



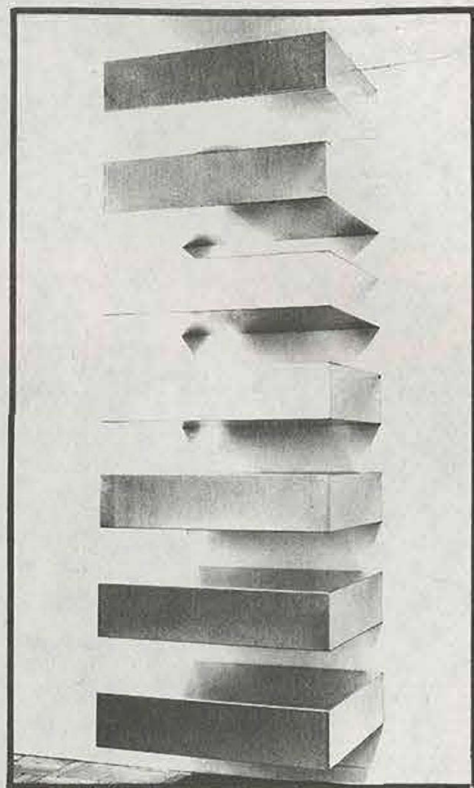
\$1.50

April 1978

CENTERFOLD

AUDIO ARTS
SUSAN BRITTON
KENNETH COUTTS-SMITH
ROBERT FILLIOU
DICK HIGGINS
JOHN OSWALD
MICHAEL SNOW
RODNEY WERDEN
plus Reviews

THE 1978 CANADIAN VIDEO OPEN



March 31-April 30
JACK SHADBOLT: SEVEN YEARS
 Multiples, triptychs and large-format paintings, 1970-77.

April 29-June 4
DUCHAMP "READY-MADES"
 An exhibition of Duchamp's "ready-mades" from the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Also included will be the *Boite-en-valise*, rotoreliefs, etchings and the *Chess Knight* (in its original Man Ray frame).

June 9-July 16
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Robert Field is an artist who has adopted the name R. Fish. He observes, draws and paints the natural life around him; but he is largely devoted to making plaster molds, and then rubber casts, of spawned-out salmon and other creatures.

1145 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6E 3H2 Telephone: (604)682-5621

ARTEXTE

Margaret Fisher performance



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PUMPS

40 East Cordova St. Vancouver B.C.

Twenty-two Photo Artists - A Show in two parts

Opening 6th April

Kazumi TANAKA
Rick HAMBLETON
Osuna DOYLE
John F. ANDERSON
Tom ROBERTSON
Roy ARDEN
Keith DONOVAN
Byron BLACK
Mike O'CONNELL
Ken KURAMO'I O

Opening 20th April

Taki BLUESINGER
Sandra JANZ
Michael DE COURCY
Paul WONG
John MITCHELL
Kim TOMZAK
Roy KIYOOKA
David LARSON
John WERTSCHEK
Chris REED

23rd April LOTO THEATRE. Performance 8:30 pm

Danice McLEOD/Liz VANDERZAAG/
Lorraine HANLEY

30th April PUMPS. Films 9:00 pm

Gordon KIDD/Pete LIPSKIS/Others.

To: Libraries, Museums, Historians and friends:

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If there is indeed something called an 'art of the seventies' CENTERFOLD contains parts of it. If you are a collector of 'decades' we strongly suggest you subscribe to Centerfold. Whilst we make every attempt to get our news to you for free, we cannot always guarantee such a service. As you know, ephemeralities evaporate quickly. Secure the information now. Subscribe.

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Letters

There may be a "connection between the major role played by women in art journalism in Canada and the insipid nature of same" - its rescue.

Thank you for correcting Avis L. Rosenberg re Powerhouse funding. We do function with the status of a Parallel Gallery, only without Council money. This means we're objective and independent, I think.

I like the part about the "efficiency mechanism". Efficient, relevant, responsible, yessir.

Enclosed please find aid to matching colour co-ordinates. From me to you.

Nell Tenhaaf
Gallery assistant
Powerhouse Montreal

CENTERFOLD

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Publisher:
Arton's

Photography:
David Hargrave

Distribution:
Marcella Bienvenue

Design:
W.O.R.K.S.

Typesetting:
Students' Union
University of Calgary

Printing:
North Hill News Ltd.

Centerfold is published six times a year in Canada by Arton's (Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs Society), a non-profit organization. Publication address: 320-10th St. N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1V8 (403) 283-6536. © 1978 Arton's. All rights reserved. Copyright is shared equally between the artist and the publisher. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. Vol. 2, No 4 Newsstand price: \$1.50. Subscription: \$9 - Individuals, \$18 - Institutions.

CENTERFOLD

APRIL 1978 Vol. 2 No. 4

AN ARTIST SMA GAZINE

A letter from the Publisher

ARTON'S is moving to Toronto in early July to re-establish as an artists' publishing space. CENTERFOLD will adjust in its new format until by August we hope it will stabilise as a new magazine appearing six times a year. The formation of a critical magazine capable of definitive artist-statements in either a documentary or projectionary capacity we feel is somewhat overdue. CENTERFOLD plans to encourage substantial critical writings by artists and art writers conversant with interdisciplinary activities: to articulate its formats, philosophies, didactics and politics.

Artist/activist (any group that is non-passive) publishing will always form the shortest route between any two cultural points and Canada has not faltered in this kind of active contribution. Artist-collaborative publishers include 'Coach House Press', 'Lama Labs Publishing', 'Eternal Network Press', 'Art Official Inc.', 'Art Metropole', 'Le Sono', 'Art Communication Editions', 'Image Bank', 'Satellite Video Exchange', 'W.O.R.K.S.', 'Music Gallery Edition', 'B.C. Monthly' plus a number of artist-publishers that produce magazine and anthological literature.

Unlike most formalised publishers that deal with art as a tacked-on service industry, producing text books or magazines, artist-publishers also have substantial claims to ideological commitment - they do not negate or neutralise potential ideologies which formal art publishing continually does whenever confronted by its own definitions of market.

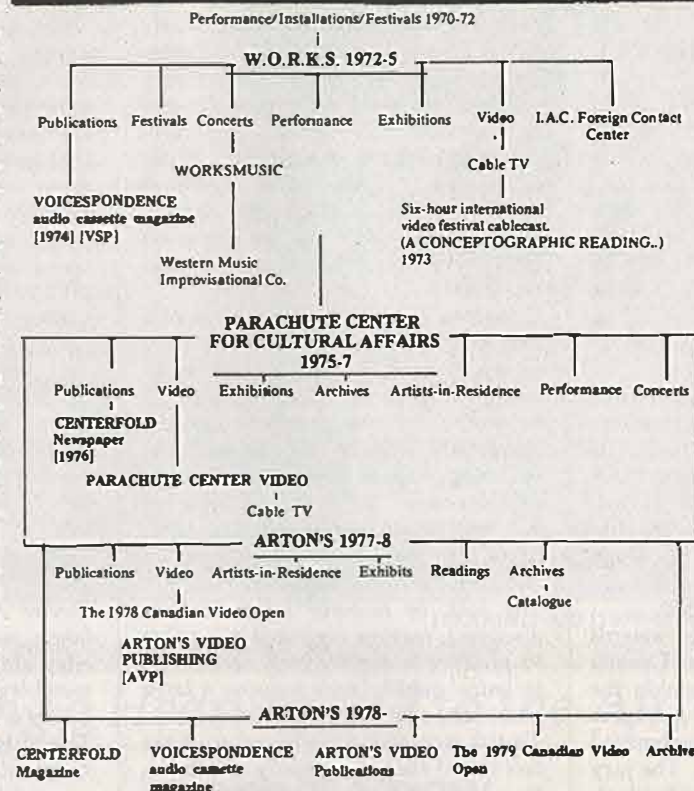
Publishing is, in the sense we use it, a paratroop of ideologies. Ideologies are 'the ideas and objectives (note the plurals) that influence a whole group or national culture, shaping their political and social procedure.' Ideology is also

the science that treats the origin, evolution and expression of ideas, therefore art-publishing cannot be left to be a paratroop in the ocean.

Intrinsically artists and artist-publishers (the collective process) are ideologists and ideopraxists, art-publishing should not be a series of empires but should be user-controlled. The user axis has to rotate from selling-control to learning-control whilst at the same time not degenerating into minimal synthesis of learning-to-sell which, in some ways, is the primary experience for the artist who produces artist-publications. The empire is 'Idios' (Gk. 'own', 'private') hence the phenomenon - Idiots. Artists have never been able to leave the historicization of their ideas to idiots no matter how articulate or complimentary those personages or institutions become.

Arton's will attempt to collaboratively publish in print, audio and video so that there can be more connection and less alienation of ideas from their source. The diagram opposite is included not to show 'what' or 'when' we did things but to make a functional connection to show how, as artists, we have reached our present priorities. In the past we have expended much energy and effort to make available the 'live' experience of art through the organisational innovations of the listed 'umbrellas' (Parachute Center, W.O.R.K.S., and Arton's); we still believe that it is essential for artists to remain in control of the direct presentation outlet: the artists' space, but increasingly we know that other work must be done if any of it is to have its complete effect.

We know that publications can be resource modules rather than products, that they can be collaborative rather than co-optative - we also know that publications can be a primary art form.



Publishing projection...

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Cover: Photo - David Hargrave

The 1978 Canadian Video Open

The first Canadian Video Open took place at Arton's February 15th - March 15th. Video artists taking part were MARION BARLING, GARRY BERTTEIG, BYRON BLACK, SUSAN BRITTON, THE DISHES, DON DRUICK, CHARLIE FOX, JOHN FREEMAN, GENERAL IDEA, ROSS GENTLEMAN, SAUL GOLDMAN, NOEL HARDING, HP, CAROL HUGGLER, NORA HUTCHINSON, IMAGE BANK, BILL JEFFRIES, KEN KURAMOTO, GLENN LEWIS, KEITH MacHATTIE, MARSHALORE, TERRY McGLADE & SALLY DUNDAS, MARK MORRIS, CLIVE ROBERTSON, TOM SHERMAN, GREGG SIMPSON, BARBARA STEINMAN & BARBARA TRANTER, WAYNE STERLOFF, ELIZABETH VANDERZAAG, RICK WARD, RODNEY WERDEN, KATE WIMCHARUK & RAYMOND ZABLOCKIS and ROBERT YOUNG.

Thirty-nine tapes were submitted, thirty-two to the competition and on the fifteenth of February sixty people came to see Rodney Werden's MAY I/CAN I and Susan Britton's INTERFERENCE. These two tapes were chosen by a jury of Kate Craig, Peggy Gale, Brian Dyson and Clive Robertson for purchase awards of \$500.

As these were the first juried awards given in Canada outside of the Canada Council, very much from within the artist community, both the jury process and the variety of tapes submitted was complex and wondrous. The jury split the tapes into Fiction, Individual, Collective and Documentary categories with many tapes appearing in more than one section. The jury spent two days with the tapes, the organisers spent close to three hundred hours watching and guiding the tapes through the Festival. Visitors came from Ontario and B.C. for one-to-three day private screenings.

The following are some general notes from the jury and others that watched the tapes.

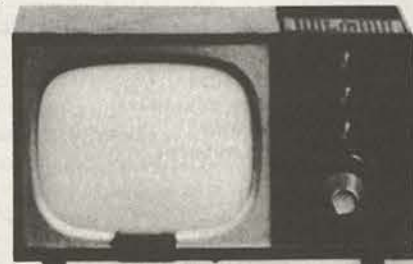
"Most of the tapes were made with a great deal of care and planning, many tapes especially those in color had been or were planned to be broadcast. Many of the color tapes that had not been mastered on 1" format had lost at least fifty per cent of their chroma by the time they had reached third of fourth generation. Two-thirds of the tapes submitted were in color, twelve in black and white. Many of the tapes made in black and white were cons-

cious decisions to do so where people prefer the one-to-one relationship of B&W technology as well as closed-circuit intention rather than broadcastability. Not that those using B&W were adverse to broadcast or did not have a sense of public. The jury responded to tapes that were verbal, had discussable content and those that were obviously well-scripted. They also responded to the tapes that were silent, particularly Garry Berteig's 'Portrait of Tim Porter' both for its extremely simple yet very original treatment of a 'portrait' and also because of its suggestion for techniques available with new 1" broadcast equipment. Of the video synthesis tapes submitted Elizabeth Vanderzaag's 'Non-Fiction' was well received because of its whimsical use of electronics.

Criticisms of the tapes ranged from a disappointment that some tapes were merely films made on the video medium to an observation that tapes which begin to look like paintings are less successful as video translation. The majority of tapes came from Toronto or Vancouver, subjects utilised were not specific to gender, that is, tapes made by men or women had no distinctive separate qualities.

The lack of humour in video was discussed, reasons suggested being that to produce a quality [not necessarily technical quality] tape requires a large amount of often very frustrating work. To this was added the mention of the fact that if there were really collaborative tapes [most group tapes being organized by one or two people] somebody could be free enough to worry about being 'funny'. The serious attitude was also seen as a deliberate displacement of the frivolity, the so-called entertainment, of television.

Although not many documentary tapes were attracted to the Open there was still enough to surmise that community action tapes have dropped off in the east whilst maintaining their interest in the west. To balance this



there are more art tapes being made in the east [Private versus Public].

The tapes as expected showed widely differing levels of sophistication of the 'message' transmitted. General though it may seem, tapes from the east do have a visible intensity and tenseness in comparison to the west.

Apart from the Britton and Werden tapes, tapes most praised by all the jury were Nora Hutchinson's 'C'était un jeu de memoire', Garry Berteig's 'Portrait of Tim Porter', General Idea's 'Pilot', and Saul Goldman's 'Time-Base Error'.

Video lends itself of course to real-time which is quite different to tapes that are not real time but pretend they have that license. Many video artists like to draw out tapes and take a certain pleasure in making the audience wait. Much of this is legitimate as the videomaker is trying to establish a different relationship with the TV viewer, to make the viewer work harder than usual. The extended process is difficult to achieve as the borderline of alientation or annoyance is reached quickly. Other positive comments referred to the admirable level of literary quality in many of the tapes, quite different from a few years ago.

Tapes that were about the television process itself either gave security to the viewer as in Rick Ward's 'Surveillance', or make the viewer somewhat edgy about being defined as they are watching as in 'Tom Sherman's 'Television's Human Nature'."

The Calgary audience took the Open very much in their stride, video's reputation for being 'non-aesthetic' is still a real drawback. This is somehow inseparable with the popular notion that video is very much a quasi-art. Be that popular notion as it may Arton's was so satisfied with the success and function of the Open that the 1979 Canadian Video Open has already been planned for March of next year at St. Lawrence College, Kingston. There will be more award money, a chance that the Open will also travel to the West coast following its organisation in Kingston and hopefully the payment of fees.

All of these things plus a 1979 catalog were written into the plan. The catalog for The 1978 Canadian Video Open is in production consisting of forty-four pages plus twenty color plates; whilst many complimentary copies will be mailed Arton's will also announce its availability for sale at a later date. ■



photos: Charlie Fox

HEARING-AID [1976-8] Alberta College of Art Gallery

Catching a Hearing-Aid to the Airport

Michael Snow

In a car on the way to the airport, the driver is wearing a combination microphone-headphone, the passenger has just finished installing an audio work. They talk about the car, the airport, The Nihilist Spasm Band, The CCMC and in amongst this - 'Hearing Aid'.

Centerfold:

So when did you start working on that piece?

Michael Snow:

A couple of years ago The Kitchen (N.Y.) asked me if I wanted to do a sound installation piece and I came up with that after looking at the space. It's got one big room and one smaller but fairly large room and then there's the stairs and it was laid out over a longer distance than the installation you just saw (installed at Alberta College of Art Gallery, part of ANOTHER DIMENSION). The piece went through more changes of just the quality of sound in each space. The metronome was in the very big room in the far corner and the final tape machine was on the stairs so there was a lot of range not only in the quality of sound but also the range of fortuitous sound: people walking, trucks and so on. In this installation it's quite pure, there's practically no incidental sound.

Centerfold:

Have you ever used that dubbing technique before to amplify the spatial characteristics of a room?

M.S.:

No.

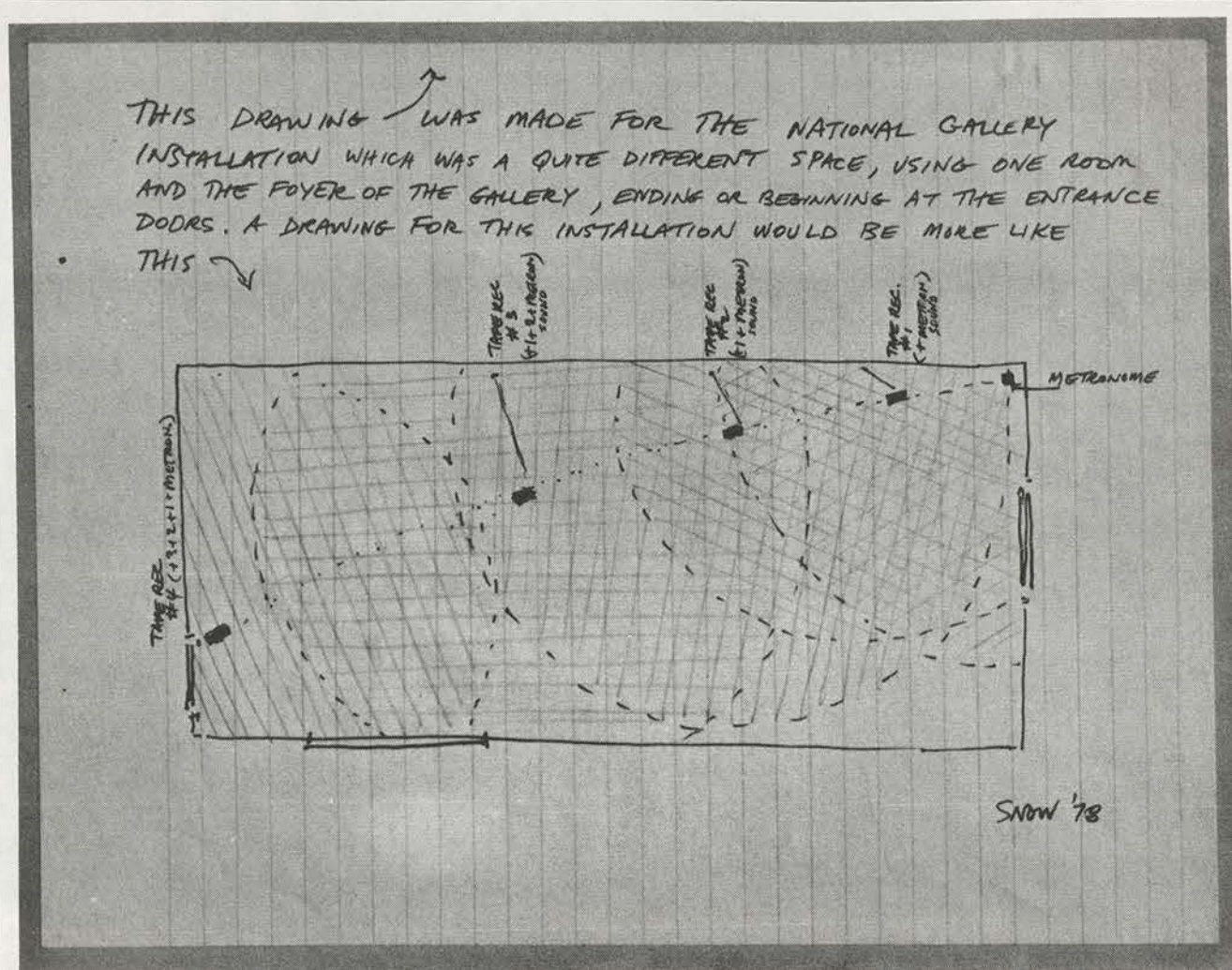
C.:

I like its simple functionality.

M.S.:

The process obviously is there right in front of you but it does bring out a rich number of less obvious nuances. I've only done a couple of sound installations, one at Expo 67 in a hexagonal auditorium and there were speakers all around it each with separate tape recorders. I played 10 or 12 separate tapes of just any music - they had a lot of commercial tapes of different kinds of music - I played them all simultaneously at top volume in the dark. It was really incredible, it was like being in Niagara Falls, very, very physical. I had this band that I played with that summer called the Kinetic Ensemble, it kept changing its name, it was a free improvisation group - and in the middle of the stage in the center of this whole thing we started to play. Of course you couldn't hear your playing at all, but the tapes ran out at different intervals so that gradually they revealed themselves as separate components and gradually that process revealed the music in the center which was live. The lights were also gradually turned on.

C.: What was that piece called?



M.S.:
I think it was SENSOLO.

C.:
This installation is called HEARING AID, are there any physics relationships that you are using the work to demonstrate?

