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VARIANT

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"We're on the Highway to Hell"

The least charismatic person in Scotland, Jimmy Boyle is now the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council. He is not to be mistaken for Jimmy Boyle, the author of "A Sense of Freedom". That Jimmy Boyle is a reformed character with a genuine interest in art, and this Jimmy Boyle still seems to enjoy stabbing people in the back.

Just as Jimmy 'joined' the SAC he was also appointed to the Civil Service Commissioners (CSC), who decide on top level appointments to the Home Civil Service and the Diplomatic Service. One good turn deserves another in the land of the terminally bland. Jimmy's SAC appointment was overseen by the Office of the Commissioner of Public Appointments, run by Dame Rennie Fritchie, who also sits on the CSC, because it is much the same thing.

Although appointments are made by Ministers the task of these bodies is to pretend that appointments are based on merit—who knows? One day they may succeed and the class system will come tumbling down. Until then these committees will be full of the kind of inept people who cling to politicians' coat tails for their legitimacy.

Along with Jimmy the CSC also brought in Dr Maggie Semple, OBE, former Director of Learning of the New Millennium Experience Company. Her knowledge of financial rectitude and public accountability running the Millennium Dome is a match for Jimmy's talentless approach to SAC.

If Jimmy is responsible for the appeals process when people in public office are mysteriously dismissed: this must give him a wee bit of inside knowledge eh? Strangely in these days of bureaucratic transparency, no one knows what happened recently at a secret SAC meeting when Tessa Jackson, the SAC director was dismissed. No one can say why she and the SAC are wasting money on lawyers when a perfectly impartial appeals procedure exists. You don't get to be a part of it yourself, but it does exist.

The complete ignorance of the local press about what is going on is also unexplainable, given that Jimmy has put a couple of old journalist mates who happen to run the PR company "Hatch" on the pay-roll ('Rent Money' as we can it up here in Scotland). Surely they are keeping the local press straight on matters. It all must be fair because we haven't heard Tessa Jackson complaining about it?

Jimmy is also on the board of *Wark Clements* (Kirsty Wark's production company) which tends to focus on (rather than monopolise) arts programme making in Scotland. Now that Jimmy completely controls things, successful models like this will probably gain more SAC funding than they would have when Jimmy used to be the Editorial Controller of BBC Scotland.

No wonder there are so few jobs in the arts up here. There are no artists involved in decision-making committees any more either. Bureaucrats do it all. They even determine what the art should be to make everything even simpler.

So the signals are that in future you would be advised to bring your own art should you decide to visit such a creatively closed country with any expectations. No one (in power) wants to 'speak out', so watch what you say.

Jimmy has realised that because 90% of SAC funds are pre-allocated: you don't actually need anyone in the SAC with ideas, certainly not ideas about art and certainly not with any connection to Scotland. If there is no direction why bother with a Director?

Can't see Tessa Jackson joining in somehow, but if anyone is unhappy about the SAC they can contact the large multi-national PR consultants, Deloitte Touche because the SAC are paying them a lot of money to let them use *their* web site as part of the biggest consultation process since the last one. Obviously no one would take it seriously if it appeared on the SAC's web site on the cheap.

Conversely because of the critical writing we

publish in Variant, the SAC have refused to fund us for reasons Nicholas Spice (the independent internal assessor hired by the SAC) called "definitely political."

So we would advise anyone presently in receipt of funding to say that everything is fine. That will be the message anyway when Jimmy prints out ten tons of much more legitimate literature to make it seem so. So stand back and watch that bureaucrat go!

Artists will be better off in the future: Jimmy has a Magic Plan, to turn the SAC into a "Development Agency" and then a "Hall of Fame". Why it almost rhymes.

You don't hear dead artists crying out for help. But it should be stressed that although appointed by them and supervising their appointments, paying journalists, meeting with them and all the rest, that Jimmy is in no way connected to the government. Half of whom have gone in Scotland anyway.

No: the SAC operate a strict "arm's length policy". You've got to when something smells that bad. When Jimmy's Development Agency is up and running artists will not have to waste their time filling in stupid forms, chasing after a piece of that 10%. No that won't be around any more. Not that these forms are completely useless: sometimes "you've got to scrape the shit right off your shoes."

Occasional Documents: Towards Situation

Howard Slater

What follows is the introduction to Howard Slater's "Occasional Documents: Towards Situation". The complete article is posted on the Variant on-line forum — details below.

In a culture still driven by commodity exchange and representation (driven by the submergence of social relationships in the object) the means of expression, as the vital component of creative activity, is often overlooked. Yet, if there is to be a popular participation in culture, a sustained participation that, as a revolutionising presupposition, can actively work towards 'a dual power in culture', or a 'crisis of proliferation', then this can only be feasible if more and more people come to be 'expressed'. 'Expression' here means an undisciplined creativity that, above all else, above the consumption of relationships, seeks to deal in the production of subjectivity—an autonomous creativity that circulates desires as the expression of singularities and differences, and not a commodifiable creativity whose expressions are overcoded as individualistic, subject to 'qualitative aesthetic judgements' and easily professionalised.

In order for there to be a renewed outgrowth of expression, an outgrowth already made possible by technological advancements, there has to be a shift in social perception wherefrom our relation to the means of expression is not seen as a 'stage' we have reached and surpassed, but an ongoing rhythm that informs our creativity and makes of being a becoming. Expression, then, has to become conscious of itself as a social practice which, being formed by social relations, can effect those social relations, create new social relations.

Already it can be said that over the past decade the means of production in the cultural sphere have been in staurating a change in social relations which are as yet inchoate. The 'leap forward' of these productive forces is leaving a 'lag' into which the increasingly outmoded social relations of creative production are attempting to infill with more of the same. Artistic activity, be it that of fine artist or musician or writer, is coming to be represented as an economical link to an outmoded manufacturing industry (creation of objects, valorisation of information), as a means of orientation for society in terms of future models of wage labour (micro-entrepreneurial, affective labour), as a means of maintaining the circulation of capital (the uninterrupted metamorphoses of value and the creation of new markets c.f. Benjamin's "exhibition value") and as a means of ensuring that social relationships are made valorisable and thus integratable (historification of cultural practices). It is from such contradictions, the antagonisms they offer, that new social relations could spring; ones that seek to reappropriate their own 'living labour' through a winning of the means of expression...

Extract from Break/Flow

Variant's discussion list has moved to a free host at:
http://www.topica.com/lists/variantforum

A full version of this article can be found there. To (re) subscribe to the list (for free) please send a BLANK email to:
variantforum-subscribe@topica.com

The full article can also be found on the Variant web site at:
www.ndirect.co.uk/~variant/events.html

Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme

William Clark

Katherine Dreier

"[America] has developed along the material rather than the immaterial, the concrete rather than the divine."

(Katherine Dreier) [1]

"The art of the new painters takes the infinite universe as its ideal, and it is to the fourth dimension alone that we owe this new measure of perfection."

(Apollinaire)

"An artist expresses himself with his soul, with the soul the artwork must be assimilated."

(Marcel Duchamp)

Katherine Sophie Dreier (1877-1952) was born in Brooklyn, New York. Her father had amassed a modest fortune in an iron importing business. She had three sisters: Mary, Margaret and Dorothea, who between them combined an active commitment to social reform, progressive politics and modern art.

Right: The Armory Show

Mary Dreier was a US labor reformer active in leadership roles in the suffrage movement. Although independently wealthy, she won the trust of working women and became active in the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). Mary walked the picket lines with strikers and was arrested and treated just as brutally by the police. The WTUL's establishment in 1903 drew together three important social currents flowing through early twentieth century America: the labor movement, the Womens' Movement, and the social reform movement of the Progressive Era. This coalition of wage-earning and middle-class women fought for the eight-hour day, decent wages, women's suffrage and protective workplace laws. She was a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, who was also active in the WTUL.

Isadora Duncan

Margaret Dreier was also a labor leader and reformer and joined the WTUL becoming president of the New York branch and playing a major role in organising support for the strikes of 1909-11 against the garment industry. In 1929 President Herbert Hoover named her to the planning committee of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. In the 1930s she became an enthusiastic supporter of the New Deal which—influenced by the WTUL agenda—brought greater security to workers' lives and seen the instigation of the WPA which nurtured the post war generation of artists.

Dorothea was a painter working in a Post-Impressionist style.

There was a strong identification with German culture in the Dreier home, and the family often traveled back to Europe to visit relatives. Between 1907 and 1914, Katherine Dreier traveled abroad studying and buying art and participating in several group exhibitions in Frankfurt, Leipzig, Dresden, and Munich. In Paris she visited Gertrude Steins' salons seeing the Fauves and Picasso and reading (in the original German) Kandinsky's 'Concerning The Spiritual in Art' in 1912 just as it was published. This was to be a profound influence including its Theosophical dimension and condemnation of the art market. She also traveled to Holland, buying a van Gogh (before the Sonderbund show) which she eventually loaned to the Armory show. [2]

The young Marcel Duchamp

The Bride...

Her first one-person show was in London in 1911 at the Doré Galleries, which later held the first Vorticist show in 1915, here:

"The American actress and feminist Elizabeth Robins introduced her into a circle of artists and literati where she met and engaged Edward Thrumbull. They returned to her family home in Brooklyn for their wedding. The marriage was annulled soon after it was learned that Thrumbull already had a wife and children." [3]

In 1912, in New York she became treasurer of the German Home for Recreation of Women and Children and helped to found the Little Italy Neighborhood Association in Brooklyn. She was invited to exhibit her own work and her collection in the influential 1913 Armory Show. Contemporary criticism of her work reduced Dreier's status to a "decorator" locating her within the amateur field, producing in a less sophisticated medium—despite the decorative arts being an essential source of inspiration for many avant-garde painters and sculptors. [4]

The invisibility of Dreier and many other women who participated in the Armory Show—and in avant-garde circles in general—begins with criticism that dismissed women who made art works connected to the schools of Modernism as imitative, rather than capable of assimilating theories by canonical artists. The Armory Show was dependent on a number of women artists who participated in the growth of modern art in New York in the years around the 1913 exhibition, yet the critical reception of this, such as Frank Crowninshield's 'Armory Show' in Vogue, 1940, Mayer Shapiro's and Milton Brown's writing have conditioned perceptions of the period to see affluent women as mere collectors because they were the wives and daughters of the "magnates." But aspects of patronage had began to shift from the industrial capitalists—guided merely by a desire to amass more wealth—to a new class of 'cultural aesthetes' who were:

"...the readers and followers of Neitzsche, Bergson, Whitman, Veblen, and often Blavatsky. They represented a professed desire to keep the art market autonomous from the markets for other goods where "it is not for the maker to set the goal for art, but for the buyer." [5]

They believed financial support for artists should be unconditional. An examination of many of these early 'women collectors' at the Armory Show (and later) reveals their own occupations as painters, sculptors and writers, recognised by their peers and the general public as professionals. Most accounts of these early twentieth century 'collectors' neglect a community and reciprocity between art patronage and production, especially in the case of women artists/collectors/organisers. Yet this neglected ground is where modern art is often first accepted or appreciated or *contested*. This blurring and erasing of distinctions will be recognised by artists as a fore-runner of artist-run initiatives and akin to Pierre Bourdieu's assessment of avant-garde art, as ostensibly anti-commercial art: 'art produced for producers'.

The Fountain

In 1914 Dreier formed the Cooperative Mural Workshops, a combination art school and workshop modeled in part after the Arts and Crafts movement and the Omega Workshops of Roger Fry. The organisation, which operated until 1917, also included the dancer Isadora Duncan. In her painting Dreier began working toward non-representational portraiture, and in 1916 she was invited to help found the *Society of Independent Artists* (SIA) which brought her into an influential circle of European and American avant-garde artists, most notably working with Marcel Duchamp as friend, partner and patron.

"While her interest in modern art is often understood in relation to her correspondence with Duchamp, her early abstractions are undoubtedly influenced by her interest in Kandinsky's theories... Dreier's most commonly reproduced work is her portrait of Duchamp, in the collection of MOMA. A slightly earlier portrait of Duchamp, called Study in Triangles, recalls Kandinsky's first chapter in On the Spiritual in Art, "The Movement of the Triangle." Following Kandinsky's logic and Dreir's painting, Duchamp reaches the top rung of the avant-garde ladder and becomes as Dreier would later call him "the modern-day Leonardo." [6]

The SIA (which continued until 1944 and also had a Mexican chapter) were a group of American and European artists who aimed to support regular exhibitions of contemporary art. It is thought it was based on the French *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, founded in 1884 (which had rejected Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase') and which acted as a kind of institutionalized Salon des Refusés. The other founders with Dreier included Marcel Duchamp, William J. Glackens, Albert Gleizes, John Marin, Walter Pach, Man Ray, John Sloan and Joseph Stella. The managing director was Walter Arensberg. Much the same group had been responsible for the Armory Show in 1913, which they quickly aimed to surpass.

'The Big Show' held at the Grand Central Palace in New York in 1917—then the largest exhibition in American history (2500 works by 1200 artists; the Armory Show had 1200 works)—coincided with US involvement in World War I. This underlined the SIA's 'dedication to democratic principles as part of a larger struggle,' which seen the group conciously adopt a no-jury policy, with the works (which extended to film screenings, lectures, poetry readings and concerts) hung alphabetically. Duchamp was originally the director of the installation of the show. For $6 artists were offered an opportunity to exhibit and join the group, regardless of style or subject-matter. This gave Duchamp an idea. What looked like a urinal signed

'R. Mutt', arrived through a delivery service with its six bucks. The central anti-academy philosophy of accepting all works was easily mocked and some members took it upon themselves to remove the work from the exhibition two days before the opening. Duchamp made an even bigger show of resigning from the SIA. It is slightly ridiculous that this incident has over-shadowed the rest of the show, but it certainly divided opinion—some of Dreier's correspondence on the matter still exists such as this one to SIA president, William Glackens:

"I want to express my profound admiration in the way you handled so important a matter as you did at the last meeting when it was [decided]...that we invite Marcel Duchamp to lecture...on his "Readymades" and have Richard Mutt bring the discarded object and explain the theory of art and why it had a legitimate place in an Art Exhibit... I felt that if you had realized that the object was sent in good faith that the whole matter would have been handled differently. It is because of the confusion of ideas that the situation took on such an important aspect... [you] will force Richard Mutt to show whether he was sincere or did it out of bravado."

Dreier also wrote to Duchamp asking him to reverse his resignation from the SIA over the refusal to exhibit Mr Mutt's Fountain:

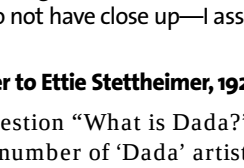
"When I voted "No," I voted on the question of originality—I did not see anything pertaining to originality in it; that does not mean that if my attention had been drawn to what was original by those who could see it, that I could not also have seen it."

One of the SIA, George Bellows, supposedly became very angered (this was 100 years ago) and turned on Walter Arensberg saying: "Someone must have sent it as a joke. It is signed R. Mutt; sounds fishy to me... It is gross, offensive!...There is such a thing as decency. Do you mean that if an artist put horse manure on a canvas and sent it to the exhibition, we would have to accept it?" Arensberg responded with "I am afraid we would." But most of these accounts are from Beatrice Wood's—who shared a studio with Duchamp—unreliable memoir 'I Shock Myself.' Some believe that the love triangle that developed among Wood, Duchamp and French Diplomat Henri-Pierre Roché formed the basis of Roché's novel, *Jules and Jim*, which was later made into the celebrated film by François Truffaut. [7]

'Fountain' was not seen by the public, but the joke was kept running in the 'open submission' magazine *The Blindman* which Duchamp and Roché printed (and Wood fronted till her father got upset) to accompany The Big Show. It began as a joke and was extended in the subsequent issue into a system of assault, following the attitude characteristic of Picabia's earlier '391' magazine. Like their European counterparts, first-generation modernists in the United States depended on the word—in manifestoes, catalog essays, and "little magazines"—to advocate and advance their art.

Duchamp's idea of 'ready-mades' had come from his surprise in New York at seeing objects such as a snow shovel (which he had no idea existed), and imagining them as ready-made sculptures just like the arrival of ready-made clothes or cigarettes on the market. This had resonated with his interest in Raymond Roussel's theatrical works which he described as "the absolute height of unusualness," and Alfred Jarry's 'Pataphysics.' It also reminded him of the 'gadgets' he kept about his studio (and which his sister threw out) such as the bicycle wheel (possibly a pun on 'Roussel'), which he enjoyed looking at like flames in the fireplace "to help his ideas come out". He would notice the spokes blurr and a curious three dimension 'optical flicker' effect which remained with one eye shut, this reminded him of his obscure readings on Euclidian geometry and the French mathematician Jules Henri Poincaré.

The Circle



Dreier seems among those who initially opposed the inclusion of Fountain, but she later came to appreciate Duchamp's intentions. They struck up a friendship that lasted Dreier's lifetime, and he introduced her to the circle of progressive artists and poets which had formed around Walter Arensberg's house and given rise to the SIA.

