



**Natural Disasters, Shirley Cameron & Roland Miller,
Chris Burden, Belgian Performance, London Video Arts,
Music, Books, Reviews, Listings.**

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LETTERS

Hi — I have only just seen your No 7 issue and would like to point out two errors in the Cage/Cunningham stuff — one factual, one conjectural! Firstly — I guess Cage (p.7) was referring to an Alison Knowles event assisted by Jackson McLow and Philip Corner, (all at some time associated with Fluxus and Dick Higgins' Something Else Press).

Corner is a composer and musician who has worked in a large range of contexts, and McLow is a poet whose work involving choice, aleatory method etc is as important to developments in the '60s as Cage. McLow collaborated both with the Judson groups (both the poets and the dance theatres) and with the Living Theatre in their 14th St. loft days. His poems for dance 'The Pronouns' have been choreographed by Meredith Monk (as well as others.)

Secondly — Ref. Yvonne Rainer (p.10). It is more probable that the *eclectic* member of the Judson 'Group' was Steve Paxton. (We have just finished 30 hours of video material on the Judson Dance Theatre, and contemporary opinion seem to bear this out.) Paxton has always developed movements/styles with a wide base of reference — often provoking and moving on. (I'm not sure that the 'seeds of contact' were visible in the early stuff.) Yvonne, however, has maintained an entirely cogent direction from early work (Trio A) through to her current film-making.) I think this is clear in her own writings and in the Nova Scotia book — certainly she most clearly defined the parameters of that combination of unstressed movement with 'minimalism' which has been the foundation (in America) of what is now called Post-Modern Dance. Thank you.

Tony Carruthers
Dance Division, Bennington College,
Vermont, USA.

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The Working Atmosphere Under Threat.



Glen Baxter

Ten issues on, at the end of our second year of publishing, many events and opinions have thrown into sharp relief the debate concerning the nature of the work we provide positive evidence for, Performance. Artistically the debate has involved both visual artists engaging in live actions and theatre companies breaking down barriers with non-narrative forms. It concerns whether the two should be treated with the same criteria from the point of view of criticism and documentation. Our standpoint in this matter is often challenged. Are we, by treating the two as strange, but equal bedfellows in our pages, simply homogenising for the sake of harmonising our community of interest? Our answer seems to be that visual artists (not even always live artists) unconsciously, deliberately, or defiantly use theatrical and narrative forms to convey meaning. And that theatre companies experimenting with visual forms having been forced into isolation from the main theatre community by the challenging nature of their work unwittingly find themselves being evaluated by art-world standards. We certainly do not intend to become the 'property' of one sector or another.

Economically the debate has just started hotting up, and is likely to get a lot hotter before the year is out. It has implications for the whole strata of arts funding, out of which we represent the innovative core. Because our area has been so affected, it is impossible not to discuss at some length the issues raised. It is also difficult to remain completely aloof given that some of the working atmosphere out of which the Performance Magazine has arisen is genuinely under threat.

As is well known, at the end of last year forty-one Arts Council clients were told that no subsidy would be available for them this year. Since that stark announcement there have been various developments that are likely to alter the face of arts subsidy in Britain, some intended by the Arts Council and some not. Significant events have been: the forming of a pressure group, Arts Fightback, to act for the interests of the ex-clients and to campaign for greater accountability on the part of the Arts Council; an unprecedented flow of loaded statements from the Chairman and Secretary-General of the Arts Council implying the creation of an 'Arts Policy' emanating from different sources than the established panel system, and finally the submitting of evidence to the parliamentary Select Committee on the Arts prepared by bodies like the Gulbenkian Foundation, questioning the patterns of art subsidy with particular reference to the methods of assessment of the affected clients.

There are also a number of semantic issues that are currently clouding the debate. One is the issue of 'cuts'. While Arts Fightback talk about 'cuts' the Arts Council

point out that *there have been no cuts*, merely reallocation of resources, and proudly point to a list of clients who have got 'increased subsidy'. This is quite correct. But the psychological reason for the misnaming points to the actual economic shift in areas funded. Although the list of have-nots include some established big spenders, such as the media-battered Prospect Company, and the haves include fringe and experimental work (the ICA, Lumiere and Son, Galactic Smallholdings) it is clear that the bulk of the money saved has gone towards the huge allocation for the established, safe, prestigious, areas. Twenty-one million pounds for the Royal Opera and ballet, the ENO, NT, and RSC. In the visual arts the funds for individual artists are being cut with a shift to more 'visible' clients like galleries. As John Willett, author, critic, (and chairman of one of the cut companies) put it: 'It would have been better if we could believe that the money saved on existing, possibly unworthy clients would all go to new and promising ventures. But this is not what is happening.' There is a real feeling that, despite some cosmetic rearrangement, a whole area of activity has been cut.

It is wrong, therefore to describe those concerned about recent events as 'opponents of the cuts'. Some, like Willett, saw a paring down of clients, particularly of revenue funded ones, as being overdue. But the Arts Council's manner of doing the deed has raised a number of awkward questions. The one being asked most is, why, with so much capital, so many jobs, and lifetimes of work at stake was not there some notice given, some chance to make arrangements for the future. The Arts Council say that it would have caused unnecessary distress if all the clients being considered for withdrawal had been told, and that as no-one likes being cut the pressure to reconsider would be intolerable. The companies retort that the arbitrary nature of the decision was designed specifically to stifle debate. But if either was the case, why now? Everyone knew that the Arts Council has the power to do these things, and this power could and should be questioned, so why wait until it is finally exercised?

The reason is the atmosphere of confidence that previous years surrounded the Arts Council and its panels. The role of the officers in particular glued the whole consensus together. One could liken the Arts Council officer to a colonial governor in a remote outpost surrounded by generally quiescent, but potentially hostile natives. He or she had quite a bit of individual power and as long as it was exercised relatively fairly no-one raised hell or asked awkward questions. Now, a sudden decree come down from on high causing everyone to suspend the status quo and jump. Guards are mounted on the Governor's mansion, questions are asked, and the system is under scrutiny. The whole

existence of the colonial power is threatened because it has to explain what it was doing there in the first place.

It would seem that there are three points to be taken into consideration here. Firstly, while the arts community, client and onlooker, knows that subsidy once given, can be taken away without too much explanation; it is not going to go out of its way to rock the boat if the money is finding its way to roughly the right sorts of places.

Secondly, it was pretty obvious the Arts Council had its back to the wall over the increase in revenue clients, especially in the Drama area, given the pressure to make room for new applications. It felt that any action to resolve this would be met with disproportionate protest.

Thirdly, there has been since the early seventies a dispute, fallen somewhat dormant lately, about whether support should be based on quality, or some other factor demanding a different system of values than that generally accepted by the art establishment.

Within this context, the Arts Council has decided to break the status quo implied in the first point, drastically resolve the dilemma in the second, and risk reviving the dispute in the third. To do this, it has gone far beyond the recommendations of the panels and called into question the confidence between client and officer. As has been said, it has the right to do all these things. But now, the spotlight has been turned on the anomalous situation of the Arts Council and its relation to the bodies that give it money and power.

Everyone knows the Arts Council is a quango. The Quasi Autonomous Neo-Governmental Organisations have been under fire from the right for being channels of indirect public expenditure and from the left for being unaccountable. The Arts Council is the most famous of them because of the way it seems to the general public to distribute largesse in an unexplainable way, to things presented by the media as equally unexplainable, by way of being piles of bricks and men with poles. (The Arts Council itself admits in one of its annual reports that performance and minimalist artists promote discussion and publicity amazingly disproportionate to the sums they get.) Anomalies that surround this particular quango include the fact that though many of its clients are associated with forces of change, if not always the left, in this country; and though Sir Roy Shaw's Secretary-Generalship was hurriedly renewed in the dying moments of the last Labour government; the arts have curiously always done slightly better in financial terms under the Tories, and in fact the Arts Council got 6% more than it expected, though whether this will continue without St John Stevas' 'enthusiasm for the Arts' remains to be seen. Each party has had their own, different reasons for supporting the arts, so the Arts Council has had up to now a much vaunted free hand which has been upheld by politicians, the media, and with reservations, the bulk of its clients. Those reservations represent the can of worms that *both* the clients and the Arts Council have been sitting on up till now.

'Arts Fightback wants more consultation from the Arts Council. It wants honesty and openness about the way it's reaching its decisions'. — David Jones of the co-ordinating committee. This is the one thing everyone seems to agree on, where previously such consultation had seemed incompatible with the traditional impartiality of the Arts Council. Where Performance Art had been under attack for being obscure and elitist, where Community Art had been under attack for lack of 'quality', and where Fringe Theatre had been under attack as a leftover of the sixties, a pale reflection of a now radicalised middle and large scale touring

theatre, the Arts Council had been with some exceptions, a welcome and uncommitted intermediary. The panel system protected the interests of one area from another.

Now, with overall decisions being made by the Council in an apparently arbitrary manner (one of the accusations being that they did not concern themselves with the fine print of, and sometimes even ignored, assessments of clients by review committees) demands are being loudly made for problematic things like the right of appeal, due notice, public accountability in appointments to panels and the Council, compulsory retirement periods, and so on. And problematic they are, given the Arts Council's quasi autonomous position. It is not an association with members, its relation with central government is indirect, restricting democratic and parliamentary access. Besides, we do not live in a society where the views of members of the public are held in particular regard where matters of detail are concerned, except in choosing an MP, or getting us into the Common Market. More accountability means more government control, and nobody wants a Ministry of Culture.

The key however seems to be more information. While the Arts Council is not going to go round asking everyone what it thinks of what it just did, nor is it going to say 'Oh, sorry. Made a mistake. Here's the money back', (though some campaigners think that it has broken the terms of its charter and should do just that,) one of the main ways in which the Arts Council should be criticised is for its covert attitude, in this particular case even after the event. If they are going to take a radical step like this, why not justify their reasons fully? Anything less is a slur on the clients concerned, and increases their difficulties. The Arts Council should not be misled into thinking that withdrawal of support is the end of the line for the clients. Many of them are at this moment trying to raise money from other sources and keep going. But if no-one knows why they were cut, how can they approach these sources without being under suspicion of general inadequacy? Some could even benefit from their assessment, and thus be helped to make further use of the Arts Councils previous investment. This is the sum total of the Arts Councils official thinking on the selection of clients for withdrawal:

'...the Council has been guided principally by considerations of artistic quality. However, other factors have also influenced the decision in some cases. These include: The balance between London and the regions; the level of local support, including local authority financial support; and the extent to which the contribution of individual clients is central to the Council's own primary duty to provide continuing revenue support for professional work.' Arts Council Information Bulletin No. 37.

Is this an arts policy? Is this a policy the Arts Council are going to explain and expand in the future? Should it then be subject for discussion and debate? We think so, and we see the Performance Magazine's role as a channel of information as important in this.

We are one of the few funded publications left dealing with performance, and in the unusual position of now being the only one touching on theatre. As a relative newcomer, and with an editorial policy that ought to be responsive to the needs of our area, we invite those with views on the arguments we have raised to respond with letters to be published in future issues. That way we can ensure that the debates remain open to all sides until we have a clearer idea of what is going on. Your responses by the end of March please.

Rob La Frenais



Keller

Natural Disasters,

Assorted Mishaps, and Other Occurrences

Performance is back at Acme. After a break of some months in which the gallery showed painting, sculpture, and mixed-media work, live work has made a sudden, rather dazzling comeback. First there was Alexander MacLennan, who paced with eyes closed round a sand circle for several days in various stages of undress — for example on the two days that I went along, completely naked one day and clothed head to foot in black the next. Then there was Dale Franck, an Australian artist who spends his time travelling all over the place performing poignant solo rituals. Finally there was Julian Maynard Smith's company Station House Opera doing an ambitious piece 'Natural Disasters', Peter Stickland and Grand Grill executing a less ambitious but very polished 'The Ninth Method', and Fiona Templeton fidgeting and nail-biting her way through a virtuosic 'Thought/Death'. The last three pieces were more than well placed together — they made a stunning collective viewing; Dale Franck is more of a solitary figure, artistically speaking, and needs to be considered separately. Besides, his work and approach raise some questions which the other work does not, so it seems appropriate to talk about him as unrelated to the rest.

I took the precaution of visiting Dale Franck early in the afternoon before his performance, and you'll soon see why this unusual piece of foresight saved my neck when it came to writing this article. He is a performer who also paints, and for ten days prior to his live showing there were drawings pinned casually to the gallery wall — as relaxed, as Harold Rosenberg once wrote about somebody else, as a pair of socks on the bathroom floor. Two were great lengths of canvas scribbled and worked over in paint, the others — more appealing I thought — were little odds and ends of shapes pencilled on what appeared to be typing paper. He showed me slides of some of his performances, many of which were exercises in solipsism, in which it mattered little whether anyone was watching, and indeed in some cases nobody was or could have been, which is proof in a way of a certain integrity. One of the more exaggeratedly withdrawn works took place on his own in a building, accompanied only by a toy horse which he moved round the floor while remembering all the important moments in his life; at some point during this examination he realised there had been a cat watching him throughout, which discovery he found disturbing — though he didn't quite say why — possibly because he felt that having believed himself to be alone, he was in a fashion being spied upon. On another occasion he took a medical drug — perhaps a form of anaesthetic — which dulled all his nerve endings while maintaining his consciousness; this took place in front of an audience, but, again, he seemed reluctant to expound on either their reaction or his own experience. Franck appears to be drawn to situations of alienation: he once observed a group of schoolboys on the street for a while, noticed one who seemed not to 'fit in' with the others, and simply went

and stood between that boy and the rest of the group. Another time, he stood without communicating next to an alcoholic in the park, having filled his pockets with ants (the sensation of ants crawling over the body is a common symptom to alcoholics) and when the man ceased coming to the park after three days, Franck did too.

I feel I can mention in good conscience the artist's age, which is 21; the reason for bringing it up is not to patronise, or alternatively to overpraise, but to indicate a possible explanation for an odd lack of reaction on his part to his own work, which is highly introspective and self-provoking. In an older artist, it would be tempting to conclude that he wasn't really sure what he was doing, or that he was committing pointedly 'interesting' actions for no real purpose. In a young artist, even one with the impressive list of performances, exhibitions, and teaching assignments behind him that Dale Franck has, perhaps the best option is to assume that his art is somewhat in advance of his own understanding of it, that he has yet to grow into it to the point of being able to reinterpret to others.

Whatever the case is, all my semi-misgivings must be read as entirely tentative in light of the following facts. When it came to seeing Dale Franck's performance at Acme that evening, a series of mishaps happened (none of them my own fault and all of them everybody else's fault) including (a) I was late, and (b) the performance was half an hour earlier than I'd been instructed anyway (not my fault — Ed.) and the end result was I DIDN'T SEE IT. Dale Franck left the country pronto the next morning.

To make up for not seeing Dale Franck's work, I saw 'Natural Disasters' twice, and I wouldn't have minded seeing it twice more. It is partially improvised, and so the emphasis changed in the two performances I saw — I don't know how much more it may have altered by the end of the week. It's a fiendish task trying to fit into ordinary paragraphs a description of a piece where several things were happening at once in different parts of the performing space: relationships developing or disintegrating, objects moving collapsing, people disappearing through the ceiling and coming in through side doors, in a sort of interpenetrating disorder. There were 'characters' after a fashion — a girl in evening dress with hair sticking from her head like frizzled knitting needles whose vocabulary was an expressive collection of gurgles, moans, being-sick noises, and all of whose bones gave the impression of being either broken or unnaturally stiffened; a couple consisting of a very thin man who repeated everything he said five or six times and a rather sensible lady who repeatedly told him to get lost. There was someone dressed as a waiter who kept either refusing or pouring drinks; a woman in a flowered dress who went berserk at the end shrieking 'pumpkin pie' and 'apple crumble' and hurling herself to the floor; and there were others. There seemed to be a theme of developing hostility and ill-feeling and misunderstanding amongst everybody, and a particularly effective aspect of the work was the relationship — again not always a very cheerful one — with inanimate objects, which are here rendered largely animate. The programme notes put it well: '(The piece) contains three variations, each influenced by a memory by both people and objects of the preceding one'. Thus, a man goes to pour a drink, and water descends from the roof; a girl stands on a table, and she and the table are moved together across the floor in a lopsided and perilous parade; a man no sooner resolves an argument with a woman than he is lifted by unseen gadgetry clean off his feet and through the top of the building.

'Natural Disasters' contains three variations on eight performers' successive carryings of the 'narrative core', but

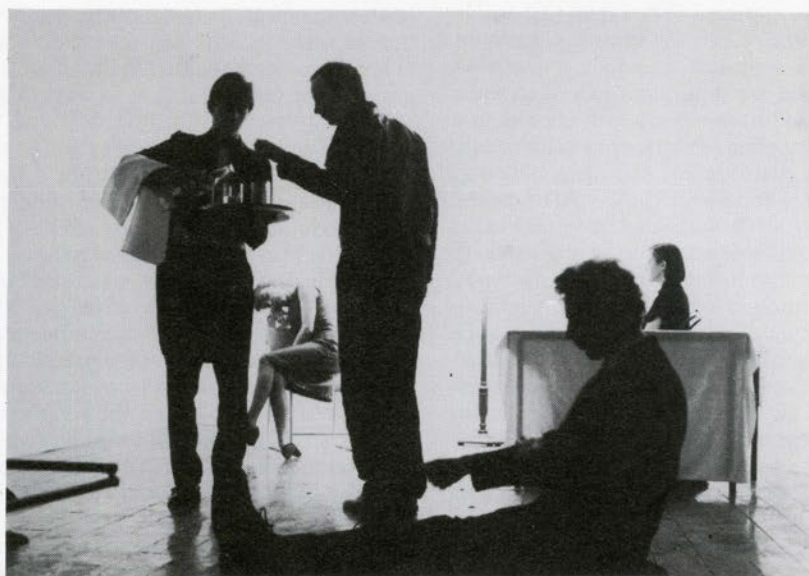
because everything overlapped, the beginnings and endings of variations were not abrupt or even very obvious. But there was what in real life would be called a dreadful inevitability about the way fragments of conversation, pieces of a situation, would occur again, again, and again. Each time you're fooled into thinking it's something different, but fundamentally it's the same claustrophobic impasse all over. When I say the inevitability is dreadful, I don't mean that it's artistically dreadful but that it rings so true in respect of being stuck in a fatiguing rut, playing out the same commonplaces until they seem positively bizarre, moving through situations in a condition of perpetual illness. One of the most common utterances was 'I feel sick' and one of the most common actions was falling over. Bits of gossip filtered through: 'She's far too distrustful', 'He's a bore', 'He's disgustingly common', and, practically the closing line, 'He likes living in a tower block, no-one bothers you ever — they're too busy with their squabbling.' Fights and mini-rows break out from time to time, insults fly about, people get fed up and threaten to leave. In the end, the only way they can leave is by fighting each other all the way to the exit.

