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Collections:

ten two  
zero zero five



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*ten two zero zero five* is the third in the a-n Collections series designed to examine and analyse the 'why, what and how' of artists' practice and published to coincide with our 25-year anniversary. Guest edited by Deborah Smith, it is an exploration of modes of dissemination for contemporary cultural practices.

As part of our strategies to present and create debates around the diversity of contemporary visual arts practices and approaches, we welcome ideas and proposals for publications in the a-n Collections and new Research papers series.



**Fashion Architecture Taste (FAT)**, Woodward Place, New Islington redevelopment of the Cardroom Estate, East Manchester, 2005. See 'Mother of all Arts' by Rob Wilson on page 20.

# Introduction

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*ten two zero zero five* is a collection of eclectic writings that are embedded within sites of specificity as defined by their subject matter. These reveal a range of contemporary cultural practices, getting to the root of the form, and how this translates to audiences for viewing, for entertaining, for contemplation and for interaction. They implicitly challenge and reinterpret physical, conceptual, virtual, and structural 'space'; they touch on the past, bring us into the present, and open up dialogue for the future.

In 'One-to-one, One-to-many and Few-to-few Communication', William Davies provides a general overview of the history of the communication technologies and distributions systems that have become the framework for how users have redefined open, closed and networked systems. Maria Fusco, in 'Thinking Machines v The Big Swap', looks at mass production and distribution of the artists' book, versus the new methodologies created through non-representative contemporary visual arts publishing. Adam Sutherland in 'I, Wannabe' charts the empathetic relationship between contemporary art and popular music. Live- and event-based art, in Sally O'Reilly's 'Performativity', is associated with durational or temporal specificity with a history that is scattered and ephemeral evolving along disconnected and often contradictory lines of enquiry and development. In 'The Campaign', Sacha Craddock suggests that all art production takes on the guise of campaign and, through definition, some practices will diminish and retreat through familiarity. However the changing expectations of place and function will mean a perpetual and permanent hunt for alternative modes of presentation and engagement. Re-engagement, in terms of the dissemination of architectural ideas and of the idea of architect as creator, is critiqued through the legacy of modernism and utopia, and is explored in 'Mother of all Arts' by Rob Wilson.

Deborah Smith, Independent Curator  
a-n Commissioning Editor

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# One-to-one, One-to-many and Few-to-few Communication

William Davies

Innovations in communication technology open up possibilities for new forms of social contact, and reduce our dependence on previous ones. Yet there are plenty of instances in which societies and individuals have clung to traditional ways of communicating, despite seemingly more efficient alternatives. The dawn of the video was expected to sound a death knell for cinemas, but cinema attendance levels in the UK actually grew over the 1990s. The written letter continues to play a significant role in our lives – for instance when expressing heartfelt thanks or sorrow – despite the abundant, more convenient alternatives for communicating over distance that are now available to us.

The reason for this is that the use of a communicative technology is never quite as simple as its sheer functionality would suggest. In an age of DVDs and film on-demand, it is clear to us that there is more to going to the cinema than simply seeing a film. It is also a night out. And in an age of emails and text messages, it is clear that there is more to writing a letter than simply conveying information. It also demonstrates a degree of sincerity and effort.

It is important to recognise these additional social functions – or ‘norms’ – that communication technologies perform, over and above the technical functions that they were designed for. Norms are how these technologies become integrated into our lives, and how acceptable and unacceptable uses of them are distinguished from one another. But often we only identify them once their intended, designed social function has been superseded by a more advanced technology, as with the case of the cinema or letter.

The novelty of new media means that it is difficult to identify what new norms they may give rise to. Small innovations in etiquette have already emerged around the internet, such as the use of ‘best regards’ at the end of an email, or the way in which webloggers use the word ‘via’ to indicate the website via which they came across a certain story. But the most interesting question surrounding new media is whether we will choose to maintain the norms of the ‘public sphere’ that have existed for over two hundred years, and have been central to a modern understanding of what constitutes a published book, a celebrity, an artwork, or a piece of art criticism; and if not, what might replace these norms.

Firstly, what do we mean by the public sphere, and how is it related to communication technologies? Social theorists tend to identify the birth of the public sphere around the time of the European Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, as pamphleteers, novels, newspapers and modern classical music. What makes something ‘public’ is that it is created for its own sake, and should be judged on its own merits. For example, according to German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, early modern music would be written to mark some historical occasion, or be played in some specific setting within Court ritual, whereas the music of the late eighteenth century existed for its own sake. Music had become autonomous.

It would be wrong to suggest that this sort of shift was *driven* by changes in communication technology, but to some extent it was enabled by them. Newspapers and books made it possible for writers and critics to communicate with large national and international audiences. But there was a significant technological bottleneck in place: only a select amount of news, comment or criticism could make it onto the printed page. Books and articles had to be judged worthy of publishing before they were printed. Norms developed to ensure that these public acts of communication were worthwhile in and of themselves, and not because of their social setting or who the author happened to be.

Publishing technologies, such as the printing press or broadcast technology, are ‘one-to-many’ technologies. A minority communicates with the majority; the many listen to or watch the few. All our ideas of celebrity, of criticism or of ‘great’ artworks are bound up in this structure of communication. Meanwhile, socialising technologies, such as a telephone, are ‘one-to-one’ technologies, and generally treated as private and outside of the public sphere. A far larger number of people are able to communicate via phone than are able to communicate via book, but the audience is also smaller.

What is unique about the internet is that it merges the function of a book with the function of a telephone. It is simultaneously a publishing technology and socialising technology. The internet can be used for one-to-many communication (as occurs when we read the BBC website), for one-to-one communication (as occurs when we exchange private emails) and various structures in-between. A group email containing twenty recipients represents a structure of communication never previously possible, as does an online message board. These are ‘few-to-few’ and ‘many-to-many’ forms of communication. Much of the time it is entirely clear when communication is public, as when it comes from a known publishing source, and when it is private, as when it comes from a friend. But there are now grey areas opened up by the technology, lying between a broadcast and a conversation.

The chief manifestation of this is the amateurisation of publishing. There is no longer a technological bottleneck limiting access to the public sphere: anyone with access to the internet can publish their thoughts and ideas, commonly via a weblog. They don't need to seek an editor's approval to do so. As the bandwidth of the internet increases, it is no longer just text that can bypass the critical judgement of an editor, but visual imagery, music and film.

On the face of it, this represents a glorious democratisation of the media and production technologies. But the norms of publishing and of critique are not unaffected once the number of contributors starts to rise. Where traditional publishing technologies led to a norm of critical editing *prior* to publication, we are now seeing the emergence of communication structures in which content can be immediately published, then wait to see if it attracts an audience. The editorial process is conducted by the audience itself, such that interesting or worthwhile creations get forwarded and linked to, while a large amount of content is ignored altogether. This is not unlike the way in which reality TV shows allow the audience to bestow fame upon someone, rather than wait to have a celebrity presented to them. On the internet, the only difference between published work and unpublished work is the size of the audience, given that there is no longer any technological difference between the two: no distinction such as that between a television and a telephone.

The norms of the public sphere can survive the removal of technological bottlenecks, just as the norms of a night at the cinema can survive the arrival of the video player. Many would argue that traditional publishers such as newspapers or academic journals become even more important in the age of the internet, because they provide a trusted starting point when searching the internet. However, new norms are also emerging: the norms of reputation.

Reputation is what lies between anonymity and fame, and how the transition is made between the two. For example, in the world of traditional publishing media, a club singer might develop a reputation, and then be signed by a record label and published. In other forms of creativity, such as novel writing, the artist is more dependent on the judgement of an individual agent or publisher, but it would help if they could accrue reputation around the publishing world first. However, we now have communication technologies that plug the gap between the public and the private spheres, and muddy the distinction between the two. In the new few-to-few and many-to-many communication structures available to us, in which content is forwarded and linked-to to mark its value, an individual writer, journalist or artist can gradually accrue reputation, until they are publicly recognised. There needn't be a radical disjuncture between being an obscure amateur and a celebrated professional, there are endless shades of grey in between.

Norms of reputation may be more democratic than those of the classical public sphere, in that the audience is performing the role of the critic, but they are also potentially damaging to publishing norms. The ideal of autonomous publishing, described above, requires that the content is judged on its own terms as much as possible, and not on the reputation of the person. But the concept of reputation fuses the evaluation of a creation with the evaluation of its creator.

The number of people engaged in self-publishing, and exploiting the network effects of new media, means it is still too difficult to tell whether norms of reputation will eventually dominate, or whether we will retain faith in the system of editorship and professional criticism that has served us for two hundred years. It is plausible we will combine the two. There are areas where we would rather have our content filtered by experts, such as television news and perhaps book publishing. But there may be other areas where we would rather allow the chaos of social and technological networks to determine what is worthy of a mass audience, and would rather experience the excitement of created works gradually emerging into the public eye than let editors or critics take that choice for us.

William Davies is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, London. His weblog is [www.potlatch.org.uk](http://www.potlatch.org.uk)

# Thinking Machines v The Big Swap

Maria Fusco

*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

**Matthew 7:13**

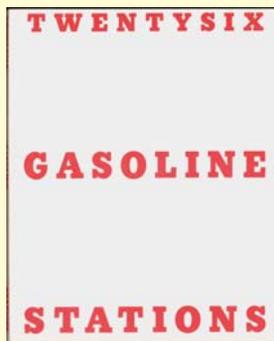
*To read too many books is harmful.*

**Mao Zedong**

Getting your fair share is all about exchange. The relationship between the reader and the read is a tender one that requires an acute account of critical complicity, a measure of the type that might be normally associated with students and exams. This activity however is not compulsory, and for many of us, takes place in what may be termed 'free time'.