The Arensberg's West 67th Street apartment contained works by Duchamp, Picasso, Braque, Gris, Miro and 19 Brancusi sculptures. Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase' (which the Arensbergs' bought from the Armory Show on the last day when they just happened by) was the centerpiece. Arensberg (a cryptology fanatic who shared mental and word games of all sorts with Duchamp) became a pivotal centre because of his extraordinary mind and instinctive comprehension of all that was stirring. The apartment contained the Avant-Garde in New York. Duchamp actually moved in to a small room and bath upstairs somewhere in the building, living in the Arensberg place most of the time.

Every night following the Armory Show there had been an influx of prominent French artists. Among the other members of the group were Man Ray, Picabia, William Carlos Williams, Mardsden Hartley, Mina Loy, Edgar Varase, Charles Demuth, Isadora Duncan and Charles Sheeler, who casts a more disparaging eye on the influx of draft-dodging Frenchmen on the make:

"CS: Yes. Well, they had a purpose in being there, I think, of course. Maybe that wouldn't include Duchamp but the majority of the others it was the hope of good picking, that is I mean to say pick up sponsors, you know....we would be in a gathering...and there was one fellow you'd see looking up and down if there were some people there that—women that represented means of some kind and so forth, looking up and down deciding whether the fur coat represented anything more substantial that might be picking, you know, sort of as taking inventory...A lot of that went on in those days. It made me sick.

MF: You're disillusioning me. That's good. What about Katherine Dreier? Didn't she get involved in this too?

CS: Well, she was madly in pursuit personally of...

MF: Duchamp?

CS: Marcel." [8]

Sheeler also recounts one evening Isadora Duncan dropped by:

"...and, as she was leaving—Walter wasn't prepared for it—she threw her arms violently around his neck and her considerable avoirdupois and he wasn't prepared—she flattened him to the ground, they fell on the floor and when he got up two front teeth were missing. He was going around for several days this way with a handkerchief up to his face 'til he got repairs. But there were silly little things like that haven't anything to do with—of importance." [9]

The Société Anonyme

"From a distance these things, these Movements take on a charm that they do not have close up—I assure you."

(Marcel Duchamp, Letter to Ettie Stettheimer, 1921)

In response to the question "What is Dada?", posed by the press a number of 'Dada' artists gathered at Katherine Dreier's on East 47th Street, to try a bit of hype. Duchamp was the spokesman:

"Dada is nothing...For instance the Dadaists say that everything is nothing; nothing is good, nothing is interesting, nothing is important. It is a general movement in Paris, relating rather to literature than to painting" And later in the interview, "Painting has already begun to tear down the past—why not literature?. But then I am in favor of Dada very much myself". Even as he was making this declaration, however, Duchamp was distancing himself from the Paris Dada scene that prompted the Evening Journal article. When his sister Suzanne... suggested Duchamp send something for the Dada Salon Tzara was organizing at the Galerie Montaigne, Duchamp responded that "exposer," sounded too much like "épouser", and when Tzara himself repeated the request, Duchamp sent a telegram that contained the three words "PODE BAL—DUCHAMP" with its pun on "peau de balle" or "balls to you." Thus, when the exhibition was mounted, the spaces reserved for Duchamp's works were occupied by empty frames. So much for Duchamp's participation in Paris Dada." [10]

Around this time, in 1920, Dreier, Duchamp, and Man Ray met in Dreier's apartment (the Arensberg's had escaped to the West Coast) to found a centre for the study and promotion of of the international avant-garde. Dreier wanted to call it "The Modern Ark," perhaps symbolising her shipping an unrivalled collection of European Modernism over the Atlantic, but Man Ray suggested a typically tedious Dada word game: the French term for "incorporated," so the name would read "Société Anonyme, Inc." which translates into "Incorporated, Inc." Dreier added the subtitle "Museum of Modern Art: 1920." Ray's involvement was largely inconsequential.

If anything the name emphasised Dreier's commitment to treating artists and art movements with impartiality. Her—typically modest—concern was with "art, not personalities." It is thought she modelled the association on the broad-ranging events and contemporary art exhibitions sponsored by Herwarth Walden's Sturm-Galerie in Berlin.

As with much of the avant garde they had to create their own means of showing their work, the Société Anonyme, was used as an exhibition vehicle for the next ten years. It organised an extensive series of exhibitions, lectures, symposia, publications and established a reference library and acquisitions programme: all for the support of modern artists and the education of the general public.

Throughout the twenties Anonyme was New York's first museum of modern art, presenting an

T'um

Kandinsky

international array of cubists, constructivists, expressionists, futurists, Bauhaus artists, and dadaists. It hosted the first American one-person shows of Kandinsky, Klee, Campendonk, and Leger. Société Anonyme promoted some of the most progressive artistic experimentation to be done in the US country at the time.

The Museum

The International Exhibition of Modern Art at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926 (the title was lifted from the 1913 Armory Show) rivalled the SIA's Big Show of 1917 in its scope and diversity. It is arguably one of the most successful, well-curated and highly attended exhibitions in America in the 20th century. It also made deliberate attempts to affect people in a more lasting manner.

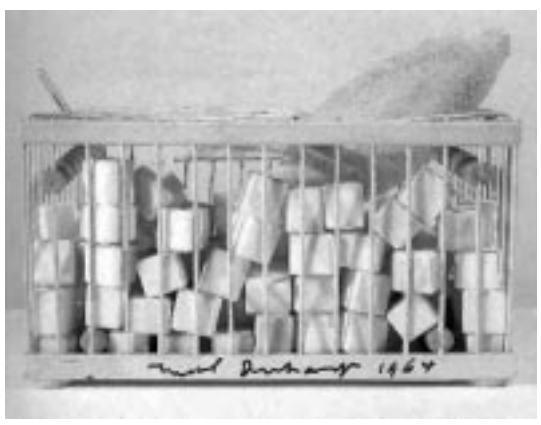
"Dreier had four galleries in the exhibition made up to resemble rooms in a house to illustrate how modern art could and should readily integrate into an everyday domestic environment, and there was also a prototype of a "television room," designed in conjunction with Frederick Kiesler, which would make any house or museum a worldwide museum of art by illuminating different slides of masterpieces with the 'turn of a knob. Concurrent with the exhibition the Societe sponsored eighteen lectures, fourteen of which were delivered by Dreier herself." [11]

It was in fact more or less single-handedly organised by Dreier—an astonishing effort demonstrating her work for the Société to date. The extensive Catalogue (given free to participating artists) was dedicated to Kandinsky's 60th Birthday and abstract art seemed to dominate at the exhibition. The Brooklyn exhibition featured 308 works by 106 artists from 23 countries and attracted over 52,000 visitors in seven weeks. It travelled to Manhattan, Buffalo and Toronto and was the first introduction in the US of Surrealism. It also offerred a larger sampling of Soviet and German (and simply non-French) modernism that had been included in the Armory Show (which had included out of the German school only one Kandinsky, one Kirchner, and two Lehmbruck sculptures, and out of the Russians only Archipenko). [12]

It was also the first time Duchamp's 'La mariée mise à nu par ses cèlibataires', or 'The Large Glass' (1915-23), was exhibited. It seems to have been largely ignored, only picking up attention when it was exhibited in the New York Museum Of Modern Art after the war.

Dreier was Duchamp's main supporter, commissioning, owning and enabling many new works, including the Large Glass itself. Dreier had an intimate relationship to most of his output, many of which make oblique references to her: 'T'um' was a mural commissioned for above her bookcase based on the shadows cast by his other works in her house. 'Why not Sneeze Rrose Sélavy' was commissioned by Dreier for her sister, Dorothea—who didn't want it, probably repulsed by its more Benny Hill (arroser, c'est la vie) aspects.

Why not Sneeze Rrose Sélavy



The major work of Duchamp's career was broken in transit to Dreier's home in Connecticut. Dreier conveyed the news six years later, where, over lunch, in France.

"Bearing a certain amount of responsibility for the damaged to the Large Glass, Dreier paid for everything connected to its repair, including materials and contracted labor. She assured Duchamp of a room in her house, offered him thermoses of coffee, breakfasts on a tray in the mornings, and a carpenter on hand to assist in the reconstruction. She even covered his passage to America." [13]

It is a misconception that the Large Glass had merely cracked in the patterns one sees today, it was reduced to a pile of unattached fragments which a newspaper described as "a 4 by 5-foot three hundred pound conglomeration of bits of colored glass."

"A photograph from 1936, taken in Katherine Dreier's Connecticut home...Wearing a pullover rather than his usually natty clothes, a five-o'clock-shadowed Duchamp stands wearily next to the Large Glass (1915-23) which he had just spent weeks reconstructing. This image...begs an interesting question. How is it that the unconventional and often fragile works of an artist who publicly eschewed those art world institutions that would normally be trusted to conserve them—dealers, galleries, museums-have come down to us in relatively fine condition, or indeed, at all?" [14]

Through the support of Katherine Dreier would seem to be the answer. The effort on the Large Glass seems to have nearly burnt him out, even the long-suffering Dreier complained to one of her friends about the his monomania at this time: "Duchamp is a dear, but his concentration on just one subject wears me out, leaves me limp."

Duchamp also used this time to restore all his other works in Dreier's collection. The Large Glass' near destruction and the draining process of undertaking its repair galvanized his resolve to enter into the large-scale reiteration and reproduction of his works in multiples. He first published the Green Box (Paris, 1934). "Only then... did he restore the image between two new plates of glass, now to be read through the foundational grid of his writings." The artist himself admitted that "the notes [in the Green Box] help to understand what it [the Large Glass] could have been." [15]

The Haven

The eventual opening in 1929 of the New York Museum of Modern Art reduced Dreier's hopes of the Société becoming a permanent museum. The Société made an urgent appeal to the Carnegie Corporation for assistance, but was refused and its headquarters in New York closed. From this point on, it continued only through Dreier's personal efforts in organising events, a lecture series, writing and further accumulating the Société's collection. In 1939, as war broke out Dreier began a plan to open 'The Country Museum' (also known as the Haven), at her house in West Redding, Connecticut—this merged the Société's and her own private collection.

She approached Yale University about funding and maintaining the Haven but, because of the high costs of renovating and maintaining it, Yale offered a compromise to take over the Société's collection if it were moved to the Yale Art Gallery. Reluctantly Dreier agreed, and began sending the collection in October 1941 shortly before the US entered another war with Germany.

"In 1942, Dreier was still adamant about her desire to open the Country Museum and to use her private collection as its basis. She continued her attempts to convince Yale to fund her project, but when Yale gave a final negative answer in April, Dreier decided to sell the Haven. In April 1946, she moved to a new home, Laurel Manor, in Milford, Connecticut. She continued to add artwork to the Societe Anonyme collection at Yale, through purchases and through gifts from artists and friends. In 1947, she attempted to reopen membership to the Societe Anonyme and printed a brochure, but Yale blocked distribution of the brochure because of the ambiguous connection between Yale and the membership campaign. In 1948, Dreier and Duchamp decided to limit the activities of the Societe to working on a catalog of the collection and to acquiring artwork." [16]

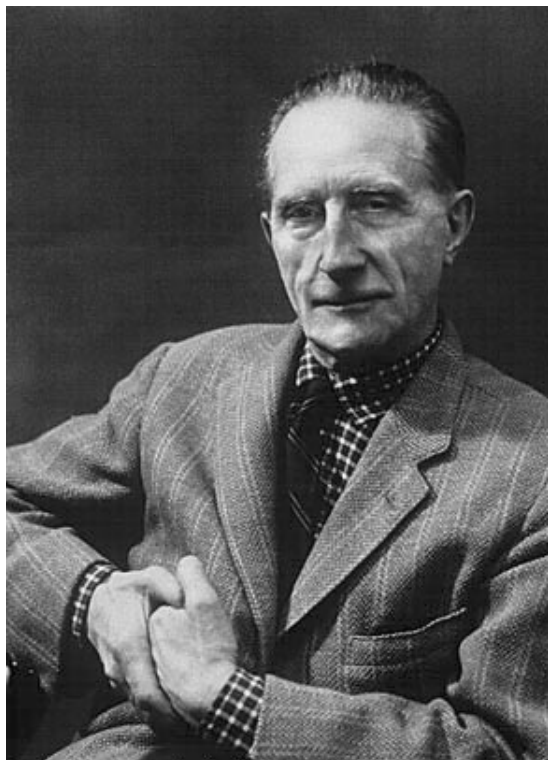
On the thirtieth anniversary of the Société's Anonyme's first exhibition, 30 April 1950, Dreier and Duchamp hosted a dinner at the New Haven Lawn Club, where they formally dissolved the Societe Anonyme. In June, a catalog of the Société's collection at Yale, *Collection of the Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art 1920*, was published. Dreier died on 29 March 1952.

It was partly because she dared not move the fragile Large Glass monolith, that she had considered converting her home into a Museum. Troubled by the matter even at the end of her life, she confessed to Duchamp that she might not leave enough money to guarantee its upkeep and safety. After her death Duchamp acted as her executor and entered it into the Arensberg Collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which contained most of his works.

Duchamp had helped to amass the collection of the Société Anonyme, and with Dreier gone, he tried to provide for its long-term survival, anxious about the rapid deterioration of works. There was no money for conservation, so Duchamp approached Mary Dreier who contributed $1,500 per year until she died. Eventually, under Duchamp's supervision, the Large Glass would be cemented to the floor of the Philadelphia Museum of Art amidst the Walter and Louise Arensberg Collection where it had all began when they were young.

Mary Dreier

The Société Anonyme begun in 1920; Albert Gallatin's Gallery of Living Art at New York University did not emerge until 1927, most dominant of all the Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929; and then the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1930. The Museum of Non-Objective Art—later to be better known as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum—was founded in New York in 1937. The Société Anonyme's art collection eventually became the basis of the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggemheim collections.



Marcel Duchamp

notes

1. Ruth L. Bohan, The Société Anonyme' s Brooklyn Exhibition, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor 1982, p.12). Quoted from http://www.brickhaus.com/amoore/magazine/p2contents.html
2. The Armoury show has been recreated at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSEUM/Armory/gallerytour.html
3. http://etrc.lib.umn.edu/travbio.htm
4. Duchamp's 'Coffee Grinder' (1911) was originally done as a decoration for his brother's kitchen.
5. http://www.people.virginia.edu/~sls8y/gender.html
6. *Ibid.*
7. http://www.craftsreport.com/april97/wood.html
8. Charles Sheeler Interview, conducted by Martin Friedman for the Archives of American Art, 1959 http://artarchives.si.edu/oralhist/sheele59.htm)
9. *Ibid.*
10. Marforie Perloff, Avant-Garde Tradition and the Individual talent. http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/perloff/dada.html
11. New Thoughts on an Old Series, John D. Angeline, http://www.brickhaus.com/amoore/magazine/Davis.html
12. Stuart Davis (a leading US modernist) underwent something of a conversion with the Brooklyn show stating that "the exhibition itself was an inspiration to me and has given me a fresh impulse." Fascinated by El Lissitzky's work, Davis was supplied by Dreier (who had kept up a strong appreciation for Russian modernism since 1922 when she visited the Erste Russiche Kunstausstellung in Berlin) with knowledge which would inform his seminal 'Egg Beater' series. She simultaneously supplied Lissitzky with sports magazines which reflected American culture. Such closeness between US and Soviet modernism has since been downplayed because of the Cold War. See Angeline above. The over-emphasis on Parisian Modernism which critics such as Harold Rosenberg note in much American art stems from critics reflecting its predominance and over-emphasis in Peggy Guggenheim's collection.
13. Marcel Duchamp as Conservator, Mark B. Pohlad, http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_3/Articles/pohlad/pohlad.html
14. Ibid. I would recommend the Duchamp magazine http://www.toutfait.com this regularly over-turns conventional wisdom on Duchamp.
15. *Ibid.*
16. The Katherine S. Dreier Papers / Societe Anonyme Archive, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Learning from history

David Chandler is the author of 'Western Intervention and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia 89-99', in which he argued that: "Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia has created a vicious circle where one destabilising intervention has been followed by another as international institutions have set the framework of fragmentation."

He was a Council of Europe election monitor at the Kosovo municipal elections on 28/18/01 and has closely studied the mechanics of the administration of occupied Kosovo. Phil England interviewed him about his new book and recent developments.

Phil England: Your book *Faking Democracy After Dayton*[1] shows that in Bosnia and Kosovo the elected governments and transitional councils are in effect puppets democracies there to rubber-stamp the policy initiatives of the High Representatives and the international community. Can you outline the problems you see with these protectorates and why you think this model will not work in Afghanistan?

David Chandler: Many people say that protectorates are too unwieldy. They argue that the fact that you've got all these different international bodies involved—the UN, NATO, Council of Europe and the European Union—has been a problem that's been responsible for the lack of any progress in Bosnia and Kosovo. How can you work efficiently if all the members have to agree before you can apply a policy?

But I think there's a more basic problem. At the end of the day, you can't nation build or impose democracy or a political system on another country. Any solution has to come from, and be accountable to, the people that live in that country.

In order to bring society together, there is no point in just having a vetted, right-on, liberal parliament. It may look very good on paper but unless these people have any basis in that society, it's going to be very difficult for them to overcome those barriers and to take some accountability for policy making and change the political context.

In Afghanistan, America has got the power to dictate exactly who's going to come to power. Perhaps it will be the old king who hasn't been there for twenty-eight years and some perfect multi-coloured coalition. But what they're really concerned with is how to engineer for the Taliban, the Mujahedeen groups and the Northern Alliance—groups they don't like politically—not to have too much say in some future government. They can do that easily, but the chances of that ever cohering Afghan society or creating a sustainable process of peace building where there's an exit strategy for international bureaucrats? That's never going to work.

Look at Bosnia where you have all these discussions about how to minimise the influence of the nationalist parties and stop people voting on ethnic lines. 'Maybe if we ban some candidates as being potential war criminals or sack a few elected presidents for being obstructionist, then things would be much better.' You can do a lot of imposed engineering, so that in Bosnia today, the nationalist parties aren't in power at the state or the entity levels and superficially you might think that's really good. But then you realise that that's only been the result of people being kicked out of office or the international community fiddling how elections are managed.

At the moment the international community run Kosovo and Bosnia without too much difficulty by imposing what they want. But as long as the political institutions have no accountability or autonomy for taking decisions that everyone inside Bosnia can live with it will be artificial.

The lesson is that foreign intervention is destabilising and doesn't give people the chance to establish a viable political system. Why repeat a failed process of external meddling in other people's affairs?

PE: They're still selling the idea that although these places are protectorates, they are in transition. But from your perspective there is no exit strategy for the UN and no prospect for self-governance in the future.

DC: After six years in Bosnia people are saying, 'Well, we're going to have to be there for a long time.' Whenever there's an opportunity to roll back international rule in Bosnia or to bring some NATO troops out, people say, 'Well it's a matter of principle, if we were to let people have a bit more power now that would give the hard-liners more confidence, it would disempower some of the NGOs and the people we want to support.' And in Kosovo there's an indefinite mandate for the international community.

Also, because of the moral rhetoric that we fought this war to civilise, liberate or empower people the international community can't just leave Bosnia or Afghanistan to govern themselves because the original legitimacy of the war would disappear. They have to paint these societies as being totally incapable of governing themselves, as being run by criminals and warlords, people and governments which are not to be trusted.

My personal view is that until the international community sees the political sphere as a place for resolving issues and getting people together and working across political, regional and ethnic divisions and resolving problems with a degree of autonomy, accountability and responsibility, then we're never going to progress. At the moment all the international plans and strategies are about how to avoid the issues and how to feel more comfortable.

PE: In Kosovo, not only have the international community's attempts to impose democracy failed, the exercise has caused a huge amount of human suffering and cost a huge amount of money. The 'international community' have to stump up to rebuild the country that it destroyed and then someone has to pay for all the staff in the huge bureaucracies that are imposed. Surely non-intervention is some kind of solution?

DC: I'd agree, but we'd be in a minority of two. Today I was at this think tank for the UN and democracy[2] meeting of policy advisers. They say, 'Dave, we can't even have that discussion. It's fair enough to say it won't work or they shouldn't be there or they shouldn't have bombed Afghanistan to start with, but from a policy point of view we have to deal with the world as it is. The reality on the ground is that the UN will be involved whether they like it or not. What we have to think about is how can we manage it.' It's difficult to argue for the principles of democracy, sovereignty or even international law, when there's no respect for them and when there's no real social force in society or even internationally that can put them into practice.

The UN is not acting out of choice in a sense. There's no way that Bush and Blair will want to take responsibility for the mess that they've made in Afghanistan. It wasn't a great place beforehand but after who knows how many weeks of war, everything's going to be totally screwed up. So they're very lucky that they've got this new rejuvenated UN with new priorities that's so desperate for a role in the world that they're going to take on the job of administration afterwards.

The UN aren't looking forward to it but they know that if they don't do it they won't get any money from America. The only role that the UN can play today is hand-maiden to NATO and America. They're not playing their old role any more so the whole situation is desperate.

The old UN approach was to be fairly neutral, let people negotiate their own peace agreements, perhaps put in some blue helmets to man a peace line but to respect sovereignty. The UN's Brahimi Report (written by Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy who is advising on Afghanistan)[3] said that that doesn't work because it doesn't solve the problem. Take Cyprus or other places where you've had partition or you've let people get on with it, you've still got partition and Blue Helmets manning a police line. What these people argue is that protectorates don't just stop the war but also stop the causes of war.

But I think that even the policy makers are beginning to recognise that this new approach doesn't really solve the problem either. And I think that's the real nut that we've got to crack, to explain why these protectorates are even less likely to work than the old style partition.

PE: You say that the turning point with Kosovo was when the local conflict was turned into a humanitarian issue and that that created the justification for military intervention[4]. There was this phoney document that the Germans were supposed to have had called "Operation Horseshoe."[5] And Racak was a set up in a sense[6]. To what extent did NATO force through the military intervention in Kosovo before all the political and diplomatic means had been exhausted?

DC: People would argue that the Rambouillet meetings weren't really face to face talks between the Serbs and the Albanians and that the American state department wrote the agreement, in the same way as the US state department wrote the Dayton Agreement for Bosnia. They'd argue that the US forced the agreement separately on the parties, and the decision to make it a military intervention rather than a diplomatic one was taken by America. I'm not privy to the higher echelons of American planners and why they thought the war worthwhile. Whether they thought they would win it easily and whether they thought it would look good or whether it was another mechanism for putting pressure on Milosevic. But it's true that all the diplomatic possibilities weren't pursued.

Look at Afghanistan—no diplomatic niceties bothered with remotely. That just shows, in our unipolar world America doesn't have to go through that anymore. If you want to start a war, preferably against a state that's unable to defend itself, and if you can dress it up in the humanitarian liberal rhetoric of today, you're going to get mass support for it.

In Kosovo it was wrong for the Albanians to think that because the Americans were bombing the Serbs that everything would be hunky-dory. It's true that Kosovo was historically one of the most poor and run-down regions and maintaining law and order has always been difficult. Tito's policy of levelling the country economically didn't really work. So the origins of the conflict lie partly in historic divisions and partly in a failure of socialist management policies of economic development.

But I think the real problem in Kosovo has been the fact that instead of negotiating and working through a solution, people have been encouraged to fight a war that they knew they couldn't win, but they hoped to draw in the international community. When that

happens it encourages people to refuse to negotiate with their neighbours because you rely on the international community instead.

Unfortunately the only people that are going to be able to rebuild Kosovo are the people that live there and to do that you're obviously going to have to build relationships with countries around you—like Serbia—whether you like it or not.

Very few Serbs remain in Kosovo. The few that remain were too scared to go the polls and boycotted the municipal elections because they didn't respect the international protectorate. There were Serbian representatives on the Transitional Council, although sometimes they'd refuse to attend. In reality the protectorate has overridden even UNSC resolution 1244 which gives respect for Yugoslav sovereignty. When I was there, outside the polling stations there were American flags and Albanian flags. Pretty strange for somewhere that is still supposed to be part of Yugoslavia. Ethnic Albanians have voted in elections so far because they thought it would symbolise a move towards independence. But as the years go by I think you'll see lower turnouts as people realise the farce that these elections are under the protectorate framework.

In Kosovo they have their first provincial elections in November. So you will have the same two tier system that you have in Bosnia where you have an elected government and above them an international administration.

PE: In Kosovo and Bosnia, the organisation responsible for the "democratisation" programme is the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). I don't think many people would know who they are, where they came from and why they exist. But a huge organisation nevertheless. And you've looked at them very closely in your work and you've even worked for them as a monitor in various elections.

DC: The OSCE are an intergovernmental organisation that was set up during the Cold War, I think in 1975, with the Helsinki Agreement. The idea was to put pressure on Eastern Europe around human rights and then there'd be an opening with economics and trade. So it was a Cold War body but the secret of the OSCE's success was that it never had a formal mandate. It was very much an informal series of conferences. With the end of the Cold War it was bodies that weren't tied to the UN Charter or Cold War mandates saying you couldn't interfere in politics and sovereignty. One of the OSCE initial big things was a series of conferences around minority rights where it was agreed that Western powers had the rights to monitor minority rights situations in Eastern Europe and a whole new network and mechanisms of regulation. It was worked out in a very one-sided way—obviously neither the Basque question nor the Northern Ireland question was a concern of minority rights, all the minority rights questions were in Eastern Europe. It was always a problem to phrase it in a universal language and then in the small print say these national questions aren't counted because of violence, or because they are indigenous minorities. Now they've developed a whole way of regulating the political process so you'll see the OSCE monitoring elections and the media in various states. In Bosnia and Kosovo the OSCE don't just monitor the elections, they set them up, they make the laws and regulations and the same with the media as well.

PE: The OSCE was accused of meddling in the Belarus elections last month. You were a monitor at the elections and wrote a piece on that[7]. There was also a piece in the Guardian on the US manipulation of the Belarus elections ("Operation White Stork") and the fact that and that it was modelled on what they did to get Kostunica into power in Belgrade[8]. At a Committee for Peace in the Balkans public meeting recently, Ann Mahon MP was warning that NATO now has Belarus in its sights. The US through the National Endowment for Democracy has been manipulating foreign elections quite some time, quite systematically[9]. Covert funding and election management seems to make a mockery of pretensions of encouraging democracy.

DC: There's a load of different so-called 'democracy' approaches. One traditional one is to fund political parties or independent newspapers or give them campaigning advice which on one-hand is a fairly traditional meddling approach. You could be generous and say, well at least there's an element of democracy about it because they argue that there should be a level playing field, that in these "transitional states" the governing party owns all the press, they've got all the publicity and all the rest of it.

With Belarus, the US Embassy and the OSCE permanent mission played a big role in getting an opposition candidate together who they thought could do a Kostunica. They persuaded the main five opposition groups to unite behind one candidate. But it was the candidate that they didn't want to unite behind—Goncharyk—who they saw as being a Trade Unionist and maybe he could win a few votes from President Lukashenka. But all that happened was that it undermined the choice for Belarussian voters. Also, once the international community gets behind one party or one faction, their policies become much more geared to the international community than to the electorate. In Belarus it was hilarious in a way that as soon as they knew they had international backing from the opposition they weren't really worried about winning the election. They just complained that the elections weren't really fair, they were fraudulent and tried to get the international community in to overturn the result and appoint their person. On the day of the elections when the other candidates were out campaigning, Goncharyk was at the Hotel Planeta talking to parliamentarians from the OSCE and the Council of Europe as opposed to the electorate. So that approach failed and I think it was very detrimental to democracy in Belarus.

PE: What is the point you are making in your new book about the connection between human rights and international interventions?[10]

DC: A lot of interventions today are based on protecting the rights of other people. Once you call an issue a human right what you're saying is that this right is so important that it should be policed, monitored or administrated independently outside the sphere of politics, democracy and accountability. An international institution can act for the rights of people in Kosovo but the people in Kosovo have no say over what is done in their name. At the same time, the British public have no say over what the government does in their name. The government says, 'We're not acting on your behalf, we're acting on behalf of other people'. So these universal rights are very different from political rights because they don't have a lot of accountability attached to them. So no matter how much the international community might screw up a situation with political intervention, military intervention and then protectorate style intervention, it's never their own fault. That's why these policies are repeated.

Quite often the slippery concept of human rights gives power to the already powerful. It's giving the US and other Western states more power to intervene in smaller states in other parts of the world outside of a framework of international law, outside of a framework of the equality of political sovereignty—and to create a new, pre-1945, pre-UN framework. By throwing away that Cold War framework we are very much entering the framework of might is right.

The more we see the end of international law and the end of respect for sovereignty the more conflict we'll see where people will be intentionally trying to bring in the international community because they'd rather have a protectorate than face a democratic mandate or negotiate from a position of weakness. Some people might argue that it's a license for minorities who want to separate but at the end of the day, it's the major Western powers that decide which campaigns they're going to support and which countries they're going to undermine. I worry that there's going to be more Kosovos, Bosnias and Afghanistans, wars allegedly fought for the protection of human rights and dressed-up in the liberal terminology of empowerment and we're basically going to go back to an old colonial era of enslavement—a few independent rich and powerful states while everyone else is going to be dictated to.

Clinton, Bush and Blair love going in on a white charger saving the victims, but there's very little thought given to what happens afterwards to the consequences. It's very short-termist. The lesson we've seen time and time again is that the international community isn't really concerned with human rights in Kosovo or Afghanistan. They're either concerned with their geostrategic interests or, more likely, with getting a good sound bite for domestic audiences.

Notes

1. David Chandler Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton (Pluto Press, 2nd Edition, 2000).
2. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).
3. General Assembly Security Council, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, 21 August 2000, http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/
4. David Chandler "Western Intervention and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia" in Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis Philip Hammond & Edward S. Herman, eds (Pluto Press, 2000).
5. Foreign Affairs Select Committee Fourth Report: Kosovo, paras 93-98.
6. Hammond & Herman, eds, ibid pp 117-120.
7. David Chandler - Dictating Democracy in Belarus http://www.spiked-online.com/articles/00000002D26F.htm
8. Ian Traynor "Belarussian foils dictator-buster... for now", The Guardian, 14/9/01.
9. Eg William Blum "Rogue State" (Zed Books, 2001) pp. 168-183.
10. David Chandler From Kosovo to Kabul: Human Rights and International Intervention (Pluto Press, forthcoming March 2002).

Searching for Asylum

William Clark

The Targeting and Criminalisation of Kurdish Asylum Seekers

Desmond Fernandes

(available from Peace in Kurdistan, 44 Ainger Road, London NW3 3AT)

This excellent report by Desmond Fernandes argues that Kurdish asylum seekers and refugee communities have been targeted and criminalised in a number of ways by state and parapolitical agencies. It provides evidence that across 'Fortress Europe' prison, immigration, security and policing services adopt institutionally racist, brutal and unaccountable policies and procedures.

Many asylum and refugee groups which have already fallen prey to an insidious coalition of the tabloid press, political opportunism, far-right groups, corrupt police and an unaccountable Security Service are now the subject of the government's proposal that people are categorised as a "national security risk and international terrorist" on the basis of the Home Secretary's beliefs or suspicions. The criteria for which are not given in the new legislation and the basis for the suspicions will be secret. Anyone who appeals against the decision, will have their case heard in a closed hearing, which may take place in their absence without full disclosure of the evidence.

While Turkey, the UK and the US routinely bomb northern Iraq themselves, the law is being perverted to give politicians the right to return asylum seekers even although they will be killed. The authorities need no longer look into reasons why people may be fleeing. Even being subjected to torture now means nothing. Those likely to seek political asylum because of their political affiliations will be considered 'terrorists'.

The Immigration Service guided by a succession of Home Secretaries (Baker, Hurd, Howard...) have long been active in contravening its own rules, ignoring the basic fact that "...asylum seekers ha(ve) a perfect right under present law—i.e. under the 1951 Convention—to use illegal means (such as false documents) to claim asylum."(p10)

Decisions are "simply political", concludes Fazil Kawani from the Refugee Council, rather than being based upon clear humanitarian considerations and principles:

"Such a desire to deter and target 'key' national 'undesirable' groups has led to a range of new, discriminatory 'measures' being institutionalised against Kurdish—and other—asylum seekers. At the beginning of May, 2001, for instance, Barbara Roche, the Home Office Minister, brazenly announced that immigration officers were now being openly permitted to officially discriminate against eight nationalities, one of which was Kurdish." (p11)

Jack Straw is now imposing a policy that institutionally targets and swiftly deports 'Turkish' Kurdish (as with other) asylum seekers fleeing from military conscription in their 'home' countries:

"In Turkey, one must remember, several Kurds have been forced to flee rather than be jailed/tortured for conscientiously objecting, or forced to join an army that has been involved in the genocidal destruction of over 3,000 Kurdish villages in the south-east, the deaths of

thousands and the forcible displacement of over three million Kurds since the early 1990's alone...government policy is now set to possibly target and deport/criminalise up to 6,000 'bogus' Kurdish asylum seekers in this way, after an appeal in Britain's High Court failed to reverse this policy." (p12)

for those who somehow manage to live here there is the policy of dispersal. In Glasgow alone:

"There have been more than 70 racist attacks in the Sighthill area since refugees began arriving on the estate, more than a year ago, often under cover of darkness. Refugees have complained of being spat at and verbally abused ... Many of them have remained holed up in their flats, too frightened to venture out". In Robina Qureshi's opinion: "The government must have known that bringing empty council houses into use for" its targeted "asylum seekers would result in mass concentration of asylum seekers and fuel racial tensions in already deprived council estates". (p14)

Investigative reporters have observed that NATO and the EU have (through the Schengen agreement and the expansion of 'Europol') developed ideological agendas which seek the criminalisation of 'Turkish' Kurdish asylum seekers and refugee communities which they perceived to be 'pro-Kurdish' and/or 'pro-PKK' in orientation. According to the lawyer Gareth Peirce, "the British and Turkish governments, under the rubric of 'suppression of terrorism', have managed to criminalise the Kurdish (refugee) community of Great Britain. Without engaging the legitimacy of a Kurdish struggle for national rights, the British police has deliberately worked to cast doubt on every Kurd in the UK as terrorist suspects". (p15)

Fernandes' report notes that the only potential source of terrorism in Britain identified by name alongside the IRA in (ex-MI5 head) Stella Rimmington's maiden broadcast were 'the Kurds'.