If 'Natural Disasters' was a loosely contained, irregularly defined puddle, 'The Ninth Method' was a sharply-cut, finely-shaped solid object. Systematic in structure, transparently obvious in concept, marked off in sections that began just here and ended just there, it was nonetheless surprising, entertaining, and graceful. Peter Stickland said and did the same thing about eight or nine times; hung his coat on an invisible peg so that it fell down, shouted 'I'm home Bea! Bea?... are you there?', took out a little white-wrapped box, the action coinciding with a funny noise, took out a newspaper and flung it on the floor, answered a ringing phone, dialled the time. Each time he did these things he did them from a different part of the room, and each time he produced a small variation; the white gift got smaller and smaller, his exasperation at Bea's non-appearance got greater and greater, and the production as a whole got funnier and funnier. The performance was impeccable and verveful (a new word I've invented), Peter Stickland wore a nice suit, the timing was perfect, the electronics infallible, the floor looked highly interesting with ten newspapers and an unimaginable number of white boxes in decreasing sizes on it, and I hope to see something like this again soon.

Fiona Templeton in 'Thought/Death' makes her entry as a highly strung near-wreck with a great deal on her mind. For a good length of time she carries out very convincingly all the mannerisms and gestures of a distraught person: biting her nails, running her hands distractedly through her hair, snuffling, pacing about, bursting into laughter which she hastily and guiltily stifles, appears to forget what she's doing here, starts tapping the furniture, and eventually collects herself enough to face the audience squarely, and promptly exits. As soon as she leaves, a large crowd of punky individuals in black stand up sharply right in front of the audience, creating a wall so that no-one can see anything. After a while, they all sit right down again — and we find Fiona Templeton is again before us. She falls forward, they all stand up. They sit down — she coughs — they stand up again. We begin to have a stroboscopic view of her activities, shuttered by the black wall of people. Her vocabulary increases; she breathes heavily; she makes a strangling sound; she pretends to be driving a car; she jumps off the table and screams. Each action is cut off and separated from the others by the crowd shooting straight up in front of our vision; at the end, the crowd has its own moment of glory when it jumps up-down several times in succession, then leaves.

All three of these performances at Acme seemed to combine all the best of the various possible approaches to performance art. None of them was strictly speaking theatrical (in the sense of using the conventions of 'naturalism', that ism which is so often highly artificial anyway) and yet they had all the strengths which are commonly found in performance, which is, however remotely, theatre-derived. The performers were strong as performers, were able to assume and communicate personas, and were capable by themselves of sustaining audience attention. The mechanics of production were always adequate — you could hear people when they spoke, lights went on and off when they were supposed to, and there was definitely a sense of things being ordered and arranged rather than being left to unroll at their own pace. At the same time there was no superabundance of theatrical mannerisms — no stageyness, no excessive technology, no over-planned movements. Most impressive of all was the way this relative order was able to incorporate, in all cases, the kind of alternative reality, the wobbly truth as seen by the artist, for which the freedom of performance art is so ideally suited.

Andrea Hill



Keller

The Dangerous Water Which Lies In Between

Lynn MacRitchie talks to Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron about contradictions in Performance, and finds some in their latest work 'Headcase'



Shirley Cameron and Roland Miller have worked together in performance now for some ten years. I had known about them for ages, known of their long commitment to the area, and the high regard in which many fellow artists held them. I had seen however only glimpses of their work, some snatches at the Royal College of Art and Serpentine Gallery years ago, and nothing of their work done in the North of England where they now live, or of their many foreign tours — Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany (West), Holland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland and the USA. In conversation, they describe their work as their economic base, their means of earning a living. This has ensured a commitment to a regular work pattern over the years, adding up to many performance hours put in. We met and talked over lunch at the Oval House, where they recently presented a new piece, 'Headcase'. What follows is the transcript of a long, somewhat rambling discussion, only part of which I managed to record. When the tape began, we were already in mid flow.....

Lynn MacRitchie: There seem to be several different strands running through performance, for instance the sort of work you do, the 'democratic' approach, working in all sorts of places... but there's also a very strong 'style' element, in some work.

Roland Miller: Like Nice Style, Marc Chaimowicz etc?

LMcR: Yes, or the Pose Band etc... it's like there are different schools — the 'posing' school, and people like yourselves or like Keith and Marie used to be — the housing estate, shopping mall, take it to the people, approach...

RM: There's also another strand, which goes with both, but less with what we do. The kind of work by someone like Stuart Brisley, much more done and followed on the continent and in America — Body Art describes it. It seems to have very little possibility of being 'housing estate' or 'democratic' art. To most people it's totally alien. People think 'Why is that guy tying himself up, why is that girl cutting her arms?'...

Shirley Cameron: But it does have a certain popular appeal, like horror movies or endurance tests. There is a lot of physical work in performance which has a fascination for people — unless you're politically against the idea of people cutting themselves in public! Most people are rather interested when someone falls down in the street and an ambulance draws up — it's a basic human thing.

LMcR: But I imagine the kind of thought process behind these sorts of performance is rather different, though, don't you?

RM: Well, I've talked quite a lot about this when giving lectures.

In Nice last year there was a critic who specialised in writing about this school. He disagreed very strongly with what I was saying, which was that I could understand the value of this type of work if one lived in a physically repressive society. There, it was necessary to express the kind of pain that was being passed off as part of government and police action — i.e. in a totalitarian state. I said that I could fully understand why Peter Stanbrook and other Czech artists were expressing how it was to be in Czechoslovakia where torture and brutality have become part of the State's way of life. It was necessary to express this freshly so that people could understand the actual pain of it. I didn't feel that I could do that living in England, although I could understand someone in America doing it. I would express the equivalent in a mental or imaginative sense. That is what I see my performance as dealing with. Mental pain is more appropriate to this society.

LMcR: But there is an element of physical discomfort in your work — the use of the rope through your mouth, for instance —

RM: A certain element, but it's not critical.

LMcR: I seem to recall you working with your head bound, and using sticks rather handling things...

RM: Yes, I do use it, but I don't push it to the extent that they do. That's my reason for not doing it. The critic was very critical of me for not doing it — he said it was necessary for Gina Pane to lacerate herself because it expresses what it's like to live in France today, in the twentieth century.

LMcR: It's all right if she's doing it and not him!

RM: Yes, of course there's a voyeuristic element. There's been a vogue for 'behavioural' work in Canada — two English artists (Dirk Larsen and Tom Puckey) were taken from there to New York by a guy who treated them almost as caged specimens. I wouldn't want that to happen to any artist, to be watched for freakish behaviour... Of course, they call themselves 'behavioural art'....

LMcR: Playing with words... dangerous. There IS a dangerous element in watching anything. If you present yourself as a spectacle, then you allow people to bring whatever is in their heads to what you are doing... there is a danger in any work that isn't very specific, which performance often isn't, that it can be interpreted in all kinds of strange ways. For example, I was reading an article on the 'New Romantics', Steve Strange and his pals. There was a quote in that referring to the rise of fascism, essentially a spurious connection, playing with the 'Fiddling while Rome burns' theme. I think it's really dangerous to play around with that sort of thing and not really look at the issues involved.

INTERVIEW

SC: Yes, sensationalism — like swastikas on leather jackets... something that everyone knows there will be some reaction to. If you want to be a person everyone reacts to, then there's a cultural store of things you can take from ready made.

LMcR: You've both mentioned certain roles that you use. In the 'History of the World' piece (Performance Mag. Summer 1979) there is a male dominant role, and a 'victim' role. When you use those, is there any criticism of the role, or do you just 'show' it?

SC: In that particular piece, the whole question of such subject matter was played with in almost a farcical way. It was called 'Knots and Crosses, the History of Western civilisation'. The knots and crosses were the form, a game, history seen in formal terms. There was a tableau in this canteen which included various sorts of histories. One of them was Judy Chicago's history of women, there was a history of cooking by Angela Carter. I did a history of madness — there were lots of interesting dates when various groups of people were picked on!

RM: I took one about masturbation being the cause of all sorts of illnesses. I also did a 'funny' history of colonialism, things like when the French made the wearing of mackintoshes compulsory in Indo China — funny, but it was also semi serious, providing some background.

SC: I did have a couple of victim roles in the piece. The first was Jesus Christ as a life model with art students drawing him. That's a bit like being a performer, people can draw you and take photographs of you and there's nothing you can do about it! There was also a dancer, somewhere between a go go dancer and one of those ladies who revolve on jewel boxes, both powerless to do something except be a spectacle.

RM: I also played a kind of camp disc jockey. I would say "Now here's all the great B's of music history", then I'd put on a piece by Brahms... I kept emphasizing the nationalistic and militaristic qualities of the music. In the final section, I played a manic fascist mercenary in a cage. Some students played waiters, correcting the spectators table manners. Then we played punk numbers, so that the kids could have something to relate to, moving back into their world from our old fuddy duddy middle aged one. It went too far, they broke all the furniture!

We were talking earlier about how things had changed in these ten years. The justification for performance in the visual arts context seems pretty well accepted now. The position that performance can have in 20th century art, both in the way it embodies a lot of the ambitions of artists which can't be realised otherwise — circumventing the gallery system, preventing entrepreneurs, not having your work in one place which then becomes someone's investment, but also that performance is a way of expressing the concerns of groups of people, people with particular interests. The only true way of expressing the concerns of groups of people, is now seen as being through those very people, as performers, using their own experience. The origins of that lie very much with certain theatre groups like Gay Sweatshop, a type of theatre, which is quite recent. That is something which has added considerably to the possibilities of performance. I don't know if one finds this in other countries so much.

LMcR: What about the students that you teach? Does their attitude reinforce this view of performance?

RM: Students may have been inspired by a particular lecturer to be interested in performance. Most of them see it as an interesting alternative to painting and sculpture. I think it's only when they leave that the other concerns begin to come through. Students by and large are not concerned with wider issues than art college. I don't think they can be: they've got a hell of a lot to cope with. I was talking to some students in Belfast for example, about performance work, and I wasn't really surprised that very few of them were at all interested in any performance that reflected the situation in Northern Ireland. Why should they be? It's there, and they're in here — when they get out it's different, though. I think students who are concerned with it stop being students. In fact the most interesting student situation I've encountered was on a community arts course where I was an adjudicator. I found students there who were teaching guitar, or running advice sessions in a youth club as part of their course, but they had to become sort of performers to do it. They had to drop themselves in to the situation in which they were working. I saw some people

in Derry last year in little shelters doing imitations of the H block blanket protest, which I thought was extraordinary. It was very simple, but very striking. In one place they had built a little shelter out of breeze blocks. They said to me as I took a photograph — 'Don't show that we're wearing clothes underneath'. People were shouting slogans on either side. I saw more of them in Belfast. It was very good — for it wasn't used as a political procession or float — somehow something of the form had filtered through.

LMcR: The usual problem is in people not seeing how to be open to possibility, that a possibility of expression exists.

RM: Or feeling that they are not allowed to see that. You see, when we were talking earlier about the dangers of different interpretation — I think it's not dangerous if it's on an individual basis. I think it is dangerous if it becomes an authoritarian thing — if one parades something which can be used by authority figures to point out a meaning that is false. If individuals have a mistaken idea from it, that's acceptable — it means that you have shown the possibility of doubt. My real basic feeling is that I am anti-authoritarian, particularly in terms of education and culture. And I want other people to be able to go against the given in those fields. I think that's the function of my work.

LMcR: Roland has talked quite a lot about how he sees his work as having an anti authoritarian function. Your work seemed to me at least to be much more formal, perhaps metaphysical...

SC: I would think that I was different in that I don't see such an ambitious role for my work as Roland sees for his work. I went to art school for a long time, got into the way of thinking that I could do certain things. The idea of being an artist — that it's something I can do. I can't do anything else in a way. It often seems worthwhile to do that, to somehow try to do it well. I have ideas of what it might mean, in terms of my psychology, why I think of certain things, what they mean to me, and also therefore what they might mean to other people looking at them. That's the background... I try to use what I am interested in and what I am capable of doing, trying to fit it in with what's around in terms of environment. I take the environment that is offered to me, juggle with it and with my different aims, and try to come up with something that does something. I feel, I suppose, often very discontented with that, and try to extend it, to open out more possibilities for people, into more real life kind of things. And I think it works to some extent, and to some extent it doesn't.

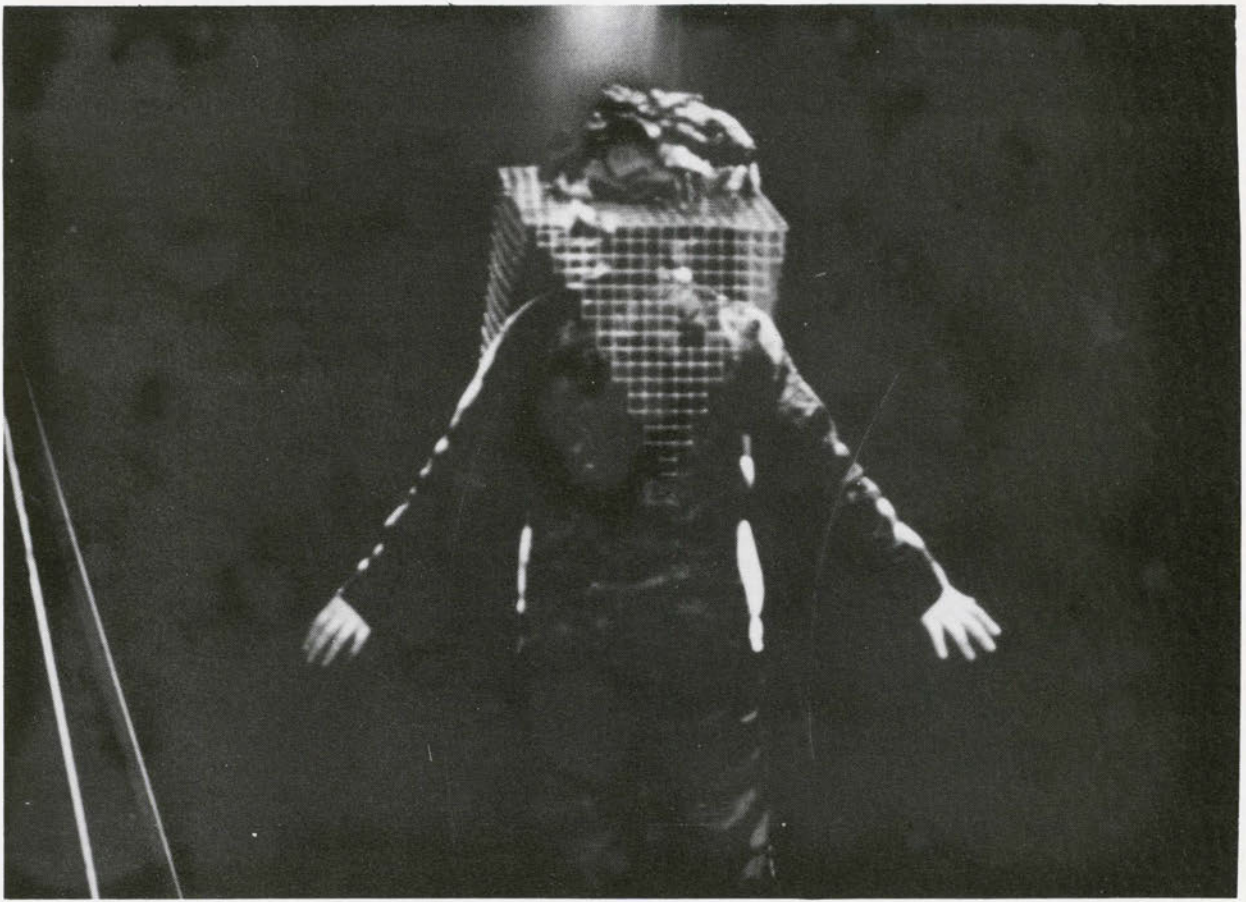
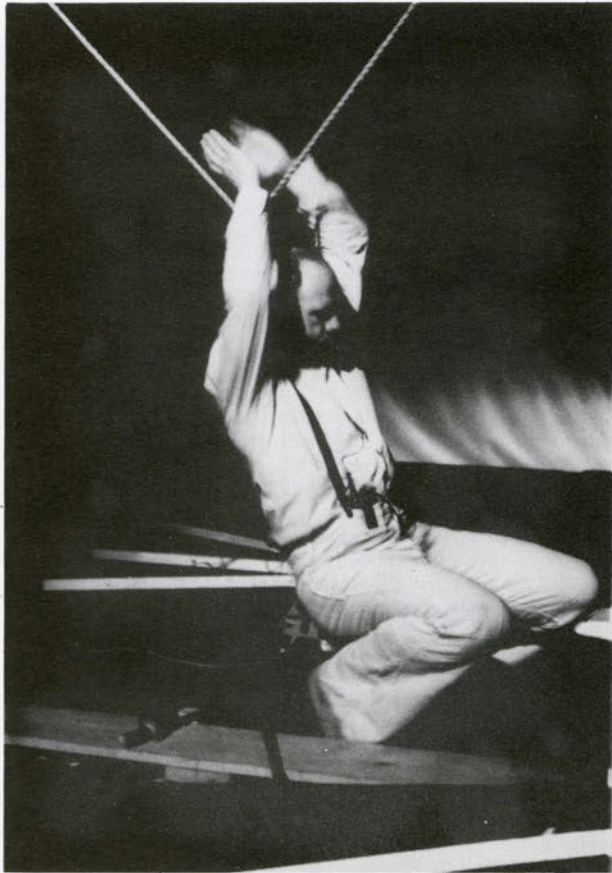
LMcR: The piece you did at the Bakehouse Gallery (Perf. Mag. No. 8) seemed to me quite different in that it was very vocal, your words very much to the point.

