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OCT/NOV No 37

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WHAT PERFORMANCE ARTISTS THINK

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See Article in Performance Mag. No. 35.



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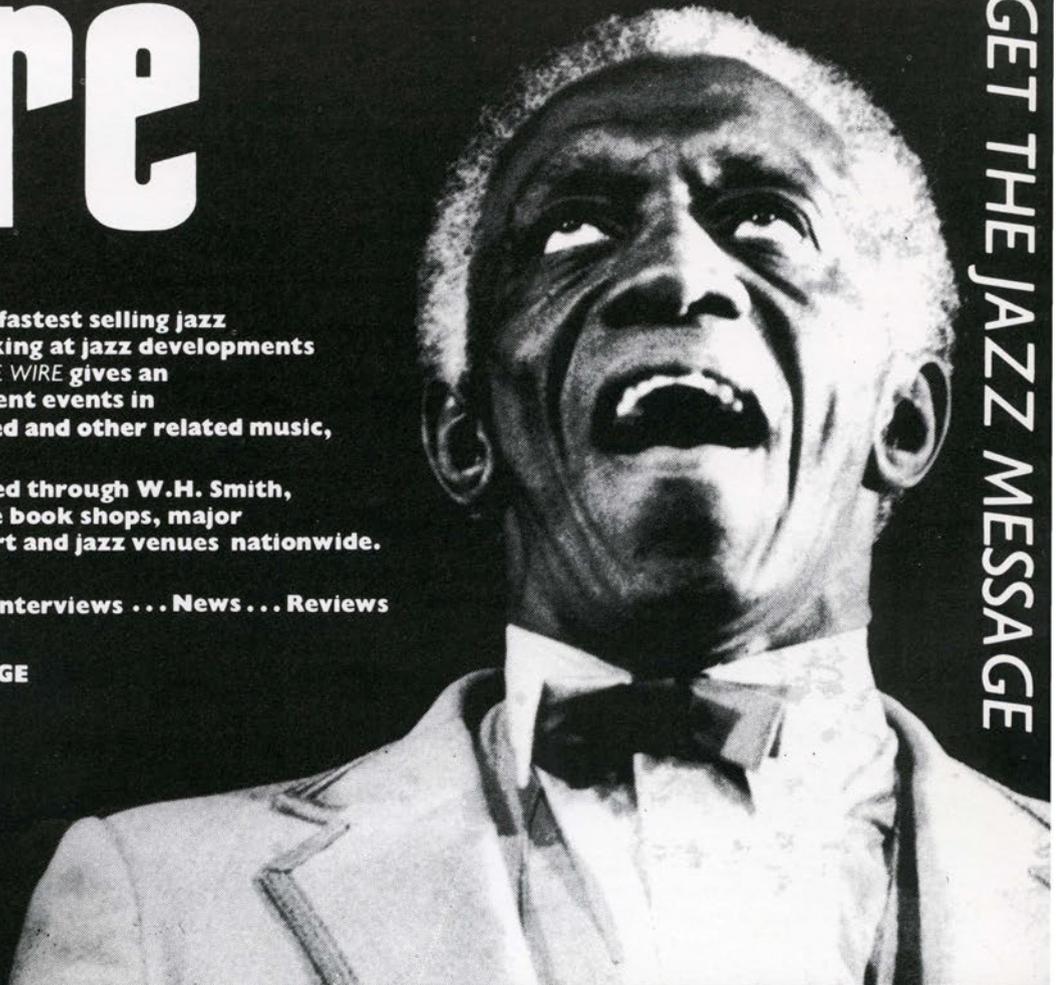
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# LETTERS

**LIFE AND ART**

**Dear Performance Magazine,**  
Some time ago, you like many others attended the performance in Nine Elms Cold Store ('Happenings' No 36) a night of organised chaos, power failures, headbangers and spiritual bad times. Well, I just thought you might like the enclosed (illustrated) as a memento. I returned from Africa to find the police had axed down my front door and turned all my wordly goods inside out hunting for evil murder weapons. Suppose it just goes to show how life and art are inextricable entwined. At least the Mirror thinks so.

**Andy Hazell**  
London SW8



**FRENETIC FOLLOW ON**

**Dear Performance Magazine,**  
People often rail against critics, dealers, curators and other mediators of art; it's about time they got around to layout designers. On page 20 of the last issue (No 36), in a piece I wrote about Rotterdam's Perfo Festival, a photo of the Amsterdam-based artists Lisa Marcus and Barbara Duijffjes who perform as a duo under the title Wet Features, was cut to a thin sliver showing only part of the legs and hands of one woman (her face was cut out). It was really idiotic and insulting. I feel a printed apology is called for.

I had some dialogue with Rob La Frenais, the editor, although he

told me it was against the policy of the magazine to let writers see the proofs of the articles. I did see a proof of my article on Tina Keane (also in the last issue) and corrected some mistakes. However, these corrections never appeared in the printed version. But I never met the designer or had a chance to discuss with him how we might get closer, by the combination of images and words, to the spirit of an individual's particular work, for example Tina Keane's. But perhaps I'm talking irrelevancies. Performance Magazine has one tone, one visual style, one message, whatever kind of work is the basis for the articles: a rather frenetic follow-on to slick and sophisticated products like ID and The Face. Artist's work is used as raw material for this end; sad, when their work may be ten times as stylish and imaginative as the model doggedly being imitated. This is just another bitter irony of a society which favours mediators rather than creators.

**Guy Brett**  
London SW2

**GEEKS**

**Dear Performance Magazine,**  
I would like to draw your attention to the review by Chrissie Iles of my Love Crimes performance at the London Film Co-op (no. 36).

The review states that near the end of the performance I enter into what I term as the gig (ha!) period or sequence. I can't believe this incredible misunderstanding! In fact this sequence in the performance is titled 'The Geek'.

This was stated on the poster for the performance, included in the catalogue for the show and in any other publicity, of which there was ample.

I'm sure this could not have been Chrissie Iles' fault as I talked at great length with her about the performance and was absolutely sure she knew I was talking of 'geeks' and not as stated in the review 'gig men'.

Chrissie Iles did however go on to inform the review with a correct meaning of the term 'geek', but I would like to elaborate . . .

Using the idea of 'the geek' as a side-show attraction in North

American carnivals of the thirties to late fifties, I have tried to create a modern archetype much in the same way as I utilise the idea of 'the trickster' or 'hebephrenic' in many of my 'akshuns'.

Apart from the obvious links with the great carnival movie Freaks, the classic 'geek' movie (and book by William Lindsey Gresham, a hack writer for Ray Palmer's pulp mags of the thirties), is Nightmare Alley. A film from 1945 starring Tyrone Power in what's probably his best, and I always thought, most believable role.

Another major source is a first-hand account in a letter from Dr Al Ackerman, which I'll quote as I think it to be a good basic description . . .

'The geek that used to show up here in San Antonio (in the fifties) with the yearly carnival, operated down in a pit — a kind of rough wooden bowl, like a small bike track, whose floor was mud. He was a black man got up in furs, feathers and shit, and he would carry on in an unknown guttural tongue and bite the heads off snakes, chickens and rats.

I'm not sure whether he actually bit them off or only used blood bags and the like, but he gave an impassioned performance and he always 'sent me', the way Frank Sinatra used to send my mum. You had to be there on the first day if you expected to catch his act, because invariably the sheriff would arrive on the second day and shut this fine attraction down — I never saw it to fail.'

One can also find references of the term 'geek' or even 'super-geek', used in a rather derogatory way in the works of Hunter S. Thompson. I also remember as a kid, we used to call anyone who was 'a bit odd', set apart, strange, or just plain ugly, crazy and mad as 'looking like a geek', or 'geekish'.

I hope this clears up a few points, as I don't want to have to go around as a 'gig man' hacking at you yobs out there — into little pieces and wrenching at throats with my manic 'geekish' choppers, eating the raw entrails and stuffing carcasses with Paxo . . . do ye understand!?

**Andre 'the geek' Stitt/Akshun Man, 551 Liverpool Rd, London N7.**

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**APLOGIES:** All round as a result of last issue. First to the *Arange! Trust* and the *ICA* for not mentioning their involvement in organising the Wodiczko projections (photo this page). Next to the various artists and writers who had their visuals cut in what proved to be an extremely crowded issue, particularly *Guy Brett*, *Tina Keane*, *Ken Hollings*, *Roberta Graham*. Finally to *David Bress* for not mentioning his authorship of *A Noise in Your Eye*, the article on sound sculpture. And also to designer *Jerry Aron* for having to throw it all together in the teeth of printers delays and staff shortages.

ESTABLISHED BY THE  
**Arts Council**  
OF GREAT BRITAIN

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Cover Photo of Bruce McLean at the Tate.

This Page: Nelsons Column enhanced by diving cruise missile courtesy of Krzysztof Wodiczko. Photo: Steve White

# WHAT PERFORMERS ARE THINKING

## SURVEY

There is currently a flurry of interest in performance art, partially caused by the now familiar ritual of the establishment waking up, rubbing its eyes sleepily, waving a wand of respectability, signing a few cheques and going back to sleep again. The British Art Show attempted to include performance art in its national perambulation, the Arts Council has set up a promotion scheme for it, and the Tate, hoping that nobody would notice, has hurriedly slipped in a week of performance, video, and lectures to its cluttered timetable. So, before you all go back to sleep again, Performance Magazine has decided to find out who the performance artists are in Britain (and there's a lot more than have been included in the above activities,) ask them what they do and what they think. This has been done as a challenge, if you like, to those who like to think that performance art was a sixties phenomenon, or a seventies phenomenon, depending upon what generation you mentally adhere to. Certainly an audience of younger performance artists were recently shocked to hear at a recent conference in Southampton that they were a sixties anachronism. It was also equally shocking to hear that one of the selectors of the British Art show had supposedly visited a wide variety of those artists and found them lacking in originality. We wonder if he had visited *all* those who have responded to our survey.

The artists were asked to respond to seven questions, which they had the option of criticising. There was a word limit. We limited it to those currently working in the United Kingdom who spend the large proportion of their time as artists engaged in live work. Some were included who *had* spent a large proportion of their time in the past. Those who only worked in groups were excluded, as were those who spend most of the time in film, video and installation. (We may do separate surveys for these). Finally, some people we were unable to contact or were abroad, or we just did not think of. If you are one of those, please get in contact, as we will do a continuation next issue if we get enough requests.

This is a richly varied, wide-ranging, working community of artists. We offer their views as evidence that they should be taken notice of by anyone concerned with modern movements in art.

# ANCE ARTISTS

- 1) If you could be said to work in any particular style or tradition — what would it be?
- 2) What do you think is the most important single philosophical or political concern facing a live artist in the world today?
- 3) If there were the unlikely event of an increase of public funds for the support and development of performance art, how should it best be spent to the benefit of all?
- 4) What do you consider your main involvement in life apart from art?
- 5) What single event or artwork would you say has affected your art the most?
- 6) What other living artists do you admire the most?
- 7) What question would you most like to ask your fellow live artists?

A N S W E R S

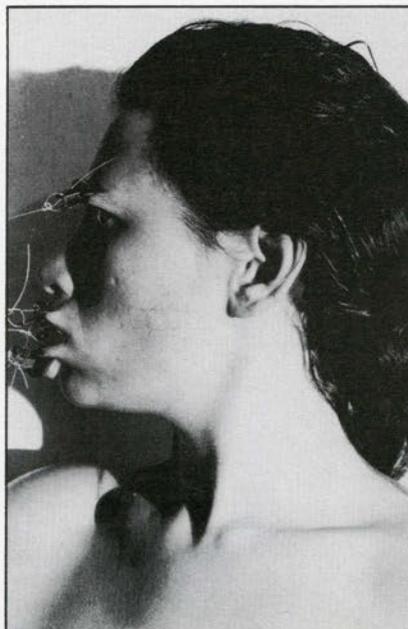
## ANNE BEAN

Always something yanking one out of the tender silence. Occasionally the desire to be yanked, pulled, to actually really reveal. A strange need to allow some edges to leap into the world in a harsher or more violent opening. Yet questions, especially questionnaires, provide a dull resentment, a weariness, and memories of pleasant flushes of the return of school essays stating at the bottom in red ink 'original and articulate'. The gnawing worry that it was only done for the pleasant flush.

**STYLE/TRADITION** Your eyeballs reading this are my tradition or style. An anti-tradition or style of immediate, direct link of flesh and flesh through a mysterious middleman, historically plausible only in motivation.

**CONCERNS** To produce good art and create some joy.

**MONEY** Put all the money in a safe under the Thames and inform all performance artists of its approximate whereabouts. Any performance artist or group of perf. artists recovering it keeps it all. Sell the story to Channel 4 (?) etc. and any money received do likewise with in a different, enclosed but equally demanding location. The public pays to watch its recovery which is again all kept by



the artist(s) and all the money from the gate is secreted in another obscure, challenging location. A big name product is invited to sponsor this as an advertising campaign/gimmick (public interest should be somewhat aroused by now) and their money is dealt with in a similar manner . . . ad infinitum.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** My early childhood (before I fused or confused life and art).

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Discovering (aged 4) whilst eavesdropping on my father and his friend that one believed in God and one didn't, but neither knew why.

**ARTIST ADMIRER** I seem to have lost a sense of admiration although many works give me a sense of intimacy.

**QUESTION** What would you most like to hide from public revelation? ♦

## STUART BRISLEY

**STYLE/TRADITION** One always works within 'the tradition', even without knowing it, then perhaps the tradition is being reformed a bit, something like 'The king is dead, long live the king'.

**CONCERN** The existence of high ▶

# SURVEY

culture supposes the pre-conditions of an encompassing equivalent social dimension, where the classes in power reside, and where cultural forms coalesce into lumps — 'deformations' — 'commodities', to fit the demands of the high class market. Elsewhere art processes are recruited on behalf of the same interests to create, stimulate, and direct desire in the masses (advertising) for 'now' attainable 'ersatz' idealisations — of the family, power, class, status, etc, which at the point of consumption induce 'god like' sensations, purchased at the expense of consciousness. This deliberate all-encompassing political process of de-politicisation creates — the social vacuum — the dead space of capitalism. (These comments restricted to Britain).



P D BURWELL

**ARTWORK** Single event . . . Difficult, don't believe in UNI-verse, MONO-theism, integrated personality . . . Probably Albert Ayler . . . pure, passionate energy, initially ('67) frightened to listen to records on own . . . unlike anything else, a window on a new, alive, vibrant, terrifying Omniverse of freedom, human potential and ecstasy.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** Anyone whose work exhibits vision, strength of purpose, and eschews surface style and triviality.

**QUESTION** What motivates you to do what you do? ♦

## DENNIS DE GROOT (DDART)

**STYLE/TRADITION** The tradition of the non-conformist artist.

**CONCERN** Maintaining art as a viable instrument of change within society, against a tidal wave of conformity and salon pretension.

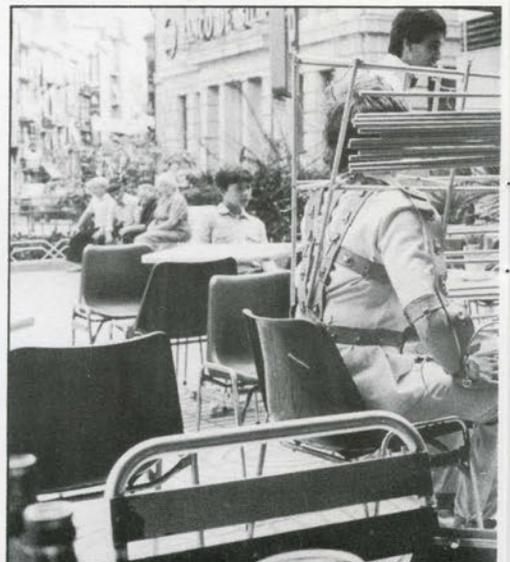
**MONEY** (Should be spent on) promoting and propelling performance against the public. Breaking down the fear artist and the man in the street have for each other. Turning it from a remote gallery activity into the common activity of the street.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Expounding ideosyncratic and highly self-opinionated views upon any matters of substance other than sport.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Jack. A performance by Rose Maguire and Jeff Nuttall which took place in pubs around the Midlands area. Two human performers and two dummies.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** George Segal, A Jaundiced View of Life's Rich Pageant.

**QUESTION** Did it take you bloody ages to fill this survey in? ♦



## SHIRLEY CAMERON

**STYLE/TRADITION** Performance Art.

**CONCERN** Exploitation.

**MONEY** It should be given as directly as possible to the artists themselves.

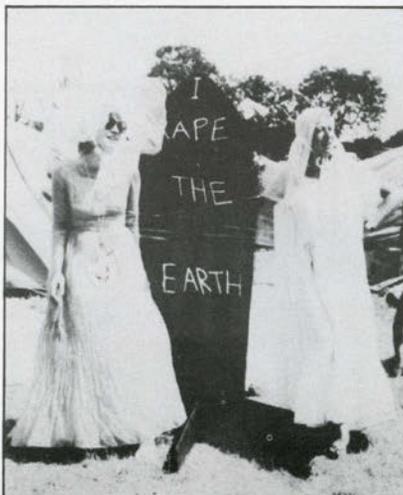
**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Feminism: the peace movement: child care: earning a living.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** All the artists I work with;

Monica Ross, Evelyn Silver, Gillian Allnutt, Mary Michaels, Carol Crowe, Rachel Finkelstein, Grace Lake, and Roland Miller.

**QUESTION** This really does depend, but most would be welcome to have a cup of tea with me; the question being would you like . . . ♦



**MONEY** Not answerable.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** I like to have the sense of being a private person.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** 1944 education act.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** Those few who persist in trying to maintain an integrity in spite of it all.

**QUESTION** The question I keep asking myself with ref to answers 2 and 6. ♦

## P D BURWELL

**STYLE/TRADITION** Autopsy-radical analyses of concerns. I decided to try and be a drummer when I was 19. Direct, complete involvement in the NOW of work.

**CONCERN** Surgery — cut away dross — Alchemy — transformation of the nothing that is left into Something . . . Hope, possibilities, Joy, energy — not to give in . . .

**MONEY** Development of Bursaries for Performance Artists. Funding of Artists Placement Group to facilitate re-integration of artists into valued role in Society. Facilitating access to facilities available from State and other Institutions: eg. Material, spaces, indoor and outdoor, equipment, direct grants to artists and collectives.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** All interests seem to interrelate . . . Balance, counterpoint . . . extrovert/introvert, work/rest, all seem part of some web that makes up my life . . .

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/**

## ROSE ENGLISH

**STYLE/TRADITION** I see myself as having one foot firmly placed in the traditions of theatre and the other in the traditions of art.

**CONCERN** Since there are many sorts of artists in the world today there is no one most important issue central to them all. The fact that this diversity is not, as yet, widely celebrated and that the different interpretations of what it is to be an artist are not fully represented is in itself important. When this does happen what sights we will see, what music we will hear, what language we will delight in, what collaborations we will enjoy, what deep thought we will unearth, how we will all flourish!

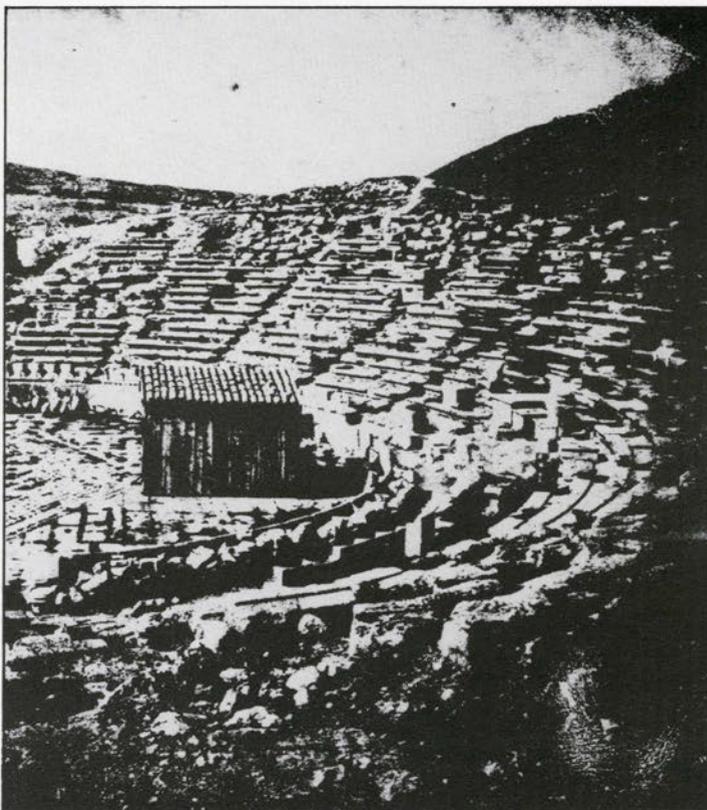
**MONEY** I would like to see this as a likelihood rather than an unlikelihood. I think that the first priority should be funding the work itself.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** I have many 'involvements', no one main one.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Growing up in Spain, and a broken half brick I carried everywhere as a child — my philosophers stone.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** Most recently the drawings of the artist Grace Kitchingman, aged three, who knows absolutely the true meaning of the word 'abstract'. Also Marcel Duchamp, Tommy Cooper and Ruth Draper, whose work still lives.

**QUESTION** I have different questions for different artists. ♦



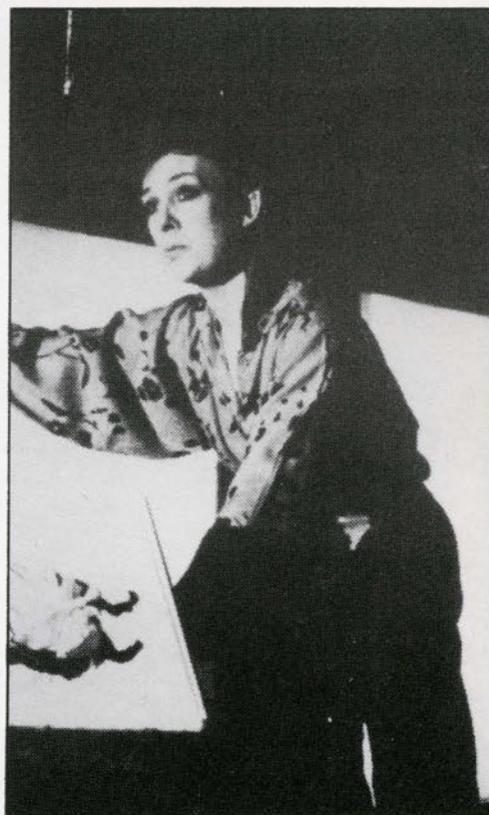
ROSE ENGLISH

## ROSE GARRARD

**STYLE/TRADITION** My work *utilises* notions of 'style and tradition' in order to move beyond and question the primacy of the values which have dominated and determined Art History in Western Culture.