M.S.:
It ends up having a lot to do with the instability of the tape cassette machines and it works because they aren't in sync. If you set them up so that the first recording of the metronome was in sync with the other one you would have a single pound all the way across. But they always play differently and they always started differently so you have many kinds of phasing rhythms which come, partly from them being started one after the other, but also from the variation in speed. Theoretically the metronome is constant but maybe it isn't. I was thinking of the metronome as being pretty close to what a frame does only in terms of time. It's about as close as you can get to something that isolates.

C.:
I like the way it allows people to experience the room as a closed volume of space - the size of the room seeming to expand or contract depending upon the length of the extended echo. I mentioned earlier that it reminded me of Alvin Lucier's I AM SITTING IN A ROOM in that it uses similar means for a similar illustration - but I prefer the methodology in HEARING AID, it is more about the room and not the physical degeneration of the recording.

M.S.:
There's an interesting ricochet when you hear just the metronome, something like BING-ra-da-dah-da. I couldn't record

that - I kept trying to record it, placing the mic's every way I could think of: pointing up, pointing down - couldn't get it and yet it's very clear to the ears. The mic's just shave it right off. Maybe with good mic's but I guess I am interested in what is called 'bad recording'. I used some kinds of limited range distortion in RAMEAU'S NEPHEW and in that record of mine (MUSICS FOR PIANO, WHISTLING, MICROPHONE AND TAPE RECORDER). What the 'distortion' does is to remove the documentary aspect and put your mind to the fact that it is recording.

C.:
How strongly do you need to work with yourself as an improviser at the moment, musically?

M.S.:
I am more interested in the collective, in what happens simultaneously with other things over which I have no control. I can do the other thing - I do it at home all the time, I've done it a couple of times in London and concerts in Montreal, it really is something separate from my main current interests.

C.:
I meant projects similar to the pieces that you published on the MUSICS album.

M.S.:
There are similar pieces I have considered publishing - one is a trumpet piece, a series of overlays - it's not that interesting technically, but musically I think it's interesting. Another is a short-wave radio piece I did three years ago that I like. The last album is very studio-like, as in a visual artist having a studio in which he/she produces work. It's not solo concert, it's a solitary solo situation that relates more to an artist making a painting than solo music with an audience.

Dick Higgins

Towards an Allusive Referential

This essay is an excerpt from the new Higgins' book, 'A DIALECTIC OF CENTURIES: Notes towards a Theory of the New Arts' available this Fall from Unpublished Editions [1978].

Dick Higgins has been involved in the practical end of the arts since the late 1950's, when he was co-founder of Happenings and, later, of Fluxus, active in music and studying with John Cage and

Henry Cowell, has been active in the visual arts with his performance notations, the graphic series 7.7.73 and five films, and above all there has been his poetry and other literary work, which at times converges on his visual art, musical or graphic activities. Far from feeling spread too thin, he has insisted all along that the one kind of activity reinforces the others.

One of the glories of writing in North American English is that almost every other word can become some other part of speech from what we are accustomed to, a capability which has lessened in most other European languages since the baroque. For instance, "telephone" can be used for "to telephone" or even for "telephone" man. This, perhaps, reflects the delight in multiple identities so typical of our brighter brothers and sisters, and so frightening to the one-track professionals of a generation ago with their Holy Terror of ambiguity. Our identities pun and partake of all the richness of our lives -- and this holds true even when we expect it least, both in life and art and verbal art. For instance, without much self-conscious thought, I titled a string of poems I had caught in my mental pond, "deep summer together poem." I had thought of the overall concept, not of the individual words. In my head they were fused. But now, looking at my title, I ask myself, does "deep" go with "summer"? Or "together"? Or "poem"? Which modifies which?

Perhaps the units fuse. If so, haven't we transcended the word and come to the transform, in the Chomskyan sense, as the basic unit of verbal art? The word was sacred to Plato and to the gnostics -- yet it seems so hierarchic, ultimately. If the word is one thing only, then isn't it almost unique in the real world? Words might be taken as, rather, radicals with great polyvalence, capability of entering into a vast variety of identities which are, presumably, difficult to explain hierarchically -- in the system, say, of the "tree diagrams" that the old timers used for diagramming sentences -- and yet, as flexible radicals their very ambiguity evokes new meaning. To cite an interchange noted by David Antin [1], the young black man flirts with the young black woman:

"Mama, you sho is fine!"

And she discourages him with:

"That ain' no way to talk to your mother."

Here dialect is mixed with literate speech, puns are fused with meaning, and, all in all, an element of allusive referential is present which is the very essence of imaginative verbal art.

Allusive referential? What a clumsy phrase! Yet better than load down our critical toolchest with yet another artificial coinage from Greek or Latin, each user of which must write off to Merriam-Webster to be sure he goes on record as the first user.

What I have in mind is, simply, displacement from the expected over the threshold into the unexpected, not for the sake of novelty, but in order to refer to some additional and relevant element which might otherwise be un-evocable. The intuitive leap requires the intuition, and making the reader or listener's intuition effective can be one of the uses of verbal art. One function of literature is that it develops the reader's abilities in his gestalt formation throughout his intellectual experience.

Naturally, in a piece of verbal art, any symbol is in some degree an allusive referential: the semioticians have explored this enough for me not to have to go into this to any great degree. But the psychology of the deliberate use of the allusive referential has not been so well explored.

What it means in art psychology is that: 1) I think *a*. Let us call *a* my "object". 2) As artist, I observe that though I try to think *a* simply, I find that my mind moves on to *b*. I could fight this and insist upon mentioning *a* only. This would cause anxiety, of course, but that might have its uses. However, instead I accept the displacement. *b* now becomes the new object, which I will call a "referential". 3) But I find that when I refer to *b* in my original context, that the sense of *a*, if the intuition has been a close one, remains. *b* is justified by its heightening of the experience of *a* -- though a displacement, the allusion (or movement from *a* to *b*) has created a vivid effect in my mind. 4) The reader need not go through the beginning of the process. The reader simply reads *b* and feels *a* (ideally).

Now, this works not merely with the contrast between poetic and purely informational language. I could, here, take some line of Keats and paraphrase it in bureaucratese: very funny. But here the concept of an allusive referential begins to pay off. Without it, I would have to argue that the poetic language is an imaginative experience for imagination's sake -- and then, perhaps, I would go on and say that the meaning of the poem is an unimportant part of it. Or, as that purist of purists, Harold Bloom, puts it, "The meaning of a poem is a poem" (which I object to also because then the critic, as explicator of that meaning, becomes a poet -- which is misleading, since we can use both critics and poets separately).

But given an allusive referential, what actually happens is that the meaning is experienced powerfully, particularly when the *b* is mentally matched with the *a* and the intuitive displacement becomes conscious. Discourse is transcended by the displacement.

The poet, then, witnesses life in language: his or her displacement of it is a critique. And the reader or critic's understanding of the poem -- and, hopefully, if the reader or critic is active and not passive about these things -- integrates the poet's critique with the reader's experience. There is no right or wrong, here, though some interpretations may be richer in implications than others. The situation is inherently non-dualistic. It has position and structure, but content and moral values, emotionally and intellectually, develop at a later stage.

As an anglophone, I read a line from Rimbaud's "Memoire" --

"Regrets des bras epais et jeunes d'herbe pure!" I translate it --

"Regrets of arms thick and young of pure grass!" Perhaps I do not understand. I translate it by sound --

"The brass regrets in spades, and the Johnnies ate pure herbs!"

And the two verbal experiences become fused. I know the meaning of all the words in the French, but find I am less interested in Rimbaud's *a*, his conscious meant object, than in either of my own two intuitive displacements, in both of which I experience rich complexes of allusive referential. Shall I blame Rimbaud for being unclear? Not at all -- I know he is a great poet because I feel these allusive referentials so vividly. Clarity is merely one vivid possibility. To make the work an assemblage of potential meaning is another one. Aleotric poetry, such as that of John Cage or Jackson Mac Low or, sometimes, myself (and others) requires only an active reader, capable of bringing his or her life experiences to the work: the allusive referential will take care of the rest. A note here might be relevant, though. Mac Low and Cage use the word as the language unit, and they apply chance to it, scrambling it. Others of us find the word rather an arbitrary unit, and try to work with transforms (phrases): when we apply chance to those, we get aleotric ideas which displace as allusive referentials in larger chunks. There are, then, at least these two basic styles within aleotric poetry.

But the former sort of aleotric poetry requires minimal allusive referential for the poet, though maximal for the reader, while the latter sort requires allusive referential for both.

Still, in the present avant garde, there are three other areas of poetry whose effect, when the poems really work well, are explainable through the allusive referential process -- and it is a process, of course, not a principle. I have in mind permutation poetry, concrete poetry, and sound poetry.

Permutation poetry is, at its simplest, poetry that consists of a list (which may or may not have semantic meaning), and the elements of that list are then scrambled. For instance, Brion Gysin's "Junk is no good, baby" --

"no junk is good baby"

"good junk is no baby"

-- etc., just to choose a couple of lines at random. It is a style that has been with us a long time: in fact, in Germany, such pieces are known as "Proteus poems" after a poem by Julius Caesar Scaliger called "Proteus" and published in 1551. The genre has been popular at various times, in German, for instance, in the works of the baroque poets Christian Schade and Quirinus Kuhlmann. As always, since art expresses an unchanging human nature, our avant garde arts have their analogues in the past. Anyway, permutation poetry, whether the components are scrambled aleotrically or systematically (and both possibilities exist) get their effect from the reader's matching of the *b* with the *a* through the allusive referential. The effect may be humorous or serious or, in Kuhlmann's case, even ecstatic. All depends on the nature of the object communication, the *a*, and the reader's feelings associated with the displacement to *b*.

Similarly, concrete poetry in its earlier analogues (pattern poems, *carmina figurata*, etc.) got a bad press from critics such as Joseph Addison who minimized the importance of the displacement and stressed the one-track precision of *a* and its expression: for them visual poetries were "false wit". However, when we see a text move into an intermedium between verbal and visual art, and when we feel this displacement as an enrichment of our conceptual experience, we can appreciate the work that has been achieved, and we experience delight (as in the case of Lewis Carroll's "Tail of a Mouse") or even something more profound and less rationally explicable, as in the case of Appolinaire's best *calligrammes* or Ian Hamilton Finlay's "the horizon of holland." [3]

Similarly, sound poetry is an intermedium between verbal art and musical composition, and its roots run from ancient

religious formulas through folk nonsemantic passages (from the Navaho Indian "horse songs" to the "nonsense" choruses of English folk songs), through the dada poems of Ball and Hausmann, and into the intuitive poems of Bernhard Heidsieck or the technological and electronic manipulative sound poems of Bengt Emil Johnson or Henri Chopin. We feel the displacement move from the traditional media of word or music into the midground which, though essentially simply a new medium (all intermedia become media), can also be the new object, *a*, which is indicated by the allusive referential: this is true of most etude pieces, where the technical aspect is a major part of the artist's intention. The sound in either case becomes a part of the referential, whatever the nature of the actual allusion.

Finally, any language can be part of the allusive referential when it is the language which is being emphasized: and this is notably true, again, in works where the style of the language is more what the artist is concerned with than what he or she is saying in that language. This is true of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (at least of some passages of it), of Gertrude Stein's "calligraphic" style texts or the novel *Lucy Church Amiably*, of my own *Book About Love & War & Death*, of Richard Kostelanetz's mathematical constructions, etc. All artistic language is, then, a metaphor for experience and an allusive referential for it: strange that most of the semioticians (except for Max Bense and Paul Bouissac) stay so resolutely in their academic closets. And only at great peril can a verbal artist today, when our hunger for the deepened experience that results from an allusive referential is so great -- perhaps as an antidote to alienation, perhaps from our need for what the anthropologist Victor Turner calls the "liminal" experiences [4] -- only at great peril can an artist use the bland and one-track language of the pre-technological age. Madison Avenue hasn't realized that, but, then, their art is sales, not literature, and they are ciphers in the service of inertia. Most of our academics have only sensed it in the shrinkage of numbers of their literature students and the dropping out of the most gifted ones. They still explain it in terms of the present generation being too pragmatic and anti-humanist, since the real educational crisis is several years ahead of us, when the gap between what is thought and written and what is taught will be even more pronounced than it is now.

Finally, the question arises does anything comparable to the allusive referential process exist in the other arts, or is it uniquely a component of the verbal/ideational gestalt formation process. I think it does, though more obviously in the visual arts, where it is a major part of the artist's "vision", than in music. In visual art we see it not only in visual puns and the overall "distortions" which a painter gives us in comparison to what he sees, but it exists also in such places as minimal art works. Obviously not all minimal art works have a powerful impact, any more than all of any other art works do. But when, for instance, George Brecht pastes relief letters "red" on a panel, and paints the letters and panel alike green, it seems to me that the curiously haunting effect that one gets can only be explained in terms of an allusive referential. This is true of a good many other recent art works, especially those of the fluxus movement where, frequently, objects are used in contexts that are utterly different and opposed to their normal ones.

In music the allusive referential is harder to observe. Perhaps it could be argued that in traditional music it is present in the interplay between the expected resolution of harmonies and where, in fact, they go. Voice leading could involve displacement, in other words. But I think it is more evident in concept music and those musics which, in a sense, revive some of the principles of the *Musica speculativa* of Boethius and the ancients -- music which, as in the works of

John Cage, are either social models or social paradigms, or are conceptual models of reality, in which each musical event happens in a way analogous to how events happen in reality as Cage sees it. The artist (Cage) sees the world and makes each element of his work harmonious with it, concrete with it as opposed to discrete. The listener, then, hears the sounds or perceives the situations inherent in the performance (scandals, rioting on the part of the audience, graciousness on the part of this or that musician -- all these are part of the overall situation), and feels a solidarity between the work and his or her life, thus experiencing an allusive referential.

In theater -- in art performances, happenings, group theater improvisations or group compositions -- the situation would be more or less analogous to the situation in music: same in dance. Perhaps in video art and cinema also -- where the prevalence of structuralist criticism has tended to reduce the viewer's sensitivity to the obvious and the situational levels which are, equally, a part of the arts.

Enough of this. The tool is now offered to those who want it. It remains to be done to quantitize its use, classify the

variety of its functions, and use it as a component of overall aesthetics and art psychology on the one hand, and to use it to explain the impact and nature of current art works (especially, though it also has uses for older art works too), works of literature and in other media as well.

Center for Twentieth Century Studies
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

3 April, 1977

©1977 by Richard C. Higgins

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AUDIO ARTS

Retention of the Audial Form

March 15th, 1978. Long-distance interview [2:30 am Local Time] with William Furlong, editor 'Audio Arts' [8:30 am GMT], England.

Centerfold:

What led you to start 'Audio Arts' as a cassette magazine?

William Furlong:

It started out of an interest in the sort of discussions that were taking place in the early seventies here around contemporary art. There were a lot of very interesting things being talked about but for one reason or another these things were never finding their way into any publication that could be circulated and therefore reach a wider audience. At roughly the same time one became interested in publishing speech in its original form if one could successfully and economically actually base a magazine on the audio cassette which, as you know, is a flexible medium. Where ideas could be generated by interchange, through conversation, discussions, etc. seemed at least to be a considerable extension to the publications that were available; to be able to witness the development of an idea as it's brought through speech between a number of people. Those two things came together when I found that publishing cassettes could happen economically, although a lot of mistakes were made in the first few issues,

due to the fact that I wasn't always versed in the possibilities of how it could be done.

It primarily was the idea of being able to make recordings of artists, with people of related disciplines whose ideas at first-hand could be retained in the audial form of a tape, and then duplicated.

C.:

Were you ever apprehensive that your magazine's audience would need a peripheral device to make use of the publication?

W.F.:

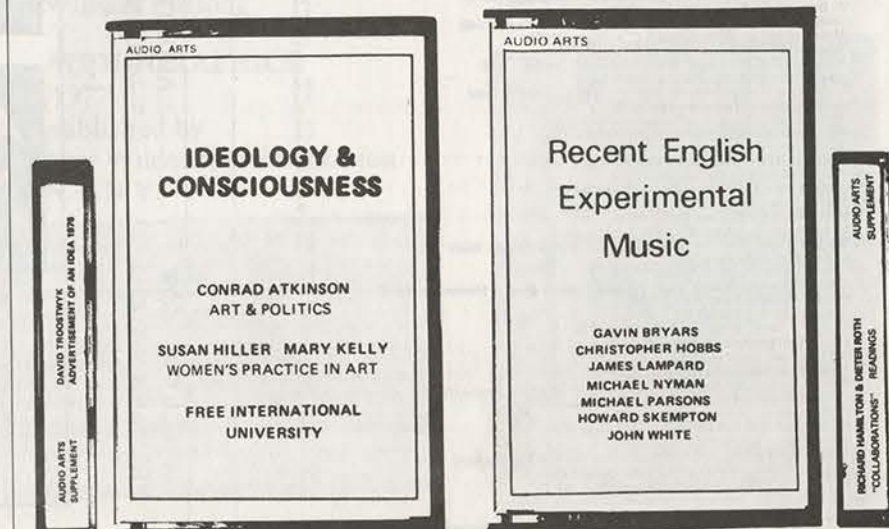
I did a fair amount of research. What emerged was that the cassette recorder was becoming very cheap then (1973), it's even cheaper now -- it was reaching the level where it was similar to the transistor radio in the late sixties, where people, particularly younger people, had these machines and used

them very informally. They used them for pre-record music but unlike record players they used them in a much more interactive and personal way -- copying recordings from radio, tape to tape, suddenly it was a two-way thing and a very interesting potential. What it meant was a possible network -- people had the machines but only used it for one sort of recording, music often pre-recorded. Most people either had a cassette machine or could easily borrow one. So it wasn't like producing videocassettes, some people sometimes advise me to publish colour video cassettes, I have to point out that although it seems a good idea very few people have any hardware.

C.:

Do you think that Audio Arts has managed to get into an educational art market that print publications haven't?

W.F.:



AUDIO ARTS began in 1973...

'Audio Arts'

In a sense it has, it seems to have been used. I get reports from colleges and so on where it's a very useful thing to base seminars and discussions on and I find that they are used in that way. Sound is a hot medium in a sense, you attend to it whilst it's being played and when it's turned off something else can happen like a discussion. It seems to be quite concentrated in that respect. The crux of 'Audio Arts' has been that it's not someone reporting on something in the third person, in most cases it is the actual artist - whatever it is he/she might be doing - actually themselves talking about their own work and ideas.

C.: Has 'Audio Arts' considered better duplicating quality, producing dolbied, stereo cassettes?

W.F.: I've gone through all those kinds of problems, as I mentioned before we're somewhat at the mercy of what we can afford. Each issue I bring out I attempt to improve the technical quality. Now, sometimes I've made recordings of various people in an informal situation where it was either that for a recording or nothing, where I've said, although it's got a hum on it - or it's slightly off-mic we are not trying to compete with the BBC in terms of studio recordings. Having said that, what I try to do always is now to make the technical quality as good as possible and the

people that now duplicate my cassettes use a system called a coop-bin, where the quality is much higher - so from this issue onwards I don't think there will be too many technical problems. I did some tapes at 'Documenta', where there was a lot of ambient sound but it doesn't matter because the speech was clear. In answer to your question, they are stereo at the moment and they will be dolbied from this issue onward.

C.: I was interested in the folder-from the Whitechapel exhibit, are many tapes in the unpublished category unpublishable because of publishing rights?

W.F.: On the whole they're all available to be published. One of my problems is the shortage of time. For every hour of tape I publish I am probably making 10 or 12 hours of original material, there's a limit to how much you can publish. For instance, there's about six to eight items on that unpublished list that are now in the process of publication. I would anticipate that all of those titles, I can't think of any exceptions - all of them will be published. Some of what I record are conferences or day-discussions and seminars and it's a question of maybe fifteen hours of tape. It may not be appropriate to edit that, then you're left with the business of publishing fifteen hours of tape which is a problem I haven't got around. What I am trying to do is get

hold of my own cassette duplicator and then it's simply a matter of doing very small runs according to orders. At the moment I'm ordering in batches of 100 or 50's - that's the most economical way of doing it. Recently I recorded that 'State of British Art' three-day seminar at I.C.A. Now those tapes are available, people would like them, but there's sixteen cassettes. It would be appropriate to make two or three of each one.

C.: Has it been possible for you to share royalties with the authors or is your financial base too thin?

W.F.: What I make sure does happen is to pay the artist 10% of the sale price of the cassette, which is a standard publishers royalty. I am not being paid or anything by the venture, so its overheads are comparatively low. Ten per cent on 100 sold would be 30 pounds.

C.: What are your immediate plans for Audio Arts?

W.F.: Shall I tell you about the next issue?

C.: Please.