As a form of visual art practice, the 'artist's book' has been kicking around for rather a long time. Livres d'artiste, or Künstlerbuch, is generally a very limited-edition, handmade book or folio constructed by an artist in response to an existing text; Picasso, Miró, Chagall and Rouault all made them. This was, and indeed still is, a regular mechanism of production for many practitioners, who want to retain a small and large audience at the same time, in the form of a profitable package. The term – livres d'artiste – when translated into English however – artist's book – has a very different connotation, more suggestive of a mass-produced, less expensive publication that flits between the bookshop, the gallery, and the bed. Between the covers, this mongrel has a saponaceous character, for it looks, stacks and smells like a regular book but is, in fact, a meta-critical operation, that is to say, it calls attention to the very conceits and conventions of its own form. A simple descriptor then, is that an artist's book is a piece of work authored in one sense or another by an artist, which can only be realised in book form. Marcel Duchamp has simply said that an artist's book is a book made by an artist, and again, more importantly, that a book is an artist's book if the artist himself says so. Clive Phillpot observed in *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books* that, "What really characterises artists' books is that they reflect and emerge from the preoccupations and sensibilities of artists as makers and as citizens".

The inventor of the contemporary artist's book is generally nominated as Ed Ruscha, who stated that he wanted his own publishing efforts to have, "...a professional polish, a clear cut machine finish... I am not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass-produced product of high order...". And so in 1963, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* steamed out of Ruscha's studio practice of paintings, prints and drawings, the first in a series of small, cheap paperbacks that seem even now to kick-start their own model of production. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is a filmic succession of dispassionate, black and white photographs documenting the gas stations on US Route 40, beginning in Los Angeles, (where the artist worked) through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and into Oklahoma City (where he grew up), it has no text, except for functional captions that outline the name and situation of each station. It's a steady, compelling narrative, slow to start and even slower to finish.



**Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, cover image, 1962.**  
Courtesy: Gagolian Gallery

There are two significant aspects of Ruscha's early publishing here, that we can continue to refer to as persistently 'contemporary'. The first, his emulation of common book trade rather than that of fine art publishers, both in terms of the book's basic production qualities – cheaply printed rather than hand-rendered and bound – and the print run – initially four hundred. It is interesting to note that the first production of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was large by then current artist's book standards but, that Ruscha still retained some conventions of more exclusive limited editions: each of the four-hundred copies were numbered and the first fifty of them were signed. This is a clear indication that old habits die hard and that the journey from gallery to bookshelf is often a sticky one. Ruscha later realised that this disciplinary ownership ran contrary to the work: "One of the purposes of my book[s] has to do with making... mass produced object[s]... The final product has a very commercial, professional feel to it. I am not in sympathy with the whole area of hand-printed publications, however sincere. One mistake I made in *Twenty-Six* [sic] *Gasoline Stations* was in numbering the books. I was testing – at that time – that each copy a person might buy would have an individual place in the edition. I don't want that now." A subsequent edition, identical in form, rectified this, signalling that each book was singular in its place as an independent artwork. The second key aspect is Ruscha's method of distribution: for the books were sold, amongst other places, in the very gas stations featured in their pages. This urge to multiply, this need to belong, this search for an audience, is an active legacy; it's feasible today to sell artists' publications in bookshops, hotels, lifestyle stores and airports, even if there is only a handful, just now.

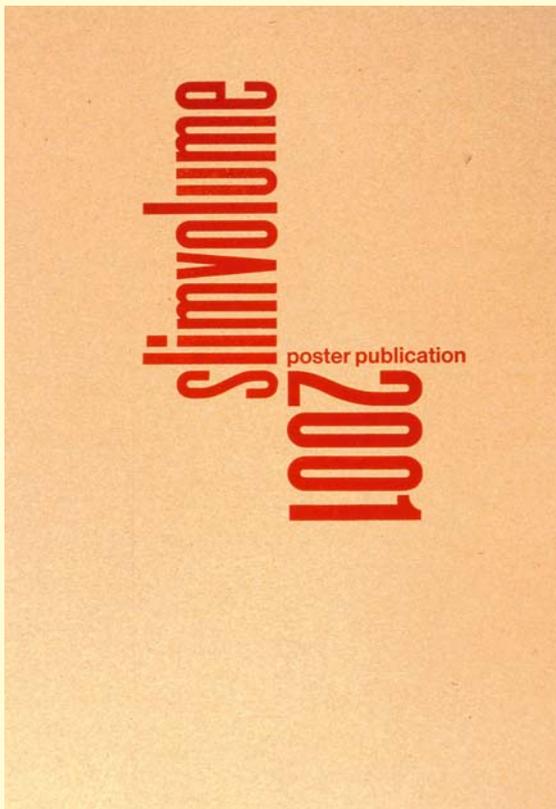
If as Walter J Ong suggests in *Orality and Literacy*: "Thought requires some sort of continuity. Writing establishes in the text a 'line' of continuity outside the mind. If distraction confuses or obliterates from the mind the context out of which emerges the material I am now reading, the context can be retrieved by glancing back over the text selectively. Back-looping can be entirely occasional, purely ad hoc." Well then, dear reader, we can

**Ed Ruscha, *Union, Needles California*, 1962, from the book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, image 12.4x26.7cm.**  
Courtesy: Gagolian Gallery



UNION, NEEDLES, CALIFORNIA

together deftly advance towards an examination of a small, non-representative sample of contemporary examples of visual arts publishing, examples that are actively creating new methodologies and continuities within their pages.



Front cover of *Slimvolume Poster Publication 2001*, letterpress on 300gsm Kapok recycled paper, 297x420cm.  
Courtesy: Andrew Hunt

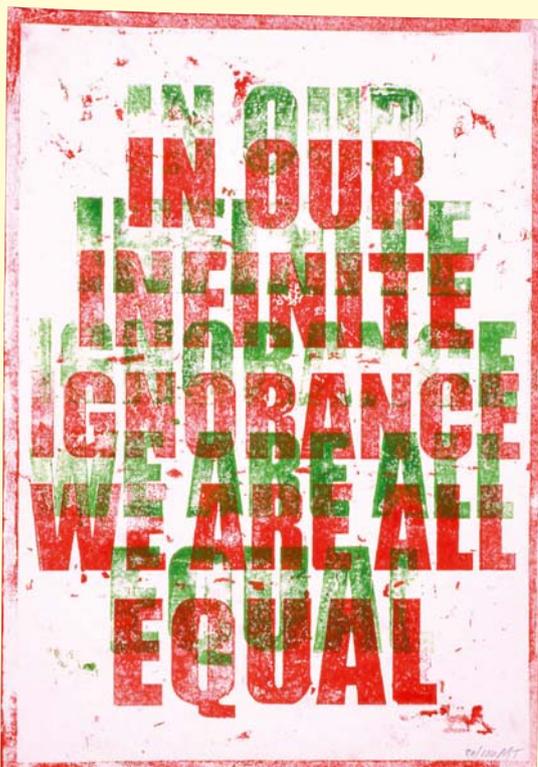
### A Magnificent Gift

Oddly cohesive in the realm of compound meaning, *Slimvolume Poster Publication*, organised by Andrew Hunt, is a loose-bound edition of works rolling thirty artists together into a neat flat package. An annual event since 2001, its method of distribution as an alternative economy is a key facet of the project, operating through the nomination, by contributors, of copies of the publication to an international range of individuals and collections, meaning that at the moment, you can't buy one, you must be given one. Each edition is also accompanied by an exposition of some sort, allowing more than just the tube's recipients to see the work. The constitutional framework here is solid enough, for by building a network of associations, *Slimvolume* is creating its own party of friendly users – albeit a deliberately leaky one, remaining 'open' to gatecrashers.

With a nod towards Michel de Certeau's assertion that, "The means of diffusion are now dominating the ideas they diffuse", *Slimvolume* traverses the cracks and tracks in average visual art production, by persuading participants to represent and self-fund 150 A3 copies of their work. Hunt says, "I don't fund the artists' production costs (although sometimes there is a small nominal fee for artists). The idea is that this works because the publication is given away to recipients of the artists and the artists all receive a copy each as well, so it's like a big swap... Another important thing is that the lack of money means that each artist's work reflects the economy of his/her situation at the time – they make whatever they can afford to and this usually makes for an exciting and unusual result." And although there were some copies of the 2003 and 2004 editions for sale, this swapping action swiftly both challenges and reaffirms the position and role of the artist within the publication as a whole, allowing the producer to make as they are able, although perhaps not quite as they wish. In addition, the A3 format can be succinct or expandable, so in 2004's production, there is a musical score from Johanna Billing that folds up into an A3 book, Simon Morris' double-sided A2 poster which folds down to A3, or John Russell's poster that sprinkles glitter through the publication.

This year's edition is a particularly self-reflexive activity, with thirty artists responding to ideas outlined in the work of Adorno and Deleuze around the idea of the 'utopian blink' – a compression or peep at a transformed reality that sits at once inside and outside of received notions about current socio-political possibilities. As the publication's corpus is essentially constructed of posters, which in a display context usually signals or advertises something that is forthcoming, 2005 *Slimvolume Poster Publication* is already moving ahead of its own time, signalling that what you are about to read is as much about the communication of information as the information it communicates.

**Mark Titchner**, *In Our Infinite Ignorance We Are All Equal*, woodcut on paper, 297x420cm, from *Slimvolume Poster Publication 2001*. Courtesy: Andrew Hunt and the artist



# Thinking Machines v The Big Swap continued

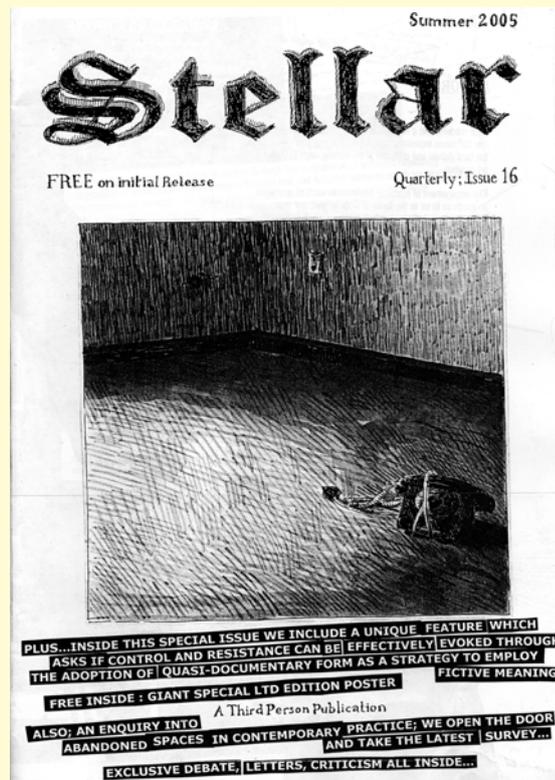
## Desunt Cetera

The meaningful surface of *Stellar* is hard to ignore. The anthropic in its authorial output and handmade in its outlook, each edition of this irregular gazetteer is dedicated to the stuff that surrounds the production of a different artist each time, ranging from Nick Crowe in the first edition, through Raymond Pettibon and Olaf Breuning to Jane and Louise Wilson in the latest one.

