

dance around the invisible axis of life. I would define the performance as a quasi-religious act in which the two performers acted as hierophant-dancer-workers in a movement symbolically alluding to a work-dance of ascent up life's own ladder. I conceived of the piece as being an experiment in monument building, but more specifically like the construction of an airborne temple whose architecture conformed to biological principles rather than societal or theological designs. A temple whose sole liturgy was the act of building it.

From the air we can see that the city is no more than an agglomeration of architectural cells like the living body. We can see that man, playing God, has built his cities in his own image. The museum is a specialized cell; within it is the museum auditorium, and within that are further divisions until we were there re-creating the center in the center, the organic geometric principle of life within the nucleus itself. At a microcosmic level, we were placing everyone who was there inside of the creation of the nucleus of every cell in their own bodies, and at a macrocosmic level, we were all at the nucleus of the creation of the city of man. □

## Lynn Hershman

Roberta Breitmore is an alchemical portrait begun in 1975. She is a sociological study of alienation and loneliness. Her performance takes the form of a real life drama based on real life in real time. As she gathers a history and identity the people and situations she encounters become archetypes, and fictional. Roberta has drivers license, credit cards, a hand-writing, walk, manner of speech, and is gathering all the paraphernalia of life through time. When she becomes «real» enough, Roberta will most likely commit suicide. Her alteration is kept to a minimum. She is, in effect, a mirror magnet for a sector of San Francisco's community. Roberta's future is based on the events that surround each of her adventures. Her diary will reveal the effect of each of these encounters. Her progression is recorded from the viewpoints of a psychoanalyst, a journalist and herself. After Roberta's suicide the accumulated articles of her research will be made public.

Excerpts from the case history of ms. R.S.B.

Age: 30

Sex: female

Race: white

**Religion:** Jewish

**Marital status:** divorced

**Occupational status:** unemployed

**General situation:**

The patient has been depressed and nervous. Showed signs of inability to concentrate and some impairment of memory ...

**Appearance:**

Deeply affected posture that quite often puts her into slumped position. Heavy makeup conceals her features. During observation she appeared both passive and eager to please. Prefers to lie down (dramatizing her helplessness). A line is beginning to form between her eyes. Modest signs of dysplasia. Her knees are stiff and feet contracted. Decreasing flexibility of legs. Can curl toes under in prehensile manner. Under the superficial softness one could palpate tension in deep muscles of the skull. Tensions choke off the flow of blood and energy, thus skin appears tender and dry. Voice is nearly always inaudible. No spontaneity of gesture ...

**Medical history:**

Usual childhood diseases. Tonsillectomy at age 11. Remembers having ingrown toenails. Suffers from many accidents. Generally clumsy ...

**Sexual history:**

Patient admits to incestuous relationship with brother. Began pattern of masturbation. Finds intercourse painful. Achieves no orgasm. No pregnancies. Fearful of pregnancies ...

## Suzanne Lacy

*Inevitable Associations* (Performance), by Suzanne Lacy, American Theater Association Conference, Aug. 8, 10 1976.

Part one, What is Seen... In a main lobby of the Bitmore Hotel, an ornate and historical hotel undergoing renovation (a "facelift"), I am transformed into an old woman during a lengthy prosthetics make-up procedure. Over the three hour period nine older women dressed in black come into the lobby one at a time and sit on red velvet chairs across from me. At the end of my transformation, they come for me, dress me in black, and together we return to the chairs. We leave the lobby separately, in different directions.

Part two, What is Experienced... The audience entered the room and sat in one of three circles of chairs, each containing one red velvet chair upon which sat one of the older women performers. A text on a slide read « I know what I know at 30. I know about aging, as every woman does. I know only what I see of the aged ». Part two, What is Experienced, allowed the older women to speak for themselves, to share their own experiences of aging with the audience.

# Permafo and Others

di Natalia L. L.

This paper aims at defining the shape of Polish avant-garde art as it has evolved in recent years. In order to do this I must limit myself to a period of time which will allow me to take in the activities of artists, groups and institutions. In the relatively clear picture offered by the avant-garde development, the year 1970 represents a turning point which separates the traditional avant-garde from the new avant-garde. It was in 1970 that the Foksal Gallery (Warsaw) lost its leading position and devoted itself to an art which could be defined as integrating theatre and plastic arts. In the sphere of theory, it set about developing the idea of « live archives » documenting past achievements.

The centre of art then moved to Wrocław where collective art manifestations took place: « Wrocław 70 » — a symposium heralding non-object art and the « SP » — Notional Art — Exhibition (December 1970) animated by the Mona Lisa Gallery. The exhibition revealed new methods of formalization as for instance the textual notation which, in fact, was an instruction how to imagine a definite state of art. The very way in which the « SP » exhibition was presented (300 identical envelopes containing identical material and constituting 300 original exhibitions) distinguished it from the then obtaining practice of regarding a work of art as a unique entity. The theoretical concept of the Mona Lisa Gallery, and for that matter of all the criticism of the old avant-garde, was based on the presentation of marginal art. Modified existentialism served as a means of cognition sufficient to explain an art which used material notation and was an expression of the artist's experiences and longings. But as there had appeared an art which was a reflection on art itself or a study of the possibilities of art such a theoretical apparatus proved to be inadequate. And maybe this was the cause of the decline of the Mona Lisa Gallery and of the breakdown of the Foksal Gallery's avant-garde concept. The decline was preceded by the emergence of a rational trend in the new art, a trend whose origins can be found in the theoretical and practical activities of Polish artists of the thirties and forties of this century, such as Chwistek, Strzemiński or Stazewski.

Particularly worthy of notice in this respect is *Permafo*, an institution which

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was started in Wrocław in 1970, initially as a gallery and then as a theoretical and practical idea uniting artists practising rationalized art.