W.F.: The next issue is 90 min., it's going to incorporate four slides, and a book and it comprises tapes made at 'Documenta 6' with artists: Antonio Mun-tadas, Wolf Vostell, Braco Dimitrijevic

PUBLISHED TAPES	2.2
Carl Andre Poems & Commentary (1975)	1.1
Art Language Proceedings (1972)	3.3
Conrad Atkinson Art & Politics (1977)	1.1
Cyril Barrett Art & Philosophy (1973)	2.1
Richard Barnas Tuning a Cymbal (1975)	S
Joseph Beuys at the ICA (1974)	S
Sue Borvin Method for Revolving a Continuous Sound (1975)	3.2
Angelo Bozzola Three Letters to a Friend (1974)	2.2
Gavin Bryars Ponukelian Melody (1975)	1.2
George Buchanan Poems (1977)	S
Victor Burgin Socially Motivated Art Practice (1976)	1.2
Naom Chomsky Interview (1973)	S
Richard Cork The Lethaby Lectures (1974)	1.2
David Coxhead The Collected Works (1975)	2.2
Michael Craig-Martin Self Interview (1974)	3.3
Braco Dimitrijevic Interview... Interview (1975 & 1977)	1.2
Marcel Duchamp Interview by Richard Hamilton (1969)	2.2
Andrew Eden Reading (1975)	3.3
Free International University Consciousness & Ideology (1977)	2.1
R. Buckminster Fuller at Art Net (1974)	1.4
Oliver St. John Gogarty on George Moore & W. B. Yeats (1949)	1.3
Mark Haymon on Wittgenstein & C. K. Ogden (1974)	S
Ted Hickey Traditional Songs from Ireland (1976)	3.3
Susan Hiller Symmetrical Notes from Dream Seminar (1973)	3.2
Susan Hiller Women's Practice in Art (1977)	S
Christopher Hobbs Aran and Three Piano Duets (1972 & 1975)	1.3
Anthony Howell Two Exercises (1975)	3.3
James Joyce reading from Finnegans Wake (1929)	3.2
Mary Kelly Women's Practice in Art (1977)	1.2
James Lampard The Caterpillar (1974)	S
Wyndham Lewis reading from One Way Song (1939)	1.2
Anne Wyndham Lewis Interview (1974)	S
Anthony McCall Film with Optical Sound (1975)	1.2
Nice Style at Garage (1974)	1.2
Nice Style at the Hanover Grand (1973)	2.4
Hermann Nitsch Interview (1975)	2.3
Michael Nyman The Otherwise Very Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz (1976)	1.4
Edna O'Brien Interview (1975)	S
Ulick O'Connor on W. B. Yeats (1974)	3.2
Bijou O'Connor on Picasso, Stein, Fitzgerald, Hemingway & Mackenzie (1974)	S
Michael Parsons Piano Piece 5 (1976)	1.1
Richard Quarrell Sum (1975)	S
Richard Quarrell Numerical Sequences (1975)	3.2
Ad Reinhardt's Auto Interview (1973)	1.1
Bill Shepherd Reading (1975)	S
Howard Skempton Waltz (1976)	1.1
Richard Sladden Systems Approach to Art & Design Education (1973)	S
Caroline Tisdall Ad Reinhardt's Auto Interview (1973)	S
Amikam Toren Untitled (1975)	S
David Troostwyk Advertisement of an Idea (1976)	3.2
John Welch Four Poems (1975)	3.1
John White Piano Duets and Photo-Finish Machine (1975 & 1976)	1.4
Stephen Willats Extending the Meaning in Art (1976)	
W. B. Yeats reading four of his poems (1934-1937)	

KEY 1.4 = volume 1 number 4
S = supplement
dates are of original recordings

All published tapes are for sale.
Those with volume numbers: £3.00
Supplement tapes: prices on request.

AUDIO ARTS
VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4

MARCEL DUCHAMP
an interview by RICHARD HAMILTON
in London and GEORGE HEARD
HAMILTON in New York.

MARCEL DUCHAMP
HERMANN NITSCH

'Audio Arts'

(plus two untranscribable: Ed.) and then there was three artists: Ian Breakwell, John Latham and Barbara Stevens (ARTISTS PLACEMENT GROUP) and also with Takis, a series of interviews and sound environments. There's a lot of different material on that side, it finishes with 'Radio Art Work, Belfast', which is an idea broadcast, as it were, that linked up various points within the city of Belfast. He also produced a book (John Carson) which he published, in relation to this work, and that's going out with the cassette as well.

And then on the other side, which the four slides relate to, is a project carried out by Stephen Willats. It was a project carried out in a part of West London, in Perivale. I was out there through the duration and I made recordings with participants and project operators and with Steve, as the project was taking place. That's a very interesting tape because it was made 'in the field', so you get the spirit of it coming through - which is very hard in terms of Steve's documentation or texts. Anyway, four slides relate to that - each slide is one of the problem-displays, you can look at it whilst you're listening to the comments - so that completes that issue, the last one in the Third Volume. I am hoping to go on trying to extend the way the magazine works, in terms of media by using slides, etc., in future issues. In terms of plans - there's always a lot of things to be done, I am thinking of working on a cassette of prisoners' poetry with Caroline Tisdall. We've just produced a cassette of the Richard

Hamilton and Diter Rot readings which has just come out. The next issue, there's an artist here called Margaret Harrison, a woman artist who's concerned with Women's Issues in her work and she has been talking recently with Lucy Lippard, and that tape will be used in the issue after the one that's just coming out. I'm also working on another tape with a performance artist, Bruce Maclean who carried out a performance at the Battersea Arts Center called 'Sorry'. We've got two slides of the performance plus two parts of it on tape, they're linked up. That's almost a work in itself - a sound catalogue/work. It's quite short - it's five minutes a side and that will be available for one pound, fifty.

WHITECHAPEL

An exciting new sound project has been installed at the Whitechapel Gallery. The Audio Arts sound archive of cassette tapes can now be heard there by the public. You just select your tape and play it on the gallery's equipment. It's been a logical step for Audio Arts and a good one for the Whitechapel too.

Bill Furlong has been working away at building his archive of art and literature since 1973. There were plenty of problems to get over, distribution being a major one, and accustoming people to taped information being another. In a short time he has succeeded in gathering a remarkable library covering a whole range of issues in contemporary culture and challenging the rule of the written word in spreading

information.

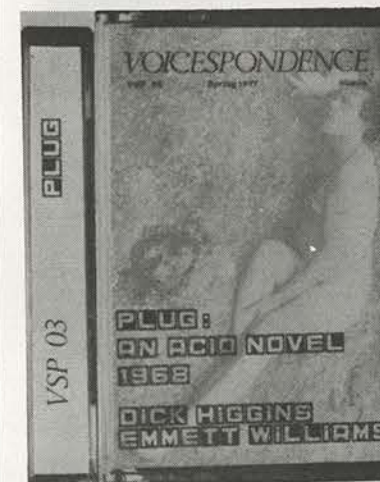
There have been over 30 issues of Audio Arts, so it is a kind of regular sound magazine. And in addition there is a range of unpublished tapes which can also be heard at the Whitechapel. Usually a tape is recorded and then copied. This is cheap, and means you can buy your own copy of a discussion or concert for little more than a traditional magazine. And all you need to play it is the ordinary cassette tape recorder.

The idea sounds simple enough, and becomes all the more interesting when you think of all the events and information that get lost, either because they are ephemeral or because they need the backing of the big publishers and distributors to travel.

Because there is no crushing financial liability in producing each edition, Furlong has been free of the risk constraints that are making publishers so wary and boring in their policies. He has above all been able to mix recordings of the very famous: Duchamp, Buckminster Fuller, Joseph Beuys, etc., with less known artists working now. This is the area in which he has really been able to exploit the difference between a tape you sit down to listen to for an hour and a magazine which invites skimming and flicking. He has been able to allow people working in the fields of theory and social practice really to expand their ideas beyond the usual restrictions of the written article, giving them more direct contact with their audience.

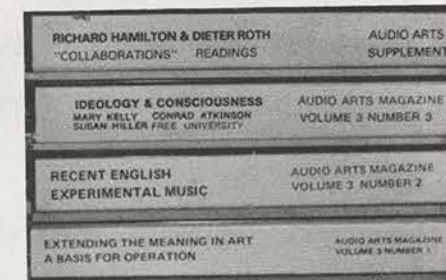
© CAROLINE TISDALL (THE GUARDIAN OCTOBER, 1977)

VOICESPONDENCE
[1974-]
published by W.O.R.K.S.
Canada.

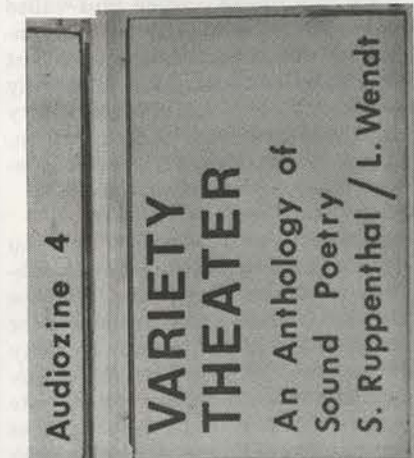


AUDIO ARTS
[1973-]
published by
William Furlong

AUDIOGRAPHICS
[1977-]
published by
New Wilderness Foundation
N.Y.N.Y.



AUDIOZINE
[1977-]
published by La Mamelie Inc.
San Francisco.



Videoview 1.

Susan Britton

SUSAN BRITTON talks with Peggy Gale

P: Although INTERFERENCE is almost an hour long it's divided into three sections, Love, Loss, and War. How did you come to those titles for the sections, were they for their own sakes - like the idea of love, then of loss etc - or were they there as a format?

S: I think they were there as a format, and as an afterthought. I'd planned on sectioning it but wasn't sure how to do it, so it became a process of going through these various ideas. Love represented an idea of the optimist and the idealist, and Loss was that of breakdown. War was retaliation.

P: The sections were quite discrete one from the other. The Love section started off with a very strong image of your face, a tight shot, with you saying I-love-you. I think on the first I-love-you the audience thought "ah ... this is interesting", then you went on repeating for eight minutes, which was extremely disconcerting. It became not so much about loving as about media manipulation and clichés and so on. Are you interested in those ideas of cliché and manipulation?

S: Well, you know that from my other work. That phrase seems to be the ultimate banal phrase. Saying it over and over again felt very cynical and aggressive. I was really cringing when I was doing it.

P: When we talked earlier you called yourself Miss Mabelline in that context; it was perfect. You looked just the way an ad should look, all sparkly and soft. Finally you reduced a very strong phrase down to some ad slogan, so that all you could say was I-love-you, you couldn't add anything to it.

S: I said I love you hopelessly, I love you desperately, extenuating little flourishes, but it was an empty thing. The tape is really about this time period and the situation I'm in in Toronto. This city almost specifically, and the day to day problems. It's necessary to operate with idealism, while at the same time being sort of slick and putting up with cynical, almost bitter feelings. I think it's very late-seventies.

P: But it also looks back to the late sixties and the terrorist groups and notions from that time.

S: It tries to do that but even more it picks up on the hype about those ideas and images, the media coverage of them. That terrorist sequence was like TIME magazine. TIME gives you instructions, and even has photos of how people live when they're terrorists. I clipped an article that says, "Be alert, keep a low profile, don't talk to strangers"; this was for businessmen in 1977. There have been 4000 kidnappings in the last five years. The way I pick up on it is through the media, tv, magazines, and I think it's totally romanticised. I've been told that if I

showed the tape in Germany I'd be thrown out on the street, because it's all wrong, but quite honestly here in Canada terrorism is shown as glamorous. I know it's a wrong idea of politics and terrorism and what the PLO is about, but it seemed a natural thing to put in a tape. After my experience at NSCAD (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), with Art and Language being there, The Fox being there, and talking for months about politics, and having the school divided into factions, it was a surprise to come to Toronto and find no one interested. I pined the CPCML (Communist Party of Canada Marxist Leninist). When I started this tape I was involved with CPCML and going on radical week-ends to Montreal.



INTERFERENCE 1977 photos: Le-La.

P: Did you find any answers there?

S: No, they were too corny for words. They were quite sincere, but it was even more romanticised than my notion of politics; they were calling each other comrade. We had meetings at my house for a couple of months, then we went off to Montreal and there were all those things happening with the Eleventh Congress and the Teng Hsiao-Ping regime getting into power, they had to figure out where they stood on that move. It was just after that I gave up on it.

P: One of the criticisms I've heard about the tape was that it treats politics as a question of fashion rather than a question of reality.

S: Well there's a point at which you can be thinking of politics as reality and then trying to actualise it, but if you can't find any solid day-to-day basis, and you join some sort of subversive organisation, it's like a perverse sort of action, like something in the twenties, it's all wrong. It was ludicrous. I got less and less interested in establishing a base for that ... it was about disillusionment.

P: I had the definite feeling that if there was a resolution in the tape it was a happy ending ... you'd escaped with the money, and your freedom, and there you were in Acapulco.

S: Oh no, the ending was a real unhappy ending. We were gone, the money was all blowing away, the phone was ringing, you couldn't ever make the connection - that was a theme throughout the tape. The interference was the real part and the other stuff was just the hype part. It ended with not picking up the phone or the money, and then that kind of listless shuffle, Mondo Disco.

P: How interesting. I felt it was very much a glamorous ending, and you felt the reverse ...

S: Well, all the idealism is over, after the brainwashing, all those products - major credit cards, ocean-going yacht - it was like what's-the-use. It was all surrender-give-up. I was trying to talk about meaning too, and how everything is so overloaded with meaning. Politics is so overloaded with meaning, cause so much is inferred and evoked by one political gesture that it gets all confused with history and media and literature.

P: The radios that were playing all that

static, what was that about? It was a very effective kind of energy-giver and aggression-giver.

S: They were like the passive disseminators, like icons. I meant them to look real sinister, but real passive at the same time, and I kept showing the wires and the switch and the plugs. There were all these connectors, but the radios were tuned off station, so it was all wrong and they were just hissing and empty.

P: One of the kinds of interference you were talking about was the electrical interference - you couldn't get a stable image or message - but I had the feeling there was a lot more included in that notion, that The Media was interfering between the message and the receiver.

S: All the time, being too caught up in the garbage and the nerve endings, and the aura rather than the body. There seem to be so many layers of irony and parody, and dead images and used language coming out over and over again... It's hard to break through it all.

P: Did you feel there was an interference between you as a thinking person and you as a producing person? Or was it more between you as an integrated individual and the outside world?

S: Oh yeah, I think that metaphor could be applied to the shouting out the window, that Celine bit, telling the world to fuck off generally, not being able to do anything else. Art and Language published an article called The French Pox where they talked about semiologists like Barthes, Foucault, Jacques Deleuze, and totally put them down. These people are talking about analysis and saying "we can tell what kind of person you are by the clothes you wear" and this is supposed to be very profound, so I was talking about "hammering together my rhetorical framework" like the French intellectual jargon they use. It seemed natural to say I'm going to make this analysis and all it amounts to is I-hate-you.

P: Some of it seemed such an ironic and amused look at the world and at that kind of rhetoric, and yet there were segments that seemed to drop the irony altogether. Specifically the part where the woman captive is brought in, seemed quite raw. Is that an indication that there were aspects of these political associations that were more deeply felt for you?

S: Yeah, it was real sincere too. When you've got someone tied up, and

you're brandishing knives, it can get ridiculous on one level, but the part where I'm talking with the knife in my teeth, those are direct quotes from what the CPCML people were into saying.

P: Do you feel those kind of issues are daily issues in Canada?

S: No, only on the news. They have nothing to do with what's going on, though maybe they will in ten years. Not right now, not for me at all. But they're certainly in everyone's mind and they're real powerful images.

P: Do you find yourself aware of the television medium as the carrier of that information? Your photographs and wall works seem to consider magazine layouts and paper issues, so the fact that these are television issues strikes me as relevant.

S: I try to use all those things. Like in the interview section, I tried to use all the clues, just enough to make it your out-and-out tv show, but always a little off. We looked just about right to be having an interview but it was off too - like a tv talk show but playing the edge ...

P: That whole conversation was a little mystifying because the interviewer would ask a very simple question and then get all this stuff as an answer. She responded as if she understood exactly what you meant but as an audience member I thought... what IS this ...

S: Sure.

P: You mean she was asking questions and you were answering with rhetoric?

S: Yeah. But at the beginning of that interview I was saying "the world is empty on every level because it's trying to transcend itself in order to survive." I don't think I'm too subtle for anybody; I throw all the other stuff in because it's about another level of getting into the tape, but that's what I was trying to say too.

P: And what about the section where you were saying "don't give in, give up"?

S: I wanted it to be sexually ambiguous as well as politically ambiguous. All this surrender stuff compounded with the I-love-you stuff was about sexuality, and related to don't-give-up-give-in and the same soft-focus, blurry images, faces close together filling the screen ...

Videoview 2.

Rodney Werden

RODNEY WERDEN talks with Peggy Gale

P: I think a good place to start would be with what you actually wrote about MAY I/CAN I. That "the tape is concerned with the intricacies of the socialisation process, the hesitant, but willing and awkward surrender to an articulated code of behaviour. Staged like a rite of initiation, a model is instructed by an unseen chorus of voices, each representing an individual point of view, while exemplifying the accepted verbal norm."

The "socialisation process" is a large area to investigate. It seems that all of your tapes are about norms and deviation from norms. I wonder if you feel comfortable about being within a norm, or whether in fact you feel yourself outside the norm and are trying to find a way in.

R: Hm. The norm is me, and the work is a sort of foray into a deviation. That foray begins at an idea or premise that I have about something and I either prove my premise or prove my premise to be wrong. But in the case of MAY I/CAN I it was pure politics. MAY I/CAN I is about a group of people watching an individual who has submitted to a certain scrutiny. And these people are collectively assessing this individual. They maintain a personal point of view, but the ultimate decision is a collective one, and it's obviously humiliating to the person who's doing it but that person is willingly doing it.

P: She doesn't speak, so the microphone around her neck seems to be either a symbol of some sort of media involvement, or else a symbol of her being collared, being led around. She has been imposed upon somehow.

R: Well, sure, metaphorically it's a collar. There could be electrodes on her brain, that would have served as well. But the microphone is the scariest thing, nowadays. Even more scary than tv, because if you can be seen at what you're saying you may be better understood... little gestures, things like that.

So MAY I/CAN I was based on that, the sick side of democracy or accepted humiliation. The reason the person was nude and the person was a woman

was political too. Women are more often subjected to that type of scrutiny.

P: Well it's partly that the artist's model is traditionally a nude woman so it sort of plays out the art game as well as playing out the male-female and society-individual role.

R: But the artist's model being a woman is also a society game. The commands to the model were from very basic social situations... if you've ever been caught in customs with dope, that sort of thing. These are things that society has asked people to do; they have asked that you be humiliated, guilty or not.

P: In art history, Truth is always shown

as blindfolded and usually without any clothes on, so she can't hide anything and she has no defenses. And it's always a woman. Truth is a naked blindfolded woman.

R: I have another tape in the works - I'm not happy with it yet - of which you saw the clothed version (ENQUIRER, 1977, colour); actually most of the tape is shot with this woman nude, with the blindfold and her ears covered. I'm continuing on into that symbolism of abusing the truthful situation, the perfect corn-fed woman co-operating in a situation she knows nothing about.

It points out how we've accepted the structures of society, and is as basic as



MAY I/CAN I 1977 photos: Le-La.

the sexual discrimination, the fetishism that is apparent even in a basic job application form. That's very simplistic, and it's not what MAY I/CAN I is about, but a lot of that humiliation is in there. You know, your marital status, male or female, how tall are you, all that seemingly irrelevant stuff. We accept the idea that information has to be given so that other people can assess us.

P: As I said before, all of your tapes seem to be about norms and deviation from norms. You seem to be interested in the line where ordinariness begins. Do you feel more comfortable within the ordinary, or within the extraordinary?

R: Possibly because I am so conservative and ordinary, my interest in the fetish or the extraordinary is quite natural. The character in this tape in an extreme political sense was capitulating. The girl that portrayed this was an actress, and I asked her to be almost on the verge of tears, but still willing. I think that's a fairly common situation.

P: She portrays it very effectively, so that it looks like it might be a clip from a very long and gruelling ordeal, of which all we see is a five minute segment. Maybe that's a nice metaphor for encapsulating her status as an individual within the society.

R: Well, it's more personal than that. I feel that way every time I'm put under that type of scrutiny, every time I'm asked to articulate, explain, substantiate what I'm doing. It's obviously about me. She plays me. But I was giving you the social connotation of it, that it does apply...

P: It's very much about the notion of authority, and how that functions, and how she deals with it.

R: How I deal with it, precisely. I don't deal with authority very well at all. I come from a background where the first thing you learn is how to manipulate authority or rebel against it. Because it's fashionable, it's expected. It's like smoking when you're a kid, that sort of stuff. She's on an edge. As am I.

