

The Signs of Los Angeles, 2004
George Barber
London Gallery West
Installation View

This catalogue considers the work of George Barber as manifested in his solo exhibition at London Gallery West, which brought together his new video work and a series of specially commissioned photographs "The Signs of Los Angeles". This exhibition provided a timely survey of the artist's work and the catalogue texts by Matthew Noel-Tod and Barber himself reveal both the ideas and the motivation behind his seductive yet disturbing vision.

A pioneer of video art, once described by Art Monthly as "the Henry Ford of independent video", George Barber quickly gained an international reputation with "Scratch Video", an original, fast-cutting, multi-layered rhythmic work. George Barber's artistic output has been prolific and taken many different forms; always visually striking and often examining the ordinary and extraordinary in life.

"The Signs of Los Angeles" are specially commissioned photographs for the Gallery, which centre on the automatically sprinkled lawns of Los Angeles and feature the signs found there. The messages vary from hand-written "*My daughter is doing great at Culver City High*" to the more disturbing "*Visitors visit at your own risk*". The photographs are a neat fit between LA's natural weirdness as a city and Barber's own fascination with the uninhibited human character, people left to their own devices, people who have lost the sense of what is appropriate. Barber's vision and the unreal qualities of LA provide a particularly toxic mix.

"Shouting Match", the main video work of the exhibition, is a powerful performance piece in which a series of shouting matches take place in an abandoned London supermarket. Participants are pushed and pulled on a small track, each has to fight to stay on screen. The louder they shout the more they are in the picture, the quieter, the more they are withdrawn. The shout is the most elementary form of human vocal expression and the tone of the work is reminiscent of early video art: raw expression, free of inhibition. The piece works both as a metaphor for current political dialogue as well as stripping down language to its basic component, vocal noise. The sound is heart-felt but meaningless ('The Shout' was also a key site of rebellion to the Lettristes in 50's Paris).

Two other featured works are "Miss Christ" and "Walking Off Court". In "Miss Christ", a silent video projection, a woman, hanging upside down off the back of a speedboat, is taken for a ride down the River Thames. A video image which simply astonishes. "Walking Off Court" is the story of the nervous breakdown of a fanatical tennis player and his rising inability to find tennis partners. The film is created using huge sweeping pans, over which, in voice-over, we hear the answermachine messages that the tennis player leaves in his desperate search to find partners.

Finally, Barber doffs his cap to the 20th anniversary of "Scratch Video" and shows us his latest scratch work, "What's That Sound?". It is a montage of questions, answers, and the cries and screams of people caught in a disaster movie. The work uses as its starting point, the film "Airport '77" where, improbably, a jumbo jet sinks to the bottom of the sea. Here again, in a clever amalgamation of absurd linguistics, cries and pleas, the artist shows his fascination with speech and human reaction to out-of-the-ordinary situations.

Michael Mazière

Curator

London Gallery West



George Barber

The Fictionalised Author

George Barber slowly crept into my consciousness over numerous encounters with his work, and for a long time was top of my list of artists and film makers I wanted to meet. He seemed a mysterious figure: pioneer of scratch video in the 80's; host of a series on BBC Radio 4; a broadsheet journalist for *The Independent*; odd ball experimenter in cutting-edge video graphics; and the prolific source of a stream of enigmatic, lo-fi, shaggy-dog-story videos from the 90's, as well as polemical, if somewhat tongue-in-cheek, articles in the film press. Add to this sometime-tennis-partner of Martin Amis, and the list was confusing but undeniably impressive.

The fictionalised author is so ubiquitous a figure in George Barber's work that I found it hard to imagine the man behind the fiction. In my attempt, I pictured a Wizard of Oz figure, ahead of - or at least to one side of - his time, engrossed in a crazy stab at creating utopia. The video composite effect was his smokescreen, and the lacklustre moaning British artist (from Barber's video *I Was Once Involved In a Shit Show* (2003)) or the gibberish-speaking weatherman surrounded by psychedelia (from *The Weather* (1996)) were among his alter egos. To resort to a much-used phrase in many articles on Barber, I found it hard to feel as if I was really "scratching the surface" of the man's identity.

Midway through 2004, I started researching a programme of work to mark the 20th anniversary of Scratch Video in 2005, a date roughly taken from the appearance of Barber and his contemporaries' seminal scratch videos, such as Barber's own *Yes Frank No Smoke* in 1985. It was suggested that I started my research by meeting with George Barber.



*Miss Christ, 2002
Video, 4 minute loop
Courtesy the Artist*

George Barber and I have been in contact for several months now, meeting in person or corresponding via email. He is alarmingly direct in trying to understand what my interest in scratch video might be, and hilariously cynical about our chosen paths as video artists. We picked the wrong medium, he jokes - painting is much more straightforward and easier to sell. He is less the wizard I had imagined, but more a hyperactive creator with the curiosity and imagination of a child, and an innate commitment to making videos. As well as being frequently amused by our correspondence, I am also impressed.

