



-form

a journal of interdisciplinary and performance art

#34

winter 1994

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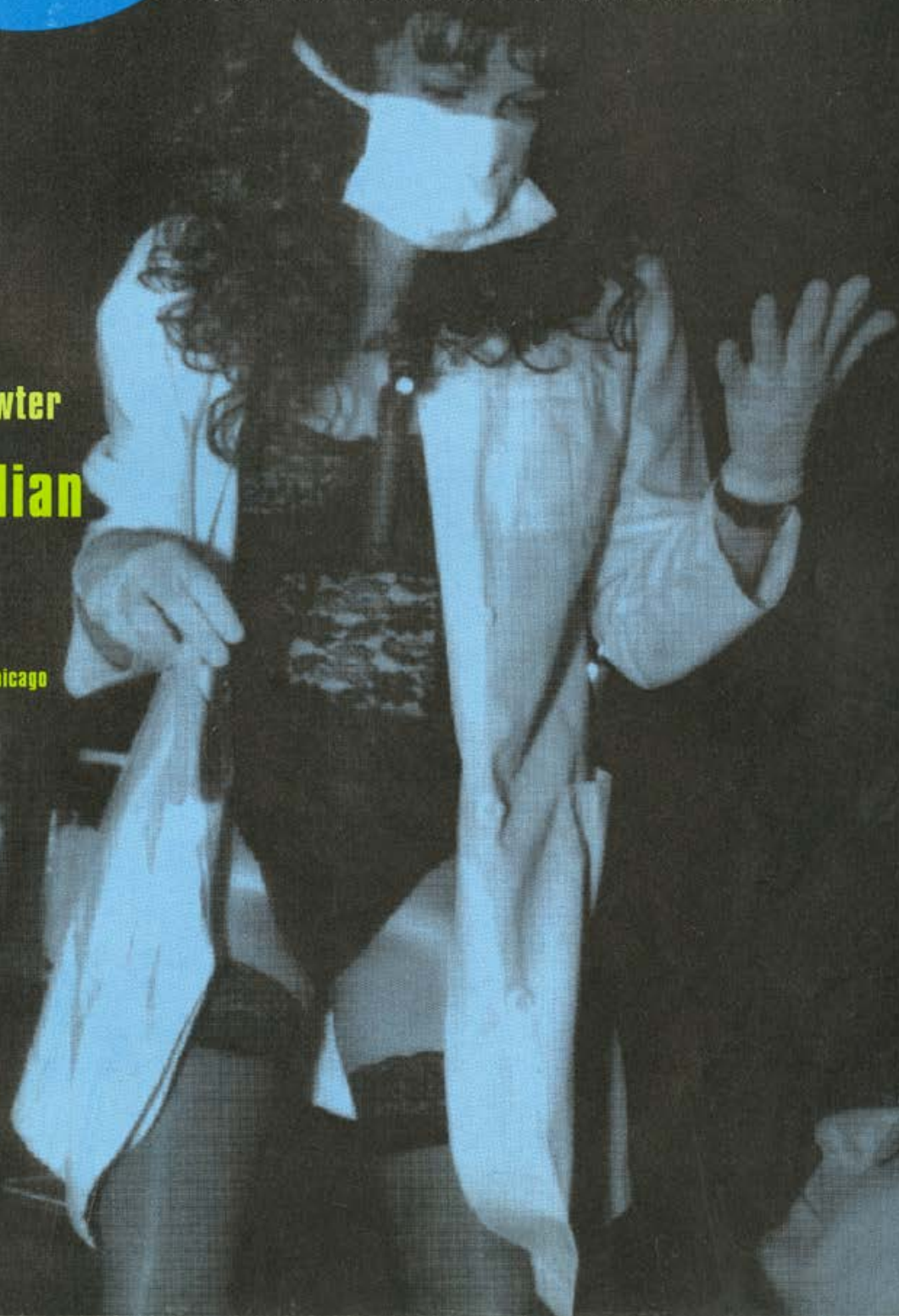
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Anna Brown's Tooth Readings
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SUBMISSIONS: P-Form gladly accepts unsolicited materials by anyone who thinks they can write a coherent sentence. We are rather picky, however, about some technical matters. Features should be limited to 3600 words, reviews 800 words (no limits

on performance texts). The copy must be typed, double-spaced, and include the author's name, phone number, and for features a one-or-two-sentence bio. Microsoft Word on Mac formatted disk is strongly encouraged, though not necessary. For complete writer's guidelines, write the address below.

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Adam&Eve/Romeo&Juliet
performed by Dziga Vertov
Performance Group
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P-Form exists to observe, document, and comment upon performance and connected arts and artists throughout the United States. In an era where artists are being forced into smaller and more constrictive roles, P-Form seeks to expand the role of the artist across both artistic and societal boundaries. It seeks to reinterpret performance (and art for that matter) as a daily human activity, worthy of both our collective praise and derision, and certainly worthy of our close examination.

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The Journal of Sound Exploration

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**Beyond Boundaries:
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FULL DISCLOSURE

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kay, so I lied. In *P-Form* #30 I wrote (and I quote my own weak Goldilocks metaphor), "What you see before you now is (hopefully) our final and last format change. First we were too small for the kind of design we wanted to have. Then we were too big (for mailboxes, newsstands). Finally, we hope we've found 'just right.' Hey, it only took 30 tries."

Would you believe 34?

Of course at this point I'm not going to make any more claims about an end to our vacillating format. Perhaps it's better to keep people guessing. In any event, I guess I can explain what happened this time: economics. Our not-8.5 x 11, not-11 x 17 format was wasting a lot of paper, which forced us to use this one printer we found who for some reason agreed to print the magazine at half the price everyone else quoted us. This, of course, should have tipped us off to the fact that THEY WERE MORONS, as we soon found out. So now we're back to a 8.5 x 11ish size, have a better printer, and are once again gazing out to sea.

My tendency is to think that you, the reading public, could probably care less about the size of the magazine: somehow I can't imagine you all staying up late at night worrying about why *P-Form* keeps changing sizes. Of course, who I'm worried about in this respect are the advertisers and magazine distributors who equate inconsistency with illegitimacy. As I write this, I'm also afraid that these same distributors and advertisers will actually read this piece and decide that no sane magazine would actually air its dirty laundry and express its doubts and misgivings in this way.

And the truth of the matter is: we need them. We have to pander to them. We have to provide a consistent, clean, homogenous, "well-designed" format or most advertisers and newsstand browsers won't even look at us. (Strangely, most 'big' advertisers are more concerned with the design than the content: no doubt a slickly designed pederasty magazine would be easier to sell ads for than a small art magazine.) [I can't believe I just wrote that.]

The bind is really this: if we want to reach more readers, we have to bland-ize the magazine to make it more sellable to advertisers and distributors. The push for a larger readership isn't just a "bigger is better" philosophy, but a

fundamental feeling that performance is underreported and deserves a wider and more informed audience. So what's a girl to do?

Don't get me wrong. I hardly think that *P-Form* is currently the most super-underground-cutting edge-artzine out there. However, through the generosity of our publisher, Randolph Street Gallery, we haven't had to bow and scrape to advertisers, and have felt free to write about whatever we damn well please, and publish the writings of whomever we felt had something interesting to say, regardless of how many copies it might sell.

While those days aren't behind us, we hope, there has been the feeling here lately that we're ready for a larger audience. Towards this end, we've brought in consultants from the Business Volunteers for the Arts to devise a marketing strategy for us. Over the next year, we'll be looking at our readers, potential new readers, and the format and content of the magazine. We'll be soliciting your advice on the magazine — what works, what doesn't, what's missing — and welcoming your opinions. We hope you'll be a part of the Big *P-Form* Makeover (Help us, Oprah!).

Our chosen route at this point is to make the format changes, uniformize things a bit, and act a little more like other magazines while hopefully maintaining a quirky/experimental/it's okay to fall flat on your face approach to the content of the magazine. Will this work? Who knows. Like all those artists (including myself) who are tired of playing to the same 30 people, we're tired of being read only by the same 2000 readers. And we're willing to sneak into people's homes by pretending to be a 'real' magazine.

I think you all should know what decisions are being made about the magazine — I look at you, the reader, as a kind of part-owner in this venture. As I write this, the U. S. Congress is deciding whether to gut the NEA programs which support *P-Form*. Would we survive this? Probably, but what would we have to do to make up the lost revenue? Make ourselves look even more like *Art in America*? Spend even more time talking to advertisers and less to writers? We hope not.

Where's this all going? I don't know. It just seems to me that advertising and marketing are creating a more and more bland world. Just like a lot of bland monologists are drawing large audiences and getting all the press, so have marketing people (sorry, BVA) figured out that bland, regular, and safe sells. In the new streamlined economy, there's no room for risk. I guess we could all live with this if all that was being marketed were jeans and long-distance service. But when access to alternate information sources is what is being limited by marketing strategies (or lack of marketing strategies), we should all sit up and take note.

KEN THOMPSON
Managing Editor

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Dear editors:

After reading Craig Harshaw's critique in *P-Form* [#32] of our "The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg: A Conference Where Artists and Revolutionaries Meet," held this past winter at Blue Rider Theatre, I am reminded of the Woody Allen maxim, "Those who can't do, teach. Those who can't teach, teach gym."

To suggest that we would spend four months of our lives, untold hours of planning, schlepping, fundraising and networking to create and produce a 9-day conference and then "actively obstruct lines of communication between the artists and the larger community" is insulting at least and ridiculous at best. No, Horseshit is a better word.

Fortunately, the conference was well-attended and many people were genuinely effected by the vital and important discourse. I know this because I was often approached by audience and panelists alike who expressed their gratitude for the forums. Even Andre Codrescu, the biggest curmudgeon of them all, was inspired on National Public Radio to talk about its impact on him. That's the point of the whole thing, after all, to effect the people that come to it, to engage them to think, to converse, to learn, and, ultimately, to act.

And don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't welcome responsible criticism. As scores of conference attendees could tell you, I was available and attentive to anyone who wanted to share ideas about improving the design, content and facilitation of events, or anyone, for that matter, who just wanted to shoot the shit.

Which brings us back to Mr. Harshaw. He writes, "This idea of community involvement...seems diametrically opposed to the Blue Rider Theatre's position...Their relationship to the economically disadvantaged Pilsen community is distant at best." Hmmmm...how about the programs we've done with neighborhood kids, like the show we developed from their own actual writings? Or the nights we host local Mexican jazz bands? Or the hundreds of kids just within the last few months through Urban Gateways that had their first theatrical experience on our stage? Or our open door policy that has admitted literally hundreds of local people to attend shows at no charge, simply for the

asking? Or, do I dare admit, all the poor white Pilsen artists who regularly attend our programs? Really, Mr. Harshaw, you gotta get out more often.

And hey, while you're out there, can you show me where it's written that we are obliged to primarily cater to our own neighborhood residents? Isn't it equally important to produce larger forums for artists and politicians to come together? Or multicultural, multi-disciplinary performance festivals, like our annual Nights of the Blue Rider Festival? Or original plays about Mexican painters (*Frida: The Last Portrait*) or Haitian Voodoo (*After Mountains, More Mountains*) or Socialist revolutionaries, for that matter?

Isn't Chicago big enough for all of us to do something different? I suppose if we catered exclusively to Pilsen's "economically disadvantaged" (read between the lines, "working class Latinos"), some white-bread critic would carp about us not being responsible to the larger metropolitan community.

He even berates our ticket prices, deciphering this, apparently, as the linchpin in our secret plot to sabotage ourselves. All but two of the nine events were \$4, which he conveniently failed to mention, and the nights featuring Judith Malina and Andre Codrescu were \$10 apiece. I defy any arts organization to produce what we did, with the scale and scope that it had, Judith Malina and Andre Codrescu included, and do it on our budget. \$10 for an evening with Judith Malina? I'd guess that the typical *P-Form* reader spends more than that a weekend on cappuccinos. Sure, after the beautiful, socialist Revolution occurs, everything will be free and no one will starve and all you need is love. In the meantime, we have to pay rent like everyone else.

But there are larger issues at stake here. Really big ones. I'm genuinely concerned about Mr. Harshaw's mental health. According to his article, he variously describes the behavior of conference organizers Donna Blue Lachman and myself as, "hostile," "embarrassingly inappropriate," "radically confrontational," "self-centered middle-class narcissism," and, my personal favorite, "nearly obscene." I can't possibly dispute his impressions of our behavior since any interpretation is by nature subjective and he is certainly entitled to his opinion. But he doesn't seem to be able to separate his own deep-seated insecurities and paranoia from his projections onto a hostile universe. (See? I have opinions, too.)

To his credit, Mr. Harshaw did admit that he was not "brave enough to directly confront Lachman's behavior." As a matter of fact, after reading his piece, I left a message on his machine to call me back so we could engage in the dialog he so publicly accused me of obstructing. I have yet to hear from him.

Did I mention that in his complex manifesto on the do's and don'ts of communication, he twice referred to me as "Tom Fiorio"..."executive director"? That's pretty close, I'm

TIM FIORI
Managing Director, Blue Rider Theatre

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Proposals are now being accepted for FRESH, N.A.M.E.'s annual student performance show. FRESH will be presented over two weekends, in March 1995. Works may include audio, video, movement, writings or other interdisciplinary performance pieces.

DEADLINE for SUBMISSION:

January 9, 1995

Call for a prospectus.

art/college/performance/texas

The Annual Meeting of the College Art Association (San Antonio, TX January 25-28, 1995) will feature a panel on "Interdisciplinary Action: The Place of Performance Art in Education." The panel is chaired by Jeff McMahon and Lin Hixson, and includes Jacki Apple, William Pope L., Laurie Beth Clark, and Michael Mufson. The panel will focus on the visibility and viability of performance in colleges/art schools, while making a case for the importance of performance art in the curriculum. The CAA can be contacted at: (212) 691-1051.

deadlines/art/opportunities

What follows are just a few selections from The Art Deadlines List, a bimonthly updated list available free over the internet (from rgardner@charon.mit.edu). These were pulled off in September; there's sure to be more by now.

Erotic Art Expo due 11/01/94 all media
The Griffin Gallery, 130 2nd St., Miami Beach FL 33139
Your Book Published Contest due 12/1/94

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P-Form, sadly, can not vouch for the reality of any of these competitions/opportunities.

audio art/LAB/residencies

The LAB (in San Francisco) has announced a call for entries for SoundLAB '95, its annual residency program in The LAB's digital audio editing facility. The residency includes training and access, a stipend for studio time, and an honorarium for a presentation at the end of the residency. No prior soundwork experience is necessary, and artists from all time-based disciplines are welcomed to apply. Proposals are due January 15, 1995. (The LAB is also accepting general proposals for their 95/96 season. Performance, video, and literary proposals are due by December 3, 1994.)

The LAB
1807 Divisadero St., San Francisco, CA 94115
phone: 415-346-4063

ABSOLUT *ely* RON VAWTER



photograph by Nancy Campbell

Michael Stumm, Willem Defoe, and Ron Vawter in *North Atlantic*.

n

ot so long ago a friend asked me to make the case that a certain rock and roller we both admired was the premiere post modern artist of our times (this was on

the radio no-less-live in front of thousands of expectant listeners. ok, hundreds.) and i froze i choked i couldn't think of a thing to say. i started babbling about shoes and how all great artists love shoes it got better but what a frightening moment, shoes, yeeks. there is such a case to be made for ron as the coolest avant garde performer in this cool world of ours but i'm not going to make it. that's best left to someone else. we were co-workers and friends. we worked at what we both considered to be the grooviest theatre in the world, and y'know what it was. simply because the rest of the world didn't agree with us didn't mean we were wrong. the rest of the world has since altered its opinion of the wooster group but there was a time when our audience consisted of a couple of painters a neighbor or two and stuart sherman. we, of course, had the time of our lives. this is a reminiscence. it doesn't pretend to be a history and like all things of this sort reveals far too much of the writer to be truly unbiased. for this i apologize, but ya know what jane fonda sez; no pain no gain.

fall sept. oct? 1977 — get my first real extended introduction to ron watching him to be the nameless killer in "cops." this guy is so scary i think to myself. he's so invisible until he has to freak out, and off everybody in the coffee shop. how does he do it, i ask, how does he keep such a low profile? really nobody notices this guy until he starts screaming and shooting up the joint. fascinating.

april or so 1977 — actually come to think of it i think

BY MICHAEL STUMM

i saw ron previous to cops in rumstick rd. (did i just type "previous"? yes previous, in rumstick. stalking naked into the lockup closet with a huge policeman's flashlight. what can i say. something just so right about that image. naked with flashlight peering nearsightedly into a dark room. so ron. yes.

the balcony when the hell was the balcony? ron comes up to me afterward and with all the sincerity he can muster sez "was it any good did you like it was it ok?" i mean what can i say? "ron it was terrific i love it (how do you spell terrific) it was very watchable loooovved it" funny thing libby asked the same thing. come to think of it so did willem. like i'm michael feingold or somebody. i tell them all it was a work of art. it wasn't. in fact it was awful.

spring 1978 — a rehearsal for nayatt school. i come to liz and spalding's house to visit will or something and once there i go to sit down on a bench that looks like it has a big black pillow on it. i sit and it starts to move. it starts wiggling and grunting. i leap up in fright and stare at this pillow and lo and behold ron's head emerges from one end grinning. hi mike he sez. oh hi ron i sez. uh ron what are you doing in that bag i continue to sez. oh just resting sez our ron. uh-huh.

1978 soon after last note — my favorite moments of nayatt school concern ron. ron leading the chorus of kids in their choral parts: "ooohhh" "nooooo" "how's that?" "yaaaaay" he does this job with such elan so sure of his voice he can afford to be one of them, one of the kids. amazingly thin line he walks doing this for me it's pure enjoyment. when libby and ron flee naked across the top of the back wall at

the end of the show i'm near tears. i think this is perfect it makes little or no sense but it's perfect. to this day, one of my favorite moments in the theatre.

in fact i seem to remember a viewing of nayatt minus the ron and libby exit. so imagine my surprise when i come the next nite and there it is. this compelling sheerly beautiful thing. wow. just wow.

fall 1978 — after a gig at the newly opened rock lounge, opening for oingo-boingo of all people, i bump into libby in the crowd i'm wandering around with a 3/4 full bottle of whiskey, why anyone is allowing me to do this i'll never know, but i am, actually trying to pick up bethany haye, who's also lost in this crowd. well lookit to make a long story short i wind up back at the garage in libby's little bed (actually big bed) and come to early the next morning only to find mr vawter smirking down at me (you know that smirk he would smirk at you whenever he'd find you in

some compromising position or other? well that one) i say hi he sez hi i kiss libby bye and stagger home. the construction workers have a hearty laff at my expense. i realize i'm dressed in knickers and pince-nez.

early 1980 — ron does the most demented things in point judith he looks absolutely nuts stabbing will or arguing with spalding or singing some lost jan and dean song. it's like we get a glimpse of the private life of the nameless killer in cops, like you know demented homicidal nut at home doing a little relaxing, a little screaming, a little stabbing. it's nice.

same time — i was just speaking with roy about this but i believe it was ronny who would whirl the lawnmower over his head during the long day's journey part and an arresting image it was. here's this guy, no arnold schwarzenegger mind you, spinning a push mower (heavy) over his head screaming i don't know what you what you really can't tell cuz berlioz is spinning at ear splitting volume with the MOST demented (naturally) look on his face. spooky. cool.

1980 — for some reason i have a tiff with will. like most things of this sort i can't remember why. my girlfriend

body else i used to ask him where he purchased a cologne that smelled just like a bloody mary. so there we all were and ron would click into his green beret priest mode thing and lead us none too gently thru calisthenics green beret priest style. to this day i don't care if i never see a squat thrust again. (unless it's in the privacy of my bedroom with my wife.) or a situp neither. i remember one day katie lay on the mat, unable to even think of doing anything else, mewling like a kitten, with a little pool (a cute ladylike little pool) of vomit next to her.

