

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER/JANUARY No 50/51 / £2.00 / \$5.00 / 500 PTS / 5000 L / 12 FL / 8 DM / 25 FR

PERFORMANCE

special **50**th issue

THE CITY AND ITS DOUBLE



J G BALLARD: interview

RICHARD DEMARCO: on Edinburgh

CAGE & CUNNINGHAM: street life and video

SHEFFIELD: sounds of the steel city

AKADEMIA RUCHU: street works

TONY DUNN: a poetics of the city

PLUS • PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE: a reprise in pictures

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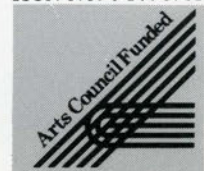
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PERFORMANCE

MAGAZINE

50 issues

BACK IN 1979 there was a sense that the whole range of new art practices that had started in the late 50's and developed throughout the 60's might just have been a passing phase. At that time, at the close of the dull 70's, with the emergence of the new right and the new realism, it seemed as though all the formal experiments which had loosely centred around performance art might become just a foot note in the history of modernism or even, some dour pessimists asserted, the final foot note to an era. It was an odd time to be starting a new magazine devoted to

this motley range of art and artists almost like a last ditch effort to assert that there was a tradition and a future. Artists do not however give up that easily and the last eight years have seen the rise of the artist — strategist who has devised ever more daring raids into the territories of the art system and establishment. The position now is certainly stronger than it was in 1979 despite the blatant philistinism of current government policy. Perhaps by being almost totally outside the funding system experimental live art has not been as effected by recent

policies as art that relies more heavily on that funding system.

We like to think that we have played some part in the survival and the recent renewal of interest in experimental art. We are certainly proud of having survived ourselves, and make no apologies for this 'reprise in pictures', devised by ROB LA FRENAIS, the magazines founder and editor for the first 45 issues. Here's to the next 50. ●

STEVE ROGERS

THE CHARACTERS



The first issue of **PERFORMANCE** opens with the **KIPPER KIDS** in full transgressional boy scout regalia.



IAN HINCHCLIFFE. Once a noted columnist for *Performance*, rampant plant-molester, now a full-time hard-edged, fundamentalist performance artist.



ROBERT AYERS, the first Arts Council Committee Member to jump naked off the roof of an art centre, The Midland Group, once the stronghold of live art, now sadly closed.



THE NEO-NATURISTS. Prime-time trash specialists during the B2 happening eposch. Now engaged in the art market. Christine Binnie (left) our only ever gossip columnist.

IAN MUNRO. The only performance artist deep sea diver.



SILVIA ZIRANEK, covergirl and confidante in capital letters. Recently concocting cook books.

THE WOMEN OF THE DECADE

THE THREE ANNES.



ANNE BEAN, as member of the legendary Moodies, lets it rip.



ANNE SEAGRAVE, bringing weimar Republic to Brighton, makes the link with expressionism.



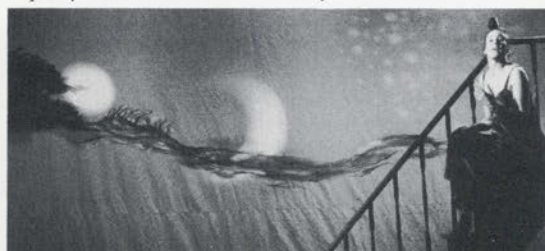
ANNIE GRIFFIN, the Deptford Yank, shows its possible for a performance artist to have STAR quality.



ROSE FINN KELCEY, in bullish mood.



LAURIE, the only person to be interviewed twice in Performance, starts the ball rolling, proving that Language is indeed a Virus.



ROSE ENGLISH, was Thy. Thou. Thine.

THE PERFORMANCE ART GROUPS



STATION HOUSE OPERA: From Natural Disasters at the late, lamented Acme Gallery, to Jumping Jericho.



THE BOW GAMELAN ENSEMBLE: From a watery start in the Thames to a tank in the ICA. Paul Burwell, Anne Bean and Richard Wilson who is now flying high as site specific sculptor, here seen at the Venice Biennale.





PERFORMANCE

MAGAZINE

50 issues

THE THEATRE GROUPS



One that didn't survive was the seminal **IMPACT THEATRE**, though their later trademark of frantic chairmoving, clothes shedding and repeated falling over has. First up in the school of Impact was **FORCED ENTERTAINMENT** who have since proved to be the true inheritors and not just copyists.



From **English Exotica** to **Systems Music** and **Chairmoving**. Two major experimental theatre companies survived our critical barbs and accolades for forty nine issues. **WELFARE STATE** in early issue with catable hat, burning down the Tower of Babel with the Hells Angels of Bracknell, and working with Tanzanian Villagers in recent project. **LUMIERE & SON** go senseless at the ICA and Kick out the Deadwood at Kew.



ART IN THE DARK

Turn of the century performance artist **ALEISTER CROWLEY** featured heavily in our theme issue on magic, while we were the first to interview his re-incarnated form, in the unlikely shape of **GENESIS P. ORRIDGE**; Orridge went on to form the Temple of Psychic Youth — 'spokesman' **DEREK JARMAN**, also exclusively interviewed. Self-confessed 'English-hater' **WILLIAM BURROUGHS** came to London. **GILBERT AND GEORGE**, love em or leave em, scourge of the left-wing art establishment.



MORE CHARACTERS



MARTY ST JAMES & ANNE WILSON, still heading for an appearance on Come Dancing but made it onto the Channel 4 'COMMENT' news slot.

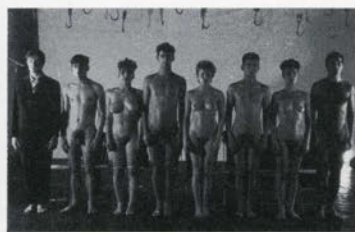
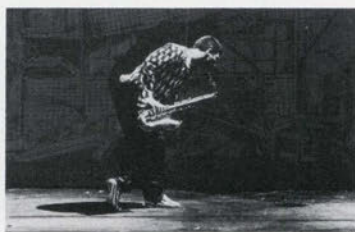


STUART BRISLEY makes his break from performance after this endurance work with Iain Robertson at De Appel in Holland, but makes a quiet but effective come-back at Glasgow this year.



ROLAND MILLER & SHIRLEY CAMERON, strong influences at the start of the decade, about due for their comeback.

THE NEW EUROPEANS



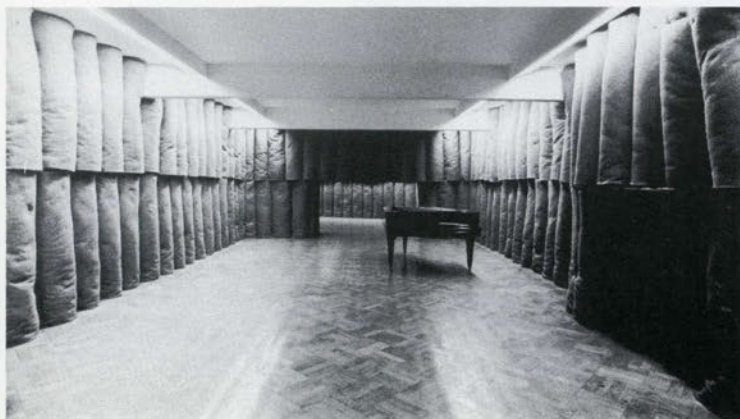
London and Bath discovered the joys of **URBAN SAX**, we were over-run by shamelessly stylish Italians, but all were eclipsed by the Blood, sweat and Classicism of Belgian, **JAN FABRE**.

THE STRUGGLES



ALASTAIR MACLENNAN brought a focus to performance in Belfast. **GREENHAM COMMON** put art on a wire, **SARAH JANE EDGE** put women and the miners in a new light, and **NEIL BARTLETT'S** Pornography exposed gay male fantasies.

THE END OF AN ERA



JOSEPH BEUYS made his last major work in London, departed both the art and the real world, leaving a free university and a monumental legend.

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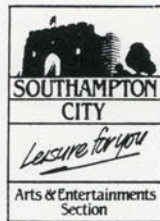
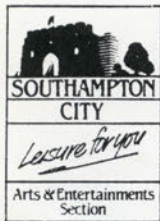
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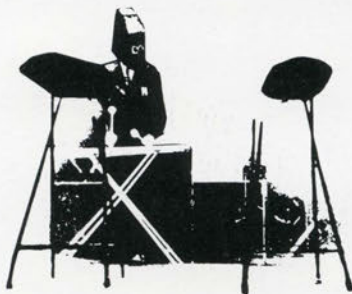
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CHAPTER

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Happy Birthday*

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0222 396061

GUEST EDITOR + CLAIRE MACDONALD

Claire MacDonald was a founding member of the highly influential, now sadly defunct, Impact Theatre Co-operative. Impact's work was characterised by a unique visual and physical language which grew out of their determination to tackle complex concepts and ideas. The break-up of Impact is as yet in the too recent past for history to clearly assess their role. I am convinced that they will come to be seen as the one British performance group that accurately gauged the measure of the 1980's. Since then all former members of Impact have gone on to produce work of their own. Claire wrote *Imitation of Life* for the Bush Theatre last year and has recently written and directed a project for the Cambridge Youth Theatre (see

reviews). She held a one year fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge and has recently been appointed Head of Drama at Dartington College of Art.

For this our 50th issue, Claire has taken the city and its changing images and functions as a starting point. The various articles reflect a diversity of attitudes held by artists towards the city and urban environments and experience. What they share is a sense of a need to re-examine the idea of the city and to re-think its relationship with art.

Performance art, for example, could be said to be an entirely urban phenomenon. It is only in the city that the levels of physical and spiritual alienation, and the consequent

obsession with privacy, have become so high that the actual presence of the artists' body in the artwork can have the provocative effect which has been part of the motivation of performance artists, especially in the early years. As the urban landscape comes more and more to fulfill Marshall McLuhan's description of reality as a high-speed information matrix, the issues of physicality and identity take on new dimensions. Artists are developing new strategies and being forced to re-assess their place in this changing culture.

The City and Its Double looks at some of these issues. ●

Steve Rogers
Managing Editor

WOMENS WORK

+ **The Magdalena Project** which last year co-ordinated a residential workshop for women theatre practitioners from around the world is holding a three day conference entitled '**A Womans Language in Theatre**'. Sessions are being led by Julia Pascal (Britain), Beatriz Camargo of Teatro Itinerante del sol (Colombia), Susan Todd (Britain), Iben Nagel Rasmussen of Odin Teatret (Denmark), Cora Herrendorf of Teatro Nucleo (Italy), Deborah Levy (Britain), and others. The conference is open to all and is accompanied by performances at Chapter, Cardiff. (See ad for details). ●

+ **The Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators** is holding a policy conference and review entitled '**Writing the Agenda, Women in Theatre, the next three years**', at the Soho Laundry, London on November 21. Creche available. Details: 01 836 7071. ●

+ **Taking Liberties** is the title for a mixed bag of womens arts taking place in Brighton throughout November. Amongst the cabarettes and comedienne there are performances by **Monica Ross**, **Anne Bean**, **Etheldreda** (one of the high points of the recent National Review of Live Art) and a discussion led by **Rose English** on her favourite subject Genius. There are other conferences of interest and a day of womens video. Details: 0273 685681. ●

SENDING IN

+ The next **deadline** for applications for funding from the Arts Council's **Special Art Projects** is **Friday November 27th**. The brief for applications is very wide but the

project must be of national significance. This is one of the few potential sources of direct funding for art projects which fall outside the usual criteria so the more performance related applications the better. Details: Sarah Wason, 01 629 9495. ●

+ **Stoke City Museum & Art Gallery** are **inviting proposals** for commissions in sculpture/performance and installations. Details from Fine Art Department, Stoke-on-Trent City Museum, Hanley, Stoke on Trent ST1 3DW. ●

+ there still is time to apply for the **Gulbenkian Foundations** innovative scheme to commission **large scale site-specific works**. Its open to artists working in any media and the money on offer looks pretty good. Deadline December 1. Details: 01 636 5313. ●

PERFORMANCE NEWS

+ **Monica Ross**, although active for a long time in performance, has achieved a highly deserved new visibility with her performance *Gold in the Furnace*. Catch it at Chapter November 14, and her new performance at the Gardner Centre, Brighton. (See Womens Work). ●

+ the incognito **Con-Dom** organisation in **Wolverhampton** is planning an **International Performance Art Tour** for early 1988. Scheduled to participate are **Club Moral** from Antwerp, **Coup de Grace** from Cambridge, England and **Etent Donnes** from Grenoble. This is a good initiative and deserves support. They are looking for potential promoters for the tour. Details: 021 236 3626. ●

+ **The Tate Gallery** is making one of its rare but welcome visits to performance and this time its not Bruce MacLean. Performances by **Tina Keane**, November 24, 26, 27 and **Richard Layzell** December 1, 3, 4. Details: 01 821 1313 x 254. ●

+ **The Leadmill**, Sheffield's rock/community/performance centre continues its excellent 4D season with **Annie Griffin**, **Gary Stevens**, **Liz Ranken** and the **4D At Home** night with a host of local artists. Details: 0742 754500. ●

+ **Neil Bartlett** and **Robin Whitmore's** highly charged '*A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep*' finishes a run in its new form in London before setting off for a **national tour**. Don't miss this. ●

+ after London previews and a European Tour, the **Robert Wilson/Heiner Muller** collaboration *Hamlet Machine* returns to the **Almeida, London** for a proper run. Details: 01 359 4404 (see reviews). ●



PHOTO / IVAN KYNCL

Hamlet machine at the
Almeida until Nov 14

FORCED START

Forced Entertainments new production *200% and Bloody Thirsty* seems to have had major teething problems and they've been forced into the drastic action of cancelling early dates. Their meteoric rise from being young unknowns only three years ago to being by far the best new group around must make a new production more difficult for them than most. Our patience is probably deserved. ●

NEW WORK GLASGOW

+ If you are one of the many who has ever wondered why Scotland should have shown so little support for non-literary live art in the past, wonder no more, its no longer a problem.

As we all knew she would, **Nikki Milligan** has made a definite change in the profile of **Glasgow's Third Eye Centre**. Her first season, a collaboration with the **Traverse in Edinburgh**, continues through November with the premiere of **Oscar McLennan's** new piece written in America, **Claire Dowie, Man Act**, **Neil Bartlett's 'A Vision of Love'** revised and on tour, **Large Scale International**, **Paul Bruwell**, and a return visit of **Dogs in Honey's** new show. Details: Third Eye 041 332 7521, Traverse 031 226 2633. ●

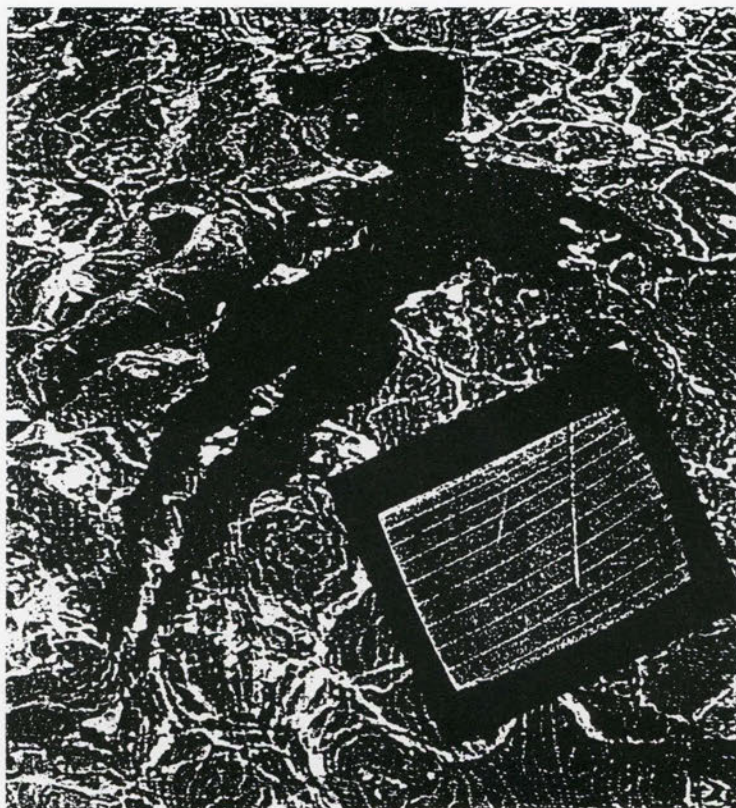
MORE LIVE ART AT AIR

+ London's **Air Gallery** which hosted the sell-out **At The Edge** series of Performances and installations earlier this year have more live art programmes on the way. First up in **November** a programme organised by percussionist/Bow Gamelan **Paul Burwell** (see ads for details), a new **At The Edge** series early next year and in the summer of '88 the gallery will host the **Edge '88**, international performance festival. ●

ICA CHANGES

+ there were some strange stories circulating recently about why **Dick Witts** the new theatre director designate pulled out. After much to-ing and fro-ing it seems that **Bob Wisdom**, currently working at **The Kitchen** in New York has agreed to take on what must be one of the hardest jobs in London. All eyes will be on him as he arrives to face dwindling budgets. ●

+ the current programme, the last organised by **Michael Morris**, is very attractive with runs by **Annie Griffin** and **Forkbeard Fantasy**. Details: 01 930 0493. ●




VIDEO NEWS compiled by Nik Houghton

+ VIDEO ARTS SHAKE UP: With **London Video Arts** launching a new catalogue and a host of new tapes for 'active distribution' comes news of the imminent departure of both **Jez Welsh** and **Roy Miller**. Roy had worked as administrator/book keeper while Jez has played a vital role in video art as both an artist and the L.V.A.'s 'frontman'. He

now seems eager to take on new challenges, however, after 5 years at the L.V.A. Already at work on an L.V.A. project in collaboration with **INTERIM ARTS** — who, incidentally have just had the lease fall through on new premises — to be called **GENLOCK** Jez will continue to maintain strong links with the L.V.A. ●

+ Following the release of his B.F.I. funded narrative *Taxidriver II* (SEE REVIEW) a jet-setting **George Barber** was last seen heading for California to work on a new production

investigating the work of women in contemporary theatre



THE MAGDALENA PROJECT

A WOMAN'S
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IN THEATRE?
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Tina Keane's *The Diver*
at Stoke on Trent until
Jan 10

entitled *The Venetian Ghost*. Again B.F.I. funded — the Arts Council turned the project down — Barber will be shooting his tape in and around Venice Beach, a Californian surf-city. ●

+ Winter brings word of a new programme of video supports to the 'main feature' at the pioneering **Acton Screen Cinema**, London. The November/December list takes in everything from Raphael Montanez Ortez hypnotic mega-scratcher *Laser Video* to Steve Hawleys playfully elegant slice of hi-tech, *Trout Descending A Staircase*. For programme details ring 01-993-2558. ●

+ Watch out for an imminent series of video screenings and discussions at the **Torriano Meeting House**, London throughout November. The programme starts on 5th November and runs every Sunday until the 26th. Titled **True Stories** the screenings offer a mix of international video with additional input from a range of video artists — **Marion Urch; Mike Stubbs; Simon Robertshaw and Mike Jones/Graham Ellard**. Curator is **Janusz Szczerek**. 01-267-2751 or 01-251-3623. ●

+ Scheduled to throw another media mash up at the **London Film Makers Co-op** are superscratchers **Nine A.M.** Featured as part of the **London Film Festival** the Nine A.M. gang will be going throwdown sometime in November. Meanwhile **Nine A.Mer St. John Walker** was last reported to be stranded somewhere in deepest **Texas** working in collaboration with a performance artist. ●

+ Mixed feedback from the **French Institute** which recently hosted an exhaustive week long video festival entitled **From Portapac to Paintbox**. Curated by **Jean Marie Duhard** the festival reportedly attracted little "first time" public response but was, says **Karen Leibrich** of the Institute "productive in a professional way — I think a few com-

missions and some possible broadcast deals will have come about through the Festival". Meanwhile one film/video hack was heard to bemoan the lack of wine at the opening wing-ding, "I mean, they are French after all" ●

+ **Video I hear you say** . . . These words, uttered by the delectable comic **Vic Reeves**, threaten to be the catch phrase of late 87 as **Battersea Arts Centre** launches *Sender — The Movie*. Tentatively lined up for a West End screening at the **Metro** this tongue-in-cheek tape features **Vic** in a storyline derived from Batterseas excellent **SENDERS** exhibition where a man's flat is invaded by video art. Fun, educational and populist? Watch this space for the full details . . . ●

+ Now in production are a number of projects funded by the **B.F.I.'s Video Production Board**. Already mentioned is **George Barbers Venice** but other works include; *Medusa*, a tape built around the myth of Medusa, from **Kate Meynell**; a collaborative piece from **George Snow** and choreographer **Micha Bergese** (he used to be with experimental dance company **MANTIS**); *The Bikers Song*, described as a "paste up animation" work, from **Rosalind Hewitt** (graduate of L.C.P. 1987); a drama about a fundamentalist supermarket manager(?) from one half of high profile scratchers the **Duvet Brothers, Rik Lander**. The work is titled *Deep Red; Instant Love*.

With each project funded to the tune of £11,000 maximum — "Quite a few are 'nt that expensive", **Ben Gibson** from the B.F.I. was eager to point out — and the chance of **Channel Four** transmission for selected works **GIBSON** indicated that most of the commissions would run to 11 minutes. ●

+ Meanwhile videoniks hover expectantly for the soon-to-come screening of the

B.F.I.'s major video production from Birmingham **Dead Honest Soul Searchers** — D.H.S.S., geddit? . . . No. I don't think its funny either. The work, presently being edited, will be on show during the **London Film Festival** at the **National Film Theatre**. ●

+ **Test Dept Titbits**; With cine brutalist **Brett Turnbull** now enrolled at the **National Film School** post-industrial shock troops **TEST DEPARTMENT** now face the prospect of recruiting a new member to organise the visual aspect of their shows as they embark on a tour of Europe. **PERFORMANCE** can also now reveal the presence of a large section of **TEST DEPT** as extras — those shaven headed 'grunts', of course — in Kubricks *Full Metal Jacket*. Meantime the question remains whether go-getting **Brett** can resist the tendency of the N.F.T. to turn out television fodder. Catch *Welcome Back To Wembley, Frankie Walsh* — an N.F.I. graduation film — on Channel Fours *Frame Up* series for confirmation of this tendency. Fact: This is the least funny 'comedy' you'll ever see unless *Terry And June* give you the giggles. And this is the future talent? Let's hope not. ●

+ Overheard at a recent **Arts Council** bash — "There's such a schizm, don't you think, between going commercial and staying an artist". These are strange people. ●

GUEST EDITOR

+ The **next issue** of **Performance**, due out **late January**, will be edited by **Nik Houghton**. Nik, who has contributed regular video reviews and news, will focus primary on video and TV. The issue will contain features on **Pirate TV, Video Technology** as well as **video art** and aesthetics. ●

STANDING UP FOR BRITONS

Dear Performance Magazine,
In response to your coverage of the Documenta 8, I feel enraged beyond control by your comments implying that the UK had little or no impact upon it. As the only British artist to perform his own work there, I would like to point out that my presence totally blasted the sensibilities of the European Community and perfectly represented the artistic fraternity that knows no boundaries between art and life.

Ever so humble,
IAN SMITH.

Important P.S. Niall Monro also submitted a sterling UK presence by his involvement in the City Souvenir Project.

UNA WALKER
JOURNEY TO A FAR COUNTRY
7 - 14 NOVEMBER

HOW ARE WE TO MAKE SENSE OF BANGS, THUMPS,
TAPS AND RATTLES THAT INDISPUTABLY HAVE SUCH
A WIDE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE?

