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# PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE +  
ART / THEATRE  
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SPECTACLE + +



THE SLEEP

*PLUS:*  
WHEN INSTITUTIONS  
COLLIDE +  
STATE OF THE ART:  
THE SINGING  
CRITIC

PERFORMANCE: THE DEALER'S EYE

LIVE ART NOW

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March 23-27

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Photography

with

John Adams  
Calum Colvin  
Catherine  
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Dogs in Honey  
Tony Hill  
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Pradip Malde  
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Jayne Parker  
Marty St James  
& Anne Wilson  
Anna Thew  
Mark Wilcox

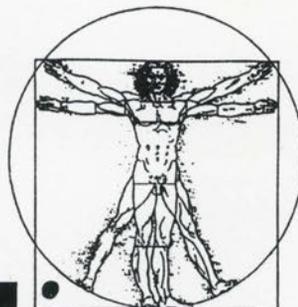


Students are invited to submit proposals for events and screenings during the week.

Further information: Steve Hawley, Sheffield Polytechnic,  
Brincliffe, Psalter Lane, Sheffield S11 8UZ.  
Tel: 0742 556101 Ex. 5080

### Photographic work by

Sue Arrowsmith  
Helen Chadwick  
Sorel Cohen  
Harald Flankenhagen  
Joe Gantz  
Roberta Graham  
Ján Krizik  
Jean-Marc Prouveur  
David Ward



# Figures

### Performances by

Mona Hatoum  
Andre Stitt  
Nick Stuart

### Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery

26 March - 3 May

Performances 24 & 25 April

### Cambridge Darkroom

16 May - 22 June

Performances 30 & 31 May

### The Arts Centre, Darlington

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Performances 16, 23 & 30 October

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Leadmill, Sheffield Thursday May 21	Caroline Bottomley 0742 754500
Bluecoat, Liverpool Saturday May 23	Jim Beirne 051 709 5297
Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh Saturday June 9	Jane McAlister 031 557 0707
Chisenhale, London To be confirmed	Ghislaine Boddington 01 981 6617
Babel, Halifax To be confirmed	Paul Bradley 0422 66723
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PARADISE LOST by Marty St James and Anne Wilson, April 2–5  
HIDDEN FROM PRYING EYES by Mona Hatoum, April 9–12

### Performances

March 25, Marcelle Van Bemmel (Holland) and Annie Griffin  
April 1, Dogs in Honey, Brittonioni Bros, Jaques Lizene (Belgium)  
April 8, Andreas Techler (W. Germany), Andre Stitt  
Performances start at 8PM; admission £2.50 (£1.50 concs)  
Come early for preview of installation

### Films

March 26, April 2, 'Hilda Was a Good Looker', Feature film by Anna Thew  
April 9, Signs of Empire and Images of Nationality, live tape-slide by the Black Audio Film Collective  
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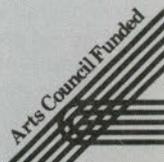
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*Marty St James & Anne Wilson*

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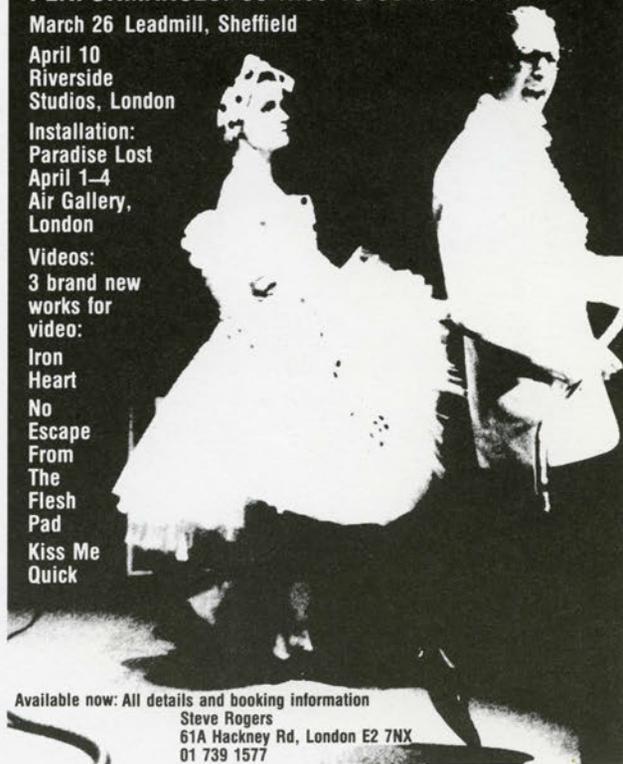
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R.I.P. Andy 1927-87

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Cover photo of Anthony D'Offay in front of Bruce Naumann sculpture by Mark Cairns. Insert cover photo from *The Sleep* by Holly Warburton.

**CHANGES AT PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE** ● Since 1979 the magazine has mainly been edited by Rob La Frenais, who founded it. Now, we are making some changes to the structure of the organisation, as Rob La Frenais moves on to other activities both inside and outside *Performance* (See News). There will be a rotating system of guest editors, drawn mainly from our regular contributors, and we will be involving contributors more and more in the structure of the magazine, with more money set aside for fees (this year's funding permitting). Chrissie Iles is our first guest editor and issues planned are as follows. Tracey Warr, in the next issue, will be editing a special issue concentrating on the North of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Rob La Frenais will be researching across the summer for a mainland European issue (including the Irish Republic), appearing in September. In November we are celebrating our 50th issue! Watch out for details of many special events. Co-ordinating all this will be Steve Rogers as Managing Editor. All in all, we hope these changes will make for a diverse and responsive product, bringing you, the reader, the magazine you want. Any comments or suggestions for special issues will be welcome. As always we would like to encourage new writers. Call Steve Rogers on the above number.

**GUEST EDITOR**  
**CHRISSIE**  
**ILES**

**EDITOR**  
ROB LA FREN AIS

**PUBLISHING DIRECTOR**  
STEVE ROGERS

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**Contributors** this issue: 'Blue' Gene Tyranny is a composer, Gray Watson is a freelance writer and lecturer, Chrissie Iles is a freelance writer and curator, Peter Culshaw is a regular contributor to *The Face*, Oliver Bennett is a freelance writer, Simon Biggs is a video and electronics artist, Nick Houghton is a video artist and freelance writer, Hannah O'Shea is an artist, Simon Herbert is a performance artist and organiser at Projects UK.

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ISSN No. 0 144 5901



PERT

## NEWS

+ Big changes in the offing here at Performance Magazine. **Rob La Frenais**, the founding editor, is moving on to develop other projects. He will still be closely involved with the Magazine and will edit some future issues (see contents page) but he will also be kept busy with organising events. First up in April is 'At The Edge' a series of installations, performances and films at London's **Air Gallery**. Then in May an exhibition of static work called 'Confrontations' which will tour to **Cornerhouse, Manchester; Cartwright Hall, Bradford**; and **The Laing Gallery, Newcastle**. His most ambitious project is an international festival of Performance art called 'EDGE 88' schedule for London in the summer of 1988. ●

+ Another new festival on the horizon is **The British Theatre Festival**. This will be a regular celebration of innovation in the British Theatre organised by **Adrian Evans**, formerly producer of Lumiere & Son, and **Nick Bye**. Its amazing that such a good idea hasn't been put into practice before and it is very sharp of the city of Bristol to host the event which will undoubtedly add much to the city's cultural reputation and to its tourism earnings.

There has been a whole flush of spaces up and down the country putting on Performance for the first time. **Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery; Darlington Art Centre; Cooper Gallery, Barnsley**; and in London the **Pentonville Gallery** has just completed an excellent short series of performances and a new space the **Richard Pomeroy Gallery** has just opened at Tower Bridge with promises to feature regular live events. ●

+ Its the time of year when traditionally people play musical chairs with jobs. **Annette Morreau** gives up Contemporary Music at the Arts Council to go to Channel 4; **Barry Barker** moves from the Hansard Gallery, Southampton to become the Arnolfini's second ever Director; **Gerald Deslandes** has moved from Chapter to be the next to tackle the exhibition organisers job at Cornerhouse, Manchester. The **Midland Group** saga seems to be more or less over now, at least as far as performance is concerned. The exact details of what exactly has been going on there over the past few months seems to depend entirely on who you listen to. Whatever led up to it, the end result is that the Midland Group has closed for six months for rebuilding and the Performance team has disbanded. **Lois Keidan** has gone to assist Michael Morris at the ICA. **Rob Flower** has become Production Manager at the **Traverse, Edinburgh** and **Nikki Millican** is leaving in March to go to the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow. She will be directing the

1987 **National Review of Live Art** which this year is being held at **Riverside Studios**. (See ads for details). Does this mean the end to the Midland Group as a venue for performance? Both the Midland Group and East Midlands Arts are saying vague things about experimental work being integrated with a more community based programme but it doesn't sound very convincing. ●

+ Good to see the **Sheffield Media Show** making a welcome return after its recent absence. Also returning in March is **Steve Shill** of **Impact Theatre** with his new show, **Face Down**. Its been quite the season for ex-Impact members to start producing new work. There was the excellent 'An Imitation of Life' by **Claire MacDonald** and **Pete Brooks** at the Bush Theatre; **Nikki Johnson** and **Richard Hawley** have become 'Sprang' and their first show 'In The Eye of A Dead Sheep' despite being rough around the edges was very promising. **Tyrone Huggins** has a new solo performance called 'Light into Darkness' which looks very good; next up is **Pete Brooks'** collaboration with **Jeremy Peyton Jones** 'The Sleep', that only leaves **Graeme Miller** but there are some tantalising rumours around about plans for a large scale work called **Dungeness**. ●

+ TSWA have announced the selections for their 3D, site specific sculpture commissions. They seem to have hit the nail on the head with most of them. **Glasgow, George Wylie; Edinburgh, Kate Whiteford; Derry, Anthony Gormley; Newcastle, Richard Wilson; Liverpool, Holly Warburton; Birmingham, Hannah Collins; London, Edward Allington; Bristol, The Mark Dunhill Group & Miranda Housden; Dartmoor, Judith Goddard, Ron Haselden; Sharon Kivland**. More details next issue. ●

+ Finally, **Tracey Warr** who looks after **Performance Magazine** at the Arts Council is leaving next month first to edit the next issue of the magazine and then, and more importantly, to have a baby. ●

## BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

The Brighton Festival just goes on getting better. This year they have a big programme which includes the new opera by **Pete Brooks** and **Jeremy Peyton Jones**, (See feature) and other performance highlights include **Studio Hinderik** whose *Glass* was a hit on the European festival circuit last summer, and a French company called **Theatre En Ciel** with an intriguing show called *Trick*. *Trick* reconstructs the strange events that

took place in George Melies old cinema in the small town of Montreuil-sou Bois in November 1926. Whatever took place there, eminent scientists were not only baffled but sworn to utmost secrecy. There is too a curse that goes along with knowledge of what happened so if you're planning on seeing it better take some protection. ●

## WATERPROOF

**Astrakan** are already known in Britain as a dance company having participated in the Dance Umbrella Festival. Now they return to London with an aquatic work called *Waterproof* that has received some very enthusiastic press in Europe. In fact the film of the performance has itself won lots of awards. *Waterproof* will be performed at Swiss Cottage Baths for two nights only, April 2, 3 as part of the Camden Festival. There is also some speculation that **Astrakan** will be performing what is already being referred to as a 'land based' work at The Place prior to the Swiss Cottage dates. ●

## OPENINGS

+ In **At The Edge** at the Air Gallery, this central London space will be totally transformed by artists better known for their performances: **Bow Gamelan Ensemble, Marty St James** and **Anne Wilson** and **Mona Hatoum**. Each installation runs for four days and each deal with an extreme environmental experience. The times to go are the openings, when there's also new performance work by British artists, and one-off appearances by a selection of Europeans recently seen at Rotterdam's Perfo. **Bow Gamelan** open, with **Annie Griffin** and **Marcelle Van Bemmell**, March 25; **Marty and Anne**, with **Dogs in Honey, Brittonioni Bros** and **Jaques Lizene**, April 1 (seriously) and **Mona Hatoum** with **Andre Stitt** and **Andreas Techler**, April 8. Particularly of interest will be **Annie Griffin** premier-



Annie Griffin

## PERFORMANCE PREVIEW

ing her new piece, *Almost Persuaded*. Also showing, films by Anna Thew (*Hilda Was A Good Looker*) and tape-slide by Black Audio Film Collective. All details: Rob La Frenais or Alison Ely on 01 278 7751/8660.

+ **FIGURES** — an exhibition of photographic work by **Sue Arrowsmith, Sorel Cohen, Harald Flankenhagen, Roberta Graham, Jan Krizik, Jean-Marc Prouveur, David Ward, Helen Chadwick** and **Joe Gantz**, accompanied by performances including **Mona Hatoum, Andre Stitt** and **Nick Stuart**. An exhibition which explores the use of the human body as the main constituent of the work and the conflict between the symbolic and actual human presence, in relation to, amongst other issues, the retention of live performance through photography. (See Ad) ●

+ **Richard Demarco** celebrates the Demarco Gallery's 21st Anniversary by presenting performances by **Anne Seagrave** and **Richard Layzell** at Smith's Gallery, Neal St, Covent Garden on March 18th at 8pm. Admission free. On the 18th Paul Overy, Caroline Tisdall and Sandy Nairne discuss the 21 years of the Demarco Gallery's work, including its performance programme, at Smith's Gallery, at 7pm. Admission free. ●

+ **Conrad Atkinson — Posterworks Project** will be on show during March-June. Co-ordinated by the Artangel Trust and Projects UK, the Financial Times and Wall Street Journal Posterworks can be seen in the London Underground (Bank Station, Central and Northern Lines) and on platforms of the Tyne & Wear Metro, at Tynemouth and Whitley Bay. ●

+ From March 17th-April 24th **Knowing Your Place — Artists' Parish Maps** will be on show at the **London Ecology Centre**, WC2 (01 379 3109), a group exhibition organised by the conservation/arts group Common Ground. Artists include Conrad Atkinson, Helen Chadwick. ●

+ **Bruce Mclean's** new exhibition at Anthony D'Offay **The Floor The Fence The Fireplace**, is based around a live performance. It opens on March 10th. ●

+ **Soaps**, an exhibition of photographic pieces, film, video, installations and performance work on the theme of soaps and soap operas, selected from open submission by, amongst others, one of the Eastenders cast, opens at **Camerawork** on 11th March. Until 28th March, 1-6pm. ●

+ At Chisenhale on Friday 20th March, an

**Evening of Performance** with **Silvia Ziranek, Mona Hatoum** and **Nick Stewart**, and on Saturday 21st **Sue Mclennan's** occasional dance company perform *Hup* and *Les Incroyables*, in collaboration with **Jane Wells**, composer and musician, and **David Ward**, visual artist. ●

+ **Stuart Brisley** has been appointed Artist in Residence at the Imperial War Museum. Each Sunday afternoon from 1st February to 26th July the public will be able to visit Brisley in his studio in the Museum, between 2 and 5.30pm and see his work in progress. Brisley has been asked to work on a theme which reflects some aspects of the museum's collection — film, photographs, art, sound records, documents — and intends to create a work which "might be concerned with what is dangerous to forget — the nature of conflict — its overwhelming destructive power". Also until 20 April a sound work by Brisley **Red Army Conservation Piece** will be exhibited alongside an exhibition from the Museum's collections titled **Which Side of the Fence**. An exhibition of Brisley's recent work will be on show at the Shipley Gallery, Gateshead, from 28 March to 17 May. ●

+ The **Metro Cinema** are hosting a series of videos for the large screen from scratch and animation to live performance. On **Sunday March 8th** a series of women's tapes explore power and self image, including Dara Birnbaum's *Wonder Woman*. *Glory* by **Rose Finn Kelcey**, *Plutonium Blond* — **Sandra Lahire** and *Faded Wallpaper* by **Tina Keene**. Plus *Forbidden Heroines*, a live performance by **Alana O'Kelly**. On **Sunday 15th March**, a programme of films looking at fiction, tales of detection and pursuit, including **Dan Landin** and **Richard Heslop's** excellent *Child and the Saw* and **Mark Wilcox's** *Man of the Crowd*. Each programme 4.45pm, Metro 2 Cinema, Rupert St, London W1, admission £2.50. ●

## BOOKNEWS

+ A selection of recently published books and catalogues **State of the Art**. The book of the TV series. Text by Sandy Nairne. £13.95.

+ **Gilbert and George — The Complete Pictures**. Illustrates all the artists' photo pieces from 1971 to 1985, with 596 plates, 367 in colour. Text by Carter Ratcliff. Thames & Hudson, £14.95.

+ **Ladder** — limited edition bookwork with 12 screenprinted images by Bruce Mclean and text by Mel Gooding. Printed at the Druckwerstadt, Berlin. Published by Knife Edge Press. "This is the eagerly anticipated 'black book'". £120.

+ **Satellite** — Anthony Wilson. Catalogue published by Riverside Studios to coincide with the installation **Satellite** at Riverside Studios in February. Text by John Hilliard. £3. (50p incl p&p).

+ **Cooking The Books** — Terry Atkinson. 44pp. Published by AIR to coincide with the exhibition Terry Atkinson, BRIT ART.

+ **Bruce Nauman** — catalogue published to coincide with Bruce Nauman at the Whitechapel Gallery. £7 (mail order £9.75 (inc pp from the Whitechapel Gallery) 88pp. 14 colour plates, 38 black and white illustrations. Essays by Jane Simon and Jean-Christoph Ammann.

+ **Ulay and Marina Abramovic — Modus Vivendi 1980 — 1985** Castello di Rivoli, Turin, 1985. Published to coincide with the exhibition at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Kolnischer Kunstverein. Text by Thomas McEvelly, the artists, Remy Zaug, the Dalai Lama and others. 96pp. 66 colour illustrations. £16.50 pb.

+ **Beuys, Warhol, Higashiyama: Global-Art Fusion**. Art-Fusion Edition, Bern. 1986. Documentation of 'Global-Art Fusion' which took place on 12.1.85 when images made by Beuys, Warhol and Higashiyama were transmitted around the world by telefax. Includes fold-out sheet of resulting image. 60pp. £8.

+ **Stuart Brisley — Georgiana Collection**. Third Eye Centre, Glasgow. 1986. Catalogue to accompany an exhibition at the Third Eye Centre, representing the artist's performances, videos, soundworks, photography and installations made since 1981. Text by Michael Archer. 36pp. £5.

## THE WORLD OF ART

+ *A story in the English language paper Athens News caught our eye with the headline 'Excrement-throwing Episode Could Become Finnish Political Issue.' Apparently a student theatre production included throwing shit at the audience. The article quotes newspapers from both the political right and left, condemning the action. It also quotes a cleaning woman at the theatre who is reported to have said 'The dirt I had to clean up contained human excrement'. The chief of the drama school however, defended his students saying 'Throwing crap was quite right. The public deserves it'. Certainly one commentator deserves it. An un-named journalist with the right wing Finnish paper 'uusi Suomi' wrote 'Our theatres and society must disavow anarchist aims and defend western cultural values.'* ●

**PERT**  
PREVIEW

# THE SLEEP



Images by Holly Warburton, directed by Impact's Pete Brooks, music by Jeremy Peyton Jones, this new visual theatre collaboration promises to be a spectacular one. STEVE ROGERS writes:

*THE SLEEP* IS the third project on which Pete Brooks and Jeremy Peyton-Jones have worked together. The two earlier collaborations, *Lulu Unchained* and the Impact Theatre production *A Place in Europe* were both largely unresolved attempts to create a kind of visual/music theatre. Both *Lulu* and *A Place in Europe* had their own strengths particularly *Lulu* in which Jeremy's music achieved a new confidence and density, and in which Pete's theatrical language was pared down to its barest skeleton without losing any of its power. But in the end both shows fell uncomfortably between the demands of the conventions of theatre, dance and opera.

*The Sleep* however is set very squarely within the conventions of opera. The performers sing their way through a narrative libretto. In fact the scenario for *The Sleep* wouldn't seem at all out of place in the cannon of classic, modernist operas. It is partly inspired by Oliver Sacks' book *Awakenings* which documents case studies from the sleeping sickness epidemic in New York. Pete Brooks describes the narrative in *The Sleep* as 'Using the idea of an orphic figure descending into hell to rescue a reluctant Eurydice as a mythic structure for the idea I had for the story. It concerns a woman trapped in an inner world by disease. The world outside, the 'real' world of medical science attempts to rescue her inner being from her 'hell' by using drugs to drag her back to the land of the living. The irony for me being that for her, as for most of the people in the sleeping sickness cases, the real world meant a mental hospital in New York City.'

It's a kind of reversal of the traditional horror or alien story of some outside and hostile force trying to penetrate and destroy our reality. In *The Sleep* it is that very same reality of ours that is the alien force that is trying to destroy her world. It questions the assumption that science has a moral obligation to 'cure' all aberrations or abnormalities even when that entails intervening the individuals autonomy over his or her own life. It is not a new theme but one which is particularly appropriate at a time when personal liberty is being curtailed by a

conservative moral retrenchment which is disguised by seeming common sense and scientific objectivity.

It seems perhaps rather odd that as a response to conservative morality these two experimental artists should turn to a traditional and, by association, conservative form like opera. But both Jeremy and Pete feel that their work is particularly suited to opera and music theatre. Jeremy's music which falls within what is known as systems music uses repeated patterns and a cyclical form. Peter's theatrical language also relies on repetition to achieve its dynamic qualities and an evolving pattern of repetition to achieve its forward momentum. The combination of the two is a theatre based on a musical structure and is a natural starting point for music theatre or opera.

As well as this formal appropriateness they are both attracted to opera as a form because of its use of the human voice. Jeremy is interested in the human voice not just for its musical, instrumental qualities but because of the challenge of setting words to music. The idea of using music at the service of the text and narrative is something which he admits he has just found. 'At college it was all minimalism, music is music is music, the idea of music as a vehicle was complete anathema to them. Of course I'm not dismissing pure music but right now I am very excited by this idea of music as a tool.'

Pete is interested in the human voice because 'they give a moral dimension to music.' But most of all opera is an extension of their previous work which looked for a form of pure theatre. Opera provides the opportunity to work with a narrative and a text without falling foul of naturalism that

most narrative plays suffer from.

