

PERFORMANCE

MAGAZINE

THE REVIEW OF LIVE ART

No. 29

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April/May

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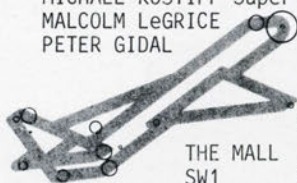


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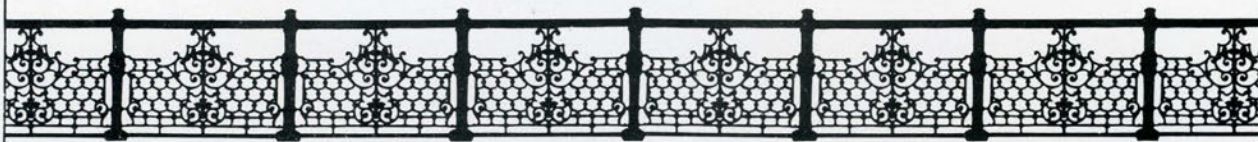
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PERFORMANCE

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'CURSE WITH EXPLETIVE OF WHIRLWIND THE BRITANNIC AESTHETE CREAM OF THE SNOBBISH EARTH'

So starts page 15 of the first edition of BLAST, the magazine of the Vorticist movement published in 1914. It makes good reading even today. With no holds barred, the Vorticists vent their collective spleen on the British establishment and all its works. The sprawling typography, which 'blasts' and 'blesses' the condemnations and promotions of the group, bawls out its message of provocative wrath. It has much in common with the Futurist manifestoes. Both the Italian Futurists and the British Vorticists yelled, shouted and provoked in an urgent effort to drag their respective cultures away from 19th century navel gazing and into the modernity of the 20th century.

Now, as then, the art radicals have to shout extremely hard to penetrate the cosy sleepiness if they want to point out that the world is changing. Now, as then, political and scientific events are going unremarked. Perhaps it's intrinsically British to be years behind the actualities of current events. In 1936, Auden wrote that 'in the hour of the Bluebird and the Bristol Bomber, (Man's) thoughts are appropriate to the year of the Penny Farthing'. Substitute Space Shuttle, Cruise missile and Model T Ford respectively and you have an instant update for 1984.

But are there that many people, let alone artists, raising their voices in comment or protest? It would not be going too far to suggest that Britain along with most of its artistic community is fast asleep to the realities of its position. Consider for a moment, the fact that Britain's shattered manufacturing economy is sustained by an oil asset due to dry up before the end of this decade. Consider the number of nuclear weapons stationed here and consider the fact that three, if not four, million people are without any useful occupation whatsoever. All in all, it's extraordinary that the country is not in a permanent state of emergency.

But it's not. So why not? Look at it like this. Wage increases are averaging about 7% p.a. which means that those in work can look forward to a growth in real personal wealth of 2% p.a. Can't be bad, squire! Gotta new motor, John? Yeah, not half! It's easy to forget the fact that this country suffered violent rioting in all its major cities three years ago if today petrol is well under two pounds a gallon: It's easy to forget the fact that this country fought an imperial war two years ago when in Britain (a country which has more VCRs per head of population than any other in the world) a video film can be hired for only one pound a night. Who is bothering to point out that last year the government was returned with a landslide majority on a reduced share of the popular vote to preside over a country that then had an all time high of Christmas consumer spending while 13% of its population was unemployed. Certainly the artistic community isn't.

Now this isn't a rallying cry for unfettered social realism and agit-prop. It's an observation which notes that our artistic community seems singularly unconcerned by the subtle but radical changes that are taking place. One can only conclude that the said community is as deeply entrenched in the materially snug status quo as the rest of the population. But very soon the winds of radical change are about to start howling and ironically it will be the Establishment that opens the window.

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Despite the irrelevance and aloofness of most art forms, the arts are nevertheless tied up in the social and political fabric of Britain. Into this introverted and self orientated world are about to land two bombshells that will shake the arts as they have never been shaken before. These are the proposed abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the ACGB strategic review. Admittedly, they don't sound particularly earthshattering. The genteel murmurs of protest and the bland newspaper articles have taken the first topic clean through the boredom threshold while the second is still under wraps. In particular, both topics would seem to have little relevance to independent artists working on experimental projects in performance or environment. The talk is primarily about cash and since artists in this area see precious little of it, who can blame them for showing scant interest when telephone numbers are needed to describe the sums involved.

But it's all tied together more than one might think. Here in a nutshell is the story so far. The six metropolitan county councils and the GLC spent £11.3 millions and £18.3 millions respectively on the arts in 1983/4. In 1986 these bodies will be abolished and their functions taken over by borough councils. In turn these councils will be faced by rate capping and grant support penalties if they exceed set spending levels. There is also no guarantee that the MCC funds will also be handed over so there is the possibility of £30 m.p.a. being lost to arts funding. As regards the ACGB, it intends to hold a standstill on grant aid throughout 1984/5 and in April 1985, to terminate grant aid drastically to some organisations while re-distributing the savings on a 'leasehold' basis to others. This is euphemistically known as 'cutting away the dead wood'.

Both these moves have their roots deep in the political and social fabric and can be viewed as such

both directly and metaphorically. The proposed MCC abolition is part of the Government's desperation to achieve a reduction in public expenditure so that it will be able to deliver it's election promise of tax cuts. Hence in the subsequent re-organisation, it will be pretty easy to pick off arts budgets when they are stood beside such utilities as transport or the fire brigade service. The ACGB initiative has a similar radical basis. Strapped for cash and unable to respond to new developments (due in part to it's own preference for funding the big four national companies), it has decided to go for the metaphorical equivalent of an industrial 'shake-out' and has taken aboard Luke Rittner as its Ian MacGregor-style new broom. The role of the ACGB will change radically from one of responding to initiatives by making resources available to one of selecting projects for finite periods of support.

How it will work out is unclear but one thing is certain. Quite a lot of people are going to get the chop and there will be scant sympathy for the administrators and bureaucrats. For these people, there is one primary allegiance and that is to the system they serve with the actual artist coming a poor second. It will be delightfully ironic to see the same system treacherously kicking it's servants in the teeth. Over the next couple of years the new spectator sport may well be the sight of redundant bureaucrats running around like so many chickens with their heads cut off.

And as for the artists? Again, one thing is certain. The interpretative arts may well be decimated but the creative arts cannot and never will be suppressed. The pundits may well talk of a 'new dark age for the arts' but this is inaccurate nonsense. It'd be true if they were talking about a 'new dark age for those arts which pander to and reflect bourgeois taste and which are serviced by well salaried bureaucrats in centres of excellence'. But little will change for anyone creating dynamic events, striking images or texts worth reading. Here at the grass roots level of artistic creation, the funding tends to come more from the DHSS than the ACGB. Dynamic art can be produced no matter what the situation is and art history is full of examples of works of art being created under the most oppressive and unlikely of situations. Sartre said that the freedom of the individual was most strongly felt under the Nazi occupation of Paris when simply walking down the street became an expression of liberty. In like manner, the major collapse and re-orientation of arts funding and opportunity may yet produce a situation where art becomes a defiant, vital medium which addresses itself to relevant issues despite and because of the deprivation it faces.

Phil Hyde

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PERF



Today's Alex:

CLOCKWORK ORANGE (MAN IN THE MOON): 'You're dead, son. Go get yourself buried'. Anthony Burgess is without doubt one of the dreariest and most pedestrian intellectuals using the English language today, despite some stiff competition from the kind of people who think it's a really neat idea to perform adaptations of his work. *A Clockwork Orange* allows a dated and rather tired form of humane literacy to go a few rounds of shadow-boxing with some phantom of violence: 'ultraviolence' is the word for the night, but that's all it is. A word. This performance—and the novel it is based upon—is in real terms merely an inarticulate expression of an educated middle-class dread of being threatened by both factions in a continually escalating social conflict. Torn between the fear of young anti-social thugs on the one side and a loathing for the guardians of the law on the other, the critique of society embodied in this work can never actually confront or explore the nature of violence, as this would immediately necessitate precisely the kind of choice which it is so desperately

trying to avoid. This major deficiency is highlighted by a concern with therapy as a method of curbing violent deviancy. Such a concern is no longer applicable to a society in which the technology of 'behavioural modification' has been replaced by the techniques of crowd control: order is now to be imposed once more rather than implanted. The most therapy today's Alex can look forward to is a frontal lobotomy with a plastic bullet in some future metropolitan capital streetfight—and anyone who thinks that this view is alarmist should write to the Campaign Against Plastic Bullets, at 9 Poland Street London W1 and find out about the 14 British police area authorities who have been supplied with these lethal little beauties. The best thing that ever happened to *A Clockwork Orange* was in 1965 when Andy Warhol bought the film rights to it, junked about 90% of the plot, changed the title to *Vinyl* and used it as an excuse to get Malanga's whip-dance down on celluloid. This kind of playing with violence always comes out as choreography somehow. Dance, fools, dance. It's later that than you think.

JAPANESE CASSETTE MAGAZINES: Unscrambling the communications puzzle and a good three passes ahead of anything else in the same medium, the TRA cassette package (available ICA Bookshop, London) proves that the last voice you'll ever hear will probably be speaking Japanese. If TRA ever had an editorial policy it has been wisely submerged under a continual flow of music, visuals, events and interviews which is both slick and unpredictable; colourful, inventive, childish and deviant.

Here's a selected checklist: TRA2 comes in a blue cassette with red labels plus magazine, and features ambient sound by ex-Plastics, Toshio Nakashini, musical and textual autism from Salon Music, a recording of some guy beating himself up to music, Japanese reggae, *Fear of Bell Crickets* (an emulator piece by Ken Matubara) and a statement from Heaven Ltd. 'We remember the airplane "Enola Gay". Fuck Off!' TRA3 is about an hour of material in a sky-blue cassette with black labels plus information cards: Jan Tomita; 'One of only two or three steel drum players in Japan', recorded live on a beach somewhere, contemporary Ikebana, 'bonsai performance', probably the shortest interview with Duggie Fields in living memory, how to make instant noodles taste 'like the real thing' (the process takes three days), industrial sludge from Axel Gross, and a piece by Sanyueti Koyuza, a well known Rakugo performer. Rakugo is a traditional form of Japanese humour, and according to a partial translation, he seems to be laying them in the aisles with a routine which begins, 'A dentist in Hachioji recently killed a child by accidentally painting fluoride on his teeth.' Well I laughed. TRA-SO2, The Berlin Special, combines a blood-red cassette with white labels and a magazine. More musical fat, muscle and gristle from the city where even the attack dogs go around in pairs. The presenter sounds like he went into a post-hypnotic trance just prior to recording his comments but he has some interesting ideas on the future relationship between performance work and live music.

Finally, and most recently comes TRA-S03, *Homework* by Toshio Nakanishi, a silver cassette with green labels which

comes wrapped in lead sheeting 'so you can listen to it even after a nuclear attack.' A whole cassette of low-cholesterol no-hiss techno funk with an overlay of scratches, dubs and loops taken from TV commercials, Dial-a-Poet recordings, Abba, Jonzun Crew and (tell me I'm dreaming) Yma Sumak. Not to be missed.

Fear of Bell Crickets: Ken Matubara





NEO-NATURISTS' VALENTINE'S DAY PERFORMANCE: To celebrate the fact that I had missed the Neo-Naturists' latest performance, and their current return to notoriety, Christine Binnie and I arranged to have afternoon tea in Soho recently. Miss Binnie graciously allowed me to tape our conversation which ranged across a number of topics like the problems of pissing in public, stone-age hill-carvings and the latest Neo-Naturist projects, especially the *Neo-Naturist Epic*, a creative interpretation of the *Ascent of Woman* on Super 8, filmed in 'broad daylight and on the run'. With her new venture the MM club about to open, Miss Binnie had a lot to talk about.

CB: I think we ought to do a lot more flashing actually.

KH: Do you just wait until no-one is looking?

CB: Yes. Just wear a big coat. It's easy. You know there's a men's peep show now? The week it opened, all the girls that work in the girls peep shows were in uproar and going on strike because it costs ten times more to look at a man so the men are making more money than the women.

KH: Before the tape runs out, tell me about the Valentines' day performance.

CB: All right. It started off with Kenneth McKellar singing *I left my heart in the Highlands* and we sellotaped

hearts to where our hearts should be and drank a bottle of whiskey. We painted mountain scenes across our bosoms—a few thistles and that. Then I said 'I've learned a poem by heart for you' and recited 'Fondling' which is from *Venus and Adonis* and is about a deer park. While I was doing that, everyone made little plastic reindeer run all over me. Then 'My love is like a red red rose' came on and we opened a box of Cadbury's Roses and melted the chocolates into a heart. Then some heart-breaker record from Rod Stewart came on, and we ripped each other's hearts off and cut them into little pieces and we broke up the bit of chocolate heart and mixed them up with the bits of real heart, putting them all in these old love letters from 1901. Janis Joplin singing 'Take another little piece of my heart' came on so we went round the audience saying 'take a little piece of my heart, baby'. That's what we did. (tape ends)

One of the Neo-Naturist things is that we never do anything that's dangerous. That's one of our rules. So many people have danger as a big gimmick, and I quite like the dangers of not being dangerous. In a way that's *more* dangerous.

KH: But what about the shock horror headlines? It's almost as if you go out of you way to find controversy.

CB: You can never go out of your way

to find it. If you do you fall into the 'danger' trap. It's all so catholic, the whole business. I like getting headlines like that but some people see it as the be all and end all of everything which is why I think it's important for us to try and not be dangerous. Then perhaps we can do something which is more than just rebelling.

KH: So it can definitely limit what you do?

CB: Yes; all the darkness, the blood and poo, sperm and stilletos and red nail varnish. Leather and whips: it's all so catholic...I try to make sure everyone is having a nice time being involved. There's no point in people doing it if they're having a horrible time. The Neo-Naturists can be a bit of 'light relief'. We had a new Neo-Naturist for Valentine's day—one who's never done it before. A new girl called Claire who allowed herself to be Neo-Naturalised.

KH: She enjoy it?

CB: Yes, thoroughly enjoyed herself, and she's quite a 'proper' girl. It's nice having new Neo-Naturists because we haven't been very enthusiastic recently. It's good to have new people and ideas popping up. That's what I'm hoping will happen at the MM club: I've asked a lot of people who don't normally perform to do an act, to see what happens. So far everyone has said yes.

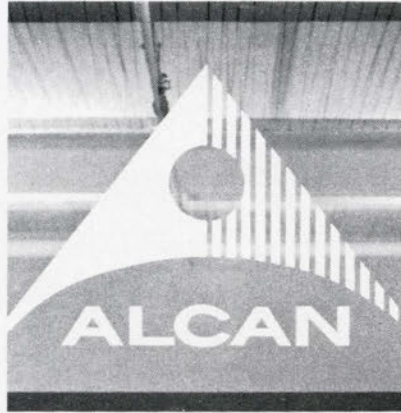
KH: Miss Binnie, thank you.

HANS HAACKE AT THE TATE:

Increasingly it seems that the only possible political art is one which represents the absence of individual power. To speak explicitly of conflict in this context is meaningless, and no 'erudite discourse' is possible without acknowledging and exposing the systems in which power manifests itself.

Haacke's work has replaced conflict with opposition. In his *Homage A Marcel Broodthaers*, an oil painting of Ronald Reagan (executed by Haacke) faces an uncropped and greatly enlarged photograph of anti-nuclear protesters across the gallery. A red carpet runs from the portrait to the photograph. Reagan is cordoned off from the public and stares disdainfully at the images of the protesters. The two representations face each other but they are not engaged with each other on any level; the red carpet encourages the spectators to walk between the two and look at one or the other. It is virtually impossible to look at both images at the same time and see them as part of the same visual space. They cannot be assimilated by the spectator. Visitors to the exhibit shuffled back and forth without being conscious of how their perception of the piece had already been determined. It is worth noting in this respect that many of Broodthaers' installations involved a curtailing of the public's access or view of the works on display.

Hommage, a comparatively recent work, stands in sharp contrast to most of the other exhibits which employ commercial art, typefaces and design to convey information about duplicitous business connections and heavy industry's encroachment into the financially rewarding world of art dealership. Haacke refers to his methods as 'information magic' and operates somewhere between Brecht's emphasis on the 'culinary' aspects of political art



Voici Alcan (detail) by Hans Haacke

and the cynical pronouncement of William Renner, President of Alcoa that 'business could hold art exhibitions to tell its own story'. Some story. When individual power ends, information becomes a weapon.

However the change of direction implied in *Homage* is confirmed in *Taking Stock*, painted by Haacke for the Tate show and all that remains of his attempts to publicly trash Saatchi and Saatchi, well entrenched in the art/business game. Charles Saatchi's considerable assistance to the Tate in building up their modern collection (and if the recent rather pallid acquisitions are anything to go by, the Tate is getting some help it doesn't need) has resulted in a certain amount of friction over the Haacke exhibit. Eventually on display was a life-size of Margaret Thatcher 'taking stock' of title-deeds, sitting at an ornate table upon which is placed *Pandora's Box*, a Pre-Raphaelite sculpture owned by the Tate and on display in the main foyer.

Taking Stock is a complex fusion of renaissance portrait and Eighteenth Century political cartoon. The details, the rich furnishings, the library of books, all lend themselves to overall impression of position and ownership, quite in keeping with a portrait. These same details also work against the subject: the books all bear the names of British industries, possessions or multinational interests, the Saatchis are depicted smiling inanely on the china plates (which on closer inspection are cracked) and Margaret Thatcher's pose is very similar to Reagan's in *Homage*. Thatcher is also not at the centre of the portrait but to one side of the canvas where her position is balanced by *Pandora's Box* which is directly opposite her in the composition. Pay attention and show some respect. That's our leader.

ANDROPOV'S FUNERAL. (RED SQUARE, MOSCOW): Change the portrait at the head of the procession and it could be Brezhnev's 15 months before. Go further and change the uniforms and it could be the rites of passage for any deceased individual in whom state power has been invested. Of all public spectacles, the state funeral remains the most immutable and the most persistently reproduced across political and cultural borders. The slow unwavering pace, the dress uniforms, the precise order of the columns of marching men, even the way wreaths are drawn up and paraded in ranks, represent the submission of individual elements to an overall and unifying structure. The discipline and order inherent in this structure reveals that the state funeral is an overt statement of permanence and cohesion in the face of the loss of the power figure: the faces can change but this state mechanism keeps functioning.

Predictably, the West saw what it wanted to see: the procession became a 'show of strength' although how two hundred men armed with rifles and a gun carriage with a dead premier strapped to it constitute such a display in a period of suspended SALT talks is lost on me. Strength and absence can never co-exist, and at the state funeral there are two key figures missing from the procession: the dead premier and his successor, who is simply an (albeit elevated

and privileged) onlooker who has no real place within the spectacle except as a spectator. To be frank, it is hard not to agree with reports that Cherenenko didn't actually seem all there at the time. He fumbled his speech, stumbled on the steps down from the balcony and fluffed a few of the protocols at the graveside. However, this was in part due to the fact that his authority had not at that time been formally defined in terms of ritual and behaviour. It had simply been conferred. At a state funeral, the successor simply has to be present. It is highly likely that if any of the world leaders who attended the funeral do ever meet with Cherenenko again, they will find that they are dealing with a very different person. Similarly, the West has to wait until the Mayday parade to see the traditional (but predictably obsolete) show of strength in Red Square. On the occasion of Andropov's funeral however what we did witness was not a show of permanence but a show of stagnation. The hideous red frills and trappings which adorned the graveside and the coffin, making it look as if the Soviets were actually burying a large box of chocolates, contrasted sharply with the austere marble lines of Lenin's tomb. The difference in temperament, ability and imagination which this clash of images embodies is one which evaded Western observers. I hope it did not escape the Russians too.

BRITISH CANADIAN VIDEO EXCHANGE OPENING, CANADA HOUSE: Culture crisis time again. Frankly I don't think this guard could care less about my explanations: I'm in the reception area of Canada House and I don't actually have an invitation on me. It's all he needs to hear. 'Yuh don't know what the hell you *do* want do yuh, son? Sit here and wait'. Takes about half an hour to get clearance and into the party. Security at Canada House is such a miserable half-measure: if you've got to do something you should *overdo* it. Some metal detectors, body searches, armed guards and closed circuit TV would really sharpen up the Canada House image. You can't buy that kind of publicity. I only hope I'm there when they strip-search Rob La Frenais.