George Barber's dedication to video and his continuing success with the medium inspires me to envision a long and fruitful future for video art. Over the last 20 years he has transformed his work with a vitality and flow of ideas that demonstrates an artist relentlessly involved in questioning his medium, his society and the relationship between the two. After viewing George's work and speaking with him at length about his ideas, background and opinions, I've come to the conclusion that Barber's artistic position as an eclectic variety performer is the product of an unexorcisable frustration and fascination with the art forms of painting, writing, television and the cinema.



Quiet, Listen, 2004
Video, 5 minutes
Courtesy the Artist

Walking Off Art

George's first interest was writing. He enrolled to study English Literature at the University of East Anglia in the late 70's, but after a brief, disillusioning time departed for London to catch the tail end of punk as an art student at St Martins. Provocatively, George Barber tells me he thinks that reading a paperback novel nowadays is better intellectual value in terms of time and money than taking public transport in London to see an art exhibition. Literature, however, remains an integral part of his creativity.

The strength of the dialogue written and performed by Barber in videos such as *I Was Once Involved In a Shit Show* (in which an artist, played by Barber himself, recounts the spiralling compromises and disappointments of being involved in an under-funded group show) comes from a talent for comic, wistful, deadpan characterisations. The characterisations are generally of society's losers (*Taxi Driver II* (1987), *Schweppes Ad* (1992), *Say Hello To Lottery Park* (1995), *I Was Once Involved In a Shit Show* (2003)) or people caught up in a world spinning out of their control (*The Weather* (1996), *Walking Off Court* (2003)).



Refusing Potatoes, 2002
Video, 7 minutes
Courtesy the Artist





Walking Off Court, 2003
Video, 10 minutes
Courtesy the Artist

Walking Off Court, winner of the Grand Prix at the 2003 Split Film Festival, is Barber's recent masterpiece. This ten-minute video tells the story of James Goodman, a tennis coach who had a nervous breakdown around about the time that a motorway was built right outside his house. He spent a lot of time aimlessly walking in circles around new roads and road works. George Barber contacted him, and eventually ended up playing tennis with him. The video is loosely the story of his experience and his changing relationship to his normal circumstances. The images at the start of the video are sweeping crane-style shots of suburban houses, north-circular-style shop parades and motorway construction. These slowly break away from circling the urban landscape and culminate in a mutedly euphoric sequence over a beach, moving out towards the ocean beneath overcast skies, reminiscent of the false existentialist escape of Antoine Doinel at the end of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (1959).

The voice-over in *Walking Off Court*, inspired by a report that Barber had read in *The Times*, tells Goodman's poignant story. Its philosophical ruminating on events is intercut with the tennis coach's disoriented answerphone messages inviting George for tennis games. The video is edited to excerpts from a melancholic violin score. George tells me that the disconnection of voice, image and music is for him the success of Godard's films and videos.

One could draw particular comparison perhaps with Godard and Miéville's *Soft and Hard* (1985), not merely from Barber and Godard's lifelong love of tennis (which they both demonstrate on screen via caricatured self-portraits) but also from an honesty of biographical approach, mixed with observations, global and anecdotal, of the world in which they are constantly repositioning themselves as artists. It is a refreshing and moving approach, a struggle with images and representation.

Whilst *Walking Off Court* does not dissect the meaning of art with the same earnestness as Godard and Miéville's *Soft and Hard*, the humour in Barber's video should not hide the revelations and hopefulness that he derives from the mysterious paths of our existence, illustrated by the story of James Goodman. *Walking Off Court* is Barber in his element, but we also sense him discovering something new for himself (he says the editing and filming was an experimental and exploratory process), finding an unexpected simplicity of form and expression from a marginalised tale of one man's struggle with the modern world.