**CONCERN** Isn't *all* art regarded as irrelevant, elitist, inessential, and incapable of contributing to any philosophical or political concerns of today? A primary concern would have to be the creating art which is popularly acknowledged as vital to societies understanding of itself and the changes it must face. Live art in resisting definition/embodying change holds the potential to explore and communicate insights beyond the boundaries which have alienated 'traditional' art from life for many people. But rather than being more engaging and accessible, this very radicality of form (and media) frequently leaves the public hostile to the content of live work. So apart from encouraging greater humanity to others by heightening our awareness of societies systems for perpetuating prejudice, inequality, repression, injustice and violence, what does concern a live artist?

**MONEY** We need more than money! Give performance artists a relevant context in which to work, conditions which they feel are conducive to their needs, informed and supportive arts administrators and assistants, equipment which works, good P.R. and publicity, an adequate fee and expenses, in short encourage the creation of serious work rather than the shoddy 'paper-cup' gig. ▶



DENNIS DE GROOT



# SURVEY

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Regret your need to separate art from life . . . but being and having good friends make both possible.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Impossible! From a short-list of eighteen . . . the killing of John F. Kennedy on TV News, walking into the Sistine Chapel, and being shocked at my own ignorance on seeing Artemesia Gentilleschi's self-portrait as La Pittura.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Chicago's courage, Frink's stamina, Hockney's unpredictability, McLean's energy, Hiller's intellect, Chadwick's precision, Oppenheim's scale, Bean's resourcefulness, Masi's drama, Keinholtz's irony, Brisley's power, Ziranek's wit, Schneemann's sensuality . . .

**QUESTION** Why do you continue? ♦ **CHARLIE HOOKER**

## CHARLIE HOOKER

**STYLE/TRADITION** I do not think that I could (answer this). The work involves elements of music, movement, drawing and drama which tend to follow theatrical conventions.

**CONCERN** Pessimism.

**MONEY** The arts are treated as a minor element of this society. Therefore, any increase in public funding might best be used to widen both public and official attitudes towards the arts, rather than on short-term projects. If attitudes were different, money would be forthcoming.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** It is impossible to separate the two; everything I am involved in has an effect on my art, and vice-versa.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** The Oldenberg show at The Tate (1969/70).

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** The ones that are still looking.

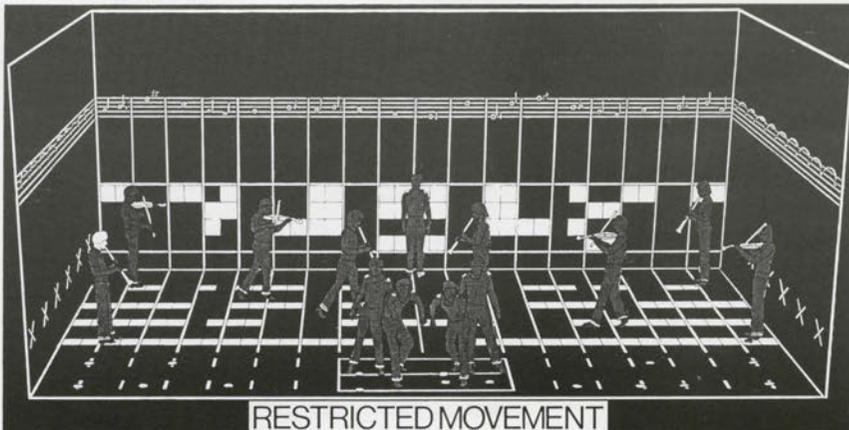
**QUESTION** In what proportion do you consider the interplay between audience and performer affects your work, and why? ♦

## ANTHONY HOWELL

**STYLE/TRADITION** I work in a style radically opposed to 'happenings'. I have been trying to identify an art of actions as opposed to dance, mime or drama.

**CONCERN** This question is too large. I am concerned with excellence in any artform. A question an artist might ask is: does my work appeal to an audience because of its quality or because I have attached myself to some socially worthy cause? If the latter, then the artist is yet another opportunistic wanker justifying trash via morality.

**MONEY** What is meant by the benefit of all? All the live artists — or all the general public? Either way the phrase has a febrile do-goodishness about it, a desire to keep on the right side of everybody. An increase in funds should enable only the excellent artists to do more excellent work. Since critical appraisal of performance is still hopelessly inadequate here it is more likely that the excellent artists will get 'marginalised' (as usual).



## RICHARD LAYZELL

**TRADITION/SYLE** Hard to say. Romanticism maybe.

**CONCERN** To be taken seriously and reach a wider audience. The cutting edge of live art is still there, it's a strong medium, but it often feels like a closed, initiated, cool audience out there. My aim is often simply to get through to them, by provocation or humour, to expose repressed issues . . . militarism, sexual stereotyping, optimism, 'normality', anarchy, vulnerability, I can't choose a single one.

**MONEY** A decent, professional space specialising in performance in London + setting up several artist-run spaces throughout Britain, like 2B Butlers Wharf used to be, or

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** None of your business.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** *Going by the Theatre of Mistakes*. It haunts me because I have never been able to do anything as good since with as many performers, perhaps because it was created in a condition of 'Mutuality' which built up enormous trust and dedication among performers despite meagre funds.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** In performance Stuart Sherman, in poetry Clark Coolidge, in music Derek Bailey, in painting Frank Auerbach, in sculpture Ulrich Ruckriem (spelling?). In general for earlier work rather than for what they are doing now.

**QUESTION** Why don't you fuck off? ♦

the parallel galleries in Canada + encouraging collaborations with other artists and other art forms, like dance or theatre.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Personal relationships and parenting. I enjoy teaching a lot of running workshops where learning is through experience. Humanistic psychology. Looking at landscape.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Moroccan dancing in Morocco in 1967, Hopi Indian dancing in Arizona in 1972, Balinese dancing and theatre in Bali in 1977.

**ARTISTS ADMIRERD** Meredith Monk, David Byrne, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Ron Haselden, John Smith, Sally Potter.

**QUESTION** What do you do about your ego? ◆



## ALISTAIR MACLENNAN

**STYLE/TRADITION** Installed, 'sited' action/rituals, evolving through stages of transition, for predetermined durations, with content engaging political, social and cultural issues.

**CONCERNS** It's the search for identity, value and meaning, making 'live' art in a materialist culture which devolves the idiom out of 'existence' since it can't be consumed as cultural 'real estate'. There's no single, generally accepted 'grammar' for evaluating the relative *worth* of performance, though one exists for the *other* visual arts, and is in regular use internationally. Hardly any *serious*, coherent, written appraisal of performance is made, *even in the art world*. It's kept well to the *edge* of public awareness, having no place in its value-structure. Performance artists will either *resolve* this issue, or remain peripheral.

**MONEY** Give a living wage in exchange for 'work'. Make the use of live television more 'available'. Provide support for a wider range of public venues. Fund serious and knowledgeable writing on performance. Set up national bursaries, fellowships, residencies and scholarships. Establish informed, structured, well taught courses in colleges.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Communicating principles of education, running an MA Fine Art course and supporting the constitution of Art and Research Exchange, Belfast.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Realising the 'bottom line' is never ideological but *human*, that art is not in, of, or 'unto' itself. It's FOR PEOPLE.

**ARTISTS ADMIRERD** Those who *overcome* the most, within and outwith themselves, 'take on' the human condition, and who (in effective art) comment on political and social corruption.

**QUESTION** There are clear discrepancies, world ideologies and world *actualities*. Results can be seen globally and locally. How does one's *own* art address this problem? ◆



## JULIAN MAYNARD SMITH

**STYLE/TRADITION** I indulge in a kind of structural, expressionist portraiture of behaviour (real or imaginary). I don't know if it corresponds to an existing style or tradition.

**CONCERN** I don't think there is one. What live art is good for is providing rituals which continually re-assert the audience's physical presence and establishing links which are wholly absent from the mass media. Technological transmission eliminates completely the vulnerable, uncertain triumphal, celebratory nature of the live event.

Art does not have to be 'for' something. Good art comes from different sources; any expression of an intuitive reality that can be considered on its own merits is worthy of such consideration. Art that depends on an unwillingness to question assumptions about its own making cannot be taken seriously. That there should be a plurality of concerns is not a weakness; it is indicative of the breadth of art's usefulness.

**MONEY** It should be distributed by panels which are representative of the artists and promoters working in performance. However, funding institutions are only too keen to use arguments of definition to refuse consideration of applications. For them, performance remains a dustbin for anyone who doesn't fit. What kind of increase is required to reverse that? Might it not be better to assault the existing, traditional areas of funding?

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** You mean, you want to know what my hobby is?

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** The first workshop I attended of the Ting: Theatre of Mistakes.

**ARTISTS ADMIRERD** The most interesting and/or moving things I've seen recently have been people I've never known the names of — the practitioners of traditional forms like kathak, kathakali, kabuki, Chinese acrobatics, etc.

**QUESTION** When are you going to give up using a) disco music, b) systems music? ◆

# SURVEY

## ROLAND MILLER

**STYLE/TRADITION** Our\*/my own style.

**CONCERN** To contradict militarism/materialism.

**MONEY** Put it towards a fund to provide a guaranteed, nationally regulated, minimum living wage for all full-time working (performance) artists.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Loving those nearest to me.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Life: which is always an event, and sometimes an artwork.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Shirley Cameron\* and: Jerzy Beres, Andrew Beresford, Pierre Alain Hubert, Zbigniew Warpechowski, Miguel Yeco.

**QUESTION** Can we work together, can we laugh together? ♦

ROLAND MILLER



then a truly dialectical relationship can arise with action and re-action playing off each other.

As far as my concerns go, (ie; those thing that I feel my work should relate to outside of the formal considerations.) I find it very difficult to isolate any single one. I am interested in trying to consider my thoughts and feelings about everything; trying to see how they have arisen, their history; trying to see how my expectations and actions affect others. Then trying to change those aspects of these that I consider harmful or detrimental to myself or others. I believe that we are all going to die and the only time to act is now; even though history is bigger than us, and I only one fifty or sixty millionth of the people in this country (let alone the world), I must play my part.

I hope this is of use to someone. ♦

## ANNE SEAGRAVE

**STYLE/TRADITION** Dance Apprentice. 'A New Waver'. 'A Flippin' Animal'. 'Explosive and Exhilarating'. 'That Woman who Fucks Tables'. 'A Poor Mans' Claire Grogan'. 'A real Original'.

**CONCERN** The justifying of one's work to oneself as a valuable and important area of communication. If one can still believe that there is a purpose to one's work, in amongst everyday banality, disaster, chaos and confusion, and if one can see that one's work is reaching spectators of diverse backgrounds, classes, and opinions, then great! Much better to work and bite rawly at the foundations of that particular area, than to refuse for any number of naively uncompromising reasons and asphixiate clutching your politics between your teeth.

**MONEY** The subsidising of performance rehearsal spaces and the purchase and maintenance of equipment on a library system. A number of transport vans for hire, but most importantly, an independent Arts Council insurance scheme for artists to insure work or equipment, the profits from which, to sponsor new work or to finance more equipment.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** A wide range of horizontal activities.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** One ongoing event, continuing to affect the way I produce work is the development of myself from under the constraints of a Conservative administration.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Ian Dury.

**QUESTION** Why create 'concerned' action committees to analyse various areas of performance, instead of reaffirming a united stand against obvious oncoming financial and political dilemmas? ♦

ANNE SEAGRAVE



## ALASTAIR SNOW

**STYLE/TRADITION** The desire to inspire, by the combination of performance elements eg shock — humour — presence and conceit is rooted in Dada with an aquascatum slant.

**CONCERN** To navigate the seas of public malaise, that obscure potential and ill-informed unease.

**MONEY** Each regional arts association should be funded to appoint an artist/performer to: (i) Irritate the contours of RAA grant support. (ii) Organise and present series of works in public — non specifically designed performance spaces. (iii) Utilise the communications potential of regional press, TV and radio for performance works to a wider audience. (iv) To commission collaborative projects for public performance between artists of different 'disciplines', living in the region.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** The instillation of a sense of curiosity, suspicion and generosity of spirit.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** An 'after-dinner' public speaking engagement to an audience of 600 — Christmas 1970.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Bow Gamelan Ensemble, British Events Theatre Co, Rose English, Art Naphro, Boris Gerrets, Franklin Aalders, Mona Hatoum.

**QUESTION** Who are you trying to 'reach' with your work? ♦

## GARY STEVENS

**STYLE/TRADITION** A post-minimal tradition. Sculptural: show performance. Refers to the theatre and to popular culture: film and TV Philosophical. Comic.

**CONCERN** There are many important concerns but for me they are the problems of expression and the ramifications to identify on one hand and the meaning of objects one produces on the other. Accessibility: finding a way of working that is intelligible without compromising it. Exposing the way that meaning is made, particularly the way that people are portrayed in popular culture and

## IAN SHERMAN

**STYLE/TRADITION** I am afraid that I was bemused by your questionnaire, finding most of the questions wholly irrelevant to my work. So, in about 275 words I will try to express something about what I feel will be of use to anyone trying to understand what I think I am trying to do.

I have worked in the area of performance because I feel that the live situation is a very special one. There are many elements of performance activity which seem difficult to isolate in relation to the senses, and the feeling that anything could happen gives a vital atmosphere to the whole thing. Alongside this the possibility of being flexible to the situation, mood etc. are very important to me, because

disarming its manipulative power. I am sure there is more.

**MONEY** The Arts Council's franchise scheme I think is a good one. The draw back at present is the limited number of venues operating under the scheme. With more money there could be more venues both financing productions and providing performance fees.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Trying to make money and enjoying myself.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/**

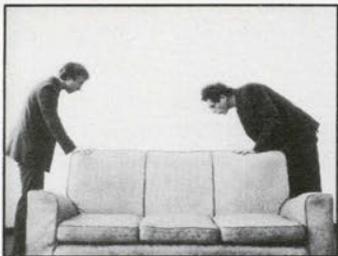
**ARTWORK** Deciding to work with Station House Opera. I learnt a great deal and met artists I hope to work with for many years to come.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Avoiding personal acquaintances, making a special case of Julian Maynard Smith. I can safely say:— Rose English, Avis Newman, Bill Woodrow and Ian McKeever.

**QUESTION** How are you? ◆



ALASTAIR SNOW



GARY STEVENS

## ANDRE STITT

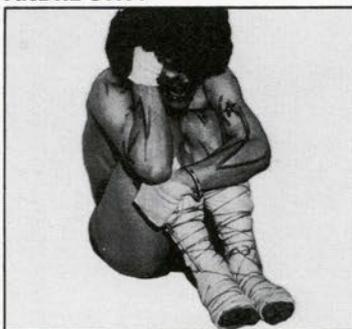
**STYLE/TRADITION** I would see my 'live' work rooted in the idea of 'ritual', a melding of highly structured activity with an allowance towards the spontaneous.

Depending on the 'piece' at hand, a concerted effort is made towards a 'peak' in awareness, and a change through an activity that questions, and realises/releases a change, something that may have been hidden or something unforeseen — beyond group identity, nationalism, a place as yet undiscovered. I would see the style or tradition aligned to the 'Viennese Actionists' and the actions in the 70's of COUM.

**CONCERN** The 'live' artist faces an indifference, within the context of ART as ART faces within our culture, something to be tolerated, lofty and somehow special and elite. The problem of acceptance, integrating and stimulating is more of a problem for 'live' art as it can never really truly be seen as a commodity, therefore is relegated as something useless in our age of excess consumerism. Our 'art' should not be a category set apart. It is a potential space — open — to facilitate growth, to affirm the identity of a group, symbolically, both collectively and individually.

The 'live' artist should not be seen as someone special and apart from, society — although often society forces the individual to become the outsider — but someone who has the ability, who presents their craft as a social function — a presenter of a location for

## ANDRE STITT



exchange and cultural experience.

Unfortunately this can be considered a dangerous occupation that allows questioning and alternatives to certain control processes.

**MONEY** There is need for more performance orientated areas, spaces etc. This is especially true of London. I don't mean spaces, like say, The Zap Club. I suggest a multi-faceted area, run by 'live' artists. This could incorporate a more sympathetic attitude towards artists using the space and there would also be a concerted attempt to make the space very public, to promote better understanding of the proliferation that exists in this country amongst the various work that continues with little or no funding. Unfortunately places like the Zap Club have not fulfilled the promise and expectations of many performance artists. A lesson should be learnt from various attitudes on the continent with various festivals and permanent venues that capture the local public imagination, places such as, the PERFO festivals in Holland, FRIGO, in Lyon, France and BELLUARD, Fribourg, Switzerland. Also the idea of venues like The Kitchen and Franklin furnace in New York.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** I don't really differentiate very much between my life and my art. I always considered my attitude towards life as being a deconditioning and a re-discovery, reaching beyond limits. I have an aversion to large crowds, masses, and am a compulsive recluse. I enjoy music, books, films, etc. Main involvements — preparing food, being a manic depressive, corresponding/letter writing, taking vast quantities of drugs and alcohol, trying to become a FREEMASON, looking for true love and laughter, and TAI-CHI.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** Mostly growing up in N. Ireland under constant oppressive threat and negative control.

I can really only think of two works that affected me and perhaps inadvertently made ME SENSE, that somehow it was possible to discover what lay behind the shadows. Firstly, seeing Alistair MacLennan standing for a full day in various paraphernalia, without moving, in the centre of Belfast. Secondly, a split second when Stuart Brisley suddenly seemed to jolt out of a chair and 'fly' across a gallery, in the middle of a softly spoken semi-conversation with the audience, Belfast '78. Other main events I guess, would be attempting suicide four times, and discovering the works of Dr Abraham Maslow.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** There are many, and of course there are those artists who helped me, and influenced my attitudes to my work, made suggestions, supported me thru all sorts of shit etc . . . but here are a few that I admire a lot in their energy, their ability to take risks and on occasion makes the hairs stand on the back of ones neck . . .

First off, Alistair MacLennan, and my great friend, Dr Al Ackerman.

Others: Adrian Hall; Arnulf Rainer; Paul McCarthy; Roberta Graham; Silvia Ziranek; Mark Pauline; Charles Bukowski; Sam Fuller; Michael Powell etc etc.

**QUESTION** Do you really know what you're doing???? ◆

## MARTY ST JAMES & ANNE WILSON

**STYLE/TRADITION** (Marty and Anne) Although we share Rachel Rosenthal's idea of 'D.B.D. — Do BY Doing' ours we feel is a more British tradition of 'Actions Speak Louder Than Words' . . . British Empiricism.

**CONCERN** In the time that we live in now it is sometimes difficult to separate fantasy from reality. To understand who you actually are amongst the images of who you might possibly be. We read a book — we are the hero. We watch a film — we are the star. We ride with cowboy film star Ronald Reagan. We shop with Margaret Thatcher . . . 2nd hand information, encompassing cruel, discriminatory ideals and models. *As artists our role is crucial in confirming the importance of real 1st hand experience, however unglamorous at times it may be . . . the importance of living life through the flesh — the shared experience of now.*

**MONEY** We would advocate the setting up of a network of artist-run spaces to promote and present performance art where artists would handle all aspects of the space with perhaps a yearly change of staff. This would give artists the chance to use their practical experiences and also to help each other. Something similar to the situation in Canada and some spaces in America, or of course Newcastle here in Britain.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** (Marty) We could say people, drinking and ballroom dancing but these are also part of our art — therefore the question is irrelevant to us.

(Anne) Socially, politically, philosophically and in every way we have unfortunately to admit that our waking hours are occupied with art — and sometimes it can be a bore . . . (Marty) Hence the drinking!

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** (Anne) An event . . . meeting each other on a beach in Wales in 1976 changed our art and our lives. (Marty) An artwork . . . reading the passage from Jean Paul Sartre's 'Nausea' which begins ' . . . and the perfect moments where do they come in . . . ' and ends ' . . . In fact, it was a sort of work of art'.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** (Marty and Anne) We admire as in 'To look on with pleasure' all living British artists because things can be difficult. Here are a few of our contemporaries chosen for their images and humour . . . Rose Garrard, Richard Layzell, Jez Welsh, Roberta Graham, Bruce Mclean, Helen Chadwick, Bow Gamelan, Noel Forster, Charlie Hooker, Alistair MacLennan, Akiko Hada, Trevor Sutton, John Carson, Michael Tippett for his sounds of time.

Also Joseph Beuys for his seriousness and Miro if as we believe he is still alive . . . and many many more artists both here and abroad.

**QUESTION** (Marty) Do you get sick of the question 'What is the difference between performance art and theatre?' (Anne) Why do you stay in Britain? ◆



## STEFAN SZCZELKUN

**STYLE/TRADITION** The European Working Class 'Folk' rituals and other actions (see Bob Peggs *Rites and Riots* Blandford.) And Post Situationists eg Raoul Vaniegem. *The Book of Pleasures* Blandford.

**CONCERN** To evolve art forms, structures and rituals that facilitate the development of a liberatory culture. A culture that would dismantle the oppressive structures and relations within our society and its exploitative relationship to the rest of the world. The philosophical outlook might be called 'Liberation Theory' but is essentially pluralist and not typified by any one thinker or group. This approach does not seem capable of articulation within the formal categories/media/galleries that comprise the current definition of art activity as they are dominated by an elitist mode of thought reflecting the apparent and false self interest of the ruling class.

**MONEY** A funding priority given to collective and artist-motivated projects would be most supportive of my practice. (More people are salaried for financing and promoting art than actually doing it!)