LIVE ART AT AIR
12 - 14 NOVEMBER

AIR

Roseberry Avenue, London EC1
01278 7751

HAROLD BUDD

Harold Budd's soft evocative piano playing has earned him a variety of labels from New Age Music to the so called Ambient Music associated with Brian Eno with whom he has collaborated. On the eve of a series of British concerts he talks to PETE CULSHAW and tries to put the record straight.

WEARY OF THE WALTZ, tired of the Tango? Probably not these days. McLaren is about to release his version of the Blue Danube so it must be hip and simply everyone loves tango. Alright then. For the times when pop seems a little banal (you're dealing with a major Mel and Kim fan here), and other forms of contemporary music seem too mind-numbing or just plain hard work, can I gently point you in the direction of the work of Harold Budd, a genial 'poet of the piano', as his bio calls him. Actually, most of his available work is layered electronic landscapes recorded like everyone else in a 24 track studio, with all the latest gizmos.

I meet Budd one sunny autumnal morning in his management company Opel's offices. Opel also look after the affairs of Brian Eno, Michael Brook, Jon Hassell and other musicians who've been loosely associated with the description 'ambient' music. But whereas most of these musicians may share a similar strategic point on the far reaches of pop music "only people who don't listen to it would place us together in terms of content" says Budd, who hasn't yet worked out what to say to people who come up to him at parties and demand an instant description of his music. 'I usually make an excuse and go and talk to someone else. Describing it is the most difficult thing in the world.' Probably the best course of action is to listen to one of his LPs like *Lovely Thunder* is a suitable introduction to his work. He's given up calling what he does 'art music', and if there's one thing he's fairly confident it isn't, it's New Age music.

'I tend to put on my fascist uniform and say things like "When I hear the term New Age I for one reach for my revolver". I could bore you to hell with a 20 minute virulent monologue. It's so lightweight musically, artistically and intellectually and emotionally very childish. There's no muscle in it.' Budd, whose essential demeanor is relaxed West Coast, is close to getting apoplectic. In a laid-back kind of way.

Budd's career runs parallel to other American composers like Reich, Glass, La Monte Young, Hassell — they are all of a similar age (hovering around the half century) and all went to music college, because 'that was the only way we thought we'd ever make a living, from teaching, so we had to have a degree'. Having left college, they all tended to trash their academic studies 'I spent too many years damning the academy, I'm bored with hearing myself talk about it' says Budd. Yet it's possible the academic discipline has helped ensure the kind of rigour in his music that doesn't apply to New Age mush, and so perhaps it was not entirely a waste of time. Under the spell of Cage, Budd moved into improvisation and minimal music in the 60s, but by 1972 'I really minimalised myself out of a career'. A change in direction resulted in *Madrigals of the Rose Angel* a work for his favourite instruments — harp, celeste, electric piano and angelic chorus, which reached the ears of Brian Eno, who asked him to record some music for his Obscure label. The two of them collaborated on *Plateaux Of Mirror* in 1980 — a record which is still in the racks in better record stores, and has sold at least 40,000 copies. In general, it seems the area of music being explored by Budd is slowing reaching a wider audience, even if we're not talking Duran Duran. His minimal past has remained to the extent that he manages to 'find as much life as possible in the smallest amount of material', as he puts it. But his current branch of minimalism is more on the epic side, and he thankfully isn't over-encumbered with Theory, preferring to work on impulse in a studio.

What has changed since *Plateaux Of Mirror* is that Budd's music seems to be working on a faster, higher gear. 'I listen back to that record and wonder what in the world was happening to me. I was really out there at the time. The pacing seems so lethargic and somnolent. Perhaps it's just advancing years.' But then perhaps everyone's attention span is decreasing. One curious piece of work which Budd undertook last year was to write the music for a Korean Airlines commercial. They told him it had to be '30 seconds long, and sound like me, but otherwise I had carte blanche. I thought I'd knock it off in a day, but it was viciously difficult. It must be hell for people who write pop jingles.' But the experience was not something he'd

have missed 'I think it's damn healthy to obliterate the arbitrary line between commercialism and art. To confuse the boundary as much as possible. That's one of the things modern composers should be doing. Mess It Up. Get the waters murky as hell.' Besides the Eno collaborations (they also worked on *Pearl*, a series of 13 musical vignettes in 1984) Budd teamed up with the Cocteau Twins for *The Moon and The Melodies*, and the Cocteau's Robin Guthrie has worked with Budd on a couple of tunes for his forthcoming LP.

So what else did we talk about? Recording in Scotland 'I didn't understand a word they said. But they said it with a smile so I imagine it wasn't derogatory'. Samplers 'I have friends who love those toys. They could spend the rest of their adult lives just listening to the samples they've got. But I don't think they're good or bad.' Virtuosity 'If it just becomes an athletic event showing dexterity it can be so vacuous'. Cy Twombly 'My three year old daughter could do that'. Collaboration 'It's never really 50/50, it's usually 80/20 at any one point. But it balances out. It's just like whose turn is it to buy the next round of beer'. Notting Hill 'Flats are pretty expensive there but I'm looking. I've been in England 6 months and I intend to stay longer'. Product 'My first LP took 4 years to write. I thought that was good going. Now . . . it's over 45 minutes a year . . . at least'.

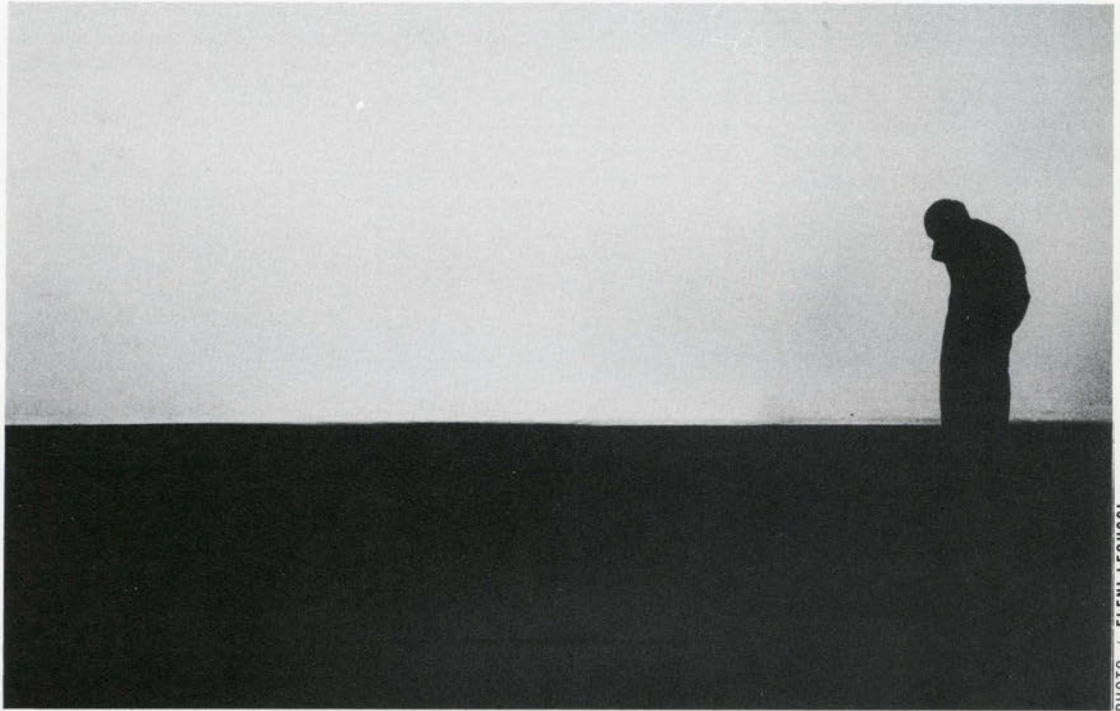
Being a composer. We all have our stereotypes, but Harold Budd is neither in the recognised romantic genius/megalomaniac mode or the intense avant-garde theoretician 'I find the hyper-European approach of what is an Artist to be intolerably pretentious. But I do think music can change peoples lives. And I've always thought that you should be convinced you are right. That's terribly important — even faced with the overwhelming evidence of other peoples opinion. You have to stick to your guns'. Budd rates Thelonius Monk 'He was not a good piano player in the traditional sense of the word, compared to Bud Powell or Art Tatum. What he did have was a unique sense of things based on his own technical limitations as a musician'. Budd is similar, he produces music which is unique. He's not trying to prove anything; it's a personal vision 'it's like handwriting — it's your own. It's supposed to look like you. That's crucial'. Any final words of wisdom for our readers? 'I don't think that anything which causes the brain to work is ultimately harmful, at all. To be frank.' ●

Somewhere between New Age and Jazz

PERFORMANCE

PREVIEW





Daniel Larreu

PHOTO / ELENI LEIOUSSI

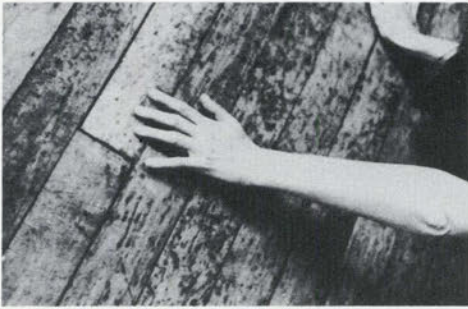
GATHERING LIGHT

Camerawork and Chisenhale Dance Space, both based in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, have got together to develop a unique collaborative project between dancers and photographers. The results of the project can be seen throughout November at both the Camerawork Gallery and Chisenhale, include performances, videos as well as photographs.

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PHOTO / ANDREW GRZYBOWSKI



From the video by
Kerry Richardson and
Louise Bangay

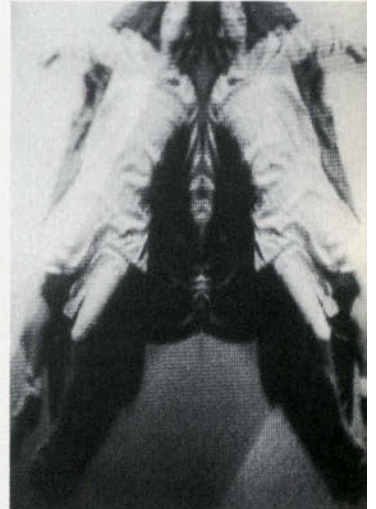
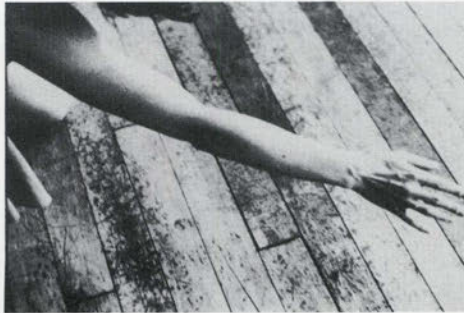
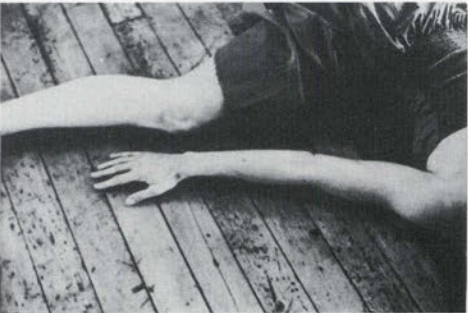


PHOTO / IRENE HALL

Sue MacLennan

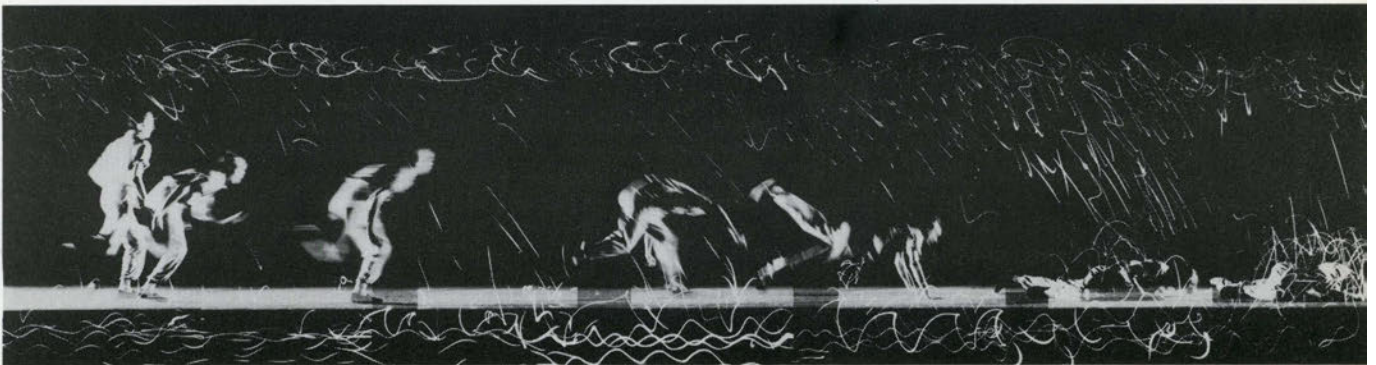
The exhibition includes works by **DAVE DAGGERS, ANDREW GRZYBOWSKI, IRENE HALL, CATHERINE HEATHERINGTON, GRACE LAU, ELENI LEOUSSI, ROSY MARTIN, CHRIS NASH, HELEN ROBERTSON, ILEA's 'A' TEAM and DAVID WARD.**

10 November–5 December

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:

- Nov 6 ● Mobile Image Construction
- Nov 13 ● Francoise Sergy with Rosy Martin
- Nov 21 ● Rosemary Lee with Catherine Heatherington
plus Charlie Pig
- Nov 27 ● Company of Cracks
plus Simon Atherley with Irene Hall and
Anne Marsh
- Details ● 01 980 6256/01 981 6617

PHOTO / ANDREW GRZYBOWSKI



THE CITY AND ITS DOUBLE

THE METROPOLIS has been, and still is, the place where new form is generated, received and critically addressed. In contemporary culture however, the place of the metropolis and its relationship to other large urban structures, (towns and cities), and to the 'non-city', (the country and suburb), has become increasingly problematic. The city is undergoing a paradoxical transformation. It is a place of rapid growth and decay whose urban technologies appear to be devouring and redefining reality. During that process of transformation the city, as experience; as material to be worked on; as alphabet; as grid; as lexicon — has become a touchstone of enormous generative power.

Looking at the whole range of contemporary performing arts, it is not simply that the best work is urban based or concerned solely with the

'real' issues of urban life. It is more that much of the best work takes into account the city environment as a concept and as an ordering principle. It recognises that urban structures and technologies have replaced the relationship of the imaginary to lived experience.

In this issue of Performance Magazine I have asked a number of writers concerned with the performing arts and fiction to address themselves to the city as concept and as the generator of specific cultural practices.

These writers include the director of a Polish performance/film company; the editor of a theatre journal; a gallery owner and producer; a singer-songwriter; a dance critic; a novelist; and a theatre director/performer. The cities addressed are, amongst others, Edinburgh, London, Sheffield, New York, and Warsaw. Their writings

represent a diversity of response. They are linked not only by the brief they were given but also by the cross-currents of unexpected themes between two extremes. On the one hand there is J.G. Ballard who sees urban technology as having led to the total abandonment of reality. On the other, the view from Eastern Europe is represented by Wojciech Krukowski, director of Akademia Ruchu, who sees in the city the transforming structures and social relations which can engender change.

The eclecticism represented here does not deny the historical and economic specificity of cities but rather, this collection of short essays, will, I hope, generate discussion about the contemporary paradox of urban life and art. ●

CLAIRE MACDONALD

THE (ZOO)LOGICAL GARDEN



IN THE FIRST place, Eve did not eat the *Apple of Knowledge*, Adam plucked his rib and ate it. The whole history of man and womankind was thus foretold in the very first act of consumption. (*Give us this day our daily bread.*)

Later, the mighty Prussian army (*the State as Reason*) besieged the then capital of western civilisation, Paris, and in desperation her citizens were obliged to feed on beasts from the zoo. (*I think therefore I am.*)

Still later, the capital of old Prussia was itself besieged by the Allies. (*My enemy's enemy is my friend.*)

Then, the Red army walled the red, white and blue armies into, and the rest of Germany out of, western Berlin. (*You have nothing to lose but your chains.*) But the occupants of the city did not then storm the zoo as one might expect, and, for their civility, they were rewarded with *manna* from Heaven. (*Annuit Coeptis.*) Food fell, miraculously, from the skies, and the zoo-dwellers praised their Keeper for captivity. (*Give us this day our daily bread.*)

Nowadays, animal-lovers walk their dogs around the zoo, and walls protect them from the wilderness within. But tomorrow the pets might all be gone, remembered only in token on the streets of Berlin. Only then, perhaps, will the zoo satisfy the Berliners' taste for animals; only then, perhaps, will the *Cultivated* become, once more, the *Wild*. ●

GRAHAM BUDGETT

Taken from the series 'Berlin wei Nacht'

An A-Z of order and chance



A at one o'clock each morning the cobbled slope in front of the Gare du Nord is invaded by vagrants, beggars, convicts, ragpickers, the scum of the city, who squat, each in his professional group, irregular clumps of dirt and grease, on the polished stones, and wait furiously for the Replica Van.

B in Balzac's *Lost Illusions* the hero Lucien Chardon leaves Angoulême to make his name as a poet in Paris. He is told there is no market for his work. It has already been written. 'In the provinces no occasion arises for choice or comparison'. By chance he meets a journalist and is soon earning a handsome living from theatre-reviews. As in 1821, so in 1987. 'A somebody at home and a nobody in Paris'. The city reduces a man to zero, then immediately offers him the chance to invent himself.

C Cageian contingency in the city. A middle-aged man lurches into the Golden Griddle from the sheeting rain. Stubbled chin, staring eyes and trousers slack at the waist to show a flash of dirty truss. 'What are you fucking staring at? My mother's dead and I was in the RAF'. The tape immediately switches to 'Where's your Momma gone?' Ten days later a girl with a blonde waterfall of hair is reading Jacqueline Susan's *Once is Not Enough* before the curtain rises on *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Young Vic.

D '... demonstration stretches as far as the eye can see down the Boulevard St. Michel. It grows all the time with spectators joining it, but it is orderly as if it controls itself from within. Now it has halted before a double-row of the National Guard and thirty yards from the Pentagon-steps. Now I can see horses rear up and bloodied heads as police seal the mob into Grosvenor Square'. 'I started off because I had been left behind. It was a flight (Cohn-Bendit)'.

E Excursions to every city! Why not Athens with its maze of narrow streets which wind through the endless canals where, through a candle-lit glass-topped motor-launch, you can see porters in ancient dress throwing coins in the Trevi Fountain, now fading and undermined by the lapping sea? Bruges is a feast for the senses, Rembrandt's house seems little changed, Rome is a complete experience, Montmartre is the mecca of Bohemian life, style to the Milanese is what team-games are to the British.

F Females in terror and ecstasy in the city. Night-transport through the darkened streets, but also night-transport high above the city in your bed, with your lover, beneath your posters, after your day's work. Mum is far away, and Charles is being very brave about you in Worcester. The sheer pleasure of being unknown. Wine-bars, clubs, streets and cinemas are yours. Up rose the sun and up rose Timothy. You regain your night.

G Gridiron city planning, according to Lewis Mumford, expresses the commercial mentality. Regular intersecting lines reduce design problems for surveyors and engineers and simplify land-sales for lawyers. Land is parcellized into standard lots which swiftly translate into standard monetary units. Organic neighbourhoods are over-ridden, natural curves are straightened, streets are identified by numbers and the compass, not by trades or heroes. 'The rectangular street and block system, projectable indefinitely toward the horizon, was the universal expression of capitalistic fantasies'.





- H** How can we distinguish good art from bad? Only by experiencing both in the metropolis. The metropolis does not produce both, but it is only the metropolis that raises both to that stage of high visibility which creates the critical faculty. And only the metropolis allows those hidden nodes of counter-culture we call bohemia, where dress and talent fester together and the new art is hatched out of Spanish Burgundy, roll-ups, all-night TV and Girocheques.
- I** inner-city used to be an adjective: 'inner-city decay, inner-city riots'. Now it is a collective noun: 'the inner cities'. What was once a description, one of many, is now a physical zone. City-life becomes a journey through a series of frontiers and checkpoints. London was never demarcated in this way. Rich and poor lived very near each other, as they still do today in Brixton and Kentish Town. But language has invented an entity, and state power will flesh it out.
- J** Jane Jacobs contends, in *The Economy of Cities* (1969), that cities are the most vigorous agents for adding new work to older work. The 3M Company began with sand, then diversified into sandpaper, adhesives, tape (Scotch, filament, magnetic), paint pigments, reflective sheeting, welding fluxes. It could export these products by using the city's other networks of publicity, transport and communications. Ford bought every item he needed for his first automobiles from various suppliers in Detroit. His workers put them together.
- K** The King of Isfahan dined in a room where the eyes in the wall-paintings had been gouged out by fanatics. Each wall of the music-room above was a miniature sounding-board and all four walls were mathematically so arranged that a note struck in the music-room arrived by a series of pipes in the King's bedroom two floors below the moment he entered after dinner. The note now hits his eardrum before the fingers have plucked the string.
- L** Lloyd's new building in the City is a quiet insurance clerk dressed up as a Futurist. Soaring blue and silver outside. All is open, all is light. Inside the visitor's view is down past floors of open-plan desks and a ziggurat of escalators, whose yellow treads are fully visible through glass side-panels, to the classical irony of a marble floor. You see all but, untrained in decoding the data on the monitors, you understand nothing, except the aesthetics.
- M** Marshall McLuhan proposed two brilliant ideas: 1) The 'content' of each new medium is always another (usually the previous) medium. So the content of early books was speech, and of early movies the novel. 2) Electronic media have made us all participants in a global village. Therefore the content of the global village must be the city. And its cosmopolitanism must eventually be lost in the intimate gossip and back-biting of village-life. DJs and soaps turn the city into a myth.
- N** Naples. 1966. The Minerva Bookshop. Roland Barthes said you must learn to read a city. But for us in those days the city was the count's mottled hand on Pierrette's thigh, boiled eels by the stinking sea off Via Caracciolo, Posillipo and the plastic-hymen clinic, liquified blood in the church of dirty gold, sweet musk from a thousand fur-lined quims.
For us the city was flesh. Only later did we realise that it was a book.



orthotropic? octave? ogham? ogress? 'One of the few terraced laybys still available on the M25, this bijou property consists of two rooms, a kitchen/sitting room with folding camp-chairs and Calorgas stove, and a bedroom with inflatable double-Lilo and a delightfully seascaped plaster-board wall. Water is from a metered tap and there is easy access to a communal WC in a field behind, with planning permission available for a private plot. Magnificent woodland views. Quick access to Heathrow and The City. Parking facilities. £80,000 — Subject to Contract'.

πολις: Gr. city. deriv. politics. A city has its openings as well as its closures. Alleys lead to squares. It was the open spaces of a city that made it the site of politics. For here the visible masses could force into view their hidden rulers, as orators or assassins. Now, as politics beam direct into interiors of home and skull, the rulers shine bright from the screen onto shadowy families, and tourists mass in the squares.

Qom is the holy city where black robes sweep against the white marble of fountains, and only one book is read, the Koran. Here Aristotle is still an enemy. Qom is the nerve-centre of the Islamic Revolution, the city of total ideology. The next global conflict will be between Islam and Christianity. The fundamentalists on both sides are manoeuvring into position. We must defend the Enlightenment of universal reason and equal rights, the city of Benjamin Franklin not St. Augustine.

