

STUDIO International

Journal of Modern Art May/June 1976

£1.75 \$5

Video Art

Jan Debbaut
Belgian Video Art

Peggy Gale
Video Art in Canada

Roselee Goldberg
NY Video Art and Cable TV

David Hall
British Video Art

Sue Hall and John Hopkins
The Metasoftware of Video

Wulf Herzogenrath
Video Art in West Germany

Mark Kidel
British TV and Video Art

Richard Kriesche
The State of Austrian Video

Stuart Marshall
**Video Art, The Imaginary
and the Parole Vide**

Hein Reedijk
Video in the Netherlands

David Ross
**Artist's Television
in the US**

Contributions from: Barnard,
Bauermeister, Byrne, Campus,
Hall, Hoey, Krikorian, Lange,
Leggett, Marshall, Partridge



from these different locations, I can imagine performances being arranged which really exploit, depend on, this curious space, live or electronic. installations which could play on this 'blindness': a group of players, perhaps, placed so that they cannot see each other but performing some task or other that normally depends on visual cuing.

But the future of music at the NT is very rosy indeed, since the potential of the most remarkable series of concerts – experimental and otherwise – is seemingly unlimited. During the first concerts I remarked to Harrison Birtwistle that if all the concerts were as successful as the first, then more money might be made available so that theatregoers could be piped into the theatre every night. Four days later a meeting was held and a decision was made: concerts every night, financed by the bar takings. Not, you notice, from ticket sales, since entrance to the concerts – which start between 6 and 6.30 – is not dependent on having a ticket for that evening's play. Free, informal concerts which will not only present a range of music notoriously neglected by the twin bastions of English musical culture – the Festival Hall and the BBC – but also hopefully providing the kind of human concourse the South Bank still lacks.

Congratulations

Happy birthday, *Musics*. The magazine *Musics* has just celebrated its first birthday with an issue on music in Holland co-edited by Hugh Davies and Peter Cusak. The scope of the magazine is wider and more thoughtful than any I have come across. I can do no better than quote from its press release: 'The Magazine was formed by people active in the area of new musics to provide a platform for their interests and views, the format to include articles, statements, interviews, reviews of records, performances and live events [and books]. The name *Musics* was chosen to indicate that a wide area of interests was covered, from western art "experimental music" to the non-music of New Guinea, the emphasis, however, being on the work of active practitioners of new musics. The co-ordinators have encouraged a wide interpretation of the term music, and film-makers, performance artists and video artists have contributed articles and reviews'.

Musics is available from some bookshops and record shops, or is available on subscription from *Musics*, 48 Hillsborough Court, Mortimer Crescent, London NW6, at the rate of £2.40 for six issues per annum, or 30p plus 10p postage for a single issue. *Musics* is co-ordinated by Paul Burwell and David Toop who are, significantly, both ex-art students. Toop's record department at Dillon's University Bookshop (Malet Street, WC1) is the best-stocked in London for specialist music.

PERFORMANCE

Report by Marc Chaimowicz

Neagu and Rinke are similar. Both in their mid-thirties, they use their bodies in their work. They have both developed a (binary-derived) personalised and refined systems approach to visual and documentational work. Both consistent and highly productive, they perpetuate a male approach in the way they manipulate people and ideas. Both are ambitious and, thanks to Nick Serota, both have had their first major English shows at MOMA Oxford (Neagu in 1975).

Neagu and Rinke are dissimilar. Neagu's work is expansive and inclusive, Rinke's work is reductive and exclusive. Neagu's approach is organic and sensual, Rinke's approach is mechanical and cerebral. For me,

Neagu's work is inspirational, it gives. Rinke's takes, it is oppressive. Although Neagu is overtly complex and open-ended and Rinke is overtly simple and closed, because of his horizontal approach the totality of Neagu's work is clearly interrelated, almost hermetic. Conversely, because of Rinke's vertical development the totality of his work is more fragmented.

Klaus Rinke at Oxford

At the MOMA Klaus Rinke showed on the ground floor for a month, during the last week of which he also had the top floor for two programmes of performance and discussion. The exhibition was of work from 1960 to 1975. The earlier pieces were, dare I say it, the more beautiful. They were dark (photographically) and ominously framed in roughly welded blue steel. The later pieces, of the better-known performances, were more methodical, large and heavily framed in thick wood. The show was dense, about 60 pieces, edge to edge. Approximately 200 images of Rinke.