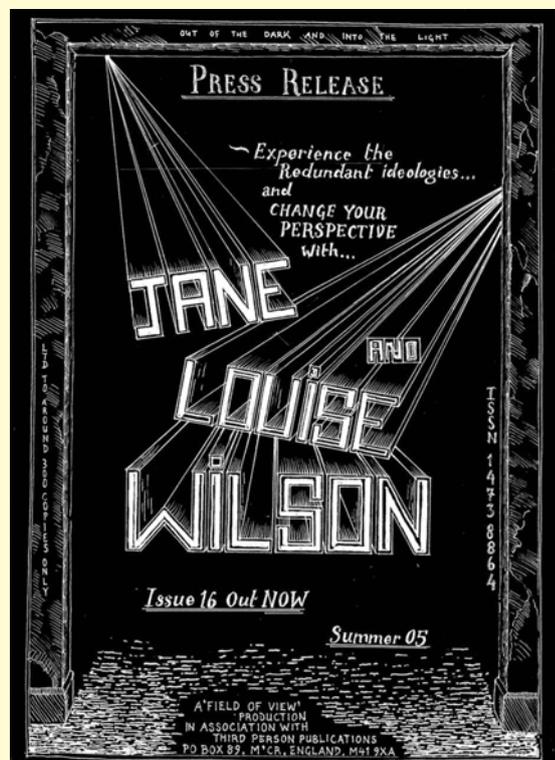
The visible history of recent culture is persistently punctual here, as The *Stellar* Editor, aka David Osbaldeston, physically re-scribes a selection of publicity and marketing materials from the chosen artist's archives, over a six-week period into a cohesive black and white whole; thereby normalising and at the same time commemorating its very own contents. Familiar in a fanzine-like way, each *Stellar* is photocopied in an A3 edition of around 300, this vacillation in edition size is important, signifying that this is no fixed enterprise, for even though it inhabits an existing recognisable formal structure, its production represents a disturbance more akin to guerrilla or irregular fighting than a surrender to a more standard application of collectability 'doomed to the showcase'. Each issue is free on initial release, dispersed by mail and up for grabs in a tight selection of galleries and bookshops.

Writing of the work of Roman Jakobson in *The Rustle of Language*, Roland Barthes stated that "...he realized that the authentic scientific phenomenon of modernity was not about *fact* but *relationship*... a decisive *opening* gesture of classifications, castes, disciplines... there are no more owners (of Literature of Linguistics), the watchdogs are sent back to their pens." One can recognise this "*opening* gesture" amidst the pages of *Stellar*, which only link together as a series or meaningful whole when as Osbaldeston puts it, "...the featured content is in some way codified as belonging to some part of a perceived or recognised greater structure which is temporal in nature and thus usually always under subtle shift. For this reason any such links are formulated by the reader themselves, be they based on certain thematic, social, or even disciplinary issues. In a world where the moment is always 'now', any relationship between this and the redundant evidence of pre-existing work, which forms the bulk of the project is constantly open to re-investment." In this way, the publication's use-value can be read as more about the way in which the material is manipulated rather than what has been chosen, suggesting at the very least a vital discussion about the act of making and who really owns what.

*Stellar*, issue 16 cover, Summer 2005.  
Courtesy: David Osbaldeston



*Stellar*, issue 16 press release, Summer 2005.  
Courtesy: David Osbaldeston



## Roundtable Discussion

Fergus Kelly, Dennis McNulty, Garrett Phelan and Sarah Pierce.

On Wednesday 27 April 2005, the following conversation took place in studio 27 of Temple Bar Gallery in Dublin. Sarah Pierce invited the participants to have an informal discussion. There was no audience present.

**Sarah Pierce** The starting point of this conversation is Dublin. I invited the three of you to participate partly because each of you were invested in a music scene in Dublin in the 80s. That said, there are exponential numbers of people who could be around this table; but apart from your experiences in music, you are all artists. You live and work here, which I suspect is important. In an abstract way, I am interested in connecting a past in Dublin to an art world that exists here now. So without sounding too much like an RTE special, what was Dublin like in the 80s?

**Garrett Phelan** Broad shoulder pads.

**Sarah Pierce** Oh yeah?

**Garrett Phelan** Big hair, shoulder pads and baggy trousers. Leather ties and tiny little knots.

**Sarah Pierce** And do you miss that Gary?

**Garrett Phelan** White socks. That's where I was at. I had a huge wave of hair over to my right-hand side and large gypsy earrings.

**Sarah Pierce** So you haven't changed much?

**Garrett Phelan** No.

**Sarah Pierce** One place we could start is by describing how and where you saw or listened to music.

**Dennis McNulty** On the radio. A lot.

**Fergus Kelly** John Peel being a major figure because, as everybody knows, he played a huge range of some very, very obscure things.

**Sarah Pierce** He was a DJ?

**Fergus Kelly** He was a Radio 1 DJ.

**Dennis McNulty** BBC Radio 1.

**Fergus Kelly** He was unusual in that he had a Radio 1 slot for the kind of stuff that he was doing. I seem to remember starting to listen to him around 1979, thereabouts. He'd have the famous Peel Sessions; he'd have bands in like Gang of Four, Magazine and The Mekons, people like that...

**Garrett Phelan** That we used to draw the names of our ecker books.

**Fergus Kelly** They used to do sessions in advance of the actual albums that were coming out six months later. So you would get to hear stuff ahead of time. There was nothing else comparable happening at the time, so for me as a teenager, I was hearing these new things. It was great for hearing contemporary punk and related post-punk. Then there was also this other off-beam stuff that you couldn't categorise, some of it was amazing, some of it was hilarious and some of it was absolutely appalling.

**Sarah Pierce** Would any of the bands ever come to Dublin?

**Fergus Kelly** Well that's the thing about Dublin. My own experience, my own memory of Dublin at the time, was the feeling of isolation, because we didn't get very many of the bands that would have played in the UK and elsewhere. There were occasional exceptions to that. I remember going to see John Cooper Clarke; he's a Manchester poet and a so-called punk poet. But none of the key bands for me like Wire, Gang of Four, Magazine, Public Image, they never played Dublin. So there was that feeling of isolation.

**Sarah Pierce** So how else did you actually get to hear stuff?

**Fergus Kelly** Besides Peel's show there was Advance Records up in Stephen's Green.

**Garrett Phelan** 'The Office'.

**Sarah Pierce** Was that its code name?

**Garrett Phelan** It was 'The Office'. It was run by this guy who had a Teddy Boy haircut, big old guy, ran 'The Office' or Advance Records as it was officially known, and that became an enclave for all the skinhead punk stuff and new wave stuff. It was one of two or three outlets for me, aside from the fact I inherited my brother's record collection, which was comprehensive. He was in one of the first punk bands in Dublin called The Letters. The only time I ever saw them was in a school prefab and they were all dressed up in bin bags and mirror shades.

**Sarah Pierce** So fashion was important.

**Garrett Phelan** There was Space Hopper boots, leather jackets and that whole malarkey. But the inheritance of the record collection was a major influence.

**Fergus Kelly** Same with me. My brother had an amazing collection.

**Garrett Phelan** That was our intro into the scene. The other influence was Big D Radio, a pirate radio station ran in Stephen's Green, beside the Green Cinema. That had Denis Murray, who was really good for listening to because he played mainly new wave and punk stuff and a bit of hard rock. Then there was another radio programme - the station that it was on used to be down in Capel Street - that used to run a programme called New Wave Rave. That was brilliant because it played everything; X-Ray Spex, all the stuff that you'd be hearing at around 1978. It was only for about a two-year period. The DJ used to interview and feature young Dublin new wave or punk rock bands.

**Sarah Pierce** In terms of distribution, was it mainly through independent record shops like Advance Records?

**Dennis McNulty** There weren't really any mainstream records shops in Ireland at that stage. Even places like Golden Discs were run more like tiny sellers.

**Garrett Phelan** At the time they were big for us.

**Fergus Kelly** This was well prior to HMV or Virgin occupying Irish soil.

**Dennis McNulty** But they weren't mainstream in the sense of the mainstream now. It was still some bloke and his mate.

**Garrett Phelan** Freebird Records would have been a huge shop for us, down on Grafton Street.

**Sarah Pierce** Were there a lot of local

bands?

**Garrett Phelan** The band scene in Dublin was huge.

**Dennis McNulty** Even from the 70s.

**Garrett Phelan** Yeah, then you had bands like Soul Survivors and I remember the Crofton Airport Hotel had a venue on Sunday's that was really, really good.

**Dennis McNulty** It was a swimming pool.

**Sarah Pierce** I'm not sure I understand what you mean.

**Dennis McNulty** In was actually a swimming pool and the bands used to play in the pool; it was empty.

**Garrett Phelan** That's where The Rats did their first gig, I think.

**Dennis McNulty** I know someone who saw U2 play there as well.

**Fergus Kelly** I remember seeing U2 in the Dandelion Market and paying 50p. That was another key spot; it was just inside of where Stephen's Green Shopping Centre is now. It was a large market with various shops selling punk clothes and records, and there was this huge badge stall. I was big into badges at the time.

**Garrett Phelan** No Romance was the shop.

**Fergus Kelly** There was this chat too, who sold records out of the boot of his car for four quid a pop. You would meet up and bump into people there. There was a sense of community just in the sense of shared interests. Not even necessarily that we hung out, it was just here was a need that was being addressed. Between that and Freebird Records that sold second-hand and new LPs.

**Garrett Phelan** It's funny looking at zines from the 90s, because the punk that I remember from my brother's time would have been the official punk. He left school in 1977 - '76, '77, '78 was majorly punk. When I look at the fanzines of today, and I look at the very hardcore fanzines of the past 10 - 15 years as well, I see that later breed of punk. I don't associate that with what my brother was into or what I was witnessing.

