

THE REVIEW OF LIVE ART NO.23

# PERFORMANCE ENIZAVGAWM

APRIL/MAY  
90p \$2.50

**REVIEWED:** Laurie Anderson's United States,  
Hermine/Binnie's the Knives beside the Plates,  
Sheffield's Expanded Media Show.  
**INTERVIEWED:** Nan Hoover.  
**PROFILED:** Welfare State.  
**DOCUMENTED:** The Paperpool Corporation.

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Dear Performance Magazine,

My original essay 'Is Performance Art Dead?' (Performance Magazine No. 19) for the Midland Group Performance Platform, October 1982, was aimed at both artists and organisers and patrons of artists. At artists because I had recognised work that fitted Stefan Morawski's descriptions 'parasitic consciousness' and 'narcissistic consciousness'. Aimed at those who organise or patronise artists because I suspect they do not condone the alternative — 'creative self-consciousness'.

In my original writing I tried to set out those terms, and define them by reference to both Morawski, writing in Poland 1981, and Helene Permelin, writing about artistic independence and the Paris 1968 'events'. The point, the main point of my essay was expanded in the paper I read in Nottingham on the last day of the Performance Platform, in October last year. That there was no meaningful discussion of the issues I raised was due, I believe, to the 'narcissistic consciousness' of the event itself, and the sensitivity of the organisers to the question of censorship.

The Performance Platform seemed to have become self-referential, and the Mid-

land Group must stay out of controversy. I was a selector of artists for the Platform in both 1981 and 1982. On both occasions the Arts Council, who supplied most of the finance for the event, objected initially to one of the artists selected — Andre Stitt. Because Stitt's work *appeared* to deal with politically sensitive subjects — Northern Ireland and street violence — it *appeared* that this was the reason for the objection. I had hoped that this and any related issues would be discussed at the Performance Platform, but it did not happen. The other artists did not seem to be interested in the further implications of both my original essay and my longer paper.

I asked what should be the future of performance art, should it not deal with 'our own selves, our own circumstances, and the problems of our existence,' .... shouldn't we approach our work *not* as artists, but as... 'sexed humans, living in a post-industrial society, class and race divided, threatened by imminent nuclear extinction'?

The reason why I was late at the event, (i.e. did not see the bulk of the performances) was because I had, on the previous two days, been at an artists' conference in

West Germany, talking about the possibility of artists from the UK and Germany visiting each others' country to do work that 'dealt with' the social, political and ecological problems of each others' country. The German artists did accept my proposition, and I hope to organise such an exchange in the future.

I was sorry that the other selectors of Platform artists in 1982 — Geraldine Pilgrim and Bill Beach — could not be present to discuss the question of artists' concerns and the responsibility of arts administrators. That I was there only briefly myself, does not, I think, mean that such discussions are valueless. I think it is generally agreed that the equivalent panel discussion in the 1981 Platform was not without merit, and that the intervention of Carlyle Reedy was particularly exciting and valuable. I believe a forum is needed for the consideration of performance art and its future, and I hope that it will emerge at the new Dartington Festival of Performance Art and Visual Theatre this year.

Yours  
Roland Miller

Coming up next issue: Kazuko Hohki of Frank Chickens and Japanese-American Toy Theatre, the former having taken Britain quietly by storm recently on tour with rock avant-gardists Pigbag and Bill Nelson — we reviewed her first in 1981 and return to profile her before she gets too famous....

Also profiled — Michael Nyman, systems musician popularised in Peter Greenaway's Draughtsmans Contract — we reviewed *him* first in 1979....

And a preview of Urban Sax, 50 french saxophonists who'll be descending on Britain this summer and converging separately and promise some extremely bizarre outdoor performance. As well as our usual wide-ranging mixture of reviews, documentation and listing of live art in the UK, we'll be running a special review section from New York, where the mammoth, excruciatingly named, Britain Salutes New York festival will be running throughout May, with performances around the city by Impact, Hesitatea and Demonstrate, Station House Opera, Stuart Brisley, Charlie Hooker, Silvia Ziranek, and many other British live, video and sound artists, alongside the best of the NY avant-garde. If you can't get there, don't miss that issue .... If you're thinking of going, and you're a performer, here's a cautionary note from Steve Rogers, UK organiser of the NY festival:

**Next Issue**

British artists of all disciplines hold America, and particularly New York, as some kind of utopia where the streets are paved with mythical tax deductible, corporate gold sponsorship. How many artists, I wonder, say to themselves, 'If only I could get my show/performance/exhibition to New York, I know I would be a success.' But the truth is, or some of it is....

Firstly, corporate support for the arts can far outweigh public support (depending where in the US you are). But even though corporations have been supporting the arts for a long time and recognise the importance of supporting younger artists and more experimental work, the bulk of corporate giving goes to the blockbuster exhibitions and the national institutions. And the US, like the UK, makes almost no provision for visiting foreign companies.

There are no performing arts venues in New York who will invite artists to perform and can offer fees and expenses (like ICA, Riverside etc., in London). The art-

ists either raise corporate or public support, they may be offered a split of the box office income, or more often the artists have to rent their own space, produce and promote themselves and hope for the best.

Most British artists don't understand this system and certainly New York does not understand British artists' natural expectation to be offered the usual expenses, facilities and promotion. In New York the artists take as much financial risk as the theatres. Most New York artists have lower earning expectations than British and most used to have to take other jobs too, like waiting tables etc. but now even that source of income is drying up.

There are more than 400 theatres and performance spaces in Manhattan, there are more professional dancers in New York than in the whole of the UK and there are certainly many more small galleries in Manahattan than in London. All of these are competing for sponsorship, audiences, press, everything: as a result, the tech-

niques, practices and attitudes in marketing the arts in New York probably seems somehow immoral to British eyes.

If it sounds like I'm trying to put people off the idea of playing New York you're right. New York is possibly the hardest place in the world to work, and should only be attempted with the most careful thought and the utmost trepidation.

Having said that.... New York is an extraordinary city where some of the most extraordinary art takes place. The imaginative ways in which New York has managed to keep afloat such a huge and varied arts community is often staggering, necessity has bred incredible ingenuity in finding money, audiences and places to play, which Britain could well learn a great deal from.

I hope Britain Salutes New York festival can somehow keep open the doors which have been prised open for a once in a lifetime event.

Steve Rogers

# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

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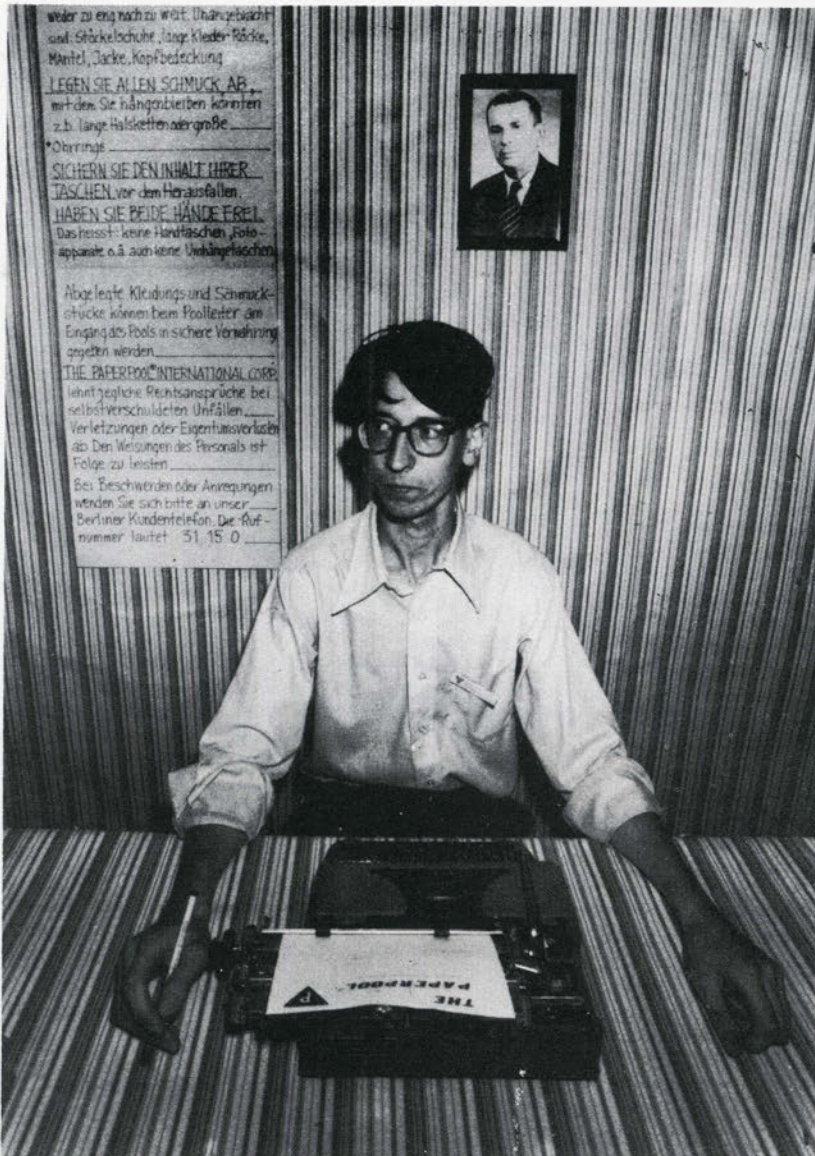
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Across the harbour stands the grey outline of the British Nuclear Fuels processing plant. From over the water comes the faint sound of the Vickers shipyard where the dull thud of a drop hammer heralds preparations for building the submarines which will carry the British Trident nuclear missiles. This is Barrow-in-Furness in March and the drizzle drifting in from the sea gives a cheerless look to this small Cumbrian town where job prospects are good these days, thanks to Government defence spending.

On the other side of the harbour inlet stand the Salthouse Mills, a collection of late Victorian outhouses now doing service as industrial fabrication units. From one comes the sound of hacksaw and cold chisel ripping open old oil drums and the flare of an oxy-acetylene torch reveals another submarine under construction. It's chassis is an E reg. Volvo saloon and its hull is being formed from rusty sheet metal begged and scrounged from Barrow factories. Upstairs, a twenty strong band of saxophones, trumpets and drums are rehearsing an arrangement of Bob Marley's 'Dem Belly Full', a tune that will accompany this crazy submarine as it processes through the Town. This is Welfare State International's art factory, working away in earnest competition with the industries of destruction that lie over the water.

Preparations are afoot for a retelling of the King Lear story. A sly touch of the anagram has renamed him King Real and a script by Adrian Mitchell has replaced Shakespeare's historical intensity with a pantomime setting complete with ugly sisters and all. Add a touch of black comedy and this rendition of King Lear becomes a modern political parable which tells of the madness coming from the misuse of power.

Weary with his office, Real abdicates and leaves the three keys of power to two of his daughters and the captain of his army. He exiles his third daughter, Cloudella, through the tragic misunderstanding of her love for him. Later, in the Royal Bunker, his three successors blind him and throw him out to wander alone in a Wasteland devastated by catastrophe. 'King Real and the Hoodlums' is being made as a full length feature film for television. With the majority members being drawn from the local townspeople.

Since January an advance team has been working through the local clubs, pubs and schools to contact welders, carpenters, musicians, performers and inventors. The enthusiastic response has been developed through social evenings to help break the ice while workshops in performance, music and making have helped build the skills needed to make a film by and for the people of Barrow.

Unusual and innovatory projects are the stock-in-trade of Welfare State which has been making sculptures, environments

At Ulverston Carnival

# Welfare State

and performances since 1968. Creating and reinventing mythologies are deeply rooted in the company's method. Their own mystical everyman, Lancelot Quail, made many appearances in early shows. Travelling alongley lines, disappearing in submarines off Cornwall, building radio telescopes on a rubbish tip in Burnley, he finally transformed into the biblical figure of Barabbas in 1977. Now the simpleton hero of Quail has been replaced by the mad king Lear as the myths adjust to the social changes that have occurred with the seventies growing into the eighties.

King Lear has formed a basis for two major projects in 1982. An invitation to appear at the Togamura International Theatre Festival in Japan posed a problem for the company. their commitment to working outside the restrictions of mainstream theatre precluded a set appearance at the sort of cultural emporium favoured by such international jamborees. To

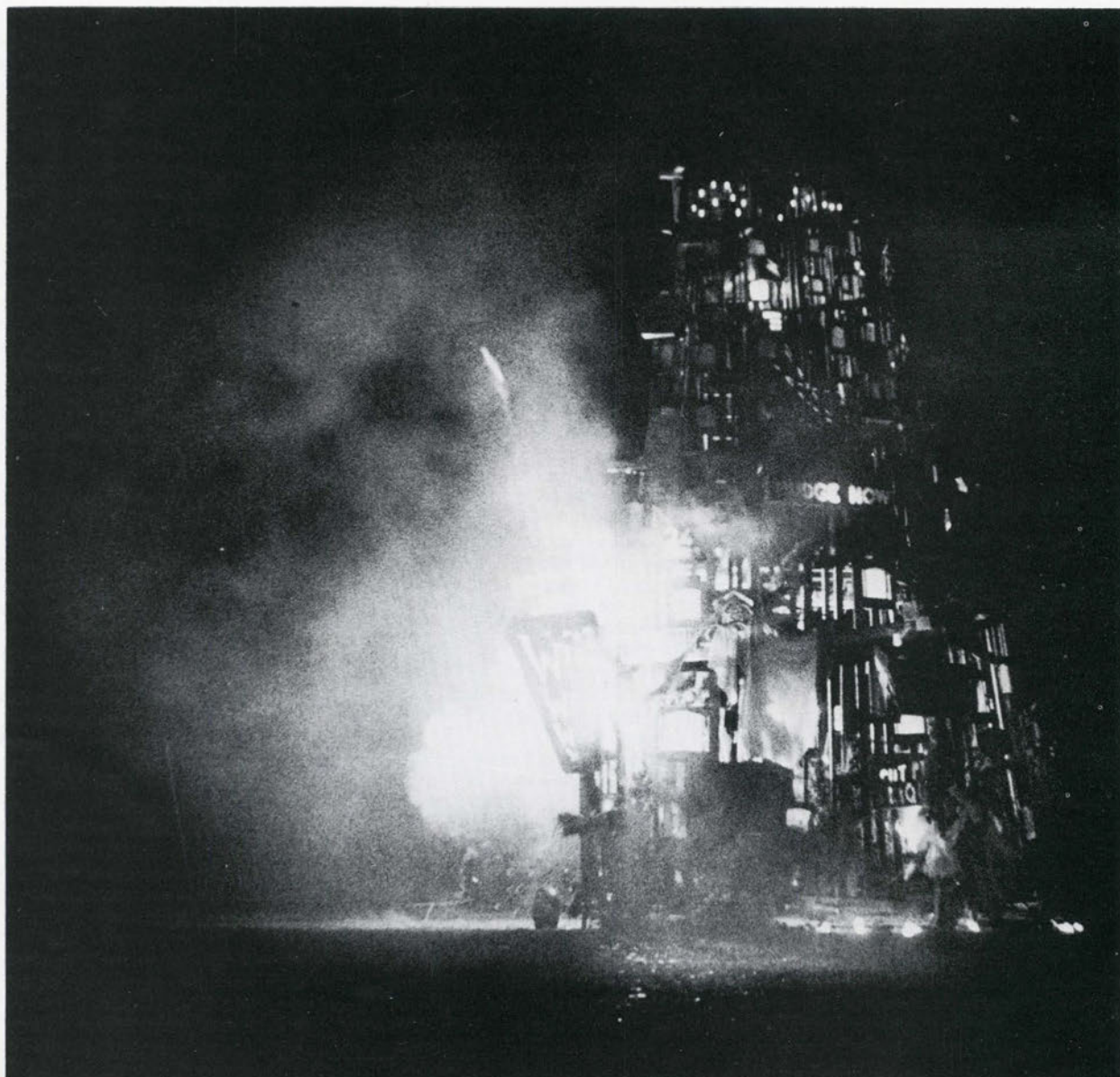
pursue their natural course of holding a residency leading to a collaborative production seemed to contain enormous risks in the form of an unknown language and culture. What was known to work in an English speaking country and a Western culture might fail disastrously in the far east. However, armed with considerable courage and shrewd intuition, the company selected a peasant village outside Togamura as their venue and as a theme the story of King Lear. The company reasoned that the Lear story had universal elements which could be relocated within the Japanese family and state. Provided that the right imagery and the right attitude could be found, an understanding would be created between the two cultures.

During their three week residency, the company used English barn dances, puppet plays and street bands to establish an empathy with the village people. Workshops to exchange skills convinced

the peasants that their lion dance had as much right as anything else to appear in the festival. Before they had thought it had no part in the high art ambience that the festival had generated. The Lear theme developed into 'The Wasteland and the Wagtail' and mixed Japanese mythology with English mumming plays. the audience and performers made a journey together up a mountainside to witness the death of Lear in the form of a thirty foot high puppet. As the puppet was carried down the mountain, lanterns were drawn from the side of the body to transform the event into a celebration involving English barn dancing and a mass singing of Auld Lang Syne. This mixture of common sense, calculated risktaking and inspired lunacy won Welfare State the award of Best Drama Event in Japan in '82 from the PIA magazine, Tokyo's Time Out/City Limits.

From the mountains of Nothern Japan, Lear travelled around the world to

Tower of Babel, South Hill Park



Vicky Carter

Vicky Carter



At Haverhill

appear as a central image in Welfare State's autumnal celebration, 'Scarecrow Zoo', held at south Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell. This was an important community based project for the company drawing together working patterns which had been developing for several years. Careful research and contact with local groups had begun several months beforehand. During the three week 'barter parties' and workshops created a focus whereby people could contribute their skills and images to a week long celebration of Hallow'een and Bonfire night. A competition to make the best scarecrow attracted one hundred entries.

The week of celebrations commenced with a carnival, 'The Non Stop Honky Tonk Hallow'een Masked Ball'. Bad memories, collected from the audience were burnt and the Moon was revived through the release of bad energy. Mid-week events revolved around two specially commissioned plays. There will eventually be twelve such plays forming a cycle of modern mystery plays and known as *The Doomsday Colouring Book*. The first of these is 'Bellevue' by Terry Johnson, a story concerning the theft of a rare bird's eggs and the closure of a municipal zoo. The second was 'King Lear and the Ugly Sisters', performed this time in the style of a traditional English mumming play. The week built to a climax on November 5th with *The Doomsday Fair*, 'an anti-war carnival symphony'. Giant puppets of quarreling politicians brought about the destruction of Noah's animals in front of King Mammon's Tower of Babel. The world is saved by a mass of local bikers who roar in to set fire to this forty foot edifice and the evening ended with 800 people dancing around a giant globe of the world.

The Bracknell festivities were a confirmation of an approach to making art within a community setting. As the political and social conditions in Britain have changed so has the Welfare State's working method. Paradoxically though, the company's method has turned more towards collaborative and harmonious events rather than didactically opposing the social decline with appropriately vigorous imagery. An early show such as 'The Sweet Misery of Life', involving the crucifixion of a pop singer by his manager, used considerable violence and aggression. The company's early neo-primitive rituals using fire and ice were also particularly disquieting and unsettling. Was the company growing into a mellow maturity?

John Fox, artistic director, greeted this question with an amused grin. 'Well, I wouldn't like to use the word mellow particularly, because it sounds like autumnal old age. 'Sweet Misery of Life' was incredibly violent and the trouble was that it became corrupting of us so that we became violent towards each other and the audience. If you feed off a poisoned beast, you will eventually become poisoned yourself. But what we have learnt is that we are only half, if not less, of a show. I wouldn't have believed ten years ago that now we would be going into villages and giving barn dances.'

Nevertheless, wasn't there a need for an aggressive stance in those early days to cut across the accepted boundaries of what constituted theatre? 'One of the problems of this society is that to survive or to get grants, you have probably got to be a bully because there's so much crap you've got to break through. The avant garde have to put a wall around themselves because they're very insecure and they have to gain

an identity within it, which I absolutely understand. We used to use a lot of heavy makeup and a lot of very extreme forms of contact with the audience which was alienating. Now we open ourselves much more to the audience and the more you open, the more you discover that you're not that different.'

Welfare State had been founded by John Fox in 1968 amidst that extraordinary mix of euphoria, revolutionary creativity and alternative empire building that ran through Europe at that time. How did he find the Britain of the Eighties? 'Here we are with the most reactionary Government this country has seen for decades. The idea of the Falklands happening after all the lessons that had been learnt at Suez, is to me just totally incredible and is an indication of a psychotic deathwish of late capitalist Europe. It's very disturbing because it's like the dinosaur lashing out with it's own tail.'

So had he become even more pessimistic now than he was then? 'Intellectually, I'm deeply pessimistic. Anyone who looks at the number of nuclear weapons in Europe or the greed or the failure to change anything has got to be deeply pessimistic. There are seeds of hope, though, like the Green Party in Europe or the women of Greenham Common. The fact that ordinary people are prepared to take up civil disobedience is enormously hopeful but it comes out of desperation and a complete disgust with the existing political structure.

Despite the gloomy outlook, Welfare State champion the cause of what they term 'pathological optimism'. They believe that the creativity released through making art has a power for change. Was this implicit responsibility for the artist being accepted or was it being ignored through an introverted stance that lead more naturally to the purer format of the gallery. Fox's views were typically forthright.

