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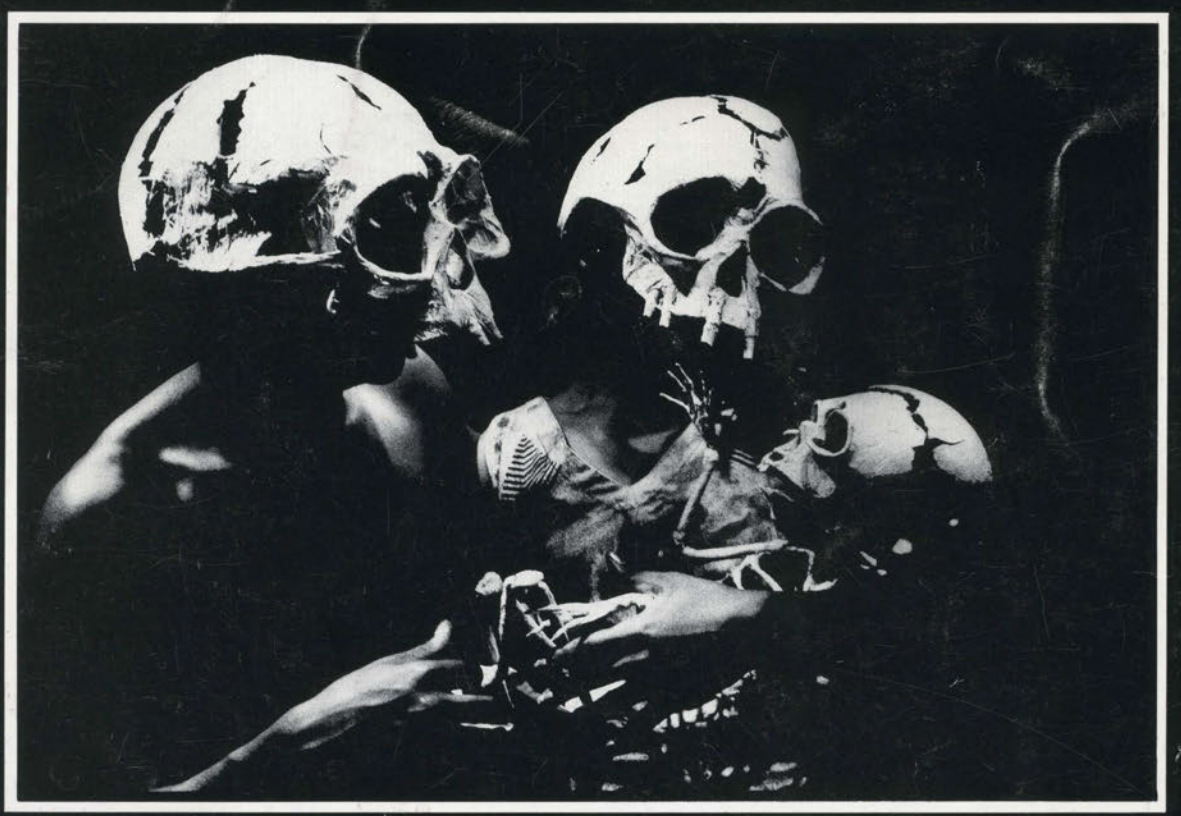
PERFORMANCE



WELFARE STATE — JOHN FOX INTERVIEWED
TADEUSZ KANTOR IN REHEARSAL
RADICAL ART IN SCOTLAND
PROCESS OR PRODUCT — TWO VIEWS
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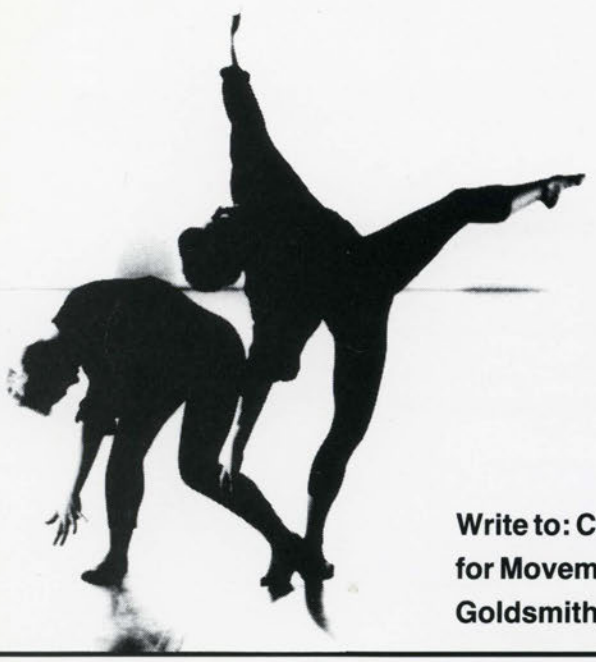

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PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

JUNE / JULY
+ NO 54

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contents

● **COVER PHOTOGRAPH** ● Welfare State International, Nutcracker, December 1985. Photo by Kilby

● **CONTENTS PAGE:** Steve Slater and John Stanton, Stanslat, Brighton 1988

GUEST EDITORS PROJECTS UK

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GUEST EDITORS + PROJECTS UK

PROJECTS UK IS a unique organisation in Britain. It is, essentially, an art centre without a centre. It commissions and curates installations, performances, site-specific art works and events which it always aims to place in appropriate and relevant locations. Projects UK has a second but no less important function as a documenting organisation. It regularly records in video and photographs temporary artworks from around Britain and abroad. Given the nature of the organisations work it is not surprising that they have chosen to put such a heavy emphasis on questions of process vs product in commissioning the articles for this issue.

The whole question of the recording of temporary artworks, particularly live art, is one which has always been contentious but which is now becoming a more crucial, public debate. Many younger artists working in performance have grown up believing that it is essential that performances are recorded in one form or another. It is part of the trappings and mystique of the form. Yet most artists will readily confess to having boxes full of 'documentation' hidden away somewhere which never ever get opened again. 'What then is it for? Who needs it?'

The answer to these questions is inevitably extremely complex. There is an ongoing theoretical debate about the effects and methods of recording live works, (*see Documenting Performance Art, Issue 53*), but there are some more pragmatic considerations. In this issue two students at Newcastle Polytechnic, Hester Reeve and Vanessa Jones, have contributed a short article giving their reasons for organising an exhibition of documentation of student work alongside documentation of works by established artists done while they were still students. The article is called *Finding Our Place* and the authors make a clear argument about how this has given them support in continuing to make live works within a course which makes no specific provision for live works. Others had to struggle and succeeded and so, the exhibition suggests, will they. This is a crucial facet to documentation. Performance has always had a very low profile within the whole hierarchy of the arts in Britain and the existence of evidence of the forms past and development is vital to its future survival. One of the bottom line arguments for the existence of this magazine is that its very presence helps support the continuation of the practice. It is very much harder to pretend performance doesn't exist or is unimportant when there is a regular publication read by a sizeable audience devoted entirely to it.

This I believe is the crux of any argument about documentation. If new generations of performance artists are to be given the best possible education in their chosen field, if there are to be more books and magazine devoted to the area, if there are to be films and TV programmes on it, if those who make the decisions about what art gets funded and what doesn't, if the audiences are to develop their understanding and critical skills, there has to be some other source of knowledge and information about performance apart from the work itself. If the art wants to find an acknowledged role and function in the fabric of our artistic culture it must be available for long term, considered debate and it is only by making a record of the events as they happen that this can be possible.

The answer to 'who needs documentation?, what is it for?' has for too long been bogged down in an academic argument about the effects it has on the work itself. Teachers, students, presenters, critics, historians, funding bodies, and audiences need it. That it is not readily available to these people is a major part of the reason that the art is still, very much, out in the cold. ●

Steve Rogers
Managing Editor

Performance Magazine is currently undertaking a report on precisely these questions which will be available at the end of 1988.

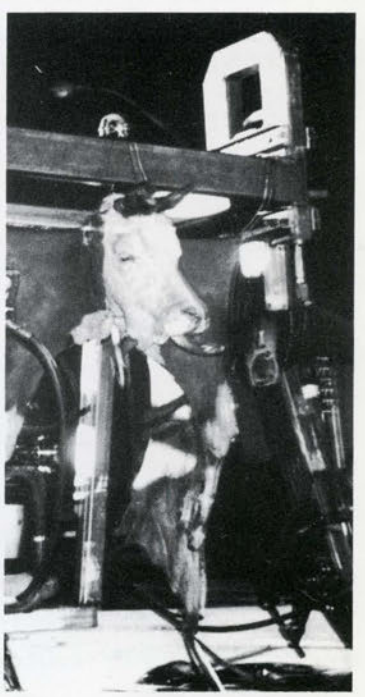
EDGE 88

+ Subtitled *International Experiment in Art, Edge 88*, is Britain's first **international festival of performance**. It will take place in the Clerkenwell area of **East/Central London, September 13-25**. Although the exact programme is yet to be finalised, it will include major artists from Britain and abroad. **Rose Gerrard, Helen Chadwick, Tina Keane, Stuart Brisley, Ian Breakwell**, will be seen alongside such important historical figures as **Carolee Schneeman** and **Ulrike Rosenbach**. Incredibly Schneeman whose *Meat Joy* performances made her one of the seminal and most controversial figures of the 1960s has never performed in Britain before, although she did participate in a protest event outside the Arts Council offices in London in 1969. In recent years Schneeman, like many of the key figures of performance history, has stopped making live works. It is interesting that festivals like Edge and some of its already established European counterparts are looking to these text book artists for new work and that the artists are prepared to supply the demand. Although not taking part in Edge 88.

Another important feature of the festival is the inclusion of **Valie Export**. She is of the **Viennese Aktionist** school having previously worked with Hermann Nitsch. Aktionism has for many years been a major thread of expressionist work which is recognised throughout the European art community but which has, like so much else, failed to cross the English Channel.

Although unconfirmed, the festival is negotiating with Canadian artist **Paul Wong** whose *Body Fluids* performance has created a furious controversy in North America. There are also unfinalised plans to include artists from Poland, Australia, Holland, Italy and Spain.

The populist highlight event will undoubtedly be the arrival of **Survival Research Laboratories** who will make their debut in Newcastle prior to their London event. Under their founder Mark Pauline, (Interviewed Performance 38/39), SRL construct vaste motorised and radio controlled gladiatorial monsters. The adrenalin pumping violence and danger of SRL events have earned them a large following amongst the thrill addicted youth of their native California. It is the perfect performance match for the culture of Less Than Zero. They can also be seen as a natural American expression of a more or less international movement of artists who utilise the detritus of a now dead mechanical age. A kind of



Survival Research Laboratories

mixture of Bow Gamelan and Royale Deluxe.

There is absolutely no doubt that EDGE 88 will be a popular success so get your tickets ordered early, particularly as some of the events will have very limited audience capacity. What remains to be seen is whether or not the arts establishment and media will accord it the attention that the calibre of artists involved and the public demand for the work will obviously warrant.

For people who can't afford, or who don't want, to make a visit to London, many of the foreign artists will be touring after EDGE. I for one hope that it will cause more than a few red faces in the so-called centres of contemporary art, notably the Tate Gallery, who have singularly failed to recognise that performance art is still, and will continue to be, a major force in the visual arts.

Details of all Edge events: EDGE 88, Air Gallery, 6-8 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1. ●

ART ON TV

+ **Channel Four's music** department are having a clear out. Annette Morreau who seemed to have become part of the furniture at the Arts Council has recently become Assistant Commissioning Editor for music at the alternative channel. The number one music job has also recently been advertised. The former Contemporary Music Network boss is already making her mark at Four with a series of three programmes by the Argentinian composer **Mauricio Kagel**, an artist she has championed for years. This is a collaboration with the **Almeida Theatre**, London which is featuring Kagel in this years International Contemporary Music Festival. *Details: Almeida Theatre.* ●

+ The enterprising **After Image** are back with a new series of Alter Image running for ten weeks from June 28. Artists who have made works for the series include **Bow Gamelan, Station House Opera, Neil Bartlett, Robert LePage, Fast Forward, Dagmar Krause, Silvia Ziranek, Keith Khan, Sokari Douglas Camp**, and many others. All programmes are on Tuesdays, Channel 4 at 11pm. (If it gets any earlier they'll be in danger of appealing to 'ordinary' people what ever they are.) ●

BURROUGHS

+ The October Gallery, London are showing works on paper as well as some of the 'shot-gun' pieces of William Burroughs. The grand old rattle-snake still manages to scare the pants off the literary world with his horny misanthropy. June 1-July 2. *Details: 01 242 7367.* ●

RAPID INSTALLATIONS

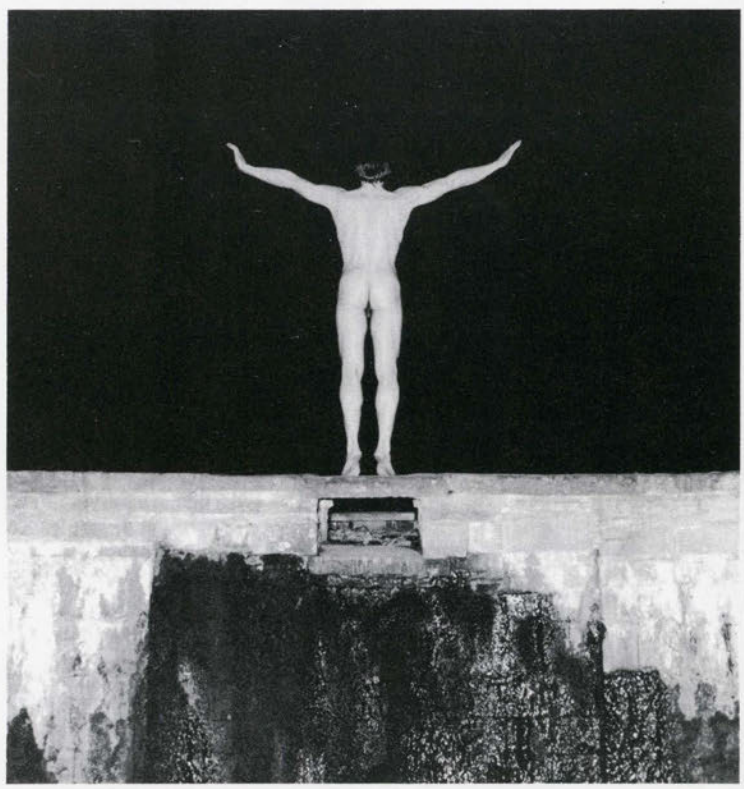
+ The **Watermans Arts Centre, London** are presenting installations by five artists, June 2-July 31. **Peter Noble, Mike Stubbs, Graham Ellard, Annie Johns** and **Dennis Dracup**. Most of the work will focus on technology and its impact on both traditional art practice and on the general culture. *Details: 01 847 5651.* ●

NOTTINGHAM FESTIVAL

+ This years festival seems smaller than previous years but with a couple of really important events. Firstly **Annie Griffin, Laura Ford and Company** will be performing *The Deadly Grove* in the Dungeon of Nottingham Castle, June 6-11. The big commission of the festival is from **Industrial and Domestic Theatre Contractors** who are creating a large scale performance/installation in the grounds of **Newstead Abbey, Linby** June 9-11. *Details: 0509 235386.* ●

HIDDEN GRIN APPEAL

Hidden Grin Theatre Co are **facing bankruptcy** for want of only **£3,000** in unpaid bills. They are asking for donations of any size to help them out. Although the members of the company are now pursuing individual careers with no plans to make a joint work in the near future your support is needed as a way of thanking them for some of the most memorable experimental works of recent years. *Send cheques payable to Hidden Grin Theatre Co to 18a Santley St, London SW4 7QH.* ●



Industrial and Domestic Theatre Contractors *Breath of Fishes*, Newstead Abbey, Nottingham 1988.

MALE SEXUALITY

+ **Goldsmiths' Gallery** in **South London** are inviting submissions for an exhibition dealing with **Representations of Male Sexuality**. Work can be in any media, closing date July 28. *Details: Goldsmiths' Gallery, Lewisham Way, London SE14.* ●

PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CLAUSE

+ It was good to see so many **'performance' workers** on the **demonstration march against Clause 28/29**. The Clause which seeks to outlaw the promotion of homosexuality could well have a particularly serious effect on experimental areas of art since it is here that sexuality is often presented most challengingly. The work of many feminist artists, whilst not necessarily lesbian, could easily be seen as contravening the vague wording of the Clause. It is also still not clear whether or not the Clause, which forms part of the local government bill, will effect the Arts Councils funding of clients which present work by gay men and women or work which supports them. ●

EAST MIDLANDS REAWAKENS

+ There once was an Arts Centre in **Leicester** called **The Phoenix**. All that is changing. The Arts Administration Department at Leicester Polytechnic, under its head Oliver Bennett, are going to be involved in the development and running of a revamped Phoenix. After some rebuilding work the centre will re-open with a new director, and new artistic staff as a touring and commissioning centre with an annual programming budget of **£100,000**. YES that's one hundred thousand pounds. The policy is to be to focus on contemporary and community work including the presentation and commissioning of new performance work. After the demise of the Midland Group as the country's leading performance centre it may just be that the East Midlands can regain that title with a revolutionary new-look Phoenix. ●

PERFORMANCE NEWS

VIDEO NEWS Compiled by Nik Houghton

+ New Tapes in distribution with **London Video Artists** include the hard-fast-and-funny **Lydia Lunch Interview** wherein the queen of sleaze badmouths everything from men to positive thinking and a video-graphic work titled *Flight* from **John Goff**. Also available is the new work from American artists **David Garcia** and **Annie Wright** — a stylish trip through Mickey Mouse land. *Details: L.V.A. on 01-734 7410.* ●

+ **East End** tape/film makers should note that application forms for the **Whitechapel Open** exhibition are now available. The exhibition — which last year featured a programme of film/video works — will be at the gallery in September with a deadline for submissions sometime in June. *Details from the Whitechapel on 01-377 0107.* ●

+ **Genlock**, the **LVA/Interim Arts** joint video exhibition, will be on view in **London** at Interim Arts, 21 Beck Road, E8, from June 1st to 5th. Thereafter it moves on to **Glasgow** and the Third Eye Centre in October between the 6th and the 9th. *Details from Interim Arts (01) 254-9607.* ●

+ **Undercut**, the magazine from the London Film-makers Co-op, is finally out. Almost legendary in its stop-go production this, the 17th issue, is titled **Cultural Identities** and is a 48 page publication. Centred on the discussions at the Commonwealth Institute in March '86 this 48 page publication is a carefully edited and well annotated transcription of the debate with a range of speakers giving their views on sexuality, race and gender. Clear, well illustrated and a solid read the magazine is well worth its £3.50 cover price and one can only hope that this magazine of independent film/video theory will be more regular in its appearance. *Details: Undercut, 47 George Downing Estate, Cazenove Road, London N16 6BE. Single copies can be ordered from this address. Subscription is £7.00 per year which delivers two separate issues of the magazine per year.* ●

+ **Independent Media's Film and Video Workshop Directory** is now out. Listing all of the workshops in the U.K. this 48 page issue is an invaluable reference work for anyone involved in the independent sector. Also featuring practical info on media-education and how to go about it the April issue contains reviews, comment and monthly listings. *Documentary Video Associates on (0252) 545505.* ●

+ **Bracknell Festival** is, yet again, looming with an un-confirmed October date for this annual video event. Calls for entries to the **Video Festival** are now going out. *Details of submission procedure contact The Media Centre, South Hill Park, Bracknell, Berkshire or ring 0344-427272.* ●

+ **News from the Co-op** — Meaning Co-operative Retail Services, that is, is that their **Let's Make a Film Festival** — a schools, youth club and community centre competition for young people to make a film or video-programme will be on show at **Photography, Film and TV Museum** in **Bradford** on 20th October. At an earlier date, 8th October, the programme will be on show at Londons N.F.T., South Bank SE1. *Details on Bradford 0274-725347 and the N.F.T. screening from 01-534-4201 Extn. 265.* ●

+ **Video Umbrella** — although yet to be formally announced word is that **Jez Welsh** — video artist and former director of L.V.A. — has already taken up employment with the **Film Umbrella** organisaion initiated by the A.C.G.B. and previously solely in the hands of **Mike O'Pray**. Welsh, who recently selected and co-ordinated the **Genlock** video exhibition tour, joins O'Pray to bring a video aspect to the Umbrella's work of touring specially programmed packages of avant-garde and experimental films to out of London venues and cinemas. Rumour also has it that this Video Umbrella will be supported by a mobile video screen unit . . . Meanwhile back in the **Elusive Signs** debate where the **ACGB** selectors for a 10 year retrospective were under attack the fun continues with a recent letter to **Independent Media** magazine. Penned by Angie Burns this continuation of the criticism levelled at the hapless programmer centres on a written reply to his attackers published in the magazine earlier in the year. "Mike O'Pray fails to respond to the main criticism and degenerates into patronizing first name invective, only superficially disguised by a smattering of pseudo-intellectual terminology and reference", states Burns at one point, finishing with a comment on "the critics hegemony". ●

+ **ICA Good Video** — now out is the newest Good Video Guide from the I.C.A. New additions from the I.C.A. video library listed here include a tape on the Documenta 8 performance event, **Mighty Miniatures** 87 — a compilation of one-minute video works from Bracknells Media Centre — and video art tapes from the likes of **Simon Robertshaw, Liz Power** and **Karen Ingham**. With over fifty videos newly selected the Good Video Guide offers brief reviews of each tape alongside a simple guide to ordering tapes. Other tapes available are a 4AD pop-promo compilation, animation and various political/social issues works. *Copies from the I.C.A. — no cover price given — or ring The Good Video Guide on (01) 930-0493.*

+ **New Installation Commissions** — Proposals and tape submissions are requested for a nationwide tour being organised by Steve Littman. The work selected/commissioned will appear at the National Review of Live Art, the London Film Festival and at Liverpool's Video Festival. Proposals for installation works involving between 3 and 6 monitors and for a "video wall" are asked for. More info from Steve Littman (01) 539-8727 or write to Steve Littman, c/o Stratford Workshops, Burford Road, Stratford, London E15. Deadline June 11th. ●

+ **ICA Video** — after their recent video screenings on Sunday afternoons the **Videotechque** will be screening selected programmes from **LVA** every Sunday through **May**. Packages selected by **Nik Houghton, Jez Welsh, Marion Urch** and **Phil Hayward** will be on view at the ICA every Sunday afternoon from 2.00. Ring ICA on: 01-930 0493 for full details. ●

PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE/EDGE 88

+ The next issue of Performance Magazine will be a collaboration with EDGE 88 Festival. Performance will be publishing an 80 page catalogue including articles by major writers and details of all participating artists. Regular Performance Magazine sections, such as News, will be included in the catalogue as a separate pull-out. The cover price of the combined catalogue and magazine will be £5 but there is no additional cost to subscribers. The catalogue/issue 55 will not be available until August 20 instead of August 8 as would be usual.