'Visual theatre is a neat way of getting ride of text. You can say certain things in a certain way through images alone. Opera is also a neat way of avoiding things, particularly all the problems of naturalism.' It is the musical element of opera that preserves it from naturalism since the performers sing rather than speak.'

As a modern experimental opera *The Sleep* differs in an important way from the usual attempts to drag the form into the modern world. Usually an 'experimental' opera amounts to a practitioner from within the opera establishment giving a classic an experimental production or setting, like David Freeman's Opera Factory punk production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Pete Brooks and Jeremy Peyton Jones come to opera fresh, with no experience of the traditions of opera practice, and bring with them a highly developed and sophisticated performance language and style of their own.

If *The Sleep* lives up to its promise it could afford Pete and Jeremy a long overdue upgrading of their credit rating in the hierarchy. It has the biggest budget they have ever worked with. It has a popstar, the charismatic and power-voiced Sarah Jane Morris in the central role, and it is receiving prestige presentations from the internationally important MayFest in Glasgow and Brighton Festivals. These ingredients should guarantee it media attention and popular appeal. Keep your fingers crossed, it's one of the best chances that the avant garde has had for years in Britain to show that it is not only vitally important to the future health of our artistic culture but also that it isn't the obscure, minority pursuit that its detractors would have us believe. ●



PHOTO / HOLLY WARBURTON

Designs for *The Sleep*

# FAST WOMAN OF NOBLE BIRTH

Seeks interesting, creative companion.  
Must like the outdoors. Danger involved.  
Also possibility of immortality. Photos  
exchanged. 'BLUE' GENE TYRANNY writes:

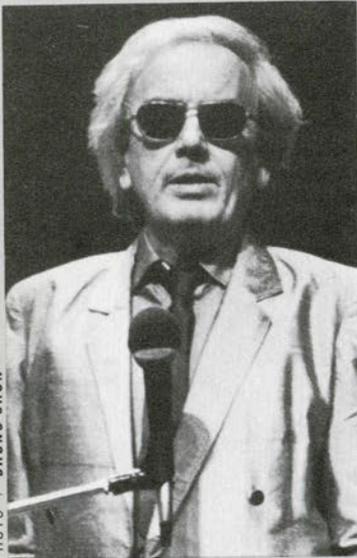


PHOTO / BRUNO BRUN

ATALANTA IS A Greek goddess, an opera by Handel, the name of a New York warehouse next to Bob Ashley's loft, and the title of his opera, in three episodes. It is the first part of his huge opera trilogy — *Atalanta, Perfect Lives, Now Eleanor's Idea* (still in progress).

Its central theme is The Law. Law is expressed through language, and the way we think about language is the basis of the law. We see different approaches to a discussion of what they could possibly mean in each of three episodes. Or, perhaps, the languages for discussing what that could mean. Languages unique to Max, Willard and Bud, the subjects of each episode.

These three men are the lovers of Atalanta. They have been picked up by a Flying Saucer. The staff of this UFO represent, metaphorically, anyone 'doing research on us', and are trying to superimpose the one Earth system they have somehow learned — Greek geometry — on the architecture and lives of the world. Of course, nothing fits. So, the UFO staff have the geometry (the templates) but they don't know how to handle them, nor the three men they have picked up — Max (Ernst, the surrealist artist), Bud (Powell, the famous bebop pianist and composer), and Willard (Bob's uncle, the black sheep of the family, who talked to himself). These three have imagination, which the guys from outer space consider a disease.

Robert Ashley is the constant narrator of his opera cycle. He appears on stage at all times, talking to himself. He is sometimes called R, or Rodney, or Raoul (Bob's middle name is Reynolds). *Atalanta* describes his birthplace. Those who saw *Private Lives* on Channel 4 in 1984 will recognise some of the imagery in R's mind. For example, it was said of Isolde that 'three men have loved her', which is also true in the myth of Atalanta, in which three men vied for her hand by running a race with her. Two of them lost and were beheaded — she was in love with the third and arranged for him to win. We are also introduced to the 'satellite' view (spatial analysis), the circling universe of *The Backyard* at the end of *Perfect Lives*. In *Atalanta* there are surveillance cameras mounted on their normal axis mounts, repetitive and automated. In

one recent production the camera surveyed a miniature train circling on its track among a toy town and countryside, the camera rocking back and forth in an arc, while the train proceeded in a full circle. In London, a video production company will monitor the cast.

Throughout, the stage settings and lighting by Larry Brickman have suggested the performers placed in the remains of culture, on the other-side-of-the-tracks. In Berlin he suggested the divided city by a fence placed perpendicularly across the stage (it had to be constructed with regular cross-hatched farm fencing; our barbed wire — called NATO Wire in Berlin — was banned as an 'instrument of war'). The three sections of *Atalanta* are distinguished by an overall flood of primary colour for each episode: green, red, blue. These all sum to grey, the principal colour worn by the performers, and of the stage set.

As with the colour, there are three basic melodies. Max Ernst's melody goes up and comes down, with an obsessive two-note call interspersed. Uncle Willard's melody ('the rocket') rushes to the top and falls steadily over six measures. Bud Powell's melody ('one thing sustains into another, the sliding overlap') starts from the bottom and goes steadily upward. The chord progression has one chord for every 30 seconds in the sequence: B flat, A flat, G seventh, C, E flat, B flat. It can be played or mixed live (the tape is eight independent tracks), and the general mood of each episode is shifted by the electronic processing done by Ashley while creating these tracks. These then are the elements that make *Atalanta*, and here are what they help to make . . .

The scene is The Bank. It has just been discovered that the vault is empty. The five bank tellers agree that those responsible for the crime were in the bank when the discovery was made. There was a seedy looking older man and his two dogs. There was someone else not present, but somehow there. There were the two lovers from *The Home*, who talk all the time. And there was the Bank Manager. (There is a painting on Bob's wall of the ancient image of a lovers leap: the lovers falling, two dogs on

Robert Ashley



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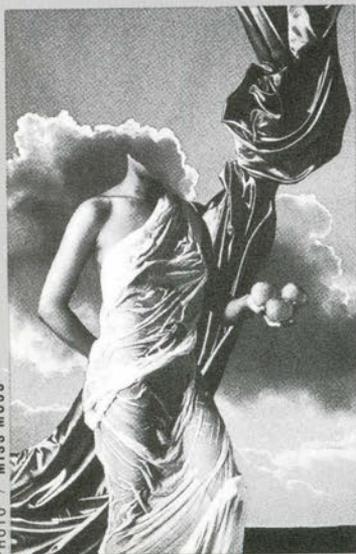
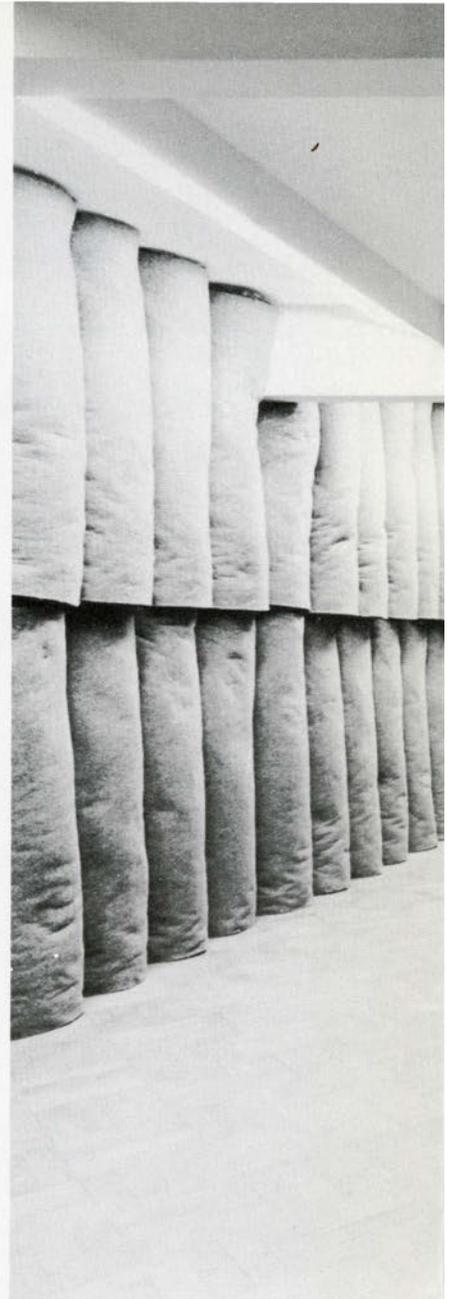


PHOTO / MISS MOSS

# BEUYS'S LINE TO BOND STREET

The ANTHONY D'OFFAY Gallery has set the pace for the rest of Cork Street by investing in artists as much known for their live and experimental work as for a traditional contemporary art production. D'Offay's artists include Gilbert and George, Warhol and Beuys. GRAY WATSON talked to him about Beuys, reincarnation and the relationship between the commercial gallery world and performance art:



**Gray Watson:** How many of your artists are, at least partly, involved in performance?

**Anthony**

**D'Offay:** Well, I suppose what springs to mind immediately is Bruce Mclean, Gilbert and George, Beuys . . .

**GW:** Bruce Nauman?

**AD:** Yes . . .

**GW:** Richard Long?

**AD:** I don't think so. I think you can make out a case that there is some sort of overlap with what he does and performance, but I don't think it really . . . Kounellis of course. I think that's about it.

**GW:** Do you see their performance activities as very different from other aspects of their art, or do you think they are very much part of it? Do you see performance generally as a very different sort of thing from gallery art, or very much part of it?

**AD:** I feel that we should do more at the gallery with performance, and it's a very great regret of mine that although we were closely involved with the lectures that Beuys did, we were never involved with any of his actions. But there it is . . . I look forward to the time when Gilbert and George do another living sculpture which we can present in London.

**GW:** How many performances have you presented?

**AD:** Very feebly, all we've done is a performance with Bruce Mclean and that's it.

**GW:** But you would like to do more . . .

**AD:** Yes, sure, absolutely.

**GW:** Do you think that is partly because the limelight isn't on performance at the moment that you felt a little less motivated than you otherwise would?

**AD:** That wasn't something I was conscious of. I don't really feel that. I think that when Gilbert and George decide to do a new living sculpture then the whole world will want to see it, so it isn't, it seems to me, a matter of what is fashionable or not. It's a matter of just being patient.

**GW:** With what the artists are doing . . .

**AD:** Exactly.

**GW:** But could you choose to have other artists on your books as well, artists who are working primarily in performance.

**AD:** Yes, that's absolutely true. I think that one of the problems that we have is that we're closely involved with artists, and we're trying to do a good job, to be a good, worthwhile gallery for those artists we represent, whether they are in this country or overseas, and that involves an enormous amount of travelling on my part, and it's extremely difficult to do that and have time left over for anything else. When I'm not travelling, I'm just keeping up with the administration or with people one has to see because they've come to London

to see you. We try to make a real commitment when we take on an artist, and we don't necessarily do that lightly. If that artist wants to make a performance that would be fine, but what we're finding is that we have so many commitments to the artists we already have it's difficult to take on new ones, and that's something I regret an enormous amount. I feel extremely concerned that we're not showing younger English artists, and that I don't get to see all the art college shows.

**GW:** So it's not a policy not to have performance artists on your books. I can see why it might be; you have the constraints of the commercial system, and you might feel that it wasn't a suitable venue for performance.

**AD:** I think we've always tried to provide the right place for the artists to do what they want. It just hasn't been that Bruce has wanted to do performance in the gallery much;



PHOTO / J LITTKEMANN

Beuys was always making sculpture here and doing other things, showing other things. Gilbert and George haven't done any living piece recently. So I think that it hasn't been a matter of persuading them not to, it hasn't been an issue, although, as I say, with both Gilbert and George and Beuys we always said please would you always bear that in mind. Beuys talked very interestingly actually. We spent Christmas with him just before he died, in Naples, with his family, and he talked very interestingly about life and death, and what happens on death. He said that when the soul leaves the body, it remains for a while with the body, close to it, and then completely leaves the body. In fact there are a lot of very interesting accounts of exactly what happens to the soul, or the spirit if you like. I read a book called 'Life After Life', which is accounts of people who have been brought back to life after having been thought dead. And one of the most interesting things

about that is how their accounts tally in so many details of what they experience, so I was interested in what Beuys had to say.

He believed in reincarnation, and said that he thought that the person's soul returns normally after an interval of several hundred years, though sometimes very fast, sometimes in a matter of months. He said about his birth that his mother had a miscarriage and that his older brother was stillborn, and that he felt very strongly that he was that child, and that he really came back again as himself, or tried a second time if you like; and of course he was born when he was only seven months old.

He was born on a shopping expedition to Krefeld, and he had to be put into one of these intensive care units which look after very premature children. It's well known that children who spend a long time in one of those units very often develop a fascination for glass, first of all because they see

the world always through glass, all their very important experiences are through glass, and secondly that they tend to have very strong emotional relationships with three dimensional objects, that is to say they are able to bond with material objects, perhaps because they aren't bonding with people. It struck me when he was saying this that we were standing in front of a vitrine of his, which is like a glass intensive care case and that he had frequently used this as a form of sculpture. So it really proved the truth of that observation.

**GW:** The making of those things was closely related to his own life experience.

**AD:** Exactly.

**GW:** It seems that all art is a peripheral activity from the point of view of cultural practice. There was a close connection between monarchs in the past, Frederick the Great being a famous example, and the people who were making interesting art of that

Joseph Beuys's *Plight*  
1958-1985 Anthony  
D'Offay Gallery





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time. Their way of conducting policy was to some extent bound up with that art. This has been less and less true since Goya's day.

**AD:** I think you have to look at it in a slightly different way. You have to look at it in a national way, and look perhaps at the situation today against, say, a hundred and twenty years ago. I think that the problem of today is for all of us to live in the present and to trust the present. I think that the very real fear people seem to have of contemporary culture is to do with that fear of the present. As you know, people are much more concerned with holding onto the past than with fostering and encouraging and being able to live in the present. When you read the reviews for example of the Royal Academy's Twentieth Century British show, you'll see that they didn't find much to criticize in the earlier years and as the show goes on they become more and more critical until in the last room they become outraged. It's to do with people's fear of the present and being unable to trust themselves in the present.

**GW:** Do you believe that other nations are any better in this respect?

**AD:** I think it's a peculiarly English problem that we are concerned with the past, because we see our greatness in the past and we see our problems in the present, and we don't want to look at our problems, we want to hang onto our greatness. That's why we talk about heritage all the time. Heritage actually means the past not the present at all.

**GW:** How does art actually affect the way in which people see the world? For example, Beuys provided opportunities for people to rethink consciousness at the most fundamental level, with a view to being able to collectively take control, not simply to be the victims of whatever economic control already exists, and social and economic forces, but to become more aware of the situation inside and outside ourselves and to be able to somehow have more control over it.

**AD:** Right; so what Beuys was saying was that not only do we have to live in the present time but we have to take responsibility for ourselves and the world at the present time. And I think that though he said it very coherently it was also said by a lot of other contemporary artists by implication in their works.

**GW:** To me it seems one of the

main justifications for art. But I wonder whether you feel art can be successful in this way, and if so how?

**AD:** I think that quite clearly the people who work in the gallery's lives have been changed by the experience of contemporary art, and I would have thought that, to go back to what I was saying about living in the present time, you can't be with contemporary art and live with the past, or really live with the future either; you actually have to be here now in this moment, and I think that that very important activity is something which contemporary art gives you the courage to do and shows you the way. I think that in the end it probably comes down to education, and the amount of money spent on culture and the young.

I think for example that it's a tragic loss of six hours of television that State of the Art should present such obscure arguments. I don't know when six hours will next be given to contemporary art on television, but I think it's a lost opportunity in terms of involving people in contemporary art. It seems to be to be a very elitist film, interesting for those already a bit in the know. I think it should also be for amateurs and just interested people. It has always been a matter of very great regret to us that if you walk through our gallery for example, most of the people who are looking at the exhibition, whatever the exhibition, are really of two sorts, art students and people from all over the world who are already knowledgeable about art, and not the people who are doing shopping up and down Oxford Street or Bond Street. That is a matter of very great personal regret. So you don't really have the public in that sense, and that's something we always find difficult to accept, and I think the reasons are that contemporary art is really not an acceptable thing for ordinary people.

**GW:** Do you think the mass media are also to blame for that?

**AD:** I think that they must take a lot of responsibility. I think when you have critics for example who are speaking to a general public and don't take contemporary art seriously, and I think there are plenty of examples of that, that's where the damage is done.

**GW:** I'd like to talk a bit about personal contact. Art works by people actually being physically in the gallery, and you were talking earlier about the

people who actually work in the gallery

**AD:** I think that the idea of an exhibition, that is to say the way you present works of art, is crucial to us. I would say that was pretty much at the top of our list of priorities. And so we always try to make an exhibition a celebration of much more than the things that are in it, so that the effect of that exhibition will go away with the person who's seen the show; and I hope that they are going to draw on it afterwards, that the exhibition will have a powerful unity and wholeness that either the artist puts there or we are able to put there. I would like the shows to be starting points for questions that people would ask.

**GW:** And that is dependent upon their physical presence in the gallery.



**AD:** Absolutely. If you think back to the Beuys installation *Plight*, for example, you can see any number of photographs about it and think, that looks pretty interesting and extraordinary, but that's totally different from the experience of walking into the room and experiencing it in that way. After all, there is nothing that one can hold onto in a sense; every moment is changing. But it really is a matter of trusting the present, isn't it?

**GW:** It is very unclear to people who are outside the art world what the art in your gallery and elsewhere has to do with the present.

**AD:** I remember reading a statistic recently that 92% of Americans actually do not live in the present time,

Gilbert and George's  
*The Singing Sculpture*  
D'Offay is waiting  
patiently for another  
performance

they live in the future. That is to say, they spend all their time saying I'm having a horrible time at this moment but I'm going to have a lovely time in ten years time, or when I retire, so they're never really in this moment, they are actually in some other moment, a sort of imaginary moment of the future. We I suspect, are doing quite the opposite. We are actually trying to hold onto something you can't actually hold onto in the past. Both are completely unreal because both are to do with a sense of fear.

**GW:** When you were selecting artists, did you go for the ones who simply had the most quality?

**AD:** No. I think what we did was . . . we were very influenced by talking to a number of artists, amongst them Gilbert and George. I remember

it was new work by Gilbert and George or whether it was a sculpture by Joseph Beuys, we felt that these were all 'young' young things.

**GW:** When you say 'relevant to the moment', could you expand a little?

**AD:** Yes: what I feel I wanted to see at the time, and what we felt should be seen. It was very important to us that the gallery should always be useful, that the shows we put on should be seen in London. After all, I would have thought that at least half the shows we've done in seven years wouldn't have been seen in this country if we hadn't done them. So if those shows had any virtue, then we did something that was worthwhile and useful. You have to feel that.

**GW:** I suppose it's difficult to

properly in London before, one thing at the ICA eight or ten years before and that was it. When we asked Warhol to make a new self portrait, he hadn't had an important show here for twelve to fifteen years, and I think it was the right moment to do it.

**GW:** Do you think that it makes reasonable sense for a commercial gallery to take on lots of gallery artists who are primarily performance artists and to showcase performance art?

**AD:** I think the only way it could be done is if in some way outside gallery hours in the evening, and the gallery would have to exist in gallery hours for the selling of work.

**GW:** So if artists don't make things that are saleable, then they are going to have rely on something

“ . . . it really is a matter of trusting the present . . . ”

very clearly Gilbert and George saying London should be the best place to have a contemporary gallery in Europe because more people come to London than anywhere else in Europe, and that the fact that contemporary galleries tended to fail was due to the people running them rather than the situation. We wanted to have a large contemporary gallery in the centre of London which showed young art, and we didn't want to define 'young art' as anything more than art which seemed to us to feel new and so that could encompass either the work of an artist like Francesco Clemente, who wasn't at all well known then, or new paintings by Willem de Kooning who is eighty but seems to me to be relevant and important at this moment. So whether

define what one means by 'useful', but could you expand a little on what you look for other than newness and youth. There must be something which seems to you to be particularly significant.

**AD:** Well, I suppose one is led by a sense of some sort of intuition about what would be the right thing to show at this moment, what people would like to see, what they should see. There is an overall situation, in the same way perhaps as how an artist chooses what to do next. There is some voice telling him what to do next the whole time. There is an element of that, and there are financial decisions, so the whole thing in a sense falls into place. We have had five exhibitions of Beuys in London. That was rather a lot, but then he'd never been shown

different from the commercial gallery system, be it government or some sort of sponsorship.

**AD:** Yes. If you look at Gilbert and George, Beuys, Bruce Mclean, each of them for example, although they are crucially important in the world of performance art, they earn their living in another way, Beuys, in a sense, by convincing us that what was left behind from a performance was an important art work and by expanding that aspect of it

**GW:** How convinced were you of that?

**AD:** It's the idea almost of a fetish. The idea of blackboards on which teaching activities were recorded becoming artworks themselves; the message was the important thing; it





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seems strange, a relic. The same applies to every single drawing, which is telling you something, and what it is telling you is important. The fact that it's worth money or not worth money is incidental. The same is true of the blackboard writings. So the truth is in the statement, whether it's in a line or whatever. The relics are very different from the performance. Of course it's very difficult to reconstruct a voice, a lecture, from a blackboard. I tried to do it! I think that what *Performance Magazine* should be doing is persuading Gilbert and George to do a new living piece. I think that the film Gilbert and George made, *The World of Gilbert and George*, was for me a very interesting way of making performance in a way that can be used again and again.

**GW:** I wonder what you thought about the kind of personal contact and physical presence we were talking about earlier in relation to performance, and to films and video.

**AD:** Well, there is a magic, ephemeral element in a performance, isn't there, which one would like to have recorded for posterity, and very often film of performance is unsatisfactory. But *The World of Gilbert and George* was something if you like towards performance as a film; it's jolly useful and important, and it seems to me to be useful and important because if it's on in a pub everyone will watch, they won't think it's art nonsense, they might think that's funny, or goodness me, what are they up to now? But, it isn't elitist in any sense, it's absolutely identifiable with.

**GW:** And you'd like more art to be of that sort.

**AD:** I'd like it to be more widely communicated, yes.

**GW:** One hope I have is that galleries will be stocking large quantities of films and videos that people could show at home. Does that idea interest you at all?

