

Original Texts and Translations

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Australia

Next First Part

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During the three weeks which I spent in Australia on the occasion of the second Biennale of Sydney I was able to observe the promises and conflicts of an emerging culture. How does a new, or at any rate a different and hitherto marginal, culture emerge? It has to get its identity recognized and to assert that identity through its difference within the unity of an exact context.

In Europe or in California, too, the new generations of artists are extending awareness of the peculiarities of the various context in which they work. This is a general phenomenon. Each contest is made up of mixed local conditions to be related to international ones, and of particular practices that have a universal value. They embrace geography and history, social and political behaviour, and they also include the individual and group attitudes of a particular community. This background is no longer identified with the boundaries of a nation and, still less, with nationalism. On the contrary, there is opposition to such limits which have so far given rise to the fascist involution of the masses. The emerging culture is, rather, a movement that is cutting its way through the various countries and the different social classes hitherto known by ruling ideologies. And it is multiplied in its true context: the marginal or counter-culture which is so wide and united that it may by now be considered an ethnic context.

Much of today's art is divided into ethnic groups and not into aesthetic trends any more. When I take part in the selection of artists for exhibitions or biennales I commit a loss; for the aesthetic barriers have been dropped. We are choosing individuals, but by choosing individuals we lose touch with the humus of their relationships, their context. Which is a mistake.

That Australia is moving into the international art scene and more generally into the world history of ideas to claim a place for itself, has been demonstrated by the radical movement named Art-Language, as well as by Patrick White,

Nobel Prize-winner for literature. In the analytical art movement which originated in the Oxford and Cambridge group, Australian artists have been the promoters of Marxist studies accompanied by militant political activity. I mention Terry Smith for the Sydney group, and Ian Burn for that of New York. These two units have for some time now made themselves independent from the British group, and now that Ian Burn is leaving New York to go back to Australia, in a general rearrangement of this movement left on the outskirts of the market, I should imagine that the Australian Art-Language artists will become more prominent, due also to the university, where Terry Smith is very active.

The 1976 Sydney Biennale took place from 13 November to 19 December at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in Sydney, with works by eighty artists from every continent. The entire Art-Language group was unfortunately missing, owing to a protest within the exhibition structure involving other radical artists such as Mike Parr and the filmmaker Peter Kennedy. The exhibition patronized sculpture, together with the most recent international art forms (environment, performance, photography and videotape), while only painting was virtually excluded. It was a very stimulating forum of encounters and debates for the foreign participants too (with myself, the artists Lynda Benglis, Stuart Brisley, Michael McMillen and Fujiko Nakaya) and not just for the local protagonists.

Now that I love this country for what little I was able to see of it, I have the impression that it is partly unknown to the Australians themselves. One is struck by their request for sympathy, which is mingled with aggressiveness and mistrust, as in all searches for identity. I arrived in Sydney via Melbourne after nearly thirty hours in the air, spread over two long nights and one short dawnless day between Teheran and Bangkok. At the airport I was already being interviewed about what I know and think about the importance of Australian art in the world, a journalistic leit-motiv to which the Biennale was to be indebted during the following days for front-page newspaper interest. Shortly afterwards an exponent of the strong feminist movement protested to me that I had not invited any woman artist from Europe.

Here the separateness between art and society does not have historical roots but is manifested in an aggressive dissent towards an enlightened bureaucracy.

The official opening of the Biennale was subjected to strong protest from students, artists and left wing movements, though without violence and in a civilized manner, as they say in the best bourgeois circles. The target of what the placards called 'anger' was not so much the show itself as the conservative premier Frazer and his government. The police confined themselves to protecting the prime minister. The protesters — among whom the artists I have mentioned distinguished themselves by their virulence — penetrated the hall where the opening speeches were being delivered, shouted and raised their fists, and then went away, handing the floor back to the speakers. Frazer spoke with the paternalistic smile of a man who has just demonstrated that 'in this country there is complete freedom of opposition' amid applause from those who courageously consent. In the park in front of the building there was a thick haze. Not tear gas, however, but the vaporized water of Nakaya's fog sculpture.

A few days earlier, I had joined the protest rally with which the Labour party, and the numerous groups into which the left wing is split up, were demonstrating against the 'coup d'état' (as they define it) by the present Liberal, that is to say conservative, government which, exactly one year before, allegedly 'overthrew' the Labour majority with the aid of the Queen's appointed governor. The Socialists governed for a brief period, from 1972 to 1975. I noted the demands chanted by the demonstrators together with their non-violent 'anger': out of the Commonwealth, set up a Republic, no dependence on United States military strategy, no sales to other countries of the uranium in which Australia, along with other raw resources, is richly endowed. This map of political tensions gave me some idea of the cultural ones.