Performance Magazine will be using the opportunity offered by this one off collaboration to rethink the future of the magazine. The issue following the Edge catalogue will feature a total re-design as well as many new contents ideas and a different editorial approach. Details of the revised Performance Magazine will be announced in Issue 55. ●

PHOTO / G. EVANS

Tattoo Day
Barrow in Furness
July, 1987

BETWEEN WORDSWORTH AND WINDSCALE

Welfare State International was founded in 1968 in Bradford by John Fox. The company has been funded by various agencies including the Arts Council and Northern Arts to research the prototype forms of visual, celebratory theatre and ceremonial art. Welfare State International has worked for and with communities throughout the world, in Japan, Canada, Australia, America, Tanzania and Britain, and is now based in Ulverston, Cumbria. Recent works include Barrow-in-Furness Town Hall Tattoo — a civic extravaganza incorporating oratorios of popular song and gigantic Town Hall transformations seen by 20,000 people, *Charcoal and Rain* — a one-man truth-telling back-pack gig by John Fox for the Lancaster literary festival; and *St Mungo's Assent* — a promenade cathedral entertainment commissioned for the 1988 joint convention of RIBA and RIAS architects in Glasgow. Combining long term community residencies with one-stop touring and one-off hand-crafted events with film-making and t.v. production, Welfare State International is now one of the oldest first generation performance art companies in the country. BAZ KERSHAW, joint editor of *Engineers of the Imagination: the Welfare State Handbook* (Methuen 1983) talks to John Fox about the company's techniques of endurance and its commitment to radical cultural revitilisation.

Baz Kershaw: John, the theme of this meeting is how Welfare State has managed to survive in the eighties. The company has worked in a remarkable range of media and in different kinds of spaces. What, for you, is the key of Welfare State's adaptability, which makes the company so able to work in such different ways, and still remain coherent?

John Fox: I'd like to believe we were a flexible organisation that can respond quickly to new situations. We don't work from a fixed ideology, although we do have certain principles and attitudes. We try to live in the particular and analyze the immediate situation very carefully. In terms of our own organisation, there may be as many as twelve that work regularly as a company, and maybe as many as fifty associate artists, whom we would like to use a lot more. So there's a continual to-ing and fro-ing of a number of very strong, very mature and committed free-lance artists who bring to the company enormous abilities and visions of their own. Many of these people have their own companies, or are part of other companies, so it's a paradox, because on the one hand we are regarded as a company that has been in existence for a very long time, but in actual fact our artists are continually going to and fro. In fact a large number of people have worked with us for over ten years.

We can therefore take on a large number of projects in different areas — obviously, one might be sculpturally based, or a performance gig or music gig or whatever. That enables us, because we've built up a lot of skills over a long time, to respond very quickly to a specific need or issue. We can produce a garden just as much as we can produce a fire-work display, as we can do an evening of story-telling, a barn-dance in a boat, or turn out a highly sophisticated street band involving musicians like Trevor Watts or Paul Rutherford. We work across a very broad spectrum.

B.K.: Related to that, and staying in the area of the internal organisation of Welfare State, one reason why you've been successful and survived so long is that you've keyed into various sources of funding that exists. You have regularly received money from the Arts Council, Northern Arts and local authorities. In that sense, your security rests upon a well-established funding system. In the eighties, as the demands are more upon producing material in response to money, rather than working on experimental arts, how has this system of funding affected present work?

J.F.: We've appointed a development director who plans for ten years ahead, and helps us see the way things are developing. Often, we try not just to respond to the vaguaries of the market place. We try to take initiatives and offer them to people — like we are doing with our new health initiative — possibly in whole new areas, and the funding system has been partly responsible. We've done a lot of the running ourselves. But in fact it is very hard. We've lost four gigs in the last year because we didn't actually have the machinery to follow up the fund-raising quickly enough. For instance, the gig we're doing in Wales in Summer was very nearly lost because we were anticipating a grant from the Welsh Tourist Board which didn't come forward. Presumably they wanted instant heritage and fake druids.

B.K.: Apart from diverting actual resources away from the creative work to more administrative PR type work, what actual overall effects is this having on the creative work?

J.F.: Well, it's very debilitating, it takes an incredible amount of energy, plus you've got to be really clear about which particular hat you're wearing. It's easy in Thatcher's Britain to get besotted with the idea that you've got to be commercial. The current ethos is to turn everybody into a commodity, so you've got to retain your principles and your visions. If you're in the process of raising money it's vital these principles do not get corrupted. At the same time, I don't object to selling one's skills in the market place; there's nothing wrong with the artist realising commercial aspects of the work. The work costs money and that has to come from somewhere. The problem is that we are increasingly being told that art should really not fundamentally be about commerce, and that's where it becomes really dangerous. I mean, you can't put a price on the soul.

B.K.: I know you have long term plans in relation to Glasgow, and even longer term plans in relation to Barrow and Ulverston. You still tour, you still do short term gigs in a wide range of venues, and you still work internationally. Given that incredible range of types of location you work in, how do you ensure that your principles and vision remain first of all coherent, and, secondly, radical?

J.F.: By being prepared to say 'no', if necessary. By researching every situation as carefully as we can afford to. By, when working on tour, checking out the host organisation that we're working with and trying to make a kind of definite partnership. They want to know what our intentions are and we would usually like to see some kind of long term follow-through, because the people on the ground choose to believe in themselves and they've got the energy to commit themselves to follow it up. And just by working very hard. Obviously, in fact, most theatre companies are working hard at making things the best they possibly can. But then we are very careful to monitor strong responses from the audiences, and from promoters.

There's a clear line really between

PHOTO / VICKY CARTER

D.H. Lawrence Festival, Nottinghamshire, August 1985

the work we ever did in the seventies and the work we're doing now. But what's happened to us since about 1983? The last really big show in London was the raising and sinking again of 'the Titanic',[1] which was an allegory about the state of Western culture. It did have some, but not enough, community involvement, so it became a model of our visions. That model was also extended into other situations. For instance, at Expo where we made a show around 'False Creek',[2] which was the area that Expo was built on. It was quite clear that Expo was only there at the expense of a lot of the local winos and squatters being moved out. Capitalism was taking over yet again, as we demonstrated in the heart of the terminal building with a simple moral parable about a psycopathic entrepreneur who eventually electrocutes himself trying to steal a neon heart. We made a very clear statement there, and we involved local artists at the start of the creation process, so that it wasn't just a bunch of jet-setters popping over with a product.

Those models, and there are others, are fine, except that they still start mainly from the art end rather than the living end. The work that's been going on in Barrow-in-Furness, where we have been since 1979, is much more directly related to responding to people on the ground. The Great Barrow Town Hall Centennial,[3] which we did last year, has a choir of a hundred people, which is going on now as an independent choir, with a gig at the Glasgow Garden Festival and also one in the Isle of Man, it's completely independent of Welfare State, although we do have a musical director, Peter Moser, on the ground, who is still steering it.

B.K.: In a forthcoming article by Mike White in 'New Theatre Quarterly' you explain that one of the reasons why you are based in Ulverston, and work in Barrow, is that the area is a nuclear hotspot. In some ways you have put the company in touch with some of the more fundamental forces, problems, horrors, that our culture is confronted by.

J.F.: We jokingly say this, to give you an example, that we chose a place half-way in between Wordsworth and Windscale. The town of Barrow is certainly kept alive by submarines. There are many people who work there who could actually put a relatively militant Left council in, but there's a very right-wing M.P. Now, we ended up in Ulverston largely by chance. Ulverston is a market town of twelve thousand people which is nine miles from Barrow. Following a year's sabbatical in Australia we intended to emigrate there, but this wasn't possible. What happened is that we really achieved all the things we might have done in Australia in Ulverston, and in particular we've become completely built into the fabric of the town. An example of this would be the lantern procession, which takes place every September in the second week. There's a town charter of celebration and we suggested a lantern procession when we came back from a gig in Japan,[4] and had seen how well it worked in a village there. In Japan we were working with a Shinto tradition, as opposed to a Buddhist tradition. We don't have the equivalent here, but we wanted something that actually works with religious notions but in a more secular way. We started doing the lantern procession partly because we had also generated an evening carnival which had taken off very well, which we had steered in conjunction with the local people. The lantern procession just took off so now we've got a thousand people turning out on the streets, having made in the region of seven hundred lanterns. Even to the tune where the young observer can describe this as a traditional Cumbrian lantern procession, with a traditional basket-making technique. So much for tradition. But it seems to work. It's quite an extraordinary event. A big sculptural display, like a huge glow worm wandering through this Georgian town. It's absolutely extraordinary and beautiful. Now that's taken off and works, and it is, in a sense, in terms of its basic home-made candle-power, a useful alternative to the lies pushed out at Windscale. Which is really a bomb factory. Now it sharpens one's sensibility no end to get on that edge. The fact that we know that inside Windscale the management is incompetent. We know that they are invariably releasing radioactivity and tellng lies about it. It sharpens one's sense of life and death, where recently a Vickers development and marketing manager said that 'we don't care what we sell, just as long as we sell it, as long as we get a contract.' I think that's certainly horrific and seems to me mad. What staggers me is how you have a workforce in Barrow who are so able to communicate, so open and generous, making large scale death machinery and they know they're doing it. I'm not saying, in any sense, what the solution is, except to do with a change of consciousness; namely, that it should be unthinkable that on a planet the size we've got that people can put the resources we've got into that kind of weaponry. There's millions of children dying before

PHOTO / JOHN VOOGD

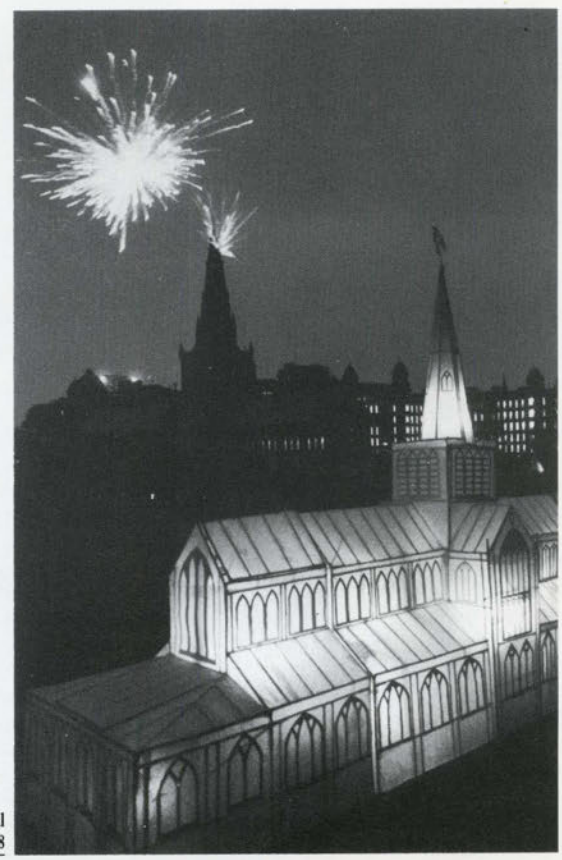
Cursed Crocodile
Dove Cottage,
Grasmere, 1985

they're four when there's these kinds of resources and they can't even get any decent food or water supply. Which is totally mad. And most of the people in the work-force know it's mad, but they've no alternative. And when you look at Britain, the whole country is really a bomb factory. Probably about fifty per cent of industry, including ancillary services, is involved in some way in building armaments. So if we're talking about art, and poetry and consciousness you've got to work on that kind of edge. You can't ignore that the way most people earn their living is different from where their feelings are. And the fact that people can remain so normal and not become schizoid about it is a daily miracle.

B.K.: We live in a kind of death culture, and each culture requires some kind of ultra-radical approach on everybody's part, particularly artists; in order to attempt to break out of the cycle of production and consumption that doesn't lead anywhere except to further production and consumption. What's the fundamental, radical position that Welfare State still holds, and how does that inform the different kinds of work that you are now undertaking?

J.F.: It's a complicated question to answer simply; I'm not in favour of confrontation, I think that's part of the problem, the polarisation of the two party system. I know there is a debate of 'Us and Them'. I think if you actually get a group of people together, almost any group of people, who are working jointly on a common project, then you find they get on with it, and their brains were somewhere in their fingers, and once they forget fixed positions of bigotry and ideology they find they have much more in common. They share food together, they build a house together or even dance together, then you're a long way towards something. We don't really need politics; but we need essential communication and contact in areas which are by definition non political, like birth or death or marriage, although some would say that's political. There needs to be areas of contact, and what's interesting in Ulverston is that we are accepted by right wingers because we are seen to work hard, to give a great deal to every section of that community. Having said that, although I don't like the idea of confrontation then I think you've got to be very truthful, be very clear about what you're doing. If in fact you do come into contact with the system which is, as the Bishop of Durham has said, 'thoroughly wicked', then you've got to somehow retain your own clarity. How you do that is one of the key problems of our

Winchester Cathedral
September 1984



Glasgow Cathedral
May 1988

PHOTO / ARTHUR KINLOCK

time. I think if you allow yourself to be manipulated through fear and the media, through worrying about everybody elses disaster all over the world instead of getting on with what's going on in your own backyard then you're in danger of being destroyed. So much of the time we waste in vicarious emotion, on things that we can't do anything about whatsoever, so we have to keep this emotional strength. Human beings respond very quickly, and if you're trying to respond to the Zeebrugge disaster or the Kings Cross fire or the latest hijacking you have wasted emotions that have nowhere to go, and this would include wasted emotion on Windscale or Trident. The stress caused by this wasted emotion is probably more dangerous than its source. So you have to look carefully and unemotionally at every particular moment and then act accordingly, starting from your own self and then your friends and then with your specific community and grow out from that. And if everybody is working in their own allotments simultaneously then like all the monkeys on the island who suddenly discovered how to take the tops off bottles, well, you've got a mammoth change of consciousness. But it comes through some kind of osmosis of ideas, so eventually enough people say 'this is unthinkable, I will not pay my poll tax, and I have no say in this, and this is a complete manipulation through a madcap government, and I'm just going to say no'. And if enough people have enough confidence in themselves, if they are centred clearly in their own situations, if they believe in what they are doing, then they have that confidence to say no. If they're not frightened by losing their careers or their grants or mortgages.

B.K.: One thing that strikes me centrally about Welfare State's work is that you're continually looking for new areas to work in that will take you to the heart of current social, political, cultural diseases in order to affect some kind of change. The risk of failure is high, always, so the successes therefore are well won. What other developments are there?

J.F.: There's been a very interesting development that's been partly the work of Art Hewitt, Ali Jones and Mike White, in terms of health and healing. I used to talk of putting elastoplast over the cracks, and I think now I see it more like there's little point in putting icing on a cake which is thoroughly rotten. There's no point, if you like, in trying to instantly cheer people up, through a show biz or theatre product, when in fact their whole lives are fundamentally flawed as they aren't given enough space through their jobs or their home situations or whatever to be 'healthy'. Health has become another highly profitable commodity, and a lot of people have vested interests in it. So you have to be really careful about that. But we've started working with doctors in the Midlands. Doing very very simple things like story telling and talking to the doctors about the link between expressing creativity and depression. And how there's very often little point in drowning people with pills when it would be cheaper and more fun to give them a tin whistle.

B.K.: An interesting aspect of art for me, is that in many ways the medical profession, the NHS, is diverted not so much to health as to promoting the absence of disease. Therefore it has no positive conception of what health might be. Could you add more about Welfare States positive conception?

J.F.: It's the same old thing about leisure being perceived as negative work, and I suppose illness is negative existence. It's to do with being, again centred in certain values, and a belief structure without that being an ideology, but actually, using ones hands and ones body so that all the chemicals flow properly; it seems to me that some of the better religious orders are where people did so much physical work, so much mental work, so much creative meditation, because in the end we are only very, very primitive, simple physical beings. We allow ourselves to become entirely divided up so we are just working with our heads or our hands, then there's something fundamentally wrong. That very often happens not only in terms of executives and administrators but obviously in terms of artists. It happens in terms of an individual who gets overweight and miserable and starts getting drunk, or whatever, just as much as it happens within an art college where people are divided up into sculptors or painters or performance artists or whatever. Very often they used to be surrounded by hardboard boxes, I don't know if they are anymore, and just as much as it happens within theatre companies where you are set up as the director, or the designer, or the maker instead of allowing people a much greater flow between those areas so that people are supportive of each others needs and allow each others needs to change so that there is a continual change within, which is able then to respond easily and naturally to the extraordinary forced political and commercial change which is being imposed from without.

B.K.: Imposed in what sense?

J.F.: We are told to react to market forces and that's presuming that the market is an open and honorable place, but in fact it isnt, it's completely bent. There are cabals, usually of men, making decisions probably in smoke filled rooms, about how we spend our money. For instance, on the electricity industry, which is about building more nuclear power stations in order to build bombs and wreck the miners. Or like the decisions to be made on the Channel Tunnel, which will destroy the NUS and establish a certain kind of trading unit within Europe. Those monumental decisions are made completely undemocratically, without any concensus whatsoever from the population. So that huge resources are subject to absolute direct manipulation done through a hugely manipulated market place. And its a complete lie of the Tories to pretend that in any sense whatsoever the market place is open. It is a club of people who have manipulated it for their own needs. And they need to scare people and

False Creek
EXPO, Vancouver
July/August 1986

divide them and to frighten them then they will be persuaded to make bombs and most of the money from the bombs goes into the pockets of a very small cabal of people who are probably unhappy.

B.K.: Welfare State frequently works through stories. Is there a recent story which sums up the main points of our discussion?

J.F.: Following a recent seminar on burial rites we caught a train home and the carriage was full of service-men on their way home for leave. Many of them were drunk and we wandered desperately through the carriage looking to place this very large lantern we had built. At the end of the carriage was a very hard little guy, sitting with an empty seat next to him, and on the other side of the aisle there were three seats that we could use. However, when we slipped the lantern onto the seat next to him and carried on our own conversation, it was clear he wanted to talk to us and he said 'well, what is it?' We tried to explain that it was a lantern that we used in processions, and seminars on death and bereavement, and we were feeling really embarrassed. We carried on our own conversation about the morphology of the folk tale, or the use of story-telling in therapy and education, and we could tell this guy was getting more and more restless and listening to everything we were saying, and he eventually got out a big box of photographs and started shuffling them around. He lent across the aisle and slapped a photograph on the table and said 'Look at that. Trolls!' And we picked this photograph up and on the picture was a huge troll, about thirty foot high, made in wood and cement, which was on display in a shopping precinct in Norway. And it turned out this guy was an S.A.S. commander-sergeant who was going off-duty and all the other photographs showed him in training, in survival conditions, snow caps, skis and so on. The more we got talking to this guy, whom we first thought of as 'the enemy', it turned out he was a real pyro-freak and was also into making simulated battles and his great love in life would have been to have left the army and put on fire-work displays. I kept talking to him and he gave us a very good description of the nature of being out in the snow on these survival exercises, saying things like 'it's quite extraordinary out on these waste-lands of ice, under the stars, and of course you get all the macho stuff, get through all the mucky jokes, when you're out there on your own it gets very lonely. One of the things we do to pass the time is to make these little fires in the ice. We even make lanterns out of melted ice. We put candles in them and just watch them. It's absolutely wonderful.' And then he said 'and that's why I was interersted in your lantern. I could see we were on the same track.' ●

1. *Raising The Titanic, Limehouse Basin, London. L.I.F.T., August 1983.*
2. *False Creek, EXPO, Vancouver, Canada, July/August 1986.*
3. *This formed part of Town Hall Bonanza, Barrow-in-Furness, England, January-July 1987.*
4. *The Wasteland and the Wagtail. First Japanese International Theatre Festival, Togamura, Japan. July 1982.*

PHOTO / EDDIE TWEEDIE

On The Loose
Sweet Band, 1987

PROCESS AND CHAOS

TADEUSZ KANTOR is a Polish theatre director and artist who has been intensely involved in European art movements since the war; influenced by and influencing them. In fact the whole business in the avant garde of old suitcases, black clothes and umbrellas originated in his stable.