This event is not so much a cultural event as a meeting of guest lists, with the LVA scoring heavily on numbers. Who let these people in? Self-publicists, art school drones, perf hags, administrators and beserkers. Where are the guards when you need them? It's face kissing time. Already? Soon everyone will be writing down their phone numbers on bits of torn-up paper.

'What do you mean, don't trust him? He lighting my cigarette for me'.

'I know it's the same perfume as last time but it's really

expensive. Buy me something different and I'll wear it, OK?' 'Seen what it says on my press card?'

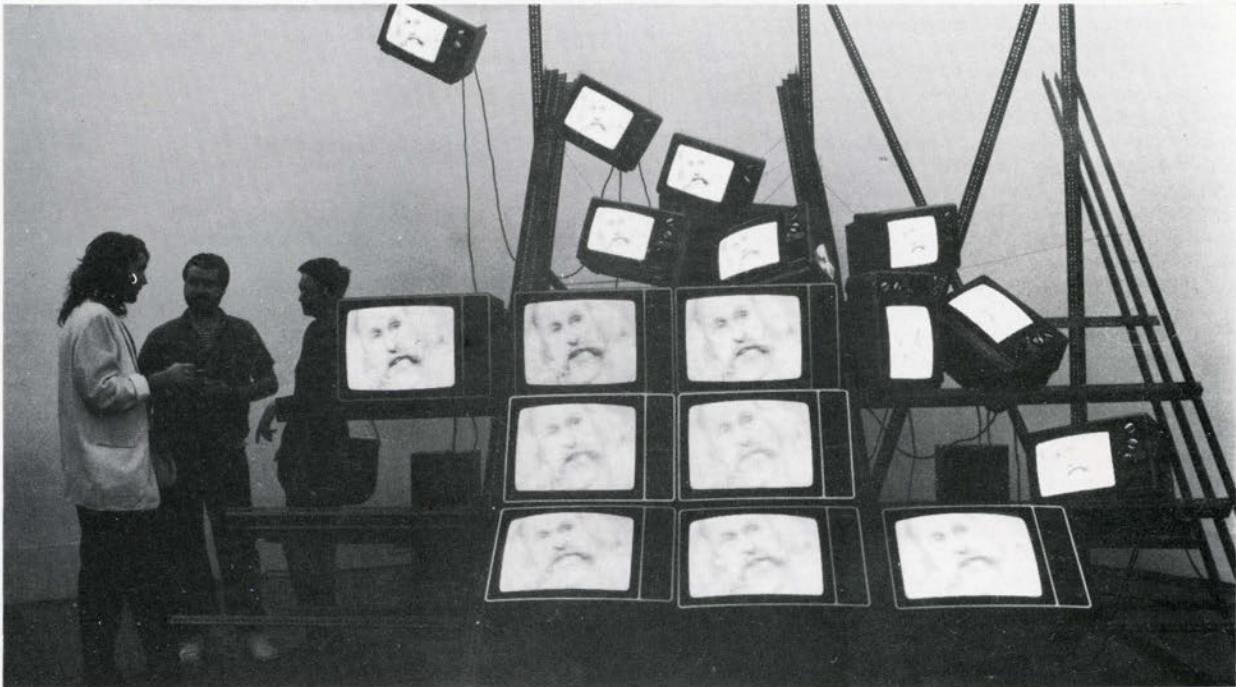
'Who was that asshole who was heckling all the way through the performance?'

'That asshole was an Arts Council officer and he's standing right behind you'.

Andre Stitt seems to be surrounded by a small circle of weak-face nudniks in ex-army gear. Despite their attentions, he's being boyish and charming. Or drunk and obnoxious—sometimes it's hard to tell.

Towering above all this is Peter Wronski's *It's Only a City Darling, They Call it New York*: a massive framework of diagonal supports holding a battery of video monitors all playing back an endless stream of newsreels and hand-held footage. Riot police, weaponry, street crime, silent interviews follow one after the other in an unstoppable flow. It was tight and tough, and I would really like to see his documentary on the Ku Klux Klan. Peter Wronski's work gave some kind of coherence to an event which was attempting and expecting too much and all in two hours. Here come the guards again, doing a 'some people have homes to go to' routine. At eight-thirty? Silvia Ziranek is at the door thanking us for coming to her party. She must throw some terrible parties.

It's Only a City, Darling, They Call New York by Peter Wronski



ROBERT WILSON'S VIDEO 50: Sounds like a game show—fifty minutes made up entirely from extremely short and unrelated sequences—a direct line cut into the rawest and most basic language of video representation. It's pure TV. Like the major networks, Wilson holds the viewer's unwavering attention through perpetually hitting the retina at closely spaced, regular, intervals. Within a structure which supports itself through the repetition of the same sixty-second climax and the black 'flash' when one image replaces another, continuity and meaning are a virtual irrelevance. *Video 50* is a heterogenous assemblage of images, techniques and actions designed to eliminate any concept of unity, progression or symmetry. Its complete

rupture with continuity is similar to some of the texts Wilson has used in his live performances such as his own *Diana Diena Kaassowrd* and, more specifically his use of Christopher Knowles' *These are the days* in *Einstein on the Beach*. Spoken language is virtually erased from *Video 50*, replaced by the repeated use of the expression 'huh'; a term in itself as basic and universal as TV image pacing. Wilson once described Knowles' destruction of language in his writings as being like 'a rock breaking apart'. This video has a very similar feel: the actual content of each of the images is not as

important as their discontinuity or the rhythms used to deploy them. Dislocated video for the '80s.

A copy of this videotape has recently been acquired by the ICA video library. A depository for videos is an increasingly vital resource—broadcast TV is slow death, and the cinema is just rotting away, so it's time to disconnect the antennae and make use of the facilities that institutions like London Video Arts and the ICA are developing. Public use means they can go further. After all, where the hell else are we going to go?

**PERF THIS ISSUE WAS WRITTEN AND
COMPILED BY KEN HOLLINGS**

AROUND THE SHOWS

Early Spring in Britain is the time of the Great Shows: From all over the country, hundreds of thousands of people descend on the capital to arrive at Earls Court Station where special signs are each year brought out of mothballs to guide visitors to the Mecca of their particular desires, hobbies or predilections, and even a special railway line is opened running to Earls Court's twin, Olympia. Not entertainment nor art, but arguably containing, with their specially trained demonstrators and highly visual 'themes', strong potential elements of either, these spectacular celebrations of consumer culture have long merited a closer look. Our writers brought back impressions of three of them . . .

Pursuing the Ideal

THERE IS SOMETHING very confident and forthright about an exhibition which claims to showcase the 'ideal' anything, but then the organiser of this show is The Daily Mail, a newspaper which even if it doesn't know what's good, certainly knows what it likes. You couldn't be blamed for thinking that such a title also implies a didactic show offering concrete remedies; in this case how to transform the drab little nest in which you live into something a little more—something approaching ideal.

Well, someone has to take the lead in these matters, and why not The Daily Mail. Imagine if you will, an Ideal Home Exhibition mounted by the only newspaper Big Brother is not watching—The Guardian; stalls selling those irritatingly enigmatic little plastic magnetic 'things' with which readers insist on decorating their fridge doors. Or perhaps map stalls selling guides to the locations of skips in East London where any enterprising young home-maker can find 'the right stuff' absolutely free. Nothing that Zebrite or Nitramorse can't instantly transform. And then there would be lots of those eggcups with legs, reading the Beano; whacky teapots shaped as internal organs and any old piece of practically styled junk so long as it's a primary colour.

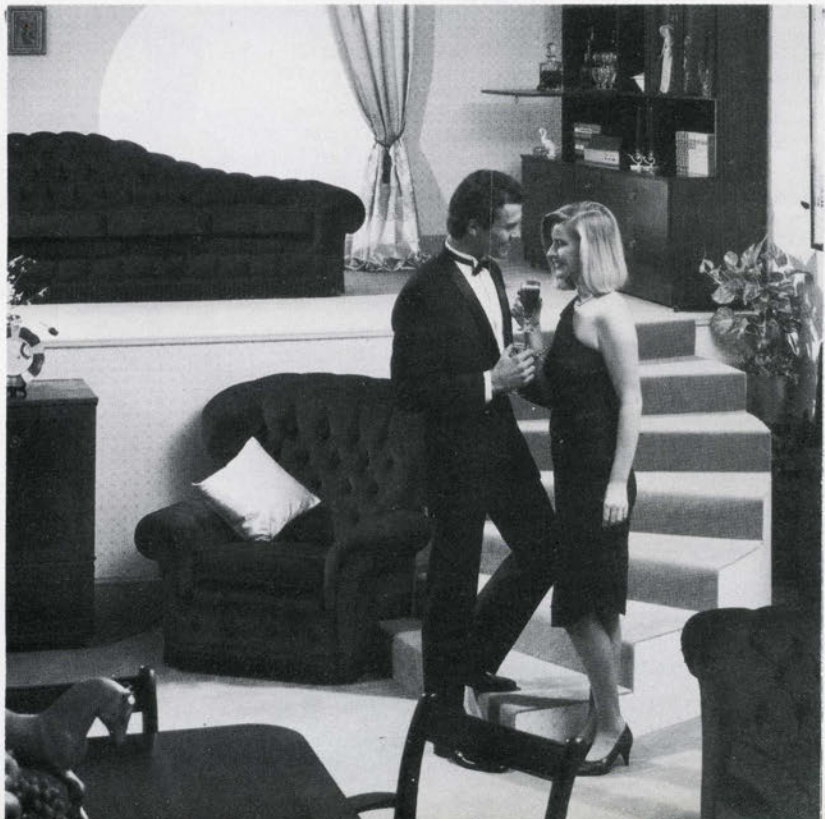
Anyway, such confidence and didacticism is always welcome; it shows little sign of catching on in the more liberal oases of exhibition organising. The Tate could name its Pre-Raphaelite offering the Ideal Painting Show, combining as it does craftsmanship, figuration, narrative, sentimentality, voyeurism, dash *and* morality. The queues at the private view were rivalled only by the January sales.

For those readers not au-fait with the specific historical tradition of The Ideal Home Exhibition, it was first launched in October 1908 by Lord Northcliffe, the founder of The Daily Mail. Its aim even in those early days, was straight and true,

The prizewinning Poodles



Ideal homeowners casually relaxing with a drink



namely a 'demonstration of the best and latest products for the home maker'. That first show included 'a patent contrivance for thoroughly cleaning the outside of a window from the inside'. It's still there in 1984, now a KLIN product under the alias of Goldings Magnetic Window Cleaner.

The possibility of spectacle was an early consideration and by the second show in 1912 the organisers were already executing such novel ideas as constructing an indoor Dutch Village complete with bulb-fields containing 50,000 tulips in bloom. Since the *The Daily Mail* has never looked back and over the years *The Ideal Home Exhibition* has been plagued by such devices as electrical fountains shooting water 60 feet into the air; gigantic rainbows hundreds of feet long or huge Kaliedakons (columns of light and music). And after the Second World War there was the almost Morrisian sounding 'Village of Beginning Again'.

This year's exhibition also boasts a theme—*Ideas Take Wing*—which 'seems particularly apt as the show is traditionally a launching pad for new ideas and innovations' (the window cleaning device, rather obviously, apart). This theme is made manifest by various none-too-subtle creations. First and foremost is the centrepiece of the whole exhibition—an aviary, (capped with a weather vane in the shape of a bird, should the theme have evaded you). The aviary, filled with feathered exotics, is set in 'attractive landscape gardens' and there are two pools, which

provide the (hardly ideal) home for six Chilean Flamingos. This impressive indoor nature reserve is surrounded by the furnished show homes which constitute the Exhibition Villages including, 'for the first time' a thatched cottage. *Ideas Take Wing* is also echoed in the giant colourful stylised birds suspended from the ceiling of Earls Court as if in flight from the aviary. Something of an exhibition designer's coup this, each one individually designed for the show 'their bright coloured plumage glinting dazzlingly under the bright lights'.

The Ideal Home Exhibition is not, however, merely a hollow spectacle resembling a Universal Studios back-lot recreation of Orpington under attack from giant birds and Chilean Flamingos. There is the small matter of some 420 exhibitors presenting the latest ideas in everything from home to garden. Carefully selected from these we proudly award the Performance Magazine House of the Year Award to *The Poodles*.

Looking out of the double glazed windows of this, one of the ten fully furnished show homes featured in the *Daily Mail's* Unique Village Setting, we can just see past the romantic woodland clearing where exotic birds bob alongside the glistening polystyrene of discarded hamburger cartons, to our neighbours' homes—'Log Boy', 'Swale Farm' and 'Kosy Kornah'; and further still to the faraway denizens of Leather City, The Olde Aran Mill, Popcorn House, Fudge Kitchen and Scandinavian World.

Holding our lovely *Daily Mail* Souvenir Cover we and the anoraked tupperware-boxed-lunch-clutching thousands in search of Perfection, shuffle through ensuite bathrooms (aubergine, avocado, champagne, mink) down whiter-shade-of-pale corridors (enhanced with security cameras for all the family) to the whiter-shade-of-pale master bedroom, here to encounter 'Premier'—the ultra modern bed. Covered in beige velour with rosewood effect trim, this extraordinary creature of the night, more Twilight Zone than Slumberland, miraculously combines heritage with technology—a push button-controlled built in radio cassette player'n'teas maid is just a stretch'n'yawn away. And on the wall—a sad Pierrot on a mirror.

For the man, antique leather, The Den, Black'n'Decker Workmate and Atari. For the ladies the kitchen of the 80s, and wheat is the order of the day. Ostentatious health consciousness prevails, wheatmeal finish cabinets groaning with yoghurt making machines and *litre de Perrier*. Pot Pourri's in 'Chelsea the Herb Bear Sacks', nestle with macrame plant holders. *Macrame Elegance* announce in the catalogue, 'Gone are the days of dull and insignificant jute planters'!

Much of the furniture has been provided by 'the world's leading up-market rustic furniture manufacturers'—names to conjure with like 'The Silesia Universal Kitchen Combination' or 'De Tonga'. A fellow up-market rustic furniture manufacturer's pamphlet tells of their stripped



pine table, 'it reminds you so much of the countryside you can almost hear the birds singing'. Healthy high tech also comes in the shape of microwave ovens with 'unique rotating antennas' (embossed with unique wheat-sheaf motifs) and Field-o'-corn tabletop electric ice-cream machines. And what Ideal Woman could be without the 'Spice'n'Easy', the 'Tomato-o'Matic', 'Le Canape Maker', the 'Wizzklean Mini-Sweeper', or the confounding 'Slurpex'?

The women's movement has made some great strides in the last few years, and no more so than at the Ideal Home. Oi! Gorgeous! Do you fancy your name carved out of a solid piece of pine as a penholder, puzzle or keyring? The 'Women's Interest' section features 'Le Dome' nail dryer, which cuts the drying time of varnished nails by up to an incredible *two thirds* giving a smooth, glossy finish.' And for those fleeting moments when you haven't got Beauty on your mind, 'Mista Bright' presents the wonderful hobby and handicraft sensation, 'Fantasies in Plastic'. 'With this simple and easy to use (that's why it's for women) kit, you can make wonderfully realistic flower arrangements, birds, insects and mobiles.' Amongst the huge variety of sewing and beauty products available our prize went to the 'Handi-Thread Needle Threader'. The catalogue boasts, 'the Needle Threader solved all the old problems like *the wife asking the husband to thread the needle for her!*' Come off it mum! And to keep slim and lovely, girls, wodobout the enigmatic Cog-on-a-Rog, originated in China 2000 years ago, and apparently pleasant to use for slimming and aerobics.

But back to the award winning *Poodles* and we descend to the glorious living room, and world of *Lexterten*. Their *Heritage* series overstuffed leather chairs tell of olde worlde values, tradition, quality, British craftsmanship, The Empire. Again, the lovely hand tooled brochure tells the story. 'We would like to emphasize the fact that leather is a natural product with all that this implies. Each hide has its own individual characteristics.



Nests of tables gambol ...

These are emphasised and encouraged. Features such as origin, breed, age and sex of the animal all help. Growth marks, bruises are commonplace on leather furniture, and it is a vital 'something' which distinguishes leather from the substitutes that attempt to copy'. Quite so.

For those wishing to house their video nasties, spatter movies and Down on the Farm Spankerama adult tapes in more stately concealment, comes the VC4 Superior Quality Video Recorder Cabinet from Period High Fidelity Limited. With its simulated marble top, burr walnut and rosewood-inlaid marquetry doors of cherubs in repose framed in astrical moulding, this surprising piece of antiquity would add style and elegance to the most pernicious modern collection of tapes for swingers.

And ticking the minutes back to the days when an Englishman's home was his castle, is a quartz hand painted clock; we are told this has been fashioned by hand from the wood of old Alpine houses up to

400 years old, and painted using very original 19th century techniques.

Monarch Twist, Admiral Churchill, Grand Canyon, Empress, Linda—a who's who of carpets, with built-in durable protection against stains and static, this mighty phalanx is protected by 'Halo Fresh' against fealthy bacteria and smelly odours—at last, personal hygiene for carpets.

Nests of tables gambol in the glow of an open log effect Valor—orange light bulbs blaze and flicker beneath a swashbuckling, bronze-effect Fleur de Lys'd canopy worthy of any Robin Hood Spectacular on Ice. The flickering flames set the Wildlife in Copper a-twinkle, with buggies and bas-relief negroes bringing back heart warming memories of those cotton-pickin-ole plantation days. From ole Virginia to Dallas, Texas, the sliding patio lounge double-glazed doors reveal the swimmin pool (with Kreepy Krawly automatic kleenah). Sadly no Peedur posed in prepubescent poolside provocation, instead a dangling watch fob, glistening sideburns, healthy plump face, rare steak sir? Somethin's cookin on stand 187 in the lovely landscape garden.

It turned out to be a unique table, represented by *Solo Flow*, which had no less than 3 functions. Thanks to its removable centre, this garden table changes instantly into a comfortable Bar-b-cue, heated by either electricity or propane. Or if the centre section is replaced with the green baize uppermost, it beomes a card or games table. On this occasion it was cooking steak. One Rud-dles too many might result in blistered palms during a quick round of whist if care were not taken to change centres or pull the plug. Or cold uncooked meats huddling sadly on greasy green baize. Either way potentially hazardous, but wonderfully South Fork.

Friends for tea?





Over stuffed leather armchairs tell of Olde Worlde values ...

Of course the main difference between The Ideal Home and many other exhibitions resides in the fact that if you pause for a moment to appreciate any one piece, someone will approach you with a smile, a clipboard, and most likely, some bilious house-style uniform to ask you if you want to buy one. The reply 'I'm just drinking in its elegant lines and subtle hues' only serves to unleash further prompting, leaflets and dotted lines on which one must sign or stop appreciating and move on to the next stand. Having narrowly missed purchasing double glazing and a flexible home, we were taken by The Bath Doctor who, you'll be relieved to know, is in your area now. He can give you a dream bathroom in 24 hours by re-surfacing that old bathroom suite in any one of 16 exotic colours including Ivory, Burgundy and Sage. Some of his treatments bear a striking resemblance to the shower work of Norman Bates, but the less consciously lively and livid remedies are A OK.

Stand 330 came as something of a surprise. 'Welcome to the World of Niagra' it said, and sure enough Niagra Therapy UK Ltd from North Wales were really at it—in full view of everyone. Smooth-talking therapists propositioned passers-by with the tempting phrase—'Would you like some therapy?' Large metal dildoes vibrating with the old AC were plugged in and played across legs, arms and shoulders by benign Rosa Klebb lookalikes, to the apparently innocent questions 'How does that feel?' and 'Are you feeling the benefit?' Faintly menac-

ing this, but a great place to put the feet up during a mammoth quest for the ideal. Difficult to deflect the old clipperboards with the dotted lines though, being at their mercy as it were. Never rub a smooth-talking therapist up the wrong way, especially when armed with one of those impressive Niagra dildoes. You might get strapped into one of their wobbling, vibrating chairs which massage even the soles of your feet and help separate the mind from the body.

