

PERFORMANCE



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EIGHT

DAY

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LETTERS

MARGINALISED AGAIN

Dear Performance Magazine,

In regard to Robert Ayers' review of the live work at the British Art Show, he would have been better separating his comments on the work from those on the organisation of the show; it is misleading to write so that criticism of the presentation of the work can be easily confused with criticism of the work itself. What he actually says about the work of Station House Opera is trivial. To claim that Sex & Death lacks incident and is overlong is just not true of the piece. It is packed with action and is rather short. But Ayers does talk a lot about the circumstances of seeing it, and the other performances in the show, and I am prepared to agree with him on many points, but it seems he knows nothing about how the show was organised, or why some of the performances suffered. Many of the problems are not specific to this show either, and I would like to note some of them which recur over again in trying to continue to produce rehearsed, group performance work.

The British Art Show was a prestigious event, and paid better than some, but remained a frustrating experience. Ayers criticises Station House Opera for not caring about its audience, for being content to withdraw from the main body of the show, and for presenting a creaky one-night stand of an existing piece instead of showing some active involvement in the show. Long before the show opened, I went to all four venues to research sites, not because of a belief that work necessarily has to be crucially influenced by its surroundings, but because Station House likes to do site-specific work on occasion, and we were enthusiastic, now that performance had for once been allowed into a major art show, to make it central and unmissable.

But it is one thing to select a company like Station House, and another to allow it to function. Our plans for a new piece in the central dome of Birmingham's City Museum came to grief on the rocks of municipal bureaucracy, the lack of anyone on the Museum staff capable of organising it, and that favourite catch-all, lack of space. Eventually we reluctantly agreed to perform Sex & Death, a small scale touring piece, in the tea-room. We made it clear that while we were keen to perform as often as possible, we could not do multiple performances for the price of one. As it was, we needn't have worried; a company of six is an expensive thing to keep, let alone pay, and we were contracted for a single performance at each of the English venues. At the first one in Birmingham

we found that the total inappropriateness of the Museum's organisation and facilities ensured that the work was eventually performed under about the worst conditions it has ever had.

In Edinburgh, fearing a repeat, and again finding ourselves excluded from the main exhibition, we requested that our venue should be one accustomed to presenting live performance. In Sheffield, one gallery in the Mappin was ideal for us to do a new work in, only for pressure of space to evict us again. More or less reduced to performing Sex & Death through lack of space and money, we found ourselves in fringe theatre venues, attempting to make an impression of a particular kind in an environment dedicated to generating another, day in, day out. The Theatre Workshop in Edinburgh and The Leadmill in Sheffield made little attempt to advertise Station House Opera as a special event, or even to attract their regular audience to try something different. We had hoped that a theatre audience might be persuaded to watch, as a consolation for being estranged from the main show. Instead, we found the venues has withdrawn any interest or enthusiasm from the show, rather as if we had been imposed upon them unwillingly.

It is here that direct comparisons with theatre practice have to be made. Although Station House is aesthetically opposite to most of what goes by the name of fringe theatre, many of the logistics and financial constraints are the same. While it is frustrating to play to 50 people when you're part of a show bringing in tens of thousands, it is in a way more frustrating to be unable to be at one's peak because the gig is an isolated one-night stand of a technically demanding performance, by a permanent company whose fee for the job might possibly pass as being ok for a theatre company of similar size in mid-tour and in receipt of Drama Panel funding. No one who doesn't run a company knows how expensive it is. Sex & Death was conceived, produced and rehearsed for no money whatever, and is still being performed for a derisory amount of cash. Ayers may be right in criticising the performance of Sex & Death at Sheffield. If he is, it is probably due to under-rehearsal. But how can you continue to afford to rehearse for a week for a single 40 minute slot? Come to that, how do you persuade a community arts centre to abandon its lunch-time jazz so that you can get time for a rehearsal in the space? Given the circumstances, we were happy with it. But this situation cannot last. Every time Station House performs, company members lose money. A bad performance loses less money, because less rehearsal is required. Ayers raises

the question: why did we and Anthony Howell only do one performance each, and not in the main galleries, in a show of this scale and popularity? The short answer is clear, but it is time we talked about the others.

**Julian Maynard Smith
Station House Opera
Wandsworth Road
London**

CONTROL

Dear Performance Magazine,

On the afternoon of Monday, June 10th, 1985, 8mm films and video tapes integral to the performance of a new piece of work — This Sickness, Faith — were seized and confiscated by Birmingham C.I.D. under Section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act.

The piece employs sexual and sado-masochistic images to comment on belief in god, religious dogma and the nature of christianity, to which end scenes of bondage, simulated rape and male masturbation were utilised. It had been specially prepared with the Midland Group's Performance Art Platform in mind and was to have been performed at the Group's 'mini-platform' on June 12th.

As an artist who, if I might quote your editorial of February/March 1984, 'You Might Think it's Art but We Think it's Disgusting', has always attempted 'to deal with images of sexuality and violence . . . through films and videos, in a realistic and honest way', I find this blatant censorship of my work both intolerable and totally unjustifiable (being an unsubsidised artist it is also hard to bear financially). Surely it is only through confronting the taboos of society and the fear and disgust which fuel them that a greater level of understanding may be achieved. Society's refusal to face controversial issues and determination to wrap itself in a legislative cocoon based on confusion and ignorance will only serve to perpetuate that ignorance and conform the role of a blinkered, coercive state system.

In the final analysis, as the editorial so rightly points out, it is 'a struggle for control', but not only of the artist's means of expression. What we have here is a fundamental attack on freedom of expression — not so much art = disgust ∴ prosecution as art = subversion ∴ suppression.

**Mike
for Con-dom
Tettenhall
Wolverhampton
W. Midlands**

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Cover: *The Vampiress* by Steve Willats (Right Hand Panel) Courtesy Lisson Gallery, London.

This page: *Untitled Film Still* by Cindy Sherman Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York. From 'Imposters'.

PERF

SAME RIVER TWICE

In *Same River Twice*, at Oval House two characters develop through a sequence of abstract and figurative interactions to a climax, from which they return, backwards through the sequence to a new beginning. A technically highly structured performance by Melanie Thompson and Paul Roylance is sharply choreographed, with strong and evocative music (by Simon Thorne). However, the linking idea — the relationship of 2 mystical seers Merlin and Cassandra — is so often obscured the whole thing becomes over-abstract and the link between events confused for no apparent purpose.

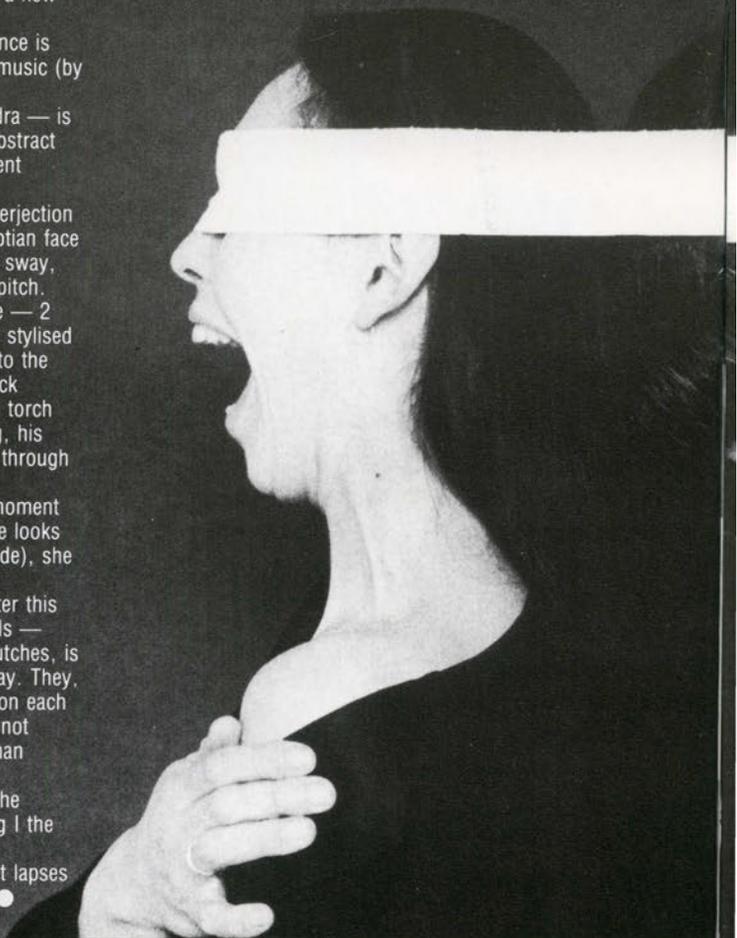
Some interesting moments are marred by the interjection of superfluous action: The woman, her almost Egyptian face in strong contrast lighting, blinks slowly, begins to sway, mesmerically, a low background hum increases in pitch. Slowly, slowly she puts her finger on her nose, eye — 2 fingers in the air, a shrug, a kiss, a jeer. A sparse, stylised piece but with interest — an almost jokey allusion to the monkey oracle within the sanctuary. Behind the black curtain, on the other hand, the man fumbles with a torch like a pantomime nightwatchman, chanting, praying, his words virtually inaudible, occasional words drifting through — Camelot, Gawain, Cassandra Hecuba, Priam, a heterogeneous litany of mythological names. One moment brings the 2 worlds together, and then is lost — He looks into the curtain, invoking the darkness outside (inside), she inside the oracle gesticulates, oblivious.

The curtain rises, the light grows. Juxtaposed after this an evening dress couple perform social/sexual rituals — they meet — their embraces never touches, she clutches, is pushed away, he holds out his hand, is pushed away. They, in turn, chant a hymn to death, echoing in opposition each others words, she is life, he is death. All this does not explain the following (overlong) episode of the woman leaping on the man's back.

The light dies and the action retraces its steps. The chanting is now audible, 'I am the clear singer, sing I the clear song'. Return to the monkey oracle.

From time to time an exciting performance -- but lapses into gratuitous mystification muddy a precise style. ●

SUE WOLFF



HAPPENINGS

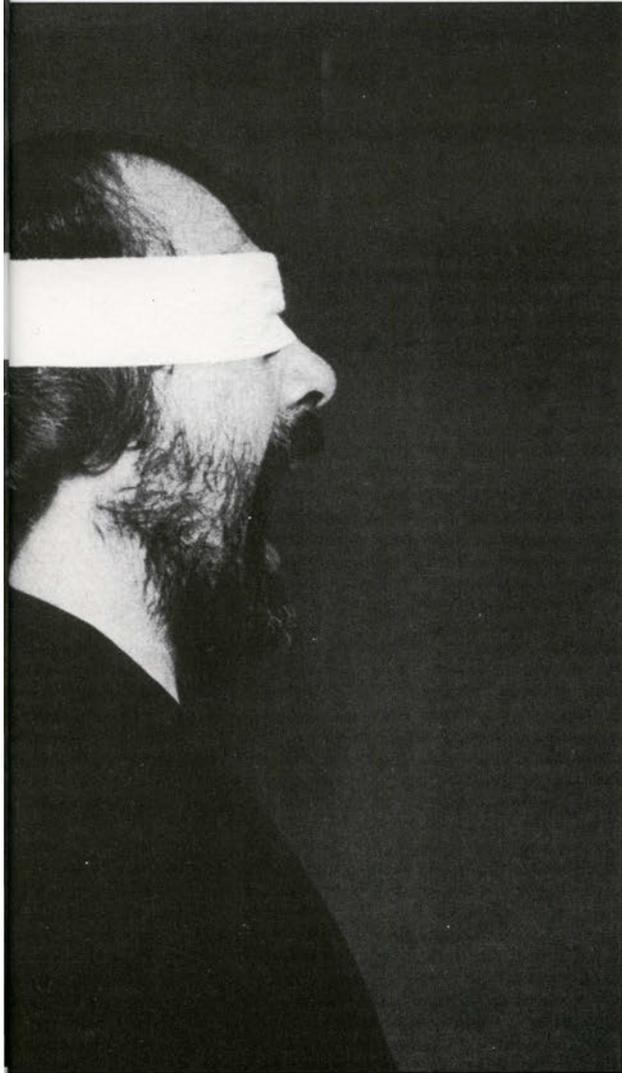
Recently I saw two 'happenings', both of which featured religious-blasphemous content and imagery, and it was interesting to compare both their cultural contexts and their stylistic difference. Happenings?

Perhaps it should be explained that in certain quarters it is now highly unfashionable to describe live, visual, and (seemingly) ad hoc events as performance art. In the thriving subculture of warehouse, party, fashion-show and theme club, the happening, old-style has made the two-decade jump, the mess and undress of the Neo-naturalists a year or so back being merely the precursors of a coming change in context and terminology. This will come, no doubt, as a relief to those in the old school, the 'serious' performance artists, who would prefer to see their work formalised, rigorised and criticised, rather than being paraded as a subcultural novelty.

The invitation to the first was typical of the

genre, a photocopied flyer with hand-drawn felt-tip colours, inviting us to participate in 'A Miracle'. The place? Nine Elms Cold Store, a huge building-refrigerator in the wastelands of Vauxhall. At the start there were all the right signs. A sense of nostalgia as we picked our way across the rubble at dusk, to dive into a foul-smelling hole which connected with steps that led us up and up to an antechamber, from which it was possible to see others, coming from all directions, as if drawn by a radar echo to the central focus of the building. I would not have been surprised to have been catapulted in to the invisible tennis scene in Antonini's *Blow-up*. Once inside, things looked promising too. A cavernous place, reeking of incense, with various 'shrines' scattered around and the confused participants making last-minute preparations.

From this point things started to go downhill. After wandering around freely, we were all herded back into the antechamber, and the organisers proceeded to make their One Big Mistake which



INTEATRO FESTIVAL 85 — POLVERIGI, ITALY

Over the years Polverigi has become an important and unique focus for artists, administrators, and critics who are concerned with and about recent and future developments in theatrical experimentation and research.

Polverigi itself is a modest, undistinguished village about ten miles inland from Ancona. The Festival came about as the result of the joint vision of the mayor of Polverigi and the Festival organisers Roberto Cimetta and Velia Papa. It is an excellent relaxed and informal occasion, ideal for seeing a huge quantity and range of new theatre, for meeting and talking with like minded people from around the world. Yet it is also important as a model of how the arts, particularly the experimental arts, can become a part of the life of the ordinary working community. The village people attend the shows as well as benefitting from the seasonal employment it provides and the boost to the incomes of local trades people. The Festival has also provided the village with a new community centre/theatre, the rehabilitation for communal enjoyment of the formerly decrepit aristocratic mansion and grounds which now form the centre of the Festival, and is also providing funds towards the building of a new sports centre through the profits of the volunteer run Festival restaurant. It has also given the village national and international prestige.

In the next issue of Performance Steve Rogers will discuss some of the shows at this year's Polverigi Festival and consider the lessons to be learnt from this unique event.●

Wieslawa Greenhalgh

was to kill any spontaneity that might have been present. This was to organise us into a 'guided tour' conducted by an 'archbishop' with an unmistakeable actorly voice, who was to introduce us to each aspect of the 'cathedral'. The audience, which was sizeable, and who had come to participate in what had all the trappings of a 'marginal' event, — a seemingly illegally entered building, darkness, blasphemy (the altar was a large double bed) — immediately started showing resentment about being herded about by a bunch of drama students. The veteran extremist performance artist, Ian Hinchcliffe, who lives locally, and was here to check out events on his manor, immediately hurled abuse and smashed a handy light fitting before retiring to the pub. The organisers nervously regained control, but the evening, wonderful place, wonderful setting was lost. The genre had been hijacked, and was found wanting.

The second was of interest, because it was actually within a context representing the

subcultural throwback, this year's Hood Fair. For years this festival has, with varying degrees of success, tried to reconcile the dynamic of a rural hippy festival with touring visual theatre and performance spectacle. The uneasy co-existence of the hedonistic complacency of the former and the artistic experimentation of the latter was particularly pointed up by the appearance of part of the Convoy, fresh from their unequal scrimmage with police at Stonehenge. They set up their post-apocalyptic encampment just outside the gates, and their lively presence around the beer tent was clearly making the mobile contact improvisers and knick-knack-selling arty-crafties a shade nervous. Even hardened fair-goers Forkbeard Fantasy were getting a bit nervous as night fell, and said that if things got silly they'd just give up. (They needn't have worried. The Convoy was out for a peaceful time, and the Forkbeard's new show, performed that night, was so excellent it got rapturous applause).

Down at the lake, Industrial and Domestic ▶

PERF

Theatre Contractors and the Theatre of Fire were starting their spectacular, *The Lady of the Lake*, and they must forgive me if I call this a happening too. Anyone who drives a large mechanical digger into a lake, with robed nymphs draped around its raised scoop and exploding firecrackers around the base, its driver dressed as death, is either performing a happening or is Italian. With a large crowd gathered, most of whom were impatient for fireworks, Industrial and Domestic, a young group, showed that a combination of clear images, presented with enthusiasm and vigour can still win through. Lancelot, the sinner, arrived in an inflatable limousine, God made a cameo appearance, and the Seven Deadly Sins writhed effectively on a raft. What happened then was highly confused, but it 'worked'. The over-the-top images were conventional enough, but they had clearly learnt from performance history enough to do the right things to make the ideas seem fresh. Where the Nine Elms event had taken a highly promising context and ruined it, this was almost exactly the reverse.●

ROB LA FREN AIS



LULU UNCHAINED

L*ulu Unchained*, taking its cue from the Lulus of Wedekind and Berg, amounts to a very limited and simple range of actions. Three men, taunt, intimidate and assault Lulu to the point where rebellion is inescapable. At the point of explosion the men use affection seduction and more force to contain and defuse her revolt. Then the process starts up again, building in a simple linear structure of crescendo, artfully interrupted by brief spoken scenarios which introduce each act. Finally her rebellion takes the form of murder and she shoots her assailants. But although they fall down dead, they get up again only to die again. So that even in their death they continue to torture her as she continually relieves her guilt and fear of her murderous act.

The simple range of actions are given depth by the excellent musical score. Jeremy Peyton-Jones (Regular Music) music just goes on getting better all the time. The live music is interspersed with brief recorded passages from Berg's opera. The live score takes its lead from these passages, following the same chord progressions but developing and elaborating them with his own systematic technique and a beautiful control of mood and pace. It becomes the prime animating force of the whole piece and this role is recognised in the design of the show. The band a stage centre on an elegantly minimal raised platform, whilst the physical action takes place in a rough undecorated space below. The orchestra and the performers of Berg's opera have changed places in a most appropriate and revealing way, the action being better suited to a pit and the highly refined art of the music better suited to the artifice of the stage itself.

The pit, although at first sight quite bare, also provides some necessary clues to the meaning of the actions. The three pillars are stained with old blood, for example, telling us that this process has been enacted many times before and will go on being re-enacted, giving the piece a universality. That the action takes place in the real space of the orchestra pit, rather than the imaginary spaces of a theatre stage, also tells us that these actions are real and not pretence or artifice, and thereby gives the actions even greater emotional power.

Unfortunately what prevents the piece (directed by Pete Brooks, of Impact) from working in the way it should as a simple direct line to the heart and gut is Kathy Acker's text. There is little enough of it, basically a monologue spoken by Lulu as a kind of poetic epilogue in which Lulu is unchained from her round of misery through the force of her own inner poetry. A poetry of strength derived from the harmonious, conjugal functioning of a woman's body and her dreams.

The final epilogue is overwhelmed by the power of the actions which precede it, largely because her explicit visceral writing which works so well on the page as a powerful, threatening, celebration of a woman's sexuality is essentially a private experience which does not translate at all well into the public experience of the theatre. *Blood and Guts* works so well because the reader is alone with the writer, but as a public experience the same words seem terrible naive and dull.

The other problem with the show is that the performers were not at all times passionate or committed enough to convince me that what was happening was real. But that is a problem which will hopefully be resolved in time. The problem of how to find an appropriate and what should be a celebratory theatrical form for the Unchaining of Lulu is a harder problem since it probably means relacing the text with a physical expression built from the language forged in the actions which lead to this final release.●

STEVE ROGERS

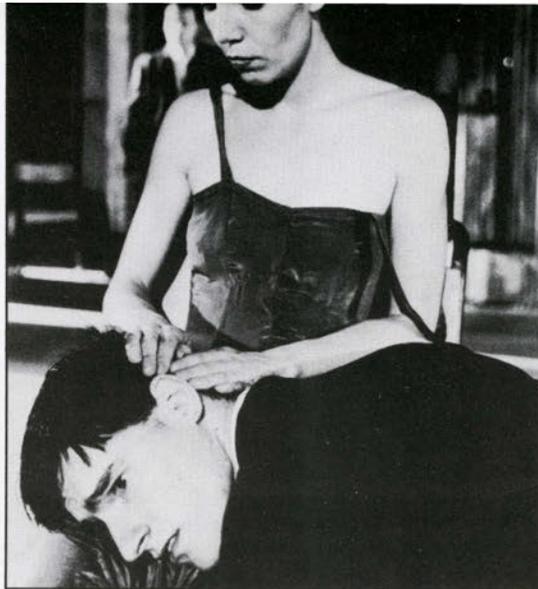


Photo: Roger Morton

Poetry of Strength

EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE

It did not come off. Expeditions have been known not to. This expedition of instrumentalists, singers, performers and designers, voyaging into a hinterland of sound, voice and effect — described by Michael Parsons as a metaphysical entertainment — struggled through its two hour journey, split mistakenly by an interval just at the point when the performance had started to make ground after a slow start. The performance as a whole was conceived by Parsons with a version first performed in August 1984, this was an extended second attempt to bring together different artists in a collage of sound and visuals in the form of a drawing room entertainment. Tales of heroism on the ice, echo's of 'I'm just going outside and may be some time' were encouraged in the retelling of the story of Dr Cook and Robert Edwin Peary who in 1909 both claimed to have been the first to reach the North Pole, following their separate attempts. But why did Parsons and his attempt fail? Well equipped with scratch instruments, experienced singers and performers they set off but were overtaken by the complexity of the task. The sight of the technicians blowing up a polystyrene blizzard with a domestic Hoover and two nodding propeller fans while the explorers crawled dragging their sledges up the floor invoked images of a BBC Radio Sound Effects Training Workshop. I wanted the whole room to be filled with polystyrene. Looking through my eyes half-closed it worked but I don't squint at performances. But it did work with the

instrumental and sung pieces, which were good, the cold rasping of the amplified taut wire and the massed choral songs balancing out the absurd entertainment of the snowstorm. The point about such entertainment is that it had to be practised to work, whereas improvisation and one-off attempts recognized in terms of pure performance. Journey to the North Pole tried to bring the two together, the performance worked, the entertainment didn't, apparently because of lack of time to rehearse.