**Sarah Pierce** What's the difference?

**Dennis McNulty** It's kind of punk and hardcore. A lot of those fanzines are more in the vein of, or influenced by, zines about UK and American hardcore which is like really fast punk.

**Fergus Kelly** It's also more heavily stylised musical form, whereas the original punk was a kick against prog and all that that represented with bands like Yes and Emerson Lake & Palmer, Genesis... The whole DIY aesthetic was crucial, you didn't need to spend years learning the guitar - play three chords and you've got a song. Or even, in the case of a monolithic masterpiece like 'Pink Flag' by Wire, one chord.

**Sarah Pierce** If I'm understanding what you mean by stylised, the shift into what came to signify 'punk' isn't what you would actually associate with punk.

**Fergus Kelly** It became stylised very quickly. By 1978 it was already a fashion.

**Dennis McNulty** I think the motivation with those fanzines is almost an attempt to return to the anti-fashion DIY thing.

## Living Clay

*The Metropolitan Complex* is a project by Sarah Pierce, that emerged as a way of considering informal lines of inquiry that artists and others employ to consider production. An ongoing series of papers, based on round-table discussions between practitioners, these publications stake the claim that such unofficial activities are just as valid and valuable critical activity in their own right as their official counterparts, the symposium or seminar. The papers are produced in a tabloid-sized format in editions that can run between 450 and 1,000 and are distributed free as part of, or in the margins of, exhibitions - a handbook of sorts.

Key here is the investigation of shared circumstances that affect and represent a critical idiolect, to 'declare a local scene'. Marshall McLuhan has written in *The Medium is the Massage* that, "Professional is environmental. Amateurism is anti-environmental. Professionalism merges the individual into patterns of total environment. Amateurism seeks the development of the total awareness of the individual and the critical awareness of the ground rules of society. The amateur can afford to lose. The professional tends to classify and specialise, to accept uncritically the ground rules of the environment." If then, as is sometimes asserted that writing restructures consciousness, *The Metropolitan Complex* presents an interesting reappraisal of the convergences and divergences between the official and the unofficial, the professional and the amateur, the policeman and the artist; by editing together a system of exchanges that are, in theory, marked by their frank nature and mediated in some loose form by their editor.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this marginal media, is its obvious reliance on the spoken word, the transformation of orality into the written and thereby the visual, not simply as re-presentation of the dynamic into the quiescent, but rather embodying, in part, Maurice Blanchot's statement in *The Writing of the Disaster*, "...speaking separate from and outside of anything spoken, the sheer saying of writing - whereby this effacement, far from effacing itself in its turn, perpetuates itself without end, even in the interruption of its mark."

As a nomenclature for publications such as *Slimvolume Poster Publication*, *Stellar* and *The Metropolitan Complex*, I can safely say that the term 'artist's books' or rather 'artists' books' has had too tight, or insufficient a collar, around such delicate, yet strategic, aggregates of cultural and economic tethers.

Best then, to remark on their shared experiences as generous, flexible, sensitive structures which combine to propagate and secure artwork to its audience, both already known and as yet to come.

Maria Fusco is a Belfast born writer based in London. She is currently a senior lecturer at University of East London and in 2004, edited *Put About: A Critical Anthology on Independent Publishing* produced by Book Works.

*The Metropolitan Complex, No. 10, Fergus Kelly, Dennis McNulty, Garrett Phelan, Sarah Pierce.* Printed for the Irish Pavilion at la Biennale di Venezia, 2005. Courtesy: Sarah Pierce

# I, Wannabe

Adam Sutherland

Contemporary art's relationship to popular music is a kind of Rock Dad – over-enthusiastic and missing the point, arriving too early to take the kids home from the disco and then insisting on dancing.

The history of a relationship between contemporary art and popular music is one of empathy and mutual interest. This article looks at the impact of this attempted fusion on the evolution of contemporary art practice, based on the premise that in the past fifty years, music culture has led artists to a realisation that other creative activities have usurped the traditional artist's role as communicators, rebels, romantic heroes and innovators. This is increasingly forcing artists to rethink their image, activity and role and ultimately to reinvent the notion of the artist.

Popular music culture is so much about what it's not about: this act of definition, identification – a teenage list of what you don't like, as if defining what you are not will resolve what you could be – a way of defining through refining that results in the narrow confines of particular music forms and their subdivisions. This idea of a synthesis of references to produce an identity is perhaps a key component in how the process of art making has evolved (Minimalism being the most extreme example), and indeed, how culture more generally has evolved (politics, religion); a cycle that is constantly interrupted by cultural rebellion, epitomised most strongly in the US and UK over the past fifty years by youth culture and popular music, rock and roll, the love generation, punk, rave – apparent across the ages, defined more commonly in art by the 'isms'.

With that said and in the spirit of rock and roll here is a list of what this article is not about:

- Collaborative working between composers or musicians and artists
- The use of popular music in art works
- Art references to popular musicians
- Art references to obscure musicians
- Art involving Jazz, New Classical or Avant Garde music
- Album covers
- Art made out of defunct music formats
- Artists as dramaturges for bands
- Music videos by artists

The above list illustrates artists' connection to the material and language of popular music to make conventional art (Christian Marclay, Pipilotti Rist). However, attempts at bridging the divide of popular music and art as a single form have inevitably failed.

At eighteen (1977) I wanted to be in a band, I was an art student. I was very aware that the music world and the art world were not seen to be related. I, like many art students, wanted to believe that art and music were intrinsically linked and I believed they were both art equals. But I also believed music was a more vibrant form of communication. I believed it was able to say more, express more. I imagined that music was informed by artists like Bryan Ferry, John Lennon, Lou Reed (actually for me more like Mark E Smith, Vic Goddard, Tom Verlaine



**Olivia Plender**, *The Masterpiece*, from *A Weekend in the Country*, issue 4, 2005. Courtesy: the artist

and Richard Hell), great artists who had for good reasons transferred their creative powers to the world of popular music. I practiced art music, with a punk/funk sensibility – unlistenable, making deliberately perverse experiments in sound and image like so many before me and since, and I was aware of the failure to fuse these two genres. I was confused, but somehow there was still a guitar in there and a concern with trousers.

The Beatles were the classic example of art students that gave it up for music, perhaps seeing music as a more vibrant form of expression or just plain more exciting. Conrad Atkinson recounts buying John Lennon's easel from him at Liverpool College and thinking, "sucker, he'll be going nowhere now". Meanwhile Atkinson immersed himself in the art world of ideas and ideals of the previous generation. This important point of connection acknowledges the existence of popular music by a refined art world – Peter Blake, Yoko Ono, being two Beatles-related examples. However, at this time there was still no acceptance that the genres were intellectually comparable.

Since the 1960s a rarely disputed idea has emerged that popular music is intrinsically related to art and that many 'serious/good' rock musicians had been through art college. Like the image of the genius artist that never sold a painting in their lifetime, this is largely untrue. Most of the cited examples actually studied graphics, or design. The number of artists crossing over into successful music careers was minimal – the Velvet Underground being perhaps the arch art band despite their being no art student amongst them and despite their apparent obliviousness to Warhol as an artist and the lack of post-Warhol – or any art-related trajectory. But the Velvet Underground remains arguably the most successful art group ever thanks to Warhol's positioning of them as artists amongst the rest of the 'Factory' product.

The romantic traditions of rock do not relate to art culture, there perhaps lies the basic misunderstanding that underpins the failure to connect. The two forms really aren't the same; they just look alike. There is however a connection

**Christian Marclay**, *Guitar Drag*, 2000. Courtesy: the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. With thanks: Barbican Art Gallery



to a successful form of creative communication – that strange idea that holding a guitar makes you look good – the rocker as outlaw, renegade romantic hero – so similar to the popular notion of the artist, the dysfunctional outsider individualist. The dysfunction of the popular musician is a touchstone to which the contemporary artist can claim affiliation: contemporary artists themselves rarely achieve the kind of sensationalised, self-hate, self-abuse that the pop idol is so eminently capable of, despite this image of the artist that they themselves are often still so wedded to.

The artist's dysfunctional image is perceived as being drawn from high culture, but in the music world it is drawn from American black culture, derived from the displacement and abuse of African Americans, whereby music, language and dance became a vehicle to explore new identities (soul brother/sister, Wu Tang Clan, the Mothership); and R&B and Rock and Roll emerging from the oppressed Southern States. That some of the black stars of R&B were prone to being dysfunctional, suicidal and drug addicted is no surprise, and bears little correlation to a romantic tradition stretching through Chatterton and Van Gogh.

As the notion of the romantic hero-artist has become increasingly embarrassing to artists, so too has the perceived affiliation with music. The two romantic notions are increasingly being debunked and ridiculed – Olivia Plender's *Masterpiece* or David Osbaldeston's *Stellar* are both drawn from a musical fanzine format, lampooning traditional art values and ideas of genius, heroism and cultural high ground.

We start to see contemporary artists progressively – generation by generation – reinventing their relationship to music. The 1970s and 1980s generation (like myself) tried to do musical and music-related culture as it was at the time, translated as being art. The art school bands attempting to write resonant popular songs, marvelling at the simplicity and genius of these unconscious miracles of communication, failing roundly and fully to understand or achieve anything approaching the kind of popular connection. Many continue to dally, artists hugely successful in their own fields, Gary Hume, Dan Graham etc, play in average bands, making average music for fun. A younger generation is more strategic in its approach, offering a tribute band approach – a tribute to status perhaps rather than creativity, a parody of the wannabe. Bands like Die Kunst, Martin Creed, Paul Rooney and The Ken Ardley Playboys parody themselves as artists wanting to be pop stars. It's funny and part of that humour is the fact you know they have had to learn to play, carry heavy equipment and generally go to a lot more effort than art making just to take the piss out of themselves. More importantly, these artists start to withdraw from the idea that they can make an art music hybrid and start to extend the idea of multiple practice where each strand of work sits alongside, on equal terms with one another, so painting and playing in a band are seen as different but still 'the work'. Paul Rooney



**Lee Fields** performing as part of 'Romantic Detachment', Chapter Arts, Wales 2004. Image includes: *Mr Ice Cream*, *Mr Chocolate Bar* and *Mr Snowman* (coffins) by **Olaf Breuning**; Sound system from a work by **Matt Stokes**; Video by the Welsh Tourist Board; Stage by **Tom** and **Simon Bloor**. Commissioned by Grizedale Arts for 'Romantic Detachment'.

perhaps goes further in this trajectory introducing other voices from other cultural standpoints into his work.