The second Sydney Biennale was truly an international exhibition although its space is much narrower than that of Venice or Documenta. Outside and within the museum (contemporary art, local collections) the organizing committee (Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, Veter Laverty, Leon

Paroissien, Gil Docking, Anthony Winterbotham, and the exhibition director, Thomas McCullough) had arranged works and events by artists whom I can distinguish by groups: Japanese and Korean, Californian Australian and New Zealander, and more generally American, British and more generally European, artists. It was the map of their ethnic and cultural relations.

With the Oceanic procession of New Zealand and New Guinea, Australia is anchored in the Pacific between Japan as its gateway to Asia and California as one shore of the United States. You might say that this ex-British colony, which keeps up with Great Britain a contradictory relationship based on historic roots whilst at the same time displaying its determination to pull up those roots, is bargaining for its own cultural independence with Japanese technological power (from which it receives the most sophisticated technological instruments and to which it supplies vital raw materials) on the one side, and on the other, the American cultural models from which, for example, the way of life and the mass media of approximately fourteen million Australians are derived.

With art, it is different. Europe still seems to have a notable function of pedagogical leadership in the formulation of art problems, though not much is known in Australia about its modernity and its avant-garde developments. There is no widespread historical teaching, and, perhaps, no actual feeling of history itself. Nevertheless, as I noticed in my lectures on European art at Sydney University and among the students of Wagga Wagga, the demand for information is rising, and the efficient art training network, connected with a generous programme of scholarships for studying abroad and largely requested for Europe, is showing more interest in the topical European scene.

Among the young sculptors at the Biennale, the best known are those who recently immigrated from Great Britain, such as Ron Robertson-Swann (Sydney) and Clive Murray-White (Melbourne), who have introduced the British tradition of neoconstructivism in the line of Anthony Caro, following the battles for abstract sculpture which Robert Klippel was fighting only twenty years ago.

John Penny is also British, but his complex floor installations are already more oriental than occidental, derived from a hermetic culture which he cultivates in the isolation of the infinite distances around Wagga Wagga where he teaches. Environmental factors and the emergence of younger artists are certainly influencing these westerners.

Also remarkable and highly intelligent is the work of Noel Sheridan, an Irishman who has been living here since 1972, and, like every conceptual artist, he pro-

duces works, critical text and collections of information; he directs the Experimental Art Foundation of Adelaide and has exhibited a block of plastic with two (closed) volumes of 'information for the people' embalmed in it.

For a European, however, in my opinion, the most interesting work is the (less recognizable) output of Australian and New Zealander artists, including John Davis, Ken Unsworth, Marr Grounds, Jon Lethbridge, Kevin Mortensen, Terry Reid and Jim Allen. Different in their art forms, they have in common an acute feeling for the peculiarity of their cultural conditionings which they tackle dialectically. They combine strictly personal experiences with forms of highly structured communications to their audiences. A typical example is Terry Reid, who founded the 'Sydney Secret Exchange', a world postal network for persons wishing to send 'secrets' and 'answers' with two walls of letters accompanied by instructions to the art public.

John Davis turns sculpture into anthropology. His aerial constructions in resins and rubbers refer back to the nomadic universe of the Australian aboriginals who still survive in the immense interior, and are accompanied by photographic sequences. For Davis (Melbourne), sculpture itself is nomadic, part of a continuum, an 'on-going procedure' to be preserved.

Marr Grounds is concerned instead with spatial relations among people. In a hole under the stairs of the museum he made himself a sort of shelter, protected by sandbags, into which the visitor penetrates on all fours to converse with the artist who then hands him a special certificate. Grounds (Sydney) calls it 'Art Bit Kit', an installation reserved for interaction between the artist and the visitor; 'dialogical art'.

In Ken Unsworth's environment we watch a drama of marionettes and shadows where the initiation of life wears itself out as if on a circus trapeze. Accompanied by the crying of a child and the roll of a drum, a marionette/child crosses a tightrope and falls off; a reiterated and beautiful action which, I am told, is connected with a personal tragedy in Ken's life (Sydney). I saw a film of an earlier performance of his. Ken Unsworth, upright in a glass cage in the middle of the public, has himself slowly covered with sand; he remains buried alive for a few minutes until an assistant smashes the glass with a hatchet to let the sand run off the artist's cyanotic face and also to relieve the audience's tension.