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** The development of personal and world consciousness and my ability to act and lead effectively from this knowledge to better fulfill my desires. But I don't really like the *separation* implied in this question.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** The Scratch Orchestra and particularly the works and outlook of Greg Bright and Peter Ellison. The Exploding Galaxy and the work of David Medalla. More recently the X6 Collective.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** Off the top of my head . . . Silvia Ziranek, Rose English, Mona Hatoum, Anne Seagrave, Sally Potter, Carlyle Reedy, Mary Kelly, Jacky Lansley, Ian Sherman and many others . . .

**QUESTION** What are the main obstacles to you making the art that you really want to? And if these obstacles didn't exist how might your art practice be different? ♦



## STEPHEN TAYLOR WOODROW

**STYLE/TRADITION** A European tradition that predates, yet has managed to co-exist with the retrogressive onslaught of American influences in the 60's and 70's.

**CONCERN** The phenomenal pace of change in society is accelerating, I do not think it should be slowed, but values within society are not keeping pace with change, this will undoubtedly lead to disaster. The role of the artist is also undergoing unprecedented change. Unfortunately artists are also not keeping up. Artists roles as communicators or social commentators are being usurped. We must re-examine our relevance. Modernism is dead. What follows must start now, there is not time for dithering. Live artists should be at the forefront being freer from art world dogma than the others. If artists cannot adopt new values what hope has society submerged as it is, in antiquated political religious idealism?

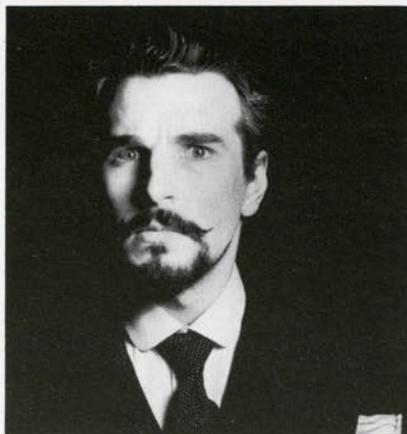
**MONEY** The setting up of a live art education department, which encourages performance to be taught, practically and academically, alongside painting and sculpture, from school level to degree level. Only through this can artists expect more work, more money and a more educated response from administration and audience alike.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** Apart from making art I do private and personal things.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** When I was 17 I had my first vision in the form of a visitation from Edvard Munch, who detailed how I should devote my life to art.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** I tend to admire art rather than artists. At least, I don't admire any that I've met. Of those I haven't met, Robert Wilson, Gary Glitter, Robert Mitchum, Vincent Price.

**QUESTION** What do you consider to be the biggest problem facing a performance artist based in the UK? ♦



## KERRY TRENGOVE

**STYLE/TRADITION** None. The basis of my work over the last decade has been the resistance to any form of categorisation.

**CONCERN** To recognise that we are all artificial beings existing in an artificial environment with artificial rules. Then to reinvent a series of frameworks within which we can all live both individually and collectively to our full human potential. One such system being that which we presently describe as art.

**MONEY** 'Performance Art' began as a resistance to the narrow dictates of modernism. Its lingering mortification began with defined histories, specialist funding panels, venues and journals. The erosion of 'Performance Art' and other such historically divine forms should be the main site of action for any new research and development funding.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** I try to play an authentic part in a mad movie where the directors are constantly changing and where no one can come up with an agreeable happy ending.

**SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ARTWORK** The BBC World Service which gives me a constant update of the people and the planet on which I live.

**ARTISTS ADMIRER** Artists like

Pablo Neruda who strive 'for justice and equality on earth, breaking the wall of silence round crystal, wood and stone, seeking a knowledge without antecedents'.

**QUESTION** Emperor Augustus exiled Ovid for writing erotic subversive poetry. Metaphorically do you: a) Support the Status Quo. b) Confront. c) Seek Voluntary Exile. d) Speak Camouflage? ♦



## KEN TURNER

**STYLE/TRADITION** Tradition and continuity, interpreted through ontological understanding does not concern itself with style, but only meaning.

**CONCERN** Meaning as embodied in — poetics, essence, experiential EVIDENCE, phenomenology, hermeneutics, synchronicity, tradition of continuity, myth.

**MONEY** The forming of new venues specifically for live art. Better critical reviews and analysis of live art. The making of film and television programmes of live art.

CONTD ON P41 ►

# SURVEY

CHRISIE ILES on the Sound/Vision show at Spacex in Exeter, and Plymouth Arts Centre:

# CELESTIAL LIGHT,

# MONSTROUS RACES

Concentrating on the medium of sound as a starting point for and linking factor between the eight artists included in Sound/Vision allows for both a new approach to the aural and visual aspects of the work (not usually considered separately nor the aural taken as a focus) and for interesting parallels and contrasts to be drawn between each artist's work. Instead of a general 'mixed media' link, comparisons, between, for example, the work of Stuart Brisley and Audio Arts, bring to attention the contrasts between their treatment of the individual in the urban environment, the difference lying in both their subject matter and in the way they both use language.

Bill Furlong, in an informative catalogue essay, draws out various points concerning sound in art which are particularly pertinent to this exhibition, notably the ability of sound to create an original experience each time it is heard; the importance of speech (used here by Brisley, Hannah Collins, Audio Arts, Michael Nyman/Paul Richards and Gerald Newman); the freedom of sound as a disparate and indistinct area of activity for artists, and its ability to generate both visual mental imagery and to have an effect on physical space.

The ability of sound to create an impact on physical space can be seen most clearly in the two extremes of work presented in this exhibition by Gerald

Newman and Holly Warburton. Whilst Warburton's rich and opulent soundtrack of opera, slow breathing and stifled cries envelops the installation space and enriches the lush and beautiful imagery by completing the feeling of being present in a total environment, Gerald Newman's tape, also experienced in a completely darkened room, denies us any visual imagery whatsoever. The sound in *In Ein Tollhaus* (In a Madhouse) creates no emotional

or human link, but its impact on the darkened space is that of a radio play in which the imagination is made to create the imagery, fired by the cold and alienating sensation received from the noises on the soundtrack, exaggerated by the lack of vision and the blackness of the space.

*The Institute for Measurement and Control* (Georgiana Collection no 22), a collaboration between Stuart Brisley and Sharon Morris, is by far the most

**Fear and dark responses**

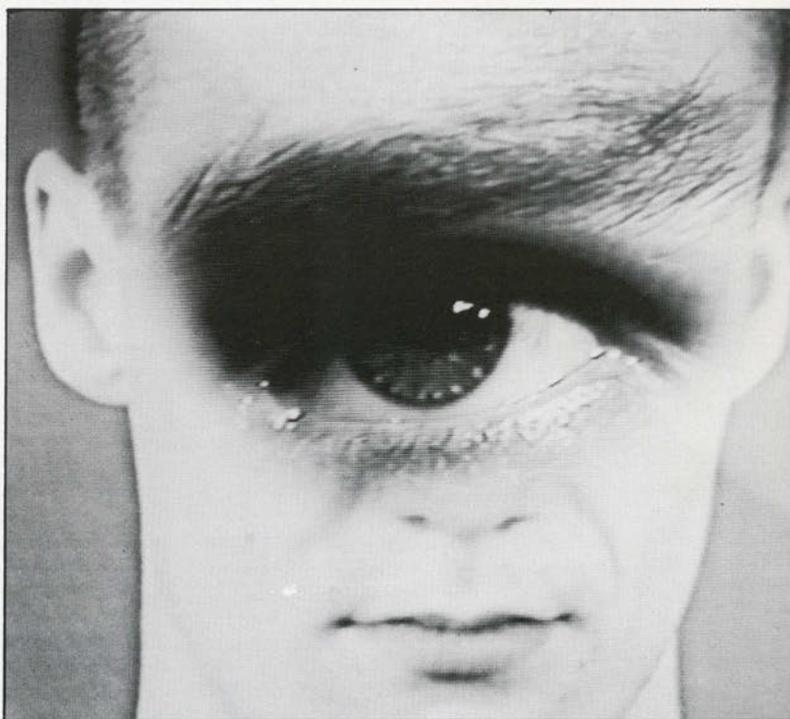


Photo: Judith Goddard

REVIEWS

DAVID BRIERS

disturbing and depressing piece in the exhibition. A series of black and white photographs by Sharon Morris of some of Britain's most desolate, alienating public institutional buildings is accompanied by a 35 minute audio tape by Stuart Brisley. Its presentation in a bare room with no encouragement for lingering, demands persistence to hear the piece in its entirety, but perseverance yields a powerful narrative in which a journey through an institution is described ambiguously (one is not sure whether the speaker is an inmate or visitor), intercut with authoritative and commanding sentences, barking dogs, helicopter noise and the sound of institutional cleaning. Despite its cool detachedness, this minimal piece of work had by far the greatest emotional impact.

Audio Arts, in contrast, use language in recorded form to, in the words of Bill Furlong, 'retrieve and analyse important facets of our culture contained within spoken language which were hitherto lost'. In *Audio Arts/ Orchard Gallery*, interviews with people in Derry and Brixton about their lives are reworked and juxtaposed to suggest parallels between the two communities.

Charles Garrard uses sound in a sculptural way in his witty *Fridge*, in which an empty fridge, door half open, reveals a box of eggs from which emits the sound of frying.

The vision with which the sound, in most cases, is linked in order to create an experience, ranges from sculptural (Charles Garrard), photographic (Brisley/Morris, Hannah Collins, Holly Warburton) to video (Goddard, Paul Richards/Michael Nyman) and original artwork (Paul Richards, Audio Arts). In all cases sound and vision are inextricably linked, some more strongly and more successfully than others.

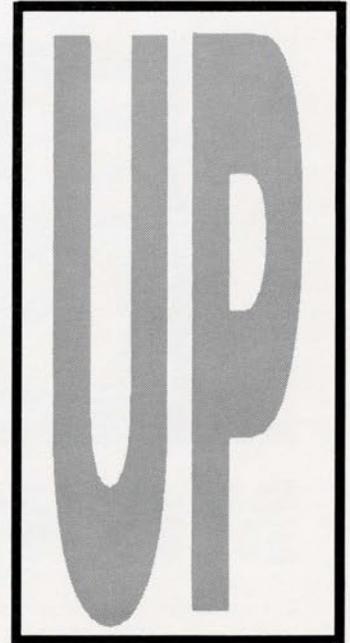
In Judith Goddard's multi-screen video installation *Celestial Light, Monstrous Races*, sound has been completely synthesised into the work, used to heighten the emotive impact of the images. Goddard has a long term fascination for the kind of narrative used in medieval art,

and uses a similar kind of visual narrative in her video work. Here it explores the double edge of celebration and the darker aspects of the human personality, specifically the idea of the deranged mind and a fear of the unknown and the different. A bizarre and humorous sequence of chroma-keyed distorted facial and bodily images refer directly to medieval drawings of 'monstrous races', both mythical and real, depicted by a people completely ignorant of other cultures. Such fear and dark responses, as well as celebration, rebirth, pleasure and pain are all explored through a synthesis of sound and vision, in which pealing bells, soft singing, jangled sound and the tolling of the 'death knell' bell mark each section, reinforcing the implied allusions to religion in the imagery (tower blocks as the modern equivalent to the soaring spires of medieval church architecture, video 'stained glass' and the notion of rebirth).

Michael Nyman and Paul Richards video *The Kiss*, a collaborative piece produced by Anna Ridley for Channel Four Television, is a direct liaison between a painter and musician, and sound in this case is used in a specifically collaborative way, in musical form, to develop video imagery through painting. Paul Richards, despite his work with Michael Nyman and Bruce McLean (*Nice Style*) remains essentially a painter rather than an artist using technology. This piece was arguably the weakest point in the exhibition. The collaboration did not rise above superficial exchange, and the relationship between painting, video and music remained awkward, disjointed and unresolved.

There are many other links which can be explored, for example the treatment of insanity in the work of Goddard, Brisley, Newman and Warburton. I would urge you to make the effort to see this 'double' show, and to see both parts. Installation and mixed media exhibitions are all too rare, especially those as well presented as this one. It should not be missed.

*Sound/Vision continues until October 23.* ●



While most eyes and ears were trained on the LIFT festival, I slipped off on 27 July to a 'Contemporary Music Open Day' at 10 Stratford Place, off Oxford Street opposite Bond Street underground — an 18th century cul-de-sac which I hadn't noticed was there before. Behind the genteel frontage of the Royal Society of Musicians operate the hotbeds of the Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM), the Electro-Acoustic Music Association (EMAS) and the British Music Information Centre (BMIC). I was interested to see the inside of the latter, for it is best to have a real reason for entering a specialised archive or library — you can't just go in to run your hands over their impressive ranks of box files. And besides, they had laid on a tempting and free day-long sequence of performances. I arrived to join a seething crowd wedged up the staircase, and immediately became aware that I didn't know a soul, although everybody else seemed to know each other on first name terms. I had crossed into another cultural sub-division.

It was such a sunny day (yes, really), that I gave the crowded 'mystery opening' by 'famous' American composer Elliott Carter a miss, and stayed outside, where loudspeakers relayed the cramped interior performances,

among the neophytes of a new mystery religion — Contemporary Music:

# A CUL DE SAC

and where several performances were to take place. The day began depressingly with some orthodox electronic music and one of those 'sound montages' of early rock and roll hits which made you wish they would just play all of one Chuck Berry record instead.

But then the emigré South American composer Javier Alvarez took the platform to perform the virtuoso solo part in his *Temazcal* for maracas and tape. Here was something to get the jaded contemporary music aficionado excited, the interplay of live maraca sounds with thrumming, rushing and bursting electronic sounds, and with occasionally surfacing Latin American rhythms, finally resolving into tinkly Paraguayan harps and birdsong. This crossover success, performed elsewhere and obviously the composer's star piece, would go down a storm anywhere, be it in an electronic music concert or salsa segue.

Then it was back to 'modern music' by Boulez, Xenakis, and Chris Dench, made to sound even drearier by the sunshine. Every now and then Michael Finnissy banged away at a piano medley of some of the more recondite and less redeemable repertoire of the likes of Cyril Scott and Percy Grainger. I missed *Celtic Lullaby*, an interesting sounding solo piece sung by its composer, Chris Newman, because I got sidetracked over a cup of tea in the basement, where a 'composer's surgery' was taking place in dimly lit recesses, like neophytes of a mystery religion. Another performance piece outside, Jane Wells' *Beggar for a Friend*, for two mobile soprano saxophones, involved its performers in moving geometrically around and on two chairs. What seemed unorthodox here might have seemed austere and rather unimaginative at a performance art open day.

At lunchtime Steve Reich



made a guest appearance, performed his *Clapping Music* with Gregory Rose (it seems to have lost impact when performed outdoors), and introduced the first half of a 'state of the art' Nonesuch recording of his large-scale *Desert Music*. This was quite overwhelming (but I am a big fan of Steve Reich), and sitting in the sun listening to its sounds rise and swirl between the high buildings must have been very different, and quite possibly preferable, to being at the conventional Proms concert performance two days later.

Then Howard Skempton serenaded us with some of his simple accordion melodies, before the third high-spot of the day, an *al fresco* performance by Jane Manning of Judith Weir's *King Harald's Saga*, a 'grand opera in 3 acts for unaccompanied solo soprano singing 8 rôles (based on the saga *Heimskringla* by Snorri Sturluson, 1179-1241'. This daunting sounding piece lasts all of ten minutes, and is a miniature masterpiece of 'anti-opera', combining good humoured parody, musicality and dramatic cohesion against all odds. Here, it was deservedly

well received, but I would rather have seen it performed in a chapel in Durham Cathedral on a winter's day.

Before the end of the day's proceedings, I had to rush off and catch a train, pockets bulging with music publishers' leaflets. Like any such mélange, what had been good had been very good, and what had been bad had been awful. What it had *not* been, was what it had set out to be — an 'open' day. It was an 'enclosed' day, a swarming of composers, musicians and music publishers, with very little crossover from other sorts of music or performance, or from the generally interested. All day, less than a hundred yards away, a solid wall of tourists marched along Oxford Street, the air heavy with the sound of maps being unfolded and pockets being picked. None of them was lured up to the end of Stratford Place, even by the thrilling sounds of Steve Reich or Javier Alvarez. How long are we all going to stay up our separate little culs-de-sac?

*David Briers was the mistakenly uncredited author of the article A Noise In Your Eye in Sound Sculpture last issue (Ed).*

Paraguayan harps just off Oxford Street

**REVIEWS**

**ROB LA FRENAIS fails to beat the record for the most performances seen in Edinburgh this year:**

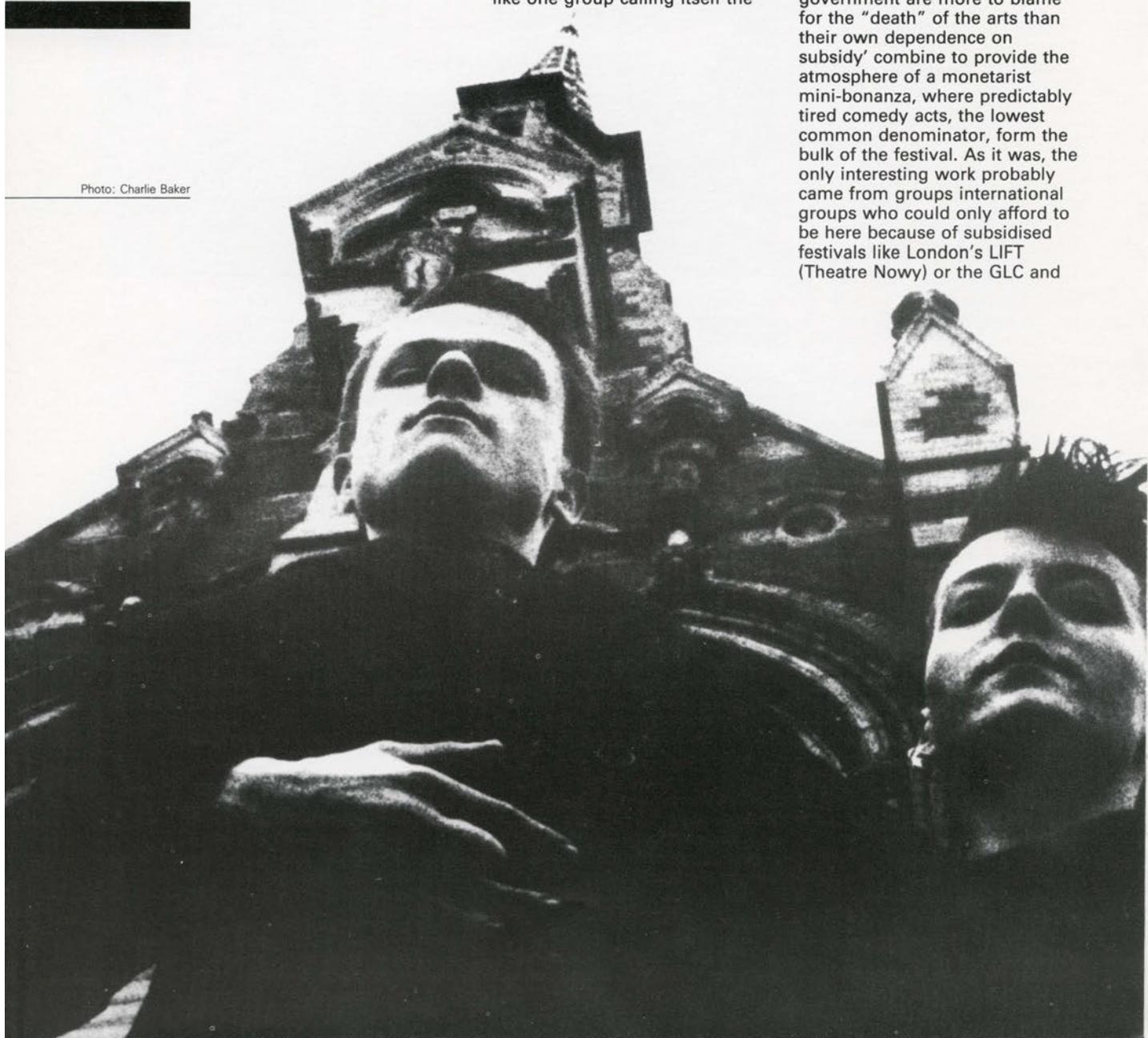
# RETURN TO

It is ten years since I last visited the Edinburgh Festival, and one look around the crowded hall packed with desperately seeking press officers and desperately seeking solo acts, in search of the unidentified press corps (Press or Pleb? one person was heard to be asked) was enough to convince me that it wasn't long enough. Minor absurdities, like one group calling itself the

AAAarts Council so it could be alphabetically first in the brochure, and major ones, like Festival administrator Michel Dale's bald statement that the festival fringe exists 'because there is an intense demand for it . . . and in the UK gives the lie to those directors and administrators who feel that the Arts Council or central government are more to blame for the "death" of the arts than their own dependence on subsidy' combine to provide the atmosphere of a monetarist mini-bonanza, where predictably tired comedy acts, the lowest common denominator, form the bulk of the festival. As it was, the only interesting work probably came from groups international groups who could only afford to be here because of subsidised festivals like London's LIFT (Theatre Nowy) or the GLC and

*Fusion's Arrested Laughter*

Photo: Charlie Baker



# EDINBURGH

Edinburgh City Council (Amanda) or nationally subsidised organisations such as Nottingham's Midland Group.

It was the Midland Group who brought what might well turn out to be one of the most interesting pieces of performance-based theatre of the year to the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, namely *Manact*, with Simon Thorne and Philip Mackenzie. Apart from being visually based on New York artist Robert Longo's visual images of men fighting, dancing and dying, this was effective psychoanalytically based, highly intensive theatre. Using highly stylised 'international' movie soundtracks, they seemed to be using largely Freudian imagery to track the path through childhood bonding, aggression, awareness of sex, and AN Other sex, to come up with a highly gripping and surprisingly emotional effect on the audience. After flaunting and discarding the objects of femininity, the objets of masculinity, mother-love and father-love they seemed to finally reach a conclusion which stated that simple love between humans was possible. At the climax they simply ceased to become 'men', but fellow creatures.

Analysed under a cold light, one could disagree with many of

their psychological assumptions, which seem in a way to disregard the possibilities and implications of gay sexual attraction. But they seemed able, through sheer intensity of purpose to cause a wave of emotion to break over the audience, and this is always a difficult thing to do — particularly in this hothouse Edinburgh ambience.