P: One of the references the tape makes is that she is a model in an art school, and it almost felt like the voices might be coming through the microphone, giving out instructions rather than accepting information, that it stood for both directions. It gave a machine edge to it, and a kind of helplessness.

R: Definitely. That veneer was quite conscious. It was shot in a gallery so it would look that way. At A.Space, upstairs.

P: The fact that she had a microphone on I saw as a reference to her position

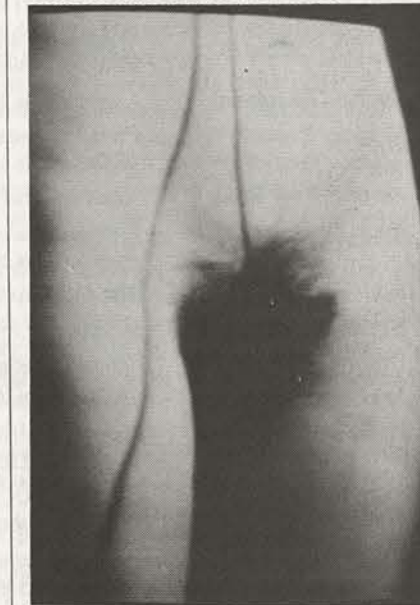
with media, that media is acting on her and manipulating her. She's not using it; it in a sense is using her.

R: That too, but more, that everything she says is being recorded. Although she didn't say anything in that segment, I wanted to imply that there were other segments. And if she did say anything it was going to be recorded and accounted for. My approach to it is a very naive approach to authority. It's not so much an external authority as a demand that I make on myself. Or how I view what I do. I always resent being accountable, as I said, but I think more in the sense of being accountable to myself.

P: Because, as you say, you not only do but probably try to live quite an ordinary respectable life. You don't want authority to single you out and say "you there, get over here and prove yourself, cause I think you've done something wrong".

R: Or something right.

P: Something right? You don't want to be noticed at all? That's not true.



R: Well, that dichotomy exists.

P: Another point that interests me about wearing the microphone... it gave me a very strong sense of impersonality. That is, she was out there all alone, and it almost felt like the voices might be coming through the microphone, giving out instructions rather than accepting information, that it stood for both directions. It gave a machine edge to it, and a kind of helplessness.

R: Yes. the voices were heavily processed technically, to take any personality

out. Six people. And the music, which was original, was to give syncopation between the voices.

P: It relaxes you just at the point where the visuals are harsh and sort of dangerous looking. The voices could be construed as being very aggressive, but the little dadadada of the music is so pretty and sort of spring-like.

R: Yes, that's responding to her femininity. She's a very delicate person and she displays that, playing that character. The music is for her. It was all done in segments, and the music and voices were all synched in separately. The editing of the visuals became the real-time problem and the audio had to be matched to that. The visuals repeat thirteen times actually. Every point of view is covered; there's a command and then it goes through a six-part cycle which actually goes in a semi-circle, and each individual looks at a different part of the body, beginning with the expression. It's linear, almost like a dream sequence in these parts, because you can't express all those points of view for six different people at the same time. I almost wish that they went a bit quicker, to give the illusion that they were all happening at the same time. The close-up of each part of her were to emphasise the scrutiny that she was undergoing, one view for each person, and all the shots were different. We have an hour of tape, edited down to 6 minutes.

P: The title MAY I/CAN I is not used anywhere in the text. When I was a kid I used to play a game called May I - may I go forward six paces, yes you may take six baby steps - was there an intentional reference to that children's game, or was it just the idea of getting permission from your society and from your peers, and from the controllers around you.

R: That too, plus the grammatical error of "can I have a glass of water" as opposed to "may I have a glass of water". It doesn't sound like a very good children's game.

P: It's all about manipulation. In May I you're supposed to sneak, making headway while the leader's back is turned. So in fact it makes a good reference point for this kind of manipulation by peers and for profit. Some of the movements were sexual, very graceful, but very mechanical. Was it about male-female manipulation?

R: Oh no. Though as I said before women are often put in that sort of sexual-political position, in a very obvious

Videoviews

way. But finally it's about me, and not about sexual assessment.

P:

The first command was "show us your teeth".

R:

Well that was the slave reference, like horse traders. They did the same thing with slaves, they looked at the teeth.

P:

It's interesting that you can put a young and attractive woman through all those movements and it will say one thing; supposing you had used an old woman, or an old man, it would have had a completely different range.

R:

But it wouldn't have been pertinent. It wouldn't have worked with anyone but a young attractive woman: in terms of society, the most desirable physical thing.

P:

I want to know the extent to which you plan everything in advance.

R:

Oh before I go into shooting I have everything written down and the concept all worked out. Then it falls apart at the time of shooting, and I look forward to that clarification. I always end up with the original ideas, but there are differences in how it's presented from how I imagined it would be presented. You always have to allow for translation, dealing with other people. Especially the kind of person I'm dealing with. Generally I don't know the people personally, though that wasn't the case with MAY I/CAN I.

I always intended MAY I/CAN I to be very short. I actually thought it would be four minutes. That was very conscious. I set out to make a very short concise tape that could include everything I intended to say. Generally speaking I'd like to see 20 minutes the tops for video - it's hard for me to watch longer than that. TYPIST is too long but I can't shorten that, because of the way it was shot. Originally I'd planned for it to be much shorter, for the typing to be much quicker, but it was technical compromise.

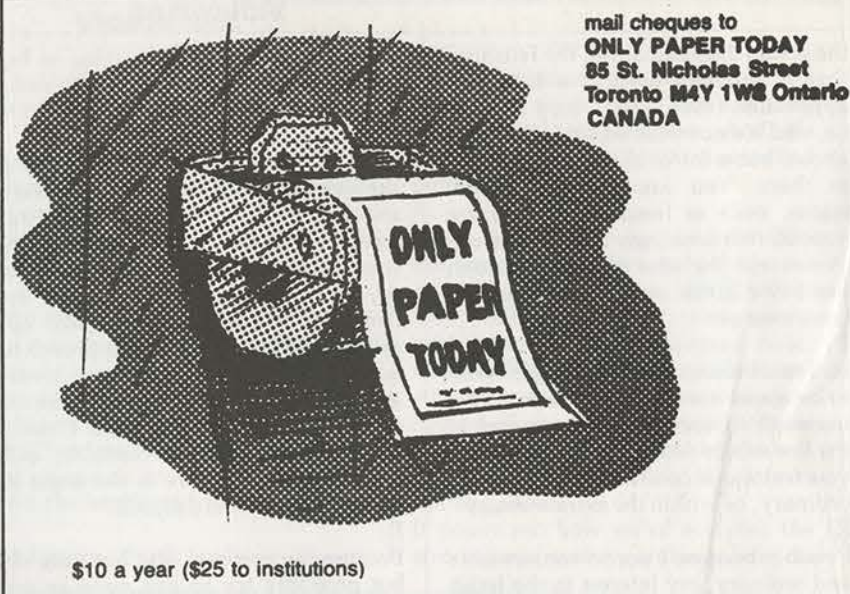
Finally you can say MAY I/CAN I is about anything.

P:

It's about permission.

R:

Yeah. Exactly. But I am surprised at the response to the tape ... I thought I had a doughnut with this one. I knew about the tape to a point, but I thought forget it, this is too raw-looking. Visually. And I didn't think the intent would come across. I'm just flabbergasted that other people, ... that I was clear for a change. ■



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Individual subscriptions (including outside the United States): \$7.00 for two issues. Sustaining subscriptions: \$25.00. For checks in Canadian dollars please add 10%. *Praxis* is distributed in the U.K., Europe and the Commonwealth by Pluto Press, Unit 10 Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1 8LH, England.

Praxis, P.O. Box 207, Goleta, CA 93017 USA

Art and Social Transformation

Kenneth Coutts-Smith

This paper was a contribution to a seminar under the same title held at the *Ecole Sociologique Interrogative* in Paris, 10-13 May 1977. The author has recently published 'The Political Art of Klaus Staeck' and 'Ten Theses on the Failure of Communication in the Plastic Arts' in PRAXIS 4 and PRAXIS 3, respectively.

The timing of this meeting, the fact that we should be gathered at this particular moment with the specific pre-occupations that here concern us, does not seem to me to be entirely gratuitous. Everyone in this room must be sharply aware, as we are talking, that it is the ninth anniversary, almost to the day, of the events of May 1968. That is to say, the present commencement of activities at the *Ecole Sociologique Interrogative* parallels, a decade later, the discussions, meetings and manifestations that were to release their tensions, though not discover their resolutions, in that social upheaval.

It might, at first, seem superfluous to remark that the cultural revolution of 1968, whether taking place here in Paris, in Germany, England or in North America, exerted a transformative effect upon our conceptions of both the actual and the possible social relations that may exist between individuals and institutions, and that nowhere had this effect been more marked than in the domain of artistic culture. However, it does appear necessary to emphasize this fact since, despite clear indications that 1968 marked a watershed in the self-conception of the artistic community, we have not yet been able to make an analysis of the cultural implications of the May revolution that is sharp enough and lucid enough to lay finally to rest a certain structure of bourgeois mythology concerning the nature, role and function of art in society.

A glance across the whole spectrum of the cultural support system, the artistic and academic institutional structure, reveals a continuing ideological allegiance to the class view of bourgeois society. Nowhere is this more clear than in the field of the fine arts; and evidence is rich, whether we observe, on the one hand, the Pompidouian necropolis or note, on the other, the annual induction of tens of thousands of students into the colleges and schools of fine art, fired by expectations, ambitions and hopes that are now, historically, completely unjustified.

Yet, despite the apparent confidence of the institutions of art, it would seem that the majority of practising artists are now beginning to question the fundamental assumptions and premises of their activity. Almost every art-worker, from the point of developing disillusionment of the third-year student up to the threshold of the established living "masters" of the modern movement (with the possible exception, according to the evidence of last year's Paris and Dusseldorf Art Fairs, of a generation including Arman, Cesar, Tapes, Mack and Sonderborg, whom the dealers are attempting to elevate to that dubious rank) has questioned in one way or another the present seriousness, nature and social relevance of his work.

Without doubt, the last decade has revealed the flaws and abrasions that mark the crumbling facade of bourgeois culture to an increasing extent, and scarcely any active creative artist has failed to take note of this. The individual artist has recently become aware not only of transmutations taking place in his own conception of the role and nature of his activity, but also of shifts of focus, or even ruptures, in

his relationship to the various institutions of art. But the majority appear to be inhibited one way or another from drawing viable conclusions from such a developing social insight, conclusions upon which concrete actions could be based, and remain trapped in a subjective nexus of frustration which can ultimately only result in a type of creative paralysis or a cynical withdrawal.

In regard to the latter alternative it is possible to observe during recent years a marked increase in the stance of post-Duchampian irony, but this is now fast becoming an untenable alternative since, even within the ambit of bourgeois cultural ideology; this position can only provide a temporarily effective psychological defence-structure for the alienated individual when it remains a minority, that is to say an elitist, position. It is clearly not possible to maintain a pose of dandified disdain when one's aloofness becomes subsumed in a post-Dada fallout of Mail Art across an internationally expanding Image Exchange Network. It is inevitable (and the paucity of new talent or original ideas in the galleries emphasizes this) that, without a fundamental reorientation of our concepts concerning the nature of artistic activity, the flow of creative action in terms of visual culture will slow down in the very near future to a point of morbidity.

The extraordinary thing is that, while the vitality of the creative community is diminishing and eroding into a sort of entropic sink, the institutions of art remain, and show every evidence of continuing to remain for the immediate future, in a remarkably healthy condition. Certainly the inflated art boom of recent years is a thing of the past (it was, anyway, only a temporary peak in the wider field of capitalist financial speculation), and the international gallery system appears to be no longer able to supply a market basis for the introduction of new artistic talent. Equally, the academic and museo-critical complex appears to be retrenching in the face of lowered governmental and municipal funding in order to protect its existing personnel and privilege at the expense of fresh entrants into the structure.

But the art-market, as the advertisements in any glossy art-journal will demonstrate, is far from moribund, and appears even able to accommodate the entry of new dealers to the exclusive fold; as well as accommodating an increasing number of new magazines dependent upon advertising and of servicing a proliferation of International Art Fairs and promotional Markets. Similarly, the institutional network would seem to be confident, even expansive, in the respect at least of massive and tangible symbols of cultural prestige and of physical plant; Beaubourg alone is evidence of this tendency.

What seems to be taking place at the present time is a complete, and possibly irremediable, rupture between the art community and the support system, a term that, incidentally, will shortly have to be abandoned as its supportive role appears no longer to function. This term is of quite recent coinage and seems to have been in use for no more than eight

years or so, since, possibly, the moment of greatest expansion of the phenomenon that it defines. But this phenomenon itself has been of recent appearance and of short-lived duration.

From that moment in the middle of the nineteenth century when commercial galleries and municipal museums first made their appearance up to the recent past, the whole period, in short, of the modern movement in art, the widespread community of the visual arts appears to have been made up of a set of inter-related but discrete groups of individuals. During this period the artists themselves were bound by a series of collective loyalties into *cenacles* subsumed into the larger fraternity of creative artists, the intensity of allegiance to which was determined a great extent upon the degree of "bohemianism" to which the individual was committed.

The artists depended, primarily, in economic terms and, secondarily, in respect of their self-view and sense of identity, upon an interlocking network of people who performed specific functions as collectors, commercial dealers, critics, journalists, publicists, restaurateurs and the like. None of these groups had any, sort of institutional identity, indeed individuals could shift from one activity to another and even simultaneously perform separate roles in separate areas. Also, according to the degree of commitment to the ideology of specific artistic *cenacles*, people in these groups would be accepted into intimacy and membership of the collective of creative individuals.

This analysis, of course, applies only to the collective of "modernism" at any one time since, say, 1848. Academic artists, both as individuals and collectively, formed social relationships *within institutions*: Academies, Salons, Art Schools and the like. It is to this structure of *interrelated but homogenous* groups that both the developing museum network and the emergent academic fields of aesthetics and art-history (as opposed to art-criticism and cultural journalism) were to belong. The market-structure of Salons and individual dealers in this area remained, as it still does today to a certain extent, separate from the speculative market concerned with the products of the *avant-garde*. Academic artists did not feel that they belonged to a special group of individuals living on the fringes of society, but rather that, just as their collectors and patrons, they were members of a solid and respectable middle-class, colleagues to other bourgeois "professionals" such as university professors, military men, doctors, and lawyers.

A dichotomy was thus drawn between, on the one hand, a voluntaristic and *demimondaine* cultural freemasonry whose social stance was rarely other than an intuitive and anarchistic individualism and, on the other, an institutionalized edifice erected consciously as the cultural objectification of bourgeois ideology. These two domains, the "bohemian" world of art and the institutional world of culture, remained separate and distinct. They were not merely divergent spheres of social experience, but were more like planets following separate orbits in such a way that mutual communication and social intercourse was made all but impossible by the relative gravities and forces of inertia of the two systems.

The melding of these two systems into one, a process in which the domain of bourgeois ideology co-opted and appropriated that of the *avant-garde*, is so recent that all practising artists much over the age of forty developed their motivations and their personal value-systems within the now-vanished collective fraternity of the creative arts, and to the frequent confusion and incomprehension of their junior colleagues and students they still exhibit a bohemianism and an anarchic world-view that appears to the younger generation to be nothing other than a sheer anachronism.

Unfortunately, this younger generation has been educated

into the expectation of membership in and benefits from an institutional edifice that is, in fact, in the process of changing its nature radically from a briefly-lived (no more than fifteen years or so) "support structure" for the *avant-garde* towards a more developed and fully ossified stage of the ideological reinforcing mechanism. This process has been subtle and complex, and, most certainly, the brief coalescence of the network of the *avant-garde* and the institutional edifice of bourgeois cultural ideology has not been a static one. The years between the early nineteen sixties and the present are far too short for any institutional structure of such magnitude to gain any stability.

It may be quite possible to take the view that there was, in fact, no such institutional structure at all in any real sense, that it was a myth believed in alike, and for a short period, by various curators, critics, art-historians, teachers and administrators as well as by practising artists. Certainly an analysis of the relative disingenuousness of the concept can be made by examining the bureaucratic survival and growth mechanisms operative in the museo-critical complex, not to mention exploring the extra-cultural and political concerns of the various Ministries, Office, Councils and the like, which have recently played such a large role in both the international promotion of exhibitions and the private development of professional careers.

For our argument here, suffice to emphasize the rupture between the community of practising artists and the institutional base of bourgeois culture, and to observe that it is at this point specifically (the nature of the individual artists' response to this rupture) that we must focus our inquiry. We might also anticipate a later theme of this essay by remarking that it is also at this point that we may well find a fertile ground for the construction of a specific strategy for the future.

Some years ago, about the time of the first, but then un-noticed, waning of the expansive Carnaby Street mood of the middle nineteen sixties, certain artists, apparently despairing of achieving for themselves what seemed their rightful share of the success and prestige stakes, began to band together in various "Artist's Unions" and professional self-protection societies. With very few unique and individual exceptions, the membership believed in the liberal-democratic dream of an equal share-out of the goodies as well as in some sort of apotheosis of *avant-garde* art in the social promise of the New Frontier. But, of course, they ignored the fact that the market had already created its spectrum of heroes (one ranging from David Hockney to Frank Stella) and it certainly had no intention of creating any more and thus de-maximizing its profits.

As the situation clarified itself, the mixed motives of these pressure groups (fluctuating, as they did, between the extremes of a sort of heroic anarchism in the manner of Antonin Artaud and a simple desire for a larger slice of the cake in terms of grants and handouts) were applied to a series of demonstrations against the institutions of art, threatening boycotts, the "withdrawal" of services, and strikes by art "workers". With one or two notable exceptions, the Guggenheim Museum - Hans Haacke boycott for instance, these actions were remarkably ineffective and the institutions remained blandly unperturbed.

Why was it that the very considerable energy expended by these groups both in Europe and North America has in the past achieved little more than gaining the rights to a minor input into the deliberations of a few Museums and funding agencies, and today appears to be almost completely ineffectual? The answer can be sought in the developing mutation of the institutional edifice of bourgeois culture as it made its sweeping pass across the territory of the *avant-garde*. In so doing, the structure appropriated the *avant-garde* to itself - not merely the specific events of the time (the

nineteen sixties) but also *the whole history of the avant-garde*. In order to digest the present, as it so easily did the past, it was quickly discovered that it was necessary also to render the living present into a safely static past; and, during the last decade, the academic world has conscientiously trained an army of art-critics and "historians" to do just that. It would seem that the institutions of bourgeois culture need now experience no threats from the body of contemporary art, for it has the power over those who operated within its own terms to render a living artistic statement instantly into safely-frozen art-history.

In this regard it begins to become clear that the museums of bourgeois culture have no actual need for any further "input" of art. They have declared the *avant-garde* over, a closed historical book, and in respect of a short-term view, they are quite consistent. Bourgeois culture here operates in a manner analogous to bourgeois economics; the safest way to deal with any crisis is not to look for a long term solution to a particular problem, but to temporarily paper-over the cracks and in this way hope that the breathing-space so achieved will permit another inflationary cycle to safely pass and that deleterious effects are experienced by the people and not by the institutions. Despite an often-repeated lip-service claim to a new "community role" for Museums during the actual support-structure period, the Museums have never been anything other than repositories for the icons of bourgeois class identity and reinforcing mechanisms for Bourgeois ideology.

The view is taken that, if the *avant-garde* can be safely dehydrated into history, then, with the exception of occasional token and unavoidable purchases, the Museum can now settle down to its essential (and traditional) dual role: the reinforcement of a value-system and the inculcation of a special body of social attitudes. The priorities of the first may be observed in the present-day increasing pragmatism expressed in Museum budgets which place more and more emphasis on the area of "educational" activities, where armies of docents and amateur assistants trivialize the history of art and bolster up the image of bourgeois culture in the minds of youthful future citizens. Those of the second may be seen in the increasing frequency of "theme" exhibitions and didactic exhibits, where the administrators of the Art Museums have taken a lesson from their colleagues in the musical, and, to a lesser extent, in the theatrical fields.

It has long been obvious that the performing arts, with by far the greater proportion of all government funding at their disposal, expend most of their energies on works that are historically petrified. The "mass" audiences of bourgeois society [1] claimed by the performing arts do not, of course, consist in the main of the proletariat any more than they do of the upper bourgeoisie. They appear, rather, to be made up of two groups; firstly, the middlebrow and semi-educated petty bourgeoisie and, secondly, school children, forcibly exposed to a bourgeois cultural experience. These latter are, of course, predominantly the children of the proletariat, if they are not the children of a non-European immigrant sub-proletariat. The intent behind the exposure of these school children to "culture" is, of course, part of a planned *bourgeoisification* of the masses. But what is most revealing in our present context is the nature of the performance "content", whether theatrical or musical, that achieves these large audiences and which is so liberally funded by the responsible cultural authorities.