**AD:** Well, we have Boyd Webb's fantastic film we show frequently, and Gilbert and George, things of that sort. People come in and we put them in touch with the Arts Council who supply them, and we see that lots of copies go all over the world to museums and to collectors, so that quite a lot of people can see them. It's very important.

**GW:** It does have the possibility of reaching out to lots of people in a way that physical performance doesn't.

**AD:** Absolutely.

**GW:** Could you say a few words about Beuys last show *Plight*?

**AD:** His last show was in Naples.

**GW:** His last show with you . . .

**AD:** You know how the work came about in the first place . . . The building behind us in Dering Street was being knocked down, and we had builders making a terrible noise, both through demolition and starting to put in the foundations for a new building, and we actually thought of moving the gallery because of the appalling noise. Beuys said that was a ridiculous thing to do and that he'd make a sculpture for us that would muffle the noise and that would be his contribution to the problem. And so all the felt was made in Germany and brought here. You know what 'plight' means . . . it means three things if you look it up in the dictionary. It means a terrible situation, which we were in with the noise; it means a promise, which is what he kept by making the work; and it also means a piece of folded material, which is of course what he used. He said that he wanted to make a sculpture that worked on a number of levels so that it wouldn't be possible to speak of the visual arts, a phrase which always irked him, and I think that's absolutely what he did.

**GW:** The sound element was absolutely crucial, even in that negative sense.

**AD:** Yes, the sound element was absolutely crucial. I think that apart from sight and sound, smell was also involved, we became involved with it, you could smell the felt; and time — if you were in the room for more than five minutes you weren't sure whether it was eleven o'clock in the morning or eleven o'clock in the evening outside. I remember Kiefer saying to me when he came into the sculpture, he said 'two miles underground; bunker!'. And so in a sense it was like a womb on the one hand, and it was like a padded cell on the other. It had two elements, just like the word; it had positive and negative in it, you also became very conscious of yourself. One of the things we noticed was that people when they came in either didn't want to leave or left immediately, and it seemed to intensify the mood of the person when they walked in. Whatever they were feeling, it became stronger. If they had

fear, it became stronger, if they were feeling quite cheerful that manifested itself. Also the idea of a concert hall which is also a padded cell, and where the piano is locked, and the idea of a blackboard, which relates if you like to the teaching activity, just as the piano relates to his performance activity. And then the thermometer, referring in a sense to his personal autobiographical plight and the idea of temperature.

**GW:** And was it to do with impending illness?

**AD:** Well, he was mortally ill at the time.

**GW:** And did he know it?

**AD:** Yes, on a certain level he knew it, absolutely. At the time of the previous environment we showed, he was absolutely conscious that he could have a heart attack at any moment. And at the time of *Plight* there was a question of whether he could come to London because he was taking cortisone all the time; he'd been very, very ill.

**GW:** So we've come back to matters of birth and death in relation to Beuys. He did say, didn't he, that having come close to death at the time of the famous crash, that he was no stranger to death. Did you feel that from him?

**AD:** Well, I do think he was a fine example of what I was talking about of living in the present moment. I think one of the wonderful things about knowing him was the joy which he took in being here now, and that was something that anyone who met him felt.

**GW:** That was part of the great charisma.

**AD:** Absolutely. He seemed to experience this moment very deeply. That was the wonderful thing, something that one didn't often encounter. He didn't in any case think that that was the end of the story. He wasn't an agnostic in that sense; as I said earlier, he had very definite views about reincarnation. I think he was very much influenced by Rudolf Steiner as a young man, and I think he had fairly orthodox Steiner views about things like life and death, and about the sanctity of all things. After all, one of his greatest sculptures is the seven thousand oak trees. I think that he was very secure in his knowledge of what he'd done, the ball he'd started rolling, the protest that he'd started. ●



PHOTO / GEORGE OLIVER

Richard Demarco and Joseph Beuys *Strategy get Arts 1970*

# RUNNING AT GREAT SPEED ACROSS A GREAT DISTANCE

**RICHARD DEMARCO** has caused controversy and excitement ever since he brought Beuys to the Edinburgh Festival at the Demarco Gallery in 1971. His long history of presenting radical live work by international artists and his "Edinburgh Arts" expeditions to Eastern and Western Europe have earned him the reputation of innovator, businessman, artist and mystic. **CHRISSIE ILES** talked to him at the beginning of a new phase of the Richard Demarco Gallery's twenty one year history, about performance, the art world and his new gallery space:



RICHARD DEMARCO & JOSEPH BEUYS IN A HILLSIDE IN ARGENTINA

**Chrissie Iles:** What do you think about contemporary British performance?

**Richard Demarco:** I think British performance art is better than many people imagine; it's every bit as good as American or European art, but it's made from a different viewpoint. It's less to do with national identity and more to do with ideas and trends within 'performance art' and its investigation. It cannot possibly compare in its way of working to, let's say, the performance art that I love best, the work of Beuys as a performance artist, or the work of Paul Neagu as a performance artist. Of course, these two artists are not, like all great performance artists, limited to the term performance art. They are artists first, and they happened to do performance for a good long period during their careers as I knew them.

**CI:** Why do you think British performance is like that?

**RD:** Because we are nearer to the loss of memory and national identity than people from, for example, Eastern Europe. But we are part of this American Twentieth Century stream of consciousness which has, to a great extent, produced what we call sophistication in twentieth century terms. I don't think Kantor or Beuys can be faulted for their sophistication, but they have a raw edge as well, and their art can produce thoughts in us which we, as British, find uncomfortable. I think Irwin, (the

Yugoslav painting group) for example, are going to have difficulty in this country. They are too over the top in some ways, although they regard themselves as cool.

**CI:** What do you mean by that?

**RD:** It's a matter of defining basic terms like warm and cool in relation to the limitations of a national culture. Our idea of warm in this country is not the same as warm in countries like Poland and Yugoslavia, and certainly the same goes for the word cool. You could say that Irwin are the coolest group in a way because they are so deliberately objective and distanced; they have formed something which has come about as much because of their sense of identity, their nationalism, their feeling for Slovenia, as for any artistic development within them all as individuals. Essentially very passionate, and full of the kind of commitment which I believe can embarrass the British. It's not entertainment. It reminds me of the same sort of problem that was built into the work of Kantor when I first presented him in Britain, or Paul Neagu, who is still, I think not clearly seen here. Paul Neagu is too warm, too committed, just like Beuys. It's too much. It's too near the area which is about, in the proper sense, revolutionary thought. What they are trying to do — it's an outrageous project — is rediscover, not for any intellectual reasons but because they need to do it, their identity as artists

within the context of a country which is part of a larger thing, which is, to a certain degree, indistinct to the British, who are less concerned, obviously, with Slovenia than they are with Yugoslavia. It seems like their effort is small in comparison to the development of British art or the development of American art, but I believe it is at the very heart of the European spirit, and that passion, that seriousness, makes me feel that this kind of group could not nowadays come out of what we call the British contemporary art world.

**CI:** You have always chosen to bring over and work with artists who have had that raw edge, that passion. Do you think therefore that is part of the reason that you have met with resistance from the 'establishment' in some ways to what you're doing?

**RD:** I've never wanted in my life to become part of an established art world. I don't want to be limited to any one particular time; I don't want people to say, oh yes, he's now in his middle period or his late period in his work. I want to work with people who will constantly question my right for myself as gallery director/exhibitions organiser/events organiser. And I don't think I've ever presented anything at all to do with art for the art world.

**CI:** Who have you produced it for?

**RD:** I think essentially myself, first of all, otherwise why would I do it; I've done it to try and find out a



## RUNNING AT GREAT SPEED ACROSS A GREAT DISTANCE

little bit more about why I'm here on this planet and how I can relate to the people I respect and love, and it so happens that many of the people that I do respect can support me in these events. I mean, it wasn't the art world which helped me present Kantor or Beuys, I can assure you.

**CI:** Do you respect the established art world?

**RD:** No.

**CI:** Why not?

**RD:** I'm talking about the people who help all art ideas and thoughts to coalesce far too quickly. You actually begin to believe that as soon as they have defined some kind of way of working, that it will do for more than five minutes. The tyranny of the academy of the avant garde, the tyranny of the post modern, the tyranny of the so-called arts centres which are now proliferating with the help of the government, is doing more damage to art than practically anything I can think of. Because this energy is never particular, it's never to do with a certain place.

**CI:** Why do you think the British art world has developed in that way?

**RD:** Because it is a natural course; it's the way things happen. Once you fight for the machinery to refine your methods, then the machinery can become the thing which you begin to take pride in, the way it gleams and works, the way it is well oiled, so you can put on a programme that will go on forever and ever in the name of the avant garde. That's why I'd find it extremely difficult to work in an 'arts centre', where I'd be expected to do a monthly programme of, let's say, performance artists. Performance is what it is. It's not about something which can be repeated or reoccur. You'll be lucky if there is a significant month or year in which whatever is being done is vital to the human condition.

**CI:** Do you think this situation will change?

**RD:** No, it'll get worse. The stranglehold is tightening. I find it extremely difficult to find a totally independent arts centre defending the view which can move beyond the constrictions of national boundaries. There are many places in Britain you can be sure which will be supporting 'British' performance artists, but there will be very few possessed of a purity of intention and experience to lasso the powers embodied in Irwin, at the

right moment.

**CI:** If you had unlimited funding resources, wouldn't you fall into the same kind of arts centre trap?

**RD:** No, because if I did, I could have reshaped the Edinburgh Festival. If you look at the lectures 'Articulations' at the South Bank, it introduces me as the person who introduced the visual arts to the Festival in 1966. If I'd had ten times what I did have, I could have maybe helped Beuys, so that he wouldn't have had to have gone beyond the gallery. He did so because he needed the back-up for projects that he wanted to do. *Plight*, for example, cost an awful lot of money. I admire D'Offay's courage to let that project happen. For a month, D'Offay's gallery became a work of art. My aim is to make the Demarco Gallery ascend to that condition as far as possible. If the artist does it properly, the space becomes made of the stuff which the artist is made of. D'Offay is an example of a totally dedicated, thoroughly professional dealer who has shown directors of Sothebys and Christies that art of the highest quality can be made by people alive now, not only artists of the past, which has always been the cut-off point in Britain.

**CI:** Is there anyone in Britain who you think is working in a more challenging way?

**RD:** I am actually impressed by one group of young people, Babel, in Halifax, who were representing an extraordinary group of Italian performance artists from Milan, I think all of them medics in some way. I think Babel has a deadly seriousness, they don't seem to work in the same sort of British way, very much influenced by Eastern Europe, and they know they're in competition with Eastern Europe. It gives me hope; there's something going on there. I would also look to a key figure like Alistair McLennan, who persists in working in an impossible situation, it would appear, i.e. Belfast, because whenever he does something over there this highly sophisticated media system that generates art for the government can't get to him easily, it's an isolated, peripheral world, so-called.

**CI:** What do you think is important about that sort of work?

**RD:** I feel performance art is a very important manifestation of our time, because it calls into question both the idea that there is a thing called theatre a million miles away from the

visual arts, and it also calls into question the training of the artist. Art schools are basically not equipped to give artists the chance to use the medium, for example, of their own bodies to make performance.

**CI:** It's quite ironic that the Turner Prize was awarded to two people who became famous for their work in performance.

**RD:** The Turner Prize is polite. There's no embarrassment in a gathering which is dedicated to making the artist respectable. If you deal with people like Marina Abramović there could literally be blood spilt, pain suffered at an unendurable level for you to witness. I must make something very clear. I didn't one day wake up and say I must do something called performance art because it's been left out of the running, certainly in the history of Scotland. By the way, as I



Richard Demarco  
Dixie  
Photography

speaking I'm conscious of the fact that they'll import it now, it's time, but what kind of performance — the best? I believe that what I have presented in Edinburgh was the best, before its time. And I didn't present it for Scotland, believe me; I presented it for Britain, but whether the Londoners decided to write about it or not was neither here nor there; I still did it. There were one or two frightening performances by people like Steve Whittaker, Phil Hitchcock, Doug Hayles, all Americans from Chicago, Kansas City, places like that, in the early seventies, that I wish I could have transferred to London, just to make the point.

**CI:** Is being based in Edinburgh a disadvantage for you or an advantage?

**RD:** The Edinburgh Festival is not about the defence of ideas, it's

mainly about entertainment, not the advancing of human thought. It's a repetition of a programme, it's like a repertory company, rather than an investigative theatre company. You don't really say that the Edinburgh Festival represents the advancement of human thought from 1947 until now. What you've actually got to say is for some years it actually more or less hit the target and summed up the year whatever, 1959 or 47, but there was no sense of being right on top of things. Usually its programmes indicate the importance of fashion.

**CI:** How do you stand in relation to it?

**RD:** I feel terribly frustrated, overwhelmingly unhappy about the visual arts component.

**CI:** What about the performance component within the theatre-based festival?

**RD:** It is almost completely buried under the avalanche of what the fringe throws at us every year.

**CI:** So is it a disadvantage?

**RD:** There are no critics to write about it.

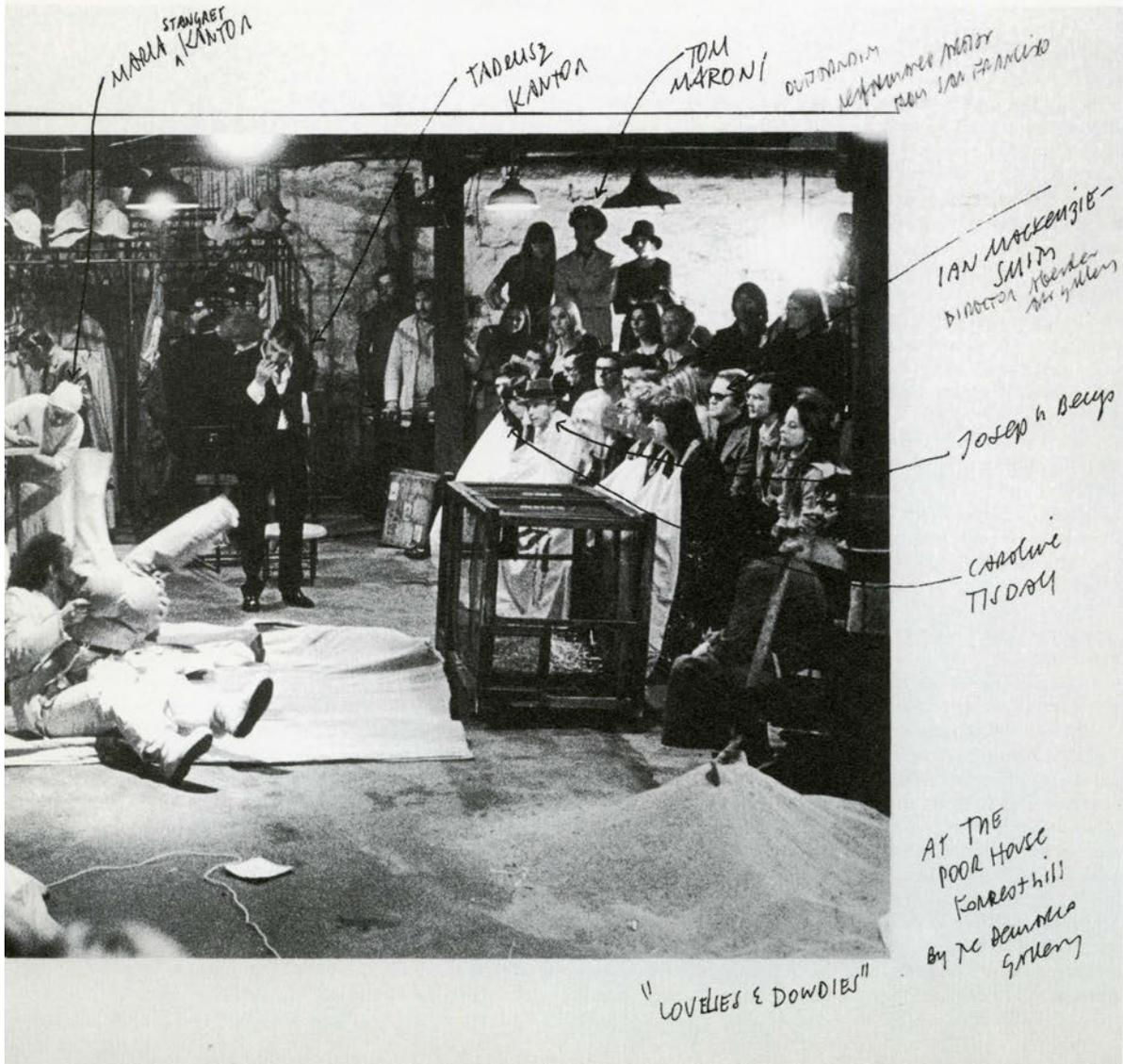
**CI:** Why won't the critics go to Edinburgh?

**RD:** Because Edinburgh is not about visual arts. I showed I think the finest performance art piece I've ever shown, apart from Beuys, a New Zealander called John Cousins, in 1984, which was all about the sound of the liquid from his body, his urine, and the exhalation of the air as well, that was required to pump the energy from his body through a complicated piece of machinery involving tubes and pipes so the fluid dripped upon drums. It was a



Demarco in 1970

Lovelies and Dowdies  
Tadeusz Kantor at the  
Poorhouse, Forresthill,  
1972



## RUNNING AT GREAT SPEED ACROSS A GREAT DISTANCE

concert. It was so shattering that it lasted only for as long as his body could stand it, which was for about four hours in the middle of the night, when the whole of the Edinburgh Festival had come to a standstill. For me, if you really want me to tell you what the best thing that's happened over the past five years is, it's that. I'm so proud of that event; I feel history was made there. And I only wish the festival could be more about that. Now nobody bothered to turn up; certainly the Arts Council didn't send any representatives, and if they want to be questioned about their ways of working, I would demand to know why they weren't there, eventually, one day, because it is inexcusable.

**CI:** What keeps you in Edinburgh?

**RD:** Because there is enormous work to be done there, and because Edinburgh deserves it and because I believe Edinburgh is the perfect city for it, and I believe that with this present Labour Council there is a genuine effort to turn the city into an all-year-round space for serious art. I think there should possibly be an experiment in Edinburgh which would remove the Festival for a few years from the scheme of things and put the money from it into the building up of this all year round energy. I think the Festival does a good deal of harm to Edinburgh because it seems to produce a solution, but its too short term, and there's not enough time spent on how the reservoir of creative energy is held afterwards to spread out. The fact is, you don't have visual arts taken seriously at the festival because we don't know how to utilise one of Edinburgh's greatest assets, which is all its galleries and museums. Edinburgh is very well equipped with museums and galleries. It has very large spaces in which you could have a *Documenta* type show which could run for four or five months.

**CI:** Is that the sort of thing you'd like to see happen in Edinburgh?

**RD:** I would like to develop that aspect of things. I believe that I am about to work with the space I've always wanted to work with a space which I hope will become second to none in Britain, ideal for performance. It's a dream. The best thing to describe it as is the Scottish equivalent to the Whitechapel. It's a smaller scale, but has the same feeling, of a perfect space which cannot be found anywhere else in the world, and it's in the centre of

the city, within the Royal Mile.

**CI:** How do you think that will compare with the Fruitmarket?

**RD:** Well, ideally it should prove to be the making of the Fruitmarket. I think the Fruitmarket will only become alive when there are other spaces equally well known, equally desirable and equally desired, and to the same extent needed by artists.

**CI:** So what are you going to do with the new space?

**RD:** I want to rely on the fact that any artist whatsoever, no matter how famous, any gallery, any institution, no matter how important, when seeing the space, become inspired by it and show passionate commitment to it. When you've got that going it means you can work wonders, because you know that you can say do you want this space and they will say YES I want this space, I have to have this space.

**CI:** How will the space function?

**RD:** The upper floor, which is the performance space, which is dedicated to Joseph Beuys, will become Beuys' room. No-one will be allowed to go anywhere near it unless they make a site-specific work. So if you want to see, let's say, a world famous artist do something that can only be found in Edinburgh, then you have to go to that space. Many people, world experts, people like Susanne Paget of the Musée D'art Moderne in Paris, or Rudi Ruchs, from the Von Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Henry Meyrick Hughes, have all enthused over that space and I think we must be optimistic at this stage, despite the fact that I know that things are more difficult than they were in the sixties. There were wide open spaces in the sixties, you could just go and run with the ball. Now everybody can see you to get the ball, and the defence systems are so extraordinarily well organised you can't run anywhere. Except in those areas like Slovenia, where those defence systems aren't set up. Irwin are running at great speed across a great distance, just as Kantor was, and the Rumanian avant garde were when I first discovered them. There is always an area which hasn't been taken into account. I believe this has been the case also for some time in Northern Ireland, especially, where the art is stronger and heavier than many people could imagine. I see my gallery in its twenty first year of its existence in its present guise. I've been running a gallery since

1963 and I see it as merely the first stage. I hope that one of the things I can do is prove that performance art will not go away. Performance art, unlike conceptual art, and like certain neatly defined terms for the way art manifests itself, is a genuine and important development in the 20th century art language which tends to bring closer together aspects of the performing arts to aspects of the visual arts. This is entirely healthy and important. I believe that if you become seriously engaged in either, you are led to consider the nature of performance art. We're just at the beginning of it. I think my most important work could be keeping an open mind so that if someone who is a painter comes along and does performance, I will accommodate that person.

**CI:** What do you think is the secret of the success of that kind of space?

**RD:** The new Demarco gallery doesn't look like a gallery. It looks more like a large-scale house, with the kind of rooms you dream about, for good parties. It's a place for the gathering of friends, large enough for public gatherings but essentially domestic in scale, and so recognisable and comforting when you walk in, it puts the public and artists at ease. I would rather see a hundred places like that than a Tate extension. You can't architect a custom-built gallery. Art takes you by surprise, unawares. That's its job. If you capture it, its like building the place where you're going to fall in love — you can be sure you won't fall in love there! It's a sign of our incapability to believe in ourselves that we build galleries and museums and not churches, i.e a place of meeting which is more than a conference centre. Certain words are signals of warning. One is conference; one is leisure; one is culture. These are naming what cannot be named. You cannot find leisure in a leisure centre. The chances are you don't find art in its highest state in an art gallery. The highest state of art is in its gestation, in an artist's studio, or at the point where the artist is inspired. When I interviewed James Towell on the rim of a volcano crater in Arizona, that was the highest point of James's art for me. And my clearest memory of Beuys was in his studio, when the moment came to meet for the first time. He was sitting on a sofa of leather on a leather floor. I knew I was in the centre of something, of a kind of whirlpool of

energy which was different, pure and refined, and a kind of elixir which was not inexhaustible; it had to be properly tapped.