Thorne and Mackenzie are from the temporarily disbanded Cardiff Laboratory Theatre, and their work is in a sense an extension of the Lab's last project — a highly flawed investigation of sexuality, but which seemed to have spawned many spin-offs including this one. They certainly seemed to have profited from the Lab's training in that their work does not exclude the possibility of 'real' actions and emotions in a structured theatre piece. I look forward to their next development with great interest.

If *Manact* was essentially Freudian, the Inside-Out's Screaming Sirens at the Walpole Hall was decidedly Jungian. A sailor is lured by a haughty succubine winged female, he regresses to childhood, there is as storm/rebirth/transmutation of souls and some unspecified pushing and shoving in the middle. Impact Theatre are to blame for the pushing and shoving, and Rose English, if she could, should sue the introductory siren's speech for breach of copyright, but this young group may well have seen neither. I was told this was a rather draughty and problem-filled first night which could have rendered one more sensitive to plagiarism. Some interesting ideas in there somewhere.

Fusion (No Alternative/Theatre Totale) in *Arrested Laughter*

*Two-Room 666* was absolutely bloody awful. It was a half-hearted attempt to be in 'bad taste' about embryo experiments and was over-acted and consisted of ideas that could have been rejected from old Incubus and Crystal Theatre of the Saint shows from the seventies. The Crystals *Radio Beelzebub* was the last show that was ever funny about the Book of Revelations. It seemed to be an attempt by a pair of otherwise serious visual theatre groups to come to grips with the all pervasive vaudeville tat of the Festival, and if anything seemed to be a good reason for *not* coming to the Festival. At this point my health agreed and I fled south with a bad case of 'Auld Reekie' flu.

However, Riverside Studios transferring two important shows meant I could finish my task, and it brought the badly-trashed new show by Michael Clark, *our caca phoney-our caca phoney H. The Scotsman* and the nationals were full of articles by whingeing dance critics, pleading with their Michael to 'cut the gimmicks' and get down to some *real dance*. I'm a bit prejudiced against dance, especially *dance* on the grounds that it never seems to deliver what it promises — visual strength, glamour and excitement. However 'postmodern' or whatever it claims to be, it all seems to be down to lithe forms posturing in leotards, rather like animated but flaccid Henry Moore sculptures. When someone like Pina Bausch or Lucinda Childs comes along to teach them a lesson, dancers and choreographers in this country at least, insist on watering any new ideas down and down until everything is finally stripped-pine leotard-safe. ▶

REVIEWS

Clark — the whole psychedelic hog



# CIRC

The cobbled courtyard in front of the Queen Anne façade of the Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool. A summer evening, the rain mercifully cleared. Four rectangular areas marked out by red and white plastic tape. In the central flagged pathway, a compartmented, silvered trapezoid structure, like a shallow barge. At the corner of one of the 'squares' a white Met. balloon is tethered, painted in black, gestural brushstrokes. In the squares stand a couple of dozen young people, clad in various combinations of black and white. Musicians and a scattering of spectators sit on the steps of the various entrances to the building. At the sound of a chord struck on a lute, the performers start to move.

*Circuitous Routes* was a collaboration between choreographer Greg Nash, musician/composer Jim Beirne, and the Bridewell Studios' artist-in-residence Jonathan Froud. Froud's contribution was also billed separately as part of the Bluecoat Gallery's *Sculpture in a Garden* project. This, like the dance project, was severely curtailed by the appalling weather conditions. Many of the strengths and weaknesses of the event stemmed from the uncertainties and improvisations thus involved.

The sculpture, as sculpture, was fairly minimal. Weather apart, this seemed part of a stylistic change appearing in Froud's work, a movement away from the cheap-and-cheerful New British Sculpture, where a sewing-machine is seen to become an umbrella, towards a more thoughtful, conceptual approach. In *The Car*, a collaboration earlier this year with the experimental music group *Dribbling Trumpets*, Froud arranged the dissected vehicle along a chalked spiral, or helix. His programme-drawing for this event suggests that something similar was his original intention



Amandla — Wellies on!

Moreover, Michael Clark delivers the goods. From the joyously eclectic and thunderously naff 'found' soundtrack to the exuberantly glam/trash/freakout antics of the performers, who are skilled but don't let it get in the way of them — I went the whole psychedelic hog for it. Yes, some of the sequences are repetitive, yes there were some shaky bits, but who gave a damn, the music was good. I could imagine those dance critics sitting there waiting to be 'outraged' by yet another 'revealing' costume, another 'obscene' gesture, and hear them mumble 'gratuitous'. It wasn't even that outrageous, it was just a lot of highly-spirited kids having a spiffing time with the now wonderfully high camp theme music of Hair. You could just see Princess Anne jumping on stage. The best bit is when they are all crawling about on their hands and knees and someone shouts 'Watch out, someone might just irrigate your ditch'.

Riverside also imported from the Festival Amandla, the Cultural Ensemble of the African National Congress. I had heard murmurings that this had been considered too much in the 'colourful and exuberant' genre

of spectacle, considering the current situation in the Cape Townships, but I soon realised, sitting under the proud banner of the ANC Cultural Ensemble, that this was in fact an extremely clever way to get some money out of rich white liberals. And why not? The work was certainly uplifting enough, if a bit simplistic, to draw a hail of pound coins into the buckets. The drumming was hypnotic, the Wellington boot dance brilliantly executed and not a bit the folkloric entertainment it could have been. I have to admit, I found it a bit strained standing up in a predominantly white audience returning the black power salute during the final anthem, but sensibilities mean nothing when we are living in the country that now gives Botha the most political and financial support in the world. More power to the exiled ANC dancing and mocking on that country's doorstep.

From the recent projection of swastika on South Africa House by projection artist Krzysztof Wodiczko to the defiance of Amandla, the Arts are flexing their muscles on issues. Support Cultural Ensembles everywhere! ●

ADRIAN HENRI celebrates the return of multi-media performance to Liverpool:

# VITIOUS ROUTES

here. In the event, we had the 'barge', light blue laboriously covered in silver leaf (why not just spray it, I wondered: strange how insidious the work ethic is in recent art), plus the tapes, etc. Triggered by the lute chords, the dancers walked or occasionally ran across the courtyard in diagonal crisscross patterns, grouping and re-grouping, using combinations of simple movements sometimes reminiscent of disco-dancing. The whole effect was like one of Merce Cunningham's simpler pieces, laced with a liberal dash of Trisha Brown's contrapuntal permutations of everyday body movements.

It worked beautifully. The very limitations of the group—heterogeneously recruited, varying widely in age and experience—had kept Nash down to basics, which made for artistic strength. With a more experienced troupe he might well have been tempted to gild the lily.

Jim Beirne's music was both

successful and memorable. Based apparently on a Seventeenth-Century lute duet, it played off live instruments—lutes, violins—against pre-recorded tapes. The third 'movement' of the outdoor section worked particularly well, a heady mixture that sounded like Villa-Lobos re-scored by Nyman or Reich.

What, we asked ourselves, were the barge and balloon there for? At the end of the outdoor piece a sudden *coup de théâtre*: the smallest dancer, who seemed little more than a child, was lifted into the barge and carried overhead in cortège, as the main double doors opened mysteriously to admit the procession. The spectators were led in via the red tapes by some of the dancers. As they left the balloon rose diagonally across the courtyard and came to rest, spotlight, at the opposite corner of the roof.

The indoor section took place to taped music, insistent and hypnotic, using much the same

patterns of walking, moving and grouping. The barge reappeared, but wasn't really used this time. Once again the use of the smallest dancer provided a strong climax. Moving in circles, the dancers peeled away one by one, leaving the smallest one alone before making his exit, too.

As the audience left the building, the dancers had reappeared in the now darkened courtyard, still, pointing up at the motionless, spotlighted balloon.

Though there were some criticisms that could be made—the ritual game element suggested by the taped squares wasn't really exploited, the lighting in the indoor section seemed arbitrary, and the piece's declared 'programme' seemed to have largely been abandoned—it was a worthwhile and enjoyable experience, not least for the young participants. It's nice to think that 'multimedia' works are slowly appearing from the closet again. ●

Contrapuntal permutation



Photo: Ward

Unashamed voyeurism abounds in Marc Chamowicz's new documentation/book. ALAN PARKER reflects:

# CAFE DU

**'The silence is broken** by the ringing of the telephone. Its tone is ominous, erotic, tantalizing. Nervous with anticipation, wishing, willing it to be the subject of our yearning . . . reason for our departure . . . object of our desire.'

Eroticism demands that its subjects are at least partially obscured. A detail of the desired object may be shown in such a way that its hidden promises are hinted at; in this way the imagination is set in motion and the internal landscapes of desire explored. Through a combination of text and images Marc Chamowicz manages to invest situations and objects not usually thought of as being overtly sexual, with a kind of erotic potential. Travel, fragments of architecture, writing equipment, flowers, drinks and glasses all conspire to create an atmosphere of sublimated sexuality.

His latest work is a book entitled 'Café du Rêve' which contains seven chapters, all of which are complete pieces in themselves. Overall the book reads as a kind of travelogue or diary in which personal landmarks are left open to the reader so that they can easily transport themselves to the environments sketched out in its pages. If you are inclined toward reflecting on what you could do in another place at another time with or without another person, this book will supply much inspiration.

The first chapter, 'Le Désert', is a point of departure and also sets the tone for much of the rest of the book. Represented by hand-tinted postcards of Tunis and the Sahara, the desert becomes a metaphor for solitude and voluntary exile of a type which falls somewhere between art and religion. The text contemplates the benefits and risks of such solitude, Lou Reed

and Cardinal Hume (amongst others) contributing their thoughts on the subject. The images and the graphics which surround them completely convey the attractions of an immersion in elegant seclusion. 'He was now left in peace but the price had been harsh and in his quest for the absolute, was appointing himself his own executioner. He reconsidered the desert . . . and was last seen walking well and lightly towards a land of discourse and dance of intoxication and gaiety . . .'

The recollections of times spent in foreign bars with friends have a feeling of timelessness, perhaps of a lost era which recall the writers of the inter-war years, Anais Nin for one. This use of time and timelessness becomes a device to create a world which is free from the constraints of the present, at one remove from everyday life. Despite all this the work still has a strongly contemporary form.

Only the fourth chapter, 'Partial Eclipse', is based on a previous piece of work — a performance presented in several major European cities as well as in London and Montreal during 1980-1982. The original narrative on which the text is based, as well as the images, refer speculatively to objects, moments in a relationship and recollections of a place or journey.

Either directly or indirectly, travelling has supplied much of the material in the remaining chapters, and in this way life and art become inextricably intertwined: 'As itinerant workers we go where the work is . . . and yet, at some time has not each of us sat in a bar or café in a distant land, merely then to ask ourselves, "Why travel when I might just as well be bored at home?" Rare then is a city in which we can both work and dream . . . happily in this the

most complex and effervescent of cities I can do both . . .'

Getting settled into a favourite book can be a deliciously private activity and Chamowicz has taken care that the contents and form of the book reflect this mood of reading. Some may find the designs and motifs which support the writing and photographs mannered, but they also serve to make each page something to be looked at for its own sake, and thus there is no sense of hurrying to reach a conclusion. One can allow oneself to be taken into a world which perhaps only books with pictures can evoke.

Snakes, fruit, cacti and sensuous details of human anatomy give clues to an encounter in a tasteful interior: 'Liaison' describes a relationship between two people in which the delicate balance of a reflective and introspective world is challenged by an intruder. The narrative outlines an idealized and romantic meeting which can somehow never be fully consummated without undermining the voyeuristic imagination that inspires it. Each party introduces 'fate, first as an ally, and then as an alibi' as their differences begin to surface. This section perhaps more than any of the others, represents the triumphs and dangers of such an exclusive and poetic vision, which depends so much on memory and the evocation of things elsewhere.

'The room is silent save for the ticking of a clock. The pale green wallpaper has a hint of both dust and peppermint . . . the white patterning is reminiscent of many things. For some — melancholy and the graciousness of a lost age. For others — timelessness and echoes of classical unity. The door is open, and he leaves this space — active in his absence . . . recalling that nothing is as it seems . . .'

# U REVE



*"I understand the need to frequent the market place . . . but miss the chances of going into the desert."*  
Cardinal Hume, Thames Television 1981.

# NEW YORK

## REVIEWS

BARBARA LEHMANN AND CATHERINE BUSH on the trail of a hot time in the old town:

This is an urban world, its bulging weight contained in a single island. In order to subsist on New York City life, it is necessary to spend a lot of time walking the streets, keeping acclimatised, absorbing life experience as an ambient voyeur. You watch fashion play with the face of the street, each renovation like a brand new lipstick. And then there are the bombed-out abandoned buildings, tried and true for the life of a different era. They are endowed with spirits of decadence and the ability to adapt and/or survive. This is a neighbourhood embraced with dying romanticism.

A modern girl tells herself that romance is with the city instead of the house. When she acclimatises herself to the ideals of the city, she will, then, have established a relationship with current culture and might even, then, have a hand in its shaping. Even just to watch things change is to admit that they are happening.

A hot summer night and the crowd gathers over at 8BC to watch a grand style spectacle by Poppo entitled, *Eternal Performance* — 'hear nothing, see nothing, speak nothing'. Poppo comes from the Japanese Buto tradition which he has tried to combine with East Village frontier consciousness. His strongest construction is fashion.

The piece begins inside the club's cavernous interior with Lucy Sexton getting her head shaved by Jo Andres, both in white silk. Poppo, a man of stark proportion, appears on stage, a muscular hairless dancer clad in black silk. He is joined by the corps of women, also in black. The women, fine artists in their own rights, inhabit this environment with a noble force. Mimi Goese steps out to manipulate a huge live fish in an amazing dance of concentration. (The women will later pair off and connect to each other with similar focus).

When the bandaged corpses descend from the wings, the company, followed by the crowd of spectators, adjourn to the abandoned lot next door in

which a giant sand box has been constructed, and where Elliot Sharp and musicians have started to play. The women remove their luxuriant silk pyjama sets to reveal elegant day-glo maillot bathing costumes. They cavort in the sand and drag each other out.

Now Poppo performs on the hillside and the top of a car where a follow spot spills onto the abandoned buildings. And the women return. This time painted gold (as the Goldfinger woman) sporting gold G-strings. By now, some neighbourhood strollers have joined the audience. Certainly this high-tech styled scene is quite different from the generic street dramas. More than one in the audience was overheard to remark, 'Forget clothes, I'm just going to paint myself gold!'

The style of Poppo's presentation seems more to do with design than an interpretation of Buto, which hardly carries the energy generated by the activity. Once an action is established, the focus tends to dissipate, bearing the visual images containing pleasing elements of Poppo's work. He may at least have created a new form of fashion show.

In search of reference, you walk down the Bowery. Making a left on Rivington, pretty soon you notice on the uptown side of the street, one old tenement building with a more colourful erosion of paint and posters. Its very name invites your entry. Would you like to come in? I don't say now. It's NO SE NO.

Inside the Spanish Social Hall-cum-Performance Space are a profusion of photographs recalling a summer romance of 1983: *99 Nights of Performance*. A non-stop marathon Performance blitz, it attracted artists from NY, California, Europe, and Everywhere creating a community of collaborators.

The photographs on the walls around you are collaged into a mural that commemorates the summer in history. There is so much movement of life and energy in these photographs of the same walls on which they

hang, you forget that you are alone with the gallery attendant two years later at two o'clock on a cold clear day.

You begin to recognise faces. There's Arlene Schloss in a t-shirt that says, 'Forget about that sweet fuck, Baby.' With Ray Kelly and R.L. Sullivan, she created NO SE NO in order to provide an environment for live art that could grow. There's Ray Kelly's beautiful water sculpture that sprays a mist to create a 360° rainbow. You notice Tehching Hsieh who had recently finished living outside for a year. And there's Arlene's t-shirt in a photograph on a wall inside a photograph.

Toyo, the Japanese photographer took pictures every night and put them on the wall the next day so that there was a momentum built. So that each night truly grew out of the night before. You want to know what became of all this creative energy. It takes you back to the streets.

And so you wandered in on Penny Arcade performing *While You Were Out* at P.S. 122. Penny, aka Susana Ventura, was a child in the Warhol Days who grew up on drag queen dramas. She has now learned to cross the street from uptown to the downtown side. Her persona is constructed of elements such as the fear of becoming a bag lady, the isolation of an ex-junkie and the fundamental desire to please that both a drag queen and a real woman ('Look at these grapefruits') share.

Penny Arcade comes accompanied with a mediocre rock band that warm her up, slowly, to a truly marvellous impersonation of Margot Howard-Howard. She gives vent to obsessions tinged with a familiar idealism that was fashionable in an earlier decade. As Margot, a (what else?) drag queen trying to keep herself supplied with junk, she demonstrates with sensitive insight an earlier punchline, 'I was going to be a great artist, but my friends said I was too fabulous.' (Hello Andy, I love you. Do you love me, Andy?).

*While You Were Out* makes an

# K REPORTS

No Se No graffiti hound

enjoyable cabaret performance. At the end, Penny Arcade pays a tribute to the recently deceased Jackie Curtis.

So I went to see *Miss Universal Happiness* by Richard Foreman and the Wooster Group last month and now in retrospect, I find I'm liking her more and more. Foreman's most enjoyable piece, I didn't understand what was happening in it until weeks later. Then the hysteria had been divested of immediate sensation and it no longer bothered me, the way it no longer bothered Miss Universal Happiness to observe, 'Is that my blood on the wall?' **BL**

You could call it a *son et lumiere* show, only this was no illuminated French chateau but the eerie, massive vaults of the Anchorage under the Brooklyn Bridge, across the river from Manhattan. The sound and light spectacle came courtesy of The Bow Gamelan Ensemble. The London art/music ensemble made its first American appearance in June, brandishing propane torches and attracting various denizens of New York's downtown scene with more matter-of-fact charm than aggressiveness.

Their drawing card in this town didn't just stem from their witty urban-industrial transformations of the exoticism of Indonesian gamelan music. Unable to bring its usual instruments from England, the ensemble recreated them out of local Brooklyn scrapyard junk, arranged like some mad scientists' elaborate set at the back of the deep Anchorage vault and auctioned off after the final show. Exotic on the one hand, but also an apt choice for the site-specific work that is the particular terrain of Creative Time, the organization which brought over the group. For the third summer, Creative Time has opened the Anchorage site for both installations and performances, in addition to sponsoring a number of similarly innovative projects on public sites.



While its methods of assembling sound objects recall those of industrial noise bands, Bow Gamelan's visual emphasis, evident both in the arrangement of objects and the effects produced, does not. Lit only by the ensemble's display, the vault's enormous 50 ft. ceiling and brick walls flared with flames and sparks. An assortment of hubcaps glowed like a Christmas tree against the rear wall.

We were warned that the show might appear dangerous, but the group's obvious carefulness precluded it. I would trust these people with a blow torch in my mother's living room. Nor are the noises the three members create with engine part, vacuum tubing or steel pipes, ever really assaulting; and at the beginning, cars blasting by outside threatened to overwhelm the sound of glass ping to the floor. (This is New York going on July 4, when you've got to get used to stepping around exploding fireworks in the streets.)

While the startling effects range from art-show to rock-show beauty, the lack of structure meant that the work failed to develop any strong contours as a performance. Its spectacle had overtones of a show-and-tell demonstration and was ultimately engaging on this level, like a generous helping from some tea-party buffet spread of industrial delights.

Creative Time also hosts the

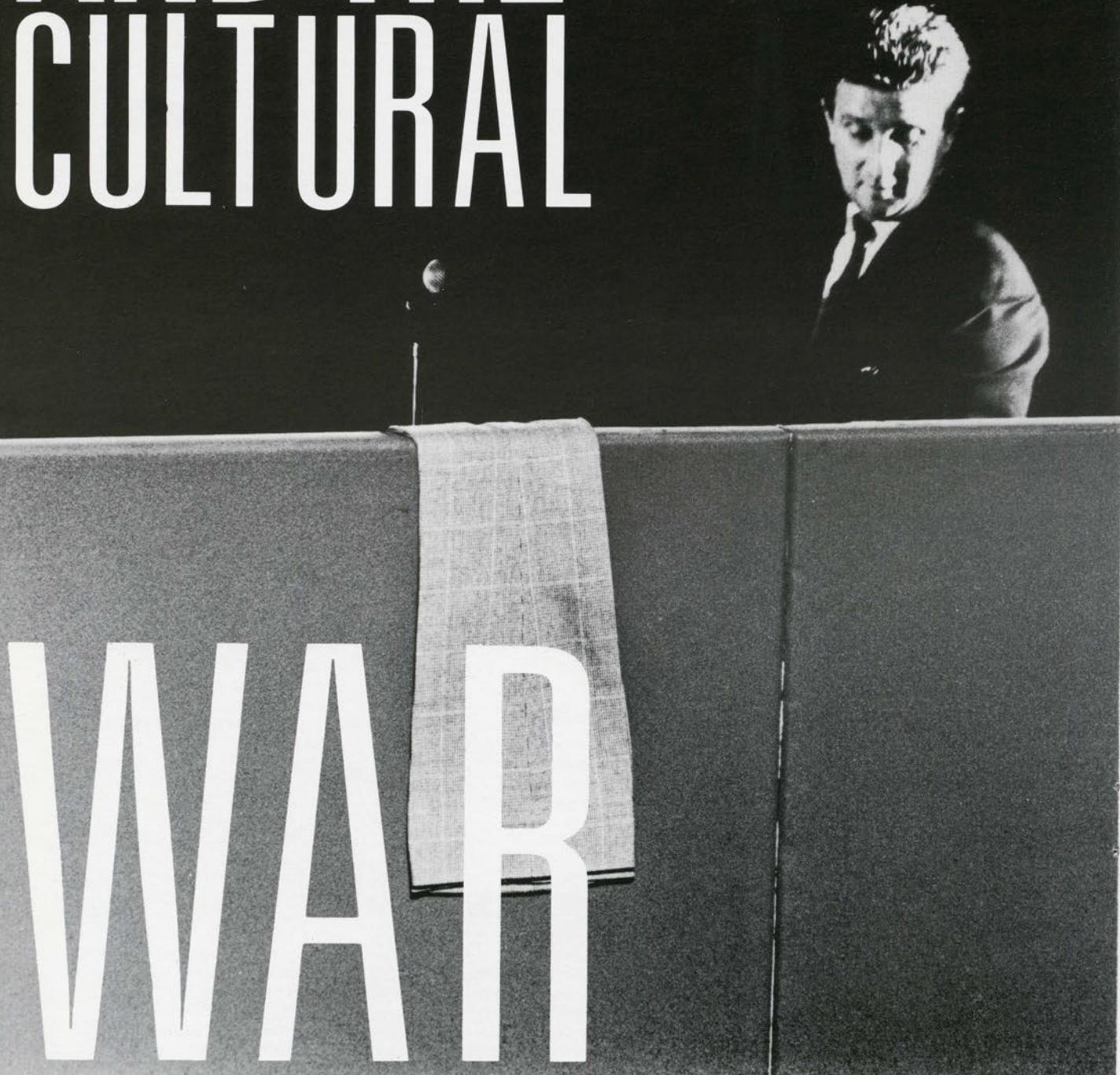
annual summertime *Art on the Beach* events down at the Battery Park landfill. For the past 8 years, and this year for the last time, artists in various disciplines have collaborated on projects that combine installations with live performances on this sand-covered site, where audiences can hang out and watch the sun set over New Jersey. The quirky and fascinating results have included a parade, and a cocktail party invaded by pirates from the river.