This was clearly shown in the second half with effects thrown to the mind. We were invited to leave the constructed polar landscape complete with ruined igloo and sit near the ensemble of singers and instrumentalists. The next hour of simpler images and music worked and we got closer to the intention of the evening's efforts. This was highlighted by Kazuko Hohki's appearance clad in an Eskimo fur suit and fish harpoon, serious and questioning. Her appearance highlighted this search for a Pole which only exists on a map co-ordinate in the minds of the explorers. This was set against Clive Bell, Bryn Harris as the explorers and Sylvia Hallet and Stuart Jones singing along to their victory vaudeville number 'Snow Business'. The simple musical number worked set against the simple performance image. Forget the polystyrene balls. Journey to the North Pole looked good on paper but suffered frostbite in the attempt.●

ROBIN MORLEY

Photo: Hetty Church

Snow Business



PERF

PRINCESS OF CLEVES



About a year ago there was a TV item about a smart, educated couple who had given up their fashionable west London flat in favour of an Edwardian terraced house in an unfashionable suburb. The couple enthusiastically extolled the advantages of being equally close to country and city, of being able to enjoy both front and back garden, relative quiet, more space and some delightful period features, notably the mock Tudor facade. They had lovingly restored the whole house whilst discreetly subjecting it to a rigorous modernisation. To my surprise I found their arguments, in an age of metropolitan sophistication, persuasive and daringly pragmatic — pioneering even. For one brief moment I pictured myself moving out to the delights of Ongar.

The Princess of Cleves had a very similar effect. Just as the pioneering couple had put pragmatism before idealism, eclecticism before purism, regional diversity before uniformity, so Tim Albery, director of *Princess* has moved away from the utopian, universal, abstract visions of modernism towards a pluralist, contextual, rhetorical style, embracing the past and the future, along with those outcasts of modernist style, metaphor, symbol, ornament and even humour. All the hallmarks of what is called 'postmodernism'.

The performance brings together two men and three women, each of very different temperament and cultural background, and secures them in a house which is equally diverse and eclectic in its decor and furnishings. A grand ornate Regency staircase, a collection of 50's wardrobes, a profusion of different lights, and some classic modernist chairs, with walls partly bare, partly painted in bold blue, and partly decorated in what looked like pre-Raphaelite frescoes. In all an intriguing and delightful mess.

The relationship between the five emerge gradually through a collage of brief episodes cut together like film. The strongest presence is that of the Prince of Cleves, played by Brian Lipson, whose presence is always strong.

The Prince it seems is in the process of clearing away all traces of the past from the house, the old furniture is stacked away and in the second half the ultra modern prevails. Throughout the Prince is constantly turning on and off and adjusting the collection of lights. The metaphor appears simple. As the Prince imposes his uniform modernity on the house so the relationships begin to break up into confrontation. The constant adjustment of lighting is a clever and persuasive metaphor of the 'modernist' condition. — constantly looking for the perfect ideal light in which to cast his vision of how things should be; constantly searching for the utopian solution.

The show is engaging, charming and quite surprising but I have reservations. Peter Gordon's occasional music, an urban bluesy sax sound, failed to create the right mood. That particular sound has been used too often in TV commercials for aftershave and home-perms to be seductive. The long meaningful pauses in the dialogues, needed a much tighter structure, and a much better script, to be effective. The script itself was rife with cliches and all too sub-Chekhovian.

I greatly admired Tim Albery's direction and the strong performances, but in the end the attempt to have the best of the traditional values of narrative, psychological theatre and of modernist theatre techniques, was really no more than an uncomfortable compromise. Just as the couple in the suburb have got neither the real bucolic virtues of the country nor the convenience and energy of the city.

I like the idea of covering the often hard-to-swallow pill of modernism with a sugar coating of recognisable ornaments but in this instance they have thrown the baby out with the bitter bathwater. I have a deep suspicion that *The Princess of Cleves* was little more than an exercise in style and that for it to really work, for this idea of 'postmodernism' to work, it needs a more thorough intellectual commitment and some serious political analysis. ●

STEVE ROGERS

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SIMON HERBERT saw Rose Garrard's new performance at the Laing, Newcastle:

OPENINGS

The title of Rose Garrard's performance, *Openings*, was significant for a number of reasons. It was only the second time that the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, had opened its doors to live work — the other event was Rose English's *Plato's Chair* a few weeks earlier. Both performances were the first to be programmed by Projects U.K. under its new performance franchise scheme. More importantly, though, it marked Rose Garrard's return to a live arena.

Watching *Openings* was reminiscent of a picture of a girl on a matchbox, who holds an identical box of matches in her hand. Our images of self are constructed in much the same way, multiplying into compartments, each box infinitely regressing, becoming smaller and more private. *Openings* was created specifically for the Laing, and took place in a large room bordered on three sides of cabinets containing ceramic and pot relics. These were masked off by sheets of white grease-proof paper, allowing the light from the cabinets to diffuse subtly around the space. Surrounded by 'antiquity', Garrard created her own boxes within a box, opening them in an autobiographical sense to explore the role of models or, rather, the lack of authentic role models that women have to look up to.

The classical role model was Pandora; she opened the original box, releasing evil upon the world. Pandora's curiosity and her precipitation of female guilt has been an important theme within Garrard's work for some time, and her myth formed the central element within the tapestry of *Openings*.

It is a commonly held belief of performance that it stresses the 'here and now'. This has been, logically, the lynch-pin of performance — the artist's investigation of the 'intensities in time and space' written about by Chantal Pontbriand. It is a pity that many performers cannot move beyond these basic concerns, and consequently fail to create work with a more substantial resonance. This was not the case with Garrard; for an hour her audience was hermetically sealed within a time capsule that not only explored layers of here and now, but also interwove them with past and future.

The performance started in darkness; a spotlight slowly faded up, illuminating a canvas hung at the



back of the space and Garrard, rolled womb-like in it's tail-end. Garrard's detached voice whispered from speakers around the space, reflecting on her expectations and vulnerability, not only as a woman, but as an artist: 'They'll be waiting for the action to begin, the image to appear.' Other voices joined in, quoting psychological papers that

mapped out woman's apparent inability to achieve.

Garrard slowly began to roll out from the blank canvas towards her audience, emerging even as a voice whispered 'We retreated, we would not be drawn out.' Donning a bowler and false moustache she presented herself as Chaplin, and to the strains of 'Come to the Circus' produced a

Rose Garrard returns to a live arena

Photo: Steve Collins

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small statuette of the Madonna and placed in at the foot of the canvas. The next object to appear was hidden under a handkerchief and pointed at the audience. In a magical moment, with the discarding of the bowler and stroke of her hair, Chaplin became Hitler. The handkerchief was removed, revealing a gun.

It seems that men have had no shortage of role models to identify with. Not only are their symbols beneficial for gain, but the models also encompass the polarities of an emotional range from laughter to hatred. Where, then, has there been room for female expression? Two large cut-outs of the Harry Bates' Pandora answered the question — in silence, in an internalisation of dialogue. To come down from the pedestal, to be not only seen but also heard, involves an inevitable accumulation of guilt. Garrard's models embody the accepted nature of female passivity. As icons they reinforce the risk of a dislocation from familiar points of reference.

Two young ballet dancers on either side of Garrard each produced another Madonna from their own boxes, once again placing them at the foot of the canvas. Garrard — dressed in white, virginal like the Madonna — repeated 'You must try to be like her' over and over again while 'Hail Mary's' echoed around the space.

The significance of the ballerinas was complex. On one level they manifested the qualities that men preserve for women: grace, passivity, fragility. Yet on another level such qualities are seemingly irreconcilable with the effort it takes to attain such a state; ballet dancers have to subject themselves to an intensive and rigorous athletic discipline. For much of the time their presence was decorative, yet there were times when Garrard's use of them became focussed and they worked extremely well.

At one point Garrard walked back to the canvas, still in white, and splashed it with red paint from Pandora's box. Female sexuality has been identified with blood, with menstruation; by making public that which is considered private, Garrard seemed to call for a disclosure of sexuality, a snubbing of taboo. The audience's gaze became rivetted on the two ballerinas who, to the echoes of chattering starlings, strutted bird-like in unison, their faces hidden by masks of Monroe and Garland respectively. Both women's lives were marked by duality; they achieved notoriety within a man's world, but Monroe read Dostoyevsky in secret, and Garland was obsessed with her figure. Both committed suicide.

It was moments like this, a curious mixture of optimism and pessimism, that gave the work its strength. A bittersweet feeling was also apparent in another segment when the ballerinas held the tail of the canvas like a bride's train and Garrard tore it down the middle. Destroying the canvas, rejecting the inability to form a picture outside of male domination, merely revealed a monumental cut-out of yet another Pandora. Had she been transformed by the action, or did she serve as an omnipresent reminder that action precipitates punishment?

Such friction — the attempt to portray elements in counterpoint rather than in a gestalt — has always been a hallmark of performance art, yet has been manifested in radically different ways according to the gender of the artist. Stuart Brisley's work, in the seventies, for example, also explored notions of domain and sexuality, yet his actions were cathartic, in that their release of energy depended upon a display of virility. Regardless of the nature of his comment, the act was a re-inforcement of masculinity. This is not a criticism of Brisley's work, rather an attempt to acknowledge

that the modes of artistic expression within performance seem to be very much defined by the artist's sex. It is intriguing to consider what the effect would be of work by performance artists who find their catharsis in actions that reverse the typical roles of men and women.

It was in this respect, with the knowledge that such barriers *are* being broken (by artists such as Anne Bean or Brisley himself, whose present work seems to mark an attempt to gradually sublimate his physical presence completely) that the ending of *Openings* was dissatisfying. Garrard, dressed in red (a positive colour for the artist), produced a bunch of roses and, walking amongst the audience, gave red ones to women, blue ones to men. In one sense it was an affirmative gesture; Garrard's gift was not only a breaking of the barrier between performer and audience, but also a relocation of self, her icons discarded mute behind her. In another sense I had desperately wanted to witness a rupture that owed less to a symbolic action, and more to a real experience of cathartic release. The irony is that Garrard, through the strength and depth of her work, has already provided proof of creating a breathing space within the male dominated artistic system.

Openings was a piece of work that demonstrated the possibilities for engaging and provocative performance to be produced, given a proper co-ordination of artist, venue and time. Project U.K.'s apparent policy of a focus on quality rather than quantity seems the only direction to take in order to ensure the respect and survival of live work. There is a whole new generation of aspiring performance artists who do not possess Rose Garrard's experience, and are unlikely to acquire any in an arena that is woefully inequipped to give them opportunities to breathe. ■



Red roses to women — blue ones to men

Photo: Steve Collins

This year's Almeida Festival was unrepeatable. STEVEN MONTAGUE raves:



Lou Harrison, Virgil Thomson, Conlon Nancarrow

It can be honestly said that the Almeida Theatre has pulled off four weeks of one of the most exciting and adventurous music festivals found in Britain in recent memory. From its beginning five years ago, with very little financial support, the Almeida Festival has consistently wedged itself into world class status. Now with this year's festival, it set a new standard for quality programming. Much of the success of the annual festival is the Artistic Director, Pierre Audi's acute detective's instinct for following the right trails and asking the right people the right questions. One of Audi's best 'finds' this year was the American pianist and animateur, Yvar Mikhashoff, a wonderful raconteur, and an artesian fount of obscure and unusual Americana. Perfect! Mikhashoff was asked to devise and co-ordinate two weeks of American music under the banner: *At the Tomb of Charles Ives* (a title taken from a Lou Harrison work), and that set the pace for the festival.

Opening day was wonderful. The Ives unpublished sets for theatre pit band were remarkable displays of all his best qualities: mad invention, raucous note jams, and the unexpected turn. Nancarrow's early *Piece for Small Orchestra* was another happy surprise. The composer was clearly moved hearing it live for the first time since it was written 42 years ago in his pre-player piano roll days.

It continued with Mikhashoff's party trick: *The Great American Piano Marathon* of 70 works from 70 years in 7 hours which lasted until

sundown. It was hard to imagine someone could sit down anywhere for seven hours, much less play the piano non-stop all that time. But the clock started at 3 pm and 'The Marathon Man' as *The Guardian* called him ran the full distance. He brought it off with all the finesse and panache the occasion required. There was just the right amount of chat between each piece with appropriate anecdote, gossip, or biography to heighten interest in what followed. The pieces were well chosen, interesting, and short. The climax of the marathon was the British premiere of John Adams' controversial *Grand Pianola Music* (1982). It was one of those pieces that would only work in that context. After 7 hours between the theatre and the bar what could be more appropriate than one grand, full blown piece with everything in it from gospel to Beethoven. It was kitsch, corny, but often wonderful, and Music Projects/London nearly blew the roof off the theatre. The end was so loud my heels ached. What a day.

Philip Glass was also in town for the opening of his new opera, *Akhmaten*, at the English National Opera, so the ever vigilant Audi saw to it there was a special concert of his music, and a reception for the minimalist who's made good. Unfortunately his recent music doesn't quite have the fire and virtuosity that characterized much of his earlier work. Even the suite from *Einstein on the Beach* performed beautifully by the New London Chamber Choir seemed lost without

the brilliant choreography of Robert Wilson and the sets.

Another personality in town was Virgil Thomson, the dean of American composers and critics. At 88 he is still spry and sharp as ever. He introduced the programme of his violin and piano works with his usual urbane wit, but his introductions were often better than some of the music. The audience was further entertained when, between each piece, he chatted loudly to his neighbour because his hearing aid was turned down.

One of the best coups this year was persuading Conlon Nancarrow to visit London for the first time since he passed through in 1936 on his way to fight in the Spanish Civil War. For 40 years Nancarrow has lived in Mexico in quiet exile from the U.S. Since the 40s he has developed a highly sophisticated player piano roll composition technique. Eva Soltes presented a slide show of his life and work in Mexico showing Nancarrow in his workshop looking not unlike one of the local Mexican artisans. Some of his *Piano Studies* were played via tape recordings, and then the 72 year old composer answered questions from the floor. Nancarrow has only recently found himself suddenly a cult figure. Unlike Virgil Thomson, Nancarrow has not had much experience in front of audiences. The little man from Texarkansas, Arkansas dressed in blue jeans and a cotton shirt fielded the questions much the way you'd expect a local from the Deep South. Q: 'Sir, what kind of compositional system do you

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use when you compose . . . 12 tone?' A: 'Oh, I don't know, I just write what I feel, I guess.'

The second week of American music featured Frederick Rzewski in a concert of his music, Crosstown Jazz with a good mixture of works by Anthony Braxton, Milton Babbitt, Stefan Wolpe, and Carla Bley, and the Electro-Acoustic Music Association (EMAS) with a programme of mixed-media works for slide projections, dancers, and computer generated tapes projected over their 28 speaker sound system, and Morton Feldman and Friends with the British premiere of his *Crippled Symmetry*, one of his shorter, long pieces. This little bagatelle was only 1½ hours compared with the work the following week in Holland which was four. He once wrote quite, short pieces. Now they're quiet and long. It was boring and recommended only for insomniacs. It was a case of a little Feldman going a long way.

The perfect Feldman antidote, however, was the festival's finest hour: The Astor Piazzolla New Tango Quintet. This little band of five brilliant musicians (violin, bass, electric guitar, piano and bandoneon — an Argentinian concertina) brought the house down for their four, sold-out nights. At the end of the first night people were coming away saying it was the best thing they'd ever heard. It was truly one of those rare magical moments. Astor Piazzolla, now in his 60s, studied with Ginistera, and Nadia Boulanger in the early days. On Boulanger's advice, he stopped trying to write European concert music and continued his development of the concert tango. In his hands this passionate Argentinian dance form has been amazingly transformed, and the first evening was so good many of us booked to see it again. It was unbelievable that this was only his first appearance in Britain. It was thrilling and really something to be savoured over the years.

At the weekend during the Piazzolla residence, the ubiquitous Mikhashoff ran his second marathon. This time 50 tangos by 50 composers. Again his presentation helped carry the day. When he

introduced Otto Luening's tango, for example: 'Just after WWI, Luening lived in that fabulous city of Zurich in a fabulous time and knew fabulous people. He was a friend of Lenin, acted in James Joyce's theatre, drank wine with Einstein, and studied piano with Busoni. He was a young man starting his career in the right way.'

The last weeks of the festival were devoted to Aspects of French Contemporary Culture which in the context of the first two weeks of the festival, seemed pretty uptight. L'itineraire brought two programmes of new French music (Boulez, Leninas, Giraud, Dusapin, etc.) which for all their fine performances, made no special impact. It all seemed a little bloodless and cool after the white heat Piazzolla's group generated. The last week was devoted to much of the music of the French-Canadian, Claude Vivier, who was brutally murdered two years ago at the age of 34 in Paris. A great hoopla was made over this tragic figure. A reflective talk about him by some of his close friends was given, and the stage was set for some kind of unusual talent to emerge. Apart from a short piano piece, *Shiraz*, heard earlier in the festival his works were rather disappointing. Words like 'towering genius' which had been bantered around seemed totally inappropriate. There was a certain rough charm to some of his music, but it didn't seem to be particularly distinguished. The festival's final tribute to Vivier was the staging of his opera, *Kopernikus*. The production was excellent (directed by Audi), and certainly captured all the angst Vivier was trying to portray. But musically it was mistimed. It seemed too dense and too intense to last the distance dramatically in spite of the staging.

The festival ended with a thoroughly engrossing premiere performance of Rzewski's *Lost and Found* (directed again by Audi) with the percussionist, Simon Limbrick, naked on a bare stage with a table reciting the text of a letter from an American soldier in Vietnam. Powerful stuff.

Next year's festival is going to have a lot to live up to. ■



A NOISE

According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, sound sculpture is 'intriguing the art world'. Well, I don't think it is intriguing the art world all that much, but it is certainly intriguing everybody else. To the seasoned visitor to contemporary art exhibitions, the most surprising thing about a sound sculpture exhibition is not at first the sculpture or the sound, but the evident receptivity and generous frame of mind of the exhibition's many other visitors. It really does come as a surprise to see looks of anticipatory pleasure on people's faces in art exhibition.

As you entered the Arnolfini's international exhibition of sound sculpture, *A Noise in Your Eye!*, the first piece of sound sculpture to grab your attention was by Ken Gray, who used to tour his 'electrosculpture' around most of Britain's less *haute couture* arts centres, until he moved to Alaska (yes, Alaska) four years ago. His *Suppelleux Vox* is housed within a sort of open plan greenhouse frame made out of plastic drainpipes within which an old bedroom suite (wardrobe, dresser, drawers, TV) bristles with extendable aerials, and is conjoined by metal piping to a central control box, whence electronic bloop-bleep signals whizz around the pipes and are 'played' by the conductivity of your own body if you complete a circuit by taking hold of an aerial and holding a metal pipe.

But one's attention was diverted by Martin Riches' *Percussion Piece No. 7*, in an adjacent corner of the gallery, comprising eight wooden blocks suspended step-wise in space, each with a small sound-making attachment activated by a piston mechanism taken from a disused pinball machine, and controlled at a distance by the pinball mechanism itself, set in motion in the conventional way by tipping it slightly. The trouble was that the resultant short, 'prepared piano' type sounds, not very loud, were apt to be drowned or confused with the other sounds in the busy gallery.

Paul and Limpe Fuchs' *Ballast-strings*, standing nearby, suffered similarly, its subtly efflorescing overtone vibrations lost in the prevailing cacophony (or anarchophony), including the more assertive sounds of the same artists' ladder of wood-blocks, held in a metal trolley-frame like a ritual temple instrument, on which everybody had

USE IN YOUR EYE

a good bonk. Peter Appleton's electrically driven but unamplified *Whirling Dervish* seemed massive and rather frightening when set in motion just above one's head, although its sussurating sounds were again lost somewhere in the bandspread of ambient noise.

Holding their own sonically, however, were some of the Scandinavian decor style sculptures of the Baschet Brothers, veterans of sound sculpture, whose music always reminds me of those sixties black & white continental Paris Pullman 'art films', which they now parody on Heineken TV ads — that was when they were called *Les Structures Sonores*, and appeared on *Monitor* and made LPs of Bach chorales and pieces with names like *Danse du cristal*. These heavy metal artists have made a comeback, though the accent is now on sculpture rather than the steel band music, and on 'open access' to the sculptural instruments with mallets and fingers dipped in water.

Upstairs, in the other gallery, it was look and listen rather than hit and twang, although you could press the buttons operating Hugh Davies' *Macro-Process Organ*, a consciously low-tech arrangement of small sound-making devices dotted around the gallery, mostly at ceiling height. Pressing one of the buttons set off a small sound somewhere above or behind, which when traced to its source might have turned out to be a buzzer in a plastic cup, nail chimes, or a revolving toothbrush. But here again, unfortunately, it was sometimes difficult to pick out the sounds of Hugh Davies' dislocated 'organ' from those of the two metallic vibrating, buzzing and resonating objects of Peter Appleton standing nearby.

Alvin Lucier's *Music on a Long Thin Wire* was composed about five years ago. It is invisible at first, apart from the rope barriers guarding it, and the tables at each end, between which a very long single wire is held taut, oscillated and passed between the poles of a large magnet at one end. Microphones pick up the sounds of the oscillating wire, amplified and transmitted in stereo through speakers placed at each end of the installation. When I was there, the sounds were a low ebb and flow difficult to attune to at first in a busy gallery. The gallery invigilator, when he was not warning children that the



wire would decapitate them if they ran into it, was privileged to have become accustomed to the music of the wire over long periods. It doesn't just go on and on, like the sound of a distant motorway, but its fluctuations in loudness, frequency and complexity of tones are affected by such things as the gallery lights, the weather, the number of people in the gallery, and — for all we know — the tides and the FT Index. As Lucier says, 'You stretch that wire 80 feet long, and you have an environment where it gets warm during the day and cold at night . . . The wire then takes on a life of its own.'

I have long considered Lucier's composition *I am sitting in a room* (in which a spoken statement is recorded and re-recorded in real space between two tape recorders, until the gradual accretion of echoes and overtones picked up and amplified from the walls and corners of the room, render the statement finally into a non-verbal composition of musical tones) to represent the acme of the minimal, self-referential, 'process' artwork. *Music on a long thin wire* is likewise refined to the point at which its asceticism releases richness. As *I am sitting in a room*

has as many possible end results as there are different rooms, so *Music on a long thin wire* varies according to the length and tuning of the wire, and the variables of its environment. But just as everything has been stripped away from Lucier's piece, so it demands a setting free of aural competition. The organiser of an anthological exhibition of sound sculpture, however, either does it this way or not at all, and to be fair, I understand that during the quiet times in the gallery, distracting sounds could be de-activated to allow the interested visitor to focus upon a particular work.

