

# THE ACT

## PERFORMANCE ART

### Ethics.

- Jacques Chwat Frontiers [pg.3]  
 William Pope.L Performance Manifesto #78 [pg.4]  
 Jacques Chwat Mercer Runway [pg.5]  
 Allan Kaprow Useful Fictions (1975) [pg.7]  
 Allan Kaprow Postscript to "Useful Fictions" (1985) [pg. 11]  
 Bruce Barber Notes Toward an Adequate Interventionist  
 [Performance] Practice [pg.14]  
 Chris Kraus/Sylvere Lotringer I Talked About God With  
 Antonin Artaud [pg.14]  
 Bradley Eros/Aline Mare Erotic Psyche [pg.27]  
 Jeffrey Greenberg We Promenade. Quaint Selves.  
 Negotiating With the Work. [pg.30]

### Holding/Releasing

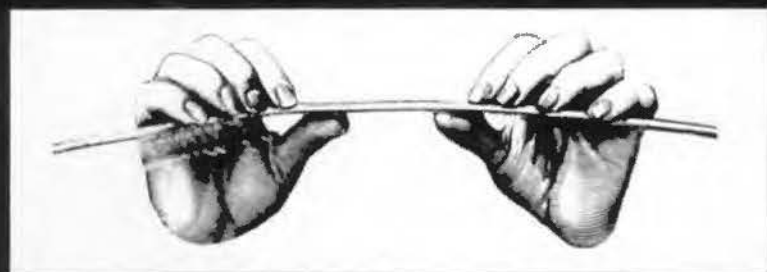
- Ellen Zweig Suspicious Language [pg.37]  
 Henry Sayre In (the) Place of a Text (Eleanor Antin's El  
 Desdichado) [pg.42]  
 Gavin Searle Jerome Rothenberg Interview [pg.49]

### Spectacle/Hallway

- Penelope Wehrli Triptych of City Scopes [pg.55]  
 TOYO/R.L. Seltman/Arlene Schloss NO SE NO [pg.58]

### Pastoral.

- Charles Allcroft/Jenneth Webster Crisp [pg.62]  
 Richard Gessner The Ball [pg.63]



## PERFORMANCE PROJECT

# THE ACT

**Publisher: Performance Project**

**Editor: Jeffrey Greenberg**

**Co-Editors: Jacques Chwat, William Pope.L**

**Art Director: Karin Stella**

The contributions of the following people are greatly appreciated:

Charles Allcroft  
Patrick Amos  
Laura Foreman  
Chris Gallagher  
Gary Goldberg  
Melinda Levokove  
Micki McGee  
Ann Palevsky  
Jan Peacock  
Alison Rossiter  
Judy Thacker  
Martha Wilson, Franklin Furnace  
Dan Zedek

We appreciate the generous support of

Saiph Corporation, Laurent Imbaud, President  
Leon Golub

## **Subscriptions:**

The Act is published irregularly & hopefully with increasing frequency. Your subscription is essential. Three issues are available for 12 Dollars. (The newsstand price *must* increase.)

## **Submissions:**

1. Critique, speculation & representation of any form of human activity.
2. No reviews.
3. The sections are organized ad hoc based on the material received.
4. Work of any visual form is acceptable...work can be layed out by the artist/writer/photographer.
5. Texts typed and double & spaced.
6. Photographs should have appropriate credits.
7. SASE, if work is to be returned.

Next Deadline - April 1st, 1986.

Next Issue - Summer 1986

Performance Project, Jeffrey Greenberg, 134 West 32nd St., Suite 602,  
New York, 10001. 212-613-9094.

Typographic Service: Artist's Classified

Printing: Faculty Press

## Introduction



There is a countless number of ladders across a desert surrounded by infinite circles of singing-naked dancers. Nearby, there are cliché-islands with one palm tree, one stranded bearded tatter-clothed man. Inland, there are forests, plazas, hallways, mountaintops, streets and wheatfields, just as there are darkened rooms and boarded-up houses. There are cemeteries, bus-stops and dry-cleaning.

The list is interminable.

Messages are relayed – there is mediation.

There are “watchers watching themselves enact a struggle between mythic, self-appointing priests and a cadre of equally self-appointing commandos, gutter-snipers, and triple agents.”



We are interested in the economy of cultural projects.



“Pushing and Pulling and Tumbling about in an open space which is not our own but which we allow to come to presence.”

Cultural projects are in an open space... While some work alone and others in cooperation, there are those who make claim to everyone else's territory, and they are the ones with whom we are unhappy. Open space is not the romance of the post-modern cornucopia; everything is NOT available for our use.



# Ethics.

*One knows only as long as one exercises... one cannot possess and lay aside.*  
— Eugenio Barba

*Since the worker has been reduced to a machine  
the machine can compete with him.*

— Karl Marx

*A few hints from my morality. ...No meals between meals, no coffee: coffee  
spreads darkness. Tea is wholesome only in the morning. A little but strong...  
Sit as little as possible; give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors  
while one moved about freely — in which the muscles are not celebrating a feast,  
too. All prejudices come from the intestines.*

— Friederich Nietzsche

*Hide our ignorance as we will an evening of wine reveals it.*

— Herakleitos

*In architecture, audience participation is not an experimental idea.*

— Francis Morrone



*We have created a position in the common man's life that cannot be filled by anyone else but actors, and that is escape into someone else's dilemma and away from your own. There is a danger in becoming a country of spectators. People are not acting in their own lives what they did 100 years ago because they're allowing actors to do it for them. The danger is that people have stopped growing, that they are allowing actors to do all the feeling, the acting-out of life while they sit passively by losing their active involvement in their own progression as human beings. — Barry Bostwick*

*In an alienated world in which only things have value, man has become an object among objects: indeed he is, apparently, the most impotent, that most contemptible of all objects. — Ernst Fischer*

*The reality which is being born among the participants is a simple reality: energy. So, there is in us a flow of movement rather than a flow of images ... the most simple [elements] ... space and movement, body and space, body and movement ... Just the most simple things. — Jerzy Grotowski*

Through two of my recent WorkProjects, I have gained a focus onto this difficult period of transition that we who work in performance/theater are faced with; there is no doubt that we are at a frontier. My own frontier has turned out to be what Ludwik Flaszen (co-founder with Jerzy Grotowski of the Polish Lab Theatre) referred to as "an invitation to imitate."

Our tradition which has existed since before the time of Aristotle is based on the imitation of an action, an imitation that we — descendants in one way or another, whether we like it or not, of Stanislavsky — now seem to find insufficient. This very same Stanislavsky literally was able to map out emotional memory in order to help the actor in creating a role that would become the performance (at the same time that Freud was mapping out the human psyche). Stanislavsky, by creating a role that would become the performance, confronted acting fully, taking it from the realm of play-acting toward acting performed by the man or woman of action — in part through his method of physical actions. At first Stanislavsky built upon the heritage of imitative play-acting which he explained in terms of contemporary psychology, and ultimately shed. It was during those last days in his Moscow attic working on *Tartuffe* and *Three Sisters*, together with a group of actors, that he devised the physical actions and improvisations. His frontier, clearly a quantum leap, led him away from the actors' reliance on the re-creation of a past event — a series of emotional memories, which adroitly strung together, had become the core of the role — toward the individual actor's creation of an event *here and now*. He accomplished this through his creative intuition, beginning with physical actions and improvisations.

Numerous explanations, including the post-modernist one of the death of character, have been forthcoming for this evolution. What is clear, however, is that in this period of transition the imitative aspects of creating a role, or simply of performance, have become both empty and insufficient. We now often seem to be going through the motions of the imitative aspects of our performing/theatrical past as a way of searching for our present, our here and now. Some continue to hang on to structures devoid of any true meaning ("Be liked and you will never want," says Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*); constantly reverting to cliché and stereotype. Others — actors in the active sense of the word, be they performers or directors — are as keenly aware and troubled by this as I am (Eugenio Barba, Spalding Gray, and Jerzy Grotowski come to mind). Peter Brook, in working on his Paris production of Genet's *Balcony*: "Long evenings of very obscene improvisations served only one purpose: they enabled this hybrid group of people to come together and begin to find a way of responding directly to each other." He searches through what he calls "the radar system of finding one point, two points, three points, and somewhere in between those is what you are looking for." The French director Antoine Vitez speaks of frontiers that we arrive at, places where no particular direction is indicated, "as in Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, the Zone none of whose paths are straight, moist hellish images, everything, the Styx, the dog, the customs-house ..." He has come closest, perhaps only tangentially, to the sense of frontier that I am following; frontiers may exist in any direction that we place them, not necessarily straight paths.

What the performer (or director) faces at this point is precisely what was facing Hamlet when he asked, "To be, or not to be." Whether or not to confront both our selves and our environment(s) in the course of our work, whether or not to *be*, within the fullness and plenitude of our work; to begin, simply to be.

# Performance Manifesto #78

William Pope.L

## Performance Manifesto # 78

written before the 3rd performance of 3rd I at PLS May 18, 1985

~~The Death of Performance; My Mother; Myself~~  
- The Death of Performance; My Mother; Myself

Some things you know in advance. Like death. yet in the end it escapes you. life is like that too. Hope also.

Dr. Chvr. Chvr

Today I been thinking about my mother. I see her in her house ~~which is~~ a little <sup>calm</sup> in a narrow house on a rock ~~street~~ street in <sup>place</sup> place specifically carved out for black folk.

When I think about my mum I frequently become sad not depressed mind you but sad. A sadness which flows like a wave over the horizon of my eyelids. I ask myself: why all the drama and deny it with a ~~point~~ point of indignation.

My mother is older today than she has ever been before.

this is logical yet I am surprised all the same she is sitting propped up in her bed. the tv is at ~~the~~ foot of ~~the~~ bed. the walls are ~~made of the~~ made of the ~~that~~ that ~~who~~ who size fills her. peace with the eye of a ~~holic~~ holic. she has a book in one hand the other ~~is~~ is in her lap. it twitches when the television sparks with static text to ~~the~~ bed, next ~~to~~ to her hand is an island containing black cigarettes, a tumbler of beer, ~~a~~ a ~~poison~~ harlequin novel and several books of matches. she is asleep. her breath is still. the room glows like a funeral pyre.

and I am sad but jubilant in a milky wet of way for my mother's death is my ~~pleasure~~ ~~breath~~ breath scribbled in this restaurant waiting for the theatre to open; avoiding ~~my~~ my attention whose ~~prime~~ prime isn't mentioned for I am a performer going ~~to~~ to my death.

# Mercer Runway

## Jacques Chwat

Description: Jeffrey Greenberg

*Mercer Runway is the third of Chwat's series of "runways" or "WorkProjects". (WorkProject – or simply work – is what Chwat has taken to calling his work rather than pieces or projects...) One lasted a week; one nearly a month; and this one, aside from its preparation, less than two hours. In "Mercer Runway", there was no false camaraderie, no false brotherhood, no false intimacy, no false moves. Participants were asked to bring something to share either with one of the others or with the group, and were told that they could bring a musical instrument as well.*

Sunday, January 27, 1985.

Jacques arrives at five in the afternoon to prepare the space: clearing it; cleaning it; washing the floor (three hours). As darkness falls he checks to see if the space is dark enough, whether windows need to be covered? The wood stove is lit, then the candles which Jacques finally places leaving one a few feet off the center of the space. Participants begin to arrive around eight o'clock – over the next half hour – besides Jacques they are Charles Allcroft, Chris Gallagher, Jeffrey Greenberg and William Pope.L.

As each arrives Jacques asks, "Please remove your shoes and socks, and find your place." Some sit upright, others lay flat, fairly isolated, at least five feet from the other. Few speak; the firelight and darkness urge silence. Jacques sits leaning against a wall, then asks us to try to shed our previous outside existence and simply *be* here fully. Now Jacques rises and walks slowly, with his hands behind his back, to Charles (the last to arrive). He offers his hand to Charles to help him rise, and together they walk to the wall where Jacques sat. A large sheet of blank paper – off-white – has been tacked against the wall, hanging from floor to ceiling. To the right is a pencil sharpener to which is fastened a bundle of pencils. Jacques asks Charles to stand with his back against the paper and proceeds to trace Charles' outline onto the paper: first the head, then right shoulder, left shoulder, right arm, left arm, torso, right leg, left leg – while the others watch this little dance or stare into the fire. Jacques leads Charles back to his place and he returns to his. They sit looking at each other, staring into space and into the fire.

*We must not build on the good old things but on the bad new ones.*

– Bertolt Brecht to Walter Benjamin

Jacques rises again and walks slowly with his hands behind his back (as before) toward William, the next to last to arrive, and leads him to the paper and traces his outline(s) as with Charles; then leads him back to his place. Jacques returns to his place and we continue to sit.

Jacques repeats this leading, tracing, returning with the two remaining men, Chris and Jeffrey.

All sit quietly. Finally Jacques approaches Jeffrey and whispers, asking him either to work with the musical instrument that he has brought or with one of the objects

he may want to share. Jeffrey opens a broken, taped portfolio and shows its contents: they appear to be an architectural project for a would-be fast food joint called "Philly Mignon" — drawings, watercolors, felt papers, colored sheets, cut-outs and remnants. He passes them around, then when they have been returned to him announces that he had found the portfolio in the street, ostensibly left there by a Willard Chang. They sit in silence looking to Jacques... until he rises and whispers in Chris' ear. Chris stands, smiles, walks over to Jeffrey to offer him a Lifesaver, offers everyone a Lifesaver, then sits.

Jacques rises pulling the string of a child's musical toy. The faster it rolls, the faster and harder its arms beat on the bars of a four-bar marimba, and as it turns different bars are brought under the beating arms. Walking back and forth he makes his music — a music for a challenge. Most taken by this challenge is Jeffrey, grabbing at the string, trying to take control of the instrument; however, he is not certain of the challenge or perhaps not up to it...his actions seem weak and Jacques finally withdraws the toy from his reach. Jeffrey remains in his spot, fixed.

Jacques quietly asks William what he has brought. William rises and whispers to Jeffrey. They walk into the adjoining room. Moments later the window opens and William yells out, "Hey you guys, why don't you come up here? We're having a party! Come on!" The window shuts and they return. They all sit.

Jacques approaches Charles, who is lying flat on his back. Charles gets up and asks each one whether they have gloves. Everyone does. Then, crouching by the wood stove, he begins to play with a metal bowl which has a small, metal chain in it. Swirling the chain, he grabs a large cardboard tube and places the bowl on top of it, beginning a sort of balancing act. Whistling with a clown's siren whistle, he pulls the chain from the bowl, causing the bowl to teeter. On his hands and knees he pushes the tube and whistles until it falls with a startling (but expected) crash and pushes the remains under the wood stove, then crawls behind it picking up the cinder shovel along the way. Now on his back, he slowly scrapes the shovel up and down the rising exhaust column, a series of hollow, metallic sounds muffled by soot. Charles stops, picks up the bowl, tube, and chain, and, whistling, pushes them slowly across the floor, now on his hands and knees, now on his back, now on his stomach. By the time he reaches the other end of the room (nearly thirty feet away) he collides the tumbling, teetering mass into a stand of ladders which he climbs, dragging his objects with him and taking, as well, a sheet of cardboard lying against the wall. He, together with his cache, almost falls; he fights for his balance; finally perching his sculpted mass on the top rung, and, as a final gesture, attaches a red light bulb to the mass. Descending warily, he finds a new place for himself far from the others.

All continue to sit quietly until invited by Jacques to share some bread, cheese, fruit and tea.



# Useful Fictions (1975)

Allan Kaprow

Photos: Bee Ottinger

1

A and B (close behind)  
walking up long hill (or flights of stairs)

A, holding large mirror before face  
keeping eyes on B's reflection, throughout  
B, copying A's movements

at top, A telling story of ascent  
tape recording it  
B, listening



B and A (close behind)  
walking backward down hill (or flights of stairs)

B, holding mirror before face  
keeping eyes on A's reflection, throughout  
A, copying B's movements

at bottom, A telling story of descent  
tape recording it  
B, listening



A, alone, retelling story  
of ascent and descent  
recording this on tape





**2**

**A and B (close behind)  
walking backward up long hill (or flights of stairs)**

**A, holding mirror before face  
keeping eyes on B's reflection, throughout  
B, copying A's movements**

**at top, B telling story of ascent  
tape recording it  
A, listening**



**B and A (close behind)  
walking back to back down hill (or flights of stairs)**

**neither looking into mirrors  
copying what's sensed  
of each other's movements**

**at bottom, each going own way**





3

A and B (close behind)  
walking back to back up long hill (or flights of stairs)

both holding mirrors before faces  
keeping eyes on each other's reflections, throughout  
copying each other's movements

at top, A telling story of ascent  
then B telling story of ascent  
tape recording them



B and A (close behind)  
walking forward down hill (or flights of stairs)

B, holding mirror before face  
keeping eyes on A's reflection, throughout  
A, copying B's movements

at bottom, B telling story of descent  
tape recording it  
A, listening



B, alone, retelling story  
of ascent and descent  
recording this on tape

# USEFUL FICTIONS



When alone, telling stories  
of ascent and descent  
recording them on tape

- for Eleanor and David Antin

Useful Fictions is about ups and downs, literally and figuratively. A couple climbs and descends hills or flights of stairs, three times. But while they do so, they are occupied with looking backward in a mirror, walking backward while looking forward in a mirror, walking back to back looking at each other in mirrors. Though they can feel that they are going up sometime and down sometime, it isn't easy to see it. Above all, they seem to be engaged in copying each other, rather than with where they have come from or are going to. Reflecting what they see, they are apparently a closed system, getting nowhere energetically.

To each other they tell stories about their up and down, and they fix these stories on tape. Later, the stories are modified, more or less, by retelling them alone. The first eight stories, shared, edited or reflected upon, influence the subsequent climbs and descents in uncertain ways. As externalizations of fantasy and recall, they color the events to come more concretely than memory by itself. They are hindights like "funny" mirrors that distort enough to cause a reaction to one's ordinary idea of things. So the stories are a way of looking ahead.

After the last descent, without mirrors, the partners tell their stories to themselves and a tape recorder. Where the recorder was used earlier to store and revise "fictions" of experience, now it is able to become a personal diary free from the constraints of another person's presence. These private recordings, along with the previous ones, are in turn subject to revision, can be shared as secrets if wished, or may be completely erased. In terms of feelings and small but significant changes in behavior, the ups and downs can lead anywhere. That is why fictions are sometimes useful.

The Activity was carried out by a small number of couples in and around Florence, Italy, in December, 1975. It was sponsored by Galleria Schema.

## Postscript to 'Useful Fictions' (1985)

Allan Kaprow

Ten years have passed since a small group of us did this piece in Florence. Compared with current taste in performance art for staged, showbiz entertainments, its deadpan routines enacted without audience throughout that city, seem remote.

But Useful Fictions was close to the experimental arts of those days. It shared a prevailing minimalism of means and open-endedness in interpretation. It shared as well an involvement in the real environment; and in personal and social psychology. And, in keeping with these interests, its subject matter and methods bore little or no resemblance to the traditional arts. Activities, events, body art, land art, noise music, *ordinary*-movement dance, found-poetry, conceptualism and the like, all were unconcerned with high or low art and their internal, historical dialogue. The art world merely granted permission to do something other than art. It was the real, changeable world, the people in it, the ideas we used in making sense of that world, and the ways we behaved in it, that formed the nub of the quasi-art of those days.

Within this general setting, Useful Fictions was also typical of my own work during the first half of the 70's. It focused on what, for that time of social upheaval, was a compelling fascination with human relationships: whether or not there were ideal kinds of relationships, whether or not they could, (or should) be controlled, and if so, how. And often my work particularly played on what "society" does to relationships and on what the small margin of unpredictability in all relationships does (or might do) to society. That is, the slippage in human intercourse attracted me.