USA Today

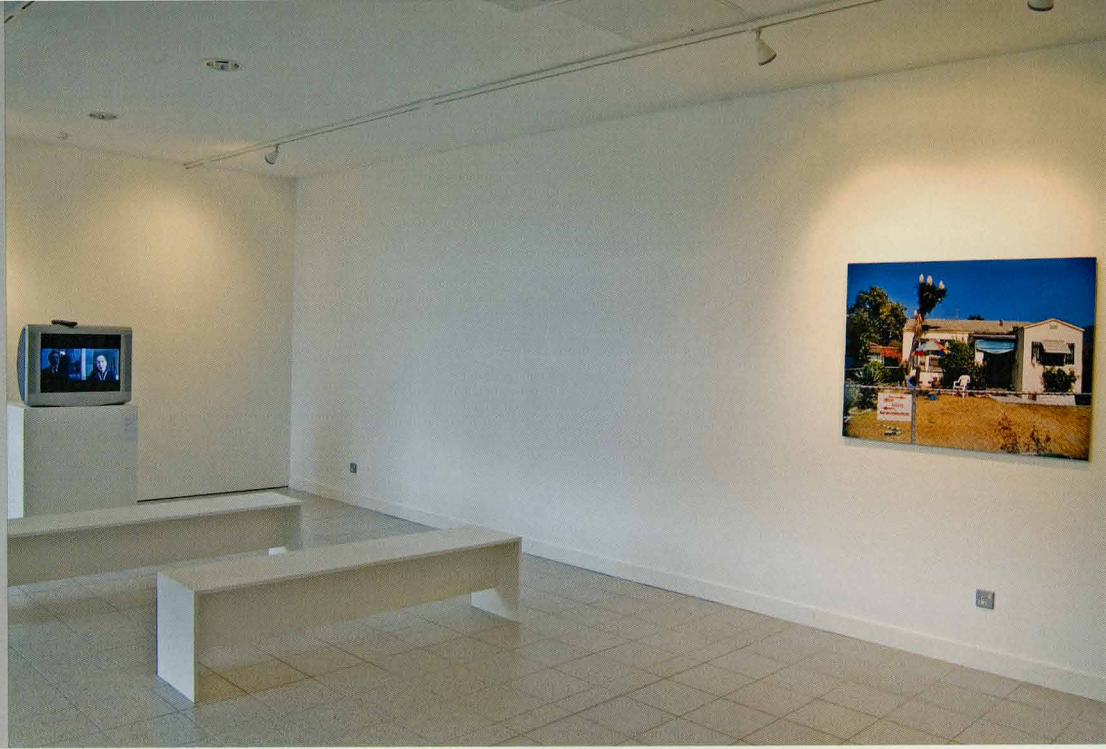
George Barber's most recent works are not videos but photographs, made during his time spent in Los Angeles. The large colour photographs, accompanied by Barber's essay "The Signs of Los Angeles" depict a range of LA houses and their typically suburban lawns. Each lawn features a sign that is a message from the absent occupants to the outside world.

The appeal of La-La-land weirdness is a common subject for artists, but the danger has always been that the subject is treated with an air of cultural superiority, cajoling the audience to join in with the sneering disdain of the artist. From Warhol or Rauschenberg's seminally incisive treatment of American trash culture onwards, there has been considerable confusion as to whether artists, especially non-US artists, are being critical, celebratory or dishonestly nostalgic when taking Americana as the subject for their work. For example, the genius of Bruce Connor's films should make him US enemy number one, whilst the banality of Noble and Webster's dollar in lights should send them back to art school. Wim Wenders achieved an intelligent European vision of America in his film *Paris, Texas* (1984), yet his photos of similar subjects present nothing more than imitation aesthetic.

George Barber, then, who has already boldly aligned himself with Warhol with his tongue-in-cheek video *1001 Colours Andy Never Thought Of* (1996), investigates Los Angeles — perhaps the ultimate modern US city — through a typical fusion of myth, mirth and reality. The ambiguous presentation of the photographs as documents of a reality Barber actually encountered makes the viewer's initial familiarisation with the subject problematic. We cannot easily apprehend what is portrayed in the images — they resist lazy qualitative judgements and other moribund habits of art viewing.

Miss Christ, 2002
Video, 4 minute loop
Courtesy the Artist

The Signs of Los Angeles, 2004
George Barber
London Gallery West
Installation View



The humour always present in Barber's work takes a dark turn in the Los Angeles images. The bland, suburban houses (the Californian counterparts of the drab north London houses in *Walking Off Court*) with sunlit lawn signs present us with disconcerting messages such as: "ABOVE Security - We Are ABOVE Average (lethal force approved) (really random visits 24/7) 1-800-500-HELP"; "FEEL SAFE? YEAH RIGHT 1-888-450-4455"; and "ARE YOU AN UNKNOWN CREEP? Wilson Jones & Company (323) 825 -1-HIT, SECURITY MAGIC". This is mixed with the odd plausible sign (or really more plausible sign, because the point in Barber's choice is that the insanity of the signs is perfectly imaginable to our paranoid minds) such as "WE ARE PROUD OF OUR NEIGHBORS" which contains a black and white image of two 70's era men. Are they the neighbours? Or the ones who are proud? What happened to the neighbours?

We start to get the sense that Barber is truly aping the situation with the hilarious but no less sinister sign: "SHEEP / PEOPLE Biggy Chooses People Everytime". The sign looks as though it is a choice over who Biggy will shoot should they dare to trespass on his shabby lawn.

Woody Allen's remark that tragedy plus time equals comedy - or as Alan Alda's character puts it in *Allen's Crimes And Misdemeanors* (1989) "if it bends it's funny, if it breaks it's not funny" - seems appropriate to what Barber achieves in his Los Angeles photos. Although not a self-conscious war-on-terror artist, or state-of-the-nation reporter from the USA, Barber nevertheless picks up on the heightened sense of public panic in the States since 9/11 and the definite signs that foreigners are treated as aliens, guilty until proven innocent. Three years ago the satirizing of America's needy display of paranoid fear and defensiveness in the nation's picket-fence signage might have looked cruel, but now Barber expresses a rightful exasperation - mixed with fascination - about this absurd US practice. He avoids playing with Americana for its own sake by using black humour to expose the darkness below, making us realise how far we have become comfortable with the USA's society of fear.

