This is a panel about technology and its subversive uses, and its use in particular by artists, writers, activists, propagandists, troublemakers, and other misfits...

Why technology? At this moment in time, when digital technology appears to be multiplying at a rate at which it might soon outnumber those granted the classification as human on this planet, it is important to look at what kind of spaces are being created between and within these technologies and the systems which propogate them. What does it mean to be deviant, dysfunstional, infectious, and becoming autonomous in this war-zone of information systems?

Perhaps the question, "Why Technology?" is itself spurious. Technologies are so thoroughly woven into the rip-stop fabric of our realities that we are not otherwise. Language has shifted in a multiplicity of directions; into sound bites, codes, jargons, cliches, and technologised dialects. Think of how someone speaks on television compared to how they type to each other on a computer bulletin board or on the phone. And our bodies... sites of immeasurable activity, from birth on a metal table surrounded by electronics and blades, to the daily processes of being attentive to machines; telephones, televisions, washing machines, computers, cars, traffic lights, stereos, radios and machines that are being attentive to us; surveillance cameras, x-rays, metal detectors, electronic security gates on shops, the list goes on... Women, who share much of the same social roles as those alloted to machines as the inert, universal tool, are technologised further. Our bodies are incessantly suffused with the dynamics of machines. So there is no outside to 'technology'. There is no perspective from which we can look God-like down and plot our path back to Arcadia.

And of all technologies, those to do with information processing are the most readily aparent and closest to us. From the Automated Telling Machine which maps you out to a global system of computers, to your wrist watch which maps out to the colonial system of time, centred at the heart of the British Empire in Greenwhich, society is constructed of information flows, and social standing is measured as much by available velocity as by financial fluidity. In a society that elevates life to the status of a blip on a junk-mailing list how can technology be deviant? How can we turn things round? Or, put a different way, how is the

interweaving of technology and people provoking new subjectivities that disrupt regulation and Central Control?

This might on the surface seem to be a good time for artists, for writers, video-makers... For surely, when a society is bouyed up sheerly by the mass of information that it produces, it is a society where the opportunity for the effective and creative shaping of that information would be at a premium. Might we not think that idiosyncratic methods for discerning difference and apreciating similarity, for recognising patterns in an atypical manner might just need to be at a premium?
Obviously not.
Corporate surrealism is the order of the day.

And it is against this background, of a society using technological vectors to massify homogeneity, to repel invaders and immigrants, to monitor and coax out into dialogue those misfits who remain like lice on the social body, and to take those vermin and find ways of farming them, that new subjectivities of revolt accrete and make themselves effective.

We live at an interesting time, a time when all the gambits of so called radicalism have been played out.

Identity politics has become a series of imploding homelands. Predicatable safe havens from diquieting thoughts and situations. Reserves where unsullied authenticity can gradually wither in its own isolation and inbreeding.

In fine art and video the 'Left's' long march through the institutions has resulted in the dismally safe independent arts and media scene. While nationalism of both hallucinatory categories right and left collides in the Yugoslavian pressure cooker.

'Essences' of 'exotic' civilisations are bottled and on sale like those of flowers and herbs as a way of getting back to nature at the same time as the homo establishment niche markets itself back into the viciousness of the ghetto.

To attempt to generate ones culture, ones politics, ones activity from some kind of fixed identity located in your groin, who you fuck, or what colour someone tells you that you are is to take your eyes, your ears, your tongue and your lips, and to nail them down to the ground.

A reason for this panel being put together is to discuss some other models. What the members of the panel share is a way of getting round not only "the mainstream", whatever ghost of a meaning that word maintains, but also ways of disrupting radical orthodoxies to find more vibrant, antagonistic and appropriate ways of going about things. We have all used technologies of some sort in the creation, production and distribution of the work that you see here. But you will also see that technology is so much the precondition for our practices, that it conjurs up what they represent just as much as it is instrumental to that representation. And that too, those who engage with these activities are already mutated and elsewhere as a result of that.

J.G.Ballard mentions in a recent interview that Jack Kerouac's'On The Road' was the counter-cultural hi-jacking or spiritual counterpoint to Eisenhower's massive unfurling of the American interstate highway system. They were hackers of the motorways. What can we see happening in the development of the much hyped Data Highways; Fidonet, the Internet and their proprietary culture doubles - Compuserve, Prodigy and the like - where the mid-century rhetoric of national communications systems is being resurrected to fuel this new wave of development? What is interesting here is that the official mythology of computer mediated communications is that it was founded by deviants, misfits, idealists and other troublesome fuck-ups, so that when we look for something that is analogous to the Beat's direct action and propaganda onslaught against the homogeneity of mid-century America, we find it almost always already entangled with what appears to be its opposite.

Does the emergence of every new technology have its black sheep? Who were the hackers of the steam age? When hackers or phone phreaks like Bill Gates of Microsoft or the founders of Apple become the richest men in the States, the generation of antagonism; the generation of a space where you can actually not have to *buy* something in order to exist; spaces where we can play with difference; becomes in some ways so much more complex. Because what you come up against in order to acheive that is so well schooled in the rhetorics of liberation (whether hyper-capitalist or municipal niceness). You have to work out what some of the stakes are:

Consider this quote from Bob Geldof in 1985, the time of Live Aid.