1983 may probably — one drunken nite i ask ron to take me to the jaguar a gay bathhouse where he spends i suspect far more time than he lets on. i've never been to one and i'm insistent like drunks tend to be. he gets all shy and kind of prim. i realize i don't have a clear image of his sexuality. i mean you know, what he does, what he likes. is he the boy or the girl or doesn't it matter. he tells me i wouldn't like it (the jaguar.) i don't get to go. hey i was just gonna watch.

same year — sometime during this show we take a side trip to brussels to do rt 1&9. i mean there are a million stories surrounding this tour the temptation to tell them all

i get stiffed for all this booze" "like what if this guy is koo-koo or something" cuz naturally ron is wearing his "don't interrupt me i'm on a mission" expression and this can be let's face it disconcerting to someone who doesn't know him. in fact when i strolled up i said hi when i recognized who it was and he turned with that particular look on his face, took like 3 minutes to realize who i was (and i'd just left him not an hour ago) beams at me crazily and dives back into his task. the super-drinks. it was the green char-treuse (i kid you not) that finally put the finishing touches on these things. also the poisonous yellowy-green sheen these things had. like something you'd see in a horror movie. so after handing over an immense amount of foreign currency (like my salary for the next 3 weeks) (really, this was an expensive bar. pricey) he loads these high octane things on a platter and with me running interference crosses the crowded room yelling things like GANGWAY — HOT STUFF — COMING THRU — INCOMING — ZOOM. we get to the table everyone expresses amazement at the product, ron has managed to convince me at least that these are going to be absolutely the BEST drinks anyone anywhere has ever drunk ever. well, they aren't. in fact

i n m e m o r y o f ron vawter

BY MATTHEW GOULISH

dee convinces me not to work on the new piece at the garage. i forget why. money? probably. libby goes crazy. i don't speak to anyone at the garage for about two years. i'll see ron around on the street wherever he's invariably polite we say hi not much more.

late 1982 early 1983 — thru events too complex to go into at great length i am on speaking terms with the garage again. travel to eindhoven (eindhoven?) for work on north atlantic. within a day of arriving ron has me dropping for 5 push-ups (of course), because i'm such a goof ball during warmups. it takes most of the time in holland but by the end he's made a marine outta me. (well, sorta) he is a spooky guy to do warm ups with. we roll in in the morning stinking of gin, all of us (with the exception of liz, of course, who is as we all know, naturally high on life) (hi liz!) hazy memories of the nite before, returning ("i did WHAT?") and believe you me ron was in no better shape than any-

1. *Village Voice* obituaries for Ron Vawter glowed with the language of spiritual longing. Writer after writer (C. Carr, Spalding Gray, Michael Feingold, Ross Wetzsteon, Gary Indiana, James Leverett) invoked grace, angels, and the divine. Vawter's life somehow gave license to a release of the usual, beloved skepticism and doubt, and allowed an embrace of spirituality rare in this country's art discourse. His life went something like this. After receiving full religious training, Vawter left the Franciscans. After full military training, he left the Green Beret. With no theater training, he joined the Wooster Group and never left. Over

the years he developed a hyper-personal acting style which director Elizabeth LeCompte once described as akin to freefall from an airplane.

2. The first time I witnessed it — I was a relative latecomer to the Wooster Group's work — was at New York's Performing Garage during the summer of 1988, when the company restaged the 1984 production of *North Atlantic*. Spalding Gray and Willem Dafoe, by then stars of international stature, clearly were the names that filled the theater. The cast included Anna Kohler, Nancy Reilly, Peyton Smith, Michael

Stumm, and Kate Valk, all excellent. James Strahs' outrageous script boasted a stunning and seemingly effortless control of language. LeCompte's direction ricocheted between overwhelming grandiosity and hilarious minutiae. Still, it seemed to me then, at the heart of all the fireworks floated the deliberate, centered physical presence and vertiginous vocal patterns of Ron Vawter.

In *Frank Dell's The Temptation of Saint Antony*, which I saw the following year, LeCompte had made Vawter the clear focus. She had constructed the piece around a tour-de-force of split-second timing in which Vawter,

is great but i'm not gonna do it. this however is one you don't wanna miss a minute of. so i walk into this bar see, and stagger over to the bartender and i'm tryin to get his attention when i realize he's not gonna give it to me cuz he's dealing with this other guy who turns out to be you guessed it mr vawter his own self. well when i say dealing with i mean just that he's none too happy with the proceedings which go something like this: ron has ordered up 8 glasses to be set in a line on the bar, just so, and is now picking liquors apparently at random, and ordering the guy to pour until he (ron) sez stop. so we get an inch or so of vermouth followed by 3/4 inch of bourbon, some scotch, a little cassis and so on and so forth. i mean i suppose he had some kind of agenda for these super powered cocktails but the logic just wasn't apparent to me. or the bartender neither for that matter who's starting to behave just a tad on the frosty side, like you can see the thought pass thru his head "hey what if

they are possibly the worst drinks anyone anywhere has ever drunk and i am not alone in this opinion. everyone else (ron excluded) shares this perception about these cocktails along with me and slowly they all drift away leaving their drinks glowing on the wet wood of the small round table and eventually i drift too, glancing over my shoulder at the last to see ron sitting all alone one of these monsternmovie concoctions clutched in his fin a smile on his face a sad smile but a smile just the same the things glowing obscenely around him. he probably drank them all.

same trip same year — making a really long story really short a story involving too much drinking — broken promises — chance meetings — hells angels — baby formula instructions in a foreign tongue — crowded disco-tecs — somebody's birthday, i encounter ron on a crowded dance floor in some dripping bar somewhere, and i say crowded but what i really mean is it's crowded everywhere

except where ron is. it's like a clearing in a forest packed to the rafters with the exception of a 10 ft circular space in the middle of this dance floor at the center of which stands (or frugs rather) ron stripped to the waist (like the warrior priest he is) (warrior priest? did i really say that?) frugging madly insanely clearly having altered his chemistry with some chemical or other twisting writhing doing some dance the rest of the world has yet to encounter and doesn't really know if it wants to, scared to death of this space alien doing his thing on their dutch dance floor. his sweat has described a perfect circle on the floor around him, and there's a lot of it. it looks like he has dug and filled a moat to surround him and keep these sissy dutch hipsters at bay, and ya know what? he's doin a dandy job. nobody will come anywhere near him. except me. (but you saw that one comin dincha?) i say hey man whacha doin? he can't even see he's so stoned but eventually he recognizes me and naturally enuf, he's a very polite guy after all, asks me if i wanna dance. i calculate the odds of being able to attend rehearsal the next day after entering into some wild dancing ritual with this creature and politely decline. when i leave he's back at it goin strong. frugging away.

he looks handsome. how does he do this?

1985 — rehearsals for lsd. more specifically the day we all decide to take lsd and rehearse the crucible. so there we are the drug is taking hold and at a certain point i glance back and there's ron, he's got feathers in his hair he's pretending to play debussy on my red farfisa organ and damned if he's doing one of those kooky dances of his again. willem, who has just seen the same thing, and i look at each other and burst into laughter. pure fun. pure fun. all pretense of actually trying to do the crucible goes right out the window.

later that year — after rehearsal we have a nite off. i'm sniffin smack off a record cover upstairs at the garage, ron comes in he's taken a bunch of lsd (he tells me) and is going on a date. lsd? date? are you thinkin the same thing i'm thinkin? must a been some date. but at any rate i must have called him ronald or something cuz he tells me "my name's not ronald" to which i reply "of course it's ronald, i mean ron has got to be the diminutive of something right?" well, wrong and here's why (sez ron) r.o.n. is a gi acronym for of all things remain over night like when his father visited his mother and signed out at the base r.o.n. remain over

microphone in hand, dubbed all the voices of a silent, pre-recorded video of the group performing a nude talk show. The tape skipped forward and back with seeming arbitrariness, while Vawter kept pace, hitting every line exactly. This mesmerizing action became the elliptical vehicle through which he took on the personage of Lenny Bruce alias Frank Dell, in order to pursue Flaubert's Saint Antony.

In 1992 Vawter presented his first and only solo performance work, *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*, directed by Gregory Mehrten. In the first half he impersonated homophobic, anti-communist lawyer Roy Cohn. After intermission, he duplicated a performance by flamboyant and open-

ly gay performance artist/filmmaker Jack Smith. Vawter prefaced the show each night by explaining that both were gay men who had died AIDS-related deaths, and that he himself was living with AIDS. The piece presented two personalities warped by homophobia. In many ways it stands as a model for contemporary political performance. While adhering to the truth as we know it, it made astute authorial connections, essaying homophobia and repression with clarity, compassion, and humor. Vawter's performing by this time had taken on a ferocious alacrity through unorthodox means. He set tape recordings of Cohn's voice to a timer which kicked them on into his earphones

in the middle of the night so he could absorb them while asleep. Smith's bizarre vocal patterns presented more of a challenge. Vawter, unable to recreate them any other way, listened to a tape of Smith's voice during the performance. The uncanny results resembled possessions more than impersonations. Vawter's performance seemed to lift him almost entirely out of himself.

3. In London in 1993 I was able to see *Brace Up!*, LeCompte's version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. The following day I recorded my thoughts.

July 5, 1993

They opened the doors and I hurried to a

1984 usa — during the run of north atlantic. ron is wearing his father's jump boots which he shines like no shine i've ever seen before or will ever see again. he tells me a story of a game he and guyz in the barracks used to play. goes like this: two blocks of ice set up at opposite ends of the barracks, a jar of cocktail cherries. you take a cherry set it on the block of ice drop trou, pick up the cherry with the crack of yr ass and carry it the length of the room only to set it on the other block of ice. if you succeed you have to chug a can of beer. and the cherry (the same cherry) passes on to the next army guy. if you fail you eat the cherry. oh those wacky army guys.

1984 — ron looks so great in his army uniform. willem looks like the ultra straight guy, i cultivate the pre motorcycle crash bob dylan buttoned up but disheveled look (hard to do in an army uniform) but ron just looks so great in his.

night. some sense of humor huh? so ron goes out on his date and quite frankly i forget just what i did with the rest of the evening.

let's backtrack a little to last summer '84 — i'm living with cookie downstairs from ron and greg at 285 bleeker st. (in a building i now laughingly refer to as "house of death") cookie and i have a little contest going, who can get in later, us or the vawters. we're annoyed when we lose.

1986 — things start to get hazy about this time. liz starts to fire me every six months. why she keeps hiring me back i'll never know but she does. when she does it's all she can do just to get me to stand up on stage. when i do stop shooting smack, it's only to start drinking, and i'm tellin you man i'm the world's drunkest citizen during these periods. during the richard foreman show (what a mistake) i take to keeping a sixpack backstage. "hey you wouldn't want me

to get dehydrated" i tell people who know what i'm doin. ron is working like a dray-horse during richard's show. he takes several bad falls during the run that i'm personally glad i didn't have to take. he looks awfully tired.

1987 — ron approaches me at one point and tells me how proud he is i've been able to kick my heroin habit because to all appearances i'm living without benefit of powerful narcotics and i've even radically cut back my drinking, so he tells me how proud he is of me. what i neglect to tell him is that this morning and every morning for the past six months i went to my methadone maintenance clinic where i'm a "client" and received a terribly powerful dose of "medication" designed to keep me sedated



second row seat. Ron Vawter, already on the stage platform, walked the playing area muttering to himself. A year ago, when I saw *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* at the Garage, he seemed robust and powerful. Last night he was thin and pale.

Through the evening, dressed in his military uniform, he delivered Vershinen's speeches, each one a mournful, optimistic farewell, slowly with an almost complete inner stillness. How many artists suspect they will soon be gone? How many people have already gone? I could list them, but what would be the point? By now we all have our own personal lists. Vawter knows the list, and he knows he is on it. For

enuf to interact with society at large, after which i hit the street buy some smuggled out methadone from some poor junkie buzz to my nabe-r-hood shoot some street heroin before the methadone enters my system buy some coke to counteract the effect of all these central nervous system depressants, and then proceed to work. hell i've already done a day's work. but whether ron was just tryin to make me feel better or truly believed what he was saying, i'm aghast, appalled at my behavior the extent of my lying and the double life i'm living i can't look him in the face i mumble something. it's so sad.

we have to backtrack a moment to the first open performances of lsd. ron tells me the best joke i have ever heard on stage. (best joke offstage: so this horse walks into this bar and the bartender sez: "hey, why the long face") we're in the climactic moments of the crucible and we're all screamin wavin our arms throwin books papers whatever

makin a hell of a racket. runnin across the stage shootin toy guns anything you can think of to make mayhem we're doin. we have these legal briefs sheets of paper really with lawyer gobbledey-gook on them and we're throwin these things every which way. in the middle of this confab ron appears at my elbow i mean really appears i don't have the foggiest notion where he comes from. like a fuckin genie er photograph by Ken Kobland

some thin. hands me one of these legal briefs that has wound up on the floor and has the clear imprint of someone's sneaker on it grins and without missing a beat sez "footnote" and whoosh disappears from whence he came. it takes a second for all this info to register with me (we are in the middle of a show after all) but when it does i dissolve into a puddle of laughter. right there on the floor i'm

him this means a one-of-a-kind opportunity. He points us toward the saddest moment in the world, and smiles at our sentiment. At the end of Act II, with the rest of the cast dancing, he appeared like an apparition in the shadows to the right of the platform. He watched them dance, then he drifted away.

At the end of the night, he had the final Chekhovian line of the play. With the cast holding a still tableau, he allowed a massive pause, then slowly approached his microphone. I saw Anna Kohler fight back a giggle. Then Kate Valk joined in with a muffled snicker. Vawter seemed to sense this, and appeared

encouraged by it. He was going to make them laugh if it was his last act in this life. He leaned toward the microphone, looking like a lost dog with a slight maniacal glint in his eye. Then, very slowly, he said, "Where's Masha? Why isn't she here?"

Then Kate stepped up and said, "That's all for tonight," and immediately they filed into curtain call formation and the applause erupted.

I was still laughing when Vawter collapsed. He stepped down the two little stairs at the platform's front, and suddenly he was on the floor. His legs had given out. He caught him-

down on my knees slapping the floor i'm laffin so hard wettin my pants it's so funny. peyton standing next to me is literally kicking me to shut me up. for days i'm laffin whenever i think about it. i'm laffin now as i hope, gentle reader, you are.

australia when was australia? on the flight over oh nevermind.

ron does anna's and my taxes every year. i'm of course aware of the uh fictional aspect of ron's tax returns but not until yrs later when i take my taxes to an acct. am i hip to just how fictional. i give the acct. some old returns of ron's and say just make them look like these. he calls me up later and sez who is this guy who used to do yr returns? who wants to know i sez back? look sez he i can't do yr returns like those i'll go to jail, you'll go to jail we'll all go to jail together and you don't want that i certainly don't want that sez he. i finally convinced him to do them like ron's just

don't sign yr name i told him i'll take the responsibility. so he did em. but he didn't like it one bit. kinda went against the grain if ya know what i mean. professional ethics being what they are and all that. i still owe him the hundred \$'s he charged me. i should pay him one of these days.

the convention involving putting years and dates to these thoughts gets a little tricky here, the constant touring (we did after all make most of our money on the road. like any hard working band) the hospitalizations both ron's and my own, shows, cities, the faces our own little book of hours all tend to run together like sticky candy in the hot hot sun. these were bad times for me. ron was getting sicker we drifted apart. my life was a poisoned river fast overtaking me making my day a hell of burglary and heroin. i wasn't paying a lot of attention to ron's decline. for instance, i have no memory of appearing on stage with him during "brace up." i don't mean i can't remember it, i can but i may as well have not even been there for all the attention i was payin.

sometime in early 92 — ron calls zoe's house lookin for me. wants to know if i have any idea where a certain power drill outfit has gone. he's the soul of tact i'm sure that's why he's chosen for this particular task. he actually

or any place else for that matter. rattle-brained as i was his physical decline was alarming. i noticed the lesions for the first time hugging him backstage at the jack smith roy cohn thing (which i didn't have the courage to tell him i didn't like much) i spent the next two odd years making some kind of peace with this bag of bones i drag around with myself i call mike, a peace that included a day without heroin then a week several months, you get the picture, convinced i would never see ron again. i did see him again, i attended a revival of st anthony which was thrilling enuf (i'd done the show for years and had no clear picture of what it was like. it was great and you know what? i didn't miss me at all) but the pleasure of watching ron be ron in a good, no, a great show put it right over the top. only afterward talking with him upstairs could i see how tired and sick and flat out old he looked. he looked as if he'd aged 50 years in the last 2. we hugged and chatted i introduced him to my girlfriend robyn two years disappeared in the blink of an eye, i'd like to say we exchanged some last gift wrapped up some old problems said goodbye or whatever but we didn't. my friend jim shot a photo which he sent to me, ron in the middle looking goofy, robin to the right smiling a secret smile,

self on one knee and for a brief moment struggled to stand but remained motionless, his body without even the strength to lift itself up. He reached out his hand, and Peyton Smith grabbed it and pulled him to his feet so quickly he looked light as a feather. I realized then that I had leaped halfway out of my seat, ridiculously, as though I could catch him. He shouted the signals for the bows. They bowed, and left the stage.

4 "I wished to live, and clearly I saw that I was not living but wrestling with the shadow of death." — Saint Teresa of Avila, 1562

I never saw Ron Vawter again. Miraculously,

he performed on stage for another ten months after that night, before his heart stopped on an airplane from Italy bound for New York, his home, on April 16th. He was 45 years old. He performed in a condition that would have kept most of us bedridden, and I can't help thinking that the art he had discovered, the discipline he developed, prolonged his life. Nobody who saw him could deny that his performances tapped an interior life force, that in performance he transformed into a conduit of sorts between those already gone and those just arriving. These performances must have propelled him into one more moment, one more day, one more week of life. Finally he grew

too weak even to be carried on stage for performances of his last project, *Philoctetes*. Now that he has gone, we can see that his art and life have given us something beyond value — something that all the spiritual longing penned by admirers, myself included, perhaps hides. For those with the strength to face it, Ron Vawter has shown us a way to approach death. "These characters for me, if you'll pardon the expression, are kind of, I see them as kinds of prayers." — Ron Vawter, 1994.

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makes me feel like it was my duty to have taken the damn thing it was just hangin around collecting dust anyway why shouldn't it wind up in a pawn shop of my choosing? but if by some chance i should happen to see it would i make sure it finds it way back to the garage no questions asked etc. etc. oh my he's persuasive he really would have made a hell of a d.a. but hardened criminal that i am i tell him no i haven't seen it consequently can't make sure it finds its way back to the garage thanks for thinkin of me blah blah blah. now of course i've seen the damn thing it's sitting in my house under my bed at that very moment i always felt bad lying to ronny. zoe sez afterwards "that ron vawter he's so polite he always says hello zoe may i speak to mike please?" i'm compelled to agree. world's politest man.

i lost touch with ron towards the end of his life. i saw him once maybe twice. i was un-employable at the garage

me looking tense off to the left, it hangs as i write on my fridge right next to ron's n.y. times obituary which appeared on my doorstep not much later in the year and in the daily procession thru my house i stop often and look at them and think of ron. i have in my portfolio a photo of ron, willem and myself which i treasure. it was taken during the run of north atlantic for a publicity shot and in it ron is pulling one of my favorite faces of his. i can best describe it as that wacky handsome balding guy face. with a crooked smile. i like to think of him in his army uniform looking as handsome as elvis presley under a carpet of stars that goes all the way to canada or hollywood or maybe even heaven. good-night ronny and goodbye.

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WITNESSES OF EXISTENCE

BY JOHANNES BIRRINGER

fragile cease-fire has momentarily brought relief to war-torn Sarajevo, although the war against Bosnia does not seem to be over yet. The "cease-fire" barely helps us to understand, momentarily, the extended time of inhuman atrocity and violence visited upon a city and its population under siege for more than twenty-two months. The news

media reported the violence, death, and destruction, as well as the endless diplomatic negotiations and conversations that took place elsewhere, among Western nations united in their indecision and apparent helplessness. While the destruction, the rapes, and the "ethnic cleansings" took their course, while a city's multicultural and cosmopolitan way of life was humiliated and shredded by canons and machine-guns, our observations fell silent since we did not seem to know how to speak to this violation of human existence.

As with other genocides that haunt our 20th century, we will have to learn to listen to the witnesses and survivors of this horror, and such a confrontation with testimony will not come easily. There is nothing reassuring in what I have to report, and I may not have the words to express the visual and emotional "evidence" of destruction that was brought to us by the emissaries from Sarajevo. Except that this mission is an extraordinary statement of a creative human spirit that reconstructs its will to survive from within the ruins of reason and the annihilation of being.