**CI:** Do you think you'll ever find someone like Beuys again?

**RD:** In my lifetime? There'll never be anyone like Joseph ever again. His stature is still not fully recognised. But the time will come when maybe it will be seen that not only was he the architect of the style we all needed to define ourselves in the world order over the period since the last 2000 years, but he was also the early warning system we needed to equip ourselves for the extraordinary test which is yet to come in the form of the twenty first century. He was the first artist to let me know, round about 1980, that the twenty first century had already begun.

**CI:** How did he do that?

**RD:** Well, he told me that the order that existed, the monetary system, the concepts of education, were so loaded against the idea of the freedom of the individual in terms of art, and that there was something desperately seriously wrong with the educational system in art that seemed to put all its energy into the encouragement of craft making and design rather than the development of spiritual and intellectual ideas. And I see of course that his warning was well founded because in the late 80's people have every right to feel alarmed that art schools are now seen to be instruments for the system we now call materialism and capitalism. Art schools for me were a kind of monastic system for young people, perhaps not as well disciplined as they might be but fairly well disciplined, for a whole generation to come out of the 50s and 60s capable of taking the chances that had to be taken to try and define our culture. I'm including in that of course the Beatles and many others who told us what Britain was about. I feel that Beuys was the right person for the ending of the twentieth century. If he had remained alive longer, he would have been able to see it properly off, finished with. He prepared us for the beginning of this new thing and I'm sad that people don't realise that that is what he did. He did it in the greatest piece of performance art I think that anyone could imagine, which was the '68 performance which he called. *The Scottish Symphony Celtic Kinloch Rannoch*. It took him six days, twice a day, four hours each time, and it

required the assistance of a great friend of his, Henning Christian Anderson, a Danish composer musician, and it required the collaboration of many of his students. And indeed the collaboration of the audience. I've never seen human beings converted into artists so quickly. All sorts of people were resisting right up until that moment when they found themselves in that room. And he managed to do it whether they were in the room for a second, or a minute, or hours; they still became part of something which they would never ever forget. The neatest way I could think of defining it in terms of art was it was like watching Leonardo da Vinci paint the *Last Supper*. You were being privileged to watch something that was never going to be repeated. It was a historic moment. You knew that everything that was happening to you, and everything that had happened to you was going to be rethought as a result of it. Beuys celebrated the moment, wherever he happened to be, which was everywhere. I never saw him 'off duty'. He was one of the few artists I know who had no pretensions. Your ideas were as interesting as his, and he would have the energy to spend time on you even if you were 'unimportant'. He didn't seek out power structures.

**CI:** What happened when you first brought Beuys over. What was the initial reaction?

**RD:** I think shock, horror, and total refusal to help the gallery change to be properly equipped to deal with Beuys. I wasn't only showing Beuys, I was showing people like Friedam Doh, etc.

**CI:** The Dusseldorf show.

**RD:** Yes.

**CI:** Was that the first time Beuys had shown in Britain?

**RD:** Yes.

**CI:** And did London show any interest at the time?

**RD:** Yes they did. Artists came up, and critics, and gallery directors like Nigel Greenwood and Nicholas Logsdail, and the reaction was good, but they didn't have the strength or the power to persuade the Scottish art world that something had happened that had altered the structure of the Festival. I tried to maintain the energy with the Rumanian exhibition, full of tremendous experimentation and significance. It was important to do it, not because it was Rumanian, but because it was completely unheard of,

everywhere, in New York, you couldn't have found the energy there. Then in 1972 it was Kantor.

**CI:** What was the reaction when he arrived?

**RD:** Almost total indifference. Very small audiences, but good critical acclaim. I remember Richard Eyres writing a tremendous piece for the Scotsman. He wrote and said if there is a syntax of experimental theatre then it was obviously written by someone called Tadeusz Kantor, and I was very happy. I noticed the other day that Richard Eyres has just become the Director of the National Gallery and it's nice that he saw that performance and wrote that. It wasn't just Kantor performing, there were others as well. There wasn't a thing called *Performance Magazine* then and there was no-one capable of writing about it.

**CI:** How do you pay for and evaluate performance?

**RD:** It's a great problem. I am seriously concerned for the way the performance artist goes unrewarded. The answer is not in performance being something you share with hundreds of people. It should only be shared by a few people. It requires a different kind of collector, prepared to engage in a pure art of collaboration. If I'd had the money, think of all the performances I could have commissioned. Perhaps there will be a time when performance is welcome at the Festival. I'd like to be there with the new gallery when that happens, and with a budget to commission important work. It must happen at some point because of the inertia caused by the repetition of the basically useless. It has to break one of these days. The imbalance between the number of performers and the audience is very serious.

**CI:** What do you see as the solution?

**RD:** The clue to supporting performance is not to breathe it around too much that it is different to the experience and excitement you get from looking at a Turner watercolour. The same rules apply. By the way, Turner for me was an artist supremely well disguised as a performance artist, because of that business of being strapped to a mast of a ship, which was worthy of being recorded as a performance. You knew Beuys was a superb performance artist because of the beauty of his watercolours. All performance artists can draw like a dream.●



Demarco in new space



Untitled # 153,  
Cindy Sherman

# THE SINGING CRITIC

Have you videotaped 'State of the Art' yet asks the character in the Biff cartoon. Whatever its merits or demerits, this TV series of the book of the show must be the most talked about, love-hated phenomena of the year so far. PETER CULSHAW chronicles the recent progress of Sandy Nairne's mega series:

Felt Suit,  
Joseph Beuys



STANDING IN FRONT of a couple of blackboards at the ICA, covered in unintelligible doodles by Joseph Beuys. The magician/shaman has left us now, but we have evidence that he was here. It reminded me of when I was eight and The Beatles played the De Montfort Hall, Leicester in 1964. A friend of mine pulled out all his hair at the concert. The Beatles actually ate at a restaurant owned by the father of another friend. When they'd finished their meal, she wouldn't allow the plates to be washed up, so they were put into a glass case. Perhaps if they'd kept the glass case it might be worth something now. I was told the Beuys blackboards are insured for £100,000.

The blackboards were part of an exhibition which went with the TV series and book *State Of The Art*. Some of the contradictions of Beuys' work shed some light on the unresolved conflicts of the *State Of The Art* extravaganza. Beuys believed everyone has the spark of creativity and is a potential if not actual artist (e.g. electricians: 'Human beings who are creative in the domain of electricity') and yet was a superstar, who opposed capitalism but has made vast profits for some collectors, whose installations and performances implied a critique of the gallery system and yet ended up as Number One on the late Dr Willi Bongard's Top 100 in his newsletter *Art Actuel* (Jasper Johns was often second). Dr Bongard gave points for prestigious shows, feature articles in magazines and which collections had acquired the artist's work. He then worked out an average price for the work, and established a price/point ratio to find out which artists were good value for money. There was also apparently a 'B' list of up-and-coming artists, a sort of equivalent to the Indie Charts in the music papers. The author/director of *State Of The Art*

Sandy Nairne was quoted as saying "Television is changing. What do kids watch? *Hill Street Blues* is fragmented, has no central narrative and a complex soundtrack. These are the characteristics of current television, typified by the rock video." He also compared *State Of The Art's* approach to *The Singing Detective*, which had 8 million viewers.

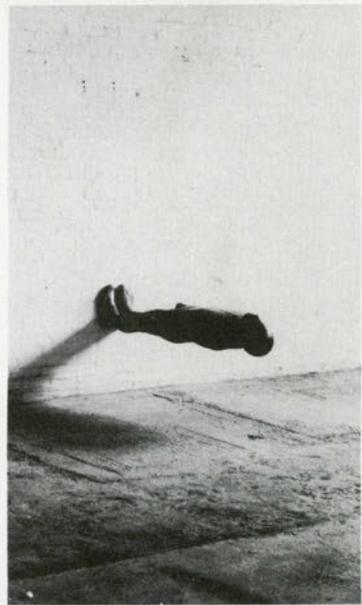
Perhaps *State Of The Art* would also have had 8 million viewers if Nairne had produced an art equivalent of *The Singing Detective* or a pop video. But people in record companies sit around with stop watches these days to make sure the hook line doesn't come more than 20 seconds into a song, and *The Singing Detective* seduced its audience with popvid-like imagery of shady characters, glamour, nostalgic saxophones and film noir streets at night which managed to hold the audience while the narrative collapsed. *State Of The Art* however kicked off with dull music from Keith Jarrett, shots of windowcleaners going up glass buildings and some fairly banal statements from 'authorities' like Frederic Jameson (who's he?) e.g. "At some point following World War 2 a new society began to emerge . . . pause . . . variously described as post-industrial society, multi-national capitalism, consumer society, media society and so forth". At which point the great unwashed reached for the off button.

It would at least have been amusing to have Dr Bongard's chart . . . In at 19 with a bullet . . . Cindy Sherman! A non-mover at 12 — Eric Fischl! You could have compared the interlinking rise of people like Run DMC and Keith Haring, and talked to his Colonel Parker manager Tony Shafrazi, who is much sharper than most rockbiz managers. We did get Thomas McEvilly of *ArtForum* instead at a

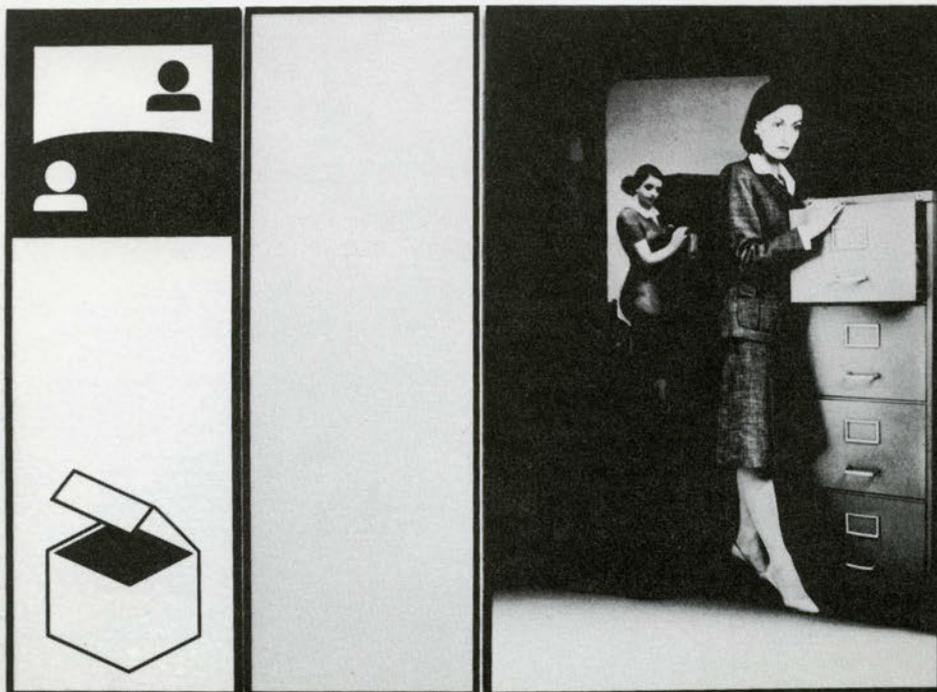
Haring opening . . . one walks through to sense the teeth of the gearbox grinding around one, to feel how sharp the bite is going to be this season. There's a great deal of professional tension, careerist tension in the huge galleries that makes them very exciting! It is exciting, and also totally ridiculous (Haring can knock off several 80,000 dollar paintings a day). When I met Shafrazi and Haring, they were deciding on various career moves — he'd do the Fiorucci shop in Milan but not New York, the Bloomingdale shopping bag offer was turned down — the mechanics of the gearbox are fascinating, if at times repellent. Assuming that *State Of The Art* had aimed to be a Tube-esque show for 'young people' there were lots of possibilities — more mileage could have been made from flame-haired entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren hanging out with Aboriginal artist Michael Nelson Tjakamarra at last year's Sydney Biennale. Malcolm reckons that artists are the new rock stars and I'm told is due to have a 'retrospective' at the MOMA in New York, curated by Jon Savage of *The Face*. We didn't get to see A R Penck's rock band but we did see the art world's Dorian Gray, the forever hip Andy Warhol — he looks more and more like an undertaker — with 'urban street angel' Jean-Michel Basquiat giving Andy a new lease of life or

perhaps a blood transfusion. Andy's ghostly figure had cropped up on the Tube twice recently, making a video for *Curiosity Killed the Cat*, and because he's bought the film rights of Tama Janowitz's *Slaves Of New York* Tama claims to be the Jane Austen of New York and her book is crammed with whining, unpleasant NY art types.

Of course, if they had actually made a 'POP' *State Of The Art* it probably would have been flash, superficial and objectionable. As the first series on Modern Art since *Shock Of The New* they succumbed to the temptation of trying to cram modern art, life and the universe into six programmes, and the result was bound to be superficial anyway. That's not to say it didn't have memorable moments or that it's not good to see a spot of Contemporary Art on the box — it's not even as if art was such a minority taste; in the US for example 4 million people visited the Met in NY last year and the art schools churn out 35,000 graduates a year (more than the entire population of Renaissance Florence). But trying to 'do' Sexuality and Politics in one programme and trying to put it in some sort of context (cue models being made up for a fashion spread, shots deep in the belly of the ITN News Room) even without mentioning apparently marginal activities like performance art was doomed. Figures like Fischl and



Edge,  
Anthony Gormley



Office at Night,  
Victor Burgin

# THE SINGING CRITIC

Sherman got ten minutes to distil an entire life's work, and burning questions like the symbiotic/parasitic relationship of the art establishment to indigenous and 'ethnic' art was glossed over in 20 minutes talking to Aborigines.

The lack of an opinionated presenter gave the series a somewhat spurious aura of objectivity and often resulted in a bland non-combative style. Having got collectors like Dr Herbert Zapp (crazy name, crazy guy) of the Deutsche Bank or Peter Ludwig or collectors like Mary Boone and Michael Werner to share their views with us, they were all treated with kid gloves. On the question of money Dr Zapp said "Investment considerations play no part at all." Pull the other one, Herbert. Or Werner "Dealing in art is absolutely uninteresting . . . because it's just an exchange of goods," while his intimidating wife Mary Boone was equally dismissive of any financial motive. She might sell you a David Salle for 75,000 dollars, but she probably wouldn't because she only sells to 'high status' collections.

Perhaps it is naive to object to any of this, but one felt a slightly tougher, more investigative style was called for.

Trying to review an entire series is almost as impossible a task as trying to cover the entire state of modern art in six shows. In many ways, the book, mercifully free of too much incomprehensible art babble, is a more satisfactory artefact (Chatto) while the exhibition, while giving us a welcome chance to see some of the works we'd seen on telly, was little more than minor works of superstars with a few Brits thrown in for good measure. One of the most interesting spiels was the sight of Victor Burgin, normally perceived as a 'political artist' arguing against using art as political propaganda. Burgin's main drawback was a tendency to mime quotation marks by waving his hands by his ears as though he's about to take off — but then part of the post-modern condition is the global takeover of inverted commas. Burgin said "Politics is certainly a matter of making statements . . . arguments supported by fact. I don't think art is a particularly

good way of doing that . . . we have other channels open to us . . . It is resented because people come to art to get away from being preached at; to allow themselves a little play. You don't confront the authoritarian patriarchal principle . . . with another act of aggressive masculinity, by making tough, macho, political art."

Or as Joseph Beuys put it (in his last interview) "If it were the task of art to understand something intellectually, I would express it better in logical sequences of sentences and not produce colours or forms." Beuys, blackboards

notwithstanding, of course didn't abandon theory and was politically active, particularly for the German Green Party, but his ecological politics were complementary to his art, much of which concerned humanity's disconnection with the non-human and with nature and wasn't just sloganeering. But his critique of the over-intellectual, top heavy theorising and endless, anachronistic, love affair with its notions of the 'avant-garde' of art critics was impressively convincing. A pity that *State Of The Art* didn't take Beuys's comments to heart. ●

Warhol with Basquiat



*We Don't Need Another Hero*, Barbara Kruger

MARKET  
CURRENCY  
ECONOMICS

HEALTH  
TECHNOLOGY  
POLITICS  
BUSINESS

CHIEFS OF STAFF

MICHELANGELO QUESTIONS  
UN. PRIORITIES ON FAMINE  
RELIEF AND CASH CROPPING IN

REMBRANDT  
in call for trade  
sanctions against

ART YIELDS

RAPID EXPANSION  
WOULD WORRY ME  
SAYS CEZANNE

Conrad Atkinson's interventionist poster works in the London Underground and the Newcastle Metro seeks the democratisation of art: by OLIVER BENNETT

# ART IN THE CITY — THE BIG BANG —

NANCY REAGAN  
BERTHE MOUST  
DISAGREE ON BASIL  
PRINCIPLES OF COLOUR  
AND EXPRESSION

THATCHER PROPOSALS  
FOR EDUCATION AND  
UNEMPLOYMENT

RECENT INITIATIVES in the public art arena by parallel curatorial teams the Artangel Trust and Projects U.K. have enabled artists working in a 'context of social or political intervention' to show temporary artworks at public locations throughout the country. As such, many of the artists involved or due to be involved in this process are those whose work deals with the representation of social or political information — often using the form and language of the mass media for the strategic dissemination of their ideas. Thus, work by Barbara Kruger, Tim Head (as Contracts International), Les Levine, Jenny Holzer, Terry Atkinson and others has or will be seen in public spaces normally associated with advertising. Conrad Atkinson, in collaboration with the above bodies, has produced two posterworks due to be exhibited in March at Bank and Bond Street tube stations, at Lewisham, on the Tyne and Wear Metro, and later at Edinburgh in May. Taking the form of the re-worked covers of the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal, the posters juxtapose disparate languages and images, making fun of newsspeak and providing a humorous and oblique criticism of media information and our relentless consumption of such received 'truths'.

Known for his work focussing upon the phenomena of particular issues, Atkinson has a reputation as a visual critic using an investigative artistic style. His critical, oppositional stance has often taken his work into areas such as trade union halls and social clubs where the artistic material performs differently according to its different uses and audiences. This working method establishes a dialogue between the receiver and the artwork that has potential for activity as manifesting "the fight to reveal to people their own powers of representation."

The posterworks grew out of a smaller commission over a year old, and it took a year of negotiations to

get past the F.T. and the W.S.J. themselves, as well as the notoriously wary London Transport Advertising Authority, who had recently blocked an Artangel proposal for posters by Terry Atkinson which addressed nuclear experiments of the 1950's depicting Robert Oppenheimer as Rocky 8.

Another work by Conrad Atkinson is appearing at a group show about nuclear power called 'World's Waste', to be seen at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, in March and April, and subsequently touring for two years. Utilising the poster form again, Atkinson's piece reworks the glossy P.R. that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd employ to allay fears about the local Sellafield reprocessing plant. Parodying the cosy familiarity of B.N.F.L.s publicity, the posters use the nuclear family visual of the original advertisement with startling new texts by Atkinson such as 'Welcome to the seductiveness of the end of the world'. The original idea to put the artworks on the Cumbrian buses where the B.N.F.L. posters have been displayed was blocked as the work was considered too confrontational, so they will appear in the exhibition, if legally permitted. Atkinson and members of his family worked at Sellafield, with tragic consequences, so the issue has a personal resonance for him and also for the Cumbrian community from which he comes.

The use by artists of the idiom of advertising and styles of mass reproducibility has been used before for critical purposes, notably in the work of Victor Burgin and Hans Jaacke — due to be involved in an Artangel project — but has remained largely gallery bound. However, there is a growing body of artists to whom the subversive devolution of political work is a necessary component of their activities. Les Levine, responsible for the contentious series of 'God' billboards seen in London and Ireland last year, has described himself as a 'media' artist. To this end, such 'media' artworks like Levine's and

Atkinson's act as a comment on the way the media works, and use the format of text and image combinations to seize attention and compete with advertising on similar terms. The curatorial problem, as Roger Took of the Artangel Trust explains, is selecting work that is able to swerve past bureaucracies and still raise issues. Thus, such work must make points laterally rather than propagandise or confront, otherwise there will be a functional inability, beyond 1968 style cultural guerilla activity, to penetrate public spaces effectively. However, such work can be relatively specific to certain issues. For instance, Barbara Kruger's work relates critically to media images of male sexuality, and Levine's posters deal with the relationship of religion to the Irish War.

The key to the public placement of such work lies in the imaginative mediation of political art through prevailing systems so that artists ideas may have a degree of influence outside the gallery. Artworks like Conrad Atkinson's posters go some way to achieving this, while simultaneously transcending the notion of public art as municipal cosmeticism. ●

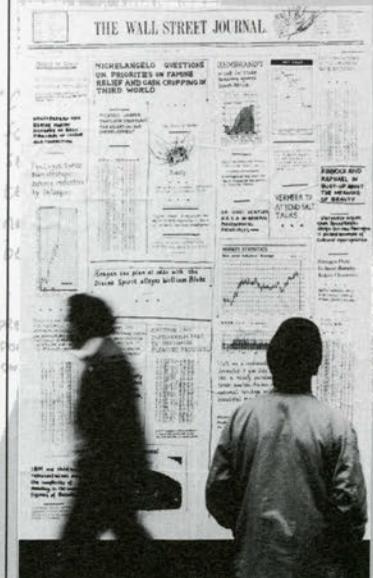
KINNOCK AND  
RAPHAEL IN  
BUST-UP ABOUT  
THE MEANING  
OF BEAUTY

Veronese argues  
that Brunelleschi  
design for new Pont  
is prime example of  
cultural appropriation

Pentagon Plans  
To Boost Beauty  
Reduce Clearances

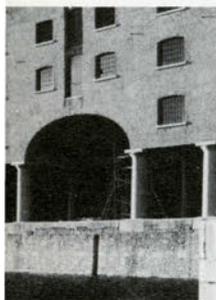
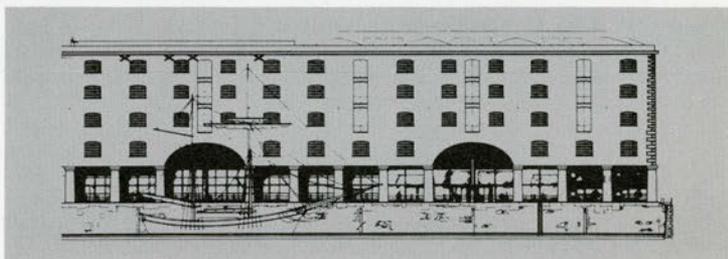
ANDY WARHOL PRICE  
RISE CAUSES CHAOS AS  
KOREA LIBERALISES LAWS

ROMAN TO TALK  
IN MASSIVE BILD



# LIVE SPACE FOR TATE NORTH

The Tate moving to its Northern base in Liverpool's dockland is making plans for a permanent performance space. **CHRISIE ILES** finds out more:



THE TATE GALLERY Liverpool is, by its new director's own definition "The first national gallery entirely devoted to modern art in England".<sup>1</sup> As such, and as a completely new venture unhampered by history and bureaucratic tradition, it presents a real possibility for a radical improvement in the presentation of contemporary art within a historical context, as seen in museums throughout Europe and America but until now, with a few notable exceptions, rarely achieved in England.