It is perhaps inevitable that one should take a keen interest in the Home Security Section. What's the point of striving financially and aesthetically for years to clutter one's little home with umpteen ideal items if some drug-crazed psycho with a chain saw on a student nurse-carving binge turns out to have as little respect for property as he or she has for human life or sexual politics and *breaks in*. Through the leaded windows, more than likely. Protecting one's work-in-progress towards that Ideal Home is essential, and this year's exhibition boasted an impressive array of devices to help keep out those from less ideal homes who would despoil one's own efforts.

For the ex-East End gangster now in clover in verdant Epping (only a short spin in the fuel-injected Jag to see dear old Mum on Sundays) there was the electronically controlled farm gate. No easy in or out here, without the right little hand device. The command Control Garage

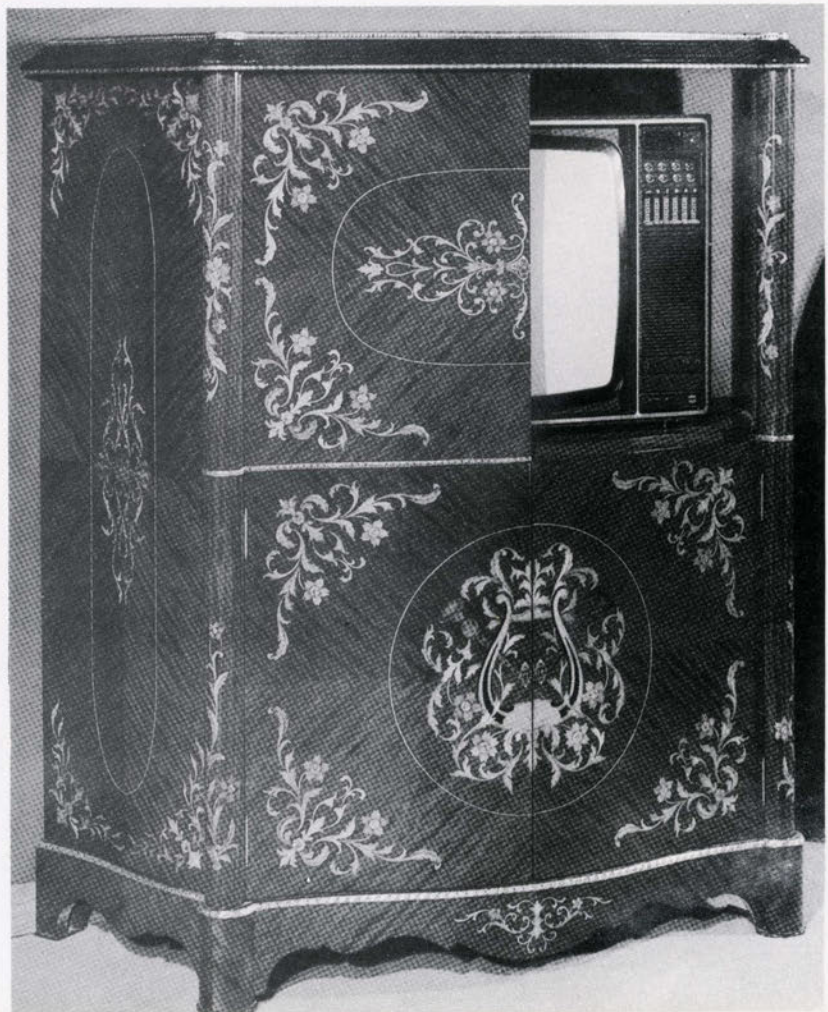
Doors were impressive, as were an assortment of underfloor safes, wall safes and plain safes. Alarms on windows, in key holes, in doormats and almost everywhere made one feel confident that one's other purchases at the exhibition could at least be protected from the kind of people...well, the kind of people *selling* you the alarms actually.

And to purchase Nirvana 'just apply for your own free, personal smart, gold, embossed Homeplan card'

So as we leave this acrylic, postorepedic, sprung-edged, polyester finished, cast aluminium, hot dipped, galvanised, prepainted, easy kleen, spring back foamed, anti-static world, let's give the last word to the lovely leggy Duchess of Norfolk, who opened this year's Ideal Home Exhibition: **SHOW WINS HEART OF THE DUCHESS**. She looked as if she would have loved to have stayed all day (cooed the Daily Mail)...it was the most informal opening of the exhibition that anyone could remember as the Duchess, dressed in a simple blue suit and an apparently ineradicable look of excited interest even sat down to a leisurely afternoon cup of teaclearly the wife of Britain's premier Earl was not to be found lacking in the common touch. She even ran her fingers along the carving of a fitted kitchen unit by Pana and asked managing director Mr. Byron Panas 'Does this collect a lot of dust?'

Iwona Blazwick and Chris Rodley

Superior TV and Bar Unit



Best in Show

Notes from the Kennel



Steve Rogers

Well, what is it?

I HAD ALWAYS ASSUMED that *Crufts* was a kind of Royal Ascot of the dog world, full of 'county' couples in heavy tweed and sensible shoes with the shooting brake up the road in the car park of the Kensington Hilton, and just a smattering of crazed Barbara Woodhouse clones beating the hell out of naughty wolfhounds. The English obsession with dogs is well known, an integral part of stereotypical English eccentricity, like going 'out in the midday sun'. More significantly doggy mania has always been associated for me with horses and hunting, one of the talismanic fetishes of baronial life that still linger nostalgically in more favoured parts of rural Britain. The Old Etonians and their wives who always feature as the breeders of *Crufts* champions on the Pedigree chum ads only serve to sustain this cumulative image of 'thoroughbred dogs' going hand in hand with a prejudice for 'thoroughbred' English people.

Crufts is named after its founder Charles Cruft who was a dog freak if there was one. In 1891 he alone rented the Agricultural Hall in Islington and inaugurated the annual 'Crufts' dog show, which was such a success that when he died in 1938 his widow handed over the institution to the prestigious and equally committed Kennel Club to run. However,

Charles Cruft was not of the baronial classes. He was of a middle class merchant background and he himself made his own reputation and career out of his devotion to dogs, being the first commercial marketer of 'dog cakes' which in fact were an unwanted consignment of ship's biscuits. The fact too that it was the Agricultural Hall is also an indication of the spirit behind *Crufts* as the hall was famous for much more lowly entertainments than would befit the pre-industrial landed aristocracy. It was in fact a great and popular public spectacle, a true example of the Victorian passion for exhibitions and instructive entertainment. Leaving aside the current vogue for favourable reinterpretation of the Victorian achievement, Charles Cruft founded an annual public spectacle which has endured and thrived into the 1980s.

Housed now in the ugly aircraft hangar of Earls Court the 1984 *Crufts* attracted no less than 10,272 competing dogs and tens of thousands of dog lovers and the curious. There may have been a few titled couples secluded in the members bar and there were most certainly a few very crazy looking people, but far from being 'county' *Crufts* is for the most part, 'country' or even 'suburban'. It was more like the Suffolk Show than Royal Ascot complete

with hot dog sellers (surely they can't have missed the irony) and stalls of crafty knick-knacks.

The rigorous and technically incomprehensible rules of entry, the extraordinary and baffling range of doggy paraphernalia on sale, and the sheer blind passion on the faces of competing breeders confirm that *Crufts* has a significance far beyond the paltry £100 Best in Show prize money. Surely even the astronomical stud fees that a *Crufts* champion can command cannot alone produce a fervour which is far beyond the merely pornographic. In 1859 at a dog show at the Town Hall in Newcastle a certain Mr. Murrel entered his beloved 'Spot' (I swear to God it's true) which had cost him £5,000. A modern 1980s 'Spot' could well be worth ten times that but this is only a sport of the very few and I honestly believe that whatever is the strange obsession which drives Mr and Mrs Average to devote all their energy, money and the freedom of their semi to their beloved pooch. It is not a fantasy of untold wealth. Even comparatively successful dog breeders barely break even on their earnings from stud fees. Cupidity is not the root of this particular madness.

The solution to the 'riddle of *Crufts*'; to obsessive doggyphilia, must lie some-

where in the dogs themselves. There is a certain philological fascination about such breed names as 'Borzais' and 'Salukis' and an ethnographic one about Afghans, Irish, Japanese Chirs, Rhodesian Ridgebacks and Chinese Crested Dogs. Yet wonder as I did over poodles like topiary hedges, their fascination remained inscrutable, and puzzle as I did over an elaborately back-combed chihuahua I arrived at no deeper appreciation than observing a striking resemblance to an apres ski boot.

Stubbs wonderfully revealed dogs and horses as powerful and beautiful abstract forms set against the flat green fields of England, but surely such a sensibility requires a more harmonious view of the world than is possible in 1984; a 'post-graduate pekingese bitch' (whatever that means), set against the background of an MFI fitted kitchen doesn't achieve quite the same sensory effect.

We all know the cliché of owners looking like their dogs, and in writing this piece I have ploughed through some very tedious sociological and psychological theories about 'transference of self-image' and 'substitution'. In the end I prefer to see this enormously widespread and popular form of private fetish and public spectacle as a kind of institutionalised group eccentricity and to enjoy it as simply that. But I shall go on idly wondering what exactly makes anyone have a chess set modeled in the likeness of their favourite pet spaniel.

Steve Rogers and Mark Stevens



Obsessive Doggyphilia

Handling the hound



Steve Rogers

Up Periscope!

To regatta menace John Stalin the prospect of stencilling scores of champagne glasses on the side of his submarine proves intoxicating . . .

What is the Difference between Flotsam and Jetsam? What Depth is a Fathom Who was Davy Jones and What is this Locker that we Hear About? What is the Sargasso Sea and is it true that Ships have become Trapped in it and unable to Get Out? What is the Difference between Gross Tonnage Net Tonnage Deadweight Tonnage and Displacement? Not one of these urgent questions was whirling through my head. It was just another pulling the Establishment's trousers down job for irreverent funloving PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE. My cover story had been carefully rehearsed: as the controversial outboard-motor critic of PERFORMANCE, Britain's leading commentary on offshore powerboat racing, I was carrying out the terse Telex instructions received on board the *Disco Volante*, my fifty-five footer currently docked at Portsmouth for a complete hi-fi refit.

Perfunctorily flashing my credentials (a note from my mother asking for me to be excused swimming because of a slight cold, circa 1969) I was surprised and pleased to be awarded my Press pass without question or argument. I felt fit, bronzed and cynical. I was on duty and it felt good. Out of my way, civilians! I had important questions to put to my seafaring brothers-in-arms. Is it true that Sailors Wear the Black Silk Handkerchiefs Round their Necks in Perpetual Mourning for Nelson? Who was the Elderly Admiral who Went About with his Pockets Full of Acorns which he Planted in Likely Places to Provide Oak Trees with which to Build Ships for the Navy?

My last experience on the high seas had taken place on holiday and provided me with the single most humiliating experience of my life. Attempting to exorcise the snivelling refusal to go for a trip round the bay on a motorboat—a traumatic confrontation with one's own cowardice at the age of seven—I had seized the helm of the boat we'd hired. Guiding her through the navigational hazards of the Greek shoreline (dead bikini tops, Ambre Solaire slicks, Club Med party debris) with consummate ease, I determined to bring the vessel under my command into the tiny harbour with a flourish. Keenly aware of the admiring gaze of less sturdy souls seated at the three waterfront tavernas, I opened up the throttle confidently. Suddenly everything seemed to happen at once—it really does in the best disasters. The unwary swimmer, the damn bloody throttle, the notion of port and starboard, the horrified faces of my beloved companions and the LARGE ROCK, these were

The Daily Express Boat Show at Earls Court



We've Top Cats. Who the fuck are you?

the items that seemed important at that moment, but their significance escaped me. To the Englishman abroad loss of face is a much more terrible thing than loss of life, limb or luggage. Pride was about to take a Tumble and the mighty brain was paralysed at the prospect. Meanwhile my lightning reflexes were turning out to be uncannily incorrect and there wasn't even time to curl up into the foetal position. At *TOP SPEED* the boat hit the large rock head-on, and at that moment I knew that I hated the horrible old sea and everything to do with it. The subsequent extrication from this Seventh Circle of Hell seemed to

take forever...the hilarious advice proffered by tablefuls of fat expensively sportskitted Krauts...the colourful fury of the boatowner...my dreadful decision to wear a Navy-surplus shirt from Lawrence Corner...Please God this didn't happen make it stop I want to die.

Perhaps the worst part was the speechless mortification of my blameless seaworthy pals. I had done a dreadful thing to them. It could not be laughed off. It took days to coax me out from my little black cave of despair, and finally these great-hearted people (bitches) let me know I had been forgiven by bestowing upon me

the you'll never live this down nickname of 'Skipper'—a term of endearment which at any time in any place will still unfailingly bring a ferocious purple flush to my delicate features.

At school we had been forced to learn how to swim by a picturesquely brutal ex-Marine gym teacher. If you couldn't do your *two lengths* by the end of the first year you had to prove this in front of the entire Lower School, who jeered with the fanaticism of boys who were only too familiar with the ordeal. Completely lacking faith in the miracle of flotation, I had yet to accomplish *one length*. But the prospect of being despatched to sit with the abject 'spastics' inspired me to complete both lengths without serious incident—driven by a fear actually more compulsive than that simple physiological terror that is the fear of drowning. These then were seminal experiences that have stimulated in me a morbid interest in the sociology of beach heroism, resulting in a passionate and comprehensive loathing for all forms of marine recreation. However, you may rest assured that a fair and balanced picture of events will be presented—a journalist's code of ethics is desperately strict.

My heart sank as I entered the exhibition. It was perfectly obvious that out of thousands of visitors and enthusiasts I was the single solitary dissident who detested boats. The craving to shin up a mizzen mast and yell something uncomplimentary about the sea became overwhelming. All about me was arrayed ample and opulent evidence of a previously unsuspected industry: an industry gratuitously devoted to the provision of giant bath toys for the *rather well off*. Hundreds of stands on three floors were packed with huge white useless shiny things, medium-sized multi-coloured useless pointed things and small black useless digital things. I felt incoherent with rage and resentment. Oh for a bomb incident, for the relief of shrapnel bursting through these voluptuous, curvaceous, luxurious, useless ego chariots. I wanted to see the blazered salesman kak their white flannels. I wanted to see magnificently casual captains of industry clawing at coronaries, perfect hostess mummies in gymkhana headscarves drenched in sparkling wine and diesel oil. A few of these people were undoubtedly Top Drawer. Some of them were authentically Port-Outward-Starboard-Home. Many of them were Our Sort of People. But were they my sort of people? Within me the democrat grappled with the social misfit. You rotten whining envious unreasonable little creep I told myself, not really meaning it. Then I relaxed and began to enjoy the alertness accompanying this unexpected surge of battle adrenalin. There they were, look at the blighters. Hundreds and hundreds of horrible leisure-oriented people. DIY bores and compulsive car-washers come for an afternoon's 'if only' voyeurism. Proud owners of crappy little lobsterpot dinghies called Skylark. Upwardly-mobile middle class couples too uptight to go

in for wifeswapping. Rich confident buggerers who didn't mind being teased about 'tearing up ten pound notes in a cold shower'. The beaming relatives of Heads of State. Important People. Fun people. Bacardi people and Martini people. Healthy young asses in immaculate T-shirts. Boat bunnies with streak jobs toggled out in name brand outfits from marina boutiques. Pay attention, scruffs: Must clothing for Yachties and Yo Hos follows.

Sweaters are chunky Guernsey and Arran, cricketing (don't forget the college crest), padded military combat, striped Breton fishing crewneck, Dudley Blake oiled wool Clipper Casuals, Nino Cerruti navy cardigans with anchor motif buttons. Island-hoppers never descend to oilskin level, yachting being a rattling good excuse for dressing up in natty nauticalia, aiming at a look based on the Duke of Westminster *en flottant* in the Brideshead era. Boating jackets (not blazers) made from Hunt and Winterbotham's West of England flannel. For the ladies the P&O to India look: white pleated skirts and practical sweaters from Valentino.

For cocaine-ridden Seventies rock stars, International Young People, Restless Dissatisfied Heirs and Decent Little Restaurant Discoverers—personalised crew shirts. This writer was much taken with one labelled CAT CRUISING and felt quite cross at being left out of the laidback, longcooldrinking 'lipsmackin' thirst-quenchin' Cat Cruising scene. For life on the ocean wave, Coolwear bermudas and Adidas satin shorts, Dunlop deck shoes and espadrilles. Loafers and flip-flops for those shore-parties. Oh, and a waterproof Sony Stowaway, in yellow or black.

For prawn-faced old salts I recommend

foul weather gear from Henry Lloyd, Musto & Hyde or Puffer, yellow slickers (it's that colour again! I predict a shift to International Distress Orange, a tempestuous, extrovert dayglo) from O. M. Watts, and Campari oilskins. Non-slip Derriboots and Lillywhites neoprene gauntlets to protect the extremities from the beastly brine, and topped up with a cheery classless knitted bobble-hat.

What we are looking at here implies a complicated (and subtle! In the effortless understated secret signal one of us English who-the-fuck-are-you way) never-ending catalogue of certain correct accessories considered advantageous to the demonstration of one's own good fortune in life; the attitude posed of carefree elegance permits total indulgence in the human weakness of strutting one's stuff. Convince me that it's all about ozone and navigation and independence and adventurous interaction with the elements. I was there—and I put it to you that everything in this show was about making Grand Entrances. It's a way of spreading the news about your standard of living. Marvellous fun. You get to meet people from all walks of life *We've discovered a super little cafe full of fishermen and it's not a bit smart* and you also enjoy the considerable impression you make on the gaping locals. Yes, you, you old devil, you tough old bastard, the Great White Lover leaping nimbly ashore to catch the rope tossed by this gorgeous languid creature. Caramba! Is wife? Is daughter? Is mistress? Au pair? Secretary? *Meet Felicity, she's our new radar person, heh heh.*

On with the show. Watersporters swear by Gul wet suits, Force 5 smoothskin thermals, Team Arrow dry suits with 'woolly bears' and the Typhoon Ladybird bolero two-piece, designed 'specially for

Getting to meet people from all walks of life...



the fair sex'. Beeswax and dusting powder provided with all these suits. To keep you warm, the Blue Streak Ice Helmet, wind-surfing mitts and Cosi-Combis (Tog rating 2.3). Successfully keeping straight faces we enquired everywhere after waterproof sombreros, but to no avail. This could be a splendid opportunity for a go-ahead company.

I was elated to discover a hitherto unsuspected sentimentality about rubber stormwear, bearing off in triumph a pair of latex socks. I shall use them in secret. Which reminds me of a letter in *Atomage*, the leading periodical for rubber enthusiasts, and to which they find it immensely therapeutic to write about their early elastic experiences. One such correspondent related his macabre preoccupation with the sensations of drowning and suffocation he'd provoked as an RN diver clearing mines in the Suez canal. Remaining hundreds of feet down until his air ran out, he perversely came to relish the fear and panic that enveloped him as he thrashed his way to the surface. Any way up, he leaves the Navy, but in civvy street could not shake off the alarmingly erotic symptoms of claustrophobia and physical confinement he'd felt in his scuba gear. Soon he took to wearing his rubber one-piece to work under his clothes, and was only detected doing so after a car crash returning home one Sunday lunchtime from a country pub. Next time you're in such an establishment, earwigging on the gin-and-Jag set, you might enjoy speculating on which of the burly St Bruno men in the saloon bar are wearing skintight wet suits under their roll-necks and old cords.

The show must go on. Sonya Walkman, my beautiful black rectangular secretary, had been recording the names of the boats on display. Powerful imaginations had plainly been at work. *Sunbird*, *Sunburst*, *Sunracer*, *Sun Fizz*, *Sun Kiss 84*. I couldn't wait. *Seawitch*, natch. *Sea Fury*, *Seaspray*, *Seabird*. Were these afterthoughts or embodied in the *design concept*? There was a pathetic gallantry about many of the brand names, like the CB handles adopted by metal freaks out in the fens of herbert land. *Ocean Warrior*, *Globe Traveller*, *Zodiac Wanderer*, *Star Follower* and yes (sigh), *Stormbird*. Another distinct genre evoked those fighter planes of Airfix familiarity so wistfully named after the fiercer meteorological phenomena: *Hurricane*, *Tempest*, *Tornado*, *Lightning*, *Mistrale*, *Mirage*, *Meteor*. But altogether grander is the first class travel reserved for yer actual aristocracy—*Sea Lord Admiral Commodore*, *Princess Contessa Konsort*, *Coronet Trident* and *Septre VII*.