Witnesses of Existence could be called a work-in-progress. The artists and members of the Obala Cultural Center in Sarajevo had worked hard towards the opening of the reconstructed Sutjeska Cinema, which they had redesigned as a theater-gallery. Shortly before the festive opening, the war began in April 1992, and the building was one of the first destroyed by shells. In an act of extraordinary defiance, Zoran Bogdanovic, Sanjin Jukic, Edo Numankadic, Nusret Pasic, Tanja and Stjepan Ros, Mustafa Skopljak, and Petar Waldegg joined Obala director Mirsad Purivatra in an exhibition project that was staged in the ruined building as a "permanent" installation (October 1992 through April 1993.) In the immediate proximity of death and destruction, these artists built a series of exhibitions, accompanied by intermittent performances, video screenings, musi-

video still from "Sarajevo Ground Zero" by SAGA/Ademir Kenovic

cal concerts, and poetry readings, which gave testimony to the spiritual act of resistance while quite literally transforming still available materials (bricks, broken glass, burnt logs, sand, ashes, paper, found objects) into "portraits" of an existence under extreme pressure. When word got out that this exhibition was being upheld under siege, an invitation was issued from the Venice Biennial in the summer of 1993, yet because of the blockade, neither the artists nor the work obtained UN permission to travel. The artists continued to develop their work, and some documentation (provided by video artists of the SAGA collective) reached the outside world, together with Ademir Kenovic's harrowing film collage, *Sarajevo Ground Zero* (now available through Globalvision, New York.) After months of insistent planning and hard negotiations, Martin Kunz was finally able to bring the artists together with their work to his new Kunsthalle in New York's East Village — ironically a building which is itself under reconstruction after being partly destroyed by fire last year. *Witnesses of Existence* is now open to the public through April 3, occupying the dark, bare, skin-and-bones structure of the gutted brick building on East 5th Street. The arrival of the Sarajevo artists coincided with a massive open forum, *Sarajevo New York: The City Under Siege*, organized by The Cooper Union in downtown New York. Panel discussions, slide lectures, film screenings, and "speak outs" brought together a huge international audience willing to learn more about the political and cultural implications of the war against Bosnia. The quiet presence of the traumatized artists from Sarajevo created a very visceral, and perhaps even unacknowledged, counterpoint to the relentless energy of the conference organizers, speakers,

and representatives of the more than 30 humanitarian relief organizations and solidarity committees that had sponsored this call to action. The provocative agenda of this public forum included a critical analysis of the struggle for Sarajevo's survival with respect to the larger, and thus *abared*, struggle against the degradation and destruction of the very idea of the culturally diverse, multiethnic, and multinational city at the end of the century. Sarajevo stood as the symbol of resistance against all barbarisms that would seek to destroy the possibility of such cultural diversity and equality.

At the end of a long day of debates, the young Sarajevo filmmaker Srdan Vuletic showed a 10-minute video, *I Burnt Lego*, which depicts his job, namely taking amputated limbs from the hospital to the place where they are cremated. As he reflects on the weight of the bags he carries, he is seen standing in front of what once was Sarajevo's central park, now empty except for a few left-over stumps of former oak trees. Speaking hurriedly into the camera, Vuletic explains that "this park really suits me. I like much more these stumps than trees. Its emptiness matches some inner emptiness of mine." There was a long silence after the screening of the piece.

When I met the artists during a reception at the Kunsthalle on the following day, I realized that the work they had brought to the United States will have to cross this incredible abyss of silence that separates us from a knowledge of this particular horror, and from the unthinkable recognition that the people in Sarajevo have been forced to accept the war as a "normal" condition of existence now. Vuletic admitted that his feelings have changed, and that he finds it increasingly difficult to accept such a normalcy. The reduction of human exist-

tence to pure survival, and thus to an acceptance of war as a normal condition, comes at a price that is too heavy. In fact, the exhibition of *Witnesses of Existence* is not merely an existential outcry. Bogdanovic's installation "Memory of People," Numankadic's "War Trials," or Jukic's sardonic "Sarajevo Likes America and America Likes Sarajevo" convey more than remembrances of violence, they are ethical acts of intervention into a monstrous scenario which they interpret creatively and consciously. They build meaningful compositions of the human spirit and intelligence in midst of the war's insanity. Thus they become also witnesses of our indifference, their irony and resiliency shame us. Their work also proves that it is neither impossible nor frivolous to make art in a time of war, perhaps making art in such a time is as necessary as finding food and shelter and healing the wounded. Within extreme circumstances, each creative act is as vulnerable as the flesh of the human body, since the very idea of aesthetic distance has collapsed. *Witnesses of Existence* exhibits work that was held hostage by war yet became a symbolic site of "reconstruction." The architects Tanja and Stjepan Ros designed the exhibition for the destroyed Obala Gallery by treating the ruin as a "new cathedral of the spirit," while they also noted that this ruin had become a place of rest for those passing through it, using it as a shortcut and a passage safer than the open streets. This reality of destruction of course cannot be "recreated" in the New York Kunsthalle, and to do so would be absurd and misleading, since the suffering and pain experienced by the Bosnians cannot be shared through representation. This is the fallacy of the media's instantaneous coverage of war elsewhere: such coverage cannot but blend into the stream of images of violence we are programmed to forget. While Bogdanovich's "Memory of People," a long, narrow band of photo-portraits culled from the obituary pages of the (still existing) Sarajevo newspaper *Oslobodjenje*, invites us to remember the growing number of the dead, Jukic's installations challenge the media's insidious spectacularization of violence in a different, and highly poignant way. In "Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle" he puts neon letters of the word "SARAJEVO" on the wall, quoting the Hollywood hills logo and simultaneously reminding us of the grand parallel event of the Olympic Games in 1984 (Sarajevo and Los Angeles,) that moment when the eyes of the world were directed at the beautifully and glamorously organized winter games in the Bosnian capital. On top of the logo Jukic projects video images from the war zone, 10 years later. A small written commentary accompanied the original installation:

The opening day of the exhibition was a paradigm of a ghetto spectacle. Everything that originally inspired this display was present. All the primary signs were repeated: the shelling, destruction, killing, wounding. Then again it all ran on television. And there were secondary signs: notorious problems with UNHCR, the hopes and glances of citizens of Sarajevo aimed towards the USA, the indifference and incompetence of Europe, the establishment of war crimes court, etc. The Sarajevo ghetto spectacle daily reaches the world mega-stage which has already been full and brimming with other and different spectacles. That is why I think that art has to play its remarkable promotion role. The fight continues. We will be the winners.

In his other installation, "Sarajevo Likes America and America Likes Sarajevo," Jukic's cynical humor goes even further, as he constructs a "likeness" between the two worlds, once again posting the maps of the US and the Olympic mountains above Sarajevo on the brick wall, with a dinner table for two beneath. The meal: "American-way-of-life" Coca-Cola cans and Marlboro packs (both empty) next to empty Turkish coffee cups on an old, hand-carved wooden table. Perhaps we remember that Coca-Cola once was the main sponsor of the Sarajevo Winter Olympic Games, but that was in another world. Numankadic also registers the changes that have interrupted his artistic work-life. On an easel he places some of his pre-war color paintings, small studies of minute changes in the emotions of color and light. In front of the absurd-looking easel we see the painter's work-table, now covered with the scattered utensils of everyday survival: penicillin, a bottle of water, an oil lamp, a piece of old bread, papers, a few books, one Duracell battery. Nusret Pasic, whose *Witnesses of Existence* installation gave the exhibition its overall title, has hung tall, narrow linen strips from the ceiling, each depicting a very elongated, thin human figure whose head seems to float upward toward the sky. Down below lies the rubble of destruction — broken glass, shrapnel, burnt logs, ash and soot. Yet these thin suspended shapes have a strange, almost magic power. They rise upward like totem poles that command our respect. Right behind this installation is a second one, "Martyrs," depicting an altar-like table on which bricks are placed. Stepping closer, one sees tiny wooden, snake-like figures nailed onto the red bricks, strangely contorted limbs that seem to be choreographed into the hieroglyphic language of a danse macabre. The young graphic artist Petar Waldegg has built a triangular staircase out of bricks; it is an open form, tantalizingly hinting at the spiritual task of reconstruction that will begin with the collection of energy or hope needed for such a difficult ascent. Finally, upon entering the space one must pass by the grave-like earthen mounds built by sculptor Mustafa Skopljak. These earthworks are surrounded by glass pyramid sculptures that look like trees, a surreal forest of memories now symbolically contained in the tiny burning lamps. What we cannot see are the painted wooden portraits, faces of the dead, which Skopljak buried in the earth and only opens up to our momentary gaze during a ritual performance.

Even if I were able to describe the installations in words, such words would only insufficiently capture the power that emanated from the exhibition as a whole, in the presence of these Sarajevans who had come, for a few weeks, to visit us before going back to a city whose future has been severely mutilated. They all know, however, that they must go back so that the city can also reconstruct its imagination for a possible future, built on the refusal to give up, or to give over one's spirit to the corrosive impact of the destruction of elementary rights. I have never felt so strongly what it might mean to consider creativity an elementary right. If we accept Jukic's ironic gesture ("America Like Sarajevo") as an invitation, which it is, we may have to think about our own choices, or about our own willingness to allow fascist aggression to rule out our elementary right to visit Sarajevo.

Johannes Birringer is a professor of Performance Studies at Northwestern University.

ETC.

SARAJEVO

my

main reason for writing this article is to open up a dialogue about the choices artists make in making overtly political work, to begin a dialogue that moves beyond moralizing to examine where the work comes from and how subjectivity is formulated in such work.

A few months ago I went to a screening of a video by a lesbian videomaker. The piece was hip, cute and sexy; a nice piece. However when the lights came on, the feeling I was left with was that I wished I was gay; I wished I could be hip, cute and sexy and gay too. What I mean is I don't think the piece raised my consciousness about lesbian issues as much as it pricked my envy for such a well-adjusted subject as the maker appeared to be.

Over the past five years or so, there has been a resurgence in the media field of projects focusing on community politics, either in the sense of media made by a specific community or by an individual who identifies with or speaks for a specific community. What is most disappointing is that such work does not receive critical examination. I do not mean exposure or acceptance; most community media projects meet a certain degree of enthusiasm, appealing to liberal sensibilities of equal representation, pluralism, and freedoms of speech and press. But, in the taboo-ridden climate of the arts press, too often political work is discussed only tentatively, critics fearing to be too negative and subsequently mistaken for a loudmouth, insensitive jerk. I find there is nothing I can say about the work: "You're working with homeless people? That's great." No dirty hardball questions like, "what do they get out of it? are you putting this on your resume? what foundation's conscience is funding you?" There is an abundance of writing about the reasons why such work is important but a lack of a critical language about the work itself. I am tired of conversations defending and criticizing the work on political grounds for I feel that this is not the real arena for the work.

The resurgence of issue-oriented artistic activity has covered a wide berth of approaches: some artists have chosen to work collectively, or in special projects designed around a specific, usually participatory, audience or community; others work individually and focus on issues of representation, identity and historical injustice often from a personal perspective. There are many possible reasons for this recent spurt of politics in art; the primary one cited is a reaction against the artworld of the 1980s and the everyone-for-

themselves attitude ascribed to that decade.

From day one, video has been called a hybrid medium, a cross between film and television. Community-based video work blurs boundaries, mixing anthropological inquiry, social action, media critique and aesthetics. The experiments of independent producers conducted during the 1960s with the then-new medium of video are seminal examples of media-makers using video to blur categories. For example, because they looked like a TV news crew, TVTV got onto the floor of the Republican National Convention in 1972.

Once there

notes on A LOOSE DIALECTIC

BY MARIA TROY

they behaved unlike any other news crew, interviewing other news reporters, covering the ugly protests outside the convention, listening to both sides. Many early video producers worked collectively in projects aimed at democratizing the media through projects based on community control of the television medium. These groups included Raindance, TVTV, Videofreex, Lanesville TV, and People's Video Theater as well as many other alternative media centers and equipment co-ops.

Then as now, the communications media critique of Marshall McLuhan and Todd Gitlin, along with the texts of the Frankfurt School were very influential in shaping the agendas of independent media producers. These critiques support community projects in the sense of sketching out the mechanism of mass media distortion which can be applied to the local situation. What is at the core is a generalized theory of power which often goes unstated, forming an assumed agenda of revolutionary à la liberal intentions to do good. The imperative to speak as a minority, to represent yourself on your own terms, is in essence a media-critical act, an attempt to set the record straight.

I think this was true then and is true now: the focus of

community-based media projects is positive empowerment of a group of people through the production of media images and control of the means of that production. The rules and the tone of the game, however, have changed much over the past 25 years. The experiments of the late 60s and early 70s are charming in their simple formula for success. Back then, just taking a camera outside the studio or giving a camera to people on the street was a radical gesture. Now, amateur videomakers sell their footage to network news. *America's Funniest Home Videos* dictates a sick style of at-home candidness. Movies, sit-coms and commercials use stylized footage that mimics the video look. The number of video cameras out there today changes the way we all look at video images.

The political terrain is different in the 1990s; pluralistic politics mean that every special interest group is scrambling to define themselves, to set an agenda and hire a lobbyist. Activists are more organized now than ever before, with new tactics including raising legal battles and passing local referendums as well as mounting demonstrations. Activists (as well as dictators for that matter) are very aware of their image and how to control it; I think in some sense the greatest success of what in the 1970s was called the Gay Liberation movement has been the creation of a largely favorable gay image, one that turns up in the oddest places, such as cock rings on Ken dolls. The generational revival of the activism and idealism of the 1960s has been updated with 90s marketing tie-ins which include specialized magazines and hip product ads.

Obviously, political art has a long legacy. The idea of the avant-garde sprang, so to speak, from the brow of that great bohemian Courbet. It would be interesting to view the impulse to create issue-oriented works as akin to the modernist faith in progress and an ever-developing sense of truth, for that is the tone of some works: that injustice can be defeated through equal representation, equal access to the media. That truth is the outcome of a pluralistic dialogue is the somewhat utopian premise of the obligation to set the record straight.

Much is made about artists coming out of the ivory tower and choosing to work in communities to solve problems. For me, the crux of the issue lies not in that lousy dialectic of the real world vs. the ivory tower of art, as much as it does in the artist choosing to identify themselves, to solve the social/psychic/subjective dilemma by taking on an

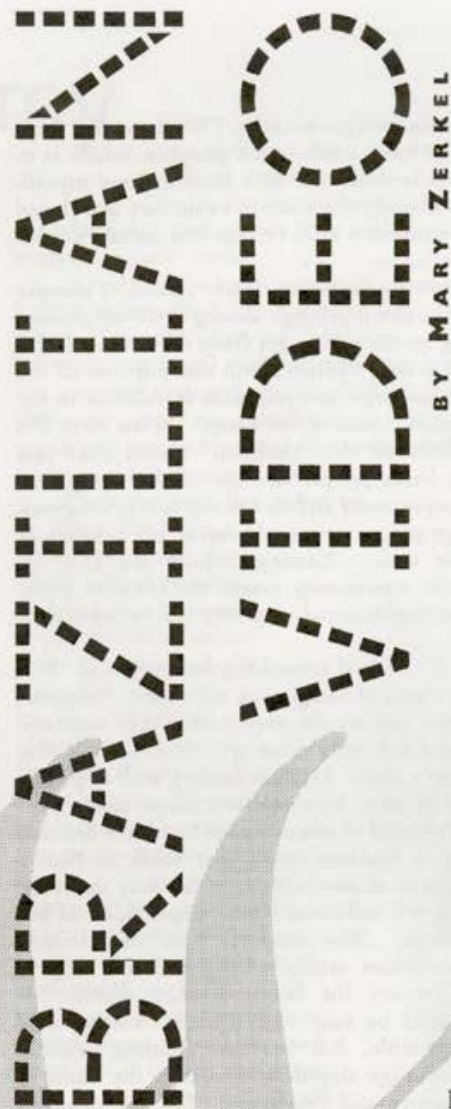
external identity. I no longer wonder, "What the hell am I doing and why?" I have a mission, a purpose, which is to represent myself over and over as I have defined myself. Moreover, artists identify themselves to the art world and can then take up a position in it, i.e. get into certain shows, show at certain galleries.

The issue of prestige is never clearly settled. I wonder if participants get as much prestige among their community from participating as the artists get from the art world for running these programs. What about the position of the artist and their knowledge or equipment in relation to the participants? David Antin in his essay, "Video Art: The Distinctive Features of the Medium," stated that just because an artist lends people the use of the equipment doesn't make the equipment and its use any less prestigious. Maybe community programs merely smear the prestige of art over a wider area. Lasting impact needs to be addressed: does the community retain the creative skills, equipment and organizational capacity to release their expression?

The politics of political artmaking are very real. It is arguable that the artworld categorizes all artists. I suppose the problem is more exactly the expectation that issue-oriented works deal only with those specific issues, i.e. that a performance about AIDS is dealing with a specific set of issues over here and not those issues over there. A friend of mine who is Seminole has told me she is hesitant to put her work in Native American shows because of the way that context will influence what people think of her work. The same is true of African-American artists who get shows only in February for Black History month. It would be easy to call such curating irresponsible, but perhaps funding sources encourage slap-dash efforts in the name of diversity and timeliness. But the question should be raised about what is more important: the work in the show or the gesture that a show with such a title makes, how it looks on a grant application?

I support politically-oriented work. I'm not even sure I know what non-political artwork would be. What I'm saying is that there has to be a better way to discuss this work that often finds itself in artworld contexts. I hope these remarks pluck some issues into focus and elicit greater interest in investigating the meaning of political work in the arts.

Maria Troy is a contributing editor to P-Form.



BY MARY ZERKEL

Recently, the Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago has begun to distribute several Brazilian artists.

3 ANTENA, PIRATE TV (excerpts from 1990)

3 Antena has been broadcasting pirate TV in Rio intermittently since 1989. The video community in Rio is very secretive about who actually does the transmissions, which make use of the dormant Channel 8, to protect them from arrest. These TV pirates mean to preach "civil disobedience to(ward) the existing monopoly of the telecommunications in Brazil." Actually people even caught watching 3 Antena in a public place have been arrested.

The 3 Antena logo shows the words incorporated into what looks like an "okay" hand sign. What means "okay" in America in fact means "fuck you" in Brazil and one immediately gets the idea of what 3 Antena is all about. These pirate transmissions are irreverent, scatological, political and hilarious. The images used are often culled from "real" broadcast television and then juxtaposed in odd ways or shown with different sound. For example, government officials are often shown "explaining" things with non-synchronous sound such as descriptions of how to roll a joint or even broadcast your own pirate TV show. Scenes of shitting and fucking are thrown in with man-on-the-street interviews with people about current events and why they hate the media, American commercials and TV shows, and whatever else they can think of. At one point a man in a suit comes on and in non-sync sound says "Watching our program is a crime. It is too late...go to the police station and turn yourself in." Scenes from the network coverage of 3 Antena watchers being arrested is shown with the questions "Who has the law? What law? There is TV only to those who have TV? Who wants TV?" being asked over and over.

workers as they gather in the markets that occupy the space in front of the plants. On the morning that I traveled with TVT to a Volkswagen plant and a Mercedes plant, the *La Journal* show was about the Black Consciousness movement in Brazil. Vincente Ulisses is a TVT producer and former metalworker, as are all the TVT producers. He estimates that the TV Truck reaches between three to four thousand viewers every week. TVT believes that because the workers view the shows in a group setting, more discussion and dialogue is generated. They have plans to begin taking the TV Truck to neighborhoods so that spouses and children of the workers can view them also.

The TVT's work must be seen in the context of Brazil's decades-long involvement with popular education, sometimes referred to as liberatory or participatory education in this country. This pedagogy is based upon the writings of Paulo Freire and others and emphasizes critical thinking, active participation from students, and great flexibility and openness on the part of the facilitators. In the early 60's popular education was developed to battle adult illiteracy that was just one symptom of the rapidly expanding capitalism in Brazil. In 1964, a military dictatorship took over the country and ousted, arrested, tortured and killed many people involved with social change movements. Freire himself was jailed and then exiled,

and spent the next seventeen years writing and developing his ideas abroad. The country remained under military rule until 1985, when a civil president was elected. Eventually Freire returned to Brazil and was asked to become Minister of Education under the socialist mayor of São Paulo. Popular education survived and even thrived within the trade union and grassroots or popular movements during this time of repression. Because this pedagogy was developed in part as resistance to capitalism and because its methodology emphasizes the need to communicate with participants



on a familiar level, it is no surprise that media education has become an important part of popular education.

In an article about Latin American media education, Valerio Fuenzalida writes that it is a "tributary whose mainstream is the pedagogy of popu-

This piece is aimed at street kids (a very large number of Brazilian children are homeless or live in favelas) to teach them about AIDS and AIDS prevention. An engaging street kid named Luis Claudio is the reporter who conducts most of the interviews. He is shown accosting people on the street asking them to show him how to put a condom on, or to talk about their

sexual experiences. He is actually very funny and he probably does appeal to teens and kids. Lots of solid information about AIDS prevention is given in an entertaining way, such as a street-side demonstration with a dildo named Smiley Pete. It is interesting to watch this as an American, where tame television commercials encouraging condom use create great controversy. One other entertaining note: the great sports/sex metaphor does transcend cultures — here it is feverishly presented as a soccer game. Goal!



