnomer — the German *Aktionkunst* is better — because it suggests a kind of theatrical 'presentation', which Performance art most emphatically is not. It is not a representation by artistic means of pre-existing life, but *lived art*, or *creative behaviour*, involving the destruction of existing meanings of things. Here is a description of the work of Joseph Beuys:

"A C-shaped sign, suggesting a blood-sausage, or an oxbow lake, or electric terminals, is drawn on a blackboard placed, apparently carelessly, on the floor across a snaking electric cable ... Or the artist himself lies wrapped in a roll of felt, at each end of the roll a dead hare. A cable runs out from the roll to a loudspeaker where strange, guttural sounds emerge intermittently from the artist within ... These are simple images to add to other images, forming a new, non-Aristotelian description of natural processes." (8)

Leaving aside for a moment this hairy philosophy, it can be seen that works like this are, firstly, destructive as well as creative, thereby fulfilling Bakunin's dictum: and secondly, they are completely dependant on publicity in order to be known at all, since the actions themselves are ephemeral. But they are attended by certain difficulties. There is the law of diminishing returns: the shock-value, and hence destructive power, of these manifestations must go down as they become more widespread; the artist risks being reduced to a licensed and harmless mad man, or a court-jester for the cultural elite. In order to avoid this fate, the works must become more and more extreme: either scandalous (and few things can scandalise any more) or violent. The violence will have to be physical; society is too well used to violent imagery, but physical violence is generally left to specialists, at any rate among the classes which form the public for the fine arts. This leads to a second problem: There can be

no rebellion without an *ancien regime*. The art-world no longer has any values which can be challenged: therefore the only context in which the artist can fruitfully operate today is *everyday society*. And to challenge the rules and values of everyday society is to *become a criminal*.

The public media devote a lot of attention to 'personalities'. Popular newspapers, for example, tend to turn news items (when they deal with them at all) into stories about people: the miners' strike seen in terms of Maggie and Arthur. This is a vulgar form of the view that sees history as the work of Great Men, and art as the work of Creative Geniuses. And there is an abundance of books, films and television programmes about the lives of such people, in which their works are hardly mentioned at all. A kind of symbiotic relationship grows up between the hero-hungry public, increasingly condemned to a routine and anonymous existence in a society which allows less and less scope for individual initiative while still paying lip-service to the individual ideal, and the isolated artist, who becomes a symbol of this ideal and a justification of this society. The C.I.A. understood this well when the subsidised exhibitions of Abstract Expressionist paintings in Europe.

But artists (as hitherto understood) are only a small and marginal group of originals as far as the general public is concerned. A casual glance through the pages of the *Sun* or the *News of the World* will reveal all kinds of scandalous and deviant behaviour being served up for public delectation. The great *criminals* are an unfailing source of fascination. "It is not your sins, it is your moderation that cries out to heaven", declared Nietzsche's Zarathustra; the person whose actions brazenly embody the impulses that most people guiltily repress is regarded with a strange mixture of fear and adulation, which easily turns to virulent bloodlust. Observe the alarm, out of all proportion to the threat posed, that certain kinds of deviance arouse in the public breast. Many people apparently believe that vandalism, for example, threatens to overturn the very foundations of civilised society (unless, of course, it is severely repressed by corporal punishment). Surely artists have something to learn from this.

(The artists possibilities of vandalism have already begun to be explored, in the illegal decoration of New York Subway trains: what is self-expression to the artist is vandalism to the New York City Transit Authority. Unfortunately in this case *embourgeoisement* has set in with the acceptance by the city's radical intellectuals, and even by its liberal mayor, of subway-painting as a kind of folk-art.)

It seems to me that artists, by largely ignoring the potential of the news media, are denying themselves a very wide field of possible activity, with access to a very large public indeed. The medium imposes certain limitations on the artist; but what medium doesn't? A skillful artist can use the limitations of the medium to serve his own purposes. The peculiarity of the news media is that they can only handle things *above* a certain size, i.e. the actions must be large and spectacular; but a liking for the large and spectacular is quite widespread among artists. If, on top of that, the action is criminal, then success is assured, because a spectacular crime will always reach a wide public.

Coum Transmissions was a performance-art group that was well aware of these possibilities. I quote from their article, *Annihilating Reality*:

"We found the artworld on every level less satisfying than real life. For every interesting performance artist there was a psychopath, fetishist or intense street individual who created more powerful and socially direct imagery. We also were unhappy about art being separated from popular culture and the mass media. It seemed to us that it was far more effective propaganda/information dispersal to be written up in the NEWS section of daily papers than in a back page column of a specialist art journal ...

"Dean Corll, arrested 7 August 1973 in Houston, Texas, murdered and sexually assaulted 27 teenage boys. Hermann Nitsch's OM Theatre slaughter 100 sheep in castle grounds in art ritual, selected crowd of art and social elite guests watching, midsummer's day. High on blood. Is it only legality that prevents the artist from slaughter of human being as performance?"