Amongst a current generation of artists using music, collectives and individuals like Juneau/projects, David Blandy and Kevin Reid are starting to evolve engaged practice within their musical wannabe tendencies, transferring or examining this tendency through other people. This then isn't directly their music, it's them valuing a broader creative impulse, illustrating the wannabe ambitions of the wider world, acknowledging the reality TV experience, but nonetheless placing themselves, guitars in hands, centre-stage.

Art as a cultural force long ago established an acceptable identity (the romantic artist figure), becoming satisfied with itself and the nature of success. The artist is a cultural insider; a conventional part of contemporary culture, that is in many ways an untenable situation (insider rebel). I hope and believe that artists are increasingly looking to lose the romantic position, looking to inhabit a more ambiguous place where there is a lack of clarity about what an artist is and does, casting aside the idea of this reduced, refined, narrow identity.

Through attempting to connect with cultures like popular music – even if failing – art practice has opened up to an acceptance and relationship with many interests and cultures; a pluralist approach based more on an interest in how and why we are motivated to create, what that means and what its aims are, rather than a continual refining of product and position.

Adam Sutherland is Director of Grizedale Arts.



Juneau/projects (**Ben Sadler** and **Phil Duckworth**), Live at Roadshow Dundee, 2003.

# Performativity

Sally O'Reilly

For many the prevalent dimension of performativity is time. The genre is associated with duration or temporal specificity, which is often so dominant it is as if this were its defining characteristic. Time and space, however, are notoriously inseparable in our post-Einsteinian universe so that, theoretically, place cannot play a secondary role at all.

The immediacy of live action is utterly tied to its location in more pragmatic and divisive ways too. The primacy of the body is an immutable pre-requisite that establishes the artwork in the here *and* now. An action or event cannot be stored or transferred elsewhere – it is the ultimate site-specific artwork. Unlike a painting, which is essentially relocatable, performative work tends to privilege its physical state, the fact of itself, over its representational qualities.

Instead of picturing something that might be elsewhere, an action cannot exist at any other time or place<sup>1</sup>. Historically, this has been the muscle of performativity, what gives it its political clout, but also its downfall – the reason the market has overlooked the genre. How can one sell a memory or a ghost?

Fin-de-siècle Europe, post-war America, London in the 1990s – these are the sort of time-spaces we associate with avant-gardism, and it is interesting to note the variations in performative work at these points in art history. The genre has traditionally been associated with (to use the old-fashioned word) the 'cutting edge', and a cyclical bucking of the establishment, from the Futurists to the Situationists to the yBas; but the object of this series of features is to test such generalisations, to trace how the discipline has shifted its objectives and modes of dissemination, how audience perception has altered through familiarity and, as a result, made a new array of venues plausible for artists working performatively.

To identify the nature of the relationship between an action and the place in which it occurs, a recap of the history of an essentially twentieth-century phenomenon is unavoidable. The history of performance and live art is almost a taboo phrase, though, as it is considered impossible to give a definitive account of myriad events, many of which may have gone undocumented, unattended or overlooked. How, indeed, can anyone write a history of such a scattered and ephemeral hurly-burly of occurrences that have evolved along disconnected and often contradictory lines of enquiry and development? That aside, it is generally mooted that the Futurists, and Marinetti more specifically, first advocated the dynamic dematerialisation of the art object, the activation of the artist in spaces beyond the studio, and gallery and the politicisation of actions in the context of art. According to Martha Wilson, founding director of the Franklin Furnace in New York, the clinching moment was in 1910, when the Futurists threw leaflets from the tower in Saint Mark's Square denouncing the Venice Biennale as a sewer of traditionalism. Such raillery against what they

**Rirkrit Tiravanija**, installation view, *A Retrospective (tomorrow is another fine day)*, Serpentine Gallery, London, 5 July – 21 August 2005.  
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

1 The label 'live art', now often used in preference to 'performance', is a reference to this quality, and a way of differentiating from theatres ostensibly representational and fictional nature. I shall refer to 'performativity' or 'event-based art' as a way of encompassing both modalities throughout the twentieth century.

2 Adrian Heathfield, *Live Art and Performance*, Tate Publishing, 2004.



considered the passé object-obsessed art market was to endure as a leitmotif of performance works throughout the twentieth century. Anti-commodity and anti-bourgeois stances were also adhered to by the Situationists, for instance, who demanded the impassionment of everyday life, and feminists during the 1970s, in reaction to hegemonic social structures. Dematerialisation, then, is not only a qualifying condition of live art, but also its leverage, its ontological defiant gesture.

The event-based artwork makes very different demands on the audience than the art object, confronting us with an immediacy and irrefutability that even the most immersive of installations cannot. Artists have developed this as the potency of performativity. As Adrian Heathfield puts it, the 'live' is where "attention is heightened, sensory relation charged, workings of thought agitated"<sup>2</sup>. We are familiar with images of intense durational performances during the 1970s, with spectators sitting around on the floor, as if they might have been there for some time and will be for some time yet to come. Or perhaps the artist has ventured out into the street, intermingling with everyday life, where the proposition may seem even more dicey. We can see changes amongst the type of audience and their location in photographic documentation: the theatrical atmosphere of Hugo Ball's phonetic poetry at Cabaret Voltaire or Yves Klein's *Anthropometry*, where the audience are dressed in evening wear,

sitting sedately on chairs while a chamber orchestra play; the intent viewers sitting on the floor around the gallery walls witnessing the unravelling of indescribable acts; or Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino* (1968), when she placed a curtained box over her bare chest and invited people on the street to engage with her 'tactile cinema'. In short, the tuxedo gradually gave way to the jeans, not only reflecting arts increasing accessibility, but also artists' desire to address issues through social interaction rather than a removed proselytising.

So, arguably, in the latter part of the century, we can observe a democratisation of event-based work, but there are other defining moments when the relationship between audience and artwork has been further readdressed. In theater, Bertolt Brecht worked with representational devices so that the viewer would be jolted from passive absorption into the narrative, which he saw as breeding bourgeois complacency, and this is evident throughout performance art too. In 1952 John Cage organised the 'concerted action' *Theater Piece No.1*, a key precedent of Happenings, in which David Tudor played piano, Merce Cunningham improvised dance, four of Rauschenberg's white paintings were hung from the rafters, MC Richards read poetry from a ladder and Cage himself delivered a lecture. The pivotal point, besides the interdisciplinary and improvisational aspects of the piece, was that there was no stage – the participants performed among the audience, affecting a Brechtian undermining of audience passivity. Later durational performances – such as Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), when he masturbated under a ramp in the gallery, and Ulay/Abramovic's *Imponderabilia* (1977), when the couple stood naked in the narrow corridor entrance so that the audience had to press past them (which of the two would you face towards?) – further impinged awkwardly on the visitor's space. And now, in the guise of relational aesthetics, we have come to accept, if not wholly understand or enjoy, social inclusivity. But this apparent dissolution of definitions and barriers does not bear out across the entire genre of live art. Currently there are many stage-based practices, from the camp cabaret of Ducky to the musical stage-based epics of Laurie Anderson, and there is even a bit of a backlash against the term 'live art', in that some artists embrace the representational aspects of theatre. Forced Entertainment, for instance, work collaboratively on projects that are hybrids of the prefigured narrative of theatre and the improvisational tendencies of live art.

To return to the Futurists' gesture in Venice, though, what was doubly important was its site-specificity. Sense is dependent on place, and content on context. Their criticism of autonomous and itinerant artworks was obviously much more forceful in-situ, rather than if they had simply published a treatise in the art press. This location-sensitivity of political engagement was developed further during the post-war era, when galleries and studios were often forsaken for the high street, the warehouse, the rural



**Carolee Schneemann**, *Meat Joy*, 1964, reperformed as part of the Whitechapel Art Gallery's 'A Short History of Performance – Part 1', 15-21 April 2002.

**Valie Export**, *Tapp und Tastkino* (*Touch Cinema*), 1968. Collection Generali Foundation, Vienna. Photo: Werner Schulz



# Performativity continued

expanse and the schools. The Situationists' urban flâneur and the overspill of Fluxus into the runnels of social space were emblematic of artists' will to influence beyond the self-contained spheres of the artworld. Billy X Curmano's *Swimming the Mississippi* – where he literally swam the length of the river, from its source to the Gulf of Mexico in ten years – was a site-specific protest piece intended to draw attention to environmental issues; while Claus Oldenburg's *Store* was much more significant for being in the high street rather than a gallery. But the most notorious facet of live art is the artist's body itself. From Carolee Schneeman's flesh as paint to Kiera O'Reilly's body as a site of politicisation, the itinerant human form is the ultimate venue for investigations into the human condition.

So, that is a very quick and partial account of the past, but what of contemporary event-based work? Well, there seems to be something in the air at the moment. This year in the UK there has been the Fierce Festival in Birmingham, a survey at the Baltic of works from the archive of New York-based commissioning organisation Franklin Furnace and Navigate, an associated long weekend of work by contemporary artists at the gallery and aboard MS Stubnitz, moored at the quay alongside. People may bemoan the passing of the avant-garde era – of the interdisciplinary mayhem of Happenings, of the collaborations between poets and painters, musicians and choreographers and the political inertia of the younger generation of practitioners – yet there are still traces of this sort of Modernist behaviour. Lali Chetwynd and gang have just walked from London to Dover, retracing the fictional steps of David Copperfield and subsisting on berries and nettle tea; Brussels-based Poni are a group of artists, musicians, writers and dancers who work together on experiments with codes, symbols and forms from their various disciplines; and there are flash mobs, when hundreds of individuals are mobilised by mobile phone texts and emails to do something obstructive, like turn up in droves in a bookstore and order titles that don't exist – not really considered art, but they do display many of the traits of aestheticised direct action. More indirect and dubious are the stunts of Mark McGowan, whose latest feat of leaving a tap running for a year in protest against water wastage finally made it into the pages of *The Guardian*, after many years of trashy tabloid and television coverage.