SC: Yes, I do speak! When I speak, I like to do it in quite a naturalistic kind of way, I don't project. I think I've come to the conclusion with performance that there are various things which work, like being very naturalistic, or the other extreme, very isolated, object-like. Both things are clearly possible, but perhaps what's most important is the dangerous water which lies in between. At either extreme, at least it's a clear statement — you're either standing on a chair saying 'look at me!' or you are talking to someone and they are talking to you. You have your story to tell and they have their story to tell, that's a human thing.

The Performance — 'Headcase' remembered.

Last Sunday when I went to Oval House to meet Shirley Cameron and Roland Miller, I found myself in a state not unfamiliar from many previous visits to such venues. Sometimes when the sun shines in through their dusty windows, all golden, mote-filled and warming, I find myself trying hard to believe that the soft centred revolution that such well founded and well meaning institutions somehow represent could come about; social change achieved just with enough performance art and good intentions — One day we'd wake up and it would be better.

Work like Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron's, for whom I was waiting that golden Sunday (carefully choosing a seat where I could keep watch on my beloved bicycle parked outside — paranoia dies hard, even when dreaming of Utopia), tends to lend itself to such thinking. Meeting them later, with their kindness, friendliness and beautiful daughters, added to my discomfort in having to admit that, try as I might, I hadn't quite succeeded in believing.



Joyce Agee

Not that their work is in any way airy fairy or romantic. Far from it. In watching it, and in talking with them, a fiercely held belief in individual liberty, in the freedom to perform, no matter what, came strikingly through. They work from a position of belief, a principled position. But the trouble with performance, is that its mode of operation, often if not always, is within the mode of the gaze. This can be denied, and individuals often try to counter it, but performance is often quite overwhelmingly a visual art, in that it exists as spectacle. Without a priority on language, spectators are left to believe their eyes — or not. In the ultimate terms of the spectacle, then, for me 'Headcase' was a failure.

But then, of course, like the rest of the world's spectators, I bear witness with my own point of view. For me, just as I imagine for the rest of any audience, watching is compounded of interest and expectation, expectation based on personal desire. So when I watch a performance in which two protagonists, one male, one female, go about very different actions, in very different ways, never interacting, or indeed paying each other the slightest bit of attention throughout the whole piece, I begin to see a metaphor. When the woman is silent, while the man holds forth throughout about important matters of work, liberty and the state of the nation, I am on familiar ground. Is it irony? Is it satire? Or does it just look like that to me, because I desperately want it to be satire, and not the representation of a status quo that I really fear it is? For Cameron and Miller, in later discussion, explained that although they work together it is as in parallel rather than in conjunction. In this piece, each was doing what they wanted, what they were most interested in exploring at the time.

An admirable principle. It was just that, watching, those areas of personal exploration shone out as being so different as to be incompatible. An end tableau attempted a reconciliation, to be achieved it seemed through the introduction of the everyday — the responsibilities of family life, love and pride in children. Watching 'Headcase' was difficult for me. It had so many of the things that always make me uncomfortable when watching performance art. The feeling that at least one of the performers really doesn't much enjoy being in the public gaze (Shirley Cameron in this case). The shaky moments and home made props which give a sense that the whole far-reaching effort is going to collapse at any moment in a welter of vulnerability and half-baked ideas. It also had many of the medium's great strengths.

For there is a sense of achievement when an effect comes off, an idea is shared. There is pleasure in comprehension, when an idea is not rammed down the throat, but rather understood in a process of shared attention between performer and spectator. Ideas such as Miller's continued use of speech despite his gagged mouth, or Cameron's mark making on the walls become gradually meaningful as the work unfolds. However, there seemed to be an uncomfortable edge of self obsession to Miller's images. His face, his body, his ideas, his words — there was no mistaking their authorship, nor the seeming desire for this to be acknowledged. Miller's performance seemed somehow to expect approval for its obvious commitment, its underlying concept of the struggle of the individual. Cameron's images were quite different. Seated within a pyramid constructed of wire mesh screens, a smaller pyramid balanced on her head, she remained a silent figure during the first section of the piece in which Miller delivered a genial lecture with slides about their home town of Grantham, the birthplace of Margaret Thatcher. His drift in this seemed to be that as Grantham had a long history of involvement with military endeavours and private enterprise, we had somehow got the Prime Minister we deserved, and that Thatcher is no more than a creature of her times, which is of course the case, as far as it goes.

It could of course be taken a great deal further. It is surely not the fault of the electorate or indeed the population of Grantham that the system of 'democracy' is a cynical sham where you lose if you take part just as much as if you don't — the North of England and Scotland did NOT vote for Thatcher.

After Miller's lecture, as he manically set about some metaphorical 'work', Cameron emerged from the pyramid and shook from her smaller pyramid headpiece a pile of autumn leaves. She began to climb a pipe up along the back wall, facing, then turning her back to the wall, stretching to make curved marks in chalk.

Her half black, half white costume, divided back and front, made her alternately stand out from and merge in with the background. As she climbed silently, Miller had gagged and bound himself to the framelike structure which took up the centre of the performance space, and, using bamboo poles with hooks or nails as his implements, had begun to pile up a scatter of polystyrene blocks into a heap. This was obviously awkward and uncomfortable to do, but polystyrene as we know is not heavy, and somehow the knowledge that the painfully hooked blocks weighted next to nothing undermined the effect of this sequence. As he piled 'bricks', then stuffed them into the spaces in the framework, he kept up a monologue about work, achievement, existing within limits. This was fairly painful both to watch and listen to. The rope which bound him ran through his mouth, covered in leather as it passed his teeth and tongue. At each end hung small weights like sand bags, jerking up and down as he moved. Cameron finished her climb, right up under the roof. She disappeared, then reappeared in the right hand pyramid, and repeated the sequence of events. The chalk marks this time were jagged and sharply broken off. I remembered how, as she had left the pyramid, its metal sections had fallen with a great clang to the floor, a very loud noise interrupting Miller's words. Somehow in retrospect this suggested an anger, a demand that her actual performance structure did not contain.

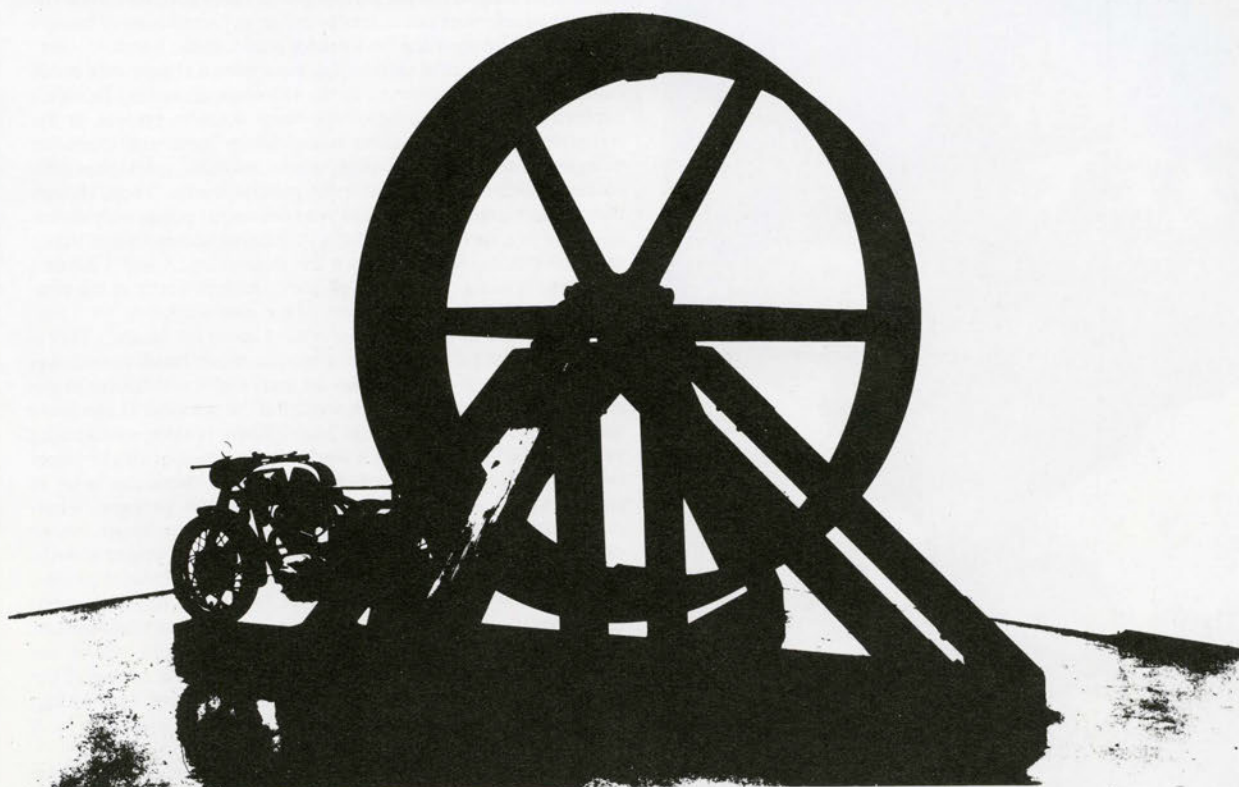
Miller meanwhile had disappeared behind the wall of his own making. Suddenly, it became a projection screen, the silent image a film of his own face seemingly screaming as autumn leaves showered down upon him. As the film ran, he began to punch out the polystyrene blocks, destroying his own image piece by piece. By now I was uncomfortable and impatient. I began to find the endless rhetoric irritating and boring. I had got the point, and anyway, it wasn't only his concern. Women too must toil and labour in an insane world, however silent and graceful they might be about their trials, speaking perhaps, as in this case, only in metaphor both silent and elusive.

Having pursued their separate visions throughout the piece, the final section brought Miller and Cameron together. Cameron re-entered from centre back, talking about a giant pyramid which she had expected to materialise over South London. She seemed to accept some sort of part in its non appearance. Moving to the front, she untied Miller from his bonds. Then spoke together in normal tones. The ringing of bicycle bells heralded the appearance of their two small daughters, riding calmly into the space. Cameron placed a daughter in each of the pyramids, rebuilding the structure around them. As they stood quietly in the coloured light, they made an affecting final image. But what did it mean? To my ever seeking eye, an image of the maintenance of an untenable status quo — the family as the final reconciliation of male and female through the responsibility of reproduction. To Cameron and Miller perhaps, a reintroduction and celebration of the fabric of their own life, bravely 'shown' as an essential part of the material of a democratic art.....

Perhaps some statements Cameron sent in a letter, concerned that I should not be confused about her work, explain a little. Her themes are duality; inside and outside, male and female, straight and curved, organic and inorganic, order and chaos. These are both formal and emotional themes, and the work has a strong symmetry. Working with Miller has allowed both him and herself to become personifications of this duality. Personal experience, hopes and fears, also come into play. The Oval performance utilised many of these themes. The pyramid, for example, were arranged symmetrically and as symbolic of male and female, their placing at stage, as were the marks on the wall. The symbol of the black and white costume, had been well understood by at least one other woman, a friend, who empathised with what she understood as an image of personal indecision. The final image was a deliberate effort to return from fantasy to some sort of normality. 'I don't say or imply that this is good or bad, just fact. I don't celebrate with a dance, as in the Bakehouse performance, but I show off my children. (I feel they are some sort of achievement on my part, to have brought up two such girls.) And they are a lot of what I am. They are difficult and marvellous. I am a bit embarrassed to show them, but also pleased'. **Lynn MacRitchie**

Chris Burden

Chris Burden comes to England at the end of March. Hugh Stoddart brings us up to date on his work involving risk, which has brought him some notoriety in the past.



Chris Burden

As with so much that has been innovatory in the visual arts in recent years, Chris Burden's work began in sculpture. While he was still a post-graduate student, his work was moving out of minimalism as he began to make sculpture which at first implied and later demanded human involvement, i.e. participatory action. A key piece was a large outdoor work consisting of a corridor made from black polythene sheet, supported at intervals of three feet, by steel pipes. These stood eleven feet high and ran for two hundred feet. '... the wind would hit one side of it and blow the plastic in, and this created some sort of vacuum that would suck in the plastic on the other side. So the whole thing was always pressed together. You couldn't see down it except on rare occasions. If you walked down it, it would engulf you, but if you started running, your body would make an air pocket that would push it open in front of you. It was like magic. The stuff would open in front of you and close behind you. That's when I realised that what I had made was not a piece of sculpture but something that had to be activated....'

The next step was to make sculpture which was very much smaller and centred on the participation — as, for example, sculpture which was for two people to get on and then try to achieve equilibrium. Then Burden sought ways to remove any ambiguity (people would tend to be content with viewing the structure as a metaphor for action rather than actually get involved). One way was to make objects or structures with nil aesthetic interest; another was to take over the action element by using his own body.

The most important piece of the latter kind to be undertaken while still at college was the Five Day Locker Piece (1971) Burden remained in one of the college lockers (2' x 2' x 3') for five days, with a full container of water in the locker above, and an empty container in the one below plus tubes to each. His body became a large piece of grit in the campus wheels as more and more of the senior staff, police, etc. etc. got to find out and debated what to do. This element of 'interposing' is a key one in much of Burden's work and I shall return to it.

Over the next few years, Burden did some twenty or so performances (no one work is repeated) and some of these earned him a notoriety that has persisted till now. Such notoriety it could be argued, would have been foreseeable by the artist who must therefore put up with it; nevertheless it can be irksome and more important, it can lead to a rather 'hyped' atmosphere of expectation whenever he is due to appear and to work. Nevertheless, although Burden grows tired of these earlier works being endlessly referred to (and he is then asked endlessly to refute allegations, of sensationalism etc.) the fact remains that there is evidence of a consistency of approach in all his work from then till now and it would be misleading to relegate them to history.

I imagine the *most* notorious piece was 'Shoot' (1971) when Burden had a friend take a shot at his arm with a rifle. Others include 'Transfixed' (1974) when he had himself literally crucified (with nails) to a Volkswagen 'beetle' and 'Doorway to Heaven' (1973) when he came close to electrocution by pushing bare live wires into his chest. Now, it is inevitable that when people consider these works, they focus on the element of self-injury and look for motives on the (I believe, quite mistaken) assumption that the elements of pain and injury are central to Burden's intentions. The artist, by the way, does not indicate any meanings, much less motivation in his own writings about his work. This is not, I think, through a studied 'laid back' style of non-communication nor a self-conscious generation of mystery. Rather, he simply does not have these things clear in his mind and ready for pat delivery. People often find this harder to accept than is the case, for instance, of abstract painting. Because bad performance is heavy on 'aims and intentions' it seems to infect the response to all.

Burden is, pretty obviously interested in risk. He is interested in the exertion of will. A rudimentary beginning for his work could be expressed as 'What would happen if...?' That he is not a kind of Evel Knievel of art, however, is due to many other factors which determine what his performance will be and how it will be presented. On the first point, Burden does seem to have the gift,



Show the Hole, Florence, Italy, March 4, 1980

Using black velvet curtains, I constructed a small private room in the entrance way of the theatre that was being used to present the American performances. I sat in this small room with my name above me in white letters on the wall. One at a time, I received each person from the audience waiting outside. As each person entered, I addressed them in Italian and asked them in a cordial manner to "Please sit down," then looking at them I said "In 1971 I did a performance in which I was shot in the arm." Finally, I would roll up my sleeve and as I pointed with my finger at the scar in my arm, I would say "The bullet went in here and came out there." Each spectator was alone with me and physically close to me. I received approximately 300 people, but because each person took about half a minute, some people had to wait in line up to three hours.

From High Performance 10, Los Angeles

intuition, persistence of thought (call it what you will) which marks good art in any medium — his performances *succeed*: they achieve a status that is succinct and often very powerful. They succeed as *images*. On the second point, there is an anti-dramatic method which rules out as totally unfair any accusation of being a showman. The shooting for instance could, in the hands of someone of more theatrical inclination, have been a climax with much building to it. In the event, as the videotape recording Burden's performance shows, people who were actually present in the room almost missed it. There was a bizarre 'incidental' character of an event which in subsequent weeks, months (years!) has mesmerised both art world and more general media. Thus, though there is an element of 'the man who does what others only dream of' there is a casualness in the way Burden orders things which must be noted. 'Seen only by a few passers by...' and 'I asked a few friends along....' are the phrases which re-occur in the non-committal descriptions he gives of his own work.

I would like to try to explain what I mean by 'image'. This is not the same as picture (the photographs which Burden publishes are usually rough — hewn like the text) and it is different to the rather plodding aura of 'documentation'. It is a kind of ideogram which exists in time as well as place. There is always something very specific about Burden's work: not in terms of aim or target but insofar as he deals each time with one particular issue of stress, risk, or structure. A sculptural approach, perhaps. Whatever — it is this particularity which generates the image. Image can exist largely in imagination — the impact, the weight of both, Shoot and Doorway to Heaven and also of the endurance pieces (22 days in White Light/White Heat 1975) — is unphotographable anyway. It is a concept and yet it is something that has been done. Burden's work reminds one of the imperatives of the Fluxus — group artists (Build a platform near the ceiling of the gallery. For the entire period of your one-man show, eat nothing, see nothing, say nothing, be invisible). Only Burden does it. A memory trace in *our* minds.