'I stopped teaching at Leeds Art School because it was like a greenhouse, and I felt like a farmer coming in from the fields to talk about turnips. If you grow turnips in a greenhouse you're going to get some pretty weird turnips, if at all. What happens is that the greenhouse or art college totally predetermines what kind of art you get. It's the structures of society that very much pre-determine the kind of art you get the artists have to look at the total picture and make alternative models. Now inevitably these models are very artificial and self-conscious but at least they contain the seeds of possible developments. Going back to Leeds, as I did the other week, you still see the same hardboard cells that people have built around themselves so that they can nurture their own egos in a completely artificial environment which is all extremely unhealthy. What I'm interested in is good art and why I go to the market place rather than the gallery is because the poetry comes from the market place. As Duke Ellington once said, if you're not prepared to play weddings in villages, you may as well pack it in. It's



## PROFILE

difficult to take work that is elitist and very precious into a broader context whereas I think that you can take the broader context work into an elitist setting. But it's horses for courses. You have to design the work for the immediate environment in mind and let the poetry drop into that. And sometimes you might curse because you have to make your images more accessible or maybe stomp around in the mud but it's salutary because you don't become separate. There's a lot of frightened artists in tight little packages all looking inwardly and if they could only be opened out more

by working together and being able to offer their services to the community, they would get a lot of pleasure from it and probably make some much better art.'

Welfare State present a totally compelling case for the necessity of a public and responsible art. Their work is a convincing demonstration that art within a broad setting benefits both the community and the artist. Their essential tool is a dynamic energy drawn from contrasts so strong that they touch on paradox. Their status is locally obscure but internationally famous. Their imagery is homely but

abstract, comforting and bizarrely disturbing. Their artefacts are made from scrapyard junk but their film is being shot on high quality negative stock. Their language is drawn as much from European expressionism as from the English folk tradition. Their energy confronts the urgent issues but replaces a wooden didacticism with wild, exciting images. Whereas some might offer an elegant shoe, finely modelled in a revivalist style, Welfare State offer a muddy wellington boot and transform it into a winged sandal.

**Phil Hyde**

### The Eye of The Peacock



Vicky Carter

# Nan Hoover

**Kate Elwes:** *You were once a painter, concentrating on the figure, and you now work with performance, photography and video. The human presence itself appears to be one of the links, one of the themes that run through these media stages. How did your current work evolve from those early paintings?*

**Nan Hoover:** I think, in my case, there are a few areas, that I'm particularly concerned with, and when I stopped painting and moved into performance work... you go from one into another and of course the medium changes, the tools you use change, but your nature and the things that concern you remain the same. The reason I stopped painting was in fact because I felt a need to go further, I needed another dimension, and I felt that somehow it would be with my body.

*How did you treat the body? Was it as a paintbrush? Was it as a human presence? Were you trying to say something specifically autobiographical? What was your approach to the human presence?*

I think that it was a combination of these things you have mentioned. I think that my paintings became very inverted, they became too obsessed with my own fantasies and I felt I no longer was communicating. When I changed and began work in performance, of course I wanted to go *out* again, I wanted to extend. To open up the sort of areas I felt had kind of closed in on my own creativity.

*What were those early performances like?*

I would say they were more *actions*, the very first ones, because I had no reference to performance. When I began video I had not seen video at all, and so I began from the point... with the images that had already developed through my painting. So I was very fortunate in this way, that I had no media influences, and I was really like a child beginning to learn from scratch.

*Were the images very similar to the one that I've seen subsequently where the figure is, in a way rather anonymous, or non specific, which makes it possible for us to project ourselves into that image? Or, were you wanting to present yourself as a very specific kind of woman? Were you anxious even then to leave the work open for some sort of interpretation, some sort of active engagement on the audiences part? That seems to be important in the later works that I've seen.*

Yes, this is true. But I don't think.... this is a process for me, I move slowly, I work very carefully and my changes are not dramatic, they're very subtle in development of my work, and I think this has been a process of elimination — eliminating the things that were not necessary any longer to express myself, and trying to come closer a kind of universal, or a point of communicating that had nothing to do with a specific time or location.

*In your videotapes you use the body as a kind of landscape, by*

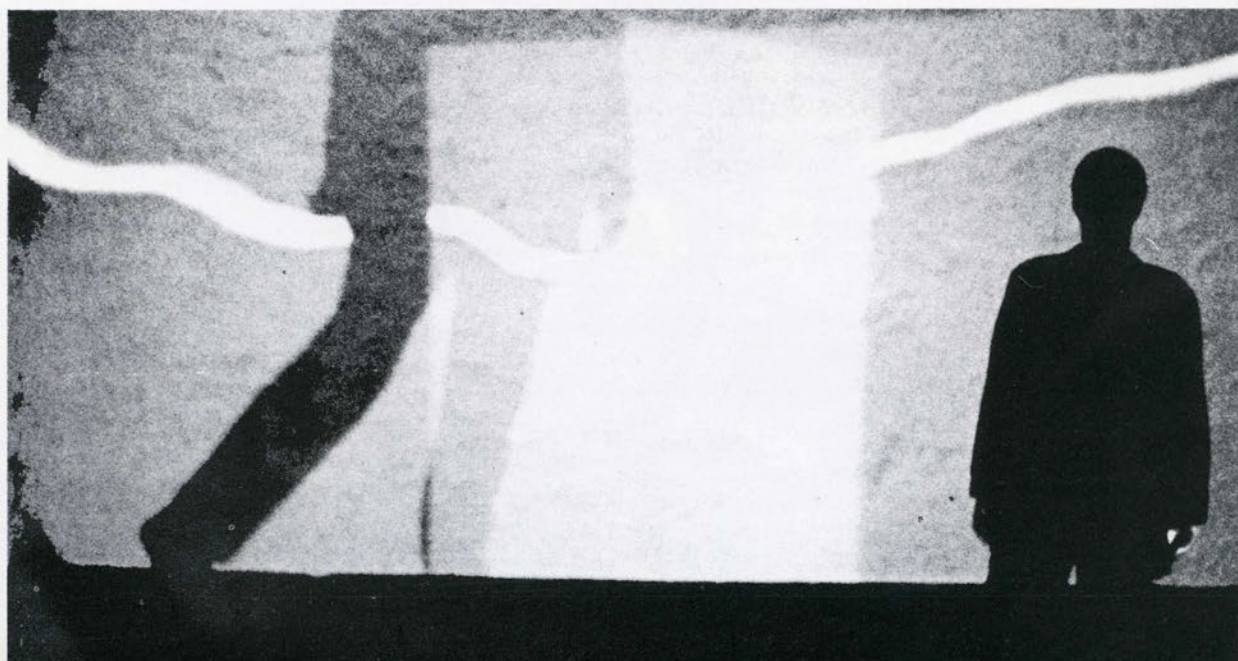
*using close-up lenses, so that the texture of the skin becomes amazingly crenellated and rough. You are able to either read the image as a body, or read it as a landscape, and you tend to oscillate between the two, and you become very aware of your own perceptual processes. That is the kind of activity I was trying to refer to before. They seemed very timeless, and the soundtrack was very sinister, more sounds than music. To what extent do those sorts of concerns flow into the performances?*

The preoccupation with landscape in relation to the body is coming from my own nature. It's a respect for the body, and the body beautiful. Our bodies are beautiful, and I think very often we abuse and misuse them, and at one point in about '76 I began, in video, relating the body to landscapes, and I did this in performances as well. It became a preoccupation with me, and I've developed out of that into now where I'm sometimes... or my figure itself becomes less important, and the shadows I'm casting become a predominant movement in a performance. The soundtrack, by the way, that you mentioned, is my breathing that has been recycled and slowed down. Regarding music, I would never use music in relation to my work because it would then pinpoint it too much. I prefer ambiguous sounds. For example, I'm fascinated by the sound of water in the radiator. Sounds that are familiar to you that are a presence in or are part of an environment, as opposed to a special score, written for a performance. This is for me not so interesting as the ambiguous sounds.

*What are you going to do here in Britain?*

In the case of Matts Gallery, as in the case of the Basement Group in Newcastle, the performance will be designed for the space. I of course have seen many beautiful photographs of Matts Gallery, but still the contact, the moment I come into the space I will begin to work. In the case of Newcastle, the night we arrived, it was when Ken Gill took us down by the bridges, and it was almost dark, and the buildings that are placed... sitting under the bridges, the arcs... I was so impressed, it had a combination of sinister and strangeness that I tried to... it was a starting point for the performance at the Basement. And then I went further and bounced beams of light off the pipes... you know, the top of the ceiling which I like very much, which in fact has a lot to do with those arches. I went back to photograph; I went back to see them at about five PM and the lights of the cars, the reflections from the windows as the cars went over the bridge were bouncing off the side of buildings, so you'd see these flashes. In fact I also used that impression within the performance, and bouncing light off the pipes, which had a similar... I could relate to the experience I had down by the bridge.

Shadows Through a Landscape 1981



## INTERVIEW

Nan Hoover is a video/performance artist living in Amsterdam whose earlier work, in particular her 'body landscape' videotapes have influenced many British artists. She was recently made a rare visit to this country, and performed her new work,

Intercept The Rays, using textures of light in a dynamic way around her body and the space. Between performances in Newcastle, Brighton, Cardiff and London, Kate Elwes talked to her about aspects of her work.



Lorne Fromer

Nan Hoover at A Space, Toronto 1982

*Something I found very interesting in your tapes, was that you take up a position which is in opposition to being too specific — that life is never so black and white. Our television culture gives us a very one-dimensional view, which we tend to then build into our thinking. You're trying to open out something else; attempting some kind of fusion or some kind of reconciliation of opposites. Would you say that was correct?*

Yes, I'm very interested in perception and how we perceive things. My main concern in a performance is the give and take between the audience and myself. The content of my work, I could say, is the internal world, the world of daydreaming, the world of reverie, the world when we are alone; the level or the depth is a better word, that we reach when we are in our silence. In our society, that is so diametrically opposed to this intimacy, this exploring within ourselves, I find it important, especially in the performances, that I give the public the space to go into themselves. I'm not interested in dictating my ideas, I'm interested in opening up...

*Do you think that we've lost the skill for that kind of introspection? Do you think that we ever stop long enough to find out what might be going on?*

I don't think that we ever lose it, it's always there. It's a question of whether or not we exercise it. It's the same thing with our bodies; if we don't take care of our bodies, our bodies will collapse, so to speak. I think that with television, and its influence, and how the amount of our intake is information... that's fine, but you must have digestion along with intake of the information, and if you don't have the digestion you have indigestion... it's quite logical. And this is a time, a moment in our society that there is a great deal of indigestion.

*When you talk about content in your work, can you safely say that it is not narrative? I'm thinking very much about the passage of time in your work.*

Or timeless.

*Or timelessness, yes. Someone did say that by presenting the work as a kind of continuum, in one of your photographs for instance, called Coming and Going, the two images actually present both movements, one hand is turned forward and the other is turned away. It would appear that you're both coming and going at the same time. It was suggested that by doing this you were placing yourself somehow historically in time. But I actually thought it was more indeed as you way, a for of timelessness that you're aiming for.*

I was very preoccupied at this period. I began this work two

years ago and I was very interested in... in order to go away we will have had to come, that there's this constant flow in life, of coming and going, of opening and shutting doors. I've also done a piece about doors. A torso, and a hand reaching out opening, drawing back, sometimes passing through the door. Sometimes coming to or going away. And I've done some videotape that I will be showing at Air Gallery called Movement from either Direction. And this is also a torso passing from one side to the other, and back, a kind of circular piece. And I think that for me it's a very interesting preoccupation that... this is the rhythm, there's so much of a rhythm in life, and the passage of time, and this is timeless, for me.

*And even in the presentation of your performance you would appear to be using long, horizontal strips of colour, across which you move. Which again suggests to me an extension. Like in your photographs where you extend the 35mm frame with another one. It's rather as if you were building a time structure.*

I like very much to change things. I have this rebel in me... if I have a format I want to immediately make into another size. And extend out. I've also done a piece with these negatives. I've done six negatives, and this piece is 3 metres 75 long. I'm fascinated with pulling things out.

*One of the things that happened a few years ago was that a group of feminist artists, myself among them, became very preoccupied with trying to redefine images of women. Finding more positive ways of representing ourselves which wouldn't be collapsed back into the usual sexist imagery. In seeing some of your tapes in which you use this idea of very very close... so close that you couldn't possibly reconstruct into the conventional image. Many of us, again, started working with fragments of the body... cribbing you absolutely! Using a close-up lens to examine the surface of the skin, or whatever. Some of adapted the ideas into rather didactic forms of feminist statement, saying 'this is what our bodies look like, that is what the media tries to make of us, this is reality against masculine fantasy. How do you feel about work which... do you in any sense try to redefine the image of woman, because that is obviously what the images are, they're of you. You are sometimes strangely androgynous. Do you like to play with that?*

Yes, very much so.

*But how do you feel about work which makes those sorts of statements? How do you feel about being adapted in this way?*

I have to say I'm enormously flattered. I can't think of a more beautiful comment on what I have tried to express for myself creatively. I didn't know this. But as far as the politics... I am a

woman. I enjoy being a woman. I love being a woman. I have had three children, and I'm very proud of them. But when I'm working I am a person. I'm neither a man or a woman. I don't think I have ever thought I am a woman... I am creating. It's always... I am creating. Of course when I meet young women, and they want to be creative, I will always open myself. Always. I'm very sensitive, of course, because I've come out of the 1950s. Which is very different from the 1980s. In regard to women. And I have an enormous appreciation for that. But creatively, and of course my creative life is my life... I support anyone who wants to work, whether it's a woman or a man. And of course, as a woman, I'm naturally very sympathetic to other women.

*Looking at some of the photographs of your performances, from the back, you could be a man or a woman. You're dressed in what looks like a dark suit. Have you found in this idea of stripping back towards some sort of essential, perhaps core experience, which a lot of people have argued with in the last few years. Have you found it necessary, equally, to strip away the very obvious signs of your femaleness?*

This is very, very consciously done. Simply because I want to be androgynous. I like the idea of... we are composed of male and female. A man has a female, a woman has a male. In me I have both. And this is what creativity comes from. And the moment you begin to understand these powers, these forces within you, this is when I... this is what you look for, this is where your great strength is. And as a woman of course I want to be as strong and be as clear as possible. And I don't want to... I see it unnecessary for myself... I appreciate women who are interested in the politics, and I think that's perfect... Everyone must do or feel what they believe in. I support that as a rule. And in myself I'm doing what I feel and what I do the best.

*But one could draw a politic from your relationship with the audience. It is a form of internal democracy that you set up in your work.*

Exactly.

*The audience is not a passive consumer of rigid and specific images. Similarly you could say that by adopting a form of androgyny, you are demanding a kind of whole woman. The stereotype is a very limited and specific sort of a woman. So that it's the work that carries the politic rather than you standing outside it saying — this is what my work is about in a very specific political sense.*

You have put it much better than I, because I often feel inadequate with words, and I think you've just expressed it absolutely perfectly.

*When you go to Matts Gallery do you think that you will be approaching it in a similar way to Newcastle whereby you may find something in the environment around the gallery or whatever that could inspire some sort of imagery. It would be an urban landscape of some kind which might then feed into the work...*

No, I don't consciously look for this. Not at all. Absolutely. This is by chance. You could say it was just chance that Ken took us down to the river that night. That was only chance, and no, I do not look consciously for this. My first concern is the space, and working within that context. If it happens, for example, the performance at Heidelberg was based by the mountain that was across from the river from Heidelberg centre. That was chance. That I should be sitting on the river because there was a 'Fest' in the city and I couldn't stand being around so many people. So,

no... I'm interested in the space, and what kind of feeling I can get from the space, and how I can use that space.

*What exactly are the elements that you'll be taking into the space?*

Well, they have the projectors, and I come with my little suitcase of gels and scissors and tape, and slide holders and then I take it from there. It's very much like building a painting for me. I approach it the same way, and in fact recently... I really feel what I'm doing at this moment especially has so much to do with painting with light. And I'm very interested in installations going even further and perhaps doing pieces that remain up, where the public can in fact walk within the projections and discover something that... you know, maybe even the ideal would be, if I did a performance, and the installation stayed up, and with the introduction that I've made via the performance, the public could then discover their own projection. Plato also went through this very much. He talked very much in the dialogue... if Man was in a cave, and could only have restricted vision, he saw Man as only in shadow. And then if you took him out of the cave... I'm not repeating this very well... and was confronted with the reality, how would he make the translation? Would he consider the shadow real, or would the way we consider the shadow be suddenly the reality? This contradiction, and the opposites that we have are very interesting to me.

*In a sense, when the audience see your performance, they think of themselves as the reality observing some kind of fantasy. And when you then stop the performance and allow them to become part of the fantasy, they're obliged to try and bring together the reality which is themselves and the fantasy that they're playing.*

Yes, it's interesting to see that.

...There is a sort of reverential attitude towards the beautiful colour of the installation, that people are very loath to interfere with. Particularly English people are very reticent, about moving into...

*They're very self conscious. There was this idea that participation had to be actual, had to be physical. That you only participated in a performance if you were dragged up to do something. Yet, participation that you talk about is actually a mental, perceptual process. But now you're extending it into a physical participation.*

I wonder, just as a proposition, if say the public, if you had stimulated their imagination, along with the imagination, wouldn't the curiosity be stimulated? And isn't it possible, because the work is not aggressive, it is not provoking, that maybe, they would not feel attacked and be more able to approach it. It may be more approachable. Possibly.

*Given the kind of barrage that comes to you, not only in your everyday life, from the media, it's very rare that anyone gives you an open invitation to do what you want. And yet we always assume that being able to watch TV all day is actually being able to do what we want. Is this something you're going to do?*

I propose it for another project because I haven't spoken to Matt, I mean Robin about it. I'm dying to meet Matt. (laughter)

*Matt'll literally knock you over. He's a huge dog.*

Really! But this is something I've been thinking about for about a year now, and have just not had the situation where I would be offered... But it is something I'm considering seriously and would like very much to do.

3 Yellow Pieces 1980

Lorne Fromer



# The Zap Club

In the last article in this series I looked at the relationship between performer and audience, and the importance of matching audience, work and venue. This month I travelled out of London to explore the performance nightlife phenomena at the Zap Club in Brighton, which turned out to be alive and well and thriving in a packed-out basement on the seafront.

The Zap Club is Brighton's venue for live performance, cabaret and video. Founded by Neil Butler and Roger Ely in 1978, it was created out of their dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities which existed for performers whose work fell outside the traditional parameters imposed by events such as the Brighton Festival, on which the two both worked at the time. After an initial period of four months in which space was provided for those (mainly local) artists to show their work, the club reopened in Easter 1982, progressing from monthly, to fortnightly then weekly shows of work from all parts of the country, as the demand for the whole gamut of performance work grew.

That important relationship between audience and performers was present at the Zap Club. Even on the night of my visit, with stiff competition from Madness and a popular local band elsewhere, the audience numbered well over a hundred, (usually more than double that) and they were loud and enthusiastic, cheering on the alternative comedy cabaret acts.

The importance of matching the work with the venue is clearly understood by Neil Butler, now the main organiser, MC and occasional performer, and this reflects in the club's programme. The relative lack of competition in Brighton makes the Zap Club the obvious choice for an evening's entertainment of 'alternative' live work, yet no less responsibility can be taken in the selection of work. Although I went on a night in which comedy and music predominated, I was assured of links with the Fine Art Department of Brighton Polytechnic, and that there was not more video shown was more due to a lack of regular access to proper equipment (which is now changing) than to a deliberate lack of interest in showing video work.

The whole ethos of the Zap Club is that it is a cross-event. Butler makes a point of putting on as wide a variety of artist(e)s as possible, so that John Hegley may rub shoulders with Roland Miller. In this way it is hoped that an audience which may have come specifically for one event or mode of performance will see another into the bargain, and that a cross-fertilisation of ideas will take place, or at the very least the enjoyment of a whole area of work one might otherwise have completely dismissed.

This is the beauty of multi-media events of course. The philosophy behind such programming emphasises the import-



ance of establishing a reputation specifically as an exciting place to go, so that an audience will flock because they know that the work is always varied, and that they will have a thoroughly good evening out, rather than having to rely on the pull of individual, well-known acts, a policy which has perpetually frustrated the efforts of so many young and unknown artists. Such a policy has been the mainstay of all establishment events and institutions, from the Brighton Festival to the ICA, and presents all kinds of restrictions which limit the potential of a truly exciting programme, and which the Zap Club manages successfully to avoid.

The flourishing of clubs such as the Zap Club and the Slammer, through to such elusive phenomena as the Dirt Box, marks the determination of a number of people to create a place of their own in which to do what they want and show the work they want to see, as opposed to that of the cultural dictates of establishment and commercial venues. This fragmentation

has provided the opportunity for work which would otherwise possibly never get shown to take place (not that this fact guarantees quality!)

I use the word 'fragmentation' rather than 'alternative', like that of the avant than 'alternative', since the very notion of 'alternative', like that of the avant garde, has ceased to have any meaning, defused by that oh-so-subtle, so British method described by Marcuse, whereby subversiveness is neutralised through its apparent acceptance by the establishment. This raises questions about how venues such as the Zap Club see their role, and the danger which exists in the notion of the court jester, the lunatic fringe whose existence merely serves to justify the centrality of the role of other more mainstream activities. In this respect the activities of clubs such as the Zap Club have an even greater responsibility, if they are to be regarded as truly important autonomous centres for live work.