Inevitably, many projects end up battling with if not overwhelmed by the physical nature of the site. First there's all the sand; then there's the imposing Wall Street skyline as a backdrop, topped by the World Trade Centre's twin towers. Now, the site itself is about to be swallowed up, a victim of urban redevelopment in the form of Battery Park City, a monolithic multi-use complex.

This year, the landfill is fenced in and smaller than ever, but the list of ten collaborations includes such noted performance types as choreographers John Bernd and Yoshiko Chuma, and club diva Ann Magnuson. One project features six small moveable vacation homes for the future and a mysterious 'dead body' whose story the audience has to reconstruct. Autumn will bring together as many past performers as possible in one last performance bash; then it's goodbye to beach parties in Manhattan. **CB**

McLean and *Another Bad Turn Up* —  
Saatchis not amused

# BRUCE MCLEAN AND THE CULTURAL



# WAR

Photo: Chris Harris

**Hot on the heels of Gilbert and George comes a performance artist whose paintings have become an internationally marketable commodity. But unlike them, he has not given up live performance work, and is also very much an active member of the artists community. His views are no less controversial, though, and to back them up he was recently to be seen in full post-modern swagger with bright red boxing gloves among the tourists at the Tate. CHRISIE ILES jumps into the ring with him:**

**CHRISIE ILES:** Why have you started making live works again?

**BRUCE MCLEAN:** Well I never really stopped, but I stopped making big ones.

**CI:** Why?

**BM:** Because I kept having problems collaborating with people.

**CI:** What sort of problems?

**BM:** Well, just personality problems. I'm quite hard to work with, because I don't know what I'm doing.

**CI:** But you'd always rather collaborate with other people than do solo work?

**BM:** I've done a lot of solo pieces, but it's much more interesting to work with other people I think. It shifts the thing into another . . . It becomes something you can't quite control, which I quite like.

**CI:** So why have you started again now? Have you found a new confidence in being able to work collaboratively with other people?

**BM:** Well, I don't just go to a studio, as you know, and just work every day; I don't work like that. I work when I feel I need to do something. I felt the need to make a piece of work about something which I felt was in the air. The idea was to make a piece about the cultural war which is being fought, which I started thinking about, then it disappeared slightly, but I'm still interested in it because the way I work is that I start with an idea of one thing and it adds and adds and it goes down a bit then it comes back again; it's all the same thing really but more bits get added and bits get forgotten, and I'm trying to make a film about that now.

What's happened is that the guy I'm making the film with used to be in the bands Nice Style the pose band 'Nice Style' — Gary . . . when he saw the performance piece at the Tate he said — oh God, this is a clue to how we can make the film; he's thinking perhaps we should use parts of the structure in the film, so it goes.

**CI:** When you work with other people are you still very much the one in control?

**BM:** No, I've not always been that way.

**CI:** So it is truly collaborative in the way ideas get developed?

**BM:** Well, in this last piece David Ward contributed a lot to that.

**CI:** But it's always seen as your work, isn't it? Bruce Mclean . . . and whoever.

**BM:** 'Nice Style' was always put out as being my group, but it wasn't my group, that was completely wrong. When I did the piece with Bill Furlong it was his and my piece together. He wrote it really, I just did the sets. The film with Gary Chitty will be a total collaboration.

Partnership. I just wish there was more of that really. It's happening in the rock world. I really like the thing

between Mick Jagger and David Bowie. I don't even like Bowie and I'd gone off Mick Jagger, but the two of them together makes some funny kind of thing occur which is quite interesting. Everyone's got so separate, playing the star, being this and that, I think it's much better to work together.

**CI:** I think the danger of collaboration sometimes is that two people or however many are brought together to work and quite often there is no true interaction; it's like different groups who meet at a party and never quite communicate. When it does happen and that cross-over area in the middle really is there, it's really strong, I think.

**BM:** That's right. You can't invent it.

**CI:** It's a question of chemistry.

**BM:** That's right. I get on really well with Paul Richards and we work very well. We've fought like hell too, but we can all work together, because we can make something else occur, sometimes.

**CI:** Do you think if you work in that way there is a danger of ideas getting dissipated?

**BM:** Yes. I made a piece at Riverside with Paul Richards called *The Masterwork — the Award Winning Fishknife* which I think was a disaster; because the ideas did get dissipated. We put the piece together as a book, spent a year doing this big book, fantastic thing, a big thick score which we worked on. I think the collaboration was putting the book together . . . he might not agree with me . . . it was fantastic, we worked extremely well, we ended up with five copies of this book. The mistake we made was to try and take that score and make it occur. We should have ended it there and gone our separate ways and done something else. But we tried to do it and that was a mistake. But I would be very interested to try and stage it again. I'd like to do it again the way it really was envisaged; I don't know if you saw it but it didn't turn out anything like what it was supposed to be like, in my opinion anyway. It wasn't a total disaster, I mean we packed the place for a week which is something.

**CI:** You've done a lot of work abroad, in Europe. Have you considered going to America?

**BM:** No. I don't really want to go to America very much.

**CI:** Why not?

**BM:** I don't like it.

**CI:** You align yourself much more with Europe.

**BM:** Yes. Elvis never came here. He didn't! He actually arrived in Prestwick in Scotland when the plane refuelled on the way to Germany.

**CI:** Do people abroad receive your performances in a different way to British audiences?

**BM:** Yes.

**CI:** How?

**BM:** They take it more seriously.

**CI:** Why do you think they do that?

**BM:** I don't know . . . they just take everyone's work more seriously. They don't look at an artist and think this person is trying it on. They might be trying it on but they don't ever assume it. They're not stupid, but they assume that if this artist has made a painting then s/he's not pissing around. They may like or not like it but they believe it should be serious and they talk to the artist very seriously.

**CI:** How do British people receive your work?

**BM:** They don't take it seriously at all. They think it's some sort of rip-off, that you're trying to con people. They do! People think that.

**CI:** Apart from taking the work more seriously, do you think people abroad have a different approach to performance work?

**BM:** They're more intrigued. They're interested, they don't want to know what it means, they don't want to understand it, they're just kind of baffled, they have opinions about it and just a very different attitude about it all.

**CI:** Do you find it easier to do live work abroad because of that?

**BM:** Yes. I made a lot of performances in Germany which were quite funny and everyone was quite funny about them. It's very hard to work in this country because most people in this country, in institutions particularly don't take it seriously either. They don't know what it is. They have no real feeling for it or understanding of what the hell's going on, so they don't get the best out of the artist either. Everyone starts to get a bit cynical about it all. I'm not at all cynical about it. The performance festivals seem to have died off a bit. There used to be a lot happening in Vienna. There's more mess abroad. Have you ever been to Documenta? The last one was terrible. It was organised by Rudi Fuchs. It was all clean and neat. I like him, but . . . The last one was organised by Swargg . . . whatever his name was, a big guy, my age but fat, big, levis shirt, unshaven, and the place was in complete chaos, it was wonderful, Joseph Beuys with cables and Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman playing a piece in the street and TV — it was just fantastic. Everyone was taking it seriously.

**CI:** Why do you think it's so neat and tidy in the art world in Britain? It's not at all messy here is it?

**BM:** No . . . well, I'm not English, which makes a difference actually. I'm Scottish, which is slightly different, I'm more messy and I've been around a lot, in these countries for some time, since I was quite

'It's not just pomegranates on a plate'

young, looking at shows and things, so I'm more confident about things.

I would like to see more live things, more people talking to each other, more people doing things together. The Basement Group do a lot of good work.

**CI:** But there's no encouragement for young artists to do that nowadays is there? The art school situation is getting worse and worse, people are being encouraged to be more successful, have a career, be more pragmatic. The climate isn't so conducive to that kind of activity is it?

**BM:** People go to art school to have a career in art. I didn't set out to have a career in art. That's what Julian Schnabel etc do, they're all art careerists, not artists. They're interesting characters and do interesting things, but it's all worked out strategically... if I make a show in Japan then I've conquered that bit, then I'll come round here and do this...

**CI:** Cultural war strategy...

**BM:** Yes. I don't think like that. If someone asks me to do something if I want to do it I'll do it, if I don't, I won't do it. I'll do some really stupid things and some really good things. What I think is so irritating about these students... you'll see a big change in the next few years... the students now are very conservative; and they want to be introduced to whoever. I can do that — but they need to make their own situation. The music thing has made its own situation.

They're keeping all the students out of art schools who would benefit from going there, they're keeping the wild ones out.

**CI:** It's partly the structure; you have to have A levels and be academic.

**BM:** That's right. But most people who have a brain in their heads; most of the people who are artists are bright, but who wants to do A levels? I got expelled because I refused to do them.

**CI:** What is the relationship between your performance work and your other work, painting and sculpture? It's always very linked. Do you create performances in the same way that you create paintings; you feel the need to do it so you do it? That you're just starting to do it again now is interesting because although you have a consistent body of performance work, in 1985 you are more known for your paintings.

**BM:** Well, that's just me being perverse I suppose... no, not really perverse; the painting was a way out. There's a lot of confusion about this. I mean, people say that all the best painting work is directly related to some sort of performance, and it isn't really painting as such, its just drawings, big notebooks, sketches, which some of them were and are,

but some of them aren't. Some of them are things in their own right, but the actual way they're made, if you watch me make one, is that they're made like a performance. I get a whole lot of canvasses and paint and stuff, I have an idea and I go for it and just work till I stop, then chuck most of it away and save a few. I've always been very interested in... I don't know if you remember the time... I'm a sculptor, that's what I am. I went to St Martins to become a sculptor and to understand what sculpture might be about, and everything I've done since has been an extension of what sculpture can be about. I'm also interested in architecture as I think its part and parcel of sculpture, dealing with space and light and social concerns and political concerns... its not just pomegranates on a plate.

**CI:** In 1972 you said that you were going to give up art. In 1979 you said that you said so because you wanted to work away from the restrictions of the art world, and that you wanted to work in a neutral situation without the stamp of approval from the art world. How do you feel about that in relation to the context in which you're working now? Where you're producing work in the Tate, which is the biggest art establishment in the country, how does that relate to your old ideas?

**BM:** I just keep on contradicting myself. I think that the reason that I or anyone can be whatever they are — an artist or whatever — is that they can do what they like. Not irresponsibly do what you like, but you can do what you like when you like. I mean, we're not bank clerks. I did give it up, but people say in retrospect, 'Oh, that's just a strategy you employed.' I've never employed strategies. People do employ strategies... I've made so many fuck-ups; you may not have heard of them all, but I've made some incredibly disastrous things...! But something always occurs from that disaster, you always learn something from it.

**CI:** But, from wanting to go and work away from the art establishment, and always being very critical of it in your work, you are very much a part of it now. You're accepted, you're an internationally well known and very successful artist. Does that mean that your ideas of six years ago have changed because of that?

**BM:** No, not at all.

**CI:** So you don't feel any conflict.

**BM:** No, there isn't. I mean, I showed at the Tate in 1972; I made a retrospective there.

**CI:** But are you still seeking that kind of credibility from elsewhere?

**BM:** What credibility?

**CI:** Well, you said in 1972 that you were seeking a credibility from

outside the art world, that you wanted your work to be seen by people outside the art world.

**BM:** The thing was, I got so pissed off with these people who called themselves artists and all the people surrounding this thing that quite frankly I don't feel a lot of sympathy for these so-called people who call themselves artists. I don't have many friends who are so-called artists. I just always thought that the activity of being a writer or an artist was an activity where you made something and put it out in front, you externalised it and people looked at it. And what's always pissed me off is not the people who look at it, but the people who get in the way, between the person who's made the bloody thing and the person who's looking at it. There's layers of shit between that. And that's what always annoyed me. It was the galleries and the institutions and all these people got on my tits basically. And they still do, absolutely. But the thing is I'm only interested in making work more available — not just my work, everybody's work — more accessible. The problem with this place (Riverside Studios) is that everybody moans that they can't get the local community in. But the local community round here are rather intelligent, and perceptive, and they don't want to come in and eat pretty inferior food and drink rather inferior beer. So there's immediately a barrier; you know, its Moong Bean Bake and Noodle Hawaiian, so there's a snotty attitude about the whole thing which I detest, I still detest it, even more now. I mean, I've just made a show at the Tate, but I could make another show about how that show at the Tate came to be. There's a lot of pressure, not from the very head of the thing, but there's a lot of pressure from that institution for me not to have been there, because they don't really think that somebody who, for one thing, comes from a working class

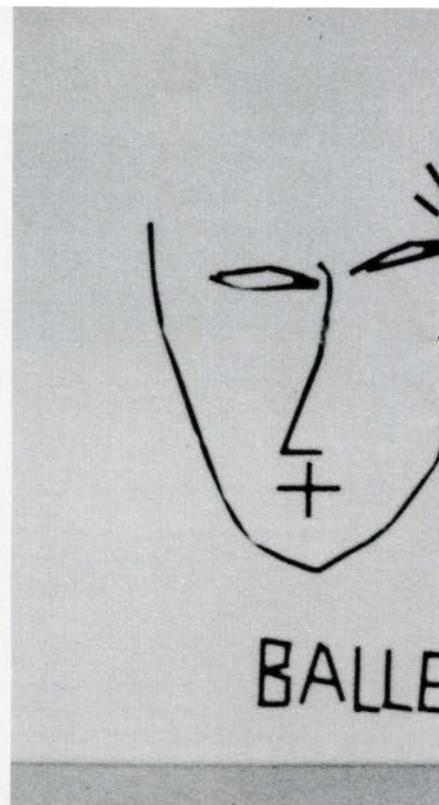
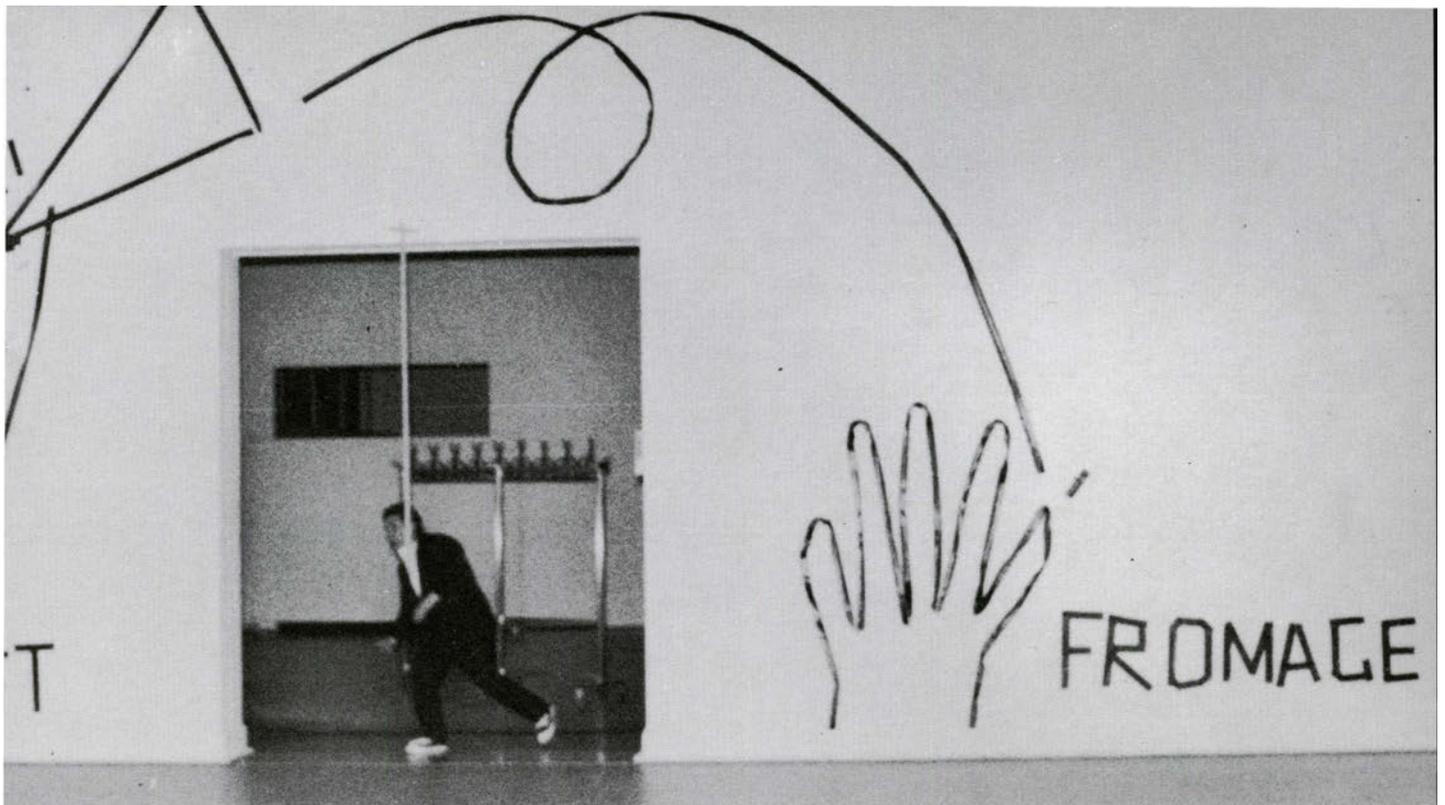


Photo: Andreas Horlitz



background — which actually isn't true — should be seen in that kind of context, 'at the Tate'. No, I'm pretty angry still.

**CI:** A lot of people say that your work is, to quote Mario Amaya in the Art Palace catalogue, a 'hedonistic celebration of life'. Is that true; I mean you do get angry about things.

**BM:** I do get angry, but you can celebrate something . . . I don't like Francis Bacon's paintings very much at all, but he celebrates what it is he's painting about; whether its a man and a lavatory pan or whatever there's a celebration. I like living; I'm enthusiastic. I made a lot of funny and serious paintings which were colourful and people said they were jokey, which they are quite, I mean I hope they have some humour in them, but also I hope they're about issues which are affecting us all a bit more.

**CI:** Like what?

**BM:** Well, like the cultural war which is going on; there is a cultural war.

**CI:** Between whom?

**BM:** Countries; various countries. I mean, Germany has no army; all they can do is fight a war with culture. And France have wakened up to the fact and are ploughing so much money into Paris again. It's political. Britain of course is so stupid, that they don't do anything. Perhaps that's a good thing. In America, they invented Julian Schnabel — a German name — it's true. He wanted to be a big star, they made him a big star and he made the tour up through from Sicily all the way up through Italy, through Germany and ended up with a show at the Tate. And it was all contrived. I made a piece about that you know, in 1982, called *Another Bad Turn-up*. The one based on this was the one which upset one or two people. It was a big warship with big lights and a big head, and I was walking up and down smoking a pipe like a smoke screen talking about Charlie Saatchi's trouser turn-up. He wasn't amused.

Mrs Saatchi was not amused. It wasn't just about his turn-up, it was about the whole manoeuvring of people. He's set himself up as this and then people all move round him. He and his wife thought it was an attack on him only. Well, it wasn't an attack on him, it was an attack on the whole thing. It's like if he pops up, at a big place with lots of artists, all the artists would pop up, and I don't see why artists should jump just because he comes in, I wouldn't bloody jump just because he comes in — he's a nice guy but you have to retain a certain kind of freedom.

**CI:** How do you think your performance work has changed?

**BM:** I don't think it has changed!

**CI:** You don't think it has? Not at all? Not since 1965? You're still dealing with the same issues and for the same reasons?

**BM:** Not the same issues, no. Well, slightly, I suppose. I think its got more complicated, in parts.

**CI:** Do you think that the fact that you're older and more successful has had any effect?

**BM:** I've always been successful! I don't feel any different now than I felt 20 years ago, about success. I don't have any money; I still live in the same place. I've always had a little bit of attention; I don't know why; just maybe because of the energy, because I've got no talent. I learnt that very early on.

**CI:** Do you think that performance is relevant as a mode of expression now?

**BM:** Yes I do, but I think that what . . . when I was at St Martins I had a friend called Andy Hall in Birmingham who used to look at the same art magazines as I did. He and I got influenced by Robert Morris, who made a piece called *Sight* with Carolee Schneeman. We saw a photograph; someone had been to America and brought it back, and we thought, oh that looks quite interesting, so we started to do some live pieces then. I'd actually made a

piece in Glasgow before I came to London but the thing that we were doing was trying to extend what we thought sculpture could be, it wasn't like sculpture was an object which went there and you wandered around it and looked at it. We thought we could be the sculpture, that was all, and Gilbert and George of course became living sculptures, they started all about the same time.