"MI5 and police Special Branch are making a considerable investment in portraying Kurds in Britain as terrorists" and criminals. "With such expenditure of resources, they are likely to be looking for results, if only to maintain their credibility and position within the increasingly competitive world of the British security and intelligence services." (p18)

That such results are accomplished by provocation and frame-ups should come as no surprise—the report has details on several framing, incitements and intimidation incidents—but if our society refuses to distinguish between the guilty and not guilty we are all in danger.

British intelligence information about émigré political activities is also exchanged with the Turkish State. According to Tony Bunyan, the editor of Statewatch, MI5 seem to be doing the job of the murderous Turkish Secret Police:

"...they will come to public meetings of the group...They will take down the numbers of the cars which are outside the building, a technique which again goes way back and was widely used in the days of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in this country. They will try and infiltrate the group and get a feel for the group and...they will often use inducements. They say: 'We will give you the right to stay in this country. We will get you a passport, if you give us information, if you will inform on your group'. These are well-tried (targeting) techniques from their history. They will produce assessments of the threat posed by the groups. They will associate groups with terrorists—'all refugees equal criminals, equal terrorists'...Of course, they have a long history of working with their counterparts, with their so-called friendly allies in NATO, which has included the CIA, and (with) Mossad and no doubt Turkish intelligence. There is a long history of collusion with these foreign intelligence agencies".(p17)

The report distressingly suggests that police agents and the Special Branch PKK Desk were allegedly involved in:

"making deals with actual criminals; hit-men who are subcontracted to carry out physical assaults and intimidation of the ('pro-Kurdish' refugee) community. Outside London, the situation is worse. Through phone tapping and informants, police are tipped off about any

All images: *Doug Aubrey* except far right: *Unknown*

(public community/refugee centre) event taking place: in one case prior to a (public Kurdish) community centre event in Scotland"—which was taking place legally—"police were waiting outside to arrest Kurds from the local community arriving to attend. Those travelling from London"—again, perfectly legally—"to address the meeting, were stopped six times en route by police controls. Another witness elsewhere revealed the gun he was given by police to 'shoot up' visiting Kurdish (human rights) speakers...Shop keepers have told us how they're being pressured and threatened to act as police informants. In return for information, they're being bribed with money or offered more secure legal/asylum status and protection." (p21)

A lot of the work here has gone to a booming private sector, some of whom even offer extra-judicial killings as a service. The report also mentions the UK based 'consultancy group', Aims Ltd (which I believe has some connection to the old far-right Aims of Industry organisation) which through its close links to British Intelligence and the SAS:

"...also happens to be the organisation which was exposed as having "plotted to assassinate Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the...PKK group" and "offered to arrange to irradiate Kurdish rebels held by the Turks in northern Iraq. The company told Turkish authorities that after the Kurds were released, the radiation would make it possible to track" and target "their movements and follow them to their bases. It added that the prisoners could fall ill from radiation poisoning within 21 days". It was also "one of two British firms which provided military equipment and training facilities to members of the Turkish special forces who captured Ocalan". "

How did they get access to radioactive material? No action is being taken against this company—why is this? It would seem that if you have the right contacts you can not openly plot murder in the UK but make money out of it. Somehow or other that is not terrorism.

The implications of the Terrorism Act 2000 were still unfolding as the report was being written, but it notes that organisations such a the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism are warning that:

"the Act's provisions are drawn so widely as to give police and prosecutors freedom to arrest most people who are involved in any way in refugee communities' activities or in solidarity work". Anyone in the UK writing an article or speaking in support of Kurdish self-determination could be construed as supporting a proscribed organisation. A meeting in any public venue which is "in support of asylum rights (but) which is addressed by a member of one of the organisations" which has been proscribed (e.g. The PKK) "could land the organisers in prison..."(p31)

How can democratic opposition be said to exist here? With the recent World Trade Centre bombings and Tony Blair's increased commitment to assist the US government in its war' against 'global terrorism'—and the enactment of ever more intrusive 'fast-tracked' anti-terrorism laws—it seems even more likely that Kurdish refugee—and other—communities in the UK will feel the unaccountable wrath of Europol, MI5 and Special Branch. These organisations are clearly (as the report argues) being increasingly 'tasked' to 'target' and obtain quick populist results against proscribed 'global terrorist' organisations.

The situation in Germany is in some ways more advanced in the criminalisation of Kurdish Asylum Seekers and Refugee Communities. Here mainstream politicians adopted the rhetoric of the far-right and incited an atmosphere of racial hatred. A special investigator for the European Parliament's Commission of Inquiry on Racism and Xenophobia states that it legitimised their views and gave neo-Nazis the green light to step up their attacks:

"Eager to instrumentalise the asylum question, the government of Helmut Kohl was deeply implicated in the neo-fascist resurgence that occurred in Germany...Gunter Grass went so far as to liken members of Kohl's cabinet to 'white collar skinheads' who were even more dangerous than the ultra-right-wing street gangs. 'They are nicely dressed with beautiful hair. They speak well. But they think in the same way as the young kids who shave their heads and carry swastikas and demonstrate...'"

We can compare this with the situation now in the UK and make some predictions of a likely future. We also saw a similar picture of active recruitment among the Italian police of far-right activists in Genoa and their use—dressed as police—against peaceful demonstrators.

The criminalisation and targeting is also a result of Turkish State's 'Psychological Warfare Operations', which Fernandes has written about in Variant and elsewhere. In Germany members of the Turkish Secret Service (MIT) were caught completely out of control and behind arson attacks against Turkish-owned businesses in Germany. The social chaos and destruction that is the cost of this collusion and importation of Turkey's dirty war is having an increasingly destabilising effect on UK society—it has destroyed civil society and freedom in Turkey.

"According to determinations made by Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), an MIT employee working in Turkey's Consulate General in Stuttgart stored a large quantity of gasoline in 20-litre containers, despite the fact that his vehicle had a diesel engine. It is stated that this gasoline was utilized in attacks against Turkish businesses. MIT then sought to" unfairly target, criminalise and "blame the PKK" and its Kurdish refugee supporters in Germany "for these arson attacks in order to tarnish the public image of the Kurds. German intelligence officials (have) thus arrived at the conclusion that 'Turkey was doing all in its power to ensure that Germany would perceive the PKK as an enemy of the state'" and act accordingly to target/criminalise/deport its refugee 'supporters' within the country."

Fernandes' report confirms that there has been extensive targeting and criminalisation of Kurdish asylum seekers and refugee communities in the UK and Germany over the past two decades—all of which—deserves to be revealed, morally damned and opposed.

Look Out Kids!

D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus

Hermione Good

At the Edinburgh Film Festival in a special BAFTA presentation D. A. Pennebaker spoke recently of his 40 years experience in documentary film making. A pioneer of the 'Direct Cinema' movement of the 50s, his first directorial triumph was *Primary* (1960) which established him as a major figure in American film. In the 60s Pennebaker filmed a range of cultural figures: Bob Dylan in *Don't Look Back* (1967), Hendrix, Joplin and others in *Monterey Pop* (1969) and David Bowie in *Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars: The Movie*. Pennebaker's projects have also included collaborations with Jean-Luc Godard. A collaborative approach with his partner, Chris Hegedus began with *Town Bloody Hall* (1977) which captured Norman Mailer vs. Germaine Greer in their notoriously flamboyant debate on Womans' Liberation in New York. Other participants included Diana Trilling and Susan Sontag. More recently they made the Oscar-nominated *The War Room*, which followed Bill Clinton's campaign strategists during the 1992 election. Another well-received documentary, *Moon Over Broadway* followed Carol Burnett's stage comeback. They had two films at the festival, *Startup.com* (which was co-directed by Hedegus and newcomer Jahane Noujaim) which followed the boom and bust of a dot com venture, and *Down From the Mountain* a concert film featuring music from the Coen brothers' film *O Brother Where Art Thou?*

For further information their web site is at:
http://www.pennebakerhegedusfilms.com/index.html

The interview was introduced by Nick Fraser, the Editor of BBC's *Storyville* who started by saying that documentaries generally made him feel bad about life, but the great thing about Pennebaker and Hegedus' work was that it made him feel good. The first clip was *Don't Look Back* and Bob Dylan's lyrics on cards sequence to 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' (yes that is Allen Ginsberg at the edge of the frame).

Was this the first 'Rockumentary' and pop video? The sequence was Dylan's idea—a rejoinder to the Beatles singing the wrong lyrics on 'Ready-Steady-Go'. They sat up all night drawing the cards and started shooting in a garden at 8 am. After being hassled by a cop they ducked into a New York alleyway and did it in two takes.

With *Don't look Back*, like taking a walk, Pennebaker has an agenda but doesn't have a structure. His role wasn't to provide information about Dylan (he claims to be suspicious of this approach) but simply to observe. He didn't want to ask questions like 'why did you change your name?' or ask him to do anything again if he missed it on camera—he doesn't want to put the pressure of filmmaking onto the subject.

The second clip was Dylan's argument with the hack from Time magazine. Fraser asked why they didn't interview their subjects or have a commentary? Chris Hegedus answered that she doesn't have rules but what interests her is the excitement of being dropped in someone else's world. They want a relationship where they hang in the background and watch rather than interview. Fraser asked whether the term 'Direct Cinema' meant anything to them now? Pennebaker said that firstly, their films are 'movies'. They want people to watch documentaries the same way they go to watch feature films, and believe the word *documentary* sometimes has connotations of an attached agenda.

Clip three was from 'Town Bloody Hall' (72 - 79) recording an event billed as the "last event of the 1960s in the theatre of ideas" and centring on a debate on feminism. For Pennebaker: 'the most ineptly shot film I've ever seen'. He didn't want to make a comedy film about a serious issue but the footage seemed filled with jokes and rude words. At this point Hegedus approached him as he struggled with the footage—she came in and saved it. Hegedus spoke of how *Life* magazine in the 60s had elevated the status of photography and was attempting to do the same with film. Through *Life* she became aware of Pennebaker and Albert and David Maysles work dealing with real subjects (Kennedy, Fonda and so on) and became inspired. So, aware of Pennebaker's documentary on Feminism she asked him for a job as his editor, adding: "The women's movement meant a lot to me but the event was hilarious and there was an incredible electricity between Germaine Greer and Norman Mailer. Working on the project it felt in a sense like putting a cap on the 60s."

Since then they have continued to work together. Hegedus said the bonus is that shooting on a long project can be lonely, sometimes subjects don't want you there so working with a partner is a bonus. She joked though that in the editing room they "get divorced at least once". "Usually Penne gives in" met with "normally she's wrong..." which was followed by another clip of Germaine and Norman.

Their work isn't broadly funded, so Fraser asked them how they kept going as independent film makers. Pennebaker joked that they stay alive because of dead rock stars, as he retained the rights to footage of early stuff like 'Monterey Pop'.

They like to release the films in cinema theatres because it's the only way to get a critical response, interest grows through word of mouth and the film has a chance to build. By contrast on TV the films play once and are gone, they tend to get lost within the ratings-led ethos. US TV stations don't normally want their films anyway, they weren't interested in 'The War Room'. With 'Start.up.com' they took a risk and started without any backing—half way through they made a short pilot version and showed it to Nick Fraser who commissioned it for the BBC. Pennebaker added that he'd made films for CBS in the past but ended up keeping them. They didn't want what he turned out.

The next clip was 'The War Room' which followed Clinton's presidential campaign, showing the unexpected Jennifer Flowers' confession of a long term relationship during the campaign. How did *they* get such intimate access? Hegedus started by saying "Films come in the door like little cold cats that come in out the rain."

A couple of guys came to see them and said 'don't you think the election is so strange that somebody should make a film about it?' Pennebaker and Hegedus said they were interested but didn't have an entree to the Whitehouse. The two people came back with money and the necessary introductions. Beginning the project they wondered if it would be a good idea. Would the campaign team be candid on camera? Would they say 'shit'? In a meeting with James Carvell (Clinton's spin doctor), he blew a chewing gum bubble until it exploded all over his face—that swung it for them.

A clip from 'The War Room' met with the response that the film wouldn't have had the same impact if it had been about a losing campaign team: again, they took a risk in the subject matter. It paid off—the people the documentary caught showed a fired-up energy, youthful enthusiasm and the determination to get the Republicans out. For them Clinton was a dream candidate: very charismatic, incredible memory, knew every issue, smart, energetic.

The next clip was from 'Moon Over Broadway'. This followed Carol Burnett's return to the Broadway stage. Nick Fraser observed that this was not a bad ploy to start with. Their producer for the project had links with top Broadway producers and got a list of what everyone was working on. Burnett's name and the notion of a play with behind the scenes aspects was the draw. The problem was the expense and technical difficulty in getting access to a Broadway show and a large number of actors for a long period of time. After discussions with the unions they got a two week trial on set and managed to establish a strong enough relationship to enable the film to go ahead.

Speaking on their latest film 'Startup.com' in which Pennebaker took a producer's role, Hegedus said she got into the idea because of the way the net was changing people's lives. She read about a place called 'Silicon Alley' in New York: kids in their 20s were starting companies with three page ideas and they'd get funding and make their fortunes. Again fate played a part and a cat came in from the cold: her co-director Jahane Noujaim came to them and suggested that they make a film about her friends Kaleil Tuzman and Tom Herman, best friends since childhood who were about to start up a dot com venture. So they had

started with the notion of an optimistic adventure where they would all become millionaires. Then the market turned. The first clip showed the founder member of the company, Kaleil sacking his best friend, Tom as their venture began to go horribly wrong.

Asked if she ever felt uncomfortable filming such events, Hedegus stated that there are always things you can't film; "it's like a dance, we get to know each other, what the limits are. We suggested let us film but if you're not happy we won't use it." It was a gift from the subjects to let them keep filming because of the trust they had built up shooting 400 hours of footage. She is aware that their films become viewed differently with the perspective of history. They began making 'Startup' in a boom time, now everyone knows nearly 99% of dot com companies have failed. Audiences view the film with the expectancy of failure, but that wasn't the idea when they started. Hegedus stressed they do not set out to portray people in a bad light, they only make films about people they like and so it is sometimes tough when things go wrong. On Moon over Broadway, "watching playwrights getting bad reviews was difficult".

Were their films intrusive? Pennebaker said it might be intrusive to film someone making love but in most of the situations they filmed he felt the idea of a camera being there was not outrageous. One question was about 'releases' how did they get clearance for all the people that feature incidentally in their films? "Fake them!" came the reply. Pennebaker claimed they have only ever got one in all their years as film-makers—a Liverpudlian Dylan Fan when making 'Don't Look Back'.

'Startup' was completely shot on DV video cameras. Hegedus said they had become 'wedded to DV', particularly the Sony VX1000 model with the flip out screen. Prior to this they had mainly worked on film, but Pennebaker agreed that working with DV had been a fantastic advantage to their kind of film-making—lightweight cameras being less intrusive and tape stock being so much cheaper than film. In the past, a major problem had been that transferring from video to film for theatrical release had never looked good, but now telecine technology was so much improved he has finally become an advocate of DV.

Was there any story they started and couldn't finish? Yes, said Pennebaker—Janis Joplin. He found her scary and just couldn't deal with the drugs. He wanted to avoid the issue yet with her it was unavoidable. "Who was to say she didn't need it? In making a documentary you don't want to be romantic or judgmental about drugs...I ran away."

"You like yoga ...we like speed"

Paul McCarthy interviewed

Graham Ramsay & John Beagles

US artist Paul McCarthy was taking a break from the final adjustments to the installation of his first major retrospective show in the UK, at the Tate Liverpool. We joined him for a drink, along with Tracey Ruddell from the Press Office.

Graham Ramsay/John Beagles: How do you feel about the way your work is written about, specifically in terms of [Julia] Kristeva, 'the abject' and that whole psychoanalytical take on it? It sometimes feels like a way for the writers to make your work intellectually respectable to themselves.

Paul McCarthy: It kind of goes both ways, there are people who just dismiss the work and just talk about it as being abject and not trying to analyse it, but just being dismissive. Then there are writers who are more analytical about it. I'm into it both ways because that's kind of how it's made. I'm not trying to make it psychoanalytical but then at the same time...

GR/JB: We were reading a non-too-flattering article about your work by Donald Kuspit in which he accused you and Mike Kelley of lacking critical distance. Over the last ten years there have been a lot of artists who have also been accused of this. Artists who have wanted to have some critical purchase but at the same time have stressed their own entanglement and immersion within their subject.

PM: I remember that Donald Kuspit article and I was kind of into it, I was thinking this is pretty interesting (Laughter).