Chrissie Iles

# Plunging into the Paperpool

Back in 1959 the American Henry Findlay invented the Paperpool. He was inspired by the ancient Egyptians, who had long known about the healing effect of the papyrusbath. Historians have ascertained that it was only many years later that papyrus was used for writing.

Some years passed before Laurence Remington acquired the plans for the paperpool. The first plant was constructed in 1967 in Shelbyville, Illinois. It was mainly used by businessmen from the big cities nearby.

During the seventies many people were searching for new forms of relaxation to relieve everyday-life-stress. Old ways such as bathing in the healing waters of the spa were revived. Coinciding with this development Henry Findlay's invention became popular through the whole spectrum of society.

At the World Science Conference 1973 in Managua scientists from various countries exploring the effect of the paperfilled room on the human body and mind, reported impressive results. This scientific affirmation promoted the construction of Paperpools in many parts of the world.

Friday night, West Berlin, winter 1983. I had made my way to Lausitzer Platz in the heart of Kreuzberg, sometimes known affectionately as 'the Ghetto' (Much later the same night I was to witness a piece of live street art involving a mass exodus from a Turkish cafe through a side window to the accompaniment of small-arms fire. Totally unrehearsed.) I was pleased to be going to a party, my first of the year. Finding the house I ascended the staircase at the rear of the courtyard to

the 4th floor. The door to the apartment was open. I went in, walked down a short corridor and came into a large white room – a typical fabric stage, full but not crowded. Some people were sitting talking. Some were sitting smoking. Others were standing. Many were dancing, most were eating. The plants were growing quietly in the rockery. It was a nice normal party, I relaxed and started to circulate. First stop dinner. I ate bread, cheese and pineapple I drank Italian red wine. It was then that I noticed, in a corner, a doorway.

Through the doorway the dance music of the main party became background. I smelt perfume. A group of perhaps 30 people stood in the middle of the wooden floor, their attention focused on the far end of the room. I joined them to view the art. A blue carpet covered the floor at the end of the room, it gave the white walls a super-clean shimmer. A photo portrait hung on the wall. (I was to learn later that it was Laurence Remington.) Two white shirted officials were accommodated behind two blue topped desks. They looked comfortable in their work. Briefcases were in evidence. Chairs awaited clients. I smelt more perfume. I had arrived in the office of the International Paperpool Corporation.

It wasn't long before my chance came; not all of the assembled audience were keen to do more than observe. I stepped onto the blue carpet and approached the vacant bureau. The greeting was a handshake and a polite smile. Guten Abend Guten Abend, I sat down. The poolguide introduced himself (John Phillips was his name.) He explained that I was present at an introductory preparation for future visits to the multitude of Paperpools throughout the

world. First of all however he had some forms for me to fill in. I did as he watched. Then he explained that he had some music for me to listen to. He gave me pair of headphones and instructed me to place my hands on the desktop and my forehead on the raised nodule prominent through the felt desk surface. I was, he told me, to remain in this position until the music stopped.

The music started – it was grade I muzak – more I can't remember. I smelt more perfume. I thought – 'so this is the Paperpool' – my feet began to shuffle under the desk. Several minutes later the tape came to an end, I sat slowly upright. Brainwashed? No. Relaxed? Yes. The Poolguide paused, allowing me time to adjust to the bright room again before he commenced with a few questions. Did I feel comfortable with paper? Did I believe in astral projection? I was also required to write my name backwards. He seemed to approve of my responses, and as he quietly nodded he made some bureaucratic adjustments to his many papers and then gave me a membership card for the Paperpool. It was signed by Laurence Remington himself. After this I rose smiled and shook hands before drifting back over the blue carpet into the curious crowd.

Here is how another client described her visit to the Paperpool proper last summer.....

'Friends told me about this new experience they had going through a room filled with blue paper. It was in August 1982 that I went to the Kreuzberger Kulturzentrum to see what it was about.

Coming into the lobby of this model plant I was welcomed by a young man in a

Poolguard, Poolminister and Poolguide





Paperpool Corporation

blue shirt. He gave me some brief information about the Paperpool International Corporation. On the walls I could see photographs and maps from Paperpools all over the world. From a large table I took an information sheet and an orientation plan. Filling in the form A to apply for a one time visit I noticed soft music and a smell of eau de cologne drifting from the next room.

Entering the pooloffice I was asked to take a seat in the waiting area. I sat down and looked around. The room was quite big, approximately 10 by 10 meters, a soft blue atmosphere pervading. In the waiting area was a table with newspapers and magazines surrounded by six comfortable armchairs. Again I could hear the soothing music. The smell of eau de cologne now mixed with a light tinge of chlorine. It reminded me of the smell in the dressing room of a public swimming pool.

I had just picked up one of the magazines in front of me when I heard my name being called. It was the Poolminis-

ter's voice. He was sitting behind a large desk on the other side of the room. The Poolminister, Mr. Peter Aldin, was a correct looking man in his thirties; his behaviour was polite although rather officious. He asked me to sit down on a simple chair in front of the desk. On the table was a typewriter, files and regulations. While he was typing out the forms I read through the rules concerning conduct during a Paperpool visit. He asked me a few more questions and then signed form B, which entitled me to a one time visit. I had to pay 2,70 DM cover charge.

With form B I went over to the Poolguide's desk. It was next to the Poolroom entrance. Friendly and smiling the Poolguide, Mr. John Phillips, took the form and offered me a seat. He gave me last precautionary instructions on how to go through the Paperroom, illustrated by drawings on a big board. On the desk was a 'BRUT' aerosol, refreshments and an oxygen mask from which I inhaled three times.

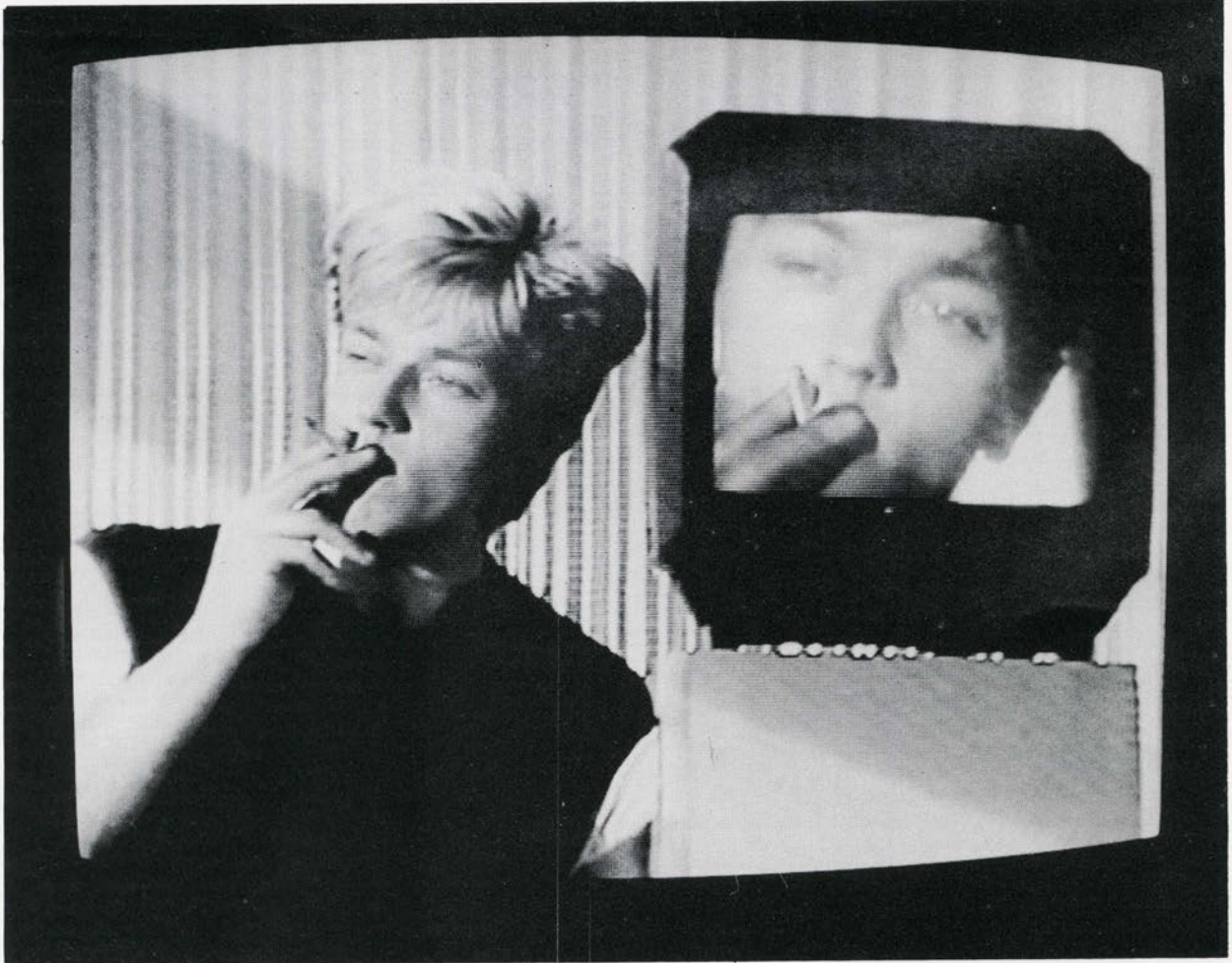
I took off my jacket, put my handbag and wristwatch in a plastic box and entered the poolroom. The Poolguard, Mr. Yoshikazu Koga, was awaiting me inside. He handed me the end of a rope which led into the paper. I must have looked slightly scared but Mr. Kogo said not to worry, his task was to watch over me and assist in any kind of trouble. The he climbed on his high lookout chair. With my left hand on the rope I bent over and used my right hand to move the paper in front of me behind as I was told by the Poolguide. I was covered with soft crumbled blue paper. The rope connected three poles inside the Poolroom forming an equilateral triangle each side approximately 5 meters long. On the way I could hear the friendly voice of the Poolguard. He encouraged me to go on and told me always to keep my feet on the ground.

When I completed the triangle he opened the door for me and I was back in the office room. The Poolguide offered me a seat to relax and handed me a glass of spring water. I received a stamped certificate of my first Paperpool visit.

I went to the statistician's room as I was requested. Mr. Arnold Tremper asked me a number of questions concerning my person and my experience with the Paperpool. I was assured that all my answers would be dealt with in strictest confidence and were for statistical use only. I felt relief talking to somebody after going through such an impressive experience.

I am afraid I cannot give a complete picture of what I really felt like during the thirty minutes in the office and especially inside the actual Paperroom. I can only say, I recommend the visit of a Paperpool plant to everyone.'

The performance 'Paperpool' was conceived in West Berlin in July 82 and was realized in the same city one month later by Stefan Karlson and Thomas Ziebarth. Stefan Karlson is a painter from Sweden, he has had exhibitions in his home country and in Italy. In 1981 he went to New York for a year and while there became fascinated with Muzak. After a number of introspective experiments, from which he became acquainted with the 'valium/morphine effect' of muzak with a tempo slower than the normal heart rate, he began to work on ways to turn his interest into a performance. It was then that he met with Thomas Ziebarth, a Berliner, who was playing with 'Krankhafte Phantasten' at the time. On return to the walled city they created the world of Paperpool International, structuring it around muzak and minimal acting. For the future they plan a 24 hour performance for reasons of personal inquiry into the effects of paper politics on themselves as well as for the public. They aim to immerse participants, in a living exhibition of contemporary office life, in paper and confusion. The industrial fairs of Leipzig and Frankfurt are to them highly attractive possible venues. I shall follow with interest the progress of these artists and echo the words on my membership card 'confusion is progress'...



John Scarlett Davis — A-Z

## Who Is Watching Whom?

We've all come to learn that in spite of the mass of gadgetery, the process of TV is just a means of communication between the producer and the audience. It's a heart warming thought that the producer hires his script-writer, who puts words into the mouth of someone whose image is turned into electrons, encoded, transmitted, received, decoded and turned back from electrons into a visible image — what could possibly go wrong?

Short of a spanner in the works, or an absolute failure on the producer's part to understand how the medium works, not much. Or so you'd think. You don't need to remove yourself far from a belief in the absolute supremacy of technology to realise that even if all the micro-chips perform up to scratch the problem is the eternal one of 'do the two parties (i.e. producer and viewer) understand each other'. I'm hardly going to bring the broadcast establishment to its knees if I suggest that there are times that they don't. They've grown used to people saying it. The question that I am interested in pursuing is 'is the nature of the producer animal so differ-

ent from the viewer animal that the two are irreconcilably incompatible?'

If you find this notion far-fetched, let me quote to you the words of one highly respected documentary producer: 'it's going out at nine o'clock, and people aren't ready for hard stuff at that time. What I've got to do is sneak round behind them, while they're not looking, and clobber them over the head.' Hardly the basis for an amicable relationship.

These thoughts have been brought on after watching a remarkably accurate critique of TV produced on video tape by the person with whom this column is normally shared, Catherine Elwes. Her tape *The Critic's Informed Viewing* is one of the many available for view at the ICA Videotheque.

There's nothing new in video producers using their medium to cast a careful eye over the activities of those other video producers who happen to work for the broadcasting companies, and it might well seem that the mileage to be made out of this work is limited. There is the Marxist critique, the feminist critique, and all of

the others. So what else can be contributed to this David and Goliath struggle?

As it happens, Catherine Elwes doesn't break new ground in these arguments; most of her comments relate to points of feminism or racism. But she isn't trying to make a statement of searing originality. Rather, she is doing what the TV producers so often fail to do, which is to build up a realistic view of the audience who will watch her tape, respect their intelligence, and find a way of communicating with them that is both enjoyable and stimulating.

She shares with Albert Hunt (in a 1981 IBA funded research project) the view that the *curriculum* is not composed of the informative and educational output of ITV and BBC, but of its entertainment programmes. That's what people watch, and that's where their information comes from. Catherine Elwes goes a step further by admitting to her own childhood intake, which centred largely around Top of the Pops. She states that her view of the world was largely drawn from what producers of programmes such as this chose to present,



and with the benefit of hindsight has chosen to look again at those programmes, and see just what they did to her 'impressible' mind.

It may sound rather dry and academic, but it isn't. The means she chose were a gentle ramble through a Thursday night's viewing (including, of course, Top of the Pops). The technology she uses is staggeringly simple: she recorded her viewing of early evening TV on one night (complete with channel changes), was herself recorded watching the same whilst consuming a TV snack, and dubbed her thoughts about it all on afterwards. The result is precise and affecting. She is talking about the same stuff we watch every night, and is adding what is going on in our minds while we watch. Or rather what *could* be going on in our minds as we watch — not that we don't criticise, but we don't do so with half the wit or intelligence she is capable of. And it's the sheer fact that she doesn't try to beat us over the head with an ice-pick that makes the viewer interested in what she is saying. She has leap-frogged the political stereotypes, and found a way of talking to us that is well worth listening to. She has also learned the lesson of her experience in front of the TV: we don't want to be preached to, made to feel rather ignorant or inferior, we want to be entertained, but intelligently.

Of course, while she is doing this, she is exercising absolute editorial control over what we see and hear. Just like television. Sometimes her choice is provocative. I was rather getting into a piece of Top of the Pops schmalz, and didn't feel like being told that 'the sight of these women.... pisses me off', until she said why: 'you only see the butch looking ones in a long shot, the camera just sticks in close up on the dolly bird'. (Fair enough, I hadn't noticed) — 'you don't notice it unless you watch it again' (thank you!). It's an extraordinary sensitivity that can produce material about what you are thinking — the kind of real dialogue that we think we get from TV, but are frequently seduced into believing has happened. When she has reached a consensus with you, the odd shock effect seems relieving rather than annoying — screen goes from wild gyration to white void: 'good song but look at the dancing' (yes it was pretty awful, and the song rates o.k.ish so why not listen to the music and blank out the screen? Everyone has enough knobs on their TV to do it at home.)

The fact that The Critic's Informed Viewing is a meander through the meandering thoughts of a viewer meant the subject matter was not mono-directional. The kind of thing a TV producer wouldn't dare do. Catherine Elwes offers views on, amongst others, the effects of the size of an image on the screen, the pleasures of anxiety being served up to you without having to leave your armchair and the erection symbolism of both ads and made-for-TV American pulp. She has only started to tap an enormous wealth of opinion.

Meanwhile our TV producer has been: 'spending hours driving round a council

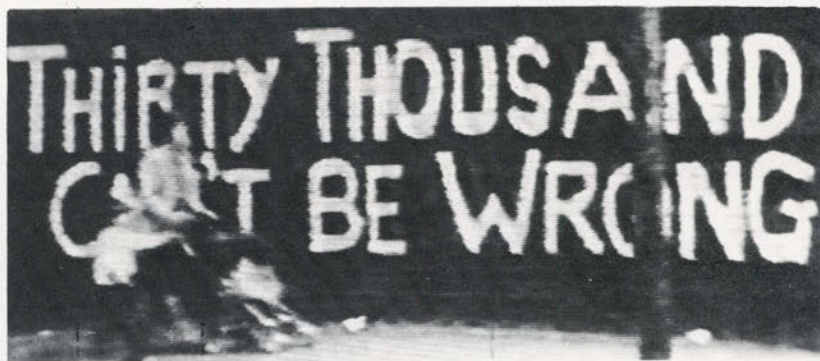
estate, trying to work out what those buggers will think'. I'm not claiming that Catherine Elwes' tape would appeal to *any* audience — but it does to the audience who will care to watch it. She doesn't need to work out how to manipulate the nation's brainwaves, and why should anyone else? What's so hot about *mass* media anyway?

But it's there, and it's difficult to ignore. So I tried a little experiment myself. At every available moment over a couple of days I planted myself in front of a TV and looked at what the producers would offer. And I was lucky. Now, at risk of losing my invitation to all of this year's parties, I have to admit that I am that rare creature, that hiccup in the JICTAR ratings, a documentary nut. I love documentaries, I loathe the missing one, and curse when two are scheduled alongside each other on different channels. But it does have its advantages. The relationship between the producer (often also the director, and frequently the narrator/interviewer/presenter to boot) is more immediately close with the audience. They can say something, without the need for ciphers, and we can hear.

Amongst the TV wallpaper I found a

producer put on the spot (in a live interview), a newsreader, and a journalist. A fair sample of the people who condition our view of the world we live in. I also found Top of the Pops, and decided any attempts to regain my lost youth were futile.

The immediate impression that I formed about each of them was that they felt like members of a threatened race, who were struggling to preserve their lives and values against marauding barbarians. Some with more justification than others. In the mouth of Rafik Halabi, a journalist offering what is widely considered a rare insight into the West Bank, one can have sympathy in his expression of Reithian values of balance, looking at all sides of an argument, whilst ducking the verbal mortar attacks of the Israeli government, and arab nationalists alike. When those same values have to be hauled out of the closet by Sandy Gall, you start to wonder what's going on. Have they just become a barricade to hide behind? After two days I was thoroughly sick of people talking about the freedom of the press. Why not just answer the question? Why do they feel so vulnerable? Because they are attacked,



London Media Research Group



Chris Newman — Bodily Functions

sure. But don't they realise that they are inhabiting the greatest fortress of power that has ever been created?

You learn quickly that their view of their position is a long way from what you imagine. But how can you swallow their impression when you hear, at the same time, of anecdotes of well known interviewees (who happen at the time to be enjoying the rich financial rewards of training top business folk to appear on TV) telling their students: 'you answer my question, and don't argue. If you don't, I will destroy you. I know how to do it. I can crush you'. Which view do you want to believe? Do they have to feign humility because it is immodest to proclaim power, or just because that is the length of leash that they think we are prepared to give them? Do they espouse *balanced coverage* because they believe in it, because it's what the Broadcasting Authorities demand, or because they are *afraid* of us, and over-value the power we have over them? Let's see what the producer had to say.

Max Bloomstein produced, directed and interviewed a number of people serving life-sentences in his TV blockbuster documentary 'Lifer'. Straight afterwards he was hauled up to be pilloried in a live discussion. The interviewer was that archetype of journalistic integrity, the master

of both balanced view and critical analysis, Robert Kee. There was time to make a cup of tea while the producer went through the formalities of 'the audience were warned at the start of the programme....', 'the television's got an "off" switch....' and 'I'm dealing with an adult audience....', before the all important question was asked.

Were you aiming to make a programme that exposed the conditions "lifers" have to live under, or were you trying to show these people as they are'. A fair question, and deserving an honest reply (unless the whole studio discussion was stage-managed in advance). And what do we get? 'Both, I was attempting to present both the people and the system they live in'. An appalling cop-out that fooled no-one, neither in the studio nor at home. You simply cannot make a three hour film of people talking to a camera, however interesting what they have to say, without something far more interesting emerging in the course of the programme. He undoubtedly believed that the life-sentence system was wrong, and created a documentary that would illustrate just that fact. So why wouldn't he answer the question? Surely he wasn't afraid of being beaten in a studio discussion? I suggest the reason is that he wanted to preserve the illusion to the viewer that

they had been watching a 'balanced' documentary, whilst, in reality, he had been coaxing and forming their opinion through immensely careful construction and between interview comments so that the *real* view the viewer *should* hold by the end was uncontrovertible. However good his motives, his methods stink. At worst, his view, and that of other programme makers is that we are a near mindless rabble whose views have to be shaped in much the same way as a programme does.

