ROLAND

—
INCLUDING TEXTS &
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS BY

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COLOPHON

The ICA is proud to present the ninth issue of ROLAND, which has been produced to accompany the programme from February to May 2011. During this period, we are holding a solo exhibition by the British artist Nathaniel Mellors, which will be accompanied by an extensive programme of films and performances organised by him in tandem with Mark Pilkington of *Strange Attractor*. Mellors' show features the screening of *Episodes 1, 2 and 4* of *Ourhouse*, his ongoing series that examines the use and potential abstraction of language. Complementing the films, a sculpture depicting the characters in *Ourhouse* further reinforces Mellors' interest in the objectification of ideas.

During this period, the ICA also presents the Birds Eye View Film Festival with its annual celebration of women filmmakers, focusing on the representation and involvement of women within the horror genre. Additionally, a programme of weekly talks is launched by conversations between a number of figures from the London art world, as well as a discussion with author James Frey on his forthcoming novel *Final Testament of the Holy Bible*, focusing on the theme of blasphemy.

Throughout February, prior to Mellors' exhibition, the ICA embarks on a series of Live Weekends, beginning with *The Last of the Red Wine*, a sitcom devised by Sally O'Reilly that will be developed and performed at the ICA. Following this, *Notation & Interpretation*, a series of workshops, discussions, sound pieces and live performances, explores the relationships between composition and performance. The Live Weekend culminates with a performance from the theatre collective Shunt, who bring their unique style and verve to the ICA.

This issue of ROLAND includes introductions and information on all of these projects, providing a broad context for viewers to engage with the themes they bring into play. The publication also contains a section handed over to the New Zealand artist Simon Denny, who has focused his attention on the culture and aesthetics of the television set in recent history.

9 March – 15 May 2011

NATHANIEL MELLORS

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This spring, the ICA presents the first major solo exhibition in a UK public institution by Nathaniel Mellors. In recent years, Mellors has produced a distinctive body of work that combines video, sculpture and writing. The complex relationship between language and power is a recurring theme in his multi-faceted work, typically manifesting itself in absurdist, humorous narratives that reveal a penchant for satire and the grotesque. For the ICA, Mellors has installed *Episodes 1, 2 and 4* from his new video series *Ourhouse* (2010–) alongside the animatronic sculpture *Hippy Dialectics (Ourhouse)* (2010). Mellors has also programmed a series of events in association with Mark Pilkington's *Strange Attractor* and *Junior Aspirin Records*.

Ourhouse is set in a dilapidated mansion in the English countryside. The series portrays the eccentric Maddox-Wilson family, whose roles and relationships begin to shift after an imposing male figure ('The Object'), that the family fail to recognise as human, arrives in the house and begins to consume and excrete their books.In doing so The Object takes control of language within the house. The themes that are played out in the ensuing episodes are the product of the ingested, half-digested texts.

Mellors combines a number of approaches, including drama, sculpture, film making and music, to formulate an individual language with which to address contemporary issues. The basic scenario of *Ourhouse* is influenced by Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* (1969). *Ourhouse* stars Richard Bremmer alongside Brian Catling, Gwendoline Christie, David Birkin, Johnny Vivash, Benedict Hopper and Patrick Kennedy. It hybridises Mellors' interest in linguistic manipulation and absurdism with the form of the TV drama series. The many layers and nuances that comprise *Ourhouse* also demonstrate Mellors' interest in sculpture, particularly as it represents the objectification of ideas; the way in which forms can come to displace the ideas they purport to represent.

Episodes 1, 2 and 4 of *Ourhouse* are installed at the ICA alongside *Hippy Dialectics (Ourhouse)*, an animatronic sculpture of Richard Bremmer's character Charles 'Daddy' Maddox-Wilson, whose face is doubled and joined together by its own hair. The exhibition continues in the ICA's concourse with a presentation of work by artists who primarily operate outside of the mechanics of the commercial art world and whose ideas relate to those in *Ourhouse* and the corresponding talks and music programmes. A further publication *The Almanach* – a repository of *Ourhouse*-related themes and content – will be launched during the exhibition, edited by Chris Bloor and Nathaniel Mellors.

Each week during the exhibition there is a film screening and talk, programmed by Mellors and Mark Pilkington of *Strange Attractor*, the publishing house and events organisation that 'celebrates unpopular culture' with a focus on arcane subjects. In addition to his work as a visual artist, Mellors co-runs *Junior Aspirin Records*, an independent record label with an eclectic catalogue of music by a diverse range of artists including Socrates that Practices Music, The Rebel, Advanced Sportswear, Skill 7 Stamina 12, Bob Parks and God in Hackney. Mellors has programmed a series of live music performances and events for the ICA theatre – a Well Rounded Records club night of UK Funky and dubstep and live music nights by *Junior Aspirin Records* and *Strange Attractor*.

Nathaniel Mellors was born in 1974 in Doncaster, England. He currently lives and works in Amsterdam and London. *Ourhouse Episodes 1, 2 and 4* continues themes established by Mellors with the exhibitions *Black Gold* and *Profondo Viola* (Matt's Gallery, London, 2001 & 2004), *The Time Surgeon* (ArtSway & Lyon Biennial, 2007; Stedelijk Museum CS, Amsterdam, 2008 and South London Gallery, 2009) and *Giantbum* (Altermodern: Tate Triennial, 2009 and Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam, 2009). *Ourhouse* was recently exhibited at De Hallen Haarlem in 2010 and is being episodically exhibited throughout 2010–11 in the different venues of *British Art Show 7 – In The Days of The Comet*, including the Hayward Gallery, where *Ourhouse Episode 2* and the vomiting animatronic *The Object (Ourhouse)* are on show until 17 April 2011.

The new publication B*ook A or MEGACOLON or For & Against Language* published by Onomatopee (distribution by Motto) featuring Mellors' scripts alongside texts by John C. Welchman and Mick Peter will be available at the opening of the exhibition.

DISPATCHES FROM INSIDE OURHOUSE

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DAN FOX

Imagine a family. Father, stepmother, two sons. The family lives somewhere in the British countryside. Think Wiltshire, or a quiet part of Suffolk, a landscape marked by history and the uncanny, where you might find an ancient barrow mound next to a decommissioned Cold War listening station. Their home is a big, rambling old pile; shabby and careworn almost to the point of neglect. It's called Ourhouse.

The family is upper middle-class but not materially wealthy; their accents and conversation speak of privilege and education, but cash flow is a problem: assets tied up in property or swallowed up by a divorce, a house that costs a lot to run. They're bourgeois bohemian: liberal arts educated, creative but with that self-absorption that inheritances and trust funds tend to incubate. You know the type: public school, Oxbridge, a stint finding themselves in India, and then a job in film or the art world. Cultural touchstones: the Greeks, Shakespeare, Russian novels, Bloomsbury's Modernism-lite, the famous bits from Beckett. The 1960s are their cultural golden age: they use Dylan and the Stones for loosening up, Jung and Laing for getting their heads straight. Holidays used to be taken in Italy, but then the money ran out so these days it's Wales. Red wine and a bit of pot at dinner parties (there was a family problem with Class As), though they love a rustic pub lunch. Labour, Liberal, Conservative, Marxist, libertarian, anarchist: they've tried them all, but these days they're much more likely to be National Theatre members than card-carrying activists.

Ourhouse belongs to Charles Maddox-Wilson. Charlie is aged somewhere north of 60 (he's spry, but fast living has aged him). He's married to Annalise (her familial nickname is 'Babydoll'), who is young enough to be his daughter. Charlie has two sons: Truson, from an earlier marriage, and Faxon, who is adopted. Both are in their 20s, a similar age to Babydoll, and their peculiar names are constant, blunt reminders of the positions they hold in the family. Broken and patched together, the Maddox-Wilsons are not that different from many families. They're creatively driven to the point of eccentricity, but some of this is bluster, beneath which lies convention, hierarchy and old-fashioned bourgeois values. The family employs a handyman called Robert Jobson (aka Bobby Jobby). He's Irish working class. (Convention, hierarchy and old-fashioned bourgeois values govern Ourhouse, remember.) The Maddox-Wilsons are fond of Bobby, and maddening though he finds them, his loyalty is strong. Bobby keeps the grounds in order and interacts with the world outside Ourhouse, running errands or doing the weekly shop. The Maddox-Wilsons like to keep themselves to themselves. Charlie doesn't like phones or the

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internet and protects his family from too many outside influences.

One day, they discover that a visitor has inexplicably appeared in their living room: an imposing, white-haired man dressed in pristine sportswear. The family does not recognise this visitor as a human form, however. Each Maddox-Wilson perceives it differently: Charlie sees a designer chair, Faxon first understands it to be a skittle, and then a fruit machine, whilst all Truson can perceive is a terrifying vortex of static noise and empty space. This entity is The Object. It starts to control what the family sees, does and says with collective hallucinations which it generates by slowly ingesting all the books in the house, turning their subject matter into unsettling situations for the family to deal with. The Object is an avenging angel. It has come to turn their lives upside down, twist them inside out, run them ragged, wring them dry, toy with them, fuck with them, brutalise them, persecute, radicalise and reset them.

This was the scenario described to me by Nathaniel Mellors for his new work Ourhouse, a sci-fi/comedy/drama serial in six episodes. (At time of writing, the first two installments have been completed.) In autumn 2009, he asked if I would like to work with him on developing its characters and basic plotline, groundwork that he would use for writing the scripts. The invitation arose from a shared fondness for British TV of the 1960s, 70s and 80s and a curiosity about what happened to the sense of play and imagination found in programming from those decades. Ourhouse doesn't reference (as is the current art parlance) any particular programmes, but nods to the surreal establishment satire of Monty Python (a touchstone for much of Mellors' work); the science-fiction dread and occult spells cast over the British landscape by shows such as Children of the Stones, Doctor Who, Edge of Darkness, The Prisoner, Quatermass and Threads; the fusion of the dreamlike and the bleakly realist in Dennis Potter's plays, and the recent grotesque horror comedy of The League of Gentlemen and Catterick. We were interested in television as a stew of realism, surrealism, sci-fi, music hall and psychedelia.

If all this sounds parochial and nostalgic, that's because it is. (It could be argued that for audiences outside the UK, such culturally specific touchstones are hard to relate to. Then again, if you didn't grow up in the Wild West, does that mean you can't enjoy cowboy films?) Parochiality is a key theme in Ourhouse: it is buried in the title – Ourhouse. It is about sovereignty at different levels – the individual, the family unit, the local community and the bigger world outside. It asks who controls whom and asks: should they even be in control in the first place? When the outside world starts to encroach, do you

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turn inwards, becoming more parochial, or do you embrace it and look beyond yourself? For those of a certain age, the title Ourhouse might bring to mind Madness' 1982 single 'Our House', which isn't a bad shortcut to understanding Mellors' series: both are about class, a romanticised ordinariness, and its expression through property ('Our house / that was our castle and our keep'). Mellors, however, goes a step further to look at how that might lead to psychological breakdown.

The Ourhouse galaxy orbits around Charlie. Like an ageing version of Richard E. Grant's Withnail, from Bruce Robinson's satirical swipe at the 1960s Withnail and I (1987), Charlie is intelligent, charismatic and creative, yet also self-centred and controlling. His personality is shaped by an individualism gone to seed, a confusion of countercultural freedom with selfishness. This individualism is fed and watered by privilege, but is also the result of Charlie trying to avoid the obligations of status. He fetishises the working class, even going so far as to affect a Mockney accent and spending an entire episode 'dahn the boozer', symptomatic of a pathetic desire to be thought of as 'real' and 'authentic'. He lavishes his adopted Liverpudlian son, Faxon, with praise, exoticising him for his class otherness, whilst ignoring Truson's sincere pleas for recognition. Charlie's misguided attempts at downward class mobility also express his anxious need to escape The Council. Charlie is convinced that The Council is a crypto-Masonic secret society, trying to use the law of family bloodlines in order to recruit

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him to its cause. It sends him letters and monitors him from the gates of the Ourhouse grounds. But it could just be asking him to pay overdue Council Tax. As with many things in *Ourhouse*, it's hard for us to tell; reality here is like a radio with bad reception, always on the edge of clarity, its signal fuzzy and distorted.

The house is a mirror of Charlie's personality. Its architecture is both prosaic and fantastical, and like him, it's impressive but run-down. Early on in the series we see a pub interior and a gallery, but slowly we realise that these places are inside the house rather than external to it. So too are its denizens: the pub's droll landlady Lorraine, Charlie's venomous alcoholic brother Uncle Tommy, an experimental theatre troupe, and a group of builders who turn out to be a historical re-enactment society. Real people paid to work as bit-part players in some rich guy's fantasy, or spectres of Charlie's imagination? As The Object begins to wage its campaign of supernatural psychological warfare against the family, the house extends itself in tandem with Charlie's mental unravelling: the pub grows from cosy country boozer to city centre mega-pub, the offices of a fashionable consultancy business appear (staffed by Micks Fleetwood, Hucknall and Jagger), the swimming pool grows from domestic to Olympic size, and new rooms appear in the house with every turn of the screw The Object makes.

Apart from Lorraine, Charlie's young wife Babydoll is the only woman in Ourhouse. At first she seems to be a manipulative and bullying gold-digger, using girlish petulance and an affected artistic insouciance to maintain her position of power in the household. But as Charlie descends into madness, she drops the play-acting, becoming increasingly level-headed as she realises that she's been hiding from herself, and that she has to escape this hysterical and hierarchical all-male household. Babydoll also recognises that the naïve Truson, and the more worldly but lonely Faxon, need to be liberated from the domineering Charlie and encourages them along the road to independence.

In a sense, liberation is also the mission of The Object. Using language as its primary weapon, The Object deprives the family of its ability to communicate, stripping back the layers of control that keep each family member in his or her place. Bobby, with one foot inside Ourhouse and the other in the world beyond its overgrown gardens, is the only person able to see The Object for what it is. But this is also because Bobby is semi-literate, and not subject to The Object's games in quite the same way as the Maddox-Wilsons are. The Object is reminiscent of the monolith in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Terence Stamp's nameless guest in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema*: visitors who arrive unannounced, their objective to liberate the film's characters from themselves. These films were both

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made in 1968, and the monolith and Stamp could be read as avatars of 1960s revolutionary idealism, whether they are taking humankind on to the next evolutionary level, or freeing a bourgeois family of its stuck-up neuroses. The Object also seems to be a higher intelligence, a kind of moralising force, but it is untethered from any social Zeitgeist and its ways and methods are no less bullying than the family dynamics of the Maddox-Wilsons.