LSD

George Barber's other recent video works, such as *Miss Christ* (2002), *Upside Down Minutiae* (2002) and *Shouting Match* (2003), fall into a completely different category to *Walking Off Court* or the LA photos. These are simple videos documenting expressions of non-normal human behaviour and reversing conventions of film and video representation. In this way, they become a contemporary riff on the early performance art videos of artists such as Bruce Nauman, Valie Export (whose videos Barber tells me he greatly admires) and Vito Acconci. *Miss Christ* and *Upside Down Minutiae* are made of short sequences of people hanging upside down from their ankles on a scaffolding frame on the back of a speedboat (*Miss Christ*) and a truck (*Upside Down Minutiae*). *Shouting Match* is a game, or a contest, between two people, using only shouting and forcing the people on screen to display their primary emotions. The often humourously paired contestants are manoeuvred backwards and forwards whilst facing each other on track-mounted chairs. Shouting forcibly pushes each person to centre screen, but each time his or her shouting quiets the person is withdrawn off screen. Each has to fight to stay in the image. Barber's interest is in our most basic form of expression, an often-visited subject with artists, grappling with ideas of raw, liberated language and presenting metaphors for contemporary human communication.

As Barber had already done in *The Weather* (1996), where a weatherman speaks in a nonsense stream of sounds, the vocal expression of the performers in *Shouting Match* becomes the focus of the video by making it unintelligible in conventional terms. It is not an obscure, layered and recontextualised language as found in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (an approach which does find some visual equivalent in the layered montage of Hollywood movie footage in Barber's scratch videos, notably *Absence of Satan* (1995)) – rather, it is a language used out of the artist's desire to transcend the limits of communication. Thinking about this and the prominent use of trippy, rave-style graphics in many of Barber's videos from the 90's, such as *Arizona Nubian Desert Kite Medley* (1995) and *Curtain Trip* (1994), I decided to ask George if he has ever taken LSD. LSD? He laughs, surprised, and says that he thinks it's not the kind of thing that would really agree with him.

I explain that I think it is a reasonable question, because he appears to have a strong interest in transcending reality, confounding ideas of representation of it and often (literally) turning them upside down. I am not so naïve to assume that any artist's departure from a realist mode of representation is a sign that they have taken hallucinogenic drugs, but *Scratch Video* was closely linked with the club scene in the 80's, the most notable venue being the *Fridge* in Brixton, and Barber himself made some so-called 'rave tapes' in 1994, collectively known as the compilation *Videohigh*, comprising the short videos *Planet Stoned*, *DMT Diving*, *Bridget Riley In the Sky with Diabetes*, *Piccadilly Rush* and *Runic Tunic*.



Shouting Match, 2004
Production Still
Courtesy the Artist



Return to Oz

When film critic Gareth Evans interviewed George Barber on stage about his work recently, Barber entertained the audience with an assortment of provocative statements: “my work is Structuralism plus fun”; “if, like Christ, someone is suffering then it makes for more interesting art;” and offering answers to questions before they were even asked. This reminded me of my first conversation with Barber. I had the impression that my interest in discovering what and who he was as an artist, made him divert our discussion before we had satisfied each topic.

They were always interesting diversions, each more spiralling than the previous, but as his passenger I occasionally had to ask him to stop and tell me where we were going. Maybe George is like this as a tennis partner. I imagine he must be a fan of the rally; languid lobs from the baseline as he savours the to-and-fro of the ball before charging the net, lest things get too placid. Barber’s gleefully opposed aesthetic of the hi-tech computer generated video and the humorous lo-fi monologue seems the artistic equivalent of rapidly switching between aggressive and defensive styles of playing.

L. Frank Baum’s character the Wizard of Oz, who provided my preconceived image of George Barber, may not be so far from the truth. In Barber, as in the character of the Wizard of Oz, we find the innocence and humanness of the real man contrasted with the grand illusions and myth-making of his alter ego. Barber’s intelligence as an artist is his ability to oscillate between, and successfully to combine, these two modes of expression: spectacle versus intimacy, pop versus confessionalism, reality versus fiction.

Matthew Noel-Tad 2004



THE ABOVE
WE USE ABOVE AIRING

The Signs of Los Angeles

by George Barber

In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis's wonderful book about Los Angeles, the city is comically described by one of its inhabitants as the 'Sunlit Mortuary'. Of course, this is good clean fun but it does capture the widespread anxiety and disappointment that many Angelinos feel about their city; its soulless, its artificiality. 'La La land' shuffles under the weight of avarice, vulgarity, stardom and its close partner; new age nonsense.

Recently, I was lucky enough to spend two months living in Los Angeles, getting a super tan and extra white teeth, and feeling really nice and kinda alienated as I drove aimlessly about the Sunlit Mortuary. It is fantastic. I could live there any day. Many graveyards are laid out with a similar grid system, each cross being a block. More seriously, it is also fantastic to breathe different air, hear different sounds and have different thoughts – I have been in London far too long. At the same time, inevitably I wanted to do something creative with my good fortune.