Ruskin deduced a history of Venice from its stones. He read a story of mediaeval community corrupted by Renaissance hubris out of the city's pilasters, basilicas, facades and window-sills. Effie Ruskin waltzed with the officers while John, she wrote, 'is either seen with a black cloth over his head taking daguerrotypes or climbing about the capitals covered with dust'. The marriage was annulled five years later because of non-consummation. Ruskin turned his sperm into great books.

streets are the veins of a city. Mean Streets, 42nd. St., The street where you live, The Streets of San Francisco. And, above all, A Street-car Named Desire. I cannot speak for women, but for men the city-street is endless glimpses of seduction —girls with secret smiles, a beauty that rises from the ruck for a moment, summer-sweated breasts. I don't know where reality becomes advertising in all this, but the street always has a thousand eyes.

Teheran's Park Share, in the south of the city, used to be occupied, from early morning, by families of the poor, sitting on their rugs with cheese, bread and samovars. Under the trees they could escape the heat of the slums. The Shah's middle-class despised these people, laughed as they threw them coins by the wayside. Now Khomeini has given them the whole city and demands only their blood and bodies for the park of a greater paradise.

Utar Pradesh is the setting for our tale, and 1301 the year. Spring comes early in these parts and the mulberries were already in full bloom on the winding, dusty south road that leads into the great city of Jannu. On this fine February morning the cacophany of melon-vendors' cries, donkeys' brays and beggars' laments rang with an added urgency. Tomorrow was the Pasha's birthday and a great celebration was in prospect. Meanwhile, in the cool of the Palace courtyard . . .

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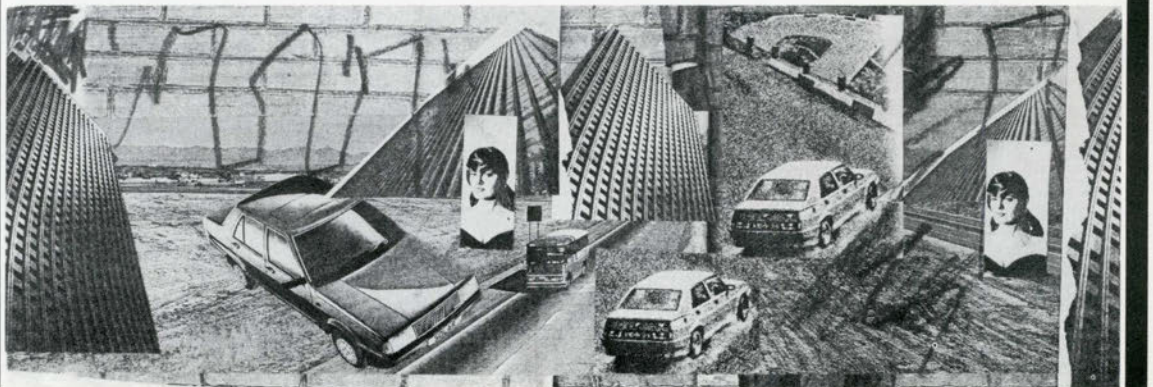
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- V** Vicar Donald Reeves leads, sorry co-ordinates, many estimable activities at St. James's, Piccadilly. Dramatized sermons, yoga, holistic health, men's support groups, peace-walks and laying-on-of-hands are only part of the monthly programme. The Church Report 'Becoming Whole' envisages St. James's as an Open Centre for activists 'of every faith and none'. A good secular programme, but if you believe in a God must not s/he be terrifying, vengeful and *right*, and its city a fortress against the infidel?
- W** W. Blake lived 13 Hercules Buildings Lambeth 1790/7, a fine view of St. Paul's (a Deist monument), produced *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Urizen*, *Los*, *Innocence and Experience*, read *Paradise Lost* naked with his wife in his back-garden, engraved a book by Woolstonecroft but kept clear of the Radicals, his City of Arts and Manufactures a Jerusalem of the Imagination which is 'Jesus Christ in every human', born in Golden Square, hated Nature.
- X** Xenophon's anabasis after many years of hard travel we came to a square room at the top of a red-bricked building above the Mersey a man in black with furious white face and eyes of water-blue 'You're flashy, Stephens, flashy, repeat urbs condida est I'll bet these lines into your coal-heaver's head I'll break you' sunlight strays into his corner and flees 20 hours per week he beat our heads the city always being built the sea never reached.
- Y** Yuppie? No. (Sir John Falstaff, Page and Bardolph come along the street). Yonder he comes, and that arrant malmsey-nose knave Bardolph with him. Do your offices, do your offices, Master Fang and Master Snare, do me, do me your offices.
Falstaff. How now? whose mare's dead? what's the matter?
Fang. Sir John, I arrest you at the suit of Mistress Quickly.
Falstaff. Away, varlets! Draw, Bardolph, cut me off the villain's head, throw the queen in the channel.
- Z** Zero. Nothing. Not a crumb in the house. Boris has gone to Spain and Pierrette has fucked off to Tours. It's quiet outside in the Rue de la Perle. When I hear the others coming, I'll climb up through the skylight and escape across the roofs. I only need my courage to beat the city.

TONY DUNN



THE LOGIC OF THE VISIBLE

JG Ballard's new novel maps a journey through the garden of all origins to the spring of life itself. Its events concern the creation of a contemporary Eden on the banks of a new river, discovered by chance and named after his hero, Dr Mallory. It is a short-lived Eden. In the course of the journey upriver and his return, Eden turns sour, dies and turns to dust. It is an epic novel with a black baroque grandeur, concerned with overwhelmingly large ideas, the fall from grace, man's relationship to time and space, knowledge of himself as matter and therefore his understanding of death through decay which is in classical western thought is the precondition of being human, the fall into time is the point at which angels become men. It is a book deeply informed by the traditions of western thought. It is as if the culture of Milton collides with contemporary urban sensibility. Time is telescoped, the forms of contemporary media slice up its geography, historicity is overturned. And only Ballard at this point in British culture can do it. As the insider/outsider, he occupies classical narrative and turns it inside out like a glove, transforming it from seamless reality to a structured space informed by myth. I have known his work since reading it first in *Bananas* in the mid-seventies, but in the past 3 years, that is since *Empire of the Sun*, his place in the landscape has changed. A Ballard novel is now expected to go in at the top, to be tipped for the Booker Prize. On the day of this interview Ballard is in London to promote *The Day of Creation*. We meet in the plush, quiet bar of a large London hotel for the half hour he can spare before Radio 2 calls. He is in interview mode, charming and affable but it is not an easy interview. He is losing his voice. He talks as if he were tired of explaining himself. I want to talk about the city but *The Day of Creation* throws me. I want to ask about the nature of subjectivity, the construction of masculine identity. I've long been fascinated by his use of classical male narratives, masculine adventure stories of mythic proportions. CLAIRE MACDONALD.

Claire MacDonald:

In contemporary culture the female identity has been seen as shifting in relation to a fixed point, the male. In your work there is a concern with masculine identity as problematic.

J.G. Ballard: I'm not sure that I get your drift. Frankly I see the events that take place in *The Day of Creation* could equally have involved a woman narrator who might not have approached the operation with the same gung-ho spirit, but then men are more gung-ho than women.

CM: But the central female character, Noon, is very much the continually elusive object of desire — and she doesn't speak, so in that sense

... **JGB:** The implication within the book is that everything flows from his imagination, including the river. But that is acceptable in the sense that the book itself flows from a masculine imagination. And the characters, men and women, are seen through particular conceptual reference points of a male imagination. Moreover one working within a traditionally male preserve, the out of doors. Women are rather late arrivals on the scene of heroic activities. A woman wouldn't respond as my hero responds to the Edenic outpouring that his imagination

seems to have engendered. But then as a man I see things through the whole anthology of male presentation devices.

CM: The setting is placed almost literally in Africa but the sensibility brought to it is urban.

JGB: That is a very important strand of the book. The way in which the intact fragment of primeval nature which the central character seems to have created is instantly overlaid by a set of perceptions that derive exclusively from the needs and fictions of an urbanized landscape — primarily that of the TV viewers of western Europe and America. I am implying that there is an absolute relativity now, that all acts of creation are equally valid and in effective terms interchangeable. The apparently magical creation of a first order of nature, this river and the wilderness that springs from its margins is as equally a fiction as the cliched images that one sees in wildlife documentaries. If there is a message then I am saying that there is no longer a distinction — one set of lies or conventions or cliches or fictions equals another. There are no different orders of creation. Although throughout the book Mallory tries to throw off the attentions of Sanger, the TV man, the only way he can sustain

himself in his hour of need is to cast himself as the hero of one of these wildlife confections. He accepts that the McLuhanised fictions are as real as anything he has created, though it is at that point the river dies . . . I don't take sides about this. We in the urbanized west live in totally artificial environments. We live in a media landscape that is almost wholly a mass of competing fictions . . . But even in the remotest corner of the planet a plane is likely to come down from the sky with its own telecommunications disc and impose its own cliches and sentimentalities and conventions on anything.

CM: So it's now impossible to locate the real?

JGB: Yes. I've written about that in other books.

CM: Given that, what is the relationship between written fiction and those other fictions you've been describing?

JGB: There's no difference and I accept that my book is a fiction in the same continuum as those which it describes. It's part of the process of what used to be called falsification but can't be called that now because there is nothing left to falsify. The false is now the reality so that it's better to adopt Freud's distinction between the



THE LOGIC OF THE VISIBLE



latent and manifest content. These are now reversed and the external world, so called, is now almost wholly a fiction. One saw this process in 1969 when Armstrong landed on the moon and there was a camera there.

CM: In the time you have been writing have there been perceptual changes that indicate a change of consciousness about this?

JGB: One wouldn't want to suggest that anything epochal has taken place in the past twenty years, but a fundamental shift in human perception has taken place. People have made the leap between viewing the fictions that surround them as fictions and the present situation where they are willing co-conspirators. They accept complicity in this re-evaluation of reality. That is a fundamental revolution and will be perceived as such by social historians in the future. Reality in its traditional mode died in the 1960s. Once the global telecommunications umbrella was in place it redefined reality as itself and has been accepted as such . . . that is what's interesting. If you look at the main activities that take place in the large megastructures, large cities, housing complexes, they are all perceived as satisfying fictional goals.

CM: Aren't they also perceived in terms of a changing notion of performance. Everything is seen in terms of a performance mode in which you are what you say you are?

JGB: Yes, that's the Californian dream. You assume any role you want and be convincing in that role. The second is the important part — you can be convincing. Any image you care to create is accepted.

CM: So art is in no sense an imitation of life. That notion has gone out of the window.

JGB: It hasn't gone out of the window, it's just that . . .

CM: . . . life is fiction . . . and so back to the nature of identity . . . that concern with masculine identity . . .

JGB: I'm totally unreconstructed.

CM: Is it to do with the notion that your novels are peopled by fictions whose reference points are fictions . . . ?

JGB: Of course.

CM: And so what men and women do in the world of your fiction is mediated through the conventions of fiction . . . in that sense it's true to reality?

JGB: Yes. Most people I know seem to live inside an enormous novel or a TV commercial.

CM: What is the place of

narrative fiction within a world of TV commercials? What place does it have in a culture of discontinuous images.

JGB: I'm not saying they are discontinuous. I'm saying that many of the strands in this matrix of fictions that we occupy are continuous . . .

CM: But in order to read them as fictions one needs to have an informed view . . . whereas novel reading has been primarily simply linear in terms of the narrative of character.

. . . there is
nothing left to
falsify.

JGB: Not my kind of novel.

I'm interested in psychological roles not character. The media landscape we inhabit is filled with powerful archetypal figures with the characteristics of heroes — and heroines — if there were any — of Greek legends. They bestride the media lands like Andromeda and Persephone. You see the media landscape as a mass of discontinuities, but I don't see it like that. McLuhan talked about reality as a kind of high speed information mosaic, but within that mosaic one sees form outlines of titanic figures which needn't be replicas of human individuals but may be abstract notions involving our deep senses of patriotism or social responsibility, mediated in their own peculiar way. Politics — which is now conducted as a branch of advertising — is a clear example. Within the media landscape one finds huge archetypal narratives unfolding which are every bit as strong as the narrative of classical myth and legend.

CM: You have been read as something of a cult novelist amongst people who are prepared to deconstruct your fictions but do you now see yourself occupying a different ground? One perhaps where the practice of reading is not the same?

JGB: Most people read fiction for a good story and sympathetic characters with whom they can identify. One identifies with characters in fiction whether it's William

Burroughs or Joyce or Shakespeare.

That's not something that's going to cease and it doesn't imply a dislocation in the way people have traditionally read fiction. I don't see any problem. On the one hand there's the subject matter; on the other, style and technique the writer adopts to represent the subject matter. In my case it's very close to surrealist painting where extremely paradoxical things are represented by very conventional academic means. Most surrealist painters adopted a very traditional method of representing subject matter. Just as Max Ernst, Dali and de Chirco presented bizarre human subjects engaged in preposterous and mysterious acts within the traditional narrative space of post-renaissance painting. I'm presenting baffling paradoxical events within the traditional landscape of masculinist adventures. People are baffled by my trying to tackle these ideas in what is basically an adventure story but that is the most telling way to do it.

CM: In saying that, what are you saying about the function of written fiction?

JGB: It's the most telling way for me. I like to think of myself as a surrealist and I use the traditional means that most of the surrealists adopted — classically rendered narrative space, an illusionist space accepting the infinite depth of the picture plane in which they place the products of extra-ordinary fantasy. I do exactly the same. It just happens to suit my purposes.

CM: Which are . . . ?

JGB: Well . . . to quote someone else, Odilon Redon, 'the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible'.

CM: Has your own place in the culture shifted and where is it now?

JGB: As what?

CM: As a writer.

JGB: I don't know what my place is. I've always operated on the fringe — a complete maverick.

CM: Has that notion of a fringe itself changed? Does it now occupy a more central place in the culture?

JGB: I don't mean fringe in the sense of the avant garde or anything, more a matter of temperament. I feel, myself, something of a visitor to this country as a result of coming here when I was sixteen. My perception of the strangeness of British life has never left me and my position is in a sense a paradoxical one: in some ways an insider but also an outsider.

CM: Paradox is at the centre of it all?

JGB: Yes. ●

MOVING FORWARDS AND BACKWARDS IN TIME

It has always been taken for granted that the work of Merce Cunningham and John Cage is rooted in the chance incidences and intersections of the urban streets. DAVID HUGHES here finds cause to re-examine this ununderstanding in the light of recent performances. The interviews referred to in the text were undertaken by David Hughes and Mair Evans during the recent season by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Sadlers Wells, London.



Does Cunningham's reliance on video signal an increasing formalism?

All cities are geological; you cannot take these steps without encountering ghosts bearing all the prestige of their legends . . . landmarks constantly draw us towards the past. (Formulary for a New Urbanism, Ivan Chtcheglov, 1953).

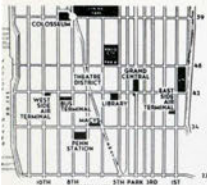
It is, no doubt, a commonplace that movement in the city has provided a number of influential models within the work of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC), a name that collects together the work and development of a number of quite separate individuals. The impression left by the recent London season, not to mention the hostility of the reaction to the music in Paris, was that a tension that has long spaced itself within their work now makes itself more clearly felt. It is to define that tension that I engage in an examination of the model of the city.

MCDC's discursive currency is the anecdote. Typically, enshrined by Cunningham in *The Dancer and the Dance*, they are repeated, almost verbatim in interview, with allowances for the cachet of the teller, of course.

Many of these anecdotes have to do with Cunningham's observations of the city and his subsequent use of them. His verbal investment in that book now ensures his effective silence. Whilst Cage is still eager to talk, theorize and 'chew the mushroom', Cunningham seems increasingly isolated, drawn into himself and reticent, speaking little in class, and only marginally more in rehearsal. However, Catherine Kerr, a company member, sets great store by these

gnomic utterances, building the narrative and emotional graph of her performances in the light of them.

John Cage has also spoken of the model provided by the city experience which leads to a spatializing of the cognitive faculties. The individual makes sense out of the multiplicity of messages, creating a private logic and narrative; being the perceptual and active centre of his/her world; selecting and combining by choice and instinct; and being open to all possible inputs. This is the ethos of the happening in which the spectator becomes creative, making sense out of arbitrarily presented material, including the other spectators and chance elements. Hence, Richard Schechner formulates a definition of the happening as: '(being) rooted in two seemingly unrelated interests: 1. an attempt to bring into a celebratory space the full "message-complexity" of a downtown street and 2. a playing with modes of perception.' Cage, in turn, formulates his own poetics out of McLuhan's dictum, saying: "all we have to do is brush information against information, and it doesn't matter what. By that brushing we will be made aware of the world which is itself doing that." The traditional sites of artistic presentation focus the attention; Cage's happening allows the spectator to make choices



MOVING FORWARDS AND BACKWARDS IN TIME



concerning focus whilst providing a message overkill that can only be embraced in its fullness by a focusless spatialization of perception. The spectator situated within the field of action, needs eyes and ears at the back of the head, as it were.

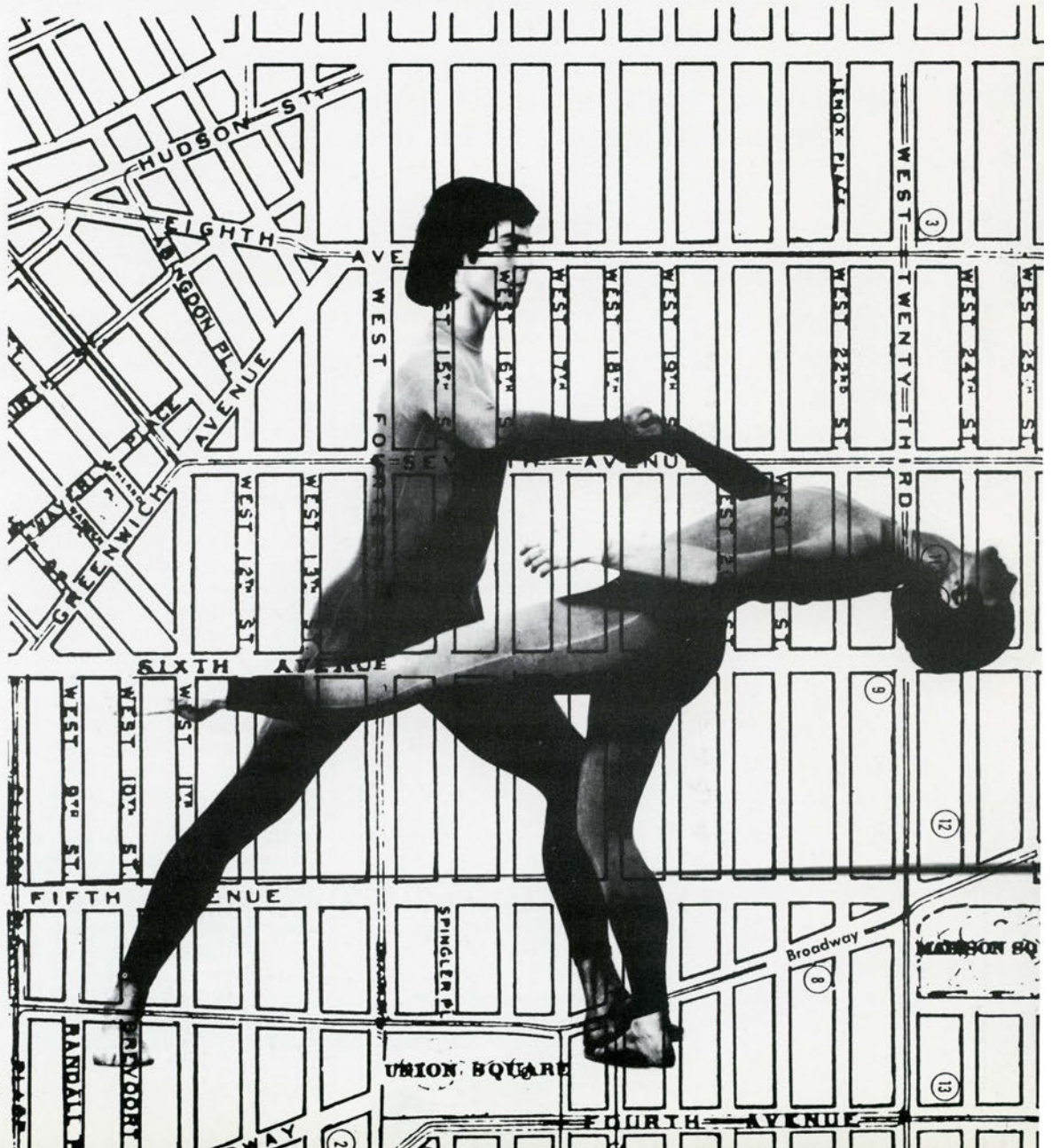
“We live in, and are more and more aware of living in, the space around us”, Cage continues, and his work takes that perceptual state and transforms it into a compositional objective which reaches its apotheosis in *Roaratorio*, each spectator in a unique relation to the audio-visual circus that literally engulfs one from all ‘sides’ of the arena. The atmosphere is more obviously that of the city circus, than the big top, being a junction box

through which lines of force traversed, entering into momentary configurations, never to be repeated, evoking the message bombardment of advertising hoardings and neon, and the space-filling density of concrete action and sound-made-concrete.

The air of suspenseful theatricality that one associates with the circus is missing, any sense of the performers as individuals, Cage included, is lost in the totality. Interestingly, Cathy Kerr felt that when Cunningham entered the raised central platform to dance in *Roaratorio*, it was as if a bolt of lightning had struck. From the ‘stalls’, the effect was less electric, even Cunningham himself being lost within the focuslessness of the event. In the

dance programmes, a different kind of balance is to be detected. Despite the tomes written on the fact that Cage and Cunningham have separated dance and music, making each equal, the music is clearly subsidiary to the dance, and Cunningham’s presence always relocates any centre onto himself, negating the notion of each performer being a separate centre. “It is his ball game, after all,” as Cathy Kerr remarked, and he clearly can command and consume space, regulating the audience’s focus on himself by modulating his own focus, either up and out emanating from a strong centre, or weak, turned inwards and downward, “as though trying to make himself invisible”, as Cathy Kerr put it.

PHOTO / LOIS GREENFIELD



Points in Space



The poet, Charles Olson, is a spectre lying behind and beside Cage and Cunningham. It was at Black Mountain, at Olson's request that MCDC was first formed. Olson's influential statement of a new poetic, 'Projective Verse', bears striking resemblance to these of MCDC. Olson also conceived of composition as spatial, not linear, working in terms of an ever expanding field and the tensions between the objects in that field. Olson may even lay claim to having initiated the first happening, having staged a multi-media event that pre-dated Cage's, at Black Mountain. Olson makes an astonishing claim for Black Mountain, saying: "(it) was the largest city I'll ever know, the swiftest . . . it's all there, absolutely all there." It was, in fact, a small campus on the shores of Lake Eden, near Asheville, North Carolina, at the foot of the Blue

Ridge Mountains. Here 'city' is 'sprung' away from notions of the 'urban', being a place of remedy, a place that can be passed through but which is also a 'unit'. The tensions and relationships within it constantly changing. It is a complete place within itself, self-sufficient. He illustrates this by listing illiterates, virtuoso musicians and the 'finest minds' of science and mathematics amongst its population. Essentially, the people at Black Mountain constituted a city in that they were all talented, but with talents that were unwanted in the economy of the urban centres of commerce and production. However, their intellectual productivity was at the forefront of ideas.