I am baffled by the assumed importance of Rinke's work. He has done immensely well professionally and has recently been appointed professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. Surely it is not simply that he's a hard working boy. Maybe it is that hard working boys are working for him, or that I've a mental block. His documentation work is a little like semaphore, except that semaphore is a language used concisely to communicate messages while Rinke's works seem rather blank and mundane, often bordering on the pretentious. They appear 'serious' and 'meaningful' but under closer scrutiny are simply illustrative. Although the systems of presentation should presumably function to clarify an attitude external to the statement (about our perception of time/space or whatever), the pattern-making within the pieces (the construction) elevates the organisation of images to the very role of content. Though this would be all right if intended, as with the work of Troostwyk, here it seems unresolved and possibly invalidates the source of the images, ie the performances, as well as producing an uneasy relationship between the two.



Klaus Rinke in performance at MOMA, Oxford

The performances or demonstrations were professionally staged, methodical and efficient. Rather as at a concert he and his assistant Monika Baumgartl presented a 'set' of pieces from an existing repertory of work, the last being the 'new number'. Among the

pieces featured were *Mutation* (1970), *Naming by Pointing* (1971) and *Maskulin Feminin* (1970-72). The last piece was for me the most interesting (partly because it wasn't documented downstairs). A five-foot stainless steel gong-like dish that appeared convex was placed centrally on the floor. Rinke then lowered a brass plumb-line that hung dramatically, almost touching the surface. He proceeded to fill this gong (which was in fact concave) with buckets of water, the amount it held being a surprise. Then he stepped back and in an assured and masterly way swung the plumb-line outwards with one gesture. We were left watching the serene rhythm of the weight slowly finding a circular path first outside then inside the metal dish until, suddenly, he stopped it. Before it came to a standstill, it naturally found its centre.

During discussion he stated that if he hadn't stopped it we might have got bored, but he didn't seem concerned with that in the previous pieces in which he was the focus of attention. Equally we might have been given some choice, *ie* to wander about. For me this intervention was more fundamental: it seemed either a lack of sensibility, a loss of faith, or implied a need to control, to dominate.

Paul Neagu and his Generative Art Group at the Arnolfini

In the past six years and as part of the totality of his work Neagu's performances have been, chronologically, *Blind Bite*, *Horizontal Rain* and *Going Tornado*. Each has been seen as an autonomous piece either at Sigi Krauss, Neal Street, MOMA Oxford or c/o Demarco in Edinburgh. His grand plan is complex and riddled with paradox. Briefly, he has developed an approach to his work within which anything he does fits into his overall scheme. This has enabled him to produce objects, drawings, major sculpture, prints and performance; all inter-referential. In 1972 Neagu founded the Generative Art Group. Again it is an organisational structure that reconciles apparently disparate elements into a whole. In its way brilliant, it consists of five 'fictional' personages each with their own individual artistic skills and attitudes that can be manipulated as five facets of one totality, *ie* GAG is Neagu (5 times) and Neagu is GAG.

In March Neagu and his GAG presented variations of the above three pieces, for the first time as a trilogy, at the new Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. *Gradually Going Tornado* was also new in that Neagu worked with four



Paul Neagu *Gradually Going Tornado* (Stage 3)

other people; the abstract members of the GAG had for this occasion materialised. Finally, owing to the extensive facilities, Neagu was able to develop his recent interest in manipulating technology (as he would have more traditional materials). The result was a polished presentation of three half-hour parts.

The first stage of Neagu's odyssey is *Blind*

Bite/Perceptions. The ground plan is a triangle, the soundtrack *Nocturnal* by Edgar Varese. The film of *Blind Bite* at Sigi Krauss in '71 is projected while Neagu simultaneously parallels the activity of preparing waffles, 'for real'. The four performers are led in, blindfolded, and are seated and given the waffles. Having eaten them slowly their blindfolds are removed, they can see. The two boys then hold up a pole from which hangs a plastic tube, while the two girls look on (black mark here). Neagu then blindfolds himself and swings a scythe round in one dangerous-looking but controlled act, splitting the tube. The area is filled with a cloud of powder. The antithesis of this explosion is the gradual dimming of the lights in sync with the settling of the powder.