London Gallery West had commissioned me to take a series of photographs during my time in LA for my upcoming exhibition. As I drove about – and I drove around 1,000 miles in LA over 8 weeks – I started to focus on the signs that some Angelinos leave in their gardens – or front yards. The most common ones are security signs, small shields with some vaguely threatening message like 'Beverly Hills Armed Response'. Next, there come more prosaic real estate messages like, 'Open day, For Rent', or the one I particularly like, 'Do Not Bother Occupants'. And finally, there are sentimental messages – often related to pride in the neighbourhood or advertising the academic achievements of a loved one. 'My daughter is doing just great at Culver City High'. These signs always exist in much the same context – a near perfect lawn, often not actually ever walked on by the lawn's owner but totally kept up by automatic sprinklers and mown once a week by a visiting Mexican. Developing that in a Ballardian sense, these lawn spaces are surprisingly dead, certainly not as ugly as the spaces created by motorway intersections, but nevertheless the lawns of Los Angeles have a curious deadness, a numb, concrete-like monotony in their uniformity and flatness.

This is grass going through the motions; it is nominal grass, not representative of a particular individual or home, but corporate grass that has crept over the border and colonised domestic space. Fundamentally, LA lawns do not join in with the life of the home they border, but remain brooding outside. Like real moats they evaporate and need proper daily maintenance.

We Are Above Average, 2004
Photographic print on Aluminium
91.4cm x 122cm
Courtesy the Artist and London Gallery West



MY DAUGHTER
IS DOING JUST
GREAT AT

CULVER CITY
HIGH

HERE LIVES
ONE PROUD
DADDY



Of course, it is difficult to elucidate the notion of a useless lawn, certainly in society one can think of useless customs. But who can doubt the sincerity of things that grow? Who can be mean to a blade of grass? Who in effect can doubt the sincerity of a plant, a monocotyledonous spike? But this is the observation of a foreigner and as such it has its own right to be either fantastically wide of the mark or vaguely spot on.

In truth, I don't think I have ever seen so much unappreciated grass. The green assembly line pastures exist to mark out one's borders or territory and show that one is on message — civilised, keeping in with the neighbourhood. Again, I never thought I would find myself rooting for grass, sticking up for the rights of lawns but there you go — LA does encourage the loony in us all (I have never been a keen smoker of grass; I know the pun is lurking nearby as I write — so I better stub it out now).

To mow my lawn further, leaf blow my drive as it were, rarely do LA gardens have fences or walls, so that they flow from the street, to the sidewalk to the front garden. A continuity of the three spaces implies a fluidity — but you may have a gun pointed at you if you trespass — so this continuity of spaces is just an impression not reality. The flatness of the street then, is echoed by the sidewalk, and this same ribbon is then repeated but in a different colour by the lawns. Next, another element weighs into the mix. There are no pedestrians. And just as there are no pedestrians, there are no owners gardening or children on the lawns. All are still, unvisited, unused by the occupants and simply kept up by hired helps who visit in Nissan pick-ups. The signs then become the only sign of life. With a new battery for my still camera I began work. My theme, as you've guessed - the garden signs of LA.

LA gardens are so full of colour; they are so not dark, or weak. Even if they are mainly grass, they have a real zing to them. All foliage is kept alive by water being pumped as much as 2000 miles from the Colorado River. (LA is a desert — everyday is hot, dry and free of wind.) The famous LA light brings out the richest reds and greens. Indeed, so rich is the colour that one can see precisely why film manufacturers wanting to show off the properties of their product would go for LA gardens. They are the cliché colour film advert. In LA, at five as the sun goes down, you could almost be forgiven for wanting to pull up a seat and watch bougainvillea. It is a natural video wall. It generally comes in purple — but for me it has to be the red. It is a real pleasure to behold and pay one's dues.

*My Daughter is doing Just Great at
Culver City High, 2004
Photographic print on Aluminium
91.4cm x 122cm
Courtesy the Artist and London Gallery West*



DO NOT RING DOORBELL

Be that as it may, in assessing the signs, I quickly came to the conclusion that my photographs would navigate a line between the signs that imply violence — always in a welcoming, pretty and well-maintained herbaceous context — and the signs that offer a truly face-melting earnestness — almost symptomatic of what we might jokingly call an ‘early discloser’ in conversation, where the occupants want to tell the world some great joy that they have experienced. ‘We are proud of our neighbors’. ‘We are having the best year of our lives, thank you’. ‘America Land of the Free, Home of the Brave’. Again, both types of messages exist in the same context; popped in beside poppies, marigolds, bougainvillea and long lazy undulating lawns. But the signs have very opposite intentions. One type tells the reader to back off, back-up, get real, while the other type is a eulogy to sweetness and good feelings — unembarrassed like a child by what others might think. The contrast between LA lawn signs is perhaps best and most appropriately summed up by movie titles. LA lawns are *Blade Runner* via *The Sound of Music*. One type of sign reminds us of the truth of human nature, future urban cynicism and social decay, while the other celebrates the joys of wholesome old fashioned, olden days, family life and small town friendliness. In this way one could make the case that the lawns of LA are schizophrenic. The patient — though always well-maintained, smartly dressed — is able to turn on a sixpence as to what it feels like expressing to the world.

The photographic results of my undertakings formed a central part of my solo show at London Gallery West, 24th September to 31st October 2004, along with a selection of my recent video work.