The new museum, situated in a massive warehouse in Liverpool's Albert Dock, has four floors of exhibition space. Major international exhibitions of Pompidou Centre stature and duration will take place on the first floor, usually engaging in some way with works from the Tate Gallery's permanent collection, 85% of which is currently in store. This will be on display in a rotation period of approximately two years at the Tate Gallery Liverpool, set in particular historical and thematic contexts.

The creation of an entirely new museum has allowed considerations of developments in the ways in which artists work and in which art is produced and presented over the last twenty five years to be taken into account. The results of this can be seen on the fourth floor of the building, which will have spaces specifically designed for installations, artists' studios and live work. International established artists will be invited to make up installation for the main gallery on this floor, working in the space for up to six months beforehand. Adjacent to this main gallery, four studios will house artists in residence, to include those working in performance and mixed media. Their work will be accessible to the public at

various points in time, as well as being presented in a small adjoining gallery. The performance space is essentially a 'black box', accommodating performance, contemporary dance, films, lectures and spin-offs from exhibitions on other floors; for example, a reconstruction and presentation of a play or action in association with a historical show.

The provision of space and facilities for live work within a national and international museum of contemporary art opens up possibilities for artists both to work with greater freedom, outside the usual practically administratively restrictive gallery situation, and to develop pieces of work in situ. This has exciting implications for live work, and for object-based work in relation to performance. The Tate Gallery Liverpool will also be involved in placing art outside the boundaries of the building itself, both in the immediate surrounding area of the dock, which also houses the Maritime Museum and a complex of housing, offices and shops, and in the city itself. The gallery is also collaborating with the Bluecoat Gallery which has recently begun to include performance in its exhibition programme, to programme performance work.

To draw the space to public attention before its completion in the early summer of 1988, and to provide a demonstration of the kinds of ways in which the Tate Liverpool intends to work with artists, three pieces of work were commissioned last year: a painting, by Steven Campbell; a sculpture, by Tony Cragg, and a performance, by Bruce Mclean and David Ward.

The performance, *A Song for the North*, took place 1st September in Albert Dock, on the quayside and on

the water itself, and involved a collaboration with local artists, singers and fire engine enthusiasts. An antique fire pump from the adjacent museum was used to create dramatic arcs of water and spray across the dock, behind which the singers, positioned on a raft in the water, and Mclean, posturing as ever on the quay, were lit by Ward in a dramatic series of light changes. The result was a particularly successful collaboration with local people in a spectacular and evocative piece. Mclean and Ward are now planning another 'spectacular' to mark the opening of the new building in 1988. And the Tate, London? It continues in its own sweet way. But you can be sure that by the middle of next year even London-bound members of the gallery-going public will be making the trip up to Liverpool to witness this new step forward in British contemporary art presentation and production. Let's hope that performance and live work really will have the position within the new scheme of things which it deserves and which it has been promised. ●



New Tate North  
Performance space



THE BRACKNELL FESTIVAL of Independent Video is held annually, and is the main event on the British video calendar. Aside from exhibition, it incorporates a conference on independent video practice in the UK. This article is in direct response to this year's events, although the discussion here is broader in its references, discussing the plurality of video, the differences and similarities in a diverse praxis, and the ensuing implications for the development of a critical meta-language or set of theories — a potential plurality of codes constituting a critical presence.

A number of major tendencies are evident in video practice. Some have evolved in parallel to one another — in some cases out of one another — whilst others have evolved quite apart from the considerations that have informed separate practices. Of course, any attempt to categorise activity, either in general or in relation to a particular tape, should be contextualised as generality. Categorical structures are only tools in aiding the reading of works, and their limitations should be recognised early on their application.

The tape by Simon Robertshaw, *One of Those Things You See All the Time* not only seeks to engage the social and political issues involved, but also the personal response of the 'artist' to the situation. That is to say, not the response of the social observer or documentarist, but the response of an individual who deals with these problems within the artistic framework of impressions, aesthetics and meanings. For some this work functions as community-video, for others as documentary, and for a third group as art-video. The reality is that like all good work it is unto itself, although its ambiguous, even ambivalent, position regarding categorisation is of importance in what would appear to be a still necessary debate at this time.

What set of generally workable categories can be identified, allowing an ordered access to a diversity of activity, without being restrictive in over prescription?

Firstly, that of art-video, which can be further sub-divided into works on tape for single monitor display and works for installation which may incorporate other media (this would include 'live' video such as Paik's early *TV Buddha* — a Buddha sculpture contemplating its image in a video monitor). The history of art-video has

been well documented, its unique genesis being most often traced to the conceptual and performance art areas and to Fluxus in particular.

Bill Viola's *Anthem* is an example of one approach to the artists video tape. This work uses virtually 'straight' video techniques, post-production effects being limited to subtle slow-motion and sound-track manipulation.

Jeremy Welsh's *Reflecting* represents a rather different approach to the medium, exploiting a bewildering array of special effects and a labyrinth of video footage. This work could easily be that described by Tamara Krikorian as in 'danger of retreating into computerised imagery and video-graphics, simply supporting the insatiable desire to consume'. However, in 'Reflecting', the effects are deployed to a purpose. The artist seeks to problematise the relativism of meaning, communication, the construction of the linguistic-self and the self-destructive tendencies evident in what can be seen as an essentially tautological process. 'Reflecting' is a video in which spinning frames, complex multi-imaging and radical dissolves function to constitute a vision of a world predicated on fundamental uncertainty regarding the reception and dissemination of information.

Community-video is generally accepted to have well defined parameters, although the work of Simon Robertshaw points to the difficulties in being overly prescriptive. Community-video is often regarded as an extension of the function of community-based schemes designed to assist or involve the community in some beneficial activity. Video in particular allows members of a community to actively represent themselves and in the best of such projects the initiative comes from the community itself. Here 'community' applies not only to geographically defined populations but to multiple factors such as ethnicity, sexuality, employment or life-style.

Home-video is rarely considered in any context other than retailing, however it is an area deserving of far more critical attention. In a sense home-video is the most ambiguous of video-forms as the intention of the maker may range from documenting 'babies first steps' to emulating their favourite film-director.

Video's relationship with television and cinema is important to an examination of its diversity. Video-makers from all persuasions may wish to engage these pervasive media in a number of ways, from that of oppositional video, autonomous video, parody, scratch, music-video or infiltration.

One thing is for certain, when independent video-makers are attracted



to working in a television context their claim to independence may be seriously compromised. The re-assimilation of *Scratch* is an example of this, but it can also occur at more ordinary, day to day, levels of activity. One community-video maker recently spoke to me of censorship practised by a television company that had commissioned a work from the group with whom she was associated. During post-production the company demanded exclusion of important material for fear of being accused of political bias in broadcasting. The video group acquiesced for the sake of having its work aired. To what extent, if at all, does this leave them independent? When outside interests hold the purse strings — and less visible strings — can an independent practice be sustained?

In fact, given the nature of video — that it is capital intensive requiring institutional support for 'independent' survival — it can be argued that the notion of an independent practice is just a chimera, a mythical balm for our ideologically inclined super-egos.

Ultimately, given the practicalities of video practice, one is left wondering whether the notion of an independent video is tenable — or desirable. Aside from its continual compromise the idea of an independent practice is divisive, in a manner that is of debatable value, separating activity between the amateur, the 'independent' professional and the institutional professional.

A great deal of video and its attendant polemics are directed against television and the commercial/capitalist system it is seen to represent. Whilst most television is unimaginative and mentally deficient, giving few considerations to the subtleties of life, this does not necessarily relegate the whole media to the negative. It is not television itself that is the problem, although due to its nature it amplifies its own short comings, but the producers and programmers. The idea that it is 'ideologically unsound' to address television through a non-oppositional practice is rather strange, as to place this restriction on activity is not only a self-destructive act of denial but is also to replicate the same hegemonic processes one is attempting to address.

A great deal of discussion in recent years has focussed on the development of a critical discourse to deal with video. Generally the debate has foundered on the problems apparent in

Does British video art stand up to serious critical analysis?  
SIMON BIGGS on the current discourse:

PROBLEMS IN PLURALISM: PLACING VIDEO





addressing one of the most diverse and unfixed of media. Given this plurality of form and intent — where difference is evident at all levels of video practice regarding objectives, production structures, audiences, resources and context — then to what degree is a multiplicity of critical codes or metalanguages desirable.

Is video an individual and distinct phenomena? As a technology, evolving rapidly into a multitude of recording and disseminating systems, does it have a clearly identifiable identity? Often discussion attempts to place video relative to television, either as an aspect of it or in opposition. Both of these approaches will treat video as a part of tele-visual culture, its signifying structures being defined relative to those of television. This can be seen as a narrow view regarding the manifestation of video in a larger technological culture. Video, as television, is part of a spectrum of communications technologies that includes satellite telecommunications, print technology, broadcast and cable media, remote sensing and surveillance equipment and computers. All these technologies function as information retrieval, processing and dissemination systems and the position of video relative to them is plural.

Aside from its most publicly visible application in television and the home-video market, video is applied in computing, word-processing, remote sensing and innumerable other areas. One should remember that video was not developed for the television industry but for aerial reconnaissance during the Vietnam War. It is true that video has evolved to some degree as part of televisual culture, initially in the television studio, however this was not the original rationale in its development, and the diversity of its application is an important factor in placing it relative to a technological culture.

As such, to argue a definition of video in a primary relationship to television is not only to avoid addressing the broader issues arising from its general applications but is also inaccurate, ignoring the historical precedents in video development. Therefore, aside from the plurality of an 'independent' video practice we are also dealing with a base technology that is perhaps even more diverse in its manifestations.

To what degree does technology prescribe video practice, and how does

this effect the various arguments in developing a critical meta-language? Video practitioners draw their resources from a particular, if complex, technological field and one would expect that a degree of commonality would be discovered at this level of practice. However, given the diversity of the technology in question, both in its manifestation and application, this may not be the case and as such make the development of a central meta-language undesirable.

There are three immediately identifiable approaches to developing a critical language. Firstly, that of a single meta-language or critical presence that could deal with video in generality — as a cultural phenomena — and in its specifics. Secondly, there is an option for a plurality of critical codes, each developed to function relative to a form of video activity — as such, a set of micro-codes. The third possibility is something of a hybrid of the first two, and consists of a hierarchy of codes or a structured plurality; as such, a hierarchy of critical forms with, at one end, a single meta-language dealing with areas of commonality and with video as a presence, and, at the other end, a plurality of micro-codes specific to different areas of practice.

In this third option we would have a classic 'tree-structured' genealogy of codes, with each branch of meta-language relating back to a more fundamental level for its context, this process continuing until the 'trunk', the genesis, of video practice is reached. This idea carries a lot of baggage, in the form of evolutionist and structuralist models, and one could reasonably expect this option to lead to the same processes of totalisation found in those models. This totalising structure would again tend to discriminate against multi- and inter-form activity and further, not take into account the inherent fluidity and randomness with which the sort of phenomena we are dealing with tend to evolve. This approach of essentially a structuralist hierarchy could be potentially more limiting than a single hegemonic meta-language.

It would seem therefore that both a plurality of codes and a unifying language are desirable for approaching video, but that the hierarchic system modelled above, which would include both a single meta-language and a plurality of codes (somewhat reminiscent of the equation between *langue* and *parole*), would not seem to work, at least on an initial analysis, due to its artificiality and inflexibility, even if the semiological metaphor is attractive to those of us who desire simple solutions.

The essential question is whether a primal form of language exists, or once



did exist, from which all other codes derive, or is language plural in its roots? This can be seen to map directly onto the problems in addressing video practice and the development of a critical language relative to it, both in terms of the equation form/content and that of hardware/software or medium/practice.

If a single primal code does exist from which language, in its multiplicity, derives, then the problem really consists of the specifics and mechanics of this structure — essentially the brief of semiology. If it is that language is multiple in its roots, that there is no single original code, then this does not discount the possibility that there are similarities across varying discursive forms that allow us to use the term 'language' and still have it signify something. Of course the problematics of this approach would be far more complex than the project of the structural semiologist, but still of a finite territory.

However, if it is that language is not only plural in its foundations but that the various forms may have little or nothing in common with one another, even in their status to signify, then the whole notion of language as a communication system — and all that it describes, prescribes and implies — is placed in a far more uncertain internal state. A situation where perhaps Quantum Mechanics and Stochastics would be of equal application as linguistics. Even though this third option would seem unlikely this does not discount it from our consideration. Indeed the video by Jez Welsh touches on this possibility as does the work of Bill Seaman, whose most recent work, *Telling Motions*, deploys a number of codes simultaneously, which gradually break down one another's capacity to signify, in a complex form of linguistic entropy.

It is at this point that a critical language can begin to be developed that will be more responsive to the problematics of the media. As such, a discussion of video has to be contextualised within a discussion of language and representing in general, and in relation to a pluralistic technology. The problems of whether the specific intent of the video-maker is political, aesthetic or whatever, will likely be seen to be if not resolvable at least further addressable within this critical context. ●

## WHITE BREATH RED HEART

EVER SINCE ARTISTS introduced their physical presence into the making of art in the early sixties a strong link existed between performance and sculpture. The live action has been used both as a physical medium incorporated with other materials to realise a two-dimensional idea, and as a complementary, independent form of expression which, in some cases, supersedes the object-making process completely and places the artist in the position of subject and object of the work.

Brian Catling works primarily as a sculptor, but uses performance as an accompaniment to his objects and installations. The performance element functions as a kind of purging and fleeing of the last of the energy from the gallery after the show has been made, and often has a violent and neurotic edge.

The creation of the exhibition *White Breath Red Heart* at the Hordaland Kunstnersentrum, Bergen, Norway, was like a continuous performance through which the sculptural objects gradually came into being, from the subterfuge

involved in transporting various essential materials and components into the country to the 'casting of the moon' on the frozen lake of Trollhagen at full moon at midnight on the eve of the show.

The entire exhibition, on two floors, was made in the space of one week. During that time all the artist's attention was focussed onto a particular point in which every decision had to be final, with no time for reflection, alteration or mistakes. This release of activity was the culmination of six months planning, and emerged as a distillation of thought triggered as if by a spring rather than an expression of raw creative energy.

Catling engages with the particular environment surrounding each exhibition he makes. His concern with nature, power, ritual and ancient form drew out the mystical atmosphere and sense of Nordic myth of the city of Bergen. Each of the two parts of the exhibition was dedicated to and articulated aspects of the city. The installation *Red Heart*, "a core, a sunken engine, a conceptual furnace that both burns

and illuminates frailty and atmosphere",<sup>1</sup> was made to engage with the heart of the seven mountains which surround the city, in almost Herzog-esque terms, whilst each piece in *White Breath* related in some way to the moon and was planned according to the readings of an almanac.

The performance which created the last piece in *White Breath* took place on the frozen Lake Trollhagen on the edge of the city, opposite the burial place of Grieg. Over a kiln of bricks and wood built on the ice a cauldron of lead was melted. The fire was drawn by a white paper hood, which when placed over the fire made a spiral ventilation, serving both as a ritual and practical way of ensuring the maximum amount of heat. At the stroke of midnight the melting process began, as twenty five people stood on the mist-covered frozen surface of the lake. The piece as made in a split second following the hours of waiting, with the physical energy both from the artist and from the interaction of the molten lead and frozen ice. The mental state of the artist during the three hour vigil was almost zen in its manifestation and purpose, the energy controlled like a finely tuned instrument, and a sense of apprehension used as part of a learning process.

When the cauldron of lead was finally molten,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

**CHRISSE ILES** chases the nordic myth and digs up a history of Bohemia lying buried in a railway arch near London Bridge.

## FROM BERLIN TO BOROUGH MARKET

SINCE ITS ERECTION in 1961 the Berlin Wall has come to represent, both symbolically and in real terms, the destruction of the boundaries of old Europe, the post-war identification of the 'new' European 'East' versus 'West' and the bitterness and intransigence of the ideological divide.

Pavel Buchler's personal history has been dictated by this ideological divide, in a direct sense, through his imprisonment in his native Czechoslovakia for his 'subversive' cultural activity and subsequent loss of citizenship, and by a more general disruption of historical continuity and identity in terms of the relocation of political, ideological and physical boundaries, and the loss of that old part of Europe known as Central Europe, which included Czechoslovakia, Bohemia and various other parts of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.

*The Wall — 2200th Anniversary of the Great Wall of China, Berlin 1961-1986* is an installation by Buchler set in a railway arch opposite Bookworks. It deals with the disruption of Europe and the East-West conflict, not in direct terms, but in relation to ideas of continuity and memory, as interpreted through media information, historical documents and photographic images from the past. These assume a significance and potency as icons for what has been lost, and have an ambivalent meaning, being on

the one hand concrete physical evidence of the facts and on the other a chosen viewpoint or reference which obscures and omits, and is, by its nature, subjective and fragmentary.

News photographs from 1961, the year the Berlin Wall was built, have been xeroxed and blown up to enormous scale to cover the roof of the railway arch. The size of the pictures show clearly the magnified half-tone of the newsprint, affirming the concrete, documentary, factual nature of the images and locating them in that particular historical moment. These images are repeated in a large, beautifully bound book made by the artist, which rests on another, very old closed, leather-bound book on a simple tall, narrow wooden 'plinth'. The size of the plinth in relation to the books and the position of the open book evoke a feeling of reverence and offering, as though from an altar or lectern. The preaching of history and wisdom becomes identified with the books themselves. On close examination the closed book is revealed to be an eighteenth century history of Bohemia, part of the old Central Europe, written in old German in German script. The book, a commonplace historical family book of its time, was smuggled out of a library archive in Prague. It relates a history of a part of Europe which has now disappeared. Resting open on top of it is Buchler's own historical record of that part of Europe, *The Wall* —

*2200th Anniversary of the Great Wall of China, Berlin 1961-1986*. Repeating the photographic images on the wall of the installation the book has been printed by a multiple xerox technique which gives each page a hard, shiny, expensive-looking surface which appears on first sight to be embossed but which is in fact a smooth surface on which the half-tone grid appears as texture. The photographic images, of *The Wall*, an unidentified astronaut — an image associated with both East and West — Elvis Presley and Marx, are fragmentary, dark and, in some pages, hardly visible, seen as though as a distant memory or half dream. This treatment of the images places a distance between documented reality and subjective memory, and creates a sense of dislocation.

The three naked light bulbs hanging down from the ceiling against the crude brick walls of the space emphasise a harsh, impersonal bleakness, making obvious allusions to political interrogation and deprivation, something experienced frequently by Buchler first-hand in Czechoslovakia and which is associated with the Eastern block authorities' attitude towards 'anti-state' behaviour, and, more specifically, with the restrictions applied to East Berliners, whose mass exodus from the Eastern part of the city prompted the building of the Berlin Wall.

The installation's location in a disused railway arch in Borough Market reiterates its message and source. The railway bridge running from London Bridge Station over the cobbled area of Borough Market resembles, in appearance and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

# DEEP IN FISHY WATERS

**OLIVER BENNETT** dives deep with Charlie Hooker and Bruce Mclean in a unique collaboration in London's East End:

THE LATEST WORK to emerge from the Whitechapel gallery's successful seven year interaction with Amherst Junior School in Hackney was a charming opportunity to see the product of collaboration between Charlie Hooker, artist in residence at Amherst in 1984, Bruce Mclean, and the children of the school, and also to assess the range of possibilities inherent in such artists in education schemes.

A central stage with the audience on either side provided the focus for the action, which consisted largely of the children executing the movements of a variety of sea dwellers; swimming languidly in shoals, darting ferociously as predators, slowly undulating as creatures of the sea bed, while simultaneously adding chance music appropriate to the action by involuntary contact with hanging chimes. A central Gamelan type orchestra provided a more systematic score with xylophones and percussion, the tempo ebbing and flowing in sympathy with the action to create a performance of some intensity. As a visual counterpart to the piece, paintings by the children and Bruce Mclean were projected obliquely onto the gallery walls, the lighting, timing and themes of which echoed the differing intensities within the piece.

Impetus for the artists' work with the school came from teachers Kate Sisman and Rosemary Phelps who have developed Amherst's work with artists and other bodies such as the

E.N.O. As artist in Residence Charlie Hooker has played a catalytic role, stimulating the initiatives of the children rather than directing them. The work in progress for *Deep in Fishy Waters* included associative educational elements; for instance considerations of physics and maths in the making and tuning of the hanging chimes, and group work in the scoring of the piece, using a basic colour coded notation so that everyone could share responsibility for the performance regardless of ability to read music or speak English as a first language. In this way, Hooker was able to develop the formal qualities of his previous systems-based compositions within an educational framework, as well, as implement the democratic, participatory aspects of his work. Bruce Mclean's paintings were developed similarly, allowing the children as much rein as they wanted around the central idea and installation, and the piece was developed spontaneously over a few days at the school and the gallery.