We aren't. We aren't even definable as one audience. Our society is composed only of a loose amalgam of minorities of opinion. When somebody stops seeing us as a mindless threat, as a leviathan to be thrown morsels of appeasement, we might start to have some television worth watching.

Still unconvinced? I recall attending a TV 'your chance to ask awkward questions to politicians' programme some years ago. We, the mass, the viewers incarnate, were instructed by the presenter to 'speak from the heart, not the mind'. I.e. ensure that the politicians and TV personalities came over as serious and thoughtful, while we could be seen to be ridiculously emotional, unintelligent, a rabble. Why? Because that's what they thought we were anyway.

Pete Shelton

Jean-Luc Godard — France Tour/Detour



# NATIONAL PERFORMANCE LISTINGS

## NATIONAL PERFORMANCE LISTINGS

# NATIONAL PERFORMANCE LISTINGS

### Brighton

#### Zap Club

Info: (0273) 506471  
*April 30:* Patrick Fitzgerald, Anne Clark, Oblivion Boys  
*May 13:* Roger McGough, Pavilion Theatre Brighton  
*May 13:* Extremists in an Igloo, Seething Wells, Dave Curtis  
*May 14:* ADBC Workshop in Muse/Museum; Jim Barclay, Ian Polsten Davis  
*May 20:* The Mivvys in Cabaret, Christine Ellerbeck  
*May 21:* Birds with Ears, Roy Hutchins, Mark Miwurdz  
*May 28:* Richard Robinson, Oogle Ooglebox, John Hollingsworth.  
 Events taking place between May 13-21 form part of Brighton Festival.

### Bristol

#### Arnolfini

Info: (0272) 299191  
*April 9:* Ronne Lowensteyn — Line Alliance, Performance. Line and movement have been predominant features in the work of Dutch jeweller Ronne Lowensteyn. For her first major showing in this country she has devised a performance piece with international dancer Willy Verkuil.  
*April 9 - June 11:* Ronne Lowensteyn, exhibition: Her new sculptures are intended to be moveable and by using them in conjunction with the human form they will relate more directly to her smaller, wearable work.

### Cardiff

#### Chapter Arts Centre

Info: (0222) 45174/371295  
*April 1:* Special Celebration, event devised by the Lab and members of the Polish Company, Akademia Ruchu. The performance takes the themes of Easter and reveals them in a different way. Music, spectacle and song.  
*April 2:* Wedding Reception: Cardiff Lab. will be joined by specially invited guests for a series of 'Wedding gifts; — songs, short performances and music.  
*April 8-9:* The Wedding — Cardiff Lab. Theatre.  
*April 12-16:* Heart of the Mirror, a powerful and disturbing production about male domination.  
*April 6:* The City Orchestra, outdoor performance, City Centre, Gala Concert.  
*April 5:* Musicians, individuals or groups invited to participate in Gala concert of musical anarchy.  
*April 21-23:* Piccolo Theatre in 3 performances Un Po' Per Non Morire (1st night), Il Giardino (2nd night), Vesitions D'Antan (3rd night).

### Devon

#### Dartington Hall

Info: (0803) 863466  
*May 14-15:* First Dartington Festival of Performance Art & Visual Theatre. Artists invited include: Shirley Cameron, Rose English, Anna Furze, Alistair McLennan, Roland Miller, Carlyle Reedy, Trevor Wishart, and writing by Angela Carter. Also work by students from Dartington College of Arts.

### London

#### Air Gallery (London Video Arts)

Info: (01) 734 7410  
*April 7:* 'Technology & meaning': Video tapes by Mick Hartney (Implied State) Steve Hawley (Bad Reasons) & Richard Layzell (Eye to Hand).

*April 9:* Allen Fisher: ideas on the culture dreamed of and Paige Mitchell

*April 16:* Chris Cheek; The Jitters (Fears of possessions). Ghosting. Body. A chain of events. A family of disturbances. All events commence 7pm.

*April 23:* Ranters Revenge (The alternative poetry olympics). Little Dave, Benjamin Zephaniah, Seething Wells, Little Brother, Joolz and Attila The Stockbroker & Surprise Ranters, Videos and records. Tickets on sale in advance from B2, Compendium Books and the Ritzy Cinema.

*May 28:* Dave Stephens and Tony Moorhead.  
 Unconfirmed visit by Kathy Acker May 21.

Ride Again with Jeff Nuttall, Diz Willis, Lol Coxhill, Bob Cobbin and Clive Fencott, at the Gypsy Queen, 166 Malden Road NW5.  
*May 13:* An evening with 'The Oral Complex', with Bob Cobbing, Clive Fencott and John Whiting at the LMC, London.

#### Half Moon Theatre

Info: (01) 791 1141  
*April 10:* Regular Music — ensemble currently following an exciting new path in 'system' music, plus The Copy 'possible Pop music' distilled from dub reggae, Tamla, Weill, Jazz, Beefheart, disco-funk, Lee Wiley, Henry Cow and others.  
*April 14-16:* For Coloured Girls who have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf, by Ntozake Shange. A serious and humorous look through dance and drama at the social and emotional development of black women in various cities of the United States.  
*April 17:* Black Theatre Co-op Benefit for Colin Roach.  
*April 26 onwards:* Hull Truck presents The Adventures of Jasper Ridley; An Adventure Story of two unemployed youths travelling through Britain during the 'International Year of the Unemployed Young Person'.

#### ICA

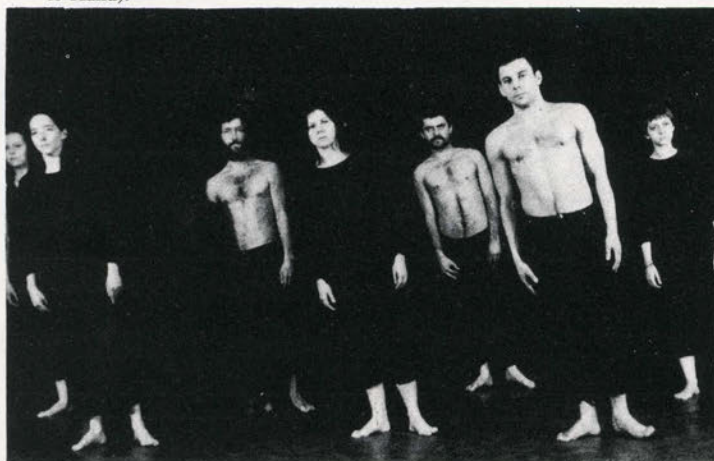
Info: (01) 930 3467  
*April 1 - May 1:* The Non-Stop Video Show (see Video section in this issue). Find out about specially selected programme in the newly published free catalogue at the Videothèque.

*April 5-17:* Eurocheck: A fortnight of theatre from Poland, Italy and Belgium.

*April 5-10:* Akademia Ruchu. Polish company currently resident at Chapter, Cardiff. They will perform a selection from their current repertoire: Other Dances, English Lesson, Autobus, and Daily Life after the French Revolution.

*April 12-14:* Piccolo Teatro di Pontedera present three of their recent shows on three consecutive nights. Vestitions d'Antan is dedicated to the wardrobe of Eleonora Duse. Un po' per non morire is an intellectual, grotesque and scandalous show, the subject Puccini's own life and music. Il Giardino is loosely based on Chekhov's Cherry Orchard.  
*April 15-17:* Teidrie — Theatre of the Third World. Their London show, King Gilgamesh is an obstinate interpretation of the Gilgamesh epic, the oldest known mythical cycle of stories.  
*April 26-27:* Impact Theatre — No Weapons for Mourning

*April 20-29:* Mary Miss —



Akademia Ruchu.

*April 14:* South Africa: Two Views: Katinka Gordon 'The Three Screams': Mick Hartney: 'Orange Free State'.

*April 21:* The Basement Group: performance, video & film from the group who run Newcastle's Basement, the north's venue for live art (see review this issue).

*April 26:* Installation/performance by New Zealand artist Peter Gibson.

*April 28:* Twin Art: Ellen & Lynda Kahn, New York video artists presenting a selection of tapes made since 1978.

#### Almeida

Info: (01) 226 7432  
*April 19-30:* That Not It Company presented 'Ariadne's Afternoon', a new performance directed by Pierre Audi. No performances  
*April 25-26:* 2 performances 23 & 30 April.

#### B2

Info: (01) 488 9815  
 Performing the Word, a series of work incorporating the use of film, slides, sound and actions.  
*April 2:* Bob Bobbing/Clive Fencott

#### Bloomsbury Theatre

Info: (01) 387 9629  
*April 11-23:* Mario Maya — Gypsy Flamenco Theatre. Musical theatre in which the entire cast, including the guitarists and singers, take part in the dramatic action, the theme being the persecution of the gypsies in Spain, and by analogy of minorities everywhere.

#### Chisenhale Dance Space

Info: (01) 981 6617  
*May 20-26:* Dance Talks: Dead Centre or Live Art, open week events, workshops, conferences, performances, parties all weeks. if you would like to take part get in touch soon.

#### Drill Hall

Info: (01) 631 1353  
*Until April 10:* Monstrous Regiment in 3 Monologues — I'm Ulrike, I'm Screaming — Muller, Freaked Out Muller/Diary of a Prostitute in a Madhouse. By Dario Fo and Franca Rame.

#### Eccentric Enterprises

Info: (01) 969 7019  
*April 1:* The Australian Dancers

# NATIONAL PERFORMANCE LISTINGS

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**Installation:** Possibly the biggest sculpture ever to be built inside a gallery in Britain. Requires the viewer to walk inside and around a partly open, partly maze like structure.

### London Musicians Collective

Info: (01) 722 0456  
Regular performances of improvised and experimental music, dance performance, films & wild activity. Club-club-night most Thursdays, concerts organised by members, most Fridays and Saturdays, special women's clubnights, festivals — phone our ansaphone for details.

### Oval House

Info: (01) 735 2786  
May 5-6: 'Zuriya' — storytelling, dance and drumming.  
May 7-8: Lanzel Afrikan Arts.  
May 11-15 and 18-22: Oval Jazz Workshop production with guest performers to be announced.  
May 25-29: 'Scarlet Harlets' in 'Out of Bounds', and 'Burnt Bridges' in 'Special Powers'.  
June 4-5: 'Brothers and Sisters', Gay Deaf Theatre Group  
June 8-12: Siren Theatre Co. in 'From the Divine'.

### South Hill Park

Info: (0344) 27272  
April 23: Foundation Stone Fling. Buskers and music groups throughout the afternoon, plus performances by Bracknell Drama Club, East Berk. Operatic Society and the Park Theatre Workshop. 12.00 noon — Foundation Stone Ceremony with Sir Michael Tippett, including the European premiere of his Wolf Trap Fanfare. 12.30pm The Alternative Theatre Opening with Baron Alban.

### Leicester

#### Live Art Works

Info: (0724) 660143  
April 7: Peter Wilson/Dave Stephens. Wilson is a painter and performer. Colours in his paintings are vivid, and the human-non-human menageries Wilson portrays edge from real-life into satirical fantasy. In the Live Arts Works programme he will be presenting a new work in 2 part 'Desk-Bound'. The subject matter of Stephen's monologues ranges through fantastic interconnections and non-sequiturs, word play and free association. Like strong meat, Stephens is not for delicate digestions, but he is always funny.'

### Manchester

#### PAT (Various venues)

Info: (061) 224 0020  
April 28-29: 784 (England) Theatre in Jimmy Riddle and

'Tickertape and V Signs' by Peter Cox.

April 30: Tara Arts in Ancestral Voices.

May 4: Mivvy Mime Company in Queen Kong.

May 11: Tony & Derek in Wagner's Ring.

May 25: Yorkshire Actors Company in Bouncers.

Plus other shows to be announced — ring for details.

### Newcastle

#### Basement Group

Info: (0632) 614527  
April 16-23: Alfred Harbich-Khan-Swastica (exhibition). Research into origins and history, uses and abuses of the swastica symbol.  
April 16: Charlie Hooker in Mainbeam. A performance with cars and pedestrians at Gateshead multi-story car park. Special buses laid on — not to be missed.  
April 30: Sandra Elear and Robyn Hutt: Performance. Deals with sexual politics, researched from visits to leather bars, gay bars and sex shops in the US.  
May 7: Ellen and Lynda Khan — Video, Poodle Paper. Also Dan Bradford — Performance.  
May 13: Bruce Maclean at Elswick Swimming Pool. 'A fashion show avec beaucoup de difference. Synchro swimmers and muzica interessant. Coach parties welcome.' A Basement Group Event of the Year.  
May 16-19: Sid Smith. Work in progress and installation (Performance on May 18).  
May 20: Richard Layzell in Song Song. Large scale performance for 11 people. 'A performed piece with highly musical qualities. Based on residency at Wimbledon Art College.

### Nottingham

#### Midland Group

Info: (0602) 582636/7  
April 14-15: Julyen Hamilton & Matthieu Keyser present 'Musk', music and dance.  
April 21-22: Bloodgroup present 'Dirt' — the sex of theatre and the theatre of sex.  
April 29-30: Centre Ocean Stream present 'Theatre of Colour'. Demonstrations of make-up technique 2-3pm on 29 April, 3-4pm on 30 April.  
May 6-7: Rat Theatre, 'The Assassin' by Joseph Kite performed by Peter Sykes.  
May 13: Intermedia presents 'Threeway' — a collaboration between actor, singer and dancer.  
May 19-20: Elaine Loudon presents Mitzi Wildebeeste.  
May 25: Michael Smith, Jamaican

### Dave Stephens



Dub Poet, to be performed at the International Community Centre, Nottingham.

May 28: The Copy, Jan Steele's 'possible pop and mood music'.

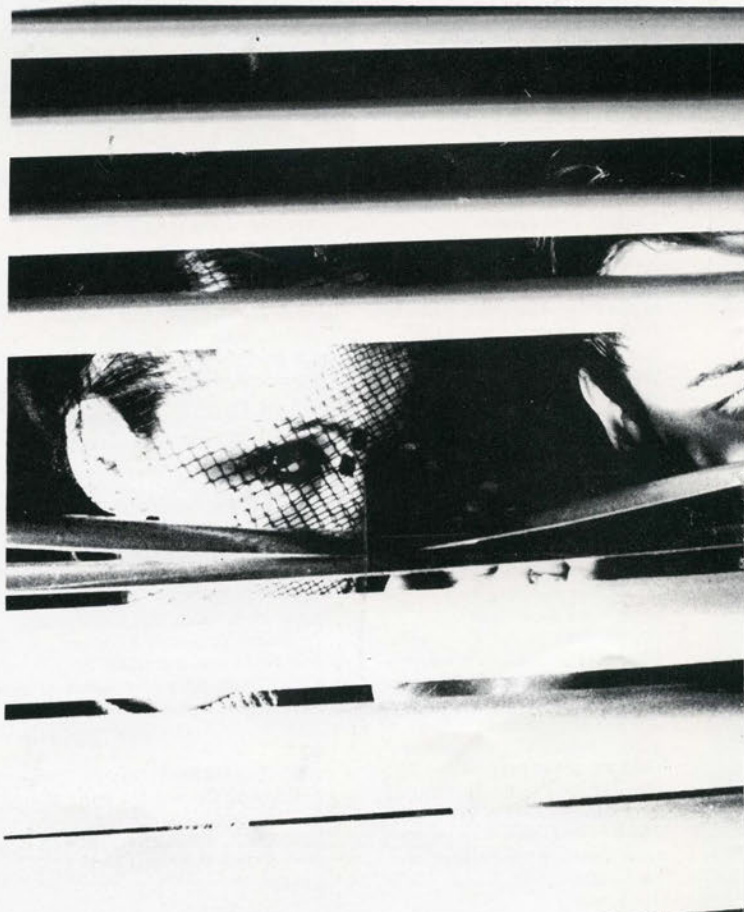
June 1: One + One. New music for 2 amplified violins.

June 2: A Little Westbrook Music — Mike and Kate Westbrook.

### Rochdale

#### Rochdale Art Gallery

Info: (0706) 47474 Ext. 704  
Rochdale Performance Collective was recently formed to programme experimental live art at this new venue, and also to tour as artists. Dates unconfirmed, but a report of their activities to appear soon.



Impact Theatre

# NATIONAL PERFORMANCE LISTINGS

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### Touring

#### Action Space Mobile Events

Info: Info: 0742 643593

April 13: The Society of Victorian Time Travel, Barnet Playscheme.

April 15: 'Don't Ask Me, I Can't Draw' exhibition, Cartwright Hall, Bradford.

April 23: Family Arts Project, Hurlfield Campus.

May 1: 'Pushing Your Luck' Eastbank Festival, Hackney.

May 2: 'Pushing Your Luck', Essex Highways Department.

#### Centre Ocean Stream

Info: (0962) 714367

Theatre of Colour takes the audience into a world of rich glowing colours and then into the blackness and magic of the imagination. The performance incorporates the disciplines of painting, drama and music to turn the stage into a mass of moving colour.

April 14: Gosport & Fareham Arts Centre, Hants.

April 20: Thornbury Arts Festival, Nr. Bristol.

April 22-23: Bonar Hall, Dundee University, Dundee, Scotland.

April 27: Aberystwyth Arts

Centre, North Wales.

April 29-30: Midlands Group Arts Centre, Nottingham.

May 13-14: St. Luke Theatre, Exeter University, Exeter.

May 16-17: Shaftesbury Hall, Cheltenham, Glos.

#### Impact Theatre

Info: 0532 445972

New Show — No Weapons For Mourning. (See review this issue)

April 2: Liverpool Everyman

April 15-16: Dovecot Arts Centre, Stockton)

April 19-20: Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham.

April 21: Wimbledon Art College

April 26-May 7: ICA

#### Intermedia

Info: 673 4522

Intermedia present Threeway, a piece about human and structural relationships in both art and reality. It tells a story of aspirations, differences and affinities through an integrated tapestry of images, sounds and words.

May 4-5: Battersea Arts Centre

May 6-7: Arnolfini, Bristol

May 8: Chapter, Cardiff

May 14: Brighton Polytechnic

(Festival performance weekend)

May 19-20: Jacksons Lane, London

#### Natural Theatre Company

Info: (0225) 310154

1/2 April 1: Bike Treasure Hunt, Bath and environs. Street Theatre

April 2-3: 'Bath Weekend', Bike Holiday, Bath and environs. Street Theatre

April 4: Bath to Wells Sponsored Bike Ride in aid of Bath Arts Association and Natural Theatre Co. Street Theatre. For details contact: 0225 310154

April 6-9: Presentation of new Street Theatre work

May 1-7: MAYFEST, Glasgow. Street Theatre.

May 14-June 10: West German and Yugoslavian tour. Street Theatre

#### Welfare State International

Info 0229 57146

Captain Real and the Hoodlums. (See profile this issue). Street Theatre, processions and other performances taking place throughout April in Barrow in Furness. May Day Celebrations in Telford, Shropshire. Phone above number for full details.

#### Tiedrie Theatre

Info: 0484 850081

Tiedrie-Theatre of the Third World is touring Gilgamesh, 'An obstinate interpretation of the Epic, the oldest known mythical cycle of stories in our culture. Masks, giant puppets, wild turkish music and dance are some of the elements in this powerful, non-verbal piece of theatre.'

April 9: PAT Manchester

April 12: Moulton Village Hall, Northwich, Cheshire

April 13: Castlefields Community Centre, Runcorn.

April 15-17 ICA, London

April 20: Bretton Hall, Wakefield

April 20: Betton Hall, Wakefield

April 21: York Arts Centre

April 22: Low Mill Lane Social Club, Keighley

April 24: Theatre in the Mill, Bradford

April 25: Ilkley College

April 26: Crewe and Alsager College

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**S P A C E S**

# Venue Without a Venue

Manchester, city of mists and mellow fruitfulness. Not familiar? Well, the mist bit is fair enough, if you accept it as poetic licence for rain, and there's a market in the city's Arndale Centre if you want the fruit as well. They've got used to making do in Manchester you see.

Once Cotton King, Manchester is now more often termed the Black Hole by those touring artists who make it a visit. Usually they're glad they took the plunge, there's a receptive audience waiting for most performing arts, it's simply the lack of suitable available venues that has kept so many away for so long.

For the last three years Jeremy Shine of Polygon Arts Trust has more or less single-handedly been filling the gap. As an arts promoter operating on a shoestring, he has devoted himself to finding a variety of venues to suit the differing needs of incoming groups, from People Show cabaret in the Gallery Wine Bar to Sisterhood of Spit in U.M.I.S.T. student union, from Optik in the room above the Thompson's Arms to I.O.U. in St. George's church. He has built up a flourishing Saturday night audience at Birch Community Centre in the South of the city and introduced countless new companies to the area especially in the field of performance art. However, he is not alone in being convinced that the fringe will not flourish in Manchester without a permanent venue being established.

About two years ago, a group of people got together to establish an Arts Centre which would include a flexible performance space. North West Arts gave its support and brought together people from both the visual and performing arts interested in pursuing the same goal. Shortly after the demise of the Peterloo Gallery and Greater Manchester Visual Arts Trust had been set up to work towards a contemporary centre for visual art. The drama interest was incorporated into this Trust and a grant of £12,000 was given in order to appoint a full-time co-ordinator to develop the project.