"The point is, for the first time, the whole world is linked physically through electronics. And I want it not to be a passive

experience, I want it to be active. In other words I want people to contribute money."

"The Revolt of the Zombies is a situation in which everyone is carrying on his own private revolution in copmplete isolation from everyone else's private revolution. It's the privatization of revolution. It's revolutionary free enterprise. Entrepeneurs are selling revolution as a consumer item. Even the government engages in revolutionary free enterprise on the side. Governments have rights too."

Ron Sukenick, Doggy bag

Many artists using technology are easily hypnotised by the flicker of the screen, or think that by investing in the latest computer model or theoretical buzz-word on the market they can primp themselves just that bit sexier for the supermarket shelf. But of course it's true that you can do anything that you want with technology. It's your guarantee. You have instant control at the twitch of a mouse. Just think of the slogan on an obelisk standing at the gates to Sirinograd, (the town in Russia that was the former supplier of semi-conducters to all the former USSR).

"Glory to the Microchip
Long Live the Soviet Union!"

Were I to toe the techno-purist party line I would of course be rhapsodically bleeting "Well of course! A structure like the Soviet Union Couldn't possibly withstand the viral attack of a technology like the micro-chip" and no doubt there's some truth in that. But having worked in a Panasonic factory slotting thousands of the bastards into their place in society and having seen the utopia afforded us by a million luminous spreed-sheet programs, I might just beg to differ.

Think of the Virtual Sex in the film Lawnmower Man, however unsatisfactory it might be, it has become one of the most lasting images of how the future is being shaped up. A perfect example of how a technologised future is being projected out in front of us as a domain of electronic angels, virus resistant cultures, happy homeworkers and ecstatic shoppers, hygienically sexless (though not of course without gender) and decontaminated in every respect.

In terms of the digital, In terms of how it's being hyped, as a domain of infinately plastic, infinately perfect bodies,

performing in a one ringed circus of liquid chrome and molten light, I guess I'm making a plea for the reinstatement of smegma, of yeast infections, of tears, dandruff, snot, asthma, a plea for the colonic bacteria that produce vitamin B12. And with this little army of debris and filth I suggest we can ward of the digital angels of light or rumours of their coming. Not because my toejam or yours offers any more authenticity, but because I thought, along with Nietschze that we had already destroyed these pristine, ultra-white, ultra-right, celestial bodies.

So maybe we have some kind of difference here. Whereas much technology is marketed along the lines of personal (or should that be personnel) empowerment, of reinforcement of the individual, the making of the more efficient, the time-managed, streamlined, hyper-productive, maximised, smart-drugged, super-bright next generation human product - a technologised sensorium become the cockpit of Command - digital deviance seeks to ally itself with technology's tendency to destabilise centres of command, to make possible the existance of things otherwise. It is a dissolution of the super-rigid pre-fabricated identities that we are so hard put to maintain all our lives. A decentering of hierarchical, isolationist and masculine power into the possibility of constructing identities and methods of being, orientated more towards freedom of flows, and towards the gregarious and nomadic.

Rather than aiming for the fantasy of mainlining pure information, we must realise that information is always material, is always contaminated, active or dull - always works to stymie life, reinforce boundaries, or produce intoxication and decontrol.

That contamination is essential to the activity of the people here.

Here we have an asssemblge of speakers: producers of graphics, writers, activists, publishers that goes beyond made to measure avant gardism,institutionalised radicalism or corporate thrills 'n' spills. It's exciting, crazy stuff - despite my attempts in this introduction to make it as boring as posible of course.

We come from a variety of angles and pasts. So the tactics people on this salubrious platform are using are so intimately connected with their personal histories, that it is essential that if others are interested in persuing what effects they might have into their own situations, that they treat what people say here merely as

some kind of day dream. Only, slightly less *reliable* as a way of getting on with things.

At one moment this work is disintering itself into sprawling reams of feedback, the next finds it coallescing to nudge up to and interrogate a series of problems; the generation of resistance; configurations of obediance; lines of flight.

So it's not that necessary to be listening out for the brand names, the release number of the software used, when you listen to these four, read between the lines a bit, work out how what they say and what they show might mesh with your situation, what parallels we can synthesise over the next few moments - and how we can push things further.

Among all of the speakers there are perhaps some key things to look out for, refrains that might form a focus of discussion afterwards:

How digitisation allows the tendency towards potentially infinite repoduction of all information resources or at the very least, relatively easy mass production.

How the notion of a cultural producer in a digital environment matches up so well with ideas of the bricoleur, the scavenger and the semiotic squatter.

And, how active engagement with our technologised environment and it's individual or collective reshaping, develops new, monstrous, unsettling, often dangerous, clusters of possibility that continually reinvent our selves, and what we do while on the planet.