The second is *Horizontal Rain/Communication*. The ground plan is four isolated tables or rectangles and the sound is mostly the swing of Count Basie. Images of earlier versions are projected as an intro. One person per table, each engaged in a separate activity: taking photographs, writing, drinking soup, drawing. Neagu in a rectangular moduled suit is co-ordinating. The development is the gradual moving of each table (or separate element) into one bigger table (or whole), and corresponding attempts at communication begin. The loosest piece, it makes sense in retrospect possibly as a societal model of the individual in a group, whereby rather like the Generative Art Group itself five personalities attempt a complex interaction. The finale is the gaining of attention by a boy who, yoga-like, is gradually impressing the others by achieving the impossible; the bending double of his body until his head is between his feet.

The third stage is *Going Tornado/Assessment*. The ground plan is a spiral and the soundtrack is Varese's *Desert*. Again a slide intro. Materially the most simple, it is the closest to the whole spirit of *Gradually Going Tornado*, and the most overtly allegorical. (The most evocative and beautiful, it is also near-impossible to describe.) Neagu emerges more fully, eventually, to dominate the space, and conversely the other four fade to the role of echoes. Three processes, imperceptibly linked, occur simultaneously. First, he steps out of his jumpsuit and gradually sheds layers of complicated clothing. The floor is littered with them and other remnants. As at Oxford he shaves, and these normally private acts seem part of a preparation to 'face the world'. Second, he begins to acknowledge the spiral. Third, a hand-held microphone is spun around a metronome, signalling the beginning of the end. Now, almost naked, he measures, restricts parts of his body, and exercises; and you notice that all his actions are within the visual dynamic of the spiral and the audible rhythm of the metronome. Gradually he begins to spin, then falters, and finally stops. The floor is cleared, and the debris is tied to his body like luggage. Disadvantage is turned to advantage: the weights or 'burdens' become counter-weights and help him establish equilibrium as he moves into the centre. The last action is simple, self-contained and beautiful. He is the focus of our attention but because of his speed we cannot see him clearly. He is out of focus.

Neagu's grand plan is ambitious and his approach so 'clever' that it could be counter-productive; one life-long hermetic work? Whatever its executive weaknesses (and in a piece as complex as this, by an artist temporarily working so close to the alien territory of theatre, they were inevitable), I think he just succeeded. Because of its refined and economic use of symbol, his balance between spontaneity and control, his sense of timing and his visual skill, he just got through, to produce a more advanced piece than most performance work currently being done in England. There is a chapel at London Airport that Neagu might enjoy: it is quiet, underground and, of course, multi-denominational.

Troostwyk Tape on Capital Radio

One Saturday night, in late February, those listening heard the following on Capital Radio:

'Modern Modern Modern Routine'
 'This is an advertisement'
 'Modern Modern Modern Routine'
 'Modern Modern Modern Routine'
 'Modern Modern Modern Routine'
 'This advertisement has advertised the text of a work by the artist David Troostwyk'.

The advertisement was spoken by a woman in a tense, slightly hurried manner, and the commentary was by an older male voice, suitably flatter. The piece lasted approximately fifteen seconds and throughout the three-hour late-night show – starting at midnight – it was repeated nine times. The idea, the advertisement of that idea, the turning of the idea into a radio commercial and the repetition of that commercial was the work itself. The broadcast was one of a series of five texts applied to various other forms, all of which are concerned with advertising an idea. Seemingly unconcerned with commenting on advertising as an 'evil' socio-manipulative industry, unconcerned with taking a moral position, the success or validity of the piece depended on its ability to encourage the listener to tackle or focus on the nature or structure of the ad itself. In other words, the ad primarily 'advertised' or referred to itself. What seemed the issue was that:

- Troostwyk had chosen to operate within the perimeter of commercial radio (Capital is London's commercial station, the programme is 'low-brow' middle-of-the-road pop music for night workers and insomniacs) as an artist or private individual rather than as an advertiser with a commercial proposition. He had bought time and yet had not used it to 'sell' but rather to promote an advertisement of an idea.
- He had 'annexed' the programme itself, *ie* although he only bought approximately two minutes we became aware of structures other than his. He had retrieved time to his advantage.
- Although he had chosen two simple but highly emotive words as the core of his idea, he had – underneath its overt simplicity – paradoxically produced a highly complex piece loaded with implications.