Dewi Lewis, previously of Bury Metro Arts Association, was appointed in July 1982 to find additional funding and a suitable building. He was given a year to show that the project was viable. During the first few months little was heard of his progress, and at one stage an emergency meeting was held after rumours about the possible loss of performance space in the building under discussion (the former Shaw's furniture store on Oxford Street) were circulated. Those concerned were informed that their fears were groundless. Ironically, months later, they were proved to be only too real.

Among the principal sponsors found have been those who favour film, not even mentioned in the initial brief, and the British Film Institute is now considering offering between £50,000 and £80,000 once the centre is open, if it gives priority to film.

Manchester has in fact been without a decent outlet since the demise of the Manchester Film Theatre in 1973 and the Greater Manchester Council's Arts & Recreation committee is prepared to fund the venture subject to the film option being pursued. So the future looks bright for an Arts Centre catering for film and the visual arts, with performance seemingly left out in the cold.

Manchester however breeds a hardy type of individual; Jeremy Shine, formerly of Action Space, was not deterred. An alt-

ernative building for performance had been found at that earlier doubtful stage and could now be pursued. His work with Action Space and in his own community of Rusholme had shown him how the arts could galvanise a community, the audiences at Birch community centre were direct evidence of that, as was the large-scale participation in the yearly Rusholme festival. During the years since his arrival there had been a marked growth in fringe activity in the city. Publick Spirit already existed, but Pan Communications (now Pan Theatre Company) has developed in the past two years and now mounts weekly shows at the Thompson's Arms, Theatre Totale, Moving Pictures, Pretty Disgusting Things, the Whalley Range All Stars have all made their varying impacts on the scene, culminating in the establishment of Fringe Action North West, a pressure group for the provision of facilities for the Fringe in the North West area.

What is still lacking is a focal point for this activity, and that of all the other groups still to come. The answer may be in an old school building behind Deansgate in the inner city. The Green Room was formerly the home of an amateur dramatic group of the same name which dissolved itself last April. They leave a four-storey building with large basement and ground floor auditorium with potential for bar, meeting rooms, rehearsal space; in short, just what is needed.

The intention clearly would not be simply to limit all touring to what could fit into the performance space at the Green Room. This would mean saying no to the sort of large project that has proved so exciting to audiences in the past. An example is the I.O.U. Residency in St. George's Church, Hulme. The company spent two weeks building set, seating, lighting rigs etc. in a now rarely-used Parish church, intending a two week run of performances. As it happened only the first night went ahead because of a breach of fire regulations but the potential for that kind of activity must remain.

Until a definite response from North West Arts at the end of the month normal activity continues with a season of new performance work entitled 'Performance Plus'. It is an attempt to present a series of lesser-known (in the area) performance artists with the admirable intention of educating an audience into a new field of interest. This has led to the scheduling of three performances under the title 'What is this thing called Performance Art?' featuring Janis Taylor, Mona Hatoum and the Rochdale Performance Collective among others. Also are Desperate Men, British Events, Optik, Intercity and at midnight on March 31st Theatre Noir in 'Nihil 87 — Easter Rising'. Should be an interesting one that... pity I'm somewhere in the Midlands that night....

Stella Hall



# Con Artist or Cultural Heroine?

Well today I walked uptown and there was this sign that said Coming Soon — Dolly Parton and it was kinda illuminated in the sky, you know real clear, and there were all these *people* inside, milling around, and they were all trying to *buy* things, and ah, the people who *ran* this place were all kinda *tense*, and I walked through the door and it was real sleazy, plush and curtains, and they were all saying to each other things like — Well this is it, you know, it's just, just the perfect.... *place* for her to *be*.... and just then, just when I was asking myself *what*.... is behind that *curtain*, it opened right out and a big sign lit up and it was saying U-N-I-T-E-D-S-T-A-T-E-S.... real slow, but then, but then I suddenly realised.... they all had these kinda funny *accents* and we weren't in the United States any more, we were.... somewhere else.

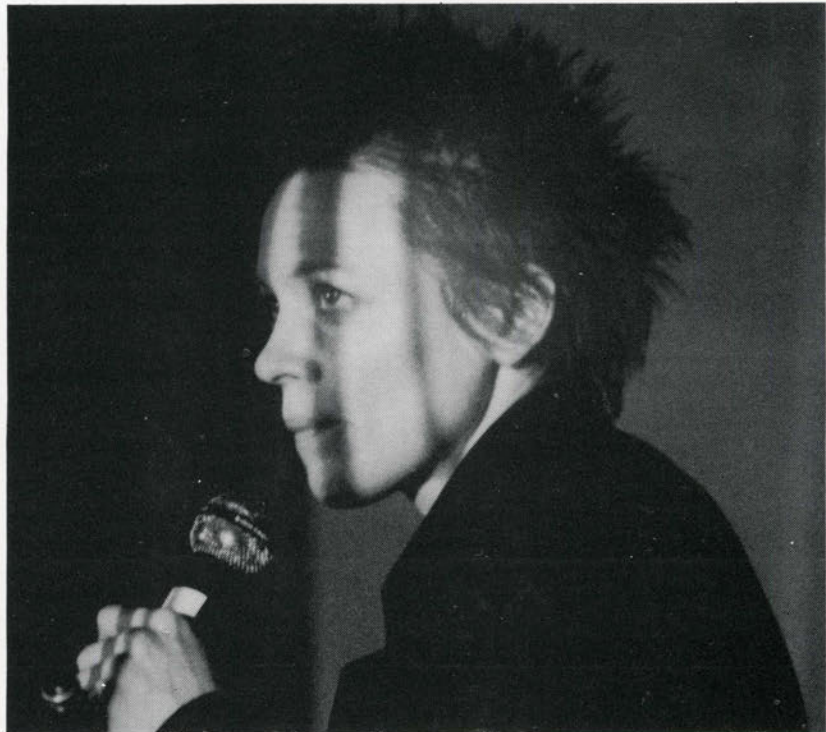
According to Laurie Anderson, whenever she comes to Britain there is always someone roughly in the fifth row of the audience 'sitting there making crazy faces at me — right at me'. Whether this is the last person in the world to be convinced that Laurie Anderson is a genius; or simply a frustrated performer, that person could be symbolic of a cultural dissidence that she is more likely to find in contemporary Britain than anywhere else.

Dissidence was surprisingly low in the mixture of typical rock audience and art world who materialised seemingly from nowhere to mill around the Tottenham Court Road and who, having all more or less thought through Anderson's arcanology of gestural clues, mock-anthropology and gee-whizz semiology, basically approved. They sat down happily to enjoy the stunning visuals and flawless electronics of her ultimate epic, *United States*.

But ideologically, how can the flower of Neadsen and Croydon youth sit still for lashings of consciousness-culture from that vast enigmatic monster-child who sends us Cruise, Pershing, Wang Micros, Wendy Burgers, Herpes and now something called a Performance Art Star? Put it down to the Special Relationship, if you like, but the fact is that the rest of the western world has been absorbing the charisma of American culture for some time, and Britain, despite its singular lack of recent prosperity is catching up fast.

Whereas Britain has not seen any major examination of the nation's soul since the days of George Orwell, *Ealing Comedies*, Humphrey Jennings documentaries and *Mass Observation*, the post-war United States has had *Beat Poets*, *Jazz Novels*, *Drug Culture*, *Vietnam*, *Pop Art*, *Trash Art* and finally Anderson herself. All of whom, while mocking every vestige of White Middle-Class Bible-Belt Cold-War society, end up celebrating even deifying those streets, those lakes, those prairies those dusty wide-open spaces and slums of America.

This is all nothing new, and there is no intention here to accuse Anderson of deliberately contributing to the inexorable progress of US Cultural imperialism. It is,



Andrew Catlin

though interesting to examine her attitude in adopting the title *United States*, simply because of the vast number of built in contradictions in her answers.

The question, 'Why *United States*?' is in fact the most frequently asked her in interviews and press conferences. Here are some of her many answers:

— It would be very strange to write a work called 'France'.

— Although it's called *United States*, most of her work is really 'Offshore'. That is, it is a metaphor for inner consciousness.

— Her ideas are not didactic in terms of politics, she is an artist free to deal with whatever material she chooses.

— It's not about the United States of America, it's more about chemical states.

— It's about any modern, electronic society.

— Yes she probably is racist, she comes from that part of the country that has a very insular point of view, the suburban mid-west.

— She was always being asked at dinner tables in Europe 'How can you live in a country like that?' *United States* is her answer.

These answers have been distilled from what Anderson would probably herself admit are very 'slippery' statements, and usually immediately precede an abrupt change of subject. Such is her style. But

they all combine to place Anderson in that narrow no-mans-land between cultural heroine and supreme con-artist. 'Seriousness can also be a disguise for utter banality' she tells us. What if we have all been taken.... I mean *really* taken?

In *United States Part 3* (A Curious phenomenon) we are certainly conned with a startlingly convincing bit of pseudo-science, in which it's said that sound waves from the fifties can still be measured, detected and recorded by highly sensitive instruments probing dusty lightbulbs and wallpaper. It could almost be true, and it takes a few lengthy saloon-bar conferences to discredit it. Is this a clue? Anderson certainly has a good recent example of a popular cultural figure subtly distorting the facts as given, for no apparent reason, only to create an even more powerful mythos. I'm thinking of another pseudo-anthropologist, Carlos Castaneda, master of the ethnological red herring, who was forgiven by everyone, even academics, for possibly 'inventing' the figure of Don Juan, simply because his 'Teachings' were so expertly derived from existing philosophical sources, both Eastern and native American, and also because they were such ripping yarns. But then *Time Magazine* discovered, while looking for the 'real' Don Juan that *everything* about Castaneda was phony. Simple autobiographical infor-



mation, place of birth, schools attended, everything, for *no reason*. All apparently planned years ago, long before 'The Teachings of Don Juan' ever graduated from textbook to best-seller. The question was no longer 'Does Don Juan exist?' but does 'Carlos Castaneda' exist? Was there a distinction between author and subject, were there many authors, many subjects and so on.

Did Laurie Anderson, for example hitch-hike to the North Pole from her front door? Where are the photos? She said she did, there's not real reason for her *not* to have done, but then to the born raconteur and huckster it might have been more fun to make it up.

But no-one is quibbling about the truth or untruth of Laurie Anderson's stories. It doesn't really matter. But it is indicative of a sort of confusion about the future. Laurie Anderson is now the flagship of a whole army waiting in the wings, an army of radical performers, artists, and dreamers who have never known popular exposure. She is out there, she's made it big, the world knows what a performance artist is now. But has she done it on a wave of apple-pie phony patriotism? Is she the US establishment's latest secret weapon against a new mood of realism in Europe? Does she know what she really is? Have we, as the British say, been sold a duck? Worse still, a coy, lovable, electronically quacking Walt Disney duck?

**I wanted to.... I wanted to be.... famous. And I wasn't getting famous at all. And then I thought that maybe, just maybe if I was to say, you don't have,.... you don't have to bite the hand,.... the hand that feeds. And I asked Mom. And Mom said.... OK. You can be famous. Just don't.... Rock the Boat. Just.... Toe the Line. Keep It Clean. Trust in God. Walk the Dog. So I walked the dog. And so did you....**

It is too easy to cavil over the meteoric rise of Anderson, though the natural cultural dissidence of the jerk in the fifth row,

the British bohemianism that dislikes anything slick and particularly with an American accent, is difficult at the best of times to subdue in the name of objectivity. But even the most cynical and jaded critics have been heard to mutter 'spirit of the age' in her wake, and she's anyway already too big for criticism from these quarters to matter much.

But it is interesting to survey the experiment from a distance, with a querulous eye. I almost want her to be the con-artist, for it all to be a pack of lies. In which case she'd be thoroughly in control. But there are signs that she may be losing her grip of the situation. The first night at the Dominion Theatre saw Anderson looking as tense and angry as she'd ever let herself look. The massive scale of the thing combined with being stuck by the snow in New York at the last minute (nearly causing the organisers, ICA Projects, to lose their shirts in the process) meant that the technology seemed to be running her, not her it. That was sorted out by a strict embargo on media appearances and interviews, and by the second night she was back to the normal, relaxed, sleight of hand tinkering with the on-stage hardware. But there were other signs that the machine was on the loose. A revolting candy-coloured souvenir poster was produced by Time Out and placed for a time in the Dominion Foyer. Rumour had it that Anderson personally ordered its removal when she saw it.

There have also been the inevitable record company manoeuvres, including an inappropriate release of *Let X=X* as a single late last year. Anderson seemed, though, to be keeping Warner Bros. nicely in their place with a gentle satire figuring the giant Warner symbol and dollar signs (This stuff doesn't grow on trees you know —' she means her electronics.) And when Warner international wanted to release *Language is a Virus* as a tour-related single, she wasn't having any of it.

Anderson as Con-artist took a back seat for a while too, as she updated her tele-

phone confessionals (OK so it's six-fifty.... it's a long show). Though somehow, I don't really see her 'just dropping in' to the odd little gallery in Soho any more. Like the Italian art patron Count in one of her stories, there'll be a phone network '.... Count So and So's on 14th Street and he's heading South.... People go out and flag him down.'

Her recruiting of the ICA telephonist, Jane Pearce, and a strapping soprano on a diving board for the British show demonstrates a keen sense of humour about the performance situation which she has not lost. But now she is set on automatic pilot to wherever stardom may take her. Video disc (her next project), Vegas or Venus, she can only, in her own words, '.... sort of light out for the territories. But there aren't any new frontiers left.... So where do you go?'

If you gave, as we seem to be giving, an artist for the first time ever as much time, money, resources and audience that s/he could ever possibly want, and if all these things didn't stunt the imagination right away could s/he really change the world? Could a tall-story teller from the mid-west, standing in front of giant flickering images, with a fake National Geographic voice, persuade us that we are no longer in Kansas anymore? Or is she just telling us the truth.... that we really are in Kansas whether we like it or not. Nobody has gone further than she. We can only stand and gape.

Rob la Frenais

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Anton Corbijn

# Sheffield Expanded Media Show

One of the more inspiring phenomena in the art world over the past ten years has been the development of a strong, autonomous body of contemporary art activity in the north of England. Sheffield in particular has established a reputation as a northern centre for new developments both in the third area of fine art and in the current music scene. A particularly strong tradition of experimental art has emerged from the Fine Art Department of Sheffield Polytechnic, which provided the initiative for two weeks of performance, video, film, sound and photography called the Expanded Media Show.

The importance of such an event is all the more marked by the climate of conservatism which has swept through the art world of late. The fact is that despite a return to the art object, a large, strong, and important body of time-based work is being produced in this country, and events such as this one provide a focus for and draw attention to this activity in all its diversity.

The performance selection covered very different kinds of work, but if a link can be said to exist between it, it is in what can only be described as a painterly, expressive approach, in which the use of materials and the individual personality and experience of the performer provide the primary tools for expression. This can be said to be true of most performance, however, and these basic tools were used in conjunction with slide tapes and video equipment by all the Sheffield performers.

Yet I felt that there was a particular sensibility present, to different degrees, in much of the live work, which perhaps corresponds to the new expressive post modernist developments in painting.

Paul Burwell and Charlie Hooker present two very different methods of working with sound. A tape 'Restricted Movement', a tape/slide 'Conversations Two' and a performance 'And Counting', demonstrate Hooker's concern with formulating an area in which he can combine the three elements of sound, visual effects and movements.

His work is carefully planned; the sound in this piece was worked out mathematically on graph paper in a way which brings peculiarly British activities such as change bell ringing to mind. Yet within this carefully composed structure he does leave large areas open for improvisation. As his work has developed, he has begun to concentrate more on the relationship between himself, the performers and the audience, and is more interested in creating atmospheres than in technical perfection.

In 'And Counting', a musical rhythm is created through the playing of chimebars



Sonia Knox — Walking Glass

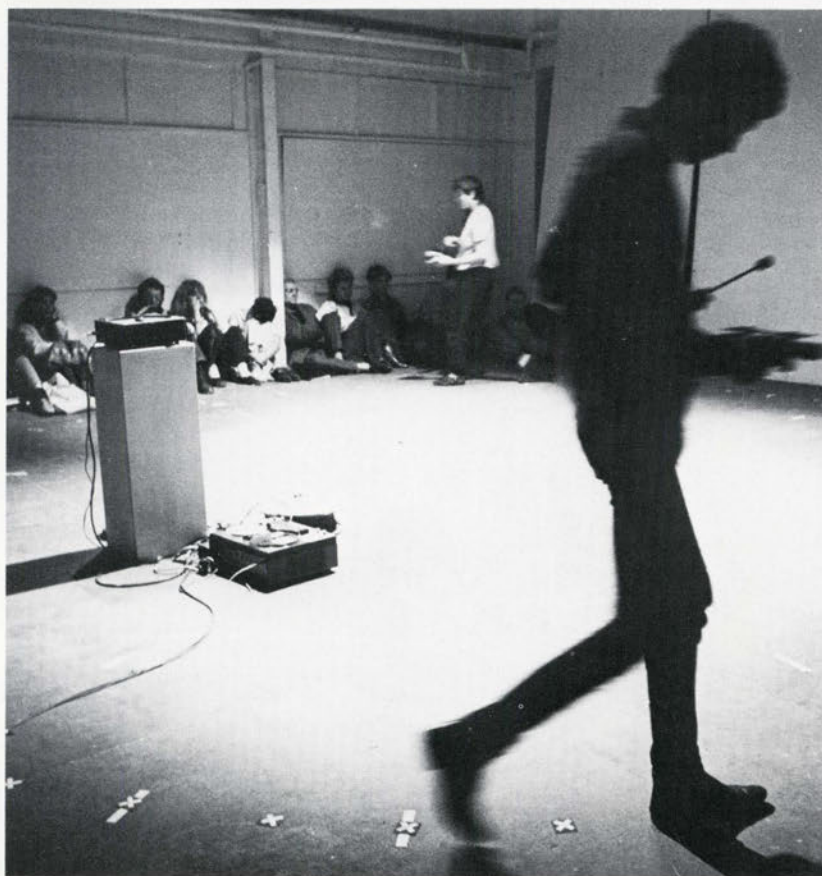
by four performers who step on 64 strips of luminous tape placed in two large concentric circles on the floor. Beginning at four synchronised positions on the circle they walk round and round, playing one note as each step is made on the tape unless a cross has been placed over the tape. Hooker moves these crosses, thereby altering the rhythm and melody, which is also changed by the alternation between the two chime bars carried by each performer, according to numbers spoken on a tape (odd numbers denoting the playing of the left chimebar, even ones the right). After the sound has been built up, Hooker diminishes it by adding more crosses to the floor until the four are walking round in almost complete silence, punctuated only by occasional chords and single notes.

'And Counting' posed no threats, asked no questions yet one left with a feeling of satisfaction. This sense of resolution seemed too complete however, and I felt that what had been explored in this piece could be taken a lot further though it is a simple piece in relation to Hooker's work as a whole.

In contrast, Burwell gave us a noisy, explosive percussion performance. He has recently been appointed musician in residence at a comprehensive school, a role which he finds difficult to reconcile with the traditional position of the drummer as 'subversive', trying to bring out this in the children as an establishment figure. This performance was his first since he had begun the residency, and he saw the event as a personal workshop, serving to get him back into performance, warning us beforehand that it would not necessarily hang together as a performance as such, but would be experimental and open.

This it was, but the maturity and self assuredness with which Burwell handles his instruments held it strongly together. Using a whole host of musical instruments and everyday objects, he explored different ways of making percussive sound, beginning with his own body, then the immediate environment – wall floor, chairs – combined with other musical instruments and paint, fireworks, beans, smoke and fire, extending them way beyond the limits of their traditional function. Devices used included the tapping of a cymbal whilst immersing it in and out of water, the placing of beans on top of snare drums so that each beat played was resonated by the sound of the beans and the use of a brush to play soft shoe shuffle rhythms whilst being dipped in paint, so that it touches first the drums then the walls behind.

The role of the drummer as subversive always traditionally the 'crazy' member of the band, was brought up by playing a brush on the drums and reading out an account of percussion and deviancy in



Charlie Hooker — And Counting

America in the 1940's concerning the uncontrollable behaviour of a drummer in a dance band.

Central to Burwell's work is the way in which the instruments are used, the drum-kit, usually seen in the context of a band, taking its place as an expensive clean, pristine piece of musical equipment alongside microphones etc, is here thoroughly well worn and battered, weathered by all the substances it had thrown at it, and stretched to its limits, first suspended from the ceiling, then set alight and scattered with paint.

Towards the end of the performance, squibs exploded into the darkness from underneath small cymbals on the floor. The sound was deafening. At the end, with the lights up, we trod the floor over a mess of burnt paper, water, paint, beans and spent fireworks. Burwell, covered in black and white paint, which creates the effect of a shamanistic mask, has red paint splattered everywhere, and looks as though he is bleeding from his efforts. The messiness and energy which had been invoked was exhilarating and liberating, and my final thoughts as I left were of what was in store for the kids at the comprehensive in the coming months.

Sonia Knox, using slide tape, video and performance seemed to be moving into something more open than her usual highly structured work, and to be reinterpreting past structures, allowing more things to emerge. she is changing from

particular, personal meanings to more universal symbols (a gun, black glittery gloves, a soundtape composed of cicadas, wasps and hawkmoths) away from minimalism towards something less formal, yet paradoxically, this new emphasis on the universal produced a more personal quality which seemed to mark a new level of confidence and maturity in her work.