The performance represented a success on various levels. It was well attended, skilful and unobtrusively collaborative, and left one feeling optimistic about the range of possibilities offered by artist in residence schemes, plus hope for the maligned and still underdeveloped area of community art. But perhaps the aspect of the show which was most gratifying was the pleasure and natural grace of the performers, miles away from the strict artificial awkwardnesses which so many of us endured at their age in the name of drama. As someone remarked after the performance, 'it was great not to have to make allowances for the fact that they were children'. Hopefully local boroughs and the I.L.E.A. will perceive the value of this kind of work and extend such schemes to include other artists working in a collaborative live art idiom. ●

## WHITE BREATH CONTINUED

it was poured by the artist onto the ice. The two opposite materials immediately locked together to create a crude, crater-like form which contained and expressed all the tension of the point of impact between them. The artist, working in a temperature of -17 degrees centigrade, felt no sense of cold until the work had been completed.

The moon has always been revered for its powers of emotional and gravitational control, particularly with respect to water, and its silvery quality has traditionally caused people everywhere to attempt to capture its reflection. *Castling the Moon* re-emphasised the impossibility of such a fantasy by its dense, black, heavy, lumpy shape and gravitational force. The clash of energy as the molten 'moon' hit the ice, a substance over which it rules, also made a physical as well as theoretical conjecture, pointing out the reality of the hard, rough composition of what is otherwise always seen in liquid, ephemeral, emotive terms.

Brian Catling will present a major new performance in the Central School of Art Gallery on

May 7th and 8th, and will perform in St James's, Piccadilly, in May as part of the Blake Festival. ●

## FROM BERLIN CONTINUED

atmosphere, the S-Bahn railway in Berlin, and is a favourite location for film crews shooting East Berlin scenes; the iron pillars still bear the painted 'S-Bahn' marks of the last film crew's visit. The river, running next to the market, forms a natural boundary and divide between the run-down area of London bridge and the wealthy City on the other side.

Although Buchler is unable to return to his 'homeland', a practical reminder of the difficulties created by the split in Europe, there is a danger of oversimplifying the ideological argument. Mass control, restrictive practices and insidious power structures are just as prevalent in Western democracies, if a little more oblique. Buchler's comments are more general and philosophical, made with a sense of personal sorrow at an irreconcilable loss of identity and a questioning through memory and images of the factual documentation surrounding it. ●

# THROUGH OUR

A new book charts the progress of people's art across the world. SARA SELWOOD reviews it:

THIS BOOK LOOKS at the ways in which groups of 'ordinary' people have consciously chosen to make art works to express their experiences in periods of historical upheaval. Without formal training and using whatever materials are to hand, they have nevertheless produced intensely moving images. According to its publisher's blurb, this book opens up a field largely ignored by art criticism. It proposes that popular political art works are of great significance both artistically and socially, and that they have the capacity to express a far deeper and more profound insight into the contemporary world than either major established forms of art or the mass-media.

In his survey of such art forms Brett focuses on five types of art works produced in different countries, at different times, under different social and political conditions, which deal with experiences as varied as the impact of modernity on an African urban consciousness; the celebration of the building of social communes in agrarian China (1947-76); nightmare visions of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima; the military dictatorship in Chile, and the installation of American cruise missiles in Great Britain.

Whilst the groups of works discussed have no formal or cultural associations they all serve as vehicles for both self-expression and communication, raising consciousness in two distinct ways: First, as the visual tools of popular liberation movements; secondly, as politically subversive in their own right.

Brett notes that the 20th century has witnessed the virtual destruction of vernacular cultural traditions by dominant imperialist and capitalist ideologies. But these very traditions have been effectively resuscitated by popular liberation movements. For convenient political reasons such movements have chosen to identify their struggle with manifestations of appropriate traditional cultures, recognising them as symbols of egalitarian interests.

By their very nature of their political and social content, works of popular art highlight ways in which, for example, the mass-media, (in the guise of a populist vehicle of communication) functions within the strict terms of dominant ideologies in its representations of specific historical events. Brett maintains that unlike the media, popular art works reveal shifts in the public consciousness. (Recent events at the BBC, however, seem to suggest that this is not necessarily the case.) He refers, for example, to the case of the arpilleras (patchwork pictures) made by members of the resistance in Chile. To all intents and purposes the works, made by unskilled and uneducated women, look childlike and innocuous. But they give expression to the direst realities faced every day, not just in Chile but many other Third World countries. It is

# OWN EYES

significant that their production and distribution is occasionally restricted by the authorities, through the seizure of shipments at customs and by attack in the mass-media.

Such examples have fired Brett's enthusiasm. His aspirations for the future of popular art, indeed for the future of art in general, are summed up in the closing sentences of his introduction:

'In the end the proof of a popular culture lies in its vitality, a vitality which brings together the sharpest observation of the present with the intimations of a future free of every form of overlordship — including the artistic.'

Hardly a contentious issue. But it is surely not just a question of 'vitality', but more a question of how such forms of popular art might become more politically effective both within and beyond the geographical confines of their original cultural contexts. And the answer to that question can only lie in the efficient dissemination of its content through marketing, distribution and increased consumption.

Brett believes that the successful dissemination of popular artefacts may result from their possession of a certain commodity value within the context of the Western art market. The fact is that there is no art market in some of the countries in which the examples of work cited are produced. Their distribution and consumption is controlled by the relevant cultural authorities. He points out that they might be seen to complement the interests displayed by contemporary Western art closely connected with "a decaying bourgeois culture". The fact of their technical inadequacies, for example, points to their "naivety". And "naivety" is, after all, a fixed category of commodity in the sophisticated market which has a lucrative place for 'bad' art.

The problem is, of course, that once such works are isolated from their original context and placed in another, the possibilities of their effectiveness is neutralised. Take, for example, the case of the African Shaba paintings cited by Brett. Following their discovery by anthropologists, the works have become highly sought after by dealers, collectors and critics operating within the context of the art market. But as such works circulate within the West, they do so with increasingly little reference as to their meaning. As Brett puts it, "The art market is indifferent to the social place and effectiveness of art."

So what then is the future for what Brett calls the 'art of the people'? It can only be an art tailored to and intended to subvert the dominant cultural ideology of the art world — in other words, the art market itself. But such works indeed exist. Brett curiously avoids referring to contemporary artists (as opposed to 'ordinary' people) working in the West. By implication he sets up a dichotomy between high art and popular art; response to historical situations and transcendent art; elitism and consciousness-raising, and so on. He thus overlooks a whole cultural tradition of professional artists motivated by and working towards the same ends as the ordinary people he prefers to discuss and for some reason or another avoids even acknowledging the practice of some of the most significant artists working today. ●



## A show which criticised consumer culture and the packaging of art was itself taken to task by clandestine graffitiists. NICK HOUGHTON investigates:

A LARGE, CHILLY, whitewalled space, containing the arranged detritus and wreckage of society, the discarded and subverted signals of contemporary culture. One wall drawing shows an 18 foot high junkie figure shooting up, his T-shirt reading 'Heroin Is The Opiate Of The People'. Below him torn art catalogues are littered across a sprawl of coal whilst in the centre space a spiral of coal is marked out by spiky constructions — mutated picket posts or oversized toy rockets? — forming a ragged circle. Close by, a bizarre hut-on-wheels, covered in felt, regularly ejects smoke, adding to the post-apocalyptic effect. On the walls a larger than life cartoon-style pin-up looks down, the paper on which she is drawn patchy with holes. And then there's the abstracted painting with a solitary toy figure stranded in its hazy surface; the mound of tea-bags, set of wall mounted etchings, floor pieces and texts . . . The overall mood is of fracture, displacement, politicised appropriation — a moment of resistance.

Afterburn: *Ruins* is a group show, an event arranged around certain ideas and concepts which arose from the exhibition *Our Wonderful Culture*. Again, as in the previous project, 'quality control' and selection procedures have been refused and instead various artists were invited to contribute. In this way although the individual artists had some notion of what they might produce, an important element was the spontaneous and interactive nature of the exhibition. The form of *Ruins* was not pre-planned and, as a result, collaborations resulted and work was developed within a context beyond the 'lone-artist-in-the-studio' model.

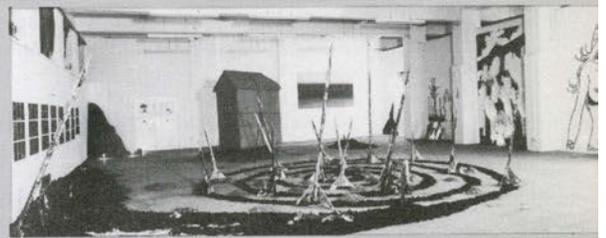
Bearing this in mind it's important to look at the exhibition as a whole — the context created by the contributions of the whole group. Certainly without this context I think it's true to say that some of these works, if placed in a different situation — presented alongside more conventional artworks, by example — would not function as fully as they do here in relation to each other. Further to this what's central to *Ruins* is the questioning of notions of artistic originality and systems of repre-

sentation. Parody, appropriation, de-construction of given images, statement-as-art and the blurred point where culture, politics and the 'everyday' interact are all represented here; all contributing to the sense of disruption and enquiry.

With *Burning Desires III/Triptych*, for example, ideas and assumptions about glamour and desire are foregrounded as the wallsize image of a 'perfect woman' is appropriated and re-contextualised. In creating the piece Glyn Banks/Hannah Vowles problematise our relation to the image while in Tom McGlynn's *White Trash Voodoo* our response to a hazily depthless abstract painting is disrupted by the small toy figure pasted to the works surface, seemingly stranded there. In an adjacent space text and a single photograph form the stuff of *No Homes To Go To* while a mound of tea-bags and related text, again from Ed Baxter/Andy Hopton, are titled 'The Pot Will Stand It'. Our view of this slagheap of some 5,000 tea-bags is informed by a text which tell us of tea-as-drug, economic tool and destroyer of health. Nearby Stevan Szczelkun's hut, seemingly wheeled out of some bleary nightmare and into reality, poops out billows of smoke. The cloud drifts across *Seasonal Desires*, a collaborative work from Baxter/Hopton and Simon Dickason creating a ragged spiral of coal in ironic comment on both the cold of the space it occupies and the political resonances that 'the black stuff' — post miners struggle — now has. Nearby 81 wall mounted xeroxes whose original source were frottages taken from the Szczelkun's house posit questions of what art is. As if passing comment the message *This Is Too Much Like Art* is stenciled neatly in large letters on the same wall. The creator, Gabriel, has placed a handmade toy turd in front of this close by Karen Elliot's ironically titled *Table (Do The Standing Still)*. Gabriel's other pieces include *From Head To Lunch*; white plaster cast 'heads' — or sexual secretions? — lie scattered in a corner, referring to the slang sexual connotations of 'giving head', and *Toy Joy*. Sited on a wall *Toy Joy* is composed of three lenses behind which sit the heads of furry toys. The image of a junkie, Karen Elliot's *Media Overdose* pays no attention as he injects his skag dreamily

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Before the attack



# RUINING THE RUINS

# THE ILLUMINATED STAGE HAND

## Carlyle Reedy manipulates the shadows of a Dadaist history. HANNA-O'SHEA deciphers:

*THE HELPING HAND* was a tribute to the life and work of the three Dada artists Emmy Hennings, (whom Carlyle Reedy defines as a singer, poet, and inspirational mystic), Hans Richter and Marcel Janco. Dadaism was a revolt against all conventional conceptions of art and in her considerable performance art practice over many years, Carlyle Reedy has acted as a lodestar in continuing to pursue such aspirations.

The title *The Helping Hand* refers to the role which Carlyle Reedy chose to take in presenting this work — which was that of the 'kurago', or the 'illuminated stage hand'.

The black clad artist emerged from the semi-darkness, her face whitened and with her chin sporting a black plastic mask as a beard. Castanets hung from her ears, suggestively clacking in humorous accompaniment to her quirkily choreographed movements. Economically, she danced and weaved her way around the shrouded totem figures, symbolising the three Dadaists, the largest of which was the one of Emmy Hennings. Carlyle Reedy spoke of the common aspirations of the three Dadaists, whilst drawing attention to the historical diminishment of Emmy Hennings's contribution — a fate too often shared by women artists of the past. However, by relocating the towering figure of Emmy Hennings centre stage, Carlyle Reedy symbolically highlighted yet simultaneously rectified such an historical malpractice which has rendered women artists 'invisible'.

The accompanying soundtrack was a collage of narrative material by Carlyle Reedy, juxtaposed with narrated extracts from Hans Richter's writings on Dadaism. These were interspersed with musical extracts, radio and other audio fragments, culminating in a dynamically individualised, multi-layered and frequently amusing audio-scratch tape.

With her own inimitable choreographed movements, the artist continued to weave and spin her way around the three shrouded figures. The torch in her belt projected a piercing shaft of light, yet alternatively generated a series of shadows stuttering across the performance space. Then moving backstage with her torch the artist played upon reflected surfaces, casting shadows of the multitude of coloured objects and cut-out shapes suspended behind a muslin screen.

Returning to centre stage Carlyle Reedy once again focussed her attention upon Emmy Hennings, fusing her own identification with the artist by projecting a slide of her own face onto the symbolic figure of her predecessor. She then danced with the Richter figure, skilfully and amusingly negotiating her way around the long pole which had accidentally, yet surreptitiously slipped down between his legs.

Then turning her back to the audience Carlyle

Reedy provided a dark backdrop against which a slide was projected, the texture of which, when combined with the artist's movements, conveyed the impression of a large eagle-size bird about to take flight. This imagery gradually seemed to merge into an ancestral 'ghost figure' of native American Indians, with the three shrouded figures in the background, reminiscent of enclosed wigwams silhouetted against a dim night sky.

The artist then took a long pole and in resting it upon her shoulders, suggested an elderly woman, yoked and rooted to the earth like an ox. Yet, in merely adjusting the stick to imply its use as a walking aid, that impression was immediately superceded by a powerful archetypal image of the universal traveller in pursuit of eternal wisdom.

Suddenly disco music blasted out over the sound system and once again, like a chameleon, the performer was immediately transformed and reduced to an ordinary middle-aged woman aimlessly dancing to the music of time.

The artist then unhooked the three Dadaist figures, abandoning the collapsed forms on the floor. Similarly, she then dismantled the muslin wall and the hanging objects, also discarding them on the floor.

A stepladder was then pulled across the floor. Against the rungs of the stepladder a red sleeping bag was placed, at the centre of which a bread basket was positioned into which two crescent moons, one black, the other white, were inserted, with a mask adorned with a rose in the position of the head. A wooden fork and spoon completed the finishing touch to the composition.

Finally, to the rousing accompaniment of organ music, Carlyle Reedy swept up the debris of her work — the collapsed wall, the cut-out objects and the three symbolic figures, whose name tags she chewed and deposited into the bread basket. The lights then dimmed and the performance ended.

There were only two sequences in *The Helping Hand* where I was unable to decipher the intention of the artist. Nevertheless, overall Carlyle Reedy revealed an extraordinary ability to stimulate an interactive relationship with her audience.

*The Helping Hand* was a wickedly witty, inspirational work, showing the capacity of the artist 'to be' rather than 'to perform', 'to illuminate' rather than to reduce to the merely didactic. In addition this work also highlighted Carlyle Reedy's capacity to transform the objects which she uses in her work by investing them with new meaning and transcending their everyday ordinariness to the extraordinary. *The Helping Hand* was one of those rare, magical works which totally illuminates, transforms and enriches one for having experienced it. The work certainly lived up to the artist's statement, that making art, 'is a way to live, not necessarily a business, not necessarily a successful endeavour. It is a research which cannot come about in any other way'. It would be good to see this work taken up by other venues. ●

A SMALL THING Standing Up by Robert Ayers (presumably a multiple pun — a small thing, standing up; a small thing standing up as in a little stand-up comedy, and a small thing obs. standing up) was performed in London recently as part of the Finborough Arms showcase of performance art. This varied season was culled from the last year's crop of new work and put on with no money, on a wing and a prayer. Just how difficult it is to bring good performance in any other way, unless you are 'adopted' by the ICA, Oval, the Place or any of the galleries is legion, and the Finborough has gone some way to fill the gap in a small way. I saw the excellent *Saccharine Muscle* by Dogs in Honey here, and they said after the show that it was the only London invitation they'd likely have for some time to come.

Ayers' piece featured his character Dr Dariol Dark, who would be like something out of a Victorian children's story had he not last been sighted jumping stark naked on fire out of a third floor window a couple of years back, in *Falling at the Midland Group*. This was the culmination of a large-scale performance of the type Ayers specialises in. Using a whole team of participant, many students, highly ambitious and event-packed 'journey based experiences are developed, usually for small numbers of people. He recently has been trying to get away from this and Small Thing is the first one-person performance Ayers has done.

The re-incarnated Dariol Dark emerged from a makeshift coffin, complete with moustache and Chicago accent, possessed by the spirit of Claes Oldenburg, among others, to deliver a lecture-performance on avant-garde art, from Dada onwards, interspersing within it a history of adolescence via the cardboard guitar. This autobiographical fragment proved to be the most amusing and personal, as we heard Ayers' progress through pop history — first a tiny Tommy Steele Guitar, a red Beatles guitar, a twangy Hank Marvin number, a white vox electric and finally a ludicrously enormous 'Spanish Beauty'. The references to male sexuality were not lost in the telling.

There are some highly engaging and at times delightful moves, and this partially mock autobiography was really the best part. His main intention, 'making art about his life', seemed to work well. It was a well polished, well rehearsed piece, but I felt, as often seems to be the case with work these days, that Ayers was trying just a bit too hard. It is perhaps unfair, and certainly not a constant sensation, but there was just, despite my enjoyment of the work just a tiny, slight feeling of the sort of cramp I always feel at the sight of an artist trying to pack every ounce of erudition into a work. It is a problem I have noticed in the past with administrators (though Ayers is not one) who try to 'keep their hand in' by producing a major artwork or two. It is as if there is a fear of showing weakness or uncertainty, or perhaps a dread of producing bad work. If the uncertainty is there it is mocked, via such things as a naked descent on a rope, or perhaps, as in the way Small Thing ends, the

## A SMALL THING STANDING UP

ROB LA FRENAIS on  
Oldenburg reincarnated

playing of the Dr Kildare theme tune on a comb-and-toilet-paper mouth organ.

The false moustache Ayers wears as Oldenburg summons up the image of a master magician, but it is also a schizophrenic one. The history lesson approach, amusing though informative though it is, could have been dropped in favour of a more direct one engagement with the viewer. One felt that Ayers, master of disguises, never really dropped his.

But the amount of solid work and preparation put into a single performance this 'small thing standing up' made me want to see more by Ayers. He should perhaps get into the habit of making performance more frequently, then this barely perceptible stilted self-consciousness about which I quibble might evaporate. ●



## Nan Hoover made a recent rare visit to London and Cambridge. NICK HOUGHTON on the show, CHRISSIE ILES on the live work:

NAN HOOVER IS a painter. Once she worked on canvas with brushes and oils. Now she paints with light, the video monitor her canvas.

In bringing the sensibility of the painter to the video medium she also brings a purity of vision and practice both startling and innovative to the form. Hoover's work at Matt's Gallery is about light and shadow, about real time and reverie, a territory of slowmoving imagery, abstraction and transformation. 'Essentially I see my work as a trigger that ignites associations in the viewer...' (Nan Hoover 1986).

*Return to Fuji* (1984), an 8 minute piece, exemplifies Hoover's approach. As the image fades up from black we see what seems to be the Fuji mountain swathed in blue tinged clouds. The soundtrack implies bleak windswept landscapes and slowly, almost imperceptibly, the shape and contours of the 'mountain' begin to shift and move. Shadows and colours magically transform what seems to be a solid picture into a sumptuously fluid image. The subtle and dreamlike effect of *Fuji* is evident too in *Desert*, a 13-minute piece from 1985, as what we first assume to be another landscape — this time the glowing shapes of a desert — undergoes slow and beautiful change as if the sandscape were reforming, melting and developing before our eyes.

My first assumption was that these were cleverly time-lapsed landscape works. In fact Hoover's technique is to compose these 'landscapes' out of paper. The artist then illuminates these paper compositions with a slowly moving light thereby effecting the delicate and constant changes in the picture. Hoover uses no editing here, no trickery, as the piece occurs in 'real time' — if a mistake is made then the artist will start again. For Hoover this refusal of editing and the interruption of real time is an important and central aspect of her work. In *Halfsleep* (23 minutes), for example, the image of a face in blurry close up is digitally slowed so that it becomes an abstract thing, distorted and dreamlike. This impression is reinforced by an eerie soundtrack seemingly recorded at the edges of consciousness. The sound was, in fact, recorded on the platform of a London tube station then slowed down to accompany *Halfsleep*, but its odd, heavy breathing quality adds an extra dreamworld quality to the work which belies its source.

Accompanying these tape works are a series of delicate photographs which employ the same technique as the *Fuji/Desert* pieces; paper compositions photographed whilst light plays over them. Also on show was *Flora*, an 8 minute continuous installation piece on a single monitor placed in the context of the photo works. *Flora* (1985) is simply a series of images of a flower stem and leaves that Hoover hopes may stimulate the viewer's imagination and associative capacity.

In this desire to use video as a painterly tool, a medium to allow our imagination to draw its own associations, lies Hoover's uniqueness and magic. Placed in the context of much contemporary video works which operate on the pre-

mise of aural/visual overkill — browbeating the viewer into numbed acceptance — Nan Hoover offers us a reflective space in which our own receptivity is allowed to function. Hoover's single-minded pre-occupation and vocation has, for thirty years, been a concern with light, shadow, form and colour. In exploring these themes she has worked through painting to arrive at video works and complementary performance pieces. Those years of dedication and exploration are foregrounded in these tapes. No one else could have made them.

Nan Hoover is currently engaged in presenting a proposal for a video installation to be situated in three airport lounges, to include Heathrow. (NH)

Nan Hoover began to work with performance for the same reasons that she began to work with video — with no prior knowledge of the medium, but a need to develop and extend the concerns of her painting in a more direct and communicative way. She likens the making of a performance to the shooting of a video, working up to a particular, unrepeatable moment of visual expression, and to the making of a painting, treating every new space she works in as a painter would approach a blank canvas.