I went to Cracow for 6 months as interpreter for an English artist studying with Kantor. We attended rehearsals each evening and had various discussions with him. I kept a record of these which go some way to giving an insight into his creative process — although such a thing is deeply personal and any reason for seeking it out must be a bit perverse. He himself said that the process of writing a book or painting a picture are seen as the act of creation. Yet the perception of this only takes place when the process actually ceases. The process of creation itself is inaccessible — only a print-out, the yeti's footprints remain. These can be very exciting, but not half as fearful as the yeti itself. We were allowed to see three months of the process of creation of a piece, it is rumoured Kantor's final piece. It is difficult to convey the sense of elation it gave us to watch these rehearsals.

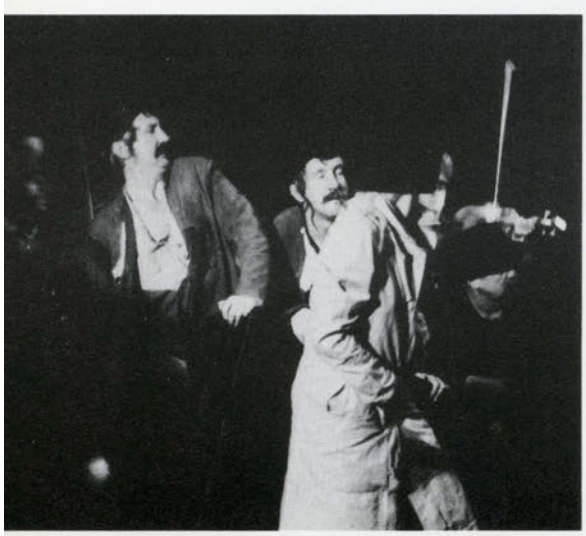
J.M. FINDLAY

Thurs 8th Oct 1987

"Pure creation, that is what I am." Kantor explained to us with the arrogance of an adolescent and the excitement of a child, "You will see . . ." We sat along the stone wall of the small cellar in Cracow in which he rehearses. It is the size of a large sitting room and here he must direct the entire props and cast to be used on the national theatres of the world. For someone established internationally since 1968 and who could be seen as Poland's greatest cultural export, little respect is shown by the authorities. Not so by the people. Get into any taxi in Cracow and ask for Kantor's theatre and the driver will take you there and discuss him all the way. He is a controversial character, a man of no compromise, and one of the few Poles who is allowed to stand up so blatently to the authorities.

Kantor dresses elegantly in a black

All photos taken during rehearsals by J.M. Findlay



suit for work. He greets the actors as they arrive and shakes hands. They are dressed in costume for all rehearsals, from the beginning to the end. They seem to know what to do, entering in a chaotic mass to a wild Polish tango as Kantor suddenly jumps up, electric. He waves his arms like a conductor — weaving his actors in and out of each other in a frenzied symphony. It must be a symphony of movement. As soon as it becomes a cacophony, Kantor bawls, "Stop . . . No . . .!" and begins frowning, pacing, shouting and telling them off. "You may all be very nice people, very kind to your friends etc, but you should be working in a dairy!" and, "You all seek to do the minimum you can possibly do." The actor's patience is extraordinary. Their outrage does not shout back, but fires their adrenalin for the piece.

Before us we see a priest, waiter, politician, a man stuck forever to his stuffed mistress, a charwoman, a princess, a prostitute, two Jews clinging to a board — their only hope, and through them all jogs the eternal traveller with a monstrous rucksack on his back. "First," Kantor tells us later, "It was a waiting room, then a cafe, then a shady cafe, then a cafe in heaven, then one in hell — now it is a cafe in purgatory. . . . First there is chaos, then it begins to clear itself." Kantor does not decide what the actors say, nor how they move initially; they give him that in improvisation. But he chooses what to reject and what to keep. He plays with these moves, directs the furniture, music: from this visual, emotional and musical chaos emerges the piece.

In another scene in which appears a skeleton, another temper rears itself — he thumps down the skeleton so that its head falls of and rolls across the floor. He rages, "This is *not* an agnostic theatre!" They are not behaving with conviction. In violent bodily actions he tries to suffuse the actors with life. He is always full of life, never a limp moment. At 73, he has more energy than any 23 year old I know.

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Tues 13th Oct 1987

This evening the rehearsal went well. Kantor was still energetic afterwards. "Sit here . . . talk to me." We talked about the actors.

Q: Are they classically trained?

A: No, they are not, they have not that. It is the schools that are bad. They do not teach them about art movements.

Q: Do you know any such actors?

A: I used to in the 50's and 60's. They were old even then. They had trained with Stanislavski. Now there is no one, they do not teach them about Surrealism, Constructivism — art movements. Theatre must be part of art, of modern art.

Q: Who do you admire, living?

A: Living? No one. I admire the Constructivists, Bauhaus, Tatlin, Schlemmer, Malevich, Rodshenko, Mayakovsky . . .

Q: Have you ever thought of using a real priest in the play?

A: He is real enough. The priest plays the person he is in real life. The actors play who they are in real life.

What is remarkable about the actors is their fidelity in the face of all, a selfless devotion we do not know over here. As one of the youngest put it, "I need this man, I need his fluids." His violence and delight are addictive. After streams of fury, he will say courteously, "Dobrze . . . Dzienkuje . . ." Good . . . Thank you. His cast are like a family. Many are long-standing, have been with him since the 60's and still hold the paterfamilias in respect. It is not a cowed and cringing sycophancy, but more the service of those who choose to give it to one they believe knows how to direct it.

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20th Oct 1987

A lot of the cast are ill. Kantor enters, "Bureaucracy is the worst beast in this world." He has been in a wrangle with Polish bureaucracy all day. There is a film crew from the Lodz school here today. One member sprawls on the ground at Kantor's feet while he directs. He miraculously avoids falling over the sound man. But he seems to perform well with an audience. There are now 6 people following and recording his every move in this tiny cellar. The priest is sitting motionless at the table with the politician speechifying on top, and the waiter furiously wiping the tables. The film camera man, with a heavy 1930's camera walks forward into Kantor's head and, realising his mistake, backs quickly into a chair, knocking it over. In fact all the cast perform well today — either because of the audience or Kantor's own excitement or both. Sweat runs from their faces, and some are puce. There is no ventilation in the cellar, and far too many people. Kantor points to a loudspeaker and a speech comes out: "Ladies and gentlemen, someone speaks. Where have I come from? Now I'm in the centre, a VIP, everyone is watching me. I'm standing at the door, my waiting is time. I have to go alone a

long, long way and you, Ladies and Gentlemen, will have to look at my going. You are tired of my going, I can't forget. But some will fall asleep tonight, or will you wake in the night, and look at the ceiling and see something you can't explain? Dear Colleagues, you actors must have strength, and keep the cleanness of your lives to go on in a reasonable and therapeutic way. You go higher in applause and I, in order to create in this world, I'm going down and down . . . When one is very unhappy, then in him grows some very bloody strength being created. First unhappiness, then strength. And actually I have nothing more to say Ladies and Gentlemen. Forgive my evil and be happy. We must endure this all. The artists must be at the very depths, at the bottom, in the mire."

You get the impression that such frenzy can only be inspired by intense frustration. Kantor himself is probably a little insane and the people around him are sane. That is his frustration. He wants them to understand him, but they cannot, so as a punishment he turns them into mannequins. But what power! It is true that the purest power and sometimes greatest vision comes from the untrammelled confidence of the insane. Yet it is great talent that can transfer this to actors and a performance. The innocence of the insane is truly disarming as is Tadeusz Kantor's. But he is not completely insane: the precision of his organisation is remarkable; his meticulous attention to detail, to every tiny movement, every unkempt word in the piece, shows hard work, common sense and military correctness.

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23rd Oct 1987

Today, after a frenzied opening, he stops it all and takes apart each minute action. Questioning the actors why it should occur. If there is no reason, it should not be there. "I want to find the motive for the action. What is the reason? Because I am a director, I must find a reason. What is the reason for this knocking? Probably the reason is that there is some kind of devil, but at the moment you must be on earth, you go in a pious way towards God . . . You, priest, go quickly and open the door."

Another go, then a stop and more shouting, "You are tired because of the journey of your whole life. You are exhausted, *driven* to despair. If you are tired you can still shout. Being tired is not in the voice volume, but in the movement of a character, breaking speech into bits, sudden raising of the voice. Suffering, despair, lost sense of life, we will get to this conclusion after many rehearsals. Say something."

Characters: Come, come kiss me.
You are a common place dirty nun.
Death is nothing to me.
Hit, hit me.
Already something's happened. Some perversion, mystery revealed.
They don't exist, do I not exist?
But you do Grace.
They're not buying it.
The den of patience.
Don't get excited . . .
He's a madman, he shot at me . . .

Kantor, "Say something else!"

You're in the wrong place.

Kantor, "That's better." Throwing down a cigarette to the floor and stamping on it violently, "If I extinguish a cigarette, it means I want to say something."

Each rehearsal is a performance in itself. The "fluids" control them, when they run well, for periods of 3 minutes at a time, all hearts run with them.

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Talk with Waclaw Janicki, one of the actors

WJ: Working with Kantor was much more difficult twenty years ago than it is today because it was not accepted everywhere. It is only since the first trip to Italy in 1968 and return to Poland after that people began to respect the work. Now of course he is famous, but in the early 60's when my brother and I first started working for him, our parents were very worried, because Kantor's work is . . . well they wanted us to have careers. I went to the university to study History of Art and Leslaw studied painting. Then I went into my father's business cutting stones. It is very important to be independent from Kantor, otherwise he feels it takes away from him.

JF: You also do performances of your own.

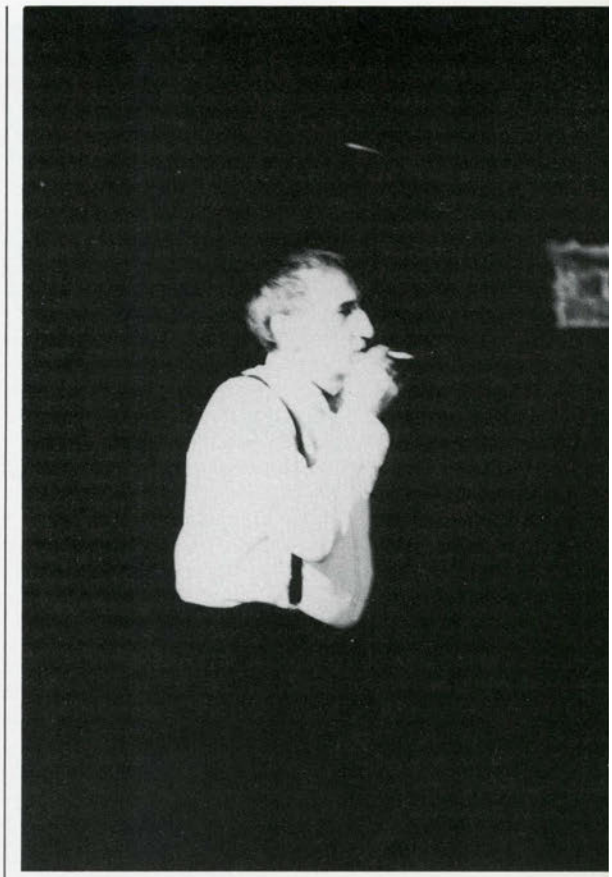
WJ: Yes, Leslaw and I have done one based on the Euthyphro . . .

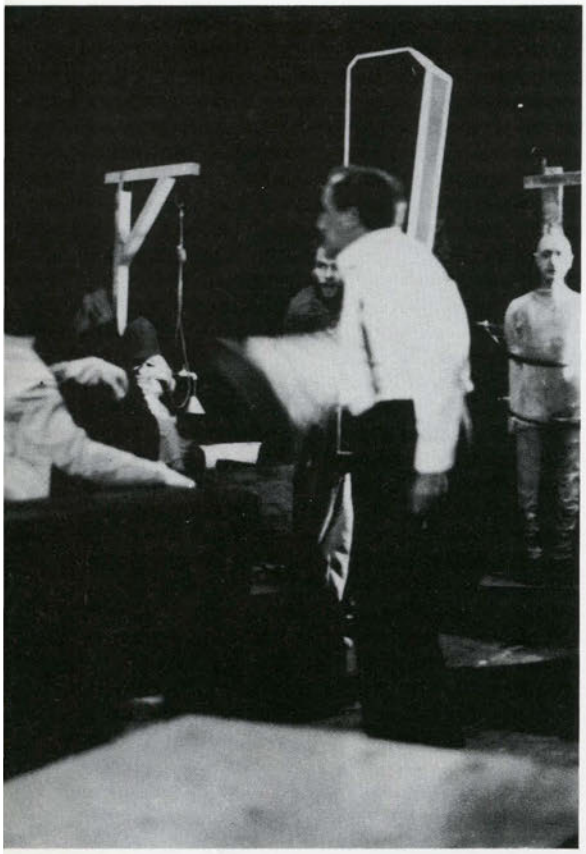
JF: How much of the play is the actor's creation?

WJ: Everyone who works with Kantor gives him a luggage. First we give, then he chooses from what we give, like a man in a clothes shop.

JF: What is this play about?

WJ: You see many different bits of the performance, persons carrying things, these are known things, the same props are used for all his plays. People imagine they come to see different props, but Kantor's intention is to shake people, not to vary his





props. The first scene is very important. He says through the loudspeaker that the actors must try to develop and make progress, "You must lead a clean life, live therapeutically." They go up, he goes down, because it is only from the very bottom that his voice will be heard. You must suffer to create art. You can see that we suffer, we actors.

JF: Certainly I do.

WJ: In the next scene there is a wedding. Perhaps it is a marriage with death . . . Kantor is nearing the end of his life . . . One of the final scenes is about Ulysses returning. At the very beginning in the 40's the theatre prepared a performance of the "Return of Ulysses": it is a return to this beginning now at the very end. The future is the beginning. For you it is the beginning, for Kantor the end. In his plays Kantor has a construction of emotions. He builds movements like a house. He says, "I want to make people cry." He rests always on the border of good art and sensational art. If he wanted he could cross the border and the laughter would be sarcastic: he is always balancing on this border. In rehearsal they look to fix this border. When he feels some rehearsal doesn't go along with his intention, he asks any audience to leave. He doesn't want anyone to see his trial. His theatre is one great risk. He likes risk. It costs the actors a lot, but it is the basis of his activity. In normal theatre, an actor would have a text, then the scenography would be clearly defined. We have worked for weeks without a text. Sometimes someone knows part of it, but no one knows the whole text. It is not necessary. If you know the text, it is not possible to act freely — it loses flexibility, intention etc. If my wife knew the whole text she would be afraid of it.

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23rd Nov 1987

The film crew have gone, banished or finished. Kantor again lectures the priest. "During the crisis in Cracow in the war there was a priest going around giving succour and somehow tolerated by the Nazis. He was fulfilling his role as a priest. He used to shout a lot and tell people where to get off." The beginning is different again, parts of it change every day. New scenes are tried out, perfected and then thrown away — perhaps to be returned to at a later date. From the beginning to the end of watching these rehearsals, one does not get an idea of the whole performance, but one does get an idea of The Whole in Kantor's work.

It is said that we are most of the time dead, that we only come to life for the few seconds when we encounter fear, embarrassment, frustration or euphoria. In his plays Kantor wants to capture these *live* states which are also present in the act of creation. There are circles within circles; each actor experiences these states and it is apparent in his motions: Kantor experiences these states as he conducts and creates; and we, the spectators, experience these states without fail when the piece is ready to see. But even now its life continues. Kantor is present in each performance on stage, in his role. He may approach or correct an actor if he thinks they are overacting or moving too near illusion or too far from life. He sits amongst them in their world in the national theatres in Sydney, New York, Paris, Berlin, Rio, and Edinburgh. His process continues here but not only in the obvious sense.

"What I mean by the process in the act of creation is a particular conduct which does not end nor can be ended with the final touch of a brush." In fact Kantor's process is his life: every living choice that cannot be given finality, every decision that leads to another and another and another. A process that never sees a finished product. "The realisation of the impossible is the strongest fascination and the deepest secret of art . . . a desperate decision to cling to the unprecedented, absurd, ridiculous possibilities . . . rather than to the process." In a sense, Kantor's process is no process at all. And this is a metaphysical paradox rather than a linguistic one.

Kantor is above all concerned with the human will. Like the Mystery Plays, he wants to get to the substance of our will's insecurity. To get there, he must undress the mechansim of will, find out its trigger, its volume and its firing pin; and also, most importantly, how it is loaded and what with. He is sad to find that the majority of firing pins are clogged with rust and will not release. So he must do his best to release on stage and undress in public. It is just as painful. In the "Dead Class" we do see geriatrics' breasts and bottoms. In all his plays, mannequins appear, wax figures, yellow as dead man's skin with over-large genitals. Kantor does not do these things lightly — we feel the weight. He takes the full responsibility of an artist in the classical sense. He knows such things have become debased: art was once a difficult and dangerous path, now it has become a freeway with safety barricades and artists' co-operatives as the service stations.

The only remaining human possibility is decision. In a way, Kantor plays with this, like a kitten with a grenade, because he has reached the riddle of process and does not mind the consequences. ●

SOMETHING MATERIAL?

NIK KAYE argues that process is succumbing to product in contemporary performance

A PROCESS IS hard to sell. Where 'the product is the process'[1] the language of performance often becomes very different from that of the economics of theatre production. Such work is frequently the most ephemeral of all and the notion of touring a process can seem faintly ridiculous. In the past, 'process work' has often challenged the authority of the artist, made conventional theatre and performance skills seem out of place and opened up the work to the presence and interference of an audience. At the same time an emphasis on process has been important to the emergence and development of performance art.

Considerations of this kind of issue and the forms that it gives rise to can be one of the more useful ways of discussing what it is that makes performance art a distinctive genre. 'Process work' can lend weight to the notion that performance art emerged at least in part as a rejection of art as a marketable commodity. Probably more importantly, work that has pursued 'process' as opposed to 'product' has tended to embody certain values and perspectives that performance art has most effectively been able to take up and extend.

This being so, a turning away from an emphasis on process may be a significant change. It may signal a new need to conform to the pressures of the market, especially where performance artists have become performance specialists or where they are members of performance companies that live through the alternative theatre circuit. Yet it may also mean a turning away from the values that gave rise to 'process work' in the first place and from the distinctive concerns that made it important to the nature of earlier performance art.

The thing about theatre that most interests me is that it takes time. Time for me is something material. I like to use it that way. It can be used the same way as paint or plaster or any other material. It can describe other natural events. Robert Whitman[2]

More than anything else time allows a process of change to occur. Arguably in stepping from object-work into time-based work artists like Robert Whitman in the early 1960s stepped from forms that described 'natural events' in fixed terms, offering a 'product', to one that could observe and present a process of change and development. Collagic in nature, early performance works by Robert Whitman, Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow and Al Hansen consisted of a stream of often oddly related actions and materials that allowed the viewer to make his own way through a flow of deliberately fragmented images.

Whitman's suggestion that time can be treated as 'something material' reflects the broadly formalist perspective out of which these performances arose. In work where the formal qualities of objects, places and materials were played one against the other, time became another element to be addressed in its own right. The 'Happenings' explored not only the properties of 'objects in motion,' how materials might be acted upon and the implication of place, found and constructed, but also the consequences of defining a piece in time.

For Kaprow, and to a lesser extent for Oldenburg and Whitman, this meant considering the viewer's developing experience in the face of the piece; how an audience's attention is captured and how their engagement is shaped over time. In Kaprow's work in particular a focus on the view's definition of the work was taken to an extreme. His *Happenings for performers only* consisted of game-like activities in which a participating 'audience' gave physical and perceptual shape to the piece. Not only did they build the game through their playing of it, but through their active participation they were offered a means of making their own way through an unfolding pattern of diverse actions, images and associations. Kaprow's idea was to engage the viewer in an active process of making, to create a kind 'participation performance' in which a would be audience engaged in a 'composition', arguing that

When we think of 'composition,' it is important not to think of it as self-sufficient 'form,' as an arrangement as such [. . .] composition is undertsood as an operation dependent upon the materials (including people and nature) and phenomenally indistinct from them. Allan Kaprow[3]

Derived from a certain view of Pollock's 'action paintings,' Kaprow understands composition as something that is done and of value principally when it is being done. Composition is most usefully considered as a process of being involved with the organising of materials and images. It is an activity to be engaged in rather than a thing to be presented.

Such work demonstrates what a 'process piece' might consist of. According to the sculptor Robert Morris, this is a kind of work where 'process becomes a fact of the work instead of prior to it' and where 'forming is moved further into the presentation'.[4] In Kaprow's *Happenings* there is really nothing left but the process of forming, which is itself taken up by the 'audience. The 'work' is a process to be undertaken and its value lies in the experience of doing, of 'playing' the game, and so engaging in a 'composition'.