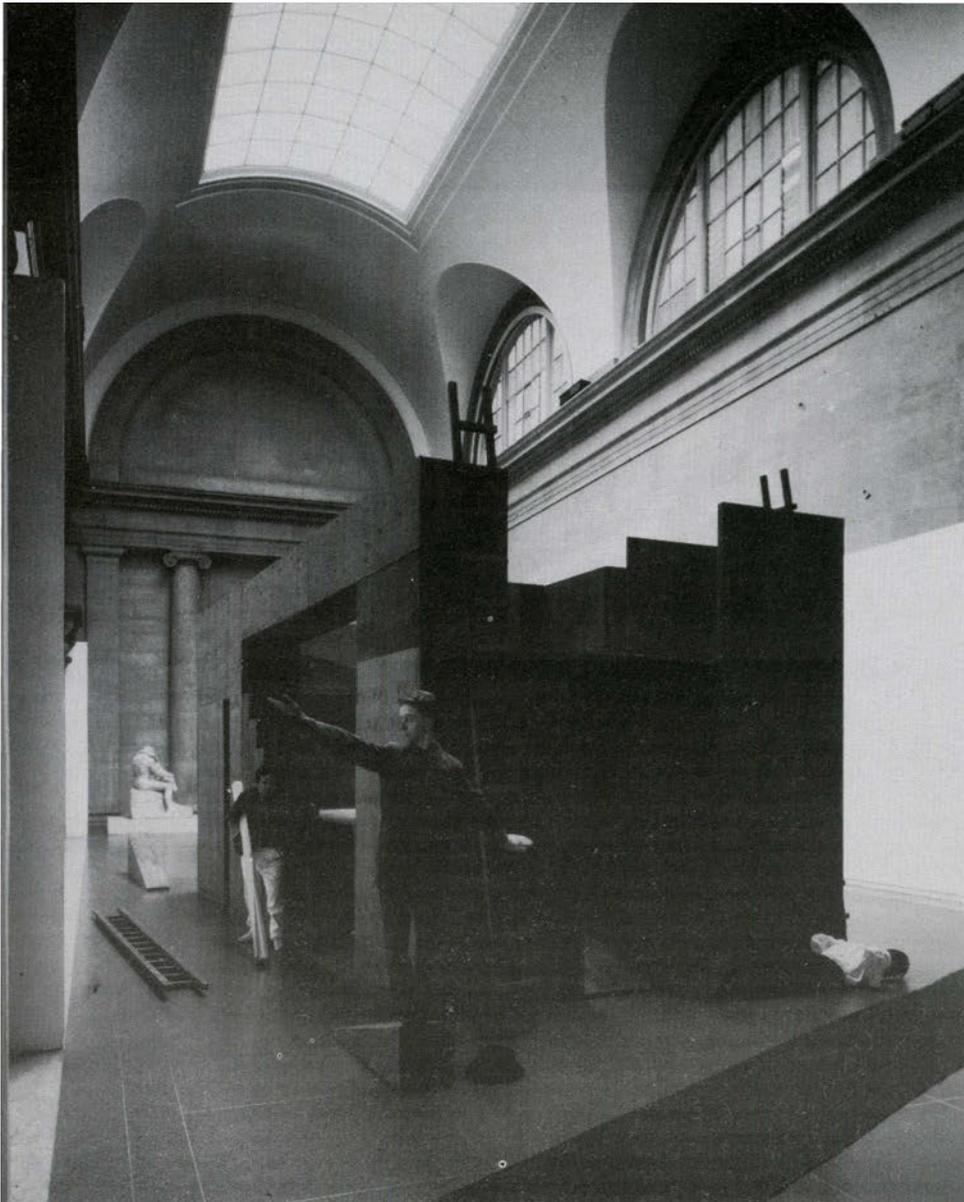
**CI:** And now, in 1985, now that all that's passed and people have gone through the performance of the 70's and all that . . .

**BM:** Well, we never called it performance. This was an Arts Council term, when they suddenly realised that there were a lot of people doing it and people were applying for grants, they then called it performance art grant or something. It was called actions or events — well, you know this yourself. I mean I never actually called anything I've done a performance. I've called it a dance, or a procedure, or a statement, or an action, or an act, or a poem, or something, anything to avoid it being called that, quite deliberately.

**CI:** But now with the so-called return to painting and the new spirit movement of the early eighties, and the general move away from the seventies kind of work, do you think that performance is still relevant?

**BM:** Yes I do, but in a different sort of way. The thing I'm interested in is I like the cinema (I don't go very often) and I like certain kinds of theatre, non-theatrical theatre, not the papier mache-Turn-Again-Dick kind of theatre, but theatre made by artists. I like the look of Robert Wilson's stuff that I've seen. Because he's coming from an architectural background. And it seems to be very theatrical in a non-theatrical way than anything I've seen in the theatre. But I do actually think its incredibly important to have a live form.

**CI:** But it's not really taken seriously ▶



**'I just made this big blue box which is like a big blue monument of authority'**

in this country by the art world is it? **BM:** No, it's not, but I tell you what, what we're going to do here, and it might help the whole think if you print this, is quite interesting. In New York, for example, a lot of friends of mine will suddenly go out because Robert Wilson or somebody will suddenly appear and there'll be a benefit for Simon Forte, and Laurie Anderson and all these people will turn up and they'll hire a hall and do something. And everyone will turn up. And we're going to do that here; a benefit for Audio Arts. Because they're having some technical difficulties with their equipment; it needs replacing. So I thought we might organise a benefit, an Audio Arts disco or something stupid, get a load of performance art people who've never actually been together before, certainly here in this country here together to see what happens. I was in a Young Contemporaries thing in the 70's looking for 'expanded media' and there were all these kids saying 'Oh, we can't get any money to do our performance at the ICA'. I said, you don't have to have any, just come in, chop your arm off and there you go, or pick your whatever. You just can do it. That's what I quite like about it. You can set the situation up very cheaply.

But all the younger artists seem to be wanting to show at Anthony D'Offay, Nigel Greenwood, they can't just take the alcove here and make something, they could make work under the table but they want to . . .

**CI:** But there's more of a pressure to be successful and make money; they're worried, because so many art students leave art school and don't do anything with it afterwards; they just disappear.

**BM:** Do you think they all do?

**CI:** I think most of them do, performance artists included. There's more of a pressure than ever to be seen and be successful and to take your work round to Edward Totah, etc.

**BM:** Yes, but they don't want to know. The thing is where is the new generation? Anthony D'Offay, Nigel Greenwood, Edward Totah and all those people are all the same age roughly as me, the same generation. Where are the ones of Hercules Fisherman's age group? Where are they?

**CI:** Do you think that dealers are interested in artists who do performance?

**BM:** Anthony D'Offay is interested in me because I do, yes.

**CI:** Obviously he's interested in you, because you make paintings.

**BM:** No, no.

**CI:** What does he think of your performance work?

**BM:** He's very keen that I do it. I think he would rather I did more, actually.

**CI:** Really?

**BM:** Yes, which might sound the opposite of what you might have thought.

**CI:** Is that not partly for the purpose of PR?

**BM:** No, not at all. He thinks that's where the work is coming from, which is probably right, and he thinks it strengthens it, and I think he's more interested in it.

**CI:** What was the piece at the Tate about?

**BM:** It was to do with the mood in the country now, which is one thing or the other, either 'Good morning' or (hits fist). There's nothing in between. So there's three people in the thing and there's another guy who watches it, I'm supposed to be, well you can see, slightly violent, the other guy is supposed to be good mannered, that's not clear enough yet, but there is that terrible atmosphere, and I actually think that the country has gone beyond getting back to any kind of sanity. Did you know we were severely beaten up in the street the other day? . . . Anyway, so I just made this big blue box which is like a big blue monument of authority, this lump of blue, with a few holes in it, it looks like a temple, that was the idea, and we were all behaving in that, running around in that's all, quite simple. And I think that what's happening is a real problem. Don't you?

**CI:** I agree.

**BM:** I actually think it's gone so far it won't get back. I can't ever see a Socialist government getting in . . .

**CI:** You complain that you're always expected to act the clown, but you use satire and humour; how do you want people to see your work?

**BM:** I don't mind that . . . I don't want them to be depressed; provoked slightly, but not depressed. I wished they were more joyful, and funnier really. I don't think they're funny at all.

**CI:** Your paintings?

**BM:** No, not funny, or even satirical. I don't really. I can be if I want to be but I don't think I am.

**CI:** It may partly be the way that you work, but there is always a slight feeling that . . .

**BM:** That I'm pissing around?

**CI:** Not exactly . . . and not that it's not serious . . . but that there is a kind of slightly tongue-in-cheek edge to it.

**BM:** There is and there isn't. The title of that (the Tate flag) is the most important thing: *Towards the Construction of a Grey Flag*.

**CI:** None of it's grey.

Photo: Chris Harris

**BM:** No; well, a bit of it's grey.

**CI:** Why is it called the *Construction of a Grey Flag*?

**BM:** Because there's this desire by certain elements in this country it seems to bring everything down to its most common denominator and obliterate things . . . something like that. It's all political. No-one picks up on it you see. It's all to do with . . . exit the reds, blue flag, red flag, white splash, enter the linoleum, that sort of thing.

**CI:** Your performances are quite contained aren't they; they never actually really challenge the audience or really push them in any way.

**BM:** No. I'm not interested in that. Not in that aggressive way, no. I can't stand it when someone starts to annoy me. Someone had an idea to ask me to do a performance at the Tate, so I said great, because I like that space, it's a nice hall, this is not an excuse . . . we could have made it louder . . . LOUDER. I just think its OK if I'm at this age to be farting round at the Tate!

**CI:** Do you think that this new spirit idea, the 'return to painting', has had a strong effect on performance work?

**BM:** I don't know. You see, the think that gets me down, and I have to say this, is I just got . . . I was the only person, along with I guess Sigmund Polke, in that New Spirit show who actually started making things again. The other people had always been painters.

**CI:** Why did you start making paintings again?

**BM:** I'll tell you how that happened. I started doing that in 1975, round at Fair Road studios. I had been making performances with *Nice Style* then I did another performance with Bill Furlong and then something else, and making drawings just for that, and I thought — hey, I used to like drawing, I don't do any drawing, I used to like doing things, why don't I do something? But I can't do that, I'm an ex conceptual artist going into live art, I can't do anything like that. I used to type things out in black and white, making xeroxes and making little piles of text . . . and I thought, this isn't me, it's a load of old crap, I hate this, I'm going to get a big brush and a stick and make some drawings. I started to make some drawings for performances and what they might look like . . . big things, and that's how I started drawing, and I thought this is good fun! Then I got caught up in this 'New Image' thing. I got caught up in it, I mean . . . How did it happen? I made something in Zurich, a show called *A Certain Smile*, and they said we liked this, it was very funny, we liked it very much, would you like to come back in October and do something else? So I thought, well I can't go back and do another live work, that would just

be boring, I've done one, I like to keep changing, just for the sake of change, and I'd been making all these coloured drawings of old performances, so I took them across and showed them, and they just couldn't believe it . . . big drawings . . . they sold the bloody lot. They couldn't work it out; it was like something completely new to them, because it wasn't painting, but it was to do with the positioning of things. That's when I got lumbered in with Clemente, because they knew of Clemente down there and all that, I mean, I have painted pictures, years ago, but I'm not a painter, and that's really what happened. And I quite liked that. But I think I'm painting myself out of it. Also, at the moment, I'm actually making big ceramic plates, not for the wall, to eat from. I thought . . . there's all these things

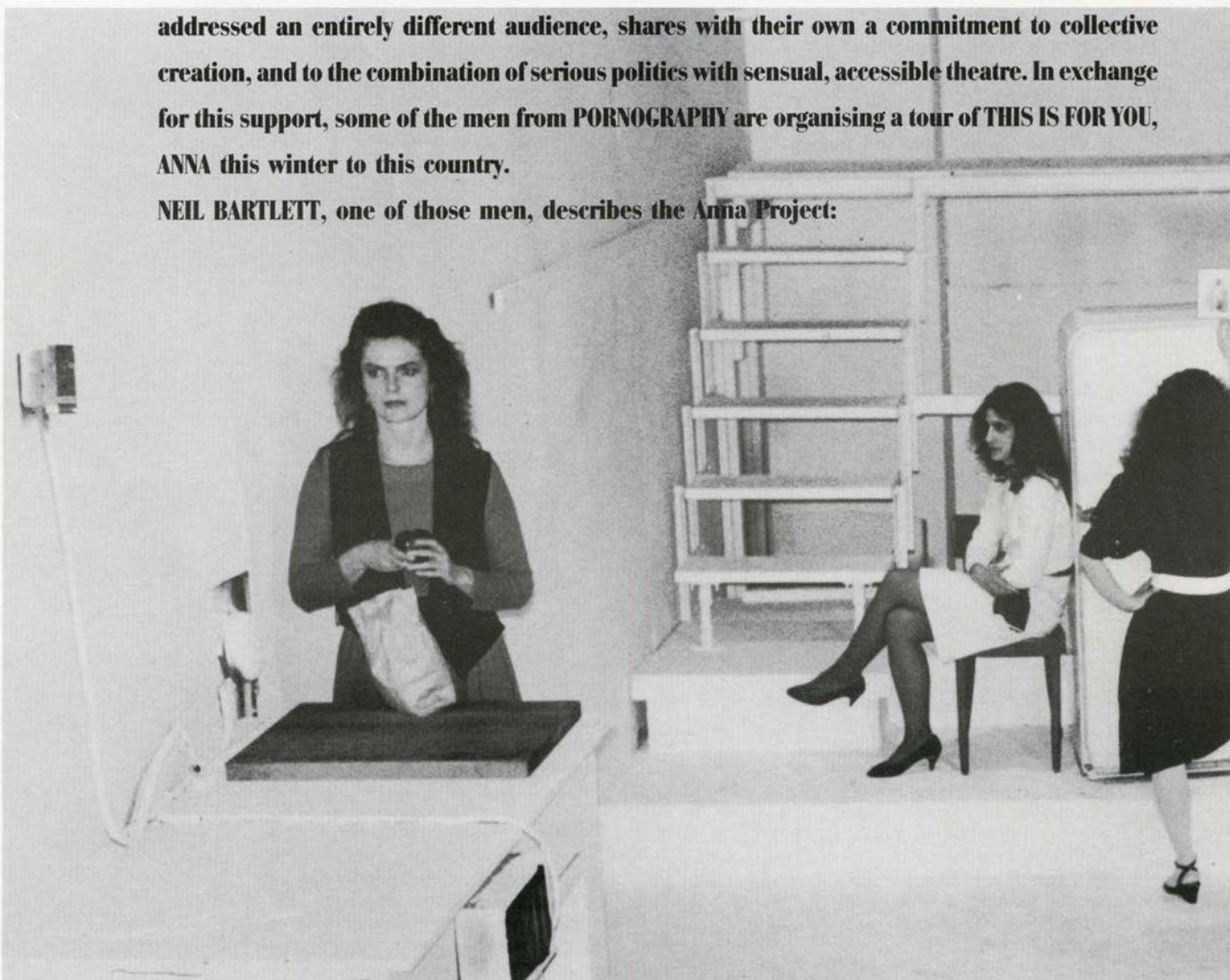
that artists used to do, which all sounds a bit arty farty now, commissioned works, etc. There's all these rules laid down in the sixties, things you couldn't do and wouldn't do; it was very heavy going. And it seemed that what artists were doing was making a series of rules and restrictions on themselves that they could operate within, you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that, all you could do was go 'nonono' on a typewriter, 'I said no at 12.45 on Monday', I'm going to make one mark on the wall for the next six years. That means you can avoid having to think about what you're doing, you've done your day's work. That was perpetuated by a lot of stupid people who thought they were artists, and I just got fed up with it. I thought, I'm going to do anything; curtain material if I fancy it. ●

'Then I got caught up in this "New Image" thing . . .'



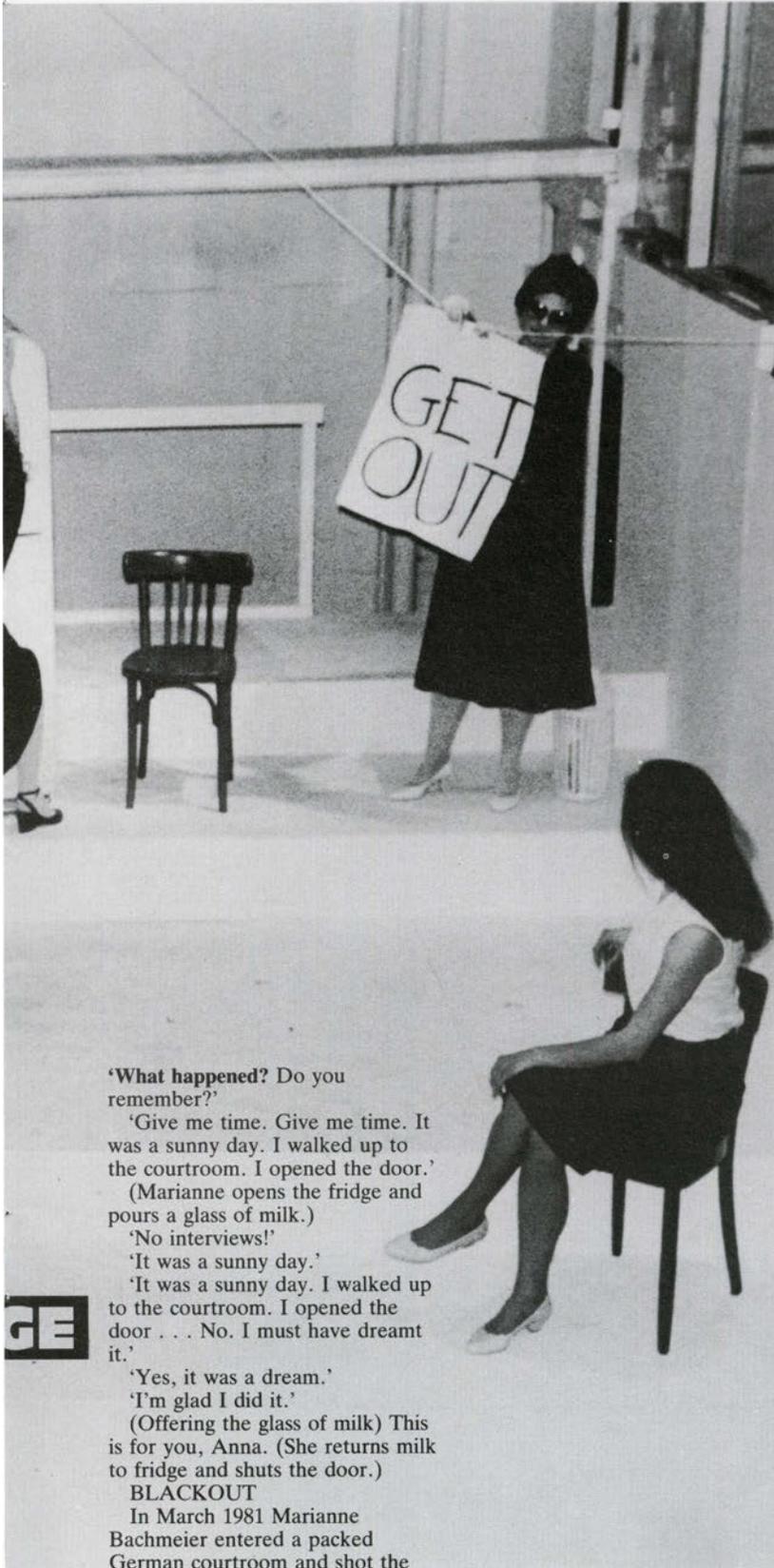
**In March 1985 the women of the Anna Project provided the support to take the British gay male performance piece PORNOGRAPHY to Canada. They booked the theatre, hustled the money and publicity and organised the publicity, because they felt connected to a project which, although it addressed an entirely different audience, shares with their own a commitment to collective creation, and to the combination of serious politics with sensual, accessible theatre. In exchange for this support, some of the men from PORNOGRAPHY are organising a tour of THIS IS FOR YOU, ANNA this winter to this country.**

**NEIL BARTLETT, one of those men, describes the Anna Project:**



# **THIS IS FOR YOU, ANNA**

**A SPECTACLE OF REVENGE**



'What happened? Do you remember?'

'Give me time. Give me time. It was a sunny day. I walked up to the courtroom. I opened the door.'

(Marianne opens the fridge and pours a glass of milk.)

'No interviews!'

'It was a sunny day.'

'It was a sunny day. I walked up to the courtroom. I opened the door . . . No. I must have dreamt it.'

'Yes, it was a dream.'

'I'm glad I did it.'

(Offering the glass of milk) This is for you, Anna. (She returns milk to fridge and shuts the door.)

BLACKOUT

In March 1981 Marianne Bachmeier entered a packed German courtroom and shot the

man who murdered her daughter, Anna. She shot him seven times.

She said, 'I did it for you, Anna.'

In March 1983 a picture of a gently smiling Marianne Bachmeier appeared in the TORONTO STAR. Underneath the picture the Star printed the caption 'She showed no flicker of emotion as she left the courtroom.'

## ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL JUST LIKE YOU, ANNA

In May 1985 five Toronto women took the story of Marianne Bachmeier, intercut it with stories of avenging women, real women, fantastic women, themselves, and created a twenty minute performance which was the first version of the current work. The performance was part of the Women's Perspective festival, and was created for a converted warehouse space, and was sponsored by Nightwood Theatre, Toronto's oldest and strongest women's theatre. The history of the show since then has been a model of effective alternative production. Using Nightwood as a platform the women obtained funding from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council — this is *not* an English story, but a Canadian one — and toured the piece to womens shelters, prisons, community centres, small and large theatres. In each venue they have met and talked to their audience. The collective of performers has expanded to embrace a stage manager and administrator with strong feminist community connections. The strength of that community has provided a base from which the women have felt free to travel; the piece is constantly evolving, the formal changes inseparable from the changes necessitated by the deliberate variety of audience.

'Some nights we performed for a theatre audience, other nights in the kitchen of women's shelter. The women would gather with popcorn

She showed no flicker of emotion

Photo: Anna Project

## A SPECTACLE OF REVENGE

and children in their laps, ready for a good time. They would laugh more than any other audience, (except those in prisons) and it was the laughter of recognition. One night, sitting in the corner was a woman who didn't laugh, whose eyes were drugged and whose face was black and blue — she was a recent arrival. In the shelters, we had audiences made up of every race, and many classes, whereas our audiences in the theatre were nearly uniformly white. Said one woman, wrapped tightly in her dressing gown, 'Now I can say, I don't go to the theatre, the theatre comes to me.'