While reformers all over the world were promising to make relationships wonderful, or at least better than they seemed to be — I'm thinking of drugs, free sexuality, love-ins, communal living, group therapies, gurus from the East — I had no clear idea of what our problem was, much less its solution. I was sure there was a problem, though. I was part of it and was very curious.

So, during that period, my "Activities" (as Michael Kirby called them) were experiments to find out what a relationship might be under the special conditions of a piece. Usually, they would involve two, three or four participants (including myself) who would carry out a plan of simple transactions in the everyday world, without an audience. Occasionally there were pieces for one person alone, in which consciousness of self and one's constant inner chattering amounted to exploring a "relationship."

In other words, the pieces were model situations in the same way that group therapy sessions, or communes, were models to test relationships within relatively known and governable limits.

Ordinary social life also allows relationships to form within relatively known and governable limits. These almost define what "relationship" means. Society's learned rules are in principle no different than those of an Activity, just more complex and more internalized over a lifetime. So they're easily ignored or merely accepted without needing attention. For instance, the simple forms of verbal politeness "thanks", "please", "you're welcome"... In an Activity, however, everything you do is italicized, stands out like a sore thumb, because it's reframed or more or less disconnected from practicality. It's like practicing tying your shoe when you already know how.

Yet at the same time the Activities' subject matter and enactments are exactly the routine behavior that is normally ignored: stares, body mimicry, politenesses, mutual assistance, and mutual indifference. And because ordinary life is not filtered through an art "medium" like sculpture or fiction, but is undertaken as a direct experience by acting life within life and not on a stage,

the question of human relationship (in this case) becomes a little glaring, perhaps scary, even silly. Those pieces in the early 70's had no moral bias, they didn't judge what anyone should feel in relating or not relating, and they had no evident outcome (the way, say, "primal therapy" had release from infantilism as its goal). That's why they were uncomfortable (to me too) and silly. The dumbell exchanges cast in exaggerated formal moves that you see in *Useful Fictions*, like all of my pieces then, were the equivalent of real life situations while real life was happening at every moment of the Activity. You couldn't put real life aside the way you could in watching a play.

This is what gives to *Useful Fictions* its absurdity and flatfooted humor. Just think of yourself being person A. Your partner, person B, whose name is Ginevra, is someone you just met because she showed up to be in the piece, which she'd been invited to take part in by the sponsor Galeria Schema. She looks like a cousin of yours from Philadelphia.

There is a meeting to discuss practicalities with about sixteen people who will do the piece. (Two couples decide not to go on.) You're given a mimeograph of the plan, two tape recorders and mirrors and then you leave the gallery and go out into the street. The other partners do the same. They walk off in different directions, and you and Ginevra stand there and talk it over, and you decide to climb up and down three places: the winding back stairs of the *Duomo* leading to the top; the stairs of an apartment building where friends of Ginevra's live; and the long hill to the church of *San Mineato al Monte*.

You and Ginevra carry out the plan that day and the next, intersecting it with other things you both have to do, like giving a talk at the Art Academy or Ginevra's part-time job at a bookstore. You climb and descend your chosen stairways and hill, facing each other, back to back, copying each other's movements, your frowns, grimaces and smiles, either in reflection (which is a copy) or directly. There is much giggling, winking and face-pulling in the mirrors; and stumbling, too since it's not easy to walk ahead or backwards looking in a mirror or at each other. Occasionally passersby look at the two of you, and then continue on.

You talk informally all the time of course, sometime tricking each other by copying your partner's speech (Ginevra likes imitating your simple Italian). You take time to go to a restaurant for lunch or supper. You stop in at the apartment of Ginevra's friends and they play American rock music on their stereo and talk politics.

Then following the first two climbs and descents, you and Ginevra, alternately tell the tape recorder your accounts of what you had just done and experienced. You do this in each other's presence. This makes the story-telling absurd (you're talking to the machine instead of your partner) and you both tend to parody the events. So the stories, when they're played back, seem very far from what you thought you'd done. You laugh about that and decide some of the stories are better stories than others.

But after the last climb and return you are alone, and this time you talk into the recorder to tell what you might suppose was the real truth or the real truth about the real fiction; of all your climbing and descending and your copying, and of your relationships with Ginevra. You alone listen to the playback and perhaps you decide to change it. You decide against playing it to her. She is off somewhere talking to her tape recorder, telling her truth or not.

Ginevra tells you later that she won't play her last tape for you because you wouldn't be able to understand her rapid Italian (which isn't quite true). But she does play the tape, she admits, for her friends in the apartment building.

This is a relationship alright, but what kind of relationship? Should it have been sexually intimate, or intimate in some other way, to have been a real relationship? Should it have been a more formal relationship, instead, to acknowledge your cultural differences (you're American, she's Italian), your gap in ages (you're twice her age), your role as guest artist (she's a student in the Academy)? Would that have made a more honest relationship?

Should the piece have been less silly; should it have been more serious befitting a serious art work? Would that have made a respectful and insightful relationship, one worthy of both of you, and doing honor to the sponsor? Should there have been some form of advantage at the end, something you could point to as proof of a real relationship? What did you and Ginevra expect of one another?

These questions were not in my awareness ten years ago. So I never even hinted at them, I suppose, in presenting the piece to that small group of hesitant participants in Florence. In passing, I mentioned some of the obvious parodies built into those climbs to the heights and sinkings to the depths in many relationships; and those one-upman copies of each other's behavior, like the blind leading the blind. But I never scratched any deeper than these generalities.

I did hope that such a piece would mediate in some way between art, psychotherapy and not-so-plain life; that the participants would see that each of these was a fiction that could be useful for understanding ourselves and our relationships. But I didn't say it.

In retrospect, if there was any important omission from my presentation to the groups when we first met and when we assembled together at the end, it was in failing to bring this intention to the discussion. It might have shifted the perspective substantially.

I'm now interested in frankness of intention when that's known. Sometimes it's not clear; but when it is, withholding it may be unkind to the good will of those who agree to take part in your experiment, and it may get in the way of fulfilling the piece. Intention and expectation may be replaced by very different results in a piece, and that is interesting for everyone to discover. Intention is what most of us always have when we engage in any considered action. It is neither good nor bad, though it might be mistaken. Expectation is what we demand of the result of our intention (like when we bet on a favorite and it doesn't come in). In any case, it is simply part of the whole complex of human affairs. Artworks, despite the myth of their self-sufficiency, have no more a life of their own that "life" has a life of its own.

# Notes Toward an Adequate Interventionist [Performance] Practice

## Bruce Barber

*(This is the second part of a two part text. In part one the author angrily surveys the current state of performance activity and sets up the need for a politicized performance practice. — Ed.)*

### Part Two: The Exemplary Action and Interventionism

By the early sixties the International Situationist group (Situationiste Internationale) had already developed strategies for continuing the critique of bourgeois society begun by the surrealists, but their revolution was to be very different from the "revolution of the mind" established by André Breton and his followers in the late twenties and early thirties. Theirs was to be a *permanent revolution in daily life* (a widely used I.S. slogan), one which could not occur in the absence of the destruction of capitalism and its institutions, or at the very least, their *radical transformation*. The I.S.'s welding together of the writings of various theorists: from Marx and Engels, to Fourier, Reich, Lenin, Mao... even Diderot and the Marx Brothers, which today seems so appallingly eclectic, allowed them to develop a highly original and persuasive analysis of the forms of social life under capitalism, and more important from the perspective of today, they theorized the means to resist *absorption*. (1)

The Situationist problematic is based on the Debordian description of the *society of the spectacle* which finds its correlative in the term consumer capitalism. From the very beginning of its use in the writings of the I.S. in early 1958, the *spectacle* was used metaphorically to designate a "one way transmission of experience; a form of 'communication' to which one side, the audience can never reply; a culture based on the reduction of almost everyone to a state of abject non-creativity: of receptivity, passivity and isolation." (2) In his book Debord describes spectacle more specifically as representation (and represented ideology).

*The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign appears as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was expressed directly has been distanced in a representation"*  
(thesis 1)

and later:

*Spectacle in general, as the concrete immersion of life is the autonomous movement of the non-living.*

---

## I Talked About God With Antonin Artaud

### Chris Kraus / Sylvere Lotringer

*In the summer of '84 Dr. Latremoliere, the assistant psychiatrist during Artaud's stay at the Rodez asylum between 1943 and 1946, gave his first interview in forty years on his experience with Artaud. This interview, excerpted below, was turned into a play by Chris Kraus and Sylvere Lotringer, and presented at St. Marks Church on April 21, 1985. Dr. Latremoliere was responsible for the administration of electroshock to Antonin Artaud, still a highly controversial subject in French literary circles. In the middle of the interview, Dr. Latremoliere produced a cassette-tape of an interview that he himself had conducted ten years before with Artaud's sister, the late Marie-Ange Malauspena.*

**Dr. Latremoliere:** I must tell you that when you called to set up this meeting, I wasn't wildly enthusiastic. The idea of raising the issue of Artaud's life again, thirty years after his death, seems to me beside the point.

For two years I was working with the director of the Rodez asylum, Dr. Gaston Ferdiere. I was Artaud's friend. Have you read the article I've written about this relationship? It's called "I Talked About God With Antonin Artaud." In it, I expressed pretty much everything I thought about Artaud. Since then I've changed my mind. I'm aware that Artaud is being studied a great deal. It's too bad. Artaud had no



*Spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation between people mediated through images.*

*(thesis 4)*

The I.S. applied the term in its various uses as defined by Debord to all aspects of social relations under capitalism. At its most incisive the term represented the hegemonic tendencies subsumed under capitalist ideologies. The I.S. antidote was the "construction of Situations," which from the outset involved the notion of intervention.

*The construction of situations can only begin to be effective as the concept of the spectacle begins to disintegrate. Clearly the basic principle of the spectacle — non-intervention — is at the heart of our alienated social life (emphasis added) And equally clearly, all the most vital features of revolutionary experiment with culture have stemmed from the attempt to break the psychological identification of the spectator with the hero; to sting the spectator into action... Thus the situation is made to be lived by those who made it. The role played by a passive or merely bit playing "public" must steadily diminish while that played by people who cannot be called actors but rather [those who live] must equally steadily augment.*

*(rapport sur la construction des Situations) (3)*

In the first issue of the *Revue I.S.*, the character of the situation is described in terms which reveal the fundamental importance of intervention as post-theoretical and *practical* aspect of their critique. The writer(s) proceeds to explain the features of the hypothetically constructed Situation.

*The constructed Situation is bound to be collective both in its inception and in its development. However it seems that at least during an initial experimental period, responsibility must fall on one particular individual. This individual must, so to speak, be the "director" of the Situation. For example, in terms of one particular Situationist project — revolving around an emotionally charged meeting of several friends one evening — one would expect (a) an initial period of research by the team, (b) the election of a director responsible for co-ordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the decor, etc., and for working out a number of interventions during the course of the evening (alternatively several individuals can work out differing series of interventions, all of them unaware of all the details planned upon by the others), (c) the actual people living the Situation who have taken part in the whole project both theoretically and practically, and (d), a few passive spectators not knowing what the hell is going on should be reduced to action. (4)*

This description reads like Kaprow's minimum definitions for a *Happening* (5) with two major differences — the emphasis on theory and collectivity. All the other elements: active participation by the spectators, spontaneity, "set" construction, discontinuity, the presence of the auteur/director who "manages" the event and so on. Yet the intentions and essentially non-hierarchical structuring of the situation reveal its *absolute political character*. This

---

message, never had. He was a distinguished paranoiac, with extraordinary ideas of grandeur and persecution. Those people he considered his friends were the ones he contacted when he needed opium. We never gave him opium, but he asked for it. We were his friends, but as soon as we were gone, we became his enemies.

To me, his written work is something of a cry. A cry of horror. Raised by a man who had *no sense*. *No sense* of other people. He placed himself at the center of the world. You'll see. It was just him and little birds.

Sylvère Lotringer: Well, at least there were the birds

Dr. Latremoliere: Yes... But really... *[knocks on table]* In any case I find his fame a bit exaggerated. How is it that he experienced such different things at such short intervals? That really couldn't have been him. But as for me, I saw him scream, heard him scream. Not against me! Never! He only yelled at me after he had left Rodez, didn't he? So, I believe that people will find nothing in Artaud's work. It will not advance civilization. I believe that someone who cannot control himself can be of no help to anyone.

Sylvère Lotringer: But the horror at the bottom of the paranoia, isn't that what makes his work important? His pain forced him to write what he wrote, then the writing itself made a shock —

Dr. L: I have here Artaud's complete works — have you read them? — and I've digested them little by little. I have the first editions of his books, haven't I? He gave them to me! Well, when you've read everything he wrote, you see there's very little that's

is no "simple" transformation of art into life or vice versa; in fact the word "art" is not even mentioned in this Situationist tract.

The given condition for the construction of situations is the *transcendence* of art, for art is, in Debordian terms, a representation, which by its very nature reinforces the spectacular nature of commodity capitalism, distancing the spectator from the phenomenal (and critical) experience of living. Hence the emphasis on the notion of reducing, by way of several interventions, the spectators to *action*. The Situationists also did not want the relationships between the "actors" and the "director" to become permanent; rather they planned for the temporary subordination of the team to ensure the success of the Situation. Direction itself was suspect, turning potentially *active* participants into *passive* ones. Total democracy was the object of the exercise; active participation by all, the desired result. It may be apparent from the quoted description that the context for this hypothetical situation seems innocuous enough; after all the "meeting of several friends on one evening," even when such a meeting is "highly charged" does not in itself constitute a particularly attractive model for a politically effective performance practice. However it is typical of Situationist rhetoric that strategies for disrupting the spectacle or enacting a critique, would be couched in language which was sufficiently opaque, so as not to cause "alarm" or rejection.

The construction of situations was not, of course, always directed towards such political "ends." The implicit anarchy implied in these life constructions was usually mediated by other intentions. Nihilism was not perceived to be an end result of the Situationist projects; rather the intent was to restore the situation, whatever it may be, to the praxis of life.

Elsewhere in this "Introduction to Situations" text, the authors distinguish their project from the development of theater, acknowledging that Brecht and Pirandello "have analyzed the destruction of the theatrical spectacle and pointed to the direction in which 'post theatrical' demands must lie." Beyond the reformist tendencies of the historical avant-gardes, the I.S. position was premised on the destruction of the institution of theater itself. One of the great slogans to emerge during the events of May '68 "Culture is the Inversion of Life," stands as one of the ultimate Situationist negations. For them culture had to be *subverted* in order to become life; and in a less ideal sense subversion and intervention strategies enabled social life (under capitalism) to be understood and acted upon in a critical manner. The most successful examples of this subversion may be seen in the many popular media forms: comics, posters and advertisements, which the Situationists appropriated, altered with their own critical texts and allowed to re-enter the public domain as highly charged vehicles of dissent. In this, the axiom — how can one criticize culture without taking for one's own (critical) use the objects of culture? — became the basis upon which the interventionist model could successfully convey a critique of the spectacular form of commodity consumption.

In his book, *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicization*, Alfred Willener notes the correspondence between the activist positions adopted by the Situationists and the initial negative projects of the Dadaists and Surrealists, which because of their

---

**understandable. Very little.**

SL: You know, it's no coincidence that everything important in modern art since the turn of the century looked toward primitive societies. Like Artaud. Civilization was already limping toward a loss of substance, things appeared and vanished at incredible speed. People needed to get back to the earth, to reinvent implacable rituals. And *that's* the theater of cruelty. It took Artaud to Mexico and Ireland. Do you find that so weird? To me, Artaud is anarchistic like the dadas. He's the echo chamber of this great breakdown that dada responded to: World War I, the first big bloodbath, this craze for universal annihilation. Artaud may be paranoid, narcissistic, megalomaniac, whatever, but it gives him a certain perception. Almost inhuman.

**Dr. L: Inhuman, that's it.**

SL: The *experience* of inhumanity.

**You see, you agree! If he's inhuman how can he contribute to humanity?**

But humanity *is* inhuman!

**I beg your pardon — ?**

Maybe we're not seeing the inhumanity of the notion of humanity!

**I can't believe you think Artaud is sensitive to civilization. I can guarantee he wasn't in the least... He was only interested in himself. During the whole time that I knew him he was Christ, the center of the world. Don't tell me he has contributed to the**

anarchistic tendencies forced these groups into the position of adopting or theorizing post-revolutionary "utopias," of dreaming — imagining a better life. And it is this tension between the material present and the imagined future which presented (and still presents), a fundamental problem for cultural producers on the left. Any movement which places *action* as the *a priori* condition to social change, irrespective of the means through which change is finally achieved, runs the risk of relegating theory to a minor position in the process. For the Dadaists and later the Surrealists, rejection became the *sine qua non* of their activist avant-garde positions, and it is in the moment of representation of disgust and rejection that political efficacy may be lost and absorption can begin. For the Situationists, intervention, subversion and succession (the "excision" of those authors who attained heroic or dominant status) allowed them to resist absorption. These strategies, in other words, allowed the Situationists to remove themselves from the cycle through which capitalism "manages" its internal contradictions and "crises" and integrates critiques into its own ideological system.

The Situationists were supremely aware of the problems initiated with the enactment of disgust; of capitulating to the Dada position which puts action first — (Action: "a priori, *that is with the eyes closed*, Dada puts action first.") (emphasis added); hence their adoption of the guiding ideology of dialectical materialism as a base for their individual programs of theory/action. Their problem was how to wed theory to practice — to achieve a state of praxis, without reducing their critiques to intellectual exercises. Thus the *spectacular* form of the *direct action* and other forms of activism: denial, resistance, provocation remained as a central theoretical bind, escape from which seemed impossible. The Situationist dilemma of how to refute the commodification of protest itself and supercede the "failures" of the historical avant-gardes, led them at times to the defence of nihilism:

*The active nihilist does not simply intend to watch things fall apart. He intends to speed up the process. Sabotage is a natural response to the chaos ruling the world. Active nihilism is pre-revolutionary; passive nihilism is counter-revolutionary. (6)*

However, by 1968, their critique of consumer capitalism had become more refined and had turned away from the slogans of the early sixties. The Situationists could now include themselves in their critique of capitalism and the cultural formations thereof. Ideological hegemony, although it was not described as such by the group, had begun to exercise its power on the intellectual life of the group. (It is no accident that the most resignations and exclusions occurred within the group around 1968 at a time when two of its most intellectually rigorous members, Debord and Vaneigem, were working on their major texts.) Thus in 1968 Vaneigem tacitly acknowledges the power of ideological hegemony (that force which makes-over any form of protest into its own ideological system) and presents a critique of all avant-garde formations as the endless capacity for capitalism to renew itself in its own terms.

*What the producers of happenings, pop art and sociodramas are now doing is concealing passivity by renewing the forms of spectacle participation and the variety of stereotypes. (7)*

---

progress of humanity, not in the least. ... He was sensitive only to his tremendous pain. And I studied his pain. With him. But his pain, hey. His alone. So don't place him on a pedestal.

What was it like to be Artaud's friend?

Oh, we chatted a lot. For hours. About God. And god only knows, his ideas about religion were disputable. He fashioned a kind of myth at which he was the center. So hey, let me laugh when they talk about his "message." There's nothing, it's hollow like this! [taps table] Besides, it makes no sense. I was there. Who reads him now?

Artaud thought he had a privileged relationship with God?

Privileged? [laughs softly] He was to be the one in power before the last appearance of God on this earth.

Artaud may have thought he was the center. He was in a way so absent, so lost in himself, so desperately deep into himself that he could connect to all despair. When you get to this degree of suffering, all the suffering in the world is a part of you.

I'm sorry, sir, but I've practiced years of psychiatry and I'm afraid I have to say that this notion of yours is romantically absurd. The more turned in on oneself a person is, the less open to the world...to love. That's why Artaud was junked. He was no longer socially viable. If we treated him — which is what we've been criticized for doing all these years — it was only to protect him from himself. And we saw him come around! He was able to write again, to draw, to talk with us. We gave that to him.