In fact, despite these inevitable misgivings, the Arnolfini's music organiser, Jolyon Laycock, has earned our gratitude for assembling the first overview in this country of types of work which have often been overlooked, not taken seriously, seen only in catalogues and magazines, or marginalised (why, for instance, has Max Eastley never been included in any group surveys of 'new sculpture' like *The Sculpture Show*?). But as Hugh Davies' usefully compendious introduction to the Arnolfini catalogue shows, 'sound sculpture' is merely a tag by which to file away

Supplex Vox
by Ken Gray

Photos: Jem Southam

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neatly any number of activities with quite unconnected impulses, historical backgrounds, and social contexts. To put Francois Baschet, Ken Gray and Alvin Lucier together in the same gallery is a bit like showing paintings by Euan Uglow, Duggie Fields and Robert Ryman in the same exhibition — and why not, except that it may too easily be assumed that this anthology of 'sound sculpture' represents all aspects of a close-knit genre. I kept thinking of things which could not fit easily into an exhibition such as this one — the overall effect of the Tinguely exhibition at the Tate, seeing a film of Harry Partch's instruments playing his music, and seeing a theatre performance of German composer Mauricio Kagel's *Repertoire* — all never to be forgotten 'sound sculpture' experiences, while, in comparison, most of *A Noise in your Eye* is soon forgotten, except for Lucier. Like other 'intermedia genres', such as 'visual poetry', 'sound poetry', 'mail art' and 'performance art', 'sound sculpture' feeds on its own marginality, protective of its small territory, but at the same time insufficiently critical of some of those within its fold.

The publicity for this exhibition reassures us that it is "very enjoyable and highly entertaining". This use of leisure industry language is an unnecessary come-on, for the 'general public' is excited by the very words 'sound sculpture', thus demonstrating its far from marginal wellsprings. But the popularity of this exhibition defeats its own ends. We all enjoy a bonk and a twang, but public access to a set of timpani in the gallery would have been equally rewarding, and the initial relish of the jolly aural fecundity of such participatory jamborees soon palls. Excited but unfocussed people troop upstairs for more fun and walk straight by Lucier's installation. It is the difference between the children's gallery and Foucault's pendulum at the Science Museum.

A Noise in your Eye has a long life. It has finished at the Arnolfini, but you can find it currently at the Mappin in Sheffield, at Huddersfield during its New Music Festival in November, at Manchester's new *Cornerhouse* in January, and at the Barbican next April. The exhibition has already featured on *Woman's Hour* and *Blue Peter*, whose frontperson likened the sound of a Baschet sculpture to the music of Vangelis. Jack, *Blue Peter's* cat, was frightened by the Baschet and Appelton sculptures, and ran off, but I think that Lucier's *Music on a long thin wire* would have excited Jack's curiosity. So go along and enjoy this exhibition, but remember to be as curious and wary as a cat. ●

APHRODITE NIVEA AND LOVE CRIMES

Tara Babel has produced a substantial body of solo work for six years; yet she is still better known for her work with Andre Stitt. *Aphrodite/Nivea and the Fetishisation of Fact* was the first solo piece I had seen, and, presented back to back with a performance by Andre Stitt, it allowed the individual styles, abilities and ideas of the two artists to be clearly seen, whilst also highlighting the elements which inform both artists' methods, many of which have evolved organically through both solo and collaborative work.

The troubled island of Cyprus, physically divided by war into two parts, and the myth of sun-worshipping and Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, were the subjects of the performance. By examining the exploitation of the island through the centuries by various world powers, Babel attempts to illustrate the futility of society's need for war. Though not making a direct political statement, the piece is a direct response to a three month stay at Cyprus School of Art, and a desire to comment in a new way on the political situation she discovered there. The absurdity of society's attitude towards war is emphasised through an illustration of the cult of sun-worshipping and the endless quest for beauty and status through the suntan which, in the case of Cyprus, drives Western Europeans to lie in indifferent hordes, saturated by suntanning products, seemingly oblivious to the island's army patrols and the 'Green Line' which divides the island, which contains evidence throughout of fierce fighting, past suffering and loss.

These ideas are explored using slides, sound, painted hangings of Aphrodite and a variety of sunbathing paraphernalia, from a complete range of Nivea sunscreen products to battery fans and personal stereos. In front of a series of projected slides of the political history of the island and facts about the invasions sepia-tinted shots of Cypriot buildings, mountains, olive groves and streets, interspersed with colour shots of army troops and



CHRISSE ILES on two powerful new pieces of performance art.

RODITE/

Andre Stitt's
Love Crimes

Photo: Roger Smith

barricades, Tara Babel performed a series of actions of sunworship. From a dark corner of the space in which she has sat typing whilst we absorb some of the historical facts about Cyprus, Babel appears in swimsuit, dons Nivea sunhat, switches on a radio and briskly and ritualistically applies Nivea creme to her legs until they are completely caked. Onto this she sprays bronze paint, to which is added the contents of a bottle of Nivea suntan oil. This process, which takes about ten minutes, is followed by a determined flop face down onto the floor, arms outstretched in the sunworship stance, in an expression of a kind of gluttony. Behind her, slides of the U.N. 'stop zone' and 'Inaccessible to tourists' notices with stylised shots of Nivea advertisements set up by the artist using coloured statuette of Aphrodite, who was born out of the foam of the sea on the Northwestern tip of the island. Further sunbathing rituals are acted out, including the slapping of a bottle of Nivea milk onto her face, taping a Walkman to the side of her head and rolling herself up in a ream of silver foil on the floor scattered with coloured stones emptied from Nivea tins. Towards the end of the performance a column of cascading pink paper strands is systematically pulled apart to reveal a small statuette of Aphrodite. Against images of troops, wrecked buildings and a single grave on a hillside and 'Nivea cares and protects' on a car sunstrip, Babel walks up the aisle towards us displaying Aphrodite's head on a compact.

The qualities which emerge from this piece show Tara Babel as a strong solo performer, who uses the familiar elements recognisable in her collaborative work with Andre Stitt — clearly defined structures, the use of backing tracks and humour, the heightening of everyday behaviour to an exaggerated degree to express a point, tactility, the use of the body and tactile substances such as food, paint and in this case suntan lotion. These elements, combined with a carefully researched set of information and ideas, are held together by a precise sense of timing and a calm, steady, quietly confident execution. Although there is a personal element in her work it is not the overwhelming factor, and comments are made in a cool, assured and slightly detached form of expression. Although I felt that at times the idea of Aphrodite could have been more clearly defined, it was a strong and articulate piece of work.

There was a real sense of maturity in the new performance, by Andre Stitt, part of which I had seen two weeks previously in a warehouse nightclub. The location of this piece in a fine art environment, with a controlled space containing an art audience whose attention could be guaranteed, allowed a much greater impact and intimacy to be ►



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created between performer and audience. The result achieved by Stitt recalls descriptions of the impact of the American Paul McCarthy's work, with which Stitt has a great affinity, namely the ability to create an altered state in the mind of an audience and to take it on a kind of journey. Where Stitt's work differs is in its highly personal content. In this piece it finds its most disturbing and articulate expression to date, by combining a powerful emotional intensity with specific ideas which are taken beyond pure catharsis into a positive sense of renewal and hope for the future.

Stitt used a complex carefully planned structure in which various groups of objects and furniture placed in small scenarios around the space became the scenes for each stage of the performance. Many of the objects were personal possessions, emphasising the intensely personal nature of the piece. In a conscious decision to use 'stamina rather than strength', Stitt has replaced a direct aggressive confrontational involvement with the audience with a more controlled relationship in which he flirts and plays with their expectations and inhibitions, constantly pushing, withdrawing and reappearing, a process in which his sense of timing is vital.

In the first section of the piece Stitt, dressed in suit and tie, swaggers round the space, dancing slowly and moving in a highly stylized, exaggerated manner to a background of 60's style James Bond guitar themes drawing our attention to various details of the scenarios, many of which refer to 50's American trash imagery.

From this initial stage the performance develops in a series of progressively more disturbing stages, during which the audience is drawn into the artists experience and confronted gradually more directly with his evolving state. From the amusing pastiche figure of the macho male, swaggering round his bachelor pad drinking cocktails, lighting cigarettes and pulling streamers out of his mouth, the tortured and alienated alter-ego develops, frenzied, dripping tomato ketchup, water, vomit and chicken entrails and breathing fire. This degeneration is skilfully controlled through balancing structured movements and improvisation. We are presented with an array of references — a silhouette of a gun stuck onto a television screen, a durex taken out of the bonnet of a toy car, a rubber heart extracted from inside the artist's shirt, all delivered with a cynical grin, and a wry humour which is then diffused by the swinging of a red lightbulb on a long flex which veers nearer and nearer the audience until it inevitably smashes against the floor. A frenzied, highly exaggerated personal toilet follows, in which the brushing of teeth, shaving with an electric razor to a deafening amplified razor sound and the splashing of talcum powder everywhere, covering the audience and pervading the air for the rest of the performance evokes a slight embarrassment. A defiant tableau in which Stitt, standing in a bowl of water, drops his trousers and vigorously washes his genitals and bottom, infusing the process with a cheeky wiggle and manic grin further provokes a mixture of embarrassment and amusement.

The next stage plots a failure to succeed at a night on the town; Stitt trudges on the spot in

another bowl of water, collar turned up, next to a super 8 film projecting images of the lights of the West End. The use of a false nose, echoing Paul McCarthy's images of distortion, alienation, and the build-up of a dark mood erupts in the emptying of a plate of spaghetti over his head, followed by the drinking of a green liquid which immediately prompts him to vomit all over the floor. This self-destructive action is quickly overtaken by a yet more manic mood as the performance enters what Stitt calls the 'gig' period.

The true meaning of the word 'gig' describes the sideshow of the carnivals of America, a more extreme version of the Victorian freak shows. A 'gig' man would for example dig a hole and perform in it, often biting off the heads of snakes and chickens, throwing food and generally behaving in an unacceptable way, playing on people's voyeurism and expressing the unexpressible, dark side of human nature and extreme elements of human behaviour. Stitt sees himself a modern version of this 'trickster', who shows the audience its worst possible side yet is far more astute than he first appears.

In the final stage of this piece Stitt, in doctor's apron and with first aid box, viciously hacks a chicken to pieces with a chopper, eating the raw entrails and stuffing the carcass with packets of Paxo. After breaking a glass into a potty (an item also used by McCarthy) and smashing a box of eggs over his head, he inhales methylated spirits and breathes out dramatic clouds of fire into the room at the audience before abruptly walking away. This display of excess and destruction should not be interpreted as gratuitous sensationalism. Each object and action is used as a symbol and ritual to create a heightened awareness which is shared by both performer and audience alike. This 'altered state' is not evoked for its own sake. The 'gig' element of the performance fantasy takes over from reality and a new state of reality is suggested. Elements used to create this include the unacceptable use of food, which has always contained a subversive, defiant expression (from the dirty protests in the Maze in Belfast to the basic frustration and anger associated with throwing food). The last images of fire symbolise both the literal idea of firewater and oblivion achieved by cheap alcohol and the ritualistic idea of fire as a cleanser, and the idea of rebirth.

The altered state achieved through this piece is not evoked for its own sake. It is used to make public a set of very private, personal and deeply felt emotions about a particular event, and in drawing it out, exorcises it. Where the piece succeeds is in its ability to reach out beyond merely using the audience as a tool for personal purging and touches something of a universal expression of the dark and unacceptable aspects of human behaviour. The idea of expressing private pain and feelings in public, releasing their power in order to diminish it is completely at odds with the English sensibility and tradition of secrecy and emotional control. Stitt is perhaps our 'shaman', who is prepared to explore what most of us would not care to being to try and express. ■

APHRODITE/
NIVEA
AND
LOVE
CRIMES

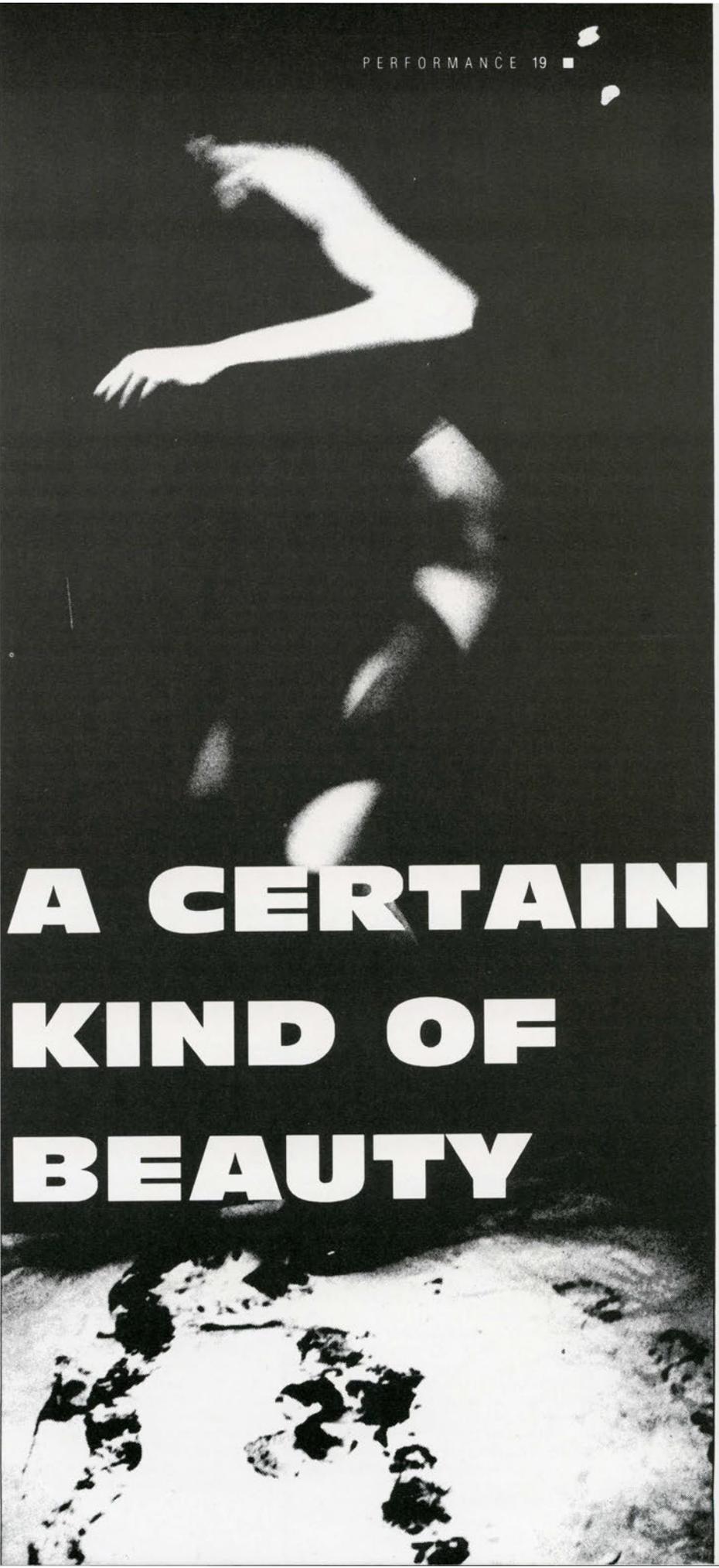
GUY BRETT at Rotterdam's Perfo 3 Festival:

Natascha Fiala

Perfo 3: more than 100 artists, from ten countries, in an eight day festival of performance, installations, and concerts. 'Many people singing together. Who decides whether it is noise or music?' as the American artist Robin Winters asked at last year's Perfo. Who indeed, especially as Winters defined his own role as one of creatively helping other artists to meet and projects to be realised. Nobody is really outside such an event.

In three years, Perfo has set a high standard of stylishness and dynamism for the organisation of a festive avant garde event: the ability to meet almost any technical requirement, welcoming the spontaneous outcomes of meetings between artists, producing a finely-printed catalogue-record within the week itself. The main organiser, Wink Van Kempen, is the opposite of today's cool art bureaucrat, an artist, a disturber of the peace, in spirit closer to Cocteau's famous demand: 'Étonnez-moi!'

The excitement — and the risks — are greater than in the average museum or gallery exhibition. Instead of the security of professional enclaves, we feel closer to the unsettled conditions of the present period, but also, like outside reality, the line appears thin between creative interaction and total confusion. This year's Perfo had two starting-points; a celebration of performance as a genre or art-form, and the proposal of 'a certain kind of beauty'. For me it was a week of quite divergent feelings. The central idea of the blurring of borders between art-forms and ambiances — theatre, painting, sculpture, fashion, music — was realised by many individual artists in ways which produced the extraordinary pleasure of a new perception of the world. But it was also applied as an overall concept of the festival in ways which had, I felt, almost the opposite effect, such as a fashion show feebly derivative from the work of artists. There seemed to be a great gulf too between exploratory, critical and ►



A CERTAIN KIND OF BEAUTY

REVIEW

Lisa Marcus and Barbara Duijffes'
Wet Features

transforming notions of beauty and others which were saccharine and conventional.

Perfo had perhaps arrived at a turning point. Attendance was much higher than before (people often had to be turned away), but many of those present felt that the old model of the audience as passive consumers was coming back, and there was less contact with, and between, artists. The theatrical venue of the Lantaren, while providing superb facilities, including the human ones of totally-supportive technicians, tended to impose an idea of professionalism which is, not unnaturally, theatrical, and often irrelevant, or actually damaging, to the whole *raison d'être* of performance. Because one of the pleasures for any observer must be to see the way each artist works in a certain ambience — theatrical, musical, or sculptural perhaps — and brings certain aspects of different legacies into a common expressive area. One of the roots of performance was nicely summed up in Ab Visser's working of the old-fashioned Danish toy stage, which became all Western theatrical tradition miniaturised to what one person could encompass with his own hands and voice.

The human performer may appear in a theatrical mode of action and timing; as in Rose English's *The Beloved*, Lisa Marcus and Barbara Duijffes' *Wet Features* (though its mixture of stylisation, nostalgia and eroticism recalled a Balthus painting), Stefi Talman and Olivia Etter's rollicking, quick-change personas; Anne Seagrave's *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, a very personal and inventive saga of self-preservation on the edge of chaos; or Carlyle Reedy's subtle changes from being an actor with props to an artist with the materials of her work.

After a week of intense and friendly co-operation with Rotterdam Corporation workers, the American artist Mierle Ukeles divided their fleet into the big trucks which collect the garbage and the little machines with round yellow brushes which sweep the streets. As masses of Rotterdammers from the city housing blocks lined the Visserijplein she directed the trucks in a ballet: sea lions chasing herrings. The workers produced a drawing for a flower opening, but it was too complicated to rehearse in time. Another, a carousel of counter-revolving circles, was produced: an extraordinary collaboration.

Rose English's superb performance *The Beloved* played with traditions, in her case theatrical, to sensitise her audience to the world with an extremely light touch, drawing out

everyone's imagination: 'This bridge is a theatrical device to draw your attention away from that little gap, that little dark area over there that I really love: sweet one, little one . . .' Her humour was not only verbal. She would sometimes prick a conventional ballet routine by thumping herself on the chest. Her irony killed all solemnity, even the solemnity of the supposedly outrageous, reaching towards a true humanity.

It was no use expecting the same tensions from performances which emphasise sound (George Smits making music from steel springs); or the visual articulation of space (Catherine Meziat's probing extension of herself in the mass of darkness by means of light rods); or the artist's manipulation of many images and props in a kind of visual-auditory tableau (Flavio Pons' evocation of Rimbaud, which used slides, clothes, song, poetry, perfume, and such rare metaphors as an alligator skin rolled out on silver sheet; almost an *embarras de richesse*).

The Venetian Georgio Spiller's work was unlike any other combination of modes or genres in the festival, and full of intriguing paradoxes. It moved in the slow time of someone assembling a machine, as Spiller 'dressed' himself in a half mechanical, half symbolic sculpture, while two carnival figures, a furry vagina and a pink silky cock, lounged at the base. The performance seemed to combine two traditions of Italian culture: the spiritual element of monumentality and high art, and the earthy humour of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. But it was not simple opposition: the monumental figure was potent and radiant but also somehow imprisoned, while the quarrelsome genitals were resplendent . . . A strange and absorbing work.

Nivea/Aphrodite, or the Fetishization of Fact, Tara Babel's performance (she is from Northern Ireland, based in London), was part documentary, part symbolic, based on a stay in Cyprus in 1984 and the bizarre experience of 'getting a suntan in a semi-occupied country where so much violence and destruction has occurred'. Perhaps over-complicated to begin with, it ended with a striking unity of visual signs, as she pulled down a bunch of pink tapers to reveal a kitsch statue of Aphrodite (whose legendary birthplace was Cyprus) on a pink base, and whirled miniature electric fans representing both the beach life and army helicopters, in front of slides of sand-bagged roads.

One of the most delectable combinations of sound, light and colour was the Portuguese Gerardo

Burmester's stylish first piece. With only his hands illuminated he opened a suitcase and threw first one, two, then multitudes of pingpong balls on the hard floor. As the sound died down, he walked about the room photographing the floor with a polaroid camera whose flash, fizz and whirr became an aural-visual delight. The lights came up. A black pingpong ball bounced to the floor; he chased it spraying it with white aerosol until it was indistinguishable from the rest. Technology playfully used to create a rare sensation.

The context of performance actually gave an added presence to the installations, like Michael Kramer's wall collage of debris in the street, Richard Baquié's circulation-metaphor of time and memory, *Passion Oublié e*, Willem Oorebeek's lithographic paper environment, and Liesbeth Pallesen and Henk Lotsy's room. This last, though depending simply on materials, sound and smell, has as much intensity as a live performance and created an indefinable, disturbing, atmosphere. Ambiguously, it suggested both the stirrings of life and cultural decay. The presence of a large crowd for the late night contemporary music concerts, made some artist's strategies for close interaction and dialogue with the audience especially pertinent. Laure Chenard unexpectedly and wittily subverted the notion of 'attendance figures', and performance as a consumable, time-tabled event, by inviting a small number of people into her space, and locking the door. 'I can only think of *the person*, and not of people in the abstract or in general', she told me. Her work involved making a particular relationship with each individual through a special way of using the traditional means of art: drawing, space, light, substances. Afterwards, nobody felt like describing literally what happened to others, not because there was anything secret about it, but perhaps because one felt it should not be mediated, but experienced directly . . .