Ourhouse, plays with a number of themes that recur in Mellors' work: language and how it controls us; how authority is constructed; the prism of subjectivity that affects everything we see and do. Language is pushed and pulled with ecstatic playfulness in Mellors' films, his scripts a blizzard of bad puns, spoonerisms, malapropisms, scatological jokes and parodies of political rhetoric or art-speak. In his 2007 film *The Time Surgeon*, an evil scientist uses language to torture a man trapped inside a tape recorder that shuttles him backwards and forwards through time. Aphasia and nonsense speech pepper the film, as does the spirit of George Orwell, that great crusader against the manipulation of language for political ends. Language eats itself in Mellors' Rabelaisian *Giantbum* (2009), the tale of a group of medieval travellers trapped inside a giant's intestines, led there by a charismatic but deranged religious crank called the Father. They suffer the metaphysical nightmare of realising that the inside of the giant's belly has no outside (it is the outside), and that they have been dupes of the Father's religious mania. In *The Time Surgeon*, *Giantbum* and now *Ourhouse*, a central authority figure – the Surgeon, the Father, Charlie – is destroyed by hubris

and language; their idea of what reality is (their 'interiority') is shattered by a greater external force.

In earlier works, Mellors' characters are comical ciphers for authority or miscommunication, but in *Ourhouse* they have grown to take on added psychological depth: witness Babydoll bullying Bobby over his reading difficulties, Faxon affectionately trying to explain to Truson what a fake is, or Charlie's physical estrangement from his young wife. There is both pathos and bathos in their struggle with reality. But that reality is always a few clicks out of reach. Words get in the way. Parochialism of the mind, body and place imprisons each character. Ourhouse was their castle and their keep. Now it's their prison and The Object is their jailor.

1.   Still from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968
2.   Still from *The Quatermass Experiment*, 1953
3.   Still from *Teorema*, 1968
4.   Still from *The League of Gentlemen*, 2001
5.   Still from *The Time Surgeon*, 2007
6.   Still from *Ourhouse*, 2010—
7.   Still from *Giantbum Stage 2 (Theatre)*, 2008

HISTORY AND THE DEATH WISH: *ZARDOZ* AS OPEN FORM

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FREDERIC JAMESON

[…] But the inhabitants of Boorman's Vortex are a ruling class of a particular type. They are drawn principally from the scientific elite, whose discoveries and technological know-how have made this new Utopia possible. Thus another possible interpretation or decoding would read the film [*Zardoz*] as a fable of the University itself, as the spectacle of a realm isolated from the surrounding culture, of intellectuals as unsuccessful candidates for some projected new race of supermen, and their ivory tower as the spoils of the barbarians who break in upon them to destroy it.

[…]
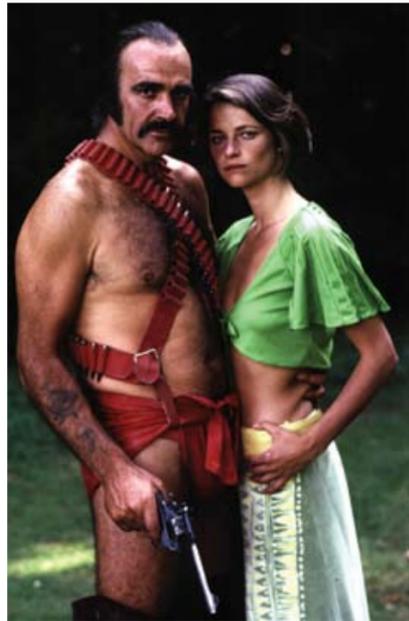
Still from *Zardoz*, UK, 1973

This is the moment, perhaps, to press our initial question a little more insistently. We should try to determine what connection there is, if any, between Boorman's 'ideology' – if that is the right word for the conceptual content of *Zardoz* – and his purely filmic visual composition. The film, which has inevitably been compared to Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, seems to me much closer in general narrative spirit to movies like Fellini's *Satyricon*. (To reawaken a dead world is as 'speculative' as the projection of a future one; it is an enterprise we might characterise – think of Golding's *Inheritors* – as archaeological science fiction.)

The visual features of *2001* were, on the one hand, the screen as a surface to be inscribed, and on the other, the window-

Chapter VI: How Pantagruel met with a Limousin, who too affectedly did counterfeit the French language

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FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

Upon a certain day, I know not when, *Pantagruel* walking after supper with some of his fellow-Students without that gate of the City, through which we enter on the road to *Paris,* encountered with a young spruce-like Scholar that was coming upon the same very way; and after they had saluted one another, asked him thus: My friend, from whence comest thou now? and the *Scholar* answered him: From the alme, inclyte, and celebrate Academie, which is *vocitated Lutetia*. *What is the meaning of this* (said *Pantagruel*) *to one of his men?* It is (answered he) from *Paris*, Thou comest from *Paris* then (said *Pantagruel*) and how do you spend your time there, you my Masters the Students of *Paris*? the *Scholar* answered, We transfretate the *Sequan* at the *dilucul* and *crepuscul*, we deambulate by the compites and quadrives of the Urb; we despumate the *Latial* verbocination; and, like verisimilarie amorabons, we captat the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform and omnigenal feminine sexe: upon certain diecules we invisat the Lupanares, and in a *venerian* extase inculcate our veretres into the penitissime recesses of the pudends of these amicabilissim meretricules: then do we cauponisate in the meritory taberns of the *pineapple*, the *castle*, the *magdalene*, and the *mule*, goodly vervecine spatules performinated with petrocile; and if by fortune there be rarity or penury of pecune in our marsupies, and that they be exhausted of ferruginean mettal, for the shot we dimit our codices and oppugnerat our vestiments, whilst we prestolate the coming of the Tabellaries from the Penates and patriotick Lares: to which *Pantagruel* answered, *What devilish language is this?* by the Lord, I think thou are some kind of Heretick. My lord, no, said the *Scholar*; for libentissimally, as soon as it illucesceth any minute slice of the day, I demigrate

into one of these so well architected minsters, and there irrorating my self with faire lustral water, I mumble off little parcels of some missick precation of our sacrificals: and submurmurating my horaric precules, I elevate and absterge my anime from its nocturnal inquinations. I revere the Olympicols. I latrially venere the supernal Astripotent: I dilige and redame my proxims: I observe the decalogical precepts, and according to the facultatule of my vires, I do not discede from them one late unguicule; nevertheless it is veriforme, that because *Mammona* doth not supergurgitate any thing in my loculs, that I am somewhat rare and lent to supererogate the elemosynes to those egents, that hostially queritate their stipe.

Prut, tut, (said *Pantagruel,*) what doth this foole mean to say? I think he is upon the forging of some diabolical tongue, and that enchanter-like he would charme us; to whom one of his men said, Without doubt (Sir) this fellow would counterfeit the Language of the *Parisians*, but he doth only flay the *Latine*, imagining by so doing that he doth highly *Pindarize* it in most eloquent termes, and strongly conceiteth himself to be therefore a great Oratour in the *French*, because he disdaineth the common manner of speaking; to which *Pantagruel* said, *Is it true?* The *Scholar* answered, My worshipful Lord, my *genie* is not apt nate to that which this flagitious Nebulon saith, to excoriate the cucule of our vernacular Gallick, but viceversally I gnave opere and by veles and rames enite to loculetate it, with the Latinicome redundance. By G— (said *Pantagruel*), I will teach you to speak, but first come hither, and tell me whence thou art? To this the Scholar answered; The primeval origin of my aves and ataves was indigenarie of the *Lemovick* regions, where requiesceth the corpor of the hagiotat St. *Martial*, I understand thee very well (said *Pantagruel*), when all comes to all, thou art a *Limousin*, and thou wilt here by thy affected speech counterfeit the *Parisians*: well now, come hither, I must show thee a new trick, and handsomely give thee the *combfeat*: with this he took him by the throat, saying to him, Thou flayest the Latine; by St. *John*, I will make thee flay the foxe, for I will now flay thee alive. Then began the poor *Limousin* to cry; Haw, *gwid* Maaster, haw, Laord, *my halp and St.* Marshaw, haw, *I'm worried*; Haw, *my thropple, the bean of my cragg is bruck!* Haw, *for* gauads *seck, lawt my lean*, Mawster; *waw, waw, waw.* Now (said *Pantagruel*) thou speakest naturally, and so let him go, for the poor *Limousin* had totally berayed, and thoroughly conshit his breeches, which were not deep and large enough, but round streat canniond gregs, having in the seat a piece like a keelings taile; and therefore in *French* called *de chausses a queue de merlus*. Then (said *Pantagruel*) St. *Alipantin*, what civette? *fi* to the

cockpit travelling across an expanse of landscapes. So its great events were moments like that in which the 'life lines' of the sleeping crew members gradually flattened out into death's static linearity (here the screen functions as an instrument panel, or the registering apparatus of a seismograph or an EKG). Or that in which the computer HAL is dismantled, circuit by circuit (the visual sequence of lights being extinguished here reduplicated by the successive decomposition of the computer's voice as well). Or again, like the slow approach or rapid tumbling disappearance of the body of the dead astronaut in space, encased in the cocoon of his cumbersome space suit. Or the final dizzying flight over some hallucinogenic Arctic of colours beyond the normal range of human eyesight. *Zardoz* is no match for moments like these, in which we are spectators seated comfortably in the speeding vehicle of a movie theatre soaring into infinity. But to Kubrick's reaffirmation of the *flatness* of the visual screen, Boorman has his own distinctive effects to oppose, and notably the concept of the visual field as a plane or interface of some more complex and layered, chippable or fragmentable crystalline solid. (I would suppose that the ultimate symbol of the crystal emerges from Boorman's use of the camera, rather than the other way around.) So the visual pleasures of *Zardoz* are of a world explored with the rather complex registering instrument of crystalline refraction, or, occasionally, a world itself encased in crystal, and to be penetrated or at length, to be smashed. Connery pounds on the invisible force field that is also your movie screen, and he knows the ultimate and predictable, Welles-like bewilderment in the cinematographic house of mirrors. But there are also more curious projections of technique back into theme, or of what Roman Jakobson would have called the axis of combination back into the axis of selection again.[1] This is notably visible in the obsession with plastic bags and coverings, which are little other than the movie screen itself gone limp, sagging upon the struggling characters and impeding their movements, a kind of ultimate working through of Boorman's interest in planes and silhouettes, of solids viewed through semi-transparent partitions of veils or vegetation.

One is tempted, indeed, to see the whole plot in terms of a substitution of one kind of space for another. In this reading, the viewer is prepared for *Zardoz*'s peculiar non-Euclidean geometry and spatial structure by the initial experience of the stone head itself. Detached against the void from all perspective or worldness, it's a free-floating image, then organises the rest of the ordinary physical world rid around itself as a kind of Gestalt-like 'background'. Here normal innerworldly perspective is then bracketed by something like a kind of meta-space or meta-perspective. We are forced to move inside the head itself, inside of some new and unaccustomed enveloping solid, in order to glimpse our world again in the ordinary way, in a Kubrick-like panoramic flight. This initial visual experience would then provide the motivation for the rest of the film's development. In terms of the content, it expresses the terror of the open plain, of that defenseless exposure of the remnants of humanity to their marauding persecutors. The other end of the film, the terminus of what might be called this purely spatial plot, is the

cave's clean but contained space, in which the screen once more recovers its character, as a space on which to be inscribed. Here the succession of slides gives us the family sequence through time to death and a kind of skeletal *trompe-l'oeil* composition, with the hanging gun and the fossil traces of an ancient human past. The Vortex, then, comes to be seen as the bewildering and mediatory element through which we must pass to arrive at this concluding image, in which, through space, something like the real time of human existence is once more reinvented.

Excerpt from Frederic Jameson, 'History and the death wish: *Zardoz* as open form', from *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 3, 1974, pp. 5–8

1. See his definition of poetry in 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Cambridge, 1960, p. 358

Image taken from Rabelais, Gargantua, Valence, Claude La Ville, 1547

devil with this Turnepeater, as he stinks, and so let him go: but this hug of *Pantagruels* was such a terrour to him all the days of his life, and took such deep impression in his fancie, that very often, distracted with sudden affrightments, he would startle and say that *Pantagruel* held him by the neck; besides that it procured him a continual drought and desire to drink, so that after some few years he died of the death *Roland*, in plain *English* called thirst, a work of divine vengeance, showing us that which saith the Philosopher and *Aulus Gellius*, that it becometh us to speak according to the common language; and that we should (as said *Octavian Augustus*) strive to shun all strange and unknown termes with as much heedfulnesse and circumspection as Pilots of ships use to avoid the rocks and banks in the sea.

Excerpt from Francois Rabelais, 'Chapter VI: How Pantagruel met with a Limousin, who too affectedly did counterfeit the French language', *The Second Book: Pantagruel, King of the Dipsodes with his Heroic Acts and Prowesses*, composed by M. Alcofribas, The Everyman Library edition, pp. 185–187

THE BIG TOE

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GEORGES BATAILLE

The big toe is the most *human* part of the human body, in the sense that no other element of this body is as differentiated from the corresponding element of the anthropoid ape (chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan, or gibbon). This is due to the fact that the ape is tree-dwelling, whereas man moves on the earth without clinging to branches, having himself become a tree; in other words raising himself straight up in the air like a tree, and all the more beautiful for the correctness of his erection. In addition, the function of the human foot consists in giving a firm foundation to the erection of which man is so proud (the big toe, ceasing to grasp branches, is applied to the ground on the same plane as the other toes).

But whatever the role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head – in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things – sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud.

Although within the body blood flows in equal quantities from high to low and from low to high, there is a bias in favour of that which elevates itself, and human life is erroneously seen as an elevation. The division of the universe into subterranean hell and perfectly pure heaven is an indelible conception, mud and darkness being the *principles* of evil as light and celestial space are the *principles* of good: with their feet in mud but their heads more or less in light, men obstinately imagine a tide that will permanently elevate them, never to return, into pure space. Human life entails, in fact, the rage of seeing oneself as a back and forth movement from refuse to the ideal, and from the ideal to the refuse – a rage that is easily directed against an organ as *base* as the foot.

The human foot is commonly subjected to grotesque tortures that deform it and make it rickety. In an imbecilic way it is doomed to corns, calluses, and bunions, and if one takes into account turns of phrase that are only now disappearing, to the most nauseating filthiness: the peasant expression 'her hands are as dirty as feet', while no longer true of the entire human collectivity, was so in the seventeenth century.

Man's secret horror of his foot is one of the explanations for the tendency to conceal its length and form as much as possible. Heels of greater or lesser height, depending on the sex, distract from the foot's low and flat character.

Besides, this uneasiness is often confused with a sexual uneasiness; this is especially striking among the Chinese, who, after having atrophied the feet of women, situate them at the most excessive point of deviance. The husband himself must not see the nude feet of his wife, and it is incorrect and immoral in general to look at the feet of women. Catholic confessors, adapting themselves to this aberration, ask their Chinese penitents 'if they have not looked at women's feet'.