More repulsive than ridiculous are the fun-type names allocated to surf boards and sailboards. *Malibu Bondi Riviera*, *Calypso Aloha Fantasia Fiesta Tango Mustang Yankee*. Ahoy, we're 18-30, this is us at the barbeque with our boards later on there's a disco ... it's great. The worst name we saw all day anointed the stern of a poxy little Thames cabin cruiser — *Freedom III*. The best name was on a big handsome ocean racer with commercial sponsorship—*It's got to be followed by the*

green silhouette of a famous gin bottle. I also liked the unambiguously assertive *Domination*. First prize for company names was UNSINK Buoyancy Ltd (life-jackets). Second prize for Bilge Evacuation Services Inc. What a practical idea—I can think of a few souls who need pumping out. In disgrace was the stand named Simply Splendid Things (hand-crafted brass and copperware including ships bells, porthole mirrors, anchor table lamps, rum label lampshades, humorous barometers, nautical key rings etc. 'Plus a variety of gift items')

Next door one could buy engraved sayings of you don't have to be mad to work here sophistication. These were most enjoyable. LIKE A WOMAN THE RIGGING COSTS MORE THAN THE HULL. Oh I get it, Haw Haw Haw. MARRIAGES PERFORMED BY THE CAPTAIN OF THIS VESSEL ARE GOOD FOR THE DURATION ONLY. (They get better). SHIP'S BAR OPEN 0900-0859. ABANDON SHIP—LADIES AND CHILDREN FIRST—FOLLOW ME. Here's a cautionary text. IF GOD HAD MEANT US TO BUILD GLASSFIBRE BOATS HE'D HAVE CREATED GLASSFIBRE TREES. Thought-provoking that; two schools of thought perhaps. The NOTICE TO LANDLUBBERS was a gruesomely explicit guide to the operation of a marine toilet, and quite unfit to print in these pages. We were very impressed however with these wonderfully undignified gadgets. Fingering the seat with the solemnity of a Muscovite filing past a President's tomb, I reflected that this was the closest I'd ever get to having wealthy friends. Although these ingenious tiny little Sanilavs were surely unable to cope with the sumptuous dumping of the filthy-rich.

Presently, a new variation of status symbol snobbery was brought to my attention. You'll have noticed the ironmongery attached to yacht masts and sticking out of cabin roofs. It seems that to the knowing observer the configuration of any individual ariel is a sort of hieroglyphic giveaway to the ackers you've spent on your electronic fit. A dish pointing heavenward puts you in the executive Lear Jet class, with access to SatNav geopositioning, and I bet that costs more than a TV licence.

I was just a poor barefoot lad, tubercular, Porscheless, no mooring problems to speak of. Nose pressed up against the window, big eyes. All this expensive bloody junk was getting on my tits. It was designed with someone totally unlike me (me the consumer) in mind. What was I going to do with a Ferranti Tracker dual mode autopilot with incremental course change and dodge facilities? If it fell into my carrier bag? It's only suitable for displacements above 1500 tons, and I don't even have the Origami to make a paper boat. Intimidated but impelled by nameless Luddite emotions, I looked round for something expensive to break. I picked on a likely looking radar echosounder hydro sonar thing and did my wreck the stereo act on it. Nothing. No is

possible senor. No smoke, no sparks, no DOES NOT COMPUTE. Stinking bloody thing, built to last, By Appointment Design Council Queens Bloody Award stuff. Not like the brittle tech-tack they wheel out for the likes of us—guaranteed to survive rough handling by a dying anorexic. So off we went in pursuit of nasty ornaments.

And found (getting the hump at this stage) a terrific little oasis, a place of refreshment, a sculpture garden. In the background, banks of impressive marine engines, lusciously painted in pastel and metallic colours. Poised in front of these row after row of formidable outboard motors, ranged like captured Martian war machines, or monuments to Futurist martyrs. This was the real thing, very tasty indeed, and worth the trip. I recalled the first time I'd had a ton to spend, visting London to buy a proper camera, the money burning a hole in my pocket. After months working in factories this was to be the culmination of hour upon hour of anticipatory gloating—the one impetus that kept me going through the long reaches of the night. On the way to New Bond Street I passed a marine outfitters and noticed a smart little Evinrude outboard motor, a snip at £99.99. *I had to have it!* The coincidence of the price and the sheer redundancy of such an article (Where would I put it? I had nothing whatsoever to attach it to. The washbasin? My bedside table?) conspired to produce in me a hysterical determination to possess this ultimate symbol of impulse buying. It took many minutes for me to assert control over this startling mental aberration, and then I fled the apparition, genuinely shocked by the power of Temptation.

We looked round for something useful to buy. Aha! This will come in handy. It's a Vosper Thornycroft Fast Patrol Boat. Twin Oerlikons, Seacats and Swordfish torpedoes. You had to be dead official to get one. Would they disbelieve my claim to be military attaché for a small hitherto unknown, friendly nation? I was about to produce my Barclaycard and the note from my mother but a small inner voice told me *You're not a student any more. This is not Rag Week*. Bah. We melted away into the crowd, in search of something less exclusive. Where could a man git his hands on a well-made submarine?

15,000,000 tons of Allied shipping were sunk by U-boats in the North Atlantic. In my fantasy (do let me tell you) I am a famous freedom fighter of the Deep, leading my loyal wolf pack through the inky murk, prowling after fancy regattas and fatheaded lone yachtsmen. My ideologically correct crew are fully prepared to nip up the conning tower and machine-gun all survivors. If only for ecological reasons—who wants scum floating all over the ocean. Gentle reader, I appeal to you. Is there no justice in this world? Who would miss the buggers? It's a great idea. The submarine will be painted in tiger stripes with grinning jaws on the bows and christened *Freedom 1*.

THE BELIEVING WORLD OF GILBERT AND GEORGE



A besuited pair who many would have termed performance artists a decade ago are now rapidly approaching a position of being Britain's internationally best-known visual artists, with a massive world-wide tour, calling at Anthony D'Offay in London and ending up at the Guggenheim in New York. But many people here view the work of Gilbert and George with suspicion, seeing in it latent fascist tendencies and images of authoritarian sexual dominance. An extensive interview with them has not appeared in Britain for a long time, and Lynn MacRitchie's recent conversation with them in their East End home gives us a chance to make up our minds about their views, which, while appearing sometimes eccentric, given their increased prominence are hardly uninfluential . . .

Lynn MacRitchie: My first question is about your working method. One of the things that really struck me in researching your work was that the actual making of it is never discussed. It's as if the persona that you have created is so strong and the works themselves are so strong that one tends to just accept them unquestioningly.

Gilbert: That's exactly what we want.

George: We dislike very much the form of art dominating the meaning: we like people to be spoken to. So if people come to see an art work and they start admiring the brush or pen work we feel it's decadent and misleading. The picture is there to speak to the person.

There's a curious shift I noticed following your work through from the very beginning. In View on the Roof at St. Martin's you allow yourself 'a moment of relaxation'. It must be the only moment of relaxation one sees you in for the next 16 years.

George: I hadn't thought of that but it's probably true.

It's quite stunning as one looks at your work—was that St Martins' picture a snap that a chum took?

Gilbert: Yes, one of the artists there. That day started the idea of the Living Sculptures with us posing with sculptures, objects. Then when we left college we left all the sculptures behind. We had no studio. We found that we could reach people through mailing pieces, walking sculptures. We had no galleries, just ourselves.

You did some walking sculptures which then became the basis for those big drawings and paintings of yourselves in the countryside. Did you do that by yourselves or did you take someone with you to take the pictures?

George: Many of our walks are unrecorded. The pop festival one for example, we didn't document that one.

Gilbert: But after that we did document everything, and then people started to take an interest in who was taking the photo's. You were successful very quickly. By 1970.

George: Not before time! we were first successful abroad, in Germany. We were rejected entirely by the galleries here. Can you tell me about that?

George: We were rejected by every gallery in London, everyone turned us down.

We have the power to abuse ourselves and that gives us amazing freedom

Gilbert: That's why we started to get interested in the pop world. We didn't know where we'd end up. We used to do a project a week, just to try out, experimenting. Telling stories in the Marquee Club, doing posing pieces with multi-coloured heads. We eventually decided to do postal sculpture to send out to people and that was very successful. It was so fresh... *The message from the sculptors* made us famous over night. We wanted to make the postal works like art objects. Everyone then knew our intentions.

So what happened in Germany?

George: Well we did a living piece with our multi-coloured heads at an opening in London, at the ICA. We just went as the living sculptures, we posed. There was a German dealer there, Konrad Fischer, who immediately invited us to exhibit just on the strength of that.

Gilbert: The first person to invite us abroad was Ger Van Elk, a Dutch artist. He was so interested, he immediately invited us to go to Holland where we did a living sculpture in the Stedelijk Museum in 1969. Then we went to Dusseldorf and did the Singing Sculpture.

Did you do the Singing Sculpture first in London?

Gilbert: Yes but not in galleries, all over. It took a slightly different form, we did it underneath the arches, in Cable Street. *Why did you pick that song?*

Gilbert: Because we wanted to be like tramps.

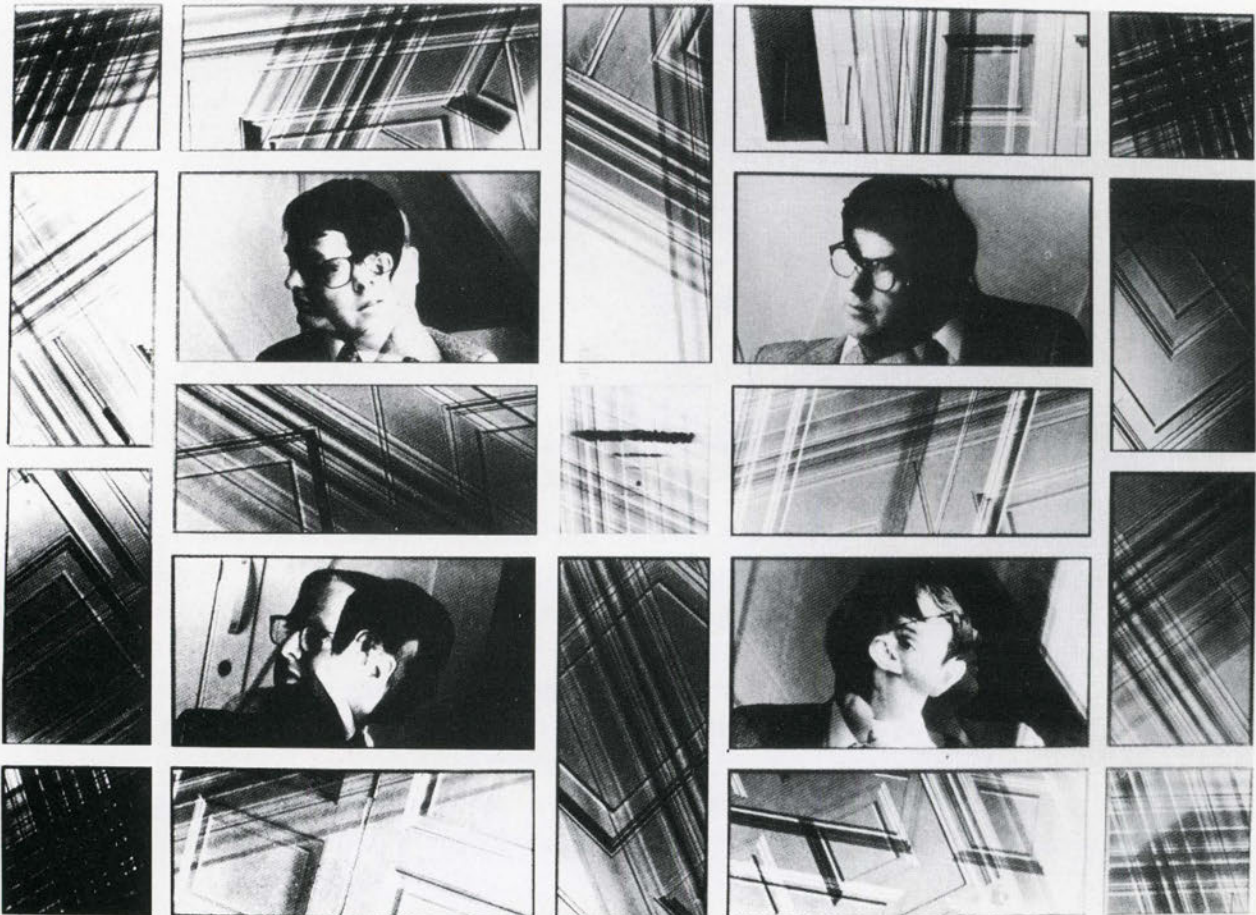
George: The connection with the song—two people with nothing at all.

Having nothing is a bit different from being a tramp, isn't it?

George: But artists are outcasts, like tramps, you are not a normal person, you are an outcast.

Underneath The Arches then became a tremendous success?

Dark Shadow 1974





Patriots 1980

George: Yes, it was an enormous success in New York, for example.

Why do you think it was so successful?

George: It was just so new, happening in the middle of so-called Minimal art, It was also in the middle of the Fluxus movement. We disliked that.

Why did you dislike it?

George: We disliked the form, rolling around the floor, dirty. Everyone was allowed to join in. We wanted to make a sculpture for everybody that everybody could understand not where they thought 'what the devil's happening?'.

Gilbert: We wanted to make a bronze sculpture come alive. It was so formal, so clear, so simple that everyone was transfixed by it.

Did the fact that you used a music hall song help to make people understand it?

Gilbert: The song made it possible for us, without getting exhausted, to go on for the whole day. It could have been almost any other song.

That song has a sort of British quality which is one of the things about your work I hoped we might discuss.

George: We don't see it like that at all. They didn't even know what the song was all about in Germany.

Gilbert: In America, very few people remember the song. If we had done a Marlene Dietrich song or American jazz I think it would have been just the same.

George: We feel very much that we are in the world, not in Britain. The whole world is an art gallery. We don't have a message for Britain.

Another important aspect of your work is the concept of there being no split between your life and your art. I have been very struck when researching your work to see how much people just seem to accept that. I haven't seen anyone asking you or you yourselves talking about what that has meant to you as people.

George: That's what our work is all about. We talk about that in the work. Our work is about everything that we know about. There is nothing that we exclude from our work.

I think what I'm trying to say is a point that you have often made—that it is a kind of duty to be an artist.

George: We feel very responsible.

Gilbert: Dedicated.

So you become exemplary in a way.

George: We feel an enormous sense of purpose.

Gilbert: We don't have any other life, we only have this.

If as you say, the work that you produce reflects your life exactly, it sometimes looks to the spectator as if it has cost you a great deal in terms of suffering.

George: Well we are suffering. I would say everyone suffers and one's work has to be life-like.

But has there ever been a time when you've said to each other, OK this is it, I've had enough. I'd rather go and work in a bank.

George: No, we never thought that.

Gilbert: This is what we know. We are driven completely. We're completely mad. We don't even have friends, we don't have a life in the normal sense.

I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.

George: We don't have a normal social life. We have very few friends and we hardly ever see them. We're never at people's houses for dinner or anything. It's been about five years since we've done that.

That kind of withdrawal can be seen taking place in your work.

Gilbert: Yes, that's true.

It starts off really quite light-hearted.

Gilbert: Innocent, but very serious on the other hand. We knew hardly anything. We never read newspapers, we were very unworldly at that time, just two gawky students.

And you explored the natural world and found it good. And then it began to change. What happened?

George: Growing up. Learning about life.

Do you think growing up is always sad?

Gilbert: Yes, I think we became more and more interested in life. Life can be very desperate—our work is about us as human beings on earth. That is something which becomes very complicated.

The nature of your work means that to ask you about it feels like prying.

George: We are some of the most frank artists. We put everything on the wall.

Gilbert: Anybody can say what they want to us, like in the pieces *Shit* and *Cunt*, we even said it to ourselves. We have the power to abuse ourselves and that gives us amazing freedom.

What do you mean by that? What sort of freedom?

Gilbert: We don't try to protect ourselves.

Do you think that some artists use their work to screen themselves from the world?

George: Oh I'm sure that's true. We have a very real feeling for the viewer, for people in general. We are very touched by people. We don't just do pictures, like a lot of artists, that either you understand or you don't. We want to have contact with the world to say something to people while we're here, to change things.

What sort of reactions did people have to pieces like the ones based on you being very drunk?

Gilbert: That is inside every single person.

Yes, but it is not the sort of thing that people usually admit about themselves. So what have people said to you about it?

George: All kinds of things. It becomes part of people.

Gilbert: I really believe the reason we started to win was when it became possible for us to put up pieces like that in museums. Like *The alcoholic* or *Queer* or *Cunt*. Completely normal old ladies, like in Baltimore, for example are not shocked by the work. Nobody is shocked. It is like a big book. Life, not an autobiography, everyone's life.

Your work then, became internalised: from you looking out at the world and being in the natural world...

George: At first we were just physical sculptures in a way. We were things to be looked at. And then when we had a little more money and we started to drink and entertain ourselves and be happy and get dirty.

Did you get drunk around here? What did the neighbours think?

Gilbert: Oh, it was unbelievable...they used to follow us back, break our windows...we had big disasters, all over the world—Australia, Bangkok, everywhere.

Because of your devotion to drunkenness?

George: Yes, we blocked every sink in every hotel with vomit.

Gilbert: But we liked it, we felt so free, so full of ideas. It was like an experiment. And then we wanted to use it.

So from drinking we move on to sex. That's the next stage isn't it?

George: I think they went together, in a way. *Human Bondage* is not exclusively about drinking. *Cherry Blossoms* too, is also about sex.

Human Bondage is of course the work where there was controversy over your use of the swastika...

George: Yes, but that was not literally true. In fact it was not a swastika but a good luck sign. It used to be very popular on birthday cards in Britain, cats balancing what look like swastikas on the end of their noses...

Gilbert: But it is good if people think about the other meaning, that too is part of the work. The swastika is an amazing sign, full of meaning. It has enormous reality. We showed it in Germany, in Dusseldorf...people are still dying from that war.

So what were you referring to by using the term bondage? Was that to do with human relationships?

George: In general. Again, it was to do with life, both sexual and general.

And again you did these pieces all on your own?

Gilbert: Yes, we arranged to take photographs when we were alone.

George: We weren't actually drunk in those pieces at all. We were acting it out. They were very contrived pieces, very handmade. We don't like documentation. None of our works are documentaries. They are thoughts, spiritual.

Confusion about that could come about though, because of your emphasis on the fact that the work is so close to your life... After this internalised period, the pieces about drinking and sex, it then looks as if you pull yourselves out of this—you look out of the window and see the world again.

Gilbert: Yes, that's true. *Red Morning* was the first to really show that. It is completely Shinto. To do with nothing.

By 1977, in work like Mental and Dirty Words, you are paying attention to the outside world. Did that underly a shift in the way you wanted to go about your work?

George: A shift of intention, a different feeling. The theme of the desperation of life, to make our art speak more accurately to people, to be more relevant. Not to be the lost artists.

You were in danger of being the lost artists for a time?

Gilbert and George: We wouldn't say that.

George: *Dirty Words* was one of the biggest changes in our work. We were quite crazy at the time, very disturbed. We began to see the world, to see people differently. Our eyes were opened to other things. We had to take more aspects of life on. In the *Dirty Words* pieces we used graffiti: we felt everyone was writing on walls. The world was aggressive, everyone shouting or chalking something up.

Those pieces seemed like very accurate descriptions of what it feels like to walk around, outside here, in Whitechapel.

George: They were not even local in that sense. When we made them we didn't even show them in Britain. We showed one in Holland and one in Germany.