William Robert Allen, too, is a gentle and severe man like Ken. Having arrived from New Zealand after two weeks of solitary sailing in a small craft, he exhibited a rather secret collage of docu-

ments, photographs and objects. Jim teaches and also practises performances. In his island, as in Australia too for that matter, these tend to be given in private, in closed groups, rather than in public.

One such practitioner is Mike Parr (Sydney), a leading young figure in Australian art. With him physical, personal experience is objectified in critical analysis (in the Freudian sense) as a contribution to psychic emancipation connected with the political struggle. Wellknown for his actions and rites of rare violence, even to his own body, the artist (who has one arm missing) now works in closed groups, naked among naked bodies who know each other; in interpersonal exchanges later entrusted to film or video.

We are already past the shocking brutality of the early performance experiments. The case of Stelarc is symptomatic of the speed at which the Australian context is maturing. Stelarc is an artist of Cypriot origin who studied at Melbourne and now lives in Japan. He sent photographs of his 'Event for Stretched Skin' to the exhibition, which was considered crudely shocking. He too develops primitive, closed rituals, such as having himself squashed by a mass of stone. This time his assistants have stuck numerous metal hooks into his flesh all along his back and limbs, and then suspended him in the air in the hallucinatory images of a well-hooked Icarus.

Australia is winning its autonomy with an intellectual, very lively culture, though limited to a few individuals and groups, which seems to have to compete with the socially more widespread and even ostentatious physical culture, love of the body and sexuality.

Sydney is large and attractive; seen in the incipient summer sunshine of November, it is a city of pleasure; where in the parks you can watch the half-naked bodies of caracoling office-workers (there is a civil service clerk for every four inhabitants) fighting against hypernutrition; where in the splendid bays on the ocean curved towards the Antarctic pole thousands of people spend their weekends sailing; where in a 100-kilometer radius of suburbs there is hardly a house among the trees which cannot offer a swim in the garden pool. But the liveliest sculptures, not dissimilar to Aboriginal ones, were those which I saw near the hotel in the King Cross district, on the whitepainted faces waiting in the recesses of bars. Here lives the largest community of transvestites and trans-sexuals; there are two or three thousand of them, among whom the body and sexuality are truly a culture that has also been the subject of studies and of a book of photographs. And there are the art students who strip nude in groups to experiment with the performance arts in between painting exercises and video studies.

This dominant physical factor is every-

where and it is tuned to interpersonal relations by means of the body rather than to spatial relations seen abstractly. Thus Australian artists share many of the attitudes of their Japanese and Californian colleagues — the same emphasis on assemblage and construction materials, as previously in poor art, the same narrative progress, as formerly in funk and body art.

As well as in the artists already mentioned, I noticed a substantial similarity between the ironically folkish works of John Armstrong, Les Kossatz, Michael Nicholson, Tony Cleing and Robert Arneson, who might be described as typically Australian, and the works of Californians Ant Farm, Mark di Suvero, Robert Kinmont, Michael McMillen and Philip Pasquini. If you look at the far better-known art and events of Lynda Benglis and Les Levine — much admired here — you will also be able to understand the mature sensitivity that guides Australian art which, conversely, has remained refractory, at any rate so far, to American minimal art (represented here by Robert Grosvenor) and to land art (absent from the show), despite the immense space of a half-empty continent. The similarities to Japanese and Korean artists are less evident, apart from an apparent convergence on experimental sculpture, with two first-rate exponents in the sparkling Fuijko Nakaya and in Kenij Togami. Among the Australians one does not note, for example, that love for technological media which the Japanese by now use daily.

Even the privileged attention paid to sculpture may in part be due to the sway of physical over metaphysical culture, but it is certainly on the other hand favoured by the strong feeling of sociality which artists here practise in their works and teaching, through the numerous schools and the large number of provincial museums with which the state of Victoria, and its capital Melbourne, are particularly well endowed.

A love for sculpture urged Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, an Italian who in fifteen years has built up a big metal construction company, to become patron first of the Transfield Art Prizes and later, in 1973, of the first Biennale of Sydney. Thomas McCullough, who was in charge of the Biennale this year, directs the Mildura Arts Centre, a provincial museum reserved for sculpture which organizes a triennale for Australian sculptors. In Sydney an association of sculptors has set up a Sculptural Centre of its own, at present directed by our extremely active fellow-countrywoman Giulia Crespi, who promotes meetings and debates on this specific art sector. In short, if in the 'forties it was painting that gave Australia its first 'school', the leadership of Australian art has now passed to sculpture. □