I sometimes had a fantasy that the timetables, tickets and turnstiles would dissolve away, and these artists of such different national and social background, vivid individuality and perceptions would form an imaginary grand parade, where for example Georgio Spiller's carnival figures, which combine such a sensuous, ironic view of 'heroic' antiquity and the 'anti-heroic' present, would be followed by Natascha Fiala's stinging allegory of art leaping beyond the phallic appropriation of the brush, and so on, and on. ■



Identity — the gain or loss of it — has long been a key obsession for artists striving to work in new ways. We have picked out some contemporary areas where identity is a main concern, whether it be personal, geographical, or pop iconographical:

Illustrations throughout: Liz Rideal ▶

MEETING THE

DOPPELGÄNGERS

Working as an artist making works about and with people — who for some reason or another have chosen to reject society's view of them, and forge their own tribal identities — has taken artist STEVE WILLATS on an eventful and meandering trail from glue-sniffers in the wastelands of West London, via gothic clubland and a 'secret' opera cult, to a meeting with a vampiress in an underground carpark. He calls the people who unconsciously change their identity from day to night 'Doppelgängers', and he talked to *Performance Magazine* about his meeting with them, and the different situations his unusual working methods has led him to confront:

Describe the three people in your Doppelgänger show

It's important to realise that the people I'm working with have a symbolic function in my artwork that is specifically directed at the audience. In the Doppelgänger series of works this resulted in my making a series of co-operations with people that I considered had a particularly powerful, symbolic projection in the culture of the moment. I thought they could represent, for the audience, very strong stereotypes in the culture of normality; one was a stockbroker, the other was a civil servant, and the other was a shop assistant, so they had three very normal kinds of daytime occupation. At 5-30, or something like that, they transformed themselves into other persons. I mean transformed themselves not only in terms of dress, but I feel emotionally and psychologically, and in terms of the kinds of contexts and places they then frequented.

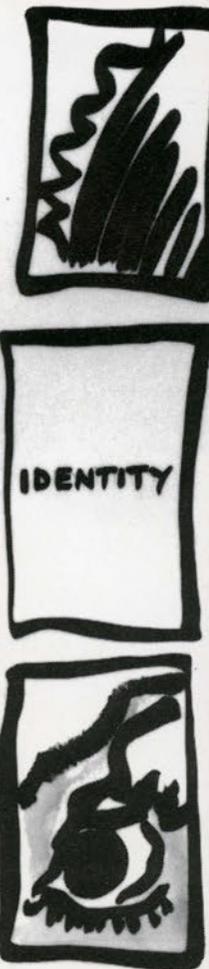
What were the personas that these people took up?

The stockbroker became a skinhead, a skinhead that was a marxist skinhead, I mean it wasn't quite fulfilling the ordinary stereotyped role of a fascist skinhead, he was a

sort of anarchist. The civil servant was heavily into gothic, she was just interested in the socially taboo. The shop assistant became a vampiress, became a kind of vampire, she was very much involved with the culture of death and this kind of thing. I'd say that the different personas they became were actually representing different kinds of ideological statements, I found in my relationship with all of them that they were extremely articulate in their outlook on the culture, and could make a division between what their two selves meant ideologically.

Is that why you selected them for the work?

I didn't really select them, I knew them. I mean when I make a work with a person it's not as if I go along in the street, and I see somebody and I say, 'Well, look, it's going to be you'. There is a definite tendency in the culture to view other people, and even the self, as objects, but my work is a manifestation of the ideology of counter-consciousness — which is a consciousness of people. I see that within the culture there are two conflicting ideologies: there is an ideology that dominates which is based round objects, possessions, property, and the very much more



The Double-cross

repressed ideology of community, social involvement, social inter-action and tolerance. So, when I make a work I don't go along and say, 'It's you!', as though I was dealing with an object. Instead there's a very complex and sensitive procedure. Somebody's introduced to the work, generally by somebody I know already, or maybe I have even made a work with the other person, more then likely have. In the case of the Doppelgänger the three people that I made the works with, they were friends of friends, they were friends of people I'd made works with and they already knew my work. When I thought of evolving the concept Doppelgänger for the show at the Lisson Gallery in January this year (and I should say that I'd developed the idea of the Doppelgänger concept before I made my relationship with the three people) I thought about who would actually reflect this idea out of all the people that I knew. Of course, the Doppelgänger is a very special kind of person, they're not ordinary people, and from all the people I knew there were really only three that did actually live this dualistic life and which actually did represent the two different ideologies. I devised each work as a diptych so that they could be divided into the two different ideological states linked to day and night. The day would represent the Doppelgänger in the world of normality, in terms of the ideology of objects, and the world of the night would show the Doppelgänger within an ideology of community and people.

You have described a 'new sensibility' which you noticed, or spotted. Could you describe it?

In the '70s I was making works about and, in conjunction with, what the audience would perceive as normality. What I was trying to do was to look at situations that were symbolic in the culture of normality. I was looking at offices, council flats, with people working within a routine situation. I was making works which were more passive in terms of the relationship with the audience. The audience was asked to enter into the encoded world I presented in my work; the kind of mutualism embodied in the work reflected the more mutualistic social sensibility of the period. The concept of mutualism is where you recognise the psychological complexity of another person: you enter into each other's psychology. This is completely different to an object-based relationship whereby you deny the psychological complexity of another person. Generally speaking, in the '60s, early '70s, when I was making the works, people were more tolerant

than now. The seemed very open and sort of fairly optimistic, I suppose, I never thought about it, I thought people were generally like this anyway. But when I was making the works *The People of Charville Lane* and *Pat Purdy and the Glue Sniffer's Camp*, these works of the late '70s, I noticed that people were more tense somehow and more aggressive and sort of frightened, really sort of nervous, they were living in a world that was changing in a way that they felt they couldn't handle. Events, such as the rise of authoritarianism were taking place, which they had no control over, and yet it was affecting them and people were becoming very anguished in this kind of situation. I had become very interested in punk culture about '76 and '77, it seemed to me enormously important as it was a reaction against professionalism, professionalism I saw as a sort of terrific inhibitor to self-expression, self-identity. The initial reaction certainly was against a particular physical reality, what I term, 'The New Reality', the reality of concrete slabs and tower block, isolated and contained housing estates. The punks were reacting against the object-base of their environment, its flexible hardness, that didn't allow them to express any real identity of their own. The other important aspect of punk was DIY, and I think this is what I found really important about it, that it fulfilled the concept of self-organisation. Punk said that you yourself could make your own culture, and that this was as valid and important and, in fact, more important and meaningful than the authoritative, professional culture. So this development coupled with the general aggression and uncertainty that I began to note, and the fact that the two were mutually reinforcing each other, actually affected my work. Certainly, with *Pat Purdy and the Glue Sniffer's Camp* the piece itself became more aggressive than what had gone before. Pat Purdy was a very strong, aggressive though articulate, woman and this effected the piece I made with her. Here for the first time I used actual objects, and invited the person with whom I was working, to write their thoughts and feelings spontaneously across the artwork.

Later, when I started to work in the 'night' it seemed like a whole language had begun to be articulated by a certain generation, that had originally come from this situation in the '70s and they'd developed these clubs which were private clubs, clubs for their friends, and again this was in the spirit of self-organisation, they were articulating these ideas for themselves.

Were they taking their own identity in their hands?

My interest was certainly this: that the clubs provided a sense of community and they were a vehicle for personal self-expression, they were a means of contact for people that were alienated, segmented, separated by the culture, they were the vehicle for actually creating new visualisations, new languages.

Would you say that this kind of sensibility happened round the late '70s and is still present today?

I'm not so sure it's present now. I was talking with somebody I'm making a work with at the moment and she seemed to feel, and I think a lot of people feel, that it's articulated itself out in a way. Originally it was very spontaneous, it was very, very tacky, and on purpose, there was a whole culture based on being rough and tacky and spontaneous. But this wouldn't last for ever and when the Futurists and people like that emerged it became more sophisticated, self-conscious — just as significant, I think, but in a different way — because they started taking languages from space, medieval and Indian culture, in fact they probed into the socially discarded, taboo, neglected, and pulled them together. By putting them in new combinations, transforming their original meanings into ones that were given a new life within their own particular, capsulised, cultural set-up.

Going back to your question, I think one could sum it up now, that the difference from what I noticed in the '70s to the '80s, is that in the '70s there was a tolerance, and in the '80s or the late '70s I noticed this tolerance had disappeared and it was replaced by a kind of aggression. I wouldn't say by intolerance, but by a nervous aggression, and it is this that I embodied in the sensibility of my work. To actually confront the audience with a kind of reality that was not normal, that they would be unlikely to be able to ever enter into as a participant. Yet nevertheless they can recognise that there's a strong generative force in the culture that is actually generating things around them. So, really I am trying to confront the audience with the new sensibility, which is different from my work of the '70s, I wasn't working that way at all.

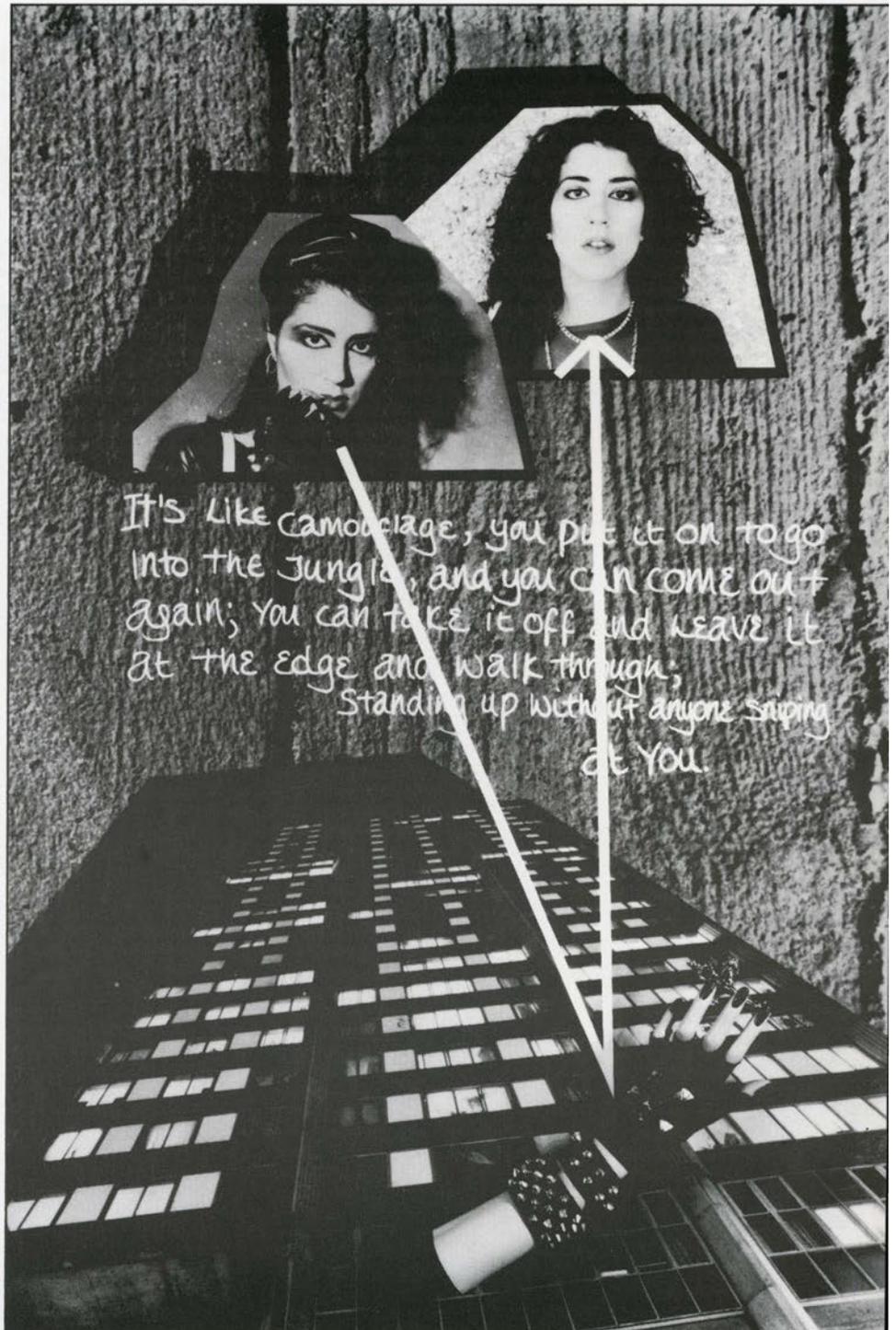
Can you tell us about the night opera, and what it is?

I see this is a work which particularly fascinates you. The work is called, *Secret Prima Donna*, and its history stems from the show I made, *Inside the Night* at the Lisson Gallery in



1983, which comprised four works about different clubs. One of the clubs I made a work about was called The Cha Cha Club and I made the piece, *Are You Good Enough For the Cha Cha Cha*. Now, one of the organisers of the Cha Cha Club was Michael Maria. Michael really got me involved in making the whole night series in a way. I met him through a friend of mine, like casually really, and I told him I was making this work about the night and a special futuristic club run by women, because I'd already started making a work about this other club, 'Oh', he said, 'I run the Cha Cha Club'. I didn't know anything about the Cha Cha Club at all, and he was really very nice and very helpful and he got me involved in the Cha Cha Club and enabled me to make my work there. But all the time I was making my work there he never once mentioned the Night Opera, which he was one of the prime, moving forces in, it was so secret. In other words there's no way you could gain access to it from the outside, you know, it was like another depth. While I made the Cha Cha work I must have known Michael for nine months, it took me about nine months to make the work and it was only when I wanted to make another exhibition which I was going to present at the Riverside Studios called, *Another City*, that I ever got a hint of the Night Opera's existence. At the Cha Cha Club obviously I met a lot of people and I became interested in the individual realities they built for themselves, the Cha Cha Club was like a communal reality, but within their home environments they built individual capsulised realities. It was while I was working on this series of works about different individuals that I heard casually about the opera from somebody else and it sounded so fascinating that I got onto Michael about it, and then gradually I got into hearing about it.

Basically the Night Opera took place in a little basement room in Earls Court, a classic kind of situation in Earls Court. There was a glass front door which had a big hole in it where someone had walked through it, not realising it was there, and it was always open 24 hours a day, a front room with the curtains permanently drawn so it was always night there, and a tiny kitchen piled high with crockery. The front room and the kitchen were basically the two wings of the opera, the front room was like a shrine to opera, absolutely lined with records and books on opera. There was a wonderful great piano and videos of opera performances, and in another small back room, it was just lined with dresses and clothes, original



MEANS OF ESCAPE

Throughout my work I present two states of social consciousness that are in continual cultural opposition. I state that the dominant social consciousness, the one that prevails throughout the institutional fabric of society, is deterministic and based on the possession of objects and their social authority. There is an institutional, authoritatively mapped-out social consciousness, its ramifications affect everyone, and in my work it is contrasted with a social consciousness of self-organisation that expresses mutuality and personal creativity. For I see that within every person there is the potential of creative self expression, but that this is inhibited and repressed by the authoritative determinism that underpins the physical and social composition of the everyday world. Perceptions and understandings are laid out for us to follow about how we should respond and behave in a world that is presented as if it cannot be changed, not only dictating our identity, but also our social position.

In a world dominated by the power of objects, self organisation is a counter consciousness that frees the individual from the constant pressure towards conformity and passivity. Counter-consciousness is the creative response of people to express their own sensibility and psychology. The presentation of these two different, and culturally opposed ways of perceiving reality, has directed both my working procedure and the visual composition of each work. The concept of self organisation is not only symbolically represented in my work, by the actual process of its internalisation by the audience involves them in acts of cognitive self organisation, for they construct their own means of escape.



SYMBOLS

It is a fundamental part of my working procedure to search for and identify symbols that are residual in the culture and which will powerfully represent, to an audience, the two opposed states of consciousness I have just described. First I look for obvious symbols of the deterministic, object-based consciousness, and then I uncover balancing expressions of people's self organisation and statements of self identity. My starting point is the physical manifestations of our culture's institutional idealisations and self projections. These have a crucial power in society for they are emulative and set the cultural norms and beliefs.

CONTEXTS

At the same time as I am searching to identify symbols that represent the object-based consciousness, I am revealing simultaneous, and contrasting, expressions of counter-consciousness. Expressions that are made in defiance of the institutional environment are particularly important, but these may initially be difficult to detect, while small gestures such as a potted plant outside the front door, or holiday postcards pinned on the wall by an office desk, can take on an enormous significance. The symbols of counter-consciousness that I see as a counterbalance revolve around self-organised contexts ▶

that have been established by people as a vehicle for their own expressions of creativity. Such contexts are not only hard to identify but are difficult to access as, by their very nature, they exist undercover in the inaccessible, forgotten corners of society, often directly repressed and usually alienated from their surroundings.

Contexts are a hidden place for personal expression, their very self creation is an extremely important cultural act, which has implications for everyone. However, the establishing of a context or capsule is still dependent on the dominant culture, for it has to co-exist, being reliant on it as a source of material. Here lies the really creative art, which requires objects from the dominant culture, with their attendant pre-determined function, to be transformed into an agent for manifesting the counter consciousness. The set determinism given to the object by the dominant culture is broken by it being appropriated by the creators of the counter consciousness, becoming an agent for their self-organisation.

OBJECTS AUDIENCE

Different objects have particular importance to different groups of creators of counter consciousness, and in each of my works about particular people I identify those objects that are central to them personally. These identified objects actually become part of my work so as to confront the audience with the reality they are viewing. Objects that are central to the audience's world are symbolically mirrored in the actual objects that have been incorporated into my work.

My works present the audience with a layer of references by depicting the same reality through various media forms. Each layer of references sets up disparate cues so that there is not a pre-formed, legislated, single view, but instead the disparate references are self-connected by the audience to create their own model. The audience make their own journey, their own transformations, between the cues associated with each state of consciousness: from the day to the night, the housing estate to the wasteland, from the conscious to the unconscious. My organisation of the layout of the references from which the work's symbolic world is formed I consider essentially a parallel process to the audience's process of deconstructing and internalising those disparate references into a coherent model. Thus to active, self-organisation required from the audience in their cognitive relationship with a work is in itself a creative act, an expression of counter consciousness, and in this way the ideology that is its governing force is externalised. The work is the audience's means of escape.





Doppelganger 'Liz'

Dior creations and items from famous ballerinas and singers. The Opera was actually seen by participants as a critique of high culture, that was the motivation, and it was also in the spirit of punk because it was spontaneous, it had to be spontaneous, there was no rehearsal. If you were caught rehearsing you were thrown out of the company. The Opera seemed to have a number of functions that I found interesting for the work. Firstly, it was a critique of high culture; secondly, it was certainly a vehicle for creating a sense of community among men who were totally alienated from the normal world. I mean couldn't exist in the normal world and thirdly, it was a vehicle for self-expression that they could take on the persona, become the real person that they would find impossible to become in normal life.

What were these?

Well, they took on various personalities to do with opera, for instance, Michael became Maria Malipasta, and in a way it was fairly light hearted, these kinds of persona they took on. But there was a whole history around each one, they even had defined whole characters which they became, and the performances were just extraordinary. They were just jam-packed and people just came from all over. There was the riff-raff of Earls Court and the opera stars of the world would turn up, so it was just this kind of mix, but the people in the audience would also have to perform, they would have to become an opera audience, they would definitely have to take this role on.

The performances started at midnight, or sometime like that, they were intended to be serious but, of course, each person was a prima donna. I called this piece, *Secret Prima Donna*, because this reflected totally the relationship of the six performers. It was very competitive, each performer trying to out-do the others the whole time, to gain more attention from the audience, and this sometimes resulted in devious practices. I mean they would trip somebody up, or pull on something, or some dirty trick like that. On the other hand they would all collaborated in making elaborate sets, this kind of thing.

Did they perform actual operas?

Was it written by them or did they take an opera like Carmen, for example?

Generally speaking I think they ad-libbed arias from various well known operas, I'm not an opera expert at all, but I know they did write some operas which are totally unsingable outside their particular context.

These were operas about Earls Court, there's one for instance called, Mike the Naff, and these tended to be sung much later on in the night, or earlier in the morning shall I put it that way. So, yes, these were sort of purely male operas and they were quite humorous sometimes, but usually about well known people on the Earls Court scene.

In that sub-culture?

Yes, so, the piece I made was quite extraordinary for me because I was entering into this whole sort of nomadic, male world, which I knew nothing about. During the day there would be all these men coming and going all the time, so you never knew what or whom to expect, they were always really extraordinary male types, doing gym, rubbing strange oils into each other, or bursting into some new opera or ballet sequence. This piece took about a year to make because everybody was so spontaneous that you couldn't ever rely on any arrangement. This was another thing about the opera, nobody ever really knew when it was going to take place, it was just really word of mouth, and it all just happened at the last moment, so it was like hopeless to count on anything happening, they couldn't have printed a notice to send around because, literally, anything could happen. So actually making the work was absolutely based around unreliability and I felt I was just jolly lucky everytime I got anything to really come together. Eventually I did manage to make few tape recordings, discussions which were transcribed, and then about twenty rolls of photographs, but the difference here between my photography and that of other artists is that the people that I'm photographing — in this case Michael and Keith — direct my photography, they tell me what to photograph, how to do it and so on. So, they told me what objects to photograph, what aspects of their performance they wanted photographed and so on. I also made a lot of tape recordings of them singing, performances, and I should also mention that we collected objects which were considered significant in some way to their lives. So when we amassed this sort of documentation we sort of arranged it all round my studio and they came

around and worked on it there with me. I thought it was going to be very difficult to kind of get through this part of the work, as I always thought they were never turning up, but in fact they did turn up, and they really got involved. The piece is centered on just two of the performers and a lot of the text in the work is, in fact, slanging each other off, which they couldn't resist doing when they saw what each other was writing, so the work has a kind of repartee in it. I think the Night Opera was amazingly important because it did actually come out of punk in a way, it was bringing together totally different aspects of the culture and generating something completely new, and my relationship with them resulted in a work that was rather different from other works that I'd made. In my work also this was the first time that I used singing, I've made some audio works in the past, but with the opera piece we've actually got Maria Malipasta singing this incredible five minute aria, you know.

Have you ever found yourself questioning your role as an artist in these situations? Have you found yourself, saying, 'Well, I'm an artist, what am I doing here, why aren't I participating, why am I taking this role?'