They seem like very accurate depictions of some aspects of English life. George: We don't think that. When we showed them in New York people thought this is something to do with our life, not something about London. Italy is most famous for graffiti. It is a true expression of people, a life force.

Your presence in the photopieces seems much less removed in Dirty Words as if you are reacting to what you have observed.

George: It's joining in, being part of it.

The later pieces that included pictures of skinheads were much criticised as racist and fascist.

George: There were two skinheads in thirty or forty pictures of young people. An article was written about us, attacking us, which described one piece, *Patriots* which said it was about young thugs sporting National Front regalia. We said My God, did we make a piece like that, and we checked. In the picture there are two skinheads. There is a Pakistani boy, old tramps, a telegraph boy and a postman. The badges are the postman's GPO badges. People saw what they wanted to see in that picture, they brought themselves to that picture.

But don't people always do that with pictures?

George: Yes and we respect that... What is interesting is that people are so crazy that they actually change the picture on the wall. They create an image. They wanted the piece to fit our image. For a witch hunt you have to have witches.

Why should people want to do this to you?

George: It's difficult to find artists that say something. Most artists are very bland.

Gilbert: We are very aggressive towards the viewer.

George: Did you see our film?

Yes, I was struck by the difference between the large silent images you create and those that move and talk. The film too was criticised, wasn't it, in terms of racism and fascism?

Gilbert: Only in England.

But the symbols you use, a St. George's flag for instance, have also been used by the British Movement for example.

George: But they also use shoes. They have to walk.

Why it is that your work has been criticised in this way, do you think?

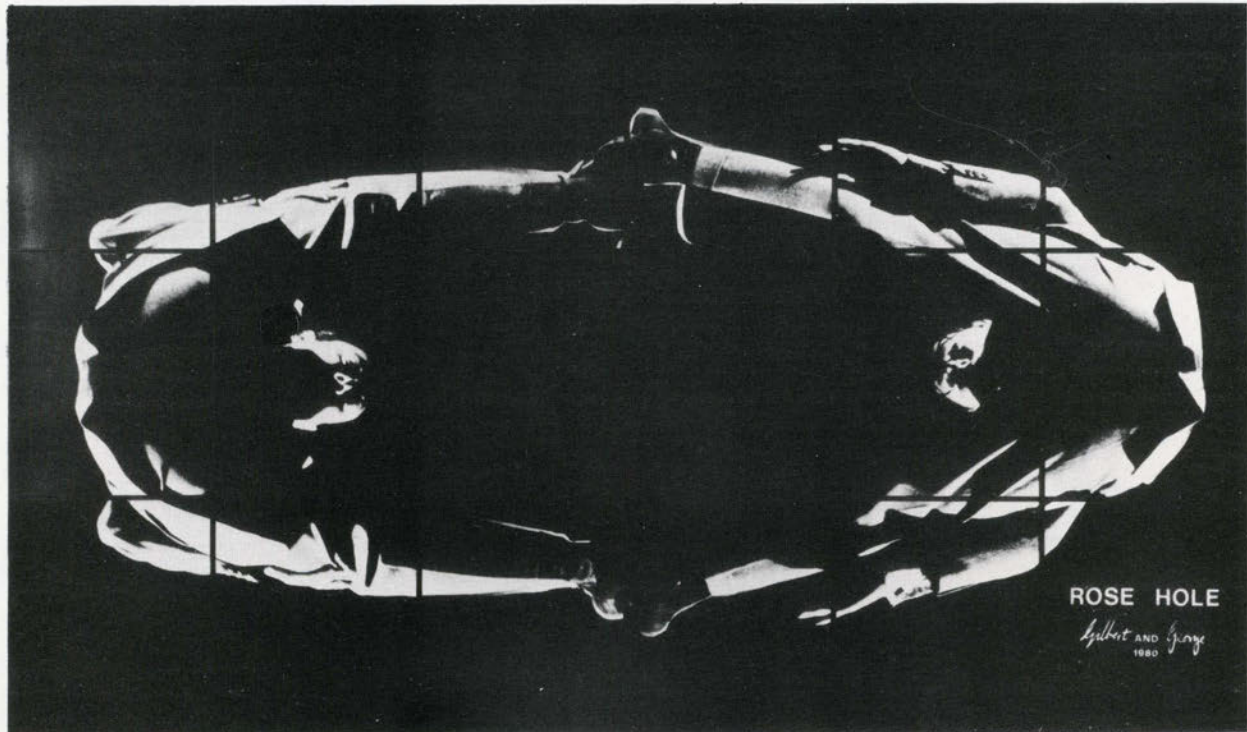
George: Because it speaks for today. It is very relevant and very important and it is bound to arouse reactions in different ways. Art should speak like that.

Gilbert: We accept the Union Jack, yes completely. We are patriotic, but most important for us was to do our art here in London, going out into the world for the first time.

George: There are plenty of artists who just do imitation foreign art. There's a 20th century tradition of that. We are not that. Most artists just want to talk about Cezanne and Poussin their whole life. The whole 20th century is riddled with the disease of foreignness. At the time of Roger Fry, to paint a landscape, you had to go to France. English subjects were not permitted by critics. If you painted a bottle, it couldn't be a gin bottle, it had to be vin rose. English art has been dominated by foreign art. There was pressure on us: accept an inferior position, teach somewhere or clean windows, go to a gallery now and again and shake hands with foreign artists. Go to shows called 'Italian Paintings', 'German Paintings', the show at the ICA which recently said it is going to bomb England with German art. Big American flags...

Do you see the criticism levelled at you then as being a 1980's version of this denigration of home grown British art?

George: British officialdom refuses to believe in indigenous culture. All art has to be from wine-growing countries. They



Rose Hole

love to go to France on holiday and sit with peasant people and act posh and join in and they want their art to be the same. It started with Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell.

Why do you think that is?

George: The English are like that as a result of the empire. We have exhibitions all over Europe and America—do you think we have an English person there to support us? Whereas if an American artist comes to Britain they load the airplane up to come and support their artists. They are patriotic. The Tate refused to send a representative to our exhibition in Baltimore. *You are now incredibly successful abroad.*

Gilbert: Only in this century have British artists been more recognised abroad than at home. It was not so in Victorian times, for example.

George: There are a few figures who broke out before us. Bacon and Henry Moore.

Gilbert: I think that had a lot to do with England winning the war. It was a good period for them.

Why do you think there is this fear of recognising indigenous work?

George: It is the reverse of patriotism, snobbery.

Gilbert: They see foreigners as superior, as posh.

George: It's very much to do with class.

Gilbert: We hate every posh person. When we do our art, if the young people outside see it, if they like it, then we know we are on the right way.

Do they like it?

George: They love it. We have a test. If you show any person on the street an art catalogue with pictures and say what is that, they say 'that's art'. They know it's art and it's in its place. If you show them pictures in our catalogue they don't say that's art, not at all.

Gilbert: If it looks like art when it's made then it's decadent. It's wrong. We really believe that.

George: Art should speak with a fresh mind. That's why our form is so good. We found and developed the best form for what we wanted to say. We weren't finding a way of making art, but of speaking to people. When we were children, art was something that people above the class of doctors looked at. It was posh stuff, for connoisseurs. A special activity. This is no longer true. Young people want visual language in their clothes, their life. They accept art, living art. It is no longer a specialist field. *Your new work seems much more open.*

George: Yes, they are more bold, outspoken. We want them to be. Some are more beautiful, more colourful. They have a modern, invented symbolism of life. A kind of subversive form. Each piece deals with a particular aspect of our general message. If you went on to the street and said the things we are saying in our work, it would be like going out and saying 'Hey dicks' to somebody, they would call a policeman. With our art we can say almost anything we want and get it through without a problem. The titles of our pieces are completely subversive. We had a request from a museum about including a piece called *Smash the Reds* in a large exhibition, they had to use that title to print in their catalogue.

Gilbert: Artists in medieval times were speaking to the people. I think that is what we are about today. We are not interested in the selling part. We think the most important thing is to get to the people.

George: Art can exist in the world, outside. Our work is breaking attendances record in museums, but it has to be serious, to be seen to be serious, to be seen as art.

Then there is a contradiction, because on the one hand we have your work, which you want to be seen in the outside world, and on the other, if we don't call your work art, it's not going to get into galleries and have the impact it has had.

George: We have placed a large number of works in public collections. We were very underbought at the Tate, the director just hated us. We have an enormous dedication on the part of people who collect our works.

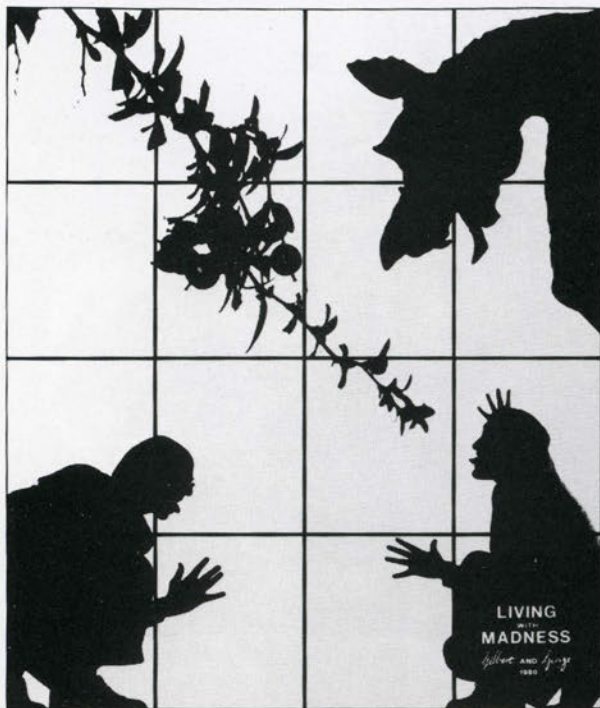
Gilbert: Our art becomes part of people's lives. That becomes our success. The lady curator of the show in Baltimore said the *Dirty Words* pieces changed her life.

A lot of the values that your earlier work seemed to be espousing seem to me to be very much middle class values.

Gilbert: But we are not middle class. We're not against middle-class people—they are our public. We don't think in terms of class in general. We are just working class people trying to make the best of it.

But some of your work seems to be about bourgeois things—correct behaviour and suits.

Gilbert: We are not at all bourgeois, we are quite extreme...extremely extreme...we don't even have a kitchen. There was this person from the Pompidou who came here, the most bourgeois person I ever met. He had a small family, talked all the time



Living with Madness 1980

The titles of our pieces are completely subversive

I think our work is very sexy

Deatho Knocko 1982



about tax and holidays, salaries—We are not even insured, nothing. And he wanted to attack us, to say that we are middle class.

George: We became quite furious, I remember. We are interested in ordinary people on the street, they understand our work much more than somebody who went to Oxford. They are full of history, Greek history, Roman history. Education is bad for brains. Collectors tend to be quite uneducated. Sophisticated people never want real art, they would be embarrassed by it. Real art speaks to people and they want to be superior. They want the picture to pat them on the back and congratulate them for being such a sophisticated contented person in this world and I don't think art is for that. Art is for telling people off. Bossing them about. We're quite bossy in our art.

Not so much bossy, but you do bring things to people's notice don't you?

George: We recommend.

What do you recommend?

George: Lots of different causes—ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, behaving, reasons to continue living—they are in the works. We are subversive. We can't give the game away.

Gilbert: We take nothing for granted.

As a woman looking at your work, I have to remark that there are no women in it, even in scenes when you just appear to be snapping the street at random.

Gilbert: We don't feel that we are excluding them. We didn't notice until they started to tell us that.

George: To us it would be as odd as going to the bank and finding the bank manager in drag. It never occurred to us to do it. Because we are men. It would be as odd as dressing up in women's clothes.

George: Women have been used up in art. If you say to someone you are an artist they say do you paint naked ladies....and in newspapers, advertising, they have been abused to buggery, completely....

It struck me most forcibly looking at your new work Life without end that you can't have life without women. You use lots of things that are about fertility, for example, flowers and buds, but you don't make the human connection.

George: We are trying to show life. And I really think that the best object is a youth. This picture would turn into Coronation Street if we used women. Everyone would have a girlfriend, a mother and a grandmother—that's not what we're saying. We're not recommending normal life, we are recommending something particular. We have a lot of women supporters of our work. We are told by museum people that *Rose Hole* is the piece liked by lady visitors, the one they stand in front of. Can you tell us why?

It's also used in the review in the Burlington Magazine to claim an androgynous sexuality for your work. Although the picture is ambiguous, I can see no particular reference to women in it...and if there is one, it certainly doesn't seem to me to be complimentary.

Gilbert: Ladies like nudity. They like cleaning bums. They have children. But it is the man who is the best symbol of life. Even in Japanese sculpture, it is always the man who is the symbol of life. There is some tradition of male superiority after all, and in Arab and Muslim countries it exists to this day.

You seem to use two types of young men in your work; the naked ones, who look as if they come from Chelsea, and the street boys, who are clothed. Do they enjoy being photographed?

George: They enjoy being paid.

Do they ever see the finished work?

George: Some do. Occasionally. Some come to exhibitions. We show them our work before asking them to be in it.

I notice in the new works a lot of symbols that you used in the film. Fruit and vegetables etc. And again they seem to be more openly used. The sexual symbolism of the fruit was very striking in the film.

George: There is no one meaning for fruit for us.

Gilbert: I think our work is very sexy.

You seem to be vanishing from your new work.

George: We never feel that we are not in our work. We're not conscious of being in the work. We feel that it is our work rather than a picture of us.

In the new work crosses are used. Do they have a specific meaning?

George: In general, they mean human, western faith, but they can have different meanings.

Do you think faith is important?

Gilbert: Yes that's why our new show is called *The Believing World*. Faith is life.

We have followed the path of your life in this interview. Do you feel older and wiser?

George: No, we feel worse!

Gilbert: We achieve more now. We are getting better at what we want to do.

It's rare to see artists who began working in the late sixties, often in an informal, performance-related way, whose work has strengthened in the way yours has. A lot of artists from that time...

Gilbert: But their work was not real, it was just a style. We had a basis and we kept to that. So all the works we did, became truer and truer. All the words that we said like 'art for all', or 'all the world's an art gallery' just became truer and truer. (Looking at the picture *Black Church*) That is one of our favourite pieces.

George: It is owned by a rather elderly American gentleman. A museum was after him for the work, they'd like to be left it when

he dies. And he said 'I'm going to give it to a black church' which rather shut them up.

I suppose that would give people who would call it racist something to think about.

George: The strange thing about the people who accuse us of being racist is that they are always white and always what we call overeducated. We get so many compliments from black people.

Do many black people see your work?

George: Oh yes, in New York a black guy came up and to the amazement of all the mimsy-pimsy whites who thought he was coming up to punch us, he said 'You guys and your work, that's really something'. Black people don't want all this honky rubbish, excluding blacks forever and ever and ever, just 3,000 dead white Jesuses. Why shouldn't they be in the work? We are accused of racism when we have used black people in our work. The opposite should be true in fact. We love to use them in pieces. They are incredibly good for what we do because of the form. If you want to take a photograph of a rose to use in a piece it can't be a white one. It has to be a tonal one. A black person is like that... there is a fantastic human presence.

Youth Faith 1982



BARON ALBAN'S PLUMB LINE

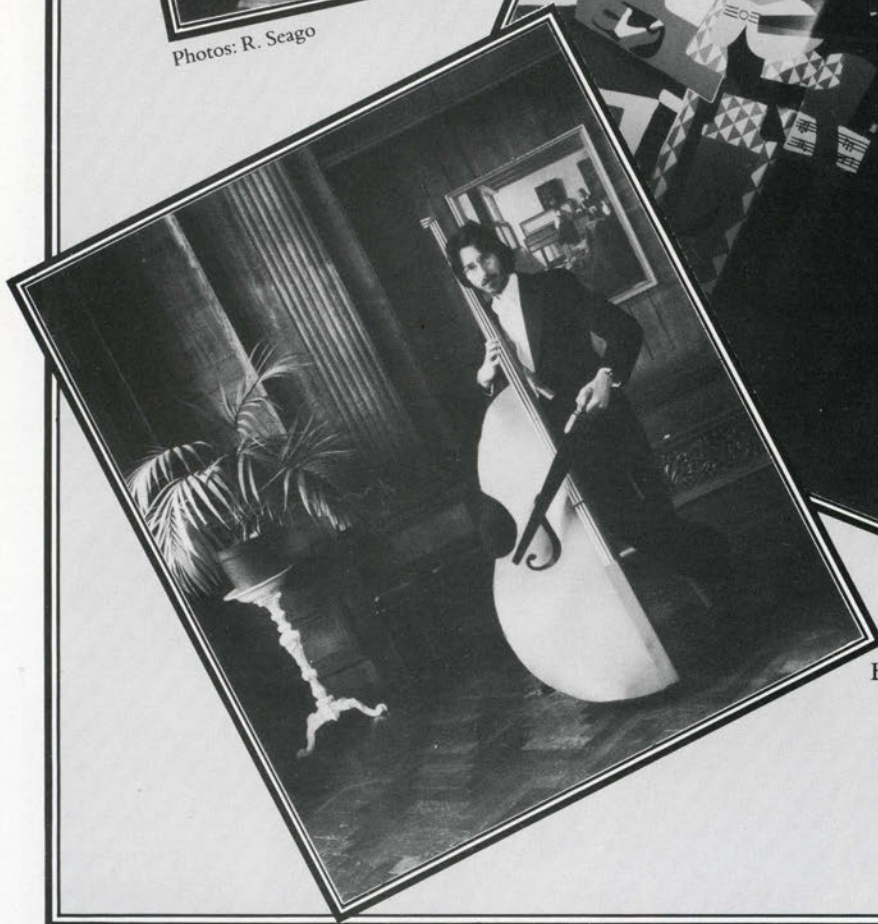
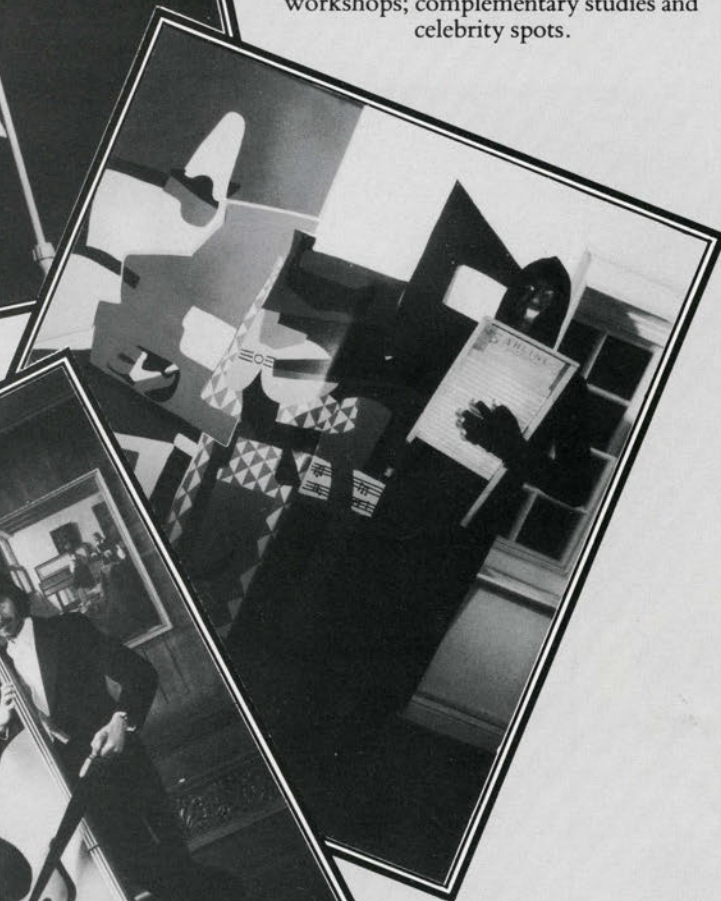


Photos: R. Seago

Baron Alban may deny that the *raison d'être* behind The Plumb Line originates in Hippocrates' famous remark, '... Life is short, but art is long ...'

But this must contain a clue to what began as a Saturday morning salon on 16 January 1982 at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, and continues to the present day.