In briefly defining the basic concepts or *Permafo*, one should draw attention to those programmatic statements which are the starting-point for a modified artistic practice:

1. The replacement of the symbolic relation: reality — artist — work of art by an operation on models of reality, i. e. by paradigmatic relations between formalized notations.

2. A heuristic study of reality as a set of sights (aspects of things) and pictures (formalized notations).

3. The treatment of visual and mental resolutions as isomorphic ones.

As coming under problem group 1 should be considered the exhibitions and theoretic statements by Natalia (*Intimate Photography* 1971) and Dlubak (*Tautologies* 1971) as well as Andr. Lachowicz's *Permart* (1971) which all determined the profile of *Permafo's* researches. At each of these exhibitions photography was used as a technique most pellucid and appropriate for presenting the idea of an art which is a study of the possibilities of art. An important programmatic event was the collective art manifestation *NS — A New Situation* (1972). It was a book in which Dlubak, Natalia, Jurkiewicz, Rosolowicz, Michalowska, Lachowicz and Pederewska presented their works. The book had been reproduced and photographic enlargements of the particular pages of the book were displayed at an exhibition in the Museum of Art in Łódź. This reversal of order (first a catalogue then an exhibit) pointed to the importance of concept and the secondariness of the exhibit. The book was a set of experiences realized in a pictorial and non-pictorial sphere and of critical and theoretical texts which constituted an attempt at formulating the grammar of art.

And Lachowicz's work *Visual and Mental Persuasion*, published in 1973, is an explication of this problem. This work is an experience which consists in summarizing a definite division of reality and reducing it to a finite number of recorded sights. This recording was done in a balanced manner according to the principle of not preferring (not favouring) any of the physical factors (such as time, shape, space) determining the reality under observation. The book contains 496 photographs which record, in an abbreviated form, 48 hours. The conclusions drawn from this experience can be reduced to the following statements:

1. Operations conducted on visual notations have in fact a mental effect.

2. The grammar of speech and the grammar of art are essentially different:

speech is a means of communicating news in a possibility exact and unequivocal way, artistic communication makes use of ambiguous formulations.

3. In comparison with manual notations, objectivized notations (film, photography) offer infinitely greater possibilities of interpreting meanings.

Thus, the search for definitions which are of importance to art should be conducted through logical and visiological studies with the empirical practice proceeding parallel to intellectual operations. *Visual and Mental Persuasion* is consistent with the theory of a regular field which was worked out by L. Kaćma and Lachowicz in 1972. This theory assumes that each sight (picture of reality) can be regarded as a material set of an infinite number of points. But each sight is bound up with meaning, it goes to the making of a complex visual and meaningful structure. A sign can be isolated from its meaning by a balanced (proportional) summarizing of the visual reality and recording it in accordance to a definite system. In this way we obtain a visual extract of a particular feature, such as shape, colour, its quality, brightness, saturation, dimension scale, and so on, which is equivalent (isomorphic) to the sight and has the form of a model notation on which evaluating mathematical operations can be carried out.

In *The Elements of the Regular Field Theory* (1973), Lachowicz suggests the use of the binary system arising from Boole's algebra which makes it possible for arithmetical operations to be conducted on visual extracts. This method enables one to make inferences about an art sign outside its meaning, to carry out decisive operations on the basis of the features of the visual structure of the picture. In this way it becomes possible to examine the syntactic relations of art signs and, furthermore, it is possible to work out concrete rules of the grammar of art comprising elements of visual physics and semantics. The most interesting is postulate no 10 of the regular field theory which states that a visual extract resulting from algebraic transformations can be subjected to a concretizing operation, to the operation of creating a concrete and objective visual reality. The sight evoked in this way emerges outside any stylistic and aesthetic classification by way of paravisual mathematical operations.

At the same time as the artistic and theoretical concepts of *Permafo* there took place a number of interesting actions which make up the picture of Polish modern art. Worth of notice is here Opalka's lonely and extraordinarily consistent work each element of which fits in with this artist's pithy, intrinsically coherent formula of life and work.

The exhibition *Aspects of Polish Modern Art* which was shown at the Con-

temporary Gallery (*Galeria Współczesna*) in Warsaw in 1975 was a review of works by artists sharing an orientation which regards art as a means of exploring the world. On display were works by Opalka, Kajetan Sosnowski, Natalia, Robakowski, Lachowicz, Bruszewski, Sosnowski, Partum, Kaćma, Berdyszak, Winiarski, Haka, Wojciechowski. In the same year, Józef Robakowski produced the film *The Live Gallery* showing almost the same group of artists and emphatically pointing to the fact that it is rational concepts that are at present the motive force of Polish avant-garde.

Thus the abandonment of illusive and aesthetic manual techniques, the use of anonymous means of notation such as photography and film, the reliance on logic and philosophy are conducive to exploring art through art and are at present an activity parallel to scientific research. □

## Poland: Photo Art

di Zdzisław Sosnowski

Art as an artificial structure builds a characteristic model of reality, thus reflecting complicated visual and mental relations. In building this model an artist who uses media of probable presentation of the reality (photo, film, video), is able somehow to enrich this reality by adding complications within their structures. A sign which is a visual aspect of the relation and particularly informative, can be further « structuralized » so that the information that we receive from it will be not only a result of the reflection but, first of all, the result of a conscious application of a visual grammar. This way we obtain definitions impossible to reach through imagination and verbalization and at the same time unusually probable (as a reproduction of reality).

Many films and photographic works made by artists rely on the characteristic values of the film and photography structures. The unquestioned and already conventional adequacy of these media to reality is such that at the end we are sure to be looking at the reality and do not even doubt it. This is not due to technical tricks but to the conscious application of appropriate structures of reality and their reproductions; that is,