Well, no I haven't, I think in fact that it's only because I am an artist and that's my function in the relationship, that enables me to enter into otherwise closed worlds. I mean, for instance, if you take either the opera or even the Cha Cha Club, there was no way I could gain access to them unless I had a function, unless I had a reason for being there, I'm quite clearly not part of their generation. But I do feel I come from a similar context. My own history is very similar to most of the people that would go to the Cha Cha Club, but quite obviously I'm about twenty years older than them, and there's nothing worse than people trying to appear younger, or part of a generation they quite clearly aren't. So, in a way, the idea that I was this artist who wanted to make a work about them was extremely important in our relationship, and I think that on that basis the idea of questioning it didn't really arise for them or for myself.

Did you find yourself getting into any sticky situations?

Just frightening a little bit, I felt a bit strange going to some places, for instance one place I went there was about seven or eight hundred mohicans and anarchists there, and it was this sort of old derelict building somewhere in Hammersmith and that was very frightening because I didn't know in advance anything

about these anarchists. Though they were anarchists they were actually in tribes and in this vast area there would be groups of these people sitting around together and you really had to pay your respects to each sort of group, or the leader of each group. Really I was very fortunate, when I went to the door of this place, the people there said, 'You can't come in'. Then they saw I was with these three mohicans who then said, 'Oh, look he's a friend of ours, he can come in', and so I went in. Luckily one of the mohicans I was with was really seen as one of the big people in this culture, so I got in alright, and having got in I started to do some photography. But I had to be very careful to point the camera at just the three people I came with so that other people wouldn't get sensitive, but it was quite frightening doing that! After I had taken a few rolls of film they just disappeared and suddenly I was completely on my own in this vast, dark place, and then other mohicans started coming up to me, and like they thought I was French or something, and started to make remarks about my clothes, equipment, my camera, ask for cigarettes and so on. Then I noticed some skinheads taking glue in a far corner and they started to sidle over, and it was a funny situation where I knew I couldn't leave quickly, because to leave quickly would have invited a quick response, but I had to kind of like slide out. But that was really very frightening, I was really, really pleased to get out of that place, very pleased and I was very relieved my photographs were alright, because I didn't relish going back!

There have been lots of other similar situations. For example, once I went down to this underground car park with the vampiress, it was midnight, and here we were in the middle of this estate of concrete tower blocks, nobody around at all. It was just completely dark and sort of derelict, no cars there, all the garages were smashed, and she started becoming this vampiress, and I mean that became quite frightening, I was quite scared then. I was also scared of the fact that in this place anything could happen, some skinheads could come round the corner, and the thought of that was quite scary. I think it's because the territory is unfamiliar, like when I first went to to the Cha Cha Club I was really scared out of my wits, there were all kinds of things going on there that were completely outside my previous experience. Although I used to go to a lot of clubs in the late '50's and early '60's by comparison with the Cha Cha they were quite straight. But at the Cha Cha everything was going

on, and I just sat in the corner on an old box for about two months before I even dared get my camera out to do any photography. I felt I had to get know people a bit, so that they would think I was familiar, though people wondered what the fuck I was doing there sitting in this corner, on this box, and they'd all come up and ask me. So, as I say, it was only after a couple of months sitting in the corner, that I began to feel I could come out in the open and take photographs. But in the meanwhile people had asked what I was doing there, and I'd said I was making this artwork, also I was quite careful when I was taking a photograph to really explain to the person I was taking what I was doing, otherwise they would get upset, and if they got upset in that environment I mean, like anything could happen really. Similarly I collected the discarded rubbish from the floor of the club and put it in a plastic bag to use in the work and then I had to be careful not to be mistaken for the drug squad!

Was it just the presence of the vampiress, or the way she talked about herself, that suddenly made you actually scared in the location. For example what did she do?

Well, all the Doppelgänger people, as I say, they're not really normal, though when I say not normal they definitely weren't crazies, but there was always like this other side to them. With the vampiress I remember even in the daytime she'd have this grey suit on, there was something frightening just being in the same company because I think it was that there was something underneath that was always very conflicting in her relationship with you, it was a sort of tension, it's a tension that's in the culture really, a tension that affects everybody. You just felt it, perhaps her eyes changed, visual appearance, you had to see it to know. I mean she certainly

changed her presence as a person, she sort of just changed, it was just really not the same person, I suppose it was that that was really frightening. Another place I went to when I was working with this skinhead was Ronan Point. I had to go along there at midnight to do these photographs. Ronan Point has a large, kind of concrete walkway area round it and we were right in the middle of this with all these cameras, doing really long exposures, this tribe of skinheads came bounding over and they started like kicking each other around. Well, to them it was just good fun, but I was in the middle of this, and I didn't want to get kicked around, especially with all my camera equipment. They didn't seem to quite understand, so I was quite pleased to get out of that one too.

Did they start kicking you?

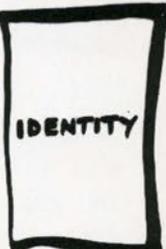
Well, they really got a bit boisterous, so I was quite pleased to get to my car and drive off home.

Finally, do you find, do you feel, in a way, jealous as an outsider? Would you like to be in such a community? You are outside, most certainly.

Well, I'm outside, but I mean I'm not so sure because I'm outside on the inside. I mean, on the one hand, I'm an artist who's like 42 or something like this, making his work and obviously with this history, but on the other hand I do sort of know everybody quite well. I do go to new clubs like Lourdes but I think that always, inevitably, one would be a little on the outside of the relationship. I think that if they perceived you actually going in and trying to be like the same as them they would reject you, I mean how can you!

How do you feel, do you actually feel drawn?

I feel drawn in a way, but also bounded by my own history.●



Maria Malipasta





IMPOSTER

The idea of the artist as Imposter has infinite variations. MAUREEN O. PALEY assembled a few of them:

Who are you? said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I — I hardly know, Sir, just at present — at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.

Rembrandt drew himself making faces in the mirror. Cindy Sherman makes various pouts and grimaces at the camera, at us, at herself. We recognise in her ingenious impersonation those 'dull' moments. Not normally meant for recording they aim to convince us further than her set or careful costuming of the authenticity of the character she has assumed.

Conmen are notorious for winning the confidence of strangers. Using such devices as an 'atmosphere of wealth' often enhanced by a suntan, they are successful for short periods as long as they never appear in the same place twice.

Names, as in the case of Chris Fallon's Kennedy's and Cay Lang's 'movie stars' can be misleading. Our shared expectations are confused by their deadpan attempts to show us a wrong version of the 'real thing'.

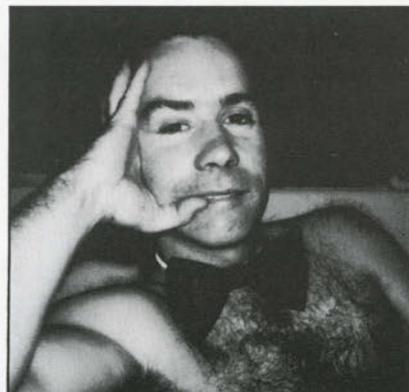
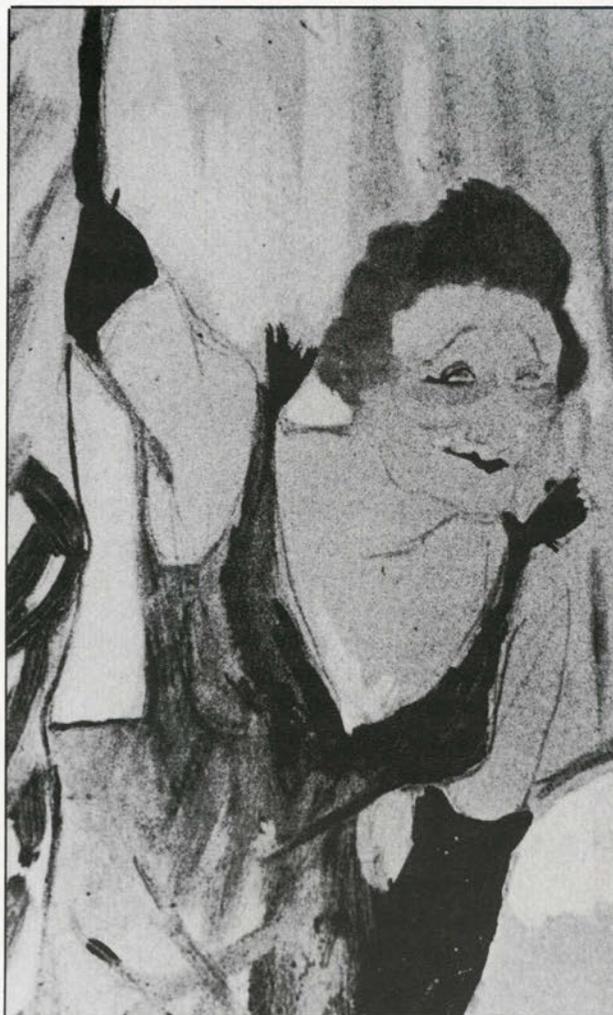
I did it my way sung in a cocktail bar in Bangkok by a singer who can't speak English and therefore puts strange emphasis on various words.

Lea Andrews, Anna Bella Geiger, and Nancy Webber share a sidelong relationship with the Imposter theme, through the use of comparison. Both Andrews and Webber use art of the past to comment on the contemporary everyday. They separately set up situations that make us compare and question appearance through the use of double-take. Geiger questions her position as a person of European heritage living in Brazil and therefore inheriting a cultural history that excludes her. She seeks to expose her "lack of skill as a primitive man" using found postcard imagery of the Brazilian Indians and awkwardly attempting to perform the tasks and rituals depicted.

These and other artists will be appearing in Imposters at Interim Art in late Autumn.

"Will the real Mr Jones please stand up?"
question from WHAT'S MY LINE television programme.

Cay Lang asked people she met in the street what movie or pop star people had told them they looked like, then photographed them as that star



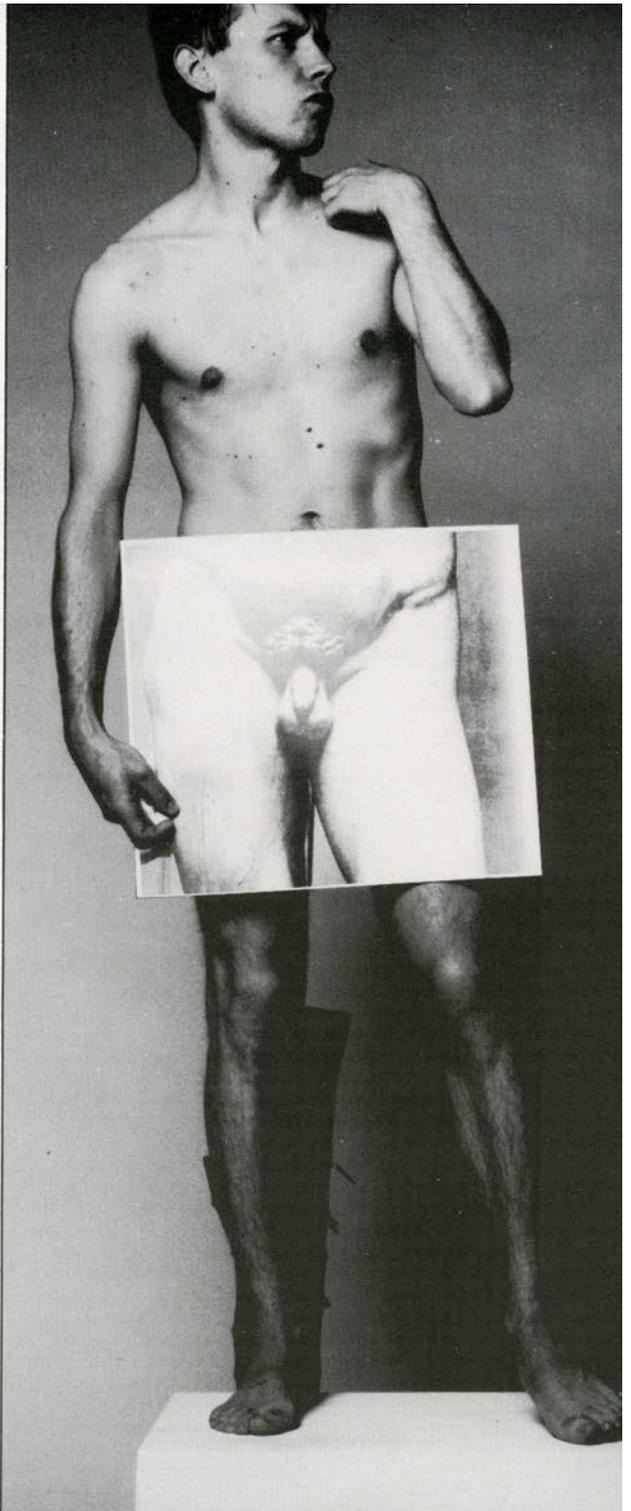
Elton John

IS

Below:
Yvette Gilbert by Toulouse
Lautrec. Vera Palmer,
pensioner 1981 by Nancy
Webber



Right
Michaelangelo's 'David'



Bob Dylan



Shirley MacLaine Robert Mitchum



ELVIS PR

VENGEANCE IS MINE

The crisis of identity and the crisis of love in a slow death at Graceland, as told to . . . **KEN HOLLINGS** takes the theories surrounding personality cults — in particular that surrounding Elvis Presley — several steps further, and finds his identity as mythically bloated in death as in later life:

ONE: FACE DOWN WITH ELVIS

Welcome to my world

'Who found the body?' Somebody has just made a serious mistake. Joe Esposito's face hangs motionless in the stage lights. No one can see where the voice came from in the crowded convention hall and the fans turn their attention back to the stage. Their real concern now is what Esposito is going to say. 'Diamond Joe' was Elvis's number one aide and his highest paid employee. He was also in Elvis' private bathroom at Graceland on the afternoon on August 15 1977; he saw the body and called in the paramedics on an outside line. Joe Esposito knows who found Elvis first that afternoon, and that is why he's been asked about it now. Most of the fans know that too, but they don't want him to say anything about it. They don't want him to answer the question, but they are not demanding or begging him not to answer: they encourage him in his silence, calling him by his first name, and there is a feeling of urgent complicity with him not to talk. Joe responds quickly and politely declines to answer, his audience applauds and someone asks him about his time with Elvis in the army.

Defrost Your Heart

The death of Elvis Presley has meant a change of manners for those who remember him and express a love for him. Everytime someone who knew Elvis speaks or sells their story about him, it will always end with Elvis lying face down on the floor. Since the moment of his death, the body has fallen forward repeatedly onto the deep pile of the expensive purple carpet in the private bathroom. In an endless compulsive action, the chair empties itself, the book on the Turin Shroud slips from

the fingers, the face is pressed to the bathroom floor, and the skin finally stiffens and turns blue. That is how the story ends, and it is constantly being retold: the body starting shifting again the moment Joe Esposito was asked that question.

However, the etiquette at work today in a Presley convention which would make such a question unthinkable has less to do with a denial of death than with a concentrated effort to silence both its circumstances and its consequences. It wasn't the death of Elvis Presley which suddenly permitted the public to read about his physical deterioration, the weight problem or the erratic behaviour: the American newspapers were already describing his condition to their readers while Elvis was still alive. Furthermore in the last three months which Presley spent in the seclusion of his Graceland bunker, copies of *Elvis: What Happened?* were on sale in the supermarkets and bookshops. Written by three bodyguards whom Presley had fired it tells the 'shocking and bizarre story' of M-16s in Las Vegas hotel rooms, midnight visits to funeral parlours, pills, celestial revelations of Jesus and Stalin and a distorted sleazy masculinity. The dark other side was already in the light.

Elvis's death, however, did more than accelerate exposure of his private life: it revealed the complex relationship between Presley and the adoring outside world that had helped create it. It transforms an image of love and devotion which had been divided against itself for years, by making it stare back at a monstrous reflection of itself, glassy eyed, sweating and held together by hair dye, a stomach bypass and face-lift. Elvis's death made vengeance into the dark reverse face of love and it made betrayal unite the two.

Behind betrayal is a crisis of belief, a break in identity which is expressed in Elvis's life and the people who surround it. Beyond that, it is expressed in his relationship with the fans. It is the division and collapse of love.

Everyone who has written about their life with Elvis begins with the knowledge and assurance of his love for them. In return they express their love for him, but it is Elvis's expression of love which is the most important, and their relationship with Elvis's life is not as essential to the meaning of their books compared with their knowledge of that love. It remains the basis for writing an intimate account of Elvis's life by such people as Ed Parker, one of his karate instructors, Larry Geller, his hairdresser, Becky Yancey, his secretary, Gabe Tucker, his press agent, Marty Lacker, one of his accountants, Miriam Cocke, a nurse who attended his detoxification sessions late in his life and Lamar Fike who supplied the basis for Goldman's authoritative expose in *Elvis*. Sugar and vitriol flow in equal amounts from the authors in complete disproportion to the professional role assigned them in their life with Elvis. Business and love obscure each other, the one renders the other motionless and frozen, but the two are never separate.

In the case of *Elvis: We Love You Tender*, the authors are Dee Presley, his step-mother and her three sons Billy, Rick and David Stanley in which family and work become fused when Elvis starts training his step-brothers as body guards and personal aides.

All of them speak for Elvis's love, even to the point of denying it to others. They ignore each other in their separate accounts, accuse each other of malicious betrayal and claim that, worst of all, Elvis didn't really love them at all.

As these expressions of love from Elvis are repeated, they become a static frozen coinage, a blank meaningless affirmation. Elvis loves them all, sometimes he even asks if they would die for him: every one says 'yes' all the time. Betrayal becomes inevitable, and the biggest betrayal happened when Elvis hit the bathroom floor: love and vengeance suddenly jerk into life.

RESLEY:



One Hand Loose

All the fans see now is betrayal, but not from Elvis. They accuse the people around him who started writing the books. Many of the fans' questions to Esposito begin with the words, 'It's not true is it...?' Then they name a name and everyone knows which book they are referring to. Joe always tells them what they want to hear, and no one can blame him. He's still saying 'yes': his experience of Elvis's love is still identified with the blank affirmation which the fans love and adore. Their adoration is only made possible by that affirmation. Seen in terms of Elvis's career it is expressed in beach party movies, Elvis in uniform, dinner shows at the Las Vegas Hilton and Aloha from Hawaii.

However, the death of Elvis is unspeakable because it is not a part of that affirmation. The Graceland bathroom was filled with the echoes of Hank Williams, dead from alcohol and amphetamines in the back seat of his car on his way to a concert: his corpse was only found upon arrival. There is perhaps even the memory of Jimmie Rodgers, wracked with tuberculosis and still singing up to the time of his death. The official verdict on Elvis's death was cardiac arrhythmia, others claimed it was an overdose. All agree that the body was overworked and was beginning to cease functioning while still alive but there is a fifty-year suppression order on the post-mortem findings, although with the right money and contacts it is supposedly possible to buy a video of the autopsy. A diseased heart, pills, or a combination of the two; Elvis Presley died a country death on the eve of yet another concert tour of astrodomes and tourist resorts.

The raw, emotionally deranged and earthy death of Elvis Presley had started to break loose some months before when Presley pursued Ginger Alden, the girl he was planning to marry, out of Graceland one night, firing shots above her head to bring her back, just as a drunken George Jones had fired at his fleeing wife, Tammy Wynette. It was Ginger Alden who found the body.

TWO: TEN THOUSAND YEARS OLD

Money is a thing of the past

The death exposed a crisis of identity based upon an

expression of love and affirmation which seemed to embody his whole life. However, the crisis itself functioned through the effects of the seemingly endless wealth which he generated, even after death. Money was a perpetual flow which was channelled through Presley. It was never conserved, checked or re-routed into investment programmes, production companies or any scheme at all which might have controlled it. There were no tax shelters, and Presley paid his own overheads: near the end of his career he was lucky if he himself saw one dollar in every ten that he earned. Within the confines of a political economy finance has never been so fluid, but this perpetual flow was designed to keep Elvis static. He remained a fixed point through which the fabulous sale figures and performance fees poured in, and with gifts, extravagances and indulgences flooded out. Money had the same basic exchange value as love, but the money never bought the love or even expressed it. The money regulated and maintained the identity of love, by conferring upon it a vast mythic space in which affirmation could exist untroubled by the contradictions it embodied.

This mythic space, the rhetoric which expressed it and the possibilities of its externally expanding dimensions has its origins in country music; the music of hill and range. Railroads, trucks, ghost riders, highways and prairies isolate the voice of the singer. He's alone and free, he sings and suffers, but the vast spaces make introspection and self-pity seem exalted and heroic. Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers created the rhetoric, but it was Elvis who connected it up to a rapaciously growing mass media and presented it to a nation torn by inner conflict.

The space stretched out of the 1950s and into eternity, and the money supplied both the means and the imagery. Placed against the vision of the 'fifties which Elvis helped create, the nation's first atomic powered singer is surrounded by gold lamé, chrome, plastic, guitars, teddy bears and juke boxes. The image is enclosed: it consumes but never refers to anything outside itself. To consider Presley against a background of McCarthy, Korea, nuclear deep freeze and a memory of the war dead from less than a decade before is to make clear the experience which Elvis's rhetoric worked both upon and against. Elvis Presley became a fixed image of affirmation when there seemed to be only a shifting pattern of suspicion, conflict and lost confidence. He said 'yes' whether it was on or off the stage, and in doing so established in

image of consensus, a point at which all distinct and opposing identities began to lose hostility and to fuse together. He said 'yes' to everybody, even those who objected to him. The move into the army and then to Hollywood, after a brief television flirtation with Frank Sinatra's Timex traditionalism, all conform to the same logic of affirmation. Hollywood in the fifties had already been responding to the need for consensus, but it took Elvis to turn *Eleven Angry Men*, *On the Waterfront* and *Rebel Without a Cause* into *Love Me Tender* and then twist that affirmation around once again to make it *Fun In Acapulco*. Years later, a New York journalist attending one of Presley's Madison Square Garden performances found that he was inexplicably united with the very people who used to beat him up in high school just by being in the same space together with Elvis.

A vast space, but one which maintained and fixed Elvis at its centre, loving you — and you alone — forever. However, it was money that controlled and contained that space, and in its turn the money itself was transformed. It returned to an old, virtually pre-capitalist value: Elvis was not General Motors. Or at least that was how it seemed.