In Cunningham's work the city functions as model and justification for quality of movement, use of space and juxtaposition of images within that

space. The latter two having clear precedents in Cage's theories of field, multiple centres and the breakdown of linear syntax — or the demilitarization of language, as he calls it. Whilst, the all-over, unfocused stage also has its analogue in the canvasses of Pollock, Kline and Tobey, the swift juxtaposition of images finds its model in the street: "just imagine a group of six people walking along the sidewalk together. At any moment they can all walk off in different directions at different rhythms," Cunningham suggests *IO's With Shoes*, first performed in 1981, makes use, not of the natural movement and patterns of the street, but the idiosyncratic movement and gestures of New York's young street dancers. However, in a more recent metaphor, Cunningham shifts another model into place.

Talking of *Locale* he says: "I wanted a piece where changes happen very quickly, because you see things fast on television . . . that idea of a multiplicity of images happening." Within this model, the viewer, flicking from channel to channel, constructs a narrative or assemblage from the fragments viewed. This presents a somewhat different concept to the Cagean ethos of 'the downtown street'. In Cunningham's TV analogy, the viewer cuts into, and is presented with strings of linear constructions, and assembles for him/herself a personal line through those images. This is not the all-round density of images of the circus. It underlines, once again, the will to focus that lies behind Cunningham's stage presentations which are both within the spirit and the fact of the proscenium arch. It became clear in our conversations with the company that, although it is not talked about, the emotional content of dances, and the narratives which underlie them are open secrets. Dances are not just 'the steps', but clear and consistent atmospheres, at the least. It is not unknown for a designer to have to change a set of costumes, for example, when it becomes clear that they do not actually match and underscore the emotional tenor of a dance. This is a long way from the separate and equal status of all the elements of performance entering into chance relations.

Technology has superseded the movement of the city street as a model for movement in MCDC. Indeed, David Vaughan suggests that as Cunningham's own powers wane, he expects greater and greater technique and control from his dancers, and that his work is becoming increasingly formalistic. Cathy Kerr notes that the younger dancers come to the company with more ballet experience, making the legwork even stronger and giving



MOVING FORWARDS AND BACKWARDS IN TIME



the work a more 'classical' feel.

Within the tighter constraints of the TV screen, there are no more Rauschenbergs building ephemeral sets from the indices of his urban experience, junk off the city streets, as he did in *Story*. Dances change to allow the cachet of new dancers, but they learn them from videos of the original versions, to maintain their 'integrity'.

David Vaughan assesses that Cunningham 'likes to control his pieces more than John does . . . he's a man of the theatre in his bones.' It was this control, the hierarchical structure of the company, the theatricality and emphasis on technique that was rejected by those dancers, painters and musicians who set up Judson Dance Theatre, in 1962. Again, David Vaughan encapsulated the move when he said: 'As they rejected Merce, they were accepting John.'

The 'New Dance' democratized the dance institution, and expanded the field of performance beyond any notion of stage space. Joan Jonas' *Delay Delay*, for example, took place on the gridded streets of a derelict area on the west side of downtown Manhattan, literally becoming inextricable from the city-scape, causing the spectators, who observed the event from the roof of a loft building, to reassess the way they viewed the city, playing on their expectations of scale and perspective and subverting them.

Accepting that improvisation was physically dangerous, they found ways of preparing for that freedom, accepting mutual responsibility, but not, like Cunningham, dismissing improvisation as too problematic and dangerous. The Grand Union developed into Contact improvisation,

which embodies Cage's ideal: a form which needs no rehearsal. A form, consequently, that is difficult to control.

Perhaps it is an irony that all the work we have been discussing here has not been carried out in a city at all, although we might have assumed that we were talking about New York Art. In fact, New York breaks down into quite separate communities, locales, districts, that are virtually villages, and the avant-garde work under discussion all took place in and around 'The Village', Greenwich Village: the place where artists . . . from various locales . . . gathered to partake of the community spirit . . . as well as to pursue new identities that could only be molded in that community . . . working at the very edges of artistic conventions.

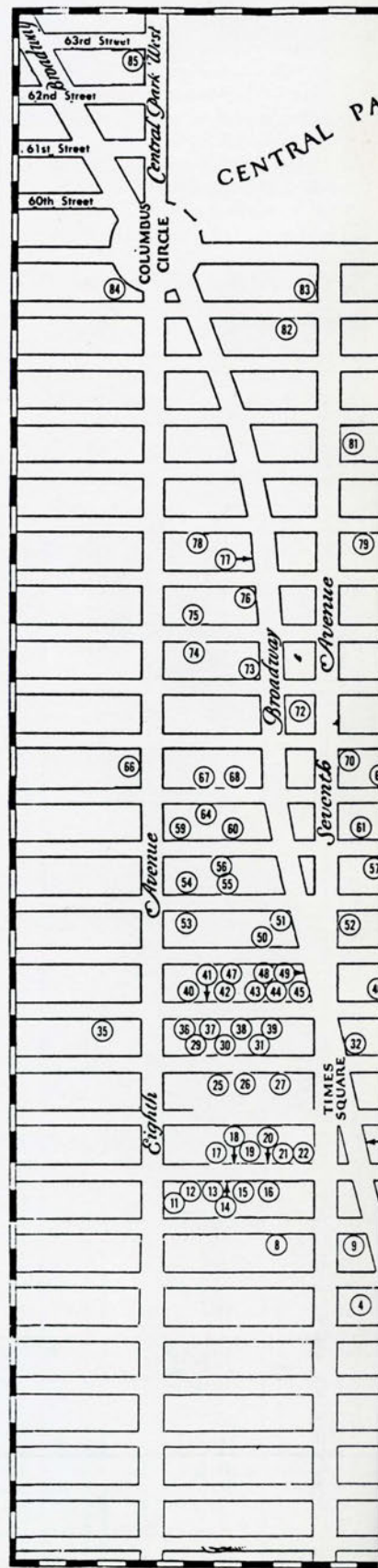
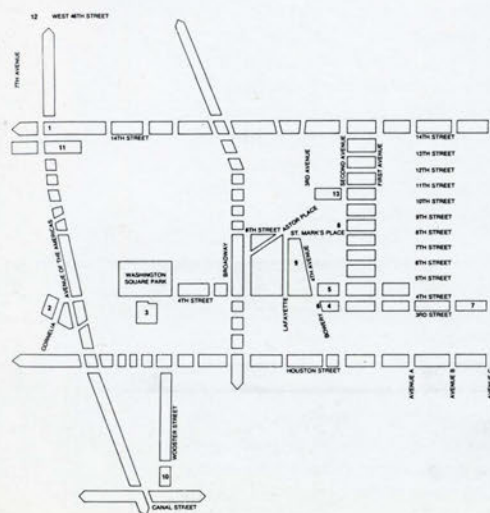
(Sally Banes, 'Democracy's Body')

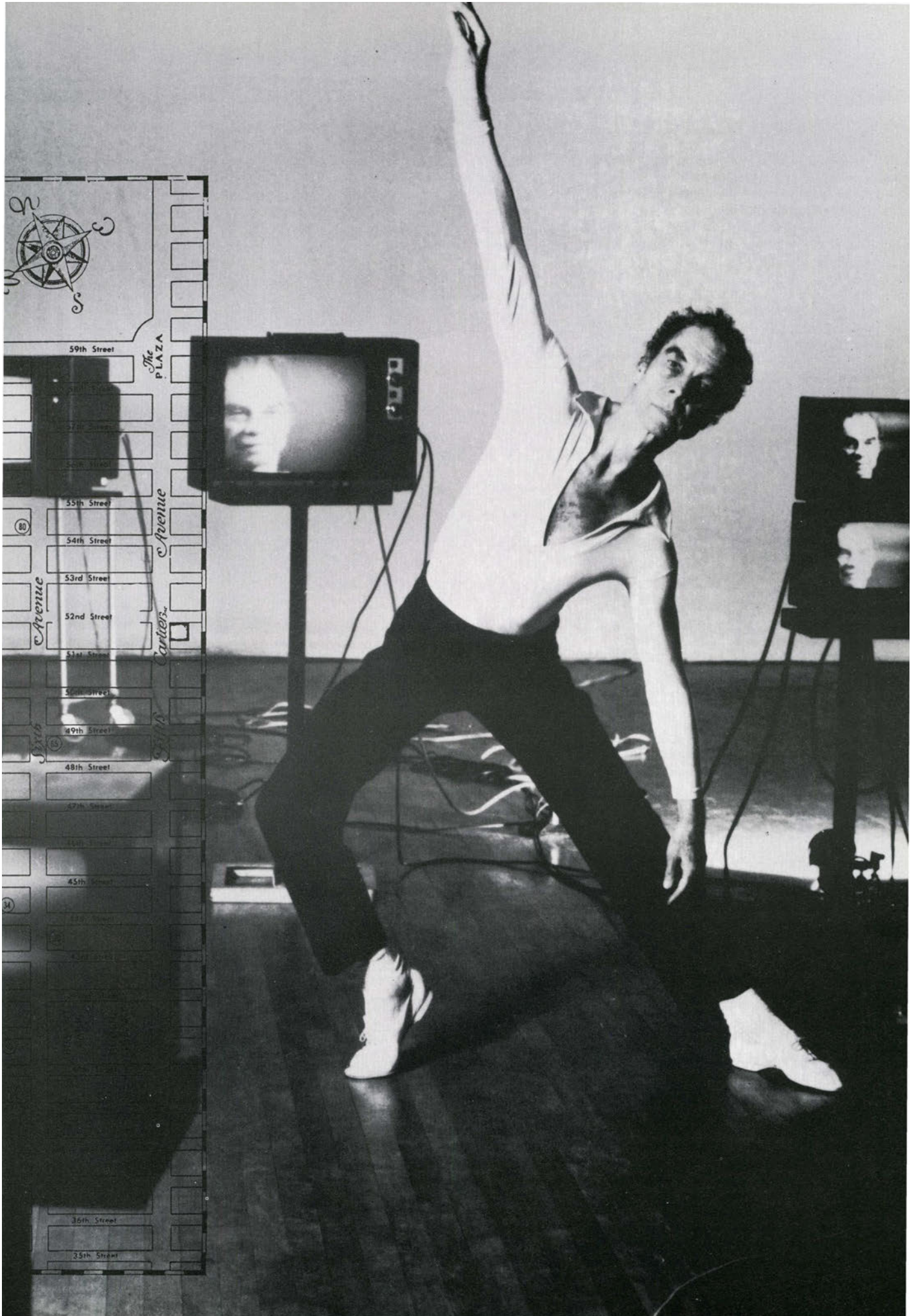
Seen as an assemblage of villages, the notion of the city breaks down, becoming an arbitrary construct.

'The Village', for the post-moderns becomes a place to recycle the detritus, the excrement, of the city as commercial, financial and business districts, and to subvert those 'images'. Their own images and identities can also be reformed in the backwater. Within this milieu, where Pop Art recycled the images of commerce, The Grand Union, the New Dancers, the 'post-moderns', what you will, effected a critique of the movement of the city that Laban had identified as following from the movement constraints "that came about when Western society became the prey of the assembly line". (Steve Paxton). Contact improvisation possibly provides the antithesis to the movement of the city, as one dancer invites another to enter the same personal space without fear that such an entry will be colonization.

Within the junction, or circus which is MCDC, two signs point in opposite directions from the same post. One towards an anti-urban utopianism, finding its path outside of the company in other kinds of dance, music and theatrical activity. Another points to the past, and the present, to the 'state of the art', as it were, the assembly line giving way to the lines which make up the television image. Cage seems to attempt to deny history and memory, by way of opening the possibility of a new future, but effects this forward movement through a return to the ethos of the happening, whilst Cunningham moves into a technological future which returns him to a past kept intact on video. ●

MAP OF THEATRE DISTRICT





MOTIVATIONS, AUTHOR, COLLABORATION, STRUCTURES

AKADEMIA RUCHU HAS been active in the open town areas (first in Poland) since 1975. At first there were anonymous events and actions, lasting from 15 minutes to several days; in one particular place or changing locations within an area of several streets and squares. In these activities, as well as exploiting behavioural structures ("actors" were quite often chosen from friends and acquaintances of Akademia Ruchu), we exploited the effects of a specific kind of use of three-dimensional structures, music and film. Since 1978 these actions have aimed at making those who, up to now, were only spectators (the inhabitant, the passer-by) into partners and fellow creators of the event.

Dynamic emphasising of the meaning and structures of town life might heighten the town people's awareness. It might also persuade them to take a more active and creative attitude towards actuality and its changing shape.

Here are a few notes on the creative activity in the open town space:

Motivations Akin to the natural manifestations of social expression. Heightened social sensitivity gives the first impulse towards releasing the creative process. During the period of strikes in the Gdansk shipyards in 1980, the need for expression, germinating in the minds of the workers, gave rise to unusual modes of behaviour, slogans, three-dimensional signs and drawings on walls which became a specific genre

of visual poetry. The majority of those people have never before felt such need and did not recognise such possibilities in themselves.

This mode of expressing the truth of social upheaval rendered the spirit of the time more originally and forcefully than the routine actions of professional actors, coming from the 'heights of art' with help for the workers.

Art, originating in the context and structures of town life, carries with it greater weight than art coming downtown in its 'Sunday best.' Created by the spirit and rhythm of town life, not 'for the town' from the standpoint of the creator — 'by his grace.'

Author The presence of the creator can be seen in his deed. But also in propagandist exploitation of the authorising signature. Anonymity? Essential for the heightening of the value of the moment; inspiring emotions bordering everyday normality and unusualness of an occurrence. "Town guerilla" action is also anonymous, functioning on the principle of "act and disappear." But then also creating a situation of surprise, bewilderment and incomprehension for the "sideline victims." Disorientation is stronger than contact with the idea of the action. There is the risk of manipulation of the mood of the street — unprepared and helpless.

Collaboration The passer-by, the town dweller — spectator becomes the co-originator of the happening. Reversing

of the basic pattern — the faith and solidarity of the spectator reached earlier, not by means of artificial modes of contact, but by far more natural means, giving even odds to both sides; by the same token creating a common starting point for the "up till now" creator and the "up till now" spectator.

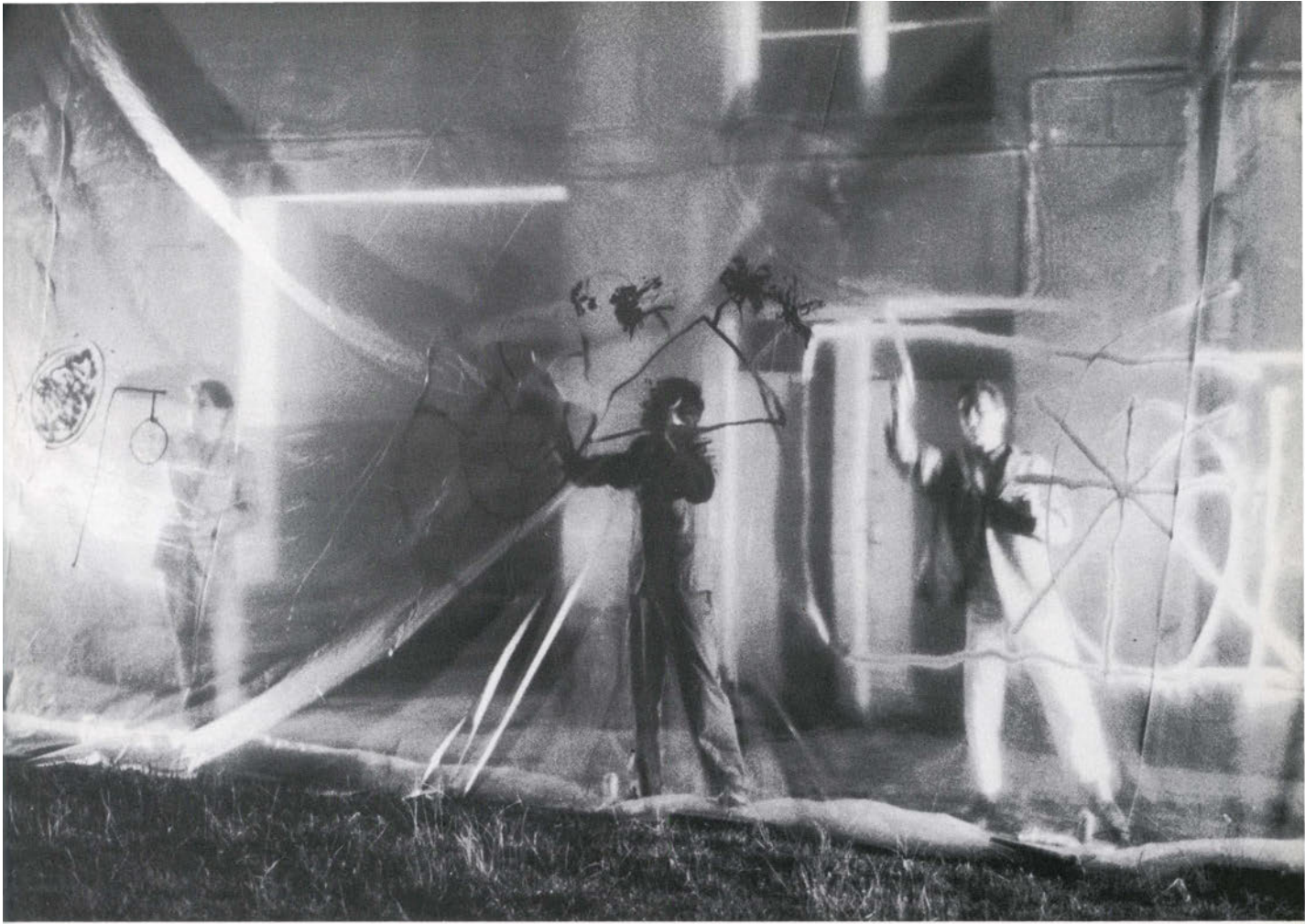
Structures Divisions of living space — streets, pedestrian trails, squares, courtyards and houses creating permanent patterns of tension in rhythm — space, to be written into, or to be opposed. Structures of the field of observation of life and of participation in life, renewing themselves through the appearance of a spontaneous action, or introduced through our actions, with the effect of strangeness. The truth and strength of creativity is ultimately confirmed not in the pathos of motivation but in the originality of structures arising, or being transformed, in the organic binding of form and idea. And, independent of the weight of social need and parameters of action within town space, the justification of this practice is fundamentally the argument of creative vision.

The primary reason for undertaking an action should be — having "lived through" the discovery value of its structure. ●

WOJCIECH KRUKOWSKI
Director Akademia Ruchu

Translated by Jan Stachniewski

Akademia Ruchu's most recent street work
Seasonal Island



WHEN THAT HAMMER STARTS TO BEAT

Sheffield based singer/songwriter **RON WRIGHT** finds that the spirit that moved his city's industrial past is re-emerging in its new music.

SHEFFIELD

YORKSHIRE'S INDEPENDANT juke box. A constant and fiercely waged struggle to uphold important social issues such as council subsidised public services. Cheap bus fares in a nuclear-free zone. Welcome to the Pressure Dome.

SteelCity, outsiders tend to call it and its easy to see why. Once, they made a lot of cutlery here and were proud of it. Now, that's all gone . . . but the spirit remains, along with a quiet industriousness, and in the past decade Sheffield has come to enjoy a worldwide reputation for its unlikely emergence as one of the most distinctive and innovative voices in modern music.

For the 'Sheffield Sound' read 'Industrial Music' — the term most popularly applied to describe that distinct area of music which is snakecharmed up from these parts. This label tends to be harumphed, raspberried and, generally greeted with howls of disapprobation and traditional suspicion by the local perpetrators of this Big Bad Noise. Why? and what exactly is Industrial Music anyway?



ATTACHING THE HANDLE

Push the button. Repetition. Machine rhythm . . . rigid, precise. The unfaltering regularity of the drop forge hammer. Repetition. Percussion. The constant rat-a-tat unswaying beats per minute of the riveter. Cold? Grey? an awesome shimmering of reverb. Scratching and scrapes. Repetition. Cogs, levers, a world of wheels turning and wheels turned. Production Time. The bottom line. The constant tempo of the night club floor. Pound your body. Sweat. A workout. The backbrain an alley of blazing clubs. A drumbeat, a steel sheet . . . words and phrases, calls and chants cut up CUT LOOSE, placed in sequence. Repetition. Sometimes a subliminal rhythm, without drums. The steel grinder on Sheldon Row which fills the air, if ever you're there in the stillness

of the early morning, with an unearthly silver-toned drone — an awesome hypnotic whining like a metallic aviary. The sounds of a city at work, both pleasant and harsh. Jerk the lever, push the button. Pull the switch.



DRY HIP ROTATION

The motor started and he pulled on his grey gloves
the pay he knew would be low and the clock ticked close at hand
with his overalls on he lost his individual look
we'll spin these wheels — these wheels we'll spin
until we pierce this/pierce this/pierce this
sharp and pointed tin
you should see it fly
I can't preach I can't pray . . .

(*The Unknown Industrial Fatality*)
p&c Native Music.

Peter Hope : Vocals, Tapes.
Jonathon S Podmore: Drills/Screams/
Masonry Chisel/Tapes/Rhythm Box.



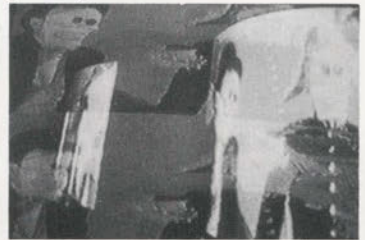
YOU'LL GET NOTHING OUT OF IT . . .

. . . until you get into it. So, we need to go back, cover tracks, and dismantle the machinery to try to get to the heart of it all. Make comparisons from different fields — such as the writing of J.G. Ballard, which comes under the crude label of science fiction. It is a futuristic fiction based on modern fact — a microscopic exploration and bizarre, detailed unravelling of sociological issues; reconstructing the regulations, myths and taboos of the inner-city and its medical, psychological and ecological consequences on the human animal and

his environment. An orgasm impacted from the collision of high technology and fantasy — the imagery and language of the city.

Similarly, David Lynch's surrealistic cinematic vistas are firmly rooted in his experience and exposure of the duality behind the American Dream. You make you're own heaven and you make you're own hell . . . In cases such as these, it is often the technique that fascinates as much as the results.

The phrase 'Industrial Music' is a very crude term which tends to blur other important aspects in the development of the musical career of this city, as I will try to show. However, put quite simply, the music of Sheffield is an example of sound as the modern lanaguage of the inner-city. It is an interpretation of its environment, both locally and on a larger scale, though not necessarily consciously. It can also be seen as a reaction against this environment. The staged glitter and schmaltz of a group like ABC is deliberate escapism against the unimaginative fodder of the working day. Besides, everyone cruises along Sunset Boulevard while they're plucking chickens.



SOCIAL SIGHT VOCABULARY "DO NOT SMOKE", "CROSS NOW", "NO DOGS"

— commands, requests and instructions that are obvious even to the illiterate by the consistency and shape of their phraseology. Apply the same rules to sound: the dreaded alarm-clock, the factory hooter. Communication. Simple. And now, "Association"; gunshots, the screech of brakes, the scraping of a pet food tin — particular sounds that provoke a fairly predictable reaction. Sound is used constantly within our lives to manipulate our emotional moods and needs. There's music as (supposed) tranquiliser: piped music in supermarkets, canteens and waiting rooms. Music as stimulant: the marching drum, the discobeat, Colonel Kilgore's *The Valkyrie* airstrike in *Apocalypse Now*. Anthems, dirges, ballads — a coin to toss in every pot.