While he did not include the Situationists themselves in his critique, the knowledge that he could have done so is implicit, for by this time the Situationist group, which had extended to the U.S. and England, realized its own capitulation to the ideology of avant-gardism. Their experiment with marginalization was at an end. The ideologies which had sustained the group during its formative years were gradually eroded, the successes of its members and the failure(s) of the "revolution" of 1968 finally signed the Situationist group's death warrant. As Christopher Gray writes:

*The I.S. ... finally received the cultural accolade it had always dreaded: it entered "the heaven of the spectacle" by the scruff of the neck, and that was that. (8)*

Vaneigem's late texts are in fact not too far removed from the analyses formulated by Peter Bürger and others in the late seventies, and the debates which have continued throughout the early eighties: that the absorption/co-optation dynamic of consumer capitalism quickly renders most forms of autonomous avant-garde activity impotent. However the failure of the Situationists to supercede the limitations of their own critique and ironically their own successes should not deter us from the recuperation of some aspects of their "revolutionary" program which are still tenable today.

The failures of the Situationists can be said to fall into two groups. The first which I have already noted: the successes of some of its members (their exclusion or resignation) and the subsequent "watering down" of the group's original program of criticism. Secondly, the events of May '68 proved the repressive character of the state in removing all "illegitimate" forms of protest from its domains. During the pre-May antagonisms the strategy of intervention was never a problem in that it did not evoke the repressive authority of the state, or the institutions at which it was directed. However the consummation of the interventionary form became the *direct action* which without fail always breached the "rules of democracy" and precipitated repressive reactions.

#### EXEMPLARY ACTION

Anarchic/individualistic action

Spontaneous

Dynamic/direct/focused action

Absence of theory

Induces repression/confrontation

Cathartic

Non-dialectical

Provocative

Spectacular

Projective

#### INTERVENTION

Collective/collaborative or participatory in form

Planned

Exhibits less dynamism / less direct

Theory laden / movement toward praxis

Integrative, mediative/interruptive

Non-cathartic

Dialectical

Attempts to lessen provocation/encourage dialogue

Non-spectacular

Reflective

[Figure 1]

A brief description of these two forms of resistance may salvage the positive features of a critical praxis which could operate successfully in advanced capitalistic society. The *exemplary action* as an agitational form has been criticized by many groups who participated in the events of May and demonstrations in other contexts throughout the sixties, for its absence of theory and its anarcho-individualistic or heroic character.

**All my life I'll remember my friend Ferdiere saying, "If I had known what was to come, I would never have let him leave Rodez. I'm immensely sorry..."**

But look at what he wrote! What seems important isn't to know whether or not Artaud deceived his friends. I'm sure he did, especially the ones who decided about his freedom. That's the least he could do.

**That is not great. That does nothing to advance society.**

One of the pieces on the Tarahumaras was written at Rodez in 1943. A sort of delirium on Christ and the Cross, which Artaud rejects a few years later as priestly bewitchment. But the ones written in Mexico are very beautiful, crystalline. It's an extremely serene vision of the world. Which is unusual with Artaud. Everything is in its place. God, men, stones. Men are no longer the center of the universe. They're hewn in stone and the stones are gods. There's a sort of material harmony... a rocky, primitive, organic feel for it.

**You find an equivalence between stones and gods harmonious?**

That's what the Greeks said. Why can we accept certain things from the Druids, accept their beliefs as legitimate—but when someone takes himself for a Druid, and becomes a Druid again, we lock him up pretty fast?

**You don't seem to mind mixing things up.**

I have something here that may appeal to you. This is a tape I have of a conversation with Marie-Ange Malaussena, Artaud's sister, at Rodez. She doesn't see it at all the same way you do.

*The exemplary action consists, instead of intervening in an overall way, in acting in a much more concentrated way on exemplary objectives, on a few key objectives that will play a determining role in the continuation of the struggle.*(9)

Its advocates have argued that the exemplary action has a symbolic use value which is only fully understood after the event: that its "unprogrammed" nature allows the "fusion of various political tendencies" (10) which otherwise would not coalesce as collective protest. The Exemplary action allowed the so-called "vicious cycle of provocation-repression" to become immediately identifiable to those engaged in social protest. However, as with the union tactic of the "wildcat strike" (the illegal strike), the repression precipitated is usually so severe that it blocks the formation of other types of *legitimate* protest. It serves to reproduce the mechanisms of authority at which it is aimed.

In contrast *Interventionism* allows a range of strategies to be attempted without (usually) precipitating a crisis. Intervention as *interruption* or *mediation* allows several positions to be adopted by those engaged in the enactment or performance of social protest, as well as those at which it is aimed. The major problem is that it may simply *remain* at the level of theory instead of engendering an authentic state of praxis on the part of those participating. Exemplary Actions are actions without theory: Interventions attempt to put theory into actions, to wed theory to practice. Both are related, as was understood clearly by those who participated in the occupations, sit-ins, theatrical agit-prop events and other forms of protest evident during May 1968. However, their intentions and ultimately the "audience" responses are different.

The table (fig.1) of oppositions represents *generally* the differences between these two types of political [performance], what I have characterized previously as the enactment of protest or resistance. However, depending upon the circumstances and the type of event, Intervention can become an exemplary action and thus devolves into a form of political posturing, and its extreme, anarchic rejection or destructive nihilism. Of course, the meaning of this distinction becomes patently clear when we consider the use of the terms "direct action" and "intervention" in the power vocabularies of the State. "Intervention" as *indirect action* is usually precipitous. "Intervention" as a euphemism for *neo-colonial incursion* can lead to resistance and, ultimately, war. Intervention strategies used by the left attempt to interrupt the passive consumption of the dominant ideologies and contest the hegemony of the right, whereas the interventionary strategies used by the right reproduce them, thus maintaining their control.

We can examine the differences between direct (exemplary) actions and intervention as a critical strategy in recent performance practice in the U.S., if we consider the work of the Guerilla Art Action Group (G.A.A.G.) (11) and that of Adrian Piper, a black feminist artist/philosopher. The extent to which the G.A.A.G. was influenced by the work of the Situationists has still to be established. It is sufficient here to say that while much of the rhetoric of the group evidenced in published pamphlets, including the short-lived "Judson Publication," resembled that of the Situationists, the major influence and factor in the group's formation "on the Lexington I.R.T. Subway" October 15, 1969 was the Art Workers Coalition.

---

Marie-Ange Malaussena: Well, I don't want to exaggerate, but I believe Artaud's love for me was...total...in terms of...uh...let's say the love of a brother for a sister. I always felt deeply loved by Antonin. And that feeling dates back to our early childhood since we were always together, you might say hand in hand.

**Dr. Latremoliere: Hand in hand...you were telling me last night about those times when he would put his little hand in yours.**

Marie-Ange Malaussena: Well, it usually happened during our required daily walks. He always cared to know where I was and liked to walk alongside me holding my hand tightly...so I wouldn't...escape.

**Dr. Latremoliere: So he had the feeling that people could run away from him.**

Mme M: Yes, he constantly had this feeling. Always.

**Dr. L: Why...do you have any idea...?**

Mme M: I don't...know. It was his personality, I suppose, his way of thinking. He always feared losing those he loved. Well...that's exactly how he felt about Mommy, wasn't it? He was always very attached to Mommy. He adored her. He really did. I've told you about those childish little scenes he enacted in which I played the go-between, carrying to Mother letters that Antonin had written begging her forgiveness.

And later, when he was a young man, if some argument arose between him and Mother—nothing very serious, mind you—he would get a huge bouquet of flowers and present it to her...so she would forgive him.

As a late counter-cultural formation, G.A.A.G. members would have been impressed by the subversive actions of the other urban guerilla organizations, including the Weathermen, the S.L.A. and the Black Panthers. The Art Action Group limited its operations, for the most part, to cultural objectives, directing their critical actions at institutions of power in the art world. However the knowledge that power relations in the art world were merely extensions of power in the political and economic sphere was a given condition for their socio/cultural critiques. (12)

Prior to the official formation of the G.A.A.G., Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, the two original founders of the group, proclaimed in manifesto-like statements the character of their protest, which from the outset was marked by the antagonist language of the avant-garde:

*The destructionists are an opposition; they are a romantic movement. They are messy and aren't very polite. It would be kind of hard to show them at Castelli's this year. Not much to buy either. Maybe they are anti-American.*

Thus wrote Jon Hendricks on December 11, 1967. This was followed by a group-signed manifesto, known as the Judson Publications Manifesto of 1967 which declaimed:

*We believe the function of the artist is to subvert culture since our culture is trivial. We are intent on giving a voice to the artist who shouts fire when there is fire; robbery when there is robbery; murder when there is murder; rape when there is rape. (13)*

And later, on May 10, 1968, Jean Toche could open his Judson event with the proclamation: "I ACCUSE...I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE. I am a subversive, and I am a saboteur."(14)

In their first act of cultural "sabotage," performed on October 16, 1969 outside the Metropolitan Museum of Art to protest the mounting of the exhibition "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970," GAAG confronted the difficulties attending all forms of protest that establish a set of exemplary objectives and then attempt to meet each of these in a symbolic enactment of protest. (15) The objectives were clear:

- 1) ...to ridicule the Establishment and the false concept of Geldzahler to present a sani-pak cultural pastiche of the last twenty years, benefitting only the money-power collectors and dealers.
- 2) To protest the increasing grip and manipulation by big business of our cultural institutions as exemplified by the museum's acceptance of \$150,000 from Xerox Corporation to mount the exhibition.
- 3) To force Henry Geldzahler, the creator and organizer of the this exhibition, to take a public stand about these issues.
- 4) To show that the artist is being manipulated by the establishment

Toche and Hendricks arrived by cab at the Met. during the patrons' opening of the exhibit. In front of several policemen and other protesters of the exhibition, they extracted a large trunk from the rear of the cab and assumed their roles: Toche, the artist, and Hendricks, the curator/establishment figure. Hendricks ceremoniously helped the artist into the trunk

---

**Dr. L: So she would forgive him...forgive him for what?**

Whatever...whatever notion he had in his head concerning — well, let's see — in terms of the behavior he had toward her. Oftentimes it would have to do with something which most other people would consider insignificant, but which for him took enormous proportions.

**Is it because he lived these things with an enormous intensity?**

Always. Always. It was his temperament. He was extreme in everything he did, I believe. In everything.

**Extreme...**

The word is perhaps too strong? Not at all suited to Antonin's personality?

**Sure.**

Both in terms of his relationships and in terms of what he liked to...work on. And since he was a poet, in terms of poetry, in terms of working as a writer, in terms of a man of the theater. He was always inclined...toward the absolute. He sought the absolute in the smallest detail.

**And how did he express this search when he was young?**

His first impulse was to take a notebook and immediately start drawing boats boats boats all the time. So he was first affected by this matter of boats. Then at thirteen he started

and then announced to an assembled group of spectators, "We are honouring this great artist here at the greatest museum in America." The artist "fall-guy" was then asked if he would like some milk and when the "curator" received an affirmative answer, the milk was poured all over his body. Following this "vaudevillian" model and in quick succession, the artist received a tray of hors-d'oeuvres, caviar, champagne and eggs. At times, the "curator" enjoined the crowd to assist him in his work. After the eggs, the "artist" began to choke and said, "I can't breathe." Hendricks asked if he was alright and the police who had been spectators up until this time, according to GAAG's description of the event, decided to intervene. Hendricks assured the officer that "this was a performance." The officer replied, "No, this man is sick he needs an ambulance" and then stopped the performance with, "If this man is not sick, leave immediately; otherwise I will arrest him for indecent exposure, drunkenness, littering and creating a public nuisance." Hendricks replied, "He is not drunk, it is an art performance and we insist on delivery to Mr. Geldzahler." Eventually Toche and Hendricks received word that Mr. Geldzahler was "busy" and if they cared to call the next day, they would receive an appointment for another time. In their commentary after the event, Hendricks and Toche stated that the performance had not been completed as planned. A gun was to have been offered the artist; money was to be offered, which he was to eat; blood was to have been poured over his body and finally a gag placed in his mouth, the trunk sealed and delivered to the museum. The artists felt the work had been successful and couched their arguments in their ability to restrain the police from stopping the performance earlier than they did. As this was an art performance, the police were uncertain of which direction to take. Nevertheless they acted finally upon their perceptions of the event and their understanding of breaches of the law.(16)

The similarities, at least in terms of results, between this performance and the spectacular quality of the Situationist's exemplary action are clear: both provoke the repressive apparatus of the state. The cycle of provocation/repression had been initiated and apart from the easily identifiable didactic elements of the GAAG work, their overall intentions were rendered impotent by the intervention of the police. As with the exemplary action of the Situationists, the success of the performance in part *depended* on the intervention of the state apparatus for, so the argument goes, it is only through such precipitous events that the state's real power is revealed. However, it is *this* problem which presents the ultimate dilemma for those seeking to produce effective social criticism: how to initiate and sustain the criticism.

The GAAG objectives for this action were "exemplary" but totally unrealizable in their own terms. They remain instead on the level of representation of political protest — as satire or parody. The reason they provoke antagonism from the institutions of the state is that they appear to breach the legitimate forms of protest and thus be subject to charges of civil disobedience.

The interventionist model of protest or resistance stops short of contesting power in the terms described above. It attempts to interrupt the passive consumption and reproduction of ideology in "an all-over way" and for this to occur the strategy of intervention must begin with the complexity of the situation without establishing a hierarchy

---

writing poetry. And each time he wrote a poem, he read to me or to Mommy, *la mere*.

**Boats... You didn't say... "the sea," "la mer".**

Oh the boats were his passion. But suddenly, after a few years this passion fell by the wayside and he started writing, writing, writing all the time.

**Don't you think that the reason the boats became such a passion was finally because they were his father?**

Oh, yes, possibly, possibly. It's very likely that—how shall I put it?—Daddy's work environment influenced him.

**How did he relate to his father?**

Well. In fact, Daddy got very involved with—how should I put it—his studies. He was a humanist. A very pronounced humanist. And for many years he corrected Antonin's Latin translations.

**He enjoyed his schoolwork, his Latin translations?**

Yes. He enjoyed Latin tremendously. All languages. Greek and —

**Oh.**

Yes, but in terms of Math, he didn't like that at all.

**Yes...**

of "exemplary" objectives. Theory is *a priori* ("without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice" – Lenin); subsequently action is delayed, in order to enhance the opportunities for critical engagement *and* learning. If there is one aspect of intervention which distinguishes its "action" from that of the direct or exemplary action, it is this focus on the acquisition of knowledge, and the *encouragement of dialogue*.

Since the mid seventies Adrian Piper has attempted to achieve a complete state of praxis in her work. Her early seventies street performance/actions evolved into her construction of the "Mythic Being," a composite of many minority racial group stereotypes – macho/gigolo/pimp/prostitute etc. She used the "Being" as a mouthpiece or in her terms a "catalyst" (17) for a wide range of critical statements about racism, sexism and the alienating conditions of life under capitalism. Her use of the "Mythic Being" took many forms: photo installations, newspaper "ads" (*Village Voice*) and film or slide works. In each case the "Being" assumed a variety of poses and was usually shown with comic strip thought or speech balloons containing political statements or slogans. In the late seventies, Piper began to confront the problem of producing politically effective work within the art world context (museums and galleries) by constructing her performances in such a way that dialogue could occur. She began to *target* her audiences, presenting a range of political information in such a way that discussion after the event became vital to the meaning (and ultimately, the "success") of the performance. This of itself was not a major advance. Yet, Piper's "*It's Just Art*," performed on February 22, 1981 at the Western Front (an alternative gallery in Vancouver), is useful for examining the interventionist [performance] model.

The work's method of address was simple. Two slide projectors were placed centrally in the rectangular space visually preparing the audience for a lecture of some kind. One of these projectors contained a large number of slides taken from captioned news wire photographs on the Cambodian war, culled from sources as diverse as *Newsfront International* and the *New York Times*. The slides were synchronized with a tape recorded reading of an authoritative account detailing specific historical events within Cambodia (Kampuchea): the activities of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, Vietnamese incursions, mass killings, dispossession of land, etc. The information was raw, a compilation delivered by Piper in the third person, which maintained its objectivity and underlined the cold brutality of the facts. The montaged images and voiceover gave a literal impression of a society at war with itself, a country devouring itself from within while simultaneously being devoured from without. A short 16mm film loop of Piper as the "Mythic Being" silently puffing a cigarette was projected continuously over the Cambodian slides, partially obscuring these images. The second slide projector contained fifteen slides of the "Being's" thought balloons. Each contained a first person statement directed toward the audience. Usually this was coupled with an aside that expanded or contradicted the original statement. These statements provided a running commentary on the process of viewing (consuming) the performance and enabled the audience to participate in a critical on-the-spot analysis of *their* relationship to the events confronting them.

*With your presence here we collaborate to create a context of comfort and insularity and aesthetic enjoyment. As artist and spectator we create values*

---

On the other hand, he loved Latio. And as I said, Daddy helped him tremendously and uh, he liked it a lot. In any case, he always got very good grades. He was known as a "good student." I remember that at the end of each week he brought home color-coded little cards. The pink card meant "very good," and the blue one meant "good," and the green one meant "satisfactory." He never had a green card. Almost never, I should say. And when he had one he was very, very unhappy.

...He took back the name of Nalpas...

That's Mommy's name. That's Mommy's name.

**And how do you explain this metamorphosis, the fact that he finally abandoned, to a certain extent, his father's name for his mother's (sa mere)?**

Well, I'd like to add something that seems to me quite exact. That is, when he wrote letters in terms of mysticism, he signed Mommy's name. And when he wrote about current everyday things, he signed Daddy's name, his real name.

**Yes yes yes yes yes. I understand. And how soon did this come about? Did this happen in his very youth?**

Oh, very early. Very early. In his youth? No. It happened when he got sick.

**Very well. Very well. Later, as you mentioned last night, he got interested in Mexico.**

Yes. My most vivid recollection has to do with magazines. He bought travel magazines which carried terrifying images of Mexico. I told you last night the story of a young



together. (You read the papers after all)  
(Thought bubble 15)

The final element of the performance was Piper herself. Dressed as the androgenous "Being" wearing dark sunglasses, afro wig and pencil-thin moustache, she danced elegant funk to the strains of "Do you love what you feel" by Rufus and Chaka Khan, presenting  
*a vocabulary of physical energy, grace, femaleness, maleness, whiteness, blackness, sexuality, abstract seduction, narcissism (so far so good)*  
(Thought bubble 4)

The work, according to Piper, is an attempt to "transmit some information of a certain kind which is fairly clear politically" (18). On the broadest possible level the work deals with information overload and information loss, presenting the observant audience member with the difficult task of screening out the valuable information from that which obscures and defeats the message.

"You read the papers after all" can be taken as the ironic... "but I know that you really don't read the papers," an oblique quip at the detached indifference and moral lassitude of the art audience. However Piper's critique is more subtle than this. By withholding, or more correctly, obscuring the primary political information, she is directing attention to the aestheticizing proclivities of the art world.

A more recent Piper [performance], "Funk Lessons" of 1982/3 (continuing), takes the interventionist model further. (19) Simply, this work addresses the problem of racism by introducing white (usually) middle class audiences to the meaning and politics of Black Funk music and dance. The form of the work is constructed from three elements: an introduction to the history of Funk and the theory behind its meaning and success as a form in Black culture; the playing of Funk music, introducing the rhythmic components, the major bands, etc.; and the introduction of the audience to the basic steps of Funk dance. The audience become active participants/collaborators in the critical re-negotiation of their own class-based stereotypes. "Funk Lessons" are not simply lessons in "Funk," they are carefully orchestrated lecture/demonstrations in Black proletarian culture, delivered in a non-alienating manner which engages the audience in an investigation of their acculturated values and enables them to establish a critique. Questions were asked; answers debated. Here is a work which transcends the interventionist model of the Situationists, a [performance] which weds theory to practice and can assist in the positive critique of the passive consumption and reproduction of the dominant ideologies.