Baron Alban's Plumb Line features curious events, installation and performance artworks; artists' and studio visits; practical making workshops; first thought impractical workshops; complementary studies and celebrity spots.



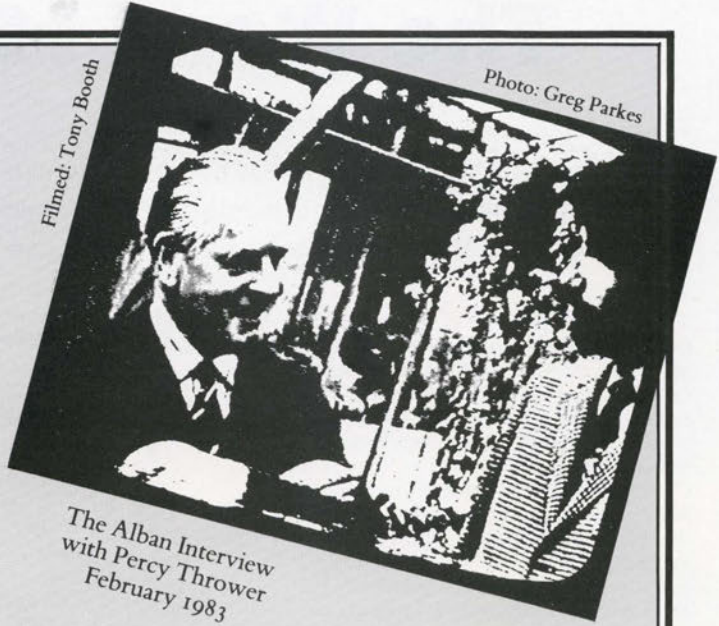
The opening of
Baron Alban's Rooftop Restaurant
October 1983

Picasso Adieu
from 'The Three Musicians'
July 1982

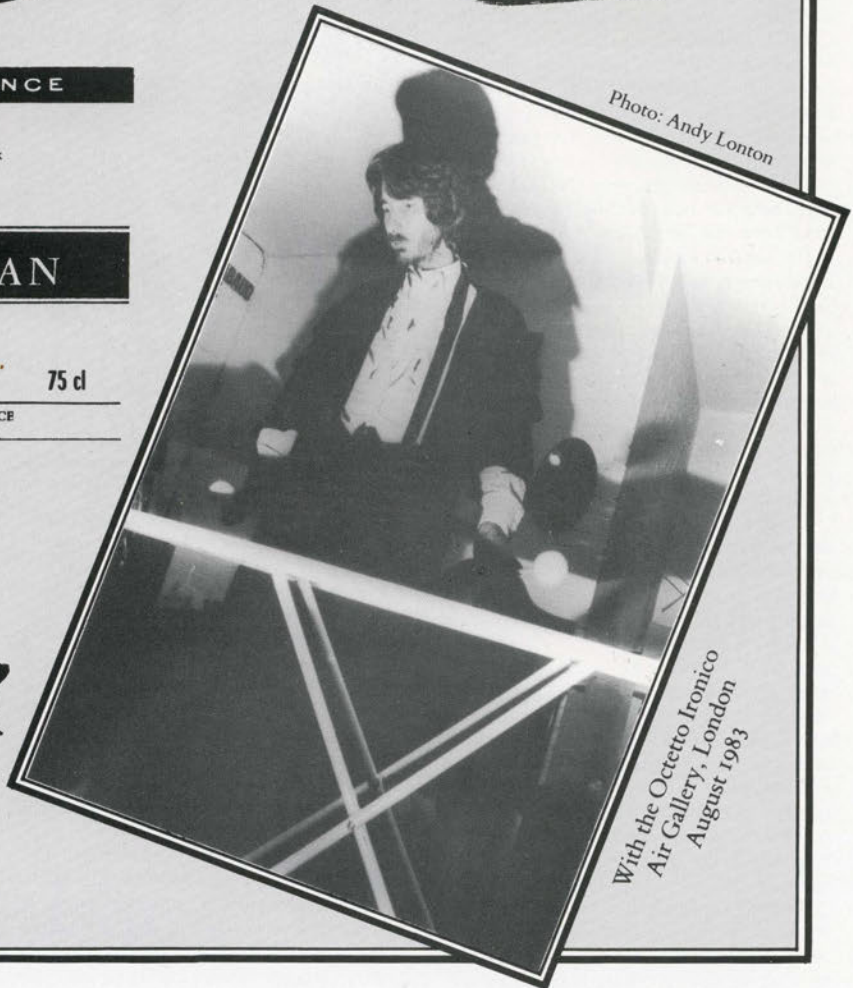
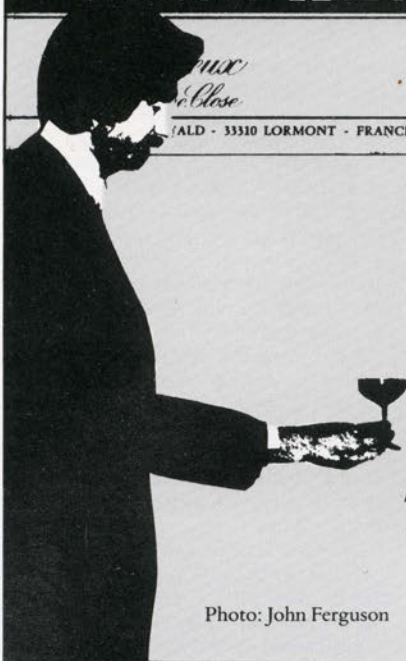
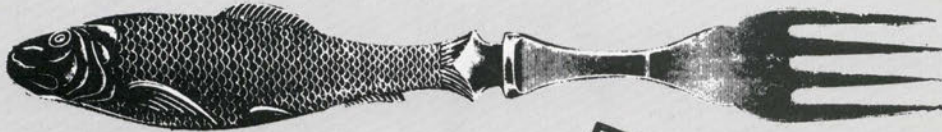
A single Bass from
the Linoleum Orchestra

..... Life is short, but art is long

PRESENTS ALASTAIR SNOW



The Alban Interview
with Percy Thrower
February 1983



With the Octetto Ironico
Air Gallery, London
August 1983

..... Life is short, but art is long

The Word Made Flesh

In the first of an occasional series of articles which attempt to bring together some kind of analytical framework for contemporary Performance Art, Gray Watson considers the impact of Freud, particularly concerning the use of the body . . .

THE INFLUENCE OF FREUD on modern art is generally agreed to be considerable. In particular, of course, the Surrealists deliberately explored areas which he had opened up and used some of his key theories as a basis for their explorations. In our own time, such painters as Francesco Clemente, Malcolm Morley and Paula Rego make frequent use of what is widely thought of as a 'Freudian' subject-matter. Perhaps, however, it is in the area of performance, and more specifically of Body Art and its derivatives, that certain of the philosophical implications of Freud's thought have been explored most profoundly.

It is not so much that Hermann Nitsch, Gunter Brus, Otto Muehl, Arnulf Rainer, Gina Pane, Vettor and Mimma Pisani, Urs Luthi, Ulay and Marina Abramovic, COUM Transmissions, Roberta Graham, Vivien Lisle, Rachel Rosenthal, Barbara Smith, John Duncan, Paul McCarthy, Suzanne Lacy or Cheri Gaulke (to name some of the main examples) have been any more influenced by psychoanalysis than, say, the Surrealists were: a case could even be made out that, on average, they have been influenced less.

Rather it is a matter of their dramatising a certain unresolved ambiguity which lay at the heart of Freud's system of interpreting symbols. This ambiguity reflects the fact that Freud's discoveries and insights came increasingly to strain the bounds set by his initial positivist scientific framework. He never abandoned that framework but instead overlaid it with an approach which was almost openly mythological.

From a strictly logical standpoint, this means that Freud's system is in certain respects self-contradictory. If, however, one views the ambiguity of interpretation in terms of an internal dialectic—albeit one whose implications were only vaguely seen by Freud himself—and if, furthermore, one sees this internal dialectic in relation to an opposition which, it could be claimed, has since come to constitute one of the most significant divides within contemporary culture, one begins to get an idea of its potential richness. It is this potential richness which, consciously or not, has been tapped by the artists in question.

In 1965 there appeared a book by Paul Ricoeur, entitled *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Ricoeur begins by suggesting that 'there is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut



Hermann Nitsch

across one another—the area of language'.

The language studied by psychoanalysis is that of the unconscious, which is a symbolic one in the sense that embedded in an immediate meaning there is at least one further or deeper meaning: that is why interpretation is called for. But there are essentially two types of interpretation or, as Ricoeur puts it, hermeneutics. The first is concerned with the 'recollection of meaning'; it puts stress on the implicit truth of symbolism—what is required is the ability to listen to symbols, to sense the 'something' to which they refer and to be open to their power of revelation. The second type is concerned with demystification; interpretation consists largely in the exercise of suspicion, the unmasking of false consciousness and revelation of the 'guilty' secrets hidden by it, in order to clear the way for a liberation of real or

the restorative hermeneutics, Ricoeur cites the work, Eliade and, declaring his colours, himself. (One might add that of Jung, although Ricoeur personally is not that interested in him). As exemplifying the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', he cites the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

What Freud discovered in typical adult dreams was, of course, the disguised attempt at substitute satisfaction of a desire, stemming from the infantile past and now wholly unconscious because in conflict with conscious aims and thus surrounded by guilt and fear. Since this substitute satisfaction is not in tune with reality, it is never really successful: hence the need to repeat the performance again.

It was in 1907 that Freud first noted the resemblance between religious practices and the rituals of obsessional neurosis.

Not surprisingly, the primary effect of such a comparison was for Freud, and remains for others to discourage religion. If correct, it punctures religious dogma, along with neurotic rationalisation, and offers proof of the 'illusory' quality of religious belief. But, even while accepting this, we must go further and see beyond the initial disillusionment. Whatever the original cause of religion—or of neurosis—may be, this need not necessarily prejudice the value which religion—or neurotic symbolism—may have in terms of providing intuitive insights into areas inaccessible, as yet anyhow, to rational thought. Ricoeur believes that, although Freud never abandoned his demystificatory interpretation, there are hints in his writings that he was at least dimly aware of this possibility. In particular, the way in which so many of his later writings were couched in mythological terms, invoking the struggle between Eros and Thanatos suggests that:

The Freudian hermeneutics can be related to another hermeneutics, a hermeneutics that deals with the mythopoetic function and regards myths not as fables, i.e. stories that are false, unreal, illusory, but rather as the symbolic exploration of our relationship to beings and to Being. What carries this mytho-poetic function is another power of language, a power that is no longer the demand of desire, demand for protection, demand for providence, but a call in which I leave off all demands and listen.

The great advantage of a demystifying, reductive hermeneutics is that it forces an acceptance of the discipline of reality. Its

Hermann Nitsch





Cheri Gaulke: *This is My Body*

great disadvantage is that it tends to lack (though this would hardly, surely, apply to Nietzsche) what Ricoeur calls the 'grace of imagination'. It is clear that Freud, unlike such hard-line adherents to an exclusively scientific method as the Behaviourists, felt this lack; which is presumably why he frequently resorted to the arts, especially literature, to bear out his points.

Art is different from religion in that it does not posit a pseudo-explanatory system. Its claims to truth are not absolute but tentative and exploratory. For Freud, art results of course from the 'sublimation' of originally sexual instincts; but as to why such a process should take place he cannot say.

There is frequently something inadequate in Freud's obsession with finding the archaic causes of human phenomena, rather than discussing their progressive function. But nowhere more than in his account of sublimation does Freud's archaeology seem to explain so little. A purely regressive analysis leaves out of account that element in art which sketches out a possible solution or transcendence of a problem; it leaves out art's prospective role. Freud was forced to recognise this and to admit that sublimation remained for him a mystery. Thus the ambiguity at the heart of Freud's system of interpretation, the ambiguity which both threatens to break his professed scientific framework and at the same time reveals the depth and richness of his thought, turns out to arise most markedly in the area where psychoanalysis comes into contact with the phenomenon of creative art. That this ambiguity should, if we are right, have been dramatised within a type of creative art is, therefore, fitting.

Most of the work of the original Body Artists of the 1960's and 70's and of their heirs, many of whom are Californian, invites and indeed requires interpretation in terms of both the hermeneutic traditions at once. Thus it is easy to see how it has confused those critics for whom the only alternative to formalism is rational demystification. Such critics have been able to cope with, for example, feminist performance, provided that it has confined itself to demonstrably social or political insights, even if these have included what were once considered more 'private' concerns, such as sexual relationships or housework.

But when the area of the irrational or the mystical has been entered—or, rather, re-entered—and when the artist has obviously not been imputing a merely negative value to it, they have tended to see this as reactionary obscurantism.

At the other extreme, those critics who really do want art to be once more at the service of religion or of mysticism, in the traditional sense, have been more than a little disquieted by the artist's evident flouting of conventional sexual morality. The challenge which both types of critic have failed to respond to is to create a form of interpretation which is both restorative

and demystificatory. Far from being a compromise, this would entail taking both approaches to their apparently opposite extremes, for it is only at the extremes that by a sudden incursion, they can be seen to possess an identity which normal, respectable thinking disallows. The language of the sacred and the language of revolutionary liberation are at one in that both are steeped in criminality and obscenity both, ultimately, are languages of transgression.

The Vienna Actionists can still perhaps be claimed as the most notoriously transgressive of all performance artists. Yet the somewhat different ways in which each of them has transgressed social taboos points to a difference of emphasis between them. Otto Muehl, for example, with his significantly named 'material actions' has aimed consciously at demystification. Influenced by Wilhelm Reich, he has used his actions as an opportunity to attack the nuclear family, which he identifies as the primary cause of the individual's inability to realise himself as such in advanced industrial societies; at the same time, the actions supposedly function as a therapy for these family-inflicted wounds. By contrast, Hermann Nitsch's work appears to lie primarily on the restorative side of the hermeneutics divide. In virtually all his actions, he has brought together symbols relating back to the rituals of primitive man, to the rights of Dionysus and to the Christian Mass. Nitsch has stated specifically how he sees the Catholic rites, in which frenzied and drunken participants, to the sound of wild and loud music, would seize animals, tear them to pieces and eat their flesh raw.

From the conventional religious view, this is doubtless blasphemy; but from another perspective Nitsch's intentions can be seen to be profoundly religious. As he himself has said: 'My work is an aesthetic way of praying. I am using symbols which are 2,000 years old and I bring them together with the symbols of today'. Nevertheless, it is obvious enough that Muehl's and Nitsch's intentions are not really that different. The work of both artists, as well as involving a celebration of food and sex, can be seen as an attempt to overcome individual trauma and alienation through communal ritual. Muehl's rituals, as much as religious ones, are intended to create a meaningful experiential and symbolic framework within which psychic re-integration, or 're-religion', can take place.

Complementarily, Nitsch's brutally physical references to traditional symbols are such as to stress their sado-masochistic character and thereby force into the open a whole dimension which was previously concealed. By relating symbols to the area of forbidden and unacknowledged desire, he exposes as dishonest, or at best shallow, many of the meanings normally ascribed to them, especially by established institutions. By insisting on the primacy of the body he has maintained contact with physical necessity, thereby being in a position to expose the irrationality of a



Rachel Rosenthal: *Performance and the Masochist Tradition*

moralism which attempts to justify the suffering of guilt where no responsibility could reasonably be ascribed.

Nitsch's art, as much as Muehl's is intended to create a context in which the damaging results of socially-induced repression can be overcome, without actual anti-social results occurring. More positively than that, it holds out a hope higher than the catharsis of classical Greek drama, in which the fate of the hero is seen as inevitable: it suggests that by a sufficiently complete realization and acting out of all that has been repressed, liberation, not from genuine necessity but from the irrationalities of guilt induced self-crippling, is a real individual and historical possibility. From this perspective, it becomes clear that genuine restoration of meaning to traditional symbolism and genuine demystification of it are two sides of the same coin.

It would be possible to show, if there were space to do so, how the same inference could be drawn from the work of all the other Body Artists as well as from that of their more recent heirs. One instance of this would be the use of androgyny, by artists from Urs Luthi to Vivien Lisle: androgyny is a prime example of a symbol laden with religious,

mystical and esoteric meanings, which functions at the same time as a social and political level as a challenge to conventional sexual role models and as a potential blow for sexual liberation. This is particularly clear in the case of Cheri Gaulke's use of it—along with traditional biblical symbolism such as the tree and the serpent and especially the crucifixion—in, for example, *This is My Body* (1983). Gaulke's work is to be seen in the context of a feminist critique of Western patriarchal culture; but its demystification of the many cultural archetypes which it co-opts simultaneously involves a revivification of them. There is the same ambiguity in Rachel Rosenthal's explorations of her own past and of such subjects as food, power and death, even if the symbols which she uses tend to be more personal and original, less immediately culturally recognisable.

In her performance-cum-lecture on 'Performance and the Masochist Tradition' which she gave as part of a joint seminar work on *Taboo Subjects* in 1981, Rosenthal explicitly connected certain types of deviant sexuality with certain traditional religious quests, such as that for ego-loss, without in any way disparaging either side of the comparison. And

perhaps particularly relevant in the present context is the influence which Tantra has had on the work, for example, of Barbara Smith and of Ulay and Marina Abramovic. For although the adoption of Tantric (as much as any other religious) ideas might seem at first glance wholly restorative, the fact that Tantra in particular stresses the connection between spiritual enlightenment and sexual bliss, as well as in general stressing the importance of the body, sets it apart from most developed religious systems (including, of course, from orthodox Hinduism and Buddhism). For it is the celebration of the body, the transcendence of mind-body dualism and the development of the *language* of the body which, more than anything else, is what unites all the artists who have been mentioned here. And it is also the central concern of psychoanalysis.

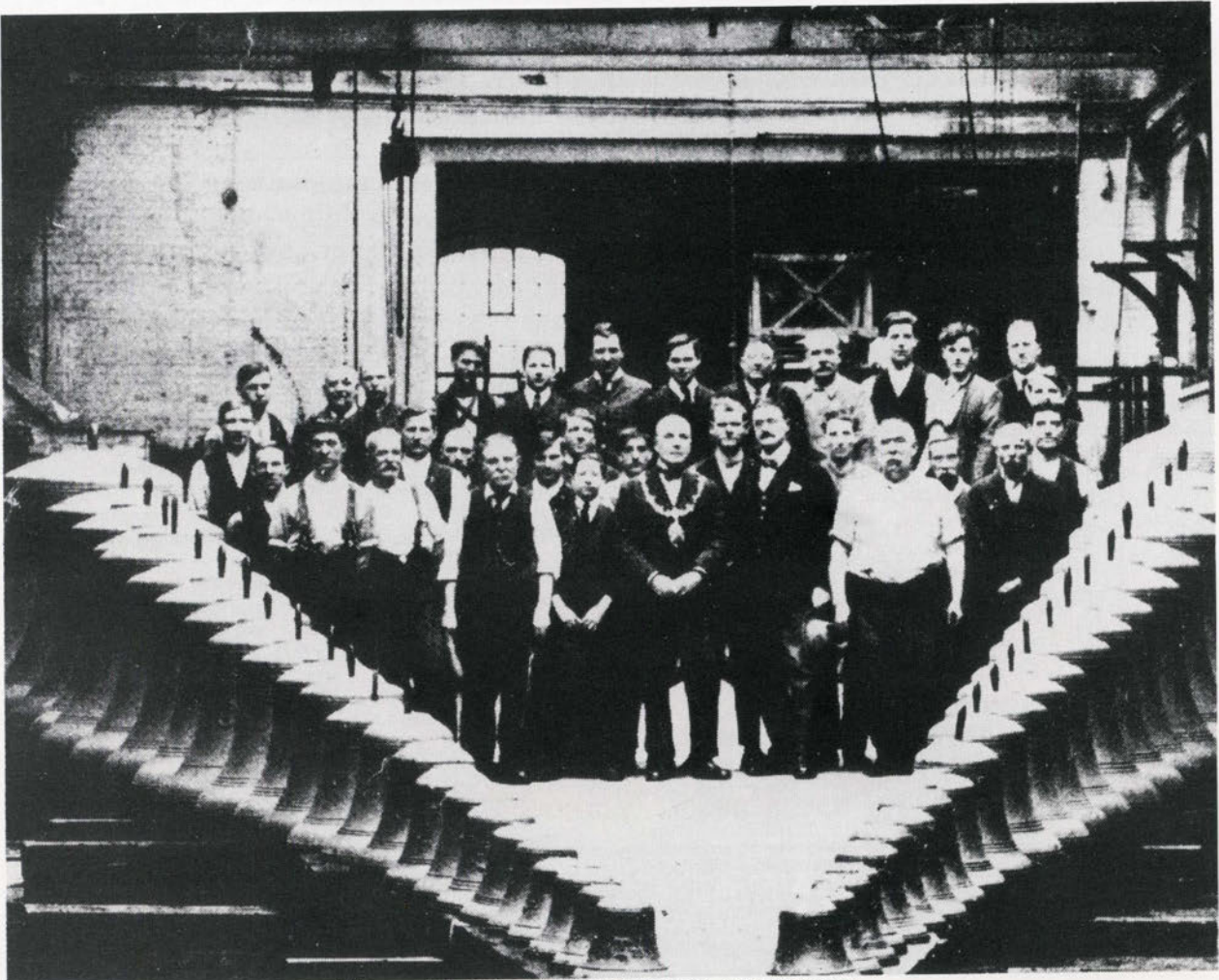
If it is fitting that the ambiguity in Freud's system of interpretation should be dramatised by a type of creative art, it is no coincidence that the particular type of art which does so should be that which has taken as its own language, the language of gesture and ritual, of desire and the transgression of taboos: the secret, symbolical, carnal language of the body.