It follows from what I am saying that the elements described can be present where there is no risk, no injury nor even endurance. For example, in 1973, Burden did a piece called '747' — he fired several shots from a pistol at a Boeing 747. It was way out of range — there was no risk to him, or the plane and the piece required no physical effort whatever. And yet it has achieved that intense image: it is an awesome thing to do — I mean, would you? One man on a beach, arm upraised, firing the pistol, the huge aircraft passing overhead — the piece strikes more than one chord.

Mention has been made of 'endurance pieces'. The last of these, I believe, was Doomed in 1975. The artist's own description is as follows:

'My performance consisted of three elements: myself, an institutional wall clock, and a 5" x 8" sheet of plate glass. The sheet of glass was placed horizontally and leaned against the wall at a 45 degree angle: the clock was placed to the left of the glass at eye level. When the performance began, the clock was running at the correct time. I entered the room and reset the clock to twelve midnight. I crawled into the space between the glass and the wall, and lay on my back. I was prepared to lie in this position indefinitely, until one of the three elements was disturbed or altered. The responsibility for ending the piece rested with the museum staff, but they were unaware of this crucial aspect. The piece ended when Dennis O'Shea placed a container of water inside the space between the wall and the glass, 45 hours and 10 minutes after the start of the piece. I immediately got up and smashed the face of the clock with a hammer, recording the exact amount of time which had elapsed from **beginning to end.**'

He said subsequently, 'I never imagined that it would go on that long. I thought it would be a matter of hours after the end of what they considered the performance: maybe at ten or eleven o'clock at night *they'd impose the structure of this institution.*' This relates directly back to the Locker piece — Burden is interposing himself, but now going further by placing the key in the hand of someone else. It's like the rifle.

Burden has never abandoned his sculptural approach. But whereas in White Light/White Heat, the minimal sculptural *continued on page 18*



Video at Air: Two Views

London Video Arts have been organising weekly screenings at ACME for some time now, but their recent AIR show was the first time that the group had had the opportunity to stage something on a bigger scale. Not exactly an invitation to present the definitive overview of all that's best on the small screen in Britain (as if that would be wanted anyway), but at least the chance to consolidate on some of the advances within both the area of practice and the organisation itself which have been made in recent years. Unfortunately, as far as the art went it was a rather flat occasion.

A couple of years ago I was present at an LVA screening and saw a tape by Mick Hartney called 'Orange Free State'. It doesn't betray an obsession with video technology although it makes good use of it. It isn't monumentally didactic although it presents certain factual information. It isn't off-puttingly 'ideologically sound' although its message is passionate and strong. It is an extremely good work, one of the best I've seen. By contrast, Hartney's three monitor installation 'AM/PM' in this show was so nuancé it almost drowned in its own discretion.

Hartney explains it thus: 'starting with a visual device: a sailboat, flanked by two beaches (or the same beach perceived at different times) vainly aspires to a passage between them. A movement, continuous, but continuously frustrated by the relentless framing function of the camera/monitor screen... The passage ultimately *is* of the screen: a metaphoric elaboration of the scanning rhythm fundamental to the video process, or the the reading of a text.' The point is that although the mood of the piece is tranquil, one doesn't actually become seduced by it. The brain works overtime in the uneasy

quest for a narrative structure. 'The grasping of memory: the yearning for movement.' And that's about it. The theoretical and metaphorical insight which can be gained from a 15 minute gaze at the three screens has insufficient depth to extend much beyond what I (or Hartney) have already said. It was very pretty though.

It was once Charlie Hooker's aim to be able to devise a 'percussion walk' that four people, picked at random off the street, could satisfactorily perform with little or no rehearsal. In common with much of the rest of British systems music this phase of contrived simplicity has passed, and he has lately been exploring new avenues in collaboration with the pianist Vincent Brown, and using trained musicians as his walkers. In the past Hooker has been impressive, but occasions such as this make one ask to what extent it is his *method* that is doing the work.

Playing music which is read by walking over a score marked on the floor necessarily contains that seductive inter-disciplinary blend which can easily satisfy in itself, without ever having to consider how those relationships are being sustained within the piece. A bit of dance and a bit of music and a bit of structure and a bit of improvisation and a bit of spatial awareness are all very well, but what are they doing there, what are they making? Hooker and Brown's 'Air Piece' was presented and executed extremely well, but musically it unfortunately didn't get very far off the ground. It was like Mike Oldfield and Keith Jarrett bathing in honey. This is a pity because, as I've said, Hooker has done some good things, and his recent partnership with Brown seems likely, on the whole, to be more stimulating than otherwise. The one enlivening aspect of the performance was its justification for inclusion in the show in the first place: its use of video. Four

monitors, one at each corner of the performing space, were used as lights. No pictures, just blank or full of static, bright or dim, according to the mood of the piece.

Margaret Warwick used the same blacked-out space as Charlie Hooker for her installation 'A Private View?' Visual imagery was minimal since most of each monitor screen was obscured with card. What little could be made out was details of an interior. The soundtrack was similarly disjointed, isolated and disoriented. Phrases such as 'She stood with her back to the door waiting for the right moment to enter.' Here we had an overload of rational pessimism working on the level of both individual and social relationships. In the event though, the 'Fine Art' connotations of the title tended to triumph in the work over the wider problems it was attempting to address. It's all right to ask questions like Where am I? and Where do I go from here?, but they should be asked with rather more of a view to feeling for an answer. This was more modern art mood music a la Hartney, but with slightly less colour.

Isolation was also Marty St James' theme, although he approached it from a rather more patriotic angle. St James sat inside a triangular enclosure facing a camera which was linked to three monitors, one facing out from each side. He was dressed like a pre-war dance band crooner in white tie and tails and with brilliantined hair. The soundtrack began with the noise of a heavy duty winch in operation while St James, starting with head lowered and deadpan expression, slowly raised his head and broke into a broad grin. The winching stopped and St James, erect and beaming, began to mime to a song of the era. This played three times. During the first two St James slowly raised his hands from out of camera towards his face. During the third they reached his face and became first a loud hailer, then a pair of binoculars, then the surface of the sea, or the horizon, below which he slowly sank. The music stopped, and he winched himself back to the starting position.

Dear old Blighty, The sun never sets on the British Empire, Britannia rules the waves,... the piece was called 'Silent Water', and even if it was somewhat lacking in depth, it did have the advantage of a little humour. If there's one thing we British have the backbone to stand it's someone taking a light-hearted look at our national foibles. (Heaven forfend that one should be so forthright as to suggest that they might be shortcomings).

Which brings me back to the earlier points about Hartney's work. One of the strengths of video is its ability to be used as a means of direct communication, and as an instrument of access to wider areas opened up by a problem. All of these pieces were either self-centred or self-contained, and it is unfortunate that the show as a whole could not sustain the kind of critical edge that has surfaced on Thursday evenings LVA Shows at ACME from time to time. It was very pretty though.

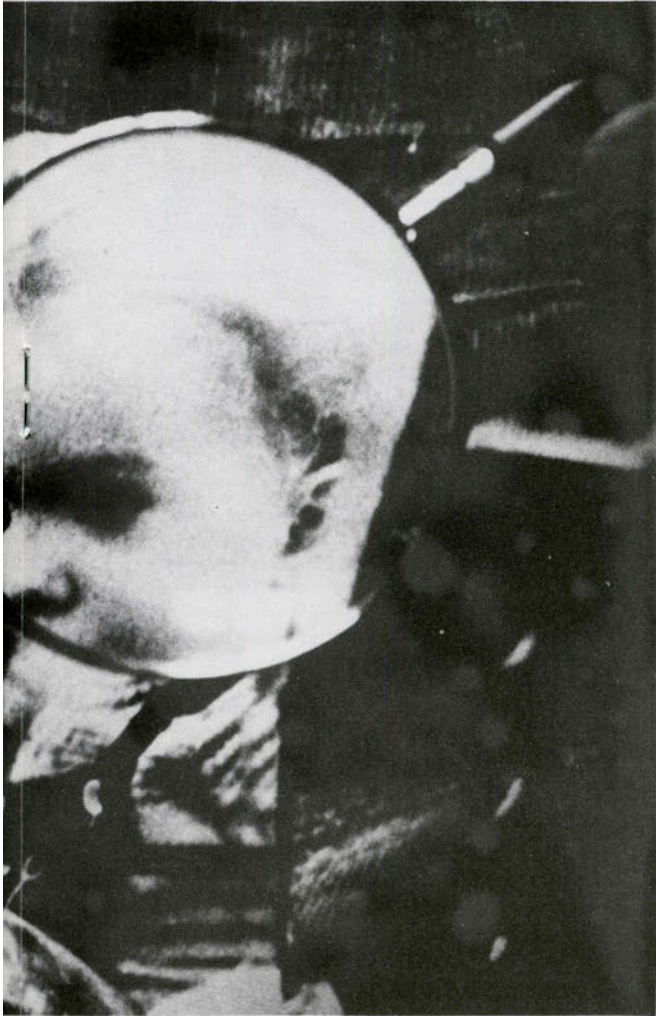
Mike Archer

I agree generally with the critique offered by Archer of the video show. I disagree, however, with what appears to be his premise implied in his last paragraph which has determined an approach to the work and has led him to dismiss some of the concerns of the artists. The disparity between Archer and myself is most pronounced in our readings (or lack of them) in the work of Hartney and Warwick, which I feel constituted the most interesting part of the show. I will discuss these two later.



An image on a monitor is read in a particular way depending on specific codes and conventions. The video artist either uses those conventions or tries to undermine them; not ignore them. Dov Eylath did not seem to be aware of them. The work was intended to function as a religious purging, an exercise to free himself from Jewish culture and religion — I think. The subject matter, already questionable and highly emotive, demanded a specific pre-knowledge of a particular cultural/political situation. The performance was merely a physical extension of this exorcism with Eylath ripping off his shirt, brandishing a hidden knife, heating it up over burning candles and slashing a plastic sheet, with similar video imagery in the background. For me, any analysis in terms of his intentions was denied. More importantly, any meanings that were produced did not extend beyond culturally dominant readings — male sexuality, male aggression: a work that can be easily located within a specific genre of performance art. An area that I categorise as reactionary rather than the so-called radical politic it tries to propagate. The work functioning through an unleashing of authority and with it oppression.

Richard Layzell's performance was slightly more subdued but still encountered the power relations that operate when 'man' confronts technology. The work evolved within a familiar model, Layzell 'reacting with or against' images on two video monitors showing objects and text, with related sounds.



Margaret Warwick

Layzell's supposedly spontaneous actions, semi-structured because they had to 'relate' to the monitors seemed laboured in relation to the images which had been carefully produced and edited. The technology dominated: the monitors likened to monoliths situated on plinths. Layzell's actions, e.g. caressing an apple, rolling it on the floor or playing cards with a sliced loaf did little to dislodge or alter our perceptions about... and produced little other than a short burst of laughter. The work included all the rubric essential for a serious investigation of meaning construction but fell hopelessly into the old bourgeois camp that perpetuates the notion that it is the 'individual who makes meaning'. It is 'I', the spectator who 'make' the work. As Layzell said to me at the end, you interpret it the way you want, yours is one of many interpretations, I could only agree.

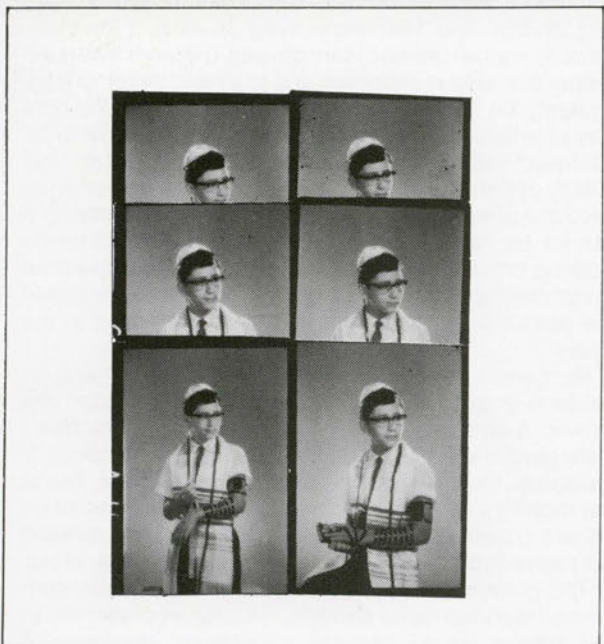
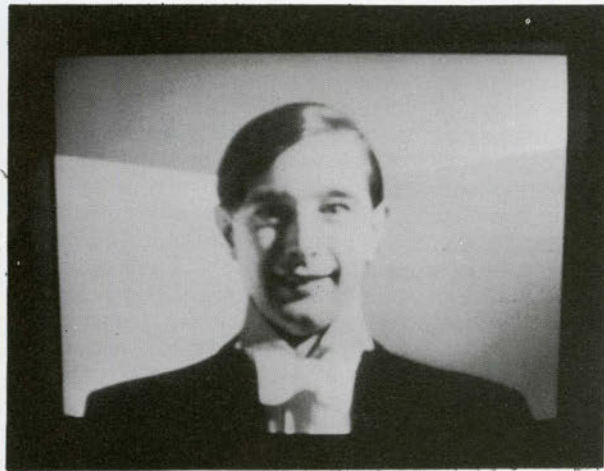
By way of comparison to the performances, the installations by Margaret Warwick and Mick Hartney were more formulated and precise in the presentation of their ideas through the production process. Archer feels that 'one of the strengths of video is its ability to be used as a means of direct communication', both these artists deliberately avoided this approach. Recently, I was at an LVA show which presented a retrospective of Hartney's tapes and it was obvious that much of his earlier work used the above dictum as its basic premise. For political or ideological reasons, however, Hartney has rejected narrative structures in favour of work that is neither

authoritative nor didactic.

What Hartney presented was a sense of 'wholeness' (whatever this is), a form and a content that is inseparable, a quality considerably lacking in several of the other artist's work. The soundtrack was as succinct as the visual imagery but was impaired slightly by the sound of traffic outside. Unfortunately, this tended, at times, to situate emphasis on the visual, a common occurrence with this area of work. The spectator was confronted with a record of time passing, a static camera shot of a beach. Hartney was not presenting us with a philosophical thesis on time, but with something that questioned how we measure change, how we order/locate our perceptions. The grey-scale image which covered a third of two of the screens (in this case with a blue hue) which is normally used to set the tonal range on television, functioned in this situation almost like a clock, the different tonal temperatures on the screens allowing the viewer to refer to different times of the day. The use of the terms 'AM', and 'and/or' and 'PM' respectively on each of the three screens was an unnecessary device. The work was not a simple exercise in dialectics and to situate the emphasis squarely on time and change (which is in fact the only way to articulate the experience of the work — not to be confused with the experience itself) diminishes the quality of the work. It is easy to dismiss this area of work because of its coldness and perhaps more so because it cannot be discussed in humanistic terms. Hartney's working process, however, has brought him to this area of concern and in doing so, raises problems in terms of the production of the work and its relationships to the viewer.

Margaret Warwick's piece 'A Private View?' with its subjective autobiographical connotations engaged the viewer in another problematic situation. Three monitors were placed in a triangle facing outwards in the centre of the space. On the wall opposite each was a mirror. Two of the monitors were masked with black paper with a small square cut out at different places. The third was masked with semi-transparent material also with a square cut out.

The polemic produced within the work, notably concerned with women's struggle, was never presented to the viewer as a coherent transparent message. A common view amongst many feminist artists and critics is that the social relations involved in women's oppression are so complex that a presentation of the 'problem' through narrative structures, or even representation, is impossible and to do so merely reproduces those social relations. From the work it is apparent that Warwick is aware of the functions of representation and how they operate against women. The masked screens do not 'conceal' images of women in advertisements or pin-up magazines but instead a domestic situation. For me the 'masks' do not function on a level of concealing/concealment as this implies an object consciously hidden but, rather, on an unconscious level: one of repression. The text and its repeated cycle, in conjunction with the camera movement, which is accentuated when looking through each of the small squares, involves the viewer in continual meaning production. The task is not to collect all the 'fragments' necessary to discover the completed story, the source or object of that repression, as it is not possible to have all the 'fragments' of the 'problem' available. Instead, as the voice implies, there is a need for clarity through continual reassessment. Images such as the magnifying glass scrutinising photographs and



text (when viewed through the cut out squares) operate to re-establish this view. The mirrors encourage movement to different viewpoints because of their positions but, because of the size of the space, their more positive function in terms of their relationship to the 'screen image' and psychoanalysis is denied.

To conclude there was the piece by Peter Anderson whose work I have previously seen and found quite interesting. His installation piece 'From Perch To Perch' I heard described as being the most unpretentious piece in the show, I am inclined to think the opposite. Ironically, this work: a bird in a cage on a stand in front of a video monitor on a stand, also showing a bird in a cage was seen by more people than any other work as it was displayed in the window. As the work was there for most of the AIR show I am inclined to think it was used as a gimmick to entice the public into the gallery.

In relation to this and some of the other work in the exhibition it seems to me a number of questions are raised concerning the criteria used by the selection panel. Both Mike Archer and myself have a number of reservations about the show, perhaps this would suggest further comment.

Keith Frake

object (the shelf crossing the corner of the gallery) was one element subjected to a fundamental change of meaning by the information that the artist was concealed on top of it, by the end of 1975 Burden began to make objects which increasingly did not require his physical presence in the same way. The elements that are characteristic of his work (the narrow focus, the exertion of will, the interposition of the innocent who dares) are present but tend to be found in private activity which precedes and is then encompassed in the resulting work, as an object usually of kinetic properties.