Walk into town. The variation of sounds and aural gestures to be input is like the fallout from a sonic bomb. Sheffield's 'Fargate', a shopping precinct bustling with buskers, hustlers and megaphone ranters. On every corner there's a bargain to be had or a petition to be signed. Got a headache? Rush home. Run a bath. The gentle relaxing trickle of water guaranteed to bring relief in more ways than one. Sound can affect us physically either by its psychological association or by the exploitation of certain frequencies. Sometimes, it's a warning — like the buzz of overloaded wires:

"I got this ticking sound inside my head"

(girl in car, opening sequence
'A TOUCH OF EVIL')



ARRIVAL AT THE ZONE

I first visited Sheffield and began to live there in 1975. My attempts to explain the development of 'Industrial Music' or the awareness of differing possibilities in manipulating sounds begins, predictably enough, one year later with the punk rock explosion. This amphetamine howl of social discontent and stifled expression found voice in a raucous, unskilled, guitar-based thrash. The emphasis was on raw excitement rather than musical proficiency which had become a very indulgent pastime anyway. The pop sensibility of the sixties was acknowledged along with other musical styles, like reggae, which were an important part of city, street level culture. Oh the joy of it all. The music business, it's plush carpets having been well and truly yanked from under its feet, was left stranded in the penthouse. All the old guard of musicians were suddenly stuck in the elevator — forgotten heroes in an instant. Now, there was a fearsome growling in the basement and it got louder and louder. The format was altered. Songs were turned up and shorn down. The fat cats were sent scuttling and the bugs came streaming and screaming from the basement from out of the woodwork . . . raising the volume and lowering the tone.

At this time the music that was being produced in Sheffield seemed to have a different emphasis but it WAS coming from a different angle. The Dadaist movement and the techniques

employed by artists like Duchamp and Bunuel were cited as a major influence by such pioneering groups as Cabaret Voltaire.

Attitudes had been stretched and doors had been opened. People who had been tackling boredom by sitting in their lofts and experimenting with sound using tape recorders and crude home-made oscillators suddenly were presented with the chance to explode their theories in public.

Brian Eno had attracted attention in the earlier part of the seventies for his contributions to Roxy Music, a group capable of reaching the masses, while proudly maintaining and exhibiting his non-musicianship. In fact, Eno went on to research environmental sound and published his findings in a series of ambient recordings (*On Land, Music for Airports*). However, such non-musical investigations had been confined to the rarefied domains of the avant-garde and artists like Stockhausen and Cage. Now there was a new curiosity fuelled by a general climate of subversion and outrage.

The Steel City went to work. The experimentation seemed to be more wideangled than the areas that punk rock was vigorously exploiting. Film, in particular, was investigated. Standard eight cine, slide film and later video became an integral part of live performance which were more multimedia based.

Manifestoes and inflammatory slogans, the trademark of the Dada movement, crude photocopied collages, blue films cut with Gerry Anderson cartoons. A total wave of sixties kitsch, fascist regalia, American bubble-gum card atrocities, strobe lights, time-lapsed celluloid ballerinas and a high speed lens tracking through suburban traffic, then played back threaded through two projectors.

These sort of elements provided the backdrop for soundtracks which were often totally improvised and generally totally lacking in melody. It all ran like a mangled absurdist newsreel, slices of life gone stale, reshuffled, repackaged:

"Slow motion, mouths flap. No dialogue. No soundtrack. Out of focus, out of sync. When things don't run the way you think . . ."

(*'Ghost Rattle'* HULA)

This added dimension to live performance, this need to place the sound into a context also served to relegate the music to a more impersonal and functional role. The pop industry standard of recording artist as personality cult material was abandoned. Vocals could be processed, disfigured and given a more rhythmic or textural role within a song.

Although rock music and its attendant fashion accessories are derived from a glamourised Western value system often proud to reflect decadence and a flaunting of the work ethic. In contrast, the Sheffield music scene established an empathy with the music that was being produced in the unglamorous, grey, urban sprawls of Germany by groups like Can, Faust and Kraftwerk. In particular, the latter's obsessive translation of modern city life and the depersonalisation of its inhabitants is far removed from pop's iconography. There is a fixation with uniform, computer technology, computer-speak moving towards language as simple universal communication — a world behind glass observed with emotional understatement from an endless autobahn.



MUSIC FROM THE DEATH FACTORY

In 1977, Throbbing Gristle released *Second Annual Report* on 'Industrial Records'. An intimidating onslaught of white noise pulsing oscillators and distortion as a soundtrack to Genesis P Orridge's tales based on a gruesome fascination of urban squalor and bizarre, ritualistic sex. From their London base the term 'Industrial Music' was promoted exposing the control systems pilloried in the literature of William Burroughs and exploiting the fashion for army surplus clothing to present a corporate identity.

Others joined in the chant and extended the form. Einsturzende Neubaten (literally 'Buildings collapsing in on themselves') again from Germany and Test Department (London) are prime examples. Traditional musical instruments were replaced by mechanical hardware — springs, oil drums, sheets of metal pounded in imitation of the shipyards, steelworks and mines — industries being forced unwillingly into recession.



PHOTOS / SIMON CRUMP



WHEN THAT HAMMER STARTS TO BEAT

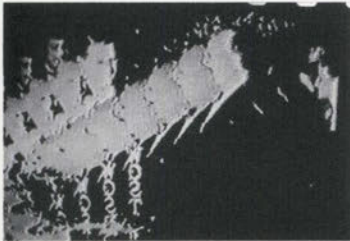
PUMP UP THE VOLUME

Where does all this leave us? Out of all this madness, a method evolves. Like the original cave paintings, crude lines take shape to imitate, illustrate and communicate the environment. "Lead the brush with bile. Splash shit on all over"

(—K. Beckmann)

Incidental words and sounds recorded onto tape and spliced into loops develop a rhythm like any repetitive, regulated sound environment — the factory production line, a printing press or a train journey. This process applies to different areas of current music. Hip-Hop, Electro, Rap, House music can all be stripped down to a simplistic mechanical format. The unrelenting thump of the beatbox machine, easily programmed, becomes the canvas for the new urban graffiti. Direct input is often replaced by 'found material' like phrases taken from the TV, radio or even other records.

A new means of musical communication has evolved through rapidly advancing technology. With computers and samplers songs are now programmed rather than written. Any sound can be frozen, manipulated into a musical note and placed into a sequence of events that will constitute a song. Efficient, mathematical and logical.



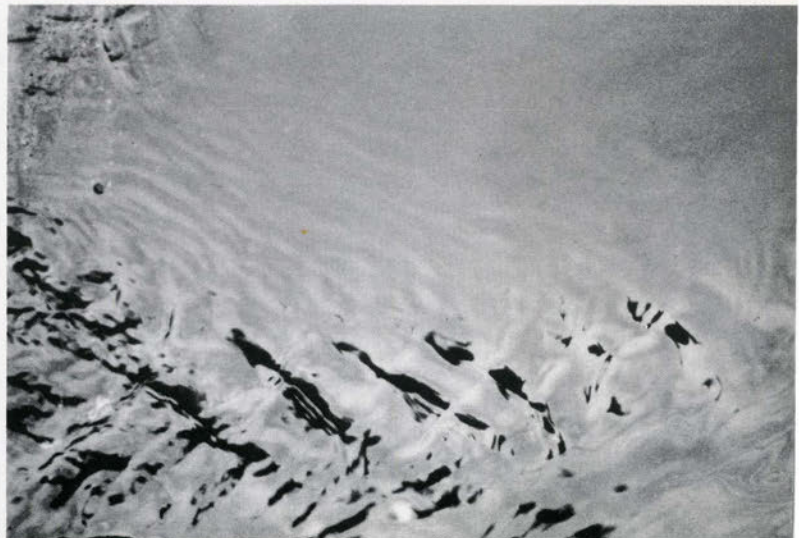
THE LAST FRAMES/THE NEW FLAMES

The camera tracks past the wasteland of redundant steelworks and coke-plants, a monochrome scenario, dismal and desolate like a set from 'Eraserhead'. A grimy labyrinth of forges and workshops opens up — the forgotten machinery of the city's traditional crafts gasping in the last throes of a death rattle. Now, the industrial hamlets, and factory complexes are inhabited by groups, photographers, graphic artists, theatre companies and recording studios. A new breed of industry occupying and refurbishing these decaying buildings, restocking the furnaces and resharpening the knives. Reconstructing . . . ●



PHOTOS / HUGO GLENDINNING

Is avantgarde music, experimental theatre and visual arts the inheritance of SteelCity's youth?



EX-CATHEDRA

Richard Demarco occupies a unique and seminal position in the history of Performance Art in Britain. He was the first in this country to mount performances by Joseph Beuys and Tadeusz Kantor amongst many others. Here he discusses the influence his home city of Edinburgh has had on him and the artists he has worked with there.

'EX-CATHEDRA' IS the way in which the Supreme Pontiff, the Bishop of Rome speaks to that part of the world defined by the Christo-Judaic culture into which I was born and from which developed the concept of the modern city. This culture has given the world the atom bomb to contend with, but to offset the negative implications of that it has also given what is generally known as the spirit of avant-gardism in 20th Century art through music, dance and the visual arts.

Born as I was in the last years of that age of religious faith which still existed in Europe more or less halfway between the two World Wars, I was always in awe of Rome, that city from which a human being could be given the divine power of speaking "ex-cathedra". My father's family name suggested that my forebears were followers of "Marcus". I often wonder if they followed him to Scotland, and if he was associated with that Roman legion that managed to get itself thoroughly lost in the Scottish Highlands. They had originated in fact from the province of Frosinone just 60 miles south of Rome. My father was rightly proud of his Roman origins. They represented an imperial power strong enough to mark its extreme North Western boundary by a line connecting the estuaries of the rivers Forth and Clyde called the Antonine Wall. This was the landscape to which my fathers parents and countless other Italian families had been inexplicably drawn in the last years of the 19th Century. I had the sense of living on a periphery all the days of my youth. I knew I was born in Edinburgh, a city which marked the site of a kingdom opposed to encroachment from an imperial power, the kingdom ruled by a king called Edwin linking what is now called Northumbria with the Lowlands of Scotland and which was doubtless associated through a potent mixture of history and mythology to Arthur, that arch enemy of Rome, the

once and future king of all the Celtic peoples of Europe. To this day his name endures in the form of a magic mountain which dominates the centre of Edwin's capital or "borough": the mountain is called "Arthur's Seat". It is in fact a grass covered hill almost 1000 feet high, but because of its peculiar and perfectly proportioned shape it is easy to imagine it as the site of that city of perfection associated with the name "Camelot". It is formed by nature with extraordinary accuracy and refinement to look like a recumbent lion. It has always been for me one of the wonders of the world, the equal, in its mystery and beauty to the Sphinx of Egypt. All that is left nowadays of this "seat of Arthur" are rows of terraces cut into the South Eastern slopes.

Long after Arthur's reign the Medieval city of Edinburgh grew around an outcrop of volcanic rock which forms the stuff and substance of this magic mountain. The outcrop now known as Castle Hill was obviously the perfect place for Edwin's successors to build their citadel around which a city could form itself. Little did I realise, born and bred as a citizen of Edinburgh, that I was being influenced daily by what could be considered arguably as the most beautiful and magnificent city site in all of Northern Europe. I had been taught to consider it as the Modern Athens, a title it had earned for itself in the period of the Nineteenth Century Enlightenment in Scotland, but knowing as I did, that it was built on seven hills, I preferred to think of it as the Northern European equivalent of Rome, for it was to me even as a child a city undeniably and proudly able to define the culture of Europe's North Western periphery, the necessary complement to Rome as the ultimate metropolitan centre of Europe's Mediterranean culture.

My Roman Catholic education taught me to see the pagan power of Rome transformed to facilitate the spread of Christianity throughout the

length and breadth of Europe and in spite of the extreme form of Protestantism represented by John Knox the leader of the Reformation in Scotland, that the bedrock of Scotland's cultural heritage was irreversibly Catholic. Such an education was inextricably linked with the profound mysteries of orthodox religious ritual and the fact that all time in Europe was measured in relation to the death of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. As an altar server and chorister I had personal experience of a world of theatre on a grand scale when it came to the celebration of the great Christian feasts of Christmas and Easter. Every season of the year and every human emotion was taken into account in the sound of 8th Century Gregorian chant and in the words of the De Profundis and in the Litanies of the Saints. The spoken word took upon itself an undeniably poetic dimension because it was beyond the limitations of the vernacular connotation. Latin as a language was meaningful to me as a form of music. There were the sensual pleasures in the smell of incense and burning candles and in the colours of the priest's vestments and altar adornments. White and gold, green and purple and black were colours which helped me know with delicate precision each season of the year and the significance of the passing hours of each day.

It was precisely because Edinburgh was such a great distance from Rome that I had felt a deep longing to travel from the European periphery to its centre in the spirit of a pilgrim. I cannot think of a time when I did not want to be an artist of some sort and I felt in my child's heart that my parents spoke the truth when they said that all great art and artists came from Italy and that even Paris and the French culture which they admired was built upon the principles of the Italian Renaissance.

The war years made it difficult for me to imagine myself experiencing the





EX-CATHEDRA

continental culture which my parents embodied. My whole childhood was blighted by the role that Italy was obliged to enact in world affairs until peace finally came. In 1949 the last year of my schooldays, I was able to get as far as Paris, the capital city even then for the world's artists containing as I imagined a fountainhead of truth from which aspiring art students could drink their fill and thus claim a place in the post-war international art world.

At the end of my first year at Edinburgh College of Art, wishing to celebrate my 20th birthday in relation to the worldwide celebrations of the Holy year of 1950, I embarked, in the company of my father and 30 other pilgrims, on my first journey to Italy and to Rome. We travelled by train, ferry and bus, through Paris across the Alps to Rome and when I first experienced the sight of a vast crowd assembled within St. Peter's Square to receive the blessing of Pope Pius XII, I knew for the first time the true meaning of the word city as the centre, not only of a national culture but of a world religion. I soon realised that the crowd filled piazza under the roof of a brilliant blue Roman sky was not quite the centre of the world.

It was only when I entered St. Peter's that I realised it was the Bernini High Altar. I understood then the full implications of the word altar as the 'sanctum sanctorum' of the city. Tens of thousands of people from every country imaginable had gathered to pray in one language before the steps of an altar under a vast dome in the presence of the Pope himself. It was my first experience of the "total art work" involving religious ritual and sculpture on a gigantic scale. It was the Gesamtkunstwerk created for the best possible reason. Of course, by 1950 I must have benefited from three years experience of Edinburgh transformed by art for three weeks annually into a world capital of culture, through the Edinburgh Festival, established against all the odds in 1947. I knew therefore that the experience of art was inextricably linked to the experience of a city which was in itself an artwork. Through the combined experience of the Holy Year 1950 and the Edinburgh Festival the word city became identified in my mind with the words art and prayer. I knew that when these three words could be linked significantly I could imagine that God was in His Heaven and that the concept of the Communion of Saints was being well defended by those inhabitants of the world who defined themselves as city dwellers.

However, since 1950, the concept of the city as I had imagined it in my youth is almost impossible to defend

after the full impact of four decades of ever increasing materialism spreading through Europe, emanating from the basically protestant culture of the New World defined by the United States of America. Sadly it is the image of New York, not Rome, which the politician, the banker and the industrialist have when they conceive of the city's shape in the last part of the 20th Century. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in London where the towers and skyscrapers of New York's Wall Street have been built anew to deny the very existence of London's equivalent of St Peter's, the great masterwork of Christopher Wren, St. Paul's Cathedral. The so-called "great" American cities are all built on a fundamental heresy that the city dweller's main function is to worship at the high altar of Mammon to the point where the life of the spirit personified by the cathedral is well nigh obliterated. When I think of the much vaunted new American cities and their so-called centres, in Houston and Dallas, and their British counterparts of Birmingham and Manchester, I cannot think that the word city should be identified with the

word 'civilised' or with the age old concept which held sway all over Europe, even into the immediate post-war period, that a city's credentials lay in the dominating presence of its cathedral.

More and more we are faced with the inescapable fact that the arts can be supported only through their capacity to be identified with monetarist value systems despite the fact that the evidence of European history makes it clear that art can only flourish when the artist is in dialogue with the banker and the merchant through an intermediary in the form of the bishop, praying at his cathedral's high altar. The Medici alone could not have produced the glories of the Renaissance in direct dialogue with the artists they admired because governing the Medici thoughts and attitudes and their favourite artists, despite all their worldly power and pride and sinfulness was the basic universal belief that Mankind's destiny and all human activities were governed by spiritual dimensions. Evidence for this can be found even to this day in the city centre of Florence, Venice and



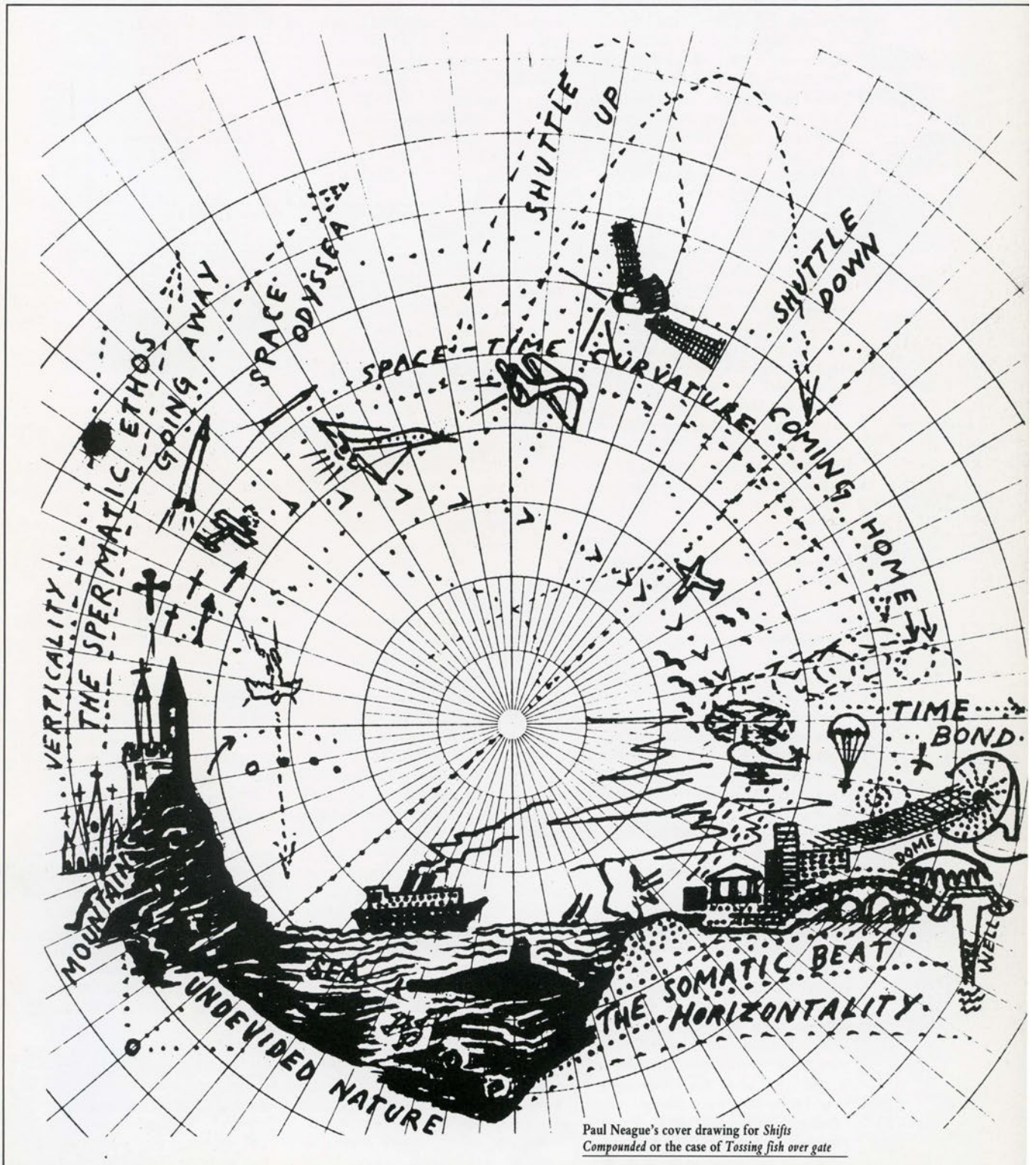
Top Left: *Testa da Morto*
 Top Right: *Call — for my Dominion*
 Bottom: *In the Wilderness*
 Roderick Tye's sculptures are inspired by time spent in Rome

Sienna where the market place and the seat of civic government were built within the domain of the cathedral.

There is only one comparable city I can think of in Britain and that is Edinburgh because it still possesses the vestiges of a cultural and political capital and because its architectural shape and history is dominated by a

cathedral precinct which is bordered at its highest point by a castle and at its lowest by an abbey and palace. The cathedral is dedicated not to a Scottish saint but to St. Giles better known in France as one of that band of Irish missionaries who spread Celtic culture from the Atlantic shores of Europe deep into the Mediterranean. St. Giles

Cathedral is positioned, literally, at a point known as the Heart of Midlothian defining the centre, not only of Edinburgh as a city, but the whole surrounding area. Its cathedral tower is in the shape of the crown of Charlemagne, an architectural form peculiar to Scotland and evidence of Scotland's close links with the



Paul Neague's cover drawing for *Shifts*
 Compounded or the case of Tossing fish over gate



EX-CATHEDRA

medieval Roman Catholic world all over the European continent. The St. Giles high altar is located halfway between two altars marking other altars. One is in the Abbey of Holyrood and the other is in the Chapel of Queen Margaret, the one and only Scottish monarch who attained sainthood. It is the oldest building within the Edinburgh Castle walls and rightly built upon the highest point of the Castle Hill. All three altars are linked by what is called the Royal Mile defining the medieval High Street. The tiny Romanesque stained glass window behind the altar of St. Margaret will direct your gaze towards the lowest point on the Royal Mile where the street ends at the altar of King David II. The altar exists within the impressive ruins of Holyrood Abbey adjoining the Palace of Holyrood House for the simple reason that divine intervention caused the life of King David, the grandson of Queen Margaret, to be saved when alone and imperilled in the depths of what was then a royal forest, he found himself face to face with a legendary white stag. The stag's life was spared and so too was the King's when he found himself with the stag at bay unexpectedly surrounded by a pack of wolves. At the moment of truth there appeared miraculously between the antlers of the stag a blinding cruciform light which struck terror into the wolves.

The miracle took place half a mile from where the 12th Century city walls had ended at the Netherbow Gate. It is nowadays marked by brass plates embedded in the Royal Mile's cobbles. Appropriately this point is known even to this day as 'World's End' for at that point the city and the life of civilised man ended and the untamed, ungovernable, unknown spaces of the wilderness began in the form of the royal forest. The extension of the city in succeeding centuries had to take into account that point in the forest where the life of the King had been spared and so it is that the medieval city of Edinburgh and its Royal Mile owes its eventual shape not to the machinations of townplanners, but to an act of divine intervention. This story should be told to anyone wishing to play the role of an Edinburgh Festival goer particularly those concerned with what is called the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, because the Fringe was born within the structure of that Royal Mile, in all manner of temporary converted premises in church, school and masonic temple halls located in the alleyways. One of these halls was converted into Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre. The five year story of how this came to be defines the beginnings of my work as

an art gallery and theatre director.

The language of art under the aegis of the Edinburgh Festival transformed Edinburgh's Old Town giving the streets and buildings new life and meaning. Edinburgh was chosen as the world capital for art because of the beauty and sacred nature of its historic Old Town fabric.

There is a lesson for all modern architects in this inescapable truth and it should provide inspiration to those who would wish to build the cities of the 21st century, to accommodate the dimension which art provides in the form of international festivals.