This kind of work embodies ideas that have been very important to developments in performance art and that make clear something of the significance of 'process' work. Kaprow's turning toward the idea of composition as a process rather than a fixed form moves away from a concern for the expressive content of a work of art and toward a focus upon the formal terms and processes by which art and its meanings are defined. Instead of offering a fixed object Kaprow draws the 'viewer' into a process of active creation and definition. Typically, rather than presenting a 'product', a self-contained art-work, such work offers the ground on which a process can be activited, or a presentation that is in some way intended to stimulate a process of definition.

These ideas draw together work as influential and diverse as that of John Cage, Joseph Beuys and Robert Wilson. Despite their differences, each of these artists place a special emphasis on stimulating or creating the ground for an active process through which the viewer can explore his own creation and definition of meaning.

You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It doesn't wait for us to change [. . .] it is more mobile than you can imagine. You are getting closer to reality when you say as it 'presents itself'; that means that it is not there, existing as an object. The world, the real is not an object. It is a process. John Cage[5]

According to Cage, we tend to consider the world as an 'object', as a given and fixed organisation of things. Art reflects and fosters this way of looking when it offers us 'objects', works where the relationships between things, meanings, are fixed, given and accepted. Yet Cage's work argues that fundamentally things are meaningless and that meaning is constructed and imposed. Art, then, 'should introduce us to life'[6] by revealing the fact of these constructions and introducing us to a way of looking that acknowledges that we are the source of meaning. In his music and theatre pieces he offers an audience a model of this 'process', a

stream of essentially unconnected sounds and sights that might challenge and disrupt the attempt to find logic and sense. In doing so he addresses the way the viewer approaches the work, attempting to draw him toward a particular way of 'looking' and its implications as he looks. Finally, Cage sees an audience being able to engage in this process of definition quite independently of any 'art-work' he has made. It is this activity he wishes to stimulate:

I'm convinced that we can apply this art of listening to all domains. Personally I chose to start with music.[7]

For Joseph Beuys, the objects, performances or relics left from performances that he presented were to act as provocations to a process of 'discussion' that also went beyond the physical work. Caught up in a complicated and complex system of symbols and yet oddly resistant to clear explanation or analysis, the central point of this work is to be found in the process of definition that they stimulate. When faced with his work, he argued,

What remains is a provocative statement, and this should not be underestimated; it addresses all spontaneous forces in the spectator that can lead to the irritating question, "What is all this about?" — to the centre of the today often suppressed feeling, to the soul or whatever one wants to call the subconscious focal point. Joseph Beuys[8]

In his work the term 'sculpture' came to indicate not a given and complete form, but any process of forming including that which was taken up in response to the objects and actions he presented. So discussion itself is 'sculpture'; 'thought is sculpture [. . .] language is sculpture'.[9] Finally, a number of his 'peformances' in the mid-70's came to consist of actual debates rather than any apparently self-contained object or performance. His interest fell on the process of creation and definition which became the work itself:

'Thinking forms — how we mould our thoughts or
Spoken forms — How we shape our thoughts into words or
SOCIAL SCULPTURE — how we mould and shape the world in which we live: Sculpture as an evolutionary process; everyone an artist.'

Joseph Beuys, 1979[10]

Robert Wilson's theatrical extravaganzas appear very different again and yet they too give a special emphasis to the process of 'forming'. According to Richard Foreman Wilson's works *create a field situation within which the spectator can examine himself (as perceptor) . . . a healthier 'compositional' theatre in which the directorial effort is not a straining after more and more intense 'expression' of predetermined material, but is a sweet and powerful 'placing' of various found and invented stage objects and actions — so placed and interwoven as to 'show' at each moment as many of the implications and multi-level relations between objects and effects as possible.*[11]

In pieces such *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud (1969)* or *Einstein on the Beach (1976)* Wilson establishes a tension between the formal and visual unities of his 'stage pictures' and the playful and associational relationships between images. While the formal unities in his work suggest a strong coherence, the working out of themes and development of imagery seem intended to raise possible connections rather than offer any clear meanings. Instead of telling us anything about Freud or Einstein, Wilson's dream worlds seem intended to draw us into a process of dreaming, inviting us to attempt to put the pieces together and work out themes and in the process become aware of our own activity.

On the surface of it this may seem an odd collection of artists to bring together, yet the connections between them are important ones. Kaprow, Cage, Beuys and Wilson explore in different ways the processes by which art and its meanings are defined and they do so by attempting to 'recover process and hold onto it as a part of the end form of the work.'[12] Rules, scores, objects and theatre performances are presented with the aim of stimulating an awareness of certain kinds of processes that an 'audience' is engaged in. Key to the work is this focus on the nature and importance of these processes and what it means for an audience or a viewer to become aware of their activity as they face that which the artist presents.

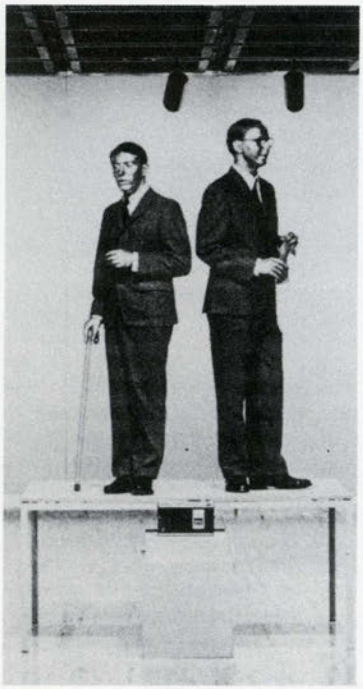
More recent developments in British experimental performance reveal a very different perspective. While in the 1960s and 1970s many artists made performances as part of a range of activities we now find more specialist performers and performance companies that work through the alternative theatre venues. Naturally enough such companies have been more open to the influence of the alternative theatre itself, which in Britain has been so strong since the mid-60s, and through this the forms and practices of the earlier performance art have been transformed.

These circumstances make other demands too. A touring theatre company needs a 'show', a 'product'. It needs a kind of work it can adapt to different spaces, that it can market, that is self-contained and somehow quantifiable. Such needs tend to undermine a focus on 'process' where the work might remain open and responsive. Arguably Kaprow's *'Happenings'* exemplify above all just how ephemeral and uncommercial an emphasis on process can become.

Of course this merging of influences is producing very interesting work that bridges sensibilities. In their earlier pieces, Impact Theatre Company seemed to establish an exciting balance between narrative, a play of images and comic episodes. Rose English has appropriated theatre conventions and practices in order to further performances which focus on an interaction with the audience. Yet it has also led to a broader confusion about what is and isn't 'performance art'.

As a whole this merging of influences and perspectives, as performance art meets theatre, is quite consistent with the way performance art itself has questioned traditional distinctions between artistic disciplines and embraced a range of means and influences. At the same time it is important to be aware of the implications of such changes and what they might leave behind. In the case of 'process work', whose influence must be diminished by its ephemeral nature, a consideration of what it offers might help set the values of current work in context and raise questions about what artists and theatre makers can draw from earlier performance art. ●

1. Anne Halprin, *A Theatre of Encounter* in M. can Tuyl, *Anthology of Impulse 1951-1966* (New York 1966).
2. M. Kirby (Ed.), *Happenings* (London 1965) p.134.
3. A. Kaprow, *Assembleges, Environments & Happenings* (New York 1966) p.159.
4. R. Morris, *Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making, Artform* April 1970.
5. J. Cage & D. Charles, *For the Birds* (London 1981) p.52.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Id*, p.204.
8. G. Adriani, W. Konnerz & K. Thomas *Joseph Beuys: Life & Work* (New York 1979) p.98.
9. C. Belz, *Joseph Beuys' American debut, Art in America* Sept/Oct 1972.
10. C. Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (London 1979) p.6.
11. R. Foreman, review of *Freud, The Village Voice* 1.1.70.
12. R. Morris, *Anti-Form, Artforum* April 1968.



SOMEBODY SHOULD TELL THE EMPEROR

SIMON HERBERT argues that many of today's performance artists have misunderstood the history of the medium

THE GHOSTS OF performance past haunt contemporary live art actions. We refer to them, either consciously or subsconsciously, when we witness, or are involved in, a live work. For all the immediacy of performance there is a great deal of evidence that in attempting a critical appraisal of the medium we are continually entralled by a reverence for the past. This probably comes as something of a surprise to the figures which have been frozen by the mechanical eye of the camera as at the time they were probably not particularly interested in the future uses of the photograph, or where it could be placed in relation to a piece of pertinent text, for example, in a retrospective catalogue. One would hope that they were too busy *being* and *doing*.

And what would they think of what *we* are doing now? What would Chris Burden think if he took the nails out of his hands and clambered down from the Volkswagen for a closer look? Or Benjamin Peret, glancing away from a rapidly retreating and bewildered priest, Beret's spittle inscribing a silver trail down his cassock? Or Carolee Schneeman, pushing her head through a melee of naked and tangled limbs? Or Joseph Ceuys, breaking off eye-contact with the sullen stare of a coyote pre-occupied with pissing on a copy of the Wall Street Journal?

Whether or not they could give a damn about the current state of British live art is another matter, but it is interesting to note that of these 'historical' artists, some are still alive and engaging with time-based practice in one way or another. In performance terms their art actions have been lionised as watersheds in defining the medium. Yet these artists are alive. They are now doing other things. They have moved on. They are pushing back other boundaries. I would like to suggest a rather shocking premise now: that we shouldn't be bothered about these and other past works. Even forget them. Because they were conceived as experimental, they were formulated and presented within a conceptual frame-work that had a beginning and an end but nothing

worked out in the middle. Certain initial parameters were defined, and they operated within these to see what would happen. In a sense, they were ultimately sketches.

'But,' I hear you say, enraged, 'if we forget their work what hope do we have of establishing a broad-based critical frame-work for present activities? Won't our artists be in danger of ignorantly re-gurgitating the essence of previous events?' Well, ignoring the temptation for a moment to pursue a line of thought that if da Vinci could paint at the speed of light than the Mona Lisa would only a sketch, let's have a look, you and I — and Chris and Benjamin and Vito and Carolee and Joseph — and see what our current artists have learnt.

This is what today's artists are writing about their own work as collected as random from recent copies of the Arts Council's performance bulletin.

"The piece is a strange and recognisable vision of horror charged with sexuality, fear and loneliness."

"Dance and imagery fuse to create an atmosphere of isolation and fragility."

". . . they simply appear on stage and create an atmosphere that all but masks a sense of danger.".

" . . . the beauty of form expressed by the human body."

". . . a richly nostalgic performance."

". . . a highly comedic performance."

And so on.

These may not, of course, be the artists own words, but rather those of an enthusiastic marketing and publicity officer attempting to put bums on seats. nevertheless, there is certainly a lot of this poetic prose knocking about, so maybe we should apply it in the interests of analysis to some previous live art actions. For instance:

"Stuart Brisley and Iain Robertson's live work at De Appel, Amsterdam in 1979, *Between*, involved both men spending long periods each day naked on a steep, slippery slope, sometimes helping each other to stay on it, sometimes painfully struggling for solo occupancy of this territory."

Alright, that's a pretty fair description so far, but let's beef it up a little:

"The bittersweet stench of capitulation and co-operation permeated the dark grainy wooden structure, as the dripping water hose trickled out a staccato eulogy to the nihilistic contortions of two wraiths engaged in a one-way battle on the road to hell."

Now, this would seem to be more in sych with present times. Or, how about the work of Alastair Maclennan:

"Alastair Maclennan IS the embodiment of Irish world pain. You will be shocked and touched to see his stockinged figure shuffle amiably around a host of fish and pigs heads staring in cold-eyed approval of his bittersweet (love that word) wandering. Be contemplative. Be very contemplative." There is a poetry in the actions of these and other artists engaged in this form of cultural practice that, at its best, cannot be forgotten. It is not a romantic poetry, neither is it very often celebratory; rather it attempts to illuminate various facets of the human condition.

Process, of course, is an integral part of any artists methodology but has, perhaps, been most often associated with time-based activities. principally, this is for two reasons. Firstly, a live action takes place within a finite timescale in which the viewer watches meaning unfold before his/her gaze i.e. the work *is* the process. Secondly, this process may involve a degree of flexibility, as many live actions occur within a mutating frame-work i.e. the artists shapes the work as it unfolds, discovering — and reacting — simultaneously to the viewer.

Maybe I am being naive, but there seems to be a substantial difference in approaching live work from this viewpoint, as opposed to fore-grounding artists intentions — whether the work has been presented before or not — and potentially steering the viewers reactions through purple prose. If current work is still 'performance', still 'experimental', (process based) and is not delivered gift-wrapped to it's audience, there seems to be some confusion here.

In times of confusion it is best to return to basics; contemporaneously, whilst artists hang from gallery walls, whilst other artists recite the names of all the American states in one breath, whilst others choreograph a post-industrial concerto on a darkened river bank, whilst others masturbate with ketchup bottles, it is interesting to attempt to explore who is investing the term 'experimental' with what kind of authenticity.

For instance, 'experimental theatre', according to a recent issue of City Limits is the blue-print for 'performance' in the eighties. Generally, though, the process element of such work has taken place in the rehearsal room long before the viewer is privy to the work. The essential nature of such work is therefore about constructing a frame-work which consists of a series of pre-meditated and telegraphed 'punches'. It's flexibility is manifested more in a gradual fine-tuning/omission/addition of these elements, consolidating the efficacy of the work over a number of presentations. This represents a move away from previously concretized notions of performance.

On the other hand, there is the 'traditional' experimental work which still allies itself historically to a purer conception of immediate process. Typefied as 'body art', this includes the current actions of artists such a Nigel Rolfe, Mona Hatoum, Alastair Maclennan and Stuart Brisley.

Each of these strands have their merits, and there is a certain amount of blurring of the borders between the former 'soft' avant-garde and the latter 'hard' avant-garde as style is appropriated in favour of content, and vice versa. What is not apparent is an attempt on the part of critics, practitioners and public to examine and assess a context for change in live work, and why the same superficial labels are being stamped onto fundamentally different methodologies. What does inform the contextualization of process within performance does not rely on pigeonholing, but an analyzing the past in terms of the present, and the present in terms of the past. There are, after all, messages to be learnt from the process of assimilation. Just as cultural trends and modes of expression (and, therefore, political intent) shift to the tempo of our times, so should our understanding of the legacy of previous works and the subsequent endorsement/rejection of current art forms.

For instance, a focus on pure process has become eclipsed by other modes of work. It's nature has, to all intents and purposes, been used and defined by practitioners in an overtly confrontational sense. It remains an integral ideological methodology for many artists, yet current perceptions and fashions shy away from it. In our rush to write purple prose for advance publicity and employ the services of a lighting techician who can dim strobes whilst bringing up pink gels, we adamantly refuse to evaluate it's legacy, or, more sadly, we re-package it without transmuting this legacy into a potent contemporary force.

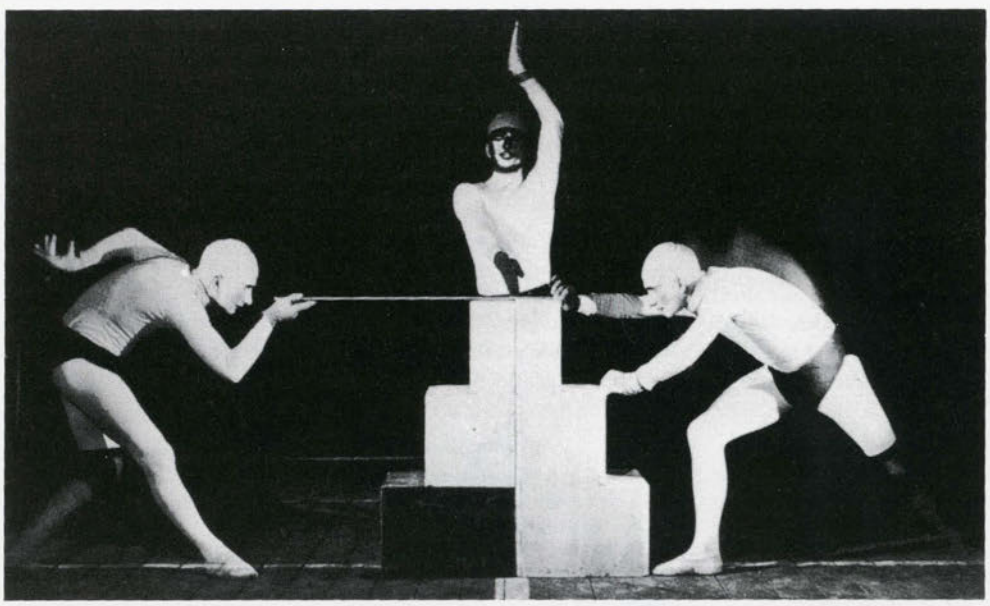
We pay lip-service to the fixed images of static ghosts. We do not honour them, do not evaluate their work as past images read in the present, neither do we examine how their work *still* changes with regard to the present. Performance by it's very nature is confrontational. If the often brutal and painful endurance work as practised by many artists in the late sixties and seventies was confrontational, how does it measure up in the eighties? Does it have a place in a world where VHS units have deadened our nerve-ends through a

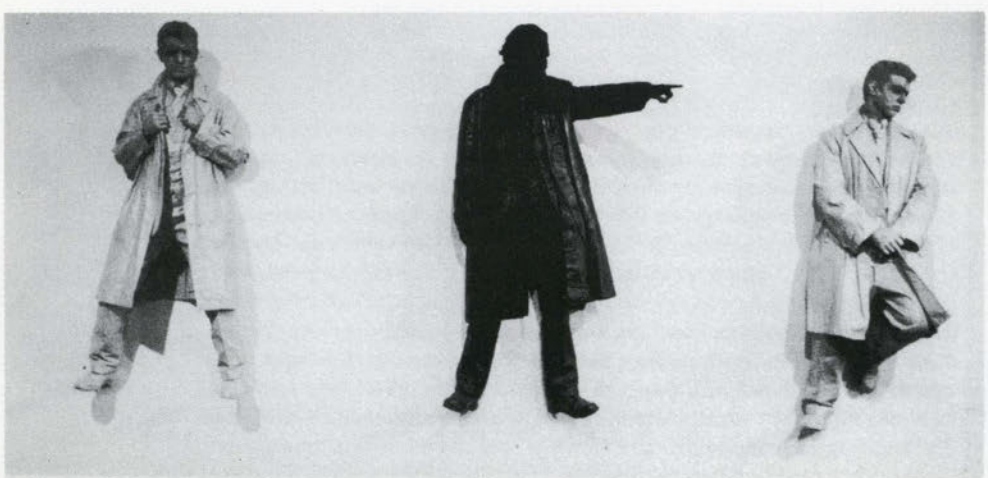
steady sensory diet of snuff movies? Or is the case, in fact, the opposite — that in a world where the A-team blast thousands of rounds of ammunition at each other without incurring even a minor flesh wound, is it time our artists brought pain back to the cultural arena, crawling once again through broken bottles and howling a language outside of conventional words?

Sadly, we appear to be learning little. Judging by the activities of our art students, the next generation seem quite happy to prance around naked covered in entrails, not recognising that the 'confrontation' and 'reality' of their work stems from their very own first-time elation and fear at entering the myth, whilst we have seen it all before. Maybe their time will come, maybe the old performance gods are still too close and the new ones not setting an example, maybe they don't realise that the biggest performance event of the year will be when the nurses all walk out of the hospitals . . .

If practitioners of live art are to remain faithful to the processes and heritage of experimental work, then they must be prepared to shift the goal-posts. A major hindrance in ascertaining a way forward is that the last few years have seen a resurgence of interest in performance, which has resulted in a celebratory climate in which any and all performance is deemed to be intrinsically worthy. Theodore Sturgeon's law that 90% of everything is shit may never be better applied than to the current live scene, yet the 'performance artist' is a protected species and it seems a critical cull must be avoided at all costs.

Performance has always embodied the immediate; the potential for an artist to confront an audience, to touch it, to punch it, to stroke it. If it's practitioners believe that the re-gurgitation of stylistic conventions of the past with no present context is the answer, or the superficial fore-grounding of knee jerk issues — within a patina of style — that we can immediately identify and compartmentalize in terms of our liberal sensibilities ("pornography is B-A-D", "racism is E-V-I-L", and there it ends), then perhaps the audience should let them into a little secret. ●





A SERIES OF CHANGES

by PAULINE CUMMINS

FROM 1979-1981 I lived in Toronto Canada, and I think that is where the process began. Like many immigrants, being far away from home, give me a new perspective on my nationality, and my identity.

I was very homesick and initially this allowed me to have a passionate, romantic, rememberance of Ireland.

Toronto seemed like a barren enclave. Most Torontonians had no respect or love for their own culture, but always looked to Britain or America for their validation. I saw a great similarity in these attitudes, which spring from colonialism, and attitudes Ireland had grown out of during the 50's and the 60's. being continually asked to explain what was happening in Northern Ireland, 'have you got three hours', also helped to make me rethink, old attitudes and look anew.

The news coverage of events in Northern Ireland, was distinctly different in Toronto to the ones I had had access to in Ireland (RTE, BBC). In fact at that time, which was during the hunger strikes, Canadian broadcasting gave sympathetic coverage to the IRA and represented in a favourable light the possibility of a united Ireland. Paradoxically now that I was two thousand miles away from Northern Ireland I was more fully aware of its dilemma, than when I had lived just sixty miles away in Dublin. Till then my politcs had been predominantly feminist, but now I realised I could no longer ignore what was happening 'up there'.