GR/JB: He was giving you a telling off. (Wags finger)

PM: Yeah, he was saying "You're full of shit", but that's pretty interesting. I kind of like that article (laughs) but I was shocked that he wrote that much, and felt that he had to somehow put it in its place. But for me he just confirmed everything he said the work was not.

GR/JB: I get the impression it was written pretty quickly, with forceful typing and a certain amount of anger.

PM: Yeah, like he saw the show, ran home and was really pissed. "I gotta stop this now! They've gone too far! They're making too much money!" (Laughs)

GR/JB: Can you speak about the way you use your performances, and yourself, within your work and how that's changed from the 70s to the present day?

PM: Well, there was a period in the 70s when there were pieces about duration, repetition, task and all those kind of words that were used at that time. Those works were made in a room by myself. I was into repetition and this sort of obsessional stuff. In 72 I made a tape, "Ma Belle", in which I make this laugh and there is this persona. It's not like I was making these repetitive, minimal pieces until 78 and then switched over to these more theatrical works with personae or fractured narratives of some sort. It was much more a case of these concerns overlapping. I had made narrative films in the 60s which dealt with personae, an established character of some sort and costumes.

GR/JB: Did those films involve just you, or actors as well?

PM: Me, and an actor friend who I was hanging out with at the time. One film featured two friends, a couple, in an apartment building and they are in this room carrying on with their daily life but they're nude. The camera is always floating past them; the camera is always moving and panning across them. Then I made one where this woman puts on makeup, and I made another where this guy is a chicken. They're kind of stupid but a lot of the films are lost. At the time I was making this work with the camera moving I didn't think I was doing anything but making a film, but there was something weird about how I kept moving the camera. I don't think it was by accident. It had to do with architecture and the camera kept switching to a window or a door.

GR/JB: It sounds similar to "Bossy Burger", where the action is viewed from several positions and you often only get a glimpse of what's going on.

PM: Yeah, and I don't know if I'm reading something into it but I'm thinking about how I might film something now. At one point I'd seen a Dennis Oppenheim piece in the early 70s, which I really liked, where a conveyor belt is put right through a wall. The idea was you put a penny on one side and the conveyor took it through and dropped it on the other side. For me, it was this thing about passing through the wall, going through the wall, and I liked the way this conveyor belt interacted with the architecture. You never fucking see that piece anywhere. I made this piece where two cameras began by looking at two windows next to each other and then the cameras begin to move like this (circular motions). They follow lines on the floor, and the lines are marked at points where single frames are to be shot. Then the two films would be shown at the same time on two screens next to one another like two eyeballs. It begins like the head moving but the eyes go in different directions, click, and they go straight through walls, click, next shots on the other side. It's as if the architecture has no substance, its just perceptual. These ideas of moving cameras, and cameras being eyes, was something I was really interested in, and so the camera is also the performer. That body of work has never really been seen much, even in this show, whose total logic is that it's someone else's curating, but it's also about the limits of the gallery space.

GR/JB: How much input did you have in the selection of works for this particular show, or when it was in LA and New York?

PM: Lisa Philips and Dan Cameron at the New Museum, New York did the initial curating. It was a kind of collaboration in that they had a list which had to do with their perception of my work, and it sort of passed through me, and then I was asked what I felt about it. There are pieces that I would have liked to have been included but part of that is the physical constraints involved, and the expense of moving them around. The show here stops with the "Santa Chocolate Shop".

GR/JB: Have you any ambitions to maybe work in different spaces, such as commercial television or film?

PM: The thing about film is money.

GR/JB: And the people who run the business.

PM: Yeah, the film world is run by people who make decisions based on money, and who want to see a script. I don't work with a script and so the idea of making a million-dollar film is pretty impossible for me.

GR/JB: What about a lower budget?

PM: Well that's really feasible. I've already shot in 35mm, 16mm, Betacam, and it's part of what I'm doing now in a film project with my son. And you know there have been a couple of times when I almost made rock videos. I was interested in it. I would get these letters, "We want you to do something wild!", and so I'd tell them my ideas andjust never hear from them again. (Laughs)

GR/JB: Which bands got in touch with you?

PM: I don't recall the name but someone told me they're really big? (Laughs)

GR/JB: Rage Against The Machine?

PM: I would have done that in a second. I really like 'em. Now I remember the others, it was Suicidal Tendencies, and also The Butthole Surfers. I was gonna do it and I was really into it but they backed down, or somebody backed

down. (Laughs) You never know who's backing down, right? There are so many managers, agents and these people in between who are trying to sell an idea so you don't know whether it's the band you're dealing with or what. It's been going on about once a year for the last five years and I always say, "Yeah, I'll do it", and nothing ever happens!

GR/JB: Do you have a few ongoing collaborations, such as those with Mike Kelley?

PM: I've collaborated with a number of people over the years, and with Mike it is definitely ongoing. In a peculiar way we're working on a piece right now, we've talked about certain ideas and next year well start work on this thing we've been thinking about for a while.

GR/JB: It's a good way to work, and it's good fun.

PM: Yeah, and it's never really like we say, "Its time to collaborate". I mean, with "Heidi" or "Fresh Acconci", for instance, we were just talking on the phone and the idea just happened in a conversation. This new one has been in the works for some time, just developing in our heads.

GR/JB: Did you find that it changed the nature of your work when you became a father?

PM: I think it did. I made pieces about fatherhood, or something. (Laughs)

GR/JB: I guess when you've gone through the birthing experience, and then all the shitting and puking, you can look at your art and think that's not so extreme after all. Maybe I can push this a little further. This is nothing.

PM: (Laughs) In the 80s my two were real young kids, and so you have to take care of them and change the art production thing.

GR/JB: It's a balancing act.

PM: Yeah, and it takes care of the money real good too! (Laughs)

Tracey Ruddell: Are you going to do a new performance of "Bossy Burger" here?

PM: I did it already. But it's not really a performance because nobody saw it and there's no camera. It's just a way of setting up. Each time I do it—nine or ten times now—it's different, sometimes it takes four hours, sometimes an hour and a half. Depending on the mood.

GR/JB: So you get locked into the gallery alone to perform?

PM: I usually do it at night when nobody is around. In the original there were about five bottles of ketchup and some milk and stuff. Now there are about twenty-five different ketchup bottles, all at a different stage of decay, and there are nine bottles of turkey bones and eighty-nine cartons of milk. You look at the floor and there are dark brown stains of ten-year-old ketchup and new stains.

GR/JB: It's a history of ketchup ... it will start to stink after a while.

PM: Oh yeah, and a lot depends on the kind of turkey bones I use. (Laughs) This one here is going to really stink! (Laughter)

GR/JB: I was looking at the "Pinocchio Pipenose Household dilemma" installation in the gallery, and I was wondering about the times you made the audience wear Pinocchio costumes when viewing the work and why that isn't happening for this show?

PM: When the videotape is being shown separate from the set, you have to wear a costume to watch it. There are ten costumes in all. When it was first shown in London viewers put on a costume in one room and then entered the installation in another but the videotape has never been shown on its own without the audience wearing costumes. It's a pretty inconsistent strategy (laughs) but I think it's interesting to watch the tape with the costume on. I like that.

GR/JB: It's a good strategy to immerse the viewer in the artwork.

PM: Yeah, and its a weird thing to watch it through these holes. But, you know; now I look at those Pinocchio costumes and they didn't turn out the way I wanted them to. That just has a lot to do with technically not being able to figure out how to do it. I'm always amazed by people who can make such great looking pieces. I sometimes feel a little fucking dumb. I had this idea that there would be big plastic buttons, and the mask would be different, but it all turned out to be kind of stupid. That's OK, because stupid can be good...(Laughter)

TR: What prompted your decision to get into using materials like rubber and plastic?

PM: Well, I wanted to make real solid rubber parts but I had a tough time figuring it out but there was no excuse it was hardly a new technology ten years ago! Somehow I just couldn't get it together. The "Spaghetti Man" has a new noodle, or penis, which is silicon but I still have the original urethane noodle, which travels with it. I like the rubber because it feels like the body although some of the pieces, like "Alpine Man", are pretty crude, very thin latex. That piece is the original "Tree Fucker" and its over twelve years old now. It has to be constantly repaired and the machinery breaks down but I kind of like it that way. It's dumb technology, like me trying to make Disney in my garage.

GR/JB: But you're getting more technically advanced recently.

PM: I made a rubber Michael Jackson that weighs six tons and you can't move it. (Laughs)

GR/JB: How was your New York show received?

PM: Well, pretty good but I get this bad boy stuff all the time, you know, every time someone writes, "Bad boy artist" or "Bad boy LA artist". Then it's "Old hippy bad boy LA artist!" What the fuck! Some New York writers always want to point out that somehow they are the Velvet Underground and LA is...

GR/JB: Jerry Garcia.

PM: Or, this is Donald Judd and that's Larry Bell. You like yoga...

GR/JB: ...we like speed.

Ian Brotherhood

Tales from the Great Unwashed

I remember him as Goosey. Goosey Watt. His first name was Alan, but that doesn't matter when you're wee. He used to cry a lot when we were first in the primary, and no-one ever knew why. His hair was long, long and curly, and it was all over the place. His nose was all squashed to the one side, like he was looking at you through a wee window, and it had a funny-looking bit, like a strip of pink skin down his lip from his nose to his mouth, and when he closed his mouth it didn't shut right, like a bit was away and you could see white tooth where there should have been lip.

Goosey always sat at the desk right in front of the teacher, right from year one. He was always there, on his own. Didn't matter what teacher it was, if it was Budgie or Wally or Timpo or Barno, he was always there, and even in different rooms, with different furniture and different light coming in the room, there was Goosey, always at the front on his tod.

So, he was daft. That was it. He was daft and he didn't know anything about sums or writing or singing or anything else. Didn't matter what we were supposed to be doing, Goosey couldn't do it right, so he'd get bored and start laughing at something he was thinking about, or else starting doing mad drawings on his books and that. His wee brother was in the next year down, and he was a right handful, so Goosey was always getting called out by Headie to come and see whatever it was that Vinny had done and try to calm him down and all that.

But Goosey was alright. Like, when I say alright, I mean he never ever did anyone wrong that I saw anyway. He was always getting in fights and that right enough, but it was usually the other guys from his bit that would do him, and he always, I mean always got a doing. He never ever won a fight, not even one. Not even against me.

I never knew all Goosey's mob, them from the scheme beside the school. They were a bad lot, that's what the old dear said, you watch them boys from the scheme, that's what she always said, almost every day. But Goosey was alright. He liked fish. Tropical fish. He said his Granda had a tank of fish and knew loads about them and had a stack of books and that, and if you ever got him during a wet-playtime, Goosey would use the crayons and that to draw some of these fish that he knew, and you could even check them with the book at the back that had like pictures of actual fish and that, so his drawings were pretty good I think, he knew what they were. Least, that's what I think, cos they were never the same as the pictures in the book, and if he was at it you would've known cos they would be the same shape and colours and all that.

Anyway, we got to the end of the primary, that's maybe when we were twelve or something, or most of us were twelve anyway, and it was all this stuff about how we were getting sent up to the big school and we would have to be ready and all that. Our teacher was old Barno. Mrs Barnes. We didn't know what she was on about, but we already had all the horror stories anyway. We knew about the gauntlet and the grog-pit and all the other stuff. Just about everyone had a big brother or sister already in the place, so we already knew all the names, all the danger.

So it came to the last day of primary seven. We could take games in cos there was no classes, we just had to go in the morning and it would be a prizegiving and then we could play games and that, games that we brought in, and it was no uniforms either, you could wear your best gear and that.

Primary seven had like a greenhouse, or that's what we called it anyway. It wasn't a real greenhouse such as you would call it, but a bit of the shelf at the window that had like big polythene sheets down about it so we could put plants in there for biology stuff, watching the plants grow and that. There was a big tomato plant there and it was tiny when it started, but we all had shots of putting water on it every morning, just before we got the milk, and it shot up right enough. It was good getting your turn to give it the water cos everyone would watch when you did it, and it was like a test to see if you could pour the water right and not give it too much cos Barno would shout when you did it too fast. You had to do the other things in there as well at the same time, but I can't remember what they were, all wee cactuses and geraniums and that.

So that was the last day of primary, like the very last day of primary seven, then off to the big school and all that, and the prizegiving happened, and that was your normal like countdown from one all the way down, and Hammy was first, the best of all, as normal, so he went up to get like a big giant book, like this big encyclopaedia type of thing, and then it was Marty and he got this wee set of history books in a box, and that looked a lot better than the first prize anyway, then there was Jules and she got a token for the book-shop in town for a fiver, and we all clapped and that, but we just really wanted to get out the games. I had the Junior Scrabble with me, and it was split new as well, but there was other folk had like Mouse Trap and Buckaroo and stuff, so I wasn't that bothered about playing Scrabble, but we all wanted the games anyway, so it was good when Barno said she was off to meet the other teachers and she would be back in a wee while.

All of a sudden, she was back again. Maybe it was getting late, I can't remember. Everybody had kind of split into bunches playing the best games, but there was no bother, we all just moved about the class, sitting places we'd never been before, getting into whatever games were going. There was even some of the guys were sitting with the lassies. There was games I never even knew before, like Autocross and Hyperlink, but when Barno came in we all ran back to our normal seats without having to be told.

Barno was smiling. She hardly ever smiled. She looked different. Her eyes were different. She looked the way my Dad looked when he came home late on Fridays. The same smile, the same look. She said she would miss us all and she hoped we would do well in the big school and not get in any trouble and be a credit to the school and always remember where we came from and all that. Then she said she had to present the special prize, and we were all kind of looking at each other cos the prizegiving was already done and that, but she told Hammy to take his pick of the tomatoes off the big plant on the shelf, and Hammy went up a bit funny, not really knowing what to do, and she told him again to pick the best tomato cos he was the top of the class and all that, so we all watched him and he pulled away this big fat scarlet tomato near the top of the bush. Then it was Marty, and he did the same, and he picked like exactly the same tomato that anybody else would have picked, like it was pure obvious to anyone what the first and second best would be, then it was Jules and, well, I think she missed the next best one, but she was dead fast and grabbed this thing and off she went, then it was Pauline and Garbo and somebody else and then eventually it was me, and the one I got was this pure sad effort that was more green than red, and I knew I couldn't even eat the thing or do anything else with it, and I was glad to get back to my seat.

By the time Goosey got up to the plant there was nothing left but wee green pellets. Some of the guys were having a laugh about it, but I think most of us were sort of looking at each other, then at Barno. It was pretty dodgy. I didn't feel right at all.

Goosey didn't even seem that bothered. He took his time. He was just looking at this dozen or something berries that was left. You couldn't pick a best out of that lot at all. He was facing away from all of us. You could hear Barno breathing, and she wasn't smiling any more. Then he did this wee mad dance, like shaking his bum dead fast for a wee minute and waving his fingers like he was going to do a magic trick, then he grabbed one wee green ball and yanked it off the plant and ran back to his seat and we all clapped cos it was all over.

Barno went away again then, and we went back to playing the games, then the bell went and we got our stuff and left the place for the last time.

We were walking away from the school, by the fence across from where our class was, and someone looked back, and there was Barno standing at the window of our room, staring out at us. Hammy and Marty and Gerso and Hingy, they were all there, and so was Goosey. He was at the back, as usual. Someone said, should we wave ? should we wave cheerio ? and we all stopped and looked at her looking at us through the window. She was dead still, dead sad looking, like she really didn't want us to go. Then you could see her shape change dead fast at something, and we all looked round and there was Goosey firing his pellet of a tomato at her. The wee hard thing did hit the window, and Barno jerked back and down. The noise of the thing hitting the window was dead loud, and you could even see the glass wobble a bit but there was no smash.

Goosey ran like the clappers. We all shouted after him, but he never stopped.

See ye's after the Summer. That's what he shouted. But we never did.

Labouring under an illusion

Jason Walsh

Remember Cool Britannia? Creative Britain? Under New Labour, Britain was rebranded as a creative nation, a multi-cultural wonderland where the arts and business could flourish in a partnership that was beneficial for all. After the dark days of Thatcher, where fine art was the preserve of individual collectors such as Saatchi, and John Major, who had no readily discernible arts policy, this seems wonderful. After all, it cannot be a bad thing for an administration to pay attention to cultural matters. Or can it?

Well, Labour have begun their second term in power and surely now it's time that their cultural policy really began to show itself. A first term government can be forgiven for not being all we would like it to be, especially in Labour's case. After eighteen years in opposition Labour saw its election as a delicate balancing act between keeping its core constituency happy and not upsetting Daily Mail readers. In all of the debates regarding this, few seem to have mentioned that Labour's constituency includes not only stodgy NUM members, but also creative, left-wing types. Dilettantes, if you like.