Peter Kennedy

1971 'But the Fierce Blackman'. 'But the Fierce Blackman' was a ritual, a ceremony, which achieved a level of personification through the regular performances given by the artist. The apparent irrational nature of the performances was reinforced by the alogical nature of the context in which the performances took place. Over a period of three weeks the exhibition developed its own peculiar rationale. 'But the Fierce Blackman' was a sound environment comprising a number of levels of aural activity. The phrase 'But the Fierce Blackman', a two track tape loop, played continuously throughout the exhibition, achieving the form of an incantation through relentless repetition. Highly amplified static caused by an electric fan and emanating from a television set was deployed through speakers located in various positions within the gallery. The external aural environment was brought into accord with the existing conditions through the frequent interjection of radio calls from taxi cabs operating in the neighbourhood. At thirty minute intervals Peter Kennedy would commence repeating the phrase 'But the Fierce Blackman' into a microphone. The sense of ritual was accentuated by the bizarre nature of the performances. The actual enunciation of the phrase underwent various changes in accordance with the kind of physical stress the artist applied to his body. Each performance was discontinued at the point when the stress became intolerable. Visitors to the exhibition participated in a similar way, modifying their performance in accordance with their emotional response to the environment.

1972 'Pelvis Tape'. 'Pelvis Tape' evolved from an increasing concern with participation art work which prescribed a specified or coherent group of participants as opposed to the random or fortuitous type of participants that such works generally have. The inscription on the photographs reads 'Pelvis as percussive instrument; for projected inclusion in rock n' roll bands following refinement for standardisation as musical instrument. The process involved in introducing this 'instrument' into the lineup of a rock band, through the mutual collaboration of band and artist, will constitute the full realisation of the work'. The intention of the piece was not so much the successful outcome of such an enterprise in terms of its stated intention but the postulation of a model supported by the social organisational capabilities of language. However an irreconcilable difficulty resided in the

fact that there was a disproportionate domination of the possible art model by the social model. Other pieces done during that time operated in contradistinction to the traditional role of the empathy inducing art-work. Gradually the social implications for art-work which stimulated increased selfawareness became more apparent.

1973, Other than Arts Sake, a 16 MM documentary film. This film was made whilst travelling during 1973 and early 1974. It has eight different sequences. Each sequence deals with a particular artists work, or, in the case of two sequences, with an attitude or ideology which happens to be consistent with the film's line of explication. Those appearing in the film are; in England David Medalla, Steve Willats, Ian Breakwell and Beau Geste Press. In the U.S.A. Adrian Piper, Hans Haacke, Charles Simonds and the Woman's Building (interviews with Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven). Locations were London, Edinburgh, Devon, New York City, and Los Angeles. The film proposes an alternative to the Formalist tradition. It develops a thesis or rationale for an art-model constructed on the implications of the artist referring to an audience other than the standard art audience. The film shows various methods adopted by artists whose work addresses an audience which does not normally attend to art. Other sequences demonstrate the possibilities open to art which addresses particular social issues. In fact, all of the art works presented in the film derive from a social consciousness. In this regard the film proposes an alternative model for art, a model supported by an esthetic which incorporates socially relevant criteria.

1974-76 Introductions. This project is a personal attempt to reconcile some of the issues elucidated in the documentary film 'Other than Arts Sake'. The project functions outside arts normal area of referral. In so doing it addresses itself to an audience which doesn't have a high or intensive level of art experience. The audience comprises members of four clubs. The clubs were selected for their coherence as groups of people, as well as for the range of demographic backgrounds which they represent. A hot-dog club, a marching girls club, an embroidery guild and a bushwalking club are the four participating groups. Representations are being constructed of club members relationships to their fellow members as well as their relationship to their respective clubs, and their club's relationship to the community. Construction of these representations has proceeded from the answering of a questionnaire to video taped interviews. Developing from the purely factual accounts of members self perceptions and the nature of their perception of their clubs are idealized representations of those same perceptions. As it is the club mem-

bers who constitute the audience then it will be their idealized representations which will constitute the art works. In some respects this methodology is related to conventional art practice in that conventional art practice has always sought to produce idealized representations of one kind or another, be it the idealized representation of a person, a bowl of fruit, or, possibly, the artist's innermost feelings as developed in abstract expressionism. These idealized representations, realized in 16 MM colour film, will utilize the structure inherent to television commercials. The choice of this particular method of presentation stems from the fact that unlike 'high art' where a highly refined encoding facility is required for comprehension of the work, a more universally developed facility to 'read' has emerged in relation to the television commercial structure.