In the theatre, the plays of Shakespeare (provided, naturally, that the productions are not "experimental" ones where the traditional drama is played out with overt social references to the present) would seem to be a staple diet. The musical arts (more safe, in that they are so-called "pure" arts, ostensibly without content) are, proportionally, more highly

subsidized; the "classical" ballet of nineteenth century Imperial Russia, the romantic opera of the Risorgimento, the introverted pessimism of Tchaikovsky or the heroic attitude of Beethoven and Berlioz, are especial favorites. The one element common to all the material of the "mass" performing arts is the illusion of passion and commitment; a surface content of high drama and emotion that is, however, carefully placed into a socially and historically neutral space.

When all these works were new, when they were still *art* rather than art-history, they were replete with social relevance; they were vital experiences in which the audiences could identify their own psychosocial experience and, to a greater or lesser extent, transcend the social or natural shackles which inhibited their human fulfillment. Beethoven, Berlioz, or Tchaikovsky, just as did the Renaissance dramatists, *spoke* to their audiences, bore witness to a collective social and mental experience. The operas of Verdi were cultural artifacts that focused an intense and genuinely mass political and social fervour. As the result of a historical meshing of an individual musician's private aesthetic insight with public political passion, an art which was both true to its own intent and instrumental to social transformation was achieved. It goes without saying that what was charged with social and political relevance in 1857 is mere spectacle in 1977; and played today, such a work becomes a de-historicized, de-socialized and formal travesty of the aesthetic experience, where a mute and passive audience is entertained by the irrelevant and desublimated emotions of cardboard and fairy-tale characters.

Art can only be art when it fulfills a transformative role. The interplay between metaphor and allusion that vitalizes a concept or illuminates an idea, the progression of plastic configuration that transcends a mere formalistic frame of reference and generates a symbol, *implants into the auditor or spectator a new thought*. In that such an experience is genuinely fresh and unique, so the auditor or spectator is transformed; he undergoes an experience upon which he cannot go back, an experience that proceeds to enrich him and *make him more human*. The necessary catharsis of art is no mere abreaction of things that go bump in the night, nor is it an aesthetic wallpaper designed to obscure whatever distasteful prospects or memories might haunt an individual. It is the painful process of inventing yourself as a human being through the assimilation of new perspectives or the resolution of new contradictions.

We have intimated that great and apparently timeless theatrical art, such as that of Shakespeare, may be trivialized into spectacle for a "mass" audience; but that, on the other hand, an inspired director can make us see again the human and social drama of Renaissance man in the context of our own present human and social drama. In a specific theatrical production, spectacle becomes art once more, a mutual and contractual event that takes place between stage and audience. But, such a socially-oriented interpretation of the classics, any more than the work of Brecht or any other artist who explores our own historical present, would not be presented in the context of a theatre for the "masses". It would, rather, be restricted by the closed-society atmosphere of the theatre itself, the timing and scheduling of performances, the economics of seat price, to an audience comprised almost exclusively of the upper-bourgeoisie. This class hardly risks demoralization as the result of attacks upon their cultural hegemony since they know better, even than the opposition, the arguments against them; and how more effectively to deal with hostile cultural manifestations than to assimilate and to co-opt them.

In respect of artistic culture, the unspoken and tacit agreement goes something like this: there must be two forms; one for us through which we can objectify our self-view, and through which we can define our own as the

result of a process of awarding or withholding higher education considered as property; and one for them, which must be essentially passive, be *entertainment*, in which there can be no possibility of catharsis or psychological growth, only a comforting, time-consuming and basically numbing event. Art in this latter case becomes the reverse of the vitalizing and humanizing input of experience; it is rather a sort of erase-head designed to wipe the spectator blank.

And spectator he is, for, as Guy Debord says: "All life, in those societies in which the modern conditions of production prevail, announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that which used to be directly lived now becomes alienated in a representation. [2] The rupture between the institutions of art and the community of creative artists can now be seen to be a logical consequence of the art institutions following their colleagues in the performance arts and opting for a passive art of spectacle.

We can, thus, locate one of the major contradictions that is presently distorting the art-continuum in the sphere of the individual artist's self-view and his conception of the specific role required of him. The rupture that we have just diagnosed makes yet a further stage of the progressive collapse and dissolution of a lengthy tradition of bourgeois culture; yet it seems clear that very few practising artists regard the present crisis as anything substantially more than a complex of fissures and flaws in the material and organization of the support system. It does not seem to have penetrated to any depth that the relationships which have previously existed between the artist and society have now undergone a radical shift both in their focus and in their basic nature.

This is undoubtedly because the artist, though he may well recognize that a whole system of class values is perhaps entering a terminal stage of siege, is unable to apply this insight to his own structure of beliefs and assumptions. In this, he remains the victim of the bourgeois ideology of culture; for he has fallen foul of the myth of the extra-historicity of art. He has been persuaded that there somehow exists, outside of time and social change, a body of truth and *virtu* that has always been (and will continue to remain) absolute. This form of aesthetic idealism, of course, constitutes the base upon which the ideological edifice of liberal humanism is erected. Thus, a particular educational reinforcement, one designed to persuade the bourgeoisie that their own world-view is eternal and rooted in the very fibre of "human nature", remains, by and large, the articular structure of the individual artist's fundamental assumptions.

As the ideological dust is now clearing after the final collapse of colonialism, one particular factor crucial to our thinking concerning culture becomes illuminated, as it were, from a different direction, and begins insistently to demand reassessment. With the shift of political centres of gravity away from the old colonialist nations of Europe (and their American extensions), we may note the fact that what used to be considered *world* cultural history is, of course, merely the history of one small and aggressive corner of the earth. The blatant Eurocentricity of the culturally historical edifice that has been exported to the whole planet becomes more and more clear.

The historical accident that an obscure Bronze Age clan of Doric Greeks and an even more obscure tribe of Semitic nomads should have dominated certain aspects of the culture of the Mediterranean basin at such a moment as to ensure that elements of these fugitive cultures should be later condensed into a historical progression that was to lead to the eventual emergence of industrial technology in Western Europe is hardly sufficient to justify the canonisation of these events into exemplars and values accorded a central and seminal position in *world* culture.

We must be reminded here that it was not so long ago that

advanced opinion held a great portion of the Judaic-Graeco-Roman mythic past of Europe to be both literal and the totality of history. As recently as the dawn of the modern technological age, Isaac Newton was to parallel his objective scientific research with a "historical" research that he considered ultimately more important, and in which he affirmed the literal truth of the biblical account basing his chronology upon Bishop Ussher's assessment that the universe was created precisely on a specific day in October in the year 4004 B.C.

It is easy to see how a sort of scriptural justification for colonialism has mutated over the years in terms of sophistication, but has not abandoned a particular Eurocentric view of cultural history; one reinforced by the tacit assumption that the Mediterranean heritage constituted a "high" culture, while regarding other traditions as, at best, ethnic or anthropological curiosities. It is only now, in the face of the emergent *political power* of the late colonies, that this assumption is being seriously challenged. Even Marx, himself, appears to have regarded Greek art as being seminal to world culture [3], and, given the mental climate of the time, it would have been surprising if he had not; this fact can only emphasize the profundity of European chauvinism and the pervasiveness of the myths of liberal humanism.

It is through this latter cultural construct that what may best be described as the ideological "property" of the bourgeoisie has traditionally been transmitted. Higher education, based on the so-called Humanities, constituted a type of wealth, a stock of cultural currency, that was hoarded and inherited within the defined parameters of a dominant class. This "property" served a manifold and complex body of functions. Primarily, it conditioned the individual to the bourgeois value-system, convincing him, in passing, of the absolute and eternal virtues and verities of that system. It also served as a tangible badge of membership, as the outward manifestation of an inward conviction of superiority and moral rectitude. Its method of transmission through the various institutions of education served to consolidate and to perpetuate specific patterns of hereditary power, as well as allowing for the controlled and programmed entry of selected individuals, who were to be permitted upward mobility in order to fill the junior administrative posts that the necessarily expansionist network of a capitalist economy was obliged to create.

But, above all, liberal humanism, with its appeal to exemplars and models embedded both in historical fact and mythical paradigm, served to perpetuate a particular attitude of mind; a certain notion of service and obligation wherein the individual was conditioned to dedicate himself to what he believed was a life of service and loyalty to "humanity", but which was, in actuality, a life dedicated to service and loyalty to narrow class interests and to the speculative profits of his class superiors. Though this type of moral mystification, a certain paternalistic civil-service mentality, may still be observed in the naive beliefs of various Peace Corps forms of social-missionary activity, such pretensions are almost completely transparent today.

The erosion of this frame of mind is not unconnected with a marked shift in both the basic nature and the dimensions of higher education. That previously had been restricted to a privileged elite, has now been *democratized* (though obviously not socialized) in a manner that is related to the processes that we have observed taking place in the arts. This constitutes not merely two analogous or parallel sets of events, but ones, as we shall see, that are profoundly integrated. Both the form and the intent of contemporary institutionalized "humanistic" education would appear to be dedicated to trivializing the nature of knowledge, if not the learning process itself, as well as inculcating response patterns that are passive in nature. Underlying this fugitive

and shifting cultural network there is, however, a firm stratum of pure technical and vocational training.

The net result of this double experience, of course, is the confirmation of desired patterns of passivity and consumerism on the one hand, and the development of a technical and managerial employment pool on the other. This latter, of course, is designed to a careful surplus, to a calculated level of "over-specialization", in order to ensure a constant flow of acquiescent personnel. One new political and economic development, one which naturally operates to the advantage of the status-quo, is the fact that the junior levels of the bourgeoisie are now placed in the sort of alienated economic relationships that had earlier only been imposed upon the proletariat. This erosion of the previously clear demarcation between the white-collar worker, on the one hand (whose class allegiance is obviously to the higher ranks of the bourgeoisie where "success" beckons), and the proletariat, on the other (who is now encouraged to believe in a completely illusory possibility of upward-mobility), constitutes a process that, in the absence of a critical social analysis, erodes the features of class-consciousness.

Quite obviously, in considering the mutation of the institutional structure of education, the nature of the final product and the nature of the plant will be quite distinct; at different historical moments, at different stages of capitalism, the "manufacturing" requirements are different. Monopoly capitalism, depending economically upon a widely-flung complex of colonial territories, required a vast army of functionaries who were capable of private initiative, but who were also unswervingly loyal both to the spoken and the unspoken class values at stake. Naturally, an education system grounded on a subtle *cultural and aesthetic ideology* came into being in order to fulfill this requirement.

The development of corporate capitalism, on the other hand, clearly created other exigencies. Instead of an army of administrators, civil servants, diplomatic, colonial and military officers, all trained to act upon independent initiative, a body of differently-orientated functionaries was needed. A computerized consumer and neo-colonialist economy, together with the development of a communications network providing the possibility of instant and centralized command, requires a corpus of programmed officials who are conditioned to act in terms of very narrow and carefully foreseen limits, but who possess, nevertheless, a high degree of technological skill.

In observing the mutation of the bourgeois "backbone" (those who have administered and fronted for the - always comparatively small - group of genuine speculators) from a class comprised mainly of cultivated, intelligent, independent and *generalized* individuals, the so-called "professional" class, to one comprised mainly of technically-skilled, culturally narrow, programmed and *specialized* individuals, a *managerial* class, we would expect to see a parallel mutation as the basic cultural and aesthetic ideology. Different class roles obviously require different symbols and ikons as conditioning and reinforcement mechanisms.

The classical-humanist exemplars have now given way to more appropriate social models. The patriotic and stoic sacrifice of Lars Porsena has given way to the hedonistic one-upmanship of James Bond. The transformation-scene fades out the hero of civic virtue and raises the spotlight on the glossy property-defined consumer. A sensual world, one mediated by moral, though limited, obligations, mutates into a world of pure sensation, one mediated, neutrally, by sheer property.

Those cultural events which bourgeois ideology claims to be *absolute* can now be seen clearly to be *relative*. Marx tell us, and how right he is to do so, that the making of art is a process analogous to work - in that it is yet another way in which man humanizes the world and invents himself [4].

But, once the creative event is taken out of the continuum of social relations, once it is frozen into cultural history, once it is reified into a museum, it then ceases to be art to any active sense, and becomes transformed into mere property - into cultural property.

We can observe that the symbols that were inherent in the art of the classical antique are today divorced from the continuum of social relations. The human and humanizing metaphors that were found in Homer, for example, served a social function. They operated as educational and social models from the onset of Mediterranean culture right up until the recent past. But where, anywhere in the world, since the nineteen fifties, has the drama of the Iliad illuminated the mind of a school child, *socialized and humanized* an unformed personality? It may well be, in a decade from now, the classical aesthetic grandeur that even Marx suspected would defy historical mutability will fade from human memory, will be reduced to nothing more than the basis for another camera-clicking tourist whistle-stop.

Greek art, and its derivatives Renaissance and classical art, have all become subsumed in the idealistic and platonic formalism of contemporary abstraction. It is notable that, while conceptual modes still give way with increasing rapidity one to the other, the tradition of formalist abstraction continues unabated. The fact that the line which descends unbroken from Constructivism and de Stijl, via the Bauhaus to Hard Edge and post-Painterly Abstraction has recently been revived under the categorization of *Support-Surface* is no accident. For here we have, at last, the final epitome of bourgeois visual culture: *the art-object regarded as pure property*. Symbol, content, allusion, any factor whatsoever, that is capable of animating a social dimension, have now vanished, and the cultural artefact has become reified to one basic quality, one single, but significant dimension: that of being *uniquely and completely possessible*.

If the present ideal of bourgeois man is the hedonistically polymorphously-perverse consumer who appears in the pages of Playboy [5], then the general style that is common to the work of such artists as Victor Vasarely and Frank Stella would clearly be the legitimate cultural form in which the relevant social attitudes might best be objectified and reinforced. Man, as total consumer, is most lucidly reflected to his own gaze in the mirror-surface of an artefact that has been reduced to the quality of pure and absolute property.

A brief examination of patterns of patronage will reinforce this analysis. Previously to the nineteen sixties, collectors were themselves part of the art community in the sense and context that we have already defined. Their numbers were few and their social relationships with either individual artists or with groups were comparatively intimate and reciprocal. Something of both the quality of the collective mental climate and the nature of the social relationships may be suggested by remarking that the typical dealer was such an individual as Peggy Guggenheim or Collette Allendy, and the dominant plastic styles of the period were American Abstract Expressionism and European Tachism, both concerned with individual and existential experience.

During the nineteen sixties, a radically new type of collector began to appear and dominate the market. Certainly there had previously been individual Maecenas-types in modern art, but they had hitherto been atypical: now, a generation of thrusting collectors, usually self-made industrial tycoons, financial manipulators or cultural mandarins, appeared on the stage. It would not be irrelevant to remark that this type was frequently, though not always, a *nouveau-riche* and socially-insecure individual who was, to a great extent, engaged in buying a place in the artistic sunlight. Sometimes, also, this type of patronage might be observed to represent a response to some sort of guilt-dues

owed by a tender conscience for the fact of excessive privilege or economic banditry. Naturally, the social relations between individual artists and this new patronage were much more strained and distant. Robert Scull, Joseph Hirshorn and Carlo Ponti are reputed to have received artists into their presence almost as courtiers and petitioners. The climate of this period is set by the more alienated imagery of Pop and Kinetic Art; and the increasing social distance can be seen to be manifested in the general atmosphere of such galleries as Castelli, Sonnabend, Denise Rene and Paul Fachetti.

The late nineteen sixties can, on the other hand, be seen to have been coloured by a specious type of "democratization" of the arts, a broadening of the base that partly resulted from the conventional need for a capitalist market to continually expand and partly represented a further dialectical stage of patronage relations. The confused social motivations of such artists as Vasarely and the originators of the concept of Multiples, together with a developing market dynamic in the field of graphics, opened up the visual arts to an even wider circle of patronage.

The mid-nineteen sixties social phenomenon of spurious glamour that was represented by the so-called "Swinging London" and the international "Jet Set" syndrome is one that consisted of the activities merely of a small group of parasitic upper-bourgeois youth who had penetrated the *demi-monde* of the fashion and entertainment worlds. In themselves, these individuals were of no importance: and they represented, of course, simply the contemporary aspect of a sort of lumpen-bourgeoisie who had existed in the twilight zones of capitalism since the nineteen twenties. In the second half of the nineteen sixties, however, their life-style became a paradigm of sorts for consumer society.

A new generation of petty-bourgeois in North America and Europe were persuaded by the international advertising industry that an ethic based upon the social assumptions and mores of rock-stars, hair stylists and dress designers could provide legitimate social goals. In this way, Madison Avenue affected the development of the consumer market to include an ever-expanding sphere of trivial gadgetry and ephemera. In this spectrum of property, the possession of which now appeared to become recognized by an increasing number of individuals as the central essence of social and personal identity, a work of art was to figure as neither more nor less significant than any other status object, than, for instance, a Braun Hi-Fi set, a Cardin shirt or a Gucci handbag.

Such a trivialization of culture, naturally, resulted in an almost total breakdown of the personal relationships between the artist and the institutions of the market; and a new merchandising style observable in the activities and the economic domination of the market by such galleries as the internationally-spread Marlborough consortium. The typical visual image which we might choose to express this stage in the developing reification of the art-world might well be that embedded in the elegant vapidities of Frank Stella.

The situation in recent years has not undergone any qualitative shift, but has enormously extended the patterns launched a decade ago. The Marlborough complex, it is true, has recently retrenched a great deal of its activity, but the appearance of many new, more anonymous but well-capitalized, galleries testifies to the development of this trend. The very blandness and anonymity of these galleries emphasizes the increasing *commodification* of the art-product, and, at this extreme stage, no new or dominant visual image may be isolated as being typical.

One departure, however, would appear to be the rundown in the quality of original work and new talent entering the market. It is almost as if there is now a sufficiently large enough capital stock of art "in flow" across the market to

enable the system to close itself; the market is safer and less speculative if it restricts itself to the continual sale and re-sale of works of proven standing; since to handle new input it is necessary to create new reputations, an expensive process that always offers the risk of diminishing returns. Perhaps we may expect the very presence of the artist in this context to become superfluous, since the art-object itself now shows signs of being de-aestheticised to such an extent that any stylistic identification becomes subsumed into the physical presence of the object as a possession. It is now possible to suggest that style *as style* may no longer have much function to play in the social identification of an art-object: any one art-object is equal to any other art-object in the domain of pure property.

The last ten years have, however, been also remarkable for a distinct shift in the nature of the individual artist's conception of his role and function in society. Observing the progressive reification, not merely of the social relationships within and without the art community, but also, inevitably, of his own creative activity, many artists have searched for methods of combatting the forces they see inexorably transforming art itself into a commodity. It is possible to chart, from the end of the nineteen fifties onwards (that is to say, during the whole period which we have just examined) a parallel and increasing tempo in the production of what has been loosely defined as "anti-art."

From the point of a revival of Dadaistically-orientated activity in the nineteen fifties, through the Happenings and Fluxus movements, up to the more recent Earthwork, Body Art, Conceptualist and Correspondence tendencies, we may observe a trend to produce art forms that would not be amenable to market speculation, to attempt to de-materialize visual culture in such a way that its objects could no longer be bought and sold as a commodity. But, unfortunately, what Marcuse was to call the "desublimation of art," [6] and which he was to hail as a potent weapon in the cultural struggle against the reification of the individual in the modern technological and capitalist state, was not to be particularly effective.

Like so many of the expectations inherited from the *contestations* of 1968, the dematerialization of art was not, finally, to provide much of a threat to the ideological structure of capitalism. The bourgeois ability to economically or culturally appropriate and disarm alternate value-systems was flexible enough to cope with this particular assault on its cultural hegemony. Certainly it was difficult to appropriate the products of an almost purely conceptualized aesthetic (though, in many cases, documentation itself was to be packaged as a commodity), but the mandarins in the museo-critical complex were to quickly realize the fact that *prestige is also property*. As long as the individual artist was vulnerable to the pressures of social approval within the existing social system, his activity could then be co-opted in terms of the dimensions of success or obscurity. It was discovered that an abstract idea could be "possessed" as property, and individual collectors were quick to buy holes in the desert, to purchase defined, but otherwise blank, spaces on a wall or in a street, to sponsor "performances" and ephemeral events.

Must we then conclude, from the arguments here put forward, that whatever we produce in terms of creative aesthetic activity is doomed to be instantly reified and placed at the service of the bourgeoisie? Are we forced to take the view that art has somehow "come to an end," that creative aesthetic activity is no longer viable? Despite the present difficulty of discerning alternatives, it is clearly impossible to accept such a conclusion. For to do so would be to imply that mankind, at this specific point in history, has ceased to struggle to invent himself, has abandoned the long process of "coming-to-be," [7] since the very process of expressing an

aesthetically coherent vision of the world is part of the ongoing larger process of *socializing and humanizing the world*.