Hoover's performances always engage with the figure in light. Her performance in the Cambridge Darkroom presented particular architectural problems in the form of several cast-iron pillars which interrupted the space visually. Hoover's solutions was to paint them black and integrate them into the environment by throwing the shadow of her silhouette between them to create the effect of Greek statues amongst a Parthenon-like architecture. A quiet grandeur was expressed through the interaction between the architecture and the piece itself. In this, as in all her performances, Hoover became an object through which to transmit feelings and concerns, experiencing a total loss of self during the performance and assuming an ambiguous, androgenous identity. This ambiguity does not relate to some specific political statement, but is necessary for the purity of the expression of the visual idea.

By the simplest of movements, walking from one side of the space to the other in front of strategically placed light sources, Hoover's silhouette appeared and reappeared, in varying sizes and tones of shadow and light, creating alternatively sharp and soft outlines. Her movements were almost Japanese in their simplicity and clarity, and held the audience silent and attentive throughout. Hoover is interested in tensions, the pull between surfaces, movement and contrast, and in that area for which there are no words as in, for example, the line created in shadow between the artist's hands. Her performances, like her video works, are a slow and contemplative refining of visual ideas, and she sees her work as a lifetime's experience, perfecting by refining and simplifying. This does not imply greater abstraction or subtraction, but rather addition and complexity, achieved through a maturation of expression. (CI) ●

PAINTER WITH LIGHT

# WHEN INSTITUTIONS

Performance has now entered, via capillary action, the superstructure of British funding policy (see accompanying article.) What are the pitfalls now that live art is sharing space with the horse-and-dog painting of municipal gallery-land? SIMON HERBERT on the view from the glorious garden:

PERFORMANCE ART, currently, seems to be enjoying an up-swing in both popularity and profile, not least of which is signified by an ever-increasing number of new generation performers appearing on the scene alongside the old stalwarts of the medium. The Arts Council directly funds five venues/organisations to either commission live work or programme it in as part of an overall cultural package. Also, it is not uncommon to see performance events sporadically advertised on the diaries of numerous galleries. The future is, if not rosy, at least pink-tinged, yet amidst devotees' cries of vindication and the grateful nods of artists who are finally benefitting from greater opportunities to show their work, a vital discourse is developing which both relates to and reflects the overall context for live work in the mid-eighties; namely, that much of the renewed interest in performance has resulted in live artists working within municipal galleries and museums.

The argument is a familiar one, and goes something like this: that a supposedly radical and anti-establishment art practice is being programmed into environments which, judging by the history of the medium, should be anathema. Can performance art, which has emerged wailing through a series of (literally) bloody births, be dragged into institutions that for decades have embodied a very particular set of Victorian attitudes (both in terms of a focus on more traditional creative working methods and also in their role as representing the cultural focus of a city, with all the incumbent civic responsibilities that implies); where it can continue its kicking and screaming within hallowed walls, as long as the buckets of flour and water are cleaned up afterwards and a pristine silence resume its guardianship of the low-lit oil paintings on those walls?

Any answer to this is far more complex than a simple matter of aesthetic and cultural polarities.

Firstly, it seems high time that the theories and interpretations of performance art as exemplified in the sixties and seventies by environments, happenings, street theatre, cultural terrorism and public intervention, be modified on a new blueprint for the eighties. After talking with a wide cross-section of the, for want of a better phrase, 'performance community', there can be little doubt

that the tenets and motivations that originally started their predecessors on that mostly-untrained, stomach-churning 1,000 mile walk into the spotlight in front of their first audience remains the same: the emotional and intellectual immediacy of the live situation, the rejection of conventions inherent in other mediums, the human link, the potential for risk, the choice between responsibility or irresponsibility. But, forgetting for a moment the passionate engagement of artists and critics with these basic mandates, it is vital to recognise that if the animal has not changed its spots, it is older and roaming in a different cage.

Let's be sensible about this shall we?

When was the last time that you went to see a performance that wasn't labelled as a 'performance'? When was the last time that you went to see a performance un-prepared — either through advance publicity or a knowledge of the artist(s) involved — that there might be some form of nudity, violence or even the occasional piece of raw meat? When was the last time, whilst watching an artist perform an intensely structured and disciplined monologue, that you realised with elation that you were not a mere voyeur peering into a proscenium arch? And when was the last time that the majority of performers didn't have immediate internal convulsions when the smart-arse in the back row began to disrupt the ambience with a throaty heckle? Answers on a postcard please.

The point I'm trying to make is not a philistine one, nor is it my intention to take cheap pot-shots at a medium which I intensely believe in, both as an organiser and as my own primary means of public expression. Simply put, performance art has begun to acquire certain recognisable unspoken rules and codes that — regardless of the isolated terms of reference and engagement of those individual artists working within the medium — bear all the hallmarks of a creative institution. By evolving through the practice itself to a stage where a range of generally adopted formats and trends are being increasingly manifested, the medium often appears to be functioning at odds with its own image as flux or catalyst.

One such symptom is an increasing technological presence in live work, or what I prefer to call the 'Laurie Anderson Syndrome'. When Anderson finally Lit Out For The Territories at the end of *United States* it was a great

shame that, for the benefit of the performance artists in the audience, there wasn't a disembodied voice proclaiming — in a manner similar to that of presenters at the end of childrens heroic television shows — "Only Laurie Anderson is indestructible and can perform these feats. Do not try to imitate her."

Artists more and more perform surrounded by a bewildering array of audio-visual devices. Historically, this stems from both the eclectic nature of the medium and parallel developments with other forms of time-based practice, and also that many live art practitioners produce work in other time-based mediums. What is significant about contemporary trends is that this hardware is being camouflaged; the accent has changed from acknowledging device within a conceptual framework to subsuming it in favour of the creation of spectacle. And, unfortunately, a video monitor on a plinth at the back of a space does not a spectacle make. Even ignoring, for a moment, the tendency for performers to disregard a cohesive time/spatial relationship between synchronous pockets of action, there is often the feeling that the technology is merely there as 'icing on the cake'.

That is not to say, of course, that good work *can't* be produced utilizing two slide projectors and a backing track, but if meanings within work are being increasingly loaded onto signalling devices then a subtle change has taken place as to where the root of work is being fixed. If the live element of performance is being eschewed in favour of communication content or message through elements other than the body — the historical guts of performance — then doesn't that alter an audience's emotional proximity and response to the work, and therefore its confrontational impact? It may be that this reflects certain changes peculiar to British work — certainly, an element of physical catharsis is still widely practised in European work.

Many would argue that such an evolution marks a swing on the part of performance artists away from work that potentially isolates the uninitiated viewer to a more progressive format that woos and nurtures prospective new audiences. Although a debatable epithet, this 'maturity' seems to be echoed in the gradual abatement of the arguments that seek to classify work by the inscription of formula on large stone tablets i.e. does it really matter

# COLLIDE

whether Station House Opera classify themselves as a theatrical or performance group? While this may be the subject of many a night's heated debate in the local pub, isn't it better that their work exist within a framework unencumbered by pigeon-holing? Many live artists have crossed over into the world of cabaret, some with successful sell-out engagements at such places as the I.C.A. If Lenny Bruce were alive today he wouldn't even have a chance to deny his label as 'comedian'; he would be touted as a 'performance artist' and snapped up by the art-house circuit.

All of which is fine by me, but the varied implications of commercial success — and more markedly, the fact that we now import our art-shock stormtroopers in the form of Las Furas del Baus on a wave of banal hype — rather pulls the teeth from the old notion of performance as a terrorist activity.

And if you don't believe me, why not examine the disinterest of the mainstream media and the gutter press? No performance generated the level of vitriolic coverage received by Carl Andre's bricks at the Tate, or the attention accorded to the fire-bombing of David Mach's tyre submarine outside the Hayward. Give them their due, they tried to put the boot into Stephen Taylor Woodrow's *Living Paintings* with the usual declamations of tax-payers money being spent on people to 'hang around' on walls, but (thankfully) things never really got off the ground. Whilst this may disappoint many an aspiring radical, surely what is more important is that when the *Living Paintings* were shown at Southampton City Art Gallery attendance records were broken with more than 7,000 people filing through in three days.

Which brings me to the subject of this article — live work in municipal galleries. Given that the complexion of performance art has, in some cases, changed, there are certain areas of common ground where the two institutions can mutually benefit one another. If live work is becoming increasingly issue-based, as opposed to feeding off its own mythos, there are a number of resources that a large city gallery can offer, not least of which, in many cases, is an education programme that carries clout with regional educational arts advisers. There is enormous potential for tying in related activities to performance

work and the issues raised by certain work. Perhaps the public intervention that artists desire can begin to be realised as more than a theoretical lip-service when, for example, the issues raised by a feminist performance are expanded upon through a series of related talks and workshops, both within the gallery and in outside locations. Or when historical lectures and static shows documenting the process of constructing a live work enable the public a first-hand insight into the medium. Or when, with the proper prompting, local schools departments target key groups of sixth formers to attend work; and if, in the end, you're an artist committed to high-lighting social iniquities, then let's get 'em while they're young.

The belief that performance art is the most accessible and least elitist of art forms — whilst well supported by its operating outside of overtly consumerist frameworks — is a theory propagated within performance ghettos, and is an illusion that deserves to be redressed more through initiatives in confronting a totally new audience than by talk. A rosy future indeed, but there are certain levels of criteria that must be established if an alliance is to benefit *all* parties concerned. It doesn't take a genius to recognise that the short-term benefits of including performance work as part of an institutions programme are very attractive: a liberal posture helps no end in wooing people into an environment normally perceived (or misperceived) as stuffy. Greater attendance by larger cross-sections of the community is not only satisfying in itself, but may also attract the interest of an Arts Council currently shifting monies to the regions through the Glory of the Garden policy (whether this money should be channelled into other spaces is an argument for another time). But if attendance figures can be raised in respect to the inclusion of live work, it still takes more than a memo on a staff trainee's desk to read a couple of back-issues of *Performance Magazine* and select something promising to ensure that both artists and developments are dealt with in a professional and knowledgeable manner. There are matters such as the provision of a suitable space within the gallery, rather than slotting artists into the corner of Gallery G and apologising for the lack of a total black-out. There are ground-rules to be laid down to afford artists fully-

realised and extensive contexts to work in. There is the recognition that performance, by its very nature, is a risk-taking medium, and in certain cases the artists may not wish to deliver the goods in a polished package. And — most importantly — there is the undeniable fact that some modes of performance art simply cannot take place in a municipal space; either because the said institution operates a policy of non-restricted access which allows for no judgements to be enforced as to the suitability of work for certain age groups, or, more basically, that no educational back-up can — or should — prepare an audience for the emotional impact of a performer entering into a series of mentally and physically traumatic acts before their gaze.

The only way forward is to experiment. As way of example, I was involved in organising 'New Work, Newcastle '86', a performance festival which show-cased the work of seventeen artists to substantial numbers of the Newcastle community. It marked a collaboration between Projects U.K., a small independent space, and the Laing Art Gallery, a large municipal space. Projects U.K. became involved as selector and curator, drawing on its extensive history of commissioning and programming time-based work, and the Laing offered both resources and the enthusiasm of a number of people committed to expanding the parameters of the space's activities. Lessons were learnt and this year sees a similar event being expanded to include the Cornerhouse in Manchester and Cartwright Hall in Bradford as participants. This is one direction to take out of many limited only by the imagination and courage of artists and organisations.

Roselee Goldberg's theory that performance art functions in a cyclical fashion — an avant-garde King Arthur ready to emerge from misty slumber whenever the threat of turgidness or stagnation looms over the horizon — is an exciting one, but perhaps the self-mythologising mystique of performance art needs to alter in view of, say, the fact that the medium has had its own magazine for the last eight years. Artists are beginning to reject art critic Peter Fuller's criticism of performance art as 'the pornography of despair' and deal instead with issues such as the despair of pornography. And let's not be careful out there... ● 

# PERFORMANCE SUPPORT SLOWLY SPREADING

● ROB LA FRENAIS on performance art funding: Who's got it, who's lost it and where to go for it in the future.

'IT'S TIME FOR live artists to become visible and raise their voices among the furore', I concluded this time two years ago in an article about the newly-formed Arts Council Performance Promoters scheme, two years ago. ('Backstairs revolution in performance art', No 34). Well, whether the artist's voices are being heard, performance art is certainly becoming visible, and already in this short time attitudes to it are shifting right across the board. But what does this imply for the artist in the field, and those organising events with them? Will the funding bodies slowly but surely shuffle towards recognition of the art form lead simply to another backlash against the experimental in favour of the traditional forms, a depressing repetition of events at the end of the seventies? Are they bandwagon-jumping or are they serious? Let us have a closer look at developments in the last two years.

When the scheme was set up by Jeni Walwin of the Arts Council Combined Arts Department, it was made clear that the strategy was to be two-stranded. First, the dividing of the total budget (apart from its inherited commitment to this magazine) between a small group of expert and committed entrepreneurs and artist/administrators was intended to devolve the selection procedure of performance art activities to those more fitted and better placed to undertake it: venue-based organisation, in the regions, with existing Regional Arts Association support. These go-betweens were expected to provide what were essentially showcases for the work — and this they did, notably the Midland Group with their well-established Performance platform (now known as the National Review of Live Art) and the Zap Club (in conjunction with the Brighton Festival) with their access, via their nightclub operation, to wider audiences. Projects UK, who started late, invested their portion in setting up a commissioning fund in combination with the municipal art gallery in the Laing, and pooling their resources to a long season *New Work Newcastle*, which took place last year and which in a sense was the most ambitious use of the money.

The second strand of the strategy was to actively shake up activity in the

regions, to whom performance art money had devolved and was lying unspent; to agitate for performance around the corridors of 105 Piccadilly and get it accepted as part of the Glory of the Garden programme, and to incorporate it into the Arts Council's increasingly high-profile Education and Training divisions. To act as an information agency, (a performance art newsletter) and in a sense, an in-house pressure group for an area which had previously lacked administrative definition. The partially devolved Promoter's Scheme would give space for Jeni Walwin, and a second officer, Tracey Warr, room to do this, and at the same time provide an example to point at. We will look at the results of this strategy in a moment.

What is the state of the promoters scheme now? Well it's moved on, and out of the original four promoters only one remains with the scheme. This year £30,000 is being divided out as follows: Projects UK Newcastle £10,000, Chisenhale Dance Space London £5,000, Green Room Manchester £6,500, Riverside Studios London (for the National Review of Live Art) £6,000 and a South-west England consortium coordinated by artist Rose Garrard, £2,500. (Any live artists reading this who want to go for some of this money should write or phone Combined Arts for details NOW, because they'll be commissioning work very soon.)

Why this quick turnover? Is there a two year rule? The Performance Art Subcommittee have given no indication that this is the case, though it's known the grants are considered as strictly one-off. There are obviously some stories behind the changes, notably the removal of the National Review of Live Art (previously the Midland Group Performance Platform) to Riverside in London. The last National Review in Nottingham was one of the best, but there was a sense that it could well be the last in that city. It was extraordinarily full of administrators, would-be promoters, funders and gallery directors, so much so that the staff had to hold back the 'insiders' while the public were let in first. Not a few arts supremos were seen wandering disconsolately unable to get into a performance at which, a few years back they would have not

been seen dead.

All this is testimony to the 'second strand' of policy enacted by Warr and Walwin, though it might just have been that a lot of people were there to prove them wrong. Anyhow it was a field day for promoting performance, and it was a great surprise to hear that shortly after the event an industrial dispute at the Midland Group that had been brewing for years erupted, causing a paper takeover of the management committee and forcing the resignation of the director Tony Bellekom.

This news broke as the Performance Art Subcommittee was having its annual meeting to select next years performance promoters and, though it insists it would have taken the decision regardless, the fact remains that the money for the National Review was moved from Nottingham to London's Riverside Studios, where it is believed the former Midland Group Performance Director, Nikki Millican, will reconvene it.

The other major change is the removal of funds from the Zap Club, as well as the Brighton Festival last year. Although aware of the need to move the money around, promoter Neil Butler is furious. He feels the committee is biased against presenting work in a popular (i.e.) club basis, and points to what he considers as the widest audience for performance art in the country. He is also concerned that the National Review money has gone to London, making two schemes in the metropolis costing over a third of the total budget.

There is no answer to the first — committees are appointed to be biased, and anyway, at least two of the current promoters are planning liaisons with nightclubs in their cities. It is also true that the National Review money was given with the stipulation that it MUST move out of London in the following year. But it seems a pity that a popular venue that steps out of the normal run of regional 'centres of excellence' etc. should feel thus excluded. Perhaps another part of the Arts Council should take heed and support initiatives at the Zap.

And so to the indirect results of the strategy to promote performance art. A look at Regional Arts Association's specific performance funding two years

back revealed a sorry picture, apart from the notable exceptions of Northern Arts and East Midland Arts. Now a number of RAA's have cleaned up their act. Notably Greater London Arts, whose Visual Arts section have finally woken up to the existence of the artform, funding among other things, an ambitious performance season at AIR Gallery, as well as their drama department who have funded Rose English and Emergency Exit Arts as well as a number of theatrical performance ventures to a total of £10,000 this year. Yorkshire Arts have doubled their funding, with money going to Babel and Pitt St. Studios to a total of £6,500. No change at S.W. Arts, an old offender, though having a promoter should shake them up. Merseyside Arts have put in a couple of thou. via the Bluecoat scheme, and NW Arts have thrown a crumb to the Green Room, hopefully rising next year (they have been devolved the last performance revenue client Horse and Bamboo, at £43,250). Blanks appear next to Southern Arts (though there are rumours of new performance activity at South Hill Park in Bracknell, ex-home of the Performance Festival) and Eastern Arts. If you are in those regions, get knocking on their door. East Midlands Arts turned in a healthy £4,640, some to the new by established Pink Room, Loughborough, but most to the Midland Group. Will that change next year? South East Arts, one of the smallest organisations, goes on faithfully giving its small change to the Zap Club despite everything, plus money for IOU — total £5,800. Top of the form comes Northern Arts with a staggering £30,000 and it all goes to John Bewley and Simon Herbert at Projects UK. Spend it wisely lads.

All these amounts may sound piddling to some, but it's an improvement on nothing and represents if anything, a foot in the door. Perhaps we should finally return to the belly of the beast and see what's stirring there. Interestingly, the so-called 'Glory of The Garden' strategy has provided a few footholds for performance, and the newly appointed Arts Council Art Touring Officer, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor will proudly point you to some of the latest initiatives, notably an ambitious performance season at Southampton Art Gallery, including site-specific works on the Isle of Wight Ferry, the headline — making Stephen Taylor Woodrow event at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. The participation of the Laing, Newcastle in the Projects UK commissions as well as a touring static show, performances at Stoke on Trent

Municipal Gallery, and many other of the so-called 'Glory' clients. Make no mistake, there's REAL money there, so find out if your municipal gallery is one.

There have also been interesting developments in the artform departments. Sarah Wason, recently appointed to the Art Department has been recently inviting applications to the 'Special Art Projects' committee, who have so far funded such things as the Daylight Club at London's Diorama, and are understood to be considering many other experimental projects. The art department has only recently declared an interest, so applications have to be pretty firmly fine-art grounded. They have to be of national significance, so as not to cross over with other schemes, or the work of the RAAs. It would seem that they are now firmly committed to supporting performance and other experimental work in the future.

The Drama Department, too, has finally found a place in its project funding for the likes of Station House Opera and the Bow Gamelan Ensemble. (Officer Jenny Waldman, not to be confused with Walwin). And the big arts centres, notably the ICA, are sitting up and taking careful notice of all forms of performance art.

I think that it can be pretty fairly concluded that a lot of this would not have developed without the second strand of the Combined Arts department's policy. The question now is how much further can it go? Let's face it, we are not just talking about performance art here, though its role could be seen as a sharp-edge weapon cutting swathes of innovation (see previous feature). The whole project of experiment within the arts needs carefully monitoring and prodding — and it is within institutions such as the Arts Council that the natural tendency towards safeness will readily congeal, given half the chance. An active clearing house principle, a system to undump the dumped, such as the one Walwin and Warr has been operating, is still desperately needed in the funding mechanism. They have only just made a start. The true mavericks, the artists long rejected by the Arts Council and the Arts Centre network (I won't say who they are) are still out there waiting to come in from the cold. Then we will see if the arts establishment is really serious about funding experiment.

*Jeni Walwin, Tracey Warr, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, Sarah Wason and Jenny Waldman are all available on 01 629 9495 to give information on policy and funding applications in the areas mentioned in this article. ●*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9  
the cliff edge, a man on a horse nearby.)

The time is just moments ago. The tellers try to give us an image of the kind of man we are looking for. Actually, just three of the tellers are of any use. Of the other two, one's boyfriend is The Man That Put The Cameras In, and so she will see the whole thing later on videotape; the other has had a religious experience of a sort too complicated to describe here. So, to get back to the story . . . Who is he, that other one? 'What does a man who is of the other world look like, when you've never seen one before?'

So Max, Willard and Bud each have a character reference. Bob Ashley knew and talked to Max Ernst, and his uncle Willard of course, and was profoundly affected by Bud Powell's music, which he came to know through fellow musicians in the Army Band. Bob has created a monologue on music and the law that he believes is representative of the Bud Powell creed.

Max, Willard and Bud each shared life circumstances in an interlocking pattern. For instance, Max (because of persecution under the McCarthy hearings in the Fifties) and Willard were at some time in their lives involved with the South-western United States — but not Bud. Willard and Bud were both involved with alcohol — but not Max. Bud and Max both had wives nicknamed Buttercup — but not Willard, who never married. In 'the rotations', like footnotes spoken by the Furies, these connections are made apparent and are spoken simultaneously with each episode.

But, a warning: this opera is subtitled 'Acts of God'. The words and music are meant to be performed as it was composed "in the spirit of 'divine inspiration' or heedlessness". Like in life, speech and meaning are separated: 'Who could speak if every word had meaning? Sounds like *uhn* have no meaning and slow things down, but swear words which have a lot of meaning, can *really* slow things down.' Bob defines music as 'words slowed down, like swearing or prayer'. The music and texts of Atalanta are composed in the form of stories ('*storia*' as in the first ever operas). There are the small chorales, which are fundamentally emotional. Then there are the three Moral Fables given to the solo voice who tries to 'figure things out'. This is, of course, a never ending process . . . ●



## LETTERS

## PASSION

Dear Performance,

Thank you so much for Steve Rogers' passionate review in the last issue, which I greatly appreciated.