They go on to quote the Marquis de Sade:

"We have but two alternatives left, either the crime that will make us happy or the noose that will put an end to our unhappiness." (9)

I will leave the last word to Christopher Caudwell, who wrote this nearly fifty years ago:

"Bourgeois culture is dying of a myth.

"But it will be said, bourgeois culture is suffering not from illusion but from disillusionment. Everyone has said it ... Precisely, for this is the very danger of an illusion, that it believes itself disillusioned. It has shed all the secondary illusions — of religion, God, morality, democracy, teleology, and metaphysics. But it cannot rid itself of the basic bourgeois illusion, and because it is unaware of this illusion, and because this illusion is now stripped to its naked essence, it violently distorts the whole fabric of contemporary ideology.

"This illusion is that man is naturally free 'naturally' in this sense, that all the organisations of society are held to limit and cripple his free instincts, and furnish restraints which he must endure and minimize as best and noblest when freely working out his own desires.

"This illusion is of course the Renaissance charter of the bourgeoisie ..."

by Simon Brown

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EDITORIAL QUOTES

"Modern culture is a serpent eating its own tail and excreting simulacra of itself in the form of malodourous turds." Ralph Rumney.

Art like Dracula, may be dead, but it flies well nevertheless." Chris Shutes.

"For the last century and a half the most striking contribution to art and life has been the fruit of free experiment with the possibilities of a bankrupt civilisation. The erotic reason of Sade; Kierkegaard's sarcasm; Nietzches lashing irony; Ahabs blasphemy, mallarmes deadpan, Carrolls fantasy. Dadas negativism - these are the forces which have reached out to confront people with some of the dankness and acidity of decaying values" Situationist International.

"Creative ideas, art music, whatever can be simplified and made impotent so that they inoculate the population against rigorous thinking, rigorous living. The same way, cow-pox vaccine is used to control smallpox, a bullshit band like Flock of Seagulls inoculate the population against a force like new wave music. Same goes for rapping, true intoxicating disco music, biting comedy, political discourse." Eric Bogosian.

"The thirst for experience, the hunger for instintual gratification in the concrete imbroglio is merely titlated by the indirect perversion of the imaginary products of commercial artists.

Hungry for what? Man, I tell you to strip naked and howl on your roof tonight at the moon and clouds. Or wander aimlessly through a landfill by candlelight with swimfins and lace - you'll get more cultural insight than by squatting a la commode before some Fellini Technogram. Ratticus.

"Art in a capitalist society is only available in commodity form." Linton Kwesi Johnson.

"If it is art, it is not for all, and if it is not for all, it is not art." Arnold Schoenberg.

"We can only make sense of art if we judge it by the criterion of whether or not it help wo/men claim their social rights." John Berger.

"I am for an art that is political - erotic - mystical, that does something other than sit on its arse in a museum. I'm for an art that grows up, not knowing it's art at all. An art given the chance of having a starting point of zero. I'm for an art that embroils itself with the every day crap and still comes out on top. An art that imitates the human, that is cosmic if necessary, or violent, whatever is necessary. I am for an art you can be sick on, for an art you can pick your nose with or stub your toes on, I am in favour of art that is put on and taken off, like pants, that develops holes, like socks. is eaten like a piece of pie or abandoned with great contempt like a piece of shit." Claes Oldenberg (Financial Times)

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Most of us have been involved in editorial decisions, though our responsibilities have varied, due to time and availability. The format and content of the magazine is not fixed forever by the content of this first issue - although our bias should be quite clear. Any readers wishing to become involved in the production - whether editorial, production, distribution, etc. are invited to write to us so we can contact you before our next meeting. ARTICLES are invited and we'd like to cover other aspects of the arts, whether on a review or theoretical basis: dance, film, music, social/street theatre, etc., where there are positive and serious proposals or actions to report. *We welcome letters.*

Please keep copies of articles submitted just in case ...
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Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue, and apologies for delay.

THIS IS NEW

CHANNEL 8 CHAINE 8 BAND 8 8 PROGRAMMA IS THE is the name of a new videocassette channel due to come out of Argyll in 1985. It thinks rather arrogantly that it is the first trans-national television service which is **totally free from commercial or government pressure**. Every cassette automatically carries the government health warning: 'BRIGHT'S AWARD: OVER 18' to forestall the forestall the provision of the video nasties bill.

The quiet hope is that gradually contributing cameras will be found which can produce material of high enough quality to merit inclusion in the language of origination, presently fixed at English (and Scots), French, German and Russian. But, experience so far shows that interest in video as a valid medium is still low. But most people don't know what can be done now.

Behind the Channel is the Communication Cooperative, which also runs Radio 8 on audiocassette. Material for launch is being steadily collected and the Cooperative will have three cameras working at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The autumn and winter will be spent coaxing writers, poets, singers and musicians down to the incredibly beautiful studios on Loch Striven or at worst going out on location. Much editing then follows.

If you would like to be involved, write to the Secretary,

The Communication Cooperative,
Inverchaolain
dunoon,
Argyll PA23 7UN.

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