There is also a sense that smaller commercial galleries are beginning to embrace live art as a supplement to their programmes. Although there may be nothing to sell, curators and gallerists have come to realise that a representation of art production should include the ephemeral event. Some artists have a foot in both camps selling the by-products of their performances – Chetwynd's costumes and paintings or John Bock's sculptural fall out, for instance – or selling the concept, as Tino Seghal does, as if it were a recipe to be owned. Others shift emphasis from the event to its documentation, as Mark Wallinger did when he



showed, in the Italian Pavilion in this year's Venice Biennale, video footage of the long nights he spent dressed as a bear in the Neue National Gallery, Berlin, for the performance *Sleeper* (2004). But, in the main, artists tend to work exclusively in the live mode, and it is these who constantly reappear in live art festivals. The same names crop up over and over: Franko B, Orlan, Ron Athey, Franko B...

In other disciplines you might extend the trajectory of art of the last century into this century, continuing the diaspora from the gallery into the fabric of society at large, from the bosom of the establishment to the chaos of the street. But event-based work diverges from this pattern somewhat. Think of the events you have attended in the past five years or so, and I will wager that most of them have taken place in or through the support of some sort of institution. The big proponents of the genre in Britain, beside dedicated organisations like the Live Art Development Agency, are Tate, South London Gallery, Arnolfini in Bristol and The Bluecoat in Liverpool. Although there must be a blistering number of independent events in odd places throughout the country, from Grizedale in the Lake District to web-based electronic activism, this seems to be an overlooked parallel universe to, say the Tate and Egg Live programme or The Whitechapel's recent series of reconstructions of past works by Schneeman, Martha Rosler and others, which dominates the common perception of contemporary live art. Inevitably, these institutions have the greater budgets and higher visibility, so we should be really worried that the critical work, the artists who remain recalcitrant to institutions, will remain obscured.

So, the question is where else can performativity retain its belligerence? During the 1990s artists like Rirkrit Tiravanija and Thomas Hirschhorn were working in and with communities. The now well-worn phrase 'relational aesthetics'

**Poni, *Project 1*, 2005.**  
Courtesy: the artists

goes some way towards describing the potential of the artwork that thrives on a lack of autonomy and authority, but even this has found its way onto the list of institutional checkboxes and the market place. The Serpentine Gallery's Tiravanija retrospective, for instance, is rather like Reclaim the Streets being organised by the local council. Gallery goers may find it awkward to find themselves confronted with the task of involvement, of being invited to make use of two reconstructions of the artist's New York apartment, but this is a far cry from, say, the wondering what to do with your hands during a Viennese Actionist's blood-swilling ritual. There is little sense that something big is going down in Tiravanija's kitchen.

How can we understand this normalisation of event-based art? No doubt, there is an element of government arts policy, which encourages public access and social responsibility, but I have a feeling that there is something more fundamental in our attitude to liveness. With rolling news channels, reality television and satellite link-ups, the unfolding event has been harnessed as a generative force. The traditional mode of creation – of the transformation of paint into a picture, words into a story, real life into fiction – no longer prevails. We apparently no longer require crafted objects of beauty to constitute a cultural product. (This is a sloppy assumption, though. As theorists such as Noam Chomsky have been at pains to point out, there is no such thing as unmediated information. *Big Brother* in real time is a very different beast to the edited highlights that make up a palatable programme.) Thankfully, there has always been the sense that the art crowd are more forgiving of the raw and un-groomed than film and television audiences, acknowledging that failure and pain are as important as well turned-out products. Art schools too, encourage contingency in principle. Working as a visiting lecturer on BAs and MAs around the country, I often encounter students who find performativity an exciting and pliable solution. But there is also a tendency, I would suggest, that these students eventually toe the line and produce objects, due, no doubt, to the orthodoxy of the degree show and marking schemes. This is, of course, a microcosmic version of the artworld, where similar pressures persist; but, as demonstration and subversion still puncture the dominance of global capitalism, so the live act will run counter to objecthood. The danger is that the widespread acceptance of performativity as entertainment will eradicate its agency; that the ease of an institutional home will weaken its migratory tendency. It is performativity's very itinerancy that questions our assumptions of place, and this hobo existence must be fiercely defended.

Sally O'Reilly is a critic and co-writer/producer of *Performance Art – The Musical*.



**Franko B**, *I Miss You!*, 2003,  
Live Culture/Tate Modern.  
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

# The Campaign

Sacha Craddock

The photograph of the close up of a young woman's face that was on display both inside and outside Sadlers Wells Theatre is a continuation of Braco Dimitrijevic's long running *Casual Passer-by* series. Commissioned to coincide with 'Open Systems', an exhibition of art from the early 1970s at Tate Modern, it was also reproduced on buses and was on display in underground stations across London in what could be characterised as a 'campaign'.

Decades after Dimitrijevic first inflated a picture of the first or last person he saw in that particular morning or night and suspended it, devoid of explanation, across the side of a palace on the Grand Canal in Venice, for instance, it is worthwhile wondering how the much-reproduced image still functions. Can it do what it used to do? What has changed? Has the currency beloved of both art and advertising become now so familiar that no one is curious enough to enquire in quite the same way? In a culture where the much-reproduced photograph of a missing person is left attached to the lamp post, tree or building after a natural or manmade disaster; where the United Colours of Benetton or Gap campaign reduces all difference to a grid of generality in a climate of intense artistic and commercial saturation, perhaps blown-up media is having to become much more subtle.

To a certain extent, all art production has had to take on the guise of the campaign. Even a cycle of paintings will need to perpetuate a general reputation to maintain an overall claim. This has so much to do with varying levels of involvement and experience. Now that artistic media are even less formally fixed in practice, the opportunities

to combine reputation with actuality are limitless. It is as much of a truth, a truism, that painting, sculpture, even photography in a gallery, unwittingly carries the sense that that alone is not able to address the public – although all art, even the most esoteric and hidden, has recently been placed much more in the public domain because of a real change in press attention and attitude.

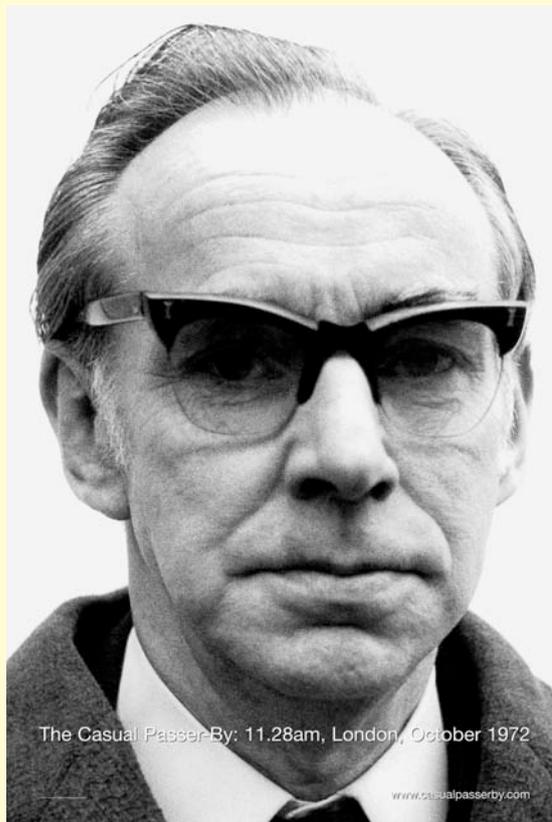
The Sam Taylor Wood photograph that wrapped the whole front and side of Selfridges store single-handedly merged the aims of art and advertising. But each has mimicked the other to varying levels of sophistication for the last thirty years that now the speed with which one is assimilated into the other means that an art work need hardly be conceived, let alone realised, for it to be contained, absorbed, understood, utilised and made to serve a clear and obvious economic goal.

So it has already been suggested that the visible art campaign, will, by definition, diminish and retreat through familiarity. This is a simple question of simple means; as long as an article like this, for instance, continues to concentrate on where an artwork is placed rather than its actual content, it will remain secondary. This is reminiscent of an early work by Mark Lewis which consists of the beginning titles and ending credits for a hypothetical film without actual narrative in between. The possibility for art, though, lies as much in what happens and what is said than what is structurally not there; in what hangs around the outside? Such an emptying out of content makes for a moment that leads to promise; by taking the technique of anticipation, drum roll and opening credit, to deliberately present nothing.



The Casual Passer-By: 11.23pm, Chelsea, May 2005

[www.casualpasserby.com](http://www.casualpasserby.com)



The Casual Passer-By: 11.28am, London, October 1972

[www.casualpasserby.com](http://www.casualpasserby.com)

**Braco Dimitrijevic**, *The Casual Passer-By*, 11.23am, Chelsea, London 2005.  
Courtesy: the artist

**Braco Dimitrijevic**, *Monument to David Harper, the Casual Passer-By* 1 Met at 11.28am, London 1972, 1972.  
Courtesy: Braco Dimitrijevic



**Barbara Kruger, *We Don't Need Another Hero*, 1987.**  
Commissioned and produced by Artangel.

One of the first really comprehensive poster campaigns here was that commissioned by Artangel to run simultaneously on sites in fourteen different cities in Britain and Ireland in January and February 1987. Barbara Kruger's *We Don't Need Another Hero*, which used a sort of Janet & John illustration to comment on boyish posturing, also coincided with a series about ideas and images of the 1980s called 'State of the art' produced by Illuminations and broadcast by Channel 4. While this campaign was successful, it was a touch shocking to hear the extensive almost imperial scope that certain artists found necessary to employ in search of the more 'real' and viable domain. It was a matter of mimicking the very structures of power, the 'real life' scope of institutions, during a particularly literal and materialistic phase in both Britain and America. During that time at a talk at The Tate Gallery, Barbara Kruger spoke of her 'campaign' to put posters in bus shelters in a particular American town; while explaining the elaborate negotiations she was holding with the local authority she never seemed to question the level and extent of this scope and ambition.