Gray Watson

Otto Muel: Psychokinetic 'noise happening'



The Beautiful Wild Chimes



The men of the Taylor Foundry, Loughborough, and their carillon

Bruges is about as close as you can get to the shores of England and yet actually be abroad, which is probably why I have never met very many people who have been there. A ten-minute train ride from the Ostend ferry through decidedly unspecial Belgian countryside ejects you suddenly into an architectural time-capsule, apparently unchanged since the Sixteenth Century.

When the vast mercantile wealth of this former inland port ran dry as a result of the local river doing the same, the town of Bruges fell into a three-hundred year long period of languorous recession (one depicted in music, incidentally, equally decadently, by Erich Korngold in his opera *Die Tote Stadt*, prior to his emigration to Hollywood to write film music). Despite its extended period of spiritual decay, Bruges never actually fell down, and amazingly remained undamaged by the closely proximate ravages of two

World Wars, only to be re-awakened finally like the *Sleeping Beauty* by the kiss of *Tourism*.

I fell hook, line and sinker into the tourist trap of Bruges. I would begin to sound like Cliff Michelmore on the 'Holiday' programme were I to fill too much space here enumerating Bruges' more obvious charms—its architecture, its paintings, its canals, its chocolates, the felicitous of Flemish exterior and interior domestic decoration, a generosity towards street performances and music-making (both official and impromptu), and a tendency to stage elaborately costumed processions at the slightest excuse—be it the Procession of the Holy Blood, the Pageant of the Golden Tree, National Day, Sailors' Day, Twelfth Night, or even just what the tourist brochure describes as 'a frantic public running-contest'. Not that Bruges has the monopoly of such things. Almost all the other towns in Flanders have their

own annual religious or carnival procession, such as Ieper's 'Joyous Entry of the Cats' Queen'—as opposed to the 'races and swimming contest for dogs' at St-Baafs-Vijve—Costduinkerke's Shrimp Pageant, Passendale's Cheese Pageant, and Koksijde's 'Homage to Flemish Painting' Pageant, in which 'world famous paintings are portrayed by theatre groups on floats'.

But the aural tapestry of Bruges is as rich as its visual aspect, furnishing a characteristic counterpoint of rippling canals, tolling bells, the clip-clop of horses hooves, itinerant musicians, rowdy markets, and the sudden rolling down of shutters in the serene quietude of the back streets. I am surprised that Bruges never seems to have featured on the European routes of researchers from the World Soundscape Project—that very valuable foundation set up in 1969 by Canadian

composer R. Murray Schafer, devoted to the study of noise pollution, the acoustic design of the environment, and the preservation of 'old sounds', just as old buildings are somewhat more successfully conserved.

If the World Soundscape researchers had visited Bruges, they would no doubt have been taken with its living museum of sounds. Upon turning a corner into the town's newly contrived Super Shopping Street, however, they would have been as horrified as I was to find the blandest of muzak coming from loudspeakers stationed at regular intervals just out of arms' length all the way along the street, providing *Backgroundmuziek* for your life, just like the background music in TV films. This unbelievably crass 'service', provided by Alpen Radio (I don't know if this musical muesli is actually sponsored by the breakfast food firm) continues non-stop from breakfast until evening, even on rainy days and holidays when the streets are empty. It has been railed at elsewhere, by the editor of *Classical Music* magazine (1), and yet it is, after all, not the only form of unavoidable muzak regularly pervading the streets of Bruges, although the other is more ancient and low-tech.

Every quarter of an hour in Bruges, wherever you are, your ear will catch a burst of sonorous bells with tinkling flourishes. At first, unable to conceive of bells other than in churches, one looks for

the spire which is the source of these sounds, and having identified the source as the enormous tower in the main square, it comes as some surprise to realise that this belfry is not, in fact, attached to any church, but is part of the town hall, a symbol of secular, civic power and wealth.

This is the Carillon of Bruges, comprising 47 bells, the largest with a diameter of 6 feet, the smallest only 6 inches across. These bells, hanging high in the tower, are played in two ways. Attached to the town clock is a mechanism which operated the carillon each 15 minutes exactly like a giant musical box. A gigantic metal drum perforated with 30,500 openings is plugged with metal pegs which operate the bell clappers as the drum slowly resolves.

But at certain times operation of this automatic mechanism is suspended to allow the carillon to be played, like any musical instrument, by one human instrumentalist. Beneath the bells is a keyboard, in layout like that of an organ, at which the *Beiaardier* (in Flemish) or *Carillonneur* (in French) sits, playing two rows of round-ended wooden keys with his open hand (protecting his little finger and the side of his hand with a special protective leather shield) and depressing pedals with his feet to activate the larger bells. Unlike the automatic mechanism, the carillonist can vary the attack of his playing, allowing for louder or softer notes, and can achieve intricate configura-

tions and tremolandi according to the degree of his virtuosity and physical agility.

On several evenings a week during the Summer, and at other special times, notably Sunday mornings, the town carillonist plays an hour-long recital of music specially composed or transcribed for the instrument.

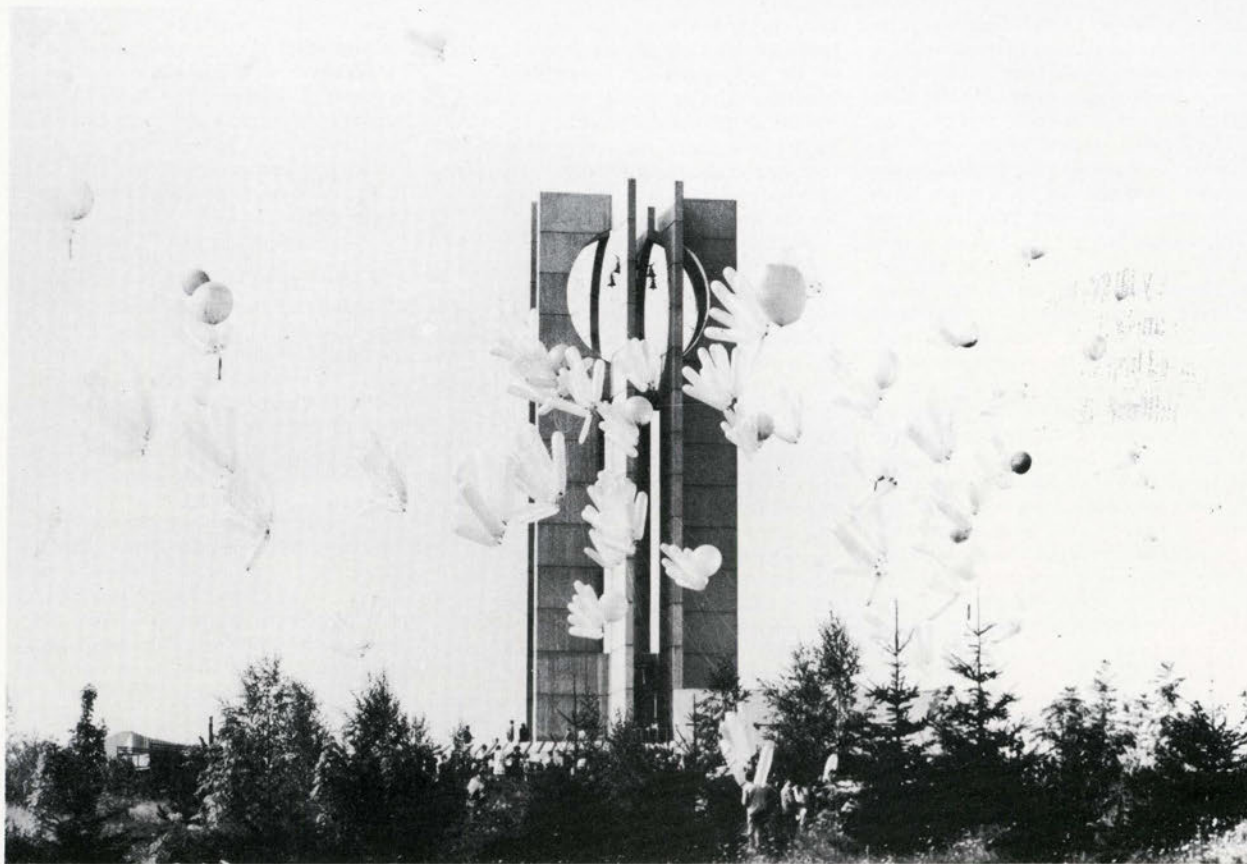
The carillon of Bruges may be one of the world's oldest and finest, but it is certainly not the only one. Any town in 'Flemish' Northern France, Belgium or Holland which has been prosperous enough to afford one, has its town carillon. The sound of the carillon is to the Netherlands what Chord Ringing (the oldest and purest form of 'systems music') is to England. The intermission jingle of Dutch radio, the carillon of Hilversum town hall, strikes a chord in Dutch hearts just as *Lilliburlero* on the BBC World Service does our own.

Many carillons are hung in churches and cathedrals, but an equal number are incorporated in town halls, and their basic repertory of music is always secular—folk tunes, marches, light classics. Carillons represent, indeed, a sophisticated tradition of secular bell-ringing quite unknown in this country, the only comparisons being with 'choirs' of handbell ringers, and the chimes of icecream vans.

The history of carillon playing is a long one, but it would be wrong to suppose that, like the harpsichord, it is an obsolete

The bells of the Banner of Peace monument, Bulgaria





The Banner of Peace monument, Bulgaria.

musical instrument frozen in time. After the centuries during which bells in towers were hit by hand with hammers, the installation of an automatic playing mechanism actually preceded the final sophistication of a keyboard. The first flowering of carillon music occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the second during the early part of this present century. Technical and performance refinements have continued up to the present day. Half of the bells comprising the Bruges carillon, for instance, date from 1748, and the remainder were re-cast as recently as 1969. And most newly built carillons now have electrical action.

The proper place to hear carillon music is from the squares and streets below the bell-tower. You may wish to sit during a recital, but it would seem more natural to promenade. The request in an old Bruges carillon concert programme for those present to 'keep silent during the concerts' seems a little bizarre, as if shoppers were asked to be quiet and listen to Alpen Radio. Half the pleasure of hearing carillon music is that it should come at you unexpectedly around corners and down narrow streets. The sound which the carillon lends to any piece of music, however banal, is unique, and permeated with the presence of all the Partial Notes which sound above the actual Strike Note of each bell, surrounds the music with an apparent aura of dissonance. To hear these sounds rebounding off the sides of build-

ings can produce phantom sounds in the air, like the illusory chords wafting about during live performances of Steve Reich's *Four Organs*. And, like that piece, LP records of carillon music can be rather boring and not comparable with the actual open-air auditory experience.

An ideal set of circumstances exists, perhaps, within which to hear the carillon, and has been described, like an Indian raga, as follows: 'The most beautiful effects of carillon music are possible only when the atmospheric conditions are favourable as, for example, they are on a calm summer evening between the hours of 9 and 10... The dim light, the absolute calm and the great height of the bells—these combine to produce indescribably ethereal music'(2)

What, then, of the music itself? The carillonneur playing to an unseen audience from halfway up a belfry has something in common with Reginald Dixon playing the organ at the Tower Ballroom Blackpool, and his instrument, whilst it could not possibly be described as a 'folk instrument', has been called a *volksinstrument*—an instrument of the people. Consequently, much of its music is 'of the people'—harmonisations of folk songs, well-known opera tunes, and 'These You Have Loved' classical favourites. In the 1930's, the programmes of carillon concerts in Bruges during the holiday season were often selected by British travel agents, and the Workers' Travel Association.

But there is a parallel tradition of

specially composed carillon music, some of which dates from the Eighteenth Century, but most of which is modern. Many such composers, like their organ-loft colleagues, are themselves practitioners which is understandable considering the variations between each instrument, with anything between 23 to 64 bells, requiring music composed or adapted accordingly. But other composers, representative of mainstream modernism, have composed music for the carillon, such as the Belgian Rene Defosse and the Dutch Henk Badings. Holland, as might be expected, has been fairly adventurous in its encouragement of new carillon music, with many commissions from government and city councils, and not always to the most predictable recipients. In 1982, for instance, the young composer Guus Janssen, also a performer in an area somewhere between free jazz and systems music, was commissioned by the Dutch Government to compose a piece for carillon, which he called *Thick and Thin*.

The only other post-modernist composer I have come across who has written for the carillon is John Cage, who composed five pieces called *Music for Carillon* between 1952 and 1967. The earlier pieces, at least, are notated fairly conventionally, following a complex process involving the random placing of transparent templates on graph paper. Such is the ability of the sound of the carillon to colour whatever is played upon it, that were Cage's music to be played by the

carillon of Bruges (which I am sure it has not) I suspect that many of its perambulatory listeners would not even notice, though some might think that the carillonneur was out of his belfry that morning.

Having thus discovered for myself the charms of the carillon, I came across another example, in an extraordinary form, later in the same year, not in the Netherlands, but in (yes, you've guessed it) Bulgaria. On a hill outside Sofia an enormous monument called the 'Banner of Peace' was erected in 1979. High in the monument's central tower hang 7 large bells, symbolising the continents of the world, and at its base hang a further 20 musical bells. Around the circular perimeter of the monument 57 different bells are mounted, each donated by a member county of the United Nations, and including some very large, some very small, and some very un-bell-like bells, all available to be rung ad libitum by visiting members of the public—a potentially memorable group improvisation, though the monument site was practically deserted when I was there.

I did not hear the carillon itself being played, but the evidence of an LP recording shows that it is played in the 'old way',

not via a keyboard but struck with hammers by a specifically formed group of six percussionists, Ensemble Polyrythmia. The resultant sound, though similar to the Flemish carillon, is indeed harder and more percussive. Bulgarian composers (and there are some very good ones) have already written music specially for the Banner of Peace carillon.

But I need not have travelled all the way to Bulgaria to see another carillon outside the Netherlands. I need only have revisited my native town of Loughborough, where a fine carillon was erected as a war memorial in 1923. Two long respected British bell foundries, Gillett and Johnston of Croydon, and John Taylor's of Loughborough, were responsible for building over twenty continental carillons (out of only five firms in any country to have built so many), and as a spin-off, you may be surprised to hear, also placed nine carillons, apart from Loughborough War Memorial, in this country and Eire. Five are in churches, two in schools, one is at the premises on Bond Street, and one is (is it still?) in the Odeon Cinema at Marble Arch!

Is it too much to suppose that some attention might be re-focused on these

neglected instruments, not only from our mainstream classical music establishment, but also from some of those involved with environmental and hybrid forms of new music? In my mind's ear I imagine a piece for carillon and aeolian harp by Max Eastley, or music for carillon and Lost Jockey, or carillon and gemelan....
David Briers.

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Some Records of Carillon Music

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David Tudor. 25 year Retrospective Concert, Avakian Records, New York (currently re-available from specialist dealers) John Cage: *Music for Carillon* (unspecified), Tove Ullman, Minerva M1 (out of print).

Score for Carillon by John Cage. (Copyright 1961 by Henmar Press Inc., New York. Reprinted by kind permission of Peters Edition Limited, London)

MUSIC FOR CARILLON (GRAPH) NO. 1

FOR MARY CAROLINE RICHARDS

EACH PAGE HAS TWO SYSTEMS OF 10 SECONDS EACH (EXCEPT THE FINAL SYSTEM WHICH IS 9 SECONDS), SPACE REPRESENTING TIME HORIZONTALLY, RELATIVE PITCH VERTICALLY WITHIN 5 LARGE SQUARES OF THE GRAPH. VERSIONS FOR 2 AND 3 OCTAVE INSTRUMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE OTHERS CAN BE MADE FROM THIS MATERIAL.

John Cage

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Artists Know What's Going Down

The first of a series dealing with art and peace, compiled by Richard Layzell.

It's possible to ignore the many sinister developments happening around us—cruise missiles, numerous repressive government legislations, nuclear waste on the beaches, distortion of the press etc. etc. It's possible to consciously put these developments at the back of one's mind, but subconsciously it goes in and filters through artists' work frequently in the form of flippancy, decadence or fear. I strongly believe that the situation we are living through has become far too serious to RE-ACT against in an introverted way. If we believe that change is essential and are working for positive, peaceful views of the future, then our work, as artists, should affect this, not as propaganda, but as an intrinsic part.

When Claes Oldenburg produces a poster for Artists Call Against US intervention in Central America, featured on the front cover of *Arts Magazine* (Jan 1984), attitudes are changing.

Like many parents in these times, when hugging my child, there is a fear of total loss somewhere in the background.

I heard a recent lecture give by Lucy Lippard at York University in Toronto. She spoke at length and with fervour about the many artists in New York who are working for peace outside the commercial gallery system. Her own views of the seriousness of the present time and the artist as sensor were startlingly clear. Comparing it to the period before the First World War, 'Artists know what's going down', she said. You could hardly say the same of the London art scene, but there's plenty happening out of London, where survival seems more important than fashion.

Sister Seven is a group of women artists and writers formed in 1981. Their exhibition has been touring since January 1982 and has been shown at 70 different places—in libraries and polytechnics, women's centres and community arts centres, not commercial galleries. Here Gillian Allnutt of Sister Seven describes their activities:

JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT this morning they took cruise missiles out of the base at

Storm over CND 'spider's web' raid

A GROUP of CND supporters have made a mess at the headquarters of Huddersfield Emergency Voluntary Aid Service—and thoroughly upset HEVAS's committee.

The incident occurred on Saturday when eight or 10 CND supporters, including two dressed as a bride and bridegroom, visited HEVAS's HQ under the waterworks building off Dale Street, Chapel Hill.

They scattered hundreds of confetti-like pieces of paper bearing CND symbols and tied chairs together with pieces of string.