As the project is an on-going project, continuing well into 1976, aspects of its development will be presented in the form of small exhibitions in the locations in which the clubs actually function. This is important for two reasons. Firstly the material comprising the exhibition will be located in the cultural context (outer suburbs as opposed to inner city) from which it derived. Secondly, such a contextualised form of presentation will have tangible benefits for the respective clubs. The exhibitions will function in the area of providing information of the club's activity to the extent that people viewing the material, and who are interested in the activities of a particular club, may, on the basis of what is presented, wish to join that club. At the completion of the project there will be a simultaneous presentation of all four groups which will articulate the development of the idealized representations from the initial factual accounts through to their final form. The presentation will incorporate video tape documentaries, representations in the form of a series of watercolour paintings, and the final, idealized representations in 16 MM colour film. It will demonstrate to us all the methods by which we maintain our social relationships, and how, in endeavouring to believe in our social relevance, we construct idealized representations of that relevance. In so far as this can be demonstrated the project will act as a metaphor for the social realities and aspirations of us all.

Mike Parr

Rules & Displacement Activities: Problems of socialization. The 'Rules & Displacement Activities' project was begun

early in 1973. At the time I write (end of 1976) it consists of two, 16 mm. films (Parts 1 & 2); 40 and 55 minutes duration respectively, with a Part 3 in pre-production to be completed sometime in 1978 (projected length: 55 minutes). Part 1 was shot during concerts of performances at Galerie Impact, Lausanne and Galerie Media, Neuchâtel, Switzerland in May/June 1973. Further material was added as the result of a private, re-performance of many of the same pieces in Sydney in November 1973. Pieces performed included the following:

- « Push tacks into your leg until a line of tacks has been made up your leg ».
- « Using sharpened matches, push matches between your teeth, until your mouth is filled with matches ».
- « Sew a line of buttons on your chest. Do up your shirt on the buttons ».
- « Blood unity structure (after Brancusi's 'Endless Column') ».
- « Hold a lighted match in your mouth until the roof of your mouth is burnt ».
- « Slash your wrists and arms. Smear the blood on your face ».
- « Have a branding iron made up with the word 'ARTIST'. Brand this word on your body ».
- « Using a sharp instrument cut around your thigh so that a 'Leg Ring' is made ».
- « Invite members of the audience to drop burning matches on your bare body ».
- « Stuff your nose with bread. Push matches into your nose. Ignite the matches ».
- « Re-open old wounds. Sew up the wounds ».
- « Slash your fingers. Let blood fall on your eyes. Until your eyes are filled with blood ».
- « Pack your armpit with fish. Pour iodine into your armpit ».

As well as these solo-performances, numbers of pieces were also performed with the audience.

Part 2 was begun late in 1975 (completed October 1976), after a year when I worked on scripted material and general structure. Unlike Part 1, Part 2 was produced outside the context of the art world. There were no 'audiences' during filming and my performances were done with friends. From a technical point of view, formal control of the material was improved by the construction of a 'Performance Room' at my home, which consists of moveable white walls (for perspective corrections) and an overhead lighting system (16x500 watt photofloods) bounced from a light shield through a diffusing filter, to provide an even distribution of shadowless light. As a result, we were free to perform without interference from the recording system.

Solo-performances and other activities during Part 2 were at once more tightly scripted and more spontaneous than Part 1. Of the tightly scripted performances, I wanted both my friends, and later the audience, to be quite clear about ideas communicated. The following is an example:

Integration 1. Leg Line of Blue Sky (1974/1975).

Make 3, 3inch square photographs of the

blue sky. Each photograph should be taken at the same time, of the same area of blue sky. Include a small area of white cloud in each shot.

Bare your right leg to the upper thigh and using grease paint completely whiten your leg to the edge of your rolled trouser.

Working slowly and evenly, place the first photograph on the outside of your leg about 1inch above your ankle. Staple in place.

Place the second photograph 2inches above the first. Staple in place.

Place the third photograph 2inches above the second. Staple in place.

Perform this piece mechanically.

Do not allow your leg to quiver. Do not cry (a stoical demeanour is important).

Afterwards place the staple gun on the floor and sit perfectly still.

Technical Instructions: the performer should be seated on a white chair, to make a right angle between the upper and lower parts of the leg.

Back the piece (background and floor) with a flat, black drop.

Light the piece with soft light from both sides. Organize lighting to eliminate shadows. Frame the piece to include the right-angle of the leg to the edge of the hip.

Camera should be tripod-mounted, and for the duration of the piece there should be no movement of the camera and no variation in framing.

Filming should commence as the performer positions photograph 1, and discontinued as photograph 3 is stapled in place (as the performer replaces the staple gun on the floor and sits still).

A microphone should be located to extract incidental sound.

No editing. Colour. Sync sound. Normal camera speed.

As well as documentation of performances, Part 2 included sections of interview, stills, graphics and complex opticals. The soundtrack was heavily constructed and subtle departures from naturalistic colour and variable timing in the prints were also important.

The ambit for 'Rules & Displacement Activities', the area of concern and its problematic, were pre-figured in an earlier work, called '150 Programmes & Investigations' (1971 & 1972). This work consists of a collection of instructions lettered on cards (in the familiar Fluxus tradition), that are both programmes for myself and suggestions for the reader. They are epiphanies, obsessions, apothegms... 'Key notions' that emerged in the context of my life situation. At the same time as I extrapolated out these notions, I wrote down theoretical observations and quotes that worked as an orientation in more social and political terms. I was trying to see myself not so much as an artist producing within art, but as a person in a social situation first, and as an artist secondly.

Now the limitations of this work seem fairly obvious. In the first instance, the relationships between the levels of intention in the work as a whole; between instructions like:

Nail your hand to a tree

« Take up fighting. Fight your fellow man.

Go out to fight every night of the week for a couple of hours at a time. Try to make the practice of fighting a habit. Fight everyone without discrimination ».

and quotes (Marcuse):

« ... in the medium of technology; culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives. The productivity and growth potential of this system stabilize the society and contain technical progress within the framework of domination. Technological rationality has become political rationality ».

is unmediated and abstract. Even though it is obvious that the juxtapositioning of two levels of 'criticism', is meant to indicate the relationship between them, the fact is, the lack of concrete connectivity forestalls any kind of effective praxis. The result is incoherence: Marxism in theory, Existentialism in practice, that merely aggravates the disorientation that the parts of the work imply.

These were fundamental problems. It is in response to these problems that I began work on 'Rules & Displacement Activities', which, from the outset, was conceived as praxis...

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The concerts in Switzerland were built around feedback. Performances were constructed around a two-camera video-system and double monitors, with instant throughput. Camera 1 was equipped with a wide-angle lens, set to continually record all aspects of the concert in real time, while Camera 2 had a zoom lens intermittently picking out specific responses and details. As the audience watched performances; as they participated in performances, they also watched one another and saw their own responses and the responses of others 'magnified' by the zoom lens. I wanted to get people involved formatively and critically: I wanted to explicate the dynamics of a social situation; to indicate the inter-relatedness of our behaviour and to qualify the irrational manifestation as a communication problem.

These intentions are made explicit in Part 1, by the inclusion, during the latter parts of the film, of 7 language graphics, printed as a 'C' roll of superimpositions over interview footage. (Statements 1 - 3. 'Rules... Part 1')

« When I said at the beginning of this film, that 'some works were performed with audiences in an effort to humanize anti-social art activities', I meant that many of my pieces were private and compulsive, so I wanted to involve the audience formatively with the works; to make the works part of collective experience. In Lausanne and Neuchâtel, the audience was encouraged to actively participate and to criticize my intentions and the specific objectives of particular works. Consequently, I felt that responsibility was shared with the audience, in that the audience affected the development of works ».

« In this way, the sense of isolation I had

previously experienced was broken down and my behaviour became explicable when compared with their response. This was important, because a fundamental objective with these concerts, was to get beyond the privacy of my own experience: to put it under group control. But besides the impact that these concerts had on my own understanding, the audience too, experienced a situation where their relationship to artwork was changed. In many of the works, I used real violence. This made it impossible for the audience to retreat into a theatrical experience ».

« The audience became participants in a life situation, which was the antithesis of art. They were involved in a formative experience, rather than a finished artwork. Instead of assuming a passive, intellectual stance to the work, articulated through formal evaluation of the material, the audience was forced to cope with a direct assault on their understanding. The ethical neutrality of art was destroyed and it became a direct component in a set of social relationships ». In a way though, I now realize that these statements were indicative of a kind of wishful thinking: they are overly sanguineous to say the least! The fact is, the audience did 'retreat into a theatrical experience'.