Schools of architecture would have to consider teaching their students how to cope with what nowadays is called 'performance art'. In the hands of master artists such as Joseph Beuys, Tadeusz Kantor, Alistair MacLennan and Paul Neagu this form of visual arts expression can work most effectively in helping to focus attention upon the ills which nowadays beset most cities as well as upon the points of high, life-enhancing energy to be found in unexpected aspects and areas of the city's fabric. Most 'performance art' work relies heavily upon the physical presence of the artist in confrontation with an audience. The performance artist thus focuses attention upon the sacred nature of the human presence as the measure of all man made things from furniture, architecture to all manner of ornaments and implements, utensils, machinery, vehicles, clothing, jewellery and regalia. The everyday, as well as ritual, uses of all such things are the very stuff and substance of the performance art work particularly when they are related directly to the elemental dimensions of time and space.

'Performance art' is essentially a form of drawing through what Gaston Bachelard the French phenomenologist called, 'La Poétique de l'Espace'. Performance art reveals 20th Century man's need for ritual. The artist's work through performance art can be linked to that of the ritualist, alchemist, priest and master of ceremonies and guide and explorer, of all the secret places normally hidden from view, which we need to know to truly inhabit a living space both interior and exterior. The artist reveals how we should be able to love these spaces if we are obliged to share them with others. This includes in particular those spaces which we have so misunderstood that they have become associated with violence, decay, illness both mental and physical and which are totally uninhabitable. These are all too clearly associated with the modern city centre with its streets, pavements, street furniture, public waiting rooms, stairways, parks,

footpaths, corridors, lifts and underpasses. Joseph Beuys pinpointed the problem with his masterwork "Tallow", a gigantic mould in life-enhancing fat of an entirely negative civic space, that of the ubiquitous motorway underpass. It was he who, more than most artists, made performance art an acceptable term of reference defining that area of the contemporary visual arts which lies somewhere between painting, sculpture and drawing and all the performing arts regarded as theatre, opera, dance and music.

Unfortunately I have always found such terms of reference somewhat misleading and therefore unacceptable. It cannot accurately describe what is undoubtedly a manifestation of the arts of our time and a phenomenon of post-war art activities questioning deeply the normal and acceptable academic definitions. These have managed to corral art activities into misleading and virtually useless categories.

In British art schools painting and sculpture tend to be considered irrevocably separate activities. In the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and certainly in Eastern Europe from the experience of my own travels lecturing in over 150 art schools, galleries and universities, I know that performance art has begun to be regarded as a manifestation of drawing, painting and sculpture. If I have to find "Le Mot Juste" I would say that all aspects of the visual arts aspire to the condition of drawing. Perhaps the Italian word "disenare" best describes it because from it is derived the English word design which I have always thought is misleading. To say that a tea pot is well designed is not at all satisfying or acceptable to me. I prefer to say that a teapot is "well drawn" three dimensionally. The question arises, can the teaching of design be truly effective if it does not take into account performance art.

Perhaps performance art could be better defined as 'ritual drawing'. Certainly that is how I would describe Joseph Beuys' first ever performance in Britain. It added a mind-boggling new dimension to the Edinburgh Festival's idea of what art could be. It was called *Celtic Kinloch Rannoch — the Scottish Symphony*. It was about the music which the Danish performance artist/composer Henning Christiansen created in collaboration with Joseph Beuys and the sound of the Gaelic language and the language of animals entoned as a form of prayer. It was a requiem celebrating the lives of all the artists who Joseph Beuys admired throughout the ages.

He was partly inspired to make this work when he saw the preparations for

another concert of music presented by the Demarco Gallery at the same time also as part of the 1970 Edinburgh Festival. This was the result of a collaboration between Harrison Birtwhistle, Alan Hacker and Keith Critchlow, called *Sound in Space*. It was certainly much more than a concert in the acceptable sense because it aspired to the Beusian view that sound was an essential ingredient to those artists attempting to redefine the nature of drawing.

In my mind's eye there is a list of names alphabetically arranged of the artists presented by the Demarco Gallery who chose to represent themselves with performance art as part of the Gallery's 'Edinburgh Arts' programmes of activities over the past 21 years. The nationality of each artist and the year in which each artist first made a performance work for the Demarco Gallery are also listed. Such a list helps me to say how 'Edinburgh Arts' programmes were so devised as to take upon themselves the nature of journeys. In this way the concept of Edinburgh Arts' as an international experimental Summer school beginning and ending in Edinburgh emphasised the role of the 'artist as explorer' prepared to be involved in the physical reality of Europe, its geography, history and prehistory and cultural origins through direct dialogue with artists, musicians and writers in studios, places of education, churches, hospitals, prisons, galleries, museums and other places where artistic life had developed and endured. 'Edinburgh Arts' journeys over land and sea enabled the Demarco Gallery to present performance art works all the way from the Hebrides to the Cyclades and from the Maltese temple of Hagar Qim to its Orcadian counterpart of the Ring of Brodgar, to prehistoric sites associated with religious ritual activities. It was also about specific journeys from Scotland through England to Poland, Holland, France and Italy. 'Edinburgh Arts' is the Demarco Gallery's acknowledgement of all places of experimental art education such as Black Mountain College, the Bauhaus and Dartington and was presented in association with Edinburgh University's School of Scottish and Extra-mural Studies, so that students of art could benefit from university credit systems.

'Edinburgh Arts' as an experimental form of art education became identified with Joseph Beuys' 'Free International University' when as part of the 'Edinburgh Arts' circumnavigation in 1980 of the British Isles on the sailing Ship 'Marques' and the presentation of the 'Free International University' as part of the

1980 Demarco Gallery's Edinburgh Festival exhibition programme, Joseph Beuys presented a 3-day 'action'.

The following is a list of 66 artists which forms the nucleus of a larger list of names which I have to keep in mind when considering the story of Performance.

Marina Abramovic; Akademia Ruchu; Woody Van Amen; Anselmo Anselmi; Betty Beaumont; Bill Beech; Joseph Beuys; Remo Bianco; Barbara Bouska; Paul Bradley & Babel; Paolo Cardazzo; Steve Carrick; Giuseppe Chiari; Henning Christiansen; John Cousins; Ivor Davies; Michael Docherty; Friedhelm Dohl; Andrew Drummond; Valie Export; Lily Eng; Robert Filliou; John Faichney; "From Scratch"; Rose Finn-Kelcey; Rose Garrard; Anne Gauldin; Cheri Gaulke; Doug Hales; Anthony Howell & The Ting Theatre of Mistakes; David Helder; Phil Hitchcock; Tom Hudson; Lyndel Jones; Mauricio Kagel; Sofia Kalinska & Akne Theatre; Tadeusz Kantor & Cricot Theatre; Tina Keane; Barbara Koslowska; Christine Koenigs; Ferdinand Kriwet; Alex Landrum; Richard Lazyell; Tom Marioni; Tony Morgan; Alastair MacLennan; Bryan MacDonald; Zbigniew Macarewicz; Michael Meyers; Paul Neagu; Paolo Patelli; Nesa Paripovic; Zoran Popovic; Sally Potter; Nigel Rolfe; Guido Sartorelli; Bogoslaw Shaffer; Anne Seagrave; Daniel Spoerri; Peggy Stufli; Sister Scipion Theatre; Rasa Todosijevic; Gunter Uecker; Zbigniew Warpechowski; Steven Whiteacre; George Wyllie.

Contemplating this list it is evident that the most famous name is that of Joseph Beuys. As it is almost 2 years since his untimely death I must consider who on that list had a dialogue with Joseph Beuys directly concerned art in relation to the Demarco Gallery. The list represents almost 150 artists as it includes all those involved in such companies as Akademia Ruchu, Sister Scipion Theatre, From Scratch, Cricot Theatre, Akne Theatre, Babel and the Ting Theatre of Mistakes.

With the subject of the artist and the city, the name of Paul Neagu comes immediately to mind, because in his first meeting with Joseph Beuys under the aegis of 'Edinburgh Arts' 1974, he asked Joseph Beuys to consider the nature of the head as the most important part of the human body, and because of its function and structure it could be likened to the position and shape of the capital city of any country in relation to the physical landscape of the country it governs.

In the human head and the capital city resides the seat of government. The cathedra contained in the human

mind functions to relate all natural things heavenwards. However, the mind contained within the head is totally dependent upon the body and its limbs which are organically earth bound so that the mind should not forget its earthly origins.

Paul Neagu's 1974 action *Going Tornado* clarified the need for balance between mind and matter, between the seat or cathedra of government and all points of contact with the earth, through the force of gravity and all objects extending the body's presence in the form of clothing, utensils and instruments of measurement, of time and space, as well as nourishment in the form of food. The Tornado unleashes power both negative and positive, a symbol of nature's regenerative power.

Paul Neagu places the human presence firmly within the centre of the volcano not outside it. All his art works since continue to give positive images of man at one with nature. My words could not be better symbolised than in a drawing which Paul Neagu entitled *Tossing Fish Over Gate*. In it the male symbol of the city built upon a magic mountain defined by the forms of castle and cathedral juxtaposed is seen to produce the reality of 20th Century flying machines. The flight path of the ill-fated "Challenger" shuttle is symbolic of Icarus for our time. He speaks eloquently thus of the city in relation to the female energy of the earth and sea and the life-enhancing forces which flow when cityscape and landscape are totally interdependent.

Thus Paul Neagu personifies that artist, who whether he likes it or not is prepared to continue working using performance art or drawing or whatever means of appropriate expression which can be linked to those heroic figures who have set the ground rules of artistic endeavour. They inspire terror as well as inspiration. Among them you will find Leonardo Da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Gianlorenzo Bernini, Vladimir Tatlin, Casimir Malevich, Yves Klein, Mark Rothko and Joseph Beuys. All of them are distinguished by their preparedness to work in and around the cathedra or throne of government as the centre of that city built to express Mankind's presence upon the surface of the earth as proof of a divine order in which art is an expression of ritual praise and thanksgiving.

I believe this is possible in my own lifetime because Edinburgh proved itself to be such a city when it was chosen to be the place of pilgrimage for all the world's artists wishing to celebrate the ending of the Second World War and the promise of peace. ●

I've been to this country before, in movies

It was night when they arrived and they were talking. A sign said: 'Welcome to New Milan, self-proclaimed murder capital of the world.' One of the women laughed and said terrific. They had cases so they couldn't be in a hurry. To pass the time they said who on earth they most wanted to be. Helen wanted to be the film starlet Natalie Gorgeous in 'The Trouble with Gorgeous' (M.G.M. 1949) or 'Farewell my Gorgeous' (Soviet Kino 1952). She wasn't bothered which since the plots were the same. Harry liked Harry Belafonte who played the homicidal gambler in 'Mr. Nasty in Acapulco' (Universal 1972). Oceane just wanted to change her name. She said she wanted to be called Miss Pretty Legs, but she was young. As for the others, almost dumb with the walking they aspired to sundry things and silent, they laughed a little and cried in secret.

They were perfect people in a perfect world.

It was night when they arrived and they were walking. They hit a cheap neighbourhood north of the city. The men bought beer and drank it. So did the women. They sat on their cases outside the Big Poland Building and took a lie detector test for love. Then they went on. Pigeons scattered on Esperanto Place as up at bombing altitude some right real snow began to fall.

There were people sleeping everywhere in that snow. On the walkways, in the stairwells to the blatant love holes, on the steps of Dave's Glue Club. All the Big Buildings were full.

They were simple people in a complicated world.

It was night when they arrived. There wasn't a square inch of city without some thick bastard sleeping on it. They climbed to the top of the tallest building and slept out in the open: curled up in the letters of its huge red neon sign.

No room at the inn. Cold snow falling.

Pure as the driven shit.

The sign they slept in lit the whole sky. It lit up the real stars and the land, sea and dust satellites.

The people cried a little and smiled in secret.

The sign said this:
200% and Bloody Thirsty.

TIM ETHELLS



OFF THE MAP

Mixed Media Work By
Irish Women Artists,
Chisenhale Gallery,
London

Reviewed by
NIK HOUGHTON



"THE WORK IN *OFF THE MAP* represents a diversity of both art practises and the histories of individuals and is thus impelled by a need to dismantle the clichés of Irishness, and to provide other, more relevant representations": From the catalogue.

Occupying nearly half of the larger space of the white walled Chisenhale Gallery sits a brooding construction ringed by TV monitors. This earthy mound, centrepiece to Frances Hegarty's installation *Groundswell*, is topped by a crater which seems to glow with a sinister, possibly nuclear ferocity. Meanwhile a series of images appear simultaneously on the monitors; grimy hands are clasped, form fists, claw at the screen, offer gestures of supplication, resistance and anger. A rumbling noise emanates from the ring of TV's and, abruptly, there is the noise of a gunshot or explosion. The images on the screens blank out. Blackness. Slowly the hands appear again and a new sequence of gesture begins.

This, in essence, is the content of *Groundswell*, a simple, powerful work with unspoken references to violence, global warfare and 'working the land'. Effective, forceful and dramatic it's a video installation which steps beyond the more usual mediamixed gimmickry of such projects and instead presents itself as a solid, confident and subtle piece. The mood of the piece, unlike much video installation work, stays with you . . .

Set next to the spectacle of *Groundswell*, Alanna O'Kelleys video may, at first, seem a slighter piece but the image of a letter, its text slowly dissolving, drifting beneath running water is an evocative and potent one. Boxed by paper walls containing lines of poetic letter writing, the monitor here interacts with its context to create a melancholy ambience evoking thoughts of identity, memory and the passing of time.

For Anne Tallentire the emphasis is less on identity and more on the "lines of fate". In her performance piece — viewed as a videotape recording, Tallentire cross references geographical lines and maps with palmistry and

Carole Keys
Virgo the Virgin

I DON'T LIKE THIS KIND OF MEETING

I don't like this kind of
theatre, ICA, London
Reviewed by PIPPA
CORNER

ONE CANNOT talk properly of disillusion when the illusion as such never existed; rather it is a lowering of expectations. The last year has seemed a long twelve months, punctuated by select gatherings in fairly select institutions. It has become something of a recurrent nightmare.

In August 1986 it was *The State of Play* at the Riverside Studios. In November 1986 it was *Against Compromise* at the Midland Group. In December 1986 it was *Abandon London* at the Dean Clough Mills, Halifax. Through winter, spring and summer I attended a number of small and even more select follow up meetings, the numbers dwindling each time, as if, with a low sigh, the breath of Performance were gasping its last.

And then, on 6th August 1987, it was the turn of *I Don't Like This Kind Of Theatre*.

The trend in the titles says enough — a not-so-slow decline into pessimism and defensiveness. I do like this kind of theatre, but I don't like this kind of meeting.

The State of Play, organised by Claire MacDonald in collaboration with the Riverside, attracted around 250 participants for a two-day conference aiming to discuss, in a series of simultaneous seminars coming together at the end for a plenary session, the issues at stake for artists, bookers and 'funders'. These categories were reflected in the spectrum of those who turned up. We talked about the nature of the work, and the impossibility of reaching a full, comprehensive definition, and therefore identity, for ourselves. We talked about the need to sharpen our critical teeth, and the need to be seen doing the right work in the right places, ultimately this meant London. There was a sense of frustration and defeat, in part due to the very ambitiousness of the weekend, and the need to create a forum in which the discussions could be continued regularly, even constantly. To this end a group of us, including Claire, formed the NETWORK. With a core of about nine artists and teachers, the intention was to

promote informed discussion, and to bring the debate back to the greater chamber as quickly and as loudly as possible, perhaps through the pages of our esteemed PERFORMANCE. I stopped attending in about May as I could not afford to travel every month. As far as I know the NETWORK has not yet achieved its aims as stated at the Riverside. (Update Please?). Essentially the *State of Play* was an intellectual assembly designed to provoke a more lively and interesting commentary on the work than is generally possible, and for it to include a broad, at times discordant, cross-section of voices. In the event it was self-defeatingly oversubscribed, and since then there has been no genuine continuation, certainly not on the same scale.

Against Compromise was a session held by Nikki Millican at the Midland Group, at the time when the axe was sharpened but still aloft. By invitation only, it was a discussion of the strategies for the future for artists, chaired by Neil Bartlett. There was only about thirty of us: two large companies, (Appeal Products and Forced Entertainment); one small company, (Dogs in Honey); and a number of solo artists and ex-company members. All of us had some relationship to the venue through past bookings. The first part of the afternoon was a good old-fashioned moan — the airing of grievances, some specific and some very general, and recognisable to anyone working in the area. The second part attempted to put forward tactics for tackling these problems. As one of the commonest complaints was a feeling of homelessness, (ie having nowhere 'of our own' to play, especially with the demise of the Midland Group, feeling unwelcome wherever we go), a decision was made to approach a small number of likely venues to find one that would set up a showcase platform for Performance work, including work-in-progress. The slot to be suggested was the first Sunday of every month, and when the 'home' venue was inappropriate for the particular piece being programmed another space should be found. This inevitably raised the questions of who should select, promote and administrate the programme: the task was to be shared by the Venue concerned and the artists assembled through common aim.

The Rosemary Branch in Islington was the co-operating venue. It is a small black box space, (16' x 26' total, 16' x 19' usual playing

seeks to deal with "that which is imposed externally and the internal reality" (*from the artists notes*). The videotape indicated a slowmoving live work here with Tallentire walking along prescribed lines, shifting rocks with a blank stoicism.

With the rest of the exhibition ranging from Carole Keys intriguing photocopy montages, charts of the night sky overlaid with iconographic images from both religious and contemporary culture — Bet Lynch set next to a hovering Virgin Mary — through Rose Anne McGreevy's raw, nightmarish construction of a

house to Rosemarie McGoldricks painting/sculpture pieces it's a varied and strong show.

For me the most forceful statement remains *Groundswell* yet, as a total show, what's on view here is both inspirational and quietly disturbing in its references to identity, dream and nightmare. *Off The Map* isn't an immediate experience but set against the shock-and-schlock 'new art' of a playful post-modernism there's the sense of a poetic meaning and communication. In challenging notions of "Irishness" and pursuing serious themes the show is of double value. For this we should be thankful. ●

floor), reasonably equipped for its size, and most importantly it is 'user friendly'. A regular Wednesday night platform was arranged for solo artists, and is beginning to take off. Anyone interested in performing at the Rosemary Branch should not hesitate to contact Rod Bolt, 01 226 6110.

However, by the fourth meeting of this Utopian ensemble, two of us came down from Leeds for the day to discover that we made up one third of the gathering. Therefore we, the walking wounded, chatted about our work, caught up on gossip, exchanged some useful information and called it a day. The trouble is: there are no common aims among a disparate group of artists; we all have particular concerns and special needs. Sadly there is little sign of altruism. Am I naive ever to have tried, or are others horribly cynical? Are they blind and lazy, or am I a complete mug? Is the failure of such projects intrinsic?

Abandon London was a nice day out. It was a flourish of 'come unto me all you that are heavy laden and I will refresh you' by Babel Administration in the Dean Clough Mills, which are enormous and largely unused. They are being developed as a business centre whose income has already funded a gallery space. The day was organised around installations, theatre, film, video and talks, including Richard Demarco and Bruce Maclean. There was not a great deal of discussion, the theme of *Abandon London* being physically demonstrated with the vision of Halifax as the cultural centre of Britain. The atmosphere was one of Possibility. However, since that time it would appear that there has been a tacit understanding, under funding pressure, to take foreign work rather than British. As far as I know there has been no follow up arranged by Badel. *Abandon Britain*.

And so it was August once again, and the ICA arranged a meeting called *I Don't Like This Kind Of Theatre*, looking on the bright side. In the seminar room of that illustrious establishment, between the hours of two and six, around 100 people: artists, bookers and 'fundlers' once again, met to discuss the current situation and possible policies for the future. During the first forty-five minutes or so nine speakers talked about their work in a gamut of fields. This was followed by an 'open' discussion, which permitted an element of inefficient question and answer.

Apart from occasional, sporadic cries of "but why can't we all work together?", the talks focussed on the inadequacy of funding provision, the lack of communication, particularly from bookers, leading to appalling touring conditions and a general feeling of hostility from 'the outside world', the absence of interest in and encouragement for new companies, and so on ad infinitum.

It was all tiresomely familiar; the same voices still meeting to hammer out the same differences, which remain resilient to all emollients.

There were a few positive suggestions, all of which inevitably were showered with arguments of unfeasibility: John Ashford's suggestion that the regional reps. be brought back into play, kicking and screaming; his indictment of the tax-deductible charity donation, with its assertion "they've got your money". There was hope, albeit unfounded, that more venues could work in collaboration with their neighbours, the outstanding example being that of the Cardiff mod-

el. There was a general agreement that change could be most quickly and assuredly effected by the movement of artists into venue management.

As usual a great deal of fatuous nonsense was talked, only some of which I can transcribe, in no particular order: Fiona Ellis (southern arts), tells us that Performance will join all the other 'priorities' on her list. (Please check dictionary for usage of the term priority). Jenny Waldman (Arts Council of Great Britain), has no answer for solo artists. (So we stopped asking the questions). We are advised to "examine those audiences, go into schools". (This is no suggestion at all as we are all capable of dreaming it up for ourselves, schools cannot solve the current financial quagmire that is Performance theatre since their projects require as much or more planning, rehearsal, *theatre* and they do not have MONEY). Nigel Cutting of the Gardiner Centre, Brighton, does not enjoy not replying to letters. (My heart bleeds for him). Andy Wilson, Hidden Grin, stirred us all with a piece of uplifting rhetoric concerning the need for dedication — with dedication we can do anything. (Sadly this is not actually the case, Andy, I have worked for nothing for two years, and I'm a junior, rehearsing in unheated church halls, building sets from stolen, borrowed and begged materials, travelled at my own expense to persuade bookers to take us, and whatever else has been necessary — but the reality is that dedication don't put diesel in the van, it don't pay the 'phone bill and it don't keep you out of court when the printers come knocking).

I may be jaded enough to run a venue, but I'm simply too young. What are my options?

It seems to me that all this blabbing is missing the point. There is another agenda, far more important, far more practicable, which ought to be our concern.

So far we have tended to start the talks from the premise that we are working within a predestined, hereditary system. It is tarnished, but valuable; frustrating but valid. There must, we urge each other, be some way of alleviating some of the pain. We must be patient, and above all understanding. We have to understand the problems faced by the Arts Council and the Arts Associations, we have to understand that there simply isn't the money to fund everyone, much as they would like to. They are all coping very well under the circumstances. Perhaps we can go to venues for commissions. But we have to understand the difficulties the venues are in with a declining if not invisible audience and no money. Perhaps if we catered for the audiences the venues could cater for us.

It does not work. The system has design faults, built-in failings. It is clear that the funding bodies are not serving each other, and they are certainly not serving their "clients". My regional arts association does not share my aims, neither for my work nor for experimental theatre in general. The arts associations and the Arts Council are engaged in a delicate juggling act, keeping aloft as many balls as possible, without due care for the quality of the whole picture. The punchline to each of their jokes is financial rather than aesthetic. Our lifestyle does not concern them, our finances do not concern them — so long as their books balance at the end of the year, and they can report satisfactory accounting to the government of the day.

The Arts Council can no longer afford to

invest properly in any future that entails an element of risk. It can afford to put large sums into a very small number of dead certs, and some smaller sums into the medium risk 'safe' gambles. It cannot afford to play dangerous. And there is nothing to make it do so. The word 'accountability' refers only to 'accounts'.

The regional arts associations are additionally burdened with responsibility to their community, rather than to their artistic community. They must justify their work on the basis of what the folks back home, the men and the women on the street are *seen* to want. They should, it seems to me, be involved in finding and creating audiences for the work being produced in their regions, and for the work touring there, however they are kept busy pushing around such piffling sums of money, like peas on a child's plate, that ability and desire are alike exhausted.