#### Notes

1. Co-optation, integration. A useful definition of hegemony is: "An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one conception of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religion and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations." Williams, Gwynn A., 1960, "Gramsci's Concept of Egeomia," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 21: 4 pp 586-99, republished in Hymes, D. "Re-inventing

---

woman dismembered in the heart of a virgin forest. Anyway, he was obsessed by, let's see, terrifying ideas. Yes. That's the word. He often frightened me. As a boy, he would hide in the house and spring on me yelling and screaming—as a joke. ... He wasn't very talkative about his feelings. He didn't say much, but we understood him. The family understood him.

**You told me something very beautiful last night. You made me understand that while he was terrified of the outside, he took refuge near you. Holding your hand. And shared...**

Oh yes, indeed. You're referring to the story of the famous dietetic bread. It's very simple. I don't know how he managed to get hold of a piece of this bread and since we slept in the same room — we were still children — when everyone was asleep, he'd get up, tap me on the shoulder and give me half of the bread that he had taken from downstairs. He probably found the bread very delicious and didn't want to keep just for himself all the — let's see, hm, I'm lost for words, I'm feeling somewhat emotional, Doctor... ... Yes. Perhaps he felt that he wasn't loved the way he would like to be loved. That's it. Yet, I'll tell you that in our house he always came first. My mother adored my brother and my brother returned her affection.

**He was never completely abandoned.**

Oh not at all. On the contrary. We were so happy to have him with us, so happy. He loved the children. And he behaved very very lovingly. There's a letter that touches on these things among those that have been reproduced. On the eve of his death I

- Anthropology." Also, the politics of the avant-garde and theories of marginalization are included in Burger, P. *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (trans. Shaw, M.) Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 4, University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Burger is also responsible for the most rigorous examination of the autonomy of artistic practice and the institution of art.
2. Gray, Christopher. *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationniste Internationale*. London, Freefall Press Publications, 1974, p.7.
  3. *ibid*, p.13 from the I.S. No 1, 1958.
  4. *ibid*, p.15.
  5. Kaprow, A., *Assemblage, Environments, Happenings*, New York, Abrams, 1966, pp.188-91.
  6. *ibid*, p.128 "Nihilism" I.S. No. 6, 1961.
  7. Willener, A., *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicisation*, London, Tavistock, 1970, p.148. Quote taken from Vaneigem, R., *Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage des jeunes generations*, Paris, Gallimard, 1968.
  8. *op cit* 2, p.15.
  9. Willener, *op cit* 7, p.163. Originally cited in *Tribune Du 22 Mars*.
  10. Willener, *op cit* 7, p.165. Descriptions of direct actions are described *passim* especially the M 22 occupation of the Senate Council Chamber at the Universite de Nanterre on March 22nd 1968. "The movement of 22 March has no political programme, no political blueprint for the future; it has only, over the next three or four days a certain grip, an analysis of what is happening and work directly linked to this analysis for the next week, in very concrete situations... before, things weren't arranged even from one day to the next, *we just did things* (emphasis added), without any pre-meditation whatsoever, we discussed, there was a certain prevailing atmosphere, then we acted, and that's all there was to it." March 22nd Movement Free Press (Cahiers Libres No. 124, Paris, Maspero, 1968, p.70) quoted in Willener p. 164.
  11. See G.A.A.G *The Guerilla Art Action Group, 1969-1976*, Printed Matter Inc., New York, 1978.
  12. *ibid*, *passim*
  13. *ibid* pp.5-6.
  14. *ibid* p.7.
  15. Each of the early GAAG actions described in their monograph have a list of objectives, a description of the action and a critical commentary after the fact. Many of their actions were symbolic in the sense that they *represented* an act of *projection*. They focused their actions, as well on the symbolic representations of institutional power—the power of the state. This was typical of the Situationist Actions as well. See Willener, esp. pp. 162-9 and Part V "Imagination," pp. 286-298.
  16. *ibid* Action Number I. A full description of the event is contained in the GAAG monograph.
  17. Catalyst and catalysis is discussed at length in Piper's "Talking to Myself," Bari, Marilene Bunomo, 1975.
  18. From a conversation with the artist, 23rd February 1981.
  19. Presented at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Piper has presented this elsewhere. A function of a re-marginalization of Piper's work is her use of advertisements to advertise her "Funk Lessons." These are placed in daily and weekly newspapers.

---

was at his house. He had asked me to put his things in order. Then time came for me to leave. He wanted to see me to the door. I told you about the great anxiety he showed about finding a corner, a hiding place, for his last writings. So for a while, for a long while, he turned around in the room, and finally I said: "The best way to hide your writings is to place them amongst the new notebooks I brought you. No one will look for them in this big pile." That—how should I put it—reassured him completely and he grew calmer. All this goes to show that he didn't trust the people around him very much.

**Do you think he guessed his approaching death on the very morning before he died, since he said to you: "it's dangerous for me to take too much of this tranquilizer?"**

Oh yes yes. He was taking chloralhydrate at this time. The previous day, while I was with him, he wanted to take some chloralhydrate with a glass of water. He took a tablespoon and said: "See, if I take just a little bit more, I could die of a heart attack, or a blood clot." And that's what must have happened during the night because the next morning they found him dead from a hemorrhage. I assume that somehow he must have increased the dosage without meaning to. And he died... What more can I tell you, Doctor, to try...to shed some light...on Antonin's anguished life?

**Perhaps you could help, Madam, by telling about the place...God had in your youthful life.**

Well, he was a very religious boy, you see. Up to the time he left home... And even after... He was very religious. I've always seen him rosary in hand. At home, I often

found him kneeling and praying fervently. Very, very often. Despite what people continue to invent about his character, he was a true believer. And I think that his faith in God survived all his misery.

**I do too. ... I was struck by...**

I've been delighted to speak with you, but right now...with the medicine that I'm taking...

*(End Of Tape)*

**Dr. Latremoliere:** I'm convinced he was impotent. That's what his "shouting" was about.

Sylvere Lotinger: If that were true, I'd pity potency

**Dr.L:** Artaud was unhappy to be the way he was. Yes, unhappy. So he wanted others to be like him. In emasculating others, he wanted to reduce them to his own dimension.

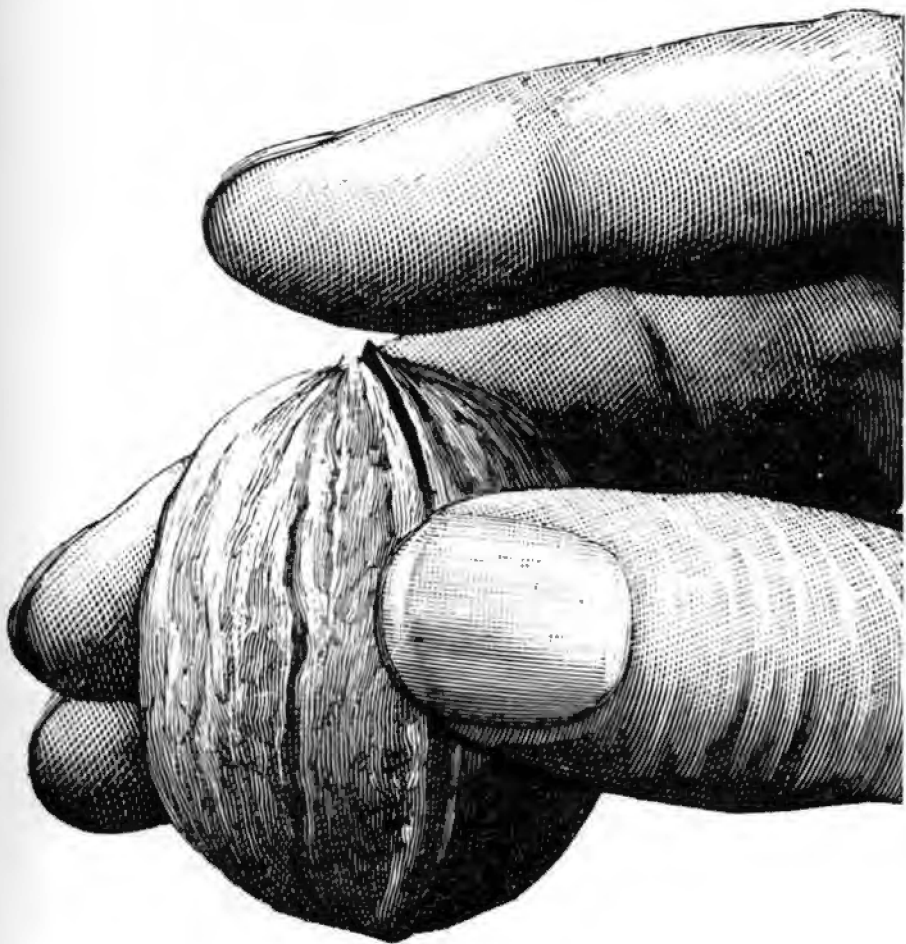
I talked about God with Antonin Artaud. I tried with all the patience I could muster to have him look at the whole of Creation, including his body, thinking this would free him from his mental prison. I could only guess what shameful erotic maneuvers his demons were exercising over him. Artaud thought his failure to uphold personal purity would prevent the Second Coming. Oh Jansenism, how much harm did you do? Artaud conceived of human love in a very strange way, turning the human procreative body into an object of abjection. I told him that the act of love was a giving up of oneself in abandon—a death achieved by thinking of the other's joy. Throughout the centuries, Christ has offered us a symbolic recreation of his Creation. I tried to make Artaud perceive *abandon* existing outside the sphere of sin by comparing it to his own ideas about art and death. But he was chained to a vision of a world repulsively organic and profaned. The virginity that he wanted so badly was outside-of-the-body; he fled in panic and disgust when confronted by any living matter and saw only bestiality informed by horror. Artaud protected himself violently against any kind of true abandon, rallying only his darker forces at the expense of real creativity. I wanted him to see how much plenitude and joy he might find in God, but sensitive only to his own resurrection-through-pain, Artaud pursued an evangelism devoid of love, the hero of a private drama. Sometimes I get the shits at the mere thought of what might have happened had Artaud actually looked for disciples, who might well have been attracted by the magical quality of his speech and his inspired appearance. What would have been the future of the human race?

Not surprisingly, when Artaud befriended members of the many couples surrounding him a Rodez, he immediately cast the other person into an adversarial role. He was never friendly toward my wife. At best, he mentioned her in the most neutrally courteous terms. Have I mentioned the gestures that he made behind her back to "exorcise" her alleged "spell"? Pff, pff, pff. Impotent to accept his insertion into the envelope of earthly being, impotent to accept the totality of himself, Artaud was impotent, finally to conceive of Christian love and love itself. I felt obliged to make him understand the unorthodoxy of these views. In my letter of July 18, 1943, I offered him a few awkward and perhaps not very charitable comments suggesting that only the *whole* of life turned toward the glory of God could stand up to diabolical possession.

SL When a crazy person writes and his texts are read and taught, they become literature. What do you do with this kind of literature? Why do you read it? Why shouldn't you read it?

*[laughs]* Yes. Well. Artaud will be forgotten very quickly. Very soon. I don't understand him anymore. I don't even feel like listening to him. He has nothing to teach me. Not about himself, nor about me. Nor about man. Especially not about man... Artaud won't last....

I didn't do literature with Artaud, you understand. I had a first-hand experience with him. It wouldn't have meant much, if there wasn't so much controversy. But if you want to know what I got from it, it gave me a notion of normalcy. The picture of the normal man. I mean the man able to live in society.



# EROTIC PSYCHE

## 1 collaboration = an oscillation

"You destroy me. You are so good for me."

Our elixir: to make radiant the tension that ricochets between our circuits, as the psychic g-force that pulls consciousness out of chaos, from rapture to rupture and back again.

"As lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis," you filter & fiber my blood, to reveal, as apocalypse means to uncover, by an x-ray of the infrared will.

Acts of transgression. Catalysts both disturbing & captivating.

*There is a knife which I do not forget. But it is a knife which is halfway into dreams. No image satisfies me unless it is at the same time Knowledge, unless it carries with it its substance as well as its lucidity.(1)*



## 2 Strange, fertile correspondences the alchemists sensed in unlikely orders of being.(2)

Alchemy in the late 20th century is an investigation in the living myths & materials—to place them under heat by the cultural-chemical distillation of crystallized knowledge.

*With all that is no longer or waits to exist  
I find the lost unity ibis mummy(3)*



## 3 We, brave transmitters.

Under pressure, bearing fruit with the taste of blood, the raw cry shaped into song. Rare minerals with a combustible history. We challenge the apparatus of control in an attempt to reinvent the rhythms of alternative futures. This "double" calls up the tense, evaporating distance between *entrance* & *entrance*; a performance door through which we enter. Our shifting script: to challenge and extend the realms of the erotic, i.e.: the irrepressible, vital life force.

*We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation.(4)*



## 4 The bomb is under the floor

The performance is enacted on a lethal stage, not unlike an open wound. This hyper-space bears the gravity of an interrogation.

*The history of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.(5)*

## 5 change & exchange

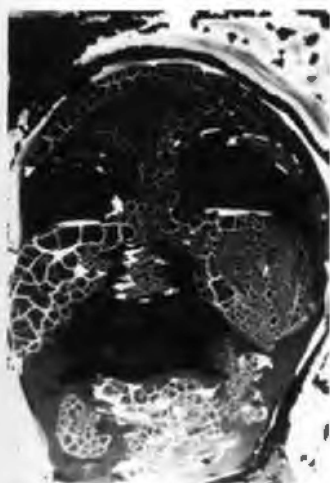
*The only thing a work of art can achieve is to create the desire for a different state of the world. And this desire is revolutionary.(6)*

## 6 the process: to etch & clarify

We create by strategic grace & elemental voltage the clash of obsessions, cut by light, edited by insistence. The mutation of accident & a modulated terror vacillating between conflict & inspiration.

*make the secrets productive.(7)*





## transmedia

*A suture of the polymorphous tech-knowledge. An oroboric circuit in the ecstacy of trans-missions. Station-to-station infiltration in the blood stream as electricity wires the terra incognita. There's wisdom in the cell, and nova synapsis, as tired forms crumble. There's an implosion of media. A collapse. The image has not yet survived the destroyed world. Discard the structure. metamorphose, leave the cocoon, pull yourself out of it!(11)*

*Warning: cynics beware!*

when the imagination asphyxiates; scream, breathe pure lightning. anticipate the ruins. assemble piece by piece all that escapes the science of despair.

*Nothing except a beautiful nerve-scale.(12)*

*The nervous system continuously sending and receiving information, distributing reverberations. It haunts the meta • body of thinking pleasure. A spectre of history in desire & desire in history. Transmedia is subversive tongue in the information war. The body of a warrior who does not kill or wound. We interrupt the night with our concepts. Our sirens run on alternating current: the urge is where the points converge. We investigate the blood of the corpus & the polis. Our mysteries as well as our machines connect in this way to Artaud's theatre "...whose only value is in its excruciating magical relation to reality & danger."*

*- Bradley Eros/Erotic Psyche*

## 7 crisis of the imagination = the itch that propels

*What is that thing our soul.  
A muscle or mucous membrane.  
What I am afraid of is the  
night of the bodies.(8)*

For us, it is the beauty of contradictions. In a culture of death, it is the power of love that links the philosophy of sex with the mysteries of the organism.

*-(Nikola Tesla radiated a blue light)(9)*

## 8 mediums. more crucial than phosphorus

the blink of the eye in complicity with the night.  
the poison arrow that is a shaft of light.  
the locomotion of veins, the amplification of shadows.

cinema, last of an erotic science.

the prima matera given electronic pulse.  
sound is light slowed down to be heard.  
the cognition & decomposition of signs.  
mobility. silence. immersion.

ancient messages on modern channels; pluck out the eye by remote control.

## 9 private history/public action

We germinated in '82 through a chance encounter of witchcraft music. This initiated a long unraveling of the intoxicating roots of a partnership.

The focus: magic, war & freedom

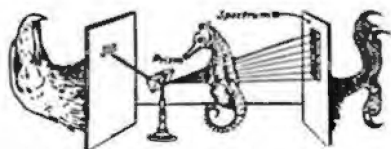
Our form was transmedia as a communiqué

The Act, our illumination, was trans-mythic gender splicing, subversive blood languages, and the kinosonic apparatus of totems & taboos.

*There exists a machine to record divergences. Their movements are translations. transmutations.(10)*

## 10 crimes of resistance

tomorrow we awake as criminals having revealed our minds on the possibilities of existence but in this world of carnivorous and psychic bondage there is no better way to live.



1. Antonin Artaud
2. Jim Morrison
3. André Breton
4. Hélène Cixous
5. Karl Marx
6. Jean Genet
7. Joseph Beuys
8. Heiner Müller
9. Dusan Makavejev
10. Monique Wittig
11. Julian Beck
12. Antonin Artaud

# INTERROGATION

*(from trance to transformation)*

*Have you ever committed dreams against the state?*

*Do you possess blueprints of revolt?*

*What are the limits to the flowering of your rage?*

*Do you support brutality in distant landscapes?*

*Do you stroke another of your own sex?*

*Is your unconscious colonized?*

*Do you harbor contempt for the ministry of fear?*

*Do you know how to graft and transplant a willow tree?*

*Did you or did you not construct the apparatus of blood without slaves?*

*With whom are you in touch with the surfaces of your brain?*

*From where do you obtain the means of supporting your disobedience?*

*Do you speak subversive blood languages?*

**TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE BURNING**

*Do you practice witchcraft, alchemy, or any deviant form of sex magic?*

**LOVE IS THE LAW/LOVE UNDER WILL**

*Can you distinguish the textures of intimacy?*

**I NEVER TASTED MY MOTHER'S MILK**

*Do you respect the laws inscribed on the flesh?*

**THE POLITICAL LIFE OF HUMAN GENITALS**

*Can you recognize sexual propaganda?*

**THE PORNOGRAPHY OF DISTANCE**

*Where were you the night they executed the tongues of dissent?*

**REVENGE IN FORBIDDEN ZONES**

*Do you suffer amnesia of history?*

**REMEMBER, AND FAILING THAT, INVENT**

*Are you deluded by the system of false tolerance?*

**NO IMAGES OF GODS IN THE SUPERMARKETS**

*Do you worship power or pleasure?*

**TO DISPOSE OF THE WHIP!**

*Can you heal your own wounds?*

**FREEDOM IS A PSYCHO-KINETIC SKILL**

*Do you uphold the separation of gender?*

**THE ARCH-TYPE OF THE HERMAPHRODITE**

*Have you danced with the beast of transformation?*

**THE EROTIC NIGHT WILL ALWAYS BE WITH US**

*Describe yourself... What are your intentions?*

**EROTIC WARRIORS**

**EROTIC PSYCHE**

**EROS AND PSYCHE**

— Bradley Eros/Aline Mare



**We Promenade. Quaint Selves.  
Negotiating With The Work.**

**Jeffrey Greenberg**



**We Promenade**

The Hand of Surety comes out of the sky blue, down to earth and sets direction: decisive, resolute, complete.

Clown roars, laughs, unravels itself, exposes genitalia, runs, runny nose, shoots in subway.

Rabbi hides in back, shoulder to the wheel, carrying on the Great Struggle.

Baker at work, flour dust billowing. Baker squashes tomato over right breast, red juice runs down belly, drawn over fat and curves into groin, accumulates, wets anus, red seed juice down inner thigh, knee, leg, sole, puddle. Lemon in hand, rolled down over right bright breast, over abdomen then across belly, diagonal down, then curving round buttock, picked up by left hand and rolled over back of ass.