The same aberration is found among the Turks (Volga Turks, Turks of Central Asia), who consider it immoral to show their nude feet and who even go to bed in stockings.

RENEGADE: THE LIVES & TALES OF MARK E. SMITH

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MARK E. SMITH

Still from *The Trial*, 1962

They did the same with Orson Welles. The studio heads couldn't just leave his work as he intended, it was all 'well, what about this, Orson?' and 'I don't think this works.' What did they know?

I don't know a great deal about him. But I like the way he looked at things – especially *Citizen Kane*, how to tell a story from a different angle. And his *Macbeth* – that's one of the best films I've ever seen. And *Touch of Evil* – that's great too.

An engineer gave me a tape of these commercials that Orson did in the 60s and 70s; and it had all the outtakes on it as well for these fishfinger and processed pea commercials. It's hilarious.

He was obviously having a few money problems at the time. From *Citizen Kane* to Mrs Pickford's processed peas – it's a bit of a departure. But the funniest part of it is that he can't read the script. It doesn't add up for him. He needs to know the thread of the story. And he keeps asking questions like, 'Who wrote this?' and 'How do the fish get into fingers,' – he's obviously drunk and he can't grasp the fundamentals behind it.

I like the way he saw life as a story; how his narrative eye was so finely honed. He was in another zone. Telling stories on stories until in the end he himself is a story. He didn't seem afraid of living in that world; and it's childish in a way, but when you can deal with it and use it, the results are evident. I think it's like heightened awareness, similar to when you don't eat for a few days or you've been on a bit of a bender – you see things differently. And not always in an obvious way.

Excerpt from Mark E. Smith, *Renegade: The Lives and Tales of Mark E. Smith*, Viking, London, 2008, p. 27

THE GUTENBERG GALAXY

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MARSHALL MCLUHAN

Plato, however, the scribe of Socrates as he seemed to the Middle Ages, could in the act of writing[1] look back to the non-literate world and say:

It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.

Plato shows no awareness here or elsewhere of how the phonetic alphabet had altered the sensibility of the Greeks; nor did anybody else in his time or later. Before his time, the myth-makers, poised on the frontiers between the old oral world of the tribe and the new technologies of specialism and individualism, had foreseen all and said all in a few words. The myth of Cadmus states how this King who had introduced the Phoenician script, or the phonetic alphabet to Greece, had sown the dragon's teeth and they had sprung up armed men. This, as with all myth, is a succinct statement of a complex social process that had occurred over a period of centuries. But it was only in recent years that the work of Harold Innis opened up the Cadmus myth fully. (See, for example, *The Bias of Communication* and *Empire and Communications*.) The myth, like the aphorism and maxim, is characteristic of oral culture. For, until literacy deprives language of his multi-dimensional resonance, every word is a poetic world unto itself, a 'momentary deity' or revelation, as it seemed to non-literate men. Ernst Cassirer's *Language and Myth* presents this aspect of non-literate human awareness, surveying the wide range of current study of language origins and development. Towards the end of the nineteenth century numerous students of non-literate societies had begun to have doubts about the *a priori* character of logical categories. Today, when the role of phonetic literacy

Nothing similar can be cited from classical antiquity (apart from the use of very high soles in tragedies). The most prudish Roman matrons constantly allowed their nude toes to be seen. On the other hand, modesty concerning the feet developed excessively in the modern era and only started to disappear in the nineteenth century. M. Salomon Reinach has studied this development in detail in the article entitled 'Pieds pudiques' ('Modest Feet'),[1] insisting on the role of Spain, where women's feet have been the object of the most dreaded anxiety and thus were the cause of crimes. The simple fact of allowing the shod foot to be seen, jutting out from under a skirt, was regarded as indecent. Under no circumstances was it possible to touch the foot of a woman, this liberty being, with one exception, more grave than any other. Of course, the foot of the queen was the object of the most terrifying prohibition. Thus, according to Mme D'Aulnoy, the Count of Villamediana, in love with Queen Elizabeth, had the idea of starting a fire in order to have the pleasure of carrying her in his arms: 'Almost the entire house, worth 100,000 écus, was burned, but he was consoled by the fact that, taking advantage of so favourable an occasion, he took the sovereign in his arms and carried her into a small staircase. He took some liberties there, and *something very much noticed in this country, he even touched her foot*. A little page saw it, reported it to the king, and the latter had his revenge by killing the count with a pistol shot.'

It is possible to see in these obsessions, as M. Reinach does, a progressive refinement of modesty that little by little has been able to reach the calf, the ankle, and the foot. This explanation, in part well founded, is however not sufficient if one wants to account for the hilarity commonly produced by simply imagining the *toes*. The play of fantasies and fears, of human necessities and aberrations, is in fact such that fingers have come to signify useful action and firm character, the toes stupor and base idiocy. The vicissitudes of organs, the profusion of stomachs, larynxes, and brains traversing innumerable animal species and individuals, carries the imagination along in an ebb and flow it does not willingly follow, due to a hatred of the still painfully perceptible frenzy of the bloody palpitations of the body. Man willingly imagines himself to be like the god Neptune, stilling his own waves, with majesty; nevertheless, the bellowing waves of the viscera, in more or less incessant inflation and upheaval, brusquely put an end to his dignity. Blind, but tranquil and strangely despising his obscure baseness, a given person, ready to call to mind the grandeurs of human history, as when his glance ascends a monument testifying to the grandeur of his nation, is stopped in mid-flight by an atrocious pain in his big toe because, though the most noble of animals, he nevertheless has corns on his feet; in other words, he has feet, and these feet independently lead an ignoble life.

Corns on the feet differ from headaches and toothaches by their baseness, and they are only laughable because of an ignominy explicable by the mud in which feet are found. Since by its physical attitude the human race distances itself *as much as it can* from terrestrial mud – whereas a spasmodic laugh carries joy to its summit each time its purest flight lands man's own arrogance spread-eagle in the mud – one can imagine that a toe, always more or less damaged and humiliating, is psychologically analogous to the brutal fall of a man – in other words, to death. The

hideously cadaverous and at the same time loud and proud appearance of the big toe corresponds to this derision and gives a very shrill expression to the disorder of the human body, that product of the violent discord of the organs.

The form of the big toe is not, however, specifically monstrous: in this it is different from other parts of the body, the inside of a gaping mouth, for example. Only secondary (but common) deformations have been able to give its ignominy an exceptionally burlesque value. Now it is easy, most often, to account for burlesque values by means of extreme seductiveness. But we are led here to distinguish categorically two radically opposed kinds of seductiveness (whose habitual confusion entails the most absurd misunderstandings of language).

If a seductive element is to be attributed to the big toe, it is evidently not one to satisfy such exalted aspirations as, for example, the perfectly indelible taste that, in most cases, leads one to prefer elegant and correct forms. On the contrary, if one chooses, for example, the case of the Count of Villamediana, one can affirm that the pleasure he derived from touching the queen's foot specifically derived from the ugliness and infection represented by the baseness of the foot, in practice by the most deformed feet. Thus, supposing that the queen's foot was perfectly pretty, it still derived its sacrilegious charm from deformed and muddy feet. Since a queen is *a priori* a more *ideal* and ethereal being than any other, it was human to the point of laceration to touch what in fact was not very different from the stinking foot of a thug. Here one submits to a seduction radically opposed to that caused by light and ideal beauty; the two orders of seduction are often confused because a person constantly moves from one to the other, and, given this back and forth movement, whether it finds its end in one direction or the other, seduction is all the more acute when the movement is more brutal.

As for the big toe, classic foot fetishism leading to the licking of toes categorically indicates that it is a phenomenon of base seduction, which accounts for the burlesque value that is always more or less attached to the pleasures condemned by pure and superficial men.

The meaning of this article lies in its insistence on a direct and explicit questioning of *seductiveness*, without taking into account poetic concoctions that are, ultimately, nothing but a diversion (most human beings are naturally feeble and can only abandon themselves to their instincts when in a poetic haze). A return to reality does not imply any new acceptances, but means that one is seduced in a base manner, without transpositions and to the point of screaming, opening his eyes wide: opening them wide, then, before a big toe.

Georges Bataille, 'The Big Toe' in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985, pp. 20–23

1.   In *L'Anthropologie*, 1903, pp. 733–36; reprinted in *Cultes, myths et religions*, 1905, vol 1, pp. 105–10

in the creating of the techniques of enunciation of propositions ('formal logic') is well known, it is still supposed, even by some anthropologists, that Euclidean space and three-dimensional visual perception is a universal datum of mankind. The absence of such space in native art is considered by such scholars to be owing to lack of artistic skill. Cassirer, reporting on the notion of words as myth (the etymology of *mythos* indicates that it means 'word') says:

According to Usener, the lowest level to which we can trace back the origin of religious concepts is that of 'momentary gods', as he calls those images which are born from the need or the specific feeling of a critical moment ... and still bearing the mark of all its pristine volatility and freedom. But it appears that the new findings which ethnology and comparative religion have put at our disposal during the three decades since the publication of Usener's work enable us to go back one step further yet.

Excerpt from Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1962, pp. 25–6

1.   *Phaedrus*, trans. B. Jowett, 274-5. All quotations from Plato are from Jowett's translation.

THE LAST OF THE RED WINE
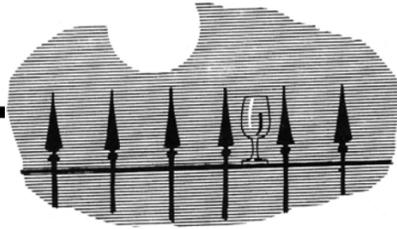
9 – 13 February 2011

THE LAST OF THE RED WINE

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Retaining one's passion for the art world isn't easy. Seen through tabloid eyes, one can't help feeling that budding YBAs simply traverse a roadmap toward Chelsea wealth via popular conurbations such as Friezetown, Turnerville, Tate Bridge or ICA-under-Lyme to book their place in the sun. It's enough to make you sick. But then…thinking about it…who cares? What's the big deal? Isn't the art world always in danger of taking itself too seriously? Doesn't it suffer questions of legitimacy, sincerity, advocacy and economy over and over and over again? The point of art is to question everything anyway, right? Tell you what, let's have a nice cup of tea and recharge our passion-o-meters…take a breather. Turn on the radio. Let *Front Row* tell us what's what.

The Last of the Red Wine is a sitcom based in the art world, written for broadcast on an as-yet undesignated station. Its beginnings are founded in the Whitechapel Gallery, where writer in residence Sally O'Reilly suggested the premise and began work on a pilot script with collaborators. For the sixth Live Weekend, *The Last of the Red Wine* makes its way to the ICA to be performed and recorded, in front of a 'live studio audience' for the first time. Daytime visitors to the ICA encounter writers and actors getting down to the business of workshopping episodes 1, 2 and 3. Evening visitors experience the episodes rehearsed and improvised live culminating in a fully fleshed omnibus edition performed to script and recorded on Sunday 13 February. Screening alongside this hive of activity are collated clips of clichés and misrepresentations of art on TV, selected by O'Reilly and Colin Perry.

The sitcom is a well-established format in entertainment land – a lightening of our collective burdens, an opportunity for all the family to share in laughter. *The Last of the Red*

Wine is the art world's way of getting in on the act. The rationale being that surely there is still plenty to laugh at while nursing any personal grievances we may have over the state of art today. Thus instead of dwelling on sobering budget cuts, why not chuckle at the slapstick of the install or the pathos of the muse? The aim is to circumvent common misgivings, misconceptions, assumptions or clichés orbiting the art world and to represent experiences of making, facilitating and critiquing art in the real world. The common misrepresentation of a glittering firmament of bloated art stars or pretentious chancers pocketing taxpayers' money is swept aside by a cast of believable characters devised and scripted by artists and critics, with the guidance of comedy scriptwriters and performers. Live Weekend – *The Last of the Red Wine* is a hilarious romp that is at once accurate and ridiculous, innovatively produced and professionally staged.

The project is lead by Sally O'Reilly with comedy tutor and director Chris Head, and features written and/or performed contributions from, among others, Doug Fishbone, Hayley Newman, Kim Noble, Michelle Owoo, Hilary Koob-Sassen, Ian Saville, Caroline Smith, Bedwyr Williams and Phil Whelans. For the omnibus edition there are Foley sound effects courtesy of The Media School, Bournemouth University. Foley art in film, theatre and TV work is made from clothes, shoes and all manner of props, pits filled with different grades of grit and stone to manufacture footsteps, kisses, punches and movement. It signals the survival of acoustic invention in an era of digitised technology.

On the following pages we print contextual essays from Sally O'Reilly and Colin Perry, as well as a how-to guide on creating an art world sitcom by Chris Head.

THE LAST OF
THE RED WINE

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SALLY O'REILLY

While art has historically thrived on criticism that approaches surgical dismemberment, one can't help feeling that these days it is being consistently clubbed with a blunt instrument by many a celebrity pundit, comedian, newscaster, dramaturg, celebrity chef, home improvement victim… Although there are many reviews in broadsheets and on TV culture shows well served by critics who fulfil the noble roles required of them – contextualising commentator, informed critical judge, networked interlocutor and writerly pontificator – art is all too often manhandled with incomprehension, exasperation or outright derision elsewhere. Think of the familiar rise of indignation in a commentator's voice as he or she describes an artwork as if it were the most pointless, absurd, self-indulgent, profligate or pretentious thing they've ever heard. Of course art is pointless, absurd, self-indulgent, profligate and pretentious, which is both its strength and its weakness. But there is a widespread and firm refusal to consider the complex applications of pointlessness, absurdity, etc. Instead, art and artists are all too often reduced to feckless type. Other cultural practices – literature, music, theatre, sport and so on – are seldom placed under the same scrutiny. Throwing a pole as far as you can or waggling some metal strings screwed on to an electrified box is hardly more rational, so there must be something about art in particular that rubs people up the wrong way.

If we research the phenomenon and lay it out starkly we can discern distinct typologies of artists as represented in mainstream drama and comedy. There's the group of existential nihilists who condemn society's norms while dressed in identical black polo-necks and berets; the confrontational gore monger who pokes harrowingly at the sensitivities of others; the pretentious cad or deluded nut who dupes his anaesthetised audience into thinking that nothing is something; the money-grubbing trickster who palms off swiftly cobbled-together ideas on a stupefied over-funded commissioning panel; the oblivious onanist steeped in inconsequential aesthetic concerns; the brash exhibitionist who can barely stay dressed at a public function; the angry loner with a knack for offering up the most spectacularly offensive ideas. We probably recognise all these people from real life, but they're not necessarily artists. They can be found in pubs, around dining tables and, dare I say it, in film and television production offices the world over. So why are these clichés laid so often at the door of art?