THE SERIAL KISSER (BEIJOQUIERO) (1992) (29:00) Carlos Nader

lar education." He continues: "The media are regarded as being at the service of North

NO RUBBER, NO WAY (1993) - 27:00 Sergio Goldberg

American capitalism and as instruments of cultural imperialism... Media education strives to create a critical consciousness with which to resist ideological-cultural domination and as a first step toward the retrieval of independence." (*New Directions in Media Education* p. 136.)

Popular educators use media education not only as a tool for critique and resistance, but also as a point of entree into communities that often have little or no formal education. In Brazil it is not uncommon to find many art forms including puppetry, comic books, performance, radio and video being used in educational settings.

In light of the importance and prevalence of popular/media education in Brazil, I was not surprised after returning to Chicago and seeing work by other Brazilian artists, that all of the work was activist or political in nature. Indeed, the influence of popular education in the

of the 152 celebrities that The Kisser has engaged with in a "kiss for world peace." This man has even kissed THE POPE. He maneuvered past unbelievable security in Manaus to reach Pope John Paul II and kiss his feet. The Kisser is shown afterward with tears of triumph streaming down his face as he clutches a nun doll. Although The Kisser's high profile targets gain him much notoriety in Brazil, he doesn't frown on kissing the little people. He is shown roaming the streets of Rio, asking people for the time, kissing them as they look down, and then stumbling away laughing maniacally as the assaulted look on in startled confusion. Nader does try to place The Kisser in context for those of us who are not Brazilian. To Nader, The Kisser is emblematic of a country where "magical realism is a day to day reality."



In February of this year Brazilian producer Renato Pereira from the Rio de Janeiro video group TV ZERO, spoke at Chicago's Center for New Television. He brought with him a sampling of TV ZERO's work.

Angola is a visually stunning piece about the African nation that, like Brazil, was colonized by the Portuguese. In fact, the tape is just as interesting because of the parallels between the two countries — colonization, struggles with fascism, incredible poverty and inflation, shanty towns (*musseque* in Angola, *favela* in Brazil), a huge and powerful black market — as it is

because it is a well made tape. These parallels are

never really commented on directly unless there is some concrete connection, such as between the economies of the two countries. Angola's black market relies heavily on Brazilian goods. The tape starts with a look at the large city Luanda and gradually works its way into the interior and tribal communities. Along the way we hear commentary from Angola's foremost intellectual, the writer Luandino Vieira. Angolans are often asked to explain various aspects of their culture such as mermaid lore, a dance craze called the "bungula," polygamy, religion and military involvement.

ions who were all American labor educators and activists. After one particularly inspiring afternoon spent watching the Bankworker's Union using performance and video I excitedly approached one of the Americans, an organizer that I know from Chicago. "When we get back, we should work together — let's talk about starting a performance and video workshop at your union," I said. "Well it seems to work here, but I don't think American workers would go for that kind of thing," she answered. I'm afraid that this is

context of the drama of Brazil's last 30 years must combine to create a vital video culture. Brazilians lived under the military dictatorship until 1985, only to oust their first democratically elected president because of corruption. Then there is the devastating poverty that the majority of Brazilians face, with millions living in shanty towns called *favelas* where the police routinely murder street children. And of course the contentious situation that surrounds Brazil's rainforests — economics vs. the environment vs. indigenous peoples. Perhaps all of these circumstances combine to create a culture where artists are activists as a matter of course.

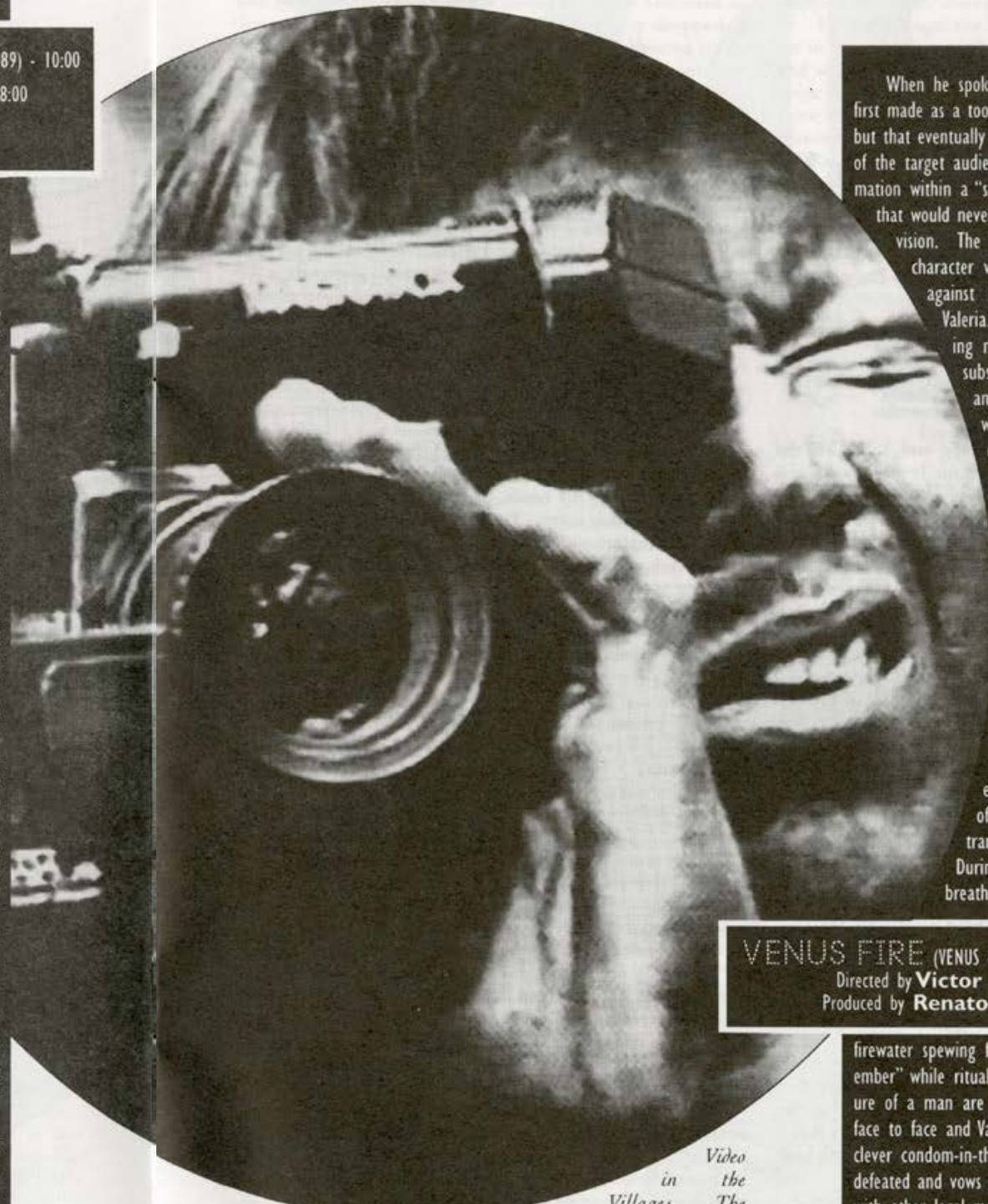
It is this integration of art and activism that left the biggest impression on me upon my return from Brazil. I hadn't expected the use of art in the grassroots and labor organizations to be so widespread. Neither had my traveling companions

a typical response in America. Although American artists seem to be more and more involved with making work that is political in nature or has a collaborative community element, very few grassroots political organizations take art seriously as a mechanism for change. When art and activism are combined in America, it is most often viewed as a pleasant or interesting interlude in the larger scheme of things by both the art world and the politicians. American activists, educators and artists could learn much about the importance of media and art as unique political tools by looking to the history of Brazil. There they will find a dynamic fusion of politics, education and art — all working together to effect social change.

VIDEO IN THE VILLAGES (1989) - 10:00
THE SPIRIT OF TV (1990) - 18:00
Vincent Carelli and
Centro Trabalho Indigenista

Both of these pieces document the work that has been done to teach indigenous people to use video as a tool. In *Video In the Villages* a narrator tells us of the positive effect that video has had on these people's lives. Video has recorded important events, cultural details, songs, and dances, thereby preserving them. In one tribe, recording the ritual of nose piercing caused a revival of this practice which had been dormant for 20 years. One elder tribesman is interviewed and he talks about wanting to pass on his knowledge to youth. Later, small children are seen watching the video of him performing a ritual. The tape also talks about the way video is being used as a political tool for indigenous people who are often being forced out of their homes by industry. They use video to record important meetings with officials, preserving promises that might be made, and to document their community to defend it against encroaching industry, such as a hydroelectric dam.

The *Spirit of TV* gives us much of the same information, but is told in the voice of the people participating in the projects. This tape also describes the way that video can provide introductions between tribes that know nothing about one another. Both of these pieces are visually beautiful and full of interesting information.



VENUS FIRE (VENUS de FOGO) - 30:00
 Directed by **Victor Lopes,**
 Produced by **Renato Pereira**

When he spoke at CNTV, Pereira explained that this piece was first made as a tool for educating prostitutes about AIDS prevention, but that eventually it was broadcast for the whole country. Because of the target audience the decision was made to couch AIDS information within a "soap opera." The result is a hilarious, racy tape that would never ever find its way onto American broadcast television. The premise of the melodrama pits a metaphorical character who embodies the AIDS virus named Harry Aids against a beautiful and civic-minded madam named Valeria. Harry Aids is on a city-wide rampage attacking men and women, forcing them to sniff a sticky substance which knocks them out, then raping them and infecting them with AIDS. Meanwhile, Valeria is waging a safe-sex campaign that centers on free condom distribution. This is part of a contest called the *Come-a-thon* sponsored by her club, the Venus Fire. If you use her free condoms and you get one of the lucky ones that has a star on the tip — then you win a free night of sex at the Venus Fire. Sort of like Willy Wonka for the 90's.

Although the tape uses conventional melodrama techniques, it also pushes them in some interesting ways, such as in the use of Harry Aids. Harry's face is never seen, and often the camera takes his visual perspective and this is always shown in grainy, color-saturated video. Harry often rambles off poetic phrases of questionable merit (part of this has got to be translation) while symbolic images are collaged. During the opening credits, for example, we hear him breathing these words "I'm going to get you and negative breed you all...I'll take you surfing on scented slobber from the Dobermans of the Higher Unthinker... my blood is

firewater spewing from the abyss and my prick glows with Pluto's ember" while ritual objects, fire, plastic dolls and the shadowy figure of a man are montaged. In the end, Valeria and Harry meet face to face and Valeria thwarts his attempt to infect her with the clever condom-in-the-mouth ploy. However, Harry is not ultimately defeated and vows to keep infecting people, while Valeria coordinates with other local madams in her valiant efforts to promote safe-sex. Some aspects of this tape appear to be politically contradictory, but overall it is engaging, funny and does provide safe-sex information.

Mary Zerkel is a videoperformance artist and teacher living in Chicago. She thanks Ayanna Udongo and Christine Mroz for their assistance with this article.

Video in the Villages, The Spirit of TV, The Serial Kisser and No Rubber, No Way can all be viewed at or rented from the Video Data Bank, 37 S. Wabash, Chicago IL 60603 (312-899-5100). *Angola, Venus Fire* and *3 Antena* excerpts can be viewed by appointment only at the Center for New Television, 1440 N. Dayton, Chicago IL 60611. Call Christine Mroz at (312-951-6868) for an appointment.

D-DAY

COMES TO CHICAGO

Montrose Harbor, Chicago, June 4, 1994:
D-Day Plus 50 Years

BY IAN MORRIS

"Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose; But young men think it is, and we were young."
— A. E. Houseman

Ten thirty a.m., my photographer and I get off the Ashland Avenue bus and stroll east on Irving Park, east toward the lake to watch the invasion of Normandy be reenacted on Montrose Beach.

The attack is scheduled for noon. City officials and the organizers of the event, The World War Two Reenactment Society, are predicting attendance of 100,000. Channel Two says that number could go as high as a million, a Woodstock of the Arts and Entertainment Generation. I wonder how this can be. Despite all the Normandy mania in the papers and on television and the current vogue of historical reenactments, what are we coming to witness? How can a recreation of pre-cold war intransigence be relevant in an age when maps of Europe are revised monthly? Particularly on the first hot day of summer, when the Cubs are in town.

One glimpse of Lakeshore Drive shows how much I know. They are coming from everywhere. Traffic is backed up a quarter mile. The lots are full and cops are turning cars away. They swell footpaths that traverse the park. With their white baseball caps, lawn chairs and Coleman coolers, they look like an auto-racing crowd. Aside from the odd septuagenarian veteran in a pin-studded legion cap, they are mostly young. A silver-haired man in golf trousers hawks laminated copies of General Patton's speech to his troops. "Complete with profanity," he says, "suitable for framing."

As it happens these days, we see the protest of the event before we see the event: a small graveyard of white crosses on a small knoll overlooking the harbor. A banner reads "Practice Peace Not War," and another, "They will have died in vain if we don't abolish war." A man about as old as the guy selling Patton's speech, though favoring cut-offs and a black t-shirt over golf garb, hands us leaflets. We thank him, take some pictures, and go looking for the war.

Instead we find more souvenir vendors, stands selling inflatable planes and tanks, M.I.A./P.O.W. pins, American flags, pennants. To the south is the Allied camp, olive drab tents and Army surplus materials surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by reenactors dressed as military police. The smell is full of nostalgia. It smells like your cot at camp when you were ten: 50-year-old canvas, mothballs and mildew. It is a smell, I suspect, that sustains the reenactor.

Except for the guards, Allied H.Q. looks deserted until we reach the far south end, where the troops are marshaling for their march to the boats. For the first time we set eyes on the conquering army. They are not as old as I expected, though many, particularly the officers, are middle aged. Had they had the good fortune to have been alive fifty years ago, few of this army would have been among the battalions that stormed the beaches. Most are too short or too heavy or too nearsighted, all of them confirm the suspicion that wars are remembered most fondly by those who did not go. I wonder about them, these reenactors. Do they own their own uniforms? Have they done this before? Do they specialize in D-Day or do they do all of WWII, from the Bataan Death March to the Battle of the Bulge? How do they get so much time off work? Do they practice by themselves in the woods? With live ammunition?

We walk on to the beach, which has been menacingly fortified, trenches dug, the beach studded with mines and anti-tank obstacles. We find a spot on a sandy knoll, high enough to see the beach without having to stand. In front of us, wearing a t-shirt that says "Freedom Isn't Free," a man pops the top on an Old Style. "Third breakfast can," he says to the guy next to him. "Hard day today, pal."

Looking north from our spot at the southern end of the beach we see an unbroken mass of people stretching up the beach several hundred yards and knee-deep into the lake. A legless man in a wheelchair motors awkwardly toward us on the sandy sidewalk. A sign on the back of his chair says he is a decorated WWII veteran who fought in every major battle of the Italian campaign, from Anzio to Monte Cassino, some of the most savage fighting of the war. "Please help," the sign says. An empty Folgers coffee can sits in his lap. As he passes behind the crowd on the wall, one of his wheels gets stuck. Trying to free himself, he struggles for a half-minute before anyone notices and gets him out of the rut. "Thank you," he says and drives on. There are stares but no money. He is not what we are here to remember.

The invasion begins at noon on the dot. An old two-engine transport plane flies in low from the south. A siren sounds on the beach and the Germans scramble for their guns. An observation tower on the breakwater is the target.

The first gunfire of the battle comes from the Germans as they try to shoot the plane down. A bomb is dropped, a flashpot explodes beneath the tower, and the shooting stops. There is polite applause for the plane as it climbs into the sky.

As the air attack continues, we watch an armada of four landing craft steam out of the harbor, around the breakwater, and turn toward the beach, while a single warship lies just visible on the horizon. This is the aspect of the reenactment that most strains our sense of verisimilitude. While the real invasion began with a formation of planes 300 miles long, here there are only five, and a single warship must represent the great elaborate lengths that these reenactors have gone to provide a literal representation of the actual event. The enormous scale of the invasion is impossible to imagine, much less recreate.

As the boats head toward the beach, there is some cheering, but not enough to drown out the Sousa music from the loudspeakers. The first of the four landing craft reaches the shallow water, a gate drops, and the men scramble ashore. We are in the British sector, where a green amphibious jeep, like the ducks at the Wisconsin Dells, drives onto the beach and the Brits, wearing tams and kilts some of them, leap out ready for action. A bagpiper is among them, as is a soldier carrying a bicycle.

Of the five beaches assaulted on D-Day, only one, code-named "Omaha," the northernmost of the American beaches, was heavily defended. This bit of history is reflected in the reenactment as the British troops in front of us overrun the German trenches with relative ease, round up the prisoners, and hoist the British flag while a piper pipes the same tune he has played all morning. Our attention turns north where the battle still rages.

This, too, will be over soon. The loudest cheer of the day is sparked by the charge of the three Americans. The cheers turn to groans as they hurl themselves on the sand. Are they shot or ducking for cover? We cannot tell, one aspect of the realism gleaned from newsreels. The largest of the landing craft arrives bearing reinforcements. It drops its gate a full twenty yards farther out than the others. The first soldier steps off and the others clamor back up the ramp as he disappears into the surf (another realistic touch, since a large number of casualties during the invasion occurred when troops wearing 60 pounds of equipment

stepped into water over their heads).

Fifty years ago, the battle for Omaha beach lasted from six in the morning until nightfall, while bodies of the dead and wounded and ruined war machinery littered the sand, ships burned off shore, and waves breaking on the beach were red with blood. Here it is all over in less than forty minutes. A tank arrives ex machina stage left. There is the furious chatter of machine-gun fire. The troops close in on the beach house. The shooting stops and there is light applause. "How do they know it's over?" my photographer asks, "did they bow?"

Despite the chaos and the carnage, the real Normandy invasion had to be judged a success because they invaders were not thrown back into the sea. However, as always happens when art too narrowly imitates life, the relative success of this reenactment is more difficult to assess.

Certainly, we do not sense anything close to a patriotic or historical catharsis from the people around us, as they fold their blankets and knock the sand out of their sneakers.

Meanwhile, on the beach it's Miller time. Some of the Germans are still being herded around at gun point, but the dead have risen, brushed themselves off, and are exchanging high fives with their surviving comrades.

I watch a chubby, young reenactor, one of the Axis troops, captured by the British early in the battle, sling his canteen and rifle onto his shoulder and duck under the yellow police tape. It occurs to me that these performers must have been looking forward to this day for months—even years as the date of the anniversary loomed on their calendars. And I wonder if the event could possibly have met their expectations. They will retire from the beaches and, for years to come, relive their participation in the remake of the most enormous military engagement of our century. Did they, I wonder, in their brief moments in the landing craft, in the water, and on the beach, sense the terror of the day fifty years ago? Or did it feel, as it appeared

to those of us on the beach who were not carrying guns, like they were just playing army.

Ian Morris is a novelist and teacher living in Chicago.



photographs by Mary Zerkel

BY CHARLES BOONE

ith the idea that performance can be anything you want it to be, here is a quick rundown of some of the venues and doings in the Bay Area.

Let's begin with one of the biggies. Project Artaud started out in the early seventies when a group of artists squatted in a disused, city block-filling American Can Company machine shop. The artists who, soon after, bought the space from the city

for \$300,000, have watched it accrue in value twenty five-fold. What a deal. There are now 81 live/work spaces and five public spaces, including Southern Exposure — one of the city's premiere alternative exhibition spaces — and Theater Artaud.

The theater is a flexible space of more than 11,000 square feet with movable seating for about 300 people. According to Dean Beck-Stewart, Executive Director, Theater Artaud offers three types of relationships with organizations invited to perform there: rental/support use, for which Artaud provides PR, technical support, equipment, consulting, and long-range planning; collaborative projects for which Artaud does thorough needs studies, looks at the goals of the organizations, does the event, makes an evaluation, and sees what might come next; and full presentation-productions sponsored by the theater.

Beck-Stewart likes to work on a continuing basis with a core group of organizations. He looks for groups with long-range scope which, through their association with Artaud, will work to raise their production values and to learn to use the large performance space effectively. Among the artists who call Artaud home are the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, June Watanabe in Company, and the Joe Goode Performance Group. The Kronos Quartet

plays there almost every year.

Ping Chong is currently at work on a long-term project that will involve eight performers working in the community. He will be in residence for eight weeks and his show will run for three weeks in 1995.

While Theater Artaud is very large, The Marsh is very small. 1994 marked the fifth anniversary of the performance space founded by poet Stephanie Weisman. It has come to be recognized as a place you can count on seeing something fresh and exciting. Why is it called The Marsh? Some years ago Weisman was living in a house on stilts at the edge of Delaware Bay. It dawned on her that a marsh is the most fertile breeding ground for practically everything. Voilà.

Though

Weisman now has an active board of directors, a job as a computer expert has allowed her to be the primary source, beyond ticket sales, of financial backing for the project.

The intimate, 99-seat theater is a former jazz club. Soda pop and cookies are available at what used to be the bar and plans are afoot to expand into more of a coffee house ambiance. A lot of things go on from The Marsh to bigger venues. Currently, four movies are in the works that developed out of things originally presented there. Chicago-based performance artist Lisa Kotin was seen at The Marsh by the producer of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and was invited to perform there. Weisman reports picking up the Sunday *New York Times* not long ago and seeing that two shows that started out at The Marsh were opening Off-Broadway.

A week at The Marsh might look like this. On Monday nights four performers get fifteen minutes each (not a minute more) to show their stuff. A typical Monday might include Shan Shan Wu doing a cooking-talking presentation about what it is like to be a Chinese cook in relation to passion and sensuality; David Harrison, a female-to-male transsexual reading texts he is getting ready to perform — the subject was the process of turning into a male; Nena St. Louis, a mid-western-born African American sculptress who has begun play writing and acting in her own pieces; and Jamie Berger, performing monologues in which he gets the audience actively involved.

Tuesdays are fairly open, but there are apt to be performance showcases coming out of classes taught at The Marsh. These are often co-productions with other local theater companies. Wednesday is apt to be new music night. Thursday through Sunday, full-length pieces that usually run for a month are mounted. (Lisa Kotin's *Miss Diagnosis* earlier this year was part of this series.) On

Saturday afternoons you might be able to see something designed especially for children and if you are a night owl there are full-length shows beginning at 10:30 pm.

Like Theater Artaud, the Capp Street Project has been on the scene quite a while and, like The Marsh, it was founded by a woman with a strong vision and sense of responsibility to the community. San Francisco-born Ann Hatch is the great granddaughter of T. B. Walker, Minnesota timber baron and founder of the Walker Art Center. She decided long ago that her personal resources should be used in this city to continue the family tradition of patronage in ways that would allow artists to interact with the community. In 1982 she bought a house in the Mission District of San Francisco designed and built by artist David Ireland. Hatch formulated for it the Capp Street Project and started a private foundation that has since become a public charity.

The plan was to use the house as the headquarters for an artist-in-residence program. It would serve as a temporary lodging/workshop/exhibition space for artists invited to create something especially for it. The residencies were three

months in length, generally with a period of planning and building plus a period of public display. Right from the beginning, Hatch engaged the kinds of advisors who would insure lively, provocative shows: Nancy Drew, James Melchert, Kathy Halbreich, and Richard Koshalek among the first of them.

By 1989, the work/exhibition space had outgrown the Capp Street house (as well as the dicey neighborhood), so a large, two-story warehouse a few blocks away was pressed into service. In January, 1994, yet another move was made to the heart of San Francisco's new South of Market (SOMA) arts crossroads. The new home is a smartly redesigned, 19th-century warehouse (Stanley Saitowitz was the architect) with two floors of exhibition space and a top floor of rental apartments to help pay the bills. The house on Capp Street still serves as home-away-from-home for resident artists.

Artists chosen to be part of Capp Street's activities are almost always

ones who work in the grey area between exhibition and performance.

Here are some examples. Paul Kos created an environment that was a comment on audio graffiti. It involved eight bells that were rung every day at noon to make a sonic link between the house and its surroundings. Mary Lucier created a video environment which was described as an attempt to awaken the world to the roar of technology while there is still time. Terry Fox and the design team of Elizabeth Diller/Ricardo Scofidio each made installations through which viewers walked and interacted in sometimes delicate, sometimes threatening ways. Joanna Haigood and Reiko Goto created "Cho Mu" ("Butterfly Dreams"), an installation and series of performances involving six dancers depicting the stages of a butterfly's development.

I could go on and on. Climate Theater specializes in performance in all its myriad forms. New Langton Arts, The Lab, and Intersection for the Arts are alternative spaces with music, literary, and performance components. Theater Rhinoceros and Josie's Juice Joint serve, primarily, the gay community. Above Brainwash is a 49-seat performance space above a cafe and laundromat, all of which cater to the SOMA arts crowd. The proprietors of The Victoria Room, Bindlestiff Studio, and Build all live in their spaces and make them available for wide ranging performance, exhibition, and educational purposes. The idea of live/performance spaces is the latest thing in San Francisco; I wonder if this is happening all over the country or if it is unique to this city.

If you are in town and can't face the prospect of Fisherman's Wharf or aren't quite ready for a massage parlor in the Tenderloin district, check out a few of San Francisco's

alternative performance spaces. Chances are you will see something provocative. For sure, you will have an experience that is not part of the standard Grey Line package tour. If you want to propose something, drop one of them a line. Here is where a few of the most obvious choices can be reached:

Theater Artaud

(415) 647-2200
business office: 2101 Bryant Str., #201
North, SF, CA 94110; theater: 450 Florida Str.

Capp Street Project (415) 495-7101
525 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

The Marsh (415) 641-0235
1062 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

Intersection for the Arts (415) 626-2787
446 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

Josie's Juice Joint (415) 861-7933
3583 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114

Victoria Room (415) 255-0364
180 Sixth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

Above Brain Wash (415) 362-7703
for info: Jack McKean,
701 Pine Street, #2, San Francisco, CA 94108
theater: 1122 Folsom Street

Build (415) 863-3321
483 Guerrero Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

Theater Rhinoceros (415) 861-5079
2926 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

The Lab (415) 346-4063
1807 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

New Langton Arts (415) 626-5416
1246 Folsom Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

Bindlestiff Studio (415) 974-1167
185 Sixth Street, San Francisco, CA 84103

Climate Theater (415) 626-9196
252 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

Charles Boone is a composer and new music activist living in San Francisco.

TO PERFORM IN SAN FRANCISCO

LEAVE YOUR HEART HERE: PLACES



DOGTROEP GOSSIP

AN INTERVIEW BY AUDREY COLBY

WITH JOS ZANDVLIET,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
AND MUSICIAN
AND THREES SCHREURS,
ARTISTIC COORDINATOR
AND ACTRESS

Audrey Colby: Could you tell me about how Dogtroep started out and how it has changed?

Threes Schreurs: You mean the history, we've been around for 20 years.

AC: Have the same people worked together for 20 years?

Jos Zandvliet: I'm the only one who has been there since the beginning.

TS: And I've been with the company for the past ten years.

AC: So you started out as a street theatre?

JZ: Yes, and we turned up at all kinds of places. We also did exhibitions and other activities. The basic idea is to bring art to the people and through development over the years, we ended up playing theatre, we never had it in mind.

TS: Because theatre is an easy way to bring things to people.

AC: What are your backgrounds?

TS: Here, you say visual art.

JZ: And music as well. And not so much acting. But these days we work more with people who have acting backgrounds. But, still we look for integration of all disciplines of art. That's what you see in our show. You don't see a specific bit of acting.

AC: Have you been inspired by specific artists?

TS: Some people have been influenced by the German art of the 40's and 50's and some are readers, and me I love to see normal life, so I sneak around the city and I go south and look in the suburbs, and that's my inspiration. Some of the mothers make things in which the idea of taking care of children is a part. It's not just art.

JZ: It is much wider.

TS: Some of the performers go to an amazing amount of theatre shows and others never go. Some only read comic books, and others read the Greek myths. It's so different for everybody. Some work with mathematics.

AC: How did the people who are with the company end up working together?

TS: It's a kind of survival of the fittest. No, they select themselves.

JZ: Each thing we do, we create another work that is a follow-up to it. And our manger does this a lot and because of the work that comes up, we have to give the people in our group the possibility to grow.

TS: And how they stay is because people can stand it, and can manage it.

JZ: They can develop themselves. It not that we're a directing team. It's really together. With ideas, we can help them to make a better story. We want to make sure that each one on the team feels good.

JZ: Everyone really has something of their own in the group.

TS: And this part, you take care of, and you know that you are responsible for that part. It can be something in the show; It can be something out of the show.

AC: How do performers come to you. Do you recruit people?

TS: A hundred different ways.

JZ: When we played in Berlin, next to the Berlin Wall, we were asked to play with a Russian group, when the wall fell. We were asked to make a performance together in Berlin. It's an interesting subject. And there, suddenly, Max appeared. He's from East Berlin. He loved it so much what we did and then he joined us.

TS: And it took some time. For the beginning he worked a little with us.

JZ: For four years, he's been with us.

TS: We have a lot of people we found on tour.

AC: So the performers are from a lot of different countries?

JZ: Some.

TS: Most are from Holland. One Italian, two English and a German.

JZ: One from Scotland, in a month. And an American also.

TS: The normal system is that people write a letter with their CV and pictures of their work. If it looks interesting, then we invite them for an interview. If the interview went okay, then we say, come and join us for a few days and if that went okay then we say okay, and slowly they are coming. Sometimes we put an advertisement, but that's more for the technical jobs.

AC: How much time does it take you to prepare a performance?

TS: Three weeks, a month, five weeks. It depends how difficult a spot is.

AC: How does the collaborative process work, for example with this piece?

TS: This piece was made quite differently from the others because the spot was not ready. Over the years, we have changed to make performances specifically for spots. But, here there was nothing. When we arrived here the theatre was not ready.

AC: With *Camel Gossip III*, was there a specific idea that you came with?

JZ: Some of the ideas were already there. There were the seven women, there was the rain. And we took things from Holland. We thought of bringing bicycles; we thought of bringing this wooden tower. But then we came here to see how technically and dramatically you should do it.

AC: How does this connect with *Camel Gossip I* and *II*?

TS: Well, *Camel Gossip I* was in this show in Glasgow in the tramway and there we did a real experimental purely poetical visual show with nearly no speech. Then we went to Amsterdam and did *Camel Gossip II*. And then we did a show that there was much more acting in. But the rain came from Glasgow. It was raining the whole month so we thought we would make rain, and also the 7 women. For us *Camel Gossip* has to do with seven women. In Glasgow we used seven women because we had seven women. We have never had so many women in the group.

JZ: We like to have people from the spot we are working in.

TS: And one of these Glasgow students is still in the group. And now one of the Americans we are going to take with us. We always make projects in a line so you have three *Camel Gossips*, it could be also four. In a way the shows have nothing to do with each other. They're new shows, totally new shows, new people, new crew, new team, and some parts are old. For example, one of the women was a brilliant woman, was a pearl, we want to have her. So we took one year to get her in the show and now she's in the next one. And you may ask why we want this American guy now. It is really hard to find in our theatre people who fit into your group, and so when you find them you have to be really careful and take care of them.

AC: What does the American guy do in the piece?

TS: He is a technician, who has an amazing body, who is not afraid, who can climb and fall from things. He knows when he makes something. What is important to know when you see our work is that all the things that are there, are made by the people of the group. We know exactly because we are there from the beginning? This American guy understands that when you start playing with things, he knows that we are

in it, that he is in it so you develop a comfortable feeling.

AC: Do you have any social themes in your work?

JZ: Well, one very social thing about our group is that we are able to perform for an audience from 0 to 80 and from working class to the elite, so we have developed a certain language through all those years.

TS: And also all kinds of cultural backgrounds, for example we played for Asiatic people and they were sure, it was about the story of the Koran. And we played in France and there was a woman who said, "I remember my mother told this story when I was five years old. Do you have the book?" I said no, no, no we make it ourselves. They bring their own ideas. There was a woman at the show here. And she said it about the biological rhythms. And another guy came up and said, "It's about loneliness isn't it?" "Yeah," I said "it's also about loneliness" and five minutes later a woman came and

have seven floating islands, not floating but hanging, and then they become cupboards and then they become cars. The island idea was out and then another one came to have some sort of skyscrapers. The hanging cupboards could be like looking in a skyscraper. So you come in the house, but if you look in the house it is not a house because one is a tree, another is a sea and another is a clock. All the things inside the cupboards are made by the women who are in it. The woman said "I'm going to make this for the seven women," and then the seven women have to adopt the idea and they start working on every cupboard itself, and somebody else paints the outside because one woman is a nice painter and she said, "Okay now I'm going to paint them."

AC: That's great.

TS: About these cupboards when they come down. It feels like when these people went to the prairie years ago and they bring their small houses behind them.

AC: Like the wagon trains?

TS: Yeah like the wagons, but also if you drive around in the countryside you see houses here with campers outside. So it could also be like a camper and that is how the fantasies grow on the spot, because if we should do this show in Africa, and we should have seven cupboards, then it will be a totally different story.

AC: It's interesting. It seemed to me to be about urban life, about always being on the move and survival in the city, that's what came to me.

TS: Also, it's really important that the woman who made the houses also made these small lantern houses in the end. There's absolutely a connection and she made the connection by making it. If she didn't make the skyscrapers and these lantern houses there would never be this line of houses being destroyed and building on it again and for some people you can build on the rubbish like the cities of

Rome were built so often on top of each other. This is in a way a new country.

AC: In this piece, you came to visit earlier?

TS: We did some brainstorming in Holland to decide who's coming with us. And then when we came here, there was no theatre. It was not ready, so for three weeks we were trying to think in between drilling machines, and we would find restful places on the Navy Pier, wearing the hard hats.

JZ: This room was not here. We had a hard time.

TS: In the night when the builders and the construction workers were gone, we came here to try things out. So before three o'clock we left and at six they came again. And then the whole day we were working other places on the pier. And in the night we came in here again. It was quite a strange way of making a show. If we really would have had one month, you wouldn't recognize the theatre any more. The catwalks

weren't there when we came in and you really can't make plans with something that isn't there.

And when we came in they didn't know what the color of the walls was. And all the time I ask him, just tell me what's the color of the walls. And he said, I don't know, maybe gray. And now it's white. It was white three days before we started.

AC: One more question, are you financially supported in Holland?

TS: Yeah, we are one of the twenty groups in Holland who gets subsidy, from the state, from the cultural minister. That's enough to pay the core group and the office we rent and the place we work and the rest we earn.

JZ: And we fit quite well into the cultural politics of our ministry, luckily. It could be worse. They use us as a good example how to survive in theatre because we have a good income ourselves, we also go abroad. We work for television sometimes. We reach a broad audience.

TS: At the moment in Holland, the mood of the minister is that theatre becomes more public because subsidized theatre groups in Holland are quite a luxury. Holland is as big as Illinois. And when we have a show it's all sold out, from young 'til old.

AC: Did both of you perform in the show?

JZ: We always look to see what my role is whether it is performing or music.

TS: He's an amazing musician.

AC: And what role did you play?

TS: I was one of the seven women.

AC: And which one were you?

TS: I'm the clock, when the black legs come out, I'm the one who is drinking. The ladies are almost all the same.

JZ: How you pissed.

AC: That was very funny; they would never do that in this country. This country is very conservative.

TS: No, it's a different country.

AC: I think we're much more repressed.

TS: But the reactions we got when we were pissing was really funny. I hear ooh and then they start really laughing so much. It's not piss, it's just water and everybody knows.

JZ: People are really over their chairs laughing.

AC: It's really funny. But in this country especially in a public forum like that it's really shocking. But it's very funny, it's great.

JZ: I think it's hard to develop things like this in America when you put money in something and you don't know how it will end up. All the arts in America, people put money in something when they know for sure its going to be like this. What happens in Holland is they believe in a certain process, what will come out the result, that's the next thing. But the process is the main thing. 'On a good ground you can grow things. I think that's the basic belief.

Audrey Colby is a Chicago-based writer and performer.

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a wretch like me

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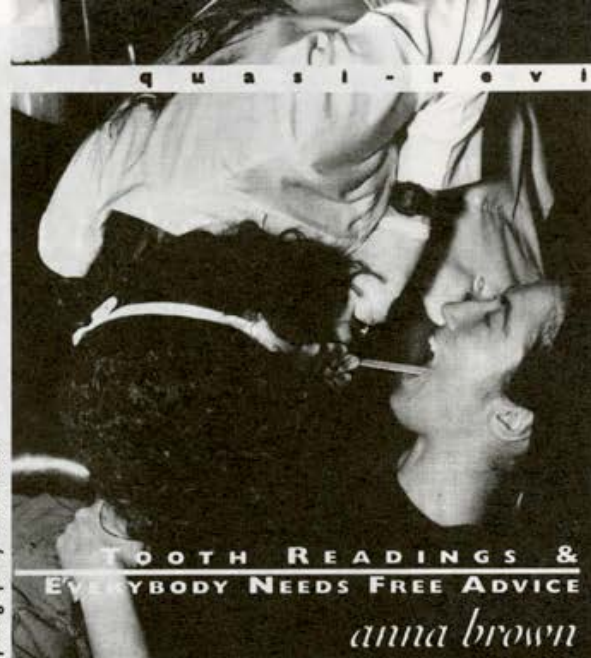
3 ARTISTS ON THEMSELVES

◆ The Off Site Specific series was curated by Ken Thompson and myself because we wanted Randolph Street Gallery to support some time-based work that couldn't exist within the walls of the gallery. Although we received over 25 great proposals for site-specific installation/performance, we were only able to choose four artists.

Throughout the month of June 1994 the OSS series occurred in sites all over Chicago. Chris Huggins led audience members on a private art collection bicycle tour of the Gold Coast in his Art in Private Places piece. Bicyclists followed Chris from window to window, peeking in to see Warhol, a Matisse, a Keifer and more. Anna Brown, Mark Bello and Lydia Charaf also participated in the series and at Anna's initiative agreed to write about their experiences.

MARY ZERKEL

photograph by Lisa Alvarez



◆ There's something about inviting people inside your own home to witness your work that changes everything about it. Makes it more urgent, but at the same time, more like play-acting. It's the ultimate installation experience. It works for me, as I am able to utilize old but still available housewife-y feelings learned from mom. Everything has to look nice — not like it usually looks — when company's coming. Making the house into a magazine comes quite naturally. Role-playing a character in my own home is the most unnatural thing I can think of.

The first time I performed tooth readings was at RSG for the Psycho Circus last summer. Too much sitting in the dentist chair I guess. With the aid of a La-Z-Boy, I examined the insides, and sometimes the outsides, of a client's mouth, and gave them a reading on their life, usually followed by a discussion and some suggestions. Elements of a borderlo and a medical office combine to heighten the anxiety level for this intimate procedure. Working with people one-on-one is challenging and way different from theatrical-style performance. Once the audience dissolves into one individual at a time, the power shifts to a more balanced location, between the two of you. As the artist, you have more responsibility and less control. Anything can happen. Which makes it perfect for a site-specific work.

In both halves of the project, I was hoping to contact a different audience than usual. That was the main draw in going out on the street to offer Free Advice. Chances would be slim that any-

one from the performance art community would wander by. We would be in the territory of those who couldn't care less.

I openly admit that we stole this idea from the women who do it in New York. We (Kiki Bussell, Doreen Stelton, and I) heard what they were doing and wanted to try it here in Chicago. We chose our sites at whim, with the attitude that if anyone objected, we would simply move on. Of course, we never drew that much attention. Our favorite site turned out to be amongst the Botero sculptures along Michigan Avenue. The walkway created was a popular path for those making their way to the World Cup games, as well as downtown workers taking a break. A good place to meet a wide variety of people. And confuse them.

It was nothing like I thought it would be. Rarely did we attract more than one person at a time. At the same time, we were rarely idle. Even going back and forth to the sites, we would become engaged in conversations with strangers at the Jewel. "You mean like advice on how to get your life together? I sure could use some of that." Some of the conversations were deep and sincere, about the troubles of the world and the individual psyche. One child asked how to recapture a lightning bug which had escaped from its jar inside the house. Other passers-by just wanted to joke: "Free advice? You can't get anything for free anymore."

One of the interesting things that happened with the tooth readings is that nobody came. That is to say, I had appointments throughout the day, kept quite busy, had some great interactions. But these were with friends who knew what I was doing, or who happened to stop by. I did one reading for the companion of the photographer RSG sent by to document the day and one for an RSG staff member. What I mean is that nobody came from the "general public." Nobody came on their own. I originally wanted to send out invitations to specific people I thought would be interested in an appointment, but the gallery suggested that it would be more effective if I was reading strangers, and I agreed. The problem was that the strangers didn't have time to stop by. Considering how many people want to participate in the readings when they happen in an accessible location, I can only surmise that my home was too inaccessible. Maybe if I lived in Wicker Park...