With red flower in my hair and red lipstick on my lips, my head against a moss covered stone, I tongue and lick and kiss the algae.

Bread of dawn, Sun of endings, Rabbi holds our left hand, Clown our right; together we promenade, in full view, sending and receiving.

**Spectacle:** Clouds of Baker's Flour float over our terrain. Clouds of Baker's Flour float over bowl of water making dough and paste, glue. We're delayed by the glue's touch, squeezing it between our hands, rolling it over our chest, down our abdomen, over our belly, between our legs. Spectacle's searchlights made visible as Clouds of Baker's Flour pass, illuminated by the fires we have built to attract our muse. Shafts, beams, columns of searchers light can be seen through Clouds of Baker's Flour. Even Nuremberg's architectonic searchlight spectacle comes forth.

**Spectacle:** Approaching, now, large walls of sound, spheres of sound. Huge rippling surfaces raised and lowered by unnamed operators. Massive projections loom behind us, pushing pushing, forcing us before them...we aren't shackled, but there's no place to go, except forward. There is no respite.

The closed hand's resolve.

From out of the sky, from way over our heads comes the Hand of Surety, closed fist, with a single, extended pointing finger. We follow its direction. Gases part for it and our directed gaze. We accelerate forward through Baker's Flour. We stride forward.

Forward, into Rabbi's hat, removed so he could wipe his forehead; sweating in back room with shoulder to wheel; and we fly straight into the Shtreiml's receptacleness. Moving now only in relation to black hat's gravity, what is its tradition and historical presence. In here, we stumble; the Hand of Surety disappears into the dark receiving. Here we waver against the inexorable struggle; our passion endlessly received by a void made of the struggle's ancient past. Reading, studying, pushing and pulling and tumbling about.



Clown lifts brim and looks in...quizzically..."What is all this noise?" Puts on Rabbi's hat, looks in mirror. Vomits. Eats the vomit.

Down the long corridor, then to the right, Clown squeezes our right hand, Rabbi cups the left, Baker shields our view. Together, together, we promenade; sending and receiving.

## Quaint Selves

True theatre has always seemed to me the exercise of a dangerous and terrible act

where the idea of theatre and spectacle is done away with as well as the idea of all science, all religion and all art.

The act I'm talking about aims for a true organic and physical transformation of the human body.

Why?

Because theatre is not that scenic parade where one develops virtually and symbolically — a myth: theatre is rather this crucible of fire and real meat

by an anatomical trampling of bone, limbs and syllables  
bodies are renewed

and the mythical act of making a body presents itself physically and plainly.

If you understand me correctly, you'll see in this an act of true genesis that will seem to everybody much too absurd — too silly, in fact — to perform on the plane of real life.

For as of now nobody believes a body can change except through time and in death.

(Artaud, "Theatre and Science", from *Theater and Its Double*)

**Selves:** Battling, regrouping, propelled by forces, tornadoes, electricities, fields of magnets; initiating waves, pulses, transmissions; leaving droppings, sites, markers; anticipating shifts; avoiding occurrences; wielding great forces.

(Holding our hands in front of our genitals.) Chalk walls, sandstone passages, paths marked by thread: no quaint selves to be remade in a theatrical crucible of fire and meat: no Dionysus, but the painful grind of Socrates, blind aesthetics, reason before sight...still, we drive towards Dionysus knowing he isn't there.

## Negotiating With The Work

**What The Work Is:** Work feeds itself, circles in, collapses, recycles; representations are passed between its folds, evaporate, twist, bind.

### **The Audience Prepares:**

*The Rabbis have gone into your house?*

*They have foreseen the book. They are prepared to meet it.*

(Edmond Jabes)

### **We Do Not Make Art:**

*One cannot go to a thought...thoughts come to us.*

(Heidegger)

**Re-valuation:** If you look out toward the village you'll see the inhabitants have lit beckoning fires to attract their muse.

**Art's Body:** Of all the ways it might come, anger comes in waves.

### **When Striving Against:**

11. *In the Pushing-Hands Practice you must recognize and know the technique of your adversary. Differentiate the genuine attack from the feint. When you ward off, don't go too far out; when you roll back, don't let your opponent come in too close.*

12. *To defeat a thousand pounds with a trigger force of four ounces, you must use correct technique. If you pull the horns or ears of a thousand-pound cow, you will be unable to move it. However, if you attach a four-ounce string to*

*its nose, you will be able to move the beast easily. If the cow is made of stone, however, even this will not avail. Correct technique will not work unless it is applied against a living creature.*

*(Yang Cheng-Fu's Twelve Important Points—T'ai-Chi)*

**Song Of The Pushing-Hands Practice:**

...  
*If he goes up, you follow,  
If he goes down, you follow.*

...  
*(Cheng Man-ch'ing)*

**Only If Art Is An Adversary:**

*3. The substantial and insubstantial must be differentiated. Double weighting must be avoided — keep your weight on only one foot at a time. If your weight is on your left foot, you must use your right hand in attacking and vice versa.*

*(Yang Cheng-Fu's Twelve Important Points—T'ai-Chi)*

**The Work/Play Dialectic:** ...this will involve pushing and pulling and tumbling about in an open space which is created by neither of us but which is allowed by us to come to presence.

Yang always said: *I'm not a shelf, don't put your dead meat on me.*

Rabbi: [draws lamb shank over knuckles, then pours milk over hand.]...



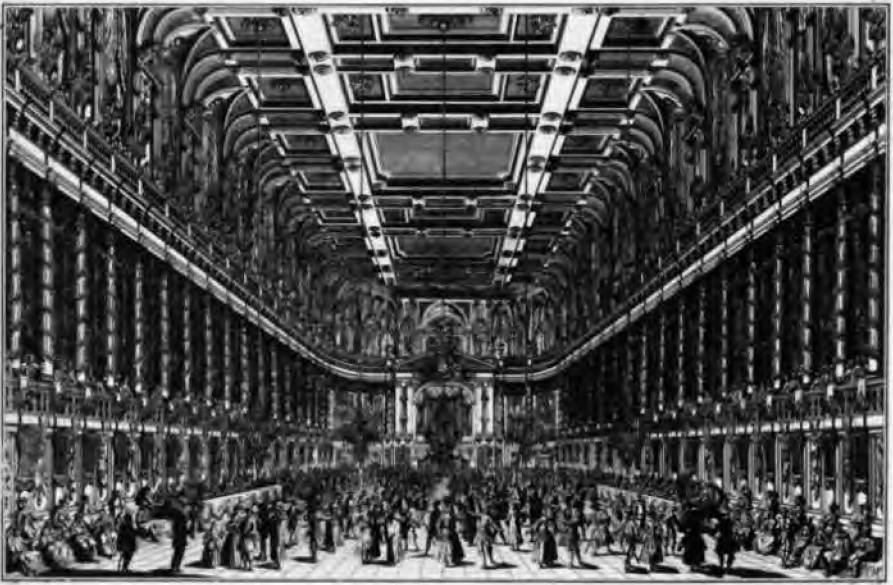
*Finally, we approach through the vast vaulted corridor, this, the culmination of our desires, endpoint, the Work in its perfect glory. A blocking and occupying force supported by corinthian columns uprooted from our ancient past. Adorned, ornamented, and priapic, a cupolla, primary figures, supporting entourages, solitary figures facing east, facing west, looking in all directions. All approaches are watched, all paths must lead here! Its eccentric, monumental, immovable sense of its own position dwarfs us.*



*Oh, well ordered world, our backdrop,  
Oh, shifting planes and surfaces,  
Oh, spectacle... Shall we walk up this step or that,  
Oh, open field...you beckon us this way and that,  
Oh, paradise...here we accompany you and you us,  
Oh, frozen moment,  
Oh, distance, calling,  
Oh, perfect world and bounded mysteries.*



*Oh, vast space, gilded super-structure. Here we can push & pull & tumble about  
in an open space that is not our own but which we allow to come to presence.  
Oh, structure that urges us to exit, for yet a grander and more urgent space.*



*Now, we shift; now, we are the center. Our space! We fill the floor; we occupy; this structure is of our necessity, not of its own, or of its own accord...that would be absurd...certainly! We are the prime movers, we are the courtiers. Now, with this social scene we synchronize. We dance together in this, our space and we rhyme with its majesty. There can be nothing outside of this!*



*Outdoors, amongst the mountains, world made visible by our structures, the land opens according to mystery's plan...Here, we promenade; here, we are romantic; here, we run under arches and across open fields; here, we stumble over stone, jump over ditch, crawl on dirt; here, we roll carts; here we climb up and look around, see vistas & floral panoramas. Silent city, silent nature... nothing much moves of its own accord. Oh, master plan.*

*We have entered triumphant, we possessors and look out to the edge, to the escape, to the frontier!*



Now, we return, this time equipped but no wiser. This time with tools and aids and we begin the task of smoothing, of removing the blemishes, of creating the perfect plane. The pure open surface without barriers...no barriers behind, none to the side or in front or below, so that we can careen around with eyes closed and not touch anything.

*Disembodied voice: I can only see it as a plane, a mathematical surface, empty, void, without hand holds or grips or footing. Jumping up and down, shorn of clothes, giggling, drooling, speaking, enunciating, expostulating, grimacing, groaning, singing to itself, jerking about like a puppet.*

*Within the earth, the open space...*

*How many are we and is there air enough? How does or did the air get down here?*

*In re-routing the open space, we close down the entry.*

*Within the earth:* This time we are letting out thread, ... not an anchoring rope. No handholds here, no footholds, certainly, no escalators. And the trail isn't simple: stones across a stream (scent lost), white thread on white chalk paths (difficult to follow). At the clearing, we find: Clown on right, Rabbi on left, Man at the center. Together they promenade, in full view, sending and receiving.



# Holding/Releasing

Sun Tzu said:

Ground can be classified according to its nature as accessible, entrapping, indecisive, constricted, precipitous, and distant.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*

*To Stop Bleeding. I walk through a green forest  
There I find three wells, cool & cold  
The first is called courage,  
The second is called good,  
And the third is called stop the blood.*

— Johann Hohman, *Long Lost Friend; or, Book of Pow-Wows.*

**METS WIN — BACK IN FIRST PLACE** BACK PAGE

**TODAY**  
Partly sunny, breezy, 66-86  
**TONIGHT**  
Soft drizzle, breeze, humid, upper 60s  
**TOMORROW**  
Partly cloudy, humid, 66-86  
Sports, Page 2

**HOME**  
EDITION  
SPORTS EXTRA

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1985

35 CENTS

AMERICA'S FASTEST-GROWING NEWSPAPER

TV PULLOUT: Complete guide to the week's viewing

## BARBARIANS!



**SALVADOR  
TERRORISTS  
VOW TO KILL  
MORE YANKS**

**Angry Prez  
warns:  
'Don't  
push  
us too far'**



**State Dept.  
murder-suicide  
triggers probe**

Shills mob chants "Death to America" as they burn Old Glory on the tarmac of Beirut Airport yesterday.

STORIES ON PAGES 3, 4 & 5

2.

# Suspicious Language

## Performance from a Writer's Point of View

Ellen Zweig

### I. Language is the Enemy: A Revolution of Poets

One of the clichés of the turn-of-the-century avant-garde most regularly reasserted, even today, is that language is the enemy. One of the facts most often *not* noted is that this idea originated, for the most part, with poets, those very practitioners of language art who sought to question and explore their medium. The history of this idea has been well-documented, so I will only reiterate it briefly here in order to emphasize the role of poets in its inception and continued practice.

With roots in Romantic and Symbolist poetry, movements such as Italian Futurism, Russian Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism were led by their respective poets, F.T. Marinetti, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Alexander Kruchenykh, Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, André Breton, Antonin Artaud, and others, to explore language as an abstract medium. Although their expressed motives were often political and, with the exception of Marinetti, were political stances with which we feel some kinship, their practice resulted not in changing their impossibly war-torn world, but in aligning language with both the visual arts and with music in a relentless impulse toward abstraction, minimalism, and the void. Both philosophical analogies with concepts that had originated in the visual and aural media and the social life of the groups of artists (poets, visual artists, composers all joining together to exchange ideas) resulted in a wealth of possibilities which pushed poetry beyond its usual boundaries and helped to push all of the arts to dissolve their boundaries and move toward intermedia productions, many of which we now call "performance." In some ways, this merging of art media has been the most powerful heritage of the poet-instigators of the avant-garde.

Explorations of language as an abstract medium continued well after the 1930's. In France in the 1940's, the Lettrists set out to list and categorize a number of sounds made by the human voice and body. In the early 50s François Dufrene broke with the Lettrists and extended their way of working by using first the microphone and then the tape recorder. Following Dufrene, writers as diverse as Henri Chopin, Bernard Heidsieck, William Burroughs, and Brion Gysin began early experiments with the tape recorder that heralded the beginning of "poésie sonore." This exploration of the human voice in conjunction with machine was evidenced all over Europe and found a home for many years at Fylkingen, Sweden.

Underlying all of this exploration is still the suspicion that language is dangerous. Paraphrasing Norman O. Brown, John Cage reminds us that

*Syntax...is the arrangement of the army. As we move away from it, we demilitarize language. This demilitarization of language is conducted in many ways: a single language is pulverized; the boundaries between two or more languages are crossed; elements not strictly linguistic (graphic, musical) are introduced; etc. Translation becomes, if not impossible, unnecessary. Nonsense and silence are produced, familiar to lovers. We begin to actually live together, and the thought of separating doesn't enter our minds. (Foreword, M)*

Rearranging language, in the modernist tradition, seems to Cage (our great modernist poet) to have great potential for changing the world.

Because the history of groups such as the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists is generally seen as part of the history of the visual arts, performance has been seen to have a history as acts of body not as acts of body *and* language. The physicality of language is certainly one of its aspects worth exploring, as evidenced in the work of artists such as Jean-Paul Curtay, Charles Stein (with George Quasha), Michael Peppe, Larry Wendt (both Peppe and Wendt have other types of discourse structures in their work such as narrative), and countless Industrial Culture groups (documented in the West Coast magazine *Unsound*). But what of the rest of language? Is it to be left unexplored? Is that a safe and proper treatment of the enemy?

## II. The Unspeakable: Spiritual Path, Political Protest

The most useful article documenting and explaining the idea that language is the enemy is Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence" (in *Styles of Radical Will*). In this article, which begins "Every era has to reinvent the project of 'spirituality' for itself...", Sontag compares the modern artist's attitudes toward language with that of the Christian mystic.

*Traditionally, it has been through the religious vocabulary, with its meta-absolutes of "sacred" and "profane," "human" and "divine," that the disaffection with language itself has been charted. In particular, the antecedents of art's dilemmas and strategies are to be found in the radical wing of the mystical tradition...*

At the center of the mystic experience, whether it be Christian, Judaic, Islamic, Buddhist, Dionysian, etc., is the unspeakable. The mystic experience is characterized by physical asceticism, hallucinations (for the most part visual in nature), paradox (which the logic of language cannot solve), and by a merging or union with the absolute. This merging has been described by countless mystics; the medieval Christian Adam of Dryburgh, for example, explains:

*We wish to talk about God, but we cannot say what He is, because we are unable to understand it, and what we cannot comprehend with our minds it follows that we cannot express in words. (Adam's "eighth stage of meditation" in "Introduction", The Medieval Mystics of England, editor: Eric Colledge)*

In *The Scale of Perfection*, Walter Hilton describes three ways of praying: 1. vocal prayer; 2. vocal prayer which is not "set, but follows the impulses of those who are in devotion." (a kind of improvised prayer); 3. prayer "which is only in the heart and is not vocal." Of the third kind of prayer, he writes: "The third kind of prayer is only in the heart, it is without words, and it comes through great peace of body and soul." (Hilton quotes from Colledge's *The Medieval Mystics of England*). Thus, not only is the experience of the spiritual impossible in words, but silence is valued as a positive sign of spiritual enlightenment in this tradition.

It should be noted that Sontag includes in her survey of artists who have explored silence (white paintings, black paintings, etc.), those who have done so through language, and quoting Novalis, she hints at a way out of the dead end of silence:

*There is something strange in the acts of writing and speaking,... The ridiculous and amazing mistake people make is to believe they use words in relation to things. They are unaware of the nature of language—which is to be its own and only concern, making it so fertile and splendid a mystery. When someone talks just for the sake of talking he is saying the most original and truthful thing he can say.*

Those who first declared language as their enemy grappled with it in this way. It was their enemy, their mystery, their medium; through it they explored that which is unspeakable.

Can this exploration continue? Sontag prophetically notes that "silence is likely to remain a viable notion for modern art and consciousness only if deployed with a considerable, near systematic irony." We hear this irony in the despair and laughter of contemporary performance artists who use noise, babble, appropriated and culturally mediated language in their work.

In her recent article "Imploring Silence", (*High Performance*), Kristine Stiles reiterates the avant-garde's plea for silence. Rather than seeing this plea as an alignment with a spiritual tradition, Stiles carefully documents the political nature of the plea: "as order crumbled and society successively babbled its confused, meaningless rhetoric, the performed arts repeatedly surrendered discourse to the power of the 'act'." Stiles' history of these acts is accurate, but exists purely in the context of the history of the visual arts. In fact, her arguments



are tinged with a kind of provincialism that defines "performance art" as something that came out of the visual arts and should stay within its boundaries. Thus, she argues:

*Performance art, with its origins in primeval essence, possesses special powers of transgression that can uniquely shatter the norms of post-industrial, electronic discourse exposing silence and corporeal experience to be the truly complicated languages of communication and expression that they are. These ancient codes, especially when employed by visual artists accustomed to communicating through non-verbal means, must become agents against the diseased rhetoric of our culture, circling round its death before the apocalyptic count-down.*

I have no argument with the concept of silence and corporeal experience as complicated languages, but I wonder why no one has viewed them as suspicious. In an age often described as one of heightened visual awareness (albeit through electronic means), that which we experience through our eyes has become just as suspicious if not more so than that which we take in through our ears. What is left? The body in pain, the scream of anguish, projections of the visual and aural that t.v. has inured us to, our reaction often one of disbelief?

Stiles weakens her argument when she asserts that she isn't arguing against all language in performance:

*It is neither silence, nor the abandonment of that rare experience, humor, that is advocated. Neither is it a call for an anachronistic return to primal behavior befitting a time when humanity lived in fear of nothing but animals like itself... The purity and strength of language remains embedded in its ethical and transformative capabilities; and our performative acts would demonstrate the results of finely-honed intellectual beliefs (philosophical system originating in language.) We would only abandon the use of our deformed, co-opted discourse that perpetuates our equally distorted social order...*

Stiles also seems to be arguing that language in performance since 1973 is linked to a fascination with entertainment that has perhaps soiled the purity of the fine arts. Here we might question just what kind of verbal utterances are possible in the model Stiles recommends. Since her central example is the brilliant performance work of Paul McCarthy, who uses every type of verbal utterance from grunts to phrases to narratives, from highly original poetic material to ironically delivered clichés, we begin to wonder just what Stiles means by "our deformed, co-opted discourse."

More importantly, what Stiles neglects to notice is that all languages are suspicious, subject to misinterpretation, carriers of lies and betrayal. It does no good to plead for silence, to single out words as carriers of deceit. We must examine all of the languages available to us, verbal, visual, corporeal, silent, with the same suspicion and distance. Only in this way, do we begin to explore the human dilemma, the paradox of language that contains both our destruction and our salvation.

### III. Language is the Enemy: Unexamined Codes

I asked a young friend of mine why he had spray-painted a swastika on a wall. He explained that it was because he was against it.