I need a hit

Whilst the flow of money was never controlled, it was, however, channelled into an intricate network which would function only by drawing attention away from itself. Love remained inviolate. Love remained unaware of the passivity within it which would divide both itself and lover against themselves. But love could only survive so long as the money flowed through the lover. Elvis was at the centre of the network which hid itself behind the identity of love: he drew the body guards around him, the security firms, and the karate instructors. They were as important as the players, the record executives and the beauticians in maintaining this identity. They were on the payroll because the money and the adoration demanded it, but they were not just hired guns: they were lovers and beloved too.

They embodied the rhetoric of space, and gave the lover the image of toughness he needed to keep the affirmative alive, and as needs they went right along with Elvis's cars, the food, the pills and guns. Ultimately they become confused with these other passions and formed a part of the financial flood; some of them were responsible for million-dollar law suits over fans who had been brutalized by them after Elvis had psyched them up to both kill and die ►

for him, when the time came. According to the testimony of two Presley body guards, they were even ready to organize a contract on the life of Mike Stone, the man for whom Priscilla left Elvis. The cost of it all is the purchasing power of absolute freedom and an identity based upon absolute love. 'Let it burn, Daddy. It's only money', Elvis said one night to his father: he had just fired so many submachine gun bullets into a wooden building on the Graceland estate that it had burst into flames.

At the heart of it all is an attitude which helped Elvis Americanize America. He loved spending money and that sanctified the act for everyone. Even when he spent it on cars, pills and guns he was affirming a fundamental approval of their presence in the lives of a vast majority of his fans. He obtained his pills on prescription through his doctors from the kind of drugstores which anyone could visit: he never took a drug that any of his fans could not have bought legally for themselves. He had the guns because he needed protection, and no American citizen who believed in the constitutional right to keep and bear arms could dispute that.

However what makes the fan and the citizen recoil is that Elvis pursued that affirmation to what was, for him, its absolute conclusion. The vastness of the space which Elvis occupied allowed pills to be consumed as casually as a stick of gum, and the weaponry was purchased as easily as packs of cigarettes. With more chemicals pounding through his system than Roche can produce in a month, an M-16 cradled in his lap and surrounded by a small group of trained guards, each one tough and loyal unto death, Elvis Presley was still finally saying 'yes'.

Night of the werewolf

Death revealed the economic network which had remained unseen during Presley's life and had in turn protected it. Those who wrote about Elvis after his death were in a very real sense perpetuating their relationship with him in financial terms. In other words, the economic network in becoming separated from Elvis by his death, was transformed. Instead of drawing attention away from itself and towards the fixed image of Presley and the space occupied by it, the network now sold itself, and it had to draw attention to itself in order to do so. The immediate result of this change was that the Presley identity — the love and the affirmation — all become grotesquely transformed in their turn. With nothing to hold it still, the fixed image began to crawl with life.

The public and private lives of Elvis Presley had always been kept

apart, and they seemed, after his death to be two separate identities which were easily identifiable as black or white; monstrous or heroic. This separation miraculously permitted a free choice. Many fans were still so deep in the grip of Elvis's affirmation that they found it possible to deny everything which did not seem to contribute to it. They would talk of betrayal and vengeance in the depiction of the monstrous Elvis; so powerful was the original image for the fans that Elvis's death was almost irrelevant to its continued existence. He still loved them: nothing else can have the same truth as this simple statement.

For the rest, there was only one possibility: a mixture of double standards, contradiction and obscene paradox. Many of the books written about Presley after his death can express little more than this. Goldmann's *Elvis*, together with *Elvis: What Happened* deal only in the shock and the outrage of it all. *Elvis, We Love You Tender* is, if anything, worse in that it can only offer excuses and apologies. At the end, none of them can see Elvis as being anything but false to an ideal which had seemed to stand alone, permanent and loving.

This image has to be divided against itself in order to both survive and contain the paradox, the sense of failure presented by the two Elvis identities. It is, however, a weak alternative to the only remaining vision of Elvis Presley: that he stayed true to the image right to the end, and it was finally the image which was false. Elvis simply followed the logic of affirmation and believed it himself. He probably didn't know any better: Elvis dreamed and it came true. It was a truck driver's dream. Without the love and the money, without the space which they conferred upon that dream, it would have remained nothing but a dream. Instead it became an image and a need. The sense of loss and destruction does not originate in the dream or the dreamer, but in the space which draws it out, expands and enlarges it to grotesque dimensions. It becomes a mythology to be consumed by the populace, but what is consumed ultimately is not the dream but the space it occupies. The dream has only given the space a substance.

The California police are currently unearthing another space on Mount Misery. It is a ranch which had until recently been run by two ex-Marines who ran survival courses over weekends. It was secluded and private, and the police found a huge stock of weaponry and money together with a quantity of homemade video tapes. Unlike Presley's teenage sex sessions taped in the master bedroom, these were

videos of victims being tortured and murdered, and the police are still sifting through the burnt remains to determine how many victims there actually were. Outside the ranch, a sign read, 'If you love something, set it free. If it doesn't come back, hunt it down and kill it.' Presley, of course, was going to marry Ginger Alden. The rhetoric of space distorts and divides experience, turning love into vengeance, and the sense of affirmation into a deadly absolute.

THREE: BEATING IN MY HEART

From Graceland to the Promised Land

For the fans, vengeance is a simple matter: those who write about Elvis after his death are out for revenge. They say Elvis loved them and that they loved him, but if you love Elvis, and he loves you, then you don't write about the lover as if he were on drugs, a sex maniac, and obsessed with guns and killing. You certainly shouldn't keep on telling the world how fat he became at the end: not if you love him like we love him. On the night Elvis died, fans pleaded with journalists not to say he was fat: one newspaper even used their pleas as a headline.

The Elvis Presley on display at Madame Tussaud's is not fat. It has the lean grace of the young hillbilly rocker, and a wide-bodied acoustic guitar is slung low across the hips to obscure them completely just as they were hidden from American television audiences of the 'fifties. There is nothing about the wax image which is fat, but at the same time, there is nothing about it which is Elvis Presley either. No one image can span the twenty-year career or can embody the enlargement and distortion of Presley's body which it caused.

To remove that conflict in identity, the body of the young Presley is clothed in one of the white, bejewelled cat-suits worn by Presley in his later performing career. The body says 'Hound Dog', and the clothing says dinner shows, Las Vegas: fat. The pictures were there for all to see after his death, and no memoir of Elvis is complete without the white rolls of fat, the sweat, the double chin and the unsteady movements, all bursting out at the seams of the white stage costume. In attempting to fuse the two identities into one image, the wax dummy finally loses Elvis altogether.

The face is aged and alien. Elvis is

singing somewhere in that firmament of stars behind this strange figure, but the lips don't move. The effigy doesn't resemble Elvis at all, but it is a very accurate reflection of his career: one last weak and subdued 'yes' memorial to affirmation and consensus. Thoughts of vengeance disappear from our minds as Elvis keeps on singing from beyond that starry heaven, and the dummy smiles endlessly curling its upper lip. Downstairs, a body slumps forward in its chair again, as another visitor pushes a button and watches Gary Gilmore's execution by firing squad.

He stopped loving her today

The was effigy was created and installed through the good graces of Colonel Parker, one of the few people around Elvis who has yet to write his version of the Presley myth. He has many critics to answer, not just from the other members of the Presley circle, but also from some of the fans. Joe Esposito had a hard time trying to persuade a whole faction present in the convention hall that the Colonel didn't cheat Elvis and didn't destroy him by subjecting him to a deadening succession of light-weight movies and heavy-weight live appearances.

After Elvis's death, the Colonel concentrated upon creating a merchandising network to preserve and sell Elvis's memory: the bubblegum cards, clothes, guitars, teddy bears, personalized dollar bills and autographed pictures started to flood the world again in the same way that they had done on Elvis's emergence in the 'fifties. It was also Colonel Parker who created the slogan 'Always Elvis' after the death, using it as a focal point for the Las Vegas Hilton show in 1978 in which a nine-foot high bronze statue of Elvis was unveiled. Its first public appearance was packaged and introduced as if were a Presley concert. Tickets, T-shirts and other merchandise were all available for a price.

The statue was created at about the same time as the wax effigy of Elvis which is on show in Madame Tassaud's and both share the common feature of not looking much like him. Many others have followed the Colonel's example, exhibiting cars that Elvis had bought or given away, copies of the death certificate and photographs of the bathroom at Graceland marked up to show exactly where the body was found.

Colonel Parker will possibly never have to give his version of life with Elvis. He doesn't need to. The lifeless, unreal effigies of Elvis Presley say it all both for him and for the fans. The Elvis which Colonel

The merchandising says it all

Parker offers to the world will always stay constant, true and fixed: its heart will never stop beating because it has never begun to beat. No one who loves Elvis would accuse this image of being one based upon betrayal.

No money in this deal

Whilst the police examine the remains at the ranch on Mount Misery and reconstruct the murder of at least 25 known victims, negotiations are taking place in Hollywood, only a few hundred miles away. Plans are already being drawn up to make a film based on the carnage, and at least one newspaper has suggested that it should be directed by John Carpenter. The style he showed in such classic splatter movies as *Halloween* and *The Thing* would suit this new subject: both films exploit a sense of space in order to capture an experience of horror and helplessness. *Elvis*, the TV movie based on Presley's life, is credited to a John Carpenter. In it, Elvis Presley was portrayed by Kurt Russell who went on to take the lead role in *The Thing*.

Near the end of his life, Elvis was interested in financing and starring in a violent martial arts film whose plot would involve drug dealers and hit men. Presley wanted to play the villain, and he had a very definite idea of how he should be presented: 'I want to be the baddest motherfucker there is.'

The intention breaks open that mythical space which surrounded Elvis in a way that points towards the circumstances of his death. The meaning behind it was only finally revealed after he had died, when the members of his world began to re-establish their financial dependence upon Elvis by writing about him. Above and beyond the possibilities which Elvis's last film project reveals in relation to the image upon which his career is based, it would never have freed Elvis from the mythic space in the same way that the madness and excess of his private life did. Elvis took the space apart from the inside while still remaining true to the principles which had created it in the first place. It only required his death to reveal how great the damage was that he had created from within. For, over the years Elvis had transformed his image of passive affirmation, his lonely expression of love, into an active assertion: affirmation was made absolute, blazing fear and destruction at the world outside the Graceland bathroom. The emotion it expresses is easy to identify, but its meaning had to wait until after Elvis's death before it became clear. After all, revenge, like Elvis Presley himself, is a dish best tasted cold.●

ELVIS

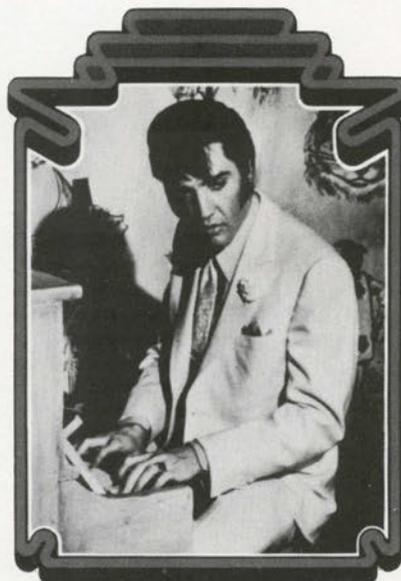
ELVIS FACTS No. 42

Elvis was a gentle, obedient, religious boy with a likable disposition. His only vice was an occasional puff on a Hav-a-Tampa cigar.



COLLECT ALL 66 CARDS

© BOXCAR ENTERPRISES, INC. 1978
LIC. by FACTORS, ETC., INC. BEAR, DE



ELVIS

ELVIS FACTS No. 7

By the end of 1956, there were some seventy-eight separate Elvis products on the market from Bermuda shorts to photos that glowed in the dark.



COLLECT ALL 66 CARDS

© BOXCAR ENTERPRISES, INC. 1978
LIC. by FACTORS, ETC., INC. BEAR, DE

Twelve years ago this year the artist Tom Phillips started a performance which he intends to go on for generations: each year he (and now his son) walk along a predetermined route, around the square mile surrounding his house in Peckham, S. London, and at fixed points take photographs of the same scene. ROB LA FRENAIS followed him on his day-long progress and asked him about this marking out of territorial identity:

TERRITORIES 1: BEATING THE BOUNDS WITH TOM PHILLIPS

ROB LA FRENAIS: So the first thing is to find the mark?

TOM PHILLIPS: Yes, it's very difficult, sometimes.

RL: And you made a mark on that spot in 1973.

TP: Yes, I do it every year.

RL: You've managed to keep that continuity.

TP: Sometimes I go round on an inspection, around January, see if I can see everything in good order. But we haven't yet come to a place where we can't stand where we stood before. It's going to happen one of these days.

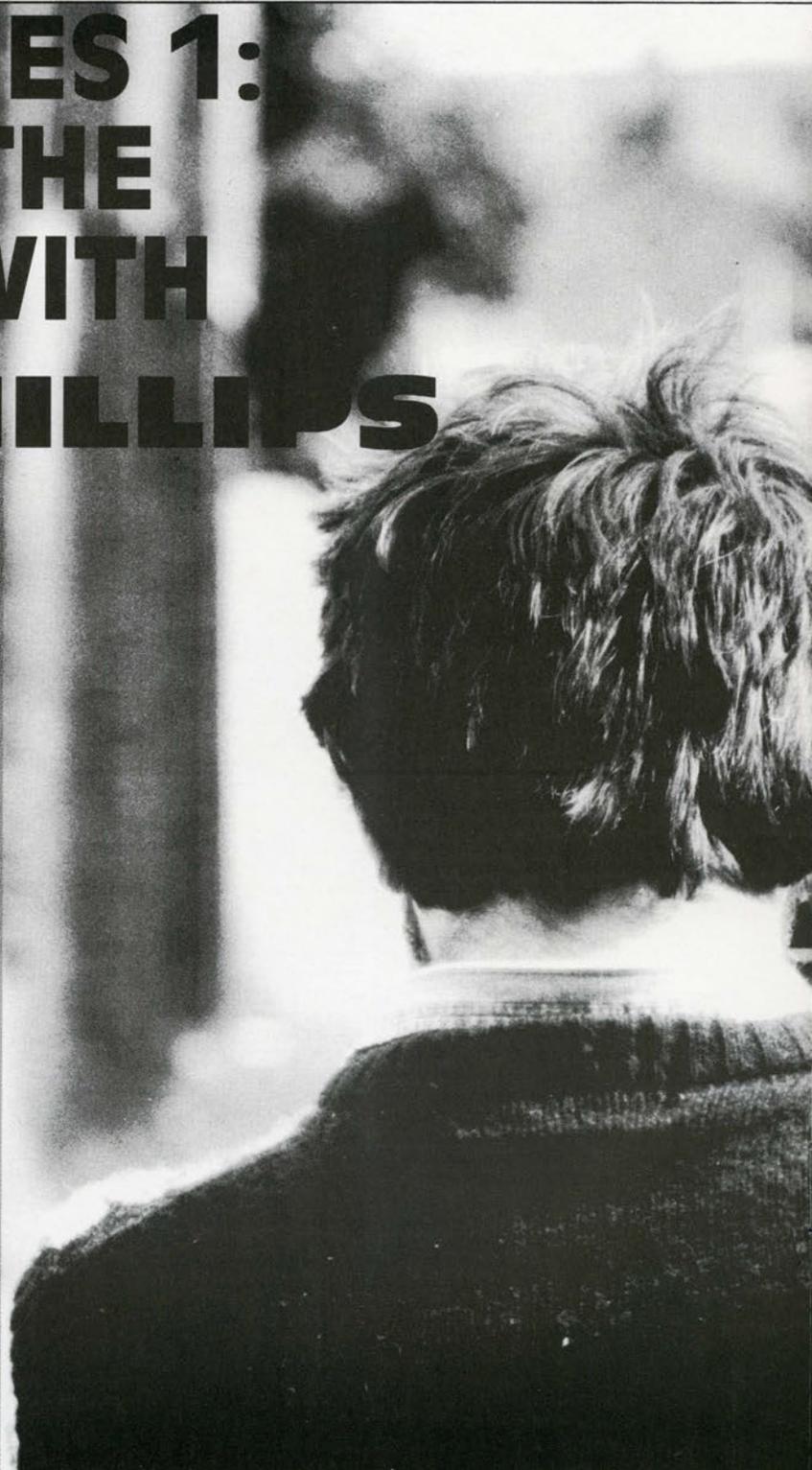
RL: Do you get called upon to explain what you're doing?

TP: Often I've had to explain, but not to officials, but to people who were going to rough me up, because they thought I was photographing *them* for some purpose, not nefarious on my side, but catching some nefariousness on their side. People coming out of the depot down there, early, when they're meant to knock off at five. People have threatened to break up the camera.

RL: Do you notice the changes in fashion, in what people wear each year?

TP: Well, pink seems to be the colour. Dressing as ice creams, or lemon sorbets. We get things parading through, only years later do you realise what it indicated, what trend it actually demonstrated. Whatever you've got used to in the year, you've got used to. But when it's disappeared, you suddenly think, oh yes that's what they all were doing, like the skateboards everyone was running around on.

RL: Do you notice any subtle difference in the way people walk around? But maybe you'd need at least 100 years to notice that.





TP: You certainly see it in old postcards. Men used to walk rigid.

RL: It was considered not on to slouch.

TP: And hands in pockets, as I was always told at school.

RL: Then there is the great hatlessness we have nowadays . . . no more wearing of hats.

TP: Which started 20 years ago. I started the project 12 years ago, which isn't bad.

RL: No hats then.

TP: No hats. The hats might come back. We've had amusing hats. Big tam 'o shanters and things. But for it to be commonplace for a man to wear a hat — no not in the last 12 years.

RL: When you have people in the photographs, how do you decide the exact moment when you shoot. Is it random? Or does it relate to how you're feeling?

TP: It's an instinctual thing. If people look archetypal of the moment then it's nice to go for them. But themes might take hundreds of years to develop. Once or twice on this spot we've had lovers walking along. That might turn out to be a statement, in which case the person doing it in 200 years time is really lumbered, having to wait bereft, on corners, for a lover with a spotted dog. Obviously you can't do that. It's got to move along. People actually stop passing various points because the orientation of thing changes — shops moved to a different place. One point where you could rely on people passing a particular house; virtually they've stopped passing that way, because there's a better way to the shops.

RL: Has doing the project changed your feelings about this area? How does it make you feel about the area?

TP: Proprietorial (laughter). It gives me a circuit to do, out of my own interests. Watching for a different thing, what's happened to the pictures we take, and regretting all sorts of amazing things that happen in the meanwhile. Incredible building works. People sticking wild and insane notices outside, then they take them down the day before we take the photograph! There's lots of regret built into it, too. For instance, the house we start at has had roadworks almost every year, flags, and things moving up and down. Every time, it's finished just before we take the photograph, so all you see is a slightly changing road surface, every year. It needs a sharper eye to see these things. But I like that. I like to find the trace elements of what's happened in the meanwhile.

RL: Even if you have to move out of this area you'll keep coming back here?

TP: Of yes. It's a rule now. Wherever I am I should come back, or Leo (his son) comes back.

RL: Could become a problem if you went to Australia, or anywhere, you'd have to come back once a year.

TP: That's right. You would, is the answer. I regard it as a crisis. A crux in a crisis. It would be a priority, so if I were planning a trip or something, I'd plan it at a different time. If it were impossible I'd fly back for a couple of days.

RL: Your route, then describes the nearest thing to a circle around your house then.

TP: It's the nearest thing you'd get to a circle, half a mile in radius, without barging into people's back doors and out their front doors. Using common rights of way, it's the nearest.

RL: Out of everything, what is *the* most significant change that you can mark down in the twelve years of doing it.

TP: I suppose in one way, the cinema. Having started with the cinema as it was, showing one film, then seeing it desperately showing three films, then seeing it closed, and now this year seeing it knocked down. A brief encapsulated story of the British cinema in the last twelve years. To see it knocked down in British Film Year seems to add piquancy to that. Although that's not visually very dramatic. Also, things move back in time in a funny way. For example there's this photographer's place called Dennis Noble that we take, next to which was a bomb site when we started. Then they built reproduction Georgian houses next door to it. It's difficult to imagine we got it the right way round!

(On this site) there's always a game of bowls, as if there's been a game of bowls going on here for twelve years, uninterruptedly.

Passing boy: What are you doing that for? (seeing us making mark) You're not allowed to do that.

RL: They come here every year to do it.

Boy: Why.

TP: The council.

Boy: You take a photograph here every year.

TP: That's right. Got it in one.

The sites aren't really chosen to be high drama, or the most glamorous things, just a typical cross section through the neighbourhood. So this one's just a gap in a block of flats. No remarkable features whatsoever. ▶

'I like to find the trace elements of what's happened in the meanwhile'

Photo: Leo Phillips

RL: Yet the details themselves come through.

TP: The duller something is, then the smaller the detail that makes a difference. The more dramatic places, where there's a hubbub of activity, you need dramatic changes. This is possibly the duller site in some ways. But I don't find any of them without a personality. Because you never know what's going to happen. If your timespan is long enough, everywhere becomes random. It could be a nuclear testing zone, or where the first Martians land. You've no idea where things are going to happen. But if you'd started when I was a baby on Clapham Common, you'd take a slice of Clapham Common, then suddenly there'd have been these anti-aircraft guns, because that's where you were.

RL: So this one is the only site where they cottoned on what was happening?

TP: Yes, the second year, they said 'Oh, I've cleaned up your mark for you'. Then the third year, it was the gardeners and workers on the estate, they put all their cleaned mowers and equipment in a line in front of where I was going to photograph. Then they obviously changed crews, and it reverted to no-one noticing.

RL: How did you explain what you were doing?

TP: It isn't difficult to explain. You just say what you're doing. If you just say it, it's quite acceptable to most people.

RL: But do you think people imagine that you're something like an estate agent rather than an artist?

TP: I don't think the word art would ring many bells or gain many favours in this neighbourhood (picks up camera). This woman is rather in the right place. Excuse me.

RL: So different rules apply to different sites? Last site someone had to walk into the camera. This one it doesn't really matter.

TP: It slightly involves somebody being in the middle distance. But if the Queen passed by, it wouldn't be permissible RL. It wouldn't be normal.

RL: So it takes you a day to walk around the circle roughly.

TP: Ten o'clock to half past five. A normal working day.

RL: Why did you decide that this would be a hereditary concept?

TP: Well, it was a reaction to those people who were doing Land Art and photographic systemic art. But they wanted to do it and put it in a gallery, like, next week. I thought that really interesting things happen over

centuries. So why not start something from which you'll get very little vain glory, but actually what these people say they want to be doing. So it was a question of applying what I thought was a proper artistic probity to an activity that seemed to be rather superficial.