Clichés are ideas, phrases or images that have been authored by someone long forgotten. A cliché has been uttered so often by so many that its original meaning has withered and been replaced by a different symbolic value. For example, when we hear someone say 'I'm not being funny, but…' we know that this is nothing to do with humour, but that

MELODRAMA

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COLIN PERRY

Melodrama is the art of combining drama and music to generate pathetic affect, a fact borne out by the word itself, which is a marriage of the Greek noun *melos*, or music, and the French word *drame*, or drama. In its modern usage it denotes a fabric cut to a particular shape irrespective of the fashions of one's times, a fearful conservativism of form that smothers the *haute-couture* experimentalism sought by any self-respecting artist. During the high tide of modernism, melodrama was the elephant in the gallery, its embarrassing corpulence and warming presence shunned or avoided.

In cinema and theatre though, where melodrama thrives best, playwrights and directors of refined taste could not so easily turn their backs on such an overwhelming entity. From the comedic operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan to Bertold Brecht's Marxian theatrics, the idea emerged that characters suffused in melodrama might rejoice in their status as plot devices. Lustful housewives, anti-heroic pirates, Cockney bartenders, implacable secret agents, proletarians and factory managers – all could tip a wink to the audience in genial or ironic collusion.

It took film theory and video art to drag this unruly monster into the gallery. The re-examination and recuperation of melodrama began in the 1970s, in numerous texts published in the film journals *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Screen* by critics such as Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen, Griselda Pollock and John Fletcher. In an early essay on the subject published in 1972,[1] Thomas Elsaesser identifies two lineages of melodrama: a 'public' tradition that stems from mediaeval morality plays and folk ballads in which the *dramatis personae* are deployed 'less as autonomous individuals than to transmit the action and link the various locales within a total constellation'.

The second tradition, derived from French post-Revolution romantic drama, places the emphasis on 'private feelings and interiorised (puritan, pietist) codes of morality and conscience'. Mulvey's subsequent analysis of Douglas Sirk,[2] whose lachrymose melodramas include *Imitation of Life* (1959), suggests that melodramatic cinema, when pushed to extreme forms of flimsiness, causes the whole baroque wedding cake to come tumbling down. Sirk (real name Detlef Sierck) cut his teeth directing plays by Brecht, Georg Kaiser and Kurt Weill in the Weimar Republic. His later Hollywood movies were, his supporters argued, brilliant parodies of the tearjerker template. Sirk, in his own words, used kitsch imagery in order to 'bring out the inner violence, the energy of the characters which is all inside them and can't break through'.[3]

Video artists since the 1980s have evinced a particular knack for imploding the elephantine excesses of this blueprint. They have done so not in the context of cinema, but against the grain of television. When Channel 4 broadcast Graham Young's series of short videos *Accidents In The Home* (1985),

viewers would have witnessed cautionary scenarios made familiar by hospital dramas or Britain's infamously hyperbolic public-warning announcements. In *No.17 Gasfires* a man throws a balsa wood model aeroplane towards a gas heater – but the action stops before a catastrophe occurs. Similarly refusing action, Stan Douglas' *TV Spots* (1987–88) were short video sequences broadcast on Canada's private television network, with each 15 to 30 second-long piece aired unannounced within the scheduled broadcasting flow. *Answering Machine* begins with a woman arriving at the door of her apartment; she enters as the telephone begins to ring but, as if toying with the conventions of drama (i.e. the phone call as a cue to action), she simply sits down, smokes a cigarette and lets the caller leave a message. Douglas later produced a series of short anti-narratives collectively titled *Monodramas* (1991), also broadcast on Canadian television. *I'm Not Gary* is a brief *mise-en-scène* in which a man walking down a street is met by another man who greets him with the words, 'Hi Gary, how are you doing', to which the first replies, enigmatically, 'I'm not Gary'. Such videos are narrative extensions of earlier structuralist 'interruptions' of televisual flow by artists such as David Hall in the UK, Peter Weibel in Austria and Chris Burden in the USA, whose *TV Hijack* (1971) took the notion of 'interruption' to its ultimate conclusion when he held an inter-viewer hostage during a live broadcast.

Most video art was – and remains – too challenging, lengthy or obscure to be shown on mainstream television. Writing in 1991, critic Sean Cubitt noted that video 'sits in an uncomfortable relation with television. The two media are so easy to confuse one with the other, since television relies extensively on video technology, and since video, despite being carried out on some of the same machinery as broadcast, nonetheless contains television.'[4] Video, in other words, transcends television because it gives artists, as active par-ticipants in the medium, the freedom to edit, comment on or parody the methods of televi-sion and to make intrusions into everyday life. Ian Breakwell's video *In the Home* (1980), for example, is an accelerated soap opera in which a relationship between a man and a woman oscillates between passion, hatred and violence. Stuart Marshall, video artist and co-founder of London Video Arts, explored the substrata of gender politics in television to great effect in *The Streets of…* and *The Love Show* (both 1979), and his full-length Channel 4 pro-gramme Bright Eyes (1984), an exploration of media responses to the AIDS crisis.

These iconographic disruptions of televisual melodrama reached an apotheosis in the 1990s in the tawdry daytime soap opera *Melrose Place* (1992-9). Operating under the moniker GALA Committee, American-Chinese artist Mel Chin led a group of artists and art-school students as set designers for the series, producing props that sought to subvert normative representations. In one episode, a couple is seen in a bed decorated with the repeated image of a condom (an image banned from broadcast by US Federal Communica-tions Commission regulations). In another episode, alert viewers in China – where Rupert Murdoch's satellite company broadcast the series – might have spotted packets of Chinese fast food emblazoned with the ideograms for

what follows will be judgmental and brutally denigrating, although the speaker wishes us to withhold our own brutal judgment of them. This symbolic second-hand value is deemed lowly compared to an authentic utterance, which is why so many people avoid clichés like the plague. They try to fend off what they perceive as the slow penetration of language and rape of sentience that breeds insensible babblers. But rather than unques-tioningly sweeping clichés aside with the broom of perpetual novelty, an analysis of their exchange value can be extremely revealing. From the list of artist characters above, for example, we can distil the base traits of vanity, hubris, selfishness and greed. These are all unyielding dispositions that threaten to disrupt social cohesiveness, and so we might infer that the artist is continually cast as eccentric to a society that revolves around liberal mutuality.

While upsetting the *status quo* has customarily been the aim and claim of twentieth-century art to the point of cliché, the current viability of the art market, buoyant gallery visitor figures and the swell of appli-cants to art schools (pre-fee hikes) hardly evidences a cultural practice that bucks the dominant ideology of mainstream capitalism. In an art scene where sociability and commercial success are central, the inflexible or provocative irritant is no more likely to be found here than in any other cultural quarter. It is surely time, then, to coin new clichés that are more accurate and expansive.

The Last of the Red Wine will, at last, vigorously redress inaccurate stereotyping and bungled imaginings of art. It will introduce to the radio set the jaundiced benefactor, the ruthlessly ambitious curator, the artist paralysed by art history, the obsequious gallerist and the jaded critic. It will let the joys be known of the farce of artspeak, the tragicomedy of the auction house and the slapstick of incomprehensible performance.

'Turmoil & Chaos' and 'Human Rights'. In *Melrose Place* the line between art and melodrama is a fine one, depending as it does on audience erudition. Yet Chin's activities remain a benchmark for artistic interventions on the level of televisual content, a reminder that the fondant of melodrama remains a pres-ence that art cannot fully ignore.

1. 'Tales of Sound and Fury' (1972) in *Home is where the Heart Is*, Christine Gledhill, ed., BFI, London, 1987
2. Laura Mulvey, 'Notes on Sirk and Melodrama' (1977), in Christine Gledhill, ed., op cit, pp. 75–83
3. Quoted in John Fletcher, 'Melodrama: An Introduction', *Screen*, issue 29, Summer 1988
4. Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift. On video Culture*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 87

CREATING AN ART WORLD SITCOM

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CHRIS HEAD

Want to create a sitcom set in the art world? Comedy director and tutor Chris Head gets you started.

Creating the characters is the most important phase in the genesis of a sitcom. Get this right and the comedy and stories will flow naturally from the characters and the dynamic between them.

The key is to make the characters and the relationships dysfunctional and full of potential conflict. But where to begin with our art world sitcom? Let's start thinking in terms of a central trio of characters.

At the heart of many sitcoms is a threesome. And what's more, there's a dynamic between the three characters that crops up over and over again. It takes many forms, but the basis of the dynamic is surprisingly consistent.

Here are some British sitcom trios (with one US one for good measure) arranged into groups. Go down the table, identify the sitcoms, then think about what the members of each group have in common with each other.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Mackay	Fletcher	Godber
Rimmer	Lister	Cat
Cybil	Basil	Manuel
Grandad	Del Boy	Rodney
Saffy	Eddy	Patsy
The Queen / Prince Regent	Blackadder (2 & 3)	Baldrick
Bob Fossil	Howard Moon	Vince Noir
Martin Crane	Frasier	Niles
David Brent	Tim	Gareth
Mr Renholm	Jen	Roy / Moss

Going through the table, you probably noted that Group 1 are all authorities. Often they're heavy-handed, petty or irresponsible with their authority. Sometimes their authority is due to the ineffectual

nature of the one who should be in charge: Eddy ceding her authority in *Absolutely Fabulous* to her daughter Saffy, for instance. But for better or worse (usually for worse) they are the authorities.

Group 3 are the fools. Often stupid, they're upbeat by nature and bounce back from the knocks they suffer from being at the bottom of the pile. Note though that while they usually are simpletons, they don't have to be. Niles Crane isn't lacking in brainpower. He's a fool by dint of his gauche nature – very similar, in fact, to Rodney Trotter.

Stuck in the middle are group 2, the central characters. They're sitcom's dreamers, aspiring to a better life, free of their bookends. Let's call them aspirants. They're kicked by the authority and kick down at the fool. They don't get it all their own way, though. The fool can kick back, so often they're being kicked from both sides.

Most sitcom characters, including the authorities and the fools, want to get away and better themselves, but this is especially true of the aspirants and it's their struggle that the audience feels most keenly. They're also often the most rounded or well-drawn of the characters.

This authority / aspirant / fool dynamic is so fertile that it crops up over and over again. In *Red Dwarf,* Rimmer is the authority, Lister is the aspirant and the Cat is the fool (along with Kryton in later series). In *Porridge* it's Mackay, Fletcher and Godber. *Fawlty Towers*? Sybil, Basil, Manuel. Try *Father Ted*, *Peep Show*, *The Thick Of It*, *Yes Minister*: a version of the dynamic can be found in them all.

Often this authority / aspirant / fool dynamic is a straightforward central trio. At other times it's more complicated, or part of a wider ensemble. For instance, *Blackadder 2* features a second trio (Queen, Melchett and Nursie) and *Blackadder Goes Forth* effectively doubles up all the slots.

General Melchett Field Marshall Haig	Blackadder (4) Captain Darling	Baldrick/ George

From one perspective, in *The Office* David Brent is the authority, Tim is the aspirant dreaming of getting away and Gareth is the fool. Brent, though, is also aspiring and has a boss above him. So another perspective sees Neil Godwin as the authority, Brent as the aspirant and Gareth as the fool. There are other fools around the office of course, such as Finchy and the taciturn Keith. The point is not that the trio rigidly manifests every time, but that those character types and the relationship between them is comedically fruitful and therefore manifests itself in various forms surprisingly often.

Neil Godwin, incidentally, is an example of a rare type of comic character whose *perfection* makes him or her funny. Usually we're laughing at a character's blatant imperfections, but here, this almost too-good-to-be-true character (just look at his surname – God-win) becomes funny through Brent's reactions to him.

The other key aspect to all of the sitcoms in the table, and sitcoms in general, is that the characters are stuck with each other. Think about what it is that holds them all together, despite the tensions pushing them apart. This is the trap. It could be economic, family, habit, loyalty, physical (prison, space, war), or their own failings and blind spots that keep them stuck.

So let's think about our art world sitcom. Characters trapped together with no escape are just what we need for our situation. How about the three central characters being artists sharing a studio space with poverty and ambition keeping them together?

We'll have an aspirant – the one the audience identifies with, who really feels the pain of being trapped. The aspirant feels short-changed by life. They could do so much better for themselves, if only they weren't trapped here, sandwiched between these two other artists: the authority and the fool.

And there you have it: our three central characters. One is the ineffectual, deluded or domineering leader of the trio, one is the aspirant and one is the fool – just plain stupid, or highly intelligent but naïve and socially awkward. Clearly we need to put flesh on the bones, but we have the bones. And they are funny bones.

And keeping this dynamic in mind we can start to think about the wider characters – maybe another fool in the role of an assistant, say, or a fabricator; an external authority in the form of a gallerist, or a collector or a journalist, or maybe the collector is an outright fool. Perhaps we could have a rival aspirant, like the Blackadder / Darling relationship. Maybe that rival could be annoyingly perfect like Godwin.

There are many options, but keeping the authority / aspirant / fool dynamic in mind is helpful in creating relationships that will fuel the comedy, because that's the key to the stories. Make the relationships rich in comic potential and full of dysfunction. Then you don't necessarily need to think of a funny story. You can just give the characters a plausible problem or challenge and watch them try and deal with it.

16 – 20 February 2011

NOTATION
&
INTERPRETATION

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Notation and Interpretation is a sequence of workshops, discussions, sound pieces and live performances that, together with a range of visual stimuli, make-up the ICA's seventh Live Weekend. The event explores the point at which the disciplines of composition and performance intersect and progress from each other, and questions the distinction that we traditionally make between performance from the page and free improvisation. The interpretation of musical language – when composition leaps from page to stage – presents engaging opportunities for musicians and audiences alike. Additionally, the visual aspect of notation has been considered significant since John Cage discussed its aesthetic appeal in his 1969 book *Notations*.

Providing a focal point for these themes, the composer and instrument-maker John Richards takes a temporary residency in the gallery entitled 'Solder and Score', running workshops under the name Dirty Electronics. Workshop participants have the opportunity to build a giant patchwork quilt-like instrument and co-write a musical score with a view to performance. Dirty Electronics refers to an approach in electronic music that Richards considers directly opposed to those found in mass-produced digital culture. Utilising characteristics such as designer trash, hand-made, ready-made, hacked, bent, fedback and kitsch, Dirty Electronics focuses on shared experiences and social interaction. For *Notation and Interpretation*, the proposed workshops immerse attendees in the interplay between process and performance, beginning on the workbench, co-devising the modules that will form the 'instrument' and then extending onto the stage.