In their "visual landscape" called "Renaissance Radar," Alan and Bean Finneran (of the theater company Soon 3) present three murders. The victims are all a nude woman murdered by elaborate technical devices constructed in such a way that the audience can see that the murders are fake. In press releases and interviews, the Finnerans explained that this piece was about the "idea of murder and violence as product, especially the illusionary product of the California movie industry." (quoted from Theodore Shank's *American Alternative Theater*). This stated exposure and criticism of violence and illusion in the movies is belied by the images and soundtrack of the piece in two ways. First, the murder devices are fascinating and beautiful in themselves; the whole piece is permeated by a skilled use of technology. Second, a movie of the ocean is projected on a screen while a woman tells an interrupted narrative: she is walking on the beach; suddenly she feels that she is being followed; she feels afraid; she screams. This segment is repeated several times, underlining the murders. Many of the audience

members, especially women, felt this piece as an attack; the images and sounds were haunting. Yet, when asked about the use of violence against women in this piece, the Finnerans insisted that what they were presenting was "visual" and that they did not feel aligned with the images of violence in the piece.

This attitude among the directors of West Coast "visual theater" leads to a disturbing body of work. Groups like Soon 3, Nightfire, and George Coates Performance Works present technically dazzling and often stunning visual work. The performances tend to be slick, professional, and sometimes beautiful. The groups are against the use of words because they feel that words will limit the possible meanings of the work. When they use words at all, they use them unexamined, often denying any responsibility for their meaning. Sometimes the results, as in "Renaissance Radar," are frightening and reprehensible; more often, as in Coates' work, the results are inane. In all cases, this unexamined use of verbal utterance proves what the creators of these works believed all along — that language, the enemy, isn't worth their time. However, this self-fulfilling prophecy backfires because the visual codes, also unexamined, betray them.

#### IV. The Unspeakable: That Which Lies Inside the Speaking

There has been a great deal of very strong performance work that depends on language. Yet, these works are not naive to the dangers of language: their creators know that the enemy lurks within the very words they use, but they also believe that through words the unspeakable is attained. This is the other side of the mystic coin. Some examples:

The Wooster Group presents their version of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in *LSD Part 1* by speeding through the text at a break-neck pace. Ron Vawter, as the prosecutor, speaks through his lines, reproducing the intonation patterns of the original without their sense, getting sense through those patterns. Since Miller's play was in part a critique of and warning against the McCarthy trials, the Wooster Group's version seems particularly apt. At Salem, at the Congressional Hearings, and in countless contemporary political moments, language controls and betrays. The formal elements of performance in *LSD Part 1* becomes a powerful metaphor for the dangers of language; this play hits with incredible and visceral emotional force because the audience interprets the babble not as language with meaning, but as a sign of language itself. By pushing listeners to interpret at this higher logical type, the Wooster Group is able to get its point across without risking the opposite interpretation.

In his current monologue, "Swimming to Cambodia," Spalding Gray tells stories about his experience as an actor in the movie "The Killing Fields". These stories, often humorous or gruesome, are interspersed with facts about the self-genocidal reign of the Khmer Rouge. In this piece, Gray is Everyman; his stories reflect the views of his audience with all of their prejudices, their wish to forget or ignore the violence that doesn't directly affect them; their prurience, racism, sexism. At first, Gray talks fast, as though he'll never have time in the two-part 3 hour piece to tell it all or tell it right. As Everyman, he's shocked by much of what he's seen and titillated and can't find the right tone or the right words. At the end of the piece, as he tells a dream, he explains that he's telling the wrong story to someone in the dream because he cannot tell the real story. Inside the stories, facts, admissions of stupidity and petty obsessions, he hopes to communicate that which he cannot say.

Leeny Sack sits on a bed wearing huge earphones; she's translating. In her bilingual performance "The Survivor and The Translator", Sack speaks the Polish of her grandmother, survivor of the Nazi death camps, and her own English, child of survivors who must try to translate their experience into her own typical American life. She has stories to tell that aren't her own (in Polish we hear "Dachau", "crematoria" and other words we recognize though we know no Polish) and her own stories to reconcile with those of the survivors (in English she tells us about highschool, about wanting to be liked by boys, about weddings.) The metaphor of translator allows Sack to explore language in many ways, (through mistranslation, sound, narrative, jokes, etc.) and she does this brilliantly, while she speaks the unspeakable in some way that makes sense to us.

## V. Language is a Medium

*Awkward, I felt, at first, as if a stranger to my own tongue...  
(Peter Rose, Secondary Currents)*

Acts of language must intercept meaning, intercede with meaning, or interact with meaning in complex ways. We must both be ourselves speaking and watch ourselves speaking. We must listen.

One of the most exciting artists working today with language is the filmmaker/performance artist Peter Rose. His film *Secondary Currents* can almost be seen as a compendium of possible experiments with language on all levels from the phonetic to the semantic and narrative. There are no images in *Secondary Currents*; we see a black screen with white subtitles. These subtitles translate a strange voice that seems to speak in something like Swedish, Italian, Japanese, and gibberish. The narrator, whose voice we see instead of hear, hears a strange voice, a voice he eventually imagines as his own.

*so subtle  
was the imagined conjugation  
of our tongues  
  
I was able to discern multiple  
meanings from single sounds,  
  
to intuit some universal language  
whose boundless homophonous inflections  
  
rebounded  
from the keen surface of reason  
  
and faded into the pale mansion  
of thought.  
  
we abandoned our intention  
and lost ourselves to language...*

Thus, Rose's narrator begins a strange voyage into language as pure sound and as pure visual image. Yet, unlike the turn-of-the-century sound poets and concrete poets, Rose constantly intercepts the purity of sound and image with meaning. Using narrative devices and witty jokes, Rose forces the viewer to consistently struggle with meaning at the same time as the visual image and sound become more and more chaotic in a final great ironic entropy.

Rose's work and the work of artists such as Theresa Cha (*Dictée*), Mary Kelly (*Post-partum Document*), David Antin, Carolee Schneemann, Eleanor Antin, Armand Schwerner, Jackson Mac Low, Alison Knowles, Rachel Rosenthal (to name a few) suggest that visual artists and poets share a common task: to examine the mystery of language with passion and distance. Metaphors of translation, imaginary characters, and abortive attempts at storytelling often characterize this work. For we cannot take language at face value. "If words are to be uttered," writes Theresa Cha, "they would be from behind a partition." That irony that Susan Sontag recommends is everywhere in evidence; after all, language is one of the best vehicles by which we can say exactly what we mean to oppose and at the same time make clear our position.

The tradition of verbal performance is as old as Homer and there are many cultures even today in which to be a man or a woman of words is to be wise and powerful, to hold the history and destiny of a people on your tongue. We have only to listen to voices from the Black American community to hear a highly innovative verbal, performative culture, a place of poetry and storytelling. (And incidentally the only such culture speaking English). There is much to be learned from the poets of rap, scratch, the blues, the pulpit, and the street.

Since all codes are equally suspicious, perhaps by their very nature, we must be responsible for our acts, visions, and words. Language is a medium, capable of complex and intense expressive power. Only if we respect it and grapple with its inherent dangers can we speak and act as adults in a world where children are to be seen and not heard.

## In (The) Place of a Text

Henry Sayre

Photos: Jennifer Kotter

On the night of Friday, December 9, 1983, I attended the first of three scheduled performances of Eleanor Antin's "*El Desdichado*" (*The Unlucky One*) at the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery in New York City. Antin, in one of her familiar roles, this time as the dispossessed picaro King, rescues an "innocent" after witnessing a series of hangings, combats a White Knight, woos a Princess (Figure 1), and embarks aboard a Ship of Fools in quest of a mythical White City. "An allegorical spectacle," as the program announced, the performance raised a number of questions for me, all of which boiled down to the fact that, although I had liked it a good deal, very few others, apparently, had felt the same way. A famous dealer, who shall remain nameless, sitting directly in front of me, had slipped out the back in disgust not half way through, and with him any number of others. A couple of people had been more audacious about their exits, standing up and wandering out through the installation itself as Antin performed. Those who remained at the end — and by and large, it should be said, most people stayed the course — were, to put it nicely, unenergetic in their appreciation and, after a desultory bow or two, Antin herself had retreated glumly to the back rooms.

The performance had been plagued, of course, by the usual array of troubles — awful acoustics which often swallowed Antin's words and which were exacerbated by a late-arriving lout who, after Antin's performance had begun, beat at the front door of the gallery until someone opened up and then, out of sight but well within ear shot, vigorously insisted that "Ron" would "hear about it" if he wasn't seated (he was turned away); uncomfortable seating, consisting largely of the floor and a few scattered pillows, complicated by a capacity (or over-capacity) crowd wedged into close quarters in winter dress, which in turn helped to contribute to a general restlessness and inattention throughout Antin's performance; and, finally, the seemingly unavoidable feel of amateur theatrical production that accompanies most performance in galleries, where there is almost never time to rehearse, and a certain aesthetic anathema to rehearsal anyway.

But the performance audience is used to such goings-on, even expects them. It is all part and parcel of being what Richard Schechner has called performance art's "integral audience." As distinct from the "accidental audience," which is "a group of people who individually or in small clusters, go to the theatre," the integral audience consists of:

*people who come because they have to or because the event is of special significance... Avant-garde performers who send out mailings or who by word of mouth gather people who've attended previous performances and are in the process of creating an integral audience for their work, a supportive audience. Every "artistic community" develops an integral audience: people who know each other, are involved with each other, support each other.(1)*

Furthermore, as Schechner points out, the behavior of the two types of audiences differs drastically, and the irony is that "*the accidental audience pays closer attention than does an integral audience... An integral audience often knows what's going on — not paying attention to it all the way is a way of showing off that knowledge.*" Antin expressed her own dissatisfaction with such an audience in her book *Being Antinova*, a highly ironical journal kept by Antin as she assumed the role of Eleanora Antinova, the once celebrated but now retired Black Ballerina of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe, for three weeks in New York in October 1980:

*This performance is not open to the public. Invited guests think a lot of themselves... Why did we keep the performance secret? Why didn't we advertise? Because the gallery is small, because the salon atmosphere would be ruined by crowds, because Antinova needs an intimate atmosphere. I know, I know, but fuck Antinova, I — Antin — can't perform before a small group. It's humiliating. And I blame the ones who come for those who didn't. I'm always counting the house.(2)*



The reviews would later confirm that *El Desdichado* had been received less than favorably. Thomas McEvelley's in *Artforum*, which didn't appear until April, served as a kind of nasty summation: "This performance was juvenile hour, a high school assembly show, a skit for a civics class or a Renaissance fair...Few performance artists seem equipped to produce long texts, and Antin is not one of them...The narrative was a relentless string of clichés — *The Seventh Seal* — warmed over and censored for morning TV." But his displeasure with the performance itself aside, McEvelley's most interesting observation concluded his review: "What intrigued me," he wrote, "was the number of important critics who attended — and not necessarily critics who have written about performance. I counted five or six, and I don't recognize many. In recent months I have seen performance art ten — a hundred — times better in dark grungy places where one never sees such people."<sup>(3)</sup> I had sensed the same thing — that, for whatever reason, perhaps the pre-performance hype in the *Voice*, *El Desdichado* had been the artworld place to be that particular weekend in December — and, until McEvelley's review, I had been tempted to attribute the general dissatisfaction with the evening to an unknowledgeable audience, one which didn't understand the aesthetics of performance, however much it might have understood about art generally. That is, indulging in a kind of critical hubris, I was willing to believe that there had been a small "integral" audience in attendance, consisting of people like myself (and the likes of McEvelley), more or less self-styled performance *aficionados* who had enjoyed themselves, but there had been an "accidental" audience as well, who hadn't enjoyed themselves, people who might or might not know something about art but didn't know much about performance.

Such a point of view had been reinforced throughout the winter in Cambridge where Frank Stella had been delivering the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard. Many of the same faces who had been at Antin's performance in December appeared once a month in Cambridge at Stella's. They may not have liked Antin, but they adored Stella. He had entitled his lectures "Working Space," and his project, as he put it, was to outline what it would take to "make painting real" again — "real like the painting which flourished in sixteenth-century Italy."<sup>(4)</sup> Caravaggio became the hero of inquiry because, Stella claimed, "he speaks directly to us today about fullness, roundness, and volume." He creates a space in his

painting – a “backside” – that overcomes the predominance of silhouetted figuration in the Renaissance. Thus Caravaggio’s art is a “private, living theater,” which possesses by virtue of its “pictorial coherence” and “togetherness” an absolutely convincing “pictorial drama”: “Here we feel the true liberation offered by art.” After Caravaggio “real” painting can never again “defer to architecture” – that is, both literally and figuratively, it cannot submit to forces outside itself: “Real freedom for painting can only be discovered in the creation of its own space.”

Now clearly, in a move which is most likely indebted to the example by Michael Fried’s *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting & Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, such an argument is designed to support Stella’s notion about the direction contemporary art ought to be headed.(5) In front of painting today, “we are splattered by wheels spinning in a rut of pigment.” Or else it seems to lie inertly on the canvas “like a dead dog.” But most importantly for Stella, painting in the ‘80s is spatially impoverished: “By 1970 modern abstract painting had lost the ability to create space... We have illustrated space which we can read – what we have lost is created space which we can feel.” Given such definition about what art ought to be – and given that almost everyone in Cambridge seemed to agree – the difficulties Antin’s performance presented to her audience seemed obvious. In the broadest terms, her “working space” was simply different. Stella offered up a profoundly formalist definition of art as a self-contained, self-reflexive and coherent whole most especially concerned with discovering – or, perhaps better, “re-inventing” – what Clement Greenberg called “the effects peculiar and exclusive to itself,” the essential and irreducible characteristics of the medium.(6) (It should perhaps be made clear that a crucial issue distinguishes Greenberg’s formalism from Stella’s. For Greenberg, painting rendered itself “pure” when it rid itself of the necessity, in modern abstraction, of representing three-dimensional space which is, Greenberg says, more properly “the province of sculpture.”(7) Stella feels, rightly or not, that he has discovered in Caravaggio a “basic quality” which “could still be used – in the sense that all that activity, of both the painting and the figuration, exists in live space. There is space all around the figures, and it’s that space around and behind things – that feeling of things not being pasted on top of each other but really having room behind them – that I think it’s possible to get in abstraction.”(8) But the point is that Stella is still after a pictorial “space” which remains “peculiar and exclusive” to his medium.)

*El Desdichado*, by contrast, seems “mediumless,” in the manner of most performance art operating in some zone between theater and painting, text and tableau. Like the episodic picaresque tales upon which it is modelled, it lacks formal narrative coherence, and its self-proclaimed allegorical intentions deny any pretension toward self-reflexivity or containment. It defers consistently to architecture, specifically to the cramped confines of the gallery, but also in its refusal to create, in Stella’s words, “its own space.” It is, especially by virtue of its status as an ephemeral event, wholly anti-formalist.

Still, what gave me pause when McEvilley’s review appeared in April was that here was a critic who understood these things, whom I suppose understood and even endorsed the anti-formalist direction of Antin’s work, and *still* didn’t like it. To write off the negative reaction to *El Desdichado* to the predominantly formalist tastes of the artworld (however real they are) seemed suddenly as inadequate as explaining its reception away by invoking the vagaries of behavior Schechner attributes to the “integral audience.” The difficulty lay elsewhere – or *partially* elsewhere, as I will explain, in a kind of unexamined, formalist pocket of counter-insurgency in the avant-garde camp – and the only clue I had was McEvilley’s questioning of Antin’s ability as a writer, with which I disagreed. In both *Being Antinova* and its companion piece, the ongoing *Recollections of My Life With Diaghilev by Eleanora Antinova*, selections from which were awarded a Pushcart prize in 1982, Antin had surely demonstrated that she was equipped to produce long texts, McEvilley’s protestations to the contrary. The more I thought about it the more convinced I became that it was text of *El Desdichado* – that body of talk, partially garbled by the exigencies of place, misheard and misunderstood – which had alienated her audience from her work.



At base, Antin's audience was reacting against the *literary* pull of her work, its emphasis on the word, or at least its understanding of the literary nature of her work. Almost everything about *El Desdichado* (and, I am beginning to think, almost everything about Antin's work as a whole) is designed to draw attention to the fabric of its language, but not in a formalist sense. That is, to borrow a distinction from Fredric Jameson, she draws attention to the *rhetoric* of her work as opposed to its *style*. Jameson sees rhetoric as addressed to a "relatively homogeneous public or class" (Schechner's integral audience, for instance), while style represents "the sapping of the collective vitality of language itself" and "emerges, not from the social life of the group, but from the silence of the isolated individual: hence its rigorously personal, quasi-physical or physiological content, the very materiality of its verbal components... What was hitherto a cultural institution — the storytelling situation itself, with its narrator and class public — now fades into the silence and solitude of the individual writer."<sup>9</sup> The analytic practices of literary formalism, of course, depend upon just such an individual style, the absence of the collective rhetoric to which Antin's language draws attention.

Antin, naturally, understands that most of us still approach literature — and the literary elements of art — in terms of style, and she constructs a kind of performance in which style and rhetoric interact — in which, to be more precise, a seemingly stylized language emerges as, or reveals itself to be, a rhetoric. *El Desdichado* (again, like most of Antin's work) is a kind of puppet theater, overtly so near its end when five consecutive dialogues are performed as puppet shows (Figure 2). Such theater oscillates between theatrical and figurative art, and Antin's particular *kind* of puppetry blurs the boundaries even more — for her puppets cannot move. They are two-dimensional cut-outs, at once sculpture and drawing, masks for Antin's voice which recall paperdolls — and play with paperdolls — as much as puppetry. They constitute a kind of theater, then, that is perhaps as *gender*-determined as any. It does not seem to me that very many men, myself included, can fully appreciate the kind of play transpiring here, the levels of psychic involvement such play at paperdolls can generate. We are unable to recognize, that is, its rhetorical dimension, its collective as opposed to individual voice. Perhaps the way boys play "war," the complexities of which are probably equally unappreciated by the opposite sex, is a comparably charged arena of play in male culture. If so, I would imagine — and Antin's thematic concerns support such a notion — that what gets worked out in paperdolls is something of a feminist rhetoric, the narrative structures of the social formation (who does the cooking, who calls whom for a date, Ken or Barbie?), and by extension, the questions of power, aggression, and submission that inform and impinge upon our (gender-determined) lives. Antin has admitted as much in a conversation with Kim Levin

about the videotapes in which she first used paperdolls in the mid-seventies, "Adventures of a Nurse" and "The Nurse and the Hijackers": "If something pains me too much I tear the doll up, which I used to do as a child by the way."(10)

But one aspect of the obvious differences in social values which playing at paperdolls and playing at war culturally instill goes to the very heart of Antin's work in *El Desdichado* — that is, the one role is physically passive and verbally active while the other is physically active and verbally passive. This amounts, in the broadest aesthetic terms, to a conflict between narrative and image, the temporal and the spatial, the verbal and visual sides of performance art. Roland Barthes has pointed out that today, in an important historical reversal, the text "enlivens" the image: "In the past, the image used to illustrate the text (made it clearer); today the text burdens the image, loads it with a culture, a morality, an imagination; there used to be a reduction from text to image; today there is an amplification from one to the other."(11) And, even more to the point, in Antin this text defines the plastic side of things as *culturally* encoded by predominantly "male" values.

Now, this is news to no one who grew up in the shadow of the Abstract Expressionists (as almost all contemporary American artists have), and it explains in large measure, I think, the number of women working in performance today, but it is especially useful to remember in connection with Antin because she so consistently manipulates and undermines her visual imagery through her language. From the time of her earliest videotapes, the strangest thing about Antin's pieces has been the contrast between the animation of her voice and the frozen perpetual smiles — the inanimate quality — of her characters' painted faces, and the way the voice transforms and informs those faces. In *El Desdichado*, the tension is brought to the fore immediately in the dialogues between the King and his talking horse. "Let's rest, boss, I'm tired," the horse says (or, that is, Antin says in her role as horse) to the King as the performance begins.(12) I am reminded of Jane Belo's description of a Balinese horse dance:

*The player would start out riding the hobbyhorse, being, so to speak the horseman. But in his trance activity he would soon become identified with the horse — he would prance, gallop about, stamp and kick as a horse — or perhaps it would be fairer to say that he would be the horse and rider in one. For though he would sit on the hobbyhorse, his legs had to serve from the beginning as the legs of the beast.(13)*

As Richard Schechner has pointed out, this is "an example of the performer's double identity" in which "the portrayal" is a transformation of the performer's body/mind" and "the 'canvas' or 'material' is the performer."(14) And yet, what Antin's text always does is remind one just who's "boss." Even as Antin "becomes" the horse, she simultaneously rides it. She controls the scene, as it were, and the price of this perhaps inevitable exercise of artistic power is Antin's true subject.