In the present climate of opinion, where the existing institutions of society are falling under more and more serious question, we must surely learn from the first conscious attempts to provide alternatives to a bourgeois culture in the visual arts. It would seem evident that the ability of the museo-critical complex to co-opt and assimilate the work of individuals who have consciously defined their opposition, lies in the fact that these artists were not able to make a sufficiently clear analysis of the issues at stake. Not having freed themselves from the myths of the *avant-garde*, and still remaining bound to the ideological concept of the extra-historicity and absolute nature of aesthetic activity, they finally fell victim to the institutions that they confronted.

At the brink of the final landslide of bourgeois culture, we

FOOTNOTES

1. It is evident that the following is also true of the "mass" audiences in the so-called socialist societies of Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe. There is no contradiction here, but rather a clarification of the fact that these societies have not so much succeeded in developing a higher social stage marked by the dictatorship of the proletariat, but have frozen their social revolution into a type of revisionism where a reified culture fulfills a similar role as it does in corporate and consumer-orientated capitalism.

2. Guy Debord, *La Societe du Spectacle*, Ed. Buchet Chastel, 1967, page 9. "Toute la vie des societies dans lesquelles regnent les conditions modernes de production s'annonce comme une immense accumulation de spectacles. Tout ce qui etait directement vecu s'est eloigne dans une representation."

3. In the Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1857. This assumption is central to the discussion of the unequal development of aesthetic mutations on the one hand, and technological and economic ones on the other, in the last few pages of the Introduction.

4. A central concept to the discussion of the aesthetic

find ourselves searching for artistic forms and modes that are historically viable, *forms with which we may invent the future*. We are becoming aware, little by little, that we must abandon those modes in art which risk being used to confirm the status-quo in favour of developing ones that will actively assist in the transformation of society.

But, in order to help invent the future with art, we must, first, liberate ourselves from the past in art. The most pressing task before us is, surely, the completion of a penetrating and critical analysis of the nature and role of aesthetic culture in existing society. Without first liberating ourselves from the exigencies that bourgeois culture would impose upon us, we remain gravely at the risk of being dragged back into a structure of social and aesthetic relationships that already belongs, irrevocably, to the past in terms of human reality. ■

function in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844.

5. One might remark that this image, quite consistently, appears in its most fully developed form in the *advertisements* rather than in the text of such magazines. Similarly, the ideological content of the commercials in television is more programmed than that of the shows themselves: it has often been remarked that television in the advanced capitalist countries is a programme of commercials interrupted by programmes.

6. In respect of anti-art phenomenon, Marcuse remarks: "The subverting use of the artistic tradition aims from the beginning at a systematic *desublimation* of culture: that is to say, at undoing the aesthetic form." Art and Revolution, in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Beacon Press, 1972, page 81. See also *Essay on Liberation*, Beacon Press, 1969, pages 42ff.

7. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, translated by Martin Milligan, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1959, page 106. "... the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the begetting of man through human labour, nothing but the coming-to-be of nature for man ..."



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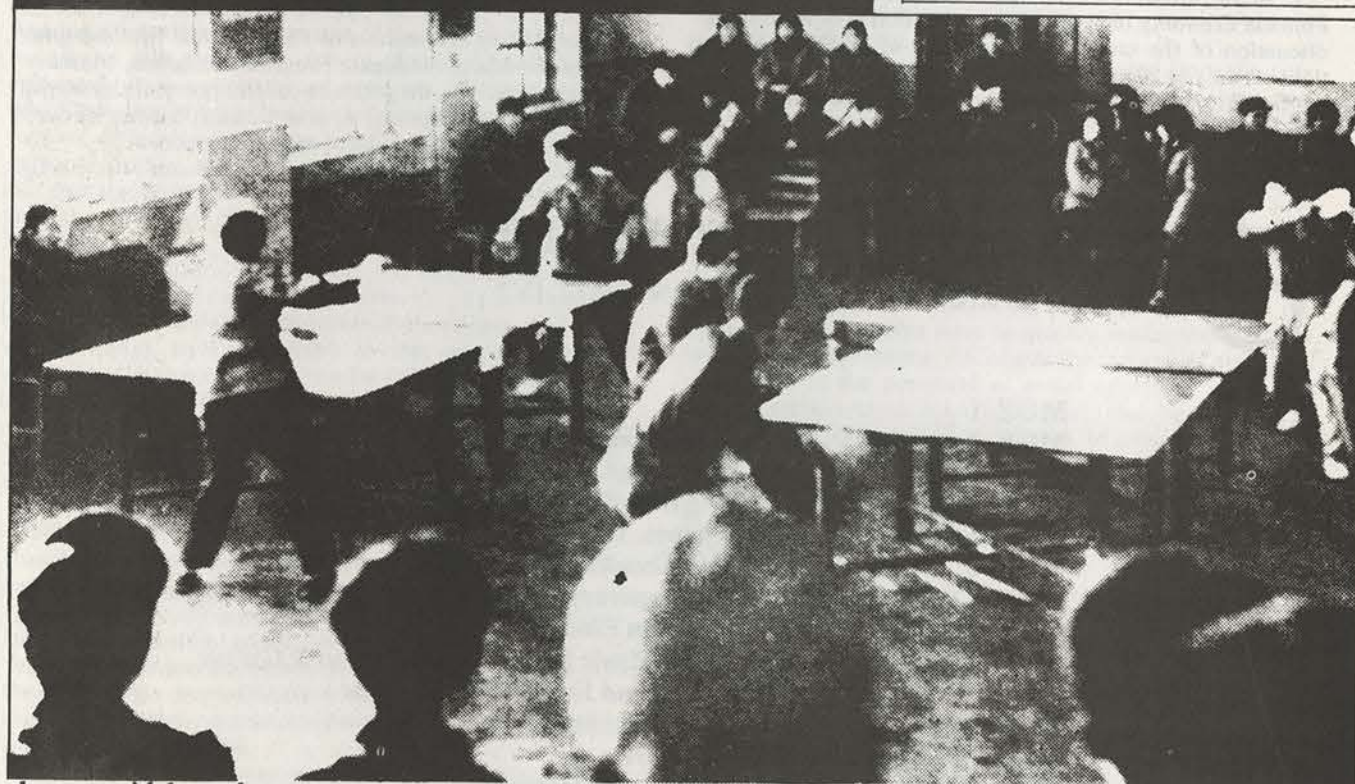


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ROBERT FILLIOU'S 'GONG SHOW' photos: Le-La

The following is a transcript from Robert Filliou's GONG SHOW, about forty minutes of a forty-eight minute performance-lecture given at the University of Calgary Art Gallery, Fall 1977. It was called the Gong Show because the performer was given 30 seconds in which to discuss a topic, tell a story at which time a cymbal was hit signalling the beginning of a new topic or story. [The cymbal is indicated by an asterisk and three dots: *...]

Robert Filliou's GONG SHOW will be available on audio cassette later this spring, part of VOICESPONDENCE VSP 04.

...You know Duchamp used to say in his later years, "What do you mean I'm famous - my green grocer doesn't know who I am", I used to say that I am quite the opposite of Duchamp - only my greengrocer knows who I am. Duchamp added that, "We must abolish the idea of judgement," - I have worked it out further, I think we must abolish the idea of admiration...

In 1965 I wrote a book in the form of postcards called 'Ample Food for Stupid Thought', it's a book consisting of a hundred postcards - each one has only one question - for instance, 'What if Lenin had not lived?' or, 'Suppose you were an Eskimo?' or, 'Would you like to die of old age?' or, 'Isn't art a remarkable thing?' Ample Food for Stupid Thought*...

In the late fifties and sixties when I was asked what I was doing, nobody was interested in what we were doing at that time, I used to say - "Oh well I'm not in a hurry, I'm working for the year 2000 when maybe some of these ideas and concepts we are working with now will be useful." But of late I have come to say that I consider myself as working for the year 3000, because by then my work*...

We have an expression in French called Poisson d'avril, it's on April Fool's Day, children cut out fishes in newspaper or cardboard and with wire they hand them on people's backs and in Ben Vautier's small gallery I had a show once where I presented myself and others as Artistes d'avril*...

In 1972 I was living in Germany, I started something called 'Research in Astrology', I picked out the birthdate of Germans whom I thought had made contributions to the universal spirit. It included of course musicians, scientists, poets, writers, visual artists and I made research into the date on which they were born, I think its under the sign of the Fish that you find most people, Einstein*...

Instead of using the word 'art' most of the time in trying to invent new concepts I have thought of our activity as one which involves Permanent Creation. It is not surprising of course that the problems that people were tackling - like the Dadaists started to say that life is more interesting than art. Of course art is only one activity and its*...

One thing that interests me is what I call 'Built-In versus Built Upon'. That

is to say I'm working on the hunch that solutions to problems can be found only if they are built-in rather than built-upon and that we will have to wish to fly for a very, very long time before we can grow wings*...

This is a book I am writing now. It's a book that for the time being the headings are made alphabetically. This book is an illustration of Writing as Performing Arts, it is a thing I have never tried to do before, the development of which depends on the time I give myself or I suppose you can*...

The Permanent Creation tool-box is the only work I did where I used neon because an electrician was around and I had an ordinary blue tool box. I asked him to set in neon inside the box for me two words: 'Innocence' and 'Imagination' and I presented this as the Permanent Creation Tool-Box, since in my mind its irrelevant whether somebody*...

In 1965 George Brecht and I started in Villefranche-sur-mer, a fishing village near Nice, a place that we called 'La cedille qui sourit'. La cedille is the sign in French which is put on the 'c' to soften the sound, we called the cedilla that smiles because perhaps whilst

Robert Filliou Transcript: The 'Gong Show' Tape.

'The Gong Show'

George and I are very different in our attitudes*...

Another very close friend of mine is Emmett Williams, the American poet. We met in Paris whilst Emmett was living in Europe - our friendship brought out many co-inventions. The first co-invention we made was the spaghetti sandwich to feed cosmonauts, then we invented the pink spaghetti handshake, that is to say Emmet and I in a performance had pink spaghetti we would take each a handful of spaghetti and shake hands*...

That was in 1966 when an exhibition I made consisted only of enlarged telegrams that I had addressed to myself and I called this, Intuitive Exhibition. It just said things like, 'Self-Deception is the only popular art', or 'everything happens and everything happens at the same time', or 'the night seen at nighttime'*...

The 'Deathless dying of the World' is a play I did using chance imagery, that is what people say depends on the color of the person that crosses them on the right. You have ten people dressed in leotards, in blue, in red, in green and as they criss-cross at random what they say depends upon the color crossing them. It's almost a play about the arbitrary nature of what we think*...

Whatever means we use to express ourselves as artists, whether we use traditional techniques or new ones, whether we use junk or the latest technical equipment, I use what I think is available to me, what I think is important is the intensity with which the material*...

I lived in Japan for three years and I like very much Japanese people and when I was back I wrote a book which I called, 'A selection from a thousand Japanese poems'. I used the small dictionary I had with me as I was learning Japanese and with every word I made*...

The joint works: I consider the material I worked with, the mood I was in, the thought that went through my head as co-authors of the work I did, so now what I am doing for instance, would be a jointwork of my name: Filliou, with papers, breathing, talking and then*...

The only words I remember in Korean is a phrase which when translated means, 'Have you eaten rice', for it is the Korean equivalent of saying on meeting, 'Are you well'. In a country of famine, if you have eaten rice you are well. The phrase is the title of a piece I made remembering the moments when I met many*...

(phrase untranscribable, Ed.)

Work as play, is something I present at times to give an idea of a certain approach to creativity that I would like to make available to everyone. Work as play, art as thought, thought in the sense of a growing and learning process. But even more thought in the sense of entertaining moments, I'm a thought-entertainer*...

For filming I also thought of filming all the jokes of the world. This also is an anonymous scenario which I think is endless, which can be filmed in so many ways, which can be a lot of fun. Like this man going into a pub in England and asking the bartender, 'Have you seen an enormous black cat with a white thing on his neck running out of the pub?'*...

On the strength of this at the time of the Happenings/Fluxus show in Koln in 1970 I was given a small space and I wanted to introduce the rest of the world and in particular the Network into this space. I created something I called the 'Wishing and Joking Room', there was a bowl full of water and a mic. On the bowl was written, 'Toss a coin and make an innocent wish' and on the mic was written, 'Now come to the mic and tell a joke'*...

Going through the Flea Market in the early sixties my friend Daniel Spoerri found little cards, on each one of them was a drawing - at times of a little girl, or robe or mirror or table - and out of this I used to write my autobiography. 'A table makes me think that very often I roll under the table', and I called this thing*...

In Japan I often went to see the Kabuki and I was very interested in this traditional Japanese technique, I worked on something I called Kabuinema which in my mind is a mixture of the technique of the Kabuki and the early cinema. An example that I did as a performance is that you have three persons on a stage: one has an object, looks at it with surprise and indifference passes it to a second one with anguish and anger, breaks*...

George and I at the Cedille drew much inspiration from a man we called John Masters. John Masters is the man who became famous in the United States by saying that art is mustard. John Masters we heard is the man who was urinating with Marcel Duchamp one day and who told Duchamp: 'Isn't that a good art work?' So, they were also bicycling and he thought that the bicycle wheel was something and one day*...

I have started a collection which I would rather call 'A Re-collection of Mind Openers'. A typical mind-opener to me would be, once I was with a

Moroccan worker in France and he asked me for some samples of my work and I give him something of what we are doing and he said: 'Monsieur, vous-etes un zero'*...

In 1962 in October several of us (Emmett Williams, Daniel Spoerri, Robin Page, Ben Vautier, 'Addi Kopcke from Denmark') we did something called a Misfits Fair. We transformed the small space of Gallery One into a kind of fairground, Ben lived for three weeks in the window, we*...

I don't know if you know of the French cartoonist, writer, film-maker Topor. Topor, Spoerri and I once we made a series of postcards where for instance Roland (Topor) would draw very quickly one of these people and we would put holes for the eyes and put our own fingers through and took pictures, you see the kind of monsters we got, and we called this book, Monsters are Inoffensive.*...

At my very first exhibition at the Gallerie Kopcke in Copenhagen I was doing measurements, that is I wanted to say something true about reality. We measure everything, we make comments, we have opinions about everything. So for instance I would measure myself with tomatoes, I was sixty tomatoes high, I was 1013 train rides between Paris and Copenhagen old, and so forth*...

To illustrate the Research on the not-made. The not-made which I consider is one of the very important elements of Permanent Creation. I proposed to myself to make the portraits not-made of all the artists I knew. Then I thought I would make the portraits not-made of all the artists I don't know. Then I thought I would make the portraits not-made of all the people I know and finally the portraits not-made of all the people I don't know*...

Again back to Villefranche, between 1965-8 George Brecht and I created what we called The Non-School of Villefranche. It had a simple programme, it never got farther than the letterhead. It says carefree exchange of information and experience. No students, no teachers. Perfect freedom, at times to listen, at times to talk. We still stand by this programme, but the mayor of the town*...

'Research on the Origin' is work I talked myself into doing since every time I presented the Principles of Equivalence (well-made, badly-made, not-made) I used to say it illustrates the permanent creation of the universe. So I did Research on the Origin and I applied the Principles of Equivalence to the Permanent Creation of the Universe. It turned out to be a work which I made on cloth, which itself is

'The Gong Show'

an explosion, which is*...

There are many projects like every, every artist has many projects that he cannot realize. Among one of the many projects I am sorry I couldn't realize is 'The artist as proposer of laws'. I was offered a show by a museum in France, I answered the man that I would only do it if Cohn-Bendit, the rebellion leader of '68, was allowed to come back to France and if marijuana*...

I think it was in Arras, in the north of France, so in front of an audience I just distributed pieces of paper and I told them would you please write the name of something that you would gladly get rid of. I read the result as a collective poem. It included rheumatism, the poet himself, De Gaulle I don't know how many times*...

In Paris up to 1964 I lived in a place which is the Jewish quarter of Paris. In the building where I lived there were so many people of many races and nationalities that I wanted a friend of mine to take photos of all the people in this building, I lived on the top so my photo would have been taken last. The title of the book would have been 'No-one is a prophet, 13 rue de rousseau, Paris'*...

'Long-short poems to keep making at home', is something I got involved in to try to do something which I like to do at times. It's much less important to express myself than to induce others to express themselves. So I would start a poem in such a way that they could finish it themselves. One of them for instance is celebrity's names translated into Japanese: Picasso-san, Satre-san*...

Then I got the idea that I would start my own country. I made something which I called Territory of the Genial Republic'. I said that I have a hunch that people at large, all of us, we are concentrating on our talents too much and we are not concentrating enough on human beings' native genius*...

At the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam I was given a room which I called Territoire la geniale and in it I stayed for one month and every day I proposed that anybody that was interested in research could come and we would engage in research ourselves according to this principle of the Genial Republic: research is not the privilege of those who know, on the contrary it's the domain of those who don't*...

Of course at times, like all of us, I have had trouble with governments. I proposed at one point that we should replace all the governments of the

world with a governmental sculpture. It would be an enormous structure in which all the answers to the most burning problems of the day would be given by children. So you would push a button and ask what are we going to do about this bilingual problem in Canada and there would be a three-year old child answering you.*...

I speak a great deal of Permanent Creation and I try to make it available to others and there is something I think of as the relative secret of Permanent Creation which is: 'whatever you do, do something else, whatever you think - think something else', in French it's called 'the other-ism', I hate -isms by the way so it's done tongue in cheek*...

You know this thing of Shakespeare: 'nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so'. Through my own practice it has come to read this way: 'nothing is good or bad but combining makes it so'. In one performance version of something I called a Kabuinema, I used to have people for instance with a hat and it says: 'A bank clerk is nothing, A hat is nothing - but a bank clerk wearing a hat is*...

In Europe now we are talking about Common Market, unity of Europe - in the sixties and seventies I could make public a proposal that countries of Europe in order to seal their new found friendship and point out the obscenity of war should exchange their War Memorials.*...

Marianne my wife, Marcelle our daughter and Bruce, my son, we live in the south of France in a vilage named Flayosc, 100 kilometres west of Nice and Marianne calls this small place of ours, about a thousand square feet of land, Cucumberland. In Cucumberland we try to combine physical and artistic work, Marianne for instance has goats and we make goat cheese, we have chickens and grow our own vegetables and we*...

One thing I thought of doing here tonight instead of this performance, but I had done it before so it was less interesting, is what I call, 'The Dictionary as Scenario', I propose to anyone - just take any word in the dictionary and film whatever action or thought or feeling or impulse it may describe. So I consider this - the dictionary, as the endless anonymous scenario, because any idea take the word 'play' you can illustrate this*...

The Dictionary as Scenario might tie up to something I can think of, that I consider my work as part of, I call this, 'Participation to the Collective Dream'. In other words creativeness exists everywhere, a certain awareness and acceptance of this can lead to a form of art which is also*...

It is equivalent to me whether something is well-made or badly-made or not-made. I suggest that in terms of Permanent Creation whether any growth, any idea, any thought, any concept is well-made or badly-made or not-made is equivalent and I have used this concept and illustrated it in certain visions*...

In 1968, George Brecht and I after running the 'Cedille qui sourit' for three years, were as broke as ever and we closed down the shop and we made an announcement saying - there is always somebody making money, somebody going broke, we in particular, and as the Cedille closes down we announce the coming of the Eternal Network*...

For many years I have been working on something I have called, 'Principles of Poetic Economy'; I was not trained in art I studied Economics for a while at U.C.L.A. and it is true, as Paul pointed out, that I had worked for the United Nations for a while in Korea. I am interested in The Principles of Poetic Economy because I see this urge as the driving*...

Working for and with children has been one of my preoccupations, at one point I even thought I will do things only for children until I did things only for children and in a certain way it's the child in us that communicates even tonight. But specifically I have written*...

Again I was in Germany in Dusseldorf when I started to put on the walls of my room anything that everyday I would do or think, it might be just a piece of paper with an idea like on such and such a day I thought we should make an anthology of decorations of war, or the next day I thought of something else and I put it in. I wanted to do this for a whole year but actually I did it only for nine weeks it became*...

I met George Maciunas who is the man behind all the Fluxus productions in Europe around 1962. It just happened that George Maciunas was working in Europe at the time and Nam June Paik was in Koln, Benjamin Patterson was also working in Germany, Emmett Williams was there - so actually the manifestations of what came to be known as FLUXUS started in Europe*...

Film-making in the sixties, you found as much interest in film-making as you find now in video, the great problem of course was to have the means to realize films. George Brecht and I at the Cedille did something we called, Movies Re-invented because we insisted*...