The broadcasts were within a web of sound ranging from *Go Now* by Manfred Mann and *I Love to Love* by Tina Charles to repeated and pre-taped news on deaths in Northern Ireland. I quite rightly leave the last word to the DJ who, at 1.55 am, bravely tackled this odd ad: 'It's nice to hear inventive advertising every once in a while, so infrequently do people bother to take the plunge into something inventive ...'

Changes in Arts Council policy

The Performance Art Committee has been disbanded. Originally established in 1974, partly as a result of the Experimental Projects and New Activities Committees (1971-74), it was one of the sub-committees of the Art Panel. Its function was to service the needs of 'Performance Artists', and in its short but busy life (it handled an annual budget, at its peak, of £45,000), it had a reputation for being accessible and for representing a wide range of interests.

The new approach is streamlined. A new steering body, The Special Applications Committee, has been established. It will consist of two members from the Dance, Art and Music Panels and one from Literature. Internally, it will be serviced by an officer who will refer to the director of a department. It will engage specialist advisers from time to time to report on the work of experimental artists. Its function will not be to award grants but rather to assess applications that do not easily fit into the existing panel structure. (Hence the mixture of panel members, partly co-opted to *liaise*.) It will then offer detailed advice to the panels who will decide on all grant aid.

The Arts Council might have made an announcement sooner than it did. As it was, rumours, disquiet and alarm grew, producing concern. This led to the 'Conference Concerning Performance Art' being held at the ICA in March. Attended by fifty people, it defined

its main concerns as:

- Doubts re lack of information regarding the new structure and their future position.
- It questioned the validity of the new committee and queried its future criteria.
- It questioned the Arts Council's current position on Performance. A shift of attitude re status?
- It queried current policy on representation.
- It sought an assurance that, whatever the structure, future needs would be served, and it sought a meeting.

Although the new structure is more logical, and may be fairer 'across the board' of experimental work (whatever that is), it obviously needs careful monitoring. (As a specialist advisory body it will equally service all panels, whereas PAC was mainly linked to the Art Panel.) In the short term performance artists (see Jan/Feb *Studio* for definition) may suffer financially, but then historical factors had put them in a relatively favoured position. What matters, surely, is that whatever structure is adopted attitudes should be jointly developed towards solving this recurrent dilemma of assessment and of funding awkward and/or unusual work.

Queries to: The Steering Committee, 'Conference Concerning Performance Art,' c/o ICA The Mall, London, SW1. Or: The Secretary, Special Applications Committee, The ACGP, 105 Piccadilly, London, W1.

New Contemporaries at the Acme Gallery

The Acme Housing Association has for three years been providing cheap studio and living space in short-term GLC property in East London. It is now extending its organisational skills to opening a professionally-run non-commercial gallery, where else but in Covent Garden? A policy of multi-functional usage has enabled them to offer a helping hand to the New Contemporaries, who were looking for a home. It is the first time the student show has attempted to cope with the strange beast 'live work', and details are currently being finalised. Video and film may be shown elsewhere (as are painting and sculpture). Performance will definitely happen from 31 May to 5 June (programmes will be available) at The Acme Gallery, 43 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, WC2. Tel: 01-240 3047.

PS

In the last column I suggested that those students whose 'finals' will feature performance send in brief information. Owing to problems of timetabling, I shall now be considering a small feature in the Autumn.

At the ICA Ted Little has been co-ordinating a mixed programme of activity, Sunday evenings at eight. They include: 23 May: Colin Barrow; 28 May: Rose English; 13 June: Dis Willis; 27 June: Harry Kipper.

Sally Potter will present films and performance at the Film Co-op on 15 June at 8 pm, and will be working with Rose English at the Roundhouse Downstairs, 28 June – 3 July.

VIDEO

Video events in Glasgow

Symposium: The Future of Video in Scotland, 13 March
Event: Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic, 16 – 21 March
Third Eye Centre

Report by Tamara Krikorian

It may have surprised those unfamiliar with the Scottish scene when these two events were announced. David Hall has documented the development of video in Scotland, which involved the Scottish Arts Council,