In the late 1980s, the fact that public or 'extended' art sometimes happened in many places at the same time, that it was known to be going on elsewhere, was seen as radical in itself.

This far reaching extended practice, with commissioned work in so many different cities at the same time, meant a particular relation to permanence and the suggestion that a work need not stay for it to remain a sort of collective memory. Much emphasis was given to the folkloric experience of art, on how it can live on in the consciousness long after it has been taken down, melted, demolished, deflated and turned off. Of course the knowledge that something happens extends its conceptual scope and the experience of an artwork can become secondary, for it lives on through its reproduction, notoriety, press and perceived presence.

Public Art, a title that implies that all other art is somehow not for the public, finds itself in a real dilemma. The sense that something is indulgent is seen as problematic and yet art has to contain a level of indulgence in order to exist. Perhaps it is useful to divide the formal categories very simply: there is art which is not expected to be missed, that which sticks out like a sore thumb; then there is the strange incongruous; then there is the category which involves a sort of suspension of belief combined with great anticipation, that comes over practically everybody entering a purpose-built art space. Then 'Hunt the Art', spot the ball, or spot the odd one out, and finally, art which is approached from the other side,



**Mark Wallinger**, *Ecce Homo*, 1999. Courtesy: Anthony Reynolds Gallery

from the angle of the artist who may not have been concerned with the idea of an audience at all.

The monument to 'Bomber' Harris outside St Clement Danes Church in the Strand, London, an extreme example of the singular, representational public monument, embodies the dilemma of the permanent directed memorial. One person's hero will almost inevitably be another person's destroyer. The relation between individual experience and collective understanding is crucial all of the time. That functioning memorial statue does exactly what it says on the tin, while Mark Wallinger's Christ, (who temporarily looked across Trafalgar Square in London, with awkward, non-triumphal, insecurity) presented a thoroughly different function, and a touching presence. This life-sized figure which appeared at the edge of the empty plinth brought an ambiguous role and comforting human scale to the place.

France-based German artist Jochen Gerz orchestrates artistic public campaigns that unfurl in difficult and long-winded ways. The year before last, Gerz completed lengthy preparations for *The Future Monument* and *The Public Bench* in Coventry that touched on the destruction of the city during the Second World War, on more recent strife, as well as causes for communal celebration. Gerz's work comes out of an attention to the reality of politics, of experience. By engaging, with conflicting levels of agreement about what the result may be, in a long process of collaboration with the public he cherishes the perception of a collective past. *The Living Memorial* (1995/6), for the village of Biron in Burgundy is an ordinary looking war memorial covered with plaques that carry the answer to a question asked of the 127 villagers by Gerz. The question was perhaps something like "what would you be prepared to die for?".

Other work by Gerz includes a series of interviews with women published in a local newspaper in Cahors, about their experience of collaboration, resistance and guilt during the Second World War. By giving in to an expectation of understanding he avoids the common cliché that all experience is too varied for it to be effectively conveyed. The famous graffiti covered anti-fascist monument in Harburg (1986), made in collaboration with Esther Shalov-Gerz, has famously concertinaed into the ground over time. The detritus of hatred, fascism, racism, as well as declarations of love crowded across the surface to echo the hatred and love felt in any one complex place and time in history, has eventually sunk into the ground to maintain a hidden undercover monument; a multi-layered imprint of reality.

Often the very method of working outside the gallery comes directly out of an established tradition. The works photograph, or professional portrait, for instance, lives on in the work of Beat Streuli's photographed employees for *Portraits in the RWE Headquarters*, in Essen, and in pictures taken in Hong Kong, London, Zurich and New York for the Credit Suisse annual report. This is



a tradition, upheld. The campaign here has its own logic and function. Streuli is known mainly for taking photographs of young people who are not conscious of their role as subject; sometimes these pictures have been placed in the local newspaper to bring desired and undesired attention to the unaware. So the campaign comes full circle, back to the representation of the grid of humanity, to the Gap or Benetton campaign where differences of experience are ironed out in the broad formally even representation of all. The specifics of difference, of the reasons for conflict, become lost.

The bland campaign falls into exactly the trap of function that it seems to say that art is there to tell us something, perhaps something we already know or recognise, about the human condition. The specific sense of the real, the local, the actuality of politics, of the way terrible situations contrast with those of comfort and ease, will drown under such a flattened claim for art. However, the need to bring art elsewhere, to place it outside, inside; to change the expectation of place and function will mean a perpetual and permanent hunt for different speed, tone and touch. The word of mouth, the alternative, the quiet, the private, the anecdotal, the local, the personal, and the unknowing can

**Beat Streuli**, *Portraits in RWE Headquarters*, Essen, 2005.  
Sponsored by RWE.

also triumph and feature. The desire for specificity is always there, there is a need for moment, meaning, and local application.

Sacha Craddock is a curator and critic.

# Mother of all Arts

Rob Wilson

Architecture has in the past been described as the 'Mother of All Arts' – crudely delineating its perceived position as a discipline that provides the 'venue' for other art forms; a container in which many of the arts could literally be encountered in space, or incorporated and grafted on as mural or frieze.

Similarly in relation to music, with architecture's internal forms and spaces recognised as effecting a sounding-board against which sound would reflect or even be amplified, buildings would subsequently be designed around the need to provide matched and complementary surfaces for reverberations: an understood mutual reciprocity before any science of acoustics was formulated. This mapping in built form contributed to architecture gaining its other old moniker, that of 'frozen music' – giving a lyrical filter to the experience of the material weight of surround-sound in bricks and mortar or latterly in steel, glass, titanium and ETFE Foil skin.

But over the last hundred years, architecture seems often to have lost its confidence as an art form and been intimately caught up with attempts to position itself more as a science, closer to engineering. This incarnation of architecture as a pure inevitability of 'form following function'; a construct reflecting unquestionable laws of reductivist physics, was symbolised by those oft-repeated mantras: Le Corbusier's *Machine for Living In* and Mies van de Rohe's *Less is More*, mirroring the empirical bent of the world post the industrial revolution.

Of course what appears at first as an attempt to reposition architecture as some ego-less functional phenomenon – almost an assisted natural one – and the concomitant suppression of it as the demonstration of creative representation and the facility of a single ego – its celebration as a product of artifice – is just a semantic conceit. Adolf Loos, one of the heralds of early Modernism polemically pronounced on 'ornament and crime', and instead praised American plumbing as the height of beauty. Yet his severe but luxuriously tooled and fashioned villa projects were just as much *Gesamtkunstwerke* and highly finished jewel boxes as any of those of his High-Secessionist predecessor Josef-Maria Olbrich in Vienna. Despite Loos' telling of the apocryphal story of the 'Poor Rich Man', who has his whole life designed for him – from his house down to the design of his slippers. As a result, his architect does not allow him to buy anything new for fear it might aesthetically jar – and in his own work he exhibited just such a level of obsession down to the design of perfect bath taps as the final imprimatur of the ideal home.

In fact what has occurred over the last century has more been a ratcheting-up of the condition of Architect as Creator, with architects often cast, or casting themselves, not merely as designers of buildings but creators of a whole philosophy, socio-industrial system or science for living. Indeed the ubiquity of Machine for Living In-type slogans are witness to this: part



A primitive hut, pictured in the frontispiece of **Marc-Antoine Laugier's** *Essai sur l'Architecture*, 1753.

political rallying-cry – the concentrated essence of architecture's own *Little Red Book* – part catchy by-line to promote architect-as-brand.

That architects consider themselves creative artists rather than skilled technicians, is not surprising – it was ever thus. But equally the process of architecture is one that has always involved a team of people and not just one designer – be the latter a creative genius or not. What perhaps has changed today is that with the complexity of building systems and servicing, the constituency of the team has shifted. In this new stew of making a building, it is easier for the architect to be defined, or define themselves, as the isolated creative artist, philosopher or poet, in a sea of service engineers and casual building-site labourers, as opposed to the embedded leader of a band of craftsmen – be this a somewhat over-nostalgic take on the past. A result of this has seen architects at times in overkill to present themselves as artists, usually taking as their model, in a rather 'methinks-he-does-protest-too-much' gesture (and it usually has been a 'he'), the old-school faux-naif, hyper-sauvages School of Paris: resulting in a lot of painting naked and daubing of walls on a grandiose scale, from Le Corbusier to Will Alsop.

Of course this serves to speak more of the disjuncture in the understanding of architecture as itself an autonomous art that carries on to this day – and of architect's resulting reactive strategies to be seen as 'artistic' practitioners. Similarly, all the 'Art and Architecture' and 'percent for art' schemes – however successful individual projects – by their very existence also witness, and sometimes problematise, this situation: with art, narrowly defined as the practice of what were traditionally termed 'fine artists', being helped into an arranged marriage with architecture.

But architecture remains in the first instance still a combination of its own three humours – enduringly delineated by Vitruvius as 'Utilitas, Firmitas and Venustas': Stability, Usefulness, and Beauty. It has to stand up, be functional and fit for purpose, and be beautiful – all three distinct qualities yet each underpinning the other – an obvious combination of necessary knowledge and skills, both practical and artistic, that just serves to highlight the insecurity of the art versus science, or aesthetics versus pragmatics, debate of today.

The originating mythic model of this combination is the 'primitive hut': a basic rude shelter fashioned from nature whose forms supposedly acted directly as the generators of all the 'beauty' and 'pureness' of classical architecture: tree trunk begetting column shaft; acanthus leaf begetting Corinthian capital in a perfect Ovidian metamorphosis. This is the original model of 'form follows function' in perfect balance: emanating from nature yet providing protection from it – both pragmatic shelter and the poetic representation of it.

This platonic condition of architecture as dwelling in constant iteration between the lived

and the conceived was that which Heidegger would unpick in his seminal tract 'Thinking, Dwelling, Building'. And of course, ultimately, the built form is neither designed in a vacuum, nor designed for a vacuum – architecture is dwelling space: it will become a lived reality for others. The architect does not have an easy brief in this: designing to symbolise another person's place in the world. They must straddle conditions – making the successful transition not just from the dimly conceived to the practically constructed during the design process but to the actually perceived, experienced and inhabited. Ultimately the successful process of building is the incredibly loaded one of the communication of an idea of dwelling and sense of place from the ego of the architect, through its representation as built form, to be then re-represented and understood and taken ownership of by the ego of the end-user or client. Jean-François Lyotard, in a critique of Heidegger, would see this as a forever unachievable task, contending simultaneously that: "the domus remains, remains as impossible" and "that it is in passing that we dwell". Each building is in essence a representation of humanity's sense of place in the world but also a recognition and constant reminder of our separation from it.