In Lausanne and Neuchâtel, the language problem was often an insuperable barrier, which, despite the help of interpreters, meant that my intentions and explanations weren't properly communicated, and that the ideas and attitudes of the audience too, were misconstrued by me. As a consequence, we went out of 'sync'; there was a loss of empathy between us, which tended to be replaced by ersatz emotions and histrionics. The real difficulties probably ran much deeper, and were, that the distinctions, 'performer' and 'audience', which my work aimed to break down, were inherent to it. At that time the work was still conceived according to these distinctions; the concept of 'concert' for argument's sake, and 'getting the audience involved' etcetera, gave the game away ('piece', 'performance', 'presentation', 'performance room' and so on, were still dominant terminology during Part 2). These distinctions delineate a kind of formalism: an a priori structure that tended to determine the communication between us. In a way, it is this residual formalism that is an index of the real problematics of my work.

Breaking with it would be equivalent to penetrating the reification of the displacement activities, for not only the relationships between myself and other performers, not only the structure of filming sessions and films, but the psychological dimensions of specific performances are posited on it (of course at one level, all communication requires a degree of formalism, for without it we cannot speak of structure or meaning: my problem was with a reified formalism, oriented as a generalized inhibitor).

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With Part 2 I tried to take cognizance of these problems. By working with my friends, as opposed to art audiences, I hoped that the decrease of inhibition and embarrassment would simplify behaviour and make it more intimate; that the intimacy of our behaviour would be a perspective on the self-aggression works. The self-aggression pieces had been beyond the reach of people. They were a kind of autistic theatre; a circumstance that intensified the problem of communication, and one which had been aggravated by the structure of the Swiss concerts.

The core of Part 2 was a 24 hour period when my friends and I came together in a sort of abreaction session. The basis was my scripted performances, however, very rapidly our activities came to include the whole group. The most important encounters were open-ended erotic experiments ('Touching') - ('délire du toucher'; 'the nucleus of the neurosis, is against touching') (the genitals), (Freud... on obsessional neurosis). They were particularly important at the time, because in my earlier work the element of explicit sexuality, in the way that the self-aggression actions were explicit, had been repressed. It was the reticence I felt in these situations, combined with the reactions of my friends and the discussions with them, that led me to speculate about the deep motivation for my behaviour. In September 1976, during the course of an article on my work, I wrote the following:

« ... in retrospect, I realized that the self-aggression works concealed as much as they revealed: they were displacement activities pure and simple, and even though I had understood this to some extent at the time, I had been unable to analyse the process of projection and to comprehend it in terms of more basic motivation... ».

During Part 2, I began to re-read aspects of Freud, Reich etcetera and as a consequence, the nature of my psychical structure was made clear to me. The concept of projection and the obsessive-compulsive base for much of my behaviour was made substantive in terms of my own sexuality and the fact of my disability (my left arm is congenitally unformed). I realized that during all my previous work, the element of explicit sexuality... had been repressed...

In Reichian terms, there was a connection between dammed-up libido and the eruption of sado-masochistic behaviour forms. I became convinced that the basic cause was my disability. It was as though I had associated my disability with castration. The self-aggression behaviour was a case of confronting a primitive fear of mutilation by giving into it. When I performed such pieces as « Leg Ring », « Slash your fingers. Let blood fall on your eyes (blinding your eyes). Until our eyes are filled with

blood », etcetera in Part 1, and « Leg-Spiral » and even elements of the « Totem Murder and identification » in Part 2, it was as though I re-enacted the traumatic memor of my disability (re-enacted a castration). Even the reference to my nose in various pieces fitted unconsciously with Freud's penis substitution/projection symbolism, while the reference to 'blinding', widely denotes castration (Freud).

The use of my leg and my arm (trials performed on them. Recurrent in my imagery) were substitutes for my disabled arm (my mutilated penis?). The attendant sexual anxiety was expressed in the actions performed... It was this ambivalence at the very center of the performances that explained the structure of my work: the tendency towards recapitulation and the separation of appearance and essence. However, in « Totem & Taboo », in the context of an essay on « Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence », Freud makes the following observation:

« In the case of neurosis these (the performances of obsessive acts) are clearly compromise actions: from one point of view they are evidences of remorse, efforts at expiation, and so on, while on the other hand they are at the same time substitutive acts to compensate the instinct for what has been prohibited. It is a law of neurotic illness that these obsessive acts fall more and more under the sway of the instinct and approach nearer and nearer to the activity which was originally prohibited ».