RL: But the father-to-son thing is very traditional. You couldn't have handed it over to a student?

TP: It seemed a nice thing to build in, in a way.

RL: How do you feel about doing it for the rest of your life? (to son)

Leo Phillips? I like it. I think it's a good idea.

RL: When were you first told that you'd have this task?

LP: I think that it was very carefully integrated into my everyday activities.

TP: I don't think that's quite fair. You kind of volunteered. Then I told you that you'd volunteered anyway (laughter). It's nice that you got interested in photography. Not that this needs any photographic skill whatsoever. They're very 'bad' photographs, and the aesthetic is based on the postcard anyway.

LP: But what it's done for me is that it's made me look much closer at things and people which... he did already because he's an artist. I do notice a lot more, and also through a lens.

(We are proceeding along a path through a wood.)

TP: We actually have secret captions to some of these sites, like this one has the caption *Rus In Urbe*, the famous phrase of Horace meaning the countryside within the town. This is the nearest you get to a country path in Camberwell, I think.

RL: Is the direction you point the camera arbitrary?

TP: It's controlled by the drawing.

RL: But the angle you are pointing at has no significance.

TP: It doesn't point into the middle or anything clever like that. The circle was divided into 16, so there's one site in each lozenge, and four sites a slice.

RL: So in twenty years time you'll be able to do it without the marks.

LP: In twenty years time *he* won't be able to do it at all (laughter).

TP: He'll be making all the money out of it. It'll be like the Tour de France. There'll be vans coming along behind you.

RL: I wonder if there'll be any money in conceptual art in twenty years time.

TP: For those that persevere there's always money in art. It comes in old age. Now this is the place where I get accused of photographing people coming out of work early.

RL: Has the urinal changed much since 1973?

TP: It has ceased to be a urinal. The first year it stopped being a urinal it was just a wall, and there was somebody seeming to go into it, out of habit, thinking it was always going to be there.

RL: Has the graffiti changed since 1973?

TP: It's more political. Less about football clubs. Even kids put up political slogans quite a lot.

RL: I've often wondered whether this sort of street furniture (looking at roadsign) is designed by committee or by a single person.

TP: Well now it's designed in Brussels. That's a tendency we'll spot more and more. Europe in Britain.

Post boxes are going to be yellow, and all that. We are now passing the only public sculpture on our route.

RL: They're footballers. With long shorts. (We turn into cafe) Do you always stop here.

TP: No, we're running ahead of time.

RL: Ah, you have to keep on schedule so the light remains the same. Do you know of anyone else in the world doing this kind of thing?

TP: Whoever's doing it has probably given up by now. That's what I like about this work. It goes on when the rest have given up. I'm a drudge, you see, as an artist. A workhorse.

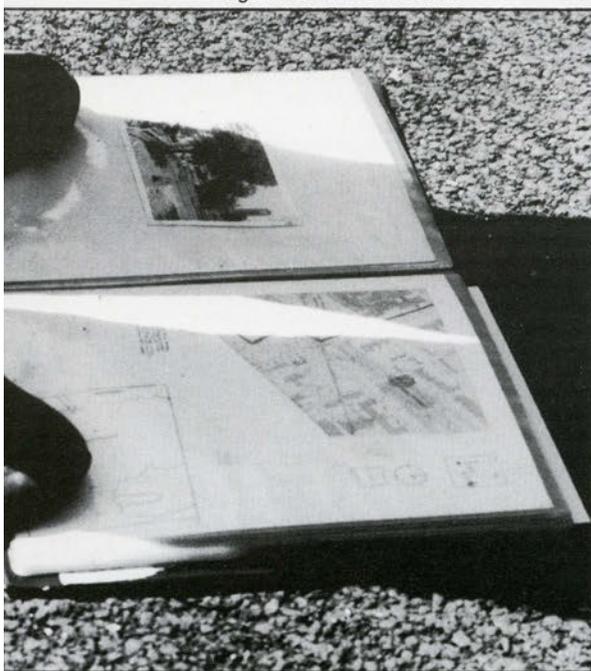
RL: So, do you find it re-inforces your identity, doing this project?

TP: I suppose it defines what I consider my patch. It's like a dog

urinating on the lamp-post. It's a kind of territory. So this is a circle around the house where I used to live, which includes my place of work now, and other places of work, the art school I went to and so forth. So it circles a lot of personal history, and is a neighbourhood I understand and know the code of, which is quite important. It's me re-signing that which marked me in the first place. ●

Checking the position

Photo: Leo Phillips



Who owns the light? Projection artist KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO has thrown images across public buildings around the world. His slide projections dramatically redefine the identity of the public buildings and monuments his images fall upon, and the authorities have often tried to stop him. He has, for example, projected an image of a cruise missile passing along a Canadian valley where it was due to be tested. He talked to *Performance Magazine* about the effects of this powerful media:

TERRITORIES 2: SUPERIMPOSING THE CITY

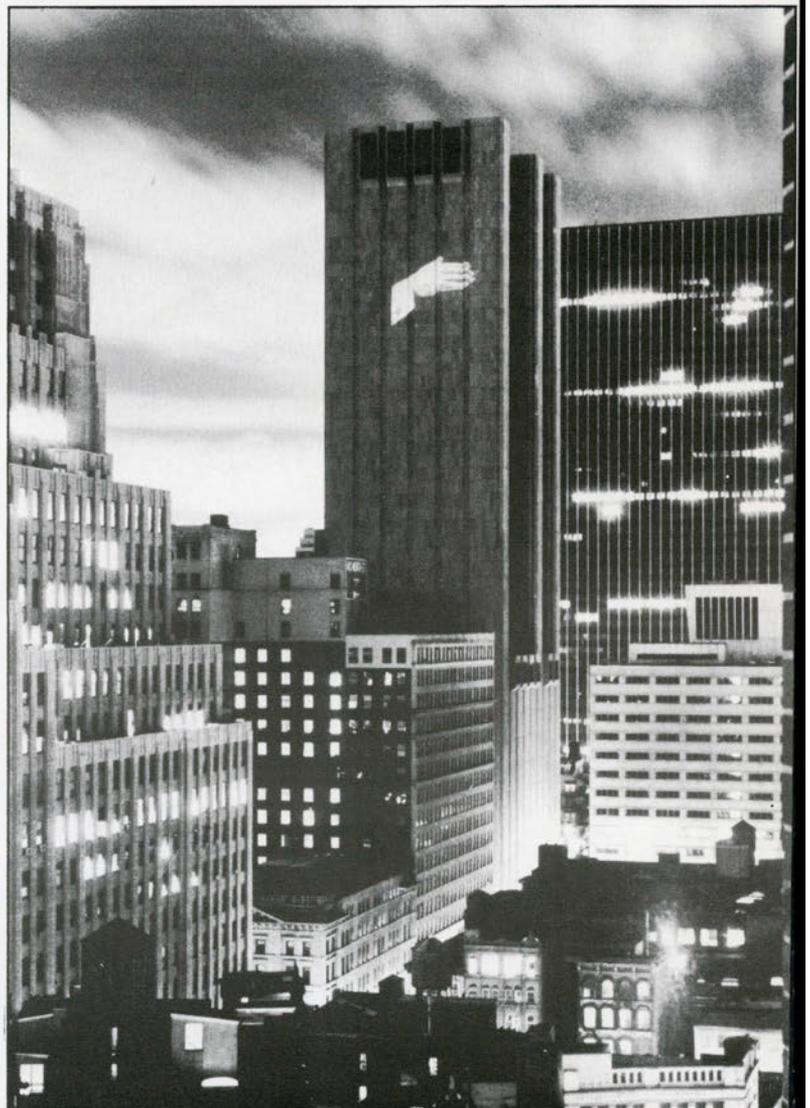
Krzysztof Wodiczko has created an intriguingly simple but problematic new form of 'art in public places'. Using quite ordinary slide projectors he projects images onto the facades of public buildings and monuments. His work raises important issues of the meaning and function of architecture. The legal difficulties he has encountered demonstrate that perhaps public places aren't quite as public as we thought. When STEVE ROGERS asked him about his work and his plans for a famous public building in the middle of London, this was his reply:

I don't want to claim to be too creative in my work. The city is already a work of art. It is a gallery of a peculiar magnitude. Particularly in London there is a special concentration of this art of architecture and space; the way it is arranged; the relationships between the different parts; it is extremely well done. I don't want to compete with that public art.

I have to see the spatial forms of the city I'm working in. I have to talk to people, read a lot, and try to understand the meaning of those forms. The forms and structures of architecture are permanent, but the circumstances change, and the changing circumstances confer new meaning on those forms.

I am trying to disclose or maybe to make explicit that which is implicit. I don't really produce new meanings. I don't even think that I discover new meanings. I just make the meanings public. Although I cannot claim to be objective either. Of course it's my work and I have specific interests and use specific methods of working. Many people would like to see my work as a kind of graffiti. However, my interest is in the ideology of public space. I am interested in how architecture in the so called 'public domain' operates culturally. I am not about projecting revolutionary messages on walls. I want to analyse the relationship between the human body, the body of someone who lives here, and the social body and the body of the architectural and spatial forms around that body. I am also interested in how the environment transmits the dominant ideology.

It is very important for me to act temporarily because the architecture has an enormous capacity to appropriate anything appearing on its surface. I want to interrupt the passive gaze of the somnambulistic circulation of our bodies around the building. I want to bring buildings and space into the public attention and I want to demystify and interrupt the building's ideological projection. So I project onto the facade, onto that myth, another image, another metaphor, a bodily metaphor. The confrontation of the two images might interrupt or damage the operation of the building's ideological power. I see the limitations of my work but I also see its power. Assuming that the projection is successful and the image I project ▶





The law does not say I cannot project'

Photo: Krystof Wodiczko

integrates well with the architecture, when the projectors are switched off there is another projection starting. The absence of the image is often more powerful than when it is there, it can have a more lasting effect than if the image were carved there, or if it were graffiti or a mural. Murals are much more a physical part of the building. So as the circumstances change the original context and meaning of the mural is lost. Perhaps a changing mural would be an interesting proposition. One that is continually changing, being repainted and reshaped, like the ones I saw in Northern Ireland which are constantly changing as the circumstances change.

Not only are there physical limitations to my work there are also limitations deriving from the very fact that public space is not really public. They are administered by special agents in the name of the public and it's heavily guarded because it's a very important property, a symbolic property. In Toronto I did a projection on the South African War Memorial. Not only did I not receive any co-operation from the authorities but I also received a letter saying I was not allowed to project on it. Of course this letter does not mean that I am not allowed to project. The law does not say that I cannot project. It's a public space. But the implications of the letter are very serious. It suggests that the property is the property of the state. It didn't receive permission from me to exist. I was not asked whether this kind of object should affect or interrelate with my life. So my attempt to evaluate the meaning or to develop public, critical discourse on the meaning of this monument, what it means today not during the time of the South African war when it was erected, but during the time of our new discourse on war and peace, was denied. Denied in the name of death. As if it were a graveyard, a sacred object in the name of

someone who died, in the middle of the city. So I am not only dealing with public space, but also with the politics of struggle to gain access to this space. Discourse on this space shouldn't only take place in galleries and lecture halls and in academic journals but also in the space itself. I felt obligated to respond to the letter telling me I couldn't do my projection and the only possible response was to go ahead with the projection. I asked a lawyer to be there with me, and the art community to be there using our own methods of intimidation, of recording and photographing everything that was said and done, the methods developed in Toronto by the gay community. The monument was surrounded by cameras and tape recorders, and the lawyer had a case full of books which prove that I have a right to do my projection.

London needs this kind of activity. Any interventionist or critical public art because the space here is so heavily protected. The relationships between forms are extended here by performances. Either state performances like parades, which disconnect the monuments and spaces from our lives or by the actions of tourists. Tourists enter the city and tourism educates the tourists how to integrate themselves with the cities from which they come. Londoners may not look at monuments in their own city but they will look at them in Rome. Tourists are a very important audience. As long as tourists are photographing each other in front of war memorials and they are integrating their own bodies with these objects in their family album, in their lives, in their personal memoirs, then we have the cultural conditions for a war. As long as these memorials are not questioned their power is not diminished. The art has an enormous job to do because it has to deal with the incredibly developed voice of propaganda. ●

Have you ever watched people crammed, giggling, into a railway station photo-booth, having their picture taken for fun? The photo-booth is a static, controlled but random, method of people recording their identities — there is no time to think as the camera flashes mechanically, inexorably. LIZ RIDEAL, who spends her working life surrounded by the court portraiture and grandly posed heroes and statesmen of the National Portrait Gallery in London, persuaded the Photo-Me company to lend a photo-booth, and had it installed — in a flash — bursting the Warhol ethic into the dusty realms of former monarchs. She discusses the implications of the photo-booth identity:

FINDING YOURSELF IN A

'We all live in a web of subterfuges and transmutations'
Anais Nin. Volume 4. Diaries.

PHOTOBOOTH

The portrait, be it self or made by another, is an attempt at a reflection or interpretation of a personality: the identity of the individual. The dictionary defines this as 'absolute sameness'. The painting, drawing or photograph cannot be an absolute reproduction, though it may present us with the psychological penetration of a character. The National Portrait Gallery, in London, contains a vast collection of portraits in all media, of diverse aesthetic quality. A congregation of Britain's chosen 'greats' . . . 'those who have done things worthy of our admiration' (Lord Palmerston 1856). This bizarre mortuary is an alternative fancy dress party of human image manifest in two and three dimensions. An identity parade of personal and public symbolism.

Early work such as Gheeraerts' Elizabeth I (c.1592) is a perfect piece of visual historic propaganda. She is recognisable, dressed in virginal white wedding finery, the Tudor badge pinioned deftly on a pretend angelic wing-like ruff, controlling the weather with a fan and standing Godlike on a map of her country, feet firmly placed in Oxfordshire . . . and England now at the top of the globe. A sonnet reinforces the visual statement, as does the very size of the canvas.

Similarly, Michael Dahl, (1656-1743) a Swedish artist and Kneller's only serious rival, relinquishes a self-image for posterity: he gestures towards a sculpted head indicative of his aesthetic appreciation and he shows us clearly by inclusion of his palette, that he is a painter. These images provide us with obvious signals, they also use methods securely fixed in an historic tradition of art-making. This is the kind of historical context that can be set off against the use of a photo-booth has been used as a specific art research tool in a public space such as this.

Artists have been using the photo-booth for some time now — Susan Hiller being one of the most renowned for the seriousness in which she regards this media. ▶



People's art centering the portals of the Establishment

Photo: Liz Rideal



Within the photo-booth there exists the privacy of one-to-one auto photographic portraits:



Liz Rideal.

Self portrait:

The supreme statement of aesthetic self expression.

The grasp for eternity.

The manipulation of visible identity clues.

The realisation of role play.

The recognition of the variety of roles.

Dress and consumer articles methods by which individuals express personality and feeling.

The face, the mask: facepaint (make-up) warpaint.

The body, the statue, the dummy.

Sexual identity: male, female.

Ying yang, positive negative.

Self constructed balance of these parts.

Identity formed by emphasis on certain aspects of these parts.

The wrapping of the body in layers of meaning, concealment, sign language.

Messages; polite and felt, real and ansaphone.

We spend our time wrapping and unwrapping, revealing and covering-up, trying to find out, and when knowledge assumed (assimilated) forgetting how we came by it.

Key moments form identity, signals given and taken/understood.

Disguise or symbolic dress.

A. Defunct as practical wear, but used ceremonially (and ceremoniously) to indicate status or job involvement: the judge, the vicar, the tart.

B. Used to suggest interest in certain types of activity or game playing in conjunction with appropriate gestures:

1. Dance floor routine, or the pick-up.
2. The occupation game, or join the club.
3. Unveiling and veiling; taking up the veil.
4. Veiling as negative identity.

'The disconnected and fragmented images produced automatically by these machines are analogies for the kind of dream images we all know . . . It doesn't seem to me accidental that the machines produce this kind of image, because, as I've been saying for years about popular disposable imagery, there is something there beyond the obvious, which is why it's worth using in art.

In the same interview with Rozsika Parker, December 1983, she states: 'Identity is a collaboration, the self is multiple.'

Dick Jewell's book 'Found Photos' concentrates on the rejected automatic portrait, those images which for whatever reason revealed the 'wrong' aspect of a personality. This points to the business of the edited image, that which has been approved. This approbation occurs when the image fulfills the function requested, whatever this might be. Clues to identities and occupations are used now as they were in sixteenth century portraiture.

This form of visual stereotyping can be analysed by a sensitive response to individual self display. We can easily focus on the obvious, props, such as items of clothing worn at football matches, the political badge and the orange/pink robes of religious cults which demand visual evidence of identity: each can manifestly link the wearer with a self-chosen philosophy or feeling. Policeman, nun, traindriver, chef, footballer, butcher, hairdresser — all have recognisable visual symbols of their activities. In addition, identity may be conveyed without props, through expression alone — though this can be misleading, or at least open to interpretation and discussion.

Mass production of designer wear invokes a more subtle or more expensive and exclusive



twentieth century stereotype of identification. The Sunday Times stated in a recent article that 'Paul Smith dresses a crowd of regulars who include Harrison Ford, David Bowie, Sting, Bruce Weber and the boys from the building site along the road'.

Generally we regard the portrait as a static image. My self-portrait, for example, records a series of static images that together reflect the variety of my physical presence: clothing, haircut, personal adornment and the fountain etching are visible pointers to my personality and chosen identity.

There are problems making self portraits which truly reflect the maker and also set up rhythms comprehensible to the onlooker. The photo-booth project looks at the phenomena of veiling and disguise of the individual, the female especially using layering as a system of protection and expression in our society. Also an individual's response to a stranger . . . how much do we reveal to an unknown? On first meeting someone we go by signs, obvious clues (the Paul Smith suit). Sometimes, despite or because of these clues (visual or other) there is instant rapport, an instinctive natural bonding, other times we may never connect.

This work points to the way in which we employ disguise to our benefit in our lives, and how we do this very naturally in order to place ourselves within a recognisable context. This process is on the one hand securing, and on the other, disastrous in maintaining individuality . . . the tea lady, the femme fatale, the teacher, the spy are all iconographic stereotypes, variations of the female ego.

Within the photo-booth there exists the privacy of one to one/auto-photographic, portraits:

immediate (no lies?) confrontation. The process, to reveal the transformation from 'the normal' to the fantasy . . .

So I am inviting all those who I encounter within my life to join in my realisation of this process, my friends, my family, my postman, my grocer, my teacher, my colleagues, other artists . . . in short it will form a comprehensive life portrait . . . unknown 'members of the public' being represented as well.

There is also the performance aspect of the booth, the photographs documenting its installation; automation welcomed through the portals of the establishment. The project participants will need make individual performances before the mechanical eye, using the miniature photographic studio as individual stage-set for private autoportrait transmutation.

I aim to create a massive photographic collage, a collective portrait containing 8,000 photographic portraits and documenting 2,000 separate performances. Each component (strip of 4) will consist of four shots, recording the metamorphosis of an 'ordinary' person into a new character or 'state' of his or her own choosing. Props and 'disguises' will be available for use, but there will also be room for personal expression and experimentation. The booth itself, may be adapted by the invention of appropriate backgrounds.

The result will reflect how as individuals, within modern society, we use our visual clues to advertise ourselves — our status, our ambitions, our characters. How we can represent or misrepresent ourselves.●

Liz Rideal invites participants in the Photo-booth project, in the Basement of the National Portrait Gallery, London, Wednesday to Saturday afternoons, until August 29.

From sixties light-show artist to video-sculptor, Tina Keane's work has been prolific and impressive. Profile of her recent work by GUY BRETT:

SNAKES LADDERS

My first reaction to each of Tina Keane's video-pieces, when I've gone into the room not knowing what to expect, has always been a shock of delight. To see colour monitors stacked up in a column, showing the see-saw motions of someone climbing a rope-ladder (as in her *Demolition/Escape*, 1983) or gathered like a bunch of flowers with the flex standing for stems (*A Bouquet*, 1984), or ascending and descending in a huge stepped curve to almost fill the room (*Media Snake*, 1985), gives that immediate pleasure which comes from a liberating playfulness. TV sets are such contradictory objects. Their electronic vitality contrasts almost ludicrously with their role as furniture (*immeubles*), and as the agent of our stasis and passivity (slumped at home, queuing at the post office, waiting for information). I think Tina Keane's particular panache in handling hardware comes partly from a sculptural sensibility which is aware of materials in space (including, incidentally, the indescribable light-quality which comes from the colour TV screen), and partly from a philosophy, absorbed perhaps in the 1960s when she herself made light-shows for groups such as Pink Floyd, which treats technology in an active, transformational sense, rather than as a source of bewitchment or dread.

But I don't think one's immediate response comes simply from the unexpected treatment of a familiar object. Though very different from one another, Tina Keane's recent installations have all been based on a form of chain, linking or gathering structure: the ladder, for example, the bunch, the coil (snake), or the garland (as in her recent piece at Interim Art where the monitor was let into the floorboards surrounded by a string of neon numbers. The monitors themselves not only create a spatial metaphor which links up with what is actually happening on the screen in each separate piece, but they have a meaning in common, a certain philosophy of life. Perhaps this will emerge from a more detailed description of three of her recent works.

The TV monitor is never accepted merely as the medium for 'what's on' it, perhaps because it is a source of light and is therefore surrounded by

shadow. The arrangement of monitors makes the first impression, which leads one into the other metaphors of the piece, and it does so by the play of light and shadow. In *Demolition/Escape* (shown at Air Gallery), three kinds of movement were joined with three kinds of light: the fine blue of a sequence of neon numbers ascending the wall 1-9, the dazzling changes of colour and intensity as the filmed body climbed the rope-ladder on the screens, and the tiny headlight of a toy train going backwards and forwards on a short stretch of track. All promised a sensation of escape. Sounds of demolition on the sound tape alternated with a children's street song.