Leaving Canada, I thought I had my attitudes on Norther Ireland clearly defined. But within a couple of months of being at home I was totally confused again. Daily reports of ordinary people, killed in front of their families, shot while watching t.v. with their kids, or while answering the door, left me depressed and demoralised not known what to do or think.

They say that uncertainty is not an ignoble condition and looking towards Northern Ireland and Northern Irish artists their hesitancy to describe the daily suffering seems admirable to me. The attention of the world media on Northern Ireland has also brought the attention of the art world, and they wish, as we all at one time wished, to have some easy description of what is happening. Lucy Lippard chose the exhibition, *Divisions, Crossroads, Turns of Mind — Some New Irish Art* which had a high political content, in 1985. And in 1987 Brian McAvera chose a show of Irish artists reactions to Northern Ireland, unfortunately this was an exclusively male show. There is a danger in thse group shows of making the war in Northern Ireland a saleable commodity and of making political art a fashionable item. But it is twenty years since the civil rights marches in Northern Ireland and some work of depth is slowly emerging. We can't look at Northern Ireland and begin to describe it without some regard to our history and the relationship between England and Ireland for the last eight hundred years. Your history is probably as biased as ours. In our history you are always the villains, we are always the heros.

We have a long line of heroes in Ireland, and death is the highest accolade. The hunger strikers are in a case in point, six healthy young men, starved to death for the principle of recognition of their political status. They now have saintly status.

My first tentative work on Northern Ireland began in 1981 and it has taken six years to reach a point where I would like to show it. I tried to look further back into our history, for ancient symbols, and past rituals, in an attempt to rise above and view the present, as a tiny part of an ongoing cycle. I became interested in bodies preserved in the bogs, some of them two thousand years old. Colloquially they are known as the bog people. I began by making clay masks in the raku method, the crumbling clay and the shiny, slimy, glazes, suggesting the process of decay, but the features are still recognisable. The bodies that have been discovered in the bogs are startling because they are so life like, the skin is preserved and even the hair and it looks as if they could almost speak.

It was this idea of preservation in death, or life preserved, that gave me I thought an apt arena in which to explore some of the contradictions and complications of the situation in Northern Ireland. The bodies are so well preserved that sometimes upon discovery they are mistaken for victims of more recent killings.

When we travel from Ireland to Northern Ireland we drive through check-points like Aughnacloy — check-points with large metal stuctures that remind me of pagodas. Behind one of these structures a young man in British Army dress watches us through a slit in the metal facade. Two more recruits, with machine guns, stand by. There is an air of seige — yet we are surrounded by open countryside. We are asked to reverse the car, he is not interested in our faces, it is the number plate he must see. He picks up a phone and makes a call, which I assume links into a central computer. This metal skin that we travel in, the car has an approved registration so the man in the metal box waves us through. We drive through this narrow constructed corridor, conscious that in the last week a man walking from north to south was shot dead by a ricochet bullet.

Back to the process of the work. The process then was to make these clay bodies to represent ordinary people, people caught by chance, and preserved in history, as symbols of the continuing agony in Northern Ireland. But the process of work canot be disassociated from the process of living, and living as I do in Ireland, I experience the killings connected with the battles for Northern Ireland, as a continuous gnawing at my bones.

Enniskillen, Auchnacloy, Loughgall, Milltown Cemetery, and Claudy, now all mean different things to us. We are re-learning the geography of Northern Ireland by the bloody events, that signpost the landscape.

My clay figures speak of the past, and of the present, of life remembered — life dimembered.

They are shown with some accountrements of their burial — some turf, some pine, some gorse, some stone. I lie with these half dead, half alive people, waiting for a cease-fire, longing to be released with them, from this eternal waiting. ●

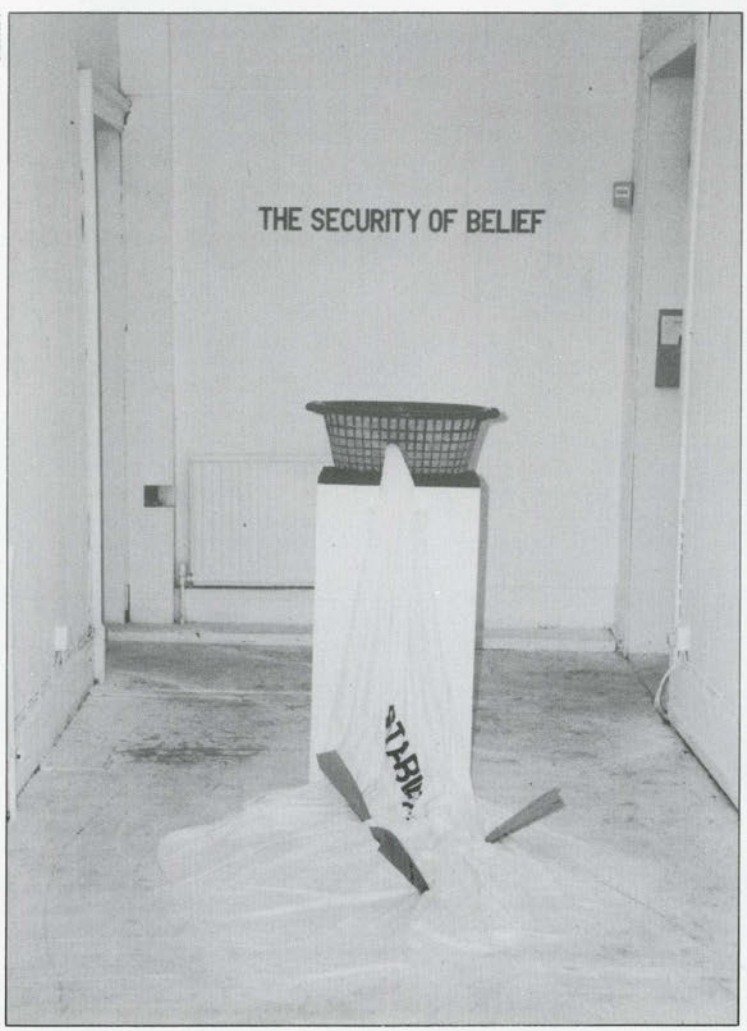
ALL THE RAGE

MALCOLM DICKSON assesses the special nature and problems of radical art practice in Scotland.

"Scotland is a country of contradictions — an unknown country in which poverty and wealth, apathy and anger, sulky resignation and surging creativity exist cheek-by-jowl. Emigation no longer provides an escape in the way it did in the past. Ordinary men, women and children worry about an uncertain future, the contradictions of the past and the present are locked within a dialectic of sullen resignation and hopeful creativity." James D. Young.[1]

HAVING BEEN ISOLATED from the wider developments in contemporary art in Britain and throughout Europe in the sixties and seventies, Scottish art has been dominated by a tradition of painting which has only slightly shed its reactionary habits with the rise of a new generation of Glasgow 'Boys': a narrow-mindedness, creative poverty, chauvinism, a numbing conservatism, and a willingness to let the art-market be a measure of the 'value' of art. There are very few precedents for the practice and exhibition of contemporary art in Scotland — Richard Demarco and his gallery is one exception, emerging out of the sixties cross-fertilisation of the visual and performing arts, literature and poetry, laced with dreams of the millenium. Similarly, in the mid-seventies the Third Eye Centre (under the directorship of playwright Tom McGrath) functioned as a late-opening drop-in place with readings and multi-media events of various sorts giving it the possibility of becoming a centre for all kinds of cultural activity (an arts lab perhaps) before it was forced to change its function. The Scottish International magazine of the last sixties-early seventies (then edited by Bob Tait, later becoming psychedelic under the editorship of Tom Buchan and because of that a bit 'out of touch') fused left politics, poetry, the arts with a sense of national identity. These were all part of a perceived alternative culture and in these cases were ephemeral.[2]

PHOTO / A. GEARY



Adam Geary, *The Security of Belief*. Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, 1986

Today there is little patience given to thoughts on a new world or in the widespread transformation of consciousness by cultural means — space for thought is restrictive. In the visual arts, the situation for most artists is difficult with no Exhibitions Payment Rights Scheme to acknowledge, however small, artists activities as cultural producers when they publicly exhibit their work. In painting, competition is fierce for the prize of capitalism. Until recently, there were no magazines devoted to the visual arts and to help give a critical framework for practice.[3] There is a desperate lack of exhibition paces and only two artist-run spaces (Transmission in Glasgow, Collective in Edinburgh: two of the lowest funded galleries in Scotland). The problems are incrased for those working in time-based areas such as video, performance and installation because these areas operate outside the weight of tradition in Scottish art. Non commercial expression and non-object based art has received little funding, curators are unwilling to programme such work or to take the risk with their budget, and there are still no equipment access centres or audio-visual libraries for more technically orientated work.

New initiatives may be identified, however, which might just begin to provide the support structure for new work and this is occurring within arts council fundings as it is evolving outwith the mainstream art world in new networks of artists activities.

In April 1988 the Scottish Arts Council announced a forthcoming New Projects Scheme for the Visual Arts to promote areas of site-specific installation, performance, artists videos and non-gallery activities.[4] This new scheme has emerged out of two meetings held by S.A.C. and representatives from various galleries and projects, including George Wylie (Society of Scottish Artists), transmission, TV Workshop in Dundee, EventSpace, Third Eye centre, collective Gallery, Department of Envionmental Art at Glasgow School of Art, and other gallery representatives not previously interest in this area. It's worth looking at some of these as they exist to clarify the situation, at least from one particular viewpoint, and to refer to a few artists whose work I am or have been familiar with.

In recent years, a lot of activity has come from the small artist-run space Transmission. Despite it's limited budget, experimental art characterises its programming and more especially that which is provocative or issue-based. By its self-run nature it stays much closer to the ground than other galleries and informality of approach is often thought of as 'unprofessional'. This space is run by a committee (though protagonists in each new committeee are always identifiable) of unemployed artists which will tend to develop a different kind of attitude to other professionally (that is salaried posts) run galleries. The gallery has lended itself to work which draws upon the nature of its space: Stuart Brisley's *Red Army* performance (1986), Iain Robertson's installation *Dead Ending* (1986), Pictorial Heroes *Faction* video installation (1986), my own installation *Beneath the Cobblestones, the Sewer* (1987) and Desire in Ruins group show (1987), as well as performances from Karen Strang (1986), Louise Crawford (1987), Puberty Institution (1987) and Billy Clark (1988). Adam Geary's installations (September 1987) made specific references to the economic and cultural situation of Scotland. *The Promise of Tradition* used a handout which linked the Sovereignty of Parliament ("invented in the 18th Century to excuse the privatisation of common lands") with a conservative ruling class structure which now figures highly in 'a priviledged, white male, Southern and City capitalist elite.' This polemical statement was a part of the other work which comprised four podiums containing fragmentary text and a central panel containing small oak tree in a clear plastic bag with the words *The Promise of Tradition* inscribed on a brass plaque. *The Security of Belief* installation in the other space used 'official-speak' terms associated with the nuclear industry painted on white sheets on the walls centred by a plinth on which was a clothes basket filled with concrete. Out of this another blanket seeped which was pinned to the floor by three government envelopes shaped into paper aeroplanes. On this sheet was the word 'Stability'.

This work referred to the vulnerability and lack of control of the Scottish public as NATO's second biggest nuclear base and to the secrecy and lack of information which surrounds this. Geary is from Gourock (now living in London) which is situated on the banks of the nuclear submarine infested waters of the Firth of Clyde. A few miles across the water at Dunoon and around the areas of the Holy Loch, Faslane, and Loch Striven, the overlooking hills and forests are all US occupied military zones.

Transmission Gallery also has been the host for a number of events called EventSpace of which video has been the focus, the most successful being EventSpace I which featured multi-monitor installations from Pictorial Heroes, Steve Partridge, Zoe Redmen, Steve Littman and Alistair McDonald plus performances and film.[5] Pictorial Heroes (Alan Robertson and Douglas Aubrey) have significantly turned attention to video art with their installation presence at several large group shows of contemporary art including the Society of Scottish Artists (at the invitation of George Wylie) and the Glasgow Group, both of which were previously fairly conservative institutions. Their installation at the Seagate Gallery as part of the *Interference Experimental Video* show was called *The Great Divide* and used images of inner-city roads and buildings, a cut-up ad for the Renault car, with repeated images of an attack on a motorway surveillance camera by a lone brick-throwing urban dissenter. This work drew attention to increasing class divisions, social tension and polarisation which is emerging out of the contrast between a new wealthy class moving into Glagow and a growing underclass being forced out of social and economic participation in the 'new-found opportunities' Glasgow is now seen as a focus of. Their single screen work *Sniper* won the second prize at the Smith Biennial in 1987 which in effect marked the formal initiation of video art into the hierarchy of Scottish art.[6] EventSpace has now become a separate organisation aimed at promoting work in a non-gallery context and in raising the profile for video art[7] throughout Scotland.

The foundation for the production of video lies at the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art where Steve Partridge (like Robertson and Aubrey is another English emigre') has built up a video course into the structure of the curriculum in the Fine Art course. Recognising the problems of lack of access to advanced equipment for artists and independent producers, he has established the TV Workshop which is available for use to members at reasonable hire charges. Recognising also the initial problems encountered by artists who wish to embark upon experimentation in video for possibly the first time, he has in conjunction with the Scottish Arts Council, made available three production grants of up to £1,000 each for artists resident in Scotland. The whole area of developing an audio-visual language within the context of art is a significant one which many artists and organisers in Scotland tend to be suspicious of.

The Third Eye Centre fairly recently appointed Nikki Millican as their Events Co-ordinator, coming to Glasgow from her previous position at the Midland Group in Nottingham

PHOTO / A. GEARY

Adam Geary
The Promise of Tradition
Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, 1987

where she successfully organised the National Review of Live Art for many years. As Scotland's first professional administrator devoted to 'live art' she will be staging the NRLA in Glasgow this year. In addition, the Third Eye Centre hopes to be able to commission new work. Millican has combined performance theatre, contemporary dance and installation/performance more related to visual arts such as Alistair MacLennan who was included in the *New Work/No Definition* season last year. Also included was the Scottish artists Karen Strang who presented a two day installation workshop and two evening performances, with the assistance of Peter Horobin (Dundee), Louise Crawford (Edinburgh) and Keneth Murphy-Roud (Glasgow).[8] The installation workshops involved the collection of certain data from visitors to the event. This approach owes a lot to the work of Peter Horobin.

Operating from the Data Attic in Dundee, Horobin takes a deliberately low profile stance and uses this base as a centre for correspondence and alternative art. As a Neoist in the early-eighties, he organised two apartment festivals — one in London in 1984 and the other in the Italian village of Pontenossa, organised with Emilio Morando who runs an art space there. As an ex-Neoist he practices the multiple name concept ("the basis of Neosim lies in the idea that anyone can be a particular individual" Karen Eliot, Smile 8) and has published an issue of Smile which was/is designed to "show the working reality of artists on the dole". This took the format of a simple description of the artists activities through one particular day. This is central to Horobin's data projects — he is currently undertaking a ten year project (ten years of his life which is his thirties and ten years of history throughout the eighties) in which he documents and records all his activities in the form of 'data'. His body becomes a gauge and 'data' becomes the form by which to record time and how we construct our lives according to it. This means the construction of his everyday life defined by himself and not in terms of capitalist social relations and patterns of consumption. This process art is one of consciousness through a regulated discipline and the mode of living itself being the 'creative exercise'. He is currently co-ordinating *The Festival of Non-Participation*, a de-centralised event throughout Scotland in 1988 which encourages 'participants' to non-participate in the capitalistic economy by joining others in the creation of events and activities which, temporarily, redefine the range of an individuals control over their lives.

The colonisation of the individuals desires is extended into the control of the environment. Commenting on Scotland becoming a tourist resort, he writes 'Many Scots cannot afford to participate in the tourist attractions of their own country. Our natural heritage has been divided into specialist areas: military zones, forestry plantations, industrial complexes, sporting estates, wildlife reserves and tourist areas. As a consequence, the Scot is no longer free to roam extensively within her/his country.'[9] This refers back to an action/event which Horobin undertook in 1984: taking on the identity of a 'tramp' (a homeless individual with no apparent identity in our society) and with a pram containing all his living and studio needs set out on a walk from Dysart in the Central Region of Scotland, to Mallaig, on the other coast. Over the Grampian Hills and into the North West Highlands this is a journey of some 100-140 miles (estimated on a small map). This image of the hobo in shackles with a pram walking in the Scottish Landscape is a strong one, bringing back memories of such nomadic outcasts I would pass in the car on outings with my parents when I was a child. Being 1984 and the year of Orwell's totalitarian society and prohibition of freedom, Horobin created an image which contradicted that: an image of exclusion and at the same time of economy of existence.[10] Many of Horobin's activities take on Fluxus orientations and the underlying ecological/Green and alternative concerns are shared by other artists in Scotland such as Jayne Taylor, organiser of Transmission's Mail Art show (June 88) and co-ordinator of the Alternative Garden Festival which will embrace art, organic gardening and direct action. It is in these propositions that the 'art base' is extended.

The possibilities of what public art is and can be are being explored by many students at Glasgow School of Art in the department of Environmental Art. Here, students have to undertake a public art project within a two-mile radius of their building and this takes

Peter Horobin in the Data Attic, 1987

Peter Horobin outside Mallaig, 10/8/1984

many diverse forms from conventional murals, banners in the Central Station, flyposting artwork and billboards, street actions, temporary installations, sculpture, and for one student, inclusion in the Glasgow Garden Festival. Run by artists Samantha Ainsley and David Harding, the conceptual premise for the course is that 'context is half the work' (brought into the department with Harding's previous involvment with the Artists Placement Group). The department is situated in an old girls high school and being outside the main splendour of GSA's Mackintosh building it lends itself well to a creative ambiance which expresses itself in the work which students undertake in a variety of the hidden basement rooms and derelict corridors (recent work has included an installation by Peter Gilmour and a performance by Euan Sutherland) to which invitations are sent out. There is a strong presence of performance work and Euan Sutherland, Douglas Gordon and Craig Richardson have collaborated together as 'tradition/ debilitation' at the NRLA and at the Third Eye Centre. Douglas Gôrdon cites the Charlie Hooker Performance at Transmission in 1986 as an influence or in encouraging live work (Gordon and Richardson both participated in Hooker's *White Lining* performance), but it has been the years of creative bankruptcy and neglect of ideas in the structure at GSA which has given rise to a passion for experimental work. In a proposal for a durational installation performance to take place in an abandoned space nearby The Clyde, Puberty Institution (Douglas Gordon and Craig Richardson):

'We feel that the choice of space is an intergral part of the art process and the work strives to create an atmosphere which is in harmony with the space and is derived for our reactions to the area.

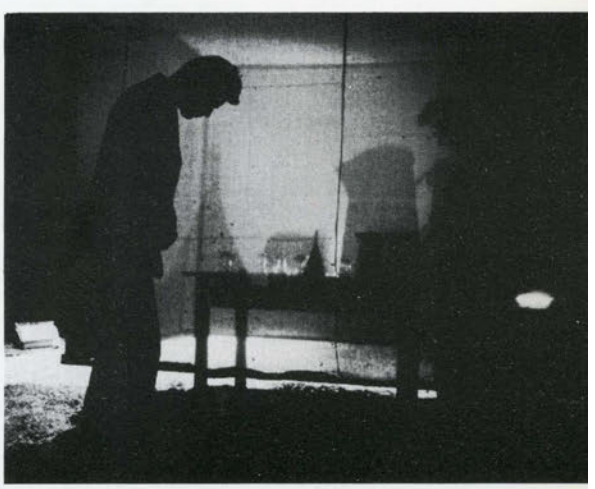
'We choose to use 'the unloved objects of the world'

We draw attention to the Neglected . . . Discarded'[11]

The lack of changing possibilities in the world mean that art activities must become more persistent in their demands. Whilst live art is establishing more public gallery outlets, the expression of new ideas is creating new structures for their dispersal. That 'half-repressed, half-insurgent and almost inarticulate expression of a national awareness' that J.D. Young sees in Archie Hinds's 60's novel *The Dear Green Place* is perhaps moving again. Art practice is undergoing a process and radicalisation and, paradoxically, of recuperation into mainstream perceptions. The issue facing many artists, writers, poets, magazine publishers, community organisers, teachers and many others is that of who controls our culture and what form will it take in the future. ●

1. James D. Young "Making Trouble: autobiolgraphical explorations and Socialism", Clydeside Press, 1987.
2. The former two are run on a formal, conventional gallery type basis. The latter was a precursor in some ways to the Edinburgh Review which currently presents a more sharper and informed perspective on Scottish culture, language, arts, literature, philosophy and psychology.
3. Variant I was published in 1984 and issue 2 in 1985 as a magazine for cultural dissent. Alba was started by Peter Hill in 1986 with Scottish Arts Council backing. Both still exist, the former of which I am editor.
4. £10,000 is available in total to artists, galleries and promoters for this. However, it is arts council policy to only fund 50%, the other half being met by some other body. In Glasgow the Festivals Unit was set up by Glasgow District Council to fund and co-ordinate all activities which will culminate in Glasgow as Europe's City of Culture in 1990. This is currently proving a great incentive for new projects, (this again is 50% funding) though after 1990 it will no longer exist and neither will the money. The problems of private sponsorship will then arise for experimental work.
5. In an article in Variant 3, Alan Robertson gives an overview of time-based work in Scotland with particular reference to video, EventSpace I and the 'Interference: Experimental Video' show at the Seagate Gallery in Dundee. This was organised by, and included the work of, Alistair McDonald and Sandra Christie, plus work from Pictorial Heroes and Chris Rowland. See also Steve Partridge's article in Alba 4 called 'Artists Television' which gives some historical precedents for video art in Scotland.
6. This exhibition, held at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Stirling, also included a video installation of six monitors embedded in technological debris which I had arranged in the entrance hall to the Museum. The installation "XS", like the work of Pictorial heroes, acted as intervention in terms of medium and art space.
7. As an organiser of EventSpace alongside Douglas Aubrey and Alan Robertson, we are to receive a grant from SAC for setting-up costs and money from both SAC and the Festivals Unit for siting Stuart Brisley's/Maya Bolciuglo's 'Cenotaph Project'.
8. These four artists worked collaboratively for a short time under the group title Limited Space and functioned as a support group for their work. They also arranged and organised the visit and subsequent performances in Scotland by Polish artist Andrej Dudek-Durer. A review of Karen Strangs performance appears in Variant 4.
9. "The Festival of Non-Participation" Communique, Peter Horobin, Data Attic, 37 Union Street, Dundee.
10. This work was documented by Stewart Home and is held in the Data Attic.
11. Site-specificity also is a pre-requisite for 'Outside/Insite' being organised by the Collective Gallery in Edinburgh. Selected artists include Iain Robertson and Paul Burwell. EventSpace plans to organise a project of several site-specific works across Glasgow in 1989. Both are seeking funding.