Burden's B-Car was not well received by some. Dismissed as an ego-trip and also perhaps regarded as a rather tame development from the intensity (danger, frisson, blah blah) of before. His aim was to make a one-passenger automobile which would travel at 100 mph at 100 mpg. He built it at home, shipped it to Amsterdam and arrived there (like Dylan with his rock band) to the consternation of the fans, with a large crate. He re-assembled the car over four days as 'his performance'. He reached only 50mph but achieved 150 mpg.

The retreat from his own aura continued when late in 1975, he responded to an invitation to appear at an art college. On arrival, he found such an atmosphere of hostility and melodrama that he decided to exhibit photographs of his work and then he occupied the space, with desk and typewriter and phone and did nothing but type letters and work on written material — he slept there at night, chatted to people during the day and 'conducted my own affairs' as if I were in my own studio.' Other and related pieces were presented elsewhere in 1976.

In 1977 for the Documenta exhibition, Burden presented 'CBTV'. It is interesting to compare at this point Burden's two approaches to the medium of television and contrast them with the involvement of many other artists. Firstly, he has purchased air-time for very brief 'commercial'-length works — a notable one was 'POEM FOR L.A.' Secondly, with CBTV he built his own primitive TV, emulating Baird's experiment of 1915 but using modern 'bits and pieces' and ad hoc elements — an electric drill, for example, and a detachable camera lens gaffer-taped into position. So there it was, a weird Heath Robinson structure achieving, at the simplest level, the great magic of the era — a visual image transmitted from A to B, instantaneously. On one level it is a mildly witty swipe at Modern technology and on another it relates directly to the earlier works: one by one, Burden is subjecting all the major elements in the society that surrounds him to a stubbornly insistent and inspired kind of re-appraisal.

I conclude by bringing us up to date. The Big Wheel was first shown in 1979 and consists of a very large steel flywheel mounted on a structure which allows it to be set in motion by direct friction drive (like an old fashioned bike dynamo) off the rear wheel of the motorcycle. By running up the bike to high speed, the flywheel reaches quite frightening speed and hurtles round a few inches from the rider's head. When he has long since departed, the motorbike disengaged, the flywheel continues to turn for hours. As a metaphor, it is a piece rich in more than one meaning. Also it was simply a fine sculpture. But finally it is a nice description of Burden's way of working over the preceding decade or, more precisely, the way his work functions, as enduring image. The 'energy' generated by many of his performances (which often last only a very short time) is still around. It is image-making by hand-crank, and of a particularly potent kind.

I am indebted to Robert Horvitz for his article in Art Forum 1976 and to Robin White's interview (View Magazine 1978).

Hugh Stoddart

Chris Burden is at the Ikon, Birmingham, (see listings) and will be teaching at Hull College of Art. For details contact Ikon.

Marty St James

Dov Eviath

A Sense of Belgium

'Strange Bedfellows' was a title at one point mooted for the ICA's 'international season of boundary-breakers'. 'Theatre not Plays' as the enterprise has eventually been called may not be as arresting a headline but it no doubt indicates the belief of the season's organiser, Tim Albery, that there is more of a link between the diverse elements in his programming than might at first appear. I doubt whether this is true. Certainly there were no 'plays' to be seen in the traditional use of the word, but the term 'performance', favoured by this journal, would seem better to embrace what has been seen so far than the historically loaded term 'theatre'.

The season highlighted the difficulties encountered in approaching much contemporary performance, both as audience and critic. Mike Figgis's 'Redheugh', considered in detail elsewhere by Andrea Hill, would have surely received much more respectable and extensive critical attention had it been prompted as an 'opera' and written about by those who usually cover serious music in the press. Similarly did the doddering dance critics of the national dailies really show themselves to have the critical faculty, the vocabulary even, to write intelligently about the Dutch Termiek or the Belgian Radeis?

It was the foreign groups, many presented in association with the sprawling London Mime Festival which ran simultaneously with the earlier part of the season, that caused the most excitement. Here, was an alternative world theatre season with an innovation, experimentation and daring on display that put to shame much of the parochial work to be seen elsewhere in the metropolis. Funding no doubt has much to do with it. Is it imaginable that Britain could export a touring cabaret of more than two dozen performers of the sophistication of Parisiana or give a creator as much money to produce just one work as the Dutch funding bodies give to Bart Stuyf? Even Mike Figgis, leaving the People Show with a modest writers bursary from the ACGB, had to go to Amsterdam to have the resulting work produced with a project grant from the Mickery.

It was Bart Stuyf's Movement Group who opened the season with a performance that was dance based in technique but a peopled kinetic sculpture in effect. This was a very pure piece of visual theatre. The opening minutes were some of the most striking, beautiful and simple I have seen for many a moon. A vast grey wall, curving forwards at its base and filling the ICA theatre, moved slowly towards the audience, grazing walls and ceiling, advancing through the lights in a shadowed dazzle. As the encounter inched ever closer the wall turned on its own axis, revealed the six grey-leotarded performers propelling it, and, splitting into six segments, began interacting with the performers. That central image of the wall, at first seemingly solid, then fragmenting, reassembling in part and finally coming together as a single unit and receding on the darkening stage with a wave-like fluidity, emphasised the dominant abstraction of the piece.

Save for very occasionally, the performers themselves maintained an anonymity as impenetrable as that of the segments themselves and so strong was the opening sequence that any temptation to see the performance in anything other than purely visual terms was easily banished. No interlocking narrative here. This was a neat, clean austere and precise production, the wall a highly sophisticated piece of engineering moving silently to an accompaniment of taped music that seemed so integral to the action as to make it difficult to believe that it was added as an afterthought.

Film noir seems to be becoming the dominant influence on performance in the '80s and where the Oval leads the rest of the world, or the Netherlands at least, appears to follow. The tacky pink Art Deco setting that was Termiek Mimetheater's 'Rainbow Cafeteria' was redolent with fringe familiarity. A solitary customer repeatedly ordered a milkshake only to be served with coffee until, after what seemed an eternity of tedium, some

bizarre though none too accomplished aerobatics, led to a reprise of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' on the accompanying soundtrack. There was nothing to grasp the wandering mind save lighting of an incompetence so unmitigated as to have been surely deliberate.

It was from Belgium of all most unlikely places, that the real surprises and delights came. Three shows, no less, one with a cast of twenty-five, were whisked in and out of the ICA as Radeis and Parisiana joined together for a triple bill. Radeis were for me the undoubted highlight of the season, a group with no obvious parallel in Britain, droll clowns at heart but visual artists, innovators and comedians of a high order. 'You're in for a treat,' a friend had promised and he was not wrong. The over-detailed



naturalism of the beginning of 'Because of Illness' should have forewarned of what was to come. There was a pink ivy-covered chalet, the sound of birdsong, a postman with the morning mail, a hand groping around the door to take in the milk. And then the chalet broke into three sections, propelled (echoes of Bart Stuyf) by three invisible performers. They moved, turned and re-grouped and presented us with the interior of the chalet. Chock-a-block with gags, festooned with surreal images and fused with a continuous recorded collage soundtrack and euro-gibberish dialogue, the seventy-five minute piece had me agog throughout.

The sections of the set continually rearranged themselves and at one point took on a recalcitrant life of their own refusing to follow the performers inside who kicked and fumbled with increasing desperation until a commanding loudspeaker eventually restored order. Some of what we saw was an homage to the comedy of silent movies, some was pure corn, all of it was inspired and much reminiscent in its deadpan tinkering with reality, of that other impish Belgian surrealist René Magritte.

This was not an easy act to follow so, wisely, Radeis followed it themselves with 'Je ne savais pas que l'Angleterre était si belle', counter posed with the English — 'I didn't know that the continent was so beautiful'. Waiting amid piles of postbags about to embark on a holiday, the four performers, taking their belongings from their suitcases, constructed their own paradise island. The meticulously detailed depiction of waiting at the railway station was all but naturalistic. And then came the amazing transformation, all done with the simplest of means. A couple of tarpaulins over stage and postbags became sea and sand and we were into an exploration and exploitation of the rich iconography and culture of desert islands, a veritable cornucopia of garlands and steel guitars, seagulls and buried treasure, perspiration and Libby's pineapple slices. The two shows were together a brace of wild delights.

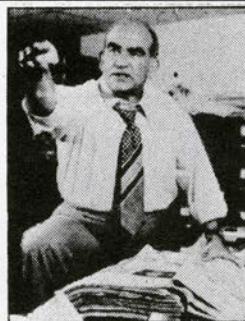
And so to Erik de Volder and Parisiana, an itinerant band of musicians and performers who processed into the ICA in seemingly endless numbers, striving throughout the show that followed, against all the odds it must be said, to create a cabaret atmosphere. Waiters and cigarette girls did the rounds; a tea-vendor dressed entirely in teabags, like some participator in an ancient fertility rite, distributed refreshment; audience members were invited to be photographed with a bisexually dressed model — an offer your correspondent failed to take up; the notorious

Why is There No Durex in The Sweeny?



Stuart Hood's new book *On Television* (Pluto Press £2.95) guides the reader through familiar territory, territory well charted by the Glasgow University Media Group, recent BFI monographs and Screen. Familiarity though is in no sense a condemnation. What Hood has written is a *discussion* book, a working guide to how television reproduces itself in its own image. The style is fluid and accessible. Concepts such as 'gate-keeping' and 'agenda-setting' are explained in their bureaucratic context and not as the back-room machinations of some unwieldy meritocracy. This examination of process, the day to day decisions taken at departmental level, is the strength of the book. This rests on the fact that Hood himself until the mid-sixties was a BBC career man. He is particularly persuasive on how BBC people are selected. How candidates are vetted by a system which places the niceties of social background (class) above individual ability. This and other topics were given a public airing at the ICA at the end of January. On the panel along with Hood were Brian Wenham head of BBC2, Peter Fiddick and David Elstein, who chaired the discussion.

On the whole the evening was a predictable and extremely polite affair. Hood in fact showed an enormous amount of deference towards the 'professional' views of Wenham and Fiddick. Balance seemed to hover in the air as ubiquitously as it does at Kensington House. Fiddick accepted Hood's critique, but ruefully asked, as if no one else had thought of it, what is to be done? As if asking the question would get him out of trouble. The central thesis of the book is that the BBC deliberately closes down the exchange of ideas in the pursuit of some oblique, idealistic notion of 'impartiality'. Familiar words. In fact so familiar that they pass through the ears of BBC personnel like some ghostly presence. Wenham insisted that it was a question of 'regulation' and not a case of the BBC wanting to 'stifle debate'. Suzy Hayman speaking from the back asked: why is there no Durex in the Sweeney? Aha nice one Suzy. Why are there no pyjamas either? retorted Wenham. Hayman like others after her wanted to know why the BBC was so sensitive on important moral and ethical areas. After defending *Man Alive's* record on these grounds Wenham declared



that on the whole the 'public' (a concept that was barely tested by Hood during the discussion) is usually offended by their mention or inclusion in a programme. What is the BBC doing about sexist and racist jokes and comments in the light of Hugh Carleton Greene's anti-racist editorial stance before the war, which is still — as Wenham pointed out — an implicit part of BBC policy? Wenham hedged his bets and once more directed the question around to audience response and the dry deserts of statistics. The only way the BBC can decide what is offensive or not he said, is by the number of complaints it gets. Most complaints are about bad language and not about the racist or sexist content of programmes. Talking numbers is always the utilitarian's way of talking 'facts'.

Chris Dunkley from the Financial Times asked Stuart Hood if there would be more or less government control over television? Hood was quite pessimistic. As he says in the book, even with Channel Four the same constraints will apply; the class makeup of the 'good and the great' on the IBA will still be the same, this is where the real control — the gate-keeping — lies. Peter Fiddick was more sanguine and believed that things must get better because they couldn't get worse. It was a wonder David Elstein didn't ask for a show of hands.

If Hood sounded a bit beleaguered Wenham appeared totally in control, at turns flip and blase, as if the discussion were a tedious ritual that he and his colleagues had to go through every so often in order to show those snapping media watchdogs how accountable and nice the Beeb actually is. Wenham was able to deflect Hood's arguments by either claiming ignorance — sorry old chap it's not my department — or referring the problem

back to the 'public'. The generality of Hood's critique: the repressive professionalism of the BBC, just couldn't get past Wenham's wall of empirical commonsense and fairplay.

On Television is an invaluable little book. It is basically a primer for debriefing TV; a grammar of television language. It will be helpful to those who want an introduction to the problems.

Hood notes that the State, since the early days of the telegraph, has consistently and systematically tried to 'close-down' the available means of communication. The realisation that knowledge is power is frightening to those who defend 'professionalism'. Opening up the airways would not simply involve a pre-revolutionary restructuring of television along community lines but a radical power-shift in society itself — common ownership of television and radio. A socialist radio in a capitalist society is a limited educative tool, bound as it is by operating outside any concrete political consensus. A State run socialist radio free from professionalism is even more improbable conditioned by the fact that no State radio — capitalist or socialist — has ever disseminated ideas in complete contradistinction to those of the State — the problem is a false one. As Hood says, we shouldn't fall into bad faith. Working within mainstream broadcasting, as well as outside it, testing the limits of 'professionalism', is just as important now as when Hans Magnus Enzenberger outlined its possibilities in 1964 in *Constituents of a Theory of the Media*.

John Roberts



Sense of Belgium continued

Parisiana Macaroni Game was played to its disgusting conclusion; a chanteuse sung; officials called a halt for a while to investigate the flames on stage — a disarming intrusion of what was taken by many to be reality; Erik de Volder conducted and whistled; the audience, punch drunk and merry, joined in patriotic songs during the air-raid and, until the final strange and explosive

moments, the band played imperturbably on. Despite all the efforts the performance seemed misplaced amidst the new brutality that is the ICA, the decadence a little too artificial, but the enterprise was a logistical triumph with some bizarrely memorable moments which large golden letters proclaimed to be, lest we had any doubts, KUNST.

Luke Dixon

Music & Movement London Musicians Collective

This event was one of a series of mini festivals that have been held at the London Musicians Collective during the last year. There have been a Guitar festival, a Percussion festival during the last few months and future plans include a Women's Improvising festival and collaborations with the London Film-makers Co-op and London Video Arts. Recently the London Musicians Collective had shown signs of losing its way with some members leaving and a generally low level of involvement being displayed by the rest. I see this as being due to the general lack of excitement in Improvised music, little recognition of good work and basic lack of effort by some performers in relation to the quality of their work, their organisation of their own performances, publicity and a lack of concern for the enjoyment and comfort of the audience. The LMC is one of the few places where performers can do what they like, when they like and how they like, and there have been several events that couldn't have happened anywhere else, but so far the space hasn't been consistently used to its full capabilities. However, there has been a lot of encouraging signs of positive change. Work has started on improving the space itself and providing better facilities for performers and audience, but such work is expensive and money is short. There have been a significant number of well organised, well attended evenings of varied and interesting work, and all the signs point to this being a continuing upward trend. Of course the problems facing the Collective have also to be seen in the broader cultural context of the visual arts, poetry, performance art, theatre and music. Although this country has produced a consistently high number of highly motivated, skillful and original improvising musicians, they receive very little understanding, support or financial reward, compared with their contemporaries in other cultural and artistic activities. The media favours more conventional work, or the work of musicians from abroad. The few performers who have been given attention have been the ones who have taken a narrow path of development and pursued it single mindedly, doing similar things over and over again, and built a reputation on it. Their performers who have been involved in constant change and development and performances embracing 'other' performance disciplines have been insultingly ignored.

Over the last couple of decades we have seen the growth of the political statement made through their art by artists and performers. The most significant and far reaching, in terms of altering peoples basic attitudes and assumptions has been feminist. Improvising musicians have, in general, remained puzzlingly silent. Puz-

zingly, because the idea of free collective improvisation would seem to contain inherent ideas of equality, liberation, de-conditioning, self-determination, freedom and so on.

Surprisingly, in view of this, many improvising musicians have had a very low level of political awareness and many have conservative lifestyles based on traditional values. A lot need to explore and examine the implications of their own work. Some do.

The movement and Music Festival presented the work of three duos, Duck Baker and Mary Cerny, Mike Cooper and Joanna Pyne, and Sinan Savaskan and Alexandra Graham, and the performance Still Mauve,

way Rose expresses her ideas or her solution 'the answer seems to be to seek out women musicians' (there are several other permutations that could confront the stereotype... women dancing to the music of women would in Rose's terms just give male audiences more to ogle, the solution to that would be more simply accomplished by removing men from the audience and performing to women only, which has been done) the points she makes cannot be dismissed, and the whole question needs to be examined and confronted by the performers.

Still Mauve's performances on both nights were the things I enjoyed most, and this group is clearly improving and attempt-



with Lol Coxhill as a general sitter inner and introducer. Two of the duos had an interesting similarity in that both Duck Baker and Mike Cooper are both originally known for their work as guitarists on the folk circuit, and have both become involved in improvisation with dancers.

Mary Cerny and Duck Baker opened the festival, neither of whom I had seen before, and whose work I enjoyed. Duck played acoustically and there was a good level of interaction between the two performers.