Now, I would like to return to the subject of unvisited lawns. (I do don’t want to stop talking about grass, this month.) As I hinted at with my introduction, grass may be grass but LA grass does seem to symbolise precisely that ‘soullessness’ that Angelinos are always worried about. Often on my travels, say inside Starbucks, in the film processing labs or in restaurants, Angelinos would always offer things like, ‘How you finding it? We sold out; we’ve sold our soul, here, right?’ or ‘You can’t compare this place to Europe — the sun may be shining but it’s totally without culture!’ It is fair to say that I don’t think I have ever visited anywhere where the locals are so keen to hear what a visitor makes of their town, to see how it compares with what they feel.

Do Not Ring Doorbell, 2004
Photographic print on Aluminium
91.4cm x 122cm
Courtesy the Artist and London Gallery West



508

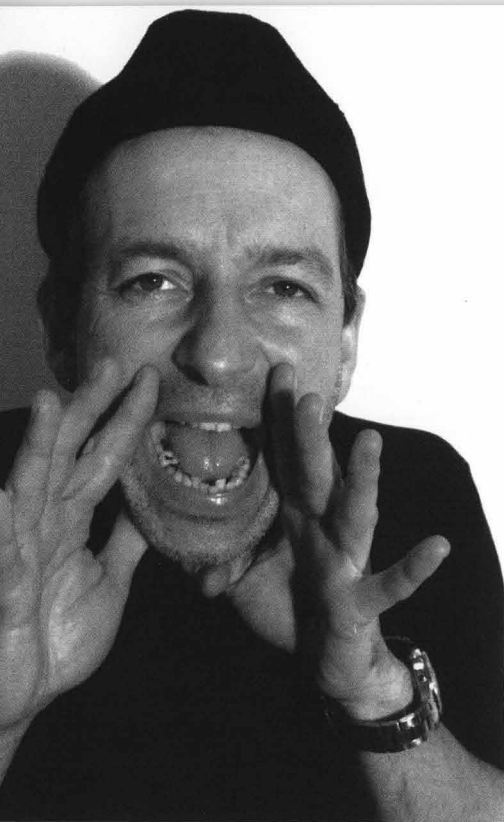

WE ARE PROUD OF
OUR NEIGHBORS

It is a tangible given that they have accepted all their lives. They feel sentimental about the brash alienation of Los Angeles — yet like to make it known they are aware of it. As long as you know they are onto it, then they get something from the conversation. 'Less Than Zero' is actually a celebration of LA life — it is not the pious blurb that it says on the cover. Brett Easton Ellis was an ambassador, not a critic. And who would not swap their existence for the life of Clay, the central character?

Who would not like to have a super rich lawyer/movie dad and nothing to do all day, except buy clothes and hang out at the Standard Hotel on Sunset Boulevard with similarly vacuous friends? I love it but back to grass. When grass gets together it makes a lawn - that's grass's basic inclination to public assembly, to be in a crowd. This has been the case for many years. Grass can't do its grass thing on a one blade basis — it gets pulled up, weeded in fact. In this way, LA grass perhaps illustrates Baudrillard's Theory of the Masses, LA lawn grass is able to absorb and suck the light out of anything, everything is taken in, equalised and nothing comes back out. There is no individuality in the masses, the masses stamp it out. LA grass is freaky. It gets the brightest light in the world but is an endless gloomy sleeping membrane, shadowing you, in the corner of your eye, as you drive along spotless suburban streets.

But who could have these thoughts strolling around Lake Windermere, Hampton Court, Wimbledon Tennis Club or their own 8ft back garden patch in a crummy English town? You'd have to be a nut right? Or a foreigner — and in the end that's all I was in LA — but one busy taking photographs and illegally walking on an endless sequence of people's lawns. Forgive me, Angelinos - anybody can have a bad trip. Don't worry, I am working right now on a road map to get over it. In the end, I guess someone just hit me with some bad grass while I was over there.

We are Proud of our Neighbors, 2004
Photographic print on Aluminium
91.4cm x 122cm
Courtesy the Artist and London Gallery West



Artist's Biography

Born 4/6/1958 Uivlugt Sugar Estate, Georgetown, Guyana

Lives and works in London

EDUCATION

1977-1980: St. Martins School of Art

BA in Sculpture 'A' (conceptual department) with distinction in Cultural Studies

1982-1984: The Slade, University College London

MA in Experimental Department

SOLO SHOWS

'New Work' One man show

24 Sept - 12 Nov 2004 London Gallery West

7 large photographs and 2 video installations. Previewed *Time Out*

Interviewed by Gareth Evans, Critic *Time Out* and *Vertigo*. Screening at *Old Lumiere Cinema, University of Westminster*

Wed 6 October 2004

'Shouting Match' One man show, *Open Eye Gallery Liverpool*

31 Jan - 6 March 2004

Preview 7 February in *Guardian 2004*

Installation of various works including 'Upside Down Minutiae' and

'Yes Frank No Smoke'

24 Nov - 12 May 2002. Gallery Contemporain Centre Regional D'Art *SETE, France*

Video installation at Video Positive 2000 Citadel, St Helens

'Discrepancy' 2000

GROUP SHOWS AND FESTIVALS

International Film Festival Rotterdam, 'What's That Sound?'