When we included portraits of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, juxtaposed in the film as stills done off an animation stand and mixed up in the live action, covered with fish, molasses, blood, feathers, snapshots of the blue sky, in close proximity to our nude bodies; our aim was not to degrade these symbols, but to charge them emotionally, to concretize them, by mixing them in with the reality of a communication/expression session. In other words, it was again, at another level, an attempt to penetrate the fact of reification (in the same way as the performances were): to tear the icons from their fetishized function and to assimilate them as sensuous realities. It will be objected that in this context such a 'reconstitution' could only be overt and symbolic. On the face of it, this would appear to be so. However, what did happen was, that the emotional ambivalence we all felt in the presence of these heroes (it was like having your father in your bedroom) penetrated the symbol and brought it alive in the form of anxiety. Our relationship with these images was the opposite of mysticism. We confronted the conservative aspects of progressive ideology head on; by freeing these images from the configurations of a dependent psychology. In this way, our reconstitution was a new level of objectivity: a form of integration and a process of de-mystification. (December 76).

The way of Jirí Kolár

Jindrich Chaluppecky

In one notebook of his diary *Rok ve dnech* (*The Year in Days*, 1947), Kolár noted with surprise his chequered career: « How many jobs have I had? At seven I began as a baker's assistant, then earned money picking fruit, trading cabbage, chasing after tennis balls, learned the carpenter's trade, wrote westerns and detective stories, was unemployed, worked as a brick-layer's assistant, an editor, a servant, loafed, laid sewers, helped out in the fields and woods, pushed a barrow around, worked as a cabinet-maker, helped out on a bulldozer, laid cement, was a delivery man, carpenter, watchman, waiter, writer, nurse, had a job with a youth group, did a stint at a butcher's, in a barber-shop, in editorial offices, sold newspapers, gave political speeches, ran a weekly, edited for a publisher's and I write poetry ».

There was as yet no mention of any art work. Kolár was still a poet. He published several books and was considered a prominent representative of his generation. In the year 1948 he stopped to be published. In 1953 he was imprisoned for nine months. « It was a decisive part of my life », says Kolár. Why was this?

At that time Kolár came to realize the unequal nature of the struggle between poetry and history. He had accepted the conditions that our history attempts to impose on poetry, and had done his best to make it as eloquent, convincing, aggressive and effective as possible. But this had transformed his poetry into declamation, rhetoric, literature; it no longer represented that great certainty which it had once been to him, and had ceased to be the pure truth, had ceased to be poetry. The words themselves blocked his path. They stuck too deeply in the fixed reality of this world, and they themselves bound the world to this reality. But what other path could he choose — a poet, fatally dependent on language?

It was some years before he found an issue. First came abstract poems written on a typewriter — compositions constructed only of letters, numbers or punctuation marks and empty spaces around and between them. Kolár entitled them « poems of silence », « empty poems », « evident poetry », and dedicated them to the memory of Malevich.

Then came manuscripts without words, « analphabetograms » and « crazygrams », in Kolár's terminology, that is texts that could have been written by an illiterate who had not yet learned how to write or by a madman who had forgotten how to write. The final variations of this abstract poetry were collages of typographical elements: « destroyed poems » and « punctual poems ». The non-objective typewriter compositions are perhaps the most significant of these. They seem to present us with that moment of tension, as yet without any content, from which a poem might arise.

From here the way led quickly towards the method which should have made Kolár famous: towards the collage. Kolár has invented an index of various kinds of collages: rollage (constructed from strips and somewhat resembling the kind of corrugated iron shop shutter that can be rolled up and down, called in Czech *roleta*); chiasmage (created from many torn or cut up fragments overlapping each other and forming chiasmata); prolage (from the Czech verb *prolínati*, to interpenetrate); ventillage (a collage with freely suspended elements); and, for the equally original form of collage created by crumpling up an image, crumplage (in Czech, *muchláz*, from the verb *muchlati*, to crumple).

His attempt to describe the origin and meaning of his collages has resulted in a rather surprising formulation: « The rollage allowed me to see the world at all times in at least two dimensions and led me to a realization of the multiplicity of reality. The chiasmage taught me to look at myself and the world from a thousand and one different angles. I was led to the assemblage by a visit to the museum at Auschwitz. It was one of the greatest shocks of my life: a vast, glass-walled room full of hair, shoes, luggage, clothing. Art has not been able — perhaps never will be able — to deal with it. Here my skepticism towards everything that worked and works with artificial shock, towards everything that ever wanted to astonish, irritate or provoke, became complete ».

But what has all this to do with the simple reality of Kolár's collages? Usually they are created by cutting or tearing up colour reproductions of paintings, photos of current events or fashion photos, and then arranging the fragments in a new way; the chiasmage is made of a wide variety of written and printed texts; old prints are the usual material for the crumplage. Kolár's comments might lead one to expect expressionist collages reflecting the cruelty and horror of the modern world, but in fact the materials of these collages are usually remote and treated in a cool and even mechanical way. There, then, lies the connection between these works and the fate of