However, that said, Labour's first term was for many a downright disappointment. The relationship between art and the institutions which support it is a delicate balancing act which has always been deeply related to the policy of the administration which is in power. But the ideological management of art has deeper roots than the fickle tastes of an elected government. Most cultural critics on the left have long rejected the Ruskinian cultural analysis of 'art for art's sake', most especially in its 1980s Thatcherite incarnation under Peter 'Modern Painters' Fuller. Since the development of Modernism the left-wing view of art has been traditionally divided into two separate analyses, one favoured by the social democrats and Stalinists and one by the others including Trotskyists. For social democrats realism was the preferred art form as it most closely represented the means of production—this was of course perverted into the grotesque fantasy world of Socialist Realism under Zhandov in Stalinist Russia. The Trotskyite position argued for the complete freedom of the artist as an individual creator. As with so much in contemporary politics, these traditional positions now seem to have declined almost beyond relevance.

For the Labour government art is not so much a cultural product but a tool with which to combat 'social exclusion'. This is seen most obviously in Labour's attempts to replace moribund heavy industry with so called creative enterprises, but it is also obvious in how the arts are expected to be major contributors to causes such as urban regeneration. The concept of social exclusion is often mocked by the remnants of the Labour left as a new term to define poverty, but in reality it is an entirely new agenda. Rather than seeing deprivation as an exclusively economic issue with social ramifications, it redefines it as a purely social one and in doing so vastly widens the definition of the problem and dilutes the possible solutions. Poverty is, in theory, an easily solved problem—a strong economy, job creation and wealth redistribution should be able to put an end to it. Social exclusion, on the other hand, is a moving target and not a problem that will be solved by throwing around wads of cash (very convenient for an administration unwilling either to do so, or take the flak for not doing so), instead it is combated by a whole raft of measures including the creation and promotion of community groups, lessons in citizenship, promotion of culture as a vehicle for inclusion, the further recreation of education as training, counselling and a seemingly endless re-education process, sorry 'life-long learning'. Social exclusion seems to me to be quite sinister as it shifts much of the focus from the situation faced by an individual or community, directly on to them—it is they who need to be re-skilled, re-educated and reconstructed. A worthy cause nonetheless? This article is not the vehicle for that discussion, but what it is interesting to contemplate is whether this situation is really healthy for art and culture. There are several issues involved and they deserve to be dealt with separately.

Firstly, inclusiveness is not what great art is good at. The critic Robert Hughes pointed out that art institutions in the United States have reacted to coming under fire from radical critics by distancing themselves from the perception that they are elitist institutions which are part and parcel of a white, patriarchal culture. In order to do this they have reinvented themselves as places which can equally promote art which is inclusive, open to ethnic minorities and women and willing to blur the distinction between artist and viewer.

Few today would doubt that the institutions of the past have been white and patriarchal, but their response to changing times has had them lurching all over the place looking for examples of more liberal friendly art, and in many cases instead of looking hard enough to find it, they have simply elevated that which is not great art. It simply doesn't matter if a great work of art was created by a person from background a, b or c, either sex or any race. A great work of art is great, a priori, it is supposed to have universal qualities.

Returning to Hughes: he pointed out that radical critics have so far eroded qualitative judgement that "the idea of 'quality'" is now considered the "enemy of justice...Quality, the argument goes, is a plot. It is the result of a conspiracy of white males to marginalise the work of other races and cultures." In these post-modern times it is easy for qualitative judgement to be railroaded and condemned as a tool of cultural domination, but the answer to problems of social injustice does not lie in depreciating the value of the artworks of the past simply because the societies which created them featured inequity. For all of the wrongs of the Soviet Union and its horrendous cultural policy, at least Lenin recognised, much to the distaste of the Procult (Proletarian Culture) faction, that the culture of the past must be built upon, not destroyed. The politically correct values of today's post-modern critics suddenly do not seem very far removed from book burning. As for the distinction between artist and viewer, well it may not be popular to say it, especially in today's world of interactivity, the internet, digital television and instant gratification, but it is pertinent to do so—if we view a work of art, concentrate on it, contemplate it, think about it, decide if we like it or not, then this is all of the interaction which is needed. The idea of replacing a Caravaggio with a flashy kiosk which tells us about the painting, the artist, his life and allows us to 'move around it' in three dimensions (a la the Van Gogh in a recent television advertisement for chip manufacturer Intel) is horrifying—and you don't have to be a screaming reactionary like Brian Sewell to think so.

Secondly, art can have a useful place in regeneration, urban or rural, and I certainly do not want to deny artists some municipal commissions. But is it really the answer to socio-economic problems? More often than not, it seems that art is used to give an area ear-marked for gentrification a quick boost, or as a sop to those whose futures have become bleak in a nation with growing industrial unemployment which is now becoming increasingly 'post-welfare socialism'. To use art merely as a vehicle for problem solving degrades it, if it becomes nothing more than a talking point or an education session or even a pretty mural it begs the question, why should we pay it any more attention than any of the other meaningless images which we are barraged with? Why even ask ourselves if a work in question is great art or not?

Labour's policy can seem to merely be an extension of the social democratic position of yesteryear, certainly it has some clear continuities such as the patronage of those least likely to come into contact with art. But the differences are more striking than the similarities, the policy of the past patronised the masses by trying to engender in them an interest in that which was often viewed as too complex for them, today no one gives a hoot about exposing people to big ideas. The focus has shifted from the work of art to the context in which it is seen and if the art can be stripped of all meaning, all the better. It is now seen as more important to fill peoples lives with art, any art, than to offer them the opportunity to see works of creative genius, and I use that word knowing how it has become the ultimate heresy.

The Mark Thomas Interview

William Clark: Anger is uneasy in performance. How does that work?

Mark Thomas: Well people either leave or they stay.

WC: But the issues must make you angry anyway, they must *really* make you angry.

MT: I've spoke to all these fucking people some of whom took a risk to talk to me (Kurdish people). One guy who was president of IHD in Diyarbakir, he was late because of land mines exploding—it took two hours for the Security Forces to get there...the delay was very likely the cause of the deaths of two young 16/17 year olds—and he came back and we're sitting in this office and he started saying 'right before you start to ask me any questions this is what's happening', and he gave a little speech, which lasted about ten minutes, about what was going on and what he was doing, how things had changed and were still bad, what our responsibility was, what their's was: really laying out what you must do to help. Now he'd said it so many times he was bored with it. He's had lots of people come in and listen to him.

We bumped into him the next night, he was coming round to the hotel because someone from the Foreign Office wanted to have a meeting with him: he sees Human Rights delegations, Civil Servants, NGOs, European Parliament...he's said all this stuff and he was bored with it. And when you put those two things together—people who take risks to come and talk to you and a man who's given the speech so many times—I just thought I'm not going to be another fucking cunt that just walks passed, do you know what I mean? I'm not going to be someone who's peeked into someone else's misery and then just fucked off.

Those two things, are if you like, the motor for what...there are different motors, do you understand what I'm saying? The facts of what people told me are fucking hugely distressing, hugely fucking emotional and our involvement, the British Government's involvement, British companies' involvement, the West's involvement to basically allow Turkey to get away with it is a huge shame. I think it is quite right that people should feel angry about it. There's also the feeling that when you're in that situation you can't do anything, you can't say anything to the 'Golfers' [Thomas' term for the secret police/security service heads], I can't say anything because if I do the people I'm with are going to get it when I've left. I won't get it; they'll get it when I've gone.

WC: You've been to South East Turkey, I've been too, I think when you do experience it—it's under Marshall Law—for yourself you realise that this is just different, you're going to nearly be killed a few times.

MT: We're quite lucky in a way that we've got political freedoms that we should be using...

WC: It's interesting that you focused on their humour, Kurdish Humour, because you go through all these things and you talk to them about all this stuff and they go 'oh yeah right', because they've been shot at school. There's nothing you can say, people just cannot understand how these people have been brought up.

MT: The humour is fucking...

WC: Did you go to Drama School?

MT: Yes. If you're saying is it for real or do I act it? I'm not a psychologist I'm not sure how it works out.

WC: No obviously it's a performance, but the level of awareness of Kurdish issues is so low that really your stuff is pitched really well, taking in aspects of prior knowledge. As you say we should be more advanced and aware of the issues here but we aren't.

MT: I'll tell you what it is actually. It's a very fundamental thing, not just about compassion and solidarity or care or love about fellow human beings and their basic genuine human emotions, care and concern. But it's actually another fundamental emotion: I refuse to be lied to.

WC: People are lovers of the truth.

MT: I REFUSE to have them...Columbia for instance, what America is doing there in the name of this 'war on drugs' and their support of terrorism there: I want to fucking know about this because I want to challenge when Bush and the fucking news comes on and when the government say this or that. I want to be able to say I'm not going to be lied to—I want to know the facts. There's a fundamental thing there which is not just about compassion for other human beings but also a fucking anger that you're being shafted. Your money is being used for those guns in the name of fucking God knows what.

WC: One can read things and see things that make you look at TV and newspapers in a different way. Surely that's part of your political education.

MT: Absolutely.

WC: From that it becomes very difficult—people go on about 'The' media not really taking on the complexities: some forms of censorship exist through laziness or whatever. But the thing about the Ilisu dam is that it was such a potentially successful campaign.

MT: You see I think we're still going to win, but as you saw tonight we're meeting up with the Fire Brigade Union on Thursday.

WC: You're making all these contacts as you go round. But what is this for you Mark is it your real life? You've devoted your life to this because...?

MT: No I've spent three years doing it.

WC: You say your doing 'it', so this is it, you just want to go on with the Kurdish thing?—it seems to be growing events are unfolding more and more.

MT: The point is I got involved accidentally.

WC: Surely you met activists and when you meet activists at that level its like stepping on a merry-go-round where they don't let go of you, they've got you by the scruff of the neck and they're going to squeeze you like a fucking lemon—and good on them.

MT: [Laughs] No no no its not just that. I knew Nick Hildyard way before we started work on Ilisu. Nick and I had done stuff together on the Export Credit Guarantee Dept. We'd hooked up through various friends of friends: Kerim [Yildiz] I got to know when we started to look at a campaign about Ilisu. The show was done because I wanted to tell the story of what had happened. I hadn't toured for five years—mainly because you see these fucking smoes coming off the telly: they fucking churn it all out, they've finished their series they do the big tour they do the fucking merchandising, they're at the top and they've used up all their good material they're fucking tired.

WC: Your talking about you fellow comics?

MT: Yeah I'm talking about my fellow fucking comics: you want to talk about milking it and squeezing it? Fucking right man—they fucking do. They go after every fucking penny. I genuinely don't give a fuck about that. I do stuff on telly I get well paid, why should I be greedy about it? Why should I traipse round trying to plaster over some fucking ranting old material that I've knocked up in half an hour. And so the time came when it was just like I wanted to tell these stories and I want to tell people what happened. I'm fucked off with television cutting out all my fucking gags because it's 24 minutes long. So I want people to see something that's different, that's real. These are peoples' stories, these are people I know, they're my mates.

WC: You're talking about the live act in distinction from the Channel Four programme. You don't really feel you can do what you want...given that there are other restrictions?

MT: Occasionally there are other restrictions in terms of censorship. Most notably when I was forbidden from going to Iraq. They wouldn't back us because 'you can't get the insurance for it', so the fucking company can't fucking film and they refused to go 'let's do it anyway'. About three or four years ago we tried to get out to Iraq to take out medicines then come back and be arrested. They said you can't go, I said 'why' and they said 'because it's illegal'. I said 'that's exactly the point I was trying to prove: that the law is immoral and they won't actually act upon it, because they know that it's wrong and if they arrest me for this they'll look stupid and they won't do it.' They said 'yes, but you're talking about morals; we're talking about the law'. I was really fucked off, I genuinely still don't know whether I should have walked on this or not.

WC: What: pack in the whole thing—what's the point in that?

MT: What's the point in that? There's a very important point which is: do I do this stuff because I want to do the things I do and because there is a valid fucking political

comment to be made and I want other people to see it and think 'fuck we can do something'. Or, am I just fucking doing that because yeah I can't believe in it but heh the fucking money's nice too. And actually how far do you acquiesce and go along with them? There's a very important point about me turning round and going 'may be I should have fucking walked'. May be I just should have gone 'fuck you, that's your line.'

WC: Why didn't you do it independently? Because it wouldn't have had the impact?

MT: That's the first point, and because in the way these things work they have to be planned not just to coincide with taking the most political advantage but also to coincide with school holidays and children (laughter) and the boring mundane stuff of just getting on with your life and making sure that...

WC: ...well you don't get your head cut off...

MT: There's a matter of not getting your head cut off but there's also the matter of making sure that the kids have got the new shoes for school and all of those kinds of things.

WC: The events at Balfour Beatty's AGM was the focus of a lot of your performance...there was a sense of enjoyment in your account which was very like the Boulting Brothers and Ealing comedies—you know the class divide somehow comes together, it seemed reminiscent of those...'I'm all right Jack' type old British comedy. The class boss doing this and the shop floor revolting. It seemed a very traditional view, the personas and the voices...?

MT: Yeah it is. I love Ealing comedies. My favourite two films—one of them is Rear Window—but 'Kind Hearts and Coronets' and 'Passports to Pimlico' they're just fucking brilliant.

WC: Even 'Whisky Galore', parts of which were based on a Propaganda film. You know where they hide the bottles of whisky—during the war there was this newsreel film of the resistance hiding radios in kids prams from the Nazis, which it makes reference to...

MT : They actually filmed Passport to Pimlico in Stockwell, which I'm really happy with—I love South London. Stockwell's officially South London. I love those films I think they're brilliant. When you look at *Kind Hearts and Coronets* what fucking genius! "I wonder if you might say a few words in Matabeli for us...bougrrgh.'

WC: What are they to our generation they're somehow accepted and rejected...?

MT: I don't subscribe to that sort of Julie Burchill, Billy Connolly point of view that sort of says there's people at the bottom and people at the top but it's the people in the middle who fuck it all up. 'The upper class and the working class have got something in common', we both like fucking and hunting.

WC: Is that Marxist—'the bourgeois oppress the working class'?

MT: No I don't think so—if you say teachers or journalists are they middle class? How would you define class here, is it just income, would you say it's education or just culture. I suppose it's all a mixture of those things. But ultimately the middle class have just got as much to gain in some ways as working people have. Different furniture, different food, posher fucking wine. Ultimately you've got to take the view that you either get control of the elites that run this world and make it work for our advantage or you don't.

WC: I think a lot of the problems in trying to change things is that you encounter a lot of very idiotic bureaucrats—if you want to use this term 'petite bourgeoisie' or just 'petty'—who have no knowledge of what they're doing and have no real compassion and enforce rules out of a sense of inadequacy. That I would see as an obstacle.

MT: I think you're absolutely right, it's an obstacle. I mean the amount of support—it's fucking weird—I was in a 24 hour bagel bakery down at the East End, a beautiful old place. We stopped after a gig to have our bagels and tea on the way home. This bloke just comes up to me and he goes "I'm a bit pissed but I think you're fucking marvellous and that's from an off-duty copper," and then staggers out. OK where do I put him on the class enemy list...?

WC: There's human social interaction and then there's an economic value on class and....

MT: Of course there is and it's the same person who said that to me who's going to be running around picket lines...I accept that but it's still a weird situation. Those divisions are really...we have more in common than we think.

WC: Well, somehow or other, when you talked about visiting the House of Lords, you're describing yourself in terms of, well through your own ignorance, which I think is a great literary or whatever device: the ignorant narrator, the reader engages with it definitely. But part of that was your own class prejudices...

MT: Absofuckinglutely.

WC: It's like 'oh that's a big house you've got here, I don't know if I should go in and get the carpet dirty'...

MT: (Laughs) Part of it is just 'bollocks bollocks fuck 'em, I'm as good as them' and all that sort of stuff.

WC: I'd like to tie that up with your use of the word 'liberalism' quite a lot in quite a positive sense. I've rarely heard it used in such as positive light: "I've reached the edge of the liberal barrier," for the people I hang about with liberalism is used pejoratively.

MT: I can sort of go down that route...the whole thing about liberal consensus is taking the piss out of whether its OK to say things or not: if I say we've reached the end of liberal consensus...if I'm going to talk about Zionism I'm going to talk about it...this is the bit where you lot all clam up and go 'oh don't Mark' That's just a factual...

WC: There's an estimation of the audience...

MT: Yes there is but its not necessarily pejorative or dismissive or positive rather.

WC: But there must be—it's a value judgement.

MT: It's a value judgement about the audience. If you were to sum up that audience you'd say they're basically kind of liberal.

WC: You had your kind of persona of the audience with the wee Scottish guy taking notes—what was all that about?

MT: I've no idea (laughter). It's playful fun.

WC: But isn't it like the showbiz thing of 'bring on the cake it Mark's birthday tonight!' I don't know—what do I know about it...

MT: Look I made a gag about Henry McLeish, I'm not going to make that gag down in Manchester because they're not going to get it, it's as simple as that. I would rather engage with people there and who they are and what they are and where they're from and their points of reference...

WC: ...the assumption of what they are.

MT: Yeah but I kind of figure the audience might have a vested interest in McLeish and might know a little bit about it...

WC: They seemed to have to think about that one.

MT: No I think people went with it quite well.

WC: What do you imagine them to be...?