Each module built towards 'the instrument' houses a custom-printed circuit board and features electrodes that when touched provide the possibility for performance, permutation and interpretation. Group sessions encourage participants to compose for the instrument and in doing so also to consider the significance of notation. The ICA plays host to a modular system that evolves and dissolves throughout the long weekend, culminating with a large group performance and auction of its constituent parts. On the following pages we print a musical score written for Dirty Electronics by sound artist Nicholas Bullen (founder member of Napalm Death and Scorn and frequent collaborator with artist Mark Titchner). We also print an essay by Richards that will serve as a contextual guide to all participants and interested parties.

Live Weekend – *Notation and Interpretation* is curated by Will Dutta, Joana Seguro and Lucy Railton with assistance from the ICA's Jamie Eastman. Dutta, Railton and Seguro share many references in their work, from contemporary classical and electronic informed musicianship to free-improvisational strategies in sonic art. All three regularly produce events enthused by the significance of contemporary composition. Dutta and Railton are accomplished players in their own right and take part in performances founded in composition throughout the Live Weekend. Composers such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, Mauricio Kagel, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown and Vinko Globokar feature as well as work from Dutta and Gabriel Prokofiev. Making their collaborative debut are contemporary composer Larry Goves and electronic producer Mira Calix. Goves and Calix have exchanged working practices for eighteen months as part of an ACE development project and present 'Exchange and Return (black edition)' following recordings made at Aldeburgh Music.

Live Weekend – *Notation and Interpretation* demonstrates the ICA's ongoing commitment to contemporary music in all forms.

LEAD & SCHEMAS

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JOHN RICHARDS

Since 2003, John Richards has been exploring the idea of 'Dirty Electronics'. This term refers to an approach in electronic music that is directly opposed to those found in mass-produced digital culture and includes the following characteristics: designer-trash, ugly, cheap, heavy, handmade, designed to be handled or to come in contact with the body, ready-made, hacked, bent, fed-back and kitsch. Dirty Electronics focuses on face-to-face shared experiences, ritual, gesture, touch and social interaction. In Dirty Electronics, process and performance are inseparably bound. The 'performance' begins on the workbench devising instruments and is extended onto the stage through playing and exploring these instruments.

In Dirty Electronics the ethos is not only DIY, but also DIT (do-it-together). I wanted to get away from the idea of the solo electronic musician and work in a more fluid and collective way. I became less bothered about 'my' system or instrument, and started thinking about how a large group could perform a new electronic music repertoire. Two major influences that have run alongside my sense of being an electronic musician are Keith Tippett, through working with him in his Centipede-like ensemble at Dartington Summer School; Christopher Hobbs and Howard Skempton, both of whom were founding members of the Scratch Orchestra. Tippett impressed me with the way he moulded the sound of a large group, and my adopted working methods seemed to chime with the Scratch Orchestra's ideals and aesthetics. My desire to work in a large group has also simply stemmed from my craving for social engagement that I felt was missing from my work during the 1990s when I was creating electronic music in solitude using UNIX-based computer systems.

A new Dirty Electronics piece often begins with an idea for a sound-generating device that can be built and played by more or less anyone; something that can be built in an afternoon or evening, and which allows time for making music together. The design of instruments and devices is therefore stripped down to a minimum: nothing esoteric or superfluous. This approach allows for both inexperienced and 'expert' musicians and artists to explore Dirty Electronics on different levels. In the context of Dirty Electronics, I have increasingly tried to avoid the terms 'workshop' and 'performance'. Building something in a workshop and performing are not necessarily mutually bound, and can suggest two separate activities. Dirty Electronics is either all performance, or all workshop, and is approached as a holistic event. An interesting question that arises is: 'Where is the piece?' Is it in the process of building an instrument, the instrument itself, a notated score, the schematic, or the live performance? Another is, 'At what point does interpretation come into it?'

Scores and notation systems have regularly been used by Dirty Electronics. Often this has been due to the practicalities of communicating ideas to a large group. In 2007, I invited a number of musicians and composers to write for an instrument called the Sudophone. These included, amongst others, Pauline Oliveros, Howard Skempton, Nicholas Bullen, Gabriel Prokofiev and Christopher Hobbs. The Sudophone is an electronic instrument reduced to its bare bones, with a single oscillator circuit, miniature loudspeaker, junk tin can and grip-bolt. The instrument is played by gripping the tin can and bolt to complete the oscillator circuit using the conductivity of the human body, much like the Cracklebox developed by Michel Waisvisz. Cupping the opening of the tin with the hand or body can produce a Harmon-like mute effect. Despite the seemingly humble nature of the Sudophone, I have been amazed by the range of music written for this instrument. *I Love You* and Skempton's *Conversing with Ducks* take the form of the event score

Conversing with Ducks
For any number of Sudophones

Wrap one hand round the Sudophone, touching the rod lightly with the middle finger.
Short flurries of sounds to begin with; then single sounds, and pairs of sounds.
To end, establish a slow pulse; slow it down, and stop.
At all times, maintain a light touch on the tiller.

Howard Skempton
January 2009

Nicholas Bullen's *Ambit* is a graphical score written for the Sudophone, where the textures and gestures are open to the performers' interpretation.
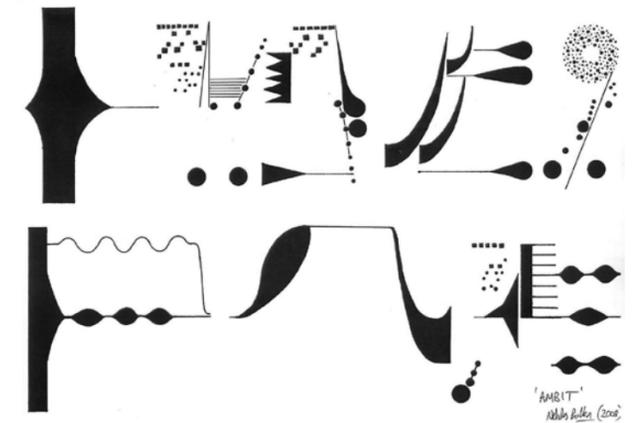
Fig. 1. *Ambit*, Nicholas Bullen, 2008

As well as using event and graphical scores for some of the instruments I had designed, I was also becoming more and more fascinated with the idea and practice of, to use a phrase coined by David Tudor, 'composing inside electronics'. Tudor saw electronics as a microcosm of sound-generating potential, where resistors, capacitors and integrated circuits (ICs) could be configured to create new sounds and musical structures. I started a series of studies on the CMOS logic IC, 4049. I was drawn to this IC mainly by Craig Anderton's tube sound fuzz circuit that was published in *Electronic Projects for Musicians*, 1975. The 4049 is a hex inverter (six inverters in one IC) and was initially designed to be used in digital systems: for example, you put in a 0, and you get a 1 out and vice versa. However, each of these inverters can be used essentially to amplify an input signal, and with amplification comes distortion, oscillation, noise and feedback. Through using all six inverters of the 4049, it was possible to do something interesting with just one IC. The process of composing would involve developing circuits on a breadboard (a prototyping environment for electronic circuits) using a mixture of theory and trial and error procedures, and from this schematics would be developed.

The 4049 studies featured in a number of instruments. The first of these was the Merztin (aka Sudofuzz), a collaboration with the Japanese noise artist Merzbow. The Merztin took on some of the characteristics of the Sudophone, junk tin can and grip-bolt, with some additional coin electrodes and, perhaps most significantly, an output jack. Merzbow wanted to plug the instrument into effects pedals and to use external amplification to make the instrument/instruments much louder. As a result, the tin-can resonator had less bearing on the sound: the Merztin became a purely electronic sounding instrument. Merzbow with the Dirty Electronics Ensemble performances involved large group improvisation with a few directed cues. No score as such was made for these performances, other than the instrument itself.

In this sense the instrument acted as a system that provided a blueprint for the music.

The Skull Etching was a refinement of the Merztin. Lots of people wanted to build the Merztin, but making the instrument required more time than what was typically allocated for a Dirty Electronics build session. There were a lot of wires and fixing the coin electrodes was fiddly. Reducing the time and complexity of the build was one of the main reasons I started looking at manufactured circuit boards. The idea of printed circuit boards (PCB) as artwork is not new. After all, the term 'artwork' is used by PCB manufacturers to describe the final production master for boards, and there are clear parallels between etching techniques in the arts and circuit board etching. For the Skull Etching I wanted a very hand-drawn scruffy look to the artwork, but this did not look good when converted to Gerber file format (a format that can be read by PCB manufacturing machines). I had to think more graphically about the artwork and I started looking at heraldic iconography, tattoos and punk imagery. The design of the Skull Etching was based on the simple idea of touching the skulls to play the instrument, and marrying a graphical etching with circuit board. The Skull Etching is a double-sided circuit board, with the back/bottom having a more typical circuit-board appearance with copper tracks that make up the circuit. These tracks connect to a conductive, copper top/front graphical image through 'vias' (plated holes). Other design features of the Skull Etching included: no knobs, switches, loudspeaker or amplifier; a touch control that 'sat' under the fingers; and densely grouped components to retain the integrity of the graphical etching. The instrument was designed to be plugged in to an external amplifier and to be loud.

Fig. 2. Skull Etching, John Richards, 2009

I wanted to take copper etching artwork and circuit design further. In 2009, I collaborated with Chris Carter from the group Throbbing Gristle. This collaboration stemmed from Chris' interest in DIY sound equipment. As in the case of Merzbow, the idea was to develop an instrument together that could be made and performed by Dirty Electronics. I also wanted to return to the principle of the self-contained electronic instrument with its own amplification and loudspeaker. We had discussed the idea of holding the instrument in two hands and making a double-sided board with touch electrodes on both sides. This design allowed performers to play the instrument with their thumbs and fingers. Tilt switches were also added to increase control. Chris did the initial graphic design with the spiral loudspeaker feature, whilst I came up with the peacock feathers for the front touch controls (tickle the feathers to play the instrument) and sun motif around the spiral.

From John Richards to Chris Carter, March 5, 2010

Chris,

Sorry for the delay. Got stuck with the batteries and power supply! … So the solution seems to be two 12 volt batteries in parallel (same voltage/double the current). I have also mounted these on the back of the board …

Given that we had discussed holding the instrument in two hands, it made sense to exploit the double-sidedness of the board. The idea is to mount a small low-profile speaker to the back of the board, with holes through the board to allow the sound to propagate. This gives the instrument a more unique sound …

The instrument uses a dual 4-stage shift register. Each register is controlled independently. Two oscillators are used per register: one as a clock, the other as input data that is cascaded through the four stages. The outputs from the four stages are mixed together. A fast clock rate produces a crude form of wavetable synthesis, whilst a slow clock rate creates audible pulses and clicks. The clock speed and the data input's frequency are controlled by touch electrodes. By tilting the instrument, sound from both the 4-stage shift registers can be mixed together. Glitchy noise, deep drones and percussive peeps!

John Richards

From Chris Carter to John Richards, March 10, 2010

Hi John,

OK here is the Dirty-Carter PCB artwork.

Because I wasn't sure if I could move components around – which I have – I've kept EVERYTHING for the artwork on a separate layer so you can move any of the elements around to fit where your components eventually go.

The biggest moves were for the speaker position (up a bit), the chips (to the left a bit) and the LEDS (moved down slightly).

Ideally I would prefer the 3.5 mm output socket on the rear, but it's no big deal. For the speaker I'd like the spiral design kept in copper with the holes drilled into the area between the copper. There are (I think) the same number of holes in this as in your version.

… I also moved the pads around a little after trying a few dummy print outs to get a feel of handling the board …

I've changed [the title] to: 'The Dirty-Carter Experimental Sound Generating Instrument' – alluding to a kind of Steam Punk/Neo Victorian vibe …

Chris

From John Richards to Chris Carter, April 7, 2010

The instrument is hard to play in the traditional sense (it is somewhat random and self generative). Yet there are clear ways of controlling it. The tilt switches help with this. Just the simple idea of performers tilting the instrument back and forwards to filter and unfilter the sound and tilting sideways to mix the two shift registers works well. To sum it up, it is mad! Loads of glitchyness, almost white noise at times, clicks and rumbles.
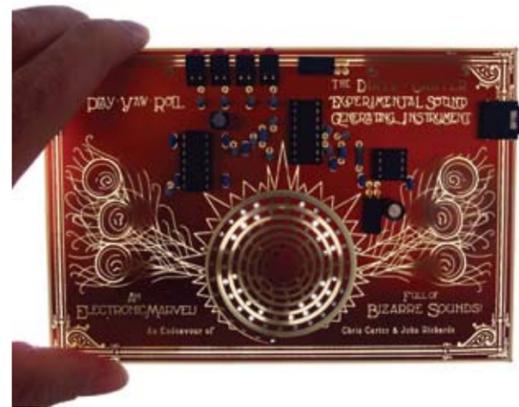
Fig. 3. Dirty-Carter Experimental Sound Generating Instrument, John Richards and Chris Carter, 2010
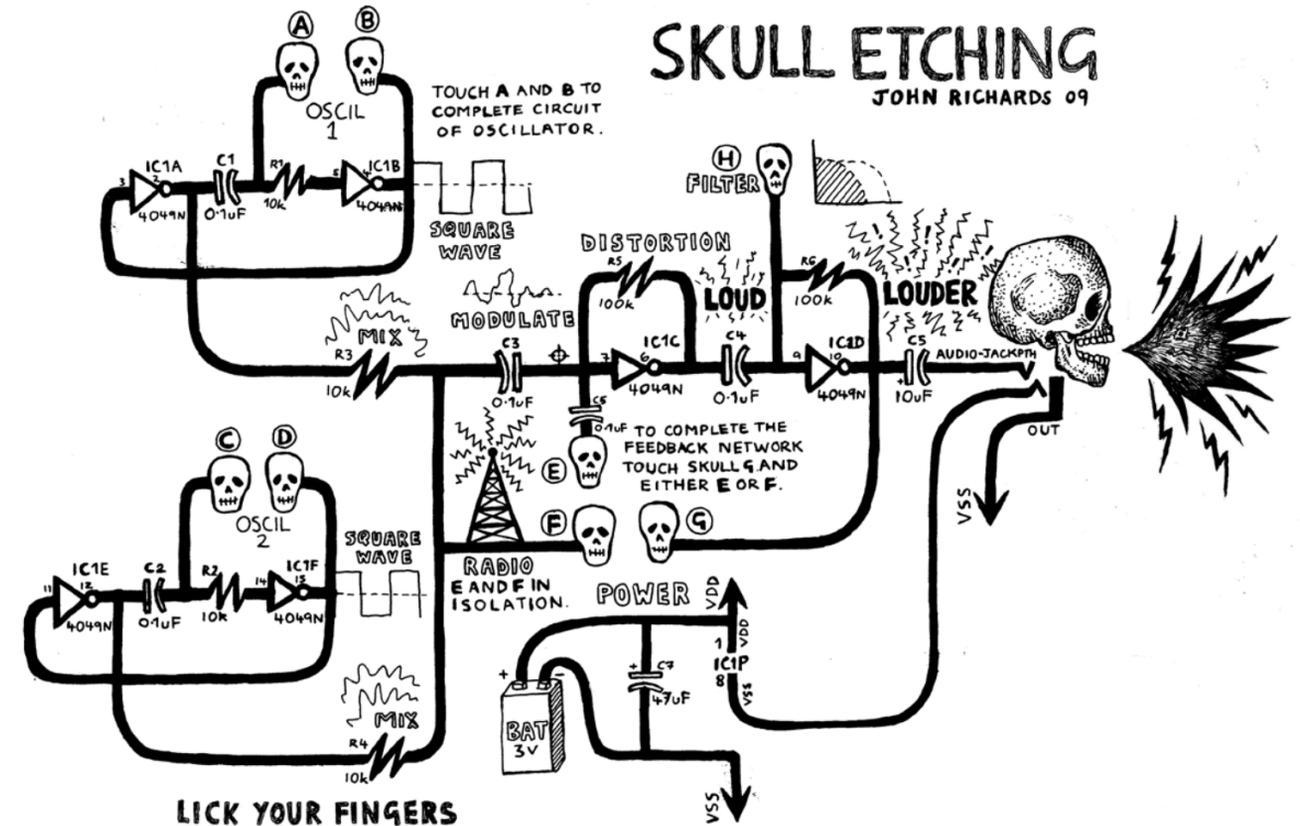
From John Richards to Nic Bullen, 20 November, 2010
Developing a piece for 'Solder a Score'

Solder a Score, ICA, February, 2011

Solder a Score continues many of the themes I have been developing in Dirty Electronics. These include creating an artistic environment for shared experiences, exploring the boundaries between artwork and circuit board, and asking the question: "What is an instrument?"