'The Gong Show'

In French we call the Eternal Network, La fete permanent, 'fete' being feast, holiday. It is quite evident, I have friends in Italy called Lotta Continua, they belong to the non-Communist extreme left who are struggling for more spontaneity and social contact, that the fete permanent could be conceived even as a proposal for the socio*...

In 1962 the Galerie Legitime which is a gallery I had in my hat, where small artworks were exhibited under my cap so that, at the same time of course it covered my head, it all goes down there and also the works and I called it*...

In London, La galerie legitime turned out to be a bowler hat and in 1962 I made a frozen exhibition where I put the bowler with the small works into a freezer and I announced that the opening would last from October 1962 to October 1972. The frozen exhibition was with me for quite a while until I lost it but I was able still in 1972 to do the de-frosting of the frozen exhibition*...

Yes, genie cafe we call it in French, coffee house geniuses - we meet a great deal in cafes and I think that the best thinking goes on there. I had done a piece once called in celebration of 'genie cafe' together with 'hommage aux rate', homage to failures*...

Once I was perhaps asking myself or somebody asked me what has all this to do with. I proposed that art is good for nothing that it is exchange of the good-for-nothing in one, with the good-for-nothing in another. Good for nothing in the sense that sitting under a tree or looking at the stars is good for nothing and that an artist in order to be good for nothing has to be good at everything*...

Dick Higgins in New York was publishing for ten years books called The Something Else Press, The Something Else Press published many, many books which otherwise wouldn't have been available, for instance they published 'Ample Food for Stupid Thought', they also published a book called 'Games at the Cedilla or, The Cedilla takes Off', where George Brecht and I wrote about why we were doing our*...

"An homage and dance to that mammal 'm', 'm' for misery, mister, madame - that misery 'm', is a play I wrote in the form of songs. There are thirteen songs, rock rhythm and so forth - you can dance, I just had a hunch that misery*...

Something that I always dreamt to see developed is an international sign language. I think that ever child in the world should learn to speak with his hands, like the deaf and mute do except we would first have to develop an international way to speak with our

hands so that everybody would be bilingual. With TV it would be very easy to learn it, I think that children would enjoy*...

Another international research I got involved in I call, 'The International Nuisance Party'. I think that the great value of art and artists in general is that we are a bloody nuisance to everybody and why not recognize the positive role of being a nuisance by creating the International Nuisance Party. For instance we could run candidates that have nothing to do with national boundaries, like if they need a cultural minister in France perhaps John Cage should be a candidate, does not matter if he is American....

The science I thought I might start is called The Science of Stupidology. In other words the definition of the science itself is this, that in every human pronouncement there is a stupidity factor 's' that if it could be isolated would allow us to take into account the proposal in neutral perspective, and of course my definition of stupidology itself*...

Cloning closes the gap between Clones

Clive Robertson

'Adjusting the Hold', No. 3

From 'TELE-VISIONS' to 'Co-Evolution Quarterly' the debates on broadcast and satellite accessibility, radiation weaponry and television analysis continues. Artists are increasingly documenting or 'fictionalising' the same concerns in writing, video, hands-on satellite experiments, plans for independent stations and so on. The broadcast industry itself is taking family portraits of its public relations (see Public Television Screening Conference, Milan, 1978), placing its creative grandchildren in the front rows for the big flash.

These same concerns - socially, technologically and politically are vast, both in informational density and quantitative effect; there is furthermore virtually no 'Guernica' equivalent that any cell of present day video artists can paint. The movie, 'Network' like the videotape 'Media Burn' was trying to use 'Draino' to eliminate nuclear submarines. Getting video art, or, as some prefer, homemade TV into broadcasting as a potential 'public service' is not really any step forward, defining television and uservideo - one against the other at this stage appears more developmental.

For the artist (until recently) the next 'logical step' was to broadcast, to get that cassette into the bigger museums in the sky, to become re-positioned in the image of television, to make art or artists' ideas become the topic of the 'talk show'. I admit that many of the proposed ideas are not quite as naive as I am suggesting but many of them have been television - the continuation of a monosyllabic communication. Even looking at the changing technological pattern and with it hopefully the structure of tele-informational receiving, it now seems increasingly wise to look at where the portable-user medium came from, and in some sense to cultivate its 'defects' rather than grab for the skinrash-eliminating cream of broadcast participation. This short essay introduces some 'whys' for that logical inversion.

Present reasonable accurate manufacturing estimates suggest that the broadcast monopoly will soon be out-monopolised by the hardware industry who no doubt sees each one of us as a greater potential market than the relative small number of broadcast stations in present operation. The personal call-and-send video technology is just two years away, soon to be riding the crest of a microwave, its mass implementation is perhaps a decade away.

Video

To return to the video/broadcast (TV) dipotere: firstly many video artists are intuitively aware that what it is they are using or doing, somehow is not as destructive as television, or do they see video on a grey-scale gradient of manipulation where video is light grey and television is black? A recent issue of 'Co-Evolution Quarterly' contains an article by Jerry Mander, 'Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television', another by Gene Youngblood, 'The Mass Media and The Future of Desire', both excerpts from soon to be published books. 1) Mander underlines the fact that there has been almost no studies done on the neurophysiology of television viewing to which we can add that there certainly has not been any such studies done on video by artists. Not being facetious, there could easily be comparative tests made on excerpts from TV and present video art to determine difference of information retention, emotional and value generation conveyance. Whilst video we assume is not as homogenous as TV, it has to a point developed both stylisms

Comparatives:

a) Television is ultimately destructive primarily for the following reasons:

- 1) The technologies of television define the boundaries of its content.
- 2) Because of the physical size of the screen the eye does not have to scan and therefore no organized thought is possible due to the induced phasic state. 2) [eye movement and thinking are directly connected].
- 3) The speed of the image creation scan is faster than the nerve pathways between your retina and the portion of the brain that 'sees' can process them. The translation of TV light energy translated into images inside your head is approximately three times slower than their transmission. 3)

b) Video is potentially constructive primarily for the following reasons:

- 1) It frequently ignores the 'content possibilities' of television communication and production theory. Video is less bound to length impositions and is willing to substitute boredom in place of control relying heavily on the patience of the audience. The signal-to-noise ratio of violence on television is high, the signal-to-noise ratio of values, subtle emotions of video is low but can be re-conveyed until sufficient clarification or impact is made.
- 2) Whilst limited to the same output device: the monitor, there is advantage to multi-channel video in breaking the hypnosis that one medium size TV induces.
- 3) The technical creation of the image, the scanning process, cannot be by-passed. Re-iteration or less dense information can to some extent neutralize or counteract the processing delay.

and techniques (a 'video language') that could, like television, be disassembled into sets of intent and achievement.

Video to be constructive, has to tread a very fine line. It has to maintain its somewhat 'narcissistic' attitude, primarily because an over-projection of self, or a lineal collection of selves is more usable as human definition than an over-projection of non-identity, stereotypes, or clones of no one thing (TV). Within that self-projection (it's questionable whether video or TV can convey collective except, as I suggest, by linear sequence) slowed down or repeated as suggested for comprehension, the fine line is maintaining comprehension without boredom or loss of interest. This is not to condemn video to simplistics, complexity is possible given the not-very-often-used repeated playback possibility. TV too treads a

thin line of informational saturation. What happens (rate of information) in a TV ad. could not easily be used over a 10 let alone 28'.30' programme. Like the ad. (the programme being the videobreak) video has the advantage of originality of content and perhaps surprisingly so, has the advantage of originality of structure.

Whilst never expecting to defend video, its production mechanism: 'controlled by the user', and its distribution mechanism: 'specified by the user' follows Gene Youngblood's proposals for the inversion of mass media. 4) 'Controlled by the user' is the initial territory for the artist specifically when used in the process of social behavioural analysis which can either come in an introversion or an extroversion. The personal usage as work is both direct and straightforward. 'Specified by the user' is not a euphemism for popularity, Youngblood suggests that the procedure will be essentially non-aristocratic and non-autocratic but basically anarchistic. To take advantage of choice means ultimately that you have to comprehend the value of choice, which so far artists video distribution, within its own sub-network, understands.

Re-sensitizing TV viewers, including ourselves, has not been a simple task. It is equally difficult for video artists to step outside of their edits and see how strangers to the medium in fact experience what is presented. One argument against TV and video is that all technical reproduction of art, nature, and the human image deletes aura 5). That the human being deprived of aura through technical reproduction loses its humanness. Whilst the sculptural act of video does not mean that it should come supplied with a phial of sweat - the physical interaction of the medium with the mediator is presently observable in many tapes. Not that this property alone should be its sole emphatic, but again the medium as presently used is on the right track.

Television cannot be used as an educational medium in the normal sense because to really learn something you have to interact with the source of the data 6). I suggest that the very 'inconvenience' of video - including its format and technical restrictions as well as its content and present re-definition of the act of viewing by the artist moves towards that very possibility of interaction.

I have omitted any mention of content or any real constructive alternate distribution except to hint at the former and to play down the present comprehension of 'mass' in the latter. Video does not have to ride in the suit jacket of broadcasting to develop its function or constructive effectiveness. Until the entire differences between video and its ghoul television are realized, the importance of not broadcasting within the current systems cannot be understood. ■

Notes:

1. 'Co-Evolution Quarterly' Box 428, Sausalito, Calif 94965. Issue No. 16, Winter 1977-78. 'The Videosphere', Gene Youngblood. 1978 E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York. 'Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television', Jerry Mander. 1978 Wm. Morrow and Company.
2. J. Mander (A.R. Luria, 'The Psychophysiology of the Frontal Lobes').
3. J. Mander.
4. 'Co-Evolution Quarterly', Issue 16', G. Youngblood.
5. J. Mander (Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction')
6. J. Mander (Dr. Erik Peper, Professor of Interdisciplinary Sciences, S.F. State University)

JOHN OSWALD: IN BETWEEN THE STATIONS

Marcella Bienvenue:

I would call you a new music composer, would you call yourself that?

John Oswald:

No, I wouldn't call myself that at all, I wouldn't call myself a musician either although in some circumstances I have. I use terms that are flexible, depending on the situation, as to who I am and what I do. I don't like the word 'new' as I think that's taken for granted, I usually don't say I am a composer because most people associate the term with someone who works with European notation and according to Robert Ashley, a composer is someone who tells other people what to do and I am not very adept at either of those things. Musicians are the technicians of sound, the people who composers tell what to do.

M.B.:

What about artist?

J.O.:

I use the word artist but not the word art. Some of the other terms I use to describe myself in relation to some of the activities I do are improviser and performer. Improvising being a subdivision of performance and some of the performance works I've done would not be improvisation though to a lot of people the specifications for that performance are so simple and there's so much leeway for the execution that it would be seen as an improvisation. When we discuss specific cases I can point out the difference. Everyone in some sense is an improviser and an improvisation on a larger scale is just someone's life. Improvising for me is dealing with each successive moment as it relates to you, something that everyone has to do every day. I have a lot of intent and ambitions as to being an improviser, which is why I use that word specifically in my case. I use improvisation in performance, performance being a special case where there's a division: a class of observers and a class of performers which raises a lot of demands on that activity which are different from everyday demands.

M.B.:

The first piece of yours that I saw was with Marvin Green here in 1976. It involved movement - dance almost, un-aggressive bells, some sort of a costume - the white jumpsuits actually an audience controlling environment, subtle, humane but quite intense. Could you

elaborate, the audience was literally in the dark?

J.O.:

At that point Marvin and I had been working together for four months on performances. This was a very interesting situation for us in that we had been in three or four concerts that we had done previously where we had been aware of the space we would be working in, the physical aspects of that space, and had designed pieces specifically for it. In this case coming to Calgary, the day before the performance we were in the position where we would have to make decisions very quickly. We found



Oswald and Marvin Green
Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs, Aug. 22nd 1976.

that the work we had done previously wouldn't fit into the space at the Parachute Center which was a very small room. In a period of a day we went through our compositional method which is suggesting ideas and coming to some mutual decision based on all aspects of what we would do.

M.B.:

I remember you bringing out traditional instruments that the audience recognised but you did not use them?

J.O.:

I think that was a bit of filling up the space and also dealing with people's expectations; for instance, Eugene Chadbourne identified us as a saxophone player and a guitar player - we saw no reason to dispute that though we had no intention of using those

instruments. The piece we decided upon, which came not through compromised ideas but a combination of what equally excited us at that moment, was that we would start off with something that was obviously a performance. Eventually it was to turn into just an audience, no performers. The two of us would be explicitly an audience - the audience could also see us as guiding their perceptions. The performance would be ourselves - meaning all of us as audience, and the environment around us. So to begin with we stood outside the building ringing small bells as people came in, coming into the space still ringing bells and going from that activity, which you can watch and listen to, to a period of what might have seemed like inactivity. The bells were in a sense faded out - we made smaller and smaller movements until the bells

weren't moving anymore, and then we weren't moving but hopefully it was apparent that we were listening and watching for sound sources around us. By turning our heads at ninety degrees to a visual plane to show that we are hearing something - the eyes being at the front of the head, the ears being at the side - we could point out the things that were happening around us.

M.B.:

Last September (1977) you did TAPE RECORDED VOICES here, it included a piece called *Mrs. Schultz Overdubbing*, would you describe that piece.

J.O.:

Mrs. Schultz is an old woman who lives over a main street in a town in Ontario. She watches things going on outside of her window and conducts almost con-

tinuous monologues based on what she sees and what she hears on the radio. She has a television, she has a way of describing how it works, a growling sound which would be untranscribable.

M.B.:

Is she more ear-orientated than visually orientated?

J.O.:

No, a lot of the information coming from the street are things that she sees. Her soliloquies go on independent of whether there is someone there or not. She gives me token acknowledgement when I am around, as example, when I came in once she hadn't noticed me and it seemed as if she could talk and be independent of what I was doing. For a while I have been taping my non-conversations with her and one day I brought in a tape of her talking and played it back for her. She was wearing headphones and listening to it. She was unaware that it was her even though I had demonstrated the tapes to her previously. She would start arguing with herself - using previously recorded statements as springboards for new statements; she would start talking independently of the tape; she would agree or disagree with what was being said on the tape.

M.B.:

Did she ever identify to you or herself whose voice it was that she was listening to?

J.O.:

On my tape of her overdubbing you can hear both voices with equal weight. She refers a lot of times to the voices being the same ones that she heard on the radio last night. She makes a lot of references to tape-machines which are really ambiguous. It's hard to work out how well she understands how the tape machine works, she's very old.

M.B.:

The piece was called MRS. SCHULTZ AGE 90 TALKS WITH MRS. SCHULTZ AGE 89, was that a deliberate symbol - the same person having two ages or was it just the time of the documentation?

J.O.:

No, there's no significance. The only deliberation on my part was making that set-up which I just described, I had no idea what she would do. After my input - merely switching on the tape recorders, the whole piece was very much hers. She was able to override all my expectations, she surprised me.

M.B.:

As I remember the piece she has arguments against ethnic groups, what nationality is she?

J.O.:

She has a Greek clothier next door and a Greek restaurant underneath her and both of them are trying to get her apartment space, so, because she is

always in her apartment and sees the world as this microcosm around her, she has the feeling that the Greeks are taking over Canada and a lot of her theories are based on the Greeks taking over Canada.

M.B.:

Does she know who the prime minister is?

J.O.:

Yes - she's a real Trudeau fan.

M.B.:

That same evening there was another work that was described as "a series of editing systems applied to tape recordings of words and phrases read by William S. Burroughs", is that a collaborative piece with Marvin Green?

J.O.:

No, I guess it's a collaborative piece with William Burroughs, though we've never worked together.

M.B.:

Why Burroughs' voice?

J.O.:

The original intent was I had access to a tape studio and I decided to use speech in a work as it has language as an information content as well as sound. Burroughs at various times talked about literary systems that I wanted to apply in an audio sense - cutting up sentences, juxtaposing words and parts of words together and I also like the quality of his voice. It turned out to be quite a big decision as I spent a lot of two years working on it, and it still might continue. I saw him in Toronto and told him about the tapes and received his permission to use them.

M.B.:

Since you have been here this time your concerns have been with radio pieces, you've referred to the radio pieces as being improvised, do you see them all as one work?

J.O.:

I've been interested in a visible way in improvisation for five or six years, I've been interested in radios for quite a bit longer than that. When I was young we

didn't have TV or a radio and one of the first things I owned was a radio. I was lucky in that the radio was AM and Short Wave and I listened more to the Short Wave than the AM. High speed telecommunications, jamming frequencies - I guess that was my first music. And that seemed something special as opposed to an environment of sounds, the milk-truck going by etc. that I really didn't become conscious of as a music, until quite a bit later. The same thing as a fish in water having to make some sort of intellectual jump in order to be able to perceive its environment.

M.B.:

Do you need to tape the radio performances?

J.O.:

I was asked to make a document, we did two performances last night - one at Arton's and one for Radio CORA live. I listened to the first one to learn how I was presenting myself and the radios to an audience. Two things interest me in using radios: one, the radios themselves, the things I come across; two is the radio as an improvisational instrument. It's a very unpredictable system, very challenging to have to deal with all the unexpected things that you come upon by twisting the radio dial - in this case four radio dials.

M.B.:

In the broadcast at Radio CORA last night I noticed that the tuner wah-wah effect could be identified traditionally as an instrument.

J.O.:

That's not a very traditional instrument though.

M.B.:

It seems traditional to me.

J.O.:

Possibly more traditional than using radios on stage. Historically the use of radios still precedes the wah-wah pedal, John Cage was using radios in the late 40's. John Cage is a special case, you don't exactly hear his music every day, whereas the wah-wah pedal, though



RADIO MULTITRACKING [2:278] - John Oswald.

Performance

newer, became 'traditionally' absorbed more effectively.

M.B.:

Your work makes one realise how much 'traditional' recognition is much a part of the listener's response, equating what you hear with what you have heard ... it seemed at Cora that the result was more collage.

J.O.:

There was a different aspect of being able to use a more spatial signal at Arton's, I was using a stereo plane so I could put signals in a string along that plane - so it made a counterpoint possibility between the two speakers, at Cora it was a mono signal, so that those two voices would be superimposed.

M.B.:

What discoveries have you made in the radio works, you mentioned something after the performance about the difference of radio stations here and in Toronto.

J.O.:

I was disappointed in the fact that there was so little radio here, eventually my disappointment became an acceptance of the fact. The fact that there was so much space between the stations made me see the dial as a landscape. There were the places indicated by each station and there were broad planes between the stations, actually Calgary radio stations are very similar to those in Toronto, they're similar all over North America, they all cover virtually the same ground.

M.B.:

There's an illusion of time passing as you switch between two stations, two voices appear to be more dislocated than they really are.

J.O.:

At a certain point you can fluctuate between one signal and another so quickly that you're getting the sum total of both signals. If I can move my hand fast enough you wouldn't even hear that fluctuation, you would just hear both signals.

M.B.:

I asked you about the possibility of thematic pieces, would this be a possibility for you or something to avoid?

J.O.:

Content isn't to be avoided as it's an indigenous part of the radio but as an improviser it doesn't interest me.

M.B.:

There is so much content in radio where you cut between songs, voices as well as static - the comparative 'melody', comparing it for instance to the CCMC, the 'melody' in your radio works is quite strong.

J.O.:

The CCMC is a very stylistic group in the same way that playing with a radio

becomes very stylistic, you get to different stations with different styles. With the CCMC, a large part of the structure of their improvisations is making references to different styles and in the case of Mike Snow he often 'jokes' with different styles by doing things that you don't expect will happen.

M.B.:

You mentioned last night the differences between your use of the alto. sax and the radio?

J.O.:

With the saxophone I have more control over what's going to happen - it's actually all coming out of me whereas with the radio I am in a sense just a monitor. At the same time in my saxophone playing I encourage things where I don't have a great deal of control over what I am doing, specifically in the smaller details, which allows for much surprise. The radios, that just happens immediately - there's no conscious play. The saxophone I have is a very old one and with time parts of it rot and parts of it get stuck, things break and the sound of the saxophone changes. What's been happening is that its overall pitch-range and my ability to create dynamics on it is becoming more and more limited and I find my playing getting more interesting, contrary to the physical breakdown of the instrument.

M.B.:

You usually work with other people ...

J.O.:

I usually work with myself, I haven't yet considered how to deal with an audience as a solo performer to a great enough extent, so usually in public I play with other people - I find duets to be very interesting for improvisations.

M.B.:

I've noticed in the three performances I have seen you do in two years you make a real attempt to post-analyse or discuss the work with the audience. Obviously it's important to you?

J.O.:

It's really nice to be able to be casual with an audience after the more formal aspects of a performance. Perceptions about what we just did are helpful towards later performances and that talk is usually what I am interested in - talk about what we have just done and its relationship to broader matters. I don't feel obligated to discuss the work, I do encourage the availability of that in whatever situation I am presenting things. Each place has different sorts of arrangements - each usually pretty easy to bypass the Stage, both in performance and after the performance. ■

Equipment:

JVC KD-2

For many years artists, videomakers and filmmakers had little choice in terms of equipment for 'field recording'. NAGRA and UHER, both expensive, were almost the only companies making professional, reliable equipment. JVC's new KD-2 is not in the NAGRA class but it is equal if not better than the old UHER-Report. The KD-2 is not the only good portable cassette machine now available but it does surpass the Yamaha 'wedge' and the comparable SONY in performance and cost.