Nigel Rolfe performed a multi-media work which was one of a continuing series of shroud hangings. Against a backdrop of two tenfoot high slide sequences of painted African tribes, dry black and red pigment was applied to a wet stretched cotton surface through a stencil to make dust drawings of a figure and the shape of Africa. These drawings have a certain similarity to ritualistic drawing methods used by ethnic tribes. Rolfe, naked, lies on top of the figure drawing and moves his arm, extending the images and blurring the colours. Two video monitors meanwhile show a modern western male dancing to rock 'n roll and a face-slapping sequence, and these parallel contrasting images juxtapose Western, present day expression with primitive and ethnic sources.

Rolfe confesses to a ten year love affair with Africa, which he has never consummated by a visit, seeing this state of affairs as preserving his romantic vision of Africa which pervades the work. The piece was sensitive, professional, beautifully executed and complete, but despite my enjoyment I was left with a feeling of 'so

what?' and a sense that his ideas had not actually been developed beyond a certain, ultimately limiting point.

Andre Stitt delivered an aggressive, passionate and painfully personal performance in which his readings, often difficult to make out over the backing tape of music and drum machine rhythms and concerned with very personal fears and emotions ('I have the eyes of a professional killer - the disease is love') developed into a naggressive shouting at the audience, crying 'You're not LISTENING'. He eventually got up from his hands and knees and rushed out, leaving the audience in a stunned silence, unsure of how to react in such a formal, structured situation to such an impassioned emotional outburst, and of where the links between planned performance and personal reaction had crossed. I was unsure of the message put across, and often find Stitts work so concerned with such personal issues that it is difficult to feel totally unaffected, and am always struck by the force with which they are expressed.

Roy Bayfield, a student from Brighton, performed three readings from a collection of rambling, narrative, semi-autobiographical anecdotes and tales, which evolved initially out of his work in video. Taking on the persona of 'Jack', he related stories of bad behaviour and everyday incidents, in the tradition of narrative handed down tales and pub anecdotes from folk clubs and small communities. His work has been influenced by writers like Bukowsky and Burroughs, and Ian Hinchcliffe and video artist Ian Bourne have also had an impact. He mixes truth with fiction, and his own personality with that of 'Jack', creating a separate personality and exploring theories of multiple reality. One finds oneself listening intently to the rambling tales, which have the fascination of other peoples overheard conversations, with a sustained interest, despite the mundane subject matter, almost in the manner of one's reaction to a Mike Leigh character. Bayfield is concerned more with communication than with culture, and the beauty of his work lies in its simplicity and mobility, and his ability to do, as he would like to, a show either in an art space or in the pub where, one feels, he would get an equally good response.

Graham Tunnadine, another student, performed 'The Cloning', a short piece whose meanings grew out of ideas about expression and communication. The idea of persuasion as the central core of all communication, and the use of persuasion to manipulate and acquire power, is explored in a cleverly constructed scenario. A video monitor at head height, showing a head and shoulders image of a politician/businessman (Tunnadine himself) smiles persuasively and disarmingly at the audience. A sound tape discusses theories of marketing and salesmanship, and how best to persuade ones public of what one wants them to be. At the back, in amongst the audience, Tunnadine stands dressed in an identical suit and tie, waving and smiling.

His position in the audience, with us but not of us, significantly provided the third, slightly removed figure being taken in by the persuasiveness of the image and the tape, reinforced of course by the fact that the face on the tape and that of the performer are one and the same.

Tunnadine's point is that all statements are persuasive; in this respect art is no different from advertising, and he questions the role of the artist. He also raises ethical questions of whether to persuade someone of something given the tools to do so. Paradoxically although the performer was drawn into the tape, it does not actually persuade. By seducing and distancing the audience simultaneously it merely tells you about the process involved.

There are no conclusions stated, mainly because Tunnadine does not want us to go away with a neat statement about the individual versus society, but to go away thinking about the issues raised in the piece. This was the most conceptual piece in the show, and it worked, because one just cannot help but be taken in by and respond to that smile.

There was a particularly prolific amount of video. The current expressive climate which has produced the new image painters and a move away from conceptual work has produced a new generation of young video artists whose work seems to be much more concerned with how to express their ideas than with the exploration of the medium itself which preoccupied so many video artists in the 60s and 70s. A concern with the popular media, and pop videos was also evident in some of the work.

Certain work showed a marked influence passing down from artist to student and certain issues had been explored independently by both, for example Tina Keane and Roy Bayfield's interest in the tradition of narrative. This was treated in very different ways, Tina using it to explore womens issues such as female submission in the story of Bluebeard, and in her video of her installation 'Demolition/Escape' at Air Gallery.

Strong individual work emerged, such as — Alessandra, Gloria and Almut of Temporary Productions, whose video 'Adjustable Picture' explored the gap between man and machinery, and the problems that occur because machines do not interpret the world in the way we want them to or understand our ideas.

Ian Breakwell's videos, 'The News' and 'In The Home', a domestic melodrama in which two newlyweds undergo an emotional trauma on their wedding night, both ridicule the structure of the TV drama, by the splicing of a thousand dramatic cliches into a dialogue which is highly amusing and entertaining, whilst at the same time challenging the sham of conventional television and its ideas about what people want to hear and see.

Cathy Owens, a recent graduate from Belfast, presented a slide tape piece which dealt with the subject of women in Ireland and the concept of marriage. To a tape of Owens reciting the nursery rhyme There

was an old Woman who lived in a shoe, in whispers, slides were shown, against a wall on which were hung large yellow cut-out irons, of a baby in a pram, a session at the hairdresser, domestic images and thoughts about a girls life. The piece was short, effective and clear, and worked well.

From the whole event, what emerged was a distinction between the older, more structuralist artists, many of whom seemed to be opening up and exploring new possibilities within the format of their past work, and a newer generation of young work which showed a marked expressive

quality, an element which some of the older artists seemed to be picking up on and developing independently in their own work.

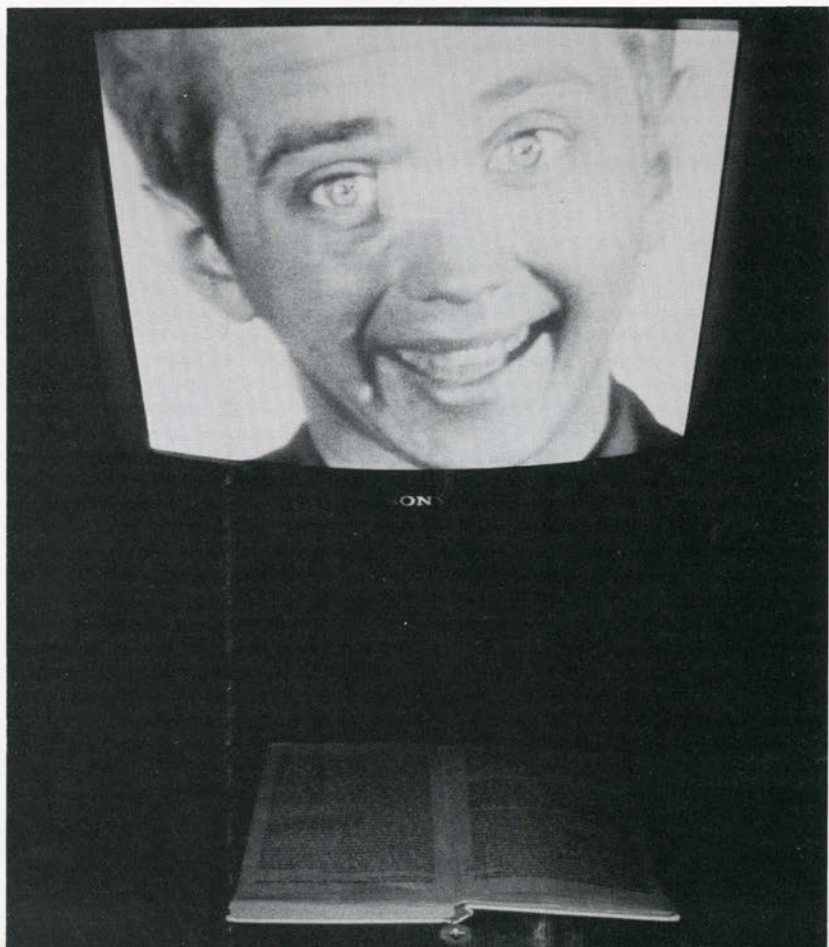
It provided an important focus for a unique situation in which student work could be seen alongside more established artists, and these different concerns and developments observed. Its importance lies in its ability to do this, within a college context, outside the restraints of a gallery system, and long may such events flourish.

Christie Iles

Ian Breakwell — In The House



Graham Tunnadine



# Can Your Monkey Do The Dog?

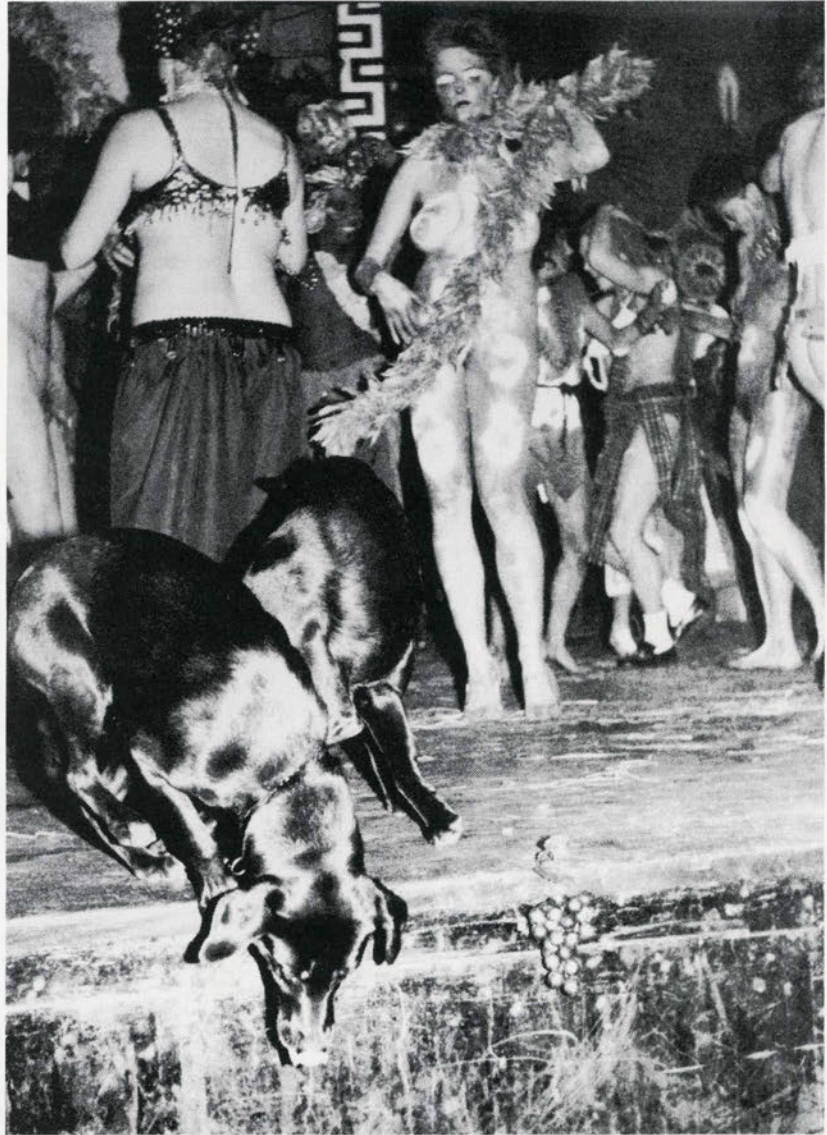
## Queer Theatre: An Introduction

About eighteen months ago, imported copies of Stefan Brecht's book, *Queer Theatre* appeared in the UK. This book, written in English, is the second volume in a series of nine by Brecht to be published in Germany to deal with American theatre from the mid-sixties to the late seventies. It presented the first useful critical study of the work of New York's sleazy loft theatres and brought together analyses of the work of Jack Smith, John Vaccaro, Charles Ludlum, Jackie Curtis and Ronald Tavel. The actual body of work represented by these names is for the most part unknown in this country, except through parallel projects on film – Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, Tavel's collaborations with Warhol and Jackie Curtis' emergence as one of Warhol's transvestite superstars.

What characterizes Queer Theatre is its low-budget trash appeal, the use of the sexual underground's attitudes, codes and costumes; transexual roles, cross-dressing, glamour and, in the place of the craft of acting, a fascination for and a sheer delight in being seen. Plays that were not improvised were put together as patchy collages of Hollywood melodrama (especially *Gone With The Wind*, *Sunset Boulevard*, and anything by Douglas Sirk), comic books, school editions of Shakespeare and pop songs. This amateurish, sloppy theatre attracted nothing but bad press and in this Brecht detected its power: its very specific disruptive assaults on modern sexuality made it difficult to assimilate into a conventional theatre and hence very difficult to take seriously in critical terms. Brecht defined Western sexuality as a transcendent commodity, an absolute to which the corporate identity could direct itself outside work hours. Established forms of performance meshed directly with this attitude and the genealogy of the simulated sex act began. The bad taste, undisciplined acting, stapled-together sets, on-stage tantrums, sexual aggression and the queens of Queer Theatre existed in opposition to the dour processes of duplicating the same roles and the same desires both in bed and on stage.

## Exotica

Now in London, a highly mutated, more genteel but nonetheless liberated and deviant form of Queer Theatre was on show at the Centre Charles Peguy (the place in Leicester Square which looks as if it is trying to disguise itself as a hot dog stand). Word of mouth had it that the performance, *Knives Beside The Plates* was an amateurish mess and that moves were being made to close it down on the grounds that it was pornographic. The



The Knives Beside The Plates by Hermine/Binnie

Hugo Williams

play was neither messy nor pornographic although it diced dangerously with both.

*Knives Beside The Plates* is a version of the Sheherazade legend rewritten into a morality play on gender in which a series of fables on the male's consistent inability to come to terms with woman's sexual identity (and consequently with his own) replaces the tales of the 1,001 nights.

The exotic setting is not arbitrary. The artificial, sumptuous, essentially Arabia, created by Sir Richard Burton, Rimsky-korsakov and Flaubert is a traditional location for normally repressed sexual activity, a nineteenth-century peep-show onto the most endlessly repetitive desires and constricting sexual role-playing. This

middle class/high art pretense inevitably has a trashy, unseemly legacy: the burlesque show, *Abbot & Costello Lost in a Harem*, Martin Denny's exotic music and the phony regalia of dull night spots. Whilst these two cultural standards are kept rigorously apart, they are both disappointing. Remember Joyce's 'Arabie'?

This collaboration between Hermine, and the Neo Naturists utilizing work by Ann Bean, Andrew Logan and Grayson Perry comes across as an insane plundering of these exotic myths: a sleazy, cackling collage of *Othello*, *Fantasia* and *The Wild Women of Wongo*. The audience is warned as soon as a tape of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade* fades in and out of the sound

of a small live ensemble scraping away at sand dance music. On stage, a sensual pile of pink and purple cushions represents King Sharyar's bed, the scene of sex and murder, surmounted by a naked purple spot light and several erect cocks in pink plaster hanging over it. The curtains shake uncertainly and Dencil Williams appears as the King.

His performance is beautiful. The sexual swagger of a supposedly stone-hearted potentate turns into an inverted, sexually ambivalent bump and grind to a tape recording of his own heart beat. His speeches are delivered in a sensual drawl: 'I carreee aaaa wound... shall I taaake heroouuin until I looose maaaaa miind?' His ambiguous appeal is a perfect foil for Christine Binnie's aggressive Sheherazade. It also establishes a perverse camp mood for the whole play.

After being betrayed by his wife, King Sharyar decides to have his revenge on all women and, at the same time comfort himself in a life of lust, by making love to a different virgin every night and having her executed at dawn. A massive mirror-encrusted sword is carried onto the stage and scythes across a white screen on which slides depicting previous victims are projected. The brutal-looking sex hag/dominatrices shown and the rapidity with which the sword cuts through them suggests that King Sharyar is more interested in slaughter than sex.

The Idyll between the King and Sheherazade begins, marked by the appearance of a huge red valentine made of plastic roses and disco lights. But they are interrupted by Sheherazade's sister Dinarzade (played by Jennifer Binnie) constantly asking for bed-time stories in an attempt to put off the hour of execution.

**Trash**

These stories are presented as a series of mimed tableaux on a set which has been made from a garbage heap and a few rolls of plastic tape. Here the Sabines and the Brute Men clash in sexual conflicts and the stories become a frightening, grotesque rewrite of Margaret Mead. The women mark their first period by smearing themselves with menstrual blood, from the pubic region outwards. A painful surgical operation performed upon one of the men in which his penis is slit open 'to ape a women's genitals.. and to bleed' is watched by a very young child while Sheherazade sneers, 'Men will do *anything* to look feminine'.

As a counterpoint to these actions, the events in King Sharyar's bed chamber degenerate into a comedy of frustrations. Sharyar tires of an attempted coupling with Sheherazade and begins a re-enactment of Desdemona's death scene. Beginning with 'Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?' Dencil's insistent mechanical delivery gives the scene a new, distorted thrust. Guilt is forced onto the woman in order to justify her death.

However the interruptions continue:

Dinarzade demands more stories and Sheherazade wants to watch television. Finally a ten-foot-high slave girl enters the bed chamber and performs the Dance of The Seven Beige Veils which slowly reveals the dancer to be a strange androgynous figure on stilts; a final degeneration into pointlessness.

It is hard to tell whether the King was defeated at the end or simply gave up as the last minutes are given over entirely to a tribal fertility dance performed by the men and women plus two strange primitive idols. One is the stilt dancer dressed like a totem pole in mourning, reading a pulp romance magazine whilst doing a bizarre almost static dance. The other is a highly animate squat figure made of mud and dried grasses: a refugee from the National Geographic. The whole fertility rite is an excuse for the cast to do the Locomotion to improvised percussion music and dance into the audience. Meanwhile, amazingly, two large black dogs invade the stage. Christine and Jennifer Binnie bring the play to an end by performing the old Hell's

Angel arms-akimbo dance routine to a tape of heavy metal music (Black Sabbath) which drowns out the tribal drumming.

**A Life of Lust**

One of the things which constitutes a genuine Queer Theatre is its authenticity. The screamingly perverse, the energetic trashy nature of this work is not something which can be consciously assumed or used to dress up old, more conventional ideas. Similarly, it is not enough to simply present a ridiculous anti-theatre; a pure expression of ineptitude. It has more to do with the wilful refusal to reproduce any established code of desire and representation and an equally strong urge to bring the damaged and the marginal to the centre of people's attention. The Knives Beside The Plates was authentic and deviant. As such it was genuinely exciting. It offered the hope that in London at least we might look forward to a real trash theatre, a form of sexual political theatre which we have lacked up to now. We need more.

**Ken Hollings**

The Knives Beside The Plates by Hermine/Binnie



Hugo Williams

## Secret Gardens

ICA

Mathematicians have a method they use when research goes inscrutably haywire. It's known as 'checking for gross error'. It means going back to first principles and closely examining the initial assumptions to see if a simple but blindingly obvious error has crept into the work. 'Secret Gardens', the latest ICA theatre project, perhaps requires such an approach, to explain why its high promise failed to deliver results. The resources and personnel available, the high profile publicity, its classification as experimental — all these raised expectations frustratingly unfulfilled. So much that the overall feeling at the end was one of despair at ever seeing any more environmental performance.

Clues can be found in the ICA's attitude towards theatre. For some time, the theatre director John Ashford, has pursued a policy of promoting work that goes beyond the more traditional script-orientated notion of theatre. It is a policy that welcomes the use of other expressive means such as music, visual presentation and movement. Innovators throughout this century used these components to express ideas but they are still today generally regarded as peripheral to the text. By recognising that these elements are also as central to the creation of theatre, the ICA is quite rightly consolidating such means by providing a platform for performers and companies who embody this approach. There is a strong consistent policy towards the companies invited to perform at the ICA. This show, a joint production by the ICA and the Mickery Theatre in Amsterdam, endeavours to take this policy a step forward by acting as a focus for well known instigators on the British fringe.

Hence this 'theatre initiative' conceived by a quartet of individuals well established in their own fields: Tim Albery (director), Anthony McDonald (designer), Geraldine Pilgrim (performer) and Ian Spink (choreographer). The performers include leading members of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre and the Ballet Rambert and the music is by Orlando Gough and Andrew Poppy of the Lost Jockey systems orchestra.

So why should the product have proved so unsatisfactory? The material for the production is drawn from two sources: 'The Secret Garden', by Frances Hodgson Burnett and the life of Nancy Cunard, a society figure from the twenties. The former is a classic novel for children, published in 1911, and the latter remained as obscure after seeing the show as before. The pre-publicity intimated an intriguing presentation of emotive images, promising 'a tale of what women and men do to each other in the name of love and in the pursuit of their own secret garden' a story set in 'the darkest room at the end of the longest corridor'.