That is, every image, every puppet figure on Antin's stage, is polysemous before arrival of the text. Roland Barthes has interrogated the consequences of this polysemy as thoroughly as anyone: "Polysemy questions meaning... Hence, in every society a certain number of techniques are developed in order to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds, to combat the terror of uncertain signs: the linguistic message is one of these techniques...The linguistic message...constitutes a kind of vise which keeps the connoted meanings from proliferating."(15) *El Desdichado* begins by addressing this "terror of uncertain signs." No sooner does the horse ask his boss for a rest than this exchange takes place:

*King:* This may not be a good place [to rest]. Last night a spotted dog crapped under my window.

*Horse:* So what?

*K:* He had only three legs.

*H:* So what does that mean?

*K:* By itself probably nothing. But this morning the innkeeper told me that last week a merchant passed by on his way to the city to sell monkeys and a woman sat down on a hill of termites and now she's pregnant. The man who learns to read signs is master of the future.

*H:* But you don't know how to read them.

*K:* I'm learning. I know one when I see one. That's the first step. Rome wasn't built in a day.



The King's announced project, then, is to learn to read images, to "master" as he says, the future by *determining* the meaning of things. Barthes continues:

[Such] anchoring can be ideological; this is even, no doubt, its main function; the text directs the reader among the various signifieds of the image, causes him to avoid some and to accept others...Anchoring is a means of control, it bears a responsibility, confronting the projective power of the figures, as to the use of the message; in relation to the freedom of the image's signifieds, the text has a repressive value, and we can see that a society's ideology and morality are principally invested on this level.(16)

As the King and his horse subsequently witness a series of hangings, they construct narratives to explain the crimes each of the victims must have committed. They are based on nothing other than a cursory examination of the victims' physiognomies:

H: [That one's] a rapist.

K: How do you know?

H: Shifty eyes. And look at those thumbs.

However arbitrary, what is clear is that these narratives — or narratives like them, which no doubt transpired at the trial — constitute the morality and ideology of the society in its most repressive mode. They justify the hanging.

As is hinted by the horse's arbitrary reading of the rapist's eyes, the "meaning" of any given sign is, furthermore, never determinant in *El Desdichado*. If the horse thinks that a Baker is guilty of having mixed sawdust with his flour, thereby killing any number of innocent peasants, the King explains that it is just as likely that the Baker is innocent, the victim himself of a Miller who owns both a flour mill and a sawmill and who uses the waste products of one to increase the profits of the other. Similarly, the "White City" may be a Utopian paradise which the King seeks, or it may be a city of bones, a great Hospital where people "generally die." But the point is nevertheless clear: what determines — however arbitrarily — the meaning of the image is the text, the narrative which the image generates.

The success of Antin's performance depends on our understanding this narrative process — how it functions both structurally and aesthetically. Barbara Herrnstein Smith has defined narrative, in a way that seems particularly useful in this context, as a verbal act "consisting of *someone telling someone else that something happened*." That is, narrative is a "social transaction," — a rhetoric, in Jameson's terms — which not only suggests that every narrative "is produced and experienced under certain social conditions and constraints and that it always involves two parties, an audience as well as a narrator, but also that, as in any social transaction, each party must be individually motivated to participate in it: in other words, that each party must have some *interest* in telling or listening to that narrative."(17) Such a definition allows us to understand that narrative is the primary *action* of Antin's work, *and* that this verbal activity draws out of the performance a certain sense of *ritual* deriving from the fact that telling or listening to a narrative establishes a more or less implicit contract between narrator and audience which in turn establishes a sense of *communitas*. It is perhaps worth saying as well that this sense of *communitas* depends, in large part, on the presence of Schechner's "integral audience" and the intimacy of the gallery space. Schechner has pointed out that what distinguishes ritual from "entertainment" is not so much "fundamental structure" (there are a great many narratives, for instance, which are entertainments not rituals), but *context*, in the case of performance the context of a small, knowledgeable, supportive and *interested* audience.(18)

The only mistake Antin makes, it seems to me, is in assuming that her audience is necessarily interested in or even understands the collective or rhetorical nature of her narrative. For instance, *El Desdichado* is anything but a worn-out, Soho version of *The Seventh Seal*. Its sense of allegory is, rather, fully postmodern — that is, whereas in Bergman the image more or less veils some deeper, hidden, but finally recoverable meaning, in Antin meaning disseminates from the image in the form of more or less indeterminate and arbitrary narratives.(19) Meaning exists in Antin's work *en abyme*, suspended over the abyss of this indeterminacy,

the inherent contingency of social transactions, social address and response. Not that meaning is, to quote Jacques Derrida, "out of reach, like a phenomenological horizon of perception, but that, in the act of inscribing itself on itself indefinitely, mark upon mark, it multiplies and complicates its text, a text within a text...the one indefinitely repeated with the other, an abyss." (20)

In the place of (instead of) the text, there is, for Antin, the performance, which occupies the place of the text, above this abyss. The performance is the literal *act of narrating*, the text's very coming into being, its "enlivening." It embodies what the text only represents — those narrative transactions out of which meanings are generated and *communitas* is established — but still *en abyme*. The power, finally, of Antin's particular brand of performance is that such an enlivening is always double-edged, always remains so precariously "ungrounded." Just as in *The Angel of Mercy*, Antin's Eleanor Nightingale must contemplate the horrible truth that each life she "saves" will in all probability return to the front to take two others, the great paradox of *El Desdichado* is that narrative itself is both a positive and negative force — it kills (at the hangings, for instance) by *authorizing*, as it were, the *rule* of meaning, and yet simultaneously it establishes itself as the basis of *communitas*. It enlivens the image — and burdens it. Antin's performance helps us to see (or should help us to see, if we are awake to narrative's possibilities) both sides — the promise of meaning and its cost.

#### NOTES

1. Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 145-47.
2. Eleanor Antin, *Being Antinova* (Los Angeles: Astro Artz, 1983), 59.
3. Review by Thomas McEvelley, *Artforum* 22 (April 1984), 77.
4. Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, "The Space Around Real Things," *The New Yorker* (September 10, 1984), 56. The remaining quotations from Stella's lectures are from my own notes.
5. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting & Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Fried admits in the Introduction that his argument about eighteenth-century French painting informs "the most ambitious and exalted art of our time," including the work of Stella, whose paintings are "in essence *anti*-theatrical, which is to say that they [treat] the beholder as if he were not there" (5).
6. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *The New Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1973), 68.
7. *Ibid.*, 70.
8. Quoted in Tomkins, 95.
9. Fredric Jameson, "Criticism in History," in *Weapons of Criticism: Marxism in America and the Literary Tradition*, ed. Norman Rudich (Palo Alto, Ca.: Ramparts Press, 1976), 34-35.
10. Quoted in Kim Levin, "The Angel of Mercy and the Fiction of History," in *The Angel of Mercy*, catalogue of an exhibition at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, September 10-October 23, 1977, unpaginated.
11. Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 14-15.
12. All quotations from *El Desdichado* are from a working script generously provided to the author by Eleanor Antin.
13. Jane Belo, *Trance in Bali* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), quoted in Schechner, 128.
14. Schechner, 128.
15. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *The Responsibility of Forms*, 28.
16. *Ibid.*, 29.
17. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," in *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 228-29.
18. Schechner, 86.
19. More detailed discussions of postmodern allegory than I can develop here can be found in Craig Owens's two-part essay, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (1980) and *October* 13 (1980) and in Gregory L. Ulmer's, "The Object of Post-Criticism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wa.: Bay Press, 1983).
20. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 265. As Johnson points out in a translator's note, "The expression *en abyme*, popularized by Gide, was originally used in heraldry to designate the status of the figure of a small shield used to decorate a shield." With the *nouveau roman*, however, Gide's image, originally intended to image the centering of meaning, began to be parodied, to designate instead the irrecoverability of meaning in a kind of infinite regress (consider, for instance, the function of the detective story in Michel Butor's *L'Emploi du temps*). Derrida simply adds to this infinite regress the possibility of infinite dissemination and proliferation. In terms of performance art and contemporary theater, it is particularly interesting to consider in these terms the high regard the play-within-a-play now enjoys — in, for instance, among many others, the work of Herbert Blau.

## Interview: Jerome Rothenberg Gavin Selerie

Excerpted from *Riverside Interviews 4: Jerome Rothenberg* (London, 1984). Edited by Gavin Selerie with Eric Mottram. (Available: Bookslinger, St. Paul, MN, and SPD, Berkeley. \$7.95.)

Gavin Selerie: I am fascinated by the accounts of "Doings" and "Happenings" in *Technicians of the Sacred* and I presume that you follow T. H. Gaster in seeing drama or event as not merely artistic but also functional within the structure of communal life. Among the rites which you describe are "Dead Feasts" (*A Seneca Journal*), the Seneca Eagle Dance (*Technicians of the Sacred*), "Gift Event II" (*A Shaman's Notebook*), and "Realtheater Piece One" and "Two" (*Narratives and Realtheater Pieces*). Having done a good deal of research on revivals of Shakespeare's Last Plays, I am mindful of the difficulties involved in bringing the mytho-religious-philosophical dimension alive for contemporary audiences. I imagine some such awkwardness arises with the presentation of Robert Duncan's plays, which have a very bold expression of mind and esoteric lore. On the other hand, it is plain that the transposition to a modern context can be achieved by sensitive direction and acting—as for example, in Britain, with the recent *Oresteia* at the National Theatre or any number of productions by able fringe companies. I wonder how you yourself see this business of blowing new life into tested but half-forgotten ritual, so that the durative and the punctual aspects of the event are retained. Can the ancient be reborn and, if so, is the main intention to enable us to create new forms of ritual entertainment?

Jerome Rothenberg: I don't think that the question is one of "blowing new life into tested but half-forgotten rituals" but of rescuing ritual possibilities in our own lives for which the older ones in some general sense can serve as models or reminders. In the Seneca Eagle Dance, we were playing around with what seemed to be the structure of a Seneca Indian ritual. But that was being filled entirely with our contemporary work and contemporary gestures—and a desire to celebrate the possibility of our own community. I would be a little wary myself of taking the old rituals and trying to revive or live them. At least I've never felt myself attracted in that direction, whether it's the Indian Sun Dance, say, or those Tibetan tantric rituals to which many of my contemporaries have felt themselves drawn. I don't know if the ancient can be reborn as what it was. I *do* think that part of our yearning has been to save for ourselves the possibility of a ritualized experiencing of the world—as something sacred. So that the term you use, "a ritual *entertainment*", involves a kind of paradox, or raises the question in any particular instance: is it ritual, with the serious function and meaning that rituals have, or is it, as they say, *mere* entertainment/simple pleasure in the activity that draws many of the participants into the ritual event. And ritual devoid of entertainment can be the most agonizing bore and obligation.

Richard Schechner, to whose work I've felt close at many times, has an essay in which he tries to set out what he calls a ritual/entertainment dyad—seeing the origins of performance in ritual activity, and then, with major social-cultural-economic changes, the development out of ritual of a kind of aesthetics or poetics of entertainment, that Schechner sees being reversed in our own century by newly ritualized forms of theatre. I would think that culminates in his own mind and in his own work in the theatrical and performance activities of the 1960's and 1970's. I'm not sure where he finds himself at present, but he was certainly one of the people who most clearly articulated the sense that twentieth-century theatre and related performances and happenings were moving back towards ritual. Blowing life into ourselves, not into it...

My own observation of Seneca ritual or of other Indian rituals where I was present more as an observer than a participant, is that people there have a tendency to drift in and out of the rituals—sometimes to be participants, sometimes observers, who can view it and themselves inside it as a form of entertainment. I can never be sure at any particular point whether a Seneca Indian friend is in it for the ritual or for the entertainment, and maybe there's no separation there between the two. But I also should say that the Senecas themselves

are notably contemporary people, not backwoods Indians but really and truly my own contemporaries, who have the problems of loss and secularization that face all of us: trying to keep some part of an old tradition alive, unfortunately doing very little in the direction of its actual revitalization, and probably in the process of losing most of it entirely. And I should add, I think, that many Senecas don't care beans about all this.

One of the things that disturbs me in my own work is that I tend, in spite of my best intentions and efforts, to give the impression that the Senecas are more traditional and romantically Indian than they truly are. I try to make up for that—at least in the oral part of my presentation—by taking some pains to actually situate the Senecas in the twentieth century as working-class Indians tied into a larger industrial economy and open to the same forms of mass communication that affect all of our lives—far more fluent at this point in the common language of America, i.e. English, than in the Seneca language itself. Only a small portion of them are now actively involved in the traditional rituals, and even those people are highly assimilated, industrialized, and English-speaking.

Gavin Selerie: I suppose there's also the danger that traditional ceremony has a constraining effect on the people in a given culture. This is a tension which is brought out well in the novels of Thomas Hardy: the sense that, although these rituals hold the society together, they also prevent the individual stepping outside the limits of behaviour, as laid down by tradition. This must be one reservation that one has about maintaining ritual structures.

Jerome Rothenberg: Yes, I think that where the traditional rituals exist on the fringe of some more dominant culture, they tend towards conservatizing and repetition rather than expansion and new invention. Part of what I've been interested in exploring in societies that have maintained a relative amount of autonomy is the degree to which ritual is involved with processes of change. For me the key contemporary figure in describing that is the anthropologist Victor Turner, from whom I've learned both through his books and through his personal presence. His is a dynamic rather than a static view of traditional rituals and cultures—that built into those systems are processes of innovation and of change. In that sense, I find Turner's view of ritual interesting, illuminating, and highly useful. There are in fact a number of anthropologists and students of culture that have gotten away from that static structuralist-functionalist model to more dynamic views of traditional cultures. It's those cultures that we've always tended to think of as static, repeating themselves over the centuries; so it's refreshing to find descriptions of traditional cultures with change and the will to change as a dominant element.

GS: I have often wondered how literal is the potency of symbolic gestures in some of those cultures. Compare, say, the eating of the wafer in Christian communion with the distribution of sweetmeats at a Greek play. Or, to take something more modern, the role of food—the crackers—in the Seneca Eagle Dance.

JR: Actual food, the shared meal, is really central to a tremendous range of ceremonial activity. What ceremony is complete without the food being eaten in common? Schechner speculates about that coming out of the rituals of early hunting bands—or even from some kind of pre-human situation where groups of primates come together and enter into ritual-like activities around a common food gathering site. Schechner then ties that up to such things as the presence of food at theatre performances—the intermission in which food is served, the presence of popcorn at the movie theatre, the bar at the commercial theatre, the restaurants that turn up in fringe theatre here in London. And religious rituals obviously have their food side—real and symbolic. For myself, let me say, I would like the full sense of food in ritual, rather than the symbolic dry wafer. But then I take my general attitude in art and life to be a little suspicious of symbolism—of symbols that aren't at the same time *real*.

GS: One of the things which interests me greatly is the degree of animation which one can attain in poetry, and it seems that you have been remarkably successful in "Declaring a behaviour for the word, as though *sometimes*, they better be shown as performing animals" — to quote Charles Olson. There are, for instance, the voices in "The Jew of Malta" (*Vienna Blood*) which are intensely dramatic, and the highly charged visual detail of the poems from *Poland/1931*. Would you say that one of your main aims has been to liberate words from the deadness of print?

JR: I would say that for many poets of my generation — and probably now the succeeding generation — there was an early recognition of poetry as a performative art, like music, like theatre. So the text became for us largely a score for the work itself. It's much easier to read written texts of poetry than scores for musical performance — I'm not trying to absolutely equate the two. Nor am I trying to limit poetry to its actual performance. But in some sense the text of a poem more than the text of a novel relates to the way in which the poem would be sounded or performed. Most poets of my generation came into performance at some point. In the process of performing, language again became very *physical* for us — as it might in another way in the process of writing. It was very physical; it was connected with sound; it was connected with movement. The Olson quote that you just gave I like very much — the sense of words as performing animals. I think the guide in my own mind is something of Whitman's in *The American Primer*. He talks about words singing, dancing, doing various activities, performing the sexual act, the "male and female act", et cetera. It's very much a sense of little animals in action — an animated sense of language — and I would take performance in general as the key to that. I would tie it into performance, while recognizing that there is also the kind of visual animation that can turn up in Concrete Poetry, say, where you're still dealing with the written form of words — but words now taken, like the name of the movement itself, as *concrete*, physical entities. Increasingly, I've had to assert that what I'm involved in is not a denial of the powers of a written language, because that — the written language, writing — would be a part of the exploration also. Over the last couple of years, in fact, I've been trying to explore the uses of writing in cultures that we usually speak of as oral, non-literate, pre-literate, and so on. And the conclusion I'm drawn towards is that writing in some sense is also universal and shared among all peoples. Therefore, when human beings developed as human beings at some point in the far past — at the point where we became human beings we were probably already using some form of speech — and along with that, I would think, some form of writing, art-making, and so on. It's *all* very old.

Earlier you seemed to imply that you improvise to a degree in performance. Would this be most evident in things like *The Horse-Songs*?

I think my phrasing may change in small ways from reading to reading, although there is a tendency to fall into set patterns and to be over-determined by the way the poem sets up in the written form. With the *Horse-Songs* I've had a tendency to depart from the text in performance — that is to say, I've never memorized the text in detail, but I do know the key words that are going to turn up in sequence throughout the poem. In order to avoid constantly looking at the text during a performance, I'll improvise on the sounds...I'll be fairly loose in the reading of the meaningless sounds that accompany the words. Unless I become aware that some part of the audience is sitting there and following my reading from some published version — in which case I'll tend to become self-conscious and stick closely to what is written. When I do performances for recording — audio or video tapes — I also stick more closely to the texts. In performance, when I don't want the text impeding the performance itself, my tendency is to follow the general pattern but to change specific sounds and word distortions — just following my own impulses on that, but not trying to memorize it perfectly.

One of the questions which I asked Allen Ginsberg, when I interviewed him, was whether he would be happier to see his work produced in video or cassette

form—for that to be the primary means of communication outside actual performance. Do you think we're coming to that and is it a preferable situation?

I don't know. I'm greedy—like him—and want both...although I must say I listen to records in a much different way than I read books. I think for certain kinds of poetry, recordings may be a viable substitute and give more of an illusion of presence than do books (though it's only an illusion). But, whether it's Ginsberg's work or my work or the work of any poet of interest, there's an attention to words and meaning that we get through the written form that's extremely valuable in itself. I find increasingly, too, that even the live performance of poetry isn't a substitute for *everything* poetry can do. It tends to be a very limited presentation of the work, partly because of the time element that enters into it. If I am going to give a poetry performance for, say, an hour or even an hour-and-a-half, I'm very much cutting myself down—compared to what I can present in even a small book of a hundred pages. There's a tremendous amount of poetry that can go into that. I couldn't get up and perform a book of a hundred pages unless I had an audience that was patient enough to stay around for three, maybe four hours to listen to the entire thing [laughter]. Even there it moves past them very rapidly, so that the poetry tends to become *more* of an entertainment in the performative situation. The poet entertains to hold attention, to divert an audience, or the poet thins the work out. Even if we ritualize it a bit and give it that kind of feeling, it tends to level out, to seem more simple than it is—or more complicated than it is. So there are two different ways of getting at the poem; and while I think performance allows us to do certain things, I don't think I would view it as an *absolute* substitution for what can be done in writing and with a book. The real question—where we come back to ritual versus entertainment—is what's intended by the poetry performance.