MT: You could describe them as liberal, they're Trade Unionists, there are old Commies there, Marxists, Crusties, Peace Camp Campaigners, Students all sorts of different people—but you can broadly say they're not going to read the Daily Mail.

WC: Meaning...?

MT: Oh what the fuck do you think it means? What do you fucking think it means? If they're going to come and see the gig they're not going to sit there and say "that Mark Thomas yeah, yeah, I'm a Daily Mail reader I have those values that actually doubts the wisdom of immigration—at all—into this country and Mark Thomas seems to epitomise those values."

WC: So it's back to the notion of what prior knowledge you can assume.

MT: I assume that most people don't know a huge amount about Kurdish issues and might know a little bit about things like the Ilisu dam. I assume they have doubts about the way government operates, and that's probably about it. Look I'll be fucking honest with you: do you think I can go out there and just go 'what will the audience want? I will do a show that the audience want...' Do I go out there and go 'will I do the show that I think they want me to do?' No, I can't do that. Just out of interest: when was the last time you saw a stand up do anything like that?

WC: Never.

MT: It's not that fucking easy. It's not about what do people think, where are they? It's about going 'these are the stories this is what happened'. It's about having as much fun as you can with those things. But letting through the whole thing—not just in terms of information but on an emotional level as well. I don't think we can change the World with statistics.

Campaign Succeeds as Balfour Beatty withdraws from ILISU!

On 13 November, Balfour Beatty, the lead contractor for the Ilisu Dam, announced its withdrawal from the project on social, environmental and economic grounds. Its Italian partner, Impregilo, has also withdrawn.

After one and a half years of very active campaigning we have finally prevailed in getting the UK out of the Ilisu dam project. We used many tactics, including the credible threat of legal action, press coverage, political work, grassroots letter writing, demonstrations, public meetings, coalition building, international networking and shareholder activism. It really did work and much of the credit must go to you, the supporters. It was your active support that built the groundswell of public furore around this project, helping to make Ilisu so controversial that even a huge multinational like Balfour Beatty had to listen.

So first, we wanted to say a huge THANK YOU to you all for your support. And also to let you know what's happening, and how we need your help in the future.

The news had been greeted with jubilation by campaigners and by those whose homes, lands and livelihoods were threatened by the dam. Speaking from Batman, a town which would be impacted by the dam, Mayor Abdullah Akin said that, "The people are celebrating."

Executive Director of the Kurdish Human Rights Project and Chair of the Ilisu Dam Campaign, Kerim Yildiz, expressed his delight at the news: "Balfour Beatty's withdrawal has vindicated what we at the Campaign have been saying all along: that the Ilisu dam would be a human rights, environmental and cultural disaster. This Campaign, strengthened by the unity of human rights and environmental groups working together, has helped to establish a precedent in sending a clear message to governments and companies that projects like Ilisu are simply not acceptable. This Campaign not only stopped the Ilisu dam but has also helped to establish the beginnings of a democratic platform in Turkey where people can discuss possible alternatives to disastrous projects like Ilisu."

Balfour Beatty had applied for export credit support from the UK Export Credit Guarantee Department (ECGD) and from the US Ex-Im Bank. With the company's withdrawal, both agencies have now ceased to be involved in the project. The company admits that the project failed to meet the conditions laid down by the agencies for export credit support—which is what we have argued all along.

We will be continuing to monitor the project closely, although the chances are that Ilisu has now effectively been stopped due to the consortium's collapse. Sulzer Hydro, the company which heads the dam consortium, has said that it is looking for a partner to replace Balfour Beatty. However, a well placed Turkish source told Channel 4 news, "Other European firms won't be interested now and the Ilisu project may not go ahead." We will continue to work with international colleagues to ensure that other companies do not become involved—to ensure that Ilisu is once and for all truly stopped.

We are now calling for the lessons of Ilisu to be learned. We want ECGD and other export credit agencies to adopt legally binding human rights, environment and development standards—so that other "Ilisus" cannot happen in future. To this end, the coalition that founded the Ilisu Dam Campaign—the Kurdish Human Rights Project, Friends of the Earth, The Cornerhouse and Mark Thomas—is going to be campaigning on other projects in the region. One, the Yusefeli dam, would be built by UK firm AMEC and partly financed with a £68 million ECGD credit. Another, the BP-promoted Baku-Ceyhan oil and gas pipeline, will cut through the Kurdish regions of Turkey, raising human rights and environmental concerns.

We would love to have your continued support for our proposed work on these campaigns. With your help we could capitalise on the victory we have achieved with Ilisu.

Kate Geary
Campaign co-ordinator
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The Importance of Appearing Earnest

Ruth MacPherson

Out of the Bubble: Approaches to 'Contextual Practice' within Fine Art Education

Edited by John Carson & Susannah Silver, The London Institute, 2000.

Two years ago I graduated from a fine art degree course. Having grown increasingly interested in 'Socially Engaged Art Practice' I began a post-graduate course: 'Art and Design in Organisational Contexts', which I did not complete, having never really got to grips with what the course could or could not accommodate. It had no handbook as such at that time. What initially appeared as a freedom soon proved to be a confusing lack of parameters within the broader institutional framework.

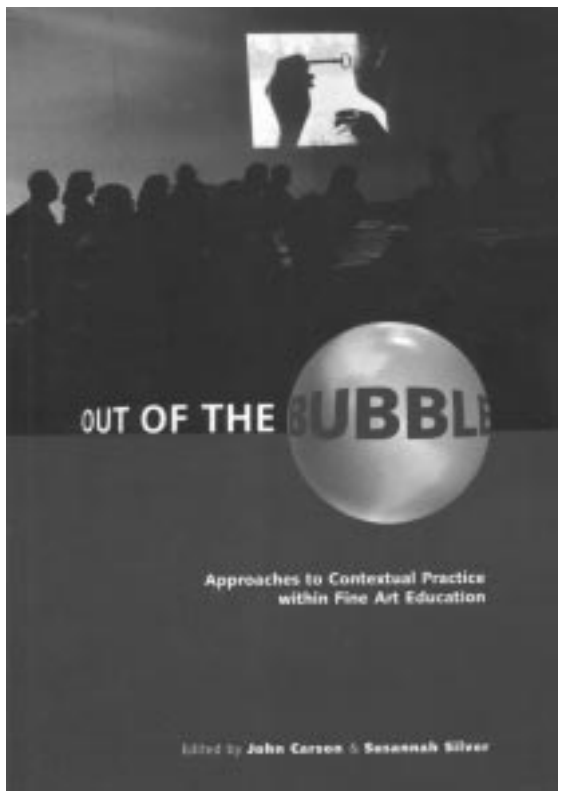
The course was known—although not exclusively—for accommodating the work of artists working with community and disability groups. With a change of Head of Department, it was a year away from its five-year evaluation review whereby it would continue or fold. In this very particular climate, the course offered to accommodate everyone from this broad field of practice. It was particularly interested in the idea of 'practice as research', as encouraged by changes in Higher Education funding. It appeared as though the resultant year group was split in two. The tuition fee payers coming from 'traditional' community arts backgrounds while bursary places were awarded to people who, I believe, it was hoped would produce work which would fall into the increasingly fashionable, apparently new, field of 'Contextual Practice'.

In many ways 'Contextual Practice' could be viewed as any arts practice that is concerned with how an artwork is received, the relevance of the audience, the importance of how and where the work is made and the value of the experience to people involved in the process of making the artwork.

Within the course there was an interest in appearing to accommodate the diversities of 'Contextual Practice', however, neither of the core teaching staff were what might be termed Contextual Practitioners within the fields of Art & Design. I also felt that there was an encouraged division between students who felt that some 'Contextual Practice' wasn't critical enough of itself, i.e. work with groups which was akin to 'baby-sitting with paints', and some practice that was too 'highbrow' and was of little benefit to the group the artist was engaging with. My time on the course was frustrating and confusing. I hoped that 'Out of the Bubble' might clarify in some way my own arts education experiences.

"The 'Out of the Bubble' conference and this publication of its presentation have a two fold aim: to highlight the diversities of 'Contextual Practice' in art and design [education] and to provide a forum for discussion as to its definition."[1]

'Out of the Bubble' presents the work of contemporary contextual practitioners, those in a position to commission, facilitate or present such practice and those writing about the field who are influential in its definition. The book is structured like a zoom shot pulling out from the artists working in their particular context, finally to the 'academics' writing about 'Contextual Practice'. The book is



split into three separate sections: *Tactics* is devoted to contextual practitioners, artists and their practices, describing projects and their working methods. *Manoeuvres* is a collection of presentations largely by curators and/or administrators. *Strategies* is written by researchers, a programme co-ordinator of a fine art contextual practices course, and an art critic/curator/educationalist.

What exactly is 'Contextual Practice'? Does it relate to 'Community Art'? How does it relate to 'Community Art'? Is 'Contextual Practice' an evolved form of 'Community Art'? Is it a separate, more critically aware development that now replaces defunct 'Community Art'? Does 'Community Art' still exist as a separate defined practice within 'Contextual Practice'? Does 'Contextual' mean 'good' while 'Community' means bad?

The term 'Contextual Practice' appears to be a US import defined by artists and educators Carol Becker and Suzanne Lacy, amongst others. Problems arise when trying to realise the relationship between 'Contextual Practice' and community orientated practices developed in the UK. 'Community Art' appears as an ancestor to the diverse practices that have evolved from this initial interest and could be encapsulated now as one specialism beneath this new umbrella term of 'Contextual Practices'; also beneath this term could be included, Socially Engaged Art Practice and Environmental Art Practice.

In many ways 'Contextual Practice' is not so radically different from earlier UK notions—such as those defined by the Artist Placement Group. But while UK community arts practice seems to have developed a very particular, institutionalised image—often synonymous in high art circles with bad art—'Contextual Practice' has a brighter contemporary image. But are the two practices really so different?

Take for example the work of the artist Alison Marchant documented in the chapter 'Living Room'. The project ran for four years from 1994 until 1998. It is described as a "conceptual intervention with residents of the Holly Street Estate in Hackney, East London"[2]. Marchant describes the situation in which she works—a deprived housing estate undergoing a period of re-development. This scenario does not sound vastly different from the contexts that community art practice engaged with in the 1970s, yet what is very different is the language and manner in which the artist talks of the situation.

The image of 'Contextual Practice' has developed radically since the dowdy AN 'Art with People'[3] days, it is presented as no longer the politically hopeful community art of the 70s, idealistically engaging with residents of deprived housing estates. Marchant talks of being 'commissioned' by an arts agency to work in this situation. Work that is undertaken within this context today is done so under new terminology such as 'Social Inclusion', 'regeneration' and 'active citizenship'. What began as idealism within politically aware groups of artists has been appropriated and distorted into the art-speak of government, local authorities, arts bureaucracies and private commissioning agencies.

The motto 'Art changes lives' is to be taken as given and acceptable in the hands of arts and health administrators, whether artists believe it or not.

"The arts improve well being"[4]

"The arts increase self confidence"[5]

"The arts encourage recognition of differences and similarities"[6]

"The arts help self-expression and advocacy"[7]

"The arts break down barriers"[8]

"The arts strengthen communities"[9]

While I am not denying that these may be possible outcomes of 'Contextual Practice' arts projects in some instances, I don't believe that they are by any means a given. If artists are the people who facilitate these miracles, wouldn't we all want to live in the company of artists, perhaps with 'Heal the World' playing gently and continuously in the background?

What is worrying about the new sexy image that 'Out of the Bubble' is trying to project onto 'Contextual Practice' is this given: that 'Contextual Practice' is a priori a common good. Marchant's documented work 'Living Room' appears to bear some similarities with projects of the 70s, but is in contrast deeply de-politicised, but that is not to romanticise the political aspirations of projects of the 70s.

Are artists being asked to provide tokens of imagined community? Is it possible to have a critical, politically aware practice that also operates within heavily policed boundaries?

Although artists' intentions may be sincere their presence and work may effectively be a sticking plaster, validating the status quo, and in certain situations may be an effective diversion away from actual positive social change. If artists are involved in freeing the voices of others, why have we never seen a community project called 'Being Poor is Shite'; and is it just as likely to be sponsored by BUPA?

There is a preference amongst many artists and arts professionals to remain nostalgic about poverty and maintain the apparition of benevolently alleviating the depression of poverty through art

projects. Just look at the front cover of 'Changing Places: The Arts in Scotland's Urban Areas'[10] for an example of a suitably temporarily alleviated person, brimming eyes gazing upwards, broad smile.

The image of 'Contextual Practice' is growing fashionable as a means of laying claim to an actual act of social inclusion or real engagement. Consult, communicate and collaborate could be the keywords of such practice. The artist Edwina fitzPatrick in her chapter 'Exploring Fear and Liberation' asks questions which make 'Contextual Practice' dynamic as a field and is open about perceived failures of some of her projects:

"Issues were inevitably raised about the ethics of an artist working in collaboration with other people, especially about how the work is authored and presented. Taking the implications of this practice to its furthest limit suggested the artist may be using or manipulating human beings as raw materials."[11]

"Instead of being in place for the full two weeks, the [ice] keys had to be re-cast every thirty-six hours. This, in hindsight, was appropriate and added another layer of meaning to the work. However, it created disappointment as I had not delivered what I had promised."[12]

Whilst reading 'Out of the Bubble' I became aware of a project by Glasgow based arts organisation Heisenberg who specialise in Community based projects. In August they launched their project the 'Gorbals Artworks Masterplan' at the Lighthouse Design Museum, Glasgow. The exhibition consisted of "a series of documentary artworks relating to The Gorbal's community and the former development in Queen Elizabeth Square with preliminary thoughts from artists participating in the Artworks Masterplan."[13] Heisenberg were commissioned by the Developers to "deliver a unique artworks programme...that will enable both the existing and displaced communities of The Gorbals to engage with the fast-moving development of their environment."[14]

Evidence of Heisenberg's 'consultation' with the residents of the Gorbals existed in the form of video footage of interviews with locals. The footage was played back on an old bashed up TV as part of the exhibition. Within the context of the Lighthouse and the minimal nature of the exhibition that this was part of, it was a very definite statement. The Heisenberg interviews were faux-consultation, and they were not sensitive to the people interviewed (there is a general feeling within the Gorbals that the re-development will push out local residents as house prices and rents rise), nor was it sensitive in the manner or the place in which it was presented. Heisenberg have attempted to secure the outward consultative appearance of 'Contextual Practice' whilst ignoring genuine considerations of such practice, i.e. are people aware of the implication of their involvement in the work, etc.

The reality of critical 'Contextual Practice' is that it is hard work; it involves constant questioning of motivation and methodology, and also constant communication with the group or situation that the artist(s) is working with. It also demands compromise, yet compromise does not sit easily with the general individualistic model of the artist or of authorship.

'Out of the Bubble' claims that 'Contextual Practice' is critical of how art is taught. Many contributors to the book mention the perceived model of the artist within art education:

"Teaching institutions are still struggling with hide-bound values based on an early nineteenth century model that associates the artist with prophetic genius, alienation, madness and martyrdom for the cause of art. Certainly students seem to think so, but where do they get it from?"[15]

Perhaps the students, 'get it from', the very lack of contextual practitioners and the very structures of tutoring within those art schools. Charles Harrison writing in Studio International in 1972 was critical of the situation then:

"I suspect that the situation outlined (the much-vaunted teaching system of group criticism of work and 'tough' exposure of the individual to and by the group)—like so many established in so many art schools—merely provides for success in its own terms and within its own limited context. Once armed with his [sic] diploma, or at the termination of his postgraduate course, the typical fine-art student is cast adrift in a world for which his studies have in no way prepared him."[16]

How much has changed in thirty years of fine art education? The following quote was published in 1999:

"What makes the artistic identity so tricky to negotiate is the widely held view (shared and promoted by many in the artistic community itself and latently supported by the dominant models of art education), that modern art necessarily exists at a distance from all other practices."[17]

The very term 'Contextual Practice' could lead to one pre-supposing that fine art practice exists which is non-context based. Perhaps it would be more fruitful to look at all artistic practice as contextual as Jane Calow[18] makes suggestion of. This might then enable a questioning of the methodologies, of the very acts of engagement, of the socio-economic relationships inherent in artistic practices. Yet still the paradigms of gallery and studio are taught as mainstream, while courses such as public art, environmental art, or artists in education are treated as peripheral.

The old term 'community art' had for a long time been equated as 'bad art' within fine art circles, an antithesis to an individualistic, professional arts practice. In parallel to the adage "those who can, do; those who can't, teach" my experience within art school and the idea generally held amongst students was, "those who can, practice fine art; those who can't, practice community art'.

The reality of such an attitude was—is—that those attempting to pursue a career as gallery artists are more often pursuing practices that are split hierarchically. Arts workshops and sessional work are treated as a way to make ends meet, an acceptable yet annoying interruption to the real task of a 'professional' studio based practice. My experience is that 'bad' or rather inadequate contextual/community art continues to be perpetuated as a direct result of this motivation, with artists being involved in a miseducation about their own work and role, and the responsibilities attached to it. This is something which the education system has to take a large proportion of the responsibility for. It is also evident that where artists are acutely aware of these discrepancies they are not making the effort to challenge uninformed arts administration as it's easier just to do the job and take the money than it is to challenge deficient ideas of what might constitute effective, relevant collaborative practice.