◆ The idea for my site specific piece *Beneath the Bread* had many origins, but the pivotal event for me was a trip to K-Mart last October. It was two weeks before Halloween and the place was brimming with trick-or-treat paraphernalia. Aside from the soap, shampoo, and scotch tape I had gone to purchase, I found myself leaving with two molded plastic skull trick-or-treat buckets.

Completely unsolicited, the cashier picked up both of the buckets and said in heavily accented English, "This is you," while nodding towards the skull bucket in her right hand, "and this is me," she said nodding towards the identical bucket in her left hand.

"Right," I said. I knew exactly what she was talking about. "Because under our skin we are all the same."

"Right," she went on, "no black, no white. No beautiful, no ugly. No rich, no poor...thank you."

The choice of my site, the Shedd Aquarium, was for a number of reasons: 1. It is a non-regulated public space where the public roams freely and feeds the abundance of birds — the same thing that I, in effect, proposed to do; 2. On a sunny June day outside the Shedd, people are enjoying the view of the lake or waiting in line to get in and see the



BENEATH THE BREAD mark bello

aquarium. So, in addition to any publicity Randolph Street Gallery provides, another audience is automatically there. Not just any "automatic audience," but people from Indiana to Italy, from the south side of Chicago to South America.

I like to think that someone returned home from their day at the Shedd on June 18th, 1994, and when asked how the aquarium was, responded somewhat like this: "Forget the aquarium."

Outside there was this kook covered in all kinds of bread and the idea was that we were supposed to help by tossing some extra bread they had to lure the birds in and pick him clean. Well the birds seemed scared and then all of a sudden this big guy in a bird costume shows up with a cooler full of meat and cheese, spreads out a blanket and starts making sandwiches out of this bread suit that like some sort of crazy Communion all the people around hungrily ate. Then this skeleton

suit emerged from under the bread and walked around handing out these rubber bread-shaped key chains that said BENEATH THE BREAD IS BONE.

Apparently this was this artist's way of showing that beneath all of our exteriors we are all reduced to the same thing."

The above assessment may be wishful thinking, but as a matter of fact, a friend of mine just in town from Colorado — and instantly put to work proofreading this as I pound it out — says "You did that bread suit thing!?! I heard about it at a wedding I went to in Hawaii from some woman who it turns out works at the Shedd Aquarium. She said that 'the guy had an amazing, impromptu audience. Everyone opted to watch the spectacle instead of coming into the aquarium.'"

THE GARDEN IS YOUR HEART lydia charaf

◆ The scheme was to grow stuff in my garden — enough to feed a handful of people, then hold them captivated long enough to make them believe that it was my birthday and green is healing.

I called this event *The Garden is Your Heart*, based on some crazy-ass dream I had the 3rd day of my first big fast. It featured putrid plants, 3 water-logged rabbits and a chopped-off pig's foot. I decided it was time to get to work. That was 2 1/2 years ago and after a season wasted in an industrial wasteland I was ready to be back home on Julian Street growing lots of basil and tending to my disintegration and severely broken heart.

So June 28th actually was my 30th birthday — though in the end some folks still thought I was making it all up. It rained a couple sheets right when the first couple arrived but not enough to postpone us. At dusk I put on my orange evening gown and lit a few candles. I'd finished making my first very own flick (a home movie plotting the garden's growth, etc. — I left out the part about the cut-off rat heads). It was more about the movement outside from the inside, winter to spring, private to public.

So at dusk I did a drum jam in the basement while attendees were munching pesto and stuffed grape leaves in the garden.

Then as the fireflies were doing their thing, I came out all surreal and slo-mo, the wind pulling at me, playing the kalimba; then the film rolled on cheesecloth I'd rigged up on a clothesline, then I sang a song about mulberries, catalpa trees and other seasonal things, then I lit giant orange candles and talked about the plot, my crazy-ass dream, and the vibration of the color green.

Everyone left kinda glowin'.

April 16, 1994
Cowell Theatre
San Francisco

POST PORN
MODERNIST

annie sprinkle

◆ annie sprinkle invited us to her *post porn modernist* one-person show last saturday. i saw it years ago when she did it at a n.y.c. strip theatre...and i wrote a review of it which was published in *art papers*. in the review, i pretended i was just someone who had come to the show (in reality we were staying at her place, watched her rehearse the last ritual, and michael painted her vibrator). i could not do that now because she has put me into the show for my "famous tongue"...and listed me in the program credits as one of her performance teachers...which is very flattering because she is the best performance artist i have seen and her show is the best i have been to. i said this in the old review. but the ritual that is this show has become much deeper, much more human. annie very quickly shattered the limitations of a stage show, very quickly created an intimate community from all the people in the space. it is the community that really does the ritual, using annie's life as the pathway. the ritual never stops, not even during the "intermission" (annie stays on stage for people to have their picture taken with her bare breasts on their heads...at \$10 a pop). the show's last section, a very magically powerful ritual, did not end, annie did not leave the stage, until way after the last audience member had left (i, as a performer, watched each person somehow decide it was time to go).

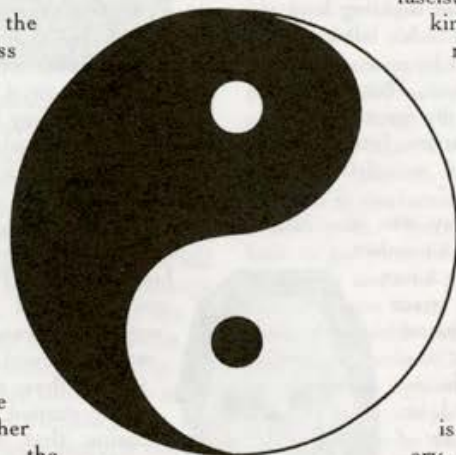
annie's messages are clear in the show...sex and the body are good...people do not have to be victims...and the more happiness and plea-

sure you have, the more happiness and pleasure you are creating in/for the world.

unfortunately, the new age goddess haunts the show just below the surface, producing a sub layer or a hidden message of separation and isolation which really runs in conflict with both annie's basic nature and the community that her show calls forth. the new age goddess is basically a corruption of the original goddess which is the yin principle which is within all of us no matter what our gender. the original ritual journey or task was to reunite the yin and yang principles into the original creative life force, and to apply, along this major journey, the yin principle for the tribal welfare. one of the powerful characteristics of the original goddess has always been an unlimited inclusiveness. this is also true of annie personally, and it radiates from her show. but both the original goddess and annie are being misused, distorted, by the forces of exclusion as an excuse and a justification of elitism, separatism, discrimination, fear, and isolation. these forces of exclusion are the main cause of today's world conflict.

one of the problems is "goddess" is being personalized, then given a gender. it is common today to hear women saying "i'm a/the goddess." it has the protection of being politically correct. but if we change the words to "i am a/the

male god," or "i'm a/the white god," or "i'm an/the american god," the fascistic dangers of this kind of logic become more obvious.



moreover, the new age goddess has more to do with mother mary than the original goddess. it isolates women once again high upon the pedestal.

annie's story is one of self-discovery...both her personal self and our collective self. her method is to isolate and define aspects of herself, give each a name and a personality, and then live each to the hilt. so far, she has discovered ellen, annie, and anya. in the past, annie has described anya as the goddess, which attracted the confusion. recently she has started describing anya as a sacred prostitute. although this term is also misleading...created by one culture...it is not gender-driven...after all, annie introduced me to the audience as a sacred prostitute. what is really meant by the term is a cultural role of a magical channel between this and other realities by means of, among other techniques, expanded sex.

annie is only in the middle of her story. before it is all over, i think she will discover many more aspects within herself...and will then combine all of the aspects together. i'm looking forward to that climax!

FRANK MOORE

◆ After the show, we sat in Cafe Istanbul on 17th and Valencia, drinking Turkish coffee. Kelly and Mike, my two English friends, were livid. We had gone to a benefit at the New Performance Gallery for the gallery's mural project. They were expecting to see some of San Francisco's most challenging performance work.

"It was like attending a therapy group that you don't belong to," I said. "Everyone leaves smiling and feeling good about life - what's wrong with that? There was a lot of love in that room," I said. "I want my money back," said Mike. "A bunch of tossers!" said Kelly.

I have learned not to have any expectations when I go to performances. I'll allow anything to wander in off the street and have its say. In the name of "performance art" (an avant-garde, European tradition that arguably never translated successfully to America) I've seen bald queens masturbating on baby dolls, bald crones praying for rain, naked women ironing their underwear, naked men brandishing dildoes, screaming women throwing food on the floor, screaming men driving chain saws - not to mention the barrage of dreadful performances I had to sit through as a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

My friend P. Michael used to say you could always tell who the performance art students were at SAIC. "If they're carrying shopping bags and looking down when they walk, you can bet their in Jaremba's class," he'd say.

Fellow classmate David Sedaris used to joke that it would be easy to end just about any performance class at SAIC, "Just pull the plug on the projector."

Despite the reputation "performance art" has of being amateur posturing, I've always found something worthwhile in its extremes and possibilities. Through experimentation we come to understand the possibility of a new language, we come to consider our dilemmas - to think on the strategies of change - to rediscover our senses.

The New Performance Gallery benefit was a haphazard mumble. Kelly and Mike felt exploited because they paid ten bucks to see "amateurish, improvisational work."

To an outsider, the new-age sentimentality and smug back-patting by emcee Jon Weaver that punctuated an evening of unfinished performances was pretty hard to stomach. He acted like he was hosting the Academy Awards. The performing club and their friends seemed hopelessly inebriated by it all. Annoyed, Kelly and Mike tried to get up and leave a couple of times but I was on the aisle and I blocked their way. "Bloody wankers!" said Kelly. "A bunch of tossers!" said Mike.

It is true that texts were often unmemorized and read straight off the page. The space was rarely utilized to its full potential. The work was very personal, almost painfully personal, but the warmth and honesty of the performers was very effective. Okay, so it wasn't the Cirque du Soleil, so it wasn't a Tori Amos concert, still there were a few moments worth remembering.

Jules Beckman of Contraband has an endearing straight-forward approach to his song "It Takes Time." He has boundless energy, engaging good looks, and is quite focused and open

as a performer. There are no psychic walls with Beckman, or with Rene Charlip's amusing storybook memory of childhood. His piece could have come right out of a John Bradshaw "Inner Child" workshop. Charlip is a gifted storyteller; his text is direct and witty. A sweet, older man resembling a cross between Leo Buscaglia and The Frugal Gourmet, he speaks to the child in all of us.

Monologist Meaghan Gannet rambled on about her life and times in Oakland. Her piece was way too long yet clever, and her vital stage presence salvaged her unrehearsed babble.

S.A.M., a three-woman collective piloted by Stanya Khan's icy Frances Farmer-like elegance, possesses potent texts and a minimalist approach. Falling off to sleep that night, I couldn't stop thinking about Anah-K (the A-girl in S.A.M.)

Barefoot and sitting on a box, she was wearing a tired aqua-colored, bad prom-date dress, like maybe she swilled down half the punch bowl ditching her date. Maybe she found herself sitting in the corner like in a Janis Ian song wondering out loud what the hell she is doing there in the first place. She is a woman with possibilities and she's played them all.

Maybe she's the girl in speech class who no one ever paid much attention to and on the day she gives her speech, she finds the whole room venerating her with a stunned silence when she says: "HIV Positive: one side of a switch blade of light causing a stigmata of the sun. Positive develops the negative of one's life in a dark room. Visually: 2 lines before crossed or spread hold the oracle of combined variations. (-) (-)2 lines once resting on their sides as autonomous negative or minus signs, when stacked together with a space between them become an equal sign (=). When they share a center they become a cross or plus (+) indicating directions or increased when tilted like the head of an ax that become an X like X marks the spot where something is."

J.J. BUSSA

January 15, 1994
San Francisco

face lift
A BENEFIT
FOR NEW
PERFORMANCE
GALLERY

♦ An older artist once told me that he'd had only 2 or 3 really good ideas in his life. While this sounded very modest coming from someone who has produced a large body of work in his time, it makes watching Kiken Chin's *Between* all the more intriguing. For the past 12 years Chin has been choreographing and performing *Between*. It is a conceptually continuous dance performance. To remain focused on one idea is quite a feat in a culture that is notorious for short attention spans.

Chin was born in Japan where he began studying ballet when he was young. Later he emigrated to the States and studied at the schools of Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Erick Hawkins in New York City. He now makes his home in Portland, Oregon. His work has a sophistication reflecting his background that seems to mix into the rather insular Northwest art scene like oil meeting vinegar. *Between* is not of this place, but Chin has found a niche and continues to adapt and educate with each performance.

I caught the Saturday evening performance of *Between* at John's Nameless Space. Chin performed with experimental musician Daniel Menche. The two have collaborated on *Between* before and their works compliment each other. Menche's detached and industrial *Sonic Action* provided an aural set for Chin's dance. His music, made up of samples of ambient and commercial sounds interspersed with his own creations (grating ceramic pots on a turntable), moved in suspenseful progressions.

John's Nameless Space is a pristine loft with two banks of windows and highly polished wood floors. The audience of about 40 was provided with an assortment of pillows and chairs for seating. Some sat, some lounged about, others stood against the posts. Throughout the evening people moved around, changing perspective and position. Menche set up in a corner with turntable, tape decks, and synthesizer, all balanced precariously on a long folding table. He began his sonic works as white noise (police radio recordings interspersed with feedback) while the audience settled in. Meanwhile, Chin mingled with the crowd clandestinely gravitating to the place where he would begin the dance. After about 20 minutes the audience grew still. Kiken had chosen a quiet corner of the room and began to move, slinking among the

crowd, rubbing up to them like a cat showing ownership and affection.

Kiken wove through-out the audience wearing a loose sleeveless red body suit. His dance was almost entirely performed in close proximity to the audience.

Some danced with him, others sat tensely while he moved into their "space."

His dance was slow and sensuous. It required the energy of the audience to determine its flow. Chin's movements were both graceful and scintillating. Animal-like one moment, child-like the next.

One of the most intense parts of the dance involved a woman and child who I presume he knew personally. As he approached the two, the child giggled at the monkey movements he made (his ass sticking straight out as he crouched forward). He played for a moment to the child, who was undoubtedly the most open and relaxed audience member that evening. Perhaps she was too young to understand sexual tension. Then in a rush he and the woman were together, moving like a giant bird across the room. His leg curled around her back and they went down to the floor in a (coital/passionate) dance. Slowly he broke away leaving the room breathless.

There were a number of sexually charged encounters with audience members. He spurred on some of this contact, reveling in the smell, the touch, the exchange. By the end of the evening he had worked his way around the room about 4 times. The audience shifted and changed positions during the hour-plus performance. In his program notes, he tells people to feel free to move about,

April 29-30, 1994
John's Nameless Space
Portland, OR

BETWEEN

kiken chin

SONIC ACTION

daniel menche

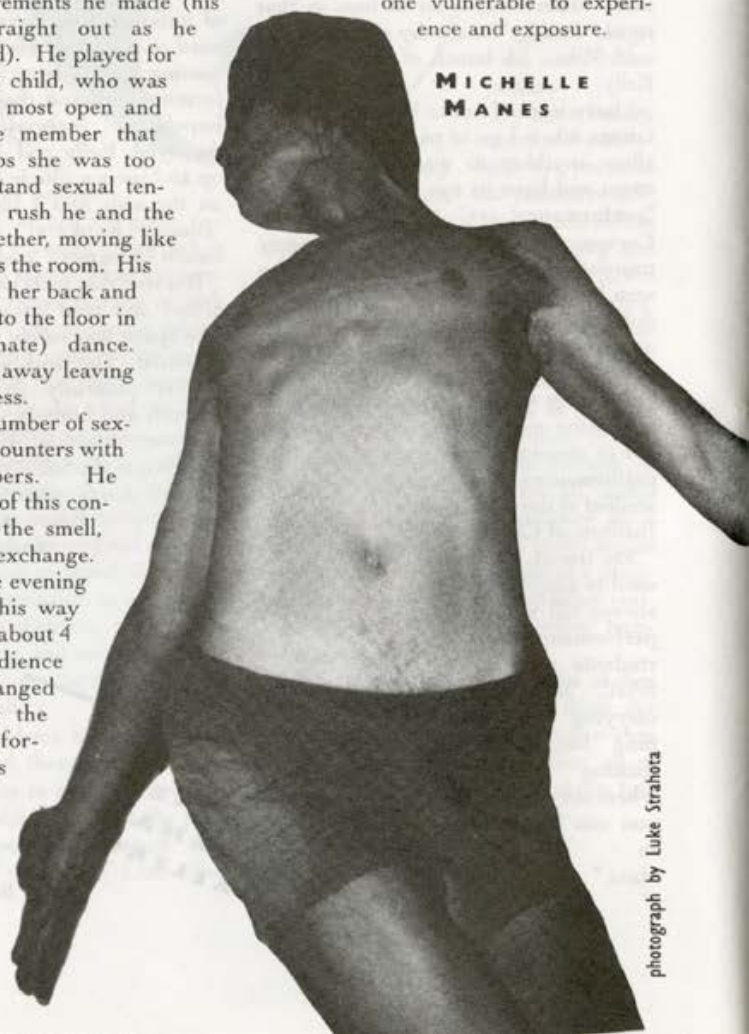
leave, come back. Some moved closer, others moved out just wanting to watch.

Throughout the evening Menche's sound sculptures reverberated in the space. There were moments of beautiful synchronicity/harmony between Menche and Chin, who both seem to work on the chaos principle allowing their work to come together as the moment dictates.

They share an understanding of interactive art forms that is often missing in collaborative ventures.

I came away from the evening with a sense that Kiken Chin's *Between* is an anti-alienation performance. Its beauty lies in its ability to break down barriers. While it is slow and sensuous, it is also forceful. Chin strips away the everyday armor we carry. *Between* leaves one vulnerable to experience and exposure.

MICHELLE
MANES



photograph by Luke Strahota



♦ The surreal was evoked from the beginning of *Jardin de Pulpos*, as a man wearing a sombrero slowly walked across stage carrying a lace covered woman in a chair who was tied to his back. A visually striking, humorous dreamscape with a social conscience, *Jardin de Pulpos* (*Octopus Garden*) was presented at the 1994 International Theatre Festival of Chicago. Taller del Sotano, which translates as basement workshop, was founded in 1990 in the basement of a house in Mexico City. *Jardin de Pulpos* was written, directed, and originally performed in Ecuador by Aristides Vargas and his company Malayerba. It was re-created with Taller del Sotano drawing on the performers' memories, dreams and questions of identity.

Jardin de Pulpos' narrative centered around Jose, a young disheveled man who lost his memory due to a mysterious tragic event. His friend Antonia told Jose that the only way he would recover his memory was to dream. The rest of the play shifted between Jose's

dreams and his encounters with Antonia, who guided him in his quest to regain his memory. Jose's dreams were both parodic and rhapsodic.

In his dreams Jose visualized a variety of mythical family members who seduced and then rejected him. Jose's flamboyant aunt was performed in drag, by an actor in a pink dress and pearls who exaggerated his sense of imbalance as he walked on his tiptoes in his imaginary high heels. The seduction/rejection scene between Jose and his aunt was embodied through interactive acrobatic movements. In one of the most memorable scenes, Jose dreamed of his mother who discussed her dead ancestors as she painstakingly dragged her feet across the stage. Glued to her feet were two long strips with a line of shoes attached to them. This striking image provoked questions as to which relatives each pair of shoes belonged.

Jose's dreams juxtaposed the pains and pleasures of his life. In a coming-of-age scene, Jose's adolescent friends, who were exploring their sexuality, partook of a slapstick, liberation orgy behind a long table with an adolescent girl, two

n u n s

(men in drag) and Pinocchio, who wore a condom on his nose. The audience could only see arms, legs and bodies flying, popping up from behind a long table. While his friends were thrashing about, Jose quietly observed from the sidelines.

Throughout the play, the personal and the political intersected. As Jose's dreams unraveled, drawing on Mexican mythology, fairy tales, fantasies and memories, themes of governmental corruption, exploitation and poverty were integrated into the scenes. When sharing his dreams with Antonia, Jose talked about how in both families and countries there are those who are corrupt and those who are just. He compared a country, with its taxes and fees, to a prostitute. Throughout *Jardin de Pulpos*, the viewer was reminded of the poor who don't have the luxury to contemplate the meaning of life "who only think about what they can find to eat." Jose ultimately learned that he lost his memory as a result of witnessing a massacre.