The big advantage of writing or print is that it gives the reader freedom to move at his or her own pace. It's less of an overlay, isn't it?

Right. It opens up certain possibilities for the reader that we may tend to close up in performance by over-determining it, becoming too authoritative. We may become even more *author* when we perform than when we present the work in the book.

I noticed, incidentally, that in your poetry readings you alternate between a halting manner of introduction and a fluid, continuous delivery of the text. It is like two modes of music and the second is extremely physical (with the resonance of the chest reinforcing or counterpointing the sounds issuing from the mouth). Is that something you're aware of?

Yes, it's something I'm very much aware of. It automatically comes up where the space, the venue, for a reading presents acoustic difficulties. Let's say in a large hall where you have to mike in, or, more acutely, a place where there isn't a microphone. I'm quite aware that, when I'm talking in the performance, there's difficulty for people in parts of the hall. They may not hear me because I have a tendency to speak softly and to reserve the large voice for the reading. Partly, that's a question of the reinforcement I get from the pre-arranged material. When the written text is in front of me there are no distractions to my voicing it, and I can let myself go, to do those various things that you describe me doing in performance. But the speaking of it is bound up with all sorts of inhibitions about spontaneous delivery and so on. My tendency there is to speak softly, to trail off, to interrupt the speaking with a series of ahs and stammers. I'm aware that when I go from speaking to the actual delivery of the poems—*Boom Boom [beats the table]*—there's a big change in that. I don't think I alter my voice all that much—not the way that somebody like Kenneth Rexroth used to do. He always had a good way of speaking and I don't think any difficulty projecting as a speaker. But [*imitates dry tone of Rexroth's introduction*]: "I'm going to read this poem to you and explain something about the poem." Then when he starts reading the voice suddenly becomes very musical and lyrical—a paradigm,



virtually, of the lyrical reader of poetry. I think Robert Bly also has a tendency to read in that way.

To dramatize?

I don't think that's what *I'm* doing in reading. But I certainly have much different control of the sound when I'm working from text or from memory, when the work is clear in my mind or when I'm trying to let the voice bring across the sense of what I have in mind of the sound of the poem. But, then, the quieter speaking, the hesitant speaking, has something about it too, and plays off against the poems and fills them out as well. Between the two modes, it's like a written/sounded text and an oral commentary, and I'm finally coming to accept it.

# Spectacle/Hallway



3.



## TRIPTYCH Of CITY SCOPES a continuous exploration

Penelope Wehrli

february – may 85

A trip was to become a body of work.

Landscapes and cityscapes are states of mind in a larger sense. External forms of inner atmospheres. They have their own language which dictates ours. The changing structures and atmospheres of cities passed/passing stay imprinted on the mind and develop into mind-maps. I install frozen mind-maps. The traveller's body is the scale to read a map.

### TEL AVIV

#### CHAOS

*The city is filled with an unreleased tension.*

*It seems impenetrable*

*All I am crudely reminded of is that I am a woman.*

*I find myself at a halt as if stuck in warm wax.*

### BERLIN

#### EUROPATATA IN EQUILIBRIUM

*Strahlendes Lächeln und lebhaftes*

*Händeschütteln zwischen Geistern und Clowns*

*... (tr: radiant smiles and vivid handshakes  
between Ghosts and Clowns ...)*

### AMSTERDAM

#### INSTEAD I HEAR MYSELF BREATHE

(... ..)



Photos: Plauto

- hanging over broken glass held by moveable blocks of stone
- a minefield
- the graves outside and the houses of prayer
- a rotten playground
- windows with bars but no glass
- boxes for international art transport and the unbearable noise of a foreign train station

- a passageway / turkish territory by an international wall
- an activity seen through glass from the street
- a balance line—red
- slight shifts of weight
- the movement of one could be the destruction of the other
- the laughter of the Walkyries and the dead end signal of a European radio station
- the smell of burning / a growing tension
- an image of potatoes and white mice from the cellar

- to hang a body and equal it's weight with a hanging block of ice
- each drop of melting ice is amplified in a container
- a world viewed through shooting holes and layers of glass
- target lines
- hypnotizing or hypnotized, my own conscience holding balance with a block of ice
- time is passing slowly, raising the nervousness, the awareness of danger.

a dream of death and revenge

the day of President Reagans visit to the SS cemetery in Bitburg, Germany

I see the image reversed.

All pieces were site specific and as far as possible, immediate reactions to the place I chose to work in.

I was interested in living pictures.

Spaces or installations with living bodies as parts.

Performance without motion, except for the extension of a breath.

Living sculptures.

I was interested in the activity that lies in the space between the viewer and the picture or its parts.

An activity that would proceed in the viewers mind.

The audience had the option of staying or leaving, as in front of any painting or sculpture.

#### I WANTED TO PROVOKE A CONFRONTATION.

The performer was never a specific person or a character, always depersonalized – a tool to picture an outside situation. That figure was suspended into a scenario of danger – a danger of physical and/or psychological violence – pinpointing the political and social scope of each city.

In Tel Aviv, two figures just looked at the audience without moving from their positions, stared at them, confronted them with their own aggressive attitude, their own staring.

In Berlin the viewers were shown their own faces as a performer was holding a mirror, moving it from left to right and back repeatedly.

Finally in Amsterdam – restricted sight, just one person from the audience could see at a time. The target line set up in space just below the hanging body, suggesting the possibility that as the ice melted, the body might fall within the target range. A situation which played – as in this absurd society – with the sense and the fear that something is going to happen and we keep watching endlessly, anticipating the end ... and keep anticipating the end.

Penelope Wehli – NYC, June-August 85.

## NO SE NO

Photographs: TOYO

Texts: R.L. Seltman/Arlene Schloss

A. Schloss/R.L.

NOSENO NO SE NO ON ES ON

NO SE NO, 1983-85 HAS BEEN A WILD COUNTRIFIED SOCIAL CLUB, DANCE HOUSE, CABARET, VIDEO LOUNGE, MUSIC SHOWCASE, PERFORMANCE BAR, ART GALLERY AND TOMB.

*Quilted Fingers.* (My calendar is the memories of ruined love affairs, as man marks his history with wars.)

I'd been in Belise with Big Tit Saint Frances on Cowboy Kelly's fantasy farm raising ants. I had found San Christabol de las Casa in the Chippas. Should of stayed, but...

ON MAY 28, 1983,

I had a dream, planted by Modigliani's grandchild, a bar where old men came to die and the young to fuck and suck the nector of the city. "No Se No."



Taylor Meade

Jack Waters



Uri Katzenstein





ON MAY 28, 1983, NO SE NO OPENED, AND THROUGH SEPT. 4, 1983 AT 8:00PM TILL MIDNIGHT, 7 DAYS A WEEK, A SUMMER FULL OF FREE ART EVENTS ENTITLED "99 NIGHTS AT NO SE NO", ROCKED THE HOUSE... INCLUDED WERE GUEST APPEARANCES BY ARTISTS FROM THE 26 NIGHTS OF PERFORMANCE A-Z. SURPRISE PARTY EVENTS, SPECIAL EFFECTS AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT.

There on Rivington, Junky's Champs Elysees, was the old social club. A dank basement painted for bags by Latin locals, a vision of Aztec primal decadence. On the floor in the dark, candle in hand, I found the remains of scores yet unpaid, a smashed juke box.

NO SE NO RETAINED ITS CARIBBEAN FLAVOR WITH FULL COLOR ROOF TO FLOOR MURALS, A JUKE BOX AND PERFORMANCE STAGE (THE BAR) SERVING SUDS

and the promise of still one more alternative. The previous alternative had been Storefront! Kyong and I, fed by those years at A's and visions of proletariat revenge had set up an outpost. A Mission in Little Italy, where the Daddies wear white ties and the kids still do drugs in the alleys.

So many beautiful aliens looking for green cards, youthful foreigners from fascist families running with what they'd taken from home. We all threw our furniture on the fire. And it was Art.

No arachnids white washed garage for me. Came to A ► Z my way through eternity. Another white bread beating his drum. Came to come with the givers. Those of fallen family fortunes, the scented sweat of the downwardly mobile crashing the gates of Hell New York.

SPECIAL EFFECTS AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT.

The blood in the veins of the Chorus line

You missed it, if you were looking at our panties.

NO SE NO WAS Activity Being Changed During Events, Fantasies Gone Haywire Inside Jukebox, Kids Loved Making Nights Of Performances, Quintessentially...

We spent, and toxified our bodies from the poison of the parasites. The lucky ones, left, folded their tents and left for the mountains and sea. I went to work for the White way. To feel the soothing strokes and silver daggers of the middle class again. "NoSeNo" dissipated into black clouds...

I'm now a Pilgrim on Shikoku.

The performers are all in the phone hook waiting your Call.

**Pastoral.**





*On the street, a man was selling a bowling pin. Performance should have that surprise, the mind should be seized. Afterward, associations may follow, but at the time, everything else should vanish. Out of nowhere, one undeniable thing.*



## The Ball

### Richard Gessner

A line projecting from a man's forehead is all oiled up, slippery and infinite, flowing from a far off source, inching backwards on his pate and vanishing against the horizon in the opposite direction.

He cups the line to his ear, listening to the sound of taut sputtering machinery operating in unison. He then follows the line to its terminus or wellspring, traveling by foot until coming to a swivelling metallic ball looming at the center of a city.

The man stands before the ball watching his line run through the walls far above him. The ball is threaded up with a network of hairlines projecting outward in all directions from the hub, octopus style.

The lines run to where they are rooted in the foreheads of men with varying degrees of baldness who move freely, untethered by their threads which they pull while going about their daily business keeping the ball swivelling with each and every movement.

The man, never passing the others of this rooted set on his way to the ball, walks around it banging on the tinny walls, finding the entrance hatch and pulling his line in with him.

The interior apparatus of the parietal structure, or, jargon aside—the innards of the big ball; is a huge control room with rows of floodlights lining a curved ceiling and circular walls all speckled over with tiny openings through which the lines run in and out.

At the center of the room, wedged between floor and ceiling, is a grillwork partition where a cadre of line operators are maneuvering the lines through the openings in the walls as they unwind from slow, moderate, and rapid receding spindles and run through bottles of cure via cause oil.

The rooted set go bald on this oil conveyed to their pates via the lines which shorten as they absorb them, getting pulled towards and into the ball by the line operators.

The ball is a generic umbrella toupee, causing covering and hence curing the bald, who become line operators, causing the baldness of others. The lines are the heavenly elixir of all good men. Overlapping genetically & commercially so that infinitely receding families willing to do business, can get a roof over their heads and benefit from the cure.

The man steps through the glistening webbed network, feeling his line well up inside him, oozing in through a cranial pore, soothing his whole head and face the way cool tonics and aftershaves do.

He watches the operators maneuvering the lines through the openings in the walls. Some operators sit at tables adjacent to the grillwork where they scribble down jargon in little pamphlets, while others thread newly wound lines through bottle and wall openings, pulling them out of the ball and rooting them in the foreheads of the populace.

Still other operators stand facing the inner walls of the ball pressing their eyes against the openings and peering out of them as though through telescopes, scanning the terrain of the city until spotting the rooted set moving closer to the ball.

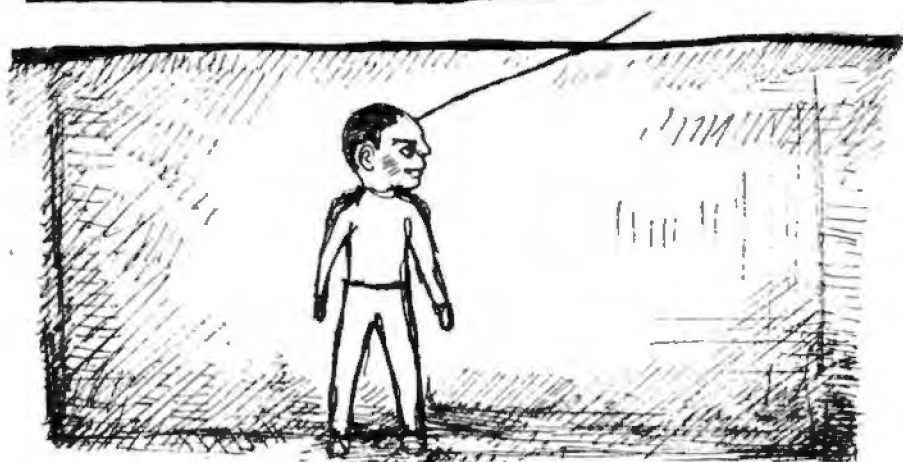
Sometimes several days pass before even one is spotted, while waiting the operators watch the distant traffic and crowds of pedestrians as well as an occasional mischievous child who throws an egg at the ball and then hides, watching from a distance to see if the operators will emerge to come look for him or her.

Sooner or later, the rooted set come into view, one by one at intervals going bald simultaneously at different rates; the operators pulling them towards and into the ball gently, without tethered coercion, guiding them in through the entrance hatch.

As the man threads a line through an oil bottle he watches another operator shackling a rapid receding spindle in rubber encasing so it won't get out of his control, snapping its line in mid-process, the man at the other end disappearing into the city with a broken thread trailing from his forehead in the wind.

A line projecting from a man's forehead is all oiled up, slippery and infinite, flowing from a far off source, inching backwards on his pate and vanishing against the horizon in the opposite direction.

1



©GESSNER

## Notes on the Ball Richard Gessner

The Ball is an exploration of the cyclical processes in the growth and death of hair. Baldness is death, the growth of hair is infinite, continuing to grow even after death.

The Ball is a place of birth, death, & infinite regeneration – a womb in which to recede into.

Within the confines of the Ball-world, baldness is perpetuated via the infinite growth of hair.

The Ball is comprised of a network of synthetic hairlines which cause baldness on the pates of men.

The Ball is a nucleus of receding; a container of ceded men: the rooted set who become line operators once they enter the ball.

The Ball is an exploration of the contradictory notion of hair as a force of impotent virility.

It is a male world which cures its own impotence by covering bald-pates, yet robbing the owners of these pates of their freedom & virility by tethering them with lines which make them passive & dependent on the mother ball.

Hence the conundrum CURE – VIA – CAUSE – oil: the ball cures baldness by covering it with the very same lines used to cause baldness.

## **The Performance Project**

(active since 1982)

### **WORK LABS**

- a gathering point for independent performance artists.
- work space.
- critique.
- the development of individual work histories out of a community of peers.

#### **People who have worked & attended (incomplete):**

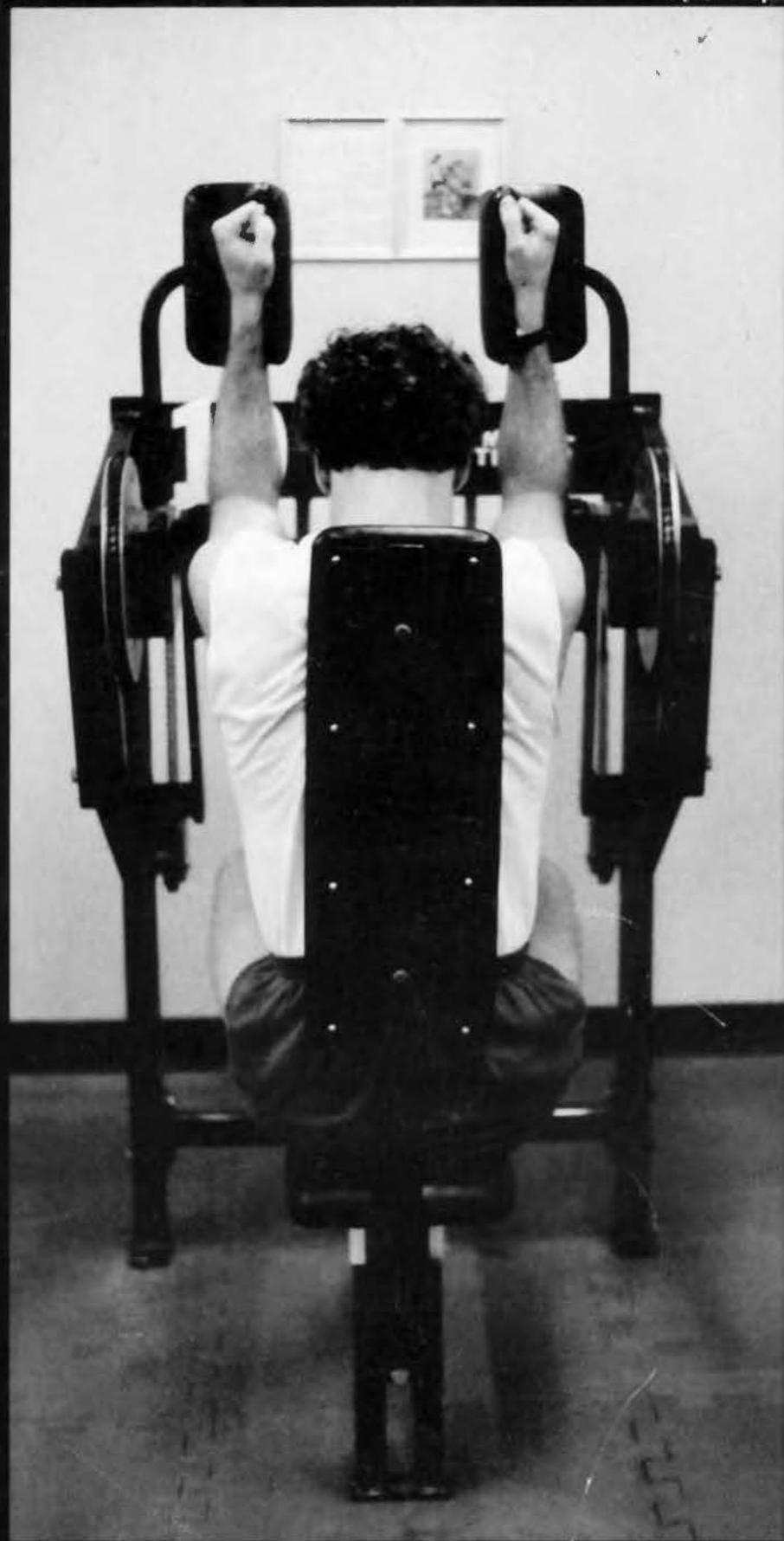
Charles Allcroft, Jessie Allen, Patrick Amos, John Borba, Michael Brandonisio, Jim Calder, Jacques Chwat, Betsy Damon, Dionysus, Clair Fergusson, Laura Foreman, Chris Gallagher, Sally Gil, Joan Giannecchini, Gary Goldberg, Bob Goldberg, Coco Gordon, Ilona Granet, Arlene Greenberg, Jeffrey Greenberg, Amy Guggenheim, Laurie Harris, Linda Henneman, Barbara Hiesiger, Vicky Hirsch, Ron Kantor, Stan Kaplan, Uri Katzenstein, Kim Kimball, Susan Kleckner, Sima Kliman, Melinda Levokove, Michael Meyers, Rochelle Minkoff, Jennifer Monson, Ann Palevsky, Jan Peacock, Paul Pierog, Laurie Perricci, William Pope.L, Shari Rosenblatt, Leeny Sack, Erich Schmidt, Frank Shifreen, Michael Stiller, Limor Winter, Charles Yuen.

### **THE ACT**

- a publication on performance art.
- for critique, speculation & representation of performance activity.

Artists & active participants are invited to enquire:  
Performance Project, Jeffrey Greenberg (Director)  
134 West 32nd Street, Suite 602, New York, 10001, USA  
212-613-9094

Body (Triceps)



L2 UK.  
FF 25 FR.  
DM 10 D.

Lire 5000 IT.  
Y 750 JP.  
SF 10 CH.