26 Jan - 6 Feb 2005

WINTERTHUR Switzerland, 'Shouting Match' Short Film Festival

11 - 15 Nov 2004

'Withdrawal' shown and on discussion panel at National Portrait Gallery

20 June 2004

'Shouting Match' *World Wide Video Festival*

10 - 20 June 2004

Screened as installation with catalogue ISBN 9909843

Melbourne International Film Festival, 'Walking Off Court'

4 - 12 June 2004

Scratch Vol.2 Prenelle Gallery, West India Quays - part of the Island Film

Festival - www.prenelle.com, 15 April 2004

The Bloomberg Show London entitled 'The Mind Is a Horse', City of London

'TILT' screened 27 March - 8 May 2004

EMAF Osnabruck Germany, 'Walking Off Court' 10 - 24 April 2004

I'd rather jack - S1 Artspace Sheffield, Feb 2004

BCA Gallery, Bedford 'Unlimited Edition' 11 Jan - 21 Feb 2004

Millais Gallery Southampton Various Works Unlimited Edition, 3 Nov - 24 Jan 2004

Viper Festival Switzerland 'Walking Off Court' shown as installation, 4 - 8 Nov 2003

Tate Britain 'A Century Of Artist's Film in Britain' 'Tilt' selected, 20 Jan - 20 March 2004

'Walking Off Court' Media Art Festival Friesland, Holland, 4 - 20 Sept 2003

'Walking Off Court' SPLIT Film and Video Festival, Croatia. Grand Prix awarded by international jury, 14 - 27 Sept 2003

'Walking Off Court' shown at New York Video Festival, 24 - 28 July 2003

'Next 5 Minutes', Spain September 2003

World Wide Video Festival Holland, 8 - 16 May 2002

'Walking Off Court' and 'I Was Once Involved In A Shit Show'

LUX Open Show 2002, 4 - 8 May Royal College of Art

GATE Work screened in Dartmoor outdoor film event, August 2002, Curator — Tina Keane

Tate Britain Programme presented by Dryden Goodwin, March 2002

Two pieces in 'Aquadria' exhibition in Landesgalerie, Oberosterreich, Austria, Feb 2002

Range of work included in The Video Show at Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London, Feb 2002

Toronto International Video Art Biennial work shown in Light Structures, curated by Dryden Goodwin, October 2001

Video A Mi Gusto Instituto De La Juventud, Madrid, Oct 2001

European Media Art Festival Osnabruck 'Upside Down Minutiae' April 2001

National Film Theatre Unlimited Edition, June 2001

Slipstream Internet Interventions, www.slipstream.uk.net, ICA 2001 (Still online)

'River Sky' shown at Viper Festival 2001

Video work on show at British School in Rome, May 2000

'Withdrawal' video installation at Home Sweet Home, Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona 1999

Five pieces shown at ICA 'Fuzzy Logic' 1998

'Withdrawal' shown at ICA as part of Channel 4's Animate scheme, 1997

Videopositive 'Simultaneous City' Review Guardian, 1997

Installation entitled RIPE, at Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, 1997

'Anaphone' included in Whitechapel Open, 1997

'A Scenic Detour through Commodity Culture, Jan van Eyck Academy and locations, Jan, Maastricht (NL) 1997. Video programmes in two public locations

Retrospective of work at ICA, The Mall, part of the Pandemonium Festival, Programme notes by Suzanne Moore of The Independent, 1996

'Passing Ship' shown at Vigo Festival, Australian Film and Video Festival, World Wide Video Festival, Locarno Video Festival and included in a touring package by Tom Van Vilet. Also, Pompidou Centre Paris

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Looking at Pop Videos and Thinking About Other Things' George Barber, AND — Journal of Art and Education, No 1 Winter, UK, 1984

'Scratching Deeper' Michael O'Pray, Art Monthly, 1986

'Close-Up: Nick Logan' George Barber, Marxism Today, September 1988

'Island that aren't face the music' Miles Kingston, The Independent on Sunday, UK, 24 March 1991

'This Week — First Person' Quentin Curtis, The Independent on Sunday, UK, 24 March 1991

'Back Bites — Hell for Leather' George Barber, The Independent Magazine, UK, 13 August 1994

'Back Bites — Last Action Paintings' George Barber, The Independent Magazine, UK, 10 September 1994

'Back Bites — Seeing is Believing' George Barber, The Independent Magazine, UK, 22 October 1994

'Go West, Eastender' George Barber, The Independent Magazine, UK, 19 November 1994

'Passing Ship' George Barber, World Wide Video Festival, Holland, 1994

'George Barber Retrospective' Suzanne Moore, Pandaemonium (catalogue), London Electronic Arts, UK, 1996

'Cyberspace Video High Volume One' Jim McClellan, The Observer, UK, 1998

'Cyberspace Video High Volume One' Steve Beard, ID Magazine, UK, 1998

'Cooking for Terrorists' Julian Petley, New Statesman, June, UK, 1988

'Il Fenomeno Scratch' Maria Rosa Sossai, Videovibe, Castelvechi Arte, Italy, 1988, ISBN 88-8210-230-0