'We researched. We studied B-movies such as *The Big Heat*. We watched too many films about women battered to the edge of despair. We listened to too many horror stories. We consulted with policemen and rape crisis workers. Whereas in 1983 we were angry and volatile, by 1984 we were very concerned not to endorse violence, to make clear that we do not idolise Marianne.'

A show can only survive and grow for two and a half years if the commitment behind it is both clear and solid. The women of the ANNA collective know exactly what they're doing. They are trying to systematically clarify what it means to create a female theatre, a theatre of rather than about women, a theatre which is formally female; and they are trying to create an administrative structure which recognises that any such theatre cannot have a single home. They don't see the aesthetic dedication which the first objective requires as being contradicted by the messy, practical flexibility which the second requires.

'When we first did the show in a theatre, and then we told people we were going to take it to women's centres they said but you can't do that, not the same show, those women don't go to theatres, and you can't do an imagistic show, you have to change it. Of course we didn't.'

'The piece is dedicated to Anna, it's a present for her. But in her absence, who is the piece actually intended for?'

'I think that above all it's for a women's audience. Though it doesn't want to be that exclusively, it's very much thinking about what women want to see. If it's for Anna, it's for a girl who

experienced violence at the hands of a man — there's no woman in our audience who hasn't — I'd like to see that woman who hasn't experienced some form of coercion or been terrorised by men. It is for all women the most *exciting* audience for us has been the women's shelter audience.'

'At our last show in the theatre in Ottawa a woman spoke up about her situation. It was worth doing it all, just for that.'

'But really, the audience we'd really like is all the women who are sitting at home with the television, who can't get to the theatre.'

**WHAT DID THEY EXPECT? DID THEY WANT A PICTURE OF ME CRYING AND TEARING OUT MY HAIR?**

Five comments on 'Feminist Theatre':

1) 'Some people say, Oh please, I'd rather watch television; I don't need to hear that story again.'

2) 'This man had a preconceived idea, that the show would be very didactic. But actually a lot of it was very emotional, he said that with surprise, as if anger isn't emotional. And I think people are surprised because they don't expect the women to be very well dressed, very beautiful, and they don't expect ever to laugh.'

3) The strangest thing about the piece is that when you describe it you have to say, well, it's this group of women talking about their own experience of violence at the hands of men, it's angry, and it's about the killing of a child. It sounds like a very heavy evening. Then what you see is tender, it's quiet, it has none of the gestures associated with anger.'

4) Company statement; 'The authors expressly forbid the graphic depiction of violence, weapons or blood in any production of this script.'

- 5) Strychnine in his coffee  
Arsenic in his tea  
Knife upon the cutting board  
Will you marry me?  
A poker would have done  
Or if she had a gun  
Or if he had a child —

**IS THIS THE FACE OF A MURDERESS?**

'I am meeting X at the airport. He is waiting for me in the rows of people at the arrivals gate. He sees me. I glare at him. He says 'hello darling . . . oh, you look as if you'd like to kill me,' and I say, 'Oh no, I'd rather kill myself . . .' BANG! I shoot him. He falls down very gracefully, in the fantastic style of dreams. Everyone at the airport turns to stare at me. End of dream. We used it in the show.'

'In our improvisations we found that we could not accept any direct emotion. If you tell me about a battered wife with direct emotion I just can't listen after twenty seconds. We had to find a different way, because in the theatre you can't leave, you can't have a cigarette while someone else is weeping, or get up and walk around.'

So, what can you show people in the theatre? A word that recurs in talking to the ANNA women about their work is SPECTACLE. What they mean is that their work doesn't 'have a message', even though it is loaded and congested with meaning. It is what you see. A cliché of visual theatre in this country is that the work must depend on something usually referred to as 'stunning images', images that are implicitly violent, since they strike and assail the viewer. This is *not* what the women mean by spectacle. They make a spectacle of themselves as women; but in an open light, not in theatrical darkness. They show you everything, rather than forcing you only to see the eye-catching, 'significant' features

of a women on stage. One thing that I could hardly believe, having just spent six months working with all male companies, and expecting a show about violence, was just how quiet the show is. The work is rivetting, full of strongly articulated anger and pain; but no one ever grabs your attention, forces you to listen, forces you to watch. The most emotional moments in the show come when an extreme intensity of feeling is communicated through the calm repetition of domestic actions; the pouring of a glass of milk, the packing and repacking of a lunchbox, thirty-one nails laid down and wrapped tidily in a cloth. None of these visual details can be reduced to a simple meaning; none of them are ever presented as anything but spectacle, something which we may calmly sit and watch. The only reason to stay and watch such a spectacle is that the performers persuade you, by their conviction, that it matters that you truly see and understand what is happening before your very eyes.

**DON'T YOU THINK MUMMY WILL LOOK NICE IN THIS, WITH A FLOWER IN HER HAIR?**

THIS IS FOR YOU, ANNA, is performed on a clean and empty white floor. Somehow the whiteness seems important. Who keeps it clean? — is she a nurse, a housewife, a mother, a barmaid? Is the whiteness going to be stained in the course of the evening — do we want these women to 'keep it clean'? The four actors, all of whom play Marianne Bachmeier, allow themselves



The calm repetition of domestic actions

to be looked at and judged just as she was. Are they trying to attract us, or are they dressed for the job — working women or provocative women? They wear tights, tight skirts, heels, good quality clothes, well made. They're all in black, white and red. Snow White. They open fridge doors, bend down to soothe a child, hang out washing, pack suitcases, tell bed-time stories and apologise; and they do it all in high heels and makeup. If they want to transform themselves into other women, they use dark glasses, a black veil, a gold rose, a china tea-cup and a basket of foil-wrapped chocolates. You begin to realise that every accessory, like every action, is female.

'How did you arrive at the way you look? What kind of women are you on stage?'

'Marianne Bachmeier was very glamorous, very beautiful. And we wanted the show to be very beautiful.'

'Why?'

'I'm tempted to say it's

because we're women. (At this point in the interview she leans closer to her tape machine and shouts at it.) BECAUSE WE'RE WOMEN. It has to do with that. I love to look at something beautiful, I'm very happy then. And even when I look at the ladies who work in offices, those women who dress up in heels to work at the office, I really identify with that, I feel more normal and part of other women when I'm dressed like that. The first thing I think of when I think of my mother is my mother leaving for a party and being dressed up, her leaning over me and kissing me.

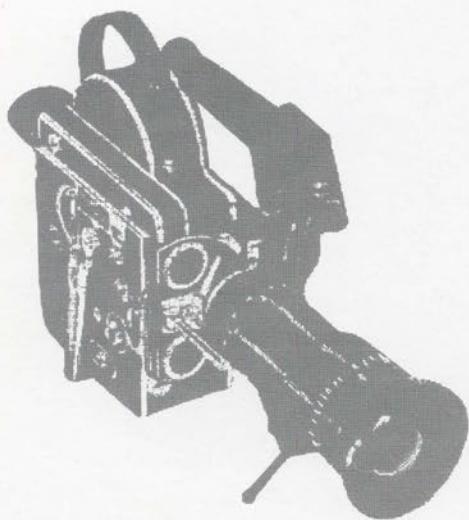
'I really want to go on the radio and say IT'S ACTUALLY A SHOW ABOUT SEX AND VIOLENCE AND THE COSTUMES ARE GORGEOUS. THE GIRLS ARE GREAT.' ●

*The Anna Project is touring Britain this winter, starting at Oval House in London.*

Photo: Anna Project

**GARY STEVENS** has long been fascinated by the performance possibilities of the double act, as was evidenced by his recent *Invisible Work*, which has provoked a lot of comment. We asked him to describe some of his research, which concentrates on Laurel and Hardy, and explain the significance of their films for live artists today:

# THINKING OF



Hardy the go-between

For many years I have looked to Laurel and Hardy films as source material for my work and these notes were written as an artist's critical appreciation of that material rather than an academic study. There is, of course, much more that could be said about them. I have simply tried to define what it is that draws me to them.

Laurel and Hardy were brought together as a team by Hal Roach in 1926, in whose studio they had been working as solo artists, in Laurel's case as both performer and director. Under Hal Roach's wing they developed their comedy personas. Although they made a smooth transition from silent to sound film (in 1929 making both silent and sound versions) their work still belongs to the silent comedy tradition and I think they were the last to really do so.

I am going to consider that tradition as not essentially silent, although silence was instrumental in determining the shape of that tradition. I do not think that the problem with sound was simply to do with the quality or suitability of the performer's voices. I think the problem was this: when the comedy persona spoke 'it' became a character. That special ambiguous status that the performer had enjoyed was lost. The nature of that ambiguous status has always intrigued me, particularly with Laurel and Hardy, and it is this problem I will try to deal with in these notes.

## THE SLAPSTICK INSULT

I will try to say briefly what I think is central to the comic tradition that Laurel and Hardy inherited. Mack Sennett (Keystone comedies) saw his films as bold insults hurled at pretension, this would characterise much silent comedy but refers specifically to slapstick. In English vaudeville comedy too, pretension was a favourite preoccupation but concerned itself more with social pretension. Working class entertainment took the manners and tastes of the upper classes as false 'airs and graces'. In America the target was more defused, and pretension became a pervasive condition; the comic victim was the man or woman in the street. The average American's liberal belief in himself as a reasonably behaved, rational individual was attacked with relish — and custard.

The hurled pie was the insult sufficient to unmask the civilised man and show him to be petty, brutal, feudal and irrational. The insult would cause the victim, now out of control, blindly to return it with interest, and so the attacks and reprisals, not wilful but mechanical, snowballed into an orgy of trouser ripping and hat crushing. The sillier the form of attack the more powerful the insult, making it apparent that its target was psychological rather than physical. The victim was shocked into a realisation of himself as an inglorious object. Slapstick plays with the stuff of



# OBJECTS

trauma; it is a pantomime rape. In slapstick clothes and possession are seen as extensions of the body and support a sense of identity. The physical insult strips these objects of their meaning and leaves the victim detached from his sense of identity, forced to face himself as a non-meaning object.

## CHARACTER/CONDITION

The silent comedy 'character' embraces both that aspect of themselves that is an object (with or without meaning) and that aspect of themselves that is a conscious agent. Within the comedy anyone not acknowledging this dichotomy is vulnerable and provokes attack. The relationship between the two aspects is varied and complex. Self-consciousness is a problem. The hero of the silent screen comedy is not someone who has solved that problem and knows himself — that would be of no comic interest — nor does he have a false idea of himself. The silent comedy hero has no idea of himself. This is fundamental to the construction of the comic character and makes it problematic to use the word 'character'. He is not simply a character in a condition, he is himself a condition. A deadpan is a poignant symptom of this condition. Identity is always an issue. The problem of identity central to the comedies makes them antithetical to melodrama. Here there is no dichotomy, the heroes are exclusively conscious agents. Self-knowledge is not an issue in the way that I have described. Thus the silent comedy hero is part character, part condition. He cannot be grasped as an individual divisible from his circumstances. He embodies the dichotomy between object and agent. He is a thinking, acting object, alien and unknown to himself. The silence holds him together.

## SILENCE AND SOUND

The problem of sound, when it came, was unresolved by many of the silent comic performers, notably Keaton and Chaplin. There is something sublime about the silent comedy hero, 'the ghost in the machine', the unreachable mind or soul. Their silence is profound. In this sense the hero has a nobility and a transcendent worth. He stands aloof. The silence of the film becomes the silence of the character. He could not stay silent with the introduction of sound, he was compelled to speak. Speech destroyed the integrity of that elusive alien presence and it became imperfect and mundane. Laurel and Hardy played upon the fragmented and soulless effect of sound. They celebrated the wordlessness and extended it to meaninglessness. Thus they took the kernel of the silent comedy tradition into sound. They pared it down and exposed its works. They were modernist in their approach, and showed an intuitive subtle understanding in the purity with which they dealt with that structure.



## WHO ARE THEY, IF ANYTHING?

For Laurel and Hardy speech is a problem in the same way that bodily expression is a problem. Laurel uses speech (thought) as just more action to bungle. Hardy's imperious utterances prepare his imminent fall. Hardy views himself as capable, knowing and masterful, which runs counter to all the evidence save the comparison with Laurel.

He began his career playing the villain or bully — the typical Chaplinesque adversary. In silent comedy the hero's antagonist is marked by a contrasting surity of who he is. The mature Hardy character draws from that formula villain to achieve quite a different effect. Laurel, on the other hand, has no pride in himself (except for short-lived glimmers), no view of himself and no desire to prove anything. He will always fare better than Hardy because he has nothing to lose. He is like a tame animal, domesticated but 'other', with two ▶

Riding into forbidden territory

basic modes, that of happy contentment or distress (hysteria or a sobbing whine). An accusation of worthlessness would produce a flicker of puzzled indignation, resignation and a vacant grin would herald the return to happy contentment.

With Chaplin's tramp, the bowler hat and cane are suggestive of social aspiration and touchingly adopted as ill-fitting symbols of respectability; the costume serves to embody a class drama. With Laurel and Hardy no social point is to be gleaned from their costume. They neither endorse the symbolic value of their bowler hats, nor do they face even a sentimentalised destitution. Their costumes are not aspirations to respectability but only inappropriately formal. The costume of Chaplin's tramp is almost fetishistic, his clothes have a symbolic and aesthetic function. Laurel and Hardy attach importance to their clothes but only as a superficial pragmatic security. It might be said of Hardy from his appearance that he is trying too hard to please, he wants to give a good impression but only has to glance at Laurel and the similarity of clothing to see that his efforts are in vain. Laurel, on the whole, is better dressed than Hardy, a perplexing sight as one cannot imagine him capable of the care, attention and concentration involved in dressing. In fact neither of them can dress themselves properly. In *Way Out West* (1937) this is celebrated in a scene where a locket has slipped down Hardy's shirt and in an effort to recover it Laurel helps him undress. Apart from the discovery and subsequent tangle with extraneous clothing, Hardy is left in a state of undress and retires with the bundle into another room. We leave him looking at the bundle on the bed, no doubt recalling the arduous task of undressing and the daunting prospect of reversing the process. After a very short space of time he bounds out of the room perfectly dressed and no more is said. Laurel's more 'English' look — bow tie and waistcoat, emphasises the impossible history of his toilet. He is inexplicably alien, his presence and appearance taunt us with their meaninglessness: the embodiment of the bold insult. Between Laurel and ourselves the more worldly Hardy acts as go-between.

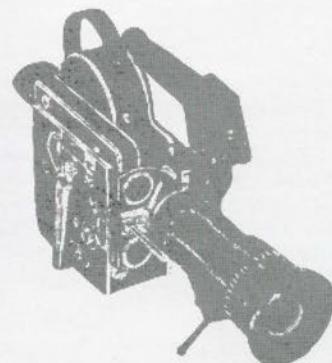
They are essentially a team, their relationship is structured rather than social. I am speaking of the

1930's sound shorts in particular, in their earlier work their identities and relationship is embryonic. The similarity of their dress establish for them a joint identity, and the differences establishes their identities in relation to one another. They have recourse to each other for their identities and on this level they are superficial but secure. The security of this mutual facade crucially co-exists with the problems of the lacking sense of self implicit in the object/agent dichotomy.

Their relationship with one another is adolescent, they appropriate social roles without having a legitimate claim to any. Their relationship with the world as individuals, however, is more pubescent, naive and innocent. Sex is a frightening unknown and they are often brought very close to it. Again in *Way Out West*, Laurel hides a deed inside his shirt to keep it from the 'bad girl' and is, momentarily, satisfied that it is now out of bounds but she chases him into the bedroom and locks the door behind her. Laurel backs off towards the bed

and the woman throws herself on him. She begins to tickle him and he helplessly rolls about laughing. The long tickling scene is clearly about sexual activity where the laughter, in part, is a substitute orgasm, leaving no doubt that Laurel enjoys it. His sleepy repressed state can be woken. Hardy too melts cooing and coy before a flattering female — as long as it doesn't go too far, then fear takes over and he will make a run for it. Sex relates to the dichotomy of their condition where they may passively succumb to the alien world of objecthood. In *Scram* (1932) they enter a house at night mistakenly thinking that they know the owner. They accidentally spike the drinking water which rapidly breaks down the inhibitions of the lady of the house. All three sit together on the bed laughing but growing increasingly aware of themselves and isolated from one another when the husband enters. The retribution is left up to our imaginations. There is a wonderful moment when the lady of the house pokes Laurel in the throat

Pretending to think



and involuntarily his tongue sticks out, finding this highly entertaining, she repeats it, each time disconcerting Laurel until finally he reciprocates with the same disconcerting effect. They are not interested in each other but in their own exposure. The fascination for an unknown, disturbing region of oneself makes this comedy akin to eroticism. Marriage is a very different story where there is no interest of any sort. Women are said to dislike Laurel and Hardy for the way that they are portrayed in the films but I think it is much more to do with the lack of real interest shown towards them (with a few notable exceptions). It must be remembered that they have no real interest in anything within the situations prescribed to them. Their child-like mannerisms do not lead us to see them as children, they function to show us that, just like children, they play adults. They are merely signs of people masquerading as real, self satisfying signs.

## TO AND FROM MEANING

Laurel and Hardy make a particular and peculiar reference to film in their work and I would like to give some examples of what I mean by this. There is a deliberate element in their work of wasting time or wasting footage. A good example of this is found in *County Hospital* (1932). Hardy is in hospital with an unexplained broken leg and is visited by Laurel who brings a bag of hard boiled eggs and nuts. After having his token present-giving rejected Laurel sits down beside Hardy's bed and, in a world of his own, begins to eat the eggs. We now look on with Hardy while Laurel, self-conscious and pretending absorption, senses that he is offending against some expectation and looks vaguely troubled while the camera rolls on. Without leaving the situation he holds up the 'film' as if it were some other business conducted to tell a story as efficiently and as economically as possible. The middle shot's long take constructs us looking with the same wearing disinterested curiosity as Hardy who in an intercut looks with growing peevishness at Laurel and wide-eyed glances at us. The camera stays on Laurel as if it expects something from him, a public space is constructed and, as if being filmed live, the camera waits for its cue. Hardy's glances at the camera do not jar because the set up already includes the camera as the public eye, Hardy looks at us. Very cleverly, Laurel's uneasiness at being observed need only refer to Hardy's expectation. Their situation comedies were in opposition to the demands for a story, they were careful to maintain their pointlessness.

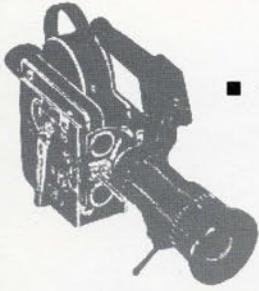
In *The Chimp* (1932) Laurel uses the double take to drain meaning from the film. The double take is classic comic business, its typical meaning is of not believing one's eyes at the first casual, habitual glance. It demands that the performer does not linger over that first look. Timing may vary between the first and second look. The length of time may suggest fear of the object or that the sight takes a while to sink in either because of its oddity or stupidity of the looker but Laurel holds the first look. A lion has escaped from its cage and is roaming free in front of him. His face shifts from ►



Conscious rubble

The psychological joust





### Exposing the civilised man

vacancy to studied interest, as if he suspects that the sight should concern him but he cannot think why. Eventually he turns away and then turns back realising then that he is in danger. As well as being a joke on the unfathomable shallowness of Laurel's mind, the joke involves film meaning. He cannot make sense of what he sees or, he looks but doesn't see. We rarely see the mind as an instrument for making sense, particularly in film, but this is such an occasion. Film economy leads to an equation between looking at and seeing, the one means the other. Cutting from a shot of a look to a shot of an object unites them in a constructed space and we read the object as seen by the looker. The shot of Laurel's look and cut to the escaped lion threaten that equation, the two shots, both longer than usual, separate from each other. When Laurel reacts they come together again. These are two instances of the way in which Laurel works to suspend meaning. The gags go beyond character and refer to the mind and to film.

Hardy's suspensions of meaning refer to his sense of himself. He will sit or sprawl after a fall into a cake or down a chimney or whatever and stay there. Focusing not on his fall but on his response. He divorces himself from his physically humiliating position by fastidious affectation, wiping cake from his eye etc, but there are moments of resignation, chagrin and embarrassment. He gives up and just sits in the mess; he has to recover a sense of himself. The fastidiousness is a defence of his respectable adult model. While the only way he can recognise himself sitting amongst the mess is to assume his

childhood identity. His resilience depends on divorcing the experience from his idea of himself. He will always forget (repress) the indignity. This is his achilles' heel and makes him, in theory, more fragile than Laurel. Yet his rubbery stoutness counteracts such an impression and we know he will bounce back unscathed. The longer he stays sitting after the fall the greater the danger of losing his sense of himself. On the brink of the precipice a fit of temper will bridge the void and return him to his old self. Related to this danger is his delayed response. Hardy uses a delayed response at those times watching Laurel trying to do something or, is expecting something from him or, maybe, after receiving a blow on the head. He delays his response attempting to remove himself from the effect that Laurel is undoubtedly causing. He wants to rise above the association but will always reach a point where he can't stand any more and in a fit of exasperation will make an attack on Laurel. These responses are not expressions but fits, they are losses of control. He does not express himself — he loses himself.

I hope I have done enough in these notes to show at least my own interest as an artist in this material. There is obviously much more that could be said about Laurel and Hardy. I think this material would make a valuable contribution to any debate on the function of the *performer* as opposed to the actor and on many other aspects of making meaning in performance. ■

*I would like to acknowledge and thank Minna Thornton for her contribution to these notes.*

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Philosophy, painting, sculpture, architecture, teaching, writing, living . . .

## SIGNIFICANT EVENT/

**ARTWORK** The Nietzschean cry of 'God is dead'.

**ARTISTS ADMIRIED** Pina Bausch, Tarkowsky, Stockhausen, Kossoff, Marquez, Beckett, Tony Harrison, Paul Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty, Mircea Eliade. ♦

## SILVIA ZIRANEK

**STYLE/TRADITION** DIARIST. **CONCERN** HOW BORING AND UGLY DOES ONE HAVE TO BE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

**MONEY** TRICKY QUESTION. AN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL, A

LONDON VENUE, A HIGHBROW PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE. **OTHER ACTIVITIES** LIFE. **SIGNIFICANT EVENT/** **ARTWORK** LIFE. **ARTISTS ADMIRIED** VERY FEW. **QUESTION** WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT. ♦



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## RICHARD WILSON

### STYLE/TRADITION

Foundryman, engineer, plumber, and a nod of the cap to 'les nouveaux Realistes.'