'Out of the Bubble' makes few inroads into suggesting how Fine Art education may go about addressing its failure to equip art students with relevant training and expectations for a meaningful working practice. Nor does the book seek to ask who benefits from out-moded models of the artist being kept in place at art schools or who will benefit from an expansion of the higher education sector as 'Contextual Practice' is offered as another choice on the curriculum. 'Out of the Bubble' does present the reader with a varied selection of practices but overall it fails to deliver in terms of discussing how art schools may begin to educate towards politically, socially and contextually aware artists.

Notes

1 Out of the Bubble: Approaches to 'Contextual Practice' within Fine Art Education, Ed. John Carson & Susannah Silver, The London Institute, 2000, p114.

2 *ibid*, p38.

3 Art with People, Ed. Malcolm Dickson, Artists Newsletter Publication, 1995.

4 Changing Lives: The Social Impact of the Arts, The Scottish Arts Council, 1995, p3.

5 *ibid*, p4.

6 *ibid*, p5.

7 *ibid*, p6.

8 *ibid*, p7.

9 *ibid*, p8.

10 Changing Places: The Arts in Scotland's Urban Areas, The Scottish Arts Council, 1995.

11 *op cit*, Out of the Bubble, p26.

12 *ibid*, p28.

13 Stirring the City, Heisenberg project flyer, 2001.

14 *ibid*.

15 *op cit*, Out of the Bubble, p101.

16 Charles Harrison, 'Educating Artists', Studio International, May 1972 .

17 Pavel Buchler, 'Other Peoples Culture' in Curious: Artists Research Within Expert Culture, Visual Arts Projects, 1999, p44.

18 *op cit*, Out of the Bubble, p106-112.

"Oh gag me"

An inclusive conversation with Suzanne Lacy

Alison Stirling & Anne Elliot

Artists working within Arts in a Social Context have in the recent past been written off as the art scene's social workers and viewed as poor cousins to the gallery artist. Yet it now appears to be having a reassessment in Scotland, influenced by the work of artists such as Suzanne Lacy.

Within new community art in Scotland, Social Inclusion has become part of the vocabulary of funding criteria for arts programmes. Having that vocabulary is necessary, but without the practical skills, or time to build up an understanding of the communities in which these arts processes will take place, the ideas are arrived at *despite* the community and not in collaboration with it.

With a lack of any real definition of its meaning in terms of practical responses, Social Inclusion is open to re-interpretation on many levels, encouraging a formulaic and often meaningless response to a multitude of social and artistic issues. After all, if you don't have the funding, competent organisation, understanding and a strong support structure, not forgetting a welcoming community, you don't have social inclusion.

Artlink Edinburgh has, for the past 15 years been working outwith the mainstream, building on the experience of artists working within social work and healthcare environments. It has over the years improved its methods of working, learning from past mistakes and more accurately targeting its responses in order that they are more relevant to the individual and wider needs of the people we work with.

The core of its work is the belief that the participant is placed at the centre of the arts process. Its aim throughout project design is to build up a working relationship with the individual or group and then establish the exact direction of the artworks in relation to the individual interests or issues.

Many of the issues we, as artists working within Artlink, face are in response to problems faced by individuals who are 'socially excluded' from the mainstream, as a result of long term illness, institutionalisation, lack of available opportunity, lack of money, public ignorance, and lack of support. The artist's role is to find the appropriate ways of working in collaboration with the individual, using the arts process to form ideas, investigate ways of working and achieve a series of responses which reflect the effectiveness of the partnerships formed.

The individual's circumstances can often seem overwhelming, overshadowing and testing the relevance of any arts process. Therefore the demands on the artist are more wide-ranging, extending their expertise and skills within programmes that seek to merge the artistic with the social.

It is a big mistake, however, to say art within this context achieves real social change. At best it gives a voice, draws attention to an issue, and always, always uncovers another set of barriers to respond to. This challenges the role of the artist as collaborator, exploring the nature of the relationship, its strengths and weaknesses, placing more importance on the process than on the product itself.

There is a lack of knowledge about what art in this context can achieve and how it can progress, and with no definitive texts available within Scotland, one has to look overseas to the US to find essays on ways of working which further progress the work of artists in this field.

Mapping The Terrain with its essays on public art has been used for Artlink as a guide in its programme development. The book itself does not offer an insight into work in the field of disability but it does offer a variety of responses to art outwith the gallery context, creating arguments for work which is more responsive to its audiences.

The book's editor and essayist is the artist Suzanne Lacy. She has worked collaboratively since the early 1970s. Her experience includes collaborations with other artists and more broadly conceived 'collaborations' with people in various communities and occupations. In the 1970s, for example, she collaborated with Evalina Newman, an older African American woman in Watts (Los Angeles), engaging others in her housing complex in exhibitions on crime. She also collaborated with Kathleen Chang, an actress in San Francisco, in a performance on Chinese immigration and women. In a series of large urban installations on violence against women, she broadened the collaborative process to include police, politicians, hotline activists and reporters, creating together multi-sited works that address social issues.

Examples of her work include *The Roof is on Fire*, an installation of parked cars on a rooftop garage with the participation of more than 200 teens; and *Youth, Cops, and Videotape*, a video of a workshop that continues to be used in police training. In 1997, she produced *No Blood/No Foul*, an installation of murals, television interviews and a live basketball game between youth and police that was widely covered on television news. This artwork, created with the co-operation of the Oakland Police Department, was not only meant to increase awareness of youth issues, but tolerance of each group for the other.

We were offered the opportunity to interview Suzanne Lacy in her hotel room. Armed with a tape recorder and a series of questions based on the Artlink interpretation of Mapping The Terrain, we sat down ready to begin our interview. The tape recorder didn't work. We managed to get another. The first question was so vague it was met with "tell me some more about the question?" Our response, garbled both on tape and in reality, ended with a "you don't get this question?" Her response, "I get the area that you are talking about, but I don't get what it is you want to know specifically about it." A dysfunctional tape recorder and inappropriate questions set the tone.

Anne Elliot (*shifting anxiously in her seat*): What do you think makes the most change, the process involved in the making of the artwork or the end product?

Suzanne Lacy: Well what kind of change do you mean?

AE (*looks agitated*): Social change?

SL: Located where?

Alison Stirling (*leans forward, perplexed*): Eh, within the audience, if the people who take part in your projects represent the audience.

SL: Let me take your work as an example. You have a person who has a learning disability and you have an artist who interacts with them, and then you have the social system that the person operates within, such as the social service or medical system, and the artist's own set of systems, often less prescriptive, and the culture that these intersecting systems exist within. On top of that you have various forms of cultural contexts, including the art world. They all mix together in various ways. Where do you think change occurs?

AS: The change takes place mostly within the person you work in collaboration with, then with support staff; then with the audiences that may see that person's work. Sometimes the change is more personal, in the artist and participant, based on gaining a mutual understanding of each other, therefore gaining a greater understanding of the issues the individuals face.

SL: What might happen as a result of that change?

AS (*getting worried that the interviewers have rapidly become the interviewees*): People will be more accepted but it takes a long time.

SL: How might that happen?

AS: The more people are visible the more they're accepted, the more positive that visibility the greater the likelihood that they will become more valued members of the community. I suppose I'm being a bit idealistic, but that can lead to greater social change.

SL: When you ask me about change, change where and

Right & opposite:
Artlink Edinburgh
Fusion Projects

to what end, is what I would say. And I think you have the answers from your own practice.

AS: How do you measure change?

SL: I think it's clearly demonstrable that one can change individual behaviour. Change isn't the right word, exactly; rather, you can impact an individual's experience and that experience might cause change. The question is, how do you measure change beyond the individual? In your instance, how would you measure changing the system that deals with people that have learning disabilities?

AS: Most art projects work with people over relatively short periods of time. What we've managed to do is over four years or six years. Over longer time periods you can measure change more accurately, as you start to see both physically and emotionally the differences in people, perhaps this is because for the first time in some of these people's lives there is someone working beside them around what interests them.

SL: Is that as a result of relationships or is that as a result of art?

AS: The art's in the relationship.

SL: Would it be the same without the art?

AS: No, because it's about starting to find out about that person, using the art to do this. For example, one man working with Anne Elliot, started off by making a book, then as a result, decided he needed to make a bookcase for it and as a result of that he got into making sculpture and ended up making work in the Sculpture Studios. So it's about his relationship with the art and how we used the art to form a positive working relationship with him.

SL: So the art is the relationship, and the manifestation of the relationship is the object?

AS: Not always.

SL: There is something in making that's very positive, and the more concrete the making the more positive the benefit might be for certain people.

AS: Sometimes for people who have higher support needs, who have profound learning difficulties, the making means nothing so it's the individual's involvement in the process and how the art works to support the individual within that, that makes the difference. Now that might not be art, but it might be. For example most people have care plans written about them, they are clinical reports on their medical needs. What we have done is bring in a writer to write about the person, their interests, their reactions, describe them in ways in which they become more of a person rather than a list of conditions. I don't know whether that's art or not but we do use artists.

SL: Do you know what I'd say: In this case the art is in the construction of the entirety of the concept. Setting up the situation. As well, perhaps, as the actual writing itself. What intrigues me is less, in this case, the writing, although the skilful expression of craft can lift the mundane to great and admirable heights. But I'm not presented with the writing, so I can't comment on that—I can say that I find the design a brilliant and intriguing piece of conceptual art.

AE: When you are young you are more idealistic, expecting and wanting change to happen. With age do you think that your idealism is the same or changed in what way?

SL: I think it has. As I've gotten older it hasn't destroyed my fervour for change but I've become (particularly in the arts) a little more sceptical of what we can and cannot do. It doesn't mean you do anything different nor with any less intensity or passion, it just means that you might assess change a little more critically. I think the work looks harder to me than it used to; more to do to actually change things.

AS: I remember talking a few years ago to a woman who was much older than me who'd been working in arts and communities for a long time. I said that I felt that there seemed to be a constant re-inventing of the wheel within arts and a social context and that I felt frustrated by this lack of change but she told me that change does take place it just takes a long time.

SL: Look at Artist Placement Group in the 70s, artists John Latham and Barbara Straveni whose goal it was to place artists in industry. And there were a few examples of it but it was more of an idea. A great idea, by the way, and one that characterised a type of artistic inquiry in other parts of the world as well. 30 years later you, for example, are actually placing artists in significant ways in industry. So I'd say that's significant progress. Being younger causes two things, one is frustration and the other is a kind of hyper belief in the effectiveness of what you do, maybe even an artificial belief.

I've been an activist at one point, and later an activist artist. As an activist I think there's a kind of hard edge of cynicism you develop when you're constantly faced with seemingly unyielding social dilemmas. But when you have an art practice you can say something beautiful was made even if great social change did not happen. There's an internal reward built into being an artist activist. To have a practice and to locate my own reward system within the practice is something that I find profoundly satisfying.

AE: At what point do other artists or specialists come in when you're constructing a project and do they fit in with your ideas or do they reinterpret your ideas?

SL: I tend to work very collaboratively which means there's other kinds of professions and concerns represented in my projects from the very beginning.

One of the issues around collaboration is to what degree will you compromise your vision? I don't think compromise is bad, by the way. One chooses where and how one will compromise. The general rule of thumb for my work is if there is a subject matter issue, the authority resides in the people who are representing that experience and I tend not to conflict with that. So if a young person says to me this is my reality I don't say "Oh no, I don't like that, let's do it differently."

But if it's a question of the aesthetics, then I tend not to negotiate as much. I will always ask others with whom I work for their ideas, and we have much discussion about what works aesthetically and what doesn't. But the final decision on how a project looks, its imagery, is mine (along with the other artists with whom I work). It's like being a theatre director. Theatre is very collaborative and negotiated, but there is a final authority and responsibility, and that rests with the director.

I'm aware of the politics of representation, and that the shape can effect the meaning. So it's not a perfect world in my artworks. Imagery I like is shaped by my culture and background. But I also have a great deal of experience in art, and I do retain the decisions as to where I will put my energy and creative passion. So

The Roof Is On Fire
1994 Oakland
Suzanne Lacy
Collaboration with Annice Jacoby and Chris Johnson

the negotiations around aesthetics are what I'd call 'transparent' in my work—lots of people express lots of ideas, and challenge each other's presumptions, and discuss the meaning of our making together. At a certain point, however, and hopefully after a full and fair hearing, I make decisions about the 'look' of a work.

Now, there is some fear expressed by other artists that this can lead to abuse of power—the manipulation of people to do your images against their interest. I think this is definitely a possibility, and in the situations you are describing decidedly so. This is why it can be dangerous working with children. There are certain times and places where it is easier to persuade people about something that is not in their best interest, like when you work with people with learning disabilities.

AS: I think it is very easy to do that and it is important always to be aware of what can be an unequal power balance. If a collaboration is to be effective then it takes time to form a relationship that works successfully. In the making of any collaborative artwork the individual's interests and/or skills must be the main focal point: It is extremely important that the individual is not lost and is not patronised within the making of the work.

SL: In general, however, I work with such a scale that there is a built-in check. With 500 people in a performance, it's pretty hard for me to persuade all of them to participate in something that they instinctively feel is not in their own best interests. Also, the processes are long and public and open continually to questioning, so that's my self-correcting environmental factor. I listen and interpret and then negotiate quite a bit compared to most artists, but there can come a point within that negotiation where I say "Oh gag me, I can't do that image, it won't work to get news coverage, it isn't aesthetically sound." With full knowledge of the complexities of that statement, the inherent contradictions and possibilities for power abuse, I still find myself at certain times saying, that won't work. What's interesting about that moment is that that's the point where art and life intersect. It's a point of ethical concern, social debate, and a place where you can engage in the meaning of art, life, politics, whatever, around that issue.

AS: I want to end the interview with a hypothetical situation. Respond to it off the top of your head, with what you would do in the situation, what sort of project would you come up with. There's a group of elderly women...

SL: They live together in a home?

AS: Yes, homes that are like small institutions.

AE: They were in institutions and they knew of each other, but they're now brought together in one house, which is their home.

AS: Some of them have mental health problems on top of their learning disabilities, exacerbated by the fact that they are limited in what they can do, partly financially and partly by the fact they live in a rural community and transport is problematic. So could you think of a project that would some way respond to this?

SL: And what do they want?

AS: They want to make friends basically. They want to be out of the house and they want to be with friends and to make new friends.

SL: And they can't go with their friends?

AS: Well you need to engineer a way of making sure they meet up. Staffing and transport is a real issue.

SL: Have you tried negotiating with the organisation that provides their service?

AS: Sometimes, yes.

SL: What happens?

AS: They are overworked.

SL: I think it's a very rich situation. I guess one of the things you would have to look at is where your initial impetus is? Is it with these particular women or is it to demonstrate the situation of women like these?

AS: You may need to point out the quality of life that they have, but in doing that you must try to create a better quality of life for them.

SL: I could suggest a whole bunch of ideas. I'd much rather talk about this than have an interview. I'd have to qualify any ideas by saying I don't know the women, I don't really know their level of ability and I don't know the politics of what might happen to them by activating this situation in their lives. I don't know whether you're looking for a sustained way out for them or a short term way out. There is a whole lot of ethical and political issues that I don't understand.

So having said that, the images that come to my mind are images of extravagant tea parties in public places, maybe performative, maybe photographed. Of looking at the systems that leverage their ability to get out and manipulating those systems in the ways that you've done in other instances. Like making an artwork around public transit. Or convening any social service vehicles that must be called to get them from point "a" to point "b" and using these as part of a work. Or projecting on the front of their buildings the passes they need.

Given what you said you wanted to do, which is change their direct lives, obviously, I can't think of an actual image for that as I don't know the circumstances that control their lives. If you were interested in changing the circumstances of people's lives with them as participants, then you have to address their level of political awareness. Is their political awareness such that they're aware that they have a right to do more in life?

AS: Yes.

SL: And they are concerned not only for their own isolation but of other women like them? If that is the case then you enter that other territory which is about changing the system and changing public opinion. You see the distinction I'm making? Then it depends on how activist you want to be. I understand your caution, you'd have to move very carefully, because they're fragile people and in overwhelming social circumstances. You could honour and empower them, in other words give them training as 'artists' and you can define that in any way you want and then you can employ them to visit people in their homes, thereby accomplishing them getting out more.

We agree that the interview has come to an end. Outside on the street Alison lights up a cigarette. The next day at Suzanne Lacy's Glasgow School of Art public talk, Anne Elliot finally managed to learn what it was that Suzanne Lacy actually did. Later on at a student organised discussion, Suzanne Lacy gained a greater understanding of Artlink.

The Turning point Project/
Under Construction
1998 Vancouver
Suzanne Lacy
Collaboration with Barbara Clausen,
video by Darlene Haber