'Yes Frank No Smoke' Michael O'Pray, The Elusive Sign, Arts Council of Great Britain/British Council, 1988

'Scratch and After — Edit Suite Technology and the Determination of Style in Video Art' George Barber, Culture Technology and Creativity, J. Libbey, 1988

'The Venetian Ghost' Steven Bode, Independent Media, Issue 77, 1988

'George Barber' A Directory of British Film and Video Artists, The Arts Council of England, University of Luton Press, 1996, 1-86020 003 6

Mentioned in Martin Amis's book 'Experience' Cape, UK, 2000

Julian Stallabrass, High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s, 1859847218 Quoted

'George Barber' The Other Side of Zero, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), UK, 2000

'Hanging Out With Artistry' Victor Lewis-Smith, Evening Standard, 14 December, UK, 2001

Preview Section The Guardian newspaper, 'Shouting Match' 14 Jan 2004

Preview Section Time Out, George Barber New Work, London Gallery West, 10 Oct 2004

'The Signs of LA' George Barber, essay in Filmwaves Magazine, Editor-publisher, Marco Zee-Jotti ISSN 1460-4051, Oct 2004

Monograph with Film and Video Umbrella, essay by Matthew Collings and essay by Gareth Evans, critic for Time Out, March 2005 with linked event at National Film Theatre

AWARDS

Grand Prix Split Film and Video Festival 2003

Gold Award at ARS Electronica, Austria for innovative computer work, '2CB CURTAIN TRIP' 1998

Chicago Film Festival Gold Award 1990

Award for life-time contribution to video art by Exploding Cinema Group, 1996

D&AD Award 1986

BROADCASTS

Channel 4 broadcast 'Upside Down Minutiae' as part of Slotart 7.55pm 13 Dec 2001

Channel 4 broadcast 'The Weather', a computer animation commissioned under the Arts Council of England's HI-Tech Scheme 1998

Directed 'The Happening History of Video Art' for BBC 2's Late Show 60-minute programme on video art, producer John Wyver

Interviewed on BBC 2's 'Saturday review' and 'Riverside' 1988

Extracts of 'Yes Frank No Smoke' shown

Marc Porter Zasada, 'A Vulgar Happiness' short radio piece featuring Barber's work <http://www.kcrw.com>

BBC World Service broadcast experimental drama entitled 'Collapse' 1999

BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service, series of three 40 minute documentaries series entitled 'Accidents Will Happen' broadcast. Written and presented by Barber, 1998

1998 BBC Radio 3 broadcast experimental drama entitled 'Collapse' written and produced with Eddie Berg

BBC Radio 4. Presenter and writer of 40 minute documentary on how new technology is affecting today's music, entitled 'The Producers'. Producer Matt Thompson 1998

BBC Radio 2 presented documentary on racing for 'The Locker Room' BBC Radio 4 1997

Reporter and presenter for BBC Radio 4 magazine programmes 'Kaleidoscope', 'Afternoon Shift' and 'Going Places' 1994-96

BBC Radio series. Wrote and presented series of four 10 minute monologues entitled 'Media Daze', 1989.

Interviewed on BBC Radio 4's 'Kaleidoscope' reviewing John Wyver's 'Ghosts In The Machine' - a history of video art 1986

© Copyright 2005 London Gallery West, University of Westminster, George Barber, Matthew Noel-Tod and photographers.
No article may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without the written permission of the publisher and the copyright holders.
Published by London Gallery West, University of Westminster, Watford Road, Northwick Park, Harrow, HA1 3TP, 2005
Images courtesy George Barber and London Gallery West
Cover composite image copyright George Barber
Designed by Kendall Bickford, University of Westminster, London
Produced by the Marketing and Development Office, University of Westminster, 115 New Cavendish Street, London, W1W 6UW
Printed by Gemini Press
Editor Michael Mazzière
ISBN 0-9550951-0-7

George Barber

Credits:

Manuel Alvarado
Fenton Bailey
John Bunyon
Paul Coyle
Andy Darley
Fried Pryor (Michael Dyer Ltd)
Maggie Ellis (Film London)
Gareth Evans
Sally Feldman (University of Westminster)
Janet Lee
Matthew Noel-Tod
Robert Moya
Caroline Steels
Elaine Thomas (Surrey Institute of Art and Design)
Marc Porter Zasada & Family
Marco Zee-Jotti (Filmwaves)

London Gallery West

Curator: Michael Mazzière
Administrator: Hannah Liley
Gallery Technician: Christian Newton
Photography: Dave Freeman

m.maziere@wmin.ac.uk

www.wmin.ac.uk/mad

London Gallery West
University of Westminster
School of Media, Arts and Design,
Watford Road, Northwick Park, Harrow
Middlesex HA1 3TP
Tel: +44(0)20 7911 5000 ext 4774
Fax: +44(0)20 7911 5943



THE SURREY INSTITUTE OF ART & DESIGN
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE 