

P - FORM

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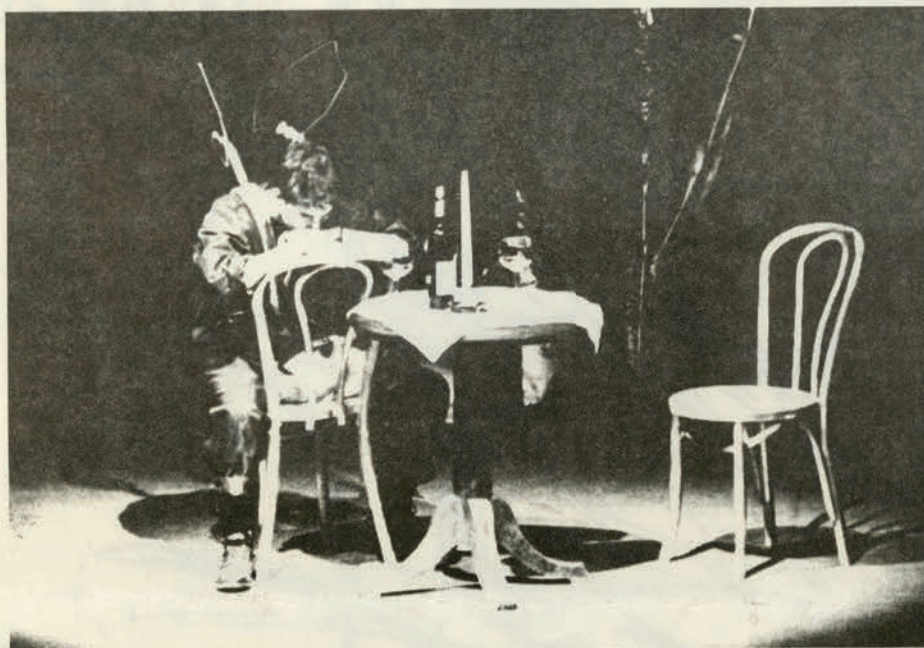
Vol. 1

No. 2



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Man in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Part IV, Werner Herterich's latest in his series, was a collection of measured actions, interactions, and words symbolizing the condition of man in late capitalist society. Most of the elements were familiar performance material, seen in earlier pieces by Herterich and other artists: the people painted white, the fire, the teacup, the stark black and white staging, a little violence, a little sex. These disjointed parts become a unified morality play only when interpreted through this artist's central text: Walter Benjamin's epilogue to his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", a critique of the Fascist Italian Futurist Marinetti. The following is a loose descriptive interpretation of the performance based on Benjamin's communism (with apologies to the artist for my presumption).

Enter two naked masked men fighting over a piece of meat.

[Authentic human interaction is based on economy - availability of resources: food and property. The physicality of this interchange is a romantic symbol of life before industrialization, when exchange of goods was not alienated by capital, but when life was harder.]

There is a big canvas bag hanging from the ceiling obviously filled with a man. Another man comes in and vocalizes to it.

[The man in the bag (the artist) is the proletariat confined by pre-industrial tradition. The singing man explores the limits of his voice, communicating to the bagged man promises of freedom]

A servant-type sets a table.

[Rise of the bourgeoisie.]

The man in the bag cuts himself free. [Rising consciousness of the proletariat.]

Enter a woman in black with large muscles. She starts singing in German.

[Authority of the traditions of culture - Language, Opera. The Words: Marinetti's glorification of war: "...War is beautiful, because it creates a new architecture of tanks, formation flights and smoke spirals from burning villages..." The new culture of progress and the machine will propel man to new heights of aesthetic awareness through destruction.]

The vocalizing man sits at the set table. The artist approaches.

[Promises of shared wealth and comfort, a wish for alliance on the part of the bourgeoisie with the working man.]

WERNER HERTERICH

BY KATHRYN HIXSON

RANDOLPH ST. GALLERY

APRIL 25, 1986

The servant pours coffee, continuing to pour until the liquid spills out, covering the table.

[Excesses of consumption by the bourgeoisie.]

Meanwhile, three people in white suits enter, turn to the back wall and begin painting their shadows in black.

[White imperialism. The whites paint their image in black, symbolizing the Western project to dominate third world cultures, superficially recreating these peoples in the Western image, in order to dominate their economies, exploit their working class, while maintaining strategic military positions.]

The bourgeois man turns the table over, pinning down the artist.

[Renegging on the tea, the bourgeois must keep the working class under his control in order to continue to increase his wealth and position.]

The woman sings Benjamin's critique of Fascism: "Mankind has become an object of self-contemplation for itself. It's self-alienation has reached such a level that its own destruction has become an aesthetic pleasure of the highest order."

A paper floor burns under the white people.

They remain unscathed.

The end.

[Meaning uncertain. The white people remain standing, but their perceived solid ground is unstable. Has the new aesthetic order of joyful destruction won out? Will the artist (the proletariat) be able to push away the confining table? Only with applause.]

Herterich is presumably using this WWII rhetoric to comment on the current state of political affairs - the escalation of defense spending, the bombing of Libya, and continued support of South Africa - and how

these affairs serve to maintain the status quo distribution of wealth. "Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system." - W. Benjamin. Both Herterich and Benjamin warn us that full scale war is imminent, but neither addresses the full extent of the control that the superstructure has on individual consciousness to make it blind to this warning, or to encourage war. A vast array of propaganda then and now has directed the public toward stalwart nationalistic pride, in the media of news and entertainment. Benjamin had hopes that this very media of reproduction would allow for a new proletarianization of art, a communist aesthetic, never dreaming that it would be used as the most efficient means of domination of the masses. Herterich does not discuss Benjamin's hopes. His political position is a sad expression of hopeless domination. This aesthetic expression is exactly what Benjamin despises in the Futurists. "Fascism sees its salvation in giving masses, not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves." - W. Benjamin. Herterich's performance, like so many other "political" artworks, expresses the personal suffering experienced in the social situation - the politics become art. The use of German before an American audience, and the opaque presentation removes the reality into the obscure realm of aesthetics. Benjamin left us with a far greater challenge - that art must become politics, actively changing society. How this is to be done, whether it is possible, or even desirable, are issues left open and ignored by Herterich. The intricacies of the political, social, economic and aesthetic situation demand more studied attention by those artists who wish to have an impact on their societies, beyond merely servicing them. O

K. HIXSON

Lucinda Childs

MoMing

May 4, 1986

Three Lucinda Childs dance pieces—*Dance #1*, *Rise*, and *Field Dance #2*—were recently presented outside of their original multimedia context. The work nevertheless constituted a whole in itself, building upon the intrinsic dance elements of rhythm—rhythm of light, rhythm of motion—and a fascination with the physical capacities of the human body.

Dance #1 was originally written and performed in 1979 as part of a major work titled *Dance*. Although *Dance* was a collaborative project between Lucinda Childs, Phillip Glass and Sol Lewitt, at MoMing the film and screen of Sol Lewitt were absent. The dance began with a bare black stage except for powerful angles of light emitted from the wings. From the sides of the stage hung rows of curtains, creating channels from which the dancers would emerge in full motion. The dancers, appearing as couples, always began at the right side of the stage and came out skipping and swinging across its width at regular intervals, only to disappear in a moment at the other side. After lulling the audience with this repetitious cycle of movement and sound, the dancers would then vary the movement by crossing from left to right, attuned to the variations of music and light. Gradually the movement of couples crossing the stage quickened with one couple rapidly following the next in leaps and bounds, or more hesitantly in jumps and skips, but always crossing the stage in a straight path connecting the two points behind the curtains with the lines of their movement.

The subtlety of these changes and the progression of the linear movement trapped the viewer in what could only be seen within the lateral demarcations of the stage. At the end of the piece a couple moving across the back of the stage suddenly jettisoned diagonally forward to the curtain furthest upstage. The effect was to push out the entire space of the stage that had been constructed throughout the dance up to this point. It was a beautiful shock within the relentless side to side structure of the piece.



Gary Reigenborn and Timothy Conboy in *Field Dance*. photo - Lynn Kohlman

The second dance was titled *Rise* and originally appeared within the work of *Relative Calm*. Here the original music of Jon Gibson was present but the set and lighting of Robert Wilson were absent. As the music began empty darkness surrounded the audience. The lights faded up in the motionless arena, and the reflection of the dancers upon the floor enlarged the visual dimensions of the space. Slowly and simply movement began in short steps and skips and gradual swinging motions which reached a maximum upward arch in a rising, reaching sweep. From a few dancers moving softly came four, from the parallel movement of these four came six, down to two again, then up to eight. The reaching gestures increased in volume to expand the space from the floor out, but as the dancers' motion increased the dual reflection on the floor became more and more obscured. Eventually the dance reached a frenzied culmination of both static image and movement.

The last piece was *Field Dance #2* which is Act III, Scene Two of *Eisenstein on the Beach*. Here, as in *Dance #1*, the music of Philip Glass was used but unfortunately the dramatic effects of Robert Wilson were absent. Instead of the stark white costumes of the prior two dances, the dancers appeared in a stylized version of street clothes which corresponded to the general overhead lighting in the theater. This, combined with the forceful cacophony of the music and the strong delineated walking, leaping, turning of the dancers, brought urgency and a sense of transition. As before, the dance began with the independent parallel movement of a few dancers, gradually giving way to a more complex pairing and gendering through metered compos-

itions. The elemental usage of genders and the imminent yet ultimately absent interaction between the dancers heightened as the dance reached its peak. In this dance the viewer, rather than being regaled in the darkness of the audience, was brought into an atmosphere of music and space shared with the dancers.

The intensity of these works lie in the minimal presentation of movement, the conceptual construction, and the control articulated by the dancers. Their ability to produce something about the way we read movement without being weighted by conventional narratives is refreshing. The sameness of the phrases in much of this work presented an alternative to the conventional ways in which we perceive other performance and dance.

The carefully constructed space of these dances lead from the center of movement down to the characters of the individual dancers. Lucinda Childs works with the individual awareness of the dancers as well as their awareness of themselves as part of a group. She achieves this without direct physical contact between the dancers by creating a movement in which they are joined—with expertise, and with beauty.

Dance as a fundamental and basic expression has the potential to transcend the mannerist elements and effects of music, theater, story or film. Although one may be tempted to imagine the original construction and context of these dances, this presentation was not ineffective; it in fact brought to realization the absolute power of the dance on its own terms. O

- DAVE KELLY

I WANTED TO SAY EVERYTHING (IN ONE HOUR)



John Haskell

HELL IS A MILLION DEGREES by JOHN HASKELL

Randolph Street Gallery
May 24, 1986

"...and I said, 'Venus, you know'-and I told her my problem. And I told her what, you know, what was going on, and she said: 'The Love Club in New York.' You know, Venus is part of the world, and in a sense if she tells me, it's the world telling me, right? So I--so I thought, where is this place? And she--she started to tell me where it was, but behind her the car was making this turn and it had its high beams on. And so as it made the turn the high beams were shining in my eyes and I couldn't see Venus. I couldn't see what she was saying. She was telling me where the place was, but I couldn't see, and then the car made the turn and Venus went inside. Now the thing was I still could see her, not her but her silhouette, her after image, and you know it's like--it's like you look up at the sun--you know when you look up at the sun, and then you close your eyes: you can still see the sun. Well I could still see Venus, not Venus, but this silhouette--this after image."

When the eyes close and the mind takes over, there is a point beyond which even the imagination treads uncertainly. I don't doubt that hell is a million degrees, but for my part, 500 degrees would suffice, easily. On the other hand, given a body, a voice and an intent imagination, hyperbole isn't a bad recipe for holding a group of people together. Who other than preachers or politicians have mined the possibilities of hyperbole? Who else has had to? What other occupations have had to move crowds in the same way as politics or religion?

The ancient convention of monologue--a singular recounting--has resurfaced during the last couple of decades to become central to today's art: Twenty years ago, Dylan, drawing from a host of singular performers from Woody Guthrie to bluesmen and gospel singers, elevated the folk song to the stature of 'Historical' poem (a conversion in which politics and religion certainly figured.) Spaulding Gray left the Wooster group to tell personal stories, and in his wake have followed comedians, actors, and singers alike. Eric Bogosian left the legitimate theater to pursue a career of monologues. Lily Tomlin left the confines of comedy to pursue character studies. Laurie Anderson has re-invoked the charm and horror of the wizard of Oz to tell stories of the United States. Likewise in music, Tom Waits took the eclecticism of musical styles to illuminate the not-so-threatening world of 'music-noir.' Robert Ashley started talking more coherently once he realized that talking could be integral to his music. There are countless other examples of people who, although not 'performance artists', have had a similar desire to rekindle the fires of a once dying oral tradition. How else could the "crowd" we refer to as America elect an actor with a leader's voice to rule this place? Are we looking for an answer?

To begin defining what a story actually is involves the arduous task of unravelling circular definitions. Our own understanding of story-telling comes by way of the Greeks who equated stories with fabric--that is, the intertwining of threads to construct a cloth. In Greek mythology fate is determined by the three goddesses: Clotho(Spinner) who spins the thread

of life, Lachesis(Disposer of lots), who determines its length, and Atropos(Inflexible), who cuts it off. Fate, as the Greeks would have it, is an entire garment district: your life comes from the same bolt of fabric as everyone else's. Our language bears this relationship out in such common phrases as: 'spinner of yarns', 'fabricated stories', 'warped mentality', 'loose thread', etc. But perhaps more to the point is the myth of Ariadne's thread tied to Theseus, allowing him to find the one way out of the labyrinth. History itself is in constant flux, in danger of being unravelled, of being re-told or retraced. Its common fabric has endless numbers of threads from endless points-of-view that shape it. To begin a story all that is needed is a simple thread.

If Kafka had been a performance artist, his manner might have been much the same as John Haskell. Here's a man who wants to say everything in order to explain one thing; here's a man with the presence of Perkins in 'Psycho' and the desperate control of David Byrne's "Psycho Killer". He's an actor with a musical sense about him; he moves and talks in perfect synch. He's crowded with ideas and is in the constant state of parading them out and shaping them--fabricating a story along those classic rules of narrative. A politician has a microphone; a preacher has a church, but Haskell has an imagination big enough and loud enough to compete with either of them--as well as the skilled control of rhetoric and body language to communicate that same singular vision. To watch John Haskell on stage is a chilling experience.

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photos: Susan Anderson



D.B. When I first said I wanted to talk to you about the performance ("Uncontrollable Love"), it was because one of the pieces I taught me something. It was the rape piece that I did - this song about rape, regardless of whether an old subject or new subject, meant something to me, and I decided to put it into this show. But I felt that night that it really alienated people and I sort of fell out of whatever character it is that I am as a performance artist. So I had the performance problem of regaining my audience after doing that piece, so that they had faith in me, so that they could laugh at what I say or take seriously what I say. Coming out of the lesson, I learned how important this character is in my work. And there is a certain amount of character to the Dark Bob. It's not really me. I'm operating through a persona sort of. And I think I came out of the persona for the rape piece. There's a whole kind of performance art that could tolerate that kind of presentation. It's sort of a confessional style of art and it's a style that turns the audience into a witness. They become a witness to the artist's confession of something. So I'm going to take it out of my show for the rest of the tour. Because I can clearly see that what it is that I'm doing is this kind of performance art that borders on entertainment, and my audience has to have a way to trust that I'm going to entertain them as well as provide them with information. I think that the rape piece didn't fit with the rest of the show and it doesn't fit with what I want to get across as a performer. I suppose I am a performance artist just by virtue of association and by history, and I know that my activities prior to this were a lot more eclectic in their construction. I was doing guerilla style art on the street, and then performance that was really about myself working through things with my art. Now it's a lot more about the people who were there. Artists don't always have to care about their audience. Two of the few places where you don't have to care about the audience are art or poetry - it doesn't matter if there are people there to get it, as long as the artist exorcises that spirit that takes place in a painting or a poem or something. Performance can be that intimate and that intense too; and yet I'm from L.A., so my performances have some entertainment value as well. I got tired of doing art that was just saying "Yeah well every time I see a door that says 'Don't Enter' I walk through it and that's my art" - there's no way to really share that other than through photo documentation or through a very small media outlet. I started wondering what are actions worth?, maybe I can do more as an artist. So I started writing songs that have lyrics that articulate certain feelings and these are the same kind of songs that make me feel good whether I'm thinking about art or not. They're almost pop

THE DARK

songs. That's a real happy thing to do. It's a wonderful thing to just rock out.

BdV Do you feel that the success of someone like Laurie Anderson is something that you're interested in?

D.B. I think it's inevitable because of the form I'm using. I'm using pop music as a medium, sort of. So you can take my work and press it on vinyl and distribute it just like a record. And you almost think it's a real song. It has been done. I had a record with Polygram, that Bob and Bob did, and that certainly went out into the world similar to Laurie Anderson or anyone else. And so that aspect of my art I am currently peddling in that direction. I wouldn't take my paintings to a record company. And I don't want to take my songs to art galleries. I'd like to take my songs to different stages. So it's an appropriate thing. And I'm sure that it will come to pass.

B.deV Do you perform in nightclubs?

D.B. Theaters and clubs, yes. I often ask the art space to get me out of their space and into a small theater. And it happens every once in awhile. I've been doing night clubs. That's a nice place to be. I think the club audience likes my work a lot. I get a good reaction from them too. They usually stop drinking and pay attention.

B.deV You're currently touring with a piece. What kind of structure do you work with? Is the piece completely scripted out?

D.B. Well when you travel the art road you've got to make your performance as simple to present as possible, so it's a very simple thing. I have an audio tape that's the entire running time of the performance. If there's silence when I'm talking, then that silence is on the tape and it's just a matter of pressing Play and it just goes through. I interact with a very rigidly set tape. That tape has movie soundtracks on it and song soundtracks

and voices and so forth. And silences. So it's all very well structured and as simple as possible, so it all fits onto a reel of film and a cassette tape. And I always have to find a big piece of paper to paint on in this show but that's easy. Simplicity works for me.

B.deV In terms of how much work you've been doing recently, do you perform in L.A. a lot?

D.B. I don't perform in L.A. as much as I do the rest of the country. It seems like that's home and I'm working on the material that I'm always planning to tour with. Once in awhile I'm trying a piece out in a club. There are a lot of clubs in L.A. that have performance art. So as far as a formal presentation of the Dark Bob show, "Uncontrollable Love", I haven't done it there yet and I have no date set to. But I suppose I will. I've been visible in L.A. with exhibitions and collaborating with other people. I'm always trying to get out of town and it's such a big deal to do a show in L.A. It really is. It seems as though everyone will pay attention and come to see what it is.

B.deV When you do music do you have people that you normally play with?

D.B. Up until this point I've been playing everything myself because I always feel that my song is my painting. It doesn't make sense to have other people working on it because I just sit and work until I get what I want. But I'm enjoying working with musicians now because I know what I can do and so now it's time to see what I can do with others. I'm just opening up to other musicians and really learning how to respect their technique. That's what musicians are -- They're technicians with instruments. They're not always artists. I want to learn to work with them and learn what it is they have to offer. And what they have to offer is like being able to

BOB

Uncontrollable Love

by the Dark Bob

Randolph Street Gallery
May 9, 1986

It's as infectious as its advocates claim. Pop music has returned to it. Smash hit ditties say we need it, we want it, can't get enough of it, are addicted to it. It's back and bigger than ever. Love is all you need, all you need is...

Love. The Beatles' kitsch anthem of '67 was smart enough to be self-consciously corny. They no doubt knew the pitfalls of so broad and naive an overstatement, so they camped up their ode to love with a snippet of the French national anthem and a healthy dose of psychedelic self-parody. Dark Bob, who performed a similar light-weight treatise on the subject, May 9 at Randolph Street Gallery, seemed to have much the same idea as the Fab Four. Conceived, according to Bob and Bob's (not internally but literally) darker half, as his solution to personal and political alienation in the world, "Uncontrollable Love" was idealistic and funny. It was also uneven and unsatisfying.

It is typical of Dark Bob - whose solo work away from the Fab Two (a past performance of Dark Bob) is still full of mischievous shenanigans, but more full of idealism and world problem solving - to create a traveling multi-media show to spread the New Word of Love. His last Chicago appearance entailed another road-show adventure called "Parfected For Everyone", which promised the viewer (in bastardized Dutch) "Performance Time For Everyone". Everyone is important to Bob. Everyone should be able to see and understand art. And everyone alive has run into love at sometime or another, so Bob - recently married and understandably oozing love and good vibes from every pore - put together this show of songs and talk and funny movies and stuff.

Bob's appeal is made clear early in the show. In the song "From Egypt

to Manhattan", Bob details his plan to monkey-wrench Armageddon by taking world leaders out into the desert and talking some sense into them in the midst of nature's beauty until they voluntarily disarm all their nuclear arsenals, live on TV, "so we all could see...We'd celebrate that day every year like Christmas. We'd call it the Birth of the New World...the world with NO BOMBS! And the technicians who took these bombs apart on TV...they'd be like Saints, and we'd wear little pictures of them around our necks in these little TV-shaped holograms and they'd be smiling at us forever (or at least until the sun explodes)...then religion would start all over and I'd want to have a baby..."

It's hard to criticize as goofy a Message of Love as that. Watching Dark Bob in his East-meets-West business suit coat and tights with feathers attached sing or narrate lines mixing genuine ideals with a smart wit is comical and fun. Bob as shaman is Bob Our Cross Cultural Friend, exorcising bad vibes for us all with the social conscience, humor in the face of despair, and worldly humanism that is the Word Of Bob.

"Uncontrollable Love" had its shining moments. The "Beirut" episode was a gem. Encouraging the audience to dance and party with him, Bob is suddenly interrupted by The Voice (of God, or maybe of his own Conscience), who scolds him for behaving frivolously and very unlike an artist. The Voice orders Bob to paint, and Bob, unassuredly, begins to paint a large piece of paper on the wall with bold, Franz Kline-like strokes of black. The Voice approves, but refuses to let Bob stop until the painting is "finished". After a moment of perplexity, the reluctant painter fills in the spaces between the black lines by writing "Palestine", "Libya", "Israel", etc. Suddenly the audience recognizes the painting is a map, and Bob finishes his work with a quick Pollock-style splash of blood-red paint. He then turns, visibly distressed by the message in the medium, and sings "Beirut": a lament

and expression of political helplessness and guilt. The song itself is no tour-de-force, few of his songs are, but it achieves a power of expression in his vocal delivery, his shrieks and whines like the Muslim call to prayer, that rarely occurs elsewhere. It is moving, almost chilling.

The whole vignette is so beautifully conceived, emotionally involving, witty and human, one wishes it was new. Unfortunately, it was the most dynamic segment of last year's "Parfected". Similarly, a haunting folk song for acoustic guitar called "The Howling Dog" - which takes the form of an understated prayer for hope and emotional support - was disappointing only in its redundancy. It too was a highlight of last year's show.

What was new was simply uneven: usually entertaining, sometimes insightful, rarely profound. A country-and-western song for his new wife was classic Bob: "You're the rings around Saturn/You're an Aztec pattern/You're the moon's effect on the tide". In another new tune, Bob held an acoustic guitar throughout, never plucking a note until a steel guitar solo in the pre-recorded soundtrack. He then, in a dead-pan manner, turned the instrument over and pretended to play the solo. It was subtle, good-humored, and (dare I say it?) zany. Everything one comes to expect and appreciate in Bob. Ditto for the better, funnier portions of Bob's films, which document his life with his dog and their various exploits: getting up in the morning, brushing each other's teeth, giving the dog his morning beer, attempting to eat together at a restaurant run by a dog-hating manager.

The low-point of the evening was a disastrous a cappella song sung out of anger at/for a rapist, complete with low lighting to make it more somber and ominous. It was every bit as sincere an attempt at expression as everything Bob does. The guy is so sincere it's painful to knock him. But sincerity and idealism

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photo - Jan Ballard

DARK BOB INTERVIEW *continued*

direct a painting with people who have great technical facility. Like getting maybe Thiebaud to do a portrait of your breakfast.

B.deV How many more times will you do "Uncontrollable Love"?

D.B. On this tour another eight or nine times. It's an evolving piece not unlike the United States that Laurie Anderson was touring with. I was disappointed with my show here and it disappoints me to disappoint others, and I felt that. In the old days it didn't matter so much. I didn't care what people thought and it was really important for me to do the kind of art that doesn't relate to others necessarily, and it was about personal catharsis or something. And you share it through this very intimate circuit which is the art world, so it doesn't feel the same anymore. I feel like my art should be responsive to those who are watching. It should be something for them.

B.deV Did you come from a painting background?

D.B. Yeah, art school. I think the best performance comes from art schools. I think it belongs to the painters before it belongs to dancers and theater people. I think it's a choice that painters have to make that makes the best performance art. And the way people are taught to be painters is the same kind of spirit that performers should have. So many dance companies are calling themselves performance artists now. I'm happy that performance art has liberated the other arts and that now there's space for dancers to do whatever thing they want to do. But it's the performance art done by visual artists that really is the foundation of what performance art is. It was their getting anxious, wanting to get off the wall and get a more immediate reaction to their effort. It was that anxiety of getting no response that painters go through that forced them into the streets. 'Cause it's so hard to get feedback

when you're a painter. It's a terribly lonely miserable thing to do.

B.deV Did you perform in art school?

D.B. Yes, and we were almost kicked out for it. It wasn't at all popular. I know about Chris Burden, and there is a generation that precedes us -- of Chris Burden and Barbara Smith. They had a way of working that we were really reacting against. We didn't like it. It seemed too far away. I really respect their work, but at the time it seemed too limited to us so we started wearing suits, doing things that seemed more theatrical. And I think that's good too. I think both kinds of work are good. But I'd rather be in the audience of someone that does care about these presentational qualities. The theatrics of it. I think it helps. And if an artist is really trying to say something then they should be concerned with how it's presented. Because people only have certain accesses into their beings and if things are too foreign or unfamiliar or threatening, they'll just keep the doors closed. Whereas if something is given to them in a familiar form, they are more open to it and they'll get more from it. And the more you have to give, the more you should make sure your audience can get. That's the artist's job. To have something to give.

B.deV Two last questions. What are five things you need to do a performance?

D.B. 1. Confidence 2. Desire 3. Optimism 4. A tape deck 5. A movie projector

B.deV What are five things you don't need when you go see a performance?

D.B. 1. Violence 2. Reptiles...

B.deV Who are some of your favorite L.A. performance artists?

D.B. I don't go to performance art, but I might add that I don't buy records or go to movies or read books or do anything else. I like to make my own movies. I just walk all the time. O

UNCONTROLLABLE LOVE *continued*

do not art make, and however strong his feelings about the ordeal, (the song was an attempt to come to terms emotionally with performance artist Barbara Smith's rape last year) the message communicated was empty, melodramatic, and, sadly (and unintentionally), trivializing. The audience was noticeably embarrassed and Bob, naive at times perhaps, but no fool, was too.

"Uncontrollable Love" teetered formally and ideologically in and out of focus. Bob himself seemed strangely unsure of himself at times. Pauses between bits were awkward and clumsy. Bob doesn't always know quite what to do during a song when all eyes are on him. There is no live band behind him to interact with, instead there are troublesome tapes. While the music is a not uninteresting hybrid of ethnic and colloquial styles, the arrangements and recordings themselves are yawningly low-key: like the product of slick session-hacks. The coldness of this disco-muzak doesn't jibe well with Bob's humble and homely, but friendly and warm, singing style. Putting an entire soundtrack on tape also tends to inhibit a performer's nature, because the structure of the piece then hinges on staying with the tape. Bob should throw out his cassettes, hire a band with great chops and lots of soul and personality, and perform with them live. Or save the recorded music for the films (where it worked very well), and concentrate on an intimate evening with Uncontrollable Bob, acoustic balladeer. Neither approach need threaten Bob's credibility as an artist - Bob is open and candid about his desire to be a pop star. And chances are he could be. He is easily one of performance art's most accessible figures. He should take his show into concert halls and make and sell records to kids and grownups, Arabs and Jews, Whites and Blacks, Easterners and Westerners everywhere. His songs and his smart good humor would (with a good band) complement airwaves all over the world. O

- STEVEN L. JONES

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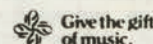
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Brendan de Vallance and the McCain Brothers in Noosepaper.

PERFORMANCE: CHICAGO

Remote Faces: Outerpretation
by Miroslaw Rogala

Noosepaper by Brendan de Vallance
in "Performance: Chicago"
State of Illinois Building, May 2

The use of technology in performance art cannot be denied, and can even become an integral part of its development and presentation; when it is used, however, basic issues must be addressed. In what ways does technology generate and extend content?

Both Miroslaw Rogala's video performance Remote Faces: Outerpretation, and Brendan de Vallance's performance Noosepaper are concerned with this issue. Rogala's multi-screen presentation displayed his skill in the manipulation of images in unison with a sometimes-mesmerizing audio track of repeated words. This was accomplished with both simultaneous and delayed material on different screens and speakers. The images consisted mostly of human faces from the street and from Rogala's life. There were faces looking at each other from different screens, there were faces talking in slow motion, faces smiling and faces talking about life and art. With the exception of the annoyingly self-conscious way "What is art?" was repeatedly asked, it was all executed with sensitivity and finesse.

Individual moments were brilliant, especially when Rogala accompanied

the video with his effectively understated accordion. Unfortunately though, the whole piece was hollow, not evoking any overall mood or idea. As effective as the scenes were by themselves, they never seemed to be built upon one another.

Noosepaper was entirely different and far more focused. Although the other performers in this piece remained peripheral, de Vallance's pacing kept the piece from unravelling despite his awkward attempts to hang himself while drinking cola and eating fast-food from a rickety card table. Props that included a record player strapped to his head, playing "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath", might have overpowered a weaker script. Here they were perfect illustrations of the individual's plight in attempting to transcend the fog of television, radio, newspaper, and mass commercialism we are all mired in. "What I'm trying to say..." he would begin, unable to finish the sentence because of the blasting amplifier on his back, or the physical attack of media thugs. He couldn't say what he wanted to, but Noosepaper did.

Obviously, technology in performance has more expansive uses than merely being the object of de Vallance's parody. There can be bridges to places we've never seen, where we might not otherwise be able to go. For travel, though, there must be a reason to go and a recognition of origin. Only then can there be a context. ○

- WARREN KARLENZIG

REVIEWED IN BRIEF

Performance at Filmmakers May 16
and 17, 1986

Laurel Serleth, Lorel Janiszewski,
Bonnie Blanck - performance curated
by Jeff Abell, Kathryn Hixson - sound
curated by Bob Metrick

This overall feeling generated by this event was that each of the performance artists was able to briefly create some unique moments in work marked by a nervous intensity which may have been caused by inexperience. The more polished sound pieces by Kathryn Hixson were interspersed between performances.

Hixson's sound work is made with electronic clocks and filters which organize tones that are generally clear and instrument-like. Her sound pieces are characterized by a close relationship with the patterns of classical music, the droning rhythms of folk and ethnic musics, and an emotional and humorous underpinning. The last piece was especially pleasing, a kind of dog sonata/folk song.

The first performance, by Lorel Janiszewski, "Beat Me Daddy--Eight to the Beat," featured jokes about bartenders, pieces of string, birth control, and medical insurance. The performer's persona was brash, jewelry bedecked and not unlike a standup comedian. The piece seemed to be about a woman's loss of control.

In "Post-Modern Time Management," Bonnie Blanck wore a hopeful costume, and acted out jokes about the computer code bars that are the universal sales symbol. She described her unequal and mysterious relationship with an Amway salesman and depicted another relationship by a series of dance moves - the same movements done around a sculpture were simultaneously shown in a series of slides. This piece revealed offbeat and unsuccessful ways to gain or regain control over time, relationships, and self.

The third piece, Laurel Serleth's "The Divided Self," began with a strange mask episode. Lighting changes seemed to indicate an attempt at imminent transformation, but the timing seemed off and the removal of the mask was obvious. The performer was dressed in a kind of penitential sheet outfit. She cut up a cow heart and pronounced derogatory remarks in the manner of someone reliving past insults. She then tried to hold the heart together. She also used a tub of water to recreate a pond, and recounted a sad and scary dream about animals. "The Divided Self" also seemed to be about women's loss of control but without the wisecracks.

The audience was sympathetic and ready to laugh. Many people enjoy jokes, visual puns, and personal anecdotes. These performance pieces seemed more like standup comedy blended with memory. There's got to be more if its going to be art. ○

- S. WEXLER

lawrence steger



photo - Mike Love

Jean Parisi, Sarah Means, and Yvette Brackman in Steger's ...Sisters.

The Marriage Or Story of Sisters
Randolph Street Gallery, May 2 & 3

What Lawrence Steger brings to the performance arena with The Marriage Or Story of Sisters is not easily categorized nor easily assimilated. Cutting a wide swath across emotional and psychological boundaries, Steger challenges and forces us to eavesdrop on the dark inner workings of fear and doubt, of death and disturbances in a family structure. Steger has cleverly masked a simple story with a complicated framework designed to duplicate the nuances of psychological dependence and independence. Based on a personal oral history as told by his mother Marie, Steger has taken those events of the early 20th century and altered them dramatically in order to reveal and harness the power of the family on four of its women.

Strong performances by Sarah Means (Johanna), Susan Anderson (Elizabeth), Jean Parisi (Victoria) and Yvette Brackman (Mamie) were well crafted and animated this carefully woven tale of funereal lament and surrender with their deft characterizations and deliveries. Created with various plot twists, a double marriage ceremony is tragically altered by the death of one of the brides, who is replaced by one of her sisters. The fourth sister, considered insane, "her mind ... taken by the wind", never marries and is cared for by first one sister, then another. Our perceptions of these women as individuals are fragmented and manipulated in ways ranging from symbolic

costuming and animation photography by John Flores to elaborate slide programming produced by Lou Mallozi, with technical assistance by Maria Lovullo. Steger's idiosyncratic soundtrack with its repetition, self-references, and subliminal messages of love and loathing (with their confusions and conceits) was finely shaped and brought yet another level of meaning to the work. In many respects we were a malleable jury in a netherworld courtroom, judging a social history as defined through multiple perspectives.

While all the conceptual posturing of Sisters is valid, it doesn't always lead the viewer in a clear direction. Steger's onstage character of "director/ engineer" is vaguely reminiscent of the "revealed" Wizard of Oz or the Stage Manager of Our Town. References to the script within the script invoke art about art and theatre about theatre, constituting a thin line between the vehicle and its contents - a line on which Steger manages to remain delicately balanced. At one point toward the end, the chorus of sisters proclaim, "I thought everything was clearer than what it is", bringing the narrative dangerously close to a miasma of self-referentiality.

Steger is clearly gifted in directing live performers along with inter-media presentations. With this family portrait accomplished he is firmly on the road to developing both an ambitious form and a strong personal style. O

- LARRY LUNDY

JOHN HASKELL *continued*

Haskell sets the stage and his desires from the very beginning: He wants to say everything, he wants this to be larger than himself, he doesn't want to be told what to do. Slowly, imperceptibly, he moves from friendly hesitance to a facistic control of the crowd to asking the world for an answer (to have God play through him.) This peculiar blend of religion and politics finally settles down to a series of stories which in a Hawthornesque journey leads him with his single thread to seek out his self-identity. His fate having been revealed outside of a pizza parlor by no other than Venus herself, and reiterated in a dream, he sets out on a bizarre underworld mission for confirmation of that fate. What ensues is a fabricated story involving a kind of coming of age (on the Lower East Side.) Story after story, the details accumulate: a failed attempt at playwriting, an encounter with an incensed Mexican looking for pure provocation (flashlight and all), a million Bowery bums with two million hands, a couple who share an arm for a relationship long expired yet are fearful of an amputation, a shit-eating initiation into New York's premiere club (the LOVE CLUB of course,) and finally a television whose programming informs the world that twenty minutes is left for living. A twenty minute period left to resolve all that there is. In this twenty minute period a kitchen, a street, and a woman (in that order) turn into a world larger than all previous worlds. In this twenty minute period all the neighbors gather on the street, as if they needed one last look at what they missed-yet they turn away at the mere sight of a man and a woman taking advantage of the little time remaining to 'love.'

Haskell arrives miraculously at the end having tied all the various stories together. Occasionally the seams of this narrative are too apparent: their metaphorical significance rising to the top. Yet, he is to be commended for undertaking such a leviathan task in a medium that is so pared down. He is a superb writer and actor and time itself will help to hide the few dangling threads. O

- KEVIN HENRY

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SQUAT THEATRE

11



Dreamland Burns by the Squat Theatre
May 15, 16, and 17, 1986

Presented at Briar Street Theatre as the third performance in the Museum of Contemporary Art's series "The Electronic Language: New Video and Performance."

The Squat Theatre is an ensemble of performers that began presenting experimental works in Hungary during the late 60s. Their early, politically radical work was banned from public performance by the Hungarian authorities, and the group was forced to emigrate to France, Holland, and England to find greater artistic freedom. In 1977, the presentation of "Pig, Child, Fire!" won the group international recognition and served as a vehicle for their eventual move to New York, where they have lived, worked, and performed until the summer of 1985. "Dreamland Burns," the ensemble's current production, marks their first attempt to create work for proscenium theater.

"Dreamland Burns" is a performance in two sections. The first is a 16mm black and white film, and the second, a series of live actions, taped sound, and theatrical special effects. The film is about a young woman named Alexandra (played by Eszter Balint - known for her lead role in the recent film "Stranger Than Paradise") who moves from her parents' home into her first apartment. Its objective documentary style is direct and unpretentious, and works well

with Balint's brilliant dead-pan acting. Within the events of a single day, the film gives a glimpse into Alexandra's relationship with her boyfriend, her parents, and her new-found freedom. A highlight of the film was Alexandra's duet with a wino, singing "Let's Get It On." Taken as a whole, it was a wonderfully entertaining work, like a "Breakfast At Tiffany's" for the 80s.

The second section began as the film fades to black on the image of Alexandra lying in bed, smoking a cigarette, lost in thought. The darkened screen slowly rose to reveal a fire blazing on stage. This quick shift from film to live action created an interesting perceptual readjustment. The fire, in a sense, burned away the virtual-time of film, creating a real-time of theater. What followed was the unfolding of Alexandra's dream-like thoughts. Characters from the film appeared live on stage, and filmed images of faces talking were projected onto faceless dummies, animating them with a surrealistic interplay of reality and illusion. The conceptual twist was provocative. The film, an illusion of reality, presented a story in a realistic manner: the live activity on stage - reality itself - presented a dreamlike sequence of thoughts. Beyond this, however, the work was void of any significant ideas other than Alexandra's dream odyssey of arguing with a friend, getting drunk, talking with a wino, and pining for a baby. Both the film and live action revolved around Alexandra's rite of passage into maturity. What was

interesting about the live sequence was not the content, but the form. Unfortunately, it suffered from an excess of theatrical devices.

Eva Buchmuller, Kuba Gontarczyk, and Jim St. Clair designed dynamic sets and props that were visually exciting and beautiful. A cardboard taxi popped up from the floor, a cafe dropped from the rafters, and dummies philosophized on the meaning of life, but the effects became repetitive, drawing too much attention to their presence as objects, rather than adding to the creation of atmosphere. Balint's stage acting suffered a similar fate. She lacked the subtle intensity exhibited in the film. Her interaction with other characters was forced and pretentious.

The use of film in performance is not unusual. The combination of film and live action is the synthesis of virtual and real time. It has been a staple of performance artists for decades. The Squat Theatre is certainly not on the cutting edge in this regard, nor should it be regarded as such.

"Dreamland Burns" was a clever, but gimmicky production, and obviously expensive. The ensemble's early success as a renegade group, performing in open-air spaces and private apartments, was fueled by political thought and realized on a shoestring. In the case of "Dreamland Burns," Squat Theatre dipped into a costly bag of tricks. Perhaps they were responding to what they perceived as a new set of formal demands. O

- RANDY ALEXANDER

JUNE 1986

CALENDAR

6 NEW PERFORMERS/NEW PERFORMANCES
Randolph Street Gallery
8 pm: \$4/\$3

An evening of four artists as part of a quarterly series at RSG. DAVID RISING will present A Second; SHARON SANDUSKY will show her films Passing Influence and Visceral Perception SUZI GREENSPAN is a writer who performs; and KATHY KOSMIDER will present Rhapsody One.

6,7 TATTOO TABOO
13,14 A.R.C. Gallery
20,21 8:30 pm: \$4/\$3

A performance dedicated to the tattoo, with poet-performers, an actress, a dancer, projected images and live music by the MARCEL DUCHAMP MEMORIAL PLAYERS.

6 TEKART
Metro
10:30 pm: \$6

Live interactive video and electronic images presented by Electronic Visualization, UIC.

7 JEFF ABELL & JOEL KLAFF
Beacon St. Gallery
8:30 pm: Free

Two local performance artists present Why We Can't Work Together as part of a day-long celebration at Beacon St. called "The Day of Light" which includes many other art, theatre, and music events.

7 BILL HARDING; BLEAK HOUSE
Links Hall
9 pm: \$5

A night of BILL HARDING's performance art and the music of Bleak House, a band consisting of FRANK & JOHN NAVIN, KEVIN HENRY, and SARAH EKHARDT.

8 FOUR PERFORMANCES
Columbia Coll. Studio Theatre
7 pm: Free

MUSA JAOUNI, JAN ROGERS, CHARLOTTE SHURE, and LYDIA TOMKIN in an evening of performances presented by the Masters Program in Interdisciplinary Arts Education of Columbia College.

13,14 FIVE PERFORMANCES CURATED
BY JAMES GRIGSBY
Columbia Coll. Studio Theatre
8 pm: \$4/\$3

Well-known Chicago artist GRIGSBY has curated a program of performances by JOAN DICKENSON, MUSA JAOUNI, ELHAM JAZAB, BRIGID MURPHY, and BOBBIE McCAOL STEWART.

14 ONO
Randolph Street Gallery
9 pm: \$3

A legendary Chicago theatrical sound ensemble appears live at an Opening Party of Sound Sculpture sponsored by RSG and The Experimental Sound Studio. Also appearing, COMMUNITY #5, an African/Carribean dance band.

21 LIGHT HENRY HUFF; XOPC;
INFANT DOTS
Randolph Street Gallery
9 pm: \$5

Visual new music performances by three diverse improvisatory acoustic and electronic ensembles.

21 SXPU
Medusa's
Throughout the night: \$6

Ambient performances entitled The Thirteenth Hole throughout the night by a local performance art collective.

27,28 CABARET GENET
Axe St. Arena
8 pm: \$4

A cabaret-style night of assorted theatrical and musical acts, sponsored by Gay Pride.

27,28 KEVIN HENRY; DANI KOPOULOS;
SHRIMP BOAT

KEVIN HENRY presents his play Life in General; DANI KOPOULOS is an emerging Chicago artist, and SHRIMP BOAT is Chicago's only post-punk, quasi-folk, neo-jazz ensemble.

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