It may not have come to his notice, but at present we live in a society dominated by a 'vicious, bitter and unpleasant' elite whose only term of reference is financial. If artists do not face up to this elite, immediately, then there will be no Midland Group, no *Performance Magazine* and ultimately no Arts Council funding (unless of course the art concerned can be shown to be making a healthy profit).

Unfortunately, he seems to have taken what I was saying at face value and ignored my underlying plea for a world where 'vulnerability' (particularly for men) is nothing to be ashamed of.

I'm sorry that he found it necessary to use the term 'fringe theatre' in such a disparaging way; this division of the arts into separate and often competitive spheres, can only be unhealthy.

His reference to the Weimar Republic was unfortunately completely off the mark, if I wore a kaftan would I necessarily be talking about Nepal?

Anyway, at the very least, his response was 'passionate' which is precisely the reaction I was hoping for.

I look forward to a lively discussion with him on the nature of art and reality at some future date.

Kind regards,  
Patrick Dineen  
Drayton Gardens  
London SW10

## TIME FOR POSITIVE MESSAGES

Dear Performance,

The review of my recent performance *Nature of Reality*, which appeared in your last issue, was both pompous in tone and misguided in content. The embarrassing subtitle 'Has Richard Layzell really seen the future?' could have come straight out of the *News of the World*. I'm not claiming to be a visionary any more than Orwell or Huxley were, who inevitably had to be dragged into this by your reviewer. *Nature of Reality* was a fiction and a device for looking at a possible scenario of life on our planet, given what we all see happening gradually around us, low-level radiation, nuclear waste and weapons, the depletion of rain forests, Chernobyl, etc. Because of the familiarity of these facts I, and my co-writer Kate Toller, chose not to mention them, but to project a future where the damage was already done. If any vision of the future has to be compared with Orwell, then it's a sad day for the imagination, and if any portrayal of a ludicrous figure in authority has to be compared with Monty Python, then it's equally sad. I often think that you find what you're looking for and if you're looking for cliché you'll find it and miss the irony altogether, for irony there was, in abundance.

The character portrayed in the first half of the performance represented the universal politician. One audience member now finds that whenever hearing politicians on the radio, he's reminded of this character and his meaningless words. This was the point.

Of course, it's difficult to make a work about the decimation of the tropical rain forests, as Lumiere & Son recently did in *Deadwood*, or about ecology in general, as we did, of course it's difficult to make it palatable and powerful, but might it just be important to acknowledge that these issues are being dealt with and to encourage them on principle? Michael Billington said as much in the *Guardian* recently in a review of *The Petition* at the National Theatre.

Should we assume that lethargy is so great that titillation is all that audiences can consume? I don't believe so. Perhaps your reviewer, Simon Herbert, was numb on this occasion, or perhaps he was too busy taking photographs for the Projects UK Archive to really engage with the piece on an emotional level. However, a lot of people did, whether middle-class, already converted, or not, is immaterial, it's the point of communication with the audience that counts and if they're engaged emotionally, the link is a strong one.

Do I expect people to be activated from seeing one performance? Well, you simply don't know what happens to people after they've left and you believe it's vital that the issues are continually raised by as many creative people as possible, because it must all help. How could the First World War poets not write about war? How can we not make work about the central issues of our time? Oh, yes, it's safer to retreat to 'alienation' as a theme, but I, for one, am tired of seeing work in all media that deals with alienation, it's time for positive messages and clear messages.

It struck me as no coincidence that your last issue also contained a reply from Lumiere & Son in defence of their work, following a 'swingeing critique' in the previous issue. *Deadwood*, their recent performance in Kew Gardens, just happened to be about ecology. Had its subject matter been alienation, I wonder if it would have provoked such criticism. *Performance Magazine* seems to be happiest when it's spotting trends and exposing them, flavour of the month. How about a clear policy? There have been requests for a thematic issue of the magazine devoted to artists working for peace. Not quite trendy enough, perhaps. *High Performance*, the American magazine, has, for some time, successfully shown that it is not afraid of themes and that it clearly supports political work, which has considerably added to its credibility. There is no doubt that *Performance Magazine* has an influence on the performance and

experimental theatre scene in general. But does it recognise and take responsibility for this influence? It looks good, but why doesn't it pay its contributors and sacrifice the colour cover? My request is for the same degree of professionalism in the magazine as is shown by most of the performers whom it writes about.

Richard Layzell  
London N4

*Ed. note.* *Performance* pays its contributors a nominal fee on request. We are obviously unhappy about this situation and are proposing to change it in our new structure (see contents page). As for colour covers, we feel the art deserves similar standards of presentation to conventional magazine media. Changes in printing technology have made the cost of colour on the cover comparatively minimal to the total cost (RL).

## THE POST FEMINIST CONDITION?

Dear Performance,

Whilst we appreciated Tara Babel's comprehensive review of the Canterbury Second Generation Sculpture Show; the article was so riddled with misconceptions that we felt compelled to put finger to typewriter. We tried very hard to understand what was meant by the 'post-feminist' condition. We have come up with a set of guidelines which might help any other confused readers who maybe worried that they have been affected.

We three old fashioned feminist artists breathed a sigh of relief that we appear to be so far untainted by this sad malady.

Here we go. Firstly; the 'Post Feminist' 'resists being categorised'. She (or he; anything else would be presumably be 'sexist') believes that works which are 'segregated sexually, ethically or politically or whatever often have a paranoid stance of self defence'. Ironically a post feminist is prone also to have a paranoid stance of self-defence.

S/he 'cannot avoid' and 'has to justify' a women's show. S/he is also well aware that 'a lot of women would disagree with her about the subject of feminist Art': that opportunity is never granted as the post feminist never states her/his opinion.

Some post-feminists are women but 'can't get away from the fact they are female', although s/he 'believes in an asexual attitude towards working as an artist'. Therefore s/he 'has trouble with the more militant women's women'. Luckily s/he 'does not feel at a disadvantage against the male race as a whole just against individuals perhaps'. 'She is divisive, she categorises artists'; 'positive feminist' v. 'strong feminist', the implication being that strong equals negative; yet disagrees with categorisation. S/he uses negative prefixes to qualify throughout, both to defend herself and implicitly to denigrate the artist she is talking about.

She fragments an artist's work by isolating her statements, and then uses it to reiterate her own rather shaky post-feminist ideology,

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thereby presenting a distorted view of the work.

'S/he finds women as sexist as men'. (Like saying black are as racist as white, without the understanding of the relationship to power, it renders the word meaningless).

S/he feels at liberty to review and criticise work without seeing it. (Thanks a bundle Tara.)

S/he presents a paranoid uninformed idea of feminism and then defends herself against herself. S/he criticizes and then says she has no grounds to criticize. S/he ridicules those who threaten her by disagreeing with their imagined position and still tells them how to do their work more effectively.

Between exclaiming a lot and being anecdotal, this wholly liberal person does the Canterbury Show a grave disservice and uses the review to profile herself and her own unresolved prejudices. As the Irish priest said in her article 'it's a funny ting fer a woman ta doo!!!'

Kate Meynell

Marion Urch

Zoe Redman

Ed. note: Tara Babel was not responsible for the expression 'Post Feminism' in the intro.

## TOO MANY 'SHOULDISMS'

Dear Performance,

This is the first time in my life I have ever felt the need to sit down and write a letter of protest to a journal. But when I read Mina Kaylan's incredibly inaccurate 'review' of Magdalena '86 and saw her described editorially as having undergone the Magdalena experience, I had to write to correct some of the more offensive statements raised in her piece.

Firstly, and probably most significantly, she did not undergo the Magdalena experience at all. She took part as a member of the public in Phase I of the festival, seeing some of the performances on offer and joining in some of the workshops and discussions. But Magdalena was a three-week event, and those of us who participated fully in the festival, all 38 of us who included performers, visual artists, technicians, administrators, writers and directors, saw the first week as simply one moment in the whole. Mina Kaylan's article leads the reader to assume that what she saw was Magdalena. What Magdalena was also was a further two weeks of women living, working and struggling together questioning some of the basic assumptions of theatre practice and eventually compiling a public performance that took place on two evenings at the end of the festival. I would have felt less urge to complain had she said simply that she was writing a series of short accounts of public performances of Phase I, instead of implying that she had somehow been an integral part of a three week working process or, worse still, implying that the second phase was no different to the first. In fact, Phase I was the necessary public dimension that enabled the hard work of Phase II to happen since it helped fund the whole Festival. Mina Kaylan

complains about the expense of participating in Phase I, but with the very small sums of funding available, there was no way to subsidise public participation as well. As writer co-opted specifically to document the festival by Jill Greenhalgh, I did not even receive travel expenses let alone a fee. Nevertheless, the unique chance to try and explore experimental theatre work as women was what led many of us to attend Magdalena, even though we may have been out of pocket as a result. The problem here, however, lies not with the women who conceived and planned Magdalena, but with the low regard in which women's work is held, particularly by funding bodies.

Mina Kaylan raises other unfair points in her article. There was not a 'total lack of black or Asian artists'. One (black) woman in the group of 38 complained bitterly whenever this particular point was mentioned, because she felt she was being deliberately ignored in the interests of making a polemical point and implying that Magdalena was somehow racist in its construction. Had Mina Kaylan bothered to find out, she would also have discovered that African performers had been invited and had hoped to attend, as had Japanese performers. The final spectrum of participants in the group of 38 reflected a huge narrowing down of the original invitees, and should by no means be taken as indicative of any pro-white bias. To suggest this is as ignorant as it is offensive to us all.

She also raises the question that was discussed in the concluding workshop of Phase I, which I recall with some detail since I led it, that 'many of the performances had been directed by men.' This fact, it was suggested in discussion, was indicative of the lack of originality of the work being shown, of the continuing dominance of women by men in directorial roles. Many of the performers present were deeply insulted by this suggestion and pointed out that: a) to suggest, as a few women did, that the role of the director is the most significant, is to totally devalue the contribution of the performer; b) most of the women practitioners worked in mixed groups and had therefore devised their shows with the people closest to them, in some cases men; 3) one of the principal issues to be worked through in Phase II concerned the relationship between director and performer, and to describe that relationship through terms of sexist hierarchy seemed to us to be naive in the extreme.

Naive political thinking was something we wanted to get away from. All the 38 although varying in age (the youngest was 22, the oldest 53) and in cultural background, nevertheless started from closely similar positions with regard to ideology and many of us have been active in women's

movements for years. But one of the feelings we shared was the belief that it is far too simple to start with 'shouldisms' — e.g. there 'should' be no men involved anywhere; there, 'should' be adequate funding for performers and participants alike; there 'should' be a perfect balance of races and nationalities; there 'should' be completely new power structures and everyone 'should' have clear ideas about what women's experimental theatre 'should' be. We began instead with telling one another and, in Phase I, anyone else who cared to listen, who we were and where we were coming from professionally. Gradually, through the shared process of living and training together, we began to tell each other where we were coming from personally, where we hoped to go, what our more private dreams might be. That happened because of a process, not because of a programme, and those who, like Mina Kaylan, imply that we lacked a coherent feminist plan that would have enabled Magdalena to be a 'springboard for a communal investigation into the conditions, restrictions and choices involved for women working in theatre/performance' obviously totally missed out on what it was that we were trying to do and why we were trying to do it in that apparently unstructured way.

A final point concerns Mina Kaylan's insinuations regarding Zofia Kalinska (and how amazingly sexist and offensive to refer to Zofia's work with Kantor, from which she is trying hard to escape, as the all-important fact about her career in the theatre). She describes the objection of a participant in Zofia's workshop to the work in progress as 'superficial and ideologically (in terms of feminism) unsound', then goes on to say patronisingly that 'ironically' it was one of the most important and challenging workshops of the festival, thus allowing the charges of superficiality and unfeminist ideology to stand. I feel particularly strongly about this issue, since I was one of the seven women who worked with Zofia throughout the three weeks, discovering things about myself, my relationship to other women and my work in the theatre that I had never imagined could be possible. So intense was the feeling within what came to be known as 'Zofia's group', that we contributed a unit to the final performance and have begun to look for funding to enable us to work further as a group in the future. To suggest that Zofia Kalinska might be superficial or somehow out of touch with feminist ideology is absurd. Her working method is to throw women back upon their inner resources within a situation involving more than one person and by slowing breaking down certainties, to move deeper and deeper into new areas. I cannot conceive of a more coherently feminist methodology than this. My recollection of the woman who raised the objections in Zofia's workshop was that she was the same person whose contribution of negative energy throughout the week had served to remind us just how tyrannous a person can be when she believes that she



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alone holds the ideologically correct key to all our boxes.

Magdalena 86 was a first of its kind. There were some mistakes, there were some difficulties and it would be foolish to deny that there were. The creche facilities, despite the hard work of the supervisors, were less than adequate physically; the relationship between performers and visual artists was sometimes strained and one casualty was the departure after two weeks of one of the visual artists who felt that the environment was not helpful to her; the final performance, though important and in its way necessary, did change the dynamics of the daily training sessions and discussions that were so vital to us all throughout the festival. If there is another such festival, these problems will have to be taken on board. But the fact that Magdalena happened at all, the fact that it happened in Thatcher's Britain with the arts being hacked to pieces, the fact that so many extraordinarily talented people came together and met and exchanged and shared their work is due to the vision of Jill Greenhalgh, the dedication of the Magdalena organisational team, the sacrifices made by all the participants and the good will of everybody who contributed in any way. Supposed reviews like the one by Mina Kaylan demean those achievements.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Bassnett

University of Warwick

Graduate School of Comparative Literature  
Coventry

## UNFAIR CHOICE

Dear Performance

In replying to my article on Lumiere and Son, David Gale and Hilary Westlake are quite right in spotting that my arguments against spectacle are influenced by the International Situationists. However, just because they spotted them and because they are now quite old ideas does not make them any less valid. In particular the much quoted I.S. maxim 'Spectacle is not a collection of images so much as a relationship between people mediated through images', is more relevant now than it has ever been. Art, which in its relationship to its audience replicates the relationship of the capitalist state to its consumer/subjects, reinforces that relationship. *It is that simple.* Gale and Westlake's rejection of this thesis on the grounds that anyway nearly all theatre shares this spectacular nature amounts to nothing less than support for that kind of theatre. There are other kinds of theatre which do not share in this spectacular nature and they choose not to make it. Their reply also reveals another important feature of what I think is wrong with Lumiere's recent work. David Gale and Hilary Westlake, whatever their particular working relationship may or may not be at the moment, have been prominent within the 'alternative' theatre for many years. Indeed they were two of its founders. It is perfectly reasonable for them

to want something better than the demeaning, precarious, hand to mouth existence they have endured for a long time. They are both extremely able artists and they have, over the years, developed strategies to make their work increasingly popular. This is not only to get their work seen by more people but is also a result of their desire to share in the rewards of the system that dominates our culture. They want to share in the rewards of opportunity, recognition and security which are usually denied to practitioners on the outside of the mainstream. To suggest that they can remain hostile to that mainstream whilst at the same time reaping its rewards is nonsense and a basic misunderstanding of what is really at stake. The only situations in which this kind of subversive infiltration could possibly work are either under a genuinely democratic system (not very likely), or with a genuinely non-philistine government (totally unlikely).

I am not arguing for some kind of romantic fiction about great art coming out of adversity and that you have to starve to be politically right-on. I am sympathetic to the genuine dilemma facing artists of the ability of Gale and Westlake.

In 'Has Modernism Failed' Suzi Gablik devotes a whole chapter to precisely this problem with regards to radical visual artists who are taken up by dealers and made into media heroes. She concludes that very few individuals are capable of resisting the effects of being on the inside of the system they want to attack. The principle effect being that that system puts the individual artist before all else. This system 'does not impose on them (the artists) any mission beyond the realisation of their own professional aims,' and 'The world is perceived as an arena for the achievement of one's own success and satisfaction; there is no struggle to realise spiritual or ethical values. And to the extent that art itself has lapsed into this function (serving the career needs of artists) it has come to lack what used to be its unquestionable moral substance, its link with intrinsic value.'

It is no accident that the works of Lumiere and Son that I have liked the least have also been their most popular and successful. Similarly it is no accident that the groups I most admire tend not to survive very long. Obviously everyone would like to be able to make precisely the work they want to and share in the rewards of opportunity, recognition and security but until something pretty fundamental changes in our world, radical artists are faced with the unfair choice of either/or but, usually, not both.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Rogers.

London E2

## THE TWO BABELS

Dear Performance,

Much to my disappointment, I find that after many years of working under my name Tara Babel, I find that another performance related group has recently adopted the name Babel also. As I do not have any legal copyright on the name Babel, a name with many connotations ancient and modern, I would now like to take the opportunity to make it clear to anyone who is interested, that I do not have anything to do with this group. Babel or Babel Administration, as they are more usually referred to, are an administration group based in Halifax, West Yorkshire promoting performance art in that area. As a performance group, I know very little about them, except that they appeared at the Midland Group's 'National Review of Live Art' to bad reviews. I believe their reputation lies more on the administration side of things, being funded mainly by Yorkshire Art and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough. As of the past few months I have been vaguely confused with this group; 'I see you're doing a lot of work in Yorkshire', or 'Your name's everywhere these days'. As a self promoting, independent individual, I now find I have to be careful where my own publicity is concerned, referring to myself at all times as Tara Babel, using the stamp above. The world of performance is still relatively cliquish in this country, and I feel it is my right to make this point clear as associations between the two Babel's can be mistakenly implemented.

Tara Babel

27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

coercing with the view that is written beside him. 'I Didn't Know The Meaning Of Glamour Until I Started Shooting Smack', it reads.

FOOTNOTE: This exhibition was prematurely closed after a raid by intruders. The attack was specific in that the aggressors spray-painted their own cackhanded critiques over the work on show.

In one example these ideologically confused art attackers sprayed *Fucking Sexist Crap* over Glyn Banks/Hannah Vowles piece and then painted crude swastikas over the breasts of the stylised depiction of a pin-up. Karen Elliot, one of the exhibitors said: 'Not only would it be better if the attackers had come to talk to us about what offended them but the statements scrawled here are so contradictory... They don't make sense.' Elliot himself was seemingly stoical about the attack. It had caused some disruption within the exhibitors group but Elliot was talking positively about an Edinburgh showing for the exhibition as part of a show titled 'Transmissions' and possible involvement in a 'Destructive Art' symposium timetabled for 1988. ●

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**Studio Hinderik** (from Holland) "**Sidewalk Edge**": powerful physical and emotional impact masterfully realised, performed in English.

Gardner Arts Centre, Wed-Sat 6-9 May, 7.45 pm; £5, £4, £3.

**Egg Theatre**: the extraordinary Vidar Eggertson, from Iceland, in two very individual performances, performed in English. "**The Turtle Gets There Too**" by Arni Ibsen: lyrical play about relationship between Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.

Pavilion Theatre, Tues-Sat 12-16 May, 8 pm; 16 May, 2.30 pm; £3.50, con. £3.

"**Nor I ... But ...**" by Samuel Beckett/Vidar Egg, 72 performances for audience of one at a time, 7-16 May, £5.

**Théâtre en Ciel "Trick"**: first British appearance of this brilliant French company. Clown, magician and puppeteer use science, mechanics, mystery and magic to explain L'Affaire des Variétés Artistiques".

Sallis Benney, 15-17 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

**Théâtre de Complicité "A Minute Too Late"**: multi-national troupe of mime artists that have convulsed audiences throughout Europe.

Pavilion Theatre, Tues-Sat 5-9 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

#### **Stephen Lowe Season**

**Metro Theatre Company "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists"**: acclaimed adaptation of Robert Tressell's celebrated novel. Pavilion Theatre, Mon-Wed 18-20 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

**Meeting Ground Theatre Company "Demon Lovers"**: an unusual meeting of theatre, film, music, puppets, actors, light and design, to explore concept of 'multiple personalities'

Pavilion Theatre, Thurs-Sat 21-23 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

"**Melon**": premiere production of new play by Simon Gray, starring Alan Bates.

Theatre Royal, Mon-Sat 11-16 May, eve 7.30 pm; mat Thurs 14 May, 2.30 pm, Sat 16 May, 2.30 pm; eve Fri & Sat £12, £10, £8, £6, £4; other performances £10, £9, £7, £5, £3.50.

#### DANCE

**Jorma Uotinen in "Scream"**: British premiere for European superstar of dance from Finland; "visionary theatre" Gardner Centre, Fri-Sun 1-3 May, 7.45 pm; £4.50, £3.80, £2.75.

**Michael Clark & Company**: world premiere of reworking of outstandingly successful piece; Theatre Royal, Tues-Sat 5-9 May, 7.30 pm; £10, £9, £7, £5, £3.50.

**Second Stride "Weighing the Heart"**: world premiere, programme of music and dance, "hour-long ritual, somewhere between a wedding, a funeral, a boxing match, a voodoo ceremony and a night out at the Lyceum" Music by Man Jumping

Gardner Centre, Thurs-Sat 21-23 May, 7.45 pm; £5, £4, £3 con £1 off.

**Passage Nord** from Norway "**The Road Between Water and Thirst**": some of the most talented and ambitious work performed outside institutional theatre in years.

Sallis Benney, Fri-Sun 22-24 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

#### PERFORMANCE AND MULTI-MEDIA

**The Sleep**: new multi-media piece inspired by updated version of Orpheus and Euridice, created from the disciplines of contemporary theatre & minimalist music. Music by Jeremy Peyton Jones, directed by Pete Brooks, Gardner Centre, Wed-Sat 13-16 May, 7.45 pm; £5, £4, £3.

**Appeal Products: "52nd Street"** - "the story of a journey across a nation and the landscape of the mind"

Pavilion Theatre, Sat & Sun 2 & 3 May, 8 pm; £3.

#### FESTIVAL ZAP TENT

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**Bloolips "Slung Back and Strapless"**: England's most frazzlingly insouciant drag group"; Sallis Benney, Fri-Sun 1-3 May, 8 pm; £3.50, con £3.

#### Late Night at the Pavilion Theatre

**Robert Pupkin Collective**: Steve Steen, Jim Sweeney, John Dowie and friends - an evening of chaotic hilarity; Sat 2 May

**The Swinging Chickens**: "uniquely entertaining group"; Thurs 7 May

**The Vicious Boys**: runaway success at last year's Festival; Fri 8 May

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