The 'instrument' for *Solder a Score* will be made up from up to one hundred modules. These modules are a hybrid of printed circuit-board artwork, wood and scrap mental. Each module will be the size of an album record sleeve (twelve inches square), and will be designed as an ornate wooden block to be laid on the floor. It is about reversing the miniaturisation of electronics and making an electronic system that is tangible and 'of the hand'. At the centre of each module will be a custom-printed circuit board. Each module will also have a group of bespoke touch electrodes that, when touched, complete and modify the electronic circuit. The interpretation of scores and playing the instrument will explore the endless permutations of how the instrument may be configured, interconnected, touched and caressed. Pieces written for the instrument will involve both small and large groups.

The circuit will be based around the common electronics building block, the operational amplifier, and will feature oscillators, feedback, filtering, distortion, noise and pulses. The signal can be sent using connectors and ribbon cable from one module to contort and modulate the sound of another module, thus creating a complex web of sound synthesis.

From John Richards to Nic Bullen, 20 November, 2010
Developing a piece for **Solder a Score**

Nic,

I now know what the piece will entail and what it will sound like. I am going back to my roots and thinking in terms of a feedback network. I know this will work, the way it is likely to behave, and that the idea of feedback will suit the rhizome-like nature of interconnected modules.

The circuit for the instrument will essentially be two pre-amps built around a single dual operational amplifier IC. The signal will be routed to different parts of the circuit by a touch-control system, approximately eight touch pads per module.

A simple way of simulating the sound and behaviour of this circuit is to configure two channels of a mixing desk in various feedback loops. The signal from the loop can then, if desired, be passed on to another module. So a map/score could be drawn up on how the modules are configured, parallel, serial, a mixture of parallel and serial etc.; or one could think in terms of groupings and sub-groupings of the modules to create distinct voices in a piece.

So as for a score, a description of a process would work well. Alternatively, a graphic score is also possible. The sound produced by the instrument and its configurations will be, to a certain extent, indeterminate, so the score/idea for a piece would need to take this into consideration.

John Richards

Ongoing

6a
ARCHITECTS RESIDENCY

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Our architects in residence 6a, along with ICA staff, have begun the first phase of stripping back the ICA in the entrance hall, exposing the original fabric of the building, which has become obscured and divided over the years with the many additions of partitions, furniture and signage.

Work started with opening up the entrance hall by merging reception, bookshop, box office in one generous space. The work was carried out with minimal means, stripping out unnecessary elements, reusing parts where possible and erasing almost all extraneous signage. This is the first step in a series of interventions aiming to create a more open field of spaces within the whole ICA which integrates and overlaps different media, events and audiences.

ICA residencies provide an opportunity for artists and practitioners to engage directly with staff, communities and audiences through events, meetings and collaborations. During a period of research within the institution, participants in the residency are invited to reflect on and respond to current conditions at the ICA, stimulating dialogue about art, culture, society and the role of a public institution.

On the following pages are a series of images documenting the early stages of work.
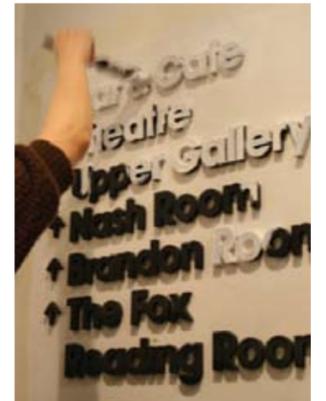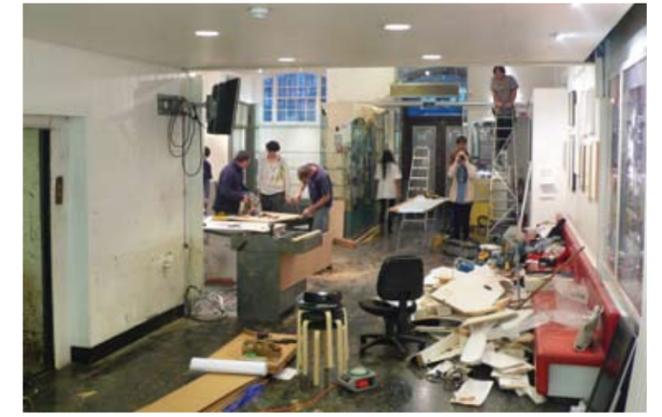
8 – 17 March 2011

WOMEN IN HORROR

From 8–17 March 2011, the Birds Eye View Film Festival comes to the ICA with its annual celebration of women filmmakers. This year, the programme includes a special strand on the role of women in horror, entitled *Bloody Women: From Gothic To Horror*.

Think horror, think men. Think Freddy Krueger, Hannibal Lecter, chainsaw massacres and general carnage wreaked by hellraisers, bodysnatchers and members of the evil dead. Think girls burying their faces in their boyfriends' arms and screaming in the middle of the night. On screen, the women are either pretty little over-sexualised victims or violent, vampish (and over-sexualised) accomplices. At its B-movie worst, the genre can slip into softcore pornography. Horror is not just stereotypically male, it's also misogynist.

But if you think the idea of the Birds Eye View Film Festival celebrating the role of women in horror seems mad, you're missing out. Delve a little deeper and you discover some cinematic treasures – from 1920s silent classics to contemporary vampire flicks – that not only show horror at its most terrifying, but also at its most progressive and powerful as a storytelling form.

The minute you think about it you hit upon the most famous, canonical text of them all: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Women are clearly going to have something to say for themselves. Then there's Oscar-winning director Kathryn Bigelow, whose 1987 vampire breakthrough *Near Dark* found a following among the most hardcore male fans. And the UK's increasingly popular Horror Channel is currently fronted by actress and passionate genre advocate Emily Booth, who will be joining us for our panel event.

Linda Ruth Williams, Professor of Film Studies at Southampton University, explains: "Women have long used horror and the cinematic gothic to explore the dark side of sexuality, the unconscious, and myths of the self, and have provided us with some of the most glittering and strange images in film."

Horror remains hugely divisive, both in the wider film community and within the genre's fanbase, as some decry recent trends towards 'torture porn' and others relish the gore. Alan Jones, a director of our programming partner FrightFest, argued, "The horror community does encompass a huge range of tastes, but we can all come together under one roof".

As *Bloody Women* proves, women have always been part of horror's evolution, but they've more recently made their presence felt in audiences. This may leave its own mark on the years to come, and some of our programme's most interesting work is by emerging female filmmakers finding their own voices in the genre.

BLOODY WOMEN: FROM GOTHIC TO HORROR (AND BACK AGAIN)

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WILL YOUNG

For the 2011 Birds Eye View Film Festival, we've embarked on a mission to slash some stereotypes and uncover women's contribution to all things horror, from gothic psychodrama to vampire chic. And – because we can never resist a pun – we've called it *Bloody Women: From Gothic To Horror*, coming to the ICA in March. Since *Bloody Women* was announced, it's become the most talked-about part of our programme, leaving some abuzz with excitement and others questioning our sanity.

There's certainly something of the zeitgeist about it. The 2008 release of *Let The Right One In* was a revelation to many, with its surprising and powerful portrayal of a girl coming to terms with her identity as a young vampire. Catherine Hardwicke's *Twilight* brought the vampire genre mass popularity well beyond the cult following such films usually find. This may be a mixed blessing, since despite being directed by a woman the film provides questionable female role models. But we're getting ahead of ourselves: let's begin at the beginning.

In the beginning there was Mary Shelley. The gothic origins of modern horror belong to her, and to the women who came after. BAFTA-nominee Eleanour Yule (director of *Blinded* and *Ghost Stories for Christmas*, starring horror legend Christopher Lee) explains: "The gothic form, which is where horror comes from, was actually led by female authors and intellectuals in the 1900s. A lot of it is about awakening female sexuality. The men could go off exploring strange lands while their women were incarcerated in a domestic environment, with a sense that their sexuality was something to be caged – hence the Victorian image of the 'mad woman in the attic'. Fear of the unknown became a metaphor for taboo subjects."

The legacy of gothic writing remains powerful. This was how Jennifer Eiss, whose brilliant debut *Short Lease* is included in the *Bloody Women* short film selection at

The Wind

the ICA, discovered her interest in horror: "It's been my favourite genre since I was a kid. I actually started by reading all those Victorian and Edwardian ghost stories, and I think you can see that influence in my film – you don't see much blood, it's all in the light and shade."

Just as women were instigators of the genre's literary beginnings, so they were midwives of its cinematic birth. Alice Guy, widely credited as the first person to ever direct a fiction motion picture, was quick to see the possibilities of gothic horror on screen, with her shorts *Massacre a la Troçonneuse* (1900), *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1913) and *Vampire* (1920).

This is where the *Bloody Women* programme begins, with the origins of the horror film in the silent era. Here, the work of female writers and directors developed themes of repression and fear of the unknown, with a tendency for terror to be psychosexually manifested, rather than embodied by fantastical creatures bent on physical mutilation.

These ideas are perhaps most perfectly realised in *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, directed in 1928 by Germaine Dulac. The near-surrealist film follows the violent and erotic hallucinations of a priest lusting after the wife of an army general. In the same year *The Wind*, scripted by Academy Award-winner Frances Marmion,

Red Riding Hood

Near Dark

embodied the characters' repressed desires in extremes of weather capable of driving a woman mad (seen in a brilliant early performance by screen legend Lillian Gish). Another classic example is *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde,* adapted in 1920 by prolific screenwriter Clara Beranger, in which the idealistic doctor's alter ego provides a savage outlet for the desires suppressed by his extreme selflessness.

Fast-forwarding to more recent times, female filmmakers have made incisive steps in the development of modern horror. The most notable is Kathryn Bigelow's seminal *Near Dark*, included in the *Bloody Women* programme. Made in 1987, the film reignited the vampire – long lost to Bela Lugosi's anachronistic Dracula – as a sexy, modern, revitalised terror for our time. Doing so, Bigelow laid the ground for what was to come, from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Blade*. Stephen Woolley, producer of *Interview with a Vampire* (1994), explains its importance: "*Near Dark* pushed the genre into other dimensions, away from the Bram Stoker *Dracula*. Kathryn directs action so well, but the film also had that quality of humanising vampires, which made it great."

As writers, women have continued the trailblazing tradition of Mary Shelley into the 20th and 21st centuries, with screen adaptations abounding. The film adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Don't Look Now* remains one of the most iconic works of horror cinema. In America, Shirley Jackson's hugely influential use of psychological terror was adapted into the seminal 1963 film *The Haunting*. More recently, Charlaine Harris followed Bigelow's lead to create a vampire epic for our

time, with the incarnation of her Sookie Stackhouse novels as HBO's *True Blood* making use of the supernatural to explore themes of civil rights, Christian cultism and homophobia.

The thread of female contributions to horror – with a focus on dread over gore and the encroaching unknown over the impending onslaught of monsters – has always been there. Changes in audiences are perhaps more recent. The Horror Channel reports that its female audience is increasingly strong and Alan Jones, a director of FrightFest, confirms this: "Our audience used to split about 90%–10% male-female, but now we're definitely around 60%–40%."

Talking about female audiences, Jones vividly remembers one incident: "I saw two old ladies sitting down in our audience and I was convinced they were in the wrong screen because *Ladies In Lavender* was showing next door. I suggested they were in the wrong place and they said, 'listen love, we're here for the blood and gore'".

It remains to be seen how changes in the horror audience will affect the genre as a whole, but director Jennifer Eiss thinks early signs are positive: "I've been going to FrightFest for years and an increasingly large proportion of the audience is female. The thing that really gets them is the more psychological, tense films. The horror genre has been dominated by male writers and directors and it's become all about the gore and the shock, what they call 'torture porn'. Women tend to be much more visceral and psychological: it's less about what you see than what you don't see."

There's a sense of a dichotomy in the filmmaker community between horror as a vehicle for exploring our fears and taboos and horror as a source of titillation through violence. Director Eleanour Yule explains: "What I find ironic is the way horror seems to have been reappropriated from its gothic origins in repressed sexuality, with female characters often being brutally murdered because of their sexuality: if you're slightly morally suspect, you'll be the first to get it. It becomes porn violence, and the artfulness has gone."

But hope remains. If there's one thing the wide range of the *Bloody Women* programme proves, it's that women started all this, and they've no intention of letting go. The 2011 calendar promises a catalogue of films from the darkest recesses of the female mind. There are upcoming adaptations of Sarah Waters' *The Little Stranger* and Susan Hill's *The Woman In Black*, the latter produced by horror powerhouse Hammer Films and adapted by Jane Goldman (*Stardust, Kick-Ass*). Meanwhile director Catherine Hardwicke looks set to do for werewolves what her *Twilight* did for vampires, with a gothic recreation of *Red Riding Hood*.