The venues are governed inevitably by the need to fill seats. Not all the seats all the time, but enough to remain solvent. Specialist work has to be subsidised by more popular work, and the local audience, especially in the provinces, must be coddled and convinced. Departure from the norm is greeted with a worried tremor of 'they won't like this one bit, oh dear oh dear'. Evidence suggests that if they can get 'them' there they do like it, (except in Kendal where they definitely do not). Very few venues have any money for commissioning, and so the pressure on those that do is phenomenal, leading to a large number of projects each year which cannot go ahead. It is death by misadventure rather than malice aforethought, but death all the same.

Artists need to eat and they need to travel and they need conditions conducive to the production of art and they need their art to be seen. Artists' needs do not sit happily with the needs of their dependents.

The reason I do not like this kind of meeting is that we sit together in a room and very politely lie to each other. The basis for the meeting is a lie. It relies on the assumption that we are all on the same side really. It relies on the assumption that something might be done. The creation and sustenance of hope is a deceptive, timewasting, sidetracking hoax. Hope is not sustenance enough.

The agenda for artists who accept the system and remain working in this climate is the agenda of the fifth column. The adoption of apparent characteristics, while maintaining subconsciously the individual consciousness.

We must be knowing of sales techniques, superb, clear, attractive images, we must be cheap, but no so cheap as to draw derisive attention, we must be diplomatically pushy. We must have access to powerful business minds, especially with the prospect of mix'n'match funding. We must have smart suits. Above all we must make saleable art: clean, containable, fashionable, comprehensible, tourable, and preferably famous.

In order to have the conditions which allow me to work, it seems that I must compromise on the details of what I want to make, to change my terms. I shall have to cater for the market place, however cutthroat. I shall have to screw the system as best I can, and seduce commerce into buying me. I shall have to give my work a face-lift, and just hope they don't notice the knots behind my ears.

"Have show will travel. £20,000 o.n.o." ●

This year the Nottingham born National Review of Live Art moved into London for one time only. The move permitted a wider range of events, and resulted in a very different kind of audience to previous years. But the move had its bad side too. STEVE ROGERS attempts an assessment.

THE MOVE FROM Nottingham to London highlighted some of the problems of the National Review of Live Art. First though on the plus side the larger venue of Riverside Studios resulted in more than 1300 tickets being sold over the four day event. Riverside's bar had rarely looked so packed, the cafe ran out of everything by Saturday lunchtime, and by Saturday night the atmosphere came to resemble the closing stages of a mega birthday party with tired revelers slumped in every available corner.

The move to London also offered a number of well-established British artists a rare opportunity to have their work seen in a high profile London venue with capacity audiences. The festival was as well thought out and well managed as could reasonably be expected given the usual limitations of resources and the ambitious attempt to stage some 50 or so separate events in four days. Unreserved congratulations are definitely in order for both Nikki Millican the director, Neil Bartlett the loquacious MC, Steve Littman, organiser of the video events and documentor of the whole show, and Riverside's staff and technicians.

The minuses of the move to London are somewhat harder to define. Perhaps the biggest minus was the metropolitan audience. What in Nottingham had seemed a celebration of diversity in here seemed liked incoherence. The general overall standard of the platform performances seemed lower than before. But most significant of all, the general assumption that all artists that work in this ill defined area of live art also share the same aims and attitudes was seen to be very far from the truth. I put all this down to the London atmosphere and audience. There's less tolerance and less willingness to be generous. There is greater sense of competition with artists feeling they need to protect their little bit of turf. Also, the simple fact that a large part of what might be called the 'professional audience', that is other artists, administrators, funders and critics, live in London and because they could all go home at the end of each day, there was less of a sense of commitment to the festival and its ideals than in Nottingham where the same 'professional audience' was there solely for the festival and were not distracted by having lives to live.

It was at the festival's Banquet Debate that the lines of division within this amorphous group of people were shown up most clearly. The speaker at the debate was to have been Dutch artist, Franklin Aalders. On the previous day he had given a 'talk' which had included the showing of a video which many members of the audience had found deeply offensive, to the extent that one person, acting as the executor of the offended group, had turned the tape off. Franklin Aalders took deep exception to this intervention and left the festival and did not therefore speak at the banquet. His absence and its cause resulted in what became a quite bitter argument. On the one hand there were those who wanted to defend the right of the artist to use whatever material s/he chooses in whatever way. In opposition to this were those who felt that the issue was not a simple black and white, censor or not censor, debate. They argued that it was more complex and that art

must be seen as coming out of and being seen in a social context. I don't believe it was any accident that all the people who voiced their support for Franklin Aalders were men and that many of those who opposed his showing of the tape were women. This conflict of attitudes opened the way for a discussion, which lack of time and the weather prevented, of the whole mythology of the individual artist-hero working alone against a hostile world.

However, the argument appeared again in a later open discussion about the festival with a panel of women artists. Here the same issues were raised in the form of that hoary old chestnut of the differences between performance art and theatre. All these debates must be resolved into the one really fundamental question which is 'what is this art for?', what is its function and its purpose? These kind of short unstructured debates are not conducive to tackling this question directly and all too often, as here, the time is taken up skirting the issue without ever getting down to the nitty-gritty.

These debates were however extremely useful in that they made the divisions extremely clear and perhaps against this background the real debate can commence without the miasma of pretence that all 'performance' work has the same goal in mind.

As to the art itself. The sheer volume of the festival programme and the limitations of space here prevent any in depth discussion of any of the work. I have chosen to focus on the platform artists since the platform is still the real heart of the festival and because most of the commissioned and invited artists taking part are frequently found in the pages of *Performance*. I apologise to those artists I have not discussed and to those I have for the brevity of my remarks.

The platform opened with John Jordan's *Icarus*. Jordan was one of the few artists in the platform who clearly had an understanding of the traditions within which he is working and it was as a result one of the most clear and successful of all the festival events. Entering the space you are greeted by a powerful smell of burnt feathers and the environment was filled with feathers. The performance involved a search for meaning in the feathers as well as an exploration of the feathers as a material for art. It was a simple, effective piece deeply rooted in the tradition of the artists body in relation to the chosen medium and materials. This is an artist who knows what he's doing and why he's doing it.

Inside Pocket, by contrast, are two women whose work also falls clearly within a tradition, that of Visual Theatre, English style, but they seemed little aware of this. Visual Theatre has lost favour in recent years possibly as a result of some of the techniques it pioneered being taken up in a big way by the more adventurous mainstream producing houses. However the freshness and evident commitment of these two artists demonstrated that there is life in the old dog yet. It had a lyrical, dreamlike quality as one of the women slept on a bed of light, her body silhouetted, as a source of memories, and the protection and desire of the other woman as she carries out a series of task-oriented actions around the sleeping form. With a sharper grasp

of theatre technology and a harder edge to their images Inside Pocket could rejuvenate a seemingly dying form.

The most traditionally theatrical performance of the platform was Martin Aubrey's vaunted *A Portrait of Salvador Dali*. It was also one of the least satisfactory. The large set was totally underused, the Dali moustache wouldn't stay stuck, the artists model couldn't help giggling and the text didn't come even close to revealing anything about Dali you didn't already know. This is the kind of one person show that most reasonably capable actors have in their repertoire to get British Council tours of the Commonwealth. It didn't belong here.

I have written about Dianne Esquerre and Keith Khan's *Images From Purdah* before (*Performance* 45) and as before I found their attempt to blend a purely image based performance style with declamatory acting and cabaret intriguing but unsuccessful. The work has changed in the year since I first saw it and has become more elaborate with the inclusion of a third performer who serves as Islamic wife in Yashmak, Klu Klux Klansman and finally as bal-ladeering cowboy. As before I found the complex series of role transformation between the two central performers, articulated through brilliantly conceived adaptable costumes, beautiful and eloquent. The additional material seemed to encumber the performance with over-elaborations of themes and ideas that are totally clear from the images alone.

Theatre was actually not much in evidence in the platform although theatricality was there in abundance. Julian White and Michael Hurst's sharp, style-conscious agit-prop as totally theatrical and one of the high points of the platform. Using video, projected images, loud music and a central, almost static performance the work amounted to the kind of unpretentious, rhetorical, sloganeering that would work extremely well in a rock club to a visually astute but artistically uninitiated mass audience. It could stand its ground between the comedian and the heavy metal band without any sense of condescension or compromise. It was also one of the surprisingly few, overtly campaigning, political works in the festival.

Another issued based performance was Sally Dawson's *She Wears Sea Shells*. Her demonstration of the exploitation and oppression involved in the appropriation of the artifacts of other, mostly non-western, cultures started out well. A series of large projections of beautiful fabrics drawn from around the world produced the effect of both pleasure and a desire to have these things. The images changed into images of the abuse of these fabrics in their incorporation into high street fashion. Finally the performance disintegrated into a poorly articulated unadorned punchline. The final overstatement of the message destroyed the effect of the subtly ironic use of seduction at the start of the performance which was far more persuasive than the sledgehammer at the end.

Etheldreda ably demonstrated that you don't have to use body blows to be either politically effective or accessible. With no props, no set and no clever technical tricks they produced an articulate series of ironic images of the English

aristocracy at play. From hunting to coming out balls, landownership, heraldry and country weekends they revealed that the nostalgia of such traditional pageantry which is shared by all classes is actually a form of class oppression. As chance would have it the former Lord Stanesgate, Tony Benn, saw the performance whilst waiting to do a book-signing in the bookshop; a perfect coincidence.

Etherdreda also demonstrated the value of technical training. They moved well and sounded clear and precise, it is something which Stephen Lumb's otherwise excellent performance sadly lacked. Here we had a classic example of the performance artist using his own body as both the form and the content of his work. He examined his own body as ikon, source of sexual pleasure and disgust, an object of desire and a transient vehicle that would finally carry him into death. His use of dance however, although appropriate for his purpose, was so untrained that it served more to distance the audience when it should have been sexually enticing. This apart, it was a performance that clearly marks him as someone to watch out for.

No such problems with the Media Arts Group. They were by far the most slickly professional on the platform. In fact their multi-disciplined skills seemed to be the only thing on offer. As a demonstration of ability it was excellent, as a work of art it was nothing. It had all the ingredients of a kind of whimsical absurdism, like Hoffnung's adventures with orchestras but beyond that I couldn't see the point.

The only other real duffer on the platform, and this was not the artists' fault, was Philippa O'Connor and Andrew Hammerson's dancery performance. It suffered two big technical problems and as a result it is impossible to make any fair comments of the piece.

One of the most enjoyable games of platform-going is trying to work out which college the artists have come out of and who was their teacher. There were no prizes for guessing that Jason Walsh and Louise Maunder have been students of Anthony Howell. This was a delightful; well executed example of the Theatre of Mistakes school of deadpan deconstruction of theatrical narrative. Using no more than a bed, a stack of books, a bed cover and a suspended apple the two performers told the tale of Adam & Eve and its consequences for contemporary gender relationships. There was a simple clarity to the work and a lightness of touch which was refreshing.

Fish Eye Pie is the unlikely name for a duo of women artists whose *Moonacy* was the most straight-forwardly enjoyable of the platform events. The simple basis of the piece is an exploration of nostalgia and romantic love seen through the image of the moon. A simple crescent construction was used as a cradle, a boat and a funeral bier as well as a moon for spooning on. They too could have benefitted from some greater technical skills particularly in movement, but in all, they had set themselves modest aims which they could fully achieve. It was a sheer pleasure to watch.

Finally, of the performances, there is John Stanton's *No Time to Panic*. This was a simple process work, the performer having to complete a construction against the demands of a tyrannical clock. It had little new to say, although the celebratory ending of the piece avoided the obvious trap of totally succumbing to the dic-

tates of the clock, but of all the performances it was one of the very few that took any account of a visual environment characterised by The Face, street fashion and TV ads for Hi-Fi equipment. It was sharp, cool, monochromatic and sexy. This style harnessed to a more provocative content would be an irresistible combination.

The three other platform performances were installation based, durational events. Karen Strang used a Television set giving information about the disappearance of Israeli scientist Vanunu after he had revealed to the world the existence of the Israeli's nuclear capability. Also in the space was a construction made from opaque plastic sheeting, which served both to blur perception and to indicate the ineffectiveness of any possible protection from a nuclear disaster. It was a sparse understated work which didn't really transform the space enough to create the intensity of focus it needed but it was nevertheless intriguing and quietly articulate.

Ian Halcrow and Antoni Malinowski's *Life Drawing* had an equally sparse feeling but on close inspection the work was revealed to be quite a thorough and extensive use of the Riverside Galleries. Entering the space you were greeted by two televisions showing static monochrome views of the rooftops of some unidentified town. The gallery beyond contained only a single figure, painted a rich, earthy reddish brown, and a large boulder. The figure rolled around the space slowly and heavily imitating the expected movement of the boulder. At the very edges of the space painted onto the floor, but partly obliterated by overpainting, was a text like the forgotten runes from some past civilisation. This was an elemental work that drew lines between the present and an archaic past and between the human body and the earth. It fulfilled all the criteria of the performance platform in that it introduced to a large audience the work of an unknown artist who deserves to be better known.

Finally, the installation by tradition: debilitation. This seven hour performance took total control of the environment and transformed it. The overheated small room, lit only by candles, focused around a table over which was suspended a canvas bag which dripped linseed oil. The oil giving off its distinctive sweet smell but also stung the eyes and put you in mind of craftsmen at work, of cricket bats, of tradition. The debilitation was visible in the men that inhabited the space, blindly, and slowing tracing the edge of the table in slavery to their craft and its purpose. This was a seductive environment and provocative in their articulation of it. Their grasp of their work was very strong and I was left wanting to see what they might do next. Overall, the platform showed a high level of sophistication but suffered from a lack of technical ability and a general lack of discipline. However, as always, it was enough to engender a feeling of great optimism for years to come.

All the other artists, invited and commissioned, deserve greater attention than I have space for but I at least have to mention some. The three commissioned works from Alistair MacLennan, Mona Hatoum and Nick Stewart were all excellent new installation performances. MacLennan continues to astound and move with his acute feeling for the power and meaning latent in ordinary domestic objects. His

haunting, meditative environments are the high point of contemporary British performance. Mona Hatoum continued her investigation of lives and situations which are deliberately hidden away by governments and the media. Here she imprisoned herself in an iron cell in a corner of the Riverside's foyer, right next to the bar. By peering at her through the only window, which was a distorting lens, you came close enough to hear a simple broken text of ordinary domestic concerns. Even at the very busiest, most public centres of our world are hidden prisons in which ordinary people attempt to maintain their lives. It is a complex stirring work, both fascinating and frightening as we are placed in the position of both jailer and voyeur.

Nick Stewart's commissioned installation/performance again marked him as someone who can come to terms with the decaying industrial environment and the bright, hard seductive aesthetic of new technology. In front of a white screen an old car exhaust supports new life in the form of a single sapling. On the screen are projected bright but subtle images of the modern urban environment, tower blocks and offices, behind the screen the performer, his silhouette thrown onto the screen, remains virtually motionless but for the constant tensing and releasing of his whole body. The screen of technology separates the body from its past and from new life. The body is without identity and without corporeality, yet the whole work remains as beautiful, glamorous even, as a perfume advertisement in a colour supplement. If I had to choose one work from the whole festival that was the most effective and memorable, this would be it.

Annie Griffin confirmed her status with a rendering of her brilliant *'Almost Persuaded'*. Anne Seagrave gave a simple, honest and immensely enjoyable talk about her own work, as did Richard Wilson. Towering Inferno performed an icily cool set of what I suppose must be called Visual Music with layered slides and films against a jazzy fusion music. Startled Insects have been spoiled by too much technology, and an overheated ambition to be pop stars. Their ultra-slick video montages and their costumes and posturing could have been exciting if the music itself had been anything more than a bland danceable electro-shock. The end-of-evening foyer cabarets were unfortunately not welcomed by the audience. At the end of a hard day keeping up with a torturous schedule they just wanted to hang-out, drink beer and discuss the latest installment of Eastenders. No more attention left despite the quirky surreal good humour of George Wyllie, the accessible virtuosity of Paul Burwell's percussing, the sharpness of Claire Dowie's, or the bumbling, game-show-host persona of Roy Bayfield. As to the videos, both in exhibition in the gallery and in the foyer, I didn't seem able to focus, which is a pity since there was some excellent work, some of which I'd seen before.

Reviewing a festival like this is hard work. Summing it up is impossible. The move to London was a useful exercise. It showed up the strengths and the weaknesses of both the festival and this whole area of work which in Nottingham there was a general willingness to ignore. With all the lessons from the London venture still settling in her head, Nikki Millican is already working on the 1988 National Review but this time it will be in Glasgow. I can't wait. ●

PERFORMANCE

REVIEW



John Stanton — sharp and cool



Etherdreda — English aristocracy given the treatment

TILTING AT WINDMILLS

IOU Theatre at Saltaire, Bradford. Reviewed by JAMIE NUTTGENS

IOU ARE ARGUABLY the most successful Performance group in Britain today. Since they grew out of Welfare State they have survived 11 years, producing 60 shows. They have a form, a vocabulary, recognisably their own; they manipulate it confidently; they have achieved a large audience for their work. In 1986, when other collectives were closing down in financial difficulties, they received increased revenue funding from the Arts Council.

This seal of approval also means that their work deserves reappraisal.

Salt and Slack Water, commissioned by the Bradford Festival, was essentially an environmentalist parable of the Town versus Country ilk, with nods in the direction of East-West relations. Whilst the utility of its non-analytical politics was questionable, it was disappointing in quite basic ways. As a site specific work, the audience were simply shortchanged on the (limited) spatial articulation of the location, Salts Mill, centrepiece of the Victorian Model Town, Saltaire.

Despite an open-air start in a factory environment, the central section — literally and figuratively — of this three part work took place in an ordinary theatre setting with audience seated for forty minutes. It was a presentation of their street theatre piece, *Terra Firma*. It concerns a Don Quixote knight who guards a tree bearing gourd-like fruits. Having chased (colourful) birds and animals away from his prize, he is attacked by dancing yellow clad figures with astrokhan beards who steal the gourds, distributing their seeds on the soil, where they belong. They teach Don to eat seeds and to walk in

a new way — on triangular blocked shoes. They depart in their war machine, leaving Don to take the next step on his own. Will he?

To recognise in the Don Quixote figure a protrait (and therefore a criticism) of Titus Salt, Victorian industrialist and philanthropist; to see in the tree he guards a symbol of the contented workforce of his alcohol-free model town, is to miss the point that IOU are themselves early Victorians. The first clue to this is in the ragamuffin mechanics with which they construct machinery, creatures, costume and set. Behind their earth-conscious environmentalist facade, they would like to return to the dawn of industrialisation, but "do it differently this time". They aspire to the inventiveness of Brunel or Edison, but whereas Edison sought cheap and efficient ways of providing electricity for all, they expound the cumbersome qualities of tallow.

And there is a machoism which attends this approach, of the 'Robin and His Marion' school, evident in all their shows. Men are builders and operators of machines, knights, furrowers, Sons of the Soil; women are cast as birds or animals, as earth mothers and symbols of fertility, to be sealed up in tree trunks to bring fruit to the branches.

IOU's work is thickly symbolic, which often confuses due to its being further disguised in whimsical surrealism, but the symbols, once grasped, are simplistic, lack resonance and are ultimately anodyne. In the final section, entitled *Back to the Garden*, whilst a man and woman stood isolated from each other, water pouring from their bodies, musicians sang a song, telling us that in the garden 'there will always be enough' and closing with, 'the journey back is never easy — its not meant to be'. Is their desire to travel backwards to the Glory of the Garden of England the reason for IOU's popularity with the Arts Council? ●

**Cambridge Youth Theatre
Directed by Claire
MacDonald Reviewed
by PIPPA CORNER**

THE FIRST THING to state clearly about this project is its success.

The base line of the concept was to produce a piece of Performance theatre with The Cambridge Youth Theatre, as a promenade show set in the Victorian Pumping Station which is part of the Cambridge Museum of Science and Technology, supported by Cambridge City Council. The interest and co-operation by all the groups concerned is an exemplary step for Performance theatre, embracing and being embraced by the community. Perhaps it seems more remarkable for being in Cambridge, a town where nothing happens without disproportionate amounts of energy being expended.

The show was under way even while the spectators were still on the approach road. To the accompaniment of squeakily excited voices, saxophone, klaxon and the engine of a large crane, a massive element of dangerous looking scrap was being very slowly hoisted over the iron railings and into the courtyard of the Pumping Station. The sense of thrill was created before the tickets were even changing hands, and it was sustained throughout by the fantasy of the environment.

The audience was shepherded in small groups through the early units, inside the building. The show was governed by the high physical profile of the venue: a building constructed around the machinery it houses. I shifted slowly through rooms and passages of steamy machinery, at one moment overlooking an eery industrial revolution family — paper dressed women looking downcast and baby-bound, lorded by the typically ominous figure of a suited man; in the next a pair of slender young women

A WORLD'S WASTE:

**Cumbria, Sellafield and Nuclear Reprocessing
Rochdale Art Gallery,
(touring from the Brewery
Arts Centre, Kendal)**

**Reviewed by
DAVID LOVELY**

'OUR TASK NOW is to imagine the real.' The aims of the artists represented in this exhibition can handily be summed up in the words of Martin Buber, the 20th century Jewish theologian. Reappearing in Phillipa Goodall's photo-text piece, *Utterings of Unquiet Women: Futures*, they served to force the question of moral choice on an indifferent, almost derelict society. Moving around the exhibition, their relevance to

the issue of nuclear waste increased.

Monica Ross interposed murky images of stone surfaces covered with semi-obliterated human marks between conflicting and ambiguous evocations of the power of stone. Wordsworth's poem to the neolithic stone-circle of Long Meg spoke of 'a weight of awe, not easy to be borne', while a Guardian report of a circle of huge granite monoliths apparently seriously intended as a marker for a high-level nuclear waste dump, with its final implication that the sites "could be so attractive that they would attract tourists", seemed almost parodic. The shift from awe to pathos took a disturbing turn next to the poignancy of hand prints and lovers graffiti, an abasement to a new Trinity, *In The Name of The Father Calder Hall, And Of The Son Windscale, And Of The Holy Ghost Sellafield*. In this complex, minatory piece, Ross seemed to be signalling the power of the nuclear industry to warp our sense of the ineffable.

Similarly, though in a crisper, dialectic style, Kit Edwardes and John Popadec's *Science Fictions: Bourgeois Narrative Fictions Legitimated* moved between images of past metaphysical and philosophical authority and new sources of conviction. Victorian engravings of Christian myths and Greek statuary from the British Museum alternated with dislocated photographs of displays in the Sellafield Visitors Centre. The accompanying texts, a neat series of either/or questions logically progressing to the final issue of who determines what is and is not regarded as 'truth' or 'knowledge'. Edwardes and Popadec's hard-headed and rigorously critical approach sharpened the exhibition's declared focus on the rationale of the nuclear debate, polarised 'between hard-to-acquire factual knowledge and desparate emotional reaction', through Conrad Atkinson's ironic reprocessing of BNFL's welcome mats, Denise Hawryso's montage of film of a reactor in operation superimposed on x-ray images of bone marrow and an embryonic child, and Judith Rugg's 'corporate cut-outs' exposing the insidious collaboration between corny 'futurism' and the multinational expansion of the nuclear industry were all incisive. ●



John Popadec
— Kit Edwardes' *Science Fictions*

DREAM OF A NEW MACHINE

in an apparent control tower, employed in silent observation. The text on the sound-track, a woman and a child's voice speaking just out of sync, describe, in muffled tones, the process of industrialisation: "the history of man is the history of invention".

Then a smoky scene where what I took, probably mistakenly, to be a viking was claiming territory. Onwards to a cacophonous 50's American consumerist enclave. Performers acting out the world of cheap tv nostalgia, repeating sequences of moves and phrases, offering us the world, the new world and the universe, like they do in the ads. It was fairly entertaining, it was exciting, it was loud and it looked quite dangerous, the performers being dotted about at all heights and on vertiginous ledges, and it was typically apocalyptic, the unit ending with the frenzied repeated demand "Please leave the building".