During Mike Cooper and Joanna Pyne's performance, Joanna read out the critique of 'the increase in number of male improvising musicians working with female improvising dancers' by Rose English in the 16th issue of *New Dance*, which she obviously took exception to, incorrectly inferring that the article meant that the work of individual women dancers was being relegated to the level of 'avant-garde go-go' and 'providing a bit of visual material to boost their (male) playing'. As I understood it, Rose did not imply a negative judgement of the work of individual women dancers but that she personally does 'not think that a woman dancer can escape from her role as "spectacle" for male pleasure when she is working with male musicians, however well-meaning and aesthetically honourable their intentions might be'. Whether or not I like the

ting to break down the roles of musician/dancer, for it is the acceptance of the restrictions of role that can inhibit the development of art work and the development of the individual. By moving towards the expression of ideas through performance and an increasingly open-ended attitude to the nature of their interactions this group is making genuine progress. The 'musicians' are (still rather self consciously) are starting to move into 'non musical' areas through the use of props (which on one level, is all a musical instrument is) and are developing through trial and error a new vocabulary for themselves. Their performances used a variety of devices, such as leaves, costumes and a vacuum cleaner as bridges from music-dance to performers. Unlike the performers of *I Giselle*, who took stereotype and role and deconstructed them for examination and overhaul, Still Mauve seem to be trying to create a context in which role is not a primary determining factor. With six performers they are able to present quite a dense spectacle and this allows individuals to do things that would not be strong enough in solo performance — for example sitting still — that can contribute significantly to the overall effect. They made good use of the space, including the ceiling. The group have been working together regularly in private workshops and have performed very little

PERFORMED MUSIC

as a group together but they have some performances lined up and are definitely worth going to see. Even in the 24 hour space between their performances at the collective they had significantly changed and developed ideas. **Paul Burwell**

Robert Calvert/ Krankshaft Cabaret. Theatre Space, London.

Apart from two solo albums on United Artists (now deleted) the reputation of rock poet Robert Calvert hines on his involvement with sci-fi rockers Hawkwind. This fact was indeed unforgettable despite Calvert's return to solo work. All manner of Hawkwind regalia emblazoned the intimate surroundings of Theatrespace as Calvert cavorted his way through a mind-boggling array of poems, songs and sketches. It is always slightly easier to forgive mishaps on the first performance: technical preparations reached completion only a matter of minutes before Calvert took the stage, audio and visual aids continued to malfunction throughout the proceedings but the overall failure of his material was a different matter altogether. 'Krankshaft Cabaret' was, for the most part, a work of such woeful inaccuracy that not even its author could be bothered to cover up its glaring shortfalls.

A multi-media event may well be the

chance for Calvert to tout himself as a Jack of all trades but the opening night of this run (a chance for a repeat viewing later in the week was squeezed out by lack of time) showed him to be master of only a few. The brief poetic forays constituted the highlights of the evening. A poignant ode to the currently ailing bastion of the British empire The Times newspaper was both witty and perceptive but palled within the context of the whole where an awesome display of anti-heroics and self-parody was very much the order of the day. Calvert's main attribute as a performer has always been his power to contextualise (he had brought a much needed sense of literary dynamics and structure to Hawkwind's fantasy trips) a quality that was barely evident during this performance. His past reputation makes it difficult to simply write off 'Krankshaft Cabaret' as the work of a bumbling eccentric. Calvert's attempt at creating a varied base straddling disparate elements of performance through economic means (a tape recorder, slide projector and two supporting actors) must warrant some praise. Perhaps in more sympathetic circumstances the formula might have paid off but even a bare-faced trial run demands a central focus to elevate it from the merely episodic. Even the improvisational humour failed to add any coherence to this sorry mess. Calvert seemed content to throw his credibility out of the window, resorting to cheap, crass clichés more often expected from the endless stream of stand-up Comics to raise the level of humour beyond that of stifled

sniggers. Perhaps he was getting bored too. At one point (I kid you not) Calvert broke off, murmuring 'What am I on about? Who cares!' Enough said!

David Ilich

Event Group. Cabaret Futura, London.

A combination of being constantly hammered by publicity about Richard Strange and Cabaret Futura and being asked to write about the Event Group finally dragged me down among the peacock people one Monday night in the Latin Quartier, one of those down at heel clubs which play host for a week to the decadent craze. After three consecutive Guardian articles and even a slot on Nationwide the venture by Richard Strange was just about peaking, so it would be interesting to see how the Event group, with a 'conventional' performance background would make out. As it happened, rather well. For the mixture of mannequins, trend-spotters and journalists, anything anyone did was to be closely examined, as if it were of deepest significance for the future. The Event Group used a long recycled disco loop as the aural background for their performance, which is basically concerned with pseudo-science and longevity. Half the performance takes the form of revelations using first a suitcase-bearing character from a German expressionist movie and secondly a type of

Music Listings

London Musicians Collective Info 01 722 0456

March 6. Voice Evening. Phil Hinton Maggie Nichols Sally Potter Bob Cobbing Terry Day and Others. March 26-27 Anne Bean Stephen Cripps Paul Burwell. — Performance Cabaret. When I saw this group do their last combined effort in November '80, together with Max Eastley and Sylvia Hallet, I thought it was one of the most energetic and fresh bits of performance phenomena I had seen for a long time. I may have been slightly overcome with relief, as it was the first time I had visited the Collective and I expected to have to sit on a line of hard chairs watching musicians in army sweaters with steel-rimmed glasses and close-cropped hair take themselves rather seriously. Of course I knew the work of these performers (see feature on Steve Cripps Performance No. 6) but this did not lessen the expectancy. There was much humour in the evening, albeit deadpan, and a warm and cheerful turnout (I recognised a few locals from the area I didn't expect to see) The attitude of the evening was neatly summed up by Burwell when he told the audience that some of the pieces were serious and some were not. They were still trying to work out which was which... Partly because of the expectancy of the audience, the humour came in a dry, unobvious way.



The playing of Red Flag, following a recital for squashed balloon, would on the face of it seem a source for cheap laughs, but the uncertainty of the seriousness of the venture left an ambiguity that must always be kicking around a good performance. Steve Cripps 'played the drums' by letting off affixed detonators, Paul Burwell set his suit of newspapers alight, and Anne Bean seemed unfortunately a victim of her surrounding environmental circumstances but carried it through with a resonant Valkrie-like determination (aurally as well as physically) Finally, there was a running 'endurance performance' producing enough sweat to convince the onlooker of at least some token seriousness to satisfy the spirit of the place. **Rob La Frenais.**

March 28th The European Theatre of War — Anti Nuclear Cabaret.

Musica-ICA Info 930 0493

March 8 Clive Bell (Flute) Silvia Hallet (trumpet, violin) Sarah Hopkins (cello). Plus BIG Birmingham Improvising Group. March 15 AMM III Eddie Prevost (Drums) Keith Rowe (guitar) John Tilbury (piano) Hugh Davis (electronics) March 22 Matin Altana (bass) Terry Day (percussion) George Khan (saxophone) John Russell (Guitar) March 29 Poly Bradford (violin) Eugene Cahdbourne (guitar) (Both from New York) Roger Turner (percussion) Carlos Zingaro (violin) Richard Coldman (guitar) Gerd Glassner (drums) Martin Mayes (french horn) Thorsten Muller

revolving cocktail cabinet containing a statesman-like figure in dress uniform who consumes test-tube after test tube of *elixir*. The scene then slowly evolves into what amounted to a gothic discotheque, members of the Event Group idiot-dancing in a hypnotic manner. Not exactly much to get your teeth into really, a kind of arts laboratory musak, but what was interesting was the way the young romantics-about-town seemed to find it frightfully thrilling. Which brings us on to the slightly extravagant claims made by Mr Richard Strange on the radio the preceding weekend. He regards the cabaret venture as being an antidote to places like the ICA (which he mentioned in this context) but not just another rock cliché. He would like to see an overall attitude to performance music and art in one space, as already happens in other countries, here in England, whose inhabitants invented the spirit, if not the actual meaning of the term 'purist'.

But good luck Mr Strange, and one can only hope he can stand the odd hot draught emanating from the particular kitchen he has chosen to loiter in. In their last performance at the Cabaret, while choosing to demonstrate what they described as an 'electric cricket bat' the Event Group also elected to tear up a large photo of Richard Strange, an act which did not go down too well with the assembled blitzies. Strange, who decides who goes on and who does not, was reported to have laconically spat 'I've got your number, don't call me — I'll call you.'

Rob la Frenais

Mike Figgis/ Redheugh. ICA, London.

Mike Figgis' *Redheugh*, his first work since leaving the People Show, was beautiful but patchy, like a Rembrandt with some of the varnish worn away. Consisting mainly of moments, with gaps — sometimes overly empty gaps — in between, it was a bit too easy to drift in and out of. Visually though, it couldn't have been better, and I haven't put an Old Master in the first sentence for no reason; dim lighting, reddish brown or amber atmosphere, objects and people emerging or disappearing into the shadows, an occasional selective flood-lighting, all conspired to make the work something of a masterpiece in evocation. The first twenty minutes or so were superbly modulated — the tiny lamp that cast the first light on the landscape, the red lit rectangle in which silhouettes of entering figures appeared before the figures themselves could be seen, the mere suggestion of the chaos on stage — a mound of earth embedding wireless, toy airplanes, a sprawled figure.

The theme of the performance was an airman's crash in a field and his taking refuge in an English farmhouse; this was only a theme in the loosest of senses; there

Incubus/Old Testament Floorshow Battersea Arts, London.

I don't know what to say about Incubus exactly, except that they sure didn't live up to their reputation. My powers of faith in a logical universe were severely stressed by the supposition that this was a famous and highly-regarded theatre company, written about in serious books and reviews, here before my eyes doing a slapstick, rock musical variation on the Bible and the End of the World, with jokes about Saul being an actor's agent and the shepherd David being a song and dance man, Delilah being a sexy broad who plays the saxophone and shows a lot of leg, Job being a character in a quiz show whose prize for answering some farcical questions was not a washing machine but a plague of boils (that last sounds quite funny now, come to think of it). It was hard not to develop a certain fondness for Paddy Fletcher as Wally, a boozy old wreck who alienates everyone

and is rewarded by a Vision of a multiple god who is (cringe) beset with shyness and an inferiority complex and lives in a juke-box, but Fletcher's appeal is disconnected with all this whimsy and appears to stem from a feverish performing style. The appeal of the other performers, which did undoubtedly affect most members of the audience except myself, was based on an I'm-a-silly-idiot goofiness, or alternatively, as in the case of the woman, an I'm-a-tough-cookie-with-plenty-of-sense-who-tells-everybody-off-the-whole-time whackiness.

I guess when people talk about pandering to audience preconceptions this is the sort of thing they mean; signposting the piece 'funny' by having jokes about religion in it, labelling it zany by putting the actors in crazee dress; adding lots of naughty language to show that it's fringe theatre where there's no respect for convention. Well, it did go down a treat at Battersea and I won't complain on that score. The only thing that really bugged me was the lack of artistry; it was put together in such a ham-fisted way. Having seen the sensitivity of handling in

continued overpage



was a good deal of toing and froing in time — from then to the present, narrative discontinuity, repetition of events from film to actuality on stage, and so forth. Some things worked better than others. I am always made a bit nervous by nostalgic music coming out of those rounded, half-moon shaped radios, and am rendered positively jittery — in the wake of Dennis Potter's 'Pennies from Heaven' which did it so well — of actors miming to old records producing voices that couldn't possibly be theirs: (that is, a female actor miming to a hearty male voice, or whatever). That whole pre, during and post-war mood as brought out in music seems less and less like an original idea. What made this piece,

which was rather slowly paced and intricate, were the peaks where several ends would suddenly tie up, the course of events would freeze for a moment, and then everything would start to unravel again. A woman would be laughing in the film, and suddenly you'd notice that she was laughing silently on stage too; the airman, the old man and the woman would all be carrying on their activities and you'd become slowly aware that each of them was in the film, silently spotlighted around the perimeters of the floor. There were some wierd passages in the earthmound: people rising from it, falling into it, digging in it with their hands.

Andrea Hill

'Redheugh', it was torment unspeakable to see scenes jammed together any old way in the 'End of the World Show'; one minute a rock number, lights fade, the next minute they're sitting at a table, someone comes on, someone goes off; events string along without any particular shape or modulation. It wasn't a work of art, it wasn't funny, it wasn't a showcase for virtuosic talent, it didn't make a point and the music was forgettable, so what was the big idea?

Andrea Hill

Lucky Strike/ Hrant Arianek. Everyman, Liverpool.

Whilst the ICA's 'Theatre Not Plays' season was engaging the attentions of London audiences something was happening in Liverpool that may come to be regarded as a landmark in experimental theatre in Britain. After only a few months, Ken Campbell's programme at the Everyman has proved to be the most idiosyncratic in the country but after *The Warp* and *Disco Queen* it showed itself to also be the most inspired.

Hrant Arianek is not, I guess, a name that is familiar to many readers of this magazine. Yet. Born in 1950 in Khartoum he moved to Canada in the late sixties and it was there in 1972 that his first play, 'Tantrums', was produced at Theatre Passe Muraille. His most recent work 'Lucky Strike' was premiered at the Factory Theatre Lab in 1979 and has since been staged at the Kennedy Centre in Washington and New York's Café La Mama. In February Campbell invited Arianek to direct a production of 'Lucky Strike' at the Everyman. The resultant performance was so outside any experience of theatre — even avant garde theatre — in Britain as to awake an unparalleled excitement and enthusiasm.

I have called it a 'play' because that is how the Everyman chose to promote it, but the word is in no way adequate to describe these seventy minutes of visual theatre of a kind utterly foreign to British audiences. Scarcely a word is spoken by the performers and when they are they betray both a conceptual flaw in the writing and a technical flaw in the performing that were the only areas of weakness in a startling evening.

The piece builds around a single recurrent image of a fugitive gangster, his pursuer and his 'moll'. Eddie the gangster, played by Peter Postlethwaite, repeatedly burst into a warehouse, designed by Billy Meall, to escape from Charlie — the beatific Neil Cunningham, underexploited in a small role but as arresting as ever, his wild hair haloed in a blaze of white light — searching for a last cigarette, draining a bottle of whisky, arguing with his girl Lolly (the unlikely Margox) and escaping from one B movie only to find himself en-

trapped in another.

Elaborate effects of sound and light were executed in such a way that the technicians themselves became as prominent and integral a part of the performance as the three protagonists, controlling the sound tape of heavy rock and period film music from inside the auditorium, running around to check sound levels. The whole event is causing quite a rumpus in Merseyside as it challenges the preconceptions of Liverpool's theatre-going punters. Some, baffled or annoyed, walk out in protest, others return night after night as if to verify that this can really be happening.

Luke Dixon

Jez Welsh/ Image Action. Ikon, Birmingham.

Jez Welsh is a solo performance artist who used to work with Keith James and Marie Leahy. Like them, he is concerned with markings, performance as a human inscription on the environment, and it was appropriate that he should be working in a place with a name like Ikon. His installation, within which I and a smattering of Birmingham public filed for an evening, consisted of an assemblage of 'evidence' of a crime, possibly of the murder or sacrifice of 'Mr X'. A suitcase, containing some 'evidence' and clearly marked as such was opened and a series of alphabetical cards is hung along a clothes line. Laid on the floor was a sheet with the crudely etched outline of a crucified person. Yet more evidence, this time radio-dated, corny connections with the Turin Shroud. The artist, his face coated with red and blue paint, surrounded the outline with lit candles. Slides flashing on a wall of glossy female fashion images cut up in a vorticism manner. Signals, triggers, the word 'semiology' is being forced down your throat.

'Trouble with all this it's all a series of traps,' he said and went on to list them. 'The situation concerns a murder'. He qualified — 'theoretically'. Using a tape measure he reiterated the forensic nature of the piece in investigating the demise of Mr X. Weighing up evidence, balancing the facts, (physically as well as mentally — his performance took on the form of a tight-rope walker) following coloured ribbons (leads?) and opening boxes 'this' and 'that'. (As we were in ATV land, it was almost a temptation to shout 'take the money') The whole thing began to take on the feel of an intensively chaotic audiovisual display for a lecture in born-again semantics. And in the middle of it all lay the unfortunate 'Mr X'. Was Mr X responsible for all the symbols and power structures represented in the acres of triangularly slashed lip-gloss? The road signs, the system of signals, the triggers that motivate the inhabitants of a media-ravaged landscape?

Jez Welsh himself, in the supporting

text, poses similar questions: 'Does he exist or has he ever existed?' 'Is it possible to determine his identity?' 'Does it matter?' Questions are asked, and asked, and asked. Jez Welsh attempts to indicate the direction of our answers in his actions, eventually by taking the place of the late 'X' by lying down in the burnt imprint. A red device emits bleeps, like a life support machine in a bad movie. When the bleep becomes continuous, there is a death. Culture dies, the artist is sacrificed, and the public are left with a static installation.

The artist has become integrated with the work and has become a reflection, a memory of its making. The art-maker is the murderer/murdered, Mr X. In creating and extinguishing the live nature of the installation the artist, X, has simply committed the capital crime of Alice in Wonderland — 'Killing Time'. But do we still sacrifice artists?

Rob La Frenais

Matchbox Purveyors/ Stationary. Oval House, London.

Watching an Ian Hinchcliffe show for the first time is like an under age drinker attempting a pint of draught Guinness — both need an acquired taste to enjoy their respective dark qualities. Transforming the upstairs theatre at Oval House into a disused railway station, Matchbox Purveyors presented a show of wry nostalgia.

Smashing down the door, two figures break in to hunt for souvenirs and to talk about the way things used to be. Looking like a cross between Mike and Bernie Winters and the Kray twins, Ian Hinchcliffe and Bradford Watson pore over old editions of the Sun from the defunct newstand and discover that the waiting room fruit machine conceals a Jack-in-the-Box boxing glove. Soon, the previous inhabitants, an old tramp (Patti Bee) and the station porter (Lol Coxhill) appear and with magical humour, piano and saxophones revive another ghost, the theme song from the sixties television programme '6.5 Special'. Cameos and interludes follow. The tramp is abducted to the lavatory, the porter reopens his cafeteria and hamburgers spiced with mustard from his footbath are proffered. Beeching is denounced and Jimmy Saville reviled. Flash Gordon puts in a lame appearance and the Last Post is sounded over the station cabbage patch. The under age drinker might have found the show disjointed and incomprehensible but this seasoned palette found it fascinating to watch people operate in a theatre situation and owe nothing to any notion of playing a part.

Naturalistic drama takes one wall of the side of a room and allows an audience to look in. Ian Hinchcliffe removes the top of his skull and invites you to jump in there with him.

Phil Hyde

Three Women/ High Heels. York & Albany, London.

One of the most endearing aspects of 'High Heels', the show devised and performed by Three Women and seen this year at the Cockpit's mime festival, is the way in which it charts their growth and development as performers over the short space of time since their formation. But more than that it also stands as a testament to the changing definition of mime.

Three Women are Peta Lily, Claudia Prielzel and Tessa Schneideman. The title piece in their current show is the first one they ever devised. It is a demonstration of three womens' attitudes towards dressing up to go out; a simple sketch and although the performance is tight and controlled and

tradition of Marceau and followers. However important the presentation is, what they have to say comes first. Peta comments 'You are continually forced to be clean and economical; if an image is hollow we cut it out'. It is because they are all so visually orientated that they find movement the ideal medium. Tessa is a painter, teaching part-time at Chelsea School of Art, and likens the stage to the rectangle of a canvas, seeing movement across the stage as the drawing of lines. But her interest in painting is translated to the stage in another way: 'Ask any woma', another of their newer pieces and more serious than 'Business Men', was partly inspired by a Magritte painting. Using raincoats, stockings over their heads and a life-size puppet devised by Claudia, they enact a rape and the consequences. The atmosphere they create illustrates the way in which they believe mime can be more comprehensible at an emotional level, and more powerful than dialogue.

Vaughan and Carmines. Riverside, London.

Those gleeful songsters David Vaughan and the Rev. Al Carmines entertained British audiences for the first time with a recent brief season at Riverside Studios. Liz Stolls joined the London dance fraternity for the first night...

Have you heard the one about the rather portly clergyman and the silver-haired archivist? Well this one had to be seen to be believed.

At Riverside Studios last month the two gentlemen referred to put on a week of performances that had little to do with religion but quite a lot to do with modern history. David Vaughan, dance writer and official archivist with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in New York; and the Rev Al Carmines, minister of the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, paid tribute to the songwriters of the 1920's, 30's and 40's with 'A Winter Garland of Songs Old and New'.

It was a warm and highly entertaining performance, which saw the Rev. Carmines giving a powerful interpretation of Bessie Smith's 1933 number 'Gimme a Pig-foot', and David Vaughan, dressed in short toga and sandals, giving a delightful rendition of 'Every Little Movement' — from the 1910 French Vaudeville 'Madame Sherry', which included in this case a series of mimetic 'body language' poses which said more about Mr Vaughan's sense of fun than Delsarte may have envisaged.

The idea of these, some may have supposed 'serious-minded', gentlemen putting together a music hall act may at first seem somewhat incongruous, but in New York their annual concert is a tradition unbroken for 10 years. In fact, so great has the fame of this performance spread that Riverside director, David Gothard, invited them to bring it to London sight unseen.

David Vaughan is probably best known in Britain as the author of 'Frederick Ashton and his Ballets' and as co-editor with Mary Clarke of the 'Encyclopedia of Dance & Ballet'. As well as being Cunningham's archivist, he is currently working on a study of Cunningham's choreography and is a member of the Dance Panel of the United States National Endowment for the Arts. He was born in London and studied ballet before emigrating to the United States to study at the School of American Ballet. He has worked as a dancer, actor, singer and choreographer in London and on Broadway.

The Rev. Carmines, an ebullient Virginian, has been minister and director of the Judson Memorial Church since 1961. I say 'director' because Judson is rather an extraordinary church. An art gallery was founded there in 1955 and showed paintings and happenings by Jim Dine, Claus Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg (Cunningham's former artistic adviser)



Tessa Schneideman

the technique is never imposed on the audience, there is a touch of the mime exercise. They feel it took them an age to dispense with the mental pre-occupation in technique but in fact ideas soon took over and they gave up worrying.

Their newest offering, 'Business Men', illustrates how they have let loose and extended their own definitions of mime. To minimal electronic music, especially composed by friend Roy Nicolson, they march into an office already inhabited by an inflatable secretary. They are wearing suits several times too large with the jackets over their heads and ties up around their noses. Moving with the music they enact a 'normal' day at the office including a dance with a dozen telephone receivers they happen to have in their pockets. Here is proof that they can enslave other arts, dance, words, music and even chaos under the pretext of mime.

As a group they are not interested in the creation of illusion for illusion's sake in the

Claudia has trained in puppetry and finds that discipline closely related to mime, they are both 'the abstraction of the human being', and every mask used in their performances she sees as essentially being a type of puppet. Their imagination with very ordinary props, especially clothes, is surely one of their strongest assets. In 'Gordon and Vivian', a portrayal of domestic unbliss, they use conventional masks, but there is no character in them, if this was meant to be the point then it could have been better illustrated with featureless masks. Contrastingly, in 'The Agatha Syndrome' they wear women's hats over their faces and leap beyond the expected utilising the hats as ready made character masks. In 'Mouth Trap' they show the cycle of women turning from sexual gratification during and after pregnancy towards food and weight problems, they use giant fat lips as masks. Now, here is the use of imagination — dispensing with eyes and noses altogether.

Paul Lyons

REVIEWS

and Allan Kaprow before their work was taken seriously by the commercial institutions. The Judson Poet's Theatre was established in the 1960's and the Judson Dance Theatre — probably the best-known of the three — was the cradle of post-Cunningham avant-garde dance in America in the 60's, spawning such talent as Yvonne Rainer, Twyla Tharp, Lucinda Childs, and Steve Paxton.

Carmines, who not surprisingly received one of the first achievement awards from New York State for his work, is also a composer, playwright, and performer. He has written several off-Broadway productions and is a talented pianist and singer.

'Al and I have loved singing together for years and I once suggested that we do a concert,' said David Vaughan. 'We have now been putting on the Judson Memorial Concert for ten years. We have learned about 250 songs over the years and this London season is a collection of our favourites.'

Their opening number 'Moonstruck' (1909) set the tone for the evening as Mr Vaughan, singing the immortal lyric 'I'm such a silly when the moon comes out... skipping, hopping, never never stopping', danced a somewhat crazed version of a chorus-girl routine, dressed in corduroy suit and jazz shoes.

With immaculate diction, the two songsters — with the Rev. Carmines on keyboard — performed such rare jewels as 'Anona', recorded by Miss Florrie Forde in 1903 with music and lyrics by Vivian Grey (Miss Mabel McKinley). But the show-stopper was Mr Vaughan's enthusiastic and highly imaginative performance of 'I Love a Piano' (Irving Berlin 1915) which included an extemporaneous 'courtship' of the grand piano.

One of the latest ministries of the Judson Church involves running a van through the New York streets to make contact with prostitutes, inviting them aboard to have cocoa and biscuits and talk about their problems. Al Carmines sang a moving version of one of his own songs 'A Woman Needs Approval Now and Then' which was inspired by this work. Most of his songs seem inspired by the people he meets as a priest, and they are a strange mixture of romanticism and loud freneticism.

Liz Stolls



Crystal Theatre Old Red Lion London

If you have ever had intercourse with a xylophone, enjoyed post-coital cigarettes in a vertical bed, attempted suicide when the pangs of unrequited love become unbearable only to be foiled by a talking photo of the object of your affections, or if you have ever reached consummation with a deity then this is not the one for you. You have seen it all before. If, however, like me you lead a slightly more sheltered life you will thrill to this production as it 'deals briskly with the following important themes: True Love, Grotesque Social Errors, Unspeakable Cruelty, Comic Violence, Vague Sexual Possibilities (STEAM).'

'Men of Stone', seen briefly at the Old Red Lion and a place or two elsewhere is the Crystals first theatre offering since their collaboration with Jeremy Sandford at the ICA. In the interim the lads have toured Europe in the guise of the rock band Shoes for Industry. Claimed to be 'a com-

prehensive substitute for real life' the show is that unique and heady mix of startling visual imagery and freewheeling verbal cadenzas for which this most elusive of groups has gained their now near legendary status.

And there is plenty of real acting too, occasioned by dialogue such as this: MAN IN EDWARDIAN DINNER SUIT: God, how I desire you! LADY WITH HEAD POKING THROUGH TABLE TOP: Patience my stallion. MAN IN EDWARDIAN DINNER SUIT: How can you be so cruel? I must 'know' you in the industrial sense... my regiment leaves at dawn and I've never had a woman!

And amidst all the torrid passion and percussive erogenous zones Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy make appearances as at the climax does God himself, emerging with all the grandeur of an animated Sistine Chapel ceiling from a blazing packing case. All this, an exploding telephone, and new scenes added nightly. There can be no mistaking the signs, the legend has indeed returned from out of the West.

Luke Dixon

Minatures Art Gallery

What is this fascination with things that are the 'wrong' size? Oldenberg's fag-end sofas; Satie's pocket opera; 10 inch records; 6 inch records; Tom Thumb; Marty Feldman's eyes....Lilliput & Brodinguag (however you spell it) exert a tremendous magnetic appeal for so many of us.

Incredible Shrinking Man I love you... who would not want to wander through the multicoloured jungle of a deep pile carpet, with Jabberwocky-sized gnats and nits threatening to crush us at every turn of the weft and warp. Or to be King Kong for a day, catching aeroplanes as if they were butterflies? Magritte put boulders in the sky to make us *really* see how heavy they are. Perhaps minaturisation and macro-aturisation (if there is such a word) — (if you want-Ed) have the same effect. When I recently bought a 19th century 1½" high

volume of Shakespeare (in order to destroy it — more of that later) I *really* noticed the way it was put together — the leather cover, the red inside covers, the glue, the beautiful plaited arrangement of string that held the pages together.

Ditto when I bought my sister for her birthday one of those lighters in the shape of a matchstick, two feet long. Cor blimey!... the scales fell from my eyes and I saw the true beauty of the humble lucifer.

Minatures, a recording project (see review in *Perormance* 8) was an aural attempt at creating the sense of wonder aroused by small being beautiful — 51 splendid musicians gave their all within the strict time limit of one minute each. As I merely suggested the idea to them & they did all the work (I play) I feel that the LP was an unqualified success.

And now its being taken a stage further. Minatures is now available as a 'micro-pack'. It's in the form of a microcassette — a tiny razorblade sized tape weighing a

fraction of an ounce, which can hold, not only an hour of music, but also the combined talents of 51 of our most relevant creative people and groups.

Is this a blatant ad? Well maybe, but also a blatant invitation. You see, along with a page torn from the aforementioned bible; a few tiny playing cards; transparencies of the LP sleeve; and an origina letter from a Minatures artist, the Minatures Micropack also contains what is probably the world's smallest sketchbook. Its dimensions are 0.6" x 0.8" and each person who buys a Micropack is invited to remove one of the pages of the Micro-tome, emblazon it with a drawing, painting, or a novel (should i say novella?) or two and send it to yours truly to establish the 'Minatures Art Gallery' admission price 1p — or preferably a farthing.

And so dear reader, the nub and gist of this small article is that you, too, are invited to send in your tiny masterpiece. You have the dimensions of your wee carte

blanche. But more important, you also have the opportunity to enter, along with Alice in Wonderland and the Borrowers and our old mate the Incredible Shrinking Man, the wonderful world of the mini-microcosmic work of art. If you *really* let go, you'll reach a sublime state of bliss and total centredness that no amount of navel-gazing or mantra-chanting will get you to. Believe me, friend, there's a lot more to writing the Lords Prayer on a grain of rice than just producing a conversation piece. So spend a *long* time on your little creation. You'll feel surprisingly huge afterwards.

Morgan Fisher

Send your miniature picture to Minatures. Art Gallery c/o Morgan Fisher, Cherry Red Records, 53 Kensington Gardens Square London W2. (Viewing details to be announced) The Minatures Micropack is available from the same address in a signed, limited edition of 100 (Price £7.50)

FUTUREPERFORM

Selected National Performance Listings

BIRMINGHAM

Ikon Gallery Info 021 643 0708

March 12 Steve Littman, Videotapes and discussion. March 7-28 Video Installation by Tamara Krikorian. March 19 Videotapes and discussion. March 26 lecture/performance by Chris Burden. This is the first UK showing of this well known US performance artist. (See feature this issue.) The event will take place whilst he is preparing an installation to run from March 28 - April 25.

Birmingham Arts Lab Info 021 359 4192

March 24-25 I, Giselle. 'I Giselle attempts to deconstruct the original's (Giselle's) implicit assumptions about class and sexuality.... utilises a formidable range of dance and theatre techniques and the integrated use of audio visual material'. Performance Magazine No.7. Also workshops during the day. Phone for details. April 6-16 Hesitate and Demonstrate in 'Do Not Disturb'. All events at Aston Centre for the Arts.

BRISTOL

Arnolfini Gallery Info 0272 299191

March 7 Beppie Blankert & Bob Helson. Improvised dance and percussion. March 12-13 Ian Spink Group. 20-21 March Siobhan Davies and dancers in residence. (Includes workshops etc. phone for details) March 24-27 Lizzie Cox 'Somerset'. ...is a performance based on the seasonal changes of a field at Nettlecombe, Somerset. An eight foot square box hung with fabrics forms the changing setting for the events of the year. These are represented both by the printed fabrics, costumes and soft objects activated by the dancer (Kirstie Simson) and by the specially composed music (Stuart Gordon). The performance is elaborated from a visual diary of a field kept by Lizzie Cox from September 1976 to harvest 1977. It shows the changes brought by the seasons and the dramatic interruptions made by man's cultivation. April (Unconfirmed.) Stuart Sherman. US performance artist. (See AIR listing.)

Bristol Arts Centre Info 0272 45008½/9

March 5-7 Les Oeufs Malades 'Family Album'. March 27 David Glass — 'Light and Dark'.

CARDIFF

Chapter Arts Centre Info 0222 39061

March (Throughout) Workshops by Theatre Onze from Lausanne culminating in a week-long performance at the National Museum of Wales entitled L'Escalier — The Flight of Stairs. (April 1-5). March 19-21 Performance by Belinda Neave (Solo Work Season) March 26-28 People Show Cabaret. April 2-4 Spalding Grey (Solo Work Season). April 9-11 Bob Carroll — 'The Dirt Show.' April 10-21. Moving Being in 'The Mabinogi' A spectacular performance event to be performed at Cardiff, Castle, the 'Mabinogi' is a book of ancient Welsh legends. Will involve boats in the moat, horses, hawks, and all sorts of similarly uncontrollable performance adjuncts. Performed in English and Welsh, Chapter are organising all the peripheral events, around the castle, medieval markets etc. Like the Theatre Onze spectacular at the Museum, this considerable project is to celebrate Chapter's tenth anniversary and as such is likely to be unmissable.

NOTTINGHAM

Midland Group Gallery Info 0602 582636

March 5-7 Hull Truck — The Cockroach Trilogy — including 'The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati', 'The Return of the Cockroach' and 'The Cockroach has Landed'.

(See Arts Lab Listing) — Fergus Early & March 5-7 Hull Truck — The Cockroach Trilogy — including 'The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati', 'The Return of the Cockroach' and 'The Cockroach has Landed'.

March 20 Delphonic Ensemble, Japan. March 26-27 'I Giselle'. (See Arts Lab Listing) —

Fergus Early & Jacky Lansly. April 7-8 CV1 Theatre Company April 30-May 1. Forkbeard Fantasy — Seal of the Walrus (New Show)

'one of the few visual performance groups in Britain who maintain a persistent tradition of dealing with the more disturbing aspects of human behaviour. This is blended with a fascination with the more morbid aspects of experimental science, an interpersonal introspection so deep as to be incestuous, and a near-worship of British eccentricity.' (Performance Magazine No.7)

LEICESTER

Phoenix Arts Centre Info 0533 555627

April 30-May 2 I, Giselle — Jack Lansly and Fergus Early (See Arts Lab Listing)

LIVERPOOL

Everyman Theatre Info 051 709 4776

Till March 14. 'the Show He Never Gave' by Maynard Collin. 'a recreation of the might-have-been concert that the famed, tortured country singer Hank Williams was on his way to give when he died. April 1-25 'The War With The Newts' Adapted by John Fletcher from Karel Capek. 'Nothing could be nicer than newts except that they breed faster than

Windscale. In fact, in their billions, they are taking over the world....' April 29-16 May. 'The Case of Charles Dexter Ward' by Camilla Saunders. A reincarnation of the famous Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool production in which the young Charles Dexter Ward discovers his uncanny resemblance to a satanic ancestor ('a man of monstrous abnormality') and gradually becomes possessed by his evil spirit....

NEWCASTLE

Basement Group, Spectro Arts. Info

0632 614527/733686 March 14. John Carson, 'Men of Ireland, the Men In Me' — videotape. March 28 Mona Hatoum and Carrie Bourne — performance. April 4 Andre Stitt — performance. April 10 Jez Welsh — Image Action — Tape/Slide and Videotape installation (see review this issue.) Basement then closed for event until May 11.

Sunderland Arts Centre Info

Art and the Sea events. March 28 Jan Maladovsky. April 3 Richard Layzell. (See article on LVA at Air in this issue.)

GLASGOW

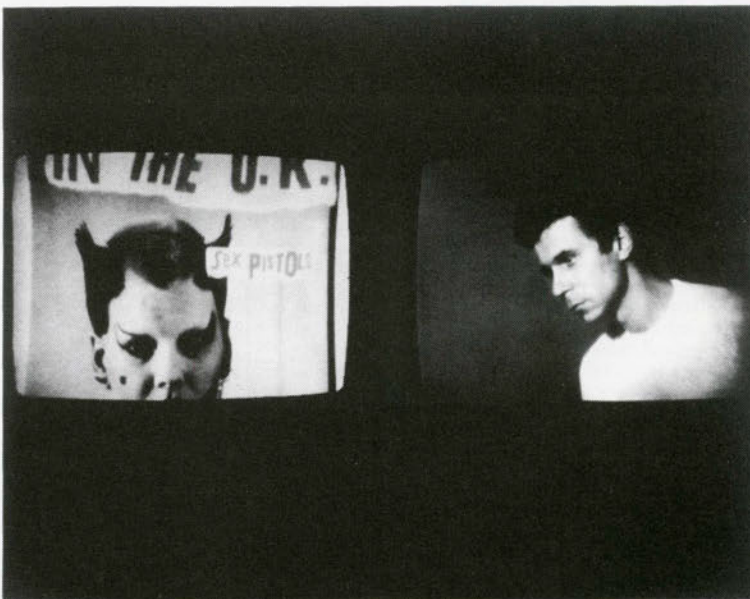
Third Eye Centre Info 041 332 7521

March 10 Mike Westbrook Brass Band. 'Bright as Fire' Musical settings of the work of William Blake. March 14, 7-84 Company (Scotland) 'One Big Blow' by John Burrows with music by Rick Lloyd.