In all these projects, there's a clear trend for those creating horror – and perhaps particularly women – to

return to the genre's gothic roots for inspiration. Lizzie Francke, former Director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival, believes that fear of the unknown is increasingly experienced close to home, and that horror's potential for exploring repressed ideas has never been more important. In an interview earlier this year about the Ministry of Fear, the company she founded and where she co-produced *Trauma* (2004), Francke explained: "We live in such extreme times now that, in our daily lives, we're constantly trying to contain and suppress our fear. I feel strongly that we need access to horror to provide us with an outlet for that fear."

With all this and more, there's life in the genre yet. And, if our programme of horror shorts by emerging female directors is anything to go by, women's creative vision will be vital to its future. Watch this blood-splattered space.

For more information on *Bloody Women: From Gothic To Horror*, including the panel discussion on 16 March featuring horror writer Muriel Gray visit the the ICA website www.ica.org.uk/birdseyeview or the Birds Eye View Film Festival 2011 website www.birds-eye-view.co.uk

13 April 2011

JAMES FREY

——

James Frey became a best-selling author on the back of his Oprah-approved memoir *A Million Little Pieces*. This fame turned to infamy when it was revealed that the book was not entirely based on fact and in 2009 he came to the ICA to talk about memoir, truth and fiction in what turned out to be a captivating discussion.

On 13 April, Frey returns to the ICA. This time he discusses blasphemy with the ex-vicar and now writer Mark Vernon. Frey's new book *Final Testament of the Holy Bible*, set in contemporary New York, is the story of a man who may be the reborn Christ, written in the manner of the Gospels and told by those around him.

As part of the research for his book, Frey got in touch with Rabbi Adam Mintz of Rayim Ahuvim, New York, with some questions on the finer points of Judaism. In a special contribution to Roland, he gives us permission to print this fascinating exchange.

Excerpts from emails:

With Rabbi Adam Mintz of Rayim Ahuvim, New York, NY:

Adam -

Happy Passover. Hope you're having a great time in Italy.

Just finished the chapter with the Rabbi. Curious about your thoughts. Ended up being pretty heavy in the research. I've attached it.

Everything is cool with us. In Amagansett.

Best -

James

———

James,

I read the chapters that you sent me carefully. Here are my thoughts on the "Rabbi Adam" chapter:

1. The Gemara was written by the Amoraim, a group of ancient Rabbinical sages, and is printed along the outside of Mishnah, on the edges of the page.

Actually, the Gemara is also written in the middle of the page right underneath the Mishna. The commentaries on the side are the medieval commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot. Look at http://www.dafyomi.org/ to see a page of the Talmud.

2. You write that Rabbi Schiff's Talmud had 64 volumes. While the Talmud consists of 64 tractates or volumes, many of them are small and are bound together. The standard set of Talmud such as the one we have in our library is 20 folio volumes.

3. The tradition with which I am familiar is that moshiach will be born on Tisha Bav, the day of the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem. It is a wonderful tradition that on the day of destruction, the savior will be born.

4. Your presentation of the history of messiahs is brilliant. The scholarly reader will be so excited that in the middle of this book is a concise and accurate history of false messiahs.

5. I really liked your description of what God is and what God isn't. You addressed the problem of radical fundamentalism in that paragraph in an insightful and important way.

6. I appreciated the juxtaposition of the serious chapter on religion with the crudeness of the Matthew chapter. There is a famous idea that the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22 is followed by a list of boring names in order to highlight the religious significance of the Isaac story.

Once again, as you told Maariv---you definitely deserve

to be a rabbi!
Love to Maya and the kids and Good Shabbos

Adam

———

Adam -

Thanks for reading, and thanks for your thoughts. Really appreciate both. First three chapters were pretty easy, fairly simple, straightforward. Starting to get into more complicated issues. Just finished chapter 4, told from the point of view of his sister. Next up his mother. Making the family a tense situation, one that might bother quite a few people. They were orthodox, and after the death of the father, the eldest son throws Ben out of the house and converts to evangelical Christianity, later forcing conversion on the rest of the family. When Ben starts to believe in his own potential messianism, he refuses his brother and his brother's beliefs, and seeks out his family's former rabbi.

Looking forward to Thursday -

James

———

Dear James,

I really enjoyed reading the opening three chapters of your new book. I would like to react based on our previous discussions of the religious view of messiah.

As we have spoken about several times, both the Jewish and Christian views of messiah struggle with the unique combination of human and super-human qualities of the messiah. This novel combination both creates a religious personality that is accessible to people and creates an inherent difficulty of identifying and proving this messiah.

From the earliest days of Christianity, the biggest problem for the early Christians was proving that Jesus was messiah and not just some Barack Obama like charismatic preacher. In many ways, the Christian Church solved this problem when in 315 AD, the Council of Nicea declared Jesus to be a God. Now, there could be no more debate.

However, within the Jewish community, this remained a serious issue. As I mentioned to you, in 1665, the Jews began to believe that a manic depressive from Turkey, Shabbetai Zevi, was the messiah. He seemed to exhibit this strange combination of the divine and the human. Even when he converted to Islam the following year, many Jews continued to believe in him claiming that this was just one of his unique messianic postures.

Given this background, I would like to comment on your first three chapters.

I found them most compelling due to the provocative way in which you presented Ben. You were able to

seamlessly weave the description of a troubled yet very human man with certain characteristics that were clearly super-human. I loved the way you described the surgery and the tension between the success of the human surgeon and the clearly divine intervention that kept Ben alive.

For the reader who does not yet know that this White man from the Bronx will be the messiah, they are caught in the amazing story of a man who unnaturally combines the human and the super-human. And, may I add, the reader is not even sure whether or not to be sympathetic to the character which I believe adds to the tension of these introductory chapters. I imagine that as the story develops, this unique combination of human flaws and super-human qualities will keep the reader guessing about Ben even after he declares himself messiah. Shabbetai Zevi would think that you are writing his biography---if it compelled half the Jewish community of the world in 1665, think how many people will be compelled today.

I look forward to speaking to you about it further when we get together on Thursday. I hope these initial thoughts are helpful.

Best to Maya,

Adam

From: James Frey
Date: Fri Feb 06 11:31:55 CST 2009
To: Adam Mintz
Subject: Re: History and Memory

Adam -

Attached are the first three chapters. Very very interested in your thoughts. And remember, this is a first draft.

Best -

James

James,

I am so happy to hear that you are on a tear I would love to read the beginning of the story of the Messiah from the Bronx.

All the best,

Adam

------Original Message------
From: James Frey
To: Adam Mintz
Subject: Re: History and Memory
Sent: Feb 5, 2009 5:38 PM

Adam -

Thank you for the kind note. Really really appreciate it.

Sorry I have taken so long to respond. Have been on a bit of a tear and have written the first three chapters of the book, at least in a rough form. When I get rolling I tend to disappear and I'm not great at corresponding. Curious if you want to see them? It's just the beginning and setting the stage for all the real stuff.

Best -

James

Dear James,

Yesterday, I taught the first class of my semester at Queens College. I taught about how people have viewed history in the ancient world. Interestingly, the ancients ignored the details of history for the sake of the religious messages. Ironically, these days people have gotten so obsessed with the details of the story that they have forgotten the importance of the message that the author wants to impart.

I told the students that our goal is to balance the importance of historical data with the lessons of history. I believe that you are a model of balancing these two goals. Getting to know you has crystallized in my mind the importance of this balance.

Speak to you soon.

Best to Maya

Adam

With Noam Mintz, the rabbi's son, who helped me with research:

N -

Thanks for the note. Really appreciate it. Very thought-provoking. And right on. I don't disagree with the points you make. Actually completely agree with them. I do believe that religion can be a great thing, that it can make the world better. I know and deeply respect and admire some very devout people, none more your father, who I consider myself fortunate to call a friend. My goal here wasn't to denigrate anyone's beliefs. My goal was to write a Messiah story. Write something that could be set next to the New Testament. Something as valid as the story of Christ, which is used in as many, or more, negative ways than positive. Frankly, I wish I did or could believe in God. I think it would make my life easier. I admire people who have strong faith. I can't. I have tried. When my son was dying I went to four different churches of four denominations, a synagogue and mosque. At each place I literally begged God for some

kind of help or relief. For something to help me deal with it. I left all of them empty. And I have been thinking about God and religion for most of my life. I've written about it in each of my books. My first book is in many ways about my internal struggle to either believe or not. I don't.

That being said, the book is a novel. Designed to make people question and think. I'm happy you have questions. My answers to them are really irrelevant. Your answers are the ones that are important. That's what the best art and the best books do to us, whether they are religious are not. They make us question ourselves and our beliefs, and make us find the answers.

Your friend -

J

Hey James,

Hope everything's going well. I just finished reading your new draft and I thought I'd share my two cents with you. Obviously I need to preface my ideas by reminding both you and myself that I'm just a punk 20 year old who's taken exactly one literature course in my entire life. That being said, here goes nothing...

First of all, I thought the book was awesome. Really interesting, provocative and daring. I could go on with all the things I liked about the book (and there are plenty), but I feel like that would just bore you. I figure it would be much more worthwhile for me to outline some of the tough questions that I grappled with upon finishing of the book.

1) Ben portrays all forms of religion and government as inherently evil, corrupt and perverted. He runs the gamut from Judaism to Islam to Christianity to Capitalism to Marxism, angrily denouncing every single one of them. This is a pretty bold statement. Granted there is a lot of fanaticism out there, and people definitely do manipulate religion for their own personal gain, but are all forms of religion really so evil? Are their any positive manifestations of religion? Even if you want to say that God is simply a delusion we've created for ourselves, I think that there is still room to say that that religion can have a positive effect on people's lives. Perhaps praying to God, allows one time for self-reflection and thus self-improvement. Perhaps maintaining the Sabbath adds structure and stability to one's week. For all of its bigotry and racism, religion does wonders in the world of philanthropy. All I'm saying is that maybe you don't have to be so harsh. Even if you want to claim that at its root all religion is empty and meaningless, nevertheless, there could still be aspects of religious practice which do conform to your's and Ben's notion of the ideal society. Must we completely detach ourselves from religion in order to lead a fulfilling existence, or maybe, even if God doesn't exist, there is still room for growth and development within the realm of certain forms of religion.

2) Throughout the novel, Ben glorifies drug-addicts, murderers and prostitutes as unfortunate products of a deeply flawed system. Conversely, he constantly demonizes clergymen, politicians and the wealthy as greedy, egotistical and power-hungry. Is this true across the board? I feel like if across the board bad stuff happens to good people and good stuff happens to bad people then the characters become somewhat repetitive and bland. One of my favorite characters in the novel was Peter. I loved the fact that he was black and born to a drug-dealing father, but nevertheless was able to be successful. His mom worked her ass off and proved that sometimes the system does work. Why is he able to succeed without Ben's miracles, while other people find themselves completely incapable of any sort of social mobility? Is it simply luck and fate? Or is there an element of "you get out whatever you put in" which also plays a role here? I guess what I'm asking is this: does Ben perform actual miracles for people who the system has screwed and have no shot, or does he simply inspire people to believe that if they have the proper attitude/mentality then they can accomplish anything?

3) The mode through which Ben expresses love for his fellow man seems to be primarily, if not exclusively, through sexuality. Is this the only possible way for people to truly express their love for each other? Could there be other legitimate, genuine ways in which we can express our love? Are there any sexual acts which are ever overly-promiscuous and inappropriate?

Again, I thought the book was very thought provoking and really enjoyed it. These are just my random musings. I hope you find them somewhat insightful and I'd love to chat about all of these different ideas with you at some point!

Thanks again for the opportunity to work with you guys this summer!

Noam

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Release Date: December 07, 2010

This Reader should accompany the show "Negative Headroom: the Broadcast Signal Intrusion Incident at the Halle Für Kusnt Lüneburg, Galerie Daniel Buchholz at ArtBasel Miami and the Contemporary Art Museum St Louis Nov-Dec 2010.

Its aim is to present relevant documents on the topic of the Max Headroom broadcast piracy that happened on the 22nd of November 1987 on channels WGN an PBS in the Chicago region. It is the hope of the compiler that this collection of documents will provide a detailed background for the exhibition, which attempts to romanticize the event.

EXCERPT

    CONTENTS:

1) Graphic icon from Background of news report, Nov 23 1987

2) "Tolmes News Service" Transcript of all news reports on the incident by Dr. Hugo P. Tolmes   http://www.textfiles.com/magazines/TOLMES/

3) Graphic icon from Background of news report, Nov 23 1987

4) Chronicle of different appearances by the "Max Headroom" character from Fanpage

5) "TV Terrorists": a short history of TV Piracy by Billy Ingram (and Michael H)

6) Diagram of possible broadcast override from a tv news report, Nov 23 1987

7) Spray-painted studio photograph background of Chicago

$$

4)

the Max Headroom chronicles

OTHER APPEARANCES

Max Headroom is probably most widely known for the 1987-1988 US television series and the lengthy and ubiquitous run of Coca-Cola ads in 1986. Information about the series episodes makes up the most complete and detailed portion of his telehistory, and the Coke ads are well-remembered among both collectors and the general public.

However, Max had a long and complex history that led to those keystone roles. He originated two full years before the series premiered, and for a time seemed to be everywhere - in both 'pro per' and as the subject of parodies and copycats.

He first appeared in the 1985 UK telefilm on Channel Four. The straggling series episodes shown in the spring of 1988 were among his last major sightings.

There is a massive amount of research and verification to be done on these other shows, as none have been preserved and documented as well as the telefilm and series. A full chronology of Max's history is under development, but for the time being, this page is arranged and annotated with the time frame of each appearance.

Because this is an evolving page, I have used a mix of styles. Some entries below are summaries for which full links will follow in time. Some links connect to pages within the "mainstream" of this site such as the UK telefilm and US series entries. The rest are new and separate entries on their respective topics.

(For the many secondary, commercial iterations of Max - that is, Max products such as toys, t-shirts and the like - see the evolving Museum of Maxxiana.)

Original Appearances

Pending the full Max chronology, this section serves as a chronological listing of all original appearances of Matt Frewer as Max Headroom.

[4 April 1985] Original UK Telefilm, Channel Four

Local link.

[1985] The Max Headroom Show (UK, Channel Four)

There were six to twelve individual shows, possibly in two separate runs. Details are forthcoming.

[1985-1986?] Radio Rentals television rental service ads (UK)

Details forthcoming. At least one example can be found on YouTube.

[1986] C-C-Catch What Wave? : Max Headroom & the New Coke Ads

A tale of marketing misjudgement and a sacrificial star.

[1986] "Paranoimia" by Art of Noise

Art of Noise released the original song on their 1986 album "In Visible Silence." Shortly thereafter, the remix and video with Max voicing the lyrics was released. Details forthcoming.

[1986?] Interview with David Letterman

Max famously appears on Letterman. May be found on YouTube.

[1986] Extended Telefilm, Cinemax

Local link. Believed to be the 'pilot' for the talk show that followed.

[1986] The Original Max Talking Headroom Show (Cinemax, US)

Six episodes of this talk/interview/music show appeared on Cinemax. Details are forthcoming.

[January 1987] Twenty Questions for Max Headroom, Playboy Magazine

Also includes the "Maxine Legroom" parody, see below.

[1987?] The Max Headroom Xmas Special (Max Headroom's Giant Christmas Turkey)

The dating of this item is uncertain. It may have been rerun in a subsequent year.

[1987-1988] Max Headroom (ABC series)

Local link.

[1988-1989] Comic Relief/"Red Nose Night" (UK - reported)

If the dating is correct on this report, this would be among the last of Max's original appearances.

[2007] Channel Four promotional ads

Matt Frewer and Max return to film four ads promoting Channel Four's switch to digital. Details forthcoming.

Secondary Appearances

This section lists all appearances of Max and related topics that are not primary appearances by Matt Frewer, including parodies, impersonations and copycats.

Parodies & Clones - F-F-Funonymes and a Fat Target

Media copies (and copy-cats) of Max. Presently includes Mad Magazine, Playboy parody "Maxine Legroom," "Doonesbury," "Back to the Future II," "Carmen Sandiego" and the X-rated "Maxine."

[20 April 1987] Newsweek Magazine cover & article

One of Max's major non-television appearances. Link is currently to another site.

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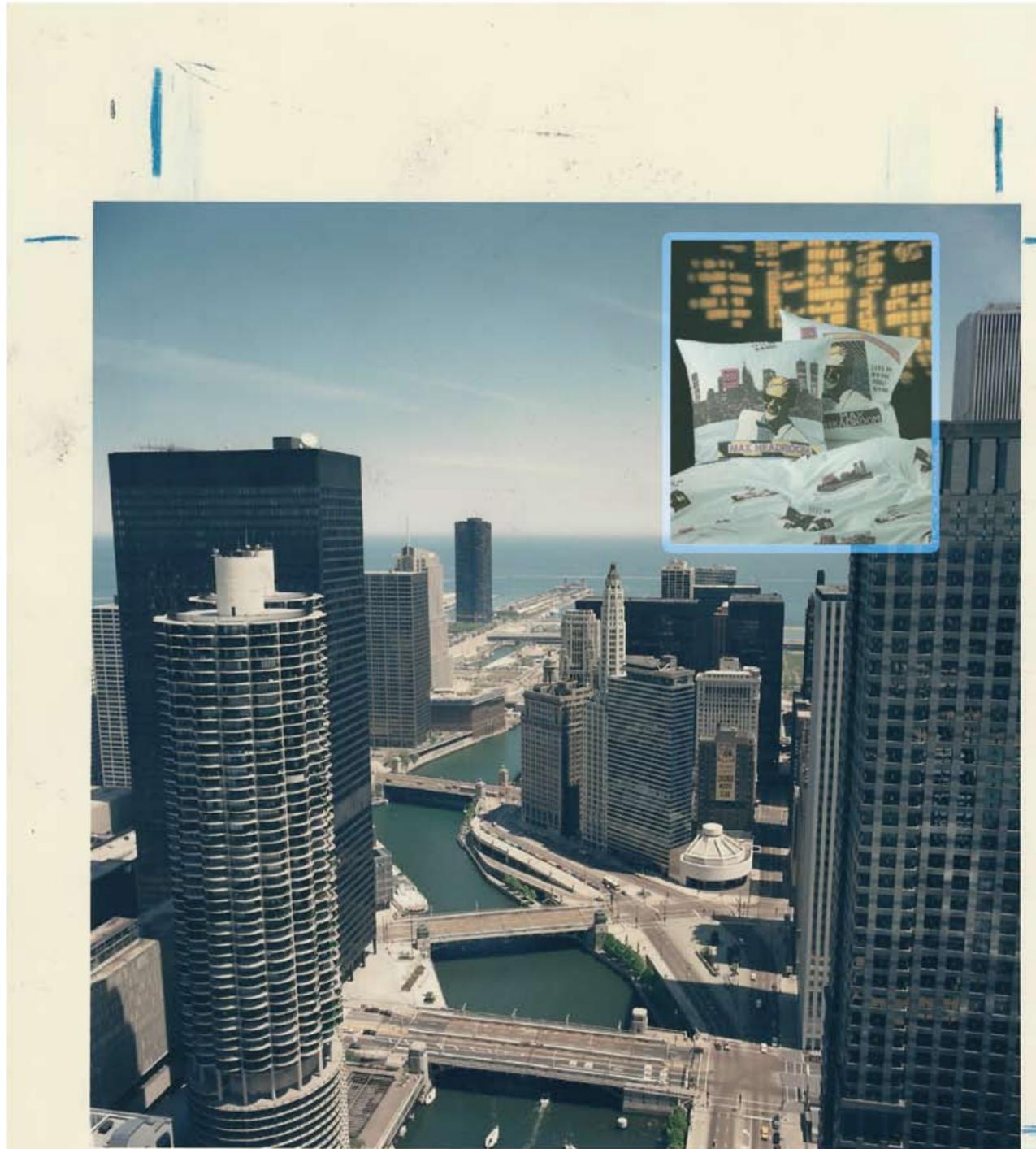
Chgo aerial views

Aerial photograph taken by John Hill for Prime Group's proposed 77 W. Wacker Dr. office tower showing what the building's views will be.

6)

7)
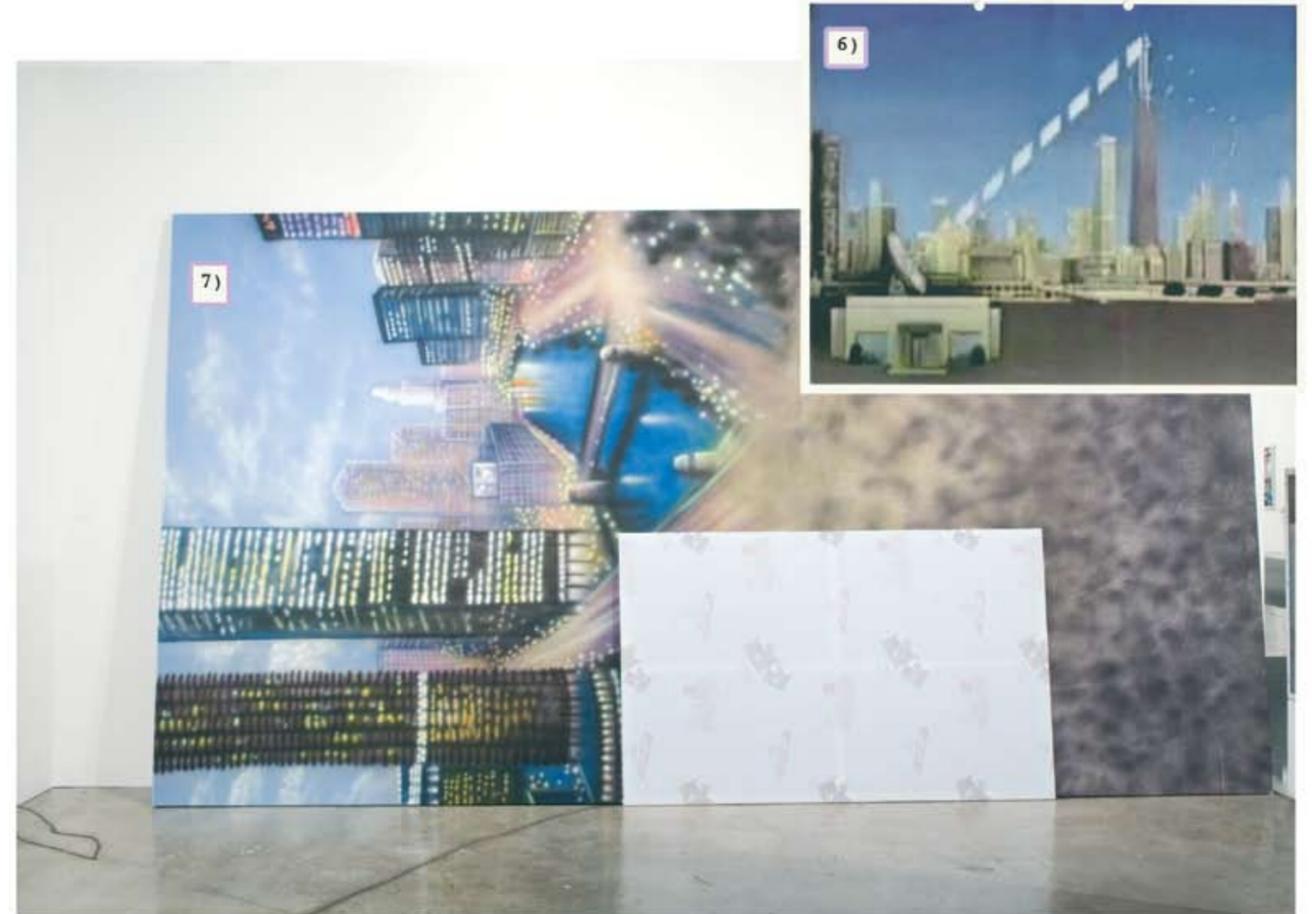
5) A TVparty Investigative Report (yeah, right!)

TV TERRORISTS

You won't believe
nerve of these daffy pranksters!
By Billy Ingram (and Michael H!)

It's a comfort to know that, with a nation on alert for possible terrorist attacks, very few people have successfully interrupted a network or local television broadcast. But what's being done to protect the airwaves?

It's almost too frightening to consider. What would happen if media outlets were suddenly hijacked by a cabal of indifferent ideologues, subjecting an unsuspecting public to a relentless disinformation campaign littered with vile, slanted viewpoints and twisted facts designed to brainwash the masses?

Come to think of it, how would we know the difference?!?

Let's look back on some bizarre historical examples:

**Hackers Hold Chicago
In The Grip Of Terror!** (well...)

On Nov. 22, 1987, **video hackers** managed to override the Chicago PBS station's broadcast of 'Dr. Who' for 90 seconds and replace it with a signal beamed from their secret location. Drunk with mad power, the dastardly duo also hacked into a major Chicago commercial station that night for a several moments.

With the ability to control one of the world's largest broadcast markets now firmly in their grasp, what diabolical message would they send? Were they terrorists with a Hell-bent message? Or was this a people's uprising, an attempt take back the airwaves from the purveyor's of lowest common denominator entertainment - perhaps sparking a return to the great dramatic anthology shows of the fifties, or the whimsical but wholesome sitcoms of the sixties?

Instead, what Chicagoans were treated to was some dork wearing a Max Headroom mask dropping his pants and getting a spanking from his accomplice (also masked). All the while, the camera panned wildly about, exposing a plain corrugated metal background. It was probably shot in someone's garage - but then, in all fairness, Bill Gates started that way.

This incident made the national news but the perpetrators were never caught in spite of an FBI investigation. You have to admire the nerve of these guys - true it wasn't Shakespeare, but the networks had a hard time filling the airwaves when THEY first got started.

Of course, we all know if the ratings had been good for the 'Show Me Your Ass And I'll Paddle It' show, it would still be on today in Chicago. In national syndication.

At the very least, the PBS station should air this during pledge breaks....

**Who Needs The
Damn Frequency?
Just Storm The Stage!**

During the Gulf War, a member of the radical group ACT UP got his **anti-AIDS rant** on the air - live - just as Dan Rather was starting the **CBS Evening News**. A controlled Rather immediately went to commercial and the activist was rushed out of the studio and arrested.

Since this incident, security has been tightened at CBS and laws have been passed that make it illegal to interrupt Dan Rather while he's talking.

**Talk Show
Ambush!**

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E-mail us at readinggroup@ica.org.uk for further information and to reserve your place.

NATHANIEL MELLORS

Nathaniel Mellors B.OK
David Evans, Jennifer Higgie, Martin Herbert
The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, 2007 / £10

Critical essays and texts from David Evans, Jennifer Higgie and Martin Herbert respond to Mellors' psychedelic theatre and satirical films exploring language play and control.

***

Book A or MEGACOLON or For & Against Language
Nathaniel Mellors
Onomatopee, 2010 / £25

An experimental monograph exploring language manipulation and absurdist comedy. *Book A* contains Mellors' original scripts and ideas for video and installation works, such as the language games of *Ourhouse* (2010–) . With contributions by Mick Peter and John C. Welchman.

***

Gargantua and Pantagruel
François Rabelais
Penguin Books, 2006 / £16.99

Rabelais' novel from the 16th century is a mischievous and carnivalesque fantasy. The story of two giants mixes scatological humour and satirical obscenity to wondrous effect.

***

Strange Attractor Journal
Mark Pilkington (ed.)
Issue Four: £14.99

Strange Attractor Journal describes itself as 'celebrating unpopular culture, declaring war on mediocrity and a pox on the foot soldiers of stupidity.' We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

BIRDS EYE VIEW: WOMEN IN HORROR

The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis
Barbara Creed
Routledge, 1993 / £22.99

Challenging the representation of woman as victim in horror film theory, Creed disrupts Freudian and Lacanian theories of sexual difference and those of spectatorship and fetishism to re-read classical and contemporary film.

***

The Darker Sex: Tales of Death and the Supernatural by Victorian Women
Mike Ashley (ed.)
Peter Owen, 2009 /£9.99

Victorian women perfected and developed the Gothic genre. This anthology features some of the most thrilling, ghostly, supernatural and psychologically fascinating work by female writers during this period.

LAST OF THE RED WINE

Ad Absurdum: Energies of the Absurd from Modernism till Today
Jan Hoet, Adam Budak, Roland Nachtigaller
Kerber Verlag, 2008 / £20

This small but perfectly formed book explores the idea that without an awareness of the absurdity of the world, it would not be possible to observe it adequately.

***

Storytelling
Christian Salmon
Verso Books, 2010 / £14.99

This text is not as simple as its title might suggest. Storytelling delves into our desire for narrative form and investigates how stories are used for social and political gain in contemporary society.

NOTATION & INTERPRETATION

Handmade Electronic Music: The Art of Hardware Hacking
Nicolas Collins
Routledge, 2009 / £22.99

A practical introduction to the DIY craft of making electronic circuits for artistic purposes; from subverting intended uses to exploring new sonic possibilities.

***

Noise / Music: A History
Paul Hegarty
Continuum, 2007 / £16.99

From John Cage and Erik Satie to Throbbing Gristle and The Boredoms, Hegarty explores the phenomenon of noise in music and the related philosophical ideas of Adorno and Deleuze among others.

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