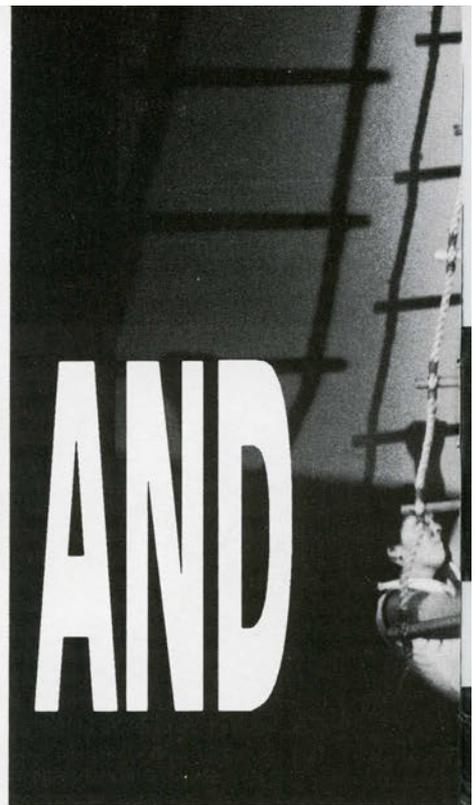
Though no less visual, *A Bouquet* (shown at the Royal College of Art) had a more militant message. It drew a parallel between women who were persecuted and burnt as witches in the 17th century and those protesting at nuclear bases in the 1980s, to say that when laws clash with the developing moral standards of the time they can be put aside, ignored. Within the 'bouquet' of monitors two tapes were running: one was slow and poetic, a camera-exploration of the monument to Maggie Wall, (who was the last woman to be burned as a witch in Scotland, at Dunning in 1657), intercut with shots of flowers, which were a kind of offering, but also stood for human qualities like resistance, or radiance. The other tape was a fast stream of images from Greenham Common: hands, candles, flames, policemen, struggles, webs. Will the fighting go on forever? Can the law be changed?

You came across the *Media Snake* in the upper galleries at the ICA as a child comes across a magic cave in a picturebook. Right from the threshold it produced ambivalent feelings: whether to be sucked in or driven away by this glittering electronic presence. The normal diet of TV soap opera (from Dallas to Ronald Reagan) had been reduced by the filter of re-shooting to a vague flickering memory on some of the monitors, while on others a snake, filmed close-up in superb lighting, slid slowly across the screen. In a curious way the snake's patterned skin seemed to echo the passage of charged electrons which make up the TV image. From this visual

association other metaphors rose to mind. The snake is of course a very old symbol common to almost all cultures, and its meanings have been so many, and so contradictory, that it can illuminate struggles taking place today.

On an obvious level the mass media can be seen as a snake: for its poison, as a liar and twister, etc. Less directly, the hypnotic fascination of the TV screen echoes the stare of the snake. But Tina Keane's attitude towards video has always been to brush aside inertia and awe in favour of liberty and play, and in her piece the lateral movement of the snake seems to steer us towards another snake-metaphor: life, sexuality — and longevity. Interestingly, in one of their actions the women at Greenham used the snake/dragon as a centre-piece. Its body became a support for their own art works — paintings, collages, banners. And as they added more, it grew longer and longer . . .

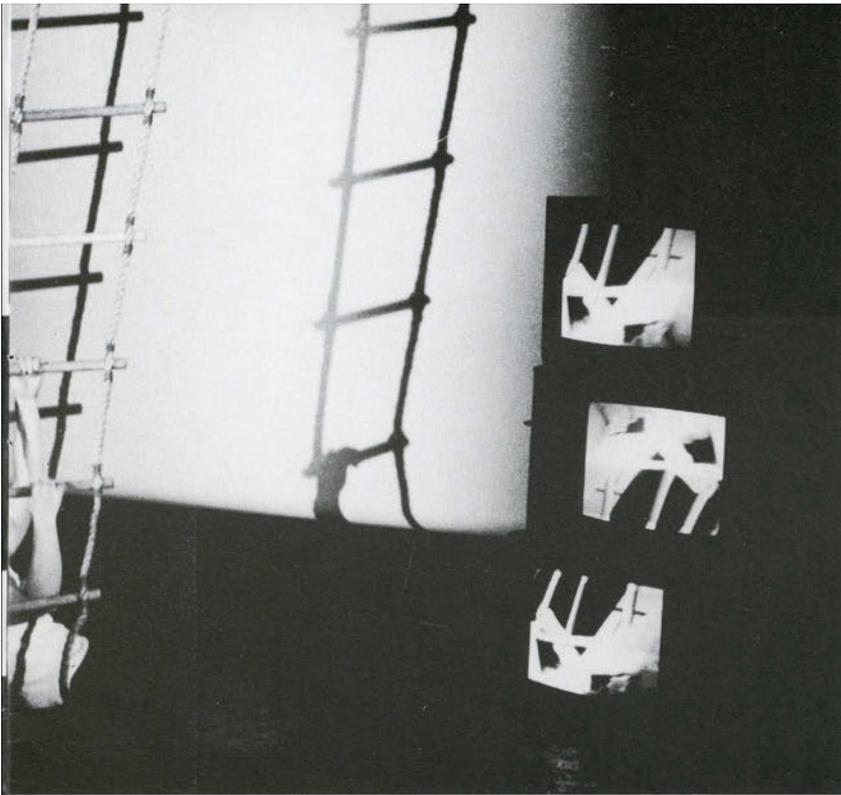
The monitors as the links in an endless chain also seem to me to connect up with one of the most interesting, and if you like combative, aspects of Tina Keane's work: her treatment of childhood. It's there in the playfulness of the work, as well as frequent allusions to children's songs and games like hopscotch. These are outward signs of her long-time collaboration with her daughter Emily (now). I believe the word collaboration is rightly used here since she has clearly learnt a lot from her child, or, to put it another way, the collaboration with Emily is with herself as a child. Manipulation of children to fulfill the philistine notions of some adults has its up-to-the-minute expressions: child gymnasts as soft porn, the mindless and conformist models of 'kids' on many TV shows. But she has seen childhood in a different and intriguing philosophical light, as the



collectivity of children, forming an unbroken chain with the past, as the inheritors of millenia of lore . . .

Tina Keane has therefore rephrased some ancient, universal metaphors within the terms of modern media, to give a critical edge to our perceptions. Of course there is a danger of this creating its own kind of aesthetic conventions, but the beauty of a piece like *Media Snake* is that it seems to arise equally from a sense of the mystery of a new medium, and of our lives as part of a historical struggle.

Demolition/Escape



Documentation of *Roadworks* at Brixton Art Gallery. Rasheed Araeen, Mona Hatoum, Kasia Januszko, Carlyle Reedy, Ian Sherman, Kumiko Shimizu, Stefan Szczelkun and Gennaro Telaro worked in public during the course of the exhibition documenting the work back in the gallery on a daily basis. In addition three artists presented paintings (Marc Elmes) prints (John Hewitt) drawings and photographs (Kasia Januszko) on related themes.

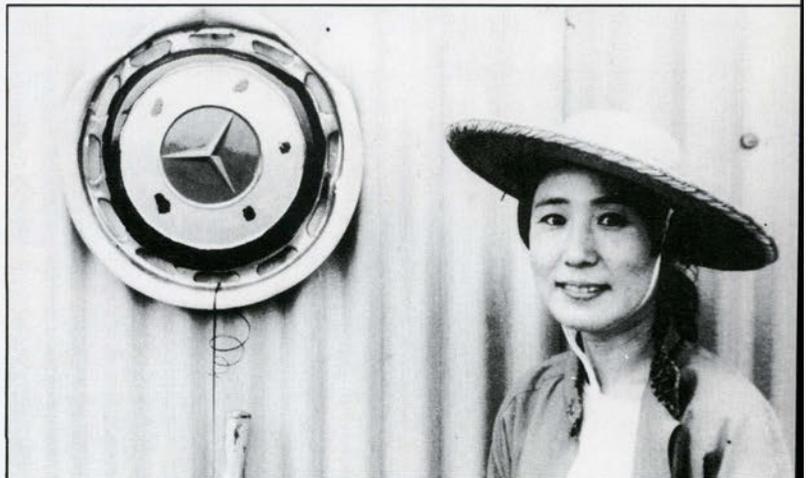
The daily activity ranged from works on paper to performances. *Roadworks* was designed to challenge conventional notions of the function of gallery space. It also aimed to provide a collaborative working situation with public access to the process of making art. A closing event showed videotape by Mona Hatoum, tape slide by Kumiko Shimizu and performances by Gennaro Telaro, Ian Sherman, Stefan Szczelkun and Carlyle Reedy.

ROADWORKS

A selection of performance documentation

Photo: Patrick Gilbert

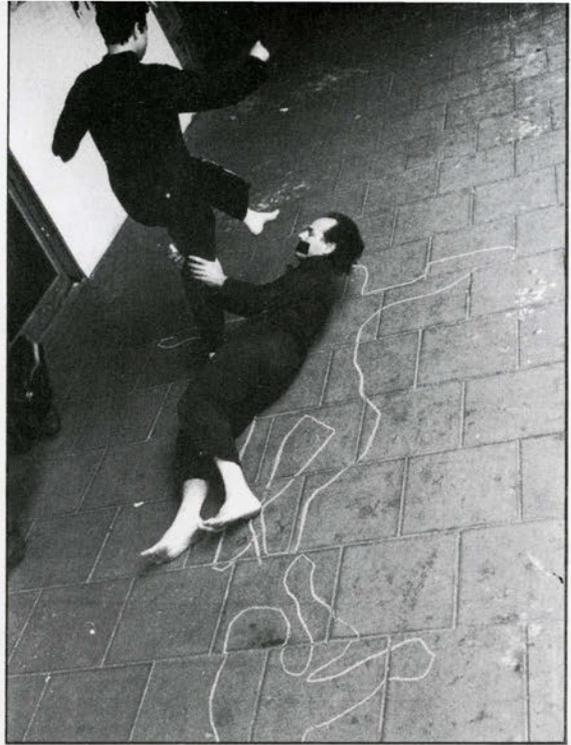
KUMIKO SHIMIZU *Roadwork in Brixton* I walked around Brixton area, Camberwell, Stockwell, Clapham Common and Herne Hill for about 5 hours every day, collecting waste materials, taping conversations with people. Then I chose the places for the installation in Milkwood Road as I felt this road is deserted and need some excitement, and Rectory Gardens where the houses looked shabby but had an interesting character and the various faded colour gave a nice delicate atmosphere where was just about for my sculptures.



Photos: Patrick Gilbert

Thursday 23rd of May 1985. **MONA HATOUM** ▶ (performed with **STEFAN SZCZELKUN**). Two people repeatedly walk past each other slightly bumping but ignoring one another. Then, in a cyclinc sequence, one figure pulls the other to the ground and draws a white outline around the body, to be in turn pulled down themselves. Traces of fallen bodies forming a trail on the pavement are gradually erased by passers-by.

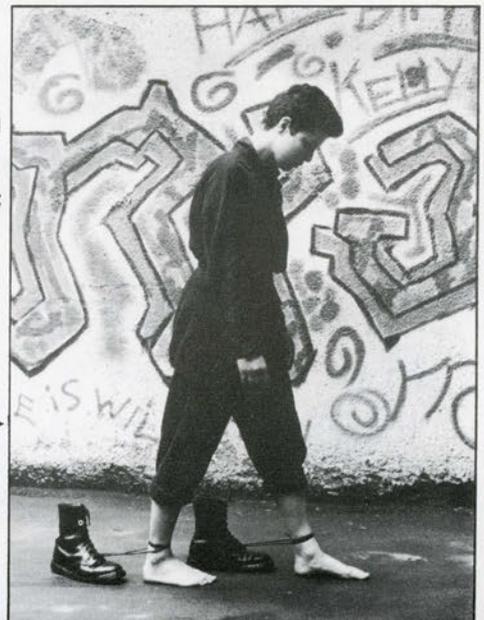
▼ **KASIA JANUSZKO** My contribution to *Roadworks* was a series of relief prints taken directly from the pavement in the Brixton area. The colour of pure premixed pigment which I sieve onto the surface is determined by location. I emboss blotting paper picking up a rich impression which metamorphoses into an emblem like image.



STEFAN SZCZELKUN: I made 10 stencil ▲ drawings, using found objects, in 8 locations. These I published with 5 texts, on *Roadworks* from my viewpoint as organiser of the event, in an edition of 40. I also did one outside action *Glamour Lied to Me* and a linked performance inside *Tribe of One*.

IAN SHERMAN I tried: OUTSIDE — to attract attention; to assume; to amuse; to create a moments thought about — our situation, 'here and now'; possibilities; trying; to break through the boundaries. INSIDE — to add substance to 'external events'; interpretation; possible meaning; tangents that better describe the whole:— my present; my past; my ancestry — history:— FUTURE. June 1985 Ian Sherman.

Tuesday 21st of May 1985. **MONA HATOUM** ▶ dragging behind a pair of heavy black Doc. Martin boots. She walked out of the gallery, through the busy market and arcades and back to the gallery at a slow, concentrated pace. 'Hey! Do you know you're being followed?'



PREVIEW



The Event Group, always quite secretive about their work at the best of times, present an evening of experiences and performances called *Grey Plague — The Truth* on Saturday **September 7** but they refuse to reveal the location to anyone. Exactly what will happen isn't quite clear either, as they are currently celebrating five years of their unpredictable and chaotic musical and visual performances. To join the celebrations, and find out what on earth's going on, phone 01 485 7415 (from Sept. 1) ■

Own up to your origins! **Dada for Now** has produced a challenge to the trendier end of the rock world with an LP of original dadist and futurist recordings by artists like **Hugo Ball**, **Kurt Schwitters** and others. While the recording artists themselves no doubt call on the memories of their art school days when composing titles, many consumers and rock press reviewers are left in the dark as to their sources. The **Dada for Now** people have corrected that imbalance with not only the record, but an amusingly educational pack of cards which 'pair up' contemporary titles with their historical references. The recordings themselves are a highly useful reference tool for those who already have an interest in these historical experimental artworks. Info on mail order: 051 708 0193 ■



Mineo Ayamaguchi will be presenting, in three parts, an installation, video performance, and performance, *Outer — Inner Colour* at South Hill Park, Bracknell, from **September 4-10**. He writes: 'In our everyday environment we are automatically visually attracted to bold primary colours — yellow lines on a road, a red door in a row of houses. I am interested in how natural and artificial colours delineate a "construction" of an outside world.' Info 0344 427272 ■

Channel 5 hits the shop windows! Unbedazzled by the lure of cable the enterprising **London Video Arts** continues to explore new and radical possibilities for video showing venues. Now they are to distribute work by experimental artists such as **Tina Keane** (profiled this issue) and **Ian Bourn** (his *End of the World* pictured). Info from back page this issue ■



LIVE ART IN A MUSEUM CULTURE

I don't know what I expected from this symposium held as part of the performance weekend at Southampton during the British Art Show. I suppose I expected something about good work and good artists not being supported either critically or financially in the present cultural climate. After all, what was the point of holding the symposium on this weekend if not primarily to promote and support what we all know is under-valued work and to generate new interest in the area? Instead of this all we got was a very strong whiff of the present cultural climate.

Jon Thompson, representing the selectors of the British Art Show, opened the occasion by declaring that he was playing devil's advocate. He had seen a great deal of performance in his capacity as selector and said that most of it was bad and derivative. This negative and uninspiring observation can be forgiven as a defence of the fact that so little performance is represented in the show but it functioned in the symposium to tar all performance with the same brush.

Marc Chaimowicz introduced himself with the opinion that all the best work was done in the 60's. There was a protest to the effect that good work having been done then didn't exclude the possibility of good work being done now and he grudgingly conceded to the argument. The discussion was kept general; performance as a whole was considered to have no legitimate claim as a separate category of art practice. It was felt to be far better (in an ideal world) if artists were brought together according to their attitudes

rather than the medium they chose to work in. I agreed and so, I think, did all the other performers that made up the audience. It is not the performers that have ghettoised their practice.

Rob La Frenais had prepared for a wider audience and his comments on reactions to the avant garde were too general to counterbalance the negative direction of the discussion. Of the four speakers it was only Jeni Walwin, Combined Arts Officer at the Arts Council, who was specific, practical and positive but any values from her contribution was drowned under the vague and apathetic attitudes that prevailed. Performance was casually placed in a never-never land fit for only students and amateurs.

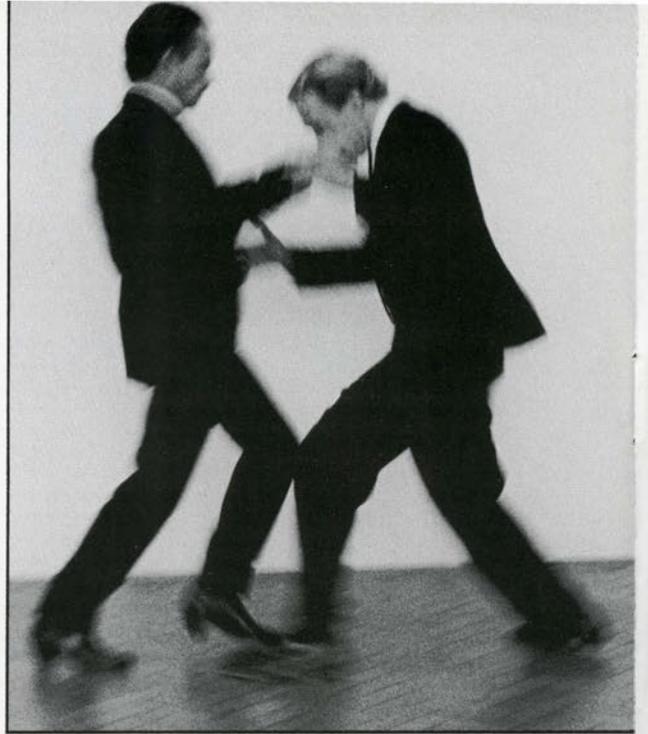
It wasn't just the feeling of impotence that was so depressing, it was the impression that that impotence was being celebrated and that there was no desire to do anything about the present state of affairs. I'm glad it wasn't seen by a wider audience. They would have not gone away thinking that there wasn't anything worth saving or supporting. I'm sure it was not the intention of the panel to be so negative. I simply feel it necessary to report that one of the rare occasions to discuss such unrepresented work was not only wasted but, if a wider audience had attended, would have done harm.

There is much interesting, exciting and important work being done now that is crying out for serious critical attention, never mind financial backing. This work needs an intelligent and enthusiastic voice, and until it gets that kind of support, it will not get any other. **GARY STEVEN**

EDINBURGH

The Edinburgh festival is to some the years most exciting event — to others a Thatcherite bacchanalia of unbridled exploitation of the desire of small groups to be seen at any cost. Its administrator, Michael Dale sums it all up in the current programme, saying that it 'gives the lie' to those who feel that 'the Arts Council or central government are more to blame for the "death" of the arts in 1985 than their own dependence on subsidy'. Nevertheless, it has to be said that there

are this year some highly interesting events, though mainly organised by 'umbrella' bodies who of course receive the subsidy blithely referred to above. **The Midland Group**, for example, will this year be grouping together the fruit of its programming experience, in performance art, and will be taking **Rose English, Theatre De Complicite, Anne Seagrave** (pictured), **Gaulier's Buffoons** and **Manact**. At various venues, call 031 226 5259 or 0602 582636 for full info ■



From Manchester, a very Manchester show with **Arrested Laughter Two — Room 666** by a combination of **Theatre Totale** and **No Alternative**, called **Fusion**. 'In a seedy hotel in the middle of nowhere, a bizarre convention is in its seventh and final day, it's cabaret night with Bobby Jaques and the Anti-Christ. A latin chant, an omen, a few songs, a few jokes, a few experiments . . . the ultimate in entertainment as the Book of Revelations is played out to the bitter end in Room 666 . . . the grand finale, "Name That Beast!". This is the kind of press release we come to expect from this struggle-to-be-seen festival, but the combination of visual theatre and apocalyptic cabaret looks interesting. Look out, too, for the 'Women at Work' events. And that's all we've got space for. Go and plod the streets yourselves or phone for info on 031 226 5259 ■

Also worth looking out for is the new show by **Inside Out Theatre** company **Screaming Sirens**, directed by Jacky Lansley, and in which 'eccentric humour and startling visual imagery combine in a lyrical tale of a sailor washed ashore on a woman's island, enfolded in a sensuous and evocative world.' Info 031 226 5259 ■



Industrial and Domestic Theatre Contractors (pictured) are one of the visually-based groups being incorporated into the Manchester Festival this year, for the first time, happening in the second half of August and the first half of September. One of the highlights of the festival will be the vintage art spectacular outfit Action Space, who will be presenting **Wind Over Water**, with fireshow and giant puppets, along with the entire Northern Wind Orchestra, on **September 14** in Plattfields Park. Full details: 061 236 9433 X219 ■



The new **Forkbeard Fantasy** show **Plants Vampires and Crazy Kings** looks highly promising, and is showing at London's Oval House, along with a selection of their new films. Of **Plants etc.** they say: 'Using a Garden Centre as a front for their ghastly experiments with plant life, a demented nanny is struggling to solve her ward's hereditary illness, to cleanse his blood, polluted by centuries of inbreeding, and so repress his vampirish tendencies. Thence she will help him claim the Throne. He, however, has other things on his mind . . .' **September 26-30** Info: 01 735 2786. Also showing at Midland Group, **October 3-4** Info: 0602 582636 ■

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PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 1985

9th 7.30 pm
CAFE GALLERY, Southwark Park SE16
The London Open (part one) Tapes selected from open submission.

16th 8.00 pm
THE VIDEO CAFE, Argyll St. W1
Opening night party, 'Dessa's Top Ten': independent music videos chosen by NME writer DESSA FOX, plus a short history of Pop Video compiled by JON SAVAGE, plus the CHANNEL 5 magazine tape. Tickets £2.50 in advance from LVA. Meal included Bar till midnight.

16th-21st daily
D.E.R. 128 Notting Hill Gate W1
Video Window by TINA KEANE
D.E.R. 188 Edgware Rd Marble Arch W2
Video Window by JEREMY WELSH
D.E.R. 26 The Mall Stratford E15
Video Window by KEVIN ATHERTON
D.E.R. 34 High Street North East Ham
Video Window by GEORGE BARBER
D.E.R. 42 Upper St Islington N1
Video Window by MARTY St JAMES and ANNE WILSON

17th-22nd daily
ICA FOYER, The Mall SW1
'On and Off the Maps' video installation by STEVE HAWLEY.

17th 7.30 pm
ALBANY EMPIRE, Douglas Way, Deptford, SE8 FREE.
Recent video productions made by groups and individuals through the resources of Albany Video

21st 10.00 am-6.00 pm
ICA SEMINAR ROOM, The Mall SW1
Symposium, 'Video: Art, Entertainment, Political Tool' speakers & panel discussions. Day ticket £3

17th-22nd 6.30 & 8.30 nightly
ICA CINEMATHEQUE, The Mall SW1
Six programmes of independent video & video art. For details phone ICA 930-3647 or LVA 437-2786

30th 7.30 pm
CAFE GALLERY, Southwark Park SE16
The London Open (part two) Tapes selected from open submission.