Mr Ronald Brown, a HEVAS committee member, said the CND supporters seemed to think that

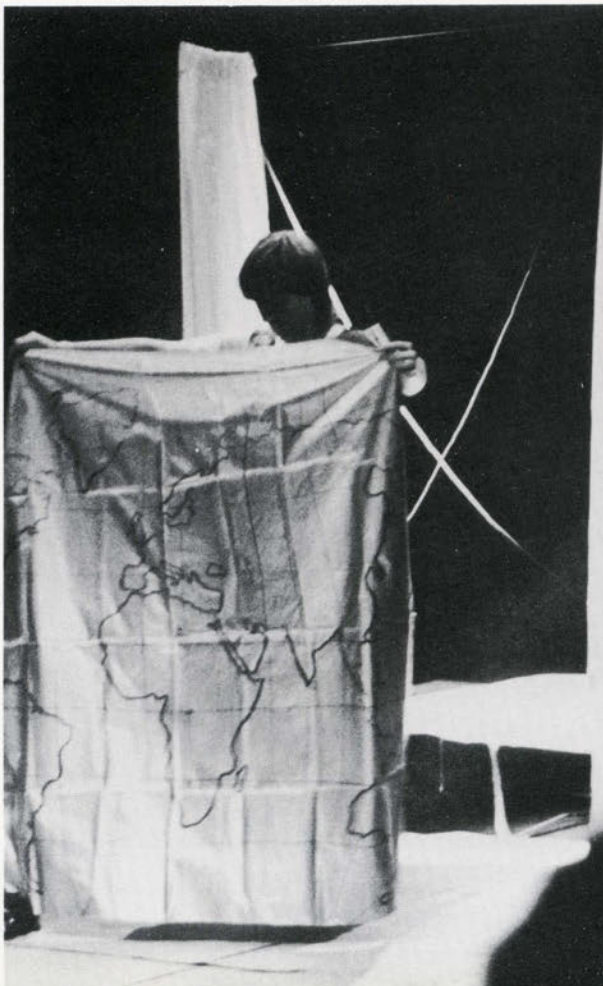
HEVAS's HQ was a nuclear bunker, but that they were mistaken. It was a communications centre for use in the event of any emergency, whether nuclear or civil.

The publicity officer for CND's Huddersfield branch, Mr David Browning, said he thought the incident was nothing to do with local CND members but involved Sister Seven, a feminist anti-nuclear group of artists who are holding performances at Huddersfield Art Gallery.

The organiser of the anti-nuclear exhibition at the art gallery, Mr Roland Miller, said the string tying together the chairs represented a spider's web, a feminist anti-nuclear symbol.

• See "Bridal procession against Bomb," Page 3

Sister Seven: *Premature Endings* by Shirley Cameron



Sister Seven: *Cruise Tango* by Evelyn Silver



Greenham. Hearing the news, I wonder, as I often do, why I am not there, sitting down in the mud by the perimeter fence, 'doing something' to stop them. And, as so often, it is one detail in a long news item that brings home to me what is happening. 'The convoy', says the newscaster, 'roamed about Berkshire and Wiltshire': and it is 'Berkshire and Wiltshire' that touches me. One of my poems in the Sister Seven exhibition, *Alien*, begins with a quote from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: '...as a woman I have no country'. This is true for me in the sense that I, and the generations of women who have gone before me, have been permitted to play little part in the 'making of England'; and because of this, my attachment to it is ambivalent. But I *am* attached: 'Wiltshire' in particular is part of what I am. It entered me by way of childhood summer holidays and with the shelf of Hardy novels that came from my paternal grandfather. If 'Wiltshire' is in danger, so is what I am.

When I think about what we are 'doing' in Sister Seven, with our poster exhibition of graphics, drawings, poems, diagrams and stories and our related performances and poetry readings, I think we are using the tools of our trade—imagination and the skills we have as artists, writers and performers—to find ways of touching people in the way that 'Wiltshire' touches me this morning; of bringing home the spiritual and emotional enormity of the nuclear threat in a way that the six o'clock news mostly fails to do.

Our purpose is serious, but our performances are not without humour. Ev Silver's current performance is called *Cruise Tango*. (Our programme of performances, which we have been doing for two years now, is not static but has changed as international events, the Peace movement, we and our relationship to these, have changed). Dressed like a comper out of the film *Cabaret* and backed by the pleasant strains of tango and foxtrot, Ev presents her soldier, a male shop window model done out in khaki. From his crutch she draws 96 cruise missiles and gives them to the audience. Of course we don't want them and, when they're all thrown back, Ev turns the soldier over her knees, rips open the trousers and stuffs them back inside—with smiles and bows throughout. (Often the joke—the pointed reference to the phallic shape of Cruise and other missiles—is, if not altogether lost on men, at least more appreciated by the women in the audience!)

Both Shirley Cameron and Monica Ross have daughters who make their respective appearances in Shirley's performance *Premature Endings* and in Monica's slide-tape show about nuclear power and weapons. Shirley's performance is touched with moments of humour and done with a lightness that belies its underlying despair at the prospect of an untimely ending to our lives. Monica's tape-slide is sobering. One of her images, on slide and poster, is based on a photo of her daughter, Alice, and Alice's shadow;

the same only 'blitzed' (with red stripes); the third shows only the shadow—recalling the way people were 'melted' as if to their own shadows, onto walls and paving stones; and warning against the possible future recurrence of this horrible phenomenon.

Mary Michaels' poems are 'a way of fixing moments or places or relationships and celebrating them'. Both she and I have come to choose carefully the poems we read as part of Sister Seven performance, including a number of poems that are simple celebrations of the human lie we are still, in spite of the weapons, living and often enjoying.

'...if I do/something for peace/does it help peace/or does it help me?' asks Janet Dube (not in Sister Seven) in her long poem *Lament 1982*. Sister Seven's answer to this is that, in 'doing something' for peace, we are helping not only it (everyone) but also ourselves. The energising human-artistic collaboration that Sister Seven is for us is certainly the best antidote I have yet discovered to that sense of creeping hopeless-helplessness that the existence of nuclear weapons, and the ever-present threat of their use, produces in human beings.

Sister Seven is: Gillian Allnutt, Shirley Cameron, Mary Michaels, Monica Ross and Evelyn Silver. Their exhibition, which they can accompany with performance, poetry and talks is available for hire. Contact: 49 Stainton Rd, Bingham Park, Sheffield S11 7AX.

Sister Seven: Performance by Monica Ross



Love Affair with a Black Space

DAVE STEPHENS IS a stand-up comedian. He appears to have little discipline, little control and above all an absurd sense of timing. He is the cleverest failure I have had the privilege of seeing.

I have seen him in action before. I have sat in public houses with him and listened to his stories, intimate in the sense that there was no greater audience to share them. I am accustomed to his vision and I do know he talks rather a lot. But then so do I. I am of the opinion that conversation is often less the art of communication than the engineering of molologue time, as if it were a precious commodity confined and not necessarily available in our god-given twenty four a day time. The vision itself is above all self-effacing, unsure, lusty and honest, a Freudian diatribe in an empty consultant's room. But how does it correspond with what people call *live work*; how does the act differ from the corner table monologue? And how does the subject shift to encompass the wider, greater business of human existence, what critics call relevance? Well, the answer is it doesn't.

You could say it was all a question of context: the place and the people. 'It's a love affair with a black space', explains Stephens, in a typically tactless description of his mute 'interlocutor' (that wholesome paradox known as the audience). There is the constant need to justify not only what he is saying but also to whom he is saying it; it's joyful naivety which, handled by anyone else, would be nothing but an empty caprice. One would have thought that Shakespeare, Brecht and some of the wilder Austrians had flogged that one to death. The fact that Stephens is a graduate of Leeds and the 'Seventies flying off at tangents and still hitting home only seems to compound the absurdity of it all. He's an anachronism: he's timeless and he's dated...simultaneously. He's someone from his own childhood repeating equations and memories...and still not making any sense out of it.

Tactless, naive and apologetic, terrified by feminists and life in general, Stephens embarks on a relentless, potted biography of himself (and not the objective, ghosted autobiography you will note), blindly moving through his fifty minutes, groping for the high points and finding them almost by accident, grappling with metaphor, symbol and the sound of his own voice, in a subdued frenzy redolent of the innocent, condemned man. He makes his ultimate defence. And the judge dons the black cap. Herein lies the charm. O Feminist, Forgive!

And the substance? Life, sex, public transport. A comedy inasmuch as a skiing



Dave Stephens at Oval House

accident is a comedy—*schadenfreude* rears its ugly head and gets bopped for its pains. A confession, laced, like all good confessions, with guilt and humour. Pathos runs strong and thick. It is used by the artist for effect and by audience for purposes of mood and response. It's the marbling of the decor. And who chose the colours you may ask.

'Bloody thing! You bloody thing!' screams Mrs Stephens, clipping her son on the ear. 'And mind out for verrucas! Verrucas? They're not, as you thought corn type blemishes on the foot but living organisms waiting in the depths of the swimming pool...waiting to suck your blood or worse. The physical, unspoken things ripe for censor's scissor. And the jaw. The infamous Stephens jaw, jutting conversation piece, endlessly berated. The hallmark of the loquacious Welshman.

The highpoints, the change in pitch denoting some cathartic moment (the jaw positively quavers) reach their apotheosis with the New Faces digression. And your precursors, asked a critic. Who are they? Lenny Bruce? Woody Allen? No. The man on New Faces replies the artist, to himself. It appears there was an amateur comedian who, given the chance on a TV talent show, 'dried up'. He burst into tears in fact. The panel was embarrassed. Everyone was embarrassed. The line between art and reality is crossed and embarrassment unites us all in a cruel display of pity. The first judge on the panel gives his verdict. Thumbs are down. Arthur Askey is then asked. Well, he's a young lad. I'll give him one. And Dave Stephens? What would you given him?

Simon Lane

Notes from Cardiff

THE ROLE WHICH Cardiff Laboratory Theatre has played over the years in bringing to Cardiff theatre groups and solo performers from Poland, Denmark, Italy, Belgium, Indonesia, etc should not be underestimated. Without their agency, the citizens of Cardiff would not have been able to see at first hand certain sorts of international theatre. But they can't all be winners.

Their presentation of two quite separate short pieces in one evening at Chapter in February began with *Wait for the Dawn*, a solo performance by Canadian Richard Fowler, currently working with Odin Theatre in Denmark. His piece was 'based upon and stimulated by' Camus' *The Outsider*, being a montage of texts by Camus, but also by Beckett, Eliot and Gombrowicz. Minimal accoutments—a blanket, a mask, a grill, snatches of taped music—were used with ingenious skill, and I was confident throughout in Rich-

ard Fowler's ability to engage and hold my full attention, though in the end the piece itself seems unsatisfyingly incomplete or diluted, and so much less than that from which it had been drawn. If we were to compare such a 'chamber piece' to music, as its rhythmical, repetitive elements tempted us to do, why had he come all this way to play only a sonatina? My memories of the piece itself are fading fast, those of Richard Dowler as a performer are certainly not.

Theatre de L'Autre Rive's piece 'd'apres' Edgar Allan Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher* was, or so it seemed, a completely hilarious parody of a piece of 'physical theatre' by a small French theatre company. All the clichés of such theatre practice were mercilessly and tediously slowly set forth, so that half way through I was unable to withhold my mirth at the thought of Billy Dainty suddenly appearing at the back of the stage in a pair

of tights to complete the bathos of the performance with the release of laughter. Well if I have felt obliged to brush aside the no doubt serious intentions of this group with such cruel throwaway remarks, it is, I realise, because it is one way of hiding my great embarrassment at having to sit through an ill-conceived work by such inexperienced practitioners. Even the environment of the 'house' which was seen to form such an important premise of the piece (the audience were led through it to their seats) was shoddy, and to symbolise the Fall of the House of Usher by knocking over small piles of new bricks will not do. It is no longer enough to have done a workshop with Grotowski, and to plaster Zygmunt Molik's name all over your programme. This group obviously do not have the breadth of experience of alternative forms of contemporary theatre to which their audience in Cardiff are privileged, and one wondered just why they had been invited here.

When Impact Theatre arrived at Chapter a few weeks later, they had already taken their new performance to several other venues around the country and abroad, and had gathered an equivalent number of press reviews, some rapturously enthusiastic, others decidedly not. By the time I saw them, a *South Wales Echo* journalist (not theatre critic—they don't have one) had had time to write a review beginning as follows: 'Unadulterated, boring, noisy, esoteric drivel is being kind to Impact Theatre's strange and senseless work *A Piece in Europe*.' I couldn't wait to see it. Unadulterated it certainly was, that being its greatest strength. Noisy it certainly was too—not beyond endurance but in an exhilarating and fairly cathartic way, the whole piece being in one sense an extended and powerful canvas of taped and live music accompanying drifting shadowy images of nostalgia related to masochism, sex, fear, and individual and corporate violence.

The arrival of a group of performers in a deserted unfamiliar place is becoming an alternative theatre cliché, and old Billie Holliday records already are an alternative theatre cliché (twice this month at Chapter alone—Theatre de l'Autre Rive used her too). Other elements of the piece derived perhaps too directly from the Theatre of Mistakes, Harold Budd, Glenn Branca, Gavin Bryars and Michael Nyman. But if they were copies, they were very good copies indeed, and if I have any such misgivings I am only too willing, in a review of this length, to sweep them aside entirely in favour of my overall totally positive reaction to *A Piece in Europe* (which I had thought referred to the EEC—perhaps it does). They are called *Impact Theatre*, for heaven's sake, and that, for once, was what you got.

David Briers

Impact Theatre: *A Piece in Europe*



DON'T MISS



Duncan Whiteman



Monty Cantsin of the Neoists visits London

... **Submerge Messiah**, an underwater performance by Janusz Szczerek at the London Filmmakers Co-op. Completely submerged in a tank during the performance, the artist bases his performance on 'the philosophical idea of suffering for the redemption of humanity which has developed in Poland since Nineteenth Century romanticism and has invested the Polish nation with a special place in history as the Messiah of Nations.' **April 14**, phone 01 586 4806 for detail.

... **The Nottingham Fringe Festival**, which this year is being revolutionised by ex Welfare Stater Kevin West. Events too numerous etc. but of particular note is the launching of a sculptural installation in a railway cutting depicting Dante's Divine Comedy, the Ready Wrapped Sculpture Show by Duncan Whiteman and Edible Art exhibition, the latest Impact performance, Songs of the Claypeople, the latest from Forkbeard Fantasy, and ... phone Kevin West on 0602 582636 who will be happy to continue. Festival runs from **May 26 to June 10**.

... **Sexual Meditations**, a one-day film and video event on **April 28**, introduced by Eve Lomax, Steve Dwoskin and Stuart Marshall, including work by Sally Potter, Stan Brakhage, Jean Genet, Colin Campbell, Judith Barry, and themselves. At '33', Luton. Phone 0582 419584 for details.

... **The Brighton Festival** has also been taken over by a more dynamic force. Though a more conventionally opera/classics/ballet festival, it has through Gavin Henderson from South Hill Park, included some suitably subversive performance pieces. The Industrial and Domestic Theatre Contractors, first seen at the Midland Group Performance Platform last year, in a piece involving a euphonium and a melon crawling with live ants will be taking over the beach, Baron Alban (see documentation this issue) will be performing above the porch of the Corn Exchange and in and around the Royal Pavilion, IOU will be premiering a new work, and the Zap Club and its assorted Wild Wiggles will be very much in evidence. Runs from **May 4-20**, further details from the Festival Office 0203 29801.

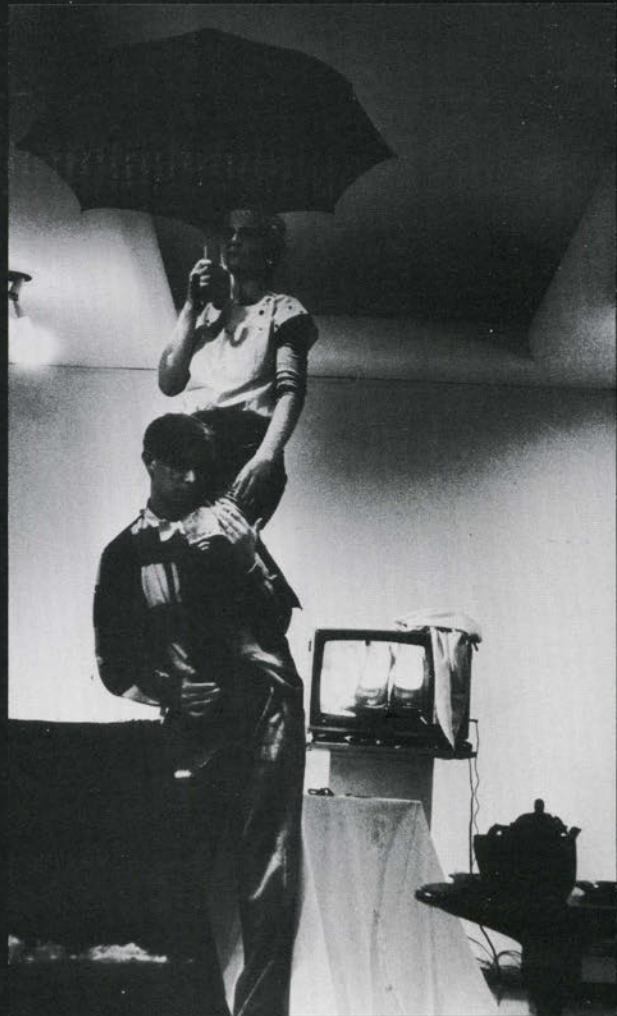
... **APT 8 (The Eighth Internationalist Neoist Apartment Festival)** We still get propaganda every day from the intense young men with berets and suitcases ... now, fresh from their latest training camp they announce that **APT 8, May 21-27** 'will be the Cultural Customs Checkpoint for US AKA: United Selves of Akademgorod, land of Neoists, temporarily occupying London for the duration of the Festival. Members of the Neoist Network should mobilise for the event and inform our central address of their estimated time of arrival.' Also: 'Any potential participants and interested individuals are invited and encouraged to contribute input/energy to this open situation.' (Previous APT events took place 'in the various private residences of conspirators. By Apt 5, New York 1982, the concept embraced the notion that the entire city was the apartment thus uncovering the Neoist Cultural Conspiracy.') Details from: *Neoistic Enquiry Unit, 13 Aulton Place, Kennington, London SE1.*

... **The Touring Exhibitionists.** A team of live artists will be touring the country in a bus, organised by the ambitious Projects UK, new enterprise organised by the Basement Group, Newcastle. Bringing together for the first time artists like Silvia Ziraneck, Kerry Trengrove, John Maybury, Marty St James and Anne Wilson, Jeff Nuttall, Alastair McLennan, Lydia Schouten, Joel Hubaut, John Carson and other surprise guest, a whistle stop tour from **May 28 – June 1** will whizz through London, Bristol, Rochdale, Nottingham and Newcastle in that order. Phone Projects UK on 0632 614527 for details and venues.

... **Black and Blue.** A performance by Rose Finn-Kelcey. New work by this intriguing artist is always worth seeing. This one depicts: 'The Button Pusher's View of Paradise' (**April 6-9**). This performance will include eleven new surrogate performers. At Matt's Gallery, London, Info 01 249 3799.

... **South Hill Park Festival of Performance.** Offering this year 'Camping in a lakeside setting' and more importantly for those unfortunate enough not to reside in Bracknell or savour the joys of life under canvas, regular minibus pickups from the Station. Now simply the performance event of the season, with Paul Burwell's residency at the park adding fresh impetus to the occasion. The names, which appear on the back of this magazine, are a virtual Who's Who of current live work. If a bomb was dropped on South Hill Park between **June 21-24** we'd have to start all over again. Details from Alastair Snow on 0344 427272.

... **Inclusion in our new, revitalised listings section.** To be written about in *Don't Miss*, you must get the information to us at least 2 months in advance, including photos if available. Or phone us on 01 935 2714 to find out the next deadline. Or if you're running really tight, why not advertise? We can accept camera ready ads up to two weeks before publication. Don't miss it...



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FRIDAY 22 JUNE : 8.00pm :
PEOPLE SHOW

from 10.00pm :
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RICHARD WILSON
P.D. BURWELL
DAVE STEPHENS
MIKE ADCOCK
RICHARD ELKAN
HERMINE DEMORIANE
ALASTAIR SNOW

SATURDAY 23 JUNE from noon :
RICHARD LAYZELL
IAN SHERMAN
RICHARD NICHOLSON
JEFF KEEN
KATE OWEN
MAX EASTLEY
ANNA FURSE
NICK STEWART
MORRIE MINAMOTO
PAUL JACKSON
PEOPLE SHOW (8.00pm)
PAUL BURWELL
STATION HOUSE OPERA

SUNDAY 24 JUNE from noon :

GADI HOLLANDER
JULIE STEPHENSON
ROBBIE KRAVITZ
NOEL TAYLOR
THAT'S NOT IT
MARY LONGFORD
JANE WELLS
STEVE HAWLEY
ALEX FRASER
KAREN RANN
MARTY ST. JAMES + ANNE WILSON
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LAURIE BOOTH (8.00pm)
JORDI CERDA
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