YORK

York Arts Centre Info 0904 27129

March 5-7 People Show Cabaret. March 11-14 Disreperatory Theatre — 'The Changeling' by Middleton and Rowley. March 20-21 Incubus Theatre — 'The Old Testament Floorshow.'



More provocative than your average art documentary and pioneering in its use of film and video, James Scott's new film 'Chance, History Art...' opens the Cinemateque programme at the ICA with lunchtime screenings from 9 April. 'Chance, History, Art...' features video-taped interviews with 5 contemporary artists: performing artists Ann Bean and John McKeon plus the legendary Stuart Brisley (whose major retro including new performance work turns up in the ICA Gallery on 28 April), painter Rita Donagh; Sex Pistols' graphic artist Jamie Reid, and sculptor Jimmy Boyle, former Glasgow 'hard-man' currently serving a life sentence for murder. Scott's film relates their work to the ideas of the Surrealists, takes pot shots at most prominent art institutions, and deals a casual death blow to the solemn intonations of the traditional voice-over arts documentary.

...Wally has made a killing in the sacramental wine business and now he wants to make a spectacular and controversial success out of entertaining the remnants of a post-holocaust society.' (See review in this issue.) March 27-28 TNT in 'Don't Look Back' 'TNT examine the debasement of death in the Twentieth Century and the false god of modern science, in contrast with the mediaeval characterisation of Death.'

LONDON

ICA Info 930 0493 Last part of 'New Contemporaries' show. March 3 Carolyn Sandys — performance. March 4 Nicholas Stewart — installation. March 3-4 Sarah Brown — installation. March 5 Laurie Swarbrick — performance. March 5 Paul Taylor — installation. March 6-7 Michael Johnson — installation. March 7 Fiona Wire — installation. March 8 Martin Cronin — installation. March 6 R.P. Conolly — performance outside the building. Throughout March Alison Urquhart — installation. In the theatre the Wakeathon (Phantom Captain) continues — 'When, on May 2nd 1977 Mrs Maureen Weston of Peterborough set a new world record for Voluntary Sleeplessness having stayed awake for 18 days 17 hour little did she realise that mention of her feat would not be confined to the Guinness Book of Records....' March 17-28. Lumiere and Son (See feature Performance Magazine No.7) March 31-May 9 — 'Safe Houses' a co-production with the Sheffield Crucible. April 21-May 9 — 'Who Are You Anyway', 'Very Important Business', and 'Moondog' a trilogy of plays by Tom McGrath. In the Gallery from April 21 — Exhibition, installations and performances by Stuart Brisley.

Oval House Info 01 735 2786 Continuation of Women's Season: March 11-15 Women's Project — 'Solar' a science fiction satire by Caroline Mylon. March 12 Anna Furze and Claire Hayes — Dance performance. March 13 — 'Minnie Kabinni Moving Into The New Age' — Performance by Michele Frankel. March 19 — Gabby and Cloe — Mime performance. March 20-22 Barnes Theatre Group — Silent Screaming. March 25-26 'The Technicolour Rosie Show' — Rosie Gibb. — mime performance. March 27-28 'Obstacles' Improvised performance by Sylvia Hallet (music) Kazuko Honki (visuals) Jessica Loeb (dance) Pamela Marre (visuals) Linda Martin (music) Maria Carlotta Silva (visuals) Karen Irving (music) March 29 — The Valentine Sisters (Joanne Richler & Silvia Hallet) 'Two Women With Hats On' April 8-12. Spider-women — 'The Fittin' Room'. Highly recommended performance group from USA. April 12 'Voices' (reading).

Action Space Info 01 637 7664 Has been cut completely by the Arts Council, so is closed indefinitely, but a campaign is being mounted to reopen one of the most eclectic venues for performance in the country. Donations (Cheques to Action Space) and messages of support to 16 Chenies St London WC1.

York and Albany Info 01 723 7482 March 4-7 'Hurting Like A Woman' and Obstacles — a seven woman performance art group. March 10-15 Three Women — 'High Heels' plus new material. (See review in this issue) March 17-22 'Learning to Walk' — Claire Hopkins and 'Brass Tacks' an all-woman cabaret by Hardware Theatre Company. March 24-29 'Mamas Gone A Huntin' by Siren Theatre Company from Brighton. All these events are part of the Womens Theatre Festival —

happening simultaneously across London. April 1-12 Mouth & Trousers Company — New Writing Showcase. (also part of festival) April 21-26 Blood group — a new two woman dance/performance art group. — 'Barricade of Flowers'. Plus — Dovetail Joint — 'The starting left over from before.'

Theatre Space Info 01 836 2035 March 11-28 'Female Trouble' Bryony Lavery's new show. March 12-14 'An Evening with Mary Longford' This is Mary Longford's last show before she goes to Italy for several years. Her performance work in the past has always been among the most original in Britain, and her last (Looking Through The Window) involved her use of a deserted street with the audience peering out of a window, with the performers arriving in a taxi. 'An Evening with Mary Longford' is an unmissable last opportunity. Other unconfirmed events (late night) during this period include performances by Pamela Stephenson, Three Women (High Heels) and Shirley Collins.

Riverside Studios Info 01 741 2251 March 5. Michael Nyman Band plus Flying Lizards. March 11-15 Royal Court Young Activists — 'Domestic Affair'. March 25-29 New Dance Season. Residency by Steve Paxton (See Letters) and his Freelance Company from New York. Workshops include video workshops (check above number) April 1-2 Rosemary Butcher. April 4-5 Diane Frank and Deborah Riley. April 7-12 Siobhan Davies. April 21-May 3 Return visit from La Claca Company from Spain. Highly recommended. Visual art performance (soon to be featured).

Air Gallery Info 01 278 7751 March 2-14 Installation and performance by Max

Lovegrove. March 18,20. Richard Layzell — 'Hooray' March 23-27 Open Access London Video Arts (Tape Viewing) See article in LVA this issue. April (Date Unconfirmed) Stuart Sherman — US performance artist 'To describe one of Sherman's vignettes out of the context of his manic energy and intense concentration is an unfair and probably ineffectual task. Will New Yorkers recognise themselves in the persona of the man reciting the time of day anxiously over a taped recording of street names, all the while spearing unknown adversaries with thin wooden spikes? Somewhere in Istanbul do furtive little men secretly wrap up cake icing in tiny tissues transported via some network to other seamy men?' — Artforum. April 29-30. Julian Maynard-Smith. (see article on Station House Orchestra this issue).

Acme Gallery Info 01 240 3047 March 9-14 'Beatles Reunion' and other impossible dreams.... at Garcia/Wrights. Facade Records. April 21-25 Kieran Lyons. Drawings and Performances. April 21-May 2. Chris Welsby. 'Estuary' Film installation.

Tricycle Theatre 01 328 8626 Womens Theatre season. March 2-7. Cabaret by Bloomers. March 10-28. Monstrous Regiment — 'Mourning Pictures' March 30-April 11. Bag and Baggage — 'What's Got Into You'.

Information for next issues listings (May-June) to the Performance Magazine 10 Fleet Road, London NW3 2Qs by the end of March.

* * * * *

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After one of my recent performances I was so disturbed by my particular effort of that evening, that I declined to visit the bar after the show. That bar would be thronged - well, not thronged, the audience wasn't that big - with the people good enough to come to the show. I couldn't face them. My embarrassment wasn't really towards the overall performance by the group but my own personal failing to put over the idea I had intended, a very odd situation to be in. As much as one can say "Well, you pays yer money", it's really very distressing to find that at the end of the show you blew it!

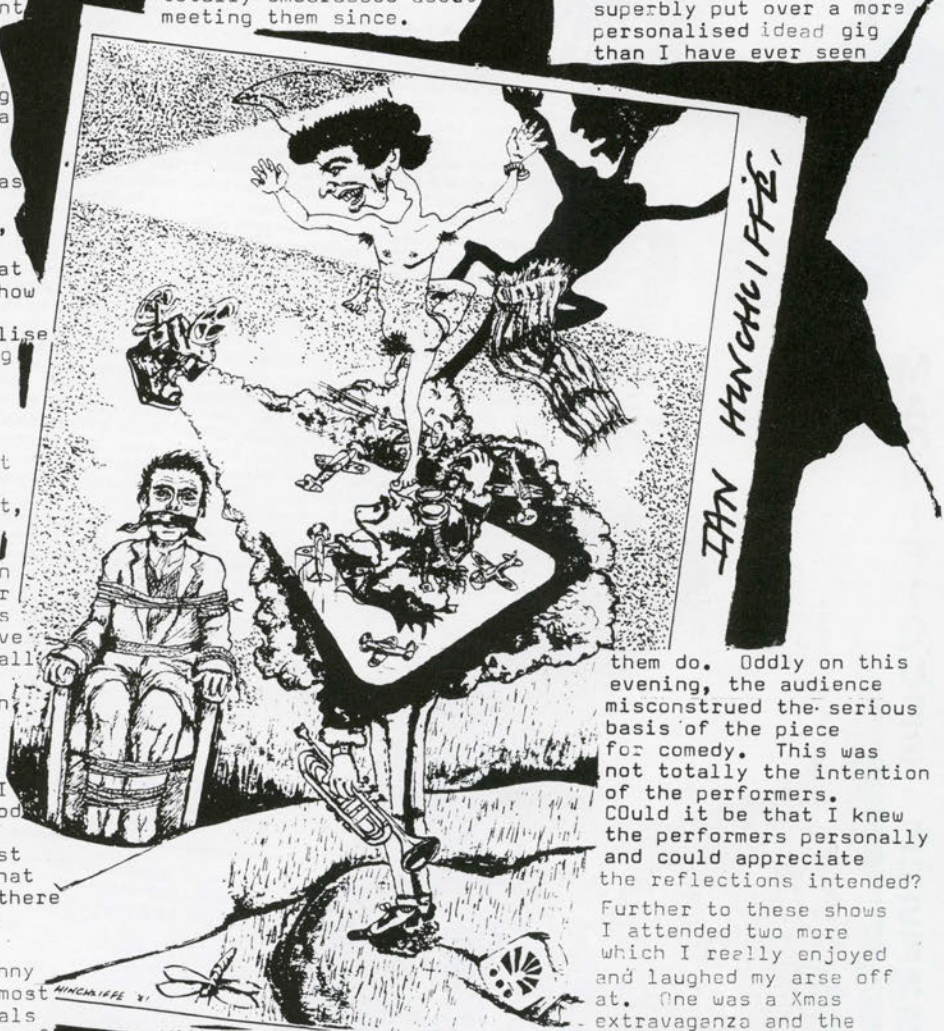
Some nights you realise that you are blowing it whilst you're doing it but some strange blob in the brain doesn't or refuses a logic that says, "if this is in your mind, say it, perform it, do it". In the past couple of months, I've been to see about five or six different events or shows. These have been varied but in all cases had been done by people well known to me, some of them old friends. I was lucky a few times. On these occasions I managed to catch good nights. Apart from one which was a first night, I was told that I should have been there on Tuesday, or last night or whatever.

Performers are a funny breed, perhaps the most self-conscious animals I know, irrespective of their trade. Everyone likes to be patted on the back for something or other, performers more so than most. To dive off the top board and find that there isn't any water in the bath can be funny to some, but to the diver, fatal. Amongst these performances that I saw, two of them intentionally didn't put water in the bath but cleverly cheated by having the bath bottom made of foam rubber.

The impact (excuse pun) didn't impress me but made me shudder with utter disappointment. How does one tell friends this, especially when that friend is the performer. On the first occasion, I mistakenly walked out.

My own intolerance couldn't subdue me from doing otherwise. The consequence of that is that I have been totally embarrassed about meeting them since.

the ones I knew that were there on the same night as me said how much they dug it. I was pleasantly surprised by the last event I saw. For this I travelled to Winchester. As luck would have it again I hit a good night. The performers on this event, again two of them, had broken through onto a new plane since I had seen them in action last. They superbly put over a more personalised idea than I have ever seen



them do. Oddly on this evening, the audience misconstrued the serious basis of the piece for comedy. This was not totally the intention of the performers. Could it be that I knew the performers personally and could appreciate the reflections intended?

Further to these shows I attended two more which I really enjoyed and laughed my arse off at. One was a Xmas extravaganza and the other two man show in a pub theatre.

How did the actual performers feel on those particular evenings? Did they, even on those nights when things went well, want to hide in the lavs? What made them do it in the first place?

To show no offence to Mark and Michael, however, I illustrate my next attire for visiting their next shows. I'll be sent to Coventry if it kills me this year.

With the second show, I remained silent afterwards but did sit through the whole thing, which I must add was ever so long and although meticulous, boring. Now for the good news. Of the shows that I really found interesting, the first was staged by one of our veteran performance artists and his lady. Mysteriously, most people I spoke to had seen it on another night and had got very little out of it. Only

LES
DE
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SILVIE



MAGNIFIQUES

ENSEMBLE

The Knee? — les Parapluies de Confiture. Just the Spot for the Odd Tomato....Nice style in a garage, pre-nuclear and post-seam.
 The Knee, then. Let us consider this item of anatomy undeniably includable in the pantheon of Physical Attitudes, twixt hubris and houmous (terra firma non-edible). Flexible. Intuitive? Eloquent in times of Rigid Sensibility.
 Eh bien, le genou. Little without the Leg. (Sans jambe — rien.) Gloss over the thigh and that Pelvic Region, font of unequivocal ineluctability/thrust area/here and there/more epithet than apolastic/variable in inclination/dependable also on intoxication and cerebral disposition.
 Viable/vulnerable as a three pin adapter, fairly? dynamic. As most of us could be (with a cup of tea, poised delicately on the knee, nonchalantly left, a challenging sight for the occasional encounter) React with a pomme. Keep your fucking knee out of the mashed potato. The opposite of apposite, no anarchy in these knees. The history of the world has not been all together the history of the knee... endorse the intellectual projections of proposed form (P.F.) Beneath the indubitable increase of Though (how little one needs perspective and technique at the breakfast table. I want more diamonds...) (and how I envy the truly gifted flautist).
 Knees can be such a wonderful background to our thoughts, that brief moment of wild escape between sheer abandon and Brixton's finer beaches. (Tesco's a go-go.) But look...
 There's someone/He gave her a controlled look. Has it come to 1/Knees or 2/La vie? One thinks not. How the knee differs from detergent...that earliest of stories: Adam and knees. Confused experiences with overliberal helpings of pâté de mardi gras up to There in altogether. One communicates through carefully coordinated adagios.
 Experiment with location. Be seen sculpturally with the Contemporary look. Does Texture suit? How Multi-purpose? The crease a Crisis (and here she spoke from experience, in a bathroom)? I've heard that one before, dear. Tend towards innuendo, leave etiquette for the eyebrow, introduce suggestions to existence. A banana? no thnak you, I had one earlier.
 They remain, sandwiched between formaggio and scenic formation, not quite crash-resistant, though occasionally drip dry. 'Give me a knee, and I'll show you the World,' 'A knee by any other name.' 'A Hand on the knee is worth Two in a Bush.' 'A la recherche des genoux perdus.' 'I could have kneed all night.'
 Knees in advertising. Victor in Lingerie. We have a Thing for Big kneed Brunettes, in baby dolls. Free of conversational restrictions, unaware (one suspects) of the pluperfect passive subjunctive (of the simplest noun). Measure their worth in the inflation-proof economy drive of integrity. Knees for President? — one thinks not. Encore une fois. Surrounded with/by 27 forms of jam-making instruments, you haven't a leg to stand on (sorry).
 About half a billion years before knees were on the scene, sponges were flourishing* And what a place to rest the Hand, the Au Revoirs, (grenouilles aux Genoux perhaps for Madame), the other knee. Knee-on-the-rocks. On rye over easy. In munch-size concepts knock-kneed at the prospect of Sid. Une fois à Paris, available as convention, as contention, for comprehension of comparison, compassion, compulsion, completion, compunction, cohesion, concession, conception, concentration, condition, (Don't go Down to NY today, you're sure of a Big Surprise), condescension, constitution, contrition, blah blah blah.
 An overpriced hstorical guide to 'The Knee'. The practicalities of the Plié. The contour of the integral. Eleven fascinating tours of: 1/Knee and Hillock, 2/Knee and It, 3/Phonetically ntz, 4/Thatched knee, 5/The Pair on the Hypothesis of a live Kneed Tango, 6/Admiral Knee, 7/The Inconvenient Knee,8/A Friend In..., 9/Yours Kneefully, 10/Aqua Knee, 11/Des Genoux Au'jourd'hui, 12/Neasden Return, 13/Thigh to calf, calf to Thigh. Who has read Tolstoy on the knee? Who has read Tolstoy on the knee? Who has read Tolstoy on the knee? Who has read Tolstoy on the knee — hmmm?
 Great knees of our time... with knees on our side... somewhere a knee struck midnight... knee on a hot tin roof... The world of knees...Knee off!!!!... Son of knee... Not the Nine O'clock Knees... Alice in Kneeland... come up and knee me some time... They call them:- knees etc etc etc.

*statistics
 To be followed with 'coping etc'..
 ZiraneK 81

People working in the field of performance are invited to submit documentation and opinion for inclusion in these back page sections. For further details phone us.

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