Craig Richardson,
Glasgow School of Art,
Dept of Environmental Art,
June 1987



Tradition/debilitation
Third Eye Centre, Glasgow
October 1987

FINDING OUR PLACE

HESTER REEVE and VANESSA JONES are in their final year of a Fine Art course at Newcastle Polytechnic. There is no specific performance course or option within their curriculum and they have received little support of encouragement. However, they have persisted in making live works and recently their commitment to this area of work inspired them to organised a small exhibition of documentary material from the student performance works of now established artists alongside documentation of their own contemporaries now at college. Here they explain why they organised the show.

There is a strong case for recognising that performance has gained an established position within the art world. However, within fine art courses it is still a marginalised activity and rarely taken seriously. Most fine art courses do not employ a performance artist on their teaching staff, of the few that do, performance art still seems to be marginalised by the college in that those students are often met with an ambivalence. This makes any intellectual/academic discussion with other students or tutors more difficult and often negated.

At Newcastle Polytechnic there are only a few who make live work. When work is shown it is seldom witnessed by the tutors leaving us in a position of isolation from the very staff who are employed to teach and assess us.

Both of us are now at the point of presenting a degree show of drawings, sculpture and live work. The live work we show will, for the first time, be properly attended by those tutors who have continually avoided debate into the concerns feeding our live work. We wonder then how much weight the live work will have over the show of static work which they are used to assessing. This is not an environment for a productive art education, yet one which can stimulate individual initiatives into developing responsibility for one's own education. In our case we have made use of college facilities and student union funds to provide a series of events, including workshops and lectures which we thought would be stimulating to us and the rest of the course. In relation to our own needs of finding a space and an audience we set up what became known as *The Strawberry Slam*. These were evenings of diversity which took place in a room above a local pub. Although this space has its own limitations, a large variety of artists have shown work to an increasingly large audience — which proves that Newcastle needs a regular platform for performance.
Interestingly, through showing work at venues out of college our 'position' within the course has strengthened; we have become more respected, even though most people still have no inclination to see the work.

We felt it was important not to deny our student situation, and acknowledge that we were part of a fine art study period. Students, in many ways, are in an enviable position in that they have access not only to equipment but also other students and artists making work and are aided by instititional structures.

In April we used the college gallery to hold an "exhibition of documentation and notes to show the issues and concerns of live art by students". An odd idea perhaps but there were many reasons for this particular exhibition — and for us an exhibition incorporating documentation can only be relevant in certain circumstances. We needed to gather together the evidence of performance happening on fine art courses around the country and thus affirm its practice, also making links with its practitioners. We regard documentation as a by-product of a live event made as a record. By using documentation we could represent many works at once and present their 'distilled' issues in an area enabling contemplation. It seems in the many media shows where a vast amount of work is shown to a great number of people, time schedules make it impossible often to stand back from what is being experienced. Obviously an exhibition of documentation is not the straightforward answer yet it does allow the time and space for an individual to approach another about a piece they have done, and to allow a constructive forum for comments. We do not wish to promote documentation in its own right. We made it an integral part of the invitation that documentation should be contextualised by notes, text and statements. Our plan being for an informative show that read like a text book.

The project was open to all students and student work made by invited established artists. The latter section, which included work by: Tara Babel, Jon Bewley, Paul Burwell, Rose English, Simon Herbert, Hannah O'Shea and Andre Stitt, provided an interesting relationship to the current work and to some extent showed different ethics to those feeding work now.

The show also pin-pointed that documentation can take any form, interesting examples being Mark Hudson's (Hull) *'Taking coals to Newcastle'* performed as documentation on route to the show. Dean Brannagan's documentation took the form of an installation from his performance *'tracing the Ghost of Joseph Beuys'* which incorporated his notes and records, thus placing the viewer in the same position of 'tracer' which he had held in the live work. The bulk of the work was obviously photographic with accompanying text. This demanded a great deal of time and attention from the viewers, if they were to take the whole exhibition in.

Realising the show could give no real sense of a live work, yet would provoke interest into seeing such work, we structured the final day as one of live performances alonside an invited speaker, Rob La Frenais who discussed his own early work and the issue of documentation in performance today.

Our time as students has actually meant frustration. Yet it has also given us a healthy distance from an educational institition that can promote an insecure attitude in the individual. We have in fact made many pieces of live work and our motivations are probably the stronger for the situations we have encountered. We have managed to work well within these circumstances and we would not have wished it any other way. However, this is not to justify what is in fact a very unhealthy situation within a lot of fine art courses. One of the points of a fine art education is that each student should be given time and attention to realise their full potential in the language most suited — whatever form that may take. ●

PERFORMANCE PROGRESS

DAVID HUNTER looks at some new initiatives to help students of performance become practicing professionals

'so he saw more clearly the ditch that was on the one hand and the quag that was on the other; also how narrow the way was that lay betwixt them both;'
John Bunyan The Pilgrim's Progress

Like those of John Bunyan's Pilgrim the first few steps for the poor student leaving The College of Security and setting out towards The Celestial City of the Practising Artist can be lonely and hard. For the artist wishing to do live work this is particularly so. The glutinous mire of The Slough of Despond is never very far away and I fear swallows up a good many artists. Not many travellers have set out in this direction before and the education system has erected few legible signposts. The theatre and music worlds serve their young foot-travellers somewhat better, there are established routes for them to follow, albeit pitted with the ruts and potholes of unemployment.

There are, however, glimmers of light playing on the distant Delectable Mountains for the pilgrim of performance. 'Performance' activity, in its many and varied forms, has increased both in energy and public profile over the past few years. 'Performance' can now attract large audiences — 500 people were there last Halloween for *Passing Through* along the canal banks adjacent to Chisenhale Dance Studios — The Air Gallery was perspiringly packed for the recent *Last Sweat of Youth* series of performances — the *National Review of Live Art* held at The Riverside Studios development many a latent jumble sale elbow in the rush for unrestricted viewing. There are now 'Performance' professionals — many a crowd has been fired by the pyrotechnics of *Bow Gamelan* and thousands have been enlivened by Stephen Taylor Woodrow's *Living Paintings*.

But how much room or encouragement is there really for new student artists on the scene? Apart from the *National Review* (for unsubsidised artists) we have no 'student' festivals like those in Europe. The number of venues and promoters putting on live work (and including it in their education programmes) may be expanding but the inevitable commercial pressures may tend to exclude 'risky' first timers in favour of 'safe' well established 'names'.

Alongside this burgeoning of activity there is a correspondingly growing interest in live work within the context of art school courses. It is unfortunate that this comes at a time when the education system in this land is at its least flexible and accommodating. Resources available to staff and students are dwindling. This enthusiasm for time-based work has obvious links with a reaction to the prevailing climate that looms over us (The Valley of the Shadow of the Auction Room).

Education, we are told from an early age, is to prepare us for the real world. It is also precious time out from the pressures and restrictions of that real world. The balance is a delicate one. What responses are there both inside and outside and formal education system to the increased awareness of an enthusiasm for live work? Why does it seem as if many young artists are swallowed by the Quag of Despond before they have even really started?

One response has been the recent extremely successful pilot-project placements of performance artists in northern art schools. Funded by the Arts Council's education department these residencies (Paul Bradley at Sheffield Polytechnic, Neil Bartlett at Newcastle Polytechnic and Fran Cottell at Humberside College of Higher Education) were conceived as a means of injecting a short, sharp, energising dose of 'performance' activity into the bloodstreams of the three institutions. The artists were 'animateurs' enabling students to explore the *process* of creating a piece of live work, taking in along the way a range of the components (artistic, technical, administrative, community, education). It was important that the vast majority of the time was spent outside the confines of the college itself.

Are such residencies of working artists (many of those teaching in art schools are working artists too) a good solution? They can bring in energy and new perspectives. But are we not just applying small amounts of polyfilla to the crumbling facade of the education system? Certainly residencies can provide much-needed employment for impoverished artists but are we in danger of breeding a new strain of 'education artist'?

If residencies are an answer then they need careful preparation. They need to be time-tabled in — students time is only elastic up to a point. They need to complement and challenge the work of the department. The artist has to be introduced to and have the support of the permanent staff. The artist has to have a status within the institution. The artist has to have access to space and facilities (often this is already an acute problem in the college anyway). The bureaucracy of budgets, payments, booking space and equipment has to bend to accommodate the immediate needs of the artist — or precious time, momentum and goodwill can be lost. Residencies should be long enough for real work to be undertaken and relationships made but short enough to maintain concentration and energy. They can operate alongside visits by other artists for workshops/performances. They can be a valuable link to the 'working world' beyond the college.

This polyfilla notion is most effective *because* it operates outside the instittional framework. 'Performance' by definition (or rather by the impossibility of its definition) is a constantly variable means of looking at the position of the artist within the context of his or her work. It can call upon differing proportions of perhaps more definable skills and elements (text, design, movement, sound, sculpture, technology, time and place). 'Performance' is not a fixed medium.

The sharp culminating performance of the Newcastle Polytechnic placement *Don't Look At Me Like That* in the Riverside building was partly about scrutiny, about the uncomfortable situation of being looked at (and in the case of us the audience, of looking). Talking to students afterwards it seemed that the chief excitement had been in the experience of working collectively. Students from different departments had actually been working together (!). Painters had deserted their palettes, printers their presses and sculptors their studios. They had found the collaborative process invigorating and exacting. They had worked in secondary schools too. They had created the final piece from a completely empty space. They had dealt with fire officers and electricians, they had handled all the publicity work. None of the students may aspire to be performance artists but they now have some very useful practical experience. It will enrich and inform their other work. If they do want to continue with live work there is less chance of them falling by the wayside.

What else can be done to encourage those students who want to develop performance as part of their artistic repertoire? There is a world of difference between showing your work to your colleagues and friends and exposing youself before a public audience. The planned SWAP scheme is designed to start bridging that gap and boosting confidence by enabling performance students to take work on a 'swap' basis to other interested colleges. It will also bring into focus the practical problems of touring work and adapting it to new spaces. The *No Quarter* Summer School held at the Green Room Manchester allowed young artists to work with a new established artist each day for a week. The Arts Council's proposed 'learning placements' are designed to enable younger artists to work alongside established artists on specific projects gaining creative, technical and administrative experience in the preparation of a piece of work.

All the above go some way towards making the possibility of performance more realistic for young artists. The real key is communication — the alliance between the colleges on the SWP scheme is encouraging as is the inclusion of a 'student news' section in this magazine. The narrow way is perhaps getting a little wider, the quag a little less treacherous. ●

For LEARNING PLACEMENT details contract Jeni Walwin, Performance Art Officer, Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU.

TINA KEANE

Escalator, Riverside Studios, London, March/April 1988 Reviewed by NIK HOUGHTON

CONTINUING HER ONGOING work in installations — Tina Keane's *Escalator* is a new 22 monitor construction which arrives as something of a let down after single tape pieces like *Hopscotch*.

As ever Keane's ability to offer simple yet striking articulations of the multi-monitor format is self-evident as two columns of monitors rise in steps from the gallery floor to the ceiling. On one set of monitors a sequence of decending images sketch out the bleary dereliction and stumbling half-lives of the tramps and outsiders who restlessly occupy the corridors and passageways of the London underground system. Meanwhile on the parallel, the ascending monitors a glossier sheen is on view with images of high style architecture from 'the City' and fleeting glimpses of well dressed men and women making their confident way onto 'the tube'. That these disparate images are framed by the steel dark of a moving escalator itself adds further visual impact to the work.

Beyond this immediate eye-catching appeal, however, doubts arise as to the real intention of the piece. Partly generated by a problematic voyeurism in relation to the ghost people of the underground these doubts are to some extent sited in the self-contained style of the work and its "message" — the immorality of a situation where the City folk get richer while the poor and homeless continue to live out a murky existence on the margins of society. "The message hardly needs stating", writes Steve Bode in a recent review (CITY LIMITS March 23RD) and that's the heart of the problem with *Escalator*; while all the right references are on show — sculptural overtones, social observation and probing camerawork — the piece seems to lack the bite or edge it might do. Rather than subverting or undermining our pre-conceptions the work states the obvious.

This is not helped by occasional sections of text which appear on the monitor screens. For all their poeticism these words — "A city haunted by broken spirits", read the words at one point — add little to what's already on view. The bottomline with *Escalator* is, I suppose, that it allows the viewer "off the hook". Dealing in a potentially emotive set of images framed by an intriguing concept the work allows us to nod with sympathy as a slumped woman stares with confused exhaustion at the underground travellers who surge past her and sneers derisively at the bankers and power dressers of the City. Beyond this, though, *Escalator* says little about our own complicity in this situation and addresses the issue in a simple and not particularly enlightening or disturbing manner.

But if *Escalator* never quite hits the target as agit-art then it does, perhaps, go some way toward re-creating the jampacked surge and sweat of the underground. Where Keanes piece to focus on this rather than taking the blunt edge of "us-and-them" politics to its imagery I would, I think, feel less critical.

Stylishly sculptural as an installation in its formal articulation of the possibilities of the multi-monitor Keane's new work never quite bridges the gap between the hardline of agitation and the glowing beauty of carefully stacked monitors. ●

PETER MCRAE

Avenue of Heroes, Piece Hall, Halifax, March 3 1988. Reviewed by PIPPA CORNER

ON AN UNUSUALLY fine day for early spring the good people of Halifax were contentedly going about their daily business in the attractive setting of the Piece Hall when Peter McRae, Penny Skerrett, Marie Lloyd and Fiona Durdy (standing in for Lucy Huntbach) climbed in turn the step ladder to position themselves, white flag in hand, on their personalised pedestals.

The locals shrugged off this provocative act with little more than an inquisitive grin.

As far as I can see the piece is problematic, from its inception to its presentation. The horse's mouth, Peter McRae, tells me that he started out with two ideas: women are traditionally under-represented by civic statuary; women are less likely to fly the flag. Thus by placing white-clad women with huge white flags on plinths in public places we can kill two birds with one stone. (I paraphrase, of course).

Inevitably the simple clarity of McRae's logic was muddied in practice by the considerations brought to bear by his audience and performers alike. Firstly we don't really want to see more civic statues of women, secondly we don't want to imitate all those undesirable qualities that are associated with the representation of women, thirdly we are not convinced that women are especially saintly when it comes to the political seduction of nationalism, fourthly we are not sure why such a piece has been dreamed up by a man — except that no feminist worth her salt would be susceptible to so simplistic a thesis.

The performers attempted to resolve these conflicts by refusing to inhabit the apparent world of the piece, resisting all temptations to look statuesque and within what is admittedly a theatrical definition of the word, resisting the temptation to perform. The resulting work of art is eminently dull. The aesthetic of white symmetry is lost in bus stop behaviour, and there-

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

STEPHEN TAYLOR WOODROW

Going Bye-Byes, Leeds City Art Gallery, 28th April-2nd May. Reviewed by PIPPA CORNER

OF COURSE STEPHEN TAYLOR WOODROW is fully aware that his work, no matter what shape it takes, will always be compared to *The Living Paintings* — a hard act to follow by any standards. So it was probably a jolly good idea, psychologically, to come right out and give *Going Bye-Byes* the sub-title *Living Furniture*. The public groan 'oh no, not again Stephen', and upon actually viewing the said work are distinctly disappointed that they won't be seeing any howling babies thrown through the air, or be sniggering at some confounded girl attempting to retrieve the contents of her handbag. After all it was quite entertaining.

No. *Going Bye-Byes* is an installation rather than a performance: a discrimination of the cuddly impresario himself. Here we meet with the heart of his problem. Having achieved the now famed 100,000 mark with his crowd-stopping *Living Paintings* he is faced with the unprecedented predicament of attracting too many visitors. 'Ha! Serves him right' you cry. Admittedly it is a rather ostentatious complaint for a Performance Artist, but at least it's novel. He is absolutely right though when he confides that the optimum number of viewers at any given moment would be three or four, and considering that between three and four thousand came along in the space of the long weekend he has an immediate logistical difficulty. I was at the gallery at the same time as a large crowd of Yorkshire folk who were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

The piece is a powerful optical illusion. The faces of Suzanne Bull, James Melloy, Paul Nichols, Sharon Elphick, Gary Jones and Becky Whitney nestle in the plump pillows of six hospital beds. There are no bodies. They seem to be terminally ill, but not necessarily in low spirits. Each has a different type of flower arranged on the identical bedside table, except one, who goes without. The lighting is bright and flat: nothing lurks in the shadows of this nightmare, it is the apparent normality which breeds suspicion. Nigel Holland von Klier's two hour soundtrack slides between a rumbling like half-heard snores or the rushing of blood, and the noises of a distant, echoing commotion. Stephen Taylor Woodro (Himself) will put the lid on it once his own more sinister performance is added as an Hitchockian caged crow.

Had I been in the room on my own I would have been scared. With so many other human reminders of the real world I was merely uneasy. Like the *Living Paintings, Going Bye-Byes* has the ability to disturb its audience. The more they smile invitingly the more theatening the faces become. Sustained eye contact was beyond me. The performers are physically constrained and therefore potentially highly vulnerable to assault, but I can't imagine anyone getting close enough to be dangerous. The codes of consumer conduct are forcefully controlled by the grim stare of six pairs of eyes. This power relationship with his audience is what interests me most about these works, it is finely constructed: even when you know the rules the confrontation is genuinely disconcerting.

As I was leaving I overheard a little girl, excitedly clinging onto her mother's sleeve, imploring 'Please don't ever take me to see anything like that ever again mummy.' I could see that she was a confirmed convert. ●

Going Bye-Byes will be at ICA Gallery, London, July 20-24, 1988.

PHOTO / EDWARD WOODMAN

Tina Keane
Escalator
Riverside Studios Gallery, March/April 1988

fore lacks focus. The common ground or the neutrality of the white flag cited by McRae was for me an emptiness of meaning at best, and at worst a surrender.

I don't find the piece offensive or even patronising, but I do find it boring. It's a bit of an ephemeral non-entity. However, having so said, it did provoke debate that afternoon, at least amongst 'we in the trade', if only in that we found ourselves asking what it is that we do want to see, and do we want to reach the passers-by of Halifax, that old chestnut 'who is it for?', how articulate should art and/or artists be? and so on. A more practical area of discussion is the question of administrative care in the placing and publicising of such events. We all agreed that it had lost out in the Piece Hall where there are no statues of men or women and all is cosy. No doubt the performance would make more of an impression in more appropriate surroundings. ●

Avenue of Heroes will be on show in Derry at the Orchard Gallery Festival and in Glasgow at the Garden Festival.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

INTIMATE STRANGERS

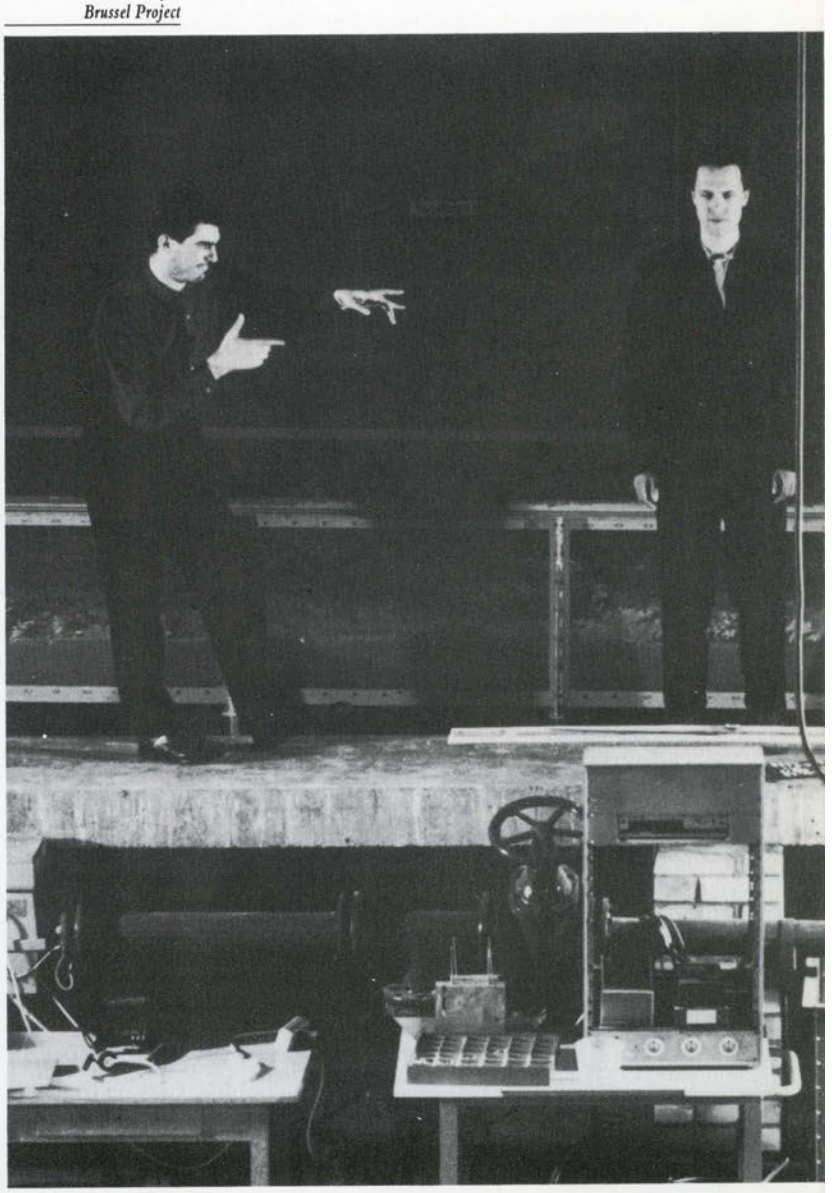
Time To Go, ICA Theatre, London, March 1988 Reviewed by STEVE ROGERS

ALL TOO OFTEN we talk about breaking down the boundaries between theatre, visual art, music, dance etc as if each of these media were in themselves a whole, discreet and unified discipline. Not all theatre or music is the same in fact the divisions within anyone of these different practices can be as sharp and as hotly contested as between different media. *Time To Go*, Intimate Stranger's most accomplished work to date, is concerned more with the former than the latter even though it does still contain both music, dance and a more acute awareness of visual imagery than is usual in theatre. *Time To Go* is about theatre both as a cultural product, (the narrative principally concerns the great Russian actress Olga Knipper and the death of her husband, Anton Chekhov), but also as a way of understanding the individual in the late twentieth century. It takes the argument that identity and memory are essentially dramatic constructions and reconstructions in which we enact various roles. It is only in the act of remembering that the past takes on its narrative form therefore all narrative theatre is an act of memory (at the banal level the actors have to remember their lines and movements). But the twentieth century theatre has had to contend with such revolutions as psychoanalysis and new phenomenologies dictated by new technologies. Of course it is Chekhov who more, than anyone else, succeeded in re-inventing theatre in a truly modern framework.

Individual identity is far too complex and fragmented to any longer be experienced in the unified way that most narrative theatre pretends. Characters in the drama are still portrayed as whole beings with logical, continuous, developmental histories. It has been left to experimental theatre to search for a theatre which can deal effectively with new ideas of identity and experience and new ideas of history and contiguity. It is the bringing together of these two ideas of history and of theatre which Intimate Strangers have attempted here. The narrative of Olga's life is interrupted by re-enactments of her memories of the death of Chekhov. Time does not flow in a linear, minute to minute way. The past suddenly becomes the present and space bends and folds in a truly Einsteinien way as other places intrude on the place of now. Realism exists only in relation to an overtly artificial theatricality as if the artists are holding up the languages and values of both narrative, picaresque theatre and of post-war experimental theatre in order to choose between them. The result is a remarkable piece of theatre. Paul Roylance's direction has intellectual depth and clarity without being suffocatingly literary or theoretical. He has given the work a shining theatrical surface made up of an almost seemless joining of text, music, dance and visual image. But above all it has a wonderful performance from Melanie Thompson. We already knew that she was accomplished in the physical and expressive techniques associated with performance theatre, but she here reveals that she can also pull off a piece of classical representational character acting that puts many of the stars of stage and screen to shame. Time To Go requires her to slip smoothly back and forth between the two styles which she does with amazing elegance.

The other central performer, Stag Theodore, at all times looks as good as Thompson and can certainly act but he looked a little unsure of himself when performing the non-narrative sections. Glyn Perrins music was also a little hesitant, as though he was over conscious that the kind of smokey, rather cinematic, mood music he was asked to write could all too easily sound cheap and cliched. He doesn't need to worry and could well afford to tighten his score to make it more precise and emphatic. These are however only minor complaints. *Time To Go* was previewed here as part of the ICA's Homework 2 season, prior to its tour in the autumn. In the past year there hasn't been much in experimental theatre to get excited about I am therefore relieved and grateful to Initimate Strangers for *Time To Go.* ●

Nice Style
Brussel Project



BERLIN

KEN GILL reports on the Beuys retrospective as well as some new developments

THROUGHOUT 1988, BERLIN is the European city of culture. In Autumn Robert Wilson, David Byrne and Wim Wenders will be creating *The Forest*, and the centrepiece Art exhibition is an enormous, and certainly unrepeatable Joseph Bueys retrospective at the Martin Gropius Bau. Sparing no expense, the show features 16 installations, including a facsimile of the d'Offay gallery for *Plight*, an array of sculptures, Beuys relics, and innumerable drawings backed up with 'The Definitive Catalogue', 2" thick and costing 220,–DM (£60.00). The show has received a critical panning; long time Beuys collaborator Johannes Stüttgen has all but disowned it, whilst conceding that no other agency could do it better at present, simply because it is too soon after the mans death to assess his real importance. In most circumstances the death of an artist would not readily affect the viability of their products. The fact that almost every criticism of this show has remarked on the crucial absence of the man himself raises some extraordinary possibility, not least in respect of the future value of his work in the Art Market, there are whisperings of 'Interested Bodies' taking advantage of the bad press to de-throne Beuys for ever, a sort of 'Kings new clothes scenario. William Feaver articulated the sense and feeling of the show very accurately in his Observer review: It is a remarkable souless collection, not just in the 'curated debris' sections, but also the installations. If it is possible to forget the money involved in the Beuys industry for a moment, it does seem incredible that no work of his will ever be complete again, not simply because the man dead but because all his works (objects/ actions or installations) were site specific, essentially transitory in nature, acting as markers in the development of the Sozial Plastik. It would seem that it is this influence as a theorist that will have any durability.

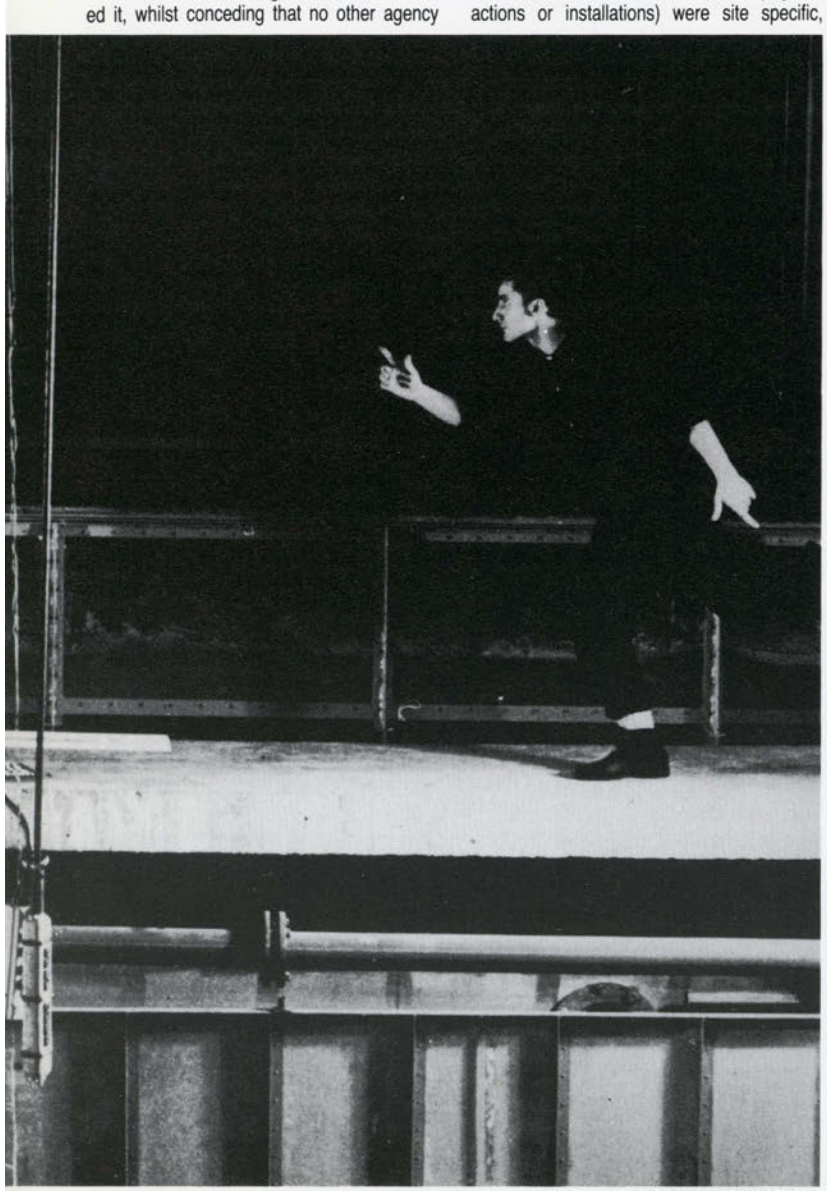


PHOTO / MARCELL SCHWIERIEN

Still it is a Big show, even Forces radio has given it a plug, encouraging the squaddies to get along and get amazed.

Elsewhere in Walltown there has been a lot of activity over the winter. Gallery SoToDo was three enterprising people with very little previous experience who took over a city centre shop for a month of nightly performances, installations music, and whatever else people wanted to come in and show. Artists were paid from the door takings, and they also ran a bar to make ends meet having put in an initial 1000,–DM each. They received no subsidies, but managed to obtain the large shop for a mere 400,–DM. The nightly mish-mash of events facilitated a relaxed party-like atmosphere, and though the work was highly variable in quality, four or five artists stood out. Lindy Annis makes short and concise works, whose scripts are well crafted and poignant. her principle tool is her amiable and very funny stage presence, which endows everything she says and does with an edge of pathos, drawing one in to her proclamations of love to an artichoke for example. There are serious issues lurking, however, to do with money, power, and people. Annis' craft is to take such 'dry' themes and humanise them in a very skillful way.

Knut Hoffmeister made an ambitious installation of doctored TV sets in building debris, with film and slide projections, making an environment to be walked through and dipped into, a sort of 'visual cut-up'. I like the ambition of his works, the scale of them, they are intriguing and rich, even if messages as such are hard to detect!

The Technical University's watercraft testing laboratory was the cavernous venue for a sound and dance work from Matthias Wittekindt. Inspired by the decrepit Atomium in Brussels, Wittekindt then spent three months hanging round the scientists at the T.U. Lab. observing experiments.

The text for the piece was derived from snippets of dialogue between the boffins, which was cut up and arranged. Whilst retaining some of the rhythms of conversation the piece was layered into 6 parts (6 performers) and sense abstracted, and only the odd phrase emerged distinctly. Beneath this, single tones from two opera singers punctuated the composition. Whilst at times this was a rather timid work, the oevrall balance and range of *Brussel Project* showed great potential for development from this experimental state.

At Cafe Swing, a regular performance venue, the audience waited in vain for a man who was scheduled to come and 'argue'. His performances are fairly notorious, but on this occasion he didn't show. Many thought he was simply winding them up, getting them primed, but it turned out he had been waylaid in a pub on the way and accidentally started his performance there. Once started it is hard for him to know when to stop, and the entire place was in uproar, arguing with him for three hours! ●

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

SHEFFIELD MEDIA SHOW 1988

Video
Reviewed by
NIK HOUGHTON

RE-LAUNCHED AND RE-VITALISED this event offers something of a model to its Southern cousins in terms of co-operation and cross-cultural programming. This mix of the popular and more experimental, of both "professional" and student works underlines, perhaps, an attitude of DIY enthusiasm which seems sadly lacking in London where — despite its high incidence of media/film/video students — no such festival has ever been attempted.

But if this multi-programme approach — students get to show and discuss their, and other peoples work, in a professionally handled context — then it has a downside too.

This downside signals its arrival with a buzz of up-to-date effects blur of fast edits and a weary re-statement of scratch video as much of the student programmes drift into cliché and media-mixed tapes. Particularly evident in the Sheffield works, engineered pre-dominantly by men, these pop-arty pieces are offset, however, by more genuinely odd, fresh and straight talking tapes. With Silvy Sulzman, for example, a simple yet striking piece evolves around a performance where the artist crawls across a dark space with a line of domestic objects dragging at her heels while in Eric Storrs work we are into a strange and unsettling landscape of moorland imagery and close-ups.

Elsewhere, though, there are more assured things to see as Graham Young pops in for a chat, Andy Stone serves up *Salmon Songs* and Bill Viola explores America, animals and the slowness of things . . . First up is Young, recently showcased at the ICA and something of a unique figure in video art in that his work is consistently well received and frequently broadcast. Showing his entire catalogue of *Accidents* tapes, six in all, Young seemed as self-contained and oblique as his work and it was only after showing a 'scratch' piece, *Ships . . . I See No Ships*, that the audience began to feel they were getting somewhere. 'It's politically a very suspect tape, don't you think?' asked one viewer. Young smiked a bit — 'I knew I shouldn't have showed it', he replied.

Perhaps the only point of interest here was that Young has now finished work on the *Accidents* series. 'I think it's time to move on', he stated and, viewed as a body of tapes, you can in some ways see what he means as the tapes reach a pitch of sophistication with *The Putter* (a Channel Four commission) and the possibilities of domestic mini-drama begin to reach their limits.

Andy Stone, by contrast, is only just beginning to explore his given territory. This, though, is a territory which takes us beyond the home-bound quirkiness of Young's world and into an area of sea-scapes, strange music and raw textures. In *Salmon Song*, last seen at the Live Art festival at the Riverside, Stone presents a rich, yet problematic, installation work which calls for the viewer to enter a multi-monitor vision of water, strobing effects enhanced by an original and haunting soundtrack. Some 40 minutes long this complex work, with its themes of nature, movement and the "otherness" of the world is a piece which requires the viewer to give themselves over wholly to the changing currents of the work. Anything less than this and one somehow feels a sense of detachment and numbed confusion. (It's a work which, I suspect, requires a quiet setting for it to be effective).

But, if *Salmon Song* is a difficult work to enter then Stones newer piece *The Animals On The Island* (25 mins 1987/88) is more "user friendly" as the work presents itself in a series of short, inter-related pieces. Derived from *Salmon Song* what's on show here are simple yet often powerful "stories" mostly centred on a beachscape. As in *Salmon Song* Stone frequently pitches us into a ground level journey across the sand and into the grey sea through the device of a camera mounted on what is, in effect, a wooden-wheeled trolley. Perhaps most effective in this quartet of works is *Coastguard* where a spare narrative voiceover suggests our fear of the natural through a storyline of sand-serpents. Again Stone adds atmosphere here with a self-created soundtrack that is like the music of dreams or nightmares.

Sidestepping the hi-style trends of video-artiness Stones vision is always fresh, strange and oddly attractive and one feels that this is an artist with something special to offer.

And so to the high-point of my two day taste of the Festival — the UK premiere screening of American artist Bill Violas new tape, *I Do Not What It Is I Am Like*. Introduced by Steve Hawley the showing of Violas new work was prefaced by an earlier tape, *Anthem*. Centred on the image of a young girl stood limply in a church and accompanied by a slow howl this short work is a tape of extraordinary power, subtlety and resonance. With its images of industry, woodlands and the pulse of a heart-revealed in a scene of chest splitting surgery — Viola seems to suggest a celebration of life and the world.

At 90 minutes duration *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like* is a more epic work. Opening with a dip below the surface of a river and closing with a remarkable sequence where we are whirled from the water of a lake, swung above the forests and drift down into a woodland clearing the tape suggests a circular narrative form which might be called a journey of discovery. Along the way we enter a world of beauty, decay and creation as images of animals, natural landscapes and religious ritual unfold in a rich and always engaging exploration of life, consciousness and death.

Enhanced by a sly humour — in one scene an elephant suddenly appears in Viola's sitting room — this has a depth, power and slow building impact. Finally one can only suggest a viewing — the tape is now in Sheffield Media Depts Library although it has no UK distributor as yet — and look forward to next year's event. ●

Live Works
Reviewed by
TIM ETCHELLS

THE EMPHASIS IN this year's Sheffield Media show was on student work, which was very varied. Three people in particular showed work that was a clear and positive development from their presentations last year. Best of all was Tony White's *A Pinch of Salt* built around tall tales of travelling and far away lands. Tony is a very good comic performer, though there were times when he didn't focus our attention clearly enough. He used bad jokes and passages heavily underlined by ironic winks and nods, odd phrases placed in quote marks mimed out to the audience. This self-consciousness was a source of strength; at one point he spoke of being in Russia watching people's breath and words freeze in the −20° cold. He set up an image, delicate and poetic in its way. He wondered if the words, frozen in the air, or their imprint on the soft snow as they fell could form a new silent language as people grew to recognize their shapes. And then he half dismissed the idea as a joke.

Here and elsewhere in *A Pinch of Salt* there was a double bluff going on; asked to believe in a fanciful story or idea you gave it attention and life only to be tapped on the shoulder for being naive. You were torn between a sad feeling as the image disappeared and a sense that, for a moment the world had been a stranger place. What could be better in a show about travel, in a show that started with a plastic world globe throwing blue electric light across an otherwise empty space?

Secondly Alan McLean presented a new work in progress which was very good. Like *The Ratman* (Performance 52), it used a persona mixing talking head, stand up comic and drunken idiot in a pub to make a kind of scratch video only live. He had dispensed with the cameras that supported his last piece and in doing so made his terms and intentions much clearer. Cue sheets for his new text were laid in long lines at the edges of the performing area. The piece mixed personal reminiscence with junk from T.V. and the streets, balancing seriousness and irony very well.

Thirdly there was Luke McKeown whose performances this year and last were very impressive. In *the Bird Story* created with Joe Thomas, McKeown stood behind a filing cabinet in a bird shit spattered suit, mushrooms safety-pinned to his flies. Thomas's arm hung lifeless from a hole in one of the draws. McKeown began to walk, nervously, picking at his clothes and then Thomas's arm moved, slowly inching up the cabinet, trying to open a draw. A tape recorder in a suitcase told the story of a baby 'cut out of its mother and cut into bits'. Later Thomas took her arm from the hole and presented her breast then her frightened face, just visible in the darkness, as McKeown huddled on top of the cabinet clinging to a chair.

The Cardiff students seem very precise and aware of what a given piece is setting out to achieve and in Luke's case this means slow

moving, surreal performances which set up humorous and dark half-fictions. Although his pieces *The Bird Story, Film X* and *The Bath* (with Lawrence Harvey) contained some weak material they were usually inventive and well thoughout out, shot through with a slightly obsessive sexuality and a nice illogical logic all of their own.

In contrast to this the piece by Hester Jones and Vanessa Reeve from Newcastle was strange and erratic without even finding its own internal logic. It felt disjointed, like bits placed together intellectually, never quite adding up or seeming comfortable in performance terms. Despite this the performances and some of the text were good and one or two of the images worked well; especially Vanessa lying awkwardly across stack of newspapers, her feet raised high and her face towards the floor as she laughed and wheezed and laughed again.

Generally I was frustrated by the shortness of much of the work which averaged between three and ten minutes long. Martin Burton from Cardiff did a piece that was just a minute and a half of dangerous noises in the darkness followed by a burst of red light in which he hung naked and upside down from a rope, splashing and twisting in water as it fell on his gas-masked face from above. Only his performance used brevity as a device; creating a moment that exploded in time and then was gone. Elsewhere work seemed short because it lacked ideas with which to continue.

Mark Hudson from Hull was an example of this. He banged metal tools together by torchlight and then held up each object for examination before smearing his face with grease. It read as a piece about alienation from work, about a world where cause and effect are separated out. But it was an intellectual idea first and a performance second, a problem which dogged a lot of overtly political or socially motivated work in the Show.

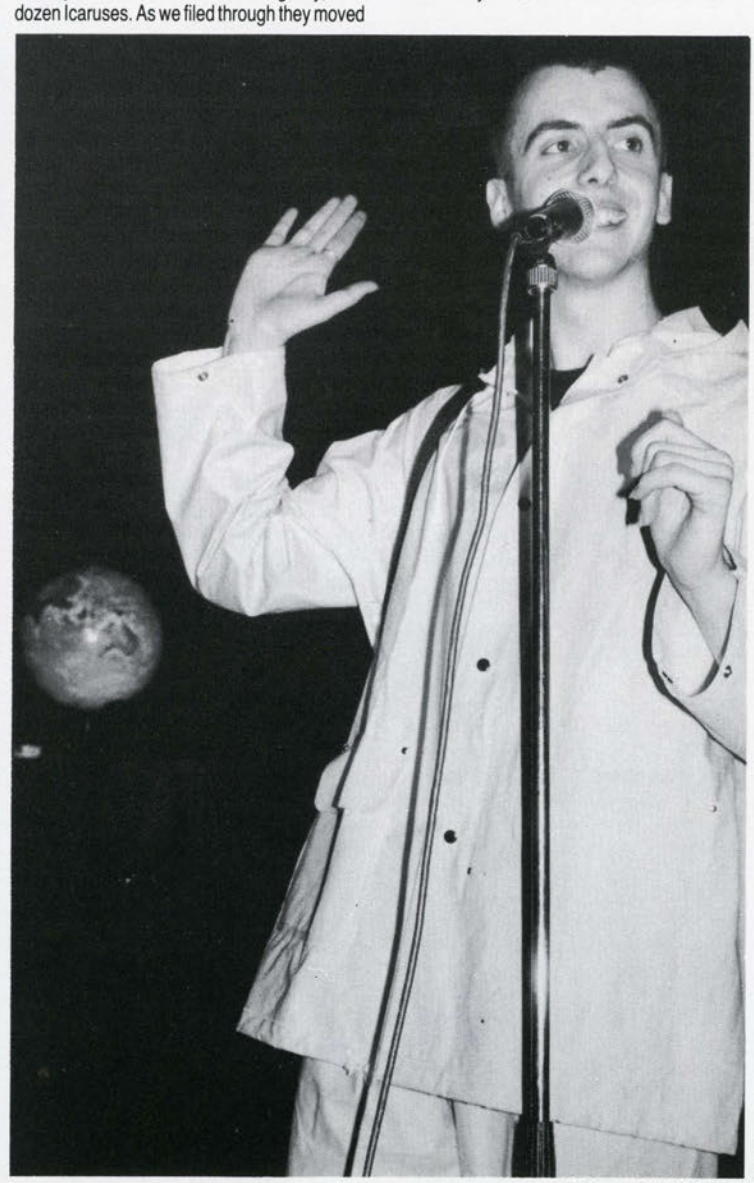
Taut, an all day performance by Tim Brennan of Hull, didn't suffer in this way. The performers were two men in climbing gear joined by a 10 ft rope, they strained against each other, boots slipping on the tiled floor. Sometimes, as one pulled the other leaned back and they'd both be still, balanced through effort at the end of the rope. From time to time they'd go to chairs and rest, rope sagging between them, eyes on the ground. The performers were sometimes too sombre and I wanted them to break the spatial rules they'd set; to move down the corridor or onto the stairs, to keep going wherever they could. The simplicity of *Taut* increased its resonance; it was about nothing, being only itself, but in itself there were hints of everything; of striving and failing, of devotion and sad little slips.

Almost equally self-contained but less engaging was an outside piece from Wimbledon which had John Croke and Steve Harper in white coats on an upturned table emptying their huge pockets of plaster covered ornaments, and then refilling them. They threw salt like Sumo Wrestlers, blew on their hands, and then lay behind a pile of iron baths. The surface of the piece was impenetrable which made it irritating at times (especially a whacky tape of voices that came out of a bush) but it almost made up for this by being good natured and comic in a bewildering sort of way.

Improvised Interiors from Sheffield was also intruiging. Four women sang half songs and harmonies, reminiscent, at times, of both Bulgarian and Red Indian music. As they sang four sets of images were projected; there were surfaces and textures; mud and roads in close-up, there were hands held pointing against blue skies, shoes against grass and fountains, and on a central screen a women in a red dress tumbled as if through space, sometimes blurred, sometimes frozen. The impression was of four women and a journey, physical and spiritual, and though I was suspiscious of its aspirations to ethnicity I did find its mixture of tranquility and passion moving.

I had similar feelings about the performance by Sheffield students working with Paul Bradley (ex of Babel). The elements were holy and familiar; the location was a bricked up church, the performance time was dusk and as the doors opened a swathe of small fires lead you in. There before you, bolted to the walls and half the height of the building were three large arcs of white muslin and wood. These arcs were crude wings, or fans or sails and behind them stood performers like slaves in a galley, or a dozen Icaruses. As we filed through they moved the sails and swayed. What won me over was the intelligence and care with which the piece was constructed; the image was full of possibilities; narrative, intellectual, emotional, and it was perfectly suited to its space; the sound of real pigeons fluttering and crying in the roof made the evening for me.

Thnking back on the Show my conclusions are brief. First I was impressed by the diversity and the development in the work that I saw, there was so much of it in fact that I haven't been able to include as much as I ought. Second I was sorry that last year's excellent balance between student and professional work was not repeated. There was an evening of experimental music and percussion at The Leadmill which featured Left Hand Right Hand, Martin Groenveld and Paul Burwell of The Bow Gamelan, but being musical these performances didn't relate closely to the rest of the show and only provided a limited point of comparison. All the sets had some existing and powerful moments but as an evening it seemed oddly academic and cold. I missed the clear context that the professional performance work provided last year. ●



Tony White
A Pinch of Salt

PHOTO / DAN WOOTAN

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

AGAINST THE STEADY STARE

An expanded cinema installation by Steve Farrer Diorama, London

On the evening of April 8, 1988 cinematic history was made. This was the occasion of the first public showing of Steve Farrer's extraordinary cinema machine. This machine is capable of recording and projecting a 360 film recorded and projected in real time. The machine's debut had a real sense of occasion to it. Its inventor, Steve Farrer appeared looking suitably dishevelled to announce that they had planned a trial run the day before but had not had time and so this was to be the trial and the debut. There was much tinkering with the strange looking machine suspended in the centre of the circular screen but when it eventually got going, despite, or perhaps because of the numerous breakdowns, the machine produced a truly unique and unfathomable result. Try as I might I cannot figure how it works, even in principle. For that reason I have printed in full the note handed out to the audience on the night. It goes someway to describing and explaining a really remarkable and historic event.

Steve Rogers

Observations on the first demonstration of Steve Farrer's Machine by Anna Thew
and even as it strikes me . . .

This strange mechanism capable of registering the world in the round, assumed a curious mythical hold, firing the imagination with theatrical, spatial possibilities, traversing the boundaries of 'celluloid seen' hitherto.

Much magicked, Steve Farrer desired to create an alternative cinema of pure pictures. His undying obsession with the materiality of film and his obsessive tampering with mechanisms lead to the invention and construction of '**THE MACHINE**', a rotating camera which would film a rotating world and would convert into a spinning projector, casting the image in a circular horizontal motion around a circular space like the unfolding of a giant Chinese scroll.

'**The Machine**' took Steve Farrer some eight years to bring about, artist's melancholia intervening on and off. This '**delay**' in projection, reminiscent of the time-scale of Duchamp's Large Glass, acquired a lens one year, a dark box the next, and two years after that a motor. Len Lye's 'Free Radicals' had cast an unbreakable spell with the delight of film as a winding, whirring, rolling, continuous strip of celluloid. '**That the wheel may turn and still be forever still**' — T.S. Eliot 'Murder in the Cathedral'

Steve Farrer raided 35mm film machine parts and designed '**the Machine**' to take **ODEON** gauge film. The film slides continuously past the lens (without the interruption of the stop/start/claw mechanism of movie photography) registering a continuous, unbroken image horizontally along the entire length of a roll of film, which can be, imagine it, **an image running anything from 50 to 1000 feet in length**'. Initally the camera was cranked manually at any speed, like the old movie cameras (see Diga Vertov's Man with a Movie Camera), but later acquired a variable speed motor with remote control, obviating the need for the film-maker to operate 'the Machine' from within its field of vision.

Whereas the conventional movie camera and projector were designed to effect an illusion of reality, with 24 still images per second giving an **impression** of movement through the 'persistence of vision' (a kind of retinal after-image that allows one to mentally bridge the flicker), **the Machine**' registers stasis, freezing movement, the flight of a bird, a passing cyclist or the motion of a wave breaking. Its function can be better understood in terms of still rather than movie photography. A static object registers in sharp focus. An object in motion will register as a streak of light. Whereas conventional movie film consists of a vertical succession of images and record separate moments in time, '**the Machine**' records the real time span of the camera in rotation. The film becomes a 360° continuous horizontal scan of landscape/space and **it has no framelines**.

The first ever images were filmed in the artist's Wapping studio and featured sliding, zig-zagging planar distortions of the walls and windows. The artist stared steadily and directly into the lens, with any movement registering ghost-like wavering lines. The first excursion with '**the Machine**' into landscape in 1986 (with van), reached orphic and almost epileptic proportions. Siting the weighty 'Machine' in a remote forest, even with six able-bodied men and women, proved such an immense physical feat, that intended rings of fire, rocks, stones and sea that were to complete the Orphic cycle, remain till be filmed.

In early '87 Steve Farrer converted the London Film Co-op Cinema into a circular shooting studio. Friends, film-makers, dancers, painters and performance artists were invited to film their own response to '**the Machine**'. This ranged from minimal use of the circular space, to an epic performance of 'Orpheus and Eurydice' orchestrated by David Medalla and involving just about everyone around. It will be interesting to see the frequency with which Greco-Roman subject matter, recumbent torsos, 17th/18th century landscape and camp find their 80's meeting point in '**the Machine**'s encircling eye.

The **DIORAMA** is the ideal location for '**the Machine**'s very first encounter with the public, but it is **still** only a beginning. On this first projection demonstration of some of the possibilities of **Machine**-made images, Steve Farrer will briefly convert '**the Machine**' as projector into '**the Machine**' as camera in order to record its first impact on a large audience. ●

The Machine is available for touring. Details: Arts Council Film Department, 01 629 9495.

SOUND MOVES

Telephone sound works Reviewed by LISA HASKEL

WHILE IT'S PROBABLY too much to suggest that the recent proliferation of recorded information and entertainment available to us down the telephone lines represents the hatching of a new audio culture, the sound works commissioned by projects UK for presentation amidst the latest cricket scores, soap-opera updates, and Vanessa Paradis' monologues certainly represents a creative level of opportunism in its exploitation of this new form of mass distribution.

Sound Moves is a tape compilation of eleven short sound pieces by nine women artists, commissioned by projects UK at Newcastle Media Workshops for individual presentation on the telephone lines. The works range from thirty seconds to ten minutes duration, and use dialogue, singing and everyday sounds to explore issues of language, class, gender and cultural identity in a highly personalized, yet powerfully evocative way.

Sound Moves is a demanding, challanging and emotionally charged tape; I found it new and refreshing. *Sound Moves* is a realization of the power of sound, sound activates in the listener all those areas of the imagination left fallow by the visual artist. Only in a sound work, for example, can language be treated in strict isolation. Caroline Wilkenson's *Interference/Transference* edits together a disjointed conversation and an individual's train of thought to explore the possible connections between two, seemingly randomly selected words. *Henno* by Mari Gordon is described by her as an 'attempt to marry knowledge and feeling'. It takes the form of a free association of words, followed by an attempt to impose order on the language by unconventional methods. Words are placed in a sequence according to their first letter; and this new grammar successfully produces wholly new meanings. *Back-words* also takes language as its theme. Marysia Lewandowska constructs an imaginary conversation between herself and a Korean artist living in New York, Theresa Hak Kyung, using their written texts. Sound enables a meeting of ideas without a physical meeting in time and space.

Of these three *Henno* stands out; with simplicity as its strength. Whereas *Interference/Transference* and *Back-Words* begin to make sense only after several hearings, *Henno* has an immediacy more suited to its means of distribution. Much of the appeal of *Sound Moves* as a whole is the challenge it presents to the listener, who must shift from passive consumer to active co-creator of meaning. Having said that, the artists notes supplied with the tape, but presumably not to a phone caller, are a crucial aid to understanding the two less direct works.

Everyday, Sedition and *Chant down Greenham* by Sharon Morris, Michelle S. Baharier, and Alanna O'Kelly respectively are also quite abstract, expressionistic works, but are more self-explanatory. *Chant Down*

Greenham stands out as the only piece on *Sound Works* with no spoken words. One woman's chanted lament, punctuating the sounds of women demonstrating, paints an intense portrait of the individual's depth of feeling, and the collective strength possible when those feelings are shared. Silences help create an atmosphere of danger; while the harshness of the woman's chant and the noisy intrusion of the sounds of vehicles, mass chanting and mass protest evoke the power of collective commitment and collective action.

By contrast, Jan Kerr's *Am I a regional variation?* is a gentle, mostly anecdotal treatment of the relationships between memory, language and cultural identity. 'Am I a regional variation? Am I my Mother's tongue?' are questions asked in the tape to Rabbie Burns; and the questions posed by the artist to the listener. 'Who could resist asking?' says the tape. Who, listening, could resist a departure into a parallel exploration of her own history?

In *The Painting*, Maggie Warwick takes an even more conventional form; a *Listen With Mother* type story, but gently plays with the content to criticize representation of women in conventional art in a refreshingly uncomplicated and wry manner.

The most emotive moment of the tape occurs in *Mother*, by Anna O'Sullivan, who tells the story of a dying womans' last days, accompanied by a traditional Irish song of lamentation; the *Caoineadh na Marbh*, or keen for the dead. *Mother* explores illness, death and the experience of caring in graphic and disturbing detail. But this is a sound tape; so the detail is neither oyeristic nor an instrusion into personal privacy.

Mother encapsulates many of the qualities that constitute the strength of *Sound Moves* as a whole, and which make the sound medium so exciting for women as both artists and listeners. In *Mother* the construction of a visual image of the dying woman is a shared task between artist, who provides and verbal description, and listener, who must user her imagination. This creates an intimacy, missing in so much visual art, but very much an aim of many women artists. Content can be tackled in new ways using sound. The physical aspect of illness is something near impossible to treat sensitively, or ethically, in visual art, but it is an important issue for women both as carers and sufferers. Language can be isolated and deconstructed in a sound-only medium in a unique way; and language, too, is of special interest to women attempting to overcome its inbuilt sexism. Sound can provide a critique of representation in the visual arts, without falling into any of its traps. ●

Sound Moves can be heard on 091 246 8010 until September 6, 1988. Details and cassettes available from Projects UK, 091 261 4527.

THE BLUE LINE

Humberside College. Saturday 7th May 1988. Reviewed by TIM ETCHELLS.

THE BLUE LINE was a twelve hour performance event involving students from Humberside College of HE devised and co-ordinated by artist in residence Fran Cottell. Students worked alone, in pairs, or as part of outreach initiatives to create performances and installations at sites all over Hull whilst, on the day, audiences were shuttled to and fro in a double-decker bus laden with posters, leaflets and video equipment. Although produced autonomously the work was conceived with common ideas about history and the past, explored particularly through the image of water and it's changing relationship to the City.

The first event of the day, Lorna Moore's performance/installation *Victims of the Elements*, was a kind of ritualised drowning and took place in the college's experimental fishery tank which was about the size of a modest swimming pool. Knee deep in water and surrounded by swathes of red and white material which hung from pulleys overhead Lorna rode a bicycle to the sound of taped waves whilst slides of coiled ropes from the dockside projected on her and into the water. The performance began in a distanced, posturing style that evolved into something more frantic and emotionally committed but the balance between these two styles never felt quite right. Despite this, and the inherent insularity of the piece, it mixed its natural and its man-made elements to cut right across polemics; I liked the wave-making machine that sent dark waves right down the length of the tank; waves so even and regular they took you by surprise, and I liked the final image very much; Moore half shrouded in sodden material and floating calmly through projected images and water alike.

There was a similar insular quality to Mark Bowles presentation in the Trinity Church. His music for chimes and voices was based on mathematical relationships between high tides in Hull during the month of March, but despite the esoteric derivation the music was clear and involving, with a good sense of serenity, and gaining very much from its location; sung against the backdrop of the church's fantastic stained glass as various cameras, video and still, competed to record the scene.

Gavin Kaufman's installation in an office at Hull railway station worked less successfully with its location. It placed a geometrical web of blue fishing line at chest height in the room making it all but impassable. This mystifying but beautiful piece of sabotage was very resonant, but the rest of the piece, a circle of chopped wood and pebbles, felt like it would have been equally at home in a gallery, and so seemed a bit contrived or inappropriate.

The only other pure installation of the day, by Isabelle Kitt, used its space and materials rather more organically. Her junked furniture had the same enigmatic quality as an empty room. You know there's history and experience bound up with these objects, scratched and kicked onto them by hands and feet now gone. But a chair can't tell you where its been or what its seen. And that silence makes it shine.

Like David Mach's work this piece seemed to pitch the quiet enigma of its materials against the articulacy of the shapes made with them; entering the space you saw mas-

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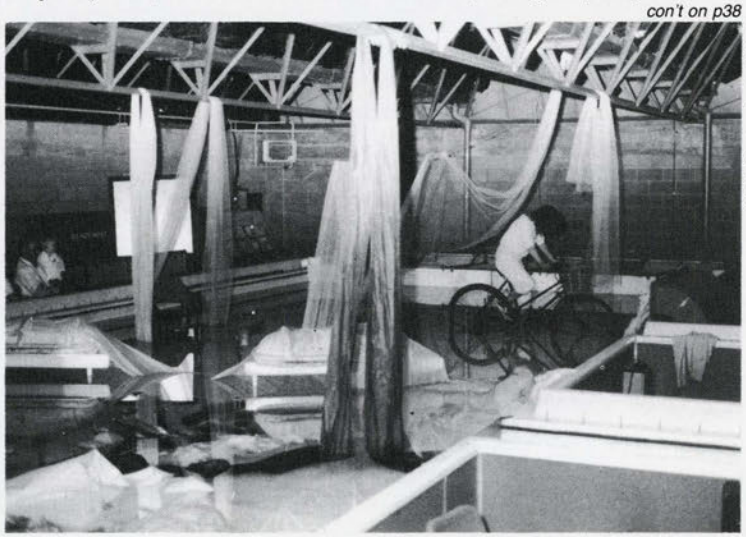

PHOTO / J. P. READ

Lorna Moore
Victims of the Elements.
Hull College of H.E.
May 1988.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Richard Downes *Stationary*
Hull Railway Station
May 1988

ses of furniture: dumb tables, chairs and stools, formed into two flowing lines, like wooden waves that reached towards the open windows of the room. Atop all this lay tangled lengths of curtain and ribbon, and half hidden on the way were photographs of families and children; some black and white, some polaroids. I liked it very much.

Downstairs from this installation, in the same waterside furniture store, there was a performance by Andrew Smith and Lynda Mellor. It used long lengths of net hanging from the ceiling, strips of tin foil on the ground, and the occasional window open onto a sunny cloudless sky to create an environment rich in texture and possibility. After some interesting business, involving wooden blocks and hanging bags containing water and flowers, the piece went into a monotonous list of pollution levels in the estuary whilst a projected map of the area was stained repeatedly with water and coffee. This didactic moment seemed to colonise the meaning of the rest of the performance in an unhelpful way, so that earlier, more interesting sections, were reduced to the level of supporting symbols.

I had a similar problem with Silvy Szulman's *Blue Bondage Line* in which she crawled through the City Art Gallery trailing a long length of blue rope to which were tied about a hundred domestic objects: pans, clocks, brushes and dustpans. As a performance it gained a lot from being funny, something which few other pieces even attempted during the day, but I found the symbolism a bit bald and lifeless. Despite this there were some good moments watching people stand gob-smacked and grinning as the rope threatened to overturn the exhibits in the foyer and Szulman made her way out onto the high street, rope and all.

Szulman's direct encounter with the outside world was untypical of the day. Travelling from location to location either on foot or by bus the lines between performance and the reality of people shopping and walking in the streets were blurred but rarely directly challenged. Instead there was a nice ambiguity about what was performance and what was not.

PHOTO / J.P. READ

One student, Luane Nicholls, organised water games and races using children from Adelaide primary school in Queen Victoria Square whilst another, Richard Downes, worked at the Railway Station with groups from the Ralph Suite day centre and the Frederick Holmes special school. Both these sections of the day had a pleasing surreal quality to them: at the station two kids in wheelchairs were dragging great knotted lengths of telephone multicore cable round the entrance hall whilst their colleagues hammered the same stuff to a large white wall, making strange and tangled shapes that caught the attention of a good few passers-by and at least one policeman.

Most interesting in terms of its relationship to reality was Tim Brennan's installation/performance *Is this England?* which was set in an abandoned underpass. At one end was a grassy slope leading to a dock; over the top you could see the masts of a burnt out ship. At the other was a fifteen foot high wooden barricade which allowed only a narrow entrance to the subway. Hidden in the dense shadows of the space was a pile of rotten rubbish; old prams, cardboard boxes, and pigeon shit. To this found setting Brennan added the single element of five huge shipping flags; union jacks in the corners of red rectangles, which hung motionless from the roof of the underpass in a mute dialogue with their surroundings. It was blunt as a statement, but the scene had an unreal, calm beauty which gave it a lasting impact.

Walking back into town we saw boarded up houses and shops; a smashed-in doorway, the Fair and Square Club, and I wondered if this was part of *Is this England?* or *The Blue Line Project* too. As if five union jacks or a scattered group of performances could throw their question out over the whole city. ●

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