For all the clashing egos, in the first instance architects want to make a better world. In the moment of conception each project is in essence an idea of ideal, utopian, space. However in the twentieth century, it was architecture's token play

not so much with being some cod-science but with the notion of architect as artist, and a dumb notion of architecture as a branch of contemporary art that would be so corrosive to architecture's own sense of itself as an autonomous artform. In particular it was the hitching of the architectural bandwagon to some idea of the 'avant-garde' that would prove disastrous. What began as a refreshing challenge to given orthodoxies, would become the tyranny of the new, with a concomitant heightening of expectations about each successive movement's ability to deliver achievable models of utopia, as Futurism rolled into Constructivism and Modernism. Architecture's already complex but subtle role at trying to negotiate the difference between the utopian and 'everyday' and the public and the private, became hijacked by a chimera of a perfect society engendered and represented in built form.

The reasons for the various and sometimes catastrophic failures of many modernist housing schemes are well rehearsed. But the perception of architects conducting random experiments with people's lives was hard to shake: from their primary engagement in the mid-decades of the twentieth century in conducting intellectual games with each other, setting up an endless switchback between the baldly positioned camps of the utopian and the so-called everyday. There was an inevitable backlash. Whatever the humanist roots of the figure of Le Corbusier's 'Cartesian Man', architects would become

**Luc Tuymans, *Der Architekt*, 1997.** Courtesy: Zeno X Gallery





**Chris Ofili**, *The Upper Room* 1999-2002, installation shot from 'Freedom One Day' at Victoria Miro Gallery, 25 June – 3 August 2002. Thirteen paintings were exhibited in a specially constructed space designed in collaboration with the architect David Adjaye. Purchased with assistance from Tate Members, the National Art Collections Fund and private benefactors 2005. Photo: Lyndon Douglas. Courtesy: Chris Ofili, Afroco and Victoria Miro Gallery

**Fashion Architecture Taste (FAT)**, *Woodward Place*, New Islington redevelopment of the Cardroom Estate, East Manchester, 2005.

demonised as inhuman, eminence-gris social engineers, or at the very least either naively optimistic or just calculatingly patronising and prescriptive.

Architecture having nailed its utopian agenda to the mast, was easily knocked down and made the scapegoat: successively fitted up for the roles of symptom, instrument, villain and finally victim of the alienation of the body in modernist Cartesian space – blamed at times for all society's ills.

As a result, for the last few decades architects have retreated from any notion of being full-on utopian dreamers – even as an exercise of their imaginations: the architectural capriccio as a form of representation has all but disappeared – presumably in case it gave the game away about an architect's hidden unhealthy ambitions at world-domination.

Again, the cult of the so-called everyday has taken hold in architectural practice, although seemingly manifested in two aesthetic extremes. In the populist cut-out-and-keep representational architecture of practices such as FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste), the celebration of chocolate-box ideas of the perfect home, can be seen in essence as still referencing ideas of utopia, but of the unthreatening, provisional domestic sort. Over the last twenty years there has also been the so-called 'banality' celebrated in the work of many mittel-European architects, such as Peter Markli or early Herzog and de Meuron, influenced by ideas of 'ordinariness' first espoused by Alison and Peter Smithson in the 1950s, and picked up here by practices such as Caruso St John. This loose school of 'neue Sachlichkeit' or the 'new simplicity' actually manifests itself through designs that are more uncompromisingly platonic in form than any product of High Modernism, often indeed looking like starkly utopian-type objects that reference minimal art. This is a strange squaring of the circle – the everydayness of minimalism – architecture not as an art but as art.

Interestingly it is only in the actual space of art that there have been recent examples of architects consciously producing structures that explicitly reference ideas of the utopian, such as with David Adjaye's cod-religious environment for Chris Ofili's *Upper Room* (2002) – a license allowable presumably, as is also perhaps the case with FAT's practice, when the architecture can safely be read as just scenography.

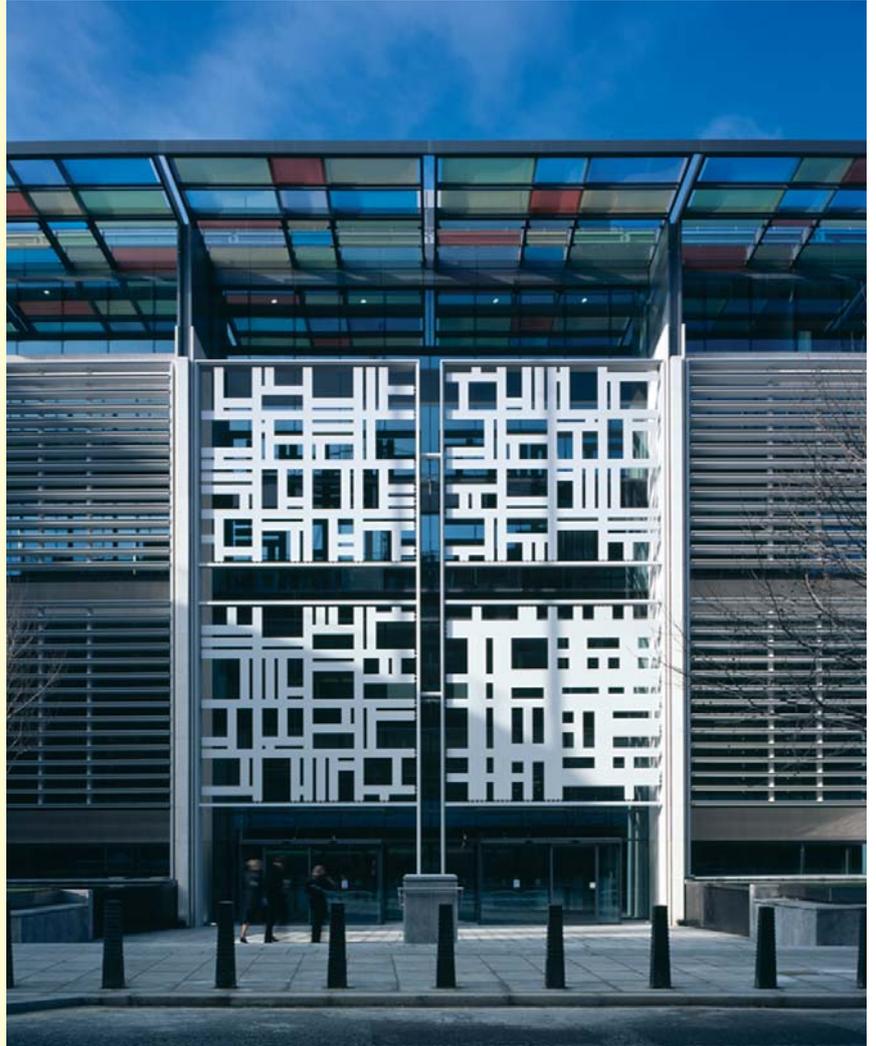
Meanwhile it has ironically been artists that have stepped into the breach left by the loss of discourse and polemics in and around architecture since the supposed 'failure' of High Modernism. At first of course much work appeared critiquing architecture and the built environment as a construct and cultural phenomenon of industrial-capitalist society, challenging notions of the 'authority' (and the Stability, Usefulness, and Beauty) of architecture: from Gordon Matta-Clark to Vito Acconci, Hans Haacke and the Beckers. More recently even the figure of the architect as literal eminence-gris has appeared: witness the seeming innocuous tiny skiing figure of Luc Tuymans' *Der Architekt* (1997) based on a photo of the Nazi über-architect Albert Speer. But in particular it has been the critique of the lost engagement with, and subsequent retreat itself of, architecture from the utopian high ground, of an absent architecture of utopia that has provided rich material for many artists with a huge diversity of practice such as Paul Noble, David Thorpe, Ian Kiaer, Mathias Muller, Martha Rosler and Sam Durant.

Whilst at times there has been a tendency for some of this work to be patronisingly ironic, much is affectionately nostalgic for the loss of an optimistic future, however misguided.

Further, in the last few years, coming as a natural addendum to the much commented implication of the viewer in the space of the art of the white cube gallery, artists like Liam Gillick and exhibitions such as 'Utopia Station' at the 2003 Venice Biennale, have represented and orchestrated 'actual' utopian architectural spaces and environments. Tellingly, with the viewer as now effective inhabitant, and the difference between a space of art and a designed space perceptually immaterial, levels of criticism are opened up that have long been reserved for architecture alone: witness the redundant feel of many elements of 'Utopia Station' once the opening crowds had moved on or how elements of Gillick's work for The Home Office, London, designed by Terry Farrell and Partners, could appear as just a rather badly detailed façade.

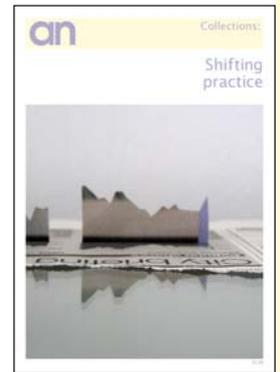
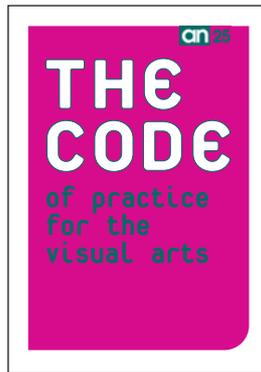
Yet in such a climate this critiquing of the legacy of Modernism and the re-engagement with the concept and problematics of the 'utopian' over a wider cultural field, has perhaps revalidated and paved the way for architecture's own re-engagement with the polemics of progress, confidently playing again to its own particular strengths as an art form and a site for critical and cultural discourse.

Rob Wilson is Curator: Programmes at the RIBA Trust.



**Liam Gillick**, Home Office  
London, 2005. Courtesy: Farrells  
Photo: Richard Bryant/  
Arcaid.co.uk

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