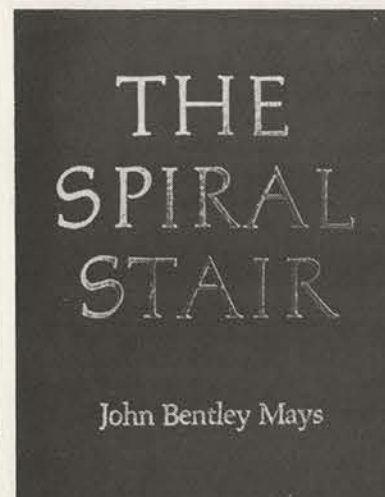
The KD-2 will record almost 12 hours continuously on one set of long-life batteries, it uses a different noise-reduction system which is compatible with 'Dolby' but surpasses the normal 'Dolby' signal-to-noise ratio boost. The noise reduction system is called ANRS (+ Super NRS) which is no 'dbx' but very useful. The KD-2 will record mono/stereo sound, has a master volume fade control plus volume adjustment for each channel, on-off meter light for checking readings in the dark.

The KD-2 is reasonably tough, a case (extra) is worthwhile as it's padded and will allow the machine to receive the normal 'rough' treatment. JVC also brought out the first binaural headphone-microphone combination which has been made compatible with the KD-2. The binaural microphone (HM-200E) is \$120 (Can.), the KD-2 is \$390 (Can.), case \$24 (Can.). The warranty is normally three years but you can find dealers which give a ten year warranty on parts and labour.

KD-2 SPECIFICATIONS

Frequency Response: surpasses DIN 45 500
25-18,000Hz (30-16,000Hz ± 3 dB) (Chrome)
25-17,000Hz (30-15,000Hz ± 3 dB) (Normal)
Signal-to-Noise Ratio:
57dB (from Peak Level, Weighted) without ANRS.
The S/N is improved by 5dB at 1kHz and by 10dB above 5kHz with ANRS on.
Wow and Flutter: 0.09% (WRMS), 0.2% (DIN 45 511)
Crosstalk: 65dB at 1kHz
Channel Separation: 35dB at 1kHz
Harmonic Distortion: 1.3% at 1kHz
Heads: SA (SEN-ALLOY) Head for Record/Play Ferrite Double-Gap Ferrite Head for Erase
Fast Forward/Rewind Time:
90 seconds (with C-60 Cassette)
Input Jacks: Mic $\times 2$ (0.2mV, 600-10k ohms)
LINE IN $\times 2$ (80mV, 100k ohms)
DIN (0.2mV/k ohm)
Output Jacks: LINE OUT $\times 2$ (500mV, 50k ohms)
DIN (500mV, 25k ohms)
Headphone (0.75mV, 8 ohms)
Power Requirements:
120V, 60Hz/DC 6V (DX 4) / EXT. DC 6V
Dimensions: 276mmW \times 95mmH \times 289mmD
(10-7/8" \times 3-3/4" \times 11-3/8")
Weight: 3.6 kg (7.9 lbs.) (without batteries)
4.0 kg (8.8 lbs.) (with batteries)
Measured with MAXELL's UD tape or equivalent

Books



JOHN BENTLEY MAYS

The Spiral Stair

Coach House Press, Toronto 1977
\$6.50. 169 pages. (13.5 x 21.5 cm)

The Spiral Stair is a delightfully and darkly satirical novel. In order for it to be experienced fully, it should be read as is poetry - aloud, the reader savouring, not gulping.

Language is used to create the terror of madness and emptiness, along with perceptive and comical observations of man. Sentences weave images, intricately patterned and involuted. Sounds are evocative and disturbing. Juxtapositions of images and ideas are used frequently and startlingly, with incongruous effect.

The primary image of the book is *division* and its derivation from the word "demon" (the Greek word "daimon", meaning "to cut up, to divide"). Division results in our concept of time. In *The Spiral Stair*, there is no division of time into past, present and future. The book contains, as the title suggests, the spiral stair as a symbol; in addition, the book is composed as a spiral structure. Each segment of the book overlaps; the repetitions in the story are from different points of view or levels, as one would see, descending a spiral staircase, as does a character in the novel.

The book begins:

These are the last messages you will receive of him ... the one who wrote and waited at last at the bottom of the spiral stair, remembering the times that belonged to him, remembering in the darkness from which springs the iron vine of steps towards light ...

The images of the descent down the spiral into darkness can suggest the Neo-Platonic view of the descent of the soul into the darkness of matter. It also brings out the mind-body dichotomy, which particularly obsessed the West-

ern philosophers and theologians. Many of the incidents in the novel re-mythologize the Church's equation of the sexual with evil. Witness the passage regarding Mays' character, Saint Superbia the Aclitorite:

The first sigilium of the child Superbia's surpassing sanctity was the self-amputation of her clitoris, at the tender age of four, by means of an apple-corer.

After a lusty description of the conception of this saint, Mays remarks:

In order to honour this man's devotion, our Holy Father ordered an image of his phallus to be erected in the Hypocaust of the Martyrs and decreed that, unto the worship of the faithful, to the Honour of Her whom it engendered.

Satire is not only religious but political, literary and social.

The novel is thought provoking, fascinating in its language and imagery, as the author creates his labyrinth of worlds through his language. "Will you meet me at the junction of all these words?"

No comment can attempt a simplification of the novel. For new patterns and meanings emerge on successive readings of the work. L.S.

OPAL L. NATIONS

This Book or Mental Scortation

Eternal Network Press, Toronto, 1978
(1975) \$4 (U.S.) 112 pp. (8" x 6 1/2")

This book took time to publish which in now way has harmed or dated it. For those that appreciate book-as-object or in this case book-as-play, *This Book* is a welcome arrival. Like the long credits on a good film, inventive page numbering is also a good signature. This book is numbered a-z, then aa-zz, then aaa-zzz, finally aaaa-rrrr. It is in many other respects very *booky* with a long dedication, long acknowledgements including, to "The constant supply of white bank paper onto which I wipe the arse of twisted cortical impulses." Acknowledgements are followed by AN INTRODUCTION TO THE REPRINTED EDITION OF THIS BOOK, a fake report of the first edition being seized under the Obscene Publications Act - a somewhat dig at Nation's old friend, Genesis P. Orridge. It then continues with a Preface, a projected fantasy on how the General Reader could be de-generalised by making physical alterations to *This Book*, in other words, tailored editions:

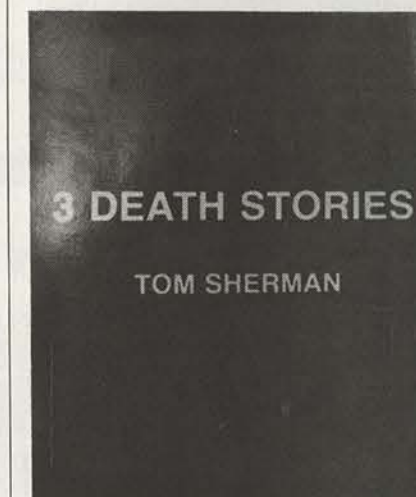
Perhaps one should entertain a special edition for those readers seeking a mother figure. This Book could contain molded pages, or pop up breasts, with

the text neatly described on a darkened protrusion suitably coloured and shaped to fit the reader's mouth and to stimulate the reader's mind. Other features include a glossary and a somewhat fake index.

This book continues with Prefaces II through XVIII including prefaces that deal with, Ideal localities in which to read This Book, The author's testimony after having read This Book, and so on.

Accompanying the text are 19th Century drawings of amputees and their re-furnished limbs, fortunately, for the reader, printed in blue and not red.

This Book is a close resemblance of a Nations classic. Those who know his work will want a copy, those who don't might. Nations is (almost) the Diter Rot of fiction, the Enid Blyton of fact and the Sotheby's of farce. C.R.



TOM SHERMAN

3 Death Stories

Art Metropole, 241 Yonge St., Toronto
MSB 1N8. \$3.50, 1977, 50 pp.
20.5 x 26 cm.

One of five new publications from Art Metropole, *3 Death Stories* being the only one not to include a biography and bibliography, the only one not a transcript of other projects. Whilst this does not then automatically make it a pre-script, at times it does have that feel. Following close behind this publication, *Only Paper Today* published a special issue featuring other of Sherman's writings under the title: *Animal Magnetism*.

The narrative style in *3 Death Stories* is not unlike the style used in his videotape, *TELEVISION'S HUMAN NATURE*, in that key words are repeated from one sentence into another so that, as conditioner, they might stick:

Magazines

Each day her sensitive eyes were covered with an opaque mask of black satin. Each day the mask was removed in the first few minutes of twilight, or,

Just motion when you want me to stop, I would tell her. Just tell me with the extension of your hand when I am moving too fast or the wrong way or in ways offensive to your mind.

(The End of The Spiral)

The narrative is made up of short sentences, each conditioning each story as if they were responding to the requirements of TV content. The narrative is highly detailed, again, as if we were screwing our eyes hard to look through a coarse TV screen to watch the described events.

Narratives no longer exist by themselves. They are from radio or from television; in watching A.S.A. Harrison's minimal slides accompanying her narrative prose with her voice coming from the same plane as the projections, I realised it was not old radio but new TV. That's what I mean by TV here: it is not TV but a book, but all the footnotes, the references are towards Television.

There are three stories, the last two more tentatively connected than the first. One is *Detroit Poison*. It's the opener, a clear description of a man being poetically poisoned by a woman with arsenic - in his food, in his juice and finally in a lotion that he sucks off her breasts. Two is *Red and Green Make Brown* and Three is *The End of the Spiral*.

The descriptors are honed, sometimes like Fielding Dawson, the difference with Sherman is that there is not much to laugh about. Again it's television. And the *Death Stories*? If you read *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander (wm. Morrow and Co. March 1978) he states that death and body movement is what television conveys best.

Narrative Video needs agile muscle, and Tom Sherman's *Death Stories* qualify as fresh spinach. C.R.

VIRUS, Montreal

c.p. 187, succursale E. Montreal
H2T 3A7 \$1 (11" x 12 1/2") 56 pages.
New purpose for VIRUS in what amounts to a noble gamble - a commercial information/events magazine for Montreal, printing run 10,000. Covers everything: Film, Politics, Radio, Exhibitions, Video, Theatre, Restaurant (menus). Well researched and planned for newsstands with exchange ads with FM stations. Emphasis on mass information: what every city needs.

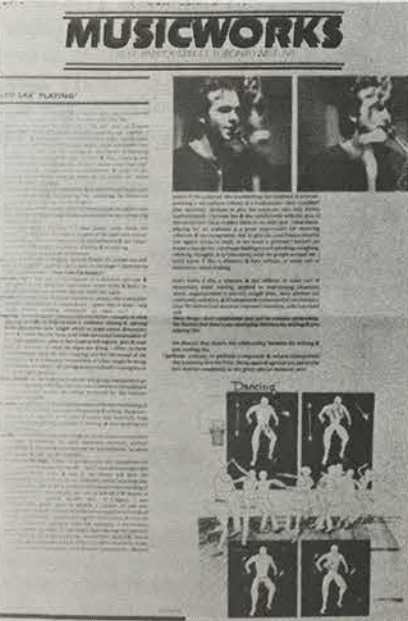


HIGH PERFORMANCE Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1978. The Performance Art Quarterly

240 S. Broadway, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012, U.S.A.
\$2.52 pages. (8 1/2" x 11")

Most of the magazine is made up of an 'artist's chronicle': submitted texts and illustrations by performance artists each performance taking two pages. Arranged in chronological order this issue covers January 1st - December 31st 1977. Next issue will cover April 1, 1977 to March 31st, 1978. Other contents include interviews, Suzanne Lacy (by Richard Newton) and Norma Jean DeAk (by Moira Roth) and a Spaces feature on LAICA. The chronicle doesn't cover dance, theatre or music but seems open and responsive to all other input. Conceptually simple but effective.

Editor: Linda Burnham



MUSICWORKS

30 St. Patrick Street, Toronto M5T 1V1
(Published as supplement to Only Paper Today) \$1 (11 1/4" x 17") 9 of 20 pages.

A potential new magazine/paper testing its sonics in Only Paper Today. Interviews, concert notices, reviews (Nihilist Spasm Band, MUD, Canadian Electronics Ensemble, NOW, Al Neil). Short features by Raymond Gervais, John Oswald, Michael Horwood, Larry Polansky, S. Shephard etc. Informative, well-designed and affordable there is obviously a backlog of material which previously had No Particular Place to Go.

The other half of OPT is split between Dance coverage and their regular features. MUSICWORKS needs more of the same (or similar). Contributions welcomed.

Editor: Andrew Timar.



SHADES

New Wave in Toronto

Shady Publications Inc.
89 Niagara St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ont. \$1.40 pages. (11" x 17")

First issue of art-hating punk. Sophisticatedly controlled, even mild, for the market place. Most of the contributing writers are worth reading. Very much like early Liverpoolian tabloids - the punk artistes might just as well be draped over the carved lions outside of St. George's Hall. The first issue is somewhat POLEarised but contains pieces on VILETONES, THE DIODES, VIBRATORS, TEENAGE HEAD, CONCORDES, THE BOY-FRIENDS, THE UGLY, THE SCENICS, THE DISHES, fasc-ion, and disc-news, as well as THE POLES.

Editor: George Dean Highton

Magazines

STRIKE

15 Duncan Street, Toronto, Canada
MSH 3H1. 50c. (11 1/2" x 17"). 36 pages.

Name change from Art Communication Edition. Still very much a 'chic' paper, too much for real political positioning: the more they wish to get away from the 'hegemony of specialized artists as the cultural heroes', the closer they get to the identity they 'hate'. Such a polemical state can only result in self-hatred. A polemical state as such does not have to result in self-destruction, but can stop at the destruction of everything around it. The contents of STRIKE, as usual, are more rewarding than the editorialisms including Tom Dean's 'No Butter, No Butter', Paul McLelland's 'Thoughts of Stammheim' and John Faichney's 'Intending Bookness'.

Editors: Amerigo Marras, Bruce Eves, Suber Corley, Paul McLelland.

VIDEO GUIDE Vol. 1, No. 1

Video Tape Guide West

Satellite Video Exchange 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1G3
\$5 for 5 issues (11" x 16 1/2") 8 pages.

"we plan to feature the views and activities of producers, artists and technicians who are experimenting with innovative video techniques and exploring subjects that mass media ignores."

Contains news, interviews, announcements, hardware notes and re-sell equipment notices. It's good and will most likely get much better.

Editors: Changeable, issue one: Daryl Lacey.

B-CAR

Chris Burden

Choke Publications, 1977.

24 pp. (7" x 5 1/2")

The photo story of Chris Burden's Bicycle Car with text by Chris Burden and Alexis Smith.

PUBLICATIONS

Review copies of artist's books, magazines, 'new' literature, catalogues, etc. are welcomed. Material received will either be reviewed or listed as publication information, the distinction between treatments will be a factor of time and space available. All review copies will be archived. The listing and archiving of junk-mail and most 'poetry' magazines is not guaranteed.

MODERN ROMANCE No. 3

A Monthly Mirror of the Times

Real World Press

Gorilla Publications Box 1411 Station A
Vancouver, Canada V6C 2P7

15c. (5 1/2" x 8 1/2") 16 pages.

A booklet of poems, stories and illustrations which used to be called 'borderline' and have now transformed into Modern Romance. Pieces by DON AUSTIN, IAN SPENCE, MITCHEL-ANGELO, DONA STURMANIS and others. Cover by John M. Bennett. The next issue (#4) will increase to \$1.

Editors: William Enwright and Richard Johnson.

SOFT ART PRESS

January 1978, No. 12.

Subs: \$7 (21 x 30 cm.) 16 pages.

case postale no. 858 CH-1001,

Lausanne, Switzerland.

W.G. Cassel, Natalia II, Klaus Staack, Ruedi Schill, groupe off, Walter Pfeiffer & Co., Monique Bailly-Roulin.

B.C. MONTHLY

Vol. 3 No. 5 - November 1977.

Box 48884 Vancouver, Canada
V7X 1A8

Special Issue:

CLEARING - Penny Kemp

(8 1/4" x 10 3/4") 152 pages.

ISBN 0-920250-02-5

B.C. MONTHLY

Vol. 3 No. 8 - December 1977

Special Issue:

THE STORY, SHE SAID. - Daphne

Marlatt.

(8" x 10 3/4") 46 pages.

SIBN 0-920250-03-3

GENERAL IDEA

RECONSTRUCTING FUTURES

Art Official Inc., 1978

241 Yonge St., Toronto, Canada.

24 pp. (10 3/4" x 14")

An English-French, French-English catalog for the 1978 Exhibition tour. Introduction: Clive Robertson.

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These new publications, available in May 1978, are the first publications to be produced under Arton's new artist-artist-publisher collaborative policy. All revenue generated by these publications is split equally between the artist and Arton's. Arton's share is then re-invested into further publications. Whilst this procedure is not new for artist print publishers, it is relatively untried in audio and video publishing. We hope that you will support this fresh initiative between artist and artist-publisher so that we can remain in control of our own historicity.

VOICESPONDENCE VSP 04.



VOICESPONDENCE
320-10th St. N.W., Calgary, Canada T2N 1V8

VSP 04

SIDE 1

Robert Filliou's Performance-lecture, *The Gong Show*. This forty-five minute segment recorded at the University of Calgary Art Gallery, October 1977, is a series of 30 second introductions/stories relating to Filliou's unique works and philosophies. These stories are interrupted by a cymbal ring giving the piece its title. Born in 1926, Robert Filliou has been a consistent catalyst and amateur for artists in many countries during the last two decades. His interaction with non-artists through his many proposals and projects underlines his effectiveness as a practitioner of Permanent Creation.

SIDE 2

John Oswald's tape composition *Mrs. Schultz Overdubbing*, 1977. Mrs. Schultz, age 90, talks with, against, about and in spite of Mrs. Schultz, age 89, also talking.

ARTON'S VIDEO PUBLICATIONS



ROBERT FILLIOU Porta Filliou

AVP 001
45 min. B&W, 1977.
[Cassette only]

Printed sleeve and index.

\$75 [purchase]

A major synopsis by the French artist describing much of the research and projects authored within the last fifteen years. Contains performance, film, stories and scenarios. Co-founder of The Eternal Network.



STEVE MacCAFFERY Permanent Performance

AVP 002
25 min. B&W, 1978.
[Cassette only]

Printed sleeve and index.

\$55 [purchase]

An anthology by the Canadian sound and action poet of his most recent performance works specifically structured to make use of the video medium. Language events, Performance Scenarios, Sound and Action Poems.

VIDEO FROM ART METROPOLE

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Bruce Emilson
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John Watt
Rodney Werden

tapes for rental and sale
curatorial suggestions upon
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Peggy Gale
Video Director
Art Metropole
241 Yonge Street
Toronto M5B 1N8
(416) 368-7787

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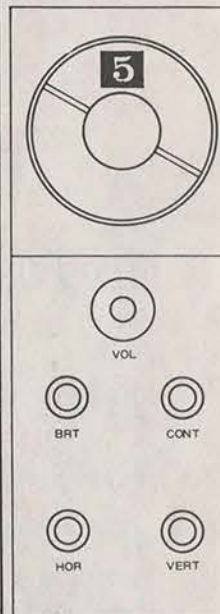
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155A GEORGE STREET, TORONTO M5A 2M8

Video

magazine



EAR MAG

EAR is a new music literary journal edited by Beth Anderson, Michael Cooper, Richard Hayman, and Laurie Spiegel with distribution manager Eric Kirk. All rights revert to authors. EAR welcomes materials from everyone and the deadline is the 20th of each month. Tax-deductible contributions for subscriptions MUST BE MADE PAYABLE TO NEW WILDERNESS FOUNDATION and sent to: 26 Second Ave. apt. 2B, New York, N.Y. 10003.

INTRODUCTORY OFFER:

All subscriptions received for CENTERFOLD magazine before August 31st 1978 will receive a complimentary copy of 'THE 1978 CANADIAN VIDEO OPEN' catalog.

The forty-four page document with twenty-two color plates includes two interviews by Peggy Gale with Rodney Werden and Susan Britton plus video directory of the participating artists.

Designed by Le-La, published by Arton's, 1978.

Subscription Rates, payable with order:

Individual: \$9 Institutional: \$18 [Airmail]

CENTERFOLD - The interdisciplinary artists' magazine.

320-10th St. N.W., Calgary, Alta., Canada T2N 1V8
