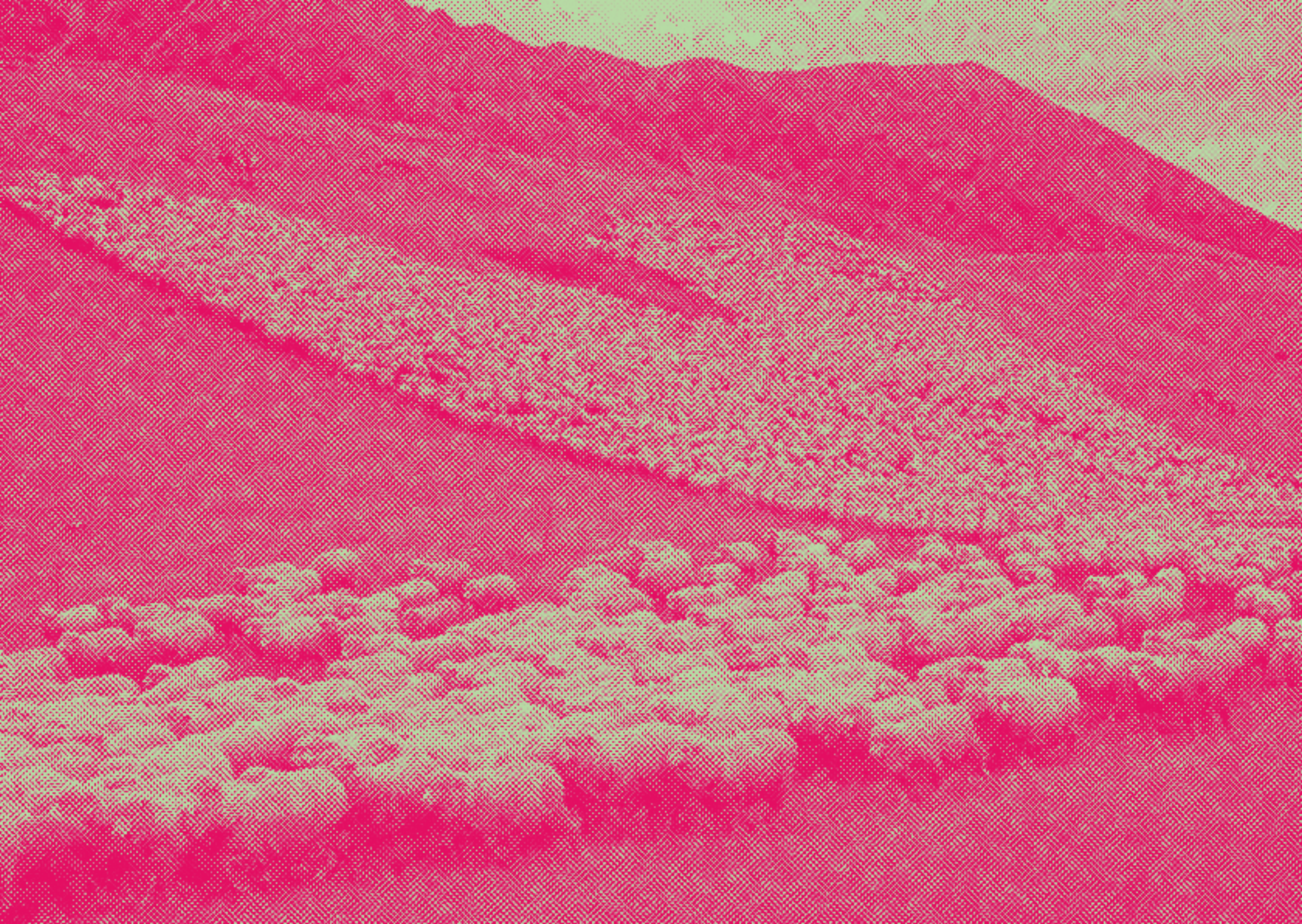


*It isn't what it used  
to be and will never  
be again*

**Bik Van der Pol**





## Bik Van der Pol

# Do or don't

We are in the land of plenty now. Plenty of nature, plenty of sheep, plenty of mountains, plenty of lochs, plenty of space, plenty of rain. Sometimes we are thinking of the land of a lot. A lot of people, a lot of cars, a lot of lots ado, a lot of chat chat, a lot of daily talkies on TV on the same subjects with the same guests but by different channels with different hosts, creating a lot of excitement which is gone and forgotten the next day. Here, there is the People's Museum, which collection shows the story of the people of Glasgow since 1750. In 1977 they had their first immigrant mayor. Thinking of the freshly installed mayor of Rotterdam, Aboutaleb, whose appointment aroused a lot of emotions and excitement... We still have a long way to go in the land of a lot. We are from the land of one-person-democracy. Every voice claims its right to be heard, claims its right to rule, right here, right now. The popular website nu.nl shows the face of the land of a lot. Wikipedia reports that on February 4, 2008, the server had to process the most page views ever on one day, a total of 19.189.517 views. The land of a lot has 17.000.000 inhabitants. Don't know what happened on February 4 2008. The amount of hits on February 4 was probably only recently surpassed on June 25, 2009, when Michael Jackson's death caused the Internet to slow and to crash Twitter.

## *What are we doing here?*

With a lot of people we are talking about the Glasgow art scene, and how a 'DIY' self-organisational aspect has been a strategic tool in creating a cultural climate. Or rather, staging an image of a climate that resonates in the world, outside Glasgow, outside Scotland, and of which a residue still remains, in an ambiguous mix of establishment and urgent activism. Self-organisation, what it brings to (and takes from) individuals, its huge potential to generate change can also develop its own myth. In transitions from temporary to permanent, necessity, control and autonomy come into question, circling around the most urgent questions; how to produce, maintain and negotiate this autonomy. Or get rid of it.

The history of the art centre that invited us is closely intertwined with the Glasgow art scene. The CCA started in the building of the former edgy, thought-provoking Third Eye Centre, which collapsed financially in 1991. It has undergone quite some changes: today it is a multi-disciplinary art institution, that houses film, art, dance, theatre and new media performances and presentations, a cafe, and a restaurant.

There is a critical tipping point. Some say art centres like this one lose their edge – when compared to their former successes - when they are forced by the politicians to open up to the general public. Every four, five years, cultural policy in Glasgow seems to change, and with it the name of the policy-making authority changes with it. Nothing should remind of what should be erased. Each of these regular local cleaning actions results in the disappearance of a few cultural institutions. Not so different from the land of a lot, despite its mythical status abroad of being a cultural heaven. Lack of physical space, increasing gentrification, pressure on institutions under the disguise of democratic claims and public access, the struggle of a local art scene and cultural institutions dealing daily with how to continuously keep up the dynamics and risk, while also trying to survive. An accelerating universe.

## *What are we thinking and talking about?*

We are thinking about changes, about what makes a difference, about what difference individuals make, if they do. About historic revolutions, what image they established. How they reside in our memory, without having experienced them. Too young to be a hippy, too old to be a punk. Is that real, or plagiarism? We are thinking about what it is that creates an image, what it is that makes a myth. A few times a week, we pass Faslane Peace Camp. This camp has been continuously occupied since 1982 when protesters first arrived to dispute England's housing of the Trident nuclear missile on the Scottish naval base, Northwest of Glasgow, which is where we are. Sometimes we see a submarine slowly passing by. We are intrigued by the 'visual manifestation' of the community of the peace camp, how it has, over the years, formed a specific architecture, and possibly a specific way of organising their life there, how they deal with newcomers, a generation of global activists, networking with mobile phones, computer and cheap airline tickets, how they communicate their point of views to the rest of the world, how their potential to influence public opinion relates to this everyday reality, alongside this road.

The peace camp is sitting on a small strip of land along the roadside, an undefined collection of circa fifteen shabby mobile homes, caravans and sheds, quite sad-looking, especially in this rain, doors open, buckets, pots, pans, plastic sheets, painted slogans, chimneys, a wooden gate painted in diverse colours, and once in a while you see someone. The naval base across the road looks like a war zone, also quite sad, actually: protected against anyone unauthorised or suspect coming in, lots of barbed wire, high fences, signs warning to keep away, CCTV, and lots of police around. Never seen so many police cars as here, on this peninsula, where we are.

Nothing seems to happen there. Both facilities (the army and the opponents) are visible, performing their presence through the image

of being there. And by both being there, at both side of the road, they show what is at stake, already for 27 years. Faslane Naval Base is not only an issue of peace campers, it is also a local issue and it is also an issue in Scottish politics. Many, including politicians, oppose the nuclear base. Regular rallies outside Faslane usually involve large numbers of protesters being arrested for non-violent civil disobedience.

Information is gathered through meticulous observations. Volunteers, activists, local citizens, and others are watching movements at, to and from the base, just as the army and the police are watching movements of passers-by. Nothing seems to happen there, but this being there causes that one cannot stay unaware, not knowing. This is why the presence of the peace camp has to be there, it has to be visible. It is a display of protest, and it can be activated any time, when necessary.

## *And we? What are we thinking about? What are we doing?*

We are hovering, observing the observers, piling up questions on the role of information, what distribution of information may or may not set off in the public realm, and if action can and should clearly and demonstratively be taken, or maybe already is tak(e)(ing) place when nothing seems to happen. Or is, sometimes, doing nothing, just observing, the most violent thing to do? We are thinking of the land of a lot, and are thinking of what Žižek (in 'Violence') states: "the threat today is not passivity, but pseudo-activity, the urge to 'be active', to 'participate', to mask the nothingness of what goes on. People intervene all the time, 'do something'."

Let's go. It is time now. It stopped raining.



Faslane Peace Camp, photograph by Stellan Vinthagen. Taken from *The Endurance to do Resistance for the Long Run*, [www.resistancestudies.org](http://www.resistancestudies.org)

## Jan Verwoert

Mt 26:36-46 / Mk 14:32-38 / Lk 22:39-46

# A Prayer to Protest

It's just a matter of time, you say. No. It's a question of principle. Time is working against me. Time is on your side. Because you have money. Your money pays for the time you can lay in wait, set your traps, plot, scheme and strategise, or just sit back and ride things out. That time I don't have. Principles is all I got instead. Mind you, I am not talking morals. For I have no morals. I cannot afford them either. And even if I could, I wouldn't want them. Morals are the last means the disgruntled resort to, to revenge themselves for life's disappointments by reproaching those who still dare to live for doing so. I am not disappointed. Yet. So, no morals for me. Just principles. On what grounds do I claim them? None whatsoever. I know no reasons, only rhymes: "I decree today life's simply taking and not giving. England is mine, it owes me a living. Ask me why and I'll spit in your eye. Ask me why and I'll die." You take your time. I keep my principles. For I am my Protestant mother's proud and only son, and yes, I am a pigheaded one. Surrender I will not. Surrender is not an option. Options are not for me. You go seek options. I stick to principles. Go ahead, call me a pigheaded Protestant, make me proud, make me smile! I am laughing at you from the bottom of my heart, the heart which my Catholic father put in my chest.

My father's is a big heart. Too big for you to command it or control the laughter that erupts from it each time it expands after contracting. I will laugh in your face. No matter how much time passes. I will keep laughing. Right in your face. Because my heart is a muscle that rarely gets sore. If it does, if it aches and throbs, I have learned where to turn, now, to ease the pain. I repent. I pray. Prayer is my principle practice. I pray with my pursed lips silently moving while my fingertips caress the keys and drum out letters. When I pray, many are included in the prayers, many who know how to live and love and create and share and take pride in the way how the muscle of their heart gives them joy and pain and makes them laugh about it all. They are the many who have been, are and will be for real in what they do, feel, think and say. For their soul I pray. I salute, honour and think of them every morning, all day, and every night. But I'm not thinking of you. I don't honour you. For you have no honour. You just have time. So when you tell me that time is what matters, I say, it's your prerogative to believe so. You, put your faith in time. But I'm sorry, I don't pray that way.



*The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, 1590s,  
Studio of El Greco  
Courtesy of The National Gallery*

## *It isn't what it used to be and will never be again \*)*

Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol have been working together as Bik Van der Pol since 1994. They often work on location, use, reuse and reactivate the work from sources – from the world of art, journalism, media, or history – and confront the visitor with situations for which they as artists refuse to take complete control.

Their work consists of the creation of connections and interacting elements that generate a communicative platform. They continually question the function and meaning of art and art spaces and repeatedly request that what we conveniently call history or general body of thought be updated and evaluated.

For the exhibition at CCA, Bik Van der Pol have brought together works that are hovering around questions of information, what distribution of information might or might not set off in the public realm, and if action can, should or is tak(e)(ing) place when seemingly nothing seems to happen.

For this publication John Bywater, the Camcorder Guerrillas, Angelique Campens, Alessandra Chilá, Neil Davidson, Neil Gray, Anthony Iles, Fiona Jardine, Francis McKee, Sarah Pierce, Darren Rhymes, Sarah Tripp, Jan Verwoert and Simon Yuill have been invited to contribute text or images, while thinking along these lines.

\*) with reference to *La révolution n'est plus ce qu'elle était*, by Henri Lefebvre with Catherine Régulier  
Paris: Editions Libres-Hallier. 1978

## contents

- 4 **Do or don't**  
Bik Van der Pol
- 8 **A Prayer to Protest**  
Jan Verwoert
- 12 **Olympic Playland**  
Anthony Iles  
(with photomontage by Alessandra Chilá)
- 14 **Past Imperfect**  
Bik Van der Pol
- 18 **Michael Stone:**  
Invoking the Ghosts of Gulliver  
Fiona Jardine
- 22 **On Entering or Leaving the  
Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra**  
Neil Davids on
- 24 **Bik Van der Pol's "1440 Minutes Towards the  
Development of a Site" as an anticlimax and  
a waste of money**  
Jon Bywater
- 26 **Loompanics**  
Bik Van der Pol
- 30 **Asleep at the Switches**  
Francis McKee
- 38 **Empire Stones**  
Neil Gray
- 44 **Deadly Cargo the script of the film  
Camcorder Guerrillas**
- 48 **Art Is either Plagiarism or Revolution, or:  
Something Is Definitely Going to Happen Here**  
Bik Van der Pol
- 52 **Rebellion at the site of knowledge**  
Sarah Pierce
- 58 **Simon Yuill**
- 64 **A coin. A coin.**  
Darren Rhymes
- 66 **A Revolutionary Proposal:  
Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds**  
Alexander Trocchi
- 69 **Further Reading and Seeing**
- 70 **Delaying Identity**  
Sarah Tripp
- 74 **the essence of all crime is undivulged**  
Angelique Campens
- 76 **The Disappearance Piece**  
Bik Van der Pol

## Anthony Iles



# Olympic Playland

In 1964, Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood made plans for a 'Fun Palace' to be sited in the Lower Lea Valley. This zone, shaped by successive waves of redevelopment that have assailed its wild, industrial and ludic nature, is currently the largest building site in London, if not Europe, being developed for the 2012 London Olympics. The Fun Palace was to be the culmination of Price's idea of architecture as 'social means' and Littlewood, the socialist theatre director's dream for a flexible, theatrical space open to all and shaped by its users' interests: a space where, in her words, 'the latest discoveries of engineering and science can provide an environment for pleasure and discovery, a place to look at the stars, to eat, stroll, meet and play.'

Like many radicals of his time, Cedric Price was influenced by the expectation of the 'new windfall of leisure time' provided to workers by the introduction of mechanisation and automation. He applied himself to the problem of the 'brain drain' that Britain faced in the post-war years – skilled and educated workers were leaving the UK for employment in Europe and America. While government planners were concerning themselves with

reproducing workers with more free time as 'workers' by disciplining them, introducing credit and loan schemes, Price was devising new forms of training and education disguised as 'leisure'.

Price followed through his explicit challenge to existing state-sponsored culture by finding corporate sponsorship to support the Fun Palace project. His (unbuilt) architecture anticipates the turn from an industrial to a service economy. The celebration of this 'creative economy' is central to the framing of both the London 2012 Olympic and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Price fully intended to nest his vision of the future in the shell of (what was quickly becoming) the industrial past. In a description that is indicative of the planners' contradictory attitudes to both sites, the site of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games on the River Clyde has been characterised as both 'the dear green place' and 'a derelict part of the city'. The designers' approach at both the Commonwealth and Olympic Games sites has been to erase any industrial heritage along with much of the amateur sports and activities that, until recently, energised these areas.

Opposite: *Monster*, Alessandra Chilá, photomontage, 2009

Upon his appointment as head of the Cultural Olympiad, Keith Khan said 'he was keen to embrace the "iPod generation" with the use of digital technology and concepts used by websites such as MySpace and YouTube.' The buzz-words of participation and user-generated content are, as with the Millenium Dome, deployed to give a democratic feel to what is ultimately a top-down process of creative branding devoid of any real content or culture. Whilst Price was to employ cybernetics and early computing to enable users to move and programme elements of the building and the activities within it, the 'flash mobs' who are expected to populate the Olympic park are conversely shaped by its designers' interests and will, at best, be able to upload their pictures and videos from mobile phones to the big screens which will fill the park and public spaces around it.

Common to projections for the Olympic and Commonwealth parks is the vision of an official playground; managed nature, organised and safe exercise, communication technologies, mobile phones, big screens and water. In the case of London, this is all set against the backdrop of the Docklands and the City – centres of global financial flows. These images are characterised by a multiculturalism peculiar to the visual creations of urban planners – the dream image of difference without conflict, an endless playscape without work or workers. The cleaners and security guards, upon whom these spaces depend, are placed firmly outside the picture. Whereas Price's model disposes of labour through automation, the Olympic and Commonwealth Games' designers' vision hides labour in dream-like reflections, screens, glass, water, smoke and mirrors. In this 'playland' a kind of infernal time is operative where 'hours go by in a flash and days are changeless'.

Countering this vision of an infernal time of uninterrupted play, the Lea Valley, Glasgow's East End and other 'derelict spaces' are often

more familiar to the people who use them as places of real life (or at least temporary escape from humdrum working lives) where people make their own entertainment: from the allotment holders, footballers, anglers, kite flyers, ramblers, cyclists, nature lovers to the ravers, free partymakers, underage drinkers, graffiti artists and scooter thieves. It is no accident that these activities require a minimum of services and equipment and yet produce the collective bonds, social articulation, altered states and physical exertion that are the very stuff of life. This self-activity is entirely absent from corporate sport – its distorted, mediatised mirror image. Likewise, now play is only coercive and profit-led, the version of 'work' in our post-industrial economy involves the coercion of the unemployed, disabled, those on incapacity benefits, lone parents and young people into voluntary service work for these passing spectacles.

If the Fun Palace can be considered a pre-vision of the emerging post-industrial society, we can wager that the Games in London and Glasgow will not be that society's crowning success. Rather, these designs represent the return, as farce, of Price's visionary dream – a plasticated world populated by unreal avatars repeating gestures rehearsed on TV. The very creation of this landscape will be underpinned by debt, exploitation and public bankruptcy. In the wake of the financial crisis and as the scale of the promises, hype and actual building begins to ebb there is the opportunity to reassess the post-Blair UK built landscape. What if we could, like Cedric Price, take a visionary stance towards the future, go beyond work as play and fully unleash the potential of self-activity? Is it possible to imagine what might be built out of the ruins of the financialised city *after* the 'new' economy?

*Olympic Playland* Anthony Iles

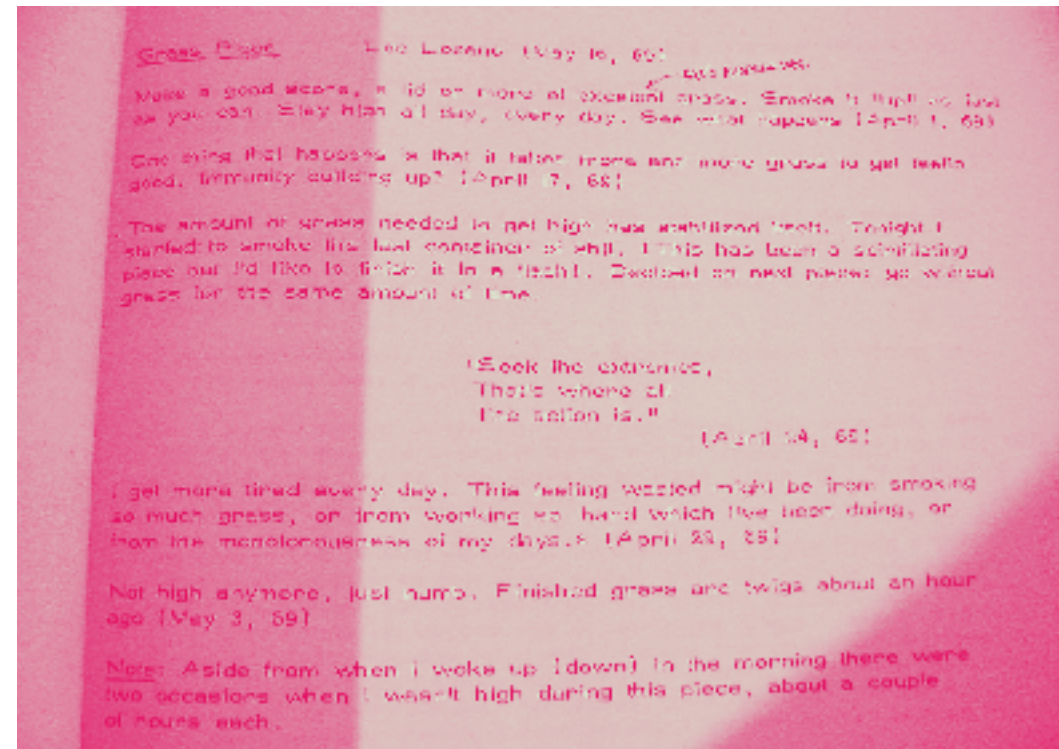
## Bik Van der Pol

### Past Imperfect

The research project *Past Imperfect* examines the extent to which radical choices and events influence the course of (art) history and through that, our forms of perception. Can these radical events actually be traced or have they intentionally or accidentally disappeared? The starting point of the research was the radical work of artist Lee Lozano (1930 – 1999), who gradually withdrew from the art world during the 1970s, eventually disappearing completely from the public arena for the rest of her life.

*Past Imperfect* explores the relations between the radical output of the conceptual art of the '60s and '70s and everyday life, gradually moving on to include how radical ideas from the past are linked to those of today.

The result of this, the publication *Casco Issues #9*, is guided by curiosity, amazement and suspicion, accepting the risk of being totally incomplete or overly thorough. *Past Imperfect* is a collection of cases around notions of disappearance, perfection, excessive control, compulsion and withdrawal.



Above photo: original script Dan Graham and Brian Wallis, *Rock My Religion: Writings and Projects 1965 – 1990*, Shown at Büro Friedrich, Insert: Bik Van der Pol, with work by Lee Lozano, 2001



## Michael Stone: Invoking the Ghosts of Gulliver

In the UK, we are used to the popular derision of contemporary art practice – if tabloids relish the opportunity for incredulous puns about the antics of crackpot artists, elsewhere commentators deplore the loss of virtuosity and pronounce discomfort at the thought that someone somewhere might be taking us all for (an expensive) ride: the Emperor's new clothes are (not) on show. There is something liberating in the fact that the popular consciousness allows for “crackpot” art, even if that is only in derision. But what does it mean for someone like Michael Stone, a convicted loyalist terrorist, to claim his action in throwing a rucksack packed with assorted weaponry into Stormont was “performance art”?

Stone was jailed in 1989 for killing 3 men, and injuring dozens more, in a sectarian attack on mourners attending a funeral at Milltown cemetery, North Belfast, 2 years previously. Sentenced to a total of 684 years, he was released in 2000 from HMP Maze under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, by which time he had taken up painting as a hobby. In the years between his release and his Stormont re-arrest, he occupied himself as an artist, whose paintings fetched between a few hundred and a few thousand pounds work – in 2001, the Engine Room gallery in Belfast hosted an exhibition of Stone's work, the Belfast Telegraph noting that

“he seems genuinely committed to an artistic career” and (approvingly) that “There is no suggestion that he is involved in any of the rackets – drugs, prostitution, protection – that have become a career for so many of the other men released early under the Good Friday Agreement”. Even though Stone sometimes tackled contentious subjects in his paintings to little criticism, gun-touting poses he re-enacted for photographs in 2004 were condemned, and the Stormont action – apparently titled “Never Say Never” – had Stone jailed and branded a lunatic. If prisoners are encouraged to pursue an interest in art while incarcerated, as Stone was, are we to impose limits on how that interest manifests itself, or impose restrictions on the subject matter they can tackle? Stone was very much isolated, (an artist in the Romantic, avant-gardist mould?), but if we want art to converge with social practice, are there caveats to that? How far does art potentially encroach on criminality?

In some respects Stone's story resonates with the experience of one of Scotland's ex-con cause célèbres, Jimmy Boyle. Styled by himself (and others), as “Scotland's Most Violent Man”, “the most notorious criminal in Scotland, a violent product of the Glasgow slums”, Boyle was a celebrity inmate and hardman serving a life sentence for murder. Art therapy at HMP Barlinnie led

to an apparently Damascene conversion, and, in 1976, while he was still in prison, he was commissioned by the Craigmillar Festival Society to design a large recumbent sculpture – “Gulliver” – for them. The Craigmillar Festival Society was pioneering in many ways, not least in its genesis amongst a group of local women exasperated with municipal indifference to the area and its people. In the 1970s, its profile as a model promoting the efficacy of community arts initiatives was international. Without doubt, this worked in Boyle's favour, and on release, he enjoyed a high profile and reportedly high earnings as an artist. His transformation from lawless gangland enforcer to well-heeled, well-behaved sculptor is something of a civic and national proverb. We see the city in the man: we see the social and political value of art in its redemptive powers to integrate the disenfranchised individual with the powers of his own expression, in uniting the divided self and more than this, we see evidence of an economic miracle. These days – with notable contemporaneity – Boyle appears in newspaper interviews as a multi-millionaire property developer, doing up riads in Marrakesh, while current cultural policy promotes the arts as almost failsafe engines for recession-proof growth, making him something of a poster boy for the benefits of exploiting “creative skills”.

Boyle generates the type of expressive work that formed the bedrock of art therapy in its infancy and is still, in some contexts, pursued as an irrefutable good. It conforms to a model of practice long regarded as defunct in art schools – if it is good enough to provide respite from those personal or social problems identified by mental health or regeneration committees, it is not really good enough for professional art education (even if those so educated end up administering or delivering the therapy). Consequently, like Jack Vettriano, Fife's

self-taught king of stiffly nostalgic soft-core noir, the outmoded Boyle has been blindsided by the critical art establishment; his success has more to do with his notoriety than his significance as an artist. Reciprocally, Boyle has dismissed contemporary art, emblematically marking “Sensation” “the biggest pile of rubbish” he'd ever seen, and making claims that he will not sell to Saatchi: “Because I don't like what he does and can afford not to.” “Not selling to Saatchi” has become a well-rehearsed cliché even amongst currents of the contemporary mainstream, as if it were some guarantee of artistic integrity, of concern with “higher” imperatives than that of the market. So where does this take Stone, who not only claims he has sold to Saatchi, but whose declared forays into performance and re-enactment are much more in keeping with the general trends in the academy, in the museums, in critical analysis and the market? Can his action be determined “art”? Is he precluded from performance because he has not earned a degree? Because of his criminal record, and the specific nature of that criminal record? He has a demonstrable commitment to artistic practice, what does this count for? Are we to admit that there are, after all, objective standards by which art succeeds or fails? Are such standards moral, ethical or political assuming they are not formal?

There are many interesting parallels between the propensities and systems of art and crime, not least of which is intent. Marcel Duchamp foregrounded the notion of artistic intent through the Readymade – particularly “Fountain” – proposing that a work of art could be enacted through choice (rather than manufactured through craft). Rejected from the open, avowedly non-selective, non-hierarchical exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, “Fountain” was deliberately adjudged “not art”. In 1967, interviewed on Canadian radio, Duchamp

said *“It’s not the visual aspect of the Readymade that matters, it’s simply the fact that it exists... Visuality is no longer a question: the Readymade is no longer visible, so to speak. It is completely gray matter. It is no longer retinal.”* This statement came at a time when his influence on a generation was well established. Though he tacitly implies that at some point in its conception the Readymade was necessarily visible, it was in principle an idea that merely required the service of objects for its enactment. The object forms it adopted between 1913 and 1917 are important only so far as they are conceptual facilitators: conceptual and performative practice in the ‘60s and ‘70s developed and extended the remit of the Readymade beyond the object.

Despite the Readymade’s initial and most complete realisation being in its exclusion from exhibition, presented in exhibitions (from the late 1950s on), its effect in influence was to devolve the power of choice to the artist within the confines of the “white cube”. However, just as the object form had a limited lifespan in relation to the Readymade, it seems that the “white cube” context could be dispensable too: the gallery is only a surrogate for audience. Through the Readymade, Duchamp imposed an active duty of intent on the viewer, and this is where it abuts with Situationist theory. Duchamp may have had to use an institutional context to effect the Readymade, but its true legacy is in the creative potential of the viewer, not the affirmation of the hegemony of gallery or museum. Situationist culture *“introduces total participation...it is the organization of the directly lived moment...(in which) everyone will become an artist, i.e. a producer-consumer of total culture creation.”* Some notion of “participation” has framed the development of recent cultural policy – much of the Creative Scotland Bill hangs off it.

It is maybe appropriate at this point to consider Joseph Beuys’s conception of “Social Sculpture/Social Architecture”. In 1980, 4 years after Boyle’s “Gulliver” was installed in a field at Craigmillar, Beuys created a blackboard diptych during the Edinburgh Festival entitled “Jimmy Boyle Days”. Quite what Beuys made of Boyle’s output is hard to determine, suffice to say that Beuys was not suggesting that everyone should paint or sculpt in pursuit of being an artist: he was concerned with developing art as a *“politically productive force, coursing through each person, and shaping history... This is the concept of art that carries within itself not only the revolutionizing of the historic bourgeois concept of knowledge (materialism, positivism), but also of religious activity...”* *“Creativity isn’t the monopoly of artists. This is the crucial fact I’ve come to realise, and this broader concept of creativity is my concept of art. When I say everybody is an artist, I mean everybody can determine the content of life in his particular sphere, whether in painting, music, engineering, caring for the sick, the economy or whatever.”*

In this sense, and bearing in mind his abolition of entry requirements to the class of “Monumental Sculpture” in Düsseldorf, Beuys moved towards rubbishing the notion that “artist” is, or should be, a specialised, professional status. Indeed, in fulfilling Beuys’s ambitions for art to become a “politically productive force”, there must be universal creative emancipation – there can be no professional status: the artist claiming such status is like a Pharisee. Equally, in terms of the Situationist imperative to introduce “total participation”, there can be no qualifications, no hierarchies. Art is whatever is chosen – and enacted – by the artist, that is by anyone behaving as an artist. Significantly that includes recognising art, “active aesthetics”, perhaps in the tradition of the flâneur, who configures urban experience

in accordance with personal – and why not political? – narratives. Karlheinz Stockhausen seems to have pushed the card too far in this direction as he was widely condemned for declaring 9/11 “the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos”, but if 9/11 functioned as art for him, if his experience of 9/11 produced an aesthetic apprehension, who can deny it?

If everybody can be an artist (the current drive for participation underscores this); if art can be any choice, enactment or aesthetic experience – must art always be benign, therapeutic and economically productive? Are these values basic determinants of what art is? Is there a place for art to be anything else or does that necessarily take art into the ever expanding scope of illegality and criminality? Is art always “good”, “acceptable”? Stone was found guilty of attempted murder and criminal damage. In his trial, Peter Bond, an artist and senior lecturer at Central St Martins, was called as an expert witness in whose opinion Stone’s action could “come under the ambit” of performance art as long as there was no intention of using the weaponry or exploding the devices. Imputing Stone’s artistic intent depends on the planned failure of his criminal activity, what does this add – or take away from – the range of artistic practice?

# On Entering or Leaving the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra

## Part 1

### Have you decided whether to leave yet?

No, not yet. I still don't know how to represent my reasons. I will say – it is time for me to leave – but that is not the end of it. I will explain myself and I will have to convince people of why I made this decision. And I cannot separate my decision on whether to leave from this expectation of how I will convey my reasons.

### Aren't these quite separate things?

No. If I leave then I change myself. I become someone else, or rather, I put myself in a position that I don't yet understand and from there I will have some explaining to do. If I decide to stay then I do not cross that threshold and so, perhaps, I have less explaining to do. In any event I cannot speak from there yet.

### Is this a question of the safety of the same and the risk of the unknown?

Indeed, but to put it another way, that step from one state to another, the broaching of presence in a new space or of articulating a new perspective is what makes the process interesting. You choose and it affects everyone. In a way what holds me back from deciding is the understanding that whatever I choose is not just for me but is chosen for everyone concerned. And this happens with each performance event with every instance of playing and every sound as it is played. I am responsible for my decision and for representing that decision. That representation might either be in the form

of a conversation or it might be in the form the sound takes when I make it. Since that is the way I represent a musical decision, by making it audible.

### Is it then more of a problem of structure than representation; that the way you represent your decision recedes behind the formal relation between your decision and those of others?

Yes. I am further convinced that what I say might come to get in the way of anyone really encountering the nub of the matter, that tangible, droppable aspect of the gesture of sound making. It's never just a question of deciding what I want, otherwise I would just follow my pleasure, as uncle Claude put it, and while that is laudable in solitary moments – performing solo as it were – I can't bring myself to do it with other people, well with an audience of course it's no problem, but among others one puts their demands on my sounds to the fore. I ask what do the sounds I make offer the others? Are they hospitable welcoming sounds or are they territorially obnoxious, leaving little space for anything else to be heard? In fact I think this last point is where I return to the beginning, that it's undecidable. I cannot know what another player is thinking, what they might want, prefer or need musically speaking. And I think this really is a good thing.

## Part 2

Revolution in art and music comes with certain conditions. To claim any music or art as revolutionary inevitably throws up the question of what will be overthrown. In an information saturated culture the archival command means that we are too richly bound to the past, to its detritus to leave anything truly to history because that history so effectively satisfies an avaricious present. But there are other presents to choose from. When we start to concern ourselves with acts and gestures of communication rather than the content or what is said then we become responsible not for history but for those we work and communicate with.

Plagiarism on the other hand is a transgression of the archive of what is written and said: the act of putting another's words into use as one's own. It is also disarmingly economical. Can you plagiarise someone's gesture of response?

We would do well to examine properly those art forms that most effectively evade documentation (a mysterious form of plagiarism), those that seem a pale imitation of their eventfulness once they are repeatable. Which of these aesthetic forms or acts most effectively disrupt the archival order? Apparently the archive begins with Noah. And hot on Noah's tail is an implicit anxiety about inter-species acts of fuckery. Moth fucks mouse. Oyster fucks toad. By these means things start to sound interesting again. Difference can be enjoyed respectfully and monstrosity emerges as pleasure. An anxiety about plagiarism might be said to stem from a prohibition of such trespasses

and Noah, and we're dealing with an idea more than a man, probably has the most to lose from that kind of thing. If books and animals start spontaneously to form new texts and species everything becomes very interesting and heterogenous. It seems like one of the most transgressive things you can do now is to really listen very carefully and respectfully to someone who is absolutely nothing like you.

Jon Bywater

# Bik Van der Pol's "1440 Minutes Towards the Development of a Site" as an anticlimax and a waste of money

A condition of all commissions for the One Day Sculpture series<sup>4</sup> was that they exist only on one calendar day. Preceded, dispersed, even preempted by images and descriptions – official and unofficial, anecdotal and critical – the artworks developed in response to this curatorial parameter elude it in a way that casts an unusual light on the fact that art exists and takes effect perhaps as much through its representation as its primary instantiations. Within this frame, Bik Van der Pol's work for One Day Sculpture was also itself a platform for the dispersal of ideas. During the occupation of a site centred in a civic park, participants in a workshop convened by the artists distributed a collaborative publication. In these respects, "1440 Minutes Towards the Development of a Site" enacted some precisely inflected questions about time, place and the public dissemination of information.

Key to what "1440 Minutes..." might contribute to the thinking of these issues could be its apparent uneventfulness. Its duration foregrounded by a countdown of the 24 hours on a large digital display, the audience's attention was constantly diffused, away from any specific moment to the work's entire timespan. Anyone encountering it was afforded an opportunity to inspect the way time as measured by calendar and clock relates to time as an experience, an embodied pace. Creating this space of generalized expectation about a day, the piece was also able to reveal to its audience some assumptions they might bring to such a public situation. Missing both possibilities, one critic inadvertently summarised a version of these, writing off "the whole event [as] a disaster: an anti-climax". Indeed, he concluded, it was a "waste of money".<sup>2</sup>

His verdict tells us that a climax is required, and by extension, lays bare the fact that time has become something we spend or invest in order to receive an immediate return. Perhaps especially in public, we might infer, the artist is obliged to compete with or adopt the codes of advertising and entertainment and to deliver a pay off, a tagline or punchline. If the opportunity is not to be thrown away, a univocal irony, for example, or a camera-ready image would surely offer an immediate advantage in even the most specialised flows of mediated circulation, art world word-of-mouth or review section illustration. Instead, however, in this case the viewer is made to wait, and you, the reader, are here cheated of any broadcast-ready soundbite.

Unreflecting frustration may be an obviously stupid response to this work's framing of time and site but, at the same time, patience cannot be celebrated for its own sake. Notwithstanding the weight of spiritual tradition (or, evolutionary psychology might have it, biological instinct) that corroborates the potential value in deferring gratification, the opportunity is equally presented in this piece to scrutinise any comfort with or self-approval for the ascetic ability to endure this kind of suspended intensity. It remains to be said, then, precisely how this sort of experience in a public place does offer something to the problematic of working publicly.

The site engaged by Bik Van der Pol's history as a venue for social protest provided them with the term "free zone" to describe their action. The contrast implied between an often romanticized local heyday of white middle class public action – the Vietnam War era – and the present showed the same disappointed critic only "the well known



student apathy of our times". Far from the only way to conclude that it is something other than the laziness or distractedness of the current population that makes the difference, the artists' piece does highlight the palpable truth in that rebuttal, just by confronting us with the reception greeting the hand distributed publication. Any changes in individual mindset follow changes in labour and production bound up in the conditions of consumption so that they are effectively two sides of a coin.

Taking the measure of a single day, and resisting the background imperative to capitalise on it in an obvious, instrumental way, Bik Van der Pol instead offered it as an opening for contemplation and conversation. The gentleness of the personal interaction, the ambivalent, low impact dispersal of the thoughtful, artistic publication on the freedom of speech, whose integrity involves declaring itself through equally thoughtful design, the duration of the work became not the short, sharp seeding of an image, but an opening where the space itself is inspected, revealing and putting forward for consideration the conditions that affect the dispersal of ideas. Perhaps, as Gilles Deleuze once remarked, "it's not a problem of getting people to express themselves but of providing little gaps of solitude or silence in which they might eventually find ... the rare, and ever rarer, thing that might be worth saying."<sup>3</sup>

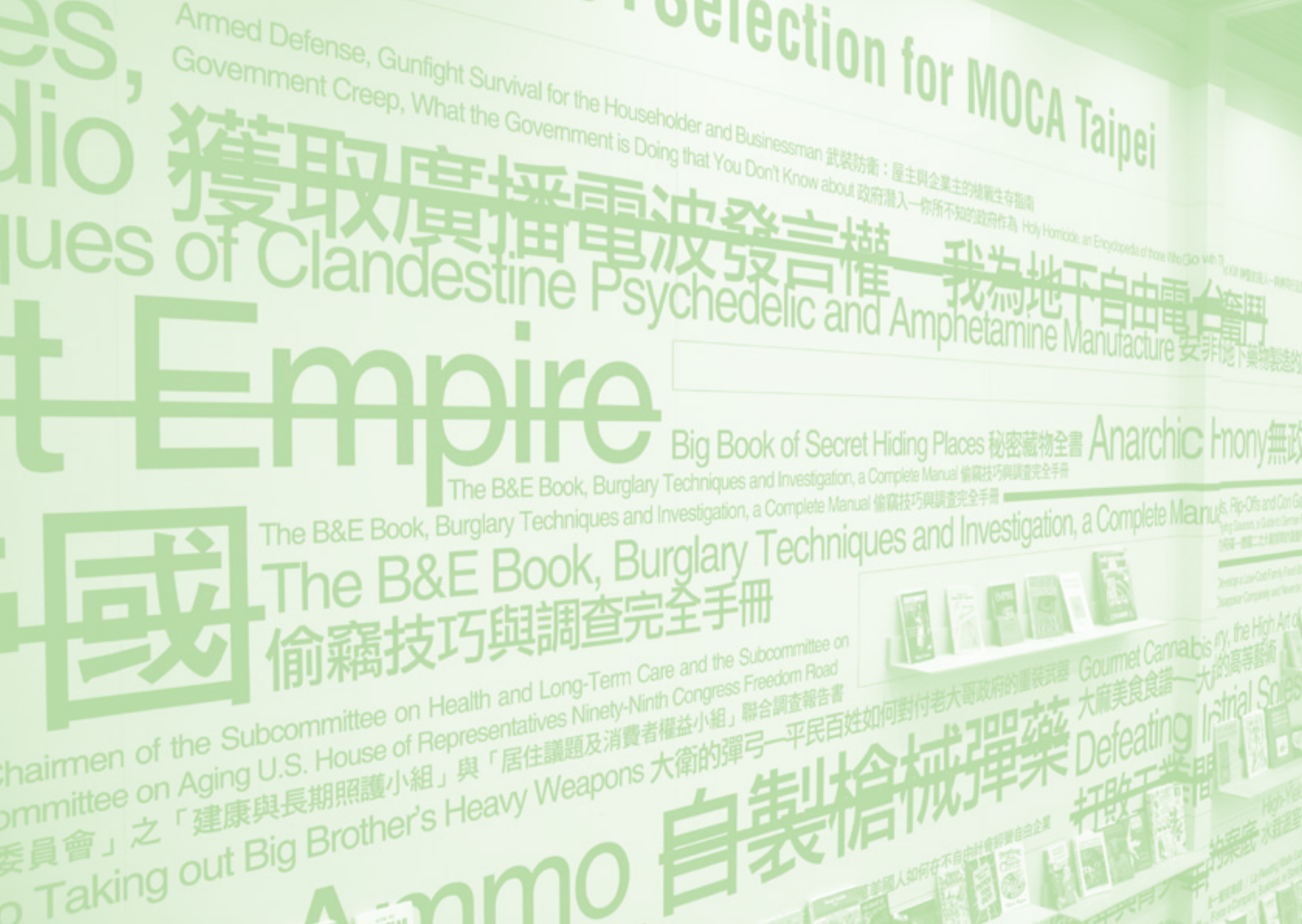
1. q.v. [www.onedaysculpture.org.nz](http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz)  
 2. John Hurrell, "Pitiful One Day Sculpture", Eye Contact blog, posted Wednesday April 8, 2009, <http://eyecontactartforum.blogspot.com/2009/04/pitiful-one-day-sculpture.html>  
 3. Negotiations, 1972 – 1990, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: columbia UP, 1995, p.129

## Bik Van der Pol

### Loompanics

The books published by Loompanics Unlimited, emphasise the tension between free speech, thinking, and taking responsibility for action. *Loompanics* – that went out of business in 2006 – has during the last thirty years been publishing books on the edge of the tolerable. The collection—now an archive—occupies an important niche. Everything produced by a society can, in reality, also be used against it. Balancing on this ambiguity of what defines a democracy, the books published by this radical company claim, through its output, a free space where one can think.





Armed Defense, Gunfight Survival for the Householder and Businessman 武装防衛：屋主與企業主的境戰生存指南  
Government Creep, What the Government is Doing that You Don't Know about 政府潛入—你所不知的政府作為 Holy Horrors, an Encyclopedia of those who GO VEH  
Selection for MOCA Taipei

獲取廣播電波發言權 我為地下自由電台奮鬥  
of Clandestine Psychedelic and Amphetamine Manufacture 安非地下藥物製造的

Empire

Big Book of Secret Hiding Places 秘密藏物全書 Anarchic Frony 無政

The B&E Book, Burglary Techniques and Investigation, a Complete Manual 偷竊技巧與調查完全手冊

The B&E Book, Burglary Techniques and Investigation, a Complete Manual 偷竊技巧與調查完全手冊

The B&E Book, Burglary Techniques and Investigation, a Complete Manual 偷竊技巧與調查完全手冊



或

Chairmen of the Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care and the Subcommittee on Aging U.S. House of Representatives Ninety-Ninth Congress Freedom Road  
委員會」之「健康與長期照護小組」與「居住議題及消費者權益小組」聯合調查報告書  
Taking out Big Brother's Heavy Weapons 大衛的彈弓—平民百姓如何對付老大哥政府的重裝武器

Ammo 自製槍械彈藥  
Gourmet Cannabis 大麻美食食譜—大師的高等藝術  
Defeating Industrial Spies 打敗工業間諜

# Asleep at the Switches

Perhaps because the Cuban uprising in 1959 coincided with the rise of the rock and roll, revolution became hip. The linking of youth culture and revolution led to a commodification of the concept. The consumer industry has spawned everything from the ubiquitous Che Guevara poster to coloured wristbands for branded uprisings – the orange, the tulip, the bulldozer, the cedar revolution...

In this process the notion of revolution has become overly simplified, reduced to a handful of media gestures revolving around good and evil. Within this context revolutions either succeed or fail, everything is transformed or everything remains the same.

There are, though, examples of revolutionary moments where something more complex occurs which cannot easily be defined by either 'good' or 'evil', 'success' or 'failure'. In Glasgow, for instance, a revolution did not take place in January 1919. At that time, strike action was taking place across the city in support of shorter working hours. It was a volatile situation only a year after the Russian Revolution and the authorities were afraid that if a similar uprising were to take place in Britain, it was likely to ignite in Glasgow. On Friday 31st January in 1919, over 60,000 workers amassed in the city centre, focusing on George Square and the surrounding area. A red flag was raised amid the crowd and a riot broke out followed by a baton charge from the police and the arrest of some of the key leaders of the strike. Pitched battles took place as the police struggled to disperse the crowds.

By the next morning the government had responded to the threat. Witnesses recalled that 'Glasgow was like an armed camp. Throughout the night trainloads of young soldiers had been brought to the city – young lads of 19 or so who had no idea

of where they were or why they were there. The authorities did not dare use the local regiments billeted at Maryhill barracks, in case they supported the strikers. The whole city bristled with tanks and machine guns.'<sup>1</sup> A 4.5 inch Howitzer was embedded in the City Chambers, tanks were stationed in the meat market, and Lewis Guns were posted around George Square on the top of the North British Hotel and the General Post Office. But the anticipated opposition never emerged and on the Saturday the workers had melted away, attending football matches across the city rather than mobilising for a revolution. In a remarkable summary of the situation, one of the strike leaders, Manny Shinwell, wrote:

We had forgotten we were revolutionary leaders of the working class. Revolt was seething everywhere, especially in the army. We had within our hands the possibility of giving actual expression and leadership to it, but it never entered our heads to do so. We were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution.

**1.** The *Glasgow Evening News* verified the impression that the government understood the implications of the situation: 'Accompanied by heavy munitions wagons, the general appearance of long columns of khaki-clad men... suggests that at last the government is in earnest in the measures to crush the new revolutionary spirit'. The Scottish Secretary of the time described the events as a 'Bolshevist uprising'.

This explanation has remained unchallenged over the years despite its disingenuous claims that 'we had forgotten' and 'it never entered our heads'. What is more remarkable, however, is the way in which the strikers themselves glimpsed that revolutionary moment and turned away.

It has been simpler in the history of Glasgow to memorialise 1919 as a glorious step towards the final struggle for socialism than to acknowledge that the turn from revolution may have been a radical gesture in itself. Perhaps it is still unacceptable to say that a form of self-knowledge prevailed in that situation, determining a rejection of violence and the compromises involved in taking power.

Information and knowledge are central to the contemporary concept of revolution. The revolutionary reads the political and social landscape, discovering significance where others see nothing. Government policies are scanned and translated to reveal their underlying strategic aims. The hype and spin of political leaders is penetrated and shown to be cosmetic beside the effects of their actions.

The difficulty lies in what to do with this knowledge or worse still in the fetishisation of the

**2.** One example of the distribution of such secret knowledge can be found in the Loompanics catalogue of clandestine information. Founded by Mike Hoy, Loompanics published a wide variety of titles including: *Secrets of Methamphetamine Manufacture*, *101 Things To Do 'Til The Revolution*, *Pirate Utopias*, *How To Start Your Own Country*, *The Policeman Is Your Friend And Other Lies*, *Paranoid Women Collect Their Thoughts*, *50 Greatest Conspiracies Of All Time*, *How To Bury Your Goods*, *Techniques Of Safecracking*, *How To Get Anything On Anybody*, *Successful Armed Robbery*, *Dirty Tricks Cops Use*, *Making Crime Pay*. Loompanics was founded in 1975 and closed in 2006 though some titles remain in print via Paladin in the US.

**3.** Harold von Braunhut, inventor of Amazing Sea-Monkeys best understood the basic principle underlying this fascination with the power of the invisible. His X-Ray Spex, marketed in superhero comics promised 'Many, many amazing, astounding illusory "X-Ray" views yours to see ALWAYS.'

invisible over the visible.<sup>2</sup> To see and understand what others cannot perceive invokes a sense of power and superiority.<sup>3</sup>

\*

In the late 1960s a revolutionary group calling themselves the Weathermen was formed in America in opposition to the Vietnam War. Growing from the campus based Students for a Democratic Society, the Weathermen rejected peaceful protest in favour of direct military action, organising Days of Rage demonstrations in Chicago before going underground to conduct a bombing campaign throughout much of the 1970s.

Looking back on their activities in a 2003 documentary, one of the Weathermen, Brian Flanagan, commented that 'If you think that you have the moral high ground that's a very dangerous position and you can do some really dreadful things...' Mark Rudd, one of the leader's of the group delved further into this reflecting on their actions

My mixed feelings. My feelings of guilt and shame. These are things that I am not proud of and I find it hard to speak publicly about them. And to tease out what was right from what was wrong. I think that part of the Weathermen phenomenon that was right was our understanding of what the position of the United States is in the world. It was this knowledge that we just couldn't handle. It was too big. We didn't know what to do. In a way I still don't know what to do with this knowledge. I don't know what needs to be done now...and it's still eating away at me just as it did thirty years ago.

\*

By the late '60s it seemed inevitable that an ability to see beyond the visible led to an understanding that the 'seer' should also become invisible. And so, the Weathermen, for instance, changed their name and became the Weather Underground as they vanished from public life. This gesture was common though across western culture as musicians (Bob Dylan, Syd

Barrett, Anne Briggs), writers (Don deLillo, Thomas Pynchon, J. D. Salinger), artists and curators (Lee Lozano, Seth Siegelaub) all 'disappeared'. The vacuum they left was immediately filled with rumour and myth, reaching into the world of urban legend and conspiracy theory while simultaneously raising the cultural importance of each of these ghostly figures.<sup>4</sup> Although this seemed to be a glamorous fate some of the evidence points to a different reality. John Jacobs, a Weatherman implicated in an explosion in Greenwich Village, went underground in 1970:

J.J., in charge of New York operations, was held responsible with the late Robbins for the townhouse catastrophe and sent on indefinite leave, never to rejoin the group. He wandered for a couple of years in northern California and Mexico, eventually settling under an assumed name in Vancouver, Canada, where he died a natural death in 1997. Once a great champion of the revolutionary motto 'Audacity, audacity and more audacity,' he confessed to Rudd in an unsent letter that he had 'lost, killed, alienated, or driven away' all his friends, and that life was 'sad and lonely,' whether he was a fugitive or not.

\*

**4.** Perhaps the most paradoxical of these disappearances is found in the 'Paul is Dead' rumour in which the Beatle, Paul McCartney dies in 1966 and that a cover-up has taken place ever since. The story is now a classic of the conspiracy theory genre, one version even linking the cover-up to the intelligence services via a friend of Ringo's. One webpage entitled *Paul is Dead (because the King is Naked)* gives a particularly gory account of McCartney's demise: On Wednesday, 9 November 1966 McCartney, while working on the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. The session rang long into the night, and ended in a blaze of fireworks. An argument broke out between Paul and the others and after some heated words Paul stormed out of the studio. The time was just before 5am.

During the time that the group was in the studio, the sky had begun to cloud

up and when the group left Abbey Road Studios it was raining pretty heavily. Paul got into his white Austin Healey car and drove off in the rain. During his travel he noticed a woman walking on the pavement, and seeing that she was cold and miserable, he pulled up alongside her and offered her a lift. At first, the woman (who it transpired was called Rita) did not know who the person was driving the car, but when it dawned on her she went hysterical; grabbing him and pulling him in a fan-frenzy.

This inevitably caused Paul to lose control of the car. He sped through a red light and his car rammied into a yellow lorry causing it to flip and smash into a telegraph pole. Rita survived and managed to get out of the vehicle and turned to try and rescue Paul, but the car caught fire and Rita was forced to back off. Paul's fingers were broken and so he couldn't pull the handle that would

Later politicians themselves began to comprehend the power of invisibility. Following the attack on the twin towers in 2001, it became clear that an invisible enemy (and the phantom presence of Osama bin Laden), provided a more amenable and infinitely adaptable target for a never-ending war. National security could always be invoked and freedoms could be necessarily curtailed in the struggle against invisible threats.<sup>5</sup>

\*

Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory. They make raids on human consciousness. What writers used to do before we were all incorporated.

**Don deLillo, *Mao II*, 1991**

\*

DeLillo's observation tells only half the story. The last decade has shown how bombs, shoot-outs and sieges have acquired a cinematic, choreographed aspect that is conscious and often directed by strategists behind the scenes. However, this represents only one dimension of power and probably

open the car door and ensue his escape. He was trapped inside, and nobody in the already gathering crowd could do anything until the fire engines came to extinguish the blaze. They duly came and tried to put out the fire, but suddenly the car exploded, decapitating the trapped victim. Paul was dead at 5am on Wednesday 9th November, 1966.

The crowd that had turned up to see what was going on was oblivious as to whom they were watching. They all thought that he looked familiar, but since his hair was burnt off in the fire they couldn't tell for sure. Later, it also transpired that identifying Paul using dental records would be impossible since all of his teeth were knocked out during the crash.

the most corrupting aspects of revolution. For the revolutionaries who turn their back on the seizure of power there is a more complex future – less spectacular, more vulnerable, and more concerned with radical long-term change rather than a transitory inversion of the status quo.

Shortly after DeLillo published *Mao II*, the Zapatista army emerged from the Lacondon jungle and attempted to seize power in the Chiapas region. Failing to do so, it retreated and rethought their position. Rather than using violence they turned to words and adopted new media formats to distribute their messages around the world. More recently again their leader, Subcomandante Marcos has turned to writing children's stories and co-writing a detective novel set in Mexico City. Rejecting the classical, even clichéd gestures of Latin American revolution the organisation has declared:

We don't want to impose our solutions by force, we want to create a democratic space. We don't see armed struggle in the classic sense of previous guerrilla wars, that is as the only way and the only all-powerful truth around which everything is organised. In a war, the decisive thing is not the military confrontation but the politics at stake in the confrontation. We didn't go to war to kill or be killed. We went to war in order to be heard.

**5.** One of the most outlandish conspiracy theories links the Hollywood actress and inventor of radar, Hedy Lamarr, to the Beatles via their electronics wizard Magic Alex (Alexis Mardas). The story goes that Lamarr and Mardas were brought together in the mid-90s by a black ops department of the US government to develop a device that would provide secure communications throughout the notoriously dense Tora Bora cave complex in the White Mountains of eastern Afghanistan. William Shears Campbell, Paul McCartney's replacement according to rumour is alleged to have visited the pair in Afghanistan. Campbell is said to have risen in the ranks of the intelligence services since his induction in 1966 and his presence in Afghanistan is cited as a reason for the unusually long gap between the release of *Off the Ground* in 1993 and *Flaming Pie* in 1997.



George Square as the Red Flag is raised, January 31 1919. Courtesy of Glasgow Digital Library, based at CDLR, University of Strathclyde.



George Square after police baton charge, January 31 1919. Courtesy of Glasgow Digital Library, based at CDLR, University of Strathclyde.

## EMPIRE STONES

‘There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.’<sup>1</sup>

**Walter Benjamin**, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, ‘Illuminations’, 1968

Benjamin’s exhortation to “brush history against the grain” remains key to any project of historical recovery. In order to rescue the past from “historicism’s bordello”, Benjamin sought out that “secret heliotropism” through which the past might be torn apart from the concept of a homogenous empty time: his writing aimed to detonate the slumbering time of the present with the fractious constellations of the past.<sup>2</sup> Working at this problem from another angle, Loren Goldner applies Marx’s theory of primitive accumulation to present-day dispossessions. For Marx, primitive accumulation was the originary form of *pre-capitalist* violence that divorced the producer from their means of production: separated from all property by which it could subsist, labour had “nothing to sell but itself”.<sup>3</sup> The chief historical markers of this bloody process in Britain are the Enclosures (England) and the Clearances (Scotland); the global ‘looting’ of the colonies is of course inscribed in letters of blood and fire. Once expropriated from their means of subsistence, the “dull compulsions” of economic relations completed the subjection of the labourer to capitalist wage relations.<sup>4</sup>

For Goldner, drawing on Rosa Luxemburg’s reading of empire and accumulation,<sup>5</sup> primitive accumulation is not merely the initial process of separating producers from their means of production, but a *permanent* form of accumulation that violates

the capitalist ‘law of value’ (the exchange of equivalents measured by labour time):

*“When Western capital sucks Third World labour power, whose costs of reproduction it did not pay for, into the world division of labour [...] that’s primitive accumulation. When capital loots the natural environment and does not pay the replacement costs for that damage, that’s primitive accumulation. When capital runs capital plant and infrastructure into the ground [...] that’s primitive accumulation. When capital pays workers non-reproductive wages, (wages too low to produce a new generation of workers) that’s primitive accumulation too”.*<sup>6</sup>

Space matters, and we can easier understand the relevance of Goldner’s conception of ‘primitive accumulation’ through a spatial analysis. George Square, in Glasgow’s city centre, provides a constellation of architectural referents that prompt an alternative reading of Glasgow’s dominant entrepreneurial and cultural narratives. The Urban Research Group, who undertook a psycho-geographical exploration of Glasgow’s city centre in 1997, have conveniently set the scene. On a ‘purposeful drift’, the group set out to challenge the disavowal of the imperial ideologies that built the city.<sup>7</sup> They found a Glasgow filled with buildings celebrating its imperial dominance – yet a “remarkable decontextualisation” had taken place. Remnants of colonial and domestic

exploitation were presented as de-politicised Victorian heritage, as fragments shorn of meaning, lost in the “mystical, secret and dangerous world of international commodity capitalism”.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘drift’ concentrated on an area around the “yuppie enclave” near the City Chambers (the City Council headquarters), a Victorian indulgence on the east side of George Square, completed in 1888 to coincide with Glasgow’s first Great Exhibition. World Exhibitions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were, as Benjamin noted, “places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish”.<sup>9</sup> They were also a form of “corporate boasting”,<sup>10</sup> and Glasgow, touting itself as the ‘second city of empire’, was keen to self-promote in the face of an outside world disdainful of its infamous slums and the industrial origins of its wealth.<sup>11</sup> Inaugurated by Queen Victoria, the City Chambers were designed to project the city’s image and enhance its prestige. Look up at the friezes where emblematic figures from the British Empire lay suppliant below Queen Victoria, then turn around to note the inscription on the cenotaph, which stands before the Chambers.

The memorial, which symbolically conflates war heroism with government offices, states that 200,000 of the soldiers engaged in the First World War were ‘raised’ from Glasgow. This astonishing figure has as its precedent the “spectacular growth industry” for the recruitment of Gaels into the British army and navy starting in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, recruitment figures were “probably unequalled in any other region of Europe”.<sup>12</sup> This subjection to the brutal military logic of empire was made possible by the ruthless transformation of the Highlands into profitable assets through systematic and forced clearances for the sheep economy – ‘the four-legged clansmen’.<sup>13</sup>

Walter Scott, whose statue rests on an 80 foot pillar only yards from the cenotaph, was a central figure in the romantic conflation of Gaeldom with martial traditions. Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) helped establish the dual-image of the Gael as a race of born warriors and ‘noble peasants’. Scott was the “master impresario” who indulged King George IV in a “plaided panorama”, replete with bogus Highlandism on the ‘King’s Jaunt’ to Edinburgh in 1822.<sup>14</sup> This seminal event presented a mystical and ‘othered’ image of

the Highlands which played a key part in obfuscating the decimation of the traditional Highland world by rapacious landlordism, forced displacement, and the merciless pursuit of profit.<sup>15</sup> Leaving vast swathes of people hungry, homeless and jobless, this primary act of primitive accumulation helped force the conscription of Highlanders into the armies of empire, and a subservient role in the looting of the colonies.

When the *Urban Research Group* visited Glasgow, the commodity realm of consumer retail chains threaded through the ‘imperial stones’ in the streets (the area studied had by then been re-branded as the ‘Merchant City’ to celebrate the ‘tobacco lords’ who once resided there)<sup>16</sup> spoke to them of the contemporary domination of western capitalism over the entire planet. This *basic banality*, reminded them that the growth and development of empire was predicated on the destruction of non-European manufactures and the global exploitation of slave and poverty labour. The tobacco lords, whose ‘new town’ George Square is part of, made their wealth (and thus Glasgow’s) by providing credit to tobacco plantations in Maryland and Virginia which were ultimately dependent on chattel slave labour.<sup>17</sup> The growth of Glasgow’s textile industries, meanwhile, was predicated on the destruction of India’s productive capacity, and the exploitation of Glasgow’s burgeoning immigrant labour pool.

Goldner’s formulation connects these imperial strategies with the present by showing contemporary processes of disinvestment as the necessary link between the flight of capital from its formerly productive form to its speculative money form. This ‘structural adjustment’, a vampiric destruction of productive capacities, ensures that vast amounts of credit is freed to feed the bubble of ‘fictitious capital’ and speculative activity. The ‘empire of debt’ is thus extended, at the same time as the gap in productivity is taken up by an increasingly exploited global precariat (China, India, etc). The resulting contradictions are met with a seemingly permanent state of geo-political conflict throughout the world.

But a spectre haunts George Square – the spectre of John Maclean. Erased by ‘official’ history, and obscured by the ‘legend’ of Red Clydeside, Maclean’s fierce internationalism, anti-militarism and *anti-capitalism*, link his ideas to those of Luxemburg

and Goldner. When he resisted the “conscriptio menace” of World War I,<sup>18</sup> he understood that capital’s inexorable fight for new markets *by necessity* ensured perpetual war for control of global markets, and the regulation of the global working class to those imperatives. To these workers he showed his solidarity – regardless of nation. As the ‘creative classes’ add value<sup>19</sup> to the ‘mystical, secret and dangerous world of international commodity capitalism’, they might do well to remember that culture really only has one parent – and that is labour. While the imperial stones of the Merchant City are repackaged as Victorian chic to form a new ‘cultural quarter’, Tom Leonard’s short poem suggests the fate awaiting those who disavow “the supporting infrastructure”<sup>20</sup> which sustains it:

somewhere between stocks and shares  
and the “commonsensical” editorial

pity the poor arts page  
thinking itself alone<sup>21</sup>

1. Benjamin, Walter, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, ‘Illuminations’, Pimlico, 1999, p.248.  
2. Ibid, pp.245 – 255.  
3. Marx, Karl, ‘Capital’, Penguin, pp.873 – 940.  
4. Ibid.  
5. See, Luxemburg, Rosa, ‘The Accumulation of Capital’, Routledge, 2003, pp.307 – 447.  
6. <http://www.metamute.org/en/Fictitious-Capital-For-Beginners>  
7. The Urban Research Group, ‘Glasgow, 1997, South Africa, 1900: The Event of the Year: Psychogeographers in Sensational Co-Incidence’, ‘Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration’, Salamander Press, London Ltd, Spring 1998, pp.77 – 83.  
8. Ibid.  
9. Benjamin, Walter, ‘The Arcades’, 1999, p.5.  
10. Kinchin, J, and Kinchin, P, ‘Glasgow’s Great Exhibitions’, White Cockade Publishing, p.14.  
11. Ibid, p.13.  
12. Devine, T.M., ‘Scotland’s Empire: 1600 – 1815’, Penguin, 2004, p.122.

13. Prebble, John. ‘The Highland Clearances’, Penguin.  
14. Devine, T.M., ‘Scotland’s Empire: 1600 – 1815’, Penguin, 2004, pp.354 – 355.  
15. Ibid.  
16. A term not heard of until the ‘yuppie’ eighties. See, Damer, Sean, ‘Glasgow: Going for a Song’, Lawrence and Wishart, p.13.  
17. Mullen, Stephen, ‘Ae Fond Kiss, and Then We Sever’, *Variant* magazine, Issue 35, Summer, 2009.  
18. See, Milton, Nan et al (eds), ‘John Maclean: In the Rapids of Revolution’, Allison and Busby Ltd, 1978.  
19. See Gray, Neil, ‘The Merchant City: An Arts-Led Property Strategy’, *Variant* magazine, Vol. 2 Issue 35, Summer, 2009.  
20. Ibid.  
21. Leonard, Tom, ‘Reports from the Present: Selected Work, 1982 – 94’, Jonathon Cape, 1995, p.5.



Queen Victoria



George Square cenotaph

# DEADLY CARGO

TRACKING THE NUCLEAR WARHEAD CONVOYS

A CAMCORDER GUERRILLAS FILM



Nuclear weapons are regularly transported in secret convoys on ordinary roads in Britain. How close do they come to you? Find out the chilling truth about these lethal convoys, how they are tracked by people in the NukeWatch network and how you can help stop them.



Creative Commons BY-NC-SA (1.0)

[www.nukewatch.org.uk](http://www.nukewatch.org.uk)

[www.camcorderguerillas.net](http://www.camcorderguerillas.net)

## UK Nuclear Warhead Convoy Routes 2007



## Deadly Cargo the script of the film

Fully assembled nuclear weapons are regularly transported in secret convoys on ordinary roads, day and night, right across Britain. NukeWatch is a UK-wide network which monitors the convoys, informs the public and local authorities of their movements and campaigns against them.

NukeWatch is not a membership organisation. It is a network of individuals who campaign against the convoys because these convoys are part of a system of weapons of mass destruction, and because they believe that communities potentially affected by the convoys should be aware of their existence and the risks they pose.

The Camcorder Guerillas made a film about NukeWatch in 2008. Below is the script of *Deadly Cargo*.

Nuclear weapons are regularly transported up and down the roads in Britain, and they use ordinary roads. It's all done with this big convoy of vehicles. In a worst case scenario, a vehicle pile up, you could get an accidental detonation of a nuclear warhead.

*Juliet climbs a tree*

Hi Di, it's Juliet. I'm at Burghfield. I think we've got a convoy getting ready so I should think about an hour, an hour and a half and we might have a convoy ready for Scotland.

*Climbs down*

So now it's time for a cup of coffee

*Fence at Burghfield, then Rob Edwards*

You have to check warheads occasionally, make sure they still work, whatever that might mean. A warhead doesn't stay in the same state. You have to refurbish it and replace the tritium in it every few years so there's a constant cycle of activity that has to take place. And while you've got submarines stationed at one end of the country and the nuclear weapons factory at the other –

and that's not likely to change – you are going to have to have constant shipments of warheads between the two.

*Convoy highlighted on motorway*

OK, well a convoy is coming along and what you will see is it'll be spread out over a couple of miles while it is on the motorway. What you get is first a police car. Then you've got the police transit control which is full of the 'big bods' and a lot of communications equipment. Then leading the actual vehicles is a spare cab in case they break down or there is an accident. Behind that is a military Land Rover. Then you have got the first weapons carrier. This is a huge vehicle, dark green with seven axles and a very distinctive front – they are quite easy to climb on. Then you've got the second nuclear weapons carrier behind it, and the third one behind that is another military Land Rover with another one behind it too. These are new additions in the last year or so that they have put in the convoy. Then you've got the rear police transit control which again is for the commander. Behind that is a police car, and then you've got a blue transit full of marines – these are fully armed

– and a second one behind it. Then you've got the fire engine, and then you've got another police transit. Then you've got the pick-up truck or breakdown truck. Then right back in the escort part of the convoy there's the workshop which is a huge vehicle, with a trailer these days, and it carries the decontamination unit. And then the white coach follows behind with the men's equipment.

*Juliet*

Well how can you take weapons up and down a motorway, I don't know how many hundreds of miles it is to Scotland, and not have "incidents"?

*Rob*

Using Freedom of Information legislation you can unearth details that otherwise wouldn't have been in the public domain. They've had brake overheating, punctures, tyre punctures or fuel leaks, numerous fuel leaks and we do know they have had more serious incidents.

*Di*

On one occasion a warhead carrier slid off the road in icy condition, in the countryside, in Wiltshire, and it was quite clear on that occasion that the top priority for the military was protection of the weapon. Not protection of the public, not protection of anybody's health.

*[Caption in Subtitles: UK SECRET: Declassified. MOD drawings of accident]*

*Rob*

The MOD does worry greatly about terrorist attacks.

*[MoD letter]*

Someone involved in NukeWatch put in a request and was refused information. The MOD said "this is an issue of national security given that such an attack has the potential to lead to damage or destruction of a nuclear weapon within the UK. The consequences of such an incident are likely to be a considerable loss of life and severe disruption both to the British people's way of life and to the UK's ability to function effectively as a sovereign state."

To me it's an astounding thing that we now know that they themselves believe that an inadvertent yield, i.e. a nuclear explosion, is possible. By an

accident in the nuclear convoy. These warheads are much more powerful than the warhead that devastated Hiroshima killing 100,000.

If an accident happened and you had a detonation in a major city you are talking, you know, a catastrophe the like of which we have never seen.

*[Animation sequence]*

*Al*

Nukewatch is a network of people based all over the country mainly along the convoy routes. We watch the bases, Coulport and Burghfield, which are the end stations for the bombs.

*Juliet*

You could see the convoy, the vehicles gathering. So you know a convoy is on the way or getting ready. So I ring Di.

*Di*

It just depends in different places who's available. It's certainly not done on any military organised fashion.

*Al*

Sometimes people have more time so they will track the convoy and drive after it and see where it goes other times people just sit at a junction somewhere along the motorway, see it passing by and usually they call in to a central point of contact. And that person then relays the information to the next person along the convoy route.

*Di*

The whole idea of nuclear weapons, whilst being very public, the actual real goings on are terribly, terribly secret, and it's uncovering this secrecy that NukeWatch is about.  
*[Rainy Convoy]*

You overtake them on the motorway you reach out your arm – they are an arm's length away from you. That's how close the UK public comes to nuclear weapons. This is the deadliest cargo on British roads.

*Di*

The political implications of these convoys are felt in every town hall up and down the country. In Oxford particularly they really don't see a need to be putting people at risk.

*Mayor of Oxford*

Well it really is quite unnerving to be sitting here in Oxford Town Hall and to think that on the M40 and the A34 there could well be a nuclear convoy. I think it's enormously important the work that groups like NukeWatch do, they get the issue into the local newspaper, they get people writing to their local councillors which makes it, you know, much easier for us to campaign.

When NukeWatch says "there is a convoy which has just gone up your main highway" – then it makes it much more real and people say: "Oh yes, we've still got those awful things, maybe we should be doing something about it".

*Rob*

They've given a pretty good picture over the years of what the movements are, of why they take place and how often they take place and what routes they use and that's simply by being observant and alert and I think that's an invaluable democratic task.

*Di*

A democracy functions by consent. People can't consent to what goes on in their name if they don't know about it.

*Mayor of Oxford*

Well, Oxford City Council is a long standing member of Nuclear Free Local Authorities and there are more than 80 of us up and down the country. We have a tradition of campaigning against nuclear weapons. Well I would say to all local councils come and join us. We only got rid of slavery when local communities local councils, local municipalities got together and said "slavery is wrong and we're going to abolish it". I'd like to see us doing exactly the same with nuclear weapons.

*Sam*

I've done one convoy action before and that was just before I started at Stirling University. I waved down one of the carriers and then I managed to climb the side of one of the trucks and get onto the roof of one of the cabs which held it up for quite a while because they had to get police in to get me down and arrest me and handcuff me and take me down a ladder.

One of the policemen was quite shocked and he said "don't you know they could shoot you?" You know, "That's really dangerous!"

And I said, "Well do you know these trucks have nuclear weapons in them? I mean that's far more dangerous. You are protecting trucks going past primary schools, which have nuclear weapons in them."

*Juliet*

What you are doing by stopping them is giving them a choice: do you want to kill me or do you want to respect life.

*Sam*

Nukewatch has guidelines for how to do action that make it as safe as possible so the basic ones are we don't do any blockade - we don't try and stop it if its raining for example or snowing.

*Juliet*

It has to be safe, it has to be a choice. It's no good jumping out into the road and causing an accident or expecting them to be able to stop when it's physically not possible.

*Sam*

Another thing is that people don't dive into the road unless somebody else has stopped a truck. So you have one person whose specific role it is to stand out very visibly and make sure the trucks stop.

Because so often we just stand with banners and we don't do anything the police don't expect you to do anything.

So if you are standing holding a banner – they think well that's them just holding a banner. So your reaction time is a lot faster than theirs and by the time they realise that you are legging it on to the road you are already past them.

*Juliet*

You know, what do you achieve? The convoy stops for 2 minutes? 10 minutes? What difference does it make?

*Juliet stops a convoy. Juliet on top of convoy.*

It does make a difference because you are saying for those 2 minutes: "No, I am not part of this and

I will not be part of it and I will not let it go by and pretend it's not happening."

It's society that has become corrupted, through turning a blind eye to these weapons. Which is why you can't turn a blind eye. They are the end of what it is they are supposed to be protecting. There is no chance of democracy, of life or peace after using a nuclear weapon.

*Rebecca driving*

We're now on the military road that leads from the A82 by Loch Lomond, right over to Coulport where the nuclear warheads are stored.

At any one time you have more than a hundred warheads actually stored here, so were there to be any kind of accident involving those, and we know that there have been quite a lot of accidents involving nuclear weapons over the last fifty years, this could be absolutely devastating for Scotland.

*AI*

Whenever Britain takes out fully armed Trident nuclear submarines under international law it's considered illegal.

So when Westminster tries to impose something which by the rest of the world is considered illegal.

And London still tries to put that illegality up in Scotland and say "please join us in this. Host these weapons for us, store them for us, deploy them for us" then Scotland has a right to turn around to the UK Government and say "No. We are not doing this. We are not going to be part of your illegal deployment of weapons of mass destruction."

*Eric and Dorothy*

I'm Eric Wallace. I'm a local resident here. And I'm concerned of course about what's happening in my town and this dreadful cargos being transported.

It comes over these roads and all we do is witness its passing, there's been a watch on this spot I think for about 24 hours now, is that right? So I hope it comes soon.

I feel that just to sit in my room and not do anything about it would be ... not human

*Di*

We are just confirming what is going on. We aren't creating any difficulties, the difficulties are already there.

*AI*

It's important to witness the nuclear weapons being transported on our roads simply because nobody else is doing it. We don't have UN weapons inspectors here which is why we have to do it ourselves.

*Eric and Dorothy*

Hopefully we'll get rid of it altogether one day, but meantime we're just nibbling away at it, making it uncomfortable for them.

*[Dusk convoy sequence]*

*[Caption. We asked the Ministry of Defence to respond. They said: "We don't discuss the nuclear convoy"]*

*[Caption. If you see a convoy, call 0845 45 88 365]*

*Credits*

Rob Edwards, Environment Editor *Sunday Herald*,  
*New Scientist*  
Juliet McBride, Tutor in Public Law, Nukewatcher  
Di McDonald, Nuclear Information Service,  
NukeWatch  
Anna-Linnéa Rundberg, Nukewatcher  
Lord Mayor of Oxford, John Tanner  
Sam Jones, Nukewatcher  
Dr Rebecca Johnson, International  
Disarmament Expert  
Eric and Dorothy Wallace, Nukewatchers

Camcorder Guerillas, 24th February 2008

More information:  
[www.nukewatch.org.uk](http://www.nukewatch.org.uk)  
[www.camcorderguerillas.net](http://www.camcorderguerillas.net)  
[info@camcorderguerillas.net](mailto:info@camcorderguerillas.net)

## Bik Van der Pol

### Art Is either Plagiarism or Revolution, or: Something Is Definitely Going to Happen Here

#### Location

The Museum of Revolution in New Belgrade was founded as an institution in 1959. The Yugoslav architectural competition for its new building in New Belgrade was held in 1961. No first prize was awarded, but Croatian architect Vjenceslav Richter, who received second prize ex aequo, was chosen to realize the museum. Initially, the plan was to locate the museum in the complex of cultural institutions near the Sava River, but later it was moved to block 13 in the Park of Friendship, between the buildings of the former Palace of the Federation (now empty) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (now a bank). Its main entrance was planned on the Boulevard of Lenin (now Mihaljo Pupin). The Park of Friendship is full of historic connotations. The first Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which former Yugoslavian President Tito was one of the initiators and at which 25 countries were represented, was convened in Belgrade in September 1961. On the occasion of this first summit, each of the leaders who were present planted a tree in the park, marked by a stone with their name engraved on it. Since then, this has become a tradition. Today one can find more than 150 of these stones and trees in the park. Hotel Yugoslavia, situated at the edge of the park and once the most luxurious hotel in Serbia where celebrities and high officials stayed, stood empty for many years. The hotel was heavily damaged during the NATO bombing that also hit the Chinese Embassy. The Museum of Revolution was supposed to open in 1981, but only the foundations were laid. The construction was stopped in the 1980s and since then left unchanged. All that can be seen today is a huge concrete platform with iron poles sticking out.

#### Action

The Museum of the Revolution that never materialized was activated on Saturday 1 December 2007. The public was invited to be part of this event at the Museum of Revolution, Park Usce, New Belgrade. At noon, trucks with film equipment arrive. 25 KW of lighting, spotlights, tripods, dolly and cherry pickers are unloaded and installed, cables are unreeled and connected. Catering and toilet services arrive. Yellow ribbons mark the scene. Four camera teams prepare themselves to record all actions. Passers-by with or without dogs and others come and go and become part of the action. The event – starting from nothing,

ending in nothing – slowly reaches its end when the sun sets and it becomes dark. Something happened here.

#### On Revolution

Few know about revolution, its causes, its consequences. It has become a print on T-shirts, icons became fashion. Is there a new type of revolution in the gaps of society? With new rules, new presences? Today, cities like New Belgrade are changing rapidly. Capital is moving in. Banks are being built, prices of real estate are rising tremendously. Seen in the scope of history, New Belgrade is, like many other cities in Central and East Europe, undergoing a major turnover. Is this the 'revolution' of today?

#### Event

Any event is, when represented in the media, flirting with the possibility and impossibility to present, show or exhibit, conserve an experience. It tiptoes on different levels of communication, such as excitement, boredom and the wish to recall. It deals with what can be implied, instead of wanting to be explicit. By stating something, naming it, you are already making it happen. Even if nothing seems to happen, maybe it is already happening. Paul Gauguin's quote 'art is either plagiarism or revolution' not only emphasizes the possible roles of art, but also what 'fake' and what 'real' experiences might be. Gatherings, whether they are demonstrations, revolutions, festivals or events, are generally highly mediated. (Being) (the) public seems to be of more importance than what is at stake. Revolutions and demonstrations are staged as media events: hope, glory and a cry for change accompany them and are used as the tools of either inevitability, political pressure, or urgency, but somehow it seems that getting used to events that are spectacularized also means getting used to the fact that they do not bring that much of a change. Gatherings create a sense of belonging. And so it can happen that sometimes even revolutions – or rather, the spark or ideas that set them off – solely appear to happen from a desperate yearning for entertainment and excitement, resulting in a media-driven presence, performed. As a classical theatre play.

#### Public

The role of the public – are they with many, or not?? – and the continuous shifts between the role of actor, participant, and observer, expresses and questions the event, its ambiguity. The public is important in a democracy, since democracy is built on the public. But who and what is (the) public? The size of the public does not necessarily create truth, justice, value or engagement. Politicians love numbers; numbers are necessary as a justification. Large masses justify



Art Is either Revolution or Plagiarism, Bik Van der Pol, Museum of Revolution, Belgrade 2007.

art is either plagiarism or revolution  
25 cm high ← 425 cm wide →

the claim of contemporary art, just like large masses justify the claim of revolution. Still, and in all cases, there is a lot of wobbly ground to walk on. Do the events that establish (temporary) communities have enough 'gravity' to become a real catalyst for change? Are they able to generate another insight, a sense of urgency?

The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra worked on a score for this video-film. Starting with the film as a source, speculations on free improvisation, the process of decisionmaking and dynamics of interaction and dialogue, they embarked on an investigation, questioning what it is that makes something 'happening' at some point. The result is a combination of image and sound, accompanying the film.

This text is a revised version of a text previously published in Open Nr. 14/2008, NAI Publishers/SKOR. *Art Is either Plagiarism or Revolution or: Something Is Definitely Going to Happen Here* is developed and produced in 2007/2008 during the project Differentiated Neighbourhoods, initiated by Zoran Eric, curator of the Centre of Visual Culture of the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade.



*Art Is either Revolution or Plagiarism*, Bik Van der Pol, Museum of Revolution, Belgrade 2007.

## Rebellion at the site of knowledge

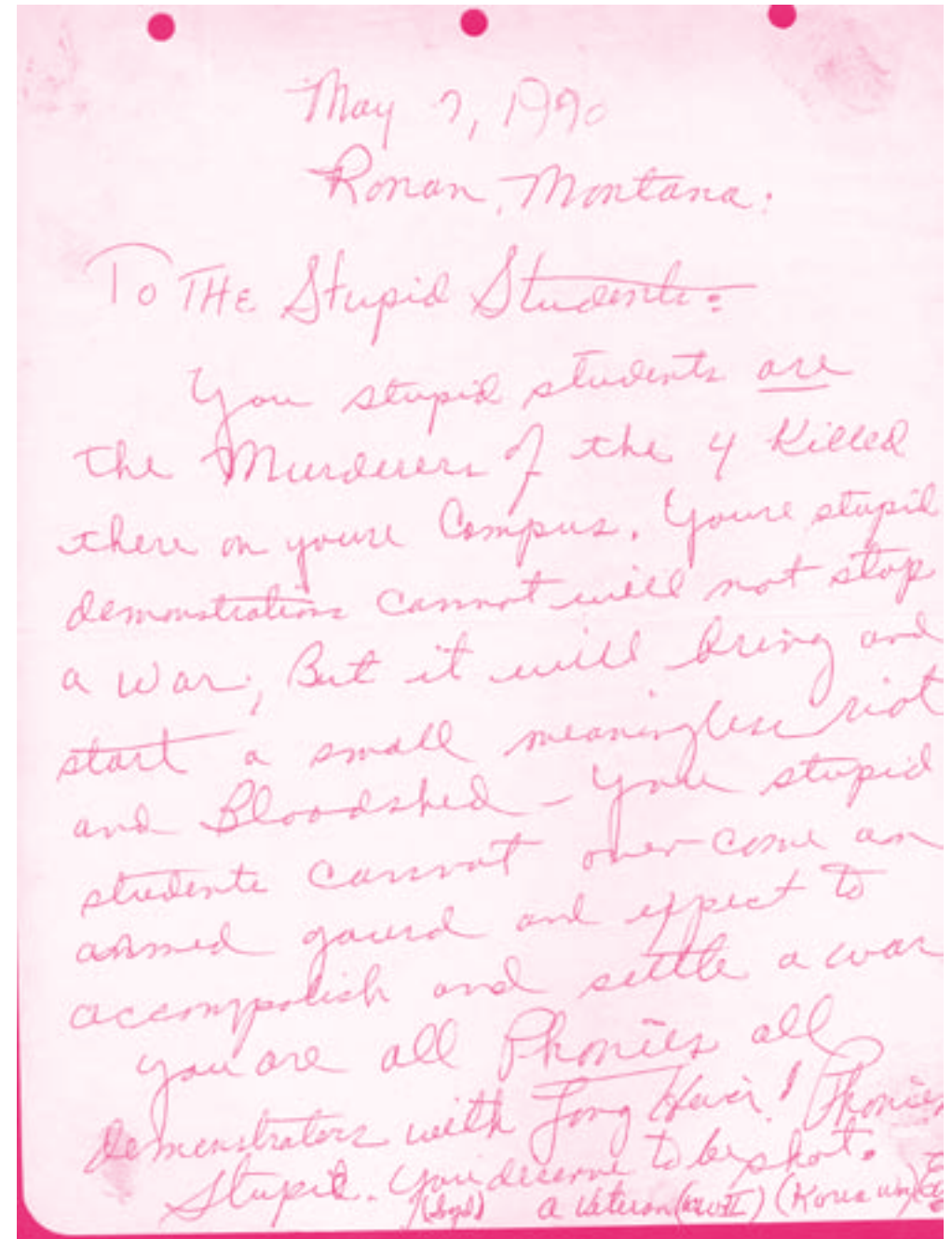
While sitting outside on the UCLA campus, I observed a small group of ten to twelve students convene and begin an anti-war demonstration against the US occupation of Iraq. Carrying placards, a drum, and with a megaphone at hand, they took turns calling out several rounds of chants as they strolled along the pathways that encircle the arts quad. After a short while, they concluded the protest and dispersed, giving each other hugs and kisses and high-fives. In another corner of the quad a violent argument broke out between a young man and woman. He seemed to grab her. I stood up and looking around, I noticed that other people nearby were unfazed. The argument stopped. Another woman stood and began yelling at the man. He grabbed her, and the same argument ensued, again with the same gestures. It dawned on me that this was an acting class; I was watching students rehearse a scene.

If we think for a moment about protest and theatre as symbolic acts that are predicated on being read, on their legibility to the outside, then *lack of legibility* is a rebellion that undoes the ways in which we expect either to take place. Suddenly on that afternoon, the boundaries between theatre and protest no longer mattered. I was amidst an indeterminacy, an immediacy that placed me in direct and instant involvement with something — something planned, yes, but also unexpected. Like a band of actors in Brecht's *Galileo*, the students momentarily suspended the time and space of the

academy, demonstrating the political as available and remote, at once. I was drawn in and confused: Do I get up? Do I stay where I am?

The 'political' in art has become particularly mannered in the last eight years. The language invoked in the many titles, quotations, and evocations of historical figures and movements that serve as our alibis have us thinking we are engaged in a conversation that has in fact not yet taken place. In the very moments when we declare 'politics' at the centre of our activity, we must also think about what these claims conceal, the violence they sustain. Simply because we can point to political subjects/subject matter in a work of art does not make a work of art 'political'.

With the difficulties and contradictions of working and producing comes a determination to simply get on with the real work at hand. It is also true that contradictions have productive potential, which is where a preoccupation with 'rebellion' arises. It is important to differentiate the excess of 'activist' art that surfaced in the years following 9/11. Much of this work remains blind to complexities that are at the crux of politics—the conditions that produce us *and* the conditions we reproduce—the economic disparities and old colonialisms that enable, for example, a Danish 'explorer' to arrive in Africa under the conceit that this will make it a better place. The art world continues to reproduce European humanism in startling ways.



Letter to the students of Kent State, May 7, 1970. Ronan MT. From the Linda Lyke Papers. May 4 Collection. Courtesy Kent State University Libraries and Media Services. Department of Special Collections and Archives.



*Students gathered at Victory Bell, May, 1970 Kent State University, OH  
Courtesy Kent State University Libraries and Media Services Department of Special Collections and Archives*



*It's palpable in the air.* Sarah Pierce. 2008. Bystander: Student protest. First anniversary of Kent State shootings, University of Maryland Baltimore, MD, May 5, 1971. Silkscreen and collage on kraft paper



*It's time man. It feels Imminent.* Sarah Pierce. 2008. Bystander: Anti-war march against possible invasion of Iraq. Washington DC, October 26, 2002. Silkscreen and collage on kraft paper

They lived in the very early times. Life had barely granted them leave on the earth. Daily hard won battles for survival, constant innovations of the simplest kinds determined continued life or simple death.

Urges to mate were acted upon readily and quickly but without fuss.

Their groupings arranged themselves by what worked.

And in these times, truth be told, there was a grouping that gained an advantage over others in its habitat. A groupling from the grouping one day took a step. He noticed something. His group were omnivorous and ate as they could find and so he would gather fruit from the trees and bundle it into shares to take to the others. What if he left a share? That share would still be for the group but they would now have drawn back from it, sacrificed it for themselves. At the thought of this he felt emboldened and strong. He would often think of this extra share and would feel this way when he would gather fruit from the trees.

And then ... *if the whole group felt this way we would all be strong and purposeful.* Thoughtful of this he realised the need to make it back to the others and speak of this discovery. He must avoid danger on his return journey to be sure of giving this to the others. He must live a little longer. He bundled up all the shares of fruit, including the one he would imagine separating. They needed all this food to eat and could not actually spare any shares, but he carried the thought of it.

The groupling made his cautious way and arrived safely back to the group. He brought the shares of fruit to the strongest of them and quickly told them of the feeling of discipline and motivation he would feel when he would think of separating out a bundle and leaving it behind. Thinking he had followed through on his imagination and left the share behind they reacted angrily and began to beat him. The groupling, just managing to repel their blows before they got too grievous, explained that he had not actually left the bundle but only wanted to tell them of the effect in him when he would think

of sacrificing it for all the group. If they all knew that the share was still there but had been withdrawn for everyone, imagine the vigour with which they would all work for each other. The others were impressed with the idea and with how fully he seemed empowered by the feelings he described. But they could not spare even the most meagre of shares of any of their food, nor their tools nor the wood they gathered. They were poor and needed all they had. If they did not eat they would die.

After some thought one of them made a suggestion: "We will disallow something that in itself would not be possible. That way we will not actually lose anything but will retain the effect you speak of."

There was some agreement that this made sense but what would be the impossibility that they would prohibit for the strength of the group?

"We do not live long enough to see our own children reach adulthood." "You and you," pointing at two of the most grown and so the

protectors of the group, "will surely die before your young reach maturity." They nodded as all knew that it was very rare for an adult to see their young reach puberty. One generation seldom lived to see the next. "Then the impossibility is to mate with our own young. We must prohibit mating with each of our own grown progeny."

"Oh the joy of moving forward! Those produced from our own flesh, who we will never know as adults, MUST never be 'known' by us as adults. This is the law for which I sacrifice. As do I, and one to another, as do I. A step by you, and new men arise and set on their march. Your head turns away; the new love! Your head turns back; The new love!"

"We have not given up anything that we need to eat or use. We will work harder for us all. Our group will be stronger."

## A coin. A coin.

protectors of the group, "will surely die before your young reach maturity." They nodded as all knew that it was very rare for an adult to see their young reach puberty. One generation seldom lived to see the next. "Then the impossibility is to mate with our own young. We must prohibit mating with each of our own grown progeny."

"Our own children are not old enough to bear our young before us adults are taken by wild beasts or other death. So we will forbid mating with those grown of our own flesh."

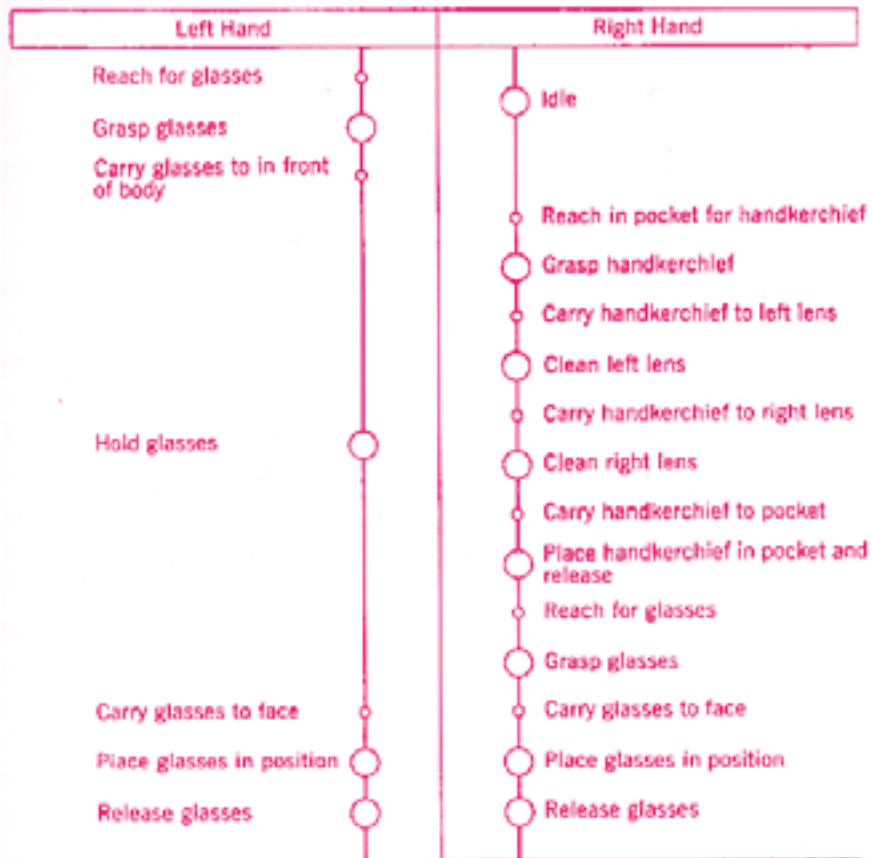


"We have not given up anything that we need to eat or use. We will work harder for us all. Our group will be stronger."



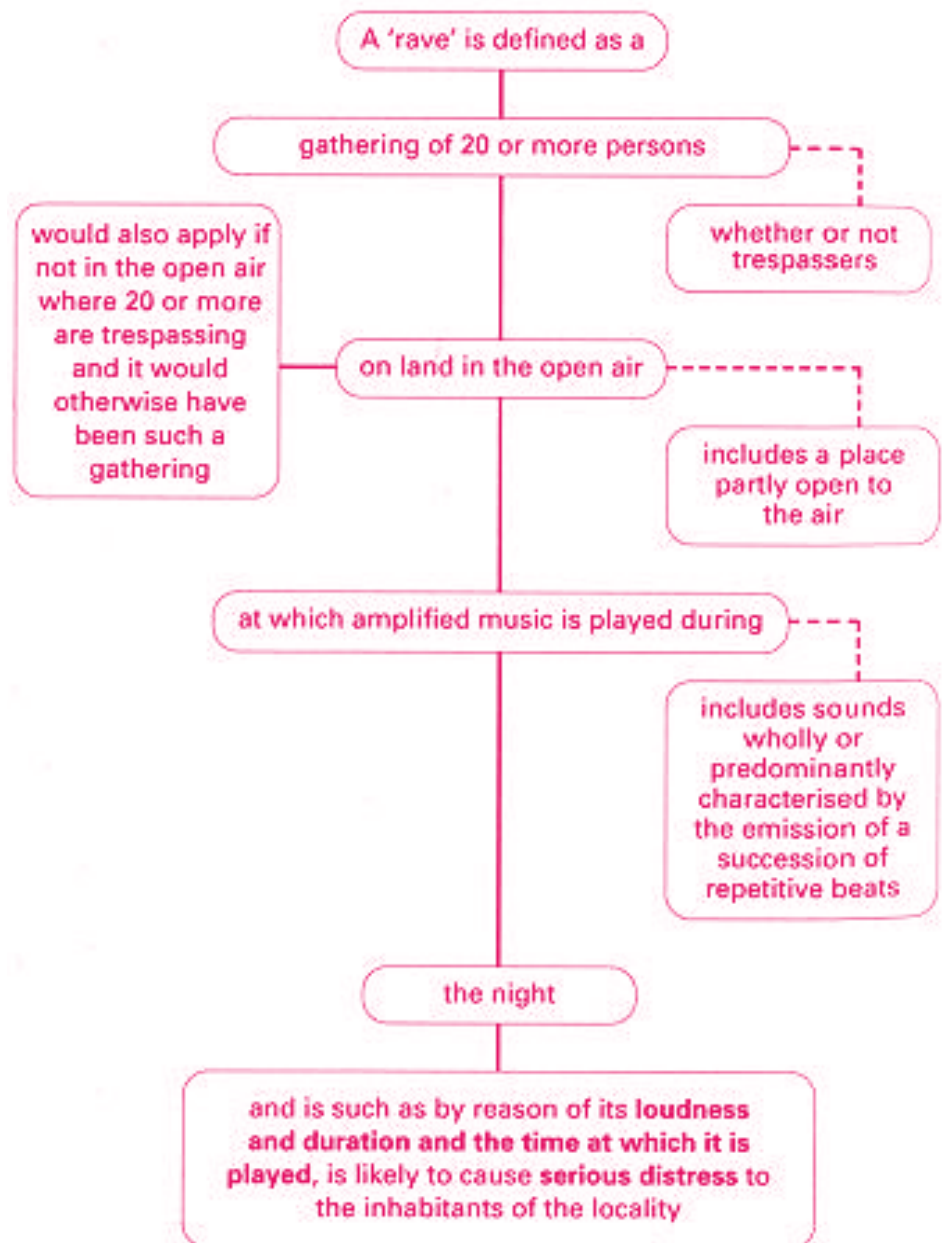
Activity Classification	Operation Chart Symbol	Examples of Activity
○	Movements	Reach for object with hand or carry object in hand
○	Actions	Grasp, position, hold, use, or release an object; idle

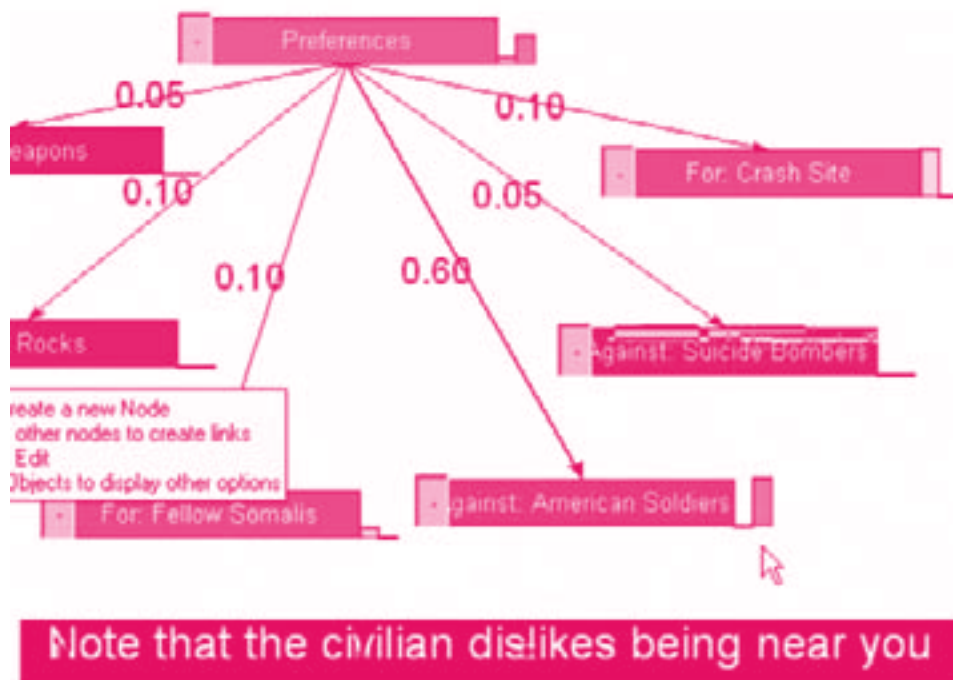
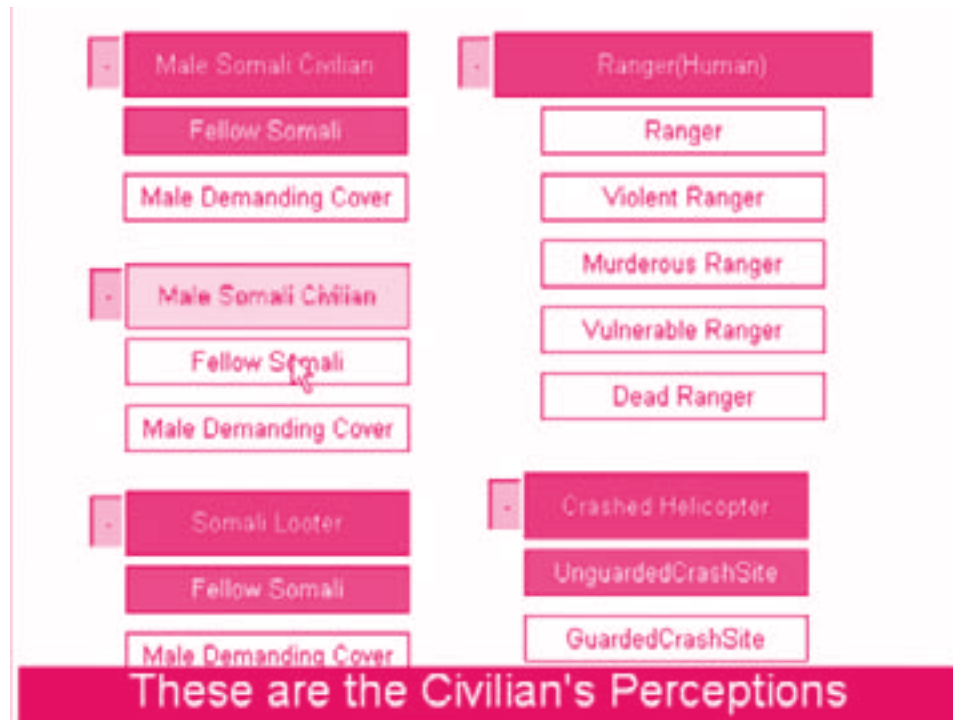
The following shows an operation chart for cleaning glasses with a handkerchief.



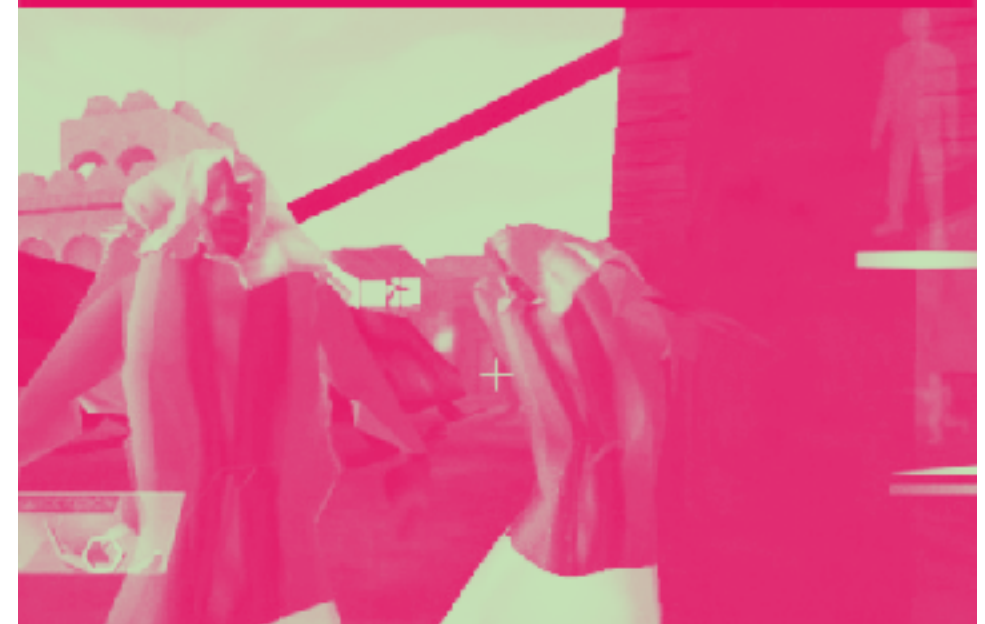
## Raves

S 63 CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER ACT 1994  
(AS AMENDED BY THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003)





The looter will run at the ranger and yell



If the ranger shoots them, their perceptions of him change

# A Revolutionary Proposal: Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds

‘And if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signalling through the flames.’

**Antonin Artaud**, *The Theatre and its Double*, 1958

Revolt is understandably unpopular. As soon as it is defined, it has provoked the measures for its confinement. The prudent man will avoid his definition which is, in effect, his death-sentence. Besides, it is a limit.

We are concerned not with the *coup d'état* [seizure of the state] of Trotsky and Lenin, but with the *coup du monde* [seizure of the world], a transition of necessity more complex, more diffuse than the other, and so more gradual, less spectacular. Our methods will vary with the empirical facts pertaining here and now, there and then.

Political revolt is and must be ineffectual precisely because it must come to grips at the prevailing level of political process. Beyond the backwaters of civilisation it is an anachronism. Meanwhile, with the world at the edge of extinction, we cannot afford to wait for the mass. Nor to brawl with it.

The *coup du monde* must be in the broad sense cultural. With his thousand technicians, Trotsky seized the viaducts and the bridges

and the telephone exchanges and the power stations. The police, victims of convention, contributed to his brilliant enterprise by guarding the old men in the Kremlin. The latter hadn't the elasticity of mind to grasp that their own presence there at the traditional seat of government was irrelevant. History outflanked them. Trotsky had the railway stations and the powerhouses, and the "government" was effectively locked out of history by its own guards.

So the cultural revolt must seize the grids of expression and the powerhouses of the mind. Intelligence must become self-conscious, realise its own power, and, on a global scale, transcending functions that are no longer appropriate, dare to exercise it. History will not overthrow national governments; it will outflank them. The cultural revolt is the necessary underpinning, the passionate substructure of a new order of things.

What is to be seized has no physical dimensions nor relevant temporal colour. It is not an arsenal, nor a capital city, nor an island, nor an isthmus visible from a peak in Darien. Finally, it is all these things too, of course, all that there is, but only by the way, and inevitably. What is to be seized -- and I address that one million (say) here and there who are capable of perceiving at once just what it is that I am about, a million potential "technicians" -- is ourselves. What must occur, now, today, tomorrow, in those widely dispersed but vital centres of experience, is a revelation. At the present time, in what is often thought of as an age of the mass, we tend to fall into the habit of regarding history and evolution as something which goes relentlessly on, quite without our control. The individual has a profound sense of his own impotence as he realises the immensity of the forces involved. We, the creative ones everywhere, must discard this paralytic posture and seize control of the human

process by assuming control of ourselves. We must reject the conventional fiction of "unchanging human nature." There is in fact no such permanence anywhere. There is only *becoming*. [Author's note: The *prise de pouvoir* (seizure of power) by an avant-garde is obviously only an early stage in a larger, more universal movement, and it must not be forgotten that our group of originators "*ne pourra realiser son projet qu'en se supprimant[...] ne peut effectivement exister qu'en tant que parti se depasse lui-meme*" ("will be able to achieve its goal only by suppressing itself [...] can really exist only as a party that transcends itself").]

Organisation, control, revolution: each of the million individuals to whom I speak will be wary of such concepts, will find it all but impossible with a quiet conscience to identify himself [sic] with any group whatsoever, no matter what it calls itself. That is how it should be. But it is at the same time the reason for the impotence of intelligence everywhere in the face of events, for which no one in particular can be said to be responsible, a yawning tide of bloody disasters, the natural outcome of that complex of processes, for the most part unconscious and uncontrolled, which constitute the history of man. Without organisation, concerted action is impossible; the energy of individuals and small groups is dissipated in a hundred and one unconnected, little acts of protest[...] a manifesto here, a hunger strike there. Such protests, moreover, are commonly based on the assumption that social behaviour is intelligent: the hallmark of their futility. If change is to be purposive, men [sic]

must somehow function together in the social situation. And it is our contention that there already exists a nucleus of men who, if they will set themselves gradually and tentatively to the task, are capable of imposing a new and seminal idea: the world waits for them to show their hand.

We have already rejected any idea of a frontal attack. Mind cannot withstand matter (brute force) in open battle. It is rather a question of perceiving clearly and without prejudice what are the forces that are at work in the world and out of whose interaction tomorrow *must* come to be; and then, calmly, without indignation, by a kind of mental ju-jitsu that is ours by virtue of intelligence, of modifying, correcting, polluting, deflecting, corrupting, eroding, outflanking[...] inspiring what we might call the *invisible insurrection*. It will come on the mass of men, if it comes at all, not as something they have voted for, fought for, but like the changing season; they will find themselves in and stimulated by the *situation* consciously at last to recreate it within and without as their own.

Clearly, there is in principle no problem of production in the modern world. The urgent problem of the future is that of distribution, which is presently (dis)ordered in terms of the economic system prevailing in this or that area. This problem on a global scale is an administrative one and will not finally be solved until existing political and economic rivalries are outgrown. Nevertheless, it is becoming widely recognised that distributive problems are most efficiently and economically handled on a global scale by an international organisation like the

United Nations (food, medicine, etc.) and this organisation has already relieved the various national governments of some of their functions. No great imagination is required to see in this kind of transference the beginning of the end for the nation-state. We should at all times do everything in our power to speed up the process.

Meanwhile, our anonymous million can focus their attention on the problem of "leisure." A great deal of what is pompously called "juvenile delinquency" is the inarticulate response of youth incapable of coming to terms with leisure. The violence associated with [juvenile delinquency] is a direct consequence of the alienation of man from himself [sic] brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Man has forgotten how to play. And if one thinks of the soulless tasks accorded each man in the industrial milieu, of the fact that education has become increasingly technological, and for the ordinary man no more than a means of fitting him for a "job," one can hardly be surprised that man is lost. He is almost afraid of more leisure. He demands "overtime" and has a latent hostility towards automation. His creativity stunted, he is orientated outwards entirely. He has to be amused. The forms that dominate his working life are carried over into leisure, which becomes more and more mechanised; thus he is equipped with machines to contend with leisure that machines have accorded him. And to offset all this, to alleviate the psychological wear and tear of our technological age, there is, in a word, ENTERTAINMENT.

When our man [sic] after the day's work comes twitching, tired, off the assembly-line into what are called without a shred of irony his "leisure hours," with what is he confronted? In the bus on the way home he reads a newspaper that is identical to yesterday's newspaper, in the sense that it is a reshake of identical elements[...] four murders, thirteen disasters, two revolutions, and "something approaching a rape"[...]which in turn is identical to the newspaper of the day before that[...]three murders, nineteen disasters, one counter-revolution, and something approaching an abomination[...] and unless he is a very exceptional man, one of our million potential technicians, the vicarious pleasure he derives from paddling in all this violence and disorder obscures from him the fact that there is nothing new in all this "news" and that his daily perusal of it leads not to a widening of consciousness, to a species of mental process that has more in common with [the] salivations of Pavlov's dogs than with the subtleties of human intelligence.

Contemporary man expects to be entertained. His active participation is almost nonexistent. Art, whatever it is, is something of which it is sometimes even proud to flaunt an attitude of invincible ignorance. This sorry state of affairs is unconsciously sanctioned by the stubborn philistinism of our cultural institutions. Museums have approximately the same hours of business as churches, the same sanctimonious odours and silences, and a snobbish presumption in direct spiritual opposition to the vital men [sic] whose works are closeted there. What have those silent corridors to do with

Rembrandt and the "no smoking" signs to do with Van Gogh? Beyond the museum, the man in the street is effectively cut off from art's naturally tonic influence by the fashionable brokerage system which, incidentally, but of economic necessity, has more to do with the emergence and establishment of so-called "art-forms" than is generally realised. Art can have no existential significance for a civilisation that draws a line between life and art, and collects artifacts like ancestral bones for reverence. Art must inform the living; we envisage a situation in which life is continually renewed by art, a situation imaginatively and passionately constructed to inspire each individual to respond creatively, to bring to whatever act a creative comportment. We envisage it. But it is we, now, who must create it. For it does not exist.

The actual situation could not be in sharper contrast. Art anaesthetises the living; we witness a situation in which life is continually devitalised by art, a situation sensorially and venally misrepresented to inspire each individual to respond in a stoic and passive way, to bring to whatever act a banal and automatic consent. For the average man, dispirited, restless, with no power of concentration, a work of art to be noticed at all must compete at the level of spectacle. It must contain nothing that is in principle unfamiliar or surprising; the audience must be able easily and without reservation to identify with the protagonist, to plant itself firmly in the "driving-seat" of the emotional roller-coaster and switch over to remote control. What takes place is empathy at a very obvious level, blind and uncritical. To the

best of my knowledge, it was Brecht who first drew attention to the danger of that method of acting which aims to provoke the state of empathy in an audience at the expense of judgment. It was to counter this promiscuous tendency on the part of the modern audience to identify that he formulated his "distance-theory" of acting, a method calculated to inspire a more active and critical kind of participation. Unfortunately, Brecht's theory has had no impact whatsoever on popular entertainment. The zombies remain; the spectacle grows more spectacular. To adapt an epigram of [Guy Debord] a friend of mine: 'Si vous ne voulez pas assister au spectacle de la fin du monde, il nous faut travailler a la fin du monde du spectacle [if you don't want to assist in the spectacle of the end of the world, you must work toward ending the world of the spectacle]'. (*Notes editoriales d'Internationale Situationniste*, 3 Decembre, 1959. Freely adapted [by Trocchi] from the original.)

**Published as "Technique du coupe du monde", *Internationale Situationniste* #8 (January, 1963)**

## Further Reading and Seeing

Giorgio Agamben, 'State of Exception', 2005  
 Michelangelo Antonioni, 'L'Avventura', 1960 (film)  
 Michelangelo Antonioni, 'The Passenger' (Professione: reporter), 1975 (film)  
 Michelangelo Antonioni, 'Zabriski Point', 1970 (film)  
 Hannah Arendt, 'On Revolution', 1963  
 Derek Bailey, 'Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music', 1992  
 Deborah Barndt Barbara Rahder, 'Just Doing it: Popular Collective Action in the Americas', 2002  
 Bernardo Bertolucci, 'Novecento', 1976 (film)  
 Maurice Blanchot, 'The Unavowable Community', 1988 (original in French, 1983)  
 Bertolt Brecht, 'Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic', 1964  
 Elias Canetti, 'Crowds & Power', 1962  
 Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, 'Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life', 1976  
 David Daube, 'Civil Disobedience in Antiquity', 1972  
 Carl Deal, Tia Lessin, 'Trouble the Water', 2008 (film)  
 Don deLillo, 'Mao II', 1992  
 John Foran (Ed), 'The Future of Revolutions: Rethinking Radical Change in the Age of Globalization', 2003  
 Jean-Luc Godard, 'La Chinoise', 1968 (film)  
 Claire Hailey, 'Camps: A Guide to 21st Century Space', 2009  
 Chester W. Hartman, 'Yerba Buena, Land grab and community resistance in San Francisco', 1974  
 A. Hughes, 'Red Skirts on Clydeside 1900 – 1936', 2002  
 Jennifer Joseph, 'The Civil Disobedience Handbook: A Brief History and Practical Advice for the Politically Disenchanted', 2002  
 Elspeth King, (Ed), 'The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement', 1978  
 Henri Lefebvre, 'State, Space, World. Selected Essays', 2009  
 Henri Lefebvre, 'The Urban Revolution', 1970  
 François Lévy-Kuentz, 'Yves Klein: The Blue Revolution', 2006 (film)  
 Philippa Levine, 'The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset', 2007  
 Colin Leys and Marguerite Mendell, 'Culture and Social Change', 1993  
 J.J. Luna, 'How to Be Invisible: The Essential Guide to Protecting Your Personal Privacy, Your Assets, and Your Life', 2004

'Re-Magazine 9 John', 2002  
 Subcomandante Marcos, Noam Chomsky, and Naomi Klein, 'Ya Basta!: 10 Years of the Zapatista Uprising Writings of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos', 2004  
 Gordon Matta Clark and Carol Goodden, 'Food', 1971  
 Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Being Singular Plural', 2000 (original in French, 1996)  
 Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community (Theory and History of Literature)', 1991 (original in French, 1983)  
 Sergei Nechayev, 'Revolutionary Catechism', 1869  
 Gillo Pontecorvo, 'The Battle of Algiers', 1965 (film)  
 Neil C. Rafeek, 'Communist women in Scotland: Red Clydeside from the Russian Revolution to the end of the Soviet Union', 2008  
 Doug Richmond, 'How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found', 1997  
 Richard Serra, 'Prisoner's Dilemma', 1974 (film)  
 'Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings', edited by Jack Flam, 1996  
 Robert Smithson, 'Hotel Palenque, Mexico', 1969 – 1972  
 Alexander Sokurov, 'Moloch', 1999 (film)  
 Alexander Sokurov, 'The Russian Ark', 2002 (film)  
 Aleksander Sokurov, 'Spiritual Voices (From the war diaries)', 1995 (film)  
 Alexander Sokurov, 'The Sun', 2004 (film)  
 Alexander Sokurov, 'Taurus', 2000 (film)  
 Dorothy Thompson, (Ed), 'Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb', 1983  
 Henry David Thoreau, 'Walden – an annotated edition', 1854  
 Raoul Vaneigem, 'Revolution of Everyday Life', 1967  
 Jeremy Varon, 'Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies', 2004  
 Paul Virilio, 'The Aesthetics of Disappearance', 1991  
 Luchino Visconti, 'The Damned', 1969 (film)  
 Voline, 'The Unknown Revolution', 1947  
 Erich Von Stroheim, 'Greed', 1924 (film)  
 Peter Watkins, 'Culloden', 1964 (film)  
 Peter Watkins, 'Punishment Park', 1970 (film)  
 Wim Wenders, 'The State of Things', 1982 (film)  
 Slavoj Žižek, 'Violence (Big Ideas)', 2008

## Delaying Identity

A **New Business Development Manager**, newly redundant but still *striving* to identify with business development as his vocational calling, *despite* the *uncertainty* he has endured at the hands of the recession, does not yet view the period he spent developing new business as an insensate chapter in his professional history (or the wintry economic climate as a darkly absurd chapter in impersonal history) as he exerts far too much pressure on the already-illuminated UP ARROW. His whole body weight, normally distributed evenly around a six x four-foot frame and between size 12 brogues, is conveyed forwards and rightwards through his hulk, down his forearm, along to the first phalanx of his right forefinger and onto the UP ARROW. Under this sustained pressure his phalanx has turned numb and white. The pressure applied to the UP-ARROW does not make the lift arrive any faster. The expression on the **New Business Development Manager's** face is rigid. The increasing duration of the pressing action, in addition to the rigidity of the gesture, starts to look (from a distance) less like an expression and more like a protest.

A **General Services Section Librarian**, newly promoted from Library Assistant and still *very much* identifying with librarianship as her vocational calling, erases pencil annotations from the margins of a book entitled, 'Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice'. She brushes aside motes of rubberised graphite

with the last three digits of her right hand. She notes that, through the process of erasing each annotation, she generates a grey blemish which, like a bruise, gradually develops then diffuses. The ultimate insult is biro. Nothing about these annotations offends her. With one eye always on specifics, she questions whether annotation is an appropriate word for the pencil marks since they are, so far, abstract. At this point, the **General Services Section Librarian** does not consider what the marks are indicating, but she has intuitively decided, based on their regularity and restraint, that they were drawn by a cognisant adult. She rarely reads non-fiction. Paper money is occasionally found marking a page in a returned book. She checks the last page. The last word is 'abacus'.

The **New Business Development Manager** finally ascends. On reaching the fourth floor, he exits the lift/removes his jacket/folds it under his arm/checks his inside wrist (where he positions the face of his watch for protection against knocks and scratches)/notes the time. He is unaware this has become his new routine. If he could observe himself, as a narrator might, he would be worried by the force of his habits, he would be impressed by his improvisation of a new routine in the substitute working environment of the library, and he might reflect on which of his daily actions were habitual and confining and which were empowering and sustaining.

The **New Business Development Manager** forges ahead with his substitute routine/habit. From the stand, he selects only the daily newspapers with job sections. A sigh. He unfolds them, one at a time, across a desk – always without seating himself. He leans forward, placing his weight onto the palm of his left hand, leaving his right hand free to navigate each sheet. From a distance, the impression is of a man lost, leaning on the bonnet of a car, poring over a map (the map, perhaps, fluttering in inclement weather), attempting to navigate a void.

The **General Services Section Librarian** returns the de-annotated 'Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice' to the 300s bay. It slots into the gap between 'Civil Disobedience and other essays' and 'Civil Disobedience in Antiquity', which are, in turn, bracketed by 'The Civil Disobedience Handbook: A Brief History and Practical Advice for the Politically Disenchanted' and 'Civility and Disobedience'. There is a niche. She observes its extent. The annotations are not yet erased from her mind. The **General Services Section Librarian**, with her conscientious eye set on perfection, removes all the civilly disobedient books for close inspection. *Despite* her preference for affective prose she is drawn to the words 'disobedience' and 'antiquity'. She opens the book. More advancing annotation/additional underlining/commentary in the margins. The chapter heading 'Women and civil disobedience in antiquity' loads her imagination, *despite* her anger at its annotation. Erasure forestalled, she reads on. She did not know about women and civil disobedience in antiquity. *Huh*, she did not know. Now, she wonders what the marks she erased earlier were indicating.

All the job sections are missing. Without the job sections the **New Business Development Manager** is lost. The daily job sections are a certain thing for him.

*Uncertainty* is exhausting. So far, there has not been a new job for him, but that is bearable if he can correspond with the world of business/jobs/certainty via the job sections and keep sight of his vocational identity *despite* his redundancy.

The **New Business Development Manager** wanders over to report the missing job sections to the **General Services Section Librarian**. He interrupts her annotation of a book. She looks at his black eye. The damage is diffusing. Things are perhaps improving for him. His attempts to keep up appearances – wear a suit/with a tie/ check the job sections daily – *despite* his obvious redundancy, makes him notable. She explains the possibilities – someone has beaten him to it and is pouring over the job sections elsewhere or they have been stolen. Kindly, with consideration for his feelings of redundancy, the **General Services Section Librarian** suggests that the **New Business Development Manager** waits a little while; in all likelihood the job sections will be returned before he finishes reading the news. He takes a seat. This is not his routine. An article on airlines flying empty planes across the Atlantic interests him. *Huh*, he did not know. He finds this darkly absurd.

*Despite striving* to identify, and *very much* identifying, with their respective professional callings they have become diverted. Their professional habits/routines are, for a moment anyway, delayed. Their professional identities are, temporarily anyway, forgotten. Without being awake to it, yet, their imaginations have been loaded. Given time, these diversions might flourish in wayward directions. They might identify other interests, preferences, inclinations and begin to drift off course. They might.

HOW TO

DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
DISAPPEAR

COMPLETELY  
AND NEVER BE FOUND

*"...a valuable resource for that special breed who has what it takes to develop a whole new lifestyle."*

— Campus Review

*"Recommended Reading."*

— Guardian Spy Shop

Doug Richmond has never changed identities. But as a journalist traveling the world, he has collected statements from dozens of people who have. What makes this book so incredible is that every scrap of information is based on case histories that are undeniably true.

*How To Disappear Completely and Never Be Found* contains heavy-duty disappearing techniques for those with "a need to know." It tells how to plan a disappearance, how to arrange for new identification, how to cope in the first few days, how to find a job and establish credit.

You'll learn how to remain invisible from whoever might be after you: the police, private eyes, insurance companies, your spouse. You'll learn how to make it appear you've left the country when you haven't. You'll learn how to commit "pseudocide": making people believe you are dead.

Identity changing is not for everyone. *How To Disappear Completely And Never Be Found* lets you know what that lifestyle is like. If you decide to disappear, you will know to do it so completely that no one will ever find you.

ISBN 0-915179-52-0



## the essence of all crime is undivulged

‘There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told. Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously in the eyes — die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed. Now and then, alas, the conscience of man takes up a burthen so heavy in horror that it can be thrown down only into the grave. And thus the essence of all crime is undivulged.’

**Edgar Allan Poe**, ‘A Man of the Crowd’

Based on a roughly fictive biography of William Randolph Hearst, Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane* exhibits the life of a reclusive billionaire. The first part of his life is marked by his public existence and desire to be the leading man, the greatest aviator, the most important producer. He succeeds in all of this but suddenly Kane decides to disappear and remove himself from society for the last 24 years of his life. The story unfolds as the journalist Jerry Thompson tries to find out what could possibly have been the motive for Kane’s disappearance from the public eye. We, the spectators, find our identifications split: both with Kane’s love of the spotlight and his desire to flee the unending gaze of the public; both admiration for Thompson’s curiosity and a hatred of him for forcing the successful recluse to account for himself.

There is something intriguing about the disappearance of another person, or the more inward-directed question, “How could I disappear?” Such questions gain their force

because they lead us to question our very existence and identity. Where did these disappeared people go? What was their motive? Is it the desire to be undefinable or perhaps to identify oneself with nothing? Is the burden of existence so great that we must flee, or is the burden of existence only itself a chimera caused by identity?

History is filled with tales of people who mysteriously disappeared without a trace.

There was, for example, the Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader who disappeared in a boat off the East Coast of the United States as he was on his way to Europe. He was attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a 13 foot sailboat as part of a project titled *In Search of the Miraculous*. Perhaps he found it. Perhaps not.

Although disappearance is mostly forced, some will disappear for pleasure – trying to leave behind your old life in order to escape from something, someone. Disappearance in this sense is drastic, the last option.

More banal, and more frightening reasons for no return could be seizure by the government without due process of law, mental illness which produces amnesia of self, or simply death.

No matter how control and authority establish the legibility and identifiability of the modern subject, there are always gaps where individuals can disappear into, without leaving behind any trace. But in order to achieve this there is a heavy price to pay: you must abandon your own identity, you must physically, literally, erase yourself.

But like any market exchange, you get what you pay for: you gain the opportunity to start from scratch and to become free from your former identity. The artist Lee Lozano made a piece called the “The Dropout Piece” and let herself disappear from the art world in 1970. In a case of life imitating art, she eventually disappeared completely from the art world for the rest of her life. She didn’t leave a trace as she embodied the ultimate disappearance.

Lee Lozano did exactly what the handbooks in *The Disappearance Piece* of Bik Van der Pol propose. This work consists of stacks of a facsimile of Doug Richmond’s 1995 book *How to Disappear, Completely, and Never be Found*. The publication guides the reader through the mechanics of how to disappear without leaving tracks, and the author explains how you can efface your old life by faking suicide and then taking on a new identity. He continues with instructions about how to function in society without any background.

The artists Bik Van der Pol question if such radical events as Lozano’s disappearance can be traced and if they disappeared intentionally or by chance? Bik Van der Pol originally made it for a show in Rotterdam in 1998 and from then on they presented the stacks of books in different forms of installations. Visitors take copies so that, as the exhibition progresses, the stacks begin to disappear, and the participants become collaborators in the work’s own disappearance. But in their installation it is not clear that visitors are allowed to take a copy since they are not explicitly told to do so. Taking a copy almost feels like stealing something. In this way, *The Disappearance Piece* is different than other take-away art practices (such as the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres or Rirkrit Tiravanija) where the concept of removal is central and the audience is invited to participate.

Here the participation is more ambiguous Bik Van der Pol asks us to question our unacknowledged role in a world of disappearance. Do we, in our confusion about whether or not to participate in the disappearance, fail to act? Or, do we, in our insistence on appearing, proclaim a right of the state to police our identities? In other words, what is the difference between a right to disappear, a right to appear, and a right not to be hidden by another?

## Bik Van der Pol

### *The Disappearance Piece*

*How To Disappear Completely and Never Be Found* is a self-help instruction book about planning a disappearance, arranging a new identity, pseudocide and more.

After the publisher went out of business in 2006, one of the books was reprinted as a scanned and personified edition of 1000 copies for each time *The Disappearance Piece* is shown.



*The Disappearance Piece* at 'For Reasons of State' (exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program), The Kitchen, New York, 2008

## COLOPHON

*It isn't what it used to be and will never be again*

Bik Van der Pol

Edited by Francis McKee and Louise Shelley

© 2009, Centre for Contemporary Arts, the artists, the writers

Published October 2009 in an edition of 2500 by CCA: Glasgow alongside the exhibition *It isn't what it used to be and will never be again*. Bik Van der Pol

Project initiated by Kerri Moogan

Designed by Sarah Tripp

The exhibition was realised with the financial support of the Mondriaan Foundation Amsterdam and Fonds BKVB

Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow [www.cca-glasgow.com](http://www.cca-glasgow.com)

p.68 *A Revolutionary Proposal: Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds* by Alexander Trocchi courtesy of Birlini publishers (1963)

Sarah Tripp would like to thank Joan Stewart for her assistance in researching *Delaying Identity*

Bik Van der Pol would like to thank Cove Park and their staff for their support

**CCA:**

 Scottish  
Arts Council  
LOTTERY FUNDED