As a non-Spanish speaking viewer, the most frustrating part of the performance was listening to the monotone translation, which was in sharp contrast to the Spanish spoken text. The Taller del Sotano company built on their life experiences, and inspired by Aristides Vargas and Malayerba, created a visually stunning and physically vibrant performance that successfully and subtly linked poetic imagery with political awareness.

AUDREY
COLBY



◆ Two recent boundary-leaping events in San Francisco explored the richness of performance and all it can be at this moment in time. The first was the premiere of Joe Goode's *Take/Place*, a new work whose primary theme concerned physical/geographical place and its relationship to our own identity. Its ostensible subject was urbanization pitted against preservation of rural environments; but the implied story went far beyond that. The issues raised—Goode says they were about the search for home—were both complex and compelling.

Trees were conspicuous throughout the piece, both tiny ones in great quantities among which the dancers performed and larger branches that were sometimes parts of the performers' costumes. Standing for things like home, truth, and reality, they (and lots of recorded bird calls) related to the geographic aspect of the piece, providing a clear connection with the land. But in this sylvan setting there was an alternate vision having to do with a sense of urban ambition. Pinocchio noses on the principle characters grew longer with each further step into that alternative life and the realization that it was a kind of lie, that there was, in fact, no place to go, no "home."

The company's work is based clearly in dance, but all the performers bring strong, disciplined theater backgrounds to the endeavor. Texts, both spoken and sung — mostly storytelling in the form of monologues — were imaginatively coupled with straight-out acting and movement only tenuously connected to traditional dance. The story line — sometimes funny but always with an underlying sense of sadness, perhaps even of loss — seemed clear enough, but Goode left plenty of room for the mind to search for and invent meaning.

Goode used the huge Theater Artaud space in virtuosic fashion. Dancers performed not only in the stage area but also on platforms scattered throughout the audience space. I was reminded of Erwin Piscator's idea of the multiple stage, of using the whole space in such a way that viewers become engaged through having to choose where to focus their attention. There was often

May 12-29, 1994
Theater Artaud
San Francisco

June 2-4, 1994
Theater Artaud
San Francisco

TAKE/PLACE ADAM&EVE/ROMEO&JULIET

joe goode dziga vertov
performance performance
group group



photograph by Nina Glaser

no way of seeing everything all the time.

The second event was presented by the Dziga Vertov Performance Group, which derives its name from the Soviet experimental filmmaker whose multi-layered works pioneered montage in film. Like Joe Goode, DVPG co-creators Douglas Rosenberg and Li Chiao-Ping took commanding advantage of the immense Theater Artaud space for the premiere of their *Romeo and Juliet/Adam and Eve*. Their grand sense of scale characterized the entire show.

The hall was already charged with visual energy when the audience began filing in. On the upstage wall were

two projected, very large and close up images of a hand holding a ripe, red apple. Scattered all over the floor of the otherwise bare performance space were a couple thousand red apples (ten cases, in all). Five pairs of identical red, high-heeled shoes (apple metaphors?) were lined up on the front edge of the performance area.

The piece consisted of a large number and variety of striking tableaux/montages dealing, to striking effect, with the two tales of the work's title. It was packed with references, both visual and sonic, to these familiar stories. There was, for example, the snake (rubber, in this instance) around the neck of the Eve character. There was recitation from the Book of Genesis while six performers dunked for apples in a trough on the stage's leading edge. There was gospel-like singing of Shakespeare's "Romeo, Romeo" soliloquy while men in the red high heels did a slow "dance" seated in lined up chairs. The slides

April 2, 1994
Elm Street Theatre, Dallas

ABEL&CAIN: A BIBLICAL DEBACLE

fred curchack
e3 daniel stein



◆ While driving to the Elm Street Theatre to see a preview of *Abel and Cain: A Biblical Debacle* by Dallas based performance artist Fred Curchack, it seemed quite fitting that a monstrous thunderstorm of epic proportions broke out and spewed rain relentlessly on the highway. Curchack is well known as a master of props and is prolific in violent images, so while it would not be off the mark to suggest that he planned this performance around these outbursts of Mother Nature, it would probably be more accurate to assume the other way around.

Curchack has the distinction of seemingly being Dallas' lone public performance artist, and his past solo offerings have included a puppet and gore Freudian take on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* called *Stuff As Dreams Are Made Of*. Here, he is appropriately joined with the more subdued movement artist Daniel Stein in an exploration of the birth of sibling rivalry in the biblical story of Cain and Abel.

As the tale goes, Adam and Eve are banished from the garden of eden for their original sin and, following through with God's curse to "greatly multiply your sorrow" (Gen. 3:16), immediately bear two sons, Abel, "a keeper of sheep," and Cain, "a tiller of the ground." When offering time comes, Abel slaughters the firstborn of his flock, while Cain brings his vegetables and fruits. When God shows disapproval upon Cain's bloodless sacrifice, Cain kills Abel in a fit of jealousy and confusion. When Cain is confronted by God about the incident, Cain feigns ignorance, only to be cursed by God to a life of wanderlust, a fugitive with meager harvests. This basic story, as well as a quick overview of the biblical tale of creation, is told at the beginning of the piece by Curchack and Stein using a manic shadow play with flashlights and screens, and is relentlessly hilarious, not to mention just this side of brilliant.

From there, things get a bit more intense. We see brothers bicker, God

condemn, blood spilled, and murder committed. Curchack's Cain and Stein's Able are taken through a myriad of metamorphisms: from farmer and shepherd to vegetarian and carnivore, to screenplay writer and studio head, and beyond. Between the allegorical scenes of brothers misunderstood, we are intermittently taken back to the original biblical tale, with Curchack and Stein in white T-shirts, blue overalls, and boots.

While the show lacks much cohesiveness in its current form, these two performers have hit upon some stunning images while trying to understand this story of first murder.

At one point, Cain and Abel prepare a sheep stew. While Abel pontificates to the audience about the various slaughtering styles he can use by pinpointing the locales with a knife on a paper-maché lamb, he continually sends Cain back to the garden to pick and prepare more vegetables. Cain goes back and forth, exhausted, until Abel is to make his final cut of the animal, which takes all of two seconds.

During the course of the performance, Curchack and Stein occasionally string rope across the length of a box structure that serves as the stage, gradually building a fence between the two, obviously a symbol of their distance and miscommunication. But at one point, during one of the brothers' incarnations that climaxes with a heated argument, one of the brothers gets too close to the fence, and is electrocuted to death from the shock.

When Abel is later incarnated as a

◀ (continued from previous page)

changed continually throughout the show and showed, mostly, historical images of Adam and Eve.

In addition, there was a strong carnival element and more than a hint of Felliniesque circus. It was a clown, for example, who swept the stage of its apples near the beginning and there was a clown episode at mid-point that anticipated a full-blown Pagliacci reference near the end. Musical elements came primarily from the large repertoire of tragic-love-story works, composers ranging from Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev (their *Romeo and Juliet*) to Leoncavallo and Leonard Bernstein (his *West Side Story*, of course).

Though *Adam and Eve/Romeo and Juliet* was conceived with dance as its primary, seminal element, the piece sticks in my mind more as a non-dance, interdisciplinary theater work. In those moments when traditional dance movement became the central focus, energy and interest flagged. The work might have benefited by being pushed completely beyond the boundaries of its dance roots, even further into the areas of theatrical space, pure movement, and spectacle in which it proved successful and unique. In spite of this, DVPG set its sights high and, for the most part, was right on target.

CHARLES BOONE

♦ If anyone has ever ventured into the music haven of Dallas' Deep Ellum area late at night, they have more than likely stumbled across the likes of street musician Cilantro. Somewhere in his late 30's or early 40's, Cilantro is some sight, with his just-fell-out-of-bed looks and a guitar strapped around his neck, ready to play any popular song you want for a dollar, or an improvised tune on any subject for five. For most, Cilantro is an annoyance in the bustling arts district of Deep Ellum, a vagrant who remains amazingly evasive of the strict anti-homeless ordinances passed this spring by the City Council. To others (like me), he is at least something human against the bleak brick and steel aesthetic Dallas has to offer. So depending on your disposition, the leaflets Cilantro passed out in June announcing his final performance at the corner of Alpha Road and Dallas Parkway were seen as either an eagerly anticipated event or a long overdue relief. Little did anyone

know he had a

July 20, 1994

Northeast corner of Alpha Road
and Dallas Parkway, Dallas

UNTITLED (FUCK TIME)

cilantro

sneaky piece of guerrilla performance art in mind.

Only three of us showed up at the busy intersection during lunch hour traffic, right next to the Galleria Mall, one of the more upscale establishments in the city. Sure enough, at 12:15, Cilantro drove up to the northeast corner, which backed up to an open, elevated, undeveloped field, and quickly took out sundry props and signs. Two large wooden signs were put face down, a gigantic wooden cross was placed behind him, six rather large clocks were arranged in rows, and a baseball bat and single-face clock (like those in schools or offices) were laid nearby. Cilantro was curiously dressed, wearing an American flag shirt and American flag jeans. Needless to say, his audience of three was intrigued.

As "Stay Away" by Nirvana began to blare over a PA speaker from his truck, the piece began when Cilantro dragged a small clock chained to his foot as if it weighed a ton, and hunched over as if in serious labor, all the while carrying a baseball bat. When he reached the edge of the sidewalk, in time with the drum

beat kicking in, he rose up to face the sky, did a pantomime of a Neanderthal first learning how to walk, then reached back with the bat, and began to pulverize the small clock chained to his foot, freeing himself from enslavement. He jumped upon the base holders of the signs so that they sprang up and stood to reveal two messages: FUCK TIME on one and KILL ALL CLOCKS on the other. He then proceeded to beat the large faced clocks with a wildly honest abandonment that gave this particular onlooker a great feeling of catharsis. I knew what he meant.

Various ritual-like movements were used when he next doused the corpus tymius with kerosene and lit the clocks, creating a lively funeral pyre that had me expecting the fire department to be appearing at any second. But before that could happen, Cilantro rounded out the piece with a finale that had him pulling the cross, which was about a foot taller than him, forward to the edge of the sidewalk. He then put the single-face office clock up to the vortex of the cross and crucified the timepiece with four long nails, to which the clock bled profusely from the wounds

(corn syrup and food coloring, I assumed. I

hoped.). Our hero then loaded up some of his supplies, leaving the main set of the signs, funeral pyre, and Time crucified behind, and spun off in his truck. No fire trucks came, but his audience of three left on fire.

This was quite a surprise for those of us merely expecting a wake of rugged and distraught original tunes sung against the consumerist urbana of Galleria Mall traffic. While the message is quite evident, a brief fantasy in which the enslaving concept of Time is put to death, I found the techniques involved to be of an interesting nature due to their ability to demand the viewer to suspend certain offenses.

For instance: in a city that has had more assault crimes per capita than any other American city in the past few years (beating out New York and L.A. at year end), to violently beat and burn objects on a street corner of an already hostile city is to invite, not to mention incite, paranoia into any passerby. Yet, when the object being mutilated is a symbol for Time itself, well, who could disagree with wanting to beat the hell out of that? My own mother would get that joke. Even the most rabid pacifist would understand

June 1-19, 1994

Navy Pier
Chicago

CAMEL GOSSIP III

dogtroep

♦ If the following string of events makes no sense to you, I can offer little solace.

A huge ramp stretched up and through the audience. Along its length were hung sewn together homey-patterned clothes. A woman in a ratty blond wig comes along and takes them down, throwing the curtain/clothes into a heap. The heap eventually begins shambling down the ramp, seemingly under its own power. On the apron of the stage a very fat workman in a ramshackle hut yells some unintelligible words, and gives himself a gravel shower.

On stage are revealed 8 or so hanging lockers, with clones of the ratty blond inside. Among other activities, the blonds stick their butts out of the lockers as if they were in outhouses, and in a monumental act of peeing, fire-hose amounts of water gush from between their legs. (I momentarily fear that bathroom activities will stretch throughout the piece.)

Across the entire length of the 40' stage, a curtain of rain begins to fall (of a similar torrential nature as the peeing). The fat man is revealed to be actually two people as a woman is pulled out of his fat suit and flown about ten feet into the air. A hole is opened in the stage, the woman released into it (it's full of water), and with a giant plunger, the ex-fat man plunges her into oblivion. The lockers are lowered, and from them emerge the ratty blonds, now with raincoats and old lady plastic rain hats and clear plastic purses with (big surprise) goldfish in them. They exit, to return amongst the audience with 20' long bamboo pole contraptions with speakers at the end, through which is broadcast the whisperings of the women. (The only words I heard were "decompression chamber.") They leave.

Meanwhile, the woman who was the fat part of the fat man reappears, this time on top of the now slim man's shack.



A series of slapsticky events occur — she blocks his flue, steals a painting, and blocks his gutter so that (big surprise) it starts raining inside his shack. The shack collapses, the woman rolls away on a giant clapboard Matterhorn, and our two protagonists end up having a sword fight with one sword that has two handles. The man defeats his ex-belly, and wanders into the Matterhorn, which promptly collapses on him in a rather thrilling manner.

The clones reappear, riding bicycles, which are then flown up the front of the stage as the rain stops. The skewered ex-belly woman, looking a bit like the Bad What's Her Name from *Metropolis*, appears on a 30' tall tricycle which the clones push up the ramp into the audience. Our formerly fat and not quite dead friend reappears, and weeps on a stool. The end.

If you're confused and disoriented after reading this, I've managed to accurately convey what it was like to actually be there.

Of course, what I haven't managed to convey, I'm sure, with this rather factual reiteration, was how delightful and entertaining the whole thing was. It truly was a spectacle the size of which is rarely seen in Chicago. The whole thing was performed about 1/4 of a mile out on Lake Michigan at Chicago's new outdoor Navy Pier Skyline Stage, and to the piece's credit, it was actually large and fast-paced enough to compete with

the sunset and the (mostly obscured) city skyline.

Unfortunately, as I'm sure you've caught on to by now, there wasn't much to chew on in this work. The International Theatre Festival of Chicago brought in Dogtroep (they're from the Netherlands) for a one month residency to create *Camel Gossip III*. Dogtroep's thing seems to be to travel to different cities making these site-specific events. In Chicago they utilized local performers, who I believe appeared as some of the disheveled blond clones. However, they seem to have spent their month perfecting many of the amazing special effects that were carried off without a hitch, rather than thinking much at all about what they were creating.

Even the musicians, who were quite excellent, were mainly used only to cover the awkward scene changes needed to get from one spectacle to the next. And as for the central (and only) theme in the piece, your basic man/woman struggle, not much got said about it — rather it seemed to serve as a thin wire hanger on which to drape the action. Given the number of violent acts perpetrated on the central female character, the piece even seemed misogynist at times. But I'm sure that wasn't their intent, none of the ideas in the work reached the depth it would take to get to real misogyny.

Overall, the effect was rather like

going to a major opera house. You know, the kind where the set gets the most applause, and you just can't believe how they get all those walls to move around like that, and how did they sync up those 120 slide projectors? Like contemporary opera productions, Dogtroep seems to have fallen into the trap of trying to create a constant visual spectacle, aka: a film.

The final moment of *Camel Gossip III* perfectly illustrates this point. As the former fat man sits weeping (apparently) over the loss of the woman, we feel nothing. That is, we feel nothing until the music starts swelling, and the lights begin a slow dim, leaving one last beautiful image on stage. All of the cues we're being given say "this is touching," but nothing in the preceding hour has set us up to feel, much less think about, anything meaningful at this moment.

In the end, however, I remain pleased that the ITF brought this type of work to Chicago. Unfortunately, the ITF seems to have lost its shirt on this year's adventurous festival, due largely, it might seem, to the huge costs of the Dogtroep residency [although reportedly none of the local performers were paid a cent]. In fact, they still haven't paid this magazine for the ad they took out. Sadly, it seems that if the ITF does return, it probably will have to be with "safer," less adventurous theatre.

KEN THOMPSON

➤ (continues on page 45)

♦ *Walk: Project #1*, a flurry of creativity amidst the grandiosity and decay of a long abandoned department store, was an ambitious attempt by a group of ten artists to redefine and sanctify the space. The space itself, the former Lerner building at the intersection of Lincoln and Ashland in Chicago, was itself wild, mysterious and decrepit. After walking in the main entrance, filled with bright lights and some projects, one walked through mazes and stairways to see the various projects, some of which blended into the ghosts of the store. I was only there one evening, and there were various projects going on throughout the week of the project, as well as the static pieces.

I went into Donald McGhie's space in the basement the wrong way. I guess you were supposed to slide down a ramp unexpectedly, but I had walked down the stairs, which was actually the exit. In this mildewy basement laboratory, there were shelves filled with catalogued items.

They were all dated by dates depending on when they were found during the setting up of the project and during the project itself. There were plastic bags filled with dead birds, bird feathers and bird bones, bags with incidental things like matches from

years back, tools and rusted nails, and bags with trash and litter from years back as well as the week of the performance. And more bags. And more things. One could wander amidst shelves and shelves of these things, and spend hours. There were work forms for the employees of the store, yellowed and tattered. From this cataloguing, you could kind of put together a perspective of the past and present of the space. McGhie himself, who was present when I was there, became the perfect mad scientist who created this confusion into order. Further down in the

basement, you could go and see "the pool." The pool was a sub-basement that had flooded, the waters were up to the level of the top of the stairs, and it smelled and seemed like the waters had not receded for years. The moistness and stark lighting created a cave-like sensation of wildness and intimacy.

The works of Werner Herterich, large accumulated and intricate piles of wood and metals, became huge almost frightening life forms on one dark level of the building. One pile seemed to become a huge nest and brought to mind a primordial chaos.

Another artist, Rae Staseson, placed tagged items in various spots throughout the maze of the building. The building, ravaged by time, infiltrated by birds, and half deconstructed, had



photograph by Donald McGhie

nooks and crannies, and the viewer could turn a corner around the end of a wall and find peeling paint, rotting boards, and mysterious tagged items.

The last day of the performance Mathew Wilson erected a large (15' by 36') red sail from the rooftop of the building, accompanied by the music of Steven Barsotti. Wilson had been working on the sail throughout the week, and it was stark and mobile as it unfolded, very large and somewhat violent as it caught wind and struggled to set itself free. This against a backdrop of Chicago skyline at reddening sunset

was very effective. The space and its ghosts again provided a haunting overture: what had been seen from this rooftop in years past? The sail made a lot of sounds as it came to life and moved about, very powerful sounds. There

were several people hanging on to the mast and it seemed at any time one of them might go up with it, become part of its flight. It eventually ripped along the bottom and became a triangle, and later (it stayed up for a week in some form or another) became a sort of rope itself. The sound, by Barsotti (who has collaborated with Wilson before), was kind of a minimal low bass hum, reverberating out. Looking out, at the next adjacent building (which was a story higher), was a sole chair facing west at the very edge of the roof. It too took on a life of its own, although it was reportedly placed there by an audience member.

There were other projects of note as well, but there is not enough space to cover them all. At one point I was brought back to art school, when everyone I knew had ambitious and innocently creative visions of what they wanted to do for the sake of Art. And, as I wandered the nooks and crannies and mazes of stairs for this project, I realized that this was what everyone envisioned. The collaboration of these artists did indeed work well within the space, without overpowering the space itself. The group of artists intends to do another similar project with another abandoned space in a yet to be known location.

PICKLES OKSIETOWICZ

W.A.L.K.:
PROJECT #1
May 30 - June 5, 1994
3215-37 North Lincoln Ave.
Chicago



BREATH
ego po
April 7-22, 1994
Y Theatre
San Francisco

♦ Dreaming of Samuel Beckett: a queasiness amasses in my gut, becoming a dull ache which creeps inexorably up my spine, swelling my head with visions of endless moments of angst-filled, neurotic ennui. Date night material? Probably not. A little light entertainment? Resoundingly not. The basis of an evening of dance/theatre performance? Um, yes. Though 'uplifting' is not a term I would use to describe Ego Po's *Breath*, the show de/re/constructed ten of the latter works of Samuel Beckett, fusing them into a fascinating whole which took the audience on a journey through the life cycle, from the first breath of birth to the final breath of life. It threaded the line between accessibility to the Beckett novice and acceptability to the Beckett aficionado, no mean feat.

Beckett defined minimalism, developing a keen ear for speech rhythms and making each word he wrote potent, requiring fewer and fewer words with each play (many of his later plays contain more stage directions than lines). Several of the pieces which comprise *Breath* (which were variously written for the stage, television, radio and for publication only) qualify as premieres, and several are adapted in ways that might have made Sam, ever paranoid about his work being altered, livid. But he might have been happy to know that

chestnuts like *What Where* were even being done.

Watching this show I was struck by how quickly the intellectual baggage which usually accompanies Beckett was displaced by the visceral impact of the action. The images of *Breath* are arresting. The show began with a tableau of white-clad bodies moving in super-slow motion atop pedestals of different heights set amid a sea of white fabric. From that moment on, it was clear that

this would be no intellectual exercise in Beckettian word salad. *Breath* utilized Beckett as a means, not an end. The text was admired, not worshipped. The opening tableau, accompanied by breathing sounds of steadily increasing intensity, gave off an eerie, womb-like feeling, transforming into the birth process. Innocuous breathing became a grinding mechanical tone, followed by a singular pool of blood splattered at the center of the performing area. After this introduction, the first "text" of the evening was appropriately titled *Breath*, a thirty second play consisting of exquisitely timed vaginal breathing and garbage. Period. "Born" at this moment was the blood figure (an Ego Po creation not to be found in any Beckett writings), whose journey through the evening connected and paralleled the flow of the Beckett texts.

As the program notes attest, *Breath* begins with the alienation of the body. Which is a brilliant segue into *Act Without Words II*, a mime piece Beckett wrote in the 1950's. We're given two identically dressed men with diametrically opposed perspectives on life. Man A is a slacker who listlessly performs a series of mundane actions, popping pills and praying to make it to the next moment. His mechanical gestures are punctuated by the relentlessly throbbing rhythm of Pearl Jam — a nauseating evocation of that equally nauseating,

tired Generation X metaphor. Man B is riding a natural high, swinging and sashaying through his go-getter day, bopping to Benny Goodman, living the American Dream, exuding it through his well-brushed teeth. Just when we're ready to charge the stage and beat the shit out of him, he disappears into a white sack, and we're given a parting glimpse of Man A, who once again limps through his day. Pitiful, but much more like real life.

What Where actually contains words, but they serve more to obscure than elucidate its meaning. The key line is the penultimate one, "Make sense who may." In other words, don't even try it. The first thing we see is an androgynous fascistic Vegas lounge lizard bellowing commands to a series of flunkies, each of whom passes the cruelty on down the line. The movements are precise, as Beckett has outlined them in detail. Maybe it's about domination, since we are being dominated by Mr. Beckett's domineering vision of the piece, down to the exact dimensions of the center playing area.

One of the more imaginative pieces of the evening was *Eb Joe*, originally a television play. The text calls for close-ups of Joe's face as he listens to the relentless voice of a woman he has used and discarded. In this adaptation, we see three Joes pathetically clutching TV remotes as they are besieged by a cacophony of accusative female voices echoing through the space. The women are exacting revenge upon Joe for his callousness, and his attempts to seek forgiveness are stunted by his inability to express any emotion. He just wants to get laid again. For Joe even a nightmare becomes self-indulgent reminiscing. The fearful symmetry of the tightly choreographed movements intensifies the loneliness of the Joes, who are condemned to live out their lives with TV static as their only solace. The Green One, a woman he has driven to suicide, comes to Joe at the end with what seems like tenderness, though it is unclear whether she is an angel of mercy or an angel of death. Tenderness and cruelty are possible in the same instant; she could either fondle or slice him. Beckett as always leaves the issue unresolved. The TVs fade in a wash of green light.

The life cycle metaphor of *Breath* achieved its culmination in the second act, with a series of pieces that explore

◀ (continues on page 45)

CARAVAN OF DREAMS

UMO ensemble

June 2 - 11, 1994
Ned Skinner Theatre
Seattle

◆ Onto a darkened stage meanders a humble cart that seems propelled by the sheer energy of rhythmic chanting. The cart is alive with a riot of fabric animated by writhing limbs and comes to a halt in a pool of light. Five gaudy vagabonds tumble to the ground and proclaim that a true traveler has no fixed plan. And so begins *Caravan of Dreams* in which UMO Ensemble combines acrobatics and all manner of music with more traditional storytelling modes to relate the tale of just such a person who roamed the world searching for something that he could not define although he did know that he was lost if he did not find it.

At the outset, one of the playful itinerants (Esther Edelman) interrupts her routine of mesmerizing contortions and clowning to say, "Between life and dreaming is a third way. Guess it!" Then, with a sly smile, she leaves us to ponder our own answers. Soon another vagabond (Janet McAlpin) appears to demand that we close our eyes and not see, clap our hands over our ears and not hear, hold our breaths and not smell. When we have followed her instructions, she spins around and announces, "Now you know what I know!" before she waltzes back into the darkness.

Throughout *Caravan of Dreams*, as in this routine, the balance between acrobatic clowning and philosophical puzzlers posed for the audience is adroit and light as a feather. Verve, high energy and spontaneity draw us so deeply into the performance of this antic group of vagabonds that only gradually does it become clear that we are hearing the story of Siddhartha Gautama's journey to becoming the Buddha.

In developing *Caravan of Dreams*, director Martha Enson and the UMO troupe created the vagabond entertainers as mythic tale bearers. Enson calls these vagabonds Djools, a combined form of the mischievous Arabic spirit Djinn and the archetypal Fool. As

sacred clowns, the Djools are on their own spiritual path at the same time that they are bearing stories from the life of Siddhartha. Above all else, they are street entertainers who know how to hold the audience's attention.



The Djools literally stand on their heads to embody tales that culminate in such maxims as "No one could teach you what you learned," and "One cannot have pleasure without giving it." Without a single self-conscious move, they cover the steps that mark Siddhartha's journey to enlightenment in what can be seen as a fabulous circus of the body, mind and spirit.

The Djools are outfitted in costumes by Patricia Toovey and Julie James that are eye-popping fantasies of the medieval and oriental, yet leave all five performers free for any athletic feat imaginable. Both men and women exult in their bodies, in its power as well as its sensuality, as women lift men just as easily as the reverse and men celebrate their own distinctive brand of allure. In one section dealing with desire, the Djools revolve in unison in five low-flying trapezes. They may be physically separate, but they are also linked by the rhythms of music, the luxurious movement they experience together and the languorous heat they generate. Here in one luminous image is the holiness of the body wedded to the yearning for spiritual transcendence without any sign of a fracture between body and spirit. Although keeping on the path of the spirit may be the goal, the Djools let us know that at every step on that path all the senses are honored.

Contributing immeasurably to the haunting and exhilarating mood of the

piece was music performed by Ela Lamblin on instruments of his own invention. Lamblin played what looked like the support wires of a huge church censer as if he were holding a cello and then moved on to a modest plastic milk bottle with a series of reeds poking through it to create a musical interlude that was anything but homemade. No matter what he picked up in his path, he made it produce sound with the same sense of startling beauty emerging from unlikely places and objects that radiates from all of *Caravan of Dreams*.

Among so many memorable stories, one that dealt with a man who kept a bird captive in a cage particularly stood out for me. As the story goes, when the bird refused to sing one day, the man hauled it out of his house and left it on the road to die. And so, in a fit of pique, the man threw away his bird and its lovely song in one fell swoop. Through a hypnotic repetition worthy of Gertrude Stein, the Djools re-weave the details of this story into one about a man who possessed a beautiful song but forgot it by not singing it. In this variation, the man is seen to have thrown himself away when he neglected to sing his own song.

In this vivid tale, UMO Ensemble has condensed all the urgency that fuels the universal exhortation to each and every one of us to find our own path and follow it with all our energy. If the storytellers who originally spread the story of the Buddha had the same virtuosity, sensuality and strength of Esther Edelman, Martha Enson, David Godsey, Kevin Joyce and Janet McAlpin, it is no wonder that their tales have come down to us in all their beauty and power.

JOHN MCFARLAND



photograph by LGalba Sandras

and enjoy the humor of the situation.

The same goes for the possible offensiveness of the word FUCK. Even for those who don't approve of such language (remember, the bulk of the audience here were lunchtime commuters near an affluent shopping mall), any vulgarity of the word is practically canceled out when the receiver of such action is the common enemy of Time. This reminded me of the bumper stickers mailed out by Paul Krassner in his satirical periodical *The Realist* in the early 60s that said FUCK COMMUNISM. When the post office refused to ship them on grounds of being obscene material, Krassner held a press conference saying that the post office must be soft on communism and accused them of being sympathizers. The post office immediately withdrew the ban. And though crucifixion was a capital punishment of the Roman Empire used on any perpetrator of lowly crimes (and who wouldn't consider Time guilty of that), in Southern Baptist Dallas this was surely to have been immediately perceived as some desecration against Christ. But once again, the symbolic use of an adversary that ranks right up there with the IRS when it comes to popular affection probably brought even the churchgoing drivers over the line into full belief, giving them the opportunity of enjoying every dig of the nail with lustful glee as they waited, stuck in traffic like they are every day. If anything, Cilantro reclaimed a cliché: to truly kill time would not be to waste it, but would be to completely divorce oneself from the entire concept altogether.

As for the American flag outfit, it initially seemed like just the typical Cilantro apparel. I suppose using such a traditionally conservative image made the thing more accessible than seeing some street urchin in tattered clothing creating such chaos, guaranteeing various phone calls to the police. But as the piece progressed, I began to be inspired by relating the concept of death and renewal to American ideals. For America is truly not based on tradition at all, but rather on the ability and opportunity to break cycles and stop patterns, to be able to create from scratch whenever one desires renewal. Certainly this was the message here, and only in America could we have men named Cilantro reminding us of this privilege by spicing up our lunchtime with a little good-humored mischief.

KORBY SEARS

◀ Untitled (Fuck Time) by Cilantro
continued from page 40

Breath by Ego Po
▼ continued from page 43

impending death: *Cascando, Come and Go* and *Rockaby*. But, calling back to childhood, there's a strangely comforting bedtime story feeling about these pieces. What is really worth noting here is that each of these pieces is about women. Written as he was approaching his own death, perhaps these pieces afforded him some distance from his own experience. As the spinster in *Rockaby* lulls herself to a final sleep in her chair, her parting words (expressed without a trace of anger) are "Fuck Life." There is no sentimentalism here, just the raw edge of lived experience, which for these characters has been both joyful and intensely painful. Seeing it without sugarcoating makes it more human and ultimately more forgivable. In the end comes stillness and peace.

Directed by Lane Savadove, Ego Po is a San Francisco-based company which has created a unique, physical style of performance. While their texts are from theatre, their style borrows heavily from dance, and if the audience for *Breath* was any indication, they have managed to cross over in both forms.

MICHAEL REISMAN

Abel & Cain by Fred Curchack & Daniel Stein
▼ continued from page 39

movie studio executive and Cain as a screenplay writer (read: artist), the rope fence is used again as a metaphor of division. As Cain begs his brother for a loan while Abel constantly interrupts the conversation by answering the phone and making major business decisions, they both weave string as they speak, symbolizing the impact of their speech. Abel weaves his thick black string up and down the rope fence to emulate a stock market report, while Cain, crying and groping, wanders all about the fence, stage, and audience, weaving his thin violet string wherever he can, desperately trying to hit upon something that will get his brother's attention or any sort of reaction whatsoever. The desperation of Cain is not only heard, but is seen and felt with this powerful visual.

It is worth noting here that Canaanite civilizations, the descendants of Cain,

were biblically the first societies to create and develop the arts and sciences. It is from the failed and flawed one of the two brothers that we received the drive to project ourselves as a corporate unit, to innovate and construct, ever reaching for a state of idealized perfection through industry and progress. At one point, Curchack and Stein interrupt the performance wearing miner's helmets with spotlights on top of them, shining the interrogating beam upon audience members in the dark, asking them such clichéd socially topical questions as "Do you think we should downsize the military?" "Do you think the Star Wars program was necessary?" and "What do you think of abortion?" Given the ambivalent answers from the audience, one begins to think: Has our industrious drive really brought us to perfection? Has all this productivity from the descendants of Cain brought him salvation?

As the piece tries to show, Abel had it so easy. For a living, he merely watched the cows and sheep. Without elaborate preparation, he killed a calf for a sacrifice, which appeased God's desire for innocent blood. Abel, bathed in purple and blue light, is shown giving this sacrifice, pulling the head off a paper-maché calf to reveal an abundance of red ribbons flowing, at once symbolizing blood, as well as prize ribbons of achievement.

Yet the hard working Cain, always poking, prodding, treading and tilling, is the embodiment of constant exploration, yet has his sacrifice condemned by God as unsuitable. In Curchack's version of the climatic murder, Cain comes upon his sleeping brother, bathed in the same purple and blue light, and kills his brother more in a desperate state to appease his Creator than mere jealousy. After the deed is done, he raises his hand to God in silent waiting, motioning to his slain brother as if to say, "Here, the most innocent, I sacrificed for you."

While the piece is still without a much needed structure, and many textures of the story are left unexplored (such as the mark God placed upon Cain in Genesis 4:15 that would curse anyone who killed him), there is much to be partaken of from Abel and Cain, and it will more than likely take an interesting shape before its debut this fall in Houston.

KORBY SEARS

This is a new section of the magazine that allows us to cover a wide range of new works, items of interest and other cultural phenomena. These mini-reviews are grouped below by media.

f i l m s

Go Fish directed by Rose Troche
GRIEF directed by Richard Glatzer

**THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA,
QUEEN OF THE DESERT** directed by Stephan Elliott

Of course, the thing that holds these three films together is that they're all about queers. I was beginning to think that gay (or any) filmmakers had given up making gay films (I'm sorry, *Philadelphia* doesn't count). Or maybe it's because I'm forced to live in Chicago, aka mainstream film hell, and the good fag films just aren't getting here. In any event, I was thrilled to finally see something queer on the big screen again. (Okay, okay, I saw two of them in Seattle, but I know they played Chicago.)

Actually, I thought *Go Fish* and *Grief* were fairly similar. *Go Fish* is a lesbian love story, told in a simple and fairly direct way, with only a few art school conceits that in the end don't disrupt the film too much. In most respects this is a traditional love story, where the characters happen to be lesbians. Hooray!

The same goes for *Grief*, which is as much about an inter-office romance amongst three friends as it is about the one year anniversary of the main character's lover's death from AIDS. Once again, although the people involved happen to be gay/bi/whatever men, there's the feeling that it could be anyone; even with the central character's grief, the film doesn't hit you over the head with AIDS-specific issues constantly, rather the more general idea of grief is examined.

I think both of these films, though by no means will they become known as the great films of the 90's, show a healthy move within the queer community away from self-marginalization, and a willingness to deal with our lives more generally, and less issue-specifically.

Priscilla, however, is somewhat of a different story. The plot: three drag queens drive across the Australian outback in a bus. Mix in a lot of 70's "I Will Survive"-esque tunes, and you can't really go wrong. Although initially the film's female characters are pretty ugly (metaphorically) and one dimensional, it redeems itself in the end. While *Priscilla* is undoubtedly destined to be a camp classic, it also takes the time to give the transgenderal (and gay) protagonists real life problems and issues to deal with. — K.T.

a u d i o a r t

**RADIUS #1, & #2, TRANSMISSIONS
FROM BROADCAST ARTISTS**

#1: Sheila Davies, Helen Thorington, Terry Allen.

#2: Jackie Apple, Donald Swearingen, Gregory Whitehead.

¿What Next? Recordings,
c/o Nonsequitur, P.O. Box 344,
Albuquerque NM 87103

These two compilation CDs feature works made specifically with broadcast radio in mind. Their creed states that *Radius* "scans the radioscope for signs of intelligence drifting in the ether, gems otherwise lost in the jumble of crossed signals, static interference, and fallout from the hostile bombardments of corporate broadcasting."

With each of the pieces weighing in at least twenty minutes, the works on the *Radius* series each become works of audio engineers as well as the written works of the artists. On #1, the Bay Area's Sheila Davies' "What is the Matter in Amy Glennon" very playfully takes apart a fictional character who has lost her body. With play-by-play texts from authoritarian monitors coming from all around her as well as Amy Glennon's own observations, she winds a path of enlightenment. Music is mixed with ambient noises, and the cacophony of academic voices (they are monitoring her in real time during the work), and the end result is a kind of strange and whimsical modern opera.

Helen Thorington's "Partial Perceptions" is an abstract work of collaged voices, synthesized sounds, eerie yodels and nature sounds (birds, water). A cross between new age music and a horror movie soundtrack, I found myself going into some kind of meditative state while it played. Set into movements, (at first more meditative, then more intense, back to eerie, strange, slower, etc.) the work plays with language without ever actually delving into it. An intriguing mixture of voices, sounds and aural meanderings.

Terry Allen's "Bleeder," the final work on this compilation, is a pseudo-documentary about a Southern fundamentalist hemophiliac con man. Told mostly from the standpoint of one woman (played by Jo Harvey Allen) we find ourselves wandering in and out of his life with an intense fascination as we hear of his meanderings and women, and he actually becomes a mythological character even though we never meet him. This is the kind of work you might hear late at night that will make you put down whatever you are doing and want to jump into the radio. Allen's performance is impeccable as she wheedles into our consciousness with her excitement about this insane and utterly fascinating character.

Radius #2 begins with "Voices in the Dark" by Jackie Apple. I don't know if it's a Laurie Anderson thing, but whatever it is Apple's delivery for most of the piece comes off as a sort of expert, almost sexy voice dramatically looking at how language travels, and how this and other transmissions travel in time out into the cosmos. Technically it's interesting and well produced, but the delivery in this case overpowers any message, and the overdrama of it all grates on one's nerves.

Donald Swearingen's "Salvation at 1 AM" is a collage of various voices from late night TV woven together for a jarring and telling mixture of medium and message. From late night offerings promising investment success, health issues, and religious channel prophesies, this work bends and moves in a quirky well-timed sampling frenzy, becoming a mantra for the insomniac.

Gregory Whitehead's "Pressures of the Unspeakable" explores a "screamscape." He set up a pseudo institution in

Sydney to identify and study screams via an automated answering system, and the results are very funny. Screaming as release, screaming as prank, this work combines texts by Whitehead discussing screams from a physiological and psychological standpoint with a kind of jazzy soundtrack, juxtaposed with the barrage of screams and comments he received on his answering machine. Hilarious and mesmerizing, I only wish Whitehead would open up an institution in my local area. — P.O.

WORKING ON THE BYPASS

Poetry and Music by Andre Stitt & Daniel Biry

ND Music
P.O. Box 4144, Austin Tx 78765

This CD features the poetry of Andre Stitt, considered one of the UK's premier performance artists, set to the music of electronic composer Daniel Biry. A booklet that accompanies the CD contains the words to the 24 poems Biry reads on this disk and is illustrated by the photographs of Mark Thompson. Stitt's poetry evokes images of the social and personal turmoil of his native Belfast with a degree of sex, drugs and recklessness thrown in for art's sake. Stitt's supposed motto is, "art is not a mirror; it's a fucking hammer." Two gruesome postcard stills from typically gory performance pieces by Stitt accompany the CD. If you don't get them with yours, call the P-Form office and we'd be glad to send them to you. — M.T.

reading material

HIGH PERFORMANCE

Summer 1994

How is it that I never noticed the subtitle "Contemporary Issues in Art, Community and Culture" on the *High Performance* cover page until just now? The subtitle does appropriately define the direction of the magazine, which does a great job in covering the gamut of art/community collaborations, the work of artists/activists, the politics of arts funding and ancillary issues of cultural significance. Its pages deliver the discourse of the artist/activist with clarity and vision, staking out a firm position that the arts and culture are a vital function of the social body. The reviews cover a range of performance, photography, installation work, and community projects with apparent equal attention to works by minority and female artists. — M.T.

GAY SUNSHINE INTERVIEWS

Two volumes, published by? date?

I recently stumbled upon this wonderful book at the library. It is a book of compelling interviews with famous gay playwrights, poets, avant-garde musicians and personalities. As the preface informs the reader, the interviews are marvelously frank, managing to explore the personal and professional sides of each man's life equally. Interviewed in the first volume are Jean Genet, Allan Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Tennessee Williams among others. All the interviews were originally published in *Gay Sunshine*, a gay liberation publication out of San Francisco. — M.T.

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→ **N O W H E A R T H I S**
(a **C h i c a g o A u d i o A r t S a m p l e r**)
november 19, 8 pm, \$8 / \$6

{in the Exhibition Space...

4 WALLS, 2 WINDOWS & A DOOR
opening november 18, 6-8 pm continues through december 23}

{coming in december RSG Time Arts brings you...

C H E L S E A G I R L S
a performance based on excerpts from the book
featuring poet, playwright, performer **Eileen MYLES**
december 9 & 10 at 8 pm, \$10 / \$6}

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