The set is indeed one of the few triumphs of the show. The grand interior of a mansion has been constructed from pers-



Secret Gardens

Bob Van Dantzig

plex so that the room becomes a transparent shell, adorned with hat-stands and chairs. At the centre stand three exhibition display cases. On the ground lie two performers in a pre-set pose which seems to be rapidly becoming the obligatory way of starting this sort of show. The atmosphere is that of a museum with the audience as a curious coach party come to goggle at bizarre and curious exhibits. The clinical thud of the ubiquitous drum machine heralds the arrival of three identikit school marms dressed in court shoes, blouses and skirts who move around and into the room carrying books on their heads in the manner of a deportment lesson. The comatose figures revive and a melancholic man in a suit enters. Medicine is taken in the form of tablets and eye drops. Gasps of inexpressible emotion are heard and umbrellas are opened and then put away. A door opens to reveal a man behind a high table. The women change hats and collect suitcases creating the effect of combining a left-luggage office with the Roman Catholic mass. The door closes. Another door opens, revealing a parlour with a piano. Some music and then the door closes. The show continues with more episodic incidents, including the cast doing party pieces to each other but there is little sense of celebration or exuberance. Neither is there the opposite sense of a malevolent game, only one of contrivance. A reading from the Book of Revelations is made. A movement piece expressing pique through rapid, irritated gestures happens, by which time the systems music has grown singularly inappropriate to the period style of the piece. There is an incident involving cocktail shakers filled with coins and used as marraccas. The several further episodes involving fractious conflicts and unspecified frissons become simply frustrating because of the tantalising difficulty of relating them to any cause.

And so it continues. The potential of the casement block at the back of the set which swung open to reveal a giant safety deposit bank vault remained unexplored. The show concludes with an altar being wheeled in and the women laying out the contents of their handbag before it. It ends as only such a show can — it stops.

Amidst this assortment of styles and

pretensions, it is interesting to note that there was an excellently conceived sequence. This was a depiction of children at play with the performers running, snatching hats and vying with each other at tag. It beautifully captured a notion of abandonment and lightheartedness and this emotional note was made compulsive by using skilful and unusual dance techniques. As the women ran at their waiting male partners, their run turned into a swivelling jump which required a balancing support from their partners hip. This episode was a magical moment and stood out clearly.

The reasons for the success of this part of the show go some way to explain the 'gross error' that afflicted the rest. Here, the dance element was given its head and allowed to express a simple concept in a complex and eloquent manner, clearly capturing an ineffable mood that related back to the stated aims of the show.

The ambition of the project was to create a new direction in the theatre by giving exactly equal weight to the four elements - music, design, theatre and dance. You can't fit a quart into a pint pot and too wide a brief means that each element never gets a proper chance to develop its singular concerns into a coherent statement.

As regards content, the objective seems to have been to encapsulate a subtle emotional mix of nostalgia and desire. But its extravagant theatricality in the use of self-conscious gestures and particular objects destroyed the emotional power it was trying to generate and did not allow its alternative language to become credible. Performers such as Laura Gilbert and Derek Wilson of Jail Warehouse for example can employ gestures and objects but the gestures never become self-conscious and the objects always retain their imposing natural reality instead of becoming mere props.

So this was a greatly disappointing show which, while attempting a lot, ended up with an uneasy mixture of styles, influences and objectives which at best seemed misplaced eclecticism and at worst a sort of cultural imperialism on the home front. The ICA is not entirely to blame for this, but should perhaps beware of assembling such ad-hoc galaxies of talent.

Phil Hyde

## British Events

### OVAL HOUSE

Obsessional in their subject matter and iconography, yet always immediate in their appeal, British Events can spin webs of innocent narrative that camouflage murky shadows beyond. Their latest indoor show, *The Island*, is a Boy's Own Paper story, a very English reverie on travel and adventure and the telling of strange tales brought back from foreign parts. It is, technically and musically, the most ambitious yet of all their shows, with creatures emerging from piles of sand, palm trees appearing from nowhere to grow to the height of the space, armadas of ships table lamps that take to the seas, and the beginnings of life, recreated with the aid of aquaria and Alka Seltzer.

The company's resources, however do not quite match up to their ambition without the sophisticated equipment that some of the show needs to support it — especially in their use of projection. An inflatable Easter Island statue that grows from a shrivelled nothing to rise quivering over an audience far from sure what it is they are seeing grow before and above them until the moment of full erection.

Despite all this, one could say the work lacks a certain surface gloss, which can be distracting. None the less, British Events have managed to develop the makeshift aspects of their work into something like style, and one would almost be sorry to see this banished by the use of the more advanced technology that improved financial circumstances would bring them.

Luke Dixon

## Hanging Committee

### ATLANTIS GALLERY

The Hanging Committee, as their name suggests, give the impression of knowing what they are doing. Their new work, *Slides*, began with slides projected onto a suspended canvas/screen to the sound of amplified projector hum, punctuated by a loud slide changing noise at regular intervals. The slides depicted familiar fetish images of 'sex' and/or 'violence' as found in newspapers and magazines — soft porn, war, armaments, consumer products, etc., denotive of persuasion, harassment, assault, attack, rape and the constitution of desire — of a sort. The three figures in black stood apart from the canvas/screen for a few minutes as the slides ran through and then, in turn, advanced alone to the canvas/screen to commence painting. Almost tentatively at first, restricting themselves to the edges and by degrees, with growing abandon, forsook their brushes and used their hands; spreading, caressing, scratching the paint over the canvas/screen. The performers stopped and stepped back before each slide changed and the next performer took their place. Intermittently a recorded voice came from the back of the gallery; 'leaving, moving towards, no, ...'. Giving the effect of a voice over or the internal voice of the per-



Hanging Committee

formers. Again no contact was made nor apparent signs exchanged between the performers, each remained alone to enter the canvas/screen/arena. An analogy with the marginal role of the artist in a culture dominated by commercial images and interests was thus indicated, a struggle for power by the powerless that falls in to co-option, so that to win is to lose.

The canvas/screen became heavy with paint glistening in the light of the projector. The 'artists' made cuts through the canvas/screen and the images were projected on to the gallery wall behind, so that the metaphor of a hopeless struggle against the images was reinforce. The final image of the piece was of the group's previous piece *Radius*. The inference being that they had themselves been co-opted and were now a projection of the dominant culture. At this point the performers quietly left the space.

The pieces seemed in general, simple and direct in their portrayal of a received view of the artistic community's self-image — an absurd, hopeless, individualistic struggle against a culture that in turn reinforces that view and which measures its success in terms of failure. It was uncertain whether this was ever intended to be in any sense ironic. In so far as the work reproduced the image of a Sisyphean fate as intuitively 'real' without humor, it risked being read as mythologising itself still further.

Richard Chapman

## Impact Theatre

### TRIANGLE, BIRMINGHAM

If you've seen those Edward Hopper paintings; 'Office at Night' or 'Nighthawks', where a melancholy sense of the largeness and loneliness of American life lurks beneath the surface glamour, then you're well on the way to capturing something of the spirit of 'No Weapons for Mourning', Impact's most recent performance.

The novels of Raymond Chandler and Damon Runyon are two of the more obvious literary references, set as it is in that seedy twilight world of dames and private dicks recently lovingly recreated in Wim Wenders 'Hammett'. But Impact aren't going for the obvious, there's also a tantalising whiff of the Ray Bradburys, an other-worldliness that casts a cool shadow over the proceedings.

Two identically-dressed angels, chic in

tailored black suits and seamed stockings, have come to view the antics of mankind (in the narrowest sense) and find their attentions focus on a particular male detective somewhere in America circa 1940. In turn, each plays Fay, a young girl whose grandfather has mysteriously died in the desert. He has left her some papers which she entrusts with the private investigator, with alarming consequences.

They move in and out of reminiscence, re-enacting scenes, describing a past life, communicating constantly with him and each other in a series of unearthly telephone calls (his telephone has been cut off for non-payment of bills, but the angels manage to make contact.)

In all this he appears a hapless pawn, trapped in that male-defined masculinity, observed and commented upon by his extra-terrestrial visitors like some organ in a specimen jar. Despite themselves, however, each finds herself becoming attached to this particular specimen as he bungles his way through the investigation of the old man's death, narrowly escaping his own death outside the office, pursued by unknown enemies.

The action moves from a bare room, two chairs, two blinds, two microphones, two telephones, to his cluttered overheated office. Outside waits the desert, encroaching even into his whisky bottle; as he pours a fine sand flows from the glass. They are the desert, cool, remote, taking their place in the line that stretches back to the Indian ancestresses who killed themselves and their children rather than give up their land, their identity. They, too, left no weapons for mourning.

I found the three performances in this piece totally absorbing, though sometimes I felt more as though I were in a cinema than a theatre, due partly I think to the enveloping quality of the musical soundtrack and partly to the arresting use of light and shade on set and performers to build the kind of atmospheric one had begun to think could not be created live.

'No Weapons for Mourning' was still being reworked when I saw it, despite two weeks on the road. The desire for perfection is apparent in every aspect of this company's work. The attempt to tackle such obtruse themes in so compellingly innovative a manner can only be admired. Unlike the mankind their angels viewed, they are not afraid of their own metaphor.

Stella Hall



**Theatre Babel**  
 OVAL HOUSE

The space was dark. It smelt of incense, candles formed a circle around a central performance space in which a cloud of white wooded crosses hung, the seats looked down. On what? A chapel or perhaps the spaces that clandestine cellar performances had taken place in during the Second World War. This impression was reinforced by what appeared to be a group of refugee's occupying the space. A mother and wrapped baby, a couple of men and young women, they seemed reluctant to come into the main space but hung around on the fringes. Until a leader figure moved into the centre and started to collect up the crosses, like harvesting fruit. Each crossbearing a number, a random number, the bingo of death. He nosily cleared the space into which the group moved. Tension increased as impending disaster approached. Destruction passed over them, they survived. Their bodies twisted and torn.

I am watching Theatre Babel and their performance 'Memorial'. They are a new company who appear to be based in the area of performance that takes its inspiration from the experimental European theatre laboratory companies. Based in West Yorkshire, Theatre Babel, are trying to find new ground, their own 'system' of development as performers and in the production of material. 'Memorial' is their first production since their foundation in September 1981 by Paul Bradley and Charlotte-Annett Diefenthal. Since then they have been joined by Elizabeth Howarth and Chris Squire, and have toured the production in the U.K. and Europe, but this is their first performance in London.

The company has a background of training and method which are draws off the experience of Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium of Poland. And this is what is interesting, as even after two decades there are still very few performance and theatre companies who explore the attitudes and techniques that Grotowski developed. very few that is to say in Britain as there seems to be a much stronger understanding in the rest of Europe, with for instance the Odin Theatre of Denmark and the Eight Day Theatre of Gdansk.

It is interesting to read the original first Statement of Cardiff Laboratory Theatre published in late 1973 and the first Statement by Theatre Babel, July 1982. The aims and hopes are similar. I wonder if Theatre Babel have examined the progress of Cardiff Lab Theatre and learn from their development.

But I am interested to see this elementary area of performance being pursued once again by a company and with politically motivated production. Towards an issue which has polarised Europe, nuclear holocaust. I was amazed to find that Grotowski and Teatr Laboratorium never performed work based on political issues in Poland, even though they are a highly res-

pected company. Whereas the Eighth Day Theatre of Gdansk based all their work around political and cultural issues.

In 'Memorial', which was designed as a Cenotaph in the theatre to the failure and inhumanity of war, the humans survive the first wave of destruction. The eyes of a corpse are covered with old pennies and two sowers appear spreading white powder. Is it death they are sowing? the powder smells of white flour; is this the crushed seeds of hope and renewal or is it the lime over the bodies of the dead? I suppose the sowers of death, but the Spectators Information provided by Theatre Babel tells me it is lime. This jars as it is such a strong image and smell, the spreading of the white fall-out, changing the atmosphere and covering the performers and the floor in a white mask. But the smell tells me it is flour.

Hiroshima is recalled in a burst of white light, cauterizing the inhabitants, again survivors they wonder in a wasteland, 'the slate is wiped clean for the future'. Trying to establish the blame for the holocaust they set up a Speakers Corner and each victim attempts to find the cause of the catastrophe from the upturned box. In each case they fail and realize their own shortcomings. Only 'naive' communicates sensibly. He ends the performance, a group of crosses are laid marking out the CND emblem.

Physical Theatre is a burgeoning phenomena in this country, however obscure its actual manifestations. Are Theatre Babel a new development or yet another clone?

**Robin Morley**

**Face On**  
 TRICYCLE

Maedee Dupres fifth solo programme, 'Face On' is an ambitious undertaking with three new pieces of choreography and specially commissioned music and songs. The piece claims to look at 'the various cycles in a person's life'. It is good to see a dancer taking so much responsibility for the conception and production of work, and attempting to use what would appear to be autobiographical content in an area usually notable for lack of any such exploration.

The three sections of 'Face On' are however very different in character, and this acts against any sense of continuity within the piece as a whole. In the first part, Lindsay Cooper's inimitable and subtle music scores songs with lyrics by Carolyn Askar and Sally Porter and dances choreographed by Maedee Dupres dealing with early childhood. Memory here seems to be of rosy days of games and caring, a fussy adult voice making sure the little one doesn't just eat but does it nicely. The props — a little door, a dolls house, a book — conjure a childhood of Alice-like quirkyness which fails to convince. Although the choreography is often interesting it is undermined by the overall sweetness of tone, the feeling that the performer is going all out to win over the audience — quite unnecessary for a dancer of such skill, who already possesses a delightful stage presence. The use of songs, while ambitious and admirable in terms of conceiving the piece as a whole was a little distressing to watch. It must be very hard to switch from one discipline to another in mid performance... perhaps the piece could benefit from a separate singer, good though it is to hear Maedee's strong singing voice.

The second part 'Facing Out', is choreographed by Richard Alston, and has a song by Sally Potter. Alston is incapable of choreographing an ugly movement and in this piece he has not succumbed to the temptation to indulge in whimsy which has him last choreograph Maedee — in 'Schubert Dances' — in full period, masculine costume, complete with spectacles. Facing Out keeps things simple in costume and intent, and lets the audience relax as they admire the dancer's skill and grace when interpreting someone else's work.

The high point of the piece is undoubtedly the last section, 'As She Breathes' with lyrics and choreography by Sally Potter. Here, sound, lighting and costume come together to make a dramatic tableau, as Maedee, barefoot and in a long scarlet gown, begins to sing. In all the songs, unfortunately, it was very hard to hear the lyrics... Song over, the music continued and the dancer took her place centre stage and in a spotlight for the first time. Standing very still, her first gesture was to guard her belly with cupped hands. Her facial expression, in the previous pieces of unvarying sweetness and smiles, had changed, was more enclosed, more in-

Theatre Babel



Sue Grove

tense. The second movement of the piece was a wide circling out of the arms in front of the belly, gesturing a great stomach, fecundity.

Circling out, growth, was the central image of the piece, a woman growing from her own inner strength. The glowing red dress showed off the grace and also the strength of the dancer's white arms, her bare feet firm and careful in the steps which were tiny at first, sideways slow circling like a very ancient folk dance. The ring dancing grew faster, there were leaps, deep breaths, hard work. There was rolling and lying and strong white legs revealed in a long still head-stand. Here the audience could at last see the dancer's real skills, her strength as well as her grace. Here they were made aware of her womanhood, her potential, her sisters, as the careful movements quickening into a spinning, whirling climax brought the sense of a more ancient world where women danced to explore and enjoy their own spiritual and sensual power.

The piece finished with the dancer's expression once more serene. As she left the stage the back of her scarlet dress showed dark, soaked with sweat.

Lynn MacRitchie

## The Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly Show

ECCENTRIC ENTERPRISES

I was nervous. The reports had told me that I could expect an evening of awful performances, a militant and vocal audience, plant mutilation and a series of events which had led the last hosting publican to scream 'beasts', 'animals', at the performers and punters alike.

So I was ready for anything and was not fooled by the evenings title of 'Has anyone here seen Kelly Show? A poetic and jazzy search for the Hampstead intellectual'. Obviously this was a blind for all sorts of excesses. I wore a raincoat. But to my relief there was not a plant in sight, bar the bamboo growing on the silver wallpaper that decorated the large upstairs room at the new venue, the Gypsy Queen pub. Everyone was sitting at tables or buying drinks at the large bar while a three piece jazz band warmed up the evening from the far corner. I was reminded of a small city jazz or folk club. Was I to watch a blast from the past? I took a seat and the blast came. With a shriek on a whistle a figure in a white suit with white hair sprung out from behind the piano. This 'Fitzcarraldo' of N.W.3 attempted to stir up the paying natives and get the evening afloat with bursts on the piano, sax and whistle. The natives sat up and listened, even sang along. But the evening went aground again when he went to the bar leaving the band bumping along in the back ground. 'There is no running order' announced Bill Millis, the evenings organizer. But then went on to introduce the next performance, gesturing towards

the back of the room, where a group of bearded men had taken their seats. Nothing happened, then a knitted mask was pulled out of a Sainsbury's plastic bag and stretched down over the face of one of the group. With only eyes and mouth visible through the mask he looked like the Black Panther and to add to this impression, he looked around and screamed. A long animal cry which filled the room and riveted attention. And he screamed.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves. Did gyre and gimble in the wabe: All mimsy were the borogoves and the mome raths outgrabe,' a voice cut through the scream. The child's language of the Jabberwocky poem from Through the Looking Glass and the blood lust screams exposed the demons. The native audience came alive with cries and screams, especially from the back where the group of men sat like the tribal elders of sound poetry. The performance by John Horder and Hugh Milburn cut the evening open and the audience took off. Bob Flag in his white suit responded to the take over and heckling of the acts with 'What do you expect for this kind of money. Berlin in the 30's?' The natives wanted blood. The previous publican's words echoed in my head 'Beasts', 'Animals', he had cried. The search for Kelly, the Surrealist poet and editor had entered the rainforest. Inhabitants, Bob Cobbing and Clive Fencott got and performed A Tribute to Mondrian, 'Boo Ma La Lee La, Boo Ma La Lee La', but they had done better while part of the audience, who now exchanged banter among themselves during their act.

The evening swerved and jerked from

side to side with the audience shouting out at the sights that appeared in front of them. Terry Day and the band came in with bursts of jazz numbers which kept up the pace of the search. Until an undertaker, Ian Hinchliffe, arrived to take up his position at the piano. Undertaker of the silent movie, he switched on his piano top projector. The 'Perils of Pauline' unfolded, spilling off the edges of the tiny screen to reflect on the silver wallpaper. At the piano the player mournfully followed the pace of events as Pauline fought off her perils. For once the native audience remained still, captured by technology. The film ended, the piano ground to a tired halt, the loose end of the film flapped around the free spinning spool with the noise of a slow hand clap. Free of his duties the piano player got up to say his piece, but the audience would have none of it as he tried to mouth words in a parody of the film. The audience added their own sound track. Effective as the performance was, he could not finish the Final Scene, as the audience had taken over the running order.

The new order, all performers exhausted, demanded a Search for a Star among the audience, but once singled out the audience members failed to fill the gap. The evening and audience evaporated now the looking glass was held up for all to see themselves reflected in. But with no Kelly in sight, so the search ended.

Bernard Kelly had in fact been in the audience, although on arrival at the door was unrecognized and an attempt was made to charge him entrance. He refused and got in.

Robin Morley

### An Eccentric Evening



Leon Morris

## General Idea

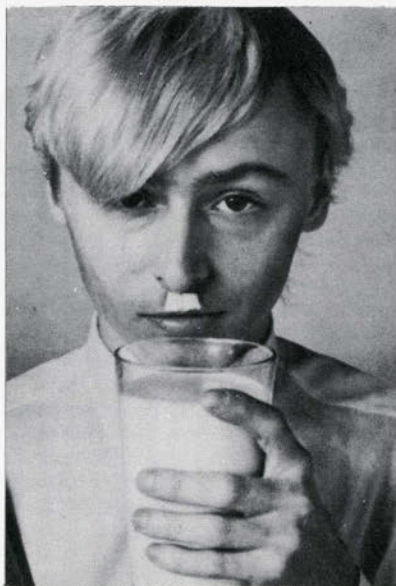
ICA

Ostensibly the Canadian group, General Idea's installation in the Artists' Architecture exhibition at the ICA has little to do with architecture. The elegant Boutique suggests rather an interior designer's fantasy. Shaped like a dollar sign, the Boutique snakes across the floor bedecked in flowers and chock full of items for sale: greetings cards, magic palettes and architectonic Doric column test tube holders to name but a few. The display is really no more than an appetizer and those wishing to know more, must turn to issues of their magazine *FILE* or, if one can catch them, their videos. Several were screened at the opening.

From these, one gets to realize the full significance of the group's performance activities. In essence they have presented perhaps the longest performance ever made, sustaining an act for over a decade already and looking towards next year, 1984, as the ultimate focus of their manoeuvres. During this time they have used a wide variety of media to relay their ideas to the world including installations, performances, pageants, TV appearances as well as their own publications and videos.

The General Idea Pilot, a 1977 video commissioned by the Ontario Educational Communications Authority outlines the history of General Idea and sums up their concerns. The three participants are introduced — AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal — and proceed to tell their own tale. We hear of the quest to find Miss General Idea (the inspiration of the artist), the establishing of the Miss General Idea Pageant and the building of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion (intended to occupy as much space in real estate as it does in the media). The narrative is presented in a slick montage of film, stills, video-taped and live action with voice-overs and soothing muzak. Apart from having a consciously avant garde arty appearance, Pilot also works like a TV documentary. The audience is swept along by a seemingly logical flow of argument, unable to stop and question it. The observation that persuasive ideas sell the artist and his vision leads to the cleverly deduced conclusion that 'It isn't art unless it sells'. This kind of manipulation of language and argument crops up in their other work as well.