**CONCERN** Time, money and being taken seriously.

**MONEY** Introduce the 'Annual International Performance Festival' to England but not to run beyond two weeks duration.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** SCZ 'for obvious reasons'.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENT/

**ARTWORK** No single event — Feats of engineering, newsreels, Broken Records — speed, electricity, Urban Decline, disasters, spring —

**QUESTION** Where can I buy a thixotropic water agent? URGENT. ♦



## IN PROGRESS . . .



**Game Set and Match** for ADBC workshop, pictured left, performing it, who are among the first of the new performance art special commissions awarded under the Arts Council promoters scheme. See previews for details for further commissions. Stop press: Projects UK in Newcastle have just announced their commissioned projects for the remaining year. They are from: Stephen Taylor Woodrow, Tara Babel, Peter McRae, Monica Ross, Simon Herbert and Nick Stewart. Watch this space for details. If you want to know how to submit a project for commissioning phone Jenny Walwin's department at the Arts Council 01 629 9495.

Photo: Ken Turner

# HOUSEWATCH

**IAN BOURNE** on your next door neighbours as art . . .

**The potential viability** of this project was first realised earlier this year, when Chris White and myself ran a series of tests using one projector and a simple back-projection screen over a window at the front of my house. We both live and work in Acme Housing premises and our houses are situated on opposite sides of the same street. Seen from the large bay window of Chris's top floor studio space, the projected 8mm film test appeared surprisingly surreal, at the same time subversively 'real', in its given context as just another lit window in the street of terraced houses at night.

We discussed the possibility of using all the windows and the door (which has glass panels), realising that a film could be made, using more projectors and separate sequences of footage, to illuminate and run through the entire house facade. These filmed sequences could be made to appear in opposition or unity by virtue of film in adjacent collage and its relationship to the real linkage of inter-connecting rooms in the house. An obvious example of this would be that of a figure, filmed and projected on separate footage in all the windows, being made to appear to walk from room to room all over the house.

These first thoughts were, in essence, the beginning of my own plans for a house film drama. In terms of my work to date, the film would follow on from the autobiographic concerns of *Lenny's Documentary* and domestic rituals that form *Making Yourself at Home* and *The End of the World*. Chris White's role in the venture was to help with the filming and to adapt his upstairs studio into an indoor viewing space. My house would be the screen and his house the auditorium.

As discussions on the setting up of the project got underway the full scale of possibilities began to emerge. There seemed many ways that the house could be used other than the limited scope of my personal interpretation. We were, after all, talking about

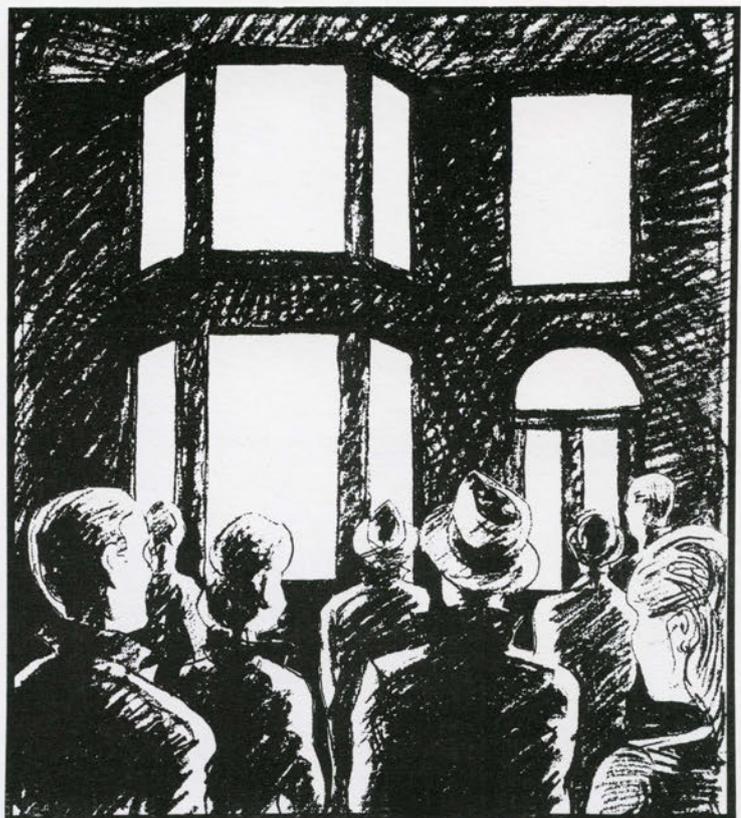
changing, visually, the nature of what went on inside my house — a house similar to so many other terraced houses on streets everywhere. And Chris was beginning to come up with quite different ideas of his own.

We then decided to open the project up, making the house available to a group of artist/film-makers who would each produce purpose-made film/slide-work to fit the screening arrangement. This would encourage a variety of personal interpretation and also provide the number needed to crew so complex a projection facility. The individual interpretations, we decided, must take into account the nature of the 'house' concept and not result in

the mere showing of irrelevant footage on an arrangement of odd-sized screens.

There are now six artists working on the project. These are George Saxon, Lulu Quinn, Tony Sinden, Alison Winckle, Chris White and myself. Each has taken to working on quite different aspects of the concept; from the obvious voyeurism derived from 'watching the neighbours' and connotations of a literal street-theatre to the more structural concerns of film flowing through architecture. ●

*Housewatch takes place at 8 Claremont Rd, London E11 on October 26 1985, at 8.30 pm.*



**8 CLAREMONT ROAD LONDON E11 ☉ LEYTON**

**8-30 OCTOBER 26**

Subversively 'real'

# PREVIEW

**Joseph Beuys** returns to London this Autumn, bringing a new installation, **Plight** to the Anthony D'Offay Gallery, **October 9-November 16**. He is transporting two containerloads of felt from Germany to entirely fill the gallery, containing a grand piano, a blackboard and a thermometer. It should be radically spectacular compared to his recent static, encased works, which have emphasised the gallery-bound nature of this human performance icon. Info: **01 499 4100**. ■



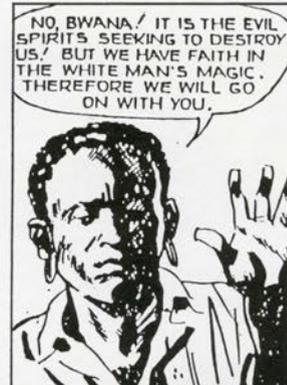
As you read this, The Midland Group leg of **Eight Days**, the Performance Festival and Platform spanning, this year, both Nottingham and Brighton, will be well under way, but you can still catch the Performance platforms and special commissioned artists at the Zap Club, **October 16-19**. Highlights include **Rose English** as guest speaker in a Mexican Banquet. Platform performers include **Michael Griffin**, **Tamzin Griffin**, **Michael Milward**, **Dogs in Honey** (pictured) **Maria Michael**, **Fabricata Illuminata**, **Jenny Wimbourne**, **Forced Entertainment** and **Paul Matosic** and **RB Thompson**. Also performance by Best of '84, **Anne Seagrave**. Specially commissioned performances by **ADBC Workshop** (see documentation), **Holly Warburton**, **Anne Bean**, (pictured) and **Hidden Grin**. Also performance by **Kathy Acker**, **Ron Geesin**. Performance Forum and video showings. All info: **0273 671545**. (Stop Press — Zap Club are bringing out a record — to be reviewed). ■



Where **do** all these crazy Catalonians come from? First **Albert Vidal** in London Zoo, then **Eis Comediants** running wild in the streets ... and that appears merely a foretaste. Now we have, as part of a Catalonian season at the ICA, 'the uncategorisable **La Fura Dels Baus** — 13 deranged tough nuts ... involves cars paint, pyrotechnics and high risk.' Also coming up at the ICA the highly spectacular Canadian **La La La**, pictured overleaf. **01 930 0493** for details. ■

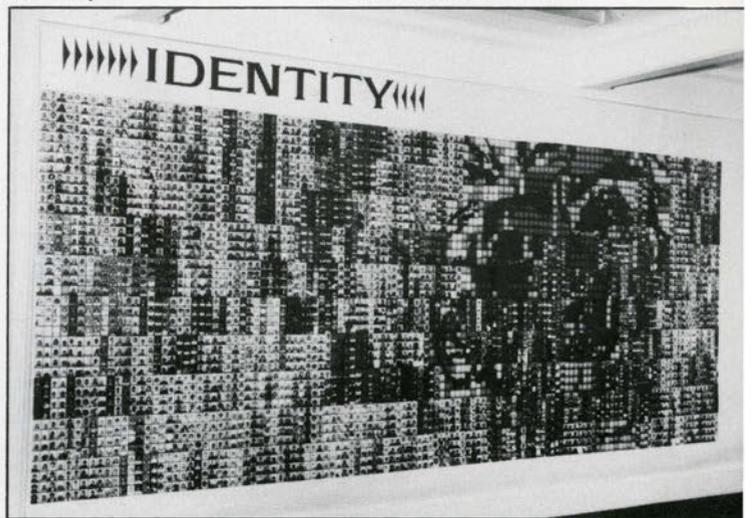


New Gallery with a radical edge in Glasgow, **Transmissions** opens with **The Map is Not the Territory** a Situationist work by **Ralph Rumney**, (until **October 19**) and continues with **Eddie Chambers' The Black Bastard as a Cultural Icon** (see illustration) in November. It cleverly juxtaposes popular images of Black people, and shows how they unconsciously encourage racism, as putting the boot in to Robertson's jam and its 'lovable' golly for good. Info: (No phone) **13-18 Chisholm St, Tron-gate, Glasgow**. ■



**The Cornerhouse**, a new centre for film and visual arts opening in Manchester, which hopefully will attract soon performance and installation. In the meanwhile the opening exhibition, **Human Interest** should be worth a look (**October 3-November 17**). Info **061 228 7621**. (illustrated: **Girl in a Discotheque** by **David Chadwick**). ■

The **Identity** project described by **Liz Rideal** in the last issue, has been completed and a vast wall-sized grid of **993!** photo-booth portraits of the public and her everyday contacts will be on display in the Basement of the National Portrait Gallery until the end of November. Phone **01 930 1552** for details. ■



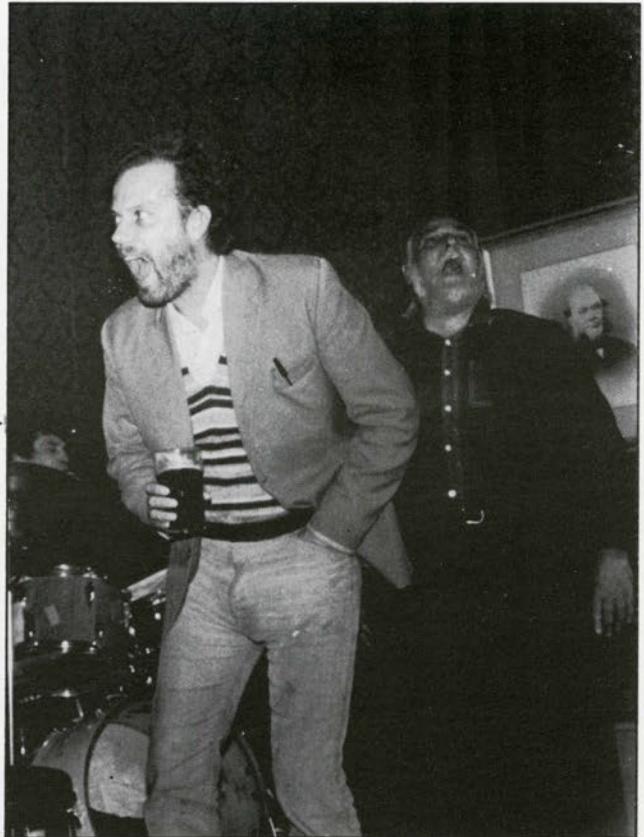
# PREVIEW

Photo: Leon Morris



A wild evening is promised at the Nettlefold Hall, **October 19**. **Random Access**, with **Bob Cobbing**, **Clive Fencott** and **Lawrence Casserley**, will perform an Electro-Acoustic cabaret, **Hydrangea**, with what looks like a lot of old-time performance chaos. Also on — Evan Parker and Trevor Wishart and the **Anglepoise Philharmonia**. This rounds off the Nettlefold's yearly music festival and info can be obtained on **01 622 6655 X 355**. ▶

Human Sex at the ICA



Artist **Steve Willats** (see last issue) is engaging in what looks to be one of the new public art foundation **The Artangel Trust's** most ambitious scheme. He has been working for nearly a year with the inhabitants of Harvey House, a West London tower block,

making an installation that reflects on aspects of their lives, and which will take place progressively on all 28 floors of the building. For fuller details of how to visit, call the Lisson Gallery on **01 262 1539 (October 6-November 2)**. ■

## PERFORMANCE

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Come on, now's the time to ensure your delivery of the most vital, risk-taking cultural magazine in Britain. Worth it alone for its exclusive interviews, telling you what internationally known artists are saying **today** not ten years later. Performance magazine tackles topics you just won't find in ordinary art magazines. Why do people vandalise artworks? What would Freud have made of Performance art? What is neo-naturism? Are there performance artists in outer space? Does Laurie Anderson own a dog? Find out about the answers to these as well as addressing the somewhat more serious concerns of today's post-modern radical artist. **Do it now.** Tick the following as appropriate:

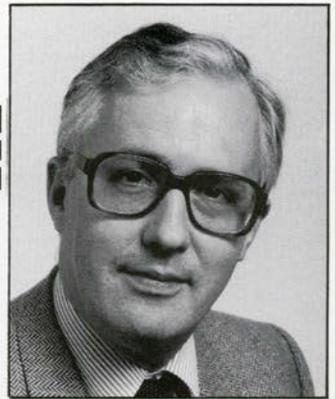
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# PERFORMANCE ART'S FRIEND AT COURT?



**ROLAND MILLER on a new top art bureaucrat who for once comes from a background of high exposure to performance art and other experimental work:**

In July I interviewed Anthony Everitt, 12 days before he became the new deputy secretary-general of the Arts Council. Anthony was director of East Midlands Arts, and before that of the Midland Group Arts Centre in Nottingham, but before that he was a journalist — arts and features editor of The Birmingham Post. I asked him how he had got into this relatively rapid spiral upwards to one of the top arts administration jobs in the country.

'I began (writing as an art critic) in '69 or '70. John Berger's book 'Art & Revolution' on the soviet 'unofficial' sculptor Neizvestny<sup>1</sup> came out at a time when there were a lot of troubles at Birmingham Art School, when all the art schools and universities in the world were sitting in and expropriating cafeterias, and the students at Birmingham had expropriated its cafeteria. I was a part-time lecturer in complementary studies on the pre-Dip. course, and I was observing the goings-on with great interest. A student came over from the Sorbonne or Nanterre and gave a heroic, Delacroix-type speech to the assembled art students. The then features editor of The Birmingham Post asked a mutual friend if they knew anyone who knew a bit about art, a bit about revolution, to review the book... I wrote a review and never looked back. I was a freelance art critic for a time, and it was consolidating my art criticism that led me to broaden out from my journalistic work in the late 70's.'

So how did that lead on to involvement with live art? 'I settled down at The Birmingham Post, and I began to develop a kind of shadowy doppelgänger alternative career by being asked to sit on various committees of arts organisations. I helped the Birmingham Arts Lab in the early stages, and the Ikon Gallery, in the early 70's. The Arts Council asked me, sometime in the mid-70's, to sit on their Drama Panel. I began to build

up an alternative curriculum vitae, which allowed me to jump across to another career when journalism had exhausted me and I had exhausted journalism.'

I reminded Anthony that I had been a member of the Arts Council's Experimental Drama Committee at the time he was on the Drama Panel. At about this time the EDC was closed down, and replaced by a committee that Anthony initiated as Chair, the Projects and New Applications Committee. The Performance Art Committee was also disbanded 'because Art (the Art Department) decided they no longer wanted it', and the functions of both committees were to some extent taken over by the new committee. I asked Anthony if he still felt sympathetic towards 'what we might call the fringes of the art world' and whether he would be able to continue to support experimental work in his new job. He answered both questions — Yes and Yes. But the situation has changed and I'm less clear how help can be offered. The ferment of the 60's spilled over into the 70's, but then the cultural, social, political climate has transformed itself. Also the way people have been working on what you call the fringes seems to have changed... I'm rather worried, to be quite honest, now, when I hear people at the Regional Arts Associations or at the Arts Council, or at Arts Centres talking about performance art as though it is really an art form like music or drama or dance. I think that it is limited by using that term because I think that that term was actually a useful bureaucratic term to create a category which would allow the Arts Council to fund it. And I suspect its life as a term now is actually counter-productive. There have been so many cultural developments both in commercial work like rock and pop and so forth, and in theatrical performance, which makes it particularly unhelpful to have some separate category cal-

led performance art, when there are links of all kinds between people that might see themselves, or be seen by funding agencies as being in performance art.

I would like to see the work that I remember writing about and attempting to encourage in the 70's as having operated like yeast through a wide range of more straightforward activities.'

In 1974, in The Birmingham Post, Anthony Everitt wrote about the International Performance Festival in the city, that July — 'The building in which a performer works can have a profound, and sometimes deforming effect on what he is doing. No surprise, then, if he moves out of doors into the free space of the street and speaks with an audience that has not bought his time with its cash. In recent years, a movement has grown up, which can be called, for want of a better term, 'performance art'. Many groups have been founded, both in this country and abroad, which present public events of a rather special kind; neither theatre nor fine art in conventional senses, they occupy the space in between. They reject the canvas on the wall, the sculpture on the plinth and the play on the stage. When they can, many of them work in the open air and address themselves directly — and gratis — to the common man.'

Not quite the language in which performance would be described today, but it is worth noting that the Arts Council gave a guarantee against loss of £2,000 to the five-day Birmingham Festival, on condition that a further £1,000 was raised from local sources — which it was. ●

<sup>1</sup> 'Art and Revolution — Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the U.S.S.R.' by John Berger, 1969, Penguin Books.

A full version of this interview is due to be published later on in Artists Newsletter. © Roland Miller.

# OPINION

## ROB LA FRENAIS on a recent polarisation of critical opinion:

A new muscular fundamentalism in performance art criticism is at large. The pretenders are to be thrown out of court — 'serious' performance art is the order of the day. Out with not only the whacky cabaret artists who claim some sort of avant-garde background to their studied irreverence, but also the 'messy' happening specialists, and the unrehearsed soloists who rely on risk as their stock in trade. There is a call for 40 minutes or so of structured, well rehearsed, thought-through performance, which is relied upon to engage the audience. Who is the author of this new-found iconoclasm? It is Anthony Howell, enfant-terrible-come-lately who recently wrote off endurance artist Alastair McLennan as a washed-out product of the seventies, who was capable of nothing more radical than walking around for 50 hours with a nylon stocking on his head. In the same article in the painterly *Artscribe*, he vigorously endorsed his former acolytes Station House Opera (who had admittedly put in their finest performance yet), at the same event as MacLennan, the Performance Festival at the end of the British Art Show at Southampton. The issue was clear. One was good, the other was crap.

Pity Howell had not however gone down at various hours of the night, as I had, to be entranced by the sheer force of *atmosphere* created by MacLennan — fiercely haunting the deserted bingo hall like a dignified though disturbing presence, attaching haunting emblems to the wall, while the noise of helicopters and bagpipes swirled in the distance. But Howell, no doubt seething with his

new-found mission to weed out what offends his eye in live art, did not see this. He is instead deliberately setting out to pick fights and otherwise annoy. The end result, he hopes, is to be a new critical awareness of performance art in this country, an awareness which had indeed previously been marred by mutual backscratching among writers, artists, and more to the point writer/artists.

To my mind, he will have to cast his net wider if that is his aim. (Iconoclasts usually end up embittered, or having sniffing acceptance and respectability, shaped up and risen above the clamour.) Good work is not sitting there, on tap, waiting to be revealed. In this unfriendly climate it has to be teased out, chased, sought after. Even those he admires have bad nights — and there is something worse about a bad night if it is not accounted for in your perception of quality. Those who strive for perfection are more bitterly disappointed in failure than those who don't. But the problems of criticism are always with us. About four years ago, a long and healthy debate on critical attitudes culminated in a definite article by one of our contributors who complained that 1) when performance artists are criticised they protest they are not judged with appropriate criteria (such as fine art or theatre) 2) that such criteria does not exist in a form or body of opinion and 3) that in a situation where a writer is providing a sole record of what took place it is difficult to be negative. The article concludes that critics should cast their fears to the wind, that artists, particularly performance artists have de-

fended their right to be abusive, shocking, provocative and downright nasty. Who is going to deny critics, especially in such small circles, the same rights?<sup>1</sup>

Four years later, we have Anthony Howell exercising his right to be abusive, shocking, etc. But he is only doing it in one, almost predictable direction. He is tempting the spectre of overkill, in upping the ante as he does. In wielding the blunt instrument of his tunnel-vision critical faculty, he is in danger of isolating himself, of turning himself into an Ubu-like figure, attacking anything that doesn't fall into his rigid criteria, and causing others to do the same. Already people are beginning to talk of different camps developing in performance precisely at the time we all need to be united in a need to draw money and attention towards all kinds of experimental works in the arts.

This may be written off by the born-again critic as woolly-minded liberalism, a continuing symptom of the disease, and so on. But as a constant observer of live art I too am seized by a conviction, which I think is contrary to Howell's. It is that whether a performance 'works' or not is quite independent of whether it is rehearsed, structured or completely random, that the best performances are often those that fail the most miserably in the wrong circumstances, and that most importantly, it is unwise to ever judge anything by the standard of your own work experience. Theirs might be quite different. And finally, some of the best work I have seen has taken place when I have expected to be bored. We need critics of the best calibre, but not hidebound and predictably partisan ones. ●

*The subject of this piece, Anthony Howell, is guest speaker at the Mexican Banquet, as part of the Eight Days — A Review of Live Art at the Midland Group, Nottingham, on October 11. Phone 0602 582636 for details.*

Alistair McLennan



Station House Opera



1 Andrea Hill, 'Critics & Doormats', Performance Magazine No. 11.

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