Down the stone-paved corridor and out into the main courtyard, where a few seats awaited us, a couple of flaming braziers, a mysterious man in another suit sitting motionless and another with a train set. After a very slow build-up of the girls in their victorian white nighties who come and go in their dreamlike living death,

the climax approached with 'that' view of an anaesthetised society. It was genuinely moving, at times it was frightening, it was impressively detailed, working as it did with a large number of performers. It was long, it was repetitive and I was reminded of a lot of other things. As the proles in the scene arrive at slowness again, a beautiful woman, clearly upper class, descends from the ramparts, trailing a train almost as long as her journey, and announces hope into a microphone. A very fine rain began to fall. It was a moment of exquisite beauty, provided by the venue and the elements and the lighting. The show seemed to belong in the space.

A clapped-out golden chariot of a 2CV emerges from the heart of the building with a flourish of high campery, and bears the little girl in white and her ladylike keeper up the hill and into the finale, where a form of hope is at last enacted. The little girl is laid on the bed to dream, presumably, of a new machine. Behind her the Flywheel of the Pump turns, gracefully casting fantastic shadows around the nativity scene. In an effort of co-operative dreaming the full cast come and go, describing their perfect city, and lapsing in turn into a state of enervated traffic direction.

I was grateful that the overview had encouraged irony, and the power of the piece to move its audience mustn't be underrated. But the show as a whole was cast so firmly within the known language of Performance that I find myself increasingly in two minds about. As a youth show, bringing much of its audience and most of its performers into contact with this sort of theatre for the first time, it had inculcated the vocabulary of repetition and physical representation into the collective mind very confidently. Theatrically it worked, and efficiently so; the performances were strong by any standards.

There is however a big BUT for me in all this. I actually don't want to keep seeing the same show over and over again. Raiding the coffers has always been relatively acceptable in this line of work, and particularly so in student residency work, partly due to the grim necessity for a workable shorthand that gets things done in time. But if we are to move into educating a wider audience for ourselves, then we must quickly move on from the staple diet of failsafe theatre. The vocabulary must expand if we hope to accommodate an increasingly youthful audience; they must be given something new, not just new to them. It must be new to the art. ●

BRIAN CATLING

Matts Gallery & St James Church, London. Reviewed by JULIA ORKNEY

THE ANGEL IS a melancholic presence. The protection of the territories of signified time — a guardian for every minute of the day — belies an ambivalent role in which positive and negative elements co-exist and often dramatic transformations take place. Brian Catling's performances take as their central theme this area of transformation and metamorphosis, and angels, "denizens of an outer world", are a preoccupation and creative source.

Titles — *The Side of Dirt and Angels* (a quotation from Stanley Spencer), *Hypothania*, *Saline Apparitions* — begin to describe his areas of concentration. The angels in Catling's performances are awkward, inarticulate and clumsy in movement. In searching for a way in which to articulate themselves into being, they will often use repetitive, obsessive ritualistic cleansing actions. Like the classic gnostic image of the angelic presence falling to earth, epitomised in popular culture by David Bowie's film *Man Who Fell to Earth*, the angel performs spiritual abluitions, in particular the washing of hands, expressing simultaneously a domestic and spiritual state. A dramatic metamorphosis always

results from the searching activity. Transformation occurs through and around a specific object. In *Haunted Clay*, performed at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, as part of the Blake Festival this summer, the object was a halo made from clay. Moving slowly through the altar area of the church amongst an array of golden wings made from bread scattered across the floor, the angel, head obscured by a muslin hood, discovered the halo on the ground and, in an at once absurd and profound gesture, placed it on his head like a hat. It appeared to be a hard, taut, solid object folded in soft wetness, placenta-like, around his ears. In that moment of uncertainty exposed in the searching, the beast, or animal spirit, took over, entered and occupied that same shell.

The ambivalence of the halo, a sculptural object, diametrically opposed to the familiar translucent, radiant, spiritual qualities of religious haloes in its density, colour, texture and substance, re-emphasised that process of transformation and exchange between human/inhuman, expressed through the angelic form. The etching of rays deep into the clay recalls the physical quality of early Greek icons and Italian paintings in which haloes appear made entirely from writing, or as solid gold discs.

The articulation of the ephemeral and ephemeral as solid form can also be traced in Catling's sculptures and installations. Catling has been described as a 'transient room-

maker'. The room is constructed through imagination in his writings, and in his performances through movements of discovery and exploration. In his installations, materials are used as instruments with which first to receive and comment on the qualities of a particular room — light, atmosphere, space — and then to re-invent it. In doing so, he creates a resonance in the objects through which an invocation of presence takes place.

In *Lair*, Catling's recent installation at Matt's Gallery, the artist brought three signifiers — a calendar of angels, a metal engraved 'carpet' and a feather — into the space to fuel a response and mark out invisible and physical boundaries. Traces of a presence could be detected in a number of objects which illuminated the atmosphere through a friction created by the juxtaposition of the qualities of parchment, vellum and perspex. The association of parchment with knowledge stored from another time, the idea of inscription (also associated with the feather, or quill), and the living, tangible, characterful opacity of its surface set against the manipulable, transparent modernity of perspex, ground into an opaque, cloudy evocation of glass and ice. The contradiction contained within the choice and use of materials was also present in the contrast between the physicality of construction and the immateriality surrounding the result.

Ambivalence and implication within the room or 'lair', suggested *Hypothania*, the area occupied by angels. This angelic presence operates for Catling both as an exploration of that hypothetic space, and as a metaphor for the human search for knowledge and meaning. ●

TATTOO THEATRE OF YUGOSLAVIA

Almeida Theatre, London
Reviewed by
PHILIP WOOD

I WAS SURPRISED at the audience for Tattoo, it was solidly middle class, Volvos full; with reviews like 'an unspoken, unsentimental romance of working class family life, dot dot dot, tender, violent, witty and moving' from the Observer, I should not have been. It did make me suspicious though. Why this sudden interest in non verbal theatre? I was slightly dubious that the popularity came from the subject matter, that of sex and violence in the home.

The director Mladen Materic is credited with experimenting with the theatre of gentleness, an opposite to Artuad theatre of cruelty. This gentleness was often touching and incisive, but impotent when tackling the sexual, political and social questions raised.

The evening started in the Almeida Bistro, East meets West, boy meets girl. Poet fights slick haired rock'n'roller, policeman idly watches, brawn wins — the trophy the barmaid. The action switched to the theatre a shabby, pokey, empty flat and the wench, now wife, is tattooed as a sign of possession. We watch the room fill with objects used as an alphabet, spelling out the slippery decline from married bliss into games of sexual taunting, beer swilling and violence. The proceedings being watched over by a rabbit, toy, real and performing, who seemed to be a benevolent Marjorie Proops character, that even did the washing-up.

The richest communication is often non verbal and these avenues were explored and used eloquently (touch, gesture, movement and sound). The props became words and later

phrases. The punching through of a wall to fit a window was initially an attempt at bettering the home and outlook. On being repeated it became a sign of frustration and contempt with a hoped for reward of sex for a DIY job well done. A washing line changed from a screen to a symbol of repression, a possible sanctuary and a murder weapon.

Before the intermission the audience was segregated by gender and two separate performances took place the men watched the wife secretly, dispassionately, pathetically getting laid by the poet reciting lines from his works — this was no solution. I suppose the husband also got fucked — still no answer. The second half now that we had learnt the vocabulary became more intensive, faster, more disturbing, and frighteningly funnier. The presumed inevitable happened; frustration bubbled into violence, lack of money lead to petty crime and the child became a pathetic ping pong ball trapped, scared and as impotent as the parents. As lost communication between each other and control of what was happening to their lives, so their ability to talk to the audience grew.

The problems that constantly gnaw at the working class here were echoed by the struggle of the Slavs. This was obvious and poignant, even tragic but hardly surprising.

Prison for the husband, rich lover for the wife. The symbols became more abstracted, the bunny, de-masked, kissed the wife, baby talc poured on the heads of the couple. The real images of policeman at the window and the boy finally dressed as party member amidst the confusion, proved to be the most powerful political statements; Big brother is watching and make sure your kids do better than you in the future. The question left unanswered was, what future? ●

ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED BY the B.F.I.'s Colin McCabe — prior to the appointment of the Video Production Officer, Ben Gibson — 'Taxidriver II: Decline Of The West' was, I suppose, always destined for close scrutiny as an example of the B.F.I.'s new initiative in funding video work. With Barbers much discussed background in an often sophisticated 'scratch video' technique — *Hard Core Video Lovelies* and *Scratch Free State*, by example — the commission might, at first glance, have made sense yet with the arrival of this new work comes a distinct sense of disillusionment.

Disillusionment is in a way, what the tape is about as the young and ambitious medianik Tim West forms the focus of a sly, funny parody of Londons Filofax toting mediaworld. Episodic and fractured it's a narrative which sees West question the 'reality' of this strangely surreal situation — Johnny Morris puts on a quizzical face as he recalls West's inverted slang, "Tim said to me, 'That voiceover, Johnny, that was wicked, wicked' . . . Well, I know what it was and it certain wasn't wicked"; West discusses an idea for cookery tips from Israeli guerrillas with a TV producer — and, finally, drive off into the country with the persona of the gungho Travis, from Scorsese's sweaty thriller *Taxidriver*, firmly in place.

It's not a bad tape. It just feels too clever, too contained. Played out in a downbeat, flat style it's a work which is both funny and pointed yet more than this there's not much else on display. Certainly there's none of Barbers scratchattack style here in what is, essentially, pure narrative and the pop experimental energies of earlier works seem a long way off. In a sense, though, Barber should perhaps be applauded for swerving into new territory and abandoning the mediam strategy of previous efforts but this is offset by a total break with experimental or innovatory techniques.

With a budget somewhere close to £11,000 *Taxidriver II* could just as easily have been a film. There's nothing 'video' about it — and this, independent of its content, is what's worrying. Why worrying? Worrying because it indicates

STIFFED BY THE TUBE or IT'S A STUDIO OUT THERE

DAVID GALE on A
History of the Present
The I.C.A.'s 40th Birthday

'I PAID TEN pounds for this and there's all those guys standing in the way,' grumbled the punter to the compere. But many of the guys in the way had also paid ten pounds and were refusing to sit on the floor because the people at the tables were in their way. The rest of the guys were from the television. With a small stage at either end of the Gallery, the ICA opened its evening of light entertainments designed to mark Forty Years in show business. Along with Neil Bartlett, Rose English and Ian Smith, it was my fraught and intermittent pleasure that night to compere an evening of music and mediocrity for an over-booked space full of innocent audience members whose wallets had just been dramatically

lightened. An appalling time was had by all. Why?

On a succession of afternoons in the third week of September, BBC2 ran a series of films about aspects of the ICA's operations. The films were coproductions with ICATV, an independent production company founded in 1986, whose brief is 'to reflect the spirit of the ICA in the medium of television'. The final film in the set, *A History of the Present*, was compiled entirely from live footage of the first night of the Anniversary Cabaret and cut, overnight, into a two and a half hour two-parter transmitted the very next afternoon to those subgroups of our society who seek avant garde documentary material between Open University and the Golf.

It is an accepted industry practice, encouraged by Equity and recognised by managements, that when a live indoor entertainment is filmed or televised, ticket prices should reflect, in terms of a reduction, the inconvenience vi-

sited upon the audience. At a recent concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, for example, prices were halved for the evening, in compensation for the telerecording of some twentyfive minutes of the programme. Several rows of seats were blocked off for camera positions, and certain other blocks were not sold because of obstruction to sightlines caused by equipment. An exception to this practice might occur when the event is being mounted as a Benefit, for a Cause. Given that none of the ICA publicity suggested that the cabaret had a charitable aspect, and the artistes working on the show were all paid (surprisingly inadequate) fees, the Benefit angle would hardly seem to hold up in this instance.

The BBC having paid the ICA a derisory location fee, over forty television personnel, many of them surly and burly, were licensed to preside over the erection of towers, the hanging of lights and the laying down of sinuous confu-

TAXIDRIVER II

by George Barber Reviewed by NIK HOUGHTON



sions of heavy cable in the Gallery space. (Later in the evening the audience would also be entertained in the packed bar and finally in the sparsely filled theatre itself.) Two teams of 'floor management' were in evidence, one from each of the colluding institutions. The man who frequently tugged my trouser leg in mid sentence, in order to draw my attention to his frantic hand-signals, was with the television. He confided that 'Quite frankly, the ICA should have let us run the whole thing. We *know* how to get what we want.' Lest it be thought that his crew were being in some way frustrated in their aspirations, it should be said that at no time was that perennial irritant, the audience, allowed to impede the project of creating a simulacrum of a good night out in the street where the Queen lives. In fact, if only those effete ticket holding bastards had not been there at all, the lads could have *really* got some decent angles in the can.

Twisting their heads in a perpetual one eighty from stage to stafe, the hapless paying minority was soon reduced to the status of extras in an amorphous, partially visible pop movie. A friend of mine was physically restrained from leaving

his seat. Others saw nothing but beefy bedemimed arse for twenty minutes at a time. Comperes were enjoined to lengthen their intros by a factor of seven, or abort outros in within seconds. All natural rhythms were buried under the squirming, anxious machine of men and their cables.

The crew clearly despised the objects of their attentions and their attitudes were readily detectable at every stratum of the heirarchy. Pinned to the wall at one point beside some bulky sparks, I was able to enjoy snippets of their running commentary on the parade of degenerates that their superiors had deemed worthy of air time. Addressing their attentions to two women sitting nearby, who had the temerity to be smartly dressed but bespectacled and not blond, a jovial voice in my ear instructed 'Look at those two fucking great dykes there, eh?' A little later, after I had given up my chair to a camera assistant, that he might get a good position for Dagmar Krause's song with Michael Nyman, my new chum observed 'Christ, was it worth giving up your fucking chair for *that*?'

Homos didn't go down too well with the anoracic either. During Neil Bartlett's monologue

that either the B.F.I. doesn't yet have a full understanding of UK video culture, its issues, concerns and possibilities, or — more disturbing in a way — this new funding source want to support a body of work which operates beyond the experimental, the radical, the risky and instead present a profile of video art as somewhere between televisions notions of the accessible and a glib, pop-culture style.

With a range of productions newly funded (see *Videocheck*) this may, in the end, prove to be a strategy which signals, a balanced policy, as the Arts Council take on more avant-garde projects and the B.F.I. funds less obviously experimental endeavours. Alternatively it could be that the B.F.I. Video Production Board's stratagem simply indicates a middle-ground of relatively high-budget, low risk tapemaking.

This latter option is, I'm afraid, what *Taxidriver II* seems to underline. I hope I'm wrong. ●

George Barber's
Taxidriver II

about AIDS the man on the mixing desk cried 'Get that fucking queen off *now!*' to anyone in the vicinity who might be feeling similarly repelled. (It would be wrong to suggest that his demand could be heard backstage, but moments later a deafening shout of 'What is that fucking cunt *doing*? If somebody doesn't fucking stop him I'll hook him off my fucking self!' welled from the darkness behind the tabs held by two of the comperes. It was here in the shadows that the emblem of loveable rascality, Jah Wobble, was anxiously expressing his earthy homophobia whilst waiting to begin his stirring 'set').

At the end of a long, wearing evening, a ragged line of exhausted and shellshocked punters traipsed to the last tube, some thirty minutes before the Cabaret had concluded. "I feel very tired," more than one victim had plaintively declared, all his righteous indignation leached away by the enormous waste of his time and money.

My advice to sensation seekers must be: stay at home, that's where the life is. Teams of men are asset stripping the hot spots for you, so why go out? It's perfectly simple — the city is where the simulations are constructed and *you* are where the very latest models will be displayed. Don't go out — it will spoil the magic. Do you really want to see things being put together? Do you really want to know about stops and starts, and applause in triplicate? Why do you put up with a man who tells you when to clap when you can clap at home whenever you want, for as long as you like? Why do you persist in squeezing past the security in the numberless studios that are inexorably replacing all the 'places' in the city, when you can get the real thing a couple of days later? It's stupid, isn't it? There are so many people, thousands of them, whose only desire is to bring you the best — why get in their way? Don't you see that things have changed? You have the Object, which is elusive, awkward and marginal, and you have the Television, and its models, showing you what the Object was trying to do, but could not manage. The Television completes the Object. For you. It makes it real. Get some cans in.

And did you catch the programme the next day? What a piece of shit. Top of the Pops. Shoddy. Didn't look like it was worth getting out of your fucking chair for. ●

DUNGENESS — THE DESERT IN THE GARDEN

by Graeme Miller
ICA, London
Reviewed by
ANDY SOUTTER

THERE ARE UNIVERSAL aspects to a place like Dungeness which enable it to be treated in such a way as to make the presence there of a nuclear installation incidental: shingle beaches, lonely shacks and queer folk such as this piece presents us with are familiar enough for the most disparate of audiences to recognise. Nevertheless it's an interesting strategy to practically ignore an element which is more or less synonymous with a particular spot — like talking of Berlin without the wall or Mona Lisa without her smile. In this way the fact of the power stations and their emotive histories is conspicuous by its absence in 'The Desert in the Garden'; but anyone with some concern for the matter can't fail to make their own connections between this issue and what's going on on stage whenever the nuclear plant is briefly alluded to. At one point it is skipped over, literally, with the repetitive phrase 'That's a construction, built in the fifties' during a vocal duet where the two singers face front, side by side, each draped with a flaccid pionoaccordion; the moment highlights the relationship of this quiet couple — a flaccid accord — and also hints at the effects of close affairs with n-plants.

The opera is 100 percent musically based — no story, drama, easy characterisations or traditional verbal syntax. The spoken or sung text (fragments of local peoples' recollections) is

Dungeness

manipulated, along with film, lighting and choreography, as chunks of music, as imagistic cadences; every medium is used as a musical element and seamlessly meshed with the sound structure, painstakingly synchronised with the work's metronomic score. So it's a familiar strand of modern music performance, but a severe specimen. Even Robert Ashley pretends an interest in characterisation (in fact his 'Perfect Lives' and 'Atlanta' make good reference points for Miller's work), but here we are not invited inside the heads of the young couple, and there is only a brief exposition of the old woman's thoughts near the end of the 90 minute piece.

The work is subtitled *A small opera about landscape*. Landscape is a very musical form of picture, resistant to drama; and the performers

in D.I.G. serve the same function as a distant flock of birds incorporated into a view: connecting sky with earth across the horizon, giving depth to the image, they are tiny and abstract, vessels for ideas and speculation on the part of the viewer. Looking at landscape, you have to invest it with your own stories, just as dreams tend to resist objective interpretations; and the opera operates very much in the dream mode, with allusions to Munch, Magritte and De Chirico, and permanently shellshocked facial expressions. The ubiquitous junk & jetsom speak constantly of memory and history, and support this process; and a pervading dry sense of humour saves it from the threat of mood-monotony. 'The Desert In the Garden' is an accomplished and resonant work, and it should be touring in '88. ●



PHOTO / JOHN SMITH

PERFORMANCE O

by Kurt Johansen
Chisenhale Works, London
Reviewed by
CHRISSIE ILES

KURT JOHANSEN A Norwegian artist whose performance emerged from sculpture and the making of books, gave a private performance to a small, invited audience at Chisenhale Works this summer of exact and simple purity.

Johansen is one of only two performance artists working in Norway. His first book was made for a performance; he has also made a book about five of his subsequent performances. This was the third presentation of his piece *Performance O*, usually accompanied by three musicians but here silent. It was highly structured and tightly controlled, suggesting, especially when with musical accompaniment, a theatrical quality. However, its roots and sensibility are sculptural, and it cannot be per-

formed many more times without losing its uniqueness of experience and becoming theatre, posing a difficult problem for Johansen and all artists working in a similar way.

In *Performance O* the artist's function was as trigger and vessel for the materials used, which are first chosen and then allowed to establish the tone and direction. Past performances have used earth, and have as a result been very physical. Here sand, which at one point pours steadily from the artists mouth onto the floor, made a soft, quiet sound which opposed in its virtual silence the violence and noise usually associated with such an action from the mouth. The human identity of the artist is de-emphasised, as in the performance work of Nan Hoover, and the body becomes a conductor, of equal status to the materials.

This position was further expressed through the use of a small, single course of light which initially slowly illuminates the artist's mouth as isolated container, (recalling Beckett and the Icelandic performance artist Vidar Egg). Then

concentrating on the materials themselves and on one hand, so that the face and body of the artists was never visible.

A white stone ball, rolled towards the hand as if by magic, was then pushed slowly round to draw a white circle on the floor, evoking two ideas of magic — the children's magician in the sleight-of-hand movement of the white ball, and arcane ancient magic in the drawing of the circle as a defined area within which ritual, power and action take place. The performance began and ended with the artists mouth, light illuminating the important areas, paring away all superfluity and concentrating, through the focussing of light, on clearly outlined highly lit features.

The residue of the performance drew the audience in after the event, fascinated by the ball's movements and hoping to discover its secret. Examination revealed that the circle had been made not by drawing white on a black surface, but by exposing white underneath black by the application of pressure from the ball. The materiality of the piece in relation to the abstract ephemerality of its performance located its source and concerns in sculpture and land art, and the relationship between artists and materials, illusion and reality and between the spiritual and the material, both in the wider environment. ●

HAMLETMACHINE

by Heiner Muller
 Directed by Robert Wilson
 Almeida Theatre, London
 Reviewed by
STEVE ROGERS

THE BRITISH ARE notoriously good at having opinions about things of which they know nothing. We all know that Australia is macho-pig paradise but few of us have ever been there. Robert Wilson suffers the same fate, his name has been on the lips of the cognoscenti for years but few have ever seen his work. It is a pity that the first opportunity British audiences have had to see any of his work should be *HamletMachine*, not because it is anything less than tremendous, but because it is so typical. Here is a work by one of the undisputedly great innovators of our generation but I fear that many will come away disappointed thinking they've seen all this before when in fact they have only heard

about all this before and seen the work of many that Wilson has directly influenced. *HamletMachine* contains nearly all the usual Wilson characteristics. It's sparse, slow, repetitive. It is composed of a series of hauntingly beautiful, virtually static images with a sculptors fascination with shape and form. The only thing missing is a 'system music' score. Instead there is the text of Heiner Muller which is extremely complex and difficult.

HamletMachine revolves, literally, around an empty stage which is systematically populated by the cast of *Hamlet* to create a tableaux which then abandoned is repeated but with the entire procedure and set revolved through 90 degrees. The cycle is repeated until it arrives back at its starting point but on each repetition more of the text emerges. Words are added to the tableaux like physical objects, so that the performers become engraved with them like tombstones dedicated to the memory of dead heroes. The growing accumulation of words attempt to explain, record and indeed to create a historical justification for this rotten state in

which they serve, but far from liberating them the words serve only to further bind them into a solid repressive edifice. The revolving is as on the face of a clock, describing a linear time; the revolving is as to the points of the compass, describing a scientific geography; the revolving is like a turning globe, the earth, which as it gains momentum sets up a centripetal force which draws in more words, more history, and we must assume as a white cloth is finally drawn between the stage and the audience, it has drawn in all witnesses also. At the centre of the circle sit three women, like the three weird sisters of *MacBeth*, or like a bench of judges, who determine the fate of all.

It is bleak warning of the threat of totalitarianism both in life and art. It is best appreciated by a prior reading of the text which is printed in full in the programme. I recommend you get a copy before seeing it, *HamletMachine* is a chamber sized introduction to the work of a true original. Its hard work, but for anyone at all concerned with the recent past and near future of theatre its essential viewing. ●

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