Underpinning all this, is of course a sidelong thrust at media manipulation: satire of the trite messages of advertising statements and an ironic challenge to society's traditional image of the artist. A scene from Test Tube (their video from 1979) called Nazi Milk exemplifies the first, as Billy complete with Hitler/milk moustache 'drinks the familial flavour of this familial drink'. This type of jargon is so familiar in advertising copy and so uncomfortable in terms of the propaganda it implies. The second part of the thrust attacking conventional views of the artist is embodied in the whole concept of the Miss General Idea Pageant. On the one hand it is



General Idea — Nazi Milk

an amusing parody of media hype at its most banal — the annual Miss World contest. On the other it is a more serious dig at the workings of the art market.

Art's central myth they say, is the 'myth of the individual genius. Each year new art stars are found to satisfy the appetite — the psychological and economic needs of consumerism in the art community'. Equating the 'art star' with the vague and woolly concept of Miss General Idea, the group pour scorn on the quality of the art community's appetite.

The fascination General Idea have with consumerism appears time and time again. In their more recent video, Cornucopia (1982) the acquisitive urge for digging up the past is dissected in a pastiche of archaeological investigation. Rooms in the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion are unearthed like historical discoveries although in reality, the pavilion is yet to be built. The divide between fact and fiction is constantly called into question through this juggling with time that occurs throughout all their work — in the endless play between future (1984); past (the obsessive recording of the group's own history) and present (the constant rehearsals for the 1984 events).

General Idea's work moves right across the area of contemporary myth and encompasses a huge complex of cultural references ranging from George Orwell to fashionable fads for cocktails. What makes their work infuriating to those seeking a serious critique of the subject matter is the 'pumping irony' and the post-Structuralist linguistic antics with which it is handled. The slipperiness of their language: constant punning, dead pan satire and chop-logic makes it impossible to pin down their tone or determine their precise meaning. The result is a minefield into which art critics venture at their peril. Perhaps 1984 will provide a solution.

Anna Moszynska

## Doppelganger

DRILL HALL

An unexploded bomb falls onto the stage, landing with a dull thud amidst a pile of sandbags. This is how Broken Years began. It was the best possible comment upon a performance which appeared threatening, crude and efficient but which actually took few risks, was badly thought out and had little impact. From first to last, this project has been played safe. Doppelganger have constantly gone for the obvious stroke, the least original line.

Think about it: at the end of World War II, a cowardly soldier and a refugee meet in a combat zone and relive their experiences of war. War is an easy choice for an experimental theatre group which doesn't want to try too hard. It offers every chance to run, shout, crawl, swear, shriek and act hurt whilst still maintaining a high level of glib credibility. Furthermore, war not only guaranteed an emotional response from an audience but it can also ensure that it is the *correct* one. Everyone participates with their attitudes already worked out. As such it is, on an intellectual level, an exercise in redundancy which draws upon the long-suffering and consistently ignored complexities of the Second World War as the supplier of cheap dialogue and cheap essential scenery.

The ideal space for action, the environment for Broken Years is a cross between an assault course and a play pen (not that there is much difference between the two to begin with). However nobody *plays* with this space. Nobody uses the accumulation of objects piled up on stage. No use is made of the actions, of movements. They all take a subordinate role. This is a theatre of words and words only — endless bloody streams of them which numb and irritate. The two characters are created and presented through the language and little else. In short, the stage is invaded and built over by the same hierarchies and values which support the conventional theatre. This is a very old dramaturgy trying hard to look vital: trying to 'perform'.

Did it not occur to Doppelganger Theatre that war creates its own theatre which the modern stage can only mimic in the clumsiest, most impotent manner? Did it never occur to them that war maintains complex intertwining networks of influences, strategies and attitudes which infest our shaky peacetime? It is war, not language, which is at the heart of our liberal European discourses. A culture is judged best by its ability to win wars — and I mean *win*. Where does Broken Years and its kind *win*. Where does Broken Years and its kind fit it? Nowhere. It stays on the periphery making smug, distracting noises. It does more harm than good.

It would be very easy to just stamp this play into the ground and forget it, if it were not for the fact that performers with the experience and —yes— talents of Ljiljana Ortolgia and Dave Baird ought to know better. The stage began to come to life during the cabaret sequence near the end of

the play when the pacing was faster and more fragmented, but by then I was too bored to give it my best attention. However I saw enough to know that Dopperganger Theatre need discipline. They need to work with other people's material and they need to try an environment different from the 'hush' of the Drill Hall (where even the decor seems to hold its breath) – they should try a venue where they would have to actively command attention. Ortolja, who has potential to use action, space and objects in a very cogent way, has to be rescued from the obvious sexism of this phony war story and allowed greater freedom. Dopperganger Theatre need to take control of themselves, and stop throwing away what abilities they have on projects like this.

Ken Hollings

**Virginia Astley,  
French & Saunders**  
MIDLAND GROUP,  
NOTTINGHAM

It's a measure of the success of the performance programme at the Midland Group since September that turning people away has become the rule rather than the exception – the only difference for the visit of French and Saunders and Virginia Astley as part of the Women's Festival in Nottingham being the sheer number of people who couldn't get in.

Those who did found the small performance studio for the first time set out as a cabaret club with round tables at the front and a bar at the side, which at least hinted at cabaret atmosphere for those crammed in and around the raked seating behind.

Most had come to see French and Saunders, presumably after the 'Five Go Mad in Dorset' and 'The Comic Strip Presents' on channel 4. While female comedians are no longer a rarity; double acts are close to unique – and while it's impossible to envisage any male coping with any of their material, none of it was over self-consciously feminine. So amongst the myriad characters were the adolescent schoolgirl fending off the caringly prying mother, the two Americans discussing sex problems with brilliantly portrayed open-ness, or the enthusiastic young actress trying desperately to impress an avant-garde drama school 'in their own space'. Most brilliant of all though was 'We keep Lizards In Business', a lampoon of robotic mime, intense performance art and the Flying Lizards in one effortless swoop.

After this it was ironic that Virginia Astley should have difficulties – ironic because into the gap left by the aggression and distortion of punk and the clinical coldness of electronics has come simpler more acoustic music which, until a couple of years ago, might have been called 'folk' pastoral though Virginia Astley may be, she suffered terribly at the Midland Group from technical problems. Playing the flute

beautifully and singing with a child-like innocence, she was backed by two musicians (Helen Ottoway on keyboards, and Jo Wells of Kissing the Pink on sax) and played further keyboards herself...but there behind them all was the culprit – the twirling ten inch reels of a Revox. For the encore, the tape broke during rewind, which 'forced' a performance of a song with no pre-recorded backing track, but the pure magic of that finale in fact left a sense of sadness that so many performers rely on totally unnecessary tapes. Not only unnecessary, but also intrusive – the moving tragedy of the dead children in 'We Will Meet Them Again' is lost when most of the performance is revolving on the Revox rather than evolving in front of you, although the bird-song and the crickets chirping did create a night-time stillness in an instrumental piece of Virginia Astley's yet to be issued piano album.

Again the tapes overwhelmed the supremely lonely 'Love's A Lonely Place To Be' (her latest single) and as enchanting as her supremely English voice is, and as dreamy and atmospheric as her songs are, the irksome tapes made it akin to seeing French live, but Saunders on video.

John Shaw

**Brian Eno**  
MOMA, OXFORD

A recent installation by Brian Eno shows him to be an artist more interesting for his music than his video work. Of course it would be unfair to generalise about him on the basis of one piece, but on this showing it was the visual images which seemed to be the least valuable.

Mistaken Memories of Medieval Manhattan is a collection of impressionistic snaps taken from various New York apartment windows, which illustrate a strange, illusive and vicarious clanking sound track. The views from Eno's windows are of skylines often bullied to the bottom of the screen and thus emptied of any movement except that of drifting clouds. Adding to the oddity of the progression of images is the almost unbelievable change in colour (which we are lead to understand was brought about by the shifting composition of the sky,) as purple shade walls turn to beige, and greys to orange. For all that the aspects seem to meander purposelessly in search for a state (emotional and physical) which is either never found or is staring us in the face all the time (in which case the notion of search would seem redundant).

Eno himself admits that the work is about something, 'the seeds of another reality' he says and there is no doubt that the feeling of the photography – a cross between time-lapse and slow-motion – achieves this much, but as he also agrees he has done little more than mention the existence of this yet unvisited state.

Whilst the creator claims that both music and film 'arise from a mixture of nostalgia and hope and a desire to make a

quiet place for myself' they owed more to the last than the former. New York is hardly a place to elicit nostalgia and his work which excludes the human element from the edifices caused by human existence contains only at best a dream. Hopes are social things and this work was disturbingly content without them. Eno's dream scares me; its self-indulgence seems to offer little to anyone else.

Paul Anand.

**Helen Seer/  
Zoe Redman**  
LONDON FILM CO-OP

A great white puff-ball of a skirt sits unceremoniously in front of three screens of which the central panel is distinguished by a window of silver paper. A nauseating smell of cheap talcum powder fills the air as the artist climbs into her voluminous skirt and disturbs layers of the dreaded dust scattered about the floor. The smell wafts across to the audience as Helen Seer begins to manically dust more talcum powder from the silver papered window. Her vast skirt hovers awkwardly around her, alternately suggesting a big-bellied clown, a whirling dervish and a monster fairy from the top of the Christmas tree. Slides of the view from a window onto a suburban street animate the flanking screens and a womans prerecorded voice begins to describe a life of domestic imprisonment both actual and psychological. 'This place, damp, untidy.. I try to wipe away the dust, but it always comes back.. I'm frightened up there, nothing above, nothing below.' Another voice gently criticises '.. you're not really afraid of people outside, only yourself.. you're afraid of conformity but you doubt your strength to rebel.' While this dialogue develops against the sounds of a busy street, the silver paper is being energetically scraped away by another woman on the other side of the window. She too is weighed down by an enormous skirt – but hers is black. Seer occasionally breaks off her manic dusting to deliver short descriptions of the 'she' in question: 'Her small blue eyes or are they grey with perhaps a hint of green.. a strong jaw, her father's jaw.. she has lines on her forehead, she's had them since she was 14..'

Poor housing, agoraphobia, paranoia, conflicts of conformity vs. nonconformity, the limitations of women's choices, the obsession with their bodies, all these become elements in a rather bleak description of a young woman delivered by the dead-pan voices of Helen Seer live and on tape. Against this, the reality of the artist's imagination, her fantastic skirts, the simple and effective structure of the performance itself suggest another side to the 'she' which I took to be in part autobiographical. I began to want some of that positive imagery to complicate the text, an element of optimism to offset what was beginning to sound like a hopeless case. Besides this, I thought 'Some kind of Balance' was an excellent performance.

'This is the story of June, the woman not the month. An ordinary woman. Her lies, her truths, her dreams, her nightmares. What she has, what she wants, or what she thinks she might want... June has the telly on all day long.'

Where Helen Seer uses humour in her costumes, Zoe Redman infuses her dialogue with a gentle comedy while keeping her visual presentation cool if not classical.

Two video monitors guard a central screen onto which slides of a suburban front door are projected. The twin monitors relay a series of virtually immobile images: the view through June's net curtained windows, a still life with green apples, a heart-shaped cushion, cups of tea, fluffy pink slippers, a perfectly proportioned Eve offering her apple — all these impeccable images picture June's ideal world. Against a background of slow electronic music, the artist's pre-recorded voice begins to tell the story. Zoe Redman live reiterates the narrative into a microphone adding another element to her collage of sound.

June waves goodbye to her husband, waves him to work as she waved him to war. Inside her 'net curtain palace' she makes herself another cup of tea and reads the Sun ('not the Bible'). She's a good neighbour, she's houseproud, a good wife and mother, impeccable, reliable and dull. Not so simple: her birthday celebrations bring on a nightmare of old age. Decayed beauty heralds failure as a woman; no longer the pretty little girl of her youth. The image of whore looms up '... prostitute to any Tom, Dick or Harry, holder of forbidden fruit in clammy hand.' But the nightmare subsides, a return to normality, reliable routine and the usual little habits saves her sanity. June waves goodbye to her husband, makes a cup of tea, talks to her plants. She's '... the ordinary woman who lives over the road, over the road to everybody.'

Zoe Redman is a natural performer — of her selves, in this case the archetypal working-class housewife, bedrock of society whose obsessive conventionality is both noble and absurd. The voice the artist uses is so much her own that it would be difficult to accuse her of sending up the folies of working-class women — besides, which there is too much affection in the portrait she paints. However, the performance left me in a peculiar position. When I laughed at June (rather than the artist) was it simply from relief that my middle-class feminism, art world refinement and taste in furniture has saved me from servitude and pink slippers? For me June could be the cleaning lady whose 'funny' accent and dreadful print dresses made us giggle as children. This is not something I like to be reminded of. Apart from this minor discomfort, I thoroughly enjoyed the performance. Zoe Redman has a remarkable talent for mixing media and maintaining absolute clarity — the mix is never too rich. Her stage presence projects warmth and intelligence. She is never overbearing, shrill or sentimental

and her wry humour finally demolishes any residual resistance you might have to the pleasures of her performance.

Catherine Elwes

## Basement Group Performance

ARNOLFINI, BRISTOL

Performance as a series of practical jokes is the best way to describe the Basement Group, Newcastle's latest installation/performance event at the Arnolfini. Right from walking into their installation to sitting in a performance, a number of deliberate zen tricks are played on the public, leading some more critical visitors to write off their work as frivolous. Tricky though some of it may have been they managed over the week to accumulate one of the best sized audiences for live art, considering their anonymous image, that I've seen outside London, most of it by word of mouth.

Here is an example of some of their conceptual pranks. Three Video monitors, the one in the centre having a minimal central white line. The two outside have alternating stills of Japanese landscape painting. A notice instructs you to look from monitor to monitor as the pictures change 'to experience Satori'. As the eye flicks from side to side, the white line incidentally involuntarily expands to show the word SATORI. Here's another. A single telephone on a plinth. When you pick it up, you can hear the New York speaking clock. Later, in the performance, a tale is told of a thwarted lover, the object of whose affections has gone back to a wife, previously unrevealed, in New York. She goes to his London apartment, dials the New York speaking clock and leaves the phone off the hook. He is not due back for several weeks.

I have to declare an interest. I am prejudiced towards this kind of work. I, like them, have had to sit through any amount of performances where a single idea is spun out for hours in the hope of achieving some kind of 'resonance'. (They also programme performance in their artist-run centre.)

They are therefore determined not to bore audiences. They take an idea, use it for five minutes, drop it, maybe pick it up later, but don't wield it as a sledgehammer obsession. This does not mean that their source material is always light, some of it is quite disturbing, but is never dwelt upon. Belinda Williams, against shots of her offspring in various states of development, against a soundtrack of probing questions about why she decided to have them, does manic keep fit exercises, till finally thoroughly exhausted answers the double question 'Is it hard work' with 'It bloody well is!'

The performances were begun by John Kippin with Thought for the Day, who with a flashlight in the dark, distributed envelopes with various quotations within

on a different 'megatheme' for every day the performance was done. (Art and Life, Artists, Art and Performers, Art and Critics, Art and Men and Women, and finally Art and Life.) The quotes used appeared to be imaginary variations of actual, well-used *mots*.

All Work And No Play Makes Jack A Dull Boy was the real cliché that motivated John Bewley as an action-drawing Jack. As slides of Bewley in various poses with bucket swiftly alternated, he attempted to draw on the screen the outline. The movement from side to side by the projected image led to stylised lunging movements as Bewley attempted to follow the images. Traces of previous drawings from the last five days remained, and were added to, re-iterating the group's general aim to make each performance part of a whole weeks sequence.

John Adams video anecdotes, part II and Sensible shoes included the previously mentioned NY telephone incident in a collage of romantic and everyday images, a mixture of True Life adventures and confessional.

More disturbing than amusing was Ken Gill's God: A Melodrama. Another slide/performance in which he inflicts upon himself various self-humiliations, such as being caught in a spotlight with his trousers down. Continuing the sardonic melancholy of his previous performances, the significant repetitive image here is a slide of the other members of the group pointing at him, laughing. A reminder that support gained from working in a group can turn, under pressure, into backbiting and paranoia? Or simply a ritual exorcism of his fears?

Finally Richard Grayson, who throughout the installation had been erecting little plaques to visitors individual heroes. Now to an accompaniment of the incantation of his own heroes, Jack Keroac, Biggles, David Bowie, Tony Benn, Russell Hobbs (Russell Hobbs?) he wrestled with John Bewley, in a cathartic celebration of his fantasy about Men of Steel. The wrestling was real enough to make them sweat, the soundtrack was dry and questioning enough to make these male artist/heroes look suitably ridiculous. All in all, an extremely satisfying exposition of the skills of these Northern artists.

Rob La Frenais.

## Roberta Graham

ARNOLFINI, BRISTOL

Since 'Campo Santo' was performed last May in London and Newcastle, Roberta Graham has significantly expanded the installation within which her ritual remembrance of the Yorkshire Ripper's victims takes place.

Visitors to the upstairs gallery at Arnolfini were invited to examine closely a reconstructed derelict wasteland, its boundaries marked by roadwork tripod lamps and orange/white bunting corresponding

in outline with a diagrammatic map of the murder locations which formed part of the wall display. Beside the map, a large painting of the rose-bay willow-herb, commonly found on derelict wasteland, drew attention to a central motif in the work: each of the thirteen memorial blocks unveiled during the performance bears a photograph of a bouquet of these flowers placed and recorded at the murder site by Graham herself. All around the walls of the spacious gallery criss-crossed black tyre marks, interspersed with black footprints, added to the claustrophobic sense of being surrounded that was a powerful element in the quadrophonic soundtrack of the performance.

Among the detailed debris within the performance area old tyres, mechanics' tools and copies of vehicle maintenance magazines created a harshly masculine impression, against which a scattered purse, lipsticks and abandoned hat disturbingly reminded onlookers of the violent events this piece records; the placing of a shop-dummy torso face-down beneath the rusty skeleton of a mattress struck a chill note.

Paper 'rubbish' around the site set newspaper articles about Peter Sutcliffe against pages torn from religious tracts, calling into question the bases of belief, and inviting the spectator to consider the origins of the viciously moralistic attitude towards women which is so deeply ingrained in our society that the crimes of the Ripper could be viewed as an aberration rather than a cruelly logical extension. The strong distinction made by the media between 'respectable', 'innocent' women and prostitutes is insidiously supported by the Christian tradition which divides women into the pure and the impure, Virgin Mary or Mary Magdalen.

Within this altered environment, the performance itself is still much as described in an earlier review (no. 18), with greater use of live sound effects as Graham and her assistant move noisily amidst the flotsam and jetsam of the enlarged installation.

As a woman, I responded to the piece more emotionally than intellectually: the aggressively loud noise of engines seeming to encircle me in the darkness, and the alienated sounds — hubbub of voices, clink of glasses, thump of disco bass — of city nightlife made me feel vulnerable and frightened, so that I looked around at my companions in the audience all too aware of psychologist Erich Fromm's reminder, quoted by Graham in her documentation, that evil men are not recognisably different from others. The difference between an ordinary person and a murderer is one of degree, not of kind.

'Campo Santo' was the most accessible piece of live art I have seen, possibly because it moves to its general assertions from a very public and recent particular case. In the torchlit pause at each memorial block, all the victims were remembered as murdered women, with none of the moralistic division between 'whores' and 'others'; the bleakly echoing roll call of all-too-familiar names was a profoundly moving reminder that there is more to any human being than a label of moral judgement. We are well advised that we can no more dismiss murder victims as 'prostitutes' than we can dismiss Sutcliffe as 'murderer'.

**Shirley Brown**

## Iron In The Flesh

AIR GALLERY

Imagine a space. A familiar low ceilinged basement room, no windows, no lights. Add the following ingredients: a liberal sprinkling of sawdust; two lengths of corrugated metal stretched across the floor; a dozen or so raw entrails placed at regular intervals along the planks; three video screens; a slide projector and several hundred pounds worth of amp equipment. Add to this scenario a couple of old tin bins thrown in at the rear; a wall projected image announcing 'Iron in the Flesh' and a barrage of indiscriminate noise issuing from two sizeable speakers. Imagine the rising heat and the butcher-shop smell and you have the setting for a recent LVA event organised at the Air Gallery.

Enter the protagonists: two boy-scout look-alikes with cropped hair who begin to play with their expensive equipment. First they start the videos rolling. What a surprise — various violent or menacing images

hit the screens: a car exploding, a bomb victim, an iron-masked man, each recurring at intervals for ten minutes or so. More switches are flicked which cause American TV voice-overs to contend with yet more random noise. Fun is had with the gadgetry until the tiring of these pursuits, the two manipulators resort to more basic delights. Retiring to the back of the set, each seize the awaiting tin bins and proceed to bounce them up and down on the floor (though mercifully not on the animal viscera). After another ten minutes or so of banging the bins, they finally round off the event with a typical flourish. A small explosion causes red smoke to fill the room and choke the spectators one by one towards the door, over the entrails and up the stairs to the welcoming Islington night. Iron in the Flesh? Pain in the Neck more like.

**Anna Moszynska**

The picture of Mona Hatoum in the last issue should have been credited to John Macpherson. We apologise for this.





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